

HM SENDS GREETINGS TO VENEZUELA
MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Nicolás Maduro of Venezuela on his country's Independence Anniversary. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes of good health and wellbeing to President Maduro. His Majesty also wished the people of Venezuela further progress and prosperity. **-ONA**



HM GREETES PRESIDENT OF ALGERIA
MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Abdelmadjid Tebboune of Algeria on his country's Independence Anniversary. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health, wellbeing and a long life to President Tebboune. His Majesty also prayed to Allah the Almighty for the return of this and similar occasions to President Tebboune while the people of Algeria realise aspirations of further progress and prosperity. **-ONA**



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STATE AUDIT INSTITUTION PRESENTS 2022 ANNUAL REPORT TO HIS MAJESTY THE SULTAN

587 CASES OF IRREGULARITIES DEALT WITH IN 2022, SAYS SAI

The report was submitted by SAI Chairman Sheikh Ghosn bin Hilal Al Alawi



MUSCAT: The consistent endeavour and efforts of the State Audit Institution (SAI) has reaped rich benefits with a total of 587 complaints of financial and administrative irregularities, abuse of power and mismanagement in the awarding of tenders among others being dealt with in 2022, according to the annual report submitted to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

The report was submitted by Sheikh Ghosn bin Hilal Al Alawi, the SAI Chairman.

According to the report submitted, SAI studied and examined 84 percent of the 587 complaints and reports received via available communication channels with regard to community partnership in accordance with the principle of

partnership in oversight and protection of public funds.

SAI has constantly been on the vigil and with cooperation of various stakeholders safeguarded the public fund over the years.

The SAI report highlighted the outcome of various actions taken during the past year.

SAI utilised all its resources and capabilities to perform its national duty in implementing terms of reference and achieving goals with a high level of efficiency and professionalism.

The implementation comes within the framework of active partnership at the institutional

and societal levels in a manner that serves the sustainable development march.

SAI also sent copies of its report to the Council of Ministers, State Council and Shura Councils in implementation of Article (66) of the Basic Law of the State, promulgated under Royal Decree No. 6/2021 and Article (29) of State Audit Law, promulgated under Royal Decree No. 111/2011.

SAI took into account the rules, standards and technical guidelines as per relevant international organisations, in terms of inclusiveness, clarity, briefness, accuracy and objectivity while

preparing the annual report.

The report includes several topics according to its 2022 annual audit plan, in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

During 2022, SAI carried out 181 audit tasks that resulted in 147 audit reports, of which results were sent to the authorities concerned.

The departments concerned showed cooperation by taking corrective measures in relation to observations and recommendations made by SAI. In cases of irregularities with suspicions of crime, the guilty were referred to the Public Prosecution Department for necessary action.

The report highlighted SAI efforts in promoting integrity with a statement. It included statistics on financial and administrative irregularities and the remedial measures taken towards them.

The report also contained SAI tasks of the Anti-Corruption Authority and following-up the implementation of the UN Convention against Corruption.

The report also shed light on SAI efforts in the examination of draft laws, regulations and systems issued by the departments covered by audit and taking note observations on the same.

SAI participation in meetings and conferences held on the UN Convention against Corruption, Arab Anti-Corruption Convention and the committees concerned with combating corruption in the GCC countries, as well as its participation in the meetings of anti-corruption law enforcement authorities in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) were also detailed.

The annual report included audits conducted on different topics in the government units through the implementation of 103 audit tasks, which resulted in 89 audit reports including audit of 2022 final account of the state. **>A2**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES



OMAN 81% rise in number of travellers at airports

1 The total number of passengers travelling through Oman airports until the end of April 2023 grew by 81% to reach 4,209,846 as against 2,324,007 passengers during the same period of 2022. **>A3**

OMAN Ministry pays great attention to tourism

2 The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism pays great attention to the integrated tourism complexes, such as hotels, recreational, commercial facilities, and the real estate units that provide qualitative addition to the sector. **>A5**

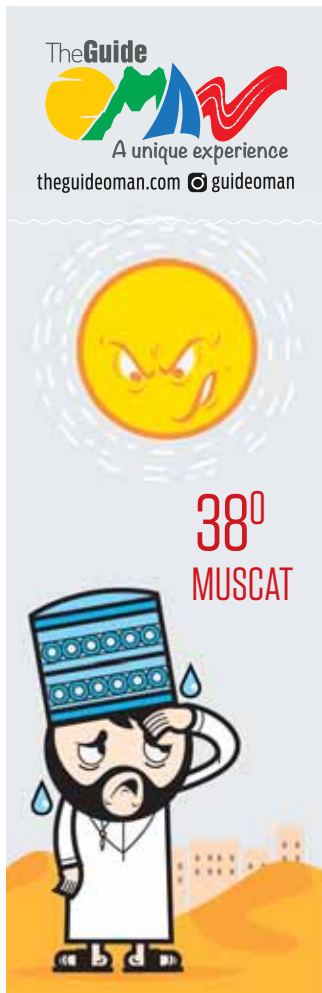
WORLD Water release plan approved

3 Japan on Tuesday received approval from the United Nation's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for a plan to release treated radioactive wastewater from the damaged Fukushima nuclear plant into the ocean. **>A7**



Oman Equestrian Federation announces holding of Dhofar Khareef events

A3



GLOBAL SOVEREIGN FUNDS

OIA ranked 2nd globally in governance, sustainability performance index

MUSCAT: Oman Investment Authority (OIA) ranked second in the world in the index of development of governance and sustainability performance between 2022 and 2023. It posted 28% improvement in its accomplishments, compared to 200 global sovereign funds.

This was unveiled in a new report issued by the International Forum of Sovereign Wealth Funds (IFSFW) in its platform, which affirms OIA's keenness to abide by international norms and principles of governance and transparency practices endorsed by IFSWF.

The report indicates that OIA seeks to achieve operational excellence and develop a global identity, notably after its emergence as a merger of the State's General Reserve Fund and the Oman Investment Fund.

The report notes that the data issued by OIA highlights investments and their strategies and an

exit plan. It explains that OIA is in the process of devising a new framework that corresponds to the goals of sustainable development.

The Oman Investment Authority adheres to a large proportion of Santiago Principles issued by the IFSWF. These comprise unified procedures related to the nature of functions of funds and their objectives. They define a standard structure that accurately reflects the requirements of disclosure, transparency, governance, accountability and risk management.

The OIA conducts regular assessment of its commitment to such criteria through its cooperation with the IFSWF. It aspires to keep pace with the latest governance requirements and achieve better operational and investment performance by applying the best international practices in the field. This qualifies the OIA to introduce an integrated, flexible and practical system. **-ONA**

INVESTMENT FOR DEVELOPMENT

Oman football to receive \$8mn over four-year period from FIFA

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman Football Association (OFA) is on the right path of development having utilised nearly 95 percent of the funds received from the world football governing body, FIFA, under the FIFA Forward programme.

In his exclusive comments to *Times of Oman*, a FIFA spokesperson said: "The main development investment that FIFA is currently undertaking jointly with Oman Football Association is a technical centre and accommodation infrastructure project. The total project cost was funded by FIFA Forward 1.0 and 2.0, and at this point is more than 95 percent completed."

"We are satisfied with the progress made by Oman and under the FIFA Forward 3.0, Oman Football Association will receive a total grant of \$8 million over a four-year cycle (2023-2026)," said the FIFA official from Lausanne, Switzerland, where the FIFA headquarters are based.

He added: Football in Oman will be eligible to receive 29 percent more funding for development in the next four years through the FIFA Forward 3.0.

From 2019-2022, a total of \$6 million was allocated to support Oman football through FIFA Forward 2.0. A top OFA official, on condition of anonymity, confirmed the development and thanked FIFA for their full support. "We hope that the new centre, once completed, will bring in qualitative changes to Oman football. We are now planning further for the growth and development of the



A file photo of FIFA President Gianni Infantino with OFA chief Sheikh Salim Al Wahaibi in Muscat.

GLOBAL OVERVIEW OF FIFA FORWARD 3.0 (2023-2026)

Total investment:
\$2,250 million

FIFA contributions

- 2011-2014: \$328 million
- 2015-2018: \$1,161 million
- 2019-2022: \$1,746 million
- 2023-2026: \$2,250 million

game to utilise the new funds in a constructive manner," he said.

OFA had recently said that the state-of-the-art technical centre and accommodation project for football players at Seeb Stadium are almost ready, with nearly 80 percent of the construction work of the training centre and players' accommodation complete.

"OFA is confident of completing the project, spread over an area of 4,700 square metres, by the end of the year. The integrated technical centre and accommodation will consist of 55 rooms, halls, swimming pool besides other facilities," said a senior OFA official.

Elaborating further, the FIFA spokesperson said: "Overall, the 2019-2022 cycle of FIFA Forward 2.0 saw a record investment in football development around the world." **>A5**



OMAN

PRAYER TIMINGS



Dhuhr.....	12:16pm
Asr.....	3:35pm
Maghrib.....	7:03pm
Isha.....	8:25pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....	3:59am



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State Council Office reviews proposals

The discussions took place during the meeting headed by Sheikh Abdul Malik Abdullah Al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council



MUSCAT: The State Council Office on Tuesday reviewed a number of studies and proposals submitted by the permanent and special committees of the Council. During the meeting, the State Council Office looked into a study

submitted by the Culture, Information and Tourism Committee titled “Scopes for Promoting Local Tourism in the Sultanate of Oman” and a study submitted by the Social Committee titled “Omani National Identity”. The meeting also discussed a

study submitted by the Technology and Innovation Committee titled “the employment of technology in formulating an innovative system for performance governance in the state’s administrative apparatus” and a study of the Legal Committee on the articles

of the “internal regulations of the State Council”. The discussions took place during the 4th regular session’s 7th meeting (Seventh Term), headed by Sheikh Abdul Malik Abdullah Al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council. -ONA

CABLE

HM the Sultan greets President of Cape Verde

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President José Maria Neves of the Republic of Cape Verde on his country’s

National Day. In the cable, His Majesty expressed his heartfelt sentiments to President José Maria Neves and the people of his country. -ONA

NATIONAL DEFENCE COLLEGE

Inspection of annual strategic drill taken

MUSCAT: Major General Hamid Ahmed Sakroon, Chairman of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies on Tuesday visited the National Defence College (NDC) to inspect the implementation of the annual strategic exercise “Decision Making-10”. The Chairman of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies and several senior officers were briefed on the annual strategic



exercise. Participants also gave a presentation on the exercise and means of responding to various scenarios. -ONA

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PILGRIMAGE

Oman’s Hajj mission returns home from the Holy Lands



MUSCAT: The Oman Hajj mission returned to the Sultanate of Oman from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on Tuesday, after providing its services to the Omani pilgrims during the rituals of Hajj. The members of the mission were received on their arrival at Muscat International Airport by Dr. Mohammed bin Said Al Maamari, Minister of Endowments and Religious Affairs, Abdullah bin Saud Al-Anzi, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia accredited to the Sultanate of Oman, and a number of officials at the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs. This year, the mission was headed by Sultan bin Said Al Hinai, and its membership included a delegation of fatwas and religious guidance, an administrative and financial delegation, a delegation supervising Hajj companies, a medical delegation, a delegation from the State’s Financial and Administrative Audit Institution, a delegation from the Royal Oman Police, a media delegation, and a scout delegation. The Oman Hajj mission left

the Sultanate of Oman on June 14, 2023, and during its presence in Makkah Al-Mukarramah, Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah, and the holy places, it served the Omani pilgrims and supervised their performance of the rituals easily. The share of the Sultanate of Oman for the season was 14,000 pilgrims. It has received the preliminary arrangements document for the upcoming Hajj season in cooperation with the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. -ONA

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SAI carried out 78 audit tasks

<FROM A1 The report contained audit on tax assessment and tax collection activities, as well as audit on financial and administrative activities, the performance evaluation of some departments and directorates in the government units, in addition to audit on some aspects related to the sectors of commerce, agriculture, tourism, labour, health, education and others. SAI carried out 78 audit tasks, for which 58 audit reports were issued and sent to the authorities

concerned. The reports included SAI observations and recommendations, in terms of aspects related to the activities of the authorities, investments and companies concerned with the sectors of energy, aviation, environment, electricity and mining, and other significant sectors. In addition, the report reviewed prominent media and awareness activities, through which SAI aims to achieve optimal awareness and build honest practices at both institutional and societal levels.

