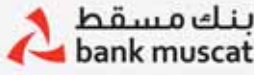




RAMADAN PRAYER TIMINGS	
DHUHR	12:18pm
ASR	3:45pm
MAGHRIB	6:24pm
ISHA	7:35pm
FAJR (TOMORROW)	4:50am

Founded 1975 · Volume 49 No. 21 | 16 Pages · Baisas 200 · Subscription OMR63 | ISO 9001:2008 Certified Company | Chairman/Editor-in-Chief: Mohamed Issa Al Zadjali | Printed & Published by Muscat Media Group

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OMAN AND GERMANY SIGN PACT FOR SUPPLY OF GREEN HYDROGEN

The agreement was signed by Eng. Salim Nasser Al Aufi and German minister

Times News Service

BERLIN: Omani and German companies signed a number of agreements for delivering green hydrogen to refining stations in Germany.

The memorandum of understanding was signed when Eng. Salim Nasser Al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals met with Dr. Robert Habeck, Vice Chancellor and Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Climate Action in Berlin.

The two sides also signed a



memorandum of understanding between Hydrom (Hydrogen Oman) and the German company (VNG) on a feasibility study for establishment of an Omani-German integrated supply chain for green hydrogen and ammonia along with an agreement on the sale and purchase of liquefied natural gas (LNG) between Oman LNG and Securing Energy for Europe (SEFE) Company.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed the needs of the energy market of the Federal Republic of Germany and the developments of green hydrogen, energy solutions and issues of common concern.

The meeting was attended by Pankaj Khimji, Advisor for Foreign Trade and International Cooperation at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment

Promotion; Maitha bint Saif Al Mahrooqi, Oman's ambassador to Germany and a number of officials concerned with energy sector.

The visit of Al Aufi to Germany is aimed at boosting cooperation between the two sides in the field of energy and availing from the experiences in the field of green hydrogen and ammonia and a number of modern technologies in the field of energy. **>A2**

GAZA DEATH TOLL

as of March 23, 2024

Israeli settlement projects condemned

A7

Deaths
32,142
Injured
74,412

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN OHRC responds to broadcast by BBC-Africa

1 OHRC expressed concern over the condition of women workers from Malawi who were allegedly harmed, and not reported to the commission or to the national bodies for protecting their rights. **>B5**

OMAN Moscow terror attack

2 Oman has condemned the armed terrorist attack that took place in the Crocus City Hall near the Russian capital, Moscow. **>A2**

MARKET Credit by banks rises

3 The total credit granted by banks in Oman recorded an increase of 1.8 percent between January 2023 and January 2024. **>B1**

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CABLE

His Majesty sends greetings to Pakistan

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to President Asif Ali Zardari of Pakistan on his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings and wishes to the president and his country's people. -ONA

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Oman decries terror attack near Moscow



The attack resulted in dozens of deaths and injuries to many others



Times News Service

MOSCOW: The Sultanate of Oman has condemned the armed terrorist attack that took place in the Crocus City Hall near the Russian capital, Moscow, and resulted in dozens of deaths and injuries.

In a statement, the Foreign Ministry on Saturday expressed its sincere condolences and sympathy to the families of the victims and to the friendly government and people of the Russian Federation, wishing speedy recovery for the injured.

Bombing in Kandahar

The Foreign Ministry also denounced the bombing in Kandahar Province in the southern part of Afghanistan.

The ministry said: "The Sultanate affirms its categorical rejection of the use of violence and targeting of civilians and anything that destabilises security and stability, expressing condolences to the families of the victims and the friendly Afghan people, wishing a speedy recovery for the injured."

IN INDIA

Oman's consulate issues advisory for citizens seeking medical advice

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman's Consulate General in Mumbai has received several reports from citizens about their exploitation and fraud by some hospitals in India.

In a notification, the embassy said: "Due to the consulate receiving several reports from citizens about their exploitation and fraud by some hospitals and physical therapy centres in collusion with translators, which unfortunately led to direct harm to their health and endangered their lives, some of which even led to deaths, not to mention the increase and exaggerated treatment costs."

"Accordingly, the Consulate advises those seeking treatment in India to exercise caution, not to get led by advertisements and propaganda campaigns of all kinds, to stay away from intermediaries such as translators, to be careful in choosing hospitals for treatment, to ensure that they provide their services on the ground, and to review the comprehensive treatment plan and agreeing to set a ceiling on the cost."

As a commitment to serving citizens abroad, the Consulate General in Mumbai - Health Attache - welcomes all your inquiries.

The Consulate General in Mumbai reiterates the need to review and adhere to the guidelines contained on its website (www.fm.gov.om/mumbai).

AL RUSTAQ HOSPITAL

Doctors conduct emergency surgery of a 3-year-old child

AL RUSTAQ: A specialised team at the Surgery Department of Al Rustaq Hospital, South Al Batinah Governorate, managed to conduct an emergency surgery of a three-year old child.

Dr. Redha Abdulfatah, Consultant Paediatric Surgeon at Al Rustaq Hospital, said that the male child was brought to the hospital after detection of a tumour in the lower abdomen with continuous pain.

After examinations, the child was found to have a serious strangulated hernia of the intestine that required immediate surgery to save his intestine.

He stressed that parents should exercise utmost care and consult specialised doctors in case their kids, mainly under one year of age, are noticed to have tumour or pain in the lower abdomen.

-With ONA inputs

BILATERAL TIES

< FROM A1 Focus on energy cooperation

The visit also aimed to link the suppliers with consumers as well as the discussion of the current challenges in the energy market.

In his speech, during the Sultanate's participation in the Berlin Energy Transition Dialogue Conference on energy production sources, Al Aufi stressed the significance of cooperation in the field of energy transition.

Dr. Firas bin Ali Al Abdwani, Director General of Renewable Energy and Green Hydrogen at the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, said that the visit represents an opportunity for enhancement of bilateral cooperation and exchange of expertise in the energy sector and for creation of new markets for low-emission hydrogen. - ONA





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Dhofar Governorate

OETC to ink OMR322mn pact to expand power grid

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) will sign an electricity transmission network expansion agreement in Dhofar Governorate at a total cost exceeding OMR322 million on Sunday.

The strategic project, Rabt, Phase II, aims to connect the main electricity transmission network to the Dhofar electricity network, by establishing transmission lines between Duqm and Dhofar with a 400kV transmission line.

The project will improve the efficiency of the electricity sector system, reduce costs, and achieve the Sultanate of Oman's plans to connect renewable energy plants and achieve the goal of zero carbon neutrality by 2050.

The total project includes electricity transmission lines with a length of 590 kilometres.

The electricity transmission network expansion projects in Dhofar Governorate, at a total cost of about OMR65 million, include extending 132 kV electricity transmission lines for a distance of up to 269 kilometres to connect the Wilayat of Al Mazayouna and the Niyabat of Shabb Asaib in the Wilayat of Rakhyut.

This will be passing through the Thumabait Madhi in the Wilayat of Thumrait, in addition to the construction of three 32 kV power transmission stations.

Engineer Saleh bin Nasser Al Ramahi, CEO of the Oman Electricity Transmission Company, highlighted the company's continued efforts and keenness to



improve and develop its various operations.

He said that the company seeks to ensure continuous expansion of the electricity transmission network by establishing new stations and also improving previous projects and extending electricity transmission lines to enhance performance of the transmission network and raise its efficiency to

ensure reliable, sustainable and safe transmission networks.

He further added that the Oman Electricity Transmission Company is working on various projects to develop and improve the network's performance in line with the increasing demand in the electricity sector.

The Oman Electricity Transmission Company, one of the Nama Group companies, is responsible for transmitting and controlling electricity transmission network in the Sultanate of Oman and works to transfer electricity from production stations to load centres distributed across all the governorates of Oman.

The transmission network also operates at a voltage of 132 kV and above to cover most of the governorates and the company manages interconnection lines between the Sultanate of Oman and the Gulf interconnection network with a 220 kV line.

- With inputs from OMA



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Pakistani expatriates in Oman commemorate National Day



Paksitan National Day marks the historic Lahore Resolution of 1940, later named the Pakistan Resolution

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Pakistan National Day, commemorated annually on March 23, holds profound significance for all patriotic Pakistanis worldwide. It marks the historic Lahore Resolution of 1940, later named the Pakistan Resolution, which laid the groundwork for the demand of a separate homeland for Muslims under the leadership of the Muslim League.

While this historic day was celebrated with patriotic zeal in Pakistan, the Pakistani expatriate community in Oman also joined in the festivities, reflecting on the role of their ancestors in securing the nation in the name of Islam and underlining the importance of passing down this historic legacy to future generations.

As Pakistanis united in celebration, their commitment to the prosperity and security of their nation was reignited. On March 23, 1940, the Muslims of the sub-continent adopted the Pakistan Resolution, articulating their demand for a separate home-

land where they could live freely according to Islamic principles.

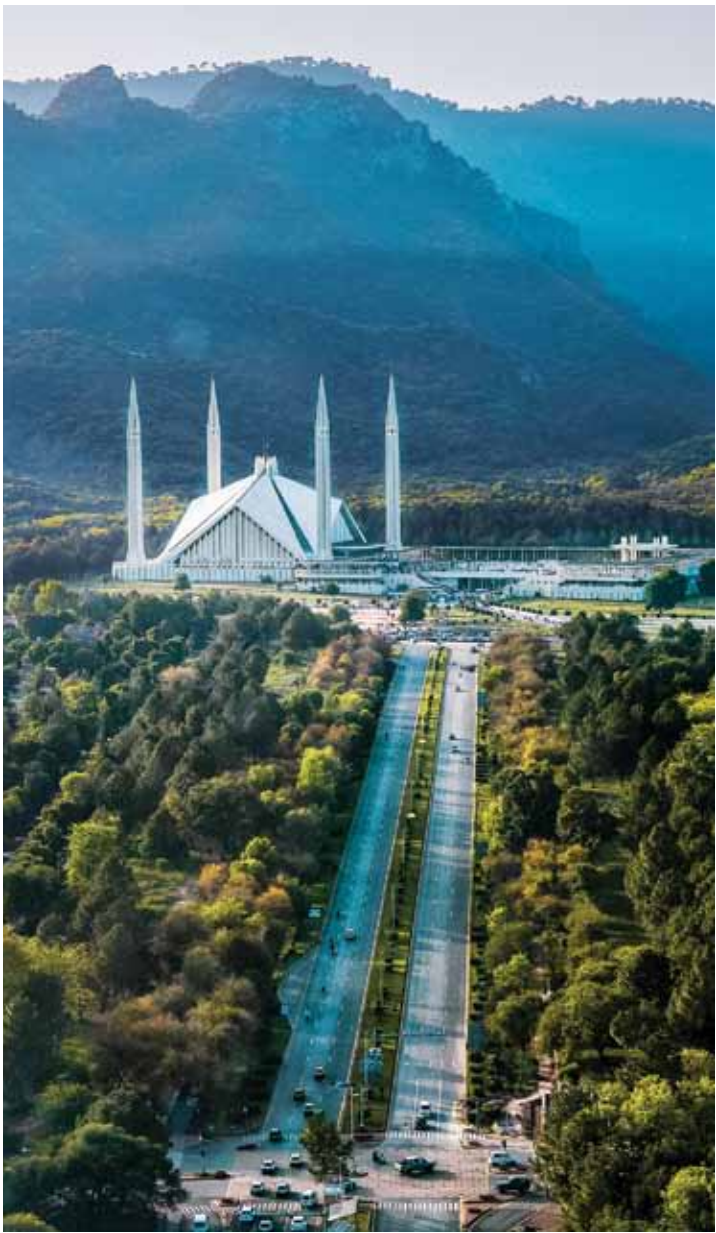
In tribute to the founding fathers whose struggles and sacrifices paved the way for Pakistan's creation, Syed Shaandar Ali Shah Bukhari, a prominent social welfare worker born and raised in Muscat to one of the oldest Pakistani families, underscored the significance of the day, and said, "March 23rd is an epoch-making day in our national history that reminds us of our past, invites us to ponder over our present state of affairs, and inspires us to build a prosperous future."

