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OMAN LIKELY TO BE AFFECTED BY A LOW PRESSURE SYSTEM

The atmosphere of the Sultanate of Oman is likely to be affected by a low pressure system, starting from Sunday until next Tuesday. During this period, it is expected that clouds will flow over the governorates of Dhofar and Al Wusta and Al Hajar Mountains and areas adjacent to them. Rains of varying intensity will fall, sometimes accompanied by thunder, and may extend to coastal areas. **>A2**



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TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES



OMAN Inflation rate in Oman rises by 1.1%

1 The inflation rate in the Sultanate of Oman rose by 1.1% in August 2024 compared to the same period in 2023 for the base year 2018, according to data from the Consumer Price Index in the Sultanate issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information. **>A3**

WORLD Nasrallah killed, confirms Hezbollah

2 Hezbollah has confirmed that its leader Hassan Nasrallah was killed in an Israeli airstrike, while pledging to continue its "holy war". **>A7**

MARKET Notable increase in non-oil exports

3 Oman's efforts towards economic diversification are yielding positive results, as evidenced by a notable increase in non-oil exports. **>B1**

S&P RAISES OMAN'S CREDIT RATING TO 'BBB-' WITH STABLE OUTLOOK



Credit rating boost reflects Vision 2040 success, says Al Maawali

MUSCAT: Oman is making remarkable strides toward economic resilience and investor confidence, as underlined by its recent credit rating upgrades. Standard & Poor's has raised Oman's credit rating from BB+ to BBB-, with a stable outlook, a move that signifies the nation's robust financial stability and commitment to its Vision 2040 strategy. Dr. Nasser bin Rashid Al

Maawali, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Economy, hailed this rating enhancement as a significant milestone, underscoring Oman's relentless efforts to fortify its economic foundations amidst global challenges. Dr. Al Maawali emphasised that the improved rating reflects a culmination of strategic financial management and successful implementation of economic policies. **>A2**

GAZA DEATH TOLL as of September 28, 2024



Deaths
41,586
Injured
96,210

The rating upgrade by S&P's represents a safe investment environment and Oman has returned to this rating category for the first time since 2017

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Standard & Poor's Global Ratings (S&P) raised its second credit rating report on the

Sultanate of Oman to 'BBB-' from 'BB+' with a stable outlook, as a result of the country's improved financial performance.

The rating upgrade by S&P's

represents a safe investment environment and Oman has returned to this rating category for the first time since 2017 due to the effects of the crises resulting from the decline in global oil prices and the COVID-19 pandemic. The Sultanate of Oman just took two and a half years of commitment to regain this rating.

Also on Friday, S&P raised Oman's its short-term ratings on Oman to 'A-3' from 'B' and the transfer and convertibility assessment to 'BBB' from 'BBB-'.

"The upgrade reflects continued strengthening of the Omani government's public finances

and ongoing external deleveraging of many state-owned enterprises (SOEs)," S&P Global said it its latest report.

The agency said in its report that the improvement in the credit rating was due to the continuation of measures to improve public finances through development initiatives and measures in the financial and economic aspects.

Government's restructuring measures have also contributed to restoring the financial balance between revenues and public spending as planned in the Medium-Term Fiscal Plan (MTFP). **>A3**



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Oman likely to be affected by a low pressure system from today

During this period, it is expected that clouds will form over the governorates of Dhofar and Al Wusta and Al Hajar Mountains



Times News Service

MUSCAT: The atmosphere of the Sultanate of Oman is expected to be affected by a low pressure system, starting from Sunday until

next Tuesday. During this period, it is expected that clouds will flow and form over the governorate of Dhofar and parts of Al Wusta governorate and Al Hajar Mountains and areas

adjacent to them. Rains of varying intensity will fall, sometimes accompanied by thunder, and may extend to include the coastal areas of the Sea of Oman. The General Directorate of

Meteorology added: "There are chances of low clouds or fog formation during the early morning hours of Saturday that may lead to a decrease in horizontal visibility on the coasts of the Sea of Oman

and the Arabian Sea." Details of daily weather condition: Sunday and Monday 29 – 30 September: Cloud advection and formation with chances of rain of varying intensity and occasional thunderstorms over the coastal and mountains areas of Dhofar governorate, coastal areas of Al Wusta governorate and Al Hajar Mountains and adjoining areas may extend to the coastal areas of Sea of Oman. Expected impact: • Rainfall between 10-30 mm may lead to the flow of some wadis. • Fresh downdraft winds with speeds ranging between 15-35 knots (28-65 km/h) leading to movement of unstable objects. • Decrease in horizontal visibility during thunderstorms and rising dust due to downdraft winds. • Moderate sea along the Arabian Sea and Sea of Oman coasts

with a maximum wave height of 2.25 metres. Tuesday, 1 October: Cloud advection and formation with chances of isolated rains, occasional thundershowers over the coastal and mountain areas of Dhofar governorate, Al Hajar Mountains and adjoining areas may extend to the coastal areas of Sea of Oman Expected impact:• Rainfall between 5-15 mm may lead to the flow of some wadis • Fresh downdraft winds with speeds ranging between 15-35 knots (28-65 km/h) leading to movement of unstable objects. • Decrease in horizontal visibility during thunderstorms and rising dust due to downdraft winds. • Moderate sea along the Arabian Sea and Sea of Oman coasts with a maximum height of 2.25 metres.

ENHANCING SKILLS

Training programme for Muscat Governorate employees from today

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The training programme 'Leadership Skills Development for Second-Level Leaders' for Muscat Governorate employees will be launched on Sunday. To be organised in two sessions, the first session begins from September 29 to October 3, and the second from October 6 to 10. The programme focuses on enhancing participants' essential skills such as strategic planning, effective communication, and decision-making. It aims to enhance productivity and achieve institutional targets efficiently. It will help establish positive leadership values and behaviours that contribute to administrative success, and enable participants to deal with the changes effectively.

It includes several main topics. For example, administrative leadership and institutional change, strategic and administrative planning, work organisation and leaders' rotation, effective communication skills, artificial intelligence, and decision-making methodologies. By combining applied lectures and individual and group practical activities, this programme will develop new skills and enhance knowledge of the participants for interaction with various situations. It is worth mentioning that this programme comes within the strategic instructions of Oman Vision 2040. Muscat Governorate pursues to build leadership abilities among youth to face future challenges efficiently and effectively.



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MINISTRY OF FINANCE

Oman's public debt is OMR14.4bn

< FROM A1 Supported by rising oil prices, Oman has adeptly navigated its fiscal landscape, resulting in a notable reduction in public debt, which has declined from a peak of OMR15.3 billion in 2020 to OMR 14.4 billion by mid-2024. With Standard & Poor's projecting a debt-to-GDP ratio decrease to 29% by 2027, Oman is on a clear path to sustainable financial health.

Dr. Al Maawali noted that Oman's GDP is expected to grow steadily over the next two years, driven by the expansion of non-oil sectors and successful diversification initiatives. Sectors such as green hydrogen and industrial projects are gaining momentum, contributing to sustainable economic growth and enhancing Oman's investment appeal.

Social, economic progress Oman has also made significant strides in improving citizens' quality of life. Public spending has been directed toward essential services, including subsidies for fuel, electricity, water, and basic commodities. Additionally, development projects, particularly those supporting housing loans and social protection, have boosted living standards. In line with Vision 2040, Oman continues to foster economic decentralisation through governorate-level projects, contributing to regional development and broadening economic participation.

Positive outlook from global institutions Dr. Al Maawali referenced reports from international organisations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which highlighted Oman's strong financial management and public finance surplus. The IMF report confirmed that Oman's fiscal surplus reached 2.2% of GDP in 2023, with a current account surplus of 5% in 2022. Moreover, Oman's trade surplus, bolstered by oil export revenues and growing non-oil exports, reached OMR 7.7 billion in 2023. The country's sovereign and foreign assets have also grown significantly, with the Oman In-

vestment Authority (OIA) holding over OMR 19 billion in assets by the end of last year. Looking forward, Oman's financial sustainability is further supported by favourable global trends, including the potential for reduced inflation and lower interest rates, as well as anticipated adjustments to oil production. As a member of OPEC+, Oman has balanced its oil production in alignment with global supply goals, while continuing to expand non-oil sectors, which grew by 4.5% in the first quarter of 2024.

Credit rating impact Dr. Salem bin Abdullah Al Sheikh, the official spokesman for the Ministry of Economy, further contextualised these ratings within the broader economic framework of Oman. He explained that the financial stability and continuous rise in credit ratings have led to a tangible increase in the volume of foreign direct investments (FDIs). "Our target under the Tenth Five-Year Plan is to raise investment rates to 27% of GDP by 2025, and we are making significant progress toward this goal," he stated.

Foreign direct investments Statistics reveal a consistent increase in Oman's cumulative volume of foreign direct investments, which rose from OMR 20.6 billion at the end of 2022 to approximately OMR 25.4 billion by the end of the first quarter of this year. This includes OMR 19.9 billion from oil and gas activities and OMR 5.5 billion from non-oil economic sectors. Dr. Al Sheikh highlighted that the business environment in Oman has improved significantly due to legislative advancements

aimed at facilitating investment procedures, reducing costs, and expanding digital services. "Within the framework of the objectives of the Tenth Plan, we have made continuous improvements in the investment landscape, which is crucial for attracting more foreign direct investments," he noted. One of the initiatives introduced this year to bolster investment is an incentive programme for the private sector, designed to encourage companies to participate in the Muscat Stock Exchange. "This programme provides various incentives, exemptions, and facilities for private companies, enabling them to access financing opportunities and expand their operations," Dr. Al Sheikh added. The officials also stressed that the rise in Oman's credit ratings enhances investor confidence and reflects the effective management of public debt. He said that public debt has decreased significantly, now standing at OMR 14.4 billion, which is a remarkable reduction from previous years. "The prudent financial policies have been effective in leveraging additional oil revenues to accelerate debt repayment, which has led to a decline in the debt-to-GDP ratio to below 35%," he explained.

Future optimistic Looking ahead, Al Maawali expressed optimism for the future, reiterating that the Tenth Five-Year Plan is instrumental in achieving Oman Vision 2040, which aims for comprehensive development and improved living standards for citizens. Al Maawali said, "Our government is committed to maintaining a stable and attractive investment climate, which is crucial for long-term economic sustainability."

CRIMES

Two held in North Al Batinah

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The North Al Batinah Police Command arrested two people for committing a crime. One of them used a sharp instrument to stab some camels in one of the farms in the Wilayat of Saham, which led to their death. The Royal Oman Police said: "This was due to personal disputes between the camel owner and the other accused. Legal procedures are being completed against them." In another incident, four people were arrested by the police for committing theft and fraud crimes. The Royal Oman Police said: "North Al Batinah Governorate Police Command arrested two Asian nationals for defrauding a group of workers in commercial stores by distracting them and making them believe that they would hand them high-value banknotes and requesting the return to the remaining amount."

TENDER
ANNOUNCEMENT

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

Tender No.	Tender title	Last date for tender purchase online	Bid submission date
34/2024 Re-float	Supply and installation of an elevator at the Directorate General of Labour in Al Dhahirah Governorate	Thursday 10/10/2024 2:00 p.m.	Thursday 24/10/2024 10 a.m.

