

HM SENDS GREETINGS

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to President Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China on the 74th Anniversary of the founding of the Republic. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings and wishes to the president and to his country's people further progress and prosperity. — **ONA**



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CABLES

HM sends greetings to Cyprus

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to President Nikos Christodoulides of the Republic of Cyprus on his country's Independence Day anniversary.

In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greeting and wishes to the president and his country's people. — **ONA**

HM greets President of Nigeria

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to President Bola Tinubu of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on his country's National Day.

In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greeting and wishes to the president and to his country's people further progress and prosperity. — **ONA**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN Campaign to attract tourists to Oman

1 The first mobile promotional workshops to promote the heritage and tourism components of Oman will begin in Kuwait today. >**A3**

OMAN Omani delegation signs several pacts

2 The Omani trade delegation signed several strategic partnerships with American companies for achieving sustainable economic development. >**A5**

WORLD New York City hit by heavy rains

3 Severe rains battered New York City causing disruptions as subways and airports experienced significant issues while roads turned to waterways. >**A7**



OMAN'S TOURISM REVENUES HIT OMR1.9 BILLION IN 2022

Tourism sector contributions to the gross domestic product of Oman to reach 2.75 percent in two years

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman is eyeing greater revenues from the tourism sector and expects its contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) will reach 2.75 percent in next two years, compared to 2.4 percent by the end of 2022, said Salim Mohammed Al Mahrouqi, the Minister of Heritage and Tourism.

The contribution of the tourism sector to the GDP amounted to OMR1.07 billion in 2022 out of total revenues of OMR1.9 billion in the same year, said the Minister of Heritage and Tourism.

"The number of tourists to Oman is also constantly rising, both on the domestic as well as foreign fronts.

There are elaborate plans



Salim Mohammed Al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism

to promote all tourism components, and the financial tools and resources that will be employed for this campaign during the coming year have been approved.

"Oman will be organising qualitative international events that will represent milestones in the promotional plan, most notably the announcement of the Sultanate of Oman as the official partner of the largest international exhibitions in Tourism Industry 'Berlin Travel and Tourism Exchange 2024'," he added.

Salim Mohammed Al Mahrouqi pointed out that the targeted investments during the

comprehensive tourism development plan (2021-2025) is OMR3 billion, though there are some challenges with regard to financing aspects or some challenges related to existing coalitions, stressing that the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is closely monitoring at all the possibilities and looking for appropriate solutions to these challenges in cooperation and coordination with the sector's partners.

He said that many tourism projects will be opened during the coming period in a number of governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, and there is a huge and diversified investment programme that includes all governorates. This programme is currently entering into the negotiation phase with the involvement of a number of investors, he added.

Integrated tourism plans

Regarding the implementation of tourism development plans in the governorates, the Minister of Heritage and Tourism confirmed that the Ministry is focusing on integrated tourism plans, aiming to develop some promising tourist destinations in harmony with various sectors and national programmes to direct investment and promotional efforts towards maximising the benefit from these plans to maximise business opportunities and create jobs. >**A5**

ECONOMIC GROWTH



S&P raises Oman's credit rating to BB+ with a stable outlook

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Standard and Poor's raised the credit rating of Oman to 'BB+' with a stable outlook on the back of improved resilience of the economy.

In its latest report the global rating agency said, "Despite the external financial shocks Oman has taken measures to improve the financial and economic indicators, reduce the state's public debt. The government also continues to improve the prospects for the oil sector."

The agency further said that it expects to achieve economic growth at an average rate of about 2 percent during the period 2023-2026 despite the slowdown in real gross domestic product (GDP) growth during the current year as a result of the voluntary reduction in oil production after the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) Plus agreement.

The agency also expects the non-oil sector to grow by about 2 percent during the period 2024-2025.

The agency also indicated that

Oman has been able to achieve a financial surplus of about 1.8 percent of the GDP during 2022 after about eight years of recording financial deficits. It expects Oman to continue achieving a financial surplus of an average of 1.5 percent during the period 2023-2024.

The rating agency further stated that high oil prices will contribute to achieving additional revenues and will enable the government to continue its efforts to exploit these revenues towards reducing public debt.

It expects the rate of public debt as a percentage of gross domestic product to decline from about 40 percent in 2022 to 38 percent in 2023."

The agency further said it expects Brent crude prices to average about \$83 per barrel in 2023 and \$85 per barrel during 2024 and subsequent years.

The agency confirmed that the credit rating of the Sultanate of Oman may rise if the government continues to reduce the country's external debt, which will lead to a decline in the cost of servicing public debt. >**A5**



THREE-DAY WEEKEND

People return to work after enjoying long weekend



PHOTO: SHADINE

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The long weekend is over. It is back to office for most as people return to work on Sunday after having an enjoyable and relaxing break.

From schoolchildren to their mothers, to working professionals, it was time to reset their morning alarm clocks as the three-day weekend gave them a good opportunity to relax and spend time with families and friends.

The three-day long weekend began on Thursday as the Sultanate of Oman announced the day as a holiday to mark the Prophet Mohammed's (PBUH) birth anniversary.

The weekend saw brisk busi-

ness all-around with families and friends opting for staycations in Muscat and nearby destinations like Al Jabal Al Akhdar.

With most of the prominent four and five-star hotels announcing lucrative offers ahead of the weekend, the hotels recorded good occupancy rates.

Restaurants in Muscat witnessed huge footfalls while shopping malls were another popular venue for people to enjoy the break.

The popular Al Qurum beach also had huge crowds spending the day with a lot enjoying a good swim in the sea.

For the arts and music connoisseurs, the start of the Royal Opera

House Muscat (ROHM) 2023-24 season on Friday saw a packed house with the staging of opera "The Barber of Seville".

Yet another event that drew a crowd was the standup comedy show by internationally acclaimed standup comedian and actor Vir Das at Al Bustan Palace, a Ritz-Carlton Hotel.

Mohammed K, an expatriate, told Times of Oman that he spent two days up at Al Jabal Al Akhdar. "We camped there and the pleasant weather made it a very relaxing trip with friends and families."

Shakeel, another expatriate, said: "We celebrated by booking a night stage in one of the top hotels in Muscat by the sea." >**A5**

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PRAYER
TIMINGS

Dhuhr.....12:02pm
Asr.....3:26pm
Maghrib.....6:00pm
Isha.....7:10pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....4:44am

OMAN’S ACHIEVEMENTS IN HUMAN RIGHTS PRAISED

Oman Human Rights Commission (OHRC) reviews its achievements and work mechanisms at the Palace of Nations in Geneva

International praise at the Palace of Nations for the Sultanate's achievements in the field of the attention and care accorded to human rights

OHRC Chairman meets with President of Human Rights Council and the Deputy to High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva

President of Human Rights Council: We express our comfort over the human rights efforts exerted in Oman

Deputy to High Commissioner: We welcome and support the efforts of OHRC for achievement of further regional and international work

Chairman of the Sultanate's permanent delegation in Geneva: We are pleased with holding the activities of the OHRC at the Palace of Nations and proud of the praise received

Abdullah Al Hosni: We have conveyed the actual condition of the Sultanate's efforts and achievements in the field of human rights

The Photo Exhibition at the Palace of Nations reflects OHRC march and achievements

Review of the responsibilities and mechanisms of OHRC before the ambassadors, experts and officials at the UN Headquarters in Geneva

Open dialogue between OHRC delegation and the attendees in an atmosphere of transparency and respect



OHRC Chairman and his accompanying delegation during the meeting with President of the UN Human Rights Council



Abdullah Al Hosni delivers his speech on human rights at the Palace of Nations in Geneva



OHRC Chairman presents President of the UN Human Rights Council with a commemorative gift



OHRC Chairman presents Deputy UN High Commissioner with a commemorative gift



A section of ambassadors and experts attending the OHRC event at the Palace of Nations in Geneva



OHRC delegation during the discussion with the attendees



OHRC delegation responds to enquires and open discussions



Comments and observations of ambassadors and their praise for human rights in Oman

Within the role and international relations of Oman Human Rights Commission (OHRC), and to convey a realistic picture of the renewed care and interest in human rights in the Sultanate of Oman, the Oman Human Rights Commission held a number of human rights events at the Palace of Nations in Geneva. The activities included a working paper on OHRC and its work mechanism, its achievements in the field of human rights over the past years. The event also comprised a direct discussion and response to questions from the audience. OHRC also held an exhibition on its 15-year journey since its foundation and screened some movies on human rights publications that were distributed to selected places in the Palace in Geneva.

OHRC distributed books and printed publications which included the OHRC's annual reports and specialised books about some of the sectors the most deserving for the care in society. In addition, the OHRC delegation met with a number of UN officials concerned with human rights and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

During these activities, OHRC clarified the efforts made in the Sultanate of Oman to guarantee more workers' rights and protection and the mechanisms and means taken to combat human trafficking and protect the groups most deserving of care in society.

Human rights event

Oman Human Rights Commission began its activities at the Palace of the Nations in Geneva with a speech by Honourable Sheikh

Abdullah bin Shuwain Al Hosni, Chairman of Oman Human Rights Commission, in which he said that the aim of these events is to celebrate 15 years of achievements and continued efforts in the field of human rights since the establishment of the Commission in 2008.

These events coincide with the United Nations' celebration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Paris Principles.

The Chairman of OHRC pointed out that the Sultanate of Oman has recently issued the Social Protection Law, which strengthens the efforts made at the social level. The new Labour Law was also issued, which included new articles aimed at providing more protection to workers. These and other steps taken by the government in Oman would enhance efforts to secure a better life and greater protection of human rights.

OHRC Chairman also pointed to that it shares with the international community the great responsibilities and challenges related to human rights. There is no substitute for sincere cooperation and joint work, with the need to exert more efforts to promote peace, security, justice and equality.

The above activities are followed by an orientation film on OHRC, its work mechanisms, prerogatives, programmes and visits, OHRC role in terms of awareness and education on human rights and OHRC communication with the regional and international organisations and its membership in various relevant committees.

The Director of the OHRC's Or-

ganisations and International Relations Department, Shatha bint Abdul Majeed Al Zadjali, also gave a video presentation, in which she explained that the OHRC's new system stipulates that it should have experienced and people interested in human rights, and representatives of a number of relevant government agencies, who are ready to achieve the principle of equality in formation according to the Paris Principles.

The presentation also explained OHRC's powers including setting up a national human rights strategy, monitoring violations, receiving complaints, conducting field visits to examine human rights incidents, raising awareness and education through organising conferences, courses and seminars, the OHRC's cooperation with international organisations concerned with human rights, preparing reports and participating in meetings at the regional and international level.

The door was opened for discussion with the audience, where the delegation responded to all questions raised regarding topics related to human rights in the Sultanate of Oman and of concern to OHRC, its powers and responsibilities, and clarified the efforts and steps taken to serve and protect human rights in the Sultanate of Oman. Many attendees expressed their appreciation for the efforts made regarding human rights in the Sultanate of Oman and praised what the Omani Human Rights Commission is doing.

The exhibition

The Oman Human Rights Commission held an accompanying

exhibition at the Palace of Nations in Geneva. The exhibition summarises the OHRC's journey over the past 15 years and explained some of its work and achievements. The exhibition was designed, implemented and directed by a specialised team from OHRC, and contained information, pictures and graphs that embody the activity and work of the Commission, the stages of development of its legislation, its representative members, its most prominent specialties, the memberships it obtained at the regional and international levels, and the means of monitoring and receiving reports and how OHRC can be communicated with the field visits it carries out, including visiting prison inmates, monitoring elections and the mechanism for writing reports for governments and external organisations.

Printed publications

During the exhibition, a set of OHRC's printed publications and annual reports were distributed. So far, OHRC has issued more than twenty publications in various fields of human rights, and has focused on clarifying the rights of groups most deserving of care, such as women, children, the elderly, and the disabled, in addition to printing international charters and agreements concerned with human rights.

Screens

A number of the OHRC's films were also screened on screens installed in selected places at the Palace of Nations in Geneva. They included orientation films about OHRC and its work mechanism, its efforts to raise awareness and educate the community about human rights,

and films about some of the groups most deserving of care in society, such as women, children, and the elderly and the disabled.

