



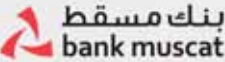
CREDIT EXTENDED BY BANKS IN OMAN REACHES OMR31.9BN

MUSCAT: The total outstanding credit extended by other depository corporations ODCs grew by 4.8 percent to OMR31.9 billion at the end of October 2024, with credit to the private sector demonstrating an increase of 4.4 percent year-on-year to reach OMR26.8 billion. ODCs consist of conventional and Islamic banks in Oman. **>A3**



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OMAN, BELARUS COMMITTED TO BOOST TIES ACROSS KEY AREAS

An official reception ceremony will be held for Belarus President at Al Alam Palace on Sunday

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Belarus are committed to expanding their partnership and promoting bilateral relations across economic, political, and cultural domains.

The arrival of President Aleksandr Lukashenko of Belarus to Oman on Saturday, along with his scheduled meeting with His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, underscores the growing importance of enhancing cooperation in key sectors.

Both nations aim to strengthen ties and explore new avenues of collaboration, particularly in economic, commercial, and investment fields.

Official exchanges between the two nations highlight their shared commitment to enhancing their partnership.

Notably, Belarusian Prime Minister Roman Golovchenko visited



Oman in October, where he met with several officials and business leaders, exploring avenues for economic and investment cooperation. During his visit, several Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) were signed.

Additionally, in August, Belar

ussian Minister of Antimonopoly Regulation and Trade, Alexei Bogdanov, visited Oman, where a business forum took place and further MoUs were signed, reinforcing the growing collaboration between the two nations.

Hamoud Salim Al Tuwaih,

Oman's Ambassador to Russia and non-resident Ambassador to Belarus, emphasised that President Lukashenko's visit will explore further ways to enhance bilateral relations.

This visit is expected to bolster cooperation in sectors such as re

Belarus President arrives in Oman

MUSCAT: President Aleksandr Lukashenko of the Republic of Belarus arrived in Muscat yesterday on an official visit to the Sultanate of Oman, lasting several days. During the visit, he will meet with His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister led the welcoming party for the Belarusian President and his accompanying delegation at the Royal Airport. The Foreign Minister welcomed the President, wishing him a pleasant stay and a successful visit.

The Belarusian President was also received by Abdul-salam Mohammed Al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (Head of the Mission of Honour accompanying the guest), Hamoud Salim Al Tuwaih, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Russian Federation and non-resident to

the Republic of Belarus, Andrei Luchenok, Belarusian non-resident Ambassador to Oman and members of the Mission of Honour accompanying the guest.

During the visit, the Belarusian President is accompanied by an official delegation comprising Viktor Lukashenko, son of the President and President of the Olympic Committee, Maxim Ryzhenkov, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alexander Efimov, Minister of Industry, Anatoly Linevich, Minister of Agriculture and Food and Sergei Terentiev, Non-resident Ambassador of Belarus to Oman.

An official reception ceremony will be held for the guest president at Al Alam Palace on Sunday. Moreover, an official session of talks will be held between Oman and Belarus under the chairmanship of His Majesty the Sultan and the Belarusian President. **— ONA**

newable energy, green hydrogen, heavy industries, and technology, contributing to expanded trade and investment flows between the two countries.

Ambassador Al Tuwaih told Oman News Agency (ONA) that numerous agreements have al

ready been signed, including those focused on encouraging and protecting investments, trade co-operation, and avoiding double taxation. These agreements underscore the commitment of both countries to strengthening their economic ties. **>A2**

TOMI AWARDS 2024: CELEBRATING CREATIVITY, INNOVATION & EXCELLENCE



TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN Sayyid Badr receives Belarusian minister

1 Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister received in Muscat on Saturday Maxim Ryzhenkov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus and discussed bilateral relations and trade ties. **>A2**



WORLD Lawmakers impeach South Korean President

2 South Korea's President Yoon Suk Yeol has been impeached. A total of 204 lawmakers voted to support the motion, the speaker said on Saturday. **>A7**

MARKET Oil exports increase in October 2024

3 The Sultanate of Oman's oil exports recorded an increase of 0.01% at the end of October 2024 to reach 256,318,800 barrels, according to the data issued by NCSI. **>B1**



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Sayyid Badr and Belarus minister discuss relations

During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views on areas of cooperation between Oman and Belarus

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister received in Muscat on Saturday Maxim Ryzhenkov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus.

During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views on areas of cooperation between Oman and Belarus, as well as the joint preparatory coordination for the official visit to be made by President Aleksandr Lukashenko of the Republic of Belarus to the Sultanate of Oman later yesterday.

They also touched on a set of regional and international developments.



The meeting was attended by Hamoud Salim Al Tuwaih, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Russian Federation and non-resident to the Republic of Belarus, Andrei Luchenok, Belarusian Ambassador to Oman and some officials from both sides. -ONA

Korea, Oman to promote ties in renewable energy sector

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Oman, in collaboration with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals of Oman and the Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA), hosted the “Korea-Oman Renewable Energy Business Roundtable and KSP (Knowledge Sharing Programme) kick-off meeting” in Muscat on December 12.

The roundtable was attended by more than 70 government officials, business stakeholders and experts from Korea and Oman, to promote partnership in the renewable energy sector, in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Korea and Oman.

Salim Al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals of the Sultanate of Oman graced the meeting and delivered a keynote speech on behalf of the Omani government.

Representatives from energy companies of Oman were in attendance such as Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC), Nama Power and Water Procurement Company, HYDROM (Hydrogen Oman), and



Oman LNG.

The meeting was attended by representatives from Korea's leading energy-related organisations and companies, including the Korea Electric Power Research Institute (KEPRI), Hyosung Heavy Industries, POSCO Holdings, GS Energy, Samsung E&C, and LS Cable & System.

The participants discussed ways to strengthen Korea-Oman cooperation in the value chains of renewable energy, from power production to storage and transport, as well as in elaborating technological solutions to be applied to enhance efficiency of renewable energy.

The meeting also included a kick-off of Korea's 2024-25 Knowledge Sharing Programme (KSP) project with Oman, which aims to share experiences and best practices between the two countries to improve the reliability and efficiency in integrating renewables into the national power system.

KIM Kiejoo, Ambassador of Korea to Oman underlined that there is great potential for mutually beneficial cooperation between Korea and Oman in the field of renewable energy, and expressed his hope that the two countries will further expand their collaboration.

Firefighters extinguish blaze in Muscat, 6 persons rescued

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Firefighting teams from the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority(CDAA) in Mus-

cat successfully extinguished a fire that broke out in a residential building in the Wilayat of Bausher. The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority reported that six individuals were rescued from the building and are currently in good health. The authorities have advised people to take proper steps to avoid such incidents.

Oman-Belarus aim to enhance tourism through joint initiatives

The tourism sector is also a focus of future collaboration, with both nations looking to expand their tourism offerings through joint initiatives.

In the cultural realm, Oman and Belarus have already held significant exhibitions, including the “At the Crossroads of Civilizational Communication” exhibition in Muscat in 2018 and the “Oman Day” exhibition in Belarus in 2019. The Belarusian Cultural Week was also held in Muscat in 2020.

Cultural exchanges

These cultural exchanges continue to deepen the bond between the two nations.

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations on 23 July,



1992, the Sultanate of Oman and Belarus have maintained a steady dialogue, with ongoing visits between their officials further solidifying this growing partnership.

It is worth noting that the first official visit of the President of Belarus to Oman took place in April 2007. (With inputs from ONA)







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TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

The Internal Tender Committee at the Ministry of Labour announces the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender title	Last date for tender purchase online	Bid submission date
41/2024	Adding a first floor in Al Buraimi Labour Department	Tuesday 31/12/2024 2:00 p.m.	Monday 20/01/2025 10 a.m.

• Specialized establishments may obtain the tender's documents online through the following link, starting from Thursday 12/12/2024 at 08:00 a.m. [/https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om](https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om)

• Bids shall be submitted online.

• Bids shall be opened at 11:00 am on Monday 20/01/2025.

(The Ministry shall not be bound to accept the lowest or any other bid)

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Credit extended by ODCs tops OMR31bn

According to a report issued by the CBO, household sector received the highest share of the total private sector credit at approximately 45.2 percent at end-October 2024

MUSCAT: Other depository corporations (ODCs) consist of conventional and Islamic banks in Oman. The total outstanding credit extended by ODCs grew by 4.8 percent to OMR31.9 billion at the end of October 2024, with credit to the private sector demonstrating an



increase of 4.4 percent (Y-o-Y) to reach OMR26.8 billion. According to a report issued by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO), household sector received the highest share of the total private sector credit at approximately 45.2 percent at end-October 2024, followed by Non-financial corporations at 45.1 percent. The share of financial corporations was 6.2 percent while other sectors received the remaining 3.5 percent of total private sector credit as at end-October 2024.

ODCs registered

Total deposits held with ODCs registered a Y-o-Y significant growth of 13.0 percent to reach OMR31.9 billion at the end of October 2024. Total private sector deposits increased by 9.4 percent to OMR20.4 billion.

In terms of sector-wise composition of private sector deposits, the biggest contribution is from household deposits at 50.2 percent, followed by non-financial corporations at 29.5 percent, financial corporations at 17.7 percent and other sectors at 2.6 percent. **DNA**

FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

FTA boosts trade relations between Oman and the US



Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Free Trade Agreement between the Sultanate of Oman and the United States of America, which came into effect in 2009, has enhanced trade and investment cooperation between the two countries and contributed to opening the way for Omani products to enter the American market.

Although 15 years have passed since the signing of the agreement, there are many advantages and facilities that have not been exploited by the Omani private sector to maximise the benefit from the agreement, which contributes to strengthening the existing partnerships between businessmen in the two countries and increasing the volume of trade and investment exchange between the Sultanate of Oman and the United States of America (USA).

Khalid bin Saeed Al-Shuaibi, Head of the National Programme for Investment and Export Development (Nazdar), said that the Free Trade Agreement requires a clear programme and plan to activate it and direct it towards targeted sectors in order to increase the flow of Omani products to the American markets to achieve the desired results.

He explained that there is a growth in the volume of trade exchange between the Sultanate of Oman and the United States of America, in addition to the fact that there are many Omani products that have begun to enter the American markets.

He added in a statement to the Oman News Agency that the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion provides information related to the advantages of the agreement, and that the US Embassy has a guidebook, which it has prepared,

especially for investors and businessmen, pointing out that activating the agreement is incumbent upon businessmen to search for opportunities that can be benefited from, especially since the US market is large, promising and diverse.

Khalid Al-Shaibi explained that the targeted products to enter the US market must be identified with a clear plan that may be the best way to increase the volume of trade exchange between the two countries, calling on businessmen and investors in the Sultanate of Oman to take advantage of the advantages and opportunities provided by the free trade agreement.

Rebecca Olson, CEO of the Oman-US Business Council, stressed that the main goal of the Free Trade Agreement is to facilitate trade, and that individuals and businesses should take advantage of the benefits of the agreement, noting that the Oman-US Business Council is working to help Omani companies find buyers in the United States.

The CEO of the Oman-US Business Council stressed the importance of having a free trade agreement office in both countries, noting the need to inform American companies of the investment opportunities available in the Sultanate of Oman in light of the free trade agreement between the two countries, and at the same time encourage Omani companies to expand and enter the American market.