Bukhari, also a senior communications and advertising manager, highlighted the vibrant celebration of Pakistan Day at the Pakistan Embassy in Oman. He noted the embassy's arrangement of various events leading up to the historical day, including ceremonies honouring accomplished women and eminent figures in education, philanthropy, medicine, and engineering.

"Such events serve to inspire the community and showcase the achievements of Pakistani expatriates, who play a vital role in fostering development and friendly relations between the two countries," he said.

Bukhari is also deeply involved in social welfare initiatives aimed at giving back to society. With a Pakistani expatriate population of nearly 400,000 in Oman, Bukhari's efforts focus on addressing day-to-day issues related to their welfare.

He mentioned initiatives such as prisoners' repatriation, distri-



Syed Shaandar Ali Shah Bukhari



Ch Shahid Shakoor



Mohsin Sheikh



Mazhar Javed Saulat



Ch Zahid Shakoor

bution of food boxes to the underprivileged, assistance to the sick in local hospitals, and support for community schools.

Bukhari said: "These endeavours align with the spirit of March 23 and the ongoing holy month of Ramadan, reflecting a commitment to service and community welfare among Pakistani expatriates in Oman."

Highlighting the significance of Pakistan Day, Mohsin Sheikh, a social worker and former cricketer, emphasised the strength embedded in Pakistan's constitution and the collective responsibility to safeguard freedom.

He said, "I thank the Almighty that we celebrate March 23 annually with the belief that there is so much strength in our constitution that we can change our country if we abide by it for good. We must do everything we can in order to protect our freedom on this day," Sheikh highlighted the unity and pride displayed by the Pakistani community in Oman commemorating this historic occasion.

Pakistan's economic growth continues at a steady pace

ISLAMABAD: The economic recovery in Pakistan continues at a steady pace, bolstering business confidence and market sentiment, Pakistan's Ministry of Finance said.

"Despite significant challenges, the overall economic outlook is optimistic, marked by receding inflationary pressures, positive prospects in agriculture, signs of potential recovery in the industrial sector reflected by positive trends in high-frequency indicators, imports, and a favorable external environment," the ministry said in its monthly economic outlook report.

The optimistic economic outlook is also evident by the 2.13 percent gross domestic product (GDP) growth achieved in the first quarter of the fiscal year (starting from July 2023 to June 2024), largely contributed by agriculture and industry, said the report. The fiscal as well as current account deficit is on a downward trajectory, which signifies better economic management to reduce the macroeconomic imbalances, it added.

"This lays the foundation for progressing towards higher and sustainable economic growth," the report said, adding that "it is expected that this positive momentum will further strengthen in the upcoming months."



reported Dawn.

The funds are the final tranche of a USD 3 billion rescue package that Pakistan secured last summer, which averted a sovereign debt default. Reportedly, Islamabad is also seeking another long-term bailout.

"The agreement recognises the strong programme implementation by the State Bank of Pakistan and the caretaker government in recent months, as well as the new government's intentions for ongoing policy and reform efforts to move Pakistan from stabilisation to a strong and sustainable recovery," the Fund said in a statement.

"Given the timing of the Second Review mission, immediately following the formation of the new cabinet, we expect the review to be considered by the IMF's Board in late April," it added.

Nathan Porter, the IMF mission chief in Pakistan, said in a statement that Pakistan's economic and financial position has improved in the months since the first review.

"Pakistan's economic and financial position has improved in

the months since the first review, with growth and confidence continuing to recover on the back of prudent policy management and the resumption of inflows from multilateral and bilateral partners," Porter stated.

The statement added that the current government will continue its efforts towards broadening the tax base, and continue with the timely implementation of power and gas tariff adjustments to keep average tariffs consistent with cost recovery while protecting the vulnerable through the existing progressive tariff structures, thus avoiding any net circular debt accumulation."

It further emphasised that the central bank remained "committed to maintaining a prudent monetary policy to lower inflation and ensure exchange rate flexibility." Following the statement, shares at the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) climbed by 374 points.

Earlier, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb and the IMF mission chief in Pakistan, Nathan Porter, led their respective teams at the final customary concluding session. **Agencies**

Agreement with IMF

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has reached a staff-level agreement with Pakistan on the final review of a USD 3 billion bailout, paving the way for the nation to receive the last tranche of USD 1.1 billion after approval from the Fund's Executive Board,

PAKISTAN SUPER LEAGUE

Babar Azam, Imad and Naseem sparkle in 2023-24 PSL season

An exciting Pakistan Super League (PSL) 2023-24 season concluded on March 18 with Islamabad United lifting the trophy for the third time in a thrilling final against Multan Sultans.

Islamabad United's Hunain Shah hit a four off the final ball of the match to give Islamabad a two-wicket win, and inflict Sultans' third straight final defeat. Sultans were on the receiving end of an even closer result in the 2023 edition, where Lahore Qalandars beat them in the final by just one run.

Here is a look back at the best 11 players from the season.



1. Saim Ayub (Peshawar Zalmi)
345 runs, 31.35 ave, 157.55 SR, two 50s, eight wickets, economy 7.45

The 21-year-old Ayub's season was about as complete as it can get. He teamed up with Babar Azam for the most formidable opening combination of the season. He added another potent layer to his formidable T20 repertoire, sometimes sending down a few tidy overs in the powerplay. He also picked up valuable top-order scalps.

2. Babar Azam (Zalmi)
569 runs, 58.90 ave, 142.60 SR, three 50s, 14 wickets, economy rate 8.54

Shadab Khan's runs ensured his all-round combinations were effective. As Islamabad United captain, he came in at No. 4 in all but one match and demonstrated he was good enough to bat there. Three half-centuries and an impressive ability to attack spin after the field restrictions kept United moving. With the ball, he picked 14 wickets.

3. Usman Khan (wk, Multan Sultans)
430 runs, 107.50 average, 164.12

strike rate, two 50s, two 100s.

Usman Khan was arguably the surprise of the tournament. He wasn't in the starting XI of Multans at the beginning but ensured he was nailed on by the end with a breathtaking mix of devastation and accumulation. He would finish behind only Babar in the run charts but at nearly twice the average and a much superior strike rate. He hit two of the season's four centuries and his runs in the final allowed Sultans to have a fighting total in the final.

4. Shadab Khan (captain, Islamabad United)
305 runs, 30.50 ave, 142.52 SR, three 50s, 14 wickets, economy rate 8.54

Shadab Khan's runs ensured his all-round combinations were effective. As Islamabad United captain, he came in at No. 4 in all but one match and demonstrated he was good enough to bat there. Three half-centuries and an impressive ability to attack spin after the field restrictions kept United moving. With the ball, he picked 14 wickets.

5. Rassie van der Dussen (Lahore Qalandars)
364 runs, 72.80 ave, 154.89 SR, three 50s, one 100

Rassie van der Dussen was near-invincible during the seven games he played with the Qalandars, making up for a misfiring top order with a dazzling array of shotmaking from lower down. The South African's unbeaten 104 was one of the best innings of the season and left the campaign with a player-of-the-match award in Qalandars' only win.

6. Iftikhar Ahmed (Sultans)
259 runs, 64.75 ave, 193.28 SR, one 50, two wickets

With the highest strike rate of the season, Iftikhar Ahmed proved he is still at his best in T20s. Iftikhar certainly was an impact player, and all that's best about him shone through in the final. He hit an unbeaten 20-ball 32 that kept them in the final before chipping in with his only two wickets of the season.

7. Imad Wasim (United)
12 wickets, economy rate 6.60, 126 runs, 21.00 ave, 128.57 SR, one 50.

The player of the final, Imad Wasim had a spectacular sensational all-round season. Imad was the bedrock to United's flair with bat in hand too, none more so than an unbeaten 13-ball 30 that gave United a last-ball win to keep them alive in the group stages. He saved his best for the final, becoming the first bowler to take five-for in a PSL final, and hanging around with bat in when the winning runs were hit.

8. Akeal Hosein (Quetta Gladiators)
15 wickets, 20.53 ave, economy rate 7.70

Quetta Gladiators' only entry in this list, West Indies' Akeal Hosein provided reliability to his side's bowling attack. The fifth-highest wicket-taker of the tournament, Hosein's value lay in his ability to bowl at any stage of an innings. He finished with the second-lowest economy among spinners.

9. Usama Mir (Sultans)
24 wickets, 15.87 ave, economy rate 8.13

Usama Mir was the most prolific

bowler of the tournament. No one else managed even 20 wickets, nor could anyone match his balls-per-wicket ratio of 11.7. He was also responsible for the tournament's only six-wicket haul and went wicketless in just one of his 12 games.

10. David Willey (Sultans)
15 wickets, 20.40 ave, economy rate 7.46

David Willey's economy was second only to Imad. The Englishman gave Sultans dependency at the top or the tail of their bowling innings, and his variations on slowing pitches made him near-unhittable at times. He was one of the pillars in Sultans' impressive run to the final.

11. Naseem Shah (United)
15 wickets, 22.20 ave, economy rate 7.56

Naseem Shah made a successful return from a serious injury. Leading United's attack, he bowled two of the seven maiden overs of the tournament. His nine-ball 17 in the final levelled the scores and teed up his younger brother Hunain to hit the winning runs.

