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REVENUES OF STAR HOTELS IN OMAN SURGE BY 18.2% TO TOP OMR52MN

MUSCAT: Statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) show that the total revenues of 3 to 5-star hotels in Oman by the end of February 2024 rose by 18.2 percent to OMR52.38 million against OMR44.41 million during the corresponding period in 2023. **>A3**



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COMMUNITY UNITY STANDS OUT IN GRIEF

Death toll rises as heavy rains continue to lash Oman

Honourable Lady offers condolences to deceased families



MUSCAT: Her Highness The Honourable Lady Assayida Ahd Abdullah Hamad Al Busaidi, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman, has sent cables of condolences and sympathy to the families of those who died in North Al Sharqiyah Governorate as a result of heavy rains and gushing floods during the

current adverse weather condition. In the cables, the Honourable Lady expressed her heartfelt sentiments of grief and profound sympathy to the deceased's families, praying to the Almighty Allah to have mercy on the deceased and grant their families solace and patience to bear the loss. — **ONA**

Council of Ministers offers condolences

MUSCAT: The Council of Ministers today extended its sincere condolences to the families and relatives of school students who passed away in the Governorate of North Al Sharqiyah as a result of the heavy rains and floods accompanying the current adverse weather conditions.

The Secretariat General of the Council of Ministers today issued a statement to this effect reading as follows: "With hearts filled with grief and faith in the will of the Almighty Allah, the Council of Ministers extends its sincere condolences and sympathies to the families and relatives of school students who recently died in the Governorate of Al



Sharqiyah as a result of the heavy rains and wadi flooding that accompanied the current adverse weather conditions.

The Council of Ministers prays to Almighty Allah to bestow His mercy on the deceased, grant them dwelling in heavens and support their families with solace and patience to bear the loss." — **ONA**

The sudden ferocity of the floodwaters caught the children unawares, sweeping them away in a cruel twist of fate

Times News Service

MUSCAT: A sombre pall descended upon Samad A'Shan, shrouding the village in sorrow on Monday. The ominous hue of dark grey clouds mirrored the heavy hearts of its inhabitants, gathered in mourning for the tragic loss of 10 young souls, swept away in merciless flash floods on Sunday.

Amidst the relentless downpour that continues to pummel the Sultanate of Oman, the grim reality of Sunday's events weighed heavily on the community.

Zaher Muhammad Al Abdali, a grieving cousin of the deceased students, recounted the harrowing ordeal of searching for their bodies amidst the tumultuous waters.

"It was a scene of unimaginable tragedy," Al Abdali reflected, his voice heavy with sorrow.

"The relentless efforts of the Civil Defence Authority and Ambulance (CDAA) were commendable, yet it took an agonising 24 hours to recover the lifeless forms of our beloved children."

The innocence and promise of these young lives cut short by nature's cruel hand evoked profound anguish.

Al Abdali struggled to describe the profound loss as his words choked with emotion.

"Their futures extinguished in an instant leaving behind shattered dreams and grieving hearts," he added further.

As Al Abdali recounted the sequence of events leading to the tragedy, his anguish is palpable.

He revealed the heart-wrenching circumstances surrounding the loss of the young students. "While some schools wisely barred their doors to shield their students from the deluge, the authorities of this particular school deemed the route safe and per-



Search teams from the Civil Defence and Ambulance Department in North Al Sharqiyah Governorate were able to find all the missing children.

TIMES OF OMAN EXCLUSIVE

mitted the children to depart," he said. Tragically, what began as a seemingly routine journey home, quickly turned into a nightmare.

"When the students' cousin set out to get them from school," Al Abdali continued, "the wadi appeared benign. Yet, upon their return, it had swelled beyond recognition, its treacherous currents proving merciless."

The sudden ferocity of the floodwaters caught the children unawares, sweeping them away in a cruel twist of fate.

"In an instant," Al Abdali la-

mented, "they were lost to the unforgiving currents, leaving behind a trail of devastation and despair."

As the search for their bodies extended beyond the bounds of the area where the tragedy unfolded, the grim reality of their fate became painfully evident.

"Despite our fervent hopes," Al Abdali said, "we discovered their lifeless forms several kilometres away, in the desolate expanse of Al Shuwai'i."

In the wake of this unfathomable tragedy, the community of Samad A'Shan gathered to bid a tearful farewell to their cherished children.

Braving the relentless deluge, they united in shared grief, seeking solace in each other's presence amidst the sombre proces-

sion at the funeral on Monday.

Yet amid the anguish, a glimmer of solidarity emerged, illuminating the darkness of despair.

Al Abdali found solace in the unwavering support of his fellow villagers, whose collective strength sustained them through the darkest of hours.

"In the face of tragedy, our community has shown remarkable resilience," Al Abdali said. "Through acts of selflessness and compassion, we find hope amid the devastation, standing as a testament to the unyielding spirit of our people."

As the rains continue to fall, casting a veil of sorrow over Samad A'Shan, the indomitable spirit of its people endures, a beacon of light amidst the darkest of storms.

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN Data centre services

1 Oman Broadband Company launched data centre services across Oman. **>A2**

OMAN Sustainability week

2 Oman Sustainability Week 2024 will take place from 28 April to 2 May. **>A5**

MARKET Bank Muscat net profit

3 Bank Muscat posted a net profit of OMR54.24mn until end March 2024. **>B1**

END OF FEBRUARY 2024

State revenues top OMR1.9bn

MUSCAT: The State's public revenues till the end of February 2024 recorded a decline by 9 percent to stand at OMR1.958 billion compared to OMR2.148 billion during the corresponding period in 2023.

This is attributed mainly to the decline in the net oil and gas revenue.

The fiscal performance bulletin issued by the Ministry of Finance showed that the net oil revenue till the end of February 2024 dropped by 4 percent, registering OMR1.102 billion compared to OMR1.153 billion by the end of February 2023.

The average oil price stood at \$86 per barrel and the average oil production stood at 1,024,000 barrels per day.



Moreover, the net gas revenue by the end of February 2024 went down by 46 percent to stand at OMR281 million compared to the corresponding period in 2023. This is attributed to a change in the procedures of collecting gas revenue.

Collected current revenues by the end of February 2024 in-

creased by OMR102 million to stand at OMR573 million compared to OMR471 million collected during the same period in 2023. This increase is mainly attributed to the receipt of returns from the Investment Authority's profits, recording approximately OMR200 million Omani, collected last January.

Public expenditure till the end of February 2024 stood at OMR1.751 billion, down by OMR25 million (one percent) compared to the same period in 2023.

The public expenditure of civil ministries stood at OMR1.277 billion (down by OMR17 million) compared to OMR1.294 billion during the corresponding period in 2023. **>A3**

GAZA DEATH TOLL

as of April 15, 2024



Deaths
33,797
Injured
76,465



Dhuhr.....	12:12pm
Asr.....	3:39pm
Maghrib.....	6:33pm
Isha.....	7:46pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....	4:26am

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OMAN POST



Oman's postal sector automation helps to boost work efficiency

MUSCAT: The postal sector in the Sultanate of Oman has seen remarkable developments and changes during the past years.

This transformation is characterised with employment of the latest technologies as to keep abreast of the digital transformation witnessed in the other sectors.

Sayyid Nasr bin Bader Al Busaidi, Head of the Post Unit at Oman Post, affiliated to Asyad Group, said that the postal sector is one of the sectors that have seen qualitative shift during the past years.

The sector has seen automation of the postal processes as to boost the work efficiency and the services offered to customers.

The postal sector also saw development and modernisation of the basic structure and expansion of the scope of postal services to incorporate the individuals and

the government departments and the private sector establishments in all governorates of the Sultanate, he added.

The technologies of artificial intelligence (AI) would open new horizons for the improvement and development of the postal services, he said adding that these technologies offer innovative solutions that could upgrade the performance to unprecedented levels.

He said that the technologies of artificial intelligence contribute to enhancement of the security of consignments/parcels and protection of data.

He said that the postal sector offers various financial services including transfer of money, payment of bills, insurance services and services associated with electronic payment.

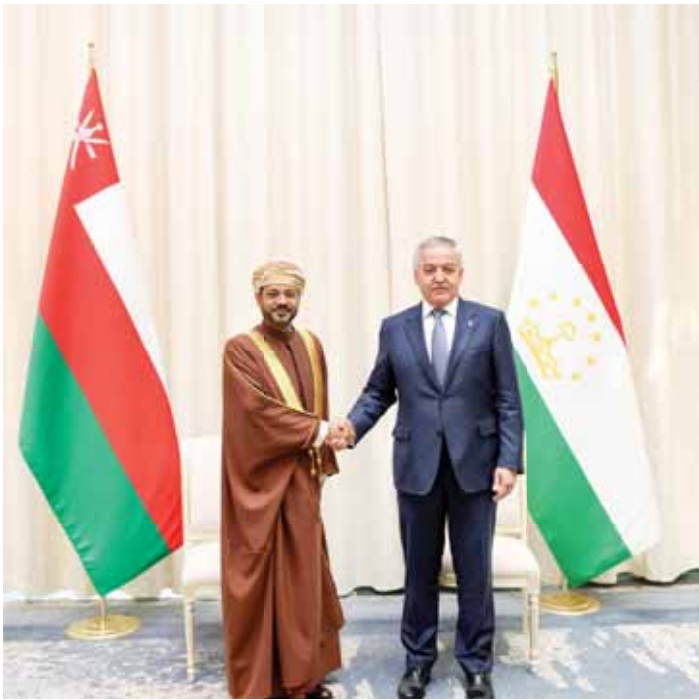
— ONA

Oman participated in the second Ministerial Meeting for Strategic Dialogue between GCC and Central Asian Countries

TASHKENT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Foreign Ministry took part on Monday in the second Ministerial Meeting for the Strategic Dialogue between the GCC and Central Asian Countries, held in the Uzbek capital, Tashkent.

The Sultanate of Oman's delegation was chaired by Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister.

The meeting aimed at bolstering the relations between the



two sides. It served the consultation between both sides in various issues of common concern in a manner that serves interests of the GCC and Central Asian peoples.

On the sidelines of the meeting, Sayyid Badr held meetings with the foreign ministers of Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan.

He also held a meeting with the

Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan. Meanwhile, the President Shavkat Mirziyayev of the Republic of Uzbekistan received Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister on Monday within the context of the GCC-Central Asian Countries' second Ministerial Meeting, in which Sayyid Badr heads the Sultanate of Oman's delegation.

Sayyid Badr conveyed the greetings and best wishes of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to President Shavkat Mirziyayev, along with His Majesty the Sultan's wishes of progress and prosperity for the friendly people of Uzbekistan.

President Shavkat Mirziyayev expressed his appreciation and sincere greetings to His Majesty the Sultan and Omani people, hoping that relations between the two friendly countries will grow further.

Within the framework of the visit, Sayyid Badr made a short tour of some historical Islamic monuments in the Uzbek region of Samarkand and held a meeting with the Governor of region.

