

OMAN TO CUT OIL OUTPUT BY 40,000BPD FROM MAY 2023

MUSCAT: Oman has announced that it will voluntarily cut production of 40,000bpd of crude oil, starting from May until end of 2023, in coordination with some countries participating in the Opec Plus agreement. The Ministry of Energy and Minerals said that this voluntary cut is a precautionary measure, besides the production cut agreed at the 33rd ministerial meeting of Opec Plus on 5 October 2022. — **ONA**



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RAMADAN PRAYER TIMINGS	
DHUHR	12:15pm
ASR	3:43pm
MAGHRIB	6:28pm
ISHA	7:39pm
FAJR (APRIL 4)	4:41am

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Don't travel to Marburg-infected countries

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health has emphasised the need to postpone travel to countries affected by Marburg virus disease (MVD), except in extreme emergencies.

Dr. Amal Saif Al Maani, Director General of Disease Surveillance at the Ministry of Health, told Oman News Agency (ONA) that it is currently necessary to quarantine travellers arriving from Marburg-infected countries.

She stressed that the travellers who develop symptoms of Marburg (like fever, fever chills,



muscle pain, rash or inflammation) have to isolate themselves from other people and go to the nearest medical care institution (emergency departments at health facilities). The symptoms include throat infection, diar-

rhoea, weakness, vomiting, stomach pain, unexplained bleeding anywhere or bruises, she added, noting that these could be felt even after 21 days. Such travellers have to report to a doctor that they arrived from an area that is affected with MVD.

Dr. Amal pointed out that MVD is similar to the Ebola virus and that it was known for the first time in 1967 in the cities of Marburg, Frankfurt and Belgrade. It was discovered among laboratory workers who were exposed to the tissues of infected African green monkeys imported from Uganda, she explained. **>A2**

OVER 1 MILLION PASSENGERS USED MUSCAT INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT IN JANUARY 2023

Domestic inbound and outbound flights climbed by 143 percent to reach 7,687 flights



Times News Service

MUSCAT: Muscat is widely regarded as one of the most-sought after destinations in winter season and the recent surge of air travellers through Muscat International Airport underlined the growing popularity of the Sultanate of Oman.

Muscat International Airport witnessed a rise in passenger traffic as it crossed the 1 million mark (international and domestic) in January 2023.

Latest figures

According to the latest figures released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) on Sunday the international and domestic inbound and outbound flights through Muscat

International Airport climbed by 143 percent to reach 7,687 flights, carrying as many as 1,051,390 passengers onboard by the end of January 2023.

The encouraging numbers of passenger movement is similar to

what Oman had recorded during the pre-pandemic times.

According to statistics available, the total number of passengers at Muscat International Airport were 1.43 million at the end of January 2020. **>A2**

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MUSCAT

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Advanced treatment available for cancer patients

1 The surgical oncology team in the gastrointestinal programme at Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Centre has announced the launch of a new form of management using a minimally invasive surgical technique to deliver chemotherapy, that can give hope for advanced cancer cases in Oman. **>A2**

WORLD

21 killed in US South, Midwest tornadoes

2 At least 21 people have been killed after devastating storms and tornadoes scraped the South and Midwest parts of the US on Friday and early on Saturday and dozens were reported injured, according to report. **>A6**

MARKET

MSX second best performing bourse

3 The MSX 30 index was the second best performing market in the GCC during March-2023 witnessing a monthly growth of 2.3 per cent to close the month at 4,863.09 points, according to a new report released on Sunday. **>B1**



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Admission process begins for higher education institutions

As many as 28,725 study seats are available in various government higher education institutions



MUSCAT: The Higher Education Admission Centre (HEAC) at the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation announced the start of applications for admission to higher education institutions and external and internal scholarships for the Academic Year 2023/2024.

Students who are holders of General Education Diploma

(GED) and its equivalent have to submit their applications for the academic year 2022/2023 via HEAC's website (www.heac.gov.om), along with their desired programmes of study, during the period from the 1 April to 1 June 2023.

Speaking about key developments in 2023, Dr. Hamad Khal-fan Al Numani, Director General of the HEAC, said that as many as 28,725 study seats are available in various government higher education institutions, as well as

scholarships and study grants in private higher education institutions within Oman and external scholarships and grants.

The number of study seats in government higher education institutions stood at 16,515 as against 11,586 scholarships and grants in private higher education institutions, he said.

He added that the total number of external scholarships and grants stood at 624, including 59 external scholarships provided by Arab

countries and 15 provided by Petroleum Development Oman (PDO).

The academic programmes covered a variety of specialisations in the fields of health, natural and physical sciences, agriculture, environment and related sciences, engineering and related technologies, architecture and construction, information technology, education, management and commercial transactions, society and culture, creative arts, religion and philosophy, Dr. Hamad explained.

He added that study programmes vary in terms of target groups. Some programmes are offered to the general public, other programmes are dedicated to the social security segment of society and other programmes serve low-income groups. Other programmes seek to localise teaching in distant villages or target people with disabilities.

Upon the start of the registration stage, a Student Guide was issued to help students enrol in higher education institutions for the Academic Year 2023/2024. An electronic version of the Student Guide is available on the website of the HEAC and it was announced through the social media accounts of the HEAC.

Al Numani pointed out that the guide has been developed and tallied with the lowest rates of competitiveness required in higher education institutions and scholarships.

This rate was determined based on the results of students' performance in the first semester exams and in comparison, with indicators of admission to higher education institutions in the past years, he said.

The guide was designed to assist students in arranging their choices of study programmes, depending on indicators of their chances of admission to those programmes (high chance of acceptance / low chance of acceptance), he explained. — **ONA**

Passenger arrivals at Oman airports increase by 94 percent

< FROM A1 The latest NCSI statistics revealed that the number of international inbound and outbound flights through Muscat International Airport, as well as Salalah, Sohar and Duqm airports reached 8,537 flights at the end of January 2023.

The number of arrivals through the airports of the Sultanate of Oman witnessed a remarkable increase by 94 percent and the number of departures soared by 115 percent as at the end of January 2023 compared to the same period in 2022.

The total number of arriving, departing and transit passengers through the airports of Muscat, Salalah, Sohar and Duqm reached about 1,165,556 at the end of January 2023. Salalah Airport reported an increase in the number of international and domestic flights by 43.1 percent, as the number of flights through the airport reached 774, carrying 105,719 passengers onboard.

ADVANCED CANCER CASES

New treatment available for cancer patients in Oman

MUSCAT: The surgical oncology team in the gastrointestinal programme at Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Centre has announced the launch of a new form of management using a minimally invasive surgical technique to deliver chemotherapy, that can give hope for advanced cancer cases in Oman. The technique of "Pressurised intra Peritoneal Aresol chemotherapy" (PIPAC) is a novel

drug delivery system of chemotherapy using a minimally invasive surgical technique to treat patients with peritoneal based metastasis, such as gastrointestinal, ovarian and uterine tumors.

The technology represents the newest and most advanced method in treating particular cases that would traditionally be considered unmanageable. The (PIPAC) treatment can help to shrink the tumours enough to

make the patient a candidate for other curative treatments, such as Hyperthermic Intraperitoneal Chemotherapy (HIPEC). The team have performed a number of procedures using "Pressurised intra Peritoneal Aresol chemotherapy" (PIPAC) with very promising results and are looking forward to expanding the services to include as many patients as possible and provide opportunities and hope for those in need. — **ONA**



Sohar Airport

The number of international and domestic inbound and outbound flights in Sohar Airport reached 24 flights at the end of January 2023, carrying 2,380 passengers onboard, while Duqm Airport reported 52 domestic inbound and outbound flights, carrying 6,067 passengers onboard.

Passengers of Indian nationality topped the list of those who crossed through Muscat International Airport with a total of 151,087 passengers, followed by Bangladeshi nationals with a total of 52,016 passengers and Pakistani nationals with 39,762 passengers.

— With inputs from **ONA**

AL MURTAFA'A GARRISON

RNO commander receives Combined Task Force commander

MUSCAT: Rear Admiral Saif Nasser Al Rahbi, Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) received at his office in Al Murtafa'a Garrison on Sunday Captain Mohamed Youssef Al Mir, Commander of the Combined Task Force (CTF-152), who is currently visit-

ing the Sultanate of Oman.

The two sides exchanged views on several naval matters and ways of enhancing them.

The meeting was attended by Commodore Jassim Mohammed Al Balushi, Director General of Operations and Plans at RNO. — **ONA**



MARBURG VIRUS DISEASE

Infection possible through physical contact

< FROM A1 The disease is transferred from close contact with an infected person, though the virus does not propagate among human beings during its incubation period, which ranges from 2 to 21 days. A person can get the infection through physical contact with a patient's blood or other body fluids like faeces, vomit, urine, saliva, and respiratory secretions or even semen, said Dr. Amal.

She noted that the probability of infected people's transmitting the disease increases as their disease develops and that it peaks during the severe stage of infection, which can also be

transmitted through the use of injections or exposure to contaminated needles. Such contact may lead to the occurrence of more severe cases of infection, rapid deterioration of health and an increased probability of death, she explained.

In more elaboration, Dr. Amal said, "The signs and symptoms of Marburg virus disease in humans begin suddenly with a severe headache and severe sickness associated with common symptoms of muscle pain and high fever on the first day of infection, followed by a gradual and rapid weakness.

On the third day of infection, the patient suffers from severe

diarrhoea, abdominal pain and cramps, nausea and vomiting. The diarrhoea can last a whole week.

Severe haemorrhagic symptoms appear on many patients between the 5th and 7th day. Fatal cases are usually associated with a form of bleeding from several areas in a patient's body, including the nose, gums and vagina.

