

**OMANI WOMEN ASSOCIATIONS
SERVE 9,979 MEMBERS**

Statistics issued by the NCSI showed that the total number of Omani Women Association branches reached 65 in various governorates, serving 9,979 members and 40,639 beneficiaries till the end of 2022. **>A5**



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Founded 1975 · Volume 48 No. 146 | 16 Pages · Baisas 200 · Subscription OMR63 | ISO 9001:2008 Certified Company | Chairman/Editor-in-Chief Mohamed Issa Al Zadjali | Printed & Published by Muscat Media Group

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DECREE

Royal Decree ratifies air services agreement between Oman, Belarus

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik issued Royal Decree No. (67/2023) on ratifying the air services agreement between the government of the Sultanate of Oman and the government of the Republic of Belarus, signed in Muscat on 25 July 2023.

Article (1) ratifies the aforementioned agreement in accordance with the version attached to this decree.

Article (2) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its data of issue. — **ONA**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN Oman calls for talks to resolve disputes



1 The Sultanate of Oman on Sunday affirmed that dialogue is a consistent principle and a strong approach in its foreign policy due to their effective impact on achieving reconciliation, harmony and peace between conflicting parties. **>A2**

OMAN 3-day weekend and options for people

2 As September 28, 2023 has been declared an official holiday on the advent of Prophet Mohammed's (PBUH) birth anniversary, citizens and residents have many options to choose from this weekend. **>A3**

WORLD 35 killed in Benin fuel depot blast

3 An explosion at what is believed to be an illegal fuel depot in southern Benin killed at least 35 people and injured several others on Saturday. **>A6**

SULTANATE'S NOMINAL GDP SURGES BY 30% IN 2022

The economic recovery of Oman has now been firmly established, as evident by its continued progress in overcoming the economic crisis, the CBO report said



MUSCAT: The nominal gross domestic product (GDP) of Oman's economy grew by 30 percent in 2022 on the back of improvements in both the hydrocarbon and non-hydrocarbon sectors, which grew by 61.6 percent and 16.9 percent, respectively.

"In the non-hydrocarbon sector, the recovery was broad-based with all major sectors showing positive growth during 2022," the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) said in its Annual Report for the year 2022 released on Sunday.

"Non-petroleum industrial activities expanded by 23.5 percent

in 2022 mainly due to rebound in nominal output from manufacturing by 49.6 percent," the CBO report said.

The real GDP (base year 2018) of Oman grew by 4.3 percent during 2022 as compared with a growth of 3.1 percent in 2021.

The improvement in real GDP growth was supported by all the major sectors with output from petroleum activities showing a remarkable growth of 10.2 percent supported by 5.9 percent growth in natural gas output.

Among the non-petroleum industrial activities, the out-

put from manufacturing in real terms witnessed a growth of 17 percent, 'mining and quarrying' and 'electricity and water supply' witnessed growths of 10.5 percent and 4.5 percent, respectively.

The CBO report further said that the recovery of the Omani economy has now been firmly established, as evident by its continued progress in overcoming the economic repercussions and the global geopolitical tensions.

In the services sector, 'accommodation and food services', 'transport and storage'

and "wholesale and retail trade", showed robust growth in real output during 2022 indicating a revival in contact-based services, which were the worst affected segment by the pandemic.

Conversely, the output of construction sector, 'agriculture, and fishing' in real terms declined by 23.2 percent and 9.7 percent in 2022, respectively.

Inflation during 2022 remained subdued, well below global average, benefiting from the monetary policy framework, fixed exchange rate regime and fiscal policy measures. **>A6**

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Follow United Nations principles for resolving disputes, says Sayyid Badr

Oman is committed to joining hands with the global community in its quest to achieve a peaceful world order based on justice and respect for the UN Charter

NEW YORK: The Sultanate of Oman affirmed that dialogue is a consistent principle and a strong approach in its foreign policy due to their effective impact on achieving reconciliation, harmony and peace between conflicting parties.

This was stated by Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister during a speech of the Sultanate of Oman in the 78th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) convened in New York.

Sayyid Badr said: “The Sultanate of Oman asserts its firm commitment to join hands with the international community in its quest to achieve a peaceful world order, based on justice, fairness, respect for the Charter of the United Nations, international law, the sovereignty of states, and non-interference in their internal affairs”.

The minister added that the Sultanate of Oman calls on the international community to adhere to the United Nations system in addressing disputes and resolving conflicts, and to advocate dialogue as a way to reach peaceful solutions to these conflicts, and to negotiate to build a world in which a decent life prevails and filled with prosperity, stability, security and peace.

He explained that we are linked to nations by the unity of principles and goals, through which our goals are achieved and our virtues are elevated, and we will remain - with God's help - supportive of truth and just causes.

The Foreign Minister added “The Palestinian cause is at the forefront of long-standing issues, and has been subjected to injustice for more than seventy years while the Palestinian people stand steadfast in the face of the brutal Israeli occupation, siege, torture, in violation of international law and the Security Council's resolutions.

He stated that the repercussions surrounding the Russian-Ukrainian crisis and its security and military escalation, as well as the painful humanitarian effects, constitute a serious threat to global peace and the flow of energy and food supply chains. This crisis, the minister added, also constitutes a serious challenge to international cooperation and the global order which is based on respect for the law and the Charter of the United Nations.

In this regard, the minister reaffirmed that the Sultanate of Oman calls for resorting to dialogue and peaceful negotiations on the basis of “do no harm,” respecting the sovereignty of states, the policy of good neighborliness, and removing the sources and causes of this crisis.

He pointed out that the Sultanate of Oman is implementing many plans and programmes aimed at adapting to climate change and reducing its effects. Oman seeks to stimulate investment in renewable energy projects, in accordance with the zero carbon neutrality strategy 2050.

Sayyid Badr added that the Sultanate of Oman is heading towards active participation in the next session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP-28), which will be held next November in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. He explained that “Oman Vision 2040” is the Sultanate of Oman's gateway to sustainable development, overcoming challenges, and keeping pace with regional and global changes.

The minister also pointed out that the constant development of the educational system at all levels and improving its outputs is necessary to build the man and enable him/her to push the wheel of economic development forward.

He added that the Covid-19 pandemic was a lesson for all countries to review their preparedness and response mechanisms for health emergencies and enhance their capabilities. Perhaps the most important lessons learned are the significance of early preparedness in dealing with public health risks and threats, as well as investing in scientific research and technological development, Sayyid Badr said.

The minister pointed out that the Sultanate of Oman organized a global ministerial conference aimed at developing solutions to antimicrobial resistance and accelerating the pace of cooperation at the national, regional and international levels to limit the growth of this threat to public health and to the economic components of countries.

He stressed that the Sultanate of Oman calls on everyone to encourage partnership in research, innovation and manufacturing to find preventive and therapeutic alternatives to reduce the effects of pandemics and prevent their spread.

The Foreign Minister said “The Sultanate of Oman seriously seeks to consolidate human rights and adhere to relevant international charters and conventions in order to develop a just international society that embraces absolute respect for human dignity and rights, as well as the religious and cultural values of countries.

The minister asserted that the Sultanate of Oman rejects and denounces all incitement acts calling for violence, hatred and discrimination on the basis of faith or race, calling on the international community to find clear and explicit legislation that criminalizes these acts that threaten social peace and stability, and even threaten the national security of countries and societies.

At the conclusion of the Sultanate of Oman's speech, Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister said “We are facing complex global challenges, most notably the escalating effects of the climate crisis, the spread of pandemics, drug trade, and human trafficking, in addition to political and sectarian conflicts, calling on the international community to firmly adhere to the principles of right and justice and apply the rules of international law without double standards, so that security and reassurance prevail among people, trust spreads among countries, and partnerships among peoples grow and flourish”. -ANI



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COMMENTARY

The social media and the ten-year olds



Saleh Al-Shaibany

We used to play with marbles, skipping ropes or just simply kicking a ball around but now ten-year olds are fixated on the screen of a mobile phone reaching out to the unknown world.

It is easy to say they are growing up very fast and parents may argue it is the best way to educate their children to the ways of the world.

But the truth is that parents simply let their children occupy themselves with a mobile phone while they get the free time at home for themselves. It also means that children are now more raised by the opinions of people thousands of kilometers away than by their own parents sitting in the next room. The question I have is this: Is it right?

For me, the social media may be part of their education but the harm outweighs the advantages. It can easily get them into trouble. The social media is potentially addictive and they can get in contact with people who can advantage of their naivety.

Delaying our children's interaction with social media until they are matured enough makes a lot of sense. How can a ten-year old understand the harm of looking at a damaging content or sending out posts that someone has the potential of taking advantage of their young age?

We know that the priority of all social media outlets is to make as much money as possible and not to protect young children. We also know that there are many people using the social media looking to prey on children. They know that children are vulnerable as they start to explore the world. I would say that the safest age is about 16 for children to get into the social media arenas.

At that age, they are already matured enough to understand what is right and wrong. For those who would say 16 is 'too old' then they are exposing their children to the possibility of irreversible harm. If we hope that children will 'figure it out' themselves from what is good or bad for themselves then we are more naive than them.

It is wrong to assume that, like one parent told me, to allow children 'to use the social media as an education tool.' The second question I have is this: did he, as a parent now, miss out anything when there was no social media in the years he was growing up? As matured people, we can pick and drop what we like but a ten-year old does not have that ability.

Predators always look for children in the social media and other online platforms to engage them in crime. One way they influence children is by using live messaging in chats. All the predators hide their identities. For example, a 45-year old man would pretend he is 12. He would use bullying or blackmailing techniques after sharing some photos or information.

Modern criminals using social media are ruthless and you don't want your child to be part of it. It goes without saying that it is the responsibility of parents to make sure it does not happen. While we know sometimes it is impossible to protect children from everything online, parents must at least educate their children about predators.

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3-day long weekend: Here are your options in Muscat

Regret not having planned enough for the extended weekend. Fret not, as we bring you a list of activities that you can choose from

Times News Service

MUSCAT: With the official holiday on Prophet Mohammed's (PBUH) birth anniversary falling on Thursday, citizens and residents have plenty to choose from this weekend.

Kicking off the season is one of the greatest comic operas, 'The Barber of Seville' on 29 and 30 September at the Royal Opera House Muscat at 7pm.

Tickets are available now and can be purchased at the ROHM box office or via its app.

People can also experience the ultimate fusion of brunch, circus, and a mesmerising laser show at Crowne Plaza Muscat, OCEC on September 29.

Little Mermaid is also coming to Muscat and will be performing at the Al Bustan Palace on September 30, a Ritz-Carlton Hotel, with their unique adaptation of Hans Christian Andersen's "Come and see the beloved fairytale, as it comes to life on stage at our Theatre," read their poster.

Indian comedian and actor Vir Das is embarking on his international Mind Fool Tour, which will continue for seven months and cover many countries worldwide.



Das highly anticipated event in Muscat on September 28, 2023 will be held at the prestigious Al Bustan Palace - A Ritz-Carlton Hotel, promising an unforgettable evening of laughter and entertainment. Vir Das has gained acclaim for his stand-up comedy and has released four successful Netflix specials, including Landing, which



premiered in December 2022. "With his talent and global appeal, Vir Das is emerging as one of the most loved comedy voices of the 21st century. Don't miss the opportunity to experience his hilarious and thought-provoking comedy on the Mind Fool Tour," the poster read.

Film buffs too are in for a visual



treat this weekend at the nearest cinema houses. Step back into the world of the PAW Patrol: The Mighty movie starring James Marsden, Iain Armitage, Mckenna Grace where a magical meteor crashlands in adventure city, and gives the PAW Patrol pups superpowers, transforming them into The Mighty

Pups. The movie is releasing on 28 September 2023. Then the Hollywood movie, The Creator is also releasing on 28 September, 2023 where a future war between the human race and the forces of artificial intelligence. Joshua, a hardened ex-special forces agent grieving over the disappearance of his wife, is recruited to hunt down and kill the Creator, the elusive architect of advanced AI who has developed a mysterious weapon with the power to end the war-and mankind itself.

If you are a Bollywood fan, then don't miss out Fukrey 3 which is releasing on 28 September 2023 starring Pulkit Samrat, Pankaj Tripathi, Varun Sharma, Richa Chadha and Manoj Singh.

In the third instalment of Fukrey, the fukrays are going even bigger! This time they plan to take over Delhi, run for city elections and go all out. However, they haven't got any money so they take

Official holiday on Thursday



MUSCAT: On the advent of Prophet Mohammed's (PBUH) birth anniversary, it has been decided that Thursday 12 Rabee Al Awwal 1445 AH, corresponding to 28 September 2023, will be an official holiday for employees of units of the State's Administrative Apparatus and other legal entities and establishments of the private sector.

The Ministry of Labour explained that the employers may agree on terms to engage employees on the said holiday—if deemed necessary due to the nature of their work—provided they compensate the workers for the holiday. -ONA

on an international job to make a quick buck, which changes their lives forever.

In the first two films, we saw them using Dejavu & dreams, then premonitions to make money but now they've been gifted with a new and unique talent which is going to make them millionaires. The movie is a laughter riot, one problem leads them to another, which they solve in their own Fukrey manner.

OIL AND GAS SECTOR

Plan for zero carbon emissions being implemented



CUTTING EMISSIONS: The programme seeks to draft a unified implementation plan, with specific steps to help achieve the interim goals of the strategy. -ONA

MUSCAT: The National Zero Carbon Neutrality Programme is carrying out tasks aimed at following up and implementing the National Net-Zero Strategy for an orderly transition to zero carbon emissions.