— ONA

BAIT AL FALAJ GARRISON

Jordanian delegation received

MUSCAT: Maj.Gen. Hamid Ahmed Sakroon, Chairman of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies received in his office at Bait Al Falaj Garrison on Monday a delegation of the Royal Jordanian National Defence College (RJNDC).

During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views on several academic topics of mutual interest.

The meeting was attended by Commodore Khalid Amir Al Salti, Director General of Studies and Academic Affairs and senior officers at the Academy of Strategic and Defence Studies.

Meanwhile, the Jordanian delegation visited the National De-



fense College (NDC) at the Academy of Strategic and Defence Studies.

The guests were greeted upon their arrival at the college by Brigadier Abdullah Hamad Al Harthy,

Acting Commandant of the NDC. Members of the visiting delegation were briefed on the college's facilities and equipment.

They also toured its various departments and halls. — ONA

OMAN BROADBAND COMPANY

Data centre services launched

MUSCAT: Oman Broadband Company launched data centre services in all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

Through its 40+ advanced data centres, the company seeks to significantly contribute to digital transition and realise the goals of economic diversification in Oman.

Oman Broadband Company focuses on providing network connectivity solutions, making use of the strategic location of its data centres and the strength of its infrastructure facilities. The com-

pany is keen to maintain highly efficient connectivity services and provide access for all customers anywhere in Oman.

Oman Broadband Company has a sophisticated operations network that ensures round-the-clock monitoring and sensors capable of detecting sources of water leakage and extinguishing fires. The company adheres to global standards of performance and service-level agreements (SLAs). This enhances reliability in the company's outstanding services. — ONA



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Revenues of star hotels in Oman top OMR52mn



Statistics indicated that the number of Omani hotel guests rose by 5.7 percent to 141,335 and that the number of GCC guests went up by 13.6 percent to 25,607

MUSCAT: Statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) show that the total revenues of 3 to 5-star hotels in Oman by the end of February 2024 rose by 18.2 percent to OMR52.38 million against OMR44.41 million during the corresponding period in 2023.

The rise in revenues was due to an 18.2 rise in the total number of hotel guests that stood at 433,856 until the end of February 2024, compared to 366,969 guests by the end of February 2023.

The rate of occupancy also grew by 11.2 percent, according to the NCSI.

GCC guests
Statistics indicated that the number of Omani hotel guests rose by 5.7 percent to 141,335 and that the number of GCC guests went up by 13.6 percent to 25,607. The number of European tenants grew by 28.7 percent to 153,422.

The number of hotel guests from the Americas stood at 14,829, while the number of hotel tenants from the African continent posted a growth rate of 9.7 percent to 2,029. In the meantime, the number of Asian tenants grew by 29.5 percent to 54,562. The number of hotel guests from Oceania stood at 6,347. — **ONA**

State budget recorded surplus of OMR207mn by end of Feb. 2024

<FROM A1 Development expenditure of ministries and civil units stood at OMR93 million, with a spending rate of 10 percent of the total development liquidity allocated for 2024 (OMR900 million).

The total of contribution and other expenses amounted to OMR231 million, comprising a surge by 75 percent compared to OMR132 million during the same period in 2023. Subsidy for the Social Protection System and petroleum products till the end of February 2024 stood at OMR93 million and OMR44 million, respectively.

Transfers for the loan payment item stood at OMR66 million.

The state budget recorded a surplus of OMR207 million by the end of February 2024, compared to a surplus of OMR372 million registered over the same period in 2023. — **ONA**





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HEAVY RAINS CONTINUE TO LASH MANY GOVERNORATES OF OMAN

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Heavy rains continued to lash Oman on Monday, killing at least 19 people in North Al Sharqiyah and Adam, official sources said on Monday.

Official sources said 16 people were killed in North Al Sharqiyah while three people were found dead in the Wilayat of Adam on Monday.

The dead include 12 children and one woman from Samad Al Shan from the Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi.

More rains expected today
Atmospheric data analysis conducted by the National Multi-Hazards Early Warning Centre (Civil Aviation Authority) indicates that the current weather condition in the Sultanate of Oman will peak today. Aisha Jumaa Al Qasmi, a meteorologist at the Civil Aviation Authority, said that the rains will peak from the midnight of Tuesday 16 April until the dawn of Wednesday 17 April.

The meteorologist said that the third wave of the depression constitutes the deepest impacts of the weather condition. She added that heavy to extremely heavy rains are likely to drench the governorates of Musandam, A'Dhahirah, Al Buraimi, North Al Batinah and A'Dakhiliyah, while the governorates of South Al Batinah, Muscat and parts of the Al Wusta Governorate are expected to experience sporadic rains of varying intensity. The trough will also continue to prevail in the governorates of A'Dakhiliyah, North A'Sharqiyah and South A'Sharqiyah, the meteorologist added.

Holiday in five governorates

In view of the adverse weather condition, the government decided to suspend work on Tuesday, 16 April 2024, for employees in units of the State's civil administrative apparatus and for workers in private sector establishments in the governorates of Musandam, Al Buraimi, A'Dhahirah, North Al Batinah and A'Dakhiliyah.

In other governorates, online work can be applied if it is not possible for employees to physically attend office.

No classes

The Ministry of Education (MoE) has extended the suspension of classes in all governorates except Dhofar and Al Wusta on Tuesday due to the inclement weather affecting the sultanate.

In a statement, MoE said, 'All public, private and international schools across all governorates will remain closed on Tuesday,



April 16, due to unstable weather conditions. However, this decision does not apply to Dhofar and Al Wusta governorates. The ministry has advised that classes can be conducted online based on the capabilities of the school.'

Rescue Work

Besides these deaths, thousands of people were rescued by the search and rescue teams in Oman in the last couple of days.

In Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi, more than 1,000 people were transferred from a school after the rain water level rose.

In a statement, Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA), said, 'Rescue teams from the Civil Defence and Ambulance Department in North Al Sharqiyah Governorate, in cooperation with the relevant authorities and citizens, transferred 1,200 people from a school in the Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi after the rain water level rose. All of them are in good health.'

In Quriyat, the Royal Oman Police (ROP), rescued more than 20 people as they were unable to reach their homes as they were caught up in a wadi.

According to ROP, the police aviation carried out an operation and transported 21 people from the farms.

Lieutenant Colonel Mohammed bin Salam Al Hashami, the official spokesman for the National Center for Emergency Management (NCEM), said the center received 78 distress calls since Sunday morning.

He pointed out that rains are concentrated in the governorates of North al Sharqiyah, South al Sharqiyah, Al Dakhiliyah, and South al Batinah, stressing that the search is still ongoing for the missing persons.

As several governorates witnessed torrential rains on Monday, there were few instances of vehicles getting stranded in the flowing water or flash floods.

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) advises all to exercise maximum caution during thunderstorms, avoid crossing wadis (flash floods), avoid low lying areas and avoid venturing into the sea during the alert period.

Medical Response Sector Ready

The sector of medical response and public health has affirmed its readiness to deal with the current adverse weather condition that is currently impacting various governorates in the Sultanate of Oman.

The sector devised a plan to ensure sustained services at health institutions in the impacted areas.

Dr. Mohammed Saif Al Bousafi, the centre's coordinator at the National Committee for Emergency Management (NCEM), told Oman News Agency (ONA) that an emergency operations chamber has been activated and that coordination is underway with departments that provide electric power backup to health institutions in the affected areas.



ments that provide electric power backup to health institutions in the affected areas.

Al Bousafi added that the overall aim is to secure sustained services to citizens and residents at health institutions and to spare employees and patients any potential risks.

Al Bousafi also affirmed the availability of basic services, medical supplies and medicines in health institutions and warehouses in the affected governorates. He added that a plan was set to augment the capacity of Ibra Hospital in response to reports of some people being stranded or missing in inundated sectors of adjoining valleys.

Al Bousafi pointed out that measures were undertaken to maintain communication and coordination with operation units of the Royal Oman Police and the Royal Air Force of Oman so that they could lend support when needed.

Acting in coordination with the Centre for Disease Control and

Prevention, the authorities have also devised epidemic preparedness plans to be implemented in the aftermath of the climatic condition, Al Bousafi explained.

On Sunday, health institutions in North A'Sharqiyah Governorate dealt with various casualties, including 13 deaths, Al Bousafi said.

He added that recent health emergencies included a dystocia (obstructed childbirth) case of a woman in labour who had to be airlifted from Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan Hospital to Sur Hospital and four medical emergency cases that were airlifted from Wadi Hatt to A'Rustaq Hospital.

Al Bousafi said that, as a precautionary measure, some health institutions in contingency-prone areas were closed, including Al Rahma Hospital in Muscat Governorate, Al-Oyoun Health Centre, Wadi Nam Health Centre in North A'Sharqiyah Governorate and Al Bashaer Health Centre in A'Dakhiliyah Governorate.

Hamas proposes new ceasefire agreement

The group’s draft added that 30 Palestinian prisoners would be released for every Israeli civilian, a steep increase from the 3:1 ratio of the weeklong November truce



TEL AVIV: After rejecting the Israeli proposal of a ceasefire amid the continuing hostilities in Gaza, Hamas presented a ceasefire and hostage release deal to mediators, demanding that Israel observe a six-week ceasefire before it receives any of the 129 hostages held by the group since October 7.

The group’s proposal was reportedly submitted after it rejected the US-mediated deal on Saturday late at night.

In the proposal, Hamas put a condition on the Israel Defence

Force (IDF) that it would be required to cease all fighting in Gaza and retreat from urban areas for six weeks, allowing displaced Palestinians to return north.

It added that only after the end of the six weeks would any hostages be released, stating further that it would use the weeks of paused hostilities to locate the hostages and ascertain what condition they are in.

The group’s draft added that 30 Palestinian prisoners would be released for every Israeli civilian, a

steep increase from the 3:1 ratio of the weeklong November truce. It also demanded that 50 Palestinian prisoners, 30 of them serving life sentences, be released for every captive soldier.

The Times of Israel reported that Israel has previously dismissed similar demands as ‘delusional’ and the number of Palestinian prisoners Hamas has demanded, as well as the severity of their crimes, has been a sticking point in several previous rounds of negotiations.

Earlier, on Saturday, Hamas submitted its response to Israel’s hostage deal negotiations and ceasefire and rejected the latter’s proposal, sticking to its original demands, Xinhua reported.

The terror group said it was sticking to its original demands for a permanent ceasefire, the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the entirety of Gaza, the return of Palestinians to northern Gaza and other areas, a surge in humanitarian aid and the start of the Strip’s reconstruction. -ANI



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Founder: Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali
Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Mohamed Issa Al Zadjali
Deputy Editor-in-Chief: Anees bin Essa Al Zedjali
Chief Executive Officer: Ahmed Essa Al Zedjali

EDITORIAL: Telephone: 24726666, Fax: 24813153, E-mail: editor@timesofoman.com
ADVERTISING: Telephone: 24726666, Fax: 24812624, E-mail: advertising@timesofoman.com
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NATURAL DISASTERS

33 killed, 27 injured in Afghanistan floods

KABUL: At least 33 people were killed after snow, rain, and subsequent flooding wreaked havoc in the country over the past three days, according to TOLONews.

