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OMAN VISION 2040 IMPLEMENTATION FOLLOW-UP UNIT ISSUES ANNUAL REPORT

Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit yesterday issued the third annual report. The report's methodology focuses on the actual performance of government institutions and the efforts made in various economic and developmental sectors during 2023 in addition to evaluating their role in achieving the goals of "Oman Vision 2040" and the indicators endorsed by the Vision. >A2

Founded 1975 · Volume 49 No. 144 | 16 Pages · Baisas 200 · Subscription OMR63 | ISO 9001:2008 Certified Company | Chairman/Editor-in-Chief: Mohamed Issa Al Zadjali | Printed & Published by Muscat Media Group

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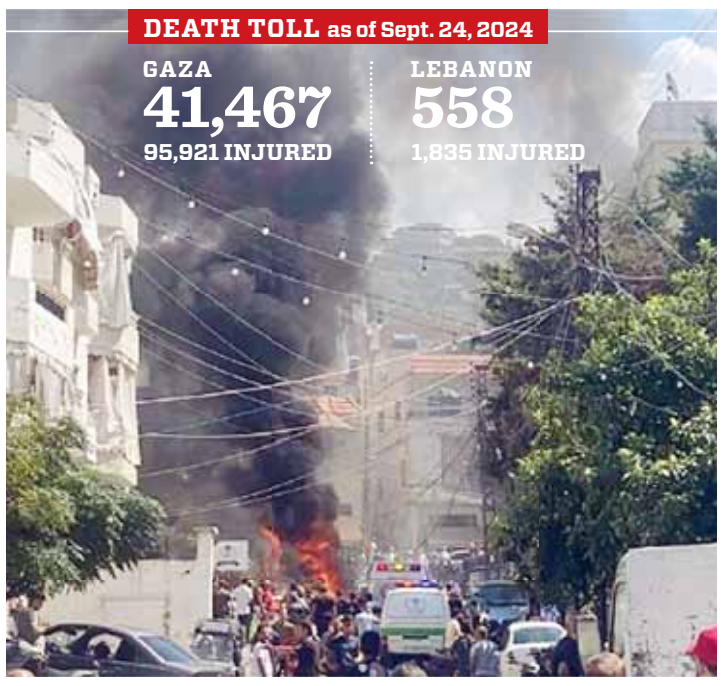
Sayyid Fahd receives advisor to Syrian president **A3**

OMAN CONDEMNS ISRAELI AIRSTRIKES ON LEBANON

Oman urged the international community to take measures to end this Israeli aggression in accordance with international law



MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman expressed its denunciation and condemnation of Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) airstrikes on Lebanon's territories.

Oman noted that this action constitutes a serious escalation that undermines security and stability in the region and leads to the expansion of conflict in a manner that involves the region in further violence and instability.

In a statement by the Foreign Ministry, Oman urged the international community to take measures to end this Israeli aggression in accordance with international law.

The Sultanate of Oman also expressed its solidarity with the Lebanese Republic. It also expressed its condolences to families of the victims, wishing the injured a speedy recovery. Oman emphasised its complete rejection of any violations of Lebanon's sovereignty or its territorial integrity. **See also >A7**

RISING FOOTBALL STAR

Oman's Al Naamani signs with Rayo Vallecano in landmark move to La Liga

MUSCAT: Omani football has a new rising star. At just 19 years old, Mohammed Al Naamani has made headlines by signing a one-year deal with Spanish La Liga club Rayo Vallecano, on Tuesday.

Once a relatively unknown name, Al Naamani's sudden breakthrough in Madrid has electrified the Sultanate's sports world, showcasing the remarkable potential of the young striker who started his journey at Muscat Football Academy (MFA).

Al Naamani, who has been playing in Italy with ASD Genova Calcio, shared his excitement in an exclusive statement to *Times of Oman*: "After six years of experience with different clubs in Italy, I'm very excited to start a new journey with Rayo Vallecano in Spain.

"It's a dream come true for me, and Inshallah, with Allah's blessings, I hope to see myself playing with the first team and being part of the Oman national team."

Full story on >A8

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Sayyid Badr takes part in meeting

1 Sayyid Badr Hamad Al participated in the Arab Ministerial Consultative Meeting, New York. >A4

OMAN

Oman-KSA trade tops OMR1.014 billion

2 The volume of trade between Oman and Saudi Arabia reached OMR1,014,494,718. >A3

MARKET

OQEP set to host nine IPO roadshows

3 OQEP is set to host a series of nine IPO roadshows across various governorates in Oman. >B1

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PRAYER TIMINGS

Dhuhr	12:04pm
Asr	3:29pm
Maghrib	6:05pm
Isha	7:16pm
Fajr (Tomorrow)	4:42am

Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit issues annual report

The report reflects the existing partnership between Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit and other government agencies

MUSCAT: Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit today issued the third annual report.

The report's methodology focuses on the actual performance of government institutions and the efforts made in various economic and developmental sectors during 2023 in addition to evaluating their role in achieving the goals of "Oman Vision 2040" and the indicators endorsed by the Vision.

This report reflects the existing partnership between Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit and other government agencies, coinciding with the fourth year of "Oman Vision 2040" in January 2024, as the Sultanate of Oman has achieved a remarkable progress in diverse global indicators.

Dr. Khamis Saif Al Jabri, Chairman of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit said that the issuance of the third annual report comes as an extension of the annual reports issued by the unit, especially the first and second annual reports issued in 2022 and 2023.

He added that issuing the third report comes as part of Unit's communication strategy to highlight the efforts made by various government institutions to implement their programmes, initiatives and projects emanating from Oman Vision 2040.

Al Jabri explained that the annual report represents monitoring and documentation of the progress in the executive path of the works of these entities and linking these works to the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

He added that the improvement in the government's economic and financial performance was reflected in its ability to cut down debt and ameliorate the gross domestic product (GDP), as well as the remarkable improvement achieved in the credit rating of the Sultanate of Oman by credit rating agencies.

Al Jabri affirmed that "this improvement would not have been achieved without the political will and executive competence that maintained the persistent efforts in managing this vital file without disrupting the path of economic and social development, especially in the field of public services that directly touch the lives of citizens".

He highlighted the tireless efforts and close cooperation shown by various government institutions to develop their work mechanisms and adopt methodologies that were developed in coordination and cooperation with Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit. Collaboration of efforts aim to ensure work according to the highest standards and best international practices, and to adopt effective governance frameworks that ensure good implementation, smooth procedures, and strict follow-up, support and escalation paths, starting from the lowest levels of implementation, all the way to the sectoral committees in the Council of Ministers and His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

Al Jabri explained that the efforts made by the Unit in cooperation with the competent government institutions in the field of building and developing national capabilities resulted in the establishment of more than 60 offices for Oman Vision 2040 in various government agencies to serve as a nucleus for transferring knowledge and expertise and to ensure the sustainability of follow-up and support by the Unit for the departments concerned with implementation.

He pointed out that the approved performance cards of government institutions represent an institutional reference document for driving the executive path of these agencies in their quest to achieve the Vision's goals, through which progress in implementing programmes, initiatives and projects can be monitored and measured periodically.

Al Jabri expressed his thanks to

all workers in the various national sectors and praised their achievements in various economic, social, cultural and environmental fields, which had an impact on the progress of the Sultanate of Oman in many international indicators.

The Chairman of the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit stated that the national efforts made by various sectors come at an important and critical stage full of opportunities and challenges and in light of global variables that have their repercussions on the global economy and national economies.

The report reviewed the priority of "Education, Learning, Research and National Capabilities" and the efforts of the state's administrative apparatus units, private schools, colleges and universities, and private sector companies to achieve this priority by improving the quality of school and higher education and raising the level of outputs; to develop the educational system at all levels to prepare graduates with competitive skills that meet the requirements of the labour market and build a knowledge economy.

The report indicated that the efforts made in this priority for 2023 included auditing the quality of 65 government and private higher education institutions within the institutional accreditation programme, funding 314 research projects for researchers from 26 research and academic institutions, and implementing many programmes and projects by the public and private sectors in the scientific research and innovation system.

Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) also improved in the QS rankings for 2025, rising from 454th to 362nd after falling in the past two years. The university's index value increased from 25.2 for 2024 to 31.7 for 2025, while Sohar University entered the rankings as the first private Omani university, paving the way for inclusion in the top 500 universities in the future.

As for the priority of "Health", the report highlighted the most prominent efforts made by all parties concerned, which seek to develop a global health system characterised by decentralisation, quality, transparency and accountability, while enhancing scientific research and health innovation, and providing high-quality preventive and therapeutic services to build a sustainable healthy society.

Under the priority of "citizenship, identity, heritage and national culture", Oman Vision 2040 seeks to enhance citizenship, identity, heritage and national culture to build a society that is proud of its identity and culture and committed to its citizenship, while preserving the cultural heritage and openness to the modern era.

The priority of "Social Welfare and Protection" aims to build an effective and sustainable social safety network with a focus on empowering women, children, youth, people with disabilities and the most needy groups. The objectives include providing integrated social protection and enhancing partnerships between the public, private and civil society sectors.

The Sultanate of Oman has achieved a remarkable leap in the Youth Development Index compared to its last rating in 2020, as its ranking rose to 33rd globally in 2023, advancing 19 places from its previous ranking. This improvement reflects the Sultanate of Oman's achievement of one of the main goals of Oman Vision 2040 to reach the target value of the index by 2030.

The priority of "Economic Leadership and Management" focuses on building Omani leaderships capable of directing the economy towards broader prospects in line with national priorities and strategic approaches, especially in the theme of economy and development. This aims to create renewed and efficient senior managements capable of dealing with rapid changes in the market and future expectations through an effective and empowered economic performance system that keeps pace with local and global changes.

The priority of the "Labour Market and Employment" focuses on improving the sector to increase its attractiveness to national competencies and enhance employment opportunities and stability of Omani workers in the private sector. The main objectives include developing the legislative system, improving institutional management, monitoring global developments in the field of future jobs and developing workers' skills. These efforts are expected to contribute to raising the efficiency of the labour market and ameliorating the rate of Omanisation and productivity, with a focus on enhancing national expertise and capabilities.

Regarding the indicators of the Promising Omani Startups Programme, as many as 116 innovation and technology based start-ups were established, while the number of beneficiaries from the idea generation phase reached 1,920 ideas, and the number of start-ups benefiting from the investment facilitation programme reached 30 companies, while the number of beneficiaries from the training camps reached 500 beneficiaries.

As for the priority of "Developing Sustainable Governorates and Cities", Oman Vision 2040 focuses on achieving comprehensive and balanced development among all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, by directing investments towards establishing smart cities and developing governorates, while applying the principle of administrative and economic decentralization.

While the priority of "Environment and Natural Resources" is a starting point for achieving the goals of the environmental sector in the Sultanate of Oman, which contributes to supporting and stimulating the economy by moving towards a green economy, diversifying non-traditional energy sources, achieving food and water security, and spreading environmental awareness to guide society towards the optimal use of natural resources and preserving all elements of the environment.

The Sultanate of Oman achieved a qualitative leap in the Environmental Performance Index for 2024, as it rose 95 ranks to reach the 54th globally (and the second in the Arab world) compared to the 149th global ranking in 2022.

The priority of "Legislation, Judiciary and Oversight" aims to have an efficient, fair and specialized judiciary that employs future technologies with flexible legislation, an independent legislative authority and an effective and transparent oversight system that combats corruption. The priority emphasizes the role of the oversight media and a legally aware society that participates in legislation and oversight.

Under the priority of "Governance of the State Administrative Apparatus, Resources and Projects," Oman Vision 2040 seeks to build a flexible and innovative administrative apparatus. The most prominent performance indicators of the government digital transformation programme in 2023 include achieving 53 percent in overall performance, with an improvement in institutional performance and digital transformation as the average performance of government institutions in achieving the requirements of government digital transformation reached 72 percent. -ONA

ASMED

Over 141,000 SMEs registered in Oman by the end of June 2024

MUSCAT: The number of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) registered with the Authority of Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED) reached 141,126 by the end of June 2024, according to a bulletin published by ASMED.

The bulletin also indicated that the number of micro enterprises exceeded 120,000, while the number of small enterprises crossed 19,000. Meanwhile, the number of medium enterprises reached more than 1,100.

This bulletin reviews the most prominent indicators and statistics related to the small and medium enterprises sector in the Sultanate of Oman, embodying the approach of communicating with the community and enriching entrepreneurial knowledge.

The number of institutions that have obtained the Entrepreneurship Card that enables its holder to obtain many facilities in various sectors from relevant authorities, by providing a set of privileges by some government and private entities for the first time during the first half of this year, reached 10,388 and the total number of small and medium enterprises that have obtained the active Entrepreneurship Card is more than 28,000.

The bulletin addressed the continuous services and initiatives provided by the Authority, as the number of public and specialised business incubators in the Sultanate of Oman during the current year reached 18, which hosted 85 institutions, provided 198 job opportunities for Omani youth in various economic activities, and recorded revenues of more than OMR800,000 during the first half of 2024.

Business incubators and centres work to provide the appropriate environment and technical support for entrepreneurs and owners of innovative ideas while practicing their business, encouraging and supporting investment in the business incubator sector in small and medium enterprises, providing appropriate technical support to transform investment, commercial, economic and other ideas into successful small and medium enterprises, and providing administrative, advisory, legal, accounting, and marketing services, periodic follow-up, assistance in preparing feasibility studies and business plans, and financing incubated projects according to the procedures followed.

