



ROHM UNVEILS SEASON 2024/2025

The Royal Opera House Muscat has unveiled details of its season 2024/2025, a season of highlights and exciting moments, with world-class performances for everyone to enjoy. The season will be featuring more than 50 performances in the main programming, offering no less than 5 operas, 9 Arab music concerts, 7 classical concerts, 4 family shows, 3 world music concerts, 1 extraordinary ballet, and a dazzling jazz concert. **>A4**



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TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN
Duqm Materials Market inaugurated

1 "Duqm Material Market", the third project in the China-Oman Industrial City in Duqm, was inaugurated on Sunday at the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD). The project has an investment cost of OMR7.5 million. **>A3**

WORLD
Shinawatra to be new Thailand PM

2 Thailand's King Maha Vajiralongkorn formally endorsed Paetongtarn Shinawatra as the country's next prime minister on Sunday. **>A7**

MARKET
Investments rise in Nizwa Industrial City

3 Nizwa Industrial City, has localised four new projects worth over OMR5.5mn on an area of 67,000 sqm during the first half of 2024. **>B1**

GAZA DEATH TOLL
as of August 18, 2024



Deaths
40,099
Injured
92,609

OMAN RECORDS TRADE SURPLUS OF NEARLY OMR3BN BY MAY END

The rise in the value of exports is mainly attributed to the increase in value of the Sultanate of Oman's oil and gas exports to OMR5.937bn



MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman's trade balance recorded a surplus of OMR2.989 billion by the end of May 2024, compared to a surplus of OMR2.986 billion during the same period of 2023, according to preliminary statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information

(NCSI). The statistics further indicate that the value of commodity exports reached OMR9.689 billion, an increase of 5 percent by the end of May 2024 from OMR9.224 billion over the same period of the previous year. The value of commodity imports to the Sultanate of Oman increased by 7.4 percent to

OMR6.700 billion by the end of May 2024 compared to OMR6.238 billion during the same period of last year. The increase in the value of exports is mainly attributed to the increase in value of the Sultanate of Oman's oil and gas exports to OMR5.937 billion, an increase of 1.8 percent compared

to OMR5.833 billion by the end of May 2023. The value of the Sultanate of Oman's crude oil exports amounted to OMR4.297 billion by the end of May 2024, recording an increase of 7.6 percent over the same period of the previous year, and the value of refined oil exports decreased to OMR579 million, a decline of 8.7 percent. **>A3**

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PRAYER TIMINGS



Dhuhr.....	12:16pm
Asr.....	3:42pm
Maghrib.....	6:42pm
Isha.....	7:56pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....	4:25am

ROP

Person held for trying to smuggle khat in Oman

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Royal Oman Police (ROP) arrested a person while he was attempting to smuggle more than 250 bundles of khat in his vehicle in Dhofar Governorate.

ROP said: “Dhofar Governorate Police Command, in cooperation with the Special Tasks Police Unit in Salalah, arrests a person while

attempting to smuggle more than 250 bundles of khat in his vehicle. Legal procedures are being completed against him.”

Two arrested

Two persons were arrested by the ROP for stealing electrical wires from several houses under construction in the Wilayat of Saham, North Al Batinah Governorate.

MINISTRY OF LABOUR

Entrepreneurship conference discusses use of AI in sustainable development

SALALAH: A two-day conference titled “Entrepreneurship, Employment and Localisation Policies”, organised by the Ministry of Labour, kicked off in the city of Salalah on Sunday.

The conference discusses the role of entrepreneurship in sustainable economic diversification and the development of non-oil sectors in the Sultanate of Oman.

The event coincides with the business forum themed “Together We Work, Together We Innovate and Prosper”.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Sheikh Salim Mustahail Al Ma’ashani, Adviser at the Diwan of Royal Court. The conference also discusses the use of artificial intelligence as a tool for planning and sustainable development.

The first day of the conference included two discussion panels, the first of which was titled “The



Importance of Localising Jobs to Serve the National Economy”.

The second showcased success models that emanated from the application of job localisation in the private sector. The conference includes three working papers: The first deals with freelance and its role in generating employment opportunities; the second reviews the “National Employment Policy” and the third outlines the Omanisation experience at Petroleum Development Oman (PDO). -ONA

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UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF LONDON

6 strategic programmes get approval

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Dr. Madiha bint Ahmed Al Shaibaniya, Minister of Education, patronised on Sunday the official announcement and receipt of the approval of the University College of London for six strategic programmes affiliated with the Specialised Institute for Professional Training for Teachers.

They are: Mathematics Experts Programme, Supervision Experts Programme, New Teachers Programme, Arabic Language Experts Programme(1-4), Senior Teachers Programme, and Science Experts Programme.

The function was held in the presence of Prof. Dr. Abdullah bin Khamis Ambosaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education, a number of the Minister's advisors, Dr. Said Al Amri, Head of the



Office of the Minister, Dr. Intisar Ambosaidi, Director-General of the Specialised Institute for Professional Training for Teachers, a number of stakeholders and a representative of the University College of London, at the Ministry's General Diwan.

Dr. Intisar Ambosaidi, Director-General of the Specialised Institute for Professional Training for Teachers, expressed her pride in the success of the Specialised Institute in obtaining the approval of six of its strategic programmes, pointing out the importance of this step in enhancing the quality of education, raising the professional competence of teachers, and empowering them with the skills necessary to teach efficiently and professionally in line with international standards and meeting the needs of the local education system.

On the importance of the Specialised Institute obtaining accreditation for the six strategic programmes, Dr. Intisar Ambosaidi explained: “On March 14, 2018, University College London granted accreditation certificates to the Specialised Institute for the programmes so that the qualifications granted by the Specialised Institute become at the level of a higher education diploma. This accreditation for the programmes of the Specialised Institute confirms that they meet the standards and requirements of Level 6 of the Quality Assurance Agency Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Wales.”



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COMMENTARY

They ignore you until they need you



SALEH AL-SHAIBANY

It is funny how friends only remember you when they need something from you while all the time they have been ignoring your messages or even calls.

I was smiling at myself this week when I received a message from a friend inviting me for her son's wedding (malka) when all this time he showed no interest in me. When I went for a coffee later that

day, the obvious explanation I came up with, gave a knock in my thoughts to offer the rationale behind his invitation. Of course, he needed people to attend the wedding of his son.

It was his son's big day and he wanted people to rejoice the day with him. Imagine having a celebration in an empty reception hall. It is unthinkable and cruel to the memories of your son when he looks back on his wedding night years later. I am not the only one who gets ignored and I am sure it happens to a lot of people.

How long does it take to read a message? Also, how long does it take to tap an answer? The big issue I hear from people is that too many messages are popping up in their phones from their groups. It is too difficult for them to keep track. But of course, when they need something from you then they will find your messages too

quickly. We usually go along with their excuses and get on with life. Personally, I don't have a quarrel with them. As a personal rule, I don't take that kind of reaction personally. I guess we live in different times now when personal messages fly around in the speed of light. We don't knock doors anymore or send invitation cards by post. We also use the spoken word as little as possible as we hurry up through life without pausing for a thoughtful word for each other.

Going back to the wedding invitation, I have every intention of attending the wedding of my friend's son. I would not miss it just because his father does not care much about some protocols in his life. Young people need our support as they set off to the long journey of matrimony. They don't need to be answerable to the mistakes committed by their parents.

So this week, I have started to take a stock of all the friends who responded to my messages and those who normally do not. There are 63 in total and I would say that only a few of them do respond. But on closer scrutiny, I realize now that I have not seen them face to face with the majority of them for many years. They are all too busy with their personal and professional relationships.

On further scrutiny, I also realise now that not many people these days have "soft skills" or "people skills" to forge good relations with others. On top of that, there are "writing skills," too, that they must possess to communicate effectively with messages. On the other hand, they also have their own priorities in life and that does not include responding to our messages. Until, that is, when they really need you to be there for them in time of need.

FOOD SECURITY

Salalah Free Zone houses 47 food projects

SALALAH: Salalah Free Zone is accommodating 47 food projects worth OMR775.6 million, comprising 16 percent of the total volume of investments in the zone.

The most important food products at Salalah Free Zone include milk and dairy products, fisheries, canned tuna, mineral water, sweets and fertilizers. These products enhance the Sultanate of Oman's position as an exporter of high-quality foodstuff and reflects Oman's commitment to support food security and develop exports.

Dr. Saud Hamoud Al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, said that his Ministry lays emphasis on achieving strategic objectives of food security, developing the agricultural and fisheries sector, improving water resources management and raising the added value of food products.

This was unveiled during the minister's field visit on Sunday to food and agricultural sector factories in Salalah Free Zone. The minister toured six main factories in the Salalah Free Zone, where he was briefed about the latest innovations in the field of food supplements and medicines at Philex Pharmaceutical Industries Factory.

The minister listened to proposals to establish a link among some raw materials units operating in the medical industries sector, including the extraction of active ingredients from frankincense, algae and seaweed.

The minister's discussions with factory officials covered ways to enhance food security by augmenting efficiency to meet market needs in a sustainable manner.

Salalah Free Zone offers economic incentives (including exemptions in tax and customs), allowing 100% foreign ownership of production units and waiving minimum capital portfolios, with the prime aim of bolstering the zone's attractiveness to the food industry. -OMA

DATA

Exports of plastics, rubber rise

< FROM A1 The value of the Sultanate of Oman's liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports decreased to OMR1.061 billion, a decrease of 12 percent, compared to the end of May 2023.

Statistics revealed an increase in the value of non-oil commodity exports increased by 11.2 percent to reach OMR3.045 billion by the end of May 2024 compared to OMR2.737 billion by the end of May 2023. Mineral products had the highest value of non-oil commodity exports, amounting to OMR1.101 billion, an increase of 23.1 percent over the same period in 2023, followed by base metals at OMR560 million, an increase of 8.9 percent, followed by products of chemical with an export value of OMR435 million, a decrease of 7 percent.

The value of the Sultanate of Oman's exports of plastics and rubber increased to OMR399 million, an increase of 13.5 percent while exports of live animals and animal products increased by 2.5 percent, reaching OMR149 million and the value of exports of other products amounted to OMR401 million.

The total value of re-exports from Oman increased to OMR707 million, an increase of 8.1 percent by the end of May 2024, compared to the end of May 2023.

The value of re-exports in transportation equipment products recorded OMR188 million, a decrease of 0.5 percent, and electrical machinery & equipment recorded OMR165 million, an increase of 2 percent. In foodstuffs; beverage and tobacco, the value of re-exports

increased by 13.7 percent to reach OMR66 million, while the re-export of mineral products reached OMR66 million, an increase of 56.2 percent. The value of re-exports of live animals & animal products decreased to OMR53 million, by 14.8 percent, while the value of other products amounted to OMR169 million. In contrast, mineral products had the largest value of commodity imports to the Sultanate of Oman, reaching OMR1.967 billion by the end of last May, an increase of 13.7 percent, followed by electrical machinery & equipment with a value of OMR1.121 billion, recording a growth of 18.5 percent by the end of May 2024, followed by base metals and their products with a value of OMR643 million, a decrease of 2.3 percent. -OMA

OMR7.5mn worth Duqm Materials Market inaugurated

The market in Duqm is built on an area of 32,000 square metres

Times News Service

DUQM: The Special Economic Zone at Duqm celebrated on Sunday the opening of Duqm Materials Market, an important addition to the special economic zone's dynamic business eco-system and the latest milestone in the special relationship between the Sultanate of Oman and the People's Republic of China and the third project in the Sino-Omani Industrial City in Duqm for light and medium industries.

The ceremony was held under the patronage of Xie Zhongmai, Commercial Counsellor at the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Sultanate of Oman in the presence of Eng. Ahmed Akaak, Acting CEO, Special Economic Zone at Duqm.

Home of green energy

Along with the dignitaries in attendance were representatives from over 30 Chinese companies looking to explore the many opportunities of the project as well as the game-changing possibilities of SEZAD, the home of green energy in Oman.

Speaking at the event, Su Wei, Chairman, Board of Directors of Duqm Materials Market and representative of Wanfang China in the Sultanate of Oman, said: "We are delighted to see the inauguration of Duqm Materials Market and look forward to the new opportunities for commercial co-operation between China and Oman it will open up. I have no doubt it will contribute to enhancing the long-standing friendship and trade relationship between our two countries as it enhances the presence of Chinese products in Oman and supports the manufacture of goods



ket, Mahmoud Al Jardani, Business Development Manager, Duqm Development Company, commented that the market is one of the largest retail projects on SEZAD. He noted that the Market was constructed, under the direct supervision of Duqm Development Company and highlighted key features contributing to its attraction for local and international companies.

Amongst these being its best-in-class integrated facilities and proximity to the Special Economic Zone infrastructure and amenity network.

Built according to the highest international standards, the 32,000 square metre Duqm Materials Market is a OMR7.5 million partnership between Wanfang China, Thabat Holding and Duqm Development Company. Its high-specification features include integrated state-of-the-art workshops designed for export-oriented manufacturers to establish a Middle East base and grow their operations.

The Market also boasts expansive multi-purpose exhibition space with a 16,000 square metre main hall and a 2,500 square metre secondary hall, both equipped to host displays of goods produced on-site as well as larger items such as cars and machinery available for import.

A range of building materials and equipment, electrical appliances and household items will also be available on permanent sale.

Supporting all activities and events at the Market are four 1,200 square metre warehouses while ample parking ensures visitor convenience at all times.



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ROYAL OPERA HOUSE MUSCAT ANNOUNCES

2024/2025 SEASON
Timeless tales and fabulous journeys:
An opera season beyond imagination

The Royal Opera House Muscat is delighted to present Season 2024/2025. Welcome to a season of highlights and exciting moments, with world-class performances for everyone to enjoy. The season is built from a significant variety, featuring more than 50 performances in the main programming, offering no less than 5 operas, 9 Arab music concerts, 7 classical concerts, 4 family shows, 3 world music concerts, 1 extraordinary ballet, and a dazzling jazz concert. Leading Arab and Western artists will grace the stage in a season packed with amazing productions running from October 2024 to the end of May 2025.

