



HIS MAJESTY SENDS GREETINGS TO PRESIDENT OF INDONESIA

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to President Joko Widodo of the Republic of Indonesia on the occasion of his country's Independence Day. His Majesty the Sultan conveyed his sincere congratulations and best wishes to the Indonesian president and the friendly people. — **ONA**



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SAYYID ASA'AD SEEKS PEACE AND STABILITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

At the His Majesty the Sultan's behest, Sayyid Asa'ad participates in third Voice of Global South Summit



SALALAH: Upon the Royal behest of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Asa'ad bin Tarik Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs and Special Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, on Saturday participated in the 3rd Voice of Global South Summit (VOGSS).

HH Sayyid Asa'ad delivered a speech in which he conveyed the greetings and best wishes of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the Indian government and people for hosting the summit, themed "An Empowered Global South for a Sustainable Future".

The virtual summit was held under the chairmanship of Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India, with the participation of heads of states and governments.

He expressed special greetings to the Republic of India on the occasion of its Independence Day.

During the speech, HH Sayyid Asa'ad said "Cooperation has now become more urgent than ever, with the world facing serious challenges that affect its security and stability. Recent years saw political and economic turmoil and armed conflicts that escalated the existing regional tensions. We believe that sustainable solu-

tions to these challenges can only come through dialogue, cooperation and joint action to consolidate the pillars of international peace and security."

In the speech, HH Sayyid Asa'ad laid emphasis on the Palestinian cause, which he described as "one of the region's most serious issues that requires a just stance by this Group and the rest of the international community."

"It should be a stance in support for the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and their right to establish their independent state on their land, and a stance for the realisation of peace and stability in the (Middle East) region that has suffered the impacts of this unresolved issue, notably under the Israeli persistent, illegal occupation of Palestinian and Arab lands since 1967, in addition to Israel's violation of all relevant UN resolutions, its disregard for international law and standards of international human rights and its violation of international humanitarian law."

Speaking about the global sustainable development goals (SDGs) and other issues, HH Sayyid Asa'ad said that, through

"Oman Vision 2040", the Sultanate of Oman has drawn out a roadmap to achieve a diversified and sustainable economy based on innovation and knowledge.

"We believe that the future requires us not only to develop the economy but also to protect the environment and ensure the welfare of the whole society. This is envisaged through investment in sectors of blue economy, renewable energy and modern technology," he added.

HH Sayyid Asa'ad pointed out that Oman has set ambitious goals to achieve zero carbon neutrality by 2050 through integrated strategies for renewable energy and by improving energy efficiency.

He affirmed that Oman believes that realisation of the SDGs requires collective the cooperation of all at the regional and international levels in a manner that serves national strategies in building prosperous and sustainable economies in the Global South.

HH Sayyid Asa'ad also affirmed the Sultanate of Oman's support for the principles of this summit. **>A2**

GAZA DEATH TOLL
as of August 17, 2024

Deaths
40,074
Injured
92,537

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

No monkey pox case detected in Oman

1 The Ministry of Health confirmed that no case of monkey pox has been detected in the Sultanate of Oman, calling on citizens and residents to follow the news from the official sources. **>A2**

OMAN

Non-oil activities add to economic growth

2 Non-oil activities were a big addition to growth during the 1st quarter. **>A2**

MARKET

Oman's trade with Americas rises

3 Oman's trade with Americas is witnessing a big boost. **>B1**

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COMMENTARY

Iran's revenge on Israel



SADIQ MOHAMED SAID AL-LAWATY

There has been much talk about Iran's revenge on the Zionist entity for the crimes of violating Iran's sovereignty and the assassination of the head of the Hamas movement's political bureau in Tehran, the Mujahid Ismail Haniyeh. Most analyses indicate that an Iranian strike is inevitable and imminent. Some have been tired of waiting and

concluded that Iran was probably afraid of the numerous naval forces of various types that America had amassed in the region including a nuclear submarine carrying nuclear bombs.

There are those who say that Iran will respond to the occupying entity with a strong strike in strategic locations, but it will not launch a comprehensive war. **Full story >A2**

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PRAYER
TIMINGS

Dhuhr.....	12:16pm
Asr.....	3:42pm
Maghrib.....	6:43pm
Isha.....	7:57pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....	4:25am

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COMMENTARY

Iran’s revenge on Israel



SADIQ MOHAMED SAID AL-LAWATY

There has been much talk about Iran’s revenge on the Zionist entity for the crimes of violating Iran’s sovereignty and the assassination of the head of the Hamas movement’s political bureau in Tehran, the Mujahid Ismail Haniyeh. Most analyses indicate that an Iranian strike is inevitable and imminent. Some have been tired of waiting and concluded that Iran was probably afraid of the numerous naval forces of various types that America had amassed in the region including

a nuclear submarine carrying nuclear bombs. There are those who say that Iran will respond to the occupying entity with a strong strike in strategic locations, but it will not launch a comprehensive war. Whoever has read several of my articles about the Gaza War, as I predicted in the first article on 16 October 2023, the Gaza war was nothing but an Israeli, American, and some Arab countries conspiracy consisting of three stages, and the evidence is that America vetoed three times in the Security Council and once in the UN General Assembly to prevent a ceasefire in Gaza so that the war may continue until its final third stage. America and other Western countries have sent hundreds of tons of bombs and other war materials since the beginning of the war, which has not stopped until this day. The Israeli press has recently revealed evidence of this conspiracy. The conspiracy can be summarized as follows: eliminate Hamas and all Palestinian resistance movements in the first stage, Lebanese Hezbollah in the second stage, and finally

striking Iran with all force by the United States and all its allies in the third stage, thus destroying its nuclear and missile facilities and drone factories. All evidence indicates that Israel has failed in its first stage in eliminating Hamas, and I am not the only one who says that, indeed, the American magazine “Foreign Affairs” mentioned this on 23 June 2024, when it stated the following: “After nine months of Israeli combat operations in the Gaza Strip, Hamas has not been defeated and is not close to being defeated either”. The magazine added, “Israel invaded the Gaza Strip with about 40,000 soldiers, forcibly displaced 80% of the population, killed more than 38,000 Palestinians, dropped at least 80,000 tons of bombs on the Strip, damaged more than half of its buildings, and restricted access to water, food, and electricity, to the region, leaving the entire population on the brink of starvation”. During his last visit to Washington, Netanyahu succeeded in convincing Biden, his deputy, and most members of Congress

of the need to move to the third and final phase of the war plan, despite his failure in the first phase. Netanyahu has secured the votes of Jews and Zionists for him and his party in the elections that will be held at the end of the year, if he strikes Iran to return it to its pre-revolution state. With US approval, Israel decided to provoke Iran by assassinating Haniyeh on its territory and violating its sovereignty. From the Israeli War Cabinet’s point of view, this malicious act of murder will cause Iran to respond with an all-out war. This will give America and the West justification to begin the third stage of the war strategy by striking Iran’s nuclear and missile facilities and drones’ factories, as part of responding to the Iran’s strike with a stronger Israel’s allies response. Thus, they will achieve what they did not achieve through harsh unilateral sanctions. America is likely to have obtained Russian and China’s agreement not to defend Iran in exchange for American concessions in Ukraine and Taiwan. Iran’s silence suggests that it was aware of the three-stage

conspiracy since the beginning of the Israeli aggression on Gaza, and today it is fully aware that the occupying entity failed in Gaza and that it does not want to confront Hezbollah. The assassination of Haniyeh in Tehran is only part of the strategy of the great and small devils to incite Iran to wage war against Israel. Regarding Iranian revenge, I would like to point out that Iran will inevitably take revenge for the assassination of its guest in Tehran and the violation of its sovereignty and the neighbouring country from which the Israeli drone was launched and which has not yet been named. Iran will do so at the right time and the right circumstances, and I expect it to happen after the aggression on Gaza stops and the Zionist forces withdraw from it. Revenge is inevitable but it may take some time. Iran remaining strong is in the interest of the resistance movements in Palestine, Syria, Iraq and Yemen, and its deterrent power represented by long-range missiles and drones frightens the Zionist entity, America and

Western countries, and therefore its strong presence also serves all the free people of the world, including the countries of Latin America that are not subject to hegemony of America. Anyone who thinks that Iran will take revenge for its honourable guest or the violation of its airspace anytime soon is short-sighted. Iran is not so foolish as to waste all its hard work and great efforts in achieving technological progress which cannot be compared to any other advanced country that has achieved the same progress in a short period of time with such ease, and destroy its infrastructure and kill hundreds of its people for a cause that may not be worth all these sacrifices. There is no doubt that those who have gathered their naval fleets for the purpose of implementing the third stage of the conspiracy are crazy and should visit a psychiatric clinic as soon as possible.

The author is a retired army corporal who has authored “Have you read Torah and Gospel”, “Pre-1970 Oman”, “Knowledge of Islam made easy”.

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

No monkey pox case detected in Oman

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health confirmed that no case of monkeypox has been detected in the Sultanate of Oman, calling on citizens and residents to follow the news from official sources. The ministry, represented by the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention and the Emergency Management Centre, is following up on developments regarding the monkeypox virus after the World Health Organization declared ‘monkeypox’ a public health emergency. The ministry confirmed the availability of necessary infrastructure to test and diagnose the disease, and its direct and continuous coordination with the World Health Organization and other international organisations concerned to monitor the infectious diseases.

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Non-oil activities add to Oman’s economic growth

The contribution of non-oil activities to the GDP during the first quarter, at constant prices, amounted to OMR6.8 billion

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman’s GDP during the first quarter of this year showed continued expansion of non-oil activities, which was a major source of economic growth. The Ministry of Economy explained that the contribution of non-oil activities to the GDP during the first quarter, at constant prices, amounted to OMR6.8 billion, while at current prices it amounted to about OMR7.2 billion. The growth increased by 6.5 percent for agriculture, forestry and fishing activities, 5.7 percent for industrial activities and 3.9 percent for service activities compared to the same period in 2023. The Ministry indicated that the contribution of agriculture,



forestry and fishing activities, at constant prices, represents 2.3 percent of the GDP, industrial activities 20.8 percent, and service activities 48.2 percent, and at current prices the contribution of the three sectors to the GDP represents 2.7 percent, 19.3 percent and 46.9 percent, respectively. The Ministry of Economy added that the transportation and storage sector continues the good work achieved over the years of the Tenth Plan, and recorded a real growth of 7.8 percent during the first quarter of this year, and its contribution to the GDP amounted to 6.4 percent, while mining and quarrying activities recorded a growth of 0.9 percent and its contribution to the GDP amounted to 0.6 percent, and the growth of accommodation and food services activities decreased by 12 percent, and its contribution to the GDP amounted to 1.5 percent, and the growth of the

education sector increased to 3.2 percent with a contribution of 4.5 percent to the GDP. In other economic sectors, the construction sector has been recovering since the end of last year, with its growth rising by 2.7 percent during the first quarter of this year compared to a decline of 1.3 percent during the same period last year, which represented an important support for GDP growth given the size of the construction sector’s contribution, which amounted to 8.3 percent of GDP. The wholesale and retail trade sector also achieved a growth of 5.8 percent and its contribution to the GDP increased to 8.1 percent, and the growth of financial and insurance activities increased by 5.6 percent with a contribution to GDP of 5.8 percent, while oil activities witnessed a decline of 2.4 percent during the first quarter compared to a growth rate of 5.1

percent during the same period last year, due to the decline in oil production and the decline in the growth rate of crude oil activity by 3.3 percent. The Ministry of Economy explained that the economic growth data for the first quarter monitors the good performance of non-oil sectors, which achieved real growth of 4.5 percent compared to the same period in 2023, which balanced the effects of the decline in the added value of oil activities, and contributed to the continued real growth of the Omani economy at a rate of 1.7 percent. The Tenth Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) aims to raise the contribution of the transport and logistics sector to 7.5 percent, tourism sector to 3 percent, fisheries sector to 2 percent, agriculture sector to 1.5 percent, mining sector to 0.7 percent, and education and scientific research sector to 6.2 percent. Expectations during 2025, which is the last year of the Tenth Five-Year Plan, indicate a continued rise in the GDP growth rate, supported by the continued growth momentum in non-oil sectors, which are expected to grow to about 3.2 percent. The prospects for economic growth are also enhanced by the expected recovery of oil activities during the coming period, in light of the OPEC Plus group’s orientation to gradually increase oil production starting from the end of 2024.

