LET'S TALK
Times OF OMAN

HM GREETS PRESIDENT OF AZERBAIJAN

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Dr. Ilham Heydar Aliyev of the Republic of Azerbaijan on his country's National Day. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Aliyev. His Majesty also wished the people of Azerbaijan further progress and prosperity. -ONA

Founded 1975 · Volume 49 No. 65 | 16 Pages · Baisas 200 · Subscription OMR63 | ISO 9001:2008 Certified Company | Chairman/Editor-in-Chief: Mohamed Issa Al Zadjali | Printed & Published by Muscat Media Group

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OMAN CENTRE FOR TRADITIONAL MUSIC

His Majesty the Sultan issues Royal Decree

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Monday issued Royal Decree No. 27/2024 transferring "Oman Centre for Traditional Music" from the Diwan of Royal Court to the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.

Article (1) states that Oman Centre for Traditional Music shall be transferred from the Diwan of Royal Court to the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.

Article (2) stipulates that all properties, origins, rights, obligations and assets of Oman Centre for Traditional Music (Diwan of Royal Court) shall be transferred to the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.

Article (3) states that employees of Oman Centre for Traditional Music shall be transferred to the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, along with their financial grades.

Article (4) cancels all that contradicts this decree or contravenes its provisions.

Article (5) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue. -ONA

On behalf of HM, Sayyid Asa'ad bids farewell to Kenyan ambassador

A2

OMAN'S DIGITAL ECONOMY SET TO RECEIVE A BOOST

Sayyid Theyazin presides over the launch of COMEX Global Technology Show 2024

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham Al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, presided over the launch of the 33rd edition of COMEX Global Technology Show 2024, on Monday.

The four-day event, which is taking place at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, brings more than 100 local and international firms under one roof.

Organised by Aldar Al Arabiya Company in partnership with the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, the exhibition aims to promote digital investment and showcase the latest technologies and electronic services.

Speaking about digital investment, Dr. Ali Amer Al Shidhani, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Communications and Information Technology, said that the National Programme for Digital Economy seeks to raise the digital economy's contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) from 2 percent now to 10 percent by 2040.

In his speech, Al Shidhani pointed out that the volume of investments in the communications and information technology sector since the announcement of the National Programme for the Digital Economy stood at more than OMR1 billion ($2.5 billion).

A large portion of these investments is focused on the areas of communications technologies, data storage and processing, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, space technology and semiconductors, said Al Shidhani.

He added that the estimated value of agreements and projects announced at COMEX 2024 is 60% higher than those announced at COMEX 2023—up by OMR40 million. >A5

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Documents of Indian diaspora digitised

1 Hundreds of documents from the 19th and early 20th centuries were scanned and saved at the Indian Embassy in Muscat over the past ten days. The private documents of the Indian diaspora digitised reached more than 7,000 at the end of the maiden project on Monday. >A3

WORLD

Over 2,000 feared dead in Papua New Guinea

2 Papua New Guinea's disaster agency has said over 2,000 people could be buried under the rubble after a landslide last Friday. "The landslide buried more than 2,000 people alive and caused major destruction to buildings," an official from the country's National Disaster Centre said. >A7

SPORTS

Al-Zubair, Grenier win 'GT Open 500' race

3 Oman's Al-Faisal Al-Zubair and Canadian team-mate Mikaël Grenier delivered a racing masterclass to stun their rivals and win the 'GT Open 500' round of the 2024 International GT Open at the demanding Spa-Francorchamps circuit in Belgium on Sunday. >A8

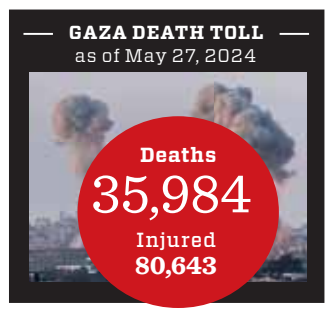
FOREIGN MINISTRY

Oman condemns Israeli aggression in Gaza

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman expressed its strong condemnation and rejection of the persistent Israeli aggression in the Palestinian Gaza Strip, and the recent targeting of a camp housing displaced people in Rafah.

In a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry on Monday, Oman pointed out that the heinous acts being committed by the occupying state require deterrent international intervention.

"It is high time that the global community imposed sanctions on Israel due to the fact that its criminal practices constitute a clear violation of international law, contravene international humanitarian law and violate values of human dignity," stressed Oman in its statement. -ONA



OMAN

PRAYER TIMINGS

Dhuhr 12:09pm
Asr 3:29pm
Maghrib 6:53pm
Isha 8:13pm
Fajr (Tomorrow) 3:55am

ETHIOPIA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

His Majesty sends cables of greetings

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Sahle-Work Zewde of Ethiopia on her country's National Day.

In the cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Sahle-Work Zewde. His Majesty also wished the people of Ethiopia further development and growth.

President of Dominican Republic

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to President Luis Rodolfo Abinader of the Dominican Republic on being re-elected for a new presidential term.

In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of success to President Luis Rodolfo Abinader. His Majesty also wished the people of the Dominican Republic further progress and prosperity and the bilateral relations further development and growth. -ONA

MEETING

On behalf of HM, HH Sayyid Asa'ad bids farewell to Kenyan ambassador

MUSCAT: On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Asa'ad bin Tarik Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan received in his office yesterday Amina Ali Abdullah, Ambassador of the Republic of Kenya to the Sultanate of Oman, to bid her farewell at the end of her tour of duty.

The ambassador expressed her thanks to His Majesty for the support extended to her from His Majesty, the Government and Omani people during her tour of duty.

She wished His Majesty good health, happiness and a long life and the Sultanate of Oman further development and growth under the wise leadership of His Majesty.

Sayyid Asa'ad expressed his appreciation for the efforts exerted by the ambassador in serving bilateral relations, wishing her success. He also wished the people of Kenya further progress and prosperity.

The meeting was attended by the Secretary General and the Advisor of HH Sayyid Asa'ad office. -ONA

Oman to take part in Gulf Radio, Television Festival in Manama

The Ministry of Information and private media establishments in Oman will take part in the 2024 Radio and Television Festival competition

MANAMA: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Information, will take part in the 16th edition of the Gulf Radio and Television Festival in Manama, Bahrain, from 28 to 30 May 2024.

The festival, which takes the slogan "Our Media, Our Identity", is organised by the Bahraini Ministry of Information in cooperation with Gulf Radio and Television.

Ibrahim Saif Al Azri, Director-General and Editor-in-Chief of Oman News Agency (ONA), Head of the delegation of the Ministry of Information at the festival, said that the Ministry's participation in the 16th edition of Gulf Radio and Television Festival in the Kingdom of Bahrain affirms Oman's keenness to actively join in GCC media events.

Al Azri described the festival as an important forum and an annual event that brings together media institutions from GCC states. "The event constitutes a podium where media personnel and agencies from member states showcase their innovative radio and TV contents," he added.

Al Azri pointed out that the Ministry will exhibit its products in a pavilion within the framework of an event titled "radio and TV production market".

The pavilion comprises dashboards and screens displaying the media content of the Ministry of Information.

The 2024 Radio and Television Festival's competition will be contested by teams representing the Ministry of Information and private media establishments in Oman. -ONA

CDAA

Fire in Seeb apartment extinguished

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) rescued 17 people after a fire broke out in an apartment in the Wilayat of Seeb. All the rescued people are in good health.

In a statement, the CDAA said: "The firefighting teams in the Muscat Governorate were able to extinguish a fire that broke out in an apartment in southern Al Hail area in the Wilayat of Seeb. The building was evacuated and the residents were rescued using a hydraulic crane.

Wilayat of Bausher

The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority extinguished another fire that broke out in a house in the Wilayat of Bausher. No injuries were reported in the incident.

The CDAA said: "The firefighting teams of the Civil Defence and Ambulance Department in Muscat Governorate were able to extinguish a fire that broke out in a house in the Al Khuwair area in the Wilayat of Bausher without recording any injuries ."

MINISTRY OF INFORMATION

Arab media panel discusses support for Palestinians

MANAMA: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Information took part in the 101th regular session of the Permanent Committee for Arab Media, held in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

The meeting discussed the continuation of media support for the Palestinian cause.

It also followed up on the plan for Arab media action abroad, including the adoption of the basic system of the observatory and the integrated platform.

Moreover, the meeting explored best means of implementing the periodic plan for the joint Arab anti-terrorism media strategy and discussed several other topics of relevance to the committee. -ONA

MEDICAL CONFERENCE HELD

A medical conference on 'Recent Advances in Blood Cancer & Bone Cancer Treatment' was held in Muscat recently. Important informations were shared by visiting doctors/speakes which are equally important for general citizens.

Over 7,000 personal documents of Indian diaspora in Oman digitised

Embassy of India, Muscat, in association with National Archives of India concludes first-ever digitisation project for historical documents of the Indian diaspora

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The soiled and yellow papers were more than a century old. As officials carefully handled the delicate documents, history was told in its own way. Be it a document from 1838, a trade document from 1927, or a 1961 invitation to an Indian Embassy event, hundreds of documents from the 19th and early 20th centuries were scanned and saved at the Indian Embassy in Muscat over the past 10 days. The personal documents of the Indian diaspora digitised reached more than 7,000 at the end of the maiden project on Monday.

This unique project, conducted by the Embassy of India, Muscat, in association with the National Archives of India (NAI), also received support from the National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA) of Oman.

At a media briefing on Monday, Amit Narang, Indian Ambassador to Oman, said: "This is a unique initiative that showcases the rich history and trade ties between India and Oman. We are happy to receive more than 7,000 documents from 32 Indian families from Gujarat, who have been in Oman for over a century."

He added: "It was a meticulous exercise to archive historical documents of the Indian diaspora living in Oman but I am happy that we have done it and it will be up for viewing after some time with the National Archives of India."

Called 'The Oman Collection – Archival Heritage of the Indian Community in Oman,' this special digitisation and oral history project was conducted at the Embassy of India premises in Muscat from May 19-27, 2024.

The success can be measured by the fact that the 32 prominent Indian families offered a treasure trove of their personal documents, with their presence in Oman spanning several generations and going back 250 years.

This was the first overseas project of the NAI for digitising and archiving diaspora documents, marking an important step in preserving the history and heritage of the Indian community abroad.

Another important initiative, according to Kalpana Shukla, Deputy Director at NAI, was recording oral histories and digitising them in Oman."This is the first time that we have decided to do oral digitising and I had the chance to meet families and record ten senior members of the family. It was wonderful to know how Omanis and Indians lived in such harmony and trusted each other when it came to business and trade matters," said Kalpana, who was accompanied by J.K. Luthra, IT expert at the NAI.

These firsthand narratives capture a wide range of stories, including personal anecdotes, migration experiences, and the evolution of the Indian community in Oman over the decades, which are expected to enrich the archival records.

Record number of documents digitised

During the project, over 7,000 documents in English, Arabic, Gujarati, and Hindi from the private collections of the old Indian merchant families were scanned and digitised.

The wide variety of documents digitised include personal diaries, account books, ledgers, telegrams, trade invoices, passports, citations, letters, correspondences, and photographs that shed a fascinating light into the lives and contributions of the Indian community in the Sultanate of Oman.

These documents collectively constitute a vivid narration of the history of the Indian community in Oman, including their cultural practices, social activities, trade and commerce, as well as their contributions to and integration into Omani society, and the preservation of Indian traditions abroad.

The digitised documents will be archived and uploaded on 'Abhilekh Patal,' the digital portal of the NAI, making these documents available to researchers and the wider public.