As many as 259 media and awareness programmes, activities and events were implemented in 2022. The constructive cooperation between SAI and other state institutions also contributed to the consolidation of the concept of responsibility to protect public funds and preserve the state’s gains. This had a positive impact on the outcomes of implementing the 2022 audit plan and achieving the objectives set therein, in conformity with the priorities and goals of Oman Vision 2040. -ONA



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81% increase in travellers at Oman airports

The total number of flights at Muscat International Airport also rose by 78 percent

MUSCAT: The total number of passengers travelling through airports of the Sultanate of Oman until the end of April 2023 grew by 81 percent to reach 4,209,846 as against 2,324,007 passengers during the corresponding period in 2022, according to the preliminary data released by the National Centre for Statistics and information (NCSD).

The total number of passengers via Muscat International Airport stood at 3,792,212 at the end of April 2023 compared to



1,984,428 passengers at the end of April 2022, marking a rise of 91.1 percent.

The total number of flights at Muscat International Airport also rose by 78 percent to 28,939 flights at the end of April 2023, from 16,262 flights for the corresponding period in 2022.

Meanwhile, the number of passengers via Salalah Airport increased by 36.8 percent to reach

390,355 passengers on board 2,842 flights, with an increase in the number of flights amounting to 30.9 percent, compared to the same period in 2022.

The total number of passengers via Sohar Airport reached 5,669 on board 86 flights, while the number of passengers via Duqm Airport reached 21,610 on 204 flights.

-ONA

DHOFAR KHAREEF

Oman Equestrian Federation to organise events in Dhofar

MUSCAT: Oman Equestrian Federation announced the holding of Dhofar Khareef events for the year 2023 from July 28 to August 1, in cooperation with the Office of the Governor of Dhofar, Dhofar Municipality and Dhofar Equestrian Committee.

The holding of these events

comes within the efforts of Omani Equestrian Federation to take advantage of the climate of Dhofar Governorate during the monsoon season and its suitability to host such events and activities related.

This year, the equestrian activities include a number of championships and competitions, which

are ponies race, endurance race for 100 km, qualifying race and tent pegging championship including the national team camp for tent pegging during from August 2 to August 15, in preparation for its participation in the tent pegging World Cup in South Africa.

-ONA

TWO-DAY EXHIBITION

OCCI's forum to present investment prospects in Oman



Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry will organise a forum for investment opportunities in several fields, including sports and real estate on August 7.

The exhibition will be held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Center, and will last for two days.

During the forum, investment opportunities will be presented to investors wishing to invest in the tourism sector, including hotels, resorts, entertainment cities, and other vital projects, as well as presenting investment

opportunities in the sports sector, such as holding international sports events and tournaments, establishing sports medical cities in the Sultanate of Oman, and other projects in addition to investing in real estate for establishing integrated cities.

The second day will be devoted to organising bilateral meetings that bring together investors and companies, and shedding light on the foreign investment law, in addition to honouring the pioneers of tourism and real estate investment in the Sultanate of Oman, in addition to the opening of the exhibition accompanying the forum.



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Sultan Qaboos cancer care centre doing pioneering work in research, treatment

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Within two year of its operation, Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Centre (SQCCRC) has been able to provide a number of advanced therapeutic services and adopt sophisticated technologies in the field of cancer treatment in the Sultanate of Oman and the region.

While incorporating the most sophisticated technologies, its experts and specialists are striving to improve the quality of health-care, tests, diagnosis, and treatment of cancer cases.

Professor Dr. Mansoor Saif Al Manthari, Head of the centre's operational committee, said: "In less than two years from the opening, the medical team of the centre was able to introduce more than 15 new therapeutic and diagnostic services that contributed to enhancing the accuracy and efficiency of treatments, reducing side effects and providing therapeutic services to the beneficiaries."

He emphasised that obtaining accreditation from the International Joint Committee for Accreditation of Health Establishments by the centre within a short time is a confirmation of the centre's commitment to providing a comprehensive medical care in accordance with the highest international standards for Omanis, residents and cancer patients in the region.

He explained that the centre, since its operation, has provided a number of diagnostic, therapeutic and rehabilitation services and advanced research projects which contributed to enhancing the accuracy of medical examinations and treatment results for the patients. The centre has started using the technique of implanting radioactive pips into the prostate for low-dose brachytherapy (LDR) therapy, which has been made available for the first time for prostate cancer patients in the region.

He also stated that the centre offers the services of high-dose brachytherapy HDR for tumours, which is based on delivering radioactive substance into the affected organ through tubes to eliminate cancer cells. This type of treatment is mainly used to treat cervi-



cal and prostate cancer and is being used to treat a number of other cancers as well.

He also stated that the radiotherapy team was successful in treating a number of cases of trigeminal neuralgia, brain and bones and spinal cord tumours and other complex cases using the radiosurgery with the automated robot (CyberKnife S7). This technique eliminates cancerous tumours using the SRS surgery without the need for any surgical incisions.

He said that the centre provides infrastructure and interactive environment to support the patients and volunteers and motivates researchers to conduct research work so that their application can be used in practice for the benefit of the patients. Utilising the results of these researches will help in protective, diagnostic and therapeutic applications, besides enhancing partnerships with research establishments inside the Sultanate and abroad.





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Investments in ITC projects under implementation exceed OMR4.3bn

The Ministry has also granted 19 valid licences for integrated tourism complexes across the governorates of Muscat, Dhofar, Al Sharqiyah South, Al Batinah South, and Musandam

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The total investment in projects related to integrated tourism complexes (ITCs) under implementation is estimated at OMR4.376 billion in addition to OMR3.120 billion in other licenced projects which are in the pre-implementation phase.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has also granted 19 valid licences for integrated tourism complexes, including a number of projects across the governorates of Muscat, Dhofar, Al Sharqiyah South, Al Batinah South, and Musandam. These projects number 81 hotel facilities, with 16,576 hotel rooms, 2,552 apartment hotels and villas and 42,617 housing units, in addition to golf courses and a number of harbours, restaurants, cafes and shops.

The MHT has been paying great attention to the ITCs as it provides a qualitative addition to the tourism sector, including hotels, recreational and commercial facilities,



and real estate units, which together help to contribute in diversifying tourism products and destinations. Alos, these projects help in increasing the number of hotel rooms, quality of services, recreational service facilities, as well as creating value addition to the society besides providing direct and indirect jobs opportunities.

“The integrated tourism complexes are a modern style of tourism cities, that provide all services and facilities under one roof, where residents can live without leaving the boundaries of the complex,” Azzan bin Qasim Al Busaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Tourism, said.

“The ITCs provide residential, tourism, recreational, sports and commercial facilities which provides foundations of a new living experience. These integrated complexes also provide opportunity for non-Omanis to own property, which constitutes a mixture of different interactive cultures and gives an opportunity to attract capital and businessmen to reside in the Sultanate of Oman and provide a supportive base for the national efforts to attract vital investments,” he further added.

He further said that, the integrated tourism complexes have added new dimensions to the tourism sector with modern and unique architecture in parallel

with the quality of the integrated infrastructure. The integrated tourism also offer a wide options of facilities and services that are among the most important pillars of tourism development, he added.

These integrated complexes have become tourism destinations in itself and tourists can enjoy the various facilities offered. The hotel component in these complexes also provide the tourism sector hundreds of different hotel rooms which are luxurious and in various styles that offer tourists more options to enjoy.

In addition to its direct economic contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP), the integrated tourism complexes also contribute to provide many direct and indirect job opportunities, and enrich supply chains in the tourism sector and thereby enhancing business opportunities as well as raising the in-country value (ICV) volumes.

Also, by allowing foreigners to own property in the Sultanate of Oman gives an opportunity to contribute to enhancing the local market while attracting investors into the tourism sector.

The Undersecretary of the Ministry of Tourism said that the success of any integrated tourism complex must be designed to provide a unique living experience that is in harmony with the topography of the place in which



the project is located. Also, at every stage, modern real estate products must be unique and different from the previous products, where the developer must keep pace with the rapid developments happening in this sector so as attract investors and tourists.

He further emphasised that, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is keen to follow up on the implementation of these projects according to the timetables agreed upon through development agreements and plans to organise the development of each project. He added that the Ministry is focusing during the current period on paying special attention to adding recreational and tourism facilities more along with other components.

He added that the ministry is focusing during the current period on paying special attention to add more recreational and tourism facilities along with other components.

The ITCs integrate with the diversity of the terrain of the picturesque beaches, mountains and valleys, to constitute an attractive factor for local and foreign investors to invest in the field of tourism and real estate. In addition to the facilities available for investment in the integrated tourism complexes, foreign owners are allowed to obtain a residence visa with most banks operating in the Sultanate of

Oman allowing the overseas investors to obtain a mortgage at a flexible interest rate.

The integrated tourism complexes also provides an opportunity to the investors to own ready-made real estate through offering extended payment programmes. The investor pays just 10 to 20 percent of the price of the property and he/she can receive the property and pay the remaining price at an agreed period between the two parties, which gives the investor the possibility of self-financing, instead of bank financing.

The existing tourism complexes, including the Muscat Bay project, Al Mouj project, the Barr Al Jissah project and the Jabal Al Sifah project in the Governorate of Muscat, are well known for their beautiful beaches, surrounded by the nature, mountains, green spaces, as well as related activities, like sports and entertainment scientific. The Hawana Resort Salalah in the Governorate of Dhofar is spread across the beautiful sandy beach, and has many distinctive tourist facilities, like a marina for ships with international specifications, Hawana Water Park and several restaurants, cafes and other recreational activities prepared to meet the needs of visitors.

Al Mouj project, is one of the largest tourism projects in the Sultanate of Oman, with an investment cost of OMR1.50 billion. The

project is built on an area of more than 2.2 million square metres and includes two existing hotels, Kempinski and Misk, in addition to there new hotels under construction, - Rotana, St. Regis and Okura - and two additional hotels under planning and 6,000 housing units.

The project also includes an 18-hole golf course in addition to the golf club, a tourist walkway, shops, and cafes. It also includes a number of projects, including the Golf Academy, the Saray project. A number of projects are under implementation at Al Mouj project. Projects included are Ghadir villas, Zunaira villas, Juman 2, Murouj Linz, Golf Beach Residences, and Al Mouj Golf Business Park any a number of recreational activities and facilities.

The Barr Al Jissah Resort, with an investment cost of above OMR300 million is built on an area of more than 434,500 square metres and includes three hotels Al Hosn Hotel, Al Bandar Hotel, and Al Waha Hotel with a total of 700 hotel rooms and 148 housing units that provide multiple options for housing while enjoying a number of other facilities such as a marina, a traditional market, a health club, an open theater, and other recreational facilities.

The Marina neighbourhood project, which consists of 76 housing units, is also being implemented. It includes various recreational activities and facilities that take advantage of the resort's view of the 500-metre coastline and extends through two interconnected wings, to provide unique experiences to explore the marine diversity in the Sultanate of Oman, or enjoy floating in the waters of the lazy river, or relax with spa services as well as water sports, which are full of energy.

Full story@ timesofoman.com/oman

FOOTBALL

‘Positive impact of FIFA’s investment into Oman football’

< FROM A1 “In line with its strategy to make football truly global, FIFA had reinvested \$5,266 million in football by the end of the 2019-2022 cycle. The total investment for the benefit of FIFA’s member associations, the confederations and zonal/regional associations amounts to \$2,250 million for the 2023-2026 cycle.

“The next stage of the programme [FIFA Forward 3.0] represents an almost seven-fold increase in football development investment compared to the development programmes in place prior to 2016 and 29% more than under Forward 2.0. In the latest cycle, each member association will receive approximately US\$ 8 million over a four-year period (2023-2026).”

He added: “We have increased the grants but FIFA has introduced enhanced oversight controls to ensure that the investment in football development is transparent, carefully managed and effective.”

The FIFA World Cup 2022 was the most successful ever and thanks to it FIFA was able to invest a record-breaking figure in football development across the world.

The FIFA official said that there has been a “positive impact of FIFA Forward investment into Oman football development during the time of FIFA President

Gianni Infantino in office.”

“The idea came up to establish a hotel-like accommodation facility along with a Technical Centre with some sport services attached to save expenses. It is being constructed beside the OFA premises close to Al Seeb Stadium.

“The main objective of the project is to provide accommodation for club and national team players in a cost-effective way and close to playing match venues. Moreover, it will improve the quality of facilities and services to be provided to the stakeholders through the OFA’s direct supervision of the hotel’s services,” added the FIFA official.