OPERAS OF PUCCINI, VERDI, AND DONIZETTI

Un Ballo in Maschera begins the season in Giuseppe Verdi's much-loved style. Joining us for the first time in Oman is The National Centre for Performing Arts Beijing (NCPA), with this Verdi masterpiece. This opera promises a stellar lineup with Elena Stikhina, Piotr Bezcala, Liao Chaoyong, and Agnieszka Rehliś, staged by the world-renowned Hugo de Ana with Orchestra Teatro Lirico di Cagliari and NCPA Chorus conducted by Giampaolo Bisanti (3rd and 25th October). One of the most exquisite stories in opera, La Fille du Regiment by Gaetano Donizetti, follows this masterpiece, packed with infectious melodies and fizzing wit, making it a delightful treat to watch. Staged by Jean-Louis Grinda in an Opera Monte Carlo production, we welcome another exceptional lineup of artists including Jessica Pratt, Antonio Siragusa, Veronica Simeoni, and Omar Montanari with the Arcangelo Corelli Orchestra and Opera Monte Carlo Chorus conducted by Antonello Allemandi (5th and 7th December).

We continue the season with Simon Boccanegra, by Giuseppe Verdi, performed by the Mariinsky Orchestra and Chorus with the globally renowned Director of the Mariinsky Theatre, Valery Gergiev as conductor (23rd and 25th January).

Younger audiences will be captivated by Michele Dall'Ongaro's family opera, the timeless epic, Robin Hood, which will be performed by the Petruzzelli Theatre Foundation of Bari conducted by Pietro Maniti based on a libretto by Vincenzo De Vivo (18th and 19th April).

Our final opera will be the return of the successful ROHM's production La Traviata staged by Marta Domingo (May 1st and 3rd). Performed by the Orchestra and Chorus of the Teatro Carlo Felice di Genova conducted by the legendary Plácido Domingo, this remarkable production first premiered in 2019 and will feature leading opera stars including Yusif Eyvazov and Juliana Grigoryan in her debut as Violetta. This stupendous opera is enriched by the Compañía Antonio Gades, adding a rich dimension in flamenco dance choreography to the drama.

ARAB MUSIC STARS FROM ACROSS THE AGES

Programming of Arab Music throughout the season gathers stars and legends in concerts that warm the soul and reconnect with history and tradition. The annual Omani Women's Day concert celebrates an incredible lineup of female musicians, including Al Nour wal Amal Orchestra, the only blind all-female orchestra playing classical music, Nour Ayadi, and ROSO Ladies' Ensemble alongside Majida El Roumi (17th October). A scattering of diamonds lights up the season in solo concerts with Arab superstars, Majida El Roumi (18th and 19th October), Ahlam (14th November), with Ragheb Alama closing our season (23rd and 24th May). Enjoy an incredible first for ROHM, as Ahlam is invited to perform her concert in the open air of the maidsan, ensuring unprecedented access for a wider audience. We revisit legends in a special festival celebrating Mohamed Abdul Wahab's place as one of the greatest musicians in Arab music history (15th and 20th February). Enjoy a series of events and exhibitions, combined with two unique concerts to pay homage to his life and work (15th January to 27th February). Our annual respectful Ramadan series will take place in the holy month, with three different Omani groups performing each evening alongside visiting musicians from the region, lending their voices to the special moments of reflection (13th, 20th, and 24th March). A unique concert opens traditional Yemeni music to symphonic orchestra arrangements in Traditional Symphonies – A Journey through Yemeni Music conducted by Mohamed AlGhoom (24th and 25th April).

CLASSICAL CONCERTS

Our first orchestral concert of the season, A Musical Night from China, features the

exceptional participation of Soloists and the Choir of NCPA Beijing, including the celebrated baritone Liao Changyong accompanied by Orchestra Teatro Lirico di Cagliari and conducted by NCPA's Artistic Director of Music and Music Director of the NCPA Orchestra Lü Jia (4th October). With a unique programme from the traditional Chinese repertoire, this concert will feature a rare performance of the Pipa concerto from Zhao Jiping played by Zhang Hongyan.

To add to this exceptional lineup, the best baritone of our age, Erwin Schrott, performs A Romantic Evening of Music with the St Petersburg Northern Symphonia Orchestra of the F.I. Chaliapin St Petersburg State Music Theatre conducted by Fabio Mastrangelo (31st December). This special New Year's Eve concert promises a classical operatic repertoire with Erwin Schrott performing in the first half from a programme of famous arias with a second half presenting the much-loved music of Johann Strauss, magical waltzes, and all.

Complementing Verdi's Simon Boccanegra, the opera house brings a beautiful programme performed by singers, choir, and orchestra of Mariinsky Opera in Opera Masterpieces (24th January). This season will also bring back the annual Pipe Organ Concert, featuring the magnificent ROHM pipe organ front and centre, with the participation of the organist Claudio



Astronio, performed by the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra conducted by Gianluca Marciano (13th February).

The final classical Gala Symphony Concert brings extraordinary award-winning artists onto the stage of the Royal Opera House of Musical Arts with the great Plácido Domingo conducting the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra (2nd May).

Launching this season, ROHM is proud to collaborate with La Salle Gaveau to present The Piano Duel, an exciting play-off by two recent winners of the piano category of the world-famous Monte Carlo Music Masters Competition, also known as the Prix de Rancier III, a prestigious title conferred under the High Patronage of S.A.S. Le Prince Sovereign of Monaco. Aristo Sham (2023 Grand Prix) and Nikolai Kuznetsov (2021 Grand Prix) will battle on stage again, performing from the piano and orchestra repertoire under the baton of Alessandro Cadario joined by the Arcangelo Corelli Orchestra. The audience will be invited to take part in nominating the best pianist of the evening. (6th December).

Audiences of all generations can delight in magical children's classics such as Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone, as the fiction is brought to extraordinary life on a giant screen with the soundtrack played by the Armenian State Symphony Orchestra conducted by Justin Freer (10th and 11th April).

STUNNING BALLET AND DANCE PERFORMANCES

Fikret Amirov's ballet, One Thousand and One Nights comes alive under the direction of one of the most prestigious and recognized companies in the world, the Primorsky Stage of the Mariinsky Ballet in Vladivostok. The music inspired by Fikret Amirov's tours of Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Syria, Egypt, Morocco, and India, shows the efforts of the composer in capturing Arabic culture of music and sense of rhythm within the ballet. From its first night in 1979, this ballet was a triumph, described as truly expressing the poetry of the ancient tales in sounds, movements, and pictures (6th and 7th



February).

In a world premiere commissioned by the Royal Opera House Muscat, the Compañía Flamenca Antonio Andrade brings its brand-new production Memories of Alhambra to the stage with this fusion of Arabic Music and Flamenco (8th and 9th May). This new show promises to bring together Arab heritage of Flamenco from its original home in Andalusia where it developed Iberian, Gypsy, Arabian, and Berber influence within the classical genre of dance.

DAZZLING JAZZ

The opera house is proud to welcome the suited, charismatic, and musically brilliant jazz singer and pianist Anthony Strong for the first time to Oman for an exceptional concert featuring the songs from his latest album. Feel the soul-stirring charm and inspiration of the 'English Gentleman' performing with the brilliant Latvian Radio Big Band for a joyful repertoire featuring legends such as Nat King Cole, Frank Sinatra and James Taylor as well as stunning originals (28th and 29th November).

ICONS OF WORLD MUSIC AND CULTURE

With special pride for the ROHM vision for cultural enrichment and global

breadth in programming, the opera house has added two artists at the top of their field in a national genre. Nishat Khan takes the meaning of musicality to a whole new level with the sitar in a two-part concert with the European Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Walter Proost, the best musician of Indian classical music bar none in the world today (30th and 31st October). Cristina Branco will fill the auditorium with the soulful passion of Portuguese fado, hitting notes and emotions that will stir audiences very deeply (5th November).

SPECTACULAR SHOWS FOR EVERYONE

As always, the opera house strives to present a full and varied programme for every audience member to enjoy. Joining this world-class season is a captivating choice of family-friendly shows defining this as a year of stories and fairy tales. Beauty and the Beast on Ice will be presented spectacularly as ROHM welcomes Olympic award-winning ice skaters telling this tale as never before, with contortionists, German wheel acts, fire breathers, aerial acrobatics, and more (2nd, 3rd, and 4th January).

Other spectacular shows joining this season include the world premiere of 'Sword of Wisdom' Acrobatic Show an

awe-inspiring performance of the extraordinary U-Theatre ensemble with drumming, martial arts, acrobatic excellence, and dynamic percussion theatre (19th and 20th December).

Locals and tourists will also be able to rejoice in the popular annual Military Music: Oman and the World outdoor show, with guest participation from Austria and Jordan this season (7th, 8th, and 9th November).

A welcome return to the programming is the Folk Music Festival, this year inviting the wonderful countries of Bulgaria, South Korea, and Paraguay to join Omani folk musicians in a glorious presentation of heritage and cultural traditions (16th and 17th January).

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME

The 2024/25 calendar of educational activities will include two Open House days designed for local enthusiasts to discover the Royal Opera House Muscat uniquely. The first Open House event will focus on the World of Fairy Tales (21st December) with a full day of activities inspired by fabled stories of childhood, designed for families and children. The second Open House, Join Us! will showcase the different professions of the theatre with staff hosting workshops on make-up, costumes, props, sound, photography, storytelling, and design (1st February).

Special Projects (in April and May) around specific shows will also be presented, including Harry Potter: A World of Magic, La Traviata Project, Welcome to Sherwood Forest with Robin Hood! and Paganini for Everyone focused on Nicolo' Paganini's role on the history of the violin and music itself.

Several masterclasses with leading artists including Ambassador of Song Thomas Hampson, renowned conductor Fabio Mastrangelo, soprano Joyce El Khoury, world-class musicians Simon Zhu and Gile Bae, and organist Claudio Astronio will also be offered to music students based in Oman.

This year, ROHM is also launching a new educational activity Let's Read to complement a season full of fairy tales, featuring monthly reading groups for children, young adults, and families. In an exciting collaboration with Elisabetta Dami, we welcome the author and her internationally adored creation Geronimo Stilton for a theatrical presentation of stories (6th November).

ROHM will offer local schools exclusive morning performances of the Robin Hood family opera (15th, 16th, and 17th April), giving both local Arabic and international schools a unique opportunity to enjoy this captivating production.

Finally, this year's Summer Camp will feature two amazing weeks inspired by the world of Superheroes during which children will be introduced to music, theatre, dance art, and technology.

OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

The outreach programme will include established activities that run throughout the season including Lunch Music in the Opera Galleria; Coffee and Dates, exclusive talks with the artists; Opera Talks with our musicologist in the music library; the Absolute Music Series, and Movie Nights.

In this season's Absolute Music Series, ROHM welcomes the soprano Joyce El Khouri accompanied by pianist Serouj Kradjian and a Lebanese ensemble for a unique concert entitled Scheherazade (21st October).

This year, ROHM is launching Emerging Talents, a three-concert format with young winners of international competitions performing in Muscat. This new concert series will present internationally recognised artists including 'Ambassador of Song', Thomas Hampson, accompanied by the Muscat Philharmonic Orchestra and Omani Opera Choir Group, conducted by Lubnan Balbaaki (9th February), pianists Aristo Sham and Nikolai Kuznetsov (6th December) from the Monte Carlo Music Masters and violinist Simon Zhu and pianist Gile Bae (24th February) from the Paganini Prize.

Following the launch of its Open Doors initiative in 2024, exporting scheduled productions outside the walls of ROHM, the opera house will continue to offer special performances for specific institutions, hospitals, and nursing homes in Muscat, with this year, the introduction of sign language across all educational activities to create more inclusivity.

Season 2024 - 2025 is richly sewn with the seeds of a truly magical season: international names of great note, popular shows, operas to feed the mind and soul, beloved Arab artists, and enough choice to inspire the love of music across all generations. Tickets may be purchased from August 18, 11:00 am.

Oman Sail's youth team looking to impress at Sur championship

The Oman Sailing
Championship 2024
is being held as part
of the Sur Maritime
Sports Festival

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Twenty sailors from Oman Sail's youth squad have taken to the water for the first day of this year's Oman Sailing Championship, taking place from 18-22 August at Mokha Beach in the Wilayat of Sur.

The sailors, who recently completed a Summer Camp at Ras Al Hadd in preparation for the event, will compete in Optimist, ILCA 4 and ILCA 6 classes.

In addition to Oman Sail's youth squad, three Optimist sailors from the Kuwait Sea Sport Club will also participate in the championship, adding a new dimension to the event and fostering greater regional collaboration in the sport.

The Oman Sailing Championship 2024 is being held as part of the Sur Maritime Sports Festival, organised by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and the Office of the Governor of South Al Sharqiyah, and running from 18-28 August.

Abdul Aziz Al Shidi, Acting Director of Sailing at Oman Sail, said, "We are very proud to stage the Oman Sailing Championship during the Sur Marine Sports Festival and share sailing with a wider audience by promoting the potential of the sport to energise Omani youth. The twenty sailors chosen to take part in the championship are the top ranked young sailors



in our program and will go on to represent Oman in national and international regattas in the coming months."

Sulttan Al Zadjali, Oman Sail's Assistant Youth Head Coach, added, "Our training camp in Ras Al Hadd provided the ideal preparation for this event, and the upcoming regattas, to give our sailors

an opportunity to perform at the highest level. We are looking forward to the Oman Sailing Championship and to entertaining visitors to the Sur Marine Sports Festival over the coming week”

After the conclusion of the Oman Sailing Championship 2024, members of Oman Sail's youth squad will travel to Tekirdag, Türkiye, to race at the VIII International Suleymanpaşa Optimist Cup from 1-5 September 2024.