Moreover, 27 people were injured as a result of flash floods in the country.

“According to preliminary statistics, unfortunately, thirty-three people have died and twenty-seven others have been injured due to the recent floods. Similarly, 606 homes have been either partially or completely destroyed,” said Janan Saig, spokesperson for the Taliban-controlled State Ministry of Disaster Management.

Saig further stated that the provinces of Farah, Herat, Zabul, and Kandahar suffered excessive

loss.

“The majority of the casualties were in the provinces of Farah, Herat, Zabul, and Kandahar, with most victims coming from Kandahar province,” he said, according to TOLONews.

Afghanistan is among the most vulnerable countries against natural disasters, including floods, earthquakes, avalanches, landslides and drought.

The State Ministry for Disaster Management Affairs said that over 22,000 needy families had received national and foreign aid.

The ministry also warned of the risk of increasing flood casualties, as well as further snow and rain precipitation causing flooding in the provinces in the coming days. -ANI

WAR CRIMES

Arab League condemns Israeli attacks in West Bank

RAMALLAH: The Arab League Council today condemned the large-scale attacks launched by colonist on several villages and towns in the occupied West Bank, with the protection of Israeli army.

Spokesman for the League’s Secretary-General, Jamal Rushdi, said that the war crimes committed by the occupation on a daily basis in Gaza should not cover up what the West Bank is witnessing.

“The imposition of sanctions by some countries on a number of colonists represents a small, late step that is insufficient to halt such attacks,” he affirmed.

Rushdi called for the Security Council to put an end to this shameful situation as well as to held colonists full accountable for their crimes against Palestinian and their proprieties in the West



Bank.

Since last Friday, Israeli colonist militias, with the protection of Israeli forces, have launched a wave of terror attack against Palestinians and their proprieties.

These attacks have resulted in the killing of civilians, injuries to dozens, and the burning of dozens of homes and vehicles.

The 17-year-old Omar Hamed, who was killed by colonist gunfire

in the village of Beitin.

Another terror attack was lunched by the gun-toting colonists on Al-Mughayir village, which resulted in the killing of Jihad Afif Sidqi Abu Alia, 25.

During Friday’s rampage, settlers set fire to more than 40 Palestinian facilities and 50 vehicles in al-Mughayyir, causing nearby agricultural lands to catch fire as well.

Eviction notice

The Israeli occupation authorities notified today three Palestinian families to evict their homes in Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of the occupied city of Jerusalem, in occupied East Jerusalem, for the benefit of the colonist militias.

The municipality gave the three families until mid-July to implement the decision. The targeted

houses are inhabited by three families consisting of 20 members.

A member of the Sheikh Jarrah Neighborhood Defence Committee, owner of one of the targeted homes, Saleh Diab, said that the Jerusalem Magistrate Court held a hearing regarding the case at the end of last May, during which the court judge was informed that there was a decision from the Israeli Supreme Court to freeze the decision regarding the evacuation of 28 families from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood.

Diab added that The Nahalat Shimon Colonial Association exerted pressure on the magistrate court judge, forcing him to look into the case again. He gave the family lawyer and the colonists’ lawyer 4 months to respond to the allegations.

Today, the judge issued the deci-

sion to evacuate the three families from their homes in the neighborhood, Diab added.

He added that the three families have been living in the houses for 56 years, and began their struggle in the courts to prove their rights since 2009 after receiving judicial notices.

For years, the Israeli occupation authorities have been trying to displace the residents of the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in occupied Jerusalem in various ways. However, they refused to do so, clinging to their homes despite all the strict restrictions imposed on them by the occupation.

More than 500 Palestinians living in 28 houses in the neighbourhood are facing threats of forced expulsion at the hands of settlement associations backed by the Israeli government and its judiciary system. -WAFIA

EL NINO PHENOMENON

58 dead in Tanzania floods



DODOMA: As many as 58 people have died in Tanzania floods over the last two weeks, seeking an answer in the country about the infrastructure projects, to prevent flooding in the future, reported Al Jazeera.

The Tanzanian government released the death toll late on Sunday as heavy rains continued to lash the East African country.

April marks the peak of Tanzania’s rainy season, and it has been exacerbated this year by the El Nino phenomenon, causing droughts and floods across the world, reported Al Jazeera.

Government spokesman Mobare Matinyi said, “From April 1 to April 14, 2024, there were 58 deaths caused by the heavy rains, which led to flooding,” stressing that the country’s coastal region

was one of the worst affected.

“Serious flood effects are experienced in the coast region, where 11 people have so far died,” he added.

Tanzania has plans to construct 14 dams to prevent flooding in future, the spokesman said.

Four months ago, at least 63 people were killed during floods in northern Tanzania that also triggered devastating landslides.

Earlier on Friday, eight school children drowned after their bus plunged into a flooded gorge in the north of the country. Moreover, a volunteer in the rescue operations also died, reported Al Jazeera.

“Overall, at least 126,831 people were affected by the flooding,” Matinyi stated.

More than 75,000 farms have been damaged in the coastal and Morogoro areas, lying about

200km (124 miles) west of the economic capital, Dar-es-Salaam.

However, essential supplies, including food, have been distributed to the affected people across the region.

Moreover, other parts of East Africa have also been experiencing heavy rains.

Meanwhile, at least 13 people have died in flooding in neighbouring Kenya.

Infrastructure has also been damaged and those living in flood-prone areas are being urged to move.

Scientists from the World Weather Attribution Group noted that the rainfall in East Africa “was one of the most intense ever recorded” in the region between October and December.

-ANI

SYDNEY

Church leader, worshippers hurt in mass stabbing

SYDNEY: Just two days after a mass shooting-stabbing incident at a shopping mall at Bondi Junction Westfield, several people were again stabbed at a church in Wakeley, a suburb of Sydney, on Monday night, The Sydney Morning Herald reported.

A church leader and multiple worshippers were stabbed during a service and one man has been arrested, according to the police.

Viral video footage circulating on social media captured the harrowing moment when, Bishop Mar Mari Emmanuel, standing at the altar, was approached by a man in a black jumper who then stabbed him in the chest.

The bishop fell to the ground, enduring further attacks as parishioners rushed to his aid, managing to separate the assailant from him, as reported by The Sydney Morning Herald.

In the aftermath, video footage revealed the bishop on the floor as parishioners applied bandages to his head.

The episode was livestreamed.

Emmanuel, known for his leadership in an ultra-conservative sect of the Assyrian Orthodox faith and his involvement in the Christian Lives Matter movement, has attracted attention for his fiery sermons.

Police have arrested one individual in connection with the attack, who is currently assisting with their inquiries. -ANI

FLOODING

Severe floods hit Kazakhstan, Russia



MOSCOW: More than 125,000 people have been displaced by flooding in Russia’s southern Ural region and northern Kazakhstan, authorities said on Monday.

Swiftly melting snow swelled several rivers in the region last week, including the Ural, Europe’s third-largest river, with authorities saying that water levels had risen by metres in a matter of hours to the highest levels ever recorded.

Authorities said floodwaters continue to rise, posing further threats.

Some 1,000 homes were flooded in the North Kazakhstan region, and over 5,000 people had been evacuated, local officials said. There have been interruptions in power and water supply in region.

People were queuing up in front of water trucks moving

from one neighbourhood to another in the badly affected city of Petropavlovsk in North Kazakhstan. The main reservoir supplying the city with drinkable water has been flooded.

Just a few hundred kilometres over the border, Russia’s Kurgan, a region of 800,000 people at the confluence of the Ural mountains and Siberia, was grappling with flooding and rising water levels in the Tobol River.

“The city of Kurgan itself will be next,” Shumkov said. “The flow of the Tobol is accelerating. The water level in it is constantly rising.” Shumkov highlighted that “the city of Kurgan itself will be next.”

Floods were also inundating homes in the Tomsk region in the southwestern part of Siberia, regional officials said on Telegram. -IW

Joe Biden, Jordan King Abdullah discuss Middle East situation

Biden “strongly condemned” the drone and missile attack launched by Iran, which the US president said threatened Jordan and the Jordanian people”

NEW YORK: US President Joe Biden and Jordan's King Abdullah II have spoken about the current situation in the Middle East, the White House said in a statement. Biden “strongly condemned” the drone and missile attack launched by Iran on Saturday, which the US president said “also threatened Jordan and the Jordanian people.” The White House said that both leaders would “continue to monitor the situation and will remain in close touch over the coming days.” The situation in Gaza was also discussed and the leaders “reaffirmed their cooperation to increase critical humanitarian assistance to Gaza,” while also seeking a way of ending the crisis as soon as possible.



While it is officially not known which of Israel's neighbours participated in the shooting down of the wave of missiles fired by Iran on Israel, one such country appeared to be Jordan. “There was an assessment that there was a real danger of Iranian marches and missiles falling on Jordan, and the armed forces dealt with this danger. And if this danger came from Israel, Jordan would take the same action,” Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman al-Safadi said in an interview on Al-Mamlaka state television at the weekend. Germany's Scholz says steps must be taken to ‘contribute to de-escalation’ German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on Monday said that Israel had managed to defend itself from Iran's missile attack and that efforts now needed to be made to de-escalate the situation. “Everyone agrees that the way in which Israel managed to successfully repel this attack... is really impressive,” Scholz said in

an interview on Al-Mamlaka state television at the weekend. Germany's Scholz says steps must be taken to ‘contribute to de-escalation’ German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on Monday said that Israel had managed to defend itself from Iran's missile attack and that efforts now needed to be made to de-escalate the situation. “Everyone agrees that the way in which Israel managed to successfully repel this attack... is really impressive,” Scholz said in

Shanghai during a three-day visit to China. “That is a success that should not be given away, and therefore our advice is to contribute to de-escalation,” Scholz said. Also speaking on Monday, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said that Israel's successful defensive efforts needed to be backed up with diplomatic measures to prevent an escalation. “Israel has won defensively thanks to its strong air defence and the efforts of the US, Britain,

Expert: Iran not interested in full-scale war with Israel

TEHRAN: As Israel considers its response to the massive Iranian drone attack, there are fears that the conflict could escalate into a major war in the Middle East. Kristin Helberg, a German journalist and Middle East expert, told DW that the risk of escalation depends on whether Israel decides to hit back in a manner that Iran would consider “existential.” “Iran made it clear... whatever Israel does to Iran, Iran would answer,” she said. According to Helberg, Iran's weekend attack showed that Tehran is ready to move from the role of masterminding attacks on Israel through its proxies in the region to becoming a direct participant in the war. She said that Iran had to retaliate for the April 1 attack on the Iranian diplomatic

compound in Damascus, and Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei made it clear that he considered the attack to be an attack on Iranian territory. However, the Iranian attack on Israel saw limited participation by Hezbollah and Houthis, and it was meant to show that a response was possible without Iran actually escalating the situation into a full-blown war, according to the expert. “The whole message is here: We have a massive response but it's under control,” Helberg said, adding that Tehran is not interested in a full-blown war with Israel and the US. “I think Netanyahu will be wiser to go also for a diplomatic response and listen very carefully to what his US partner is telling him,” Helberg said. -**rw**

IRAN-ISRAEL

World leaders call for caution against an escalation

BERLIN: As Israel considers the next step following the weekend's drone and missile attack by Iran during the weekend, world leaders are cautioning against an escalation. French President Emmanuel Macron on Monday said his country would do all it can to avoid further escalation. “We are all worried about a possible escalation,” Macron told BFM TV and RMC radio in an interview. British Foreign Secretary David Cameron called on Israel not to retaliate, framing Iran's attack as a “almost a total failure.”