GLOBAL SOUTH

Stress on need for better cooperation

<FROM A1 He voiced Oman’s support for constructive action among friends in the Global South to achieve the common objectives and the aspirations of their peoples for development, prosperity, security and stability. The summit dealt with a wide range of issues of significance to developing countries, most notably climate change. It underscored the need to address

the disproportionate impact of climate change on developing countries and explore solutions to achieve sustainable development by promoting an inclusive and environmentally sustainable economic growth, with special emphasis on achieving the global SDG. The summit also elaborated on global governance aimed to achieve a fair governance structure that gives greater voice and representation to developing countries. It stressed the need for better international cooperation through diplomatic relations and cooperation between countries of the Global South, to address common challenges like health crises, economic instability, and food security. The virtual summit was attended by Sheikh Khalifa Ali Al

Harthy, Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs, Sheikh Khalifa Hamad Al Badi, Secretary-General of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs and Special Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, and Ahmed Hashel Al Maskari, Head of the GCC and Regional Neighbourhood Department at the Foreign Ministry. -ONA

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78th Independence Day of India celebrated with fervour

More than 1,000 people, including members of the Indian community, took part in the event

MUSCAT: Embassy of India in Muscat celebrated the 78th Independence Day with great enthusiasm and patriotic fervour on 15 August 2024.

The event witnessed the participation of more than 1,000 people, including members of the Indian community, friends of India in Oman, and distinguished guests.

Amit Narang, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman, commenced the celebrations by paying a floral tribute to the statue of Mahatma Gandhi, a global icon of peace and non-violence. Following this, the ambassador raised the National Flag of India, accompanied by the singing of the National Anthem.

In his address on the occasion, Ambassador Amit Narang read out excerpts from the speech delivered on the eve of Independence Day by President of India Smt. Droupadi Murmu, emphasising the progress India has made over the past decades and the vision for a prosperous future.

The students of Indian School Darsait added a soulful touch to the celebration with their rendition of patriotic songs, filling the atmosphere with pride and joy. The event also featured the 'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign, with attendees eagerly taking photographs at the specially designed photo booth that celebrated this nationwide initiative.

A special presentation on the 'Partition Horrors Remembrance Day' was also displayed, reflecting on the tragic events of the partition and the resilience of the Indian spirit. This presentation, which was inaugurated by the Ambassador on 14 August, highlights the importance of remembering history to build a peaceful future.

Later in the day, Ambassador Amit Narang presided as the Chief Guest at the Independence Day celebration at Indian School Maabala. He joined the dignitaries and the children for the 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' campaign, launched by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on Environment Day. This initiative will encourage the young generation to contribute to environmental sustainability.

The celebrations of the 78th Independence Day at the Embassy of India, Muscat, were a tribute to India's journey of freedom, unity and progress, inspiring all present to continue working towards a brighter future for the nation.



INDIAN SCHOOL MAABELA

Rich Indian cultural heritage to the fore on Independence Day

MUSCAT: Indian School Al Maabala celebrated the 78th Independence Day with grandeur, marked by a series of events that highlighted the rich cultural heritage of India and a commitment to environmental sustainability. The event was graced by Amit Narang, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman, as the Chief Guest.

He was accompanied by his wife, Mrs. Divya Narang. The day also witnessed the presence of several distinguished dignitaries, including Jayapal Detha, Second Secretary, Embassy of India, Dr. Sivakumar Manickam, Chairman, Board of Directors of Indian Schools in Oman; Syed Salman, Vice Chairman, BoD and Director-in-Charge, ISAM; Krishnendhu S, Chairperson of the Grievance Committee, BoD and Director-in-Charge, ISAM; Vinoba MP, Senior Principal and Education Advisor, BoD; Shamim Hussain, President, SMC, ISAM; Dr Vikas Rao, Convenor, Syed Najeeb Rafiq, chairperson, PSC, along with other esteemed SMC Members.



The Social Sc Dept of ISAM presented an Art Gallery which showcased India's freedom struggle from 1857 to 1947.

The event commenced with an auspicious tree plantation drive under the initiative 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam,' a step towards a greener tomorrow. The school ground resonated with the Royal Oman Anthem and the Indian National Anthem, setting a patriotic tone for the day.

The celebration continued with a vibrant March Past by students from seven Indian schools in the capital, showcasing their discipline, coordination, and pride in their respective institutions.

After receiving the Guard of

Honour, the Chief Guest, Amit Narang in his address, commended the efforts of the students and the school, emphasising the importance of cultural plurality, which is vividly reflected in India's diverse traditions, languages, and festivals.

His words underscored the unity in diversity that defines the nation and reverberated with India's Independence Day theme of 'Viksit Bharat'.

He spoke about the aspirations of the Indian populace and highlighted how the nation is focused on progress and development. The Chief Guest was also felicitated with a memento, acknowledging his role as a beacon of inspiration to young and old alike.

INDIAN SCHOOL AL GHUBRA

Festivities and national pride mark celebrations

MUSCAT: Indian School Al Ghubra observed the 78th Independence Day on 15 August 2024 with a spirit of national fervour.

Ahmed Rayees, President, School Management Committee and Sunil K. A - Convenor, SMC graced the event.

The programme began with the school band playing the National Anthem of India. The band continued with the patriotic songs 'Aye Mere Watan Ke Logon' and the marching tune titled 'Bharat Ke Jawan'.

The students of classes 7, 8 and 9 presented a choral rendition titled 'Apne Maati Hain', which translates into 'This is our soil'. The song showcased the mesmerising beauty of India. This was followed by a video presentation on what the youngsters of today think about the freedom struggle of India. In keeping with the theme of 'Viksit Bharat', the western choir presented a soulful rendition titled 'Rise up, Rise up India!'. A captivating semi-classical dance performance by the students of class 8 brought to life the



diverse beauty of the nation.

Sarah Pranav G of class 7, Srihari K. Syam and Adhithya Rajesh of class 9 entertained the audience by playing instrumental music.

Ageedath Khanam and Aarushi Manikandan of class 11 were the comperes of the event.

The celebrations concluded with the Principal Mrs. Papri Ghosh seeking the blessings of the Almighty for a progressive and inclusive nation where every citizen enjoys freedom.

The Sustainable City – Yiti highlights its strategies to achieve net zero emissions

By turning sustainable living into a way of life, the city aims to create real generational behavioural change, making sustainability the norm and ensuring a lasting positive impact on future generations

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Sustainable City – Yiti represents a big advancement in urban planning and integrating green techniques with strict sustainability requirements. The project helps support Oman's vision for sustainable tourism, while contributing to the country's environmental preservation and economic diversification plans.

Located 30km from central Muscat, The Sustainable City - Yiti is a coastal development overlooking the Gulf of Oman and is a joint venture between Diamond Developers (part of SEE Holding) and Oman Tourism Development Company, part of Omran Group.

In an exclusive interview with the *Times of Oman* Mahmoud Shehadeh, Chief Sales and Marketing Officer in The Sustainable City – Yiti, highlights its key sustainability efforts underscoring its commitment to bringing forward global net zero targets, in line with Oman Vision 2040 and the Sultanate of Oman's commitment to achieving the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.



Excerpts from the interview: What is the significance of The Sustainable City - Yiti in Oman's journey towards achieving net-zero emissions and how does it align with Oman Vision 2040?

The Sustainable City – Yiti, embodies our commitment to supporting Oman's sustainability objectives and our full alignment with the country's vision of delivering an emission-neutral city that provides a green, energy-efficient, and people-centric environment for its residents to live, work, and thrive.

Oman's Vision 2040 paints a clear path towards a diversified, inclusive, and sustainable national economy, with the aim to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. We have bold ambitions to make The Sustainable City – Yiti the largest operational sustainable community in the region and the first net-zero emissions city in the region by 2040. We hope to extend the blueprint that we have been developing and continue to act as living proof-of-concept of The Sustainable City brand.

What are the key goals you aim to accomplish in the coming years?

We are slated for completion in 2026, with a 93% of the Sustain-



able City – Yiti infrastructure already completed. Our ambitious project involves a multipronged approach focusing on reducing the per capita emissions footprint of our residents by a minimum of 78% compared to conventional housing in Oman. This includes relying on 100% clean energy, 100% water recycling, 100% waste diversion from landfill, and up to 80% self-sufficiency in food caloric requirements.

An important goal that we strive to achieve is to enhance the economic value of the project by providing net zero service charges and equipping all residential units with energy-efficient appliances to minimise resource consumption and associated costs. As a result, residents of The Sustainable City – Yiti, will enjoy a considerable drop in their utility bills – up

to 100% on electricity and 50% on water – compared to conventional households.

Additionally, we are dedicated to fostering community engagement through urban farming, education, and sustainable lifestyle practices. By turning sustainable living into a way of life, we aim to create real generational behavioural change, making sustainability the norm and ensuring a lasting positive impact on future generations.

What are the key features of the clean, renewable energy sources that will power The Sustainable City – Yiti? Do you feel the reduced energy cost makes a case for investing in and opting for more sustainable developments?

To meet sustainability targets, we are aiming to cut down on emissions across all six pillars of environmental sustainability: food, energy, water, products, mobility, and waste.

With the Sustainable City – Yiti, we will harness renewable energy in two main ways: through the installation of rooftop solar photovoltaic (PV) panels, and through the use of biogas plants that convert organic waste into energy. The community will be equipped with smart systems such as electric vehicle charging points, with



an EV car sharing programme in the pipeline. Smart systems also provide residents with the ability to share power.

Moreover, the innovative design of our villas, townhouses and plaza apartments, all equipped with energy-efficient appliances, LED lighting, low-flow water fixtures, and smart home systems results in significant savings in consumption and utility bills reaching 100% for electricity.

Residential units avoid the sun and maximise shading. They are also equipped with highly insulated UV reflective walls, roofs, and windows which reduce air-conditioning loads and electrical consumption.