The annual event attracts sailors from south eastern Europe, as well as North Africa and West Asia with a strong Turkish contingent expected once again this year.

This will be followed by the 13th edition of Mussanah Race Week, organised by Oman Sail at Barcelo Mussanah Resort from 1-8 October 2024, where the team will join sailors from across the region to compete in Optimist and ILCA 4, ILCA 6 and ILCA 7 classes, as well as the Para Inclusive RS Venture Connect class.

WORKSHOP



'Oman to be in strongest possible position in the future of the digital world'

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Workshop on Enhancing & Regulating Connectivity calls for ensuring that the Sultanate is in the forefront in the future of digital world.

The two-day workshop on Enhancing and Regulating Connectivity conducted by leading auditing and consulting firm Crowe, concluded at the Hormuz Grand hotel on Wednesday.

The delegates were mainly representatives from the Telecom Regulatory Authority (TRA), Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MTCIT), Oman Broadband, Omantel, Ooredoo, and Vodafone.

The Vice President of TRA, Omar Al Qatabi was the guest of honour.

Davis Kallukaran, managing partner of Crowe Oman, welcomed the gathering and said, "We now exist in a world of digital technology, which is transforming our lives, enabling more advanced services, and creating greater opportunities. It will require financial resources, world class oversight and our collective will to ensure Oman is in the strongest possible position in the

future of the digital world.”

“Huge increases in data transmitted around our immediate environment and further into the distant space help us to understand more about our surroundings. The massive mobile telecommunications infrastructure such as 5G, cloud systems and data analytics, all point to a new world of big data and massive transaction volumes.”

Financial measurement

"The cost of these developments is enormous, and the financial measurement and accounting in these sectors provides new challenges for scientists, policymakers, business managers and accountants. We need to understand what constitutes the space sector economy, how it should be measured and how market opportunities and risks should be assessed," Kallurakorn added.

Delivering the keynote address, Anna Coast, a finance professional specialising in regulatory consultations, accounting separation and radio spectrum valuations said, "The choice between new communication products and different connectivity solutions, run parallel with the increased complexity of the regulatory frame-

works that aim to mimic the business dynamics, and provide extra stability through the legislative and policy framework.”

"It is becoming essential for customers, suppliers, and investors to understand the changing dynamics of the cost drivers, the viability of different technology solutions and how business models will need to evolve. Investment not only relates to traditional network assets, but also to operating costs and intangible assets such as spectrum, all of which affect the resultant return and risk profile," she added.

Michael Byrne, an expert on regulation and competition law in the broadcasting, telecommunications, postal and energy sectors in the UK and Channel Islands, explored the evolving role of regulators at both national and international levels.

Prof. Hanna Rothkaehl, a senior space scientist in Poland, discussed some of the relevant issues related to space research, including the impact of space weather on connectivity.

Paul Kallukaran, Head of Technology at Crowe Oman, thanked the speakers and attendees for their insightful contribution to the event.

 AL JAZEIRA SERVICES CO. SAOG	P.O. Box 2855, Ruwi, P.C 112, Sultanate of Oman Tel.: 24706499, Fax: 24703653																																																																																																																																																																																												
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT	CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 JUNE 2024																																																																																																																																																																																												
Dear Shareholders, On behalf of the Board of Directors of Al Jazeera Services Co. SAOG, I am pleased to present the audited financial statements for the half year ended on 30 June 2024. Profits and assets The revenue from catering and allied services business for the half year ended on 30 June 2024 increased by 10% to RO 5,444,214 compared to revenue of RO 4,951,034 for the corresponding half year in 2023. The operating profit of the company was up by 14% to RO 367,975 from RO 323,129 for the same period in 2023. The net gains from investments for the half year ended 30 June 2024 was RO 145,121 against gain of RO 212,774 for the corresponding period in the year 2023. The share of profit from associate company, Al Anwar Ceramics Tiles Co. SAOG for the period was RO 128,736 down by 89% compared to RO 1,151,080 for the corresponding half year in 2023. The net profit after tax for the half year ended on 30 June 2024 was RO 557,757 down by 65% compared to profit of RO 1,613,952 for the half year ended on 30 June 2023. The shareholders' equity as on 30 June 2024 was RO 18,282,478 up by 3% against RO 17,756,948 as on 31 December 2023. Therefore, the net assets per share as on 30 June 2024 was 164 baisa as against 159 baisa as on 31 December 2023. Capital reduction The Board of Directors has decided to hold an Extraordinary General Meeting and propose to the Shareholders to approve the reduction of the capital of the company by 30% of its total amount that is from RO 11,711,717 to RO 7,820,202 and to distribute the reduced capital of RO 3,351,515 back to shareholders subject to the approval of the Financial Services Authority. Future outlook We remain focused on our core business of catering and allied services and our outlook for the future remains stable. I am pleased to report that your company has adhered to all the applicable regulations covering corporate governance in Sultanate of Oman. Acknowledgements On behalf of the Board of Directors, I express our sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik for his great vision and initiatives as he continues to lead the Sultanate on the path of development, peace and enduring prosperity. We also extend our sincere thanks to our Customers, Shareholders, Muscat Stock Exchange and Financial Services Authority for their continued support. I would also like to thank the management and staff for their commitment and hard work. Abdulredha Mustafa Sultan Deputy Chairman	<table> <tr> <th></th><th>Group 30 June 2024 (audited)</th><th>Parent Company 30 June 2024 (audited)</th><th>Group 31 December 2023 (audited)</th><th>Parent Company 31 December 2023 (audited)</th></tr> <tr> <td>ASSETS</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>Non-current assets</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>Furniture and equipment</td><td>74,667</td><td>6,148</td><td>76,777</td><td>7,306</td></tr> <tr> <td>Goodwill</td><td>90,000</td><td>-</td><td>90,000</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr> <td>Investment in subsidiaries</td><td>-</td><td>320,444</td><td>-</td><td>320,444</td></tr> <tr> <td>Investment in an associate</td><td>10,988,056</td><td>10,988,056</td><td>12,519,136</td><td>12,519,136</td></tr> <tr> <td>Financial assets at fair value through other comprehensive income</td><td>9,897</td><td>9,897</td><td>9,897</td><td>9,897</td></tr> <tr> <td>Deferred tax asset</td><td>219,480</td><td>215,454</td><td>223,772</td><td>221,041</td></tr> <tr> <td>Total non-current assets</td><td>11,382,100</td><td>11,539,999</td><td>12,919,582</td><td>13,077,824</td></tr> <tr> <td>Current assets</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>Inventories</td><td>378,041</td><td>-</td><td>352,240</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr> <td>Trade and other receivables</td><td>4,281,035</td><td>8,798</td><td>3,875,263</td><td>2,119</td></tr> <tr> <td>Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss</td><td>849,650</td><td>849,650</td><td>787,055</td><td>787,055</td></tr> <tr> <td>Due from related parties</td><td>3,249</td><td>1,559,558</td><td>3,073</td><td>1,669,522</td></tr> <tr> <td>Cash and bank balances</td><td>4,713,185</td><td>4,361,823</td><td>2,704,683</td><td>2,272,267</td></tr> <tr> <td>Total current assets</td><td>10,225,160</td><td>6,779,829</td><td>7,722,314</td><td>4,731,003</td></tr> <tr> <td>Total 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related parties	3,249	1,559,558	3,073	1,669,522	Cash and bank balances	4,713,185	4,361,823	2,704,683	2,272,267	Total current assets	10,225,160	6,779,829	7,722,314	4,731,003	Total assets	21,607,260	18,319,828	20,641,896	17,808,827	EQUITY AND LIABILITIES					Shareholders' capital and reserves					Share capital	11,711,717	11,711,717	11,711,717	11,711,717	Legal reserve	3,763,884	3,735,270	3,763,884	3,735,270	Retained earnings	3,603,340	3,451,161	3,045,583	2,897,601	Investment fair value reserve	(305,850)	(305,850)	(273,623)	(273,623)	Other reserves	49,387	49,387	49,387	49,387	Total shareholders' capital and reserves	18,282,478	18,101,685	17,756,948	17,580,352	Non-current liabilities					Employee benefit liabilities	580,278	55,495	558,414	52,259	Total non-current liabilities	580,278	55,495	558,414	52,259	Current liabilities					Trade and other payables	2,107,324	20,728	1,789,875	20,971	Due to related parties	536,374	121,033	367,278	134,358	Provision for 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Revenue from contracts with customers	5,444,214	-	4,951,034	-																																																																																																																																																																																									
Direct costs	(4,501,070)	-	(4,097,506)	-																																																																																																																																																																																									
Gross profit	943,144	-	853,528	-																																																																																																																																																																																									
Other income	20,356	-	17,801	-																																																																																																																																																																																									
	963,500	-	871,329	-</																																																																																																																																																																																									

India’s Jaishankar calls on Kuwait Prime Minister, talks of deepening ties

India and Kuwait share centuries-old bonds of goodwill and friendship and the contemporary partnership between both the countries is expanding steadily

KUWAIT CITY: The Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Sunday called on Sheikh Ahmed Abdullah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Prime Minister of Kuwait and held talks on the deepening of India-Kuwait ties. Jaishankar said that he valued the Prime Minister’s views regarding further economic cooperation. In a post on X, Jaishankar said, “Pleased to call on His Highness Sheikh Ahmed Abdullah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Prime Minister of Kuwait. Conveyed the greetings of PM @narendramodi. Appreciated his perspectives on the deepening of India-Kuwait ties. Valued his views in regard to further economic cooperation.” Earlier in the day, Jaishankar called on Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah



Al-Sabah, the Crown Prince of Kuwait and took his guidance and insights on taking India-Kuwait ties to a higher level. Jaishankar said that India and Kuwait share centuries-old bonds of goodwill and friendship and the contemporary partnership between both the countries is expanding steadily. In a post on X, Jaishankar said, “Honoured to call on His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, the Crown Prince of the State of Kuwait. Conveyed the greetings

of President and Prime Minister. India and Kuwait share centuries-old bonds of goodwill and friendship. Our contemporary partnership is expanding steadily. Thank him for his guidance and insights on taking our ties to a higher level.” Earlier in the day, Jaishankar arrived in Kuwait where he was warmly welcomed by Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Abdullah Ali Al-Yahya. Expressing his gratitude for the warm reception, Jaishankar said he is looking forward to his scheduled meetings with the Kuwaiti leadership.

In a post on X, Jaishankar had said, “Namaste Kuwait. Thank FM Abdullah Ali Al-Yahya for the warm welcome. Looking forward to my engagements today with the Kuwaiti leadership.” On Friday, the MEA said, “This visit will enable both sides to review various aspects of our bilateral relations including political, trade, investment, energy, security, cultural, consular and people-to-people contacts as well as exchange views on regional and international issues of mutual interest.” – ANI



HIGH-PROFILE POSITIONS

How European Parliament is helping normalise far right

BRUSSELS: The European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), the right-wing bloc led by Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, managed to secure high-profile positions on more than a dozen committees in the European Parliament following this year’s EU elections. Of the parliament’s 20 committees and four subcommittees, the ECR grouping has been allocated 13 positions, including three chair positions and 10 vice chair positions. Seven of these positions, on committees that cover key issues like foreign affairs, security, environment and public health, have been given to members of Meloni’s far-right Brothers of Italy party — up from one in the last parliamentary term. Carlo Fidanza of the Brothers of Italy told DW that his party was “proud” of this growth. Reacting to the news on July 23, Nicola Procaccini, co-chair of the ECR group and also a Brothers of Italy lawmaker, welcomed the growing role of his bloc in EU parliamentary affairs. “Despite the Left’s attempt to boycott us in all committees, the positive outcome of today’s votes shows that the majority has shifted and that the Conservatives can be decisive in this next five-year legislature,” he said in a statement. **Rise of ECR will ‘threaten liberal democratic values’** But some observers are worried that having ECR representatives in such powerful committee leadership positions could not only influence the parliamentary agenda, but also lead to a normalization of the far right within the European Parliament and progressively undermine democratic values. “The normalisation of the radical right as demonstrated by ECR’s course & the lack of cordon sanitaire toward it by mainstream



political groups threaten liberal democratic values,” Zsuzsanna Vegh, a program officer at the German Marshall Fund, a US public policy think tank, said on X. By cordon sanitaire, she was referring to the firewall strategy employed by mainstream political parties to block the far right from power by refusing cooperation. “This trend, if continues, could challenge the achievements of European integration,” she added. Not all parties in the ECR are considered far-right, but the dominance of the Brothers of Italy has some lawmakers and political analysts concerned. Julien Hoez, editor of a politics newsletter and EU affairs consultant, said the ECR is split between those who are just “euroskeptical right wingers [and] those who are more toxic far-right actors.” Their growing prominence in the EU, particularly of the Brothers of Italy members, “could have a negative effect on women’s rights, press freedoms and the competent management of migration issues,” he added. “They could try and push policy that blocks asylum-seekers and foreign workers from entering Europe,” said Hoez. Vegh pointed out that committee chairs and vice chairs play an

important role in planning and executing the legislative work of the European Parliament. They not only ensure discussion on various bills, but set the agenda, manage meetings and oversee who handles key dossiers on specific bills. “These are important positions when it comes to having an impact on legislative work,” she told DW. “Normalisation [of the far right] brings about better chances for representatives of such parties to influence European legislation in a direction that is in line with their ideological and programmatic preferences.” **How far-right is the Brothers of Italy?** After the EU elections in June, which saw the far right increase its influence in the new European Parliament, centrist groups joined forces to block far-right lawmakers from obtaining committee leadership positions. These far-right blocs include Patriots for Europe, parliament’s third-largest group with France’s National Rally and Hungary’s Fidesz, and the Europe of Sovereign Nations group, which counts the far-right Alternative for Germany among its members. The number of seats a politi-