Persistent high fever during the severe stage of the disease may affect the central nervous system, causing irritation and often orchitis (inflammation of one or both of the testicles). In fatal cases, death occurs between 8th or 9th day after the onset of symptoms — With inputs from **ONA**

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COMMENTARY

The crossroads of life

SALEH AL-SHAIBANY

I would like to say that, over the years, I have learned to accept disappointments. But each time something has not worked my way, I tend to brood about it longer than I should. I would like to have the mental strength to move on and rise to the challenge the moment the problem is imposed on me. I know time is essential but then you need to manage it accordingly to get you to the next level.

However, having said that, I take for comfort that I am not the only one. Just the other day, when I thought the roof of the world was collapsing on my head, in my futile attempt to forget, I bumped into a young lady who I haven't seen for quite sometimes. She looked older than her age and withdrawn. It made me feel better sitting there listening to her. It was a welcoming interlude. I was not anymore alone with my thoughts and someone was offloading her own anguish and I felt strangely privilege to be there.

She reached a crossroad, she said. In her circumstances, approaching thirty was frightening. She was still living with her domineering parents whom she found very suppressing. Being very much a woman of the east, she could not just pack her bag and leave. She would like to but "the gossip would kill" her mother,

not to mention her disciplinarian father. Her parents have lined up a "nice boy back in India" as a husband and there was no room for negotiation. In her society, a woman in her late twenties was "too old" for most suitors of any good repute. Her parents were pressing her saying that time was running against her.

They even forced her to leave her work so she could not meet other men. She was forbidden to drive a car and her college days were cut short. Her mobile phone was regularly checked for any "undue text messages" and she had to explain to her parents every call that was made to her. To make it worse, she was still secretly seeing the boyfriend her parents "ordered" her not to. But the problem was that she had been standing on that crossroad for too long. She either had to resign herself to please her parents but live an unhappy life or rush into marrying her boyfriend, who has proved to be an escape route from her ordeal.

She admitted that the boyfriend was just a two-year attachment but marrying him might be the key of unlocking the shackles. Living with him

would just be a temporary solution but not what she really wanted. When I smiled, she did not find that amusing and accused me of being insensitive. I wish I had a solution for her. However, I asked to be true to herself and walked away from the crossroad. I told her there are always inroads when you look deep enough. These are not shortcuts but a long way around to a solution that might pay good dividends in the end.

Her parents would be alright and see her point in the long run. It is her happiness that mattered.

Throwing away her ambitions and dreams and just plunging in a bad situation would ruin it for her. I might have been guilty of being an instigator of a course that might make her rebel to her parents and two young men involved in her life. But I know now I am right. I have to be because no one deserves to cheaply throw their lives in the hands of others just to satisfy an ego or a misplaced commitment. When we parted company that morning, my interlude with her provided me with new ammunition to my own problems.

Omani Hospitality Start-up, “fanadaq.com” launches event venue booking service.



Marking a new milestone for the Omani hospitality sector, “fanadaq.com” adds to its website hotel-based event venues and meeting rooms booking service, opening a new horizon to events and meetings planning in the country. Fanadaq.com is an Omani startup that provides hotel booking service across the Sultanate. Founded by 3 Omani entrepreneurs with a vision to connect the community with hotel products and services. In this pursuit, fanadaq.com started with only a hotel-stay booking service early last year and now is adding event venues and meeting rooms booking.

Speaking about this new service, one of the co-founders, Mazin Al Mahrouqi said: “In the past, the process of booking a venue for an event required up to several days to search, find and complete the booking. However, with fanadaq.com you can complete the entire booking process within just a couple of minutes”. When asked about the booking process, Nour Tajouri, the business development executive answered: “by visiting fanadaq.com’s main page and clicking on “venue booking” you find a long listing of venues comprising of event halls, meeting rooms, and outdoor event spaces. You filter your desired venue by location, capacity, and event purpose. Upon selecting your desired venue, you simply fill in basic required information and proceed to send a booking quotation request to the hotel”.

Haifa Al Durai, the product development executive added: “In line with Vision 2040, fanadaq.com is keen to contribute by innovating and promoting the Omani hospitality sector to a visioned height of growth and advancement”.

Pact inked to provide rescue and ambulance services in Duqm

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (Opaz) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the International Rescue Company for Air Ambulance and Commercial Land and Sea Ambulance.

The MoU stipulates areas of cooperation in providing first responder emergency services, rescue and ambulance services in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (Sezad).

The MoU was signed by Eng. Ahmed bin Hassan Al Dheeb, Deputy Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones and Faisal Al Tanaak, Chairman International Rescue Company for Air Ambulance and Commercial Land and Sea Ambulance.

Managing emergency cases The Memorandum stipulates facilitating the procedures for establishing a company specialised in managing emergency cases in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) and shall starts operation to provide emergency services.

It also includes that the Company provides ambulance ser-



vices, firefighting systems, marine search and rescue services, Aeromedical helicopter and jet-based rescue and emergency, including third-level injury coverage, and transportation service to an emergency hospital, according to international standards.

The Memorandum of Understanding, further, included establishing a training academy to train and certify Omani citizens in emergency-related aspects.

It worth mentioning that the International Rescue Company for Air Ambulance and Commercial Land and Sea Ambulance is a consortium that includes a number of specialised and professional companies in the fields of rescue, ambulance, firefighting, land, sea and air search and rescue (SAR), emergency medical services (EMS) and accredited training services.

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Ramadan

IFTAR TIMING

6:28 pm



PRAYER TIMINGS

Dhuhr	12:15 pm
Asr	3:43 pm
Maghrib	6:28 pm
Isha	7:39 pm
Fajr (April 4)	4:41 am

IFTAR RECIPE

PEANUT SALSA

By Oneza Tabish

INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/2 cups roasted peanuts
- 1/2cup finely chopped tomato
- 1/4 cup fresh coriander leaves, finely chopped
- 1/4 cup finely chopped spring onion
- 1 tsp paprika
- 1 tsp minced garlic
- Juice of 1 lemon
- Salt, to taste

PREPARATION

- In a small bowl, combine the peanuts, tomato, fresh coriander, spring onion, paprika and garlic.
- Toss to combine.
- Add lemon juice, and season to taste with salt. Mix well and serve.



WORDS OF WISDOM

“Do what is beautiful. Allah loves those who do what is beautiful” [Quran 2:195]

Another beautiful verse from the Quran, this can help remind us to stay good and pure in our actions, and to strive towards being the best Muslims even when it seems no one is looking. Beauty, on a deeper level, is often equated with goodness of Allah, and by remembering that our actions should be centered around having a beautiful heart we can inshallah come closer to Allah.

FASTING TIPS

INCLUDE COMPLEX CARBOHYDRATES AND PROTEINS

It is vital to provide your body with the energy it needs after long hours of fasting. Include wholegrains like brown rice, couscous, barley or lentils. Also make sure to eat one or two portions of various sources of protein such as lean meat, fish, beans, pulses, lentils, chickpea or tofu.



CUISINE

IFTAR TRADITIONS IN MALAYSIA

In Malaysia, Iftar is called ‘berbuka puasa’, which can be literally translated as “to open the fast”. After breaking the fast with traditional dates and water, people indulge in sugarcane juice, soybean milk mixed with grass jelly, nasi lemak, laksa, ayampercik, chicken rice, satay and popiah. Night markets are also popular dining spots after sunset, open to all, serving the masses as they break the daylong fast with affordable street food feasts.



GOOD DEEDS



QARANQASHO, A SPECIAL NIGHT IN RAMADAN

On the night before the 15th day, or half-way through Ramadan, children celebrate Qarankasho by wearing traditional costumes and going door-to-door through their neighbourhoods singing songs and collecting sweets and halwa. In the past, children used to carry shells and beat them against each other while singing. This celebration started as a way to reward children for successfully fasting for the first half of the month, and to encourage them to continue through the second half. It continues to be a beloved tradition throughout the Gulf countries.

As a part of the festivities, children are given sweets and candy, and treated to face painting, balloon art, cartoon characters, games and other fun activities. On this day, mothers also make rice dishes with meat, fish, or chicken, as well as harees and sweets, and distribute them to the poor. In Oman Qarankasho is celebrated in shopping malls, hotels and other places.



FILE PHOTOS





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Pink lakes of Jalan Bani Bu Ali become a tourist hotspot

This beautiful natural phenomenon (pink lakes) is formed by marine factors when sea water enters the creek, called ‘Al Ruwais Creek’

Times News Service

JALAN BANI BU ALI: The Al Ruwais region in the Wilayat of Jalan Bani Bu Ali has become an attraction for tourists due to the presence of beautiful ‘pink lakes’.

The Al Ruwais coastal area in the South Al Sharqiyah Governorate is one of the beautiful regions overlooking the coastal strip of the Arabian Sea.

It has become an important tourist destination in the Sultanate of Oman as tourists flock to the region to get a glimpse of the wonderful pink lake.

This beautiful natural phenomenon (pink lakes) is formed by marine factors when sea water enters the creek, called ‘Al Ruwais Creek’. The presence of algae and



plankton in the water gives it a pink colour.

The bright pink waters of the lakes are of particular importance to the residents and visitors of the region. The pink lakes are also a source of food for migratory birds, the most famous of which are the “flamingos” and waterfowls.



World autism awareness day celebrated

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Social Development, represented by the National Autism Centre, celebrated on Sunday the ‘World Autism Spectrum Disorder Awareness Day’ at its headquarters in Seeb.

The ceremony witnessed many functions and singing activities, educational competitions, face painting, and storyteller performances, in which children of the National Autism Centre and children of educational institutions participated.