“If you're sitting in Israel this morning, you're thinking quite rightly, we have every right to respond to this and they do. But we are urging that they shouldn't escalate,” Cameron told British broadcaster Sky News on Monday. “In many ways this has been a double defeat for Iran. The attack was an almost total failure, and they revealed to the world that they are the malign influence in the region prepared to do this. So our hope is that there won't be a retaliatory response.” Saturday saw Iran launch hundreds of drones and missiles at Israel in response to a suspected

Israeli attack on Iran's consulate in Syria on April 1, in which two Iranian generals were killed. The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) on Sunday said it had intercepted 99% of the over 300 drones and missiles launched. **Airports in Iran resume operations after attack on Israel** Iranian state media has reported the reopening of airports in Tehran and elsewhere on Monday following Iran's drone and missile attack on Israel. Flights had been suspended following Saturday's first direct

attack on Israeli territory, which came as a response to an attack on Iran's consulate in Syria that Tehran blamed Israel for carrying out. The IRNA news agency reported that “flights at Imam Khomeini International Airport in Tehran were back to normal as of 6:00 am (0230 GMT).” Other airports across the country were also reported to be in operation. The Iranian attack led to fears of possible Israeli retaliatory strikes with airlines suspending operations in the region. Neighbouring countries Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon also temporarily closed their airspace. -**rw**

MIDDLE EAST

Blinken calls up Turkish, Egyptian, Jordanian and Saudi counterparts

WASHINGTON, DC: Amid rising tensions in West Asia, US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken on Sunday spoke with his Turkish counterpart, Hakan Fidan to discuss the ‘blatant’ and ‘unprecedented’ attack by Iran and its proxies on Israel, US Department of State spokesperson Mathew Miller said. In conversation with Turkish leader, Secretary Blinken thanked him for his efforts to prevent further escalation in the region. US official also spoke with his counterparts in Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia following Iran's attacks in Israel. During his phone calls, Blinken emphasised the importance of avoiding escalation in the region and the importance of “a coordinated diplomatic response.” In his conversation with his counterparts in Jordan and Egypt, Blinken also underlined the significance of achieving an “enduring end to the crisis in Gaza.” Spokesperson Miller shared details about Secretary Blinken's conversation with Saudi Foreign Minister, Faisal bin Farhan, saying, “@SecBlinken spoke with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince @FaisalbinFarhan to discuss last night's unprecedented air attack against military facilities in Israel and to coordinate on a diplomatic response.” “@SecBlinken and Jordanian Foreign Minister @AymanHsafadi discussed Iran's unprecedented air attack on Israel and the importance of regional de-escalation,” he added. Meanwhile, the hours-long Is-



raeli war cabinet meeting ended Sunday night without a decision on how Israel will respond to Iran's missile and drone attack, CNN reported citing an Israeli official. The cabinet is determined to respond but has yet to decide on the timing and scope and the official said the military has been tasked with coming up with additional options for a response. In its first direct attack on Israel on Saturday night, Israel launched more than 300 drones and missiles from its territory towards the Jewish state, triggering air raid sirens throughout Israel on Sunday morning as the country's advanced air defence intercepted and disabled the projectiles that came its way, the Times of Israel reported. Amid rising tensions in West Asia, US President Joe Biden made it clear to his counterparts that America will not get drawn into any offensive action against Iran after it launched a barrage of missiles against Israel on Saturday, CNN reported, citing US offi-

cials familiar with the matter. **Israeli response was unnecessary** In the conversation between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Biden following the successful interception of Iranian drones and missiles by Israel's advanced air defence system, Biden suggested that further Israeli response was unnecessary. Over a phone call with the Israeli PM, Biden said he should consider Saturday a ‘win’ because Iran's attacks had been largely unsuccessful and demonstrated Israel's superior military capability, a senior administration official said. The US assessed that there was “no significant damage within Israel itself,” CNN reported. Earlier, Iran came out in defence of its retaliatory attack on Israel on Saturday in response to an attack on its consulate in Syria, saying that the “matter can be deemed concluded”. -**ANI**

EMERGENCY MEETING

Neither region nor world can afford more war: UN chief

NEW YORK: Addressing the emergency meeting of the UN Security Council, which was convened after Iranian drone and missile launches into Israel, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Sunday said the ‘Middle East’ was on the brink, adding that neither the region nor the world can afford more war. “We have a shared responsibility to work for peace. Regional- and indeed global-peace and security are being undermined by the hour. Neither the region nor the world can afford more war,” Guterres said in his statement. “The Middle East is on the brink. The people of the region are confronting a real danger of a devastating full-scale conflict. Now is the time to defuse and de-escalate. Now is the time for maximum restraint,” he added. He also condemned the Iranian air raids into Israel to avenge the attack on its embassy in Syria, which left three of its top military generals dead, while calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities. “I strongly condemn the serious escalation represented by the large-scale attack launched on Israel by the Islamic Republic of Iran this evening. And I call for an immediate cessation of these hostilities,” the UN said. “I remind all Member States that the Charter of the United Nations prohibits the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations,” he added.



Guterres also dwelt on the ongoing war between Israel and Hamas, reiterating the UN's call for immediate ceasefire and unconditional release of all hostages. “We have a shared responsibility to secure an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza, the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, and the unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid,” he said. “We have a shared responsibility to stop violence in the occupied West Bank, de-escalate the situation along the Blue Line, and re-establish safe navigation in the Red Sea,” he added. **G7 countries condemn Iran's air raid on Israel** Condemning Iran's retaliatory drone and missile strikes on Israel, the leaders of the G7 countries said the Islamic nation has further ‘stepped up’ the destabilisation of the region, CNN reported. “We express our full solidarity and support to Israel and its people and reaffirm our commitment towards its security,” read

the statement, adding, “With its actions, Iran has further stepped toward the destabilisation of the region and risks provoking an uncontrollable regional escalation. This must be avoided.” The G7 leaders vowed to continue working towards stabilising the situation and avoiding further escalation. “In this spirit, we demand that Iran and its proxies cease their attacks, and we stand ready to take further measures now and in response to further destabilising initiatives,” the statement read further. The meeting was chaired by Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni. President of the European Union Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, also shared the details of the G7 meeting on her official X handle, posting, “Today, we, the G7 Leaders, condemned Iran's unprecedented attack against Israel in the strongest terms. We express our solidarity and support to the people of Israel. And reaffirm our commitment towards its security.” -**ANI**

SPORTS

IPL 2024

Rohit's ton goes in vain as Mumbai lose to Chennai



MUMBAI: Opener Rohit Sharma's valiant second Indian Premier League (IPL) century went in vain as a four-wicket haul from Matheesha Pathirana managed to restrict a power-packed Mumbai Indians (MI) line-up to 186/6 in their 20 overs and Chennai Super Kings (CSK) secured a 20-run win at Wankhede Stadium on Sunday.

With this win, CSK climbed to number three with four wins and two losses, giving them eight points. MI is at eighth spot, with two wins and four losses, giving them four points.

In the run chase of 207 runs, openers Rohit Sharma and Ishan Kishan started well as they reached 63/0 at the end of powerplay.

Pathirana ended the partnership at 70 runs, getting Ishan caught (23). Suryakumar Yadav walked in but was caught brilliantly by Mustafizur near the boundary on third-man position. Rohit completed his half-century in 30 balls, with seven fours and two sixes.

Tilak Varma and Rohit continued to fight bringing their 50-run stand in 30 balls. However, Pathirana ended the partnership, with Varma gone for 31. MI were 130/3 in 13.5 overs. Skipper Hardik Pandya could not survive for long and Tim David departed after hitting two sixes.

Pathirana continued to run through MI's line-up, cleaning up Romario Shepherd's stumps as MI slumped to 157/6 in 17.3 overs.

TODAY'S MATCH

Kolkata Knight Riders vs Rajasthan Royals

Kolkata, 6pm

Rohit got his second IPL, ton in 61 balls as MI innings ended at 186/6 with Rohit (105* in 63 balls, with 11 fours and five sixes). Pathirana (4/28) was the pick of the bowlers for CSK. Tushar and Mustafizur secured a wicket each.

Earlier, brilliant half-centuries by Ruturaj Gaikwad and Shivam Dube and a 'Mahi Special' hat-trick of sixes by MS Dhoni in the final over took Chennai Super Kings (CSK) to 206/4.

Gaikwad reached his second IPL half-century in 33 balls, with three fours and four sixes while Dube reached his second IPL 2024 fifty in 28 balls, with seven fours and two sixes. CSK were 186/4 in 19.2 overs when Dhoni walked in and made an immediate impact with three successive sixes, one over long-on, the other over long-off and the third over square leg as CSK ended at 206/4, with Dhoni (20* in four balls) and Dube (66* in 38 balls, with 10 fours and two sixes) unbeaten.

Brief scores: Chennai Super Kings: 206/4 (Ruturaj Gaikwad 69, Shivam Dube 66*; Hardik Pandya 2/43) beat Mumbai Indians 186/6 (Rohit Sharma 105*, Tilak Varma 31, Matheesha Pathirana 4/28). - Agencies

Oman trounce UAE by nine wickets for third win in a row

Kashyap Prajapati and Khalid Kail hit half-centuries while pacer Bilal Khan picks three wickets for the hosts in a rain-shortened match at the ACC Men's Premier Cup



MUSCAT: A dominant Oman outplayed UAE by nine wickets in a Group B match to register their third successive win in the ACC Men's Premier Cup T20I tournament at the Oman Cricket Academy ground on Monday.

For the second successive day, rains and wet outfield delayed the game and the game was curtailed to 15 overs a side.

Having defeated Bahrain in the opener and Cambodia on Sunday, the third victory for Duleep Mendis-coached side meant they stayed on top of the group with a game remaining. Oman play their concluding game against Kuwait on Wednesday where a win will seal the top spot. UAE are second with four after Monday's loss with Kuwait at third with two points but having played a game less.

Nepal with three wins currently lead Group A.

On Monday, Oman chased down the target of 143 to win in 12.4 overs, as Kashyap Prajapati and Khalid Kail slammed unbeaten half-centuries and Naseem Khushi made a brisk 39 off 15 balls.

Oman openers - Prajapati and Khushi - were in rampaging form as the hosts sprinted to 30 for no loss in just two overs with the wicketkeeper-batter Khushi blasting 25 off just eight balls that

included three huge sixes. Oman raced to 50 in only three overs with Prajapati at 18 and Khushi at 30.

The duo shared a 67-run stand in 4.4 overs before Khushi departed for 15-ball 39 off Ali Naseer.