Meeting with President of Human Rights Council

The Chairman of Oman Human Rights Commission (OHRC) and his accompanying delegation met with Vaclav Balek, President of the United Nations Human Rights Council. During the meeting, the Chairman of Oman Human Rights Commission spoke on the work and competencies of OHRC, its efforts at the national, regional and international levels, its participation in submitting reports parallel to government reports, and attending the discussions of the Human Rights Council, as the Chairman of the Commission explained the most important developments in the field of human rights in the Sultanate of Oman. The President of the UN Human Rights Council expressed his appreciation for the work of the Commission (OHRC) and praised the role played by it, and the serious developments in the OHRC Law. He also praised the role of the Commission at the regional level, the organisation of the first Gulf Forum for Human Rights Institutions in Muscat, and the events organised by OHRC in Geneva, which attracted a large number of visitors from various countries.

Meeting Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights

The Honourable Chairman of OHRC and the accompanying delegation also met with Nada Al-Nashif, Deputy High Commissioner

of the United Nations for Human Rights, in the presence of Mohammad Al-Nusour, Head of the Middle East and North Africa Department at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The OHRC Chairman presented a summary of the most prominent legislative and legal developments in the Sultanate of Oman related to human rights. The Deputy High Commissioner praised the role of the Committee at various levels, its efforts in raising awareness and education on human rights, and the steps taken in the field of the OHRC's competencies and its work system.

She also appreciated the organisation of OHRC for a series of events held at the Palace of the Nations in Geneva. She also expressed her appreciation for the efforts made in developing work mechanisms to serve human rights, including those related to protecting workers and the establishment of the General Federation of Oman Workers.

The door was opened for discussion with the audience, where the delegation responded to all questions regarding topics related to human rights in Oman and of concern to OHRC, its powers and responsibilities. The commission clarified the efforts and steps taken to serve and protect human rights in Oman.

The OHRC successfully concluded its activities with the praise by the concerned personnel and guests at the Palace of Nations for the achievements and efforts being made in the field of human rights in Oman, which is blessed with the wise leadership and generous care of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq.



Review of OHRC works in the presence of the audience



Photo Exhibition in Geneva on OHRC's 15-year march.



Display screens and publications within the OHRC exhibition at the Palace of Nations.



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Oman’s workshops to woo tourists starts from today in Kuwait

The number of tourists coming from the Gulf Cooperation Council countries during the first half of this year reached more than 637,000

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The first mobile promotional workshops organised by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for the Gulf market to promote the heritage and tourism components of the Sultanate of Oman will begin in Kuwait on Sunday.

Haitham Mohammed Al Ghasani, Director General of Promotion at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism said: “Holding promotional workshops coincides with the beginning of the winter tourism season in Oman, which continues from October to May and is expected to witness great rush due to efforts made to promote tourism components.”

He added: “Promotional introductory seminars will also be held in Qatar, the Kingdom of Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates, with the participation of 15 local companies representing the hotel sector, travel agencies, and tour operators and destination management in Oman.”

He said that the tourism components of all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman are being promoted, and the focus is to encour-



age investments in old tourist villages, beach adventure tourism. The tourism patterns are trying to promote festivals that have proven successful in attracting tourists, he added.

He pointed out that the introductory seminars include holding events, such as meetings, visual presentations, bilateral discussions between participants, and dialogues about tourism products and components, to promote the Sultanate of Oman as a rich tourist destination with its heritage and tourism components, and the diversity of tourism activities and experiences.

He added that the importance and diversity of the Omani tourism product for the Gulf market will also be reviewed, and the differences in factors that distinguish the Sultanate of Oman as a preferred tourist destination for the Gulf market will be emphasised.

It will also focus on communicating with major tourism companies in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, concluding joint cooperation agreements, and introducing regional companies to the most important tourism components, he said.

He pointed out that the promotional workshops aim to attract citizens of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries and residents of these countries of various nationalities, especially since there is a large percentage of foreign communities in these countries, and they are usually attracted by the activities, especially during the winter period.

Al-Ghasani explained that statistics indicate that the number of tourists coming from the Gulf Cooperation Council countries during the first half of this year reached more than 637,000, compared to more than 1,426,000 in 2022. With ONA inputs

ROYAL PARDON

His Majesty the Sultan pardons 162 prisoners

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, has issued a Royal pardon to a number of prisoners convicted of different cases.

They included 162 prisoners, 94 of them are foreign prisoners, according to an official source at the Royal Oman Police (ROP).

The Royal pardon of His Majesty the Sultan coincides with Prophet Mohammed’s (PBUH) birth anniversary 1445 AH and in consideration of families of the prisoners. -ONA

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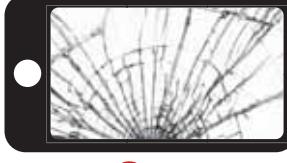
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THE HEROES RETURN TO A WARM WELCOME

Oman's sailing duo of Musab Al Hadi and Waleed Al Kindi, who picked up the Sultanate's maiden silver medal at the ongoing Asian Games in Hangzhou, China, returned home to a rousing reception

MUSCAT: It was a surreal feeling at the Muscat International Airport for the Sultanate's sports officials waiting to greet the nation's heroes. And the reasons for joy and delight were crystal clear. A historic first after more than a decade. This was the first time that Oman had Asian Games silver medallists and they were being warmly welcomed for their spectacular show at the ongoing 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou, China.

The national heroes, Musab Al Hadi and Waleed Al Kindi, who clinched Oman's first ever silver medal at the continental Games, in the men's skiff 49er sailing event, returned home with the shining medals around their neck.

The last time Oman sports officials waited to greet an Asian Games medallist at the airport was way back in 2010 when sprinter Barakat Al Harthi returned home with a bronze medal in the 100m event at the Guangzhou Asian Games.

The silver medallists and the accompanying delegation were welcomed by Oman Sail CEO Dr Khamis Al Jabri and Dr Marwan Juma Al Juma, Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) board member and chairman of the Oman Hockey Association.

It was double delight for the sailing duo as their medal also secured automatic qualification to the Asian Olympic Qualification Regatta in Chon Buri, Thailand, in December. A win for them in Chon Buri will book a place at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games.

Speaking on his arrival in Muscat, Al Hadi said: "Our emotions are beyond words as a team, and we collectively share immense pride in what we have accomplished amid intense competition against the finest sailors in the 49er class at the Asian level.

"Throughout the competitions, we aimed to pursue points and maintain consistency through meticulous planning. Despite setbacks in a few races, we maintained a high morale to bring honour for Oman. It is a great feeling and matter of pride to see our national flag being raised at the awards ceremony."

For Al Kindi it was "a journey that spans years."

He said: "One of the key factors behind our success at the Asian Games is continuous development, unceasing training, and fostering synergy among team members. We have also sought to harness international expertise whenever the opportunity arose in international and regional competitions. We are immensely proud of our accomplishments, and we hope that this milestone serves as inspiration for all athletes in the Sultanate of Oman."

Al Kindi added: "The silver medal underlines that winning medals is not an insurmountable feat but an attainable goal and it can be achieved through relentless effort and meticulous planning."

Oman Sail CEO Al Jabri said, "Winning this medal stands as a testament to the remarkable collective efforts of the Oman Sail team, underscoring years of experience and meticulous planning to earn international recognition. We take immense pride in the outstanding achievements by Musab Al Hadi and Waleed Al Kindi in this Olympic class. We eagerly anticipate further triumphs in upcoming championships and Olympic qualifiers. Our heartfelt gratitude extends to the entire technical and support team for their commitment, dedication, and collaborative spirit in securing this international honour for our beloved nation."

Hashim Al Rashdi, Head Coach at Oman Sail, said, "This accomplishment is the fruit of intense preparation and continuous training preceding the tournament, culminating in the team's unwavering focus and outstanding performance throughout the event."

Al Rashdi added, "This achievement adds to Oman's sports legacy and stands as a formidable addition to the records, marking the culmination of years of effort and rigorous training by our sailors. We take immense pride in their achievements on this continental stage".

Prior to the latest success, Oman had won only four medals including the historic gold in 1990 at the Beijing Asian Games.

The maiden medal for Oman was earned at the Seoul Asian Games in 1986 by legendary athlete Mohammed Amur Al Malki in the 400m event with a bronze. He bettered it with an Asian record and a gold four years later in Beijing.

The third medal was won by the 4x100 relay quartet at the 1998 Bangkok Asian Games who were initially fourth but were promoted to the podium after one of the podium finishers were disqualified.

And in 2010 at the Asian Games in Guangzhou, China, Al Harthi brought an Asian Games bronze in the blue riband 100m event.

The Asian Games are considered the largest sporting event on the Asian continent and the second largest global event after the Summer Olympics. More than 12,000 male and female athletes are currently competing in Hangzhou, representing 45 Asian countries in 40 sports.



This accomplishment is the fruit of intense preparation and continuous training preceding the tournament, culminating in the team's unwavering focus and outstanding performance throughout the event.



DIVERSIFICATION EFFORTS

Omani delegation inks several pacts with US firms

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Omani trade delegation signed several strategic partnerships with American companies for achieving sustainable economic development that is in line with the goals of “Oman Vision 2040” as part of economic diversification efforts.

An agreement was signed in the American city of Houston between Arkan Foundation and Step Company in the agricultural field.

The agreement aimed to enhance trade exchange and bilateral relations between the two countries, and also contribute to the possibility of improving access to diverse, high-quality agricultural products (products and



services related to agriculture and sustainability).

A partnership agreement was also signed in New York City between Asas Majan Development and Investment Company and American Molly Cobb Company to establish the first factory in

the Gulf Cooperation Council countries to manufacture grinding balls. The Omani Company for Creative Thinking, which specialises in providing services in the fields of communications and technology in New York City, signed a strategic partnership

agreement with the American company Netside, which is a leading global company in the field of value-added distribution to the communications network and digital infrastructure industry specialising in distribution, logistics services, technical engineering and design products.

Ibtisam bint Ahmed Al-Furuji, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Investment Promotion, confirmed that the visit comes as a continuation of the tireless efforts between the two friendly countries to discuss and follow up aspects of commercial and industrial cooperation and opportunities for investment partnerships in promising sec-

tors, noting that the opportunities are favourable for companies and investors in the two countries to increase the volume of investment, diversifying sources of import and export and facilitating the smooth movement of goods and products.

She added that the two sides continue to strive to harmonise common goals and directions in order to achieve partnership and integration, increase Omani-American investments, and benefit from the advantages and incentives in the two countries to create integration in the various investments directed in the targeted sectors.

Full story @ timesofoman.com/oman

S & P

FROM A1 Ratings raised

S&P also praised the remarkable progress made by the government towards enhancing the principle of transparency and data disclosure, including publishing periodic data on the gross domestic product and international investment status of the Sultanate of Oman.

The agency added that the measures taken by the government within the framework of regulating and governance of government companies are achieving tangible results in terms of operating efficiency and enhancing the financial performance of these companies.

During the past few days, Fitch Credit Rating Agency had also raised the credit rating of the Sultanate of Oman to ‘BB+’ with a stable future outlook. – With inputs from ONA

NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME

FROM A1 Tourism ministry working on jobs plan

He said that the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is working on a special programme for the labour market in the tourism sector in direct cooperation with the National Employment Programme, to achieve a number of goals related to the localisation of jobs, training, and creating professional

standards for jobs in the tourism sector, including an initiative for Omanis to assume the positions of general managers in four and five star hotels.

The Minister of Heritage and Tourism explained that growth in the tourism sector will be accompanied by responsibilities so that

there are no damages to the environment or to the culture of local communities due to the intensity of tourist traffic. The Ministry is working through a specialised sustainability programme that covers the economic, social and environmental aspects, in addition to adopting local content

policy whose primary aim is to benefit local communities from sustainable tourism.

The minister said that it is important to have specific policies to deal with the existing situation, since the world is going through a transitional phase with regard to the effects of climate change.

2023/2024 SEASON

Training for show jumping contests starts

BARKA: The first show jumping training competitions for this 2023/2024 season, organised and supervised by the Oman Equestrian Federation, were launched at the Olympic Arena in Al Rahba Farm in the Wilayat of Barka.

