



OMAN PARTICIPATES IN MEETING OF UN OFFICE ON DRUGS, CRIME

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Royal Oman Police (ROP) and the National Committee for Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances is taking part in the extraordinary meeting organised by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Vienna. **>A5**



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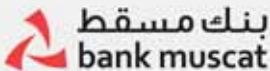
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GOVERNORATE OF DHOFAR

Masterplan for Greater Salalah, housing projects reviewed

Times News Service

SALALAH: The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning reviewed aspects related to the masterplan for Greater Salalah and the Future City of Salalah, and current and future housing projects in the Governorate of Dhofar.

During an introductory meeting in the Wilayat of Salalah, organised by the ministry on Wednesday in the presence of His Highness Sayyid Marwan bin Turki Al Said, Governor of Dhofar, Dr. Khalfan bin Said Al Shuaili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning, and members of the Governorate's Municipal Council, discussed the masterplan for Greater Salalah and its vision as a national economic gateway for Oman and its positive impact on economic development of other regions in accordance with Oman



Vision 2040.

The meeting touched on the Salalah Future City project, which comes within an integrated development and strategic plan that contributes to accommodating population growth, attracting investment and strengthening the economy, in addition to developing the transportation system, raising the quality of services and enhancing the infrastructure.

The meeting also discussed ways to develop agricultural ar-

reas, including the Najd region in Dhofar Governorate, and the mechanism for developing them to achieve the national goals of sustainable development and contribute to achieving self-sufficiency in food production, in addition to reviewing the rural housing project in the governorate, with the importance of preserving green spaces, pastures, open plains and grazing areas, and ways to develop and invest in them in coordination with all relevant parties.

OMAN CHARTS ITS COURSE TOWARDS A CARBON-FREE FUTURE

The Environment Authority has prepared the final draft for issuing carbon reduction certificates

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Environment Authority, has completed the preparation of the final draft of the general policy framework for registering and issuing carbon reduction certificates, in accordance with Article 6 of Paris Agreement.

The final document consists of 52 pages, in which the Sultanate of Oman charts its path towards a carbon-free future. Through the document, Oman seeks to become a prominent carbon trading centre in the Middle East.

In the context, the Environ-

ment Authority affirmed that the draft received the commendation of international institutions and organizations specialized in this field. The authority pointed out that the draft or framework will be reviewed by all stakeholders during a technical workshop to be held in mid-September in Muscat.

It is worth mentioning that the political framework for the draft will be launched at the 29th Conference of the Parties next November in the capital Baku, the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The National Zero Carbon

Neutrality Programme is carrying out tasks aimed at following up and implementing the National Net-Zero Strategy for an orderly transition to zero carbon emissions. The programme is shared by a broad spectrum of public and private establishments, academics, experts and relevant entities.

The programme seeks to draft a unified implementation plan, with specific steps to add a number of projects to help achieve the interim goals of the strategy based on supporting elements.

The programme also comprises workshops that examine mechanisms for resolving challenges within the context of the goals of Oman's net-zero emissions by 2050. With emphasis on oil and gas sector, the discussions include targets for reaching carbon neutrality, initiatives and projects implemented to this effect and key challenges and capabilities required to address them.

GAZA DEATH TOLL

as of August 28, 2024



Deaths
40,534
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93,778

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Omani-Belarus forum discusses trade ties

1 The Omani-Belarusian Business Forum on Wednesday discussed means of enhancing economic and trade relations between the two countries, as well as promoting trade and tackling challenges facing investors. **>A3**

OMAN

Bait Al Safah house represents rich past

2 Bait Al Safah is a historic house located in Al Hamra, offering a fascinating glimpse into the Omani's rich past. It was built during the reign of Imam Saif bin Sultan Al Ya'arubi in 1655. **>A4**

SPORTS

Alcaraz fends off Australia's Li Tu

3 Carlos Alcaraz stormed into the second round of the US Open 2024 after recalibrating his approach against Australia's Li Tu in the opening round at the Arthur Ashe Stadium. **>A8**

"YOUR CLUB IS CALLING YOU"

MMG launches campaign to support Omani products & local football clubs, in collaboration with OFA and Madayn



MUSCAT MEDIA GROUP launched the "Your Club is Calling You" campaign on Wednesday at the Grand Millennium Muscat Hotel in the presence of local manufacturing leaders and athletes. This national campaign aims to support both the local manufacturing sector and home-grown football clubs.

The campaign fosters a community partnership between institutions, individuals, industries, products, and Omani football.

Commenting on the campaign, Mr. Ahmed Essa Al Zadjali, CEO of Muscat Media Group, said, "We are pleased and honoured to present to you a new and unique initiative from Muscat Media Group. Our initiative today is the 'Your Club is Calling You' campaign."

He continued, "At Muscat Me-

dia Group, we have been pioneers in the Omani media landscape. About 10 years ago, we ventured into modern media and social media, and today, we are the leading media group in Oman, operating with a '360-degree media' approach. This means we are the only group that covers all forms of media, including visual, audio, print, and social media. The group reaches about 3.7 million followers daily. This progress has given us the responsibility to contribute to society through various community initiatives."

He added, "Muscat Media Group has consistently played a vital and effective role in supporting numerous national initiatives. We have launched many pioneering and creative projects that support the nation and the

Omani society."

He explained, "Recently, we have supported the Omani community through various unique initiatives. These include modern media efforts, advertising and promotion support for institutions and companies, and fostering investment in Oman through economic forums. Examples include the 'Building Bridges,' during which several partnerships and agreements were signed between Omani and Saudi companies. Another initiative is the 'TOMI Awards,' which celebrates the most creative advertising campaigns in Oman. We launched this at the Crowne Plaza Hotel to support advertising excellence and highlight outstanding and bold campaigns."

The CEO continued, "Today, we

are launching a new and unique initiative: the 'Your Club is Calling You' campaign. This national campaign supports two crucial sectors: industry and football. In the industrial sector, it promotes Omani products, while in the football sector, it supports Omani clubs."

Three step process

Mr. Ayman Al Hasani, Advisor to the CEO for Economic Affairs, said, "The 'Your Club is Calling You' campaign creates a community partnership between institutions, individuals, industry, products, and Omani football. The campaign can be summed up in three words: Participate... Support... Win."

He elaborated, "Participate: By purchasing Omani products, you contribute to promoting your country's goods. Support:

Your support extends to Omani products and clubs, helping create a strong Omani sports scene that can compete regionally and internationally. Win: Your positive participation and support for national products and clubs come with a chance to win valuable prizes through the campaign."

Al Hasani added, "The campaign will begin at the end of October and continue until the end of January. It will be promoted across all Muscat Media Group platforms, including *Al Shabiba* and *Times of Oman* newspapers. Stay tuned."

Many Valuable Prizes

Mr. Fadi Kattar, Chief Operating Officer of Muscat Media Group, said, "This major national campaign offers numerous valu-

able prizes. All participants in the campaign will enter a raffle to win prizes, including cars, mobile phones, travel tickets to various destinations, stays in luxury hotels, and more."

He emphasised, "Participate with us, share your opinions, support your products and favourite Omani clubs, and we can all win together."

He continued, "You may be wondering how to contribute to this campaign. It's simple: buy Omani products. With every purchase, you will receive a 'code' sent to you via text message along with the name of the club you support. This way, you will have participated in the campaign, supported your favourite club, and entered the draw. Remember, the more you buy and send, the better your chances of winning."

He explained, "The campaign's mechanism involves a small fee for each text message—less than half a riyal. These amounts will be collected and distributed to the clubs based on the public's support and participation."

Kattar added, "The campaign will be launched at the end of October and run until the end of December. It will be announced across all Muscat Media Group platforms, including *Al Shabiba* and *Times of Oman* newspapers. Follow us."

MEETING

State Council Deputy Chairman meets Belarus minister

MUSCAT: Salim Musallam Qutn, Deputy Chairman of the State Council yesterday received Bogdanov Alexei, Minister of Antimonopoly Regulation and Trade in the Republic of Belarus and his accompanying delegation.

The Deputy Chairman of the State Council reiterated the firmness of relations between Oman

and Belarus. He also underscored the role undertaken by the parliamentary friendship association between the two countries in enhancing cooperation, especially in regulatory fields.

In his turn, the Belarusian minister lauded the remarkable development witnessed in the Sultanate of Oman both on the local and in-

ternational arenas.

He also emphasised on the importance of expanding bilateral relations.

Eng. Khamis Mohammed Al Shamakhi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Transport received Bogdanov Alexei and his accompa-

nying delegation.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed areas of bilateral cooperation in the sectors of transport, logistics and information technology. They also explored means of boosting this cooperation.

The meeting was attended by officials from both sides. -ONA



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EXCHANGE OF EXPERTISE

Oman, Belarus explore ties in farm, fisheries sectors

MUSCAT: Dr. Saud Hamoud Al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources on Wednesday received Bogdanov Alexei, Minister of Antimonopoly Regulation and Trade in the Republic of Belarus and his accompanying delegation.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed areas of bilateral cooperation in the fields of agriculture, fisheries, livestock, water resources and food security.

They also explored cooperation potentials in research, the exchange of expertise and visits, as well as benefitting from the Belarusian experience in developing and growing the agriculture, fisheries and water resources sectors.

The meeting was attended by officials from the ministry and members of the visiting delegation. -ONA



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Omani-Belarus business forum to boost trade



The event focused on several economic sectors, namely tourism, industry, logistics, importing and exporting, food security, and information and communication technologies

MUSCAT: The Omani-Belarusian Business Forum on Wednesday discussed means of enhancing economic and trade relations between the two countries, as well as promoting trade exchange and tackling challenges facing investors.

The forum was organised by Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI). The event focused on several economic sectors, namely tourism, industry, logistics, importing and exporting, food security, and information and communication technologies (ICT).

Eng. Hamoud Salim Al Sa'adi, Acting OCCI Chairman explained that the Chamber has worked to strengthen economic and trade relations with the Republic of Belarus in recent years by organising many high-level visits and meetings, which resulted in tangible positive results.

In his turn, Bogdanov Alexei, Minister of Antimonopoly Regulation and Trade in the Republic of Belarus, Head of the Belarusian delegation, pointed out that the forum reflects the desire of his country to boost relations with Oman.

He added that Oman has many



components to be a gateway for Belarusian products to promising markets in the GCC and Asia.

He explained that the forum underlined means of stimulating bilateral cooperation, especially in the fields of industrial production, agriculture and information technology.

He said that Belarus seeks to support cooperation in many fields, especially in information technology, bearing in mind that Belarus owns an incubator with thousand companies working in various fields of information technology.

Meanwhile, Dr. Abdullah Masoud Al Harthy, Honorary Consul of the Republic of Belarus and member of the OCCI Board noted that the Omani private sector views Belarus as a promising economic and investment partner in light of the efforts made to develop areas and opportunities for joint cooperation.

He explained that holding the Omani-Belarusian Business Forum provided an opportunity for business owners in the two countries to strengthen bilateral relations and explore trade and investment opportunities, in addition to facilitating shipping, import and export routes in various areas of common interest.

During the forum a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between OCCI and the Belarusian National Centre for Marketing and Price Study.

The MoU deals with the exchange of information that are related to external trade, the business environment, opportunities for production and importing, as well as investment and market trends.

Moreover, a memorandum of understanding was signed between Omani National Engineering and Investment Company (ONEIC) and Belarus Hi Tech Park Company. This MoU pertains to the field of ICT and advanced technologies.

Another MoU was also signed between Omani Euro Food Industries SAOG and Minsk Dairy Factory.

