



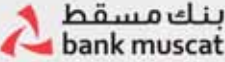
HIS MAJESTY THE SULTAN GREETES KING OF BHUTAN

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck of Bhutan on his country's National Day. In the cable, His Majesty expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes to King Wangchuck and the people of Bhutan. — **ONA**



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THE HONOURABLE LADY PRESIDES OVER GRADUATION OF TASMU INITIATIVE BATCH

Her Highness the Honourable Lady Assayida Ahd Abdullah Hamed Al Busaidi, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman, yesterday presided over the graduation ceremony of a new batch of the Tasmu Initiative, which aims to develop leadership capabilities of Omani women cadres. The ceremony took place at the Royal Academy of Management (RAM). **>A2**



OMAN'S INFLATION RATE ONE OF THE LOWEST GLOBALLY

Proactive measures and policies have helped keep inflation rates at a moderate level even during its global peak in 2022

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman has attached great interest to the issue of global inflation.

Oman has been striving to contain inflation rates within the targets of the financial, economic and social policies. It has also exerted sincere efforts to avoid its exacerbation to the rates witnessed by many developed, emerging and developing countries. These high rates of inflation affected the growth of the economy and the standards of living in these countries.

The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, followed by closures and restrictions on movement and economic activities, led to problems in supply chains and global trade, and increased the cost of services and food prices.

These high prices continued to rise due to the repercussions of the Ukrainian crisis and its effects on energy prices, services, shipping and insurance costs, as well as food commodities such as grains, seeds, vegetable oils, and milk. All these developments resulted in an exacerbation of global inflation to reach its highest levels during 2022.

In light of this crisis, the effects of global increases were reflected



1.7%

The average inflation rate according to consumer price indices (CPI) recorded in Oman during the period from 2021-2023

0.8%

Was the consumer price inflation rate during the period from January to October 2024

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN Belarus President visits National Museum

1 President Aleksandr Lukashenko of the Republic of Belarus and his accompanying delegation yesterday visited the National Museum, within the context of his official visit to the Sultanate of Oman. The President also toured the museum's different galleries. **>A5**

OMAN Oman, USA explore cooperation

2 Sheikh Khalifa Ali Al Harthy, Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs yesterday received Elizabeth Richard, Coordinator for Counterterrorism at the Department of State of the United States of America. **>A3**

WORLD Ustad Zakir Hussain passes away in US

3 Renowned tabla maestro Ustad Zakir Hussain passed away in a hospital in San Francisco. According to reports, he was undergoing treatment for a critical condition. Ustad Zakir Hussain is the son of the legendary tabla player Ustad Allah Rakha. **>A7**

INTERNATIONAL HOCKEY FEDERATION

FIH President hails Oman's exceptional hosting of Junior Asia Cups as India shine

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman has earned high praise from the International Hockey Federation (FIH) for its outstanding hosting of the Women's and Men's Junior Asia Cups 2024 at the state-of-the-art Hockey Oman Arena in Al Amerat, which concluded on Sunday.

FIH President Tayyab Ikram, acknowledging the country's significant contribution to global hockey, said: "Oman has once again demonstrated its remarkable ability to organise top-tier events, with both the women's and



TAYYAB IKRAM: President, International Hockey Federation

men's Asia Junior Cups executed flawlessly.

Superb facilities

"The country's commitment to the sport and the superb facilities at Hockey Oman Arena make it a standout destination for international competitions. The dedication of Oman Hockey Association (OHA) officials to the sport and impeccable hosting standards have elevated hockey in the region."

India triumphed in both tournaments, with the women's team securing the Junior Asia Cup ti-

tle through a nail-biting penalty shootout against China on Sunday, while the men's team claimed the title with a 5-3 win over Pakistan earlier this month.

The Women's Junior Asia Cup not only crowned champions but also finalised Asia's representatives - India, China, South Korea, Japan, and Malaysia - for the expanded 24-team FIH Hockey Women's Junior World Cup in Santiago, Chile, in 2025. Third-placed South Korea, along with Japan and Malaysia, rounded out the top five teams, all securing their spots. **>A5**



**TOMI Awards 2024: Celebrating
creativity, innovation and excellence**

A4



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GRADUATION CEREMONY

The Honourable Lady presides over graduation of Tasmu initiative batch



MUSCAT: Her Highness the Honourable Lady Assayida Ahd Abdullah Hamed Al Busaidi, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman, yesterday presided over the graduation ceremony of a new batch of the Tasmu Initiative, which aims to develop leadership capabilities of Omani women cadres. The ceremony took place at the Royal Academy of Management (RAM).

Upon the arrival of the Honourable Lady at the Academy's building, she was received by Dr. Ali Qasim Al Lawati, President of the Royal Academy of Management, and those in charge of the Academy.

In cooperation with the Ministry of Social Development, the new batch saw the participation of 50 women from the public and private sectors and civil society institutions.

Tasmu Initiative, the first national programme of its kind that is dedicated to female leaders, seeks to enhance the Sultanate of Oman's comprehensive development process. It includes advanced training, meetings and field visits.

On the sidelines of the ceremony, the Honourable Lady toured the Academy's departments and listened to a briefing about the institution's goals and specialized programmes designed to develop performance and draw out future strategic plans. She also took note of the Digital Academy and the international indices display panel.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, the Honourable Lady signed the Visitors Book. The Royal Academy of Management presented a commemorative gift to the Honourable Lady, who expressed her thanks to those in charge of Tasmu Initiative.

The Honourable Lady also valued the sincere efforts to develop the capabilities of Omani women in various fields. She wished all success in making further accomplishments.

For their part, the organisers of the initiative expressed their delight at the auspicious visit of the Honourable Lady, thanking her for gracing the ceremony. They valued her great support to Omani women. They also expressed their best wishes to her. - *ONA*





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OMAN VISION 2040

Visual, promotional identity of Al Dakhiliyah Governorate launched

MANAH: The Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah yesterday launched its promotional visual identity named "Al Dakhiliyah, Sincerity Oman".

The event sought to develop a visual identity that embodies the governorate's vision, mission, goals and future approaches, in line with Oman Vision 2040. The vision aims to integrate cultural heritage into economic diversification efforts.

The governorate also seeks to utilise its rich heritage and historical landmarks to enhance the tourism sector, which highlights the governorate's role as a major destination for Omani authenticity. The visual identity reflects the



way historical and cultural values shape the identity of Omani society. The inaugural ceremony was held at Oman Across the Ages Museum under the auspices of Sheikh Ghuson Hilal Al Alawi, Chairman of the State Audit Institution (SAI). - *ONA*

HIGHER EDUCATION

Role of AI in admissions explored

MUSCAT: The 41st Conference of the Arab Organisation of University Admissions and Registration Officials in Arab Countries kicked off here on Monday. The conference explores the role of AI in enhancing admission and registration procedures.

As many as 30 scientific papers will be presented during the conference, with the participation of 150 experts from Oman and beyond. The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of

Dr. Rahma Ibrahim Al Mahrouqi, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

The 3-day conference discusses moral and regulatory challenges related to the use of AI technologies, as well as the role of technology in developing admission and registration systems.

Furthermore, the conference covers the topic of utilising technology to support students with disabilities and to enhance the use of AI in universities. - *ONA*





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Oman and USA exchange views to combat terrorism

During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views on developments pertaining to issues in the region

MUSCAT: Sheikh Khalifa Ali Al Harthy, Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs on Monday received Eliza-

beth Richard, Coordinator for Counterterrorism at the Department of State of the United States of America (USA).

During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views on developments pertaining to issues in the region. They also touched on means of boosting cooperation between Oman and the USA in the field of counterterrorism. The meeting was attended by Ana Escrogima, Ambassador of the United States of America to the Sultanate of Oman and several officials from the Foreign Ministry.

-ONA



FIELD TRAINING

Joint Omani-Saudi Military drill ‘Solidarity 1’ kicks off

RIYADH: The activities of the joint Omani-Saudi military drill “Solidarity 1” kicked off on Monday in Saudi Arabia.

The drill, which will be ongoing till 26 December 2024, is participated by a force from Oman Coast Regiment of the 23rd Infantry Brigade of the Royal Army of Oman (RAO). From the Saudi side it is participated by a force from the 2nd Regiment of the 20th Brigade. Solidarity/1 includes the imple-



mentation of several joint military plans and field training. Conducting the drill comes within the framework of the RAO

training plans to exchange expertise and enhance military cooperation between Oman and Arab and friendly countries. -ONA

SQU

Conference on social care policies begins

MUSCAT: Activities of the third international scientific conference on “Social care policies & programmes and their role in achieving sustainable development goals” began at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) yesterday.

The conference is organized by SQU in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Development. As many as 190 researchers, specialists and interested parties from the GCC countries are taking part in the conference to enhance cooperation between the relevant executive and academic bodies and institutions and exchange

knowledge, expertise and experiences in the field of social care. The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr. Khamis Saif Al Jabri, Head of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow up Unit. The two-day conference witnesses the presentation of 116 research papers distributed over 5 main themes, namely studying social care policies and programs and achieving social care goals according to Oman Vision 2040, Arab and international experiences in the field of social care policies and programs and achieving sus-

tainable development goals, studies of social justice and achieving sustainable development goals, environmental studies and achieving sustainable development goals, in addition to anticipating the future of social care policies and programs in light of current and future global changes. The conference aims to enhance, boost and activate policies and programme of social care. It also targets encouraging research and academic efforts from various parts of the world to discuss important issues related to social care programmes. -ONA



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OMAN'S CULTURAL HERITAGE

President of Belarus visits National Museum



MUSCAT: President Aleksandr Lukashenko of the Republic of Belarus and his accompanying delegation today visited the National Museum, within the context of his official visit to the Sultanate of Oman.

The President of Belarus and his accompanying delegation toured the museum and took note of its galleries that highlight Oman's cultural heritage from the earliest human settlement in Oman till the present day.

At the outset of the visit, Jamal Hassan Al Moosawi, Secretary General of the National Museum gave a presentation summarizing areas of cultural cooperation between the National Museum and the Belarusian side.

Then, the President toured the museum's different galleries which represent important aspects of the history and civilization of Oman. Most notably, he toured the Land and the People Gallery, the Prehistory and Ancient History Gallery, Splendours

of Islam Gallery, Oman and the World Gallery and the Renaissance Gallery.

PresidentAleksandr Lukashenko also went on tour of the Sultan Qaboos bin Said's Corner (the Dearest and Purest of Men) and viewed the original letter No. 1 (Letter of Will) addressed by the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said to the Royal Family Council through the Defense Council.

At the conclusion of the visit, the guest recorded a word in the Museum's senior visitors' register, in which he underscored the importance of visiting the museum in a bid to enhance cultural cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Belarus.