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» RAMADAN WORDS

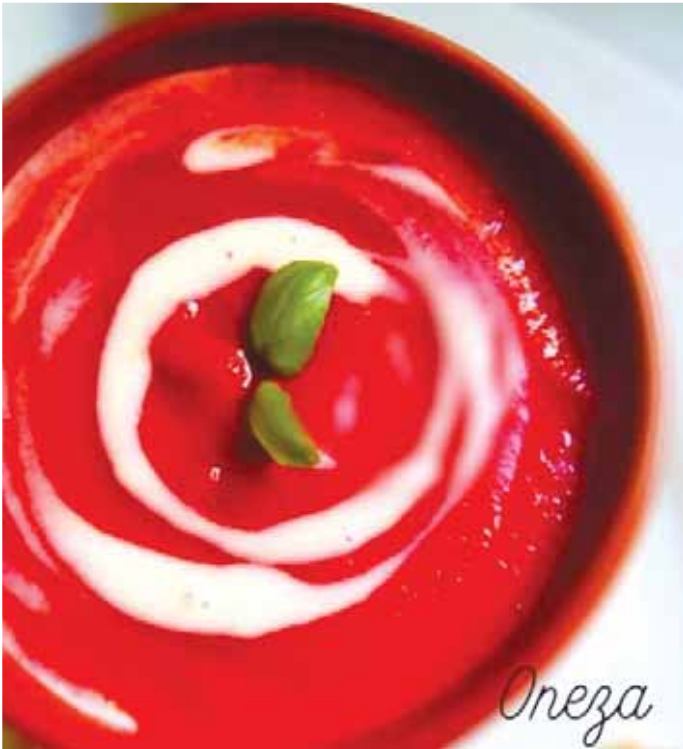
“

And when I am ill, it is [God] who cures me.”

When I fall sick, no one is able to heal me but Him, Who heals me with the means that may lead to recovery.

» IFTAR RECIPE Oneza Tabish

BEETROOT GAZPACHO



INGREDIENTS

- 2 medium tomatoes- finely chopped
- 1/2 onion - finely chopped
- 1 large beetroot (boiled)
- 3 garlic cloves
- 1 cup of cold vegetable stock from a cube
- 1 cucumber - cut in bits
- Salt and pepper as per taste
- 1 tsp vinegar
- Some dill or basil leaves for garnish

METHOD

- Blend all of the above ingredients together (except the garnish ingredients) by adding little cold water till it's all smooth .
- Refrigerate in serving glasses or mugs.
- Garnish with dill or basil and a swirl of sour cream.
- Drizzle olive oil before serving.

» GOOD DEEDS

SEEK KNOWLEDGE,
REFLECT, AND GET
ENLIGHTENED



Reading or learning the Holy Quran will help you to discover the right path in your life. It will give insight into how to live with a purpose to serve Almighty Allah. Those who have been reading the Holy Quran during Ramadan, get into the habit of reading it daily even when Ramadan is over. And if you have not been very regular in reading it then take out time from your busy schedule to read the Holy Quran daily. Reading the Holy Quran helps you to attain inner peace and solace. It is also a source of guidance. You will be amazed to find how easily it comforts you and calms your disturbed mind. One of the most important good deeds is sharing the knowledge that Allah the Almighty has blessed us with. Whether in religion or in our respective lives, try to build good relationships with those around you. Offer them what you have learned during Ramadan. You would be surprised to know how rewarding the deed is. And when it comes to religious views and spirituality, God loves those who pass on their knowledge to others and guide them, as he would shower them with endless rewards and virtues.

RUSSIAN STATE NEWS AGENCY

Death toll from Crocus City concert hall attack rises to 133

Moscow: Following the deadly firing at the Crocus City concert hall near Moscow, Russia's Investigative Committee has claimed that the death toll has been confirmed at 133 people and warned that this figure is likely to rise, Russian state news agency, RT News reported on Saturday.

"According to preliminary data, the causes of death were gunshot wounds and poisoning by combustion products (smoke inhalation)," investigators said, adding that they are continuing to establish all the details of the attack by analysing evidence at the scene, going through CCTV footage and taking statements from the victims.

The service had previously stated that the death toll was 93, but later issued an update announcing that additional bodies were found after emergency services started clearing the rubble.

The Moscow Region Health Ministry had also previously reported that there were at least three children among the deceased.

Meanwhile, the Russian intelligence agencies detained 11 people, including four 'terrorists', who they claimed were 'directly' involved in a terrorist attack on the Crocus City Hall, TASS reported citing Russia's Federal Security



Service (FSB) statement on Saturday. "The activities of intelligence and law enforcement agencies have resulted in the detention of 11 people, including four terrorists, who directly participated in the terrorist attack on the Crocus City Hall," the statement read.

The tragic events unfolded on Friday evening at Crocus City Hall in Krasnogorsk, on the western outskirts of the Russian capital. The concert venue, with an estimated capacity of 7,500, was almost full when the terrorists struck. The assault took place ahead of a performance by the Russian rock band Picnic, RT news agency reported.

According to the mobile phone footage and eyewitness accounts, at least five gunmen wearing military-style gear and carrying assault rifles first opened fire at unarmed security guards at the main entrance to the venue. They then proceeded to shoot indiscriminately at the fleeing crowd of panicked visitors.

Once the terrorists reached the concert hall, they appeared to set fire to rows of chairs inside, with the blaze quickly engulfing much of the building, including its roof.

Investigators have stated that preliminary findings based on evidence at the scene appear to confirm that the terrorists used auto-

matic weapons during the attack, and used some sort of flammable liquid to set fire to the premises.

The Investigative Committee said it is now carrying out ballistic, genetic, and fingerprint analysis based on the material evidence found at the scene.

Meanwhile, the head of Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) Aleksandr Bortnikov has informed President Vladimir Putin that eleven suspects, including four terrorists who were directly involved in the Crocus attack, have been detained, the Kremlin press service has said.

The ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack at the concert venue complex near Moscow on Friday night after assailants stormed the venue with guns and incendiary devices, CNN reported.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday condemned the 'heinous act' and expressed solidarity with the Russian government and its people.

"We strongly condemn the heinous terrorist attack in Moscow. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of the victims. India stands in solidarity with the government and the people of the Russian Federation in this hour of grief," PM Modi posted from his X handle. — ANI



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



Founder: Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali
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CIRCULATION: Telephone: 24726666, Fax: 24818270, E-mail: circulation@timesofoman.com

PALESTINIAN PRESIDENCY

Israeli settlement projects condemned

RAMALLAH: The Palestinian Presidency on Friday condemned the Israeli government's decision to seize 8,000 dunams (8 square km) of Palestinian land as part of its efforts to hinder the establishment of a Palestinian state.

Nabil Abu Rudeineh, spokesperson of the presidency, said in a statement published by the Palestinian news agency that the Israeli decision poses a challenge to the international community.

Noting that all settlements are "illegitimate," the spokesperson said that there will be no security or stability without the establishment of a Palestinian state free of

settlements and settlers.

He added that the U.S. government must prove its commitment to international legitimacy and international law, and compel Israel to stop "its crimes and settlements," otherwise the alternative will be more violence and explosions.

Israeli authorities seized 8,000 dunams in the Jordan Valley area of the West Bank on Friday to establish hundreds of settlement units, according to Israeli public radio. Israel occupied the West Bank in 1967 and has since established settlements there, which are considered violations of international law. — Xinhua

BRITAIN'S PRINCESS OF WALES

Kate receiving treatment for cancer

LONDON: Kate, Britain's Princess of Wales, said that she is undergoing preventative chemotherapy after medical tests revealed the presence of cancer.

The video announcement comes after she was hospitalised in January for abdominal surgery.

Kensington Palace at the time said that Kate's condition was not cancer-related.

Kate had not been seen publicly since Christmas until a video

surfaced of her with her husband, Prince William, walking to a shop near their home in Windsor.

Kate's absence from public view sparked weeks of speculation as to her condition.

A photo released by Kensington Palace after her hospitalisation was retracted by news organisations after they found it had been altered.

In her Friday video announcement, Kate said that while her

medical team initially thought that her condition was non-cancerous, tests taken after her surgery revealed the presence of cancer.

Kate said that the discovery was "a huge shock," but she was "well and getting stronger every day."

She said that her family needed "time, space and privacy" as she completes her treatment.

— DW

Travelex & Co LLC PO Box 1061, Sultanate of Oman					
SUMMARY OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES - TRAVELEX & CO. LLC AS OF 31 DECEMBER 2023					
(In RO 000's)					
ASSETS	2023	2022	LIABILITIES	2023	2022
1 CASH IN HAND	410,049	279,991	1 CAPITAL AND RESERVES	1,474,718	1,165,400
2 DEPOSIT WITH CENTRAL BANK OF OMAN	110,000	110,000	2 BORROWINGS FROM BANKS	-	-
3 PRECIOUS METALS	-	-	3 BALANCES DUE TO BRANCHES	-	-
4 BALANCES DUE FROM BANKS	1,012,227	906,654	4 BALANCES DUE TO MONEY CHANGERS	-	-
5 BALANCES DUE FROM BRANCHES	-	-	5 LOANS AND ADVANCES PAYABLE	-	-
6 BALANCES DUE FROM MONEY CHANGERS	-	-	6 CHEQUES AND DRAFTS ISSUED AND OUTSTANDING	-	-
7 CHEQUES AND DRAFTS PURCHASED	-	-	7 OTHER LIABILITIES	359,607	270,674
8 LOANS AND ADVANCES	-	-			
9 INVESTMENTS	-	-			
10 FIXED ASSETS	13,591	10,502			
11 OTHER ASSETS	288,458	128,927			
TOTAL	1,834,325	1,436,074	TOTAL	1,834,325	1,436,074

Ramadan Iftar Program

The Prophet (ﷺ) said "Whoever breaks the fast for a fasting person, will have a reward similar to his reward, however, nothing is detracted from the reward of a fasting person".

The Oman Charitable Organization is pleased to announce that it will receive donations for Ramadan Iftar Program in Sultanate of Oman for the year 1445 AH AD 2024

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or donate through the Jood platform jood.om

OCO Headquarters : Muscat Governorate , Al Khuwair 33 , Street No. 47, next to Sultan Said bin Taimur Mosque, or one of its branches :

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North Al-Batinah Governorate
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Sohar / Al-Hambar

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وزارة النقل والاتصالات وتقنية المعلومات
Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology

**إعلان مناقصة
Tender Notice**

The Internal Tenders Committee at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology invites for the Following Tenders:

TENDER NUMBER	TENDER NAME	DATE OF PUBLISHING	LAST DATE TO PURCHASE TENDER DOCUMENT	SUBMISSION DATE	COMPANIES WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THIS TENDER	DOCUMENT PRICE
MTCIT/ 39/2024	SUPERVISION CONSULTANCY SERVICES FOR DUALIZATION OF THE EXISTING ROAD FROM AJ KAMIL WAAI WAFI - JALAN BANI BU HASAN - JALAN BANI BU ALI	21-03-2024	04-04-2024	30-04-2024	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF TENDER BOARD (EXCELLENT & FIRST)	(150/-) ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY OMANI RIAL FOR LOCAL COMPANIES (10/-) TEN OMANI RIAL (FOR SME) NON-REFUNDABL

Interested Companies registered with the Secretariat General of Tencer Board may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of documents. Tenders should be submitted online on given website

CORRESPONDANCE:
1. Tender Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at e-Tendering System. (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
2. E-Tendering System Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the e-Tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number:
Tel: +968 24402200 e-mail: etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om

INTERNAL TENDERS COMMITTEE

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SPORTS

Punjab Kings begin IPL 2024 campaign on a winning note



TODAY'S MATCHES

Rajasthan Royals vs Lucknow Super Giants

Jaipur, 2pm

Gujarat Titans vs Mumbai Indians

Ahmedabad, 6pm

Sam Curran and Liam Livingstone shine as Kings chase down Delhi Capitals' target of 175 at Mullanpur

MULLANPUR: Punjab Kings (PBKS) started off IPL 2024 on a winning note on Saturday as they edged Delhi Capitals (DC) by four wickets at the Maharaja Yadavindra Singh International Cricket Stadium in Mullanpur.

