LET'S TALK
Times OF OMAN

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CERTIFICATE

ARABIC WATERMELON, A DISTINCT SUMMER FRUIT FROM AL DHAHIRAH

The Arabic watermelon, which is locally called 'Omani watermelon', is one of the famous summer crops cultivated in various wilayats of the Al Dhahirah Governorate. It is one of the crops that can withstand high temperatures and dry weather, and its demand is increasing among consumers. >A4

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TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN
EA signs three agreements

1 The Environment Authority on Tuesday signed three contracts with academic institutions that won research projects funded by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation. The first deal, signed with SQU, covered two projects, the first of which is "Multi-criteria decision analysis for sustainable management of the Omani coast". >A3

SPORTS
Messi not in squad for WC qualifiers

2 Star forward Lionel Messi has been left out of Argentina's squad for the upcoming World Cup qualifiers against Chile and Colombia. Messi has been out of action since sustaining an ankle injury in the Copa America 2024 final against Columbia. In the final, Messi left the pitch in tears after Nico Gonzalez came in as a substitute for him. >A8

MARKET
Over OMR44mn worth spare parts imported

3 The Sultanate of Oman's total imports of vehicle spare parts by the end of the first five months of this year (2024) declined 11.8 percent to OMR44,695,140 as against OMR50,683,871 during the corresponding period in 2023, according to the NCSI. The UAE topped the list of countries supplying vehicle spare parts. >B1

OMAN INVESTMENT AUTHORITY'S ASSETS EXCEED OMR19 BILLION

HIGHLIGHTS

- Approximately OMR300 million of OIA companies' debt was prepaid in 2023
- OIA's investment portfolio is geographically diverse, with investments in every continent
- OIA aims at achieving Oman's vision of becoming a more attractive investment destination
- The total spending on SMEs reached OMR202.6 million
- The Private Markets' arm of OIA's Future Generation Fund invested in 13 international funds in various sectors
- OIA's National Development Fund spent approximately OMR2.1 billion on investments

Oman Investment Authority has also reported profits of over OMR1.7bn in 2023

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman Investment Authority (OIA) assets reached OMR19.2 billion in 2023 compared to OMR17.9 billion at the end of 2022, according to the company's latest annual report 2023.

The investment arm of Oman, which is mandated with managing, investing, and growing the Sultanate's assets locally and internationally, has also reported profits of over OMR1.7 billion in 2023.

OIA has also contributed OMR800 million to the State's General Budget, and with that OIA's combined contributions to the Budget since 2016 exceed OMR6 billion, Abdulsalam Al Murshidi, President, OIA, has stated in the annual report.

This contribution was made from profits and returns only and there was no need to liquidate or sell any assets to generate liquidity, the OIA president further added.

"Continuing efforts to reduce the debt of OIA companies and to limit financial risks, approximately OMR300 million of OIA companies' debt was prepaid in 2023. This helped improve Oman's credit rating according to global credit rating agencies," he pointed out.

OIA's investment portfolio is geographically diverse, with investments on every continent, and cover a wide range of sectors, including food and fisheries, energy, logistics, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), public services, financial and investment services, tourism, mining, manufacturing, and aviation. It plays a key role in driving sustainable economic development and achieving Oman's vision of becoming a more attractive investment destination.

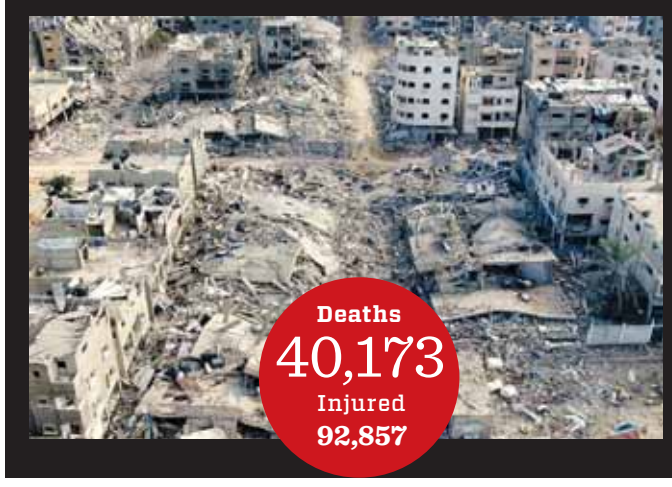
The OIA President elaborated that in its quest to boost employment opportunities for citizens, 1,307 Omanis were hired by the OIA and its companies, exceeding the target number for 2023, which was 800 new positions.

"We also launched a number of new training and qualification programmes, most importantly the Oman Scholars programme for outstanding students, which received royal endorsement, and the OIA Academy for Training and Development," Al Murshidi said.

In-Country Value

Efforts by OIA and its companies to enhance In-Country Value (ICV) and was also focused on small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The total spending on SMEs reached OMR202.6 million, including OMR106.7 million for Riyada Card holders. The share of SMEs in total expenditure on the supply chain was 16.8 percent. >A2

GAZA DEATH TOLL
as of August 20, 2024



TENDER FOR NEW SYSTEM

Passengers to get real time info on buses

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Mwasalat, which has played a crucial role in shaping and enhancing the public transportation landscape in Oman, plans to install Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) Systems at bus stations and bus stops across the Sultanate of Oman.

For this, Mwasalat has floated a tender for the supply and installation of RTPI, including backend solutions with support and maintenance.

The last date for tender document distribution is fixed for August 28.

In a tender announcement, Mwasalat said that this initiative aims to enhance public transportation services through innovative smart solutions.

RTPI screens will be installed at selective bus stations and standalone bus stops in accordance with operational requirements and as specified in the tender documents.

Mwasalat has transported more than 4.5 million passengers in 2023, a 40 percent increase over 2022's figure when it served 3.2 million passengers, according to the data.

With over 11,700 daily passengers, the government-run company transported 4,271,732 passengers across the Sultanate.

Mwasalat's ferry service transported over 236,986 passengers compared to 221,000 in 2022.

The company has been working on improving its infrastructure and expanding its transport network to meet the increasing needs of passengers to various parts of Oman.

BIRD CONSERVATION

Two new bird species discovered in Al Ansab Wetland

MUSCAT: Al Ansab Wetland in Muscat has once again proven its critical role in bird conservation and biodiversity with the recent discovery of new breeding records for two significant bird species: the Black-crowned Night Heron and the Indian Pond Heron. These findings underscore the ecological importance of this unique wetland, which serves as a vital sanctuary for numerous bird species.

The Indian Pond Heron, whose breeding has been recorded for the first time in Oman, marks a significant milestone in the country's ornithological history. The presence of this species highlights the diverse habitats within Al Ansab Wetland that are conducive to supporting such uncommon breeding activities. Additionally, the Black-crowned Night Heron, already known to breed in southern Oman, has now been documented breeding in the northern region for the first time, further emphasizing the wetland's expanding ecological significance.

Al Ansab Wetland is a crucial site for bird conservation, providing a safe haven for a wide variety of avian species. The recent breeding records are a testament to the wetland's thriving ecosystem, which is maintained through dedicated conservation efforts. These findings also bring attention to the importance of ongoing preservation initiatives to ensure that Al Ansab Wetland remains a sanctuary for birds and a natural treasure for Oman.

"The discovery of these new breeding records is a reminder of how essential it is to protect and preserve our wetlands," said Manal Al Kindi, Head of Wetland from Nama Water Services, the company responsible for managing the site. "Al Ansab Wetland is not just a local treasure but a globally significant habitat that supports a wide range of bird species. These records highlight the wetland's role in maintaining biodiversity and the need for continued conservation efforts."

Al Ansab Wetland has long been recognised as a key site for biodiversity, attracting bird watchers, researchers, and nature enthusiasts from around the world. The recent discoveries reinforce the importance of protecting such habitats to ensure that future generations can continue to enjoy and learn from these unique ecosystems. Conservationists are calling for sustained efforts to safeguard Al Ansab Wetland, which remains a critical resource for the region's natural heritage.

With the new breeding records for the Indian Pond Heron and the Black-crowned Night Heron, Al Ansab Wetland continues to stand out as a beacon of biodiversity in the Arabian Peninsula. The wetland's thriving ecosystem not only supports a wide array of bird species but also plays a crucial role in maintaining the balance of nature in the region. -ONA

OMAN

PRAYER TIMINGS

Dhuhr	12:15pm
Asr	3:42pm
Maghrib	6:40pm
Isha	7:54pm
Fajr (Tomorrow)	4:26am

INVESTMENTS

OIA focuses on geographic and sector-based diversification

< FROM A1

The accomplishments of 2023 are due to the national talent, of which OIA is very proud, the OIA President said, adding that, "The workforce's experience, ambitions, and confidence harmonise perfectly with OIA's style of work as the sovereign wealth fund of the Sultanate of Oman. They met expectations by achieving OIA's goals and its national objectives."

OIA focused on geographic and sector-based diversification of its new international and local investments to maximise returns and decrease risks. It tied some external investments to local target sectors by transferring state-of-the-art technology to the local market. The Private Markets' arm of OIA's Future Generation Fund (FGF) invested in 13 international funds in various sectors. It also entered various direct investments, while the Public Markets' arm of FGF continued to invest in markets in several countries around the world.

Some of OIA's international investments last year include the American company Our Next Energy (ONE), which specialises in innovative battery technology for electric vehicles; Electric Hydrogen (EH2), which develops low-voltage, high-current density electrolysers; and Hysata, an Australian company that develops electrolyzers to produce green hydrogen. Among the global funds invested in last year are the Platinum Investment Fund, which invests in manufacturing, chemical materials, and distribution; the Global Infrastructure Fund, which invests in North America, Europe, Asia, the Pacific Ocean, and Latin America; and the Chinese fund 5Y, which focuses on consumer innovation, information technology, and life sciences.

The National Development Fund spent approximately OMR2.1 billion on investments by broadening and improving current projects, completing the construction of projects in progress, and approving and developing new projects.

Salalah hosts forum on employee health, safety at workplace

The human resources forum aims to raise public awareness about the importance of psychological safety and mental health at the workplace

SALALAH: A two-day forum on psychological safety and mental health in the work environment kicked off in Salalah on Tuesday.

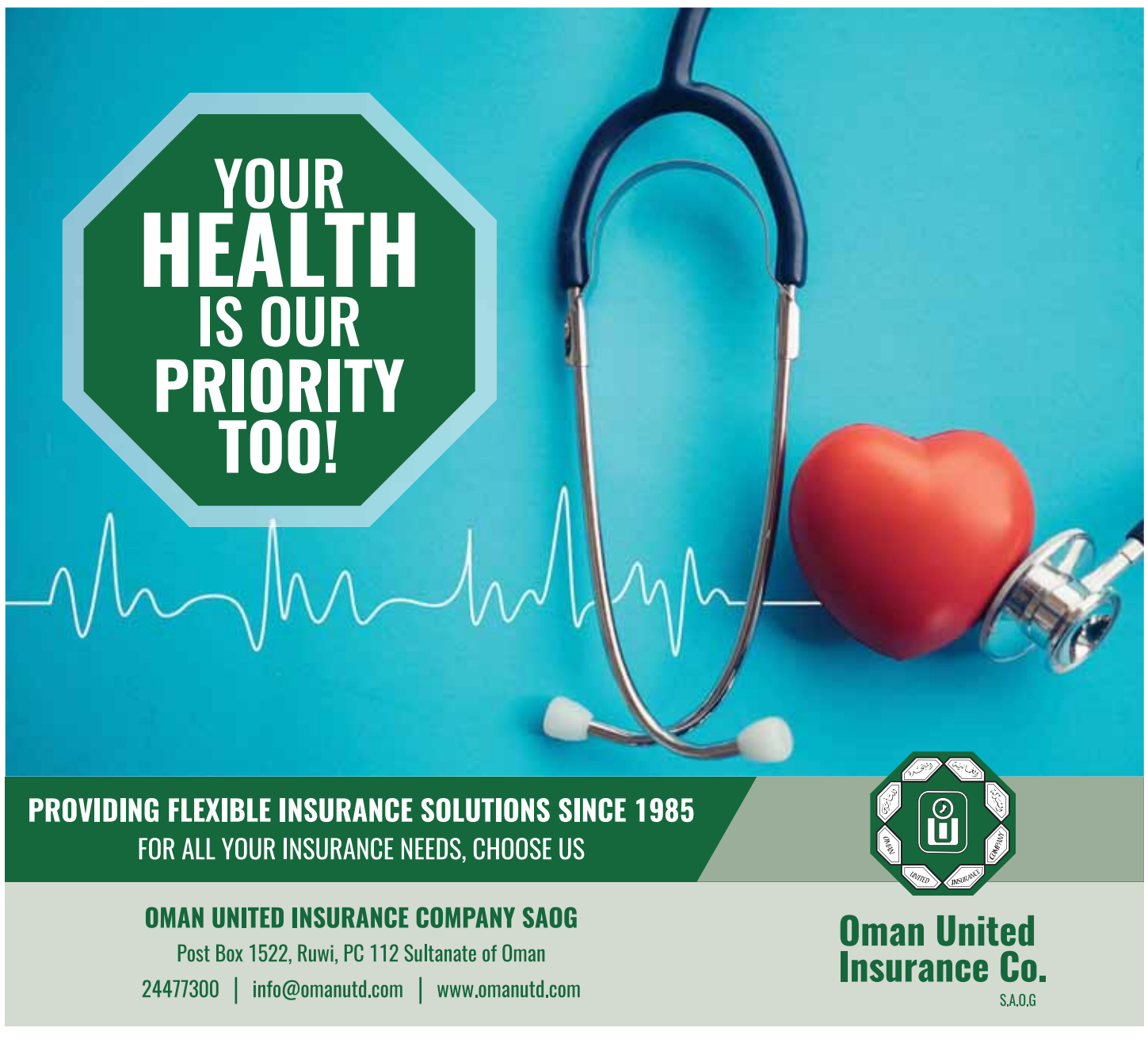
The forum is organised by the Ministry of Labour in cooperation with the Omani Society for Human Resources Management (OSHRM).