The President of the Republic of Belarus was accompanied during his visit to the National Museum by Abdulsalam Mohammed Al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (Head of the Mission of Honour) and several members of the Mission of Honour. — **ONA**



OMAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

OCCI unveils 3rd edition of Commercial Franchise Programme

MUSCAT: Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) yesterday launched the 3rd edition of the Commercial Franchise Programme with the aim of qualifying business owners and preparing Omani companies to benefit from the advantages and opportunities of commercial franchise.

The ceremony was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Dr. Kamil bin Fahd bin Mahmoud Al Said, Secretary General at the Secretariat General of the Council of Ministers.

Faisal bin Abdullah Al Rowas, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the OCCI, said that the Commercial Franchise Pro-



gramme figures among key initiatives launched by the OCCI to serve the private sector, notably by qualifying business owners

and preparing Omani companies to benefit from the advantages of commercial franchise.

He added that the step contrib-

utes to enhancing the competitiveness of the private sector at the local and global levels, much in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. He pointed out that the OCCI seeks to support private sector establishments and enable them to enter new markets using commercial models ready for securing success.

Commercial franchise

For his part, Eng. Hamoud bin Salim Al Saadi, Chairman of the OCCI Branch in South Al Batinah Governorate, the Head of the Commercial Franchise Initiative said, "The Chamber is embarked on a programme to enhance the culture

of commercial franchise in a manner that enables entrepreneurs to develop commercial projects and expand them locally and regionally."

He added that the 3rd third edition of the Commercial Franchise Programme drew a large turnout in registration, reaching more than 450 participants. "This reflects the successes achieved by the programme," he observed.

The head of the initiative explained that the second version of the programme included 14 consultations that benefited participating companies. It also included several training courses that benefited about 155 participants, in

HOCKEY OMAN ARENA

< FROM A1 A pivotal hub for international hockey

Ikram added: "Congratulations to all five Asian teams that have qualified for next year's FIH Hockey Women's Junior World Cup in Chile, where 24 teams will compete for the first time. A special mention to India for being crowned 2024 Junior Asian Cup champions."

The FIH Hockey Women's Junior World Cup 2025 will be held in Santiago, Chile. Beyond the hosts, teams from Argentina, Uruguay, the United States, and Canada

have already qualified from the Americas, while Belgium, England, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Ireland, Wales, and Scotland have qualified from Europe. Three more teams from Oceania and Africa will join them, completing the qualification process over the next few months.

India's double triumph in Oman underscores the region's growing prominence in hosting elite hockey events, further boosting its reputation on the global stage.

The Hockey Oman Arena, with its state-of-the-art facilities, continues to bolster Oman's reputation as a pivotal hub for international hockey. With its successful hosting of back-to-back events, Oman not only promotes hockey's growth in the region but also strengthens its standing as a destination for global sporting excellence. In the Women's Asia Cup, China, India, Japan, and South Korea finished in the top two spots of their respective pools,

qualifying for both the semi-finals and the World Cup.

As the final spot for the World Cup went to the fifth-place team, the 5-8 place classification matches were crucial. Thailand and Malaysia defeated Chinese Taipei and Hong Kong respectively to move on to the 5th-6th place match. Malaysia won the crucial match-up to become the final Asian team to qualify for the FIH Hockey Women's Junior World Cup Chile 2025.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Land Evacuation

Capital Yachts and Diving Company LLC announces that due to the transfer of ownership of the Company's land located in Sidab area to Omran Company, it has been decided to vacate the land before the end of this year. Therefore, 19th of December 2024 will be the last day to provide boat launching and towing services, so that the land will be handed over to Omran Company on 31st of December 2024.

Therefore, please provide the Company manager, Mr. Musa Abdul Rahman Al Balushi, with a copy of the boat ownership and pay the rents due to the Company, if any. Boats with any overdue payments will be allowed to be transferred only after those payments are paid.

Capital Yachts and Diving Company LLC



Winners of Darsait Valley Development competition declared

The competition, organised by Muscat Municipality, aimed to provide engineering students an opportunity to participate in designing the area surrounding the Darsait Valley pathway

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Under the patronage of Sayyid Saud bin Hilal Al-Busaidi, Governor of Muscat, the Muscat Governorate, represented by Muscat Municipality, announced the winners of the top three positions in the Darsait Valley Development competition.

The closing ceremony was held on Sunday morning in the presence of Ahmed bin Mohammed Al-Hamidi, Chairman of Muscat Municipality, along with several dignitaries, officials, participants, and students.

The competition, launched by Muscat Governorate and organised by Muscat Municipality, aimed to provide engineering students from the University of Technology and Applied Sciences an



opportunity to participate in designing the area surrounding the Darsait Valley pathway.

It encouraged innovative solutions to challenges in the area, particularly water pooling during adverse weather conditions while enhancing the surrounding landscape to reflect a modern and sustainable urban image.

This initiative aligns with the governorate's efforts to create vibrant, sustainable projects that support the pillars of development.

The competition featured the participation of 22 students, divided into seven teams, who worked on presenting various concepts for the development of the Darsait Valley area.

The submitted projects were evaluated by a specialised committee, which selected the top three teams based on creativity, sustainability, and feasibility of implementation.

Based on the evaluation results, first place was awarded to Team 3, which included students Raghd bint Ali Al-Ramimiyah and Sara bint Ali Al-Siyabiyah.

Second place went to Team 4,

which comprised students Arwa Al-Amriyah, Arwa Al-Hilaliyah, Lama Al-Hajiyah, Taif Al-Wahibiyah, Shurooq Al-Habsiyah, Ali Al-Balushi and Bassam Al-Qasmi.

Third place was claimed by Team 7, consisting of students Louay Al-Hadhrani, Talib Al-Maawali, and Sara Al-Balushiyah.

Commenting on this initiative, Ahmed bin Mohammed Al-Hamidi, Chairman of Muscat Municipality, stated: "We are delighted to have launched this initiative, through which we aimed to enhance community engagement, foster creativity, and inspire innovation among our national talents. This stems from our belief in the importance of empowering young people to contribute to Oman's comprehensive development journey, in alignment with the goals of Oman Vision 2040. We also recognise that the youth are the backbone and foundation of the nation and are pleased with the remarkable success of this initiative and the active participation of the students. It serves as a positive indicator of Omani youth's eagerness to shape a brighter future for

their beloved country."

During the event, Muscat Municipality also announced the launch of the 'Himma Muscat' initiative, which will serve as an umbrella platform for all programmes and initiatives aimed at engaging the community, especially the youth, in planning the future of the governorate.

The municipality further emphasised its belief in the importance of fostering community participation in decision-making, highlighting that the partnership between the government and civil society is a key pillar of successful development.

Muscat Governorate continues its relentless efforts to introduce unique projects and initiatives through collaboration with relevant entities, providing essential infrastructure, urban planning, and residential development services. These efforts aim to enhance tourism and developmental activities while improving the quality of life, reinforcing Muscat's position as a sustainable and attractive tourist destination in alignment with national priorities.

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OF OMAN

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‘Inflation rate to remain moderate’

<FROM A1 The decline in inflation on an annual basis by the end of October 2024 compared to the same period in 2023 comes in light of the stability of the standard prices of the housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels group, the communications group, and the tobacco group, as well as the decline in the standard numbers of the transportation group prices by 2.6 percent, with an increase in the prices of the miscellaneous personal goods and services group by 4.8 percent, the food and non-alcoholic beverages group by 3.5 percent, and the health group by 3.2 percent, with limited increases in the groups of restaurants and hotels, clothing and footwear, furniture, household equipment and supplies, maintenance work, and education.

The report issued by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) last November indicated that inflation in the Sultanate of Oman declined to 0.6 percent during the period from the beginning of this year until the end of the third quarter, compared to an inflation rate of 0.9 percent in 2023.

Accordingly, inflation rates in consumer prices remain at low levels in the Sultanate of Oman.

The Ministry of Economy expects the inflation rate to remain moderate and within the targets in the medium term. The Ministry also follows up inflation developments in various governorates through the Governorates Competitiveness Index with the aim of identifying price disparities and the factors affecting price changes to help take the necessary measures to limit these disparities and achieve market and price balance.

The Ministry of Economy stressed that boosting social spending and basic services such as health, education and housing is a priority that the Sultanate of Oman has maintained to improve living standards, alleviate burdens and upgrade services, even during the period when the country's financial situation was affected by the repercussions of the pandemic and the decline in oil prices.

Global headline inflation is expected to decline to 5.8 percent in 2024, indicating that central banks' efforts are increasingly successful in containing inflation. Based on these developments, the International Monetary Fund has lowered its inflation forecast for the coming year. After expectations indicated an inflation rate of 4.4 percent in 2025, the forecast has been lowered to 3.5 percent by the end of next year 2025. — **ONA**

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Sultan Qaboos award for culture and arts approved

The minister welcomed the board members and encouraged them to exert more efforts for upgrading the standards of the award



MUSCAT: The Board of Trustees of the Sultan Qaboos Award for Culture, Arts and Literature on Monday held a meeting under the chairmanship of Sayyid Khalid Hilal Al Busaidi, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, Chairman of the Board.

During the meeting, the minister welcomed the board members and encouraged them to exert more efforts for upgrading the standards of the award so that it could better achieve its goals.

The meeting reviewed the progress made in the award during its previous editions, the areas of competition at each edition, the names of winners (Omanis and Arab) the media campaigns and

coverage made through print, visual, audio and electronic outlets, locally and internationally.

The meeting also discussed preparations for the launch of the 12th edition of the award in 2025, which will be dedicated to Arabs in general.

The meeting looked into the three areas of the competition (Culture, Arts, Literature) and the proposed topics that will be announced on Wednesday 18 December 2024 during the award ceremony of the 10th edition (Arabs) and 11th edition (Omanis). The ceremony will be held at Oasis Club under the auspices of Sayyid Saud Hilal Al Busaidi, Governor of Muscat.

The board reviewed visions to develop the award and reviewed a number of its terms and mechanisms.

Early next year (2025), the Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Science will form committees to set conditions for the areas of the contest. These will see the participation of Omani and Arab academics, specialists, artists and writers operating in the fields. Then, the award will be released for contestants via the official website.

The Sultan Qaboos Award for Culture, Arts and Literature reflects the attention accorded to culture by the Government of the Sultanate of Oman. It is an annual award that is dedicated to Omanis in one year and to Arabs the next year.

The award seeks to boost the intellectual march and affirm the contribution of Omanis to human civilization in the past, the present and the future. -ONA

MEETING

RNO commander receives Pakistan's Navy Chief of Staff

MUSCAT: Rear Admiral Saif Nasser Al Rahbi, Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) received in his office at Al Murtafa'a Garrison on Monday Admiral Naveed Ashraf, Chief of Naval Staff in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and his accompanying military delegation.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed a set of military topics, especially in the maritime field.

The meeting was attended by some senior RNO officers and the Military Attaché at the Embassy of Pakistan in Muscat.