In the first IPL match at the new venue, Sam Curran (63 off 47) and Liam Livingstone (38* off 21) played crucial knocks to help Kings chase down 175 after a collective bowling effort had restricted Capitals to 174/9.

Chasing 175, Kings got off to a brisk start but lost openers Shikhar Dhawan and Jonny Bairstow inside the powerplay. Impact Player Prabhsimran Singh cracked a couple of fours in the next over to take Kings to 53/2. Kuldeep Yadav dismissed Prabhsimran and struck again in the next over as he had Jitesh Sharma stumped.

With 63 needed off 36, Curran and Livingstone upped the ante, smacking two fours and a six off Mitchell Marsh, taking 18 off the 15th over. Curran brought up his fifty off 39 balls. Curran departed for 64 (47) in the penultimate over, cleaned up by Khaleel Ahmed. The left-arm pacer had two in two as he sent back Shashank Singh.

With 6 needed off 6, Sumit Kumar started off with a couple of wides. The third one was a dot but Livingstone finished it with a six.

Earlier, Kings captain Dhawan won the toss and elected to field. It was a special moment for Rishabh Pant, who made his comeback to competitive cricket after suffering

a life-threatening road mishap on December 30, 2022.

Capitals got off to an aggressive start but lost Mitchell Marsh early. Warner and Marsh shared 39-run stand before Arshdeep Singh dismissed Marsh Warner, though, continued to attack as Delhi reached 54/1 at the end of the powerplay. Warner and Shai Hope continued the momentum with a 35-run stand. Harshal Patel provided a breakthrough as he sent back Warner. Pant arrived at a crease to a standing ovation.

Rabada came back to dismiss Hope (33 off 25) in the 11th over. It sparked a collapse as Capitals lost half their side in the 14th over.

Capitals sent in Abishek Porel as their Impact Player, and he provided a crucial late burst, with a scintillating 10-ball 32* to help Capitals post 174/9.

Brief scores: Delhi Capitals 174/9 (Hope 33, Porel 32*; Arshdeep Singh 2/28) lost to Punjab Kings: 177/6 in 19.2 overs (Curran 63, Livingstone 38*; Kuldeep Yadav 2/20). - **ANI**

JOINT WORLD CUP-ASIAN CUP QUALIFIER

Players showed determination to win: Oman coach Silhavy

MUSCAT: Oman head coach Jaroslav Silhavy of Czech Republic was delighted after his side cruised to a 2-0 win over Malaysia to revive their Preliminary Joint Qualification – Round 2 for the FIFA World Cup 2026 and AFC Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2027 Group D hopes on Thursday.

The hosts could have won by a wider margin at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in front of nearly 22,000 supporters but Silhavy was pleased with the performance of the players in his first match as head coach.

"I want to thank the players for the performance they showed



and the result, since the start of the match the players showed determination to get the win.

"The preparation time was very short but with the players' efforts,

we managed to get the result. We have another match in a few days (Tuesday) and we will be ready for it," said Silhavy.

Having suffered a 1-0 defeat to

Kyrgyzstan and then being eliminated in the group stage of the AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023, Oman could have been excused if they lacked confidence but it proved to be the

opposite as they took the game to Malaysia.

"We started the match with high pressure, and we forced our style and managed to score the needed goals," said Silhavy.

The win meant Oman surged to the top of the table on goal difference, with Silhavy's side level on points with Kyrgyzstan and Malaysia.

Oman now travel to Kuala Lumpur to take on hosts Malaysia on Tuesday.

The result was a blow for Kim Pan Gon's Malaysia, with his team having headed into the match top of the table after two wins.

"We have to review our game

quickly, recover physically and prepare for the home game, and we will try our best to prepare well.

"The home game should be different, of course physically and fitness wise, we are not up to the level we expected but if we want to go to the third round, I think we have to get points in our next game," said Korean tactician Kim.

Kyrgyzstan remained firmly in the mix for one of the two spots to the third round of the FIFA World Cup qualifiers, which would also seal them a third consecutive AFC Asian Cup appearance, after their 2-0 win over Chinese Taipei.

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OMAN LNG SIGNS PACT

Under the auspices of Eng Salim bin Nasser Al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, Oman LNG inked a Sales and Purchase Agreement (SPA) with SEFE Secure Energy for Europe (SEFE), heralding a new chapter in their continuing partnership.

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX ENDS WEEK POSITIVELY

The Omani stock market ended the week slightly positively, marking the third consecutive week of gains, according to an analyst. In the broader Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region, market performances varied, influenced by a week full of central bank meetings.

Credit granted by banks rises by 1.8%

Credit granted to the private sector increased by 2.6 percent to reach OMR20.1 billion by the end of January 2024

MUSCAT: An analysis of the activities of traditional commercial banks indicates continued credit growth in the Sultanate of Oman. The total credit granted by banks recorded an increase of 1.8 percent between January 2023 and January 2024.

Credit granted to the private sector increased by 2.6 percent to reach OMR20.1 billion by the end of January 2024.

According to the data, total investments of traditional commercial banks in securities witnessed an increase of 28.1 percent to reach about OMR5.7 billion by the end of January 2024.

Banks' investment in government development bonds (GDBs) recorded a 15 percent decrease



compared to the same period last year, reaching OMR1.8 billion.

Investments in foreign securities witnessed an increase of 156.3 percent to reach OMR2.4 billion by the end of January 2024.

On the liabilities side, total deposits with traditional commercial banks recorded an increase

of 12.3 percent to reach OMR24.1 billion by the end of January 2024.

Among the total deposits, government deposits with commercial banks recorded an increase of 0.3 percent to reach about OMR5.2 billion. Deposits of public sector institutions increased by 60 percent to reach about OMR2.3 billion

by the end of January 2024 compared to the same period in 2023.

Private sector deposits recorded an increase of 10.5 percent to reach OMR15.9 billion in January 2024, constituting 66 percent of the total deposits with traditional commercial banks. - **ONA**

NCSI DATA



Consumer goods prices in Oman stabilise

MUSCAT: The prices of consumer goods in the Sultanate of Oman stabilised during the month of February 2024 compared to the same month in 2023, according to the latest consumer price index data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The data indicates a decrease in the prices of major groups such as transportation by 2.6 percent, restaurants and hotels by 0.1 percent, clothing and footwear by 0.2 percent, communications by 0.3 percent, and education by 0.4 percent. In contrast other major groups like food and non-alcoholic beverages saw an increase in the prices by 1.1 percent, miscellaneous goods and services by 3.1 percent.

In the food and non-alcoholic beverages group, the prices of fruits increased by 3.1 percent, milk, cheese, and eggs by 4.2 percent, sugar, jam, honey, and sweets by 2.8 percent, oils and

fats by 2 percent, bread and cereals by 0.9 percent, foodstuffs by 1.1 percent, vegetables by 5.2 percent, and meat by 1.7 percent. Fish prices fell by 9.9 percent.

Muscat Governorate recorded the lowest percentage of decrease in inflation at the end of February 2024 compared to the same period of the previous year, with the index falling by 0.3 percent. The index also decreased by 0.2 percent in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, compared to an increase of 0.9 percent in North Al Sharqiyah Governorate.

The inflation rate increased by 0.5 percent in the Al Wusta Governorate, 0.4 percent in both the Dhofar and Al Buraimi Governorates, 0.3 percent in both the Al Dhahirah Governorate and the Musandam Governorate, 0.2 percent in each of the South Al Batinah and North Al Batinah Governorates, and 0.1 percent in the South Al Sharqiyah Governorate. - **ONA**

BANK MUSCAT

Oryx Fund distributes highest ever dividend of 72 baisas per unit

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat Oryx Fund continues to reward its investors with a growing stream of dividend distributions and capital growth.

The fund's management body, in its meeting held on February 18, 2024, approved a dividend distribution of 72 baisa per unit to be paid to the unit holders for FY 2023. This is the highest cash dividend paid so far by the fund, which highlights the investor-focused approach followed by the fund.

The fund rewards its investors with consistent dividend distributions and it has maintained its track record of growing dividend every year, as highlighted in the chart (figure 1).

In addition to the regular income distributions (through dividends), the Fund has also been rewarding its investors with attractive capital appreciation. Oryx Fund has delivered a return of 29.2 per cent for the one-year period ended 31st December, 2023 against a return of 6.2 per cent by its benchmark i.e. S&P GCC index. The fund has been delivering consistent performance across all periods as highlighted in the table.

Bank Muscat Oryx Fund pri-



marily invests in stock markets in the GCC region and has a consistent and proven track record of generating attractive returns for 29 years. The Fund is one of largest funds in GCC region within its category and it is regulated by the Capital Market Authority as per the applicable laws and regulations in Oman. The Fund clearly stands out as an attractive investment choice for prospective investors with a medium to long term view.

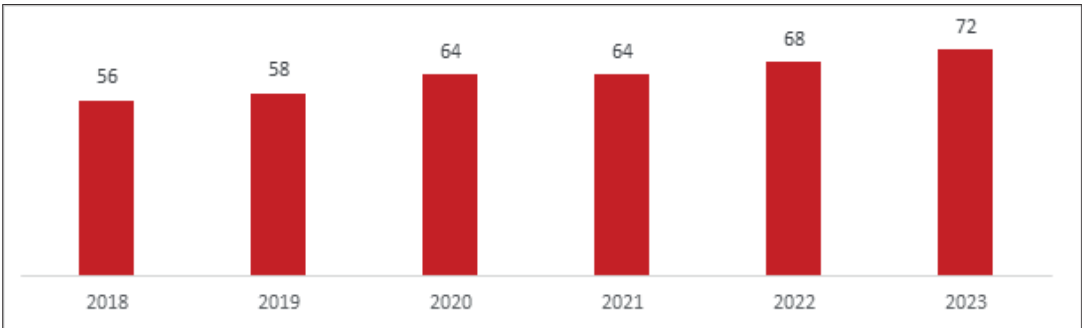
Bank Muscat Oryx Fund offers daily liquidity with no minimum

holding period. Investors may choose to sell their investments anytime and receive cash funds in their bank accounts within 3 days. The fund's NAV is published on a daily basis on Bank Muscat's website and on Muscat Stock Exchange's website, so that investors can track the value of their investments on a daily basis.