The bulletin focused on the service of usufruct lands, which are granted to small and medium enterprises that have obtained an entrepreneurship card for industrial uses in most governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, at a nominal annual fee with an exemption from payment for the first two years.

The total approvals for usufruct lands during the first half of this year amounted to 44 approvals according to the package of plans for usufruct lands announced by the Authority in a number of governorates of the Sultanate of Oman through the Tatweer platform of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, with a set of advantages for entrepreneurs, including: setting nominal annual fees that are consistent with the conditions of small and medium enterprises, a grace period that allows the project owner to complete the preparation of his project according to a clear work plan, and giving him priority in obtaining facilities from the Authority for the Development of Small and Medium Enterprises in the areas of financing, marketing, training and qualification. -ONA

Sayyid Fahd meets media advisor to Syria president

Sayyid Fahd expressed his best wishes to the Syrian leadership. He also wished the people of Syria further development and growth

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers yesterday received Dr. Bouthaina Shaaban, Political and Media Advisor to the President of the Syrian Arab Republic and Chairperson of the Wathiqat Wattan Organisation.

HH Sayyid Fahd expressed his best wishes to the Syrian leadership. He also wished the people of Syria further development and growth.

Further, the meeting highlighted Omani-Syrian relations and means of boosting cooperation. It also touched on the agenda of the international conference organized by the National Records and Archives Authority in cooperation with the Syrian Wathiqat Wattan Organisation.

The two sides underscored the importance of joint Arab action in preserving legacies and historic documents and exchanging expertise in these fields. They also discussed regional developments and matters of mutual interest.

The guest and her accompanying delegation expressed their happiness in visiting the Sultanate of Oman and the developments achieved in different fields.

Moreover, the Political and Media Advisor to the President of the Syrian Arab Republic underlined the importance of the consultations she held with officials in the Sultanate of Oman.

The meeting was attended by Dr. Hamad Mohammed Al Dhouiani, Chairman of the National RecordsandArchives Authority and Dr. Idris Maya, Ambassador of Syria to Oman. -ONA

PUBLIC HEALTH LAW

State Council panel hosts health ministry officials

MUSCAT: The State Council's sub-committee formed to study the draft version of the Public Health Law—which was referred to the State Council by the Council of Ministers—yesterday hosted a number of officials from the Ministry of Health.

The meeting chaired by Dr. Sana Abdulrahman Al Khanjari, Chairperson of the State Council's Social and Cultural Committee.

The committee discussed basic elements and concepts related to public health services in the Sultanate of Oman.

It also discussed the role of the Ministry of Health in supervising popular medicine and alternative medicine and means of regulating blood services.

Food manufacturing

During the meeting, the participants also studied methods of food manufacturing. -ONA

DISCUSSION: The meeting chaired by Dr. Sana Abdulrahman Al Khanjari, Chairperson of the State Council's Social and Cultural Committee. - ONA

NCSI

Trade between Oman and KSA tops OMR1.014 billion

MUSCAT: The volume of trade between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reached OMR1,014,494,718 by the end of June 2024, according to the data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Metal products constituted the largest value of Omani exports to the KSA with a value of OMR160,547,747. This was followed by minerals and related products with a value of OMR95,036,061.

Moreover, machinery, digital devices and electric equipment and their parts came next with a value of OMR33,592,718.

On the other hand, metal products also constituted the largest value of imports from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Sultanate (OMR284,941,374), followed by chemicals and related industries with a value of OMR137,967,829. The products of food industry, drinks, alcohols, vinegar, tobacco and synthetic alternatives to tobacco reached OMR38,882,937.

Direct Saudi investment in the Sultanate of Oman reached OMR121.1 million, comprising a rise from OMR80.6 million by the end of 2021 (50.2%).

Omani direct investment in Saudi Arabia reached OMR129.1 million by the end of 2022.

The Rub Al Khali port represented a qualitative shift in trade exchange between the two countries, as the value of goods imported through the port by the end of June 2024 amounted to OMR159, 678, 381, with a total weight of 324,529, 044 kilograms, compared to OMR118, 724, 376, with a total weight of 254, 142, 296 kilograms by the end of June 2024.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is one of the most prominent tourism partners of the Sultanate of Oman, as the number of Saudi visitors coming to the Sultanate of Oman until the end of August 2024 reached about 87,710.

Statistics from the National Centre for Statistics and Information indicate that the number of Saudis residing in Oman reached 1,517 residents by the end of June 2024, including 989 males and 528 females, while the number of Saudi students in government schools in the Sultanate of Oman for the academic year 2023/2024 reached about 341, including 160 males and 181 females, while the number of Saudi students in higher education institutions in the Sultanate of Oman for the academic year 2022/2023 reached about 103 students, including 84 males and 19 females. -ONA

OMAN

Sayyid Badr participates in Arab Ministerial Consultative Meeting

The meeting stressed the importance of unifying Arab ranks and enhancing joint cooperation to address current crises

NEW YORK: Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, today participated in the Arab Ministerial Consultative Meeting, held on the sidelines of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

The meeting discussed the latest regional developments and common challenges.

It stressed the importance of unifying Arab ranks and enhancing joint cooperation to address current crises, notably within the context of the Palestinian cause.

The ministers expressed their unwavering support for the rights of the Palestinian people and the importance of realizing a just and comprehensive solution that guarantees the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on the 1967 borders, with Al Quds Al Sharqiyah (East Jerusalem) as its capital.

They also reiterated their call for the international community to shoulder its responsibilities and intensify efforts to immediately implement a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and terminate the brutal Israeli aggression.

Sayyid Badr also conferred with several officials. Mohamed Muizzu, President of the Republic of Maldives, received Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi on the sidelines of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

During the meeting, Sayyid Badr conveyed the greetings and best wishes of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to President of the Republic of Maldives, along with His Majesty's wishes of further growth and prosperity to the Maldivian people.

The President of the Republic of Maldives asked Sayyid Badr to convey his greetings to His Majesty the Sultan, as well as his sincere wishes to His Majesty and the Omani people. He hoped that relations between the two countries would continue to grow and develop further.

The meeting dealt with ways to enhance bilateral relations in the fields of tourism, environment and sustainable development. It laid emphasis on means of enhancing commercial exchange, developing economic cooperation and exploring new investment opportunities, notably in the marine and environmental sectors.

The two sides also discussed common challenges related to climate change and ways of consolidating cooperation in this field. They also stressed the need to enhance joint efforts to protect natural resources. The two sides also exchanged views on regional and international issues of common interest.

Sayyid Badr also held a meeting with Ivan Gil Pinto, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. During the meeting, the two ministers signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to hold political consultations to help enhance coordination about bilateral, regional and international issues of common interest.

They also signed an agreement on mutual exemption from visas for holders of diplomatic, special and service passports.

The ministers exchanged views on bilateral relations and opportunities to enhance economic and trade cooperation between the two countries. They stressed the importance of exploring new areas of partnership in promising sectors and exchanged views on regional and international issues of common interest.

Then, Sayyid Badr met with Alice Nderitu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Prevention of Genocide. The two sides discussed the tragic situation in the Gaza Strip and expressed their deep concern over the ongoing escalation and violence against civilians at a time the international community shows inability to stop the aggression and violation of international law.

The two sides also exchanged views on means of enhancing efforts to protect world peoples from serious violations. They discussed means of providing urgently needed support to the Palestinian people who continue to meet serious challenges.

The meeting also touched on means of boosting international efforts to combat hate speech and incitement.

During a meeting with Deemah Al Yahya, Secretary-General of the Digital Cooperation Organization, Sayyid Badr reviewed cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the Organization. They discussed projects that support digital diplomacy and capacity and skills development within the context of digital economy, artificial intelligence (AI) and sustainable development.

During his meeting with Xavier Bettel, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Affairs of Luxembourg, the Minister of Foreign Affairs reviewed the bilateral relations between the Sultanate of Oman and Luxembourg, and ways to enhance them in various fields, especially in the areas of economic and investment cooperation.

On the other hand, the Sultanate of Oman and Hungary signed an executive programme in the field of higher education. The programme was signed by Sayyid Badr and Péter Szijjártó, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Hungary.

The Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Bulgaria signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to hold political consultations to advance bilateral relations and an agreement on mutual visa exemption for holders of diplomatic, special and service passports.

The MoU was signed by Sayyid Badr and Ivan Kondov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria.

During the meeting, the two ministers discussed regional and international developments of common interest.

In another meeting, Sayyid Badr and Hans Grundberg, the UN Special Envoy for Yemen, reviewed the latest developments in the Yemeni arena. They discussed international and regional efforts made to achieve peace and stability in Yemen. They stressed the need to back efforts to reach a comprehensive political solution that paves the way for a future of security, stability and harmony for the Yemeni people.

Sayyid Badr then met with Dr. Badr Abdel Aati, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

The two sides hailed the strong Omani-Egyptian relations and the two countries' keenness to keep developing and diversifying programmes of cooperation in various vital fields to achieve more benefits for the two peoples.

Sayyid Badr and Dr. Badr Abdel Aati reviewed topics on the agenda of the current session of the United Nations General Assembly. They exchanged views on developments in the region, most notably those related to the Palestinian issue, as well as efforts to realize justice, alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people and achieve their aspirations for independence and freedom.

Sayyid Badr underlined the significance of Egypt's role and its support for the Arab cause. For his part, the Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs commended the foreign policy of the Sultanate of Oman the country's wisdom and its peaceful and constructive positions at regional and international levels. He stressed the need to step up coordination of Arab positions, boost peaceful solutions and stop military escalation in the region.

During his meeting with Bakhtiyor Saidov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Sayyid Badr discussed ways to enhance cooperation between Oman and Uzbekistan in the fields of economy, trade and culture.

The two sides elaborated on prospects for cooperation in the field of investments, notably in renewable energy and technology sectors. They also exchanged views on regional and international issues of common interest. - ONA

ENVIRONMENT AUTHORITY

Oman has implemented plans to protect the ozone layer

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Environment Authority, participates in the celebration of the International Ozone Day, which falls on September 16 every year.

This year the theme of the celebration was "Advancing Climate Action" which reflected the crucial role of the Montreal Protocol in protecting the ozone layer and driving broader climate action initiatives worldwide.

The Sultanate of Oman has implemented many policies, programmes and control procedures, through which it was able to achieve compliance requirements by reducing and stopping the use of the most important ozone-depleting substances, as the consumed quantity reached zero at the beginning of 2010 for halons and chlorofluorocarbons, as well as for methyl bromide, starting in 2015.

The Sultanate of Oman is implementing the third phase of the hydrochlorofluorocarbons Phase-Out Strategy Project in cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization.

The project aims to implement several activities in the field of training and awareness, and review and develop national procedures and regulations in line with the requirements of the Montreal Protocol during the next phase.

The EA is also reviewing and evaluating the licensing system for ozone-depleting substances and their alternatives in the customs declaration system, in cooperation with the General Directorate of Customs of the Royal Oman Police, and studying the approval of centres for the recovery, recycling and reclamation of ozone-depleting substances in the Sultanate of Oman in cooperation with the relevant authorities, in addition to studying the establishment of professional licenses for technicians working in the refrigeration and air conditioning sector in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour.

Gradual elimination

As for hydrochlorofluorocarbons, for which the Montreal Protocol has set a gradual reduction schedule beginning with freezing consumption starting in 2013 and ending with their complete elimination by the beginning of 2030.

The Sultanate of Oman has taken many measures that have enabled it to achieve the reduction requirements stipulated in the Protocol, such as distributing import quotas to all importing companies, achieving a 10% reduction rate in 2015 and a 35% reduction rate in 2020 for those substances, and moving forward with the gradual elimination of ozone-depleting substances by 67.5% by 2025. - ONA

First Karwa school bus launched in Duqm

All the buses are equipped with modern technologies that allow real-time tracking

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Education, in cooperation with Karwa Company, celebrated the launching of Karwa School Buses under the patronage of Majid bin Said Al Bahri, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education for Administrative and Financial Affairs, in presence of Badr bin Salim Al Maamri, Secretary-General of the Tender Board, and a number of officials at the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance, Development Bank, and Karwa Motor Company.

The cooperation between the Ministry of Education and Karwa Motor Company came in compliance with the directives that stipulated focusing on qualitative projects that provides added value to the national economy, by creating investment opportunities for small and medium enterprises through enhancing and encouraging local content for Omani industries.

From this standpoint, the Ministry of Education strengthened Karwa Motor Company by signing an agreement to provide school buses according to the number required by the ministry's requirements, for a period of five years.

The process of manufacturing these school buses by the Karwa Motor Company goes through several stages, namely: Design, implementation, and inspection. Thr process begins with the design of the school bus, where the technical specifications, dimensions, and required equipment are determined, then selecting the appropriate materials for manufacturing the body, such as steel, aluminium, and plastic, in addition to the interior materials such as seats and floors.

Then comes the stage of manufacturing the external body of the bus using techniques such as welding and cutting, and assembling the various parts such as the engine, suspension system, wheels, brake system, seat installation, air conditioning system, lighting, and safety systems such as cameras and alarms.

After these buses pass the driving, brake, and safety tests, the final finishes are carried out such as: paint, logos, and then cleaning the bus

Khamis Al Hadidi, Director-General of the Directorate-General of Projects and Services, said: "As the Ministry of Education continues to update the school transportation, and work to replace old transportation with new ones, and in light of the agreement signed between the Ministry of Education, Karwa Motors Company, and the Oman Development Bank to replace 5,000 buses over 5 years at a rate of 1,000 buses annually.

