LET'S TALK
Times OF OMAN

HM THE SULTAN ISSUES ROYAL DECREE

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik yesterday issued Royal Decree No. 38/2024 on granting an official the rank of "Ambassador" and appointing her as the Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
Article (1) grants Amna Salim Rashid Al Balushi the rank of Ambassador and appoints her as Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman to the UNESCO. Article (2) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue. — ONA

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MEETING

Sayyid Fahd receives Egypt's Head of Supreme Council for Media Regulation

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers yesterday received Karam Gabr Head of the Supreme Council for Media Regulation (SCMR) of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

At the outset of the meeting, the head of the SCMR conveyed the Egyptian leadership's greetings to the Omani leadership. He also conveyed his country's best wishes of further progress and prosperity to the Omani people. HH Sayyid Fahd underscored the government's support for the Omani media in pursuance of the media's constructive role in the march of sustainable development. >A3

MORE THAN 853,000 OMANIS EMPLOYED IN 2023 AMID REFORMS

Oman's labour market sees 6.4% growth in 2023, says report

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman's labour market is witnessing significant transformation as part of the country's Vision 2040 implementation efforts.

According to the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation and Follow-up Unit's annual report issued recently, more than 853,000 Omanis were employed across the public and private sectors in 2023, marking a 6.4 percent growth from the previous year.

Expatriates also accounted for 1.8 million workers, with a 7% increase. These figures highlight the impact of ongoing reforms and strategic initiatives aimed at boosting national workforce participation and aligning the labour market with the country's long-term economic goals.

Key labour reforms and initiatives have positioned the country for continued success, making the labour market more attractive to national talent and addressing the evolving needs of the private sector. Central to these reforms was the issuance of the new Labour Law in accordance with Royal Decree No. 53/2023, aimed at improving worker conditions, enhancing productivity, and fostering long-term stability in the labour market.

Strategic employment initiatives in 2023

A major highlight of 2023 was the launch of the labour market needs survey in private sector establishments. >A6

GAZA DEATH TOLL
as of September 25, 2024

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN
HM's greetings conveyed to Brunei Darussalam

1 Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister conveyed message of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, along with the Sultanate of Oman's greetings to Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah and the people of Brunei Darussalam. >A2

OMAN
Al Harrasi meets Egyptian official

2 Dr. Abdullah Nasser Al Harrasi, Minister of Information, received Karam Gabr, Head of the SCMR in Egypt. >A5

MARKET
Oman, Azerbaijan review trade ties

3 OCCI highlighted means of enhancing investment and trade between the Omani private sector and its Azerbaijani counterpart. >B1

OMAN

PRAYER TIMINGS

Dhuhr	12:03pm
Asr	3:28pm
Maghrib	6:04pm
Isha	7:15pm
Fajr (Tomorrow)	4:42am

Sayyid Badr conveys HM's greetings to Sultan of Brunei Darussalam, other officials

The foreign minister held several meetings with a number of officials, on the sidelines of the 79th General Assembly of the United Nations

NEW YORK: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister conveyed message of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, along with the Sultanate of Oman's greetings to Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah and the people of Brunei Darussalam on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of Brunei joining the United Nations.

This came during a ceremony held under the patronage of Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei Darussalam, within the context of the 79th General Assembly of the United Nations.

Meanwhile, Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah asked Sayyid Badr to convey his greetings and best wishes to His Majesty the Sultan and the people of Oman. He also wished relations between Oman and Brunei Darussalam further progress and prosperity.

On other side, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister held several meetings with a number of officials, on the sidelines of the 79th General Assembly of the United Nations.

Sayyid Badr held a meeting with Gabrielius Landsbergis, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Lithuania.

The two ministers reviewed relations of friendship and joint projects, as well as the efforts exerted to expand areas of partnership in the economic, cultural, scientific and technological fields. They also exchanged views on a set of current regional and international issues.

Sayyid Badr also held a meeting with Luminita Odobescu, Foreign Minister of Romania. They discussed means of enhancing relations between Oman and Romania. They also explored areas of cooperation in the fields of economy, culture and education.

The two ministers touched on the regional and international issues of mutual interests. They expressed their joint support for the efforts exerted to maintain regional and international peace and stability. They also laid emphasis on the importance of dialogue and peaceful means in addressing security challenges.

Sayyid Badr also held a meeting with Philippe Lazzarini, Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA).

The two sides discussed the humanitarian challenges facing the Palestinian refugees.

Sayyid Badr expressed the Sultanate of Oman's continued support for efforts aimed at improving the conditions of refugees. He underlined the importance of collective action and demanding the implementation of UN resolutions calling for the entry of urgent humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip without any obstacles. Sayyid Badr valued the UNRWA's efforts in providing vital assistance and basic services to Palestinian refugees.

In his turn, the Commissioner-General of UNRWA lauded the active role of the Sultanate of Oman in supporting humanitarian issues and relief efforts, stressing the importance of continuing these efforts and backing the UN agency in carrying out its responsibilities.

Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister also held a meeting with Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba.

The meeting touched on relations between the two countries and means of enhancing them. The two ministers expressed the joint keenness to push these relations towards wider horizons. They also expressed the joint desire to explore various areas of cooperation.

The two ministers exchanged views on various issues at the regional and international arenas.

Sayyid Badr held a meeting with Caspar Veldkamp, Minister of the Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands. The two sides discussed areas of cooperation and stressed the importance of the economic partnership between Oman and the Netherlands.

The two ministers also exchanged views on a set of regional and international issues. The views also covered means of maintaining regional and international peace and security.

Sayyid Badr held a meeting with Hakan Fidan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Türkiye.

The meeting reviewed relations between the two countries and means of promoting them in various areas.

The two ministers also discussed the ongoing escalation in the region by the Israeli occupation forces, stressing the importance of redoubling efforts by international community institutions to stop the ongoing escalating military operations in the region and avoid the expansion of the conflict.

The two sides stressed the importance of the peace option based on the two-state solution, the justice of international law and legitimacy, and the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the establishment of their independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

During his meeting with Abdulaziz Ibrahim Al-Mulla, Executive Director of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Sayyid Badr discussed cooperation and partnership relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the World Bank and ways to develop a number of financial and technical cooperation and economic diversification programs, including capacity building programs that support development and sustainability. -ONA

MOSQUITO CONTROL

Team from Muscat Municipality reviews mosquito eradication plan

MUSCAT: The team tasked with dealing and supervising the investigation and control of the Aedes mosquito in Muscat Governorate met on Wednesday under the chairmanship of Ahmed Mohammed Al Humaidi, Chairman of Muscat Municipality.

The meeting reviewed the results of the executive plan for the Aedes mosquito control work for the year 2023-2024, and the future plan for 2024-2025, while specialists from the Ministry of Health reviewed the indicators of the epidemiological situation.

The results of the executive plan for the past year 2023-2024 showed a decrease in the number of dengue fever infections by nearly 93% compared to the previous season.

The team visited 69,000 homes and facilities with the aim of eliminating the breeding grounds of the Aedes mosquito; which contributed to reducing its density.

The number of fixed swamps (which are breeding grounds for mosquitoes) in the wilayats of Muscat Governorate was also limited to 266 sites with an area of 84 square kilometres, and the data of these sites was updated on the interactive map with the aim of creating a database and organising vector control work.

The plan witnessed the implementation of electronic transformation in entering data on combating work through the use of a special programme on mobile phones.

Muscat Municipality, represented by the General Directorate of Health Affairs and Municipalities in the wilayats, seeks to limit the spread of all types of mosquitoes, especially the Aedes mosquito, through teams qualified with all technical requirements and modern methods, and emphasises its efforts in preserving public health through its systematic work and strategic plans.

-ONA

ASMED

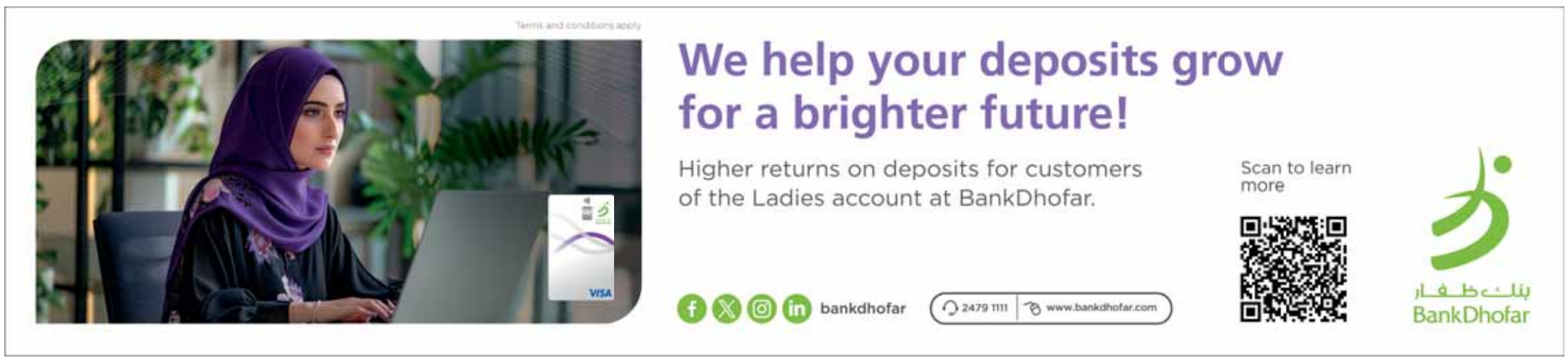
Prospects for SMEs financing explored

MUSCAT: The Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED) yesterday organised the first discussion panel (during 2024) with a group of entrepreneurs benefiting from the Authority's "Al Azm" financing programmes portfolio.

Titled "Prospects for Financing Small and Medium Enterprises", the discussion panel was aimed at highlighting key challenges in SME funding procedures.

The session explored ways to upgrade the efficiency of financing procedures and accelerating endorsement methods to help improve regulations for financing services. The mechanism is deemed necessary for making the procedures easier and faster and cut down waiting time for entrepreneurs. It also seeks to enhance opportunities for access to financing and developing financing mechanisms to meet the needs of entrepreneurs in a more flexible manner.

By the end of June 2024, ASMED approved a total of 312 applications to the tune of OMR 30,724,662. -ONA



Oman chairs a meeting in US on infection control

The foreign minister stressed the importance of consolidating international cooperation and partnerships among countries and global health institutions

NEW YORK: The Sultanate of Oman yesterday chaired a meeting to discuss infection prevention and control (IPC) and antimicrobial stewardship in the health sector (AMS).

The meeting took part on the sidelines of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, who chaired the meeting, stressed the importance of consolidating international cooperation and partnerships among countries and global health institutions.

He reaffirmed the Sultanate of Oman's commitment to support global efforts, as a means to secure a healthy and safe future for world generations.

The meeting included a forum that outlined the experiences of Oman, the World Health Organization (WHO), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Germany, Nigeria and the US-based Centres for Disease Control and Prevention.

The meeting was attended by Dr. Ahmed Salim Al Mandhari, Health Ministry's Undersecretary for Health Planning and Regulation, and attended by ministers, heads of delegations and representatives of member states and technical experts in the field.

-ONA

MEETING

Egyptian official lauds Omani media coverage

< FROM A1

Karam Gabr, Head of the Supreme Council for Media Regulation (SCMR) of the Arab Republic of Egypt also lauded Omani media persons and the efforts they exert in media coverages that are based on integrity.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed bilateral relations and explored means of enhancing media cooperation in various fields, particularly in exchanging expertise and visits of media persons. They also highlighted current issues on the regional arena and the efforts exerted to put an end to violations in a bid to have security and stability prevail in the region.

In his turn, the Egyptian official lauded the wise and balanced policy espoused by the Sultanate of Oman and its role in backing efforts of understanding and constructive dialogue among nations. This policy granted Oman the respect and appreciation of all, he affirmed.