Homes in our cities are likely to have a higher resale value in the years to come given the growing demand for sustainable, energy-efficient living spaces, which not only reduce carbon footprint but as such, have lower operational costs. This makes a compelling case for considering more sustainable developments when looking to invest in property and real estate.

What amenities and facilities are part of the comprehensive master plan of The Sustainable City – Yiti, and how do they contribute to the community's sustainability goals?

Our residents are at the heart of our communities, so it is invaluable for us to promote a culture of sustainability amongst them. We're putting in place the necessary platforms, infrastructure, and initiatives to help our community adapt to a more sustainable lifestyle.

We're bringing a vibrant community built on the live-work-thrive philosophy. Everything from retail, dining, hospitality, leisure, healthcare, education, jobs and services will be available at The Sustainable City - Yiti, minimising the need to leave the community and therefore slashing the collective emissions of the community even further.

The Sustainable City - Yiti is also populated with car-free areas and to facilitate commute, shared e-bikes and electric buggies will be available for travel around the community in the car-free areas. We strongly believe that these mobility solutions will promote healthy commuting and encourage walkability.

In addition, The Sustainable City – Yiti will organise educational, sports, cultural and environmental community events and initiatives that will contribute to creating social ties and spreading environmental culture and sustainable practices in general.

50 OMANI YOUTH

Royal Academy of Administration launches programme to enhance the leadership skills of Omani youth

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Royal Academy of Administration on Saturday launched the 'Future Leadership Programme' to enhance and develop the leadership skills of Omani youth in line with "Oman Vision 2040".

The programme targets 50 Omani youth aged between 25 and 34 years, from the public and private sectors.

The programme includes intensive learning sessions, interactive workshops and practical training, and is implemented in cooperation with Hamad Bin Khalifa University, Globus Europe University, in addition to the Matters Group and Chaos Pilot University.

The programme focuses on meeting real challenges and learn from local and international leadership experiences, which seeks to achieve several goals, including enhancing leadership competencies, developing innovative strategies for solving problems, enhancing self-awareness and teamwork, and adopting a culture of innovation within institutions.

The programme provides participants with the opportunity to interact with leaders and experts from inside and outside



the Sultanate of Oman.

This will contribute to broadening the horizons of participants and strengthening their professional network, which enhances their ability to positively influence their professional and community environments.

The programme aims to develop Omani talents and competencies, enhance their leadership skills, and enable participants to develop effective leadership skills, strate-

gic thinking and innovative solutions, in addition to enhancing awareness of the importance of innovation and positive change in the work environment.

It will be implemented over a period of six months, and consists of three in-person units and three talent labs.

The learning journey includes different units, starting with the first unit, "Discover", which focuses on enhancing leadership,

then the second unit, "Predict", to learn about successful international experiences.

The third unit, "Leadership", helps enhance the mindset directed towards business success and achievement. All units focus on developing and enhancing future skills and applying the best international practices among participants.

The programme includes a visit to Japan to learn about various

educational and entrepreneurial institutions and meet with young leaders from Japan to exchange views and experiences.

The visit will address several topics, including rapid technological changes, change management strategies, developing creativity and innovation skills in the work environment, and sustainable leadership practices.

The trip aims to broaden the participants' horizons, enhance their openness to the world, and learn about different experiences and cultures, which will provide them with new ideas and visions that they can apply in their professional and personal lives.

Dr. Fathia bint Abdullah Al Rashidi, Assistant President of the Royal Academy of Administration for Programs Affairs, said that the Future Leaders Programme is an embodiment of the Academy's vision to develop young national leaders who have the ability to innovate and positively impact their communities.

She added that the Academy believes that empowering youth today is an investment in Oman's bright future, and that this programme is a continuation of the initiatives directed by the Academy to various leadership groups,

through which it seeks to build an integrated system in executive education and zero distance with leaders and consistency with reality by aligning initiatives with national needs and global trends.

She pointed out that the Royal Academy of Administration seeks through this initiative, to build a strong network of young leaders who can cooperate together to face future challenges and achieve sustainable development goals in the Sultanate of Oman.

The Future Leadership Programme comes as an important step towards building young national leaders capable of leading change and achieving sustainable development in the public and private sectors, and adopting a culture of innovation within institutions, and it is hoped that it will contribute to enhancing the readiness of participants to deal with rapid changes.

It is worth noting that the Royal Academy of Administration works to achieve its vision and the foundations of its work philosophy by implementing various initiatives targeting various leadership communities in government and private institutions in an effort to empower them with executive innovation and leadership skills.





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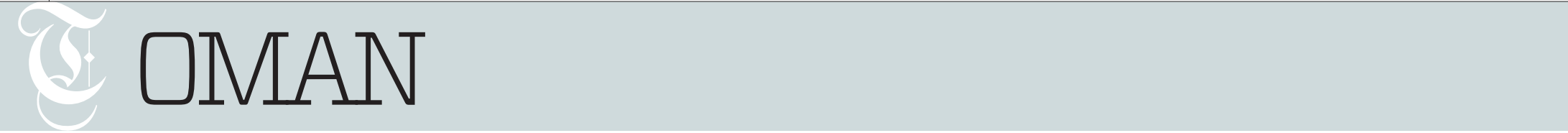
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WEATHER ALERT

Rain and flash floods expected in Oman

Times News Service

MUSCAT: According to the latest forecasts and analyses from the National Centre of Early Warning Centre from Multi Hazards, a low-pressure system is expected to bring significant rainfall to the Sultanate of Oman from Monday to Wednesday (August 19-21). Most of Oman is expected to

experience increased cloud cover, the Met office said on Saturday. Isolated rain is likely across the country, with heavier rainfall and thunderstorms in South Al Sharqiyah, Al Wusta, Dhofar, parts of Muscat, and the Al Hajar Mountains. There is a high risk of flash floods in the affected areas due to heavy rainfall.



Times
OF OMAN

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ISM unveils a commemorative plaque to celebrate Golden Jubilee

Indian School Muscat’s journey is a testament to the vision of its founders, the dedication of its staff, and the unwavering support of the Indian community in Oman

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The dawn of 2024 heralded a historic moment for Indian School Muscat (ISM) as it embarked on a year-long celebration marking its 50th anniversary. This landmark event was further elevated by the unveiling of a commemorative plaque, symbolising the school’s rich legacy and its unwavering commitment to future generations.

The inaugural ceremony, held on the school’s campus, was graced by dignitaries -- the honourable Chief Guest Amit Narang, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman, the Guest of Honour, Dr Siva Kumar Manickam, Chairman, Board of Directors of Indian Schools in Oman, esteemed Directors of Board of Directors of Indian Schools in Oman, Members of the School Management Committee, other distinguished dignitaries, Principal, Rakesh Joshi, Senior Vice-Principal, Vice-Principals of various sections, Asst. Vice-Principals of various sections, HODs of various sections, esteemed guests, teachers, parents and students. On this momentous occasion, the Principal, Rakesh Joshi briefed the gathering with the opulent history of ISM. He highlighted the school’s journey from its modest beginnings in 1975 to its current status as one of the largest and most respected educational institutions in the Gulf region. A special Golden Jubilee video was also screened, taking the audience on a visual journey through the school’s history, its milestones, and the countless memories etched in the hearts of those who have walked its halls. He delved deep to pay tribute to all the principals, teachers and

support staff who have been the steady pillars and contributed to making the ISM of now. ISM’s journey is a testament to the vision of its founders, the dedication of its staff, and the unwavering support of the Indian community in Oman. From its inception, the school has strived to foster not only academic excellence but also creativity and character building. The institution’s commitment to holistic development where students are equipped with the 21st century skills and values necessary for success in a globalized world remains steadfast. The ISM@50 anthem, a soulful rendition composed & created by the performing arts department

achievement, and the collective effort of all those who have cemented its glory. He congratulated the school for achieving this milestone and wished the best for all future endeavours. The centerpiece of the event was the unveiling of the Golden Jubilee commemorative plaque by the honourable Chief Guest Amit Narang, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman. This plaque, artfully crafted to reflect the essence of ISM’s journey, was unveiled by the Chief Guest, His Excellency Shri Amit Narang, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman. In his address, he lauded the school’s achievements and its pivotal role in shaping the lives of thousands of students over the past five decades. He acknowledged the incessant commitments and contributions of Indian School Muscat in Oman as significant to the success of the Indian community in Oman. He also believes that schools like ISM have been a vital contributor to India’s growth story as many of their ex-students have achieved great recognitions across various fields. He praised the efforts of the school in providing amicable and conducive environment for students to explore the impossible in particular sports, music and co-curricular. He congratulated the school and asserted that this was not just a celebration of the past glory but also a reaffirmation of commitment to excellence in education, holistic development, and community engagement in future. The plaque stands as a permanent testament to the school’s enduring legacy, engraved with the words that capture the spirit of ISM—“50 Years of Excellence in Education.” It serves not only as a marker of time but also as an inspiration for future generations. The inauguration of the Golden Jubilee year and the unveiling of the commemorative plaque mark the beginning of a year of celebrations, filled with events. In particular, it serves as a lasting reminder of the school’s journey and its promise to continue shaping the minds and hearts of young learners for generations to come. As the Golden Jubilee celebrations unfold, Indian School Muscat remains steadfast in its mission, poised to inspire and lead with the same passion and dedication that has defined its first 50 years.

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Israel reduces humanitarian zone in Gaza Strip to only 11%: UNRWA

Once again, fear spreads as families have nowhere to go. People remain trapped in an endless nightmare of death and destruction on a staggering scale

GAZA: The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) warned that Israel has reduced the so-called “humanitarian zone” to only 11% of the Gaza Strip, causing chaos and fear among the displaced.

“Thousands of families in Gaza have been displaced as the occupation authorities issue new evacuation orders,” UNRWA said in a post on X.

It pointed out that, “Once again,



fear spreads as families have nowhere to go. People remain trapped in an endless nightmare of death and destruction on a staggering scale.”

UN chief calls for humanitarian pauses for a polio vaccination campaign in Gaza

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Saturday called for humanitarian pauses in

order to conduct a polio vaccine campaign after the virus was detected in the war-torn Gaza Strip.

Speaking at a press conference in New York, Guterres appealed to all parties to provide concrete assurances right away guaranteeing humanitarian pauses for a polio vaccination campaign, reiterating that “the ultimate vaccine for polio is peace and an immediate humanitarian ceasefire.”

He stressed: “A Polio Pause is a must. It is impossible to conduct

a polio vaccination campaign with war raging all over.”

“Polio goes beyond politics. It transcends all divisions. And so it is our shared obligation to come together. To mobilise – not to fight people, but to fight polio. And to defeat a vicious virus that, left unchecked, would have a disastrous effect not only for Palestinian children in Gaza, but also in neighboring countries and the region,” he continued.

According to the UN, in recent

weeks, the poliovirus has been detected in wastewater samples in Khan Younis and Deir al-Balah.

The Secretary-General also said: “Preventing and containing the spread of polio will take a massive, coordinated and urgent effort.”