His cameo included four hits over the ropes and two boundaries. Khushi also set a new Oman

record for most sixes in T20Is as he reached 48 to better Zeeshan Magsood's 44. Having laid a solid platform, Kail joined Prajapati and the pair kept the momentum as they took Oman past 100 in 7.4 overs. At the end of eight overs, the hosts were 104/1 with Prajapati on 35 and Kail on 27.

There was no respite for the UAE bowlers as the pair smashed them all around the park with Prajapati reaching his 50 off 33 balls that included five boundaries and two maximums. He stayed unbeaten on 53. Kail was not to be left behind in the run chase as he stayed unbeaten on 50 off 23 balls, a knock that was studded with five sixes and two boundaries, as Oman completed an emphatic win, reaching 147/1 with 14 balls remaining as the three batters hit a total of 11 sixes.

Earlier, Oman skipper Zeeshan Magsood hoping to capitalise on overcast conditions opted to field after winning the toss.

Pacer Bilal Khan gave Oman a dream start with a wicket off the second ball of the innings as he clean bowled Alishan Sharafu. Fayyaz Butt castled Vishnu Sukumaran in the third over to leave UAE struggling at 16/2. At the end of the powerplay, UAE were 39/2.

Skipper Muhammad Waseem and Asif Khan then got into the act to resurrect the innings as they put on a 88-run third-wicket partnership in eight overs, before Bilal got the breakthrough with the wicket of Waseem. The duo's 50-run stand came off 31 balls and UAE crossed 100-run mark in 9.4 overs.

The UAE skipper made a 25-ball 45 with four boundaries and two sixes. Oman's third pacer Kaleemullah sent back Basil Hameed in the 13th over as UAE tried to accelerate the run-rate.

Asif Khan stayed till the final ball of the innings for a standout innings of 66 off 45 balls that included six fours and two sixes as UAE finished at 142/5.

He reached his half-century in 37 balls and only his onslaught helped the side reach a competitive total before being adjudged leg-before to Bilal who finished with three wickets for 11 runs and was named player of the match.

Brief scores: UAE 142/5 in 15 overs (Muhammad Waseem 45, Asif Khan 66; Bilal Khan 3/11) lost to Oman 147/1 in 12.4overs (Kashyap Prajapati 53*, Naseem Khushi 39, Khalid Kail 50*).

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OMAN CRUDE PRICE FALLS

The price of Oman oil has decreased, with prices for delivery by June 2024 reaching \$89.59, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil fell by 76 cents from the price of Friday, which was \$90.35. - **ONA**

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 4,727.73 points, up by 0.58 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.14 per cent at 451.85 points. Muscat Thread Mill, up 8.82 per cent, was the top gainer while National Gas, down 9.47 per cent, was the top loser.

Bank Muscat posts net profit of OMR54.24mn for first quarter

Net Interest Income from Conventional Banking and Net Income from Islamic Financing stood at OMR95.45 million for the three months period ended on 31 March 2024

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the flagship financial institution in the Sultanate of Oman, announced its preliminary unaudited results for the three months ended 31 March 2024.

The bank posted a net profit of OMR54.24 million for the period compared to OMR51.30 million reported during the same period in 2023, an increase of 5.7 per cent.

Key highlights

Net Interest Income from Conventional Banking and Net Income from Islamic Financing stood at



OMR95.45 million for the three months period ended 31 March 2024 compared to OMR91.71 million for the same period in 2023, an increase of 4.1 per cent.

Non-interest income was OMR37.25 million for the three months period ended 31 March 2024 as compared to OMR31.50 million for the same period in 2023, an increase of 18.3 per cent. This increase was due to overall improvement in various business

lines and volume increase.

Operating expenses

Operating expenses for the three months period ended 31 March 2024 was OMR51.80 million as compared to OMR48.70 million for the same period in 2023, an increase of 6.4 per cent.

Net Impairment for credit losses for the three months period ended 31 March 2024 was OMR16.13 million as against OMR14.44 mil-

lion for the same period in 2023.

Net Loans and advances including Islamic financing receivables increased by 1.0 per cent to OMR9,854 million as against OMR9,762 million as at 31 March 2023.

Customer deposits including Islamic Customer deposits increased by 8.4 per cent to OMR9,750 million as against OMR8,992 million as at 31 March 2023.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF PRELIMINARY UNAUDITED RESULTS

Particulars (RO millions)

Particulars (RO millions) For the period ended	31 Mar 2024	31 Mar 2023	Change (%)
Net interest income & Islamic financing income	95.45	91.71	4.1%
Other operating income	37.25	31.50	18.3%
Operating expenses	51.80	48.70	6.4%
Operating profit	80.90	74.51	8.6%
Net profit	54.24	51.30	5.7%
Particulars (RO millions) As at period ended	31 Mar 2024	31 Mar 2023	Change (%)
Total Assets	14,003	13,076	7.1%
Net loans and Islamic financing	9,854	9,762	1.0%
Conventional loans and advances	8,327	8,289	0.5%
Islamic financing receivables	1,527	1,473	3.7%
Customer deposits and Islamic deposits	9,750	8,992	8.4%
Conventional customer deposits	8,410	7,780	8.1%
Islamic customer deposits	1,340	1,212	10.6%
Total Equity*	2,301	2,173	5.9%

*Total Equity includes Perpetual Tier I capital of OMR505 million (2023: OMR505 million).

The full results for the three months period ended 31 March 2024 along with the complete set of unaudited financial statements

will be released following the approval of the Board of Directors of the Bank at its meeting scheduled later during April 2024.

CENTRAL BANK OF OMAN

Treasury bills worth OMR20mn issued

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) raised OMR20 million by way of allotting treasury bills on Monday.

The value of the allotted Treasury bills amounted to OMR500 thousand, for a maturity period of 28 days.

The average accepted price reached OMR99.650 for every OMR100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at OMR99.650 per OMR100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 4.56250 per cent and 4.57852 per cent, respectively.

The value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to OMR19.5 million, for a maturity period of 91 days. The average accepted price reached OMR98.747 for every OMR100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at OMR98.740 per OMR100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 5.02505 per cent and 5.08880 per cent, respectively.



The treasury bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance, and they provide licensed commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds. The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) acts as the Issue Manager and provides the added advantage

of ready liquidity through discounting and repurchase facilities (Repo).

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

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

FINANCIAL SERVICES AUTHORITY

FSA calls on accounting and audit firms to submit data for assessment and review

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Financial Services Authority (FSA) has issued a circular to all accounting and audit firms to file their particulars for the purpose of assessment and reviews related to the accounting and audit profession.

The move comes after issuance of Royal Decree No. 20/2024 which established the FSA and transferred the functions of regulating and supervising the accounting and audit profession to the FSA to develop and regulate the profession to ensure competency and integrity. FSA endeavours to enhance the integrity and stability of the Omani financial sector and to upgrade the regulatory role of the licensed firms in accordance with the international requirements to enhance the performance of the financial sector to ensure constructive impact on the performance of the private sector and the national economy of the Sultanate of Oman in general.

FSA has issued the circular on Aril 7 and granted the firms two weeks to respond.

FSA imposes penalty on Shumookh Industrial Development Fund for financial reporting violation

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Financial Services Authority has issued Administrative Decision No. 1/2024 imposing a financial penalty on Shumookh Industrial Development Fund for failing to file financial statements for the second and third quarters of 2023 in violation of Article 279 of the Executive Regulation of the Capital Market Law no. 1/2009.

Article 279 provides; "Every issuer shall prepare unaudited interim financial statements for first, second and third quarters of the financial year and disclose the same immediately after approval by the board of

directors and within not more than 30 days from the end of the quarter. However, the issuers who have subsidiaries and are required to prepare consolidated financial statements would be allowed 45 days for the same.

Financial statements mean the balance sheet, income statement, cash flow statement, a statement on change in shareholder's equity and the notes to the financial statements.

Such disclosures shall be accompanied by a report containing the material events that affected the issuer's performance and its financial position during the financial period of the report and reasons for material

changes in figures compared to the same financial period of the previous year."

It is worth noting that FSA is required to ensure providing periodic and material information of the issuers of securities on a timely basis taking into account the integrity and accuracy of information for all consumers in the stock exchange and such disclosure shall be via the website of the stock exchange as central outlet for dissemination of issuers' news to ensure fairness among all consumers to increase the level of investor confidence so as the Omani capital market will be attractive to foreign and local capital.

POISED FOR GROWTH



India's travel, tourism sector set to generate revenue of \$23.7bn

NEW DELHI: The travel and tourism market in India is set to generate a revenue of \$23.72 billion in 2024, with a projected annual growth rate (CAGR 2024-2028) of 9.62 per cent, according to projections by the India Brand Equity Foundation (IBEF).

This growth trajectory is expected to propel the market volume to \$34.25 billion by 2028.

As per Invest India, India announced 100 per cent Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in tourism-related ventures, including the development of hotels, resorts, and recreational facilities, in a move aimed at fostering growth and development in the tourism sector as of 2023.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been asserting that India's efforts in the tourism sector are centred on preserving its rich heritage while at the same time creating a world-class infrastructure for tourism.

The total FDI inflows in India for the fiscal year 2023-2024 stand at a \$17.96 billion, with \$11.54 billion attributed to FDI equity.

This announcement comes as the nation charts a course towards bolstering its tourism industry, positioning it as a major contributor to economic growth and job creation. The tourism landscape in India is diverse, with the package holidays market emerging as the largest segment, projected to reach a market volume of \$10.48 billion in 2024.

By 2028, the number of users in the package holidays market is expected to soar to 64.74 million, with a user penetration rate

increasing from 7.8 per cent in 2024 to 10.0 per cent in 2028.

The average revenue per user (ARPU) in this segment is forecasted to be \$209.70 by 2028, with online sales expected to contribute 60 per cent of the total revenue in the travel and tourism market in India.

In alignment with global trends, India's tourism industry is undergoing a transformation, with a focus on promoting sustainable and eco-friendly travel options to attract travellers. The sector is poised to make significant contributions to the country's GDP, with projections indicating that it will contribute \$250 billion by 2030, generating employment for 137 million individuals.

In a recent development on March 7, Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated and launched 52 tourism sector projects worth more than Rs 1400 crores under the Swadesh Darshan and PRASHAD Scheme.

These projects encompass various aspects of tourism infrastructure development, including pilgrimage sites, heritage destinations, and recreational facilities, with a focus on enhancing visitor experiences and promoting local communities' participation in tourism initiatives.

With India's tourism industry poised for exponential growth, driven by factors such as world-class infrastructure development, evolving technology landscape, and rising disposable incomes, the nation is poised to emerge as a leading global tourism destination. - **ANI**

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Muscat Thread Mill, up 8.82 per cent, was the top gainer while National Gas, down 9.47 per cent, was the top loser



MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,727.73 points, up by 0.58 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.14 per cent at 451.85 points. Muscat Thread Mill, up 8.82 per cent, was the top gainer while National Gas, down 9.47 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of Sohar International Bank were the most active in terms of number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 1376 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of OMR34.7 million, with more than 19.75 million shares changing hands. Out of 50 traded securities, 22 advanced, 13 declined, and 15 remained unchanged. At the session close, foreign investors were net buyers for OMR152,000 while domestic investors were net sellers for OMR128,000, followed by GCC & Arab investors for OMR25,000 worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,713.93 points, up 0.68 per cent. Prices of Taageer Finance, Sohar International Bank, United Finance, Global Financial Investments, Muscat Finance were up by 5.00 per cent, 3.57 per cent, 3.33 per cent, 3.23 per cent, 1.82

per cent respectively.