She touched on the experiences of some countries that have free trade agreements with the United States, stressing the need for cooperation and work between all concerned sectors in order to ensure benefiting from the advantages of the agreement. — With inputs from **DNA**

UNIVERSITY OF BURAIMI

Symposium focuses on importance of research work

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The University of Buraimi hosted the symposium on: “The Role of Research Chairs in Enhancing Education, Scientific Research and Knowledge Transfer” under the auspices of Prof. Dr. Rahma bint Ibrahim Al Mahrouqi, Minister of Higher Education, Scientific Research, and Innovation.

The symposium was organised by the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation and Ministry of Education, represented by the Omani National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, with the on-line participation of experts from international and regional organisations concerned with education, culture and science.

The symposium targeted heads and professors of scientific chairs inside and outside the Sultanate of Oman, researchers, and students of higher education institutions. It aimed to introduce the concept of research chairs, their importance, and their role in enhancing education and scientific research, as well as providing participants with the skills in establishing and managing research.

The symposium also aimed at exchanging expertise and experiences between educational and research institutions on establishing and managing research from inside and outside the Sultanate of



Oman.

The one-day symposium highlighted the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation's interest in supporting the establishment and activation of research, the role of international organisations in supporting research to achieve sustainable development goals, presenting successful experiences and good practices in establishing and investing in scientific research, and building partnerships between scientific communities and university networks worldwide.

During the opening ceremony of the symposium, Dr. Mahmoud Al-Abri, Secretary-General of the Omani National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, delivered a speech in which he

stressed the importance of exchanging expertise and enhancing cooperation between all universities and research institutions in the Sultanate of Oman in support of research work, which are important tools in enhancing academic and scientific activities.

He added: “Recognising the importance of strengthening international cooperation in the field of higher education by the three organisations that the National Commission is associated with (UNESCO, ICESCO and ALECSO), and supporting the development of scientific research and higher education institutions in different countries in all sectors including education, natural sciences, social and human sciences, culture and communication.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Outstanding students awarded

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Education, represented by the Innovation and Scientific Olympiad Department, in cooperation with OMIFCO, celebrated the conclusion of the National Olympiad of Student Scientific Innovation, Robotics Competitions, and Artificial Intelligence for the academic year 2024/2025.

The event was held under the patronage of Dr. Mansour bin Taleb Al Hinai, Chairman of the Public Services Regulatory Authority, in the presence of Prof. Dr. Abdullah bin Khamis Ambosaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry for Education, Said bin Salim Al Salmi, Director-General of Human Resources and Work Culture at OMIFCO, Directors-General in the Ministry's General Diwan and Education Directorates, Heads of Innovation and Scientific Olympiad Departments, and students, at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Hilal Al Khazairi, Assistant Director of the Innovation and Scientific Olympiad Department, delivered a speech.

The event aims to enhance future skills by having students compete in various fields of scientific innovations, robotics and artificial intelligence (AI).

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TOMI AWARDS 2024: CELEBRATING CREATIVITY, INNOVATION & EXCELLENCE

This year, TOMI Awards featured 25 diverse categories, each recognising outstanding achievements in marketing and creativity

MUSCAT: On Wednesday, 11th December 2024, Oman witnessed a transformative night in the marketing and creative industry - the inaugural TOMI Awards.

Held at the breathtaking outdoor gardens of Crowne Plaza, Qurum, the TOMI Awards 2024 celebrated the brilliance, passion, and imagination that have shaped Oman's creative sector. With an audience of industry leaders, creative innovators, and marketers in attendance, the event honoured excellence across the field. It was not just a celebration, but a powerful movement - an invitation for marketers, creatives, and visionaries to continue pushing boundaries and redefining the industry.

Award Categories

This year, the TOMI Awards featured 25 diverse categories, each recognising exceptional achievements in marketing and creativity. Ten outstanding agencies were also honoured with the Marketing Excellence Awards for their

unmatched innovation, strategic vision, and lasting impact.

Here are the categories that received the spotlight:

1. Best Print Advertising
2. Best Explainer Video
3. Best PR Campaign
4. Best Event Activity
5. Best Event Video
6. Best Content Marketing Video
7. Best On-Ground Activation
8. Best Brand Identity (Logo) - Static
9. Best Brand Identity (Logo) - Video
10. Best CSR Campaign
11. Best Video Advertising
12. Best Digital Advertising Static
13. Best Digital Advertising Video
14. Best Digital Advertising Auto-motive Video
15. Best Out-of-Home Advertising (Static)
16. Best Digital Out-of-Home Advertising
17. Best Influencer Marketing
18. Best Website
19. Best Live Brand Experience

The Marketing Excellence

Awards honoured the incredible marketing and advertising agencies that are the true masterminds behind Oman's most remarkable campaigns. These awards celebrated the brilliance, creativity, and hard work of the teams who transformed ideas into impactful stories that captivated audiences.

An Evening of Entertainment & Celebration

The evening came alive with vibrant entertainment, captivating guests with a lively atmosphere brimming with energy, excitement, and camaraderie. Highlights included a jaw-dropping fire show that left the audience in awe, live music performances that set the perfect vibe, and a caricature artist who captured the funniest and most memorable moments of the evening. Creativity took centre stage throughout, ensuring the fun never stopped. It was an unforgettable night where entertainment and artistry seamlessly blended to create lasting memories.



‘Strengthen measures to prevent drowning’

According to WHO's first Global status report on drowning prevention, the South-East Asia region reported 83,000 drowning fatalities in 2021

NEW DELHI: The World Health Organization (WHO) has called on countries in South-East Asia region to strengthen measures to prevent drowning which disproportionately impacted children and the vulnerable people.

According to WHO's first Global status report on drowning prevention, the South-East Asia region reported 83,000 drowning fatalities in 2021, which accounts to 28 per cent of the global drowning burden and contributing substantially to the nearly 30 lives lost to



drowning every hour, across the world.

Nearly 43 per cent drowning fatalities in the region involved children aged 14 years or below, according to WHO press release. Drowning is the third leading cause of death for children aged between five years to 14 years and the fourth leading cause of death for children aged 1-4 years.

Saima Wazed, WHO South-East Asia Regional Director, said, "To save lives and ensure equitable safety for all, expanding and scaling up proven drowning preventive interventions across the Region is not just essential, but a

moral imperative."

Poverty, limited access to safety measures, and inadequate infrastructure exacerbate drowning risks, especially in low- and middle-income nations.

In a press release, the WHO said, "Children face heightened vulnerabilities due to inadequate supervision, limited swimming skills, and lack of water safety knowledge. For older children and adolescents, peer pressure, risk-taking behaviors, and substance use further increase their risk. Children with disabilities face additional challenges in recognizing and responding to water hazards.

Non-fatal drowning incidents lead to severe long-term neurological complications and disabilities that require prolonged care."

Saima Wazed said most nations in the WHO South-East Asia Region have comprehensive drowning prevention strategies. However, she said that more measures need to be taken like enacting laws mandating lifejacket use, barriers around water hazards, and safe boating regulations have shown potential, though enforcement remains inconsistent in many countries. Rules restricting alcohol consumption near public water bodies lack in many areas. — ANI

WAR-TORN SYRIA

Indians evacuated from Syria arrive in Delhi

NEW DELHI: Indian nationals evacuated from war-torn Syria reached Delhi airport on Saturday. They expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Indian embassy for bringing them back home.

Indian nationals who returned to India shared their experience of staying in Syria in the past few days and how the embassy helped them to come back to India.

Recounting how embassy helped him, an Indian national

said, "I had been there in Syria for about six months and the situation was normal there. When the conflict broke out between the rebels and the government, we contacted the embassy and also to those people close to us. They told us that we have to leave today. We were ready but then they told us to hold for sometime as there were celebrations there and you might get hurt. Then after three days, they told us to leave.

"75 people had left before me.

We were there in the embassy for two days. The embassy helped us and took very good care of us. After that, embassy talked to the company. My company booked tickets for me. The embassy booked tickets for 75 people."

Praising government's efforts for evacuating them from Syria, he said, "After that, the embassy team brought two of us to the Lebanon border, then took us to the hotel. Then the next team went from Lebanon to Beirut.

There was contact with everyone, whether someone is in Emirate or somewhere else and everyone is in the group. There are about 80-90 people. Everyone else has just left. Now we will sleep peacefully. The government has done well. It is not easy to evacuate 75 people and bring us out of the naxalite area, although there is embassy there. We would visit embassy on 15 August and 26 January. We always remained in touch with the embassy." — ANI



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BATTLE OF THE BULGE

Pelosi in hospital after getting injured during Luxembourg visit

WASHINGTON, DC: Former US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi was hospitalised after suffering an injury during an official visit to Luxembourg, her spokesperson announced on Friday.

Pelosi was travelling with a bipartisan Congressional delegation to mark the 80th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge.

Battle of Bulge is an episode from World War II, which started as a result of the German offensive and ended with the victory of the Allied powers.

"While travelling with a bipartisan Congressional delegation in Luxembourg to mark the 80th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge, Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi sustained an injury during an official engagement and was admitted to the hospital for evaluation," Pelosi's spokesperson, Ian Krager, said in a statement.



Pelosi is currently receiving treatment and has expressed 'regret' on being unable to attend the remainder of the engagements.

"Speaker Emerita Pelosi is currently receiving excellent treatment from doctors and medical professionals. She continues to work and regrets that she is unable to attend the remainder of the CODEL engagements to honor the courage of our servicemem-

bers during one of the greatest acts of American heroism in our nation's history," the spokesperson added.

The former House Speaker expressed her gratitude and thanked American veterans for their service.

"Speaker Emerita Pelosi conveys her thanks and praise to our veterans and gratitude to people of Luxembourg and Bastogne for their service in World War II and their role in bringing peace to Europe," the statement read.

"Speaker Emerita Pelosi was personally and officially honoured to travel with the distinguished delegation, many of whom had family members who fought in World War II- including her uncle, Johnny. She looks forward to returning home to the US soon," it added. — ANI

MIKHEIL KAVELASHVILI

Georgians elect new president

TBILISI: Pro-EU protesters took to the streets in Georgia on Saturday as an electoral college dominated by the ruling party chose a new president known for his vehement anti-West views.

Former soccer star Mikheil Kavelashvili received 224 votes out of a possible 300 from the electoral college.

He was the only candidate in

the election, which the opposition boycotted and has said it will not not recognize, insisting that current President Salome Zourabichvili remain the legitimate head of state.

Before 2017, the Georgian head of state — a largely ceremonial position — was elected directly.

But the ruling Georgian Dream party, which is seen as Moscow-

leaning and anti-West, amended the constitution in that year to put the vote in the hands of an electoral college made up of members of parliament and regional representatives.

Kavelashvili was a Premier League striker for Manchester City and for several Swiss Super League clubs as well.

-DW

FRESHWATER FISH

Cambodia fishermen find six rare Mekong giant catfish



MEKONG: Conservationists are celebrating the discovery and release back into nature of six highly endangered Mekong giant catfish in Cambodia.

The bumper catch in the Mekong River Basin has boosted hopes of a revival of the critically endangered species, which is among the world's largest freshwater fish.

