

PORT OF SALALAH RECEIVES CRUISE SHIP WITH 3,963 PASSENGERS

MUSCAT: The Port of Salalah on Monday received a cruise ship with 3,963 passengers, including 2,956 tourists, as a part of its tourism programme for a number of ports of the world. **>A5**



OMAN, IRAN EXPLORE MEASURES TO BOOST BILATERAL RELATIONS

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, on Monday held a meeting in Tehran with Dr. Hossein Amir Abdollahian, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The meeting discussed a number of topics of relevance to bilateral relations, means of expanding cooperation and exchanging benefits to serve the interest of the two countries' peoples. **>A5**



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MEETING IN DOHA



On behalf of His Majesty, Sayyid Fahd to lead Oman's delegation at 44th GCC Summit on Tuesday

MUSCAT: On behalf of His Majesty the Sultan, His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, will leave for the State of Qatar on Tuesday (5 December 2023), heading the Sultanate of Oman's delegation at the 44th GCC Summit, scheduled to be held in Doha on the same day.

In its capacity as chair of the current GCC session, Oman has been keen to communicate and cooperate with member states to enhance the GCC march and realise the GCC people's aspirations for progress and prosperity. HH Sayyid Fahd will be accompanied by an official delegation comprising ministers and senior government officials. — **ONA**

EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCES

Sayyid Bilarab presides over opening of startups forum

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham Al Said, Honorary President of the Promising Omani Start-ups Programme (POSP), today presided over the opening of a gathering titled "Promising Omani Startups Forum", held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre. The forum was aimed at highlighting the initiatives and achievements of the Promising Omani Startups Programme, fostering the culture of entrepreneurship, exploring the latest trends and studying international experiences and practices in the field, to better anticipate the future of the sector. The forum saw the participation of more than 1,500 people, including entrepreneurs, students, experts, academics and interested persons. It constituted a valuable opportunity to learn about the



challenges and opportunities facing the entrepreneurship sector. The forum served as a platform for participants to enhance cooperation and exchange of experiences about better methods to spur economic development and build

a promising future for Omani entrepreneurs. The forum reviewed working papers elaborating on the programme's three main themes of "Capacity Building for Startups", "Funding Investment in Startups" and "Developing a Legal Setup for

Startups". It also included discussion panels on entrepreneurship and startups. At the forum, the POSP operators briefed the gathering about the programme's most prominent initiatives during 2023. **>A4**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN Flights from Oman to Chennai cancelled

1 Due to heavy rains in Chennai, Oman Air has announced temporary suspension of operations on Monday, December 4, 2023. Even low cost airline of India, Indigo cancelled its Muscat-Chennai 6E1278 flight on Monday. The flight was to leave at 2.50 am on Monday and arrive in Chennai at 7.50 am. **>A3**

WORLD Massive child casualties in Gaza



2 James Elder, Spokesperson for the United Nation's Children's Fund (UNICEF) said "This is the worst bombardment of the war right now in south Gaza. I am seeing massive child casualties." "We have a final warning to save children; and our collective conscience," said the Spokesperson for UNICEF. **>A6**

MARKET Treasury bills worth OMR36.13mn issued

3 The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) raised OMR36.13 million by way of allotting treasury bills on Monday. The value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to OMR14.73 million, for a maturity period of 28 days. The average accepted price reached OMR99.590 for every OMR100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at OMR99.590 per OMR100. **>B1**



Sayyid Saud
Hilal Al Busaidi,
Governor of
Muscat, patronises
the inaugural
Muscat Dialogue
sessions

MUSCAT: Sayyid Saud Hilal Al Busaidi, Governor of Muscat, emphasised the pivotal role of Omani youths as the driving force behind the Sultanate's development during the inaugural Muscat Dialogue sessions in 2023. He said: "Omani youths are the wealth of the nation and they are the primary engine towards development of the Sultanate of Oman." Themed "Towards a sustainable and prosperous future," this three-day event, organised by the Muscat Governorate, aims to gather and implement innovative ideas and proposals. It focuses



on engaging various societal segments to identify priority projects and plan their execution. Speaking at the opening, Sayyid Saud Hilal Al Busaidi highlighted the significance of youth engagement and their involvement in development strategies. He stressed the need to listen to their aspirations, needs, and interests, pledging careful attention from state institutions. The sessions covered diverse topics. "Humanisation of cities and the entertainment industry" featured Dr. Hanan Amer Al Jabri, Director General of Urban Plan-

ning at the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, discussing urban planning methodologies, public spaces' quality, public arts, and the Vibrant Public Spaces Initiative. The session was moderated by Shabib Al Maamari, Director General of National Travel Operator in OMRAN Group. The second session, "Environmental Volunteering," involved Manar Abdullah Al Riyami, a quality specialist and expert speaker from the Environment Authority, focusing on national goals, successful achievements, neighbouring countries' experi-

ences, current status, and national components of environmental volunteering. The session was moderated by Ibrahim Al Salmi, Assistant Vice President of Ominvest Group for Corporate Communication. "Manar elaborated on Oman's environmental volunteering goals, local successes, and neighbouring countries' experiences, along with analysing the current status and national components. The second day of the Muscat Dialogue will focus on investment opportunities, technology, and innovation. — **ONA**

NOBLE INITIATIVE

On a mission to support people with disabilities in Oman

Times News Service

MUSCAT: A heartwarming scene unfolded as visitors were welcomed at the entrance of dusicD2 Naseem Resort, Jabal Akhdar, greeted by a resilient and spirited Omani individual with physical disability. His beaming smile echoed the sheer joy of being employed and trained at this popular mountain resort. Meet Mohammed Al Oumri, one of the five newly-appointed trainees at the resort, who is part of the 'GIFTed' initiative, a noble endeavour, launched recently by the Oman Tourism Development Company (OMRAN) as part of the #IAmTourism strategy. Besides Mohammed, the other



four include his brother Ahmed, Fathi Al Amri, Ahmed Al Dughari and Ahmed Al Tubi. The initiative has left an indelible mark on many hearts and at the forefront of this initiative, focused on empowering individuals with disabilities to

excel in the tourism sector, is Jagdeep Thakral, the General Manager of dusicD2 Naseem Resort, Jabal Akhdar, Oman. In an exclusive chat with *Times of Oman*, Thakral shared his deep involvement in this mis-

sion, a cause that has remained close to his heart throughout his two-decade-long journey in the hospitality industry. "My journey began in 2010 in Singapore when I became part of the Enabling Employers Network (EEN) while working at Holiday Inn Singapore Orchard City Centre (IHG Group). EEN, a collaborative effort of the Singapore government, corporates, and special schools, aimed to equip people with disabilities with skills for open employment. We trained and employed individuals with various disabilities, including Autism, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, slow learning, and hearing and speech impairments," Thakral recounted. **>A5**





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Ten winners of National Research Award announced

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation announced on Monday the names of the 10 winners of the National Research Award.

The announcement was made during the activities of Annual Research Forum in its 10th edition, which was held under the patronage of Dr. Hilal Ali Al Sabti, Minister of Health.

Moreover, the forum included the signing of 32 contracts for the Strategic Research Projects Programme.

Further, an exhibition was held on the sidelines of the forum, during which posters of the



winner research projects were displayed. The exhibition also highlighted success stories from various programmes of the Ministry that are aimed at empowering researchers.

Meanwhile, two sessions were also held on the effects of research on the industry and academic sector. — **ONA**



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Two arrested for trying to smuggle drugs into Oman

Times News Service

Muscat: Two smugglers were arrested for smuggling more than 120 kilograms of hashish into the Wilayat of Muscat, Muscat Governorate, said the Royal Oman Police (ROP).

ROP said in a statement: "The General Administration for Combating Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances arrested two people of Asian nationality in the Wilayat of Muscat on charges of smuggling more than 120 kilograms of hashish. Legal procedures are being completed against them."



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TEMPORARY SUSPENSION

Flights from Oman cancelled
as heavy rains flood India's
Chennai airport on Monday

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Due to heavy rains in Chennai, Oman Air has announced temporary suspension of operations on Monday, December 4, 2023.

In a statement, the national carrier, Oman Air said, "We would like to note to our valued passengers that our operations in Chennai have been temporarily affected due to the heavy rains witnessed in the region and the suspension of operations at Chennai International Airport on December 4, 2023. We are doing our best to reschedule our flights as soon as operations return to normal and we will keep you updated with the latest developments."

Even low cost airline of India, Indigo cancelled its Muscat-Chennai 6E1278 flight on Monday. The flight was supposed to leave at 2.50 am on Monday and arrive in Chennai at 7.50 am.

The Chennai airfield is to remain closed until 9 a.m. on Tuesday.

"Airfield closed for arrival and departure operations till 0900 hrs IST tomorrow due to adverse weather conditions", said the Chennai airport authority in a post on X.

Five killed

As many as five people have been killed in separate incidents in Tamil Nadu's Chennai amid heavy rain due to cyclone Michaung, according to an official statement by the Chennai police.

One person has been injured due to the falling of a tree, according to the police.

Subways have been closed due to the severe waterlogging in Chennai. Also, traffic has been closed from Manjambakkam to Vadaperumbakkam Road due to



the release of water from Puzhal Lake, said the police.

"DDRT Teams are available in all vulnerable areas and they are working in coordination with the GCC and Highways Department," it added.

Cyclonic storm 'Michaung' intensified to a severe cyclonic storm at 8:30 a.m. on Monday, about 90 km east-northeast of Chennai.

The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has warned of heavy to very heavy rainfall on December 4 and 5 in north-coastal Tamil Nadu and Puducherry. Light to moderate rainfall at most places and heavy to very heavy rainfall at a few places, with extremely heavy falls at isolated places over coastal Andhra Pradesh and Yanam, is expected on December 4 and 5.

Public life is severely affected in Chennai due to heavy rains lashing several parts of the city. Several areas, including Walajah Road, Mount Road, Anna Salai, Chepauk, outside Omandurar government multispecialty hospital and other low-lying areas, were left inundated due to the persistent heavy rainfall.

Chennai's popular Marina Beach was flooded due to heavy downpours, and the roads from Mount Road to Marina Beach

were blocked due to severe waterlogging. The Tamil Nadu government has declared a public holiday in Chennai, Chengalpattu, Kancheepuram and Tiruvallur districts on Tuesday, given the cyclone.

The public holiday has been declared under the Negotiable Instruments Act of 1881.

All schools, colleges, educational institutions, and government offices, including the offices of public undertakings and corporations, boards, banks, and financial institutions in the four districts of Chennai, Tiruvallur, Kancheepuram and Chengalpattu, will be closed due to the harsh weather conditions in the state.

However, all essential services, such as police, fire service, local bodies, milk supply, water supply, hospitals and medical shops, power supply, transport, fuel outlets, hotels and restaurants, etc., and the offices engaged in disaster response, relief and rescue activities, shall function as usual.

The Tamil Nadu government has asked people to take precautionary measures as the Indian Meteorological Department has issued a red alert in the state. The IMD has predicted heavy to very heavy rainfall in Chennai and neighbouring areas.

— With inputs from ANI



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PUBLIC POLL



Forum seeks to boost
communication and
interaction between
govt and society

MUSCAT: The Secretariat General of the Council of Ministers on Monday announced the results of a public poll that allowed members of society to choose topics for discussion at the second edition of a forum titled "Together We Make Progress".

The forum, the second of its kind, seeks to enhance communication and interaction between the government and society.

The voting period, which started on 9 November 2023, saw a large turnout, with as many as 4,664 respondents expressing their opinion about topics deemed significant for the community. The outcome was that the theme of 'Society and Citizenship' attracted the majority

of votes (48 percent), followed by 'Future Oman' theme (27 percent) and 'Investment and Economy' theme (25 percent).

Popular topic

Asked to propose topics other than the ones listed for the poll, the participants chose 'Labour market and employment' as the most popular topic worthy of discussion.

Accordingly, it has been decided that the forthcoming forum would discuss the following topics: education, higher education, research and innovation, health, the social protection scheme, culture, sports, youth, media, the labour market and employment.