Admiral Naveed Ashraf, Chief of Naval Staff of the Pakistan's Navy and his accompanying military delegation also visited yesterday the Military Technological Col-



lege. He was accompanied during the visit by Rear Admiral Saif Nasser Al Rahbi, Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman. Upon the delegation's arrival at the college,

they were received by the Acting Commandant of the MTC. The visiting delegation were briefed on the college's education and service facilities. -ONA

TABLA MAESTRO

Ustad Zakir Hussain passes away: Celebrities mourn loss

SAN FRANCISCO: Renowned tabla maestro Ustad Zakir Hussain passed away on Sunday, December 15. The legendary musician had been receiving treatment for heart-related complications in the ICU of a San Francisco hospital for the past two weeks.

The cause of death was confirmed to be idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, a chronic lung disease. The news was confirmed by Jon Bleicher of Prospect PR, representing the family.

The demise of Padma Vibhushan awardee has left the music world and his countless admirers in profound grief, with tributes and condolences pouring in from the film industry.

Film director and producer Madhur Bhandarkar offered his condolences to the family of Padma Vibhushan Zakir Hussain.

Taking to his X handle, the 'Page 3' director wrote,

"Saddened to hear about the passing of the legendary tabla maestro, Padma Vibhushan #ZakirHussain sir. His extraordinary talent elevated Indian classical music to the world stage, making him a household name. My heartfelt condolences go out to his family and the millions of admirers. #OmShanti"

Music composer Shamir Tandon expressed his gratitude to Ustad Zakir Hussain for putting India on the global map of the music industry through his tabla.



While sharing a beautiful portrait of Zakir Hussain during one of his performances on Instagram, Shamir Tandon wrote,

"The bols of Zakir bhai's tabla have put us on the global Music firmament many decades ago.

Making Indian classical cool and Youtifying the instrument - such Gargantuan contribution to art and culture. RIP Zakir bhai. Thank you for everything. Grateful"

Bollywood actor Ranveer Singh paid tribute to the tabla maestro by sharing his photo along with a red heart and folded hands emoji.

The three-time Grammy Award-winning musician, Ricky Kej was 'shocked' and 'deeply saddened' by the demise of the legend Ustad Zakir Hussain. He called him one of the greatest musicians which India has ever produced.

PCT WITH WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

Agreement signed to set up for Fourth Industrial Revolution Centre in Oman

MUSCAT: Acting with the support of the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology on Monday signed a cooperation agreement with the World Economic Forum (WEF) to establish the Fourth Industrial Revolution Centre (4IR) in the Sultanate of Oman.

The new 4IR centre counts as the sixth centre of its kind that is established in the Middle East in cooperation with the World Economic Forum—the 22nd centre globally. The centre is scheduled to begin operating in the first quarter of 2025.

The agreement was signed by Dr. Ali Amer Al Shidhani, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Communications and Information Technology, and Sebastian Backup, Head of Networks and Partnerships and Member of the Executive Committee at the WEF.

Advanced technologies

Al Shidhani said in a speech that cooperation with the WEF reflects the Sultanate of Oman's commitment towards adopting the latest innovations and advanced technologies to drive sustainable development and achieve the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

He added that the move consti-

HISTORIC RELATIONS

Royal Office Minister meets with Pakistan military official

MUSCAT: Gen. Sultan Mohammed Al Nu'amani, Minister of the Royal Office received in his office on Monday Admiral Naveed Ashraf, Chief of Naval Staff in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and his accompanying military delegation.

During the meeting, the two sides highlighted the historic relations between Oman and Pakistan. They also explored means of enhancing bilateral relations to serve joint interests.

The meeting was attended by the Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO).

NDC commandant discusses military matters

Rear Admiral Ali Abdullah Al Shidi, Commandant of the National Defence College (NDC) at the Academy for Strategic and



Defence Studies today received at the college's headquarters in Bait Al Falaj Garrison Admiral Naveed Ashraf, Chief of Naval Staff in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and his accompanying military delegation.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed several military matters of common interest.

Moreover, the guests were briefed about the NDC and its facilities. They also toured its various departments.

The meeting was attended by several senior officers of the NDC at the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies and the Military Attaché at the Embassy of Pakistan in Muscat. -ONA

SHURA COUNCIL

Commerce ministry reviews national programme 'Nazdaher'



MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion reviewed the National Program for Private Sector and Foreign Trade Development "Nazdaher".

The ministry also reviewed the efforts to foster growth and development of the trade and industry sectors and support and develop the business and investment environment.

This took place during the meeting held by Khalid Hilal Al Maawali, Chairman of the Shura Council and members of the Council, with Qais Mohammed Al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

The Minister of Commerce,

Industry and Investment Promotion underscored during the visual presentation the importance of the meetings and visual presentations provided by government institutions to the members of the Council to introduce the efforts made in those institutions. He explained that this approach comes within the framework of the integration among state institutions and working to achieve Oman Vision 2040.

The meeting discussed the National Program for Private Sector and Foreign Trade Development "Nazdaher", which is part of the national programs in the economy and development axis of "Oman Vision 2040". This program seeks to intensify national

efforts to attract investments, create a stimulating environment for investment and develop Omani exports in the 10th five-year plan (2021-2025).

The Council's members presented a set of observations and inquiries, which focused on the need to work hard to increase the contribution of industry, trade and investment to the GDP.

The meeting was attended by Dr. Saleh Said Masan, Undersecretary for Commerce and Industry, Ibtisam Ahmed Al Farooji, Undersecretary for Investment Promotion and Pankaj Khimji, Advisor for Foreign Trade and International Cooperation at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion. -ONA



tutes a step forward in the Ministry's ongoing efforts to transfer knowledge, localise technology and consolidate Oman's position as a regional centre for technology and innovation.

Sebastian Backup said that the agreement opens up vistas for further cooperation between Oman and the WEF in advanced technical fields, much in line with Oman Vision 2040.

He pointed out that the centre would provide opportunities for close coordination within the context of projects that enhance

innovation and sustainable digital solutions to existing challenges.

The agreement aims to accelerate the adoption of emerging technologies and artificial intelligence (AI) applications in accordance with international standards and to generate benefits from the network of international experts in the digital field available at the WEF.

It also aims to launch initiatives to bring together stakeholders from various sectors, including the government, the business sector and academic institutions, to

discuss and cooperate in developing joint policies.

The agreement also aims to help establish a pilot environment for regulatory frameworks to enhance the mitigation of risks associated with 4IR applications.

It also contributes towards guiding WEF activities in various areas of 4IR technology by actively participating in the Forum's platforms, launching a bilateral exchange programme and facilitating participation in the WEF's Fourth Industrial Revolution community. - ONA

SPORTS

HM's Cup for Youth: Four in a row for Salalah Club



Seeb finished second and Saham came third in the coveted competition for clubs

MUSCAT: Salalah Club asserted their dominance in Oman's sports landscape by lifting the prestigious His Majesty's Cup for Youth for the fourth consecutive time during the 2022/2023 season. They were crowned winners at the awards ceremony held at

Al Bustan Palace, a Ritz-Carlton Hotel, by the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Youth on Monday, under the patronage of Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion. The Dhofar-based club's victory marked another significant milestone in their history as they lifted the trophy and a cash prize of OMR30,000. Seeb Club finished as the runner-up for the second consecutive year, receiving the silver shield along with a cash prize of OMR27,000. Saham Club, was up one spot from last season, earned the bronze shield and a cash prize of OMR25,000. Oman Club made a notable improvement, rising from fifth to fourth place, while Masirah Club



dropped from last edition's third to fifth. Nizwa Club made a strong return to the top six after a one-year absence, finishing sixth. Ahli-Sidab moved up one position from the previous season to secure seventh, while Quriyat finished ninth. Al Bashayer Club dropped to tenth place, having finished sixth in the previous edition. Basil bin Ahmed al Rawas, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Youth for Sports and Youth, emphasised the importance of the HM's Cup for Youth in recognising the outstanding efforts of clubs to empower youth. He said, "His Majesty's Cup for Youth is an annual event that celebrates clubs' efforts in engag-

ing youth across various sports, cultural, and youth activities. The competition also underscores the vital role clubs play in fostering community development." Al Rawas further noted the competition's alignment with His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's ongoing commitment to the youth sector, highlighting its role in motivating clubs to continually enhance their activities. "One of the competition's key objectives is to encourage clubs to serve as hubs for youth, effectively responding to their aspirations and ambitions," he added. A total of 44 clubs participated in the 2022-2023 edition. The HM's Cup for Youth is not just a sporting competition; it holds significant importance for the sports and youth sector in Oman. The Cup serves as a vital platform for nurturing talent, encouraging healthy competition, and providing youth with opportunities to engage in activities that benefit both their personal growth and society. Through this competition, the ministry continues to support clubs in achieving their goals and ensuring sustained growth in Oman's sports sector. Since the launch of the competition in 1998, the Ministry has developed criteria of assessment to keep pace with the needs of each stage. The approach included aligning the objectives of the competition with the ministry's future plans and the Omani sports strategy to keep pace with the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

THIRD TEST: AUSTRALIA VS INDIA



Australia's quicks rattle India on stop-start day

BRISBANE: Australia's pace trio seized control of the third Test against India at the Gabba on Monday, reducing the visitors to 51 for 4 in their first innings on a rain-ravaged day three. Only 33.1 overs were possible due to frequent interruptions, but Australia's bowlers made the most of the limited play to strengthen their grip on the match. Resuming at 405/7, Australia added 40 runs to their overnight total, with Alex Carey leading the charge. The wicketkeeper-batter reached a fluent 70, playing some spar-

ing strokes, including a six over wide long-off, before becoming Akash Deep's lone victim. Jasprit Bumrah also struck early in the day to dismiss Pat Cummins, finishing with remarkable figures of 6 for 108, including his 50th Test wicket in Australia. India's reply began on a rocky note as Mitchell Starc struck in the very first over, dismissing Yashasvi Jaiswal for 4. The left-hander flicked a full delivery straight to Mitchell Marsh at square leg. Starc struck again in his next over, inducing Shubman Gill into a loose drive outside off stump. The edge flew to gully, where Marsh completed a stunning low catch. Josh Hazlewood then accounted for Virat Kohli, who edged a wide delivery behind to Alex Carey. The Indian captain's struggles outside off stump continued, as he fell cheaply once more in a series marked by inconsistency. Rain interruptions meant India's batters had to repeatedly reset, and when play resumed briefly, Pat Cummins delivered a beauty to dismiss Rishabh Pant. The delivery, angled across the left-hander, nipped away late, drawing a hesi-

tant edge to Carey. Amid the chaos, KL Rahul battled with determination, showing solid technique and driving with authority through the covers to remain unbeaten on 33 off 64 balls. Skipper Rohit Sharma, however, was yet to get off the mark after facing 13 balls. India, still trailing by 394 runs, face the immediate challenge of avoiding the follow-on by reaching 246. **Brief scores:** Australia 1st innings 445 (Head 152, Smith 101, Carey 70, Bumrah 6-76) lead India 1st innings 51/4 (Rahul 33*, Starc 2-25) by 394 runs. - Agencies



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Campaign period: 24th November 2024 to 23rd January 2025. The above benefits are applicable for all purchases except RAC, Government Organizations & Ministries. *5 Years/50,000kms (whichever is earlier) covering 5 services at 1 year/10,000kms service interval (whichever is earlier) on 23 & 24 Model Years. **Free first year registration where applicable. Vehicles specifications are subject to change without notice. Pictures & colours are indicative. For further details, please visit your nearest Saud Bahwan Automotive showroom.