Fishermen released the fish alongside officials from Cambodia's Fisheries Administration (CFA), smiling as they held up the animals — weighing up to 130 kilograms each. The USAID-funded Wonders of the Mekong conservation group said the capture of so many giant catfish over just five days was "a remarkable and unprecedented event."

"I've never heard of this be-

fore," said research biologist and project lead Zeb Hogan, from the University of Nevada.

"It's a hopeful sign that the species is not in imminent, like in the next few years, risk of extinction, which gives conservation activities time to be implemented and to continue to bend the curve away from decline and toward recovery."

"By tagging these fish, we gain critical information about their ecology, their migrations, their habitat...to try to help these fish survive in the future," Hogan said.

How bad is the plight of the giant Mekong catfish?

According to the IUCN Red List, the current population of the giant Mekong catfish is unknown but it is thought to have declined

by around 80% in the past 13 years.

They now are only found in some stretches of the Mekong River and its tributaries, but in the past inhabited the length of the 4,900-kilometer (3,044 mile)-long river — from its outlet in Vietnam to its higher reaches in the Chinese province of Yunnan.

The Mekong, a critical South-east Asian waterway has long been plagued by illegal fishing, habitat loss and plastic waste.

In addition, the Mekong River Basin become a tougher habitat to survive in because of dams, including so-called mega-dams, and climate change. These have had a devastating impact on water levels and upstream connectivity in the dangerously rare catfish's aquatic habitat. — DW



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Lawmakers in South Korea impeach President Yoon Suk

Police estimated at least 200,000 people filled the streets of Seoul ahead of the vote

SEOUL: South Korea's President Yoon Suk Yeol has been impeached. A total of 204 lawmakers voted to support the motion, the speaker said. Meanwhile, 85 lawmakers voted against the motion and three abstained. A further eight votes were nullified. All 300 members of parliament



participated in the vote. It comes after members of Yoon's ruling People Power Party walked out of the first impeachment vote last week.

Opposition hails 'victory for the people'
South Korea's opposition Democratic Party has celebrated after the successful motion to impeach

Once the copies of the impeachment document are delivered to Yoon and to the Constitutional Court, his presidential powers and duties will be suspended.

Yoon's political fate
The court now has 180 days to decide on Yoon's political fate. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Han Duck-soo has become South Korea's acting president. Parlaiment speaker Woo Won Shik urged the government and parliament to work together to stabilize the economy and foreign affairs. Finance Minister Choi Sang-mok will convene an emergency meeting on the economy on Sunday. Thousands of people gathered in South Korea's capital and demonstrated ahead of an impeachment vote against President Yoon Suk Yeol.

Yoon.
"Today's impeachment is the great victory of the people," Democratic Party floor leader Park Chan-dae said following the vote.

The protests demanding Yoon's removal began around midday outside the National Assembly. A Seoul police official told the AFP news agency that they expected at least 200,000 people to demonstrate in support of removing him. "If Yoon isn't impeached today, I'll return next week," one protester told AFP. However, Seoul also saw people gathering in support of Yoon. Near Gwanghwamun Square, thousands rallied in support of Yoon, singing patriotic songs and waving South Korean and American flags. "Yoon had no choice but to declare martial law. I approve of every decision he has made as president," a pro-Yoon demonstrator told AFP. It was the second such motion to impeach Yoon over his failed attempt to impose martial law early last week. -**bw**

UNIDENTIFIED DRONES

Drones spotted over US air base at Ramstein in Germany

BERLIN: German authorities said on Friday that unidentified drones had been spotted flying over sensitive military and industrial sites. Among the sites was the US air base at Ramstein in the western state of Rhineland-Palatinate. The sightings were first reported by Germany's Der Spiegel magazine. It cited a report from German security authorities saying that several drone sightings were registered over the Ramstein base late on December 3 and 4. Der Spiegel said that unidentified drones were also sighted over facilities belonging to German arms maker Rheinmetall. Unidentified drones were also seen over the Brunsbüttel area of northern Schleswig-Holstein state in August. Media reports said officials believed at the time that the drones were part of a Russian espionage campaign. However, the ARD broadcaster reported on Friday that investiga-



tions into the sightings in Brunsbüttel have as of yet unearthed no indications of espionage. A spokesperson for the US Air Force said that its facilities at the Ramstein air base were unaffected. There were "no impacts to base residents, facilities, or assets," the spokesperson said. "In concert with host nation authorities, we continue to monitor the airspace to ensure safety and security of the community." Over the past few weeks, un-

identified drones were also sighted in New Jersey and other parts of the northeastern United States. On Thursday, the US federal authorities said in a report that there was no evidence that the sightings posed a national security threat and that some of the devices were "manned aircraft ... operating lawfully." In November, the US Air Force said that unidentified drones were spotted over three air bases in the United Kingdom. -**bw**

SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT

PIA to resume US flights after seven-year gap

ISLAMABAD : Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) will be resuming flights to the United States after seven years of gap, marking a significant development for the country's aviation sector, ARY News reported. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to settle pending financial obligations. According to DG CAA Nadir Shafi Dar, payments to the FAA are expected to be made shortly, paving the way for the FAA's delegation to visit Pakistan by February or March. According to ARY News, the development has increased chances that Pakistan will be reclassified to 'Category One' status with the FAA, allowing direct flights to the US to resume, as per ARY News. Notably, PIA's flights to the US were suspended in 2017, when the airline operated six flights per week between Pakistan and New York



and two to Chicago. The Pak government is also intensifying efforts to privatise PIA through government-to-government (G2G) agreements, with a deadline set for December 31, ARY News reported on Saturday, citing sources. According to the report, both Abu Dhabi and Qatar have expressed strong interest in PIA's privatisation, creating a potential opportunity for foreign investment. Active discussions are underway with both countries to finalise the terms of the deal. To attract investors, the Secu-

rities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) is reportedly offering substantial incentives to those looking to acquire stakes in PIA. These measures are designed to ensure a smooth transition during the privatization process, providing necessary support to potential investors, the ARY report added. In October 2024, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb stated that the government plans to complete PIA's privatisation, along with that of three power distribution companies, by the end of the year. -**ANI**

SYRIA'S TRANSITION

Antony Blinken meets Iraqi PM

WASHINGTON, DC: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who is on an unannounced tour to the Middle East, met Iraqi Prime Minister, Mohammed Shia al-Sudani in Baghdad to discuss the future of neighbouring Syria. Blinken's visit to Baghdad was the final stop on his Middle East tour, following the toppling of President Bashar al-Assad's government in Syria.

Blinken underscored the US' commitment to Iraq's security, stability, and sovereignty. "Iraqi Prime Minister Sudani and I met to discuss the latest developments in Syria. I underscored our commitment to Iraq's security, stability, and sovereignty," Blinken stated in a post on X. According to Al Jazeera, Blinken and al-Sudani discussed the need for Syria's transition

from dictatorship to democracy to be inclusive and protective of all minorities. They discussed "the conviction of so many countries in the region and beyond that as Syria transitions from the Assad dictatorship to hopefully a democracy, it does so in a way that, of course, protects all of the minorities in Syria, that produces an inclusive, nonsectarian government", he said. -**ANI**

OPERATIONAL FACILITIES

Japanese envoy to India takes ride in Delhi Metro

NEW DELHI: Ono Keiichi, Ambassador of Japan to India on Friday visited Delhi Metro system and travelled from Central Secretariat to Chawri Bazar. The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation, in a statement said that Keiichi showed great interest on various operational facilities in Delhi Metro and was accompanied by Vikas Kumar, the Managing Director of Delhi Metro Rail Corporation. "Ono Keiichi, Ambassador of Japan to India, today visited the Delhi Metro system and was accompanied by Dr. Vikas Kumar, Managing Director, DMRC during his journey on the Metro from Central Secretariat till Chawri Bazaar," the statement by DMRC said. Earlier on Wednesday, Keiichi attended Rising Rajasthan, Global Investment Summit. -**ANI**

Public Notice: Request for Quote Renovation of Oman Football Association (OFA) Headquarters

December 15, 2024
The Oman Football Association (OFA) invites reputable furniture and fit-out contractors to submit quotations for the renovation of its headquarters. This tender is aimed at upgrading the office spaces and meeting rooms to provide a modern and functional working environment.

SCOPE OF WORK:
The scope of work includes, but is not limited to:
• **Furniture:** Procurement and installation of office desks, chairs, conference tables, and other essential furniture items.
• **Fit outs:** Interior design, partitioning, flooring, ceiling, lighting, and painting work.
• **Electrical and Mechanical Works:** Installation of electrical outlets, lighting fixtures, and other necessary electrical and mechanical installations.

Tender Reference	RFQ 200525
Collection Date	16th December 2024 from 8 am to 3 pm
From	Oman Football Association Seeb Sports Stadium, Al Hail South Sultanate of Oman
Tender period	2 Weeks
Last Submission Date	30th December 2024 at 3:00 P.M. Local Time. Late submissions will not be considered.
Fee	200 OMR

The Oman Football Association reserves the right to accept or reject any quote and to annul the procurement process at any time without incurring any liability.

For any inquiries regarding this RFQ or to request additional information, interested parties may contact us at finance@ofa.om

سلطنة عُمان
وزارة النقل والاتصالات وتقنية المعلومات
Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology

**إعلان مناقصة
Tender Notice**

The Internal Tenders Committee at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology invites for the Following Tenders:

TENDER NUMBER	TENDER NAME	DATE OF PUBLISHING	LAST DATE TO PURCHASE TENDER DOCUMENT	SUBMISSION DATE	COMPANIES WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THIS TENDER	DOCUMENT PRICE
MTCT/ 279/2024 (RECALL)	CONSULTANCY SERVICES SUPERVISION OF REPAIRING CRACKS AT SEA WATER RETURN CANAL AT SOHAR PORT	12-12-2024	19-12-2024	12-01-2025	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF TENDER BOARD (EXCELLENT, FIRST CLASS)	(25/-) TWENTY- FIVE OMANI RIALS FOR (LOCAL, REGIONAL) COMPANIES (10/-) TEN OMANI RIAL FOR SME NON-REFUNDABLE
MTCT/ 286/2024	CONSULTANCY SERVICES FOR SUPERVISION OF CONSTRUCTION OF IMPROVEMENT OF ROAD AT ASH SHUWAYMIYAH ESCARPMEN	12-12-2024	26-12-2024	26-01-2025	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF TENDER BOARD (EXCELLENT, FIRST CLASS)	(57/-) FIFTY-SEVEN OMANI RIALS FOR (LOCAL, REGIONAL) COMPANIES (10/-) TEN OMANI RIAL FOR SME NON-REFUNDABLE

Interested Companies registered with the Secretariat General of Tender Board may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of documents. Tenders should be submitted online on given website

CORRESPONDANCE:

- Tender Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at e-Tendering System. (<https://e-tendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
- E-Tendering System Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the e-Tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number

Tel: +968 24402200 • E-mail: etenderhd@gstb.gov.om

INTERNAL TENDERS COMMITTEE

@mtcitoman www.mtcit.gov.om

Oman set the tone for Gulf Cup T20 title defence with win over Qatar

Holders all-round performance saw Jatinder Singh-led team to a comfortable 35-run victory in Dubai on Saturday

MUSCAT: Oman's all-round performance marked a strong start to their Gulf Cup T20 title defence, as they comprehensively defeated Qatar by 35 runs in a high-scoring encounter at the ICC Academy ground in Dubai, UAE.