The programme is shared by a broad spectrum of public and private establishments, academics, experts and relevant entities.

The programme seeks to draft a unified implementation plan, with specific steps to add a number of projects to help achieve the interim goals of the strategy based on supporting elements.

Now in its 4th week, the programme is elaborating on plans for the oil and gas sector.

The discussions include targets for reaching carbon neutrality, initiatives and projects implemented to this effect and key challenges and capabilities required to address them.

The programme also comprises workshops that examine mechanisms for resolving challenges within the context of the goals of Oman's net-zero emissions by 2050.

The oil and gas sector constitutes 26% of greenhouse gas emissions in Oman, equivalent to 22.9 million tonnes.

It is hoped that the volume of emissions-cut will occur at a rate of 7 percent by 2030.

-ONA

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HERITAGE MINISTRY OPENS BIDS FOR MANAGEMENT OF AL KHANDAQ, AL HILLAH CASTLES IN AL BURAIMI

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism on Sunday announced the opening of bids to submit competitive offers to manage, operate and utilise the castles of ‘Al Hillah’ and ‘Khandaq’ in the Wilayat of Al Buraimi, the Governorate of Al Buraimi. The Ministry set 16 November 2023 as the deadline to submit bidding documents. – **ONA**



KHAZAEN ECONOMIC CITY

75% of central vegetables, fruits market in Khazaen completed



MUSCAT: Khazaen Vegetables and Fruits Central Market company announced the start of the second phase of a plan to lease new market facilities at Khazaen Economic City.

Khazaen called upon all companies and establishments wishing to engage in the activity of wholesale vegetable and fruit sale to come forward and book their desired stalls, right from 1 October 2023, in the runup to the official opening of the market next year.

Seventy-five percent of the market has been completed, said the company, noting that the facility would serve a larger segment of consumers thanks to its large area estimated at triple the space of Al Mawaleh Central



Market. The new market occupies a key location in the South Batinah Governorate, it added.

The company in charge of Khazaen Central Market for Vegetables and Fruits signed an agreement with Muscat Municipality in May 2021 to transfer

all business activities from Al Mawaleh area to the new market at Khazaen Economic City in the Wilayat of Barka. Once completed, the project will occupy a total of 700,000 sqm, with 412,000 sqm set to be developed during the first phase. – **ONA**

ENVIRONMENT AUTHORITY
MONITORS BIRD SPECIES
IN NORTH AL BATINAH

27

species of migratory birds were monitored in several locations in North Al Batinah Governorate from December 2022 until this September 2023

16

species of birds visit during the winter

9

resident species are found throughout the year, in addition to two species of migratory birds during the migration season

1

species of visiting birds are found in the summer

SOHAR: The Environment Authority, represented by its administration in North Al Batinah Governorate, monitors different types of migratory birds at environment sites in the governorate, due to its diversity between the plain, sea and mountains during the summer and winter seasons.

Amani bint Abdullah Al-Shibliyya, an environmental inspector in the Environmental Conservation Department of North Al Batinah Governorate, said: “Through periodic monitoring and environmental analysis, more than 27 species of migratory birds were monitored in several locations in North Al Batinah Governorate from December 2022 until this September, including 16 species of visiting birds during the winter, nine resident species throughout the year, in addition to two species of migratory birds during the migration season, and one species of visiting birds in the summer.

She added that environmental diversity has contributed significantly



cantly to preserving the crossing, migration, or settlement of these types of birds in lakes, coastal creeks, and sandy beaches, as well as agricultural lands on the governorate’s coast, and tidal mudflats constitute the best environments for these types of birds.

She stated that among the birds residing throughout the year in North Al Batinah are the gray egret, the rock heron, the red-cheeked plover, the sooty gull, the swift tern, and the common mynah. Examples of visiting birds in winter are the little egret, the great egret, the little sand plover, the little crested tern, and the sandpiper, red leg and water curlew.

The most famous species of visiting birds in the summer is the pink tern, while the common tern and the white-cheeked tern are among the most famous birds seen during the migration season in the North Al Batinah Governorate.





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Spring season begins in Dhofar governorate

Serb affects the coastal areas of the Dhofar Governorate specifically from the wilayat of Dhalkut in the west to wilayat of Mirbat in the east

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The spring season began in Dhofar Governorate on Thursday. It is locally called “Serb” and it affects the coastal areas of the governorate specifically from the wilayat of Dhalkut in the west to wilayat of Mirbat in the east and lasts for three months, ending on December 21 of each year.

The “Serb” season is characterised by bright sunshine, mild weather, low humidity, and calm sea waves, in addition to the splendour of natural scenery in the mountains, valleys, and plains after the end of the rainy Khareef season.

As the fog dissipates, the air becomes clear, cool breeze starts blowing and many flowers bloom.

The “Serb” season represents one of the important seasons for farmers, fishermen, and livestock breeders due to the seasonal agricultural harvest in the mountainous and plains depending on the autumn seasonal rains, the most important of which are corn, local



beans and cucumbers, in addition to the increase in honey production and the availability of large quantities of pelagic and demersal fish with high nutritional value, most notably: charkha, kingfish, and sardines.

The “Serb” season also witnesses spring grazing (camel herding), which begins annually in late September, when camel owners in the mountains of Dhofar Governorate transport their camels in groups from the plains or areas behind

the “cotton” mountains to grazing places that are closed with the beginning of the fall season.

People practice a number of traditional singing arts and poetic verses, accompanied by some ancient social customs.

The “Serb” season is full of green pastures for livestock in the plains, plateaus and mountains. This contributes to increasing the production of meat, dairy products, and their derivatives, such as: “Qattamin” butter and “Mashah” local ghee.

The Dhofar Mountains are among the tourist destinations for visitors during the Serb season in Dhofar Governorate. Due to its picturesque nature, moderate atmosphere, wide expansive plains, and the spread of trees, citizens and residents come to seek shade and spend time in the lap of nature.

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Efforts to empower persons with disabilities discussed

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Social Development yesterday held a consultative meeting on “Discussing the Country Profile Report on Employment Policies for Persons with Disabilities in the Sultanate of Oman.”

The meeting was held in cooperation with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). Oman was represented at the meeting by the Directorate General for Persons with Disabilities.

The meeting was aimed at highlighting the efforts made to empower persons with disabilities and to introduce the legislative and legal frameworks and systems applied by the authorities concerned in providing employment for this segment of society.

The meeting also sought to finalise the country profile report, as well as the project of the ESCWA and the International Labour Organisation. -ONA



MINISTRY OF LABOUR

Over 25 expats arrested in Wilayat of Barka

MUSCAT: More than 25 expatriates were arrested for violating provisions of the Labour Law in the Wilayat of Barka, South Al Batinah Governorate, Ministry of Labour said.

The Ministry of Labour, represented by the Office of the Joint Inspection Team in the Directorate General of Labour in the South Al Batinah Governorate, in cooperation with the Royal Oman Police and the Municipality of Barka, carried out an inspection campaign on some private sector establishments in Barka in which 29 violators of the Labour Law were arrested.

BLOOD DONATION DRIVE

Bangladesh Social Club organises blood donation campaign

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Bangladesh Social Club Oman organised a day-long blood donation campaign on 16 September 2023 at Al Khuwair Zakher Mall to support the blood bank in Oman.

A large number of Bangladeshi expatriates, including men and women attended the event and donated blood.

The Ambassador of Bangladesh, Nazmul Islam, inaugurated the function as the chief guest and praised the Bangladesh Social Club for arranging such noble humanitarian activities.



Ms. Moushimi Rahman, Deputy Head of Mission, also visited the venue and exchanged talked with the blood donors along with

the ambassador.

The donation campaign was started at 8 am in the presence of a huge crowd of people gathering for



blood donation.

Sirajul Hoque, Chairman and the Executive Committee members of Bangladesh Social Club,

thanked the authorities of the Ministry of Health for their support and donors for their participation.

The programme was also attended by main sponsor of the event Iftakher Chowdhury, CEO Gulf Overseas Exchange, officials of Biman Bangladesh Airlines, Executive Committee members of Greater Noakhali Wing, Greater Comilla Wing, Women's Wing, proposed Chattragram Wing, NRB Sporting.

A large number of community members and leaders including Engineer Mustafa Kamal, Nur Hossain, Md. Shahabuddin also participated in the event and supported the humanitarian effort of Bangladesh Social Club Oman.

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Dr. Sandesh Shetty
Consultant Orthopaedic & Trauma
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Al Ghoubra

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Omani women associations serve 40,639 beneficiaries



MUSCAT: Statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) showed that the total number of Omani Women Association branches reached 65 in various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, serving 9,979 members and 40,639 beneficiaries till the end of 2022.

The Governorate of Muscat has 6 associations, serving 1,648 members, and 1,804 beneficiaries, while the number of the Omani Women Association's branches in the Governorate of Dhofar reached 10, serving 1,162 members, and 2,801 beneficiaries.

The number of the Omani Women Association's branches in the Governorate of Musandam reached 4, serving 568 members and 2,436 beneficiaries, while the number in the Governorate of Buraimi reached 2, serving 168 members and 3,005 beneficiaries.

In the Governorate of Al Dakhili-

yah, the number of Omani Women Association's branches reached 10, serving 1,115 members and 11,376 beneficiaries, in the Governorate of North Al Batinah it reached 7, serving 1,694 members and 7,057 beneficiaries, while in the Governorate of South Al Batinah, there are 6 branches with 1,050 members and 4,104 beneficiaries.

In the Governorate of South Al Sharqiyah, there are 6 branches of Omani Women Association, serving 1,256 members and 3,525 beneficiaries, while in the Governorate of North Al Sharqiyah, there are 6 branches, serving 552 members and 3,178 beneficiaries. In the Governorate of Al Dhahirah, there are 4 branches serving 519 members and 1,263 beneficiaries.

The number of Omani women's associations branches in the Governorate of Al Wusta reached 4, serving 247 members, and 90 beneficiaries. -ONA

OSIRIS-REX SPACECRAFT

NASA’s first asteroid samples land on Earth

HOUSTON: NASA's first asteroid samples fetched from deep space parachuted into the Utah desert on Sunday to cap a seven-year journey.

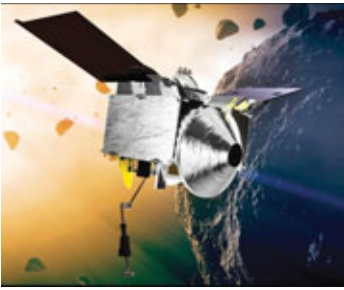
In a flyby of Earth, the Osiris-Rex spacecraft released the sample capsule from 63,000 miles (100,000 kilometres) out. The small capsule landed four hours later on a remote expanse of mili-

tary land, as the mothership set off after another asteroid.

“We have touchdown!” Flight Control announced, immediately repeating the news since the landing occurred three minutes before anticipated.

Officials later said the orange striped parachute opened four times higher than anticipated — around 20,000 feet (6,100 me-

ters) — which led to the early touchdown. Scientists estimate the capsule holds at least a cup of rubble from the carbon-rich asteroid known as Bennu, but won’t know for sure until the container is opened. Some spilled and floated away when the spacecraft scooped up too much and rocks jammed the container's lid during collection three years ago. — **ONA**



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

Founder: Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali
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JUSTICE MINISTRY STATEMENT



At least 35 killed in Benin fuel depot blast

PORTO-NOVO: An explosion at what is believed to be an illegal fuel depot in southern Benin, killed at least 35 people and injured several others on Saturday, according to the government.

A Justice Ministry statement shared by local radio station BIP Radio Cotonou, put the death toll at 35, with a child among the dead.

It said a fire broke out at a store, adding that a preliminary investigation suggested it took place as gasoline bags were being unloaded from a vehicle.

The French AFP news agency said the blast occurred at a contraband fuel depot and reported that it happened when commuters of cars, motorbikes and tricycle taxis lined up at the warehouse to stock up on fuel.

The Justice Ministry offered its condolences to the families of those killed and announced an investigation had been launched into the circumstances of the “tragic” incident.

It said it was working with all the parties involved to identify the victims, many of whom were badly charred.

Benin is among the neighboring states of Nigeria and has a substantial fuel black market, with supplies smuggled from Africa's most populous country.

Fuel smuggling

As a major oil producer, fuel smuggling is common both inside Nigeria and among its neighbors, which hosts illegal refineries, fuel dumps and even pipelines. This is due to subsidies on fuel which make it significantly low-cost.

However, since Nigeria's President Bola Ahmed Tinubu was elected in May, he has upended that market, by dropping the fuel subsidies and therefore causing the fuel prices to skyrocket.

This has affected several smuggling operations in Benin and other West African countries.

— DW

Tropical Storm Ophelia lashes US Atlantic coast

The storm weakened as it swept through north. It is expected to travel northeast on Sunday along the mid-Atlantic coast to New Jersey, the US National Hurricane Centre said



and all storm warnings have been discontinued.

“There have been tropical storm-force winds observed, but those are starting to gradually subside as the system moves further inland,” Philippe Papin, a hurricane specialist with the centre, said. “Additional weakening is expected, and Ophelia is likely to become a post-tropical cyclone tomorrow,” the hurricane centre said in a statement on Saturday night. “However, there is a significant flooding rainfall threat for a large portion of eastern North Carolina into southern Virginia over the next 12 to 24 hours.”

What is the latest on the impact of Storm Ophelia?

One of the hardest hit communities by the storm was Washington, North Carolina.

Video footage on social media showed flood waters reaching homes and partly submerging vehicles in areas of the town that sit on the banks of the Pamlico River.