The MoU pertains to cooperating in the field of retail business in Oman, with the possibility of expanding to neighboring countries and markets.

Furthermore, the forum showcased prominent investment and commercial opportunities in the Sultanate of Oman. It also highlighted projects that are being implemented in accordance with Oman Vision 2040.

On the sidelines of the forum, several B2B meetings were held between Omani and Belarusian businesspeople.

The forum was attended by Qais Mohammed Al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and several officials from both sides. -ONA

ENHANCING COOPERATION

Al Nu'amani meets senior military official of Pakistan

MUSCAT: Gen. Sultan Mohammed Al Nu'amani, Minister of the Royal Office on Wednesday received Gen. Sahir Shamshad Mirza, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and his accompanying delegation.

Gen. Sahir expressed his appreciation to the Sultanate of Oman for facilitating means of enhancing cooperation in a bid to achieve joint interests.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed several matters of mutual interest.



The meeting was attended by Vice Admiral Abdullah Khamis Al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces. -ONA

AL WUSTA GOVERNORATE

Arabian Oryx Sanctuary attracts over 1,300 visitors



HAIMA: The number of visitors to the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary in the Wilayat of Haima in Al Wusta Governorate exceeded 1,300 since the beginning of 2024, supporting ecotourism and enhancing the culture of preserving heritage and environmental treasures in the Sultanate of Oman.

Sultan Mohammed Al Balushi, Director of the Arabian Oryx Department, said: "The Arabian Oryx Reserve is a centre for wildlife conservation and a driver of economic development by promoting eco-tourism and connecting with Oman's natural history. It includes ambitious projects, including a project to plant 80,000 wild trees as part of a programme to increase vegetation cover and rehabilitate natural habitats with the aim of sustaining ecosystems. The infrastructure is also being developed to enhance the reserve's attractiveness."

He added that the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary covers a vast area of 2,824 square kilometres, surrounded by diverse wild environments. It now includes about 900 Arabian Oryx, in addition to 1,240 sand gazelles and 160 Arabian gazelles, as well as the Nubian ibex,



sand fox, striped hyena, wild rabbit and honey badger, which enriches the visitors' experience and enhances their understanding of the natural heritage of the Sultanate of Oman.

Al Balushi explained that the reserve contributes to enhancing awareness of the ancient Omani environmental and geological history, through its mini-exhibition, in which the reserve displays pictures and brochures that shed light on the story of its establishment and development, reflecting the geological and cultural history of the region and its connection to people and the local community.

He pointed out that the reserve uses advanced technologies such as installing collars to track herds of Arabian oryx, Arabian gazelle and sand gazelle, and documenting their natural migration paths, which enhances understanding of their historical range and monitors their natural habitats. Last April, 50 sand gazelles were released into the reserve, which enhances the sustainability of biodiversity in the region. -ONA



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Bait Al Safah in Al Dakhiliyah governorate represents the ingenuity of Omani people

Bait Al Safah is an archaeological landmark distinguished by its unique location in the middle of the old town, according to Omani historians



Times News Service

MUSCAT: Ancient Omani houses are a treasure trove and a witness to the antiquity of history that reflects the ingenuity of ancient Omani architecture.

The diversity of houses and their shapes showcases the construction methods, and materials used according to the prevailing climate in that region.

Among the archaeological heritage preserved by the Wilayat of Al Hamra in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate is “Bait Al Safah”, which according to Omani historians is an archaeological landmark distinguished by its unique location in the middle of the old town and next to Al Salaf Mosque and next to a group of orchards, palm trees, and Al Hara Falaj.

Bait Al Safah was a scientific and religious gathering area and many scholars and sheikhs graduated from it. It is a house with the beauty of its construction and a destination for tourists, researchers, and students of archaeological sciences and history. It contains more than 25 rooms of varying sizes and is about 20 metres long. Its wooden door is more than 400 years old and still stands with the beauty of its engravings.

The Bait Al Safah was built from mud mixed with straw and mortar. According to Omani historians, this house was built during the reign of Imam Saif bin Sultan Al Ya'arubi - around the year 1655 AD. Its construction was supervised by the scholar Sheikh Mohammed bin Yousef Al Abri, and the Sharia Falaj was dug next to it, and the town of Misfat Al Abriyyin was also built.

The purpose of building the house was to be the headquarters of the administration of Al Hamra town, and to be a scientific and religious gathering area. This building was called Bait Al Safah because it was built on a smooth flat rock as its base.

This house went through several stages in its construction, the oldest of which was the eastern side, which was contemporary with the construction of the ancient Jabreen Fort. It was a landmark of culture, science, thought, literature, and a seat of peace, harmony, and wisdom for centuries.

Bait Al Safah is one of the ancient historical houses that speaks of the past of the Omani people and depicts an image of a cultural civilisation that draws a history that traces in its path the features of an ancient scientific and intellectual renaissance that rests in deep historical corners that exude the scent of the struggle of the Omani people and their pursuit of knowledge.

Its walls show an aspect of the architecture with the interweaving of its parts such as stairs, rooms, corridors, and decorations in the ceilings and its facilities.



The house was restored in recent years and now appears as a wonderful living museum, using ancient artifacts and traditional furnishings. The building reflects the life of the Omani people in ancient clay houses and the tools used in life.

Bait Al Safah is distinguished by its unique architectural style, with its multiple floors, high building,

decorations and engravings on the walls, ceilings and doors, and creativity in architecture.

Rashid bin Saif Al Abri, Director of Bait Al Safah, said that the house has been distinguished since ancient times by its unique architecture that was built in successive stages. The house has been restored several times and rooms were added to it according to the

needs of the time.

He explained that this house was a residence and headquarters for the administration of Al Hamra town, where meetings were held, decisions were made, scholars graduated from it and students of knowledge went to it.

Al Abri added that Bait Al Safah has now become a tourist destination visited by visitors due to its

distinguished architectural art. It has currently been converted into a tourist destination that reflects the ancient Omani customs and traditions. Some professions and crafts that were practiced in the past are held there, such as spinning, weaving and extracting some local oils such as Shu'a and Qafas oils.

There is also a place dedicated

to making rose water, old household tools and handicrafts such as pottery, pottery, textiles and palm fronds.

Al Abri explained that the woolen industries and agricultural tools found in Bait Al Safah show visitors the extent of the ingenuity of the Omani people in relying on what their hands make and what their land produces.

UN OFFICE

Oman participates in meeting on drugs, crime

VIENNA: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Royal Oman Police (ROP) and the National Committee for Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances is taking part in the extraordinary meeting organised by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Vienna.

The meeting is held during the period from 28 August till 30 August 2024.

Role of social media

Further, the meeting highlights the role of social media in the spread of electronic trafficking of narcotics and psychotropic substances. It also reviews the efforts of organisations and security establishments in this regard.

— ONA





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NATIONAL DEFENCE COLLEGE

Pakistan’s Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee visits NDC



MUSCAT: Gen. Sahir Shamshad Mirza, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on Wednesday visited the National Defence College (NDC) at the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies.

Upon the guest's arrival at the college, he was greeted by Rear Admiral Ali Abdullah Al Shidi, Commandant of the NDC.

The guest and his accompanying delegation were briefed about the college, its vision and strategic programmes.

They also learned about the NDC's tasks and duties.

Strategic, Defence Studies Academy

Maj. Gen Hamid Ahmed Sakroon, Chairman of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies received at Bait Al Falaj Garrison Gen. Sahir Shamshad Mirza, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and his accompanying delegation.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed several matters of mutual interest.

The meeting was attended by a number of senior officers of the academy.

— ONA

Rapid developments in field of education discussed at meeting

This annual meeting targets more than 240 participants from supervisors from the Ministry’s General Diwan and the educational directorates in the governorates

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Education, represented by the Directorate-General of Educational Supervision, holds a two-day educational meeting for senior supervisors of various academic subjects.

The opening ceremony of the annual meeting was patronised by Saif Al-Julandani, Director-General of the Directorate-General of Educational Supervision.

This annual meeting targets more than 240 participants from supervisors from the Ministry’s General Diwan and the educational directorates in the governorates.

This meeting comes from the keenness of the Directorate-General of Educational Supervision to provide professional support to supervisory categories, including senior supervisors, and to keep pace with the rapid developments in the field of education in general, and educational supervision in particular, and to achieve the objectives of the Directorate’s five-year plan, which includes activating the methodology of educational supervision teams, in which the senior supervisor is an important element.

The meeting included, on its first day, a training session presented by an expert in the field of training from the Queen Rania Training Academy, in which she



discussed support methodologies in supervisory practices, between directed and non-directed control practices.

This training session aims to define the concepts of supervisory practices, educational support, and to provide a model for each practice according to the nature of the teacher, the context, and the teacher’s previous knowledge.

The second day of the program includes specialized meetings for each subject with the senior supervisors in the educational directorates, with the participation of specialists from curricula, evaluation, and training, addressing some aspects related to supervision, in addition to reviewing the latest developments in evaluation and curricula, and some of the observations made in these aspects to work on finding practical solutions for them.

A set of training working papers is also presented. In the second period of the day, Prof. Dr. Abdullah bin Khamis Ambosaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education for Education, meets with the participants in a discussion session to exchange dialogue about their observations; to provide them with some guidance and visions that can help the senior supervisors in developing technical work in the educational directorates in the governorates.

The meeting aims to develop the capabilities of senior supervisors and their skills in building supervisory work plans, following up on their implementation, measuring their impact, exchanging experiences, skills, and development ideas to improve the work environment, enabling them to carry out their roles and job responsibilities, and enhancing the spirit of positive work and working within one team to develop supervisory performance.

‘QAISARIYA MARKET’

Exploring Jeddah’s historic markets

JEDDAH: Jeddah, once renowned for its vibrant markets and caravanserais, offers a glimpse into the city’s rich past.

The ‘Qaisariya market’ was a bustling hub of interconnected shops. Among the most notable historical caravanserais in Jeddah were Khan Al-Qasbah (a shop selling fabric), Khan Al-Dallaleen (middlemen), and Khan Al-Attarin (perfumers).

Today, the customs of Jeddah’s hospitable people continue to bring families and loved ones together. The tradition of decorating homes with lights and singing celebratory songs creates a unique and charming atmosphere that permeates all occasions in the central historical area. The King Abdulaziz Foundation for Research and Archives (Darrah), dedicated to preserving the history of Saudi cities and sites, has meticulously documented the history of Jeddah, focusing on its buildings, neighborhoods, markets, mashrabiyas (latticework



windows), and architectural features. Historic Jeddah, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2014, remains testament to the city’s rich heritage.

The foundation also has documented King Abdulaziz’s visit to Jeddah in 1925, and his temporary residence in Nassif House.

Jeddah, once a close-knit community centered around the sea, has evolved into a major city and a gateway to the two holy mosques in Makkah and Madinah. — SPA



Ministry of Health

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry of Health - Directorate General of Health Service AL Dhahira Governorate of Health- invites specialized companies to participate in the following Tender:

Tender Ref.	Description	Last date for Collection of tender Document	Closing Time/ Day/ Date	Eligibility	Tender Fee (Non-Refundable)
3376/2024/ MOH/ DGHSDH-3	Renting a building for the medical store for the General Directorate of Health Services in Al Dhahira Governorate	Sunday 15/ SEP /2024	Before 9 am on Sunday 06/ OCT /2024	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board	SME:10 R.O LO:25 R.O

• Tenders should be submitted online on <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.

• The DGHS is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accepts or reject any tender.