Investors can invest and redeem their investments in Bank Muscat Oryx Fund through Bank Muscat's Mobile Banking and Internet Banking platforms.

The investors can subscribe for

Figure 1: Dividend distribution track record of Oryx Fund (Baisa per unit)



Bank Muscat Oryx Fund's performance track record

Period	Bank Muscat Oryx Fund	S&P GCC Composite Index	Outperformance
2023	29.2%	6.2%	23.0%
Past 3 Years	22.6% p.a.	9.0% p.a.	13.6% p.a.
Past 10 Years	11.1% p.a.	2.2% p.a.	8.9% p.a.

Note: Return over 1-year period is annualized Performance as on December 31, 2023
Data source: Bloomberg

the Fund with a minimum subscription amount of OMR50. Investors may also choose to invest every month by subscribing to the Systematic Investment Plan (SIP) option by filling in the application form and submitting it to Bank Muscat's Asset Manage-

ment team. Interested investors may contact the team of the Fund through email at assetmanagement@bankmuscat.com.

Please refer to the prospectus of Bank Muscat Oryx Fund available on www.bankmuscat.com to understand the Fund's details includ-

ing key terms and conditions. Investors are also requested to refer to the key risk factors highlighted in the prospectus. It should be noted that the mutual fund returns are subjected to market performance and past performance doesn't guarantee future performance.

GLOBAL TRADE UPDATE

International trade poised for rebound in 2024

GENEVA: After facing declines over several quarters, international trade is poised for a rebound in 2024, according to the latest Global Trade Update from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

In 2023, global trade saw a 3 per cent contraction, equalling roughly \$1 trillion, compared to the record high of \$32 trillion in 2022. Despite this decline, the services sector showed resilience with a \$500 billion, or 8 per cent, increase from the previous year, while trade in goods experienced a \$1.3 trillion, or 5 per cent, decline compared to 2022.

The fourth quarter of 2023 marked a departure from previous quarters, with both merchandise and services trade stabilizing quarter-over-quarter. Developing countries, especially those in the African, East Asian and South Asian regions, experienced growth in trade during this period.

While major economies gener-



ally saw a decline in merchandise trade throughout 2023, certain exceptions emerged, like the Russian Federation, which exhibited notable volatility in trade statistics. Towards the end of 2023, trade in goods saw growth in several major economies, including China (+5 per cent imports) and India (+5 per cent exports), although it declined for the Russian Federation and the European Union.

During 2023, trade performance diverged between developing and

developed countries, with the former experiencing a decline of approximately 4 per cent and the latter around 6 per cent. South-South trade, or trade between developing economies, saw a steeper decline of about 7 per cent. However, these trends reversed in the last quarter of 2023, with developing countries and South-South trade resuming growth while trade in developed countries remained stable.

Geopolitical tensions continued to impact bilateral trade flows, as

shown by the Russian Federation reducing its trade dependence on the European Union while increasing its reliance on China. Additionally, trade interdependence between China and the United States decreased further in 2023.

Regionally, trade between African economies bucked the global trend by increasing 6 per cent in 2023, whereas intra-regional trade in East Asia (-9 per cent) and Latin America (-5 per cent lagged behind the global average.

At the sectoral level, most industries experienced declines in trade value, with exceptions such as pharmaceuticals, transportation equipment (largely due to increased demand for wide-body aircraft) and motor vehicles, which grew by 14 per cent, primarily fuelled by the demand for electric vehicles.

Conversely, sectors like apparel, chemicals and textiles saw significant declines in 2023. However, most sectors rebounded in the fourth quarter of 2023, except for

apparel, where trade further contracted. Among services, tourism and travel-related services showed the strongest rebound, increasing by almost 40 per cent last year.

Available data for the first quarter of 2024 suggests a continued improvement in global trade, especially considering moderating global inflation and improving economic growth forecasts. Additionally, rising demand for environmental goods, particularly electric vehicles, is expected to bolster trade this year.

However, geopolitical tensions and supply chain disruptions persist as pivotal factors influencing bilateral trade trends and require ongoing scrutiny. Disruptions in shipping routes, particularly those related to security issues in the Red Sea and the Suez Canal, as well as adverse climate effects on water levels in the Panama Canal, carry the potential to escalate shipping costs, prolong voyage times and disrupt supply chains. - **WAM**

RBI DATA

India's foreign exchange reserves hit all-time high

NEW DELHI: India's foreign exchange reserves rose for the fourth straight week to hit an all-time high of \$642.49 billion in the week ending on March 15, as per the latest data released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). During the week, the foreign exchange kitty rose by \$6.396 billion.

Before March 8 week, the reserves rose by \$10.470 billion to \$636.095 billion.

During the latest week, India's foreign currency assets (FCA), the biggest component of the forex reserves, rose by \$6.034 billion to \$568.386 billion, the central bank's weekly statistical data showed.

Gold reserves during the week rose from \$425 million to \$51.140 billion. - **ANI**

MARKET

Omani stock market marks third consecutive week of gains

In the broader Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region, market performances varied, influenced by a week full of central bank meetings

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Omani stock market ended the week slightly positively, marking the third consecutive week of gains, according to an analyst.

“The main index remained near the peak levels of August, hovering close to the 4,800 points level, with a modest increase of 0.12 percent. The market could remain exposed to some price corrections as the momentum slows,” said Joseph Dahrieh, Managing Principal, at Tickmill.

In the broader Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region, market performances varied, influenced by a week full of central bank meetings. The US Federal Reserve’s dovish stance positively impacted market sentiment towards the week’s end while a decrease in oil prices weighed on markets to a certain extent.

Sector-wise, performance was mixed on the Omani stock mar-

ket, echoing the previous week’s trends. The financial and services sectors saw improvements, whereas the industrial sector declined. The financial sector closed with a 0.3 percent gain, led by Bank Muscat which increased 2.21 percent and was the week’s most traded stock by value. Oman United Insurance also ended positively, with a 1.42 percent increase.

The services sector experienced a 0.93 percent rise, maintaining its bullish trend since the year’s start. SMN Power Holding, with a significant 19.28 percent gain, continued its strong performance for the ninth consecutive week, standing out as one of the market’s top performers and most traded stocks. Additionally, Abraj Energy, Dhofar Generating, and Oman Telecom reported gains of 0.63 percent, 8.77 percent, and 0.46 percent, respectively.

Conversely, the industrial sector faced a decline of -0.61 percent. Gulf Mushroom Products,



Voltamp Energy, Galfar Engineering and Contracting, and Oman Chromite experienced declines of -8.44 percent, -9.60 percent, -0.65 percent, and -10.35 percent, respectively.

“The stock market could find more support as attention turns to Oman’s sovereign wealth fund as it is considering an initial public offering (IPO) for its logistics firm,” said Joseph Dahrieh.

“This initiative could help attract more local and international investors to the stock market and to the rest of the economy,” he further added.

Trading value on MSX reaches OMR17mn

MUSCAT: The trading value on the Muscat Securities Exchange (MSX) declined during the week to OMR17 million compared to about OMR19.8 million in the previous week. The number of transactions executed during the week recorded a decline of 19.2 percent from 6,148 deals to 4,967 deals.

The market value of securities listed on the stock exchange also declined at the end of the current week to OMR24.13 billion recording weekly losses of OMR29 million.

During the week, the prices of 23 securities rose, compared to 30 securities whose prices declined, and 18 securities that remained unchanged at their previous levels. Barka Water and Power shares recorded the highest gains, rising by 56.8 percent and closing at 138 baisas. This rise came amid a general rise in energy company stocks for several weeks with Optimistic expectations for the sector’s performance during the current year.

Barka Water and Power



Company said that Nama Power and Water Purchase Company has extended the current water purchase agreements for a period of 3 months until next June 30 for the two reverse osmosis plants (first phase and second phase). SMN Power Holding Company said that one of its subsidiaries, SMN Barka Power received a letter of support from Nama Power and Water Purchase Company to conclude a new water purchase agreement for a period of nine years. SMN Power Holding Company shares rose during the week by

19.2 percent and closed at 297 baisas.

In the banking sector, the share of Oman Arab Bank (OAB) recorded the best increase, rising by 7.2 percent and closing at 118 baisas, and share of Bank Muscat rose by 2.2 percent and closing at 277 baisas.

Oman Investment and Finance Company (OIFC) shares topped the losing stocks, declining by 11.8 percent and closing at 82 baisas. The company said during the week that the competent court issued its ruling rejecting the lawsuit filed by a number of shareholders in order to invalidate the decisions of the company’s extraordinary general assembly held on June 21, 2023, related to approving the dissolution of the company. The company’s shares rose last week by 5 percent and closed at 210 baisas.

The list of the five companies that declined during the current week also included Omani Chromite, Salalah Port Services, Voltamp Energy, and Al Hassan Engineering. - **ONA**

BINDING TERM SHEET AGREEMENT

Oman LNG signs sales, purchase pact with SEFE

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Under the auspices of Eng Salim bin Nasser Al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, Oman LNG inked a Sales and Purchase Agreement (SPA) with SEFE Secure Energy for Europe (SEFE), heralding a new chapter in their continuing partnership.

The agreement follows a prior commitment where Oman LNG inked a binding term sheet agreement to supply SEFE with 0.4 million metric tonnes per annum (mtpa) of LNG starting in 2026. This strategic partnership reflects a significant step forward in bolstering the LNG supply chain, emphasizing Oman LNG’s commitment to meeting SEFE’s energy needs.

By entering into this SPA, Oman LNG not only reinforces the Sultanate of Oman’s reputation as a dependable LNG provider but also demonstrates its adeptness in effi-



ciently managing business operations to deliver secure and sustainable energy to global customers.

Commenting on this agreement, Hamed Al Naamany- Chief Execu-

tive Officer of Oman LNG - said, “The agreement marks a pivotal moment for both Oman LNG and SEFE, symbolising a profound step towards enhanced collaboration.

The SPA stands as a testament to the mutual benefits derived from this partnership. For Oman LNG, it signifies access to new markets, technological advancements from Germany, and broader economic growth opportunities. Meanwhile, SEFE gains a reliable and trusted energy supplier, strengthening its position in the European market.”

Furthermore, this strategic partnership with SEFE serves to fortify Oman’s ties with Germany, contributing significantly to energy security initiatives, where that open up new opportunities for Oman LNG in the German market and beyond, underscoring its dedication to fostering growth and collaborative endeavours to enrich Oman’s economy.