The OFA Technical Centre and Accommodation project will be serving several stakeholders such as: all national teams, referees and coaches, clubs and OFA official delegates and guests.

Reduction in hotel bills

Once completed, the centre will help significant reduction in hotel bills for national teams, transportation costs, meet clubs’ requirements, organising courses and workshops in the premises and avoiding bills while hosting conferences and meetings.

The FIFA official said: “With regards to FIFA Forward 3.0, as the cycle started in January, FIFA is currently working with Oman on planning future objectives and projects.”

The FIFA Forward Programme plays a key role in promoting football development globally, which is one of the central pillars of The Vision 2020-2023, as laid out by FIFA President Gianni Infantino.

FIFA’s flagship development programme also helps to increase global competitiveness, another tenet of the aforementioned action plan.

“When we launched the Forward development programme, FIFA embarked upon a new era of global football development that is now heading into its third cycle”, said Infantino on the programme. “It is vital that we are now strengthening our commitment to building a stronger foundation for the growth of football.

“The new cycle will provide increased investment, greater impact through the achievement of football development objectives and continued oversight to ensure that all funds are used responsibly.”

Infantino continued: “We have increased this funding seven-fold but our revenues have not increased seven-fold; just that at the new FIFA since 2016 money goes where it has to go and that is back into football.”

A significant element of the investment will support FIFA’s goal of having 60 million female players participating in football worldwide by the end of the coming cycle.



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NOTICE OF ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

The Board of Directors of Barka Water and Power Company SAOG (the “Company”) is pleased to invite all shareholders to the Ordinary General Meeting to be held at 3.00 p.m. on Wednesday, 19 July 2023 via the electronic platform for convening general meetings which can be accessed through the Muscat Clearing and Depository Company website (www.mcd.gov.om), if quorum is not met, a second ordinary general meeting shall be held at 3.00 p.m. on Wednesday, 26 July 2023, to discuss the following agenda:

Ordinary General Meeting Agendas :

- To consider and approve the entering into a related party transaction with ACWA Power Barka Services 1 (Mauritius) Limited and ACWA Power Barka Services 2 (Mauritius) Limited to provide certain advisory and support services related to the operations, maintenance, and administrative requirements of the power and water generating facility near Barka, Sultanate of Oman (the Transaction), on the terms set out in the form of Technical Services Agreement attached to this resolution and summarised in Appendix 1 (Explanatory Statement).

In accordance with the Company’s Articles of Association and the rules for convening general meetings via electronic means issued by the Capital Market Authority, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

- A legal person, exclusively, shall have the right to appoint a natural person, as proxy, to attend the general meeting, and vote on decisions taken on his behalf using electronic means. Such natural person must have an investor number registered with the Muscat Clearing and Depository Company SAOC.
- Shareholders will be able to vote for the items set out in the agenda starting from 3 days prior to the meeting date up until the end of the voting process for that particular item presented in the agenda on the day of the meeting. If a shareholder’s shareholding is increased or decreased, then such shareholders votes will be void, and the shareholder will have to vote again on the day of the general meeting.

For further information please contact on telephone No 92084869 or email: Ahussain@acwapower.com

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DIJKERS

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Trowers & Hamlin

External Auditor
KPMG L.L.C

GERMANY

Court jails man who knifed schoolgirl to death

BERLIN: A regional court in the southern German city of Ulm on Tuesday sentenced a 27-year-old man to life in prison for murder and attempted murder following a knife attack on two schoolgirls last year.

The killing, as the girls walked to catch their morning school bus, prompted a wave of shock and anger across Germany.

The man attacked the two girls, a 13-year-old and a 14-year-old, in December last year, in the Baden-Württemberg town of Illerkirchberg. The younger of the two was able to flee, but the other girl died in hospital from her injuries.

Prosecutors said the defendant, an Eritrean man who came to Germany as an asylum seeker, had been carrying the knife with the

plan of forcing local authority officials to provide him with an identity document.

He was said to have been angry with authorities, blaming them for ruining his life because he had no passport to travel home and find a wife.

The prosecution said the man had moved the weapon from his backpack into his pocket when he left his lodgings at an asylum shelter.

He then attacked the girls, suspecting that they had seen him doing so, according to the prosecution.

The man was arrested back at his shelter where officers found him with the knife shortly after the attack.

— DW



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DESTABILISING THE BALKANS



The Netherlands and Luxembourg PMs urge Serbia and Kosovo to ease recent tensions

BELGRADE: The prime ministers of the Netherlands and Luxembourg implored Serbia and Kosovo to ease recent tensions to prevent destabilising the Balkans as Europea deals with Russia's war in Ukraine.

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte and Luxembourg Prime Minister Xavier Bettel met Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic in Belgrade on Monday and will meet with Kosovo's Prime Minister Albin Kurti on Tuesday.

"We cannot both emphasize enough how important it is that both Serbia and Kosovo take steps towards de-escalation and ultimately towards normalisation of their relations through the EU-led dialogue," Rutte said at a press conference after the meeting with Vucic.

"With a war raging between Russia and Ukraine on our continent, it's more important than ever that we act together. What's more, a stable relationship is essential for both countries' prospects for further EU integration and accession," he added.

Kosovo's northern region, home to 50,000 ethnic Serbs, has seen its worst tensions since Pristina declared independence from Serbia in 2008. Last month, Serbia released three Kosovar police officers that it detained earlier in June.

The story behind Kosovo-Serbia tensions

Kosovo's northern region, home to 50,000 ethnic Serbs, has recently seen its worst tensions since Pristina declared independence from Serbia in 2008.

Last month, Serbia released three Kosovar police officers that it detained earlier in June.

Serbia said the officers were deep inside Serbian territory — and Kosovo — said the men were kidnapped.

Violence erupted in late May after ethnic Albanian mayors took office in the volatile northern re-

gion of Kosovo following a local election with a turnout of only 3.5% due to Serb boycotts.

The clashes left 30 NATO peacekeepers, defending three town halls in the region, injured. Fifty-two protesters were also wounded in the violence.

Kosovo's main backers, the United States and the European Union, have pressed Prime Minister Albin Kurti to withdraw the mayors and remove the special police used to install them.

Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008, but Belgrade does not recognise Pristina's independence and sees it as a breakaway state. — DW

According to the statement, the UN Strategic Framework was developed in close consultations with Member States, partners, and stakeholders

KABUL: The United Nations in Afghanistan unveiled its Strategic Framework for Afghanistan, which outlines the organization's approach to addressing fundamental human needs in the country for the period of 2023-2025, according to Khaama Press.

The new strategic framework places a high priority on the needs and rights of the most vulnerable groups, including women



and girls, children and youth, internally displaced persons, returnees, refugees, as well as ethnic and religious minorities. Roza Otunbayeva, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan said, "Our Strategic Framework is a robust offer of assistance to the people of Afghanistan to address their basic human needs and complement the ongoing delivery of lifesaving humanitarian assistance," Khaama Press reported.

According to the statement, the UN Strategic Framework was developed in close consulta-

tions with Member States, partners, and stakeholders, reported Khaama Press.

Moreover, to support the basic human needs of the Afghan people, the New Strategic Framework has three complementary and mutually reinforcing joint priorities.

First, sustained essential services in crucial sectors such as health, nutrition, education, employment, water, sanitation, hygiene, social protection, and protection that are accessible to all, affordable, and can be delivered free from all forms of discrimination. The second priority will ensure economic opportunities and resilient livelihoods by creating an enabling environment that facilitates economic growth and provides decent work opportunities, especially for excluded groups such as women. Third, it will prioritise social cohesion, inclusion, gender equality, human rights, and the rule of law. These are the prerequisites for sustainable development and peace in Afghanistan which will strengthen civil society engagement and advocacy for alignment of the country's normative and legal frameworks with international human rights instruments. "The United Nations and its partners recognize that humanitarian aid alone will not be enough to sustainably address the large-scale and increasing human suffering of the Afghan people in the medium and long term," said Daniel Endres, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator ad interim, according to Khaama Press. — ANI

Full story at timesofoman.com/world

IN INDONESIA

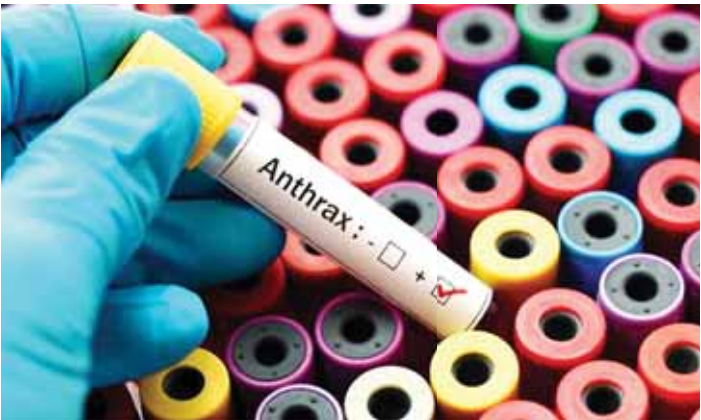
1 killed, 85 infected in anthrax outbreak

JAKARTA: One person has been confirmed dead from anthrax and 85 others have been found to be infected after all of them consumed infected meat in Indonesia's Yogyakarta province, said local authorities on Tuesday.

Anthrax is a lethal infectious disease that commonly affects cattle or goats. Human beings can be infected only when they come into contact with anthrax-affected animals or consume their meat.

Press conference

Head of the Gunungkidul Regency Health Agency, Dewi Irawati, said in a press conference that they found the spread of anthrax in the regency after receiving a report



from government-owned Sardjito Central General Hospital that a 73-year-old resident died from the virus, on June 4.

The agency, then, conducted further examination of the patient and found that he had consumed meat from his own cow after he

died of an illness.

"Then, we found that the patient also distributed the meat to dozens of other residents in his neighborhood. Thus, we did blood tests on 125 residents and found 85 of them infected," Irawati said.

"Most of them have shown symptoms like diarrhea, sores on the skin, and small reddish lumps or swelling appearing on their hands. But now they have been consuming antibiotics," said the official.

Irawati also said that the regional authorities had moved quickly to name the area nearby as the red zone for 120 days since the finding and advised the residents to only consume meat from healthy livestock. — Xinhua

UNDER INDIA'S SCO PRESIDENCY

Joint statements on radicalisation leading to terrorism, digital transformation adopted

NEW DELHI: The leaders of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), under India's presidency, adopted a Delhi declaration and two thematic joint statements - one on cooperation in countering the radicalisation leading to separatism, extremism and terrorism and the second one cooperation in the field of digital transformation, Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra said on Tuesday.

He further said that during SCO meeting under India's presidency, the focus was on involving stakeholders beyond the government, leading to the organisation of various meetings, activities, and events over the past nine months. Addressing the briefing upon the conclusion of the SCO summit, Vinay Kwatra said, "As the outcome of the summit, the leaders admitted one Delhi declaration and two thematic joint statements -- one on cooperation in countering radicalisation leading to separatism, extremism and terrorism, and the second one cooperation in the field of digital transformation. Besides the leaders signed a total of 10 decisions. Essentially the outcomes that are aimed at furthering the cooperation among SCO nations".



While reiterating PM Modi's vision for SCO, he said, "When India assumed the presidency of SCO last year, after the Samarkand summit, PM Modi had articulated India's priority towards the theme of SECURE SCO, standing for; Security, Economic Development, Connectivity, Unity, Respect for sovereignty and territo-

rial integrity, and Environmental Protection."

As part of India's initiatives, two new mechanisms were created within the SCO: the Special Working Group on startups and innovation, and an expert-level working group on medicine. The first meetings for these mechanisms will be held later in the year.

"During India's presidency, it hosted more than 134 events in the last 9 months and an unprecedented level of engagement with the dialogue partners and observer nations. There were in total 15 ministerial-level meetings, and four heads of agencies meetings across different areas," he added.

The Foreign Secretary also high-

lighted five initiatives proposed by India adopted at these ministerial-level meetings.

"First was on the development of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) for the promotion of digital technologies among the population in particular on digital innovation and inclusion. This was echoed by almost all leaders at the summit proceedings. Two, on the cooperation between SCO members on emerging fuels. Three, working together to combat the challenges of climate change, plastic pollution, air pollution, marine plastic litter with focus on resource efficiency and circular economy," he said.

Kwatra added, "Related to that, actions oriented sequence like decarbonising, digital transformation and innovative technologies, for efficiency and higher sustainability through cooperation among the SCO member states. Lastly, the first-ever report on digital financial inclusion policies in the SCO member states".