Private collections of the following Indian/Indian-origin families have been digitised: Ratansi Purshotam family, Khimji Ramdas family, Haridas Nensey family, Bhanji Haridas Mundrawalla family, Naraindas and Shanta Toprani family, Maganlal Manji Vyas family, Vijay Singh Veljee Pawani family, Lakhoo's Ved family, Chimanlal Chhotalal Surti family, Jayantilal Wadher family, Kanojia family, Ramesh Khimji family, Visoomal Damodardas family, Vijay Singh Purshotam Toprani family, Jamnadas Keshavji family, Naranjee Hirjee family, Velji Arjun Pawani family, Purshotam Damodar family, Pandya family, Meghji Nenshi family, Shah Nagardas Manji family, Ajit Khimji family, Khatau Ratansi Toprani family, Ratanshi Gordhandas Bajaria family, Harshendu Hasmukh Shah family, Khubo Gurnani family, Mohanlal Arjun Pawani family, Dhanji Moraji "Shabica" family, Ebji Sundardas Asher, Dharamsey Nensey, Kiran Asher family, and Bakul Mehta family.

In a statement to media from India, Arun Singhal, NAI Director General, remarked: "This is the first time that we have collected and digitised the private archives of diaspora documents from abroad. This marks a historic milestone for the NAI and a significant step towards preserving the rich heritage and narratives of the diverse overseas Indian community."

At the press briefing on Monday, Narang said: "This project aligns with Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji's vision to strengthen connections with the Indian diaspora worldwide. By documenting and preserving the history of the Indian community in Oman, we are rekindling a vital part of our shared heritage and fostering a deeper engagement with our diaspora."

Sheikh Anil Khimji, head of the Indian community in Oman, expressed his appreciation for the project.

He said, "We thank Prime Minister Narendra Modi and External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar for their vision of engaging and connecting with the Indian diaspora. The archiving of the historical documents of the Indian diaspora by the Embassy of India will go a long way in preserving their history and in doing so also showcase the time-tested bonds of friendship between India and the Sultanate of Oman."

Oman's NRAA supported the project by providing essential logistical and other support, ensuring its smooth execution. In addition to preserving historical records, the digitisation project seeks to foster a more focused engagement with the Indian diaspora community in Oman and will promote a better appreciation of the longstanding India-Oman friendship. The project will facilitate better research about the Indian diaspora's development and contributions and will serve as a valuable resource for future generations.

ENVIRONMENTALLY AWARE PANEL

Tejarah Talks takes a dive into an ocean of possibilities on sustainable blue economy

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Taking a deep dive into the economic and investment potential of sustainable ocean practices, Tejarah Talks will host "The Blue Economy: Making Waves" 7:30pm Tuesday 4 June at Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre.

Creating thousands of jobs in fisheries, tourism, shipping, manufacturing and logistics in communities right across Oman, this emerging sector is already establishing itself to be a major driver of long-term development.

Moderated by Jamal Al Asmi, Executive Producer RealityCG, the eco-focused session will feature industry experts Dr. Bashair Al Riyami, Manager, Economic Diversification Investment, Food & Fisheries Sector, Oman Investment Authority; Badr Al Naabi, Group Director, Business Development, Fisheries Development Oman; Captain Ala'a Aziz, Marine Operations Manager, ASYAD; and Zakariya Al Hasni, CEO, International Seafood Company.

Dr. Bashair Al Riyami, Manager, Economic Diversification Investment, Food & Fisheries Sector, Oman Investment Authority.

It is estimated oceans generate up to $6 trillion in global revenues annually, facilitate around 90 percent of world trade and support over 350 million direct and indirect jobs

"It is estimated oceans generate up to $6 trillion in global revenues annually, facilitate around 90 percent of world trade and support over 350 million direct and indirect jobs. And this economic value is projected to double by 2030," noted Maymuna Al Adawi, Director, Public-Private Partnerships, Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) and Tejarah Talks organiser.

Addressing the critical role our oceans playing in regulating the climate by absorbing 25 percent of all carbon dioxide emissions and capturing 90 percent of the excess heat generated by these emissions, the environmentally aware panel will take as its starting point how investment in sustainable maritime practices can drive economic benefits while addressing climate change.

Also under the microscope will be reducing the greenhouse gas emissions of shipping as well as the implications of United Nations High Seas Treaty for Oman's maritime industry.

The treaty represents a significant step towards sustainable ocean management and underscores the need for Omani businesses to adopt environmentally friendly practices.

"Protecting our oceans is not just an environmental imperative but an economic one. The Blue Economy holds vast potential for job creation and sustainable development. By investing in our ocean resources, we can secure a prosperous future for Oman's youth as well as attract foreign investment, talent and facilitate knowledge transfer," said MoCIIP's Al Adawi.

Supported by Jindal Shadeed, Nortal, MHD, Apex Transgulf Manufacturing, Invest Oman Lounge, OCEC and Oman FM – this edition of Tejarah Talks aims to provide insights into how the Blue Economy can attract investment and create jobs while ensuring the health of ocean ecosystems.

This session will be particularly relevant for businesses, policymakers and stakeholders interested in the future of Oman's maritime activities and their economic impact.

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COMEX

< FROM A1

Pacts worth OMR60mn signed on opening day of expo

He explained that the value of new projects and agreements announced during the expo's opening day touches OMR60 million. These cover the areas of digital fields, developing technical infrastructure and Omani Investment Authority projects to support the digital economy and technology investments, he added.

Various agreements were signed as part of the inaugural ceremony. They were inked by companies specialised in digital transition, development of technical infrastructure and investment and projects undertaken by Oman Investment Authority to support digital economy and digital investments.

The opening ceremony was attended by ministers, undersecretaries, members of the State Council and Shura Council, CEOs and representatives of companies participating in the exhibition. -ONA

Opportunities, challenges in e-commerce highlighted

The value of the e-commerce market in the Sulatante of Oman amounted to $2.28 billion in 2023

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Investment Promotion organised the Oman e-commerce forum in its first edition on at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre Monday.

The forum was oragnised in the presence of Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef, Minister of Commerce and Industry and Investment Promotion, Eng. Said bin Hamoud Al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, and a number of Their Excellencies and officials,.

A number of experts and specialists also took part in the event to look into the efforts of the Sultanate of Oman and the GCC countries in the field of e-commerce and to highlight the opportunities and challenges.

During his speech at the forum, Dr. Saleh bin Said Masan, Undersecretary for Commerce and Industry, Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion, said that e-commerce represents an essential part of the modern global economy, and plays a vital role in strengthening economic and cultural relations between nations and achieving sustainable development, by accelerating growth, expanding access to global markets, increasing cross-border trade and investment opportunities and stimulating innovation and product development. Furthermore, e-commerce plays a role in cultural communication between peoples through the exchange of products, services, and ideas.

He added that based on Oman Vision 2040, which focuses on a number of national priorities to encourage and empower the e-commerce system in the Sultanate of Oman, such as economic diversification and financial development, the private sector, investment and international cooperation. The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, in cooperation with the UNCTAD and supporting partners, prepared a national plan that was launched and started implementing its programmes and initiatives in 2022.

"The latest WTO reports indicate that the volume of global sales of e-commerce during 2023 amounted to $5.8 trillion, with an expected growth rate of 39% in the coming years, due to the increasing use of the internet and smartphones, the development of financial technology, and the expansion of sales via the Internet and global trade platforms."

Visual presentation

The Director of Commercial Affairs and e-commerce at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Investment Promotion, Azza Ibrahim Al Kindi, gave a visual presentation on the National e-commerce plan and its importance, which aims to support and facilitate e-commerce in the Sultanate of Oman by addressing challenges related to supply and demand and raising awareness among commercial companies and consumers.

Al Kindi has also indicated that the national e-commerce plan contains 8 basic axes, namely the e-commerce complex, information and communication technology infrastructure and services, transport, logistics and trade facilitation, business facilitation, e-procurement, skills and awareness, payments, and the legal and regulatory framework.

These axes include 30 initiatives supporting the plan which are distributed to the various government agencies participating in their respective fields of competence. She has also mentioned theE-commerce regulation that was issued last September.

She also pointed out that the completion rate of the initiatives of the national plan reached 46% by the end of 2023 by completing 14 initiatives supporting the plan during the year 2023.

These initiatives include an initiative that encourages the development of private data centres, provide technical platforms specialised in e-commerce, develop an electronic portal for commercial transactions, and ensure the availability of communication services at competitive prices.

Another initiative focuses on reducing the fees on licenses for transporting postal parcels and enabling postal companies to implement customs clearance.

A further initiative is to urge connectivity with neighbouring countries, in addition to issuing an e-commerce regulation, developing a trust mark for companies in e-commerce, simplifying the registration of e-commerce companies.

Supportive environment for innovation

Added to the previous initiatives another initiative was developed to provide a supportive environment for innovation in electronic payments, review the Consumer Protection Law, the e-commerce programme, and implement the Oman Broadband Company's network.It is hoped that 3 initiatives supporting the national plan will be completed this year, with a completion rate of 53%, namely the Know Your Customer application for the Central Bank in addition to issuing the general policy for the postal services sector and creating fair and transparent customs duties on e-commerce shipments.

Discussion session

Hassan bin Riyad Al-Kilani, Legal Advisor at the Ministry of Economy in the United Arab Emirates, gave a visual presentation on the legal framework for e-commerce between GCC. The forum also witnessed a discussion session to learn about the opportunities and challenges in the field of e-commerce.

The forum highlighted the latest developments in the field of e-commerce and sharing the best practices and successful regional experiences, to contribute to strengthening regional cooperation and exchanging expertise and experiences in e-commerce and all aspects related to it.

The forum came out with effective recommendations that contribute to improving the business environment and enhancing the role of e-commerce in supporting economic growth and achieving sustainable development.

It is noteworthy that the value of the e-commerce market in the Sultanate of Oman amounted to $2.28 billion in 2023, and is distributed over five main sectors, where electronics and media account for 32.9 percent, food and personal care products by 25 percent, fashion by 22.2 percent, furniture and household appliances by 13.3 percent, and toys, hobbies, and handicrafts by 6.6 percent.

MUSCAT MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

Ways to transform Sultan Qaboos Port into a global tourist destination discussed

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Muscat Municipal Council has discussed transforming Sultan Qaboos Port into a global tourist destination.

The Council held its fifth meeting for this year, headed by His Excellency Sayyid Saud bin Hilal Al Busaidi, Governor of Muscat, and in the presence of His Excellency the Chairman of Muscat Municipality. During the meeting, the Council reviewed the Omran Group's statement regarding the project to develop the waterfront of Sultan Qaboos Port, and turn it into a tourist destination in line with the highest international standards.

Tourism project

The tourism project will ensure the implementation of the considerations set by the Oman Investment Authority, most notably achieving added value that does not conflict with the privacy of the port's location, the historical and architectural heritage of the surrounding area, and the importance of providing tourism activities that suit the lifestyle of the local community. The meeting also touched on the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Water Resources' statement regarding dam projects in Muscat Governorate.

Integrated projects

It emphasised the importance of continuing to focus on the integrated system related to the construction of dams, drainage channels, and valley paths and approving the resulting financial budgets as integrated projects in coordination with all competent authorities.

The meeting also discussed the possibility of rehabilitating and establishing the necessary protection for some residential areas affected by floods and exploiting the available spaces on the banks of some dams to implement tourism projects in coordination with the competent authorities.

The Council reviewed the recommendations of the Governorate Development Committee regarding the request to change the use of plots of land from residential to tourist use in the Wilayat of Muttrah, as this would represent a qualitative shift on the cultural level.

INDIAN SCHOOL MULADHA

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TENDER NOTICE

REF: ISML/TENDER/2024-25/001

Sl.No	Description	Sl.No	Description
1.	LED School Name Board	7.	KG Block – Exterior Art work (sticker)
2.	Milestone Girls Toilet Renovation	8.	Roofing work – Staff Accommodation
3.	Solar lights (Compound wall)	9.	Notice Board (External) – Cast Aluminum powder coat
4.	Split Air conditioner -13 nos		
5.	Sunshade – Tent in front of Canteen area	10.	Window mosquito net (External)
6.	Display stickers on staircase	11.	Medals & Trophies

- Interested parties shall collect the tender documents from the school cash counter against the payment of RO 10/- as a non refundable tender fee from **28th May 2024** during the working days (Sunday to Thursday) of the school between **7.30 a.m. and 02.00 p.m**.
- The completed tender shall be dropped in the Tender Box kept in the school office before the due date. The tender should be in a sealed envelope, addressed to the Chairman, Purchase Sub Committee, Indian School Muladha, P.B. No. 42, P.C. 314, Al Muladha, Sultanate of Oman.