Prices of Al Madina Investments, Takaful Oman, Al Sharqia Investment, Al Anwar Investment, Oman United Insurance were down by 8.62 per cent, 1.85 per cent, 1.28 per cent, 1.11 per cent, 0.71 per cent respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,812.53 points, up 0.03 per cent. Prices of Muscat Thread Mill, Voltamp Energy, Jazeera Steel Products, Oman Cement, Raysut Cement were up by 8.82 per cent, 5.95 per cent, 3.85 per cent, 2.78 per cent, 0.80 per cent respectively. Prices of Galfar Engineering, Al Maha Ceramics, Al Anwar Ceramics, Gulf Mushroom Products were down by 7.90 per cent, 1.85 per cent, 1.11 per cent, 0.42 per cent respectively.

Services Index was up by 0.21 per cent before closing at 1,858.18 points. Prices of Barka Water & Power Company, SMN Power Holding, Muscat Desalination, Al Suwadi Power, Al Jazeera Services were up by 4.17 per cent, 3.55 per cent, 2.60 per cent, 2.44 per cent, 2.08 per cent respectively. Prices of National Gas, Ooredoo, Renaissance Services were down by 9.47 per cent, 0.67 per cent, 0.25 per cent respectively. — United Securities

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	4,727.73	4,701.60	4,727.73	4,700.59	27.14	0.58
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,713.93	7,661.90	7,713.93	7,661.77	52.16	0.68
Industry Index	5,865.87	5,812.53	5,812.53	5,810.60	1.93	0.03
Services Index	1,858.18	1,849.77	1,858.18	1,854.28	3.90	0.21
MSX Shariah Index	455.24	450.11	451.85	452.50	-0.65	-0.14
MSX TR INDEX	6,537.42	6,501.28	6,537.42	6,499.89	37.53	0.58
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,702.37	8,643.00	8,702.37	8,643.53	58.85	0.68
SERVICES TR IDX	2,147.09	2,137.37	2,147.09	2,142.58	4.50	0.21
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	6,753.86	6,692.44	6,692.44	6,690.22	2.22	0.03
FIXED INCOME INDEX	1,027.09	1,027.09	1,027.09	1,025.49	1.60	0.16

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
19,751,419	3,472,410	1,376	24,151,380,358	22	13	15	50

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR MONDAY, APRIL 15

SN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF	DIFF %	LAST PD	LAST BD	LAST OFF	PAV VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET																
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	86,220	23,277	19	0.266	0.275	0.266	0.270	0.260	0.010	3.846	0.270	0.270	0.280	0.100	33,722,449
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	5,178,217	598,254	120	0.112	0.117	0.112	0.116	0.112	0.004	3.571	0.116	0.115	0.116	0.100	646,960,567
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	275,884	88,150	28	0.316	0.325	0.316	0.321	0.310	0.011	3.548	0.321	0.321	0.341	0.100	64,083,028
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	451,400	28,186	21	0.060	0.064	0.060	0.062	0.060	0.002	3.333	0.061	0.061	0.061	0.100	22,079,882
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO	300,000	19,239	9	0.064	0.065	0.064	0.064	0.062	0.002	3.226	0.064	0.064	0.065	0.100	12,800,000
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	20,531	7,597	18	0.375	0.375	0.370	0.370	0.380	-0.010	-2.778	0.370	0.370	0.370	0.100	122,422,903
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	3,436	837	6	0.254	0.254	0.240	0.245	0.240	0.005	2.083	0.245	0.234	0.244	0.100	14,965,047
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	183,983	193,404	78	1.054	1.054	1.048	1.052	1.039	0.013	1.251	1.051	1.051	1.051	0.100	789,000,000
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	462,775	38,333	33	0.083	0.083	0.082	0.083	0.082	0.001	1.220	0.083	0.083	0.083	0.100	14,525,000
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	1,592,950	423,674	54	0.266	0.267	0.263	0.267	0.265	0.002	0.755	0.267	0.264	0.270	0.100	2,004,208,016
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	36,295	14,874	7	0.410	0.410	0.409	0.410	0.409	0.001	0.244	0.410	0.406	0.410	0.100	274,029,825
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	1,000	261	1	0.261	0.261	0.261	0.261	0.261	0.000	0.000	0.261	0.262	0.269	0.100	424,371,999
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO	8,100	672	1	0.083	0.083	0.083	0.083	0.083	0.000	0.000	0.083	0.077	0.086	0.100	10,115,625
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	348,000	126,023	21	0.380	0.400	0.380	0.399	0.400	-0.001	-0.250	0.399	0.399	0.399	0.100	94,327,590
OM0000003868	OOREDOO	642,400	191,485	72	0.300	0.300	0.297	0.298	0.300	-0.002	-0.667	0.298	0.300	0.310	0.100	193,961,381
OM0000001087	OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	205,212	56,878	13	0.275	0.278	0.275	0.278	0.280	-0.002	-0.714	0.278	0.278	0.278	0.100	27,800,000
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	505,193	90,940	33	0.181	0.183	0.179	0.179	0.181	-0.002	-1.105	0.179	0.179	0.179	0.100	39,380,000
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIA INVESTMENT HO	8,200	641	4	0.079	0.080	0.077	0.077	0.078	-0.001	-1.282	0.077	0.075	0.085	0.100	6,930,000
OM0000005005	ALMADA CERAMICS	25,006	3,995	6	0.160	0.160	0.159	0.159	0.162	-0.003	-1.852	0.159	0.158	0.160	0.100	8,745,000
Total	19	10,335,402	1,914,722	546												
Parallel Market																
OM0000002036	MUSCAT THREAD MILLS	6,153	455	1	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.068	0.006	8.824	0.074	0.074	0.000	0.100	1,213,164
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	288,809	84,197	51	0.280	0.295	0.280	0.285	0.269	0.016	5.948	0.285	0.285	0.285	0.100	23,192,784
OM0000003281	TAGEER FINANCE	22,041	2,314	2	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.100	0.005	5.000	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.100	28,464,502
OM0000003341	BARKA WATER AND POWER	515,000	180,232	56	0.350	0.355	0.341	0.350	0.336	0.014	4.187	0.350	0.315	0.350	0.100	56,000,000
OM0000007084	MUSCAT CITY DESALINATION	66,011	5,159	11	0.077	0.079	0.076	0.079	0.077	0.002	2.597	0.079	0.079	0.079	0.100	12,288,482
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	620,120	51,712	19	0.083	0.084	0.083	0.084	0.082	0.002	2.439	0.084	0.083	0.084	0.100	60,010,133
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	120,000	6,720	7	0.056	0.056	0.056	0.056	0.055	0.001	1.818	0.056	0.055	0.059	0.100	17,200,194
OM0000001178	MUSCAT GASES	110,040	15,782	14	0.133	0.135	0.132	0.133	0.131	0.002	1.527	0.133	0.133	0.136	0.100	3,960,000
OM0000009072	QI GAS NETWORKS	1,776,966	257,177	242	0.145	0.146	0.144	0.146	0.144	0.002	1.388	0.146	0.143	0.147	0.100	632,271,662
OM0000001418	RAYSUT CEMENT	83,922	10,650	12	0.127	0.127	0.126	0.126	0.125	0.001	0.800	0.126	0.126	0.127	0.100	25,200,000
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	250	628	1	2.510	2.510	2.510	2.510	2.510	0.000	0.000	2.510	2.361	2.509	0.100	225,147,000
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	344,849	34,466	24	0.099	0.100	0.099	0.100	0.100	0.000	0.000	0.100	0.099	0.100	0.100	223,695,303
OM0000004735	SEMO CORP SALALAH	314,311	34,574	10	0.110	0.110	0.110	0.110	0.110	0.000	0.000	0.110	0.108	0.110	0.100	105,002,915
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	313,000	24,702	22	0.078	0.079	0.078	0.079	0.079	0.000	0.000	0.079	0.079	0.081	0.100	53,316,107
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	463,396	28,265	21	0.060	0.061	0.060	0.061	0.060	0.000	0.000	0.061	0.061	0.061	0.100	89,218,689
OM0000007407	DHO FAR GENERATING	13,000	1,170	2	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.000	0.000	0.090	0.082	0.089	0.100	20,001,600
OM0000008710	BARKA DESALINATION	4,000	539	3	0.130	0.130	0.130	0.130	0.130	0.000	0.000	0.130	0.127	0.130	0.100	3,817,960
OM0000008868	THE PEARL REEF	4,000	489	1	0.122	0.122	0.122	0.122	0.122	0.000	0.000	0.122	0.110	0.123	0.100	61,888,633
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	199,951	61,818	25	0.309	0.310	0.308	0.308	0.308	0.000	0.000	0.308	0.309	0.310	0.100	237,221,600
OM0000002287	GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS	7,146	1,707	4	0.240	0.240	0.238	0.238	0.239	-0.001	-0.418	0.238	0.225	0.238	0.100	10,892,260
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	2,048,139	181,175	106	0.080	0.080	0.087	0.089	0.090	-0.001	-1.111	0.089	0.089	0.089	0.100	18,334,000
OM0000004778	TAKAFUL OMAN	81,678	4,355	7	0.054	0.054	0.053	0.053	0.054	-0.001	-1.852	0.053	0.052	0.056	0.100	13,250,000
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	35,190	2,717	3	0.078	0.078	0.076	0.076	0.078	-0.002	-2.564	0.076	0.076	0.076	0.100	37,303,565
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	1,696,584	241,120	146	0.148	0.148	0.140	0.140	0.152	-0.012	-7.895	0.140	0.140	0.140	0.100	28,418,102
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	74,111	3,952	5	0.054	0.054	0.053	0.053	0.058	-0.005	-8.621	0.054	0.054	0.054	0.100	4,505,000
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	108,130	3,150	19	0.088	0.088	0.086	0.086	0.095	-0.009	-9.474	0.086	0.086	0.086	0.100	7,310,000
Total	26	9,324,395	1,245,227	814												



LIFESTYLE

Study reveals how

hypertensive disorders

of pregnancy increase

Eclampsia, a syndrome in which hypertension issues cause seizures, was linked to a roughly 58-fold increase in fatal cardiovascular disease, according to a study published in Paediatric and Perinatal Epidemiology

Researchers at Rutgers Health discovered that hypertensive problems during pregnancy are substantially related to deadly cardiovascular disease up to a year after birth.

All hypertensive disorders that cause dangerously high blood pressure during pregnancy—chronic hypertension, gestational hypertension, preeclampsia without severe features, preeclampsia with severe features, superimposed preeclampsia, and eclampsia—except gestational diabetes, were associated with a doubling in the risk of fatal cardiovascular disease compared to women with normal blood pressure.

