

FEASIBILITY STUDY TO EXPORT GREEN HYDROGEN TO EUROPE

The Government of Oman, Hydrogen Oman (Hydrom), Port of Amsterdam, Zenith Energy Terminals and GasLog have agreed to study the feasibility of a liquid hydrogen supply chain, to deliver Omani green hydrogen to the Port of Amsterdam and onwards to Europe. **>A2**



OMAN PARTICIPATES IN MINISTERIAL MEETING IN DOHA

The Sultanate of Oman on Sunday participated in a meeting of the 158th session of the ministerial council tasked with preparing for the 44th session of the GCC Supreme Council. The meeting was held in Doha in the presence of GCC foreign ministers. **>A5**



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Sayyid Bilarab to launch Promising Omani Startups Forum

A3

FACT INKED WITH TWO COMPANIES

Sayyid Theyazin signs agreement to construct OMR147.8mn Oman Cultural Complex building

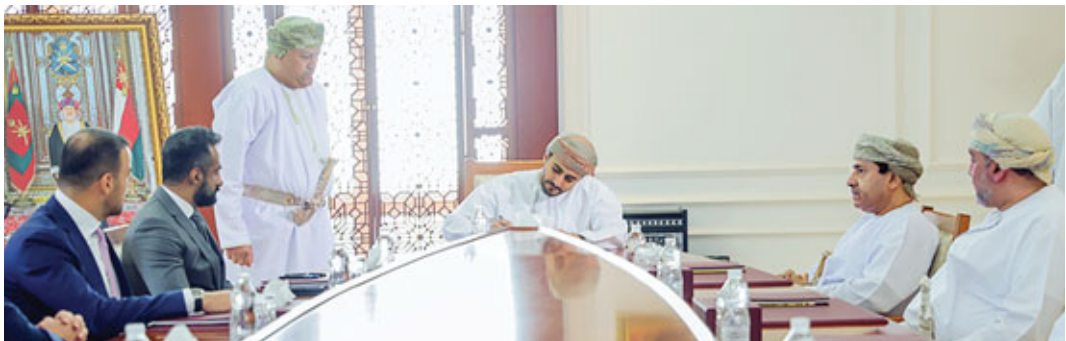
MUSCAT: His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham Al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, on Sunday signed an agreement to set up the main building of Oman Cultural Complex to the tune of OMR147.8 million.

The project, which will be completed within a maximum period of 3 years, will occupy an area of 400,000 sqm.

National Theatre

It will accommodate the National Theatre, the National Library and the National Records and Archives Authority.

The agreement was signed with



a consortium of two companies.

Oman Cultural Complex constitutes a modern landmark and an edifice featuring the country's

civilisation, culture, scholarly accomplishments and institutional entity. The complex will contribute to the advancement of cultur-

al, literary, theatrical and research action and support the organisation of cultural programmes and events. — **OMA**



1 DUQM REFINERY AND PETROCHEMICAL INDUSTRIES COMPANY PROJECT

SULTANATE LAUNCHES 6 PROJECTS WORTH

2 DUQM INTEGRATED POWER AND WATER STATION

3 RAS MARKAZ CRUDE OIL PARK

4 KHUWAIMAH SHRIMP FARM

5 ELECTRICITY TRANSMISSION PROJECT

6 JW MARRIOTT HOTEL MUSCAT

OMR4.65BN

The projects will enhance economic diversification and attract more investments

MUSCAT: The Secretariat General for National Celebrations concluded the preparation of a programme for opening national projects to mark Oman's 53rd National Day celebrations.

Within the context of the National Day celebrations programme, Oman Investment Authority (OIA) recently announced the opening of six projects: Duqm Refinery and Petrochemical Industries company project, Duqm

Integrated Power and Water Station, Ras Markaz Crude Oil Park, Khuwaimah Shrimp Farm, an electricity transmission project and JW Marriott Hotel Muscat.

The projects will contribute to enhancing economic diversification and attracting more investments.

The total cost of the projects to be opened will stand at OMR4.65 billion.

Various departments of the

State's Administrative Apparatus will open a number of sustainable development projects worth more than OMR650 million. The projects include the opening of a production assembly station in Greater Saqr area, a fishing jetty, a shipping and customs service station, infrastructure tasks at the government dock in the port of Duqm and other projects.

Largest project

The Duqm Refinery and Petrochemical Industries (OQ8) project is known to be the largest project executed in the Duqm economic zone. The project is considered as the starting line for the plan to transform Duqm into one of the largest industrial and economic centres in the region.

The project includes three key areas: main processing units at the refinery, facilities and services, storage and export facilities for liquid petroleum materials at Duqm Port, the crude oil storage facility in Ras Markaz, and the 81-km long crude oil transmission pipeline from Ras Markaz to Duqm Refinery.

The refinery includes 10 main processing units capable of producing diesel, jet fuel, liquefied petroleum gas, sulphur and petroleum coal, with a capacity of 230,000 barrels per day.