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STARTUPS EXHIBITION

50 emerging companies participate in startups forum

<FROM A1 On the sidelines of the forum, an event titled “Startups Exhibition” was held, with the participation of 50 emerging companies whose structure was based on technology and innovation. The exhibition brought about startups from various sectors, and showcased projects that won advanced places in the “Entrepreneurial Race”, a contest organised by the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED) in cooperation with firms affiliated to Oman Investment Authority (OIA). — ONA



DUSITD2 NASEEM RESORT JABAL AKHDAR

<FROM A1 On a mission to support people with disabilities in Oman

“By the time I departed from Singapore, we had successfully employed 235 people with disabilities across multiple hotels and companies,” he added. Driven by his passion for providing employment and training opportunities for people with disabilities, Thakral was invited to deliver a speech on the subject at the United Nations Headquarters in New York in 2013.

His exceptional contribution was acknowledged with the UNESCAP-Sasakawa Award for Disability-Inclusive Business in Bangkok in 2014. “We advocated the model of training and hiring persons with disabilities, urging other companies to follow suit. In my previous roles in South Korea (2017), Bangkok (2018), and Jakarta (2019), I remained committed to this mission. Upon joining in Oman earlier this year, I proposed a similar project and I am grateful to OMRAN for their wholehearted support,” said Thakral.

“Partnering with the Al Wafa Centre for the Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities in Al Jabal Al Akhdar, with full support from OMRAN, we initiated a project where we welcomed five individuals with disabilities to join our property starting November 19. The programme aims to provide them with training until April 19, preparing them for employment within our establishment or the burgeoning hospitality industry in Oman,” he explained.

“Throughout the six-month training, our commitment is to enrich their experience, offering essential knowledge and skills in a safe, comprehensive environment that nurtures their potential, both professionally and socially,” added Thakral. “The selected individuals will undergo training in kitchen stewarding, laundry, housekeeping, and concierge services.”

He added: “Their [five participants] extraordinary journey within the initiative showcases a fervent desire to excel in the hospitality industry, leaving an unfading mark on both their leaders and the resort’s discerning guests. The strides they have made since the programme’s inception reflect not only their passion for learning but also the transformative impact of the programme in empowering individuals with disabilities to achieve excellence.”

Programme promoting social integration

The ‘GIFTed’ programme aims not only to raise awareness about the capabilities of individuals with disabilities in the tourism sector but also to promote social integration by highlighting their significant role in the community.

At the programme’s launch recently at the resort, Hilal bin Masoud Al Jadidi, Chief Human Capital Officer at OMRAN Group, said, “The ‘GIFTed’ initiative stands as a cornerstone of our #IAMTourism strategy, serving as a roadmap to empower national talent in this opportunity-rich sector. We strongly believe in enhancing professional opportunities for people with disabilities, acknowledging the talents and capabilities they possess. We aspire to utilise the outcomes of this initiative as a model across our assets and future projects.

Resort revenues go up in November

Notably, dusitD2 Naseem Resort had introduced a special celebratory package to mark the 53rd Oman National Day. During the National Day holidays, the resort experienced full occupancy, treating guests to traditional oud performances at Veranda Restaurant and a saxophonist-led band at Sky View Restaurant.

“At our lavish buffet at Veranda, guests savoured the popular Shuwa dish alongside other Omani and international cuisines, while Sky View served Lebanese food. November’s revenue for the resort increased by nearly 75 percent compared to the previous year. Most of our guests indulged in adventure and various recreational activities at our unique Adventure Park, the only one in the Sultanate,” he added.

“We have plans underway to upgrade several facilities, including the lobby, guest rooms, and the Kids Club. Additionally, we aim to construct another pool, a kids’ play area, and a café in the coming year,” Thakral revealed.

Thakral served as the GM of The Grand New Delhi, successfully elevating the hotel to the luxury segment by enhancing products and standardising systems and processes. He commenced his tenure as General Manager of dusitD2 Naseem Resort Jabal Akhdar in April this year.

OMRAN spearheads pioneering kite-surfing expedition, unveils water sport wonders, eco-tourism

THIS

venture is a testament to OMRAN’s commitment to diversifying Oman’s tourism sector and enhancing the adventure experiences on offer

Times News Service

MUSCAT: OMRAN Group, in partnership with Oman Sail and Sea & Beach Projects, has announced the successful completion of a groundbreaking kite-surfing expedition along Oman’s stunning coastline. This venture is a testament to OMRAN Group’s commitment to diversifying Oman’s tourism sector and enhancing the adventure experiences on offer, in preparation for the establishment of ‘downwinder’ activities and competitions in Oman.

Spanning 334km over five days, from Bar Al Hickman in the Wilayat of Mahout to Al Suwaih in Jalan Bani Abu Ali, the expe-



dition aimed to explore potential sports and adventure experiences along Oman’s shores. The ideal wind conditions of Oman’s coast provide a prime setting for activities such as kite-surfing and wing-foiling.

Mohammed Al Ghufaili, OMRAN Group’s COO, commented, “This expedition aligns with our objective to diversify the tourism sector by showcasing Oman’s

natural beauty and adventure potential. We are dedicated to crafting sustainable and eco-conscious experiences that resonate with adventure enthusiasts worldwide.”

Marcelo Antunes Ferreira, who undertook the expedition, shared his awe-inspiring experiences, ranging from captivating wildlife and breathtaking landscapes to engaging with local fishermen

and witnessing traditional Omani fishing methods, adding, “The success of this expedition, supported by a dedicated team and rigorous safety measures, highlights the potential for expanding water sports and adventure tourism in the Oman.”

Sea and beach tourism

Al Ghufaili further stated, “Sea and beach tourism brings people closer to nature and promotes environmental awareness. Oman’s rich marine environment, paired with our commitment to sustainability, positions us as a top choice for travellers. Additionally, this trend often results in significant tourism revenue boosts during peak seasons, benefiting local businesses, employment opportunities, and overall economic growth.”

In the evolving landscape of adventure tourism, OMRAN Group is well-positioned to transform Oman into a premier global destination for adventure seekers and nature enthusiasts. The success of this expedition paves the way for future similar activities and potential competitions.

Furthermore, the Group’s focus on eco-tourism and responsible tourism practices aligns with the conservation and sustainability objectives of Oman Vision 2040 and the National Tourism Strategy. This ensures the remarkable destinations where these activities are hosted remain pristine for future generations to enjoy.

Oman, Iran discuss ways to enhance cooperation

The meeting also discussed a number of topics of relevance to bilateral relations, means of expanding cooperation and exchanging benefits to serve the interest of the two countries

TEHRAN: Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, on Monday held a meeting in Tehran with Dr. Hossein Amir Abdollahian, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The meeting discussed a number of topics of relevance to bilateral relations, means of expanding cooperation and exchanging benefits to serve the interest of the two countries' peoples. The two sides also discussed re-



gional and international developments of common concern, most notably the painful developments in the Gaza Strip. They exchanged views about humanitarian and political efforts made to extend relief aid to the Strip, lift the siege and terminate the escalation and brutal Israeli aggression on civilians. In this context, they affirmed their unwavering stand in solidarity with the legitimate Palestinian cause. Speaking about the situation in the region, Sayyid Badr stressed the need to keep up constructive consultation between Oman and Iran as an effective means of

enhancing mutual understanding and addressing regional challenges. **Tragic situation in the Gaza Strip** Sayyid Badr pointed out that he and his Iranian counterpart followed up, with great concern, the tragic situation in the Gaza Strip and the relentless military operations staged by Israeli occupation forces targeting civilians, public facilities, hospitals and schools. The two sides commended the steadfastness of the Palestinian people and their invaluable sacrifices.

Sayyid Badr and his Iranian counterpart also laid emphasis on maintaining diplomatic and political efforts. They urged the international community to shoulder its responsibilities to stop the war, restore peace and security and resort to the rules of international law and international humanitarian law. In particular, they stressed the need to lift the unjust siege on the Gaza Strip and provide relief aid, including medical and life-saving supplies, to the stricken population there. The two sides stressed that security and stability cannot be achieved without an end to Israeli occupation and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State in accordance with the resolutions of international law. These, they observed, constitute the core values of justice, and the dictates of human conscience and the tenets of religious and moral obligations. The meeting was attended by Khalid Hashel Al Muselhi, Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry for Administrative and Financial Affairs, Ibrahim Ahmed Al Mu'aini, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Islamic Republic of Iran, and other officials. — ONA



Sayyid Badr receives copy of credentials of the USA Ambassador

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister received a copy of credentials of Ana Escrogima, Ambassador-designate of the United States of America to the Sultanate of Oman. Sayyid Badr wished the ambassador success in carrying out her duties. He also wished the bilateral relations further developments and growth. — ONA

HEALTH SECTOR



Ministry of Health launches rotavirus vaccine for newborns, a major step to control diarrhoea

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health on Monday inaugurated a programme whereby rotavirus vaccine has been included in the national schedule for the immunisation. The event also included the launch of the 4th edition of the national guide for the immunisation programme and the Omani guide for immunisation. Rotavirus vaccine will be administered to newborns from November 2023 onwards, who will be given two doses: the first at two months from birth and the second at the age of four months. The ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr. Hilal Ali Al Sabti, Minister of Health, who laid emphasis on the need to get the new vaccine due to its qualities that keep pace with international standards. The minister pointed out that the Sultanate of Oman is pressing ahead with initiatives to develop the health sector. Dr. Said Harib Al Lamki, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health for Health Affairs, said that the launch of the rotavirus vaccine and the fourth edition of the national immunisation programme reflect the Ministry of Health's keenness to eradicate infectious diseases and maintain the stability of public health. Al Lamki stressed that admin-



istering the vaccine to the target segments (estimated at 90,000 children a year) would cut down the rate of hospitalisation by 90 percent. He added that the government is currently spending the equivalent of OMR1 million on hospitalisation with cases of diarrhoea that emanate from rotavirus. — ONA

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Massive child casualties in Gaza Strip, says Unicef

The devastating war on Gaza Strip has resulted in the deaths of 15,523

NEW YORK: James Elder, Spokesperson for the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) said "This is the worst bombardment of the war right now in south Gaza. I am seeing massive child casualties."

"We have a final warning to save children; and our collective conscience," said the Spokesperson for Unicef.

The UN official had previously said there is panic among people, and they do not know where to go and are almost in a state of astonishment, describing the state of



despair that dominates Palestinian families and children in a hospital in the Gaza Strip.

Since 7 October, the Israeli entity has been waging a devastating war on Gaza, which resulted in the deaths of 15,523, the wounding of 41,316 others. The war has also left massive destruction to the infrastructure, according to official Palestinian and UN sources.

Meanwhile, the Israeli military

says it has expanded its ground operation against Hamas to "every part" of the Gaza Strip.

The army resumed its offensive Friday after a weeklong cease-fire expired. After focusing its ground operation on the northern part of Gaza in recent weeks, the military began carrying out airstrikes in southern Gaza as well.

The vast majority of Gaza's population has fled to the south in

search of safety.

But late on Sunday, Israeli military spokesman Daniel Hagari said ground troops were also pushing into the south

Ground operation

"The Israeli army is continuing and expanding the ground operation against the Hamas presence in every part of the Gaza Strip," he said. "The forces are coming face-to-face with terrorists and killing them."

Earlier, eyewitnesses had told DPA news agency that Israeli ground troops had advanced into an area east of the city of Khan Yunis in the south of the Gaza Strip.

Israel's military says it has conducted around 10,000 airstrikes on targets in Gaza since the war began nearly two months ago.

The announcement comes as international criticism of Israel's actions is growing.

Israel's aerial bombardment has caused a large number of civilian casualties. — Agencies



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CENTRAL COMMAND

US warship downs drones in Red Sea



BERLIN: The United States military said an American warship shot down three drones headed in its direction on Sunday while it was assisting commercial vessels that were attacked in the Red Sea.

"We cannot assess at this time whether the Carney was a target of the UAVs," US Central Command (Centcom) said after earlier reports the US Navy vessel was attacked.

