



HM GREETES PRESIDENT OF DJIBOUTI

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Ismail Omar Guelleh of the Republic of Djibouti, on his country's Independence Anniversary. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Ismail. His Majesty also wished the people of Djibouti further progress and prosperity. — **ONA**



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SAYYID ASA'AD RECEIVES UZBEKISTAN'S FOREIGN MINISTER



Delegated by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Asa'ad bin Tarik Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, and Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan received yesterday Baxtiyor Saidov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan. During the meeting, the two officials reviewed bilateral cooperation and means of enhancing them in various fields to serve joint interests. They also discussed several matters of mutual interest. The meeting was attended by Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, the secretary general and the advisor in the office of HH Sayyid Asa'ad. It was also attended by Abdusalam Khatamov, Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the Sultanate of Oman and the delegation accompanying the guest. — **ONA**

AIR SERVICES

His Majesty issues two Royal decrees

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Wednesday issued two Royal decrees that read as follows:

Royal Decree No. 29/2024 ratifies the agreement on regular air services between the Government of the Sultanate of Oman and the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt, signed in Cairo on 23 April 2024.

Article (1) ratifies the above-mentioned agreement in accordance with the version attached to this decree.

Article (2) says that this decree shall be published in the Official

Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree No. 30/2024 ratifies the agreement on air transport between the government of the Sultanate of Oman and the government of the Republic of Indonesia, signed in Muscat on 15 June 2022.

Article (1) ratifies the aforementioned agreement in accordance with the version attached to this decree.

Article (2) says that this Royal decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue. — **ONA**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Oman honours Jordanian official

1 His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has conferred Oman Military Order (2nd Class) on Maj. Gen. Yousef Al Huneiti, Chairman of the Jordanian Joint Chiefs of Staff, for his efforts in consolidating military cooperation. **>A2**

WORLD

22 protesters killed in Kenya clashes

2 Kenya's state-backed rights body announced the death of 22 protesters killed during Tuesday's rallies, while the Kenya Medical Association put the death toll at 23. **>A6**

SPORTS

India seek revenge against England

3 Team India will meet holders England in the second semifinal of the ongoing ICC T20 World Cup at Guyana on Thursday. The crucial encounter begins at 6.30pm, Oman time. **>A8**



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OMAN PLANS TO ENHANCE ENERGY, MINERALS CONTRIBUTIONS TO GDP



The Ministry of Energy and Minerals said that it had achieved robust results in 2023 and seeks to further boost production

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Energy and Minerals seeks to enhance the contribution of the energy and mineral sectors to the gross domestic product (GDP) and add to the national income of Oman.

In a statement, the ministry said that it has achieved strong results in 2023 and wants to sup-

plement the state's general budget by using all possible means to boost production at lower cost using the latest technology.

Engineer Salem bin Nasser Al-Awfi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, stressed that the ministry is working to harness all capabilities and resources to enhance its role in developing the energy and minerals sectors,

and use advanced technology to support the production of crude oil and oil condensates.

The minister further explained that the Ministry of Energy and Minerals continued its efforts in the field of localisation of industries in 2023.

Local value

A factory for manufacturing chemicals within the Sultanate of Oman has been certified and approved in accordance with the required standards and specifications, which will contribute directly to enhancing the local value, in addition to achieving a reduction in operational expenses.

The first well drilling rig manufactured in Oman with an electronic operation feature was

also completed, as it was manufactured using the latest technologies to ensure safe, efficient and sustainable drilling operations.

He pointed out that in line with the government's directions in supporting the role of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to contribute to achieving economic and social development, the total spending on small and medium enterprises in the oil and gas sectors amounted to about 16 percent of the total value of purchases and tenders.

Regarding the important projects that were started in 2023, Engineer Salem bin Nasser Al-Awfi pointed to the Al-Ghaisin Mine Copper Mining Project in the Wilayat of Al-Khaboura.

It is one of the most important

and promising projects in copper mining that will contribute to enhancing economic diversification in the Sultanate of Oman. It relies on modern, environmentally friendly underground mining techniques and its reserve is estimated at more than six million tonnes with an average concentration of 2.04 percent copper ore.

Also, a solar energy station was opened in the Wilayat of Sur to produce renewable energy for the Sur water desalination plant.

He stressed that the ministry has made tangible efforts in the field of social responsibility with its partners as three national projects were supported by three different companies at a cost of OMR2.5 million. **See also >B1**

20-MONTH-OLD

Muscat toddler sets world record for fastest counting

Times News Service

MUSCAT: At an age when most young girls are captivated by dolls and toys, a Muscat-based toddler has already made her mark on the world stage.

Vianna Kanojia, a 20-month-old, has set a world record for the "Fastest Recitation of 1 to 10 Counting by a Toddler."

On April 6, 2024, Vianna's proud parents, Sanjit and Payal, witnessed her record-setting recitation. She counted from 1 to 10 in just six seconds, breaking the previous record of eight seconds. Recently, they received the official certificate and confirmation of her remarkable achievement.

At the time of her record-setting



recitation, Vianna was one year, eight months, and fifteen days old.

The record was validated by the International Book of Records, a global organisation with ambassadors around the world.

This platform allows individuals to showcase their unique talents and inspire others to push their limits. The organisation documents and publishes notable records across a wide range of achievements.

Speaking to *Times of Oman*, Sanjit Kanojia, Vianna's father, said: "We came across this platform through social media, where we saw many people showcasing their talents in various fields, which inspired us. We are aware of Vianna's ability to learn things quickly, often leaving us speech-

less. She loves listening to rhymes and music, and even croons to her favourite songs."

Sanjit continued, "At a very young age of 15 months, she had already started reciting alphabets and numbers."

She sings rhymes and recites alphabets and numbers almost daily. One day, we noticed her counting from 1 to 10 very quickly, and that's when we decided she should attempt a record. We registered her with the International Book of Records."

Her mother, Payal, expressed their joy: "We are delighted and proud that she has set a world record before even turning two. As parents, we believed in Vianna's potential and encouraged her to participate." **>A2**

GAZA DEATH TOLL

as of June 26, 2024





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Discussions on steps for zero carbon emission

The symposium highlighted the importance of exchanging ideas and experiences between institutions to achieve Oman Vision 2040

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The initiatives of national institutions to achieve zero carbon neutrality by 2050 was reviewed at a symposium. Attended by 50 participants representing a number of national authorities interested in the zero carbon neutrality, the meeting aimed at reducing carbon emission and take advantage of the benefits gained from its application at the local level, and highlight the projects and initiatives that the concerned authorities are working on in the Sultanate of Oman to achieve the goal.



The symposium highlighted the importance of exchanging ideas and experiences between institutions to achieve Oman Vision 2040, the priority of the environment and natural resources to achieve a balance between the requirements of the sustainable development goals and the sustainable use of natural resources and wealth with the aim of enhancing the growth of the national economy. The programme included two working sessions, the first focused on introducing zero carbon neutrality and spreading community awareness. It reviewed 4 working papers on the role of the UNESCO-Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Conservation in supporting environmental issues, the role of the private sector in achieving zero carbon neutrality, the national strategy for zero carbon neutral-

ity and developing environmental awareness to achieve zero carbon neutrality. While the second working session of the symposium focused on the projects and initiatives that the concerned authorities are working on in the Sultanate of Oman to achieve zero carbon neutrality, including the efforts of the Ministry of Education in this aspect, the initiative of the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation, the initiative of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, and youth institutions' initiatives to achieve zero carbon neutrality. The symposium was organised by the Omani National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, represented by the Science Sector Department in cooperation with the Petroleum Development Oman Company.

RESEARCH CENTRE

Pact signed for drone, robotics use in farm sector

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources on Wednesday signed an agreement to lease a unit for establishing a research centre to develop robotics and drones for agricultural, fishery and water uses. The agreement stems from the Ministry's endeavours to consolidate partnership with the private sector and enable small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to carry out tasks in the agricultural sector through the use of smart technologies. The Ministry also seeks to introduce, evaluate, transfer and utilise modern technologies in the agricultural sector. -ONA





REF: OFM -01-2024 SCRAP SALE

Oman Flour Mills SAOG, (OFM) invites specialize vendor to participate in our tender for the "Scrap Sale" as per the scope of work and specifications.

Tender Ref no.	OFM -01/2024
Tender subject	Scrap for Sale
Tender fees	RO.200/- (refundable)
Date for Visit location	30.06.2024 till 02.07.2024
Closing date of the tender	04.07.2024
Mode of payment of tender fees	By cash - Admin dept.
For communication	Mr. Shabib Bader Al-Bakshi # 98047984

Therefore, please contact the person to inquire, and submit the offer in a sealed envelope with the tender Ref no. mentioned, and drop them at the tender box of Oman Flour Mills Company at Ajlun Investment Building- Reception.



11TH REGULAR SESSION

Draft 'Public Health Law', 'Financial Law' sent to the State Council

MUSCAT: The Shura Council on Wednesday referred the draft "Public Health Law" and "Financial Law" to the State Council for the draft bills to complete the legislative session. This took place during the Shura Council's 11th regular session of the first annual convening (2023-2024) during the tenth term (2023-2027), held under the chairmanship of Sheikh Khalid Hilal Al Maawali, Chairman of the Shura Council. The council also discussed the report of the temporary committee concerned with the job seek-



ers' file. This resulted in several outcomes and recommendations aimed at boosting the labour market in Oman. Moreover, the Shura Council will continue its discussions tomorrow (Thursday) during its 12th regular session regarding a number of draft laws referred by the government. -ONA



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MEETINGS

Minister of Royal Office bids farewell to ambassadors of Jordan, Cyprus



MUSCAT: Gen. Sultan Mohammed Al Nu'amani, Minister of the Royal Office yesterday received Amjad Kuhewi, Ambassador of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to bid him farewell at the end of his tour of duty. The ambassador expressed his

thanks for the support accorded to him by officials in Oman. In his turn, Al Nu'amani expressed his appreciation to the ambassador for the efforts he exerted in enhancing bilateral relations, wishing him success in his future endeavors.



Moreover, Gen. Sultan Mohammed Al Nu'amani, Minister of the Royal Office also received Andreas Nicolaides, Ambassador of the Republic of Cyprus to the Sultanate of Oman to bid him farewell at the end of his tour of duty. The ambassador expressed his

appreciation for the cooperation extended to him. He also lauded the strength of relations between Oman and Cyprus. Al Nu'amani expressed his thanks to the ambassador for the efforts he exerted in boosting bilateral relations, wishing him success. -ONA

NAMA WATER PROCUREMENT COMPANY

Nine prequalify for Ibri III Solar PV project

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Nine international companies have prequalified in the competitive tender to participate in the Ibri III Solar PV project – a 500 MW project estimated to cost OMR155 million, according to Nama Power and Water Procurement Company (PWP), the sole buyer of power and water output in the Sultanate of Oman.