- Specialized establishments may obtain the tender's documents online through the following link, starting from Sunday 29/09/2024 at 08:00 a.m.
/https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om
- Bids shall be submitted online.
- Bids shall be opened at 11:00 am on Thursday 24/10/2024.

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

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ADG7

Music concert held to mark 50th anniversary of Oman-Korea ties

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Korean Embassy in Oman hosted a concert with a theme 'Heritage in Harmony' by the ADG7 (Ak Dan Gwang Chil), a multi-award winning band of Korea at the Oman Auditorium, Al Bustan Palace on September 25.

It was part of a series of activities organised to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the diplomatic relations between Korea and Oman.

World Music Expo 2019

The ADG7 has gained wider popularity and reputation with its performances at international stages including the World Music Expo 2019 and the global FEST 2020



since its debut in 2015.

The Oman- Korea Friendship Association and the Korean Association in Oman supported the



concert.

The ADG7 presented traditional Korean folk music in a modern style to the Omani and interna-

the two peoples.

Eng. Salim Al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals graced the concert where Omani dignitaries representatives from public and private sectors, foreign Ambassadors together with members of the diplomatic corps as well as fans of Korean culture attended.

Ambassador Kim Kiejoo of Korea highlighted the significance of this year as a watershed in the five decades of fruitful mutual partnership between Korea and Oman.

The Korean Ambassador emphasised that cultural exchanges will help promote the already-strong solidarity of the people of both nations and reassured that further exchanges will continue to grow.

Inflation rate in Oman increases by 1.1%: NCSI



Musandam Governorate recorded the highest inflation rate at the end of August 2024 compared to the same period of the previous year

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The inflation rate in the Sultanate of Oman rose by 1.1 percent in August 2024 compared to the same period in 2023 for the base year 2018, according to data

from the Consumer Price Index in the Sultanate issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

The data indicated an increase in the prices of various goods and services groups by 4.4 percent, food and non-alcoholic beverages by 3.3 percent, health by 2.4 percent, housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels by 1.7 percent, culture and entertainment by 0.7 percent, restaurants and hotels by 0.4 percent, and clothing and footwear by 0.3 percent.

In contrast, prices of transportation groups decreased by 2.7 percent, furniture, household equipment and routine home maintenance by 0.6 percent, education by 0.4 percent, and prices of tobacco and communications groups remained stable.

In the food and non-alcoholic beverages group, the prices of vegetables rose by 11.5 percent, fruits by 7.4 percent, milk, cheese and eggs by 5.4 percent, meat by

2.8 percent, sugar, jam, honey and sweets by 2.3 percent, food products not classified under another item by 1.9 percent, oils and fats by 1.2 percent, non-alcoholic beverages by 1.1 percent, bread and cereals by 1 percent, and fish and seafood prices fell by 4.1 percent.

Highest inflation

Musandam Governorate recorded the highest inflation rate at the end of August 2024 compared to the same period of the previous year, as the index rose by 2.3 percent, and also rose by 2.2 percent in South Al Sharqiyah Governorate, and by 2 percent in Al Wusta and North Al Sharqiyah Governorates, and the rate rose by 1.6 percent in North Al Batinah and Al Buraimi Governorates, and by 1.3 percent in Dhofar Governorate, and by 1 percent in Al Dhahirah and Al Dakhiliyah Governorates, and by 0.8 percent in Muscat Governorate, while in South Al Batinah Governorate, the rate rose by 0.7 percent.

RATING AGENCY

Oman's general budget likely to achieve moderate surpluses

<FROM A1 As a result of the rise in average oil prices and achieving positive results from the financial measures taken, the government was able to strengthen the state's financial position and provide flexibility to deal with any sudden external shocks.

The international rating agency expects the Oman's general budget to achieve moderate financial surpluses of 1.9 percent during the period 2024-2027, assuming the average price of Brent crude will reach about \$80 per barrel during the period 2025-2027, which will allow the government to continue reducing the level of public debt and build financial reserves.

The agency also expected that real GDP (at constant prices) would grow by about 2 percent annually on average during the period 2024-2027, and the increase in average oil production until 2027 would continue to stimulate the growth of the non-oil sector by about 2 percent annually.

The agency also expected that the current account would record financial surpluses on average by 1.2 percent of GDP during the period 2024-2027. It explained that the Sultanate of Oman is committed to reducing the total public debt to reach 29 percent of GDP in 2027.

S&P further said that the average size of liquid monetary assets will remain at 36 percent of GDP until 2027.

The agency also indicated in its report that inflation is expected to remain moderate, averaging about 1.4 percent annually during the period 2024-2027, after reaching a low rate of 0.9 percent in 2023.

On the other hand, the growth of credit granted to the private sector expanded by at an hefty rate of 4.9 percent in 2023, and the credit environment is expected to continue to be favourable, which will drive lending growth



by about 5 percent to 6 percent annually.

The S&P report further highlighted that government's efforts in managing government companies since 2020 have clearly contributed to strengthening governance rules, enhancing operational efficiency, and improving financial conditions by increasing the profitability rate of companies and decreasing debt rates.

The establishment of the Oman Energy Development Company (EDO) and the Integrated Gas Company (IGC) also contributed to improving the structure of government financial accounts by showing net government revenues after deducting expenses related to managing the oil and gas sectors.

The report stated that the credit rating of the Sultanate of Oman may witness further improvement over the next two years if the government continues to commit to managing the country's public finances as planned to increase non-oil revenues and raise the efficiency of public spending, which it is hoped will continue to drive GDP growth supported by continued momentum in the growth of non-oil sector activities, in addition to continuing measures aimed at enhancing the establishment and growth of companies and projects that support economic diversification activities and operations, in addition to

initiatives to develop the capital market sector.

Sultan bin Salem Al Habsi, Minister of Finance, said that the Standard & Poor's report on raising the creditworthiness of Oman confirms that the government is on its way to achieve the national goals of restoring financial balance and achieving financial sustainability.

"This rating enhances confidence in the strength of the economy and its ability to grow and expand economically, accompanied by the positive results of the financial measures that have been approved over the past years. These include, among others, the issuance of the Public Debt Law, which contributed to raising confidence in the methodology of the Ministry of Finance and the rules of governance of government companies, in addition to improving the investment environment," he said.

His Excellency stressed in a statement to the Oman News Agency that the government is committed to continuing to enhance public finance indicators and benefit from the financial surpluses achieved in increasing the gains reflected at the economic and social levels, and that the results achieved came through the cooperation of all government units and partners from the private sector and civil society institutions.







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In 2020, two young Omani Architects Alya and Rihab designed a building based on a frankincense tree. It represented Oman for more than 6 months at what event in Dubai?

Which toddlers book, famous for holes in its pages, was literally inspired by a hole punch machine?

Can you match wits with the participants?


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Sayyid Badr meets with several officials, discusses bilateral ties

Oman's foreign minister discussed bilateral relations with them, and ways to expand trade ties

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister met with Tawhid Hussain, Advisor for Foreign Affairs, and Mohammad Fawzul Kabir Khan, Advisor for Energy and Mineral Resources of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, within the framework of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. They discussed bilateral relations between them, existing trade ties and the desire of both sides to develop them to broader horizons. During the meeting with Abbas Araghchi, Minister of Foreign



Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Foreign Minister discussed regional and international issues of common interest, stressing the importance of dialogue and diplomacy in resolving current issues and challenges, and joint cooperation to support efforts to achieve peace in the region. The two ministers stressed the strength of bilateral relations and historical ties between the two countries and their keenness to continue cooperation and partnership in various fields for mutual benefit of the two friendly peoples.

During his meeting with Alexander Schallenberg, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Austria, Sayyid Badr reviewed the current regional and international situation, and efforts to achieve security and peace in the region and the world, stressing the importance of serious international cooperation to confront these challenges and rely on international law and the foundations of justice for all. During the meeting, the two ministers expressed their interest in developing partnerships in

renewable energy, education and tourism sectors, which would contribute to deepening the economic and scientific interests between the two friendly countries. The Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Suriname signed an agreement on mutual visa exemption for holders of diplomatic, special and official passports at the headquarters of the Permanent Mission of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Nations in New York. It was signed on behalf of the Sultanate of Oman by Sayyid Badr

bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and on behalf of the Republic by Albert Ramdin, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Suriname. The two ministers expressed their aspiration to advance bilateral cooperation between the two countries, especially in the economic and commercial fields and in the exchange of expertise and scientific cooperation. The two sides discussed ways to enhance cooperation in international organisations, stressing the need to unify efforts and intensify

consultations in support of efforts to achieve international peace and security. Sayyid Badr reviewed during his meeting with Tim Lenderking, US Special Envoy for Yemen, the efforts made to support the peace process in Yemen, and the humanitarian efforts to alleviate the suffering of the brotherly Yemeni people. He Excellency stressed the Sultanate of Oman's firm position in support of political dialogue as a way to achieve stability, peace and harmony in Yemen.

OCCI

Oman, Azerbaijan explore opportunities in commerce and investment fields



Times News Service

BAKU: A number of Omani businessmen and their Azerbaijani counterparts expressed hope of opening new horizons of cooperation in the economic, commerce and investment fields between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Azerbaijan. The announcement was made during meetings on the sidelines of the 2nd Azerbaijan - GCC Economic Forum organised by the Federation of GCC Chambers, in Baku. The meetings discussed the investment opportunities in promising economic sectors that would be offered for partnerships between the two sides, mainly in renewable energy, transport, logistics services, agriculture and food industries among others. The meetings also reviewed the business environment, procedures, incentives and facilities offered by both sides for investors



mainly at the economic and free zones, industrial cities and ports. Faisal bin Abdullah Al Rawas, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) said that Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry aspires through the meetings between the Omani businessmen and their counterparts of other countries to acquaint them of the necessary procedures, the laws and regulations, the support and consultancy services of the Omani compa-

nies interested in entering other international markets, notably of Azerbaijan. He said that the level of economic relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Azerbaijan needs to be upgraded. He also pointed out that a trade delegation from the Republic of Azerbaijan would visit the Sultanate during the upcoming stage to acquaint with the business environment, the investment opportunities and the promising



economic sectors. Rashid bin Amer Al Maslahi, First Deputy to the Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) said that such meetings offered the opportunities for the two sides to acquaint themselves with the promising opportunities in each country. He hoped that such opportunities would contribute to entering into partnerships between the private sector of the Sultanate of Oman and that of the Republic of Azerbaijan. -ONA

MINISTRY OF HERITAGE AND TOURISM

Stress on tourism for fostering world peace



SUR: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism organised on 27 September a tourism event tilted the "White Sails", to mark the World Tourism Day, which is celebrated this year under the theme "Tourism and Peace". The celebration was organised within the executive programme of Sur as Arab Capital for Tourism 2024. The two-day event stressed the significance of tourism in fostering world peace and to boost mutual understanding among nations. The celebration also showcased the maritime history of the Wilayat of Sur and the role it played in dissemination of the culture of peace and exchange of trade with

other countries. The event included several activities, mainly heritage and ship making craft; the White Sails Theatre which hosted heritage art shows and a seminar on cultural and tourism exchange and its relation with the world peace and workshops on traditional ship making among other activities. The celebration was organised at the Dhow Factory in Sur, located at Khor Al Batah bank, which accommodates various sections of traditional boat making. The event of White Sails focuses on a number of activities which showcase the maritime heritage of the Wilayat of Sur. -ONA

CLIMATE CHANGE

Campaign to raise awareness on weather

SALALAH: The National Emergency Management Committee will implement a public awareness campaign about risks involved in climate change and tsunami waves. The campaign will be carried out by the National Emergency Management Centre in all the wilayats of Dhofar Governorate

from 29 September to 7 October. It aims to raise community awareness about adverse weather conditions and the hazards of climate change and tsunamis and be implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Information, the Civil Aviation Authority the Authority for Civil Defence and Ambulance. -ONA

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3637/2024/ MOH/ NIZH-3	REPLACEMENT AND UPGRADING OF STRUCTURE CABING AT NIZWA HOSPITAL	15/OCTOBER/2024	30/ OCTOBER /2024	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board	R.O 25.000 Per set

- Tenders should be submitted on line on <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> enclose Electronic Bank Guarantee issued by a Local bank for not less than One percent (1%) for the Tender value validity for (90) days from the Tender Submission date, addressed to The Chairman of the Tender Committee.
- Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accepts or reject any tender.

