



HM RECEIVES THANKS CABLE FROM KUWAIT

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from Sheikh Mishal Al Ahmed Al Jaber Al Sabah, Emir of Kuwait in reply to His Majesty's congratulatory cable to him on the occasion of assuming the reins of power in his country. In the cable, Sheikh Mishal expressed his utmost appreciation to His Majesty's heartfelt sentiments. He lauded the historic and fraternal relations between Oman and Kuwait. The Emir of Kuwait also prayed to Allah the Almighty to grant His Majesty continuous good health and wellbeing and the Omani people further progress and prosperity under the wise leadership of His Majesty. — **ONA**



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OMR900 MILLION ALLOCATED FOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN OMAN

The state budget 2024 has given priority to projects with a social dimension like education, health, culture, sports, housing and urban planning

Times News Service

MUSCAT: A sum of OMR900 million has been allocated for development projects in Oman.

The percentage allocation is distributed as follows: 9.6 percent for the commodity production sector, 13.5 percent for services, 32.7 percent for social segments, 33.9 percent for infrastructure, and 10.3 percent for other sectors. The estimated amount will be paid during the year as per the actual work in progress for the projects.

The budget has given priority to projects having social dimensions like education, health, culture, sports and youth, housing and urban planning, transport and agriculture, fisheries and water resources.

The budget 2024 document, which was announced on Mon-



day, laid out the details of the development spending. The Ministry of Finance said that under the education sector the important projects include the construction of 15 public schools, besides floating tenders for the construction of 20 new schools.

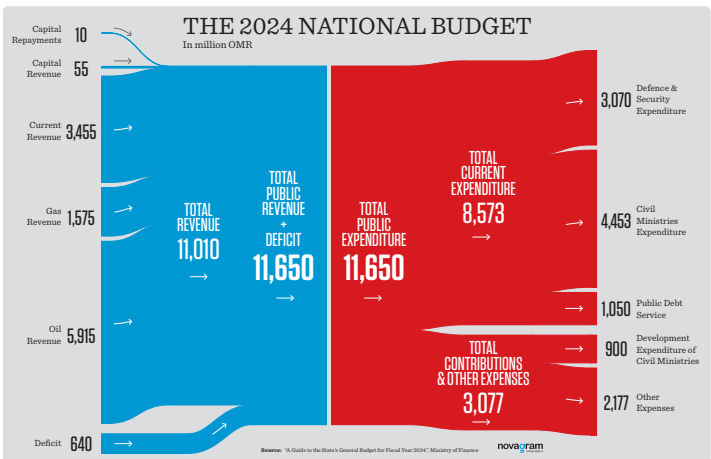
Construction of university

Also plans were announced for the construction of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences building in Governorate Musandam. Under the implementation of the abroad scholarship programme (Rowad Oman) it will cover 150 scholarships in over five years. Besides 150 additional contracts will be offered for public school buses with the replacement of 1,000 school buses that will feature enhanced safety standards.

The budget 2024 document further said the development projects in the health sector include the completion of the construction of seven government hospitals (Sultan Qaboos Hospital, Salalah, Al Suqaiq Hospital, Wadi Bani Khalid Hospital, Khasab Hospital, Madha hospital, Mahout Hospital and Al Mazyona Hospital).

Construction of three hospitals (Samail, Al Namaa and Al Falah), completion of the construction of two dialysis units. Besides, the renovation of two government hospitals, the opening up of the Central Laboratory of Infectious Diseases.

The development project also includes the construction of Oman Cultural Complex and infrastructure work for Phase I of Sultan Haitham City. **>A2**



The national budget in graphics >A2



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MUSCAT

Oman expresses sympathy with Japan over quake deaths

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman has expressed its sympathy and commiseration with the Government of Japan after the earthquake hit Japan yesterday.

In a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry on Tuesday, Oman voiced its condolences to the families of deceased victims, along with its wishes of quick recovery for the injured.

The toll from the series of earthquakes that jolted Japan on New Year's Day rose to 48 on Tuesday, with several more injured, NHK World reported.

The injuries have been reported in the prefectures of Ishikawa, Niigata, Fukui, Toyama, and Gifu, NHK World stated.

According to fire department

officials, 25 buildings, including houses, have collapsed in Wajima City, NHK World reported, adding that firefighters have also been pressed into the ongoing rescue operations across locations.

Meanwhile, the fire department informed that the blaze that broke out on Monday in Kawai Town in the centre of the city is no longer at risk of spreading, but firefighters were still on the job, trying to put out the flames.

A total of about 200 buildings, including shops and houses, are believed to have been burned around Asaichi Street, a popular tourist spot.

The United States Geological Survey reported that the earthquake occurred on the Noto Penin-

sula of Ishikawa prefecture around 4.10 pm (local time), at a depth of 10 kilometres.

Strong aftershocks

The officials warned that strong aftershocks may occur in the next week, especially over the next two to three days, according to NHK World.

Additionally, the quake has affected other prefectures as well. The authorities and hospitals highlighted that dozens of people have been injured in four other prefectures, including Niigata and Toyoma.

The Met agency stated that there have been over 100 jolts in the region since the initial quake.

-With inputs from ONA/ANI

will be held from 15 to 21 January 2024. The teams will compete to book three tickets for the next Olympics.

The new stadium will also host the Futsal Hockey World Cup "Oman 2024", to be held in Oman from 24 to 31 January 2024.

The stadium can accommodate more than 5,000 spectators during the tournament and all seats can be removed and used in other stadiums. The integrated com-

plex was built in accordance with the latest standards and designs approved by the International Hockey Federation.

The complex comprises two playgrounds designed in accordance with the international specifications and criteria besides other training playgrounds and facilities such as the offices, change rooms, first aid rooms, referees' rooms and offices of security service and VIPs among other facilities. **>A2**



TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN Indian movie shot in Oman to hit screens

1 'Raastha', the first international movie in Malayalam, which has been completely shot in Oman, will hit the movie screens on January 5. The theme of the movie is set in the backdrop of the Rub Al Khali desert, which is ten times the size of southern Indian state of Kerala. It depicts a heart-wrenching story of a girl. **>A3**

WORLD Many Palestinians martyred, injured

2 Scores of Palestinians, including women and children were martyred and injured in the ongoing Israeli aggression on Gaza Strip for the 88th consecutive day. The Israeli occupation has launched a series of air raids and artillery bombardment, leaving scores of Palestinians martyred and injured, in addition to causing massive destruction. **>A7**

SPORTS Oman to host tennis championships

3 The Sultanate of Oman, represented by Oman Tennis Association (OTA), will host the International and Asian Federation U-14 Championships (ITF Aisa 14) and regional qualifiers for West and Central Asia from 8 to 16 January 2024. Eight teams from the Asian continent will compete in a large gathering for different age groups. **>A8**



MEETING

Royal Office Minister receives envoy of Philippines, discusses relations

MUSCAT: Gen. Sultan Mohammed Al Nu'amani, Minister of the Royal Office received here on Tuesday Raul Hernandez, Ambassador of the Republic of the Philippines to the Sultanate of Oman. During the meeting, Al Nu'amani highlighted the march of bilateral relations between Oman and the Philippines.

The two sides reviewed several areas of joint cooperation. They also discussed a number of matters of common interest. -ONA



STATE BUDGET 2024

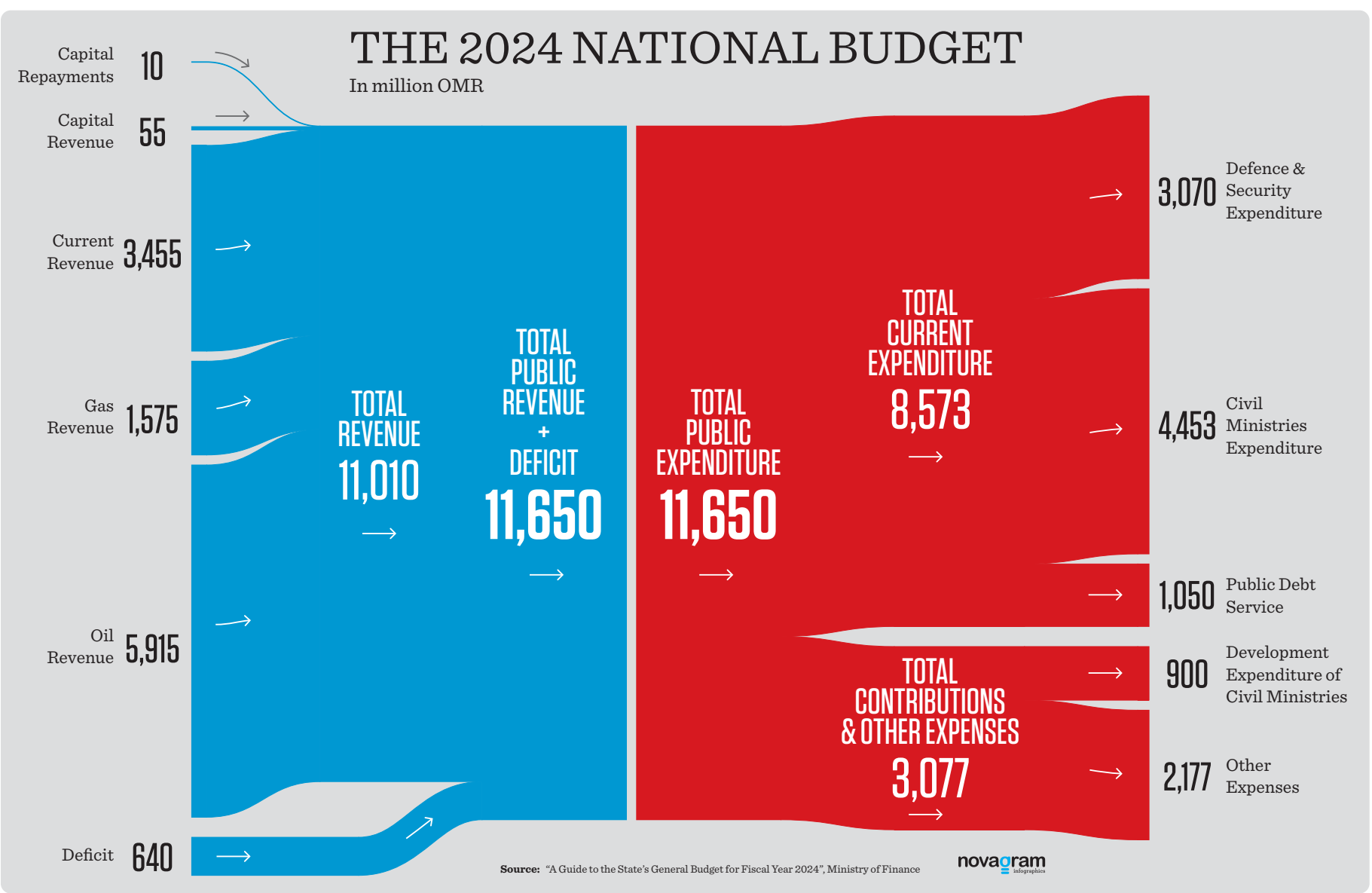
Oman allocates close to OMR1bn for development projects

< FROM A1 The projects in the transport sector include the design and construction of an asphalt road between Khasab and Dibba and the road linking Lima in Musandam Governorate.

Also design and construction of the remaining parts of Al Batinah Coastal Road Phase I, construction of the Al Ansab-Al Jifnain dual-carriage road, construction of the dual-carriage of Sultan Qaboos road in Salalah, construction of the asphalt road in the province of Mugshin in Dhofar Governorate and construction of tunnels of Atin intersection with 18 November Street in Salalah

In the agriculture, fisheries and water resources sector the projects that have been included are Wadai Adai Dam, Wadi Al-Zhaimi Dam, Masirah multi-purpose port and Shuwaimiya multi-purpose port. The Budget also has mentioned development projects in various Governorates and include the development and maintenance of public parks, waterfront development projects.

Also the following projects will be implemented as the best winning projects: Remal Park project, Ames Bay Project and Rathath Boulevard Project.