The Ibri III Solar PV project is the fourth large-scale solar scheme to be developed in Oman. In a press statement, PWP said that the prequalified companies are: Abu Dhabi Future Energy Company (Masdar), ACWA Power, Al Riyadh National Trading and Korea Midland Power (KOMIPO), Jinko Power, Sembcorp Utilities, TotalEnergies Renewables, EDF Renouvelables and Korean Western Power (KOWEPO), International Power SA (Engie) and Sumitomo Corporation.

The procurement of this solar project is part of the Omani government's policy to diversify energy resources to meet the growing demand for electricity.

IPP model

The implementation of this project will follow the successful precedent IPP model established in Oman and involves a fair and transparent competition process with the objective of awarding the contract to a highly qualified private sector developer with a view to deliver world class technology solutions to advance Oman's renewable energy and energy resource diversification goals.

In response to its request for qualification floated in January this year,

Local and international developers

Nama Power and Water Procurement Company received a total of 12 submissions for qualification submitted by local and international developers.

Nine applicants have been either conditionally, or unconditionally qualified.

The developers are from the Sultanate of Oman, United Arab Emirates, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, China, South Korea, Singapore, France, and Japan.

“After a rigorous evaluation process, Nama Power and Water Procurement is pleased to announce the unconditionally pre-qualified and conditionally pre-qualified applicants,” said Nama PWP in a press statement.

“Nama Power and Water Procurement Company is currently working to finalise the Request for Proposals which will soon be issued to the above-listed pre-qualified applicants upon receipt of the relevant approvals,” it added.

Ibri III Solar IPP is the fourth solar IPP that has been tendered by Nama Power and Water Procurement Company following Ibri II Solar IPP (Operational since summer 2021) and Manah I Solar IPP and Manah II Solar IPP (under construction).

Nama Power and Water Procurement Company is working along with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals and the Authority for Public Services Regulation to achieve the energy renewable targets set in Oman Vision 2040.

CENTRAL BANK OF OMAN

CBO Board of Governors meeting held

MUSCAT: The Board of Governors of the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) on Wednesday convened its second meeting for 2024, at CBO's head office in the commercial district of Muttrah.

The Board reviewed the items presented in the agenda of its meeting.

It addressed the salient features of the framework for regulating and monitoring digital banks to keep pace with modern developments, increase efficiency in providing banking and financial services, enhance financial inclusion, and determine the way forward in regulating digital banks.

As a result of the growth in Islamic banking products and services in the Sultanate of Oman, and the belief of the Central Bank of Oman in the necessity of continuing development of the financial sector in various fields; during its meeting, the Board approved the fundamentals of the regulatory framework for licencing Finance and Leasing Companies (FLCs) that are compatible with Sharia. It aims to support the growth of the FLCs sector and enable it to provide diverse banking products and services.

The Board also approved the framework policies of the Oman

Credit and Financial Information Centre “Mala’a”, approved its organisational structure and amendments to its financial regulations, and approved the issuance of the centre's information security policy.

Moreover, during its meeting, the Board reviewed a number of topics, the most important of which were financial soundness indicators for banks, and a report on the financial position of the Central Bank of Oman.

The Board also discussed the prospects and challenges of stability in the Omani economy, the position of reserves, and the per-

formance of the CBO's foreign investments.

The Board also reviewed the semi-annual report of the project to enhance the efficiency of monetary policy, the report on the progress of the bank's second strategic plan (2024-2026) and the evaluation of the first strategic plan (2021-2023), the annual report of the bank Deposit Insurance Scheme, and the quarterly report of the Oman Credit and Financial Information Centre “Mala’a”.

The Board also reviewed a number of studies and topics on the agenda and appropriate decisions were taken regarding them. -ONA

CIVIL DEFENCE AND AMBULANCE AUTHORITY

Drowning incidents spike in Oman during summer



Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman has seen a troubling increase in drowning incidents, particularly during the summer months when people flock to wadis and beaches to escape the high temperatures.

Despite the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) reporting a lesser number of cases in 2023, the numbers are alarming.

CDAA reported a total of 166 incidents in 2023 as compared to 324 drowning cases in 2022.

Drowning incidents are very painful and generally occur in deeper areas of valley and beaches where people try to take comfort in hot weather while enjoying the surroundings.

These incidents often involve

individuals, including children, who are not proficient swimmers.

The main causes of drowning include lack of swimming skills, swimming in non-designated areas such as pools, dams, and risky water channels, and unsafe rescue attempts.

Many tragedies occur when people fail to heed warning signs or underestimate the strength of water currents, particularly in wadis.

The Authority emphasises the importance of vigilant supervision, especially for children near pools and beaches.

Public urged to follow safety measures

To combat these incidents, the CDAA has urged the public to follow safety measures.

This includes swimming only in designated areas and ensuring water wells are covered and fenced to prevent children or animals from falling in. Swimming pools should have fixed stairs, steel handles, lifebuoys, and appropriate swimming costumes should be worn while going into the pool. The pools should also not be filled to capacity when used by children, and adults should always supervise children in the water.

In case of emergencies, the public is advised to contact the emergency numbers (9999 or 24343666).

By adhering to these precautions, CDAA aims to significantly reduce the number of drowning incidents and ensure the safety of its residents and visitors.



Death toll in Kenya protests rises to 22

Protesters have called on fellow citizens to take to the streets again on Thursday in memory of “our fallen people,” according to one prominent organiser

NAIROBI: Kenya’s state-backed rights body announced the death of 22 protesters killed during Tuesday’s rallies, while the Kenya Medical Association put the death toll at 23.

Some 30 others were being treated for bullet wounds sustained during the nationwide protests, the association said.

Roseline Odede, chairwoman of the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, said that 19 people had died in the capital, Nairobi, where police opened fire at demonstrators who stormed parliament. She vowed the commission would launch an inquiry, describing the toll as “the largest number of deaths [in] a single day protest.”

‘I wish I was born in another country’

Reuters news agency has been out and about on the streets of Nairobi over the last 24 hours, speaking to Kenya’s largely Millennial and Generation Z protesters.

“It’s the people against the government,” added Ronnie Baron, a 30-year-old English literature teacher.

“It’s going to unite the youth and the old like never before,” said 29-year-old John Aron.



Kenya may be the economic powerhouse of East Africa, but Nairobi is under pressure from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to slash foreign debt, which currently stands at roughly 10 trillion shillings (\$77.7bn), around 70 percent of GDP, and boost state revenues, hence the government’s proposed tax increases.

But with a third of Kenya’s 52-million population living in poverty, many people are already struggling with the increasing cost of living and are frustrated at a political system which they feel offers them few opportunities.

“Our parents failed us, they voted along tribal lines,” 26-year-old Derick Kolito told Reuters, saying he was unable to find a job despite having a master’s degree in accounting. “I am the son of peasants. You must have a godfather to get a job,” he said. “I wish I was born in another country.”

For others, government attempts to engage with protest leaders are evidence in itself that the political class has failed to understand the issues.

“Our leaders are saying they are going to sit down with the youth and talk to us,” protester Mitchell Mwamodo said. “But we don’t have a leader. I am not trying to have a conversation. We are not ready to

back down.”

“They are just trying to find out which hand to shake and which hand to cut off,” said 37-year-old Mary Ngigi. “But we don’t have any leaders.”

‘See you on Thursday’: Kenyans call for peaceful protests

Kenyan protesters have called on fellow citizens to take to the streets again on Thursday in memory of “our fallen people,” according to one prominent organiser.

“You cannot kill all of us,” wrote the journalist and activist Hanifa Adan on X, formerly Twitter, on Wednesday morning. “Tomorrow we march peacefully again.”

Meanwhile, a new hashtag was trending across Kenyan social media: “#tupatanethursday,” a mix of Swahili and English meaning “see you on Thursday.”

In her post, Adan said “all sovereign power belong to the people of Kenya” and called on demonstrators to wear white.

Kenyans woke up on Wednesday morning with the smell of tear gas still lingering across the capital, Nairobi, after some of the most violent protests seen in decades.

The front page of the Standard newspaper spoke of “deaths” and “mayhem,” while the Daily Nation

described “pandemonium.” It said “the foundations of the country have been shaken to the core” but called for dialogue, saying: “Let’s reason together.”

The Nation documented protests in at least 35 of Kenya’s 47 counties, from big cities to rural areas, including President Ruto’s hometown of Eldoret in his ethnic Kalenjin heartland, demonstrating the extent to which protests have cut across Kenya’s geographic, social and ethnic landscape.

On Tuesday night, local broadcaster Citizen TV hosted a discussion entitled “A nation on the brink,” which featured panelists calling on the government to engage with protesters.

However, after some limited back-pedaling on some proposed tax increases last week, Ruto does not appear inclined to offer further concessions.

In a briefing late on Tuesday night, he likened some demonstrators to “criminals” and warned that he would crack down on “violence and anarchy.”

On Wednesday morning, a policeman guarding broken barricades told the AFP news agency that Tuesday’s events were “madness” and said, “We hope it will be calm today.” —DW



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NORTH KOREA

Suspected hypersonic missile explodes midair

SEOUL: A suspected hypersonic missile launched by North Korea exploded midair on Wednesday, South Korea’s military said.

The launch from near the capital, Pyongyang, ended in failure as the missile blew up over the eastern coastal waters near the North Korean city of Wonsan, South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement.

The missile fragments scattered up to 250 kilometres away. No damages were reported.

The missile, likely solid-fueled, emitted more smoke than usual, suggesting engine issues, South Korea said.

Japan’s Defence Ministry also confirmed the launch of the missile.

North Korea has been testing hypersonic missiles since 2021, seemingly aimed at targeting South Korea’s missile defense systems.

Wednesday’s test also came ahead of the regional deployment of a US aircraft carrier for a trilateral military drill with South Korea and Japan.

North Korea’s vice defense minister, Kim Kang Il, on Monday called the US aircraft carrier’s deployment “reckless” and “dangerous.”

Pyongyang has previously condemned US-South Korean drills and responded with missile tests.

Senior officials from South Korea, the United States and Japan held a phone call to condemn the recent launch, calling it a violation of multiple UN Security Council resolutions and a threat to peace and stability.

“While we have assessed that this event does not pose an immediate threat to US personnel, or territory, or to our allies, we continue to monitor the situation,” the US Indo-Pacific Command said in a statement, denouncing the launch.

The missile test comes amid deepening military cooperation between North Korea and Russia, highlighted by a recent summit between Kim Jong Un and Vladimir Putin and signing of a mutual defence pact.