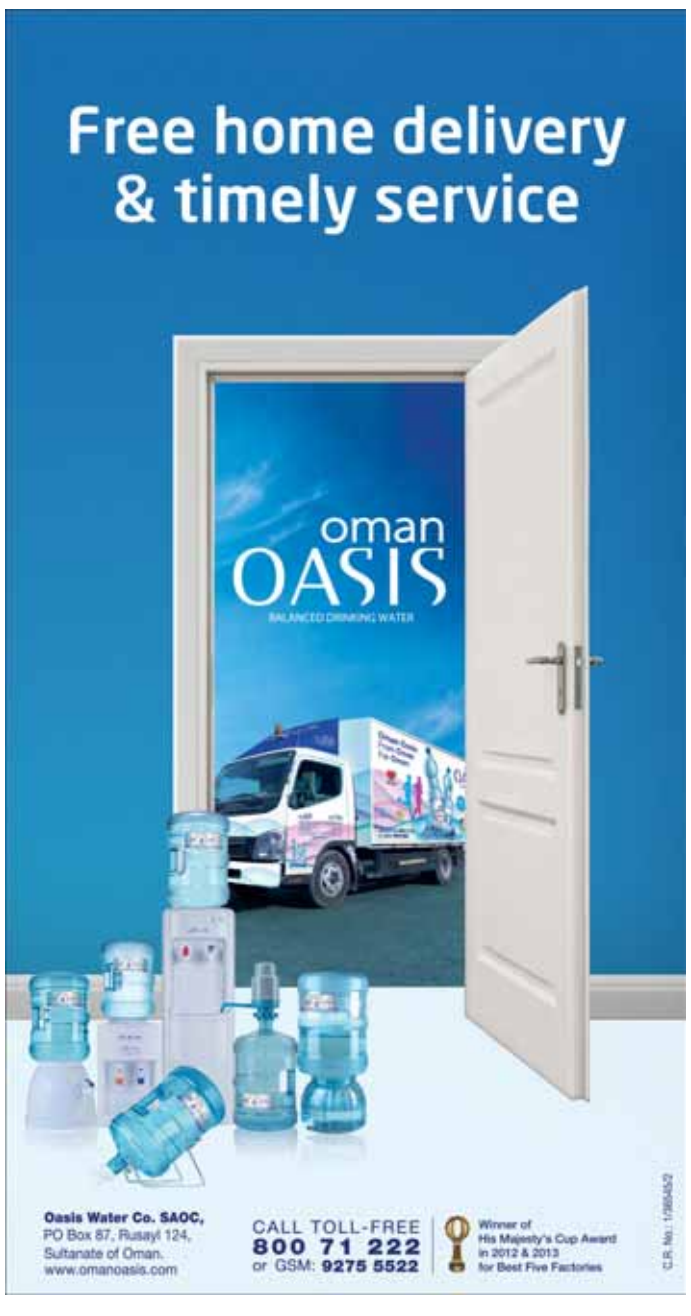
The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Marwan Turki Al Said, Governor of Dhofar.

The forum aims to raise public awareness about the importance of psychological safety and mental health in the workplace and provide a platform for exchanging knowledge and expertise on how to apply new techniques to support workers in dealing with psychological challenges.

Through working papers and discussion panels, the forum explores basics of psychological safety in the work environment, related challenges, as well as the process of managing employee performance, online work and its impact on employee well-being.

The forum also discusses the role of leadership in inspiring a healthy work environment for employees and the significance of psychological safety on job satisfaction and an institution's productivity. — ONA





MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION, RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

EA signs 3 contracts with academic institutions that won research projects

MUSCAT: The Environment Authority on Tuesday signed three contracts with academic institutions that won research projects funded by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

The first contract, signed with Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), covered two projects, the first of which is titled "Multi-criteria decision analysis for sustainable management of the Omani coast: Sohar and Salalah ports as a case study".

The project deals with the conservation of ecosystems through the implementation of sustainable management practices on the Omani coastal areas, with emphasis on Sohar and Salalah Ports.

The SQU's second project, pertains to "mysterious energy sources and natural radiation levels" in Oman. It provides a preliminary breakthrough into the health and social aspects of radiation on the population of Oman.

The project seeks to establish a basic database and understand the scope of radiation exposure in Oman, to help develop guidelines to keep radiation levels within safety limits and protect the environment and human health.

The second contract, signed with the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS), dealt with a research project titled "Measuring the concentration of radioactive radon gas in Oman, with special emphasis on its impact on public health. The project focuses on measuring the concentration of radon gas and assessing indoor air quality.

The third contract, signed with National University of Science and Technology (NU), is titled "Revolutionizing the sustainability of special economic zones in Oman: valorization of pollutant currents' impact on products and developing a bio-electrochemical system-based biorefinery".

The project aims to convert waste materials or pollutants into valuable products through the establishment of a bio-refinery based on bio-electric systems. The facility is envisaged to extract maximum value from waste through the usage of innovative technologies by means of which pollutants are converted into valuable products.

Dr. Abdullah bin Ali Al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority, said that the contracts signed by the Authority today with these national universities aim to study three important issues in environmental affairs.

Al Amri added that the projects require 6 months to one year to yield results and provide effective solutions to the target environmental issues. He explained that each research project has a technical team and a steering committee to ensure that the research projects achieve the desired outcome in a timely manner.

The contracts were signed by Dr. Abdullah Ali Al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority, HH Sayyid Dr. Fahd Al Julanda Al Said, Vice-Chancellor of Sultan Qaboos University, Dr. Said Hamad Al Ruba'ee, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, and Dr. Ali Saud Al Bimani, Vice-Chancellor of the National University of Science and Technology. -ONA

OMAN

Arabic watermelon, a distinct summer fruit from Al Dhahirah Governorate

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Arabic watermelon, which is locally called 'Omani watermelon', is one of the famous summer crops cultivated in various wilayats of the Al Dhahirah Governorate. It is one of the crops that can withstand high temperatures and dry weather, and its demand is increasing among consumers.

Engineer Ahmed bin Mubarak Al Badi, an agricultural engineer at the Department of Agricultural Wealth and Water Resources in the Wilayat of Dhank, said that the Omani watermelon in the local market is one of the purest crops that have not undergone any changes or cross-pollination processes, which sometimes occur as a result of the presence of other crops of watermelons and gourds near each other. Insects and bees transfer pollen seeds among different crop flowers, producing varieties of watermelon with different genetic characteristics.

Al Badi added that some watermelon products brought from abroad contain overlapping characteristics due to natural cross-pollination, which results in varieties that differ in shape, colour and taste from the pure one.

He pointed out that Omani watermelons are characterised by a certain shape and maintain their green outer colour even when ripe and their taste is less sweet compared to other types.

Al Badi added that there are a number of pests that affect the production of Omani watermelons, such as the fruit fly, which causes damage to the crop if not controlled. In addition to the white fly, viral pests, some types of mold and spiders that coincide with the cultivation of the crop and the period of moderate weather after the end of winter, is a period of increased insect activity and reproduction.

He stressed that the efforts made by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources and its various programs contribute to combating and raising awareness in a significant and effective way in preserving the safety of these important crops, which form part of the food basket of the Omani consumer.

Al Badi explained that according to the elderly farmers and producers of agricultural materials, the Arab watermelon variety was previously the most popular variety in the local markets at that time, but with the agricultural development witnessed by the markets in terms of importing seeds for new crops in the local market, other types of red watermelon and cantaloupe began to be cultivated due to the high demand for them by consumers, since the Arab watermelon is less sweet in taste compared to other watermelon varieties, which made farmers focus on crops with high demand in the local market.

OMANI ENTREPRENEUR

Interior design is passion for Omani entrepreneur

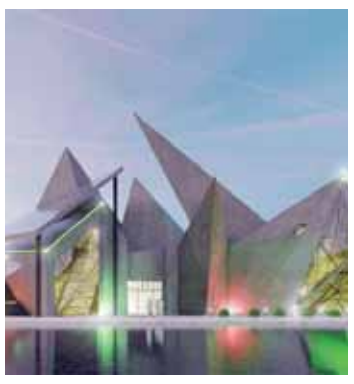
SALALAH: Interior design is not just an arrangement of furniture and colours, but a true art that reflects the identity and culture of a place and affects people's daily lives.

This is how entrepreneur and engineer Sumw Amer Tabook views the path to achieving her passion for interior design and architecture.

In an interview with Oman News Agency, Engineer Tabook said: "My passion for design prompted me to study the specialisation academically, in order to build a strong foundation for working professionally and on scientific foundations. This was my dream since school, which I sought to achieve by establishing the "Sumw Design Studio" project in 2019, which is one of the projects under the Public Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises."

The project idea came from the market's growing need to provide innovative and sustainable design solutions that meet the needs of individuals and institutions in the Sultanate of Oman, as explained by Tabook, who aspires to bring about positive change in the field and contribute to the development of the architectural landscape.

She added: "Work began on a number of small projects to gain experience and increase the customer base. Since its establishment, the project has gone through several stages according to a clear and specific vision and objectives by building an integrated work team of experienced designers and architects until it gradually achieved successes that included commercial work on a large scale, and the implementation of a group of residential designs and garden coordination."



She pointed out that since its launch, the project has achieved remarkable growth in a number of spheres, and the customer base has expanded by 30 percent annually in the last two years. The project has also received positive reviews from them, which indicates its success and the increasing demand for the services it provides.

Regarding the support from various relevant parties, she said: "The project received great support from government agencies in the Sultanate of Oman, as various facilities were provided to support the growth of the institution; with the aim of enhancing the business environment, which played an important role in accelerating the growth of the project and achieving its goals."

She added: "I aspire to expand the scope of services in the project to include all GCC countries, and provide innovative design solutions at a regional level, in addition to introducing new and sustainable technologies in the implemented projects, and enhancing innovation in interior and exterior designs, as well as seeking to develop strategic partnerships with leading companies and institutions in the field."

Challenges are an incentive for projects to continue to achieve more successes, she said, adding that the main challenge the project faced was during the Covid-19 pandemic, as many projects were affected and delayed due to global circumstances. She added: Persistence enabled me to adapt to the situation and work remotely, which helped us continue working and communicating with customers in an effective manner.

She believes that the field of interior design and architecture provides wide opportunities for creativity and professional development, especially for Omani youth, if they work on developing their skills and benefiting from the available educational and training opportunities, in addition to innovation and creative thinking.

OMAN POST-OTAXI AGREEMENT

Key pact signed to accelerate parcel delivery in Oman

Times News Agency

MUSCAT: Oman Post, the national postal operator, recently signed an agreement with OTaxi to enhance its parcel delivery services domestically.

This strategic partnership which aligns with Oman Post's commitment to engaging the private sector in line with Oman Vision 2040 objectives aims to ensure delivery within 24 hours in Muscat and from 48 to 72 hours in other governorates, reflecting Oman Post's dedication to customer-centric solutions.

This collaboration marks the first phase of an expansive plan to enhance service offerings, initially focusing on parcel delivery service and extending to include additional postal services.

Sheikh Ibrahim bin Sultan Alhosni, Acting Chief Executive Officer, said: "At Oman Post, we continuously explore innovative ways to exceed our customers' needs in partnership with the private sector. This strategic collaboration with OTaxi enables us to achieve that goal by introducing faster and more efficient delivery services."

"By significantly reducing delivery times, we are not only enhancing our service offering to our customers but also supporting the small and medium-sized enterprises across Oman, who rely on rapid parcel delivery to drive their growth and success," he further added.

Eng. Harith Al Muqbali Chief Executive Officer of OTaxi commented: "This partnership with Oman Post is a testament to our shared vision of enhancing logistics and delivery services within the Sultanate through providing fast delivery solutions across the Sultanate. We are eager to contribute to a service that directly benefits businesses and consumers alike by providing reliable and expedited parcel delivery."

"Through this strategic alliance, we are confident that we can deliver a transformative experience that empowers the growth and success of enterprises across Oman," he added.

Oman Post, part of Asyad Group, has consistently demonstrated its commitment to excellence, as reflected in its outstanding performance.

The company has achieved notable accolades, including being ranked first in the world among the 190 member countries of the Universal Postal Union at the 2023 EMS Performance Awards and ranked second in the world in EMS Customer Care.

Building on this success, Oman Post continues to innovate and expand its service offerings, solidifying its position as a leader in the postal sector.

Salalah to host Omani Culinary Arts Festival

The event, being organised by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, aims to promote and enhance food tourism and culinary arts, particularly Omani cuisine, both locally and internationally

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT) is organizing the Omani Culinary Arts Festival from August 22 to 26 at Al Haffa Beach in Salalah, coinciding with the Dhofar Khareef 2024 events.

Amira Iqbal Al Lawati, Head of the Food Tourism and Culinary Arts Programme at the MHT, stated that the festival will feature a variety of activities over the five days.

These include live cooking demonstrations by top Gulf and Omani chefs (such as Lulwa Altaanak, Nader Al Aisari, Ahmed Al Saadi, Mohammed Issa, Faisal Sajoor, Umm Ayman, and Khulood), a children's cooking corner, folk music performances, and various competitions.

Additionally, there will be a farmers' corner with local products, restaurants offering authentic Omani cuisine, and a section for gifts and souvenirs.

She added that the Omani Culinary Arts Festival aims to promote and enhance food tourism and culinary arts, particularly Omani cuisine, both locally and internationally.

This will be achieved through gatherings, festivals, events, and specialised forums dedicated to food tourism and culinary arts.

Al Lawati explained that the Festival is part of the 'Food Tourism and Culinary Arts' programme.

Through this initiative, the Ministry aims to showcase Omani cuisine as a means of achieving economic, social, and environmental sustainability.

The goal is to position Omani culinary arts on the cultural tourism map, enhance tourism's role in benefiting local communities, provide business opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises, and create job opportunities in culinary professions.

The Head of the Food Tourism and Culinary Arts Programme stated that the MHT places significant importance on developing tourism based on the comparative and competitive advantages of Oman.

This involves creating visions for each type of tourism and defining strategic and promotional programmes to achieve the best

results and sustainable goals.

She emphasised that the Omani Culinary Arts Festival is one of the most important tourism types, focusing on showcasing and promoting Omani culinary arts.

Food and drink, as well as culinary arts, have always been central to any society, reflecting the cultural and civilizational diversity that distinguishes it from others. There is a growing global trend towards this type of tourism.

She emphasised that the Sultanate of Oman is distinguished by its rich cultural and heritage, its excellent reputation, and the authenticity of its hospitable community, which qualifies it to benefit from food tourism and culinary arts.

She pointed out that there are many professions related to culinary arts, and the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is focused on developing these programmes and career paths.

This includes training Omani chefs through global programs to enhance their skills and enable them to serve as ambassadors for Omani cuisine wherever they go.

The Food Tourism and Culinary Arts Programme aims to document the heritage, history, and traditions of Omani cuisine.

The programme seeks to preserve and sustain this heritage through the development and innovation of recipes and menus to suit the evolving tastes of tourists, while maintaining the essential ingredients that define these recipes.

It also focuses on innovating products linked to supply chains to enhance competitiveness, benefiting local communities.

Additionally, the programme aims to foster entrepreneurial opportunities in manufacturing, services, and tourism products, as well as innovative experiences.

The Ministry emphasised that the successful implementation of these initiatives requires the combined efforts of public and private sector stakeholders, tourism sector partners, and the involvement of the local community, enthusiasts, associations, and chefs.