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OMAN CRUDE PRICE RISES

Oman Crude (February delivery 2025) rose by 73 cents to reach \$74.19 per barrel, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). Average price of Oman Crude (December delivery) has stabilised at \$74.82 per barrel, \$1.33 per barrel higher than November delivery. - ONA

MARKET

BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,521.10 points, up by 0.14% from previous close. The Shariah Index ended down by 0.00% at 412.98 points. Voltamp Energy, up 6.25%, was the top gainer while, Oman & Emirates Investment, down 2.94%, was the top loser. > **B2**

MINISTRY OF HOUSING AND URBAN PLANNING



Oman Data Park signs key pact to modernise IT infrastructure of ministry

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Revered as the Sultanate's leading IT-managed service provider offering superior data centre, cybersecurity, and cloud services, Oman Data Park (ODP) continues to empower the Sultanate's public sector with cutting-edge technology. In line with the same, ODP has entered into an agreement with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, the signing ceremony of which was held at the Geographic Information Systems Day Forum, marking the commencement of this transformative project. As per the agreement to modernise the Ministry's IT infrastructure, ODP will undertake a comprehensive cloud transformation, which includes the establishment of a Disaster Recovery Centre, while also implementing enhanced cybersecurity measures.

Commenting on the project, Eng. Maqbool Al Wahabi, Chief Executive Officer of ODP, stated, "It is essential to recognise the transformative potential of technology in reshaping public services and advancing national priorities. At ODP, we take pride in enabling such impactful projects that not only enhance the operational efficiency of key government entities but also contribute to Oman's overarching vision of advancing toward a smarter future. By leveraging next-generation cloud solutions and fostering resilience, we are supporting the Ministry's efforts to operate with greater agility and effectiveness in addressing the needs of a rapidly evolving landscape."

He added, "The implications of this transformation extend beyond the Ministry, driving economic growth, encouraging innovation, and aligning with Oman's sustainability agenda. Each milestone in this digital journey strengthens the nation's capacity to adopt technological advancements while ensuring its

long-term progress. In this equation, ODP remains steadfast in its commitment to delivering solutions that empower institutions, elevate national capabilities, and inspire progress."

Sharing his thoughts on the collaboration, Dr. Moaman Mohd Al Busaidi, Minister's Advisor for Future Cities, Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning said, "Digital transformation is essential for the public sector to streamline operations, improve service delivery, and stay agile. This partnership with ODP is a significant step in advancing digitalisation within our sector, further strengthening our ability to serve the public. It not only secures our systems but also lays the groundwork for future innovations that will enhance the Ministry's contribution to the nation's development."

Building on this vision, ODP is playing a strategic role in migrating all workloads from the Ministry and its regional directorates across Oman to a secure and scalable cloud environment. This will help create a unified, high-performance digital ecosystem, enabling greater operational efficiency and paving the way for innovative services. By aligning with Oman's broader digitalisation goals, the project supports key initiatives such as the digitisation of Sultan Haitham City and underscores the Ministry's focus on resilience and modernisation.

As part of the project, ODP is also implementing a state-of-the-art Disaster Recovery Centre. This critical addition will ensure the uninterrupted availability of essential applications, mitigating risks from unforeseen disruptions. By prioritising system continuity, the Disaster Recovery Centre strengthens the Ministry's ability to maintain seamless operations.

Full story at timesofoman.com/business

CBO issues treasury bills worth OMR35mn

Treasury bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance

MUSCAT: The total issuance of Government Treasury Bills amounted to OMR35 million. The value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to OMR10 million, for a maturity period of 28 days.

The average accepted price reached OMR99.685 for every OMR100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at OMR99.685 per OMR100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 4.10625% and 4.11923%, respectively.

Whereas, the value of the allotted Treasury bills amounted to OMR25 million, for a maturity period of 91 days. The average accepted price reached OMR98.900 for every OMR100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at OMR98.900 per OMR100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 4.41209% and 4.46116%, respectively.

Treasury bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance, and they provide licenced commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds.

The Central Bank of Oman



(CBO) acts as the Issue Manager and provides theaddded advantage of ready liquidity through discounting and repurchase facilities (Repo).

It may be noted that the interest rate on the Repo operations with CBO is 5.25% while the discount rate on the Treasury Bills Discounting Facility with CBO is 5.75%.

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



IN NOVEMBER 2024

WPI inflation in India eases to 1.89%

NEW DELHI: The annual inflation rate based on the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) stood at 1.89 per cent (provisional) for November 2024, compared to 2.36 per cent in October 2024 and 1.91 per cent in September 2024.

According to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the easing inflation reflects a moderation in price increases for food items and manufactured products.

The overall WPI index decreased marginally by 0.06 per cent month-over-month, slipping from 156.1 in October to 156.0 in November 2024.

Positive inflation was primarily driven by higher prices in food articles, textiles, and machinery and equipment. Despite the decline, inflation remained elevated in specific categories, indicating a mixed trend across commodity groups.

In terms of sectoral performance, the index for Primary Articles (weight: 22.62 per cent) declined by 1.20 per cent in November 2024. This was largely due to reduced prices of food articles (-1.83 per cent) and crude petroleum & natural gas (-0.41 per cent).

However, there were price increases in minerals (2.10 per cent) and non-food articles (0.56 per cent). For Fuel & Power (weight:

13.15 per cent), the index rose slightly by 0.41 per cent due to higher mineral oil prices, although electricity prices declined marginally (-0.07 per cent).

The category of Manufactured Products (weight: 64.23 per cent) saw an increase of 0.35 per cent in November 2024, supported by price hikes in food products, pharmaceuticals, and electrical equipment. - ANI

STATE-OF-THE-ART CENTRE

New India Assurance opens dedicated customer care centre

Times News Service

MUSCAT: In a landmark move to enhance customer service and engagement, New India Assurance, Oman Operations, inaugurated its state-of-the-art Customer Care Centre. The launch ceremony was held at the New India Assurance Co Ltd, Head Office, Al Hamriya, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman and was honoured by the presence of Amit Narang, Ambassador of India to Oman, as the chief guest.

The Customer Care Centre is part of New India Assurance's vision to streamline customer interaction by providing efficient, round-the-clock service. Equipped with advanced technology and a skilled team, the centre is ready to meet the diverse needs of its clients.

The call centre will be managed 100% by Omani staff fluent in Arabic, English, and Hindi, ensuring that customers from diverse backgrounds feel comfortable and confident in their interactions. This initiative not only supports Omanisation but also reflects New India Assurance's commitment to fostering local talent and providing exceptional service.

Majid Abdul Rahim Jaffer Al Bahrani, Chairman of Abdul Aziz and Brother's, Chief Agents for New India Assurance, was unable to attend the event due to prior commitments. However, his unwavering support and leadership have been instrumental in making this initiative a reality.

Speaking ahead of the launch,



Majid Al Bahrani remarked, "This Customer Care Centre is a testament to the strong relationship between New India Assurance and its clients in Oman. We are committed to ensuring the best service experience for all policyholders."

The new Customer Care Centre is designed to offer convenience and accessibility:

Direct Call Line: Clients can now reach the centre at +968 2483 8800 for assistance with their policies, claims, or any queries.

WhatsApp Support: For quick and simple queries, customers can send a message via WhatsApp to the same number, +968 2483 8800.

New India Assurance, Oman Operations, has a long-standing



tradition of fostering a collaborative work environment. Many Omani staff members have been with the organisation for decades,

a testament to the company's supportive working culture. This enduring partnership between Omani and Indian teams reflects the core values of trust, respect, and inclusivity that define New India Assurance.

Speaking at the event, Amit Narang applauded New India Assurance for its customer-centric approach, stating, "This initiative demonstrates the company's dedication to providing reliable and effective services, reinforcing the strong ties between India and Oman."

Gaurav Sharma, Chief Operating Officer, New India Assurance, Oman Operations, expressed his pride in the launch, saying, "This



Customer Care Centre is a significant step forward in our commitment to delivering exceptional service. Our goal is to ensure that every customer interaction is smooth, efficient, and satisfactory. This initiative reflects our dedication to empowering trust and ensuring safety for all our clients."

The Customer Care Centre will handle various services, including: Assisting with insurance policies and claims

Addressing grievances promptly Offering expert guidance on insurance-related matters

With the introduction of WhatsApp support, New India Assurance is leveraging technology to

provide instant resolutions for customer queries, ensuring accessibility and convenience.

New India Assurance is a global leader in the insurance industry, with over a century of excellence. In Oman, the company remains committed to delivering innovative insurance solutions and outstanding customer service to individuals and businesses alike.

It operates through its chief agents, Abdul Aziz and Brothers, under the visionary leadership of Majid Abdul Rahim Jaffer Al Bahrani, ensuring high-quality service and strategic growth.

MARKET



MSX index ends higher

Voltamp Energy, up 6.25%, was the top gainer while, Oman & Emirates Investment, down 2.94%, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,521.10 points, up by 0.14% from previous close. The Shariah Index ended down by 0.00% at 412.98 points. Voltamp Energy, up 6.25%, was the top gainer while, Oman & Emirates Investment, down 2.94%, was the top loser. Shares of OQEP were the most active in terms of number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 2345 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of OMR5.98 million, with more than 40.35 million shares changing hands. Out of 43 traded securities, 15 advanced, 15 declined, and 13 remained unchanged. At the session close, GCC & Arab investors were net sellers for OMR911,000 while domestic investors were net buyers for OMR762,000, followed by foreign investors for OMR149,000 worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,582.58 points, down 0.05%. Prices of Al Anwar Investment, Bank Nizwa, Sohar International

Bank were up by 1.54%, 1.03%, 0.76% respectively. Prices of Oman & Emirates Investment, Global Financial Investments, DIDIC, Bank Muscat, OMINVEST were down by 2.94%, 2.44%, 2.34%, 0.79%, 0.59% respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,180.17 points, up 0.32%. Prices of Voltamp Energy, Oman Cement, A'Saffa Foods were up by 6.25%, 2.78%, 0.53% respectively. Prices of Jazeera Steel Products, Galfar Engineering, Oman Flour Mills were down by 2.69%, 2.27%, 0.95% respectively.