“Some areas are even cut off,

seeing water rescue crews moving throughout town just in case the call comes later,” storm chaser Bryce Shelton said on X, formerly known as Twitter, describing the conditions in the town of 10,000 people.

Brian Haines, a spokesperson for the North Carolina Division of Emergency Management, said there were also reports of downed trees, but no major road closures.

In Virginia, the state's department of emergency management said in an X post that its crews were ready to deploy swift water rescues and debris removal if required.

By midday Saturday, more than 65,000 homes and businesses in North Carolina, Virginia, Pennsylvania and New Jersey were without power, according to Poweroutage.com.

Five people, including three children 10 or younger, needed the Coast Guard's help on the water when conditions worsened Friday.

They were aboard a 38-foot

(12-metre) catamaran anchored in Lookout Bight in Cape Lookout, North Carolina, stuck in choppy water with strong winds.

In Washington, the Nationals baseball team postponed their Saturday game until Sunday.

The North Carolina Ferry System suspended service on all routes until conditions improved.

Peak hurricane season

It is not uncommon for one or two tropical storms, or even hurricanes, to develop right off the East Coast each year, National Hurricane Center Director Michael Brennan said.

“We're right at the peak of hurricane season, we can basically have storms form anywhere across much of the Atlantic basin,” Brennan said in an interview Friday.

Scientists say climate change could result in hurricanes expanding their reach into mid-latitude regions more often, making storms like this month's Hurricane Lee more common. — **DW**

CBO REPORT

Govt’s revenue in 2022 saw a massive 29.3% jump

<FROM A1 The average consumer price inflation in Oman was 2.8 percent in 2022 compared to 1.6 percent in 2021, the CBO report said.

Given the country's dependence on imports for meeting a large part of day-to-day requirements, the global inflation conditions had a dominant impact on prices in the Sultanate of Oman. The impact of global inflationary pressures on domestic inflation was, however, to some extent contained by appreciation in the nominal effective exchange rate (NEER) of the Omani Rial, which appreciated year-on-year by 6.3 percent in December 2022 amidst strengthening of USD, and government interventions that had largely insulated the domestic inflation from global inflation spikes.

Oman's public finance achieved remarkable positive fiscal performance in 2022, surpassing previous years, driven by higher oil and reform measures undertaken by the government.

Crude oil prices in 2022, surpassed the levels observed in the previous year. The average Oman oil price in 2022 was \$95.40 per barrel, higher by 48.40 percent than that in a year ago, while oil production during the year increased by 9.6 percent compared to 1.9 percent in 2021. These developments have generated fiscal space for the government to undertake productive expenditure while remaining on the course of fiscal consolidation spelt out under the Medium-Term Fiscal Plan (MTFP).

Government revenue during 2022 witnessed a notable increase of 29.3 percent compared to the previous year. This was primar-



ily driven by higher oil and gas revenue as well as other current revenues.

The government expenditure also increased by 7.3 percent in 2022 from the level seen in the previous year. The surge in oil revenues provided a cushion for the economy, leading to the Sultanate of Oman reporting its first surplus since 2014.

Meanwhile, the government has successfully restored fiscal sustainability by enhancing non-oil revenue, increasing spending efficiency, and controlling the budget deficit. This resulted in a fiscal surplus of 2.6 percent in 2022 from a deficit of 3.6 percent in 2021. These effective measures enabled the government to successfully decrease the public debt to GDP ratio to 40.2 percent in 2022 from 61.7 in 2021.

As a result of the continued efforts in debt reduction and improved fiscal outcome, Oman

experienced positive and stable improvements in its credit ratings outlook during 2022, as recognised by credit rating agencies.

The CBO continued to focus on ensuring that the financial sector serves as a source of strength for the Omani economy. Consequently, the banking sector in the Sultanate of Oman showed improved performance with total assets of the banking sector increasing by 0.8 percent to reach OMR38.8 billion at the end of 2022. The total credit increased to OMR29.2 billion in 2022 showing a growth of 4.8 percent over 2021, while aggregate deposits showed a growth of 1.1 percent by the end of the year.

The banking sector remained sound and resilient and continued to be well capitalised on the back of an effective supervisory framework and the deployment of appropriate policy tools. Thus, gross non-performing loans (NPLs) remained reasonably low, at 4.36

percent as of December 2022. In addition, the capital adequacy ratio (CAR) stood at 19.7 percent at the end of 2022 from 19.4 percent a year ago.

Furthermore, the liquidity position of banks remained comfortable as indicated by the prescribed liquidity ratios.

Moreover, monetary aggregates showed marginal growth during 2022, while reserve money (monetary base) contracted by 18.3 percent in 2022, broad money grew by 0.6 percent. Among the sources of money supply, broad money slight expansion was supported by growth in assets of the banking system.

The external position strengthened substantially in 2022, driven by higher hydrocarbon exports and fiscal adjustments. These factors contributed to a significant surplus in the current account. Accordingly, the current account balance (CAB) showed a marked

improvement in 2022, with merchandise exports registering a strong growth under both oil and non-oil exports, while re-exports remained unchanged during the year.

Merchandise imports also rose during the year but at a slower pace than exports, leading to a significant increase in trade surplus. The services account deficit increased moderately during the year due to higher outward payment towards transport with relaxation in travel restrictions and also increased shipping costs.

As a result of these developments, CAB posted a surplus to OMR2,212 million in 2022 from a deficit of OMR1,839 million in 2021. The financial account turned to a net outflow of OMR2,519 million in 2022 compared to net inflow of OMR2,284 million in 2021, reflecting a positive performance under foreign direct investment (FDI), portfolio investments, and other investments.

However, the reserve assets in 2022 declined by OMR580 million, mainly attributed to the debt repayments made by the government during the year.

The macroeconomic outlook of the Omani economy has significantly improved, successfully overcoming the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing global geopolitical tensions.

The steadfast implementation of reforms agenda under the strategic direction of Oman Vision 2040, along with favorable oil prices draw an optimistic macroeconomic outlook for the Omani economy for 2023.

Economic activities in the Sultanate of Oman are witnessing revival, with real output growing,

and inflation being contained at low levels. The oil prices are expected to remain at a higher-level providing support to hydrocarbon activities.

The non-hydrocarbon activities are also projected to show a moderate growth in real terms in 2023 with the expected increase in demand for Omani exports. The fiscal outlook for 2023 is projected to improve as a result of oil windfalls and fiscal consolidation measures, which have had a positive impact on both fiscal and external positions.

The expected continuation of non-hydrocarbon growth is likely to contribute to an improved fiscal outcome, potentially leading to a fiscal surplus. This comes in line with the government's commitment to fiscal consolidation and opens up opportunities for productive expenditures and support for economic activities. Additionally, the external sector is expected to benefit from robust demand for Omani non-hydrocarbon exports.

Overall, the outlook for 2023 indicates a sustained revival in economic activities in the country.

The CBO's Annual Report for the year 2022 presents an overall macroeconomic assessment of Oman during 2022 and analyses major sectors of the economy through five chapters: Current Assessment and Macroeconomic Outlook (Chapter I); Output, Employment and Prices (Chapter II); Public Finance (Chapter III); Money, Banking and Financial Institutions (Chapter IV); and Foreign Trade and Balance of Payments (Chapter V).

The report also contains the audited balance sheet of the CBO and important CBO regulations issued during 2022. — **ONA**

Germany criticises late change to European Union migrant reforms

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock on Sunday called for the European Union’s reform of migration policy, which was finalised in the summer, to be implemented quickly

BRUSSELS: The EU has approved changes to its asylum policy but a late amendment is now on the table. The German foreign minister warned Berlin won’t back plans to allow more flexibility during periods of large-scale migration.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock on Sunday called for the European Union’s reform of migration policy, which was finalized in the summer, to be implemented quickly.

Baerbock wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter, that the long-awaited changes to the EU’s Common European Asylum System could finally bring more orderly migration to the bloc.

Berlin can’t support crisis regulation plan
But she said she was unhappy that the European Commission — the EU’s executive arm — now wanted to add a so-called crisis regulation to the pact.
If adopted, the amendment would allow for more flexibility if



Europe were to face a large surge in migrant and refugee arrivals, such as the 2015 migration crisis.
Baerbock warned that the crisis regulation would create incentives for other EU states to forward refugees to Germany without registering them first.
She said this could put further strain on German public sector resources at the local level.
“Instead of orderly procedures, the wide discretion that the current proposal for a crisis regulation grants ... would again de facto create incentives for forwarding large numbers of unregistered refugees to Germany,” Baerbock wrote on X.
She said the German government could not support such rule.

Germany and France receive most asylum claims
Many migrants and refugees arrive in southern European countries having crossed the Mediterranean and often move to Germany and other more prosperous EU states in the north.
Under the EU’s asylum rules, migrants should have their asylum claims processed in the country in which they first arrive.
After more than a decade of growing irregular migration to Europe, the Common European Asylum System was finalized in 2011 to create a fair and efficient asylum policy across the EU.
Irregular migration intensified in 2015 when more than a million migrants — fleeing war in Syria

and Iraq — landed on Europe’s shores over a relatively short period of time.
The reforms to the asylum rules aim to set clear procedures to prevent abuse of the system, which includes speeding up assessments about unfounded or inadmissible asylum applications at the EU’s external borders.
Rome hits out at Berlin support for migrant rescue boats
Meanwhile, Italian Defense Minister Guido Crosetto on Sunday criticized the German government’s support for non-profit organizations that help rescue boat migrants in the Mediterranean.
In an interview with La Stam-

pa newspaper, Crosetto spoke of “very serious” behavior. “Berlin ... is getting a country in trouble with which it is theoretically ‘friendly,’” he said.
Crosetto is a politician from the ultra-right governing party Fratelli d’Italia (Brothers of Italy), also the party of Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni.
Its smaller coalition partner The League has also criticized Germany over the matter.
The issue of migration and the work of private German aid organizations in the Mediterranean has long been a source of tension between Rome and Berlin, even under previous Italian governments.
German media reported that two organizations will soon re-

ceive several hundred thousand euros each in government aid, a measure approved by Germany’s parliament.
Rome considers Germany’s actions to be interference in its domestic affairs.
Meloni has vowed to reduce the number of migrants arriving by boat in Italy.
However, more than 130,000 arrivals have been registered since the beginning of the year, twice as many as in the same period in 2022.
After 8,500 people arrived on the tiny island of Lampedusa in just three days earlier this month, Meloni demanded the European Union do more to help relieve the pressure. —DW

FRANCE



Protests against police brutality turn violent

PARIS: Tens of thousands of people took to the streets across France on Saturday to protest against police violence and racism. The protests were sparked by ongoing anger over the police killing of 17-year-old Nahel Merzouk in June.
However, numerous groups and initiatives with demands for immigration rights, affordable housing and economic justice also took part in the demonstrations. They denounced systemic racism, police violence and growing social inequalities.
Some 100 rallies took place nationwide. Unions said around 80,000 people joined the protest across France in response to a call by radical leftists, but police put the number at 31,800.

Violent incidents in Paris
A demonstration in Paris saw some clashes between protesters and police.
A report from French news agency AFP said hundreds of people wearing black and in hoods broke away from the main march of several thousand people. They reportedly smashed the windows of a bank branch and attacked a police car with iron rods.
A video later published by the BFMTV channel showed a group of masked protesters running after the car, repeatedly kicking it, as one man smashes a window with a crowbar. An officer can be

seen getting out and brandishing his service weapon, but does not fire it, before getting back in the vehicle.
Paris police chief Laurent Nunez said three people had been arrested over the incident.
“We see where anti-police hatred leads,” French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin wrote on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter, denouncing “unacceptable violence” against the police.
Killing of Nahel Merzouk
The death of Nahel Merzouk by a police bullet led to days of massive riots in June and July. The unrest, which included arson and looting, erupted after video footage showed the young man did not try to run over the officers during a police check, as initially claimed.
Authorities eventually restored calm with a massive police presence. Since then, the government of President Emmanuel Macron has neither presented a concept to improve the situation in the socially isolated suburbs nor has the police behavior been critically analysed.
According to a report by the Inspectorate General of the National Police (IGPN), a total of 38 people died and 66 were injured in police operations in 2022, compared to 37 deaths and 79 injuries in 2021. —DW

OECD DATA

Can Germany afford a 4-day workweek?

BERLIN: According to the latest figures from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Germans worked an average of 1,349 hours per employed person in 2021. The OECD average was 1,716 hours, while Greeks worked 1,872 hours per year.
Despite Germans putting in fewer hours a year, the country’s powerful metalworkers’ union IG Metall recently came up with a proposal pushing for an even shorter workweek for its members: namely, four days.
Assuming fully compensated wages, any worker would support such a proposal. But in times of a slowing German economy and an acute shortage of skilled workers, shouldn’t Germans be working more rather than less?

Lazy Germans?
The OECD itself has admitted that its figures are skewed and, due to different reporting standards and time references, can’t really be compared. Also, what people in different countries consider working hours may not necessarily be the same, it said in its report.
Labour market expert Enzo Weber from the Institute of Employment Research (IAB) says the OECD’s figures tend to be based on public surveys, meaning the results principally depend on the questions being asked and in what order.
“What people understand of working hours isn’t necessarily everywhere the same,” he told DW, adding that OECD figures are generally intended to illustrate labor market trends rather than serving as a basis for comparison.
Weber noted, for example, that the labor force participation rate of German women is significantly higher than that in other countries. However given that roughly half the women work part-time, this lowers the average annual working hours per person. “That doesn’t mean Germans work less, quite the contrary. More work is being done, because these women would not even be included in the statistics,” said Weber.
The number of hours people



spend at work cannot be viewed in isolation. The question is what are they doing and how productive are they? German workers do much better in the productivity rankings, Weber said, even though the “glory days” of Germany as a productivity powerhouse are long gone.
Currently, productivity is falling, he said, which isn’t the result of German workers being lazier than last year, however.
Calculating productivity is a complex exercise, but basically divides output by the hours worked. Weber attributes the present decline to the energy crisis. Despite the higher costs, German companies are keeping their workforces fully employed to avoid future shortages. As a result, working hours in total remain stable while output shrinks due to higher energy costs.
Another reason for falling German productivity is the country’s huge low-wage sector, where productivity is typically not very high.