DRIVE SLOWER LIVE LONGER

A TIMES OF OMAN PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender committee of **Ministry of Social Development** hereby announces the following tender :-

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of tender document	Last date for tender submission	Tender Document Price (non-retundable)	
					Small and Medium companies	Local companies
320/2024	Training program for managing home projects for 250 productive families	Companies specialized in the field of Education, training and human resources development registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the excellent, first degree, second, third, fourth	Monday 09-09- 2024 02:00 PM	Sunday 29-09-2024 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O
(321/2024)	Providing technicians for the maintenance team for the Ministry's buildings in Muscat Governorate	Companies specialized in the field of Industrial workshops (blacksmithing, carpentry, machinery and vehicle repair). registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the excellent, first degree second, third, fourth	Monday 09-09- 2024 02:00 PM	Sunday 29-09-2024 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O
(322/2024)	Buying new washing machines and dryers for Dar Al Aman (home for the severely disabled in Al Khoud)	Companies specialized in the field of Supplying electrical, mechanical and industrial machines and spare parts registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the excellent, first degree, second, third, fourth	Monday 09-09- 2024 02:00 PM	Sunday 29-09-2024 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O

- Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link **(https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om)**, On Wednesday 21/08 /2024
- Tender shall be submitted in compliance with the technical specifcations and terms along with a local bank warranty at (1%) of the tender value, valid ninety (90) days from the date of e-submission.
- For Inquiry, please contact through the e-tendering website **(reg@tenderboard.gov.om)**
  Tel. (24402200)

www.mosd.gov.om

MUSCAT GOVERNORATE
MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No. 22/2024

Muscat Municipality invites interested companies to the following bidding

Sl No.	Bidding No.	Bidding description	Document fee	Deadline for obtaining bidding docs.	Deadline for inquires submission	Deadline for submission
1	RE-1/2024	Investing of Plot No. (2939) at Wilayat Al-Amerat	150/- OMR	05/09/2024	08/09/2024	28/09/2024
2	RE-5/2024	Constructing, Managing & Operating of Sports fields in Wadi Kabeer Garden – Matrah	150/- OMR	05/09/2024	08/09/2024	28/09/2024
3	RE-6/2024	Managing & Operating of Sports Fields (Football, Basketball, Volleyball) at Al - Mabella - Al Seeb	150/- OMR	05/09/2024	08/09/2024	28/09/2024
4	RE-8/2024	Managing & Operating of Skating Field at Al -Mabella - Seeb	150/- OMR	05/09/2024	08/09/2024	28/09/2024
5	RE-12/2024	Design, construct and operate slaughter house in plot no.(185) at Quriyat	400/- OMR	05/09/2024	08/09/2024	28/09/2024

Registered companies with Muscat Municipality which are Specialized in above bid are invited to participate as per the following procedures:

1. Company registertion with Muscat Municipality have to be valid as per note number one below, to be able to get the bid document.
2. Pay the specified document fee for the requested bid via bank deposit to Muscat Municipality's Bank account as follows:

BANK MUSCAT 0423010702710024

3. A copy of the transaction's receipt MUST be send to the following e-mail (SQ.QS@mm.gov.om), provided with the company data (name and bid number, delegate name,office phone number, mobile number, email address approved by the company and commerical registration number of the company).
4 The tender document will be provided to the company via email.
5. **2:00 PM** on the above mentioned dates, is the last timing for obtaining Bidding Documents. Any bid's document request reciveid after the specified time will not be considered.

- Submitted offers must be accompanied with a bond mentioned in the tender document valid for a period not less than (90) days issued by any local bank in Oman addressed to Muscat Municipality.
  Bidding that do not meet the required bond **will not be accepted.**
  Documents must be enclosed in a plain closed envelope (without any company information) and drop in the box located First Floor , QS Department , in Muscat Municipality, Head Office, Darsait.

NOTES:

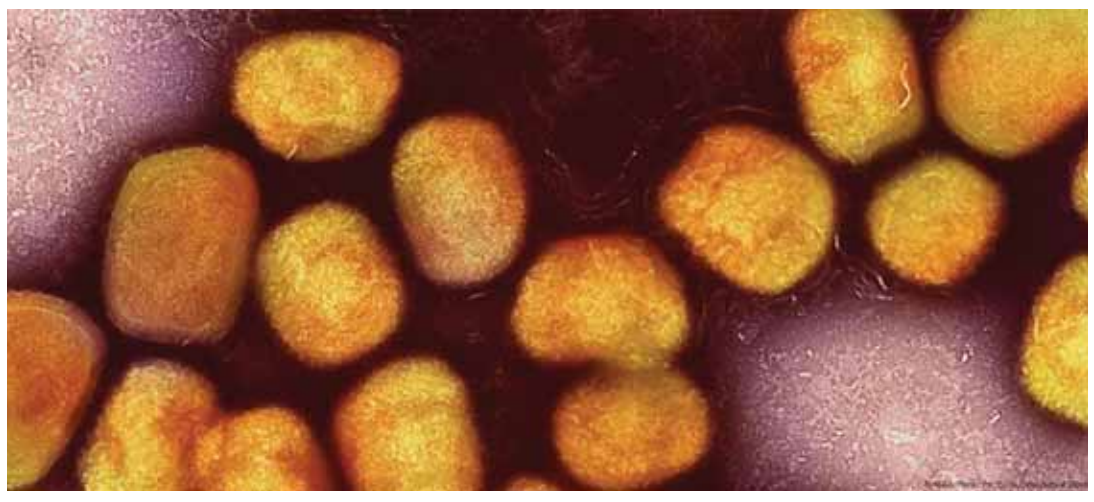
1. Companies which are not registed in Muscat Municipality or their registeration has been expaired shall register through the municipality& website **(www.mm.gov.om).** For technical support, please contact Muscat Municpality throngh this email **(crm@mm.gov.om).**
2. If the bidders have any inquiries regarding the scope of the work, they have to sent their inquiries through the following e-mail **(SQ.QS@mm.gov.om)**
3. **10:00 AM** on the above submission mentioned dates, is the last timing for receving bids. Offers submitted after the above mentioned date & time shall not be accepted for any reason.
4. Muscat Municipality has the right to accept or reject any offer without assigning any reason.

Website: www.mm.gov.om

WORLD

No link between mpox and Covid vaccination

Recent developments have led to an increase in discussions on social media, with a noticeable rise in claims about the viral disease — many of which are untrue



GENEVA: Just one day after the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the highest level of alert for mpox outbreaks in African countries for the second time in two years, the first case in Europe was also reported.

The infected individual is said to have contracted the virus while staying in an African region experiencing a significant outbreak of the disease, according to the Director-General of the Swedish Health Agency during a press conference on Thursday.

These recent developments have led to an increase in discussions on social media, with a noticeable rise in claims about the viral disease — many of which are untrue.

Mpox and mRNA vaccines: Is there a connection?

Claim: "What they are selling us as MONKEYPOX is, in most cases, actually herpes zoster; one of the most common side effects of the COVID 'vaccine'", wrote this X-user on August 14, 2024, quoting the German doctor and politician Wolfgang Wodarg. The post has already been viewed 2 million times.

The claim originates from a video interview with Wolfgang Wodarg, a physician and former Social Democrat (SPD) member of the German Bundestag, who later became a leading candidate for the small party dieBasis (the base), which was founded in the context of protests against COVID-19 measures. The video was released in 2022 by the controversial Austrian broadcaster AUF1.

What the user claims in the accompanying text of the post has also been shared by others: Example 1 (Portuguese, 178K views), Example 2 (Spanish, 498.5K views), Example 3 (Spanish, 117K views).

Most of the posts we found on this topic were in Spanish and Portuguese. According to a study by Loyola University Andalusia, which analysed the period from May 7 to September 10, 2022, the narrative that mpox is a side effect of COVID-19 vaccines was shared more frequently than any other false claim about mpox.

When asked if there is a connection between the COVID-19 vaccine and the mpox outbreak, microbiologist and immunologist Kari Moore Debbink from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in the US said in a DW interview: "The COVID mRNA vaccines were used globally, while mpox cases are typically found in specific countries in Africa, with some low case numbers outside of those regions. Therefore, there is no geographic link between COVID mRNA vaccine use and mpox cases."

William Schaffner, a professor of infectious diseases at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville, US, shares this opinion: "These are two completely different viruses, and of course, the vaccine against COVID has nothing to do with mpox."

We have already thoroughly debunked the claim that the AstraZeneca COVID vaccine contains weakened viruses from chimpanzees as carriers for the DNA of the coronavirus spike protein in a previous fact-check.

Mpox = shingles?

The viral X-post also claims that mpox is actually herpes zoster, also known as shingles, in most cases. According to a 2022 study published in the Journal of the European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology, the varicella-zoster virus (VZV), which causes herpes zoster and chickenpox, can be reactivated through vaccinations. The study also shows that individuals vaccinated with various COVID-19 vaccines have an increased risk of herpes zoster outbreaks.

However, there is no connection between the mpox pathogen and VZV, says Kari Moore Debbink: "Mpox and herpes zoster are in different virus groups, so testing is easily able to discern between the two viruses. While both viruses can cause similar symptoms including rashes, fever, swollen lymph nodes, and malaise, there are also distinct characteristics of the rashes caused by each virus — making it possible to tell them apart by sight and symptoms."

Mpox is much less contagious than COVID-19. While the mpox pathogen is transmitted through close physical skin-to-skin contact or contact with contaminated materials (towels, bedding and clothing), the coronavirus is extremely contagious and can be spread through tiny droplets in the air from breathing, speaking, sneezing or coughing. COVID-19 can be transmitted by others who have the virus, even if they have no symptoms. The California Department of Public Health has listed additional differences between coronaviruses and mpox viruses on its website.

The massive misinformation surrounding vaccines in general is a cause of concern for medical professionals. "The misinformation that is being spread about all vaccines, about the COVID-19 vaccine, and now mpox also just results in a great deal of confusion and mistrust in public health authorities. That makes it much more difficult for countries and their ministries of public health to try to provide the best information and to help people. So, all of this confusion makes good intentions much more difficult," says Schaffner. — DW

India heightens alert as mpox cases rise globally

NEW DELHI: The central government has directed airport, ports and border authorities to remain vigilant in response to the global rise in mpox cases, according to sources.

Official sources told ANI, "We have alerted airports, ports and borders with Bangladesh and Pakistan. Three central hospitals will have facilities for isolation like Safdarjung hospital, Ram Manohar Lohia hospital and Lady Hardinge."

As per sources, the Union Health Ministry held meetings with experts on the new virus scare which "is different" from the previous Monkey pox virus.

"We had a meeting with states and the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) last week. Point of entries are on alert. It's a self limiting virus. There is no correlation of mpox with COVID. Nodal officers are already in Hospitals. Testing facilities are available at 32 ICMR centers. The symptoms of mpox are like of chickenpox," sources said.

"Chances of mortality is high but their is Low chance to affect India. This disease occurs with rashes," they added. — ANI

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FIRST EUROPEAN FACTORY

EU approves €5bn aid for new microchip plant in Dresden

BRUSSELS: The European Commission on Tuesday said it had approved a new silicon chip factory in Dresden as Taiwanese semiconductor giant TSMC broke ground on its first European factory .

European leaders are keen to avoid dependence on other regions of the world for the supply of semiconductors — indispensable in an array of electronics from computers, to cars and and even missiles.

What Brussels said

The approval allows the German federal government to provide €5 billion ($5.5 billion) of financial support for the new European Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (ESMC).

"The measure will strengthen Europe's security of supply, resilience and digital sovereignty in semiconductor technologies," a commission statement said. "The measure will also contribute to achieving the digital and green transitions."

"The new large-scale manufacturing facility supported under the measure will deliver high-performance chips," it added.

The Commission said the ESMC was a joint venture between the Taiwanese company and three European firms — Germany's Bosch and Infineon and the Netherlands' NXP.

Brussels' ruling said the advantages were significant with little in the way of a downside and noted that the sum provided in assistance was not excessive.

"The measure has a limited impact on competition and trade within the EU. It is necessary and appropriate to ensure the resilience of Europe's semiconductor supply chain."

"In addition, the aid is proportionate and limited to the minimum necessary based on a proven funding gap."

'An endorsement for Europe'

Production is expected to start at the factory in 2027, with a focus on chips for the automotive industry. The first TSMC plant in Europe, it is expected to create 2,000 jobs.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen attended as TSMC broke the ground to mark the start of construction at the site.

"The world's largest chipmaker is coming to our continent and joining forces with three European champions," von der Leyen, hailing it as "an endorsement for Europe as a global innovation powerhouse."

"We are thrilled that such an important player in the global semiconductor scene is now opening a site here with us," Scholz said.

TSMC said its aim was to meet the semiconductor demand of European automotive and industrial sectors, chief executive CC Wei said.

"With this state-of-the-art production facility, we will bring TSMC's innovative manufacturing methods much closer to our European customers and partners," Wei said.

Product sensitive to shocks

In the US, President Joe Biden's administration has also sunk billions into ventures to build chip factories in several US states.

— DW

OVER TOURISM

Travel companies are turning to private islands

VENICE: In the Northern Hemisphere the summer season is in full swing and tourists are on the go. But there is a dark side of tourism and a number of popular places have complained about hordes of visitors.

There have been protests against tourists in Spanish cities and the island of Mallorca. Venice has long been plagued by cruise ships and now charges an entrance fee. Lisbon, Prague and Amsterdam have all seen tensions rise between visitors and locals.

Some businesses think they may have an answer.

Private-island sales increasing

Sales of private islands have spiked since the COVID-19 pandemic, says Chris Krolow, founder and CEO of Private Islands Inc., a Canada-based marketplace for private-island sales and rentals. He points to certain hotspot regions such as the Caribbean and Central America, especially places like Belize and the Bahamas.

Krolow, who is known for HGTV's popular show "Island Hunters," is a big player in the private island business. His company has around 600 islands for sale. Prices range from around $26,000 (€23,700) for a single lot on Long Caye, Belize, to $160 million for Rangyai Island in Thailand.

With over 25 years of experience buying and selling islands across the world, he warns that buyers need to consider the costs of running an island, which "can include supplies, maintenance, renovations, staffing and transportation to and from the island."

Travel companies on the lookout for islands

Individuals aren't the only ones buying islands. More big-pocketed companies are behind some of these purchases, too, says Krolow.

Cruise lines, hotel chains and other travel companies are splashing out on private destinations. And they are hitting two birds with one stone: keeping more tourism dollars for themselves and keeping tourists out of overcrowded places.

Being in charge ensures that the companies control the entire experience and can guarantee the quality of a visit, whether it's a day-trip as part of a cruise or a stand-alone vacation.

Norwegian Cruise Line has two private islands in the Caribbean: Great Stirrup Cay in the Bahamas and Harvest Caye in Belize. The company bought Great Stirrup Cay back in 1977. Guests can relax on the beach and enjoy water sports. Today, it is home to an oceanfront resort. The company's other island, Harvest Caye, opened in 2016 in partnership with the country's government.

Royal Caribbean has run its own island in the Bahamas called CocoCay since the 1980s. Recently the company invested $250 million in the island. The company also runs a private resort on Haiti and is planning another one in Vanuatu in the Pacific Ocean. The company says around 2 million people visit their private destinations each year.