Services Index was down by 0.14% before closing at 1,722.56 points. Prices of SMN Power Holding, OQ Gas Networks, Oman Oil Marketing, Abraj Energy, Oman Telecom were up by 1.77%, 0.78%, 0.69%, 0.36%, 0.22% respectively. Prices of Al Jazeera Services, Phoenix Power, Al Suwadi Power, Sembcorp Salalah, Renaissance Services were down by 2.33%, 1.70%, 1.56%, 1.04%, 0.52% respectively.

— United Securities

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	4,525.05	4,496.80	4,521.10	4,514.66	643	0.14
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,587.65	7,545.17	7,582.58	7,586.67	-4.10	-0.05
Industry Index	5,196.77	5,158.62	5,180.17	5,163.53	16.65	0.32
Services Index	1,730.87	1,722.01	1,722.56	1,724.92	-2.36	-0.14
MSX Shariah Index	414.63	412.85	412.98	413.00	-0.02	0.00
MSX TR INDEX	6,332.33	6,292.80	6,326.80	6,317.80	9.00	0.14
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,620.35	8,572.09	8,614.59	8,619.24	-4.66	-0.05
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	5,995.84	5,951.82	5,976.69	5,957.48	19.21	0.32
SERVICES TR IDX	2,060.54	2,049.99	2,050.65	2,053.46	-2.80	-0.14
FIXED INCOME INDEX	1,067.21	1,067.21	1,067.21	1,067.21	0.00	0.00

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
40,358,248	5,976,855	2,345	27,246,460,890	15	15	13	43

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR MONDAY, DECEMBER 16

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BD	LAST OFFER	PREV VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET																
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	2,101	767	4	0.365	0.370	0.365	0.370	0.360	0.010	2.77%	0.370	0.357	0.370	0.100	122,422,903
OM0000009072	OQ GAS NETWORKS	906,500	117,845	170	0.130	0.130	0.130	0.130	0.129	0.001	0.75%	0.130	0.130	0.130	0.100	562,881,110
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	421,132	55,748	7	0.131	0.133	0.131	0.133	0.132	0.001	0.75%	0.133	0.132	0.134	0.100	880,093,754
OM0000002804	ASAFFA FOODS	1,000	382	1	0.382	0.382	0.382	0.382	0.380	0.002	0.52%	0.382	0.380	0.385	0.100	45,840,000
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	69,605	19,281	8	0.277	0.277	0.277	0.277	0.276	0.001	0.36%	0.277	0.277	0.295	0.100	213,345,400
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	200,608	185,849	44	0.928	0.930	0.923	0.930	0.928	0.002	0.21%	0.930	0.929	0.930	0.100	697,500,000
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	535,213	49,107	22	0.092	0.092	0.090	0.092	0.092	0.000	0.00%	0.092	0.091	0.092	0.100	20,240,000
OM0000002275	SHELL OMAN MARKETING	5,550	3,330	2	0.600	0.600	0.600	0.600	0.600	0.000	0.00%	0.600	0.600	0.660	0.100	57,000,000
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	19,378	1,550	3	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.000	0.00%	0.080	0.080	0.083	0.100	14,000,000
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	190,699	12,015	8	0.063	0.064	0.063	0.064	0.064	0.000	0.00%	0.064	0.063	0.064	0.100	43,192,796
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	1,575	371	6	0.233	0.240	0.233	0.233	0.234	0.001	-0.42%	0.234	0.233	0.234	0.100	151,670,006
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	72,050	27,322	22	0.379	0.387	0.379	0.385	0.387	-0.002	-0.51%	0.385	0.383	0.415	0.100	91,017,950
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	70,450	23,251	23	0.335	0.335	0.330	0.335	0.337	-0.002	-0.56%	0.335	0.332	0.334	0.100	223,902,418
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	657,432	164,518	49	0.251	0.252	0.250	0.250	0.252	-0.002	-0.79%	0.250	0.250	0.251	0.100	1,878,599,266
OM0000004735	SEMBOORP SALALAH	60,000	5,700	2	0.095	0.095	0.095	0.095	0.096	-0.001	-1.04%	0.095	0.091	0.096	0.100	90,684,335
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	4,570	288	1	0.063	0.063	0.063	0.063	0.064	-0.001	-1.56%	0.063	0.063	0.070	0.100	45,007,599
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO	18,100	1,466	3	0.081	0.081	0.080	0.080	0.082	-0.002	-2.43%	0.080	0.080	0.082	0.100	16,000,000
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	20,000	5,800	1	0.290	0.290	0.290	0.290	0.298	-0.008	-2.68%	0.290	0.291	0.292	0.100	36,220,400
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO	819	54	2	0.067	0.067	0.066	0.066	0.068	-0.002	-2.94%	0.066	0.066	0.066	0.100	8,043,750
Total	19	3,256,782	674,644	378												
Parallel Market																
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	5,029	2,015	8	0.400	0.425	0.400	0.425	0.400	0.025	6.25%	0.425	0.400	0.425	0.100	34,596,169
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	339,446	25,598	22	0.074	0.079	0.074	0.079	0.075	0.004	5.33%	0.079	0.075	0.079	0.100	40,181,872
OM0000009759	OQ EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION	6,112,281	1,919,374	715	0.306	0.315	0.306	0.315	0.306	0.009	2.94%	0.315	0.293	0.315	0.010	520,000,000
OM0000009908	OQ BASE INDUSTRIES (SF2)	27,695,094	2,988,206	1,069	0.107	0.110	0.107	0.110	0.107	0.003	2.80%	0.110	0.109	0.110	0.040	380,543,994
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	407,970	139,943	48	0.340	0.346	0.340	0.346	0.340	0.006	1.76%	0.346	0.344	0.350	0.100	69,079,918
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	20,000	1,310	4	0.065	0.066	0.065	0.066	0.065	0.001	1.53%	0.066	0.065	0.066	0.100	14,003,880
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	363,670	35,467	18	0.097	0.098	0.097	0.098	0.097	0.001	1.03%	0.098	0.097	0.099	0.100	219,221,397
OM0000002572	OMAN OIL MARKETING	1,000	725	2	0.725	0.725	0.725	0.725	0.720	0.005	0.69%	0.725	0.725	0.785	0.100	44,424,375
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	46,197	3,503	10	0.076	0.076	0.076	0.076	0.076	0.000	0.00%	0.076	0.076	0.076	0.100	5,460,000
OM0000001368	CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL INDUSTRIES	40,000	1,810	3	0.046	0.046	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.000	0.00%	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.100	2,812,500
OM0000002036	MUSCAT THREAD MILLS	4,850	679	1	0.140	0.140	0.140	0.140	0.140	0.000	0.00%	0.140	0.135	0.154	0.100	2,265,175
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	2,101	335	3	0.157	0.162	0.157	0.162	0.162	0.000	0.00%	0.162	0.155	0.162	0.100	485,408,833
OM0000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	35,377	11,250	7	0.318	0.318	0.318	0.318	0.318	0.000	0.00%	0.318	0.314	0.318	0.100	50,880,000
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	1,000	128	1	0.128	0.128	0.128	0.128	0.128	0.000	0.00%	0.128	0.128	0.140	0.100	7,040,000
OM0000005280	OMAN ARAB BANK	51,616	7,433	2	0.144	0.144	0.144	0.144	0.144	0.000	0.00%	0.144	0.144	0.144	0.100	240,395,040
OM0000009569	JABAL REIF	980,300	99,991	2	0.102	0.102	0.102	0.102	0.102	0.000	0.00%	0.102	0.100	0.102	0.100	1,7748,000
OM0000001400	OMAN FLOUR MILLS	413	173	3	0.422	0.422	0.418	0.418	0.422	-0.004	-0.94%	0.418	0.418	0.422	0.100	65,835,000
OM0000007910	AMAN REAL ESTATE	690	56	1	0.094	0.094	0.094	0.094	0.095	-0.001	-1.05%	0.094	0.090	0.094	0.100	18,800,000
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	942,600	54,671	27	0.058	0.059	0.058	0.058	0.059	-0.001	-1.69%	0.058	0.055	0.060	0.100	84,830,885
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	19,700	1,694	8	0.087	0.087	0.086	0.086	0.088	-0.002	-2.27%	0.086	0.086	0.088	0.100	17,456,834
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	302	63	2	0.210	0.210	0.210	0.210	0.215	-0.005	-2.32%	0.210	0.194	0.210	0.100	8,997,028
OM0000001509	DHOFAR INTERNATIONAL DEV & INV HO	29,620	6,171	7	0.195	0.209	0.195	0.209	0.214	-0.005	-2.33%	0.209	0.212	0.209	0.100	85,532,480
Total	22	37,099,166	5,300,597	1,963												

EMBASSY OF JAPAN

Video game and pop culture event

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Embassy of Japan will participate in the biggest video game and pop culture event in Oman “968GameZ” from 19 to 21 December 2024 in the evening in Al Mouj Muscat.

The Embassy will introduce Japanese cultures such as, Cal-

ligraphy, Origami and Japanese books which will be displayed at the Embassy's booth during the event.

Free to attend

The event, organised by SOCIAL-MANIA Creative and Digital Marketing, is free to attend. The Embassy invites visitors to ex-

plore and engage with the cultural exhibits.

Cultural exchange

The Embassy of Japan expresses its commitment to supporting events that foster cultural exchange and help spread Japanese culture throughout the Omani society.

COMMODITIES

Gold edges higher

SINGAPORE: Gold prices inched higher on Monday as investors anticipated a potential interest rate cut by the Federal Reserve this week.



LIFESTYLE

PROMISING DRUG FOR TREATING RARE CHILDHOOD CANCER: STUDY

The study focuses on the use of TETA (triethylenetetramine), marketed as Cuprior. This drug helps shrink tumours and boosts the immune system’s ability to fight the disease

A new study by researchers from The University of New South Wales (UNSW) in Australia suggests that the health of children with a rare, high-risk cancer called neuroblastoma could be improved by adding an existing drug to their treatment plan.

The study focuses on the use of TETA (triethylenetetramine), marketed as Cuprior. This drug helps shrink tumours and boosts the immune system’s ability to fight the disease. Tests on mice showed that the drug weakens tumours by transferring copper to immune cells, like neutrophils, which are white blood cells that help combat infections and diseases.

Dr. Orazio Vittorio, lead researcher from UNSW’s School of Biomedical Sciences, explained that the drug has a dual effect: it weakens the tumor and strengthens the immune system, improving the body’s response to immunotherapy.

Dr. Vittorio added that this approach could improve the results of current immunotherapy for neuroblastoma, increasing survival rates for affected children from 10 to 50 percent.

Dr. Jordyn Rowan, principal investigator from UNSW’s Clinical Medicine School, described copper removal from tumors as a major breakthrough in treating neuroblastoma, stating that It’s non-toxic and has shown no concerning side effects, and that this treatment could also improve the quality of life for children suffering from this aggressive cancer.