cal group gets in a committee is proportional to the given group’s weight in the parliament. The political group decides internally which of its lawmakers will sit in which committee and proposes respective names, but the chair and the vice chairs are elected by committee members. Although committee members managed to enforce the cordon sanitaire against the Patriots for Europe and the Europe of Sovereign Nations, it didn’t follow suit with the ECR and the Brothers of Italy. Fidanza pointed out that this was because his party isn’t far-right, and blamed the label on left-wing political parties. “It’s the usual narrative of the left,” he said, noting that there were now two political groups further to the right than ECR. “Nobody in Europe with a minimum of good sense can consider our party as ‘far-right.’ The good result in terms of positions in the parliament confirms this.” **Despite moderation, Meloni still seen as problematic** Both Meloni and Marine Le Pen, of France’s National Rally, have moderated their parties’ most extreme policies in recent years in an attempt to increase their ac-

ceptability among voters. But, said analyst Hoez, “neither is particularly far from the other, and a lot of the ‘moderating’ and detoxification is down to communication strategies.” Meloni is ever so slightly closer to the center than Le Pen, so you could argue she has moderated more, but they also both represent the far right,” he added. “Brothers of Italy today falls in the populist radical right category based on its ideology and thanks to a process of moderation conducted by Giorgia Meloni,” said Vegh of the German Marshall Fund. “The initial roots of the party, however, connected it to the extreme right neo-fascist movement.” The Brothers of Italy has its origins in the Italian Social Movement, or MSI, founded by officials loyal to fascist dictator Benito Mussolini. Meloni was a member of the youth branches of MSI and its successor party, the National Alliance, and founded Brothers of Italy in 2012. Since becoming Italy’s prime minister in 2022, Meloni has tamped down her euroskepticism and sided with Ukraine over Russia, a shift that has been favorably noticed by EU leaders. In 2018, before coming to power, she hailed President Vladimir Putin’s reelec-

tion victory as the will of the Russian people, but lately she has been seen as a loud critic of his invasion of Ukraine. Meloni’s opposition to Putin has brought her in line with the EU’s critical defense policies. But she is still seen as problematic when it comes to European values and frameworks to guard them, such as media freedom. In its latest rule of law report, the European Commission reprimanded Meloni’s government for eroding media freedom in Italy since she took office. Journalists at Rai, Italy’s public broadcaster, went on strike in May accusing the government of stifling free speech. The EU called on Meloni’s government to take “into account European standards on the protection of journalists” and ensure “that rules or mechanisms are in place to provide funding for public service media,” guaranteeing its independence. **Far right taking aim at EU’s green policies** Katarina Barley, a leading politician with the center-left Socialists & Democrats, said in early July that the Patriots “must be isolated in the European Parliament” and prevented from “sabotaging constructive politics” in Europe. That view was shared by Terry Reintke, co-president of the Greens/EFA group, who told German media that the far right could destroy her group’s “green” policies. “This adventurous right-wing extremist movement must not be given committee chairs because its only goal is to block Europe, polarize societies, abolish the Green Deal, democracy, the rule of law and freedom of the press,” she said. But the Green Deal is also expected to be among the priorities for the ECR and of Brothers of Italy over the next five years. – DW

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SUPREME COURT

X shuts its Brazil operations over ‘censorship’ orders

CALIFORNIA: Social media website X, formerly Twitter, will wind up its local operations in Brazil after a legal battle at the Supreme Court over the platform’s rights and responsibilities, owner Elon Musk said on Sunday. But the company said the website would remain available to users in Brazil. While X argued that it was protecting free speech and standing up against “illegal secret censorship,” Brazil’s Supreme Court Judge Alexandre de Moraes argued he was standing up against disinformation and tyranny in Brazil. In April, Moraes had ordered an investigation into Musk, accusing him of “criminal instrumentalisation” of the platform. An order seen by AFP detailed that Musk had reactivated banned accounts and was then threatened with a fine for each instance. This comes roughly a week after Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro banned the website for a 10-day period over an election result dispute and accused Musk of inciting hate, civil war, and death. Musk has been increasingly outspoken on Latin American politics, as he has on politics in general, of late. **What did X say?** “Alexandre de Moraes threatened our legal representative in Brazil with arrest if we do not comply with his censorship orders. He did so in a secret order, which we share here to expose his actions,” X’s Global Government



Affairs department said in a post on Saturday. “We are deeply saddened that we have been forced to make this decision. The responsibility lies solely with Alexandre de Moraes,” the post read. “His actions are incompatible with democratic government. The people of Brazil have a choice to make — democracy, or Alexandre de Moraes.” The post said X’s numerous appeals went unheard at the court while the public was not informed of the orders. The Brazilian office’s staff had “no responsibility or control” over whether content was blocked from the platform. The decision to close down local operations was taken to protect the safety of the staff, it said. Billionaire Musk, in his post, said the decision was “difficult, but, if we had agreed to Alexandre’s (illegal) secret censorship and private information handover demands, there was no way we could explain our actions without being ashamed.” – DW

Over 10,000 Palestinians arrested in West Bank by Israel since Oct 7

The recent arrests across the West Bank were accompanied by assaults on detainees and their families, as well as widespread vandalism and property damage

GAZA: The number of Palestinians arrested by the Israeli occupation forces (IOF) in the West Bank since the beginning of the genocide on the Gaza Strip on Oct. 7 has risen to 10,100 detainees, after the arrest of 25 Palestinians during the past two days, including a female student and children, in addition to freed captives.

The Commission of Prisoners' Affairs and the Prisoners' Club reported that recent arrests across the West Bank were accompanied



by assaults on detainees and their families, as well as widespread vandalism and property damage.

The arrests of Palestinians in the West Bank have increased in frequency, coinciding with the ongoing Israeli genocide in Gaza, during which the Israeli occupation has slaughtered more than 40,000 Palestinian civilians and wounded nearly 100,000 others for 317 consecutive days.

IOF starts firing in Khan Younis, injures several others

The Israeli occupation forces (IOF) started a fire on Sunday in

west of Khan Younis City, south of the Gaza Strip, murdering a Palestinian civilian and injuring several others. Wafa news agency reported eyewitnesses as saying that the IOF started a fire targeting a group of Palestinian civilians in the vicinity of Hamad City, northwest of Khan Younis, murdering a Palestinian woman and injuring several other civilians.

Death, fear, and hunger: Israel's destruction of childhood in Gaza

Barely a day passes without reports of children being killed

alongside their families and relatives in Gaza, since the onset of the Israeli aggression on October 7, 2023.

For the 11th consecutive month of this genocidal war, the number of children killed by the Israeli assault has risen to 16,456, with thousands more injured, according to medical data.

The crimes of the occupation have not stopped there; its control over the Rafah border crossing with Egypt has prevented the injured from receiving treatment abroad, worsening the humanitarian crisis and leading to the deaths

of over a thousand children. This has added another layer of suffering to their ongoing tragedy.

On May 6, 2024, the Israeli military announced the start of a ground offensive in Rafah, southern Gaza. Ignoring international warnings about the impact on the displaced populations overwhelming the city, the military took control of the Rafah crossing the following day and tightened its siege on Gaza from all sides.

Children without childhood

Children in Gaza are not only facing death and injury but are also enduring the hell of fear and terror from intense airstrikes, constant displacement, and diseases resulting from overcrowding in inadequate refugee shelters.

UNICEF has warned that "many children in Gaza are no longer able to sleep or enjoy their childhood due to the horrors they have witnessed as a result of the Israeli war," expressing concern about their future if the war continues.

Salim Oweis, UNICEF's Media Officer for the Middle East and North Africa, has called on the international community to intervene to stop the war and restore the future of Gaza's children.

Oweis stated in an interview with Anadolu Agency that "children in Gaza are not living their childhood."

He added that "skin diseases, respiratory infections, and diarrhea have become common among Gaza's children."

He noted that "it is extremely difficult for children to live in tents during a scorching summer with temperatures reaching 35 degrees Celsius, which increases by 5 to 10 degrees inside the tents."

He continued, "Many children in Gaza are deprived of sleep because they are constantly thinking about the horrors they have seen and are afraid due to the ongoing war."

The UN official stressed that "there are many things the international community must do for Gaza's children."

Thousands of orphans

In hospital reception areas and beneath the rubble of destroyed homes, journalists and activists capture images of dead and injured children, their bodies stained with blood or dismembered, tearing at the hearts of those who view them.

The occupation shows no concern for the deaths of children, continuing its attacks across all areas of the Gaza Strip and disregarding all international laws and norms. — Wafa

4.8 MAGNITUDE

Quake strikes northern Chile

SANTIAGO: An earthquake measuring 4.8 magnitude on the Richter scale hit the Tarapaca region in northern Chile on Sunday.

The epicentre of the earthquake occurred 51 from the town of Camina, at a depth of 100.1 km, the US Geological Survey (USGS) reported.

There have been no reports of casualties or material damage due to the earthquake so far.

Chile is located along the Ring of Fire where many earthquakes and volcanic eruptions occur.

In 2010, a massive 8.8-magnitude earthquake struck central Chile, killing at least 500 people and triggering a tsunami. — ONA

YOUNGEST-EVER PRIME MINISTER

Heiress Shinawatra takes office as Thailand PM

BANGKOK: Paetongtarn Shinawatra — heiress and daughter of controversial billionaire and premier Thaksin, formally took office as Thailand's prime minister on Sunday, after receiving a royal sign-off.

The 37-year-old is the kingdom's youngest-ever prime minister and has come to power days after days after the Constitutional Court dismissed ally Srettha Thavisin as premier. The court also disbanded the main opposition party, adding to Thailand's ever-turbulent internal politics.

After the ceremony, she vowed to boost Thailand's sluggish economy.

"As head of the government I will work with parliament with



an open heart, open to all ideas to help develop the country," she said in her first press conference after the ceremony.

"Fellow Thais, this duty cannot be done by the prime minister alone. I hope I will be able to coordinate the power of all gen-

erations, all talented people in Thailand -- from the cabinet, the coalition, civil servants, private sector and the people."

Earlier in the day, Thailand's King Maha Vajiralongkorn endorsed Paetongtarn in a formality which will allow her to form a

cabinet in the coming weeks.

Paetongtarn said she will continue with all policies of her predecessor, which include a "major" economic stimulus and reform, tackling illegal drugs, improving the country's universal healthcare system and promoting gender diversity.

The government will also go forward with its flagship digital wallet policy — a handout programme worth 500 billion baht (\$15 billion) — but ensure the scheme is fiscally responsible.

"The goal is to stimulate the economy so this intention remains," Paetongtarn said.

The Shinawatra legacy

Paetongtarn is the third person

from her family to attain the position. The Shinawatra family has held significant sway over Thailand's politics and economy for decades, at times locking horns with the influential establishment and the royalist military.

However, her father Thaksin and aunt Yingluck were both thrown out of power in military coups.

Paetontarn, who is known in Thailand by her nickname Ung Ing, helped run the hotel arm of the family's business empire before entering politics three years ago.

She has grown her public profile and maintained a near-constant presence on the campaign trail during the 2023 elections. — DW

IN SEVERAL CITIES

Pro-opposition Venezuelans protest election 'fraud'

CARACAS: Supporters of Venezuela's political opposition took to the streets on Saturday in several cities in the Latin American country and abroad.

Venezuela's opposition disputes that President Nicolas Maduro won the presidential election on July 28.

On Saturday, thousands gathered in the Venezuelan capital, Caracas.

Opposition leader Maria Corina Machado called for independent, international verification of the July 28 election and urged protesters to stay in the streets.

"There is nothing above the voice of the people and the people have spoken," she said.

She also called for security forces to switch sides and support the opposition.

In the northwestern city of Maracaibo, hundreds had gathered by 9 a.m. local time (1300 UTC).

Hundreds of demonstrators were also seen in the cities of Valencia, San Cristobal and Barquisimeto.

According to Venezuela's opposition, there were also rallies in Spain, Australia, South Korea, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Belgium and Switzerland.

Over 7 million Venezuelans live outside the country.



What sparked Venezuela's anti-government protests?

Venezuela's electoral authority, the National Electoral Council (CNE), said that Maduro won just under 52% in this year's presidential election, securing him a third term.

The opposition alleges that the CNE functions as an arm of Maduro's ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV).

The opposition published what it claims to be 83% of voting machine tallies, which give its candidate Edmundo Gonzalez nearly

67% support. A government crackdown on protests has led to at least 2,400 arrests and clashes have led to at least 23 deaths.

The European Union and the Organisation of American States (OAS) have requested the publication of detailed results lists. The US and several Latin American countries have recognized Gonzalez as the election winner.

Earlier this week, a UN panel concluded that Venezuela's election lacked "transparency and integrity." — DW



BILATERAL RELATIONS

Nepal Foreign Minister to visit India

KATHMANDU: Nepali Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba will embark on an official visit to India for five days starting Sunday at the invitation of her Indian counterpart, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Nepal's Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Saturday.

As per the statement, Nepali Foreign Minister will be holding meetings with Jaishankar and will "discuss matters of mutual interest for strengthening Nepal-India relations and promoting cooperation."

"As part of the regular exchange of high-level visits between Nepal and India, this visit will further consolidate the age-old, deep and multifaceted bilateral relations," the release stated.

An official from the secretariat of Arzu Rana Deuba confirmed to ANI that she will also be tying "Rakshabandhan" to Vijay Chauthaiwale on Monday.

"The Foreign Minister was set to go India for medical checkup later next week. During the visit of Indian Foreign Secretary earlier this week, invitation for the formal visit of

The foreign minister came along. As it coincides with Rakshabandhan she will also be tying Rakshabandhan with Dr. Vijay Chauthaiwale," an official from the Foreign Minister's secretariat confirmed ANI.