The Ras Markaz Crude Oil Storage project promotes the government's efforts in the field of economic diversification. It achieves several economic and commercial values, such as storing crude oil

in the Sultanate of Oman with high capacity that goes up to 200 million barrels, with a storage capacity up to 26.7 million barrels in the first phase, allocating of 5.2 million barrels to the Duqm Refinery (OQ8). In addition, the facility is set to export Omani oil by connecting it to the Nihayda Station, which serves as another port to export Omani crude oil, along with Mina Al-Fahal, in Muscat. Due to its strategic location near the emerging markets in Asia and Africa, the project is capable to address the demands of local and global markets, and will contribute to increasing the number of offshore oil transportation vessels coming to Oman.

The Duqm Integrated Power and Water Project (DIPWP) in

Duqm will meet the electricity and water needs of OQ 8 (Duqm Refinery and Petrochemical Industries), and attract investments to the Duqm Special Economic Zone by providing industrial electricity and water needs to heavy industry companies which are looking to invest in the region, meet the future expansions in Duqm Economic Zone, and provide electric power to the crude oil storage project.

The design capacity of the station is 326MW of electricity and 36,000 cubic metres of water/day. Moreover, the station includes facilities for taking sea water with a supply capacity of up to 1.5 million cubic metres/day, in addition to a water return line with a capacity of up to one million cubic metres/day. **>A3**

CHANGE IN WEATHER

People in Oman warmly embrace onset of winter

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The onset of chill in the nights and early mornings in Muscat have prompted residents to reach for windcheaters and light woollens, warmly embracing the delightful change in weather.

This transition brings boundless joy, beckoning residents to indulge in outdoor escapades during their weekends - whether lounging by the beaches, camping in nature's embrace, or exploring picturesque picnic spots around the Sultanate.

This past weekend witnessed an influx of cars lining the beaches in Azaiba, Qurum, and Seeb, as people eagerly embraced the nip in the air, marking the arrival of the winter season, albeit slightly delayed. Cafes experienced a surge in evening



footfall, signalling the commencement of this awaited season.

Though the peak of winter is forecasted for early January, mountainous regions like Jabal Shams are already shivering under notably cold temperatures, dipping below a chilling 5°C. On Sunday,

MINIMUM TEMPERATURES IN OMAN

Jabal Shams: 3°C
Saiq: 6°C
Jabal Al-Qamar: 14°C
Yanqul: 15°C
Jabal Samhan: 15°C
Samail: 16°C
Thumrait: 17°C
Seeb: 19°C
Sur: 19°C

Saiq in Al Jabal Al Akhdar recorded a minimal temperature of 6°C.

In Seeb and Al Amerat, Sunday's temperatures plummeted below 20°C, mirroring similar ranges in most cities. Conversely, Mudhaibi and Salalah boasted maximum temperatures of 31°C and 30°C

respectively, a pattern echoed in Mahout and Haima.

The region's pleasant climate serves as a magnet for European tourists seeking refuge from their countries' harsh winter.

Hoteliers anticipate a surge in December and January, welcoming a substantial influx of European tourists drawn to Oman's natural landscapes and secure environment during the festive season.

For locals and residents, weekends present the perfect opportunity for outdoor barbecues, while regular days are filled with bustling activities, including street food vendors offering the popular mishkak - a traditional Omani delight consisting of marinated meat cubes skewered and expertly grilled over hot charcoal. **>A2**

OMAN

Lab for people with disabilities begins



1 A lab on the development of services and programmes for people with disabilities began on Sunday. The lab's theme touches on the topic of unity in action to activate Sustainable Development Goals for people with disabilities. **>A5**

WORLD

Death toll crosses 15,000 in Gaza Strip

2 At least 15,207 Palestinians lost their lives as a result of Israeli attacks in Gaza by Hamas, report citing health ministry official in Gaza said on Sunday. **>A6**

MARKET

MSX registers gain of 2.5% in November

3 The MSX 30 index registered a gain of 2.5 percent during November 2023 to close at 4,658.15 points, according to a new report. **>B1**

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Agreement inked to set up common infrastructure for green hydrogen

The signing ceremony, held at Oman's pavilion in COP28 in Dubai, was attended by Eng. Salim Nasser Al Afi, Minister of Energy and Minerals and Prince Jaime de Bourbon de Parme, the Climate Envoy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

DUBAI: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals and Hydrogen Oman (Hydrom) signed a Joint Study Agreement (JSA) with the Port of Amsterdam, Zenith Energy Terminals and GasLog, to collaborate on the development of a liquid hydrogen route to market for green hydrogen produced in Oman and its export to the Port of Amsterdam and Europe.

The Agreement was signed at Oman's pavilion in COP28 in Dubai.

The signing ceremony was attended by Eng. Salim Nasser Al Afi, Minister of Energy and Minerals and Prince Jaime de Bourbon



de Parme, the Climate Envoy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The Agreement entails conducting a detailed assessment of the requirements to develop an

open-access hydrogen liquefaction, storage and export facility in the Sultanate of Oman, along with the provision of specialised vessels for the transportation of the liquid

hydrogen, currently under development by GasLog.