He also underlined the importance of the consultations he conducted with officials in Oman, which reflect positively on bilateral relations.

The meeting was attended by Dr. Abdullah Nasser Al Harrasi, Minister of Information and Khalid Abdul Halim Radi, Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the Sultanate of Oman. -ONA

BILATERAL TIES

Sheikh Khalifa reviews ties with Iranian official

MUSCAT: Sheikh Khalifa Ali Al Harthy, Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs on Wednesday received Mohammad Ali Bek, the Islamic Republic of Iran's Aide to the Foreign Minister and Director General of the ministry's Gulf department.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed regional relations and situations.

They also explored means of enhancing bilateral cooperation in all fields to achieve joint interests.

The meeting was attended by Sheikh Ahmed Hashel Al Maskari, Head of theGCC Department and Mousa Farhang, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Sultanate of Oman. -ONA

Sheikh Khalifa Ali Al Harthy, Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs with Mohammad Ali Bek, Iran's Aide to the Foreign Minister. - ONA

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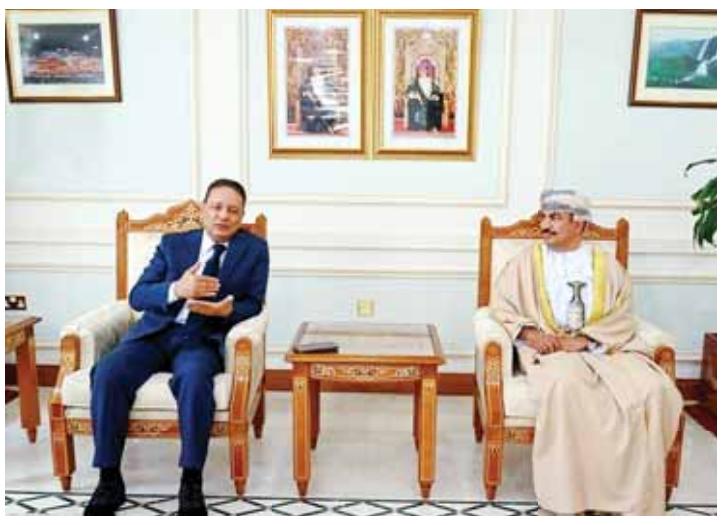
Al Harrasi meets top Egyptian media regulatory official

The meeting dealt with the strong bonds between the Sultanate of Oman and Egypt and ways to enhance bilateral cooperation



MEETING: Dr. Abdullah Nasser Al Harrasi, Minister of Information, met with Karam Gabr, Head of the Supreme Council for Media Regulation (SCMR) of the Arab Republic of Egypt. - ONA

MUSCAT: Dr. Abdullah Nasser Al Harrasi, Minister of Information, received in his office on Wenesday day Karam Gabr, Head of the Supreme Council for Media Regulation (SCMR) of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

The meeting dealt with the strong bonds between the Sultanate of Oman and Egypt and ways to enhance bilateral cooperation.

The two sides discussed a number of media issues, including the exchange of expertise in the fields of electronic content, training and technical updates supporting modern media modes.

They also elaborated on the role of media in consolidating the Arab cultural identity, bringing up generations in accordance with authentic human values and enhancing mutual understanding among cultures.

The meeting was attended by Mohammed Said Al Balushi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Information, Khalid Mohammed Abdul Halim Radi, Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the Sultanate of Oman, and officials from the Ministry of Information.

CABLE

His Majesty congratulates President of Sri Lanka

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to President Anura Kumara Dissanayake of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka on winning the presidential elections and taking the oath of office.

In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes of success to President Anura in leading the people of Sri Lanka towards further progress and prosperity. His Majesty also wished the bilateral relations further development. -ONA

ASYAD GROUP

Pact to establish Oman as leader in low-carbon fuels for bunkering

MUSCAT: Asyad Group, in collaboration with OQ Alternative Energy and Sumitomo Corporation Middle East FZE, announced a joint study agreement to explore the potential of establishing Oman as a global leader in low-carbon fuels for bunkering.

This visionary initiative represents a pioneering step in promoting sustainable shipping practices to meet global decarbonization goals in the maritime industry and leveraging Oman's renewable resources on a global scale.

The group has issued a Request For Information (RFI) to the world's leading shipping companies to drive the adoption of global green logistic solutions in Oman.

Additionally, a feasibility study will be conducted to assess key factors including the levelized costs of delivered low-carbon fuels, the infrastructure required to support such operations, and the alignment with global regulatory standards for sustainable fuels.

Early findings suggest that Oman's unique geographical advantage and superior renewable energy resources could position the country as a frontrunner in providing competitively priced low-carbon fuels to the global shipping industry.

The insights derived from the RFI will represent the cornerstone for the study and will be crucial in guiding the development of a world-class low-carbon bunkering infrastructure in Oman, thus making a lasting impact on global maritime practices.

In line with Oman's Vision 2040 and its sustainable energy strategy, the parties aim to leverage the Sultanate of Oman's abundant renewable resources to offer low-carbon fuels such as e-methanol and ammonia at competitive prices.

Current bunkering facilities at the Ports of Salalah and Duqm are earmarked as strategic sites for potential retrofitting to support low-carbon fuel operations. By updating these existing infrastructures and transforming these ports into key nodes on vital global trade routes, Oman aims to become a leader in the global transition to low-carbon shipping fuels and further support the growth of the nation's bourgeoning logistics sector. -ONA

STATE AUDIT INSTITUTION

Oman takes part in ASOSAI meeting

NEW DELHI: Oman, represented by the State Audit Institution (SAI), takes part in the 16th Assembly of the Asian Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (ASOSAI), held in New Delhi.

The assembly is being held from 24-27 September 2024, with the participation of heads of member SAIs.

Oman's delegation is headed by Sheikh Ghuson Hilal Al-Alawi, Chairman of State Audit Institution (SAI).

During the meeting, many key topics listed in the agenda were discussed, primarily, review of the report of the Secretariat's activities for the years (2021-2023), approval of the ASOSAI financial statements for the financial years (2021-2023) and review of the results of external audit of the ASOSAI financial statements for the financial years (2021-2023).

The meeting also reviewed a number of reports of the ASOSAI Working Group on Environmental Audit, ASOSAI Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals and the ASOSAI Working Group on Crisis Management Audit.

Furthermore, the meeting reviews the report on the ASOSAI Strategic Plan and the report of the ASOSAI Capacity Building Activities.

The meeting will be concluded by approving the ASOSAI budget for the years (2025-2027), and discussing proposals on the establishment of new working groups, namely, the ASOSAI Working Group on State Owned Enterprise, the ASOSAI Working Group on IT Audit and Data Analysis and the ASOSAI Working Group on Regional and Municipal Audit, in addition to selecting members of the ASOSAI Governing Board and Audit Committee for the period (2024-2027).

On the other hand, Sheikh Ghuson headed the Sultanate of Oman's delegation in the 9th ASOSAI symposium. -ANI

INDIAN SCHOOL NIZWA

PB No. 598, PC – 611, Thymsa, Nizwa, Sultanate of Oman

TENDER NOTICE

Tenders are invited from potential vendors / agencies / contractors / companies / establishments specialized in the following services accordance with the terms and conditions set down as per the documents (drawings and Bill of Quantities) providing by the school.

Construction of Walkway shade

The completed tenders shall be submitted (in separate sealed envelopes) directly to the school office during school working hours **(latest by 2.00 pm).**

Note: A tender fee **RO 5** (Non-Refundable) will be applicable for collecting the BOQ from the School Office.

The tenders may also be sent via couriers/speed post to:
The Principal, Indian School Nizwa, PB No. 598, PC – 611, Thymsa, Nizwa, Sultanate of Oman.

The last date of submission of the tenders is within 10 days from the date of this advertisement.

For more details, contact: +968 99413124 or send mail to principal@isnizwa.org.

U.S. EMBASSY - MUSCAT

ONLINE AUCTION
SALE OF USED ITEMS

The U.S. Embassy Muscat is auctioning a used vehicle, household and office furniture, furnishings, appliances, and IT equipment by online auction.

Interested bidders may view the auction items online starting on Wednesday, September 25, 2024, at 10:00a.m. by going to https://online-auction.state.gov/en-US. Online bidding for all items will open on Thursday, September 26 at 10:00a.m. Bidders must first register on the website before placing a bid.

All items offered are sold "As is, where is." There are no warranties, either expressed or implied. Bidding closes on Sunday, September 29, 2024, at 1:30p.m.

After the auction closes, successful bidders will be notified and must make full payment in the **Bank Muscat U.S. Embassy account 0454000188720026** (Swift: BMUSOMRX) before the payment deadline of October 1, 11:00 a.m. Bidders can view payment instructions in the "How it works" link on the auction website after the auction goes live and successful bidders will receive an email with instructions.

Please note failure to follow payment instructions may result in the forfeiture of your lots and possible bank fees. Please read instructions carefully. Late payments will not be accepted.

Successful bidders with fully paid lots must collect their items or arrange for someone to collect them on Saturday, October 5 at the Ghala warehouse during the specific scheduled time (BEFORE 2:00pm). Vehicles auctioned will take approximately 30 days to hand over after payment and required documents (copy of ID and driver's license) are submitted. If you are unable to arrange pickup on that date, please do not participate in the auction as there are no alternate pickup dates. Directions to the Ghala warehouse will be provided to successful bidders.

Sultan Qaboos University

ANNOUNCEMENT

Sultan Qaboos University announces their desire to sell used furniture in sealed envelopes. Those wishing to enter the auction must adhere to the following conditions:

- Interested parties can view used furniture in auction yard and receive the bidding on Monday & Tuesday (30/09-01/10/2024) from 03:00 pm to 05:00 pm.
- Deposit of (200) Omani riyals in cash as an insurance. This amount will be refunded to the unsuccessful bidders.
- Submitting the offer in a sealed envelope after viewing the used furniture, entitled by the name of the head of the committee for selling used furniture, and put the envelope in bid box.
- The presented offer is binding on its owner if it is placed on it, and in the event that the buyer does not pay the purchase price on time, the insurance amount will be forfeited, and the sale will be awarded to another applicant.
- Those who win the bidding will be contacted. They must pay the remaining sum, and they are responsible for moving their items on Wednesday and Thursday (02-03/10/2024) from 09:00 am to 03:00 pm.
- The Used furniture are sold in their current condition and SQU is not responsible for any loss or damage to the sold material if the moving is not completed after the end of the sale (10) Omani riyals will be imposed for each day after 06/10/2024.

Note:

- **Prices are sorted according to groups and the higher price is taken.**
- **Funds will be collected electronically through visa cards.**
- **Entering the auction stores through Hospital Gate No (2).**
- **For more information contact on 24141272.**

OMAN/WORLD

Egypt's Supreme Council for Media Regulation head visits Omani media institutions

During the visit, the guest listened to a briefing about Omani media and news content provided by the Ministry of Information. He also took note of their advanced technical equipment and programmes aimed to keep pace with the need for prompt media action

MUSCAT: Karam Gabr, Head of the Supreme Council for Media Regulation (SCMR) of the Arab Republic of Egypt, on Wednesday visited Oman News Agency (ONA), the News Centre, Digital Studios Complex and Oman Newspaper building.

During the visit, the guest listened to a briefing about Omani media and news content provided by the Ministry of Information, represented by the institutions he toured. He also took note of their advanced technical equipment and programmes aimed to keep pace with the need for prompt media action.

In a statement to ONA, the official commended the advanced level of Oman-Egypt bilateral relations.

He stressed that the two countries possess rich civilizational, intellectual and technical components that inspire them to cooperate and exchange expertise in all fields. Karam Gabr pointed out that the media plays a significant role in establishing closer relations between countries and peoples. He explained that the media can bridge gaps, furnish common areas among nations and encourage them to better communicate with each other.