It is noteworthy that the National Autism Centre aims to provide rehabilitative and therapeutic services, and model training programmes for autism spectrum disorder and their families. It is characterised by an integrated rehabilitation and training environment that helps to develop their level of performance to reach independence and achieve their integration into society in different stages of life, in addition to providing internationally accredited programmes and training to enhance and develop the skills of national cadres working in the field of autism spectrum disorder.

The centre aims to raise awareness about autism spectrum disorder, the importance of diagnosis, early intervention, and comprehensive education, and provide internationally accredited training programmes for families that help them understand the requirements of their children with autism spectrum disorder, participate in the preparation and implementation of rehabilitation plans, and follow a comprehensive approach. -**UNA**



Tender

Oman chamber of commerce and industry would like to announce the following public tender:

Tender No.	Tender Name	Tender Fees (irrevocable)	Specialized companies	Deadline for Obtaining Documents	Deadline for Tender submission Before 12 pm 30
1/2023	Designs, printing and marketing for Oman chamber magazine	25 /-R.O	Companies specialized in content creation, design, printing and marketing	16 April 2023	April 2023

Companies specialized may obtain the tender documents from the Administration Department at the Second Floor of the chamber's Headquarters in Ruwi , during the official working hours against the payment of tender fees.

Tender Terms:

Provide valid CR,OCCI membership , and taxation certificate .

The bids should be submitted in red waxed envelopes addressed to - Head of main tendering Committee, OCCI, written outside the Number and title of the Tender. No indication about the bidder is allowed on the envelope.

Offers should be deposited in the tender box kept at the Administration Department in the Second floor of OCCI Head office.

OCCI is not bound to accept the lowest or any other bids. It has the right to accept or reject any bids without showing reasons

Interested companies should submit the Tenders before 12 pm on 30 April 2023
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Ramadan Iftar Program



The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "He who provides a fasting person something with which to break his fast, will earn the same reward as the one who was observing the fast, without diminishing in any way the reward of the latter."

The Oman Charitable Organization is pleased to announce that it will receive donations for Ramadan Iftar Program in Sultanate of Oman for the year 1444 AH / AD 2023

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G20 MEETINGS

‘Motto of hosting G20 is to get world ready for India’

BENGALURU: Speaking about the significance of India hosting the G20 this year, Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Sunday said that the motto of India hosting G20 is getting the world ready for India and India ready for the world.

The minister said: “We have taken up the G20 at an important time in the world. We consulted 125 countries who are not part of the G20 and came up with the issues being faced by them.”

“Moreover, countries generally do this (G20 meetings) in their capital cities and 2-3 other cities.

Our way of doing this - and it is democratisation of foreign policy - is to do it across 60 cities, across states and union territories,” Jaishankar said.

A globalised world

Jaishankar said that India wants every city and every state to be more aware of the world because, in a globalised world, that is where our opportunities are. “While a city like Bengaluru is used to foreigners coming and visiting, for other cities, it is a big deal and they are quite excited,” he said. **-ANI**



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PHONE CALL

Saudi Crown Prince congratulates UAE leadership on new appointments

ABU DHABI: His Royal Highness Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia, has made a phone call to Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Vice President, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Presidential Court, congratulating him on his appointment as UAE Vice President.

HRH Mohammad bin Salman also made similar calls to Hazza bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Ruler of Abu Dhabi, Tahnoun bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Ruler of Abu Dhabi, and Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, congratulating them on their appointments.

During the calls, the Saudi

Crown Prince wished them success in performing their duties and serving their country and people, praying to God Almighty to bless them in bringing further development and prosperity to the UAE.

For their part, their Highnesses expressed their appreciation to HRH Mohammad bin Salman for his sincere feelings towards the UAE leadership and people and wished continued progress and prosperity for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Both sides underscored the deep-rooted fraternal ties that bring the UAE and Saudi Arabia closer together, and their keenness to further strengthen them to serve the interests of their countries and peoples. **-ANI/WAM**



DEVASTATING STORMS

21 killed in horrific US South, Midwest tornadoes

WASHINGTON: At least 21 people have been killed after devastating storms and tornadoes scraped the South and Midwest parts of the United States on Friday into early Saturday and dozens were reported injured, according to CNN.

New four deaths were reported in Illinois during Friday’s severe weather outbreak, increasing the total number to 21. According to the National Weather Service’s Storm Prediction Center, on Friday and Saturday, more than 60 tornadoes have been reported across the state.

US State officials said that a “large and destructive tornado” struck Little Rock and elsewhere in Arkansas on Friday afternoon, ripping through homes.

LaTresha Woodruff, a spokeswoman for the Arkansas Department of Emergency Management, said that four people had been killed northeast of Little



Rock, in Cross County. In Wynne, pictures showed that neighbourhoods and the town’s high school had sustained extensive damage.

Wynne awoke Saturday morning to rescue crews looking through flattened homes and businesses, sifting the debris strewn through town. It was unlike anything longtime residents in this place that calls itself “The City with a Smile” could recall, ac-

cording to The Washington Post.

“We were in utter disbelief,” he said. “I’ve lived in this community since 1985. I know the whole county pretty well. Not being able to recognise landmarks just has me in shock. You can’t even tell where you are in some places. ... I saw a storage building laying three miles down the road from where it was supposed to be,” as per the report in The Washington Post. **-ANI**

RIOTS

Over 1,000 officers injured in France unrest

PARIS: More than 1,000 law enforcement officers and firefighters have been injured in demonstrations and riots across France, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin told local media on Sunday.

In an interview with France’s *Journal du Dimanche*, Darmanin said since March 16, “1093 police officers, gendarmes and firefighters have been injured.” He added that there have also been “2,579 arson attacks and 316 attacks on public buildings.”

He did not reveal how many protesters have been injured but told the weekly newspaper that 36 officers were being probed on charges of excessive use of force.

Denying accusations that the police used aggressive tactics and disproportionate force against demonstrators, he said, “When violence, thugs and the ultra-left get involved, then it is the duty of the police to say stop.” He said the police use legitimate force, which can be robust. **-DW**

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We took an aggressive approach, says skipper KL Rahul

Captain of Lucknow Super Giants expressed happiness after starting their IPL 2023 campaign with a dominating 50-run win over Delhi Capitals on Saturday

LUCKNOW: Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) began their Indian Premier League 2023 season with a dominant display against Delhi Capitals (DC) on Saturday with a 50-run victory at Ekana Sports City in Lucknow.

In the doubleheader on Saturday, one thing was common between both winners - Punjab Kings and Lucknow Super Giants - aggressiveness. It was a factor that Kolkata and Delhi failed to match on the pitch against their

respective rivals. It was evident in every department of Lucknow's victory - Kyle Mayers with the bat, and Mark Wood with the ball - as they cruise past Delhi.

After the match, Lucknow Super Giants' skipper KL Rahul said: "We took an aggressive approach against the spinners and put them under pressure. I thought they started well, but we came back well. It was Wood's day today, it's a dream for a fast bowler and a team. He made it count."

"Overall, the bowling group did well and put pressure on the batters. We are not going to make too much of it, we'll take confidence from it. It's T20 cricket, you need to turn up every day and be ready for the fight. We don't want to think too much about this win."

Even though Lucknow lost Rahul quite early in the first inning, Mayers and Deepak Hooda ensured that LSG still had the perfect start in their IPL campaign opener.

"It was a great start. We'll take confidence from this win. Toss is not in our hands, with the new rules you get to play with the team you want. It gives great depth in bowling and batting. I thought we were 30 runs above par. The way Kyle (Mayers) batted," Rahul added.

Prithvi Shaw and David Warner came onto the pitch chasing a challenging 194-run target. Delhi Capitals got off to a quick start as Shaw and skipper Warner batted aggressively with pacer Jaydev

Unadkat conceding 17 runs in the second over.

Mark Wood broke the 41-run opening partnership, cleaning up Shaw for 12 from 9 balls. In the very next ball, Wood dismissed Mitchell Marsh for a golden duck to leave Delhi in a spot of bother at 41/2. Rovman Powell then joined his captain but failed to make an impact as he was dismissed leg-before wicket by Ravi Bishnoi who took his second wicket of the match. Delhi were 94/5.

Pacer Wood got his fourth wicket dismissing Axar Patel for 16 from 11 balls as Delhi lost their eighth wicket for 139.

Wood went on to bag the first five-wicket haul of the season as he dismissed Chetan Sakariya and Delhi could only manage 143/9 in 20 overs falling 50 runs short of the target.

Lucknow will play their next game against Chennai Super Kings on Monday in Chennai. -ANI



FLAGSHIP ODI TOURNAMENT

ICC reveals logo for Cricket World Cup India 2023



DUBAI: ICC on Sunday unveiled the logo of the upcoming 2023 ICC Men's World Cup on the same day the Indian team led by MS Dhoni stood victorious over Sri Lanka to lift the ICC trophy in 2011.

Six months out from the flagship men's ODI event, the Cricket World Cup has been developed with the 'Navarasa', nine emotions the game's audiences experience during the high-stakes action. A term in Indian theatre, the 'Navarasa' has been reimagined in a cricketing context, using sym-

bols and colour to depict the emotions fans feel while living the drama and excitement of a World Cup match: joy, power, anguish, respect, pride, bravery, glory, wonder and passion, feelings which represent the reactions that a World Cup evokes.

Seven of the ten teams are confirmed qualifiers for ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023. The eighth spot will be taken by the eighth-placed finisher of the Cricket World Cup Super League, with the final two decided by the Cricket World Cup Qualifier in June and July.

KNEE INJURY



Williamson ruled out of IPL 2023

AHMEDABAD: Gujarat Titans batter Kane Williamson has been ruled out of the Indian Premier League 2023 after suffering a knee injury in the IPL campaign opener against Chennai Super Kings on Friday at the Narendra Modi Stadium.