The first of these buses was launched at Karwa Motors Company in Duqm in Al Wusta Governorate, and it is expected that a number of these buses will begin to be supplied in October.

These buses will bring about a qualitative shift in school transportation services and create a safe and comfortable environment for our students."

He emphasised in his speech the importance of providing safe and comfortable school transportation for students, which contributes to improving the educational experience and its role in enhancing road safety. This is the first step and the beginning of further improvements in the school transportation infrastructure in the future.

Eng. Issa Al Rashdi, Director of School Transportation Department, said: "These school buses are equipped with the latest monitoring technologies, sensors, automatic fire extinguishing systems, and guidelines, which is an approach to development, improving the school transportation process, finding the necessary solutions, and addressing the challenges that affect the educational process."

It is worth noting that Karwa School Buses are characterised with modern design and utilities including developed safety systems, and comfortable seats.

It is also equipped with modern technologies that allow real-time bus tracking.

SUSPICIOUS CALLS

Indian Embassy issues advisory against fraudsters

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Indian Embassy telephone lines in Muscat have been spoofed by fraudsters to cheat people for money, according to an advisory issued by the mission which warned against entertaining any suspicious calls.

The Indian Embassy in Muscat also issued a public advisory on such fraud calls which seeks money to sort out passport, immigration matters in the Embassy.

"Attention Indian nationals in Oman: Beware of calls from spoofed numbers claiming to be from the Embassy," it said.

"It has been brought to the notice of the Embassy that innocent Indian nationals in Oman are getting calls in the name of Indian Embassy from spoofed numbers. The caller seeks money to sort out passport/immigration matters in the Embassy. It is reported that the calls are received from number +180071234."

"All Indian nationals are hereby informed that 80071234 is the 24x7 Toll Free Helpline number of Community Welfare Wing of the Embassy. It is not used to make any outgoing calls. Any calls received from spoofed number +180071234 are fake calls from fraudsters. It is advised that recipient of calls from spoofed numbers must cross check directly with the Embassy on helpline numbers to avoid falling into the trap of unscrupulous elements," the statement said.

SUPREME JUDICIAL COUNCIL

Discussion on judicial action and ways to boost services

MUSCAT: The Supreme Judicial Council yesterday held its 4th meeting of 2024 during which its discussed topics related to judicial action, including the development of laws and the improvement of the quality of judicial services over the new Judicial Year (2024-2025).

The meeting was chaired by Sayyid Mohammed Sultan Al Busaidi, Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council.

Reviewed decisions

It reviewed decisions related to administrative and functional affairs of the Supreme Judicial Council.

Sayyid Mohammed called for enhanced efforts during the new judicial year (2024-2025) to achieve prompt justice that consolidates the rule of law. -ONA

EMBASSY OF INDIA

India-Oman B2B meeting on healthcare organised

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Embassy of India in Muscat, in association with *Malayala Manorama*, a leading Indian media house, organised an India-Oman B2B Meet on Healthcare at the Embassy on 23 September 2024.

The event brought together 26 prominent Indian hospitals, which are also participating in the Oman Health Exhibition and Conference (OHEC) at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre from 23 to 25 September 2024.

Dr. Waleed Khalid Zadjali, President of the Oman Medical Association, graced the occasion as the chief guest, while Dr. Rashid bin Mohammed Al Alawi, Director General of the General Directorate of Khoula Hospital, and Dr. Khalid Al Rasadi, Director of Medical Research Centre, SQU, College of Medicine & Health Sciences, joined as the guests of honour.

The B2B meeting saw the participation of several senior doctors and medical professionals from all major hospitals in Muscat. The event facilitated valuable exchanges between the healthcare industries of both countries, providing a platform to discuss expanding medical tourism and leveraging India's strengths in cost-effective, high-quality treatment.

Speaking at the event, Amit Narang, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman remarked, "India and Oman share a robust and growing collaboration in the healthcare sector, spanning modern and traditional systems of medicine. The potential to enhance medical tourism and forge stronger healthcare partnerships between our countries is significant, and today's event marks a meaningful step in that direction."

India has become a destination of choice for patients globally, including those from Oman, seeking world-class yet affordable medical care.

India's healthcare system, supported by skilled professionals, short waiting times, and streamlined visa procedures for medical tourists, offers comprehensive care that continues to attract Omani citizens.

Earlier in the day, Ambassador Amit Narang, inaugurated the Indian Pavilion at the Oman Health Exhibition and Conference. The pavilion showcases the expertise of 26 leading Indian hospitals, highlighting India's excellence in delivering advanced healthcare services.

Sultanate of Oman سلطنة عُمان
وزارة التراث والسياحة
Ministry of Heritage and Tourism

Tenders Announcement

Tender No.	216/2024/MHT/HQ-51	Tender Name	Providing consulting and technical support in the field of preserving and maintaining historical monuments and qualifying them for investment.
	217/2024/MHT/HQ-52		Consultancy Services for Preparation Of Tourism Development Master Plan For Al'buraimi Governorate.
	218/2024/MHT/HQ-53		Maintenance of Maqzah Mosque in the Wilayat of Izki, Al Dakhiliyah Governorate
Fees of Tender Documents (Non-refundable)		25 O.R	
Tender Document Sales End Date		13/10/2024	
Last Date for Bid Submission		5/11/2024	
Grade		216/2024/MHT/HQ-51	First-Second
		217/2024/MHT/HQ-52	First
		218/2024/MHT/HQ-53	Fourth
E-Tendering Portal		https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om	

Interested Companies registered with Tender Board (in the mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om, against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.

The Tenderers must acknowledge commitment to the bid.

The Ministry shall not be obligated to accept the lowest or any other bids

The bid submission period starts after the end of the inquiry period shown in the e-tendering system, until the last date for submitting bids before (10:00 am, Oman time).

Support and inquiries	For more information, related to the tender, kindly communicate through the website of the e-tendering system: https:// etendering.tenderboard.gov.om
	For inquiries related to the technical support for the e-tendering system, kindly communicate through **etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om or 24402200**
For further information	**Email : sotic@mht.gov.om** **Phones : 22088348 - 22088085**

WORLD

VIETNAM

3 dead, thousands evacuated in floods

HANOI: At least three people have died, and more than 10,000 were evacuated, in central Vietnam after catastrophic flooding, authorities said on Tuesday.

The three people were reported killed in Nghe An province after they drowned in flash floods.

Since Saturday, about 320 houses have sustained damages while more than 6,300 hectares of crops were destroyed, the ministry of agriculture said.

At least 40 school buildings in the area were also submerged in water, it added.

According to officials in Thanh Hoa province, more than 11,700 people had evacuated their homes and sought shelter in higher elevations in the past three days.

Authorities in the province issued warnings on Monday and ordered residents in flood-prone areas to evacuate their homes, according to national online newspaper VnExpress.

Vietnam suffers double whammy

Earlier this month, Typhoon Yagi hit Vietnam, leaving nearly 300 people dead and destroying property worth $1.6 billion (€1.4 billion). However, before the country could recover from Yagi, it was hit by yet another intense storm last week, bringing torrential rainfall and causing the rivers to swell to dangerous levels.

Some homes on the outskirts of the capital, Hanoi, remain partially submerged more than two weeks after Yagi made landfall. — DW

Times OF OMAN

Printed and published by: Muscat Media Group
Post Box: 770,
Postal Code: 112

Founder: Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali
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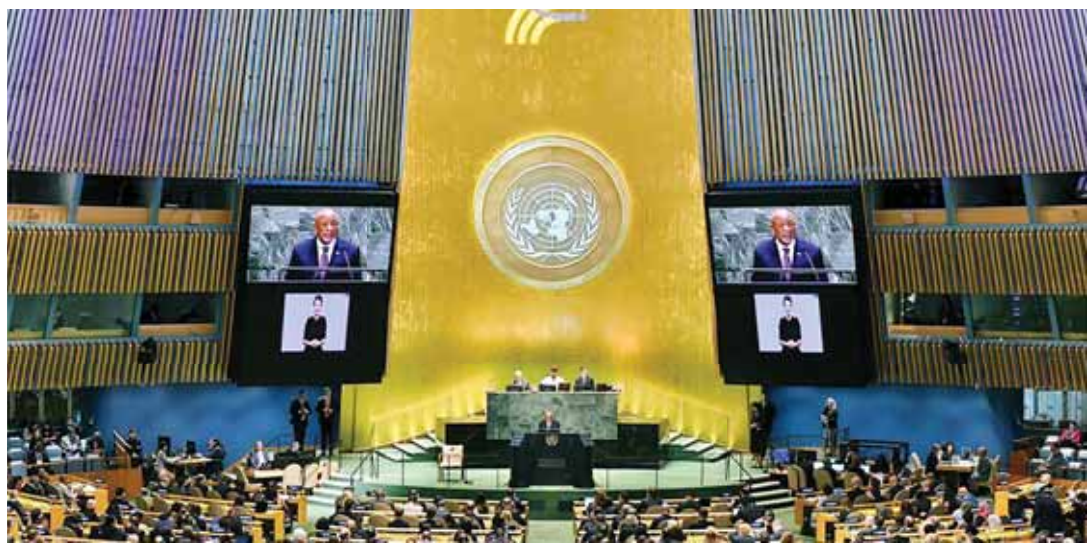
World leaders praise adoption of pact at UN Summit of the Future

The pact and its annexes cover a broad range of themes including peace and security, sustainable development, climate change, digital cooperation, human rights, gender, youth and future generations and the transformation of global governance



UNITED NATIONS: Leaders from the world body's member countries hailed the adoption of the Pact for the Future, with Global Digital Compact and Declaration on Future Generations at the Summit of the Future at the United Nations headquarters in New York.

The pact and its annexes cover a broad range of themes including peace and security, sustainable development, climate change, digital cooperation, human rights, gender, youth and future generations and the transformation of global governance.

High-level event

"The Summit of the Future is a high-level event, bringing world leaders together to forge a new international consensus on how we deliver a better present and safeguard the future," said the world organization in its release. "This once-in-a-generation opportunity serves as a moment to mend eroded trust and demonstrate that international cooperation can effectively tackle current challenges as well as those that have emerged in recent years or may yet be over the horizon."

President of Angola João Lourenço said that the adoption of the Pact for the Future represents "a real turning point" for a more dynamic, engaged and assertive approach to the issues that are of concern to the humanity. Stressing the importance of including youth and women as "vital drivers" of transformation and modernization, he called for a commitment "to step up the fight against poverty in all forms and dimensions."

President of the Czech Republic Petr Pavel said that the Pact for the Future creates a solid base for a better and more effective multilateral system. Particularly, he insisted, it is critical to "contribute to our shared understanding of how to handle technology safely on a daily basis and protect ourselves against its misuse by malign actors."

President of Ecuador Daniel Noboa said that all global decisions and commitments must be determined with "the involvement and contribution of those who today can build tomorrow." To tackle "the alarming and growing rates of youth unemployment" through targeted investment, he said that this is the only way "to pull youth from the grasp of crime, drugs and transnational organized criminal activities."

President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon said that the inclusion of climate and water issues in the final document "underscores the imperative for sustained and urgent action" to secure a peaceful and sustainable future. Despite some progress, "access to filtered water and sanitation remains insufficient," he said, voicing the commitment of his country to enhancing collaboration with other nations to advance water resource management and climate change action.

Albert II, Prince of Monaco, said that the Pact for the Future establishes a bedrock for a more prosperous world and allows young people to flourish in an environment protected from security threats such as transnational crime. "Peace is our most valuable asset," he added, noting that without access to human rights, a world benefiting all people is impossible.

Speaking on behalf of the least developed countries (LDCs) group, Prime Minister of Nepal KP Sharma Oli said that millions of their children are going hungry every day, highlighting the clear inequality evident around the globe. "Nothing could be more unjust and ethnical than to be ignorant to the fact that millions of people in LDCs live in extreme poverty while a small minority in some corners of the world accumulate billions in wealth," he said, noting that this is not the future that humanity should aspire towards. "The International community must act now to ensure every child and young person has the chance to thrive."

Nangolo Mbumba, president of Namibia, noted that the world is at a crossroads. One path leads to environmental catastrophe, widening inequality, global conflict, destruction and the rise of dangerous technology that threatens peoples' security and civil liberties; the other, to peace, the eradication of poverty and hunger and the responsible harnessing of digital technologies for the benefit of humanity.

Olaf Scholz, chancellor of Germany, urged those present to take steps towards a more peaceful, fairer world, stating that, while "the road ahead is rocky," history will judge member states for their commitment to the plan at hand. The pact can serve as a compass towards cooperation instead of conflict, showing determination to restore international justice and expelling all the talk of polarization, he added.

"We do not have time to waste," stressed Sadyr Zhaparov, president of Kyrgyzstan, urging "decisive" action to strengthen the connections between nations and forge global partnerships to address challenges such as forced migration, climate threats and the unjust distribution of resources.

Stressing that "inaction is not an option," Chandrikapersad Santokhi, president of Suriname, pointed to Caribbean nations' lack of financial resources to invest in health, education and infrastructure due to external debt.

The failure to share global resources will continue to drive humanity to war, social disintegration and migration and "condemn us to live in two separate worlds", said Mia Amor Mottley, prime minister of Barbados.

"The future is not distant," stressed Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, president of Ghana. "It is here, and the choices we make here will determine the fate of generations to come." No nation, regardless of power, can solve today's challenges alone, he stated.