Eighty-three horses are participating in the training competitions, divided into five categories: 22 horses in the junior category with 70 cm height, 23 horses in the (F) category with 90 cm height, 25 horses in the (D1) category with 100 cm height, and 10 horses in the (D) category with 110 cm height, in addition to 3 horses in category (C).

The training competition witnessed the participation of a number of government and private stables, represented by the participation of the Royal Cavalry, the Royal Oman Police Cavalry Command, the Royal Guard of Oman Cavalry, Al Said Stables,



Al Rayyan Stables, Al Qurum Stables, Al Arabiya Stables, Al Sabqi Stables, the Olympic Equestrian Centre, and the Mojo Equestrian Center. Al Shamekh Equestrian School, Al Fares Equestrian School, Al Tamayoz Equestrian School, and Al Seeb Equestrian School.

Such training competitions come in preparation for the new season and to ensure that horses and riders are ready to compete in upcoming competitions and tournaments, as this season will witness a number of local and international tournaments. -ONA

HOLIDAY

‘Breaks necessary for rejuvenation’

FROM A1 “These long breaks are so good and necessary at times. They allow us to rejuvenate and get back to work with renewed focus and energy. Such long weekends are a welcome way to break the monotony of our hectic lives,” he said.

Elham Al Maqbali, a government employee, said: “I drove down to my hometown, Sohar, and had a relaxing time with my family at our parental farm. The moments spent with family and near dear ones are the best. It is a

challenge after three days of rest to prepare ourselves for work on Sunday. But, one thing is sure, we feel reinvigorated and the long weekend definitely puts us in a good mood.”

“We now look forward to having another long weekend when Oman celebrates the National Day on November 18. Hopefully, it will be another long weekend for us and with the weather getting cooler then, it would be ideal to have outdoor gatherings,” she added.



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TENDER NOTICE

Kempinski Hotel Muscat is pleased to invite you to become a business partner and share your tender proposal for food and non food items for the following categories:

Food & Beverages:

- F0001 - Seafoods & Other Crustaceans
- F0002 - Fish Local & Fish Imported
- F0003 - Meat - Beef Cuts
- F0004 - Lamb & Mutton Cuts
- F0006 - Dairy - Cheese
- F0007 - Dairy - Milk Fresh & UHT Milk
- F0008 - Cold Cuts & Other Breakfast Items
- F0011- Pastry Products (Chocolates, Arabic Sweets & Hot Mezze)
- F0012- Frozen Vegetables & Frozen Fruits & Others)
- G0001 - General Items

Tender Invitation and Tender form are available in the Purchasing Office ground floor next to the Receiving Area.

Tender Submission: Tender form shall be sealed in A4 size envelope (with details of quotations with company stamps endorsement on each page) must be submitted to Kempinski Hotel Muscat Finance department and address to: -

Purchasing Department:
Usman Al Dari - Purchasing Manager
T +96824985112 · M +968 90189649/+968 95135399
Email Add: usman.aldari@kempinski.com



Ministry of Social Development

Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender committee of Ministry of Social Development hereby announces the following tender :-

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of tender document	Last date for tender submission	Tender Document Price (non-retundable)	
					small and Medium companies	local companies
343/2023	Establishing a water therapy unit at the Al-Wafa Center for Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities in the Wilayat of Al-Buraimi	Companies specialized in the field of building contracting and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the first degree	Thursday 19-10-2023 02:00 PM	Thursday 9-11-2023 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O
347/2023	Supplying air conditioners to supply the Ministry's stores	Companies specialized in the field of supply services for electrical, mechanical, and industrial machinery and equipment and spare parts, registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the excellent, first, second, third, or fourth degree				

❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the Tender Board may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) , On Sunday 1/10/2023

❖ For Inquiry , please contact though the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (24402200)

" The lowest or any other tender shall not be binding to the Ministry"

GERMANY

Dozens injured by gas at local festival

LOWER SAXONY: Police said on Saturday that more than 50 people suffered coughing, vomiting and shortness of breath due to irritant gas at a local festival tent in a German town.

Dozens were treated on the site in the Hessisch Oldendorf town in the northwestern state of Lower Saxony while three were hospitalised. Several people apparently

threw so-called pepper balls on the ground, slowly releasing the gas into the air as they burst in a festival tent.

Police said they arrested two 20-year-old suspects as part of their investigation into the incident. The event, which started on Friday into the early hours of Saturday, was immediately evacuated by the police. — **dw**



‘Tourism Opens Minds’ initiative launched to change travel habits

Announced during the World Tourism Day celebrations in Riyadh, the initiative will showcase the powerful role that tourism plays in bridging cultures and promoting an interconnected and harmonious world

RIYADH: The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) has launched a new global initiative designed to unite and encourage nations, tourism sector leaders and consumers to be more open-minded when choosing a travel destination.

Announced during the World Tourism Day (WTD) celebrations in Riyadh, “Tourism Opens Minds” will showcase the powerful role that tourism plays in bridging cultures and promoting a more interconnected and harmonious world. To mark the launch, delegates gathered in Riyadh were presented with a special Pledge calling on them to actively work to promote new and under-appreciated destinations.



World Tourism Day 2023 was held as new data from UNWTO underscored the sector’s recovery from the impacts of the pandemic.

At the same time, however, research suggests that only a minority of tourists intend to seek out new or different destinations as they start travelling again. World Tourism Day (WTD) is commemorated each year on 27 September.

According to the UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, global tourism is on track to recover 80 per cent and 95 per cent international arrival numbers by the end of 2023.

Notably, however, a recent YouGov survey found that 66 per cent of tourists believe that travelling

to a place that provides familiarity is important. Just under half of respondents feel uncomfortable travelling to places they know little about.

This is despite the fact that, of those who do travel to new destinations, 83 per cent agree that they come back with a changed or broadened perspective.

The data shows the need for initiatives such as ‘Tourism Open Minds’ to encourage consumers to diversify their travel habits, with UNWTO uniting the global sector behind this aim.

The initiative also aims at allowing government officials, sector leaders and consumers help to mitigate the impacts of over-tourism, foster mutual understanding, conserve the environment and ensure equitable growth of the sector.

UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said, “To

ensure true global prosperity, we must work together to ensure that every country can harness the potential of a thriving tourism industry. The sector serves as a unifying force, fostering cultural understanding, strengthening bonds between societies, and championing environmental preservation.

“The ‘Tourism Opens Minds’ initiative extends a compelling invitation for travellers to broaden their horizons and explore the uncharted corners of our world. By doing so, it not only reveals the beauty of diverse destinations but also nurtures an appreciation for the cultures and people who call these places home.”

Ahmed Al-Khateeb, Minister of Tourism of Saudi Arabia, said, “Since embarking on our tourism journey, Saudi Arabia has been committed to enhancing the sector and generating an impact that extends beyond borders. Our contributions including pivotal partnerships such as the establishment of the UNWTO Middle East office in Riyadh, the creation of the Riyadh School for Travel and Hospitality and the hosting of record-breaking editions of the WTTC Global Forum and UNWTO World Tourism Day, underscore the immense potential of the sector when people from across the globe are united and connected.”

“The UNWTO ‘Tourism Opens Minds’ Initiative is another important milestone for the tourism sector, and its launch at World Tourism Day in Riyadh is a continuation of our many previous commitments to the global tourism sector,” he added. — **Agencies**

BURKINA FASO

Elections not a ‘priority’, says junta leader

OUAGADOUGOU Elections in Burkina Faso are not a “priority,” junta leader Ibrahim Traore said on Friday.

Traore had earlier promised a return to democracy with presidential elections by July 2024.

Hundreds of the leader’s supporters gathered in Ouagadougou on Friday — the first anniversary of the coup that brought the interim president to power. “It’s not a priority, I’ll tell you that clearly, it’s security that’s the priority,” Traore told reporters in comments broadcast on state television.

The military leader said he planned a “partial change” to Burkina Faso’s constitution. He said the current constitution reflects “the opinion of a handful of enlightened people” and not that of the “popular masses.”

Traore said security was improving and that the army had gained ground.

How did Traore come to power?

Traore seized power from a different military junta on September 30, 2022, which was Burkina Faso’s second coup in eight months.

After taking power, Traore said he would take “two to three months” to improve security in the country.

Attacks by al-Qaida and the “Islamic State” terrorist groups have displaced over 2 million people and killed thousands of people in Burkina Faso.

In early September, the country sustained some of its most substantial losses in months, with over 50 soldiers and volunteer fighters killed in clashes with Islamist militants. — **dw**

FORMERLY SWAZILAND



Eswatini, where king has absolute rule, votes for parliament

MBABANE: Citizens of Eswatini, formerly Swaziland, voted on Friday in parliamentary elections that are seen as largely undemocratic.

The landlocked country, nestled between South Africa and Mozambique, is Africa’s last absolute monarchy. King Mswati III has been in power since he inherited the crown from his father, Sobhuza II, in 1986.

Some 500,000 are eligible to vote but most opposition groupings have called for a boycott of the vote.

“It is a misnomer to call what is happening in Swaziland elections,” Sivumelwano Nyembe, spokesperson for Eswatini’s Multi-Stakeholder Forum, a pro-democracy activist group, said.

The king has the power to appoint the prime minister and cabinet, dissolve parliament and government, and command the police and army.

Political parties are banned from participating in the vote and candidates for parliament are selected by traditional chiefs, mostly loyal to the king.

Lawmakers are also not allowed to be affiliated with any political grouping.

Ultimately, parliament only serves an advisory role, and its acts need the king’s seal of approval to be implemented.

“Monarchy is not a political system but a traditional system,” Moses Dlamini, an adviser to the king, told French news agency AFP. “The system shall stay as it is.”

Not everyone in the tiny kingdom agrees with Dlamini’s assessment.

In 2021, pro-democracy protesters clashed with security forces in weeks of mass demonstrations.

“We live in a dictatorship. If one raises his voice, the police come knocking at his door at night and charge him for treason or something,” Thantaza Silolo, spokesperson for the largest opposition group, the Swaziland Liberation Movement, said.

On Friday, the situation was calm, but flare-ups of demonstrations by those frustrated with their country’s political system are not uncommon.

— **dw**

UNITED NATIONS

UN lacks credibility and to a large degree, effectiveness, says India’s EAM Jaishankar

WASHINGTON: Reiterating the need for reforms in the United Nations, India’s External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar on Friday said the world body lacks credibility and, to a large degree, effectiveness.

Without naming India, Jaishankar lamented that the fifth largest economy of the world is not in the United Nations Security Council.

Jaishankar made the remarks while participating in a discussion at Hudson Institute in Washington, DC.

On India being described as a reformist rather than as a revisionist power, he said, “It’s very clear today that we are serious about climate action. If you are looking to sustain, you know, to ensure that sustainable development goals are well-resourced, then somewhere we have to find the financial muscle for that. Now, for us too, it is the international financial institutions, the World Bank and the Fund which will be at the core of that effort.”

“So, a lot of what we are seeking to do is to improve and I would say refresh institutions, make them more fit for purpose. And that even applies to the United Nations. We do believe today that a United Nations where the most populous country is not in the Security Council, when the fifth largest economy is not there, when a continent of 50 plus countries is not there, that United Nations obviously lacks credibility and to a large degree effectiveness as well. So when we approach the world, it’s not with the sort of pull down the pillars kind of approach. It is very much what can we do to make it better, fitter, efficient, purposeful,” he added.

Earlier, addressing the 78th ses-



“It’s very clear today that we are serious about climate action. If you are looking to sustain, you know, to ensure that sustainable development goals are well-resourced, then somewhere we have to find the financial muscle for that. Now, for us too, it is the international financial institutions, the World Bank and the Fund which will be at the core of that effort

S Jaishankar
India’s External Affairs Minister

sion of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York City, Jaishankar called on the United Nations to ring in urgent reforms to stay relevant in the contemporary world, saying that the issue cannot remain “indefinite” and “unchallenged”.

Keeping up with his refrain from his address at the United Nations General Assembly, Jaishankar said, “In our deliberations, we often advocate the promotion of a rules-based order. From time to time, respect for the UN Charter is also involved. But for all the talk, it is still a few nations, which shape the agenda and seek to define the norms. This can’t go on indefinitely nor will it go unchallenged. A fair, equitable and democratic order will surely emerge once we all put our minds to it. And for a start, that means ensuring that

rule-makers do not subjugate rule-takers.”