Yemen's Houthi rebels claimed responsibility for attacking two vessels, the Unity Explorer and Number 9, but made no mention of attacking a US Navy ship.

Centcom said there were four attacks against three separate commercial vessels operating in international waters, naming the Sophie II as the ship not mentioned by the Houthis.

"The Arleigh-Burke Class destroyer USS Carney responded to

the distress calls from the ships and provided assistance," and shot down three drones that were heading for the warship during the day, the statement said.

The Houthis said they attacked the ships because they were linked to Israel and were targeted after they rejected warnings.

The Iran-backed groups have launched several missile and drone attacks on Israel since the start of the war between Israel and the Palestinian group Hamas.

Israeli military spokesman Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari how said the two ships that came under attack had had no connection to the state of Israel.

An Israeli-linked cargo ship was seized last month by the Houthis, which controls most of Yemen's Red Sea coast and vowed to target more Israeli vessels.

-DW

GUT WRENCHING

Palestinian student shot at in Burlington paralysed, says mother

BURLINGTON: Hisham Awartani, a Palestinian student shot at in Burlington, Vermont, is now paralysed, said his mother, Elizabeth Price, in an interview with CNN.

Awartani, one of three Palestinian students who were shot, may face a life without mobility after a bullet lodged in his spine.

Elizabeth Price shared with CNN that they initiated a GoFundMe campaign to aid her son financially "as he prepares to move into this next phase of his life-recovery."

"It's been a gut wrenching and

difficult six days, but it's also been a remarkable and awe-inspiring time--first to watch Hisham and his two childhood friends meet this experience with resilience, strength and even deep concern for others (for each other, for their parents many miles away and for thousands of their people suffering under a brutal military bombardment) and, second, to see and feel the incredible support from all over the world, including messages of love and support from many of you," Price said.

Hisham Awartani, a 20-year-

old junior at Brown University, is grappling with the reality of a "very long road" to recovery, as stated by Price.

Awartani and his friends, Kinnan Abdalhamid and Tahseen Ali Ahmad, were shot during a walk in Burlington over the Thanksgiving holiday.

Burlington Police Chief Jon Murad reported that Awartani sustained a life-altering spinal injury, while the other two men were shot in the upper torso and lower extremities, requiring ICU hospitalisation.

The suspect in the attack, 48-year-old Jason J Eaton, has been charged with three counts of attempted murder and pleaded not guilty. Authorities are probing whether the incident was motivated by hate.

Awartani is set to be released from the hospital next week for rehabilitation care. Tahseen Ali Ahmad, the other injured student, has been released, with his mother securing an emergency visa to join him from Ramallah in the West Bank to the United States, CNN reported. **ANI**



END OF YEAR PROMOTION

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SEISMIC EVENTS

New 6.9 earthquake off Mindanao island jolts Philippines

MANILA: Another large earthquake struck off the east coast of the Philippines' Mindanao island early on Monday, amid a series of quakes and aftershocks concentrated around the same area over the weekend.

The US Geological Survey (USGS) said a magnitude 6.9 earthquake hit just before 4 a.m. on Sunday at a depth of roughly 30 kilometres (18 miles), some

72 kilometres off the northeastern coast.

That followed a deadly 7.6 quake late on Saturday and another 6.6 tremor on Sunday in the same area. USGS' website logged dozens of seismic events, most likely to be designated as aftershocks, in the area over the weekend. They continued later into Monday morning following the latest large tremor.

Severe damage and 2 deaths

sustained in earlier quake. Authorities had already reported two deaths and several injuries following Saturday night's quake, as well as damage to buildings and homes.

Hinatuan police Staff Sergeant Joseph Lambo told news agency AFP that the latest quake sent people in one of the worst-hit towns rushing outside again in case their homes should be damaged.

"They were panicking due to the

memory of the previous night's quake," he said, before adding that police were still checking for further damage or casualties.

Saturday's quake had also briefly triggered tsunami warnings in the region but these were later lifted. Earthquakes are an almost daily occurrence for the Philippines, situated along the Pacific "Ring of Fire," a large area of intense seismic and volcanic activity. -nw



11 climbers dead after Mount Marapi erupts

Mount Marapi on the island of Indonesia's Sumatra erupted, spewing an ash tower 3,000 metres high, which rained volcanic debris onto nearby villages.

rained volcanic debris onto nearby villages. The peak is 2,891 metres (9,484 feet) high.

Authorities raised the alert to the second-highest level and prohibited residents from going within 3 kilometers of the crater. Local disaster agency official Ade Setiawan said in a statement that residents in local villages were "given masks and reminded to stay inside their houses."

Search suspended

Video footage showed a huge cloud of volcanic ash spread widely across the sky while cars and roads were covered in ash. Jodi Haryawan, spokesperson for the search and rescue team, said the search had to be suspended because of a small eruption on Monday. "It's too dangerous if we continue searching now," he said.

Search teams found the 11 dead near the crater on Monday morning.

"There are 26 people who have not been evacuated, we have found 14 of them, three were found alive and 11 were found dead," Abdul

Malik, head of Padang Search and Rescue Agency told reporters on Monday.

Found near the crater

Malik said the three survivors were found near the crater, and "their condition was weak, and some had burns." Rescue workers had to take turns carrying down the dead, due to the difficult terrain.

He added that 49 people had climbed down from the mountain, some of which had to be taken to the hospital. Twelve were still missing.

"Some suffered from burns because it was very hot, and they have been taken to the hospital. Those who are injured were the ones who got closer to the crater," Rudy Rinaldi, head of the West Sumatra Disaster Mitigation Agency told AFP news agency.

Indonesia lies in the Pacific Ring of Fire, where the meeting of continental plates causes high volcanic and seismic activity. It has nearly 130 active volcanoes. -nw

WORLD BANK

Initiative to avert 21mn deaths by 2050 unveiled

NEW DELHI: In an initiative announced at COP28, the World Bank unveiled its Climate and Health Programme to combat the escalating health risks triggered by climate change in low- and middle-income countries.

According to a press release by the World Bank, with projections indicating at least 21 million additional deaths by 2050 due to climate-related health hazards, the programme aims to fortify health systems, particularly in vulnerable regions of sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

The initiative involves comprehensive strategies, including assessing climate and health vulnerabilities, bolstering investments in resilient health systems, and mobilising funds for immediate action. The World Bank emphasises the urgency of addressing five key health risks--extreme heat, stunting, diarrhoea, malaria, and dengue--that could claim millions of lives within the next three decades.

Mamta Murthi, Vice President for Human Development at the World Bank, highlighted the program's significance in breaking the cycle of ill health and poverty caused by climate change.

Murthi said, "Climate change amplifies health risks, creating a cycle of ill health and poverty with far-reaching consequences for human capital development. Through the Climate and



Health Programme, the World Bank will use its knowledge and financing to help countries address health risks stemming from climate change, work across related sectors, and bring together partners to maximise financing and harmonise investments and actions."

The Climate and Health Program seeks to generate evidence, increase financing for tailored solutions, and forge strong partnerships with entities such as the World Health Organisation, Gavi, The Global Fund, and foundations.

Notably, the World Bank will co-convene a Development Bank Working Group for Climate-Health Finance to align and maximise investments.

The \$34 billion health portfolio, active in over 100 countries, will focus on enhancing surveillance and early warning systems, climate-proofing health facilities, and strengthening the capacity of health workers. -ANI

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Ministry of Health

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry of Health invites specialized companies to participate in the following Tenders: -

Tender Ref:	DESCRIPTION	LAST DATE FOR COLLECTION OF TENDER DOCUMENT	CLOSING TIME/ DAY/ DATE	ELIGIBILITY	TENDER FEE (NON-REFUNDABLE)
2023/4478	Supplying kitchen tools and equipment at Sinaw Hospital	Before 10 am on Thursday 14/ December/2023	Before 10 am on Thursday 11/ January /2024	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	R.O 25 Per set
2023/4480	Maintenance and rehabilitation work at Sinaw Hospital	Before 11 am on Thursday 14/ December/2023	Before 10 am on Thursday 11/ January /2024	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board have Fourth grade	R.O 25 Per set

- All Specialized and interested Companies registered with Tender Board on the above mentioned Grade may obtain Tender documents from the E. Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.
- Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accepts or reject any tender. (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)

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SPORTS



Oman’s Ahmad Al Harthy clinches his maiden win in the LMP2 class during the Asian Le Mans Series (ALMS) opener at the Sepang circuit in Malaysia and follows it up with a second-place finish to wrap a fruitful weekend

MUSCAT: Oman’s Ahmad Al Harthy got off to a flying start to the Asian Le Mans Series (ALMS) season as he claimed his maiden win in the first round and then rounded off the weekend at the Sepang International Circuit in

Malaysia, with a second-place finish in LMP2 prototype class. Al Harthy teamed up with 99 Racing’s Louis Deletraz and Nikita Mazepin for the first round and the trio delivered a powerful performance to go top of driver and team

Oman’s Al Zubair finishes fourth in both races

MUSCAT: The Al Manar Racing by Getspeed trio of Al Faisal Al Zubair, Martin Konrad and Fabian Schiller finished fourth in the GT class in both four-hour races at the opening round of the 2023/2024 Asian Le Mans Series at the Sepang International Circuit. The Omani, the Austrian and the German trio entered a Mercedes-AMG GT3 Evo and visited the rain-soaked Malaysian circuit for the first time. The second of the weekend’s races on Sunday afternoon finished under a yellow flag with victory going to the Pure Racing trio of Klaus Bachler, Joel Sturm and Alex Malykhin in a Porsche 911 GT3 R. Schiller brought the Al-Manar Racing by Getspeed car home in fourth in the final stint behind a Sainteloc Racing Audi and the Optimum Motorsport McLaren 720S GT3. Al Zubair said: “Fourth place in second race but, to sum it up, it was a very positive result after everything that happened. Martin had contact with two cars and we got a drive-through penalty and a stop-and-go penalty. Bringing that into account, it was a very good result. We got



a bit lucky with the safety car timing but we had a great pit stop in the end to jump five cars and be in P4. “But, unfortunately, with the damage we had on the car, it was difficult to go up to P3. Nonetheless, after being last with a drive-through we should be very happy with the results. We leave here third in the championship going on to our strong tracks in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. Overall, I think we should be happy.” The trio overcame challenging track conditions and late heavy rain to finish fourth in race one when the heavens

opened and a deluge ruined racing in the last 30 minutes. Track conditions deteriorated quickly and the race was red-flagged with 10 minutes to run. Victory in the GT class went to Christopher Haase, Gilles Magnus and Alban Varutti in the Sainteloc Racing Audi R8 LMS GT3 Evo II, with Dylan Pereira, Alex Aka and Andrey Mukovoz finishing second in the Attempto Racing Audi. The second Sainteloc Racing Audi finished third in the hands of Dennis Marschall, Paul Evrard and Zhou Bihuang. On the opening race, Al Zubair said: “Martin had a bit

of contact at the first corner but the car seemed okay. We were fourth after the start and then I felt the car was quite good in my stint. Unfortunately, I made a little mistake passing a car under a safety car restart, which had slowed down enough for me to think there was a problem and I wanted to avoid an accident. We got a drive-through penalty for that and finished fourth in the race. Nonetheless, it’s good points for the championship for a track where we came for the first time.” Dry conditions prevailed for much of the opening four-hour race on the 5.543km circuit. Twenty-three cars competed in the GT class. The fastest lap in the second practice session went to the Al Manar Racing by Getspeed Mercedes with a best run of 2min 04.901 seconds. Again the team carried out 31 laps of practice. Al Manar Racing finished fourth in Saturday morning’s Q1 qualifying session and then finished second behind Craft-Bamboo Racing’s Mercedes in Q2. The championship continues with the 4H of Dubai on February 4, 2024.