Lula da Silva, president of Brazil, highlighted the "great responsibilities to those who will succeed us," and urged them not to back down from the promotion of equality between men and women and the fight against racism and all forms of discrimination.

He also stressed that "we cannot live with nuclear threats again, nor fuel new arms races on Earth or in space," noting that it is unacceptable to regress to a world divided into ideological borders or zones of influence. — Xinhua

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif arrives in New York

NEW YORK: Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif arrived in New York on Tuesday to attend the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), according to a report by Dawn.

The Pakistan PM will take the global stage on September 27, addressing a plenary meeting during the UN General Debate.

PM Shehbaz will also attend the reception given by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres for the heads of member states, where he will have an informal meeting with the heads of different nations and will also participate in the opening ceremony of the UNGA session, Dawn reported.

Ahead of his UNGA address, Pakistan's Prime Minister outlined the issues that he would be taking up -- promoting peace, development and climate action.

While sharing a post on X on September 21, he wrote, "Departing for New York to represent Pakistan at the 79th UN General Assembly. Looking forward to a busy week full of engagements. During our interactions we will take up global issues, promoting peace, development & climate action. Will present Pakistan's perspective to the world, advocate our interests & strengthen international partnerships."

Notably, the general debate of the 79th session of the General Assembly opens on September 24 and will continue through September 28 and conclude on September 30.

The theme for the general debate of the 79th session of the General Assembly is "Leaving no one behind: acting together for the advancement of peace, sustainable development and human dignity for present and future generations," according to the UN official statement.

Opening amid growing calls for more international cooperation to address challenges such as climate change, poverty and inequality, while also tackling the fallout from ongoing conflicts and global health crises, the session will see world leaders heading to New York to deliver their statements in the iconic Assembly Hall. -ANI

ISLAND NATION

Can left-leaning Anura Dissanayake revive Sri Lanka's ailing economy?

COLOMBO: Anura Kumara Dissanayake was sworn in as Sri Lanka's president on Monday, vowing to change the island nation, which is emerging from its worst economic crisis in more than seven decades.

Dissanayake, who ran as head of the Marxist-leaning National People's Power coalition, defeated opposition leader Sajith Premadasa and 36 other candidates in Saturday's vote.

During his election campaign, Dissanayake challenged the established political order accused of corruption and mismanagement, which resonated deeply with millions of Sri Lankans.

"We need to establish a new clean political culture," he said during his swearing-in speech.

"I have said before that I am not a magician — I am an ordinary citizen. There are things I know and don't know. My utmost objective is to gather those with the knowledge and skills to help lift this country."

Sri Lanka's close neighbors India, Pakistan, and the Maldives congratulated Dissanayake on his win, along with Chinese President Xi Jinping, who said he looked forward to working together "to jointly carry forward our traditional friendship."

Dissanayake: An outsider who rose to the presidency

The 55-year-old, popularly known as AKD, leads the National People's Power (NPP) alliance, which includes his party, the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), or People's Liberation Front.

Dissanayake gained prominence as a student leader before becoming a part of JVP's central

committee in 1997. He later entered Parliament and became a cabinet minister in President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga's government.

Dissanayake's rise now is particularly remarkable, considering he received only 3% of the vote in the 2019 presidential election.

Saturday's vote was the first since mass protests over shortages of essentials such as foods, medicines, cooking gas and fuel in 2022 forced then-president Gotabaya Rajapaksa to flee the country and resign.

Experts believe Dissanayake and his party seized this moment by pledging to transform the island's political culture and dismantle its entrenched political dynasties.

"Although former President Ranil Wickremesinghe helped stabilize the country's economy, people still view him as someone aligned with the Rajapaksa clan, who are accused of corruption and promoting family politics," senior journalist and political science lecturer Amirthanayagam Nixon told DW.

"Voters took this opportunity to completely remove them from power and give a new face a chance."

Concerns have been raised about a completely new president taking the helm during such a critical period for the country.

Economic recovery challenges

Dissanayake's main challenge will be economic recovery. His election manifesto included plans to revisit the terms of Sri Lanka's International Monetary Fund's $2.9 billion (€2.6 billion) bailout, along with a commitment to cut taxes.

"Any adjustments to the IMF programme must be with consideration to why it's being done and if those adjustments help attain a better outcome than today," Anushka Wijesinha, an economist and director of Colombo-based public policy think tank, Centre for a Smart Future, told DW.

Wijesinha added that continuing the debt restructuring, which has almost reached the final step, should be Dissanayake's key priority.

"The new president has to maintain credibility and predictably with the bondholder group and the official creditor committee and get it over the finish line," Wijesinha said.

"This will help move Sri Lanka out of default status and strengthen the new government's hand in dealing with international lenders and move on with other policy priorities they may have."

What other issues will Dissanayake face?

Apart from economic recovery, how Dissanayake handles the issues of Sri Lankan Tamils, the country's largest ethnic minority that accounts for nearly 12% of the 22 million population, remains uncertain.

Historically, his JVP party has been seen as opposing Tamil interests, which led to fewer votes for him in the northern and eastern provinces, where the Tamil and Muslim populations are mainly concentrated.

"His party has engaged in anti-Tamil activities," according to Siva Ramasamy, chief editor of the Thamilan newspaper, who claimed that the JVP played a key role in splitting the North and East provinces, which were once united.

Sri Lankan Tamils share deep social, cultural and linguistic ties with people in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, and have been struggling to recover from decades of a civil war that lasted until 2009 and claimed around 100,000 lives.

In a nation where the Sinhalese ethnic group makes up roughly three-quarters of the population, many Sri Lankan Tamils support the devolution of powers to the North and East, as well as reconciliation following the civil war. — DW

UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Arab League Council warns of large-scale regional war due to Israeli aggression

NEW YORK: The Arab League Council at the level of foreign ministers warned of the repercussions of escalating the Israeli aggression against Lebanon in light of recent developments, which could lead to the outbreak of a large-scale regional war and threaten the security and stability of the entire region.

This was stated in the statement issued by the Council at the conclusion of its annual consultative meeting held last night on the sidelines of the 79th session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA 79).

The meeting addressed the developments of the brutal war waged by the Israeli entity on Gaza, and the dangerous Israeli escalation against Lebanon.

The Council affirmed full solidarity with Lebanon, its government and people, and its strong condemnation of the escalating Israeli aggression against it, which led to the killing of 357 people and the injury of 1,250 in one day.

The Council emphasized full support for Lebanon in confronting this aggression and holding the Israeli entity responsible for this dangerous escalation.

The Arab foreign ministers agreed on the importance of coordination with the member states of the Islamic group in the coming days in order to send a clear message to the international community on the necessity of stopping the Israeli aggressive war immediately.

G7 warns of potential broader regional conflict

The foreign ministers of the Group of Seven (G7) have warned that escalating tensions in the Middle East could lead to a broader regional conflict that no country would gain from.

Actions and counter-reactions risk magnifying this dangerous spiral of violence and dragging the entire Middle East into a broader regional conflict with unimaginable consequences, the G7 foreign ministers said in a statement after meeting on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly, coinciding with intensified Israeli airstrikes on Lebanon. They called for a stop to the current destructive cycle.

On Monday, Israeli warplanes launched hundreds of airstrikes on areas in southern and eastern Lebanon, leaving 492 dead including 35 children and 58 women and 1,645 injured, according to Lebanon's Ministry of Health. — Agencies

Thousands flee Lebanon as Israeli strikes kill over 550, including 50 children

Health Minister said that some 1,835 have been wounded and that emergency personnel were among the dead, with four paramedics among those killed and 16 paramedics and firefighters were among the wounded

BEIRUT: Lebanon's health minister, Firass Abiad, said the death toll from Israeli strikes on the country's south had climbed to 558, including 50 children and 94 women. Some 1,835 have been wounded, he added. Abiad said that emergency personnel were among the dead, with four paramedics among those killed and 16 paramedics and firefighters were among the wounded.

"The vast majority, if not all, of those killed in yesterday's attacks were unarmed people in their homes," Abiad said.

Thousands in southern Lebanon packed family members and belongings into cars, vans and trucks in a rushed attempt to evacuate their homes.

A Lebanese official coordinating the crisis response told Reuters news agency that 89 temporary shelters in schools and other facilities had been set up, with the capacity for more than 26,000 people as civilians fled.

In the southern port city of Sidon, cars heading north toward Beirut packed the main north-south highway linking the capital with southern communities.

The last time that Lebanon saw such a large wave of displacement was in 2006, when Israel clashed with Hezbollah, causing hundreds of thousands to flee their homes in the south.

Qatar suspends flights to Lebanon

Qatar Airways said on Tuesday that it had suspended flights to Beirut for the day as tensions escalated between Israel and Hezbollah."Due to the ongoing situation in Lebanon, Qatar Airways has temporarily suspended flights to and from Beirut Rafic Hariri International Airport until September 25," the Qatari national carrier said in a statement. "The safety of our passengers remains our highest priority."Last week, Qatar Airways announced a ban on pagers and walkie-talkies on its Beirut flights following the communications device explosions that killed 37 people and wounded thousands over two days.

Lufthansa, Germany's national carrier, and Air France have also suspended or extended their suspension of flights to Beirut in recent days.

World leaders react

World leaders have voiced concerns over the rapid escalation between Israel and Hezbollah. UN chief Antonio Guterres's spokesman said he was "gravely alarmed," and the EU's top diplomat Josep Borrell warned, "We are almost in a full-fledged war."

France and Egypt called on the UN Security Council to intervene, while Iraq requested an urgent meeting of Arab states on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York.A US official said the country is presenting "concrete ideas" at the UN in a bid to ease tensions between Israel and Hezbollah.The official, who spoke to reporters on condition of anonymity, said that Washington and several other nations were keen to present an "off-ramp" for both Israel and Hezbollah to reduce tensions.Meanwhile, China's top diplomat, Wang Yi, expressed support for Lebanon and condemned what he termed "indiscriminate attacks against civilians," Beijing's foreign ministry said on Tuesday.

"We pay close attention to developments in the region, especially the recent explosion of communications equipment in Lebanon, and firmly oppose indiscriminate attacks against civilians," Wang said in New York at the sidelines of the UN General Assembly meeting.

"No matter how the situation changes, we will always stand on the side of justice, on the side of our Arab brothers, including Lebanon," Wang told Lebanon's Foreign Minister Abdallah Bou Habib. — DW

FILES FOR BANKRUPTCY

How Tupperware parties empowered suburban women

MICHIGAN: Karen Watters, from Michigan, was 18 years old, newly married and had a young child when she started selling Tupperware in the 1970s.

"I couldn't even get a credit card back then. The bank wouldn't give it to me even though I was the one working. Those were different times for women," she told DW. Before 1974, married women in the US could not apply for a credit card in their own name.

She hosted gatherings for her friends and acquaintances known as "Tupperware parties," earning a commission for everything she sold. She then used the money to help her husband get through university.

"He was studying electrical engineering, and I bought all of his tools. He got all his stuff from the money I made from selling Tupperware. And we needed the money."

For Watters, like so many other women, selling the sealable plastic containers was a way to help her family get by. The Tupperware party, a new sales approach introduced in the 1950s, empowered thousands of women as they started their own businesses.

The company has now announced its bankruptcy, but that doesn't lessen its relevance to history and how it helped many homemakers become businesswomen.

A major phenomenon

The durable, sealable plastic containers were created by Earl Tupper, a businessman and chemist from New Hampshire who discovered a way to make flexible plastic out of an industrial byproduct that sealed as tightly as a paint can. In 1946, Tupper "had a spark of inspiration while creating molds at a plastics factory," according to the company's website.

But when his containers initially debuted, they didn't catch on as the entrepreneur had hoped. Homemakers were skeptical of the cheap construction and oily texture and confused about the need to "burp" the containers to let out the air so they would seal properly.

It took an army of amateur salespeople, primarily suburban women, to help the brand catch on. Thousands of women in the US, and eventually worldwide, started their own businesses selling the products at home gatherings known as Tupperware parties.

The phenomenon swept across the US and peaked in the 1950s and '60s.

Largely responsible for the success of the Tupperware empire was Brownie Wise, a single mother with little formal education whom Tupper took on as his vice president and head of sales. A marketing genius with a knack for sales, she helped revolutionise the brand with her unique marketing methods.

Stanley Home

Wise had formerly worked for a cleaning product company called Stanley Home. She hosted what the company called "home parties," gatherings of housewives and their friends to sell products. Wise quickly saw a market for Tupperware at such events, too.

Her enlivening product demonstrations, which included fun party games and throwing the containers across the room to show they didn't break, educated buyers about the product along the way.

At the company's Florida headquarters, Wise trained other women in her sales methods, creating handbooks and introducing lavish sales incentives to get more saleswomen on board, and soon the product was taking off.

To encourage their sales force, the company devised creative promotions in which sellers competed for "everything from new electric irons to a trip to Europe with Brownie Wise," as described in an article by US public broadcaster PBS.

By the mid-1950s, Wise was the company's icon and the first woman to be featured on the cover of BusinessWeek magazine.

She also appeared in popular magazines such as Cosmopolitan and Women's Home Journal.

From homemaker to entrepreneur

The socioeconomic conditions of the 1950s were perfect for the success of this marketing strategy. Women who had entered the job market during World War II had been pushed out and were now expected to stay at home with the kids during the baby boom.