Just hours ahead of the missile launch, Pyongyang sent several trash-filled balloons southward for a second consecutive day, forcing South Korea’s Incheon International Airport to halt flights.

Seoul’s military said the balloons were carrying “mostly paper waste” and posed no threat to the public.

Pyongyang has sent hundreds of balloons filled with trash as retaliation against South Korean activists floating propaganda balloons criticising the North Korean leader.

—DW

UNITED STATES

Five killed in Las Vegas shooting

LAS VEGAS: As many as five people were killed in North Las Vegas on Tuesday morning (local time) after a man went on a shooting spree in two apartment complexes, before killing himself, according to media report.

An overnight manhunt ended Tuesday morning after police located him just before he killed himself. Eric Adams, 47, was identified by police as a suspect in two shootings on Monday night, the North Las Vegas Police Department said in a news release.

Along with five dead, a 13-year-old girl was hospitalised in critical condition. —ANI

WHO REPORT

Nearly 1.8 billion people at risk due to inactivity

GENEVA: Nearly 1.8 billion adults are at risk of cancer, stroke, dementia and diabetes due to insufficient exercise, according to a new report released on Wednesday.

The World Health Organization (WHO) said physical inactivity has increased globally by five percentage points from 2010 to 2022, yet around 31% of adults still don’t meet exercise guidelines.

The study, published in The Lancet Global Health journal, pointed out that 34% of women and 29% of men are inactive.

If current trends continue, 35% of people will be inactive by 2030, the report said.

“Physical inactivity is a silent threat to global health, contributing significantly to the burden

of chronic diseases,” said Ruediger Krech, director of the WHO’s health promotion department.

“Unfortunately the world is not going in the right direction.”

Krech said the risk of non-communicable diseases can be reduced “by making physical activity accessible, affordable, and enjoyable.”

According to the WHO, “Physical activity refers to all movement including during leisure time, for transport to get to and from places, or as part of a person’s work or domestic activities.”

The WHO recommends 150 minutes of moderate or 75 minutes of vigorous activity weekly.

While moderate everyday activity includes very brisk walking or heavy cleaning such as washing

windows or mopping, vigorous activities include hiking, jogging, and shoveling.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the WHO director-general, emphasized that the new findings underscore a missed opportunity to reduce cancer, heart disease, and enhance mental well-being through increased physical activity.

“We must renew our commitments to increasing levels of physical activity and prioritize bold action, including strengthened policies and increased funding, to reverse this worrying trend.”

High-income countries are slightly reducing inactivity rates but are still off track, the report said. —DW



IN SEPTEMBER

How to see the 2024 nova explosion without a telescope

BERLIN: It’s not often that a dark spot in space illuminates our planet, but that is exactly what professional and amateur astronomers expect to happen in September when a once-in-a-lifetime nova explosion 3,000 light-years from Earth will light up our night sky.

What is a nova explosion?

A nova explosion is the dramatic instance of a star exploding as it interacts with another, nearby star. It’s a one of many, repeated moments during the long, slow, death of two neighbouring stars in the same system.

Astronomers are waiting for the fiery explosion of T Coronae Borealis, also dubbed the “Blaze Star” and known to astronomers as “T CrB”.

The system contains two stars — a white dwarf and a red giant. The white dwarf is an incredibly dense remnant of a once larger star. It’s about the size of planet Earth but with the same mass as our Sun.

Its neighbour, the red giant, is in its final years of existence and is slowly being stripped of hydrogen by the gravitational pull of the denser white dwarf.

This star “cannibalism” causes



a tremendous buildup of pressure and heat, which eventually triggers a huge thermonuclear explosion. The explosion doesn’t completely destroy the stars, however, and so this event repeats over time. It can carry on for hundreds of thousands of years.

For T CrB, this nova event happens roughly every 80 years — it’s a like Halley’s Comet event every 76

years — so, astronomers call T CrB a “recurrent” nova.

They believe T CrB’s prior eruptions were observed as long ago as December 1787 and even October 1217 AD.

Is a nova the same as a supernova?

No. A supernova is the final explosion that utterly destroys stars. In a

nova event, the dwarf star remains intact, which is why nova events typically repeat themselves.

Different nova events have different cycles, ranging from a few years to hundreds of thousands of years.

What does a nova look like?

The explosion of a nova blasts away star matter in a blinding

light, but it won’t look like a star explosion you see in the movies — thankfully, we’re too far away to see this level of detail.

To the naked eye, the nova will instead look like a new star has appeared in the sky. People with high-powered telescopes will be able to see the nova’s brightly coloured luminosity in some detail.

Will we be able to see the nova without a telescope?

Yes! When T CrB erupts, its luminosity will increase dramatically, making it visible to the naked eye for several days.

The Northern Crown is a horseshoe-shaped curve of stars west of the Hercules constellation, ideally spotted on clear nights.

To find the Northern Crown, locate the two brightest stars in the Northern Hemisphere: Arcturus and Vega. Tracing a line between the two stars will lead you to the Northern Crown, where T CrB lies.

The European Space Agency told DW that all telescopes were already pointing towards T CrB, waiting to capture the event, but that there are no images as yet.

When will the nova be visible?

All signs point to the nova explosion happening in September 2024. However, novae can be unpredictable, so astrophysicists say it’s difficult to know exactly when the T CrB nova will occur.

Have nova events been seen during history?

T CrB nova was last seen from Earth in 1946. The first recorded sighting of the T CrB nova was believed to be more than 800 years ago in 1217, when an abbot in the town of Ursberg, Germany, noted “a faint star that for a time shone with great light.”

The abbot wrote the light lasted for “many days” and was thought to be a “wonderful sign.” Other celestial events like comets were believed to be bad omens.

Astronomers have recorded supernova events much further back in history. The first sighting of a supernova goes back almost 2000 years to 185 CE, when Chinese astronomers saw a strange “guest star” appear in the night sky for eight months.

—DW

INDIA

Death toll in Tamil Nadu hooch tragedy rises to 63

KALLAKURICHI: The death toll in the hooch tragedy in Tamil Nadu's Kallakurichi district rose to 58, according to the District Collectorate.

Currently, 88 people are undergoing treatment in total across five hospitals in the state, out of which 47 are admitted to the Government Kallakurichi Medical College and Hospital and 63 have been discharged in total from the Government Kallakurichi Medical College, as per the hospital authorities.

9 people have been admitted to the Jawaharlal Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research (JIPMER) Puducherry and a total of six have been discharged from the hospital. A total of five people have passed away at JIPMER.

29 people are undergoing treatment at Salem Medical College, while 22 have passed away, as reported by hospital authorities.

Two people are currently admitted to the Villupuram Medical College and two have been discharged from there.

One person has been admitted to the Royapettah Greater Hospital in Chennai. Two people admitted to Sri Sanjeevi Hospital have been discharged.

The total number of people affected by the consumption of illicit liquor has now increased to 225.

Earlier in the day, the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) Chairman Kishor Makwana, along with the Deputy Chairman of the Tamil Nadu Commission for Scheduled Castes (TNCSC) Puneeth Pandian and the Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of the National Aditya Vidarbha Commission Sanmeet Kaur, met the family members of the people who died due to the consumption of illicit liquor in the Karunapuram area of the Kallakurichi district.

- ANI

Gazans face imminent risk of starvation, says PRCs

The Palestine Red Crescent Society called for the necessity of bringing humanitarian aid into the northern areas of the Gaza Strip and lifting the siege, noting that air humanitarian aid did not meet the necessary needs to reduce hunger rates

GAZA: The Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) said that thousands of residents of the Gaza Strip face the risk of starvation.

PRCS called for the necessity of bringing humanitarian aid into the northern areas of the Gaza Strip and lifting the siege, noting that air humanitarian aid did not meet the necessary needs to reduce hunger rates.

It also called for opening the crossings and bringing aid into all areas of the Gaza Strip, stressing that the occupation deliberately and continuously targets relief crews.

An international report, published yesterday, warned of the continued high risk of famine throughout the Gaza Strip, in light of the continuing war and restrictions on humanitarian access, noting that about 96% of Gaza's population face high levels of acute food insecurity.

The "Integrated Food Security Phase Classification" report stated that the entire Gaza Strip is classified as being in a state of emergency, which is the fourth stage of the classification that precedes famine, the fifth stage.

WHO representative calls for the reopening of Gaza crossings

Rick Pepperkorn, WHO representative in the West Bank and Gaza, said the Israeli closure of the Rafah border crossing between Egypt and Gaza has prevented the medical evacuation of at least two thousand patients in Gaza, calling for the reopening of Rafah and other crossings.

Before the closure, "approximately 50 critical patients per day were leaving Gaza. This means that as of May 7, at least two thousand people have been unable to leave Gaza to receive medical care," he said.

The Rafah crossing has been the main conduit for evacuations as well as humanitarian aid arriving in the war that began on October 7. The crossing was closed when Israel launched an operation in southern Gaza in May.

"Evacuation is necessary for at least 10,000 people from Gaza, Pepperkorn said, adding that the figure is an underestimate compared to the actual number of people who need urgent medical care for war injuries and chronic illnesses."

"We need more routes for emergency medical evacuation," the WHO official said, adding that they would like to see other routes opened to take patients to East Jerusalem or the West Bank.

Meanwhile, many civilians were killed and others were injured today in Israeli occupation's bombardment of several areas in the Gaza Strip.

Local sources reported that at least three civilians were killed and others were injured in an Israeli air raid targeting a gathering of civilians in the al-Jarn area in the town of Jabalia, north of the Gaza Strip.



Occupation warplanes

The occupation warplanes also targeted the southern and eastern areas of the al-Zeitoun neighborhood, southeast of Gaza City.

Also, five civilians were killed and others injured following an Israeli artillery shelling that targeted a residential apartment in the Nuseirat camp.

The Israeli occupation artillery also fired shells at farmers west of the new camp north of the Nuseirat camp in the central Gaza Strip.

Dozens of civilians were injured after the occupation tanks bombed the homes of civilians in the town of Khuza'a in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip.

At least eight more civilians were killed in Israeli artillery and air attacks targeting multiple locations in the northern and central Strip.

Report shows increase in Palestine's current account deficit, reaching \$836 million

A sharp decline in the compensation of Palestinian workers in Israel and net current transfers has been noted during the first quarter of 2024 compared to the corresponding quarter of 2023, led to the increase in the current account deficit, reaching \$836 million, according to a report by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) and the Palestine Monetary Authority (PMA)

PCBS and PMA announced the preliminary results of the Palestinian Balance of Payments (BoP) for the first quarter of 2024 under the joint issuance cycle. It should be noted that the data excludes those parts of Jerusalem which were annexed by Israeli occupation in 1967.