Skipper Jatinder Singh led from the front with a brilliant knock, while veteran spinner Aamir Kaleem's stunning bowling display, taking two wickets off successive balls, provided pivotal moments in the game.

With solid contributions from Wasim Ali and a breezy cameo from Vinayak Shukla, Oman cruised to a



total of 204/5 from their 20 overs
after being put to bat.

Oman's innings got off to a commanding start, with Jatinder anchoring the innings with a composed 69 off 50 balls, including six boundaries and two sixes. However, he was dismissed while trying to accelerate, caught behind by Imal Liyanage off Mohammed

Nadeem, but not before he had set the platform for the middle order.

Aamir Kaleem, despite being run out for 13, had his moments with the ball later on, making a significant impact by picking up three wickets. Karan Sonavale (10), Hammad Mirza (16), and Wasim Ali (34) all contributed to the run chase.



Ali's fiery 34 off 19 balls, which included three boundaries and a six, before departing off the penultimate ball, and Vinayak Shukla's explosive 40 off 18 balls that were studded with seven boundaries and a six helped take Oman to a total of 204/5 as the pair shared a 64-run partnership.

Shukla's ability to clear the

boundary added some much-needed acceleration to the innings, making it difficult for the Qatar bowlers to gain control at the death.

Qatar, in response, faced setbacks after a promising start, which led them to 49 in less than five overs by openers Imal Liyanage (22) and Saqlan Arshad (28). The middle order struggled to

find rhythm, as Aamir Kaleem took three wickets, including two off consecutive deliveries, to leave Qatar reeling at 113/6 by the 14th over.

Wasim Ali (2/23), Shakeel Ahmed (1/34), Jay Odedara (1/28) also made vital contributions with the ball. Qatar's Muhammad Asim provided a glimmer of hope with a blistering 63 off 28 balls, which included six fours and three sixes.

However, the target proved too steep as wickets continued to fall at regular intervals, and Qatar was ultimately restricted to 169/8 in their 20 overs, falling short by 35 runs.

The Man of the Match award went to Oman's skipper Jatinder Singh for his outstanding contribution with the bat.

With this dominant performance, Oman has set the tone for their Gulf Cup T20 title defence, sending a strong message to their rivals.

Duleep Mendis-coached Oman will now meet arch-rivals and hosts, UAE, on Sunday with the match beginning at 9am.

Brief scores: Oman: 204/5 (Jatin-der Singh 69, Wasim Ali 34, Vinayak Shukla 40*) beat **Qatar:** 169/8 (Muhammad Asim 63, Saqlain Arshad 28, Imal Liyanage 22; Aamir Kaleem 3/19).

England's Potts, Atkinson shine against NZ

HAMILTON: England's seamers delivered a resilient performance on the opening day of the third and final Test against New Zealand in Hamilton on Saturday, chipping away at the hosts to leave them teetering at 315-9 by stumps.

Ben Stokes' decision to field first seemed questionable early on, as Tom Latham and Will Young forged a solid 105-run opening partnership.

However, England turned the tide in scorching conditions during the afternoon and evening sessions, applying relentless pressure to cause a New Zealand collapse, with five wickets falling for just 70 runs.

Matthew Potts justified his inclusion over Chris Woakes, claiming 3-75, while Gus Atkinson impressed with 3-55, surpassing 50



wickets in just his 11th Test.

New Zealand's top order faltered after promising starts - Latham scored 63, Kane William-

son added 44, and Young made 42 - but soft dismissals plagued their innings. At 231-7, England appeared poised to bat before the

day's end, only for Mitchell Santner to anchor the tail.

Santner remained unbeaten on 50, reaching his half-century with a six off Potts' final ball of the day. A stunning boundary-line catch by Harry Brook, deftly juggling a hook shot from Matt Henry, was the highlight of England's day.

Retiring veteran Tim South-
ee entertained briefly, smash-
ing three sixes in a brisk 23, but
his departure left last-man Will
O'Rourke to support Santner.

England, already victorious in the series following wins in Christchurch and Wellington, now aim to become only the third visiting side to complete a 3-0 sweep in New Zealand.

Brief scores: New Zealand 315-9 (Latham 63, Santner 50; Atkinson 3-55, Potts 3-75). - **Agencies**

Rain frustrates Australia and India in third Test

BRISBANE: Persistent rain disrupted the first day of the third Test between Australia and India at the Gabba, allowing just 13.2 overs of play on Saturday.

Openers Usman Khawaja and Nathan McSweeney guided Australia to 28 without loss, navigating a cautious start. The sole moment of excitement came when Indian seamer Akash Deep had a strong lbw appeal against McSweeney, but it was turned down.

With the five-match series locked at 1-1 after Australia's commanding 10-wicket victory in Adelaide, both sides made strategic changes. India brought in Akash Deep for Harshit Rana and opted for Ravindra Jadeja over Ravichandran Ashwin, aiming to

strengthen their attack.

The only action of the day was squeezed into two brief morning sessions after India elected to bowl first. However, play was called off just over an hour before the scheduled close due to unrelenting rain.

To make up for lost time, the remaining days of the match will begin earlier at 09:50 local time (23:50 GMT), with 98 overs scheduled per day. Yet, weather forecasts suggest further rain interruptions could be likely.

The stakes remain high for both teams. India needs to win at least two of the final three Tests to secure a spot in the WTC final. Holders Australia will guarantee their place if they win two of the remaining matches. - Agencies



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ECB TRIMS INTEREST RATE

BRUSSELS: The European Central Bank — the central bank for the 20 countries that use the euro — on Thursday lowered its key deposit rate by a quarter point to 3%. The widely expected move was the ECB's third cut in a row — the fourth since June when the Frankfurt-based institution kicked off its current cycle of easing rates. — **DW**

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



INDIA'S FOREX RESERVES

NEW DELHI: India's foreign exchange (forex) reserves declined again after a one-off rise recently. In the week that ended December 6, the foreign exchange kitty declined by \$3.23 billion to \$654.857 billion, data from the Reserve Bank of India showed on Friday. — **ANI**

Oman launches third public bidding round for green hydrogen project

This move underscores Oman's continued efforts to offer investment opportunities in the renewable energy and green hydrogen sectors

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Hydrom, Oman's green hydrogen company, has announced the launch of its third public bidding process for green hydrogen project lands. The bidding round is set to begin in March 2025.

This move underscores Oman's



continued efforts to offer investment opportunities in the renewable energy and green hydrogen sectors, supporting strategic goals and national efforts to sustain jobs and economic opportunities.

Engineer Abdulaziz bin Saeed Al Sheidhani, General Manager of Hydrom, explained that the company aims to allocate at least two new zones in this third bidding round, identified within the designated lands for green hydrogen

projects in the Al Wusta and Dhofar Governorates.

These zones will vary in size to attract new categories of potential investors and enhance participation opportunities in future rounds.

In a statement to the Oman News Agency, Al Sheidhani said that, in addition to previous participants, the company targets new markets and economies such as China, the USA, several Eu-

ropean and Asian countries, and neighbouring investments with an interest in the green hydrogen sector.

Discussing the challenges in the hydrogen sector, Al Sheidhani noted that "challenges always exist in this sector, starting from market and procurement challenges to those related to political changes, as well as technical challenges."

He emphasised that gauging market interest will provide a



clearer view of the opportunities available.

He affirmed that green hydrogen prices mainly depend on production costs, which are gradually im-

proving due to ongoing advancements in technology, financing, and economies of scale, contributing to reduced production costs.

On the other hand, global demand for green hydrogen is increasing, supported by incentives and government policies, as seen in countries like Germany, some EU nations, and East Asian economies like Singapore, South Korea, and Japan.

Al Sheidhani further added that Hydrom continues its efforts to attract more projects to achieve Oman's strategic targets for green hydrogen.

NCSI DATA



Oman's crude oil exports increase in October 2024

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman's oil exports recorded an increase of 0.01% at the end of October 2024 to reach 256,318,800 barrels compared to the corresponding period in 2023 when it was 256,290,600 barrels, according to the data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

According to NCSI statistics, the production of oil in the Sultanate of Oman decreased by 5.1% at the end of October 2024 to reach 303,149,600 barrels compared to 319,297,100 barrels during the corresponding period in 2023.

Crude oil production decreased by 6.6%, while the production of condensates increased by 0.2% at the end of October 2024 compared to the corresponding period in 2023.

Average oil price increased by



2.5% to reach USD 82.6 per barrel at the end of October 2024, compared to USD 80.5 per barrel at the end of October 2023.

Average daily production also decreased by 5.4% at the end of October 2024.

As far as exports are concerned, Oman's oil exports to China recorded an increase by 2.4% to reach 241,087,200 barrels at the end of October 2024.

Oil exports to India dropped by 26.3% and that of South Korea increased by 102.3%. — **ONA**

PROACTIVE APPROACH

Nama Water provides innovative solutions for addressing sewage network blockages

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Nama Water Services is committed to proactively addressing sewerage network blockages within its service areas.

This proactive approach is rooted in the company's dedication to ensuring the sustainability of sewerage services and minimizing environmental impact. Nama Water Services underscores its commitment to public health and environmental preservation by preventing pollution from blockages.

To mitigate the risk of sewage network blockages Eng/ Ahmed alarimi said, the company implements a two-part strategy. The first part involves a proactive approach of regular cleaning to prevent blockages. The second part involves a reactive approach to address blockages after they occur, which are often caused by accumulated waste and materials. Traditionally, manual removal of these blockages presented challenges due to worker safety risks and the time and effort required.

Nama Water Services has successfully resolved these sewage network blockages using cutting-edge equipment and technology. This proactive measure ensures the uninterrupted function of sewage systems and prevents fu-



ture disruptions caused by solid waste buildup.

Eng Hitham Al Jabri said: The company owns two types of equipment: cutting-edge and well-suited to Oman's terrain and sewerage systems. Its fleet of 15 pieces of equipment, ranging in size, can clear all blockages. A standout piece of machinery is a large, specialized unit, one of only three in the Gulf region, exclusively owned by Nama Water Services. This exceptional equipment excels at clearing blockages in deep, long-distance networks and even within wastewater treatment plants.

A team of skilled national experts manages and operates

blockage treatment equipment at Nama Water Services Company. The company is committed to staying updated with the latest technological developments in this field to ensure efficient operations. Furthermore, the company actively engages with regional and global institutions and companies to share knowledge and best practices.

This equipment is utilised to address blockages through two primary methods: cleaning networks and responding to subscriber-reported issues, as well as adhering to an annual cleaning programme. This programme, designed to prevent blockages, is based on factors such as the

area's characteristics, population density, historical blockage data, and network age. By maintaining clean networks, the company effectively eliminates odor issues caused by sewage waste gases.

To eliminate waste-related blockages, a high-pressure water pumping system is utilized. Water is introduced into the network according to specific standards and measurements, forcing waste through ventilation openings. The process begins at the initial point, with waste being collected at the nearest ventilation opening. Additionally, a high-pressure suction system is employed to remove obstructing waste and deposit it into the equipment tank.