Spreading awareness

In this context, he underscored the media's role in spreading awareness about means of affirming the national identity of different peoples, notably youth, by instilling a sense of belonging, love of the homeland and a keenness to safeguarding its gains.

The Egyptian official also spoke about the role of the media in handling the technology revolution that stems from communication, noting that "media content should be compatible with our societies' values, ethical, religious and legal aspects".

The Egyptian official laid emphasis on maximising the positive aspect of social media platforms and avoiding negative phenomena (including violence and extremism), which, he said, often emerges through inadvertent broadcasting of "media content that conflicts with our societies' religious values, customs and traditions".

He also cautioned that many issues and challenges are currently posed to print media, including an observable decline in reading rates and a shrinkage in the volume of advertisements and resources in general.

He added that this challenge is after all global rather than being associated with specific countries. Yet, he affirmed that the print press would continue to be part of the soft power of societies. — ONA

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BILATERAL RELATIONS

President Biden, Prof Yunus affirm close partnership between Dhaka, Washington

NEW YORK: Chief Advisor to the Bangladesh interim government, Muhammad Yunus, met US President Joe Biden on Tuesday, on the sidelines of the 79th United Nations General Assembly.

President Biden congratulated Yunus on his recent appointment as the head of the interim government.

The two leaders affirmed the "close partnership" between the United States and Bangladesh, which is rooted in shared democratic values and strong people-to-people ties, the White House statement read.

President Biden welcomed further engagement between the two governments and offered continued US support as Bangladesh implements its new reform agenda.

The press release from the Bangladesh side, stated that President Biden expressed US government's "full support" to Bangladesh and the Professor Yunus-led Interim Government during the meeting.

"President Biden expressed US government's full support for Chief Adviser Dr. Muhammad Yunus and his government as they met on the margin of the UNGA," Yunus said in a post in X.

Yunus also apprised Biden on the situation in Bangladesh. He also spoke about how the students rose against the "tyranny of the previous government" and gave their lives in order to rebuild Bangladesh.

The chief advisor further stressed the need for the US's cooperation for him to succeed his government in rebuilding the country.

The Chief Advisor also handed a copy of the book 'The Art of Triumph' to President Biden, which depicts the wall paintings drawn by the students during the uprising.

This is the first time in the history of Bangladesh that a US President has met a head of the Bangladesh government on the sidelines of the UNGA, according to the press release by the Bangladesh side.

Meanwhile, Muhammad Yunus also met Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on the sidelines of the UN general assembly meeting on Tuesday.

During the brief meeting, the two leaders discussed ways to cement Bangladesh-Canada relationships, deepen freedom, build institutions, and support the youth of Bangladesh, the release stated.

Trudeau appreciated Professor Yunus for assuming the responsibility and expressed Canada's readiness to support institution building in Bangladesh.

Professor Yunus handed The Art of Triumph, an art book of the wall paintings by the students and young people drawn during and after the Revolution, to the Canadian prime minister.

He also requested Canada grant more visas to Bangladeshi students. — ANI

MINISTRY OF LABOUR

< FROM A1

Marsad platform provides decision-makers details about labour market data

This project, designed to align workforce development with actual market requirements, plays a crucial role in ensuring Oman's workforce is equipped to meet future job demands.

Furthermore, the issuance of 707,000 work permits and the registration of 634,000 work contracts for both Omanis and expatriates reflected the robust nature of the labour market.

The Ministry of Labour's commitment to improving working conditions was evident through 1,281 inspection visits conducted to ensure compliance with Occupational Safety and Health Regulations.

A notable achievement in 2023 was the establishment of sectoral skills units for Fisheries, Engineering, and Information Technology.

These units serve as platforms where employers, industry leaders, and academia collaborate to develop workforce skills aligned with international standards.

The National Employment Policy project, which launched in 2023, further reinforces these goals by focusing on identifying labour market needs and bridging the gap between education outcomes and employment demands.

Among the Ministry of Labour's future plans are four major programmes designed to improve labour market conditions and boost employment opportunities.

These programmes include the completion of the National Employment Policy Project, now 55% complete, the National Strategy for Professional Standards at 49%, the Labour Market Policies Development and Enhancement Project at 65%, and the Training Project coupled with Replacement, which aims to create 11,000 new training opportunities.

In 2023, the Ministry of Labour took decisive steps to implement several initiatives that have already had a positive impact on the employment system. Two notable initiatives focused on enhancing job opportunities in both the private and public sectors.

As a result, 13,242 job seekers were appointed in private sector establishments for the first time, while 29,668 individuals were reappointed through job rotation initiatives. Furthermore, 17,910 job seekers secured positions within public sector establishments, demonstrating the government's commitment to creating sustainable employment for Omanis across various industries.

Marsad platform: Enhancing data-driven employment planning

An integral part of Oman's strategy for improving labour market indicators is the Marsad platform, which, while not reformed in 2023, continues to play a vital role in facilitating the employment of Omani youth in both public and private sectors.

The platform provides decision-makers with detailed labour market data, including information on job seekers and students in various educational institutions. This data enables more harmonious planning between educational outcomes and the labour market's actual needs, bridging the gap between skills and job opportunities.

Marsad contains six dashboards designed to measure key indicators, including population census data, labor force metrics, active and inactive job seekers, and education and graduate statistics. This robust data infrastructure is essential for Oman's ongoing efforts to align higher education and vocational training with market demands, further ensuring that the national workforce is prepared for future job opportunities.

Skills development and training

To further boost the national workforce's capabilities, Oman placed significant emphasis on training programmes.

In 2023, 9,300 young Omani cadres underwent various training initiatives, helping them acquire the skills needed for emerging job opportunities. These training efforts, along with Oman's focus on improving professional standards, aim to close the gap between education and employment, ensuring the workforce remains competitive both locally and internationally.

A significant initiative in this area includes an agreement between the Ministry of Labour and the Musleh platform, which trained 600 job seekers in various maintenance fields. Additionally, over 2,000 Omani men and women were trained as part of a programme to support entrepreneurs and promote self-employment.

The job security fund: A safety net for workers

Oman has also implemented the Job Security Fund, a key element in ensuring stability for Omani workers who face job loss due to circumstances beyond their control, such as arbitrary dismissal. By the end of 2023, the fund had benefited over 17,000 individuals, including 13,599 whose services were terminated and 3,400 whose contracts had expired, offering temporary financial relief while they sought alternative employment.

Legislative reforms driving stability and growth

The issuance of the new Labour Law represents a key milestone in the country's labour market development. This comprehensive legal framework addresses the modern needs of the economy by enhancing productivity, improving operating conditions, and increasing job stability in both public and private sector establishments.

The law also aims to reduce disruptions in the labour market by preventing strikes and closures, ensuring businesses and workers can operate in a stable and predictable environment.

It further contributes to Omanisation efforts, promoting higher rates of Omani participation in technical, professional, and administrative roles across industries.

Future-oriented strategies

With Oman's labour market growing rapidly, the Ministry of Labour continues to focus on long-term strategies that prioritise skills development, job creation, and regulatory improvements.

By fostering a balanced and competitive employment landscape, Oman is steadily moving toward achieving its Vision 2040 goals, where both Omani talent and expatriate contributions are essential to the nation's prosperity.

In summary, 2023 was a year of substantial growth and reform for Oman's labour market, with significant gains in employment numbers, critical legislative reforms, and a focus on skills development. As Oman continues to evolve, the government's efforts to balance workforce development with economic competitiveness will ensure a brighter, more prosperous future for all.

UNRWA warns of generation loss in Gaza under Israeli aggression

According to the UN News website, Lazzarini said that more than 600,000 children in Gaza are living in the rubble and suffering from deep trauma, warning that the delay in returning them to a suitable educational environment threatens the loss of an entire generation

GAZA: Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) Philippe Lazzarini warned of the ongoing violations of international humanitarian law in the Gaza Strip, worsening daily in light of the continuing Israeli occupation aggression.

According to the UN News website, Lazzarini said that more than 600,000 children in Gaza are living in the rubble and suffering from deep trauma, warning that the delay in returning them to a suitable educational environment threatens the loss of an entire generation, which could lead to the strengthening of feelings of hatred and resentment.

Lazzarini addressed the deteriorating situation of schools and infrastructure in Gaza, where more than 70 percent of UNRWA facilities were fully destroyed or damaged, highlighting that the agency has faced ongoing targeting, including the killing of more than 220 staff since Oct. 7, 2023.

Humanitarian relief operations are being hampered despite prior coordination with the relevant parties.

In a related context, the UNRWA Commissioner-General spoke about the successful polio vaccination campaign, which managed to protect more than 640,000 children under the age of ten, amid concerns about the return of the disease 25 years after its eradication.

Regarding the occupied West Bank, Lazzarini described the situation as a "silent war" boiling in the West Bank as a result of what is happening in Gaza and Lebanon, where the residents of the West Bank are suffering from increasing violations by the occupation forces and settlers.

He also pointed to the escalating tensions on the Blue Line between Lebanon and the occupied Palestinian territories, warning that Lebanon could become a "new Gaza" if urgent efforts are not taken to prevent the escalating Israeli aggression against Lebanon.

Regarding the agency's funding, Lazzarini affirmed that UNRWA is facing a worsening financial crisis and that the needs have never been as great as they are today, expressing his concern about reducing contributions from member states in 2025 when the Palestinians need more support.

The UN official called for a ceasefire, the release of hostages, and increased humanitarian aid, stressing that political solutions are clear, but the region needs political will to achieve this.

UN Rapporteur calls for protection of healthcare workers in Palestine

UN Special Rapporteur on the right to health Tlaleng Mofokeng called for the protection of healthcare workers in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territory.

"On the cusp of the one-year anniversary of the genocide, I continue to be shocked at Israel's blatant disregard for the right to health in Gaza and the rest of the occupied territory," Mofokeng said. "Israel must stop destroying and hindering the already limited functioning of the health system in Palestine, by protecting healthcare workers," she said.

"The practice of medicine is never a crime during conflict but targeted killing of healthcare workers is," She added. "Israel must stop." The Special Rapporteur said the targeting of healthcare workers and healthcare facilities contravenes the fundamental right of individuals to access essential healthcare services, a matter of acute significance during times of conflict, and may constitute a war crime.

Mofokeng demanded the immediate release of all healthcare workers arbitrarily detained in occupation and the occupied Palestinian territory, and urgent, independent and impartial investigations, and accountability for those who have unlawfully detained and killed them.

"A people's inability to fully exercise their right to self-determination impacts the enjoyment of all their fundamental rights, including the right to health," Mofokeng said. "Immediately ceasefire. End the occupation. End the genocide," she said.

Over 10,900 Palestinians detained in occupied West Bank since October 7, says prisoners institutions

The Israeli occupation forces detained at least 20 people, including former detainees, in the occupied West Bank during the last 24 hours.

The Detainees and Ex-Detainees Commission and the Palestine Prisoners Society said in a joint statement that the detention operations took place across different governorates in the occupied West Bank, accompanied by widespread raids and abuse, assaults and threats against detainees and their families, in addition to vandalism and destruction of citizens' homes.

PPS and the Commission affirmed that, the total number of Palestinians detained in the occupied West Bank since October 7th has risen to over 10,900. This figure includes those detained from their homes, at military checkpoints, those who surrendered under pressure, and those taken hostage.

Several civilians killed and others injured in Israeli airstrikes on different areas in Gaza

Several civilians were killed and others were injured on Wednesday after Israeli occupation warplanes targeted large areas in the Gaza Strip.

Civil Defence sources reported that their crews recovered the body of an elderly man,70, and a young man who were killed after the occupation targeted a group of citizens in the Khirbet al-Adas area north of Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip.

The defence crews also recovered the body of a girl from under the rubble of her house that was destroyed by the occupation yesterday in the Al-Ahly Club area in the Nuseirat camp in the central Gaza Strip.