Gujarat Titans gave an update on Williamson's injury in a tweet: "We regret to announce, Kane Williamson has been ruled out of the TATA IPL 2023, after sustaining an injury in the season opener against Chennai Super Kings. We wish our Titan a speedy recovery and hope for his early return."

Williamson will now head home to New Zealand for further assessment. The Gujarat Titans will finalise a replacement for the right-handed batter and an announcement will be made in due course. -ANI

LUCKNOW SUPER GIANTS VS DELHI CAPITALS

Dropped catches shifted the momentum, says Warner

LUCKNOW: Delhi Capitals lost their opening match against Lucknow Super Giants on Saturday. Kyle Mayers played a blistering knock of 73(38), which allowed Lucknow Super Giants to put up a score of 193/6 on the board. All of this could have been avoided in a single moment. Delhi Capitals' pace bowler Khaleel Ahmed dropped a sitter in the final over of the powerplay, which extended Mayers' stay. Even Khaleel was shocked after realising the opportunity that he had allowed to slip past his hands.

"It was a bit of a challenge. We had some early momentum with the fast bowlers, they bowled very well in the powerplay. A few dropped catches and the momentum shifted there but you can't take anything away from Lucknow," David Warner said during the post-match presentation.

Mayers didn't look back even for a single moment and started to make the most of the opportunity, as he struck seven sixes. Nicholas Pooran and Ayush Badoni were only dealing in boundaries as the first innings approached its climax.

"They batted very very well. I thought 170 was par but they did an exceptional job. Momentum is a big thing in this game," Warner added.

England's Mark Wood sealed the victory for Lucknow with the



sheer quality of his pace bowling. Fear was clearly visible on Capitals batters as they faced the Englishman.

Warner said: "Don't take it away from Wood, he's an exceptional bowler and he showed his true talent tonight. I feel on this wicket you're playing on two different surfaces from either end. We started very well. Our bowlers bowled exceptionally well."

Wood capped off a terrific display with the figures of 5/14 in the second innings. His attitude

while bowling clearly depicted that he was looking to make an impact on the game.

"Wanted to make an impact in this game. The landing area was a bit of an issue, but I am pleased with my rhythm as I managed to take wickets," Wood said after the match.

Delhi Capitals will now return to Delhi with hopes of bouncing back from this defeat against defending champions Gujarat Titans on Tuesday at the Arun Jaitley Stadium.



QUOTE OF THE DAY



"We did not bowl pretty well, first match of the season and a lot to improve. South African players are coming back and we definitely will be a much better batting side, we have to move forward from this game"

BHUVNESHWAR KUMAR
Sunrisers Hyderabad captain, after the loss to Rajasthan Royals

TODAY'S MATCH



Chennai Super Kings vs Lucknow Super Giants

6pm, Chennai

POINTS TABLE

TEAM	P	W	L	T	NR	NRR	PTS
RR	1	1	0	0	0	+3.600	2
LSG	1	1	0	0	0	+2.500	2
GT	1	1	0	0	0	+0.514	2
PBKS	1	1	0	0	0	+0.438	2
KKR	1	0	1	0	0	-0.438	0
CSK	1	0	1	0	0	-0.514	0
DC	1	0	1	0	0	-2.500	0
SRH	1	0	1	0	0	-3.600	0
MI	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0
RCB	0	0	0	0	0	0.000	0

CSK: Chennai Super Kings, DC: Delhi Capitals, GT: Gujarat Titans, KKR: Kolkata Knight Riders, LSG: Lucknow Super Giants, MI: Mumbai Indians, PBKS: Punjab Kings, RCB: Royal Challengers Bangalore, RR: Rajasthan Royals, SRH: Sunrisers Hyderabad

ROUSING START FOR RAJASTHAN

Buttler, Jaiswal and Samson hit fifties while Chahal and Boult shine with ball as Royals thump Sunrisers Hyderabad by 72 runs

HYDERABAD: Fiery bowling spell from pacer Trent Boult and a wily performance from Yuzvendra Chahal powered Rajasthan Royals (RR) to a 72-run win over Sunrisers Hyderabad to start off their Indian Premier League (IPL) 2023 campaign in style at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium in Hyderabad on Sunday.

In the chase of 204 runs, Sunrisers were off to a disastrous start as pacer Trent Boult dismissed Abhishek Sharma and Rahul Tripathi for ducks in the first over with a double-wicket maiden.

After the early hiccups, IPL debutant Harry Brook and Mayank Agarwal, making his debut for Sunrisers attempted to rebuild the innings. They took the team through the remainder of the powerplay without any loss of wicket.

At the end of six overs, Hyderabad was 30/2 with Harry Brook (10*) and Mayank Agarwal (20*) unbeaten before Yuzvendra Chahal ran through the Sunrisers batting with a four-wicket haul.

Brook was first to be bowled by



Yuzvendra Chahal for 13 off 21 balls. Washington Sundar then departed for just one after he was caught by Shimron Hetmyer at extra-cover off Jason Holder.

Abdul Samad replaced Fazalhaq Farooqi as an impact player for Hyderabad. There was no end to Sunrisers woes as Ravichandran Ashwin got his first wicket, dismissing Glenn Phillips for just eight runs and they were down to 48/5 in 9.3 overs.

Chahal got his second scalp when he dismissed Mayank for 27 off 23 balls. He was caught by Jos Buttler at long-off. Navdeep Saini replaced Yashasvi Jaiswal for Royals as an impact player.

There was a brief partnership between Samad (32 n.o.) and Adil Rashid (18). But Chahal got his third wicket when he had Rashid stumped by keeper Sanju Samson for 18 off 13 balls. At the end of 15 overs, Sunrisers were tottering

at 85/7, with Samad joined by skipper Bhuvneshwar Kumar.

Chahal then got his fourth scalp when he castled Kumar. Hyderabad crossed the 100-run mark in 18.4 overs. Umran Malik (18) provided something to cheer about to the home crowd, smashing two sixes and a four as the hosts finished their innings at 131/8.

Earlier, Rajasthan Royals dominated the first half of their batting innings, racing to 122 for 1 in ten overs.

It was all Royals from the first over of the game. Their top three of Jos Buttler (54), Yashasvi Jaiswal (54) and Sanju Samson (55) thumped half-centuries to give their team a record-breaking start.

Royals posted their highest powerplay score (85) and also their fastest hundred in the IPL (in 7.4 overs). Even though their middle and lower order didn't



fire, the brutal hitting at the top ensured that the Royals posted the first 200-plus score of the season.

The Royals crossed the 50-run mark in just 3.4 overs with both Buttler and Jaiswal in rampaging form.

Buttler continued from where he left in the previous season as he brought up his half-century in just 20 balls. His knock consisted of six fours and three sixes.

After being smashed for three fours in the sixth over, Fazalhaq Farooqi got better off Buttler as he cleaned him up for 54 off 22 balls, his knock consisted of seven fours and three sixes.

Skipper Sanju Samson was next up on the crease and he continued from where Buttler left off. He smashed Umran Malik for two fours in the eighth over, helping RR cross the 100-run mark in just 7.4 overs.

At the end of ten overs, Samson

(21*) and Jaiswal (46*) were unbeaten. Jaiswal raced to his 50 in just 34 balls. His knock consists of eight fours. The duo of Samson-Jaiswal brought up the 50-run stand in just 36 balls.

Farooqi dismissed Jaiswal for 54 off 37 balls, consisting of nine fours. At the end of 15 overs, Royals were racing towards the 200-mark.

brought up his half-century in just 28 balls but was out for 55 off 32 balls. His knock consisted of three fours and four sixes. Rajasthan touched the 200-run mark in 19.5 overs and ended at 203/5.

Natrajan was the pick of the bowlers with 2/23 while Farooqi took 2/41.

Brief scores: Rajasthan Royals 203/5 (Samson 55, Buttler 54, Jaiswal 54; T Natrajan 2/23) defeated Sunrisers Hyderabad: 131/8 (Samad 32, Agarwal 27, Chahal 4/17, Boult 2/21). - ANI



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MSX INDEX ENDS LOWER

The MSX index closed at 4,812.01 points, down by 1.05 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.25 per cent at 482.70 points. Dhofar Generating, up 9.09 per cent, was the top gainer while Oman United Insurance, down 10.00 per cent, was the top loser.

MSX emerges second best performing market in GCC

In terms of sector performance, two out of the three sector indices recorded monthly gains during March 2023, according to a new report



Times News Service

MUSCAT: The MSX 30 index was the second best performing market in the GCC during March 2023 witnessing a monthly growth of 2.3 per cent to close the month at 4,863.09 points, according to a new report.

"In terms of sector performance, two out of the three sector indices recorded monthly gains during March 2023," the Kuwait-based Kamco Invest said in its latest Monthly GCC stock Markets update.

“The Industrial Sector Index recorded the biggest monthly growth of 2.2 per cent during March-2023, closing the month at 6,070.8 points,” it added.

The growth was primarily driven by a small number of top-performing companies including SMN Power Holding which witnessed share price growth of 31.9 per cent during March-2023 and Anwar Ceramic Tiles which witnessed 13.3 per cent gains. The Financial Sector index followed witnessing a monthly rise of 1.8 per cent to close the month at 7,778.2 points while the Services Sector Index registered a marginal monthly drop of 0.4 per cent during March-2023.

Stand out share price performance of companies like Al Batinah Development & Investment

Holding Co in the Financial Sector Index, which recorded a share price growth of 76.2 per cent during the month has been the primary driver of the sector indices' monthly gain.