He continued, “The United Nations is poised to launch a vital polio vaccine campaign in Gaza for more than 640,000 children under the age of 10. The World Health Organization has approved the release of 1.6 million doses of the polio vaccine. UNICEF is coordinating delivery of the vaccines and the cold chain equipment to store them. And UNRWA, the largest primary healthcare provider in Gaza, has medical teams ready to administer the vaccines and assist with logistics.”

But the challenges are grave, Guterres told reporters, as health, water, and sanitation systems in Gaza have been decimated; the majority of hospitals and primary care facilities are not functional; people are constantly on the run for safety.

And routine immunizations have been severely disrupted by the conflict, increasing the spread of other preventable diseases like measles and hepatitis A, he added.

The UN chief reiterated, “We

know how an effective polio vaccination campaign must be administered. Given the wholesale devastation in Gaza, at least 95 per cent vaccination coverage will be needed during each round of the two-round campaign to prevent polio’s spread and reduce its emergence.”

Guterres further explained, “The vaccination effort will include 708 teams at hospitals and primary health care centres – many of which are barely functioning -- and by 316 community outreach teams throughout Gaza.”

“We also know what a successful campaign will require,” the UN chief listed, “The facilitation of transport for vaccines and cold chain equipment at every step. The entry of polio experts into Gaza. Fuel for health teams to conduct their work. Reliable internet and phone services to inform communities about the campaign. An increase in the amount of cash allowed into Gaza to pay health workers. And, above all, a successful polio vaccination campaign needs safety. Safety for health workers to do their jobs. Safety for children and families to get to the health facilities. And safety for those health facilities to be protected from bombardment.” – **Wafa**

UNITED STATES

Trump ropes in Tulsi for debate preparation

WASHINGTON DC: Gearing up for his debate with US Vice President Kamala Harris, former President Donald Trump, and has brought in the former Democratic congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard to help sharpen his attacks, according to media report citing two people aware with Trump’s schedule.

She joined Trump’s practice session at the latter’s private club and home, Mar-a-Lago. Donald Trump and Kamala Harris are set to face off in the ABC News debate on September 10.

Gabbard, who left the Democratic Party after her 2020 presidential run and has rebranded herself as a celebrity among Trump’s

base of support, has long been friendly with Trump and was also speculated to be his running mate for some time.

Garbbard’s involvement in Trump’s debate preparation, was partly because of her own performance in a 2019 Democratic presidential primary debate, when Gabbard eviscerated Harris in a memorable onstage encounter.

Karoline Leavitt, a spokeswoman for Trump, confirmed Gabbard’s involvement in an email, NYT reported. Leavitt said the former president has “proven to be one of the best debaters in political history as evidenced by his knock-out blow to Joe Biden. – **ANI**

MPox

EU public health body raises alert level

BRUSSELS: The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) on Friday recommended increased vigilance against a new mpox virus variant that is likely to spread quickly, it said.

“Due to frequent and close travel links,” European Union member states should issue advice for those visiting or returning from mpox outbreak areas in five Central African states: Burundi, Central African Republic, Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and Kenya.

“As a result of the rapid spread of this outbreak in Africa, ECDC has increased the level of risk for the general population in the EU/EEA and travelers to affected areas,” said Pamela Rendi-Wagner, director of the



Stockholm-based ECDC.

On Thursday, the first infection of the new mpox clade 1 variant was reported in the EU, coincidentally also in Sweden. The person infected with the virus was a traveller who had recently returned from Africa.

Vaccinations recommended for travellers

An ECDC spokesperson told DW that travel warnings, travel bans or even border controls were not necessary at this time, though higher infection figures are expected in Europe.

Travellers with symptoms should seek medical treatment and isolate themselves to prevent secondary infections and the spread of the disease.

Mpox clade 1, formerly known as monkeypox, is transmitted through close physical contact. Congo has recently seen a particular spike in cases in recent months, reporting over 16,000 infections and 511 deaths this year alone.

The ECDC does not expect

“sustained transmission” of mpox in Europe, provided cases are found and treated quickly. The key to prevention will be well-prepared health authorities and the proper education of travelers to and from Africa, said the ECDC spokesperson.

“Ensuring effective surveillance, laboratory testing, epidemiological investigation and contact tracing capacities will be vital to detecting cases of MPXV clade I on the continent and activating any response,” the agency wrote in its new risk analysis on Friday. It recommends that travelers who want to visit risk areas in Africa should seek an mpox vaccination from their doctors. – **DW**

Full story @ timesofoman.com/world

LARGE MOBILISATION OF MILITIAS

Is Libya on the brink of a new civil war again?

TRIPOLI: Over the past week, various international bodies have sent out the alarm.

In a statement, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya said it was monitoring “with concern the recent mobilisation of forces in various parts of Libya.”

The organisation, known as UNSMIL, urged “all parties to exercise maximum restraint and avoid any provocative military actions that could be perceived as offensive.”

On Thursday, the Delegation of the European Union to Libya expressed similar concerns. “The use of force would harm stability in Libya and lead to human suffering. It should be avoided at all cost,” it said in a statement.

Longtime Libya watchers were more direct, suggesting that, after around four years of relative calm in the country, civil war might be about to break out once again.

The warnings came in response to last week’s large mobilisation of militias affiliated with one of Libya’s two rival administrations.

Since 2014, Libya has been split in two, with opposing governments located in the east and west of the country.

A UN-backed administration known as the Government of National Unity, or GNU, is based in Tripoli in the west, and its rival, known as the House of Representatives, is based in the east, in Tobruk. At various times over the last decade, each government has tried – and failed – to wrest control from the other.

The government in eastern Libya is supported by former warlord-turned-politician Khalifa Haftar, who controls various armed groups in his area. It was Haftar’s forces that appeared to be moving toward Tripoli late last week. In 2019, Haftar attacked the city but was eventually forced to



sign a cease-fire in 2020.

Haftar said troops under the command of his son, Saddam, were marching in order to secure Libyan borders, to fight drug and human trafficking and to combat terrorism. However, military analysts suspected other plans.

Haftar’s forces have wanted

control of Ghadames airport and its surroundings for some time, Jalel Harchaoui, a North Africa expert with UK-based think tank the Royal United Services Institute, told French newspaper Le Monde . Controlling Ghadames “would significantly enhance his territorial stature in relation to



Algeria, Tunisia and Niger,” said Harchaoui, and would also block access for the rival GNU.

If Haftar’s troops seize Ghadames, it “would officially mark the collapse of the 2020 cease-fire,” Tarek Megerisi, a Libya expert at the European Council on Foreign Relations, wrote in a post on

social media platform X (formerly Twitter). In response to the troop movements, a range of other militias that support the Tripoli government in the west were told to increase their combat readiness.

Will there be another Libyan civil war?

The day after Haftar’s mobilisation was sighted, a clash between two militias in Tajoura, on the coastal outskirts of Tripoli, left at least nine dead. However, local media later reported this had been motivated by an assassination attempt on one of the militia leaders.

And this week, the situation in Libya seems to have calmed again. But the danger remains, experts told DW.

Emadeddin Badi, a non-resident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council who focuses on Libya, sees Haftar’s latest moves as a kind of ongoing “brinkmanship.” “Many of the actors [in Libya] are engaging in this, to see how far they could go in kind of taunting, or sidelining, or undermining their opponents,” he said. “A zero-sum mentality still prevails,” he added, referring to the fact that opposing factions in Libya believe that one of them must eventually run the country, as opposed to working together for unity.

“Libya continues to unravel quietly, with indications mounting that rival governments are regrouping for something big,” Hafed al-Ghwel, executive director of the North Africa Initiative at Johns Hopkins University’s Foreign Policy Institute in Washington, wrote in an op-ed for the website Euronews last week. With all of the different militias, Libya is in danger of becoming a “mafia state,” he said. – **DW**

HUMANITARIAN AID

India dispatches anti-cancer drugs to Syria

NEW DELHI: India has dispatched a consignment of approximately 1400 kgs of anti-cancer drugs to Syria in humanitarian assistance, the Ministry of External Affairs said.

The drugs are dispatched from India, keeping in mind the country’s commitments to Syria.

“India sends humanitarian assistance to Syria. In keeping with its humanitarian commitments, India has dispatched anti-cancer drugs to Syria,” the official spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs, Randhir Jaiswal wrote on X Friday, sharing a post of the consignment with pictures.

“The consignment of approx 1400 kgs will support the Syrian government and its people combat the disease,” the post added.

Syria and India have historically shared cordial relations built on deep-rooted people-to-people ties.

The Indian Embassy in Syria has remained open throughout the Syrian conflict. Many people visit India as tourists, businesspeople, and patients.

Moreover, India has contributed immensely to the capacity building of the Syrian youth over the years through scholarship schemes and training courses under the flagship ITEC programme, according to an official MEA release.

In May this year, Syria’s First Lady Asma Assad was diagnosed with leukaemia, according to state news agency SANA which reported the same, citing the President’s office. Following a series of medical examinations and tests, the First Lady was diagnosed with Acute Myeloid leukaemia.

The Syrian First Lady was born and raised to Syrian parents in London. She had earlier recovered from Breast Cancer in 2019. – **ANI**

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Arab culture,
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that is usually used
to welcome
guests.

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pawns are there
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at the start of
a game of
chess?

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MARKET

BUSINESS & FINANCE



OMAN STOCK MARKET GAINS
The market's gains can be attributed mostly to external factors including crude oil market volatility that played a role in shaping market sentiment throughout the week. > **B2**

Trade between Oman and Americas touches OMR742.94mn by May 2024

The total exports from Oman to the countries of the Americas increased by 23.3 percent to reach OMR255.41 million by the end of May 2024

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman is witnessing a big boost in its volume of trade with the countries of the Americas increasing by 6.6 percent to reach OMR742.94 million by the end of May 2024 compared to OMR696.69 million by the end of May 2023, according to preliminary statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The NCSI data further indicates that the total exports from the Sultanate of Oman to the countries of the Americas reached OMR255.41 million by the end of May 2024. This is an increase of 23.3 percent by the end of May 2024 compared to the end of May 2023, when



the value of exports amounted to OMR207.13 million.

The total imports of Oman from the countries of the Americas by the end of May 2024 amounted to OMR469.35 million, an increase in value of 2 percent compared to the end of May 2023, when the total im-

ports amounted to 459.99 million.

The total re-exports from the Sultanate of Oman from the countries of Americas amounted to OMR18.17 million by the end of May 2024, a decrease in value of 38.5 percent compared to the end of May 2023, when the total value of re-exports at that time amounted to OMR29.56 million.

The United States of America ranked first among the countries of America in terms of trade exchange with the Sultanate of Oman. The total imports from Brazil amounted to OMR226.34 million by the end of May 2024, an increase of 13 percent compared to the end of May 2023, when the value of imports amounted to OMR200.51 million. - **ONA**

SECOND EDITION



Sohar Port and Freezone celebrates remarkable achievements of over 400 students of 2024 Maseer programme

MUSCAT: Under the patronage of Sheikh Haitham Al-Shehi, Deputy Wali of Liwa, Sohar Port and Freezone celebrated the remarkable achievements of over 400 students from Sohar and Liwa during a certification ceremony, marking the successful conclusion of the 2024 Maseer programme. This transformative three-week initiative is dedicated to equipping Oman's youth with essential skills in advanced technologies while fostering awareness of diverse educational and career pathways.

