LET'S TALK
Times OF OMAN

OMANI AUTHOR'S NOVEL SHORTLISTED FOR AWARD

A novel authored by Omani writer Ruqayya Abdullah Al Badi has been shortlisted for the 18th edition of "The Abdul Hameed Shoman Children's Literature Award". The novel, titled "The Boy Who Ran with His Heart", focused on the theme of "Adventure Literature", a genre of discourse dedicated to the age group 12-16 years. >A3

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EMERGING TEAMS ASIA CUP

Watch out! India vs Pakistan cricket clash in Oman next month

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The sight of India vs Pakistan cricketers vying for victory is one of the most-sought clashes in sports world.

Be it a match in U19 Asia Cup or a match in World Cup, cricket fans across the world look forward to a thriller between these cricket giants and arch-rivals. Oman is all set to host the Asian Cricket Council [ACC] Emerging Teams Asia Cup that will witness India and Pakistan teams among eight fight for title at the Oman Cricket Academy ground in Al Amerat from October 16-27.

According to sources, the eight-team event will feature A teams from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and three qualifiers from the 2024 ACC Men's Premier Cup.

Hosts Oman, UAE and Hong Kong national teams have qualified from the Premier Cup, which was hosted in Oman in April this year.

UAE had defeated Oman in the final to secure berth in 2025 Asia Cup and Emerging Teams Asia Cup while runner-up Oman and third-placed Hong Kong secured berth for the Emerging Teams Asia Cup.

OMAN-INDIA EXPLORE INVESTMENTS IN FOOD SECURITY, TEXTILES, JEWELLERY

Representatives of over 50 Omani companies attended the B2B Meet with the visiting Indian representatives

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman-India Business Forum explored investment opportunities in key sectors like food security, building materials, petroleum and pharmaceutical products, jewellery, textiles and plastic industries.

Organised by Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), the forum reviewed joint investment opportunities between the two countries in commercial sectors in Muscat on Tuesday.

OCCI Board Member Eng. Ridha Juma Al Saleh said that the forum constituted an ideal platform for Omani and Indian companies to boost trade exchange.

Al Saleh added that the two countries recently saw remarkable growth in bilateral trade and engaged in developing a comprehensive economic partnership.

He pointed out that the value of bilateral commercial exchange stood at OMR1.2 billion ($3.1 billion) by the end of 2024.

Business owners from the two sides held bilateral meetings to discuss measures for upgrading cooperation, consolidating ties, exchanging expertise and information and assessing investment opportunities, said Al Saleh.

The meeting saw the participation of 21 visiting Indian companies from Multi Product sectors, led by Paresh Kantilal Mehta, Regional Chairman of the Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO).

Representatives of over 50 Omani companies attended the B2B Meet with the visiting Indian representatives.

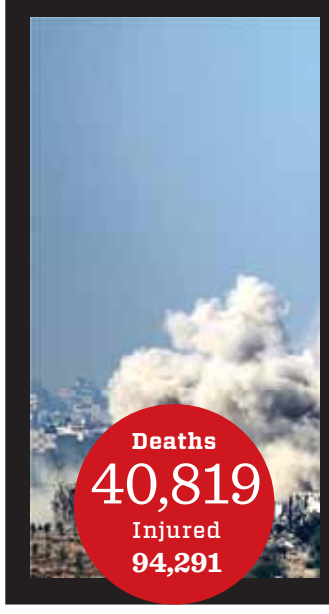
The meeting facilitated direct interactions between Indian and Omani companies in Multi Product sectors such as artificial jewellery, food and agro products, packaging, pharmaceuticals, construction and engineering, essential oils, ayurveda products, medical devices, textiles, and detergents.

Amit Narang, Ambassador of India to Oman, addressed the gathering, highlighting the robustness of India-Oman commercial relations and the potential for diversifying and enhancing India-Oman trade relations.

India and Oman share a long history of robust economic and trade ties underpinned by shared interests and values. India is among Oman's top trading partners. **-With ONA inputs**

GAZA DEATH TOLL

as of September 3, 2024



TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Oman participates in UNESCO meeting

1 The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Education, is taking part in the activities of the International Conference "UNESCO Digital Learning Week," which is currently being held from 2 September to 5 September 2024 at the headquarters of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris. Oman's delegation in the conference is headed by Majid Said Al Bahri, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education for Administrative and Financial Affairs. >A2

OMAN

Oman team arrives in Iraq for World Cup

2 The Oman national football team arrived in the Republic of Iraq on Tuesday to participate in the third round of the Asian qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup. The match will be held on Thursday at Basra International Stadium at 8 pm. Omani fans wishing to travel to the Republic of Iraq to attend the national team's match in the Asian qualifiers have been exempted from visa fees, said the Oman Football Association (OFA) in a statement. The exemption is valid from September 2 to September 5, 2024. >A5

WORLD

Cathay Pacific grounds A350 fleet

3 Hong Kong-based Cathay Pacific Airways said it was grounding and inspecting all of its Airbus A350 airplanes after a "first of its kind" engine component failure forced a flight to turn back on Monday. The airline was inspecting all 48 of its Airbus A350 planes as a precaution. >A6

Wasit Village- an ideal destination for leisure activity A4

SURGE IN SPENDING

Here's why Oman residents will spend more on travel in 2024?

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman residents are spending at least 10 per cent more on their travel this year, compared to their 2023 budgets.

Travel agents attribute the surge in spending due to rise in flight ticket prices and increasing costs of visa.

Venkat Perumal, a sales manager of a reputed travel agency, said that travellers are opting for more luxury options in land arrangements, including hotels and sightseeing.

"And this is contributing to the overall hike in travel costs other than the visa costs," he said.

The government of New Zealand announced on Tuesday that it will nearly triple entry fees for foreign tourists.

Currently, international tourists pay NZ$35 ($22) to enter the country. Starting October 1, that fee will rise to NZ$100 ($62).

High-quality experiences

The measure was to "ensure visitors contribute to public services and high-quality experiences while visiting New Zealand".

Like many other popular destinations, New Zealand has been grappling with the deluge of visitors, now an important part of the country's economy, and the environmental and social impacts that excess tourism can have.

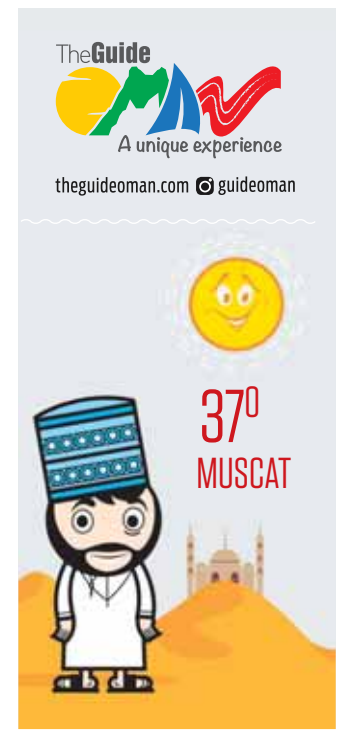
Moreover, the European Commission also announced a global increase in short-stay Schengen visa fees, effective from June 11, 2024.

Under the new fee structure, the cost for adult applicants will be euro 90, up from the current euro 80. For children aged 6 and below 12 years, the fee will increase from euro 40 to euro 45. This hike applies to visa applications submitted worldwide.

Visa free for Omanis

However, there is good news as some countries have relaxed visa requirements for Omanis. Omani citizens holding ordinary passports will be exempted from visa requirement for their travel for tourism purposes to Türkiye, recently. Then, the EU countries have decided to grant 5-year multiple visas to citizens of Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Bahrain. Then more recently, as part of its Independence Day celebrations, Pakistan introduced a new visa policy to attract more tourists and foreign investment.

Under the new policy, residents from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries — Oman, UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia — can now obtain a visa-on-arrival in Pakistan. This visa is valid for three months and can be renewed quickly.



OMAN

PRAYER TIMINGS

Dhuhr	12:11pm
Asr	3:38pm
Maghrib	6:27pm
Isha	7:39pm
Fajr (Tomorrow)	4:34am

Oman participates in UNESCO Digital Learning Week in Paris

UNESCO Digital Learning Week is a major event held annually in the field of digital learning and education transformation

PARIS: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Education, is taking part in the activities of the International Conference "UNESCO Digital Learning Week," which is currently being carried out during from 2 to 5 September 2024 at the headquarters of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris.

This year, the conference comes under the slogan "Directing Technology in Education".

Oman's delegation in the conference is headed by Majid Said Al Bahri, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education for Administrative and Financial Affairs.

UNESCO Digital Learning Week is a major event held annually in the field of digital learning and education transformation.

It aims to enhance cooperation and the exchange of views among education leaders, those interested in digital education, policy makers, researchers and practitioners from United Nations agencies, governments, NGOs, and the private sector. The event aims to promote the digital transformation of education and sensure the ethical use of artificial intelligence, and how to benefit from it in the learning assessment process; to build educational systems that enhance the relationship between digital transformation and green transformation, empower students and raise their awareness of artificial intelligence technologies, guide and support teachers as users of artificial intelligence in the educational process, and support students in acquiring artificial intelligence competencies as part of digital citizenship education.

During the conference sessions, the delegation of the Sultanate of Oman participated with a scientific paper which reviewed the experience of the Ministry of Education in integrating artificial intelligence into school education. Moreover, the head of the delegation met with the Assistant Director-General for Education at UNESCO, and a number of experts in the organisation in the field of education to discuss means of enhancing joint cooperation between the two sides. -ONA

GCC TAX DIRECTORS

Oman takes part in Doha meeting

DOHA: Oman on Tuesday took part in the 13th meeting of the Committee of Heads and Directors of GCC Tax Departments. The meeting was held in Doha.

Oman's delegation was headed by Nasser Khamis Al Jashmi, Chairman of the Tax Authority.

The meeting discussed means of upgrading cooperation between GCC tax authorities, streamlining GCC tax systems and studying the best practices in combating tax evasion, with the overall objective of establishing a fair and transparent Gulf tax system. -ONA

MARITIME SECURITY CENTRE

Indian defence college delegation visits MSC

MUSCAT: A delegation from the National Defence College of the Republic of India on Tuesday visited the Maritime Security Centre (MSC).

Upon their arrival at the centre, the guests were greeted by Commodore Adil Hamoud Al Busaidi, Head of the MSC.

During the visit, members of the visiting delegation were briefed about the role of the MSC in maintaining the maritime security. They also toured the centre's facilities and viewed its latest systems and equipment which are used in carrying out the MSC's national duties. -ONA

AMERAT

Cigarette cartons seized in raid

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman Customs has seized more than 11,500 restricted and prohibited cigarette cartons after it raided a house of an expat in Muscat Governorate.

A statement issued by the Oman Customs said: "The Compliance and Risk Assessment Department raided the home of an Asian worker in Amerat and seized more than 11,500 restricted and prohibited cigarette cartons."

"It also raided a shop in the Seeb market and seized more than 430 cigarette cartons and 305 kilograms of tobacco derivatives," the statement added.

Women arrested

A group of foreign women were arrested for committing immoral acts and begging in Muscat Governorate.

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) said: "Muscat Governorate Police Command arrested a group of women of different nationalities for committing immoral acts and begging. The legal procedures are being completed against them."

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) has arrested a person for possessing more than 100 bundles of khat in Dhofar Governorate.

Omani author's book shortlisted for children award

The criteria for evaluating the works were based on language, style, content, ideas, innovation and the authenticity of the works

AMMAN: A novel authored by Omani writer Ruqayya Abdullah Al Badi has been shortlisted for the 18th edition of "The Abdul Hameed Shoman Children's Literature Award".

The novel, titled "The Boy Who Ran with His Heart", focused on the theme of "Adventure Literature", a genre of discourse dedicated to the age group 12-16 years.

Shoman Foundation appointed a jury tasked with assessing the entries to the award. The jury comprised professionals in literature, criticism, and children's literature.

The criteria for evaluating the works were based on language, style, content, ideas, innovation and the authenticity of the works.

The jury, acting in the most transparent manner, would look out for entries that meet "the highest standards", without knowing the names of the participants or the countries to which they belong. -ONA

IN AL DHAHIRAH

Over 7,000 wild seedlings distributed for eco initiative

IBRI: An Omani environmental initiative in Al Dhahirah Governorate kicked off through the distribution of more than 7,000 seedlings of wild trees to various public and private establishments and individuals.

The aim is to spread greenery in an open area where the growth of wild plants can maintain the ecological balance upright.

The initiative is based on volunteers' collecting seeds and plants from various desert and mountainous environments, valleys and plains and then nurse the stocks in large quantities in a "seed bank".

The seedlings would then be used for research aimed at preserving the species of rare and endangered plants and trees, to ensure their sustainable growth in the Omani environment. -ONA

OMAN

WASIT VILLAGE

AN IDEAL DESTINATION FOR LEISURE ACTIVITY

The village has tourism potentials due to its topography and heritage elements including agricultural lands with date palm trees

AL BURAIMI: Wasit Village is one of the main villages in Wadi Al Jizzi, in the wilayat of Al Buraimi.

The village is the eastern gateway of the wilayat of Al Buraimi and is located 50 kilometres from the centre of the wilayat.

Wasit village has tourism potentials due to its topography and heritage elements including agricultural lands with date palm trees and crops and natural scenes that attract visitors.

The quiet rural environment has made it a destination favoured by lovers of rural areas.

The visitors of the village have the opportunity to enjoy the beauty of the area and explore Wadi Al Jizzi. The moderate temperatures throughout the year have made the area an ideal destination for families and tourists looking for a quiet place to relax.

Sulaiman bin Ali Al Shamsi of Wasit village said that the village is located in an agricultural area and is known for its date palms which supports the local economy and meets the local needs of dates.

The village is also famous for crops and fodder for animals. Falaj Wasit area plays a key role in irrigation of farm crops, he added.

Humaid bin Rashed Al Zaidi, Director of Heritage and Tourism Department in Al Buraimi Governorate said that the village accommodates Wasit heritage site dated back to the second century BC. The said site is also known for unique heritage pieces such as the stone tools, bronze arrow heads and bronze swords among other items, he said adding that the village accommodates five neighbourhoods. -ONA

FOOTBALL

Oman team arrives in Iraq

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Oman national football team arrived in the Republic of Iraq to participate in the third round of the Asian qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup. The match will be held on Thursday at Basra International Stadium at 8 pm.