Trading activity increased during March-2023 with monthly value traded recording a gain of 116.0 per cent to reach OMR91.9 million during March-2023 as compared to OMR42.5 million during February-2023. Similarly, the total volume of shares traded in the exchange witnessed an increase of 95.7 per cent to 317.8 million during March-2023 as compared to 162.4 million in February-2023. Bank Muscat topped the monthly value traded chart for the month with trades at OMR38.7 million followed by Ominvest and Sohar Bank with total value traded at OMR15.9 million and OMR15.8 million, respectively. In terms of monthly volume traded, Bank Muscat topped the table for the second consecutive month with 11.1 million shares followed by Oman Telecommunication Company and Ominvest with volume at 10.7 million shares and 7.9 million shares, respectively.

In terms of company performance, shares of Al Batinah Development & Investment Holding topped the gainers list with a share price gain of 76.2 per cent followed by SMN Power Holding and Oman Qatar insurance with 31.9 per cent and 25.7 per cent monthly share

gains, respectively. Al Batinah Development & Investment Holdings' share price jump came on the back of its recent disclosure on behalf of its partners and subsidiary AlPharabi for Veterinary Medicines Agricultural Company.

The company disclosed its cancellation of a previously leased plot to build a new factory and a new project to rent a newly ready-made factory building for the same project in the same location in Al-Buraimi Industrial City. On the decliner's side, Dhofar Cattle Feed Co topped the monthly losers list with a share price drop of 14.3 per cent followed by Sharqiyah Desalination Company and Oman Chromite Co which recorded 11.1 per cent and 10 per cent share price declines during the month, respectively.

In economic news, ratings agency S&P revised its outlook on Oman's sovereign rating to Positive from Stable citing the Sultanate's fiscal and economic reform program that could strengthen Oman's fiscal position beyond S&P's current assumptions. The agency also highlighted a greater degree of resilience against the economy's structural susceptibility to adverse oil price shocks. The agency affirmed the Sultanate's long-term and short-term sovereign credit ratings at "BB/B".

Furthermore, the ratings agency indicated that it might raise its ratings on Oman's economy over

the next year if the ongoing government reforms continue to bear fruit and strengthen the Sultanate's fiscal covers.

GCC markets

After reaching multi-month lows during February-2023, most GCC equity markets continued to report declines during March-2023, according to the report.

"However, a steep recovery in Saudi Arabia and an elevated Oman market helped the aggregate MSCI GCC index to report a gain of 0.9 per cent in the month of March," the report said.

“While Saudi Arabia was the best performing GCC market during the month with a gain of 4.8 per cent following a steep recovery during the second half of the month, Oman’s MSX index also witnessed gains of 2.3 per cent,” the report further said.

On the other hand, ADX reported the biggest decline in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) with the benchmark down by 4.2 per cent in Mar-2023 followed by Qatar and Kuwait with declines of 3.4 per cent and 2.7 per cent, respectively.

Gains in Saudi's TASI also helped the index turn positive during Q1-2023 with a gain of 1.1 per cent, while DFM led with gains of 2.1 per cent. The rest of the GCC markets were in the red with Abu Dhabi reporting the biggest decline of 7.6 per cent, the report said.

ISLAMIC BANKING



Muzn Sharia Supervisory Board meeting discusses latest innovative products

Times News Service

MUSCAT: In keeping with its mission to provide customers with the latest Sharia-compliant solutions, Muzn, National Bank of Oman's (NBO) Islamic banking window, recently held its first Sharia Board Meeting for the year 2023.

Chairman Sheikh Dr Muhammad Zubair Usmani was joined by Muzn's other board members, which includes His Highness Sayyid Dr Adham bin Turki Al Said, Sheikh Dr Abdulrahman Abdullah Al Saadi and Sheikh Saleh Al Kharusi.

During the meeting, the board discussed the bank's latest innovative products, the quarterly Sharia audit and Sharia review processes.

Salima Al Marzouqi, Chief Islamic Banking Officer, said, "We are committed to fostering the development of the country's growing Islamic finance sector. Sharia compliance is at the heart of what we do and ongoing collaborations with our experienced Sharia board members allow for constructive engagement among them to further improve our products and services."

"We always aim to create new possibilities for our customers while ensuring their banking experience is not only seamless but is in keeping with their values as well. We have identified many areas on which we will continue

During the meeting, the board discussed the quarterly Sharia audit and Sharia review processes

to focus our efforts during the upcoming months, while we continue to adapt to new technologies and meet the ever-evolving needs of our customers.”

Moreover, Muzn offers a variety of innovative, competitive and quality financial solutions with the values of Sharia at the core. Among its latest products is its Islamic Personal Financing Facility and Kids Wakala account. Meanwhile, customers are now also able to make cash deposits through a diverse network of Cash and Cheque Deposit Machines (CCDMs) operated by NBO, Muzn's parent company. Moreover, its pioneering digital services continue to grow, with a new Wallet Transfer feature as its latest addition, enabling customers to send and receive money locally and instantly through a mobile number, and Scan & Pay using QR codes.



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New insights into part of brain that gives sense of direction

READING THE BRAIN'S INTERNAL COMPASS

U

Using the most recent advances in brain imaging techniques, scientists have gained new insights into the part of the brain that gives us a sense of direction.

The findings of the study shed light on how the brain orients itself in changing environments - and even the processes that can go wrong in degenerative diseases like dementia, which leave people feeling disoriented and lost.

"Neuroscience research has witnessed a technology revolution in the last decade allowing us to ask and answer questions that could only be dreamed of just years ago," said Mark Brandon, an associate professor of psychiatry at McGill University and researcher at the Douglas Research Centre, who co-led the research with Zaki Ajabi, a former student at McGill University and now a postdoctoral research fellow at Harvard University.

To understand how visual information impacts the brain's internal compass, the researchers exposed mice to a disorienting virtual world while recording the brain's neural activity.

The team recorded the brain's internal compass with unprecedented precision using the latest advances in neuronal recording technology.

This ability to accurately decode the animal's internal head direction allowed the researchers to explore how the Head-Direction cells, which make up the brain's internal compass, support the brain's ability to re-orient itself in changing surroundings. Specifically, the research team identified a phenomenon they term 'network gain' that allowed the brain's internal compass to reorient after the mice were disoriented. "It's as if the brain has a mechanism to implement a 'reset button' allowing for rapid reorientation of its internal compass in confusing situations," said Ajabi.

Although the animals in this study were exposed to unnatural visual experiences, the authors argue that such scenarios are already relevant to the modern human experience, especially with the rapid spread of virtual reality technology. "These findings may eventually

explain how virtual reality systems can easily take control over our sense of orientation," added Ajabi.

The results inspired the research team to develop new models to better understand the underlying mechanisms. "This work is a beautiful example of how experimental and computational approaches together can advance our understanding of brain activity that drives behaviour," said co-author Xue-Xin Wei, a computational neuroscientist and an Assistant Professor at The University of Texas at Austin.

DEGENERATIVE DISEASES

The findings also have significant implications for Alzheimer's disease. "One of the first self-reported cognitive symptoms of Alzheimer's is that people become disoriented and lost, even in familiar settings," said Brandon.

The researchers expect that a better understanding of how the brain's internal compass and navigation system works will lead to earlier detection and better assessment of treatments for Alzheimer's disease. ANI



LIFESTYLE

SPORTS

Verstappen triumphs amid Melbourne drama

The Red Bull driver claimed a chaotic and controversial Australian GP ahead of Lewis Hamilton and Fernando Alonso

MELBOURNE: Max Verstappen claimed victory during a wild and action-packed Australian Grand Prix, overcoming battles with the Mercedes drivers, several Safety Cars and three red flags to lead home Lewis Hamilton and Fernando Alonso.

The Aston Martin of Lance Stroll was fourth, followed by Sergio Perez, McLaren's Lando Norris and Haas driver Nico Hulkenberg. McLaren's Oscar Piastri, Alfa Romeo's Zhou Guanyu and Alpha Tauri's Yuki Tsunoda completed the points positions.

Verstappen lost out to both George Russell and Hamilton at the original race start, before the Safety Car made two appearances in quick succession due to Charles Leclerc retiring from a collision with Lance Stroll and Alex Albon crashing out heavily.

A subsequent red flag for Albon's incident brought the field back to the pits, with Hamilton leading Verstappen and Alonso, taking advantage of misfortune for Russell and Carlos Sainz, who were the two front-runners to take on fresh tyres just before the stoppage.

With a free choice of tyres for the restart, Hamilton initially held the lead from Verstappen, but the Red Bull driver soon got



within DRS range and moved back into P1, moments before Russell's misery was compounded by an apparent engine failure.

Verstappen brushed off the early drama to move into a comfortable lead as the race developed, while Hamilton held P2 and set about managing the gap back to Alonso, who was joined by the recovering Sainz and Pierre Gasly in a fight for

the podium positions.

But just as the order appeared to be locked in, another Safety Car, and then another red flag, was triggered late on when Kevin Magnussen thumped the wall exiting Turn 2, lost his rear-right wheel and spread debris from his Haas over the racing line.

It meant a third standing start and the prospect of a two-lap

shootout on soft tyres, but just a matter of seconds passed before further contact and drama as Sainz tipped fellow Spaniard Alonso into a spin in the Turn 1 bottleneck.

Behind, Gasly took avoiding action and collided with Alpine teammate Esteban Ocon as he rejoined the circuit, putting both drivers out on the spot, while Logan Sargeant ran into the back of Nyck de Vries, and Sergio Perez - who had risen from the pit lane - and Stroll had separate off-track excursions.

After some confusion over how the race would proceed and the results would be determined, proceedings were resumed - and ultimately settled - behind the Safety Car in the order of the previous start, minus the cars that had been eliminated.

A rolling start took the field around to the chequered flag, with Verstappen crossing the line for his first victory in Australia, as Hamilton and Alonso completed the podium.