During her stay in Delhi, Deuba will also hold talks about visit of Nepal Prime Minister Oli to India.

An official from the Foreign Ministry informed ANI that, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has extended invitation to his Nepali counterpart, KP Sharma Oli, during the visit of Foreign Secretary. — ANI

SPORTS

1-0 SERIES VICTORY



Proteas beat West Indies, earn crucial World Test Championship points

GUYANA: South Africa sealed a 1-0 series victory after a closely fought contest in Guyana that finished on the third day with a 40-run win over West Indies.

Keshav Maharaj and Kagiso Rabada's three wickets apiece in the second innings overshadowed Jayden Seales' career-best efforts of 6/41 earlier in the day, as per the ICC.

The morning began with South Africa resuming play on 223/5 with Kyle Verreynne and Wiaan Mulder on the crease who had put together a solid partnership on day two. West Indies, however, came back strongly.

Jomel Warrican sparked an implosion in the South Africa batting lineup, dismissing Mulder's leg-before wicket for 34 in the opening over of the day.

Soon, Seales followed with his end to send Maharaj, Verreynne and Burger back to the dressing room, completing his six-wicket haul. Proteas went from 223/5 to 246 all out, setting West Indies a target of 263 runs.

West Indies looked in the mood to chase the total with a cautious start of 54/1. As the hosts started to command, Mulder's two-wicket spell changed the course of the match once again. First, he trapped Kraigg Brathwaite in front for 25 and then cleaned up Keacy

Carty for 17. Rabada and off-spinner Dane Piedt took up the task of dismantling the West Indies middle order, reducing them to 104/6. Gudakesh Motie and Warrican were left to rebuild.

The West Indies duo stitched a counter-attacking 77-run partnership -- their highest of the match -- that refuelled their flames of hope. Maharaj flew back like a gusty wind.

The left-arm off-spinner Maharaj, who was wicketless so far in the second innings, removed the two set batters trapped leg-before wicket. West Indies now needed 81 runs with two wickets in hand.

Then, Rabada removed Shamar Joseph and Maharaj completed the Test win for South Africa with Seales' wicket, securing their 10th consecutive Test series win against West Indies.

In the process, Maharaj became South Africa's most prolific Test spinner with 171 wickets. His 13 wickets on the tour also earned him the Player of the Series award.

The win has helped South Africa jump two places, from seventh to fifth, on the World Test Championship standings while pushing Pakistan and England a place down each. West Indies continue to remain at the bottom of the table with one win in nine WTC matches. -ANI

CRICKET

Australia to host England in one-off match in 2027 to mark 150 years of Test cricket

NEW DELHI: The historic Test match between Australia and England in 2027 will take place at the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG). The match will mark 150 years of Test cricket since it was first played between the two teams in March 1877. It follows the 1977 Centenary Test which Australia won, like the first-ever match, by 45 runs.

Cricket Australia (CA) has also announced the allocation of hosting rights for various men's international Tests, ODIs, T20Is and other matches over the next seven summers, spanning from 2024-25 to 2030-31.

These arrangements are part of a series of strategic partnerships between CA and State and Territory Governments, designed to offer greater certainty for fans and communities while expanding cricket events nationwide, as per the ICC.

As part of this arrangement, the MCG will maintain its tradition of hosting the annual Boxing Day Test, while the Sydney Cricket

Ground will continue to stage the New Year's match.

The Adelaide Oval is set to host the "Christmas Test" each December starting from the 2025/26 season, featuring a mix of Day-Night and Day Tests. Meanwhile, Perth Stadium has secured the rights to host the first Men's Test of the summer until the 2026/27 season.

The chairman of Cricket Australia, Mike Baird asserted that it is hard to host the clash at the Brisbane Stadium because of its infrastructure.

"In Brisbane it is harder [to plan] because of the infrastructure. There is just uncertainty, so we're not sure of the long-term solution. What we do know is the Gabba has a use for life that ends in 2030. We need a solution and are working with the AFL as well on a long-term solution. We want a great venue in Brisbane that can support Queensland Cricket and Australian Cricket for years to come," Baird stated as quoted by ESPNcricinfo. -ANI

HUNGRY FOR WIN

It's been ten years of unfinished business: Lyon determined to turn things around in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy

NEW DELHI : Australia is determined to resolve a decade of unfinished business in their pursuit of reclaiming the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. Australia has not held the Border-Gavaskar Trophy since the 2014-15 series, which they won 2-0. Since then, they have suffered consecutive series defeats to India on home soil.

Notably, in the 2020-21 series, India famously rebounded from being bowled out for 36 in Adelaide to secure the series with remarkable victories at Melbourne Cricket Ground and Gabba, along with a gritty draw in Sydney.

For this generation of Australian cricketers, a series win over India remains a significant unachieved



goal. Current captain Pat Cummins, along with others, has yet to lift the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, despite claiming the World Test Championship (WTC) title in the one-off match at The Oval last year.

"It's been ten years of unfinished business, it's been a long time, and I know we're extremely hungry to turn things around especially here at home," Lyon was quoted by ESPNcricinfo.

"Don't get me wrong, India is an absolute superstar side and extremely challenging but I'm extremely hungry to turn things around and make sure we get that trophy back," he added.

"Feel like we are a different team to a couple of years ago, we are on

a journey of becoming a great Australian cricket team. We're definitely not there but we are along that journey and have been playing some decent cricket," the 36-year-old off-spinner said.

Lyon praised India's ability to produce some world-class players and singled out Yashasvi Jaiswal among the newer names. "I haven't come across him [Jaiswal] yet, but that will be a massive challenge for all us bowlers," Lyon said.

Nathan Lyon is eager to leverage the insights he gained from England's Tom Hartley during his time with Lancashire as he prepares to face India later this year.

"The way he played against England, I watched that quite closely

and thought that was quite amazing. I had some really good chats with Tom Hartley about different ways he went about it to different guys which I found quite interesting," he noted.

"I love talking about cricket, so if I can talk to someone who has played Test cricket I might be able to pick up something I'm not aware of. There's so much knowledge floating around this game that we can always tap into," he said.

Lyon knows that this could work in reverse for next year's Ashes, but when asked if he thought the conversations about India would prove valuable, he added, "If the plans we've spoken about come true, then I think it will be." -ANI

Oman set to organise first Socca Gulf Cup



The draw for the Socca Gulf Cup will be held on 19 August, at the Sultan Qaboos Complex for Culture

Times News Service

MUSCAT: As part of the Socca Oman convoy to promote the 2024 Socca World Cup, hosted by the Sultanate of Oman for the first time in the Middle East and Asia, the first Socca Gulf Cup will be launched in Salalah city in Oman during 1 to 4 September 2024 with the participation of eight teams from the Gulf countries.

It will be organised by the Sports Makers Company in co-operation with the Governor of Dhofar, Dhofar Municipality and the Directorate General of Culture, Sports and Youth in Dhofar Governorate.

The tournament will be held at Hawana Resort in partnership



with Al Fanar Hotel. The Socca Gulf Cup is the 3rd continental competition that takes place in 2024 after Socca Copa America and Socca EuroCup and it will be the major event of the Middle East countries as part of the holistic strategy of ISF.

The draw for the Socca Gulf Cup will be held on 19 August, at the Sultan Qaboos Complex for Culture and Entertainment under the patronage of Dr. Mahad Said Ba'owain, Minister of Labour, in the presence of a number of invited personalities from inside and outside the Sultanate of Oman.

Waleed Al Obaidani, President

of the Soca Middle East Federation and Executive Director of Sports Makers, said: "The first Socca Gulf Cup is the second stop of the Socca Oman convoy after the success of the first station in Nizwa, which witnessed a public attendance of more than one hundred thousand visitors to various events Caravan. Through the Socca Gulf Cup, we look forward to laying the first brick in the development of the six-a-side football game at the level of the Gulf countries and the Middle East, a goal that we set in partnership with those in charge of the game in the various countries participating in the tournament. The Gulf Socca Cup will be an opportunity for a number of Gulf teams to qualify to the Socca World Cup and catch up with qualified teams from America, Europe and East Asian countries, in addition to African countries and Australia. We have a clear vision for the countries of the Middle East and short-term goals to promote the sport of five-, six-a-side and seven-a-side football, like the high level that sport has reached in Europe and the rest of the world. We will soon be visiting the rest of the Middle East to showcase the vision and calendar of ISF in the region and

partner with various interested parties in those countries."

"Al Wusta Governorate and Duqm in particular will be the third stop of the Socca Oman convoy in cooperation with the Governor of Al Wusta, and preparations are currently underway with the committee in charge of providing a package of sports and entertainment events for the people of Al Wusta Governorate, including the Soka Oman Championship for the people of the province," Al-Obaidani added.

A roadmap has been developed to reach the Socca World Cup at the end of this year, starting with the Omani participation in the Copa Socca America in Mexico and the Socca European Championship in Moldova, through which the Omani team was able to reach the semi-finals and achieve fourth place in the European Championship in an unprecedented Arab achievement. The program prepared to promote Socca World Cup continues at Socca Oman stations in some governorates, which will conclude in Muscat Governorate at the end of next October, leading to the Socca World Cup scheduled during The period from November 29th - December 7, 2024.

FINTECH CONFERENCE

Riyadh will host the 24 Fintech Conference, the first edition of the international conference specialised in the financial technology sector. The conference will take place from September 3 to 5 at the Riyadh Front Exhibition & Conference Center. -SPA

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS LOWER

The MSX index closed at 4,691.48 points, down by 0.03% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.46% at 443.54 points. Dhofar Generating, up 6.15%, was the top gainer while Shell Oman Marketing, down 9.93%, was the top loser.

Nizwa Industrial City records OMR474mn in investments

During the first half of 2024, Madayn completed several key projects in Nizwa Industrial City, including the expansion of Phases 3 and 4 on 1 million sqm area



Times News Service

MUSCAT: Nizwa Industrial City, affiliated to the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), has successfully localised four new projects worth over OMR5.5 million on an area of 67,000 sqm during the first half of 2024, bringing the total investment volume in Nizwa Industrial City to OMR474 million.

According to Salah bin Nasser Al Alawi, Acting Director General of Nizwa Industrial City, the total number of projects at various stages of development has reached 173, with a workforce of 5,707 employees and an Omanisation rate of 45 per cent. These projects include 154 operating projects, 8 projects allocated with space, and 13 projects under construction. Of the 3.1 million sqm area of developed land, 76 per cent is currently occupied, while the total area of the industrial city exceeds 7.2 million sqm," Al Alawi noted.

Al Alawi highlighted that dur-

ing the first half of 2024, Madayn completed several key projects in Nizwa Industrial City, including the expansion of Phases 3 and 4 on one million sqm area. "These expansions involve developing basic services, adding a new entrance to the city, and implementing fiber optic network in cooperation with Oman Broadband Company. Additionally, Madayn is currently preparing the master plan for Phase 5, which covers 4.1 million sqm area. The project, which comprises preparing consultancy studies, is expected to be completed in the second half of 2024. Land will be available for investment once the project is completed," he informed.

He also pointed out that Madayn, in collaboration with the SMEs Development Authority, is working on the development of Madayn Entrepreneurial Complex on 11,000 sqm area. This new complex will feature 10 industrial workshops tailored for the SMEs, and the construction is set to be



completed in 12 months.

Al Alawi added, "Ongoing projects in Nizwa Industrial City also include the master plan for the

residential project spanning 78,000 sqm, which will be open for investment after the plan is finalised. Several environmental sustainability

projects are also in progress, such as planting over 600 trees in phases 3 and 4. Additionally, the management of the industrial city recently

leased a 34,000-sqm commercial area at the city's entrance to an investor, which will provide services to local companies, employees, and nearby residential areas."

Al Alawi emphasised on the diverse range of projects within Nizwa Industrial City, including food industries, construction materials, glass, wood, and steel. The city is also home to several oil and gas companies involved in equipment maintenance, alongside a variety of SMEs providing services to the factories and employees. Looking ahead, Nizwa Industrial City is preparing for the inauguration of several key industrial projects in the coming period, including a specialised medical solutions factory currently under construction, which will play a fundamental role in enhancing health security in Oman.

COLLABORATION



Zubair EDC signs agreement to empower entrepreneurs through innovative crowdfunding solutions

Times News Service

MUSCAT: In a significant step towards empowering entrepreneurs with innovative financial solutions, Zubair Enterprises Development Centre (Zubair EDC) - a social initiative by The Zubair Corporation, has signed a strategic partnership with Wadiaa.

This collaboration aims to provide cutting-edge crowdfunding solutions that will attract start-ups and investors, both individual and institutional, fostering smart investments and contributing to the prosperous future of the nation.

The agreement was signed by Hamza Al Lawati, Co-Founder and CEO of Wadiaa, and Hilal Al Siyabi, Chief Corporate Services Officer at The Zubair Corporation.

Commenting on the agreement, Hilal Al Siyabi stated the importance of supporting innovative

ideas and solutions, expressing hope for the success of this cooperation with Wadiaa Platform. He also highlighted the need to raise awareness of these technical solutions among the Centre's members and Zubair Corporation employees, encouraging the adoption of more innovative and sustainable ideas across various levels.

Ali Shaker further emphasised "This partnership aligns perfectly with our strategy to support entrepreneurs and provide them with the opportunities they need to succeed. By signing this agreement with Wadiaa, we are opening new and alternative channels to finance the projects of our members, particularly those entering the growth and expansion stages of their businesses.

"The availability of these alternative financing solutions is crucial, given the challenges that

project owners face in securing traditional financing, which is one of the major obstacles for entrepreneurs in Oman, according to studies and field statistics."

Wadiaa, based in the Sultanate of Oman, is at the forefront of providing financial solutions and crowdfunding services through advanced technology.