Eclampsia, a syndrome in which hypertension issues cause seizures, was linked to a roughly 58-fold increase in fatal cardiovascular disease, according to a study published in Paediatric and Perinatal Epidemiology.

“Maternal and postpartum mortality rates in the U.S. are higher than in other high-income countries and rising, but more than half of cardiovascular disease-related deaths are preventable,” said lead author Rachel Lee, a data analyst at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. “This study provides new information about how each hypertensive disorder is related to fatal cardiovascular disease, so healthcare providers can monitor patients with such complications more closely and develop strategies for keeping them healthy postpartum.”

The researchers used the Nationwide Readmissions Database to examine pregnancy-related mortality rates for females 15 to 54 years old from 2010 to 2018. Data from more than 33 million delivery hospitalizations identified hypertensive disorders in 11 percent of patients, but that number increased with time. In 2010, 9.4 percent of patients in the study had hypertensive disorders of pregnancy. By 2018, that figure had risen by more than half to 14.4 per cent.

“We’ve gotten better at predicting, diagnosing, and treating preeclampsia in this country, so the risk of death is falling for any individual patient with that condition,” said Cande Ananth, chief of the Division of Epidemiology and Biostatistics in the Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology, and Reproductive Sciences at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and senior author of the study.

Unfortunately, Ananth noted, the sharp increase in the number of patients who develop chronic hypertension has more than offset the improved ability to treat it.

“Cases of chronic hypertension are rising sharply among people of childbearing age, but optimal treatment strategies remain uncertain,” he said. “While we’re treating more pregnant people with mild hypertension with antihypertensive medications, there remain many questions about the right definitions of hypertension in pregnant women compared to non-pregnant individuals.”

Pregnant people with hypertensive disorders, especially those with pre-existing hypertension, need high-quality care as heart disease and related cardiac symptoms can be confused with common symptoms of normal pregnancy. Delays in diagnosis are associated with an increased incidence of preventable complications, the study authors said. Early identification and optimal treatment of hypertensive disorders, especially preeclampsia-eclampsia, are crucial for the primary prevention of maternal stroke. —ANI

cardiovascular

risk of death

after giving

birth

SPORTS

Scheffler earns second Green Jacket at Augusta National

The American, 27, is the fourth-youngest player to win the Masters twice after Tiger Woods, Jack Nicklaus and Seve Ballesteros

GEORGIA: World No.1 Scottie Scheffler won the Masters for a second time after a commanding performance at Augusta National on Sunday demonstrated why he was the red-hot pre-tournament favourite.

Scheffler, who led overnight by a shot, hit a four-under 68 in Sunday's final round to finish four clear on 11 under.

Sweden's Ludvig Aberg shot 69 to finish runner-up on his major debut.

England's Tommy Fleetwood (69) ended joint third with American pair Collin Morikawa (74) and Max Homa (73).

Fleetwood put together an impressive round to make a late charge up the leaderboard and record his best finish at the Masters.

But catching Scheffler was out of reach. The 27-year-old American showed rare emotion on the 18th green as he received the acclaim of the Augusta patrons after wrapping up his second Masters victory in three years.

Not since Tiger Woods dominated golf in the 2000s had anybody arrived at Augusta as strong a favourite as Scheffler.



He came into the first major of the year on the back of two victories in his three previous tournaments - at the Arnold Palmer Invitational and the Players Championship - and a second-place finish at the Houston Open.

That imperious form, combined with his pedigree as a previous Masters champion, meant his odds were as short as 4-1 at the start of the week.

While not hitting the expected heights on the opening three days, particularly during an eventful round on Saturday where he recovered from several mistakes, he still led by a shot going into Sunday.

However, he lacked distance control with his irons in the opening holes and a bogey on the seventh dropped him back alongside Morikawa and Aberg. Homa joined them in a four-way tie for the lead after a birdie on the eighth.

But Scheffler - playing alongside Morikawa in the group behind Aberg and Homa - birdied the same hole to lead again on seven under.

Then came a moment of magic which felt like a potential turning point - and proved to be so.

Scheffler almost holed a magnificent 89-yard approach on the ninth, demonstrating sublime skill to spin the ball and use Augusta's contours to roll it towards the pin - leaving himself with a tap-in for back-to-back birdies.

Scheffler added a third successive birdie on the 10th but as the leaders approached Amen Corner - the famed section of the course featuring the 11th, 12th and 13th holes - it was still too close to call.

However, by the time he teed off on the short 12th, it was his tournament to lose.

His nearest rivals - Aberg, Morikawa and Homa - all picked up costly double bogeys in the space

of about 15 minutes, handing a three-shot lead to Scheffler even though he had bogeyed the 11th.

Aberg and Morikawa both pulled their approaches on the 11th into the water, while a bad bounce for Homa on the iconic par-three 12th left him in the bushes and taking a one-shot penalty.

From that point, Scheffler could relax more and birdies on 13, 14 and 16 all but clinched victory.

Aberg's hopes of becoming the third man to win on his first start in a major were over, but he finished second after recovering with birdies on 13 and 14.

Five-time Masters champion Tiger Woods finished last of the 60 players who made the cut to play all four rounds, shooting a five-over 77 to finish 16 over in total.

Even making the weekend was an achievement for the 15-time champion, who had barely played in the past year as he continues to recover from injuries sustained in a car crash in February 2021.

However, packed galleries followed Woods around the scene of some of his most famous triumphs, with patrons roaring him off the final green and hoping they will get many more chances to see the 48-year-old at Augusta in the future.

Defending champion Jon Rahm was already out of contention and things got even worse as he recorded his highest total in eight appearances at the Masters.

The 29-year-old Spaniard, who has made a shock switch to the breakaway LIV Golf tour since his victory last year, shot a 76 and finished nine over.

Final leaderboard: -11 Scheffler (US); -7 Aberg (Swe); -4 Morikawa (US), Homa (US), Fleetwood (Eng); -2 DeChambeau (US), Smith (Aus).

Selected others: Level Hatton (Eng), +4 McIlroy (NI), Fitzpatrick (Eng); +9 Rahm (Spa), Willett (Eng); +16 Woods (US). - Agencies

'I love competing, love winning, hate losing'



GEORGIA: Masters champion Scottie Scheffler says his fierce determination to win means he will continue to chase victories despite admitting golf is about to become less of a priority in his life.

Scheffler secured a four-shBetween now and next month's major, the US PGA Championship, Scheffler and his wife are expecting their first child.

"I'm not going to intentionally take my eye off the ball," said the American.

"I still love competing. I love winning. I hate losing."

Golf, however, was not his main focus after winning a second Green Jacket, the 27-year-old's thoughts instead turning to his heavily pregnant wife Meredith, who stayed at home in Texas

"All I can think about is getting home. It is a special time for us," said the world

No.1. "I will go home, soak in this victory and enjoy the birth of my first child. I am looking forward to celebrating with Meredith - it's been a long week without her.

"My priorities will change very soon. My son or daughter will be the main priority, along with my wife, so golf will now be probably fourth in line," he added, before referring to role his Christian faith played in his victory.

It was Scheffler's third win in his past four tournaments and his second major, to add to his 2022 Masters win. Since winning that first Green Jacket, Scheffler has been the world's best player and throughout 2023 was peerless in almost all metrics, with only well-documented putting struggles stopping him from converting more of his 18 consecutive top-12 finishes into wins. - Agencies

PREMIER LEAGUE

Arsenal, Liverpool suffer shock defeats

LONDON: Aston Villa produced an outstanding performance to stun Arsenal 2-0 at Emirates Stadium on Sunday and leave Manchester City in pole position in the Premier League title race.

The game started with high anticipation for the Gunners after Liverpool's shock home 1-0 defeat by Crystal Palace, but Arsenal were desperately disappointing and well beaten as Villa boss Unai Emery made a winning return to his former club.

Villa's win move them three points ahead of Tottenham in fourth having played a game more. The only surprise was that it took Villa until six minutes from the end of normal time to open the scoring - Ollie Watkins and Youri Tielemans hit the woodwork in each half before Leon Bailey finally broke the deadlock with a low finish at the far post.

The visitors wrapped up the win when Watkins raced clear in the 87th minute to loft a composed finish over David Raya.

It completed a perfect weekend for reigning champions City, with Pep Guardiola's side now two points clear of Arsenal who are ahead of third-placed Liverpool on goal difference.

Earlier, Liverpool's Premier League title hopes suffered a



huge blow as they fell to a 1-0 defeat by Crystal Palace at Anfield.

Eberechi Eze converted from Tyrick Mitchell's cut-back to finish off a flowing Palace move early on and the visitors were deservedly in front at the break.

Jurgen Klopp's Reds ramped up the pressure in the second half but, just as in recent games against Manchester United and Atalanta, their finishing let them down as they lost at home in the league for the first time since October 2022.

Defeat leaves Liverpool two points behind leaders Manchester City and level on points with Arsenal, who were beaten 2-0 by Aston Villa.

Also on Sunday, Andreas Pereira scored twice to give Fulham a rare 2-0 win at West Ham in the Premier League. - Agencies

GERMAN BUNDESLIGA

Alonso's Bayer Leverkusen claim Bundesliga crown

MUNICH: Xabi Alonso says "the feeling is incredible" after Bayer Leverkusen won their first Bundesliga title with five games to spare thanks to a 5-0 victory over Werder Bremen on Sunday.

Bayern Munich beat Cologne on Saturday to keep Leverkusen's title celebrations on hold for at least a day. But there were scenes of jubilation for Alonso's team when the final whistle blew at BayArena on Sunday.

"We have to enjoy and celebrate today with our families, friends and fans," said Alonso, who was showered with beer after the victory in a German tradition. "This was my first [full] season as a coach, the feeling is incredible."

Victor Boniface's 25th-minute penalty set Leverkusen on their way before Granit Khaka and Florian Wirtz scored stunning goals in quick succession.

Supporters stormed onto the pitch in mid-match when star-man Wirtz added a fourth in the 82nd minute, and again when he completed a hat-trick soon afterwards.

Khaka and Wirtz added the achievement had not sunk in yet.

"Obviously, at the start of the season we couldn't have imagined this," said Khaka, who joined Lev-



erkusen from Arsenal last July.

Wirtz added: "I personally can still not realise this has happened. I will need a few moments in the changing room to understand what we have achieved."

Leverkusen's landmark achievement ends an era of dominance for Bayern, who had won the past 11 Bundesliga titles.

Unbeaten in all competitions this season, Leverkusen remain on course for a remarkable treble in Alonso's first full season in charge, with the German Cup and Europa League still in their sights.

The home crowd erupted when Boniface slotted home from the spot after a video assistant referee check showed Julian Malatini impeding Jonas Hofmann in the

penalty area. Werder came close to spoiling Leverkusen's party just before the break, but Marvin Ducksch was unable to direct his glancing header towards goal.

Khaka's superb 25-yard shot on the hour put Alonso's side in firm control, before Wirtz one-upped the former Arsenal midfielder with his own long-range effort.