Selling Tupperware was a way to make an income for women whose husbands didn't want them to work outside the home — as well as a way for homebound suburban women to escape domestic routines and socialise.

The hostess of a party would invite a Tupperware salesperson to come to their house and in exchange receive free Tupperware products, while the salesperson would earn a commission based on how many products were sold.

Symbolically impacted

Therefore, the Tupperware parties symbolically impacted and embodied the culture of an era on different levels.

They allowed housewives to gain autonomy by becoming consultants, managers and distributors of the product.

The parties felt subversive in a way.

At the same time, the business model reinforced the idea that a woman's actual place was at home.

The end of burping bowls

Despite the narrative of female empowerment behind the rise of the brand — with Brownie Wise celebrated as one of the first women to "lean in" — the story didn't end well for the pioneering businesswoman. She was ousted by the company she helped build in 1958 after a disagreement with Tupper, not even receiving stock.

The same year, Tupper sold the company, calling it Tupperware Home Parties, to Rexall Drug Company for $16 million (€14.3 million) and followed his brand's success from Costa Rica, where he retired.

Indeed, the business model saw the products quickly expand into Europe, Asia and Latin America.

Since then, the brand has continued to primarily be sold the same way, via Tupperware parties, as opposed to brick and mortar shops.

New designs have long been part of the brand strategy: Tupperware has received more than 280 design awards for its product designs and functionality since 1982.

Shrinking profit

Yet, the brand has now filed for bankruptcy, citing a decreased interest in their products and shrinking profit margins. Among other reasons, Tupperware didn't manage to appeal as much to younger consumers.

Still, from cosmetics to sex toys, many other companies have meanwhile adopted the party method to sell products, modeled on Tupperware's success. Amid the rise of the gig economy, independent direct sellers are now flooded with opportunities to choose from: There are 7.3 million in the US as of 2023, according to the Direct Selling Association.

While it may be the end of an era, Tupperware remains embedded in millions of people's lives and woven into the history of the 20th century. — DW

SPORTS

‘Excited to start a new journey’

Oman’s Mohammed Al Naamani embarks on a exciting new chapter in Spain and remains focused on making an impact in La Liga

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Omani football has a new rising star. At just 19 years old, Mohammed Al Naamani has made headlines by signing a one-year deal with Spanish La Liga club Rayo Vallecano on Tuesday.

Once a relatively unknown name, Al Naamani’s sudden breakthrough in Madrid has electrified the Sultanate’s sports world, showcasing the remarkable potential of the young striker who started his journey at Muscat Football Academy (MFA).

Al Naamani, who has been playing in Italy with ASD Genova Calcio, shared his excitement in an exclusive statement to *Times of Oman*: “After six years of experience with different clubs in Italy, I’m very excited to start a new journey with Rayo Vallecano in Spain.

“It’s a dream come true for me, and *Inshallah*, with Allah’s blessings, I hope to see myself playing with the first team and being part of the Oman national team.”

Despite not yet featuring in the national squad, Al Naamani’s signing may now open doors for his inclusion in the Red Warriors under new coach Rasheed Jaber.

Reflecting on his roots, Al Naamani paid tribute to MFA, where his footballing journey began at the age of 8.

“At MFA, I was given ample exposure and plenty of opportunities to participate in tournaments like the Dubai Cup, Portugal Mondalito, Spain Mondalito, and the Man City Cup. These experiences helped me develop and grow as a footballer,” he said.

His former coach Chuck Martini, who always predicted great things for Al Naamani, could not contain his pride.

“It means the world to me to see my students join top-class clubs in the world. Mohammed was special from the very beginning, and today, we are all proud to see him sign with one of the top Spanish La Liga clubs,” said Martini.

Martini reminisced about Al Naamani’s early days at MFA, recalling, “I remember Mohammed as an eight-year-old coming to the academy with his father. A few days into training,

“I could see that this boy was talented and destined for great things. Our coaches worked tirelessly with him, and it’s an incredible feeling to see him join a club like Rayo Vallecano.”

Al Naamani’s trial at Rayo Vallecano spanned three weeks, during which the coaching staff was impressed by his skills, leading to the offer of a professional contract. Martini added, “The hard work starts now for Mohammed as he aims to break into Rayo’s first team. I have no doubt he will succeed and score many goals. He is a goal-machine. It’s a huge moment for him, his family, and for Omani football.”

Rayo Vallecano, a club based in Madrid’s Vallecas neighbourhood, has recently bolstered its squad with the signing of Colombian star James Rodriguez.

Speaking of the club’s rich history, Martini noted, “Rayo Vallecano has seen big names over the years. Now, Mohammed will be part of this exciting chapter. I’m sure this is just the beginning for him.”

With a capacity of 14,700 at Vallecas Stadium, Rayo’s best performance in La Liga came in 2012-13 when they finished eighth. The club’s only European campaign was in 2000-01.

Their most significant title was the 2017-18 Segunda División (Second Division) championship.

However, the club has a history of big names: former English winger Laurie Cunningham played here in the 1980s, as did Austrian forward Toni Polster and Mexican striker Hugo Sánchez in the 1990s.

Current president Raúl Martín Presa has continued that tradition: Rodríguez’s fellow Colombian, Radamel Falcao, played here for the last three seasons.

Presa proudly compared Rodriguez’s arrival to that of Diego Maradona, who was signed by Napoli in 1984. Older Rayo fans will remember Diego’s brother, Hugo, as one of their least successful signings in the late 1980s.

Over the years, legendary players have graced the club’s history, adding prestige to Al Naamani’s new home. As Al Naamani embarks on this exciting new chapter in Spain, he remains focused on making an impact in La Liga and pursuing his dream of representing Oman on the international stage.

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE

WWW.TIMESOFOMAN.COM
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2024

OMAN CRUDE PRICE RISES

The price of Oman oil has increased, with prices for delivery by November 2024 reaching $75.07, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil rose by 71 cents from the price of Monday, which was $74.36. - ONA

MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 4,715.89 points, up by 0.08% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.50% at 428.35 points. Muscat Thread Mill, up 2.94%, was the top gainer while Shell Oman Marketing, down 10.00%, was the top loser.

OQEP to launch 9 IPO roadshows across Oman

These roadshows are scheduled to run from today till 7 October, with an aim to familiarise investors, citizens, and residents with the IPO process and the target groups

MUSCAT: OQ Exploration & Production Company (OQEP) is set to host a series of nine IPO roadshows across various governorates in Oman. The events will be held in partnership with the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), along with the offices of the Governors and Walis.

These roadshows are scheduled to run from Wednesday, 25 September till 7 October 2024, with an aim to familiarise investors, citizens, and residents with the IPO process and the target groups.

Intending to offer up to 25% of its shares, OQEP provides an opportunity for investors to participate in the growth of the company.

The first roadshow will be held on 25 September in the Wilayat of Ibra, North Al Sharqiyah Governorate. Meanwhile, the second event is scheduled on 26 September at the Chamber's branch in the Wilayat of Sohar, North Al Batinah Governorate.

In Dhofar Governorate, the OCCI (Salalah branch) will host the third IPO roadshow on 29 September, while the Ibri branch in Al Dhahirah Governorate will hold the fourth roadshow on 30 September.

Continuing this series, the fifth OQEP IPO roadshow will be conducted in the Wilayat of Nizwa, Al Dakhiliyah Governorate on 1 October, followed by the sixth roadshow event at the OCCI Sur branch on 2 October.

On 3 October, the seventh IPO roadshow will take place in the Wilayat of Rustaq. On 6 October, OQEP will organize the eighth event in the Wilayat of Khasab at OCCI, Musandam. Finally, the OQEP IPO roadshow in Muscat is set for 7 October 2024. - ONA

FIVE-DAY EVENT

China-ASEAN Expo drives economic cooperation

NANNING: Participants at the 21st China-ASEAN Expo, which kicked off on Tuesday in Nanning, south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, emphasised the importance of deepening economic and trade cooperation between the two sides.

The opening ceremony attracted about 1,100 participants, including Chinese and foreign leaders, government officials, entrepreneurs, scholars, and representatives from international organisations.

The theme of this year's expo focuses on "Upholding amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness for common development, creating a diamond crown new future - promoting development of a China-ASEAN Free Trade Area 3.0 and high-quality growth of this region."

Speaking at the opening ceremony, China's Vice Minister of Commerce Li Fei said that the mutually beneficial and win-win cooperation between China and ASEAN countries has reached new levels.

The five-day event covers an exhibition area of nearly 200,000 sq. m, with Malaysia as the country of honour. -Xinhua

ACHIEVEMENT

Omran achieves safety milestone with 58mn safe man hours

Times News Service

MUSCAT: As part of its continuous efforts to become a centre of excellence, the Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran Group) has achieved a significant milestone, reinforcing its strong track record of accomplishments in tourism, hospitality, and real estate development. The company has completed 58 million safe man hours without a single lost time injury or accident.

Eng. Omar Al Kathiri, Director of Development at Omran Group, stated, "We are incredibly proud of this achievement. At Omran Group, the safety of our employees is our top priority, which drives us to enforce stringent health and safety standards. We are dedicated to fostering a culture of health and safety among all our employees and contractors through regular initiatives, risk management, Incident/accident reporting and investigations and training workshops. We applaud our employees' commitment to upholding these vital crucial practices, which has enabled us to reach this historic milestone."

Core set of values

"We have adopted a core set of values that align with international performance standards in sustainability, safety, and occupational health. Our ongoing efforts focus on enhancing the systems, procedures, standards, and policies in these areas to ensure our employees' safety while delivering projects on time and to the highest quality standards," he added.

Achieving this milestone was no small feat. The path to 58 million safe man hours involved overcoming substantial challenges. The company navigated complex project environments, managed diverse teams, and dealt with high-risk activities, all while maintaining rigorous safety protocols. Implementing and enforcing comprehensive safety measures across varied projects required meticulous planning, constant vigilance, and an unwavering commitment to the highest standards of safety.

Omran Group has an impressive track record of achievements across various sustainability pillars. Notably, six of its projects have been awarded the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification by the U.S. Green Building Council.

This accolade demonstrates the Group's commitment to integrating sustainability standards into its construction practices and underscores its dedication to maintaining a safe and healthy work environment for its employees.

CONTACTLESS PAYMENT

NBO, Muzn to launch Apple Pay for customers

MUSCAT: National Bank of Oman (NBO) and Muzn Islamic Banking will launch for its customers Apple Pay today, a safer, more secure and private way to pay that helps customers avoid handing their payment card to someone else, touching physical buttons or exchanging cash — and uses the power of iPhone to protect every transaction.

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

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

Security and privacy are at the core of Apple Pay. When customers use a credit or debit card with Apple Pay, the actual card numbers are not stored on the device nor on Apple servers. Instead, a unique Device Account Number is assigned, encrypted, and securely stored in the Secure Element, an industry-standard, certified chip designed to store the payment information safely on the device.

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

SECURE PAYMENT

Sohar International brings Apple Pay to customers in Oman

MUSCAT: Sohar International, Oman's best bank, today brings its customers Apple Pay, a safer, more secure and private way to pay that helps customers avoid handing their payment card to someone else, touching physical buttons or exchanging cash — and uses the power of iPhone to protect every transaction.

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

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

Security and privacy are at the core of Apple Pay. When customers use a credit or debit card with Apple Pay, the actual card numbers are not stored on the device, nor on Apple servers. Instead, a unique Device Account Number is assigned, encrypted, and securely stored in the Secure Element, an industry-standard, certified chip designed to store the payment information safely on the device.

Apple Pay is easy to set up. On iPhone, simply open the Wallet app, tap +, and follow the steps to add Sohar International's credit, debit or prepaid cards. Once a customer adds a card to iPhone, Apple Watch, iPad, and Mac, they can start using Apple Pay on that device right away.

INDIA'S STOCK MARKET

Sensex touches 85,000 mark, Nifty 26,000 amid global policy rate cuts

NEW DELHI: Stock indices in India continued to rally amid rate cuts globally, touching fresh highs on Tuesday. Sensex breached 85,000 and Nifty crossed 26,000.

Sensex closed the day at 84,914.04 points, down 14.57 points or 0.017 per cent, while Nifty closed at 25,940.40 points, up just 1.35 points or 0.0052 per cent. Among the sectoral indices, Nifty metal was the top mover at 2.97 per cent.

"...for the rally to continue, the Nifty must decisively break above the 26,000 level. Until then, we expect range-bound movement, with the index fluctuating between 25,800 and 26,000 over the next few hours to a few days," said Rupak De, Senior Technical Analyst, LKP Securities.

US Federal Reserve's monetary policy committee loosening interest rate by steep 50 basis points, in particular, lent fresh support to Indian stocks.

Loosening monetary policy in the US through rate cuts typically leads to flight of capital to markets where policy rates are high. The steeper the rate cut in the US, the more the tendency of flight of capitals to alternative investment destinations, including India.

Continued buying by foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) also somewhat supported the stock indices. Foreign portfolio investors upped their investments in India, hoping for a better return on investments due to the interest rate differentials.

They have so far mopped up Rs 48,872 worth of stocks in India in September, data made available by NSDL showed. They have been net buyers for the fourth month now.