The platform facilitates financing through both capital participation and lending, creating a vital link between projects and companies with investors, thereby driving economic progress and social development.

Expressing his enthusiasm for the partnership, Hamza Al Lawati said, "We are thrilled to collaborate with Zubair EDC, whose support and facilities will play a crucial role in achieving our company's goals. This partnership provides us with an invaluable

opportunity to extend our innovative solutions to companies on the brink of growth, enabling them to benefit from the offerings of the Wadiaa."

Mahmoud Al Ameri, Chief Operating Officer of Wadiaa, added, "We look forward to a productive collaboration with Zubair EDC by providing innovative financing solutions to its members. Additionally, we aim to introduce investment opportunities available through Wadiaa and educate The Zubair Corporation employees on the investment mechanisms for both individuals and institutions."

Established in 2013, Zubair EDC is a cornerstone of The Zubair Corporation's social responsibility initiatives, reflecting its commitment to the advancement of small enterprises and sustainable economic and social development in Oman.

FOREIGN PORTFOLIO INVESTORS

Experts upbeat on Indian stock market despite FPI selling

NEW DELHI: Despite the continued stock selling by Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) in August so far, the stock market experts have expressed a positive outlook for the market opening in the upcoming week starting from Monday.

Favourable global cues

According to the market analysts, the market will be driven by favourable global cues and domestic economic data such as the HSBC India Manufacturing PMI and HSBC India Services PMI.

The upcoming week is particularly important because the FPIs have sold net equities worth Rs 21,201 crore during August.

Foreign investors have been reducing their exposure to Indian equities by selling equities worth Rs 7,769.73 crore in just the last week (August 12 to 17).

This activity has caused their net investment for August to turn negative, signalling a shift in the investment.

"For India, the one issue is continued FPI selling which has taken out nearly USD 2.8 billion from the cash equities segment this month so far. We remain positive on the Indian markets and expect a move up," said Ajay Bagga, Market and Banking expert.

"We remain positive on the Indian markets and expect a move up," he added expressing his optimism in the upcoming trading days.

Interestingly, at a time when overseas investors were net sellers in Indian equities, domestic institutional investors remained net buyers, largely compensating for the outflows by foreign investors.

According to NSE data, the net gross purchase by domestic investors (DIIs) in August stands at Rs 34,060.09 crore.

The benchmark indices witnessed a strong rally on the last trading day of the previous

week, with both the NSE Nifty 50 and the BSE Sensex posting significant gains. On Friday, August 16, the Sensex increased by 1,330.96 points, or 1.68 per cent, to complete the day at 80,436.85, while the Nifty 50 at the National Stock Exchange (NSE) soared by 397.40 points, or 1.65 per cent, to close at 24,541.15.

Market analysts say that the stock markets have responded impressively to global risks in the past few months and will be reacting positively in the upcoming week due to the indication of favourable US economic macro-economic indications.

"The recent economic data reinforcing expectations that the Federal Reserve will soon lower interest rates. The market will also closely watch various Fed Officials' commentary to take further clue regards to their views on Interest rate trajectory, economy and Inflation," a market commentary by Pantomath Capital Advisors Private Limited added.

Among the key sectoral indices, IT saw significant gains, followed by realty and auto, while energy and metal sectors ended in the red. The broader indices also managed to recover losses, with the midcap index gaining nearly a per cent and the small-cap index finishing almost flat.

"With the earnings season concluded, attention will now shift to global markets for cues, particularly in light of the notable recovery in US markets, which has eased recession fears," said Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd.

"Domestically, market participants will be watching institutional flows and upcoming economic data, such as the HSBC India Manufacturing PMI and HSBC India Services PMI, for direction," he added.

MARKET

MSX index ends lower

Dhofar Generating, up 6.15%, was the top gainer while, Shell Oman Marketing, down 9.93%, was the top loser



MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,691.48 points, down by 0.03% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.46% at 443.54 points. Dhofar Generating, up 6.15%, was the top gainer while, Shell Oman Marketing, down 9.93%, was the top loser. Shares of Bank Nizwa were the most active in terms of number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 399 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of RO 2.7 million, with more than 15.99 million shares changing hands. Out of 46 traded securities, 16 advanced, 17 declined, and 13 remained unchanged. At the session close, GCC & Arab investors were net buyers for RO 111K, followed by foreign investors for RO 88K worth of shares. Financial Index closed at 7,660.75 points, up 0.12%. Prices of Global Financial Investments, Al Madina Takaful, Bank Nizwa, Bank Muscat were up by 1.35%,

1.32%, 0.97%, 0.39% respectively. Prices of Al Madina Investments, United Finance, Al Sharqia Investment, Al Anwar Investment were down by 1.75%, 1.72%, 1.33%, 1.32% respectively. Industrial Index closed at 5,830.12 points, down 0.51%. Prices of Voltamp Energy, Al Maha Ceramics, Galfar Engineering were up by 2.02%, 1.33%, 0.71% respectively. Prices of Raysut Cement, Al Anwar Ceramics, Oman Flour Mills, A'Saffa Foods, Jazeera Steel Products were down by 2.36%, 2.24%, 2.08%, 1.96%, 1.79% respectively. Services Index was up by 0.01% before closing at 1,819.50 points. Prices of Dhofar Generating, OIFC, Al Batinah Power, Renaissance Services, Abraj Energy were up by 6.15%, 1.37%, 1.35%, 0.78%, 0.33% respectively. Prices of Shell Oman Marketing, Musandam Power, OQ Gas Networks, Muscat Gases, Oman Oil Marketing were down by 9.93%, 2.31%, 1.41%, 0.81%, 0.50% respectively.— **United Securities**

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev . Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	4,695.76	4,686.52	4,691.48	4,693.12	-1.64	-0.03
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,667.89	7,648.39	7,660.75	7,651.94	8.81	0.12
Industry Index	5,856.85	5,830.12	5,830.12	5,859.88	-29.75	-0.51
Services Index	1,820.79	1,816.09	1,819.50	1,819.25	0.24	0.01
MSX Shariah Index	443.54	440.45	443.54	441.50	2.04	0.46
MSX TR INDEX	6,526.36	6,513.53	6,520.41	6,522.69	-2.28	-0.03
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,711.51	8,689.36	8,703.39	8,693.39	10.00	0.12
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	6,757.41	6,726.58	6,726.58	6,760.91	-34.33	-0.51
SERVICES TR IDX	2,118.77	2,113.30	2,117.26	2,116.98	0.28	0.01
FIXED INCOME INDEX	1,069.10	1,069.10	1,069.10	1,069.10	0.00	0.00

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
15,994,170	2,695,469	399	24,390,733,294	16	17	13	46

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR SUNDAY, AUGUST 18

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PR.	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PUR VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET																
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO	118,360	8,873	7	0.075	0.076	0.074	0.075	0.074	0.001	1.351	0.075	0.074	0.075	0.100	15,000,000
OM0000004925	ALBATTINAH POWER	435,718	32,248	9	0.074	0.075	0.074	0.075	0.074	0.001	1.351	0.075	0.074	0.079	0.100	50,616,557
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	136,667	10,485	9	0.076	0.077	0.075	0.077	0.076	0.001	1.316	0.077	0.077	0.078	0.100	13,475,000
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	134,219	62,309	42	0.387	0.390	0.387	0.388	0.385	0.003	0.779	0.388	0.386	0.389	0.100	91,727,080
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	1,799,963	459,635	32	0.255	0.256	0.254	0.256	0.255	0.001	0.392	0.256	0.256	0.256	0.100	1,921,637,648
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	455,670	137,516	39	0.300	0.303	0.300	0.302	0.301	0.001	0.332	0.302	0.301	0.302	0.100	232,600,400
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	186,474	186,507	23	1.000	1.001	0.999	1.001	1.000	0.001	0.100	1.001	0.995	1.000	0.100	750,750,000
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO	20,000	1,480	4	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.000	0.000	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.100	9,018,750
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	83,878	11,156	4	0.133	0.133	0.133	0.133	0.133	0.000	0.000	0.133	0.132	0.135	0.100	741,773,754
OM0000004735	SEMBOORP SALALAH	5,050	625	3	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.000	0.000	0.104	0.103	0.104	0.100	99,275,483
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	19,000	1,444	4	0.076	0.076	0.076	0.076	0.076	0.000	0.000	0.076	0.076	0.080	0.100	54,294,882
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	90,230	25,535	3	0.281	0.283	0.281	0.283	0.284	-0.001	-0.352	0.283	0.281	0.286	0.100	184,217,217
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	8,702	3,479	6	0.400	0.400	0.398	0.398	0.400	-0.002	-0.500	0.398	0.398	0.400	0.100	131,687,339
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIA INVESTMENT HO	15,000	1,110	1	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.075	-0.001	-1.333	0.074	0.074	0.077	0.100	6,660,000
OM0000008072	OQ GAS NETWORKS	789,795	111,336	72	0.141	0.141	0.140	0.140	0.142	-0.002	-1.408	0.140	0.140	0.142	0.100	606,287,349
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	97,200	5,540	2	0.057	0.057	0.057	0.057	0.058	-0.001	-1.724	0.057	0.057	0.063	0.100	20,299,256
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	1,000	275	1	0.275	0.275	0.275	0.275	0.280	-0.005	-1.786	0.275	0.280	0.280	0.100	34,344,939
OM0000002804	ASAFA FOODS	2,580	1,041	4	0.400	0.408	0.400	0.400	0.408	-0.008	-1.961	0.400	0.400	0.408	0.100	48,000,000
OM0000000128	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	8,000	1,400	1	0.175	0.175	0.175	0.175	0.179	-0.004	-2.235	0.175	0.173	0.184	0.100	38,500,000
OM0000007811	MUSANDAM POWER	5,000	1,270	1	0.254	0.254	0.254	0.254	0.260	-0.006	-2.308	0.254	0.254	0.000	0.100	17,879,060
OM0000002275	SHELL OMAN MARKETING	100	74	1	0.735	0.735	0.735	0.735	0.816	-0.081	-9.926	0.735	0.735	0.820	0.100	69,825,000
Total		21	4,412,606	1,053,138	268											
Parallel Market																
OM0000007407	DHOFAR GENERATING	10,000	690	1	0.069	0.069	0.069	0.069	0.065	0.004	6.154	0.069	0.067	0.070	0.100	15,334,560
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	1,274	441	3	0.344	0.353	0.344	0.353	0.346	0.007	2.023	0.353	0.345	0.353	0.100	28,735,171
OM0000008868	THE PEARL REIF	200	23	2	0.115	0.117	0.115	0.117	0.115	0.002	1.739	0.117	0.115	0.117	0.100	59,448,115
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	290	44	2	0.151	0.152	0.151	0.152	0.150	0.002	1.333	0.152	0.152	0.160	0.100	8,360,000
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	10,363,000	1,117,691	16	0.103	0.108	0.103	0.104	0.103	0.001	0.971	0.104	0.103	0.104	0.100	232,614,115
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	10,000	1,410	1	0.141	0.141	0.141	0.141	0.140	0.001	0.714	0.141	0.141	0.144	0.100	28,621,589
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	20,000	900	1	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.000	0.000	0.045	0.045	0.000	0.100	13,821,585
OM0000002028	GULF INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS	20,000	1,400	1	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.000	0.000	0.070	0.070	0.072	0.100	1,470,000
OM0000002200	AHLI BANK	1,940	301	2	0.155	0.155	0.155	0.155	0.155	0.000	0.000	0.155	0.155	0.155	0.100	364,196,907
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	84,789	18,225	18	0.215	0.215	0.215	0.215	0.215	0.000	0.000	0.215	0.215	0.215	0.100	13,158,919
OM0000002685	NATIONAL DETERGENT	150	36	1	0.650	0.650	0.650	0.650	0.650	0.000	0.000	0.650	0.640	0.650	0.100	13,000,000
OM0000005902	PHOENIX POWER	8,474	500	2	0.059	0.059	0.059	0.059	0.059	0.000	0.000	0.059	0.059	0.059	0.100	86,293,486
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	149,604	9,873	16	0.066	0.066	0.065	0.066	0.066	0.000	0.000	0.066	0.066	0.066	0.100	32,395,201
OM0000002572	OMAN OIL MARKETING	3,000	2,400	1	0.800	0.800	0.800	0.800	0.804	-0.004	-0.498	0.800	0.800	0.800	0.100	49,020,000
OM0000001178	MUSCAT GASES	500	61	1	0.122	0.122	0.122	0.122	0.123	-0.001	-0.813	0.122	0.112	0.122	0.100	3,660,000
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	227,947	17,082	4	0.074	0.075	0.074	0.075	0.076	-0.001	-1.316	0.075	0.075	0.079	0.100	15,913,500
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	60,000	3,360	1	0.056	0.056	0.056	0.056	0.057	-0.001	-1.754	0.056	0.056	0.061	0.100	4,760,000
OM0000001400	OMAN FLOUR MILLS	30,922	14,636	10	0.475	0.475	0.470	0.470	0.480	-0.010	-2.083	0.470	0.468	0.490	0.100	74,023,000
Total		18	10,992,070	1,180,135	83											

TECHNOLOGY

Chinese enterprises fight AI hackers with robotic guardians

BELJING: As the Chinese adage goes: “apply the same tactics to the person who used them on you.” At a time when artificial intelligence (AI) increasingly looms behind cyberattacks, Chinese enterprises have started to employ generative AI technologies to build up defense against such AI threats. Qi-Anxin Group, a leading Chi-

nese cybersecurity company, released its large-scale model QAX-GPT in March, expecting it to assist in the development of security products, detection of threats and areas of vulnerability, and analysis of internet-related crimes. This model boasts investigation and judgment abilities close to that of an intermediate-level secu-

rity expert, while its efficiency in terms of alarms and judgments is more than 60 times that of manual efforts, said Qi Xiangdong, chairman of Qi-Anxin. Since ChatGPT, developed by OpenAI, took the world by storm in late 2022, tech giants and startups worldwide have been rushing to join the AI race by launching similar AI

chatbots, as well as industrial applications based on large language models. Experts believe that generative AI tools lower the barrier to entry for threat actors with limited programming abilities or technical skills and warn that hackers have started using generative AI tools to create malware, dark web and other tools to carry out cyberattacks.— **Xinhua**

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HOTSPOT REGIONS

Travel industry sees big money in private-island holidays

BRUSSELS: In the Northern Hemisphere the summer season is in full swing and tourists are on the go. But there is a dark side of tourism and a number of popular places have complained about hordes of visitors. There have been protests against tourists in Spanish cities and the island of Mallorca. Venice has long been plagued by cruise ships and now charges an entrance fee. Lisbon, Prague and Amsterdam have all seen tensions rise between visitors and locals. Some businesses think they may have an answer.