Bodies of three people recovered

Meanwhile, The bodies of three people were also recovered after the occupation aircraft bombed a civilian vehicle northeast of the Nuseirat camp. Israeli gunboats opened fire towards the western areas of the Gaza Strip, and the occupation aircraft targeted agricultural land in the town of Al-Fakhari east of Khan Yunis city in the southern Gaza Strip.

In a preliminary toll, the number of civilians killed since the beginning of the occupation's aggression on the Gaza Strip on October 7, 2023, has risen to 41,467, in addition to 95,921 wounded, the majority of whom are children and women, while thousands of missing people are still under the rubble. – WAFA

DEUTSCHE BAHN AND FRANCE'S SNCF

New train service to link Berlin and Paris in eight hours by December

BERLIN: A new high-speed train, operated by German rail operator Deutsche Bahn and France's SNCF, will allow passengers to travel between Berlin and Paris in approximately eight hours, Deutsche Bahn announced on Tuesday. The first departure is scheduled for December.

"This is the first daytime direct connection between the capitals of Germany and France, and it is also a symbol of a growing Europe," said Michael Peterson, an executive at Deutsche Bahn.

"This new connection is further proof of the Franco-German friendship and contributes to a shared goal of our two countries: more CO2-free mobility," added Alain Krakovitch from SNCF.

What will the journey look like?

The train is set to depart from Berlin at 11:54 a.m. and arrive at Paris' Gare de l'Est at 7:55 p.m. In the reverse direction, it will leave Paris at 9:55 a.m. and arrive in Berlin at 6:03 p.m.

The route will stop in Strasbourg, France, and not Saarbrücken, as initially requested by Deutsche Bahn. It will also make stops in the German cities of Frankfurt and Karlsruhe.

Second-class tickets will be available starting at €60 ($67), slightly more expensive than the cheapest flights between the two capitals. With this route, the number of daily connections between France and Germany will increase from 24 to 26.

Was there already a Paris-Berlin train?

Berlin and Paris have been connected by a long-distance night train service, operated by Austrian Railways, although it is currently suspended due to construction work.

Deutsche Bahn is also planning other new international connections. Among them are routes from Munich to Milan and Rome, in collaboration with Trenitalia, scheduled for 2026.

According to Peterson, demand for international train travel has grown faster than for domestic routes.

This service adds to the high-speed rail network between Germany and France, which already includes routes to Marseille and Bordeaux from Frankfurt. – DW

GLOBAL WARMING

Why are sea levels rising?

NEW YORK: "The ocean is overflowing," warned UN secretary general Antonio Guterres at a recent visit to Tonga.

The archipelago in the South Pacific is one of several countries in the region that are severely and disproportionately threatened by sea level rise.

And while low-lying islands are particularly vulnerable, many coastal communities and cities worldwide are already struggling with more destructive floods and storms that endanger lives, jobs and crucial infrastructure.

How fast are sea levels rising?

Global sea levels have risen faster since the start of the 20th century than at any point in the last 3,000 years — and the pace is only accelerating.

Since records began in 1880, they have risen more than 20 cm(more than 8 inches), and this is getting faster with each decade. Global mean sea levels hit a record height in 2023, according to the World Meteorological Organisation.

And they are not rising equally around the globe due to ocean dynamics and the Earth's unequal gravity field. In some areas of the southwestern Pacific, sea levels have risen close to twice the global rate since 1993.

How fast oceans will continue to rise depends on planetary heating.

If the world holds it below 1.5 degrees Celsius as set out in the Paris Agreement and hits net zero emissions by 2050, global sea levels are set to rise a further 38 cm by 2100. However, with current climate action setting us on a path to 2.7 degrees Celsius global warming by the end of the century this would lead to a further rise of 56 cm.

A few centimetres might not seem like much, but scientists estimate that every 2.5 cm of sea rise equates to 2.5 meters of lost beachfront and means that high tides and storm surges can reach even higher and further. Equally, for each centimetre of sea level rise, an extra 6 million people are estimated to be exposed to coastal flooding.

In extreme cases, scientists predict that human activity could cause sea levels to rise up to two meters by the end of the century.

What is causing them to rise?

Sea level is driven by global warming, caused by carbon dioxide, methane and other emissions released from the burning of fossil fuels for uses including energy, industry, and transport.

This is making the ocean heat up. Our seas have absorbed an estimated 90% of atmospheric warming over the past 50 years, and the pace of ocean heating has doubled in the last 20 years, rising three times faster than the global average in the southwest Pacific Sea. Ocean temperatures in 2023 were the hottest on record.

When water heats up, it grows in volume due to a process known as thermal expansion. Changes in land water storage — for example, through pumping groundwater — can also lead to a net change in ocean water volume.

However, one of the major sources of sea level rise is the melting of ice sheets and mountain glaciers due to increasing heat. An average of 150 billion tonnes of ice mass are lost yearly from Antarctica and 270 billion tonnes from Greenland.

Recent scientific reports have also raised concern about climate "tipping points," where increases in temperatures beyond 1.5 degrees Celsius could trigger the irreversible collapse of the entire Greenland and West Antarctic ice sheets, with severe repercussions for sea levels.

Which parts of the world are most impacted?

Low-lying small islands, such as Fiji, the Maldives and Tuvalu, are facing some of the most critical threats from sea level rise — with even a moderate increase posing an existential danger.

However, sea level rises pose a global threat as nearly 40% of the world's population lives near the coast and roughly 900 million in low-elevation zones.

Coastal cities and communities worldwide are already struggling with coastal erosion, agriculture and freshwater challenges due to saltwater intrusion and increasingly destructive flooding and storms.

According to a 2022 study, among the hardest hit places will be tropical regions, particularly in Asia, with Bangladesh, India, China particularly at risk. Some of the most vulnerable areas will be river deltas — broad areas where rivers meet the sea, often where port cities are located.

Megacities such as Cairo, Lagos, Los Angeles, Mumbai, Buenos Aires and London are all expected to face serious impacts.

What can be done to respond?

Ultimately, experts say the solution to preventing dramatic sea level rise lies in rapidly reducing emissions.

However, some degree of sea level rise is now inevitable — this is because even if the world stops emitting all greenhouse gases tomorrow, there is a time lag in the effect global heating has on ocean temperatures and ice and glacier melting.

Countries worldwide are employing a range of adaptation measures, from creating sea walls and storm surge barriers to improving drainage systems and flood resistant buildings.

Some of the adaptation measures are simple and nature based: from staving off coastal erosion by driving wooden stakes into Senegal's beaches or regenerating mangrove forests in Cameroon.

For low lying small island states responses to sea level rise include moving entire villages to higher ground in Fiji, building floating cities in the Maldives and reclaiming land from the sea in Tuvalu.

Many developing regions need financial help to deal with sea level rise and other consequences being felt due to climate change, experts say. -DW

SPORTS

2024 GTWCE

Al Zubair's title challenge suffers setback in Monza

MUSCAT: Oman's Al Faisal Al Zubair escaped unhurt after a crash during the fourth round of the 2024 Fanatec GT World Challenge (GTWCE) powered by AWS Endurance Cup in Monza, Italy, recently.

The Al-Manar Racing by Getspeed Team driver's car was hit from the rear after just six laps to leave his Mercedes-AMG GT3 Evo damaged and forcing an early retirement and dampening the team's title hopes.

Al Zubair had begun the three-hour race from the rear of the Gold Cup grid but the retirement left no chance for his Australian team debutant Broc Feeney and Austrian Dominik Baumann to continue.

A disappointed Al Zubair said: "Unfortunately, it was not the best of weekends. It started off quite difficult with the car set-up for us and the Pro car in the team. Then, in qualifying, we had a real issue where we couldn't get our tyres to really switch on. That allowed us to qualify sixth in class.

"From then on, we went for quite an aggressive set-up for the race. About 20 minutes into the race, I had an accident on turn one. There was too much damage to the car and that forced us to retire the car from the race. We are still second in the championship with one round to go. That is a positive and I am looking forward to the next round in Jeddah."

Gold Cup victory after 87 laps on the Italian circuit went to the Haupt Racing Team Mercedes trio of Michele Berreta, Jusuf Owega and Arjun Maini.

The Saintéloc Racing trio of Paul Evrard, Gilles Magnus and Jim Pla extended their lead in the title race after finishing second in their Audi. The Comtoyou Racing Aston Martin crew of Matisse Lismont, Jon Van Uitert and Charles Clark took the third spot.

The Al-Manar Racing by Getspeed crew were at the foot of the Gold Cup standings after Q1, were fourth in Q2 and at the foot of the rankings again in Q3. With the three sessions combined, the Al-Manar Racing by Getspeed crew started at the rear of the Gold Cup field after ongoing tyre issues.

The Fanatec GT World Challenge powered by AWS Endurance Cup reaches its conclusion in Jeddah on November 21-23.

Seeb crowned Super Cup hockey champs

In a thrilling match, the winners edged past Ahli-Sidab in a penalty shootout at the Hockey Arena in Al Amerat

MUSCAT: Tuesday's clash was between two Muscat-based long-standing hockey rivals and Seeb edged past Ahli-Sidab 4-3 in a thrilling penalty shootout at the Hockey Arena in Al Amerat to lift the Oman Hockey Association (OHA) 2024 Super Cup.

The Super Cup is the traditional curtain raiser to the hockey season with the Oman Hockey League beginning on Thursday.

Following a goalless first quarter, Seeb drew first blood with a goal from Mohammed Al Lawati in the 18th minute. The joy was short lived as Ahli-Sidab fought back to draw parity in the 25th minute through Oman international Ammar Al Shuaibi as the teams went into the break with the score 1-1. In the third quarter, Ahli-Sidab took the lead off a counter-attack with Aseel Al Muaini finding the target in the 34th minute. The 12-time His Majesty's Cup champions then made it 3-1 with Rashid Al Fazari's powerful shot sounding the boards.

Ahli-Sidab led 3-1 at the end of the third quarter but a solid comeback from Seeb in the final quarter forced the game to be decided in a shootout.

Seeb's Al Lawati reduced the margin soon after the start of the final quarter (48th minute) and found the equaliser with two minutes for the final hooter as Huthaifa Al Balushi scored.

Later, Salem bin Khamis Al Araimi, Chairman of the Oman University Sports Committee, handed over the trophy, in the presence of Marwan bin Juma Al Juma, OHA Chairman of and other officials.

Oman Hockey League

The 2024 Oman Hockey League will feature only six teams. Besides Seeb and Ahli-Sidab, the other teams in fray are Sohar, Salalah, Al Nasr and Dhofar. The winner of the league will receive a cash reward of OMR5,000 while the runner-up will take home OMR3,500. The reward for the third-placed team is OMR2,500. Besides the team awards, there will be individual trophies and a cash prize of OMR100 for the best player, best goalkeeper, and top scorer of the tournament.

OMAN CRUDE PRICE RISES

The price of Oman oil has increased, with prices for delivery by November 2024 reaching $75.15, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil rose by 8cents from the price of Tuesday, which was $75.07. - ONA

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE

MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 4,726.52 points, up by 0.23% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.03% at 428.23 points. National Bank Oman, up 6.43%, was the top gainer while Al Jazeera Services, down 6.40%, was the top loser.

OCCI highlights economic and trade cooperation with Azerbaijan

The meeting took place in Baku within the framework of OCCI's participation in the 2nd GCC-Azerbaijan Economic Forum, organised by the Federation of GCC Chambers

BAKU: Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) highlighted means of enhancing areas of economic, investment and trade cooperation between the Omani private sector and its Azerbaijani counterpart.

This took place in Baku within the framework of OCCI's participation in the 2nd GCC-Azerbaijan Economic Forum that is organised by the Federation of GCC Chambers.

The forum's activities began with a visit to Alat Free Economic Zone in Baku, Azerbaijan. During the visit, the business milieu of the zone was reviewed, in addition to facilities offered to investors.