Any Clarification, you may contact via Telephone: 24402200, Email id: etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om

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Israel continues military onslaught on Nur shams camp in Tulkarem

Israeli bulldozers destroyed the camp's main water supply line, cutting off water

GAZA: The Israeli occupation forces on Wednesday continued their onslaught on the Nur Shams refugee camp east of Tulkarem city, causing widespread destruction to its infrastructure and citizens' properties.

Wafa correspondent said that the occupation's bulldozers destroyed the camp's main water supply line, cutting off water. Forces also bulldozed large swathes of lands and caused massive destruction to infrastructure, its entrances, its main streets and the properties of citizens along Nablus Street adjacent to the camp.



According to sources, the occupation forces sent military reinforcement to the camp, accompanied by heavy bulldozers, imposed a tight military cordon around the camp and deployed their snipers on the rooftops of high buildings.

The occupation forces opened heavy fire at any moving object in the camp, including at journalists

and Red Crescent paramedics to force them to leave.

The occupation's military vehicles and foot patrols were stationed throughout the Nur Shams camp and at its various entrances. Forces raided and searched the homes and subjected their residents to interrogation.

Forces also raided a number of

shops and commercial enterprises after breaking down their doors.

The occupation forces continue to siege the Al-Israa Specialty Hospital and the Martyr Dr. Thabet Thabet Governmental Hospital, preventing anyone from entering or leaving, thus obstructing the movement of medical personnel and ambulances.

Forces also subjected medical and ambulance teams to field interrogations.

The occupation forces deployed their troops in the neighborhoods of Tulkarem city following a military raid in the early hours of the morning and obstructed the movement of citizens.

The occupation bulldozers also destroyed infrastructure and the water network throughout the camp.

During this aggression, two citizens from Nur Shams camp were injured by shrapnel in a drone bombing in the al-Manshiya area at the camp.

Nine Palestinians martyred in military operation in northern West Bank

Nine Palestinians were martyred and 11 others were injured by gunfire in the large-scale military operation launched by the Israeli occupation forces in the northern West Bank, especially in the governorates of Jenin, Tubas and Tulkarm, amid a siege on hospitals and systematic destruction of infrastructure.

Three young Palestinians were martyred early this morning when an Israeli drone targeted their vehicle near the village of Misilya, southeast of Jenin. The development is part of a wide-scale military offensive launched by the Israeli occupation authorities in several areas of the occupied West Bank, including the cities of Jenin, Tulkarm, Tubas and their refugee camps.

Meanwhile, the Israeli occupation forces launched a major offensive in the city of Tulkarm in the occupied West Bank last night, besieging hospitals and blocking movement of Palestinians into and out of the city.

According to Palestinian news agency (Wafa), military vehicles stationed themselves around Al-Israa Specialized Hospital in the western neighborhood and the Shahid Thabet Thabet Governmental Hospital. The forces imposed a blockade that hindered ambulance movements. — Agencies

UNION CABINET DECISION

India gives nod for 12 industrial smart cities covering 10 states

NEW DELHI: Taking a step forward in the manufacturing ecosystem, the Indian Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday approved 12 industrial smart cities across the country.

These industrial smart cities are being built under the National Industrial Corridor Development Programme (NIDCP).

These industrial nodes will cover 10 states and have been strategically planned along 6 major corridors.

The government will spend an estimated Rs28,602 crore for these projects, Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw told reporters at a press briefing.

Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said, "Cabinet today approved 12 Industrial Smart Cities under National Industrial Corridor Development Programme. The government will invest Rs 28,602 crore for this project."

These industrial areas will be located in Khurpia in Uttarakhand, Rajpura-Patiala in Punjab, Dighi in, Maharashtra, Palakkad in Kerala, Agra and Prayagraj in UP, Gaya



in Bihar, Zaheerabad in Telangana, Orvakal and Koppurthy in AP and Jodhpur-Pali in Rajasthan.

Investment potential in these industrial hubs are Rs1.5 lakh crore with 10 lakh direct and 30 lakh indirect employment potential.

"India to soon have a grand necklace of Industrial Smart Cities on the backbone of Golden Quadrilateral as Cabinet approves 12 World-class greenfield Industrial Smart Cities under National Industrial Corridor Development Programme," DG PIB posted on X, soon after the Cabinet meeting.

— ANI

BILATERAL RELATIONS

Visiting Berlin, UK's Starmer vows relation 'reset' with EU

BERLIN: UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer arrived in Germany on Wednesday, his first bilateral visit since taking office seven weeks ago.

German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier welcomed Starmer before talks with Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who received him with military honours in Berlin.

Scholz and Starmer have already met a couple of times since Starmer became the British prime minister. In early July, they both attended the NATO summit in Washington and the European Political Community Summit in England.

Starmer's Labour Party won the July 4 general election with a large majority in Parliament, which propelled him to the premiership.

But Starmer's visit comes in the wake of a recent wave of unrest in the UK after a knife attack led to anti-immigration riots, which officials say were stoked by far-right elements and false information, in the community of Southport and elsewhere last month.

The UK formally left the European Union in 2020, but it still re-



mains a member of NATO, the G7 group of industrial democracies and the G20 group of the world's biggest economic powers.

Starmer has pledged to rebuild trust with European allies that was damaged by Brexit. His timing may be symbolic, as his Conservative predecessor, Rishi Sunak, waited 18 months before visiting Berlin.

However, despite vowing to

"reset" the UK's relations with the EU, he ruled out rejoining the bloc.

"That does not mean reversing Brexit or re-entering the single market or the customs union, but it does mean a closer relationship on a number of fronts," the prime minister said at a press conference after talks with Scholz.

His government said ahead of the trip that strengthening

ties with Germany is "crucial" for tackling illegal migration and "boosting economic growth across the continent and crucially in the UK."

At the press conference alongside Scholz, Starmer announced a new treaty between the UK and Germany, calling it a "once-in-a-generation chance to deliver for working people in Britain and Germany." — DW

JAPAN METEOROLOGICAL AGENCY

Japan issues emergency alert, braces for Typhoon Shanshan

TOKYO: Japan issued an emergency warning as it braced for a powerful typhoon as it slowly approached the southwest of the country, threatening to bring heavy rain and strong winds.

Typhoon Shanshan was about 120 kilometres (75 miles) south of the southern island of Yakushima as it headed north towards Japan's southwestern island of Kyushu with winds of up to 180 kilometres per hour, the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) said.

The agency said the typhoon is expected to reach the southern part of Kyushu and make landfall on Thursday. JMA issued a high-level warning for the Kagoshima prefecture of strong winds, high waves and tides as well as heavy rain.

Southern Kyushu is expected to receive 500 millimetres (19.6 inches) of rain in the 24 hours through Thursday morning and 600 millimetres in the 24 hours through Friday morning, the JMA added.



regions, including the capital Tokyo, around the weekend, the JMA said.

Airlines cancel some flights

Airlines and rail operators canceled some services over the next few days. Kyushu Railway said it would suspend some Shinkansen bullet train services between Kumamoto and Kagoshima Chuo from Wednesday night and warned of further possible disruptions.

ANA Holdings said it would cancel a total of more than 210 domestic flights scheduled to depart or arrive in southwestern Japan between Wednesday and Friday, affecting about 18,400 passengers.

Japan Airlines said it would cancel 170 domestic flights through Thursday. A total of 10 international flights operated by both airlines will also be suspended.

Automaker Toyota said it is suspending production at all of its plants in Japan because of an approaching typhoon.

Some 28 production lines at 14 group companies will cease operations from Wednesday afternoon. One line at truck maker Hino Motors will resume operations on Thursday morning, the company's spokesman added.

Typhoon Shanshan is the latest severe weather to hit Japan, following last week's Typhoon Ampil, which also caused power outages and evacuations. — DW



SPORTS

Carlos Alcaraz fends off Australia's Li Tu in opening round of US Open

With the win, Alcaraz is on the course of becoming just the third man in the Open era to win Roland Garros, Wimbledon and the US Open in the same year

NEW YORK: Carlos Alcaraz stormed into the second round of the US Open 2024 after recalibrating his approach against Australia's Li Tu in the opening round at the Arthur Ashe Stadium.

The young Spaniard extended his major match-winning streak to 15 with a 6-2, 4-6, 6-3, 6-1 triumph. With the win, Alcaraz is on the course of becoming just the third man in the Open Era to win Roland Garros, Wimbledon and the US Open in the same year.

The US Open 2022 champion raced to a 6-2 win within a blink



of an eye, foreshadowing a quick wrap-up of the opening round.

However, in the second set, the dynamics of the game completely changed after the 22-year-old dropped three consecutive games. With the scoreline reading 4-5, Alcaraz lost a topsy-turvy 10-minute service game to Li Tu.

Alcaraz upped the ante after producing 18 unforced errors in the second set. He relied on his strong forehand game to dictate the flow of the play from the baseline.



the next round.

Wang Xinyu advances

Olympic mixed doubles silver medalist Wang Xinyu staged a comeback victory at the ongoing US Open, defeating Australian qualifier Arina Rodionova 3-6, 6-4, 6-1 in the first round of the women's singles on Tuesday.

"It took some time to adapt to the court and read my opponent's shots at the beginning. Actually, I was the first to be broken, but I still played my own game firmly in the end," Wang said.

This is Wang's second time advancing to the second round of the US Open, after reaching the round of 16 here last year.

Elsewhere, Wang's compatriot Zhang Shuai and Zheng Saisai both failed to advance to the next round in the women's singles.

Wang's mixed doubles partner at the Paris Olympics, Zhang Zhizhen, faced a completely different situation in the first round of the men's singles. Due to injury, he chose to withdraw from the match against Britain's Jack Draper in the third set.

"I don't want to play the upcoming Asian season and possibly the European season with injuries. There are still five or six weeks of matches to play, so I don't want to risk a serious injury just to compete in the Grand Slam this time," Zhang said. **ANI**

BUNDESLIGA

Thomas Müller makes record appearance for Bayern Munich

BERLIN: Thomas Müller has always stood apart. A player difficult to define. A charismatic presence. And one of an increasingly rare breed: the elite one-club player. Sixteen years after his debut, Müller has become Bayern Munich's record appearance maker in the Bundesliga. He has also equalled Sepp Maier's record of 709 total appearances.

"I personally feel that, at Bayern, the sporting aspect, the feeling with the fans in Munich and the appreciation from the fans, is unique here," he told Spox in an interview midway through his career. "Those are the most important aspects for me."

His status as a one-club man at the top level is burnished by that connection to Munich. Having grown up playing for TSV Pähl between the lakes southwest of the city, Müller represents the fan made good. Pictures of him as a boy with Bayern posters on the wall offer a sense of identity to young, local fans that was once commonplace but has now largely been lost in top level football.



son for both his longevity and success. "You can't get injured where there are no muscles," he once joked. "My calves are so thin that no opponent can hit the bones because they're so hard to see."

That self-effacing nature has also often shown itself in Müller's assessment of his qualities on the pitch.

"You have to adapt and find your niche, in terms of the type of player you can become, both on and off the pitch," he told the Guardian shortly after that World Cup win.

"I always knew I'd have no chance against a 1.90-meter (6'2"), 90 kilogram (198 pounds) defender in a duel, so the key is to avoid these situations altogether. You have to pick your space and time."

That use of space and time has come to define a player who often looks ungainly, both technically and aesthetically, but is mercifully efficient in the opposition box. His use of the word Raum-

deuter or "space Interpreter" in an early interview was an attempt to pin down his habit of popping up in unlikely positions, and with unlikely body parts, in order to get the ball over the line. It is testament to his abilities that the term is now integrated in to the football lexicon. Only the best have a role named in their honor.