Overall, cruise lines have invested at least $1.5 billion in private beach resorts and islands in the Caribbean since 2019, expanding or improving their offers, news agency Bloomberg recently reported. Today, they oversee at least 15 islands and beaches covering around 5,200 acres (2,104 hectares) in the Bahamas, Belize, the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Mexico.

Exclusive luxury destinations

Family-run Fischer Travel has likewise seen a growth in demand for private-island holidays in the past few years.

"When it comes to private islands, the trend has always been the same — to come together with the people you want to be with in the most exclusive and luxury setting," Stacy Fischer-Rosenthal, the president of the company, told DW. "Having said that, the demand is higher and private islands are seeing more and more bookings throughout the year."

At the New York City-based membership travel and lifestyle company, clients pay a $150,000 initiation fee and annual dues of $25,000, on top of any travel costs and coordination fees. For these rich clients the sky is the limit and they want what others can't have or afford.

"For private islands, the Caribbean is very popular, including the British Virgin Islands and the Bahamas," Fischer said. "The Caribbean is also easy to get to, particularly from New York and for those with private planes, making it easy to do an island buyout for just a long weekend."

Running an island is a lot of work

Owning an island is not all tropical glamour though. Many private islands are not in the Caribbean or other sun-soaked places. northern Scotland offers a number of them as does Norway.

By its very nature, an island is separate from the mainland and many services like infrastructure for water, waste removal or electricity, not to mention getting food, packages or emergency medical care. Being self-sufficient may have its benefits, but splendid isolation is expensive and sometimes complicated.

Additionally, nearly all the islands in the world are claimed by one country or another. A number of these countries restrict foreign buyers from owning property. Still others don't allow the outright purchase of land at all.

National laws and local regulations are enforced even if the mainland seems far away. This can impact building permits, nature protection, labor rules and many other issues. Therefore, it's in the interest of Individuals or companies to do their homework before considering an island paradise.

Whether these private getaways will really relieve hard-hit tourist destinations like Barcelona or Venice or just add more visitors to the mix remains to be seen as global tourism rebounds with a vengeance. — DW

‘Catastrophic situation in Gaza’ due to displacement, OCHA says

According to humanitarian workers in Gaza, the latest Israeli evacuation order issued last Saturday affected some 13,500 people in 18 locations

GAZA: The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has warned that the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip is deteriorating due to repeated waves of displacement, overcrowding, insecurity, collapsing infrastructure, ongoing hostilities, and limited services.

According to humanitarian workers in Gaza, the latest Israeli evacuation order issued last Saturday affected some 13,500 displaced people in 18 locations, which they said included the entire Maghazi camp area and several other neighbourhoods in Deir al-Balah, in the central Gaza Strip.

OCHA warned that the ongoing hostilities, evacuation orders, and severe shortages of essential supplies are making it increasingly difficult for displaced families to access basic services in the locations they arrive.

Since October, 86% of the Gaza Strip has been under evacuation orders, with the majority of Gaza's population increasingly concentrated in an area designated by the occupation authorities in Al-Mawasi.

According to OCHA, the population density in this area has increased to between 33 and 34 thousand people per square kilometer, compared to about 200 people before last October.

On the health front, UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said in his daily press conference that the severe fuel shortage is forcing hospitals to postpone essential surgeries, and threatens to stop the work of ambulances, especially in northern Gaza.

Several Palestinians martyred and injured

Several Palestinians were martyred and injured on Tuesday as a result of the ongoing Israeli occupation bombing of several areas in the Gaza Strip.

According to Palestinian news agency (WAFA), six civilians were martyred and others were injured after the Israeli occupation forces bombed a house in Al-Bureij camp in the central Gaza Strip.

In the city of Rafah, four civilians were martyred as a result of the occupation's bombing of a civilian car in the vicinity of Al-Hashashin Street north of the city.

The occupation forces also blew up residential buildings west of the city, while the Israeli artillery fired towards the center and west of Rafah.

Meanwhile, the Israeli military vehicles penetrated amidst heavy gunfire towards the tents of the displaced in Al-Shakoush area in the Mawasi Rafah area, northwest of Rafah city, WAFA added.

In Khan Yunis, five people were injured after they were shot by the Israeli tanks that attacked the outskirts of Mawasi area of the town of Al-Qarara, northwest of the city.

In Gaza City, the Israeli artillery fired shells and fire towards the neighborhoods of Tal Al-Hawa, Al-Sabra and Al-Zeitoun, while the Israeli warplanes launched a raid on Asqoula area.

The occupation army artillery fired shells at the northwestern areas of Nuseirat camp and the east of Deir al-Balah city in the central Gaza Strip.

Israel bombs school sheltering displaced persons in Gaza

The Israeli occupation warplanes targeted and bombed a school sheltering displaced persons today, west of Gaza City, murdering three Palestinian civilians and injuring several others.

Wafa news agency reported that Israeli warplanes bombed Mustafa Hafez School, which is housing the displaced persons of western Gaza City, murdering three Palestinian civilians and injuring dozens of others (some severely).

On Aug. 10, the Israeli occupation forces (IOF) committed a massacre in Al-Tabi-een school, which was sheltering displaced persons in Gaza City's Daraj neighborhood, by directly shooting three missiles, slaughtering more than 100 Palestinian civilians and injuring hundreds of others, while they were praying the fajr (dawn) prayer. — Agencies

DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION

Harris thanks Biden for his ‘historic leadership’

CHICAGO: In her first remarks at the Democratic National Convention that kicked off on Monday night in Chicago, Vice President and Democratic nominee for the upcoming US Presidential Polls, Kamala Harris thanked President Joe Biden for his leadership to the nation.

Biden will be delivering a keynote address later and is expected to deliver remarks on progress made by the US in the last three and a half years. He will also extend support to Harris, pointing towards how she will eventually be the person to carry on that progress.

"I want to kick us off by celebrating our incredible President Joe Biden," Harris said during brief surprise remarks at the DNC in Chicago.

"Thank you for your historic leadership, for your lifetime of service to our nation and for all you will continue to do. We are forever grateful to you," Harris further said.

As the first night of the Democratic National Convention (DNC) has begun in Chicago, US President Joe Biden, First Lady Jill Biden and former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton are among the top speakers at the convention, CNN reported.

It is important to note that a video played Monday at the Democratic National Convention also highlighted Harris' Californian roots and the critical role her mother Shyamala Gopalan, an Indian, played in her upbringing.

Some of the snippets from Harris's childhood flat in California's East Bay were included in the video. Harris is the daughter of Jamaican-born Donald Harris, an 85-year-old retired Stanford University economist, and Indian-born Shyamala Gopalan, a breast cancer researcher who passed away in 2009.

Harris is the first Asian American woman and Black woman to head a significant party ticket.

NORTHWEST CHINA

Five people killed in factory explosion

BEIJING: Five people died in an explosion at a workshop in northwest China's Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, according to local authorities.

The incident took place at a workshop of a new material company located at Ningdong Energy Chemical Industry Base. The open flames at the scene had been fully extinguished.

Rescuers found three people dead at the scene, and later confirmed two previously missing people dead.

The search and rescue tasks have ended. The cause is currently under investigation. — ONA

OFFICIAL STATISTICS

People leaving Sweden will exceed immigrants in 2024

STOCKHOLM: The number of immigrants in Sweden is lower than it has been for a long time.

In early August, Migration Minister Maria Malmer Stenergard said Statistics Sweden, the government's official statistics agency, had found that 5,700 more people had emigrated than immigrated in the period from January to May 2024. Stenergard said the trend was expected to continue, adding that the number of asylum applications had not been as low since 1997.

It's not the first time that Sweden has seen a dramatic drop in asylum applications. In 2016, 28,939 people applied for asylum in the country of just over 10.5 million— significantly down from the 162,877 applications in 2015.

Government tightened migration policies in 2016

The lower figures can be attributed to the government's decision to change course. At the end of 2015, the ruling Social Democrats ended Sweden's previously liberal immigration and integration policies, whereby many asylum-seekers from crisis-ridden countries such as the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq and Somalia had been accepted, and significantly tightened migration policies.

Since October 2022, a minority government led by conservative Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson has been in power, supported by the far-right nationalist Sweden Democrats.

In a report by the German Federal Agency for Civic Education, Swedish migration expert Bernd Parusel wrote that Sweden introduced various measures against a backdrop of major "bottlenecks in registering, finding accommodation for, and caring for asylum-seekers entering the country."

Parusel explained that the measures first concerned access to Swedish territory in order to apply for asylum. Secondly, they were about granting asylum and the legal consequences. Thirdly, the idea was that people should be encouraged to return voluntarily, and deportations should be carried out consistently.

Iraqis, Somalis and Syrians leaving Sweden

According to the Swedish government's most recent press release, there are now more and more people who originally came from Iraq, Somalia or Syria leaving the country. It remains open how many of these voluntary returnees figure in the latest migration statistics. But Stenergard seems convinced that the current figures are down to the more restrictive policies of the past eight years. "The government's efforts are bearing fruit," she said.

The motives of departing immigrants also remain unclear. In 2017, Parusel explained that "making life difficult for asylum-seekers forced to leave the country" is not a suitable method of encouraging people to leave Sweden on a voluntary basis. On the contrary, he said there would be more social hardship if they were deprived of benefits and accommodation.

"The trend toward manageable immigration is crucial if we want to improve integration," said Migration Minister Sternegard.

At first glance, it might appear logical that it's easier to integrate migrants if there are fewer people. — DW

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Tender Number	Tender Description	Last date to collect the tender	Tender return date
PRE-24-190 (RE-CALL)	Hire of Automatic Truck Mounted High Capacity Thermoplastic Road Marking Machine (Unit Rate) (Re-Tender)	31/08/2024	05/09/2024
PRE-23-272 (RE-CALL)	RFP for Application Software Development Service (Re-Tender	10/09/2024	22/09/2024
PRE-24-101 (RE-CALL)	Database Administration Support For Muscat Municipality (Re-Tender)	31/08/2024	05/09/2024
PRE-23-155 (RE-CALL)	Consultancy Services for Design of Festival Land (Re-Tender)	10/09/2024	22/09/2024
PRE-23-287 (RE-CALL)	Design and Construction of dualization of green walk at Al Mabeelah (Re-tender)	31/08/2024	10/09/2024
PRE-24-225	Supply shoes and personal protection tools for workers in various units of Muscat Municipality (Re-Tender)	14/09/2024	30/09/2024
PRE-24-238	Supply of Equipment's for Maintenance Road in Muscat	31/08/2024	10/09/2024
PRE-24-233	Maintenance of photocopiers, faxes machines and central printers	31/08/2024	05/09/2024
PRE-24-239	Providing Technical Assistance to Muscat Municipality in Procurement, Contract, Project Controls, Road Design including Drainage and Traffic Engineering	14/09/2024	30/09/2024
PRE-24-221	Design and construction of internal roads in Al Misfah industrial area	14/09/2024	30/09/2024
PRE-24-208	Supply & installation of lighting poles in Al-Sahwa park	14/09/2024	30/09/2024
PRE-24-223	Development of Al Sarooj Beach	14/09/2024	30/09/2024
PRE-24-232	Paving of parking for Al Anbeiaa Mosque in Almabelah South	14/09/2024	30/09/2024
PRE-24-247	Construction of Toilet and Mosques in Al Amirat Park	31/08/2024	05/09/2024
PRE-24-243	Supply of interlock and Kerbstone	31/08/2024	05/09/2024
PRE-24-244	Hire of Manpower	31/08/2024	05/09/2024
PRE-24-245	Developemt of Al Amirat Park Gate	31/08/2024	05/09/2024
PRE-24-246	Supply and ficing of benches in various locations	31/08/2024	05/09/2024
PRE-24-237	Maintenance of the wadi course in the Mumtaz area in Ruwi	14/09/2024	30/09/2024

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SPORTS

Argentina's maestro Lionel Messi left out of squad for upcoming World Cup qualifiers

The 2022 World Cup winner has been out of action since sustaining an ankle injury in the Copa America 2024 final against Columbia

NEW DELHI: Star forward Lionel Messi has been left out of Argentina's squad for the upcoming World Cup qualifiers against Chile and Colombia.

The 2022 World Cup winner has been out of action since sustaining an ankle injury in the Copa America 2024 final against Columbia last month. In the final, Messi left the pitch in tears after Nico Gonzalez came in as a substitute for him in the 66th minute.

In the first half, Messi sustained a heavy knock following a challenge from Arias. However, the Argentinian maestro got up without any assistance, but there was a slight limp as he resumed the game. His injury aggravated in the second half after he was brought down once again.

Despite Messi's absence, Argentina boast a talented attacking line-up. Julian Alvarez, Lautaro Martinez, Alejandro Garnacho, Giuliano Simeone and Valentin Castellanos will look to carry forward the mantle of scoring goals in the absence of Argentina's leading goal-scorer. Since his ankle injury, Messi ended up missing the MLS All-Star game and Inter Miami's Leagues Cup defence.

Apart from Messi's absence, Argentina will also miss the services of their star winger, Angel Di Maria. The 36-year-old had his last dance in international football following Argentina's 1-0 triumph in the Copa America 2024 final.

In the defensive half, Argentina will enjoy plenty of experience with the inclusion of Nicolas Otamendi, Lisandro Martinez and Cristian Romero.

Shot stopper Emiliano Martinez is expected to don the gloves and hold the final defensive line for Argentina at the goalpost.

In midfield, Enzo Fernandez, Alexis Mac Allister and Rodrigo de Paul will offer plenty of creativity and defensive cover.

Argentina will face Chile on September 6 and will meet their opponent in the Copa America final, Colombia on September 10.

Argentina squad:

Goalkeepers: Walter Benitez (PSV Eindhoven), Geronimo Rulli (Olympique Marseille), Juan Musso (Atalanta), Emiliano Martinez (Aston Villa).

Defenders: Gonzalo Montiel (Sevilla), Nahuel Molina (Atletico Madrid), Cristian Romero (Tottenham), German Pezzella (River Plate), Leonardo Balerdi (Olympique Marseille), Nicolas Otamendi (Benfica), Lisandro Martinez (Manchester United), Nicolas Tagliafico (Olympique Lyon), Valentin Barco (Brighton).

Midfielders: Leandro Paredes (Roma), Guido Rodriguez (West Ham), Alexis Mac Allister (Liverpool), Enzo Fernandez (Chelsea), Giovani Lo Celso (Tottenham), Ezequiel Fernandez (Al Qadisiya), Rodrigo de Paul (Atletico Madrid), Nico Gonzalez (Fiorentina).

Forwards: Alejandro Garnacho (Manchester United), Matias Soule (Roma), Giuliano Simeone, Julian Alvarez both (Atletico Madrid), Valentin Carboni (Olympique Marseille), Lautaro Martinez (Inter Milan) and Valentin Castellanos (Lazio). — ANI

MIXED PERFORMANCES

It's just a position...happy to bat anywhere: Australia's Steve Smith ahead of Border Gavaskar Trophy

NEW DELHI: Australia batter Steven Smith is open to batting at any position ahead of the upcoming Border Gavaskar Trophy against India.