PAN ARAB GOLF CHAMPIONSHIP

Oman U13 boys bag bronze in KSA



MUSCAT: Oman under-13 golfers made the country proud when they won the bronze medal at the recently-concluded Pan Arab Golf Championship. Over 100 players from 12 countries competed in the Junior and Ladies’ Pan Arab Championship, played at Riyadh Golf Club in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). Hosted by the Saudi Golf Federation the tournament featured five categories; Ladies, girls under-15 and boys under-13, under-15 and under-18. Each category was contested at both individual and team level. Oman was represented at under-18 level by Ahmed Al Wahaibi, Mahir Sampat, and Avi Hamlai, at under-15 by Pransh Jagwani, and at under-13 by Mohib Al Kathiri, Yusuf Al Rumhy, and Taimur Al Busaidi. Oman’s only medal came in the under-13 category as they claimed the team bronze. Played over two rounds the best two scores from the team of three each day made up the team score. Mohib Al Kathiri’s scores on both rounds counted and were complimented by Yusuf Al Rumhy on day 1 and Taimur Al Busaidi on day 2.

standings after the first round of the 2023/2024 Asian Le Mans Series. After qualifying an impressive fourth fastest for the opening four-hour race on Saturday, just seven thousandths of a second shy of the front row, Al Harthy put together a competitive start to the encounter – his first ever race at Sepang. Maintaining a top-four placing throughout the first hour, he moved up into third before slipping to fourth again through the pit-stop strategies. Following great stints by Mazepin and Deletraz, the latter the reigning FIA WEC LMP2 champion, encountered heavy rains leading to the Safety Car with 10 minutes to go. Deletraz went on to win the race and also recorded the fastest race lap with a time of 1m52.991 seconds (176.6 km/h). For the second four-hour race on Sunday, Al Harthy again took the start – this time from fifth on the grid – and delivered an outstanding stint. While edged back to sixth initially, the Omani regained fifth soon after and then climbed into the top four before moving into the podium placings within the opening 15 minutes of action. Then seizing second position during the second half-hour of action, Al Harthy ended hour one well within contention before pitting to hand the car over to Mazepin. Running in second when racing resumed after a Safety Car period, Mazepin swiftly took the lead before surrendering after the next stop. The race then took a turn for 99 Racing in the final hour



Egypt won the gold while Tunisia took silver. Against a strong competition the Oman under-18’s produced a fine final day to climb to fourth spot in the team standings, with leading player Ahmed Al Wahaibi carding a level par final round to finish in fifth position as an individual. Taking top honours by some margin were the team from Morocco, the UAE in second, and Egypt finishing in third place, eight strokes ahead of Oman. The teams were accompanied by Ahmed Al Jhadhamy, Oman Golf Association (OGA) general secretary and head of delegation, Ghalib Al Busaidi, OGA board member, and Azaan Al Rumhy, who served as a mentor. Mundhir Al Barwani, OGA chairman said: “We are delighted with the team’s performances in Saudi Arabia at the Pan Arab competition. The results are significant against some very strong teams. The bronze medal by the under-13 team bodes well for the future. We extend our thanks to all our sponsors and partners along with the Ministry of Culture, Sport, and Youth for their ongoing support.”

OMAN CRICKET PREMIER DIVISION

Athawale hits ton; Kaleem picks five

MUSCAT: There were some brilliant individual performances over the weekend during the Oman Cricket Premier Division matches at the Oman Cricket Academy ground in Al Amerat. National team opener Pratik Athawale hammered a century to power Oman Stallions to a 81-run win over Yalla Shabab, despite Karan Sonavale’s six-for, on Saturday while Aamir Kaleem’s magical spell of five for just nine runs steered Majees CC to a seven-wicket win over Renaissance CT on Friday. Athawale slammed 110 in 132 deliveries to power Stallions to 230. He was supported well by Sankata Prasad’s 38. For Yalla Shabab, Sonavale claimed six wickets to restrict the Stallions scoring spree. Mohammed Naseem hit 85 but the rest failed as Yalla Shabab were bundled to 149, as Shakeel Ahmad and Rafiullah picked three wickets each for the winners. Earlier on Friday, Majees CC’s Kaleem was the wrecker-in-chief



Athawale of Oman Stallions (left) and Kaleem of Majees as Renaissance were bowled out for paltry 67 in 16 overs. Besides Kaleem, Arafat Islam scalped three and Ubaidullah claimed two wickets. In reply Majees raced to win in 11 overs **Brief scores: Oman Stallions** 230 in 50 overs (Pratik Athawale 110 (132); Karan Sonavale 6/36) **beat Yalla Shabab** 149 in 37.4 overs (Mohammed Naseem 85 (86); Shakeel Ahmad 3/23). **Renaissance** 67 in 16 overs (Aamir Kaleem 5/9, Arafat Islam 3/23) **lost to Majees CC** 68/3 in 10.3 overs (Aamir Kaleem 29 (26); Syed Muzammil 1/12).

OMAN CRUDE PRICE FALLS

The price of Oman oil has decreased, with prices for delivery by February 2024 reaching \$77.96, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil fell by \$3.28 from the price of Friday, which was \$81.24. - **ONA**

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 4,667.79 points, up by 0.21 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.42 per cent at 449.50 points. Al Batinah Development Company, up 7.61 per cent, was the top gainer while Voltamp Energy, down 9.23 per cent, was the top loser.

Treasury bills worth OMR36.13mn issued

The value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to OMR14.73 million, for a maturity period of 28 days, whereas the value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to OMR21.4 million, for a maturity period of 91 days



MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) raised OMR36.13 million by way of allotting treasury bills on Monday.

The value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to OMR14.73 million, for a maturity period of 28 days. The average accepted price reached OMR99.590 for every OMR100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at OMR99.590 per OMR100. The average discount rate and the average

age yield reached 5.34407 per cent and 5.36607 per cent, respectively.

Whereas, the value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to OMR21.4 million, for a maturity period of 91 days.

The average accepted price reached OMR98.660 for every OMR100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at OMR98.660 per OMR100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 5.37435 per cent

and 5.44734 per cent, respectively.

Treasury bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance, and they provide licensed commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds. The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) acts as the Issue Manager and provides the added advantage of ready liquidity through discounting and repurchase facilities (Repo).

It may be noted that the interest

rate on the Repo operations with CBO is 6.00 per cent while the discount rate on the Treasury Bills Discounting Facility with CBO is 6.50 per cent.

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

APPOINTMENT

Kempinski Hotel appoints Karim El Berkchi as Director of Sales & Marketing



MUSCAT: Kempinski Hotel Muscat announced the appointment of Karim El Berkchi as Director of Sales & Marketing.

Karim brings with him more than 18 years of extensive operations and sales and marketing experience, having led commercial strategy for world-renowned Radisson Hotel Group in Oman and Accor hotels in Bahrain which was his latest role.

In his new role, Karim will use his expertise and diverse experience in business development, hotel operations, and property development towards the continued success of the hotel, where he will also focus on creating strategic regional and international partnerships to position Kempinski Hotel Muscat and Oman as a destination for leisure as well as business travellers.

AHLIBANK

Conference discusses importance of diversification in wealth management

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Demonstrating a commitment to thought-leadership and continuous knowledge sharing with its esteemed clientele, ahlibank recently hosted a conference for its 'Exclusiv' wealth management customers at its head office.

The high-profile event provided valuable insights to ahlibank's Exclusiv clients, assisting them in managing and growing their wealth strategically. The conference hosted international experts from global financial institutions that specialise in investments and wealth management.

Focused on 'The Power of Diversification,' the conference received a positive response from attendees and shed light on ahlibank's latest initiatives, including the launch of its "Digital Wealth Platform" integrated into a comprehensive and innovative product and service portfolio.

Najla Al Lawati, AGM and Head of Private Banking & Wealth Management at ahlibank, commented on the event, stating, "At ahlibank, we design wealth management products tailored to our customers' needs and preferences. Through our Exclusiv portfolio,



we aim to consistently deliver high-quality services and present investment opportunities to our high-profile clients. Building strong relationships with our customers is essential for their ongoing financial well-being."

As the market evolves, ahlibank remains dedicated to excellence in its various initiatives and events, ensuring meaningful engagement with customers to understand their evolving needs.

Highlighting the significance of diversification in reducing risk and enhancing returns, Najla Al Lawati emphasised, "Diversification is crucial when implementing

strategies to mitigate risk. At ahlibank, we consider it our duty to guide our customers through the financial landscape with enlightened approaches, emphasizing the diversification of investments and delivering a comprehensive wealth management experience."

As an integral component of ahlibank's extensive Private Banking & Wealth Management services, the Systematic Investment Plan (SIP) takes centre stage.

Essentially, the SIP provides an effective platform for investors to invest in funds that have demonstrated market potentials. ahlibank's SIP, structured under

expert guidance and advisory, is designed to augment customers' wealth through thoughtfully chosen investment opportunities along with other services as part of its extensive portfolio.

Exclusiv Banking at ahlibank, focuses on maximising returns and minimising risks, managing wealth and providing customised financial and investment solutions. ahlibank's privileged banking offers personalised services to help customers' investments flourish and grow, with the bank and its team of professionals ready to guide them on their journey to long-term financial success and prosperity.

STRONG QUARTERLY GROWTH

Foreign investors make beeline for Indian stocks

NEW DELHI: Foreign Portfolio Investors have again trained their sight towards, becoming net buyers in the country's stock market. This month they have again made a beeline to invest in Indian stock markets, following a cumulative accumulation of Rs 9,001 crore in November.

The latest inflow comes at a time when India reported strong quarterly growth maintaining its fastest-growing major economy tag, inflation in a comfortable zone, and political stability in the run-up to General Elections 2024.

Data from the National Securities Depository (NSDL) showed that in December so far, they purchased Rs 9,744 crore, which is greater than the Rs 9,001 crore total purchase in November.

Before November, FPI participation in Indian stocks was lukewarm and they had turned net sellers. They sold Rs 14,768 crore and



Rs 24,548 crore, in September and October respectively.

Before that, FPIs bought Indian stocks worth Rs 7,936 crore, Rs 11,631 crore, Rs 43,838 crore, Rs 47,148 crore, Rs 46,618 crore, and Rs 12,262 crore in March, April, May, June, July, and August respectively, data showed.

So far in 2023, FPIs cumulatively bought stocks worth Rs 114,716

crore, NSDL data showed.

Barring some exceptions, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have been selling equities in the Indian markets for over a year, which started in October 2021 for various reasons. In 2022, foreign portfolio investors sold Rs 121,439 crore worth of stocks in India on a cumulative basis, the data available on the NSDL website showed.

"FII, who had been net sellers for months, resumed buying in November. Despite this shift, their overall holdings remain at multi-year lows. With India offering attractive growth prospects and political stability, FIIs are finding it hard to resist the allure of Indian debt. The icing on the cake is the decline in US bond yields and crude oil prices, further enhancing India's appeal," said Sunil Nyati, Managing Director of Swastika Investment Ltd.

Along with the equity segment, debt assets are getting traction among FPIs. Indian debt market saw FPI inflow to the tune of Rs 50,270 crore on a cumulative basis.

"Foreign investors are pouring money into Indian debt, drawn by the country's strong economic outlook and improving public sector health. This inflow is expected to accelerate as political stability solidifies and Indian bonds inch

closer to inclusion in global indices," Nyati added.

According to Varun Aggarwal, founder and managing director, Profit Idea, "Due to the fall in bond yields, the return on investment in foreign markets is reducing, and the opportunity for the Indian market opens as the equity market is doing well and the BJP winning state election shows the political stability. Whereas in the US and Europe, the geopolitical tension and war situation questioned the political decision made by them, many new companies are coming to India and started manufacturing and operations on a large scale."

"Also, many joint ventures are in the pipeline to get started and boost the overall economy and companies profits in India, so India is much more likely to see huge investment coming in the coming years," Aggarwal added. - **ANI**

DIGITAL MUSIC GIANT

Spotify to cut 17% of staff in cost-cutting measure

STOCKHOLM: Digital music giant Spotify said Monday that it would lay off around 1,500 employees as a means to reduce costs.

"To align Spotify with our future goals and ensure we are right-sized for the challenges ahead, I have made the difficult decision to reduce our total headcount by approximately 17 per cent across the company," Spotify co-founder and CEO Daniel Ek said in a statement.