4-day workweek a productivity booster?
A key question in the current debate about a 4-day workweek is whether or not it can improve productivity amid a shortage of skilled labour. Proponents argue that shorter hours may increase the motivation of workers and subsequently make them more productive. Additionally, they say this could bring people into the workforce who are not willing to work five days a week, resulting in the availability of more skilled workers.
Since 2019, the nonprofit organisation 4 Day Week Global

(4DWG) has organised pilot programs in countries like the UK, South Africa, Australia, Ireland, and the United States. More than 500 companies have participated in these programs, according to the New Zealand-based NGO. Results seem to confirm hopes for a positive outcome.
Reactions among German workers to plans for a 4-day workweek remain mixed, however, according to a survey conducted by Germany’s trade union-affiliated Hans-Böckler Foundation.
About 73% of the workers surveyed said they want a 4-day workweek, but only if their pay stays the same. Some 8% would accept reduced remuneration, while 17% rejected the shorter working time outright.
Inconclusive studies
In Germany, a 4-day workweek programme was launched on September 21 inviting companies to apply for a 6-month test period. The program is run by the German consulting agency Intrenpenr in collaboration with 4DWG.
Enzo Weber argues the design of the pilot already highlights the main problem with such projects. Only companies with a positive attitude towards a shorter workweek would participate, he said, meaning the large majority of businesses would remain unrepresented.
Furthermore, the pilot foresees not only reducing working time but also altering processes and organizational structures in the participating companies. Any increase in productivity, therefore, may not necessarily be linked causally to the shorter working

week, said Weber.
The IAB labour market expert also questions the idea of positive results. Reducing the workweek by one day would likely increase employees’ daily workload while reducing communication and teamwork. “Companies usually don’t feel the consequences immediately, but rather in the medium term,” said Weber. He pointed to the 6-month project design, which was too short.
For Holger Schäfer, introducing a 4-day workweek is counterproductive from a macroeconomic perspective. The economist from the Institute of the German Economy (IW Cologne) told DW that offering shorter hours might help a company to “poach scarce workers from competitors” but would not help the economy as a whole. “If all companies reduce working hours, it ultimately results in a working hour deficit,” he said.
Schäfer argued there is no evidence that reducing working hours could significantly increase productivity. “Reducing the workweek from five to four days corresponds to a 20% reduction in working hours. To compensate for the resulting production loss would require a productivity boost by 25%, which is unrealistic.”
‘X-Day Work Week’
Nevertheless, introducing a 4-day work week in some sectors of the economy may make sense, says Jörg Dittrich, the president of the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts and Small Businesses (ZDH). —DW



Oman skipper Aqib Ilyas plays a shot during the final

Gulf T20I title triumph will be remembered for long: Mendis

Oman claim top honours with a thrilling five-wicket win over the UAE in the final of the first Gulf T20I Championship

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman cricketers seem to love making history in the shortest format of the game, in particular, when it comes to the inaugural edition.

Nearly 16 years after Oman had won the inaugural Asian Cricket Council (ACC) Twenty20 Cup in Kuwait, their first major title as Oman were adjudged joint winners with Afghanistan following a washout, the Men in Red have done it again.

On Saturday, Oman were crowned champions of the inaugural Gulf T20I Cricket Championship that concluded in Doha, Qatar.

In a thrilling final, Oman led by Aqib Ilyas, defeated UAE by five wickets with four balls to spare.

Having won the inaugural ACC T20 Cup, and then again in 2015 the latest Gulf T20I Championship trophy is a “massive” achievement in the words of the team’s head coach Duleep Mendis. Mendis, the former Sri Lankan captain, is the architect of Oman’s rise in the T20 format over the past decade and he continues to deliver since joining the team in September 2012.

Under Mendis, Oman have qualified twice to the ICC T20 World Cup (2016 and 2021) and have won the ACC T20 crown in UAE in 2015 before the latest title.

The latest feat assumes significance as this is the first edition of the Gulf T20I Championship and the regional cricket associations are hopeful that this tournament



Oman’s pacer Bilal Khan in action against the UAE in the final in Doha on Saturday



Oman’s Ayaan Khan celebrates after reaching his half-century

will be an annual affair and played across all the six GCC countries – Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, UAE and Kuwait – in future.

Aqib Ilyas, the talented all-rounder, led from the front in the Doha tournament, where the come-from-behind spirit was displayed in abundance by the team.

In his remarks after the title win, Mendis said: “I am very happy with the result. It was a great show of character and grit by the boys as they came back strongly to claim the title after two defeats in the league stage.

“The bowlers did a fantastic job throughout the tournament. We

had few issues in the top order during the early matches but the lower order rose to the occasion to save us.”

Mendis added: “The best part of this highly competitive tournament was that our players peaked at the right time as we won the last two matches in the league stage [against Saudi Arabia and Kuwait] to head into the final high on confidence.”

The head coach gave full marks to the captaincy of Ilyas, who displayed his class with batting and bowling and was also all praise for Ayaan Khan and the bowlers.

“There were so many contri-

butions from the rest and it was heartening to see that the fielding came out good,” he added.

Mendis said: “I am really impressed by the team’s fighting qualities and the way they made a comeback was just fantastic. To achieve this sort of success shows the team’s character and and I hope they continue with this mentality ahead. This title victory will be remembered for long for the way the boys made a strong comeback.”

The chief coach, who is also OC’s chief development officer, added: “The win had a lot to do with the support we received from the OC chairman, Pankaj Khimji, Madhu Jesrani (OC secretary), Alkesh Joshi (treasurer) and other board members and support staff.

Thrilling final

Chasing a victory target of 164 after restricting UAE to 163/5, Oman rode on Ilyas’ knock of 67 and an unbeaten 53 from Ayaan to reach the target. Shoaib Khan contributed vital 22 after the team was reduced to 11 for two. A 66-run stand between Ilyas and Shoaib put the team back on course.

Earlier, Bilal Khan and Ilyas picked up two wickets apiece to restrict the UAE to 163. Muhammad Waseem top scored with 46.

OMAN’S BEST PERFORMERS

Highest run-getter
Aqib Ilyas: 5 innings, 205 runs, SR: 158+, 50's: 2
Ayaan Khan: 6 innings, 182 runs, SR: 127, 50's: 1 (SR: strike rate)
Highest wicket-taker
Bilal Khan: 6 inn, 10 wickets, Overs: 23, Eco: 6.39
Fayyaz Butt: 6 inn, 9 wickets, Overs: 21, Eco: 6.33
Notable performances
Aqib Ilyas: 90 (52) vs UAE in the opening league match
Mehran Khan: 3/17 in 4 overs vs Qatar
Naseem Khushi: 64 (45) vs Saudi Arabia as opener
Final: Aqib Ilyas 67 (33) and Ayaan Khan 53 (38)
Most dismissals
Naseem Khushi 7 [4 catches, 3 stumpings]
Highest partnership
Jatinder Singh and Aqib Ilyas vs UAE
93 runs for the second wicket

Campaign starts with a loss

Oman reached the final despite two defeats in the round-robin format. Oman lost their opening match to UAE by 22 runs but exacted revenge for the trophy.

Oman bounced back to defeat the hosts Qatar by 19 runs but lost to Bahrain in one of the most thrilling games as Mendis’ men went down by one run.

Oman then demolished Saudi Arabia by 47 runs and booked a place in the final with a massive 68-run win over Kuwait on Friday.

Led from the front

Ilyas emerged as the tournament’s highest scorer with 90, scored in the opener against the UAE.

His 52-ball innings was studied with ten boundaries and four maximums.

Ilyas also scored a valuable half-century in the title clash against the UAE and was the tournament’s second highest run-getter with 205 runs in five innings.

He ended with an average of 41. His all-round effort in the final (67 and 2/24) earned him the player of the final award.

Ilyas was given good support by Ayaan, who finished the tournament with a total of 182 runs at an average of 36.4.

Ayaan was the only other Omani cricketer to win the player of the match award as he was selected for his all-round display against Saudi Arabia with 34 runs and 2/16.

Besides Ilyas and Ayaan, the only other batter who scored a fifty for Oman was wicketkeeper Naseem Khushi, who hammered 64 against Saudi Arabia.

Khushi also set another record with the most dismissals in the tournament with seven that included three stumpings and four catches.

His excellent display behind the stumps led him past former Oman skipper and wicketkeeper Sultan Ahmed for the most dismissals in T20Is with 18, out of which seven were recorded in the just-concluded Gulf T20I meet. Sultan had held the record of 17 dismissals.

The bowling attack that was lauded by Mendis was led by pacer Bilal Khan, who emerged as tournament’s second highest wicket-taker with 10 wickets, just one behind the tournament’s best of 11 by Ali Naseen of the UAE.

Fayyaz Butt picked a total of nine wickets while the best bowling spell by an Omani at the tournament was from Mehran Khan with 3/17 against Qatar. Butt’s 3-29 against Bahrain was another fruitful spell.

OMAN AT ASIAN GAMES

Oman go down fighting to China in their hockey opener

MUSCAT: Oman went down fighting 4-2 to hosts China in their opening Pool B match of the hockey event at the 19th Asian Games at the Gongshu Canal Sports Park (GSP) Stadium on Sunday.

Oman, coached by Dutchman Siegfried Aikman, fought hard and didn’t allow their much experienced rivals to dominate as they finished the first quarter goalless. Oman took the lead in the second quarter through Ahmed Al Nofali in the 20th minute off a penalty corner.

However, China came back strongly in the penultimate quar-

ter to not only equalise but took the lead to head into the final 15 minutes with a 2-1 score. Gao Jiesheng got the equaliser through a penalty corner in the 33rd minute and made it 2-1 when China captain Lin Changliang converted a penalty stroke in the 41st minute.

Oman fought back to equalise 2-2 through a superb field goal from Fahad Al Lawati in the 52nd minute and raise the team’s hopes of late fightback but China got the winner two minutes later through their drag flicker Jiesheng who scored his third goal off a penalty corner.

The hosts then thwarted the

Oman attacks till the final hooter to claim full points.

Beach spikers bow out

Both the Oman teams competing in the beach volleyball event made their exit in the round of 16 (knockout) on Sunday. Nough Al Jalboobi and Mazin Al Hashimi lost to Kazakhstan pair of Sergey Bogatu and Dmitry Yakolev 2-0 (21-16, 21-17) while Ahmed Al Hosni and Haitham Al Shreiqi lost 2-0 (21-13, 21-11) to Qatari duo of Cherif Samba and Ahmed Janko.

Also in action on Sunday were Oman’s swimmers – Issa Al Adawi and Abdul Rahman Al Kulaibi.

Both the swimmers failed to qualify in their respective events. Al Adawi clocked 53.53sec to finish last in the 100m freestyle heats while Al Kulaibi came seventh in the eight-lane 200m individual medley with a time of 2.16:65

In shooting, the Omani women were in action in the 10m Air Rifle event. Siham Al Hasani, Al Anoud Al Khalili and Amina Al Tarshi finished 48th, 50th and 55th respectively in a field of 59. Siham scored 615.6 points, Al Anoud garnered 614.9 and Amina got 611.7. In the team event, Oman were ranked last among the 14 teams with a total of 1842.2 points.



AL MAHA SIGNS PACT
Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co, recently announced the signing of a distributorship agreement with Al Qalaf Marine Services for the exclusive distribution of AMPRO AQUA 4S, a cutting-edge 4-stroke marine engine oil.

MARKET

BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER
The MSX index closed at 4,679.02 points, up by 0.05 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.07 per cent at 464.52 points. Phoenix Power, up 3.70 per cent, was the top gainer while Dhofar Cattle Feed, down 9.26 per cent, was the top loser.

Experts unite to pitch for clean, green energy

This workshop is part of the initiatives stemming from the strategic dialogue between the Sultanate of Oman and the United States of America, which was announced during the visit of the Secretary of State of the USA in 2022

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Energy and Minerals, in collaboration with the Department of Energy of the United States of America (USA), held a technical workshop on geologic hydrogen.

This workshop is part of the initiatives stemming from the strategic dialogue between the Sultanate of Oman and the United States of America, which was announced during the visit of the Secretary of State of the USA in 2022.

The first round of this dialogue was held in Muscat in February 2023 and encompasses three main areas: trade and investment, alternative energy, education, culture, and science. Notably, this workshop represents the inaugural government-level event in the field of Geologic Hydrogen.

The workshop was attended by Eng. Mohsen Hamad Al Hadrami, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, and Senior Advisor to the US Department of Energy, Dan Milstein, besides the attendance of Leslie Ordman, the Chargé d'Affaires of the Embassy of the United States of America in the Sultanate of Oman, along with representatives from various entities from the public, private, and academic sectors, as well as investment and research institutions.

The workshop's objectives include the exchange of information and ideas concerning geologic hydrogen, facilitating discussions on policies related to its exploration, and fostering commercial and academic partnerships and collaborations between the Sultanate of Oman and the United States of America in the area of cutting-edge energy research.