Van Gaal offers trust

Not that any of that seems to bother the 34-year-old all that much. While many players would bristle at criticism of their technical attributes, he's always seen it as a compliment that he's made the most of what he has. It's not without reason that he has been trusted by coaches as diverse as Jupp Heynckes, Pep Guardiola and Louis van Gaal.

Though he didn't give Müller his debut, van Gaal is the man Müller often cites as giving him his break and the trust he needed. **AW**

CRICKET

Todd Murphy determined to reclaim spot as Nathan Lyon's Test successor

NEW DELHI [INDIA]: Todd Murphy is ready to re-establish himself as Nathan Lyon's potential successor in Australia's Test team following a difficult period marked by injury and inconsistent form.

The young off-spinner, who was once one of Australia's most promising prospects, endured a frustrating summer as shoulder issues hampered his performance.

Murphy's rise to prominence began during the 2023-24 domestic season, where he played key roles both alongside and as a replacement for Lyon during Australia's challenging Test tours of India and the United Kingdom.

His ability to take on seasoned players like Virat Kohli, Ben Stokes, and Joe Root highlighted his potential.

However, his first full Sheffield Shield season brought mixed results, yielding 17 wickets at an average of 38. The promising start was derailed by persistent right shoulder problems, which prevented him from replicating his earlier success.

Reflecting on his tough summer, Murphy admitted, "I reckon that was probably the biggest challenge."

"I built it up like it was going to be quite an important summer for me, and I really wanted to do well off the back of that (his Test appearances)," Murphy was quoted as per cricket.com.au.

"Then unfortunately, it just



didn't play out like that. It was just challenging the whole way through, and I never felt like I was at my best," he added.

His inability to perform at his peak stemmed from a recurring shoulder niggle.

"I had a shoulder niggle that was there the whole season and I probably I wasn't having the success I wanted to on the field, so I was pushing hard at training as well to try and get back (into form)," Murphy explained, adding that the constant effort to regain form at training only exacerbated his injury.

"That sort of meant that the shoulder was never getting a break, and I was always just up against it, going into games never feeling good and confident in my shoulder, which was tough work," he noted.

Despite the setback, Murphy remains optimistic, viewing the experience as a learning curve.

"But I think it was one of those (experiences) that you look back on and you take a bit out of. I learnt a few things about myself and how I'm going to approach games going forward," he added.

Murphy's determination to secure his place as Lyon's successor comes amid growing competition. Fellow off-spinner Corey Rocciccioli had an impressive Shield campaign with 47 wickets, while leg-spinner Mitchell Swepson also made a strong case with 30 wickets. Left-arm spinner Matthew Kuhnemann, who shared the spin duties with Murphy and Lyon in India, is also keen to re-enter the Test scene following his move to Tasmania.

Encouragingly for Murphy, his shoulder issues, involving bursae at the front and tendon damage at the back, are now under control after a winter focused on strengthening the joint. **ANI**

ICC

Brook, Rizwan see major rise in ICC's latest Test batter rankings

DUBAI: England's right-hand batter Hary Brook and Pakistan's wicketkeeper-batter Mohammad Rizwan have seen a jump in their positions, according to the latest Test rankings released by the International Cricket Council (ICC) on Wednesday.

Veteran right-hander Joe Root maintained his place as the No.1 ranked Test batter in the world following England's success in the opening Test of their series against Sri Lanka in Manchester, teammate Brook has made a massive jump on the back of scores of 56 and 32 during that Old Trafford contest.

Harry Brook rose three places to fourth overall, with the 25-year-old catapulting past Pakistan's Babar Azam, Australia's Steve Smith and India's Rohit Sharma, courtesy of his strong recent form.

Babar dropped a whopping six places to fall from third to ninth following his rare failure in the first innings of Pakistan's Test against Bangladesh in Rawalpindi, with teammate Mohammad



Rizwan gaining seven spots and achieving a new career-high rating by moving inside the top 10 at equal 10th following his century in the same match.

It means Babar is just six rating points ahead of Rizwan on the

updated rankings for Test batters, while Pakistan vice-captain Saud Shakeel is not far behind after he gained one place to move to 13th overall on the back of his century against Bangladesh.

Bangladesh right-handed batter



Mushfiquur Rahim achieved a career-high rating as he gained seven spots to move to 17th, while Sri Lanka duo Dinesh Chandimal (up four places to 23rd) and Kamindu Mendis (up eight rungs to 36th) and England newcomer Jamie

Smith (up 22 to 42nd) also rose in the Test batter rankings.

India spinner Ravichandran Ashwin remained at the top of the Test bowler rankings. Spinner Prabath Jayasuriya moved up one place to ninth for Sri Lanka following his five wickets in Manchester against England.

Three Lions' seamer Chris Woakes (up four rungs to 16th) and Sri Lanka's Asitha Fernando (up 10 spots to 17th) also gained, while Pakistan's right-armar Naseem Shah (up four spots to 33rd) and England's Gus Atkinson (up four places to 42nd) saw their career-best ratings.

Woakes also improved one place to move up to eight on the list for Test all-rounders, with India spinner Ravindra Jadeja out in front of that category. **ANI**

OMAN CRUDE PRICE FALLS
The price of Oman oil has decreased, with prices for delivery by October 2024 reaching \$77.13, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil fell by \$2.09 from the price of Tuesday, which was \$79.22. - **ONA**

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER
The MSX index closed at 4,720.24 points, up by 0.62% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.28% at 443.14 points. Musandam Power, up 10.00%, was the top gainer while Oman Fisheries, down 7.50%, was the top loser.

Aggregate net profits of GCC banks hit \$14.8bn in 2024 second quarter

Total loan loss provisions (impairments) reached the lowest level in at least 33 quarters at \$1.9 billion reflecting double-digit quarter-on-quarter declines in most countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Net income reported by listed banks in the GCC reached a new record high during the second quarter of 2024 after four out of the six country aggregates showed growth as compared to the first quarter of 2024, according to a new report.



“Aggregate net profits reached \$14.8 billion during the quarter as compared to \$14.4 billion during the previous quarter, resulting in a quarter-on-quarter (q-o-q) growth of 2.6 percent,” Kamco Invest said in its latest GCC Banking Sector Report – Q2-2024 August-2024. “The year-on-year (y-o-y) growth was also healthy at 9.2 percent when compared to the second quarter (Q2) of 2023,” it added. The biggest support to bottom-line performance for the sector came from a steep decline in quarterly impairments booked by banks in the region. Total loan loss

provisions (impairments) reached the lowest level in at least 33 quarters at \$1.9 billion reflecting double-digit q-o-q declines in most countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The decline in impairments indicates improving health of the economy as well as overall credit quality. It also shows improving loan portfolios over the past several years as shown by a steadily declining non-performing loan rate. Moreover, since central bank interest rates in the GCC remained unchanged during the quarter, net interest income reached a new

peak during the quarter at \$21.5 billion, a slight improvement when compared to \$21.3 billion during Q1-2024. Non-interest income reported a small decline to reach a three-quarter low level of \$10.1 billion during Q2-2024. As a result, aggregate bank revenue reached \$31.6 billion during Q1-2024, registering a marginal q-o-q growth of 0.4 percent. Meanwhile, lending growth continued in the region despite higher borrowing costs. Data from central banks in the GCC showed higher q-o-q lending for all the GCC country aggregates. The data on listed

banks showed gross loans for UAE banks registering the strongest quarterly growth during Q2-2024 at 3.4 percent followed by Saudi Arabian banks with a slightly smaller growth of 3.1 percent. Data from central banks also highlighted a similar picture with Saudi Arabia witnessing credit growth of 3.1 percent followed by Oman, Kuwait and Qatar with quarterly growth of around one percent. On the other hand, customer deposits for GCC-listed banks declined by a marginal 0.5 percent during the quarter mainly led by fall in customer deposits reported by SNB as well as a decline in deposits in Bahrain after the delisting of Al Baraka Banking Group. These declines were partially offset by higher customer deposits reported by banks in Kuwait, Oman and Qatar.

Loan growth highlights resilient economic trends in the GCC
Data from GCC central banks once again highlighted the resilience of regional economies with continued growth in credit facilities. Outstanding credit facilities in the region continued to show growth during Q2-2024 led by a broad-based growth across the seven country aggregates. The gains as compared to last year were solid with all countries witnessing healthy growth in lending. Saudi

Arabia witnessed a double-digit y-o-y growth in outstanding credit facilities at 11.4 percent while banks in Qatar showed a y-o-y growth of 5.5 percent. The lending growth in the region reflected a strong project pipeline with aggregate contract awards of \$51.7 billion in the GCC during Q2-2024. Similarly, manufacturing activity data from Bloomberg (Markit Whole Economy Surveys) showed PMI figures stayed strong during the quarter above the growth mark of 50 for Dubai, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE at the end of Q2-2024. The manufacturing activity in Saudi Arabia remained robust with PMI at 55.0 points during June-2024, a slight decline from 57 points at the end of March-2024. UAE also boasted a strong PMI figure of 54.6 points in June-2024 while Dubai showed a similar growth with a PMI of 54.3 points. Qatar has shown significant recovery over the last few months with PMI figures reaching 55.9 points, the highest in the GCC in June-2024 as compared to 50.6 points in March-2024. The PMI for Kuwait, published by S&P Global, also showed growth during June-2024 with the index at 51.6 points, although there was a decline from May-2024 when the index was at one of the highest levels at 52.4 points.

BOSTON CONSULTING GROUP REPORT



India outpaces global level fintech growth in 2023; to reach \$190bn in revenue by 2030

NEW DELHI: India's fintech sector has logged a 50 per cent growth rate in 2023 compared to the global average of 13 per cent. Boston Consulting Group (BCG) has prepared a flagship report titled 'Building Bridges for the Next Decade of Finance', where it noted that revenues in the Indian fintech sector are projected to reach \$190 billion by 2030, contributing to over 20 per cent of all banking revenues. The report comes at a time when the Fintech sector is in maturation mode. In terms of market size, the fintech sector globally is on track to achieving \$1.5 trillion in revenues by 2030, predominantly driven by the Asia Pacific, along with the North American region, expected to generate three times higher revenues than the next best region by 2030. According to the BCG report, the path ahead for India is to leverage critical and emerging technologies — Generative AI and API-based open architecture — across diverse functions such as customer service automation to fraud detection. Yashraj Erande, Global Head of Fintech and India Head of Financial Institutions at BCG said, “It is also encouraging that Indian Fintechs are demonstrating a path to profitability earlier than what was expected 2-3 years ago.” The BCG report also highlighted how India can internalise its payment solutions. Indian financial infrastructure and digital payment solutions are highly mature and scalable, capa-

In terms of market size, the fintech sector globally is on track to achieving \$1.5 trillion in revenues by 2030, predominantly driven by the Asia Pacific, along with the North American region

ble of supporting the exponential digitisation needs of global institutions. Indian BFSI SaaS players, in particular, have a significant opportunity to expand internationally and drive in revenues, said global consultancy firm BCG. Unified Payment Interface (UPI) is a key innovation driving India's fintech sector. It is India's leading digital payment platform. Payments through digital means in India are hitting fresh highs, as its citizens are increasingly adopting the emerging modes of transacting on the internet. Among others, a key emphasis of the Indian government has been on ensuring that the benefits of UPI are not limited to India only; other countries, too, benefit from it. - **ANI**