The primary aim of the Agreement is to establish a green hydrogen corridor between the Sultan-



ate of Oman and the Kingdom of the Netherlands, with the terminal of Zenith Energy as the destination for the import, regasification and further distribution of Oman-produced hydrogen to both local off-takers within the port of Amsterdam, as well as large industries in the European hinterland.

The open-access liquefaction facility will also enable the government of the Sultanate of Oman to explore cost effective hydrogen export corridors to other global markets.

The government of the Sultanate of Oman has pursued a hydrogen strategy that seeks to capitalise on the country's abundant (wind and sun) natural resources and existing port and industrial infrastructures. Moreover, its geographical location puts Oman in a prime position to supply the European and the Asian markets.

Hydrom is orchestrating the overall development of the Om-

ani hydrogen sector and is responsible for master-planning, managing the allocation of government lands to hydrogen developers and overseeing the execution of projects.

The open-access facility for liquefaction would unlock a great potential for these projects, offering liquid hydrogen as a viable vector that can be utilised by individual projects for export.

Eng. Abdulaziz Al Shidhani, Managing Director of Hydrom said "As countries around the world race to achieve a hydrogen-based economy, the fundamental challenges of storing and transporting hydrogen on large scale remain open. Oman is building an economically sustainable future by establishing a fully integrated hydrogen ecosystem. This joining of efforts with the Port of Amsterdam, Zenith Energy Terminals and GasLog will help bring us one step closer to our shared goal." — **ONA**

COOL WEATHER

'December, January are the best months to enjoy weather'

< FROM A1 For a long-time resident from India, UD Manoj, the weather in Muscat during December and January is the "best".

He said: "Oman is the most beautiful place to be around these months as one can enjoy the slight chill in the air and also doesn't need a lot of warm clothes to put on. It is just a dream destination and I make it a point to spend my weekends on outdoor trips and enjoying barbecue."

Mohammed Al Balushi, a resident of Mussanah, loves sitting



outside his house in the evenings and enjoying the cool breeze from the sea.

"This is the best time of the year.

We enjoy the outdoors and one can also relish the traditional mishkak and other barbecue dishes that we love to cook."

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Lab to develop programmes for people with disabilities begins

MUSCAT: A lab on the development of services and programmes for people with disabilities kicked off on Sunday, coinciding with the international day for people with disabilities.

The lab's theme touches on the topic of unity in action to activate Sustainable Development Goals for people with disabilities.

The launching event was held under the patronage of Sheikh Al Fadhl Mohammed Al Harthy, Secretary General of the Council of Ministers.

Further, the event is organised by the Ministry of Social Development in cooperation with Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit. It is also held in partnership with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health,



the Ministry of Labour, private sector establishments, civil society institutions and employees working in fields related to people with disabilities, as well as several institutions of relevance to

the event.

The lab, which is ongoing till the end of December, aims to align services and programmes for people with disabilities with Oman Vision 2040. — **ONA**



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

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

Tender No.	Tender title	Last date for tender purchase online	Bid submission date
28/2023	Supply, installation and commissioning of air conditioning units in Samail Labour Department and the Directorate General of Labour in Al Dhahirah Governorate in Ibri	Saturday 23/12/2023 2:00 p.m.	Sunday 14/01/2024 10 a.m.

- Specialized establishments may obtain the tenders' documents online through the following link, starting from Monday 04/12/2023 at 08:00 a.m.: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>
- Bids shall be opened at 11:00 am on Sunday 14/01/2024.

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

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COMMENTARY

Tie a string on your heart



SALEH AL-SHAIBANY

When you tie a string on your heart, it stops swinging like a pendulum and the rhythm moves in a moderate speed helping you to see all obstacles in your way.

When problems hit the roof of your emotion, everything feels unfamiliar and out of place. That is the right time to come back and make a rational decision. It goes without saying that stability is the anchor of our life. Metaphorically speaking, when your heart threatens to pound out of your chest, you go into a considerable panic.

Whether it is relationships, jobs or family matters, when the anchor of the heart is in deep water, then the string can help to pull us out of trouble. But what is the job of the string in our hearts? In simple terms, to navigate ourselves out of the trouble zones from time to time. Some of the decisions we make in our daily lives come when we take a wrong choice. That's where we often get into trouble.

Imagine when we decide to buy something we cannot really afford and end up in a financial problem. Or walk out of our families for something that glitters outside when the shine has always been in our homes. And talking about the 'shine', the string can be used to let in some sunshine in our hearts when we start walking



into the darkness of our own making.

But when we start talking about the heart, then another question pops up. What is the role of our minds in decision making? Certainly not to divert us from the true path. The mind can think of the consequences of our decisions while the heart only looks at the glamour. When the two are not compatible with each other, then we quickly get into trouble.