In the absence of domestic cues, the markets are likely to mirror trends in the global indices going ahead. -ANI

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Muscat Thread Mill, up 2.94%, was the top gainer while Shell Oman Marketing, down 10.00%, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,715.89 points, up by 0.08% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.50% at 428.35 points. Muscat Thread Mill, up 2.94%, was the top gainer while Shell Oman Marketing, down 10.00%, was the top loser. Shares of OQGN were the most active in terms of number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 622 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of RO 2.33 million, with more than 15.34 million shares changing hands. Out of 43 traded securities, 12 advanced, 12 declined, and 19 remained unchanged. At the session close, domestic investors were net sellers for RO 834K while foreign investors were net buyers for RO 730K, followed by GCC & Arab investors for RO 104K worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,720.65 points, up 0.09%. Prices of Bank Nizwa, Sohar International Bank, Bank Muscat were up by 0.95%, 0.73%, 0.39% respectively. Prices of Oman Arab Bank, Ominvest were down by 0.68%, 0.56% respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,674.05 points, up 0.09%. Prices of Muscat Thread Mill, Oman Chromite, Galfar Engineering were up by 2.94%, 2.90%, 0.81% respectively. Prices of Oman Chlorine, Al Anwar Ceramics, Oman Cement were down by 7.71%, 0.60%, 0.26% respectively.

Services Index was down by 0.23% before closing at 1,819.56 points. Prices of Al Batinah Power, Al Suwadi Power, Al Jazeera Services, Oman Telecom were up by 1.33%, 1.32%, 0.50%, 0.50% respectively. Prices of Shell Oman Marketing, SMN Power Holding, National Gas, Musandam Power, Dhofar Generating were down by 10.00%, 4.57%, 2.35%, 2.22%, 1.56% respectively. — United Securities

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	4,716.81	4,703.09	4,715.89	4,711.96	3.92	0.08
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,721.06	7,707.41	7,720.65	7,713.87	6.78	0.09
Industry Index	5,680.91	5,651.82	5,674.05	5,669.21	4.84	0.09
Services Index	1,824.11	1,815.98	1,819.56	1,823.76	-4.20	-0.23
MSX Shariah Index	428.60	425.64	428.35	426.20	2.15	0.50
MSX TR INDEX	6,555.63	6,536.55	6,554.34	6,548.89	5.45	0.08
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,771.92	8,756.41	8,771.45	8,763.75	7.70	0.09
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	6,554.42	6,520.86	6,546.51	6,540.93	5.58	0.09
SERVICES TR IDX	2,122.64	2,113.18	2,117.34	2,122.22	-4.89	-0.23
FIXED INCOME INDEX	1,069.10	1,069.10	1,069.10	1,069.10	0.00	0.00

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
15,348,617	2,325,441	622	24,566,130,713	12	12	19	43

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24

REGULAR MARKET

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RO)	DIFF %	LAST PR.	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	549,540	41,216	19	0.075	0.076	0.075	0.076	0.075	0.001	1.333	0.076	0.072	0.080	0.100	51,291,445
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	1,128,710	86,895	45	0.076	0.077	0.076	0.077	0.076	0.001	1.316	0.077	0.076	0.082	0.100	55,009,288
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	3,178,427	439,457	25	0.138	0.139	0.138	0.139	0.138	0.001	0.725	0.139	0.138	0.139	0.100	775,237,232
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	13,490	13,422	7	0.997	1.000	0.994	1.000	0.995	0.005	0.503	1.000	0.997	1.000	0.100	750,000,000
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	1,786,139	460,824	19	0.258	0.258	0.258	0.258	0.257	0.001	0.389	0.258	0.257	0.258	0.100	1,936,650,442
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	21,055	5,895	2	0.280	0.280	0.280	0.280	0.280	0.000	0.000	0.280	0.275	0.280	0.100	455,264,979
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIYA INVESTMENT HO.	85,000	6,035	4	0.071	0.071	0.071	0.071	0.071	0.000	0.000	0.071	0.071	0.072	0.100	6,390,000
OM0000002804	ASAFFA FOODS	402	149	1	0.371	0.371	0.371	0.371	0.371	0.000	0.000	0.371	0.345	0.000	0.100	44,520,000
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	25,215	7,060	10	0.280	0.280	0.280	0.280	0.280	0.000	0.000	0.280	0.279	0.280	0.100	182,264,384
OM0000004735	SEMBCORP SALALAH	148,100	16,147	23	0.109	0.110	0.109	0.109	0.109	0.000	0.000	0.109	0.104	0.109	0.100	104,048,343
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	115,992	8,960	15	0.077	0.078	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.000	0.000	0.077	0.077	0.078	0.100	13,475,000
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	223,283	65,861	22	0.295	0.295	0.294	0.295	0.295	0.000	0.000	0.295	0.294	0.295	0.100	227,209,000
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	1,579	613	2	0.388	0.388	0.388	0.388	0.389	-0.001	-0.257	0.388	0.388	0.388	0.100	128,378,611
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	8,728	3,399	6	0.395	0.395	0.388	0.388	0.390	-0.002	-0.513	0.388	0.388	0.388	0.100	91,727,080
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	59,530	21,423	16	0.360	0.360	0.358	0.358	0.360	-0.002	-0.556	0.358	0.330	0.360	0.100	239,274,823
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	301,000	48,167	2	0.160	0.167	0.160	0.167	0.168	-0.001	-0.595	0.167	0.160	0.165	0.100	36,740,000
OM0000009072	OQ GAS NETWORKS	5,950,306	858,177	236	0.144	0.145	0.143	0.144	0.145	-0.001	-0.690	0.143	0.143	0.144	0.100	623,609,844
OM0000007811	MUSANDAM POWER	1,000	264	1	0.264	0.264	0.264	0.264	0.270	-0.006	-2.222	0.264	0.260	0.000	0.100	18,582,960
OM0000002275	SHELL OMAN MARKETING	125	90	1	0.720	0.720	0.720	0.720	0.800	-0.080	-10.000	0.720	0.720	0.800	0.100	68,400,000
Total	19	13,597,621	2,084,053	456												

Parallel Market

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RO)	DIFF %	LAST PR.	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
OM0000002036	MUSCAT THREAD MILLS	91,100	9,576	7	0.105	0.107	0.105	0.105	0.102	0.003	2.941	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.100	1,721,381
OM0000001020	OMAN CHROMITE	11,055	38,595	21	3.450	3.550	3.400	3.550	3.450	0.100	2.899	3.550	3.550	3.620	1.000	11,715,000
OM0000007910	AMAN REAL ESTATE	35,814	3,331	4	0.093	0.093	0.093	0.093	0.091	0.002	2.198	0.093	0.091	0.093	0.100	18,600,000
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	57,500	3,749	7	0.065	0.066	0.065	0.066	0.065	0.001	1.538	0.066	0.064	0.066	0.100	32,395,201
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	527,755	55,419	13	0.105	0.106	0.105	0.106	0.105	0.001	0.952	0.106	0.105	0.106	0.100	237,117,021
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	330,527	40,695	25	0.122	0.125	0.122	0.124	0.123	0.001	0.813	0.124	0.123	0.124	0.100	25,170,319
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	1,500	305	2	0.203	0.203	0.203	0.203	0.202	0.001	0.495	0.203	0.190	0.202	0.100	12,424,467
OM0000001301	DHOFAR FOODS AND INVESTMENT	50,000	3,150	2	0.063	0.063	0.063	0.063	0.063	0.000	0.000	0.063	0.000	0.063	0.100	12,453,646
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	11,250	30,375	3	2.700	2.750	2.700	2.750	2.750	0.000	0.000	2.750	2.500	2.700	0.100	246,675,000
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	24,600	1,845	1	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.000	0.000	0.075	0.074	0.077	0.100	15,913,500
OM0000001897	MAJAN COLLEGE	10,003	1,070	2	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.000	0.000	0.107	0.107	0.115	0.100	9,630,000
OM0000003000	Al MAHA PETROLEUM PRODUCTS MARKETING	300	315	1	1.050	1.050	1.050	1.050	1.050	0.000	0.000	1.050	1.050	1.150	0.100	72,450,000
OM0000003265	NATIONAL DETERGENT	3,405	2,043	5	0.600	0.600	0.600	0.600	0.600	0.000	0.000	0.600	0.600	0.600	0.100	12,000,000
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	1,271	465	3	0.366	0.366	0.366	0.366	0.366	0.000	0.000	0.366	0.366	0.369	0.100	29,793,407
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	214,900	12,464	16	0.058	0.058	0.057	0.058	0.058	0.000	0.000	0.058	0.057	0.058	0.100	84,830,885
OM0000005260	OMAN ARAB BANK	1,315	193	1	0.147	0.147	0.147	0.147	0.148	-0.001	-0.676	0.147	0.147	0.151	0.100	245,403,270
OM0000007407	DHOFAR GENERATING	108,600	6,743	13	0.064	0.064	0.061	0.063	0.064	-0.001	-1.563	0.063	0.061	0.065	0.100	14,001,120
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	208,489	17,364	28	0.085	0.085	0.083	0.083	0.085	-0.002	-2.353	0.083	0.083	0.083	0.100	7,055,000
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	2,500	783	2	0.313	0.313	0.313	0.313	0.328	-0.015	-4.573	0.313	0.313	0.318	0.100	62,485,943
OM0000002341	OMAN CHLORINE	10,000	3,950	1	0.395	0.395	0.395	0.395	0.428	-0.033	-7.710	0.395	0.000	0.395	0.100	28,245,992
Total	20	1,701,884	232,429	157												

LARSEN & TOUBRO

L&T wins new orders in Saudi Arabia, UAE

DUBAI: The Power Transmission & Distribution (PT&D) vertical of Larsen & Toubro has won new orders in the Middle East for expanding and strengthening the electricity grids at high voltage levels.

The different operating regions in Saudi Arabia's national electricity network are being interconnected through High Voltage Direct Current links that enable exchange of power between regions and enhanced system resilience. L&T has secured orders to establish ±500kV HVDC Transmission Links associated with these interconnections.

L&T has also won orders for three more packages involving two 380kV overhead transmission lines and a bulk supply 380kV Gas Insulated Substation. These elements contribute significantly to the renewable generation interconnection and fortification of the grid.

In Abu Dhabi, L&T has received an order to build two major 400kV Gas Insulated Substations.

In addition to civil works, the scope also involves Series Current Limiting Reactors, Auto Transformers, related control, protection, substation monitoring & alarm systems including fault and power quality monitoring, telecommunication systems and integration with the Load Dispatch Centre. These substations will enhance the power transfer capacity of the electricity grid.

SINGAPORE'S DIGITAL ASSET EXCHANGE

SDAX secures $50mn in series B2 funding led by Oman's Muscat Precious Metals Refining Company

"We look forward to deepening our partnership with SDAX by developing capabilities in Oman to provide companies in the GCC with an alternative source of funds, and to building a strong investor base in the region

Nick Cochrane
Dyet MBE of MPMR and Chair-designate of SDAX

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Singapore's Digital Asset Exchange (SDAX), announced the successful closing of its $50 million Series B2 funding round led by the Oman-based Muscat Precious Metals Refining Company ("MPMR").

MPMR is incorporated in the Sultanate of Oman led by CEO, Shihab Al Busaidi.

Oman's first and to date, sole licensed gold refinery, MPMR specialises in the smelting, refining, testing, trading and minting of precious metals such as gold, silver, platinum and palladium. It refines approximately 40 tons of gold annually.

With years of experience, it plays a vital role in the pioneering, development and improvement of many industry standards in Oman, setting new benchmarks through the on-going integration of industry-leading technologies and the knowledge and skill sets of a highly specialised and dedicated team.

In April this year, SDAX teamed up with MPMR to securitize Gold Tokens on the SDAX Exchange platform, empowering investors with access to private markets and alternative investment opportunities. First of their kind, these tokens offer investors fractional gold investments and trading, backed by physical gold bullion held at Le Freeport in Singapore. Following this, SDAX has issued a popular series of short-term gold-backed loan notes offering investors double-digit yields.

Brimming with confidence, Nick Cochrane - Dyet MBE of MPMR and Chair-designate of SDAX says, "After more than a year of working with SDAX, the results of our partnership have demonstrated the potential SDAX has to offer in democratizing investments for financial inclusion. We look forward to deepening our partnership with SDAX by developing capabilities in Oman to provide companies in the GCC with an alternative source of funds, and to building a strong investor base in the region."

Rachel Chia, Chief Executive Officer of SDAX, said, "The successful Series B2 funding round is a testament to SDAX's commitment to democratise access to institutional-grade private markets and alternative investments. We value the continued support of our current investors, and welcome both our new shareholders MPMR and the business potential that this new partnership brings. We are particularly excited about the opportunity to expand into the GCC region."

Regional expansion is another priority for SDAX, as is the launch of a digital asset exchange in Oman. This platform will not only provide a strategic gateway to the GCC and Africa but will also connect Oman to liquidity pools globally.

Oman continues to implement economic plans, and financial and investment programmes within the framework of the 10th Five-year plan (2021-2025), guided by the priorities of Oman Vision 2040. The outcomes of these plans have contributed to enhancing GDP growth, raising financial and economic indicators, improving credit ratings, and achieving some financial surpluses that were directed to economic and social priorities.

LIFESTYLE

Study finds new target for treating heart failure

AS SOCIETY AGES, the number of patients suffering from heart failure grows significantly. Fibrosis, or excessive growth of fibrotic tissue in the heart, has been linked to the advancement of heart failure. A group from Nagoya University Graduate School of Medicine in Japan discovered an enzyme called protein kinase N (PKN) that controls cardiac fibrosis.