OQ BASIC INDUSTRIES

OQ Salalah unveils new brand identity

Times News Service

MUSCAT: OQ Salalah, an OQ Group company based in Dhofar Governorate, has announced its new brand identity, OQ Basic Industries (OQBi). The ceremony was attended by Ashraf Hamed Al Mamari, Group CEO of OQ, Hilal Ali Al Kharousi, Chief Executive Commercial & Downstream, in addition to officials and employees of the company. This rebranding aims to strengthen the group's strategy to maximise investment returns in the region and establish a distinct corporate identity for its subsidiaries both domestically and internationally. The new identity for OQ Basic Industries represents the operational plants in the Salalah Free Zone, Dhofar, comprising three major facilities: the ammonia plant, the Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) plant, and the methanol plant. These facilities play a crucial role in Oman's industrial sector, particularly in advancing clean manufacturing processes and boosting exports. Notably, all products from the methanol and ammonia plants, along with 90% of the LPG plant's output, are exported. The ammonia plant has a daily operational capacity of 1,000 metric tonnes, producing ammonia used in various industries, including fertilisers, industrial fertilisers, urea, cleaning products, and refrigerants. With a daily capacity of 3,000



metric tonnes, the methanol plant supplies methanol for a wide array of industrial applications, such as the production of plastics, synthetic fibres, and medical and chemical products. One of Oman's most significant fuel processing projects, the LPG plant is enhancing the gas value chain. It operates at a capacity of 1,000 metric tonnes per day, producing propane, butane, and condensates. Locally, LPG is used to supply cooking gas to Dhofar and Al Wusta governorates, thus increasing the added value within Oman. Additionally, 90 per cent of the plant's production is destined for export. The launch of the OQ Basic Industries brand marks a pivotal step in solidifying the company's economic presence in the region and empowering the industrial

sector. The brand's vision, “Leadership through global solutions and exceptional talent,” reflects the company's ambition and commitment to driving growth, implementing best practices, and maintaining a competitive edge in global markets. The new OQ Basic Industries identity aligns with OQ Group's ambition to support Oman Vision 2040 through “pursuing sustainable growth and operational excellence by fostering a people-centric culture, advancing decarbonisation initiatives, enhancing energy efficiency, and promoting local development.” This new brand identity underscores the company's dedication to continuous improvement, the advancement of clean energy industries, and the pursuit of carbon neutrality, contributing to sustainability, economic diver-

sification, and future investment opportunities. Commenting on the launch, Engineer Khalid Khalfan Al Asmi, Managing Director of OQ Basic Industries, stated that, as the energy investment arm of the OQ Group in Dhofar Governorate, the company's new identity reflects its commitment to economic diversification and maximising returns, making it easier to measure progress in industrial initiatives and projects. He added, “We are proud to unveil our new brand identity, which represents the significant contributions of our industrial sectors to the economic and investment growth of Dhofar Governorate.” He emphasised the company's dedication to fostering innovation through various initiatives while maintaining a strong commitment to sustainability, preserving Omani identity, and continuously seeking growth opportunities that drive progress and align with global and local economic trends. OQ Basic Industries takes pride in its employees, partners, and In-Country Value contributions to the local economy. In the first half of 2024 alone, the company spent approximately \$17.9 million on goods and services from small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), alongside investing \$1.4 million in community projects this year. These projects have supported a range of initiatives focused on children, education, health, the environment, youth, heritage and various community sectors.

EXTENSIVE EXPERIENCE

Glenn Nobbs appointed as General Manager at Grand Millennium Muscat



MUSCAT: Grand Millennium Muscat announced the appointment of Glenn Nobbs as the new General Manager, effective immediately. He will oversee the strategic direction and daily operations of the hotel's 328 rooms, suites and apartments. Glenn Nobbs is a hospitality professional with over 25 years of experience in the industry. Throughout his career, he has worked with renowned brands such as Marriott Hotels, Shangri-La Hotels & Resorts, and Emirates Hotels and Resorts. For the past 12 years, he has been a key member of Millennium & Copthorne Hotels in the Mid-

dle East and Africa, most recently serving as the opening General Manager of Millennium Place Barsha Heights Dubai. **Elevating standards** “I am honoured to step into the role of General Manager at Grand Millennium Muscat,” said Glenn Nobbs. “I look forward to working closely with our talented team to elevate our service standards and drive the hotel's success to new heights. Additionally, we are excited to introduce new concepts to our F&B outlets, particularly at Mazaj Terrace, Café D, and Bahriyat Restaurant. These new offer-

ings aim to deliver an exceptional dining experience that resonates with both our local and international guests.” With an extensive experience in the hospitality industry across Australia and Middle East, he brings a wealth of knowledge and a proven track record of success to his new role. As the Grand Millennium Muscat continues to grow and expand its presence in the region, Glenn's leadership will be instrumental in driving the hotel's continued triumph and ensuring it remains a preferred destination for travellers in Oman.

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Musandam Power, higher by 10%, was the top gainer while Oman Fisheries, lower by 7.50%, was the top loser at the end of trading session



MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,720.24 points, up by 0.62% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.28% at 443.14 points. Musandam Power, up 10.00%, was the top gainer while Oman Fisheries, down 7.50%, was the top loser. Shares of Muscat Finance were the most active in terms of number of shares traded while OQGN were the most active in terms of turnover.

A total number of 1104 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of RO 4.47 million, with more than 37.73 million shares changing hands. Out of 43 traded securities, 20 advanced, 10 declined, and 13 remained unchanged. At the session close, foreign investors were net sellers for RO 542K while domestic investors were net buyers for RO 330K, followed by GCC & Arab investors for RO 212K worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,652.41 points, up 0.49%. Prices of Sohar International Bank, Oman & Emirates Investment,

Al Anwar Investment, Global Financial Investments, and Al Madina Takaful were up by 3.73%, 1.37%, 1.33%, 1.30%, and 1.28% respectively. Prices of Oman Arab Bank, Al Sharqia Investment, and Al Omaniya Financial Services were down by 1.37%, 1.33%, and 0.61% respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,849.30 points, down 0.26%. Prices of Construction Materials, and Galfar Engineering were up by 4.44%, and 0.76% respectively. Prices of Oman Fisheries, Jazeera Steel Products, Oman Cables Industry, and Oman Cement were down by 7.50%, 2.46%, 1.04%, and 0.25% respectively.

Services Index was up by 0.31% before closing at 1,826.78 points. Prices of Musandam Power, OIFC, Oman National Engineering, Dhofar Generating, and Ooredoo were up by 10.00%, 2.70%, 1.77%, 1.41%, and 1.41% respectively. Prices of National Gas, Al Jazeera Services, and Abraj Energy were down by 4.76%, 2.79%, and 0.67% respectively.—United Securities

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	4,723.41	4,694.31	4,720.24	4,691.12	29.12	0.62
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,662.26	7,615.45	7,652.41	7,615.45	36.96	0.49
Industry Index	5,865.54	5,845.62	5,849.30	5,864.26	-14.97	-0.26
Services Index	1,829.08	1,822.05	1,826.78	1,821.09	5.69	0.31
MSX Shariah Index	443.14	439.25	443.14	441.88	1.26	0.28
MSX TR INDEX	6,564.80	6,524.35	6,560.38	6,519.91	40.47	0.62
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,705.12	8,651.94	8,693.93	8,651.94	41.99	0.49
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	6,767.44	6,744.46	6,748.70	6,765.97	-17.27	-0.26
SERVICES TR IDX	2,128.42	2,120.24	2,125.74	2,119.12	6.62	0.31
FIXED INCOME INDEX	1,069.10	1,069.10	1,069.10	1,069.10	0.00	0.00

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
37,735,771	4,472,646	1,104	24,508,355,874	20	10	13	43

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 28

SEC. NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF BD.	DIFF %	LAST PR.	LAST BD.	LAST OFF.	PREV. VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET															
OM0000007811	MUSANDAM POWER	133,600	34,882	9	0.260	0.286	0.260	0.286	0.026	10.000	0.286	0.286	0.286	0.100	20,131,540
OM0000003388	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	4,673,709	644,622	160	0.134	0.139	0.134	0.139	0.005	3.731	0.139	0.138	0.139	0.100	775,237,232
OM0000001152	OMAN NATIONAL ENGINEERING & INVESTMENT	1,000	115	1	0.115	0.115	0.115	0.115	0.000	0.000	0.114	0.100	0.115	0.100	17,250,000
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	370,100	106,499	15	0.288	0.289	0.287	0.288	0.004	1.408	0.288	0.288	0.288	0.100	187,471,938
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	201,000	14,874	11	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.000	0.000	0.074	0.073	0.074	0.100	9,018,750
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	402,666	30,204	14	0.075	0.076	0.075	0.076	0.001	1.333	0.076	0.075	0.078	0.100	51,291,445
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	626,438	48,812	33	0.077	0.079	0.077	0.078	0.001	1.299	0.078	0.078	0.080	0.100	15,600,000
OM0000004769	MADINA TAKAFUL	37,702	2,945	8	0.078	0.079	0.078	0.078	0.000	0.000	0.078	0.078	0.079	0.100	13,825,000
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	77,510	78,019	67	1.000	1.010	1.000	1.010	0.010	1.000	1.008	1.010	1.008	0.100	757,500,000
OM0000009072	QO GAS NETWORKS	7,178,052	1,045,073	267	0.145	0.147	0.145	0.144	0.001	0.694	0.145	0.145	0.151	0.100	627,940,468
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	267,805	107,139	40	0.400	0.401	0.400	0.401	0.001	0.501	0.401	0.399	0.401	0.100	94,800,410
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	155,000	41,850	3	0.270	0.270	0.270	0.270	0.000	0.000	0.270	0.270	0.000	0.100	93,005,516
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	730,450	241,049	22	0.330	0.330	0.330	0.330	0.000	0.000	0.330	0.325	0.330	0.100	220,560,591
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	1,398,849	362,701	52	0.260	0.260	0.259	0.259	0.000	0.000	0.259	0.259	0.234	0.100	19,441,158,839
OM0000002804	ASAPFA FOODS	4,287	1,650	3	0.385	0.385	0.385	0.385	0.000	0.000	0.385	0.382	0.385	0.100	46,200,000
OM0000004735	SEMBOORP SALALAH	250	26	1	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.000	0.000	0.104	0.103	0.104	0.100	99,275,483
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	303,432	23,061	11	0.076	0.076	0.076	0.076	0.000	0.000	0.076	0.078	0.077	0.100	54,294,882
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	2,336	932	1	0.399	0.399	0.399	0.399	0.000	0.000	0.399	0.398	0.399	0.100	132,018,211
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	531,671	159,591	33	0.300	0.302	0.298	0.298	0.000	-0.002	0.298	0.298	0.305	0.100	229,519,600
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIA INVESTMENT HO.	175,784	13,018	12	0.075	0.075	0.074	0.074	0.000	-0.001	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.100	6,660,000
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	7,090	1,955	3	0.285	0.285	0.278	0.278	0.000	-0.007	0.278	0.278	0.280	0.100	34,721,633
Total	21	17,278,641	2,950,016	766											
Parallel Market															
OM0000001368	CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL INDUSTRIES	10,000	470	1	0.047	0.047	0.047	0.045	0.002	4.444	0.047	0.045	0.047	0.100	2,937,500
OM0000008868	THE PEARL REIF	1,770	211	1	0.119	0.119	0.119	0.117	0.002	1.709	0.119	0.117	0.118	0.100	60,464,322
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	1,674,630	107,505	45	0.065	0.066	0.064	0.066	0.002	1.538	0.066	0.064	0.066	0.100	32,395,201
OM0000007407	DHOFAR GENERATING	356,000	25,029	15	0.067	0.072	0.067	0.072	0.005	0.001	0.072	0.070	0.078	0.100	16,001,280
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	97,301	7,302	8	0.075	0.076	0.075	0.076	0.001	1.333	0.076	0.075	0.080	0.100	16,125,680
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	190,282	20,167	11	0.105	0.106	0.105	0.106	0.001	0.952	0.106	0.106	0.106	0.100	237,117,021
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	1,183,379	158,210	56	0.134	0.134	0.132	0.133	0.001	0.758	0.133	0.133	0.133	0.100	26,997,197
OM0000001095	DHOFAR INSURANCE	2,034	458	2	0.224	0.230	0.224	0.230	0.006	0.000	0.230	0.000	0.230	0.100	25,933,093
OM0000001301	DHOFAR FOODS AND INVESTMENT	7128	489	2	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.000	0.000	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.100	13,857,385
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	14,000,000	616,000	1	0.044	0.044	0.044	0.044	0.000	0.000	0.044	0.043	0.048	0.100	13,514,438
OM0000002036	MUSCAT THREAD MILLS	60,000	6,130	1	0.102	0.102	0.102	0.102	0.000	0.000	0.102	0.100	0.102	0.100	1,672,199
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	67,891	21,386	2	0.315	0.315	0.315	0.315	0.000	0.000	0.315	0.315	0.315	0.100	62,885,213
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	218,731	12,468	23	0.057	0.057	0.057	0.057	0.000	0.000	0.057	0.057	0.058	0.100	83,385,283
OM0000002077	AL OMANIYA FINANCIAL SERVICES	50,000	8,200	1	0.164	0.164	0.164	0.164	0.000	0.000	0.164	0.000	0.000	0.100	51,728,388
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	28,000	79,989	9	2.845	2.860	2.845	2.860	0.015	0.530	2.860	2.860	2.860	0.100	256,542,000
OM0000005260	OMAN ARAB BANK	5,000	720	1	0.144	0.144	0.144	0.144	0.000	0.000	0.144	0.144	0.145	0.100	240,395,040
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	10,470	2,145	3	0.200	0.210	0.200	0.209	0.009	0.004	0.209	0.207	0.210	0.100	12,791,693
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	2,057,014	204,573	136	0.104	0.104	0.095	0.100	0.005	0.005	0.100	0.099	0.100	0.100	8,500,000
Total	18	20,019,630	1,271,451	318											
FUEL DEMAND															