Play resumed quickly after supporters returned to their seats following Wirtz's second, but a sea of red and black shirts swarmed the pitch again when the 20-year-old swept home Leverkusen's fifth, prompting the referee to blow the final whistle.

Leverkusen were in the relegation zone when Alonso took charge in October 2022. Barely 18 months later, they are champions.

ITALIAN SERIE A



Match called off after Roma's Ndicka collapses

ROME: Roma defender Evan Ndicka is in "good spirits" in hospital after collapsing during his side's Serie A match at Udinese on Sunday. The Serie A game was abandoned after the 24-year-old Ivory Coast player collapsed in the 72nd minute and was taken off on a stretcher. He appeared to be conscious as he left the pitch, with the score 1-1.

Roma posted a photo of him in hospital, saying he "feels better" and that his team-mates had visited. The statement added: "He will remain under observation for tests in hospital."

After Ndicka's collapse, Roma's medical staff and emergency services were called on to the pitch and after discussions with the referee, the match was abandoned. The remainder of the match is now set to be played at a later date. - Agencies

MONTE CARLO MASTERS

Greece's Tsitsipas beats Norway's Ruud to lift third title in Monaco

MONACO: Stefanos Tsitsipas beat Casper Ruud 6-1, 6-4 on Sunday to win his third Monte Carlo Masters title in four years.

Greece's Tsitsipas, 25, dominated the opening stages and sealed the first set inside 36 minutes.

Norwegian Ruud fought valiantly in a tense second set, which was level at 4-4 before Tsitsipas pulled away in the final two games.

"It's been a very difficult time for me, so to be back on the podium and winning, it's amazing," he said.

The victory took Tsitsipas to seventh in the world rankings and

he fell to the floor in emotion after his win.

"I am extremely grateful to my friends, family and everyone behind this journey," he added.

"To win three [titles] is just unbelievable - it was a nerve-wracking game but I am extremely happy."

The success concluded a significant tournament for Tsitsipas as he also beat top-10 players Alexander Zverev and Jannik Sinner to reach the final.

He joined Rafael Nadal, Bjorn Borg, Thomas Muster and Ilie Nastase in the list of players to

win three or more titles at Monte Carlo. Tsitsipas committed to a fearless style of play, dominating on the forehand and challenging Ruud's tactics of playing deep from the court.

The positivity resulted in a first title since he beat Alex de Minaur in the final at Los Cabos, Mexico, last August - also ending a sketchy start to 2024 for the former French Open and Australian Open runner-up.

He broke Ruud's serve in the third game of the first set and the Norwegian, who struggled for fluency, could not recover.

The 25-year-old Ruud improved significantly in the second set and a tense seventh game lasted 13 minutes, but Tsitsipas survived three break points.

In an impressive all-round performance, he saved all eight break points he faced and converted four of his own eight break opportunities.

Both players are set to play in the Barcelona Open in the coming week, where defending champion Carlos Alcaraz has been forced to withdraw with a forearm injury, but Rafael Nadal is set to make his comeback. - Agencies



IN PICTURES



2024 Argus Bike Festival held in Vienna
Children ride bikes during the 2024 Argus Bike Festival in Vienna, Austria. *Xinhua*



City view of Juba, South Sudan
This picture shows the city view of Juba, South Sudan. *Xinhua*



View of blooming tulips in Netherlands
An aerial drone picture shows tulip fields in Lisse, the Netherlands. *Xinhua*



Bucharest Dance Festival celebrated in Romania
Dancers perform during the Bucharest Dance Festival in Bucharest, Romania. *Xinhua*



Bollywood actors Kirti Sanon and Ranveer Singh along with fashion designer Manish Malhotra arrive to offer prayers at Kashi Vishwanath Temple
Bollywood actors Kirti Sanon and Ranveer Singh along with fashion designer Manish Malhotra, arrive to offer prayers at Kashi Vishwanath Temple, in Varanasi. *ANI Photo*



Annual ABC Kite Fest held in Austin, Texas
People attend the annual ABC Kite Fest in Austin, Texas, the United States. *Xinhua*

ROUND-UP

KIA Oman honoured with 2023 Sales Customer Satisfaction Regional Excellence Award

The award recognises the RIA's outstanding performance and effective initiatives taken across the customer journey cycle in the vehicle sales process

MUSCAT: At a recent special ceremony, Yuri Duzhnikov - Head of Sales, Kia Middle East & Africa region, gave away the 'Regional Excellence Award' for securing the highest sales customer satisfaction index in the region to its distributor in Oman - Reliable International Automotive (RIA). The award was presented on behalf of SooHang Chang, KIA President, Middle East & Africa Region and received by Abdullah Mohamed Bahwan, Managing Director - Corporate, Saud Bahwan Group.



The award recognises the RIA's outstanding performance and effective initiatives taken across the customer journey cycle in the vehicle sales process. Speaking at the occasion, Yuri Duzhnikov remarked, "We extend our heartfelt congratulations to Sheikh Mohammed Saud Bahwan and Abdullah Mohamed Bahwan

for this remarkable achievement. Among all distributors in Middle East & Africa region, Reliable International Automotive LLC (RIA) has truly excelled in ensuring high levels of customer satisfaction. "We commend RIA for their unwavering dedication and efforts, evident in this well-deserved recognition. RIA is one of our es-



teemed Kia distributors that has consistently prioritised customer satisfaction across all endeavours. This award is a testament to their passion and commitment." Accepting the accolade, Abdullah Mohamed Bahwan stated, "I am grateful to Kia for their continuous support and cooperation which is pivotal to our success. I

also thank our loyal Kia customers for their unwavering support which has been instrumental in achieving this distinction. Moving forward, we will strive to remain dedicated in our commitment to elevate our services, aiming to set even higher benchmarks in customer satisfaction." Reliable International Auto-

motive remains steadfast in its commitment to delivering inspiring customer-centric services. At RIA, customer relationship extends far beyond the initial purchase of a Kia vehicle; it marks the beginning of a lasting relationship that transcends generations, a key factor in fostering enduring customer loyalty.

COLLEGE OF BANKING AND FINANCIAL STUDIES



CBFS renews agreement with ISACA Muscat Chapter

MUSCAT: The College of Banking and Financial Studies (CBFS) has renewed its Memorandum of Agreement (MoU) with the Information Systems Audit & Control Association (ISACA) for a period of 3 years from April 2024. The new MoU was signed by Dr. Zahran Al Salti, Dean, CBFS and Maari Ponniah, President, ISACA recently. Dr Yousuf Al Mabsali, Asst. Dean-Academic Affairs, CBFS and the office bearers of the ISACA Chapter were present. The college has been sponsoring ISACA Muscat Chapter since 2000 and supporting its knowledge building programs (known as Continuing Professional Education or CPE events) for its members drawn from across all

sectors in Oman and other invitees from CBFS and its sponsor banks. The College has also partnered with ISACA for organising training courses and seminars for the banking and financial sector in Oman. The Chapter has also held preparatory classes for various certifications of ISACA and thereby contributed to local capacity building across all sectors in its area of specialization. In the words of Dr Zahran Al Salti, "The college is delighted to renew its MoU with ISACA, which adds significant value to audit, IT and IS professionals by providing them a real-time insight into prevalent practices in information systems security and audit."

IN MUSANDAM

KR Facility and Security Solutions complete comprehensive generator project for Nama

MUSCAT: Khimji Ramdas (KR) Group's Facility and Security Solutions (FSS), a unit of the Special Projects Division, announced the successful completion of a comprehensive project for the supply and commissioning of generators for Nama Electricity Distribution Company (NEDC) in the Musandam region. Commencing in October 2023 and concluding in February 2024, the project encompassed the supply, delivery and commissioning of seven soundproof generators ranging from 250 KW to 500 KW at various government facilities across the Musandam region of Oman. These generators were strategically distributed in Khasab, Bukha, Madha, and Dibba, areas characterised by diverse landscapes including mountainous terrains, seashores, and country borders. The KR Facility and Security Solutions team successfully delivered and provided training to the Nama Electricity Distribution Company team, ensuring seamless integration and functional-



ity. Experienced technicians and engineers from FSS undertook the delivery and commissioning, adhering to the highest industry standards to ensure optimal performance and safety. Moreover, extensive training sessions were conducted to equip government personnel with the necessary skills to efficiently operate and maintain the generators. The after-sales service team of Facility and Security Solutions also

provided on-site training to Nama Electricity Distribution Company's technical staff, guaranteeing 24x7 service support through their mobile service team. Representing Mecca Power Generators in Oman, FSS offers customisable solutions tailored to customers' operational needs, including preferred engine models and capacities. Renowned for their durability, efficiency, and reliability, the gen-

erators supplied by the company serve as ideal solutions for powering essential facilities during emergencies and power outages. Commending FSS for the outstanding work carried out by them, Mohammed Yousuf Al Shahi, Regional Manager - Musandam, Nama Electricity Distribution Company said: "I would like to extend my sincere appreciation for the exceptional work carried out by KR FSS's team in supplying and commissioning the generator for the Musandam region within a short period. Emphasizing the significance of the project, Rajneesh Armugham, General Manager, KR Facility and Security Solutions mentioned, "Completing such a complex project in Musandam is a significant milestone for us; as it exemplifies the quality we deliver through our specially designed equipment tailored for governmental entities. As we strive to enhance the national infrastructure by incorporating state-of-the-art equipment and technologies, all our endeavours align with Oman Vision 2040."

PROMOTION

Mitsubishi Motors unveils 'Drive that Counts' extended offers

MUSCAT: In view of the overwhelming response to the Mitsubishi promotion for the holy month, General Automotive Company (GAC), the authorised dealership for Mitsubishi Motors in Oman, has announced a limited extension of the campaign in order to enable more buyers to avail the opportunity to own their favourite Mitsubishi during Eid Al Fitr as well. The extended 'Drive the Counts' offer includes zero percent interest rate on vehicle finance up to two years, cashback offers up to



RO 4,808, free service up to 50,000 kilometres or 5 years, free insurance and registration, 6 years unlimited mileage warranty, plus roadside assistance. There's even

a special Eid gift for all new Mitsubishi owners. The offers are valid across the full range of models, from Attrage - the sporty salon; Eclipse Cross - the tur-

bo-charged coupe SUV; ASX - the practical compact SUV; New Outlander - the spacious and versatile SUV; Xpander and Xpander Cross - the premium 7-seater MUV; to

Montero Sport - the luxury SUV with the legendary Pajero DNA, and L200 - the range of 'engineered tough' pickups. "Mitsubishi has always been one of the most trusted Japanese automotive brands in Oman. We want to ensure that everyone looking for new driving experience can enjoy, what is quite possibly, our most exciting offer yet," said Manoj Ranade, General Manager of GAC. The 'Drive That Counts' credo embodies Mitsubishi's total com-

mitment to make every moment count for customers - right from exclusive benefits, personalised service and a seamless buying experience, to endless, memorable journeys in their new vehicle. "When you are looking for proven reliability, superior performance, outstanding comfort, renowned toughness, cutting-edge safety, and unbeatable value, Mitsubishi is the obvious answer - and there's never been a better time to own it," he said. The offers are valid until May 9.



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