The Foreign Secretary said that in addition to governmental engagements, socio-cultural activities and youth-oriented events were organized to involve stake-

holders from SCO member nations beyond the government.

"There was also a substantial section of socio-cultural activities. This included the SCO millet festival, SCO film festival, SCO cultural showcasing at Surajkund Mela, SCO Tourism Mart, and SCO conference on traditional medicine in a Business-to-business format. All this received quite a remarkable and robust response from the SCO member nations," he said.

Kwatra added, "We also organised many activities focussed on the youth population., like Young Scientists Conclave, Young Authors Conclave, SCO Young Resident Scholar Programme, SCO start-up Forum, SCO Youth Council, SCO role of youth in community development".

The SCO summit, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, concluded with the virtual participation of the heads of state from all SCO nations.

India assumed the rotating chairmanship of the SCO at the Samarkand Summit of SCO on September 16 last year. The theme of India's Chairmanship of SCO in 2023 is 'SECURE-SCO'.

— ANI

JAMES WEBB SPACE TELESCOPE

JWST: Why detecting carbon molecules in space matters?

COLOGNE: One of the most important unsolved problems of modern science is: How did life arise from non-living matter?

We still don't know but we have a good idea of what the required steps are, for instance, the formation of complex organic molecules, like amino acids, from simpler ones, like CH₃⁺, or methylium.

The CH₃⁺ molecule, which is also known as methyl cation, has been detected in space for the first time by the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST). The preliminary unedited results were published on June 26, 2023, in the journal Nature.

Organic molecules are carbon based. They contain carbon atoms bonded to hydrogen atoms but can also bond to other elements, such as oxygen, nitrogen or phosphorus.

Everything that makes us and all life on Earth is carbon based.

CH₃⁺ is a very simple organic molecule, just one carbon atom and 3 hydrogen atoms. But it reacts with other molecules to form more complex ones. Its presence in space tells us that basic building blocks for life are out there.



“This CH₃⁺ is an initiator of a lot of very interesting more complex reactions,” said Stephan Schlemmer, a professor of

experimental physics at Cologne University in Germany. Schlemmer was part of an international team that worked on the latest findings.

Looking for molecular fingerprints in space

Scientists found the fingerprints of the CH₃⁺ molecule in light coming from a swirling disk of dust and gas around a young star. The disk is in the Orion Nebula, 1,350 light years from Earth.

The Orion Nebula is visible to the naked eye although you may only see a dot on Orion's sword

slightly below the belt.

Visible light is just a fraction of the whole picture. But every atom and molecule absorbs or emits light uniquely, with its own specific color palette.

For example, hydrogen, the simplest of atoms, when excited, emits a red glow, and if you view it through a prism, you will see four characteristic lines that make up its spectrum.

Scientists call this technique spectroscopy and in space they use the James Webb Space Telescope to do it.

An unexpected discovery

But the thing is, when astronomers captured the spectrum of this planet forming disk, it came as a surprise. “Nobody knew what it was,” said Schlemmer.

So they started looking for other scientists who could help and they found Schlemmer's lab.

The lab had been studying the fingerprint of molecules and analyzed CH₃⁺ in detail. And that enabled scientists to match the unknown fingerprint detected by the JWST to this specific, life-giving molecule. —**dw**

UNITED STATES

Fukushima plan to release water into ocean approved

The IAEA said in its report the plan was consistent with international safety standards and would have a “negligible radiological impact to people and the environment”



Tuesday for a four-day trip, met with Prime Minister Fumio Kishida to submit the nuclear watchdog's final report on the water release.

At a joint press conference with Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi earlier on Tuesday, Grossi said that the report marks “an important chapter” in the IAEA's work over the past two years.

Neighbouring countries have raised concerns over the contentious plan, with Beijing being its most vocal critic. Local fishing unions have also voiced their opposition to the project.

The IAEA said in its report

si, Kishida said that Tokyo would continue explaining the safety of the plan to both the Japanese people and the international community.

The project still requires final approval from Japanese nuclear regulator Tokyo Electric Power (Tepco). A date for the start of the implementation of the plan has not been announced.

The Fukushima plant melted down in 2011 — triggered by a devastating earthquake and tsunami — left Japan to have to deal with the water used to cool the plant's fuel rods. Authorities have over the last ten since been treating the contaminated water which is being stored in almost 1,000 tanks.

But the storage is about to reach its capacity of 1.37 million tons — enough to fill 500 Olympic size swimming pools.

The water must be removed to make way for the plant's decommissioning and to prevent any accidental leaks.

As part of its plan, Japan intends to dilute the treated water and release it over 30 to 40 years with the help of a pipe extending

around a kilometer from the east coast where the Fukushima nuclear plant is located.

How have Japan's neighbours responded?

Neighbouring countries have expressed concern over the years about the risk to marine life and public health. China has been the staunchest critic of the water release plan.

On Tuesday, Beijing said through its embassy in Japan said the IAEA's report cannot be a “pass” for the water release and urged the plan's suspension.

Some fishing unions in Fukushima have also opposed the government's plan, fearing that customers will steer clear of their catches despite strict testing norms for the food from the region.

Several countries had banned some food products from Japan after the 2011 catastrophe. South Korea said it would continue its ban on certain food products, ahead of the IAEA report's release.

—**dw**

Full story at timesofoman.com/world

4 killed, two wounded in Philadelphia

PHILADELPHIA: Four people were been killed and two others injured in a mass shooting in Philadelphia on Monday night, in the latest outbreak of gun violence in the United States.

Police said that a gunman, wearing a bulletproof jacket, opened fire on the street in Philadelphia's southwestern neighbourhood of Kingessing.

Police Commissioner Danielle Outlaw told the media at a briefing that officers chased the suspect while he continued to fire and he was arrested after surrendering in an alley.

“At this point, all we know is that this person decided to leave their home and target individuals,” Outlaw said.

He had multiple magazines, an “AR-type rifle,” a handgun and a police scanner, she added.

Outlaw said the crime scene was spread over several blocks.

The Philadelphia Inquirer reported that people were shot at different locations and that the two injured victims were children, aged 2 and 13. The local newspaper also said that the suspect was a 40-year-old man. —**dw**



ANGRY RIOTERS

Anti-violence rallies held in France as riot tensions ease

PARIS: Demonstrations continued in France on Monday, but this time in solidarity with local governments previously attacked by angry rioters who had been on the streets.

Those protesters were decrying the recent killing of a teenager at a traffic stop by a police officer, with some of them engaging in violence.

Rallygoers gathered outside French town halls to condemn the violence which had shrouded the country for most of last week, while the riots saw a significant lull.

The teen, 17-year-old Nahel, was shot and killed by a police officer at close range at a traffic stop in the western Paris suburb of Nanterre last Tuesday. He was of Algerian origin.

The teenager's death prompted unrest, clashes and arson attacks in several Paris suburbs. The unrest expanded nationwide with nightly protests and riots often taking a violent turn.

Those outraged by the killing aim to highlight the discrimination, and often violence, they say minorities in France face at the hands of the police.

What do the anti-violence rallygoers want?

The demonstrations were called a “mobilisation of citizens for a return to republican order.” They followed a riot attack on the house of a mayor over the weekend, while his family was inside.

Rioters rammed a car rigged with incendiaries into the house of l'Hay-les-Roses Mayor Vincent Jeanbrun.

Regional authorities in several areas nationwide announced an emergency support worth tens of millions of euros to repair the public buildings and small businesses affected by the riots.

Some 34 buildings, many linked to the government, and nearly 300 vehicles were attacked overnight between Sunday and Monday.

French President Emmanuel Macron will meet with mayors representing 220 towns nationwide on Tuesday.

“We want justice for Nahel and that the calls for an end of the violence expressed by his grandmother and mother be respected,” said Nanterre Mayor Patrick Jarry. He spoke from outside the city hall of Nanterre, Nahel's home suburb.

The riots have cost the French public transport operator some €20 million (roughly \$21.8 million) in damages to transport vehicles in the Paris region, the operator told the French AFP news agency. The damage includes “burned buses, a torched tramway, two damaged tramways and urban infrastructure which was smashed.”

Fund for culprit policeman gathers some \$1 million

Meanwhile, a fund set up for the police officer being investigated for killing the teenage boy has amassed more than €986,000 (approximately \$1.07 million). The number is more than five times more than that collected for the victim's family.

The fund was set up by far-right Egyptian-born commentator Jean Messiha, a former adviser to far-right leader Marine Le Pen. He argues that the officer was only “doing his work and is paying a heavy price.”

Nahel's grandmother, who had called on the rioters to end the violence, said she was “heartbroken” by the support the police officer received.

“He took the life of my grandson. This man must pay, the same as everyone,” she told the BFM TV channel on Sunday.

The 38-year-old policeman is detained and charged with voluntary manslaughter.

A video of the incident that has gone viral shows the officer stopping the car Nahel was driving without a license, with his weapon drawn. He shoots the youth at point-blank range as the car drives off. Besides the killing, the officer is also charged with making false statements. He had initially claimed he opened fire when Nahel drove toward him. —**dw**

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SPORTS

WIMBLEDON

Alcaraz advances, Rybakina struggles

LONDON: Spain's world No. 1 Carlos Alcaraz gained a comfortable first-round win at the Wimbledon on Tuesday against Jeremy Chardy, who played the final singles match of his career. Alcaraz, the reigning US Open champion, needed less than two hours to secure a 6-0 6-2 7-5 victory on Court One.

Also on Tuesday, defending women's champion Elena Rybakina recovered from a poor start to avoid a first-round exit against American Shelby Rogers. The Kazakh, whose title defence began with a double fault, won 4-6, 6-1, 6-2.

Her build-up had been hampered by illness and she lacked energy against the world No. 49 at



Carlos Alcaraz

the start. But there was a dramatic shift in momentum as Rybakina avoided becoming the first women's defending champion since 1994 to lose at this stage.

Watched from Centre Court's Royal Box by both tennis royalty and actual royalty in the shape of Roger Federer and the Princess of Wales, the 24-year-old battled to hold on to her own crown a little longer.

Earlier on the opening day on Monday, Russia's seventh seed Andrey Rublev began his campaign with a 6-3 7-5 6-4 success over Australia's Max Purcell. Norwegian fourth seed Casper Ruud, was tested by Laurent Lokoli of France before winning 6-1, 5-7, 6-4, 6-3. Elsewhere, there were successes for 14th seed Lorenzo Musetti and 17th seed Hubert Hurkacz against Juan Pablo Varillas of Peru and Albert Ramos-

Vinolas of Spain respectively.

But there was a first-round exit for Canadian 11th seed Felix Auger-Aliassime, who lost 7-6, 6-7, 7-6, 6-4 to USA's Michael Mmoh.

In the women's category, American teenager Coco Gauff was the first big-name casualty at Wimbledon after losing against a resurgent Sofia Kenin 6-4, 2-6, 6-4 in the first round. Russian 12th seed Veronika Kudermetova reached the second round for only the second time, beating Estonian Kaia Kanepi, 38, in a 7-6 (7-4) 6-4 victory. American veteran Venus Williams, making her 24th Wimbledon singles appearance, fell 6-4, 6-3 to Ukrainian Elina Svitolina. - Agencies

Zimbabwe's World Cup hopes over



Bowlers power Scotland to knock out the hosts; Dutch to face Scots for the final World Cup spot on Thursday

BULAWAYO: In a decisive clash in Bulawayo on Tuesday, Scotland not only beat hosts Zimbabwe but also knocked their hopes of reaching the World Cup out of the window with a brilliant 31-run win on the back of a superb bowling performance.

Zimbabwe after an unbeaten run into the Super Six stage crashed out of contention after back-to-back losses to Sri Lanka and Scotland.

Chris Sole's searing new-ball spell (3/33) put Scotland on top after their batters had scraped their way towards the end to put on a total of 234/8. Sole sent back the top three batters with Zimbabwe's score under 30 in seven overs.

Sikandar Raza (34), alongside Ryan Burl (83), put on a solid partnership to pull Zimbabwe back into the game but once Chris Greaves sent Raza back in his first

over, Burl was left to achieve a lot. He departed in the 39th over for 83 with the total at 197/9.

Zimbabwe's defeat to Scotland means their net run rate (NRR) fell to -0.099, largely due to their heavy defeat against Sri Lanka. If Netherlands beat Scotland on Thursday, then all three teams - Zimbabwe, Scotland and Netherlands - will finish on six points.