Verstappen's win, coupled with a fifth place for his team-mate Sergio Perez after the Mexican started from the back, extended the Dutchman's championship lead to 15 points. - Agencies

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE



Arsenal restore eight-point lead

LONDON: Gabriel Jesus scored his first Arsenal goals since October as the Gunners restored their eight-point lead at the top of the English Premier League with a comfortable 4-1 win over Leeds on Saturday.

Second-placed Manchester City's victory at home to Liverpool on Saturday lunchtime had cut the gap to five points, but Jesus' first-half penalty - awarded for Luke Ayling's mistimed challenge on the Brazilian - put Mikel Arteta's side in front just after the half-hour mark.

Leeds fell further behind two minutes into the second half when Ben White converted Gabriel Martinelli's low cross via the underside of the crossbar.

Arsenal dominated from that moment and Jesus - recalled to the side in place of Bukayo Saka - made it 3-0 with a clinical first-time finish from Leandro Trossard's drilled cross.

Kristensen pulled a goal back for Leeds via a heavy deflection off Oleksandr Zinchenko, but Granit Xhaka's late header from Martin Odegaard's delivery completed the scoring with six

minutes remaining.

The defeat leaves Javi Gracia's team hovering a point above the relegation zone with 10 games left to play.

Elsewhere, Aston Villa manager Unai Emery masterminded another victory away from home with a composed display against Chelsea, winning 2-0, to increase pressure on Blues boss Graham Potter.

Ollie Watkins opened the scoring from a Marc Cucurella blunder at Stamford Bridge, latching on to the Chelsea defender's backwards header to lob home, before John McGinn's second-half rocket put the game out of reach for the home side.

It is the Villans fifth win on the road since Emery took over in October and means they have now picked up 16 points away from home, a tally equalled only by Manchester City in that time.

All ten of Chelsea's victories this season have come against bottom-half opposition but this loss means they drop into 11th themselves while Villa move up to ninth, one point off Liverpool in eighth. - Agencies

INTER-COMPANY CRICKET

Majan Shipping emerge champions



MUSCAT: Majan Shipping defeated Majan Travel to lift the inter-company cricket tournament, organised by Muscat Overseas Group recently. A total of 16 teams took part in the tournament.

Tarek from Majan Shipping was named the player of the tour-

namement. Later, the chief guest, Sheikh Saud bin Mustahail Al Mashani, gave away the prizes in the presence of Abdul Razak, group CFO, Himansu Mohapatra, group general manager (investments), Balachandran, CEO of MOIMETCO, and other senior company officials.

INDIA'S FIRST ARJUNA AWARD WINNER IN CRICKET

Indian cricket great Durani dies

JAMNAGAR: Former India cricketer Salim Durani breathed his last on Sunday morning at his Jamnagar house in the Indian state of Gujarat due to age-related ailments, confirmed his family sources. He was 88.

Durani played 29 Tests for India and took 75 wickets, with the best bowling figure of 10 for 177. With the bat in hand, he scored 1202 runs with the highest score of 104 against West Indies in 1962.

The former all-rounder was famous for his heroic performance in India's series victory against England in 1961-62. He scalped eight and ten wickets in the Kolkata and Chennai Tests to guide India to a 2-0 series victory.

Born to Afghan parents with a Pathani lineage, Durani entertained the fans right from his first Ranji Trophy match against Gujarat.

Dropped for four seasons from 1967 to 1970, Durani was recalled to the Indian team for the 1971 tour of the West Indies, where he was chiefly instrumental in India's historic first series win there.



The star cricketer also dabbled in Bollywood, starring opposite renowned actor Praveen Babi in the movie Charitra in 1973. The stylish cricketer aggregated 8,545 runs at 33.37 in first-class cricket and hit 14 hundreds.

A joy to watch when in full flow, Durani had the ability to demolish any bowling attack on his day,

though it was as a bowler he had first made his mark for the Indian team. India's first Arjuna Award winner in cricket, Durani was a tall man and could get the ball to lift and turn on any surface with a bit of help.

In domestic cricket, Durani played Ranji Trophy for Saurashtra, Rajasthan and Gujarat. - ANI

LA LIGA

Barcelona drub Elche to extend lead

BARCELONA: Polish striker Robert Lewandowski scored twice as Barcelona inched closer to a first La Liga (Spanish League) title since 2019 with a thumping 4-0 win at Elche on Saturday. Lewandowski opened the scoring with a scuffed finish in the 20th minute and Ansu Fati added the second eight minutes into the second half.

Gavi teed up Lewandowski to score the third and Ferran Torres extended the lead further in the 70th minute.

Barcelona are now 15 points clear of second-placed Real Madrid.

Elche were playing their first match under Sebastian Beccacece - their fourth permanent manager of the season - but after a solid first-half showing lost their way after the break and remain 14 points from safety at the foot of the table. - Agencies

SIX-NATION TOURNAMENT

Oman finish at fourth place in ACC U16 West Zone Cup

MUSCAT: Oman boys concluded their campaign in the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) Men's Under-16 West Zone Cup on a winning note to finish fourth in the six-nation event at the Vision Cricket Centre Grounds in Sharjah, UAE, recently.

Skipper Jeet Shah's brilliant 75 was the highlight of Oman's 106-run win over Saudi Arabia, only their second success in the tournament, which began on March 24.

Hosted by the Bahrain Cricket Association and played in Sharjah, the West Zone Cup top honours went to the UAE, who stayed perfect throughout to collect the maximum 10 points with five out of five victories. Bahrain finished second with six points but with better net run-rate (+1.349) as compared to Kuwait, who also collected six points (+1.161). Oman were fourth with four points (-0.547) edging Qatar on net run-rate (-2.903),



who too had four points. Saudi Arabia didn't open their account.

On the final day, UAE defeated Bahrain by eight wickets. They had beat Saudi Arabia by 10 wickets, routed Kuwait by 140 runs, crushed Qatar by 254 runs, and drubbed Oman by 106 runs.

For Syed Aamir Kaleem-coached Oman squad, there were many positives to take from the tournament. He said: "One of the many positives

was the boys' determination to fight till the last ball. Overall, the performance was not to our satisfaction. The conditions were tough to deal with for our players. Our batters struggled during crucial stages of the matches, which cost us dear."

The coach added: "However, I am happy with the fact that the boys stayed positive throughout despite the defeats. Such match situations and losses will serve as

lessons for these young boys."

The former Oman international said, "The boys have a lot of areas to improve upon. We will strive to keep the boys in good shape mentally and physically as they prepare for bigger tournaments ahead. We have returned with a lot of experience and exposure. There are a lot of positives from the tournament and we will work upon them with this pool of talent."

Oman's only other victory showcased the players' potential to keep their nerves in tense match situations as they recorded a thrilling two-wicket victory over Bahrain with just three balls to spare. Kriv Patel and Kavish Shah stood out in Oman's win over Bahrain.

Against the Saudis, there were contributions from Rishab Gupta (24), Giriharan Kuttiraja (28), and Rahil Habibulla (27) to complement Jeet's 75 as Oman scored 218/6 in the stipulated 35 overs.

Oman bowled out Saudis for 112 in 28.4 overs with superb spells from Kriv Patel (3/16) and Aryan Joshi (3/23). Prathiesh Ramesh picked up two wickets.

Earlier against Bahrain, Prathiesh picked two for 30 as Bahrain were restricted to 179/6. Oman lost two early wickets in the chase. But a 42-run stand in 47 balls between Giriharan Kuttiraja and Kriv Patel (36) put the team's chase on track. Kriv then shared a 68-run partnership with Kavish in 91 balls.

However, Oman lost three quick wickets with Kavish run out for 33. Varshieth Dinesh and Aneek Chakraborty shared a 24-run partnership in 25 balls before Aneek departed with 15 still needed. An unbeaten 20 by Varshieth and Prathiesh took the team home.

Oman's campaign in Sharjah began with a forgettable outing as UAE drubbed them by 109 runs. UAE scored 230/9 with Oman's

Devansh Loya the pick of bowlers with 3/43. Oman were bundled out for 121 in 31.5 overs with Kriv the top-scorer with 31.

Qatar routed Oman by 69 runs in a low-scoring affair. Qatar was restricted to 140/9 with Devansh, Prathiesh and Aryan picking two wickets each. However, Oman batting flopped as they were shot out for 71 in 17.5 overs with Jeet making the highest 23.

Kuwait beat Oman by 27 runs. Batting first, Kuwait put up 209/8. Devansh took 3/29. In reply, Oman were bowled out for 182 in 33.1 overs. Devansh top-scored with 41 while Varshieth made 39.

Skipper Jeet emerged Oman's highest run-getter in the tournament with 135 runs while Kriv was second best with 101 runs. Prathiesh with ten wickets was the most successful bowler for Oman in the tournament with Devansh next best with eight wickets.

IN-PICTURES



A man shops for a skull cap on the Islamic holy month of Ramadan in Bengaluru, India. Xinhua



A man prepares sweets during Ramadan at a market in Amman, Jordan. Xinhua



Muslims attend prayer of Ramadan at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in the Old City of Jerusalem. Xinhua



ISLAMIC HOLY MONTH OF RAMADAN CELEBRATED ACROSS WORLD

People have Iftar meals during Ramadan in Karachi, Pakistan. Xinhua



A Palestinian vendor makes traditional sweets during Ramadan at a local market in Gaza City. Xinhua



A man arranges Iftar meals during Ramadan in Karachi. Xinhua



People visit a market during Ramadan in Amman, Jordan. Xinhua

ROUND-UP

Malabar Gold unveils ‘Golden Gift’ offer

With this offer, customers can get assured gold coins with gold & diamond jewellery purchases

MUSCAT: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 6th largest jewellery retailer globally with an extensive retail network of 312 outlets across 10 countries, has just unveiled its ‘Golden Gift’ offers ahead of the festive season. With this offer, customers can get assured gold coins with gold & diamond jewellery purchases. Malabar Gold & Diamonds will

also be showcasing an exquisite array of jewellery collections in gold, diamond and precious gems across their numerous sub-brands such as Mine, Era, Precia, Viraaaz, Ethnix & Divine etc., which are assured to be a huge hit amongst their customers.