Oil rebounds after a sharp drop in the previous session

SINGAPORE: Oil rebounded yesterday after a sharp drop in the previous session ended a three-day streak of gains as investors have whipsawed worries about global fuel demand. Brent crude futures were up 25 cents, or 0.31%, at \$79.80 a barrel. US West Texas Intermediate crude futures rose 17 cents, or

0.23%, to trade at \$75.70. Prices are bouncing back from Tuesday's more than 2% decline, which snapped a three-day streak of gains of more than 7%, as concerns about low refinery profit margins weighed on expectations for fuel demand amid data showing global consumption growth has been lower than forecast this year.

Dollar rises as traders seek clues on US rate cuts
The dollar held near its lowest in more than a year against a basket of peers yesterday, with sterling trading just off multi-year highs, as markets focused on clues to the size of a widely expected US interest rate cut in September. The Australian dollar rose to an

eight-month high and last traded at \$0.6793. Elsewhere, overall moves in the foreign exchange market were muted as traders awaited fresh hints on the state of the world's largest economy. The dollar index, which measures the greenback against a basket of currencies, was last 0.2% higher at 100.78. -GNA

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THRIVES THROUGH GLOBAL SHIPPING CHALLENGES

Hutchison Ports Sohar achieves record growth and sustainability milestones

Times News Service

MUSCAT: 2024 has been a year of both significant challenges and remarkable achievements for the global container shipping industry, which is responsible for transporting 80% of the world's traded goods. The industry has grappled with increased ship waiting times, rising freight rates, and ongoing complexities in the Suez Canal due to the Red Sea situation, among other hurdles. Amid these global challenges, Hutchison Ports Sohar announced that its transshipment volumes have more than tripled compared to last year, resulting in an impressive 26% year-on-year growth in the first half of 2024. A collaborative initiative by Hutchison Ports Sohar and Sohar Port & Freezone, with the backing of Customs and various other authorities, the land-bridge solution has proven to be a critical asset. It ensures the smooth flow of cargo to-and-from countries within the Arabian Peninsula and beyond, providing vital support to both regional and global trade during these challenging times. The terminal's exceptional performance is underscored by its seamless 24/7 operations with no congestion issues, ensuring uninterrupted service around the clock: an impressive achievement amidst regional congestion challenges experienced in other ports in the region. Thanks to the dedicated efforts of our team, Hutchison Ports Sohar is a step closer to joining the 1.0 million TEU club. This milestone highlights our strong customer relationships, well-trained Omani workforce, and an effective Business Continuity Management strategy, said Anacin Kum, Chief Executive Officer, Hutchison Ports Sohar. As a common user terminal, Hutchison Ports Sohar welcomed 12 new customers in the first half of 2024, highlighting the total number

LIFESTYLE

Why Venice is
this year’s most
important film
festival?

THE 81ST VENICE FILM FESTIVAL is the can’t-miss event for movie fans in 2024. It will feature impressive feature debuts and the return of cinema superstars.

Stand back, Cannes, because Venice will be taking your crown this year.

The 81st Venice Film Festival, which runs from August 28 to September 7, can lay claim to being the biggest, most important, and just plain coolest film festival of 2024.

Here’s why Venice will be the can’t-miss movie event of the year.

Movie stars are back, baby

Last year’s actors strike left red carpet gawkers starved of celebrity spottings, but Venice 2024 will be a VIP feast.

The long list of A-list stars includes Brad Pitt and George Clooney, in town for Jon Watts’s action comedy “Wolfs” in which they play competitive crime scene

cleaners forced to work together.

Tilda Swinton and Julianne Moore return to the canals for “The Room Next Door” from Spanish director Pedro Almodóvar, and Lady Gaga and Joaquin Phoenix are set to tap and shimmy their way across Venice as DC villains Harley Quinn and Joker in “Joker: Folie à Deux.”

It is the sequel to Todd Phillips’s “Joker” from 2019, which also premiered in Venice, winning the Golden Lion for best film.

Add in a very un-James Bond turn from Daniel Craig in Luca Guadagnino’s “Queer”; Angelina Jolie in Pablo Larrain’s “Maria”; Nicole Kidman, Antonio Banderas in “Babygirl” from Dutch director Halina Reijn; and the cast of Tim Burton’s opening night film “Beetlejuice Beetlejuice” — which includes the stars of the original 1988 film Michael Keaton, Winona Ryder and Catherine O’Hara together with newcomers Jenna Ortega, Willem Dafoe, and Italian legend Monica

Bellucci. That will be enough stars to crash Instagram.

“It looks like it will be the most crowded red carpet we’ve had in a decade,” says festival director Alberto Barbera.

Oscar bait galore

Venice has long usurped Cannes as the launchpad for Oscar winners, with Barbera knowing how to pick films the Academy will go wild for.

Best Picture winners “Birdman,” “Spotlight,” “The Shape of Water,” and “Nomadland,” all got their start in Venice, as did award-season champs “The Favourite,” “Dune,” “The Whale” and “Poor Things,” among many others.

This year, Oscar handicappers will find out if Angelina Jolie hits the high notes playing opera legend Maria Callas in “Maria”; if the magic of Almodóvar’s Oscar-winning Spanish films (“Volver,” “Talk to Her”) gets lost in translation with “The Room Next Door,” his English-language feature de-

but; and if Joaquin Phoenix, who won the 2020 Best Actor Oscar for “Joker,” can again dazzle the Academy as the clown prince of crime.

Venice’s political agenda

It won’t be all razzle-dazzle on the Lido. The Venice line-up includes some of the most politically relevant movies and documentaries of the year, films certain to contribute to the public debate.

They include “September 5,” a docu-drama from German filmmaker Tim Fehlbaum that recreates the terrorist attacks on the 1972 Munich Olympics — in which Israeli athletes were taken hostage. The film tells the story from the perspective of the US TV sports journalists who were there to cover the games.

Andres Veiel, one of Germany’s most acclaimed documentarians, takes on one of Germany’s most infamous historical figures in “Riefenstahl,” an examination of Leni Riefenstahl, the director of the Nazi propaganda films “Tri-

umph of the Film” and “Olympia.”

Riefenstahl, who died in 2003 at age 101, always denied she knew anything about Hitler’s concentration camps and the Holocaust.

But Veiel, who had new access to her archives for his documentary, finds evidence that suggests Riefenstahl was a devoted Nazi.

Beyond the history lesson, Veiel sees “Riefenstahl” as an example of the “seduction of fascism,” which, with the rise of the far-right across Europe, shows a frightening topicality.

And Joe Wright, director of “Atonement” and “The Darkest Hour,” examines the origins of fascism in “Son of the Century,” a TV series that premieres in Venice and traces the rise of Italian dictator Benito Mussolini. Given the current Italian government is the most far-right since Il Duce’s, the show will be the talk of the town.

Steaming up the big screen

Debates around #MeToo and intimacy coordinators haven’t

stopped the world’s oldest film festival from “getting pretty steamy this year,” according to actor Drew Starkey, who stars as Daniel Craig’s lover in “Queer” — an adaptation of the pretty explicit William S. Burroughs novel about American GIs in Mexico in the 1950s.

Nicole Kidman and “Triangle of Sadness” actor Harris Dickinson get it on in “Babygirl,” which director Halina Reijn says was inspired by 90s erotic thrillers like “Basic Instinct,” “Fatal Attraction” and “9 1/2 Weeks.”

Kidman plays a high-powered CEO who puts her career and family on the line to begin a torrid affair with her much younger intern.

And “Love,” a film by Norwegian director Dag Johan Haugerud, looks at singles trying to find spontaneous intimacy through Tinder hookups on a ferry to Oslo. Venice could be an ideal date night for film fans tired of a tepid diet of family-friendly Disney films. —**bw**

SPORTS

West Indies sweep T20I series with 8-wicket win over South Africa

In their last ten encounters, the Caribbean side has tasted victory eight times

TAROUBA: West Indies completed a 3-0 T20I series whitewash of the T20 World Cup 2024 finalists South Africa with an eight-wicket win via the DLS method in the third and final match of the series at the Brian Lara Stadium. Their outright dominance over the Proteas stretches back to March 2023. In their last ten encounters, the Caribbean side has tasted victory eight times, including back-to-back 3-0 series win over South Africa. South Africa had to wait for an opportunity to put on a “better show” in the final game of an enticing series after rain delayed the game by an hour. No overs were lost when the play resumed. However, after a second delay due to rain, which came midway through the fifth over of South Africa’s innings, took more than an



hour out of the game. As a result, the game was cut short to 13 overs a side. While chasing the adjusted target of 116, the West Indies suffered an early blow after Alick Athanaze

was back in the dressing room just four balls into the chase. Shai Hope and Nicholas Pooran went on a rampage that completely derailed South Africa’s hopes of

avoiding a clean sweep. Pooran (35) mistimed his shot straight to Jason Smith off Ottneil Baartman. But the damage was already done. Shimron Hetmyer

(31*) applied the finishing touches and sealed an 8-wicket win via the DLS method. Hope cleared the boundary rope for a maximum and ended the chase with an unbeaten