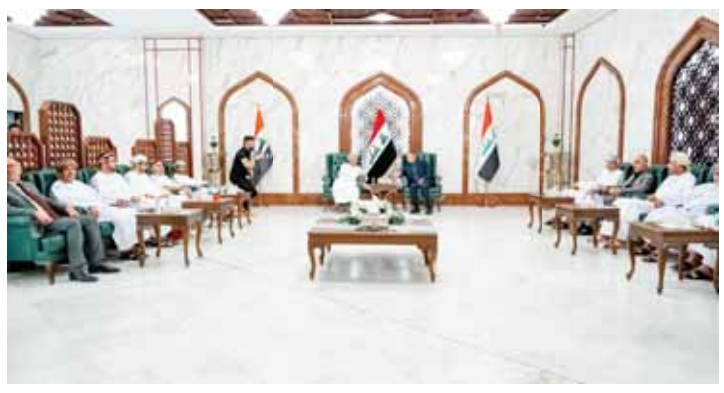
Warm welcome

In a statement, Oman Football Association (OFA), said: "Our national team delegation arrived in the Republic of Iraq - Basra Governorate - headed by Salem bin Saeed bin Salem Al Wahaibi, President of the Oman Football Association. The delegation was received upon arrival by Ali Jabbar, Vice President of the Iraqi Football Association, and Ambassador Sheikh Mahmoud bin Mahna Al Kharousi, Deputy Head of the Sultanate of Oman Mission to the Republic of Iraq."

No visas

Omani fans wishing to travel to the Republic of Iraq to attend the national team's match in the Asian qualifiers have been exempted from visa fees, said the Oman Football Association (OFA).

OFA said: "With reference to the statement issued by the Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman in Baghdad, we would like to inform the fans of our national team wishing to attend the 2026 FIFA World Cup qualification against the Iraqi national team on September 5, that the fans have been exempted from entry visa fees to Iraq for those arriving by land and air to Basra Governorate. The exemption is valid from September 2 to September 5, 2024."



INNOVATION COMPLEX IN MUSCAT

Ninth edition of Falling Walls lab competition concludes

MUSCAT: Acting in cooperation with the German organisers of 'Falling Walls Foundation', the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation on Tuesday held a ceremony to mark the conclusion of the 9th national edition of the contest.

The ceremony was held at the Innovation Complex in Muscat Governorate under the auspices of Dr. Saif Abdullah Al Haddabi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation for Scientific Research and Innovation.

First place in the competition went to Tasneem Mohammed Al Dawoodi, who shared the trophy with Duha Jamal Al Barwani. Their project focused on methods to cut down the use of heavy oil use through green energy applications.

Al Waleed Yousef Al Muharbi merited second place for his project about the (observed) depositing of wax in pipelines.

Third place was won by Samia Nasser Al Riyami for her project on improvising a sustainable water filter. — ONA

PRESTIGIOUS EVENT

Hawana Salalah to host Socca Gulf Cup for six-a-side teams

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Hawana Salalah, by Orascom Development and Omran, in partnership with Sports Makers Oman, is hosting the first-ever Socca Gulf Cup in the Middle East and Asia, marking a significant milestone in the regional sports calendar.

This prestigious event will feature eight competitive teams from across the Gulf region with matches scheduled to take place from the 1 st to the 4 th of September in the Dhofar Governorate.

Hawana Salalah, Oman's largest integrated tourism complex and year-round vibrant community, features white sandy beaches, lush green wadis and turquoise waters, which makes it an ideal setting for the Socca games.

The destination offers a choice of hotels, vibrant restaurants and cafés, the Hawana Aqua Park, and a range of water and land activities and is located on the south-eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula, only 20 minutes from the international airport.

It is also recognised as Oman's premier destination for recreation, leisure, and entertainment, featuring luxurious residential offerings, which makes it the preferred choice for major sports, cultural, and entertainment events throughout the year.

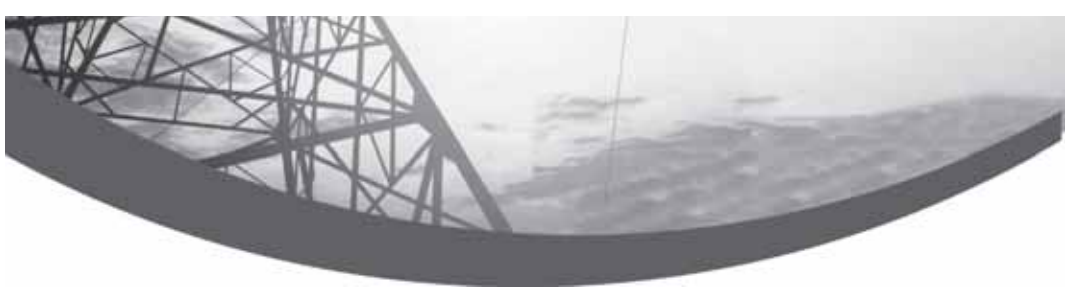
Engineer Wael Al Lawati, CEO of Muriya, the developer of the award-winning communities, Jebel Sifah and Hawana Salalah, expressed his enthusiasm for hosting this historic tournament said, "We are proud to welcome the Socca Gulf Cup to Hawana Salalah, marking a significant first for Oman. This event emphasises Hawana Salalah's growing reputation as a leading destination for regional and international events. It also contributes to Oman's national economy and further cements the country's position as a top global tourist destination."

The Socca Gulf Cup marks a significant milestone in the development of six-a-side football in the Gulf region, and the broader Middle East. This tournament offers Gulf teams the chance to qualify for the 2024 Socca World Cup, where they will compete alongside elite teams from around the world.

The recent draw for the tournament, held on August 20 at the Sultan Qaboos Cultural and Entertainment Complex, witnessed the participation of distinguished guests from Oman and other countries, setting the stage for an exciting competition.

Under the leadership of the Middle East Socca Association and its President & Founder of Sport Makers, Waleed Al Obaidani, there is an ambitious vision to advance five-a-side, six-a-side, and seven-a-side football across the region.

Highlighting the significance of this event, Engineer Al Lawati said, "Hosting the inaugural Socca Gulf Cup at Hawana Salalah is just the beginning of a series of prestigious events that will position the Dhofar Governorate and Oman as hubs for international sports and cultural activities. We eagerly anticipate welcoming players, fans, and guests to our world-class destination, where they can experience the very best that Oman has to offer."



جامعة الشرقية
A'SHARQIYAH UNIVERSITY

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Tender details:

The Tender Committee at A'Sharqiyah University is pleased to invite companies with experience in providing laboratory equipment to participate in this tender.

Tender No.	Description	Document Collection Deadline	Bids Submission Deadline	Document fees
ASU/01/24/25	Description	09/09/2024	30/09/2024	100 OMR

- Specialized companies interested in this assignment can obtain the tender document from the Procurement and Contracts Department at A'Sharqiyah University in Ibra during working days from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM.
- Bids must be submitted in closed, sealed envelopes with red wax, addressed to the Tender Committee at A'Sharqiyah University, Ibra. The envelopes should clearly indicate the tender subject and reference number but must not display the bidders & names.
- The main submission envelope should contain the following:
  - A separate sealed envelope with the technical proposal (1 original copy, 1 copy, and 1 soft copy on a USB flash drive).
  - A separate sealed envelope with the commercial proposal (1 original copy, 1 copy, and 1 soft copy on a USB flash drive).
  - A separate sealed envelope containing the tender bond.

ASU general terms and conditions of tenders shall apply on all submitted bids.
http://www.asu.edu.om/downloads/purchase_terms_conditions.pdf

- A'Sharqiyah University is not obligated to accept the lowest bid.
- **For further details, feel free to contact us via phone at 2540111525401116, or by email at [azza.rashid@asu.edu.om]**

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Nama Dhofar Services invites the specialized companies to participate and submit their offers for the below said tenders: -

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last Date for Collection of Documents	Time & Last Date for Proposal Submission	Tender Fee (OMR) Including VAT (5%)
DISC/2024/105	Replacement of Components/ Assets in the Existing Primary Substations & Distribution Substations	18 September 2024	06 October 2024	52/500
DISC/2024/106	11KV & LV NETWORK IMPROVEMENT WORKS OF 2024 LOT-2	18 September 2024	06 October 2024	52/500
DISC/2024/107	Drilling well and Construction of RCC Tank at Kizeet Gahleel in Salalah	18 September 2024	06 October 2024	52/500
DISC/2024/108	11kV & LV NETWORK IMPROVEMENT WORKS OF 2023 IN ZONE-1 & ZONE- 3 (LOT-16)	18 September 2024	06 October 2024	52/500
DISC/2024/109	Upgrade of Desalination Plant & Distribution network of Rabkout in Wilayat Thumrait	18 September 2024	13 October 2024	1575/-
DISC/2024/110	Replacement of Existing 33 KV Porcelain Insulator to New Silicone Rubber Insulator of Existing 33 KV Overhead Line for Multi Areas"	18 September 2024	06 October 2024	52/500
DISC/2024/111	UTILITY NETWORK EXTENSION – Lot -08B/2024	18 September 2024	06 October 2024	52/500

- To purchase the tender document website via the link or the Barcode below:
  https://isupplier.nama.om:4443/OA_HTML/OA.jsp?OAFunc=XXTEN_TENDER_FLOAT_DISC_F
- Every company wishing to participate in this tender must attach with its bid a bid bond in the form of a bank guarantee from one of the banks operating in the Sultanate of Oman. Any bid that does not contain the bid bond will be disqualified.
- The original bid bond must be submitted in an envelope sealed with red wax and addressed to the chairperson of the minor tender committee and written on outside the Tender name and the Tender number and it should be paced in the tender box in Nama Dhofar Services in Salalah before 10:00 am of the last day for submitting Bids.
- Bids shall be submitted online through using **"isupplier portal"**. No hard copies are accepted.
- The Tender fees are not refundable. However, Tenderers who are holding "Riyada" card issued from public authority for SME development will be exempted from providing the tender fee and the Bid bond.
- The company is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other bid.
- In the event of receipt of the tender document on behalf of another company, the interested purchasers in the above tender document should provide details of the person's name and the company details.

نماء nama
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OMAN/WORLD

Indian PM arrives in Brunei on official visit

The historic visit of Prime Minister coincides with the 40th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic ties between India and Brunei

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN: Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in Brunei on Tuesday on a bilateral visit and said he is looking forward to strong bilateral ties, specially in boosting commercial and cultural linkages.

On his arrival, PM Modi was accorded a ceremonial welcome. PM Modi thanked Crown Prince Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah for welcoming him at the airport.

"Landed in Brunei Darussalam. Looking forward to strong ties between our nations, especially in boosting commercial and cultural linkages. I thank Crown Prince His Royal Highness Prince Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah for welcoming me at the airport," PM Modi said in a post on X.

PM Modi was warmly received by the members of Indian diaspora. He had an endearing interaction with a girl child who showed him a painting.

The painting had the Tricolour and the child with the Prime Minister.

The gathering, which had people waving the Tricolour, cheered for the Prime Minister as he reciprocated their feelings.

A Ministry of External Affairs release said that the Brunei is an important partner in India's 'Act East' Policy and Indo-Pacific Vision.

It said India and Brunei enjoy a friendly relationship which is marked by mutual respect and understanding on bilateral and multilateral issues.

The two countries are linked by history, culture and tradition spanning a millennium.

This is the first-ever bilateral visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Brunei. The historic visit of Prime Minister coincides with the 40th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic ties between India and Brunei.

During the visit, the Prime Minister will engage in bilateral discussions on all aspects of bilateral relations and cooperation with Brunei leadership and explore new areas of collaboration.

New Chancery of Indian High Commission in Brunei inaugurated

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday inaugurated the new Chancery of the High Commission of India, in Brunei's capital Bandar Seri Begawan.

The chancery complex embodies a profound sense of Indianness, masterfully integrating traditional motifs and lush tree plantations. The use of elegant claddings and durable Kota stones further enhances its aesthetic appeal, harmoniously blending classic and contemporary elements. The design not only pays homage to India's rich cultural heritage but also creates a tranquil and inviting atmosphere, according to a press release of the Prime Minister's Office.

On the occasion, he lit a lamp and unveiled a plaque. PM Modi also interacted with the Indian community members who were present at the inauguration,

He appreciated their contribution as a living bridge between the two countries and strengthened bilateral ties. The first phase of Indians arriving in Brunei started with the discovery of oil in the 1920s.

Currently, approximately 14,000 Indians are residing in Brunei. The contribution of Indian doctors and teachers to the growth and development of Brunei's healthcare and education sectors has been well acknowledged.

Notably, PM Modi arrived in Brunei on Tuesday on a bilateral visit and said he is looking forward to strong bilateral ties, specially in boosting commercial and cultural linkages.

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AIRBUS A350

Cathay Pacific grounds planes after engine failure

HONG KONG: Hong Kong-based Cathay Pacific Airways said it was grounding and inspecting all of its Airbus A350 airplanes after a "first of its kind" engine component failure forced a flight to turn back on Monday.

The airline was inspecting all 48 of its Airbus A350 planes as a precaution, it said in a statement on Monday night.

"Thus far we have identified a number of the same engine components that need to be replaced, spare parts have been secured and repair work is underway," it said.

Cathay Director Engineering Keith Brown assured passengers of safety measures.

"Each aircraft is undergoing a rigorous inspection. Upon completion, the aircraft cleared for operation will return to service, while those identified with technical issues will undergo further repair and maintenance work," he said.

The airline was working in tandem with the Hong Kong Civil Aviation Department and the British engine manufacturer Rolls-Royce.

Rolls-Royce engine issue on flight to Zurich

Minutes after takeoff, flight CX383 from Hong Kong to Zurich encountered a problem with its engine.

Instead of turning north for the 12-hour journey, the A350-1000 airplane took two wide circles over the South China Sea, dumped fuel into the ocean, and safely landed back in Hong Kong some 75 minutes after takeoff, according to tracking data from the Flightradar24 website.

Cathay Airways did not provide details on which component of the Rolls-Royce engine malfunctioned. According to a Reuters report, citing a person familiar with the matter, the incident involved a problem with the fuel nozzle, which directs fuel inside the engine.

What does this mean for Cathay Pacific Airways?

The airline operates 18 of the largest twin-engined Airbus planes as part of a fleet that consists of both Airbus and Boeing planes.

It is one of the three largest operators of the wide-bodied airplane, after Qatar Airways and British Airways, which also owns 18 of the jets. There are 88 A350-1000 aircraft in operation worldwide.

Cathay owns another 30 A350-900 planes, which are smaller and more widely used. These planes run on a different model of Rolls-Royce engines.