Limited-period offer
The limited-period offer can be availed across all Malabar Gold & Diamonds outlets in the Middle East, Far East and the USA from March 30 to April 23. For every diamond or precious gem jewellery purchase worth OMR 500 will get a free 1g gold coin and for diamond and precious gem jewellery purchases worth OMR300 you will be eligible for half gram gold coin. The special array of jewellery collections that the brand has unveiled ahead of the festive season presents jewellery lovers with

an enthralling array of designs in gold, diamond and precious gem jewellery. The special design has been made available across a wide range of sub-brands such as Mine, Era, Precia, Viraaaz, Ethnix and Divine, comprising 22k gold, diamonds and precious gem jewellery. Elegant designs crafted in contemporary fashion have also been introduced in the 18K gold category. Furthermore, Malabar Gold & Diamonds is also offering 8g gold coins with zero making charges as part of the offers. **Festive jewellery**
“As Malabar Gold & Diamonds celebrates 30 years of providing an exemplary jewellery shopping experience to its customers all over the world, the Golden Gift offer that we have unveiled is yet another example of our ardent commitment towards adding joy to their

celebrations. The immense collection of festive jewellery that we have launched for the season combined with the free gold coin offers on the diamond and precious gem jewellery will ensure that festive shopping becomes even more exciting,” commented Shamlal Ahamed, Managing Director-International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds. Malabar Gold & Diamonds has also introduced Gold Rate Protection offers, wherein customers can protect themselves from fluctuating gold rates by paying just a 10% advance, valid till April 23. If the gold rate goes up during this period, customers can purchase at the blocked rate and if the rate happens to go down, customers can draw mileage from the low rates. Customers can also block gold rates by paying a 50% or 100% advance, which will be valid for 3 months and 6 months respectively.



Jaquar World Oman: Complete bathroom destination showroom

MUSCAT: Jaquar has established itself as a trusted global brand known for innovation and cutting-edge technology. Since 1960, Jaquar has had a vast and unmatched product portfolio that plays a dominant position in commercial, residential, and public institutions along with capturing hotels Industries across the world. Jaquar World Oman (JW-Oman) offers a unique experience with a wide range of premium, state-of-the-art bathroom fittings and sanitaryware in its spacious 274-square-metre showroom in Gubrah, in the heart of Muscat.

In Oman, it has partnered with Khimji Ramdas Group, Oman's leading business conglomerate for over 150 years. Jaquar World Oman offers solutions that transform bathrooms from mere utility areas into complete dream homes. Jaquar World Showroom in Ghubra offers a large range of bathroom fittings and sanitary ware products designed for efficiency, comfort and convenience. Jaquar is in the premium category of functional bath fittings and its brand Artize caters to the luxury segment. The coordinated designs, easy installation procedures, and user-friendly aspects, backed by rigorous quality control tests make Jaquar bathroom fitting the preferred choice. Jaquar fittings also boast special features such as anti-bacterial glazes, odour-free WCs, seamless, gap-free fittings on walls and floors, and soft-closing seats. Syed Ahsanuddin, Area Sales Manager at Jaguar Group Oman, says, “The concept of good living has piqued interest in sanitaryware and changed people's perception of brands. Jaquar products have caught the fancy of those who tried them out. The customer always comes first at Jaquar and as an act of appreciation, Jaquar World-Oman has announced an amazing offer to be availed at the showroom. Ranjith Ravindran, General Manager of KR Bath Solutions said, “Seeing the demand from clients in Oman for well-coordinated bathroom concepts, it was a logical step for us to bring Jaquar, the global brand for complete bathroom solutions. Our customer base has grown substantially in the last three years, which reflects Jaquar's iconic status around the globe.”

Sunil Kumar, Retail Head of Bathroom Fittings at KR said, “In Oman, Jaquar customers feel they have chosen the right brand. At our Ghubra showroom, the customers can experience Jaquar's complete range of bathroom solutions, featuring faucets, showers, sanitary ware, shower enclosures, etc.” Sheikh Laith Mohammed Hilal Al Khalili, Managing Director from Al Khaleel Group said, “Being a one-stop solution brand for all bathing needs makes it easy for us to design our bathrooms. Their key takeaways are aesthetic designs, unmatched customer service and 10 years product warranty.”

NATIONAL DETERGENT COMPANY

Bahar continues to set new standards for excellence; wins ‘Top Omani Brand’ award

MUSCAT: A flagship brand of National Detergent Company (NDC), Bahar has been a popular household name in the local market. Attesting to its popularity, the brand was recognised with the prestigious Alam Al Iktisaad ‘Top Omani Brand’ award in the category of ‘FMCG Homecare’ in a ceremony held in Al Bustan, a Ritz-Carlton Hotel, on March 15, 2023. The high-profile event was conducted under the auspices of His Highness Sayyid Muhammad Salim Al Said and was hosted by Shaikh Salim bin Mustahail Al Mashani. The event witnessed the presence of more than 100 key officials, delegates, and market experts from a cross-section of industries. The winners were declared after a detailed survey with stringent parameters conducted by Alam Al-Iktisaad in partnership with Arabian Research Bureau. Dedicated to acknowledging, applauding, and encouraging the concerted efforts of organisations that demonstrate the highest brand recall value in the local market while establish-



ing their position as the trusted choice amongst consumers, these awards are one of the most coveted in the industry. Commenting on Bahar's latest achievement, Murali Sundar, CEO said, “With this award, Bahar has once again reaffirmed its strong foothold in the Omani market. This recognition also further cements our unfaltering commitment to quality and our keen focus on the evolving needs of our prized consumers. Apart from

leveraging our inherent product knowledge to deliver the promise of hygienic cleaning, Bahar has also been mindful of the environment, taking quantifiable efforts to develop sustainable products. Our ongoing community engagement campaigns have also played an instrumental role in helping us strengthen our bond with our customers and better understand what matters most to them. To be able to earn the trust of individuals is the biggest reward for any brand,

and Bahar would like to extend its heartfelt gratitude to all its customers for their unending loyalty.” Bahar has an extensive range of detergents, dishwashing liquids, disinfectants, antiseptics, fabric softeners, and other multipurpose cleaning agents. The brand focuses on continuing to remain relevant and affordable while catering to the various cleaning preferences of its diverse base of customers. Taking a holistic approach, Bahar has been taking consistent endeavours to enhance the entire customer experience through high-quality products, ease of availability, and various packaging options. Its parent company, NDC is the first ISO-certified soap and detergent company in the region. Apart from Oman, the company also has a strong market share in other GCC countries like UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Qatar. With over four decades of experience in the industry, NDC and Bahar have received innumerable awards that pay tribute to their unique stance on maintaining excellence.

RECOGNITION

National Finance wins ‘Leadership in SME Financing’ award

MUSCAT: National Finance, a leading financial and leasing service company, was honoured with the ‘Leadership in SME Financing’ award at the Muntada Al Mara event held at Radisson Blu Hotel in Sohar. The event was attended by the presence of Dr Aisha Al Washahi, Member, Majlis A'Dawla as the chief guest and Eng. Saeed bin Ali Al-Abri, Chairman of the Board of Directors, OCCI, North Al Batinah as the Guest of Honour. The award recognises National Finance's commitment to providing innovative financial solutions that meet the unique needs of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Oman. “At National Finance, we understand the vital role that SMEs play in the development of the country's economy and we remain committed to providing them with the necessary financial support to help them achieve their goals. We are delighted to receive the ‘Leadership in SME Financing’ award at Muntada AlMara. This recogni-



tion is a testament to our commitment to supporting the growth of SMEs in Oman,” said Jawaher Al Hashmi, Branch Manager of National Finance. “Our success in supporting SMEs is driven by its deep understanding of the unique challenges faced by small and medium-sized businesses in Oman. The company's experienced team of financial

experts work closely with SMEs to understand their financial needs and tailor solutions that meet their specific requirements,” she added. National Finance is a leading financial company that has been offering flexible financing solutions for over 35 years. Its services are characterised by their simplicity, providing easy financing plans with competitive interest rates.

APPOINTMENTS

Yahya Al Jabri and Noor Sweid join Renaissance Board

MUSCAT: Yahya Said Abdullah Al Jabri, Chairman and Board member of Alizz Islamic Bank and Noor Sweid, Founder and Managing Partner of UAE-based Global Ventures, have joined Renaissance's Board of Directors. They were elected to the Renaissance Board at its Annual General Meeting held on March 27. Yahya, also a member of Alpen Capital's Advisory Board, brings his vast experience in global corporate investment and banking to Renaissance. Yahya was earlier chairman of the Special Economic Zone Authority of Duqm (Sezad) and executive president and chairman of the Capital Market Authority (CMA). Other important positions held by Yahya include Director of the Central Bank of Oman's Board of Governance for two terms, Board member of the Oman Investment Fund (OIF), Vice Chairman of Telecommunication Regulatory



Authority (TRA) besides Chairmanships of Pak Oman Investment Company, Oman Development Bank and Public Authority for Investment and Export Development (Ithraa). He is a former member of the Hawkamah Institute for Corporate Governance. Noor is the first woman to operate, scale and IPO a company in MENA, listing it on NASDAQ Dubai and the London Stock Exchange for \$1.1 billion. She has been named among ‘Top 50 Women in Tech’ by Forbes and

the ‘Most Influential Arabs’ by Arabian Business. Noor is also a Board Director of Clue, Europe's largest femtech company, the Founding Chairwoman of the Middle East Venture Capital Association, a Director of the Global Private Capital Association and a member of the Aspen Global Leadership Network and the World Economic Forum's Young Global Leaders. She has been Chief Investment Officer at Dubai Future Foundation and Board Director at MIT Sloan.