For any Clarification, you may contact via Telephone: 24402200 , Email id etenderhd@ita.gov.om

Floods and landslides kill 60 people in Nepal

As per the police, dozens of others are missing across the country, with the rescue operation ongoing with deployment of choppers, motorboats and other possible



KATHMANDU: At least 60 people have died as incessant rainfall batters all across Nepal. The government has deployed more than 20,000 security personnel for the search and rescue operation.

The Kathmandu Valley, comprising Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Lalitpur alone, recorded 34 deaths in a single day due to water logging and landslides on the slopes. Five different districts of Bagmati Province recorded an additional 19 deaths, while Koshi Province recorded 7 deaths in the past 24 hours.

As per the police, dozens of others are missing across the country, with the rescue operation ongoing with deployment of choppers, motorboats and other possible means.

"In Kathmandu, 11 people are recorded dead while Lalitpur reported 18 and Bhaktapur reported 5 deaths within 24 hours," SSP Binod Ghimire from Kathmandu Valley Police Office confirmed ANI.

The security agencies- Nepal

Army, Armed Police Force (APF) and the Nepal Police rescued 1415 people from various locations of valley.

Nepal Army and Armed Police Force (APF) personnel used the zip-line rescue and long-line rescue techniques to bring stranded people to safer place.

Rising water level

Nepal's Koshi province CM Hikmat Kumar Karki visited Koshi barrage in Supaul to review the rising water level situation.

"Last evening, we had our dinner at around 8 PM (NST) and slept off. The water started entering our garage after 10:30 PM (NST), few of my friends managed to escape the flash flood and reached to a safer ground. The flood engulfed the area and swept few vehicles, I woke up others and we climbed to the top of the bus, we spent whole night there. The flood eventually swept 5 to 7 vehicles, three motorcycles, and other parts of the vehicle. Staying on the top of the vehicle since last night, we are now rescued in the afternoon by the security forces," Jitendra Mandal, one of the rescued workers from a garage engulfed by Nakkhu River told ANI after arriving at the shelter.

A total of 75 workers were in the garage built on the embankments of the Nakkhu River in Kusunti of Lalitpur. Security personnel working for hours were able to rescue them using zip-line rescue who are now kept in a school and will be relocated to the safer place later.

Jitendra Mandal, rescued worker in Lalitpur, said, "We were slowly losing our hopes. We thought it's our last day because the other buses were also gradually being washed away."

Recalling the ordeal, he said, "The overflowing Nakkhu River burst its embankment trapping dozens of families. A Nepal Army chopper also was called in to rescue workers from a under construction building using the long-line rescue method, only few meters far from the site where Mandal along with his friends were rescued on Saturday afternoon."

Asked about the total number

of people who have been rescued so far, Mukesh Sharaff, one of the rescued workers who managed to escape early, said, "We were a total of 75 people in the garage." He said, "Till afternoon about 15 of them are there and are being rescued. Rest of the them already has been rescued."

Influenced by water vapour from the Bay of Bengal and a low-pressure system in the region, Nepal since Thursday evening had been witnessing heavy downpours. The National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Authority (NDRRMA) also issued warning for 56 out of 77 districts about possible disasters advising people to exercise caution.

As of Saturday evening, floods, landslides, inundation and erosion have caused damage in 44 districts across the country, as per the Police. Among them, various road sections of 39 districts have been completely blocked.

As the rain battered the bowl-shaped valley overflowing the rivers, people faced problems in continuing with their day-to-day routine works. — ANI



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BILATERAL RELATIONS

President of Maldives plans to visit India soon

NEW YORK: Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu has said that he is planning to visit India as soon as possible.

He also praised the "very strong" bilateral relationship between the two countries.

"I am planning to visit (India) as soon as possible...We have a very strong bilateral relationship," Muizzu told ANI on sidelines of 79th United Nations General Assembly.

Muizzu's second visit

Notably, if happens, it will be Muizzu's second visit to India, after first making the visit in June during the swearing-in ceremony of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

It is pertinent to note that earlier almost every Maldivian President used to make his first foreign visit to India, but Muizzu changed the trend by first visiting Türkiye and then China, after coming to office earlier this year.

The Mohamed Muizzu government in the Maldives took a reconciliatory tone after ties between the two nations soured, leading to a diplomatic row.

Since coming to power, Muizzu has taken several steps that have been unconventional from the point of view of India-Maldives ties. He ran his whole presiden-

tial campaign on the lines of 'India Out'. The removal of Indian troops from the country was the main election campaign of Muizzu's party.

Last December, the Maldives said it would not renew the Hydrographic Survey agreement made with India.

After Muizzu government officially requested India to withdraw troops, the Indian government set up a High-Level Core Group to discuss the matter. The withdrawal of Indian troops was completed in May this year.

But the row between New Delhi and Male erupted after three Maldivian deputy ministers made derogatory comments against Prime Minister Narendra Modi, over his pictures from the visit to Lakshadweep.

The matter snowballed into a major diplomatic row, with New Delhi summoning the Maldivian envoy and registering a strong protest against the viral posts. The three deputy ministers were suspended and they remain under suspension with pay.

Maldives Tourism Ministry data showed, earlier this year, that the number of Indian tourists visiting the Maldives dropped by 33 per cent as compared to last year. — ANI

US NATIONAL HURRICANE CENTRE



Deadly Tropical Storm Helene triggers floods, power outages

FLORIDA: Deaths from tropical Storm Helene rose to at least 44 as it barreled across the southeastern United States on Friday, causing widespread destruction and flooding.

Helene crossed Florida's north-west coast as a Category 4 hurricane on Thursday with windspeeds of 140 miles per hour (225 kilometres per hour), generating a massive storm surge and cutting off power to millions of homes in multiple states.

Helene later weakened to a tropical storm, but officials warned the storm continued to be "extremely dangerous" as it moved to the Carolinas and Georgia.

Officials reported deaths in the states of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida reported, including among firefighters.

Georgia Governor Brian Kemp said dozens of people were still trapped in damaged buildings. Authorities were "having a hard time getting to places" so teams with chainsaws were "working to free up roads," Kemp told a news conference.

Cities as far inland as Atlanta, Georgia, were hit with flooding from the heavy downpour. In North Carolina, residents near Lake Lure Dam were urged to



evacuate to escape an "imminent" dam failure.

The US National Hurricane Centre warned residents to shelter from "catastrophic winds," storm surge and rainfall. "This is an extremely dangerous and life-threatening situation," the center said.

Helene was unusually large for a Gulf of Mexico hurricane.

Airports in the Florida cities of Tampa, Tallahassee and St. Petersburg remained closed early Friday, while hundreds of flights in Charlotte, North Carolina, and Atlanta, Georgia, were delayed or canceled, according to the tracking website FlightAware.com.

More than 4 million homes and businesses were without power in Florida, Georgia and South Carolina on Friday morning.

The governors of those states

as well as Alabama and Virginia all declared emergencies.

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis mobilised the National Guard and ordered thousands of personnel to ready for search-and-rescue operations.

In Georgia, Governor Kemp also mobilised an additional 1,000 National Guard troops, on top of the 500 he mobilised earlier.

US President Joe Biden urged people to heed official evacuation warnings.

"I urge everyone in and near the path of Helene to listen to local officials and follow evacuation warnings," he said. "Take this seriously, and be safe."

Where is Helene headed next?

On Friday morning, Helene was moving north with windspeeds of 45 miles per hour (75 kilometres per hour), the National Hurricane Centre in Miami reported.

Forecasters said the storm would continue to weaken as it moves into Tennessee and Kentucky.

Helene is expected to bring heavy rain to the Appalachian Mountains, potentially triggering mudslides and flash flooding.

Helene was the eighth named storm of the Atlantic hurricane season, which began in June. — nw

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UPRISING IN 2000



Remembering the Second Palestinian Intifada 24 years on

GAZA: On the 28th of September of the year 2000, Israel's then opposition leader Ariel Sharon, heavily guarded by policemen and soldiers, stormed Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in occupied Jerusalem, provoking a Palestinian uprising that was later known as the Second Intifada or the Al-Aqsa Intafada. The uprising lasted five years and left over 3,000 Palestinians killed.

Prior to Sharon's move, tensions had risen against the backdrop of the failed Camp David talks, when late Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak failed to come to a peace agreement due to disagreements over the status of Jerusalem and the right of return for Palestinian refugees. As a result, the promised declaration of a Palestinian state was postponed.

It was on the last Thursday of September when Sharon decided to visit Al-Aqsa Mosque accompanied by heavily armed Israeli policemen. The decision was met with widespread outrage by Palestinians who had just marked the anniversary of the Sabra and Shatila Massacre, for which Sharon was found responsible for failing to stop the bloodshed. Palestinians were also deeply frustrated over the ongoing Israeli occupation, which once again peace talks had failed to resolve.

The next Friday and shortly following the weekly Friday prayer, protests erupted across the Old City of Jerusalem. Seven Palestinians were shot dead and some 300 more injured by the occupation forces. In the following

days, mass protests erupted across the West Bank and Gaza, prompting a violent response from Israeli occupation forces. A report by Amnesty International found that the majority of Palestinian casualties during this time were civilian bystanders and that 80 percent of those killed in the first month were not endangering the lives of Israeli occupation forces.

On Saturday 30 September, the murder of 12-year-old Muhammad Al-Durrah by Israeli occupation forces as he took shelter with his father was captured on camera and sparked worldwide condemnation. The video showed the father and the son bending behind a concrete pillar as they tried to escape Israeli soldiers who had opened fire. Al-Durrah's father could be seen trying to ask the soldiers to stop firing, but was met with a hail of Israeli gunfire that put an end to the son's life. The footage became iconic, representing the oppression endured by the Palestinians.

The months that followed witnessed more violent crackdowns, leaving hundreds of Palestinians dead and thousands injured.