The Maseer programme, a collaborative effort between Sohar and Kidsity, provided specialised training in key areas such as cybersecurity, artificial intelligence (AI), cloud data, smart city development, web development, Arduino programming, 3D CAD, photography and photo editing, and renewable energy solutions. By emphasizing hands-on learning and real-world applications, Maseer empowered students with the knowledge necessary to seize emerging digital opportunities.

Throughout the programme, participants engaged in a variety of workshops led by experts gaining invaluable insights into the practical applications of emerging technologies. The closing ceremony served as a fitting tribute to the hard work and dedication of the students, showcasing their newfound skills and innovative projects.

Aisha Al Muqbali, a participant in the Maseer programme expressed her enthusiasm for the experience, stating, "The Maseer programme was an incredible opportunity to learn new skills that

will benefit me in the future. I especially enjoyed the 3D design workshops where we used Tinkercad to create models and then brought them to life by operating 3D printers. The trainer's teaching style made it easy to pick up these new technologies, and my skills in 3D design improved tremendously through this programme. Everything was well-organized and fun, but I would have loved even more time to delve deeper into this fascinating field.

Another participant, Mohammed Al Bahri, shared, "I joined the programme to improve my English skills, and it turned out to be an incredible experience. The practical workshops were not only engaging but also fun, especially the competitions that made learning exciting. I now feel much more confident speaking English. I would definitely recommend this programme to my friends because it's enjoyable and offers valuable skills that will help us in the future."

The Maseer programme exemplifies Sohar Port and Freezone's broader commitment to nurturing local talent and empowering Oman's youth as pivotal contributors to the nation's growth and prosperity. By focusing on skill development and providing access to world-class training, this initiative equips participants with vital skills and knowledge that lay a strong foundation for their future careers.

In doing so, Maseer supports Oman's goals for economic diversification and sustainable development, ensuring that the next generation is well-prepared to navigate the challenges.

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Dhofar Khareef an opportunity to boost local businesses and support economy

Times News Service

Muscat: The Khareef season in Dhofar Governorate represents a good opportunity to boost commercial and economic activity that contributes to strengthening and supporting the local economy, benefiting companies and society in achieving sustainable development in the governorate.

During the Khareef season, the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry branch in Dhofar Governorate promotes investment opportunities and Omani products by organising many events, conferences and exhibitions that that contribute to enhance the business environment in the governorate.

Naif bin Hamed Fadhel, a member of the Board of Directors of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Head of the Chamber's branch in Dhofar Governorate, said that during the Khareef season, the branch organises many promotional exhibitions for Omani and other products, and receives a number of delegations from sisterly and friendly countries to promote investment opportunities available in the tourism and real estate sectors in the governorate.

He added that the branch of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) in Dhofar Governorate works to improve the business environment and supports small and medium enterprises and owners of productive family projects by providing them with opportunities to participate in all the events and activities for free.

He stressed that the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry always seeks to attract and localise foreign investments through multiple mechanisms,



including organising mutual visits between business owners in the Sultanate of Oman and other countries, providing data, and direct communication with investors, in addition to organising visits for trade delegations in the governorate with the aim of creating partnerships between the private sector in the Sultanate of Oman and its counterpart in sisterly and friendly countries.

Naif bin Hamed Fadhel pointed out that the branch provides ser-

vices, facilities, information and data related to investment opportunities to all affiliated members, whose number exceeds 70,000 affiliates.

He stressed that the Chamber's branch in Dhofar Governorate receives and directs trade delegations with the aim of informing businessmen and owners of small and medium enterprises about the experiences of their counterparts in various economic sectors, which would benefit them in developing and growing their businesses and bringing pioneering expertise and experiences to their businesses in the governorate.

He pointed out that during the past period, several trade delegations were directed to the People's Republic of China and Indonesia, noting that the branch seeks to build bridges of effective communication and strengthen trade relations between investors and their counterparts in the governorate, which contributed to raising

investment rates in Dhofar Governorate.

He explained that the branch continues to organise workshops that contribute to educating members and introducing them to the principles of trade, seizing opportunities, developing projects, and introducing to the new laws and legislation related to the business sector, opening up new horizons for self-employment.

The head of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry branch in Dhofar Governorate confirmed that it seeks to remove the obstacles facing various economic sectors.

They monitor and submit appropriate recommendations for each sector, work on studying them, following up on solutions with various government agencies, and providing consultations that help them in the sustainability of commercial projects for business owners, both male and female.

IMF'S DEPUTY MANAGING DIRECTOR

Gita Gopinath praises Indian government's policy continuity on fiscal consolidation path

NEW DELHI: Gita Gopinath, the First Deputy Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), met Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday and lauded the continuity in "fiscal consolidation path" being followed by the Government.

Gopinath acknowledged the vibrancy of the Indian economy and the strength of the country's relationship with the IMF.

Sitharaman said India deeply values its relationship with the IMF and the government is open to exploring more ways to increase collaboration.

"The First Deputy Managing Director @IMFNews, Ms. @GitaGopinath, called on the Union Finance Minister Smt. @nsitharaman, in New Delhi, today. Ms. @GitaGopinath congratulated the Union Finance Minister on the policy continuity in the fiscal consolidation path followed by the Government of India," the Ministry of Finance said in a post on X.

"Besides acknowledging the



vibrancy of the Indian economy, Ms. @GitaGopinath appreciated the strength of India's relationship with IMF - valuable to both India, IMF, and the world at large. FM Smt. @nsitharaman stated that India deeply values its relationship and continuous engagement with IMF; and looking ahead, the Government of India

is open to exploring more ways to increase India's collaboration with the IMF," it added.

IMF in its outlook released last month raised India's growth projections for 2024 from 6.8 per cent earlier to 7 per cent.

For the year 2025, the IMF projected India's growth rate at 6.5 per cent. It attributed robust-

ness and strength in domestic demand and a rising working-age population behind its growth projections.

According to official data of the Indian government, the country's GDP grew at an impressive 8.2 per cent during the financial year 2023-24, and it continued to remain the fastest-growing major economy. India's economy grew 7.2 per cent in 2022-23 and 8.7 per cent in 2021-22 respectively.

The Reserve Bank of India, in its latest monetary policy meeting, raised the GDP forecast for the current for 2024-25 to 7.2 per cent from 7 per cent earlier.

The World Bank too upwardly revised India's GDP growth forecast for the current financial year 2024-25 by 20 basis points to 6.6 per cent from its earlier projection of 6.4 per cent made in January.

It said India will remain the fastest-growing of the world's largest economies, although its pace of expansion is expected to moderate. - **ANI**

MARKET

Omani stock market gains 1% amid optimism in weekly trading

The market's gains can be attributed mostly to external factors including crude oil market volatility that played a role in shaping market sentiment throughout the week

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Omani stock market concluded the week with a positive performance, registering a gain of 1.04 percent according to an industry watcher.

"This upward movement aligns with the broader trend observed across regional markets, reflecting improved investor sentiment. The market's gains can be attributed mostly to external factors, essentially the developments around the US economy, including softer US inflation data, which has bolstered expectations for the Federal Reserve to initiate its easing cycle in September," said Joseph Dahrieh, Managing Principal at Tickmill.

"This potential move is likely to influence central banks in the region, potentially leading to more favourable credit conditions and stimulating economic growth. Additionally, oil market volatility played a role in shaping market sentiment throughout the week," he further added.

"Despite this week's positive performance, the Omani stock market remains within a one-year price range and could need addi-



tional catalysts to climb higher, he pointed out.

Sector performances this week were broadly positive, with notable gains across key industries:

The financial sector emerged as the top performer, advancing by 1.27 percent. Banking stocks led the sector's gains, with Bank Muscat rising 1.19 percent, Bank Dhofar surging 3.90 percent, and National Bank of Oman climbing 3.77 percent. Al Sharqiya Investment Holding also demonstrated strong performance with a 4.17 percent increase.

The services index also showed robust growth, posting gains of 0.85 percent. Standout performers in this sector included Abraj Energy Services, which rose by 1.35 percent, OQ Gas Networks, up 0.71 percent, Oman Telecom, increasing by 0.70 percent, and Renaissance Services, which saw a significant jump of 4.05 percent.

While more modest in its gains, the industrial sector still contributed positively to the market's overall performance with a 0.33 percent increase. Notable movements within this sector included

Market capitalisation of Muscat Stock Exchange rises

MUSCAT: The market capitalisation of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) recorded gains of OMR6.5 million during the week's trading to OMR24.39 billion.

This rise came after many shares rose, with public joint stock companies recording gains in their market value of more than OMR58 million after rising during the week's trading to OMR9.2 billion. However, the declines recorded by the closed market affected the total market value of the exchange and it closed the week's trading at OMR10.79 billion, recording weekly losses of about OMR49 million.

The main index of the Muscat Stock Exchange rose by 48 points during the week and closed at 4,693 points, resuming its rise after a one-week decline.

The week witnessed an increase in the prices of 22 shares compared to 15 shares whose prices increased in the previous week. It also witnessed a decrease in the number of stocks that fell to 22 compared to 39 whose prices decreased in the previous week. This positive performance came as the Muscat Stock Exchange absorbed the global political and economic conditions that affected most regional and global stock



exchanges during the previous two weeks.

The trading value during the past week recorded an increase of 2.4 percent, rising to OMR8.50 million, compared to trading that amounted to OMR8.30 million in the previous week. However, the number of deals executed declined in the week to 2,463 deals, compared to 2,744 deals executed in the previous week.

Gulf International Chemicals topped the gainers, rising by 6 percent and closing at 70 baisas. Al Anwar Ceramic Tiles rose by 5.9 percent and closed at 179 baisas, while Al Anwar Investments rose to 76 baisas, recording a weekly increase of

5.5 percent.

Dhofar Power Generation Company's share was the leading loser, declining by 7.1 percent and closing at 65 baisas. Muscat Finance Company's share fell by 4.2 percent and closed at 45 baisas, while Muscat Gases' share fell to 123 baisas, recording a decline of 3.9 percent.

Bank Muscat topped the most traded companies after witnessing trades worth OMR2.41 million, accounting for 24 percent of the total trading value. Bank Sohar International came in second place with trades worth OMR1.17 million, and Omantel came in third place with trades worth

OMR885,000, representing 10.4 percent of the total trading value.

In corporate news, Salalah Mills Company has invited its shareholders to attend the Extraordinary General Assembly meeting scheduled to be held on September 1st. The meeting will discuss increasing the company's issued capital from OMR4.99 million to OMR17.49 million through a private subscription to an international company with a value of OMR12.5 million. After the completion of the private subscription, the international company will own 20 percent of Salalah Mills Company's capital. -ONA

Jazeera Steel Products, up 0.36 percent, Al Anwar Ceramic, which saw a substantial leap of 5.92 percent, and Oman Cement, rising by 1.01 percent.