Preliminary data for the balance of payments in the first quarter of 2024 indicate a continued deficit in the current account (goods, services, income, and current transfers), amounting to \$836 million with an increase of 29% compared to the corresponding quarter of 2023, which reached \$1,124 million, as well as the deficit in Services Balance, which amounted to \$154 million.

The data indicates a decrease in the net income account during the first quarter of 2024, by 88% compared to the corresponding quarter of 2023, reaching \$123 million. Meanwhile, foreign investment income amounted to \$69 million, primarily resulting from interest earned on Palestinian deposits in foreign banks. A decrease of 52% was recorded in the net current transfers from abroad to other sectors (non-governmental) during the first quarter of 2024 compared to the corresponding quarter of 2023. - Wafa

NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANISATION

Dutch PM Mark Rutte officially appointed as NATO's next boss

BRUSSELS: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) allies on Wednesday selected outgoing Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte for the alliance's top job, as members and NATO itself continue to face the repercussions of Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine.

Rutte's eventual appointment to the secretary general position was clear last week after his only rival for the post, Romanian President Klaus Iohannis, stepped out of the running.

The Dutch politician described his appointment as a "tremendous honour."

"The Alliance is and will remain the cornerstone of our collective security," he said on social media. "Leading this organisation is a responsibility I do not take lightly. I'm grateful to all the Allies for placing their trust in me."

Rutte is due to take over from the current secretary general, Norway's Jens Stoltenberg, on October 1. Stoltenberg, who served at the top job for over a decade, hailed Rutte as a "true transatlanticist, strong leader and consensus-builder."

"I wish him every success as we continue to strengthen NATO for the challenges of today and tomorrow. I know I am leaving NATO in good hands," he added.

NATO ambassadors sealed Rutte's appointments during the Wednesday meeting at the headquarters in Brussels. The new boss shall be formally welcomed at a summit in Washington on July 9-11.

A staunch backer of Ukraine, the 57-year-old Rutte staked his claim for the job last year after the collapse of his Dutch ruling coalition. He quickly gained the support of NATO heavyweights the United States, Britain, France, and Germany.

But Rutte's road to NATO was not entirely straightforward. Hungary long objected to his candidacy and only lifted its objection earlier this month after Rutte agreed that the country has no future obligations to send personnel or provide funds for a new



Ukraine support plan.

Türkiye had also initially objected to Rutte's nomination but withdrew its objection in April.

Secretaries general are responsible for chairing the alliance's meetings and guiding consultations among member allies, often a delicate task. They should also make sure decisions are put into action.

New NATO chief Mark Rutte faces balancing act

In July 2023, after 13 years in office as the Netherlands' prime minister, Mark Rutte announced he would resign from office, saying he was "retiring from politics."

Rutte had been the longest-serving prime minister in the history of the Netherlands, a country of just over 17 million. So, why did he step down?

Rutte's liberal-conservative People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) had deemed his approach to asylum-seekers too lenient, causing his fragile four-party coalition government to collapse. This was followed by snap elections won by far-right populist Geert Wilders. Rutte had been unable to prevent this shift toward the right, arguably marking the biggest defeat of his political career.

Since then, he has remained in office for nearly a year in a caretaker role as Wilders' complicated government talks have dragged on.

By October 2023, the 57-year-old Rutte had seemingly forgotten all about his vow to retire from politics and instead signaled his interest in succeeding NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg, whose term ends in October. For months, Rutte ran a discreet one-man campaign in an effort to win over various heads of state and government, whom he already knew from years of working with various international bodies. The trained historian is a staunch supporter of Ukraine and was quickly able to secure US backing for his campaign, which was soon followed by most other NATO member states.

Winning over Hungary's right-wing nationalist Prime Minister Viktor Orban, with whom he is not on the best of terms, took a bit longer. Rutte had to promise Orban that Hungary would never have to participate in NATO activities supporting Ukraine outside of NATO territory as long as Rutte led the alliance. Orban, who keeps friendly ties with Russia, also ruled out arms deliveries to Ukraine.

Rutte's liberal politics and Orban's illiberal outlook often put them at loggerheads in their dealings within the European Union. When Hungary adopted an anti-LGBTQ+ law in 2021, Rutte told Orban he was free to leave the bloc if he disagreed with its policies.

That said, Rutte is known for his good humor and wit. As prime minister, he would cycle from his modest home to his office. Sometimes, one could witness his musical talent when he sat down to play piano at The Hague Central Station. - w

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Red-hot India seek revenge against defending champions England

India have a 100% record in completed matches over the last three weeks in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup and they underlined their status as tournament favourites by beating Australia to advance into semi-finals

GUYANA: It will be a rematch of the semifinal from the 2022 edition of the tournament as a red-hot Team India will meet holders England in the second semifinal of the ongoing ICC T20 World Cup at Guyana on Thursday. The match begins at 6.30pm, Oman time.

The last time these two nations faced off in a Men's T20 World Cup semi-final was just 19 months ago in Adelaide, when a remarkable opening partnership between Jos Buttler and Alex Hales saw England cruise to 10-wicket win that forced a complete rethink in India's T20 strategy and move away from more established superstars to younger blood, from conservatism to aggression.

This time around, though, India has more batting firepower led by experienced campaigners' skipper Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, more attacking options through the middle overs, and more variation in their attack, but the defending champions will take some beating, especially with skipper Jos Buttler and his new opening partner Phil Salt both in blistering form.

England are just two games away from making history and becoming the first men's team to retain a T20 World Cup.

On the other hand, India have not won this tournament since



by eight wickets. That win, and the nature of it, proved important, giving them a significant Net Run Rate advantage that they boosted further with a ten-wicket hammering of the USA to effectively qualify with a game to spare.

South Africa's victory over West Indies helped them secure the second spot in the group, sending them to this semi-final rather than being the top seed in the semi-final one.

India named a settled side throughout their Super Eight campaign, having added Kuldeep Yadav in place of Mohammed Siraj from the team who dominated the Group Stage.

It is quite likely they will continue with that exact balance, given it offers six frontline bowling options, with three pacers and three spinners.

The only possible change, given the expected nature of the Guyana surface, is that Yuzvendra Chahal could be added for another spinning threat.

England moved away from the batting-heavy balance that they started the tournament with, leaving out Will Jacks and playing four front-line pace bowlers, with Sam Curran and Chris Jordan slotting in at seven and eight to avoid an excessively lengthy tail, and Mark Wood missing out. There could be the option of bringing Jacks back as a part-time spin option, or even handing a debut to Tom Hartley who is in the squad as an additional main spinner.

But England does have spin-bowling all-rounders Moeen Ali and Liam Livingstone in their top six, both of whom have bowled well when called upon, so may opt to stick with the formula that got them through the Super Eight.

India squad: Rohit Sharma (c), Hardik Pandya, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Virat Kohli, Suryakumar Yadav, Rishabh Pant, Sanju Samson, Shivam Dube, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal, Arshdeep Singh, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj.

England squad: Jos Buttler (c), Moeen Ali, Jofra Archer, Jonathan Bairstow, Harry Brook, Sam Curran, Ben Duckett, Tom Hartley, Will Jacks, Chris Jordan, Liam Livingstone, Adil Rashid, Phil Salt, Reece Topley, Mark Wood. - **ANI**



the pacers, with the highest score across the five games being Afghanistan's 183/5 against Uganda.

India have won every game they have been able to compete in, with the only dropped points coming from the abandoned fixture against Canada at a rain-soaked Lauderhill in Florida.

Impressive wins over Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Australia secured their spot in the knockout stages as the winners of Group one in the Super Eight.

England, by contrast, have got here the hard way. A rain-soaked match against Scotland was followed by a loss to arch-rivals Australia right at the start of their campaign, leaving them needing huge wins and favours from elsewhere to reach the Super Eights. But they managed just that, qualifying ahead of Scotland on net run rate, interestingly, thanks to their rivals, Australia.

its inception back in 2007, and is searching for its first World Cup win in any format since 2011's 50-over tournament. India's last ICC trophy was in 2013, when they captured the ICC Champions Trophy in England.

The Guyana National Stadium is a 20,000-seater venue on the outskirts of Georgetown, situated just off the banks of the Demerara River and a few kilometres from the coast.

This is the sixth and final game

to be held at the venue during the tournament, with the previous five all coming in Group C during the first-round stage.

Spinners have been quite effective on the ground, but there's also been a bit on the surface for

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OMAN CRUDE PRICE FALLS
The price of Oman oil has decreased, with prices for delivery by August 2024 reaching \$84.60, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil fell by 56 cents from the price of Tuesday, which was \$85.16. - **ONA**

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER
The MSX index closed at 4,673.53 points, up by 1.64% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 1.34% at 456.78 points. Raysut Cement, up 12.88%, was the top gainer while Barka Water & Power Company, down 3.46%, was the top loser.

Oman signed five mining pacts to extract potash and nickel ore

Six agreements were also signed in 2023 to produce green hydrogen in the Duqm, Dhofar, and Al-Jazar regions by Ministry of Energy and Minerals

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman's Ministry of Energy and Minerals signed five agreements in 2023 relating to the mining sector specialising in exploration of potash and nickel ores in various locations.
"The total amount of mineral raw materials sold was approximately 64.5 million tonnes, as the amount of sales of limestone, gypsum and plastic material increased by 3 million tonnes," the ministry said in its annual report.
The total production of mineral raw materials during the year 2023



was about 70.4 million tonnes, a decrease of 7 percent compared to the year 2022. The amount of production of building materials decreased by about 9 million tonnes, constituting 60 percent of the total production.
The report said that these decreases were due to the delay of mining companies in submitting their monthly production reports.