Other airlines have not reported inspections or similar findings as of now. The European Union Aviation Safety Agency, which has the power to order fleet-wide inspections and repairs, said it would wait for the results of Cathay's investigation. – DW

FRANCE

At least 13 dead after migrant boat capsizes

PARIS: At least 13 people have drowned after a small boat carrying around 70 migrants capsized in the English Channel on Tuesday, just off the northern coast of France near Boulogne-sur-Mer.

Local authorities said that several other people had been rescued but remain in a "serious condition," and warned that the death toll could yet rise. At least two people are still reported to be "missing."

"Unfortunately, the bottom of the boat ripped open," said Olivier Barbarin, mayor of Le Portel, a suburb of Boulogne-sur-Mer, where a first-aid post was set up to treat victims.

The boat had reportedly been attempting to cross from France to the United Kingdom when it was spotted in difficulty by a French vessel, the Minck, which had gone to its aid before it broke up, the Minck's captain told the AFP news agency.

Sea temperatures in the area were around 20 degrees Celsius (68 Fahrenheit).

"It's a huge drama," said Mayor Barbarin of what is the most deadly single incident in the English Channel involving migrants this year. 25 people have already lost their lives attempting the crossing since January,

He said that the town's out-of-use hoverport had been opened up for use by rescue helicopters. – DW

TO ACHIEVE DECARBONISATION GOALS

Industry players increasingly integrating ESG principles

Times News Service

MUSCAT: With significant strides in embracing environmental, social and governance (ESG), the industrial sector in Oman , is experiencing a huge shift to adapt and embrace ESG to align with international sustainability standards.

Leading industry players are increasingly integrating ESG principles into their operating models to drive the latest innovation and achieve decarbonisation.

This strategy is redefining the country's landscapes and shaping the future of the industry.

Speaking about the latest strategies that Oman Cables Industry (OCI) employs to maintain its leadership position in the industry, Erkan Aydogdu, CEO, Oman Cables Industry, said: "OCI secures its leadership in the cable manufacturing industry through a multi-faceted strategy centred on sustainability, innovation, customer focus, strategic partnerships, and robust governance."

"By embedding ESG principles into every aspect of the company's operations, OCI is committed to driving innovation and achieving decarbonisation," he added.

The company's continuous investment in research and development ensures it stays ahead of industry trends, while a deep understanding of customer needs allows OCI to deliver tailored solutions that anticipate market demands.

Erkan Aydogdu. - Supplied picture

"Strategic collaborations, including those with industry leaders like Prysmian Group, further bolster OCI's technological edge," Aydogdu said.

"Moreover, a strong corporate governance framework ensures effective leadership and strategic oversight, enabling OCI to maintain its industry dominance while advancing sustainability and consistently exceeding customer expectations," he added

"With innovation being crucial for the future of the energy sector, OCI plans to stay ahead of the competition. At OCI, staying ahead of the competition is driven by our relentless commitment to innovation. We invest heavily in research and development to explore cutting-edge materials, technologies, and processes that not only enhance our product offerings but also optimise our operational efficiency," OCI CEO said.

"Central to this effort is our Excellence Centre, a dedicated hub where pioneering research and technological advancements are cultivated. Furthermore, we prioritise the continuous training and development of our workforce, ensuring they are well-equipped with the latest skills and knowledge to effectively harness new technologies," he said.

"This comprehensive approach enables OCI to lead the energy sector with innovative solutions that anticipate and meet the evolving demands of our industry," the CEO pointed out.

Regarding the new initiatives that OCI implementing to address ESG priorities, the CEO said, "At Oman Cables Industry, sustainability is deeply embedded in our DNA and integral to every aspect of our business. Our commitment to exceeding ESG targets is reflected in our leadership's dedication to fostering an equal and diverse working environment and making a positive impact on the communities we serve. This commitment has nurtured a culture of innovation, empowering our employees to drive meaningful change within the organisation."

He also said, "We are honoured to be recognised as one of the top companies on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX), a distinction that underscores our commitment to excellence and amplifies our responsibility as a sustainability leader. To this end, OCI has developed a comprehensive regional ESG plan that addresses all aspects of environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and governance. "

"We have established a steering committee to ensure that sustainability remains at the core of our operations, supported by six dedicated teams focused on Net-zero Emissions, Circularity, Innovation, Value Chain, Sustainable Finance, and Sustainable Human Resources. Our initiatives include product circularity and recycling to reduce waste and maximise resource efficiency," he added.

"We also prioritise sustainability awareness training, empowering all employees to contribute actively to our ESG goals. Key programmes like SHE STEMS and KIDS in STEM are central to our efforts, driving gender diversity and inspiring future innovators. With the publication of our first-ever Sustainability Report in 2023 and our alignment with MSX for the 2024 report, OCI is firmly positioned as a leader in sustainable practices, committed to long-term value creation for all stakeholders," OCI CEO said.

He further added, "We remain focused on sustainable business practices, including environmental stewardship and corporate social responsibility initiatives, to ensure our long-term viability and contribute positively to society. We have identified 50 projects over the next three years to boost our sustainability efforts."

Regarding Omanisation goals, the CEO said, "Oman Cables Industry is deeply committed to the national goal of Omanisation, actively fostering a skilled and capable Omani workforce. Currently, our workforce proudly comprises 51% Omani nationals, reflecting our dedication to this objective."

"To further advance this goal, we have recently partnered with the Eidaad Programme, providing six Omani candidates with year-long training opportunities, including one individual who will receive specialised training abroad as part of our group. Looking after our people is a top priority at OCI," he said.

"We emphasise safety in the workplace and are committed to the well-being of our employees through initiatives like our comprehensive welfare policy, which includes providing shares, a baby bonus, and other support measures. We are also focused on developing new talent, collaborating closely with the government and local educational institutions to ensure that our workforce is equipped with the skills needed to drive our industry forward. Through these efforts, OCI not only contributes to the success of Omanisation but also strengthens the future of our nation's industrial sector," he said

Regarding the OCI's plans for future expansion and growth, Aydogdu said, "Oman Cables Industry is committed to continuous growth and expansion, always exploring new markets while strengthening our presence in existing ones. We achieve this through strategic partnerships and collaborations that align with our long-term vision."

"Our ongoing investment in research and development enables us to integrate cutting-edge technologies and enhance our product offerings, ensuring we remain at the forefront of the industry. Additionally, OCI is actively investing in renewable energy technologies and sustainable practices, reflecting our dedication to reducing environmental impact and meeting the increasing demand for green solutions."

"These strategic efforts position OCI for sustained growth and success in an ever-evolving market," the CEO of Oman Cables Industry further added.

160,000 Palestinian children receive 1st dose of polio vaccine in Gaza Strip

WHO had previously announced that 1.26 million doses of vaccines and 500 vaccine carriers had been delivered to Gaza

GAZA: The Palestinian Ministry of Health on Tuesday said that about 160,000 Palestinian children received the first dose of the polio vaccine in the Central Governorate of the Gaza Strip during the previous two days (Sunday and Monday).

The ministry explained in a statement carried by the Palestinian news agency (WAFA) that its teams are working in cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to vaccinate children in fixed and mobile centres affiliated with the ministry and UNRWA, amid great turnout from the families.

Last Sunday, a campaign to vaccinate 640,000 Palestinian children against polio was launched in the Gaza Strip.

WHO had previously announced that 1.26 million doses of vaccines and 500 vaccine carriers had been delivered to Gaza.

Scabies spreading among prisoners

The Palestinian Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs Commission and the Palestinian Prisoner's Society (PPS) said that the Israeli Prison Services (IPS) in the prisons of Ramon and Nafha informed the lawyers who organise visits to the detainees that the scheduled visits were cancelled without specifying a time period, under the pretext of imposing a quarantine on all sections of the prisoners due to the spread of scabies among the prisoners on a large scale.

The two organisations explained in a joint statement that scabies has spread widely among the detainees in several prisons — specifically — in the prisons of Naqab, Megiddo, Nafha, and Rimon as a result of the retaliatory measures imposed by the IPS on the prisoners and detainees after October 7, which fall within the systematic and escalating policies of torture and abuse against the prisoners, which constitute one aspect of the ongoing genocide waged against the Palestinian people in Gaza.

They stated that based on dozens of testimonies conveyed by lawyers from detainees inside prisons, in addition to testimonies of released prisoners, scabies has spread widely for months in several central prisons, adding that the IPS has actually turned the disease into a tool of torture and abuse by deliberately committing medical crimes against them, by depriving them of treatment, and not taking any of the necessary measures as a prison authority to prevent the spread of the disease.

It confirmed that many detainees went out for visits sometimes after some time had passed since they were infected and that their bodies appeared disfigured from the disease, blood, and ulcers on their bodies due to severe itching.

The prisoners' organisations pointed out that the IPS measures imposed on prisoners, in addition to torture, were the main reason for the spread of the disease, most notably the lack of necessary quantities of cleaning materials, including those used to maintain personal hygiene, reducing the quantities of water and the periods available to the prisoner to shower, and withdrawing clothes from prisoners.

Today, the majority of prisoners rely on piece of clothes, and some of them have been wearing the same clothes for long periods and are forced to wash them and wear them while they are wet, in addition to the state of severe overcrowding inside the sections with the escalation of daily detention campaigns.

They added that the biggest crime committed by the prison administration against detainees despite the spread of the disease is the deliberate transfer of those infected with contagious diseases from one section to another, which contributed to the increase in the number of infections, noting that among the infected are child prisoners, specifically in the children's section in Megiddo Prison.

The Palestinian Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs Commission and the PPS held the IPS fully responsible for the fate of the detainees, especially since the prisons where scabies has spread contain dozens of sick prisoners, some of whom suffer from chronic and serious diseases. — WAFA

CENTRAL MAKALA PRISON

129 dead in DR Congo jail break attemp: Govt

KINSHASA: Democratic Republic of Congo's government said at least 129 people were killed while trying to escape from the central Makala prison in the capital Kinshasa late on Sunday.

In a statement, Interior Minister Shabani Lukoo today said a fire had also broken out in the jail's administrative building, including its hospital. Some 59 people were wounded, he added.

He added that 24 people were shot dead, while others suffocated in the crowd.

Shabani said that there was a loss of lives, several injured and mainly material damage.

Earlier, a prison official had said that no inmates had managed to escape. Those who tried had been killed.

The prison, which has a capacity for merely 1,500 inmates, holds over 12,000 people, according to an Amnesty International report. Most of them are awaiting trial.

There have been previous incidents of jailbreaks from the Makala prison. In 2017, a religious sect attacked the prison and freed dozens. The government said it is investigating the latest incident. — Agencies

IMPACT OF OVERTOURISM

New Zealand to triple tourist fee

AUCKLAND: The government of New Zealand announced on Tuesday that it will nearly triple entry fees for foreign tourists. The news prompted criticism from the country's key tourism sector, citing concerns that it will keep visitors away.

Currently, international tourists pay NZ$35 ($22) to enter the country. Starting October 1, that fee will rise to NZ$100 ($62).

The measure was to "ensure visitors contribute to public services and high-quality experiences while visiting New Zealand."

Like many other popular destinations, New Zealand has been grappling with how to manage a deluge of visitors, now an important part of the country's economy, and the environmental and social impact that overtourism can bring.

"International tourism plays a hugely important role in the New Zealand economy, with international visitors spending over $11 billion in the year ending March 2024," Minister for Tourism and Hospitality Matt Doocey said.

"But international tourism also comes with costs to local communities, including additional pressure on regional infrastructure and higher upkeep and maintenance costs across our conservation estate," he said.

Still reeling from the pandemic

The NZ$35 fee was first introduced in 2019, but the government found that this was not enough to cover the cost of environmental damage wrought by tourism.

However, the New Zealand Tourism Industry Association is worried that the fee will keep many people away. This is particularly concerning in the aftermath of the COVID.19 pandemic, when the country had extremely strict border closures.

"New Zealand's tourism recovery is falling behind the rest of the world, and this will further dent our global competitiveness," Rebecca Ingram, the association's chief executive, said.

Earlier on Tuesday, data from Stats NZ showed that travel industry profits from June 2023 to June 2024 were down 5% on pre-pandemic levels.

The government has also proposed to increase taxes on regional airports, prompting further worry from the tourism sector. — DW

REGULAR CHOICE DESTINATION

Migrants increasingly drawn to Spain's Canary Islands

EL HIERRO: In the clubs of the La Frontera municipality, the second largest town on the island of El Hierro, the phrase "Que lleguen bien," meaning "may they arrive safely,"echoes through the walls.

Located at the southwestern tip of the Canary Islands archipelago, seven islands belonging to Spain, El Hierro has been a regular choice destination for African migrants.

Francis Mendoza, the coordinator of the Corazon Naranja group of Civil Protection volunteers on the well-known Tigaday Street. Mendoza is accompanied by Omar, a young man from Gambia, and Aliu, of Senegalese origin. They are closely monitoring the arrivals of the cayucos, the boats carrying migrants.

Figures from the Spanish Interior Ministry show that in 2023, at least 14,535 people arrived on El Hierro in 154 boats. That's equivalent to an average of 40 people daily on an island with an area of 278 square kilometres (108 square miles), and home to around 12,000 inhabitants.

More arrivals expected in September

Boat arrivals have continued to increase in 2024, with the numbers showing an average of 45 people each day. The island's residents, known as Herrenos, told DW they expect a further increase in the number of people arriving in September. In just 10 days in August, 1,007 people arrived on the island. Among the migrants were people from Senegal, Mauritania, Gambia, Mali, Guinea, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Juan Miguel Padron Brito is the mayor of the municipality of El Pinar and remembers those chaotic times when the small Atlantic island had to face the massive arrival of migrants for the first time.

"There were people who complained, with good reason, because there were, for example, three of us in the room to be attended by the doctors in the health center, a migrant boat arrived and all the health workers moved to attend it and the three of us were left without health services," Brito told DW.

However, El Hierro is an oasis of solidarity in a Europe that is becoming increasingly closed and hostile toward migrants searching for a better life and future.

"The sea is very calm. It's very strange," said Mendoza. "I only hope they arrive safely," he added with concern. In El Hierro, most people are welcoming; some even offer a space in their homes to care for those who have arrived. Migrants generally spend around five days in El Hierro before they are transferred to main island of Tenerife, further east.

A new life on the island

"Here we are fine and happy. We want to stay on the island," Abdu told DW. He arrived from Senegal 11 months ago and is now a community member.Teseida, a mother of two boys, and her husband arrived 11 months ago from Senegal with other family members. They raised enough money to buy a boat and set sail into the uncertainty of the sea.On disembarking, the Spanish police accused the father of the minors of being the "patron" of the boat, which makes him liable for the crime of human trafficking for profit.