The enzyme converts heart fibroblasts to myofibroblasts, putting the heart's integrity at risk. Deleting this enzyme reduced ventricular dysfunction, indicating that anti-PKN therapies are a prospective therapy for protecting patients from heart failure.

The findings were published in Nature Communications. The heart maintains its integrity by the usage of tiny cells known as fibroblasts, which are frequently transformed into myofibroblasts following damage. Myofibroblasts promote wound healing by creating fibrous connective tissues like collagen and elastin. However, in heart failure patients, they frequently cause extra tissue to collect, resulting in hardening of heart tissue and reduced function, a disease known as fibrosis.

This process reduces the integrity of the heart's structure, increasing the risk of a heart attack.

The enzyme PKN has been implicated in a signaling cascade that causes heart fibroblast activation. A group led by Drs. Satoya Yoshida, Mikito Takefuji, and Toyoaki Murohara in the Department of Cardiology at the Nagoya University Graduate School of Medicine suspected the involvement of PKN in the changes of fibroblasts to myofibroblasts seen in fibrosis.

In collaboration with colleagues at the Max Planck Institute, they investigated its role.

In mammal cells, there are three forms of PKN: PKN1, 2, and 3. Using RNA-sequencing data, they identified PKN1 and 2 in heart fibroblasts. The study used mice raised without PKN1 and PKN2. It found that although heart function remained unaffected, there was a notable decrease in actin and collagen expression in the myocardial infarction and heart failure model. These proteins are essential components responsible for the tissue buildup observed in fibrosis.

They also found that mice with suppressed PKN1 and 2 did not show conversion of fibroblasts to myofibroblasts. "Although our study was done in a mouse model, PKN expression has been demonstrated in human heart fibroblasts, so similar results are expected in human trials," Dr. Yoshida said.

"In fact, almost all heart diseases are closely related to heart fibrosis. I believe our findings contribute to improving the prognosis of many heart diseases, especially heart failure." – ANI

SPORTS

'I prefer facts to words'

Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta on 'dark arts' claims by Man City players after Sunday's 2-2 draw in their Premier League game

LONDON: Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta on Tuesday said his side's tactics in Sunday's 2-2 draw against Manchester City were "normal".

The Gunners conceded a 98th-minute equaliser at Etihad Stadium, having been reduced to 10 men following Leandro Trossard sending off in first-half stoppage time.

Arsenal were accused of time-wasting against City, with John Stones and Kyle Walker saying the Gunners used the "dark arts" while protecting their 2-1 lead.

But Arteta says his team had little option but to defend deeply, given City's numerical advantage, referencing a moment in the first half when Guardiola's side were down to 10 following Rodri's injury.

"Well, we had to play the game that we had to play. The first 15 minutes, we couldn't. They [City] played 30 seconds with 10 men. Look what they did. It's normal what they did," said Arteta.

"Unfortunately we've been in the same situation. We were in that same situation with Granit [Xhaka] when we lost 5-0 [in 2021]. So we'd better learn. If not I would be very thick."

David Raya, Jurrien Timber, Riccardo Calafiori and Gabriel Martinelli all went down with cramps during the second half at the Etihad, leading to accusations of time-wasting. But Arteta says the Gunners will be without injured players for Wednesday's EFL Cup tie against Bolton.

"I always prefer the facts to words, or supposing things," said Arteta.

"Let's see who's available tomorrow and then we can talk about dark arts or these things.

"Unfortunately, yes, there will be a few players not available."

Asked if any of the injuries sustained against City were serious, Arteta said: "We have to wait. One of them."

Trossard's second booking at the Etihad came after he kicked the ball away following a foul on Bernardo Silva.

It was the second time this season that an Arsenal player has been sent off for such an offence, following Declan Rice's dismissal against Brighton in August.

Asked if he needs to warn his players about the rule, Arteta said: "For passing the ball [away] you mean? I think so... just leave the ball, don't touch the ball. We play without the ball." - Agencies

BOXING

IBF champ Dubois' promoter wants him to fight Usyk next

LONDON: IBF heavyweight champion Daniel Dubois has "all the tools" to take over the division, says his promoter Frank Warren.

Following his stunning five-round world title demolition of fellow Briton Anthony Joshua on Saturday, Warren wants Dubois to face WBO, WBA and WBC champion Oleksandr Usyk in a rematch next.

Dubois fought Usyk in August 2023, with the Ukrainian winning via a ninth-round stoppage.

Dubois, 27, was elevated to IBF champion after Usyk vacated the belt in June, just weeks after beating Tyson Fury to become the first undisputed heavyweight boxing champion in 25 years.

"The fight I would like to see him in now is Usyk again," Warren told BBC 5 Live. "He is a different Daniel Dubois, he is more mature physically and mentally.

"He will go from strength to strength. He will be here for a while, he is a young man and has all the tools to take this division over. "There is a clause [for a rematch with Joshua] in his contract but not in ours. But that's not to say we wouldn't do it. It's something we'll sit down and discuss."

Usyk was ringside at Wembley, taking a brief break from his training camp as he prepares for a rematch with Fury on December 21.

There was controversy in the fifth round when Dubois and Usyk met in 2023.

The Brit sent Usyk to the canvas, but it was ruled a low blow by the referee, with Usyk given almost four minutes to recover.

"Dubois lost his composure [after the incident]," said Warren. "I think that was down to the fact he was a bit younger and he probably did not have the ring savviness to deal with it. "But now he is a different guy altogether, as you saw on Saturday night."

Joshua has reiterated that he has no plans to retire despite the devastating nature of the defeat.

"We came up short but we have to look at the positives, that has to be the mindset," Joshua, 34, said in a video posted on social media, external.

"Look at what we have achieved over 11 years. It has been phenomenal. "What a rollercoaster journey - but it is far from over.

"I've got a lot more to bring to the game and long may it continue." - Agencies

TENNIS

Nadal included in Spain squad for Davis Cup finals

MADRID: Rafael Nadal has been included in Spain's squad for the Davis Cup Final Eight in November. The former world No.1, 38, has been added alongside world No.3 Carlos Alcaraz, Roberto Bautista Agut, Pablo Carreno Busta and Marcel Granollers. Nadal has not competed since the Paris 2024 Olympics, where the 22-time Grand Slam champion was beaten in the singles by Novak Djokovic and lost in the quarter-finals of the doubles after partnering Alcaraz.

He withdrew from the US Open in August and last weekend's Laver Cup because of fitness concerns.

Six-time champions Spain, whose most recent success came in 2019, face Netherlands in the quarter-finals, starting on November 19. Nadal missed the US Open because he said he would not "be

able to give my 100% at this time".

He then pulled out of the Laver Cup earlier in September, saying he believed there are "other players who can help the team deliver the win". Nadal also missed the Australian Open in January through injury and decided not to play Wimbledon to focus on the Olympics.

He previously hinted at retirement later this year, but said before the French Open he was not "100%" certain that would be the last time he played at Roland Garros. The Davis Cup quarter-finals take place November 19-21, with the semi-finals following on consecutive days before the final on Sunday, November 24. Reigning world No.1 Jannik Sinner is set to lead defending champions Italy, who will seek to become the first team to retain the title since 2013.

LA LIGA

Barcelona's Ter Stegen has successful knee surgery

BARCELONA: Barcelona goalkeeper and captain Marc-Andre ter Stegen had successful knee surgery on Monday after suffering a ruptured patella tendon during Sunday's La Liga victory against Villarreal. The Germany international was carried off on a stretcher during the first half after his right knee buckled as he landed while catching the ball.

No timescale has yet been put on the 32-year-old's recovery but it has been reported in Spanish media that Ter Stegen could miss at least seven months.

"The player is unavailable for selection and his recovery will dictate his return," the club said.

Ter Stegen has made more than 400 appearances for the club since joining from Borussia Monchengladbach in 2014.

Hansi Flick's side beat Villarreal 5-1 to maintain their 100% record in La Liga and move four points clear of Real Madrid at the top of the table. - Agencies

NEW DELHI TO BE THE VENUE

India to host Germany for two-match bilateral hockey series in October

NEW DELHI: Hockey India (HI) has announced a highly anticipated two-match bilateral men's hockey series between India and Germany, set to take place in October 2024.

The last time India faced Germany was in the semi-final of the Paris 2024 Olympics, where the European giants emerged victorious with a 3-2 win.

The two matches will be played on October 23 and 24 at the iconic Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium, in the national capital.

Hockey India President Dilip Tirkey expressed his enthusiasm and said, "This bilateral series against Germany will be a remarkable showcase of world-class hockey. Both India and Germany have a rich history in the sport, and this series will give fans an opportunity to witness an intense competition between two of the most formidable teams in the world.

"We are honoured to host this event, which will not only promote the spirit of hockey but also strengthen the bond between the two nations."

HI Secretary General Bhola Nath Singh feels both teams will have a chance to fine tune their skills for future international tournaments.

"The India-Germany hockey rivalry has always been a thrilling contest. Our players are eager to compete against such a good side, and I believe this series will offer both teams a chance to fine-tune their skills and strategies ahead of future international tournaments. We are proud to be part of this Indo-German collaboration, which brings together not just business and diplomacy but also the love of sport," Bhola Nath said.

President of the German Hockey Federation, Henning Fastrich, is seeing the bilateral series as an opportunity to strengthen the sporting ties between Germany and India.

"India has always been a special place for hockey, and our team is excited to play in front of passionate Indian hockey fans. This series will be a fantastic opportunity to strengthen the sporting ties between Germany and India while offering both teams a competitive platform to prepare for upcoming global events. We look forward to the challenge and the experience of playing at the historic Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium," Henning said. - ANI

ROUND-UP

Bank Muscat celebrates inauguration of 300 olive tree-planting initiative

This is part of the bank's CSR sustainable efforts, which aim to serve the community and foster Oman's economic growth by launching projects with long-term ecological, social, and economic impact

"We are delighted to witness the launch of the 300-olive-tree planting initiative in Al Manakhir village, Jabal Al Akhdhar. This project will benefit the village's residents by leveraging the returns realised. Bank Muscat will continue to undertake such efforts, partnering with different institutions, to promote ecologically sustainable practices, which will contribute to the in-country value

Talib Saif Al Makhmari
Head of Community & Media Relations, Bank Muscat

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial service provider in the Sultanate of Oman, celebrated the inauguration of the 300-olive-tree planting initiative in the village of Al Manakhir, Jabal Al Akhdhar.

This is part of the bank's CSR sustainable efforts, which aim to serve the community and foster the Sultanate's economic growth by launching projects with long-term ecological, social, and economic impact.

Speaking on the occasion, Talib Saif Al Makhmari, Head of Community & Media Relations, Bank Muscat, said: "We are delighted to witness the launch of the 300-olive-tree planting initiative in Al Manakhir village, Jabal Al Akhdhar. The project is part of Bank Muscat's CSR sustainable initiatives, which aim to serve the community and foster the Sultanate of Oman's economic growth by launching projects that have a positive ecological, social, and financial impact.

"Jabal Al Akhdhar is a popular tourist attraction and agricultural area in the Sultanate, with a temperate climate conducive to agricultural endeavours. This project will benefit the village's residents by leveraging the returns realised. Bank Muscat will continue to undertake such efforts, partnering with different institutions, to promote ecologically sustainable practices, which will contribute to the in-country value."

Supporting community

The bank is committed to supporting the community in a variety of sectors that have a significant social impact, such as education, youth, sports, health, SMEs, and environment. As part of its CSR initiatives, the Bank executes various sustainable programmes including Green Sports, Tadhamun and Al Wathbah Academy for small and medium enterprises. Previously, theBank worked with a number of institutions to complete development projects, including the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for the old village of Misfat al Abriyeen in Al Hamraand Muscat Municipality for Al Khoudh Park project in Seeb. Bank Muscat has earlier implemented a number of programmes focusing on financial literacy, including Maliyat programme and Maliyat Academy in partnership with the Ministry of Education.

Action plan

Bank Muscat also undertakes an action plan to maximise prospects for economic competitiveness as well as enable growth and development in accordance with Oman Vision 2040. As a leading financial institution, the Bank works relentlessly to maintain sustainability in its varied activities while also serving the Omani community through annual programmes that emphasise the importance of sustainability in ensuring a better future for all.

It is a matter of great pride that the Bank has been well recognised both locally and internationally for its sustainability practices. This year, it was recognised at the Oman Sustainability Week Awardsand received Euromoney's Best Bank CSR Award.

THIRD SHOWROOM

Filters International all set to open new showroom tomorrow

MUSCAT: Filters International Sultanate of Oman, a division of Care n Cure Group, Qatar, announces the grand opening of a new showroom in the exotic land of green landscapes and hilly wonders - Salalah, Sultanate of Oman.

The new showroom will be located at Salalah Sanaiya, Sultanate of Oman and will officially open its doors to the public on September 26 at 5.30 pm with dignitaries and officials from MOD, Dhofar Municipality and Royal Oman Police participating in this grand opening. The Chairman of Dhofar Municipality and Chief of Police would be the honoured dignitaries.

A huge outlay of OMR400,000 is being set aside as investment, and the client list includes MOD, Royal Oman Police, Dhofar municipality and large business enterprises to name some. The Chairman of Dhofar Municipality and Chief of Police would be the honoured dignitaries.

Filters International, a division of Care n Cure group of Companies, a leading business enterprise in Qatar, delivering quality products and services across a range of sectors. Scaled numerous heights and earned a reputation for a dynamic and customer-centric approach. After firmly establishing itself in the country's healthcare sector, Care n Cure has continued its impressive rise by expanding into FMCG, Technical, Engineering, and Telecom services as well.