Since David Warner brought the curtain down on his illustrious Test career, Australia promoted Smith to the opening slot.

However, since his promotion, he has had a mixed bag of performances at the opening slot. The 35-year-old has racked up 171 runs at an average of 28.50 in four Test appearances, including a magnificent 91 against the West Indies.

But for Smith, the batting position is "just a number."

"The conversations I've had so far is that we'll go to England. I'm there for the one-dayers, then make a decision after that. There are conversations happening in the background. You see some comments that guys like Usman [Khawaja] has said he likes me down at No. 4, think Marnus is of a similar thought pattern. We'll wait and see. I'm happy to bat anywhere," he said, as quoted from ESPNcricinfo.

"For me, it's just a position. Batting at four, I could be in after the first two balls. I've been in early on many occasions and faced the new ball. For me, it's kind of just a number. I batted at three for a long period of time as well, and we lost wickets inside the first over, and I'll come out and score runs. The only real thing I had to get used to was how quick a turnaround it is when you come off the field, and you only have ten minutes, particularly with the amount of mucking around I have in the changing rooms," he added.

Australia will be eyeing to lift their first Border-Gavaskar title since the 2014-15 2-0 series triumph. Since then, the Baggy Greens have suffered consecutive defeats in series against India on home soil. Ahead of the series, former Australia captain Ricky Ponting recently questioned whether Smtih is the right man to open for the Baggy Greens.

"Probably the only one question there might be with Australia again is if (Steve) Smith's the right man to be opening the batting. That would be the only query that I can see there. But that was all about obviously bringing Cameron Green back into the side," he said in ICC Review.

"So I will rephrase it, not whether Smith's the right man to open the batting but whether he thinks it is the right spot for him. Because I think if he does not think it is the right spot, then they will make a change and get someone else back up there," he added.

The five-match Test series will begin on November 2022 at the Perth Stadium. The fifth and final match of the series will start on January 3 in Sydney.

FAN WEEK

U.S. Open kicks off with fan week

NEW YORK: The 2024 U.S. Open Tennis Championships, one of the four Grand Slam tournaments, kicked off on Monday with the start of Fan Week.

Thousands of tennis enthusiasts flocked to the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in Corona Park, Queens, New York City, to enjoy the festivities.

During Fan Week, attendees can watch qualifying matches and practice sessions, and participate in various events and family-friendly activities. A special Kids' Day will offer young fans chances to watch top players practice, enjoy musical performances, and meet players on a designated stage, along with interactive games.

On Monday, the Chinatown Young Lions Dance Group from New York City performed traditional lion and dragon dances to welcome fans. Tai chi demonstrations and traditional Chinese ribbon dances will also be featured throughout the week.

The main draw of the U.S. Open will begin on August 26, with the women's final set for September 7 and the men's final on September 8. The singles champions will each take home 3.6 million U.S. dollars in prize money, while the doubles champions will share a prize of 750,000 dollars.

Paris Olympics women's singles gold medalist Zheng Qinwen will lead Chinese tennis players into the tournament. -Xinhua

JOKIN APERRIBAY

Real Sociedad president admits talks with Arsenal for Spain midfielder Merino

MADRID: Real Sociedad President Jokin Aperribay has confirmed that the club are still negotiating the future of Spain international midfielder Mikel Merino with Arsenal.

The 28-year-old was left out of the team for Real Sociedad's 2-1 opening day defeat at home to Rayo Vallecano and when asked about his absence, Aperribay admitted the club had taken the decision "that Mikel wouldn't be in the squad, because he wishes to leave."

Merino is in the last year of his contract with the San Sebastian based club and Aperribay says he doesn't want to sign a new deal.

"When we met with Mikel to renew his contract, he said that he feels very close to the club, but if a team from the Premier League came, and he named two or three, he wanted to fulfil his dream of going back there and to be successful." "It wasn't a surprise," admitted the club president.

Merino had a spell on loan with Newcastle United in the 2017-2018 season and Arsenal see him as a part of their plans as they look to overturn Manchester City's dominance of the Premier League. The north-London club are thought to have offered around 25 million euros (28 million U.S. dollars), but Real Sociedad are holding out for more for one of their key players.

"We will talk to Arsenal and defend the interests of La Real. When we consider that the offer is good, we will say yes," concluded Aperribay. -Xinhua

LA LIGA

Four important things on Spain's matchday one

MADRID: Real Madrid's expected victory parade didn't happen as Kylian Mbappe's La Liga debut ended in a draw in Mallorca, while FC Barcelona began their season with a win in Valencia on an opening weekend where parity was the order of the day for much of La Liga.

1. Real Madrid fail to impress against rock-solid Mallorca

All eyes were on Kylian Mbappe on his La Liga debut as Real Madrid drew 1-1 in Mallorca, but it was Rodrygo, the player most likely to lose minutes because of his arrival, who actually scored their side's goal. Real Madrid were clear favorites for all three points and their attack of Mbappe, Rodrygo, Vinicius and Jude Bellingham, with Fede Valverde arriving from deep is certainly enough to impose fear on their rivals. However, Mallorca stuck to their task, defended doggedly, and got their reward when Vedat Muriqi powered in a header to equalize. Carlo Ancelotti was annoyed at his side's poor defending after the game and he could also be worried that without Toni Kroos his side now lacks someone who play the ball out effectively from the back.

2. Lewandowski is still vital as youngsters impress for Barca

Robert Lewandowski scored both goals as Barcelona came back from a goal down to win 2-1 away to Valencia. Hugo Duro had put Valencia ahead and only a goal-line clearance from Pau Cubarsi stopped him doubling their lead moments before Lewandowski was in the right place to score after Lamine Yamal's low cross.

He then kept his calm to net a penalty early in the second half, before Valencia ran out of steam.

Barca coach Hansi Flick showed faith in B-teamers, Marc Casado and Marc Bernal, in the absence of Frenkie de Jong and Ilkay Gundogan and with Barca's finances still a problem, their displays could see the club look to move Gundogan on before the end of the month.

3. Early season fitness an issue for Athletic Bilbao

48,000 fans packed into Athletic Bilbao's San Mames stadium for their opening game against Getafe, with high hopes the club can improve on last season's Copa del Rey win and fifth place in LaLiga.

The 1-1 draw they saw had the high point of a spectacular goal from Oihan Sancet and the huge ovation for Nico Williams on his return to action after rejecting a move to Barcelona, but overall, the Basque side looked flat and Getafe were good value for their point.

Athletic's pressing game relies on their being at peak fitness and after a pre-season disrupted by injuries, several players are still getting to their best. Coach Ernesto Valverde now has nine days to get them into shape before they visit Barca on Saturday.

4. Draws to get underway

With eight of 10 games played to date, five have ended in draws, with only Rayo Vallecano, Celta Vigo and Barcelona winning their games.

While some may say that is down to the parity between most of the teams in La Liga, it is more likely down to the fact that several clubs are still without players who took part in the European Championships and Olympic Games. For example, none of Athletic Bilbao's Spain internationals started against Getafe and neither Martin Zubimendi nor Mikel Merino kicked off for Real Sociedad against Rayo. Consequently, some teams are still short of full fitness and will improve in the next couple of weeks when they get up to speed. -Xinhua

OMAN CRUDE PRICE FALLS

The price of Oman oil has decreased, with prices for delivery by October 2024 reaching $75.71, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil fell by $2.13 from the price of Monday, which was $77.84. - ONA

MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 4,693.07 points, up by 0.42% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.13% at 443.64 points. Voltamp Energy, up 2.91%, was the top gainer while Financial Corporation, down 9.62%, was the top loser.

Oman's vehicle spare parts import crosses OMR44mn by end of May

The total value of Oman's exports of vehicle spare parts by the end of May 2024 grew by 27.04 percent to OMR9,868,483, compared to OMR7,767,713 in the corresponding period in 2023

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman's total imports of vehicle spare parts by the end of the first five months of 2024 declined 11.8 percent to OMR44,695,140 as against OMR50,683,871 during the corresponding period in 2023, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) topped the list of countries supplying vehicle spare parts to Oman as at the end of May 2024, to the tune of OMR19,480,336. Japan occupied second place (OMR13,728,648), followed by India (OMR2,156,903), Thailand (OMR1,999,484) and China (OMR1,669,950).

Yet, the total value of Oman's exports of vehicle spare parts by the end of May 2024 grew by 27.04 percent to OMR9,868,483, compared to OMR7,767,713 in the corresponding period in 2023, according to the NCSI.

The total weight of vehicle spare part exports from Oman during the first five months of 2024 stood at 14,327,313 kilograms, compared to 10,244,585 kilograms during the corresponding by the corresponding period in 2023.

The Czech Republic topped the list of countries importing vehicle spare parts from Oman by the end of May of 2024 (to the tune of OMR4,098,425), followed by the United States of Mexico (OMR2,066,158), the Netherlands (OMR1,193,587), the United States of America (OMR709,888) and the United Arab Emirates (OMR510,330).

However, the value of vehicle spare part re-exports from Oman as at the end of May 2024 dropped 65.66 percent to OMR11,125,786 as against the same re-exports during the corresponding period in 2023 (OMR32,396,522).

The total weights of vehicle spare parts that were re-exported from Oman during the first five months of 2024 stood at 2,646,405 kilograms, compared to 5,286,371 kilograms at the end of May 2023.

The UAE topped the list of countries to which vehicle spare parts were re-exported from Oman by the end of May 2024 (Value: OMR7,282,841), followed by Turkey (OMR2,170,831), the United Kingdom (OMR636,822), the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg (OMR132,236), and the United States of America (OMR128,680).

As many as 1,527 establishments operated in the sale of vehicle spare parts in Oman by the end of April of 2024, among them 856 operated in the business of selling new spare parts for vehicles and 671 in the retail sale of used spare parts. - ONA

BULLION

Gold climbs to fresh record high with focus on Jackson Hole symposium

NEW YORK: Gold resumed its rally to hit another record high as traders focus attention on comments from Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell due later this week.

Bloomberg reported that bullion climbed above US$2,520 an ounce Tuesday, after falling slightly in the previous session. Powell is set to speak Friday at the annual Jackson Hole symposium in Wyoming, where his comments will be closely analysed for clues about the central bank's thinking on widely expected cuts to interest rates.

Traders will also be monitoring other US reports due this week, including jobless claims figures on Thursday, which could play into the Fed's plans. Lower rates are often seen as positive for non-interest bearing gold.

The precious metal has surged more than 20 percent so far this year. Along with expectations of rate cuts, the rally has been helped by robust purchasing by central banks. It has also been supported by haven demand amid ongoing conflicts in the Middle East and Ukraine.

"Gold remains in record-setting mode ahead of Powell's Jackson Hole speech on Friday," said Ole Hansen, head of commodity strategy at Saxo Bank A/S. "With the dollar and yields not providing much inspiration today, the main driver is the current positive momentum and limited selling appetite basically leaving the path of least resistance to the upside."

Still, there are signs that gold's stellar run may now be weighing on demand in China, after a report showed last month's imports fell to the lowest since May 2022.

Spot gold rose 0.7 percent to US$2,521.51 an ounce by 10:04 in London. The Bloomberg Dollar Spot Index slipped further, while US 10-year Treasury yields were broadly steady. Palladium, platinum and silver also gained. -WAM

RATE CUT BETS

Dollar hangs near 7-month low

SINGAPORE: The dollar hung near a seven-month low today on wagers the US central bank will start cutting interest rates from next month.

The dollar index, which measures the US currency against six rivals, touched its lowest since Jan. 2 of 101.82 yesterday.

The Japanese yen was a shade stronger at 146.50 per dollar.

The euro last fetched $1.1080 today having touched $1.108775, its highest since December 28 in early trading. The single currency is up 2.4% this month, on course for its strongest monthly performance since November.

The pound was steady at $1.2985 in early trading.

The Australian dollar was 0.12% lower at $0.6725, while the New Zealand dollar was little changed at $0.61135. - ONA

SECOND QUARTER

ahlibank hosts branch managers meeting to drive strategic growth

Times News Service

MUSCAT: ahlibank recently convened its Branch Managers Meeting for the second quarter of 2024, focusing on key achievements, operational updates, and the bank's overarching strategy. This gathering served as a vital platform for employees to exchange ideas, share insights, and discuss the performance of the bank across various departments.

The gathering highlighted discerning topics such as operations control, product development, credit department, change management, innovation, E-channels, wealth management, and more. Powered by its extensive branch network established nationwide, the branch managers provided insight into their joint efforts, exploring new avenues to boost customer experience and address the various strategies to implement.

During the gathering, Muneer Al Balushi, AGM – Head of Retail Distribution, commended the various teams for their diligent efforts, saying, "We will remain steadfast in our commitment to excellence, as we gather to highlight the course our journey took us over the past months, and planning for what's to come. Our future is a promising one, as we continue to deliver unparalleled service, and instill trust by adding value to our customers. Through our collaborative means and shared vision, we will seize opportunities, and continue to elevate our customer's banking experience; meeting their needs and surpassing their expectations. ahlibank will continue to be the Partner in Excellence by setting new standards and enhancing its presence throughout the country."

The meeting ended with a rewards distribution to the best-performing branches. The several ahlibank teams received recognition for their efforts in propelling the Bank forwards, further exemplifying its commitment to excellence and success during the second quarter of 2024, and beyond.

BLOCKS 3&4

Tethys July oil production in Oman reaches 238,290 barrels

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Tethys Oil's share of the production, before government take, from Blocks 3&4 onshore the Sultanate of Oman, in July 2024 amounted to 238,290 barrels of oil, corresponding to 7,687 barrels of oil per day.

Benchmark price

The Official Selling Price (OSP) for Oman Export Blend Crude Oil for the month of July 2024 was $83.89 per barrel. The OSP, as published by the Sultanate of Oman's Ministry of Energy and Minerals, is the benchmark price for Tethys Oil's monthly oil sales excluding trading and quality adjustments.

Tethys Oil, through its wholly owned subsidiary Tethys Oil Block 3 & 4, has a 30 percent interest in Blocks 3&4. Partners are Mitsui E&P Middle East with 20 percent and the operator CC Energy Development (Oman branch) holding the remaining 50 percent. Tethys Oil is an oil exploration and production company with focus on onshore areas with known oil discoveries.

Core area

The company's core area is Oman, where it holds interests in Blocks 3&4, Block 49, Block 56 and Block 58. Tethys Oil has net working interest 2P reserves of 21.7 million barrels of oil (mmbo) and net working interest 2C Contingent Resources of 15.5 mmbo and had an average oil production of 8,818 barrels per day during 2023. The company's shares are listed on Nasdaq Stockholm.

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Voltamp Energy, up 2.91%, was the top gainer while, Financial Corporation, down 9.62%, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,693.07 points, up by 0.42% from previous close. The Shariah Index ended up by 0.13% at 443.64 points.