Whenever a migrant boat arrives, the authorities look for someone responsible, even if, in this case, he was not a smuggler. Now, he is being held in prison in Tenerife, awaiting trial.

Every month, Teseida takes the children to the neighbouring island to visit their father, as she considers it essential for the boys to have contact with him.

Registering and verifying migrants

Omar, a young Gambian, arrived in a boat from Senegal 12 months ago as a minor. However, bone tests determined he was an adult, so he was forced to leave the center.

Luckily for him, Mendoza, head of the Civil Protection volunteers, gave him a place of refuge. Today, the young man works as a volunteer in the Corazon Naranja group, which helps migrants, and is trying to build a normal life.

Migrants helping migrants

Omar now assists in the reception of new migrants arriving on the island. He takes care of the new arrivals with his colleagues as they enter the temporary centre for foreigners, under the watch of the National Police. The center is responsible for carrying out registration and identification procedures for people who enter the country irregularly.

Local sources in El Hierro believe at least 75,000 people are expected to try to reach Europe through the Canary Islands route between September and October.

Faced with the imminent increase in the number of boats arriving on the small island, one wonders whether the solidarity of the locals has a limit or is inexhaustible.

"No, no, in El Hierro, that doesn't happen," said Mendoza. Though island residents "may be tired, out of breath," he said that they "will be giving everything to help [migrants]." — DW

SPORTS

ANKLE INJURY

Ceballos is another injury setback for Real Madrid

MADRID: Real Madrid will be without midfielder Dani Ceballos for between six weeks to two months after confirming that he suffered an ankle injury in Sunday's 2-0 win at home to Betis.

"Following tests carried out today by the Real Madrid Medical Services on our player Dani Ceballos, he has been diagnosed with a grade 3 sprain with ligament damage to his right ankle. His progress will be monitored," confirmed the club website.

The injury comes at a bad time, with Jude Bellingham and Eduardo Camavinga both out of action and unlikely to return until the end of September, after suffering a muscle injury and a twisted knee ligament and it will leave Carlo Ancelotti short of players in central midfield after the international break.

Ceballos suffered the injury in his first start of the new season, after accumulating just six minutes in Real Madrid's first three La Liga matches and the European Supercup against Atalanta. -Xinhua

Bangladesh secure Test series win over Pakistan

The win has boosted Bangladesh in the ICC World Test Championship standings

RAWALPINDI: Bangladesh delivered a thoroughly dominant performance over two weeks, sweeping the Test series against Pakistan 2-0, despite a rain-affected start to the second Test.

The 10-wicket victory in the first match marked Bangladesh's maiden Test win over Pakistan. A repeat of this performance in the second Test solidified a historic achievement for the team.

This series victory is also Bangladesh's first Test series win (of two matches or more) against a team other than Zimbabwe and the West Indies, according to the ICC.

The win has boosted Bangladesh in the ICC World Test Championship standings, propelling them to No. 4 with a points percentage of 45.83, leapfrogging England.

Beginning the fifth day on 42/0, needing 143 more runs to win, Bangladesh got off to a steady start, inching towards the modest target without taking too many risks. They added another 80 runs in the morning session but lost both openers within the space of 12 runs.

Despite the wickets, the experienced duo of Najmul Hossain Shanto and Mominul Haque put together a 57-run stand to keep the visitors on track. Shanto was dismissed soon after lunch for 38, and Mominul perished for 34, causing Bangladesh to stutter slightly towards the end.

Guided over the line

However, the veteran pair of Mushfiqur Rahim (22*) and Shakib Al Hasan (21*) persisted and guided Bangladesh over the line without further hiccups.

Earlier in the Test, after opting to field first, Bangladesh produced another fantastic performance, bowling Pakistan out for a modest 274 runs. Despite half-centuries from captain Shan Masood and opener Saim Ayub, Mehidy Hasan Miraz's five-wicket haul, combined with three wickets from Taskin Ahmed, ensured that Pakistan's first innings total remained within reach.

Pakistan responded brilliantly with the ball, with Khurram Shahzad leading the fightback with a six-wicket haul that gave the home team a slim lead of 12 runs.

However, Bangladesh's bowlers were not done. Two more heroes stepped up for the visitors--24-year-old Hasan Mahmud and 21-year-old Nahid Rana--who took a combined nine wickets between them as Pakistan collapsed for just 172 runs in the second innings, setting Bangladesh a target of 185 with four sessions left in the game.

Poor weather and bad light stopped play early on Day 4 but only delayed the inevitable as the visitors wrapped up the Test with six wickets to spare. -ANI

US OPEN

Sinner sets up Medvedev QF clash; Minaur, Draper march into final eight

NEW YORK: The world number one Jannik Sinner set up a quarterfinal clash with Daniil Medvedev following a win over local favourite Tommy Paul at the ongoing US Open on Tuesday.

The world number one and current Australian Open champion battled past Paul 7-6(3), 7-6(5), 6-1. Though he was made to work hard for his points and battled from two breaks down in set one, Sinner displayed some stunning shotmaking and baseline power.

Now, Sinner has also accomplished the rare feat of reaching the quarterfinals in at least of all four Grand Slam events in a season. He has become the eighth men's singles player since 2000 to achieve this feat and has joined the elite company of Novak Djokovic, Roger Federer, Andy Murray, Rafael Nadal, David Ferrer, Stan Wawrinka and Andre Agassi. Djokovic has achived this feat a total of eight times, as per ATP.

Following the match, he was quoted as saying by ATP website, "It is a huge honour to play

on this court here. The evening session is always very, very nice. Thanks everyone for the support, it is amazing. I thought that we both did not play our best tennis. It was a little breezy, a little windy, so we tried to find our rhythm a little bit. I found it a little bit at the end of the match, but I can be very proud. Today was a tough opponent, so I am very happy to be in the next round."

Sinner and Medvedev recently clashed in Wimbledon QFs this year, where Medvedev won in five sets and took a 7-5 lead in the rivalry. Sinner had also defeated Medvedev to secure the Australian Open title.

Medvedev, the fifth seed and 2021 US Open champion continued his 2024 campaign with a win over Nuno Borges by 6-0, 6-1, 6-3 in a one hour, 51 minute clash. The Russian was in control for the majority of the clash, except when he trailed by a break early in set one. Since 2018, Medvedev has scored 268 wins at hard courts, more tour-level wins than any other player. His nearest rival is Andrey Rublev with 210 wins.

Medvedev has also secured wins in all three ATP Head to Head meetings with Borges, having won against him in Australian Open and in Halle this year.

Alex de Minaur secured his third successive quarterfinal in a major competition on Monday, beating fellow Australian Jordan Thompson 6-0, 3-6, 6-3, 7-5 in the round of 16 clash. The 10th seed was in command since the start and was agile enough to track down drop volleys and flat Thompson groundstrokes in the two hour, 57 minute clash.

With his 40th tour-level win this year, Alex has surpassed Djokovic in the seventh place of the ATP Live Race to Turin. The 25-year-old has enjoyed a fine year, with QF finishes in French Open and Wimbledon and title wins in Acapulco and 's-Hertogenbosch. He is targeting a first-time qualification to the ATP Finals. -ANI

MALI DEFENDER

Double injury blow makes Sociedad's season difficult

MADRID: Real Sociedad's difficult start to the season has continued with the news that right back Hamari Traore is likely to miss the entire season after tearing the anterior cruciate ligament in his right knee.

The 32-year-old Mali defender suffered the injury in Sunday's 0-0 draw with Getafe in La Liga.

The Real Sociedad website has confirmed the injury, adding that Traore will have an operation "in the coming days."

Losing Traore is a big blow to the club from San Sebastian, who have Alvaro Odriozola (who has a long injury history and currently sidelined again) as cover, along with youngster Jon Aranburu.

The same game also saw midfielder Brais Mendez have to limp off the pitch and he will also be out of action for some time, with coach Imanol Alguacil telling the press Mendez has broken a metatarsal bone in his foot.

Last season saw Real Sociedad finish sixth in La Liga, but it has been a difficult summer for the club, who have lost Spain internationals, Mikel Merino to Arsenal and Robin Le Normand, who has moved to Atletico Madrid.

The club moved on the last day of the transfer window to sign young Icelandic striker Orri Oskarsson from Copenhagen and midfielder Luka Sucic from RB Salzburg. -Xinhua

'LONE STAR LE MANS' SIX-HOUR RACE

Ahmad Al Harthy, Valentino Rossi, Maxime Martin impress in USA

MUSCAT: Remarkable driving and tremendous tenacity from Ahmad Al Harthy, Valentino Rossi and Maxime Martin in the 'Lone Star Le Mans' six-hour race in Austin, Texas, on Sunday, 1st September, almost delivered a dream podium return – until hopes were shattered with just 15 minutes to run.

Omani racer Al Harthy, making his maiden visit to the Circuit of the Americas in the USA, relished the new challenge in round six of the FIA World Endurance Championship season and, along with his No.46 BMW M4 team-mates, produced an incredible series of performances on raceday.

Storming through from an uncharacteristic 15th on the LMGT3 grid, excellent pace and racecraft from the trio and superb strategy and pit-work from Team WRT ensured a possible podium finish was on the cards – certainly a top four result. With Martin at the wheel during the final stint, the deserved points haul looked assured but he was forced into retirement with power steering failure.

After a positive first couple of free practice sessions at the Austin track on Friday, 30th August, the No.46 entry lapping within 0.6 seconds of the top of the LMGT3 times in the day's second outing, Al Harthy felt decidedly under the weather on Saturday, 31st August, and so qualifying proved to be an even sterner test than would normally be the case.

Even so, the Omani did his absolute best in the circumstances and was initially within the top 10 spots for possible progression into Hyperpole. Before the end of the 12-minute session, though, the Team WRT BMW slipped to 15th on the times and so had the challenge of starting on row eight.

Al Harthy took the beginning of Sunday's 'Lone Star Le Mans' and the OQ, Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Omantel, Experience Oman and BMW Oman partnered driver immediately made excellent progress, leaping into the top 12 and then moving into 11th place mid-lap.

Continuing to pick up his pace, on the third tour he passed the sister No.31 Team WRT car to break into the top 10. Pulling away and instantly pressuring the cars ahead, half an hour into the stint he claimed ninth. Motoring further away, but with over three seconds to make up to the next couple of cars, Al Harthy reduced the gap in no time but the battle then pla-

teaued.

At the 50-minute mark, the No.777 Aston Martin pitted and so Al Harthy climbed into eighth as a result. This precipitated most of the other LMGT3 runners pitting, but the Omani stayed out and moved into the top three. He then pitted on lap 26, just ahead of the end of the first hour, with Martin taking over and joining the action in fifth position.

Taking fourth place on lap 35, Martin decimated the 10 second gap to the podium placings and 40 minutes into his stint he successfully challenged for third position. Instantly on the tail of the second placed No.85 Lamborghini Huracan, Martin swept past on lap 50.

With one and hour and 45 minutes of the race elapsed, the Belgian driver was just 1.5 seconds shy of the LMGT3 leading No.27 Aston Martin and he closed the gap in the blink of an eye before the Aston pitted. Martin then headed into pitlane a lap later from the LMGT3 lead.

Al Harthy returned to the driving seat for his second stint and threaded back into the race just before the end of the second hour in P2. Slipping back a couple of spots during the early going of hour three, passed by Gold and Silver graded drivers, Bronze graded competitor Ahmad pressed on.

Running in fifth position a third of the way through the stint, the Omani soon moved back into fourth when the No.85 Lamborghini had to pit with damage. With debris on the track, a Full Course Yellow cautionary period was duly called with racing resuming just a few minutes later. Al Harthy pitted from fourth nearing the halfway point of the race, handing over the BMW to Rossi for his first miles.

Holding seventh place initially, when the full race order settled after the third round of stops Rossi had risen to fifth. As the encounter hit the three hour mark, the MotoGP legend swarmed all over the back of the fourth placed McLaren – having rocketed up to the No.59 car – and he remained squarely in the fight for a dream podium, later moving into the top four with some great driving.

After Rossi completed his two-hour stint, Martin returned to the driving seat for the run to the finish as a tremendous fourth place result looked assured. But with only 15 minutes remaining, the power steering on the No.46 failed – robbing Martin, Rossi and Al Harthy of a thoroughly deserved result.

Ahmad Al Harthy: "We had every emotion this weekend here in Texas! Vale and Maxime drove so unbelievably well in the race, and I was really happy with my pace and performance – especially the first stint to get us through the order after such a tough qualifying. The guys at Team WRT gave us a fantastic car and the strategy was perfect, an incredible performance to come through from P15 to P4.

"In the end it wasn't to be, unfortunately, with the power steering issue. After so much hard work it does feel a cruel blow, but we're proud of the performance we all delivered and it makes us even more determined and focused for Fuji in a couple of weeks. Thank you, as always, to my amazing partners and for all the incredible support this weekend on my first visit to COTA."

Round seven of the FIA World Endurance Championship season, the 6 Hours of Fuji, will take place at the world-famous venue in Japan over the weekend 14th/15th September.

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE

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WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 2024

OMAN CRUDE PRICE RISES

The price of Oman oil has increased, with prices for delivery by November 2024 reaching $76.63, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil rose by 22 cents from the price of Monday, which was $76.41. - ONA

MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 4,777.90 points, up by 0.13% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.04% at 443.76 points. Al Batinah Development Company, up 28.57%, was the top gainer while National Finance, down 6.67%, was the top loser.

World Bank raises India's growth to 7%

This marks an upward revision, underscoring India's resilience in the face of challenging global economic conditions.

NEW DELHI: World Bank has revised the growth from a previous forecast of 6.6 per cent to 7 per cent for FY25, according to the latest India Development Update (IDU) released on Tuesday.

This marks an upward revision, underscoring India's resilience in the face of challenging global economic conditions.

The report, titled India's Trade Opportunities in a Changing Global Context, highlights India's status as the fastest-growing major economy, with a remarkable growth rate of 8.2 per cent in FY23/24.

This growth was primarily driven by significant public infrastructure investments and a surge in household investments in the real estate sector. On the supply side, a buoyant manufacturing sector, which expanded by 9.9 per cent, and resilient services activity played crucial roles in offsetting the underperformance of the agriculture sector.