From his end, Dr. Egbert Leage, CEO of SEFE, said, “SEFE is very proud to continue its path of increased cooperation with Oman and to be the front-runner

amongst German companies in importing energy from the country. This partnership diversifies our portfolio and supports our goal to provide Europe with a secure energy supply. We look forward to this being the first of many agreements and also developing a trusting partnership in the hydrogen economy in the medium and long term. The Sultanate of Oman is making impressive progress with its ambitious hydrogen strategy.”

Oman LNG has grown to be the largest income earner for the Sultanate of Oman, after oil revenues. Beyond its direct contribution to revenue, Oman LNG has been pivotal to social development, executing a myriad of social investment initiatives that have triggered job creation and entrepreneurship, spread quality education and healthcare, encouraged women’s development and supported tourism, among others.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

GCC, Türkiye to launch talks for free trade pact

ANKARA: The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the Republic of Türkiye have signed a deal to launch negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

Turkish Trade Minister Omer Bolat said that the pact would lead to one of the world’s largest free trade areas.

In a statement, GCC Secretary General Jassem Al Budaiwi said the accord to launch FTA talks “is a demonstration of the robust and strategic partnership between the GCC countries and Türkiye.”

He added that the move showcases successful cooperation across various fields, including commerce, economics, and finance. - **ONA**

DEVELOPING TECHNOLOGIES

Should phonemakers build electric cars?

BRUSSELS: Three years ago, Chinese tech giant Xiaomi announced that it was getting into the electric vehicle (EV) business, following in the footsteps of US rival Apple, which spent the better part of a decade researching and developing its own EV.

Fast forward to 2024 and, while Apple has given up on its plans to build a self-driving car, Xiaomi is just days away from the launch of its SU7, a four-door sedan produced by the state-owned car manufacturer BAIC at a factory in Beijing.

Xiaomi is not alone. Rival Chinese smartphone maker Huawei is also developing technologies for the auto industry, from smart driving systems to cockpit systems and communications platforms. Huawei’s Stelato brand of vehicles is also a partnership with BAIC.

Xiaomi’s Speed Ultra 7 (SU7), which will be available in 29 Chinese cities from March 28, has a driving range of up to 800 kilometers (500 miles) and is equipped with Xiaomi software and electronic features.

It also has technology capable of delivering faster acceleration speeds than Tesla and Porsche’s EVs. It can reportedly go from zero to 100 kilometers per hour (62 miles per hour) in 2.8 seconds.

Chinese consumers line up to try Xiaomi’s new car
The company says it has already booked 100,000 appointments to view the car, which is priced at between \$35,200 and \$55,000.

Shares in China’s largest smart-



phone maker soared nearly 12 percent in Hong Kong in a day earlier this month on the news of the first deliveries, as part of what CEO and founder Lei Jun previously said was a goal to become one of the world’s top five automotive manufacturers. But how feasible are Xiaomi and Huawei’s ambitions, given the already ultra-competitive landscape of the automotive sector?

“It looks like we are witnessing the biggest transformation in the [auto] industry,” German auto analyst Ferdinand Dudenhöffer said in January.

Could tech firms gain the upper hand?

Dudenhöffer said he expects car manufacturers to become mere suppliers for the likes of Xiaomi in the future, noting how “bending sheet metal is getting boring,” compared to the creation of the dashboard intelligence provided by the smartphone makers.

“The future of the car can be seen less in the mechanics ... [it]

depends on software, autonomous driving, and smart cockpits. That is exactly the competence of these tech companies,” he added.

Xiaomi and Huawei will certainly benefit from their home market being the world’s largest automobile market in terms of demand and supply. Last year, total output in China reached 30 million vehicles, including 9 million EVs.

China’s potential is enormous as there is currently less than one car for every five individuals, versus 800 vehicles per 1,000 inhabitants in the United States.

Price war as competition intensifies

But despite record vehicle deliveries, China’s automakers are currently engaged in a massive price war that threatens their profitability.

Tesla was the first to make several rounds of price cuts worth thousands of dollars as Elon Musk’s firm fell into second place to Chinese rival BYD in the last

quarter of 2023, in terms of the number of EVs sold.

Tesla’s rivals have quickly dropped their prices too, so vehicle prices fell more than 8% last year, according to data from the Shanghai Automotive Industry Corp.

Adding insult to injury for the auto sector, Chinese government subsidies to encourage the transition to electric vehicles, worth nearly \$1,800 per car purchased, ran out at the end of 2022.

Some analysts predict that consolidation is on the cards over the next two years and that some vehicle manufacturers could even go bust. Many foreign auto brands, meanwhile, are at a further disadvantage, having already struggled to get a foothold in China. That’s despite the easing five years ago of joint venture requirements so the likes of Volkswagen and BMW no longer needed a Chinese partner.

Europe, North America could be tricky

While tech giants like Xiaomi and Huawei may have a home advantage, they could face an uphill battle in the race for global EV supremacy. Xiaomi is Europe’s third most popular smartphone brand but is only ranked fifth in the United States. Huawei’s reputation was severely damaged by sanctions imposed by Washington under the Trump administration.

“With zero brand equity in Europe or North America it will be a tough ask to penetrate those markets,” auto analyst Matthias Schmidt told DW. -**ww**

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OMAN



MUSCAT: Oman Human Rights Commission (OHRC) observed the documentary film and report broadcast by BBC Africa regarding female workers from the Republic of Malawi who were allegedly subjected to human trafficking according to the network's report. Consequently, the OHRC expresses concerns about the condition of these workers who were allegedly harmed as a result, and without it being reported to the Oman Human Rights Commission nor to the national bodies for protecting workers' rights in the Sultanate of Oman.

As per the OHRC's mandates stipulated under article (11), paragraph (3), of Royal Decree No. 57/2022, to respond to any observations raised by government or non-government international organizations in the field of human rights within the Sultanate of Oman, and to verify and respond to the information contained therein, Oman Human Rights Commission would like to clarify the following:

1- The report dealt with 50 female domestic workers of Malawian nationality without sufficient details on those cases regardless of a few cases. Furthermore, the report mentioned that those cases had previously left the Sultanate of Oman.

2- As per the report, female workers were deceived by recruitment agencies in their home country. Therefore, the Malawian government should investigate and address the issue domestically.

3- The report further verified that female workers had been in contact with international organizations and civil society agencies located outside Oman through social media, demonstrating their capability to utilize such channels to reach out to national mechanisms in Oman dedicated to protecting workers' rights. Such national mechanisms allocated several means (social media) to receive reports around the clock. Accordingly, these workers may access various communication channels. Additionally, they could have informed airport authorities of their refusal to travel back to their home countries until their rights were settled if the recruitment agency insisted on their travel.

4- The report contains inaccurate information that contradicts

RESPONSE OF OMAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION TO THE BROADCAST BY BBC-AFRICA

the actual situation in Oman, as highlighted by non-governmental international organization "Do Bold". The organization emphasized that workers in Oman are not able to substitute their employers and are not permitted to leave the country under dire circumstances. On the other hand, according to the Oman Labour Law, employers are prohibited from subjecting workers to any form of forced or compulsory labour as stipulated under Article (5). Additionally, as per Article (6), employers are not allowed to confiscate workers' passports or personal documents.

5- The "Do Bold" organization did not contact the Oman Human Rights Commission about the incidents mentioned within the report. However, "Do Bold" regularly interacts with the Commission concerning female workers from different nationalities, and OHRC promptly responds to assist, intervene, and find solutions for such cases.

6- The report addressed the death of Aida Chiwalu, a domestic worker who tragically died in Oman in 2023. The reason for her death remains unknown, and the report suggests that she was neglected by the Employment Office in Oman.

Based on the published report, Oman Human Rights Commission confirms that it received two complaints only from Malawian female domestic workers in 2023, regarding breaches of their employment contracts by the recruitment agency. In collaboration

with the Ministry of Labour, legal actions were initiated against the agency owner, which bore all financial costs, and the two workers were repatriated to their home countries.

Regarding the correspondence received by OHRC from "Do Bold", only one communication was received concerning a Malawian domestic worker. The organization was asked for further information about the worker. However, the organization later informed the Commission's working group that the issue had been resolved with the employer through alternative means resulting in the worker's repatriation, without requiring intervention from the Oman Human Rights Commission. No further details about the worker were shared with the Commission.

Official national statistics indi-

cate that by the end of February 2024, there were 626 Malawian female workers in Oman. The statistics also reflected that Malawian female domestic workers represent around 0.3% of the 202,368 total female domestic workforce of all nationalities in Oman. While the cases highlighted in the report are extremely limited in number, consequently, the Commission expresses concerns about cases where female domestic workers or international non-governmental organizations fail to contact the Oman Human Rights Commission or relevant official authorities responsible for protecting workers' rights in Oman assuming the information presented is accurate.

The Commission emphasizes that Omani laws and legislation protect the rights of workers, including domestic workers. Furthermore, these laws ensure that workers are paid their agreed-upon monthly wages within seven days of each month's end, provided with sufficient food and accommodation, and receive medical care from their employer throughout their contract.

In Addition, the law also mandates that domestic workers have break-time during the day, as well as a weekly rest day, and are entitled to leave after the agreed-upon period in their employment contract. The law underscores the importance of providing decent and humane treatment that upholds the worker's dignity.

Furthermore, domestic workers are provided with a return ticket to their home country, which is covered by the recruitment agency within 180 days of their arrival if it is determined that their job is different from the one specified in the recruitment permit, if they are mentally ill or contagious, or if they have a disability that prevents them from performing their duties. Domestic workers may also be given a return ticket at the employer's expense after the contract period expires or due to the employer's violation of the contract.

The Sultanate of Oman enforces a legal framework that ensures the rights of workers in alignment with international labour norms, the Basic Law of the State, the Omani Labour Law, ministerial resolutions, Convention No. 105 on the Abolition of Forced Labour, ILO Convention

No. 29 on Forced Labour, and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

In relation to the Domestic Worker case named "Aida Chiwalu", who passed away in Oman in 2023, the OHRC confirms, based on investigations, that her death was natural, attributed to a decrease in blood circulation, with no criminal suspicions reported by official authorities in Oman. Following her demise, the Omani authorities contacted the deceased worker's family, who initially agreed to have her buried in Oman in exchange for financial compensation instead of repatriation. However, the government of Malawi declined this arrangement. Consequently, the body was repatriated on 12 June 2023. Upon investigation, the Commission found that the recruitment agency had arranged for all necessary procedures for transporting and preserving the body for repatriation, contingent on the Malawian Embassy providing a repatriation ticket as requested. The employer also ensured that the worker's family received compensation for the ticket and all financial entitlements. Support was extended to the worker's family, including assistance in purchasing a house in Malawi. The Commission affirms that its investigations were in-depth and transparent, and involved reviewing relevant documents with both Omani authorities concerned as well as the recruitment agency and employer.