Upon Sharon's election to the office of Prime Minister in early 2001, he refused to meet late President Arafat, and all attempts at diplomacy came to a roadblock. In 2002, Palestinian leaders repeated their efforts to stop the violence and arrive at a peace deal by endorsing the Arab Peace Initiative outlined by Saudi Arabia, yet Israel has largely ignored the proposal until this day. — **WAFA**

Hezbollah confirms Nasrallah is killed after Israeli strike

Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, secretary general of Hezbollah, has joined his great, immortal martyr comrades whom he led for about 30 years, the group said in a statement

BEIRUT: Lebanon's Hezbollah has confirmed that its leader Hassan Nasrallah was killed in an Israeli airstrike, while pledging to continue its "holy war" against Israel.

"Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, secretary general of Hezbollah, has joined his great, immortal martyr comrades whom he led for about 30 years," the group said in a statement.

The statement says Hezbollah vows to "continue the holy war against the enemy and in support of Palestine."

Iran's supreme leader calls on Muslims to 'stand by the people of Lebanon'

Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has called on Muslims to help fight Israel, saying that Lebanon's Hezbollah would play a major role in deciding the fate of the Middle East region.

In a statement that did not mention the status of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah despite Israeli claims to have killed him, Khamenei said Muslims should "stand by the people of Lebanon and the proud Hezbollah" in the fight against the "wicked regime (of Israel)."

"The fate of this region will be determined by the forces of resistance,



ance, with Hezbollah at the forefront," state media reported him as saying.

"The massacre of the defenceless people in Lebanon once again revealed the ferocity of the Zionist to everyone and proved the shortsighted and stupid policy of the leaders of the usurping regime," Khamenei said.

Regional officials briefed by Tehran have told Reuters news agency that Khamenei has been transferred to a secure location in Iran under heightened security.

Israel says it is on high alert after reported Nasrallah killing

The Israeli military says it expects

Hezbollah to continue its attacks on Israel despite reportedly losing its leader, Hassan Nasrallah.

"We hope this will change Hezbollah's actions," Lieutenant Colonel Nadav Shoshani told reporters after the IDF said it had killed Nasrallah.

But, he said, "It's safe to assume that they are going to continue carrying out their attacks against us or try to."

A wider escalation?

"So are we ready for a wider escalation? Yes. We've been in a wider escalation, a multi-front war, for a year. Our forces are on high alert, our intelligence is up and looking for these types of threats," he further said.

Israel's chief of staff, Lieutenant General Herzi Halevi, said Israel, too, would continue its attacks on the the group even after Nasrallah's death.

Halevi said the killing of Nasrallah was "not the end of our toolbox."

"The message to all those who threaten the citizens of the state of Israel is simple: We will know how to reach them. In the north, in the south and in more distant places," he said.

Hezbollah itself has yet to issue any statement on the status of Nasrallah.

Hezbollah's Nasrallah: A bitter enemy to Israel

Hassan Nasrallah, 64, whom Israel says was killed in an airstrike on Beirut on Friday, became the leader of Hezbollah in 1992 after its former head and co-founder, Abbas al-Musawi, was assassinated by Israel.

He had long been a member the group, which was formed to fight the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, and became its leader shortly after his return from a brief period of religious studies in Iran.

Nasrallah led Hezbollah for 32 years

Among other things, he is credited in the Arab world and Lebanon with having ended the 18-year Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon in 2000. This greatly bolstered the group's popularity in the country.

Under his leadership, Hezbollah also brought about the 34-day Israel-Hezbollah War in 2006 after its members carried out a cross-border raid into Israel, to which Israel responded with airstrikes and a ground invasion.

Nasrallah remained an implacable enemy to Israel. In 2000, he told the Washington Post: "I am against any reconciliation with Israel. I do not even recognise the presence of a state that is called 'Israel.' I consider its presence both unjust and unlawful."

— **Agencies**

AFRICA CDC

Global efforts continuing to fight mpox outbreak in Africa

KINSHASA: Global efforts are continuing to fight the current mpox outbreak in Africa, where suspected cases have reached over 32,000 — with more than 28,000 of these in the Central Africa region, according to the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC).

Officials from the organisation told a news briefing on Thursday that the Central Africa region accounts for over 28,000 suspected mpox cases. The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been at the mpox epicenter where the death toll from the outbreak has now reached at least 840 since the beginning of the year, Africa CDC officials said.

"We are clearly saying that there is an increase of cases across all affected regions in Africa," Africa CDC head Dr. Jean Kaseya said.

Vaccination challenges

Kaseya said many countries are recording suspected cases, but the lack of testing means makes it difficult to include those figures in the latest updates on cases.

More than \$800 million (€718 million) has been pledged for mpox response, Africa CDC said.

But vaccination programmes against the infectious disease in countries badly hit have been restricted due to a lack of access to doses of vaccines.

The Africa CDC said it has so far secured some 4.3 million doses of vaccines but added that it needs over 10 million to contain the outbreak.

Danish biotech firm Bavarian Nordic on Thursday announced it has signed an agreement with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for 1 million doses of its mpox vaccine, Jynneos, for affected countries in Africa.

It said the doses would be made available for supply before the end of this year.



Germany will donate 100,000 doses of mpox vaccine to Congo and other African nations to help contain the outbreak.

Berlin will also lend financial support to this effort, providing funding to the World Health Organisation (WHO) as well as supporting partners in Africa through the Gavi Vaccine Alliance.

Government spokesman Steffen Hebestreit said Berlin's aim is "to support in solidarity the international efforts to contain mpox on the African continent."

US President Joe Biden announced that 1 million mpox vaccine doses were being donated to Africa to support the fight.

The United States is also making at least \$500 million of funding available to African countries to support their response efforts.

"We must now move quickly to face mpox," Biden said.

Japan has also pledged 3 million vaccine shots, the largest number pledged so far.

Vaccine distribution to affected countries

"This week we are sending vaccines to some countries [including] Rwanda, South Africa, Burundi, CAR and Cameroon," Kaseya said.

Rwanda has already started the vaccination campaign targeted at people in high-risk areas. It was the first country in Africa to do so.

"We congratulate Rwanda for starting the campaign," Kaseya told reporters.

Congo is expected to start its vaccination campaign next month, health officials in the country said.

Meanwhile, infections are soaring among children, according to Congolese officials.

Dr. Thierry Turano, chief physi-

cian of the Nyiragongo health zone in Goma, one of the worst affected areas in eastern Congo, told DW that containing the spread of the disease has become even more difficult due to the impact of the ongoing conflict in the region.

"The area now has more than 400,000 displaced people, and from there, there is also a disengagement of some partners, unfortunately during this period of the epidemic," Turano said, adding that governmental intervention is needed to counter the spread of the mpox outbreak.

South Kivu begins vaccination drive

Meanwhile in Congo's South Kivu province, officials said the first phase of a 10-day vaccination campaign will begin on October 2.

Justin Bengheya, head of operations in the response to Monkey



Pox in South Kivu told DW, vaccines are still inadequate.

"Out of the 34 health zones in the province, 32 are affected. But the vaccine order was made while there were only three health zones that were 'hotspots'."

Meanwhile several local organizations are raising awareness among the population about accepting the vaccines.

Daniel Birindwa, a member of Les Amis de la Nature (Friends of Nature) in France told DW that the mobilization of volunteers to educate people about mpox is vital for the success of the vaccination campaign.

"There is never a lack of resistance. But we are trying hard and persevering in raising awareness," said Birindwa, who added that cases of mpox have been detected among hairdressers.

The city of Bukavu is the epi-

center of the mpox outbreak in South Kivu. Health officials there say they are set to help make the vaccination a success.

"Why did it drag on? I can't tell you. But I know that we were preparing everything so that these vaccines could be deployed," Dr Joseph Matundanya, coordinating doctor of the Expanded Vaccination Program (EPI) in South Kivu, told DW.

Mpox is an infectious disease caused by the monkeypox virus. It can enter the body through broken skin and through the respiratory system.

People can become infected by coming into close contact with people who have the virus — through skin-to-skin contact during kissing, hugging, and massages.

The infection causes a pus-filled skin rash lasting up to four weeks, which can be very painful. — **DW**

SPORTS

Royal Oman Stallions defeat Yalla Shabab Giants for title

The Oman D10 final played recently at the Oman Cricket Academy ground in Al Amerat featured both the teams, owned by Chaitanya Khimji, battle out for the coveted crown

MUSCAT: The cricket ‘stables’ of Chaitanya Khimji continue to dominate the domestic arena, with his teams - Royal Oman Stallions and Yalla Shabab Giants - facing off as fierce rivals in the final of the 2024 Oman D10 cricket tournament.

The fourth edition of the tournament concluded at the Oman Cricket Academy ground in Al Amerat recently, showcasing the exceptional talent fostered within Khimji’s stables.

In a first-of-its-kind summit clash of the shortest format of domestic cricket, the Royal Oman Stallions, formerly known as Amerat Royals, successfully defended their title with an impressive eight-wicket victory. This final echoed the 2023 edition when the Amerat Royals triumphed over the Yalla Shabab Giants.

Yalla Shabab Giants, who were the 2023 champions of the D20 tournament, struggled to find their rhythm as the Stallions restricted them to a modest 102 for 4. Zikria Islam led the charge with a brisk 36 runs off just 14 balls, supported well by Zohaib Amanat (27 off 19)



and Mujibur Ali (14 off 14).

For the Stallions, Hassnain Ali emerged as the key wicket-taker, claiming 2 for 17, while Sagar Parmar and Jiten Kumar contributed with important wickets.

In response, the Stallions set off on their chase with determination. Rafi Ullah, a member of Oman’s T20 World Cup squad, top-scored with an unbeaten 36 runs off 15 deliveries, while Karan Sonavale complimented him perfectly with 27 runs off just 14 balls.

Naseem Khushi, another T20

World Cup player, provided a brisk start with a quick 18 off eight balls. Skipper Vinayak Shukla played a crucial captain’s knock, scoring 21 runs from just 11 balls, as the Stallions completed their chase in a mere eight overs, finishing at 104 for 2. Umair Shakeel and Mujibur Ali were among the wickets.

A delighted Chaitanya Khimji expressed his pride and said, “It is an amazing feeling. To have both my teams feature in the title clash is a dream come true. This is a fantastic start to the domestic season

for us. I hope my boys continue their excellent work in the remaining tournaments.”

He added: “The journey of my boys is filled with hard work, teamwork, and unforgettable moments. I am proud of them, and I hope my teams can raise the standard of the game by producing quality cricket throughout the 2024-25 season.”

Vinu Mathew, manager of both teams, echoed this enthusiasm.

He said: “This victory is a result of careful planning and execution by our team owner, Chaitanyabhai,

the coaching staff, and the players. We have a strong mix of expatriate talent, and this winning start boosts our confidence and desire to achieve more success.

“Our goal this year is to sweep all the titles. Having won the D10 and D20 last year, we are aiming for a hat-trick of championships (D10, D20 and D50). The success so far is all credit to the guidance of our dynamic and passionate owner, Chaitanyabhai.”

During the post-match presentation ceremony, Madhu Jesrani,

secretary of Oman Cricket, presented the awards.

Royal Oman Stallions captain Vinayak Shukla accepted the winner’s trophy, while Yalla Shabab Giants skipper Mohit Patel received the runners-up trophy.