REVIEW MEETING

Shura Council Office reviews study on the future of frankincense tree

MUSCAT: The Shura Council Office on Tuesday reviewed in its regular meeting the council's decision of forming a temporary committee tasked with the file of job seekers in the Sultanate of Oman.

The meeting was held under the chairmanship of Khalid Hilal Al Maawali, Chairman of the Shura Council.

Further, the meeting discussed a study regarding the future of the frankincense tree in the Governorate of Dhofar. It also highlighted a number of other topics, including the report of the delegation which participated in the training programme for youth parliamentarians, among other topics. -ONA



MEETING: The meeting was held under the chairmanship of Khalid Hilal Al Maawali, Chairman of the Shura Council. -ONA

OMAN HOCKEY PROJECT



New integrated complex to serve hockey championships

< FROM A1 Basil bin Ahmed Al Rawas, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, said that the new project would serve Oman's hockey championships and is expected to serve the hockey games at the regional and international level.

Dr. Marwan bin Jumah Al Jumah, Chairman of the Board of

Oman Hockey Association, said that Oman Hockey Project represents a qualitative shift in the history of Oman sport in general and in the hockey sport in particular.

The project would pay due care and attention to the juniors and other age groups through establishment of an academy to generate those who excel in the field of the sport, he added.

-With ONA inputs



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Indian film fully shot in Oman to hit theatres on January 5

The theme of the movie is set in the backdrop of the Rub Al Khali desert, which is ten times the size of southern Indian state of Kerala

Times News Service

MUSCAT: 'Raastha', the first international movie in Malayalam, which has been completely shot in Oman, will hit the movie screens on January 5.

Theme of the movie
The theme of the movie is set in the backdrop of the Rub Al Khali desert, which is ten times the size of southern Indian state of Kerala. It depicts a heart-wrenching story of a girl who travels to the Gulf to find her mother. Many Omani citizens have also acted in the movie.
Directed by Aneesh Anwar, the highly anticipated survival thriller film 'Raastha' has actors like Sarjano Khalid, Anagha Narayanan, Aaradhya Ann, Sudheesh, Irshad Ali, T.G. Ravi, and Anish Anwar. The film has been produced by Linu Sreenivas under the banner of ALU Entertainments.
In a press conference organised at Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the crew of the movie shared their rich experience of shooting in Oman and the story which is based on real previous incidences.
During the press conference, the Chairman of Oman Chamber



of Commerce and Industry, Faisal bin Abdullah Al Rawas, expressed deep satisfaction and excitement upon knowing that the movie was completely shot in Oman and how it showcases the beauty of Oman.
The Chairman of Oman Chamber

of Commerce and Industry, Faisal bin Abdullah Al Rawas, expressed deep satisfaction and excitement upon knowing that the movie was completely shot in Oman and how it showcases the beauty of Oman.
The Chairman of Oman Chamber

with his family to watch the film.
While sharing his experiences, Humaid Al Amri, Chairman of Oman Film Society, said the movie will give a boost to Oman entertainment industry and will inspire more movie makers to come to Oman and shoot movies here.

True facts
Abdul Latheef Uppala, the owner of ALU Entertainments, Board Member of Oman Chamber of Commerce & Industry and Managing Director of Badr Al Samaa Group of Hospitals said that the story of the movie motivated him

to consider it as it is based on true facts and how it showcases the true nature and culture of Oman.
He said that he felt his responsibility to contribute to the promotion of entertainment and tourism industry of Oman and this movie is one such step in this direction.
While talking to media Aneesh Anwar, Director of the movie shared his experience of shooting movie in Oman and how the authorities and local people supported them.
He said he will recommend to the Indian film industry to choose Oman as a favourable destination for shooting movies.
Penned by Shahul and Faiz, 'Raastha' promises an enthralling cinematic experience with its gripping story, screenplay, and dialogues. Vishnu Narayanan handles the cinematography, while Avin Mohan Sithara contributes the musical score, ensuring a captivating auditory journey.
Edited by Aftan Anwar, 'Raastha' boasts of a stellar performances complemented by the artistic direction of Venu Thopil.
The film features outstanding songs sung by Vineeth Srinivasan, Alphonse Joseph, Suraj Santhosh, and Avin Mohan Sithara.
The ensemble behind the scenes includes Premal Pattazhi for cinematography, Rajesh Nenmara for makeup, A.B. Jub for sound design, Liju Prabhakar as colourist, and Qasim Muhammad Al Sulaimi overseeing VFX at Fox.Media. Costume design has been handled by Shaibi Joseph, spot editing by Rahul Raju, and finance control by Rahul Cheral. Production Controller: Hochimin KC, Design: Collins Lyofill, Marketing and Communication: PR Pratheesh Sekhar.
With a powerhouse cast and a talented crew, 'Raastha' promises to deliver an immersive cinematic experience, blending suspense, survival, and the raw essence of storytelling.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Pact signed for 3D printer initiative

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Education, represented by the Directorate-General of Curriculum Development, and Al Suwadi Energy Company, signed an agreement on Tuesday to support the 3D printer initiative for the tenth grade in information technology.
The agreement was signed by Dr. Yahya Al Harithi, Director-General of the Directorate-General of Curriculum Development, and Abdullah Al Rawahi, CEO of the company, in the presence of Dr. Afaf Al Lawati, Director of the Applied Sciences Curricula Development Department, and Hamdoun Al Rashidi, Director of Social Affairs at the company.

The signing of the agreement took place at the Ministry's General Diwan.
The agreement aims to introduce students to 3D printer technology and its importance in the local and global economy, as it is one of the main technologies in the future.
The agreement also aims at instilling values and principles, developing the skills necessary for entrepreneurship, and integrating the subject with student projects.
It will help them to deal with 3D printers and contribute to learning the technical and commercial aspects of this technology, and change their outlook on future professions.



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Times News Service

MUSCAT: With the participation of 700 runners, the Oman Desert Marathon will be held in the Al Sharqiyah Sands in the North Al Sharqiyah Governorate for four days during the period from January 20-23, 2024.

The “Oman Desert Marathon” will return in its ninth edition during the period from January 20 to 23, 2024 , in the Al Sharqiyah Sands in the North Al Sharqiyah Governorate, after the organisers of this upcoming race announced the opening of registration to participate in one of the global running races, which requires high endurance throughout the distance of 165 kilometers. Every runner will be completely self-reliant during the race.

In addition, there are other races for desert racing fans, such as the 2 km children’s race, the 5 km family race, the 10 km cross-country race, the 21 km half-marathon race, and the 42 km marathon race. The race is held under the sponsorship of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and with the participation of a number of government and private agencies.

The race gains great fame year after year by attracting more than 700 runners from various countries of the world to embark on an unparalleled adventure in the embrace of the picturesque terrain of the Omani desert, allowing them to experience an unforgettable physical experience amidst a vast expanse of enchanting surrounding scenery extending between the golden sand dunes.

The race, which will start from the Al Wasil area in the Wilayat of Bidiya, is divided into a (classic desert race) of 165 kilometers, and is divided into four stages, each extending over a distance of 42 kilometers, 55 kilometers, 47 kilometers (night stage), and 21 kilometers, respectively. In addition to the accompanying short races of 2 km, 5 km, 10 km, 21 km, and 42 km, which provides the competi-

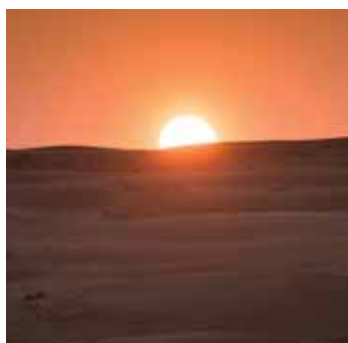
tors with the opportunity to enjoy a variety of landscapes in the desert of the Sultanate of Oman during the race route extending in front of the castles and forts steeped in history in the village of Al Wasil in the Wilayat of Bidiya, through towering sand dunes, providing runners with a complete desert experience. Where competitors will pass through the beauty of wildlife and a captivating sunset view.

The night stage will also captivate the hearts of the competitors with the amazing magic of the desert and the sky studded with sparkling stars, which represents the perfect conclusion to this stage, and the competitors will land at the Jewel Bidiyah Resort at the finish line.

On this occasion, Said bin Mohammed Al Hajri, Chairman of the Organising Committee of the ‘Oman Desert Marathon’, said: “The route of the ‘Oman Desert Marathon’ was designed in a unique style that provides a realistic, unparalleled desert experience. The Sultanate of Oman is distinguished by the beauty of its wonderful terrain of stunning mountains and desert dunes. And the wonderful valleys. The Omani desert also provides marathon runners around the world with an ideal and new experience that is the best of its kind ever.”

It is noteworthy that the runners must rely completely on themselves, as they must carry all the equipment for the race except for the water distributed at the checkpoints, each of which is separated by a distance of 10 kilometers, which represents a real challenge in the eyes of the competitor, who will carry supplies sufficient for four days and run a distance of 165 km, but it is an adventure worth the effort and allows participants to immerse themselves in an authentic desert experience.

It is worth noting that registration for the race is open through the website : www.marathonoman.com.



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Make-A-Wish Foundation brings joy to boys, girls from 28 nationalities in UAE

The foundation’s commitment to aligning with the UAE’s leadership’s efforts to bring joy and happiness to sick children and their families, both inside and outside the country

ABU DHABI: H.H. Sheikha Shai-kha bint Saif bin Mohammed Al Nahyan, wife of H.H. Dr. Sheikh Sultan bin Khalifa Al Nahyan, Adviser to the UAE President, and Honorary President of the Make-A-Wish Foundation, highlighted the foundation’s commitment to aligning with the UAE’s leadership’s efforts to bring joy and hap-



piness to sick children and their families, both inside and outside the country. “Our foundation’s ongoing mission is to bring joy and foster hope, optimism, strength, and courage among patients. At the Make-A-Wish Foundation, we have suc-

ceeded in aligning with the goals of the Year of Sustainability announced by President His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, to sustainably bring joy and happiness to everyone’s hearts without discrimination,” she said. “Throughout 2023, the founda-



tion has sown the seeds of happiness and optimism in the hearts of 712 boys and girls from 28 nationalities inside and outside the country, suffering from some 98 life-threatening chronic diseases,” she added. “The UAE’s noble humanitar-

ian work never ceases, and our foundation is fulfilling the wishes of sick children regardless of their locations or nationalities. The outcomes of 2023 have warmed our hearts, with 307 wishes being fulfilled in the UAE, 217 wishes in Jordan, and 188 wishes



in Egypt. We look forward to further achievements and expanding our philanthropic work to bring happiness to children battling serious illnesses around the world,” Sheikha Shaikha said in conclusion. The foundation’s mission lies not only in granting the wishes of children suffering from critical illnesses, but also aims to strengthen these children’s faith, along with their families and loved ones, when they all witness the children’s wishes being granted. This will bring hope, strength, and joy to their young lives. – WAM

SAUDI ARABIA

Captivating journey of Shada coffee in highlands of Al-Baha

AL-BAHA: On the Shada Mountains, in the highlands of Al-Baha, Saudi Arabia, the aroma of coffee trees fills the air. The coffee shrubs on Shada Al-Asfal (Lower Shada) mountain ascend to embrace their counterparts on Shada Al-Ala (Upper Shada) mountain; they produce a distinct type of coffee beans that makes the Shada coffee, named after the two grand mountains. Scattered across these mountains are farms that hold over 54,000 coffee seedlings, which yield more than 12 tonnes of coffee annually. Over 280 farmers are involved in this enterprise, according to statistics from the Ministry of Environment, Water, and Agriculture branch in Al-Baha region. The twin mountains, part of a mountain range amidst a series of low plains and valleys, are the highest peaks in the Tihama plain. Shada Al-Ala reaches an elevation of 2,200 metres, while Shada Al-Asfal stands at around 1,500 metres. Agriculture on these mountains extends beyond coffee, as the locals cultivate various trees, yet their primary focus remains on coffee, which is the prominent crop of the region. Remarkable methods are used

for the care of coffee trees by the locals. The plants are watered by storing rainwater in hollow rocks hewn to resemble water tanks, as explained by farmer Ali Al-Ghamdi, owner of a farm on Shada Al-Asfal mountain. His farm boasts around 700 Shada coffee trees. The plants receive meticulous care, from the initial stages of planting to drying and processing coffee beans, and production is abundant, he said. The price of Shada coffee ranges between SAR100 and SAR150 per kilogram. Adjacent to his farm, there is a cave designed to serve as a museum for Shada coffee. It contains ample quantities of coffee alongside other produce, such as bananas, mangoes, lemons, and various tools used for coffee preparation. From Shada Al-Asfal to Shada Al-Ala, the long-standing trees, some older than 150 years, still yield coffee. Some 300 of them are carefully tended by farmer Abdullah Al-Shadawi, who continues his forefathers’ occupation. According to him, Shada coffee farms are greatly helped by the fertile soil, which explains the amount and quality of yield. Al-Ala also has around 3,000 seedlings. – SPA