Urban unemployment rates have also seen gradual improvement, particularly among female workers, whose unemployment rate fell to 8.5 per cent in early FY24/25. However, the report notes that urban youth unemployment remains high at 17 per cent. On the external front, India's foreign exchange reserves reached a record high of USD 670.1 billion in early August, equivalent to over 11 months of import cover, bolstered by a narrowing current account deficit and strong foreign portfolio investment inflows.

Despite global economic headwinds, the World Bank's outlook for India remains positive, with growth projected to remain strong at 7 percent in FY24/25 and continue robustly through FY26/27.

The report also anticipates a decline in India's debt-to-GDP ratio from 83.9 per cent in FY23/24 to 82 per cent by FY26/27, alongside a stable current account deficit of around 1-1.6 per cent of GDP over the same period.

The IDU emphasises the critical role of trade in sustaining and boosting India's economic growth. The global trade environment has become increasingly protectionist, but the reconfiguration of global value chains following the COVID-19 pandemic presents significant opportunities for India.

The report highlights India's efforts to enhance its competitiveness through the National Logistics Policy and various digital initiatives aimed at reducing trade costs. However, it also cautions that rising tariff and non-tariff barriers could potentially limit the effectiveness of trade-focused investments.

Auguste Tano Kouame, World Bank's Country Director in India, said, "India's robust growth prospects along with declining inflation will help to reduce extreme poverty. India can boost its growth further by harnessing its global trade potential."

He added, "In addition to IT, business services and pharma where it excels, India can diversify its export basket with increased exports in textiles, apparel, and footwear sectors, as well as electronics and green technology products."

To achieve its ambitious goal of USD 1 trillion in merchandise exports by 2030, the IDU recommends a three-pronged approach: reducing trade costs further, lowering trade barriers, and deepening trade integration.

The report points out that India's share in global apparel exports has declined from 4 per cent in 2018 to 3 per cent in 2022, largely due to rising production costs and declining productivity.

Nora Dihel and Ran Li, Senior Economists and co-authors of the report, said, "With rising costs of production and declining productivity, India's share in global apparel exports has declined from 4 per cent in 2018 to 3 per cent in 2022."

They added, "To create more trade-related jobs, India can integrate more deeply into global value chains which will also create opportunities for innovation and productivity growth." -ANI

LATEST ADVANCEMENTS

Chinese firms accelerate green development of power battery industry

CHENGDU: The latest advancements and strategic directions of China's power battery industry have been highlighted at the 2024 World Power Battery Conference held in the city of Yibin, southwest China's Sichuan Province.

As the global shift towards electrification and green energy accelerates, China has been increasingly focusing on technological innovation, sustainability, and enhanced safety standards to strengthen its position in the global power battery market while exploring new application opportunities.

Range and charging efficiency remain key concerns for electric vehicle (EV) users. During the conference, major Chinese battery manufacturers such as CATL and BYD showcased their next-generation battery technologies.

CATL's "Shenxing Plus" battery drew attention for its high energy density and fast-charging capabilities, capable of achieving a 600-kilometer range with just a 10-minute charge, and maintaining an efficient performance even at minus 20 degrees Celsius, which marks a significant breakthrough in lithium iron phosphate battery technology.

CATL Chairman Zeng Yuqun stressed the balance between design and chemical composition when addressing the development of battery technology, so as to achieve high performance and high safety.

"We have developed a more energy-dense, lighter, and smaller battery system by combining large cylindrical cell designs with innovative silicon-based anode materials," said Mei Ao, general manager of Guangzhou Leadinx Energy Technology Co., Ltd. This innovation has extended the flight time of large industrial electric drones by over 35 percent with the same weight and volume, making it suitable for high-performance scenarios such as agricultural protection, inspection, and security, as well as manned electric aerial vehicles.

Zhong Zhicheng, general manager of Novo Setsail New Energy Technology Zhuhai Company, highlighted China's exploration in the field of electric ships. Despite China having the largest inland waterway freight market globally, the development of new energy ships remains in its infancy.

Zhong pointed out that China is leveraging its electric vehicle technology experience to accelerate the promotion of electric ships and the construction of battery charging and swapping infrastructure, aiming for breakthroughs in green shipping.

Xiong Jijun, vice minister of industry and information technology, stated in his speech that China would leverage leading enterprises and innovation platforms to promote the establishment of industry-university-research integrated innovation consortia, increasing resource investment to support the development of next-generation battery technologies such as new material systems and all-solid-state batteries.

Beyond technological innovation and new application exploration, the recycling and sustainability of the battery industry also became a focal point of the conference. Data from the China Power Battery Recycling and Utilization Industry Collaborative Development Alliance show that the total volume of retired power batteries in China reached 168,000 tonnes in 2023, a year-on-year increase of 78.3 percent. -Xinhua

BRIEFS

Dollar steady as traders await economic data

SINGAPORE: The dollar held near two-week highs against the yen and the euro, as investors awaited a series of US economic data that will influence the size of an expected rate cut. The dollar index, which measures the greenback against six major currencies, fell to 101.69 in early trade, just below a two-week high of 101.79 touched yesterday (Monday). The index fell 2.2% in August amid expectations of a US rate cut. The euro was last at $1.1060, while the yen fell to $147.10 in early trade. The pound was slightly lower at $1.31425 in early trade, the Australian dollar was down 0.14% at $0.6782, while the New Zealand dollar was down 0.18% at $0.6223.

Eastern Economic Forum kicks off in Russia

MOSCOW: The 9th Eastern Economic Forum kicked off in the city of Vladivostok in the Russian Far East today under the theme "Far East 2030. Combining Strengths to Create New Potential". The four-day forum features more than 70 events across seven tracks, including international cooperation, technological sovereignty, and transport logistics, with the participation of 4,200 figures. Russian President Vladimir Putin will deliver a speech at the forum's plenary session, in which he will address current events in the global economy, and the development of the Russian Far East with its wealth, human, scientific and logistical capabilities. The forum is a platform for attracting investments to the Russian Far East, where participants discuss the challenges facing the economy in Russia and the world at large. -ONA

CHIPMAKING CAPABILITIES

Can Germany live up to its chipmaking ambitions

BRUSSELS: When European Union Commission President Ursula von der Leyen came to Dresden on August 20 for the groundbreaking ceremony of a new chipmaking factory she brought a gift of €5 billion ($5.58 billion) with her.

It wasn't actually a gift or even EU money. What she had done in the early morning hours was approve subsidies from the German government for the project.

It was the official go-ahead needed for a massive project, part of Germany's goal of building up its own chipmaking industry. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who was also at the groundbreaking, was glad to accept.

Up and running soon in Silicon Saxony

The new factory is expected to employ 2,000 people and be up and running by 2027. The project is a joint venture of ESMC (European Semiconductor Manufacturing Company) with partners Bosch, Infineon and NXP.

The impulse behind the deal is Taiwan-based TSMC, the biggest contract chipmaker in the world. This is the company's first foray in Europe. The new €10 billion factory will be built next to German engineering company Bosch and facilities of Germany's largest semiconductor manufacturer Infineon in what many call Silicon Saxony.

When it comes to chips size matters

Silicon Saxony is a region encompassing a 100-kilometer (62-mile) radius around Dresden, the capital of the regional German state of Saxony. After some bumpy times, for the past 15 years the region has been on an upward trajectory.

Today, this high-tech cluster is home to 3,600 companies working in microelectronics, software or as suppliers to these businesses. These companies employ around 81,000 people, a third of which are women.Continued growth puts the industry on track for 100,000 workers by 2030, says Frank Bösenberg, the managing director of an industry association also called Silicon Saxony

He calculates that it would then overtake the automotive sector to become the most important industry in Saxony.

In an interview with DW, Bösenberg described his job as a mix between a politician, economic developer, marketing expert and office manager. Besides focusing on Saxony, he coordinates with other semiconductor clusters in France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden, Italy, Austria and the Czech Republic.

Build it and they will come?

Saxony has been a manufacturing hub since the 1980s. Partly because of this long history Silicon Saxony is now the biggest microelectronics cluster in Europe with the biggest choice of employers and the most partners or competitors. This ecosystem, which includes technical universities in Dresden and the town of Chemnitz nearby, has been able to support itself and grow.

Building factories is one part of the equation. Having qualified people to run them is another and this is where Saxony and nearby Thuringia could run into problems. The states, and eastern Germany more generally, have not always been kind to recent arrivals. For a place that is heavily dependent on foreign skilled workers, fears of intolerance could keep workers away. If these fears are backed by a more right-wing government things could get worse.

So far, Silicon Saxony companies have been able to meet the challenge of finding skilled workers. The worry that big new factories would hoover up workers from smaller companies has not happened as more people from outside the region discovered the jobs on offer.

For Bösenberg, there are other problems that growth can bring like affordable housing, schools and public transportation. Infrastructure projects in Germany are becoming well-known for taking a long time and running over budget. And in Saxony much of the planning is based on the region shrinking not growing.

Around Dresden, the current situation is "good to very good," said Bösenberg, but needs to keep up. More housing will soon be needed. It is already hard to find bigger apartments. One challenge is figuring out who will come to fill the jobs: singles or couples and how many children they will bring? These are all factors that change what will be needed.

Unfulfilled promises to build more

The new TSMC facility in Dresden went quickly from talks to groundbreaking. Projects elsewhere have not been so fast. Last year the government signed an agreement with Intel to help build two chipmaking sites in the eastern city of Magdeburg. Total investments could come to around €30 billion.

At the time, the chancellor called the company's plans the biggest direct foreign investment in German history. Construction was supposed to start this year, but not much has happened. In the meantime, the company announced the need to cut back its workforce and investments. Many around Magdeburg doubt anything will be built.

Wolfspeed, an American chipmaker, has also been trying to get a factory off the ground for a number of years in Saarland in western Germany. Groundbreaking for this facility, which would make chips for the car industry, was pushed from 2023 to 2025.

Moreover, Germany has to think bigger. The €10 billion TSMC factory is a nice addition to Silicon Saxony, but pales compared to the $65 billion (€58 billion) the company plans to invest in three new plants in Arizona, United States, by 2030.

In August, the US Department of Commerce announced that in the last two years the CHIPS and Science Act had granted over $30 billion in funding for 23 projects — including 16 brand new semiconductor manufacturing facilities — in 15 US states. -DW

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Al Batinah Development Company, up 28.57%, was the top gainer while National Finance, down 6.67%, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,777.90 points, up by 0.13% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.04% at 443.76 points. Al Batinah Development Company, up 28.57%, was the top gainer while, National Finance, down 6.67%, was the top loser. Shares of OQGN were the most active in terms of number of shares traded while Bank Muscat were the most active in terms of turnover.

A total number of 894 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of RO 4.11 million, with more than 18.25 million shares changing hands. Out of 58 traded securities, 24 advanced, 14 declined, and 20 remained unchanged. At the session close, foreign investors were net buyers for RO 255K while GCC & Arab investors were net sellers for RO 143K, followed by domestic investors for RO 112K worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,754.05 points, up 0.24%. Prices of Al Batinah Development Company, Oman Qatar Insurance, Al Anwar Investment, OMINVEST, DIDIC were up by 28.57%, 7.14%, 2.63%, 1.75%, 1.32% respectively. Prices of National Finance, Al Madina Investments, Global Financial Investments, Bank Muscat were down by 6.67%, 4.00%, 1.28%, 0.38% respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,908.00 points, up 0.46%. Prices of A'Saffa Foods, Voltamp Energy, Muscat Thread Mill, Gulf Mushroom Products, Galfar Engineering were up by 5.00%, 2.78%, 0.95%, 0.88%, 0.76% respectively. Prices of Oman Packaging, Oman Fisheries, Raysut Cement, Al Anwar Ceramics, Oman Flour Mills were down by 2.78%, 2.44%, 1.60%, 1.08%, 0.79% respectively.

Services Index was up by 0.43% before closing at 1,850.50 points. Prices of SMN Power Holding, Barka Water & Power Company, Al Batinah Power, Al Suwadi Power, Sembcorp Salalah were up by 4.62%, 1.54%, 1.32%, 1.32%, 0.94% respectively. Prices of Dhofar Generating, Al Jazeera Services, Renaissance Services, Oman Telecom were down by 4.29%, 1.87%, 0.99%, 0.88% respectively. — **United Securities**

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	4,783.66	4,771.15	4,777.90	4,771.79	6.11	0.13
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,756.40	7,740.25	7,754.05	7,735.14	18.91	0.24
Industry Index	5,920.81	5,881.08	5,908.00	5,881.08	26.92	0.46
Services Index	1,855.86	1,842.02	1,850.50	1,842.63	7.87	0.43
MSX Shariah Index	444.36	440.40	443.76	443.58	0.18	0.04
MSX TR INDEX	6,648.54	6,631.14	6,640.52	6,632.03	8.49	0.13
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,812.07	8,793.72	8,809.40	8,787.92	21.48	0.24
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	6,831.21	6,785.37	6,816.43	6,785.37	31.06	0.46
SERVICES TR IDX	2,159.58	2,143.47	2,153.35	2,144.19	9.16	0.43
FIXED INCOME INDEX	1,069.10	1,069.10	1,069.10	1,069.10	0.00	0.00

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
18,255,963	4,108,162	894	24,619,514,574	24	14	20	58