Further, the GCC-Azerbaijan forum will discuss today a spectrum of topics dealing with joint cooperation in the fields of renewable energy, clean energy, water and electricity. It will also highlight challenges and opportunities in the sectors of transport, logistic services and strategic partnerships between GCC countries and Azerbaijan in areas of agriculture, food security and food industries.

On the sidelines of the forum, several B2B meetings will be held between GCC and Azerbaijani businesspeople. -ONA

BRIEFS

Oil prices dip on worries of China stimulus plans

SINGAPORE: Oil prices fell as investors reassessed the ability of China's stimulus plans to boost the economy enough to drive more fuel demand growth in the world's largest crude importer. Brent crude futures dropped 17 cents, or 0.2%, at $75 a barrel. US West Texas Intermediate crude fell 24 cents, or 0.3%, at $71.32 per barrel. Prices rose about 1.7% on Tuesday after China announced its most aggressive economic stimulus since the COVID-19 pandemic, with interest rate cuts and government funding.

Gold jumps to record high on rate bets, weaker US dollar

SINGAPORE: Gold scaled another high yesterday, boosted by a softer US dollar and hopes of more interest rate cuts. Spot gold rose 0.2% to $2,661.53 per ounce. Bullion hit an all-time high of $2,670.43 earlier. US gold futures gained 0.3% to $2,686.10. The dollar eased 0.2%, making greenback-priced bullion less expensive for other currency holders. Spot silver fell 0.5% to $31.97 per ounce, platinum edged 0.1% higher to $986.85 and palladium shed 0.6% to $1,050.04.

US dollar falls amid major rate cut anticipation

SINGAPORE: The US dollar index fell more than 0.5% after China's aggressive stimulus moves buoyed risk appetite, with growing bets of another outsized US rate cut in November adding to headwinds for the greenback. Against a basket of currencies, the US dollar last stood at 100.26, languishing near a more than one-year low of 100.21. The Aussie peaked at $0.6908 in the early Asian session, its highest since February 2023, while the kiwi rose to a nine-month top of $0.63555. The onshore yuan rose to a 16-month top of 7.0012 per US dollar. Elsewhere, sterling advanced 0.1% to trade at $1.3430, a level not seen since March 2022. The euro gained 0.14% to $1.1195, hovering near a 13-month high hit last month, while the yen eased slightly to 143.32 per dollar. - ONA

SECURE TRANSACTIONS

Dhofar Islamic brings Apple Pay to customers

MUSCAT: Dhofar Islamic, Bank-Dhofar's Islamic Banking Services Window, today brings its customers Apple Pay, a safer, more secure and private way to pay that helps customers avoid handing their payment card to someone else, touching physical buttons or exchanging cash — and uses the power of iPhone to protect every transaction.

Customers simply hold their iPhone or Apple Watch near a payment terminal to make a contactless payment. Every Apple Pay purchase is secure because it is authenticated with Face ID, Touch ID, or device passcode, as well as a one-time unique dynamic security code. Apple Pay is accepted in grocery stores, pharmacies, restaurants, coffee shops, retail stores, and many more places.

Customers can also use Apple Pay on iPhone, iPad, and Mac to make faster and more convenient purchases in apps or on the web in Safari without having to create accounts or repeatedly type in shipping and billing information. Apple Pay makes it easier to pay for food and grocery deliveries, online shopping, transportation, and parking, among other things. Apple Pay can also be used to make payments in apps on Apple Watch.

Security and privacy are at the core of Apple Pay. When customers use a credit or debit card with Apple Pay, the actual card numbers are not stored on the device, nor on Apple servers.

Instead, a unique Device Account Number is assigned, encrypted, and securely stored in the Secure Element, an industry-standard, certified chip designed to store the payment information safely on the device.

Apple Pay is easy to set up. On iPhone, simply open the Wallet app, tap +, and follow the steps to add Dhofar Islamic credit or debit cards. Once a customer adds a card to iPhone, Apple Watch, iPad, and Mac, they can start using Apple Pay on that device right away. Customers will continue to receive all of the rewards and benefits offered by Dhofar Islamic cards.

BOOSTING LOCAL FISHERY RESOURCES

Vale and Ministry of Agriculture partner to deploy 3D artificial reefs in Liwa

Times News Service

MUSCAT: In a groundbreaking initiative aimed at enriching marine ecosystems and boosting local fishery resources, Vale signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Water Resources, represented by the Directorate General of Agricultural Wealth, Fisheries, and Water Resources in North Al Batinah Governorate, to fund the production and deployment of pioneering 3D artificial reefs off the coast of Liwa.

Announced during the Social Investment Forum, the project, a first of its kind in the region, will utilise advanced 3D printing technology to create artificial reefs that closely mimic natural coral reef formations. Carefully designed to withstand the dynamic marine environment of North Al Batinah, the reefs will significantly enhance biodiversity and contribute to the sustainable growth of fish populations, providing long-term benefits to local fishing communities.

Abdullah Al Hadabi,Director General of the Ministry of Agricultural Wealth, Fisheries, and Water Resources commented, "'Our collaboration with Vale is a testamentto our shared commitment to protecting and enhancing Oman's natural marine life. By combining our resources and expertise, we are taking a vital step toward ensuring that our coastal ecosystems remain vibrant and productive, providing a sustainable pathway for improving local livelihoods and preserving our rich biodiversity."

Abdullah Al Saadi, Corporate Affairs and Administration Chiefat Vale in Oman said, "At Vale, our focus is on finding innovative solutions that address the unique challenges faced by the communities where we operate. Introducing 3D artificial reefs in Liwa is one such solution—a forward-thinking effort that leverages advanced technology to create real, lasting benefits. This is not about today; it's about laying the foundation for a sustainable future where local fishermen can thrive, and marine ecosystems are protected."

The project is set to begin within the next month, with the reefs expected to be fully deployed by the end of the year. The reefs are expected to increase local fish catch within the first year, providing a substantial boost to the region's fishery economy. In the long term, the reefs are anticipated to foster a more diverse and resilient marine ecosystem, contributing to the sustainable management of marine resources in the area.

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

National Bank Oman, up 6.43%, was the top gainer while Al Jazeera Services, down 6.40%, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,726.52 points, up by 0.23% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.03% at 428.23 points. National Bank Oman, up 6.43%, was the top gainer while Al Jazeera Services, down 6.40%, was the top loser. Shares of National Bank Oman were the most active in terms of number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 695 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of RO 8.93 million, with more than 41.77 million shares changing hands.

Out of 51 traded securities, 9 advanced, 16 declined, and 26 remained unchanged. At the session close, GCC & Arab investors were net sellers for RO 73K while domestic investors were net buyers for RO 41K, followed by foreign investors for RO 32K worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,764.12 points, up 0.56%. Prices of National Bank Oman, Global Financial Investments, Al Anwar Investment were up by 6.43%, 1.35%, 1.33% respectively. Prices of United Finance, Bank Muscat, Sohar International Bank, OMINVEST were down by 1.75%, 0.78%, 0.72%, 0.28% respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,669.59 points, down 0.08%. Prices of Gulf International Chemicals, Muscat Thread Mill were up by 4.41%, 3.81% respectively. Prices of Gulf Mushroom Products, Galfar Engineering, A'Saffa Foods, Oman Cement were down by 0.90%, 0.81%, 0.27%, 0.26% respectively.

Services Index was down by 0.4% before closing at 1,812.33 points. Prices of Musandam Power, Oman National Engineering were up by 1.14%, 0.89% respectively. Prices of Al Jazeera Services, Sembcorp Salalah, OIFC, Al Batinah Power, National Gas were down by 6.40%, 1.84%, 1.35%, 1.32%, 1.21% respectively.

— United Securities

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	4,743.42	4,709.04	4,726.52	4,715.89	10.64	0.23
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,781.40	7,714.87	7,764.12	7,720.65	43.47	0.56
Industry Index	5,680.52	5,649.88	5,669.59	5,674.05	-4.47	-0.08
Services Index	1,819.93	1,804.40	1,812.33	1,819.56	-7.23	-0.40
MSX Shariah Index	428.23	427.32	428.23	428.35	-0.11	-0.03
MSX TR INDEX	6,592.61	6,544.82	6,569.12	6,554.34	14.79	0.23
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,840.47	8,764.89	8,820.84	8,771.45	49.39	0.56
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	6,553.97	6,518.61	6,541.36	6,546.51	-5.15	-0.08
SERVICES TR IDX	2,117.77	2,099.70	2,108.92	2,117.34	-8.41	-0.40
FIXED INCOME INDEX	1,069.59	1,069.59	1,069.59	1,069.10	0.49	0.05

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
41,770,674	8,926,923	695	24,565,445,260	9	16	26	51

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25

REGULAR MARKET

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RO)	DIFF %	LAST PR.	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	16,243,677	4,865,859	21	0.283	0.300	0.283	0.298	0.280	0.018	6.429	0.298	0.291	0.293	0.100	484,532,014
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	23	2	1	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.074	0.001	1.351	0.075	0.075	0.081	0.100	15,000,000
OM0000007811	MUSANDAM POWER	200	53	1	0.267	0.267	0.267	0.267	0.264	0.003	1.136	0.267	0.240	0.267	0.100	18,794,130
OM0000001152	OMAN NATIONAL ENGINEERING & INVESTMENT	36,183	4,125	2	0.114	0.114	0.114	0.114	0.113	0.001	0.885	0.114	0.114	0.115	0.100	17,100,000
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	20,041	1,438	5	0.072	0.072	0.071	0.072	0.072	0.000	0.000	0.072	0.072	0.072	0.100	8,775,000
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	91,338	15,210	11	0.162	0.170	0.162	0.167	0.167	0.000	0.000	0.167	0.163	0.166	0.100	36,740,000
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIYA INVESTMENT HO.	180,000	12,780	2	0.071	0.071	0.071	0.071	0.071	0.000	0.000	0.071	0.070	0.072	0.100	6,390,000
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	90,228	35,021	6	0.390	0.390	0.388	0.388	0.388	0.000	0.000	0.388	0.386	0.388	0.100	91,727,080
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	147,000	11,277	13	0.077	0.077	0.076	0.077	0.077	0.000	0.000	0.077	0.076	0.077	0.100	13,475,000
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	740,769	56,817	33	0.077	0.077	0.076	0.077	0.077	0.000	0.000	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.100	55,009,288
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	205,682	60,733	26	0.295	0.296	0.295	0.295	0.295	0.000	0.000	0.295	0.295	0.296	0.100	227,209,000
OM0000009072	OQ GAS NETWORKS	7,289,029	1,046,435	217	0.144	0.144	0.143	0.144	0.144	0.000	0.000	0.144	0.143	0.148	0.100	623,609,844
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	34,902	13,541	5	0.388	0.388	0.387	0.387	0.388	-0.001	-0.258	0.387	0.387	0.388	0.100	128,047,739
OM0000002804	ASAFFA FOODS	3,230	1,195	3	0.370	0.370	0.370	0.370	0.371	-0.001	-0.270	0.370	0.361	0.390	0.100	44,400,000
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	75,246	26,690	13	0.355	0.357	0.351	0.357	0.358	-0.001	-0.279	0.357	0.350	0.357	0.100	238,606,457
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	145,770	40,503	8	0.278	0.279	0.277	0.279	0.280	-0.001	-0.357	0.277	0.277	0.279	0.100	181,613,440
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	5,783	5,743	7	0.997	0.997	0.993	0.993	1.000	-0.007	-0.700	0.993	0.993	1.010	0.100	744,750,000
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	7,665,131	1,059,374	72	0.138	0.139	0.138	0.138	0.139	-0.001	-0.719	0.138	0.128	0.147	0.100	769,659,985
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	3,420,156	879,951	42	0.258	0.258	0.255	0.256	0.258	-0.002	-0.775	0.256	0.256	0.256	0.100	1,921,637,648
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	1,317,165	98,789	41	0.075	0.076	0.075	0.075	0.076	-0.001	-1.316	0.075	0.075	0.078	0.100	50,616,557
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	128,958	7,222	3	0.056	0.056	0.056	0.056	0.057	-0.001	-1.754	0.056	0.056	0.058	0.100	19,943,129
OM0000004735	SEMBCORP SALALAH	57,160	6,210	9	0.109	0.109	0.107	0.107	0.109	-0.002	-1.835	0.107	0.107	0.109	0.100	102,139,199
Total	22	37,897,671	8,248,967	541												