Note: Respective tenders shall clearly mention the "name of service quoted for "by the bidding party.

- Any tender without the name of service/supply will be considered disqualified.

Last date of tender submission: On or before 5th June 2024

The School reserves the right to reject any tender without providing any reason and is not obliged to accept the lowest or any tender

WORLD

WHO INVESTMENT ROUND

Fund raising

GENEVA: The World Health Organisation (WHO) has launched a new 'Investment Round' aiming to raise USD 7 billion of funds. This comes ahead of the 77th World Health Assembly that begins Monday at the headquarters of the 194-member strong United States agency.

— ANI

Times OF OMAN

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

Founder: Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali
Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Mohamed Issa Al Zadjali
Deputy Editor-in-Chief: Anees bin Essa Al Zedjali
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CIRCULATION: Telephone: 24726666, Fax: 24818270, E-mail: circulation@timesofoman.com

INDIA METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT

Cyclone 'Remal' weakened into cyclonic storm: IMD

KOLKATA: India Meteorological Department (IMD) announced that Cyclone 'Remal' had weakened into a cyclonic storm from a severe cyclonic storm on Monday and that it is further anticipated to continue weakening and lose its strength gradually, said an official.

Speaking to ANI, Somnath Dutta, Head Eastern Region, IMD Kolkata, said, "After the landfall, Cyclone Remal moved to the northward direction and today morning, its strength has reduced and turned into a cyclonic storm."

"As per the IMD's predictions, the strength has been reduced from a severe cyclonic storm to a cyclonic storm. The predictions for its movement state that Cyclone Remal will move to the north-northeastwards region It will gradually lose its energy, and by evening it will become a deep depression," said Dutta.

Strong wind warnings

The IMD official further said that strong wind warnings have been given in all the districts of Bengal.

"The warning for strong winds has also been predicted for North Bengal on Tuesday. Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar for 40-50 kmph. For June 1, forecast isolated rain in all districts of South Bengal including Kolkata," said Dutta. The official further said that the IMD urges to download some applications like Mausam, and Damini wherein all types of weather warnings will feature in these apps.

"All the advisories and all the weather information, time-to-time, are communicated to the central and state government authorities. Alongwith this we also indicate the possible impact and suggested measures to be taken," said Dutta.

Meanwhile, an official press release on the impact of Cyclone Remal suggests 4 casualties and an injury following heavy winds and rainfall.

"Severe Cyclone Remal made landfall on May 26 at 22.30 hrs. between Sagar Island of South 24 Parganas & Khepupara, Bangladesh close to Mongla port of Bangladesh, caused very heavy rainfall over coastal districts of South-24-Parganas, North-24-Parganas, Purba Medinipur and heavy rainfall over Kolkata, Howrah, Hooghly and Paschim Medinipur on May 26-27, said the press release."

Four persons died

"Four persons died, one in Kolkata (due to wall collapse) and one in South-24-Paraganas (due to falling of tree), two in Purba Bardhaman (Electrocution). One person injured due to falling of a tree in Canning is admitted to SSKM hospital for treatment," it said.

As per the release, windspeed reached 120 kmph over Sagar islands and 90 kmph at Dum Dum, the rainfall received in Kolkata was 140 mm, Haldia 110mm and many places had more than 60 mm rainfall. Rainfall led to inundation in many areas of Sunderbans.

The entire administration was completely alert, and ready and worked 24x7 throughout the night to restore services and provide relief.

According to the response and restoration, the release stated that over 2 lakh people were evacuated to safer places and relief camps. — ANI

ICC should investigate Israeli airstrikes on Al-Maghazi and Rafah as 'war crimes'

These devastating strikes have decimated families and cruelly cut short the lives of 32 children. Our findings offer crucial evidence of unlawful attacks by the Israeli military," Amnesty International said

GAZA: The International Criminal Court (ICC) should investigate as "war crimes" three Israeli air strikes that resulted in the martyrdom of 44 Palestinian civilians, including 32 children, in the occupied Gaza Strip last month, Amnesty International said on Monday.

The attacks - one on Al-Maghazi refugee camp in central Gaza on 16 April 2024, and two on Rafah on 19 and 20 April 2024, Amnesty said in a press release.

"These devastating strikes have decimated families and cruelly cut short the lives of 32 children," it said, adding "Our findings offer crucial evidence of unlawful attacks by the Israeli military." Amnesty said that the International Criminal Court should investigate as war crimes the three Israeli airstrikes.

The Israeli occupation continues its aggression against the Gaza Strip, by land, sea and air, since 7 October 2023 killing 35,984, the majority of whom were children and women, and injuring 80,643 others, while thousands of victims are still under the rubble.

Israeli 'cruelty' in Gaza, blatant defiance of int'l law unacceptable: UN rapporteur

The UN's special rapporteur on Palestine on Monday criticized the "cruelty" of Israel on Palestinians, urging the international community to increase "external pressure" on the country to stop "Gaza genocide."

"More horror in the #GazaGhetto," Francesca Albanese said on X.

"The Israeli occupation forces have bombed a camp for displaced Palestinians in #Rafah, causing plastic tents to catch fire and tragically burning people alive," she lamented.

"This cruelty, along with blatant defiance of the int'l law and system, is unacceptable," the official criticised.

UNRWA calls Israel's attack on Rafah 'horrifying'

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) said on Monday that Israeli attacks on families who seek a safe haven in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, are horrific.

In a post on X, the Agency said that "information coming out of #Rafah about further attacks on families seeking shelter is horrifying."

— Agencies

UN chief expresses dismay over Israel's non-compliance with international court decision

NEW YORK: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has expressed his dismay at the Israeli occupation's failure to comply with the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) recent decision regarding the situation in Gaza.

In a statement attributed to the Spokesman for the UN Secretary-General, Stephane Dujarric, Guterres emphasised the binding nature of ICJ decisions on all parties involved in the dispute.

The statement underscored the responsibility of the occupying authorities to facilitate the safe transport and delivery of essential humanitarian supplies to those in need, noting that the humanitarian operation in the Gaza Strip is "on the verge of collapse."

The UN Secretary-General reiterated his call for the protection of Palestinian civilians and the fulfillment of their basic needs, including access to food, shelter, and clean water.

The Israeli occupation authorities must facilitate the safe pickup and delivery of humanitarian supplies from Egypt entering Kerem Shalom to those in need, underscoring the need for all crossing points to be open in line with Security Council resolution 2720 (2023) and for humanitarian organisations to have full, safe and unhindered access to reach all civilians in need across Gaza, he added. — ONA

AUSTRALIA

Scientists discover ancient echidnapus

CANBERRA: Scientists have discovered a bizarre creature dubbed the "echidnapus" which they believe roamed Australia in prehistoric times.

Fossilised pieces of the animal's jaw bone were found in opal fields in northern New South Wales, alongside evidence of several other ancient and now extinct monotreme species.

Officially named Opalios splendens, the new species has been nicknamed for its resemblance to the platypus and echidna - which are the only egg-laying mammals in the world today, BBC news reported.

The team behind the research say it indicates that Australia once had an "age of monotremes" - in which the incredibly rare order of animals was abundant and dominant.

"It's like discovering a whole new civilisation," lead author Professor Tim Flannery said.

The array of fossils was found about 25 years ago by palaeontologist Elizabeth Smith and her daughter Clytie while they were going through the discards of an opal mine.

They donated the specimens - estimated to be about 100 million years old - to the Australian Museum, where they sat forgotten in a drawer until about two years ago.

Prof Flannery, a mammalogist, says he stumbled across them and immediately knew they were from ancient monotremes.

Some of the bones belonged to the already-discovered Steropodon galmani, a shorter, stumpier and toothier ancestor of the platypus.

But the other fragments were unfamiliar. From them, Dr. Flannery and his team discovered evidence of three species previously unknown to science, findings which were published in Alcheringa: An Australasian Journal of Palaeontology on Monday.

The critters had combinations of features never seen before - in living or fossil monotremes, said Director of the Australian Museum Research Institute Professor Kris Helgen, who also worked on the paper. — ONA

NATIONAL DISASTER CENTRE

Papua New Guinea disaster agency fears over 2,000 dead after landslide

PORT MORESBY: Papua New Guinea's disaster agency has said more than 2,000 people could be buried under the rubble after a landslide last Friday.

"The landslide buried more than 2,000 people alive and caused major destruction to buildings," an official from the country's National Disaster Centre said in a letter to the United Nations.

Several villages in the province of Enga were hit when part of a mountain collapsed in the early hours of Friday in the remote central highlands of Papua New Guinea.

Previous estimates from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) had on Sunday put the death toll at 670.

The IOM's chief of mission in Papua New Guinea, Serhan Aktoprak, said today that chances of finding survivors, more than three days after the landslide, were "slim."

Aktoprak said rescue efforts were being hampered by the region's remoteness and lack of infrastructure. Teams are reaching the affected area by road from the provincial capital Wabag, but there was no overnight accommodation available, he stated.

The emergency operation was also being complicated by "an ongoing tribal fight" in the area forcing the country's military to provide convoys for rescue teams.

An estimated 1,500 people are estimated to have been displaced, Aktoprak said. Around 4,000 people are believed to have lived in the affected area.

The IOM official said the cause of the landslide was likely a "combination of multiple factors" including heavy rain, "tectonic movements" and a potential lightning strike, as reported by one eyewitness.

The National Disaster Centre's letter to the UN mission in Papua New Guinea said the situation in the affected area was still highly unstable, posing further risks for rescue teams.

Video from the scene on social media showed people trying to find survivors under large heaps of rubble using shovels. Aktoprak previously said most of the houses were buried 6 to 8 metres deep.

Papua New Guinea, with a population of almost 10 million people, lies just north of Australia.

Tribal clashes in area

In addition to the blocked highway, the convoys faced risks from tribal fighting in the village of Tambitanis, about halfway along the route, as they transported food, water and other essentials to the devastated village, 60 kilometers (35 miles) from the provincial capital of Wabag, since Saturday.

Papua New Guinea soldiers provided security for the convoys. Eight locals were killed on Saturday in a clash between two rival clans over a long-standing dispute unrelated to the landslide.

Enga province is a sparsely populated and difficult-to-access inland region in the northern half of Papua New Guinea. The landslide occurred approximately 600 kilometers northwest of the capital, Port Moresby.

Just south of the equator, the area often experiences heavy rainfall, including intense downpours and flooding this year.

It is also prone to volcanic and seismic activity.

In March, a landslide killed at least 23 people in a nearby province. — Agencies

TEXAS, OKLAHOMA AND ARKANSAS

Deadly storms in central US leave destructive trail

TEXAS: Powerful storms in the central United States have killed at least 15 people and caused widespread damage to communities in Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas.

Weather forecasters warned of more severe weather and the National Weather Service has issued dozens of tornado warnings for cities and towns in the region.

In Texas, Ray Sappington, the sheriff of Cooke County, said that at least seven people were killed when a powerful tornado hit communities in the north central part of the state, near the border with Oklahoma on Saturday.

Two children, aged 2 and 5 years old, were among the dead, Sappington told the Reuters news agency.

Conducting search and rescue operations

On Sunday, officials were getting to grips with the scale of the disaster and conducting search and rescue operations.

Sappington said that a number of trailer homes in the hardest-hit areas were "completely gone" while others had been badly damaged.Multiple people had to be taken to hospitals by ambulance and helicopter in Denton County, Texas, north of Dallas.