In terms of national mechanisms for protecting workers' rights, workers can report complaints through various channels such as the Ministry of Labour, the Royal Oman Police, the Public Prosecution Department, the National Committee against Trafficking in Persons, and the Oman Human Rights Commission.

Various methods for receiving workers' reports have been designated, including:

- 1- In-person Attendance.
- 2- Contact hotlines.
- 3- Text messaging.
- 4- WhatsApp program.
- 5- Voicemail.
- 6- Email.
- 7- Website.

In situations where domestic workers fall victim to human trafficking and are subjected to exploitation beyond the bounds of their

employment contract or coerced into illicit labour, they may report to the National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking. This committee takes appropriate actions to protect the impacted workers and oversee their rights. Additionally, they collaborate with the Ministry of Social Development, which has established a shelter for human trafficking victims known as the "Dar Al Wifaq" which aims to provide legal aid, healthcare, psychological support, and accommodation for the victims, to alleviate the repercussions of any exploitation. In addition, the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking created a quick response team in 2019 to address any reports of human trafficking cases.

Finally, the Oman Human Rights Commission confirms its collaboration with international governmental and non-governmental organizations on matters concerning the promotion and protection of human rights in Oman, particularly, with the "Do Bold" organization in addressing the protection of workers' rights and investigate and resolve cases referred by the organization in cooperation with the relevant authorities in Oman.

Since its establishment in 2008, Oman Human Rights Commission has functioned as an independent institution established by Royal Decree No. 57/2022 aiming to protect and promote human rights in Oman. The Commission endeavors to ensure that all individuals in Oman, regardless of nationality or employment status, access and enjoy their fundamental human rights without prejudice.

Additionally, the Commission encourages domestic workers to contact Oman Human Rights Commission and the authorities concerned mentioned above in order to report any violation of their rights.

The Oman Human Rights Commission welcomes collaboration with various international governmental and non-governmental organizations in efforts to protect and promote human rights in Oman. This includes verifying, investigating, and resolving any reported violations in cooperation with all authorities concerned. Furthermore, the Commission emphasizes the significance of collective national endeavors to protect the rights of workers in Oman. -OMA

The Sultanate of Oman enforces a legal framework that ensures the rights of workers in alignment with international labour norms, the Basic Law of the State, the Omani Labour Law

Red Bull’s Verstappen fights off Sainz’s challenge to take pole

Two exquisite laps from the Dutchman in the final session sealed the P1 spot at the Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne

MELBOURNE: Red Bull’s Max Verstappen fought off a challenge from Ferrari driver Carlos Sainz to take pole position for the Australian Grand Prix on Saturday.

Sainz was quickest in the first two parts of qualifying but the world champion bounced back in the top 10 shootout to take pole by 0.27 seconds.

Lando Norris will start third ahead of Ferrari’s Charles Leclerc after a grid penalty for Red Bull’s Sergio Perez.

Mercedes’ George Russell was seventh while Lewis Hamilton only 11th.

Norris’ team-mate Oscar Piastri made it a four-six for McLaren while RB’s Yuki Tsunoda and the Aston Martins of Lance Stroll and Fernando Alonso completed the top 10.

Reigning world champion Verstappen and Red Bull had looked comparatively out of sorts for most of the weekend, there or thereabouts but not topping any of the practice sessions on the way to qualifying.

And when Sainz was fastest in both first and second qualifying, the Spaniard looked a favourite for pole, just 15 days after having an operation for appendicitis that



forced him to miss the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix.

But two exquisite laps from Verstappen in the final session were too good for the Ferraris and the Dutchman took his third pole position in a row this season, one he

has started in even more dominant style than his record-breaking 2023.

“A bit unexpected in qualifying today but very happy with Q3,” Verstappen said. “Both of those laps felt very nice. Bit of a tricky

weekend but we managed to be there in the end.”

Red Bull typically have an even greater advantage in the race than in qualifying but Ferrari’s long run in second practice looked strong and Verstappen said he was ex-



pecting a challenge in the race.

“They seem very quick also in the long runs so a bit of a question mark also for tomorrow but that makes it interesting,” he said.

It was a momentous performance from Sainz, in remarkable form considering he was just two weeks out from abdominal surgery.

He said: “It has been a tough couple of weeks, a lot of days in bed, waiting to see if I could be here today. To make it this weekend and put it on the front row after leading all the way through qualifying, I almost could not believe it.

“Very happy to be here. I was a bit rusty yesterday but I got up to speed and feeling good with the car.

“I am not going to lie, I am not in my most comfortable state when I am driving out there but I can get it done. A lot of discomfort and weird feelings but no pain so it allowed me to push flat out.”

Perez took third in qualifying, 0.359secs slower than team-mate Verstappen, but was later given a three-place grid drop for impeding

the Haas of Nico Hulkenberg in the first part of qualifying.

Leclerc had looked competitive on Friday but he said he felt the car had gone away from him on Saturday, developing understeer, and he had a “messy” qualifying as a result, adding too much front wing for the final run and generating oversteer instead.

Norris’ fourth place was McLaren’s best result of a year after they had started a little bit behind where they expected to be.

Mercedes, meanwhile, continued to struggle in Australia after a difficult weekend in Saudi Arabia last time out.

Last year, Russell was on the front row with Verstappen, but this time he was more than 0.8secs off the pace.

And Hamilton did not even make it into the top 10, losing out to his team-mate in the second session by 0.059secs.

Both drivers insist the car has potential, but after three races it remains stubbornly elusive and Mercedes still have plenty of work to do. - Agencies

FORMER MAN CITY, AC MILAN FOOTBALLER

Former Brazil star Robinho arrested, to serve sentence

RIO DE JANEIRO: Former Brazil international football player Robinho has been arrested to serve a nine-year prison sentence for outraging the modesty of a woman.

He was convicted two years ago in Italy for his part in the gang assault of an Albanian woman at a nightclub in Milan in 2013.

Robinho, 40, was arrested at his flat in his home city of Santos.

The Italian government had requested that he serve his sentence in Brazil after failing to get him extradited.

On Wednesday, a court in Brazil upheld the decision and also ruled that he should serve his time behind bars instead of under house arrest.

Earlier on Thursday, a Supreme Court judge rejected a request to halt his detention.

The decisive action taken by Brazil’s justice system has been praised by many on local media, who feared that Robinho would evade justice thanks to his fame and his wealth.

The former Brazil international,



who has 100 caps for his country, was playing for AC Milan at the time of the crime. After being found guilty, he lost an appeal in 2020 before Italy’s highest court upheld his sentence in 2022.

Italian prosecutors then issued

an international arrest warrant for him.

The footballer, who spent two years with Manchester City, told a Brazilian network on Sunday that the act with the woman had been “consensual”. - Agencies

INTERNATIONAL FRIENDLIES

Munoz scores as Colombia beat Spain; Dutch triumph

LONDON: Crystal Palace defender Daniel Munoz scored the only goal as Colombia beat Spain 1-0 in a friendly at West Ham’s London Stadium on Friday.

The January signing from Genk scored an acrobatic volley after fantastic play on the left wing by Liverpool’s Luis Diaz.

It was Spain’s first friendly loss since a June 2016 defeat by Georgia.

Spain handed international debuts to three players including 17-year-old Barcelona defender Pau Cubarsi.

Real Sociedad goalkeeper Alex Remiro and Athletic Bilbao defender Daniel Vivian also made their La Roja bows.

Dutch rout Scots

Elsewhere, Scotland’s winless run stretched to six games as their wastefulness in front of goal was compounded by a late collapse in a 4-0 defeat against the Netherlands in Amsterdam on Friday.

Trailing with 18 minutes left to Tijjani Reijnders’ fabulous first-half strike, the Scots then



lost three cheap goals in the final stages to flip the narrative from an encouraging evening to a chastening night. Georginio Wijnaldum and Wout Weghorst netted, before Donyell Malen added a fourth for a Dutch side short of their best.

Scotland have now conceded 18 goals in six games, with just three friendly matches to play before

they face hosts Germany in the opening game of Euro 2024.

Other results: Romania 1 Northern Ireland 1, Ecuador 2 Guatemala 0, Tanzania 0 Bulgaria 1, North Macedonia 1 Moldova 1, Armenia 0 Kosovo 1, Azerbaijan 1 Mongolia 0, Nigeria 2 Ghana 1, Liechtenstein 0 Faroe Islands 4, Norway 1 Czech Republic 2, Senegal 3 Gabon 0.

ILLUSTRIOUS DIPLOMATIC CAREER

Former PCB chairman Shaharyar Khan passes away at the age of 89



NEW DELHI: Former Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Shaharyar Khan passed away at the age of 89 due to a long-time illness in Lahore on Saturday.

PCB released a statement to announce the demise of Shaharyar Khan which read, “The Pakistan Cricket Board, through its Chairman, the Board of Governors and employees, expresses deep sadness and sorrow over the passing away of former PCB chairman Shaharyar Khan earlier this morning, in Lahore. He was 89.”

In December 2003, Shaharyar took over from Gen Tauqir Zia as PCB chairman. It was a time when PCB’s reputation suffered due to financial mismanagement and allegations of nepotism. After his arrival, the board transformed and appeared as a robust management. His appointment played a crucial role in

transforming Pakistan’s cricket.

In 2004, he appointed former English cricketer Bob Woolmer as the coach of the national team and bringing in Woolmer instantly reaped rewards as the team looked more stable. In October 2006, his tenure ended two months before his contract was meant to expire. He was accused of failure to handle players with authority at the time of the Darrell Hair-Oval crisis.

In 2006, umpires Darrell Hair and Billy Doctrove stated that the Pakistan team were involved in ball tampering on the fourth day of the fourth Test against England.

He was appointed as the PCB chairman following an illustrious diplomatic career. Between 1957 and 1994, he worked as Pakistan’s foreign secretary as well as the ambassador and a high commissioner. He was Pakistan’s ambassa-

dor to Jordan in 1976, before being posted to London in 1987. He also served as Pakistan’s Ambassador to France from 1999 until 2001.

Shaharyar also worked as team manager of the Pakistan team during the 1999 tour of India and the ICC Cricket World Cup 2003.

His second stint as the PCB chairman began in 2014 during a time when Pakistan cricket was once again stuck in turmoil. The chairman role saw a change several times between Najam Sethi and Zaka Ashraf. Shaharyar was finally inducted as the chairman unopposed.

Cricket had long been a part of his life - Mansur Ali Khan Pataudi, the former India captain, was his cousin. That his life extended far beyond the game is evidenced in his prolific authorship, which included a history of his home state Bhopal -

The Begums of Bhopal - and a book about the Rwandan genocide - *The Shallow Graves of Rwanda*. He also wrote a biography of his mother Princess Abida Sultan, called *Memoirs of a Rebel Princess*.