"The market could benefit from

the Financial Services Authority's new incentive programme for the Omani capital market, aiming to deepen the market and achieve Oman Vision 2040 objectives. This five-year initiative includes

encouraging larger companies to go public and establishing a market for smaller entities," said Joseph Dahrieh.

"The programme also offers various incentives, including tax

benefits, fee waivers, and preferential treatment in government tenders. These measures are expected to enhance market liquidity and attract investments," he further added.

EXPERTS IN

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UNCTAD

Booming South-South trade in fisheries and aquaculture offers a sea of opportunities

GENEVA: Global trade in marine fisheries and aquaculture offers big opportunities for sustainable and inclusive economic growth while advancing key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly improving food security and eliminating hunger (SDG 2) and protecting life below water (SDG 14).

The sector, including fish, crustaceans, molluscs, seaweed and many value-added aquatic by-products, saw global exports hit \$186 billion in 2022, up 63% from \$114 billion in 2012.

Notably, South-South trade – commerce between developing countries – has surged across various fisheries sectors, including marine fisheries, aquaculture, fish processing and fishing vessels. According to new UN Trade

and Development (UNCTAD) analysis, this trade more than doubled from around \$19 billion in 2012 to \$39 billion in 2022.

Leading exporters

Chile, China, Ecuador, India, Peru, Thailand and Vietnam are leading exporters among developing countries, which accounted for 46% of global seafood exports in 2022, up from 42% in 2012. Notably, their share of the higher-value processed segment is higher than that of unprocessed exports, at 53% compared with 40%.

"This highlights the success of developing countries in adding value to their seafood exports," says David Vivas Eugui, in charge of UN Trade and Development's ocean and circular economy section.

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"This highlights the success of developing countries in adding value to their seafood exports," says David Vivas Eugui, in charge of UN Trade and Development's ocean and circular economy section.

Despite the promising growth, the marine fisheries and aquaculture sector faces several challenges. Overfishing, harmful subsidies and climate change pose significant threats to sustainability. -WAM

WORLD GOLD COUNCIL

Gold boosts returns and lowers risk, while Bitcoin heightens volatility

NEW DELHI: Gold consistently reduces portfolio volatility while improving returns, even with increased allocation. By simulating portfolio performance with varying allocations of gold (2.5 per cent to 10 per cent), it's evident that the metal bolsters return without adding significant risk, according to World Gold Council.

On the other hand, Bitcoin shows diminishing returns as allocation increases. A 2.5 per cent allocation of bitcoin can enhance risk-adjusted returns, but beyond that, the portfolio's volatility rises, leading to larger drawdowns and lower overall performance.

The data underscores that while bitcoin may offer short-term upside, it introduces risk that erodes its effectiveness as a stable store of value.

Global equities experienced a

sharp downturn, with the S&P 500 and NASDAQ dropping over 4 per cent and 6 per cent, respectively, at the peak of the selloff. Amid this volatility, the debate over whether bitcoin can be considered "digital gold" resurfaced, as investors re-examined its place as an inflation hedge and a store of value.

While bitcoin enthusiasts often label the cryptocurrency as "digital gold," a closer examination of the data, particularly during turbulent market periods, challenges this claim.

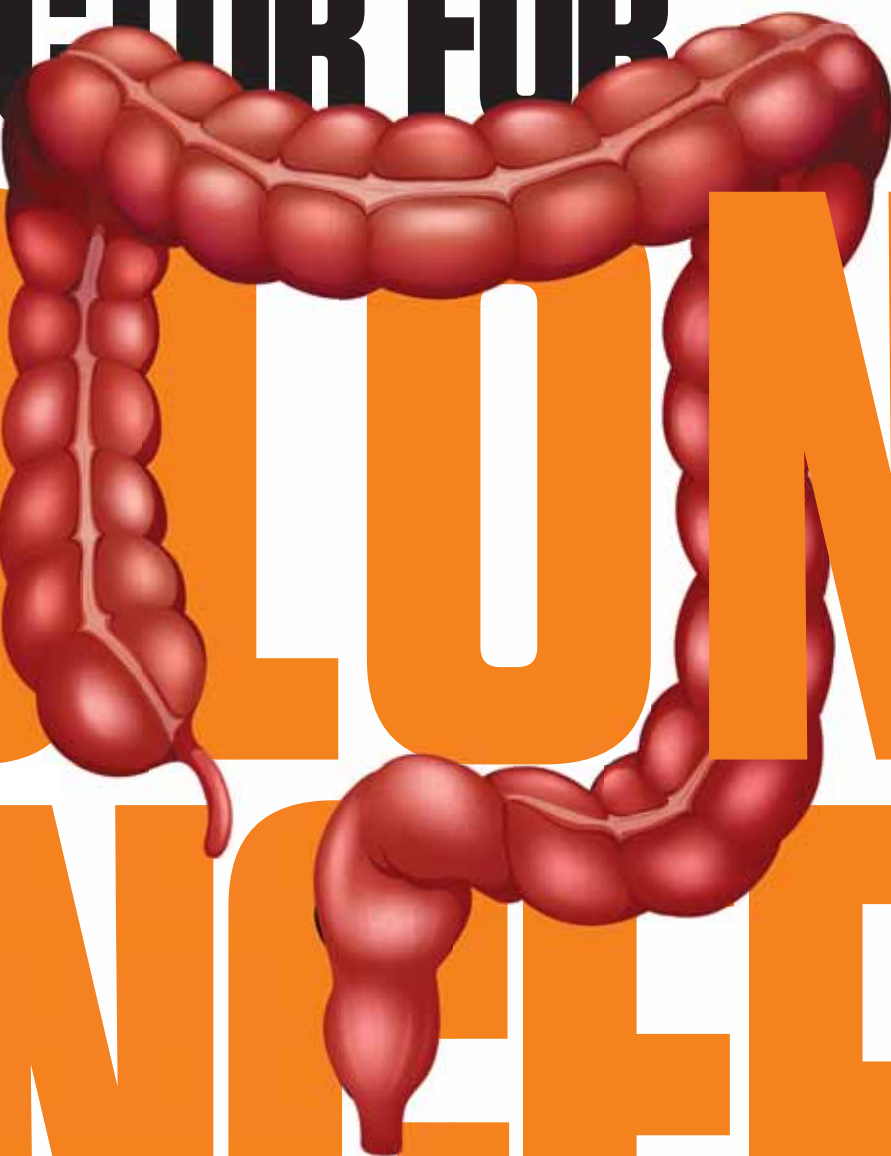
Gold, a time-tested asset known for its stability, has long been a safe haven during market downturns. Bitcoin, on the other hand, displays characteristics more akin to high-risk technology stocks, making it an unsuitable substitute for gold in times of market stress.

The primary distinction between gold and bitcoin lies in volatility. On a five-year rolling basis, gold has proven to be far less volatile than bitcoin, a trend that underscores its role as a safe haven asset. Gold's stable value is supported by central bank holdings, long-term investment demand, and its status as a global store of wealth.

Bitcoin, conversely, is at the extreme end of the volatility spectrum, with its price fluctuations resembling those of tech stocks – closely tied to blockchain adoption and innovation trends. The most recent market correction in early August 2024 further emphasized these differences. While bitcoin experienced sharp losses, gold remained relatively stable, reinforcing its value as a risk mitigator during crises. -ANI



DIET CAN BE RISK FACTOR FOR COLON CANCER IN YOUNGER ADULTS, FINDS STUDY



A new Cleveland Clinic study has identified diet-derived chemicals termed metabolites as the primary drivers of young-onset colorectal cancer risk, particularly those associated with red and processed meat. The NPJ Precision Oncology paper studied metabolite and microbiome datasets and found that discussing food with a doctor is an effective method for younger adults (<60 years) to prevent colorectal cancer.

Increased monitoring and screening for colorectal cancer is a very useful tool. Senior author and gastrointestinal oncologist Suneel Kamath, MD, suggests that despite the efficacy of these approaches, physicians should approach younger patients differently.

“At the end of the day, it’s impractical to apply our care models for those over 60 to younger adults simply because we cannot give everyone in the system yearly colonoscopies,” he explains. “What is much more feasible is to give everyone in the system a simple test to measure a biomarker that determines their colorectal cancer risk. Then we can give the most at-risk individuals appropriate screening.”

Former clinical fellow Thejus Jayakrishnan, MD, and Naseer Sangwan, PhD, director of the Microbial Sequencing & Analytics Resource Core co-led the

work. Researchers in Cleveland Clinic’s Centre for Young-Onset Colorectal Cancer provided large-scale analyses of patient data from individuals who received care for either young- or average-onset colorectal cancer at Cleveland Clinic.

This team’s earlier work found disparities in the metabolites (diet-derived compounds) of young- and average-onset colorectal cancer, as well as differences in the gut microbiome between younger and older persons with colorectal cancer. These research suggested numerous new possibilities for exploring young-onset CRC. However, when more elements are involved in cancer risk, it becomes more difficult to grasp what’s going on and plan future study, according to Dr. Sangwan. Interactions between elements, such as

These research suggested numerous new possibilities for exploring young-onset CRC. However, when more elements are involved in cancer risk, it becomes more difficult to grasp what’s going on and plan future study

gut bacteria consuming and producing metabolites, add to the complexity.

Dr Sangwan and his team then developed an artificial intelligence (AI) algorithm to combine and analyze the existing studies’ datasets and clarify what factors are most relevant for future studies. Surprisingly, Dr Sangwan’s analysis revealed that differences in diet (identified through analyzing metabolites) accounted for a significant proportion of the differences observed between the young-onset and older-onset patients.

“Researchers - ourselves included - have begun to focus on the gut microbiome as a primary contributor to colon cancer risk. But our data clearly shows that the main driver is diet,” Dr. Sangwan says. “We already know the main metabo-

lites associated with young-onset risk, so we can now move our research forward in the correct direction.”

The team was excited to see diet play such a large role in cancer risk, because it is much easier to identify at-risk patients by counting the metabolites in their blood than it is to sequence the bacterial DNA in their stool for different microbes.

“It can actually be very complicated and difficult to change your microbiome,” explains Dr. Kamath. “While it’s not always easy, it is much simpler to change your diet to prevent colon cancer.”

Younger colon cancer patients had higher levels of metabolites associated with the production and metabolism of an amino acid called arginine, and with the urea cycle compared to their older peers.

These differences may be tied to long-term consumption of red meat and processed meat. The team is now analyzing national datasets to validate their Cleveland Clinic-specific findings in patients across the country.

After they show that arginine and urea cycle metabolites (and, by proxy, red and processed meat overconsumption) are elevated across younger adults with colon cancer nationwide, they plan to test whether certain diets or commercially available drugs that regulate arginine production and the urea cycle can help prevent or even treat young-onset colorectal cancer.

Dr. Kamath says that even though more research is needed to understand exactly how dietary factors cause colon cancer, his current findings have already changed the way he delivers patient care.