Texas Governor Greg Abbott on Sunday said that around 100 people had been injured and more than 200 homes and structures destroyed.

"The hopes and dreams of Texas families and small businesses have literally been crushed by storm after storm," said Abbott, whose state has experienced successive bouts of severe weather.

Abbott signed a decree for four counties, freeing up funds and staff to help people whose homes were damaged or destroyed.

Fatalities in Arkansas and Oklahoma

In Arkansas, authorities said at least five people were killed, roads were blocked with debris and power lines and trees were downed, while homes and businesses were destroyed.

Fatalities were also reported in Oklahoma and local officials activated an Emergency Operations Center to coordinate response efforts in the state.

The latest extreme weather comes just days after a powerful tornado tore through a rural Iowa town, leaving four people dead.

Meteorologists and local authorities have been issuing urgent warnings for people in affected areas to get to shelter as soon as possible."If you are in the path of this storm take cover now!" the National Weather Service office in Norman, Oklahoma, posted on X, formerly Twitter. — DW

SPORTS

Al Zubair and Grenier triumph after racing masterclass at Spa

The victory for the Al Manar Racing by Getspeed team in the 2024 International GT Open took them to top of the championship

MUSCAT: It was a stunning display by Oman's Al Faisal Al Zubair and his Canadian teammate Mikaël Grenier as they delivered a racing masterclass to win the 'GT Open 500' round of the 2024 International GT Open at the demanding Spa-Francorchamps circuit in Belgium on Sunday.

The Al Manar Racing by Getspeed Mercedes-AMG GT3 duo had qualified in second position and quickly moved into a lead they held mostly throughout the 2hrs 40mins race that counted for double points towards the International GT Open.

Despite missing round two in Germany, the crew now top the championship standings by eight points.

The Oregon Team's Jordan Pepper and Alessio Deledda reached the chequered flag in second place in a Lamborghini Huracan GT3 Evo2 with Comtoyou Racing's Lorens Levertua and Matisse Lismont rounding off the podium places. Al Zubair's Getspeed teammates Anthony Bartone and Fabian Schiller came home in fifth place after 65 laps of racing.

Speaking after the race, Al Zubair said: "It was a great race today. We were very happy and couldn't really ask for anything more. We were disappointed with qualifying on Saturday but we actually chose to go on one set of new tyres instead of two, so we saved an extra set for the race.

"That seemed to make a lot of sense. Mik got both new sets and I had fresh tyres. We were happy with that in terms of strategy."

He added: "It was very important for us to get past in the first few laps, which I managed to do on lap one. I had a good run into Eau Rouge and managed to get past Diego Mancheca. From there, we maintained and opened a gap. But then we had the safety car come out.

"That didn't help us in terms of the gap because of the 10-second handicap in the last pit stop and the bigger the gap the better it would be for us. After the safety car, I managed to open the gap a bit and it was a bit close to the Lamborghini in the end but it all worked out well."

Al Zubair said: "We missed one round in Germany but we are back as championship leaders. So, very happy with the weekend's performance, with Mik and the whole team. The next race is the big Spa 24. Hopefully we can get a win there."

The green flag for the 'GT Open 500' was brought forward by 25 minutes and Al Zubair lined up on the front row. The Omani made the perfect start in dry conditions and managed to get ahead of Team Motopark's Diego Mancheca and snatch a slender lead.

Al Zubair gradually extended his advantage and led the race by 2.067 seconds after 13 laps with 2hrs 08mins remaining.

The first of the mandatory pit stops saw Grenier take the hot seat and the Mercedes slipped back to second place behind Tijmen van der Helm in the Car Collection Motorsport Porsche but Grenier soon regained the lead when the 911 crew pitted. Marcos Siebert moved up to second in the Team Motopark Mercedes.

Grenier increased the gap to 5.709 seconds with 101 minutes of the race to run and the duo held the lead through the second driver change with Al Zubair retaking the wheel.

With 69 minutes remaining, the Omani led by 21.992 seconds from Mancheca but the race was yellow flagged soon afterwards and the leading pack bunched up before the restart.

Al Zubair maintained his advantage and handed over to Grenier again with the Canadian increasing the duo's lead to 6.043 seconds with 22 minutes and one additional lap remaining. Pepper had moved into second place with Levertua pushing the Aston Martin Vantage into third.

Grenier kept his cool over the closing laps to reach the chequered flag 13.035 seconds ahead of Pepper to seal a memorable win for the Al Manar Racing by Getspeed duo.

GT Open 500 action got underway for the Al-Manar Racing by Getspeed crew with a pair of 70-minute free practice sessions on Friday.

The car ran for 19 laps in the opening session with a best lap of 2min 36.424sec that put Al Zubair and Grenier in 11th place.

The AF Corse Ferrari 296 GT3 of Jean-Claude Saada and Conrad Grunewald topped the times with Getspeed's Antony Bartone and Fabian Schiller in second and the leading Pro car. The Car Collection Motorsport Porsche of Gustav Bergström and Nick Menzel ran out quickest of the Pro cars in free practice two.

Practice counted for nothing when the first 30-minute qualifying session got underway and Al Zubair delivered a polished stint to hit the top of the standings with a lap of 2min 19.401sec in cool and cloudy conditions.

After pitting, the stint was red-flagged with 8min 34sec remaining: the Omani was down in sixth with Olimp Racing's Karol Basz leading the way. Qualifying resumed minutes later and Al Zubair completed the session in ninth place with a quickest run of 2min 17.652sec and the Team Motopark Mercedes claiming the fastest lap, courtesy of Marcos Siebert (2min 16.798sec).

Grenier took the hot seat for the second qualifying session and the Canadian ran a best lap of 2min 16.983sec to slot the Mercedes into second place behind Nico Menzel.

But the time was eclipsed in the dying seconds by the session-winning Christopher Haase in the Eastalent Racing Audi and Grenier was pushed down to fifth.

When the two sessions were combined, Al Zubair lined up on the front of the grid in second place behind Mancheca for the start of the race.

WOMEN'S CRICKET

Dominant ISC-MKW emerge champs

MUSCAT: A dominant Indian Social Club (ISC)- Mangalorean Konkani Wing (MKW) routed Oman Cricket Academy (OCA)-A by 6 wickets to emerge champions of the Oman Cricket (OC) Women's Summer League 2024 at the Oman Cricket Academy ground on Thursday.

It was the second title and underlined the strength of ISC-MKW as they followed up their title win in the OC Women's League Season 2023-24.

During both the leagues, ISC-MKW remained unbeaten in the 11 matches they played.

In the final of the OC Women's Super League, OCA-A were bundled out 85 in 17.1 overs after electing to bat first. Sameera Khan top scored 34 (29b) while Hina Javed scored 26 (28b).

Amanda D'Costa was the wrecker-in-chief with four wickets while Pratima B claimed two wickets. Priyanka Mendonca and Merita Pinto picked a wicket each.

Chasing a modest total, Trupti Pawde gave ISC-MKW a strong start with a knock of 24 (33b) Priyanka smashed 35 off 28 deliveries to lead the team to a six-wicket win with 26 balls to spare. Fiza Javed, Hina Javed and Sameera Khan picked up a wicket each.

A total of eight teams took part in the league, which is part of oC's ongoing Cricket4Her – Women's Cricket Development Programme.

At the awards ceremony, Paul Sheridan, OC's vice-chairman and Women's Cricket Committee member, Oman Cricket presented the awards. Priyanka was the player of the final.

Individual awards: Best batter: Fiza Javed (279 runs in 5 innings with 2 hundreds and 1 fifty), Best bowler: Amanda Dcosta (13 wickets in 5 matches), Player of the Tournament: Fiza Javed.

Brief scores: OCA Women's A 85 in 17.1 overs (Sameera 34; Amanda 4/14) lost to ISC-MKW 86/4 in 15.4 overs (Priyanka Mendonca 35).

FIA JUNIOR WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Oman's Al Rawahi all set to compete in Rally Italia

MUSCAT: A determined Abdullah Al Rawahi of Oman and his British co-driver Ross Whittock are all set to showcase their mettle in the competitive FIA Junior World Rally Championship (JWRC) in Rally Italia Sardegna in Italy's Sardinia from May 31-June 2.

The Oman Rally Team (ORT) duo arrived in the picturesque Mediterranean island of Sardinia to acclimatise and do prepare for the tough JWRC rally

Rally Italia Sardegna is the sixth round of the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC) and the third in the JWRC calendar after events in Sweden and Croatia. Al Rawahi got his first ever taste of racing on snow between banks in the forests on the season's opener in Scandinavia but was forced to miss round two on tarmac because of a back injury.

With his usual Jordanian co-driver Ata Al-Hmoud unavailable because of other commitments this week, Al Rawahi lines up against 17 JWRC rivals with Whittock for the first time.

Both the Omani and his stand-in co-driver were in action at last week's Jordan Rally but both retired early: Whittock was sitting alongside Qatar's Khalid Al Suwaidi until they crashed in the opening stage and Al Rawahi and Al Hmoud were sidelined with engine damage after an accident on the third gravel stage. The defending FIA Middle East rally champions had been leading the event after the second stage.

Al Rawahi said: "I am very excited for this rally. This is a gravel rally compared to the one in Sweden and the second one that we missed. I think we will be more comfortable on gravel terrain. There is still a lot to learn in the World Rally Championship.

"Obviously, the competition is very high and we are still looking to gain experience and learn more and even learn from my co-driver as well. Maybe we will have a different perspective from (stage) notes and stuff. Hopefully, it will be a good rally and a safe one too."

Crews taking part in the JWRC use identical M-Sport Poland Ford Fiesta Rally3 cars running on Pirelli tyres. While Al Rawahi is using the opening events to gain experience on different surfaces and against new competition, the prize for the winner will be an arrival and drive package to contest four European rounds of the 2025 FIA World Rally Championship in a Ford Fiesta Rally2 car.

The Omani's rivals this weekend include the series-leading Estonian Romet Jürgenson, Australia's Taylor Gill, Romania's Norbert Maior and other competitors from as far afield as Bolivia, Paraguay, Chile, Perú, South Africa, Kazakhstan, Turkey and Belgium.

The on-stage action gets underway on Friday afternoon (May 31) with two passes through a pair of gravel stages between Osilo, Tergu, Sedini and Castelsardo to the north of Alghero in northwestern Sardinia.

Saturday's (June 1) action features two passes through the Tempio Pausania, Tula-Erula, Monte Lerno-Monti Di Ala and Coiluna-Loelle stages, before a further two passes through the Cala Flumini and Sassari-Argentiera specials rounds off the weekend's action on Sunday morning (June 2).

Competitors will tackle 266.12 competitive during the rally.

OMAN CRUDE PRICE RISES

The price of Oman oil has increased, with prices for delivery by July 2024 reaching $83.19, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil rose by 77 cents from the price of Friday, which was $82.42. - ONA

MSX INDEX ENDS LOWER

The MSX index closed at 4,790.51 points, down by 0.32 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.09 per cent at 455.59 points. Al Omaniya Non Convertible Bonds 2022, up 10.00 per cent, was the top gainer while Oman Fisheries, down 7.69 per cent, was the top loser.

Treasury bills worth OMR22.03mn issued

The value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to OMR22.03 million, for a maturity period of 91 days

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) raised OMR22.03 million million by way of allotting treasury bills on Monday.

The value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to OMR22.03 million, for a maturity period of 91 days. The average accepted price reached OMR98.732 for every OMR100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at OMR98.725 per OMR100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 5.08651 per cent and 5.15185 per cent, respectively.

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

It may be noted that the interest rate on the Repo operations with CBO is 6.00 per cent while the discount rate on the Treasury Bills Discounting Facility with CBO is 6.50 per cent.