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

Omani stock market's performance burdened by pressure on key sectors

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Muscat stock market had a largely quiet year, trading within a very narrow range of just 8 percent, reflecting weak investor appetite and a lack of strong catalysts that could drive momentum to higher levels, according to an industry watcher.

"With the index stabilising at 4,545 points, near the lower end of this range, caution has dominated the market throughout most of the year," said Ahmad Assiri, Research Strategist at Pepperstone.

"While periods of consolidation are not uncommon, the extended duration of this stagnation suggests deeper investment challenges," he further added.

The market's performance was burdened by pressure on key sectors.

The utilities and industrial sectors, typically considered more stable, faced rising operational costs, limiting their upside potential.

Meanwhile, the telecommuni-



cations and banking sectors experienced margin compression in a globally high interest rate environment.

These overarching pressures were exacerbated by the absence of macroeconomic stimuli that could have added vitality to the market.

"Despite this generally lacklustre picture, signs of resilience appeared in certain corners of the market," said Ahmad Assiri.

Some utility companies man-

aged to outperform due to stable profits and favourable regulatory conditions, reflecting their defensive nature during times of uncertainty.

This indicates a shift towards less volatile sectors, a trend consistent with the current cautious mood.

From a technical perspective, the market's failure to surpass the 200-day moving average at 4,705 points serves as a clear indication of weak momentum.

This level has acted as a ceiling for any recovery attempts, while the support level at 4,100 points represents a significant floor.

A break of this level could push the market into a bearish phase, targeting the psychological level of 4,000 points.

"On the other hand, a recovery in momentum, supported by improved market sentiment or greater clarity in the economic outlook, could lead the index to reclaim the 4,700-4,800 point range," said Ahmad Assiri.

As the year draws to a close,

the Omani market finds itself at a crossroads.

The prolonged consolidation period could signal the possibility of a breakout, but this largely depends on an improvement in investor sentiment or the emergence of new catalysts that could restore confidence in the market. The weak activity also reflects a deeper hesitation among participants, perhaps driven by broader concerns about the macroeconomic environment.

For now, it seems the market has tested investors' patience. However, in such periods of low volatility and weak sentiment, opportunities often emerge for those who can anticipate the coming shifts and maintain a longer investment horizon.

"Whether the year ends on a stronger note or sees further decline will depend on the market's ability to overcome the current stagnation and respond to any potential catalysts in the final weeks of the year and into 2025," said Ahmad Assiri.

END OF OCTOBER 2024



Gas production in Oman rises by 4.5%

MUSCAT: Gas production (including imports and local production) in the Sultanate of Oman increased by 4.5% to reach 47,105.5 MNCM at the end of October 2024 compared to 45,093.5 MNCM until the end of October 2023.

Further, natural gas consumption increased by 76.7% in power generation plants, whereas consumption in industrial projects, industrial areas and oil fields decreases by 8.5%, 5.1%, and 12%, respectively, until the end of October 2024. — **ONA**

MARKET

THIRD QUARTER 2024

Non-oil exports, local sales insured by Credit Oman rises by 5%

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Credit Oman continues its dedicated efforts to enhance the presence of Omani exports on both international and regional levels by providing credit insurance services aimed at protecting exporters and mitigating commercial and non-commercial risks.

Sheikh Khalil Ahmed Al Harthy, CEO of Credit Oman, announced that non-oil Omani exports and local sales insured by Credit Oman experienced an overall growth of 5% in the third quarter of the cur-

rent year, reaching a total value of OMR272.8 million, compared to OMR259.1 million during the same period last year.

A significant increase

The data also revealed a significant increase in insured local sales, which rose by 15%, reaching OMR126.9 million, up from OMR110.7 million in Q3 2022. However, non-oil insured exports saw a slight decline of 2%, totaling OMR145.9 million compared to OMR148.4 million in the same period last year.

In terms of export sectors, the

petrochemicals and plastics sector witnessed substantial growth, increasing by 58% from OMR13.9 million to OMR22 million.

Conversely, the mining sector experienced a decline of 42%, dropping from OMR2.9 million to OMR1.7 million. On the local market front, the packaging sector achieved the highest growth rate in insured sales, soaring by 156%, with values rising from OMR155,000 to OMR397,000.

The mining sector also saw a 95% increase, climbing from OMR329,000 to OMR643,000. In contrast, the building materi-

als sector faced a 12% drop, decreasing from OMR16.8 million to OMR14.7 million.

Consumer and food goods sector

The consumer and food goods sector recorded a 13% rise in insured local sales, increasing from OMR72.2 million to OMR81.4 million. This overall growth is attributed to the noticeable improvement in the performance of various industrial sectors, particularly in packaging and petrochemicals, alongside the continuous growth in the consumer and food

goods sector.

Al-Harthy concluded by stating that Credit Oman aims to support Omani companies in exploring new markets and enhancing their competitiveness, contributing to economic growth and achieving sustainable development goals aligned with Oman Vision 2040.

He emphasised that credit insurance services bolster the presence of exports by reducing financial risks, stimulating expansion, and enhancing competitiveness, thereby encouraging companies to target additional markets and increasing their financial stability.



Muzn Islamic Banking introduces its exclusive referral reward campaign

The campaign offers vouchers as a token of appreciation for customers who successfully introduce new clients to Muzn's Shari'a-compliant financial services

MUSCAT: As part of its efforts to enhance its customer reach, NBO Muzn Islamic Banking has introduced a distinctive referral reward campaign lasting until 31st December 2024, encouraging customers to refer friends and family to its Privilege and Priority Banking services.

The campaign offers vouchers as a token of appreciation for customers who successfully introduce new clients to Muzn's Shari'a-compliant financial services.

Financial solutions

Commenting on the initiative, Salima Obaid Al-Marzogi, Assistant General Manager and Chief Islamic Banking Officer at NBO, said: "It gives us a great delight to reward our loyal customers who have referred our Privilege and Priority Banking services to their network of friends and relatives for every new account opened. In addition, we are thrilled to welcome new customers and expand our base by offering Sharia-compliant financial solutions through our Privilege and Priority Banking Services".

Exclusive rewards

Throughout the campaign's period, existing Muzn customers will earn exclusive rewards upon referring individuals who meet specific deposit requirements. Customers who refer a new Pri-

lege Banking customer with a deposit of OMR10,000 or more will receive a voucher worth OMR30. Those who refer a new Priority Banking customer with a deposit of OMR30,000 or more will be rewarded with a voucher worth OMR50.

Customer-focused solutions

This initiative reflects Muzn's commitment to expanding its reach and providing Shari'a-compliant, customer-focused solutions. Muzn's Privilege and Priority Banking services are designed to offer tailored financial solutions, delivering an elevated banking experience to customers seeking a secure and ethical approach to managing their wealth.

Through this referral reward campaign, Muzn aims to strengthen further its community of customers who appreciate the convenience, integrity, and values embedded in Islamic banking.

For more details NBO Muzn Islamic Banking range of Shari'a-compliant banking services, please visit www.muzn.om or contact the Muzn Call Centre at 24770001.



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- Marketing Collaterals
- Brand Strategy Development
- Consistent Brand Messaging

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OOMCO highlights safety excellence during HSEQ Week

MUSCAT: The Oman Oil Marketing Company (OOMCO) commenced its Annual Health, Safety, Environment, and Quality (HSEQ) Week from December 8 to December 12, 2024.

The five-day event highlighted OOMCO's dedication to promoting a culture of health and safety by involving employees, stakeholders, and the wider community through significant initiatives, awareness workshops, and strategic partnerships.

The week began with a distinguished kick-off ceremony, presided over by Brigadier General Engineer Ali bin Saif Al Maqbali, Chief of the Civil Defense and Ambulance Authority (CDAA), and included the HSEQ Contractor Forum, attended by notable stakeholders, such as representatives from the Ministry of Labor, Oman Energy Association (Opal), and Civil Defence.

This event facilitated the sharing of ideas, showcased best practices, and encouraged collaboration in health and safety management.

During HSEQ Week, OOMCO's leadership team will visit important partners to align health and safety objectives, collect vital feedback, and enhance partnerships.

OOMCO employees participated in an array of activities designed to enhance awareness and encourage healthy habits.

These included a Daily Safety Quiz, blood donation drives,



medical checkups, and awareness sessions on critical topics such as breast cancer, and diabetes prevention.

One of the standout initiatives was the session titled "No to Amputation for Diabetic Foot Patients," which addressed the importance of early intervention and preventive care for diabetic patients.

Reinforcing its commitment to the community, OOMCO collaborated with leading organizations such as the Blood Bank, Oman International Hospital, and the Cancer Association to extend the impact of its health and safety efforts beyond the workplace. These partnerships exemplify OOMCO's dedication to promoting well-being across all sectors of society.

In reference to the importance of HSEQ Week, Tarik Mohammed Al Junaidi, CEO of OOMCO, remarked: "Our Annual Health and Safety Week exemplifies our unwavering dedication to safeguarding the health and welfare of

our employees, partners, and the community." We strive to exemplify health and safety as essential elements of our operations through such programs, while cultivating a culture that emphasizes the well-being of all those we serve.

OOMCO's Annual HSEQ Week underscores the company's leadership in health and safety, demonstrating its comprehensive commitment to workplace and community welfare. These initiatives correspond with OOMCO's overarching objective to establish new standards in operational excellence and community involvement.

Oman Oil Marketing Company, a pioneer in fuel marketing, has been at the forefront of industry innovation for over two decades. Its modern service stations, strategic partnerships, and high-quality petroleum products cater to the evolving needs of customers across Oman, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and United Republic of Tanzania.



Austria’s Pusterhofer takes Oman Golf Trophy honours

The event served as a showcase for Oman’s world-class golf courses while fostering networking opportunities that could strengthen economic ties and facilitate new partnerships

MUSCAT: Austrian golfer Otmar Pusterhofer emerged as the champion of the Oman Golf Trophy, securing a six-point victory after an intense final day at Al Mouj Golf in Muscat on Thursday.

The second-round leader displayed remarkable consistency to claim the title, holding off a spirited challenge from Japan’s Atsushi Kiba, who had to settle for second place despite a stellar performance on the final day. Kiba, the first-round winner, showcased his exceptional skills throughout the tournament but could not overcome Pusterhofer’s steady dominance.

Fellow Japanese golfer Shingo Kato completed the podium with a strong third-place finish, narrowly edging out Austrians Gerald Monsberger and Michael Winner, who finished fourth and fifth, respectively.



Ozaki triumphs in the ladies’ division

In the ladies’ division, Japan’s Hiroko Ozaki delivered a commanding performance to secure her victory, finishing with a four-point lead over Germany’s Gabriela Porstner Banea, who took second place. Porstner Banea also earned accolades on the final day, winning the Nearest to the Pin Challenge on hole 5.

Japan’s Kazue Miyamoto com-

pleted the ladies’ division podium in third place with 83 points.

Other notable winners of the Nearest to the Pin Challenge included Germany’s Jonas Lange on hole 11 and Italy’s Silvia Valli on hole 13, highlighting the competitive spirit across the field.