Private-island sales increasing



Researchers give more insight into DNA of Lyme disease bacteria

The disease arises from bacteria belonging to the *Borrelia burgdorferi sensu lato* group, which infect people through the bite of infected ticks.

A group of scientists at the CUNY Graduate Centre has generated a genetic analysis of the bacteria causing Lyme disease, which could lead to better identification, management, and prevention of the illness spread by ticks.

A global team led by lead author Saymon Akther, a former Ph.D. student in biology at the CUNY Graduate Centre, and biology professor Weigang Qiu of Hunter College and the CUNY Graduate Centre mapped the entire genetic composition of 47 strains of bacteria related to Lyme disease from around the globe, developing a potent tool for identifying the bacterial strains that infect patients. This could allow for more precise diagnostic procedures and therapies that are specific to the germs causing each patient's ailment, according to researchers.

The findings of the study were published in mBio journal.

"By understanding how these bacteria evolve and exchange genetic material, we're better equipped to monitor their spread and respond to their ability to cause disease in humans," said Qiu, the corresponding author of the study.

Researchers said the genetic information uncovered in the study may help scientists develop more-effective vaccines against Lyme disease.

Lyme disease is the most com-

mon tick-borne illness in North America and Europe, affecting hundreds of thousands of people a year. The disease arises from bacteria belonging to the *Borrelia burgdorferi sensu lato* group, which infect people through the bite of infected ticks. Symptoms can include fever, headache, fatigue, and a characteristic skin rash. If left untreated, the infection can spread to joints, the heart, and the nervous system, causing more severe complications.

Case numbers are increasing steadily, with 476,000 new cases each year in the United States, and may grow faster with climate change, the authors of the study said.

The research team, led by scientists from the CUNY Graduate Center and Hunter College, Rutgers, Stony Brook, and more than a dozen other research institutions, sequenced the complete genomes of Lyme disease bacteria representing all 23 known species in the group. Most hadn't been sequenced before the effort. The National Institutes of Health-funded project included many bacteria strains most associated with human infections and species not known to cause disease in humans.

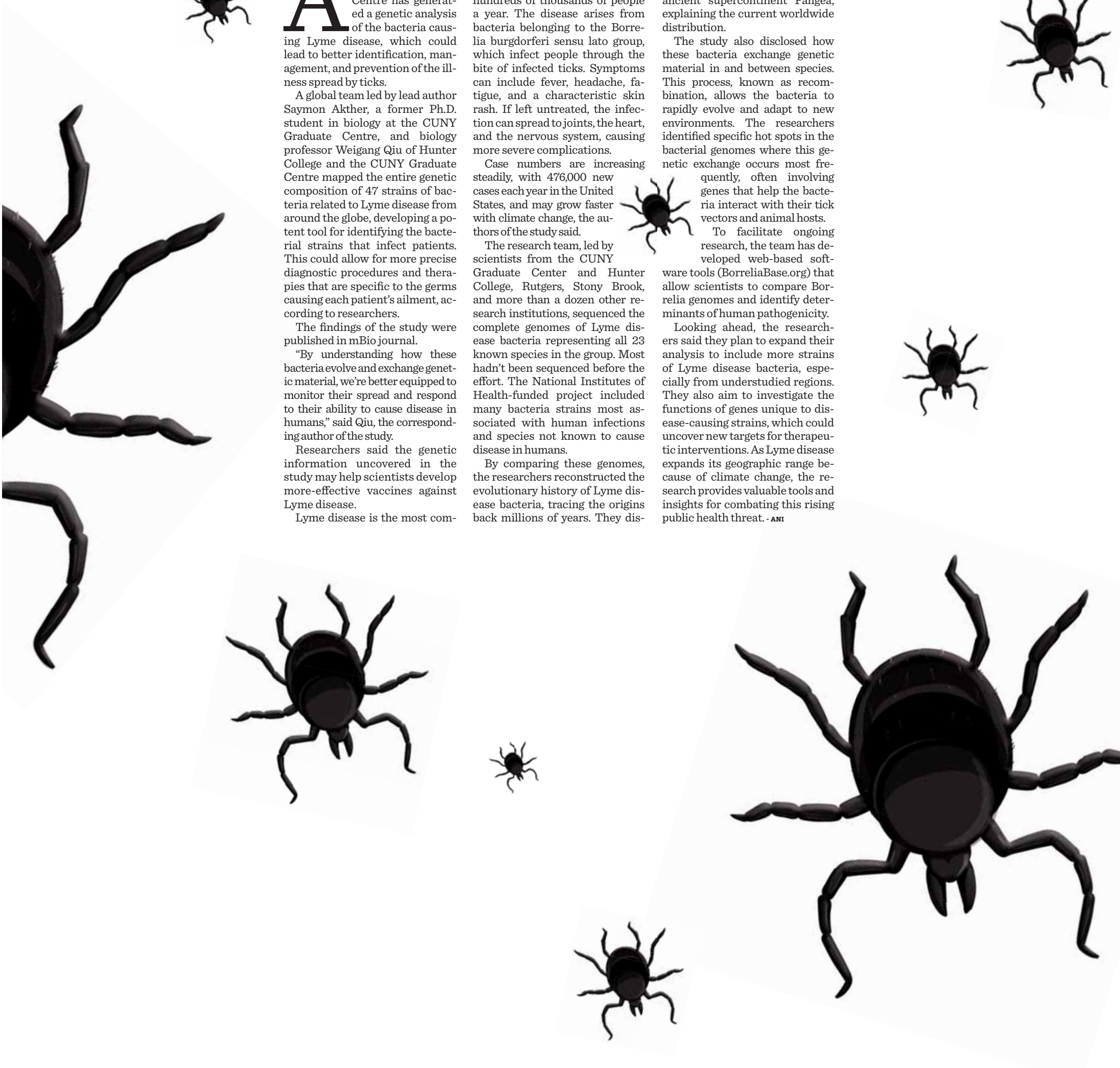
By comparing these genomes, the researchers reconstructed the evolutionary history of Lyme disease bacteria, tracing the origins back millions of years. They dis-

covered the bacteria likely originated before the breakup of the ancient supercontinent Pangea, explaining the current worldwide distribution.

The study also disclosed how these bacteria exchange genetic material in and between species. This process, known as recombination, allows the bacteria to rapidly evolve and adapt to new environments. The researchers identified specific hot spots in the bacterial genomes where this genetic exchange occurs most frequently, often involving genes that help the bacteria interact with their tick vectors and animal hosts.

To facilitate ongoing research, the team has developed web-based software tools (BorreliaBase.org) that allow scientists to compare *Borrelia* genomes and identify determinants of human pathogenicity.

Looking ahead, the researchers said they plan to expand their analysis to include more strains of Lyme disease bacteria, especially from understudied regions. They also aim to investigate the functions of genes unique to disease-causing strains, which could uncover new targets for therapeutic interventions. As Lyme disease expands its geographic range because of climate change, the research provides valuable tools and insights for combating this rising public health threat. - **ANI**



SPORTS



Lewandowski scores twice to give Barca win in Valencia

MADRID: Robert Lewandowski scored twice as FC Barcelona started the season with a 2-1 win away to Valencia on Saturday night.

Lewandowski scored from close range on the stroke of halftime and then netted a penalty four minutes into the second half to give Hansi Flick a winning start as Barca coach.

Valencia took the lead in the 44th minute of an even first half when Hugo Duro headed Diego Lopez's cross from the left wing.

Pau Cubarsi cleared an effort from Duro off the line moments later after Marc-Andre ter Stegen had given the ball away. After being inches away from going 2-0 down, Barca were level.

Alejandro Balde was given space to cross from the left and Lamine Yamal knocked his ball

across the six-yard box for Lewandowski to level, and Lewandowski scored the winning goal after Raphinha had been clipped inside the Valencia area.

Earlier in the day Osasuna and Leganes drew 1-1, with Juan Cruz putting newly promoted Leganes ahead with an excellent goal after 22 minutes, only for bad luck to deny them a win after Aimar Oroz's ball off the post hit Leganes defender Juan Soriano to bounce into the net.

The season kicked off on Thursday night when Athletic Club Bilbao drew 1-1 at home to Getafe while Real Betis and Girona drew by the same score.

Celta Vigo came from behind to win 2-1 at home to Alaves on Friday and Las Palmas came from behind twice to take a point with a 2-2 draw at home to Sevilla. **-xinhua**

Arsenal, Liverpool off to winning starts in Premier League

Kai Havertz nodded them in front after 25 minutes following a cross from Bukayo Saka

LONDON: Arsenal got their Premier League campaign off to a smooth start with a 2-0 win at home to Wolves on Saturday, with a goal in each half.

Kai Havertz nodded them in front after 25 minutes following a cross from Bukayo Saka, and the impressive England international scored the second in the 74th minute following a pass from Havertz.

Ipswich impressed for an hour on their return to the Premier League, but two goals in five minutes from Diogo Jota and Mohamed Salah meant Liverpool went home with all three points to give new coach Arne Slot a winning start at the club.

Southampton also impressed on their return to the elite, but returned empty-handed from their visit to Newcastle United, despite playing against 10 men for well over an hour after Fabian Schar was sent off for aggression against Southampton forward Ben Brereton Diaz, who made a meal of a head movement towards him.

Joelinton took advantage of a horrible error from Southampton goalkeeper Alex McCarthy to score the only goal of the game on the stroke of halftime and his side defended stoutly in the second half as the recently promoted team pinned them back.

Jhon Duran showed why West Ham United tried to sign him over the summer when he scored the goal that gave Aston Villa a 2-1 win at the London Stadium.

The forward ran onto a through ball to score the winning goal 11 minutes from time of an entertaining game that had seen new signing Amadou Onana head the



visitors in front after just four minutes. Lucas Paqueta equalized from the penalty spot before halftime and the game was in the balance until Duran's winner.

31-year-old Fabian Hurler got off to a flying start as the youngest coach in Premier League history as Brighton totally outplayed Everton at Goodison Park to win 3-0 with a first-half goal from Kaoru Mitoma, with Danny Welbeck and Simon Adingra sealing the win after the break.

Everton's misery was completed when defender Ashley Young was sent off late in the game.

Nottingham Forest and Bournemouth drew 1-1, with Chris Wood putting Forest ahead midway through the first half before Antoine Semenyo saved a point for Bournemouth in the closing minutes.

Forest suffered an important injury setback in the game when Danilo was carried off with a suspected broken ankle.

New Manchester United signing Joshua Zirkzee scored an 87th-minute winner as his side opened the new Premier League season with a 1-0 win at home to Fulham after it looked as if missed chances would again be costly for Erik ten Hag's side. **-xinhua**



Ten-man Leverkusen beat Stuttgart on penalties to clinch German Supercup

BERLIN: Bayer Leverkusen kicked off the new season just as they ended the last, with Xabi Alonso's squad lifting the German Supercup on Saturday after a dramatic 4-3 (2-2) penalty shootout victory over Stuttgart to secure their first title of the season.

The Werkself started on the front foot, opening the scoring in the 11th minute when Victor Boniface tapped in Edmond Tapsoba's header at the far post. Stuttgart, however, responded swiftly, leveling the match just four minutes later as Enzo Millot drilled a shot into the bottom corner from 13 meters out.

The Swabians piled on the pressure but couldn't convert their

chances into anything tangible as Ermedin Demirovic, Chris Fuhrich and Pascal Stenzel hit the woodwork in quick succession.

Leverkusen struggled to find their feet and lacked precision in the final third. To make matters worse, Martin Terrier was sent off for a foul on Demirovic just before the break. Stuttgart continued to dominate after the restart, while Leverkusen stood firm in defense.

A triple substitution gave Stuttgart a much-needed boost, with Silas Katomba Mvumpa, Frans Kratzig and Deniz Undav all coming on and making an immediate impact after Kratzig's through ball found Undav to turn the game on the hour mark.

Leverkusen piled on the pressure in a hectic closing period that saw plenty of yellow cards. They finally broke the deadlock in the 88th minute when Patrick Schick beat Stuttgart goalkeeper Alexander Nubel with a low shot into the bottom left corner. Kratzig and Silas missed their efforts in the penalty shootout, allowing Leverkusen to lift the Supercup.

"We are on the right way, but we have seen today on which areas we have to improve. We have a young team and Leverkusen fielded some top players in the closing stages. Nevertheless, we would have liked the game to end differently," said Stuttgart coach Sebastian Hoeness. **-xinhua**

Pakistan opt for all-out pace attack in first Test against Bangladesh

RAWALPINDI: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Saturday confirmed fielding an all-pace bowling line-up against Bangladesh in the first Test starting from August 21 onwards.

The first Test of the two-match affair against Bangladesh will be held at Rawalpindi. In a press release by the board, it was mentioned that two players, spinner Abrar Ahmed and top-order batter Kamran Ghulam were released from the squad in order to give them some game time during the second practice game between Pakistan Shaheens, the 'A' team of Pakistan and Bangladesh 'A', which will take place from August 20-23, as per Wisden.