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

HIGH-LEVEL TRAINING PROGRAMMES

OQ launches Digital Hub to train national cadres in cybersecurity

MUSCAT: OQ, the global integrated energy group, launched the OQ Digital Hub under the auspices of Dr Rahma Ibrahim Al Mahrouqi, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

Established in partnership with various leading international and local companies in the information technology sector, OQ Digital Hub aims to harness collective efforts to develop national workforce skills through structured and high-level training programmes. These meticulously structured programmes will help enhancing the professional qualifications of participants.

By focusing on several pillars of digital transformation, OQ develops digital solutions through partnerships with global companies, accelerates digital transformation, fosters SMEs, and trains entrepreneurs to hone their IT skills. During Comex 2024, OQ signed 14 MoUs with international companies to contribute in providing training programmes. - ONA

STRENGTHENING LOCAL COMMUNITY

OETC launches three sustainable projects

Times News Service

MUSCAT: As part of its commitment to social responsibility and sustainable goals aimed at creating a positive impact on Omani society, the Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) has recently launched three sustainable projects.

These initiatives are designed to provide essential support to various community organizations, improve the quality of life for individuals, and enhance their integration into the local community, contributing to a more prosperous future for the Sultanate of Oman.

The sustainability projects included supporting the Omani Association for the Disabled by providing 55 wheelchairs to be distributed to people with disabilities, to facilitate their movement and reduce their dependence on others, as well as to enhance their integration into society. The sustainability projects also included supporting the Omani Association for the Hearing Impaired by providing 20 specialised and advanced hearing aids, to be distributed to students in schools to improve their integration into society, enhance their self-confidence, and improve their quality of life.

Additionally, the sustainability projects included supporting the Omani Cancer Association (OCA)by providing 8 specialized and advanced models to support awareness campaigns about breast cancer, and the importance of early detection for better treatment opportunities.

These models will be distributed across all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman to facilitate the movement of association members and enhance awareness campaigns and initiatives in this regard.

In confirmation of the OETC's commitment to supporting the community and launching such initiatives, Samira Salem Al-Mughairi, Communication and Sustainability Manager highlighted the various initiatives, projects, and plans the company is working on to achieve a sustainable positive impact on the local community and its members. She also emphasized the company's ongoing efforts to achieve its targets in various aspects of sustainability, especially environmental, social, and governance sustainability.

Al Mughairi added, " OETC is diligently striving to support progress in various vital fields, especially those directly impacting the local community and its members. We affirm the company's commitment to sustainability through every initiative and project, as we aim, through our initiatives, to support various sectors rather than focusing on a specific sector. This has been evident to all through the various sustainable projects we have launched in previous years. We are continuing our efforts to achieve environmental, social, and governance sustainability (ESG), for a sustainable future for Oman and its people."

It is worth mentioning that OETC, a member of the Nama Group, is the only company responsible for the transmission and control of electricity across the Sultanate's network. The electricity is transmitted from production stations to distributed load centres in the governorates. The transmission network operates at a voltage of 132kV and above to cover most of the governorates in the Sultanate, whether in the north or the south. Furthermore, OETC manages the interconnection lines between Oman and the GCC interconnection network, which operates at a voltage of 220kV.

PUBLIC AUTHORITY FOR SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONES AND FREE ZONES

Opaz showcases its latest electronic services for investors at Comex 2024

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (Opaz) will participate in the Comex Global Technology Show 2024 from May 27 to 30 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

The show is a scientific platform that will feature the latest digital breakthroughs from companies in this field as well as the most significant e-services provided by public and private institutions.

Opaz will have a special booth at Comex 2024 to showcase its diverse experiences and projects in various fields, including smart cities, digital transformation, and evaluating many electronic services. Opaz aims, during its participation, to present a number of outstanding projects and applications in the field of artificial intelligence. A number of Opaz specialists will be available at its booth to demonstrate an array of electronic services, including the Omap platform, the digital portal for integrated geographical maps that include all-inclusive data of masterplans for the special economic zones, free zones, and industrial cities overseen by Opaz, in addition to reviewing the advantages of the Enjazat system, which is an electronic platform that tracks the stages of implementation of all projects — strategic, operational, and event — that have been incorporated into the authority's annual work plan. In addition to the Internet of Things project, which is being implemented in the network control rooms at Opaz building and the Centralised Compliance System "Eltizam", which will be launched at Comex 2023, in addition to artificial intelligence and drone experiments.

Visitors and participants passing by the Opaz booth can view the different initiatives and achievements in digital transformation, artificial intelligence and the use of 3D printing technology projects of Opaz.

It is worth noting that the Opaz won the award for 3D printing technology at Comex Technology Awards 2023, for using 3D printing technology to build a commercial cafe and its annexes, as well as a residential unit with its annexes in the Fishermen Village in the tourist area of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm. This award is a testament to the Authority's efforts towards digital transformation through the creation of electronic programmes and applications and the adoption of artificial intelligence technologies to streamline procedures and offer investors quick, secure, and all-encompassing services. It also represents the pinnacle of the Authority's excellence in providing leading digital services in the investment sector and serving investors.

STATE AUDIT INSTITUTION

Global participation elevates Inclusive Leadership Masterclass in Muscat

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Inclusive Leadership Masterclass was launched by the INTOSAI Development Initiative (IDI) in collaboration with the State Audit Institution (SAI), yesterday at Sheraton Hotel in Muscat.

The three-day event was inaugurated by Ahmed bin Salim Al Rujaibi, Deputy Chairman of the State Audit Institution, and saw participation from heads of Supreme Audit Institutions and members of the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI).

The Inclusive Leadership Masterclass seeks to achieve several key objectives, the most important of which is to leverage the experiences of SAI leaders and the knowledge of international experts. The masterclass also aims at developing innovative strategies for adopting an inclusive leadership approach, thereby assisting SAIs in the effective fulfilment of their mandates. In addition, the programme targets raising knowledge and awareness on the importance of inclusive leadership as a core value of the SAI and allowing SAI leaders to identify strategies and actions that can be taken in leading an inclusive SAI.

The masterclass consists of several scientific sessions with in-depth discussions on key topics, such as understanding the concept of "inclusive leadership" in terms of the notion of inclusiveness and its relation to diversity, reviewing contemporary leadership styles, and identifying the main traits of an inclusive leader.

The programme sessions also address reviewing means of acquiring expert knowledge on the best practices that encourage inclusive approaches in SAI works, identifying tools that support inclusive behaviour in the workplace, as well as discussing ways to cultivate a culture of an open and safe work environment.

It is worth noting that Inclusive Leadership is one of the masterclasses of the MASTERY initiative, which was launched by the IDI in early 2021. The MASTERY initiative aims at empowering SAI leaders to lead their institutions with the goal of realising change that leads to effectiveness, impact, and sustainability within and beyond their institutions. The initiative also facilitates the exchange of experiences among SAI leaders, fosters an in-depth understanding of crucial subjects, and provides opportunities for interaction with globally recognised experts in an enriching academic setting.

MARKET

MSX index ends lower

Al Omaniya Non Convertible Bonds 2022, up 10.00 per cent, was the top gainer while Oman Fisheries, down 7.69 per cent, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,790.51 points, down by 0.32 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.09 per cent at 455.59 points. Al Omaniya Non Convertible Bonds 2022, up 10.00 per cent, was the top gainer while Oman Fisheries, down 7.69 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of Bank Nizwa were the most active in terms of number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 881 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of OMR4.05 million, with more than 22.87 million shares changing hands. Out of 53 traded securities, 11 advanced, 19 declined, and 23 remained unchanged. At the session close, foreign investors were net sellers for OMR128,000 while domestic investors were net buyers for OMR126,000, followed by GCC & Arab investors for OMR2,000 worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,815.32 points, down 0.65 per cent. Prices of Bank Nizwa, Ominvest were up by 1.85 per cent, 0.27 per cent respectively. Prices of Ahli Bank, Taageer Finance, Global Financial Investments, Oman Arab Bank, Oman & Emirates Investment were down by 5.56 per cent, 3.77 per cent, 1.45 per cent, 1.39 per cent, 1.24 per cent respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,909.68 points, up 0.03 per cent. Prices of Oman Flour Mills, Raysut Cement, Voltamp Energy were up by 1.29 per cent, 0.81 per cent, 0.35 per cent respectively. Prices of Oman Fisheries, Galfar Engineering, Jazeera Steel Products were down by 7.69 per cent, 0.62 per cent, 0.36 per cent respectively.

Services Index was down by 0.13 per cent before closing at 1,797.61 points. Prices of Barka Desalination, Ooredoo, Oman Telecom were up by 2.42 per cent, 1.00 per cent, 0.19 per cent respectively. Prices of Musandam Power, Al Batinah Power, National Gas, SMN Power Holding, Sembcorp Salalah were down by 3.57 per cent, 1.32 per cent, 1.25 per cent, 1.21 per cent, 0.98 per cent respectively.

— United Securities

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	4,817.485	4,788.742	4,790.508	4,805.696	-15.188	-0.32
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,880.521	7,807.625	7,815.322	7,866.601	-51.279	-0.65
Industry Index	5,909.682	5,861.141	5,909.682	5,907.962	1.720	0.03
Services Index	1,807.360	1,797.613	1,797.613	1,800.025	-2.412	-0.13
MSX Shariah Index	455.771	454.289	455.591	455.162	0.429	0.09
FIXED INCOME INDEX	1,069.101	1,069.101	1,069.101	1,069.101	0.000	0.00
MSX TR INDEX	6,684.459	6,644.576	6,647.026	6,668.100	-21.074	-0.32
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,933.266	8,850.632	8,859.357	8,917.487	-58.130	-0.65
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	6,818.369	6,762.364	6,818.369	6,816.385	1.984	0.03
SERVICES TR IDX	2,088.367	2,077.104	2,077.104	2,079.892	-2.788	-0.13

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
22,873,840	4,052,418	881	24,423,325,208	11	19	23	53

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR MONDAY, MAY 27

REGULAR MARKET

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RO)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	SECIRITY SYMBOL	MARKET CAP
OM0000001087	OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	2,900	725	2	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.000	0.000	0.250	0.248	0.275	0.100	OUIC	25,000,000
OM0000001152	OMAN NATIONAL ENGINEERING & INVESTMENT	77,076	8,787	8	0.114	0.114	0.114	0.114	0.114	0.000	0.000	0.114	0.114	0.115	0.100	ONES	17,100,000
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	800	222	1	0.277	0.277	0.277	0.277	0.277	0.000	0.000	0.277	0.277	0.280	0.100	NBOB	450,387,140
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	43,964	16,420	15	0.372	0.379	0.372	0.379	0.378	0.001	0.265	0.379	0.373	0.380	0.100	OMVS	253,310,496
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	166,700	13,336	13	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.081	-0.001	-1.235	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.100	OEIO	9,750,000
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	10,530	1,895	6	0.180	0.180	0.180	0.180	0.180	0.000	0.000	0.180	0.180	0.183	0.100	AACT	39,600,000
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	116,807	32,936	12	0.282	0.283	0.280	0.280	0.281	-0.001	-0.356	0.280	0.270	0.280	0.100	ATMI	34,971,429
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	6,760	392	2	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.000	0.000	0.058	0.057	0.061	0.100	UFCI	20,655,383
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIYA INVESTMENT HO.	5,000	370	1	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.000	0.000	0.074	0.073	0.076	0.100	SIHC	6,660,000
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	1,001,134	258,802	83	0.260	0.260	0.258	0.259	0.259	0.000	0.000	0.258	0.258	0.258	0.100	BKMB	1,944,156,839
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	125,315	133,234	32	1.056	1.065	1.056	1.056	1.054	0.002	0.190	1.056	1.056	1.064	0.100	OTEL	792,000,000
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	805,000	54,880	23	0.069	0.069	0.068	0.068	0.069	-0.001	-1.449	0.068	0.068	0.071	0.100	GFIC	13,600,000
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	2,199,707	303,946	30	0.139	0.139	0.137	0.138	0.139	-0.001	-0.719	0.138	0.138	0.147	0.100	BKSB	769,659,985
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	265,500	80,775	40	0.300	0.305	0.300	0.303	0.300	0.003	1.000	0.301	0.301	0.301	0.100	ORDS	197,236,102
OM0000004735	SEMBCORP SALALAH	138,640	14,003	8	0.101	0.101	0.101	0.101	0.102	-0.001	-0.980	0.101	0.101	0.101	0.100	SSPW	96,411,767
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	38,884	3,117	11	0.081	0.081	0.080	0.080	0.081	-0.001	-1.235	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.100	AMAT	14,000,000
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	441,163	33,107	39	0.076	0.076	0.075	0.075	0.076	-0.001	-1.316	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.100	BATP	50,616,557
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	588,578	46,293	40	0.078	0.080	0.078	0.078	0.078	0.000	0.000	0.078	0.078	0.078	0.100	SUWP	55,723,695
OM0000007811	MUSANDAM POWER	9,600	2,595	4	0.270	0.275	0.270	0.270	0.280	-0.010	-3.571	0.270	0.270	0.000	0.100	MSPW	19,005,300
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	260,296	77,089	43	0.297	0.297	0.296	0.296	0.297	-0.001	-0.337	0.296	0.296	0.305	0.100	ABRJ	227,979,200
OM0000009072	OQ GAS NETWORKS	1,512,740	213,726	152	0.142	0.142	0.141	0.141	0.142	-0.001	-0.704	0.141	0.141	0.145	0.100	OQGN	610,617,973
Total	21	7,817,094	1,296,648	565													