The total number of mining licences issued in 2023 reached 8, while the exploration licences issued amounted to 12.
Renewable energy
The number of main regions for renewable energy reached seven regions, namely: Dhofar, Duqm, Al-Jazar, Manah, Ibri, Sur and Musandam, and 6 agreements were

signed to produce green hydrogen in the Duqm, Dhofar, and Al-Jazar regions.
The total production of electrical energy in 2023 reached about 44.4 terawatt-hours, an increase of 6.4 percent compared to the previous year, which was estimated at 41.7 terawatt-hours. Nearly 2 terawatt-hours of electrical energy were produced through renewable

energy sources, representing an increase of 5 percent over the previous year.
Companies in Oman's oil and gas sectors drilled, tested and evaluated 63 exploratory and appraisal wells for oil and 15 for gas during 2023, according to the annual report of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals.
This includes some wells that were previously drilled and underwent testing and evaluation this year.
The report also indicated that the results of petro-physical analysis and well productivity tests resulted in positive indicators in a number of them, and some wells were linked to the production line and handed over to the post-exploration stage of development, which resulted in the addition of new oil and gas reserves.
The total reserves of crude oil and oil condensates expected by the end of 2023 amounted to about 4,971 million barrels, an increase of one percent compared to 2022. While the total expected natural gas reserves of the Sultanate of Oman by the end of 2023 amounted to about 23 trillion cubic feet, lower by 5 percent expected in 2022.
The number of companies operating concession areas in the field of oil and gas exploration and pro-

duction by the end of 2023 in 36 concession areas reached 18.
Total oil exports of crude oil and oil condensates during the year amounted to about 310 million barrels. China ranked first among the countries importing Omani oil, amounting to 92 percent.
The average daily production of crude oil and oil condensates in the Sultanate of Oman during the year 2023 was 1.05 million barrels, compared to 1.06 million barrels per day in 2022, a slight decrease of 1.5 percent from the previous year. While total oil exports of crude oil and oil condensates during 2023 reached about 310 million barrels.
The Sultanate of Oman's average production of natural gas during the year 2023 was about 142.5 million cubic metres per day, with a rate of 30.1 million cubic metres per day of associated gas production and 112.4 million cubic metres per day of non-associated gas production. Natural gas production increased by 4 percent compared to 2022.
The average price of Omani crude oil decreased by 14 percent during the year 2023, reaching about \$82.3 per barrel. The price of a barrel of Omani oil ranged between a minimum of \$74.8 per barrel in August 2023 and a maximum of \$92.8 per barrel in November of the same year. - **With input from ONA**

CYBERSECURITY

Trend Micro partners with NVIDIA to secure AI-enabled private data centres

MUSCAT: Trend Micro Incorporated, a global leader in cybersecurity solutions, announced its partnership with NVIDIA to secure AI-enabled private data centres in the region and globally.
This collaboration integrates NVIDIA NIM and NVIDIA Morphue with Trend Vision One - Sovereign and Private Cloud (SPC) solutions, enhancing security for businesses adopting generative AI.
By utilising NVIDIA NIM's optimised AI inferencing microservices to locally serve Trend's Cyber Security Large Language Model (LLM), Trend Vision One - SPC amplifies the strength of security solutions by improving data privacy, real-time analysis, and rapid threat mitigation. This in-



tegration addresses the complexities of next-generation AI-driven data centres and delivers highly efficient threat detection and response capabilities.
"This partnership is critical as the AI sector in our region is set to grow annually by 20% to 34%,

reflecting a vibrant and rapidly expanding ecosystem," said Dr Moataz Bin Ali, Regional Vice President and Managing Director, MMEA, Trend Micro. "In this transformative era, our mission is to enable businesses to unlock the full potential of AI while maintaining top-tier security and data protection. Our latest initiative is dedicated to protecting these vital AI-driven infrastructures with state-of-the-art security solutions."
"Leading companies recognise the importance of deploying generative AI in diverse environments, including sovereign private clouds, and are developing strategies for integrating security into their AI applications," said Pat Lee, VP of Strategic Enterprise Partnerships at NVIDIA. "Trend

Micro's NVIDIA NIM integration highlights how companies can use generative AI to enhance the security of their customers' environments across a broad range of enterprise infrastructure."
As AI revolutionises industries, Trend Micro's collaboration with NVIDIA sets a new benchmark in securing AI-enabled environments.
This partnership underscores Trend Micro's commitment to providing robust, innovative cybersecurity solutions that meet the growing demands of government and private sector organizations wanting to leverage the power of AI in their on-prem data centres to supercharge productivity and create innovative AI-powered user experiences.

BRIEFS

OpenAI postpones launch of advanced voice mode



WASHINGTON: OpenAI announced the postponement of the launch of its previously announced Voice Mode, which was to be made available within a few weeks to ChatGPT premium account holders. OpenAI said it was planning to start rolling out the audio mode for a small group of ChatGPT Plus users in late June, but was forced to postpone the launch until next July 2024 due to ongoing technical issues. It was working to improve the model's ability to detect and reject specific content, improve user experience and prepare expansion infrastructure to serve millions of users while maintaining real-time responses. The company explained that it will test voice mode with a small group of users initially to gather feedback, and then expand based on users' feedback. Advanced audio placement in ChatGPT can understand and respond to non-verbal emotions and signals based on them, to provide natural real-time conversations with AI, according to the company. - **ONA**

GLOBAL MARKET

Asian shares wobble as investors wary before US inflation data

SINGAPORE: Asian stocks stuttered in choppy trade on Wednesday as markets braced for a key US inflation reading, Reuters reported. Meanwhile, the yen lurked just shy of 160 per dollar level, keeping traders on alert for another round of intervention by Japanese authorities.
Risk sentiment was also capped as hawkish comments from Federal Reserve officials kept near-term US rate cut expectations in check in a boost to the dollar. A jump in Australian consumer inflation to a six-month high in May lifted the Australian dollar to its highest in two weeks.

Asia-Pacific, European markets

MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan struggled for direction and was flat at 566.53, not far from the two-year high of 573.38 it hit last week.
Japan's Nikkei and Taiwan stocks rose, led by chipmakers, tracking the rally in tech heavy Nasdaq on Tuesday, with Nvidia surging over 6 percent, snapping out of a three-session tailspin that had erased about US\$430 billion from its market value.
European stocks also looked poised for a strong start, with Eu-



rostoxx 50 futures up 0.4 percent and German DAX futures 0.3 percent higher. FTSE futures were 0.2 percent higher.

US policy, PCE

On the US monetary policy front, Fed officials urged patience on interest rate cuts, with governor Lisa Cook saying the central bank is on track for a rate cut if the economy's performance meets her expectations. But Cook declined to say when the Fed will be able to act.
US Federal Reserve Governor

Michelle Bowman reiterated her view that holding the policy rate steady "for some time" will probably be enough to bring inflation under control.
The comments along with data showing a stable housing market kept expectations in check over when and by how much the Fed will cut rates. Traders are eagerly awaiting Friday's release of the US personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index - the Fed's preferred measure of inflation, with economists polled by Reuters

expecting the annual growth to ease to 2.6 percent in May.

Forex

In the currency market, the Aussie rose more than 0.5 percent to US\$0.6685 after hotter-than-expected inflation data, leading markets to narrow the odds on another rate hike as early as in August.
The dollar index, which measures the US unit against six peers, was steady at 105.66, while the euro was at US\$1.071075.
The yen was fetching 159.76 per dollar and has been trading in tight ranges as it stalks the crucial 160 level that some traders say might bring about another round of intervention. The yen touched a 34-year low of 160.245 per dollar on April 29, prompting Tokyo to spend roughly 9.8 trillion yen in late April and early May to support the currency.
The latest slide in the yen has come in the wake of the Bank of Japan's (BOJ) decision this month to hold off on reducing bond-buying stimulus until its July meeting.
The BOJ though is dropping signals that its quantitative tightening plan in July could be bigger than markets think, and may even be accompanied by an interest rate hike. - **WAM**

Apple launches iPhone mirroring for developers



WASHINGTON: Apple has launched an iPhone Mirroring feature, for developers testing iOS 18 beta versions in iPhone and macOS Sequoia in Mac. This feature allows users to stream the iPhone screen directly to Mac, providing an integrated experience that allows iPhone apps to be managed and operated in Mac devices, as well as seamlessly transferring files between phones and computers. Apple announced the iPhone Mirroring feature for the first time during the recent Developers Conference, which contributes to enhancing the interaction between Mac and iPhone apps, as explained by Apple during the presentation at the conference. The feature provides users with the ability to run their iPhone apps directly on their Mac without the need to unlock the phone, and iPhone desktop notifications on Mac computers, as well as the ability to respond to alerts from various apps. Users can easily share an iPhone screen with others through Mac computers for video calls or presentations. In terms of security, the actual iPhone remains locked when you use the iPhone reflection feature on your Mac, preventing anyone from accessing the phone without their owner's permission, even if left elsewhere. General beta versions of users wishing to try out new features are due to be launched shortly, while final versions of these systems will be released in the autumn of this year (2024) to all users. - **ONA**

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Raysut Cement, up 12.88%, was the top gainer while Barka Water & Power Company, down 3.46%, was the top loser



MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,673.53 points, up by 1.64% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 1.34% at 456.78 points. Raysut Cement, up 12.88%, was the top gainer while Barka Water & Power Company, down 3.46%, was the top loser. Shares of Sohar International Bank were the most active in terms of number of shares traded while Oman Telecom were the most active in terms of turnover.

A total number of 764 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of RO 1.57 million, with more than 7.82 million shares changing hands. Out of 46 traded securities, 31 advanced, 8 declined, and 7 remained unchanged. At the session close, GCC & Arab investors were net buyers for RO 58K while foreign investors were net sellers for RO 32K, followed by domestic investors for RO 26K worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,693.58 points, up 1.68%. Prices of Bank Dhofar, Oman United

Insurance, Takaful Oman, Al Madina Investments, Ahli Bank were up by 7.84%, 4.35%, 4.35%, 3.70%, 3.33% respectively. Prices of Ominvest, Al Anwar Investment were down by 1.39%, 1.14% respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,949.44 points, up 0.35%. Prices of Raysut Cement, Oman Cables Industry, Galfar Engineering, National Detergent, Gulf Mushroom Products were up by 12.88%, 2.86%, 1.22%, 0.68%, 0.45% respectively. Prices of Voltamp Energy, A'Saffa Foods, Al Maha Ceramics were down by 1.27%, 0.99%, 0.55% respectively.