Before Tarik Ibn Ziyad, the Arab army General conquered Spain in the year 711, he had to make an important decision. He asked his officers not to let their emotions get the better of them while marching into Andalusia. He asked them to be compassion in their conquest of the new territory. What he was really asking his soldiers not to let their minds ruled by their hearts.

History tells us now Ibn Ziyad made sure there were fewer casualties when the

Arabs conquered that part of the world. Ibn Sina, the founder of modern medicine, followed the same path before he started his experiments in pharmacology. He loved the sea and wanted to become a seaman to see the world. Until he saw the sufferings of the people in his hometown at Afshanah in Uzbekistan. A deadly plague wiped out almost half of the population there.

He decided to pull the string in his heart by not jumping into a ship but instead, vowed to find a 'cure' for the plague. So it was his mind that made him stay back to start experimenting with medicines that led to the treatment of the disease. Not to follow the heart but the mind also led to many breakthroughs that shaped our world we live in.

So next time you arrive at a crossroad, pull the string of your heart to give your mind the chance it needs to make a better decision.

AT OCEC



Sayyid Bilarab to inaugurate
Promising Omani Startups Forum

Times News Service

MUSCAT: His Highness Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham Al Said, Honorary President of Oman's Startups Programme, will inaugurate the Promising Omani Startups Forum at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) on Monday.

Organised by the Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Development Authority, the forum targets a diverse audience, including students, experts, academics, and investors.

The event is designed to foster networking, collaboration, and knowledge exchange.

This Forum also aims to explore the entrepreneurial skills among

Omani youths, a cornerstone initiative of the Promising Omani Startups Forum.

It will highlight strategies and contributions to the startup ecosystem, featuring thought-provoking workshops discussing crucial topics for startup growth and sustainability.

An essential component of the forum is an exhibition showcasing established startups, providing a unique opportunity for participants to interact with successful entrepreneurs. This platform facilitates learning for emerging startups, offering insights from counterparts who have successfully navigated the complexities of technology and innovation.

The Forum will underscore the

significance of technological advancements, presenting inspiring success stories in the realms of technology and innovation.

These narratives will motivate and guide aspiring entrepreneurs in navigating the evolving startup landscape.

Expecting around 50 startups, each bringing its unique vision and innovative solutions, the event will provide a fertile ground for learning and exchange.

By bringing together a diverse group of stakeholders, fostering collaboration, and celebrating innovation, this event aims to propel the growth of startups in Oman, contributing significantly to the country's broader economic development.

SOUTH AL SHARQIYAH

Shrimp Farm Project
contributes towards
food security in Oman

<FROM A1 Khuwayma Shrimp Farm Project in Jalan Bani Bu Ali, Governorate of South Al Sharqiyah, contributes to achieving food security and establishing other industries to enhance the value added of the raw materials available in the Sultanate of Oman.

The project is built on an area of 200 hectares, containing 126 aquariums, a shrimp nursery unit of 48 aquariums, a care unit for shrimps after the larvae stage, a primary processing unit, and a production and packaging unit.

The operational capacity of the project is 4000 tonnes/year.

Supporting the tourism sector in the country, JW Marriott Muscat Hotel has 304 rooms and suites, and sets an outstanding example for tourism development by exploiting the natural resources to achieve long-term goals, supporting economic diversification efforts, raising the direct and indirect contribution of the tourism sector to the gross domestic product (GDP), and generating direct employment opportunities for the national workforce.



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CARNIVAL HELD IN OMAN FOR DIFFERENTLY-ABLED CHILDREN

Times News Service

MUSCAT: An evening full of entertainment for persons with disabilities, titled 'Happiness Village Carnival', was held on Friday, coinciding with the International Day for People with Disabilities to help integrate them with their peers in society, at the Civil Aviation Club.

The occasion was graced by His Highness Sayyid Mohammad bin Thuwaini Al Said. Her Highness Sayyida Hujaija Jaifer Al Said, organiser of the Happiness Village Carnival event, said: "The carnival targeted more than 1,848 children affiliated with various associations and institutions that serve children with disabilities, and it came in co-operation with the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Civil Aviation Club to celebrate International Day for People with Disabilities to enhance their abilities and integrate them with their peers into society."

She added that the carnival aims

to provide a safe entertainment space for people with disabilities, taking into account their needs and abilities, and also makes a moral impact on the lives of people with disabilities by supporting and empowering them.

She explained that the carnival included several activities like carriage and horse rides, entertainment shows, and safe recreational games for children with disabilities.

It also included comic characters, an acrobatic artist, a food and beverage stall section, various games, science laboratory activities, a jumping castle event, luxury car rides for children with disabilities, bike riding, and many other programmes that meet their needs.

During the carnival event, a cooperation agreement was signed between the National Finance Company and Sign Book to provide sign language translation services. The carnival event was attended by several dignitaries and specialists from government and private agencies.