ROADS AND TRANSPORT AUTHORITY

RTA awards contract for streetlighting project spanning 40 districts in Dubai

DUBAI: Dubai’s Roads and Transport Authority (RTA) has awarded a contract worth AED278 million for a street lighting project that will cover 40 districts and streets. This project is part of the Street Lighting Plan 2023-2026, which aims to enhance the infrastructure of road network facilities to keep up with Dubai’s ongoing development and meet the demands of urban expansion and population growth. Mattar Al Tayer, the Director-General, and Chairman of the Board of Executive Directors of RTA, has announced the Street-lighting Plan for 2023-2026. He said: “The main goal of this plan is to improve traffic safety and security for all road users, including vehicles and pedestrians. The initiative is designed to contribute to residents’ and visitors’ well-being and satisfaction in the targeted areas. The selection of these areas is based on careful consideration of traffic safety and security standards, traffic volumes, and the pace of urban growth.” “We have implemented the best energy conservation practices and supported green economy to achieve RTA’s strategic objectives. We have utilized the latest smart and sustainable lighting



technologies that are specially designed for the UAE’s climatic conditions. These innovative lighting systems use energy-efficient LED technology, which provides multiple benefits over traditional lighting units. They offer a 55% reduction in energy consumption and a 173% increase in lifespan, which reduces the need for frequent lamp replacements and lowers maintenance and operational costs,” stated Al Tayer. As part of the Streetlighting Plan, RTA began working on designing and implementing street-lighting projects in 2023 for the

Al Qusais Industrial Areas 1 to 5, as well as Al Lusaily and Lahbab 1 and 2. The project is almost completed now. **Lighting installations** During 2024, the installation of streetlights will be extended to cover roads previously unlit in Mirdif, Al Baraha, Oud Metha, Al Waheda, Al Hudaiba, Al Satwa, Abu Hail, and Al Bada’a. Additionally, lighting installations will be carried out in Umm Suqeim 1, 2, and 3, Al Safa 1 and 2, Al Manara, Al Mariyal Reserve Street, and the road to Al Minhad Air Base.

The plan also includes streets and parking areas in Jumeirah. In 2025, streetlighting works will cover Umm Al Sheif, Al Su-fouh 1, Al Quoz Residential Areas 1 and 3, Nad Al Hamar, and Al Awir 2. In 2026, the project will extend to Al Mamzar, Oud Al Muteena, and various streets and parking lots in Al Garhoud, Al Twar, Hasyan, Al Jafliya, Al Marmoom, Al Qusais 1 and 2, Nad Al Sheba 1, Al Warsan 2, Hind City, Business Bay, Umm Ramool, Ras Al Khor Industrial Area 1 and 2, and Ras Al Khor Industrial Area 3 Street. – WAM

BAHRAIN

6,800 housing units distributed to citizens

MANAMA: Following the directives of King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and the order of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, on the distribution of 6,800 housing services to citizens, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning continues procedures to distribute housing services in Salman City, East Hidd City, and East Sitra City projects. Electronic draws for the hous-

ing units will continue until the end of February, following the schedule to ensure a rapid and continuous process. **Seamless flow** The citizens commended the seamless flow of procedures. They were given detailed explanations by specialised staff about the housing units, requirements, and guarantees provided by the ministry, as well as the electronic withdrawal mechanism, types of

housing units, and contract details provided by the ministry. The ministry continues its procedures for housing financing solutions through Tas’heel Aqari, “Tas’heel Al Bait Al Oud” and “Tas’heel Ta’awon”, or the newly launched category of “Mazaya”. The ministry offers advisory services via its website www.housing.gov.bh and the eGovernment portal to citizens wishing to receive housing financing services through its Customer Support

Centre, to provide consultations and answer inquiries about the standards and provisions of types of financing. Financial service applications are submitted online. Advisors are available at the Customer Support Centre to assist citizens and calculate the value of financing before the formal process begins. It offers electronic services, including a video call service, for individuals who wish to receive online financing consultations. – BNA

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Principal

UNIDENTIFIED ASSAILANT

South Korean opposition leader stabbed

SEOUL: The head of South Korea's main opposition party, Lee Jae-myung, was stabbed in the neck on Tuesday, officials said.

Lee was attacked by an unidentified assailant while touring the site of a proposed airport in the southern city of Busan.

Lee's Democratic Party's spokesperson Kwon Chil-seung said that Lee had undergone surgery.

Lee "is currently admitted to the intensive care unit and is recovering," he said.

The official also said the opposition politician had suffered "damage to the internal jugular vein."

In the immediate aftermath of the attack, there was concern over the large amount of bleeding that Lee suffered.

President Yoon Suk Yeol ordered a speedy investigation and offered his support to Lee, the president's office said in a statement.

"Yoon emphasized our society should never tolerate this kind of act of violence under any circumstances," the statement added.

Local news reports said the attacker appeared to be a man in his 50s or 60s who approached Lee for an autograph.

The attacker then suddenly lunged forward and appeared to stab the opposition leader in the left side of his neck.

Officials near Lee quickly subdued the attacker before police officers detained him, senior Busan police officer Sohn Jae-han said in a televised briefing.

— DW

DEVASTATING EARTHQUAKE



Rescuers search for survivors in Japan

TOKYO: Japanese rescue teams struggled on Tuesday to reach isolated areas impacted by a devastating earthquake which struck the country's western coast on New Year's day, killing at least 48 people.

The 7.6 magnitude quake hit Japan's Noto peninsula in Ishikawa prefecture, prompting the Japan Meteorological Agency to issue a major tsunami warning.

The area was also shaken by dozens of powerful aftershocks.

Rescue workers face race against time

Authorities dispatched a team of 3,000 army personnel, firefighters and police officers to help with the rescue operations.

"The search and rescue of those impacted by the quake is a battle against time," Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said during an emergency meeting on Tuesday.

Rescuers were struggling to reach the northern tip of the Noto peninsula, due to widespread damage and raging fires, Kishida said.

The quake and its aftermath disrupted several rail services and flights into the area, closing Noto's airport due to damage to its runway terminal and access roads.

Suzu, a coastal town near the quake's epicenter, saw up to 1,000 houses destroyed, its mayor Masuhiro Izumiya said.

"The situation is catastrophic," he added.

Destroyed houses and tsunami warnings

Tens of thousands of homes were destroyed by the quake, which brought down water, power and mobile services in some areas, local media reported.

"It's not just that it's a mess. The wall has collapsed, and you can see through to the next room. I don't think we can live here anymore," the Associated Press quoted Miki Kobayashi, an Ishikawa resident, as saying about her house.

Evacuated people rest at a green house converted as an evacuation center, in the aftermath of an earthquake, in Wajima, Ishikawa prefecture.

Japanese authorities ordered some 100,000 people to evacuate their homes on Monday night.

— DW

Five killed after Japan Airlines plane collides

Japan Airlines said all 367 passengers and 12 crew on board the burning aircraft were evacuated



TOKYO: Five people on board a coast guard aircraft died after a collision with a Japan Airlines plane at Haneda airport in Tokyo, Japan's capital, on Tuesday, the Japanese transport minister said.

Footage aired on public broadcaster NHK showed the Japan Airlines Airbus A-350 burst into flames on the runway. An official from the carrier said the plane, flight 516, had just travelled from Shin Chitose airport in Hokkaido to Haneda.

Japan Airlines said all 367 passengers and 12 crew on board the burning aircraft were evacuated.

Meanwhile, Japanese Transport Minister Tetsuo Saito said five of the crewmembers on the coast guard aircraft had died. The pilot, one of six on board, escaped with serious injuries, he added.

What do we know about the cause of the fire?

The transport minister said the cause of the accident was unclear and the Japan Transport Safety Board, police and other departments would investigate.

"The Transport Ministry will attempt to resume the operations of Haneda airport as soon as possible," Saito said.

Video footage broadcast shortly after the collision showed fire crews working to put out the blaze. The Transport Ministry said all runways at the airport were closed.

Haneda is one of Japan's busiest airports and the second-largest hub serving Tokyo, after Narita airport.

What do we know about the Coast Guard plane?

The Coast Guard said its plane had been due to head to Niigata airport on Japan's west coast to deliver aid to those caught up in the powerful New Year's Day earthquake, which killed nearly 50 people.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's office relayed his instructions to relevant authorities to coordinate in order to quickly assess the damage and provide the public with information.

The prime minister also praised those killed in the crash while on their way to help the quake victims.

"These were employees who had a high sense of mission and responsibility for the affected areas. It's very regrettable," he told reporters. "I express my respect and gratitude to their sense of mission."

The government promptly set up an information liaison room at the Crisis Management Centre of the Prime Minister's Office at 6:05 pm on Tuesday to collect and coordinate information regarding the incident. In response to the emergency, all runways at Haneda Airport were closed around 6 pm, causing significant disruptions to air traffic.

Officials from the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism have indicated that there is information suggesting a collision between the Japan Airlines Airbus A350 from New Chitose Airport and the Japan Coast Guard aircraft near the runway. The cause of the collision is yet to be officially determined. — Agencies

EUROPEAN UNION

Is migration the EU's biggest challenge in 2024?

BRUSSELS: The number of asylum applications to the European Union has risen over the past two years. While there were just under 1 million in 2022, the European Union Agency for Asylum has predicted that this mark could now have hit the highest number since 2015, the year in which a especially large number of people came to Europe and former German Chancellor Angela Merkel coined the slogan: "We can do this!"

Of those seeking protection, more than 350,000 entered the EU irregularly (without permission) in the first 11 months of 2023, according to EU border protection agency Frontex.

But irregular migration only accounts for a fraction of all migration to the 27 member states, according to the EU Commission. By contrast, almost 3.5 million people migrated to the EU in 2022 as refugees with asylum status, or to pursue education or a job, for example.

Experts expect that many people will continue to make the dangerous, and sometimes deadly, journey to Europe in 2024. Catherine Woollard, director of the European Council on Refugees and Exiles, told DW that record numbers of people are currently fleeing worldwide. A small proportion of them will seek protection in the EU.

"It is likely that next year there will be somewhere up to a million people seeking protection [in Europe], and most of them actually in need of protection," said Woollard.

David Kipp, who works on German and European migration policy at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs in Berlin, said there were "no signs of a trend reversal at the moment" because the number of crises are



increasing worldwide.

Still, accommodating these migrants is manageable, Woollard said, pointing to the example of the way Ukrainians who fled to the EU in 2022 were integrated. According to the European Council, around 4.2 million Ukrainians received temporary protection in the EU in September 2023. Rather than panic about numbers, Woollard suggested that the functionality of European asylum systems be improved.

In mid-December, the European Parliament and 27 member states agreed on a far-reaching reform to EU migration and asylum policy. Before it can take force, it must still be formally adopted by the member states and the EU Parliament in the first half of 2024,

pending the clarification of technical details.

Kipp expects the new laws to be implemented in two to three years. For the time being, the symbolic agreement, which he called a "political liberation" for those involved, is in the foreground.

The reform provides for stricter procedures, such as how asylum-seekers with little chance of success will be received at borders. They are to be housed in detention-like conditions — with no exceptions for families with children. A mandatory solidarity mechanism between member states is also set to ease the burden on border countries. It dictates that if a member state refuses to accept asylum-seekers, it must make up for this refusal with financial compensation or other contributions.