The cost-cutting measure could serve as a means to boost profitability at Spotify. Price hikes have already propelled the company to a rare €32 million (\$34.7 million) profit in the third quarter. - **AP**

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Al Batinah Development Company, up 7.61 per cent, was the top gainer while Voltamp Energy, down 9.23 per cent, was the top loser



MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,667.79 points, up by 0.21 per cent from previous close. The Shari Index ended up by 0.42 per cent at 449.50 points. Al Batinah Development Company, up 7.61 per cent, was the top gainer while Voltamp Energy, down 9.23 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of Bank Muscat were the most active in terms of number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 811 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of OMR3.11 million, with more than 12.16 million shares changing hands. Out of 47 traded securities, 12 advanced, 16 declined, and 19 remained unchanged. At the session close, foreign investors were net sellers for OMR32,000 while domestic investors were net buyers for OMR30,000, followed by GCC & Arab investors for OMR1,000 worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,582.24 points, down 0.24 per cent. Prices of Al Batinah Development Company, Sohar International Bank, Bank Nizwa, Bank

Muscat were up by 7.61 per cent, 1.94 per cent, 1.03 per cent, 0.37 per cent respectively. Prices of Muscat Finance, Al Madina Investments, Al Anwar Investment, Ominvest, DIDIC were down by 7.41 per cent, 6.90 per cent, 2.60 per cent, 2.06 per cent, 0.43 per cent respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,342.66 points, down 0.54 per cent. Prices of Galfar Engineering, Al Anwar Ceramics were up by 0.66 per cent, 0.57 per cent respectively. Prices of Voltamp Energy, Oman Flour Mills were down by 9.23 per cent, 3.53 per cent respectively.

Services Index was down by 0.15 per cent before closing at 1,594.10 points. Prices of Phoenix Power, Oman Telecom, Al Jazeera Services were up by 1.82 per cent, 1.48 per cent, 0.44 per cent respectively. Prices of Barka Water & Power Company, Muscat Desalination, Sembcorp Salalah, Muscat Gases, National Gas were down by 4.55 per cent, 3.70 per cent, 3.16 per cent, 3.06 per cent, 2.30 per cent respectively.

— United Securities

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff%
MSX 30 INDEX	4,668.528	4,635.452	4,667.793	4,658.178	9.615	0.21
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,617.651	7,525.255	7,582.237	7,600.355	-18.118	-0.24
Industry Index	5,374.997	5,342.658	5,342.658	5,371.463	-28.805	-0.54
Services Index	1,597.074	1,586.199	1,594.104	1,596.430	-2.326	-0.15
MSX Shariah Index	450.282	447.612	449.503	447.612	1.891	0.42
MSX TR INDEX	6,153.680	6,110.083	6,152.712	6,140.038	12.674	0.21
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,312.256	8,211.436	8,273.613	8,293.383	-19.770	-0.24
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	5,741.835	5,707.288	5,707.288	5,738.059	-30.771	-0.54
SERVICES TR IDX	1,776.731	1,764.633	1,773.427	1,776.014	-2.587	-0.15

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap.	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
12,169,633	3,107,537	811	23,792,879,003	12	16	19	47

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR MONDAY, DECEMBER 4

ROW	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PREV. VALUE	SECURITY SYMBOL	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET																	
OM0000001152	OMAN NATIONAL ENGINEERING & INVESTMENT	25,834	2,775	2	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.108	-0.002	-1.835	0.107	0.105	0.110	0.100	ONES	16,650,000
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	5,000	1,425	1	0.285	0.285	0.285	0.285	0.285	0.000	0.000	0.285	0.283	0.313	0.100	NBOB	463,394,711
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	4,800	2,168	2	0.450	0.475	0.450	0.475	0.485	-0.010	-2.062	0.475	0.440	0.475	0.100	OMVS	317,473,577
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	134,360	7,121	6	0.053	0.053	0.053	0.053	0.053	0.000	0.000	0.053	0.053	0.053	0.100	OEIO	6,459,375
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	107,082	18,964	18	0.177	0.178	0.177	0.178	0.177	0.001	0.565	0.178	0.165	0.179	0.100	AACT	39,160,000
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	15,597	3,975	2	0.230	0.231	0.230	0.231	0.230	0.001	0.435	0.231	0.222	0.230	0.100	AJSS	14,138,187
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	10,904	622	2	0.057	0.057	0.057	0.057	0.057	0.000	0.000	0.057	0.057	0.061	0.100	UFCL	20,239,256
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	5,824,370	1,597,068	138	0.273	0.275	0.272	0.274	0.273	0.001	0.366	0.274	0.274	0.274	0.100	BKMB	2,056,752,795
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	718,948	787,203	50	1.082	1.096	1.082	1.096	1.080	0.016	1.481	1.096	1.095	1.096	0.100	OTEL	822,000,000
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	100,000	5,800	3	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.000	0.000	0.058	0.057	0.059	0.100	GFIC	11,600,000
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	1,751,500	180,559	26	0.103	0.105	0.103	0.105	0.103	0.002	1.942	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.100	BKSB	574,128,293
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	6,600	2,244	3	0.340	0.340	0.340	0.340	0.340	0.000	0.000	0.340	0.338	0.349	0.100	ORDS	221,321,038
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	100,100	7,807	6	0.072	0.076	0.072	0.076	0.076	0.000	0.000	0.076	0.075	0.077	0.100	SMNP	15,172,306
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	19,744	1,658	2	0.084	0.084	0.084	0.084	0.084	0.000	0.000	0.084	0.084	0.084	0.100	AMAT	14,700,000
Total	14	8,824,879	2,618,888	261													

Parallel Market

OM0000001111	GULF HOTELS (OM)	456	1,942	9	4.259	4.259	4.259	4.259	4.260	-0.001	-0.023	4.259	4.000	4.259	1.000	GHOS	14,601,223
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	5,000	4,025	2	0.085	0.085	0.085	0.085	0.087	-0.002	-2.239	0.085	0.085	0.088	0.100	NGCI	7,225,000
OM0000001178	MUSCAT GASES	3,500	333	2	0.095	0.095	0.095	0.095	0.098	-0.003	-3.061	0.095	0.089	0.098	0.100	MGMC	2,850,000
OM0000001368	CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL INDUSTRIES	107,852	4,853	7	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.000	0.000	0.045	0.045	0.047	0.100	CMII	2,812,500
OM0000001400	OMAN FLOUR MILLS	20,000	10,380	9	0.519	0.519	0.519	0.519	0.538	-0.019	-3.532	0.519	0.500	0.519	0.100	OFMI	81,742,500
OM0000001418	RAYSUT CEMENT	47,583	6,485	20	0.136	0.138	0.135	0.138	0.138	0.000	0.000	0.138	0.137	0.138	0.100	RCCL	27,600,000
OM0000001426	OMAN REFRESHMENT	300	420	9	1.400	1.400	1.400	1.400	1.400	0.000	0.000	1.400	1.400	1.400	0.100	ORCI	70,000,000
OM0000001509	DHOFAIR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT & INV.	17,246	4,018	9	0.233	0.233	0.233	0.233	0.234	-0.001	-0.427	0.233	0.233	0.233	0.100	DIDI	95,354,392
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	10,000	500	1	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.054	-0.004	-7.407	0.050	0.050	0.053	0.100	MFCI	15,357,316
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	55,175	4,141	7	0.075	0.076	0.075	0.075	0.077	-0.002	-2.597	0.075	0.075	0.076	0.100	AAIC	15,450,000
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	46,700	2,509	8	0.054	0.054	0.053	0.054	0.058	-0.004	-8.897	0.053	0.053	0.053	0.100	AMHI	4,590,000
OM0000002275	SHELL OMAN MARKETING	1,040	865	2	0.830	0.830	0.830	0.830	0.830	0.000	0.000	0.830	0.830	0.830	0.100	SOBS	78,850,000
OM0000002366	AL BATINAH DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT HO.	45,500	4,133	9	0.086	0.099	0.086	0.099	0.092	-0.007	-7.609	0.099	0.085	0.092	0.100	DBIH	2,970,000
OM0000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	79,000	3,320	7	0.043	0.043	0.042	0.042	0.044	-0.002	-4.545	0.042	0.042	0.042	0.100	BWPC	6,720,000
OM0000003281	TAAQEER FINANCE	1,713	163	1	0.095	0.095	0.095	0.095	0.095	0.000	0.000	0.095	0.095	0.095	0.100	TFCL	25,064,328
OM0000003821	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	25,000	3,777	2	0.151	0.152	0.151	0.152	0.151	0.001	0.662	0.152	0.146	0.152	0.100	GECS	30,853,940
OM0000003961	VOLTAMP ENERGY	541	64	1	0.118	0.118	0.118	0.118	0.130	-0.012	-9.281	0.118	0.105	0.134	0.100	VOES	9,605,325
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	46,960	4,606	12	0.099	0.099	0.098	0.098	0.097	0.001	1.031	0.098	0.098	0.098	0.100	BKNZ	219,221,397
OM0000004735	SEMBCORP SALALAH	201,027	18,686	12	0.093	0.095	0.092	0.092	0.095	-0.003	-3.158	0.094	0.094	0.094	0.100	SSPW	87,820,619
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	20,000	440	2	0.022	0.022	0.022	0.022	0.022	0.000	0.000	0.022	0.022	0.023	0.100	BATP	14,847,523
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	11,000	242	2	0.022	0.022	0.022	0.022	0.022	0.000	0.000	0.022	0.020	0.022	0.100	SUWP	15,716,939
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	21,698	1,195	6	0.056	0.056	0.054	0.056	0.055	0.001	1.518	0.056	0.054	0.060	0.100	PHPC	81,905,682
OM0000007084	MUSCAT CITY DESALINATION	8,604	673	6	0.078	0.080	0.078	0.078	0.081	-0.003	-3.704	0.080	0.078	0.089	0.100	MCDE	12,132,931
OM0000007811	MUSANDAM POWER	5,000	1,375	2	0.275	0.275	0.275	0.275	0.275	0.000	0.000	0.275	0.260	0.280	0.100	MSPW	19,397,250
OM0000007910	AMAN REAL ESTATE	15,270	1,456	5	0.099	0.099	0.095	0.097	0.096	0.001	1.042	0.097	0.094	0.097	0.100	AMAN	19,400,000
OM0000008868	THE PEARL REEF	6,500	796	3	0.121	0.123	0.121	0.123	0.133	-0.009	-6.818	0.123	0.121	0.123	0.100	PRPD	62,498,736
OM0000008934	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	15,519	5,519	7	0.298	0.298	0.298	0.298	0.300	-0.002	-0.687	0.298	0.298	0.298	0.100	QGN	13,513,680
OM0000009072	OQ GAS NETWORKS	2,436,643	372,554	375	0.153	0.154	0.152	0.153	0.153	0.000	0.000	0.153	0.153	0.153	0.100	OQGN	662,585,460
Total	28	3,257,795	455,867	538													

STOCK MARKET

Asia shares turn mixed, gold reaches record above \$2,100

SYDNEY: Asian shares turned mixed on Monday while gold spiked to all-time peaks above \$2,100 at the start of a busy week for economic data that will test market wagers for early and aggressive rate cuts from major central banks next year.

Median forecasts are for payrolls to rise 180,000, keeping unemployment steady at 3.9 per cent, Reuters reported.

MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan was up 0.3 per cent, led by gains in South Korea and Australia. Japan's Nikkei dipped 0.6 per cent as the yen extended recent gains.

Chinese blue chips eased 0.5 per cent, while the country's central bank set another firm fix for the yuan.

S&P 500 futures dipped 0.2 per cent after finishing at a 20-month high on Friday, while Nasdaq futures lost 0.3 per cent. The S&P 500 is up 19 per cent for the year so



far and just 4 per cent away from its all-time peak.

The euro was flat at \$1.0874. It had also been climbing recently but suffered a reversal last week when surprisingly soft inflation data led markets to price in a March rate cut from the European Central Bank.