The carnival, coinciding with the International Day for People with Disabilities, targeted more than 1,848 children affiliated with various associations and institutions that serve children with disabilities





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31ST EDITION



Winners of Sultan Qaboos Holy Quran competition announced

MUSCAT: The Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Science on Sunday announced the names of winners of the Sultan Qaboos Holy Quran Competition (31st edition).

As many as 1,638 male and female contestants participated in the competition's seven levels, as follows: Level 1 for memorising the entire Holy Qur'an; Level 2 for memorising 24 consecutive parts of the Holy Qur'an; Level 3 for memorising 18 consecutive parts; Level 4 for memorising 12 consecutive parts (on condition that the competitor was born in 1998 or afterwards); level 5 for memorising 6 consecutive parts (for those born in 2009 and afterwards); Level 6 memorising 4

consecutive parts (for those born in 2013 or afterwards) and Level 7 for memorising 2 consecutive parts (for those born in 2016 or afterwards).

During the award ceremony, whose date will be announced later, the top three winners from each level of the competition will be felicitated, while incentive prizes will be dedicated to top three finishers from each level other than the top three.

The competition is aimed at encouraging Omanis to memorize the Holy Qur'an and pursue the guidance of its teachings, in addition to enhancing the presence of the Sultanate of Oman in international Qur'anic contests.

— OMA

GCC foreign ministers discuss several issues

The meeting was held in Doha in the presence of Gulf Cooperation Council foreign ministers and Oman's delegation was led by Sayyid Badr



DOHA: The Sultanate of Oman on Sunday participated in a meeting of the 158th session of the ministerial council tasked with preparing for the 44th session of the GCC Supreme Council.

The meeting was held in Doha in the presence of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) foreign ministers. Oman's delegation to the meeting was led by Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister.

The preparatory ministerial session dealt with topics of concern to GCC states, as well as issues that will be submitted for discussion at

the GCC Supreme Council's 44th session due to be held in Dohar on Tuesday, 5 December 2023.

It also touched on major regional and international issues and challenges. — OMA



COMMENTARY

'You have to change your accent....!'



'Sir, is there any problem with my accent?' Recently, a student from a known school asked me this question. Surprisingly, I had to listen to the reasons of her question or concern. After being in the U.K for a couple of months, she was able to acquire British accent because of continuous interaction with her cousins and other friends. Undoubtedly, I would say that it was a natural style that she could apply in her day-today conversations. Of course, unlike the other students she used her acquired ability within the classes too without any hesitation. On the day of her presentation, as soon as she started her introduction, the teacher stopped her saying 'you have to change your accent'. As a teacher, she should have been proud of her student who is good at applying the actual British accent. Unfortunately, instead of an appreciation, the child was humiliated horribly.

As we all know, people travel, stay, take a lot of energy and spend a huge amount of money to acquire the British pronunciation or accent. On the contrary, the teacher's untimely or impolite remarks spoiled the normal sleep of the child. The child got humiliated and embarrassed in-front of the whole class. Naturally, the next day onwards, the child was between the devil and the deep sea. She was scared whenever she has to speak to her teacher or her friends. When the parents real-



ized the matter, it was reported to the authority. Obviously, as a result, the teacher started ignoring the student in the class, rather all other students were given chances which affected the child psychologically.

At this juncture, as a teacher, this incident has been an eye opener to all the teaching community. It has been understood that the classrooms are the places where the teachers strive to build or mould good citizens of the future where we teach not only a particular subject or a language. It is a fact that teachers teach heterogeneous classes in schools or colleges in which students differ in numerous aspects, such as their cognitive abilities, their classroom behaviour, and their socio-economic backgrounds. To ensure that all individual students in these classes develop according to their potentials, teachers should meet the educational needs of each student. A student can learn many disciplines and has to act and be strong as per the classroom environment. Essentially, instructors or teachers urge students to accept problems and deal with every event that may come across in their lives. Even though they teach all these qualities, there is one feature that some teachers

unwittingly implement prejudice and preferential treatment for particular students even in this 21st century. It is customary for some teachers to show favouritism and biases at any educational institution. They have preferences for certain students and dislike others based on personal tastes or grudge, regardless of how brilliant or clever the student is. The above described teachers have a restricted mindset that is difficult to change. The teacher may taunt the students and pass the negative comments to the students who are not good in the eyes of the teacher as the above example.

Obviously, we can say that partiality and favouritism may be old practices, but both still exist in the classrooms. Partiality almost ruins the meaning of equality in the classroom. Students who usually become partial victims have to feel the severe inequality in the classroom. Most of the time, the student gets affected by the type of treatments the teacher may use in the classrooms. If a teacher behaves positively and unbiased with each student, the students will also give positive feedback to the teacher. If the teacher continues to act unequally without motivation, students

will have a negative feedback for the teacher. Students who are treated with partiality and discrimination often feel less motivated to perform any class activity. Usually, these students have to face severe stress and a depressing situation in the classrooms.