A number of human rights organizations have sharply criticized the planned regulations. Woollard is among those who fear that the already fragile right to asylum will be eroded.

"One of the major challenges is that the pact won't resolve some of the key problems," she said. "Because of the increased responsibility of the countries at the borders, which is part of the pact, we expect to see them responding by engaging in more pushbacks and denials of access at the borders."

In terms of feasibility, Kipp said it remains to be seen just how functional the new proposals will be. For example, it remains unclear whether camps would have to be built to accommodate the new border procedures, and how these could be designed in a humane fashion.

The European Union reached a migration agreement with Tunisia in the summer of 2023. In exchange for over €1 billion (about \$1.1 billion) in financial aid, the country would prevent migrants from crossing the Mediterranean for Europe.

However, the agreement has

yet to yield any significant results. Meanwhile, relations have reached a standstill in other respects, when in October Tunisian President Kais Saied rejected a multimillion euro payment from the EU as a "handout."

Migration diplomacy will become even more important in 2024, predicted Kipp. The Tunisia deal isn't the EU's first attempt to motivate third countries to keep migrants out of Europe. Similar agreements had already been reached with Turkey and Libya, and another such deal is in the works with Egypt.

But these arrangements are highly controversial from a human rights perspective. What's more, they're not very successful, said Woollard. "There is no real interest or desire from other countries to do Europe's job for it," she added.

The planned border procedures will also require further cooperation with countries that take in rejected asylum-seekers, explained Kipp. But transit countries have no real interest in taking back people who have been deported from third countries.

Unofficially, it's said in Brussels that an asylum policy agreement was needed to slow the rise of right-wing populists.

European parliamentary elections are due to take place in June, and migration has often played a major political role in many member state polls — most recently in the Netherlands, where far-right lawmaker Geert Wilders' anti-Islam, anti-immigration Party for Freedom emerged victorious.

However, experts like Kipp are skeptical that the new asylum rules can help to make the issue less explosive, because the reality is that migration will continue.

— DW

BILATERAL RELATIONS

India-UAE joint military exercise 'Desert Cyclone' commences in Rajasthan

NEW DELHI: The two-week-long India-UAE joint military exercise 'Desert Cyclone' commenced in Rajasthan, with 45 personnel representing each of the forces.

The UAE Land Forces contingent arrived to participate in the 1st edition of the India-UAE Joint Military Exercise 'Desert Cyclone', read a press statement from the Ministry of Defence.

The exercise that will run till January 15 is happening in Mahajan, Rajasthan.

The UAE contingent is being represented by troops from the Zayed First Brigade. The Indian Army contingent comprising 45 personnel is being represented mainly by a battalion from the Mechanised Infantry Regiment.

The exercise aims to enhance interoperability in sub-conventional operations including fighting in built-up areas (FIBUA) in desert or semi-desert terrain under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter on Peacekeeping Operations.

Enhance cooperation

The exercise will enhance cooperation and interoperability between both sides during peacekeeping operations.

Drills planned to be rehearsed during Exercise 'Desert Cyclone' include the establishment of a Joint Surveillance Centre, Cordon and Search Operation, Domination of Built-Up Area and Heliborne Operations.

The Exercise will also foster collaborative partnership and help in sharing best practices between the two sides.

This exercise signifies further strengthening of bonds of friendship and trust between India and the UAE. The exercise also aims to achieve shared security objectives and foster bilateral relations between two friendly nations.

- ANI

Israeli aggression on Gaza Strip leaves scores martyred

The Israeli occupation has launched a series of violent air raids and artillery bombardment since Monday night, leaving Palestinians injured, in addition to causing massive destruction to houses and facilities

GAZA: Scores of Palestinians, including women and children, were martyred and injured in the ongoing Israeli occupation aggression on Gaza Strip for the 88th consecutive day.

The Israeli occupation has launched a series of violent air raids and artillery bombardment since last night, leaving scores of Palestinians martyred and injured, in addition to causing massive destruction to houses and facilities.

Children and women

The Israeli air, sea and land bombardment targeted several areas in central and southern Gaza Strip, including the Maghazi camp, and Khan Younis where the occupation artillery attacked the northern areas, killing and injured several civilians, the majority of them were children and women.

In northern Gaza Strip, fierce clashes erupted with the oc-



cupation forces, in conjunction with continuous air and artillery bombardment.

Last night, 15 Palestinians were martyred and several others were injured, mostly children and women, after the Israeli occupation shelled a house in Deir Al-Balah in central Gaza Strip.

Several others were martyred and injured in an Israeli air raid targeted a house in the Nuseirat camp, central of the Strip.

The Israeli bombardment also targeted the center of Khan Younis city, as well as houses in Deir Al-Balah, leaving scores of martyrs and wounded. The Israeli occupation continues its brutal aggression on Gaza Strip for the 88th consecutive day, leaving at least 21,978 martyred and 57,697 injured, the majority of them are children and women, in addition to thousands missing. - DNA

Human Rights Monitor: Targeting shelter centres in Gaza violates international law

GENEVA: The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor said that the Israeli occupation is still escalating its military attacks that directly target shelter and displacement centres in the Gaza Strip. The Israeli occupation plans to forcibly displace residents from the Gaza Strip, instill in them the feeling that there is no safe place in Gaza, and exacerbate their suffering in light of the ongoing genocidal war since 7 October 2023.

The Euro-Med Monitor

stressed that the occupation's deliberate military attacks against shelters and displacement centers explicitly violate the rules of international law, especially international humanitarian law. The basic principle is that the identified shelter and displacement centers are safe places and it is the responsibility of the Israeli occupation to ensure their safety and security.

The statement referred to the public statements issued by many senior officials in

the Israeli entity regarding seeking the forced displacement of the residents of Gaza and the search for countries that would receive the largest numbers of them. It pointed out that since 12 October 2023, the Israeli forces warned about 1.1 million residents of the northern part of the Gaza Strip to move to the south without guaranteeing that they would be allowed to return in the future or ensuring security for them during their displacement. - DNA

IDYLIC LANDSCAPES

European Capitals of Culture 2024 - Bodo, Tartu and Bad Ischl

BAD ISCHL: Bad Ischl, a town in the Austrian region of Salzkammergut near the border with Germany's Bavaria, is a popular tourist spot. Hundreds of thousands of people come here every year to enjoy the region's scenic mountainous views, with crystal-clear lakes and lush green meadows in the summer or snow-covered peaks in the winter.

This had also attracted the Austrian nobility to the town. Emperor Franz Joseph I and Empress Sisi spent many summers in Bad Ischl. They also got engaged there in 1853.

In 2024, Bad Ischl and 22 surrounding communities will become one of the three European Capitals of Culture of the year — alongside Tartu in Estonia and Bodo in Norway.

Bad Ischl and the other communities want to realize more than 300 projects together in order to show there's more to the region than its idyllic landscapes. The program will explore, among others, the consequences of overtourism and climate change as well as the region's historically burdened past. The goal is to "shed light on the positive and negative sides of this entire region and not to turn it [the European Cultural Capital year] into a fireworks display or a festival," program curator Elisabeth Schweeger told the German press agency, DPA.

The programme will nevertheless kick off with a bang on January 20 in Bad Ischl. Tom Neuwirth, who is better known as Eurovision Song Contest winner Conchita Wurst and who hails from the Salzkammergut region, will take part in the opening concert together with rappers and a thousand-strong yodeling choir.

Salt has been mined in the Salzkammergut area for at least 7,000 years, and this "white gold" shaped the region.

"It developed because of salt, became rich through salt — and with salt it will face its future," said Schweeger. "Now it's time to add another essential element: culture. It is the engine for sustainability in Salzkammergut and far beyond."

Projects for the European Capital of Culture include an exhibi-



tion by Chinese artist Ai Weiwei, which will also explore the tradition of salt mining.

Other exhibitions deal with looted art by the Nazis. The Nazi regime stashed looted art and art treasures in a mountain tunnel in Bad Ischl during World War II. A show in Bad Aussee will also shed light on the life of the art dealer Wolfgang Gurlitt, whose collection included artworks looted by the Nazis.

Concerts with music by Arnold Schönberg and an operetta by Oscar Straus also highlight the many Jewish artists and art lovers who were closely connected to Salzkammergut.

Another project will deal with the history of the Habsburg monarchy. Salzkammergut was originally the private property of the

Habsburgs.

Bad Ischl only has around 14,000 residents. The other communities in the region that have come together to form the European Cultural Capital have, in some cases, a population of just a few hundred.

The region, listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1997, already has to cope with an influx of visitors every year. Historian Michael Kurz from Bad Goisern, who knows the region well, notes there was a certain unease during the European Cultural Capital campaign. Locals would often ask, "Do we need this?"

On the other hand, as curator Elisabeth Schweeger pointed out, more than 85% of events are held by local and regional project sponsors. And getting an outside per-



spective on the region is an opportunity for the community to reflect critically on its own history and culture, she added.

The city of Tartu, in eastern Estonia, is much less well known. With close to 100,000 inhabitants, it's the second largest city in the country after the capital, Tallinn.

Economically, it's clearly in the shadow of Estonia's capital. But culturally, the old university and Hanseatic city is at least on par with it. Tartu has traditionally been seen as the heart and soul of the small Baltic state in northeastern Europe.

"Tartu has always been a center for science, education and culture in Estonia," said Mayor Urmas Klaas.

Tartu was once the cradle of Estonian national awakening and the

birthplace of the Estonian song festival, Estonian theater and even of the Estonian state itself.

The Peace Treaty of Dorpat — the old German name for Tartu — was signed in Tartu on February 2, 1920, in which Soviet Russia recognized the sovereignty of Estonia, which had become independent in 1918.

Through an artistic concept titled "Arts of Survival," the European Cultural Capital of Tartu will offer more than 1,000 events. Its program will be launched on January 26, with an anthem specially composed to celebrate the university city as the "Young Blood City."

Highlights include "Kissing Tartu," a mass kissing event; "Naked Truth," an opinion festival where discussions are held in saunas; as well as the play "Business as Usual," inspired by the money laundering scandals that rocked Estonian banking.

Tartu Pride will take place from August 12-18, an occasion to celebrate the legalization of same-sex marriage in Estonia, a new law that comes into force on January 1, 2024.

Bodo is the third European Cultural Capital of 2024. It's located high in the north, on the west coast of Norway, making it the first European Cultural Capital north of the Arctic Circle.

With more than 1,000 events,

Bodo and the surrounding Nordland region want to show that they not only have breathtaking Arctic nature, but also an engaging culture. Organizers hope to attract more than 500,000 people throughout the year.

The region is huge: A drive through Nordland from north to south will cover a good 800 kilometres (500 miles).

"Bodo2024" is the largest cultural project to take place in northern Norway to date.

Bodo aims to be the most sustainable European Capital of Culture. In the spring, it will host what organizers call "the world's most sustainable concert," titled "Pure Music."

The culture of the Sami, the region's Indigenous people, will also receive a special focus, including with a multi-part musical theater production.

Several events have a connection to Germany, including the opening ceremony on February 3. It will be celebrated with a spectacular harbor event with the Berlin artist collective Phase7, on a specially built floating stage.

An important open-air event is planned for Midsummer Eve on June 22, when the midnight sun can be admired. And the first Nordland Light Festival will be held in November and December when the days get shorter again. - DW

SPORTS

OMAN TENNIS ASSOCIATION

Oman to host international, Asian U-14 tennis championships

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by Oman Tennis Association (OTA), will host the International and Asian Federation U-14 Championships (ITF Aisa 14) and regional qualifiers for West and Central Asia from 8 to 16 January 2024.

Eight teams from the Asian continent will compete in a large gathering for different age groups under the supervision of the International and Asian

Tennis Federations.

This was unveiled during a press conference held on Tuesday by the OTA in the presence of Eng. Mohammed Ibrahim Al Balushi, tournament director, and Algerian coach Sufian Doub, coach of the national teams.

Eng. Mohammed Al Balushi said that the tournament will bring together eight Asian teams: from Oman, Iraq, the UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iran

and Turkmenistan.