His attachment to the game and how he saw it as more than just a game, however, endured through three books. The first, *A Bridge of Peace*, was a manager’s diary of Pakistan’s 1998-99 tour to India, amidst historic peace-making overtures between the two countries and the Kargil war. He also co-authored a history of India-Pakistan cricket with Shashi Tharoor, *Shadows Across the Playing Fields*.

His last book, *Cricketer Caudron*, co-authored with his son Ali, was arguably his most impressive, a sprawling political, cultural and societal history of Pakistan through the prism of cricket. - Agencies

IN PICTURES



People welcome spring equinox in Mexico
People bask in sunlight in front of the Pyramid of the Moon to welcome the spring equinox, in the archaeological zone of Teotihuacan, Mexico. *xinhua*



Keukenhof park in Netherlands open to public to mark 75th anniversary
Visitors are seen at the Keukenhof park in Lisse, the Netherlands. Keukenhof, which is celebrating its 75th anniversary, is open to the public from March 21 to May 12 this year. *xinhua*



Four decades of weather watch atop east China mountain
An aerial drone picture shows a sea of clouds at Lushan Mountain in east China's Jiangxi Province. *Xinhua*



Giant pandas seen at Beauval Zoo in Saint-Aignan, France
Giant panda Huan Huan is seen at the Beauval Zoo in Saint-Aignan, France. *xinhua*



Rani Mukerji celebrates her 46th birthday
Bollywood actress Rani Mukerji poses for a picture with photographers during her 46th birthday celebration, at Yashraj Studio in Mumbai. *ANI Photo*



Models present creations during fashion show in Colombo
Models present creations during a fashion show at the Ratmalana Airport premises in Colombo, Sri Lanka. *Xinhua*



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MUSCAT: Lynk & Co, the premium automotive brand, jointly owned by Volvo and Geely is revolutionising the roads of Oman with its exceptional models. Engineered to redefine the driving experience, Lynk & Co represents the perfect blend of cutting-edge technology, superior craftsmanship, and remarkable performance. Committed to enhancing driving experiences across Oman, Lynk & Co announced unbeatable offers and test drive opportunities on its lineup of models. Now, owning a Lynk &

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roadside assistance. Additionally, benefit from complimentary registration for the first year and a generous 600 litres of fuel with each vehicle purchase. As a special bonus, receive a gift voucher worth RO 50 with your purchase. These exceptional offers are valid from 19th February, 2024, to 18th May 2024. It's a perfect opportunity to drive home your dream car with unparalleled benefits and savings. **Lynk & Co 01 - Stylish SUV** Lynk & Co 01, the stylish SUV model, sets a new benchmark of

excellence for the residents of Oman. Experience unmatched urban driving with the LYNK & CO 01 which blends style with advanced technology. Enjoy Smart Connectivity, City-Smart Design, and cutting-edge safety features like Traffic Jam Assist. With sporty elegance, the 01 offers comfort and sophistication through unique exterior elements and refined interior details. Stay connected with wireless charging, advanced infotainment, and intuitive HMI Interface. Prioritize safety with ADAS and an air-purifying cabin.

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Career Guidance Cell for students launched at ISD



MUSCAT: Indian School Darsait (ISD) took a significant step towards empowering its students with the inauguration of the Career Guidance Cell on March 17. The inaugural ceremony was attended by the chief guest, Shalimar Moideen, Vice President and Head of the Academic Subcommittee of the School Management Committee. Vijay Saravanan Sankaran, President of the School Management Committee, was also present on this occasion. Amar Srivastava, Principal, delivered the welcome address, setting the tone for the event. Dr. Nita Joseph, Coordinator of the Career Guidance Cell, provided insights into the objectives and initiatives planned by the cell through a comprehensive presentation. Shalimar Moideen captivated the audience with a compelling 'Career Talk' on Entrepreneurial Skills, shedding light on the challenges, risks, and ethical considerations inherent in entrepreneurship. The Career Guidance Cell at ISD aims to provide students with resources and support to explore diverse career options and realize their aspirations. In addition to personalized guidance, the Career Guidance Cell will offer a dedicated section on the school's website, providing students with access to valuable resources for exploring universities and colleges worldwide. Shamshad Hamza, Vice Principal of ISD, concluded the ceremony by expressing gratitude to all students, staff, and dignitaries for their invaluable contributions to making the event a resounding success.

ISC Oman celebrates International Women's Day



MUSCAT: Indian Social Club (ISC) Oman, organised a ladies event on March 7 to celebrate International Women's Day on the premises of Indian Social Club at Darsait. The event kicked off with the Ladies' coordinator Mariam Cherian highlighting the great strides women have made through the years. It was followed by the ladies dancing to the thumping musical beats of the DJ of the evening, Prakash Wadhwani. The ladies danced to their hearts content. There were exciting spot prizes some of which were complimentary gifts sponsored by Mawarid Trading Company and Sanghani Trading Co. The ladies enjoyed their special day thoroughly. The assorted live chaat kept them fuelled to expend all their energy on the dance floor. The selfie corner was yet another attraction for the ladies to indulge in photography sessions with their stylish poses. The placards with catch phrases were very inviting to the selfie corner. The event concluded with the vote of thanks by the Ladies' Coordinator conveying her appreciation to the Chairman of the ISC Babu Rajendran for the continued support of ISC for such events.

Exclusive benefits on Toyota's popular Hilux and Land Cruiser pick-up models



MUSCAT: Toyota has built a huge reputation for manufacturing iconic workhorses like the Hilux and the Land Cruiser pick-up. Engineered to extract the maximum on every journey, these models along with the Toyota Oman's Biggest Excitement benefits makes owning either of them an absolutely profitable decision. Customers looking forward to owning the Hilux or the Land Cruiser pick-up can avail a chance to enter the Raffle draw & win 5 Toyota Crown cars and avail exclusive benefits including Service for 3 Years / 30,000 kms (whichever is earlier) and Insurance 1 Year. Apart from that customers can also avail attractive instalments. The campaign is valid until to May 1 (Prospective buyers may be advised that the benefits vary between model variants, model year and manufacturing year. EMI calculated are for base models with 20 percent down payment for 10 years. Loan approval is based on the sole discretion of banks. Terms & Conditions apply. Customers can visit any Saud Bahwan Automotive showroom for exact details.)

The Toyota Hilux is equipped with a powerful 4.0 Litre V6 Engine with 235 HP & 38.3 Kg-m Torque. It has an Auto Disconnect Differential to keep the tempo going. The 4.0 Litre V6 Toyota Hilux Adventure gets your pulse racing. Similarly the Hilux 4X4 is equipped with a 2.7 Litre Petrol Engine that is available in 5-speed Manual Transmission and 6 Speed Automatic Transmission, outputting 164 HP. The Hilux's interior continues the concept of "Tough and Emotional", and reflects the same attention to detail as the exterior with SUV vehicle styl-

ing, accents and ornamentations. The key features that keep you comfortable are the Auto Air conditioner with rear vents, Multi-Information Display (MID), 8" Navigation and many more. The Hilux comes equipped with a number of active and passive safety features like Anti-Lock Braking System (ABS), Electronic Brake-Force Distribution (EBD) and Brake Assist (BA), Vehicle Stability Control (VSC), Hill Assist Control (HAC), Trailer Sway Control and SRS Airbags for the Driver and Front Passenger. The Land Cruiser pick-up is a

Part-time 4WD with easy switching between 4WD and 2WD mode - it is powered by a mighty 4.0L V6, VVT-i Engine generating 228 HP. The Land Cruiser Pick-up is well-detailed and has Classy Silver Garnish on AC Vents, Keyless Entry System, Fog Lamps, Power Windows, Woodgrain Panelling, Wood Finish Steering Wheel, Chrome Outer Mirrors with Turn Signals, Front Bumper Guard and much more. The Toyota Land Cruiser Pick-up is packed with many features that include an Advanced 7" Navigation System with DVD Player featuring AUX, USB and Bluetooth, Stylish Radiator Grille in addition to Daytime Running Lights (DRL) and side protection moulding with chrome inserts. The Land Cruiser Pick-up offers reassuring levels of protection thanks to many Safety Features such as Electronic Brake Force Distribution (EBD), Vehicle Stability Control (VSC), Active Traction Control (ATRC), Hill Assist Control (HAC), Brake Assist (BA), Electrical Winch, Rear Differential Lock, Driver + Front Passenger Airbags, Rear View Camera, etc.

Bank Nizwa launches exclusive Ramadan auto finance campaign



MUSCAT: In alignment with its customer-centric operational ethos, and dedication to providing exceptional value to its customers, Bank Nizwa, the leading and most trusted Islamic bank in the Sultanate of Oman, recently announced its exclusive Ramadan auto finance campaign, replete with remarkable benefits. Featuring competitive profit rates starting from 4.5%, the Ramadan Auto Finance proposition offers a multitude of benefits designed to enhance value and flexibility for customers. Notably, the offer includes a deferment of repayments for two months, alleviating the immediate financial burden, along with a waiver on the annual subscription fees for the first year on Bank Nizwa's Titanium Credit Cards. Furthermore, customers can anticipate swift finance approvals in just 24 hours through the IFIN platform. Enriched with such benefits, this limited-period deal from Bank Nizwa aims to simplify the application process while prioritising convenience and accessibility for all. Commenting on the offering, Mohammed Al Ghassani, Deputy

General Manager - Retail Banking at Bank Nizwa, said, "Once again, we present an attractive Ramadan Auto Finance offering that places paramount importance on meeting the diverse needs and preferences of our customers. With flexible repayment options, competitive profit rates, a two-month deferment on the initial instal-

ment, and value-added benefits, Bank Nizwa's Auto Finance solution facilitates customers in purchasing their new vehicles hassle-free, all while staying true to their beliefs and preferences. Adhering to the principles of Sharia, our Ramadan Auto Finance offering underscores our commitment to providing customers with innova-

tive financial solutions that help them fulfil their aspirations." It is worth noting that Bank Nizwa's Auto Finance blends flexibility and ease, giving customers access to varied repayment tenures and payment modes. Customers can avail themselves of a special profit rate of 4.5% for tenures below three years, while financing for tenures exceeding three years is available at a profit rate of 5%. Additionally, the bank extends a Post Dated Cheque (PDC) repayment option, allowing for tenures of up to 8 years at a profit rate of 5.5%. Furthermore, the offering encompasses comprehensive Life Takaful coverage, ensuring peace of mind for both the customer and their families. Tailored to meet the market demand for vehicle financing, Bank Nizwa's Ramadan Auto Finance solution is the ideal solution for anyone looking to acquire a new car during the holy month of Ramadan. As the most trusted Islamic bank in the country's financial landscape, Bank Nizwa cements its commitment to being the preferred banking partner for all through such offerings.



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