Many techniques and methods can prevent the act of being partial in the classroom. Indeed, it is ideal to be conscious of how you treat your pupils based on how you feel about it. Being a teacher you have to keep your sentiments at bay and concentrate entirely on your role as a teacher. Insulting or harassing is totally unacceptable and can lead to pupils resenting you in the classroom. It also lowers students' self-esteem, alienates the most challenging pupils, and produces an unfriendly classroom environment. As teachers, we have to be mindful of our feelings toward all pupils and endeavor to establish rapport with each of them so that we can create a classroom community in which all kids feel equal. Eventually, let the student feel encouraged, motivated and appreciated for their efforts. Above all, I would say that a teacher should be a mentor, a guide, and a "Friend".

The writer is a Lecturer of English, OCHS.

LAUNCHING CEREMONY



Higher education ministry launches 'We are Oman' award

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation on Sunday launched the "We are Oman" award for the academic year 2023/2024.

The award comes within the framework of the orientation programme for students of higher education institutions and students with scholarships abroad. The programme aims to raise the awareness of students, support and guide them to showcase their talents.

The launching ceremony was held under the patronage of Dr. Khamis Saif Al Jabri, Chairman of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, in the presence of Dr. Rahma Ibrahim Al Mahrouqi, Minister of



Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

"We are Oman" award is an annual award supervised by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

— OMA



Death toll in Gaza Strip crosses 15,000

At least 40,652 others have been injured in Gaza during the conflict, and 70 per cent of the victims are children and women

TEL AVIV: At least 15,207 Palestinians lost their lives as a result of Israeli attacks in Gaza since the October 7 attacks by Hamas, CNN reported, citing a spokesperson for the Hamas-controlled health ministry in Gaza on Sunday.

At least 40,652 others have been injured in Gaza during the conflict, and 70 per cent of the victims are children and women, Dr. Ashraf Al-Qudra said at a news conference on Saturday.

It reported that 193 Palestinians have been killed since a truce between Israel and Hamas expired on Friday morning and Israel resumed its attacks in the region.

During the seven-day truce between Israel and Hamas, which ended on Friday morning, 105 civilians were released from Hamas captivity in Gaza, including 81 Israelis, 23 Thai nationals and 1 Filipino, in exchange for 210 Palestinian prisoners, all of them women or minors.

Israel also allowed an influx of humanitarian aid into the Strip.

Still held hostage by Gaza groups when the truce collapsed were 136 people -- 114 men, 20 women and two children -- government spokesperson Eylon Levy said.

Ten of the hostages are 75 and older, he said, adding a vast majority of the hostages, 125, are Israelis.

Eleven are foreign nationals, including eight from Thailand, the spokesperson informed further.



Israel said on Saturday that it has reached a “dead end” in negotiations in Qatar over an end to the fighting in Gaza and has ordered its team to leave the Gulf Arab country.

“Due to the dead end in negotiations, and following instructions from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Mossad head David Barnea ordered the negotiating team in Doha to return home,” a statement from Netanyahu’s office published by the Times of Israel said.

“The Hamas group did not fulfill its obligations under the agreement that included releasing all the women and children that were on the list provided to Hamas that had authorized it,” the statement continued.

Hamas: No prisoner exchange until cease-fire

The prospect of further cease-fires in Gaza appeared bleak on Saturday after Israel recalled its negotiators from Qatar and Hamas’ deputy leader said any further exchange of prisoners would only happen after the war ended.

Saleh Arouri told pan-Arab broadcaster Al-Jazeera that any

remaining hostages are men, “all of whom served in the (Israeli) army,” currently or previously.

He said they would not be freed unless there was a truce and all Palestinian detainees were released.

“Let the war take its course. This decision is final. We will not compromise on it,” Arouri said.

Netanyahu reportedly sees no role for Palestinian Authority in Gaza

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he does not see a role for the Palestinian Authority (PA) in post-war Gaza.

That is according to Israeli media reports on remarks Netanyahu made at a news conference in Tel Aviv, in which he condemned the PA, which governs parts of the occupied West Bank but not Gaza, which has been under the control of the Hamas group since 2007.

“I’m not prepared to delude myself and say that this defective thing, established under the Oslo Accords in a terrible mistake,” should be allowed to govern Gaza, The Times of Israel quoted him as saying.

“We would be putting the same element — utterly unreformed, utterly unchanged — into Gaza, and that’s what even the best of our friends suggest. I think differently. I oppose it,” he said.

Netanyahu said Israel should take charge of Gaza’s security and would have to do so for years to come.

Earlier in the day, US Vice President Kamala Harris said, “We want to see a unified Gaza and West Bank under the Palestinian Authority, and Palestinian voices and aspirations must be at the center of this work.”

UK to undertake surveillance flights over Israel, Gaza

The United Kingdom announced it will conduct surveillance flights over Israel and Gaza as part of hostage rescue efforts.

The surveillance aircraft “will be unarmed, do not have a combat role, and will be tasked solely to locate hostages,” the Ministry of Defence said.