Speaking on changing world architecture at the Hudson Institute in Washington, DC, Jaishankar said, “The world as we live it today is largely a Western construct. Now, if you looked at the world architecture there’s been obviously enormous change in the last 80 years... nothing illustrates it more than the G20 itself. So, the list of the G20 will tell you the easiest way of actually getting a sense of the changes in the world.”

“So, I make this very important distinction. Where India is concerned, India is non-Western. India is not anti-Western,” he added.

He said that a particular model of globalisation has evolved over the past 25 years but the world now is “badly in need of some form of reglobalisation.”

In his opening remarks at the Hudson Institute in Washington, DC, Jaishankar said, “If you put it together, I would suggest to you that the world is badly in need of some form of reglobalisation, that globalisation itself is undeniable. It has struck very deep roots.”

Safer world

“It has tremendous benefits. Nobody doubts that. But, the particular model of globalisation which has evolved over the last 25 years obviously has a lot of risks inherent in it. And today, how to address those risks and create a safer world is part of the challenge facing the Pacific order,” he added.

Jaishankar is currently in the last leg of his US visit. After concluding his New York visit, the EAM arrived in Washington, DC on September 28. — **ANI**

New York City brought to halt by heavy rainfall and floods

The unprecedented downpour saw parts of Brooklyn experience almost 7 inches of rain and nearly 8 inches at JFK Airport, breaking records set in 1960 by Hurricane Donna

NEW YORK: Severe rainfall battered New York City on Friday, causing widespread disruptions as subways and airports experienced significant issues while roads turned to waterways. The unprecedented downpour saw parts of Brooklyn experience almost 7 inches (18 centimeters) of rain and nearly 8 inches at JFK Airport, breaking records set in 1960 by Hurricane Donna. Social media images from New York City showed cars partially underwater and congested traffic, with several critical roads inundated by floods.

What is the latest? A flash flood warning had been announced for the city. However, as of 8:00 p.m. local time (0200 UTC), the city's weather services reported that the "magnitude of the rain has come down," while some areas were still under moderate to heavy rain. The US National Weather Service (NWS) later lifted its so-called Flood Watch alert for most areas in the city, meaning



residents were no longer urged to be prepared for flood-like conditions. "While additional rain is possible tonight, it should mainly be on the lighter side," said the NWS in New York City.

States of emergency declared Earlier, state of New York Governor Kathy Hochul and New York City Mayor Eric Adams declared a state of emergency and urged people to stay indoors if possible. The rains especially hit the boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens hard with significant flooding.

Emergency services asked people living in basement apartments or flood-prone areas to prepare to move to higher ground. In September 2021, Hurricane Ida caused widespread flooding, killing 13 and trapping several people in basement apartments. Although no deaths have been reported from this storm, the city remains on high alert.

Residents unhappy Some residents said they got no warning about the flooding from officials. "We are really, really suffering," Yasiel Ogando, a 38-year-old hospital worker, said. "Broken prom-

ises. Nothing gets done. It's really bad. It's terrible." Residents claim that neighborhood meetings with city officials aimed to make their area less prone to flooding have borne no results. The city recently implemented floodgates, set to close automatically if water clogs the streets. The gates were reportedly still down and blocking traffic on many roads.

What caused the heavy rainfall? The downpour is attributed to remnants of Tropical Storm Ophelia. The storm brought heavy downpours and unrelent-

ing winds last weekend to New York City and caused widespread power outages in nearby areas. Climate experts assert that climate change has led to more extreme weather patterns globally. As the Earth warms, the resulting hotter atmosphere retains more moisture, leading to increased frequencies of very heavy rainfall, according to their findings. "This changing weather pattern is the result of climate change. And the sad reality is our climate is changing faster than our infrastructure can respond," Rohit Aggarwala Overall, the city's Environmental Protection Commissioner, said. — DW

Man dies in Australia after whale flips fishing boat

SYDNEY: Authorities in the east coast of Australia said on Saturday one man was dead and another injured after a whale collided with their fishing boat. New South Wales (NSW) state police said the incident took place at around 6 a.m. local time (2000 GMT on Friday) in the waters off La Perouse, 14 kilometres (9 miles) southeast of Sydney. People aboard another vessel spotted a 4.8-metre (15.7 feet) unoccupied boat circling in the waters and notified the police, who pulled two men: a 61-year-old unconscious passenger and a 53-year-old skipper. Authorities said attempts to revive the first man failed and declared him dead on scene, while the skipper was taken to a hospital and was in a stable condition.

A 'tragic accident' Water Police Acting Superintendent Siobhan Munro said the skipper had been trying to save his companion, holding him "as close as he could." She described the collision as a "tragic accident," saying that the whale possibly breached near or even onto the boat. New South Wales Police Minister Yasmin Catley later confirmed a whale was involved in the incident. State Emergency Services Minister Jihad Dib spoke of "an absolute freak accident."

Whales in New South Wales Authorities did not name the exact type of whale involved in the incident, but the country's extensive coastline hosts some 30 species of whales. The New South Wales coastline sees humpback and southern right whales, which head north to warmer breeding grounds during the winter and return southward between September and November.

— DW

A COLLABORATIVE VENTURE



Churchill's Old War Office launched as luxury hotel

MUMBAI: The Hinduja Group, a 109 year old multinational has inaugurated The Old War Office (OWO) London's premier luxury hotel. Britain's World War II era Prime Minister Winston Churchill opened its doors as a brand-new luxury hotel in London with a glittering launch event, with surprise musical performances by musicians Lord Andrew Lloyd Webber and Andrea Bocelli. The historic Old War Office (OWO), a collaborative venture between the Hinduja Group and Raffles Hotels & Resorts was inaugurated in the heart of Whitehall. Princess Anne – the Princess Royal, the sister of King Charles III, officially unveiled the plaque for The OWO after a tour of the hotel with Hinduja Group chairman GP Hinduja. British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak also made a quick stopover, along with parliamentarians, entrepreneurs, hoteliers and stars of film and television. "We have always been working to see what best we can do between India and the UK because we believe our responsibility is to act as a bridge between the host country and the motherland," said GP Hinduja chairman Hinduja Group.

"It took us eight years and in these eight years we had a lot to do, but finally this iconic building has been converted into a symbol of peace and solace and not World Wars. The OWO will represent the legacy of the Hinduja Group and emerge as London's iconic destination. Everyone who lands in London will first come here to see what it is," said GP Hinduja. The launch event showcased the food of 3-Michelin-starred chef Mauro Colagreco as the chef partner for The OWO, the hotel will welcome its first guests starting this Friday, September 29th. Raffles London at The OWO, as it is officially known, has been developed in partnership between the Hinduja Group and French multinational hospitality group Accor. "When we came to Whitehall, the team were blown away by the size and beauty of this majestic building. No expense has been spared in bringing it back to its former glory and paying homage to its heritage, whilst breathing new life into it. Along with Raffles London at The OWO, we hope to create a legacy that is both timeless and unsurpassed," said Sanjay Hinduja, who has overseen the project.

The OWO's grand inauguration ceremony welcomed distinguished guests, including HRH Princess Beatrice, Sadiq Khan - The Mayor of London, Adil Ray-British Actor and Comedian, Natalie Pinkman - British Television Presenter, Richard Caring - British Businessman and Bollywood Actor Akshay Kumar and wife Twinkle Khanna. Other Notable figures from the Royal Family, world leaders, and celebrities also came together to witness the rebirth of this iconic building. The ceremony was nothing short of spectacular, with live entertainment by world-renowned music icons Andrea Bocelli and Lord Andrew Lloyd Webber. Guests were treated to an exquisite culinary experience with canapés prepared by the acclaimed 3-Michelin starred Chef Mauro Colagreco, who is also the chef partner for Raffles London at The OWO. The transformed OWO also houses 85 Residences by Raffles as part of the building's reimagining as a new culinary district for London, complete with nine new restaurants and three bars, including a rooftop with panoramic views of Buckingham Palace. — DW

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SPORTS

Second successive win for Oman in hockey at Asiad

Aikman's men rally to down Indonesia 4-2; sprinters Barakat Al Harthi and Ali Anwar Al Balushi bow out in 100m semifinal round on Saturday

Times News Service

MUSCAT: It was a bitter-sweet day for Oman at the ongoing 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou, China, on Saturday.

The men's national hockey team registered their second successive win at the Games when they defeated Indonesia 4-2 to raise their points tally to six in Pool B at the Gongshu Canal Sports Park Stadium.

Earlier on Thursday, Oman, coached by experienced Dutchman Siegfried Aikman, had beaten Thailand 5-3.

It was a strong comeback by Oman hockey side, who trailed 2-0 against Indonesia at one stage.

However, Oman bounced back to pump in three goals in the third quarter while Indonesia got one to make it 3-2 in favour of Oman going into the final quarter.

Both Indonesian goals came from penalty corners, with the first in 19th minute through Mochamad Fathur, and then in 34th minute when Fadli Muhamad.

Oman began their comeback through a brilliant field goal from Fahad Al Lawati in the 37th minute and drew parity with another stunner, this time off the stick of Aiman Madit.

The wave of attacks from Oman bore fruit when Al Lawati put his team ahead with another field goal in the 41st minute.

Oman finally found success in penalty corner conversion when Akram Bait struck the boards in the 48th minute. They then defended well to earn a morale-boosting win ahead of their final match against heavyweights South Korea on Monday.

China top the Pool B with one round to go with 12 points while Malaysia and South Korea have nine points each. China take on Malaysia on Monday with the winner of that game securing a spot in the semi-finals. Oman are fourth in the pool with six points while Indonesia and Thailand have yet to open their account.

The top two teams from both the pools will make it to the semi-finals.

Al Harthi, Al Balushi out of medal race

If the hockey team tasted success, the two Omani athletes in



100m competition, Barakat Al Harthi and Ali Anwar Al Balushi, bowed out of the event in the men's 100m semifinal stage at the Hangzhou Olympic Sports Centre Stadium.

Al Harthi, an Asian Games bronze medallist, clocked a disappointing 10.50sec in the semifinal to finish seventh among eight sprinters. China's Zhenye Xie (10.03) and Thailand's Puripol Boonson (10.06) qualified from semifinal No.2.

Al Harthi had earlier on Friday ran the round 1 heat in 10.52s to advance in the semifinal.

For the ace sprinter, the performance was disappointing as he has been running the distance around 10.25-10.35s in the build-up to the Asian Games.

The only Omani to have ever run a 100m below 10 seconds (9.97s), Al Harthi's exit in the semifinal of the 100m could possibly mean that this would be last Asian Games.

Al Balushi managed to record

a better timing in his semifinal 3 race with a time of 10.33 but that could only get him a seventh spot in the race. Iran's Hassan Taftian (10.13) and Thailand's Soraoat Dapbang (10.16) advanced to the finals from this race.

Earlier on Friday, running in the preliminary heat, Al Balushi ran the 100m in 10.47 to finish third in the race and advance to the semifinal.

For Oman, the only highlight so far has been the historic sil-

ver medal win of the sailing duo of Musab Al Hadi and Waleed Al Kindi.

The men and women shooters ended their campaign with a whimper while the two swimmers, Issa Al Adawi and Abdul Rahman Al Kulaibi also failed to go beyond the preliminary rounds. The two teams of beach spikers – Nauh Al Jalboobi and Mazin Al Hashimi and Ahmed Al Hosni and Haitham Al Shreiqi - did qualify for the round of 16 but

then their run ended in the opening stage of the knockouts.

On Sunday, two athletes – Mohammed Obaid Al Saadi and Rashid Al Aasmi – will take part in the first round heat of men's 200m.

Also on Sunday, one of the two lifters would be in action with the men's 67kg preliminary round where Oman's Elyas Al Busaidi will be in fray. The other lifter, Amur Al Khanjari, will compete in the 81kg event on Tuesday.

ASIAN GAMES SQUASH

India edge Pakistan in thrilling final

HANGZHOU: India beat arch-rivals Pakistan 2-1 in the final to win the gold medal at the Asian Games 2023 men's team squash event in Hangzhou, China, on Saturday.