Al Balushi pointed out that Oman was awarded this opportunity after a long pause from hosting international tournaments, the last of which was Davis Cup competitions in Group Four in 2018. He added that, after that event, OTA stopped hosting the tournaments. "Today we get back to track, ready to host another international tournament, with good turnout from West Asian teams," said Al Balushi.

He explained that this hosting covers two tournaments, the first of which will last from 8 to 11 January, while the second event follows suit after a one-day break, to cover the period from 13 to 16 January 2024.

The tournament will see the felicitation of qualifiers and first-place finishers on the last day of each stage. -ONA



Liverpool playing like potential champions in Premier League

Liverpool has a three-point lead over second-placed Aston Villa

LIVERPOOL: With the highest expected goals in the English Premier League (EPL) history and the joint-highest shots on goal this season, Liverpool are clicking into gear and developing into serious title challengers.

A busy summer transfer window, where they effectively rebuilt their midfield after the departures of Fabinho and Jordan Henderson, meant manager Jurgen Klopp probably did not expect his side to be top of the EPL table on the opening day of 2024. But, after only one defeat in their opening 20 games, they are.



Liverpool now face a run of fixtures without Mohamed Salah, who will go to the Africa Cup of Nations with Egypt.

The final of that competition is on 11 February, so if Egypt go all the way then Salah could miss

eight games for Liverpool if they progress in the FA Cup.

That run includes Arsenal in the FA Cup third round on Sunday, and in the EPL on 4 February.

There is also the two-legged Carabao Cup semi-final against

Fulham and league games against Bournemouth, Chelsea and Burnley.

Salah is Liverpool's top scorer with 18 in all competitions this season. He has also set up eight goals for team-mates.

We showed the quality we have got, says Curtis Jones

NEW DELHI: Following Liverpool's 4-2 win over Newcastle United in the Premier League (PL) at Anfield Stadium on Tuesday, Curtis Jones said they showed a quality performance against their opponents and called it an 'all-round performance'.

While speaking after the end of the game, Jones praised the visitors and said that they were a "very good team".

"We wore them down in the end. They're a very, very good team but we showed today the quality we've got in the whole team. Fantastic all round," Jones said as quoted

by Liverpool's official website.

He added that the home side dominated the game and placed lots of shots on the goal.

"There have been games in the past where we've had all the ball, dominated, had loads and loads of shots but we don't score as much," he added.

He further added that in the second half, Liverpool continued to dominate and got an important result.

"But we stayed in the game, dominated and in the second half we came out on top, which was the important thing," he added. -ANI

FOOTBALL

ManU confirm departure of Donny van de Beek on loan to Eintracht



MANCHESTER : Manchester United confirmed the departure of Dutch midfielder Donny van de Beek on a loan deal to Eintracht Frankfurt as the winter transfer window opened on Monday.

The club released an official statement to announce the departure of the midfielder which read, "Donny van de Beek has signed for Eintracht Frankfurt on loan from Manchester United."

Donny will join the Bundesliga side for the remainder of the 2023/24 season. The Dutch midfielder will be looking to get more game time to his name as he made just two appearances for the Red Devils this season.

The 26-year-old midfielder will be looking to feature more on the scoresheet as he scored just two goals in his 62 appearances since joining the English club from Ajax in 2020. He also made seven appearances for Everton during a loan spell in 2022.

Van de Beek enjoyed a golden

period during his time with Ajax as he was a part of the team that defied the odds and went on to reach the UEFA Champions League semi-finals in 2019.

Overall, Donny has a total of 175 competitive games for Ajax (41 goals, 34 assists) to his name and during his time with Ajax, he won the Dutch league, cup and Super Cup with the Amsterdam club.

He has also played for the Netherlands, featuring 19 times for the nation and scoring three goals.

Eintracht board member for sport Markus Krosche talked about the Dutchman's arrival and said, "Donny van de Beek fits our playing philosophy perfectly and is an important piece of the puzzle for our squad. He brings plenty of international experience, which our young players will profit from. Donny also carries a goal threat and should be particularly useful when it comes to getting our forwards into promising positions."

-ANI

BACKPACK

Warner makes emotional appeal for return of his baggy green cap

SYDNEY: Australia opener David Warner made an emotional public appeal for the return of the backpack that had his baggy green cap after it went missing during the journey from Melbourne to Sydney ahead of his farewell Test.

Warner will bid farewell to the longest format of the game with the third Test against Pakistan at his home arena of Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG).

Before his final Test, the batter announced on social media that he had lost his "baggy green" cap and urged anyone who might have it to give it back to him.

"Hi all, this is my last resort. but my backpack, which contained my Baggy Green, has been taken from my luggage, which was transported to Melbourne airport and flown on @qantas to Sydney a few days ago. @qantas have said they checked their cameras and have not seen anyone open our bags and take the backpack, however they do have blind spots. If you are the person, who was either working for the company driving it to and from the airport or working for @qantas and have, by chance,



just wanted the backpack, I have one for I would be grateful if this were returned asap. Thanks," he wrote on Instagram, alongside a video.

Warner called on the public to assist him in finding his baggy green, promising no consequences for the person who returns it. The veteran opener even offered to give up another piece of his backpack and asked the person to contact Cricket Australia or the airline.

"Unfortunately, someone has taken my backpack out of my actual luggage, which had my backpack and my girls' presents in there. Inside this backpack was my Baggy Greens. That is sentimental to me, it's something I would love to have back in my hands, walking out there come this week," Warner said in his plea.

"If it's the backpack you really wanted, I have a spare one here. You won't get into any trouble I'm

happy to give this to you if you return my baggy greens," he said.

Warner announced his retirement from ODI cricket on Monday, just a couple of days ahead of his farewell Test match against Pakistan at his home arena of SCG.

The two-time Cricket World Cup winner made the announcement on the morning of New Year's Day. The left-handed opener compiled 6,932 runs in 161 ODIs at an average of 45.30, at a strike rate of 97.26. Warner has also registered 22 centuries and 33 fifties in the format, with the best score of 179.

Warner has retired on a high as not only he won the World Cup this year, but he also scored 535 runs in 11 matches at an average of 48.63 and a strike rate of above 108, with two centuries and two fifties. He ended up as the sixth-highest run-scorer in the tournament.

"I have got to give back to the family. That (ODI retirement) was something I had said through the World Cup, get through that and winning that in India is a massive achievement," Warner said. -ANI

LA LIGA GIANTS

Bellingham sets target to achieve in 2024

MADRID : Real Madrid star Jude Bellingham set his targets for 2024 as he continues to shine for the La Liga giants.

Last month, the young English midfielder created a milestone by becoming the first Real Madrid player to win the 'Golden Boy Award' in Turin. The 20-year-old made his place from a list of 25 finalists, including his Los Blancos teammate Arda Guler.

Since his arrival in Spain, he has made 21 appearances and scored 17 goals, going past Cris-



tiano Ronaldo's tally in his early phase with Los Blancos.

Bellingham's hunger for more trophies hasn't died. With each

game, his hunger grows as he told the 'Universe Real Madrid: United Kingdom' documentary as quoted from Goal.com, "For 2024 I ask for many titles, goals and help the team win the game. And enjoy being a Real Madrid player. Working at Real Madrid requires a certain level of quality and mentality, and to have this responsibility feels like a huge privilege to me. Every day I come I try to work hard to be the best. The goal when you come to Real Madrid is to win everything."

Bellingham has faced numerous challenges during his time in Madrid and one of them was taking up the jersey No.5 of iconic midfielder Zinedine Zidane during the Frenchman's time at Santiago Bernabeu.

"I feel very proud of my number, of working with this coaching staff, and of this badge. I think it can all be summed up with the word 'privilege'. Not many players have the opportunity to play for such a big club, Bellingham added.

-ANI

OMAN CRUDE PRICE RISES
The price of Oman oil has increased, with prices for delivery by March 2024 reaching \$77.94, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil rose by 74 cents. - OMA

MARKET BUSINESS & FINANCE



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WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 3, 2024



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 4,589.34 points, up by 0.2 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.17 per cent at 447.82 points. Al Hassan Engineering, up 25.00 per cent, was the top gainer while Salalah Mills, down 9.04 per cent, was the top loser.

Campaign highlights importance of purchasing Omani-origin products

This is attributed to several factors, including the quality and standard specifications that characterise Omani products, qualifying them to compete in both the local and global markets

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The 'Made in Oman' campaign that took place at various commercial centres across the governorates of Oman witnessed widespread and positive acceptance from both citizens and residents.

The campaign was organised by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) in collaboration with the OCCI and OPEX.

The 'Made in Oman' campaign has contributed to enhancing societal awareness about the importance of purchasing Omani-origin products and supporting Omani producers and exporters, according to a statement by the MoCIIP.

This is attributed to several factors, including the quality and standard specifications that characterise Omani products, qualifying them to compete in both the local and global markets. Purchasing Omani products is considered a means of supporting the national economy, contributing to increased economic returns for the Sultanate of Oman, and enhancing both local and global recognition of the quality of Omani products.

The campaign also played a crucial role in raising societal



awareness about the significance of buying Omani-origin products, supporting Omani producers and exporters, and drawing international attention to the quality of Omani products.

The ministry emphasised that the implementation of standard specifications and technical regulations, along with the application of best practices, contributes to the promotion and protection of the national industry against unfair competition. This, in turn, ensures tangible economic gains for the nation and encourages innovation, local investment improvement, and the regulation of buyer-seller relationships at the national level.

Loyalty to local products

The campaign aimed to introduce and promote national products in the local market, boost confidence in the new national product identity, encourage industrial entities to obtain a national product identity license and strengthen consumers' loyalty to local products. Additionally, it sought to create communication channels between producers

and consumers, enhance and diversify the national economy, and foster collaboration between industrial establishments and small to medium-sized enterprises.

Mazin bin Humaid Al Siyabi, the Assistant Director-General of Industry at the MoCIIP, stated that the 'Made in Oman' campaign aligned with the ministry's industrial strategy. It aimed to support the national industry by creating an investment-friendly climate for establishing new industries and developing existing ones by addressing existing challenges.

Al Siyabi added that the campaign had yielded numerous positive outcomes, such as increased awareness of the quality and specifications of Omani products with global value. Omani products have become competitive in both domestic and foreign markets, supporting the national economy, and achieving economic gains by circulating funds internally, boosting domestic trade, and contributing to the activation of other economic sectors. Furthermore, it enhances the trade balance and diversifies

income sources for the country.

He explained that the 'Made in Oman' campaign has played a significant role in enhancing societal awareness regarding the importance of purchasing Omani-origin products. The campaign also aimed to support Omani producers and exporters. Additionally, it drew attention to the quality of Omani products, shedding light on the excellence of locally manufactured goods and services. The campaign achieved this through seminars and competitions organized in both public and private schools, spanning a month.

Al Siyabi further stated that instilling a culture of buying local products within different segments of society is a national responsibility. Implementing this culture enhances purchasing power and boosts the productivity of Omani industrial establishments. This, in turn, leads to the expansion of these establishments and the creation of additional employment opportunities.

Imad bin Khamis Al Shukaili, the Director General of the Direc-

torate General of Standards and Metrology at the MoCIIP emphasised the role of specifications, standards, and technical regulations, along with the application of best practices, in promoting and protecting the national industry. These measures aim to ensure tangible economic gains for the country, enhance its competitiveness both locally and in global markets, encourage innovation, improve local investment, and regulate buyer-seller relationships at the national level.

Omani quality mark

Al Shukaili highlighted that specifications and standards contribute to elevating the quality of local products and services through technical tools such as the Omani Quality Mark, inspection visits, control measures, compliance with requirements, and technical standards. Involving the private sector in the preparation of standard specifications was emphasised. He also stressed that enforcing conformity procedures and inspections before importing protects national products from the entry of competing products with poor quality that do not meet minimum safety standards.

He said it is imperative for the local industrial sector to work by standard specifications, as this primarily protects them from globalisation. Compliance with standards also works towards developing and growing national industries, raising productivity, and implementing the principle of continuous improvement. The Ministry studies challenges faced by production entities and users of standards, seeking ways to overcome these challenges to benefit national industry and all stakeholders without hindering international trade.