It said only information relevant to hostage rescue will be shared.

It did not give any additional details about the flights. -Agencies



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HAILE VICTORY

Election results show people have faith in BJP: Indian PM Modi



NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday hailed the Bharatiya Janata Party’s victories in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh assembly polls and said the results are showing that people have faith only in the politics of ‘development and good governance’ and on the BJP.

He also thanked the voters, especially the women voters and youth, for their affection and blessings on the BJP.

The Prime Minister said the people are moving forward with the aim of making India a developed country and “we have today taken together a strong step in that direction”.

He said the BJP will continue to work hard for the welfare of the people.

“We bow to people. The results in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh are telling that faith of people of India is only on the politics of good governance and development, they have faith on BJP,” the Prime Minister said in a post on X.

“For showering their affec-

tions, faith and blessings on BJP, I thank from my heart ‘parvi-arjans’, specially mothers-sisters-daughters and our young voters. I assure that we will continue to work hard for your welfare,” he added.

The Prime Minister also lauded the BJP workers for taking the central government’s schemes to the people.

“A special thanks to the hard-working party workers. You all have set an excellent example. The way you have taken development and poor-oriented welfare policies of the BJP to people, the more it is praised the less it will be,” he said.

“We are moving ahead with the goal of a developed India. We do not have to stop or get tired. We have to make India victorious. Today we have together taken a strong step in that direction,” he added. BJP won in Madhya Pradesh and get comfortable victories in Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh. In Telangana, Congress is poised to form government by ousting Bharat Rashtia Samithi from power. -ANI

ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

Congress leader concedes defeat

NEW DELHI: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday conceded the party’s defeat in the Assembly elections of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan, but he said that the party’s battle of ideology would continue.

“We humbly accept the mandate of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan - the battle of ideology will continue,” Rahul Gandhi posted on X.

In Telangana where the Congress is set to form the next government, dethroning BRS’s 10-year rule, he said that his party will fulfil the promise of making

“Prajalu Telangana”. “I am very thankful to the people of Telangana - we will fulfil the promise of making Prajalu Telangana. Heartfelt thanks to all the workers for their hard work and support,” the Wayanad MP said.

In the Assembly elections in four states- Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Chhattisgarh, as per the Election Commission data, the BJP is leading in majority of the seats in three States, clearly indicating that it would form governments in these states. -ANI

TERROR ATTACK

1 dead, 2 injured in central Paris attack

PARIS: French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said late on Saturday that a German tourist had been killed and another person injured in central Paris.

“The police have just courageously arrested an assailant attacking passers-by in Paris, around the Quai de Grenelle,” Darmanin wrote. “One deceased person and one injured person treated by the Paris Fire Brigade. Please avoid the area.”

The Quai de Grenelle, on the banks of the River Seine, is not far from the Eiffel Tower in the centre of France’s capital.

French President Emmanuel Macron extended his condolences to the family of a German killed in what he called a “terror attack.”

“My condolences go out to the family and loved ones of the German citizen who died this evening in the terrorist attack in Paris, and my thoughts are with the people who are currently injured and being cared for,” he wrote on X, formerly Twitter.

Darmanin spoke to reporters at the scene later Saturday night.

He said that the attacker first



attacked a “couple” who were German tourists with a knife near Quai de Grenelle, killing one and injuring the other. Darmanin said the suspect then tried to attack two more people with a hammer while pursued by police, injuring one and leaving the other shocked.

The minister said the man had a prior four-year conviction from 2016, when French authorities foiled attack plans.

French news agency cited unnamed police sources as saying the assailant was French-born and a French citizen, and also a known supporter of radical Islam with mental health issues. Unconfirmed reports suggested the attacker had shouted the Arabic for “God is great” during the attack.

Darmanin said the country’s terrorism prosecution author-

ity was already evaluating the case but had not yet launched a formal terrorism investigation.

“After his arrest, he said that he could no longer bear Muslims dying in Afghanistan as well as in the Palestinian Territories,” Darmanin said of the attacker.

The assailant then crossed the Bir-Hakeim bridge over the Seine, with police arriving on the scene as he reached the other side. -DW

BAD WEATHER

Munich Airport resumes flights after heavy snowfall

MUNICH: Flight operations resumed at Munich Airport at 6 a.m. on Sunday after heavy snowfall ground air traffic to a halt, the operating company announced on its website.

The operating company said that although flights had now resumed, there would still be “restrictions in air traffic.”

It urged passengers to check the status of their flight with their airline “well in advance” before traveling to the airport.

Although operations are once again possible, a majority of the planned flights for Sunday have been cancelled, news agency dpa reported. Flights were suspended at the air-

port on Saturday amid the onset of severe winter weather across southern Germany.

Buses, trams and some train services were also suspended in Munich due to the snowfall, Munich’s public transport company said.

According to Germany’s national railway company Deutsche Bahn, Munich’s central train station was closed for arrivals and long-distance services were also suspended. It further said that rail traffic will be “impacted severely” until Monday.