In the final, Mahesh Mangaonkar lost the opener before Saurav Ghosal levelled the scores. Abhay Singh persevered in an enticing decider to win his team the top podium. India had lost 2-1 to Pakistan in the group stage earlier this week.

In the final, Mangaonkar struggled against Nasir Iqbal and went down 3-0 (11-8, 11-3, 11-2) in just 11 minutes. Saurav Ghosal then drew India level when he beat Muhammad Asim Khan 3-0 (11-5, 11-1, 11-3) and kept India in the hunt.

In the decider, Abhay Singh won the first game before losing the next two. The Indian squash player, however, dug deep to beat Noor Zaman 3-2 (11-7, 9-11, 8-11, 11-9, 12-10) to clinch the tie in India's favour. -ANI

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REAL ESTATE TRADING

The total value of real estate trading in the Sultanate of Oman rose by 15.8 percent to OMR1.80 billion at the end of August 2023 compared to OMR1.58 billion during the same period in 2022.

Muscat Stock Exchange index declines by 120 points in Sept

Shares on the MSX are expected to rise during the next two weeks with the end of the subscription for OQ Gas Networks

MUSCAT: The main index of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) declined in September by 120 points and closed at 4,678 points, affected by investors' desire to sell to provide liquidity to subscribe to OQ Gas Networks Company IPO. The company has offered 49 percent of its capital for public subscription, starting on September 26, for two categories of investors. Trading data for September issued by the Muscat Stock Exchange showed a decline in the prices of 61 securities, compared to 14 securities whose prices rose and 9 securities that stabilised at their previous levels. These declines affected the stock market indices, which all declined, and also affected the market value of the Muscat Stock Exchange. The market capitalisation of MSX declined to OMR23.50 billion at the end of September thereby recording losses at OMR346.1 million. However, shares are expected to rise during the next two weeks with



the end of the subscription for OQ Gas Networks and the announcement of the financial results of public joint stock companies for the third quarter of this year. At the level of sectoral indicators, the industrial sector index recorded the highest decline at 355 points, the financial sector index declined 181 points, the services sector index lost 33 points, and the Sharia index recorded a decline of 13 points. The trading value declined in September to OMR51.1 million compared to OMR63.6 million in August and OMR66.9 million in July. The number of transactions executed in September also decreased to 8,656 deals, compared to 11,347 deals in August and 10,914 deals in July. The total number of trading days in September was 19 compared to 23 trading days in August. Bank Muscat topped the most

traded companies in terms of trading value with OMR11.5 million, representing 22.5 percent of the total trading value. Omantel came next with transactions at about OMR9.8 million, while Al Nahda Services came in next with OMR6.5 million, representing 12.7 percent of the total trading value. Sembcorp Salalah shares recorded the best rise, rising by 11.4 percent and closing at 107 baisas, Al Batinah Development and Investment shares rose by 10 percent and closed at 99 baisas, and Tajeer Finance shares rose by 7.7 percent and closed at 97 baisas. Dhofar Food and Investment shares came at the top of the losing stocks, declining by about 32.9 percent and closing at 49 baisas, Al Suwadi Energy shares fell by 28 percent and closing at 18 baisas, and Raysut Cement shares fell to 117 baisas, recording a decline of 25 percent. -ONA

Omani stocks see risks with oil volatility in sight

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Omani stock market recorded limited price movements during a shorter trading week, stabilising to a certain extent after the constant losses of this month, according to an industry expert. "However, the market could be exposed to additional declines during the coming trading sessions if sentiment remains pessimistic and traders maintain their cautious stance," said Ahmed Negm Head of Market Research MENA at XS.com. "While the main index recorded a slight rebound compared to its lowest point last week, it failed to build a clear reversal from the current downward trend," he added. While the market's global performance was limited, its sectors witnessed mixed results. The services and financial sectors climbed, reversing part of the decline they recorded during the week before. The industrial sector however fell, extending losses from previous weeks. The services sector was a clear leader, recording a 2 percent increase, but continued its seesawing performance



increased by 2 percent during the week and dominated more than half of the trading volumes on the Omani stock market with Bank Muscat and Sohar International Bank. Market Sentiment could see an improvement over the coming month as traders' attention could remain direct toward OQ's initial public offering (IPO), said Ahmed Negm. The company has seen its listing operation attract strong interest from investors, resulting in its oversubscription. "The stock's trading debut later in October could help lift trading volumes and boost the market to a certain extent. The IPO could play a role in improving the performance of the stock market, which remained without a clear direction this year," he further added. Attention could also remain on oil markets which have been seeing significant volatility this week, with the Omani crude reaching a peak price of \$96 before retreating. "Crude prices could however continue to extend gains over the medium term and could push Omani stocks and help the stock market to stabilise and recover," said Ahmed Negm.

CBO

Credit granted by banks in Oman rises 5.3% to OMR20.2 billion

MUSCAT: An analysis of the activities of traditional commercial banks during July 2022-July 2023 indicates continued growth of credit in the Sultanate of Oman. The total balance of credit granted by banks recorded an increase of 5.3 percent reaching OMR20.2 billion at the end of July 2023. The report issued by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) further stated that the total investments of traditional commercial banks in securities witnessed a decline of 4.6 percent and reached about OMR4.4 billion at the end of July 2023. Investment in government development bonds (GDBs) recorded a decrease of 10.4 percent reaching OMR 1.9 billion at the end of July 2023 compared to the same period last year. Regarding investments in foreign securities, the CBO report said that such investments witnessed an increase of 89.5 percent reaching OMR1.2 billion Omani rials at the end of July 2023. On the other liabilities side, total



deposits with traditional commercial banks recorded an increase of 3.4 percent to reach OMR22.2 billion at the end of July 2023. Among the total deposits, government deposits with commercial banks recorded an increase of 7 percent reaching about OMR5.3 billion, while deposits of public sector institutions decreased by 9.7 percent reaching about OMR1.6 billion during the same period.

Private sector deposits recorded an increase of 4.2 percent to reach OMR14.9 billion in July 2023, constituting 67 percent of the total deposits with traditional commercial banks. -ONA

MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

India's core industries up 12.1% in August, all 8 sectors record growth

NEW DELHI: The output of India's eight core sector industries increased by 12.1 per cent (provisional) on a yearly basis in August 2023. The production of all eight core industries - cement, coal, crude oil, electricity, fertilisers, natural gas, refinery products and steel - recorded positive growth in August over the corresponding month of last year, according to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. Cement production, which has a weightage of 5.37 per cent, increased by 18.9 per cent in August, and coal having 10.33 per cent, increased by 17.9 per cent in August. Crude Oil production (weightage: 8.98 per cent) increased by 2.1 per cent in August 2023 over August 2022. Electricity generation (weightage: 19.85 per cent) increased by 14.9 per cent in August 2023 over August 2022. Fertiliser, natural gas, petroleum refinery products, and steel increased by 1.8 per cent, 10 per

The production of all eight core industries - cement, coal, crude oil, electricity, fertilisers, natural gas, refinery products and steel - recorded positive growth in August over the corresponding month of last year

cent, 9.5 per cent, and 10.9 per cent, respectively. The cumulative growth rate of the Index of Eight Core Industries from April to August 2023-24 is 7.7 per cent (provisional) as compared to the corresponding period of last year. -ANI

CATEGORY 1 OFFER



OQ Gas Networks IPO update

Times News Service

MUSCAT: OQ Gas Networks (OQGN) confirms that the Category 1 offer, representing 40 percent of the IPO size and reserved for institutional investors, has been covered multiple times at the maximum price of 140bz as of close of business on the first day of the book building process. OQGN holds a natural monopoly over critical gas transportation infrastructure in Oman as the exclusive owner and operator of the NGTN.

FOSTERING COLLABORATIONS

Fisheries Development Oman participates in Russia's Global Fishery Forum & Seafood Expo

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Fisheries Development Oman (FDO) participated in the sixth Global Fishery Forum & Seafood Expo from September 27 to 29 in St. Petersburg, Russia, as part of its commitment to sustainable growth and global expansion. The Expo featured over 400 companies from 34 Russian regions and 14 countries, sprawling over 26,000 square metres of exhibition space. With 139 speakers on the roster, the event promises a convergence of industry leaders, traders, and retailers. Badar Said Al Naabi, Group Director - Business Development, remarked, "As a key player in Oman's fisheries and aquaculture sector, FDO's involvement under-



scores Oman's position as a large fish producer in the GCC region, in addition to its role as a net exporter of fish and fish products. To elevate this position, Oman is working to expand its seafood exports and access new markets. This involves complying with

market requirements and best practices, focusing on food safety, and sustainability, and maintaining an environmentally friendly approach. In addition, the Sultanate of Oman offers attractive business incentives and ensures a clear

business environment, alongside continuous improvements in fisheries infrastructure and regulation of the value chain." On the event, added, "Our presence at the Global Fishery Forum & Seafood Expo Russia comes at a pivotal moment. Russian traders have a discernible and growing interest in the diverse range of products our subsidiary companies offer. This event provides a platform to engage with these traders and solidify FDO's reputation in Russian and global markets. We aim to foster collaborations, secure meaningful deals and attract investments in the fisheries and aquaculture industry. With fisheries being a cornerstone of Oman's economy, this event echoes our national vision of amplifying this

vital industry on a global stage." FDO functions as an Investment and Development holding company. Its subsidiaries play a vital role in operations, reflecting FDO's focus on development and industry participation. In line with its 2023-2026 vision, FDO has made progress in infrastructure, diversified its investments, and sought better returns. One of its recent initiatives includes the launch of 'Acila', a fishing vessel emphasising sustainability. FDO aims to support Oman's economic growth by investing in local and international fisheries and aquaculture sectors. Their efforts align with the broader objectives of sustainable development and economic diversification, as highlighted in Oman Vision 2040.

MARKET

Real estate trading value in Oman rises to OMR1.80 billion

The value of traded mortgage contracts increased by 39.5 percent to reach OMR1.11 billion for 16,034, while the number of swap contracts reached 954 with a value of OMR7.6 million

MUSCAT: The total value of real estate trading in the Sultanate of Oman rose by 15.8 percent to OMR1.80 billion at the end of August 2023 compared to OMR1.58 billion during the same period in 2022.

Preliminary statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) indicated that the fees collected for all legal transactions amounted to OMR43.6 million, an increase of 8.3 percent while the traded value of sales contracts amounted



to OMR707.80 million for 44,000 sales contracts.

The value of traded mortgage contracts increased by 39.5 percent to OMR1.11 billion for 16,034, while the number of swap contracts reached 954 contracts with a value of OMR7.6 million.

The number of properties issued by the end of August 2023 reached about 157,659, an increase of 2.3 percent, while the number of properties issued to members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) reached 877 properties, an increase of 76.8 percent. -ONA

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EVENT

Singapore to host 8th annual TiE Global Summit 2023

MUMBAI: The TiE Global Summit (TGS) 2023, the flagship event of TiE Global, is set to bring together visionaries, industry leaders, investors, and entrepreneurs from across the globe.

This is the 8th annual edition of the event. This premier entrepreneurial event is scheduled to take place from 15 – 17 November 2023 at Singapore Expo and Marina Bay Sands hotel. The event has partnered with Singapore Fintech Festival to enable attendees to seamlessly move between the world's largest entrepreneurship event and the world's most impactful fintech festival.

Purpose-led entrepreneurship

Renowned for fostering innovation, collaboration, and knowledge sharing among aspiring and established entrepreneurs, the theme for TGS 2023 is #GoodForTheWorld, highlighting how entrepreneurship can offer solutions to some of the biggest challenges faced by mankind today. This year's tracks will focus on areas such as ESG, AI, DeepTech, ClimateTech, FoodTech, AgriTech, BioTech and purpose-led entrepreneurship.

TGS 2023 has also partnered with Singapore Fintech Festival (SFF), enabling attendees to seamlessly move between both events. SFF 2022 saw 62,000 participants from 134 countries who came together to synergise, engage and collaborate on the development of

financial services, public policy and technology. SFF 2023 will focus on the growth and adoption of technologies like AI and Web3 and how these technologies can potentially be used in financial services.