Services Index was up by 1.16% before closing at 1,775.98 points. Prices of Dhofar Generating, Shell Oman Marketing, Al Suwadi Power, SMN Power Holding, Sembcorp Salalah were up by 6.06%, 3.17%, 2.82%, 2.24%, 2.08% respectively. Prices of Barka Water & Power Company, Oman Telecom were down by 3.46%, 0.70% respectively

— United Securities

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE

INDICES

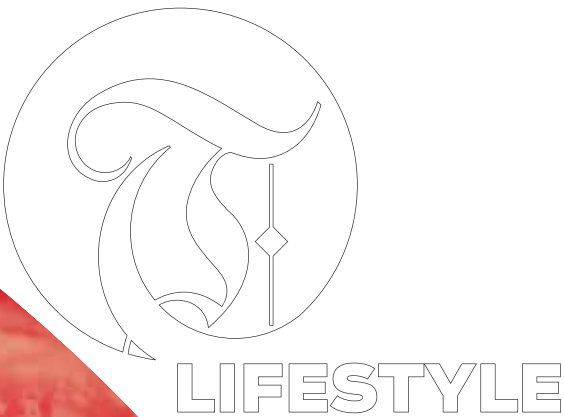
Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff%
MSX 30 INDEX	4,673.53	4,597.07	4,673.53	4,598.32	75.20	1.64
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,693.58	7,550.85	7,693.58	7,566.27	127.31	1.68
Industry Index	5,951.30	5,900.59	5,949.44	5,928.63	20.80	0.35
Services Index	1,775.98	1,755.28	1,775.98	1,755.65	20.34	1.16
MSX Shariah Index	456.87	450.44	456.78	450.74	6.04	1.34
MSX TR INDEX	6,489.55	6,383.39	6,489.55	6,385.13	104.43	1.64
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,721.36	8,559.56	8,721.36	8,577.03	144.32	1.68
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	6,866.38	6,807.88	6,864.23	6,840.24	24.00	0.35
SERVICES TR IDX	2,059.61	2,035.60	2,059.61	2,036.02	23.59	1.16
FIXED INCOME INDEX	1,069.10	1,069.10	1,069.10	1,069.10	0.00	0.00

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
7,820,278	1,569,910	764	24,234,611,326	31	8	7	46

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR WEDNESDAY, JUNE 26

SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PREV. VALUE	MARKET CAP	
REGULAR MARKET																
OM0000001087	OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	33,015	8,599	14	0.255	0.264	0.255	0.264	0.253	0.011	4.348	0.264	0.245	0.265	0.100	26,400,000
OM0000002275	SHELL OMAN MARKETING	7,169	5,815	4	0.810	0.815	0.810	0.815	0.790	0.025	3.165	0.815	0.800	0.815	0.100	77,425,000
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO	269,459	18,726	14	0.069	0.070	0.069	0.070	0.068	0.002	2.941	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.100	14,000,000
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	192,221	13,855	10	0.072	0.073	0.072	0.073	0.071	0.002	2.817	0.073	0.072	0.074	0.100	52,151,683
OM0000004735	SEBPCORP SALALAH	23,000	2,509	4	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.086	0.002	2.083	0.088	0.086	0.089	0.100	93,548,051
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	1,078,420	143,429	47	0.132	0.135	0.132	0.134	0.132	0.002	1.515	0.134	0.125	0.144	0.100	747,351,000
OM0000004925	ALBATHINAH POWER	53,211	3,725	7	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.069	0.001	1.449	0.070	0.070	0.075	0.100	47,242,120
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	77,352	22,535	18	0.286	0.292	0.286	0.292	0.288	0.004	1.389	0.292	0.290	0.292	0.100	190,075,715
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	33,355	2,630	4	0.078	0.079	0.078	0.079	0.078	0.001	1.282	0.079	0.079	0.085	0.100	13,825,000
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	776,505	193,302	38	0.249	0.250	0.248	0.250	0.247	0.003	1.215	0.250	0.249	0.250	0.100	1,876,589,266
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	250,211	73,392	29	0.294	0.296	0.293	0.296	0.294	0.002	0.680	0.296	0.300	0.296	0.100	227,979,200
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	44,002	15,842	7	0.361	0.362	0.360	0.360	0.358	0.002	0.559	0.360	0.360	0.361	0.100	85,107,000
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	15,000	4,140	1	0.276	0.276	0.276	0.276	0.275	0.001	0.364	0.276	0.276	0.278	0.100	34,471,837
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO	106,000	8,632	9	0.081	0.082	0.081	0.081	0.080	0.000	0.000	0.081	0.081	0.082	0.100	3,871,875
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	16,100	6,118	7	0.380	0.380	0.380	0.380	0.380	0.000	0.000	0.380	0.380	0.000	0.100	125,731,630
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	13,000	2,399	5	0.182	0.185	0.182	0.185	0.185	0.000	0.000	0.185	0.180	0.185	0.100	40,700,000
OM0000009072	OQ GAS NETWORKS	848,227	119,822	154	0.141	0.142	0.141	0.141	0.141	0.000	0.000	0.141	0.141	0.148	0.100	610,617,973
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	333,094	333,232	49	1.005	1.005	0.997	0.998	1.005	-0.007	-0.697	0.998	0.997	0.998	0.100	748,500,000
OM0000002804	A'SAFFA FOODS	53,360	21,317	11	0.400	0.404	0.400	0.404	0.404	0.004	-0.990	0.404	0.404	0.400	0.100	48,000,000
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	13,089	4,709	6	0.360	0.360	0.355	0.355	0.360	-0.005	-1.389	0.355	0.356	0.380	0.100	237,269,726
Total	20	4,236,170	1,004,747	438												
Parallel Market																
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	80,078	13,126	6	0.162	0.165	0.162	0.165	0.153	0.012	7.843	0.165	0.153	0.165	0.100	494,397,987
OM0000007407	DHOFAR GENERATING	42,000	2,916	4	0.068	0.070	0.068	0.070	0.066	0.004	6.061	0.070	0.069	0.070	0.100	15,556,800
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	800	61	2	0.078	0.078	0.075	0.077	0.071	0.004	5.634	0.075	0.072	0.078	0.100	36,812,729
OM0000004776	TAKAFUL OMAN	12,000	576	1	0.048	0.048	0.048	0.048	0.046	0.002	4.348	0.048	0.048	0.000	0.100	12,000,000
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	31,700	1,740	2	0.054	0.056	0.054	0.056	0.054	0.002	3.704	0.056	0.055	0.059	0.100	4,760,000
OM0000002200	AHLI BANK	2,880	446	1	0.155	0.155	0.155	0.155	0.150	0.005	3.333	0.155	0.151	0.155	0.100	364,196,907
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	43,199	4,458	11	0.102	0.102	0.102	0.105	0.102	0.003	2.941	0.105	0.103	0.105	0.100	234,890,068
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	16,287	46,478	4	2.800	2.885	2.800	2.880	2.800	0.080	2.857	2.880	2.800	2.875	0.100	258,336,000
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	180,900	57,046	16	0.313	0.320	0.313	0.320	0.313	0.007	2.236	0.320	0.320	0.320	0.100	63,883,392
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	14,700	865	4	0.058	0.059	0.058	0.059	0.058	0.001	1.724	0.059	0.058	0.061	0.100	86,293,486
OM0000008868	THE PEARL REEF	3,200	624	3	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.118	0.002	1.685	0.120	0.000	0.125	0.100	60,972,426
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	923,014	154,777	72	0.165	0.166	0.165	0.166	0.164	0.002	1.220	0.166	0.166	0.165	0.100	33,695,750
OM0000003000	ALMAHA PETROLEUM PRODUCTS MARKETING	2,697	2,620	6	1.080	1.086	1.080	1.086	1.075	0.011	1.023	1.086	1.086	1.086	0.100	74,934,000
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	527,536	58,637	56	0.111	0.113	0.110	0.111	0.110	0.001	0.909	0.111	0.111	0.112	0.100	9,435,000
OM0000006280	OMAN ARAB BANK	152,520	21,759	24	0.142	0.145	0.141	0.145	0.144	0.001	0.694	0.145	0.142	0.145	0.100	242,064,450
OM0000003285	NATIONAL DETERGENT	500	373	1	0.745	0.745	0.745	0.745	0.740	0.005	0.676	0.745	0.000	0.745	0.100	14,900,000
OM0000002287	GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS	10,096	2,236	3	0.221	0.222	0.221	0.222	0.221	0.001	0.452	0.222	0.219	0.223	0.100	10,160,007
OM0000001368	CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL INDUSTRIES	432,514	22,511	26	0.052	0.053	0.052	0.052	0.052	0.000	0.000	0.052	0.047	0.056	0.100	3,250,000
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	7,875	1,851	4	0.235	0.235	0.235	0.235	0.235	0.000	0.000	0.235	0.232	0.235	0.100	14,383,004
OM0000002572	OMAN OIL MARKETING	1,500	1,200	1	0.800	0.800	0.800	0.800	0.800	0.000	0.000	0.800	0.000	0.800	0.100	49,020,000
OM0000005006	ALMAHA CERAMICS	1,000	181	1	0.181	0.181	0.181	0.181	0.182	-0.001	-0.548	0.181	0.168	0.181	0.100	9,955,000
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	502,197	43,893	36	0.088	0.088	0.087	0.087	0.088	-0.001	-1.136	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.100	17,922,000
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	2,074	630	4	0.294	0.310	0.294	0.310	0.314	-0.004	-1.274	0.310	0.290	0.310	0.100	25,234,853
OM0000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	2,499	697	1	0.279	0.279	0.279	0.279	0.289	-0.010	-3.460	0.279	0.261	0.278	0.100	44,640,000
Total	34	3,005,766	440,024	289												



Deadly flesh-eating bacteria infections on the rise in Japan

Streptococcal toxic shock syndrome (STSS) can kill within just 48 hours of infection. Here’s what you need to know about the rare but deadly bacterial illness.

It sounds like the stuff of horror movies, but Japan is seeing record levels of a highly fatal “flesh-eating” bacterial infection. Official figures show there have been over 1,000 cases of streptococcal toxic shock syndrome (STSS) since January in the country, surpassing the total number recorded last year. STSS is a rare but serious disease typically caused by infection with the bacteria *Streptococcus pyogenes*. It initially causes fever and throat infections but can develop very quickly into a life-threatening emergency, causing “toxic shock” and organ failure within days of infection. “Even with treatment, STSS can be deadly. Out of 10 people with STSS, as many as three people will die from the infection,” say the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

on their website.

Why are STSS cases rising in Japan?

The reason for the sudden rise in STSS cases in Japan remains unclear to health professionals. “Experts don’t know how the bacteria got into the body for nearly half of people who get STSS,” according to the CDC. In March, Japan’s National Institute of Infectious Diseases (NIID) also said, “There are still many unknown factors regarding the mechanisms behind fulminant (severe and sudden) forms of streptococcus, and we are not at the stage where we can explain them.” STSS occurs around the world at low levels, but the recent rise in cases in Japan has caused concern among health experts concerned that bacterial infections could spread to other countries.