Stallions’ Rafi Ullah was named Player of the Match, and Giants’ Mujibur Ali earned the title of Player of the Tournament for his outstanding all-round performance, accumulating 348 runs and taking 22 wickets throughout the tournament.

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Bank Nizwa assumed the role of Collecting Bank for the highly anticipated Sharia-compliant OQ Exploration & Production (OQEP) Initial Public Offering (IPO).

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX TRADING JUMPS
The value of trading on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) saw a hefty 126 percent jump to OMR21.2 million during the week compared to OMR9.3 million in the previous week.

Oman’s non-oil exports surge by 8% in first half of 2024



This growth indicates the rising global demand for Omani products and the ongoing recovery of markets, setting the stage for potentially record-breaking export levels by the end of the year

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman’s efforts towards economic diversification are yielding positive results, as evidenced by a notable increase in non-oil ex-



ports during the first half of 2024. According to the latest data from the National Centre for Statistical Information (NCSI), Omani-origin non-oil exports reached OMR3.575 billion by the end of June 2024, reflecting an 8% rise compared to the same period last year. This growth indicates the rising global demand for Omani products and the ongoing recovery



of markets, setting the stage for potentially record-breaking export levels by the end of the year. Leading this export growth are metal products, which accounted for OMR 1.304 billion in export value, marking a 21.5% increase from last year’s figures. Basic metal products and their manufactures followed, contributing OMR 671 million, with a growth rate of

7.3%. The plastics and rubber sector also expanded, with exports rising by 11.5% to reach OMR 473 million, while other product categories collectively contributed OMR 437 million by mid-year. These numbers reflect a significant shift in Oman’s economic landscape. Non-oil exports are projected to account for 22% of the Sultanate’s GDP by the end of the

second quarter of 2024. The total value of these exports is expected to reach OMR 5.4 billion, driving the GDP to an estimated OMR 21.9 billion, further strengthening Oman’s economic position on the global stage. Lubna AlHarthi, Export Development Director at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion, commented:

“The increase in Omani non-oil exports highlights the progress Oman has made in economic diversification and enhancing local content. The growth in export volume demonstrates the value and competitiveness of Omani products in international markets. The rising global demand reflects the quality, cost-effectiveness, and competitive standards of our products.” This export growth is further supported by the performance of key international markets. South Korea, for example, saw a significant 1,154.4% increase in import volume, driven by industrial product exports. In terms of value, the UAE remains a leading market with OMR457 million, followed by Saudi Arabia with OMR 402 million in non-oil exports. Omani-origin non-oil exports now represent 36% of the nation’s total exports, which have reached OMR 10.804 billion by the end of the second quarter of 2024. This marks a significant milestone in Oman’s journey towards a diversified and resilient economy, with continued growth on the horizon.

CENTRAL BANK OF OMAN

Credit granted by banks in Oman rises by 3.4% to OMR31.3 billion

MUSCAT: Data issued by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) indicate that the total credit balance granted by the Omani banking sector increased by 3.4 percent to OMR 31.3 billion by the end of July 2024. Additionally, credit granted to the private sector recorded a growth of 3 percent to reach OMR26.2 billion by the end of July 2024. Data on its distribution across various sectors indicate that the household sector accounted for the largest share, amounting to 45.1 percent by the end of July 2024, followed by non-financial companies at 44.9 percent, while the remaining percentage was distributed between the financial companies sector at 6.3 percent and other sectors at 3.6 percent. Total deposits in the banking sector grew by 12.5 percent to reach OMR31 billion by the end of July 2024. Within this total, private sector deposits in the banking system witnessed a 13.9 percent increase to reach OMR20.7 billion by the end of July 2024. When looking at the distribution of the total private sector deposit base across various sectors, the figures indicate that the household sector received the largest share, amounting to about 49.9 percent, followed by the non-financial cor-



porate sector and the financial corporate sector with shares of 29.9 percent and 17.7 percent, respectively, while the remaining 2.5 percent was distributed among other sectors. **Assets of Islamic banks and windows** Data issued by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) indicated that the total assets of Islamic banks and windows combined rose to about OMR7.8 billion, or 18.2 percent of

the total assets of the banking sector in the Sultanate of Oman by the end of July 2024, recording an increase of 10.8 percent compared to the same period last year. Statistics further showed that the total financing balance granted by units practicing this activity recorded an increase of 11 percent to reach about OMR6.4 billion. Deposits in Islamic banks and windows also increased by 17 percent to reach about OMR6.2 billion by the end of July 2024. - ONA

INITIAL PUBLIC OFFERING

OQEP organises 2nd IPO roadshow

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The second OQEP IPO roadshow took place at the Sohar Branch of the Chamber of Commerce. The company is transitioning from a closed joint-stock company to a public joint-stock company. This initiative aims to raise awareness about the importance of the initial public offering (IPO), which plays a crucial role in channelling the savings of citizens, residents, and investors into the IPO. Eng. Ahmed bin Said Al Azkawi, CEO of OQEP, delivered a presentation on the offering process, announcing that 25% of the company’s shares are allocated for the IPO, with 40% reserved for individuals. The shares are priced at 351 baisas each for Omani individuals and 390 baisas for non-Omanis, aiming to encourage investment and promote the use of savings in profitable ventures. Al Azkawi emphasized that this offering represents the largest of its kind in Oman and is a groundbreaking initiative in the production and exploration sector. Al Azkawi highlighted the company’s strong operational and financial performance, showcasing a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) in revenues of 14% since 2010, along with a 19% CAGR in earnings before interest, taxes,



depreciation, and amortization (EBITDA). He emphasized that the company’s sharp focus on maintaining a high-quality, low-cost operating asset base has allowed it to achieve operating costs of US\$9.4 per barrel of oil equivalent (boe) in 2023, compared to an average of US\$13.8/boe among peers selected by Wood Mackenzie II. This low operating cost base, combined with a stable and attractive fiscal regime, supported an Adjusted Free Cash Flow generation of US\$16.0 per barrel of oil equivalent (boe) in 2023, which is significantly higher than the average of US\$5.9/boe among its selected peer group in the same year. Eng.Said bin Ali Al-Abri, Board Member of the OCCI and Head of the Chamber’s North Al Batinah Branch, highlighted the importance of IPOs in stimulating the

national economy and broadening the ownership base of government assets. He emphasized that these initiatives are part of economic policies aimed at attracting global investments and improving corporate governance practices. Al-Abri also noted that this offering will enrich the Muscat Stock Exchange with high-capital companies, thereby attracting both domestic and foreign investments. Al-Abri pointed out that OQEP is one of the leading companies in oil and gas exploration and production, owned by OQ Group and the Oman Investment Authority. As the only wholly government-owned operator in this sector, the offering of 25% of its shares represents a promising opportunity for investors, given its capabilities and profit generation potential outlined in the issuance prospectus.

GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS

Sohar Port celebrates two decades of pioneering Oman’s prosperity

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Under the patronage of Eng. Saeed bin Hamoud Al Mawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, Sohar Port and Freezone celebrated two decades of unparalleled achievements. The event, which was attended by key government dignitaries and partners, showcased Sohar’s legacy and standards of excellence in ports and free zones management. Leveraging Oman’s strategic location as a gateway between East and West, Sohar has become a pivotal player in Oman’s integration into the global supply chain, pioneering advancements in the logistics sector while stimulating economic diversification and sustainability. Since inception, Sohar has demonstrated robust economic performance, attracting a remarkable total of \$29 billion in investments to date. In H1 of 2024 alone, the port and freezone has secured \$3.4 billion in investment, underscoring its appeal as a premier destination for international trade and commerce. The infrastructure has undergone significant enhancements, with the recent expansion



of Sohar Freezone Phase 2, introducing 345 hectares of additional leasable land. This strategic expansion aligns with the increasing demand for industrial and commercial spaces which is poised to facilitate increased connectivity and economic collaboration on a global scale. “Sohar Port and Freezone plays a crucial role in the daily lives of people across Oman, as the goods that flow through our facilities ul-

timately reach the homes of every citizen. Our performance over the past two decades reflects our commitment to excellence and our strategic importance as a global logistics hub. By continuously enhancing our operations and cultivating strong partnerships, we ensure a steady supply of essential goods that bolster the growth and progress of both local industries and the broader national economy,” said Eng. Abdullah bin

Khalfan AlJabri, Chairman of the Board of Sohar Port and Freezone. “Sohar Port and Freezone has transcended traditional infrastructure; it has become a vital catalyst for commerce and economic growth in Oman. Over the last two decades, we have built a thriving integrated business ecosystem that not only supports local development but also enhances our global competitiveness. As we celebrate our achievements, we remain steadfast in our responsibility to driving innovation and accelerating the discovery of opportunities that will further propel Oman’s economic advancements on the world stage,” said Emile Hoogsteden, CEO of Sohar Port. Strategic collaborations have been instrumental in shaping Sohar’s success story. The partnership between Asyad Group and the Port of Rotterdam has established Sohar as a world-class facility, renowned for its operational excellence and leading-edge approach. Alliances with other notable international companies, such as the groundbreaking initiative with United Solar Polysilicon to establish the region’s first polysilicon factory, further exemplify Sohar’s

commitment to fostering progressive-thinking and attracting transformative investments that support its vision as an industrial cluster and manufacturing hub for green products. Today, Sohar stands as a beacon of economic prosperity, contributing more than 2.1% to Oman’s GDP and generating nearly 36,000 direct and indirect jobs. This milestone offers a moment to reflect on the significant achievements that have defined Sohar’s journey and its profound impact on the region’s economic landscape. “We extend our deepest appreciation to our stakeholders, whose unwavering trust and support have been the foundation of our success, reflecting our enduring partnerships and shared vision as we celebrate our 20th anniversary,” continued Hoogsteden. Sohar Port and Freezone is also a pioneer in sustainability, championing groundbreaking initiatives that support environmental stewardship. The Marsa LNG project, a USD 1.6 billion collaboration between Oman’s OQ Group and TotalEnergies, will establish the region’s first LNG bunkering hub powered entirely by solar energy.

This initiative aligns with Oman’s Vision 2040 and carbon neutrality goals, while enhancing Sohar’s maritime service offerings. Beyond the LNG project, Sohar’s dedication to sustainability extends through initiatives like the Sohar Net Zero Alliance, which aims to reduce emissions and promote renewable energy projects across the port. By embracing clean technologies and sustainable practices, including the integration of solar energy and the exploration of clean hydrogen for manufacturing, Sohar is leading the way in sustainable port operations. At the heart of Sohar’s journey is a strong focus on workforce development, empowering individuals and communities through dedicated training and educational programs that nurture the next generation of talent. This commitment is exemplified by ‘Maseer’, which offers hands-on workshops and real-world applications to equip students with essential skills needed to thrive in an increasingly digital and competitive job market. This year, over 400 students from Liwa and Sohar have participated in the 2024 edition.

MARKET

MSX trading value sees massive 126% jump to OMR21.2 million

This was on the back of benefiting from investors' interest in bank shares and a number of other leading companies whose shares declined during the weeks and became more attractive to investors

MUSCAT: The value of trading on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) saw a hefty 126 percent jump to OMR21.2 million during the week compared to OMR9.3 million in the previous week.