The dive in yields and the dollar has been a boon for non-yielding gold, which added 0.9 per cent to \$2,088 an ounce after hitting a re-

cord of \$2,111.39 an ounce.

Oil prices have not been so fortunate, amid doubts OPEC+ will be able to maintain planned output cuts. At the same time, US oil production is at record levels above 13 million barrels a day and rig counts are still rising.

The attacks on shipping in the Red Sea offered only fleeting support and Brent eased 51 cents to \$78.37 a barrel, while US crude fell 44 cents to \$73.63. -BNA

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Toyota plans to expand battery EV line-up in Europe to 6 models by 2026

TOKYO: Toyota Motor (7203.T) said on Monday it would increase its line-up of battery electric vehicles in Europe to six models by 2026 and it expected such vehicles to make up more than 20 per cent of new car sales in the region by then.

The world's largest automaker by sales said in a statement it expected to sell more than 250,000 battery-powered vehicles annually in Europe by 2026, as it seeks steep growth in a market where it has long been overtaken by rivals, Reuters reported.

On top of a battery EV the company is currently selling in Europe and a compact sports utility vehicle (SUV) concept it already showcased last year, Toyota unveiled two new concepts for models that it plans to sell in the region later this decade.

Concept model

One was a concept model for a battery-powered small SUV that it plans to launch in Europe in 2024 and the other was a concept for a sports crossover model that is scheduled for introduction in 2025, Toyota said in statements.

Toyota is targeting sales of 1.5 million battery-powered vehicles a year globally by 2026.

Sales of fully electric cars in the European Union (EU) were up more than half over the first 10 months of the year compared to the same period a year earlier, data from the European Automobile Manufacturers Association showed last month.

Toyota had the fifth-biggest total auto market share in the EU for the 10 months through October, seeing its share decline slightly from the previous year to just under 7 per cent, the data showed. Battery powered vehicles accounted for 1 per cent of Toyota's worldwide sales of about 8.5 million vehicles over the first 10 months of the year, including those of its luxury Lexus brand.

Toyota also said it would set up a business unit focusing on hydrogen in Europe as it seeks to commercialise the technology by developing fuel-cell systems and supporting commercial partnerships for it.

The announcement came after Toyota executives said in July the company would focus on selling hydrogen-powered trucks and cars in Europe and China.

A hydrogen fuel-cell vehicle uses an electric motor like an EV but draws power from a fuel stack where hydrogen is separated by a catalyst to produce electricity. -BNA

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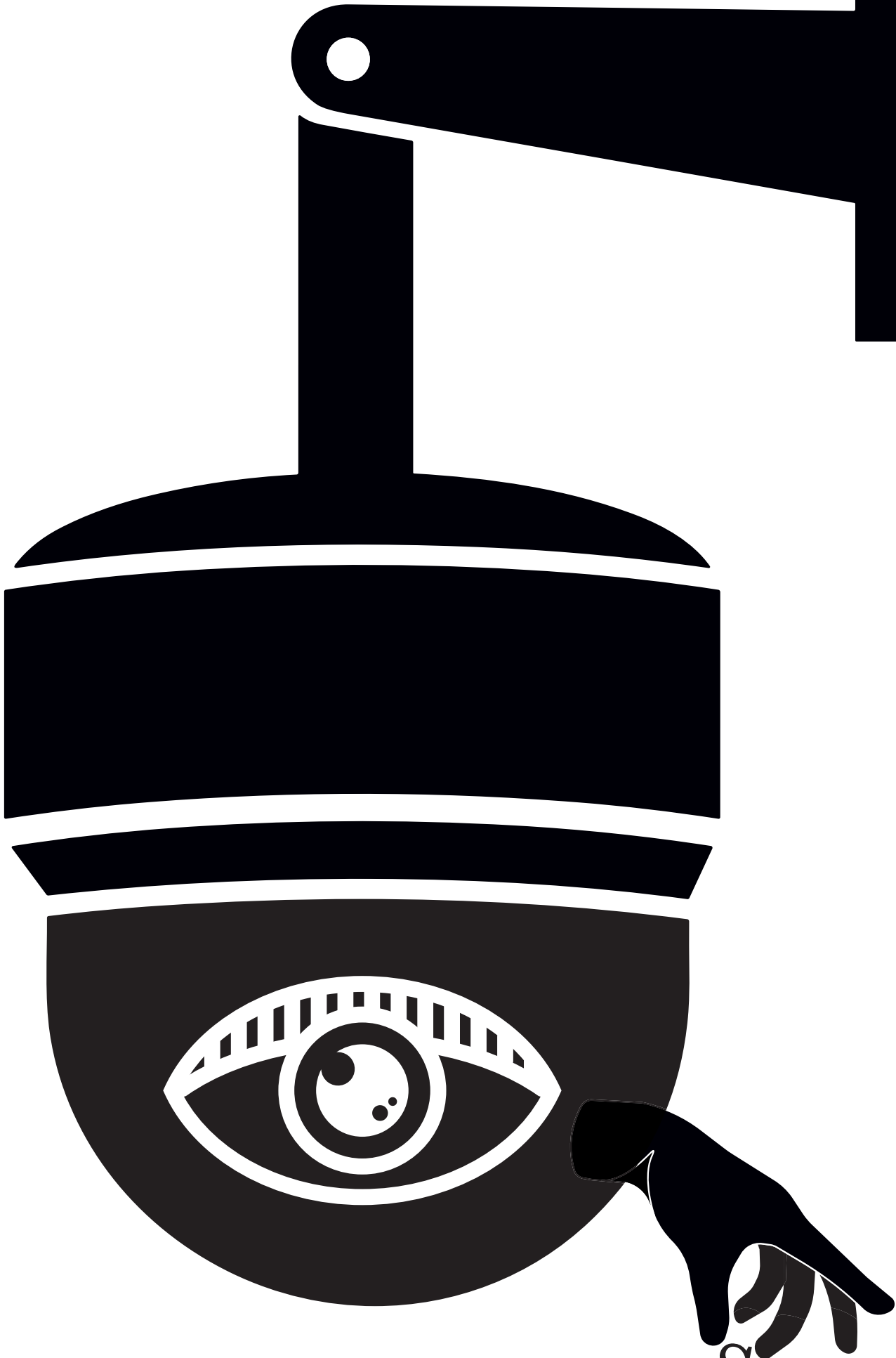
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LIFESTYLE



RESEARCH SHOWS SERIOUS SECURITY,
PRIVACY RISKS IN SMART HOMES

Researchers have released ground-breaking research on the security and privacy issues raised by the increasing number of opaque and intricately designed Internet of Things (IoT) devices in smart homes.

Smart homes, which include a variety of consumer-focused IoT gadgets including smartphones, smart TVs, virtual assistants, and security cameras, are getting more and more networked. These gadgets can sense activity in our homes, which are the most private places we have, using cameras, microphones, and other sensors. Can we trust that the sensitive data that these gadgets in our homes have access to is being handled and protected in a safe manner? is an important question.

“When we think of what happens between the walls of our homes, we think of it as a trusted, private place. In reality, we find that smart devices in our homes are piercing that veil of trust and privacy—in ways that allow nearly any company to learn what devices are in your home, to know when you are home, and to learn where your home is.

These behaviours are generally not disclosed to consumers, and there is a need for better protections in the home,” said David Choffnes, Associate Professor of

Computer Science and Executive Director of the Cybersecurity and Privacy Institute at Northeastern University.

The research team’s extensive study, titled “In the Room Where It Happens: Characterizing Local Communication and Threats in Smart Homes,” was presented this week at the ACM Internet Measurement Conference (ACM IMC’23) in Montreal (Canada).

The paper delves for the first time into the intricacies of local network interactions between 93 IoT devices and mobile apps, revealing a plethora of previously undisclosed security and privacy concerns with actual real-world implications.

While most users typically view local networks as a trusted and safe environment, the study’s findings illuminate new threats associated with the inadvertent exposure of sensitive data by IoT devices within local networks using standard protocols such as UPnP or mDNS.

These threats include the exposure of unique device names, UUIDs, and even household geolocation data, all of which can be

harvested by companies involved in surveillance capitalism without user awareness.

According to Vijay Prakash, PhD student from NYU Tandon who co-authored the paper, “analysing the data collected by IoT Inspector, we found evidence of IoT devices inadvertently exposing at least one PII (Personally Identifiable Information), like unique hardware address (MAC), UUID, or unique device names, in thousands of real-world smart homes.

Any single PII is useful for identifying a household, but combining all three of them together makes a house very unique and easily identifiable. For comparison, if a person is fingerprinted using the simplest browser fingerprinting technique, they are as unique as one in 1,500 people. If a smart home with all three types of identifiers is fingerprinted, it is as unique as one in 1.12 million smart homes.”

These local network protocols can be employed as side channels to access data that is supposedly protected by several mobile app permissions such as

household locations

“A side channel is a sneaky way of indirectly accessing sensitive data. For example, Android app developers are supposed to request and obtain users’ consent to access data like geolocation. However, we have shown that certain spyware apps and advertising companies do abuse local network protocols to silently access such sensitive information without any user awareness.

All they have to do is kindly ask for it to other IoT devices deployed in the local network using standard protocols like UPnP,” said Narseo Vallina-Rodriguez, Associate Research Professor of IMDEA Networks and co-founder of AppCensus.

“Our study shows that the local network protocols used by IoT devices are not sufficiently protected and expose sensitive information about the home and the use we make of the devices.

This information is being collected in an opaque way and makes it easier to create profiles of our habits or socioeconomic level,” added Juan Tapiador, professor at UC3M. -ANI

SPORTS

Spurs earn late draw against Man City; Liverpool triumph

Tottenham midfielder Kulusevski's late goal helped his side come out of Etihad Stadium with a 3-3 draw in a thriller

LONDON: Tottenham midfielder Dejan Kulusevski's 90th-minute header denied Manchester City victory in a breathless six-goal thriller at Etihad Stadium on Sunday. City thought they had won it nine minutes from time when Jack Grealish turned home Erling Haaland's cross for his first goal since April, *BBC Sport* reported. But Tottenham snatched a point from a match that ended in controversy as referee Simon Hooper blew for a foul on Erling Haaland, who had already shrugged off the effects of Emerson Royal's tackle and chipped a pass to Grealish which seemed to set the England man clear. Haaland was still complaining long after the final whistle and responded to something said from the Tottenham bench before furiously marching down the tunnel. It was fitting both sides got



something out of the game given how entertaining it had been. Tottenham led early through Son Heung-min, only for the Tottenham skipper to divert Julian Alvarez's cross into his own net three minutes later. Phil Foden finished off a slick City attack to put the hosts in front at the break. Giovanni Lo Celso pulled Tottenham level with an excellent curling effort from the edge of the area midway through the second half, but Yves Bissouma was soon punished for losing possession close to the Spurs area.

Foden fed Haaland, who delivered the low cross for Grealish to convert. Kulusevski's late intervention - a mix of head and shoulder sending the ball in off the bar - ensured Tottenham avoided a fourth successive Premier League defeat, with Ange Postecoglou's side fifth on 27 points, three behind champions City, who drop to third.

Trent Alexander-Arnold hits late winner for Reds Trent Alexander-Arnold scored an 88th-minute winner as Liverpool mounted a stunning late

comeback to beat Fulham in a seven-goal thriller at Anfield on Sunday. Trailing 3-2 in the 87th minute, Liverpool equalised as Wataru Endo scored his first Premier League goal and seconds later Alexander-Arnold completed the turnaround. Alexander-Arnold had helped Liverpool open the scoring in the 20th minute when his free-kick ricocheted off the crossbar and in off Fulham keeper Bernd Leno. Former Red Harry Wilson equalised four minutes later before Alexis Mac Allister restored Liverpool's lead after 38

minutes with a stunning long-range strike. Kenny Tete netted Fulham's second equaliser in first-half injury time and Bobby De Cordova-Reid headed the Cottagers into the lead in the 80th minute. Fulham had looked set to end Liverpool's 13-month unbeaten home record in the Premier League. Instead, the Reds kept up their perfect record at Anfield this season and cut Arsenal's lead at the top to two points. Marco Silva's side stayed 14th.