Currently, there is no indication that STSS is spreading beyond normal levels elsewhere in the world. In the US, for example, the CDC has counted 395 reported cases so far this year, which is similar to the 390 reported at this time last year. **Why is STSS so deadly?** Many people carry *Streptococcus pyogenes* on their skin without ever getting sick, but the bacteria can cause serious STSS if they get into the bloodstream or deep tissue. STSS develops when the bacteria spread into deep tissues and the bloodstream and begin to produce exotoxins. Exotoxins are toxic compounds that destroy cells and tissues in our bodies — hence the term “flesh eating bacteria.” If the bacterial infection gets out of control, it can lead to organ failure and turn fatal. STSS is particularly deadly be-

cause of the rapidity of organ failure after infection. After the onset of initial symptoms like fever, aches, and nausea, it only takes about 24 to 48 hours for low blood pressure to develop. Once this happens, STSS quickly turns much more serious. Heart rate and blood pressure change, and organs like the kidneys or liver begin to fail. STSS is normally treated in a hospital with antibiotics like ampicillin. However, some strains of *Streptococcus pyogenes* have shown antimicrobial resistance (AMR) to a range of antibiotic agents. To prevent the bacteria from spreading further around the body, infected tissues can also be surgically removed. **Is STSS infectious?** However, the CDC warns that less severe bacterial infections, like a Group A

strep infection, can also turn into STSS. Group A strep bacteria are much more contagious, spreading via talking, coughing, or sneezing or via direct contact with infected skin sores. STSS is most common in older adults over 65 years old, as well as in people with health factors like diabetes or alcohol use disorders. Open wounds also increase the risk of developing STSS. Therefore, it is recommended that people with recent surgeries or those who have viral infections that cause open sores (eg, chickenpox or shingles) cover wounds to reduce the risk of being infected with *Streptococcus pyogenes*. The CDC also recommends people avoid contact with others who have Group A strep infections, and receive treatment for them as soon as possible.

SPORTS

NARROW WIN OVER CHILE

Martinez scores as Argentina book spot in Copa America quarters

NEW JERSEY: Argentina became the first nation to book their spot in the quarter-finals of the 2024 Copa America as Lautaro Martinez's late strike delivered 1-0 victory against Chile on Saturday. The defending champions were dominant throughout at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey, with 22 shots. Manchester City striker Julian Alvarez and Fiorentina midfielder Nicolas Gonzalez were the first to test Chile goalkeeper Claudio Bravo, setting the tone early on. Argentina's best opportunity of the first half fell to talisman Lionel Messi but the Inter Miami star was denied by the post. The pattern of play remained

the same after the break with Liverpool's Alexis Mac Allister spurning a golden opportunity. It took until the 72nd minute for Chile to register their first attempt at goal, Rodrigo Echeverria forcing a save out of goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez. That chance seemed to spark Chile into life. Echeverria and Marcelino Nunez both tested Aston Villa number one Martinez as Chile looked to end a winless run of 30 games against Argentina at the Copa America. With the game heading towards a frustrating draw, Inter Milan striker Martinez broke the deadlock in the 88th minute. Martinez, who also scored



after coming on as a substitute in Friday's 2-0 win against Canada, reacted quickest to a loose ball in a crowded penalty area after Chile failed to deal with Messi's corner. "These matches are always like this, we have to continue in the same way, treating the matches in this

way, as they are all going to be complicated," Martinez told TyC Sports. "Everything was tight, they set up lines of five at times but we are happy we ended up taking the three points, which is what we wanted." Argentina are top of Group A and are guaranteed a top-two finish with a match to spare. They play their final group game against Peru on Sunday. **Canada claim maiden Copa America win** Earlier in Group A, Canada picked up their first Copa America win with a 1-0 victory over Peru. Lille striker Jonathan David scored the crucial goal - the first

since manager Jesse Marsch was appointed in May - in sweltering conditions at Children's Mercy Park in Kansas City. Temperatures reached 38C and assistant referee Humberto Panjoj had to be replaced after collapsing late in the first half. Elsewhere, Mexico captain Edson Alvarez has confirmed he will miss the rest of the Copa America after suffering a hamstring injury during Sunday's 1-0 win against Jamaica. The West Ham midfielder left the field 30 minutes into Mexico's Group B opener. West Ham begin their 2024-25 Premier League campaign at home against Aston Villa on 17 August. - Agencies

Austria upset Netherlands



France finish second in group after being held to a 1-1 draw by Poland in Euros



BERLIN: Austria produced a hugely impressive performance that will make others take notice at Euro 2024 as they beat the Netherlands 3-2 to progress to the last 16 as Group D winners on Tuesday. Despite being handed a tough draw with the Dutch and France, Ralf Rangnick's side won two of their three games to finish top of the standings. The Netherlands had already guaranteed their progression to the last 16 but they will now go through as one of the best third-placed sides, with France second. This was a fully deserved win for Austria as they played with spirit and desire throughout, and showed great determination to respond to a fast start to the second-half by the

Netherlands as Marcel Sabitzer's strike secured the victory. The Austrians had been gifted a sixth-minute lead when Donyell Malen turned home Alexander Prass's dangerous cross. And, although Malen had a chance at redemption but scuffed his shot, Austria took control as the Netherlands struggled to get a touch of the ball at times. Rangnick's side had chances to add to their lead through Sabitzer and Marko Arnautovic, but the Netherlands were level just 75 seconds into the second half. The Dutch came out fighting

in the second half and equalised when Cody Gakpo curled in a great finish. That prompted a shift in tempo and Austria were holding on as Virgil van Dijk's header deflected over the bar. But Austria weathered the storm and retook the lead through Romano Schmid's powerful header, which the unfortunate Stefan de Vrij could only help over the line. Memphis Depay thought he had earned the Dutch a draw when his close-range volley survived a check for handball by the video assistant referee, but Sabitzer had the final say when he broke

through and drove into the roof of the net to send the Austrian fans wild. **Mbappe scores as France held** In Dortmund, a masked Kylian Mbappe scored his first-ever Euros goal but France were held to a 1-1 draw by an already-eliminated Poland to finish second in Group D on Tuesday. France needed all three points in order to seal top spot, but Robert Lewandowski's 79th-minute penalty cancelled out Mbappe's spot-kick 11 minutes into the second half.

Having returned to the starting line-up following a broken nose and donning a protective mask, Mbappe ended his wait for a first goal at a European Championships with the opener. Ousmane Dembele was brought down in the area by Poland and Arsenal defender Jakub Kiwior and Mbappe made no mistake from the spot. But France took their foot off the gas and a clumsy challenge from Dayot Upamecano gifted Lewandowski a golden opportunity to respond with a spot-kick of his own. Mike Maignan thought he was the French hero after saving Le-

wandowski's effort but the goalkeeper had encroached off his line and the penalty had to be retaken. The Poland captain slotted into the corner to score for a fourth European Championships, joining Cristiano Ronaldo and Luka Modric in achieving the feat. The thousands of blue shirts inside a scorching Signal Iduna Park in Dortmund finally got to witness a Frenchman scoring for their side when Mbappe netted in the 56th minute. The French captain ripped off his protective mask to celebrate his 48th strike for his country. - Agencies

EURO 2024

England reach last 16 after a dull draw with Slovenia

COLOGNE: England moved into Euro 2024's last 16 at the top of Group C - but it was only achieved after another drab display with a draw against Slovenia in Cologne on Tuesday. Gareth Southgate's side offered up slightly more than in the abysmal performance against Denmark but once again it was nowhere good enough to justify England's status as pre-tournament favourites. They were laboured and only showed quality in flashes, namely in the first half when a slick passing move ended with Bukayo Saka's goal being ruled out for offside. For the second game in a row, England felt real hostility from supporters who backed them magnificently during the game but made their feelings clear after the final whistle. After boos at the break, supporters let Southgate know what they thought when he went to ap-



plaud them at the end, with a couple of empty drinks cups aimed his way from the stands. Meanwhile, Denmark's 0-0 draw with Serbia in Munich means they finish second and Slovenia qualify as one of the best third-placed teams. Denmark finished second in Group C by virtue of having a better disciplinary record than Slovenia. Denmark ended on an identical record to Slovenia, meaning they

had to be separated by the amount of yellow cards they received. Both sides picked up six yellow cards on the pitch, but Slovenian coach Novakovic Milivoje was also booked in the first game, which UEFA do not count on their disciplinary statistics page, and that ultimately gave Denmark the slimmest of edges. While Denmark and Slovenia both go through, Serbia are out - although none of the three teams won a group game. - Agencies

FANATEC GT WORLD CHALLENGE EUROPE

Oman's Al Harthy ready for 24 Hours of Spa challenge

MUSCAT: Fresh from the biggest race in world motorsport, the 24 Hours of Le Mans, Oman's experienced racer Ahmad Al Harthy is now set to compete in yet another round-the-clock contest as he gets ready for the CrowdStrike 24 Hours of Spa on 29-30 June. Al Harthy is ready for the challenge in round two of the Fanatec GT World Challenge Europe (GTWCE) powered by AWS Endurance Cup at Belgium's Spa-Francorchamps. The venue has witnessed the Omani driver clinch race wins in his class in the past and he is now joined by Oman Racing team-mates, Sam De Haan and Jens Klingmann. The trio will be have Australia's Calan Williams as their fourth team-mate for the 24 hour race. With support from prestigious partners OQ, Oman Ministry of Culture Sports and Youth, Omantel and BMW Oman, two-time GTWCE Endurance Cup



Pro-Amclass champion Al Harthy is determined to push for a season-best showing at Spa and climb the bronze class points table from his current sixth place. Al Harthy said: "It's been a very busy few weeks with the Le Mans 24 Hours and now the Spa 24 Hours. We're here to be part of the biggest endurance races in the world and to challenge the very best drivers and teams out there in GT3 racing, while proudly flying the flag for Oman. There has been a lot of hard work behind the scenes,

the demands of a 24 hour race are not insignificant, and I'm very happy with our preparations. "It's great to be back with OQ by Oman Racing for the second race of the GTWCE Endurance season, and I'm obviously looking forward to being back with Sam and Jens and, of course, working with Calan for the first time. I always love racing at Spa, we've had some incredible moments in the 24 Hours before and it would be amazing if we can create more special memories this weekend."

JOINT INITIATIVE OF OGA AND THE R&A

'Unleash Your Drive in Schools Programme' to begin in Oman

MUSCAT: The latest initiative of the Oman Golf Association (OGA) to introduce the game in Oman schools at the start of the new academic year in coordination with The R&A has been warmly welcomed by His Highness Sayyid Azzan bin Kais Tarik Al Said, the OGA chairman. Sayyid Azzan said: "I am excited about the 'Unleash Your Drive in Schools Programme' and would like to thank The R&A for their support to golf in Oman." Sayyid Azzan recently hosted Neal Graham, The R&A Development Manager for the Middle East and India, in Muscat and discussed ways to develop the game in the Sultanate. Following the discussions with Graham, the OGA announced that from the start of the next academic year it would be introducing golf



in local schools through The R&A 'Unleash Your Drive in Schools Programme'. The programme which has been

created by The R&A in collaboration with the Golf Foundation is a six-part beginners' programme delivered to primary schools us-



ing specially designed equipment provided to the OGA by The R&A. The classes will feature fun games and challenges as well as

nine mental resilience tools which will not only help to master the game of golf but also to develop key life skills that are essential for

long-term mental well-being. Sayyid Azzan said: "The Oman Golf Association would like to thank The R&A for providing us with the equipment and knowledge to introduce golf to a younger audience. Golf can have a significant impact on physical health and with the work done by The R&A we are confident that 'Unleash Your Drive' will have a positive impact on the minds and bodies of Oman's youth. We hope to uncover the next generation of golfers." Graham said: "The R&A 'Unleash Your Drive' has proven to be a real hit with young people in Great Britain and Ireland thanks to the great work of the Golf Foundation. The programme is now active across the UAE, Jordan and Lebanon. Our aim is to replicate the success by introducing the sport into schools throughout Oman."