TiE Global Summit 2023 already boasts a line-up of global industry pioneers including Vinod Khosla, Founder, Khosla Ventures & Co-Founder, Sun Microsystems, Dr. Krishna M. Ella, Founder & Chairman, Bharat Biotech (manufacturers of Covaxin), Dr. Jaleh Daie, Partner, Aurora Equity, Ajay Piramal, Chairman Piramal Group, Hari Krishnan, Group CEO, Propertyguru, Chatri Sityodtong CEO & Founder, ONE among others. Past TiE events have been supported by icons of the global entrepreneur ecosystem including Bill Gates, Elon Musk, Ratan Tata, Larry Page, Anand Mahindra, Arianna Huffington, Satya Nadella to name a few.

Key highlights of TiE Global Summit 2023:

1. TiE Women Global Pitch Competition: Finals of TiE's largest running global investment support program for women led ventures from 62 countries will culminate at TGS 2023.
2. Startup show: Episodic show bringing the most promising startups and the biggest judges, investors and ecosystem players together for covering a myriad of Innovation themes across Singapore and SEA
3. TiE-KPMG SEA Entrepreneur of the Year Awards: The TiE x KPMG SEA Entrepreneur of the Year Awards are a recognition of entrepreneurs by entrepreneurs, who are the top business leaders from the Southeast Asia region.
4. TiE Golf Tournament: Global Charter Members of TiE in a golf tournament with the local corporate, entrepreneur and investor ecosystem.

Singapore continues to stand out as the top choice for startups and venture capitalists, boasting a thriving ecosystem with nearly 4,800 tech startups, 252 incubators and accelerators, 529 investors, and 700 family offices. According to the Global Startup Ecosystem Report (GSER) 2023, Singapore's startup ecosystem has made remarkable progress, advancing ten places to #8 in the global startup ranking compared to its position at #18 in GSER 2022.

Amit Gupta, President, TiE Singapore & Member, Global Board of Trustees, TiE, said, "TiE Global Summit 2023, is a movement that goes beyond an event, and promises to be an exceptional gathering of entrepreneurial minds from around the world. Singapore provides the perfect ecosystem of innovation, collaboration and the limitless possibilities of entrepreneurship and we invite you to join us in shaping the future of business. This summit is where inspiration meets action, where ideas are transformed into ventures, and where connections turn into lasting partnerships." -ANI

EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK



Euro zone money supply shrinks as ECB turns off taps

FRANKFURT: The amount of money circulating in the euro zone shrank by the most on record last month as banks curbed lending and depositors locked up their savings, two tangible effects of the European Central Bank's fight against inflation.

Faced with the highest inflation rates in its nearly 25-year history, the ECB has turned off the money taps by jacking up interest rates to record highs and withdrawing some of the liquidity it pumped into the banking system over the previous decade, Reuters reported.

The ECB's latest lending data on Wednesday showed this sharp increase in borrowing costs was having the desired effect and may fuel a debate over whether such a brisk tightening cycle may even push the 20-country euro zone into a recession.

A measure of money supply comprising just cash and current account balances shrank by an unprecedented 11.9 per cent in August as bank customers switched to term deposits now offering much better returns as a result of the ECB's rate hikes.

The ECB's own research shows that a drop in this gauge of money, once it is adjusted for inflation, is a reliable harbinger of recession, although board member Isabel Schnabel said last week it was more likely to reflect a normalisation in savers' portfolios at this juncture.

A broader measure of money that also includes term deposits and short-term bank debt also declined by a record-breaking 1.3 per cent, showing some money was leaving the banking sector altogether - likely to be parked in government bonds and funds.

"This paints a bleak picture for the euro zone's near-term prospects," Daniel Kral, an economist at Oxford Economics, said. -BNA

NEW FUNDING

ADB capital management reforms unlock \$100 billion

MANILA: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) approved capital management reforms that unlock \$100 billion in new funding capacity over the next decade to address the region's overlapping crises.

The expansion of available funds will be further leveraged through mobilising private and domestic capital to move from the billions to trillions required to tackle the climate crisis.

The reforms were introduced through an update of ADB's Capital Adequacy Framework (CAF). They expand the bank's annual new commitments capacity to more than \$36 billion—an increase of approximately \$10 billion, or about 40 percent.

The expansion is achieved by optimising ADB's prudential level of capitalisation while maintaining its overall risk appetite. The reforms also create a Countercyclical Lending Buffer to support ADB developing member countries (DMCs) facing unexpected crises.

The measures, which will enable ADB to provide up to \$360 billion of its own financing to its DMCs and private-sector clients over the next decade, are designed to ensure ADB maintains its AAA credit rating and its ability to provide DMCs with funding at low cost and with long maturities. -WAM

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UNCTAD

Decarbonising the world's fleet by 2050 could require up to \$28 billion annually

GENEVA: The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has called for a "just and equitable transition" to a decarbonised shipping industry in its Review of Maritime Transport 2023 launched ahead of World Maritime Day (28 September).

The agency highlights the pressing need for cleaner fuels, digital solutions and an equitable transition to combat continued carbon emissions and regulatory uncertainty in the shipping industry.

The shipping industry accounts for over 80 per cent of the world's trade volume and nearly 3 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions, with emissions escalating by 20 per cent in just a decade.

UNCTAD Secretary-General Rebeca Grynspan said, "Maritime transport needs to decarbonise as soon as possible, while ensuring economic growth. Balancing environmental sustainability, regulatory compliance and economic demands is vital for a prosperous, equitable and resilient future for maritime transport."

UNCTAD, ahead of the United Nations climate conference (COP28) in November of this year in the UAE, advocates for a shift towards cleaner fuels in shipping, emphasising the need for an environmentally effective, procedurally fair, socially just, technologically inclusive and globally equitable transition strategy. The organisation underscores the im-

portance of system-wide collaboration, swift regulatory interventions, and robust investments in green technologies and fleets.

While the transition to cleaner fuels is in its early stages, with nearly 99 per cent of the global fleet still reliant on conventional fuels, the report cites promising developments, including 21 per cent of vessels on order designed for alternative fuels.

However, the transition comes with substantial costs. UNCTAD reports that an additional \$8 billion to \$28 billion will be required annually to decarbonise ships by 2050, and even more substantial investments, ranging from \$28 billion to \$90 billion annually, will be needed to develop infrastructure

contributions paid in relation to shipping emissions may incentivize action, can promote the competitiveness of alternative fuels and narrow the cost gap with conventional heavy fuels. These funds could also facilitate investments in ports in SIDS and LDCs, focusing on climate change adaptation, trade and transport reforms, as well as digital connectivity."

Despite a 0.4 per cent contraction in total maritime trade volumes in 2022, the industry anticipates a 2.4 per cent growth in 2023, with containerised trade (which declined by 3.7 per cent in 2022) expected to expand by 1.2 per cent in 2023 and more than 3 per cent between 2024 and 2028.

Oil and gas trade volumes showed robust growth in 2022, while tanker freight rates saw a strong revival driven by geopolitical events. Dry bulk rates experienced volatility due to shifting demand, port congestion, geopolitical tensions and weather disruptions.

In conclusion, UNCTAD's call for a just and equitable transition to a low- and zero-carbon future in global shipping serves as a call for system-wide commitment and regulatory action to combat the escalating environmental challenges faced by the maritime sector. Bold and timely action and collaborative efforts are essential to ensure a sustainable, resilient and prosperous future for maritime transport. -WAM



INCREASING DAILY STEPS BY

WASHINGTON: A new study discovered that increasing exercise by 3,000 steps per day can significantly reduce high blood pressure in older persons.

Pescatello worked in Duck-Chun Lee's lab at Iowa State University with Elizabeth Lefferts, the paper's primary author, and others.

The findings were published in the Journal of Cardiovascular Development and Disease.

"We'll all get high blood pressure if we live long enough, at least in this country," Pescatello said. "That's how prevalent it is."

Pescatello is an expert on hypertension (the clinical term for high blood pressure) and exercise. Her previous research has demonstrated that exercise can have a significant immediate and long-lasting impact on lowering blood pressure in hypertensive adults.

This study sought to determine if older adults with hypertension could receive these benefits by moderately increasing their daily walking, which is one of the easiest and most popular forms of physical activity for this population.

"It's easy to do, they don't need any equipment, they can do it anywhere at almost any time," Lee said.

The study focused on a group of sedentary older adults between ages 68 and 78 who walked an average of about 4,000 steps per day before the study.

After consulting existing studies, Lee determined that 3,000 steps would be a reasonable goal. This would also put most participants at 7,000 daily steps, in line with the American College of Sports Medicine's recommendation.

"3,000 steps is large enough but not too challenging to achieve for health benefits," Lee said.

The team conducted the study during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, which meant they had to do everything remotely.

The researchers sent participants a kit with pedometers, blood pressure monitors, and step diaries for participants to log how much they were walking each day.

On average, participants' systolic and diastolic blood pressure decreased by an average of seven and four points, respectively, after the intervention.

"It's exciting that a simple lifestyle intervention can be just as effective as structured exercise and some medications," Lefferts said.

The findings suggest that the 7,000-step regimen the participants in the study achieved is on-par with reductions seen with anti-hypertensive medications. Eight of the 21 participants were already on anti-hypertensive medications. Those participants still saw improvements in systolic blood pressure from increasing their daily activity.

"In a previous study, we found that when exercise is combined with medication, exercise bolsters the effects of blood pressure medication alone," Pescatello said. "It just speaks to the value of exercise as anti-hypertensive therapy. It's not to negate the effects of medication at all, but it's part of the treatment arsenal."

The researchers found that walking speed and walking in continuous bouts did not matter as much as simply increasing total steps.

"We saw that the volume of physical activity is what's really important here, not the intensity," Pescatello said.

"Using the volume as a target, whatever fits in and whatever works convey health benefits." -ANI

CAN REDUCE BLOOD PRESSURE

IN OLDER PERSONS





Times

OF OMAN



SUNDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2023

B6

Omantel

LEAGUE

Football 2023-24



16

GOALS SCORED
(SIXTH ROUND)

.....

4-0

BIGGEST WIN MARGIN
(SIXTH ROUND)



SEEB CLIMB TO TOP, OMAN CLOSE BEHIND

Former champions Seeb drub Al Wahda in the latest round of Omantel League while three consecutive wins for Oman Club catapult them to second spot



Times News Service

MUSCAT: Former champions Seeb toppled Sohar at the top of the table in the ongoing 2023-24 Omantel Football League in style as they thrashed Al Wahda 4-0 in the sixth round games played last week.

The win helped Seeb reach the top with a game in hand while Sohar, which dominated the early rounds as leaders, suffered a 2-1 defeat at the hands of defending champions Al Nahda.

Oman climbed to second spot with a narrow 1-0 win over Salalah heavyweights Al Nasr.

Following the conclusion of the latest round of matches played over the weekend, Seeb lead the table with 13 points after five matches while Oman have 12 points from six games.

Sohar slipped to third spot with 11 points after six matches while holders Al Nahda are at fourth spot with 11 points but lag behind on goal-difference. However, Nahda have also a game in hand.

Sur, which won 2-0 against Bahla, are fifth on the standings with nine points from five matches while Al Shabab, which stunned record title-holders Dhofar 2-1 in the latest round, have climbed to sixth place with eight points from six matches.

Dhofar, the 11-time champions moved below their victors with seven points from six games while Al Rustaq, which won 2-1 against Ibri, have six points from six rounds.

Al Nasr are in the bottom-four bracket along with Bahla, Al Wahda and Ibri. Both Al Nasr and Ibri have played five matches so far.

Seeb in rampaging form
At the Sur Sports Complex, Seeb demolished Al Wahda in their away game.
Coached by Jorvan Vieira of Bra-

ROUND SIX RESULTS

Seeb-4 Al Wahda-0

Al Nahda-2 Sohar-1

Al Rustaq-2 Ibri-1

Oman-1 Al Nasr-0

Sur-2 Bahla-0

Al Shabab-2 Dhofar-1

zil, Seeb made their intentions clear as a title contenders with the latest victory. Jackson Besan, their foreign recruit, got the breakthrough at the half hour mark as Seeb went into break with a 1-0 lead.