Voltamp Energy, up 2.91%, was the top gainer while, Financial Corporation, down 9.62%, 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 473 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of RO 1.5 million, with more than 7.68 million shares changing hands. Out of 48 traded securities, 13 advanced, 13 declined, and 22 remained unchanged.

At the session close, domestic investors were net buyers for RO 214K while foreign investors were net sellers for RO 207K, followed by GCC & Arab investors for RO 8K worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,637.16 points, up 0.49%. Prices of Bank Nizwa, Sohar International Bank, Al Sharqia Investment, Al Anwar Investment, and Bank Muscat were up by 1.94%, 1.52%, 1.37%, 1.33%, and 1.17% respectively. Prices of Financial Corporation, Al Omaniya Financial Services, Takaful Oman, and National Bank Oman were down by 9.62%, 6.79%, 2.13%, and 0.36% respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,833.77 points, up 0.16%. Prices of Voltamp Energy, Raysut Cement, Al Anwar Ceramics, and Oman Flour Mills were up by 2.91%, 0.81%, 0.56%, and 0.22% respectively. Prices of Gulf International Chemicals, Galfar Engineering, and Muscat Thread Mill were down by 4.29%, 1.43%, and 1.00% respectively.

Services Index was up by 0.06% before closing at 1,819.38 points. Prices of Ooredoo, Al Suwadi Power, Oman Telecom were up by 1.41%, 1.33%, 0.40% respectively. Prices of Oman Oil Marketing, Majan College, Al Batinah Power, Abraj Energy, Renaissance Services were down by 1.88%, 1.84%, 1.33%, 0.66%, and 0.50% respectively.— United Securities

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	4,696.39	4,672.84	4,693.07	4,673.30	19.77	0.42
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,637.16	7,599.82	7,637.16	7,599.82	37.34	0.49
Industry Index	5,841.29	5,824.22	5,833.77	5,824.22	9.56	0.16
Services Index	1,821.90	1,817.39	1,819.38	1,818.34	1.04	0.06
MSX Shariah Index	443.73	442.88	443.64	443.04	0.60	0.13
MSX TR INDEX	6,527.25	6,494.51	6,522.63	6,495.15	27.48	0.42
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,676.60	8,634.17	8,676.60	8,634.17	42.42	0.49
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	6,739.46	6,719.76	6,730.78	6,719.76	11.02	0.16
SERVICES TR IDX	2,120.06	2,114.82	2,117.13	2,115.93	1.21	0.06
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
7,687,864	1,495,769	473	24,442,194,292	13	13	22	48

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR TUESDAY, AUGUST 20

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
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	765,454	102,086	29	0.132	0.134	0.132	0.134	0.132	0.002	1.515	0.134	0.124	0.141	0.100	747,351,000
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	210,000	59,530	7	0.283	0.287	0.283	0.287	0.283	0.004	1.413	0.287	0.282	0.286	0.100	186,820,994
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIYA INVESTMENT HO.	87,157	6,410	11	0.073	0.074	0.073	0.074	0.073	0.001	1.370	0.074	0.074	0.076	0.100	6,660,000
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	68,000	5,169	6	0.076	0.077	0.076	0.076	0.075	0.001	1.333	0.076	0.075	0.080	0.100	54,294,882
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	903,735	233,221	24	0.258	0.259	0.257	0.259	0.256	0.003	1.172	0.259	0.254	0.259	0.100	1,944,156,839
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	7,000	1,245	3	0.177	0.180	0.177	0.180	0.179	0.001	0.559	0.180	0.174	0.185	0.100	39,600,000
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	253,460	253,207	32	0.999	0.999	0.999	0.999	0.995	0.004	0.402	0.999	0.999	0.999	0.100	749,250,000
OM0000001087	OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	1,190	298	1	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.000	0.000	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.100	25,000,000
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	100,000	7,400	5	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.000	0.000	0.074	0.071	0.075	0.100	9,018,750
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	2,000	558	1	0.279	0.279	0.279	0.279	0.279	0.000	0.000	0.279	0.277	0.279	0.100	34,846,531
OM0000002804	ASAFFA FOODS	1,000	400	1	0.400	0.400	0.400	0.400	0.400	0.000	0.000	0.400	0.394	0.408	0.100	48,000,000
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	144,900	10,868	10	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.000	0.000	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.100	15,000,000
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	65,000	5,005	8	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.000	0.000	0.077	0.077	0.078	0.100	13,475,000
OM0000009072	OQ GAS NETWORKS	1,915,265	269,158	88	0.140	0.141	0.140	0.140	0.140	0.000	0.000	0.140	0.140	0.140	0.100	606,287,349
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	100,000	27,440	4	0.275	0.275	0.274	0.274	0.275	-0.001	-0.364	0.274	0.272	0.274	0.100	445,509,301
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	142,075	56,448	75	0.398	0.401	0.395	0.396	0.398	-0.002	-0.503	0.396	0.395	0.396	0.100	93,618,360
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	801,279	241,937	34	0.302	0.303	0.300	0.300	0.302	-0.002	-0.662	0.300	0.300	0.302	0.100	231,060,000
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	413,000	30,562	18	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.075	-0.001	-1.333	0.074	0.073	0.080	0.100	49,941,670
Total	18	5,980,515	1,310,940	357												

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
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	37,100	13,113	6	0.344	0.354	0.344	0.354	0.344	0.010	2.907	0.354	0.340	0.354	0.100	28,816,574
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	659,737	68,752	18	0.104	0.105	0.104	0.105	0.103	0.002	1.942	0.105	0.103	0.105	0.100	234,880,068
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	103,169	7,738	4	0.075	0.076	0.075	0.076	0.075	0.001	1.333	0.076	0.074	0.077	0.100	16,125,680
OM0000001400	OMAN FLOUR MILLS	9,056	4,175	2	0.461	0.461	0.461	0.461	0.460	0.001	0.217	0.461	0.461	0.000	0.100	72,607,500
OM0000001046	PACKAGING CO. LTD	1,000	1,950	1	1.950	1.950	1.950	1.950	1.950	0.000	0.000	1.950	0.000	1.950	1.000	5,850,000
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	88,330	4,946	6	0.056	0.056	0.056	0.056	0.056	0.000	0.000	0.056	0.056	0.056	0.100	4,760,000
OM0000002200	AHLI BANK	67,000	10,050	2	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.000	0.000	0.150	0.145	0.165	0.100	352,448,620
OM0000002267	GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS	11,200	2,454	2	0.220	0.220	0.219	0.219	0.219	0.000	0.000	0.219	0.219	0.220	0.100	10,022,710
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	46,900	7,270	5	0.155	0.155	0.155	0.155	0.155	0.000	0.000	0.155	0.155	0.156	0.100	8,525,000
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	161,000	9,338	1	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.000	0.000	0.058	0.058	0.060	0.100	84,830,885
OM0000007407	DHOFAR GENERATING	19,100	1,356	2	0.071	0.071	0.071	0.071	0.071	0.000	0.000	0.071	0.069	0.075	0.100	15,779,040
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	209,691	14,121	19	0.068	0.069	0.067	0.068	0.068	0.000	0.000	0.068	0.065	0.068	0.100	33,376,874
OM0000008868	THE PEARL REIF	20,000	2,320	4	0.116	0.116	0.116	0.116	0.116	0.000	0.000	0.116	0.116	0.116	0.100	58,940,011
OM0000002036	MUSCAT THREAD MILLS	10,000	993	2	0.100	0.100	0.099	0.099	0.100	-0.001	-1.000	0.099	0.099	0.000	0.100	1,623,016
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	46,168	6,448	9	0.140	0.140	0.138	0.138	0.140	-0.002	-1.429	0.138	0.137	0.140	0.100	28,012,130
OM0000001897	MAJAN COLLEGE	250	27	1	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.109	-0.002	-1.835	0.107	0.105	0.114	0.100	9,630,000
OM0000002572	OMAN OIL MARKETING	200	157	1	0.785	0.785	0.785	0.785	0.800	-0.015	-1.875	0.785	0.785	0.880	0.100	48,100,875
OM0000004776	TAKAFUL OMAN	4,000	184	1	0.046	0.046	0.046	0.046	0.047	-0.001	-2.128	0.046	0.046	0.046	0.100	11,500,000
OM0000002028	GULF INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS	50,000	3,350	7	0.068	0.068	0.067	0.067	0.070	-0.003	-4.286	0.067	0.068	0.070	0.100	1,407,000
OM0000002077	AL OMANIYA FINANCIAL SERVICES	10,000	1,510	1	0.151	0.151	0.151	0.151	0.162	-0.011	-6.790	0.151	0.146	0.159	0.100	47,627,967
OM0000002911	FINANCIAL CORPORATION	5,584	262	1	0.047	0.047	0.047	0.047	0.052	-0.005	-9.615	0.047	0.047	0.052	0.100	3,291,408
Total	21	1,559,485	160,514	95												

TANGIBLE BENEFITS

China-Africa economic, trade cooperation reaches new heights

BEIJING: China-Africa economic and trade cooperation has continued to scale new heights since the 2021 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), delivering tangible benefits to the people of both China and Africa, Assistant Minister of Commerce Tang Wenhong said Tuesday.

Tang made the remarks at a press conference detailing the progress and achievements that have been made under the nine cooperation programs China announced during the FOCAC's 8th Ministerial Conference held three years ago in Senegal.

These nine programs span categories such as medical and health, poverty reduction and agricultural development, trade and investment promotion, digital innovation, green development and capacity building, among others.

According to Tang, driven by programs aimed at trade and investment promotion as well as poverty reduction and agricultural development, China-Africa investment and trade cooperation has developed steadily.

"China has remained Africa's largest trading partner for 15 consecutive years," Tang said, noting that in 2023, China-Africa trade reached 282.1 billion U.S. dollars, up nearly 11 percent compared with 2021, which demonstrates the strong resilience of China-Africa trade. -Xinhua

TELECOM REGULATORY AUTHORITY OF INDIA

Indian telecom sector soars in 2023-2024 with record subscriber growth

NEW DELHI: The Indian telecom sector has achieved growth during the financial year 2023-2024, as revealed in the latest annual report released by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI).

According to the Ministry of Telecommunications, the report underscores growth trends and key metrics across various telecom services, compiled from data provided by service providers. It reveals that India's overall teledensity rose from 84.51 per cent at the end of March 2023 to 85.69 per cent at the end of March 2024, marking an annual growth rate of 1.39 per cent.

The number of internet subscribers jumped from 88.1 crore at the end of March 2023 to 95.4 crore by March 2024, reflecting an 8.30 per cent annual growth rate and adding 7.3 crore new subscribers over the year.

Broadband services continued their upward trajectory, with subscribers increasing from 84.6 crore to 92.4 crore. This robust 9.15 per cent growth rate and the addition of 7.8 crore new broadband subscribers highlight the growing demand for high-speed connectivity.

The count of wireless data subscribers climbed from 84.6 crore in March 2023 to 91.3 crore in March 2024, a growth of 7.93 per cent. Additionally, the total volume of wireless data usage surged from 1,60,054 PB in 2022-23 to 1,94,774 PB in 2023-24, reflecting a 21.69 per cent annual increase.

The number of telephone subscribers rose from 117.2 crore to 119.9 crore, achieving a 2.30 per cent growth rate. The overall teledensity in India improved from 84.51 per cent to 85.69 per cent over the year, a 1.39 per cent increase.

The average minutes of usage (MOUs) per subscriber per month grew from 919 in 2022-23 to 963 in 2023-24, representing a 4.73 per cent annual increase.

Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) rose from Rs 2,49,908 crore in 2022-23 to Rs 2,70,504 crore in 2023-24, marking an 8.24 per cent annual growth.

This report not only outlines the key metrics and growth trends for India's telecom sector in 2023-24 but also provides a comprehensive overview for stakeholders, research agencies, and analysts. -ANI

WORLD GREEN ECONOMY SUMMIT

WGES to prioritise climate justice, empower vulnerable communities

DUBAI: The World Green Economy Summit (WGES) has announced that achieving climate justice and empowering impoverished communities are the top objectives of the summit.

The summit, held under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, serves as a premier platform for dialogue, exploring solutions, and making decisions that support global efforts in combating climate change and empowering vulnerable communities.

He added that the summit will focus on advancing green policies, promoting cutting-edge technologies, and facilitating the transition to a green economy, while addressing the risks and challenges associated with energy supply to support the green energy transition.

The summit is organised by the Dubai Supreme Council of Energy, DEWA, and the World Green Economy Organisation (WGEO). The 10th WGES will be held on October 2024 at the Dubai World Trade Centre under the theme "Empowering Global Action: Unlocking Opportunities and Advancing Progress".

Its main thematic pillars this year include decarbonisation, clean energy advancements (including green hydrogen and energy storage), climate finance, circular economy, using technology to tackle climate change, youth in climate change, and food and water. -WAM

LIFESTYLE

STUDY FINDS HOW RARE DISEASES HIGHLIGHT CONNECTIONS BETWEEN METABOLISM, IMMUNITY

The findings suggest that patients with an inborn error of metabolism may also have immune defects that could impact their care, and conversely that metabolic defects may contribute to symptoms in patients with inborn errors of immunity

A new study suggested that inherited immune and metabolism disorders are more similar than previously believed. The results provide fresh information that may help patients with these illnesses receive better care by highlighting a novel collection of metabolic genes that are critical for immune system T cell activity.

The findings of the study were published in the journal Science Immunology.

The study looked at the genes that lead to inborn errors of immunity, which are illnesses that impact immune system function, and inborn errors of metabolism, which are diseases of the mechanisms cells employ to transform food into energy. We don't fully understand these uncommon and complicated disorders.

"There had previously been only a small number of genes that were on both lists of diseases, but we found that many more have overlap," said Andrew Patterson, PhD, who led the study as a postdoctoral fellow working with Jeffrey Rathmell, PhD, at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. "Our study showed that a large number of genes associated with inborn errors of metabolism can also potentially affect T cell function when they are mutated."

The findings suggest that patients with an inborn error of metabolism may also have immune defects that could impact their care, and conversely that metabolic defects may contribute to symptoms in patients with inborn errors of immunity.

"There's a lot more that will have to be learned, but these connections might point to different therapies," said Rathmell, Cornelius Vanderbilt Professor of Immunobiology and director of the Vanderbilt Center for Immunobiology. "Rather than different categories, these diseases are part of a continuum; there's a gray zone between them and a potential new class of inborn errors of immunometabolism that intersects the two."

Patterson and the research team used a gene-editing CRISPR approach to screen the inborn errors of metabolism genes for immune defects and the inborn errors of immunity genes for metabolic defects. They further analyzed one example from each set -- one metabolic gene that had an immune defect; one immunity gene that had a metabolic defect -- to more carefully examine the mechanistic impact.

Overall, Rathmell's team is interested in discovering how metabolic pathways regulate T cell function, with the goal of developing targeted therapies for immune-mediated disorders.