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3

REGULAR MARKET

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RO)	DIFF %	LAST PR.	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
OM0000002804	ASAFFA FOODS	90	36	1	0.399	0.399	0.399	0.399	0.380	0.019	5.000	0.399	0.378	0.399	0.100	47,880,000
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	22,205	7,664	4	0.345	0.348	0.345	0.348	0.342	0.006	1.754	0.348	0.341	0.348	0.100	232,591,168
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	53,400	4,121	10	0.077	0.079	0.077	0.077	0.076	0.001	1.316	0.077	0.076	0.082	0.100	9,384,375
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	500	39	1	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.076	0.001	1.316	0.077	0.075	0.079	0.100	51,966,332
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	175,538	13,516	9	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.076	0.001	1.316	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.100	55,009,288
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	427,315	34,175	24	0.080	0.080	0.079	0.080	0.079	0.001	1.266	0.080	0.079	0.085	0.100	14,000,000
OM0000004735	SEMBCORP SALALAH	108,000	11,629	12	0.107	0.108	0.107	0.108	0.107	0.001	0.935	0.108	0.107	0.108	0.100	103,093,771
OM0000009072	OQ GAS NETWORKS	3,503,064	518,313	226	0.148	0.149	0.147	0.148	0.147	0.001	0.680	0.148	0.148	0.150	0.100	640,932,340
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	1,000	280	1	0.280	0.280	0.280	0.280	0.279	0.001	0.358	0.280	0.277	0.285	0.100	34,971,429
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	30,296	8,815	6	0.291	0.291	0.290	0.291	0.290	0.001	0.345	0.290	0.290	0.290	0.100	189,424,771
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	10,000	2,700	1	0.270	0.270	0.270	0.270	0.270	0.000	0.000	0.270	0.270	0.270	0.100	439,005,516
OM0000002275	SHELL OMAN MARKETING	3,000	2,400	1	0.800	0.800	0.800	0.800	0.800	0.000	0.000	0.800	0.000	0.000	0.100	76,000,000
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIYA INVESTMENT HO.	311,555	23,055	13	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.000	0.000	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.100	6,660,000
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	1,270,769	183,151	40	0.145	0.146	0.144	0.144	0.144	0.000	0.000	0.144	0.144	0.153	0.100	803,123,463
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	278,388	83,518	25	0.299	0.301	0.299	0.300	0.300	0.000	0.000	0.299	0.299	0.300	0.100	231,060,000
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	2,688,238	706,222	41	0.263	0.264	0.262	0.262	0.263	-0.001	-0.380	0.262	0.262	0.263	0.100	1,966,676,030
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	189,482	191,715	33	1.020	1.020	1.009	1.009	1.018	-0.009	-0.884	1.009	1.009	1.010	0.100	756,750,000
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	1,531,769	612,828	62	0.403	0.403	0.400	0.400	0.404	-0.004	-0.990	0.400	0.400	0.400	0.100	94,564,000
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	7,000	1,275	3	0.182	0.183	0.182	0.183	0.185	-0.002	-1.081	0.183	0.180	0.183	0.100	40,260,000
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	668,338	51,529	22	0.078	0.078	0.077	0.077	0.078	-0.001	-1.282	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.100	15,400,000
Total	20	11,279,947	2,456,982	535												

Parallel Market

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RO)	DIFF %	LAST PR.	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
OM0000006979	OMAN QATAR INSURANCE	19,171	3,384	3	0.170	0.195	0.170	0.195	0.182	0.013	7.143	0.195	0.171	0.185	0.100	31,437,621
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	963,000	326,342	13	0.328	0.340	0.328	0.340	0.325	0.015	4.615	0.340	0.329	0.345	0.100	67,876,104
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	149,087	55,470	19	0.370	0.379	0.370	0.370	0.360	0.010	2.778	0.370	0.370	0.375	0.100	30,119,018
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	546,162	41,772	22	0.076	0.078	0.076	0.078	0.076	0.002	2.632	0.078	0.076	0.078	0.100	16,550,040
OM0000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	99,333	26,907	17	0.259	0.279	0.258	0.263	0.259	0.004	1.544	0.263	0.263	0.284	0.100	42,080,000
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	1,014,020	68,504	40	0.067	0.069	0.067	0.068	0.067	0.001	1.493	0.068	0.066	0.069	0.100	33,376,874
OM0000001509	DHOFAR INTERNATIONAL DEV. & INV. HO.	375,321	81,646	29	0.205	0.230	0.205	0.230	0.227	0.003	1.322	0.230	0.210	0.229	0.100	94,126,653
OM0000002036	MUSCAT THREAD MILLS	56,000	5,936	5	0.106	0.106	0.106	0.106	0.105	0.001	0.952	0.106	0.105	0.107	0.100	1,737,775
OM0000002267	GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS	240	55	2	0.228	0.230	0.228	0.230	0.228	0.002	0.877	0.230	0.000	0.230	0.100	10,526,134
OM0000008868	THE PEARL REIF	81,308	9,454	14	0.116	0.117	0.116	0.117	0.116	0.001	0.862	0.117	0.117	0.118	0.100	59,448,115
OM0000008710	BARKA DESALINATION	4,000	500	1	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.124	0.001	0.806	0.125	0.118	0.125	0.100	9,440,250
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	1,667,889	217,769	82	0.131	0.132	0.130	0.132	0.131	0.001	0.763	0.132	0.132	0.132	0.100	26,794,211
OM0000002572	OMAN OIL MARKETING	3,320	2,623	2	0.790	0.790	0.790	0.790	0.785	0.005	0.637	0.790	0.790	0.790	0.100	48,407,250
OM0000001020	OMAN CHROMITE	274	1,082	3	4.200	4.200	3.780	4.200	4.200	0.000	0.000	4.200	3.780	4.190	1.000	13,860,000
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	14,713	1,383	7	0.094	0.094	0.094	0.094	0.094	0.000	0.000	0.094	0.091	0.094	0.100	7,990,000
OM0000001426	OMAN REFRESHMENT	50	56	2	1.120	1.120	1.120	1.120	1.120	0.000	0.000	1.120	0.000	1.120	0.100	56,000,000
OM0000001897	MAJAN COLLEGE	240	27	2	0.111	0.111	0.111	0.111	0.111	0.000	0.000	0.111	0.105	0.111	0.100	9,990,000
OM0000002077	AL OMANIYA FINANCIAL SERVICES	40,440	6,713	1	0.166	0.166	0.166	0.166	0.166	0.000	0.000	0.166	0.166	0.166	0.100	52,359,222
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	38,999	6,162	4	0.158	0.158	0.158	0.158	0.158	0.000	0.000	0.158	0.150	0.165	0.100	473,423,527
OM0000003265	NATIONAL DETERGENT	90	59	1	0.650	0.650	0.650	0.650	0.650	0.000	0.000	0.650	0.600	0.650	0.100	13,000,000
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	990	105	1	0.106	0.106	0.106	0.106	0.106	0.000	0.000	0.106	0.105	0.106	0.100	237,117,021
OM0000004669	SHARQIYAH DESALINATION	2,980	408	1	0.137	0.137	0.137	0.137	0.137	0.000	0.000	0.137	0.137	0.142	0.100	13,398,896
OM0000007910	AMAN REAL ESTATE	500	48	2	0.095	0.095	0.095	0.095	0.095	0.000	0.000	0.095	0.091	0.095	0.100	19,000,000
OM0000001400	OMAN FLOUR MILLS	16,111	8,056	2	0.500	0.500	0.500	0.500	0.504	-0.004	-0.794	0.500	0.460	0.500	0.100	78,750,000
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	11,804	2,479	8	0.210	0.210	0.210	0.210	0.214	-0.004	-1.869	0.210	0.210	0.210	0.100	12,852,897
OM0000001608	OMAN PACKAGING	4,772	835	1	0.175	0.175	0.175	0.175	0.180	-0.005	-2.778	0.175	0.175	0.180	0.100	5,676,276
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	282,789	13,183	27	0.045	0.049	0.045	0.048	0.050	-0.002	-4.000	0.049	0.049	0.049	0.100	4,080,000
OM0000007407	DHOFAR GENERATING	10,150	680	2	0.066	0.067	0.066	0.067	0.070	-0.003	-4.286	0.067	0.067	0.076	0.100	14,890,080
OM0000002648	NATIONAL FINANCE	26,107	3,655	3	0.140	0.140	0.140	0.140	0.150	-0.010	-6.667	0.140	0.135	0.140	0.100	80,318,599
Total	29	5,429,860	885,289	316												

MARKET

European stocks steady as data on monetary policy path awaited

BRUSSELS: European stocks were steady, as investors awaited a series of economic data that could provide clues on the path of monetary policy in the euro zone and the United States. The pan-European STOXX 600 index was flat, while Germany's benchmark index rose 0.1 percent after a record high at the end of the previous session.

The industrial sub-index also rose (helped by a 4.2 percent jump in Rolls-Royce) after Hong Kong's Cathay Pacific said three of its 48 aircraft powered by Rolls-Royce engines had already undergone successful repairs after inspections, with all aircraft expected to resume operations by this Saturday.

The sub-index for mining companies fell 0.6 percent as non-ferrous metal prices fell. Investors await comments from European Central Bank policymakers during the day, looking for clues on the bank's next move at its meeting on 12 September.

US manufacturing PMI data, due from the Institute for Supply Management later in the day, and jobs data due on Friday are expected to be crucial to the Federal Reserve's decision on monetary policy. - **ONA**

CUTTING-EDGE MIRRORLESS CAMERA

Nikon launches Nikon Z6III and SR-1, small robotic head in Oman

MUSCAT: Nikon, the leading name in photography and imaging products in Oman, announced the launch of the highly anticipated Nikon Z6III along with the new SR-1, Nikon's small robotic head. Nikon's exclusive distributor, Khimji Ramdas is excited to bring this cutting-edge mirrorless camera to photography enthusiasts and professionals in Oman.

The Nikon Z6III represents the next generation of Nikon's renowned Z series, offering superior performance, advanced features, and unparalleled image quality.

With its 24.5-megapixel full-frame sensor, partially stacked and AI powered autofocus system, and powerful EXPEED 7 image processor, the Z6III is designed to meet the demands of both still photography and videography, making it the ideal choice for creators looking to push the boundaries of their craft.

The SR-1 Small Robotic Head revolutionizes professional photography and videography with its compact, lightweight design. Featuring an effortless setup, smooth, versatile movement, and advanced remote-control capabilities for seamless operation in tight spaces, it's the perfect tool for capturing dynamic angles in a range of environments.

Nailesh Khimji, Director, Khimji Ramdas mentioned: "We are honored to celebrate our long-standing association with Nikon, a brand that has consistently set the standard in imaging technology. Over the decades, Nikon's commitment to innovation has not only made it the preferred choice for professionals but has also inspired countless amateurs to explore the art of photography."

Sachin Malhotra, COO, KR Lifestyle Cluster opined: "We're thrilled to unveil two groundbreaking products: the Nikon Z6III, which furthers the legacy of the iconic Z series, and the SR-1 Small Robotic Head, designed to enable photographers, media houses, and broadcasters to capture a diverse range of angles in their work."

In addition to its impressive technical specifications, the Nikon Z6III offers enhanced connectivity options, allowing users to seamlessly transfer images and videos to their devices for instant sharing.

The camera's ergonomic design ensures a comfortable shooting experience, whether in the studio or on location.

The SR-1 on the other hand is compatible with Nikon Camera's including Z9, Z8, D6 and D5, supporting a payload of up to 4kg. The head has an axis speed of 30 degrees per second and a pan range of +/- 120 degrees.

The Nikon Z6III is available at Khimji's Aalami store and selected dealers. To celebrate the launch, KhimjiRamdas is hosting a series of in-store events and workshops, giving customers the opportunity to experience the Nikon Z6III firsthand and learn more about its capabilities from professional photographers.

The SR-1 will be available on demo for media agencies, broadcasting houses, media departments and the ministries.

LIFESTYLE

The study, which was headed by the Murdoch Children's Research Institute (MCRI) and published in Nature Biotechnology, has successfully surmounted a significant obstacle in the production of human blood stem cells, which are capable of generating red, white, and platelets that are highly similar to those seen in human embryos

RESEARCHERS DISCOVER BLOOD STEM CELL COULD TRANSFORM BONE MARROW TRANSPLANTS

Researchers in Melbourne have achieved a first for the world: they have successfully created blood stem cells that closely resemble human tissue. Additionally, the discovery may eventually result in customized therapies for kids suffering from bone marrow failure syndromes and leukaemia.

The study, which was headed by the Murdoch Children's Research Institute (MCRI) and published in Nature Biotechnology, has successfully surmounted a significant obstacle in the production of human blood stem cells, which are capable of generating red, white, and platelets that are highly similar to those seen in human embryos.

MCRI Associate Professor Elizabeth Ng said the team had made a significant discovery in human blood stem cell development, paving the way for these lab grown cells to be used in blood stem cell and bone marrow transplants.

"The ability to take any cell from a patient, reprogram it into a stem cell and then turn these into specifically matched blood cells for transplantation will have a massive impact on these vulnerable patients' lives," she said.

"Prior to this study, developing human blood stem cells in the lab that were capable of being transplanted into an animal model of bone marrow failure to make healthy blood cells had not been achievable. We have developed a workflow that has created transplantable blood stem cells that closely mirror those in the human embryo.

"Importantly, these human cells can be created at the scale and purity required for clinical use."

In the study, immune deficient mice were injected with the lab engineered human blood stem cells. It found the blood stem cells became functional bone marrow at similar levels to that seen in umbilical cord blood cell transplants, a proven benchmark of success.

The research also found the lab grown stem cells could be frozen prior to being successfully transplanted into the mice. This mimicked the preservation process of donor blood stem cells before being transplanted into patients.

MCRI Professor Ed Stanley said the findings could lead to new treatment options for a range of blood disorders.

"Red blood cells are vital for oxygen transport and white blood cells are our immune defence, while platelets cause clotting to stop us bleeding," he said. Understanding how these cells develop and function is like decoding a complex puzzle.

"By perfecting stem cell methods that mimic the development of the normal blood stem cells found in our bodies we can understand and develop personalised treatments for a range of blood diseases, including leukaemias and bone marrow failure."

MCRI Professor Andrew Elefanty said while a blood stem cell transplant was often a key part of lifesaving treatment for childhood blood disorders, not all children found an ideally matched donor.

"Mismatched donor immune cells from the transplant can attack the recipient's own tissues, leading to severe illness or death," he said.

"Developing personalised, patient-specific blood stem cells will prevent these complications, address donor shortages and, alongside genome editing, help correct underlying causes of blood diseases."

Professor Elefanty said the next stage, likely in about five years with government funding, would be conducting a phase one clinical trial to test the safety of using these lab grown blood cells in humans.

Riya was diagnosed at the age of 11 with aplastic anaemia, a rare and serious blood disorder where the body stops producing enough new blood cells.

Riya's family, including parents Sonali and Gaurav Mahajan, were in India at the time when she started to feel fatigued, rapidly lost weight and developed bruises on her thighs.

"We took Riya for a simple blood test, her very first one. But as soon as the results came in, we were told to rush her to the emergency department due to her being so low on platelets and red blood cells," Sonali said.

"Riya was originally diagnosed with leukemia because the symptoms are very similar to aplastic anaemia. When we got the eventual diagnosis, it was a complete shock and a condition we had never heard of before.

"The doctors told us she had bone marrow failure and she started needing regular platelet and blood transfusions to get her blood cell count up."

Sonali said the family had already planned to return to Australia for Riya's high school education, but the diagnosis fast tracked the return.

"Once they were able to stabilise her, we were given a two-day window to fly her to Australia to be hospitalised," she said.

"As soon as we got off the plane we went straight to The Royal Children's Hospital. Within days Riya started therapy, but she never really responded to the medications.

"Eventually a bone marrow transplant was recommended due to the amount of transfusions she was needing to have and the concerns around possible long-term complications."