Besan got his and the team's second goal, nodding in a powerful header off a cross from Zaher Al Aghbari soon after the break. Al Aghbari took the match beyond the rivals with a goal in the dying minutes of the match and experienced Mohsin Al Ghassani rounded off the emphatic victory in the injury time of the match.

At the Ibri Sports Complex, Al Rustaq recorded their maiden win of the season with a 2-1 result against the hosts. Goals from Robert in the 47th minute and Yaseen Al Shiyadi in the 55th minute powered Rustaq to victory, while Ibri managed a consolation goal through Faisal Al Aghbari in the 97th minute.

First defeat for Sohar
Early leaders Sohar suffered their first defeat of the season when hosts Al Nahda pulled off a thrilling 2-1 win over Sohar at the Al Buraimi Sports Complex.

Hamood Al Saadi got the opening goal for Al Nahda at the stroke of half-time and Issam Al Subhi made it 2-0 soon after the resumption.

Ali Al Balushi reduced the margin in the injury time of the second half for Sohar.



OMANTEL LEAGUE TABLE- WEEK 6

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	PTS
Seeb	5	4	1	0	11	2	13
Oman	6	4	0	2	5	6	12
Sohar	6	3	2	1	12	5	11
Al Nahda	5	3	2	0	10	5	11
Sur	5	2	3	0	8	5	9
Al Shabab	6	2	2	2	6	6	8
Dhofar	6	2	1	3	7	8	7
Al Rustaq	6	1	3	2	6	8	6
Al Nasr	6	1	2	3	3	5	5
Bahla	6	1	1	4	2	6	4
Al Wahda	6	1	1	4	5	15	4
Ibri	5	1	0	4	3	7	3

P: Played, W: Win, D: Draw, L: Loss, GF: Goals for, GA: Goals against, PTS: Points

Hat-trick of wins
Oman Club are in imperious form this season as they scored their third successive and fourth overall win of the season when they edged past Al Nasr 1-0 at Seeb Stadium on Thursday.

Hosni Mubarak scored the decisive goal just before half-time for Oman, who are now just a point behind leaders Seeb with 12 points.

Elsewhere, Sur, under new coach Abdul Hameed al Wuraimi

from Tunisia, defeated Bahla 2-0 at the Sur Sports Complex.

Mohammed Nasser found the opening goal in the 14th minute and Ahed al Hudaifi doubled the lead for his team in the 63rd minute.

For Bahla, it was their third successive defeat after they made a solid start with a win over fancied Al Nasr in their season opener.

The seventh week of Omantel League will resume on October 10.

Eastern European countries push for ban on grain imports

Poland, Slovakia and Hungary oppose the EU’s lifting of trade restrictions on Ukrainian grain. It’s all about domestic politics

SEVERE WARSAW: The eastern member states of the European Union — with the exception of Hungary — have until now been the union’s most consistent supporters of Ukraine since it was invaded by Russia in February 2022. Now, however, not only are cracks appearing in this wall of solidarity, there is even considerable ill-feeling between Ukraine and several of its neighbours in Central and Eastern Europe.

The reason for the dispute is the fact the EU lifted its temporary trade restrictions on Ukrainian grain and oilseeds last Friday.

Poland, Slovakia and Hungary are opposed to the move and want to keep import restrictions in place although this would mean violating EU law. Ukraine has responded by filing a complaint with the World Trade Organisation.

Ukraine is one of the world’s largest producers of grain and oilseeds. Until recently, most of its exports were shipped to regions outside the EU.

However, Russia’s blockade of the Black Sea ports means that Ukraine is now cut off from its traditional export routes and is forced to rely on other paths such as the overland transit routes through



Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania.

Problems have repeatedly arisen, above all in Poland, where instead of transiting through the country to other markets, some of the grain landed on the Polish market — pushing down prices or taking up storage capacity.

After several farmers’ protests, both Poland and Hungary imposed import restrictions on Ukrainian grain in mid-April and forced the EU to impose a temporary import ban for the entire union.

This ban remained in place until it expired on September 15. The EU sees its decision not to renew the ban as a gesture of solidarity with Ukraine. In the eastern member states of the EU, however, the issue has long assumed a very different importance: It is now a matter of domestic policy and the subject of a power struggle with Brussels.

For Poland’s ruling Law and Justice (PiS) party, this is about

maintaining its grip on power.

In an election many observers consider pivotal, Poles will elect a new parliament on October 15. Farmers played an important role in PiS’s two previous election victories, in 2015 and 2019.

But Jaroslaw Kaczynski’s party got a rude awakening last spring when furious farmers across the country took to the streets to protest the government’s agricultural policy and oppose the transit of Ukrainian grain across Polish territory. Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki responded by sacking his agriculture minister and persuading the European Commission to impose the embargo that expired last Friday.

With the election just around the corner, Morawiecki has no intention of risking further protests that could damage his party’s election prospects, which is why Poland swiftly implemented its unilateral import ban.

The government is toeing the

line drawn by party leader Kaczynski last week when he said: “We are ready to support Ukraine during the war and during its reconstruction and we want to take part in the reconstruction but at the same time, we must remember our citizens, our agriculture and our countryside. Our Ukrainian friends should understand that.”

Nevertheless, there is still hope for a compromise: The Polish embargo relates to imports, but not the transit of Ukrainian grain.

In Slovakia, too, the upcoming parliamentary election on September 30 looms large over the grain dispute. As in neighboring Poland, this election is seen as pivotal.

After three-and-a-half chaotic years of a pro-Western, pro-reform coalition government, Slovakia could see the return of former PM Robert Fico. Nominally a social democrat, Fico is in practice a right-wing nationalist with close links to Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban. He has made

repeated anti-Ukrainian, pro-Russian statements and has promised to halt Slovakia’s military support for Ukraine. It is likely this played a role in the caretaker government’s decision to maintain its import restrictions on Ukrainian grain. Although Ludovit Odor’s pro-Western interim government has few real powers, it obviously wants to avoid driving more voters into Fico’s arms by permitting the unrestricted import of Ukrainian grain.

A “serious fight”

Hungary’s PM Viktor Orban had predicted a “serious fight” between the EU’s eastern member states and Brussels before the EU had even decided to lift the import restrictions on Ukrainian grain.

He accused the EU of representing American and not European interests, saying that Ukrainian grain is actually “a commercial product originating from a territory, which, possibly, has long been in the US’s hands.”

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban delivers the keynote speech at the opening session of the Hungary Conservative Political Action Conference, Budapest, Hungary

While Orban is targeting first and foremost his domestic supporters with such crude statements, it is likely that Hungary’s decision to maintain the import ban on Ukrainian grain is also an attempt to win over his former partners for an anti-Brussels alliance.

With his pro-Putin, anti-Ukraine stance, Orban has fallen out not only with the Czech Republic and Slovakia, but also with Poland over the past 18 months and is largely isolated in the region in terms of its foreign policy.

Unlike the three above-mentioned countries, Romania is sitting on the fence in the dispute about Ukrainian grain imports:

It wants to extend the import ban on Ukrainian grain, but initially only for 30 days. Romanian Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu said on Monday that his country had set Ukraine a deadline to present a plan that will protect Romanian farmers against uncontrolled grain exports from Ukraine. In addition to the Ukrainian action plan, the Romanian government wants to decide on suitable measures to protect its farmers.

Parliamentary and presidential elections are scheduled for late 2024 in Romania, which means that the issue of Ukrainian grain is not currently as pressing as it is in Poland and Slovakia.

However, the extreme right-wing nationalist Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR) party is gaining ground. AUR has a pro-Russian stance, and one of its policies is the unification of all Romanians in one state, including those in the northern Bukovina region, which is part of Ukraine.

In Bulgaria, the question of Ukrainian grain has the potential to cause major domestic divisions.

Bulgaria was the only eastern member state of the EU to lift import restrictions on Ukrainian grain last week. Bulgarian farmers are now protesting the pro-Western government’s decision across the country.

The protests are being fuelled by a pro-Russian disinformation campaign and rumors on social media that Ukrainian food is contaminated and poses a threat to people’s health.

Bulgaria has just held its fifth parliamentary election in 24 months and currently has a stable ruling majority for the first time in several years. It remains to be seen whether the protests will pose a threat to this stability.

For its part, the European Commission in Brussels has decided to watch and wait. — DW

VOLATILE SITUATION

Peace agreement fails to resolve Ethiopia tensions

ADDIS ABABA: The situation in Ethiopia is becoming increasingly volatile. That’s according to Yared Hailemariam, the director of the Ethiopian Human Rights Defenders Centre, when asked to assess the situation on the ground. The northern Amhara Region is considered particularly volatile.

“Most of us expected that the peace agreement (in early November 2022) would resolve the political tensions and conflict in ‘Tigray,’ Hailemariam told DW from Brussels. He believes the Ethiopian government under Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed made mistakes during the negotiation.

“The Pretoria agreement invites a new conflict in the Amhara region because from the very beginning the Amhara armed group — particularly the Fano and Amhara elites — were demanding their participation and for this engagement during the Pretoria peace negotiations,” Hailemariam further explains. “But the negotiations were only between the TPLF (Tigray People’s Liberation Front) and the Ethiopian government, and excluded other parties to the conflict who were actively involved in the two-year war.”

According to Hailemariam, one of the clauses in the peace agreement states that the TPLF special forces and Tigray forces must completely disarm. However, this clause was not fully followed through. This triggered the most recent conflict in the neighboring Amhara region.

Fighting for people’s liberation

The ethno-nationalist Amhara youth militia, Fano — also based in the Amhara region — has announced that it has not been defeated in its battle with the Ethiopian National Defense Force.

A spokesperson for Fano, who wishes to remain anonymous, told DW that his group wants to overthrow Abiy’s government



through an armed struggle and ultimately hand over power to the Ethiopian people.

“When justice is violated in Amhara society, when freedom is trampled on, Fano fights for the liberation of the people and the country,” he said.

He added that Abiy runs a “fascist regime” which has “spread corruption and ethnic extremism throughout the country.” The Amhara people have called on the government to engage in a dialogue towards peace.

Smoldering conflict in Amhara

For months now, there has been ongoing unrest in Amhara, which borders Tigray to the south. The initial violence was triggered back in April by an announcement from the federal government in Addis Ababa that it would disband the states’ regional armies, which effectively represent Ethiopia’s various ethnic groups.

Amhara nationalists viewed the announcement as a threat and a sign of the government’s potential vulnerability in border disputes with Tigray.

They took up arms and Abiy eventually declared a state of emergency in August in response.

Hailemariam says the government has since failed to open the door to talks and negotiations, leaving crushing the Amhara group by force as the only remaining option. However, he added, the resistance of the Amhara group was greater than the government expected.

‘Genocide in Ethiopia’

Yirga Gelaw Woldeyes, a lecturer and researcher at the Center for Human Rights Education at Curtin University in Western Australia, goes one step further: “I believe there is a genocide happening in Ethiopia and the world is not talking about it,” he told DW.

Most of the violence is taking place in Amhara itself, he adds, where the six-month state of emergency is currently still in effect.

“The government has shut down all internet access to the area and we are hearing stories about extrajudicial killings, the use of drones, and attacks on innocent civilians,” Woldeyes explained.

In a statement released last Friday, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission said it had received information from witnesses, residents and victims’ families of “extra-judicial killings committed by government security forces in various parts of the region” which it described as “very concerning.”

The state-backed but independent agency said “many civilians” had been killed and injured and property destroyed in the fighting in cities, towns and some rural villages across Amhara.

It also said there had been widespread “arbitrary arrests,” not only in Amhara but the neighboring region of Oromia and the capital Addis Ababa.

— DW

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ROUND-UP

MCBS introduces ‘We Are Oman’ series to enhance sense of identity



The programme is designed for higher education students with the aim of providing future skills and entrepreneurship to keep pace with scientific and technical development

MUSCAT: At Modern College of Business and Science (MCBS) in alignment with the efforts to support Oman Vision 2040 goals, the national educational programme “We are Oman” was launched by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research & Innovation.

The programme is designed for higher education students with the aim of providing future skills and entrepreneurship to keep pace with scientific and technical development. In addition, it aspires to boost Omani identity and pride in national achievements, and fos-

ter responsible, and positive citizenship to help instil values like culture, science, learning, citizenship, and identity preservation in the Omani youth.