42-run knock. After being put to bat, South Africa struggled in the absence of individual contributions. The lack of strong individual contributions was a constant theme for the Proteas throughout the three-match series. Captain Aiden Markram and Tristan Stubbs showed intent to push South Africa’s score, but the entire batting unit was kept quiet by the spin duo of Akeal Hosen and stand-in skipper Roston Chase. The duo combined to concede just 22 runs in five overs between them. South Africa’s woes began when the opening duo of Reeza Hendricks and Ryan Rickelton failed to provide a fiery start. Hendricks never found the timing he yearned for and returned to the pavilions with 9(20). Rickelton kept on going and managed to pick up a couple of fours and sixes but lost his wicket to Romario Shepherd. Stubbs was the only player who stood out with his exceptional stroke play. While relying on his fearless approach, the 24-year-old scored 40 runs at a whopping strike rate of 266.67. His effort powered the Proteas to 108/4. **Brief Score:** West Indies 116/2 (Shai Hope 42*, Nicholas Pooran 35; Bjorn Fortuin 1-8) vs South Africa 108/4 (Tristan Stubbs 40; Romario Shepherd 2-14). -ANI

ICC CHAIRMAN



Cricket fraternity praise Jay Shah on his appointment

NEW DELHI: The Indian Cricket fraternity gave best wishes to newly appointed International Cricket Council (ICC) chairman Jay Shah on Tuesday. Jay Shah has been elected unopposed as the next Chairman of the International Cricket Council (ICC). Shah, who has served as the BCCI Secretary since October 2019 and Chairman of the Asian Cricket Council since January 2021, will assume this prestigious role on December 1, 2024. All-rounder Hardik Pandya took to social media and congratulated Jay Shah following his appointment. “Congratulations @JayShah bhai on being elected as the youngest chairman of ICC. Look forward to seeing you take cricket to even greater heights. Your vision and drive will help ICC, just like it did with BCCI,” Pandya wrote on X. Former India head coach Ravi Shastri also lauded the former BCCI secretary after being elect-

ed as the chairman of ICC. “Congratulations to @JayShah on being elected unopposed as ICC Chairman--the youngest ever at just 35! His experience running @BCCI will undoubtedly serve him well. The cricket community can be rest assured that Jay will work tirelessly to help World Cricket and @ICC to realize their full potential and take them to another level,” Shastri wrote in a post on X. Former off-spinner Harbhajan Singh gave his best wishes to Jay Shah following his appointment as the new ICC chairman. “Congratulations to Secretary @BCCI @JayShahJi on your election, unopposed, as Chairman @ICC. Confident that the ICC will benefit from your experience of handling Indian cricket. Your leadership will guide world cricket to a new height. My best wishes,” Harbhajan posted on X. Young Indian opener Shubman Gill said “All the Best” to Jay Shah following the appointment. -ANI

RIGHT-ARM SEAMER

Olly Stone replaces Mark Wood as England announce squad for Lord’s Test

LONDON : Right-arm seamer Olly Stone will replace injured Mark Wood in the playing XI for the England side for the second match of the two-match series against Sri Lanka which is set to be played at Lord’s starting from August 29. England on Tuesday announced the playing XI for the second match of the series against the Islanders. The hosts have made only one change in the lineup for this match as they brought in Stone in place of Wood. Despite having a career ruined by injuries, Stone has played only three Tests but has been an essential member of the England team whenever he has played for his country. The seamer has played 28 matches this summer for Nottinghamshire and London Spirit across formats, which is the second-most appearances he has made in a single season after missing the most of previous season due to a hamstring injury. England playing XI for the Lord’s Test: Ben Duckett, Dan Lawrence, Ollie Pope (captain), Joe Root, Harry Brook, Jamie Smith (wicket-keeper), Chris Woakes, Gus Atkinson, Matthew Potts, Olly Stone, Shoaib Bashir. Earlier on August 25, uncapped English fast bowler Josh Hull replaced Wood from the last two Test matches of the series against Sri Lanka after the 34-year-old suffered a right thigh muscle strain while bowling in the second innings of the Manchester Test, according to the ICC. Recapping the first match of the series, SL won the toss and opted to bat first. Struggling at 113/7, it was knocks from skipper Dhananjaya de Silva (74 in 84



balls, with eight fours) and Milan Rathnayake (72 in 135 balls, with six fours and two sixes) that pushed SL to 236/10. Chris Woakes (3/32) and Shoaib Bashir (3/55) were the top bowlers for England. Despite a poor start and a tricky score of 67/3, fine performances from middle-order batters Joe Root (42 in 57 balls with four boundaries), Harry Brook (56 in 73 balls with four boundaries), and centurion Jamie Smith (111 in 148 balls, with eight fours and a six) helped England attain a lead of 122 runs as they were bundled out for 358 runs. Ashitha Fernando (4/103) and Prabhat Jayasuriya (3/85) delivered fine spells for Sri Lanka. In their second innings, SL once again found themselves in a troublesome position, with the score reading 95/4. However, veterans Angelo Matthews (65

in 145 balls, with two fours and a six), and Dinesh Chandimal (79 in 119 balls, with seven fours) formed a 78-run partnership to push SL towards a lead. Later, keeping his fine form, Kamindu Mendis slammed his second Test ton in five innings, scoring 113 in 183 balls, with 15 fours and a six. SL put up a total of 326/10, giving them a respectable lead of 204 runs. Woakes and Matthew Potts (3/47) took three wickets each to lead England’s bowling charts. In reply, England was in a tight position at 70/3. However, Root’s calm and composed half-century (62* in 128 balls with two fours) and solid contributions from Brook (32 in 68 balls, with three fours) and Smith (39* in 48 balls, with four boundaries and a six) took England to a five-wicket win. England took a 1-0 lead in the three-match series. -ANI

SUCCESS

Sri Lanka’s Mendis reveals mantra that helps him thrive in tests



LONDON : Sri Lanka’s Kamindu Mendis revealed that staying “calm” is the mantra behind the success he has enjoyed in the Test format. Mendis played a captivating 113-run knock in a losing cause against England in Manchester in the opening Test of the three-match series. His performance left him with a batting average of 92.16, which is the second-highest in Test history among players who have more than 500 runs to their name. Ahead of the second Test, Kamindu opened up about his philosophy, which has buttressed his batting and allowed him to express himself freely on the field of cricket. “I do basic things and try to keep calm in the middle. What I wanted was to do what I could on the day for the team. That’s really my only goal: to give as much to my team as possible, whether on the batting front, bowling front or via fielding,” Kamindu said as quoted from ESPNcricinfo. It was two years ago that Kamindu made his debut against Australia as a replacement for Dhananjaya de Silva. He impressed with a knock of 61 but had to bide his time on the sidelines to showcase his talent again. -ANI

FORMULA 1 TEAM

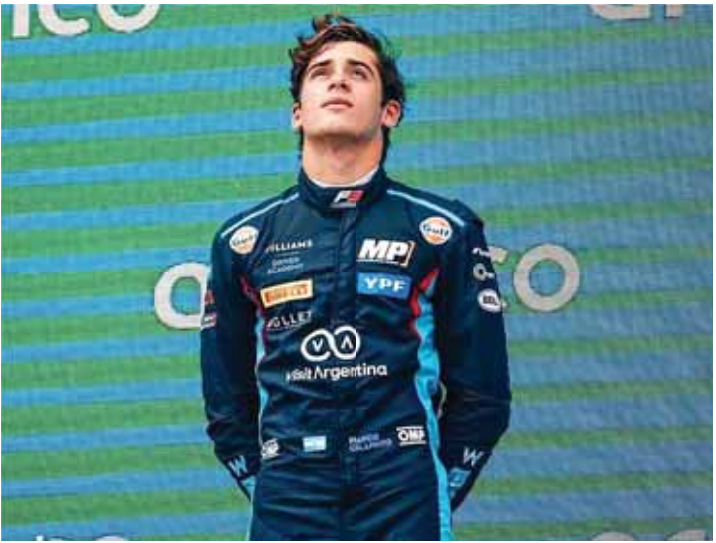
F1: Williams drop Sargeant for Colapinto

BELJING: The Williams Formula 1 team has dropped driver Logan Sargeant, with his place to be taken by rookie Franco Colapinto for the remainder of the 2024 season. “To replace a driver mid-season is not a decision we have taken lightly, but we believe this gives Williams the best chance to compete for points over the remainder of the season,” said Williams team principal James Vowles. “We have just brought a large upgrade to the car and need to maximise every points-scoring opportunity in a remarkably tight

midfield battle. We also believe in investing in our young drivers in the Williams Racing Driver Academy, and Franco is getting a fantastic opportunity to demonstrate what he is capable of across the final nine rounds of the season. Sargeant graduated to F1 with Williams in 2023, but the team had grown increasingly frustrated with his inability to match the performance of teammate Alex Albon, and it had been announced in July that the American would leave Williams at the end of the year, to be replaced by

Carlos Sainz. A high-speed accident during practice for last weekend’s Dutch Grand Prix, which resulted in a chassis update being destroyed, appears to have been the last straw for Williams, who have elected to terminate Sargeant’s contract ahead of schedule. Williams are currently ninth in the 2024 F1 Constructors’ Championship with four points, all scored by Albon. Like Sargeant before him, Colapinto is a member of Williams’ driver academy, and the Argentin-

ian has spent 2024 racing in the feeder Formula 2 series, currently lying sixth in the championship standings with one win. Set to debut at this weekend’s Italian Grand Prix, the Argentinian will become his nation’s first F1 race driver since Gaston Mazzacane in 2001. With Sainz and Albon under contract for 2025, there will be no room for Colapinto at Williams next year, and with few other seats available, the Argentinian’s F1 future beyond 2024 looks unclear. -Xinhua