Numerous benefits

Hilal bin Badr Al Rashidi, the Director of the Department of MoCIIP in Al Dakhiliyah, affirmed that the 'Made in Oman' campaign has yielded numerous benefits. Among the notable achievements is raising

awareness among Omani factories about the necessity of obtaining the new national product identity logo. This unifies the marketing identity, enhances the local value added to their products, increases the inclination to purchase Omani products, boosts sales for local companies, establishes marketing outlets in all governorates of Oman, and supports local industry's ability to compete globally, thereby enhancing the national economy.

The campaign also focused on introducing and promoting Omani products, showcasing the diverse industries in Oman that produce over 10,000 different products. These industries span various sectors, including food, electricity, pharmaceuticals, metals, textiles, perfumes, cleaning products, jewellery, petrochemicals, furniture, and more.

Saleh bin Saeed Al Musalhi, the Director of the Department of MoCIIP in Ad Dhahirah, said that the 'Made in Oman' campaign has contributed significantly to realising several benefits. Among these is the shift of many consumers towards purchasing local products, especially food items that adhere to quality standards, and specifications and offer competitive prices. The campaign was designed to support Omani factories by boosting their sales.

Interactive experience

Al Musalhi emphasised that the ministry, through the campaign, aims to target various segments of society and industrial companies. The goal is to create an interactive experience between industrial institutions and entrepreneurs in the governorates, supporting local products, and raising awareness of the quality of the national product.

Khaled bin Hamed Al Saadi, the Director of MoCIIP in Ash Sharqiyah South, pointed out that the campaign has achieved accelerated positive indicators in increasing the purchasing power of Omani products. It informed consumers about the advanced level attained by our national industry and the high quality and competitiveness of Omani products.

SOVEREIGN SUKUK SERIES 7

Bank Nizwa acts as Issue Manager for Sukuk issuance on behalf of Oman government

Times News Service

MUSCAT: In a testament to its unwavering commitment to financial innovation and collaborative growth, Bank Nizwa, the Sultanate of Oman's leading Islamic bank, has successfully acted as the issue manager for Sovereign Sukuk Series 7 issuance by the Oman Sovereign Sukuk Company (issuer and trustee), which concluded on December 7, 2023.

Leveraging its pioneering position in the market, the bank also assumed the additional responsibility of serving as the collecting bank. This dual role underscores the bank's commitment to ensuring a seamless and efficient management process for transactions of such national stature.

Represented by The Ministry of Finance, the Government of the Sultanate of Oman undertook the role of the Obligor in the Sukuk issuance, an integral part of the Omani Rial Sukuk Issuance Programme. This Series 7 issuance comprises OMR 50 million Trust Certificates, with the potential to expand up to OMR100 million through the Greenshoe option. The certificates, structured as Sukuk Al Ijarah, carry a competitive profit rate over 7 years from the issue date, with profits paid out semi-annually.

The Sukuk is listed on the Bond and Sukuk Market of Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX), reinforcing its visibility and thereby enhancing market accessibility. The issuance achieved remarkable success, raising OMR143.6 million, the issuance was almost three times oversubscribed, leading to



an allotment of OMR76.3 million.

Commenting on the success of the issuance, Saif Al Rawahi, AGM - Investment, Treasury, Government Relationship and Project Finance at Bank Nizwa said, "As a pioneer in the Islamic financial landscape, Bank Nizwa not only demonstrates strong industry knowledge and unfaltering adherence to regulatory standards, but also boasts a proven track record in debt issuance, effective risk management capabilities, and formidable expertise in navigating the intricacies of the capital market.

"Keeping with the increasing demand for Sharia-compliant financial instruments, the new Sukuk aligns with the bank's commitment to delivering innovative and lucrative investment opportunities to the market."

He further stated, "The successful issuance of this Sukuk is poised to bring substantial economic benefits to the Sultanate of Oman. The infusion of OMR

76.3 million, with the potential for further expansion, signifies a vital injection of capital into critical sectors, fostering economic growth and stability."

The Sukuk issuance attracted subscriptions from a diverse array of investors, showcasing broad interest across various segments. The majority of the participants included financial institutions, pension funds and insurance companies, thereby attesting to the overall success and inclusivity of the offering.

Bank Nizwa's pivotal position as an issue manager not only underscores its proficiency in Islamic finance but also symbolises its commitment to facilitating strategic financial transactions that contribute to the sustainable growth and prosperity of the nation. Furthermore, achieving this milestone showcases the bank's adeptness in leading complex financial transactions, solidifying its standing as a trusted and capable partner in the Islamic financial landscape.



Tax Liability Settlement Initiative

► For taxpayers with outstanding tax liabilities due before **January 1st, 2020.**

In line with Oman Vision 2040 government's strategy to encourage economic activity and entrepreneurship, Tax Authority announces as of **January 2nd, 2024**, the "Tax Liability Settlement Initiative", for taxpayers with outstanding tax liabilities due before **January 1st, 2020**, for a 6-month run.

All settlement requests should be sent by email to the Tax Authority at **mubadara@taxoman.gov.om** by filling out the application form available online at the Tax Authority's official website.

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Al Hassan Engineering, up 25.00 per cent, was the top gainer while Salalah Mills, down 9.04 per cent, was the top loser



MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,589.34 points, up by 0.2 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.17 per cent at 447.82 points. Al Hassan Engineering, up 25.00 per cent, was the top gainer while Salalah Mills, down 9.04 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of OQGN were the most active in terms of number of shares traded while Abraj Energy Services were the most active in terms of turnover.

A total number of 1086 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of OMR2.92 million, with more than 13.52 million shares changing hands. Out of 41 traded securities, 13 advanced, 16 declined, and 12 remained unchanged. At the session close, domestic investors were net sellers for OMR860,000 while foreign investors were net buyers for OMR852,000, followed by GCC & Arab investors for OMR8,000 worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7486.97 points, up 0.28 per cent. Prices of Ominvest, United Finance, Bank Nizwa, Bank Muscat were up by 4.65 per cent, 1.72 per cent, 1.04 per cent, 0.38 per cent

respectively. Prices of Al Madina Investments, Oman & Emirates Investment, Sohar International Bank, Global Financial Investments, Al Anwar Investment were down by 8.00 per cent, 3.57 per cent, 1.98 per cent, 1.64 per cent, 1.30 per cent respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,472.79 points, up 0 per cent. Prices of Al Hassan Engineering, Dhofar Cattle Feed, Oman Fisheries, Al Anwar Ceramics were up by 25.00 per cent, 8.51 per cent, 4.55 per cent, 2.92 per cent respectively. Prices of Salalah Mills, Oman Flour Mills, Galfar Engineering, Oman Cables Industry were down by 9.04 per cent, 1.96 per cent, 1.78 per cent, 0.04 per cent respectively.

Services Index was up by 0.03 per cent before closing at 1,591.32 points. Prices of Al Batinah Power, Al Suwadi Power, Al Jazeera Services, Abraj Energy, OQ Gas Networks were up by 10.00 per cent, 4.76 per cent, 1.38 per cent, 1.01 per cent, 0.65 per cent respectively. Prices of SMN Power Holding, Ooredoo, Renaissance Services, Oman Telecom were down by 6.41 per cent, 0.62 per cent, 0.48 per cent, 0.47 per cent respectively. – United Securities

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff%
MSX 30 INDEX	4,590.67	4,573.43	4,589.34	4,580.32	9.02	0.20
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,490.62	7,447.95	7,486.97	7,466.05	20.93	0.28
Industry Index	5,485.75	5,469.99	5,472.79	5,472.55	0.24	0.00
Services Index	1,594.24	1,589.90	1,591.32	1,590.77	0.55	0.03
MSX Shariah Index	448.69	447.08	447.82	447.08	0.74	0.17
MSX TR INDEX	6,051.05	6,028.32	6,049.30	6,037.41	11.89	0.20
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,173.64	8,127.08	8,169.66	8,146.83	22.83	0.28
SERVICES TR IDX	1,773.58	1,768.75	1,770.33	1,769.71	0.62	0.03
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	5,860.15	5,843.31	5,846.31	5,846.05	0.26	0.00
FIXED INCOME INDEX	991.33	991.33	991.33	991.33	0.00	0.00

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
13,520,967	2,917,561	1,086	23,848,777,508	13	16	12	41

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR TUESDAY, JANUARY 2

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET																
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	20,761	9,342	3	0.450	0.450	0.450	0.450	0.430	0.020	4.651	0.450	0.450	0.000	0.100	300,764,442
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	171,013	29,797	38	0.172	0.176	0.172	0.176	0.171	0.005	2.924	0.174	0.174	0.174	0.100	38,720,000
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	187,910	11,041	11	0.058	0.059	0.057	0.059	0.058	0.001	1.724	0.059	0.057	0.059	0.100	21,011,511
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	9,220	2,029	4	0.223	0.223	0.220	0.220	0.217	0.003	1.382	0.220	0.220	0.220	0.100	13,464,940
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	1,297,575	345,201	36	0.267	0.268	0.265	0.268	0.267	0.001	0.375	0.268	0.267	0.268	0.100	2,011,714,413
OM0000001152	OMAN NATIONAL ENGINEERING & INVESTMENT	19,030	2,131	3	0.112	0.112	0.112	0.112	0.112	0.000	0.000	0.112	0.112	0.115	0.100	16,800,000
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	10,000	3,050	3	0.305	0.305	0.305	0.305	0.305	0.000	0.000	0.305	0.305	0.305	0.100	100,916,177
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	40,932	6,549	1	0.160	0.160	0.160	0.160	0.160	0.000	0.000	0.160	0.150	0.165	0.100	479,416,230
OM0000004788	MADINA TAKAFUL	102,049	8,647	7	0.085	0.085	0.084	0.084	0.084	0.000	0.000	0.084	0.083	0.088	0.100	14,700,000
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	165	48	1	0.289	0.289	0.289	0.289	0.290	-0.001	-0.345	0.289	0.276	0.290	0.100	468,489,497
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	15,893	16,772	13	1.060	1.060	1.060	1.060	1.065	-0.005	-0.469	1.060	1.045	1.060	0.100	795,000,000
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	115,897	48,146	9	0.415	0.418	0.415	0.418	0.420	-0.002	-0.476	0.418	0.415	0.418	0.100	98,819,380
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	90,804	29,308	12	0.325	0.325	0.322	0.323	0.325	-0.002	-0.615	0.323	0.322	0.323	0.100	210,254,986
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	17,350	1,041	1	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.061	-0.001	-1.639	0.060	0.060	0.063	0.100	12,000,000
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	223,448	22,169	17	0.100	0.100	0.099	0.099	0.101	-0.002	-1.980	0.099	0.099	0.099	0.100	541,320,962
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	403	22	1	0.054	0.054	0.054	0.054	0.056	-0.002	-3.571	0.054	0.052	0.060	0.100	6,581,250
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	100	7	1	0.073	0.073	0.073	0.073	0.078	-0.005	-6.410	0.073	0.073	0.078	0.100	14,573,399
Total	17	2,322,480	535,300	161												
Parallel Market																
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	2,679	59	1	0.023	0.022	0.022	0.022	0.020	0.002	10.000	0.022	0.020	0.022	0.100	14,847,523
OM0000001301	DHOFAR FOODS AND INVESTMENT	500	26	1	0.051	0.051	0.051	0.051	0.047	0.004	8.511	0.051	0.043	0.051	0.100	10,081,523
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	10,000	220	1	0.022	0.022	0.022	0.022	0.021	0.001	4.763	0.022	0.020	0.023	0.100	15,716,839
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	86,679	8,395	7	0.097	0.097	0.096	0.097	0.096	0.001	1.042	0.097	0.096	0.097	0.100	216,984,444
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	2,083,819	628,068	41	0.298	0.300	0.297	0.300	0.297	0.003	1.010	0.299	0.299	0.299	0.100	231,064,000
OM0000009072	OQ GAS NETWORKS	3,973,454	615,428	800	0.154	0.156	0.154	0.155	0.154	0.001	0.649	0.155	0.155	0.155	0.100	671,246,708
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	110	9	1	0.086	0.086	0.086	0.086	0.086	0.000	0.000	0.086	0.086	0.086	0.100	7,310,000
OM0000001418	RAYSUT CEMENT	56,000	7,000	5	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.000	0.000	0.125	0.124	0.125	0.100	25,000,000
OM0000002036	MUSCAT THREAD MILLS	1,113	67	1	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.000	0.000	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.100	964,359
OM0000002077	AL OMANIYA FINANCIAL SERVICES	2,233,663	368,554	8	0.165	0.165	0.165	0.165	0.165	0.000	0.000	0.165	0.150	0.181	0.100	50,766,277
OM0000003961	VOLTAMP ENERGY	17,086	2,983	3	0.140	0.140	0.140	0.140	0.140	0.000	0.000	0.140	0.140	0.140	0.100	11,398,385
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	1,100	62	2	0.056	0.056	0.056	0.056	0.056	0.000	0.000	0.056	0.054	0.056	0.100	81,905,682
OM0000007084	MUSCAT CITY DESALINATION	19,800	1,544	7	0.077	0.078	0.077	0.078	0.078	0.000	0.000	0.078	0.076	0.078	0.100	12,132,831
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	230,800	519,136	6	2.250	2.250	2.249	2.249	2.250	-0.001	-0.044	2.249	2.100	2.249	0.100	201,735,300
OM0000002366	AL BATINAH DEVELOPMENT & INV. HO.	420	37	1	0.087	0.087	0.087	0.087	0.088	-0.001	-1.136	0.087	0.084	0.090	0.100	2,610,000
OM0000004474	OMAN REIT FUND	2,095,306	178,086	12	0.084	0.085	0.084	0.084	0.085	-0.001	-1.176	0.084	0.084	0.085	0.100	39,579,656
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	50,000	3,800	1	0.076	0.076	0.076	0.076	0.077	-0.001	-1.299	0.076	0.076	0.080	0.100	15,656,000
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	265,000	44,320	7	0.167	0.170	0.166	0.166	0.169	-0.003	-1.775	0.166	0.160	0.170	0.100	33,695,750
OM0000001400	OMAN FLOUR MILLS	1,100	550	2	0.500	0.500	0.500	0.500	0.510	-0.010	-1.961	0.500	0.495	0.500	0.100	78,750,000
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	3,400	157	3	0.046	0.050	0.046	0.046	0.050	-0.004	-8.000	0.046	0.046	0.048	0.100	3,910,000
OM0000001889	SALALAH MILLS	5,184	2,783	4	0.533	0.533	0.533	0.533	0.586	-0.053	-9.044	0.533	0.533	0.533	0.100	26,630,313
Total	21	11,147,222	2,380,673	914												