Dr. Rowan pointed out that re-purposing an existing drug saves both time and money compared to developing entirely new treatments, which usually take 8 to 13 years.

Neuroblastoma, or neuroblastic tumor, is a cancer that develops from immature nerve cells found in various parts of the body. It most commonly originates in and around the adrenal glands, with origins similar to nerve cells. This cancer primarily affects children aged 5 years or younger and rarely occurs in older children. - **ONA**

SPORTS

Late Diallo magic inspires dramatic United victory in Manchester derby

Amorim's men staged a stunning comeback at the Etihad Stadium to triumph 2-1

LONDON: Manchester United struck twice in the closing minutes to stun Manchester City 2-1 in a dramatic derby conclusion at Etihad Stadium on Sunday.

Josko Gvardiol's first-half header looked to be giving City victory in a largely dismal clash until United staged a remarkable turnaround to give new manager Ruben Amorim a landmark win early in his reign. Amad Diallo was United's star performer, winning the 88th minute penalty that saw Bruno Fernandes equalise after the youngster was fouled by Matheus Nunes.

As City tried to regroup, Diallo then pounced in the closing seconds of normal time to score from a tight angle.

It was a rich reward for United boss Amorim after he ruthlessly axed Marcus Rashford and Alejandro Garnacho from his match day squad, but then suffered an early blow when Mason Mount was struck down by his latest injury, limping off after only 14 minutes.

Opportunities were at a premium in a game largely made up of desperate mediocrity, United looking to have wasted their best opportunity to equalise 17 minutes from time when Fernandes raced clear on to Rasmus Hojlund's pass, only to lift his finish over the onrushing Ederson but wide. The game was turned on its head in that frantic finale, City's fans furious and jeering their side while United's followers celebrated wildly in their corner of Etihad Stadium.

United's late win was something



few – perhaps not even Amorim himself – saw coming as a game that had been so undistinguished appeared to be moving towards an uneventful conclusion.

And then, in a final few minutes totally out of keeping with the mediocre fare that had gone before, United gave Amorim a personal triumph that will instantly increase his standing among United's supporters.

United had barely been troubled by Pep Guardiola's off-colour Premier League champions, but had created little of the their own, that Fernandes chance apart, until the always lively Diallo took a hand.

He collected a poor pass from Nunes in the 88th minute, who then compounded his error by chasing back and flattening the United forward with a reckless challenge, allowing Fernandes to make up for his earlier miss.

Diallo then showed real composure in the final minute of normal time to squeeze in United's winner from a title angle, Etihad Stadium stunned into silence apart from the ecstatic visiting fans.

Amorim took two big decisions to ditch Rashford and Garnacho from his squad completely, an early indicator that he will not shy away from difficult calls. - Agencies



I am not good enough: Guardiola

LONDON: Pep Guardiola says his sleep has suffered during Manchester City's deepening crisis, so he will not be helped by a nightmarish conclusion to one of the most stunning defeats of his long reign on Sunday.

Guardiola looked agitated, animated and on edge even after City led the Manchester derby through Josko Gvardiol's 36th-minute header, his reaction to the goal one of almost disdain that it came via a deflected cross as opposed to in his purist style.

He sat alone with his eyes closed sipping from a water bottle before the resumption of the second half, then was denied even the respite of victory when Manchester United gave this largely dismal derby a dramatic conclusion it barely deserved with a remarkable late comeback.

And in a sign of City's previous excellence that is now



being challenged, they have only lost four of 105 Premier League home games under Guardiola in which they have been ahead at half-time, winning 94 and drawing seven.

Guardiola delivered a brutal self-analysis as he told Match of the Day: "I am not good enough. I am the boss. I am the manager. I have to find solutions and so far I haven't. That's the reality.

"Not much else to say. No defence. Manchester United were incredibly persistent. We have not lost eight games in two seasons. We can't defend that."

Today was different: Amorim

LONDON: As the new head coach of Manchester United, days don't get much better than this for Ruben Amorim.

When you drop two of the most high-profile members of your squad, Marcus Rashford and Alejandro Garnacho – not just from the team, but the entire travelling party – Amorim would have known scrutiny would come.

"I think so," said Amorim, when asked if he felt United deserved their first win at Etihad Stadium since 2021.

"We did a great job. We believed a lot. It was different to [the defeat at] Arsenal. There I didn't feel the belief. I did today.

"Amad is in a good moment. Erik [ten Hag] brought him to the first team. Ruud [van Nistelrooy] did a great job. Now don't make the same mistakes we made in the past."

Amorim didn't explain what the previous mistakes



were, whether they related to Amad or his team as a whole. There wasn't really time.

In an eight-minute discussion with the media, the biggest talk centred around two players who were not even in the stadium.

"Today the team proved we can leave anyone out of the squad and manage to win if you play together."

MARTIN SACKED

Tottenham trounce Southampton 5-0



LONDON: Five goals in a rampant first half earned Tottenham a stunning 5-0 victory at St Mary's Stadium on Sunday and ended the tenure of Southampton boss Russell Martin.

"Going into the start of the season, we all knew the challenges that we would face this year as we readjusted to life in the top flight, competing in the best and most competitive league in the world," said a Southampton statement.

A strike inside 40 seconds from James Maddison settled any pre-game nerves for Spurs manager Ange Postecoglou, the England midfielder tucking home from Djed Spence's clever pass.

Against a woefully open Saints

defence, Tottenham's free-scoring attackers cleaned up, Son Heung-min firing past Alex McCarthy and Dejan Kulusevski tapping in from close range inside the first 15 minutes.

A shell-shocked Southampton were hit on the break by Son once more and he teed up Pape Sarr to dance through two half-hearted challenges and slot into the net.

Spurs captain Son was denied three more times by McCarthy before Maddison smashed into the top of the net from a ridiculous angle deep into first-half stoppage time. The result leaves Saints nine points from safety and guaranteed to be bottom at Christmas. Meanwhile, Tottenham are up to 10th.

DEFEAT BRENTFORD

Chelsea narrow gap at the top

LONDON: Chelsea moved without touching distance of Premier League leaders Liverpool with a narrow 2-1 victory over Brentford at Stamford Bridge on Sunday.

Enzo Maresca's side now sit second in the table two points behind the Reds, who have the advantage of having played a game less.

However, Chelsea's seventh consecutive win in all competitions will only serve to underline their status as genuine title contenders.

Marc Cucurella's first-half header set them on their way against Brentford, with the left-back stealing in to nod in from Noni Madueke's curling delivery from the right wing.

However, the Spaniard was later shown a second yellow card

after the final whistle after appearing to shove Kevin Schade, to sour an evening when he ought to have just been celebrating his first goal since May 2022.

Chelsea's second came in the closing stages when centre forward Nicolas Jackson sprinted on to Enzo Fernandez's pass to dispatch a low shot past Bees goalkeeper Mark Flekken into the right corner.

The Senegal international's effort came as Thomas Frank's side threatened to level in a match which the hosts had largely dominated. The hosts were still made to hold on in a nervy finale after Bryan Mbeumo registered his 10th top-flight goal of the season, with a well-placed finish past Sanchez. - Agencies



O'NEIL DEPARTS



Wolves target Pereira as new boss

LONDON: Wolves are in talks with Al-Shabab manager Vitor Pereira to replace head coach Gary O'Neil, who was sacked by the club on Sunday.

The Premier League strugglers are looking for a swift appointment and the money they would have to pay as compensation to secure former Porto and Olympiakos boss Pereira, around £800,000, is

not believed to be an issue.

Wolves have been assessing their options and have sounded other possible replacements, including ex-West Ham and Manchester United boss David Moyes.

But club sources have told BBC Sport that Pereira is the frontrunner for the job. He has been in charge at Al Shabab since February, finishing eighth in the Saudi

Pro League last season. They currently sit sixth. The 56-year-old Portuguese won two Primeira Liga titles with Porto in 2012 and 2013 and the Greek Super League with Olympiakos in 2015.

O'Neil was dismissed on Sunday morning following Saturday's 2-1 defeat at home to Ipswich which left them second bottom, four points from safety. - Agencies

SPANISH LA LIGA

Leganes record shock win over Barcelona

BARCELONA: Barcelona suffered a surprise 1-0 defeat at home to Leganes to end their lead at the top of La Liga cut on Sunday.

Hansi Flick's side are only above Atletico Madrid on goal difference and one point above third-placed Real Madrid.

Leganes, who move up to 15th, took the lead in the fourth minute when Sergio Gonzalez headed in from Oscar Rodriguez's corner.

That would prove to be the

only goal of the game.

Barcelona dominated, with 20 shots in total, and the closest they came was when Raphinha's half-volley from Alex Balde's cross hit the bar.

Earlier on Sunday Atletico beat Getafe 1-0 to move level on points with Barcelona.

Champions Real drew 3-3 at Rayo Vallecano on Saturday.

Barca have now suffered consecutive home defeats for the third

time in all competitions in the 21st century, after April 2003 under Radomir Antic (two) and April 2022 with Xavi (three).

The visitors took the lead early on when Oscar Rodriguez's corner kick found an unmarked Gonzalez at the near post to thump the ball beyond Inaki Pena.

Robert Lewandowski came close to restoring parity seven minutes later, but LaLiga's leading marksman was unable to turn

Raphinha's cross beyond Marko Dmitrovic.

Young striker Lamine Yamal then fired over in first-half stoppage time before Jules Kounde poked narrowly wide shortly after the restart.