The tournament’s conclusion was marked by a grand prize-giving ceremony, held under the patronage of Basil bin Ahmed Al



The Oman Golf Trophy is more than just a sporting event; it is a bold initiative led by the Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, and the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, in collaboration with the Oman Golf Association.

Designed to leverage golf as a unifying platform, the tournament brought together over 80 players, including winners from seven qualification rounds held in Italy, Austria, Germany, India, South Africa, Japan, and France, as well as international business leaders, diplomats, and invited guests.

The event served as a showcase for Oman’s world-class golf courses while fostering networking opportunities that could strengthen economic ties and facilitate new partnerships.

Guests were treated to a comprehensive experience, including tours of Muscat, Wadi Shab, Nizwa, Nakhal, and the Daymaniyat Islands, alongside gala dinners and business networking events at the Kempinski Hotel Muscat.

As a cornerstone of Oman’s efforts to position itself as a global hub for tourism, trade, and sports, the Oman Golf Trophy aligns with the Sultanate’s Vision 2040. With its central location, visa-free access for citizens of over 100 countries, and state-of-the-art venues, Oman is well-placed to host major international events.

The success of the Oman Golf Trophy has laid the groundwork for future sporting events and partnerships, reinforcing Oman’s reputation as a premier global destination for business, leisure, and sport.

CRICKET VETERANS



Amir, Imad retire from Pakistan duty again

LAHORE: Pakistan cricket veterans Mohammad Amir and Imad Wasim have retired from international cricket for the second time, following Pakistan’s disappointing group-stage exit at the 2024 ICC T20 World Cup.

Amir, 32, a left-arm fast bowler, had initially retired from Tests in 2019 and later from all formats in 2020, citing “mental torture” and poor treatment by team management.

Known for his prodigious swing bowling, Amir’s career highlights include 119 wickets in 36 Tests, 81 in 61 ODIs, and 71 in 62 T20Is. However, his journey

was also clouded by a five-year ban for spot-fixing during a 2010 England Test, leading to jail time in the UK. Announcing his decision on X, Amir said, “These decisions are never easy but are inevitable. It’s time for the next generation to elevate Pakistan cricket.”

Imad, 35, who excelled in white-ball cricket as an all-rounder, scored 986 ODI runs at an average of 42.86 and 554 T20I runs, alongside 44 and 73 wickets in the respective formats. He was a reliable middle-order batter and a clever spinner during his career.

SOUTH AFRICA VS PAKISTAN

Hendricks’ maiden ton powers SA to first T20I series win since 2022

CENTURION: Reeza Hendricks’ first T20I century led South Africa to a thrilling five-wicket win over Pakistan on Friday, securing their first bilateral T20I series victory since August 2022.

This victory ended a drought of eight series without a win, stretching back to their triumph over Ireland more than two years ago. The win also marked Rob Walter’s first T20I series victory since taking over as the head coach of South Africa’s white-ball team in March 2023.

Chasing a daunting 207, South Africa achieved the third-highest successful chase at SuperSport Park, reaching their target with three balls to spare.

Hendricks (117 off 63 balls) and Rassie van der Dussen (66* off 43 balls) were the architects of the chase, forming a dominant third-wicket partnership worth 157 runs off just 83 balls. Van der Dussen, who played a crucial supporting role, struck the winning runs with stand-in captain Heinrich Klaasen at the other end.

Pakistan, after being asked to bat, posted a strong total of 206/5. Saim Ayub led the charge with an impressive 98*, falling just two runs short of a maiden T20I century.

His innings, including three sixes in the final over of the innings, was a highlight. Ayub’s partner-



ship with Babar Azam (31) and another with Irfan Khan (30) helped Pakistan build a solid total.

However, the South African bowlers, led by debutant Dayyaan Galiem (2/21), took key wickets in the middle overs to limit Pakistan’s scoring.

Despite crossing 200, Pakistan’s late collapse – losing 3 wickets for 33 runs in five overs – ensured

South Africa’s chase was within reach. Hendricks, who had been dropped from South Africa’s ODI squad a day earlier, responded to the criticism with an explosive knock.

After a quiet start, Hendricks exploded with sixes off Haris Rauf and others, reaching his half-century off 29 balls. He continued his onslaught with three more sixes,

bringing up his century off 54 balls. His performance guided South Africa within striking distance of victory, and although he fell with 21 runs still required, van der Dussen finished the job.

Brief scores: South Africa 210/3 (Hendricks 117, van der Dussen 66*) beat Pakistan 206/5 (Ayub 98*, Azam 31, Irfan 30, Galiem 2-21) by five wickets. - Agencies

2026 FIFA WORLD CUP

World Cup qualifiers: European nations learn their fate

ZURICH: The journey to the 2026 World Cup has begun as England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland discovered their qualifying opponents during Friday’s draw in Zurich. The qualifying campaign will unfold across five international breaks between March and November 2025, with European teams battling for a spot in the tournament co-hosted by the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

England, now guided by new head coach Thomas Tuchel, will face Serbia, Albania, Latvia, and Andorra in Group K. Wales find themselves in Group J alongside familiar foes Belgium, as well as North Macedonia, Kazakhstan,

and Liechtenstein. Scotland, drawn into Group C, will compete against Greece, Belarus, and the loser of the Nations League quarter-final between Portugal and Denmark. Meanwhile, Northern Ireland will take on Slovakia, Luxembourg, and the winner of the Germany v Italy Nations League clash in Group A.

The stakes are clear: the top team from each of the 12 groups will qualify directly for the World Cup, while the second-placed teams will enter the play-offs. In total, 16 European nations will secure a place at the 2026 tournament, marking a historic expansion of the competition.

For Scotland and Northern Ireland, the journey will start slightly later. Both teams, drawn into four-team groups, will not begin their campaigns until September 2025. Scotland, however, face an additional challenge in March when they meet Greece in a two-legged Nations League promotion-relegation play-off – a match that adds an extra layer of intrigue given the two nations are also set to meet in Group C.

The full group draw remains incomplete, with several Nations League quarter-finals set to determine final placements. Among the other notable pairings, Group D pits France or Croatia against

Ukraine, Iceland, and Azerbaijan, while Group E sees Spain or the Netherlands take on Turkey, Georgia, and Bulgaria.

Some of the groups will not be finalised until after the Nations League quarter-finals in March.

Draw: **Group A:** Germany/Italy (winner), Slovakia, Northern Ireland, Luxembourg. **Group B:** Switzerland, Sweden, Slovenia, Kosovo. **Group C:** Portugal/Denmark (loser), Greece, Scotland, Belarus. **Group D:** France/Croatia (winner), Ukraine, Iceland, Azerbaijan. **Group E:** Spain/Netherlands (winner), Turkey, Georgia, Bul-

Group F: Portugal/Denmark (winner), Hungary, Republic of Ireland, Armenia. **Group G:** Spain/Netherlands (loser), Poland, Finland, Lithuania, Malta. **Group H:** Austria, Romania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cyprus, San Marino. **Group I:** Germany/Italy (loser), Norway, Israel, Estonia, Moldova. **Group J:** Belgium, Wales, North Macedonia, Kazakhstan, Liechtenstein. **Group K:** England, Serbia, Albania, Latvia, Andorra. **Group L:** France/Croatia (loser), Czech Republic, Montenegro, Faroe Islands, Gibraltar. - Agencies



ROUND-UP

Sohar International wins award for ‘Best Government Banking in Oman 2024’

As a key enabler of national mega projects, Sohar International has positioned itself as a catalyst for propelling the Sultanate's economic growth

MUSCAT: Sohar International, Oman's best bank, has been honored with the title of 'Best Government Banking in Oman 2024' by International Business Magazine. This prestigious accolade underscores the bank's pivotal role in the government banking sector, showcasing its comprehensive suite of tailored financial products



and services designed to meet the unique needs of government entities. As a key enabler of national mega projects, Sohar International has positioned itself as a catalyst for propelling the Sultanate's economic growth. The award was presented at a grand ceremony held at Atlantis, The Palm in Dubai which was attended by Mr. Khalil Salim Al Hedaifi, Chief Government and Private Banking Officer, and Mr. Mazin Mahmood Al Raisi, Chief

Marketing Officer, along with representatives from prominent regional and international financial institutions. Commenting on the award, Mr. Khalil Salim Al Hedaifi, Chief Government and Private Banking Officer at Sohar International, stated, "Being awarded such a coveted title is not just a reflection of our leadership in the sector, but a direct endorsement of the trust and confidence placed in us by the institutions that drive national pro-

gress. At Sohar International, we go beyond being a traditional service provider—we are a strategic partner to the government, helping navigate the complexities of public sector financing. Our approach is anchored in delivering bespoke, forward-thinking solutions that align with Oman's Vision 2040, supporting the country's efforts to diversify and grow its economy. On the other hand, our dedication to innovation and the seamless integration of modern financial

technologies has enabled us to enhance the efficiency of government operations, streamline financing for critical projects, and facilitate large-scale investments. The continued confidence from government entities reflects the stability, credibility, and depth of expertise that Sohar International has cultivated over the years. This recognition further underscores our unwavering commitment to Oman's economic agenda." Sohar International's Government Banking unit offers a comprehensive suite of services, including remittances, trade finance, corporate credit cards, and other advanced digital banking solutions. In addition, the bank delivers customized financial solutions tailored to meet the unique needs of government institutions and their employees. Moreover, Sohar International partners with local financial entities on syndications to support large-scale national projects in sectors such as shipping, hospitality, and oil and gas. This collaborative and integrated approach enables the bank to play a pivotal role in driving Oman's economic growth.

Sohar International's achievements in 2024 reflect its commitment to excellence, innovation, and leadership. The bank was honored with the prestigious title of 'Bank of the Year 2024 – Oman' by The Banker magazine, a renowned UK-based publication by the Financial Times. Other accolades include the 'Best Corporate Banking – Oman' award by the Global Business Review Magazine Awards 2024, the 'Best Performing Company' in the Large Cap category at the Alam Al-Iktisaad Awards 2024, and the prestigious 'Oman's Best Bank' title by the Middle East Euromoney Awards for Excellence. Recognized for its digital innovation, Sohar International received the 'Digital Leadership in Banking' award at DX Oman 2024 and the 'Best Mobile App Oman 2024'. Additional honors include multiple awards at the Oman Banking & Finance Awards and the 'Most Innovative Digital Bank for Ecosystem Services – Oman 2023' by The Global Economics, UK. These achievements reaffirm Sohar International's position as a leader in advancing the financial sector in Oman and beyond.