CENTRAL BANK OF OMAN

CBO issues treasury bills worth OMR9 million

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) raised OMR9 million by way of allotting treasury bills for a maturity period of 28 days on Tuesday.

The average accepted price reached OMR99.590 for every OMR100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at OMR99.590 per OMR100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 5.34464 per cent and 5.36665 per cent, respectively.

Treasury bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance, and they provide licensed commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds. The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) acts as the Issue Manager and provides the added advantage of ready liquidity through discounting and repurchase facilities (Repo).

It may be noted that the interest rate on the Repo operations with CBO is 6.00 per cent while the discount rate on the Treasury Bills Discounting Facility with CBO is 6.50 per cent. Furthermore, treasury bills promote the local money market by creating a benchmark yield curve for short-term interest rates. Additionally, the government may also resort to this instrument whenever felt necessary for financing its recurrent expenditures. -ONA

BRIEFS

Oil jumps 1.5% in New Year

SINGAPORE: Oil prices jumped 1.5 per cent in the first session of the New Year and hopes of strong holiday demand and an economic stimulus in China, the top crude importer. Brent crude rose \$1.20, or 1.5 per cent, to \$78.24 a barrel by 0438 GMT. US West Texas Intermediate crude was at \$72.66 a barrel, up \$1, or 1.4 per cent. -BNA

Asian shares kick off 2024 on steady footing

SINGAPORE: Asian shares started the first trading day of the New Year on a steady footing on Tuesday, as investors returning after a holiday lull looked ahead to fresh trading catalysts from key economic releases later in the week. Risk appetite was strong after global shares ended 2023 with their biggest annual rise in four years, driven by the prospect that major central banks globally could begin easing rates this year in a major boost for consumers and businesses shackled by high borrowing costs. -BNA

China guideline to improve processing trade

BEIJING: Chinese authorities have rolled out a guideline to improve the development of the processing trade. The guideline, released by the Ministry of Commerce (MOC) and nine other government departments, is an important document following another issued by the State Council in 2016, according to the MOC. The processing trade refers to the business activity of importing all or parts of raw and auxiliary materials, parts, accessories and packaging materials from abroad, and re-exporting finished products after processing or assembly is completed by companies within China. -Xinhua

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STUDY EXPLORES

LINKAGE

BETWEEN CHANGES

IN HUMAN MOBILITY,

IMPACT ON MEDICAL COSTS

DURING PANDEMIC

"We also point to the need for more walkable cities and sustainable urban planning where people can live without cars and opt for public transit, especially in metropolises." -ANI



SPORTS

I want to break records: Novak keen to ‘make more history’

At the United Cup, the 36-year-old showed no signs of rust in his brilliant straight-sets victory over China's Zhang Zhizhen

PERTH: At this stage of his career, Novak Djokovic doesn't face many fresh experiences on the court, but celebrating the start of the year in Perth's RAC Arena with his fellow countrymen amid hundreds of dedicated fans is a pleasant surprise.

At the United Cup, the 36-year-old showed no signs of rust in his brilliant straight-sets victory over China's big-striking Zhang Zhizhen. He then led the way home with Olga Danilovic in a decisive mixed doubles match with just seven minutes remaining before midnight.

"It's a great start of the sea-



It's a great start of the season. Wonderful way to celebrate New Year's. We have a saying in Serbia: if the entire year is going to be as kind as the sunrise or the first minute of the new year, then I think we're going to have a great season and great year

country's best athlete, she had crossed something off her bucket list. Naturally, talk turned to Djokovic's intentions for the upcoming campaign.

"Obviously Grand Slams, Olympic Games, playing for my country, Davis Cup, all these competitions where you represent Serbia is the greatest honour and pleasure," said Djokovic.

"It's a very long year, season. I'll have to obviously work in a way step by step with my body to see how it feels, how I react when I change surfaces, what kind of schedule I need to have in order to peak at the right time in the biggest tournaments," the record seventh ATP Finals title winner said.

After leading Serbia through the United Cup, Djokovic will go to Melbourne to try to capture an unprecedented 11th Australian Open championship.

"I feel like that kind of mentality, all I have been doing for the last 20-plus years on a daily basis, of course with my team and family, have helped me to reach the heights and be where I am. That mentality is not changing for 2024 or any next year potentially that I play," Djokovic said. -ANI

Birmingham City sack manager Wayne Rooney after just 83 days



BIRMINGHAM: Birmingham City have sacked manager Wayne Rooney after just 83 days in charge of the Championship club.

The 38-year-old was appointed on 11 October 2023 following the controversial decision to dismiss John Eustace, with Blues sixth in the table, BBC sports reported.

Since then, Blues have slipped to 20th, Monday's 3-0 loss at Leeds having been his ninth defeat in 15 games.

Professional development coach Steve Spooner will take interim charge for Blues, who have also parted company with one of Rooney's backroom team, former Wolves and Wales midfielder Carl

Robinson.

Rooney released a statement after his sacking, which read as quoted from Sky Sports, "I would like to thank Tom Wagner, Tom Brady and Garry Cook for the opportunity to manage Birmingham City FC and the support they all gave me during my short period with the club."

"Football is a results business - and I recognise they have not been at the level I wanted them to be. However, time is the most precious commodity a manager requires and I do not believe 13 weeks was sufficient to oversee the changes that were needed," Rooney added. -DNA/ANI

Pakistan team director Hafeez misses flight to Sydney ahead of third Test against Australia

SYDNEY: Team director Mohammad Hafeez missed his flight to Sydney for Pakistan's final Test series clash against Australia, according to Geo News.

Australia gained an unassailable lead of 2-0 following their second consecutive triumph in the three-match series against the Asian Giants.

According to Geo News sources, Hafeez was travelling with his wife and was supposed to travel to Sydney with the Pakistan team but he missed the flight at the airport.

The former Pakistan player arrived late at the airport after which the staff did not allow him and his wife to board the plane. Hafeez and his wife took another flight to Sydney hours later.

Pakistan is likely to hand Saim Ayub his debut cap and he could make his place in the team in place of Imam-ul-Haq.

The Geo News source also revealed that the workload of vice-captain Shaheen Shah Afridi could be reduced and he is likely to bowl less overs in the final Test of the series.

The left-arm pacer has bowled 99.2 overs in the series which is more than any player in both teams.

The fate of the series could have been left hanging as Pakistan came close to winning the second Test but ended up falling short at the end.

Pakistan stood in pole position to emerge triumphant when they were 219 for 5 and needed 98 runs for a series-levelling victory



The fate of the Pakistan-Australia series could have been left in balance as Pakistan came close to winning the second Test but ended up falling short of runs at the end

as the match seemed poised to be a cliffhanger.

But Australia skipper Pat Cummins and Mitchell Starc bowled a remarkable fast bowling spell as they took the host to a second consecutive triumph with a 79-run victory.

After the game, Hafeez who was emotionally charged declared that Pakistan were better and said as quoted from ESP-Ncrinfo, "We played better cricket as a team. I'm proud of that. The way the team had the courage to attack this game in the

best possible way. If I sum up the game, the Pakistan team played better than the other team in general. Our batting intent was better, and while bowling, we were hitting the right areas. Yes, we made some mistakes that cost us the game but as a team, I believe that there were a lot of positives, enough to win the game but unfortunately, at the end, we didn't win the game."

Pakistan will now look to win their first Test game on Australian soil since 1995 at the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG) on January 3. -ANI

Australia announce unchanged playing XI for 3rd Test against Pakistan



SYDNEY: Australia skipper Pat Cummins on Tuesday announced an unchanged playing XI for the third Test and final match of the series against Pakistan at Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG), beginning on Wednesday.

For the Sydney Test, Australia named a 13-player lineup that remained the same. While it was anticipated that one of their three primary quicks would receive a rest, Cummins stated that every one of them has recovered well and is ready to play.

All attention will be on veteran opener David Warner, who is about to say goodbye to the longest format of the game in front of his home fans at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Wednesday. In an attempt to give the seasoned opener the ideal send-off, Australia are anticipated to be up for the struggle against Pakistan in Sydney. Warner will depart as Australia's fifth-highest run-scorer in the format.

The 37-year-old has amassed

8695 runs at a pace of 44.58 in Test cricket; at his home ground, he has amassed 793 runs at a rate of 49.56, including four centuries.

Having announced his ODI retirement on Monday, Warner made an emotional public appeal for the return of the backpack that had his baggy green cap after it went missing during the journey from Melbourne to Sydney ahead of his farewell Test.

"Unfortunately, someone has taken my backpack out of my actual luggage, which had my backpack and my girls' presents in there, inside this backpack was my Baggy Greens," Warner stated in his video post on Instagram.

"It's sentimental to me, it's something I would love to have back in my hands walking out there come this week," he added.

Even though fringe Australian all-rounder Cameron Green had a lengthy net session and raised the possibility of a comeback, Australia decided against making changes

to a winning formula in order to successfully defend their World Test Championship title.

Captain Cummins said Australia's fast bowlers have enough time to play every match because of the Test calendar that includes breaks between their two home series against Pakistan and the West Indies and their tour to New Zealand.