Parallel Market

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RO)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	SECIRITY SYMBOL	MARKET CAP
OM0000001095	DHOFAR INSURANCE	3,300	670	2	0.203	0.203	0.203	0.203	0.205	-0.002	-0.976	0.203	0.202	0.214	0.100	DICS	22,160,468
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	15,000	1,185	1	0.079	0.079	0.079	0.079	0.080	-0.001	-1.250	0.079	0.077	0.079	0.100	NGCI	6,715,000
OM0000001178	MUSCAT GASES	138	18	1	0.132	0.132	0.132	0.132	0.132	0.000	0.000	0.132	0.000	0.132	0.100	MGMC	3,960,000
OM0000001186	NATIONAL BISCUIT INDUSTRIES LIMITED	153	649	1	4.240	4.240	4.240	4.240	4.240	0.000	0.000	4.240	4.200	4.240	1.000	NBII	4,240,000
OM0000001368	CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL INDUSTRIES	1,470	62	1	0.042	0.042	0.042	0.042	0.042	0.000	0.000	0.042	0.042	0.038	0.100	CMII	2,625,000
OM0000001400	OMAN FLOUR MILLS	100,100	46,503	10	0.430	0.470	0.430	0.470	0.464	0.006	1.293	0.470	0.465	0.470	0.100	OFMI	74,025,000
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	319,139	817,827	6	2.560	2.600	2.560	2.600	2.600	0.000	0.000	2.600	2.500	2.600	0.100	OCAI	233,220,000
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	385,100	34,163	31	0.088	0.089	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.000	0.000	0.088	0.088	0.089	0.100	AAIC	18,128,000
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	4,225	308	2	0.073	0.073	0.073	0.081	0.081	0.000	0.000	0.073	0.073	0.080	0.100	AMII	6,885,000
OM0000002200	AHLI BANK	8,087	1,237	1	0.153	0.153	0.153	0.153	0.162	-0.009	-5.556	0.153	0.153	0.160	0.100	ABOB	359,497,592
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	16,000	4,000	2	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.000	0.000	0.250	0.236	0.250	0.100	AJSS	15,301,068
OM0000003000	Al MAHA PETROLEUM PRODUCTS MARKETING	4,836	4,981	1	1.030	1.030	1.030	1.030	1.030	0.000	0.000	1.030	1.018	1.030	0.100	MHAS	71,070,000
OM0000003281	TAAGEER FINANCE	16,518	1,685	1	0.102	0.102	0.102	0.102	0.106	-0.004	-3.774	0.102	0.102	0.105	0.100	TFCI	27,651,231
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	1,277,293	207,855	101	0.163	0.165	0.161	0.161	0.162	-0.001	-0.617	0.161	0.161	0.161	0.100	GECS	32,680,818
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	5,210	1,480	11	0.284	0.284	0.284	0.284	0.283	0.001	0.353	0.284	0.271	0.284	0.100	VOES	23,118,381
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	151,000	49,528	7	0.328	0.328	0.328	0.328	0.332	-0.004	-1.205	0.328	0.325	0.328	0.100	SMNP	65,480,477
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	11,786,116	1,275,174	53	0.109	0.110	0.107	0.110	0.108	0.002	1.852	0.110	0.108	0.110	0.100	BKNZ	246,064,834
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	19,059	3,219	8	0.170	0.170	0.167	0.170	0.170	0.000	0.000	0.170	0.167	0.170	0.100	AMCI	9,350,000
OM0000005260	OMAN ARAB BANK	99,899	14,376	13	0.145	0.145	0.142	0.142	0.144	-0.002	-1.389	0.142	0.142	0.143	0.100	OAB	237,056,220
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	151,395	8,938	14	0.059	0.060	0.059	0.059	0.059	0.000	0.000	0.059	0.059	0.064	0.100	PHPC	86,293,486
OM0000007084	MUSCAT CITY DESALINATION	1,100	82	2	0.074	0.077	0.074	0.077	0.077	0.000	0.000	0.077	0.074	0.077	0.100	MCDE	11,977,381
OM0000007407	DHOFAR GENERATING	2,100	155	3	0.075	0.075	0.072	0.072	0.072	0.000	0.000	0.072	0.072	0.075	0.100	DGEN	16,001,280
OM0000007910	AMAN REAL ESTATE	1,735	165	1	0.095	0.095	0.095	0.095	0.095	0.000	0.000	0.095	0.000	0.095	0.100	AMAN	19,000,000
OM0000008710	BARKA DESALINATION	1,000	127	1	0.127	0.127	0.127	0.127	0.124	0.003	2.419	0.127	0.000	0.127	0.100	BRDE	9,591,294
OM0000008868	THE PEARL REIF	42,631	4,955	11	0.117	0.117	0.116	0.116	0.117	-0.001	-0.855	0.116	0.115	0.116	0.100	PRFD	58,940,011
Total	25	14,412,604	2,479,340	285													

TRADING

Oil prices steady as markets turn focus to Opec+ meeting

SINGAPORE: Oil prices steadied in Asian trading on Monday as markets awaited an Opec+ meeting on June 2 where producers are expected to discuss maintaining voluntary output cuts for the rest of the year. The Brent crude July contract was up 18 cents to $82.30 a barrel as of 04:09 GMT. The more-active August contract rose 25 cents to $82.09.

US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures rose 24 cents to $77.96. Brent ended last week about 2% lower and WTI lost nearly 3% after Federal Reserve minutes showed some officials would be willing to tighten interest rates further if they believed it was necessary to control persistent inflation.

Public holidays in the US and UK on Monday are expected to keep trading relatively thin.

The upcoming meeting of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies, (Opec+), was pushed back by a day and will be held online, Opec said.

The producers will discuss whether to extend voluntary output cuts of 2.2 million barrels per day into the second half of the year, with three sources from Opec+ countries saying an extension was likely.

Oil futures are expected to maintain today's gains due expectations of the cuts being extended, said Sugandha Sachdeva, founder of Delhi-based research firm SS WealthStreet. -BNA

INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS

Sohar International introduces first API Banking Portal in Oman

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman's Best Bank, has launched its comprehensive Application Programming Interfaces (API) Banking Portal, heralding a new era designed to revolutionise financial management catering primarily to government bodies, corporate entities, and fintech companies through providing innovative API based solutions. This transformative journey is a direct response to the rapidly evolving financial landscape, where shifts in consumer behavior and technological advancements necessitate a new approach to banking.

Standing at the forefront of financial sector modernisation, API banking enables third party entities to securely access bank services and data to complete specific transactions tha otherwise may take a longer time to complete.

Ahmed Al Musalmi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International commented, "Today marks a significant milestone in our nation's financial landscape as we proudly launch our API Banking portal, a first in the country. This innovative platform empowers developers and third-party providers to create groundbreaking financial services, driving unparalleled convenience and choice for our customers. By embracing this innovative technology, we are not only fostering innovation but also reinforcing our commitment to security, transparency, and customer-centric solutions. Aligning with Oman Vision 2040 and our nation's agenda towards a more digital economy, this initiative supports our collective goal of creating a technologically advanced and diversified financial sector. By driving seamless integration, we aspire to lead Oman towards an era where financial technology sets new benchmarks, fostering broader economic growth and innovation."

Sohar International's API Banking Portal aims to redefine the provision of financial services with a diverse suite of products,

> API banking enables third party entities to securely access bank services and data to complete specific transactions tha otherwise may take a longer time to complete

including Account Information, Transaction, and Collection Services, among others, facilitated through carefully crafted APIs. Immediate benefits of this API banking will be experienced through customised capabilities, seamless interconnectivity and integration, increased efficiency and cost savings, and enhanced speed and flexibility of workflows, thereby fostering innovation.

These APIs are designed to offer a consent-driven, secure, and personalised banking experience, ensuring customers' needs are met with precision and care.

Sajeel Bashiruddin, Chief Digital Officer of Sohar International, articulates the essence of this initiative, stating, "Our API Banking platform represents Sohar International's commitment to innovation and empowering customers. By leading the adoption of this paradigm, we're not merely keeping pace with global trends; we're setting them in our region. API Banking transcends technological advancement, embodying a cultural shift towards more transparent, accessible, and customer-focused financial services. We're proud to pioneer this future of banking."

The API Banking platform will catalyse the development of new business models and use cases, offering significant benefits to government bodies and corporates, with potential future extensions to retail customers. This initiative underscores Sohar International's dedication to innovation, collaboration, and a customer-centric approach, aiming to position itself as the first bank in the country to introduce such an API offering.

Through this initiative, Sohar International reaffirms its pioneering status in the Omani and global banking sectors, driving financial technology progression and innovation.

This bold move sets new benchmarks for banking and finance, showcasing what's possible when traditional banking meets the future.

LIFESTYLE

RESEARCHERS FIND HIDDEN THREATS IN ADVANCED X-RAY IMAGING

TO PRODUCE multi-contrast images that may be utilized in thousands of complex scenarios to identify potentially threatening materials like explosives, researchers have integrated multiple x-ray imaging methods. Security screening and applications in the biological and physical sciences may benefit from the new method, which also makes use of easily accessible machine learning processes for materials classification.

"This method is particularly well suited to discriminating objects with very similar elemental composition," said research team leader Thomas Partridge from University College London in the UK. "It could be used in airport security or any inline scanning operation to examine materials flagged as suspicious by an initial fast scan such as a traditional x-ray system."

In Optica, Optica Publishing Group's journal for high-impact research, the researchers show that the new approach was highly effective in accurately detecting and identifying explosives in almost 4,000 scans of threatening and non-threatening materials hidden inside bags or obscured by various types of objects. They achieved a near-perfect recall rate of 99.68%, with just one false negative, from the threat-bearing cases.

"Although more work is needed, this approach could also prove useful for medical imaging," said Partridge. "While traditional x-ray imaging struggles to separate healthy from diseased tissue, other studies have suggested that phase contrast imaging might be able to capture textures that could be used to distinguish healthy and benign tissues."

The x-ray machines found in airports or medical facilities are based on x-ray attenuation, which images the reduction in intensity in x-rays after they pass through a material. The new technique creates multi-contrast images by combining conventional x-ray attenuation data at various x-ray energies with x-ray phase information, which consists of refraction and dark-field channels.

"Many explosives and common everyday items are composed primarily of carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen and oxygen, a similarity that makes them difficult to separate with x-ray attenuation alone," said Partridge. "The additional channels offer significantly better enhancement of edges as well as textures and grains of materials, allowing the discrimination of objects with very similar elemental compositions."