This was on the back of benefiting from investors' interest in bank shares and a number of other leading companies whose shares declined during the weeks and became more attractive to investors.

This comes at a time when investors are awaiting the financial results for the third quarter of this year, which are expected to be announced within the next two weeks. Also, the much anticipated launch of the subscription in OQ Exploration and Production is expected on September 30.

OQ Exploration and Production announced the subscription dates during the week after the issuance prospectus was approved by the Financial Services Authority (FSA). The company is offering two billion shares for public subscription, representing 25



percent of the company's capital. Subscription will start on September 30 at a price of 351 baisas per share for Omani individuals, 390 baisas per share for foreigners, and between 370 baisas and 390 baisas per share for local and foreign institutions.

National Bank of Oman (NBO), Bank Sohar International, OQ Gas Networks and Bank Muscat accounted for 76 percent of the total trading value during the past week. The National Bank of Oman share witnessed trading worth OMR5.6 million, representing 26.3 percent of the total trading value, Bank Sohar witnessed trading worth OMR4.7 million, OQ Gas Networks came in third place with OMR4 million, while Bank Muscat's trading amounted to OMR1.8 million.

Muscat Stock Exchange witnessed a 90 percent increase in the number of deals executed during the week, which rose to 3,064 compared to 1,606 deals in the previous week. OQ Gas Networks topped the companies in the number of deals executed after witnessing 1,057 deals. The share price closed at its previous level of 144 baisas, despite its movement during trading between 146 and 142 baisas.

The market capitalisation of securities listed on the stock exchange during the week recorded gains of about OMR20 million, rising by the end of Thursday's trading to OMR24.53 billion. This rise came as a result of the rise in the market value of companies listed on the closed market, which rose by the end of week's trading to OMR10.92 billion, while public joint-stock companies recorded a decline in their market value, affected by the decline in stock prices, with the prices of 36 securities falling, compared to 19 securities whose prices rose, and 19 other securities that remained unchanged at their previous levels.

These declines affected the Muscat Stock Exchange indices, all of which declined. The main index declined by 23 points and closed at 4,701 points. The industrial sector index recorded the highest declines at 76 points, the financial sector index declined by 26 points, the Sharia index lost about 3 points, and the services sector index recorded the lowest declines at about 2 points, benefiting from the support provided by the shares of a number of energy companies that closed higher.

Muscat Thread Factories topped the gainers, rising by 6.7 percent and closing at 111 baisas.

Omani stock market faces third week of losses

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Omani stock market experienced its third consecutive week of losses, declining by 0.49 percent, according to an analyst. "This week's drop in oil prices weighed on market performance and limited the potential positive impact of the rate cut by the Omani central bank last week, said Ahmed Negm, Head of Market Research MENA at XS.com.

"This negative performance contrasted with the generally positive trend in other markets in the region, which were buoyed by optimism following recent rate cuts by their respective central banks," he further added.

The upcoming OQ Exploration and Production IPO, one of Oman's largest to date, is set to open subscriptions for individual and institutional investors from September 30 to October 10. This event is expected to significantly influence the market by boosting liquidity and attracting foreign investment.

"However, the IPO may put pressure on other stocks as investors reallocate funds due to its importance and expected high demand from national, regional, and foreign investors," said Ahmed Negm. "This landmark offering could set



new benchmarks for the energy sector and overall market sentiment, reshaping Oman's financial landscape and potentially helping the market find direction after a period of uncertainty during which prices have remained within a range for the last two years," he further added.

In terms of sector performance this week, all sectors recorded declines. The Industrial sector was the worst performer, falling by 1.34 percent. Notable declines within this sector included Oman Cables Industry, which decreased by 2.36 percent; Galfar Engineering and Contracting, which fell by 3.13 percent; and Voltamp

Energy, which plunged by 5.01 percent.

The Financial sector also experienced a downturn, decreasing by 0.35 percent. Key financial stocks saw losses, with Bank Muscat down by 0.77 percent and Sohar International Bank decreasing by 1.44 percent. Additionally, Omninvest registered a significant drop of 4.61 percent.

The Services sector saw a slight decline of 0.10 percent. Within this sector, Oman Telecom decreased by 1.51 percent, and Abraj Energy Services edged down by 0.34 percent. Contrastingly, some companies bucked the downward trend; Al Batinah Power and Al Suwadi Power recorded gains of 1.33 percent and 4 percent, respectively.

"Looking ahead, Oman's recent unveiling of an ambitious AI program aimed at driving the digital economy and achieving Vision 2040 could significantly impact the nation's economic landscape and stock market," said Ahmed Negm. "This initiative is expected to boost productivity, create new investment opportunities, and attract both domestic and foreign capital, potentially revitalising market performance in the medium to long term," he further added.

Gulf International Chemicals rose by 4.4 percent and closed at 71 baisas. Al Anwar Investments rose by 4 percent and closed at 78 baisas. Al Suwadi Energy rose by 4 percent and closed at 78 baisas as

well. National Bank of Oman rose by 3.9 percent and closed at 290 baisas.

Shell Oman Marketing Company's share recorded the highest declines in the stock market, fall-

ing by 10 percent and closing at 720 baisas, while Leva convertible bonds recorded the highest declines in the bonds and sukuk market, falling by 29.2 percent and the bond price closed at 70 baisas. - ONA

INITIAL PUBLIC OFFERING

Bank Nizwa facilitates OQEP IPO subscription as collecting bank

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Reaffirming its steadfast commitment to driving the nation's economic progress, Bank Nizwa, the leading and most trusted Islamic bank in Oman, assumed the role of Collecting Bank for the highly anticipated Sharia-compliant OQ Exploration & Production (OQEP) Initial Public Offering (IPO).

Set to be the largest IPO in the Sultanate over the next decade, this announcement follows OQ SAOC's plan to offer up to 25% of OQEP's shares. With 40% of the IPO allocated to retail investors, the offering provides a significant opportunity for individual investors to participate in this landmark event. The OQEP IPO will consist of 2,000,000,000 shares, available in two categories. Category 1 of the IPO will run for the

period of 30 September, 2024, to 10 October, 2024, with the subscription price ranging from Bzs 370 to Bzs 390 per share. Category 2 is further divided into two segments for Omani and Non-Omani Individuals. Omani Individuals can avail a special price of Bzs 351 per offer share, representing a 10% discount on the maximum price of Bzs 390. Subscription for Non-Omani Individuals is set at a maximum price of Bzs 390 per offer share. The subscription period for Category 2 begins on 30 September and ends on 9 October.

Bank Nizwa enables both customers and general public who are non-customers to participate in the OQEP IPO. Individual customers and general public who are non-customers alike can participate in the IPO securely and seamlessly through mobile banking services, without the need to visit branches.

Corporate customers can also participate in the offering by visiting any of Bank Nizwa's branches.

Commenting on the bank's pivotal role in the IPO, Saif Al Rawahi, Assistant General Manager - Investment, Treasury, Government relation and Project Finance at Bank Nizwa, said, "This partnership reflects the bank's dedication to supporting key initiatives that contribute to the country's growth and diversification objectives. Our involvement in this landmark IPO demonstrates our capability to undertake major financial roles with excellence. Committed to delivering exceptional value and service, Bank Nizwa will facilitate the subscription process through traditional and digital channels, ensuring broad accessibility and effortless participation for all investors in this opportunity."

FOOD SAFETY STANDARD

Mazoon Dairy receives FSSC 22000 V6 certification

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Mazoon Dairy, Oman's leading dairy producer, announced that it has received FSSC 22000 V6 certification, a globally recognised food safety standard. This achievement marks a significant step in ensuring that Mazoon Dairy's products meet the highest food safety, quality, and consumer trust levels.

The FSSC 22000 V6 certification is a globally recognized food safety management system issued by the Foundation for Food Safety Certification. It integrates ISO 22000 standards with additional food safety requirements, focusing on enhancing food safety culture, risk management, and continuous improvement throughout the supply chain.

For Mazoon Dairy, this certification is a testament to its commitment to excellence and also positions the company as a leader in food safety within the global



dairy and food industry.

Abdulhamid Al-Sarmi, Quality Assurance & Quality Control Manager at Mazoon Dairy highlighted the significance of its recent FSSC 22000 certification, a globally recognized food safety standard under the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI). He mentioned "While the company was already ISO 22000 certified, FSSC 22000 is more stringent, featuring unannounced audits and a stronger emphasis on prac-

tical food safety measures. This certification ensures comprehensive food safety across the entire supply chain, from raw materials to final distribution, with continuous monitoring at each stage of production."

Abdulhamid emphasized the impact of the certification, noting how it enhances customer trust, strengthens regulatory relationships, and solidifies Mazoon Dairy's commitment to the highest food safety standards.

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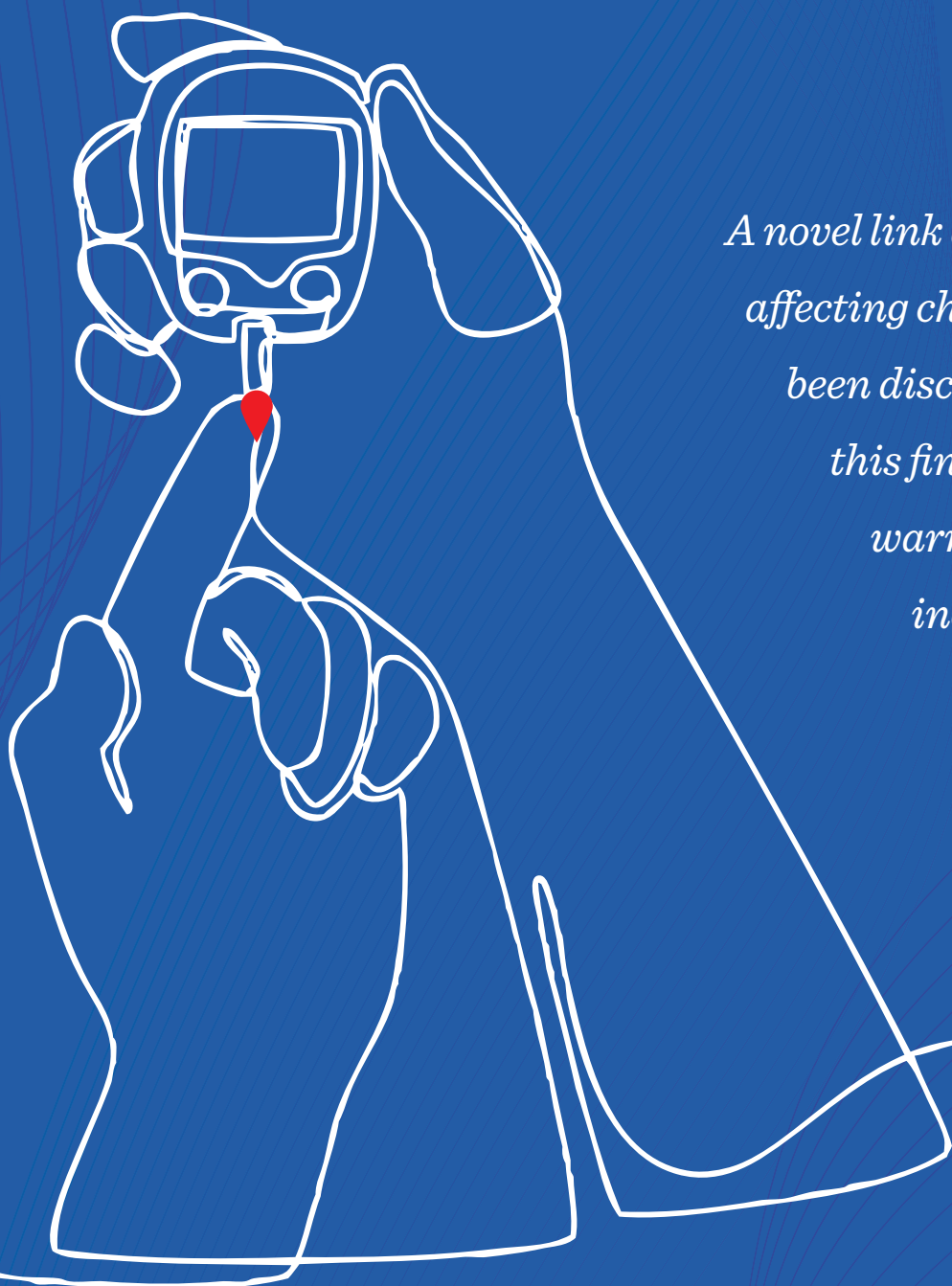
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LIFESTYLE