For either Netherlands or Scotland to qualify, a lot will depend on the result and margins. A win for Scotland will obviously take them through with eight points, but even if they lose, they could qualify if the margin of defeat is relatively small.

Brief scores: Scotland 234/8 (Michael Leask 48, Matthew Cross 38; Sean Williams 3/41, Tendai Chatara 2/46) beat Zimbabwe 203 all out in 41.1 overs (Ryan Burl 83, Wessly Madhevere 40; Chris Sole 3/33, Brandon McMullen 2/31).

Also on Tuesday, Ireland beat Nepal by two wickets to clinch the seventh spot.

Brief scores: Nepal 268/9 (Gulshan Jha 57*, Craig Young 2/26) lost to Ireland 269/8 in 49.2 overs (Curtis Campher 62, Harry Tector 60; Karan KC 4/58)

Oman meet Windies today
On Wednesday, Oman and West Indies will play their concluding Super Six match with both teams hoping to finish off their campaign in Zimbabwe with a victory.

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OMAN CRUDE PRICE FALLS

The price of Oman oil has decreased, with prices for delivery by September 2023 reaching \$75.27, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil fell by 9 cents from the price of Monday, which was \$75.36. - **ONA**

MARKET BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 4,795.19 points, up by 0.07 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.12 per cent at 480.11 points. Arabia Falcon Insurance, up 10.00 per cent, was the top gainer while National Finance, down 7.69 per cent, was the top loser.

Opaz reveals details of decision to specify fees for over 80 services

The decision included a 50 per cent reduction in fees for these services for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), according to the schedule published in the official gazette

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (Opaz) held a press conference on July 4 to reveal the details of the recently issued decision regarding specifying the fees for more than 80 services provided by Opaz in the various special economic zones and free zones affiliated with Opaz.

The decision included a 50 per cent reduction in fees for these services for Small and Medium-



sized Enterprises (SMEs), according to the schedule published in the official gazette.

This decision comes as an important step towards improving procedures, re-engineering operations and accelerating businesses. It reflects Opaz's tireless efforts and continuous support to enhance the local investment and business environment, stimulate economic growth, attract foreign investments, support SMEs and support the business sector in general by unifying and reducing fees for the services and activities provided to investors and establishments in the zones supervised by Opaz.

This step aims to complement the national efforts aimed at economic diversification and maximising the role of SMEs in establishing projects that play a vital role to support the local economy, providing job opportunities, promoting innovation, sustainable economic development and financial stability in the special economic zones and free zones, in line with Oman Vision 2040.

This is done by reducing the challenges facing the investors, maximising the participation of the local and foreign private sectors, and improving the competitiveness of the investment environment in the Sultanate of Oman.

Moreover, the decision aims to simplify and re-engineer some procedures and licenses that reduce operating costs and achieve credibility through transparency in determining fees for the services provided by Opaz and unifying them in the zones, defining performance indicators, ensuring consistency of the policies and processes as well as ensuring investors' accessibility to comprehensive and accurate information about policies, procedures, fees, the balance between fees, quality of services, harmonising similar services in the different zones.

Further, it serves to create a package of preferential package that

achieves integration between investments and government objectives towards employing the national workforce and developing SMEs.

The reduced fees in the special economic zones and free zones included those related to the procedures for commercial register, registration of contracts, licenses and permits related to conducting some business and commercial, industrial and tourism activities, investor work permits, environmental permits, urban planning services, construction and engineering affairs permits, and the issuance of certificates and documents, permits for service suppliers, government fees related to operation and

investment, and others.

In this regard, Dr Said bin Khalifa Al Quraini, General Manager of the Investment Development Sector at the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones, stated that the new facilities package reflects Opaz's continuous efforts to improve the business environment, achieve sustainable economic growth, and enhance economic competitiveness and the relative value of the zones. Therefore, this will contribute to increasing the growth of investments and SMEs in the zones and their integration in line with the needs of existing and upcoming projects and to achieve sustainable development in the special economic zones and free zones.

Al Quraini stressed the continuous endeavour of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones to review and improve the fees for services and activities provided by the various zones, as well as to ensure providing speedy and efficient services. In addition, Opaz strives to provide a set of advantages, incentives and facilities, and create an attractive business environment for investments that enables SMEs to benefit from them and facilitates procedures for registering their commercial records and establishing their projects, in an effort by Opaz to ensure the efficiency of its various electronic services.

MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT, COMMUNICATIONS

Ministry pays private sector dues worth OMR80mn towards development projects

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology has said that it paid OMR80 million from private sector dues emanating from development projects supervised by the ministry during the first half of 2023.

During the first half of 2023, the ministry received financial revenues estimated at OMR20 million, and this constituted a rise of 100 per cent compared to the corresponding period in 2022.

Fahd Salim Al Hinai, Director General of Administrative and Financial Affairs at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, said that the ministry conducted 53 training programmes and workshops during the first half of 2023. As many



as 520 employees benefited from the training programmes, which included specialised, general administrative, technical and leadership programmes, Al Hinai added. Meanwhile, the Human Re-

sources Development Department at the ministry provided 28 free seats for public sector employees to enable them to tap the benefits of the ministry's specialisations and meet market requirements, Al

Hinai affirmed.

He pointed out that 265 male and female employees of the ministry benefited from similar programmes during the first half of 2023. -**ONA**

DIGITAL INDIA



India tops in digital payment in world

NEW DELHI: With Digital India, digital payment made its foray in India and within a short time caught the imagination of the people. With 46 per cent of global real time payments done by India, it stands at the top globally.

As per the data from MyGovIndia, India undertook 89.5 million real time payment transactions in 2022. India's payments are greater than those of the next four leading countries combined. Brazil stands in second place, accounting for 29.2 million real-time payment transactions.

China comes in third with 17.6 million, and Thailand and South Korea stand in the fourth and fifth positions with 16.5 million and 8 million, respectively. MyGov has been established as Government of India's Citizen Engagement Platform which collaborates with multiple Government bodies/Ministries to engage with citizens for policy formulation and seeks the opinion of people on issues/topics of public interest and welfare.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi took to Twitter and said, "When it comes to embracing the latest technology, the people of India are undisputed champions." Further, the PM added that this change is visible across India, and we will keep this momentum going in the times to come.

According to the data released by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), the UPI recorded over 7.82 billion transactions worth Rs 12.82 trillion in December 2022, a new record since it was launched in 2016.

India has followed a very unique model of digital transformation. The country focused on creating public digital platforms that are open source, robust, accessible, and have large-scale scalability.

After such platforms were established, they became accessible to a wide range of burgeoning startups and private companies, which are now taking advantage of them to develop solutions to the problems faced by people. The growth of the digital ecosystem in India has been driven by a number of factors, including the government's push towards digitalization, an increase in internet and smartphone penetration, and the rise of e-commerce.

The Indian government has been actively promoting the use of digital technologies through various initiatives such as Digital India, Make in India, and Startup India. These initiatives aim to increase the use of digital technologies in various sectors such as healthcare, education, and agriculture, and also to create a conducive environment for flourishing start-ups. The increase in internet and smartphone penetration in India has also played a major role in the growth of the digital ecosystem.

According to a report by the Internet and Mobile Association of India, the number of internet users in India is expected to reach 800 million by 2023. This increase in internet users has also led to an increase in the number of mobile wallet users in India, which is expected to reach 900 million by 2025. -**ANI**

GLOBAL ENERGY SCENE

Oil and gas industry plays central role in addressing climate change, says Opec Secretary-General

VIENNA: Haitham Al Ghaiss, Secretary-General of the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec), highlighted the importance of promoting dialogue in the global energy scene, with the participation of both developed and developing nations, as well as all stakeholders.

The objective is to develop a shared vision that addresses the triple challenges of energy sustainability while considering all energy sources and technologies, respecting the interests of all nations, listening to all opinions, and relying on multiple pathways to reduce global carbon emissions, he added.

In a statement to the Emirates News Agency (WAM) ahead of the upcoming 8th Opec International Seminar in Vienna, Al Ghaiss said that the challenges of energy sustainability include goals related to energy security, cost affordability and the imperative to reduce emissions.

Opec PEC believes in the necessity of directing investments towards emission reduction technologies, such as carbon capture, utilisation and storage, the circular carbon economy, reducing methane emissions and flaring, direct air capture, hydrogen production and integrating renew-



able energy sources in oil and gas operations, along with the use of smart technologies to enhance the energy efficiency, he added.

Al Ghaiss noted that the average global production of oil and natural gas reached 100 million barrels per day and 4,000 billion cubic metres of natural gas in 2022, while Opec's projections indicate that by 2045, the global economy will double. The population will increase, so the demand for all energy sources, including oil and natural gas, will rise by approximately 23 per cent.

Regarding the UAE's role in supporting Opec's efforts, Al Ghaiss lauded the UAE's support for the organisation, stating that

since joining Opec, the country has played a leading role in all its affairs. This leadership has been evident through the UAE's contributions to the Declaration of Cooperation (DoC) with Opec+, he added.

He also highlighted the cooperation and dialogue between Opec and the UAE, which resulted in the signing of an agreement between the organisation and WAM, which will be an official media partner of the 8th edition of the Opec International Seminar scheduled on 5th and 6th July in Vienna.

Some 50 high-level speakers from energy-producing and consuming nations will attend the seminar, including Suhail bin Mohammed Al Mazrouei, Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, and heads and executive directors of international organisations and companies from both the public and private sectors.

Al Ghaiss welcomed the guests at the seminar, which will be held at the Hofburg Palace in Vienna. They will include constructive discussions on the energy sector and its developments, in addition to other important issues, such as energy security, energy transition and attracting investment.

Regarding the hopes and aspi-

rations for the upcoming COP28 hosted by the UAE at the end of 2023, Al Ghaiss said that the conference would be a key opportunity to unify the world towards practical and ambitious solutions to address the phenomenon of climate change. Therefore, it is expected to be a practical conference focused on action, implementation and inclusiveness, based on scientifically supported innovative solutions and principles that promote equality and inclusivity.

Al Ghaiss added that COP28 has the potential to achieve ambitious, fair and balanced results, with climate action ensuring a just transition by supporting developing countries fairly and equitably while considering national circumstances and priorities.

It should also focus on climate financing, knowledge sharing and technology transfer to encourage innovation and develop technological solutions that inspire ambition and remove barriers to collective climate action, he further added.

He stressed that since the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972 (Stockholm Conference), OPEC and its member countries have fully prioritised environmental and climate change issues. -**WAM**

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Arabia Falcon Insurance, up 10.00 per cent, was the top gainer while National Finance, down 7.69 per cent, was the top loser



MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,795.19 points, up by 0.07 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.12 per cent at 480.11 points. Arabia Falcon Insurance, up 10.00 per cent, was the top gainer while National Finance, down 7.69 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of National Bank Oman were the most active in terms of the number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover. A total number of 758 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating a turnover of OMR5.51 million, with more than 21.99 million shares changing hands. Out of 52 traded securities, 18 advanced, 11 declined, and 23 remained unchanged. At the session close, foreign investors were net sellers for OMR287,000 while GCC & Arab investors were net buyers for OMR170,000, followed by domestic investors for OMR117,000 worth of shares. Financial Index closed at 7,872.48 points, up 0.14 per cent. Prices of Arabia Falcon Insurance, Oman United Insurance, Takaful Oman, Ominvest, and Muscat Finance were up by 10.00 per cent,

3.46 per cent, 1.85 per cent, 1.84 per cent, and 1.67 per cent respectively. Prices of National Finance, Al Anwar Investment, Bank Nizwa, and Sohar International Bank were up by 7.69 per cent, 2.38 per cent, 1.03 per cent, and 0.92 per cent respectively. Industrial Index closed at 6,165.02 points, down 0.01 per cent. Prices of Gulf International Chemicals, Oman Fisheries, Al Anwar Ceramics, and Oman Flour Mills were up by 9.72 per cent, 3.33 per cent, 1.13 per cent, and 0.38 per cent respectively. Prices of Raysut Cement, Oman Packaging, and Galfar Engineering were up by 2.69 per cent, 2.15 per cent, and 1.64 per cent respectively. Services Index was down by 0.03 per cent before closing at 1,701.76 points. Prices of Barka Water & Power Company, SMN Power Holding, Ooredoo, and Abraj Energy were up by 5.56 per cent, 3.70 per cent, 1.35 per cent, and 0.32 per cent respectively. Prices of Barka Desalination, Sembcorp Salalah, and Oman Telecom were up by 2.92 per cent, 1.05 per cent, and 0.51 per cent respectively. — United Securities