But the hosts' best chance of an equaliser came in the closing stages, with Ferran Torres neatly flicking the ball into Kounde's path, but he dragged his effort past the post. - Agencies



Sohar Islamic acts as the Platinum Sponsor of Oman Waqf Conference

This sponsorship reflects Sohar Islamic’s continued efforts to support initiatives that drive transformative impact and foster societal benefit



MUSCAT: Demonstrating its strong commitment to socio-economic advancement through responsible financial practices, Sohar Islamic, the Islamic banking arm of Sohar International, underscored its dedication to the devel-

opment of the Waqf sector by serving as the Platinum Sponsor of the inaugural Oman Waqf Conference. This significant two-day event, held on December 16 and 17, 2024, at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, was organised by the Bousher Waqf Foundation in partnership with the Ministry of

Endowments and Religious Affairs, under the esteemed patronage of His Excellency Sultan Al Habsi, Minister of Finance. This sponsorship reflects Sohar Islamic’s ongoing strategic collaboration with the Bousher Waqf Foundation and its continued efforts to support initiatives that

drive transformative impact and foster long-term societal benefit. Through this partnership, Sohar Islamic reinforces its role as a key enabler of sustainable socio-economic development, aligning with its broader mission to empower the community and contribute to the country’s financial and philanthropic ecosystem. Under the theme ‘Innovation and Sustainability’, the conference brought together thought leaders, industry experts, and stakeholders from the Waqf sector to explore forward-thinking strategies that expand the role of endowments. Sohar Islamic’s active participation included hosting a dedicated stall to engage with attendees and share its insights on progressive endowment strategies. The bank’s efforts were further recognized with a token of appreciation, underscoring its leadership in advocating for innovative and impactful practices within the Waqf ecosystem. This recognition not

only highlighted Sohar Islamic’s influence but also reinforced its alignment with Oman’s broader goals of sustainable development. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Abdulwahid Al Murshidi, Chief Islamic Banking Officer, stated: “The Oman Waqf Conference presents a unique opportunity to inspire fresh perspectives and foster collaboration among key stakeholders in the Waqf sector. At Sohar Islamic, we believe that endowments are a cornerstone for building resilient societies and addressing critical societal needs. Our sponsorship reflects our commitment to integrating Islamic finance with social initiatives that drive meaningful change.” Mr. Abdulwahid Al Murshidi added, “The conference also provided a platform to empower participants with practical skills in endowment management and investment while encouraging innovative ideas to modernize practices. By equipping attendees with

the tools to drive change, this event highlights the transformative potential of Waqf in shaping a sustainable future and underscores the importance of such forums in paving the way for collective progress.” The conference delved into key themes, including innovative investment strategies for sustainable endowments, and leveraging technology to enhance endowment efficiency. By showcasing both local and international success stories, the event emphasized the potential of endowments as a tool for sustainable development and their critical role in addressing the needs of society. Through its active involvement, Sohar Islamic reaffirmed its leadership in advancing the Waqf ecosystem by emphasizing strategic, value-driven, and relationship-oriented approaches. As a leading advocate of ethical finance, Sohar Islamic continues to champion initiatives that create tangible value for society.

AT ISAS PARENTS SPORTS FEST



Kaldi 850 Coffee sponsors ‘Rockstar Mom’ team

MUSCAT: Kaldi 850 Coffee, renowned for its rich brews and community-focused ethos, proudly participated as the official sponsor of the Rockstar Mom team at the ISAS Parents Sports Fest, held on 14.12.2024, Saturday. The highly anticipated event brought together parents in a spirited celebration of sports, camaraderie, and healthy competition. The Rockstar Mom team showcased incredible determination and skill during the Throw ball Tournament, securing the prestigious 1st Runners-Up Prize.

Unwavering dedication Their journey through the competition was marked by resilience, teamwork, and unwavering dedication, earning them admiration and applause from participants and spectators alike. Speaking on this achievement, Paul Biswajit, General Manager, at

Kaldi 850 Coffee, shared: “At Kaldi 850 Coffee, we believe in supporting initiatives that empower and inspire communities. We are immensely proud of the Rockstar Mom team for their outstanding performance and sportsmanship. They exemplify the spirit of teamwork and perseverance that resonates deeply with our brand values.” The ISAS Parents Sports Fest served as a dynamic platform to encourage parent participation in sports, strengthen community bonds, and celebrate collective achievements. Kaldi 850 Coffee, as a brand committed to enriching lives and creating connections, was delighted to be a part of this vibrant event. Kaldi 850 Coffee congratulates the Rockstar Mom team on their remarkable achievement and extends gratitude to all participants and organisers for making the event a grand success.

INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER DAY



INMA leads beach cleanup campaign

MUSCAT: INMA, the Real Estate Sector of The Zubair Corporation, in collaboration with Muscat Municipality, hosted a successful beach cleanup campaign at Qurum Beach to commemorate International Volunteer Day. The initiative brought together more than 50 employees from the real estate sector, including representatives from INMA, Barr Al Jassah, and Zakher Building Solutions, along with senior leadership and management. Under the slogan “Together We Can Make a Difference,” the event aimed to raise awareness about the importance of preserving our natural environment and fostering a sense of community responsibility. The campaign was an impactful reminder of the need for collective action to safeguard our beaches and maintain a clean and sustainable environment for future generations. Employees worked side by side with community representatives, reflecting a shared commitment to environmental stewardship.

Yahya Al Balushi, Chief Operations Officer of the Real Estate Sector, emphasised the significance of such initiatives, said, “This beach cleanup campaign embodies the spirit of collaboration and responsibility that International Volunteer Day represents. At INMA, we are committed to creating sustainable communities and protecting our environment.” “Today’s effort is a testament to how we, together with our partners and employees, can make a meaningful impact. It’s not just about cleaning the beach—it’s about inspiring action and fostering a culture of care for our surroundings,” he further added. The partnership with Muscat Municipality further highlights INMA’s dedication to working closely with local organisations to enhance community well-being. This event is part of a broader commitment by INMA and its group companies to promote sustainability and corporate social responsibility initiatives that resonate with both employees and the community.

IADC DRILLING MIDDLE EAST CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION

Abraj Energy Services showcases its innovation, safety, and sustainability

MUSCAT: Abraj Energy Services, Oman’s leading oil and gas services provider, participated in the 2024 IADC Drilling Middle East Conference and Exhibition as the platinum sponsor to showcase its competitive solutions, innovative technologies, commitment to safety, and leadership in advancing the oil and energy industry. Held under the patronage of H.E. Mohsin Al Hadhrami, undersecretary of Oman’s Ministry of Energy and Minerals, the conference and exhibition took place from December 10–11, hosted by Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) in collaboration with the Oman Society for Petroleum Services (OPAL). Abraj’s participation emphasized its role in promoting sustainable practices, innovative solutions, industry insights, and the development of local talent within the oil and energy sector. Abraj contributed significantly to the annual event by engaging speakers and participants in panel sessions and technical workshops. Key topics included enhancing drilling and maintenance efficiency, maximizing local content and in-country value, and safety standards in drilling performance. In addition, Abraj emphasised



fostering emerging local qualified personnel to contribute to innovation development in drilling. Eng. Saif Al Hamhami, CEO of Abraj Energy Services, stated, “Our participation in the 2024 IADC Drilling Middle East Conference and Exhibition is an ideal opportunity to exchange knowledge and expertise in the oil and energy drilling field. It also enables us to discuss the most prominent challenges facing this industry. Together with our partners, we are committed to supporting sustainable practices and health, safety, and security aspects, along with empowering the emerging gen-

eration to contribute to innovation development and create a suitable environment for future growth.” Among Abraj’s key contributions, Dr. Ilyas Ahmed, HSE Manager, participated in the panel session on “Advancing Safety Performance with New Methods and Technologies.” Saud Al Ghafri, Drilling superintendent, presented a paper entitled “Agile and Innovative Approach for Conducting Drilling Rigs’ Annual Maintenance with Minimal Impact on Operations,” highlighting Abraj’s best practices in the field. Moreover, Salah Al-Harthy, Director of Business Development &

Well Services Division, moderated the panel session on “Maximizing Local Content and In-Country Value.” Ismail Al Habsi, Training Drilling Superintendent, discussed Abraj’s role in supporting the local market with qualified personnel in the industry in the panel session on “Attracting the Young Generation.” Abraj Energy Services played a leading role in this event, which provided a crucial platform for addressing the drilling industry’s most pressing challenges, including the advancement of sustainability practices, workforce training, and the enhancement of quality assurance standards. The event brought together leading oil and gas companies, creating a collaborative environment for insightful discussions and innovative solutions to shape the future of the industry. Abraj Energy Services is Oman’s leading oil and gas services provider, specialising in drilling, well services, and integrated project management. With a strong focus on innovation and technology, Abraj Energy Services is committed to delivering high-quality, sustainable solutions to meet the evolving needs of the energy sector.

FUSION OF TRADITION AND INNOVATION

Mercedes-Benz Oman unveils most diverse G-Class portfolio of all time

MUSCAT: Mercedes-Benz Oman is proud to unveil the all-new G-Class portfolio. The diverse lineup of models features the iconic Mercedes-AMG G 63, Mercedes-Benz G 450 and G 500, and its Edition One electric G 580 with EQ Technology, representing the perfect fusion of tradition and innovation. With a legacy spanning over 45 years, the G-Class continues to be an iconic figure in luxury off-road vehicles, now further elevated by electrification with the G 580. All models are built to excel in Oman’s diverse and demanding terrains while offering unparalleled luxury, performance, and sustainability. Since its debut in 1979, the G-Class has been renowned for its rugged off-road capabilities and luxury, making it the perfect choice for Oman’s adventurous spirit. The latest iteration continues to push boundaries with improved performance, advanced digital features, and luxurious comfort. The iconic design remains intact, with subtle updates like a redesigned radiator grille and bumpers, offering a modern yet familiar look. The G-Class’s off-road prowess remains unmatched with its ladder-frame concept, three mechanical differential locks, LOW RANGE off-road gear reduction, and long-travel suspension. With



up to 100% gradeability, a ground clearance of at least 241 mm, and a fording depth of 70 cm, the G-Class is built to conquer the challenging landscapes of Oman, from sand dunes to rocky mountain paths. The G 580 with EQ Technology marks a historic leap into the future of off-roading, offering all-electric power without sacrificing the iconic G-Class performance. Powered by four individually controlled electric motors, the G 580 delivers an astounding 432 kW and 1164 Nm of torque, providing unparalleled power and control. Key innovations like G-TURN, G-STEERING, and the intelligent off-road crawl function ensure the G 580 excels in Oman’s diverse off-road conditions. The 116-kWh high-voltage lithium-ion battery ensures a driving range of up to 473 kilometres, making it ideal for long journeys

across Oman, whether through the city of Muscat or venturing into the desert. The G 580’s fast-charging capabilities allow up to 80% recharge in just 32 minutes, minimising downtime and maximizing your adventures. With a fording depth of 850 mm, the G 580 surpasses its predecessors and is fully prepared for Oman’s wadis and desert landscapes. Its design stays true to the G-Class heritage while incorporating new electric-specific elements like a black-panel radiator grille, a slightly raised bonnet, and air curtains in the rear wheel arches to enhance aerodynamics. Inside all of the G-Class models, the focus is on luxury, comfort, and advanced technology. The MBUX (Mercedes-Benz User Experience) infotainment system features a 12.3-inch high-resolution display with intuitive con-

trols, voice commands, and smartphone integration. All the models come with high-quality materials, including nappa leather, ensuring a premium feel throughout. Optional features like temperature-controlled cupholders, wireless charging, and the Burmester® 3D surround sound system add to the luxurious driving experience. The MANUFAKTUR programme offers almost limitless customisation options, allowing Omani customers to personalise their G-Class with a wide range of interior and exterior finishes. Safety is at the core of Mercedes-Benz’s design philosophy, and all the G-Class models are equipped with the latest driver assistance systems. From Active Brake Assist to the PRE-SAFE® preventive occupant protection system, the vehicles ensure maximum safety on Oman’s roads. The G 580 also includes the “transparent bonnet” feature, allowing drivers to see obstacles directly under the front of the car—a crucial tool for navigating rocky or uneven terrain. The G 580 with EQ Technology represents a pivotal moment for Mercedes-Benz and the future of luxury vehicles in Oman. Offering zero-emission driving without compromising on performance, the G 580 aligns with global sustainability goals and Oman’s focus on renewable energy.