Sonali said over six months they struggled to find a perfectly matched donor and were losing hope. Despite being a half match, Sonali, following specialist advice, became her daughter's donor.

Following the bone marrow transplant in June last year, Riya remained in hospital for three months where she had minor complications.

Without a perfect donor match, Riya's platelet count took more time to return to normal, she required longer immunosuppressive therapy and was more susceptible to infections. Riya only recently started to be re-vaccinated.

"She had a weakened immune system for a long time after the transplant but thankfully once she was discharged from the hospital she hasn't needed another transplant," Sonali said.

Riya, 14, said after a painful few years she was now feeling well, took hydrotherapy classes and was glad to be back at school with her friends.

Sonali said the new MCRI-led research on blood stem cells was a remarkable achievement.

"This research will come as a blessing to so many families," she said. The fact that one day there could be targeted treatments for children with leukaemia and bone marrow failure disorders is life changing." - ANI

SPORTS

ICC World Test Championship final to be held at Lord's, dates revealed

The one-off Test will be played at London venue from 11 to 15 June 2025, with 16 June available as a reserve day if required

LONDON: The iconic Lord's stadium in London will be hosting the ICC World Test Championship final from June 11 onwards next year.

A statement from ICC confirmed the dates for marquee clash in Tests, saying, "Lord's to host the third edition of the World Test Championship final from 11 June 2025." The one-off Test will be played at the iconic London venue from 11 to 15 June 2025, with 16 June available as a reserve day if required.

It will be the first time that Lord's has been used for the World Test Championship final, with Southhampton as the venue for the first edition (2021) and The Oval as the venue for the second edition (2023), that were won by NZ and Australia respectively.

The match will be played between the top two sides on the standings at the completion of the current cycle, with Rohit Sharma's India currently sitting in pole position ahead of reigning champions Australia. Men in Blue have featured in both the WTC finals so far but is yet to capture the prestigious mace.

There are still plenty of points available for teams though, with New Zealand (third), England (fourth), Sri Lanka (fifth), South Africa (sixth) and Bangladesh (seventh) still well in contention for a place in the one-off decider.

Fans will get the chance to register their interest for tickets for the World Test Championship final and ICC CEO Geoff Allardice expects demand to be high for the eagerly-awaited contest.

"The ICC World Test Championship Final has quickly become one of the most anticipated events in the cricketing calendar and we are pleased to announce the dates for the 2025 edition," Allardice said as quoted by ICC.

"It is a testament to the enduring appeal of Test cricket, which continues to captivate fans. Tickets will be in high demand so I would encourage fans to register their interest now to ensure they are in with a chance of attending the Ultimate Test next year," he said. -ANI

AUSTRALIAN TEST CAPTAIN

It's always fiercely competitive, says Pat Cummins

MELBOURNE: As the much anticipated Border-Gavaskar Trophy approaches, the excitement among Australian cricketers is palpable. With the series scheduled for November, key members of the Australian team have shared their thoughts exclusively with Star Sports, setting the stage for what promises to be a thrilling contest.

Australian Test captain Pat Cummins is eager to turn the tide against India after two unsuccessful series at home.

"The last two series here in Australia, we haven't been successful, so it's been a long time. Hopefully, it's time to make amends," said Cummins.

Reflecting on past encounters, he added, "You know we've played them plenty of times where they've beaten us, but we've also had plenty of wins against them as well, which we'll draw confidence from. The most recent Test match was, of course, the World Test Championship in neutral conditions, and we came out on top in that match. It's always fiercely competitive, and it always feels like it's 50-50. I'm 10 out of 10 excited for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy."

The Border-Gavaskar series between India and Australia will begin on November 22.

The second Test, scheduled for December 6 to 10 at Adelaide Oval, will feature the exciting day-night format under the stadium's lights.

After that, fans will turn their attention to The Gabba in Brisbane -- where India scripted a memorable win in 2021 -- for the third Test, which will be held from December 14 to 18.

The customary Boxing Day Test, set for December 26 to 30 at Melbourne's storied Melbourne Cricket Ground, will bring the series to its penultimate stage.

The fifth and final Test, taking place at the Sydney Cricket Ground from January 3 to 7, will serve as the series climax, promising a dramatic conclusion to an exciting contest. -ANI

AUSTRALIAN PACER

Border Gavaskar Trophy has grown from strength-to-strength: Mitchell Starc

MUMBAI: Australian pacer Mitchell Starc said that India's recent success in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy has contributed to the rivalry between both teams getting "bigger" and expressed hope that both sides will play some fantastic cricket in the series starting November.

The Border-Gavaskar series between India and Australia will begin on November 22, with the first Test being played in Perth.

Over the years, India has regained an upper hand over Australia in the series. India has won its last four series against Australia in a row, including two wins in Australia in the 2018-19 and 2020-21 seasons.

This has made India a much more successful side in the series, with India winning the BGT 10 times and Australia winning it five times, with their last series win coming in during the 2014-15 season. Their last series win in India was in 2004-05.

Speaking exclusively to Star Sports, Starc said that for Australian cricket, BGT is among two of the biggest rivalries ever alongside the Ashes rivalry against England.

"For Australian cricket, you have got the Ashes and then you've got the Border Gavaskar Trophy in there. I mean there's a long history in the Ashes but that Border Gavaskar rivalry, if you like, has just grown from strength to strength over each series and now we see it as a five test match series which is fantastic for not only the rivalry but for the test series as well," said Starc.

"Whether it is the calibre of player, the calibre of matches that we see as fans and as cricketers just continues to grow strength on strength each series and now India obviously winning a number of series in a row, it is created even a bigger rivalry between the two countries. I mean both teams are well known to one another, we play each other very often across the formats so I am sure it will be another exciting series but one I think that both experienced sides will showcase some fantastic cricket," added Starc.

The second Test, scheduled for December 6 to 10 at Adelaide Oval, will feature the exciting day-night format under the stadium's lights. After that, fans will turn their attention to The Gabba in Brisbane for the third Test, which will be held from December 14 to 18.

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REAL MADRID

Tchouameni foot issue adds to Ancelotti's injury woes

MADRID: Real Madrid's early season injury crisis has worsened with the news that French international pair Aurelien Tchouameni and Ferland Mendy have both had to abandon their country's squad with physical problems.

Tchouameni suffered an injury in his left foot in Sunday's 2-0 win at home to Betis, while Mendy has a problem with his shinbone, and although the problem with the left-back is not thought to be serious enough to stop him from playing against Real Sociedad on September 14, Tchouameni's return is more worrying.

The 24-year-old is arguably Real Madrid's only holding midfielder and his injury comes just a day after it was confirmed that Dani Ceballos has suffered a twisted ankle that could leave him out of action for between six and eight weeks.

Jude Bellingham and Eduardo Camavinga are also sidelined until the end of September with a muscle injury and a twisted knee ligament, respectively.

The problem for Real Madrid coach is that all the injuries are accumulating in the same area of the pitch, where Real didn't make any signings in the summer. -Xinhua

PACE VETERAN

Shami turns 34: Records, accomplishments of India's 'World Cup Warrior'

NEW DELHI : Indian all-format pace veteran Mohammed Shami, who has stood up as the match-winner across all three formats, delivered numerous memorable performances and has been Men In Blue's go-to man in the ODI World Cups, turned 34 on Tuesday.

Ever since his memorable debut in international cricket back in 2013 -- where he picked up nine scalps in Eden Gardens -- Shami has made a name for himself with his pace, toe-crushing yorkers and ability to step up his game in big games.

Delivering match-winning performances through major ICC tournaments for India, particularly, the 50-over World Cups, despite battling injuries, the pacer has gained a massive following for himself.

He forms a formidable pace duo with Jasprit Bumrah in all formats of the game.

With 448 international scalps in 188 games including 229 in Tests, 195 in ODIs and 24 in T20Is, Shami is one of the best modern-era pacers to have graced the sport.

Here are some records owned by Shami across all formats of the game:

Five wicket haul on Test debut

Shami is among nine Indian bowlers to have taken a five-wicket haul on Test debut. He is only the third pacer to have accomplished this feat. In his debut Test against West Indies at Eden Gardens, Shami took 5/47, including prized wickets of Marlon Samuels, Darren Sammy and Denesh Ramdin.

India's go-to man in the 50-over World Cup

Despite not being the first-choice bowler in ICC Cricket World Cups throughout his career, Shami has delivered whenever his team needed him the most. With 55 wickets in 18 matches, Shami is the fifth-highest wicket-taker in the tournament's history and India's top wicket-getter.

He holds several records in the 50-over World Cup. He is only the second Indian to have taken a World Cup hat-trick after Chetan Sharma, with his milestone coming against Afghanistan in the 2019 edition of the tournament.

Taking his 50th wicket in just his 17th innings against New Zealand in the semifinals of the 2023 World Cup, Shami became the fastest player to reach a half-century of 50-over World Cup wickets. His spell of 7/57 against the Kiwis in that match also remains the best spell by an Indian bowler in the 50-over World Cup and in ODIs too.

With four five-wicket hauls, including three in the 2023 edition of the tournament at home, Shami holds the record for most World Cup five-wicket hauls. He finished the tournament as the highest wicket-taker, with 24 wickets in just seven matches at an average of 10.70 and an economy rate of 5.26.

He is also India's fastest bowler to take 100 ODI wickets, having reached the milestone in just 56 matches.

-An Indian Premier League (IPL) star

Having played for Kolkata Knight Riders, Delhi Capitals, Punjab Kings and Gujarat Titans, Shami has a very strong IPL record, with 127 wickets in 110 matches. He won the 2023 IPL Purple Cap for most wickets, with 28 wickets in 17 matches at an average of 18.64 and best figures of 4/11.

A notable performance of Shami remains when he managed to defend 6 runs in the Super Over against Mumbai Indians in 2020 while playing for Punjab Kings (PBKS).

Shami also won the 2022 IPL title with Gujarat Titans. -ANI

ROUND-UP

TYREPLUS launches exclusive summer offers on Michelin tyres, Varta battery and Motul oil

With extensive network across Oman, TYREPLUS continues to deliver exceptional service and maintain high safety standards

MUSCAT: TYREPLUS, a division of MHD ACERE, is excited to announce special summer promotions on a wide range of products.

Since its establishment in 2002, TYREPLUS has grown to over 1,600 franchises across 26 countries. In Oman, TYREPLUS operates nine strategically located branches, including four in Muscat (Wadi Kabir, Al Khuwair, Azaiba, and Mabela), as well as branches in Barka, Sohar, Nizwa, Khat Al Batinah, and Salalah, to serve customers effectively across the nation.

Now is the perfect opportunity to upgrade your passenger car or SUV with premium Michelin tires with our offering of additional cashback of up to OMR 50 on select Michelin 2023 & 2024 DOT tires. The offer is subject to terms and conditions.

Additionally, you can save on Motul oils and Varta batteries. Have your battery tested free of charge and receive 20% off on every VARTA battery purchase. It doesn't end there! With Motul oils as well, get a flat 20% off on all Motul oils. These offers are only available through MHD-affiliated TYREPLUS branches. We invite all motorists to visit our outlets and take advantage of these fantastic deals on tyres, battery and motor oil.

Mohsin Hani Al Bahrani, CEO of MHD ACERE, commented, "As temperatures soar, vehicle safety becomes even more crucial. We emphasize thorough vehicle checks at TYREPLUS in order to ensure safe driving. Additionally, we offer discounted MICHELIN tires, Motul oils, and free battery testing with discounts on VARTA batteries. With our extensive network across Oman, we continue to deliver exceptional service and maintain high safety standards."

At TYREPLUS, we pride ourselves on being a One-Stop Solution for Car Care and recognize the critical importance of vehicle safety, especially during the scorching summer months when the risk of car-related issues increases.

SIGNIFICANT STEP

Muzn Islamic banking goes green with eco-friendly Sharia-compliant credit cards

MUSCAT: In a significant step forward in its commitment to sustainability and innovation, NBO Muzn Islamic Banking has launched its new range of eco-friendly Sharia-compliant credit cards. These cards combine responsible banking with ethical finance, allowing customers to manage their finances while supporting environmental sustainability. Designed to align with Sharia principles, these cards offer a greener way to bank, blending modern convenience with a commitment to ethical and eco-friendly practices.

Salima Al Marzoqi, Chief Islamic Banking Officer at NBO Muzn Islamic Banking, said: "We are committed to meeting the diverse needs of our customers through innovative and customised financial solutions that address their current and future needs. Our newly introduced Gold, Platinum and Signature eco-friendly credit cards exemplify this commitment, offering special services that cater to varying lifestyles and preferences. These cards provide exclusive perks such as airport lounge access, hotel discounts, and special services such as chauffeur trips and embody our ethos of responsible and sustainable banking. We believe in contributing to sustainability with cards made from eco-friendly materials and ensuring our customers experience the best in banking, reflecting our continuous commitment to excellence and customer satisfaction."

The new environmentally friendly credit cards are unveiled as part of Muzn Islamic Banking's offerings, catering to both premium and mass segments. The Gold Credit Card, part of the mass segment, combines financial convenience with eco-conscious values. It offers global acceptance and a range of benefits, including discounts on car rentals and bookings through partner platforms, as well as easy payment plans to make your transactions more manageable and rewarding.

The Platinum Credit Card, part of the Privilege Banking segment, offers exclusive benefits, including complimentary visits to airport lounges, exclusive merchant discounts, and special rates at partner hotels worldwide through Visa Platinum Hotel Discounts. Additionally, it offers the Visa Platinum Entertainer Xperience App with exclusive deals and discounts.

The Signature Credit Card, included with Priority Banking, offers a variety of privileges, such as access to the Visa Platinum Entertainer Xperience App for special offers and discounts.

Furthermore, it provides complimentary visits to airport lounges. Customers will receive exclusive merchant discounts and offers, along with special rates at partner hotels worldwide through Visa Platinum Hotel Discounts, all tailored to provide unparalleled convenience and luxury.

Muzn Islamic's Environmentally Friendly Credit Cards offer worldwide acceptance, ensuring seamless usability across the globe and enhanced security features that guarantee safe and secure online shopping experiences. The new credit cards highlight NBO Muzn Islamic Bank's strong commitment to providing innovative products that not only meet customers' financial needs but also support their environmental values.

PROMOTION

Asalah and Al Jawhar Referral scheme from Bank Muscat witnesses popularity

MUSCAT: In recognition of its dedication to providing the best banking services catering to the needs of various customers, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, continues its promotional offering of Asalah and Al Jawhar referral scheme which will run till the 31 December.