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDECIES

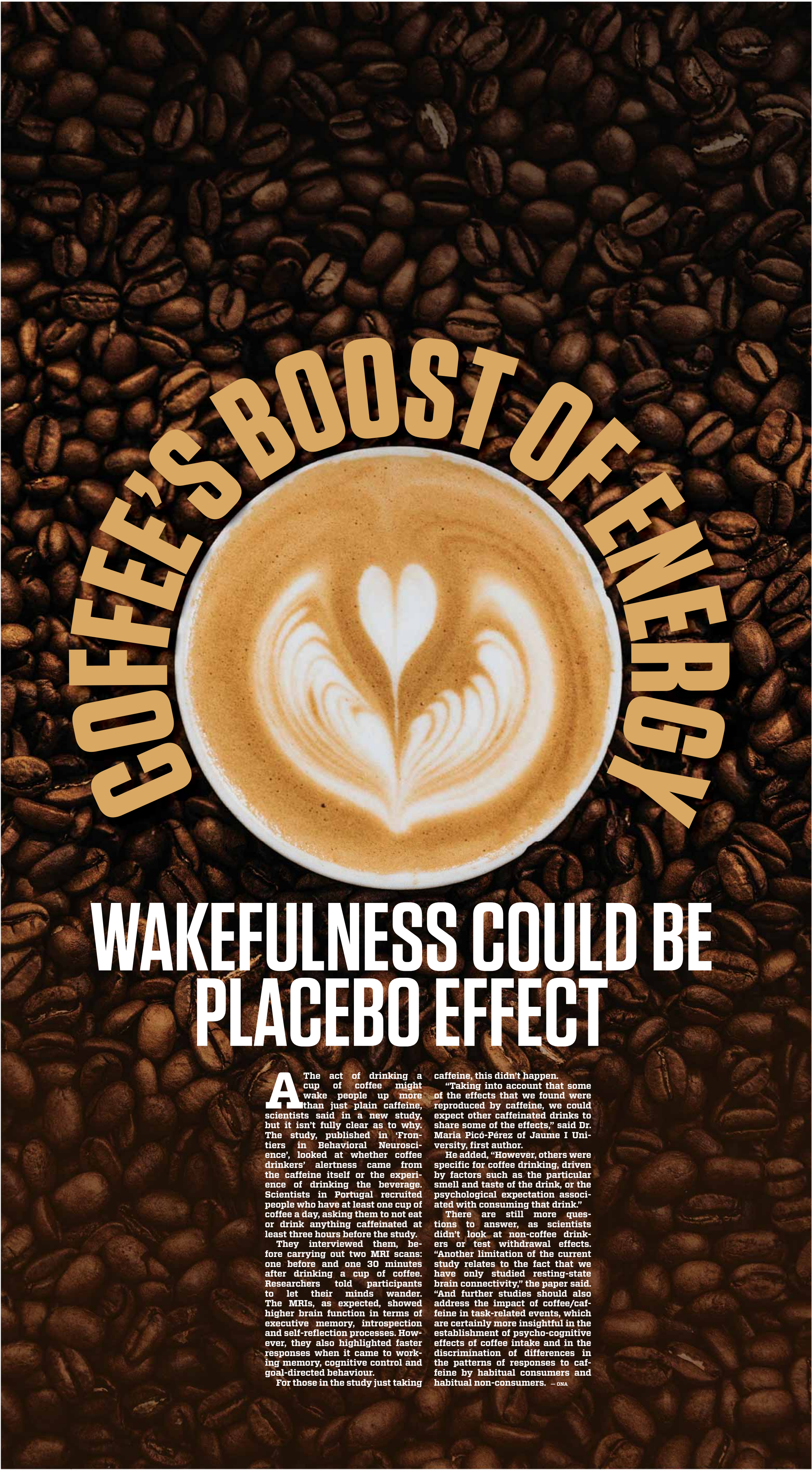
Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	4,810.97	4,792.00	4,795.19	4,792.00	3.19	0.07
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,912.20	7,861.82	7,872.48	7,861.82	10.66	0.14
Industry Index	6,177.41	6,165.02	6,165.02	6,165.76	-0.74	-0.01
Services Index	1,705.29	1,698.22	1,701.76	1,702.19	-0.43	-0.03
MSX Shariah Index	481.55	479.31	480.11	479.55	0.56	0.12
MSX TR INDEX	6,327.07	6,302.12	6,306.32	6,302.12	4.20	0.07
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,633.66	8,578.69	8,590.32	8,578.69	11.63	0.14
SERVICES TR IDX	1,874.66	1,866.89	1,870.78	1,871.25	-0.47	-0.03
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	6,599.02	6,585.78	6,585.78	6,586.57	-0.79	-0.01

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
21,990,701	5,514,616	758	23,863,734,497	18	11	23	52

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR TUESDAY, JULY 4

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BD	LAST OFFER	PRE VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET																
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	154,200	12,852	17	0.083	0.084	0.083	0.084	0.081	0.003	3.704	0.084	0.083	0.086	0.100	16,769,390
OM0000001087	OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	20,950	5,577	6	0.265	0.270	0.265	0.269	0.260	0.009	3.462	0.269	0.265	0.269	0.100	26,900,000
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	3,400	1,316	4	0.387	0.387	0.387	0.380	0.007	1.842	0.387	0.388	0.385	0.100	258,657,420	
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	287,447	18,431	28	0.064	0.065	0.063	0.064	0.063	0.001	1.587	0.064	0.063	0.064	0.100	22,792,147
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	771,300	287,428	30	0.372	0.375	0.370	0.375	0.370	0.005	1.351	0.373	0.373	0.374	0.100	244,104,086
OM0000002440	AL SHARGIYA INVESTMENT HO.	5,000	380	1	0.076	0.076	0.076	0.075	0.001	1.333	0.076	0.076	0.076	0.078	0.100	6,840,000
OM0000004788	MADINA TAKAFUL	91,425	7,959	15	0.087	0.088	0.087	0.086	0.001	1.163	0.087	0.086	0.086	0.087	0.100	15,225,000
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	567,613	141,191	7	0.287	0.270	0.287	0.288	0.285	0.003	1.132	0.288	0.286	0.270	0.100	58,860,000
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	2,649,925	763,151	27	0.288	0.289	0.287	0.287	0.285	0.002	0.702	0.287	0.287	0.287	0.100	466,646,604
OM0000001152	OMAN NATIONAL ENGINEERING & INVESTMENT	17,500	1,908	5	0.109	0.109	0.109	0.109	0.000	0.000	0.109	0.107	0.109	0.100	16,350,000	
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	250	90	1	0.360	0.360	0.360	0.360	0.360	0.000	0.000	0.360	0.360	0.370	0.100	119,114,176
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	1,875	525	1	0.280	0.280	0.280	0.280	0.280	0.000	0.000	0.280	0.280	0.280	0.100	34,971,429
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	9,000	1,557	3	0.173	0.173	0.173	0.173	0.173	0.000	0.000	0.173	0.172	0.173	0.100	518,368,798
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	1,524,640	427,691	67	0.280	0.282	0.279	0.279	0.279	0.000	0.000	0.279	0.279	0.279	0.100	610,024,984,780
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	90,000	5,665	10	0.063	0.064	0.062	0.062	0.062	0.000	0.000	0.062	0.060	0.063	0.100	12,400,000
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	763,640	756,577	38	0.990	0.994	0.985	0.985	0.990	-0.005	-0.505	0.985	0.985	1.000	0.100	738,750,000
OM0000003396	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	890,800	96,207	29	0.109	0.109	0.108	0.108	0.109	-0.001	-0.917	0.108	0.108	0.110	0.100	495,728,727
OM0000002236	AL JAZEERA SERVICES	5,000	1,250	1	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.250	-0.009	-3.475	0.250	0.248	0.250	0.100	15,301,068
Total	18	7,813,965	2,529,755	290												
Parallel Market																
OM0000007290	ARABIA FALCON INSURANCE	1,500	165	1	0.110	0.110	0.110	0.110	0.100	0.010	10.000	0.110	0.110	0.000	0.100	11,363,183
OM0000002028	GULF INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS	1,000	79	1	0.079	0.079	0.079	0.079	0.072	0.007	9.722	0.079	0.072	0.079	0.100	1,659,000
OM0000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	741,308	27,075	37	0.036	0.038	0.036	0.038	0.036	0.002	5.556	0.038	0.038	0.038	0.100	6,080,000
OM0000007910	AMAN REAL ESTATE	18,100	1,720	2	0.095	0.098	0.095	0.098	0.095	0.003	3.158	0.098	0.090	0.104	0.100	19,600,000
OM0000004776	TAKAFUL OMAN	58,000	3,190	6	0.055	0.055	0.055	0.055	0.054	0.001	1.852	0.055	0.055	0.055	0.100	13,750,000
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	1,300,753	80,265	58	0.060	0.063	0.060	0.061	0.060	0.001	1.667	0.061	0.061	0.061	0.100	18,735,926
OM0000001400	OMAN FLOUR MILLS	419,658	219,901	12	0.524	0.524	0.524	0.524	0.522	0.002	0.383	0.524	0.524	0.524	0.100	82,530,000
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	3,034,476	946,278	109	0.309	0.314	0.309	0.310	0.309	0.001	0.324	0.311	0.311	0.311	0.100	238,762,000
OM0000001030	OMAN CHROMITE	1,175	1,113	3	3.500	3.500	3.500	3.500	3.500	0.000	0.000	3.500	3.450	3.500	1.000	10,500,000
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	108,700	10,900	13	0.101	0.102	0.099	0.101	0.101	0.000	0.000	0.099	0.099	0.101	0.100	8,585,000
OM0000001368	CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL INDUSTRIES	8,500	570	1	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.000	0.000	0.060	0.056	0.066	0.100	3,750,000
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	243,300	12,646	20	0.052	0.052	0.052	0.052	0.050	0.002	0.556	0.052	0.052	0.052	0.100	4,420,000
OM0000002287	GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS	2,126	476	1	0.224	0.224	0.224	0.224	0.224	0.000	0.000	0.224	0.226	0.246	0.100	10,251,539
OM0000002275	SHELL OMAN MARKETING	260	250	1	0.960	0.960	0.960	0.960	0.960	0.000	0.000	0.960	0.865	0.960	0.100	91,200,000
OM0000002372	OMAN OIL MARKETING	631,500	663,075	4	1.050	1.050	1.050	1.050	1.050	0.000	0.000	1.050	1.050	1.050	0.100	64,338,750
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	70,000	7,350	6	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.000	0.000	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.100	5,547,289
OM0000004669	SHARGIYAH DESALINATION	140,000	17,500	6	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.000	0.000	0.125	0.120	0.125	0.100	12,225,270
OM0000004825	ALBATINAH POWER	10,100	283	2	0.028	0.029	0.028	0.029	0.029	0.000	0.000	0.029	0.028	0.029	0.100	19,571,735
OM0000004932	AL SUWADI POWER	152,355	3,849	6	0.028	0.029	0.028	0.029	0.029	0.000	0.000	0.029	0.028	0.029	0.100	20,717,784
OM0000005260	OMAN ARAB BANK	100,000	14,500	4	0.145	0.145	0.145	0.145	0.145	0.000	0.000	0.145	0.143	0.145	0.100	242,064,450
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	445,349	29,395	4	0.066	0.067	0.066	0.067	0.067	0.000	0.000	0.067	0.063	0.067	0.100	97,994,298
OM0000006447	OMAN REIT FUND	760	71	2	0.093	0.093	0.093	0.093	0.093	0.000	0.000	0.093	0.093	0.093	0.100	43,920,334
OM0000008868	THE PEARL REIT	100,000	12,200	3	0.122	0.122	0.122	0.122	0.122	0.000	0.000	0.122	0.122	0.125	0.100	53,821,966
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	970,775	93,212	20	0.096	0.097	0.096	0.096	0.097	-0.001	-1.031	0.096	0.088	0.096	0.100	214,747,491
OM0000004735	SEMBCORP SALALAH	40,000	3,760	5	0.094	0.094	0.094	0.094	0.095	0.001	1.053	0.094	0.093	0.098	0.100	89,729,763
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	1,600,050	292,490	26	0.183	0.183	0.180	0.180	0.183	-0.003	-1.639	0.180	0.180	0.181	0.100	36,537,560
OM0000001608	OMAN PACKAGING	1,500	273	1	0.182	0.182	0.182	0.182	0.186	-0.004	-2.151	0.182	0.180	0.000	0.100	5,903,327
OM0000001772	ALANWAH INVESTMENT	1,475,030	122,616	45	0.085	0.085	0.082	0.082	0.084	-0.002	-2.381	0.082	0.082	0.082	0.100	16,892,000
OM0000001418	RAYSUT CEMENT	449,870	82,307	44	0.189	0.189	0.181	0.181	0.186	-0.005	-2.688	0.181	0.181	0.1		