This work builds on previous efforts by the researchers to use multi-contrast x-ray phase enhanced imaging with machine learning approaches for threat detection with a smaller number of explosives and benign objects.

In the new experiment, they significantly scaled up the number of materials investigated and the number of imaging scenarios to better mimic real world situations. They also created a more effective scanning system with a resolution that could be changed by modifying the scanning speed and applied edge illumination phase contrast. Edge illumination involves placing masks before and after the sample to create the sub-pixel x-ray 'beamlets' needed to make the system sensitive to phase signals. One key advantage of this illumination approach is that it works with incoherent x-ray sources, widening its applicability.

Since the increased complexity of the imaging scenarios required more sophisticated protocols, the researchers applied machine learning with a hierarchical architecture that separated the cluttering objects before distinguishing material types. This made it possible to rapidly discern subtle differences in shapes and textures to distinguish materials based on key identifying features.

To test the new technique, they used 19 threat materials and 56 non-threat materials, all at three thicknesses and obscured by a range of cluttering objects such as brushes, face wipes, socks and other items passengers would have in a carry-on bag. By using all the acquired contrast channels, the researchers demonstrated not just material discrimination but identification in some cases. Using deep learning to analyze the signals from the combination of x-ray contrasts provided very promising results, with just a single miss out of 313 threat cases. The researchers said that translating this approach to a commercial setting would require improving the scanning speed through further optimization of the system. The robustness of material discrimination also needs to be tested on a larger set of data. One area of active study for the team is combining the method with 3D computed tomography scanning, which is being explored for security purposes because of its ability to provide detailed, three-dimensional images of objects. -ANI

Z-NUMBER	MATERIAL TYPE	EXAMPLE	POSSIBLE THREATS
0-8	ORGANIC	WOOD, OIL	C-4, INI,SEM/TEX
8-10	LOW ORGANIC	PAPER	COCAINE, HEROIN
10-12	HIGH INORGANIC	GLASS	PROPELLANTS
12-17	LIGHT METALS	ALUMINUM, SILICON	GUNPOWDER, TRIGGER DEVICES
12-17	LIGHT METALS	ALUMINUM, SILICON	GUNPOWDER, TRIGGER DEVICES
29+	DENSE METALS	GOLD, SILVER	HIGH-VALUE CONTRABAND

IMAGING

IMPENETRABLE - LEAD - SHIELDING FROM ABOVE THREATS

SPORTS

Sinner makes light work of Eubanks in Paris opener

Former Grand Slam champion Murray loses in opening round; Osaka survives scare at French Open

PARIS : Australian Open champion Jannik Sinner made light work of Christopher Eubanks to get his French Open campaign off to a bright start on Monday.

Italy's Sinner struggled with a hip injury in the build-up to Roland Garros but he moved well in a routine 6-3, 6-3, 6-4 win.

Sinner only looked troubled when serving out the match, handing his American opponent two break points with a double fault before recovering to seal victory.

"The hip is good, I am very happy," the 22-year-old, *BBC Sport* reported. "The general shape is not at 100% yet so we try to build every day."

Sinner will become world No.1 in Paris should defending champion Novak Djokovic fail to reach the semi-finals.

He put in a strong showing against Eubanks, hitting 33 winners and saving nine of the 10 break points he faced.

He will face home favourite Richard Gasquet next.

Former Grand Slam champion Andy Murray may have played his final French Open singles match after losing to Stan Wawrinka in a one-sided first-round meeting between the veteran pair on Sunday.

Britain's Murray, 37, has said this year is likely to be his last one on tour and avoided surgery on an ankle injury in order to return to Roland Garros. But his lack of court time was evident in a 6-4, 6-4, 6-2 loss to the 39-year-old Swiss.

It was the former world No1's first appearance on the Paris clay since a first-round defeat in 2020, and only the second since a brutal loss in the 2017 semi-finals – both also at the hands of Wawrinka.

Murray's exit on day one in Paris came after Jack Draper lost to Dutch qualifier Jesper de Jong as the British campaign got off to an inauspicious start.

Draper, 22, is 35th in the world but was beaten 7-5, 6-4, 6-7 (3-7), 3-6, 6-3 by 176th-ranked De Jong.

Elsewhere, Carlos Alcaraz said his injured forearm is getting "better and better" after claiming a dominant first-round French Open win over J.J. Wolf.

However he dropped just four games in a 6-1, 6-2, 6-1 dispatching of American lucky loser Wolf.

Spain's Alcaraz needed just one hour and 51 minutes to win, with his ground strokes close to their formidable best.

Alcaraz will play qualifier Jesper de Jong in the second round.

Earlier on Sunday, Naomi Osaka reached the second round. Four-time major winner Osaka said her first-round win over Italy's Lucia Bronzetti at the French Open was "like a rollercoaster". Japan's Osaka came through 6-1, 4-6, 7-5 for her first victory at Roland Garros in three years.

"It really was like a rollercoaster," said Osaka, who lost in the first round of the Australian Open on her Grand Slam return.

Elsewhere, Jelena Ostapenko cruised into the second round with a 6-4, 7-5 win over Romanian Jaqueline Cristian. Another former champion Barbora Krejcikova fell to a shock loss to Swiss world No.76 Viktorija Golubic.

Czech 24th seed Krejcikova, who was victorious at Roland Garros in 2021, lost 7-6 (7-3), 6-4 on Court Suzanne Lenglen as Golubic reached the second round for the first time since 2016.

Ukraine's Dayana Yastremska, seeded 30th, came from a set down to beat Australian wildcard Ajla Tomljanovic 3-6, 6-3, 6-3.

French home hope and 21st seed Caroline Garcia beat German qualifier Eva Lys, winning 4-6, 7-5, 6-2, while Ukrainian 18th seed Marta Kostyuk beat Brazilian qualifier Laura Pigossi 7-5, 6-7 (4-7), 6-4.But Russian 29th seed Ve ronika Kudermetova became the first seed to fall with a 6-2, 6-4 loss to Czech Marie Bouzkova. - Agencies

SPANISH LA LIGA

Xavi bids Barcelona farewell with victory

BARCELONA: Xavi's time as Barcelona boss came to an end with a 2-1 win at Sevilla in the final La Liga game of the season on Sunday, *BBC Sport* reported.

Fermin Lopez scored the winner, running to celebrate with the departing boss, who was told on Friday he was being sacked.

Robert Lewandowski's early goal gave the visitors the lead before Sevilla's Youssef En-Nesyri responded.

Barcelona were already guaranteed to finish second in La Liga, behind champions Real Madrid, while Sevilla end the season in 14th.

Former Spain midfielder Xavi said in January that he was going to leave the Nou Camp, but was persuaded to stay by club president Joan Laporta in April.

However, during a meeting with Laporta and sporting director Deco - exactly one month since it was announced that he would remain at the club - the 44-year-old was told he would not be staying.

Former Bayern Munich boss Hansi Flick is set to replace him.

Xavi, who won four Champions Leagues as a player with the club, guided Barcelona to their only La Liga title in the past five seasons last year.

"I don't think the work has been appreciated enough," said Xavi after Sunday's game.

"A double last year [La Liga and Super Cup], and this year we haven't been up to the task because of details.

"I leave with some mixed feelings because the work is positive even though we didn't win the titles this season. I think we were on the right track and I still think so."

Barca goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen added: "Xavi has always given us a lot

"He worked every day so that we could succeed. On a personal level, he's been a friend for many years and it's never easy to let him go." - Agencies

FORMULA ONE

Leclerc claims home Monaco win after heavy Perez crash

MONACO: Ferrari's Charles Leclerc held his nerve to convert pole position at his home Monaco Grand Prix into a controlled victory after a huge first-lap pile-up on Sunday, *BBC Sport* reported.

A collision between the two Haas cars and Red Bull's Sergio Perez caused a red flag and led to a race of extreme tyre management by the leaders. Leclerc controlled McLaren's Oscar Piastri, teammate Carlos Sainz and McLaren's Lando Norris all race - without any of them making a pit stop - to take Ferrari's second win of 2024.

The final laps were enlivened by a battle for fifth between Mercedes' George Russell and Red Bull's Max Verstappen, in which the Briton managed to hold out despite having tyres that were more than 50 laps older than Verstappen's. Verstappen had stopped for fresh tyres with 26 laps to go and quickly caught Russell, but despite the huge grip advantage was unable to pass.

Lewis Hamilton, who had stopped for fresh tyres a lap before Verstappen, took seventh place - just behind his 2021 title rival.

Leclerc's win was a story of redemption for the 26-year-old, who twice before had taken pole position at Monaco only for the win to slip through his fingers.

This time, neither team nor driver made a mistake after Leclerc's blistering pace had secured pole, before Ferrari planned a race centred on managing from the front.

The top four had started on medium tyres, while Russell, Verstappen and Hamilton behind them were on the hards.

But the red flag - which was caused when Kevin Magnussen's front left tyre tagged Perez's right rear, spinning the Red Bull around, the pair also collecting Nico Hulkenberg - turned the race around.

Firstly, it allowed Sainz to rejoin the race in his original third-place grid position after a collision with Piastri at the first corner had caused a puncture which led to him going straight on at Casino Square. And it allowed Ferrari and McLaren to switch their cars to hard tyres while the barriers were repaired, with the expectation that they would run and run and perhaps have to get to the end if there were no more safety cars.

That meant taking the tyres about 15 laps further than Pirelli had predicted they would last, but Leclerc and his pursuers were more than capable of making them last by virtue of careful driving and controlling their pace.

The teams spent the race looking at gaps to rivals and wondering about pit-stop windows but the remainder of the grand prix passed without major incident and going to the end was what they were forced to do.

In the closing laps, Leclerc underlined his domination of the weekend by stretching out his lead and he crossed the line seven seconds ahead of Piastri.

Leclerc screamed with delight on the radio after crossing the line, before saying: "I need to cool down, myself as well. Tonight will be a big night."

If the race for the win was sufficient a demonstration of the difficulty of passing at Monaco, Verstappen put it in even starker perspective after rocketing up to Russell's tail in the closing laps, before being unable to make any progress.

Verstappen's sixth place combined with Leclerc's win cut the Dutchman's championship lead to 31 points after seven of 24 races.

RB's Yuki Tsunoda, Williams' Alex Albon and Alpine's Pierre Gasly completed the top 10 and took the final points, even though Gasly's car had to be repaired in the red-flag period after a collision with teammate Esteban Ocon at Portier. Ocon was penalised 10 seconds for causing the collision, which will be converted into a five-place grid penalty at the next race in Canada. No blame was attributed by the stewards for the Magnussen-Perez-Hulkenberg collision. - Agencies

PREMIER LEAGUE

Winning my way is best way, says Saints boss Martin

LONDON: Southampton head coach Russell Martin says his side need to "embrace the challenge" of playing his style of football in the Premier League next season.

Saints earned promotion back to the top flight at the first time of asking after a 1-0 victory over Leeds United in the Championship play-off final on Sunday.

Martin has come under scrutiny for his possession-based mantra during the Championship season, especially when Saints started the campaign slowly, *BBC Sport* reported.

"I know possession won't win you games," said Martin after his side's Wembley success.

"But it is a vehicle for us to give ourselves the best opportunity to show the best version of ourselves, I really believe that.

"If you win this way, to me it is the best way, not the right or wrong way but it's the best."

Southampton ended the Championship season in fourth position, beating West Bromwich Albion over two legs before seeing off Leeds in the final.

As the campaign progressed, the players at St Mary's grew more comfortable with their head coach's style, enjoying a club-record 25-game unbeaten run.

Martin will be a Premier League boss for the first time next season - he was managing MK Dons in League One as recently as the 2019-20 campaign.

Indeed, his highest finish as a manager before this season was 10th place with Swansea in the second tier last year.

"I feel really emotional and overwhelmed by the support I have had over the last nine or 10 months, especially in the tough times," Martin told Sky Sports.