IN PICTURES



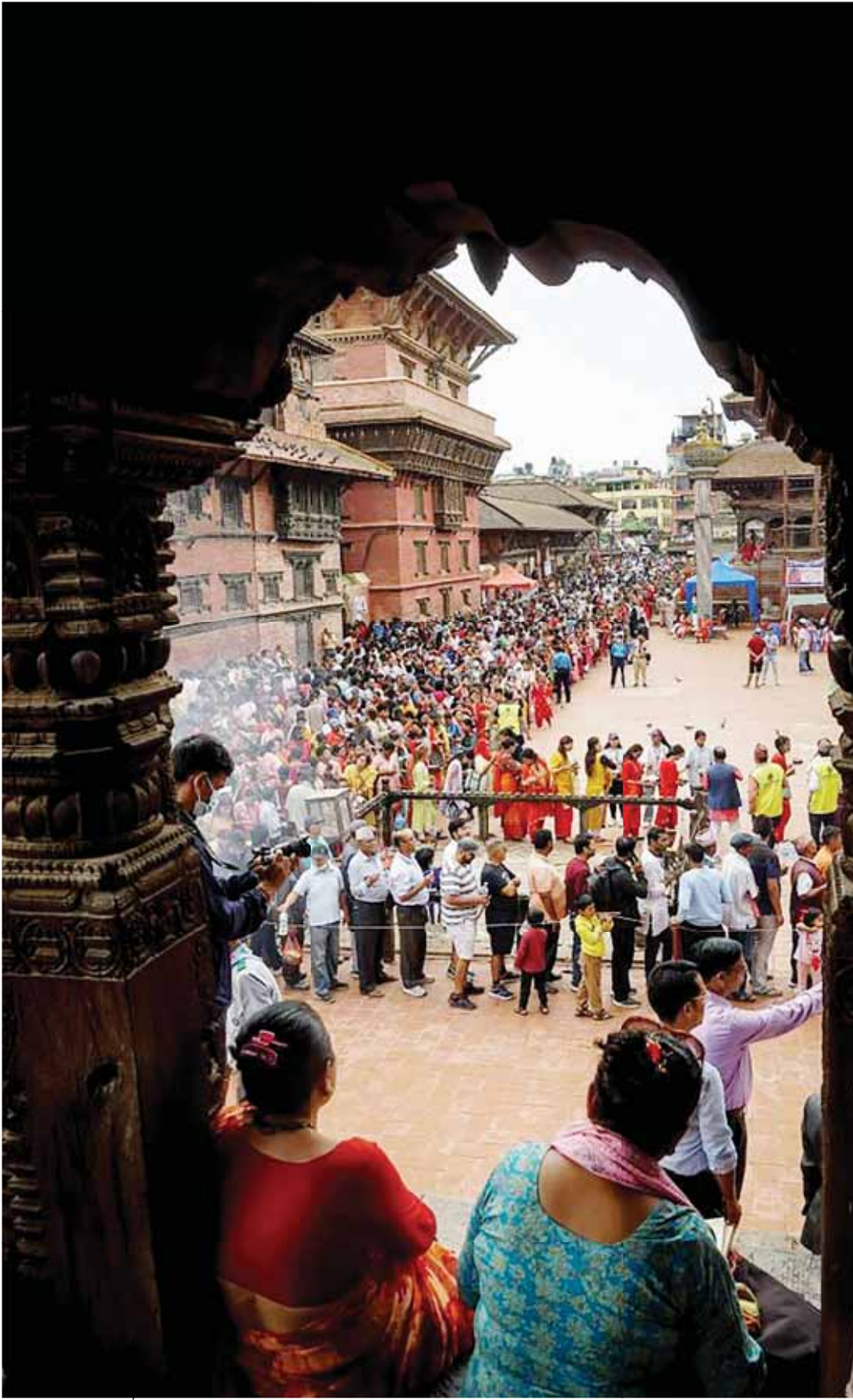
Water level of Mekong rises after continuous rainfall during rainy season in Laos
A drone picture shows rising water in Mekong River in Vientiane, capital of Laos. The water level of the Mekong has risen after continuous rainfall during rainy season in Laos. *Xinhua*



Tibetan antelopes seen in Serling Tso national nature reserve, Xizang
Tibetan antelopes run on grass in Serling Tso national nature reserve in Nagqu City, southwest China's Xizang Autonomous Region. *Xinhua*



Sunset scenery at Bosphorus Strait in Istanbul, Türkiye
This picture shows the Bosphorus Strait at sunset in Istanbul, Türkiye. *Xinhua*



Krishna Janmashtami festival in Nepal
Devotees line up to worship Lord Krishna at a Krishna temple during the Krishna Janmashtami festival in Lalitpur, Nepal. *Xinhua*



Stage 2 of 15th Tour of Hainan Island cycling race
Cyclists compete during Stage 2 of the 15th Tour of Hainan Island cycling race from Qionghai to Lingshui, south China's Hainan Province. *Xinhua*



Wiener Dog race at Huntington Beach in Orange County, California
Dogs compete in the Wiener Dog race at Huntington Beach in Orange County, California, the United States. *Xinhua*

ROUND-UP

TCL launches world’s largest 115-inch QD-Mini LED TV in Oman



LANDMARK EVENT



BYD celebrates production of 8 millionth new energy vehicle

MUSCAT: BYD, a global leader in new energy vehicles recently celebrated the production of its 8 millionth new energy vehicle.

This landmark event highlights BYD’s ongoing commitment to innovation and sustainability within the automotive industry. The production of the 8 millionth new energy vehicle marks a significant milestone in BYD’s quest to lead the way in sustainable mobility solutions.

BYD’s achievement with the 8 millionth new energy vehicle is only the beginning. The company plans to expand its production capabilities and introduce even more innovative and environmentally friendly vehicles to meet the rising demand for sustainable transportation. Committed to its vision of “cooling the earth by 1°C,” BYD will continue to lead the way in the new energy vehicle industry.

In Oman, BYD’s latest range that includes the ATTO 3, Seal, Han, Qin Plus or SONG Plus.

The BYD ATTO 3, an electric SUV boasts 201 HP and a range of 420 km (based on standard test conditions). Packed with features

like the BYD blade battery, panoramic sunroof and advanced safety systems, the ATTO 3 promises both performance and comfort.

Meanwhile, the SEAL electric Sport AWD Sedan, equipped with 523 HP, 0-100 km/h speed in 3.8 seconds and a range of 520 km (based on standard test conditions) , dazzled with its luxurious amenities and cutting-edge technology, including a 15.6-inch rotating advanced multi-media screen, multi-colour ambient cabin lighting, a head-up display and adaptive cruise control.

The HAN electric luxury AWD sedan, with its impressive 509 HP, 0-100 km/h speed in 3.9 seconds, and 521 km range (based on standard test conditions), offered attendees a glimpse into the future of automotive luxury, boasting features like a panoramic sunroof, a 360-degree camera, luxury leather upholstery with seat ventilation and heater and automatic emergency braking.

Another addition to the SUV line-up, the SONG PLUS electric plug-in hybrid SUV showcased

versatility with its combination of 128 HP petrol and 201 HP electric motor, promising upto 1000 km of combined range (based on standard test conditions). With features like a lithium-ion phosphate battery, a 360-degree camera, and an integrated power braking system, the SONG PLUS exemplifies BYD’s commitment to innovation.

BYD’s Qin PLUS DM-i hybrid vehicle is equipped with the latest dual-mode system. Utilizing the power of a hybrid, it delivers a combination of 108 HP petrol and 194 HP electric motor and reaches 0-100 km/h acceleration in 7.3 seconds. The system integrates engine, motor and power battery delivering key performance factors such as power, economy and NVH. Users can experience EV/HEV driving by switching between ECO/NORMAL/SPORT working modes. The 12V power battery provides electric energy for the motor with self-charge capability, delivering upto 1000 km combined range on a full charged battery.

In Oman, BYD vehicles are distributed by Saud Bahwan Group.



The TCL 115” X955 MAX Premium QD-Mini LED TV is a technological marvel, boasting a peak brightness of 5,000 nits, over 20,000 local dimming zones, QLED Pro technology, a 144 Hz VRR, and an ONKYO 6.2.2 Hi-Fi system

MUSCAT: TCL, the world’s top two TV brand and top one 98-inch TV brand, has unveiled the world’s largest 115” X955 MAX Premium QD-Mini LED TV in Oman.

The launch took place at the Extra Oman store in Muscat, marking a significant milestone in TCL’s expansion within the region. The event was attended by officials from Genetco, TCL’s exclusive distributor in Oman, and representatives from TCL.

The event was attended by Faye Al Rushaidi, captain of the Oman national football team and Genetco’s brand ambassador, who officially inaugurated the launch. Fans were thrilled as he signed autographs and interacted with attendees. Also present were distin-

guished guests including Dr Muthanna Al Durrah, CEO of Genetco, Dr. AmbujKhare, COO of Genetco, Vic Shen, Business Head of the Dubai subsidiary of TCL and Jitendra Kulkarni, regional sales director of Dubai subsidiary of TCL, among others. The event took place at Extra Ghubra, where Fadi Shbaro, the Country Head of Extra, and his team were also in attendance.

Cutting-edge features

The TCL 115” X955 MAX Premium QD-Mini LED TV is a technological marvel, boasting a peak brightness of 5,000 nits, over 20,000 local dimming zones, QLED Pro technology, a 144 Hz VRR, and an ONKYO 6.2.2 Hi-Fi system. These cutting-edge fea-

tures come together to deliver an unrivalled cinematic experience with exceptional image quality and immersive sound. Dr. Muthanna Al Durrah, CEO of Genetco, expressed confidence that TCL’s World’s Largest QD-Mini LED TV will set a new benchmark in home entertainment.

Attendees had the opportunity to witness the TV’s impressive visuals and audio first-hand in an immersive experience zone. They were captivated by the vibrant colours, deep contrasts, and immersive sound, which created a truly memorable viewing experience. Guests particularly noted the TV’s remarkable clarity, depth of display, and dynamic sound quality.

“The overwhelmingly positive feedback we’ve received today is a testament to TCL’s relentless pursuit of excellence. Our goal is to push technological boundaries and deliver products that not only meet but exceed our customers’ expectations. The 115” X955 MAX Premium QD-Mini LED TV is a shining example of this commitment,” said Vic Shen, Business Head of the Dubai subsidiary.

This event highlights TCL’s unwavering commitment to innovation, continuously striving to enhance customer experiences through its advanced technology and world-class products.

EXPANSION

Bank Muscat expands priority banking network with new Asalah centre in Al Khuwair

MUSCAT: In line with its strategic plan to enhance and expand its branch and centres network, Bank Muscat, the leading financial service provider in the Sultanate of Oman, inaugurated a new Asalah Priority Banking Center and a service centre at the Bank’s branch in Al Khuwair-33, in the Wilayat of Bausher, Muscat Governorate. The inauguration was patronised by Sheikh Mohammed bin Hamed bin Ali Al Ghazali, along with several customers and members of the bank’s executive management team.

The decision to open the new Asalah centre in Al Khuwair-33 was driven by the area’s significant population growth and thriving commercial activity. The area has recently witnessed the launch of various commercial projects and the development of public spaces, making it an ideal location for the new facility.

The newly opened centre is a valuable addition to the Asalah centre network across branches, which spans across the Sultanate, now totalling 50 centres. Bank Muscat recently launched several new centres, including those at its branches in Al Mouj Street, Al Hail, and Al Khoudh-6 in Muscat Governorate. Other centers have also been opened in Sinaw, North Sharqiya Governorate, Izki, and Adam, Dakhiliya Governorate.

The Asalah Center at Al Khuwair-33 branch is equipped toofpriority banking customers with a range of tailored solution-within a modern and comfortable environment. Dedicated Relationship Managers and experienced staff are on hand to provide personalized assistance, reflecting Bank Muscat’s commitment to delivering exceptional customer service and keeping pace with the latest developments in the banking sector.

In addition to the Asalah Cent-



er, the new service center within the branch offers a variety of banking services, including account opening and delivery of debit cards. The center is outfitted with advanced technology to ensure quick and high-quality service, supported by a team of skilled employees. This expansion aligns with Bank Muscat’s vision of continuously enhancing its customer service capabilities across its branches and service centers nationwide.

On the occasion, Saleh Mohammed Al Maaini, Deputy General Manager Capital Regions, Bank Muscat, expressed pride in the ongoing expansion of the bank’s Asalah Centers, stating: “The new center in Al Khuwair-33 will serve a large segment of priority banking customers in the Wilayat of Bausher, providing a range of services and facilities designed to meet their needs and aspirations. Bank Muscat is dedicated to strengthening its presence in key areas experiencing rapid commercial, economic, and urban growth.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks and appreciation to all our customers for their continued trust in our services across the Sultanate. We remain committed to delivering the best banking experience to our valued clients.”

AsalahPriority Banking Group offers many exclusive benefits to customers, including a large number of dedicated Relationship Managers located in various governorates, in addition to Asalah banking centers spread throughout the country dedicated to providing fast service and completing transactions. The Asalah call center works around the clock and all days of the week through the number 24779999 to provide the best services and customer assistance.

Bank Muscat’s Asalah Priority Banking offers numerous exclusive benefits, including wealth management solutions offering an exceptional breadth and depth of investment options across different asset classes, directly as well as through tie-ups with partners of repute.



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Your reservation number will be entered into a raffle draw.

Raffle draw will take place at 12pm (noon) on 30 August.

All vouchers are valid until 31 October 2024.

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