Fernandez double helps 10-man Blues win Enzo Fernandez scored twice as 10-man Chelsea held on to beat Brighton 3-2 in a thriller at Stamford Bridge on Sunday. The Argentine midfielder headed the Blues in front after 17 minutes and former Brighton loanee Levi Colwill doubled the lead four minutes later with his first Chelsea goal. Facundo Buonanotte got one back for the visitors and they were right back in the game when Chelsea skipper Conor Gallagher was shown a second yellow card and sent off on the stroke of half-time. However, Fernandez restored Chelsea's two-goal advantage from the penalty spot midway through the second half. Joao Pedro pulled one back in the second minute of injury time. **Other results:** Bournemouth 2 Aston Villa 2, West Ham 1 Crystal Palace 1. - Agencies



Felix scores winner for Barca against Atletico

BARCELONA: Barcelona beat Atletico Madrid 1-0 as Joao Felix scored the only goal of the game against his parent club on Sunday. The Portuguese forward, on a season-long loan from Atletico, dinked the ball over Jan Oblak from a tight angle in the 28th minute, *BBC Sport* reported. Memphis Depay went close to an Atletico equaliser against his old club, but his free-kick was tipped on to the frame of the goal by Inaki Pena. Barca could have won by more had Robert Lewandowski taken some great chances. Reigning champions Barcelona move above Atletico into third place in La Liga, but they sit four points off the top two, Real Madrid and Girona. **Other results:** Mallorca 0 Alaves 0, Almeria 0 Real Betis 0, Sevilla 1 Villarreal 1. - Agencies

ITALIAN SERIE A



Inter return to top, trounce Napoli

MILAN: Inter Milan moved back to the top of the Serie A table thanks to a big 3-0 victory at defending champions Napoli on Sunday, *BBC Sport* reported. Hakan Calhanoglu put the visitors ahead with a fantastic first-time strike from 25 yards. Nicolo Barella slotted home after some excellent footwork in the box and Marcus Thuram netted from Juan Cuadrado's low drive across the box. Napoli, who appointed Walter

Mazzarri as manager last month, drop down to fifth in the table. They are 11 points behind Simone Inzaghi's side and have already lost as many Serie A games as they did last season - four. Juventus had gone top on Friday thanks to a 2-1 victory at Monza and now sit two points off Inter. **Other results:** Lecce 1 Bologna 1, Fiorentina 3 Salernitana 0, Udinese 3 Hellas Verona 3, Sassuolo 1 Roma 2.

WEST INDIES VS ENGLAND FIRST ODI

Hope guides Windies to thrilling win

ANTIGUA: Shai Hope's sublime century led West Indies to a stunning four-wicket win over England in the first one-day international (ODI) in Antigua on Sunday. Hope smashed 109 not out from just 83 balls as the hosts chased down 326 to win with seven balls to spare, *BBC Sport* reported. Needing an unlikely 106 from the last 10 overs with five wickets left, captain Hope was supported by Romario Shepherd's 48 from 28 balls. Hope then finished the chase in style with three sixes in the 49th over. England were firm favourites at the halfway stage on a tricky pitch that was offering uneven bounce and turn for the spinners. In their first outing since a disappointing group-stage exit at the World Cup, England started emphatically after winning the toss as openers Phil Salt and Will Jacks blitzed an opening stand of 77 in just 8.2 overs. They somewhat squandered the positive start, however, with all of the top five reaching at least 20, but only Harry Brook able to kick on past a half-century with 71 from 72 balls. Late cameos from Sam Curran and Brydon Carse, with an eighth-wicket stand of 66, propelled the score past 300. A West Indies victory looked even more unlikely when they lost



both openers in successive overs after a promising 104-run opening stand, exposing an inexperienced middle order. But Hope timed his knock to perfection, biding his time alongside the aggression of Shepherd and Shimron Hetmyer, who made 32, before accelerating in the death overs once both had departed - taking a particular liking to Curran, who finished with 0-98. The three-match ODI series continues at the same venue on Wednesday. **'Fantastic game of cricket'** England captain Jos Buttler: "It was a fantastic game of cricket. A lot of credit has to go to Shai Hope and Romario Shepherd. They did really well at the back end to

chase those runs down. "I thought it was a fantastic battling effort by us. They [Phil Salt & Will Jacks] set the tone at the top. They pegged us back a bit in the middle phase but it was a fantastic effort to get to that score and it needed a fantastic innings to chase it down." On his own form: "I feel good, I just keep managing to get out. It's disappointing, frustrating and gone on for a lot longer than I would have liked but there's only myself who can score my own runs. "I'm not going to score any if I hide away and don't get out there. You keep working hard, you keep putting the effort in and trust that it will turn around." West Indies captain and player of the match Shai Hope: "It was in a winning cause that's all we play for, the stats will come but my aim is to win games and I'm happy the guys crossed the line today." On his partnership with Romario Shepherd, Hope said: "He was amazing, he's one of those guys you can always depend on at this level and we got the one to start the series on a high and the aim is to repeat this in the second game." **Brief scores:** England 325 (Harry Brook 71 (72); Gudakesh Motie 2-49) lost to West Indies 326/6 in 48.5 overs (Shai Hope 109* (83); Rehan Ahmed 2-40). - Agencies

FRENCH LIGUE 1

Ten-man PSG prevail

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) overcame the early sending off of goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma to win 2-0 at Le Havre and move four points clear at the top of Ligue 1 on Sunday. Donnarumma was dismissed in the 10th minute after he stopped Josue Casimir's run outside the box. Despite that, PSG opened the scoring when Kylian Mbappe fired his 15th goal of the season off the post. Vitinha made the win safe in the final minute with a deflected strike. Goalkeeper Arnau Tenas had come on to make his professional debut, going in goal after Donnarumma's dismissal. PSG boss Luis Enrique praised the 22-year-old's performance. "I am very proud of what the team showed, the mentality, the ability to adapt to the different



things that happened during the game and the team spirit," he said. "We didn't concede too many chances and the ones we did concede were saved by Arnau." **Other results:** Brest 3 Clermont 0, Monaco 2 Montpellier 0, Toulouse 1 Lorient 1, Lille 2 Metz 0, Marseille 2 Rennes 0.

HERO WORLD CHALLENGE

Scheffler claims title as Woods finishes 18th

BAHAMAS: World No.1 Scottie Scheffler won the Hero World Challenge in the Bahamas as Tiger Woods finished 18th in the 20-man field on his return from injury, *BBC Sport* reported. American Scheffler's bogey-free four-under round of 68 meant he finished on 20 under and sealed a three-shot win from Austrian Sepp Straka. Woods, competing for the first time since withdrawing from the Masters in April, ended level after a round of 72. The 15-time major champion expects to play "once a month" in 2024. Former world No.1 Woods, 47, had ankle surgery earlier this year to address post-traumatic arthritis following the 2021 car crash that kept him out of action for nearly 14 months. "Once a month seems reason-



able," Woods told Golf Channel of his plans for next year. "It gives me a couple of weeks to recover and a week to tune up. Maybe I can get into the rhythm." Woods, who will next play the PNC Championship - formerly the Father/Son Challenge - from

14 December with his son Charlie, said he was "ecstatic" with his return. "I feel like my game's not that far off but I need to get in better shape," Woods said. "I don't have the bone pain that I did, but I still have to go through the same protocols. It takes a long time, that's the unfortunate thing about ageing." Woods finished 20 shots behind compatriot Scheffler, runner-up to Viktor Hovland in each of the past two years. Straka returned a superb 64 to finish 17 under, with Justin Thomas as a shot further back in third. Hovland surged through the field with a 63 to finish 10th. "I think this is great for momentum," Scheffler told NBC. "I talked a little bit about it at the beginning of the week; this was kind of a warm-up for the [next] season." - Agencies

Meethaq available in special booths in Sur, Sohar and Nizwa

These booths will offer visitors access to a range of Sharia-compliant products and services including opening children and saving accounts, subscribing in Meethaq saving plan, applying for salary transfer, and various financing products

MUSCAT: Aligning with its strategy to broaden its services to encompass all segments of society, Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat is launching special booths across key commercial centres in various regions of the Sultanate of Oman, aiming to bring Meethaq's suite of services and products closer to customers, ensuring seamless, convenient and fast transactions.

As a start, Meethaq will set up a booth at Sur City Centre in Sharqiyah South, for three days, from December 7 to 9. Meethaq Team will be available in the counter in two shifts, morning and evening,

to provide customers with the best banking experiences. The second station will be Sohar City Centre in Batinah North from December 14 to 16 and it will end at Nizwa Grand Mall in Dakhiliya Governorate from December 21 to 23.

These booths will offer visitors access to a range of Sharia-compliant products and services including opening children and saving accounts, subscribing in Meethaq saving plan, applying for salary transfer, and various financing products. Meethaq employees will ensure swift and hassle-free transactions, committed to delivering unparalleled banking services.



On the occasion, Sami Arfah Bait Rashid, Assistant General Manager - Meethaq Personal Banking, said: "Despite of our wide network encompassing 27 branches distributed across all governorates, offering various banking services and facilities, we have launched this initiative with the aim of providing opportunities for customers to explore our diverse range of products and

services, including the opening of bank accounts, in a convenient environment in these renowned commercial centres. I urge everyone to take this opportunity and benefit from these exceptional services. I would like to extend my gratitude all our customers for their trust in the banking services, products and facilities provided by Meethaq."

Meethaq Islamic Banking en-

deavours to provide a full suite of Sharia-compliant Islamic banking products and services including deposit products, consumer financing, credit cards, corporate banking, Internet banking, mobile banking and 24/7 Contact Center for both customers and corporate sector. Every Meethaq product undergoes through Sharia compliance certification by the bank's Sharia Supervisory

Board and is created in line with the guidelines of the Central Bank of Oman.

Demonstrating its leadership in the Islamic banking sector, Meethaq has been awarded globally and regionally. It recently won multiple awards from Global Islamic Finance, most prominent of which is The 2023 Market Leadership Bank Award and The Best Digital Islamic Bank.

FIA WORLD RALLY



Toyota Gazoo Racing shines at Rally Japan

MUSCAT: Toyota Gazoo Racing (TGR) World Rally Team (WRT) has scored a flawless 1-2-3 podium finish on home roads at the FIA World Rally Championship's (WRC) Rally Japan to complete a season of success in style. Elfyn Evans, followed by Sébastien Ogier and Kalle Rovanperä, all claimed victory in their No. 33, No. 17, and No. 69 Toyota GR Yaris Rally Hybrid Electric Vehicles respectively.

The triumph, for Evans and co-driver Scott Martin, is their third of the season and the ninth in 13 rallies this year for TGR. Toyota, meanwhile, had already sealed its manufacturers' title during round 11 of Rally Chile before Rovanperä and Jonne Halttunen secured their second drivers' and co-drivers' titles on the penultimate event, the Central European Rally.

Akio Toyoda, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Toyota Motor Corporation and TGR-WRT Chairman, commented: "To foster the culture of rallying through continuous improvement in a Japanese way' and 'to make the rally an essential autumn tradition in Japan'. Rally Japan this year made all of these things come true. The most impressive thing was that we were able to use Toyota Stadium as one of the special stages allowing us to watch the top drivers driving up close and in front of that many spectators. It was a rally full of exciting and amazing experiences for both fans and drivers. If we continue this kind of rally events, I am sure that motorsport will become a culture in Japan and be more popular. I would like to thank everyone who worked so hard to make Rally Japan 2023 a great success."

This was the WRC's second visit to the technical and demanding asphalt roads in the mountains of the Aichi and Gifu prefectures around Toyota City. Heavy rain added significantly to day one's challenges, and this was where Evans built the foundations of his victory.

Two stage wins in the most extreme wet morning weather helped him to open up a lead of almost one minute and 50 seconds over his team-mates.

Day two and three brought further changeable and slippery weather conditions, but Evans managed both days expertly to seal the win. Meanwhile, Ogier and Rovanperä focused on maximising the team's result rather than their own positions in tricky weather conditions to finally emerge in second and third place.