Parallel Market

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RO)	DIFF %	LAST PR.	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
OM0000002028	GULF INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS	1,000	71	1	0.071	0.071	0.071	0.071	0.068	0.003	4.412	0.071	0.065	0.070	0.100	1,491,000
OM0000002036	MUSCAT THREAD MILLS	100,000	10,821	10	0.107	0.109	0.107	0.109	0.105	0.004	3.810	0.109	0.109	0.110	0.100	1,786,958
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	24,691	1,861	2	0.074	0.076	0.074	0.076	0.075	0.001	1.333	0.076	0.074	0.077	0.100	16,125,680
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	30,000	1,320	1	0.044	0.044	0.044	0.044	0.044	0.000	0.000	0.044	0.044	0.000	0.100	13,514,438
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	5,402	273	3	0.050	0.055	0.050	0.055	0.055	0.000	0.000	0.055	0.050	0.055	0.100	4,675,000
OM0000002200	AHLI BANK	3,110	470	1	0.151	0.151	0.151	0.151	0.151	0.000	0.000	0.151	0.151	0.151	0.100	354,798,277
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	20,000	3,140	1	0.157	0.157	0.157	0.157	0.157	0.000	0.000	0.157	0.157	0.000	0.100	470,427,175
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	55,531	20,283	14	0.366	0.366	0.360	0.366	0.366	0.000	0.000	0.366	0.360	0.366	0.100	29,793,407
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	120,000	12,720	8	0.106	0.106	0.106	0.106	0.106	0.000	0.000	0.106	0.106	0.106	0.100	237,117,021
OM0000004669	SHARQIYAH DESALINATION	1,938	264	1	0.136	0.136	0.136	0.136	0.136	0.000	0.000	0.136	0.136	0.000	0.100	13,301,094
OM0000004776	TAKAFUL OMAN	11,770	506	2	0.043	0.043	0.043	0.043	0.043	0.000	0.000	0.043	0.043	0.043	0.100	10,750,000
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	21,550	3,362	4	0.156	0.156	0.156	0.156	0.156	0.000	0.000	0.156	0.156	0.000	0.100	8,580,000
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	235,746	13,598	19	0.059	0.059	0.056	0.058	0.058	0.000	0.000	0.058	0.056	0.059	0.100	84,830,885
OM0000007407	DHOFAR GENERATING	46,800	2,938	5	0.063	0.063	0.062	0.063	0.063	0.000	0.000	0.063	0.061	0.063	0.100	14,001,120
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	25,029	1,603	5	0.066	0.066	0.064	0.066	0.066	0.000	0.000	0.066	0.064	0.071	0.100	32,395,201
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	379,800	47,034	24	0.124	0.125	0.123	0.123	0.124	-0.001	-0.806	0.123	0.123	0.123	0.100	24,967,333
OM0000002267	GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS	84,692	18,671	17	0.222	0.222	0.220	0.220	0.222	-0.002	-0.901	0.220	0.220	0.220	0.100	10,068,476
OM0000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	69,537	17,523	2	0.252	0.252	0.252	0.252	0.255	-0.003	-1.176	0.252	0.232	0.255	0.100	40,320,000
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	46,579	3,825	7	0.083	0.083	0.082	0.082	0.083	-0.001	-1.205	0.082	0.081	0.087	0.100	6,970,000
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	5,000	944	2	0.190	0.190	0.188	0.190	0.203	-0.013	-6.404	0.188	0.187	0.190	0.100	11,628,812
Total	20	1,288,175	161,226	129												

TRANSFORMING MARITIME SECTOR

Ministry on track to achieve Maritime India Vision 2030 goals

NEW DELHI: Sarbananda Sonowal, Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, presented an extensive overview of the significant milestones achieved by the ministry during the first 100 days.

The press conference was aimed at showcasing the ministry's contributions toward transforming India's maritime sector and aligning with the vision of Maritime India Vision 2030 and Maritime Amritkaal Vision 2047.

Sonowal commenced his address by acknowledging the unwavering guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, whose vision of 'Ports for Prosperity and Ports for Progress' has become the cornerstone of India's maritime transformation.

He highlighted that PM Modi's focus on holistic development and his mantra of 'Transformation through Transportation' are leading to a complete overhaul of India's maritime landscape.

Sonowal further elaborated on the major initiatives taken by the Ministry under the guidance of PM Modi, highlighting that these are geared toward enhancing port infrastructure, improving ease of doing business, promoting sustainability, and creating employment opportunities.

The Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways is resolutely focused on achieving the goals set forth under the Maritime India Vision 2030. -ANI

MOTOR INSURANCE

Zubair Corporation partners with Liva Insurance to offer exclusive employee benefits

MUSCAT: The Zubair Corporation signed a partnership agreement with Liva Insurance, aimed at providing employees across the corporation with access to special motor insurance packages and exclusive rewards. This strategic collaboration underscores the corporation's ongoing commitment to enhancing employee well-being and satisfaction.

Through this partnership, employees of The Zubair Corporation will benefit from exclusive offers on Liva Insurance's motor insurance policies. Beyond the exceptional value these policies offer, Liva Insurance's customers will also gain membership to the Liva Insurance rewards program, which includes special discounts and deals across a wide range of lifestyle services.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Niels Bormans, Group Chief Executive Officer of The Zubair Corporation, said, "We are always looking for ways to offer added value and support to our employees. This partnership with Liva Insurance is another step towards ensuring our people have access to services that enhance their lives both professionally and personally. We are proud to collaborate with Liva Isnurance, a company known for its customer-centric solutions and commitment to customer satisfaction."

> Zubair Corporation employees will benefit from exclusive offers on Liva's motor insurance policies and gain membership to the Liva Insurance rewards programme which includes special discounts

Hanaa Al Hinai, CEO of Liva-Insurance, added, "Liva Insurance is delighted to partner with The Zubair Corporation, one of Oman's leading conglomerates, to offer bespoke motor insurance packages and exclusive rewards to its employees. Our goal is to go beyond traditional insurance by offering a holistic approach to protection and well-being, and we are excited to bring these benefits to The Zubair Corporation's workforce."

This partnership reflects The Zubair Corporation's dedication to fostering a supportive and rewarding workplace environment, as well as Liva Insurance's commitment to providing value beyond insurance, ensuring employees not only receive industry-leading insurance packages but also enjoy meaningful lifestyle enhancements.

ENTERTAINMENT

Yas Island is all set to become the heart of Indian cinema as it plays host to the epic IIFA Festival 2024 - A show-stopping celebration of five iconic industries

THE MAGIC OF INDIAN MOVIES

FRIDAY

Rana Daggubati

Diya Menon

Raashii Khanna

Prabhu Deva

Shane Nigam

Vijay Raghavendra

SATURDAY

Shah Rukh Khan

Karan Johar

Rekha

Kriti Sanon

Janhvi Kapoor

Nora Fatehi

SUNDAY

Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy

Shilpa Rao

Honey Singh

Siddhant Chaturvedi

Abhishek Banerjee

Iulia Vantur

UTSAVAM 2024
FRIDAY 27TH SEPTEMBER

IFA UTSAVAM 2024 HOSTS:
TELUGU: Rana Daggubati & Teja Sajja
KANNADA: Akul Balaji & Vijay Raghavendra
TAMIL: Sathish & Diya Menon
MALAYALAM: Sudev Nair & Pearle Maaney
IIFA UTSAVAM PERFORMERS:
Prabhu Deva, Rockstar DSP, Shane Nigam, Raashii Khanna, Pragya Jaiswal, Malashri, Regina Cassandra, and more!
STAR-STUDDED LINE-UP OF ATTENDEES AT IIFA UTSAVAM:
Chiranjeevi, Ram Charan, Rana Daggubati, Teja Sajja, Vikram, Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, SJ Suryah, Samantha, Jiiva, Mrunal Thakur, Nani, Mani Ratnam, AR Rahman, Balakrishna, Jayam Ravi, Keerthy Suresh, Indrajit Sukumaran, Anaswara Rajan, Mamitha Baiju, Shraddha Srinath, Brahmanandam, and Shine Tom Chacko and many more

AWARDS
SATURDAY, 28TH SEPTEMBER

HOSTS: SHAH RUKH KHAN, KARAN JOHAR AND VICKY KAUSHAL
PERFORMERS: REKHA, SHAHID KAPOOR, VICKY KAUSHAL, KRITI SANON, JANHVI KAPOOR, ANANYA PANDAY

ROCKS
SUNDAY, 29TH SEPTEMBER

HOSTS: SIDDHANT CHATURVEDI AND ABHISHEK BANERJEE
PERFORMERS: SHANKAR-EHSAAN-LOY, SHILPA RAO, HONEY SINGH, LULIA V VANTUR

RAHUL DAS
rahuldas@timesofoman.com

ABU DHABI: If the studios and sets in India wore a deserted look this weekend, then Abu Dhabi is to be blamed.

A galaxy of Indian stars is making a beeline for the capital city of UAE, to celebrate 24 years of cinematic excellence from September 27-29 at Yas Island, Abu Dhabi.

Heralding an extraordinary journey over 24 glorious years, the IIFA (International Indian Film Academy) 2024 Awards is all set to take place in the Etihad Arena, Abu Dhabi.

The three-day extravaganza is set to showcase the rich diversity of Indian cinema by bringing together the glamour of the IIFA Awards.

The festivities will kick start on Friday, 27th September, with IIFA Utsavam Awards, a grand celebration of the four vibrant South Indian film industries.

The excitement continues on Saturday, 28th September, with the prestigious IIFA Awards.

The festival concludes on Sunday, 29th September, with the exclusive, IIFA Rocks.

The 24th edition of IIFA promises to be a magnificent celebration of cinematic excellence, featuring a stellar array of talent and industry luminaries, from the brilliance of Hindi cinema to the dynamic South Indian film industry, OTT platforms, global stars, international dignitaries and cinema enthusiasts from around the world.

Andre Timmins, Founder/Director, IIFA stated, "We are thrilled to unite the grandeur of Indian cinema for a historic star-studded celebration of five iconic industries, our biggest and most spectacular IIFA Festival yet. This year's IIFA will be a celebration of unprecedented scale, transcending cinematic boundaries with the convergence of Hindi Cinema and South Indian cinema, set against Yas Island's unmatched hospitality and breath-taking backdrop as a premier international destination."

He added, "The excitement is palpable as tickets for IIFA Awards night have sold out! Get ready for unforgettable moments, mesmerising performances, and a cultural extravaganza during our star-studded three-day IIFA Festival. This galactic celebration of cinema will captivate audiences worldwide and leave a lasting global impact. A true testament to the unparalleled appeal of Yas Island, IIFA 2024 festival will foster meaningful connections, offer unique networking opportunities, and celebrate the visionaries who have shaped the global entertainment landscape, setting the stage for an extraordinary journey to 2025."

Speaking about the event, Bollywood superstar, Shah Rukh Khan, who is also hosting the 24th edition of the IIFA Festival, said, "IIFA is a celebration of Indian cinema that resonates across the globe and being a part of its journey over the years has been amazing. I look forward to bringing the energy, passion, and grandeur of IIFA to life once again, as we gear up for an unforgettable celebration of Indian cinema this September!"