"What we've done is lay the foundation for further investigation," Patterson said. "The two examples we studied in detail point to new biology and new mechanisms, and there are hundreds of other genes we identified to analyze for their roles in T cell function."

"If you're trying to understand the connections between metabolism and immunity, this is a great place to start," Rathmell said.

Patterson recently joined the faculty of the University of Louisville as an assistant professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Genetics. Vanderbilt collaborators Vivian Gama, PhD, associate professor of Cell and Developmental Biology, and Janet Markle, PhD, assistant professor of Pathology, Microbiology and Immunology, were important contributors to the study. - ANI

SPORTS

Pakistan announce playing eleven for first Test against Bangladesh

The two-match Test series will kick off on August 21 at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Monday announced their playing eleven for their first Test match against Bangladesh.

The two-match Test series will kick off on August 21 at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium. The two Tests against Bangladesh will mark the first assignment of Jason Gillespie as Pakistan's Test coach.

The second Test of the two-match series is set to be played from August 30 to September 3 in Karachi.

Shaheen Shah Afridi, Naseem Shah, Khurram Shahzad and Mohammad Ali are the top four pacers for Pakistan who will play against Bangladesh in the first Test match. Meanwhile, Saud Shakeel and Salman Ali Agha will be the hosts' spin bowlers. Abdullah Shafique and Saim Ayub will open for Pakistan. While Shan Masood and Babar Azam will be in action in the middle order.

Fast bowler Aamir Jamal has been released from the squad due to ongoing fitness issues which impacted Pakistan's lineup against Bangladesh.

Jamal, who suffered a back injury while playing County cricket in England earlier this year, was initially included in Pakistan's squad for the ICC World Test Championship series, pending a fitness clearance. However, the 28-year-old has not fully recovered from his back problem and has been sent to the National Cricket Academy in Lahore for rehabilitation.

Pakistan's playing XI for the 1st Test against Bangladesh: Abdullah Shafique, Saim Ayub, Shan Masood (C), Babar Azam, Saud Shakeel (VC), Mohammad Rizwan (WK), Salman Ali Agha, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Naseem Shah, Khurram Shahzad, Mohammad Ali. – ANI

None of our stadiums are of international standard: PCB chief Mohsin Naqvi

LAHORE: Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Mohsin Naqvi on Monday said that none of the stadiums in Pakistan are 'of international standard'.

Ahead of the upcoming Champions Trophy 2025 which will be held in Pakistan, PCB has directed the renovation of the National Stadium in Karachi, Rawalpindi International Cricket Stadium and Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore at the cost of Rs12.8 billion, according to Geo News.

Speaking at a press conference while reviewing the renovation work at Gaddafi Stadium, Naqvi said that there's a huge difference between the international stadiums and the ones in Pakistan.

"There's a huge difference in international stadiums and those of ours [...] none of our stadiums are of international standard," Naqvi was quoted by Geo News as saying.

The PCB chief added that the Frontier Works Organisation is working to make the stadiums in Pakistan one of the best in the world.

"The Frontier Works Organisation (FWO) team is working day and night. [We] will make our stadiums one of the best in the world [...] providing basic facilities in stadiums is [our] first priority," he added.

Earlier on Sunday, PCB decided to shift the second Test between Pakistan and Bangladesh from Karachi to Rawalpindi due to the ongoing construction work in Karachi National Stadium for next year's ICC Champions Trophy. -ANI

REWRITE HISTORY

Samoa's Visser achieves iconic feat, shatters record for most runs in single over in T20I

APIA: Samoa wicket-keeper batter Darius Visser rewrote history by shattering the record of scoring the most runs in a single over in men's T20I.

During Samoa's match against Vanuatu in the ongoing ICC Men's T20 World Cup Sub Regional East Asia-Pacific Qualifier A event on Tuesday, Visser garnered 39 runs in a single over at Garden Oval No.2 in Apia.

In the 15th over of the Qualifier A match, Visser smacked six towering sixes and was helped with three no-balls from Vanuatu seamer Nalin Nipiko.

He surpassed India's former all-rounder Yuvraj Singh's iconic feat of six sixes that saw him amass 36 runs in a single over off England's Stuart Broad in the inaugural ICC T20 World Cup in 2007 and more recent efforts from Kieron Pollard (2021 - 36 runs), Nicholas Pooran (2024 - 36 runs), Dipendra Singh Airee (2024 - 36 runs).

Visser smashed three consecutive sixes from the first three deliveries of Nipiko's over. He once again cleared the boundary rope from the fourth legal delivery of the over to propel Samoa to a score of hundred.

Nipiko tried to dampen Visser's spirits by producing a dot ball from the fifth delivery of the over. But the 28-year-old continued to ride high on the momentum and smashed a maximum from the third no-ball of the over. To add icing on the cake he finished the over with another six to ensure he broke the record and became the first player from Samoa to score a century in international cricket.

Visser's impressive display was laced with a total of 14 sixes, four short of the most hit by one batter in a men's T20I.

His impact performance of 132 from just 62 deliveries was enough to ensure Samoa registered their second victory at the event.

Their triumph kept their hopes of qualifying for the next edition of the T20 World Cup in 2026 alive. -ANI

TWO-MATCH TEST SERIES

Head coach Chandika Hathurusinghe admits 'batting has been a concern' for Bangladesh

RAWALPINDI : Ahead of his side's two-match Test series against Pakistan, Bangladesh head coach Chandika Hathurusinghe accepted that there has been a concern with their batting.

Speaking at the pre-match press conference, Hathurusinghe called the pitches in Bangladesh are "result-oriented wickets". He added that the wickets in Pakistan are favourable batting.

"Batting has been a concern for a while, but not for one reason. We play in result-oriented wickets back home. Sometimes 250 is a winning score in those pitches. Obviously when you play on these pitches, the batters have a tough time. I hope the pitches in Pakistan generally favour batting. It is a good contest between bat and ball. We will show better result on these pitches," Hathurusinghe was quoted by ESPNcricinfo as saying.

The head coach praised his side's pacers and said that they performed well in the recently concluded T20 World Cup.

"The fast bowlers did well in the [T20] World Cup where they had favourable conditions. It hasn't happened overnight. It developed in the last two years. They have not played 20 Tests altogether, so they are young fast bowlers compared to the Pakistan attack. I am really excited to see how they continue," he added.

Bangladesh squad: Najmul Hossain Shanto (C), Mahmudul Hasan Joy, Zakir Hasan, Shadman Islam, Mominul Haque, Mushfiqur Rahim, Shakib Al Hasan, Litton Das, Mehidy Hasan Miraz, Taijul Islam, Nayeem Hasan, Nahid Rana, Shoriful Islam, Hasan Mahmud, Taskin Ahmed, Syed Khaled A hmed. -ANI

ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT

Gundogan ends his international career with German football team

BERLIN: Ilkay Gundogan, captain of the German national football team, has announced his retirement from international football and his absence from the 2026 World Cup, which will be hosted by Canada, the United States and Mexico.

Gundogan decided to end his football career with the German national team, which he began with his first appearance in 2011.

Gundogan participated in 82 matches with the German national team, and led his country in the last European Nations Championship (Euro 2024) in Germany before losing to Spain in the quarter-finals.

The German player continues to play for the Spanish club Barcelona, despite speculation that he wants to leave. -ONA

HIS PLAN

England's Lawrence aims to score runs, stay in contention for future selection

MANCHESTE: England batter Dan Lawrence is aiming to put runs on board and put his name in the hat for his selection in the squad in the future.

England will kick off a three-match Test series against Sri Lanka in Manchester on Wednesday.

Lawrence, who played his last Test against the West Indies in 2022, was also included in the playing XI.

While outlining his plan for the three Tests against Sri Lanka, the 27-year-old wants to enjoy his time on the crease and put runs on the board to stay in contention for England's Test team in the future.

"I was just waiting for an opportunity. And wherever that was, in the order, I was going to snap their hands off for it. So I'm just going to enjoy these few weeks and hopefully score some runs and put my name in the hat for future selection," Lawrence said, as quoted from ESPNcricinfo.

"I think ultimately, the best thing about this environment is allowing players - or new players - to go out there and be as free as possible.

"Whereas, necessarily, in the past, it might not have been like that. But watching all the boys go out there and debut and take five-fors and score loads of runs, it's quite evident that boys are going out there and just relaxing and having a good time. And that's what I'm going to try and do," he added.

With Ben Stokes out of the mix due to injury, England named Ollie Pope as the skipper of the side while announcing their playing XI. With Pope taking the captaincy charge, Harry Brook will serve as his deputy for the three Tests.

Recently, England recorded a 3-0 series sweep against the Windies to move up to 6th place in the World Test Championship standings. However, South Africa's recent 1-0 series win over the West Indies led to England dropping to the seventh spot. They will look to improve their standings and push their name for the WTC final, which will be played next year at The Lord's.

England's (Playing XI) for the first Test against Sri Lanka: Dan Lawrence, Ben Duckett, Ollie Pope (C), Joe Root, Harry Brook, Jamie Smith (WK), Chris Woakes, Gus Atkinson, Matthew Potts, Mark Wood, Shoaib Bashir.

Saud Bahwan Automotive unveils stylish & luxurious Toyota Camry

The all-new Toyota Camry is a true masterpiece, designed to capture attention with its stunning profile

MUSCAT: Recently, at an exclusive event held at the Toyota showroom at Wattayah, Saud Bahwan Automotive unveiled the all-new Toyota Camry.

The event was attended by Jota Yamamoto, Ambassador of Japan to the Sultanate of Oman, Shunsuke Chijiiwa, Deputy Chief Representative of Dubai Office at Toyota Motor Corporation and distinguished guests from both the public and private sectors.

Speaking at the occasion Abdullah Mohamed Bahwan, Managing Director – Corporate, Saud Bahwan Group said, "For decades, Toyota has been the brand of choice for families in Oman. Each model, renowned for its quality, dependability and reliability, has become a trusted companion on our roads. The all-new Toyota Camry is poised to carry forward this proud legacy, making lasting impressions on enthusiasts and drivers alike. At Saud Bahwan Automotive, our commitment goes beyond delivering exceptional vehicles. We continually invest in nurturing a talented workforce and establishing world-class facilities to enhance the joy of ownership for our customers."

Expressing his gratitude to customers and to Toyota Motor Corporation he said, "We are deeply grateful to our loyal customers in Oman, who have supported us through generations. Your trust and loyalty are the cornerstones of our success. We also extend our heartfelt thanks to the team at Toyota Motor Corporation for their unwavering support and guidance."

Sharing his views on the all-new Toyota Camry he said, "The all-new Toyota Camry is a true masterpiece, designed to capture attention with its stunning profile. Inside, it offers a meticulously crafted environment that promises some of the finest on-road experiences. With a gasoline & hybrid engine options, customers can choose the level of performance and efficiency that best suits their needs."

Later in the evening Shunsuke Chijiiwa, Deputy Chief Representative of Dubai Office at Toyota Motor Corporation, sharing his thoughts about Toyota Motor Corporation and Saud Bahwan Group's journey as partners said, "Toyota Motor Corporation has a very long relationship with Saud Bahwan Automotive, for more than 50 years since 1975. They are one of the most important partners among the all the distributors in the world. That's why, the late Honorary Chairman of Toyota Motor Corporation, Dr Shoichiro Toyoda and his son and current Chairman Mr. Akio Toyoda have visited Oman and deepened their personal relationship with Bahwan family, which is not always the case with other distributors."

Expressing his thoughts about the all-new Toyota Camry he said, "As a part of such production strategy, our brand-new product, Camry is going to be launched today in Oman. I'm very honoured to be able to participate in such an exciting event. I can see so many Camry on the road in Oman and from that, I can feel that our Camry has been cherished in Oman for long time. With this model change, we have improved the design, driving performance and other aspects, so I believe that all of you will enjoy the new generation Camry."

Later in the evening customers went around experiencing the all-new Camry and what makes this vehicle stand out.

The all-new Camry offers two powertrain options: a 2.5-litre four-cylinder in line VVTi - engine producing 201 hp and 240 Nm of torque, paired with an eight-speed Direct-Shift Multi-mode automatic transmission, and the Camry HEV with an electrified hybrid system that combines a petrol engine and two electric motors, delivering a combined power of 226 hp. The hybrid version is paired with an Electrically Controlled Continuously Variable Transmission (ECVT), providing an exceptional driving experience.

The all-new Toyota Camry is now on display at all Saud Bahwan Automotive showrooms.

SPECIAL OCCASION

Indian School Darsait celebrates 78th Independence Day in style

MUSCAT: Indian School Darsait celebrated India's 78th Independence Day on 15 August 2024 with great patriotic fervor and pride in the Senior School auditorium.

The event was attended by Vijaya Saravanan Sankaran, President of the School Management Committee, who was the Chief Guest. The celebration saw enthusiastic participation from members of the School Management Committee, parents, and numerous well-wishers, reflecting a vibrant display of unity, diversity, and the rich cultural heritage of India.

The programme commenced with the Indian National Anthem. AadilShaham, the Head Boy, extended a warm welcome to the gathering. In his address, the Chief Guest emphasized the country's progress and the responsibilities that lie ahead for every citizen, especially the younger generation. He also shared excerpts from the message of the President of India, Droupadi Murmu, which was met with great reverence.

The Primary Wing choir set a lively tone for the day with a medley of popular patriotic songs. Students from both the Primary and Senior sections performed spirited and graceful dances, depicting the diverse cultural tapestry of India. The Senior School choir delivered a powerful rendition of patriotic songs that deeply resonated with the audience.

Notably, the choir had the honor of performing at the Independence Day celebration held earlier in the morning at the Indian Embassy. The Primary section students also paid tribute to the unsung women warriors of India's freedom struggle through a heartfelt skit.

The event concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by the Head Girl, Ayesha Zalka.

The 78th Independence Day celebration was a fitting tribute to the nation's heritage, inspiring all present to cherish and uphold the values of freedom and independence.

WORKSHOP

Indian Social Club Oman to host 'Groomed and Gorgeous'

MUSCAT: The Indian Social Club (ISC) Oman announced an exciting event, "Groomed and Gorgeous". This two-hour workshop will be conducted on Friday September 13 from 6 pm to 8 pm on the Indian Social Club premises.

THe "Groomed and Gorgeous" workshop is your gateway to mastering the art of personal presentation. Discover how to dress impeccably and authentically, exuding elegance without overspending. Learn how to emerge looking stunning on any budget and master the art of sophisticated behavior, compelling communication, and a captivating attitude. This workshop is designed to help you harness your personal appearance, projecting confidence and professionalism in every interaction. Elevate your presence, charm, and poise—join us and transform the way the world sees you!

The workshop will be presented by Sumangla Jacob, a certified Image consultant and Soft Skills Trainer. She firmly believes that while we may not all have equal talent; we all have an equal opportunity to develop our talent. Her work focuses on harnessing the potential within each individual.

Our goal at Indian Social Club is to encourage and empower women. We strive to bring valuable events and workshops with that in mind. This workshop is going to be of great value.