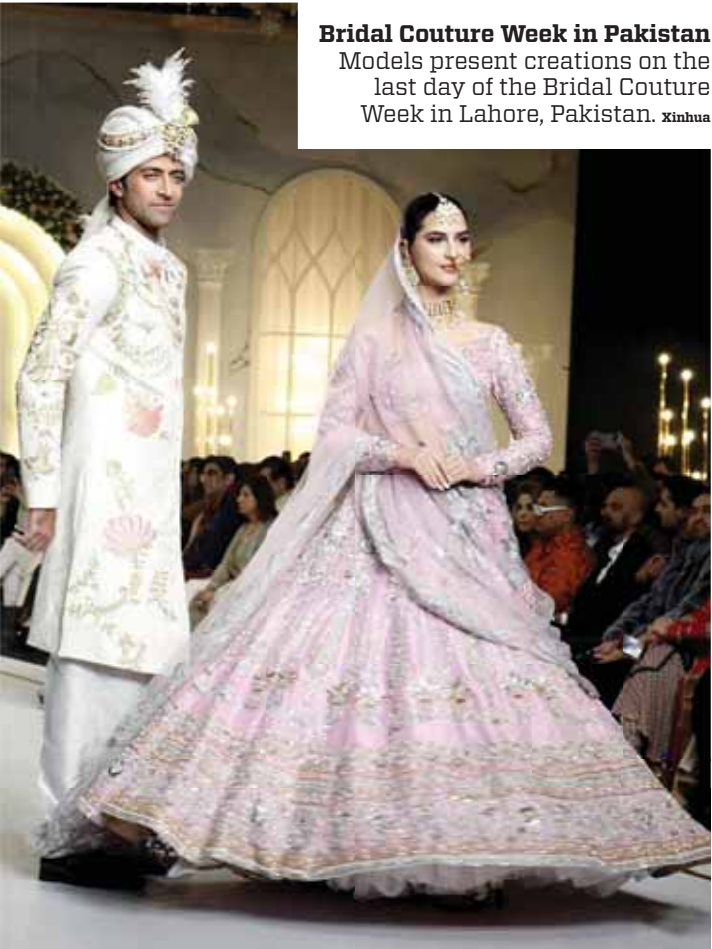
"Normally each summer there's something that pops up. But all three of us (Cummins, Starc and Josh Hazlewood) are really fresh. Even the way this summer is spread out a bit more, there's two Tests on, then a bit of a gap; then two Tests, then a bit of a gap; then New Zealand. We'll give it a chance. It's all gone pretty smoothly so far," Cummins was quoted as saying by ICC.

Australia XI to take on Pakistan at the SCG: Pat Cummins (c) David Warner, Usman Khawaja, Marnus Labuschagne, Steve Smith, Travis Head, Mitch Marsh, Alex Carey, Mitchell Starc, Nathan Lyon and Josh Hazlewood. -ANI

IN-PICTURES



Diver dressed in Santa Claus costumes performs at Bangkok Ocean World
A diver dressed in Santa Claus costumes performs at the Bangkok Ocean World in Bangkok, Thailand. Xinhua



Bridal Couture Week in Pakistan
Models present creations on the last day of the Bridal Couture Week in Lahore, Pakistan. Xinhua

Aerial view of giant cat patterns at rice field in Chiang Rai, Thailand
This aerial picture shows giant cat patterns at a rice field in Chiang Rai, Thailand. Xinhua



Celebration of Tamu Lhosar festival in Kathmandu, Nepal
Girls in traditional attire from the Gurung community are pictured during the celebration of Tamu Lhosar festival to mark the commencement of Gurung new year in Kathmandu, Nepal. Xinhua



Shah Rukh Khan attends the 60th birthday bash of Anand Pandit
Bollywood film producer Anand Pandit poses for a picture at his 60th birthday bash with actor Shah Rukh Khan, in Mumbai. ANI Photo



135th Rose Parade held in US
A float moves along Colorado Boulevard in Pasadena, Southern California, the United States, during the 135th Rose Parade. Tens of thousands of people lined the streets Monday to watch the 135th Rose Parade, the annual celebration event for the New Year. Xinhua



Christmas Pet Parade held in Quezon City, Philippines
People are seen with their pets dressed in costumes during the Christmas Pet Parade at a mall in Quezon City, the Philippines. Xinhua

ROUND-UP

All-new Suzuki Jimny 5-door opens new chapter in off-road adventure

The Suzuki Jimny 5-door combines full-fledged off-road performance with enhanced accessibility and comfortable seating for four adults

MUSCAT: Moosa Abdul Rahman Hassan & Company (MARHCO), the exclusive distributor of Suzuki vehicles in Oman, announced the launch of the highly anticipated Suzuki Jimny 5-door, the latest addition to the legendary Jimny lineup. The unveiling took place at the breathtaking Jabel Sifah Beach, where Jimny owners, members of the media, and the management of Moosa Abdul Rahman gathered to witness the historic event.

The Suzuki Jimny 5-door combines full-fledged off-road performance with enhanced accessibility and comfortable seating for four adults. This new iteration aims to meet the expectations of an even wider audience, catering to those who seek adventure without compromising on comfort and style. Commenting on the launch of the new Suzuki Jimny 5-Door, Said Darwish Al-Balushi, the CEO of Moosa Abdul Rahman Hassan & Company Said, "As we launch the Suzuki Jimny 5-door in Oman, we're not just introducing a vehicle; we're unveiling a new chapter in off-road adventure. With over 50 years of innovation and refinement, the Jimny has been a symbol of exploration and rugged capability. The 5-door version takes this legacy further, providing enhanced access and comfort without sacrificing its off-road prowess. We're proud to bring this exceptional vehicle to our customers in Oman, and we believe it will redefine the standards of versatility and excitement in the off-road segment."



More than 50 years of innovation
For over half a century, Suzuki has been a trailblazer in the automotive industry, consistently refining and innovating to maintain Jimny's position as the world's smallest authentic off-roader. The introduction of the 5-door version marks a significant milestone, enhancing Jimny's legacy by bringing even greater versatility into play.

Highlights
Practical and functional design, Enhanced usability, Off-road performance, Practical and Functional Design

Exterior
The 5-door model inherits all of Jimny's practical and functional design elements. Its strong square body expresses off-road ability and robustness, as well as supporting the driver's situational awareness. The upright A-pillars and flat



clamshell bonnet enhance visibility from the front windshield, and the dipped driver and passenger window lines expand visibility from the side windows. Chrome accents on the front grille are a unique feature of the 5-door model, highlighting the grille's distinctive 5-slot design. Features like the signature round headlamps and 15-inch dark-metallic alloy wheels further accentuate the robust exterior styling.

Body colours
The Jimny 5-door is available in six single-tone colours and three dual-tone colours. Sizzling red metallic with bluish-black pearl roof, celestial blue metallic, and granite grey metallic are new to

Jimny for the 5-door model.

Interior
The practical and functional theme continues inside. Carefully crafted to be aesthetically pleasing yet highly functional, the handsome black interior is without excessive colours or decoration to minimise distraction and lets the driver concentrate on manoeuvring the vehicle. The horizontal lines defining the instrument panel, and the vertical lines in the meter cluster and centre console panels help the driver recognise the angle of the vehicle in rough and mountainous terrain.

Enhanced usability
Rear seat: The rear seat has been updated with thicker seat cushions to help bolster seating posture and comfortably accommodate two adults in the rear. The rear seat lamp is now positioned directly above the rear passengers

to provide better lighting and rear seat power window switches are located both in the rear doors and the front console box for convenient controls in both rows.

Luggage space
The extended wheelbase of the 5-door model has created room for a larger luggage area. While the luggage box of the 3-door model has been eliminated, the height of the luggage area floor has been lowered, and its depth has been increased, creating 211L of luggage capacity (rear seatback raised). User-friendliness has also been improved with the addition of a luggage area lamp that illuminates the entrance way, and the toolbox has been eliminated to make loading and unloading luggage easier. Like the 3-door model, the luggage area of the 5-door model is equipped with an accessory socket.

Safety
Rearview camera, Rear parking sensors, Off-road Performance
While the wheelbase is 340 mm longer than the 3-door model, the Jimny 5-door retains the four essentials for serious off-roading:
Ladder Frame Structure: Provides a solid base for suspension components and helps protect the vehicle body on bumpy surfaces. The centre frame was extended and a centre cross member was added for sufficient strength and rigidity.
Exceptional Angles: The 36-degree approach angle, 24-degree ramp breakover angle, and 47-degree departure angle allow the Jimny 5-door to climb over major obstacles and steep hills without scraping its bumpers or underbody.
Rigid Axle Suspension: Thrives in bumpy off-road driving, providing superior grip on uneven terrain. Equipped with rigid axle suspension in both the front and rear for superior drivability in harsh environments.
Part-time 4WD System: Features a part-time 4WD system with low-range transfer gear, easily switched between 2H (2WD-high gear), 4H (4WD-high gear), and 4L (4WD-low gear) modes. The 4L mode transfers more torque to the tires for better traction on steep slopes and rough terrain.

IS SUR TEACHER AWARDED PHD

Pradeep R V, Head of the English Department at Indian School Sur in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman has been awarded PhD in the subject Education from the University of Kerala. — Supplied picture



OFFERS

Benefits on Lexus range ending soon



MUSCAT: The time to own a luxury Lexus is now. With exclusive benefits that will end on January 10, 2024. Own a Lexus and get Service 5 Years / 50,000km (Whichever is earlier) and 1 Year Free Registration (Conditions apply. For details visit any Saud Bahwan Automotive showroom).

Lexus has a thrilling range of vehicles in Oman including the LX, GX, RX, NX, UX, LS, ES and IS.

The powerful, capable, flagship LX is available with a choice of two powertrain options, including two newly developed V6 twin-turbo engines. The V6 twin-turbo 3.5-litre petrol engine achieves class-leading performance that surpasses that of a conventional V8, producing 409 hp and up to 66.28 Kg.m torque. Meanwhile, the V6 twin-turbo engine 3.3-litre diesel variant is capable of 302 hp and up to 71.38 Kg.m torque. Both versions are mated to a 10-speed automatic transmission.

The Lexus GX460 with its impressive capability and thoughtful luxury features is a perfect companion for lasting experiences. The GX is equipped with a 4.6L engine that provides outstanding power and responsive performance.

tinuously variable transmission (E-CVT) to provide excellent fuel efficiencies. A hybrid-electric system pairing a 2.4-litre turbocharged engine with an electric motor is also available, which provides a combined power of 366 hp mated to a 6-speed automatic transmission.

The Lexus NX is good choice for those looking to enjoy luxury experiences on their routine journeys. The NX is powered with two powertrain options. An inline 4-cylinder, 2.4 L turbocharged engine that produces 275 hp and 6000 RPM and is paired to an 8-speed Direct-Shift automatic transmission (8AT). The NX is also available with hybrid-electric system that combines two power sources consisting of a 2.5-litre petrol engine and two electric motors producing 240 hp.

The exciting and luxurious Lexus UX reflects the "Yet Philosophy," in many ways, but especially in terms of design, performance and utility. The front wheel drive Lexus UX is powered by a high-efficiency 2.0 litre, four-cylinder engine, which is coupled with a Direct Shift Continuously Variable Trans-

mission (DCVT).

For those interested in owning a Lexus sedan, the range include the flagship LS which is an inspiring luxury sedan, available with 3.5-litre V6 Multi Stage Hybrid System producing 354 hp, a 3.5-litre V6 naturally aspirated Atkinson-cycle producing 311 hp and 38.7 Kg.M Torque, and a 3.5-litre twin-turbo V6 engine producing 415 hp and 61.2 Kg.M of Torque.

The popular and classy Lexus ES is equipped with two powertrain options. ES350 is powered by a 3.5 litre, 24 valve, V6 engine that produces 298 hp and 36.3 kg.m. of torque. While the ES250 is powered by high efficiency 2.5 litre, 16-valve DOHC engine that produces 204 hp and 24.8 kg.m of torque.

The IS has been a choice of those looking to move up to luxury sedan experiences. The IS350 is a sleek and stylish powerful sedan which is equipped with a 3.5-litre engine that's paired to an 8-speed automatic transmission. The turbocharged IS300 features a 2.0-litre twin-scroll turbocharged inline four-cylinder engine with intercooler that generates 241 Hp.



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