Having commenced its business operations eight years ago with two showrooms in Ghala and Misfa region Oman, Filters International has reached another strategic milestone in the grand opening of the 3rd new showroom in Salalah, given its growth and expansion plans. An established wholesale and retail dealer providing Filtration solutions, Pneumatic components , Hoses and fittings in the Gulf countries – Qatar, UAE, KSA and Sultanate of Oman.

Abdurahiman E.P. - Founder & Chairman of Care n Cure commented "We are thrilled and confident with this strategic association, to expand our presence to Salalah, Sultanate of Oman, and to become a part of this vibrant Community. An ever-changing business environment possesses many challenges. As time moves forward and the world runs towards development, people are becoming more demanding and sophisticated. As the competition in the market intensifies with each day, we are always ready to take on new challenges. Our team has worked tirelessly to bring a wide range of high-quality products and exceptional customer service extended to this region.

Saleem Babu, General Manager, Filters International added "a 100 % Indian owned enterprise, Filters International , the new showroom will feature an extensive selection of all types of Filters, Hose/Hose fittings & ampPneumatic components. Filters International is an exclusive distributor of major brands like Sakura Filters (Japan), HIFI Filters (France), FILTON(Malaysia), API Pneumatics , Dunlop Hiflex – Alfagomma group hoses & Rexflow hoses (China) in Oman region. In addition to an array of diversified product ranges, customers can expect excellent service, technical solutions, and stock availability at very competitive prices."

Saleem , general manager of hydrocare group added, " As the competition in the market intensifies with each day, we are always ready to take on new challenges. On this historic occasion, we would like to invite the entire community to join us to celebrate this milestone with us".

INNOVATIVE MEDICAL CARE

Aster Royal Al Raffah Hospital introduces advanced third space endoscopy procedures to treat gastrointestinal disorders in Oman

MUSCAT: Aster Royal Al Raffah Hospital, Muscat, Oman, part of GCC's leading integrated healthcare provider Aster DM Healthcare, has recently introduced cutting-edge third space endoscopy services, solidifying its reputation as a leader in innovative medical care in Oman and the GCC region.

As the first private hospital in Oman to offer these services, Aster Royal Al Raffah Hospital expands its capabilities, ensuring local access to advanced medical treatments.

The 175-bed multispecialty tertiary care facility, spanning 25,750 square meters, now offers Third Space Endoscopy procedures, including Per Oral Endoscopic Myotomy (POEM), Endoscopic Full-Thickness Resection (EFTR), Endoscopic Submucosal Dissection (ESD), and Submucosal Tunneling Endoscopic Resection (STER). These minimally invasive procedures, previously unavailable in Oman, mark a new era in gastroenterological care, providing efficient and effective treatments for various GI disorders. They provide alternatives with reduced recovery times, lower risks of complications, and improved clinical outcomes, resulting in shorter hospital stays.

One remarkable case involved a 19-year-old female patient suffering from a swallowing disorder affecting the esophagus (achalasia). Despite undergoing several endoscopic treatments, she continued to struggle with swallowing, which significantly impacted her daily activities and quality of life. She underwent the POEM procedure, which was completed in under 60 minutes. The following morning, she was able to start oral intake and reported being symptom-free at her four-week follow-up, significantly transforming her quality of life.

Another case involved a 52-year-old male with progressively worsening swallowing problems (dysphagia) due to the same disorder (achalasia). This condition had a significant impact on his life. The POEM procedure provided significant relief, demonstrating the effectiveness of this innovative technique. The success of these procedures underscores the hospital's commitment to delivering patient-centered care and addressing complex medical conditions with cutting-edge technology.

Dr. Ashik Sainu Mohiyadeen, Senior Consultant, Gastroenterologist Hepatologist & Therapeutic Endoscopist at Aster Royal Al Raffah Hospital, leads the team providing these advanced procedures. He expressed his enthusiasm, stating, "We are excited to bring these novel techniques to the GCC, offering minimally invasive solutions for GI disorders that were previously managed through more invasive surgical methods. Our comprehensive Third Space Endoscopy program, aimed at enhancing diagnostic and therapeutic capabilities, is designed to improve patient outcomes and elevate the quality of care."

Third Space Endoscopy, also known as Submucosal Endoscopy, allows endoscopists to access the deeper layers of the gastrointestinal tract without damaging the outer layer. This approach has expanded the scope of interventional endoscopy, enabling the treatment of various GI conditions that were previously managed through more invasive surgical methods.

In particular, the Submucosal Tunneling Endoscopic Resection (STER) technique involves creating a submucosal tunnel to serve as a working space for endoscope insertion and tumor resection. This procedure is especially useful for submucosal lesions such as gastrointestinal stromal tumors (GIST), non-cancerous fat tissue growths (lipomas), hormone-producing cell tumors (neuroendocrine tumors), and non-cancerous smooth muscle tumors (leiomyomas), offering a less invasive option compared to traditional surgical methods.

Endoscopic Submucosal Dissection (ESD) is another advanced technique used to remove larger polyps or early-stage tumors from the digestive tract. This minimally invasive procedure allows for the removal of the entire lesion in one piece, which aids in accurate diagnosis and can potentially cure certain types of early cancers, such as adenocarcinoma.

Part of the 'Treat in Oman' initiative, this program aims to enhance healthcare accessibility by educating residents about the local availability of world-class medical services, reducing the need for international travel.

Shailesh Guntu, Chief Executive Officer, Aster Hospitals and Clinics, Oman, shared his insights on this significant development, saying, "Our dedication to innovation and excellence in healthcare is unwavering. The introduction of Third Space Endoscopy services at Aster Royal Al Raffah Hospital is a testament to our commitment to providing the best possible care to our patients. We are proud to be the first private hospital in Oman to offer these advanced procedures and look forward to continuing to set new standards in medical care."

Since its inception in 2011, Aster Royal Al Raffah Hospital's Department of Gastroenterology has exemplified medical excellence, earning recognition as a Center of Excellence in 2013 and establishing itself as a leading gastrointestinal unit in the country. The recent introduction of Third Space Endoscopy services underscores the hospital's dedication to pioneering advancements and delivering superior medical care. This initiative not only enhances the hospital's capabilities but also positions Oman as a hub for innovative gastroenterological care in the GCC region, drawing patients seeking top-tier medical treatment.

ROUND-UP

Experience style and comfort with Lexus crossover SUV NX

Based on the Tazuna concept for the driver's cockpit, the NX is a perfect blend of tradition and modernity

MUSCAT: Explore horizons and navigate cityscapes with unmatched luxury offered by Lexus' crossover SUV, the NX. Boasting world-class comfort and sublime details, this Lexus offers unprecedented experiences. Upgrade your lifestyle this season and take control of the roads.

At first look, donning the F sport badge, the Lexus NX features a gorgeous subtle chrome-plated exterior with bold contours and Lexus' hallmark spindle grille. Enhancing the outer appearance, the front design features 3-eye LED headlights incorporating Lexus' first slim Adaptive High-beam System (AHS). The L-shaped daytime running lights feature a fade-in function when the driver activates the indicators.

Under the hood, the NX is equipped with two powertrain options. The 4-cylinder, 2.4 L turbocharged engine produces 275 hp and 430 nm torque and is mated to a new 8-speed Direct-Shift automatic transmission (8AT). Experience the thrilling new hybrid-electric trim consisting of a 2.5-litre petrol engine and two electric motors producing 240 hp. The hybrid-electric system is also mated to a Direct Shift Continuously Variable Transmission (CVT).

Based on the Tazuna concept for the driver's cockpit, the NX is a perfect blend of tradition and modernity. Gain intuitive control of your journey with Lexus' 'hands on the wheel, eyes on the road' philosophy. Feel welcomed inside with the crisp 14-inch touchscreen multimedia system that is compatible with Apple CarPlay® and Android Auto™, a 7-inch colour multi-information display (MID), a wireless charging system for smartphones and adjust the inside temperature with Climate Concierge to experience a smooth ride.

For an added experience, the NX also offers SmartAccess with a push-button start, a 10-speaker premium surround sound system, a panoramic roof and a power tailgate option for easy luggage storage.

Safety is Lexus' top priority, thanks to the innovative Lexus Safety System+, the advanced technologies give drivers immense control over various aspects of driving. The system includes a new Pre-Collision System (PCS) with an expanded detection range, Automatic Emergency Braking (AEB), Emergency Steering Assist (ESA), and Daytime Pedestrian Detection (DPD), the new Dynamic Radar Cruise Control (DRCC) and the Curve Speed Reduction (CSR). Drivers also benefit from Lane Tracing Alert (LTA), Lane Departure Alert (LDA), Advanced Driver Assistance (ADAS), and Adaptive High-beam System (AHB) among others.

One noteworthy feature that takes safety up a notch is the new Safe Exit Assist (SEA). A feature that uses an e-latch system combined with a Blind Spot Monitor (BSM) to help prevent accidents and other standard comprehensive safety features.

For Adventure enthusiasts, the NX Sport version provides the ultimate thrill and performance. Experience the dynamic lineup at your nearest Lexus Oman showroom.

SAFER, SECURE WAY TO PAY

BankDhofar brings Apple Pay to customers

MUSCAT: BankDhofar, the second largest networked branches in Oman, today brings its customers Apple Pay, a safer, more secure and private way to pay that helps customers avoid handing their payment card to someone else, touching physical buttons or exchanging cash — and uses the power of iPhone to protect every transaction.

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

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

Security and privacy are at the core of Apple Pay. When customers use a credit or debit card with Apple Pay, the actual card numbers are not stored on the device, nor on Apple servers. Instead, a unique Device Account Number is assigned, encrypted, and securely stored in the Secure Element, an industry-standard, certified chip designed to store the payment information safely on the device.

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

RECOGNITION

Duqm Governor's Office and Marafiq honour outstanding students from Duqm schools

MUSCAT: The Wilayat of Duqm recently celebrated the recognition of top-performing students from local schools for the 2023/2024 academic year. The event also included the provision of interactive screens to enhance educational resources, facilitated through a collaboration between the Duqm Governor's Office and Marafiq.

The ceremony was presided over by Sheikh Badr bin Nasser Al-Farsi, Governor of Duqm, and attended by several senior officials from Al Wusta Governorate, alongside members of Marafiq's Board of Directors and executive leadership.

This initiative underscores the joint efforts of the Duqm Governor's Office, the General Directorate of Education in Al Wusta Governorate, and Marafiq to promote academic excellence and encourage students to strive for higher educational achievement.

In his remarks, Sheikh Badr bin Nasser Al-Farsi congratulated the distinguished students, saying, "We offer our sincere congratulations to the students for their outstanding academic achievements, which reflect the dedication of both the teaching and administrative staff in fostering a supportive learning environment. The continuous involvement of parents has also been instrumental in these successes."

He added, "We encourage students to remain committed to their studies in the current academic year, as we look forward to their future contributions to Oman's economic and social development."

He also praised Marafiq's initiative to recognize the students, commenting, "Marafiq's involvement is a meaningful acknowledgment of the efforts and dedication these students have demonstrated throughout the past year."

Eng. Abdullah bin Mohammed Al Hashmi, MD of Marafiq, reaffirmed the company's commitment to education, stating, "At Marafiq, we believe that education is the foundation of sustainable development in Duqm. Since our inception, we have been dedicated to supporting educational advancement and empowering youth to become the leaders of tomorrow. This forms an integral part of our corporate social responsibility."

Marafiq's CSR programs focus primarily on supporting education by funding various training programs and initiatives in collaboration with both public and private sector partners.

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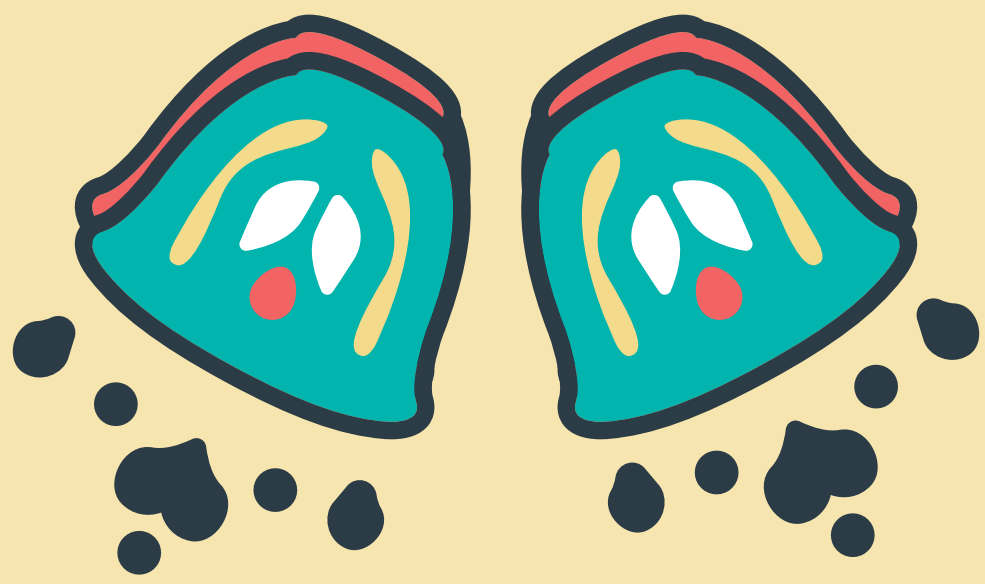

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