INNOVATIVE INITIATIVE



Sohar Port and Freezone implements new port management programme

MUSCAT: SOHAR Port and Freezone is proud to announce the launch of a first of its kind Port Management Programme, an innovative initiative designed to deepen engagement with key government stakeholders. This comprehensive, four-day programme aims to provide 30 participants with critical insights into SOHAR's strategic business model, regulatory framework, and its significant contributions to Oman's economy and global trade networks. By providing an in-depth overview of its infrastructure, operations, and value propositions, the programme aims to foster stronger collaborations and align efforts for sustainable growth. Participants will gain foundational knowledge of the port and freezone sectors, appreciating its economic significance to Oman and exposure to international best practices in port management. The programme will also focus on regulatory familiarity, ensuring participants are well-informed about the laws and regulations governing port and freezone operations. This knowledge is crucial for maintaining compliance and promoting efficient operational standards. Additionally, attendees will delve into SOHAR's collaborative business model, highlighting strategies that drive sustainable growth and development. A significant feature of the program is the opportunity for participants to engage in site visits to major tenants such as OQ, Hutchison Ports Sohar, Vale Oman, and National University Science and Technology (IMCO). These tenants are instrumental in facilitating the trade of Oman's top imports including mineral fuels, vehicles, machinery, and equipment as well as top exports, such as mineral fuels, plastics, iron and steel, mineral ores, and fertilizers, with key international partners like the UAE, KSA, India, China, Qatar, and South Korea. These visits provide direct insights into the operations of SOHAR's key partners, fostering stronger relationships and promoting a collaborative environment among stakeholders. "We are delighted to launch the Port Management Programme which will forge new bonds and

deepen understanding among our key collaborators," said Mohammed Al Ismaili, People Manager at SOHAR Port and Freezone. "By sharing strategic insights, we empower our tenants to thrive in their operations while enhancing our collective capacity to uphold best practices. This initiative not only strengthens our relationships with key stakeholders but also supports the overall growth and success of our tenants, fostering an environment of collaboration and shared value." SOHAR Port and Freezone plays a crucial role in Oman's economy, contributing significantly to the country's trade exchange. As of recent reports, the port handles approximately 80% of Oman's import and export activities. Its total trade value is estimated to account for \$43.6 billion, which represents around 38% of Oman's overall trade exchange. Through the Port Management Programme, SOHAR highlights its role as an international knowledge-sharing hub, positioned to accelerate port management strategy as Oman expands its logistic capabilities. Further, the initiative aligns with SOHAR Port and Freezone's active participation in global maritime networks, reflecting its dedication to transforming the industry with knowledge-based leadership and attention to sustainable development. As one of the world's most rapidly growing integrated industrial and logistics projects, SOHAR Port and Freezone capitalises on its strategic location to cement its status as a crucial logistics hub in the region and globally. A unique collaboration between the Port of Rotterdam and ASYAD Group marks it as a key mega-project in Oman, offering a range of services including logistics, petrochemicals, metals, and the region's first dedicated agro terminal. With over 20 years of operation, SOHAR is the main gateway for Oman's import and export, contributing 2.1% to the nation's GDP and creating almost 36,000 jobs. Committed to sustainable development and advanced technology, SOHAR is modernising logistics infrastructure in line with the economic diversification goals of Oman's 2040 Vision.

DINING EXPERIENCES

Grand Millennium Muscat announces launch of new festive season offerings

MUSCAT: Grand Millennium Muscat is embracing the magic of the festive season with an array of special offerings designed to create unforgettable holiday memories. From gourmet takeaways to festive dining experiences, the hotel invites guests to indulge in the finest seasonal flavors, entertainment, and family-friendly activities. A 25% early bird discount is available for all festive promotions, including takeaways, Christmas Eve Dinner, Christmas Brunch, and New Year's Eve celebrations, for bookings made before December 20th, 2024.

Festive takeaways For those who wish to celebrate in the comfort of their homes, the hotel offers two exquisite takeaway options: **Grand turkey takeaway:** Traditional roast turkey served with honey-glazed carrots, baby potatoes with rosemary, country-style stuffing, turkey gravy, cranberry sauce, and roasted root vegetables. Price: OMR60 net (serves 6-8 people). **Beef Wellington** Takeaway: Perfectly cooked beef Wellington



featuring tender fillet coated with mushroom duxelles, seasonal vegetables, and baby potatoes. Price: OMR58 net (serves 6-8 people). Takeaways must be ordered 24 hours in advance, with pick-up available from Taybat Restaurant until January 2, 2025. **Christmas eve dinner & Christmas brunch** Taybat Restaurant offers a Family Christmas Eve Dinner and Christmas Brunch featuring a kids' buffet, a play area, and a visit from Santa Claus.

Dinner (December 24th, 7 PM–11 PM) and Brunch (December 25th) are priced at OMR25 net per adult, OMR11.5 per child (6–12 years), and complimentary for children under 6. **Bahriyat Restaurant Festive Set Menu** For those seeking a more exquisite experience, Bahriyat Restaurant offers a festive set menu priced at just OMR26 net, featuring fresh seafood, premium meats, and seasonal flavours for a truly delightful Christmas feast.

New Year's Eve Celebrations Bahriyat Restaurant Dinner: For an intimate and sophisticated evening, Bahriyat Restaurant offers a starlit dinner featuring a curated menu of gourmet delights such as Scallop and Mango Tartar, Seared Sea Bass, and the decadent Hazelnut and Brown Butter Tart. Priced at OMR30 net per person, this luxurious dining experience sets the perfect tone for a memorable start to the New Year. **Taybat Restaurant Grand Dinner:** For a more vibrant celebration, Taybat Restaurant invites you to its Grand Dinner on the spacious outdoor terrace. Enjoy a festive buffet, live DJ, entertainment, and engaging activities for children. Priced at OMR35 per adult and OMR15 per child (6–12 years), this vibrant outdoor event offers the perfect family-friendly atmosphere to welcome 2025. Join Grand Millennium Muscat for delicious food, family fun, and unforgettable moments this festive season. For inquiries and bookings: Email: restaurants.gmm@millenniumhotels.com Phone: +968 9743 3203

SPECIALISED CARE

Aster Royal Al Raffah Hospital unveils pioneering diabetes care solutions

MUSCAT: Aster Royal Al Raffah Hospital, Muscat, Oman, part of GCC's leading integrated healthcare provider Aster DM Healthcare, has announced the launch of its new Endocrinology & Vascular Centre of Excellence (COE) in Muscat, Oman. This state-of-the-art facility is set to redefine the landscape of diabetes care and endocrinology treatment in Oman, offering a comprehensive range of services designed to address the multifaceted challenges of diabetes and its associated complications. The launch event was graced by Dr. Muhanna Nasser Al Maslahi, Director General of the Directorate General of Private Health Institutions at the Ministry of Health (MOH). Prominent medical professionals present included Dr. Khalifa Nasser, Senior Consultant – Vascular Surgery; Dr. Wasim Sheikh, Specialist Endocrinology; Dr. Sebasis Besoi, Specialist General Surgery; Dr. Saida Yasmeen, Specialist Ophthalmologist; and Mr. Shailesh Guntu, Chief Executive Officer of Aster Hospitals and Clinics, Oman. Speaking at the event, Dr. Muhanna Nasser Al Maslahi, Director General of the Directorate General of Private Health Institutions at the Ministry of Health (MOH) said, "The establishment of the Endocrinology & Vascular Centre of Excellence at Aster Royal Al Raffah Hospital is a com-



mendable step forward in Oman's healthcare landscape. As diabetes continues to be a pressing concern in the region, initiatives like this, which combine advanced technology with specialised care, are vital to improving patient outcomes and reducing the burden of chronic diseases. We are proud to witness the private healthcare sector's commitment to enhancing medical services for the benefit of our community." The official launch event marked a significant milestone in Aster's ongoing commitment to advancing healthcare in Oman. Among the highlights of the launch were the introduction of two specialized clinics – the Vascular & Diabetic Foot Clinic and the Diabetic Retinopathy Clinic, making Aster Royal Al Raffah the first private hospital chain in Oman to offer such specialized care, alongside the first-ever AI-

powered diabetes screening tool available in Oman. Detecting diabetes at an early stage is crucial in preventing complications such as neuropathy, vision loss, and vascular diseases, which can lead to complex and life-altering health issues. The Vascular & Diabetic Foot Clinic, the first of its kind in a private hospital in Oman, is designed to provide expert care for the often-overlooked complications of diabetes, particularly diabetic neuropathy, foot ulcers, and infections. These issues, if left untreated, can lead to severe outcomes such as gangrene and, in the worst cases, amputation. With early intervention and specialised care, Aster's Vascular & Diabetic Foot Clinic aims to prevent such outcomes, improving patients' quality of life and reducing the burden of diabetic complications. In addition, the Diabetic Retin-

opathy Clinic will offer comprehensive services for one of the most common complications of diabetes, which can lead to vision loss if not detected and treated early. The clinic will provide specialized screening, including dilated funduscopy and Optical Coherence Tomography (OCT), as well as treatment options ranging from laser therapy to eye injections for more advanced stages of the disease. This clinic highlights Aster's commitment to preserving patients' vision and improving their overall health outcomes. A particularly innovative offering at Aster Royal Al Raffah is the AI Diabetes Screening Tool, "Aster Al Raffah AI Sugar Buddy," a first-of-its-kind service in Oman. This tool, available through WhatsApp at +968 9139 1235, allows patients to assess their risk for prediabetes from the comfort of their own homes. By leveraging artificial intelligence, the tool provides an easy and convenient way for individuals to screen for potential diabetes risks, facilitating early detection and timely intervention. AI is not only transforming diabetes care but also reshaping the broader healthcare sector by improving the accuracy of diagnostics, optimizing treatment plans, and enhancing patient monitoring. This initiative aims to make diabetes care more accessible and efficient, empowering individuals to take control of their health.

Al Hashar Automotive celebrates launch of Nissan and Infiniti in Oman with grand opening of facility



MUSCAT: Al Hashar Automotive proudly unveiled its new Nissan and INFINITI facility located in Al Azaiba on Al Maaridh Street, marking a significant milestone for Al Hashar Group and the official launch of the Nissan and INFINITI brands in Oman. The grand opening was held under the esteemed patronage of His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham Al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports, and Youth, who inaugurated the showroom in a distinguished ceremony attended by dignitaries, senior government officials and senior executives from Nissan Middle East and INFINITI Middle East.

The celebration showcased Al Hashar Automotive's commitment to elevating customer experiences in Oman while introducing the globally renowned Nissan and INFINITI brands to the Sultanate. The evening commenced with a spectacular 3D mapping show projected onto the showroom facade, culminating in a dazzling display of lights highlighting the Nissan and INFINITI spaces. The ribbon-cutting ceremony officially opened the doors to the state-of-the-art facility, fol-

lowed by an exclusive tour of the showroom. Spanning 1,700 square meters, the Nissan showroom redefines customer engagement through modern craftsmanship and meticulous attention to detail. Guests are greeted by a dramatic brand feature vehicle upon entry, which sets the tone for a unique Nissan environment. The showroom features an expansive display space, including a dedicated elevated platform for NISMO, creating an impressive visual impact. At the heart of the showroom lies a central customer lounge. This relaxing space is complemented by a coffee bar, enhancing the overall visitor experience. Adding to the showroom's appeal is a dedicated area for merchandising and accessories, where customers can personalize their vehicles with the latest Nissan accessories and

to transforming the automotive landscape in the Sultanate by providing exceptional care to both our loyal and new customers. Our state-of-the-art facility stands as a testament to our dedication to delivering premium experiences, and we eagerly anticipate the opening of more facilities across Oman in the near future, bringing these world-class services even closer to our valued customers."