COFFEE'S BOOST OF ENERGY

WAKEFULNESS COULD BE PLACEBO EFFECT

A The act of drinking a cup of coffee might wake people up more than just plain caffeine, scientists said in a new study, but it isn't fully clear as to why. The study, published in 'Frontiers in Behavioral Neuroscience', looked at whether coffee drinkers' alertness came from the caffeine itself or the experience of drinking the beverage. Scientists in Portugal recruited people who have at least one cup of coffee a day, asking them to not eat or drink anything caffeinated at least three hours before the study. They interviewed them, before carrying out two MRI scans: one before and one 30 minutes after drinking a cup of coffee. Researchers told participants to let their minds wander. The MRIs, as expected, showed higher brain function in terms of executive memory, introspection and self-reflection processes. However, they also highlighted faster responses when it came to working memory, cognitive control and goal-directed behaviour. For those in the study just taking

caffeine, this didn't happen. "Taking into account that some of the effects that we found were reproduced by caffeine, we could expect other caffeinated drinks to share some of the effects," said Dr. Maria Picó-Pérez of Jaume I University, first author. He added, "However, others were specific for coffee drinking, driven by factors such as the particular smell and taste of the drink, or the psychological expectation associated with consuming that drink." There are still more questions to answer, as scientists didn't look at non-coffee drinkers or test withdrawal effects. "Another limitation of the current study relates to the fact that we have only studied resting-state brain connectivity," the paper said. "And further studies should also address the impact of coffee/caffeine in task-related events, which are certainly more insightful in the establishment of psycho-cognitive effects of coffee intake and in the discrimination of differences in the patterns of responses to caffeine by habitual consumers and habitual non-consumers. — ONA

SPORTS

2023 World Golf Awards: Al Mouj Golf nominated in six categories

Al Mouj Golf invites people to vote as they bid to win big at the most prestigious awards in the golfing world with the decision to be made in October

MUSCAT: Al Mouj Golf has been nominated for six awards in the 2023 World Golf Awards and the twice-ranked World Top 100 club is inviting golfers and non-golfers to get behind the oceanfront course by casting votes to help them win.

The awards are the most prestigious in the golfing world with votes made by leading names from the world of golf tourism and management, including past and current professionals, as well as being open to the media and the public.

The Greg Norman-designed course has been shortlisted across a range of categories including Best Golf Course in the Middle East and separately, Best Golf Destination, Best Golf Course in Oman, World's Best Club House, World's Best 9 Hole Course and the World's Most Eco-friendly Golf Facility.

Voting is open until September 1 with the winners announced in October, and Al Mouj Golf is en-



couraging anyone with an interest in supporting the club, to visit the Al Mouj Golf website www.almoujgolf.com so that their votes can be counted.

The 72-par links course is one of the main leisure attractions within Al Mouj Muscat, the country's leading lifestyle destination and, since opening in 2012, has achieved a number of notable suc-

cesses including being the first in the country to earn PGA status. It has also won 22 international titles, hosted the Oman Open on three occasions, and was the first in the region to host the Oman Stage of the Asian Tour, the pan-Asian competition supported by LIV Golf.

Nasser bin Masoud Al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat said, "We

are particularly proud of the range of nominations which cover all aspects of our strengths from the playing experience and the maintenance and management of our course to the social opportunities that make Al Mouj Golf such an attractive destination.

"It is also wonderful that once again, our eco-conscious approach to preserving the natural envi-

ronment is being recognised and should we win in the eco-friendly category, our commitment to sustainability and golf will raise our profile even higher on the global stage. These awards are also the perfect platform to raise awareness of Oman's natural beauty, widening its appeal to tourists from all over the world."

Set along a two-kilometre

stretch of coastline and against the striking backdrop of the Al Hajar Mountains, Al Mouj Golf offers players of all standards a challenging game in a lush setting, accented with bunkers, water hazards and natural dunes. There is a floodlit driving range and clubhouse complete with an international restaurant open seven days a week, morning to night.

SAUDI PRO LEAGUE

Gerrard named manager of Saudi club Al Ettifaq

LONDON: Former England and Liverpool midfielder Steven Gerrard has been named manager of Saudi Arabian side Al-Ettifaq, *BBC Sport* reported on Tuesday.

The 43-year-old had said in June he had been invited over to the country to "look at a potential offer" but that he would not be taking it up.

"Without a doubt, Gerrard's presence will be an addition and a quantum leap to our league," said Khalid Al Dabal, the club's chairman.

Gerrard has signed a two-year contract with the Saudi club.

Al Ettifaq were seventh in the 16-team Saudi Pro League last season, finishing 35 points behind champions Al Ittihad.

Gerrard has been out of work since being sacked as Aston Villa manager in October last year.

The former England midfielder's move to Saudi Arabia follows a summer of heavy investment by Pro League clubs as several top European players have joined Manchester United striker Cristiano Ronaldo in the Middle East.

Former Real Madrid striker Karim Benzema, Wolves midfielder Ruben Neves and Chelsea trio N'Golo Kante, Kalidou Koulibaly and Edouard Mendy are among those to move to Saudi Arabia, with Inter Milan's Marcelo Brozovic to Al-Nassr the



most recent deal to be completed.

The trend underlines the league's ambition to be one of the top five in the world and follows a decision in June by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF), which owns Newcastle United, to take over four leading clubs in the country. Al Ettifaq is not one of those clubs.

Gerrard retired from playing in 2016 and his first managerial role was at Scottish club Rangers.

He took over the Ibrox side in 2018 and led the club to their first Scottish Premiership title in 10 years in 2020-21.

Gerrard then became Villa boss in November 2021 but left after 13 wins from 40 games during his time in charge.

FIA-WEC ROUND FIVE

Al Harthy hopes to put up a strong show at Monza

MUSCAT: Buoyed by his podium finish on debut at the Le Mans 24hrs, Oman's Ahmad Al Harthy goes into round five of the FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC) high on confidence as Oman Racing with TF Sport team attempts for another podium finish at Monza in Italy on July 9.

Al Harthy, along with his teammates Michael Dinan and Charlie Eastwood, powered their Aston Martin Vantage to second place at the Le Mans 24hrs, the world's biggest endurance race.

Oman Racing trio are now ranked second in both the driver's and team's GTE Am standings.

With just three races remaining in the FIA WEC season, the No.25 Aston Martin Vantage trio will hope to garner maximum points in the races ahead to eye an overall podium finish in the championship.

Monza is a track that holds great memories for Al Harthy, who won his maiden Pro-Am class victory in the Blancpain Endurance Series - now the GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup - back in 2017 as well as other podium success.

Al Harthy, who is supported by the Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, OQ, Omantel and MHD-ITICS, has been in outstanding form so far in the series.

Even with a negative 'balance of performance' grading at the start



of the year for the Aston Martin, the Omani and his team-mates picked up points for ninth place at Sebring in the USA during round one, and then eighth position during the subsequent race in Portimao, Portugal.

As soon as the playing field levelled for the Aston, in time for round three at Spa-Francorchamps in Belgium, Oman Racing delivered on its promise with a first ever podium for Al Harthy in WEC after a terrific top three finish - a day after he achieved his maiden WEC pole position in GTE Am. Taking that forward they achieved greater success at Le Mans.

Ahead of Monza, Al Harthy said: "To be honest the podium at Le Mans is yet to sink in completely. It was an amazing week. It was the

best event of my career and the proudest moment as it is (Le Mans) the biggest endurance race in the world. The aim now is to take that momentum forward to Monza.

"I love racing there, it's a fantastic track but you do need the top speed to be able to compete. The guys at the team haven't stopped working, we continually push to improve and try and be the best we can be, so hopefully we will have a competitive car and be able to challenge for the podium again.

"I really am looking forward to being back in Italy, and at such a great and historic circuit."

The first two free practice sessions at Monza will take place on Friday, with a third session and all-important qualifying on Saturday. The 6 Hours of Monza will get underway on Sunday.

MOVE FROM CELTIC

Portuguese winger Jota joins Ittihad

LONDON: Portuguese Jota has moved to Saudi Arabian side Al Ittihad from Celtic for an undisclosed fee, *BBC Sport* reported on Tuesday.

The winger, 24, initially joined Celtic on loan from Benfica in 2021 before Celtic signed him on a five-year deal last summer.

He contributed 28 goals and 26 assists in 83 games over two years in Glasgow and had been heavily linked with a move to Al Ittihad in recent days.

Last week, Celtic signed winger Marco Tilio, 21 from Melbourne City.

Jota scored Celtic's last goal in the 3-1 Scottish Cup final triumph over Inverness, ensuring the club completed a fifth domestic treble in seven years.

The Portugal age grade international was a key member of Ange Postecoglou's side, picking up all but one of the six Scottish trophies on offer during his tenure.

Jota averaged a goal or assist every 111 minutes, but follows manager Postecoglou and the retired Aaron Mooy in leaving Celtic this window.

And he joins fellow new signings Karim Benzema and N'Golo Kante at Al Ittihad.

SUMMER TRAINING

OWA holds karate course in Mudhaibi

MUSCAT: The Omani Women's Association (OWA) in the Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi, North A'Sharqiyah Governorate, in cooperation with the Muscat-based Shotokan Karate Center, concluded a summer training course in karate and self-defence recently.

A total of 32 boys and girls participants from children under the age of ten took part.

Asma bint Nasser Al Habsiya, chairwoman of the OWA branch in Al Mudhaibi, said: "The summer training course, which lasted for three weeks, was aimed at utilising the spare time of school students and providing them with skills and knowledge



in self defence and karate. The course was conducted by Hilal bin Mohammed Al Abdali from the Shotokan Karate Center in Muscat Governorate."

She added: "Karate and self-defence skills are important in

today's life and children should learn at an early age. Besides the psychological and physical benefits, they also develop strength, patience, discipline, respect, boldness, courage and teamwork."

SHOULDER DISLOCATION

Pope ruled out for rest of Ashes

LONDON: Ollie Pope has been ruled out of the remainder of England's Ashes campaign after dislocating his right shoulder during the second Test at Lord's last week.

Pope, who has twice suffered shoulder dislocations in the past, underwent a scan in London on Monday, which revealed the full extent of the injury. He will undergo surgery and will miss the final three Tests against Australia, before beginning his rehabilitation under the guidance of the England and Surrey medical teams.

Having damaged the shoulder diving for a ball on day one of



the Lord's Test, Pope aggravated the injury on day three after the umpires insisted he take the field after batting in England's first innings, scoring 42.

Pope is also England's designated vice-captain, although that leadership gap is straight replacement to fill, with Stuart Broad likely to step up as Ben Stokes' deputy, having fulfilled the role unofficially last summer.

The bigger issue, however, is who now steps into the vacant No. 3 spot at Headingley.

Dan Lawrence is the closest thing to a like-for-like replacement. He is already the only spare batter in the squad, with England choosing not to name a replacement in their squad, and has also been in sound domestic form, scoring 491 runs at 44.63 for Essex with two centuries.