Join us for an enriching experience that promises to transform your self-presentation and confidence. This workshop is open to all ladies who are members and non-members of Indian Social club Oman. Please contact ISC office on 24703263 for registering your attendance so your seats can be reserved on time.

RECOGNITION

Bank Muscat wins Best Bank for Corporate Responsibility award

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial service provider in the Sultanate of Oman, was recently awarded for being the Best Bank for Corporate Responsibility by Euromoney as a culmination of its concrete initiatives in the field of Social Responsibility.

As part of its sustainable strategy, the Bank is committed to serve society through several sectors covering different community groups. This includesvarious aspects such as environment, sports,youth, education, entrepreneurship and health, in addition to its contributions to enhancing financial literacy and partnership with various associations and charitable teams in the Sultanate.

The award reaffirms Bank Muscat's leadership in the implementation of vital and sustainable projects in the field of social responsibility and a recognition of its role in supporting activities that are of a great importance to the Omani community, fostering voluntary works among community members.

Talib bin Saif Al Makhmari, Head of Community & Media Relations, Bank Muscat, said: "We are glad to receive this award from the prestigious Euromoney which indicates the Bank's keenness to sustainability and corporate responsibility aspects."

Al Makhmari pointed out:"Sustainability has consistently been a core principle of the Bank's operations. For decades, the Bank has diligently pursued a significant impact in the realm of social responsibility by adopting clear strategies and implementing annual sustainable programmes and initiatives designed to positively affect various sectors of Omani society".

Bank Muscat's sustainability and social responsibility strategy is dedicated to achieving long-term benefits for various segments of society, making a positive impact in areas such as education, youth development, sports, alternative energy, health, and the SME sector. As a leading financial institution in the Sultanate, the Bank is committed to supporting individuals and society through the creation of strategic social responsibility programs. Sustainability is at the core of all initiatives launched by the Bank, ensuring that they achieve beneficial outcomes for all while strengthening relationships and partnerships with various entities, whether governmental, private, or charitable, across the Sultanate.

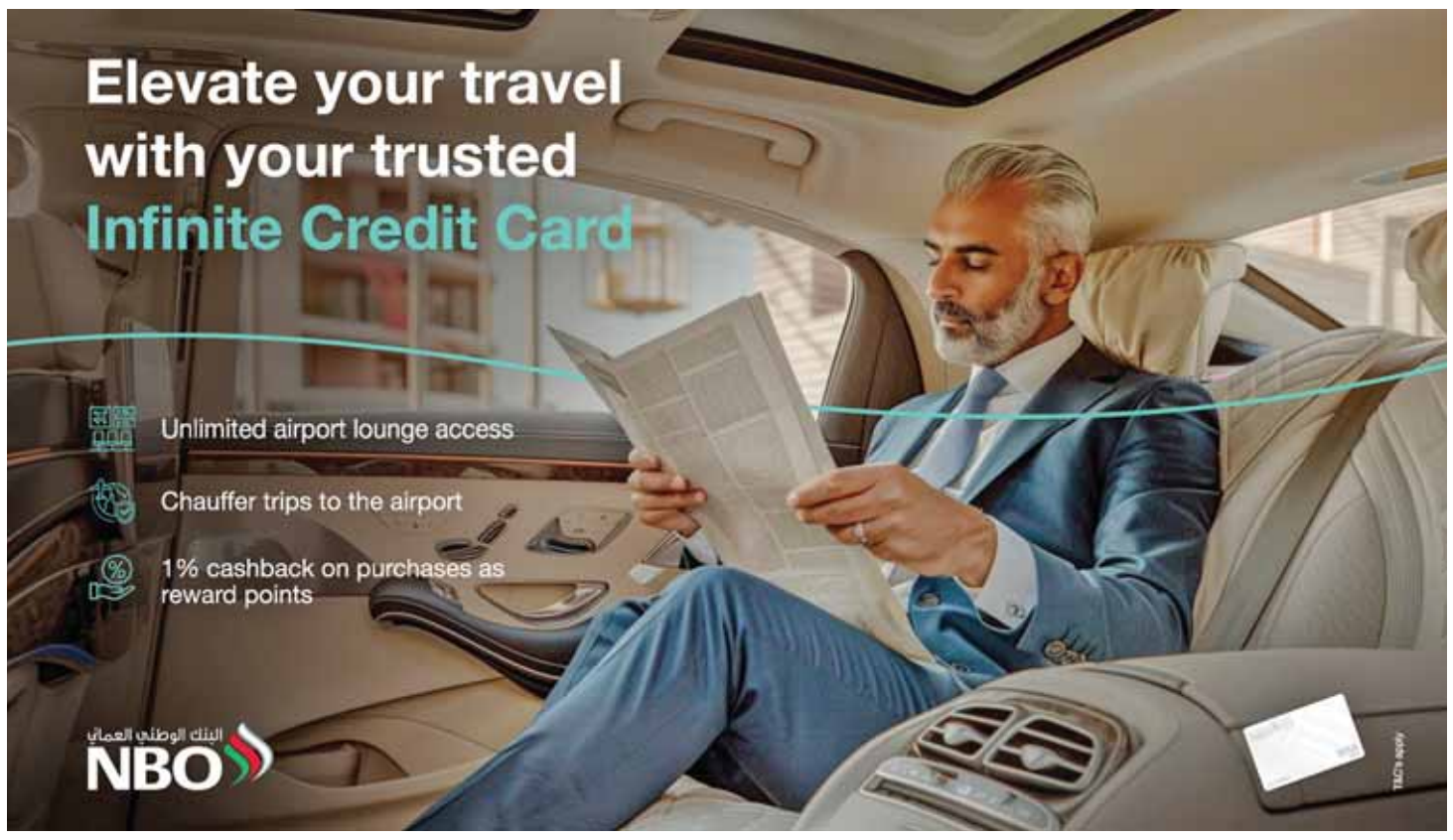
To promote transparency and raise awareness of its efforts in this area, Bank Muscat publishes an annual sustainability report based on the guidelines of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and sector-specific supplements for the financial sector. This report highlights the positive impact of the Bank's activities on the economy, society, and the environment. It also demonstrates the Bank's growing openness to sustainability reporting, underscoring its influence on the decision-making process, as well as its policy and strategy.

Bank Muscat is undertaking a broad array of initiatives in social responsibility and community service, benefiting thousands of community members. The "Green Sports" programme enhances local sports teams across various wilayats in the Sultanate by improving their infrastructure and preparing play yards for sports activities. The Bank also runs the annual "Tadhamun" programme in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development, providing essential household supplies to social security and low-income families in different governorates. Additionally, the "Al Wathbah Academy" programme is designed to support Omani entrepreneurs. Within its initiatives to support entrepreneurs and start-ups, Bank Muscat recently signed a memorandum of cooperation with Muscat Municipality to provide street vendors the appropriate environment for the development of their projects and enabling them grow their businesses. Other initiatives focus on enhancing financial literacy, such as "Maliyat online platform, "Irshad", and "Maliyat Academy" programme which was recently launched in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. Such progarmmes aim to foster financial culture and combat electronic financial fraud.Bank Muscat is also a pioneer in introducing special ATM for the visually impaired persons in cooperation withAl Noor Association for the Blind, catering to their needs.

ROUND-UP

Elevate your lifestyle with NBO's exclusive credit card benefits

The Infinite, Signature, and Platinum credit cards come with premium benefits that cater to travellers and those seeking entertainment and rewards



MUSCAT: In its commitment to enhancing the banking experience for its customers, the National Bank of Oman (NBO) provides a comprehensive suite of credit card benefits, focusing on luxury and convenience, and delivering value through exclusive offers designed to meet a variety of lifestyle needs.

Maha Al Raisi, Assistant General Manager& Head of Products at NBO, states, "At National Bank of Oman, we believe that loyalty should be rewarded. That's why our credit card benefits are more than just a payment tool; they are a passport to a variety of exclusive luxuries and everyday conveniences. They reflect our commitment to providing exceptional value to our customers, whether they're travelling the world or making local purchases. From cashback and airport lounge access to travel insurance and chauffeur services, NBO's credit cards offer an elevated experience tailored to the needs of today's customers. We aim to ensure that every transaction with our credit cards feels like a reward in itself."

The Infinite, Signature, and Platinum credit cards come with premium benefits that cater to travellers and those seeking entertainment and rewards. For frequent travellers, the Infinite Credit Card provides unlimited access to global airport lounges. Signature Credit Card holders receive up to 12 complimentary airport lounge visits per year, while Platinum Credit Card users are entitled to 6 visits annually.

The NBO Rewards Program offers for credit card holders with a competitive 1% cashback on purchases made with Infinite, Signature, and Platinum Credit Cards, and 0.5% cashback on the Gold Credit Card. In addition to these benefits, cardholders can enjoy exclusive Entertainer offers and travel portal discounts, adding substantial value to their experiences.

NBO also provides complimentary international travel insurance and chauffeur services for Infinite and Signature Credit Card holders. The chauffeur service, which provides airport transfers in Muscat and Salalah, ensures a smooth and luxurious journey for customers, from doorstep to destination, exemplifying NBO's dedication to exceptional convenience and value for premium cardholders.

Moreover, cardholders can elevate their entertainment experience with an exclusive 50% discount on VOX Cinema tickets, adding value and enjoyment to their leisure activities.

Additionally, NBO Visa Credit cardholders receive a complimentary BookingBash subscription, unlocking up to 50% off on experiences around the world alongside other special offers.

These credit card benefits are designed to offer NBO customers flexibility, innovation, and a personalised experience. By focusing on the unique needs and aspirations of the customers, NBO continually evolves to remain a trusted partner throughout their financial journey.

INTENSE POWER

Maserati GranTurismo Modena thrills with power, elegance and timeless style

MUSCAT: You get behind the wheel of this car, you are certain to feel an overpowering sense of expectation. The Maserati GranTurismo Modena, with its sleek lines and commanding presence is an experience waiting to unfurl. The Modena, part of Maserati's celebrated GranTurismo pedigree, guarantees performance, elegance and luxury, and it certainly lives up to it.

The car's intense power reverberates through the cabin the moment the engine is turned on. The 3.0-litre V6 Nettuno Twin Turbo engine, with its 490 horsepower, rumbles to life with a deep, rumbling sound that is distinctly Maserati. It is a sound statement, an announcement that this car is outfitted to rule the open road.

As the car pulls out and moves onto the Muscat Highway, the GranTurismo Modena feels instantly responsive. The acceleration is smooth yet dynamic, pushing the driver back into the seat as the car smoothly reaches higher speeds.

What is most noticeable is how the Modena balances this amazing power with a sense of elegance and equanimity. The all-wheel-drive system inculcates confidence in every turn, making the car feel grounded even as it steers tight corners at speed.

Journeying along the highway, the drive mode is set to GT, which is the default setting. This mode offers the complete combination of execution and comfort, making it ideal for long stretches of road. The suspension softens just enough to absorb impacts, while the engine maintains a steady hum that is both powerful and reassuring. While it is evident that the GranTurismo is designed for speed, you will feel that it will be spot-on for grand touring that allows one to cover long distances with comfort and style.

Maserati has always been renowned for its attention to detail, and GranTurismo Modena too ticks all the boxes when it comes to the interior. The dashboard, with its embroidered and stitched graphic motifs is a work of art. The mishmash of lavish materials, including the soft leather seats and dark ash burl wood accents, creates an ambience that is as relaxing as it is visually exquisite.

INSURANCE COMPANY

Al Madina Takaful wins coveted 'brand leadership' award at CMO Asia Awards

MUSCAT: Al Madina Takaful, one of Oman's leading Insurance companies and the first Takaful provider in the country, recently won the 'Brand Leadership Award' at the CMO Asia's Oman Leadership Awards 2024. The prestigious award event was held at the Crowne Plaza Muscat Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre.

Representing Al Madina Takaful, the award was received by Deputy CEO, Shakaib Mahmood and Head of Operations, Mr. Aneesh Varghese from Sayyida Basma Al Said during the event. The event is endorsed by the World Brand Congress & Awards and World Marketing Congress & Awards.

The Oman Leadership Awards, hosted by CMO Asia, aim to recognize and reward excellence across various sectors and segments. These awards distinguish organizations that demonstrate outstanding brand practices and set benchmarks for others to follow. Participating companies are invited to showcase their achievements through examples of comprehensive use of global standards, including effective communication and feedback mechanisms, creativity and innovation, robust administration, and key performance indicators. The awards serve as a platform to highlight and promote best practices, fostering a culture of excellence and continuous improvement in Oman.

Usama Al Barwani, CEO of Al Madina Takaful, expressed his pride, stating, "We are immensely proud to receive the Brand Leadership Award, one of the most prestigious accolades in the region. Al Madina Takaful continually strives for excellence in everything we do, and this recognition illustrates the progress we have made over the years towards fulfilling our aim to be the best in the insurance sector."

Shakaib Mahmood, Deputy CEO, added, "Receiving thisaward reflects our commitment to observing the highest standards in all aspects of our operations."

Aneesh Varghese, Head of Operations, commented, "The award is a testament to our relentless pursuit of delivering best-in-class insurance products and exceeding customer expectations."

Al Madina Takaful's win is attributed to its exceptional performance in various aspects of the insurance industry. The company offers a comprehensive range of Sharia-compliant insurance products to both retail and corporate clients. Its wide product portfolio includes general, life, and health Takaful products, covering areas such as motor, travel, home, domestic workers, pleasure craft, fire, engineering, energy, aviation, liability, general accident, and marine cargo insurance.

These products are served through an extensive network of branches, kiosks, and agencies. Al Madina Takaful distinguishes itself through professionalism, integrity, exceptional services, and commitment to its customers and all stakeholders.

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8-speed AT, 4WD, 7 Seater

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2.0L Turbo Engine, 224 hp,
8-speed AT

EMI OMR 148* for 6 years

EMI OMR 150* for 6 years

ALL NEW
CS75 PLUS
2.0L Turbo Engine,
224 hp, 8-speed AT

CS35 PLUS
1.4L Turbo Engine,
156 hp, 7-speed DCT

EMI OMR 109* for 6 years

EMI OMR 110* for 6 years

ALL NEW
EADO PLUS
1.5L Turbo Engine,
170 hp, 7-speed DCT

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5-speed DCT

EMI OMR 64* for 6 years

CHANGAN The Premium Range | Super Warranty up to 6 years / 250,000 Km#

*Easy Monthly Installment is calculated based on 20% down payment for 6 years loan tenure, Subject to credit approvals from Banks only. Applicable on vehicles purchased for personal use. Images shown are for illustrative purpose only. Specification may vary as per the model variant. #Whichever is earlier. To know more, please visit the CHANGAN Showroom.

C.R. No: 1232361

Arabian Gulf Automobiles and Equipment LLC

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Sohar 95351200, Salalah 96629050, Ibri 96628930

Sales Centers : Nizwa 96628940, Barka 96629010, Sur 96628920

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