Study finds how new type of blood test could identify children at risk of diabetes



A novel link between lipids and disorders affecting children's metabolism has been discovered by researchers and this finding may provide an early warning system for ailments including liver disease

Scientists have developed a novel blood test that uses lipids to identify children who are more susceptible to obesity-related problems, such as type 2 diabetes, liver, and heart disease.

A novel link between lipids and disorders affecting children's metabolism has been discovered by King's College London researchers, and this finding may provide an early warning system for ailments including liver disease. The study was published in Nature Medicine.

The researchers propose that this could assist medical professionals in identifying early disease

indicators in children more quickly and facilitating their access to the appropriate treatment by using blood plasma testing machines already in use in hospitals.

The findings also contest the common idea that cholesterol is a leading cause of complications around obesity in children, identifying new lipid molecules which contribute to health risks like blood pressure but are not only correlated with a child's weight.

Lipids have traditionally been thought to be fatty acids in the body, either good or bad types of cholesterol or triglycerides, fats found in the bloodstream that is the most common in the human body. Recent studies from the same group of scientists have suggested that the picture is

more complex.

Using a technique associated with chemistry called mass spectrometry, current evidence puts the types of different lipid present in the body in the thousands, each with separate functions.

Taking a control sample of 1,300 children with obesity, the team assessed their lipids in blood.

Afterwards 200 of them were put on the HOLBAEK-model for a year, a lifestyle intervention for people with obesity popular in Denmark.

Subsequent readings showed that amongst the intervention group, counts of lipids tied to diabetes risk, insulin resistance and blood pressure decreased, despite limited improvements in some children's BMI.

Dr Cristina Legido-Quigley,

a group leader in Systems Medicine at King's College London, Head of Systems Medicine at the Steno Diabetes Centre Copenhagen (SDCC) and principal author, said: "For decades, scientists have relied on a classification system for lipids that have split them into good and bad cholesterol, but now with a simple blood test we can assess a much broader range of lipid molecules that could serve as vital early warning signs for illness. In the future, this has the potential to be an entirely new way to evaluate someone's personal risk of disease and by studying how to change lipid molecules in the body, we could even prevent metabolic diseases like diabetes altogether."

Obesity continues to be a risk factor for conditions like fatty liver disease, but the

team hope that doctors can use these measurements to treat children when they are at risk and not just a little larger than their peers.

Dr Karolina Sulek, who was part of the study and performed analysis at the SDCC, said: "Early recognition of children at risk for these life-threatening diseases is crucial. The study provides strong evidence of the great need for obesity management and gives parents confidence to intervene in their children's life more compassionately, helping them to lose weight."

The next step for the researchers is to help understand how genetics affects lipids and what this means for metabolic diseases, as well as how these lipids can be changed to improve health. - AMI

SPORTS

HEAD INJURY

Swiss cyclist Furrer dies after crash at Worlds

ZURICH: Swiss cyclist Muriel Furrer has died after suffering a serious head injury at the world championships in Switzerland on Friday.

The 18-year-old crashed during the junior road race on Thursday and was taken to hospital by emergency helicopter.

Torrential rain fell during much of Thursday's racing in Zurich.

At a news conference on Friday, Peter van den Abeele, sports director of world governing body Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI), said they could not give more informa-

tion about the incident as it was now under investigation by public authorities.

He added: "The UCI and the organising committee are respecting the wish of the family to continue these world championships."

However, the procedure for Friday's medal ceremony has been altered, with no music or anthems being played and flags being flown at half-mast.

A minute's silence will be held and a message of condolence will be read, with a photo of Furrer shown on the video screen.



All evening activities for Friday have been cancelled, along with the UCI gala that was scheduled for Saturday.

Safety concerns

Road cycling safety has come under the spotlight in recent years and the UCI introduced the SafeR campaign in 2023 to analyse risks involved in events.

Last year, Furrer's compatriot Gino Mader was killed, aged 26, after a crash while descending at high speed during the Tour de Suisse.

At the Tour of Austria in July, Norwegian cyclist Andre Drege, 25, was fatally injured in a crash on the descent of the Grossglockner, Austria's highest mountain.

Olivier Senn, sports director of the Local Organising Committee (LOC) of the Road and Paracycling World Championships, said: "We believe we always do the maximum for the safety and security of the riders. The downhill was looked at again with the rain on site."

According to Senn, there was no information yet about the exact point of the accident and he said "we have slightly amended the staff on site". "With respect to the family, please use facts and not rumours," he added. Furrer was a

double silver medallist in the time trial and road race at this year's Swiss road nationals.

"Our hearts are broken," said Swiss Cycling on X. "It is with a heavy heart and infinite sadness that we have to say goodbye to Muriel Furrer."

In a statement following the news of her loss, the UCI said: "With the passing of Muriel Furrer, the international cycling community loses a rider with a bright future ahead of her. Muriel Furrer's family asks that their privacy be respected at this very painful time." - Agencies

WORLD NO.1 TENNIS PLAYER

WADA appeals against Sinner doping exoneration



LONDON: The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) has appealed against the decision to clear world No.1 Jannik Sinner of blame after he twice tested positive for a banned substance.

WADA said last month's ruling by an independent tribunal to find the Italian had no fault or negligence was "not correct under the applicable rules".

It has appealed to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) and says Sinner should be banned for "between one and two years".

Sinner, 23, is currently playing Roman Safullin in the last 16 of the China Open in Beijing.

The case had been presented to a tribunal by the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA).

Sinner was cleared of any wrongdoing after twice testing positive for low levels of a metabolite of clostebol - a steroid that can be used to build muscle mass - during the Indian Wells tournament in March.

The ITIA said its process was run according to WADA guidelines but respected its right to appeal against the decision.

He was provisionally suspended but challenged the decision and was able to continue playing.

Sinner's defence said he was inadvertently contaminated by the banned substance by his physiotherapist, Giacomo Naldi.

The ITIA accepted Sinner's explanation that Naldi had applied an over-the-counter spray - widely available in Italy - which contained clostebol to treat a cut on Sinner's hand.

The tribunal ruled that Sinner was not to blame, but stripped him of his ranking points and prize money for reaching the Indian Wells semi-finals.

He has since stopped working with Naldi. Sinner won the US Open in New York this month, 19 days after he was cleared. - Agencies

New Zealand concluded their 2024 campaign in the tournament with an easy 33-13 win over Wallabies

WELLINGTON: New Zealand ended their Rugby Championship campaign on a high, with a comfortable 33-13 victory over a much-improved Australia in Wellington on Saturday.

The Wallabies started fast with flanker Fraser McReight going over for the opening try after sustained pressure.

However, the All Blacks, who last won in Wellington in 2018, responded through a try each from their back three of Sevu Reece, Will Jordan and Caleb Clarke.

Prop Tamaiti Williams then powered over in the second period before winger Clarke sealed the win.

The hosts had already retained the Bledisloe Cup for the 22nd year in a row following a 31-28 victory in Sydney last weekend.

Victory also moves Scott Robertson's side up to second in the championship - a position they will finish in if South Africa defeat Argentina in a title decider later on Saturday in Nelspruit.

Two defeats by the Springboks



and one by Argentina meant New Zealand were unable to reclaim the Rugby Championship for the first time since 2019 in Robertson's first tournament as head coach. Joe Schmidt's first championship in charge of Australia finishes with just one victory over the

Pumas, with his side bottom of the table for the second year running.

New Zealand survived a late rally to beat Australia last weekend in a game that ended with the Wallabies in full control, wishing they had more time after scoring two tries in the closing stages.

Schmidt's side started in Wellington as they finished last weekend, with flanker McReight forcing his way over for a deserved opening try.

Despite the visitors dominating the early stages, the All Blacks responded when Wallace Sititi showed some nifty footwork to break the line, before Anton Lienert-Brown's long pass sent Reece over in the corner.

An individual score by Jordan, who cut a brilliant line to step his way through and score his 35th Test try in just 37 appearances, further punished the Wallabies for not taking their early opportunities.

Right on the half-time buzzer, Clarke was next to show his rapid pace as he burst through a hole to reward bravery in turning down a kickable penalty. - Agencies

PREMIER LEAGUE

Man City's Rodri out for season with ACL injury

LONDON: Manchester City midfielder Rodri will miss the rest of the season after rupturing his anterior cruciate ligament.

The 28-year-old limped out of Sunday's 2-2 draw against Arsenal in the Premier League on Sunday following a collision with Thomas Partey. Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola said Rodri has now had surgery on his knee and will miss the rest of the campaign.

"He had surgery this morning - ACL and some meniscus," Guardiola said on Friday.

"So, next season he will be here. This season is over [for him]."

Guardiola said Rodri was "irreplaceable" during last season's title run-in.

Rodri missed five games last season and City lost four of them.



"Unfortunately we got the worst (news) but these things happen," added Guardiola. "We will be there to support him in his recovery step-by-step. "What he gives us, we don't have a similar player."

"But the others can all together replace what Rodri has given since his arrival to us. We will have to do it as a team and find a way to play a lot of matches without an important player for us." - Agencies

SECOND TEST: INDIA VS BANGLADESH

Persistent drizzle in Kanpur washes out second day

KANPUR: A start-stop drizzle meant there was no play on the second day of the second Test between India and Bangladesh in Kanpur on Saturday. The whole ground remained under covers throughout the day. At times, three super soppers came out, running over the covers, but the ground staff could not do much beyond that.

There was a steady drizzle till around 10am but after that, the rain was so light that had play been in progress, it might have continued. However, there was considerable rain last evening and overnight and that seemed to have done the most damage.

With no chance of an immediate start, the players went back to their hotel around 10.20am. Eventually, at 2pm, the umpires called it off.