IN PICTURES



Children enjoy International Festival for Iraqi Children
Children try out virtual reality (VR) headsets during the second edition of the International Festival for Iraqi Children at the Baghdad International Fair in Baghdad, Iraq. *Xinhua*



European style Christmas market held in Canberra
A woman buys food during the 'Christmas in July Festival' in Canberra, Australia. An European style Christmas market was held in Canberra to let the local people experience a cold Christmas in the current winter month. *Xinhua*



Proboscis monkey cub makes public debut in Guangdong
Proboscis monkey cub "Wuyi" is seen with its mother at Chimelong Safari Park in Guangzhou, south China's Guangdong Province. Chimelong Safari Park has successfully bred 11 proboscis monkey cubs since the introduction of proboscis monkeys in 2017. *Xinhua*

Australia's central bank keeps cash rate unchanged at 4.1%
People walk past an office of a commercial bank in Sydney, Australia. The Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA), Australia's central bank, kept the cash rate unchanged at 4.1 percent on Tuesday. *Xinhua*



Parade held to celebrate Tongan King Tupou VI's official birthday
Soldiers participate in a military parade in Nuku'alofa, Tonga. Tongan King Tupou VI's official birthday, observed on July 4 each year, is a public holiday in the country. *Xinhua*



Belarus Independence Day marked at Mound of Glory memorial complex
Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko (front) speaks at an event marking Belarus Independence Day at the Mound of Glory memorial complex outside Minsk, Belarus. *Xinhua*



North America's largest anime show being held in Los Angeles
Attendees walk through a hall during the Anime Expo 2023 at the Los Angeles Convention Centre in Los Angeles, the United States. The showbrings together fans and industry professionals from over 60 countries and regions. *Xinhua*

ROUND-UP

NBO launches salary transfer campaign with up to 10% cashback

Running until August 30, the salary transfer campaign is available to eligible customers who open new accounts with a salary transfer or have existing accounts with no salary transfer for more than 12 months

MUSCAT: Continuing to unlock opportunities for its customers, the National Bank of Oman (NBO) has launched a salary transfer campaign.

Running until August 30, the salary transfer campaign is available to eligible customers who open new accounts with a salary transfer or have existing accounts with no salary transfer for more than 12 months. These customers have the chance to receive a cashback of up to 10% on their new salary credit,

with a maximum cashback limit of OMR 500. As an additional benefit, eligible customers participating in the campaign will also receive a first-year free credit card and a first year free automated safe deposit locker at NBO's head office.

Maha Al Raisi, Assistant General Manager and Head of Retail Products said, "We are excited to offer this opportunity to our customers, demonstrating our commitment to delivering exceptional banking solutions tailored to their needs. The Salary Transfer Campaign further enhances their banking experience with NBO, offering added benefits and convenience. We will continue to unlock opportunities and create value for our customers."

To be eligible for this exciting campaign, customers must have a minimum salary transfer of OMR750. The cashback calculation will be based on the first salary amount credited to the customer's NBO account. It is important to note that the first salary transfer must occur before October 31, 2023, to qualify for the cashback. The payout of the cashback will take place after at least three successful salary credits have been made. To continue enjoying the benefits of this campaign, customers are required to maintain the salary transfer for a minimum of 12 months. Additionally, customers are required to provide a salary assignment letter from their employer upon opening the account.



EXCLUSIVE DISCOUNTS

Crowne Plaza Resort Salalah announces limited-period Khareef flash sale

MUSCAT: Crowne Plaza Resort Salalah, a premier beach-front resort in Salalah, Oman, unveiled its highly anticipated Khareef Flash Sale. From July 1 to 15, the resort presents an irresistible opportunity for a relaxing getaway during Salalah's renowned Khareef season, with exclusive discounts on accommodation. Due to limited availability, early booking is highly recommended to secure desired dates.

During this limited period, Khareef Flash Sale, Crowne Plaza Resort Salalah offers remarkable discounts on room rates. Guests can enjoy a special price of OMR 65 nett per night, including breakfast for single occupancy, and OMR 70 nett per night, including breakfast for double occupancy, subject to availability. Families, couples, and individuals seeking an extraordinary experience in Salalah during the Khareef season will find this offer truly enticing.

Nestled on Salalah's picturesque beachfront, Crowne Plaza Resort Salalah is renowned for its five-star amenities and exceptional services. Guests can indulge in spacious accommodations, indulge in delectable culinary experiences at the acclaimed Ocean Blue Beach House restaurant, and unwind by three interconnecting pools. The resort also features a dedicated kids' play area, a water park, a garden golf course, and a driving range, catering to guests of all ages.

Salalah's Khareef season transforms the region into a lush green oasis, a spectacle unique to Salalah, Oman. This natural phenomenon entices nature enthusiasts to

witness the captivating beauty of the region. Crowne Plaza Resort Salalah offers guests an extraordinary opportunity to immerse themselves in this transformation and discover the enchantment of the Khareef season first-hand. To complement the resort's offerings, guests can explore the mesmerising attractions that Salalah has to offer. Delve into history at the Al-Baleed archaeological park, explore the scenic wonders of Wadi Darbat, or embark on exhilarating trekking trips in the nearby mountain ranges. Adventure seekers can also indulge in off-roading experiences along thrilling tracks.

"We are thrilled to present the Khareef Flash Sale, showcasing the allure of Salalah's Khareef season," said Anoop Joseph, Director of Sales & Marketing at Crowne Plaza Resort Salalah. "At our resort, guests will enjoy a relaxing stay, coupled with warm Omani hospitality and the rich cultural heritage of Oman. We invite travellers to seize this opportunity to experience the magical Khareef season, indulge in our world-class amenities, and explore the captivating attractions surrounding us."

For reservations during the Khareef Flash Sale, interested individuals are encouraged to contact the resort directly at +968 2323 8000 or via email at reservations.cpsalalah@ihg.com. Please note that this Khareef Flash Sale is available only for a limited period and cannot be combined with any other promotions or offers. Terms and conditions apply. For detailed information, guests are advised to inquire during the reservation process.

EXPANSION

BankDhofar opens 92nd branch in Nakhal

MUSCAT: Under the patronage of Sheikh Eng. Uday Hilal Al Maawali - Chairman of Medical City for Military and Security Units, the BankDhofar and Maisarah network announced the grand opening of its 92nd branch in Nakhal.

This new branch is set to serve the financial needs of the community, offering a wide range of banking services and innovative solutions.

Located in the heart of the Wilayat of Nakhal, the new branch aims to provide convenient, modern banking facilities with personalized services available to every customer. With the inauguration of this branch, BankDhofar reinforces its commitment to supporting the growth and development of the local economy, while catering to the evolving needs of customers across the nation.

The opening ceremony was attended by esteemed dignitaries, officials, and members of the community and BankDhofar's executive management.



Sheikh Eng. Uday Hilal Al Maawali, Chairman of Medical City for Military and Security Units, graciously presided over the event as the patron, highlighting the significance of this new branch in enhancing financial accessibility in Nakhal.

Commenting on the occasion, Amjad Iqbal Al Lawati, Chief Retail Banking Officer of BankDhofar,

said, "We are delighted to inaugurate our new branch in Nakhal under the patronage of Sheikh Eng. Uday Hilal Al Maawali. This branch will play a crucial role in our mission to offer convenient banking solutions and outstanding customer service to the people of Nakhal. As a customer-centric bank, we constantly strive to bring our services closer to communities and contribute to their prosperity."

The new Nakhal branch provides a comprehensive range of banking services, including personal banking, corporate banking, trade finance, investments, and more. With a team of qualified professionals, the branch will assist customers with their financial needs, offering tailored solutions to meet their requirements effectively.

BankDhofar's expansion strategy continues to focus on identifying locations where it can provide accessible banking services to communities across Oman. The opening of the Nakhal branch is part of the bank's ongoing efforts to expand its network and reach more customers, empowering them with modern financial tools and solutions.

BankDhofar, one of the leading banks in Oman, is renowned for its comprehensive range of products and services that cater to retail, corporate, and investment banking segments.

PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

Al Maha supports free car safety checks at Precision Tune Centres when heading to Khareef Salalah

MUSCAT: Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company announced a partnership agreement with Precision Tune Auto Care Centers for free vehicle inspection for vehicles travelling to Salalah from 1 July to 31 August.

Fahmi Al-Jabri, the manager for quality, health, safety and environment at Al Maha, stated that drivers heading to Salalah can benefit from this opportunity and obtain a free 9-point safety check for the car, at any of the following Precision Tune Auto Care Centers: Mabela, Al Amerat, Samail, Adam, Qurayyat, Jalan, Al-Mudhaibi, Ibra, Al-Wadi Al-Kabir, Salalah, Sahalnot, Duqm, Al-Suwaiq, Al-



Ghubra North, Mabela Industrial City, Al-Amerat City, New Musannah Saham, Ghala, Mirbat, Rusayl Industrial, Al-Buraimi, Fanja,

Al-Ghubra Beach, Al-Hail North, Ansab, Sohar, Ghala Heights.

Fahmy Al Jabri continued: "The vehicle safety check increase a

hassle-free journey to and from Salalah for drivers and their families. We also advise drivers to make sure to check vehicle fluids before beginning the journey."

Commenting on the partnership, Sandeep Ghai, CEO of Precision Tune Auto Care, stated that he is pleased to collaborate with Al Maha Company to offer free safety checks as an initiative to support vehicle safety during long journeys towards Khareef Salalah.

He added, "Precision Tune centres are fully-equipped and have the best-trained technicians who suggest the need for car repairs and maintenance before the long drive."

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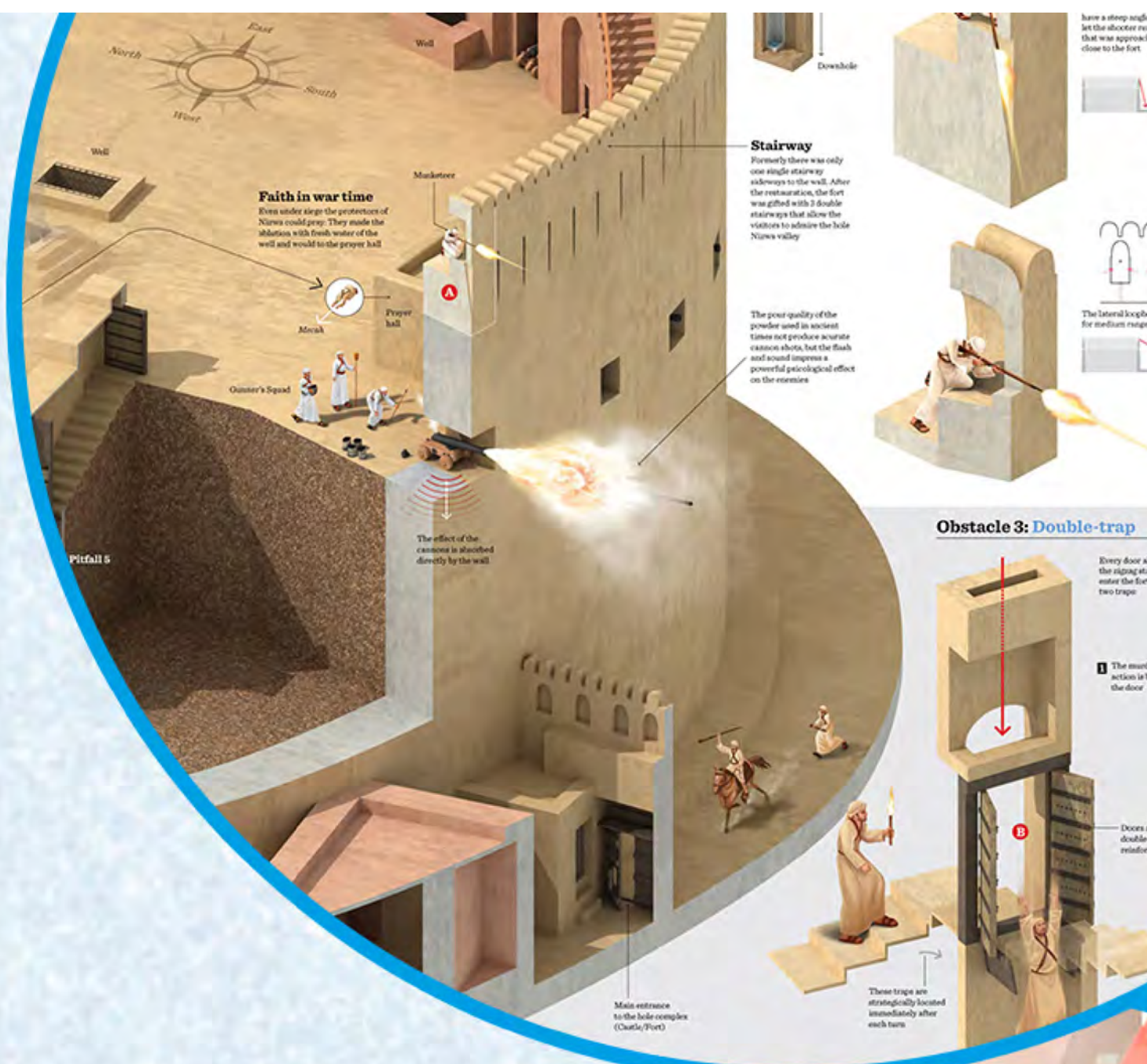
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