"For them [Southampton] to give me the job in the first place, I felt like I had to do this to justify and validate it so I'm so pleased for them because it wasn't an exciting appointment for them. To take me on was really brave."

Come August, Martin will face the prospect of trips to Etihad Stadium, Anfield and Emirates Stadium, and tasked with trying to stop some of the most talented teams in world football. "It's up to us to prove ourselves in the Premier League next season," added the 38-year-old, who played in the top flight with Norwich City.

"The style is something that myself and my players believe in, I won't change and I love what I do.

"We'll need to embrace the challenge without losing who we are." - Agencies

IN PICTURES

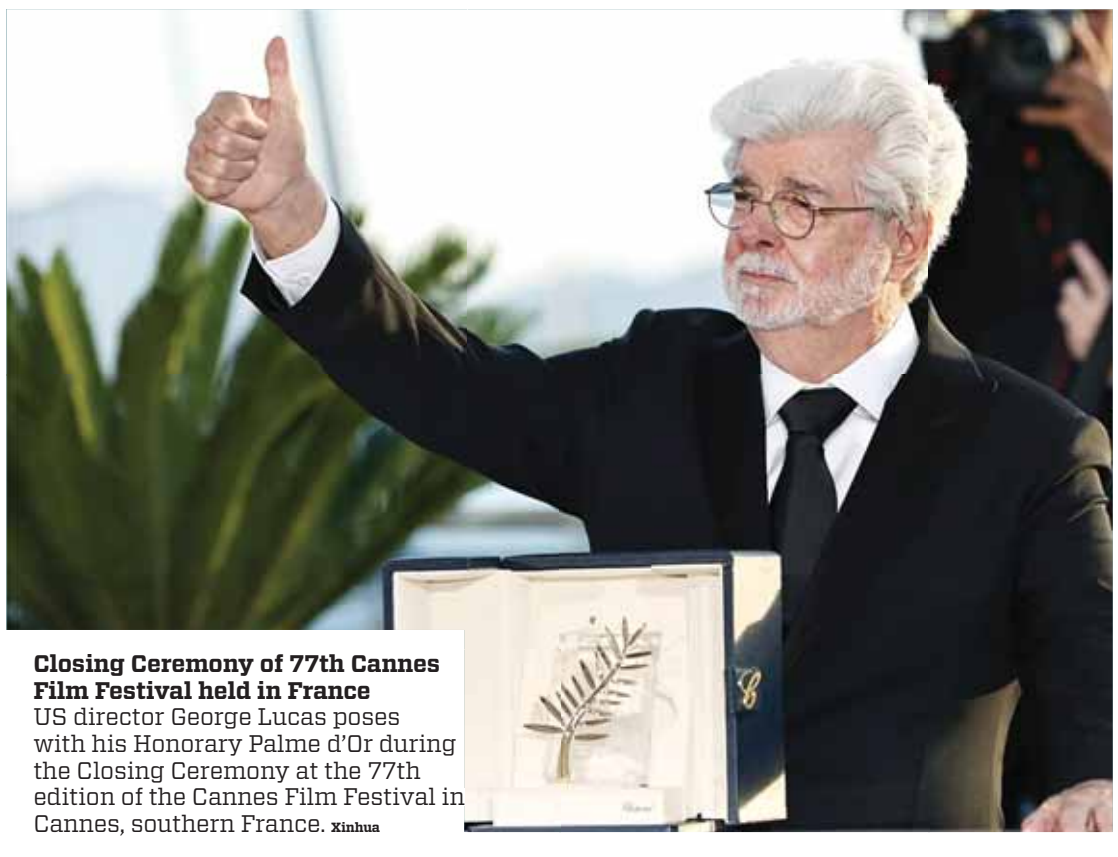
World Otter Day celebrated in Singapore
Smooth-coated otter pups learn to swim in a pond next to Singapore's Marina Bay Financial Centre. The day is celebrated on the last Wednesday of May, which falls on May 29 this year. Xinhua

Highlight of 2024 Taklimakan Rally
Driver Qiao Xiaohua of China and his pilot Wu Qi of China compete during the fifth stage at the 2024 Taklimakan Rally, in China's northwestern Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. Xinhua

Cyclone Remal leaves 7 dead in Bangladesh
People take flatbed tricycles on a waterlogged street in Dhaka, Bangladesh. At least seven people died in Bangladesh due to the devastations of cyclone Remal, which lashed parts of the South Asian country with heavy rain and strong wind on Sunday night. Xinhua

Shilpa Shetty Kundra during an event in Mumbai
Bollywood actress Shilpa Shetty Kundra poses for a picture during an event, in Mumbai. ANI Photo

11th International Festival for Drums and Traditional Arts kicks off in Cairo
Artists perform at the opening of the 11th International Festival for Drums and Traditional Arts in Cairo, Egypt, on May 26, 2024. Egypt's 11th International Festival for Drums and Traditional Arts kicked off here on Sunday night, attracting participants from 30 countries and regions. Xinhua



Closing Ceremony of 77th Cannes Film Festival held in France
US director George Lucas poses with his Honorary Palme d'Or during the Closing Ceremony at the 77th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. Xinhua

ROUND-UP

BankDhofar showcases cutting-edge banking solutions at Comex

BankDhofar places innovation and customer-centricity at the forefront while developing its products and services

MUSCAT: BankDhofar and Dhofar Islamic are participating at the 33rd edition of Comex 2024, the Sultanate of Oman's premier Technology, Communications, Innovation, and Digital Transformation show. Taking place from May 27 to May 30, at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC), this event brings together leading technology companies showcasing cutting-edge solutions.

Additionally, BankDhofar is the main sponsor of the Oman Broadband Innovatex Gaming event at the Gaming Zone, the largest video gaming event ever in the Sultanate of Oman.

BankDhofar places innovation and customer-centricity at the forefront while developing its products and services. The bank strives to offer a seamless and convenient banking experience to its customers.

Visitors of BankDhofar and Dhofar Islamic booth, at the Banking Fintech and InsurTech Zone, will get a chance to explore and experience the advanced banking solutions including; Dhofar Pay, Dhofar Islamic Pay, Samsung Pay, Rewards programme for credit card holders and Ladies Banking.

BankDhofar puts technology and innovation at the core of its strategy to improve the experience of its customers. The Bank is constantly keeping pace with the technological developments while designing new products and services to ensure convenient banking experience for customers. Customers may conduct their transactions at ease and around the clock through the highly-secured and user-friendly digital banking channels.

Comex showcases the latest advancements in technology aimed at enhancing efficiency, accessibility, and convenience across various sectors. BankDhofar is proud to be a part of this event, demonstrating its ongoing commitment to innovation and customer-centricity.

DESIGNATION

OCS Infotech named Fortinet's Engage Tech Support Partner

MUSCAT: OCS Infotech, the digitisation and IT arm of The Zubair Corporation, announced that it has been named an Engage Tech Support Partner (ETSP) within Fortinet's Engage Partner Program. This enrolment demonstrates OCS Infotech's ability to expertly support, operates, and maintains end-to-end Fortinet security solutions for their customers and offers the opportunity for OCS Infotech to upskill support engineers for better, more efficient customer support.

As an Engage Tech Support Partner, OCS Infotech, receives exclusive access to regular live workshops designed and delivered by Fortinet Subject Matter Experts as well as tailored training on selected products. Partners are also entitled to a fast-track process to engage Fortinet Support organisation. Being part of this program enables OCS Infotech to continue to maximise the quality of support they deliver to their customers and to expand their portfolio of Fortinet security solutions.

Anu Cherian Philip, General Manager of OCS Infotech expressed his pride, saying: "Earning Fortinet ETSP status alongside our Expert Partner designation underscores our team's expertise and dedication to delivering top-tier security support to our clients. As the first partner in the Sultanate of Oman to attain this accreditation, we take great pride in this accomplishment. We eagerly anticipate maintaining our unwavering commitment to providing our customers with unparalleled levels of service and support."

Fortinet is committed to helping partners meet new and evolving customer challenges created by work-from-anywhere models, hybrid IT environments, and the evolving threat landscape through Fortinet's Engage Partner Program and enablement tools for partners. The program is focused on enabling growth opportunities that are unique with Fortinet's expansive portfolio built around the Fortinet Security Fabric, designed to secure customers' entire infrastructure from the data center to the cloud.

COMEX

Vodafone brings future of enterprise connectivity through transformational experiences, technological innovations

MUSCAT: Vodafone Oman is taking the 33rd edition of the annual global technology show, Comex, to the next level by bringing the future of enterprise connectivity to life through transformational experiences, technological innovations and empowering services.

Focusing on key economic sectors including transport, health, agriculture and technology, the Vodafone showcase demonstrates the company's global expertise and commitment to revolutionize the digital landscape in Oman. From a custom built digital-river to an immersive digital twin experience, engaging workshops and ground-breaking solutions, this year's Comex showcase promises more than just mobility.

Commenting on this year's participation, Aneth Guerra, Vodafone Oman's Chief Operating Officer said, " Comex is a key event for us, providing a strategic platform to showcase our technological advancements and innovative solutions. This year, following the launch of our enterprise solutions, we aim to demonstrate the practical benefits we can offer Omani businesses by leveraging Vodafone Group's global expertise." She went on to add, "Our participation underscores our commitment to driving digital transformation and economic growth in Oman, equipping enterprises with the tools they need to succeed in today's dynamic digital landscape."

Adding value to its participation, Vodafone is set to host a series of educational workshops focused on AI, digital transformation, and future-proofing businesses. With an impressive line-up of industry expert speakers, the sessions will equip the enterprise community with the skills needed for growth and efficiency. They will further help safeguard operations and leverage technology effectively, by providing valuable insights on how to thrive in an evolving digital economy.

In line with its vision to digitalize the Omani way of life, Vodafone is also presenting four industry-specific solutions, each highlighting the company's advance technological capabilities today. Addressing road safety, Vodafone is inviting visitors to explore its newly launched platform called Safer Transport for Europe Platform (STEP). An innovative solution aimed to enhance transportation safety and efficiency, it was developed to connect road users directly with road operators and each other, enabling the sharing of safety information, hazard warnings and traffic updates in real-time no matter the device or in-vehicle system.

Within the Agriculture sector, Vodafone is presenting its cutting-edge digital platform, MYFARMWEBTm, designed to benefit farmers and their operations. Utilizing data collated from various sources and interfaces, the platform offers extensive services to enable the running of a more professional, profitable, and environmentally friendly commercial farm.

The third showcase presents Vodafone's unique technological advancement within the health sector. Through a solution called "Health Broker" Vodafone's is playing a pivotal role in improving the lives of those in assisted care by giving them tools to maintain their independence and giving peace of mind to their friends and family.

The final showcase, presented in collaboration with Vodafone's industry partner HTC, is the Digital Twin—a virtual representation of a physical object or system that provides real-time data and insights. At Comex, this technology will offer a detailed and accurate virtual view of the booth layout and showcases, allowing visitors to experience the booth remotely. On-site attendees will enjoy interactive elements such as virtual tours, product demonstrations, and live workshop sessions.

INVESTITURE CEREMONY

ISAM celebrates new era of student leadership

MUSCAT: On May 22, 2024, Indian School Al Mabela hosted a resplendent Investiture Ceremony at the school's Multi-Purpose Hall. Attending the occasion as Chief Guest was Omar Sulaiman Al Bahri, General Manager, Corporate Techno Plastic Industry. He was joined by the Guest of Honour, Ahmed Al Hajri, General Manager, International Food and Beverages Company, Barzman, who offered his felicitations and congratulated the ceremonial heads, council members and prefects.

The highlight of the ceremony was the induction of student representatives across all grades. Notably, Asish Manu Mathew and Suveeksha Sanjay Shanbhag assumed the roles of Head Boy and Head Girl, embodying the ideals of integrity, resilience, and service that ISAM seeks to cultivate.

GEELY

The New Geely

PREFACE

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