As part of the Modern College of Business and Science’s vision, and in line with the nation’s aspirations, the college continues to be a leading institution in the region by facilitating learning, skills, innovation, and technology to better serve society in the 21st century. From this standpoint, the Department of General Education at MCBS organised the first of a series of events under the name of, “Omani History: A Tool to Understand the Past, and Plan for The Future.

A lecture was presented by Khamis Rashid Al Adawi, an Omani scholar, researcher, and writer. Al Adawi presented on the MCBS

campus, with members of the faculty, staff, and students among the attendees, many of whom posed interesting questions that demonstrated their interest in the subject. The lecture sought to enhance the principle of identity and belonging among students by examining Omani history, which includes many values that new generations can benefit from and which can contribute to solving many of the problems of contemporary life.

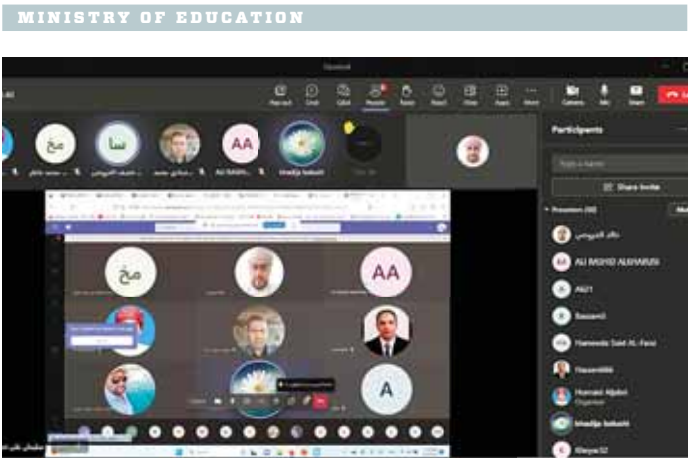
Dr Moosa Al Kindi, Dean of MCBS shared, “It gives us great pleasure, as one of Oman’s pioneering higher education institutions to embrace and encourage intellectually inspiring lectures in order to engage students and provide them a platform to appreciate the importance of their

identity and history. At MCBS we welcome many more scholars and like-minded individuals such as Al Adawi to connect with the future cornerstone of Oman.”

The Department of General Education (GE) at MCBS is crucial as it acts as the bridge between the Foundation Program offered by the CEAP and the Major Programs offered by the Computer Science and Mathematics Department and the Business Department. Students pursuing their bachelor’s and associate degrees must take nearly 25%-30% of their credits through these courses to acquire the University degree as required by the American affiliates. The Department offers a breadth of knowledge and skills to the students through interdisciplinary courses in Communication, Hu-

manities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences. All course syllabi are up to date with new trends, methodologies, and formative assessments that ensure that learning outcomes are met.

Modern College of Business and Science, mcbs.edu.om, is the first full-fledged private college in Oman since 1996 led by the Executive Chairman, Dr Muneer Al Maskari. The college acclaimed programs spanning the sciences, technology, business, economics and Management programs offered in Arabic Language. Our diverse community of faculty, researchers, creators, and innovators is driven to make real-world impacts that benefit people. With a robust, interdisciplinary, and entrepreneurial approach, we do the work that matters.



Virtual forum discusses analysis, cloning of genes, design of genetically modified organisms

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Education, represented by the Directorate-General of Educational Supervision – Applied Sciences Supervision Department – implemented a virtual forum for genetic technology, which targeted teachers, senior teachers, supervisors, and senior supervisors to discuss the latest developments in genetic technology.

The virtual forum discussed analysis, cloning of genes and the design of genetically modified organisms. Dr Khadija Al Balushi, Director of the Applied Sciences Supervision Department, said: “The world is moving at an accelerated technical pace that affects all areas of life, especially those related to the educational system. Perhaps scientific development, especially in the genetic field, has become one of the most

important aspects affected by these steps. It was necessary for education to keep pace with this development, and to provide its beneficiaries, science students, with the most important developments in this field. Accordingly, the Biology Unit Enrichment Forum for Genetic Technology comes to raise the attendance of teachers and supervisory groups’ awareness of the developments in genetic technology.

The forum aims to acquire skills, extract genetic information about the gene to be studied, identify the sequences of its nitrogenous bases, design the principles used to amplify it through thermal passaging and acquire the skills of designing the appropriate plasmid for the process of cloning the insulin gene and how to produce it by the fermentation process (Bioreactor).

ZERO CARBON NEUTRALITY

Ministry launches PDO Renewable Energy Award



MUSCAT: The Ministry of Education, with the support of PDO, launched the sixth edition of the PDO Renewable Energy Award, which comes under the title “Zero Carbon Neutrality” for the academic year 2023/2024, targeting public and private school students in grades 7 to 12.

The award aims to increase awareness among school students to recognise the importance of using renewable energy in daily life as an alternative to fossil fuels, innovating new ways to reduce carbon emissions that are harmful to the environment, and developing students’ abilities in the skill and technical aspects.

Accompanying the launch of the award was the launch of the promotional film for the award and its promotional posters in Arabic and English, which encouraged students to interact and participate. It was also accompanied by the launch of the registration link for students wishing to participate according to the conditions required by the award. Alongside the award was the announcement of the training programs accompanying the award, which include providing training sessions and workshops provided remotely by

experts and specialists to promote the award and clarify aspects of the participating student. The award goes through four stages, starting with the announcement of the award, then the initial screening of the candidate ideas, and the initial evaluation stage from which the teams will be qualified for the final evaluation. The final evaluation and announcing of the winners will be during the Oman Sustainability Week, which will be held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Center during the period April 28 to May 2, 2024.

The Ministry of Education, in cooperation with the private sector, continues to provide qualitative programs that serve students’ learning and develop their abilities in applied innovative aspects. The award was launched in its first edition during the academic year 2017/2018, and since then, it has worked to enhance the trend towards the possibility of using renewable energy sources in aspects of daily life and came up with ideas that could be employed and even produced in and outside the school, which is the ultimate goal for which the award came, as each of its courses is devoted to a specific topic.



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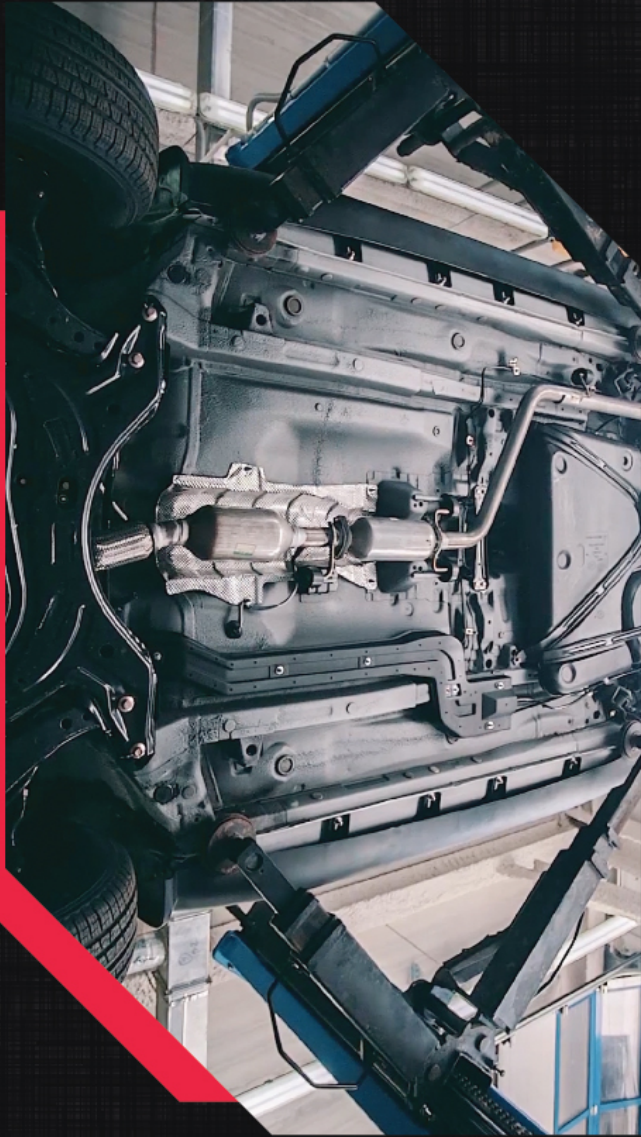
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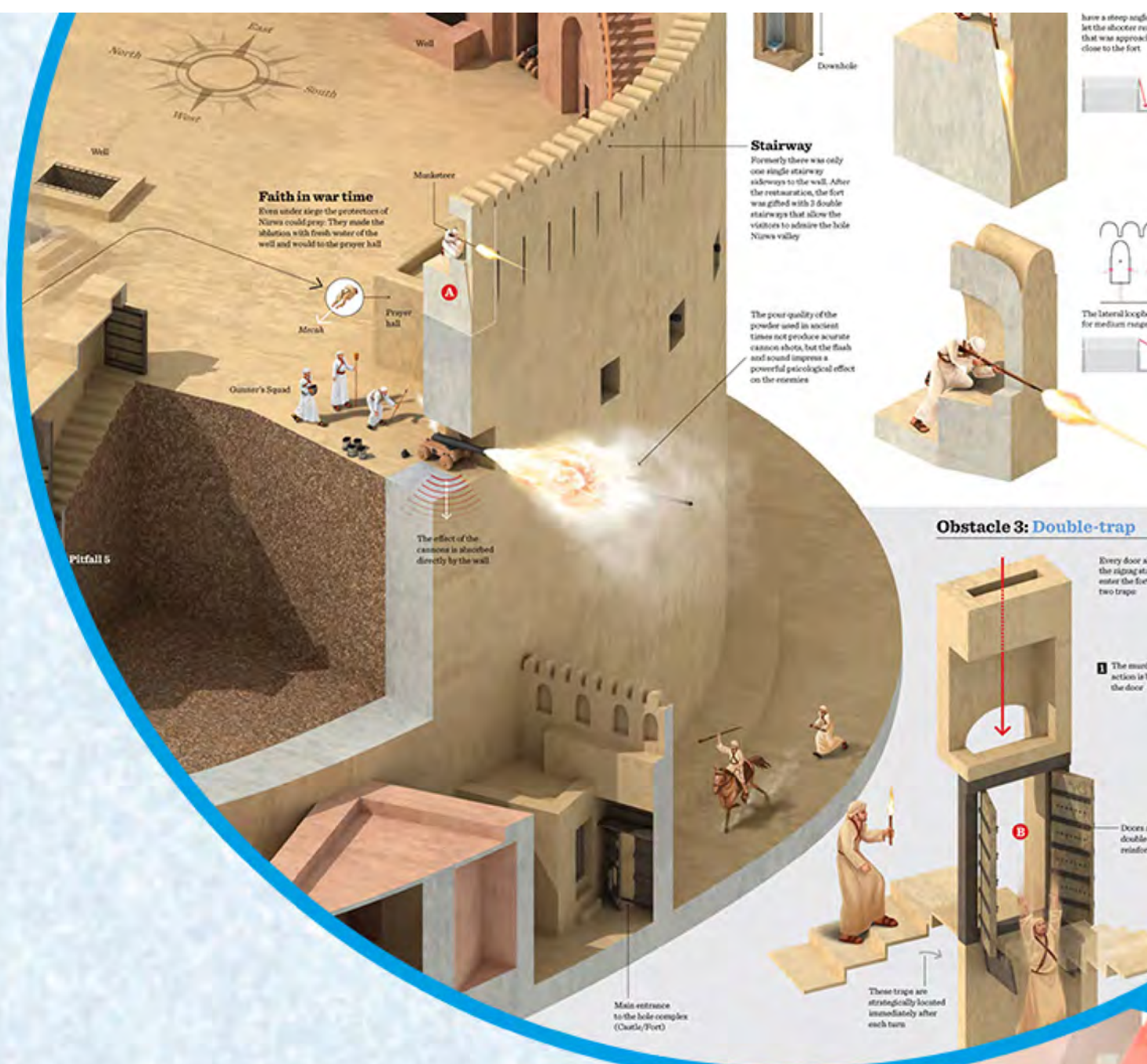


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