Film director, Karan Johar, while announcing his return to host the IIFA Festival, said, "For more than two decades, IIFA has been a defining part of my journey. My father, with his extensive industry experience and vision, was a significant member of IIFA's advisory board in its early years, contributing to its mission of celebrating Indian cinema.

"His association with IIFA was a source of immense pride, further cementing our family's deep connection with the Indian film industry and its international outreach. It's an absolute honour to reignite the magic on the iconic IIFA stage for an unprecedented third showcase this, alongside my dear friend Shah Rukh Khan. Get ready for an unforgettable experience – we're about to light up Yas Island, Abu Dhabi, like never before!"

Actor Vicky Kaushal shared his excitement about co-hosting and performing at the 24th edition of the IIFA Festival. He said, "IIFA has been an important part in my journey, a remarkable celebration of cinematic excellence, and a gathering of the brightest talent and visionaries in Indian cinema. Every time I step onto the IIFA stage, it's pure magic. Returning to IIFA at the breath-taking Yas Island, Abu Dhabi – a place where entertainment knows no limits – is an experience I've eagerly anticipated. I'l try this time too to ignite the stage with fresh energy and create unforgettable memories with the amazing IIFA family. The anticipation, the fans, and the celebration of cinema make it truly special. This year is set to be one for the history books."

Evergreen, Rekha shared her excitement about being part of the IIFA journey and her upcoming 22-minute finale performance at the IIFA Awards. She said, "IIFA holds a special place in my heart, representing not just a celebration of Indian cinema but a vibrant fusion of art, culture, and love on a global stage.It feels like home – a beautiful showcase where the magic of Indian cinema truly comes alive, and I've had the privilege of experiencing that magic first-hand over the years. Being part of this iconic festival once again is a profound honour, and I am thrilled to contribute to the legacy of IIFA. The energy, warmth, and passion of the audience make it an unparalleled experience. I look forward to celebrating our cinema at Yas Island, Abu Dhabi, and creating more cherished memories with all of you at the 24th edition of IIFA. The incredible fans and the IIFA family make this journey truly unforgettable."

Film star Shahid Kapoor said, "IIFA has always been an electrifying journey for me, and every time I step onto that iconic global stage, the magic is undeniable. Performing at Yas Island is the ultimate global destination for entertainment and leisure, and it is going to be nothing short of unforgettable. I'm ready to deliver something extraordinary for the fans. IIFA has given me some of my most cherished moments in Indian cinema, and I'm beyond thrilled to be part of this legendary celebration once again. Get ready for a spectacular night brimming with energy, emotion, and the pure magic of cinema this September 2024!"

SPORTS

FRANCE WORLD CUP WINNER

Ex-Real Madrid and Man Utd defender Varane retires aged 31

PARIS: Former Manchester United, Real Madrid and France defender Raphael Varane retired from football at the age of 31 on Wednesday.

Varane joined Italian side Como on a free transfer in July but suffered a knee injury on his debut against Sampdoria last month.

The centre-back says he will stay at the club in a non-playing role.

"I hold myself to the highest standard, I want to go out strong, not just holding on to the game," he wrote on Instagram. "It takes a big dose of courage to listen to your heart and your instinct."

Varane began his career at French side Lens but spent just one season in the first team before joining Real Madrid in 2011.

He enjoyed a glittering 10-year career in the Spanish capital, winning 18 trophies - including three La Liga titles and four Champions Leagues.

The defender moved to Old Trafford in the summer 2021 for an initial £34m, going on to make 95 appearances in all competitions despite struggling with injuries.

He won the Carabao Cup in 2022 and his final appearance for the club was an FA Cup final victory over rivals Manchester City at Wembley in May. Varane made his France debut in 2013 and earned 93 caps, winning the World Cup in 2018, the Nations League in 2021 and reaching the World Cup final again in 2022.

"I have fallen and risen a thousand times, and this time, it's the moment to stop and hang my boots up with my final game winning a trophy at Wembley," he said.

"I have no regrets, I wouldn't change a thing. I have won more than I could have even dreamed of, but beyond the accolades and trophies, I am proud that no matter what, I have stuck to my principles of being sincere and have tried to leave everywhere better than I found it. I hope I have made you all proud."

On his future plans, Varane added: "A new life begins off the pitch. I will remain with Como. Just without using my boots and shin pads. Something I am looking forward to sharing more about soon."

In April, Varane said he had "damaged his body" because of the continued impact of heading the ball, and once finished a France World Cup game in 2014 on "autopilot" after playing on with concussion. He has called for greater protection and better awareness of the issue. - Agencies

Man City won't waste energy on EFL Cup, says Guardiola

Doku and Nunes scored as City defeated Watford in a third round game at the Etihad Stadium

LONDON: Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola says he is not going to "waste energy" on the EFL Cup even though no manager has been more successful than him in the competition.

City edged into the last 16 of this season's edition thanks to first-half goals from Jeremy Doku and Matheus Nunes, his first for the club, in a 2-1 win against Championship side Watford.

Only Doku and Kyle Walker kept their starting places for a game that began less than 50 hours after the enthralling 2-2 Premier League draw with Arsenal had ended.

Though, while their side included 16-year-old debutant Kaden Braithwaite, established internationals John Stones, Jack Grealish, Nunes and Phil Foden were among those to come in.

With a league game at Newcastle on Saturday lunchtime (12:30 BST), and a Wednesday tie ruled out on police grounds as Manchester United are playing at home to FC Twente in the Europa League, Guardiola opted for a quick turnaround from Sunday rather than the alternatives of switching the game to Watford or playing on Thursday.

"The next round, I announce to you, I will play the second team," said Guardiola. "We are not going to waste energy, for sure."

The fourth round is scheduled for either October 29 or 30. Although there are no clashes with European fixtures in that week, Chelsea are due to play in the UEFA Conference League when the quarter-finals are scheduled in the midweek before Christmas.

Guardiola is level with Brian Clough and Sir Alex Ferguson with four triumphs in this competition. However, with additional European matches from this season, he feels he has to look at the tournament differently.

"The schedule is the schedule, we cannot handle it anyway," he said. "Today for [James] McAtee, Matheus [Nunes], Jack [Grealish], Phil [Foden], who didn't play, the young lad, 16 years old, it's perfect," he said.

"That's why it's a good competition, otherwise we wouldn't win four in a row.

"We play to go through. We never throw a competition. Never. But we played 50 hours ago. I'm not going to [take] a risk with the Premier League and the Champions League in this competition."

On a night when Braithwaite became the third-youngest player to start a game for City, Nunes also had a night to remember, following up Doku's fifth-minute opener with a precise first-half finish.

A £53m signing from Wolves just over a year ago, Nunes has not made the impact envisaged.

The Portugal international started only seven times last season and so far this term has been limited to just 20 minutes' Premier League action across three substitute appearances.

"He has a special quality that few players have," said Guardiola. "He is excellent in space and in the transitions. I am really pleased for him. He's a lovely guy."

At Stamford Bridge, Christopher Nkunku scored a hat-trick as Chelsea cruised into the fourth round of the Carabao Cup with a convincing 5-0 win over League Two Barrow.

Nkunku opened the scoring in the eighth minute with a cool finish after a fine chipped pass from Joao Felix.

The forward soon added his second with a clever flick to divert Malo Gusto's low cross into the net, before a Felix free-kick hit the post and bounced in off Barrow goalkeeper Paul Farman to give the Blues a 3-0 half-time lead.

Two minutes after the restart Pedro Neto scored his first Chelsea goal by tapping in after Mykhailo Mudryk's pass across goal.

Nkunku completed his hat-trick in the 75th minute after tackling keeper Farman and passing the ball into an empty net.

Thanks to his first Chelsea treble, the 26-year-old Frenchman now has six goals in eight appearances this season for the Blues.

Nkunku was making his first start for the hosts since their opening-day defeat by Manchester City last month.

Other results: Walsall 0 Leicester City 0 (Leicester City win 3-0 on penalties), Wycombe Wanderers 1 Aston Villa 2. - Agencies

City confirm Rodri has injured knee ligament

LONDON: Manchester City on Tuesday night have confirmed Spain midfielder Rodri suffered a knee ligament injury against Arsenal on Sunday.

Rodri was substituted in the 21st minute after he twisted the joint in a collision with Arsenal's Thomas Partey at a corner.

No timescale has yet been put on the player's recovery, but speaking after Tuesday's Carabao Cup win over Watford, Pep Guardiola said he is set for a lengthy spell on the sidelines.

"Still we don't have the definitive [diagnosis] but he will be out for a long time - a while," said the City boss. "But there are some opinions that maybe it will be less than we expected.

"We are waiting for the last phone calls from him and the doctors for what definitely he has and the type of surgery he has to get.

"We expect that tonight, tomorrow we will know exactly."

Rodri has travelled to Spain to see a specialist following initial tests in Manchester.

Guardiola has described the 28-year-old as "irreplaceable" - City have not last in the last 48 Premier League matches in which he has started - but the manager says he will find a solution in his absence.

City were beaten in four out of the five games Rodri missed last season, while he has lost just once in 50 appearances in all competitions.

He was also named player of the tournament as Spain won Euro 2024 in July and is one of the favourites to win the Ballon d'Or next month - given to the world's best player.

A week ago the former Atletico Madrid player, who played 63 times for City and Spain last season, claimed players are "close to" striking over an increase in the number of games in the calendar, including an expanded Champions League and Club World Cup. - Agencies

LA LIGA PRIMERA DIVISION

Mbappe's fine run at Real continues

MADRID: Kylian Mbappe scored in his fifth consecutive match to continue his fine start to life in a Real Madrid shirt, as his side survived a late comeback to beat Deportivo Alaves 3-2 on Tuesday.

Lucas Vazquez gave the La Liga champions the lead inside 57 seconds before Frenchman Mbappe found the net with a fine finish after being set up by Jude Bellingham. Rodrygo added a third just after the restart, but Carlos Benavidez pulled a goal back for the visitors in the 85th minute.

Deportivo's Kike Garcia then added a second a minute later to ensure a nervy finish, but Carlo Ancelotti's side were able to hang on.

Mbappe's strike means the 25-year-old now has seven goals in nine appearances this season for Real, including six in his past seven. He and Bellingham had also combined in the 23rd minute but the forward had his strike into the bottom corner ruled out for offside. Mbappe signed a five-year deal at Real Madrid in July after the expiry of his Paris Saint-Germain contract. - Agencies

SAN SIRO STRIPPED OF HOSTING

UEFA reopens bids for 2027 Champions League final

LAUSANNE: UEFA has reopened the bidding for stadiums to host the 2027 Champions League final, after the match was stripped from Milan on Tuesday.

The San Siro was to be the venue for the showcase final but, after Milan officials failed to assure UEFA that planned redevelopment work would not hamper the event, European football's governing body opted to take it away from them.

AC Milan and Inter Milan are considering building a new stadium in the San Siro area.

The new host stadium for the 2027 final is expected to be announced in May or June 2025.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the UEFA Executive Committee on Tuesday, where changes to the organisation's solidarity funding was also agreed.

The 'big five' European leagues - the Premier League, La Liga, Ligue 1, Serie A and Bundesliga - agreed to have their solidarity payments capped at 10m euros (£8.3m) per season up to and including 2026-27. This is an increase of 1.5m euros on the previous cycle, but there are now 308m euros (£256.3m) to be shared rather than 177.2m euros (£147.4m) in the previous cycle. The funds are allocated to clubs not participating in European competitions. - Agencies

TENNIS

Injury-hit Cilic creates ATP history with comeback title

HANGZHOU: Former US Open champion Marin Cilic became the lowest-ranked player to win an ATP Tour title with an emotional victory at the Hangzhou Open on Tuesday.

Croatia's Cilic, who started the tournament at 777th in the world, has spent the majority of the past two seasons out with a knee injury which required multiple surgeries.