IN PICTURES



Giorgio Armani Prive's Fall/Winter 2024-2025 Haute Couture collections
A model presents a creation of Giorgio Armani Prive's Fall/Winter 2024-2025 Haute Couture collections during Paris Fashion Week in Paris, France. *Xinhua*



Paris getting ready for the Olympics
Picture shows the Eiffel Tower Stadium, which will host Beach Volleyball during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games and the Blind Football during the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games, in Paris, France. *Xinhua*



Interactive tea show held in China Cultural Centre in Sweden
A man looks on as a hostess demonstrates Chinese tea culture during an interactive tea show held in China Cultural Centre in Stockholm, Sweden. *Xinhua*



Refugee girl living in Kenya defies odds to shine at Paris 2024
Perina Lokure Nakang (front centre) has an online class with her teammates in All4Running school in Nandi County, western Kenya. Perina, a refugee girl from South Sudan, is part of the group in their final preparations for the 2024 Summer Olympics, scheduled to take place in Paris, France, in late July. *Xinhua*



Saiee Manjrekar and Shantanu Maheshwari during a promotion event for their upcoming film 'Auron Mein Kahan Dum Tha'
Bollywood actress Saiee Manjrekar and actor Shantanu Maheshwari pose for a photo during a promotion event for their upcoming film 'Auron Mein Kahan Dum Tha', in Mumbai. *ANI Photo*



Scenery of Ny-Alesund in Norway
A cruise ship docks in Ny-Alesund, Svalbard, Norway. As the world's northernmost permanent settlement, Ny-Alesund has four months of continuous daylight and four months of lasting darkness each year. From late April to late August, the sun never sets, treating visitors to the spectacle of the "midnight sun." *Xinhua*



Researchers carry out Arctic expedition at Yellow River Station in Norway
This picture shows the Yellow River Station in Ny-Alesund, Svalbard, Norway. *Xinhua*

Tourism in Qingdao heats up in hot summer days
This picture shows a coastal view in Qingdao, east China's Shandong Province. Tourism in Qingdao is heating up as domestic and foreign tourists come here to enjoy the coastal scenery and cool off in hot summer days. *Xinhua*



ROUND-UP

BankDhofar launches private banking segment for high net worth clients

The launch demonstrates the bank’s commitment to lead wealth management in Oman, by offering world class wealth solutions, private banking expertise, an extensive network in the country and access to full range of banking capabilities

MUSCAT: BankDhofar launched its private banking segment to serve high net worth individuals, entrepreneurs, and their families. The launch further demonstrates the bank's commitment to lead wealth management in Oman, by offering world class wealth solutions, private banking expertise, an extensive network in the country and access to full range of banking capabilities. The launch event, held at St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat, marks a significant milestone in BankDhofar's ongoing commitment to offer a holistic banking experience with the aim of delivering sustainable long-term value to its clients. The segment is dedicated to offering specialised core and non-core banking services, as well as a personalised wealth and lifestyle management proposition for ultra high net worth individuals, fami-



lies, and corporate clients. It promises tailored solutions to nurture and grow wealth in a secure and prudent manner with complete privacy and confidentiality. Bank Dhofar Private Banking will offer a broad range of tailored and bespoke services in Oman. **Need-based solutions** Solutions that meet the needs of clients, including bespoke lending, and investment products and propositions like mutual funds, bonds, portfolio management services, insurance and access to structured products, alternative investments, and a direct equity execution platform. Bank will provide exclusive insights to support its client's decision making through exclusive access to private banking investment insights.

Dedicated relationship manager A team of dedicated relationship managers, investment advisors and product specialists supporting wealth planning for individuals and family offices. With a commitment to go beyond expectations, the approach begins with a detailed review of clients' circumstances and financial goals, including short and long-term financial objectives. These are meticulously carried out by the bank's experienced private bankers. **Comprehensive financial concierge** The segment will aim to be a complete financial concierge service, managing banking needs on a 360-degree level by addressing both onshore domestic and off-

shore international needs. These include the offering of services including core banking, wealth management, investment advisory and offshore banking. Wealth and business succession planning, key-person insurance, trust solutions, and the establishment of foundations and family offices, will also play a significant role in the new business. **Global partnerships** Through its private banking, bank aims to leverage the bank's thirty-four years of local expertise with global partnerships to offer unmatched solutions across geographies. The segment will also provide global access to investments - with a diverse list of shrewdly selected opportunities across key asset classes - through mutual funds,

local and international bonds and equities. Clients can also access some of the most sought-after alternatives in the market, ranging from hedge funds to strategies that involve real estate, private credit and venture capital, thus ensuring clients receive unparalleled access to well researched financial solutions. With booking centers in Switzerland and Singapore respectively, and independent custody of client assets, the segment intends to offer a safe global approach with a local presence. **Family office** The family office services focus on crafting a legacy that goes beyond financial success. Expert advisors work closely with clients to develop comprehensive financial plans covering wealth preservation, estate

and succession planning, and strategic investment strategies. The segment also assists in setting up and overseeing charitable foundations, ensuring clients' legacies positively impact their communities. **Next generation empowerment** With the belief of empowering the next generation, bespoke benefits and privileges designed for diverse passions, have been curated. Elite VIP experiences in fashion, art, musical and sporting events, and enhanced VIP concierge services, with a dedicated concierge manager, are designed to enrich and enhance the client's lifestyle experience. This ensures the bank introduces many "firsts" in the Sultanate through the segment; the first metallic card offered by a local bank with loaded card features, benefits as well as a dedicated VIP concierge service to name a few. Speaking on the occasion, the bank's Deputy Chief Executive Officer, K Gopakumar remarked, "Entrepreneurialism and innovation are fueling both economic growth and significant wealth creation in Oman. We are excited to partner with our clients to protect and grow their wealth and support their ambitions for their families, businesses, and legacies. Our clients are looking for highly customized solutions, innovative digital services, and resources to address the growing complexities of multi-generational wealth. The launch of private banking will provide robust solutions across the wealth spectrum with world class investment solutions, dedicated private banking teams and global expertise via partners." He added "With our new private banking offering, we are reinforcing our promise to take our clients to a higher level of service not yet seen in the Sultanate. The new private banking services will complement BankDhofar's retail and corporate banking offerings."

WORLD AIRLINE AWARDS

CULTURAL EXCHANGE

Turkish Airlines named Best Airline in Europe by Skytrax

MUSCAT: Turkish Airlines, the airline that flies to more countries than any other, is named Best Airline in Europe by Skytrax on the prestigious 2024 World Airline Awards, also known as the Oscars of the aviation industry. Held in London at the iconic Fairmont Windsor Park on 24 June, the World Airline Awards saw several accolades being presented to the successful flag carrier. In addition to being recognised as the "Best Airline in Europe", Turkish Airlines won two other top awards at the ceremony, including the "World's Best Business Class Catering" and "Best Airline in Southern Europe". Based on results from the independent surveys carried out by Skytrax, Turkish Airlines has been named best airline both in Europe and Southern Europe. These awards highlight the carrier's exceptional service quality across its extensive network, underscoring the airline's dedication to providing a seamless and comfortable travel experience for its passengers. Continuing to set the benchmark for in-flight dining and offering passengers an unforgettable gastronomic journey above the clouds, Turkish Airlines has secured "World's Best Business Class Catering" award. Receiving the awards at the ceremony, Bilal Eksi, CEO of Turkish Airlines stated: "We are delighted to receive these prestigious awards from Skytrax. Being named the Best Airline in Europe and in Southern Europe, and receiving recognition for our business class catering excellence is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our entire team. As the Turkish Airlines family, we would like to thank our valued passengers, who deemed us worthy of these wonderful awards, and the Skytrax team, who put this evaluation into practice. With Turkish hospitality in our DNA, we remain committed to delivering an unmatched travel experience to our passengers and will continue to innovate and enhance our services." Edward Plaisted, CEO of Skytrax



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said: "We congratulate Turkish Airlines on being named the Best Airline in Europe, which for the ninth time is a remarkable achievement in such a competitive region, and demonstrates that they are a customer favourite. Turkish Airlines repeated earlier year successes by winning the award for the World's Best Business Class Catering and the airline and its catering partner Turkish DO&CO should be very proud of this success." Through these awards, Turkish Airlines reaffirms its leading position in hospitality, service quality and extensive network, which boasts more countries than any other. With the addition of Melbourne route in March 2024, the national flag carrier's network has expanded to six continents.

Alizz Islamic Bank launches Islamic finance programme with Peking University

MUSCAT: Alizz Islamic Bank recently launched the first-of-its-kind cultural exchange programme with the bank hosting 8 delegates from Peking University for a 12-day programme that serves as a platform to enhance bilateral cooperation and outline the future trajectory of the two nations' collaboration. The bank has a developed a comprehensive program through which the Chinese delegation will gain knowledge of the history of Oman, learn about Islamic banking and how it works, meet a number of officials in different institutions and visit some historical landmarks in Oman. Alizz Islamic Bank is dedicated to building a community with a shared future for mankind, knowing the importance of an equal and orderly multipolar world and a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalisation. The continuous collaboration between Alizz Islamic Bank and Peking University contributes to strengthening relations between both nations, marking a model of successful cooperation between nations with diverse backgrounds and systems. In recent years, economic and cultural exchanges between



China and Oman have witnessed significant and profound development and trade cooperation has flourished, with the bilateral trade volume reaching \$30 billion by the end of 2023. On this occasion, Ali Al Mani CEO of Alizz Islamic Bank, said: "We are honoured to launch this cultural exchange program with Peking University. It further cements the banks pioneering role in reinforcing the enduring friendship between both nations, building upon the cultural bonds and paving the way forward for enhanced collaboration in various domains. At Alizz Islamic Bank we believe that it is our civil duty to raise the profile of our beautiful nation and being one of the first dedicated Islamic

banks in Oman we focus on sharing knowledge and experiences to support the development of Islamic Banking both locally and globally." Peking University, also known as Beijing University, is a national public research University in Beijing, China. Within this esteemed educational institute is the 'Sultan Qaboos Chair in Arabic Studies'. The objective of the Chair includes the teaching and learning of the Arabic language and literature to Chinese students in Peking University, encouraging research of the Arabic language, literature and culture, especially research on the Sultanate of Oman. It also encourages cultural exchanges between both countries.





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