The workshop focused on the discussion of hydrogen, a natural



substance formed deep within the Earth, with a particular emphasis on opportunities, methods, and strategies related to its exploration and extraction. Additionally, it delved into the phenomenon of natural hydrogen emissions occurring in various regions worldwide, including Oman, particularly in the Hajar Mountains.

One common natural process that generates hydrogen involves the interaction of groundwater with iron-rich minerals, such as olivine rocks found in Oman. These rocks are characterized by their unique type as they contain significant fractures that can potentially facilitate the leakage of hydrogen to sites near the Earth's surface. Furthermore, the workshop highlighted that geologic hydrogen possesses the potential to serve as a primary energy source that is cost-effective and environmentally friendly. It can be extracted from underground reserves through drilling procedures, similar to the extraction of other gases, once discovered in significant quantities.

Nonetheless, more extensive research and development efforts are needed to fully understand the technical and commercial possibilities and opportunities within this domain. Several participants also raised the prospect of geologic

hydrogen being a renewable resource due to the natural geological processes occurring underground.

Further, the workshop discussed various methods to stimulate the production of geological hydrogen and ongoing research related to this emerging field. During the workshop, the Ministry of Energy and Minerals announced the acceptance of research and experimental proposals in the realm of geological hydrogen exploration within the Sultanate of Oman, welcoming submissions from interested parties. Participants also acknowledged the significance of the positive measures undertaken by the Sultanate of Oman to promote environmental sustainability in a broader context, with a particular emphasis on advancing the renewable energy sector and clean hydrogen initiatives.

On the sidelines of this meeting, Mohsen Hamad Al Hadrami, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, signed two Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with the American company 'Eden Geopower' and the Omani Earth Sciences Consultancy Centre. These MoUs aim to facilitate scientific dialogues to conduct extensive preliminary studies for assessing the potential and opportunities in geologic hydrogen

exploration. Furthermore, they will identify suitable locations for conducting experimental research in collaboration with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals.

Following the MoU signing, Al Hadrami said, "The expansion of the hydrogen sector as a clean energy source holds strategic significance within our energy transition plan, particularly in terms of its economic and environmental aspects."

He added, "It will play a pivotal role in global energy security. Hence, the role of research and exploration in this sector is of utmost importance to achieve optimal outcomes. Collaboration and coordination with international experts are fundamental elements that contribute to advancing the scientific and technical dimensions and attracting investments. Our goal is to firmly establish the Sultanate of Oman as a leading and trustworthy player on the global stage in this sector."

He further elaborated, "This workshop and the research agreements in the field of geologic hydrogen with the United States of America represent a significant step in bolstering cooperation in this domain, to optimise research and exploration opportunities. It has the potential to bolster economic opportunities and strategic partnerships related to geologic hydrogen, exploring its utility as a clean natural resource through further research and exploration in this sphere. Notably, the Sultanate of Oman has already ventured into the green hydrogen sector by allocating several sites for investment and establishing partnerships with globally recognised developers in this sector. This collective effort aims to substantially reduce carbon emissions and ensure a stable energy supply on a global scale." -ONA

TENDER FOR OMANI AND SAUDI FIRMS



Tender floated for Al Dhahirah Economic Zone's infrastructure design, supervision

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (Opaz) has announced through the electronic tender system (ESNAD) a tender for Omani and Saudi companies to bid for providing advisory services for designing and supervising the implementation of infrastructure facilities for the Integrated Economic Zone at Al Dhahirah Governorate (EZAD).

Opaz invited local specialised companies to get the terms and conditions of the tender from the website of the General Secretariat of the Tender Board.

The deadline for participating and purchasing the tender documents was set for October 2. Opaz set the date for interested companies in bidding for the project to visit the zone on October 3, and the deadline for receiving bids was set on October 26.

Yahya bin Khamis Al Zadjali, Planning Advisor to Opaz Chairman, pointed out, "The tender was announced after Opaz had finished its thorough analysis and plans for establishing the Integrated Economic Zone at Al Dhahirah Governorate. The scope of this tender includes the design and supervision of the first phase's infrastructure facilities, including roads, electrical installations, water and sewage networks, telecommunications networks, gas networks, industrial waste treatment and necessary area facilities like administrative and commercial buildings and some ancillary facilities. The initial phase of the comprehensive plan for the construction of the Integrated Economic Zone at Al Dhahirah is currently being finalised by Opaz."

"This zone plays a strategic role in enhancing bilateral trade between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



Opaz set the date for interested companies in bidding for the project to visit the zone on October 3, and the deadline for receiving bids was set on October 26

by attracting companies from the two countries to establish their projects within the zone and find economic partnerships to reduce the production and export costs, make it easier to supply goods and products and provide high-quality industries. Additionally, the zone provides job opportunities for Omanis in various sectors and industries, streamlined with Oman's Vision 2040 goals," Al Zadjali explained.

PROSPECTUS

OQGN set to be largest company on MSX Sharia index

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The prospectus for the forthcoming OQ Gas Networks (OQGN) IPO, published on September 18, confirms that the OQGN share offer is Sharia-compliant.

Given OQGN's expected market capitalisation of up to OMR606 million at the top of the price range, the company is expected to become the largest entity on the MSX Sharia Index, when it lists in late October. The addition to the MSX Sharia Index will of course be contingent on the completion of the relevant assessment by MSX post-IPO.

In its Prospectus, OQGN details the pronouncement by the Shariyah Review Bureau, a Shariah Advisory firm licensed by the Central Bank of Bahrain, which confirms that, in its view, based on the circumstances as of the date of the pronouncement, the Offer is Sharia compliant in accordance with pertinent Sharia principles of the AAOIFI Sharia standards as of the date of the Prospectus.

A copy of the aforementioned report by the Shariya Review Bureau is available on the OQGN IPO



portal for interested parties.

Notably, a relative outperformance of the S&P GCC Sharia Index in comparison to the S&P GCC Composite Index has consistently been seen in the GCC market over the last 5 years. This outperformance by the S&P GCC Sharia Index has mainly been attributed to (i) the presence of companies from resilient and defensive sectors, and (ii) the relatively low leverage of underlying companies in the S&P GCC Sharia Index.

OQ Gas Networks hosts roadshow in Ibri for its IPO

MUSCAT: The branch of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) at the Wilayat of Ibri in Al Dhahirah Governorate hosted, yesterday, the third roadshow on the initial public offering (IPO) of OQ Gas Networks (OQGN).

These roadshows aim to inform investors, citizens and residents about the system of subscribing to the floated shares and targeted categories. OQGN intends to float up to 49 per cent of its shares in an IPO, which provides investors with an opportunity to take part in the development journey of the company. In 2022, the company transported about 39.4 billion cubic metres of gas from six gas producers to a varied consumer base including 130 gas consumers along 4,031 kilometres of gas pipelines.



Mansoor Ali Al Abdali, Managing Director of OQGN, said, "OQ Gas Networks is the exclusive operator of the main gas transportation infrastructure in the Sultanate of Oman. The company plays a vital role in connecting gas producers with consumers through its assets which include gas pipelines and networks supported by compression and gas supply stations,

which generate transportation and delivery revenues.

Al Abdali explained that OQGN intends to approve a semi-annual dividend distribution policy to pay the profits of shares in cash after the IPO. The company expects to distribute dividends amounting to OMR33 million for the first nine months of 2023 in January 2024 and OMR11 million for

the last three months of 2023 in April 2024.

He pointed out that the demand for gas in the Sultanate of Oman has increased. Furthermore, he noted that it is expected to be in the range of 37.7 billion square meters and 54.5 billion square meters by 2043 with the rise in economic activity and manufacturing in all vital sectors in Oman.

Saif Al Badi, board member of OCCI and chairman of OCCI's branch at Al Dhahirah Governorate, said, "IPOs contribute to attracting national and foreign investments in governmental assets and boosting the savings of individuals. This results in increasing the cash flows and creating foreign partnerships that enhance the opportunities to exchange expertise and experiences." -ONA

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Phoenix Power, up 3.70 per cent, was the top gainer while Dhofar Cattle Feed, down 9.26 per cent, was the top loser



MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,679.02 points, up by 0.05 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.07 per cent at 464.52 points. Phoenix Power, up 3.70 per cent, was the top gainer while Dhofar Cattle Feed, down 9.26 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of Bank Muscat were the most active in terms of number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 597 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of OMR3.63 million, with more than 14.05 million shares changing hands. Out of 40 traded securities, 11 advanced, 12 declined, and 17 remained unchanged. At the session close, foreign investors were net sellers for OMR289,000 while domestic investors were net buyers for OMR263,000, followed by GCC & Arab investors for OMR25,000 worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,588.97 points, down 0.07 per cent. Prices of Taageer Finance, Bank Nizwa, Ominvest were up by 2.11 per cent, 1.03 per cent, 0.25 per cent respectively. Prices of Al Madina Investments, Global Financial Investments, Al Madina Takaful, Bank Muscat were up by 3.23 per cent, 1.75 per cent, 1.18 per cent, 1.06 per cent respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,670.08 points, down 0.09 per cent. Prices of Galfar Engineering were up by 3.25 per cent respectively. Prices of Dhofar Cattle Feed were up by 9.26 per cent respectively.

Services Index was up by 0.19 per cent before closing at 1,599.35 points. Prices of Phoenix Power, Dhofar Generating, OIFC, Sharqiyah Desalination, Shell Oman Marketing were up by 3.70 per cent, 2.50 per cent, 1.32 per cent, 0.79 per cent, 0.45 per cent respectively. Prices of National Gas, Barka Desalination, Renaissance Services were up by 2.22 per cent, 1.55 per cent, 0.74 per cent respectively. — United Securities

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INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff%
MSX 30 INDEX	4,681.201	4,649.089	4,679.017	4,676.842	2.175	0.05
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,594.296	7,550.930	7,588.969	7,593.950	-4.981	-0.07
Industry Index	5,678.320	5,648.320	5,670.081	5,674.986	-4.905	-0.09
Services Index	1,602.186	1,593.515	1,599.349	1,596.265	3.084	0.19
MSX Shariah Index	465.339	464.044	464.524	464.860	-0.336	-0.07
MSX TR INDEX	6,163.364	6,121.085	6,160.488	6,157.624	2.864	0.05
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,286.772	8,239.452	8,280.959	8,286.394	-5.435	-0.07
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	6,065.858	6,033.811	6,057.057	6,062.297	-5.240	-0.09
SERVICES TR IDX	1,769.530	1,759.953	1,766.397	1,762.990	3.407	0.19

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
14,054,051	3,626,269	597	23,486,043,039	11	12	17	40

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 24

ISINSECURITY NAMEVOLUMETURNOVERTRADESOPEN PRICEHIGHLOWCLOSE PRPREV. CLOSEDIFF (RD)DIFF %LAST PDLAST BDLAST OFFER_PAN VALUE_SECURITY SYMBOLMARKET CAP

REGULAR MARKET

OM0000001152	OMAN NATIONAL ENGINEERING & INVESTMENT	20,000	2,100	1	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.000	0.000	0.105	0.104	0.110	0.100	ONES	15,750,000
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	18,633	5,603	16	0.290	0.305	0.290	0.305	0.305	0.000	0.000	0.300	0.300	0.275	0.100	NBOB	495,913,638
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	528,360	208,351	29	0.395	0.396	0.393	0.395	0.394	0.001	0.254	0.395	0.395	0.393	0.100	OMVS	264,004,343
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	5,764	362	3	0.062	0.063	0.062	0.063	0.063	0.000	0.000	0.063	0.062	0.063	0.100	OEOI	7,678,125
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	807,500	153,575	27	0.190	0.191	0.190	0.190	0.190	0.000	0.000	0.190	0.190	0.190	0.100	AACT	41,800,000
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	41,407	2,316	3	0.055	0.056	0.055	0.056	0.056	0.000	0.000	0.056	0.055	0.056	0.100	UFCE	19,943,129
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	5,531,046	1,562,194	97	0.282	0.284	0.281	0.281	0.284	-0.003	-1.056	0.281	0.281	0.256	0.100	BKMB	2,109,297,574
OM0000003000	AI MAHA PETROLEUM PRODUCTS MARKETING	1,000	1,000	2	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	0.000	0.000	1.000	0.990	1.000	0.100	MHAS	69,000,000
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	839,973	842,443	62	0.998	1.005	0.998	1.001	1.000	0.001	0.100	1.001	1.001	0.900	0.100	OTEL	750,750,000
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	195,000	10,935	24	0.057	0.057	0.056	0.056	0.057	-0.001	-1.754	0.056	0.056	0.060	0.100	GFIC	11,200,000
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	156,648	63,676	20	0.402	0.407	0.402	0.404	0.407	-0.003	-0.737	0.404	0.404	0.387	0.100	RNSS	95,509,640
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	581,695	60,494	21	0.103	0.104	0.103	0.104	0.104	0.000	0.000	0.104	0.103	0.104	0.100	BKSB	668,960,404
OM0000003968	QOREDOO	404,403	153,672	26	0.380	0.381	0.379	0.380	0.380	0.000	0.000	0.381	0.381	0.342	0.100	ORDS	247,558,807
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	7,864	681	3	0.084	0.084	0.084	0.084	0.085	-0.001	-1.176	0.084	0.084	0.085	0.100	AMAT	14,700,000
Total	14	9,139,293	3,067,382	334													