With that, the team for the first Test is left with an all-pace attack, with the exact composition of the bowling line-up yet to be revealed.

Seven players currently playing with the Shaheens team, Mir Hamza, Mohammad Ali, Mohammad Huraire, Naseem Shah, Saim Ayub, Sarfaraz Ahmed and Saud Shakeel have been called up to the main Test squad.

Once the second practice game is over, Abrar and Kamran will rejoin the test team. Among pacers in the main Test line-up are: Shaheen Afridi, Naseem Shah, Aamer Jamal, Khurram Shahzad and Mir Hamza. Part-timer bowlers Salman Ali Agha, Saim Ayub and Shakeel though, can provide some overs of spin.

In their last home Test, Pakistan played three frontline seam bowlers Naseem, Hamza and Hasan Ali while the top spinner

was Abrar. Salman was the secondary spin option.

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

With two wins from their five Tests so far, Pakistan have a point percentage of 36.66, which has placed them below India, Australia, New Zealand and Sri Lanka in the World Test Championship (WTC) 2023-25 cycle.

Pakistan squad: Shan Masood (c), Saud Shakeel (vc), Aamir Jamal (subject to fitness), Abdullah Shafique, Abrar Ahmed, Babar Azam, Kamran Ghulam, Khurram Shahzad, Mir Hamza, Mohammad Ali, Mohammad Huraire, Mohammad Rizwan (wk), Naseem Shah, Saim Ayub, Salman Ali Agha, Sarfaraz Ahmed (wk), Shaheen Afridi. **-ANI**



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tomers with low insurance fees and simple and fast procedures. The Bank also provides deposit accounts at competitive interest rates. Al Riadah customers may benefit from the distinct monthly interest rate of the High Yield Savings Account. Al Riadah Priority Banking customers have highly competent relationship managers to ensure the utmost convenience

to this segment of our customers. As part of continuous improvement, the bank solicits regular feedback on the products, services and digital platforms from its customers. As of July 2024, more than 84% of the customers expressed their satisfaction with Relationship managers and the special treatment they receive at the branches.

With the Rewards Program, which is an exclusive and comprehensive loyalty program, credit card holders, may enjoy a variety of privileges and benefits. Reward points can be viewed through BankDhofar's flagship Mobile Banking Application. The App enables customers to conduct their banking transactions at their convenience 24/7.

VIBRANT DISPLAY



Indian School Bousher celebrates Independence Day

MUSCAT: Indian School Bousher marked the 78th Independence Day of India with great patriotism and enthusiasm. The event was a vibrant display of the school's commitment to fostering national pride and unity among its students and staff. The celebration began with the arrival of the esteemed Chief Guest, Ashwini Sawrikar, Chairperson, Academic Committee, Board of directors, Indian Schools in Oman and Director in charge, Indian School Bousher and the School Management Committee Members - Dr Sayed Fazlur Rehman, Convenor, Chairperson - Sports and Co-Curricular Sub-Committee, Piyush Agarwal, Treasurer, Chairperson - Finance Sub-committee, Shanmugam Purushottaman, Chairperson -Building and Infrastructure Sub- Committee, Dr Vinod Patchigalla, Chairperson - HR Sub-Committee, Sowmiya Parameswaran, Chairperson - Staff Welfare and Grievance Redressal Sub- Committee, Remya Damodaran - Member, Building and Infrastructure Sub- Committee. The event commenced with the soulful rendition of the Indian National Anthem. The entire assembly stood in unison, reflecting their respect and love for the motherland. The Deputy Head Girl (Middle School) delivered a heartfelt welcome address, setting the tone for the event. The March Past of the students was based on the central theme of the event, "Lead with Valour, Inspiring Patriotism: Marching to Viksit Bharat." It was not just a display of synchronized movements;

it was a powerful demonstration of our commitment to the ideals of our nation—courage, integrity, and perseverance. Each step the students took represented the collective march of our country toward a brighter and more prosperous future, a Viksit Bharat. Let us remember the valiant heroes who fought for our freedom, and let their sacrifices inspire us to lead with valour in all that we do. A captivating dance performance titled "Freedom's Rhythms: The Dance of Independent India" enthralled the audience. The Chief Guest delivered an inspiring address, emphasizing the importance of freedom, patriotism and unity. The speech was well-received, leaving a lasting impact on the attendees. In a display of unity, students participated in a choir performance, "One Voice, One Nation: Singing for India." The melodious voices of the students filled the air with patriotic fervor, reinforcing the spirit of togetherness. The Head Boy and the Head Girl of the school presented a verbal expression titled "Celebrating 78 Years of Freedom: Reflecting on Our Journey, Embracing Our Future." The presentation was a reflective narrative on India's journey since independence, highlighting key milestones and envisioning a brighter future. A special segment titled "Journey of Independence" took the audience on a historical journey through India's struggle for freedom. The students' performance was both informative and moving, reminding everyone of the sacrifices made by the nation's heroes.

SIGNIFICANT INCREASE

Chery achieves 196,000 units in July sales, 1.296 million units year-to-date



MUSCAT: Recently in July 2024, Chery Holding Group achieved impressive automotive sales of 195,759 units, marking a significant year-on-year increase of 30.1 per cent. Of these, 90,281 units were exported, reflecting a year-on-year increase of 16.8 per cent, while new energy vehicle (NEV) sales soared to 45,370 units, a remarkable year-on-year increase of 254.5 per cent. The group's cumulative sales reached 1,296,380 units from Jan-

uary to July, representing a 45.4% year-on-year growth. In July, Chery Group continued to outperform industry growth rates with a 30.1% year-on-year growth, maintaining its position as the only automaker this year to achieve growth in both NEVs and fuel vehicles, as well as in domestic and overseas markets. In July, Chery Group continued to maintain a high-quality development trajectory with comprehensive and balanced growth in the "four

tracks." In addition to a 254.5% increase in new energy vehicle sales, fuel vehicle sales reached 150,389 units in July, marking a year-on-year growth of 9.2%. Exports increased by 16.8%. Furthermore, Chery brand sales in July totalled 123,123 units, reflecting a year-on-year increase of 20.4 per cent and cumulative sales from January to July amounted to 829,890 units, a 38.3 per cent increase compared to the same period last year.

Kantar and Google jointly released the 2023 Chinese Global Brand Builders. Chery is ranked as the best Chinese global brand builder in cars and 14th in the overall list and its brand power has achieved strong growth. Chery Automobile secured the first spot among all Chinese automotive brands in J.D. Power 2023 China Initial Quality StudySM (IQS). In Oman, Chery vehicles are distributed by Saud Bahwan Group.

SPECIAL OCCASION

Indian School Sur celebrates 78th Independence Day with patriotic fervour

MUSCAT: Indian School Sur marked the 78th Independence Day of India with a grand celebration on Thursday, August 15, 2024. The event was attended by distinguished guests including Chief Guest of the programme Jami Srinivas Rao, President of the School Management Committee, Dr. Ramkumar Lakshmi Narayanan, Convenor of SMC, Adv Saeed T P, Member of SMC, and Principal Dr. S Srinivasan. The program commenced with a floral welcome to the chief guests, followed by a prayer and the singing of the Indian National Anthem. School Head Boy Amaan Amin delivered the welcome address, setting the tone for the patriotic celebration. The event featured a diverse array of performances showcasing India's rich cultural heritage. Students presented speeches in English and Hindi, emphasizing the significance of the day. The school choir delivered a stirring



group song, while a dance drama brought to life the stories of influential freedom fighters. A highlight of the celebration was the patriotic group song competition organized by the Co-curricular Activities (CCA) team. The competition saw enthusiastic participation, with Blue, Green, and Yellow houses all receiving A+ grades for their performances and Red house with A Grade. Jami Srinivas Rao, Dr. Ramkumar Lakshmi Narayanan, and Adv Saeed T P distributed prizes to the participants who scored various grades in the competition, recognizing their talent and effort.

The cultural program also included a captivating group dance that celebrated India's diversity, and a multilingual song recital featuring melodies in Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, Hindi, and Bengali. Dr. Ramkumar Lakshmi Narayanan delivered a special address, recalling the sacrifices of India's great leaders and emphasizing the importance of unity in diversity. He quoted insights of the visionary leaders of India and urged students to safeguard the vigour and vitality of the nation. The event concluded with a vote of thanks by School Head Girl Harshita Chaudhary, expressing gratitude to all participants, artists, teachers, and staff members who contributed to the success of the celebration. The 78th Independence Day celebration at Indian School Sur served as a powerful reminder of India's journey towards freedom and progress, instilling a sense of pride and patriotism in all attendees.

ROUND-UP

Unlock rewards with NBO’s new ‘Spend & Earn’ campaign for Badeel prepaid multi-currency travel card

This exciting new offer provides attractive cashback rewards and doubles the rewards on international transactions, reflecting NBO’s dedication to innovation and customer satisfaction

MUSCAT: Continuing its commitment to reward loyal customers, National Bank of Oman (NBO) has announced the launch of its new ‘Spend & Earn’ campaign for Badeel Prepaid Multi-Currency Travel Card during the summer travel season.

The first 250 winning cardholders get a chance to receive a cashback of OMR 50 when they spend OMR 500 or more in a month until 4 September. This exciting new offer provides attractive cashback rewards and doubles the rewards on international transactions, reflecting NBO’s dedication to innovation and customer satisfaction.

Maha Al Raisi, Assistant General Manager and Head of Retail Products at NBO, said: “At National Bank of Oman, we are committed to providing novel solutions that meet the ever-changing needs of our customers. Our ‘Spend & Earn’ campaign gives our customers access to a host of exclusive perks that simplify their



financial journeys. What sets it apart is its exclusivity, as we are the sole provider of this innovative multi-currency prepaid card in the market and is available for all residents in Oman. Whether travelling for work or leisure, NBO’s Badeel Multicurrency Travel Card offers a safe, easy,

and cashless way to carry multiple foreign currencies in a single card. With this card, travellers can easily manage their finances, avoid currency exchange hassles, and enjoy peace of mind with enhanced security features making it their perfect travel companion.”

The theme of the campaign, ‘Spend like a local, anywhere, anytime,’ signifies the essence of simplicity, convenience, security, and flexibility that the NBO Badeel Prepaid Multi-Currency Travel Card offers. Whether it’s shopping, dining, or exploring new destina-

tions, cardholders can enjoy the same ease and convenience as they would at home, regardless of where they are in the world.

This card can be activated through digital onboarding, the NBO app, Badeel Prepaid App or a self-service kiosk. Additionally,

customers can enjoy instant card issuance through self-service kiosks or from branches, ensuring convenient access to our services.

This exclusive offer provides customers with added value and benefits for their everyday spending and international transactions.

EMPOWER BUSINESSES

Bank Muscat’s cutting-edge digital solutions enhance quality of banking services for corporates

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, Oman’s leading financial service provider, continues to augment its banking services for government and corporate customers by offering a variety of solutions and facilities tailored to their specific needs. The Bank is dedicated to delivering exceptional business and banking services with a strong focus on electronic services.

Recently, Bank Muscat has introduced several new services, facilities, and features designed to add value for its diverse institutional customers. These innovations facilitate seamless and secure banking transactions through new electronic channels, leveraging modern technologies to enhance service delivery.

Ilham Murtadha Al Humaid, General Manager of Corporate Banking at Bank Muscat, emphasized the importance and priority given to institutions in both the government and private sectors. She stated: “We continuously strive to enhance our services and operations to align with the evolving needs of these entities. This involves active engagement with our clients to better understand their requirements, enabling us to offer



services, products, and facilities that not only meet their needs but also contribute to their growth and development.”

She added: “Our recent innovative services are designed to help our government and corporate customers speed up their transactions. These additions are driven

by the technological advances made available through the implementation of cutting-edge technology. We are committed to elevating the customer experience as much as possible and will continue supporting this important sector by enhancing banking convenience and security. We view

ourselves as partners in their success and progress.”

This strategic shift towards electronic services not only boosts efficiency but also reduces costs, increases speed, and scalability, and improves transaction efficiency. Digital transformation is now imperative for all institutions, es-

pecially with the innovative banking and technological advancements in the online realm.

To keep pace with these developments, Bank Muscat actively invests in technology, providing electronic banking services to meet customers’ needs and deliver added value. The Bank is committed to supporting a variety of institutions, both governmental and private, fostering a thriving business environment. This includes supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which are vital to the national economy.

The Bank is dedicated to offering solutions that support entrepreneurs and business owners, reinforcing Bank Muscat’s position as a leading financial institution in the Sultanate and prioritizing this crucial sector. The Bank continually evolves its services to meet market requirements and corporate needs.

As the trusted banking partner of corporates and institutions in Oman, Bank Muscat is committed to aiding corporates in digitalization to create a successful business environment. It offers the ‘Integrated Transaction Banking’ platform to government entities, corporates, and SMEs, as part of its digi-

tal transformation strategy. This platform provides a wide range of online capabilities, including payments, a consolidated dashboard of bank accounts across all banks, direct debit solutions, liquidity solutions, and trade services.

With the latest addition in Duqm, the Bank now has five corporate banking branches across Oman, including two branches in Muscat and one each in Sohar, Salalah, and Duqm. These corporate branches feature spacious and comfortable designs and are staffed by well-qualified and experienced Omani professionals.

In recognition of its leadership in the banking sector, Bank Muscat has received numerous local and international awards for its exclusive services and products catering to all segments of society. For corporate banking, the Bank was recognized as the Gold Winner of the Corporate Banking Innovation category within Infosys Finacle Innovation Awards, the Best Corporate Digital Bank in Oman within the World’s Best Digital Bank Awards from Global Finance, and the Best Bank for Large Corporates within Oman Banking & Finance Awards 2024.



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to welcome
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on a chessboard
at the start of
a game of
chess?

Can you match wits
with the participants?



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