The introduction of Nissan and INFINITI brands back into Oman's automotive landscape represents a transformative moment for the sector. These iconic brands bring with them a legacy of innovation, reliability, and premium quality that resonates with both global and local customers. With a focus on offering vehicles that cater to diverse customer needs, from cutting-edge performance models to versatile family-friendly options, Nissan and INFINITI are set to redefine driving experiences in Oman. Moreover, Al Hashar Automotive's strategic partnership with Nissan and INFINITI underscores its commitment to delivering value and enhancing the automotive sector in the Sultanate.



lowed by an exclusive tour of the showroom. Sheikh Al-Muhammad Al Hashar, Chairman of Al Hashar Group, commented on this momentous occasion, highlighting the significance of launching the Nissan and INFINITI brands alongside the new facility in Al Hashar Automotive's journey, saying, "We are deeply honored by the presence of His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham Al Said, esteemed dignitaries, senior government officials, and our valued partners from Nissan and INFINITI at this landmark event. This milestone marks an exciting new chapter for Al Hashar Automotive as the official distributor for Nissan and INFINITI in Oman."

"This launch underscores our unwavering commitment

Spanning 1,700 square meters, the Nissan showroom redefines customer engagement through modern craftsmanship and meticulous attention to detail. Guests are greeted by a dramatic brand feature vehicle upon entry, which sets the tone for a unique Nissan environment. The showroom features an expansive display space, including a dedicated elevated platform for NISMO, creating an impressive visual impact. At the heart of the showroom lies a central customer lounge. This relaxing space is complemented by a coffee bar, enhancing the overall visitor experience. Adding to the showroom's appeal is a dedicated area for merchandising and accessories, where customers can personalize their vehicles with the latest Nissan accessories and

browse branded items. The vehicle delivery experience is equally memorable, with three open and visible delivery spaces strategically designed for unveiling new vehicles to their owners. Adjacent to the Nissan showroom, the INFINITI facility exudes sophistication and embodies the brand's DNA. The showroom, complete with luxury Valet service for INFINITI customers, showcases a harmonious blend of innovation and luxury. The design emphasizes openness and hospitality, creating an environment that seamlessly integrates with the outdoors. Its expansive horizontal roofline and the large clear "Window to INFINITI" evoke a sense of elegance and modernity, providing an uninterrupted view to the Gallery



vehicles while creating seamless boundaries between the inside of the building with the outside. The open floor plan, enhanced by indirect lighting, provides a calming atmosphere. The dedicated delivery space ensures that every vehicle handover is a memorable moment for customers.

Thierry Sabbagh, Divisional

Vice President, President Middle East, KSA & CIS - Nissan, INFINITI, commented on this milestone. "The inauguration of this state-of-the-art facility for Nissan and INFINITI marks a pivotal milestone in the company's journey in Oman, underscoring our unwavering commitment to this dynamic market. Our partnership with Al

Hashar Automotive, founded on shared values of excellence and innovation, ensures that customers will enjoy unparalleled service and access to diverse model line-ups, including the all-new Nissan Patrol and the all-new INFINITI QX80. This launch is a testament to our dedication to delivering outstanding ownership experiences and deepening our connection with the people of Oman."

The launch of the Nissan and INFINITI brands and their respective showrooms by Al Hashar Automotive sets a new benchmark for automotive retail in Oman, combining innovation, design, and customer-first principles. Both showrooms are now open to the public, welcoming visitors to explore and experience the best of Nissan and INFINITI.

ROUND-UP

Bank Muscat holds seminar in Nizwa to promote digital banking awareness

The session showcased the bank's extensive range of banking products and services available through its internet and mobile platforms



MUSCAT: Continuing its series of educational seminars aimed at familiarizing customers across the Sultanate of Oman with its cutting-edge electronic platforms, Bank Muscat, the Sultanate's leading financial services provider, recently hosted a seminar in Nizwa, Al Dhakhliyah Governorate. The session showcased the

Bank's extensive range of banking products and services available through its internet and mobile platforms. It was delivered by technical expert and entrepreneur Salim bin Mohammed Al Badi, and attracted significant customer participation. Bank Muscat's is committed to

organise such events within its efforts in the field of building a robust digital infrastructure that meets evolving local, regional, and global standards. By fostering direct communication with customers across Oman, the Bank aims to stay aligned with their needs and expectations, strengthening

relationships and empowering users to make the most of the Bank's digital services. Taya Eid Bait Sabeea, Deputy General Manager, Interior Regions at Bank Muscat, emphasized the Bank's dedication to leveraging technology for improved customer experiences. He said: "Keeping

pace with technological advancements is crucial to delivering efficient and responsive banking solutions. The quality of services provided by Bank Muscat through the Internet and Mobile Banking during the past period has enhanced in order align with the customers' requirements. We deeply appreciate our customers' trust in Bank Muscat's products and services." During these seminars, attendees explored a variety of mobile and online banking services, including instant local and international money transfers, subscription to public offerings, charitable donations, bill payments, investments, account opening for children, card applications, and other essential banking functions that allow customers to conveniently complete without visiting a branch. For SMEs and business owners, the seminars demonstrated how they can manage their company accounts and cards, conduct payroll transactions, view loan repayment details, make local and international transfers, request VAT

statements, order checkbooks, pay bills and suppliers, handle taxes, and open fixed deposit accounts. To further strengthen its digital services, Bank Muscat has launched several new payment options for users of smart devices. These additions enhance the digital payment landscape, providing customers with convenient and secure alternatives to carrying physical cards while shopping. The Bank's payment solutions also cover point-of-sale transactions, online payments, and the acceptance of various debit, credit and prepaid cards, both locally and internationally. Additionally, the Bank offers instant payment settlements, round-the-clock support services and help desk to ensure a seamless customer experience. The Nizwa seminar builds on the success of similar events held in Al Buraimi, North Al Batinah, and South Al Batinah governorates. The Bank remains committed to reaching more customers across Oman, solidifying its position as a pioneer in digital banking.

LEADING WATER BRAND IN OMAN



Oman Oasis marks 30 years of excellence with new bottle design and continued innovation

MUSCAT: Oman Oasis, the leading water brand in Oman and a key player in the FMCG sector of Zubair Corporation, recently celebrated its 30th anniversary, marking three decades of delivering pure, refreshing hydration to Oman and beyond. The celebration highlighted the company's rich legacy of quality, innovation, and sustainability, while also unveiling a newly designed bottle to commemorate this milestone. Founded in 1994, Oman Oasis has grown into a household name, trusted by consumers across the Sultanate. The company has continuously expanded its portfolio with innovative products such as Sifr - Sodium-Free Drinking Water and Mai Alkaline Water, all while maintaining its commitment to the highest standards of water purity and sustainability. Over the years, Oman Oasis has not only shaped the water industry in the region but has also remained at the forefront of innovation and customer satisfaction. As part of the 30th-anniversary celebrations, Oman Oasis launched a new bottle design that reflects the company's journey and future vision. The design blends iconic Omani landmarks with modern elements, symbolizing Oman Oasis' deep connection to the Sultanate and its forward-thinking approach. The new look embodies the trust that customers have placed in the brand for three decades, with carefully selected colors and fonts that align with the company's commitment to innovation, quality, and sustainability. "We are incredibly proud to celebrate 30 years of success, growth,

and commitment to providing the finest hydration to our customers," said Moosa Al Hasni, Chief Operating Officer of Oman Oasis. "The launch of our new bottle design symbolizes our ongoing pursuit of excellence, and it is a testament to our dedication to quality and innovation. This milestone represents the collective effort of our dedicated team, loyal customers, and partners. We look forward to continuing our journey of excellence for many more years to come." The anniversary event showcased Oman Oasis' remarkable journey, its significant milestones, and the advanced production processes and state-of-the-art facilities that have set it apart as a leader in the industry. Guests had the opportunity to witness firsthand how Oman Oasis continues to deliver high-quality drinking water through cutting-edge technology, making it the first choice for consumers in Oman. The celebration also recognized key partners, stakeholders, and employees who have contributed to the company's success over the years. Oman Oasis expressed its heartfelt gratitude to its valued customers and partners for their unwavering support throughout its 30-year journey. With the new bottle design, Oman Oasis is not only commemorating its past achievements but also paving the way for future innovations. The company aims to strengthen its position in the market by introducing more products and services that meet modern consumer demands, all while maintaining the highest standards of quality and service.

INNOVATIVE SHOWROOM CONCEPT

BYD opens its third automotive showroom at Mall of Oman

MUSCAT: Accelerating a new chapter in Oman's automotive landscape, World Auto Business has brought BYD's electric mobility experiences closer to automotive enthusiasts with the inauguration of BYD's third showroom at the Mall of Oman. This is Oman's first automotive showroom within the premises of a shopping mall. This innovative showroom concept offers visitors a unique opportunity to explore BYD's high-tech electric and hybrid vehicles. It invites customers to embark on electrifying journeys with vehicles that seamlessly blend technology, performance and sustainability. The inauguration was graced by Mr. A D Huang, General Manager of BYD Middle East and Africa Auto Sales Division, Mr. Husam Al Mandhari, Director, Mall Management, Mall of Oman, Mr. Abdullah Mohamed Bahwan, Managing Director - Corporate, Saud Bahwan Group and senior representatives from BYD. Highlighting this milestone, a BYD representative described it as a pivotal step in the brand's expansion in Oman, stating that BYD's vehicles are not merely products but future-inspired innovations where cutting-edge technology meets practicality to create sustainable, high-performance solutions designed for the demands of modern city life. The representative also emphasised how the showroom enhances the overall customer experience, allowing families to engage in enriching edutainment encounters while making informed decisions about their automotive choices. Stepping into the showroom, visitors have an opportunity to enter a world of unique storytelling and automotive advancements. The ultra-dimensional exhibition space showcases BYD's futuristic DNA through high-tech interiors, immersive aesthetics and interactive displays. A centrepiece of the showroom experience is the 98-inch LED screens, which deliver captivating presentations on BYD's transformative technologies, including the revolutionary Blade Battery, DM-i Super Hybrid technology and the



e3 platform. Visitors can also explore advanced solutions such as the Disus Body Control system and the e4 (Yisifang) platform, designed to offer consumers the benefits of cutting-edge automotive innovation. Every aspect of the showroom reflects BYD's commitment to innovation, from earthy dome-like elements to illuminated floors and high-contrast mirror reflections. These design elements create a

harmonious balance, emphasising the brand's forward-thinking identity. BYD's range of vehicles available in Oman includes the dynamic electric models Han, Atto 3, and Seal, as well as the DM-i-powered hybrid Song Plus DM-i and Qin Plus DM-i, catering to a wide spectrum of customer preferences. The recent unveiling of BYD's new-age EV showroom in Wat-

tayah heralded the beginning of Oman's e-mobility era and was followed by the inauguration of BYD's second showroom at Al Mouj. As BYD sets its sights on the future, World Auto Business LLC remains committed to providing an exceptional customer journey, ensuring a smooth transition from conventional vehicles to the cutting-edge technology of tomorrow. Visit the BYD showrooms at Wattayah, Al Mouj and Mall of Oman today to explore the future of mobility first-hand. In Oman, BYD vehicles are distributed by World Auto Business. Please visit www.bydoman.com, www.youtube.com/@BYD_oman, www.facebook.com/BYDinOman and www.instagram.com/byd_oman. For any further details, or to ascertain the availability of stocks and for test-drive requests, please call 72225925.



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