Parallel Market

OM0000001095	DHOFAR INSURANCE	51,805	9,584	3	0.185	0.185	0.185	0.185	0.185	0.000	0.000	0.185	0.000	0.185	0.100	DICS	20,195,500
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	115,105	10,133	8	0.089	0.089	0.088	0.088	0.090	-0.002	-2.222	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.100	NGCI	7,480,000
OM0000001301	DHOFAR FOODS AND INVESTMENT	9,290	455	1	0.049	0.049	0.049	0.049	0.054	-0.005	-9.259	0.049	0.050	0.058	0.100	DFIN	9,686,169
OM0000001418	RAYSUT CEMENT	988,910	118,669	59	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.000	0.000	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.100	RCCI	24,000,000
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	342,206	25,675	14	0.075	0.076	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.000	0.000	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.100	AAIC	15,450,000
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	10,000	390	1	0.030	0.030	0.030	0.030	0.031	-0.001	-3.226	0.030	0.032	0.030	0.100	AMII	2,550,000
OM0000002077	AL OMANITA FINANCIAL SERVICES	616,500	121,659	6	0.149	0.150	0.149	0.150	0.150	0.000	0.000	0.150	0.000	0.150	0.100	AQFS	46,151,131
OM0000002200	AHLI BANK	128,088	21,106	6	0.166	0.166	0.164	0.164	0.164	0.000	0.000	0.164	0.164	0.167	0.100	ABOB	385,343,834
OM0000002275	SHELL OMAN MARKETING	922	826	2	0.895	0.900	0.895	0.900	0.896	0.004	0.446	0.900	0.890	0.900	0.100	SOMS	85,500,000
OM0000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	65,800	2,463	5	0.039	0.039	0.036	0.037	0.038	-0.001	-2.632	0.037	0.036	0.041	0.100	BWPC	5,920,000
OM0000003281	TAAGEER FINANCE	591,893	57,234	14	0.095	0.097	0.095	0.097	0.095	0.002	2.105	0.097	0.097	0.097	0.100	TFCI	25,591,998
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	213,000	33,409	17	0.146	0.159	0.146	0.159	0.154	-0.005	-3.247	0.159	0.147	0.157	0.100	GECS	32,274,845
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	691,738	67,698	30	0.097	0.098	0.096	0.098	0.097	0.001	1.031	0.098	0.090	0.098	0.100	BKNZ	219,221,397
OM0000004669	SHARQIYAH DESALINATION	1,000	128	1	0.128	0.128	0.128	0.128	0.127	0.001	0.787	0.128	0.128	0.132	0.100	SHRQ	12,518,676
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	256,745	5,142	5	0.021	0.021	0.020	0.020	0.020	0.000	0.000	0.020	0.020	0.022	0.100	SUWP	14,288,127
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	900	50	1	0.056	0.056	0.056	0.056	0.054	0.002	3.704	0.056	0.050	0.054	0.100	PHPC	81,905,682
OM0000007407	DHOFAR GENERATING	100,000	4,100	2	0.041	0.041	0.041	0.041	0.040	0.001	2.500	0.041	0.041	0.041	0.100	DGEN	9,111,840
OM0000007910	AMAN REAL ESTATE	13,000	1,287	3	0.099	0.099	0.099	0.099	0.100	-0.001	-1.000	0.099	0.000	0.099	0.100	AMAN	19,800,000
OM0000008447	OMAN RETT FUND	58,600	4,809	3	0.083	0.083	0.082	0.082	0.085	-0.003	-3.529	0.082	0.082	0.085	0.100	OMHF	38,637,284
OM0000008710	BARKA DESALINATION	30,000	3,813	7	0.128	0.128	0.127	0.127	0.129	-0.002	-1.550	0.127	0.126	0.141	0.100	BRDE	9,591,294
OM0000008868	THE PEARL REIF	165,750	18,497	20	0.117	0.119	0.117	0.119	0.117	0.002	1.709	0.119	0.113	0.119	0.100	PRPD	60,464,322
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	125,090	36,643	40	0.293	0.293	0.292	0.293	0.293	0.000	0.000	0.293	0.292	0.293	0.100	ABRJ	225,668,600
Total	22	4,776,342	544,682	248													

DISTRIBUTORSHIP AGREEMENT

Al Maha signs agreement with Al Qalaf Marine Services

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co, recently announced the signing of a distributorship agreement with Al Qalaf Marine Services for the exclusive distribution of AMPRO AQUA 4S, a cutting-edge 4-stroke marine engine oil.

With this agreement, Al Qalaf Marine will serve as the exclusive distributor of AMPRO AQUA 4S four-stroke marine engine oil across the Sultanate of Oman. In addition to traditional distribution channels, Al Qalaf Marine will make this high-performance marine engine oil accessible through their online portal, ensuring convenience and efficiency for marine enthusiasts across the country.

Speaking on the occasion, the Division Head of Sales, Hafidh Bait Hadeed remarked, "Al Qalaf's expertise in the marine industry and extensive reach align seamlessly



with our commitment to delivering quality products to our customers. Together, we aim to elevate the maritime experience in Oman."

Aqil Al Bharani, the CEO of Al Qalaf Marine Services expressed excitement about this partnership, saying, "Our collaboration with Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Co SAOG is a significant

milestone in our journey to provide top-notch solutions to the boating community in Oman. With AMPRO AQUA 4S oil, we are set to enhance the performance and longevity of marine engines, ensuring a smooth sailing experience. The product is already available in the market and online at Al Qalaf marine app."

PARTICIPATION

Bank Nizwa partners with OQGN as collecting bank for impending IPO

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Committed to the innovation of diversified cutting-edge Islamic banking offerings, Bank Nizwa, the Sultanate of Oman's pioneering Islamic bank, announced its participation as a Collecting Bank for the highly anticipated OQ Gas Networks Initial Public Offering (IPO).

In line with the bank's dynamic approach towards establishing strategic collaborations with key players across industries, Bank Nizwa has made subscribing to the IPO accessible to a wider audience through this move.

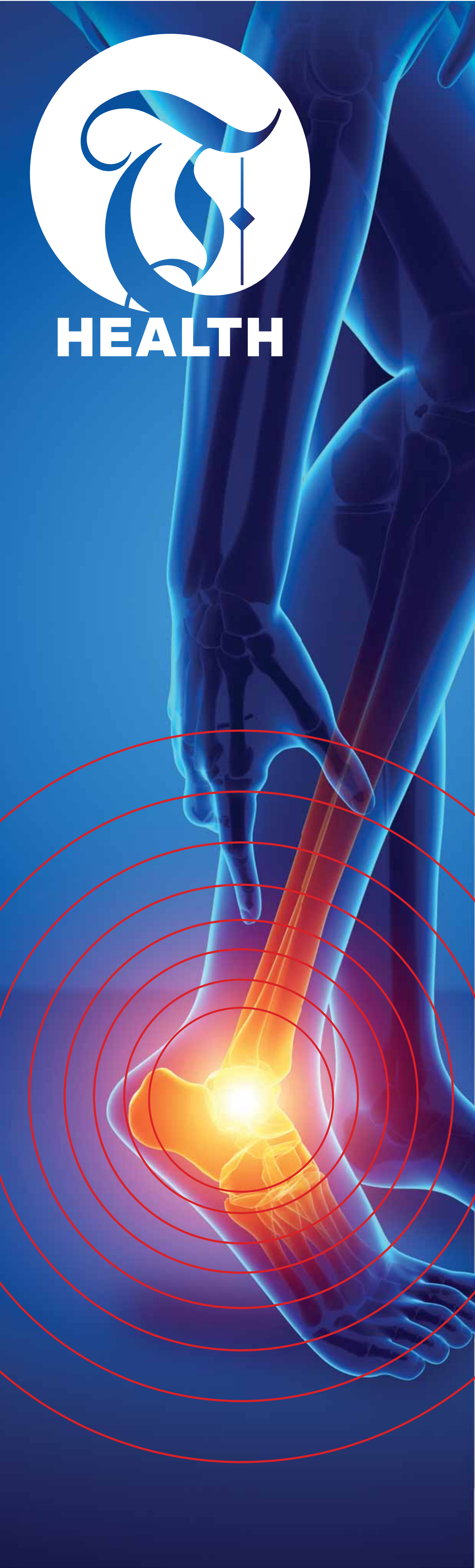
This collaboration enables Bank Nizwa's valued retail customers to subscribe to shares in the OQGN IPO through the bank's user-friendly Mobile Application. Furthermore, Bank Nizwa corporate customers and non-bank Nizwa retail customers can submit their bids through the bank's branches.

OQ Gas Networks recently announced its intention to float 49% of its share capital via an IPO. Marking a significant milestone in Oman's financial sector, the IPO is set to be the biggest to be listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) with 2,122,005,720 shares offered for subscription. A premium energy asset, the IPO will allow local and international investors to be a part of a prominent and strategically important venture in Oman's energy landscape.



Commenting on the momentous partnership, Saif Al Rawahi, Assistant General Manager of Investment, Treasury, Government Relations and Project Finance at Bank Nizwa, said, "As the country's most-trusted Islamic bank, we at Bank Nizwa are proud to be the Collecting Bank for OQGN's IPO as it aligns with our dedication to supporting the economic development of Oman. We are excited to be able to make this offering accessible to our valued customers in a hassle-free, convenient and secure manner."

Institutions will be able to start subscribing starting from September 26 to October 9, where the minimum shares to subscribe will be 100



PLAY-IT-SAFE TIPS TO PROTECT YOUNG ATHLETES’ FEET & ANKLES

IN today’s competitive youth sports landscape, injuries are common, and when they do occur, young athletes are often pressured to play through the pain.

“The back-to-school season is prime time for foot and ankle injuries from fall sports like soccer, football and cross country,” says Richard Baker, DPM, FACFAS, a foot and ankle surgeon and Fellow Member of the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons (ACFAS). “Fortunately, there are many steps parents, coaches and young athletes can take to prevent injuries from occurring in the first place and to discourage kids from playing through pain.”

Here are eight play-it-safe tips from the foot and ankle surgeon members of ACFAS to help prevent injuries and to treat them properly when they do occur.

Here are eight play-it-safe tips from the foot and ankle surgeon members of ACFAS to help prevent injuries and to treat them properly when they do occur.

1. Get a pre-season checkup. A pre-season medical evaluation can help identify whether your child could possibly benefit from using an orthotic or wearing a supportive ankle brace while playing. This is especially important for those with previous sprains and injuries.

2. Start the season with new shoes. Old shoes can wear down and become uneven, causing the ankle to tilt. And, as your child’s feet may have grown between seasons, their old shoes may not fit. The smart move is to replace athletic shoes at the start of each season. While children under 10 should wear all-purpose sports shoes, older youth athletes should wear sport-specific footwear.

3. Train for the season. It’s important that your child’s feet and ankles are accustomed to the level of activity required for the sport. Adequate conditioning in the off-season can help maintain a player’s ability to meet these demands, reducing their risk of injury and improving their performance during the season.

4. Encourage warm up exercises. Calf stretches and light jogging before competition help warm up ligaments and blood vessels, reducing injury risk.

5. Check fields for dips, divots and holes. Ninety percent of ankle sprains are due to poor playing conditions. That’s why some surgeons recommend walking the field, especially in non-professional settings like public parks, looking for spots that could catch a player’s foot. Alert coaching officials to any irregularities.

6. Watch their technique. A difference in the way your child is moving is often a tell-tale sign that something is wrong. Playing with pain is never a winning strategy so encourage kids to be honest about pain or discomfort.

7. Be mindful of other physical activities. Your child doesn’t need to be involved in a formalized athletic program to be vulnerable to sports-related injuries. Foot and ankle surgeons warn of common injuries like plantar fasciitis, bone spurs, fractures and Achilles tendonitis due to repetitive, forceful motions, which can occur in activities such as skateboarding. When skateboarding or engaged in other non-formal activities, always wear protective gear, including supportive shoes, and seek treatment when there is pain or injury.

8. Remember RICE. Often, an injured foot or ankle can be treated with rest, ice, compression and elevation. Those with foot or ankle pain should take a break from playing and allow time for recovery. If pain persists, something more serious may be happening, such as cartilage injuries or broken bones in the foot. Consult a foot and ankle surgeon for a complete evaluation, proper diagnosis and treatment plan. The sooner rehabilitation starts, the sooner your child can safely get back into the game.

SPORTS

Verstappen’s victory powers Red Bull to constructors’ title

The Red Bull driver wins his 13th race of the season and has a chance to clinch the title in the next race in Qatar in October

SUZUKA: Max Verstappen expressed his pride at Red Bull’s workforce after his dominant victory, the 13th of the year, in Sunday’s Japanese Grand Prix secured a second consecutive constructors’ title for the team.

Verstappen survived an attack from McLaren pair Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri at the start of the race before taking control of proceedings and pulling almost 20 seconds clear.

The result put the constructors’ championship mathematically out of reach of Red Bull’s nearest rivals, Mercedes and Ferrari, while giving Verstappen his first chance of winning the drivers’ title in the next Grand Prix race in Qatar in October.

The win also underlines the outfit’s superiority under F1’s latest ground effect era so far, while adding to the teams’ titles they achieved in 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013.

“It’s an unbelievable weekend,” said Verstappen after jumping out of the car. “To win here was great. I think the car was working really well on every [tyre] compound.

“But of course, the most important was also to win the construc-



tors’. I’m very proud of everyone working at the track but also back at the factory. We’re having an incredible year.”

Asked if there were any moments of concern, he added: “Only the start, probably a bit too much wheel spin, but after that it was quite a

straightforward race luckily.”