“Even though I knew before this study that diet is an important factor in colon cancer risk, I didn’t always discuss it with my patients during their first visit. There is so much going on, it can already be so overwhelming,” says Dr. Kamath. “Now, I always make sure to bring it up to my patients, and to any healthy friends or family members they may come in with, to try and equip them with the tools they need to make informed choices about their lifestyle.” -ANI

Campaign launched to support Oman football team for World Cup qualifiers

The ceremony included a visual presentation about the national football team and its journey

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, in cooperation with the Oman Football Association, launched a campaign to support Oman national football team “We are all with you” in the final qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup.

The ceremony included a visual presentation about the national football team and its journey in the qualifiers. A video was also shown about the national team's first participation in the U-17 World Cup finals, which was held in Ecuador in 1995, in which the team achieved good results that enabled it to qualify for the semi-finals.

The ceremony also included a visual presentation about the loyal Omani fans who have supported their journey in all the tournaments everywhere.

Mohammed bin Ahmed Al Amri, Director General of Sports Activities at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Director of the Campaign to Support the football team in the 2026 World Cup final qualifiers, said: “Our national football team's journey to achieve the goal of reaching the World Cup begins early next September, as it is the most prominent and popular event among football competitions worldwide in an atmosphere of excitement, fun and enthusiasm.”

He added: “The campaign seeks to support the national football team to create appropriate environmental conditions and over-



come difficulties by providing logistical support to host the team's matches in the Sultanate of Oman with the optimal equipment that ensures the provision of high-quality services, in addition to providing media support to the team during all its matches in the qualifiers in cooperation with private sector institutions, government and private media institutions.

Mohammed bin Suleiman Al Yahmadi, Secretary General of the Oman Football Association, explained that reaching the 2026 World Cup is a great goal and a great national project, so the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, and the Ministry of Information with all its press and media institutions have joined hands with the Oman Football Association to achieve it.

For his part, the national team goalkeeper and former international player Ali bin Abdullah Al Habsi, during his speech, touched on the importance of supporting the national team in the third stage of the Asian qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup finals scheduled to be held in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

Al Habsi cited the One Pulse campaign that covered the slogan



of our national team's media campaign during its participation in the 19th Gulf Cup in Muscat, which culminated in our national team winning the Gulf Cup title for the first time in its history, indicating that the national unity at that time bore fruit as a result of the cohesion and solidarity of all sports sectors and the government agencies.

“It had led the national team to write its name in the annals of history among those crowned with the Gulf Cup tournaments,” he said. He added that it is hoped that the next stage of the quali-



fiers will witness unprecedented support from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, the Oman Football Association, sports clubs and the private sector, in order to improve the capabilities of the national team, and to harness all aspects of material, moral and logistical support, which will positively reflect on the Reds' performance in the qualifiers.

Basil bin Ahmed Al Rawas, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Sports and Youth, the sponsor of the event, launched the identity of the campaign to support the national football team in the final qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup, which carried the name “We are all with you”, as the logo was designed to symbolise sports, speed and boldness, and one colour was used for the logo to be easy and versatile.

The logo is characterised by its ease of application in most media such as television channels, print advertisements, social media channels and others, while the abstract engravings indicate all segments of society (young, youth and old), who stand behind the team and support it in its journey to World Cup finals, and this is evident through the movement of abstract shapes in one direction and in an ascending manner.

The launch of the campaign is aimed at achieving the desired goal and preparing for the next stage of the journey of Omani football in search of a dream that has been awaited for decades, which is to attend among the big teams in the 2026 World Cup.

The national team will begin its journey in the qualifiers against the Iraqi team at Basra International Stadium on fifth of September, and will play in the second

match against the South Korean team in Muscat on 10 September at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bousher, while the third match against Kuwait will be held in Muscat on 10 October, and will travel to meet Jordan in Amman on 15 October, and will receive Palestine in Muscat on 14 November.

Oman national team will host its Iraqi counterpart in Muscat on November 19 in the second leg, then leave for Seoul to meet South Korea on March 20, 2025, then play against Kuwait in Kuwait on March 25, then host Jordan in Muscat on June 5, 2025, and conclude its journey with Palestine away from home on June 10, 2025.

Oman topped its group in the last stage of the qualifiers with (13) points, followed by the Kyrgyzstan team with (11) points, then Malaysia with (10) points and Chinese Taipei with no points.

Two technical teams have supervised its training so far after starting with Branko in the matches against Chinese Taipei and Kyrgyzstan (first leg) before the Czech coach Jaroslav Celavy, coach of our national football team, was brought in, who achieved (10) points out of (12) with the team, putting it in the lead.

LIVERPOOL

Not easy to find players who can boost the squad: Slot on transfer activity

IPSWICH: Liverpool head coach Arne Slot believes their lack of transfer activity in the ongoing summer transfer window won't weaken them ahead of their season opener against Ipswich Town in the Premier League.

Liverpool have enjoyed impressive results in the pre-season campaign against Arsenal and Manchester United. However, Slot's side is yet to complete a signing before the beginning of the season. Liverpool tried to pursue Martin Zubimendi but they failed to convince the midfielder to leave Real Sociedad. Slot admitted that despite Liverpool missing out on Zubimendi, Liverpool has a really strong squad.

“I've said many times already our squad is really strong, and it's not easy to find players who can help us or strengthen the squad. Zubimendi was one of them to be fair, but he decided not to come. We go forward with the ones we have. We are in a good place,” he said in the pre-match press conference, as quoted from Sky Sports. “In the background, Richard [Hughes] is trying to strengthen the squad as he can, unfortunately, Zubimendi decided not to come. He did every effort and tried everything to bring him in, but if a player doesn't want to come, it's obvious he's not coming,” he added.

Liverpool is the only team in the Premier League to not com-



plete any signing in the ongoing summer transfer window. Slot believes that acquiring new players is always not the solution to make the squad stronger.

“That's a bit weird as normally you'd either stay the same or I truly believe on the training ground you can help players and teams to improve. That's what happened here in recent years. The training ground really helped the team improve,” he said.

“Maybe what you mean is that if the clubs around you do strengthen their team, then maybe they become better, but it's not always true that if you bring in new players, the team becomes stronger,” he added.

Liverpool will begin their Premier League campaign against the newly promoted side Ipswich Town on Saturday at the Portman Road. -ANI

PARIS OLYMPICS

Couldn't push myself to extreme: Neeraj Chopra

MAGGLINGEN: Indian javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra, who won the silver medal at the Paris Olympics, said he couldn't push himself to his extreme.

Chopra fell short of retaining his gold medal in the men's javelin throw at the ongoing marquee event securing silver with a best throw of 89.45 metres.

Speaking at a virtual press briefing, Neeraj said that mentally he was ready but lacked in the physical area. The 26-year-old accepted that his legwork was not how it should have been during the final.

“I never thought I couldn't do it... Arshad Nadeem's previous best was at 90.18 metres which he threw at the Commonwealth Games, and my previous best was 89.94 metres... I couldn't push myself to my extreme. Mentally I was ready but physically, I was retraining myself. My legwork on the runway was not how it should have been. My efforts were going in vain. My throw immediately after Nadeem's throw was good because I was extremely positive...” Neeraj said.

Neeraj also revealed his next competition and said that he will participate in the Lausanne Diamond League, which will kick off on August 22. -ANI

RIGHT-HANDED BATTER

Babar proved his fitness, scored truckloads of runs: Salman Butt

NEW DELHI: Former Pakistan cricketer Salman Butt heaped praise on Babar Azam and said that the right-handed batter has proved his fitness and scored truckloads of runs in the past two years.

Pakistan's stalwart batter Babar Azam is set to play at the number four spot in their upcoming two-match Test series against Bangladesh, sources informed Geo News on Thursday.

The sources told Geo News that Abdullah Shafiq's position in the team as an opener is “not under threat,” and captain Shan Masood will bat at the number three.

Speaking on his official YouTube channel, Butt said: “Babar Azam scored truckloads of runs in the last 2 years, he proved his fitness, he ran on the field, and scored runs while batting first as well as second innings. Things should go up but they are getting broken in the middle, which is wrong. So, this is the responsibility of the players to maintain their fitness.”

He added that the whole nation started to criticize the fitness of the Pakistan cricket team after their poor performance at the T20 World Cup 2024.

“Entire Pakistan is talking about the fitness of the team and it brought a storm in Pakistan, players at the junior level were asked to run. This came after people said players weren't fit in the T20 World Cup 2024. No one questioned the physios or trainers, but instead, they started making players at the district level push hard



for fitness. Those who made errors are still there,” he added.

The two-match Test series will kick off on August 21 at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium. The two Tests against Bangladesh will mark the first assignment of Jason Gillespie as Pakistan's Test coach.

The second Test of the two-match series is set to be played from August 30 to September 3 in Karachi.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) announced on Wednesday that spectators will not be allowed during the second Test match between Pakistan and Bangladesh due to ongoing renovations at Karachi's National Stadium.

Pakistan squad for Test series:

Shan Masood (captain), Saud Shakeel, Aamir Jamal (subject to fitness), Abdullah Shafique, Abrar Ahmed, Babar Azam, Kamran Ghulam, Khurram Shahzad, Mir Hamza, Mohammad Ali, Muhammad Huraira, Mohammad Rizwan, Naseem Shah, Saim Ayub, Salman Ali Agha, Sarfaraz Ahmed, and Shaheen Shah Afridi.

Bangladesh squad for Test series: Najmul Hossain Shanto (captain), Mahmudullah, Zakir Hasan, Shadman Islam, Mominul Haque, Mushfiqur Rahim, Shakib Al Hasan. Litton Das, Mehidy Hasan Miraz, Taijul Islam, Nazmul Hossain, Nurul Hasan, Ebadot Hossain, Hasan Mahmud, Taskin Ahmed and Khaled Ahmed. -ANI

RECENT APPOINTMENT

Good for Pope to be captain for three Tests: Nasser Hussain

LONDON: Former England captains Nasser Hussain and Michael Atherton discussed Ollie Pope's recent appointment as England's new red-ball captain for the upcoming matches, following the news that regular captain Ben Stokes has been ruled out for the remainder of the English summer.

Pope has been named as the stand-in captain for the Test series against Sri Lanka.

Hussain believes it will be ben-

eficial for Pope to lead the England side for a few games ahead of next year's Ashes series in Australia.

“I think it's good for Pope to be captain for three Tests, just in case, Ben Stokes does get injured in the future,” Hussain said on Sky Sports Cricket Podcast as quoted by ICC. “They need other options. Just like when they go to Australia, and they don't want a bowling attack that's inexperienced,” he said.

“You don't want to get there with



someone [leading] who hasn't done it before,” he added.

However, both former captains acknowledge that Pope will face his share of challenges. Michael Atherton notes that the 26-year-old finds himself in a somewhat uncertain position, given the temporary nature of his appointment.

“Essentially, you're in a caretaker position. And Ben Stokes has left such a permanent mark on the side, Ollie Pope wouldn't want to

change that,” he said. “While you are captain and you make decisions, it's someone else's team. It's a slightly awkward position for him,” he added.

Hussain also pointed out that Pope has yet to fully assert himself as the definitive leader of the team.