Given a wildcard to play in Hangzhou, the former world NO.3 had not won an ATP Tour match in 22 months before this week.

On Tuesday, just four days before his 36th birthday, he beat home favourite Zhang Zhizhen 7-6 (7-5), 7-6 (7-5) to lift the title.

"It has been a difficult period for me - I lost my ranking and I didn't play too much," said Cilic, who reached a career-high ranking of third in 2018.

Cilic had the latest surgery on his right knee in May, saying it was the "best option" to help overcome the problem and return to court.

He played just two matches in 2023 and another four times at the start of this season.

The comeback began on the Challenger Tour - the tier below the main ATP events - in August before stepping up a level again over the past week in China.

Cilic hit 18 aces and won 42 of 50 first-service points (84%) against 43rd-ranked Zhang.

In his post-match speech, the 2014 US Open champion dedicated the victory to his family - including his wife and two children - for their support during the low moments.

"Everybody at home has been with me in this difficult period, working day by day, believing and pushing me, giving me strength and spirit," Cilic said.

"I'm happy to make this victory, not just for me, but for them. For everyone there is a small piece of this trophy."

On the back of winning a 21st title of his career, Cilic will rise 404 places in the rankings to 373 next week. - Agencies

IN PICTURES

BRICS civilisation dialogue deepens understanding, friendship Artists from Russia present music with ethnic characteristics in Kazan, Russia. The BRICS Civilisation Dialogue was held in the Russian city of Kazan with the participation of more than 300 experts, scholars and young representatives from various fields and institutions from the BRICS countries. — Xinhua

Shilpa Shetty, Suniel Shetty reunite at event
Bollywood stars Shilpa Shetty and Suniel Shetty were captured bumping into each other at an event in Mumbai. In visuals captured by the paparrazi, both Shilpa and Suniel could be seen exchanging pleasantries as soon as they saw each other. The duo even posed together for pictures. — ANI

Temporary shelter in northern Gaza Strip city of Jabalia
People are pictured at a temporary shelter in the northern Gaza Strip city of Jabalia. — Xinhua

World Junior Wushu Championships
Sana Panahidorchen of Iran competes during Group C competition of women's Nanquan category of Taolu at the World Junior Wushu Championships in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei. — Xinhua

Aerial photo of Deng Deng National Park in East Cameroon
An aerial drone picture shows a forest of Deng Deng National Park in the East Region of Cameroon. Located in Cameroon's East Region, Deng Deng National Park is home to lowland gorillas and other threatened species, including chimpanzees, elephants, hippos and giant pangolins. — Xinhua

Erhai forum in Geneva offers insights into ecological conservation and biodiversity
A participant presents Yunnan folk costumes at the 2024 Erhai forum on ecological civilisation and biodiversity in Geneva, Switzerland. At the 2024 Erhai forum on ecological civilisation and biodiversity held in Geneva, experts, policymakers and business leaders from around the world gathered to address pressing concerns over lake ecosystem management. — Xinhua

New academic year starts in Qormi, Malta
Students arrive at a school on the first day of a new academic year in Qormi, Malta. — Xinhua

ROUND-UP

Bahar picks first raffle winners of Own Your Dream Tesla promotion

This promotion presents an exceptional opportunity for residents to win a range of prizes, including the mega prize of a Tesla Model Y, which is the first of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman

MUSCAT: Bahar, the flagship brand of National Detergent Company (NDC), announced the winners of the first raffle draw in its ongoing promotion 'Buy Bahar Win Your Dream Tesla'.

Launched on July 25 and continuing until October 7, this campaign has garnered significant engagement from loyal customers throughout Oman.

The first raffle has resulted in ten consumers winning gift vouchers worth OMR 50 each. Additionally, 10 participants won brand-new washing machines, and five individuals have won the iPhone 14, while another five have won the latest iPhone 15. Furthermore, five participants were lucky to win Samsung Galaxy S24.

This promotion presents an exceptional opportunity for residents to win a range of prizes, including the mega prize of a Tesla Model Y, which is the first of its kind in Oman.

All are winners with the instant "Scratch and Win", customers have numerous opportunities to win with every purchase. This promotion is available in all leading hyper/supermarkets in Oman, and participation requires purchasing any Bahar, No.1, Farah, Pinex and Spark products just for RO 3 and entering details in the raffle coupon for a chance to win in the upcoming raffles.

Reflecting on the promotion's success, Murali Sundar, CEO of National Detergent Company, commented, "We are delighted by the enthusiastic participation and engagement from our customers. This campaign is designed not only to reward our customers but also to celebrate the longstanding trust and loyalty they have shown towards Bahar. The winners of this first draw exemplify our commitment to offering unique and valuable rewards. We look forward to the forthcoming draw and are dedicated to continuing to provide exceptional value and memorable experiences."

Anish Kumar, Head of Marketing and Sales at NDC, added, "The success of the first raffle has been remarkable, and we are excited to see the momentum build as we approach the final grand prize draw. At Bahar, we aim to exceed traditional promotional methods and deliver extraordinary value to our customers. The positive feedback from our winners highlights the impact of this campaign, and we are confident it will further strengthen the bond between Bahar and its devoted consumers."

As a leading supplier of home and personal care products in the region, Bahar, a 100% Omani brand, remains dedicated to delivering outstanding value and quality to customers across the Sultanate. The final raffle draw to select the Mega winner of Tesla Model Y and other grand prizes is scheduled for 2nd week of October.

OFFER

Akeed benefits on Toyota Corolla

MUSCAT: Drive one of Toyota's best-selling sedans with exclusive Akeed benefits. Become a Corolla owner and get service upgrades from 2 Years/20,000 km or 10 Years/100,000 km (whichever is earlier) along with 1st year free insurance. Enjoy the winning season at Toyota and participate in the grand raffle to win an All-new Toyota Prado.

Don't miss out before the campaign ends on 31st October 2024. Head to your nearest Toyota showroom to learn more and check out Toyota's amazing product lineup.

Take advantage of the Akeed benefits and invest in a Corolla this season. Built on the brand ethos of quality, durability, and reliability, the sedan remains a top-notch household choice. It delivers an exhilarating experience packed with advanced safety, technologies and unmatched fuel efficiency.

Exploring the vehicle dynamics, the Corolla features a 2.0-litre, four-cylinder Dynamic Force engine that produces 168 hp and 20.39 kg/m of torque. For a more fuel-efficient option, opt for the 1.6-litre four-cylinder engine that produces 121 hp and 15.7 kg/m of torque. Each engine type is paired with a direct-shift CVT transmission. Promising agility and high confidence, the Corolla is utilitarian at all trim levels.

Make fun memories and create joyous moments in the Corolla which is built for comfort, convenience, and safety of your family. The makers of the Corolla have always opted for a simple yet appealing interior style with impressive space, integrated functionalities, and intuitive controls. Experience the pillowy, cushion-fitted seating space created with fine-quality material with supporting armrests, comfortable legroom space, cup holders, seamless connectivity options, and the latest technologies for the driver's assistance.

The sedan offers a smart-key system that allows keyless switching on and off the car. Its 8-inch display audio screen is augmented with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto to boost the driving mood. Seamlessly connect phones to the six-speaker sound system and hit the cruise control for longer drives. Adding more to the experience are the rear seat AC vents, a moonroof, a 4.2-inch multi-information display (MID), and 60:40 split-folding rear seats.

LIMITED OFFER

Bestune unveils 'unmatched price' promotion on its premium models

MUSCAT: Bestune Oman, represented by Gulf Great Sands (GGS), has introduced a special promotion titled 'Bestune's Limited Offer - Drive Luxury at an Unmatched Price' on its premium models, including the Bestune T77 Pro, Bestune T99, Bestune B70, and B70S.

As part of this exclusive promotion, Bestune Oman is offering a range of attractive deals for customers. These include complimentary registration and free insurance for first year only, a service package for periodic maintenance, complimentary window tinting, and a manufacturer's warranty.

A spokesperson for Bestune Oman commented, "We are thrilled to present this opportunity for car enthusiasts in Oman to experience the luxury and performance of the Bestune lineup. With its dynamic and sporty design, unmatched elegance, and advanced technological features, Bestune vehicles are on par with high-end cars equipped with the latest innovations and radar-based systems."

The offer which has already begun is valid till October 17, 2024, for models purchased through the Bestune showrooms. All customers opting for the retail offer are eligible for the below said offer.

The Bestune T99 is available for OMR 10,100, the T77 Pro for OMR 6,950, the B70S for OMR 7,450, and the B70 for OMR 7,050. All prices are inclusive of 5% VAT.

Customers purchasing the Bestune T77 Pro, Bestune T99, Bestune B70, or B70S during the promotional period will receive free vehicle registration for the first year, applicable only to private registrations. Commercial vehicle customers with red plates will need to cover the cost difference for commercial registration.

Customers who buy the Bestune T77 Pro, Bestune T99, Bestune B70, or B70S during this promotion will qualify for free first-year vehicle insurance covering Oman and the UAE, applicable only to private registrations. Commercial vehicle customers will need to pay the difference in insurance costs.

All Bestune customers will receive a complimentary service package covering periodic maintenance as per the manufacturer's recommendations. This does not include wear and tear parts. The service is guaranteed for 3 years or up to 55,000 kms, with 10,000 km periodic maintenance intervals for 1 year.

During the promotional period, customers purchasing a new Bestune T77 Pro, Bestune T99, Bestune B70 or B70S will receive complimentary window tinting. This service is available exclusively at Bestune Gulf Great Sands Service Centres and includes both window tinting and ceramic coating.

All customers purchasing Bestune models will receive a six-year/250,000-kilometer manufacturer's warranty.

Bestune T99

The Bestune T99 Crossover offers luxury at its finest with the Limousine MY2023 model, featuring a 2.0L Turbo Engine with 220hp and a 6-speed automatic transmission. Key features include a Panoramic Sunroof, Auto Sensing Headlamps, 20" Alloy Wheels, a 12.3" Infotainment System, Cruise Control, Automatic Emergency Brake, Fully Automatic Parking, and a Panoramic Camera with 3D View. Dimensions: 4800mm (L) x 1915mm (W) x 1685mm (H).

Bestune T77 Pro

The Bestune T77 Pro Compact Crossover in the Delux MY2025 variant features a 1.5L Turbo Engine with 168hp and a 7-speed DCT. It includes 18" Dual Tone Alloy Wheels, LED Headlamps, a Panoramic Sunroof, 12.3" Infotainment Screens, Leather Seats, Push Button Start, Front & Side Airbags, Keyless Entry, Cruise Control, and Hill Descent Control. Dimensions: 4525mm (L) x 1845mm (W) x 1615mm (H).

Bestune B70S

The Bestune B70S Stylish Coupe SUV in the Premium MY2025 model is equipped with a 1.5L Turbo Engine producing 158hp and a 7-speed DCT. It features a Panoramic Sunroof, LED Headlights & DRLs, 18" Alloy Wheels, a 12.3" Full-colour HD Central Control Screen, Adaptive Cruise Control, and a 360° Panoramic View. Safety is enhanced with Front, Side & Curtain Airbags. Dimensions: 4555mm (L) x 1850mm (W) x 1515mm (H).

Bestune B70

The Bestune B70 Mid-level Sedan in the Comfort MY2025 variant offers a 1.5L Turbo Engine with 165hp and a 7-speed DCT. It includes 18" Dual Tone Alloy Wheels, LED Headlamps, a Panoramic Sunroof, 6 Speakers, Leather Seats, a Rear View Camera, Front, Rear & Curtain Airbags, Keyless Entry, Cruise Control, and an Electric Parking Brake (EPB) with Auto Hold. Dimensions: 4810mm (L) x 1840mm (W) x 1455mm (H).

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** A raffle for one car on 1st November 2024, and raffle for 2 cars on 1st January 2025.