ROUND-UP

Bank Muscat Corporate Banking: An ambition delivered campaign

Bank Muscat has developed and executed strategies to strengthen diverse business sectors and empower organisations to leverage opportunities in local, regional, and global markets

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, is steadfast in its commitment to Oman Vision 2040, a national framework aiming to foster growth across industries and commercial sectors. This ambitious programme encourages government institutions and corporates to embrace emerging opportunities, paving the way for economic progress and innovation. Aligned with this vision, Bank Muscat has developed and executed strategies to strengthen diverse business sectors and empower organisations to leverage opportu-



nities in local, regional, and global markets. The bank has been proactive in adapting to shifting market dynamics and customer preferences, thereby, effectively addressing the needs of its government, corporate, SME, and other business customers. Bank Muscat Corporate Banking's new campaign, "Ambition Delivered", underscores the bank's role as a trusted enabler of progress for its corporate customers. It signifies the Bank's unwavering commitment to understanding the unique aspirations of its customers and transforming them into tangible achievements. Ambition Delivered reflects Bank Muscat's dedication to delivering tailored solutions, innovative technology and seamless services that empower businesses to thrive in a dynamic economic environment. By aligning its efforts with the ambitions of customers, the Bank ensures that the Corpo-

rate Banking proposition is not just about financial transactions but about creating added value and fostering sustainable growth for the future. Bank Muscat's enduring success is rooted in its strong customer relationships and unwavering dedication to corporate values. These values, coupled with a commitment to quality and a no-compromise approach, have enabled the Bank to support its customers in achieving sustainable growth. For over four decades, Bank Muscat has been instrumental in advancing corporate banking, reinforcing its position as a trusted banking partner in the Sultanate. The Bank's extensive range of services and innovative digital solutions empower the government, corporate, and SMEs sectors to achieve their strategic objectives, thus, contributing to the growth of the country's economic landscape. Ilham Murtadha Al Hamaid, General Manager - Corporate Banking at Bank Muscat, commented on the Bank's pioneering role in the development of the government, corporate, and SMEs sectors. he stated: "Bank Muscat has consistently prioritized the development of the Bank customers' businesses by keeping pace with market changes and providing forward-looking solutions. The Bank's long-standing commitment to customers of all shapes and sizes underpins its mission to help them achieve their strategic goals and aspirations. Bank Muscat's focus remains on delivering tailored and innovative banking solutions that address the evolving needs of its diverse customer base." Reflecting on the recent corporate banking brand positioning campaign, Ilham Al Hamaid added: "The Bank's new campaign highlights its dedication to corporate customers and the progress the Bank as well as these corporates achieved together. The Bank is one of the first in the region to adopt strategic digital transformation initiatives, which have redefined operational efficiency of customers. By integrating the latest technologies into Bank Muscat's offerings, the Bank ensures that corporate customers can seamlessly manage their businesses, allowing them to focus on growth and expansion. Bank Muscat remains committed to innovation, ensuring this commitment empowers the Bank's customers to navigate the evolving landscape confidently." Bank Muscat's Corporate Banking services are designed to meet the evolving needs of institutions and corporations, providing swift, efficient, and cost-effective solutions. The Bank has expanded its network of corporate branches currently standing at 5 modern and spacious branches across the Sultanate, with 2 branches in Muscat and one branch in Sohar, Salalah, and Duqm. These branches are equipped with latest technologies and supported by a highly qualified team of relationship managers that facilitate customer transactions. The Bank also

places special attention to SMEs, recognising their significant role in the country's economic growth. The dedicated relationship managers at the bank's corporate branches offer advisory services and assist customers with services like account opening, insurance products, remote check deposits, and direct debit services. Through its digital transformation initiatives, Bank Muscat continues to enhance the business sector by introducing comprehensive digital platforms that streamline payment processing, liquidity management, and trade services. Notable solutions include a unified account dashboard, an online corporate banking platform, and a B2B payment system that ensures secure salary payments for employees. Bank Muscat's leadership in corporate banking has been recognized with several prestigious awards, including the Infosys Finacle Innovation Award for Innovation in Corporate Banking, the Best Corporate Bank Award from Oman Economic Review, and the Best Digital Bank for Corporates in Oman from Global Finance. The Bank has also been listed amongst Forbes Middle East's Most Valuable Banks. Through these continued efforts and achievements, Bank Muscat remains the trusted partner in the Sultanate's financial sector. These achievements also encourage the Bank to keep advancing the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 and supporting customers in seizing opportunities for sustainable growth.

A GREAT FAMILY CAR

Meet the proud owner of Kia's electric vehicle EV9 in Oman

MUSCAT: With technological advancements happening at lightning speed, the shift in perception towards electric vehicles is evident, as customers in Oman increasingly move beyond conventional modes of transport. Kia Oman proudly announces that Mr. Humaid Rashid Humaid Al Habsi is the proud owner of Kia's EV9 in Oman. Sharing his transition from conventional to electric vehicles, Mr Al Habsi expressed, "I'm incredibly excited to take this journey forward and become one of Kia's proud owner of EV9 in Oman. The vehicle is smart, spacious, and luxurious, packed with a range of safety and seamless connectivity features." Mr Al Habsi emphasised that one of the key reasons he opted for the EV9 is low maintenance compared to gasoline-powered vehicles, as EVs have fewer moving parts. With a battery management warranty of 160,000 kms/8 years, whichever is earlier, Kia ensures that its EV9 customers have a trouble free experience. To deliver complete peace of mind, Kia in collaboration with European Mobility Company - Wall Box also installs an AC charging unit at the customer's residence or office. "The Kia EV9, with its powerful battery and an impressive driving range of up to 500 kilometres, provides an ideal solution for city driving while ensuring minimal environmental impact and eliminates the need to stop at a petrol station. It is a great family car, perfect for a large family of 7-members," he shared. Based on Kia's "Opposites United" philosophy, Kia's next-gen EV9 is its first mid-sized



all-wheel-drive SUV, built on Kia's advanced E-GMP platform. Experience the exhilaration of noiseless acceleration, with a motor output power of 283 kW. Available in 6 and 7-seater configurations, it offers sophisticated leather interiors, remarkable speed, and an impressive range of up to 500 kilometres on a full charge. The battery charges quickly in Ultra-fast (350 Kw) mode, with a 24-minute boost delivering up to 80% charge, ensuring smooth and efficient journeys. The EV9's front exudes confidence, clarity, and calmness with its clear-cut lines and surfaces. The SUV's signature 'Digital Tiger Face' is accentuated by the Digital Pattern Lighting Grille and vertical headlamps, giving the EV9 a bold and futuristic look. The EV9's 'Star Map' LED daytime running lights (DRL) create a modern animated lighting pattern providing a new illumination experience. Beyond its stunning exterior, the EV9 offers ample storage

and immersive infotainment options. The integrated 12.3" Navigation on a Cluster LED with 64 colour Ambient Mood Lighting, wide electric sunroof, a wireless smartphone charging tray, Premium Meridian 14 speakers Music System and Remote Smart Parking Assist (RSPA) among others are some of the top attractive features. The EV9 offer immersive and eco-conscious driving experiences setting a benchmark for sustainable mobility. Visit Kia showrooms near you or visit www.kia.com to request a test drive or to know more call +968 93204360. The Kia Oman team is ready to assist you. Reliable International Automotive LLC (RIA), the official distributor for Kia in Oman, offers a rewarding ownership experience. Ranked #1 by Kia in 2024 for Sales Customer Satisfaction in the Middle East and Africa, RIA offers excellent products and unmatched facilities to ensure customers' absolute satisfaction every mile.

MULTI-DAY EVENT

Middle East College celebrates the graduation of batch 2024

MUSCAT: Middle East College (MEC) celebrated its Annual Graduation Ceremony for the Batch 2024 on the 7th and 8th of December 2024 at its Student Hub. The multi-day event celebrated the academic achievements of 1,012 graduates across a spectrum of disciplines, including Engineering, Science, Technology, Business Management, and Archives and Records Management. The grand ceremonies reflected MEC's unwavering commitment to empowering students through outstanding qualifications, immersive experience, and robust professional networks - hallmarks of the institution. This year's ceremonies, held in four distinct sessions, were graced by esteemed dignitaries, industry partners, management members, members of the College Board, parents of graduates, faculty members, academic support staff, and the professional services team. His Excellency Dr. Saif bin Abdullah Al-Haddabi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation for Research and Innovation, presided over the ceremony awarding undergraduate degrees in the Logistics Management programme. The programme is affiliated with the Breda University of Applied Sciences, Netherlands. His Excellency Ahmed bin Mohammed Al-Humaidi, President of Muscat Municipality, presided over the awarding ceremony for undergraduate diplomas and advanced diplomas in Business Administration, Science, and Engineering programmes, offered in affiliation with Coventry University, UK. His Excellency Prof. Abdullah bin Khamis Ambusaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education



for Education, presided over the awarding ceremony for Bachelor's awards in Business Administration and Engineering programmes, offered in affiliation with Coventry University, UK. His Excellency Engineer Ahmed Hasan Al-Dheeb, Deputy Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones, presided over the final ceremony, which conferred bachelor's degrees in the Archives and Records Management programme from MEC, bachelor's degrees in technology programmes affiliated with Coventry University, UK, as well as post-graduate degrees from both MEC and Coventry University. In his address, Dr Saleh Hamed Al Shaaibi, Dean of Middle East College, emphasised the dedication and diligent work exhibited by the graduating class, underscoring the significance of their journey, and said, "As we gather here today, I am filled with immense happiness. Your unwavering dedication and diligent work have helped you reach this remarkable milestone. As you stride into the future, I encourage you to carry with you the values and wisdom instilled by Middle East College. Guided by the spirit of the Sultanate of Oman and inspired by Vision 2040, you step forward into a world eager for

your contributions. The knowledge you've gained, the friendships you've forged, and the dreams you've nurtured here at MEC will light the path ahead." "Abdulmalik, a graduate of the Archives and Records Management programme expressed his pride and optimism, stating: "This moment is a true celebration of our dedication and hard work. I extend my warmest congratulations to all my fellow graduates and look forward to applying the ethos and knowledge gained at MEC as we embark on the next chapters of our lives. I am excited to further my academic journey at Middle East College by pursuing a master's degree in my field. Once again, congratulations to everyone who has achieved this milestone". MEC's newest alumni carry forward the institution's ethos of innovation, resilience, and community impact, well-positioned to become catalysts for change - leaders, creators, and thinkers who will address the needs of local communities and the global arena. Notably, Middle East College stands proudly among the top 8 institutions in the Arab region, as shortlisted by Times Higher Education (THE) for outstanding achievements in Leadership and Management.



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