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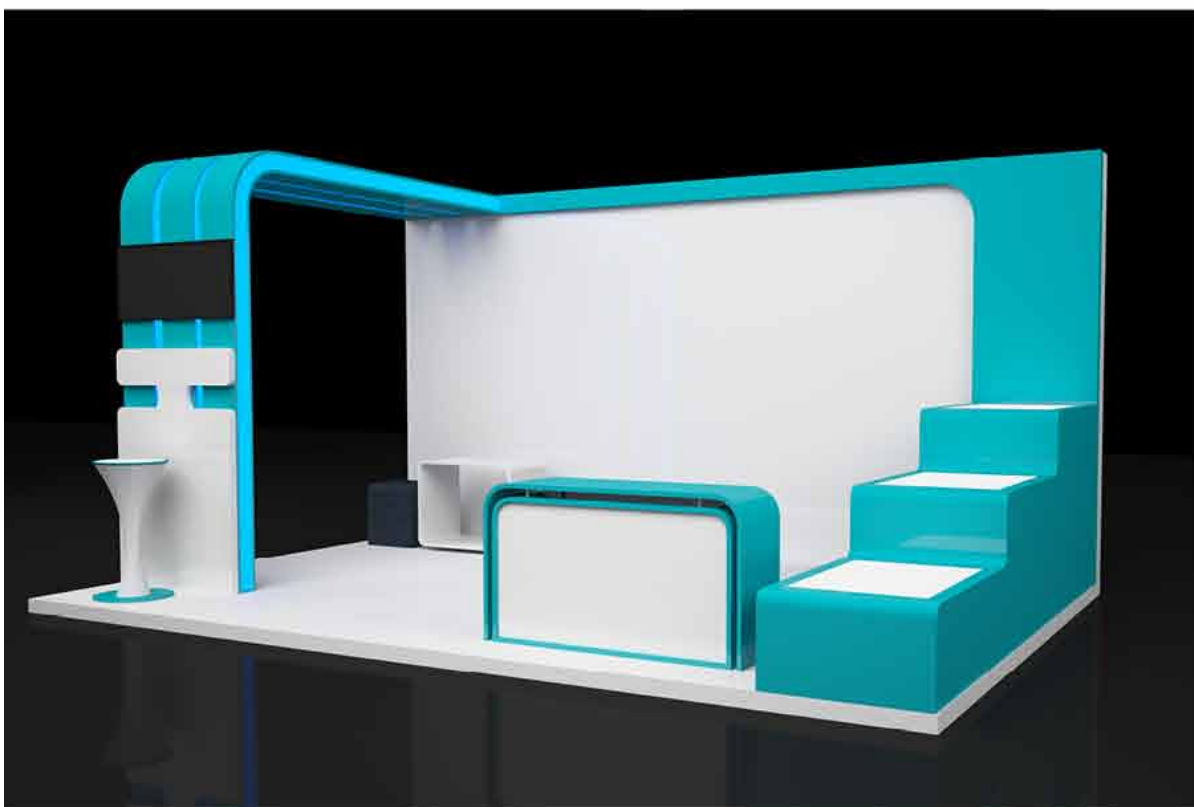
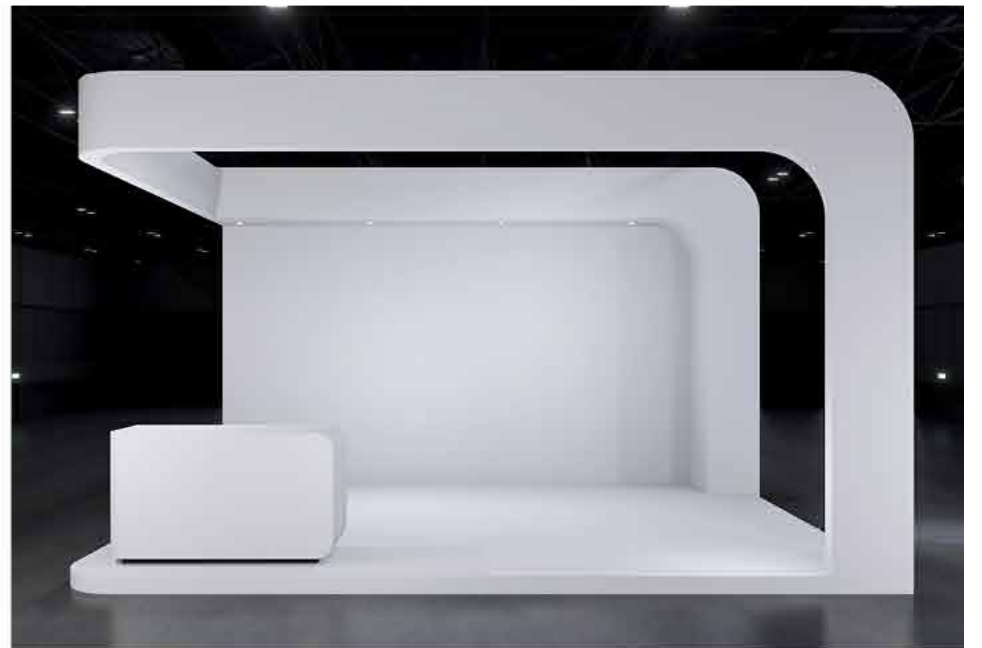
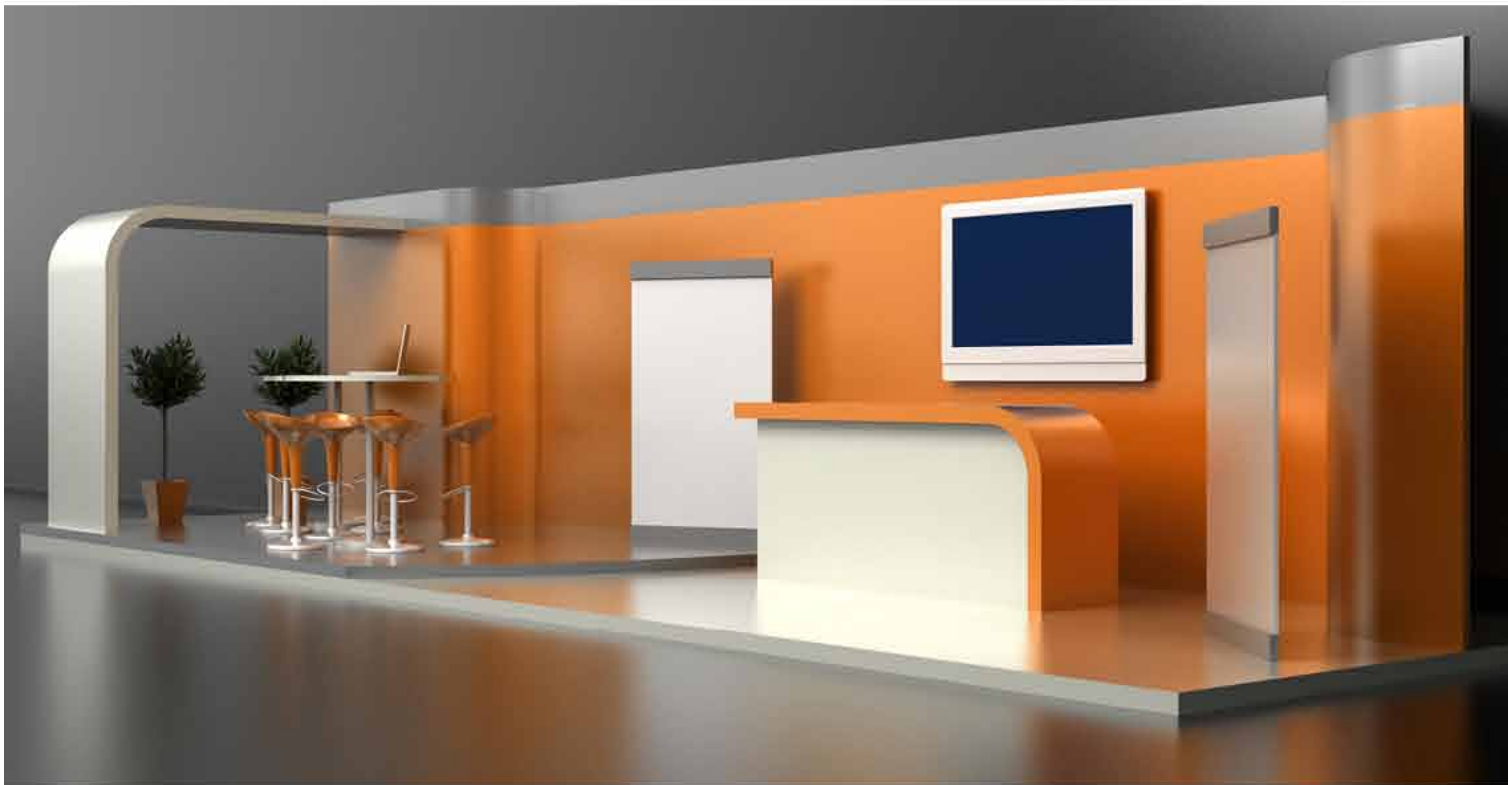
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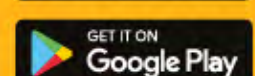
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