“The feeling with Pope is that it doesn't come naturally, [whereas] the feeling with Stokes is that cricketing intelligence comes very naturally to him. It feels like he

[Pope] was given the vice-captaincy to get him out of that shell, the no. 3 position as well, we believe in you, which I think was the right thing to do,” Hussain noted.

“But the other side of that, when you're captain. You've to sell that belief. Sell yourself to the team, your plans,” he added.

The two former captains agree that Pope is a popular figure and extend their best wishes for his new role. -ANI

IN PICTURES

Tourists pose for photos with installation marking Mid-Autumn Festival in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
A tourist poses for photos in front of an installation marking the Mid-Autumn Festival in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Xinhua



Janhvi Kapoor attends the Red Carpet Premiere of 'Rajadhiraj: Love Life Leela': Bollywood actress Janhvi Kapoor poses for a picture during the Red Carpet Premiere of 'Rajadhiraj: Love Life Leela', in Mumbai. ANI Photo



Beautiful scenery, joyful life in Basha Village, SW China's Guizhou
An aerial drone picture shows a view of Basha Village in Congjiang County of Qiandongnan Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture, southwest China's Guizhou Province. Xinhua



World Elephant Day marked in Sri Lanka
Elephants bathe in a river at the Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage in Sri Lanka. Established in 1975, Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage is the first one of its kind in the world, home to 69 elephant orphans today. Xinhua



Gunla Festival celebrated in Lalitpur, Nepal
Devotees worship little stupas with offerings in celebration of the Gunla Festival in Lalitpur, Nepal. The month-long Gunla festival is one of the major festivals of the Newar Buddhist community during which they recite scriptures, observe fast and visit places of worship. Xinhua



79th Independence Day celebrated in Indonesia
This picture shows Independence Day celebration in Nusantara, Indonesia. Indonesia celebrated its 79th Independence Day on Saturday. Xinhua



Highlight of Dog surfing championships in California
A dog is pictured at dog surfing championships in Pacifica, California, the United States. Xinhua

ROUND-UP

Experience luxury on every adventure with Lynk & Co 09 SUV

The Lynk & Co 09 SUV, a range model that has shaken up the market, is built for both safety and unparalleled thrill

MUSCAT: Lynk & Co, renowned for its cutting-edge European technology and innovative designs, is committed to revolutionising the driving experience in Oman. The Lynk & Co 09 SUV, a range model that has shaken up the market, is built for both safety and unparalleled thrill. It has made its mark on Oman's automotive scene, ushering in a new era of driving excellence, advanced technology and unwavering safety standards.

The 09 model: For a luxury voyage
Lynk & Co 09, is an exquisite MHEV seven-seat full-size SUV that marks a significant milestone in the automobile industry. Combining progressive tech, a head-turning design and comfort, it redefines urban style in Oman. Conquer family adventures and elevate your city experience - the 09 is perfect for every drive. The perfect SUV companion The Lynk & Co 09 presents striking exterior shades of gray, black and white. The design transitions from the bold front grille to



the meticulously crafted interior, prioritizing spacious comfort for extended travels. The Drive-E 2.0TD T5 turbo engine and BSG system with an 8-speed automatic transmission combine for a responsive and exciting driving experience, without sacrificing efficiency on your journeys. Beyond performance, it is the ideal companion for family adventures. The spacious interior provides ample legroom for everyone to stretch out, while a user-friendly rear-seat infotainment system keeps passengers entertained on long journeys. Safety is paramount and the 23 advanced driver-assistance systems, including Lane Change Assist, Emergency Lane Keeping Assistant with Rear Car Detection and Blind Spot Detection, provide peace of mind on every mile.

This tech-forward SUV equips a cutting-edge Smart Connectivity & Infotainment System, featuring a user-friendly interface that caters to the most discerning driver. The expansive 12-inch+6-inch center touchscreen and crystal-clear Head-Up Display put information at your fingertips, while the premium 14-speaker BOSE® Audio System elevates every journey with immersive sound. It prioritizes your comfort with plush, spacious seating crafted with luxurious NAPPA leather. The genuine leather steering wheel and 6-way power seat adjustment with lumbar support ensure a first-class experience for both driver and passengers. The Lynk & Co 09 personalizes every driving experience with its five distinct drive modes for ultimate versatility: 'Eco' prioritizes

fuel efficiency, 'Comfort' delivers a smooth ride, 'Sports' dials up the excitement, 'Off-Road' tackles tough terrain and 'Individual' lets you personalize everything. As a Mild Hybrid Electric Vehicle (MHEV), it strikes a perfect balance between efficiency and performance. This technology allows one to enjoy the benefits of electrification, making it a convenient and fuel-saving option.

INDIAN SOCIAL CLUB

ISC celebrates Indian Independence Day with enthusiasm, unity



MUSCAT: The Indian Social Club Oman organized a grand celebration on the occasion of the 78th Indian Independence Day on August 15 at the Oman auditorium, Al Bustan Palace Hotel in Muscat. The event, attended by members of the Indian Diaspora and other distinguished guests, reflected the spirit of unity and pride that marks the celebration of India's independence. The programme commenced with the singing of the Indian National Anthem. The highlight of the event was the cultural program, which showcased India's rich cultural heritage through a series of performances. Traditional dances from various states were performed by the members and children of the linguistic wings of ISC. The event was a vivid tapestry of performance art, with each regional wing performance captivating the audience through colourful garments

and heartfelt performances. Alongside the cultural program, a special painting exhibition by members of 'Rangrez' the artist group of ISC, showcasing India in its diverse forms was also held. In his keynote address, Babu Rajendran, Chairman of the Indian Social Club, emphasized the importance of staying connected to one's roots while contributing to the growth and development of the host country. He said, "On this day, we not only celebrate our freedom but also our culture, our values, and the achievements of Indians across the world. The Indian community in Oman continues to strengthen ties between India and Oman, making meaningful contributions in various fields." Rajendran also paid a rich tribute to the freedom fighters who fought for India's independence. The chief guest of the evening was Amit Narang, Ambassador of

India to Oman in his address the Ambassador highlighted the significance of the day and the contributions of the Indian diaspora in fostering cultural exchange and bilateral relations between India and Oman. He also spoke of the giant strides India has taken in the years since Independence across various fields. The Indian of the Year Award is an annual recognition presented by Indian Social Club Oman. This prestigious award honors exceptional individuals from various fields who have made significant contributions to Indian community in Oman and elevated the nation on a global stage. For the year 2024, the Indian Social Club honored Ahmed Rayees with the "Indian of the Year" award for his exemplary service and dedication to the Indian community in Oman. A distinguished businessman and philanthropist



with a humble personality, Rayees's tireless efforts over the last many decades have significantly impacted the lives of many not just in Oman but in India as well. Suhail Khan, Jt. General Secretary of the Indian Social Club, proposed the vote of thanks at the event. On behalf of the Indian Social Club, Khan expressed his grat-

itude to all the participants, well-wishers and guests who made this celebration a resounding success. He added "Together, we continue to celebrate our heritage, uphold our values, and strive for a brighter future for our community. "The Indian Social Club remains committed to promoting Indian culture, traditions, and unity

within the diaspora community, and this Independence Day celebration was another step toward fulfilling that mission". The event attracted a large number of attendees, creating an atmosphere of joy, patriotism, and community spirit, reinforcing the bonds among the members of the Indian diaspora in Oman.



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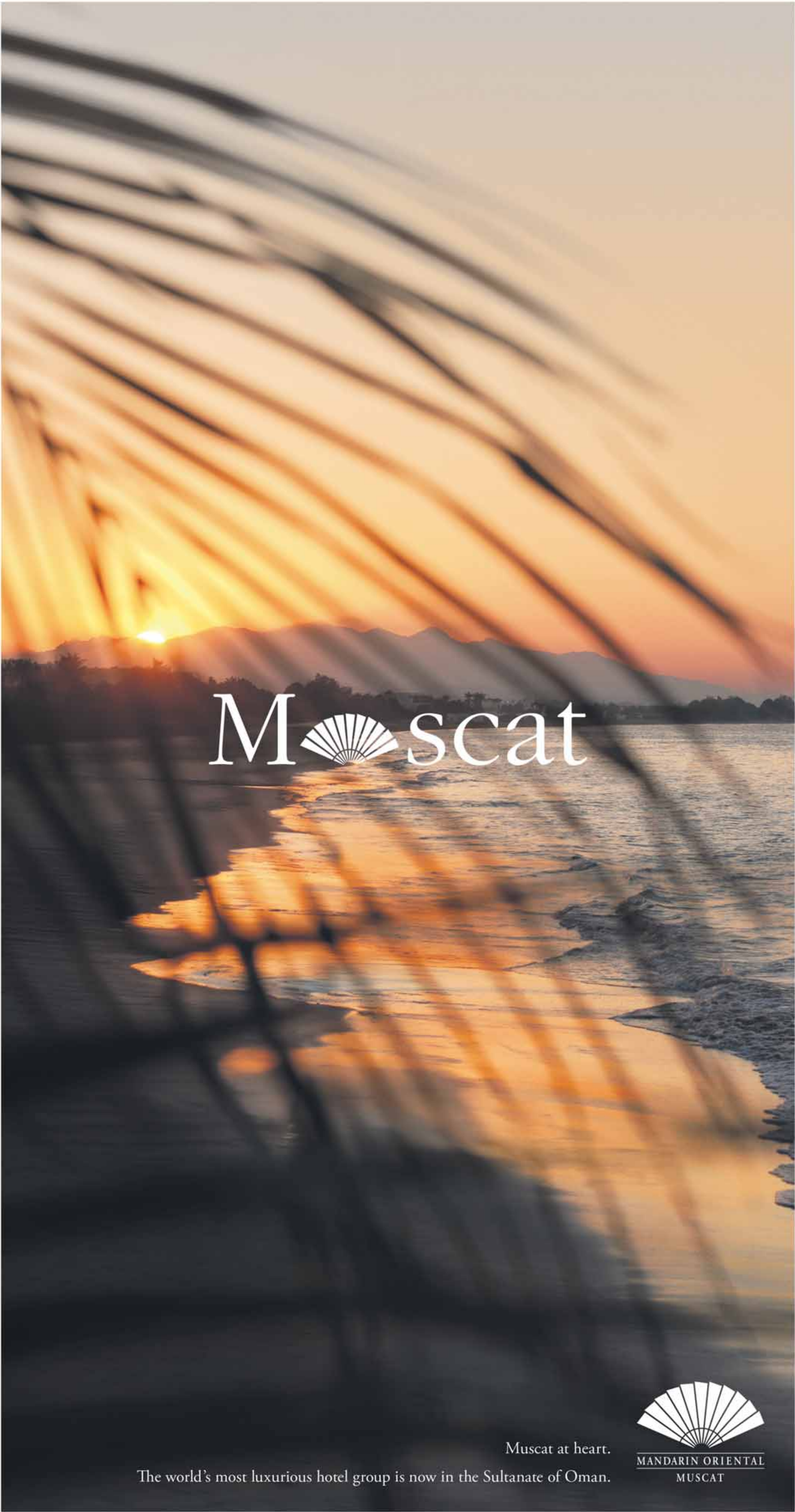
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