Over the years, Toyota has been participating in many different forms of motorsports, including Formula One, the World Endurance Championship (WEC), and the Nürburgring 24 Hours endurance race. Toyota's participation in these events was overseen by separate entities within the company until April 2015, when Toyota established TGR, to consolidate all of its motorsports activities under one in-house brand. Representing Toyota's belief that 'the roads build the people, and the people build the cars,' TGR highlights the role of motorsports as a fundamental pillar of Toyota's commitment to making 'ever-better' cars. Harnessing years of experience gained under the extreme conditions of various motorsports events, TGR aims to forge new technologies and solutions that bring the freedom, adventure, and joy of driving to everyone.

IMPACTFUL INITIATIVE

National Finance reaffirms partnership with Injaz Oman to drive youth development

MUSCAT: Recognising the pivotal role that the nation's youth play in driving socio-economic growth, National Finance, the leading finance company in the Sultanate of Oman, has been at the forefront of championing impactful initiatives while collaborating with organisations that share similar values.

In line with this, the company, under its dedicated social responsibility arm, 'Imtidad', has fortified its strategic partnership with Injaz Oman.

The partnership agreement was formally signed by Tariq bin Sulaiman Al Farsi, Chief Executive Officer of National Finance, and Khaula Hamoud Al Harthy, Chief Executive Officer of Injaz Oman, in an official ceremony attended by key personnel from both organisations.

Speaking on the occasion, Tariq bin Sulaiman Al Farsi said, "At National Finance, we believe the youth of the country are the foundational pillars of our society. Empowering them is crucial as it helps unlock hidden potential, fosters innovation, and nurtures the next generation of leaders. Our partnership with Injaz Oman, which shares our vision, transcends mere youth empowerment; it represents not only a present-day investment but also a strategic foresight aimed



at driving the growth of the nation's economy through the cultivation of skilled and visionary leaders."

Khaula Al Harthy echoed the sentiment, saying, "At Injaz Oman, we are dedicated to providing youth from diverse academic backgrounds with the right opportunities to establish their own entrepreneurial ventures. As we nurture the skills of the youth, we are sowing the seeds for a dynamic economy that thrives on innovation and creativity. We are grateful for the consistent support from National Finance, which plays a

vital role in the effective execution of our initiatives."

National Finance's longstanding relationship with Injaz Oman exemplifies its commitment to equipping the next generation with the necessary tools to bring their aspirations to life. As part of 'Imtidad', the company has previously supported Injaz Oman's 'The Company Programme', which has given over 1,000 budding entrepreneurs, between the ages of 11 and 25, the opportunity to set up and operate real-world ventures in their local communities.

Through its strategic partnerships with organizations such as Injaz Oman, National Finance continues to create a positive impact on society. Embracing a holistic approach, the company's 'Imtidad' wing focuses on education, community, health, and the environment and aims to bring about societal development and economic advancement among communities. By supporting these vital endeavours, National Finance seeks to lay the groundwork for a sustainable and prosperous future with leaders capable of driving change.

PARTNERSHIP

Vodafone Oman becomes official sponsor of Al Seeb Club's first football team

MUSCAT: Vodafone Oman has signed a first-of-its-kind long-term partnership with Al Seeb club as the 'official sponsor' of its first football team.

The coming together of the two powerhouse-brands will aim to leverage the inherent synergies between football and telecom to generate even greater value for the much-loved game, creating stronger community connections, impactful initiatives, and opportunities for skills-development.

Following the signing, Eng. Badier Al Zidi said, "Vodafone and Al Seeb Club are united by a shared love for football, echoing a passion that resonates across the country. This sponsorship isn't just about supporting a club; it's about doing things differently and breaking new ground. We're pioneers, the first private company to back a football club in Oman, setting a trail for others to follow, changing the game in the process."

Youssef Al Wahaibi, Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of Al Seeb Football Club expressed the appreciation of the Club for Vodafone's commitment and trust. He said, "This agreement does not only serve Al Seeb Club, but also



has the best interest of Al Seeb community at heart. In addition to sponsoring the first football team, we are looking forward to what it will provide our Seebawi fans and will work alongside our partners to ensure a positive impact on Oman's sports and football."

Known as the 'Emperor' amongst fans, Al Seeb FC is a beacon of football excellence holding to its name several Sultan Qaboos Cup and Omani League championship winnings, in addition to being the first club in Oman to bring home the AFC Cup in 2022.

As the official sponsor, Vodafone will work hand-in-hand with Al Seeb Club management to deepen the connection with 'Seebawi' fans through a variety of exclusive fan engagement initiatives. From meet-and-greets to digital activations, these initiatives will enhance the overall fan experience and further solidify the partnership's impact.

Beyond immediate benefits for the club, the players and fans, Vodafone's strategic sponsorship will contribute significantly to the growth of Al Seeb Club and football in Oman. On the horizon

are player and coaching development activations, training facility upgrades as well as international exposure support for the club and Oman.

The partnership Al Seeb Football Club is the one of several impactful social initiatives on the company's horizon.

In collaboration with its strategic partners, Vodafone aims to harness technology to bring together individuals, organisations and entities as one, enabling growth and development beyond the telecom industry in Oman.

ROUND-UP

Mall of Muscat wins Mena Shopping Centre and Retailer Award 2023

Mall of Muscat's triumph in the 'cause-related marketing' category underscores its commitment to socially responsible initiatives

MUSCAT: Mall of Muscat has been honoured with the 2023 Middle East and North Africa (Mena) Shopping Centre and Retailer Award, securing its position as a leader in traditional marketing excellence category, for cause related marketing. The event was held in Dubai, celebrating the most innovative and creative retail achievements across the Mena region.

Mall of Muscat's triumph in the 'cause-related marketing' category underscores its commitment to socially responsible initiatives.

The Mall of Muscat's cause-related marketing initiative was as a strategic response to Oman's post-pandemic economic challenges. Recognising the surge in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) as a critical economic driver, the mall



leveraged its resources to support some SMEs and students struggling with academic fees. Collaborating with Al Rahma Association, Oman Tourism College (OTC), and Scientific College of Design (SCD), they identified SMEs and students in need, offering them free stalls at the mall's main event during the Eid-Al-Fitr/Ramadan season. This event, themed as an Open Ramadan Majlis, featured 21 stalls designed by SCD and occupied by selected SMEs and OTC students,

allowing them to sell various products without any charge or fees, thus providing them a significant opportunity to generate revenue and support their ventures and academic pursuits.

A spokesperson for the mall expressed pride in this achievement, stating, "We are extremely honoured to be recognised with this award for our extremely high work standards practiced in the category. Award winners in the cause-related marketing are appreci-

ated for a strong commitment to community through events, programmes, and projects that support charitable organisations or address community needs. Mall of Muscat is proud to receive this prestigious award and this accolade reflects the Mall's dedication to our visitors and our commitment to social causes."

The Mall of Muscat stands as a sprawling commercial hub, spanning approximately 200,000 square meters, with ample space

for over 3,000 vehicles in its parking facilities. Aside from its retail offerings, the Mall provides an array of family-oriented attractions including a cinema, an entertainment zone, and notably, the Oman Aquarium—the nation's largest and sole public aquarium. Housing over 240 brands across various categories like fashion, lifestyle, sports, and electronics, the Mall of Muscat delivers an unmatched shopping experience to both local and international visitors.

Located in Mabela, in close proximity to the Muscat International Airport, Mall of Muscat beckons with its charm. Boasting an expansive collection of 240+ brands that span fashion, lifestyle, sports, and electronics, this retail haven occupies an impressive 200,000-square-meter expanse, generously adorned with over 3000 parking spaces. Within its precincts lies a treasure trove of family-friendly attractions, designed to delight all members of the household. Specifically catering to the young audience, the Mall also features specialized kids' outlets all dedicated to ensuring children's boundless entertainment. The Mall boasts an impressive lineup of anchor tenants that serve as its pillars of attraction. Among these prominent establishments are the Oman Aquarium, Lulu, Debenhams, Matalan, Homes R Us, Centrepunkt Max, R&B, Fabyland, Xtreme Zone, Red Tag, Riva, Family Outlet, Victoria's Secret and Novo Cinemas – all contributing to an unparalleled shopping and leisure experience. When it comes to indulging the palate, the Mall presents an array of exquisite dining options. Renowned names like Starbucks, Costa, Gloria Jeans, Cinnabon, Pappa Roti, McDonalds, KFC, and Charleys among others, ensure that visitors can savour an exquisite range of culinary delights that cater to various tastes and preferences.

SIGNATURE CAFE

Culinary venture Amouage Café atop Jabal Akhdar mountains open until December 10



MUSCAT: Renowned worldwide for its dedication to crafting unique and uncompromising scents, Amouage, the distinguished high perfumery house from Oman, is breaking new ground in the culinary realm.

Collaborating with Alila Jabal Akhdar, it presents the Amouage Café, a one-of-a-kind cliff-side pop-up, nestled on the Jabal Deck terrace, overlooking the breathtaking Jabal Akhdar mountains.

This extraordinary culinary venture, inspired by the iconic

Amouage perfumes, celebrates the house's 40-year legacy and will be open from November 1 to December 10, marking 40 days of indulgence.

The Amouage Café, a collaboration with Alila Jabal Akhdar, draws inspiration from the rich heritage of Oman's Hajar mountains, where the rare rock rose, a key ingredient in Amouage's perfumery line, has been cultivated for centuries. The café serves as a homage to this cultural connection, creating an immersive experience at the inter-

section of scent and taste.

In harmony with Amouage's commitment to precision and excellence, the café's culinary offerings present a bespoke four-course menu priced at OMR 55 per person. Additionally, a luxurious canapés option is available at OMR 65, excluding taxes. Crafted by a world-class culinary team, the menu showcases an upscale, traditional, and signature twist on Omani cuisine, mirroring the essence of Amouage's iconic fragrances.

The Amouage Café experience

extends beyond exquisite cuisine. Guests can enjoy an unprecedented multi-sensory adventure with mocktails named after iconic perfumes, incorporating key ingredients from the fragrance creations. The café operates daily from 6:30pm to 9:30pm until December 10.

As Amouage continues to redefine luxury, the Amouage Café at Alila Jabal Akhdar invites patrons to savor the harmonious blend of scent and flavour, encapsulating 40 years of high perfumery excellence.

11TH EDITION



Dossier Construction Awards felicitates exemplary achievers

MUSCAT: The 11th edition of Dossier Construction Awards was held on November 29 at Sheraton Oman Hotel. The awards instituted by Dossier - Oman's first Business-to-Business (B2B) publication on construction, infrastructure, real estate, design and engineering sectors felicitates exemplary achievers.

The event was attended by Ahmed Mohammed Al Humaidi, Chairman, Muscat Municipality as the chief guest. Shaikh Tariq bin Salim Al Mashani presided as the host.

Atulya Sharma, CEO, United Media Services in his inaugural speech said, "As a signatory to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, Oman is committed to apply these principles in its national plans and strategies. And it is heartening to note that Oman's construction, infrastructure and real estate sector are leading the charge on such best practices."

Dossier Construction Awards 2023 was supported by Al Adrak Trading & Contracting Company

and Al Adrak Developers as the Strategic Partners; F&M Middle East as the Design Engineering Partner; Best Infrastructure Developers; Foton; Oman Quarrior; CID Gulf and Duqm Quarries as Support Partners.

Harsha Shetty, Chief Executive Officer, Jindal Shadeed Iron & Steel was the winner of the CEO of the Year Award for his path-breaking leadership in growing Jindal Shadeed into one of the largest integrated steel producers in the Gulf of Arabia.

Dr. Thomas Alexander, Founder and Chief Executive Director, Al Adrak Trading & Contracting Company LLC won the Iconic Business Leader Award for building his company into a market leader over the last 35 years.

Devaki Khimji, Managing Director, Al Tasnim Enterprises was the recipient of the 'Business Leader of the Year' Award for her seminal role in transforming the group into one of the Sultanate's most respected and widely known construction conglomerates.





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