Things were only slightly better on the first day. A combination of rain and bad light allowed just 33 overs in which Bangladesh scored 107 for 3.

After India won the toss, which itself was delayed by an hour, Rohit Sharma opted to bowl.

Bangladesh openers Zakir Hasan and Shadman Islam survived Jasprit Bumrah and Devon Conway run between the wickets. But Akash Deep dismissed both

of them soon after to put India ahead. Mominul Haque and Najmul Hossain Shanto then stabilised the innings before R Ashwin ended their 51-run stand by trapping Shanto lbw. However, before either team could take significant advantage, the weather intervened.

Brief scores: Bangladesh 1st innings: 107/3 (Mominul 40*, Shanto 31, Akash Deep 2-34) vs India. - Agencies

SECOND TEST: SRI LANKA VS NEW ZEALAND

Sri Lanka's Peiris, Jayasuriya have New Zealand in a spin



GALLE: Sri Lanka's left-arm spinner Prabath Jayasuriya bagged 6 for 42, and debutant off-spinner Nishan Peiris took 3 for 33, as the hosts spun New Zealand out for 88, their lowest all-out total against Sri Lanka, in the first innings on Saturday.

After securing a mammoth 514-run lead, Dhananjaya de Silva made New Zealand follow on.

The visitors lost a wicket in the first over in their second innings, but Devon Conway came out all

guns blazing after lunch, and along with an enterprising Kane Williamson, added an entertaining 97 off 108 balls. Jayasuriya, Peiris and Dhananjaya then fashioned a collapse - New Zealand's second on the day - in a period where Sri Lanka bagged 4 for 24.

But on the other side of that slide, Tom Blundell and Glenn Phillips chose to counterattack, before bad light and drizzle combined to bring an early end to the third day's play.

Blundell (47*) and Phillips (32*) added an undefeated 78 off just 84 balls for the sixth wicket, pumping two sixes each on the way. They had joined hands just before tea - Peiris had cleaned Rachin Ravindra up with a beautiful delivery turning away - and took the attacking route three overs into the final session.

Blundell launched Peiris for two big sixes in the 33rd over, both times by stepping out and going down the ground.

Phillips, meanwhile, ticked along at the other end with regular singles and twos, looking assured at the crease against both left-arm spin and offspin. He belted Peiris for a six over long-on in the 37th over and Blundell decided to keep counterpunching with successive fours over Jayasuriya's head in the 38th. That brought up the fifty stand in 62 balls.

Kane Williamson and Devon Conway run between the wickets, Sri Lanka vs New Zealand, 2nd

Test, Galle, 3rd day, September 28, 2024

Blundell reverse swept Peiris for four, and Phillips launched another six down the ground in what turned out to be the final over of the day. Eventually, though, New Zealand were still 315 runs behind Sri Lanka.

Brief scores: New Zealand 88 (Santner 29, Jayasuriya 6-42, Peiris 3-33) and 199 for 5 (Conway 61, Blundell 47*, Peiris 3-91) trail Sri Lanka 602 for 5 dec by 315 runs.

ROUND-UP



General Debate of 79th session of UNGA
Prime Minister of Barbados Mia Amor Mottley delivers a speech during the General Debate of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) at the UN headquarters in New York. — Xinhua

Creations of LOOLAYY presented at 2nd Sino-French fashion and culture festival
A model presents a creation as part of the LOOLAYY haute couture Paris fashion show during the 2nd Sino-French fashion and culture festival at the Chinese culture centre in Paris, France. — Xinhua



Harvester works in corn field in Konya, Türkiye
A harvester works in a corn field in Konya, Türkiye. — Xinhua



Paris Fashion Week: Spring/Summer 2025 ready-to-wear collections by Loewe
A model presents a creation from the Spring/Summer 2025 ready-to-wear collections by Loewe during the Paris Fashion Week, in Paris, France. — Xinhua

Sprint race of Pertamina Grand Prix of Indonesia 2024
Riders compete during the sprint race of the Pertamina Grand Prix of Indonesia 2024 in Lombok Island, Indonesia. — Xinhua



Women's singles semifinal match at Macao Open Badminton 2024
Gao Fangjie hits a return during the women's singles semifinal match between Gao Fangjie of China and Chiu Pin-Chian of Chinese Taipei at Macao Open Badminton 2024 in Macao, south China. — Xinhua

ROUND-UP

Malabar Gold & diamonds launches gold chains and bangles with making charges starting from 2.5%

The selected range of designs is guaranteed with the lowest making charges and comes with the assurance of the Malabar Promise, which includes 100% value on gold exchange, assured lifetime maintenance, guaranteed buyback, responsible sourcing, complete transparency and more

MUSCAT: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 6th largest jewellery retailer globally with over 355 showrooms across 13 countries, have unveiled a range of gold chains and bangles with making charges starting from 2.5%, guaranteeing customers of the lowest making charges on their favourite jewellery.

Available across all Malabar Gold & Diamonds showrooms in

Oman, the selected range of designs is guaranteed with the lowest making charges and comes with the assurance of the Malabar Promise, which includes 100% value on gold exchange, assured lifetime maintenance, guaranteed buyback, responsible sourcing, complete transparency and more.

“At Malabar Gold & Diamonds, we are committed to offering our customers high-quality craftsmanship



at the best possible value. Price-conscious buyers make up a significant portion of our customer base and by launching collections that offer the most value for money while also being superior in design and craftsmanship, we are reiterating our position as a jeweller for everyone. With making charges starting at 2.5%, we are proud to offer a unique opportunity for customers to indulge in their favorite designs without compromising on quality or price”,

commented Shamlal Ahamed, MD-International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

With festive season around the corner, Malabar Gold & Diamonds has made waves in the market with their 10% advance facility, offering customers the opportunity to leverage the increase gold rates to make incredible savings. With the offers, customers can block the gold rate till 29th of October by paying just 10% as an advance.

If gold rate increases at the time of purchase, customers can avail the blocked rate and if it reduces, they can still draw mileage of the reduced rate. Customers can also avail a complimentary diamond voucher for first advance bookings made on or before 10th October 2024. The offer will be valid across all Malabar Gold & Diamonds showrooms. Customers can either pay the advance directly at the outlet or online, via Malabar Gold &

Diamonds’ mobile app.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds is renowned globally for offering an unparalleled jewellery buying experience with convenience and customer-friendly policies along with the ‘Malabar Promise’ of incomparable quality and service assurance. Apart from this, the Malabar Promise also includes transparent pricing, assured lifetime maintenance from any of the showrooms across 13 countries.

CELEBRATING YOUNG TALENTS



Indian Social Club honours young badminton prodigy Bilal Subair

MUSCAT: In a delightful event hosted by the Indian Social Club Oman, the spotlight shone brightly on the remarkable achievements of young badminton prodigy, Bilal Subair.

During the club’s annual badminton tournament, Bilal was felicitated for an extraordinary feat that has etched his name in the prestigious India Book of Records: he holds the record for the maximum number (85) of badminton shots executed by a child (3 years, 11 months and 29 days).

The atmosphere at the tournament was electric, filled with the spirit of sportsmanship and community. Members of the club, along with family and friends, gathered to witness this momentous occasion. Chairman of the club, Babu Rajendran emphasized the importance of nurturing young talent and fostering a love for sports among children.

Bilal’s feat of completing an as-

tonishing number of badminton shots has not only earned him a spot in the India Book of Records but has also inspired countless aspiring athletes within the community. The club took great pride in recognizing Bilal’s hard work, perseverance, and his achievement in such a young age.

During the ceremony, Bilal was presented with a memento accompanied by heartfelt applause and cheers. The event not only recognised Bilal’s talent but also served as a platform for all players to engage, compete, and build camaraderie.

Bilal Subair’s remarkable achievement stands as a testament to what dedication and hard work can accomplish. As he continues his journey in badminton, one can only anticipate the heights this young athlete will reach in the future, paving the way for a new generation of sports enthusiasts.

DISTRIBUTION AGREEMENT

New World Autos brings heavy vehicle brand Sinotrukto Oman

MUSCAT: In a landmark move set to reshape the heavy vehicle industry in Oman, Sinotruk (China National Heavy Duty Truck Group Co., Ltd.) has officially signed a distribution agreement with New World Autos. This strategic partnership combines the robust engineering prowess of Sinotruk with the unparalleled market expertise of New World Autos, creating a formidable alliance that promises to deliver exceptional value to consumers across Oman.



The partnership aims to address the growing demand for robust, efficient and high-performance heavy-duty trucks capable of handling Oman’s diverse and challenging terrains, its transportation needs and also important safety compliance formalities for the Oil & Gas sector. By combining Sinotruk’s cutting-edge technology with New World Autos deep-rooted experience, commitment to customer satisfaction, extensive local expertise and infrastructure,

this collaboration is poised to deliver substantial benefits to businesses through the introduction of a new standard of heavy vehicle solutions in Oman.

As one of Oman’s largest and most respected business houses, New World Autos boasts an impressive portfolio of globally renowned automotive brands. With a strong sales and after-sales service network across Oman, it has established a reputation for delivering exceptional customer experiences. This

partnership will further enhance the position as a leader in the automotive sector, providing Omani consumers with access to Sinotruk’s world-class heavy vehicles.

Sinotruk, a pioneer in China’s heavy-duty truck manufacturing industry, has a rich history dating back to 1956. With a legacy of innovation, Sinotruk introduced China’s first heavy-duty truck, the HUANGHE branded JN150 8-ton truck, and has continuously advanced its technology. By col-

laborating with New World Autos, Sinotruk aims to expand its global footprint and promote localised operations in Oman, ensuring that customers receive tailored solutions and outstanding service.

As part of this strategic initiative, New World Autos will soon establish dedicated Sinotruk showrooms and after-sales service centers in major cities across Oman. These facilities will be instrumental in delivering an enriching customer experience, ensuring that Sinotruk’s products are supported by the highest standards of service and support.

This partnership is poised to bring about significant results in the coming days, offering consumers in Oman unparalleled access to innovative heavy vehicle solutions. Together, New World Autos and Sinotruk are set to drive forward the future of the heavy vehicle industry in Oman, delivering exceptional value, quality and service to customers across the nation.

CELEBRATING SUCCESS

Europcar Oman and Bahrain staff shines bright at IFBB West Asian Championship



MUSCAT: Europcar Oman and Bahrain, the leading mobility services provider in the region announced the remarkable victory of Haitham Al Zadjali, a dedicated staff member at the prestigious IFBB West Asian Championship.

Held at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Muscat, this event showcased the pinnacle of physical excellence and dedication from athletes across all countries.

Haitham, renowned for his unwavering commitment and exceptional driving skills with Europcar for over two decades, triumphed in the Master Men’s Bodybuilding category. His victory not only dem-

onstrates his physical prowess but also underscores his unwavering discipline and focus.

Nitin Sapre, the CEO of Europcar Oman and Bahrain, stated, “Haitham’s victory exemplifies the relentless pursuit of excellence that defines Europcar. His dedication and success inspire us all to reach new heights. Congratulations, Haitham, for showcasing the true spirit of our team!”

This triumph reflects Europcar Oman & Bahrain’s values of perseverance and success, with Haitham embodying the essence of the team’s commitment to excellence.



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