While Verstappen enjoyed a dream race, it was a nightmare for team-mate Sergio Perez, who was caught up in a first-lap incident with Mercedes’ Lewis Hamilton, picked up a penalty for breaching the Safety Car regulations and then another sanction for clashing with Haas rival Kevin Magnussen.

Perez retired from the action due to the damage sustained, despite fitting two new front wings, but made a late, brief re-appearance to serve his penalties and ensure that no punishments will be hanging over him at the Lusail International Circuit next time out.

Back to winning ways

Verstappen was attacked by Piastri and Norris at the start but kept both of them at bay, navigated Safety Car and Virtual Safety Car periods and then romped into the distance, taking the chequered flag first for the 13th time this season.

A battle between the McLaren drivers was ultimately settled in Norris’ favour, the Briton getting ahead at the start, dropping behind when Piastri pitted under a Virtual Safety Car but then displaying enough pace for the team to swap positions.

Charles Leclerc led Ferrari’s charge in fourth position, completing a bold, late move on Mercedes

rival George Russell – the only front-runner to attempt a one-stop rather than two-stop strategy – around the outside of Turns 1 and 2.

Russell fell into the clutches of team-mate Hamilton in the closing laps and was instructed to let him by, which he agreed to do, after the Mercedes drivers had gone wheel-to-wheel and almost collided earlier in the race.

Carlos Sainz also pounced on Russell’s ageing tyres to take sixth behind Hamilton, with Aston Martin’s Fernando Alonso and the Alpines of Esteban Ocon and Pierre Gasly – despite a first-lap incident for the former – scoring the final points of the day.

With their cars starting ninth and 11th, AlphaTauri had been points contenders in the opening exchanges, but faded as the various strategies played out – F1 newcomer Liam Lawson beating home favourite Yuki Tsunoda to the flag in 11th and 12th respectively.

Zhou Guanyu was another to bounce back from Lap 1 drama as he crossed the line 13th, the only Alfa Romeo driver to finish after team-mate Valtteri Bottas was punted into the gravel by Williams rival Logan Sargeant.

Haas pair Nico Hulkenberg and Kevin Magnussen were the final finishers in P14 and P15 respectively, a theme of their 2023 season amid tyre degradation struggles, with a gaggle of cars behind retiring at different stages.

Williams suffered a double DNF as Sargeant returned his car to the garage after clashing with Bottas, having been penalised pre-race and given a pit lane start for major car changes following his qualifying crash, while Albon retired with damage after his own Lap 1 incident involving the Alfa Romeo. - Agencies

SPANISH LA LIGA

Barcelona make dramatic comeback in win against Celta



BARCELONA: Joao Cancelo snatched a late 3-2 win for Barcelona as they returned to the top of La Liga with a fightback against Celta Vigo on Saturday.

Celta were 2-0 up with nine minutes remaining after goals from Jorgen Strand Larsen and Tasos Douvikas.

But two clinical finishes in the space of just four minutes from Robert Lewandowski rescued Barcelona’s hopes.

And Cancelo completed the comeback as he met a Gavi ball and drilled a composed volley past Ivan Millar.

Barcelona now top La Liga thanks to a superior goal differ-

ence over Girona, with both sides on 16 points.

Barca were regularly undone at the back, with Celta’s Luca de la Torre, Iago Aspas and Jonathan Bamba weaving through their defence.

But Xavi’s men were resilient and continued to send waves of attacks towards the visitors’ backline until it finally cracked.

Real Madrid, who are second, could return to the top of the table and move two points ahead of Barcelona if they beat Atletico Madrid in Sunday’s Madrid derby.

Other results: Girona 5 Mallorca 3, Osasuna 0 Sevilla 0, Almeria 2 Valencia 2.

PREMIER LEAGUE

Ten-man Man City edge past Forest

LONDON: Leaders Manchester City were forced to hang on to beat Nottingham Forest 2-0 after Rodri’s red card but still maintained their perfect start to the Premier League season.

City were cruising at the break thanks to early goals by Phil Foden and Erling Haaland but the game changed dramatically only 27 seconds after the restart.

Rodri was shown a straight red for violent conduct after putting his hands around Morgan Gibbs-White’s throat as they tangled near the corner flag, with VAR upholding referee Anthony Taylor’s decision.

Forest had been outplayed until that point, with City slicing them open with sparkling attacks down the right to score both their goals inside the first 15 minutes.

Kyle Walker set up Foden to fire home City’s opener with a fine first-time finish, before Matheus Nunes crossed from the same flank for an unmarked Haaland to head home.

The second half was a different story, however, with City having to dig in to protect their lead - and they mostly succeeded in keeping Forest at arms’ length.

Tempers continued to boil over



in the closing minutes, with City manager Pep Guardiola and the home fans unhappy with more of Rodri’s decisions, but City still held out to make it six wins out of six.

Rodri’s first red card in the Premier League came after a moment of madness that was completely out of character for the 27-year-old Spain international, who has been a cornerstone of City’s midfield for most of the past four seasons.

Gibbs-White waited before throwing himself to the ground

United’s Rashford escapes unhurt after car crash

LONDON: Manchester United and England striker Marcus Rashford escaped unhurt after being involved in a car crash on Saturday night.

The incident happened when Rashford had left United’s Carrington training ground in his white Rolls Royce.

Erik ten Hag’s squad had returned on the team coach

from Burnley following their 1-0 win before leaving the training base in their personal cars.

Pictures emerged online showing the aftermath of the car incident.

Rashford played the full 90 minutes of United’s win at Turf Moor - the club’s first win in four matches. - Agencies

ETHIOPIAN RUNNER

Assefa smashes women’s marathon world record

BERLIN: Ethiopia’s Tigist Assefa smashed the women’s marathon world record as she won Sunday’s race in Berlin.

Assefa, who also won last year’s race, crossed the line in a time of two hours, 11 minutes and 53 seconds.

The 29-year-old took more than two minutes off the previous record of 2:14.04 - set by Kenya’s Brigid Kosgei in Chicago in 2019.

Double Olympic champion Eliud Kipchoge was the men’s winner for a record fifth time in Berlin with a run of 2:02.42.

The 38-year-old Kenyan set the men’s record of 2:01.09 in Berlin last year, when he moved



level with Ethiopian great Haile Gebrselassie on four wins.

Assefa’s winning time is the 13th world record to be set in Berlin, where she won last year in 2:15.37 - which at the time was the third fastest women’s run in history. - Agencies

LAVER CUP

Team World take healthy 10-2 lead

VANCOUVER: Defending champions Team World will carry a 10-2 lead over Team Europe into the third and final day of this year’s Laver Cup in Vancouver.

American pair Taylor Fritz and Frances Tiafoe both won in straight sets on Saturday, beating Andrey Rublev and Hubert Hurkacz, respectively.

Felix Auger-Aliassime and Ben Shelton added a doubles win for Team World. Matches on day three are worth three points so Team World need just one win from Sunday’s four contests to win the event for a second time. - Agencies

GERMAN BUNDESLIGA

Kane’s hat-trick in Bayern’s 7-0 triumph over Bochum

MUNICH: England captain Harry Kane scored a hat-trick and assisted twice as Bayern Munich extended their unbeaten start to the Bundesliga season with a 7-0 win over VfL Bochum on Saturday.

Kane reacted quickly to smash home a loose ball in the Bochum box in the first half before converting a penalty after the break.

He secured the match ball by turning home a pass from Nussair Mazraoui in the 88th minute.

Kane delivered precise passes to set up Leroy Sane and teenager Mathys Tel. Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting and Matthijs de Ligt also scored for the Bavarians.

Kane, whose goal on Wednesday helped Bayern to a 4-3



Champions League victory over Manchester United, has netted seven in his first five Bundesliga matches.

The haul on Saturday was his first domestic league hat-trick since December 2017, when he scored consecutive trebles for Tottenham against Burnley and Southampton.

Thomas Tuchel’s Bayern now have four wins and one draw after their opening five games and top the table with 13 points.

Other results: Union Berlin 0 Hoffenheim 2, Borussia Dortmund 1 Wolfsburg 0, Borussia Monchengladbach 0 RB Leipzig 1, Augsburg 2 Mainz 1, Werder Bremen 2 Cologne 1. - Agencies

Mall of Muscat delights visitors with captivating ‘Panchavadyam’

Commencing with a gentle tempo, the Panchavadyam performance, the popular rhythmic orchestra hailing from the Indian state of Kerala, gradually built-up momentum, eventually reaching a breathtaking crescendo that had the audience fully immersed and enraptured by the music

MUSCAT: Mall of Muscat, Oman's premier shopping destination, recently delighted its visitors with a captivating performance of Panchavadyam, the popular rhythmic orchestra hailing from the Indian state of Kerala.

This ensemble showcased the remarkable talents of approximately 20 artists proficient in an array of instruments, including five distinctive percussion instruments: Timila, Maddalam, Ilathalam, and Idakka, alongside the symphonic tones of the wind instrument known as Kombu.

Commencing with a gentle tempo, the Panchavadyam performance gradually built-up momentum, eventually reaching a

breathtaking crescendo that had the audience fully immersed and enraptured by the music.

A spokesperson for Mall of Muscat said, "Panchavadyam's performance brought forth a musical delight that resonated deeply, and the crowd's palpable enthusiasm was a testament to its captivating allure. This is our special way of welcoming and pampering our valued visitors. Mall of Muscat took great pleasure in hosting this immersive music session, introducing the enchanting melodies of this orchestra to the people of Oman. Traditional Omani music boasts a rich heritage, featuring a wide array of percussion instruments that have played a significant role in shaping



the country's musical traditions for centuries. This performance served as a beautiful fusion of cultural appreciation and entertainment, celebrating both the artistry of Panchavadyam and the diverse

musical heritage of Oman."

Incorporating an expanse of approximately 200,000 square meters and providing more than 3000 parking spaces, the Mall boasts a substantial area. Beyond its shop-

ping allure, Mall of Muscat presents a host of family-centric attractions, including a cinema, an entertainment zone, and other engaging features. Remarkably, it also hosts the Oman Aquarium, the largest and

only public aquarium within the Sultanate. With an impressive array of 240+ brands spanning across fashion, lifestyle, sports, and electronics, Mall of Muscat offers an unparalleled luxurious experience.

SMARTPHONE

Adhwa Al Billa Technology introduces Nothing Phone (2) in Oman

MUSCAT: Few months back, Nothing tech announced the launch of Phone (2) in the region. Thanks to its newest with Adhwa Al Billa Technology, users in Oman will get the chance to get their hands on the highly anticipated second-generation flagship smartphone from September 26.

Engineered to make smartphone usage more mindful, Phone (2) introduces the new Glyph Interface at the back, enabling users to minimize screen interactions by accessing key information at a glance. It also features a revamped Nothing OS 2.0, rooted in utility and designed to reduce distractions, while delivering a fast and smooth experience that embodies Nothing's unique aesthetics. Powered by the top-of-the-line Snapdragon® 8+ Gen 1 Mobile Platform, Phone (2) delivers Nothing's most premium smartphone experience to date, boasting a powerful 50MP dual rear camera with advanced algorithms for true-to-life photography, and a stunning 6.7-inch OLED display with LTPO.

Commenting on the expansion of Nothing in the GCC and new partnership with Adhwa Al Billa Technology, Rishi Kishor Gupta, Business Lead for Middle East and Africa at Nothing said, "We have seen a lot of excitement for our products in the region and we feel confident that Phone (2) along with other Nothing products range will resonate strongly with Omani consumers. We are thrilled to work with Adhwa Al Billa Technology to cement our presence in Oman and introduce a place where people can experience our top-notch products."

Faris Al Juma, CEO- ABTL said, "Nothing is dedicated to making tech fun again and has proven its abilities to break boundaries in industrial design. Phone 2 was described as an upgrade from Phone 1, with software being a major focus for the company as has been reported previously.



designed to encourage users to be more present in their everyday life, by providing essential information without the constant need to look at the screen. Additionally, users have the ability to assign personalized light and sound sequences to contacts and apps, allowing them to stay one step ahead of incoming notifications.

Nothing has enhanced its signature Glyph Interface on Phone (2) by increasing the number of LED segments to allow for greater customisability and functionality. The Glyph Interface can now serve as a visual countdown and progress tracker for ride or delivery services. It also offers additional functionalities such as a volume checker, and timer. With Essential Glyph Notifications, users can stay focused without missing what matters the most. When receiving a notification from selected contacts or apps, the top-right LED segment will remain on until it has been addressed.

Through the new Glyph Composer, users can personalize their experience further by creating their own unique Glyph Ringtones.

outs and illustrated covers.

Committed to providing a fast and smooth user experience first and foremost, Nothing has optimised its software, making app opening speed on Phone (2) up to twice as fast as that of Phone (1), while refining over 500 transitions and animations.

Powerful camera upgrades

Phone (2) offers Nothing's most premium smartphone camera experience to date, featuring a 32 MP front camera, and a dual rear camera system that has two advanced 50 MP sensors, with a main sensor upgraded to the Sony IMX890.

Equipped with an advanced 18-bit Image Signal Processor (ISP), Phone (2) has the ability to process camera data up to 4,000 times more than its predecessor, Phone (1). This empowers Phone (2) to leverage cutting-edge algorithms, resulting in incredible levels of accuracy for both photos and videos. Capturing three times more data than before, the new Advanced HDR algorithm takes eight frames with varying exposure levels within the RAW domain of the sensor. This enables it to preserve an abundance of intricate details in each frame, ultimately merging them to produce a final image that captures the most true-to-life result. To further enhance the camera experience, Motion Capture 2.0, an advanced AI-based technology, facilitates real-time identification of moving subjects to ensure precise focus on all crucial details in a frame.