The Asalah and Al Jawhar referral scheme has seen positive feedback from customers who availed the advantages of this year's campaign. The current referral scheme offers cash rewards when referring new customers to the Bank to enjoy an extraordinary banking experience. It is worth noting that the current scheme is cross-referral between the Bank's "Asalah" Priority Banking and "Al Jawhar" Privilege Banking segments. Asalah customers may refer Al Jawhar customers to the Bank, while Al Jawhar customers may also refer other customers to open a new Asalah account.

The scheme offers Asalahand new customers a chance to win up to OMR 100 for every successful referral after the referees meet the eligibility criteria. For Asalah the referees should have a monthly salary of OMR 3,500 or transfer and maintain a deposit of OMR 30,000 or more in their savings. Both the referrer and referee get a sum of OMR 100 once the referee successfully meets all eligibility criteria for the Asalah Priority Banking membership.

For Al Jawhar customers, the referrer and the referee will win OMR 50 per successful referral once the referees successfully meet all eligibility criteria, including maintaining a depositing OMR 10,000 - 29,999 in their Bank Muscat Al Jawhar savings accounts within a month from the date of successful referrals or have a monthly salary of OMR 1,000 – 3,499. Both the referrer and referee win a sum of OMR 50 per successful referral, if the referee successfully meets all eligibility criteria for Al Jawhar Privlige Banking.

The participation in Asalah and Al Jawhar referral schemes is based on successful referrals to the Bank based on the eligibility criteria set for each segment.

To take part in the Asalah Referral scheme, the referrer should fill up the form available on the bank's website. Customers of both banking segments can refer family and friends to open a new Bank Muscat account, provided that the referees meet the eligibility criteria at the end of the three-month review period from the date of the salary\deposit transfer to the Bank account.

It may be noted that Asalah customers enjoy a range of benefits including access to a team of dedicated Relationship Managers, 50 Asalah centers distributed across the Sultanate, various wealth solutions and a dedicated 24/7 Asalah Call Centre and an exclusive Asalah WhatsApp service.

LEADING THE FUTURE

Changan showcases three major brands in Middle East

RIYADH: Changan Automobile is expanding on its more than 30 years of automotive excellence in the Middle Eastwith its three major brands. To underscore how it is "Leading the Future", today Changan is officially launching the Changan UNI-S, which brings users high quality, fashion, and practicality. It is also showcasing its high-end emotional intelligent brand AVATR for the first time in the region, along with its young and innovative digital new energy brand, DEEPAL. With this, Changan Automobile is taking an important step forward to accelerate its localized operations in the Middle East, a key focus of its global brand strategy, where it now serves 400,000 users.

Mr. Wang Jun, President of Changan Automobile, stated, "We are committed to meeting the diverse needs of global customers by establishing a differentiated brand portfolio – CHANGAN, AVATAR and DEEPAL. We will further expand our product lineup in the Middle East, broaden our coverage of segmented markets, and continue to prioritize customer service to meet the needs of more consumers."

Changan

Changan Automobile demonstrates its vision for future mobility with the Changan E07 and the launch of the Changan UNI-S in the Middle East.

The Changan E07 is the first car built on the SDA platform; it brings users a new world of experiences. As versatile as a pick-up truck, as elegant as a coupe, and as roomy as an MPV – it also features the latest digital technologies to meet user demands. Its iconic design has already been recognized with the 2024 iF Design Award.

With the launch of the Changan UNI-S in the Middle East, Changan Automobile further demonstrates its commitment to meeting the demands of young users in the region for distinctive design, exceptional performance, and advanced technologies. "The design of the Changan UNI-S centers around simplicity and technology," said Klaus Zyciora, Vice President Design at Changan.

The Changan UNI-S models are now available for pre-order through Changan's extensive sales and service network across the Middle East, as well as via online channels.

Echoing Changan Automobile's deep history in the region, today the company presented the very first Changan UNI-S model to a customer in Riyadh – he was among the first batch of users when Changan Automobile officially entered the Saudi market in 2015. This new milestone demonstrates Changan Automobile's three decades of passion, sentiment, quality, and innovation.

Avatar

Changan Automobile's premium brand AVATR is an emotional intelligent companion, featuring cutting-edge technologies co-developed with CATL and Huawei and visionary aesthetics created by the Changan Automobile design team in Munich, Germany. The brand's flagship models, AVATR 11 and AVATR 12 offer industry-leading capabilities in smart driving and digital experiences.

Deepal

The Deepal EV brand showcases the joy of electric driving. It's stylish design and advanced digital technologies have made it a favorite among young tech lovers around the world. The stylish Deepal L07 sedan won the 2023 Red Dot Award for Product Design, and together with the Deepal S07 set a new sales record among EV brands in China, where they surpassed the 100,000-unit milestone within 14 months of launching.

Demonstrating its customer-centric focus, Changan Automobile is accelerating its localization efforts in the Middle East by preparing to establish regional subsidiaries and exploring a "dual-engine" strategy with integrated operations and regional dealerships.

As part of this, the company is building a regional market operation system and advancing its vehicle and parts business in the region. This includes opening its Middle East Parts Warehouse Center in Dubai, which will significantly upgrade Changan Auto's service network in the region.

Changan's commitment to deepening localization and enhancing customer care also includes setting up a professional maintenance team and bringing its with U customer care program to the region. Furthermore, this year it is working with Huawei Cloud to offer smarter user experience solutions in the Middle East. Changan has also opened its largest store outside of China in Riyadh, underscoring the strategic importance of the region to the company.

By deepening its presence in the market and continuously optimizing its service system, Changan Automobile aims to ensure an exceptional mobility experience for its customers in the Middle East.

ROUND-UP

Mitsubishi Motors announces its buy now and pay later offer

The offer provides customers with a unique opportunity to defer their monthly EMI payments for the first three months, presenting a much-needed financial breather

MUSCAT: General Automotive Company (GAC), the official distributor of Mitsubishi Motors in Oman, announced its buy now and pay later offer, a limited-time promotion that offers exceptional value and benefits for customers looking to purchase a new Mitsubishi vehicle.

The offer provides customers with a unique opportunity to defer their monthly EMI payments for the first three months, presenting a much-needed financial breather. This translates to ease and convenience, as customers can enjoy their new Mitsubishi without the immediate burden of monthly installments, giving them more flexibility to plan their finances and adjust to their new purchase.

In addition to the EMI holiday, the offer includes a generous cashback ranging from OMR1379 to OMR5238, depending on the model chosen. This substantial cashback makes owning a Mitsubishi even more affordable, allowing customers to drive home their favorite Mitsubishi without breaking the bank.

To enhance customer experience, GAC is also offering free insurance and registration for all vehicles purchased under the offer. This saves customers a significant amount of money upfront and simplifies the ownership process, while augmenting convenience through the complimentary fuel card. As part of the deal, customers can avail fuel cards valued between OMR 50 to OMR 100 depending on the model purchased and enjoy a head start on their new car journey.

There is more: In a drive to ensure customers' complete peace of mind, the offer also provides free service for 2 years (or 30,000 kilometers), to 6 years (or 100,000 kilometers), depending on the model. This means that customers can enjoy regular maintenance and keep their vehicles in excellent condition without incurring any additional costs.

The offer also includes a 6-year unlimited kilometers warranty and roadside assistance, providing customers with comprehensive coverage and support in case of any unforeseen issues.

Commenting on the value-added offer, Kamil Al Balushi, Sales Manager, Muscat, stated: "The buy now and pay later Offer is an impactful campaign that is designed to make owning a Mitsubishi vehicle even more affordable and rewarding. With a range of benefits, including an EMI holiday, cashback, free insurance, and more, this offer provides an excellent opportunity for customers to take home their favorite Mitsubishi."

The buy now and pay later offer is available from 15 August to 17 October at all Mitsubishi showrooms across Oman in Azaiba, Mabelah, Barka, Sohar, Nizwa, Ibri, Sur, Jalan Bani Buali, and Salalah.

EDUCATION

Shape your study abroad future at Glinks International fair

MUSCAT: Ready to turbocharge your educational journey? Look no further than the Glinks International Education Fair 2024 — your passport to boundless opportunities!

When and where? Saturday, 7 September, time: 3pm – 7pm

Venue: Royal Tulip Hotel Muscat, Al Marafah Street OM, Way No. 238, 103, Oman

Interact directly with representatives from over 10 global institutions, including but not limited to Brock University, Clark University, Columbia College, Canadian University Dubai, Grenfell Campus - Memorial University, Huron University, North Island College, POLIMI Graduate School of Management, Queen's University, SP Jain School of Global Management, St Francis Xavier University, University of New Brunswick, University of Otago, New Zealand, and University of Waterloo.

Countries you will get to explore: Wondering about the study destinations you'll explore at the fair? Here's a sneak peek: Canadian Universities: Explore programs from renowned Canadian universities. Whether you're interested in University of Waterloo, University of New Brunswick or more, their representatives will be there to guide you.

Italian Institutions: Italy—where pasta meets passion and art whispers through ancient streets. From Renaissance masterpieces to gelato-filled piazzas, this country oozes culture. Italian education institutions blend tradition with modernity. Whether it's fashion in Milan, architecture in Florence, or linguistics in Rome, Italy invites you to learn, live, and love.

US Institutions: Explore the diversity of American higher education. Whether you're drawn to top universities, liberal arts colleges, or state universities, you'll find them all at this year's biggest education fair. And much more.

What to expect: Personalized Guidance: Our team of experts will provide personalized guidance to help you choose the right programs that align with your career aspirations and academic interests.

Scholarship Opportunities: Learn about available scholarships and financial aid options that can make your education more affordable.

Networking: Connect with industry experts and peers to expand your professional network and gain valuable contacts.

For any inquiries, please contact the Glinks office at the following number: +968 94949634. Registration and attendance is free: https://www.glinksgroup.com/fairs-landing/muscat/

FINTECH ACCELERATOR PROGRAMME

NBO Hackathon concludes with winning ideas and innovative solutions

MUSCAT: The National Bank of Oman (NBO) recently concluded the NBO Hackathon as part of its Fintech Accelerator Programme, held from 30 August to 1 September at the NBO head office.

The event was a resounding success, bringing together Oman's brightest fintech innovators to develop creative solutions and showcase their entrepreneurial skills. The winning teams were awarded cash prizes, with the first-place winner, team Archon Wallet, receiving OMR 2,000, second place going to team Finsync, receiving OMR 1,000 and third place was team CoinEdge, awarded OMR 500. The NBO Hackathon received over 300 applications, with 90 applicants shortlisted for the 48-hour hackathon.

A special closing ceremony celebrated the event's success and winners, with several distinguished VIP attendees present, including Tahir Al Amri, Executive President of Central Bank of Oman and Mahmood Al Aweini, Secretary General of the Ministry of Finance, with the presence of Sheikha Amal Bahwan, Chairperson of NBO, and Abdullah Al Hinai, Chief Executive Officer of NBO.

Over 48 hours, 17 teams engaged in intensive brainstorming and development sessions, creating innovative fintech solutions to address real-world challenges. The event culminated in three finalist presentations to a panel of judges comprised of industry experts and leaders, who evaluated the projects based on their innovation, feasibility, and potential impact. The judging panel included members from diverse expertise, which comprised Azzan Al Kindi, CEO and Co-founder of Rihal, Ghada Al Kharusi, Innovation Manager at the Central Bank of Oman, Mohammed Al Wahaibi, CEO of Al Jabr MENA and Ferenc Bole, Head of Information Technology at NBO.

Mustahil Ahmed Al Mamari, Assistant General Manager and Head of Strategy and Transformation at NBO, expressed his enthusiasm for the outcomes: "The Hackathon was just the beginning of an exciting journey for the participants. The winners will potentially advance to the next step in our Fintech Accelerator Programme, where they will receive further support to turn their innovative ideas into fully operational ventures. We are amazed by the calibre of innovationsand creativity levels the participants presented."

He added, "The NBO Fintech Accelerator is committed to nurturing Oman's fintech ecosystem, which aligns with our goals and in-country value initiatives. By fostering local talent and supporting innovative startups, we aim to contribute to Oman's economic diversification andour communities' sustainable development. We are excited to see these ideas develop further and make a lasting impact on both the financial sector and the broader economy."

As Oman continues to promote innovation and entrepreneurship, initiatives such as the NBO Fintech Accelerator are essential for turning inventive ideas into tangible businesses that contribute to the broader economy. Aligned with the goals of Oman Vision 2024, this Hackathon has set a strong foundation for future events and collaborations, fostering a culture of innovation and excellence within the fintech sector.

ACHIEVEMENT

BYD listed on Kantar BrandZ Top 50 Chinese Global Brand Builders

MUSCAT: On June 20, 2024, Google, in collaboration with Kantar, released the "2024 Google x Kantar BrandZ Top 50 Chinese Global Brand Builders" list, which evaluates the performance and influence of Chinese brands in their global development.

The list includes brands from various industries, with BYD ranking 15th, up seven places from last year. Since the establishment of this list in 2017, BYD has been featured for seven consecutive years.

As a global company operating across four major industries — automotive, rail transit, new energy, and electronics—BYD continues to accelerate its global expansion. As of May 2024, BYD's new energy passenger vehicles have entered 77 countries and regions, including Brazil, Germany, Japan, and Thailand, and the company has invested in factories in Brazil, Hungary, and Thailand. In 2023, BYD sold a total of 3.02 million vehicles, retaining its title as the global annual sales champion for new energy vehicles. Among these, BYD's overseas new energy passenger vehicle sales exceeded 240,000 units, representing a year-on-year increase of 337%. To date, BYD has cumulatively sold more than 7.6 million new energy vehicles.

BYD has consistently adhered to its development philosophy that prioritizes technology and innovation. From DM (Dual Mode) plug-in hybrids and e-Platform 3.0 to Blade Battery, CTB (Cell to Body), DiSus Intelligent Body Control System, and further to the ePlatform, DMO Super Hybrid Off-road Platform, as well as the fifth-generation DM technology, an increasing number of core technologies have continually enriched its technological content. In 2023, BYD's R&D investment reached nearly 40 billion RMB, with over 102,800 R&D talents, making it the largest automotive R&D team globally, leading the wave of technological innovation in the global automotive industry. This year, BYD became an official partner of UEFA EURO 2024 and a regional partner for CONMEBOL Copa América 2024 in Latin America. From actively promoting dragon boating as an Olympic sport to supporting young Chinese footballers on the world stage, BYD, as a global leader in new energy vehicles, is integrating into top-tier international sports events, injecting vitality into the global green dream.

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