Phone (2) elevates video recording capabilities with stunning 4K resolution at 60fps on the main rear camera. The experience is further enhanced by Action Mode, ensuring seamless filming even while on the move. With built-in EIS (Electronic Image Stabilization) and OIS (Optical Image Stabilization), users can expect

flawlessly smooth results. Additionally, the front camera enables captivating self-recording in immersive 1080P at 60fps.

Premium performance

Phone (2) delivers an entirely elevated experience. Packed with the Snapdragon® 8+ Gen 1 Mobile Platform and 4700 mAh battery, Phone (2) delivers a fast performance and lasting battery life to power users through their everyday lives. Users can charge fast and wirelessly, reaching 50% power in just under 20 minutes of fast wired charging.

Featuring Nothing's most premium smartphone display to date, Phone (2) offers an edge-to-edge 6.7-inch LTPO OLED display with adaptive refresh rate from 120hz to 1hz to ensure optimal power consumption and peak performance, without compromising on battery life.

Sustainability

Phone (2) marks the culmination of the company's ongoing sustainability initiatives. Despite incorporating more advanced features and components compared to its predecessor, Phone (2) achieves a 5 kg reduction of CO2, exemplifying Nothing's ongoing commitment to sustainability across the years. The following key initiatives have contributed to this achievement:

- 100% recycled aluminum mid-frame, buttons, and SIM tray tip.
- 80% of plastic parts made from recycled and bio-based materials.
- 100% recycled tin used on 9 circuit boards.
- 100% recycled copper foils used for the main board.
- Over 90% recycled steel used for all 28 steel stamping parts.
- Zero waste from the assembling process ends up in landfills.
- 100% renewable energy used across the final assembly plant and the recycled aluminium production plant.
- FSC MIX certified (The Forest Stewardship Council) plastic-free packaging with over 60% recycled fibre.

Availability and pricing

Nothing Phone (2) will be available in both white and dark gray with two variants to choose from: 12GB/256GB (264.9 OMR), and the 12GB/512GB (299.9 OMR).

Pre-orders for the Nothing Phone (2) will start on 21st to the 25th Sep and will include a free Nothing Ear (Stick) with every purchase until stocks last.

Pre-orders will be available in the following stores:

Oman across selected retailers:

- Sharaf DG
- Extra Electronics
- Emax

Phone (2) will be publicly available across above retailers in Oman from Sep 26.

Dr Ammar Al Lawati joins Gulf Specialised hospital

MUSCAT: Gulf Specialised hospital appointed Dr.Ammar Bin Mohsin Bin Jumaa Al Lawati as its first ENT consultant to its team and will be available all week days after a long journey with Al Nahdah Hospital. He diagnoses, treat and operate ENT different surgeries for all ages. Dr Ammar graduated from Italy and specialised in Germany as well he has ear and skullbase fellowship from Italy also he had published many



scientific papers and considered one of pioneers in ear and cochlear implant surgery in the region.

WORLD ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP



Toyota Gazoo Racing grabs World Title at 6 Hours of Fuji

MUSCAT: Toyota Gazoo Racing earned a thrilling one-two victory on home ground in the 6 Hours of Fuji to clinch Toyota's fifth manufacturers' title in the penultimate race of the 2023 FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC) season.

In front of a record 54,700 crowd, Mike Conway, Kamui Kobayashi and José María López took victory in their No.7 GR010 Hybrid Electric Hypercar after an epic battle against WEC's biggest lineup of top-class competitors. Sébastien Buemi, Brendon Hartley and Ryo Hirakawa completed a perfect result by taking second place in their No.8 GR010 Hybrid Electric Hypercar, finishing just 39.119secs behind.

Koji Sato, President of Toyota Motor Corporation and Toyota Gazoo Racing Europe Chairman, commented: "Together with our Japanese fans and partners who support our challenge in WEC, at the 6 Hours of Fuji, the sixth round of the season, the #7 car won from pole position and the #8 car completed a one-two victory. I was watching the race from the pit, and it was very reassuring to see the enthusiastic support and smiling faces of everyone in the grandstand. I think it was a great source of encouragement for the team to take on the challenges of this race, so I really appreciate all our fans here."

Sato added: "We want to improve our vehicles through motorsport and make our customers

happy. We will continue to take on the challenge of creating more smiles through WEC and fight with all our might as one team in the next round in Bahrain, the final race of the season."

Right from the race's outset, Conway and Buemi faced fierce competition from some of the World Championship's biggest contenders. Pressure at the front continued to mount after the first driver changes, which came around the two-hour mark. López immediately set the fastest lap, with Hirakawa battling to advance through the ranks.

López relentlessly looked for a way past the leader and soon the top three were separated by barely a second after a string of fast laps from Hirakawa, who eventually passed López before making a bold overtake for the lead.

The 2023 FIA WEC season will conclude with the 8 Hours of Bahrain, which will take place on November 4.

ROUND-UP

National Finance bags ‘Best Performing Company’ in Mid-Cap Category award

The accolade – another feather in the company’s hat – underscores National Finance’s unparalleled pursuit of excellence, innovation and scaling new heights

MUSCAT: Recognising its outstanding achievements over the past year, National Finance was recently honoured with the esteemed ‘Best Performing Company’ Award in the Mid-Cap Category at the prestigious Alam Al-Iktisaad Awards 2023.

The accolade – another feather in the company’s hat – underscores National Finance’s unparalleled pursuit of excellence, innovation and scaling new heights in the Sultanate of Oman’s finance sector. The honour was presented by His Highness Sayyid Melek bin Shihab Al Said and was received by Ahmed Al Maawali, Deputy Head of Retail at National Finance, on behalf of the company.

The awards, organised by the country’s leading business magazine Alam Al-Iktisaad, was graced by the presence of Chief Guest His Highness Sayyid Melek bin Shihab Al Said and hosted by Shaikh



Salim Bin Mustahail Al Mashani.

The event also saw in attendance distinguished senior government dignitaries, top business leaders, financial consultants, decision makers and esteemed members of the business fraternity. In the midst of illustrious players of the industry, 15 top ranking MSX-listed companies were felicitated with honours based on a ranking process that assessed select parameters like revenue growth, net profit growth and net profit margin, among others.

Beaming with pride upon the win, Tariq Al Farsi, Chief Executive Officer, National Finance, said, “This award serves as a testament to National Finance’s dedication and constant commitment to providing the fastest and most flexible solutions to serve our customers in the best possible way. Our extensive experience, strong collaborations, strategic business practices, and hard-working and dedicated employees are the reasons behind our great achievements. This recognition reinforces

our continuous commitment to delivering unparalleled financial services, staying abreast of market developments, and improving people’s lives by adapting our products to meet customer needs.”

National Finance’s customer-centric approach and keen focus on developing finance solutions that cater to the evolving needs of individuals, business owners, SMEs and corporates, sets it apart as the most sought after finance company in the country. Apart from its unparalleled services, the

company also stands out for its immeasurable contribution to sustainability initiatives and social welfare campaigns. The company has been integral to an array of campaigns that are environmentally conscious and empower communities across the Sultanate of Oman. Additionally, the company has been instrumental in providing SMEs with the backing they need to succeed. These initiatives add immense value to the National Finance brand and shed light on its committed efforts towards the economic and social progress of the country.

The receipt of the Best Performing Mid-Cap Company award serves as further impetus to the leading diversified financial institution to continue spearheading excellence in the country’s finance sector. National Finance looks forward to a bright future of innovation and progress, and remains steadfast in its aim to empower individuals and businesses through accessible and responsible financial services.

BRUNCH FIESTA



Aloft Muscat elevates weekend dining with The Backstage restaurant’s sassy Saturday brunch

MUSCAT: Aloft Muscat announced the launch of its sassy Saturday brunch fiesta at The Backstage restaurant, where culinary excellence meets affordability and assures an exceptional dining experience along with live entertainment. The brunch is available every Saturday from 11:30am to 3:30pm, making it the perfect weekend treat for friends and family.

The Saturday brunch at The Backstage all day dining restaurant offers an array of international and Middle Eastern fusion flavours, live cooking stations and sensations that will leave customers craving for more. Guests can customise their brunch experience, selecting from two enticing packages.

The inviting ambiance of The Backstage complements its cool-

vibes dining experience perfectly. With its modern and elegant decor, it provides the ideal backdrop for a leisurely and enjoyable meal.

The recently opened Aloft Muscat is strategically located in the middle of the dynamic capital city at Ghala, exhibiting the perfect blend of the city’s buzzing, yet calm nature, creating an experience that is well rounded.

OMAN ARAB BANK

OAB announces winners of summer credit card campaign



MUSCAT: Five lucky winners will be jetting off on premium holidays after winning the final draw of the Oman Arab Bank (OAB) summer 2023 credit campaign. The prize winners, who each secured unforgettable vacations worth OMR 1,200 each, comprised four customers and one OAB employee.

Following the announcement, Sulaiman Al Harthi, CEO of Oman Arab Bank, said: “I have been extremely pleased with the success of this campaign, which

is part of our ongoing commitment to providing added value and opportunities for our customers. Congratulations to all our winners, and my heartfelt thanks to all our loyal customers who took part.”

The campaign had seen participating customers earning draw entries for every OMR 5 spent, including online and POS transactions. Promoting in-bound tourism, those customers travelling to Salalah for the season were able to double their entries per trans-

action for bigger chances to win.

Today, Oman Arab Bank credit card holders can unlock a plethora of perks and benefits through the innovative OAB mobile app. Key exciting travel benefits that come with being an OAB credit card holder include travel insurance for peace of mind, exclusive airport lounge access for added comfort, unbeatable discounts and special offers on airfares and hotel stays, as well as exquisite dining experiences at over 300 airport outlets worldwide.



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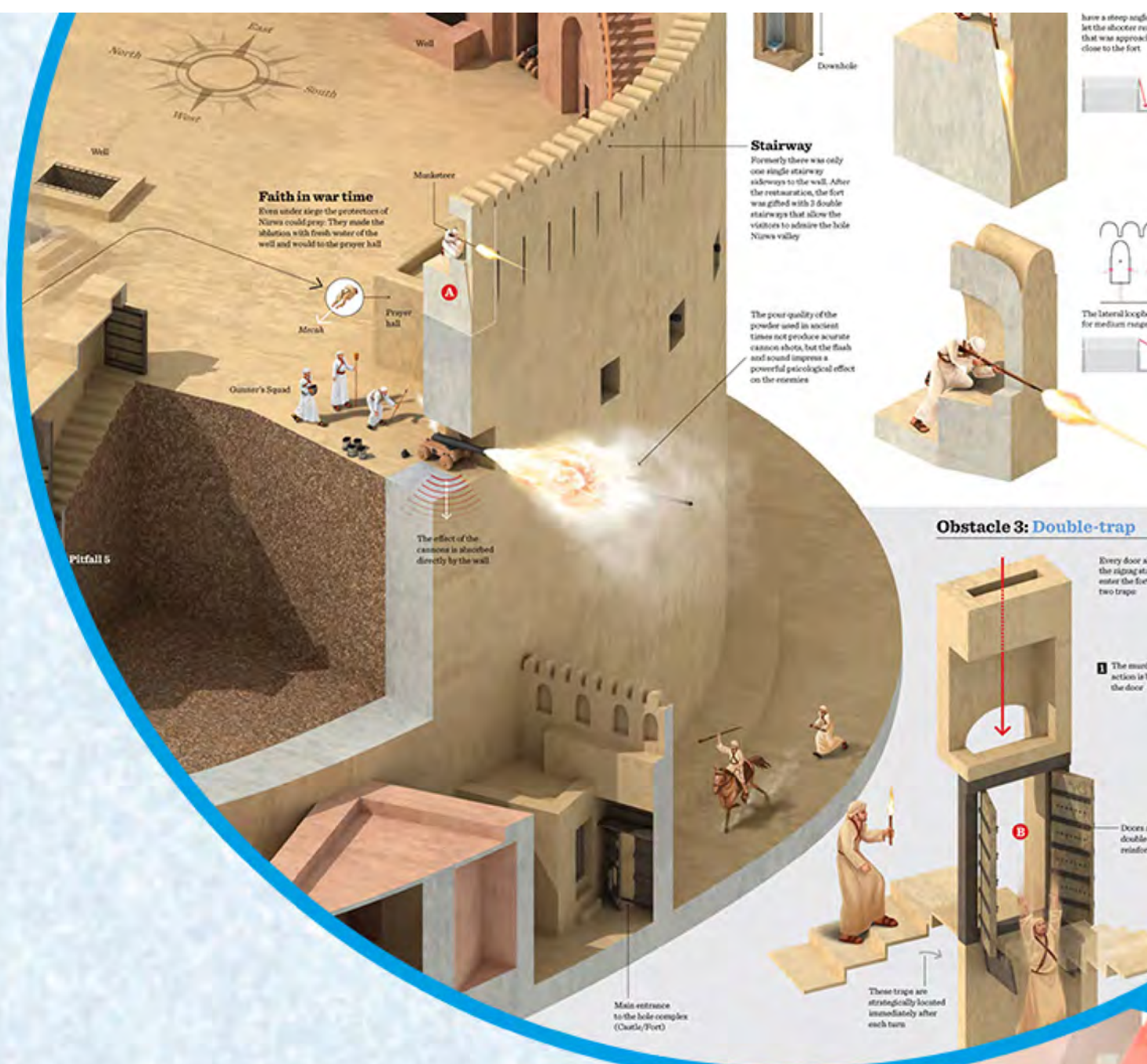
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