A large number of travellers have been left stranded at Munich’s main station, CNN re-

ported citing Germany-based newspaper Sueddeutsche Zeitung. Speaking to the publication, one passenger said, “I’ve been sitting here in this place since one o’clock in the morning.”

Another passenger said, “We just want to know if there’s still a chance of getting out of here,” CNN reported citing the publication.

On Saturday, police asked people in Munich to not use their cars until necessary. Meanwhile, people in some parts of southern Bavaria were asked not to leave their homes at all, CNN reported citing a Munich police spokesperson. -DW



Vietnam reels from historic \$12.4bn corruption scandal

It is arguably the largest corruption scandal in recent Southeast Asian history

HANOI: Vietnam has been rocked by its largest corruption scandal to date after authorities last month arrested a prominent real estate developer over allegedly embezzling nearly \$12.4 billion, the equivalent of more than 3% of the country's GDP.

In 2016, Vietnam's governing Communist Party began conducting a sweeping anti-corruption campaign. Since then, it has brought down a national president and senior government ministers, but the scale of the alleged graft involved in the latest scandal it uncovered raised questions about the true state of Vietnam's



banking and property sectors.

On November 17, the Ministry of Public Security alleged that Truong My Lan, the chairperson of real estate developer Van Thinh Phat Holdings Group, had embezzled 304 trillion dong (€11.4 billion) from Saigon Commercial Bank, of which she was a majority stakeholder, over several years.

According to the ministry's statements, My Lan, who was first arrested last year, operated a vast network of more than 1,000 domestic and foreign subsidiaries as well as further shell compa-

nies that took out more than €40 billion in loans from the Saigon Commercial Bank, appropriating about a third of it through "ghost companies" she and her family and associates created.

24 government officials

In mid-November, the Ministry of Public Security also recommended the prosecution of a further 85 people, including 24 government officials and associates of Van Thinh Phat Holdings Group and Saigon Commercial Bank.

Days later, the Internal Affairs

Commission of the Communist Party's Central Committee recommended opening investigations into another 23 state officials, including 12 from the State Bank of Vietnam, the country's central bank.

Corruption scandal

It is arguably the largest corruption scandal in recent Southeast Asian history. By comparison, the well-documented 1MDB scandal in Malaysia in the 2010s, which led to Malaysia's dominant party losing power for the first time ever, involved the theft of €4.1 billion from the country's sovereign wealth fund.

The Communist Party of Vietnam embarked on its "blazing furnace" anti-graft campaign when Nguyen Phu Trong, the party's general secretary, defeated rival Nguyen Tan Dung — Dung was prime minister at the time and seen by many as allowing corruption to thrive.

The anti-corruption campaign has resulted in hundreds, if not thousands of party and government officials being dismissed in recent years. — **DW**

Philippines President condemns attack on Mindanao varsity

MANILA: Philippines President Bongbong Marcos has condemned the attack on Mindanao State University (MSU) in Marawi City, which claimed the lives of four people and injured several others.

Taking to X, Marcos stated, "I condemn in the strongest possible terms the senseless and most heinous acts perpetrated by foreign terrorists upon the Mindanao State University (MSU) and Marawi communities early this Sunday morning. Extremists who wield violence against the innocent will always be regarded as enemies to our society."

His statement comes after four people were killed and several others were wounded after a bombing attack on a university gymnasium in the southern Philippines, Al Jazeera reported. The explosion took place at a gymnasium at Mindanao State University in Marawi City during a Catholic mass service on Sunday morning.

Bongbong Marcos said that he has directed the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to ensure the protection and safety of civilians and the security of affected and vulnerable communities. He further said that additional security personnel are also being deployed.

He offered condolences to the victims and their loved ones who had been targeted in the attack. Marcos vowed to bring perpetrators to justice.

"We are in close coordination with the regional government of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and the concerned Local Government Units. I thank them for their swift and immediate response to the incident and for their ready support to the victims," Marcos stated.

He asked people to remain calm and circumspect in the Philippines' collective efforts to ensure that the horrific events of this morning are not further compounded by "inaccurate, unvetted, and unofficial information."

In a post shared on X, Bongbong Marcos stated, "As reports come in throughout the day, I enjoin all of us to remain calm, circumspect, and conscientious in our collective efforts to ensure that the horrific events of this morning are not further compounded by inaccurate,



unvetted, and unofficial information. Rest assured we will bring the perpetrators of this ruthless act to justice. Let us all keep the victims, their families, and our communities in our prayers."

Earlier, Lanao del Sur province Governor Mamintal Alonto Adiong Jr condemned the bombing. He stressed that terrorist attacks on educational institutions must be condemned.

In a statement, he stated, "Here in my province, we uphold basic human rights, and that includes the right to religion," according to Al Jazeera report. Mamintal Alonto Adiong Jr said, "Terroristic attacks on educational insitutions [sic] must also be condemned because these are places that promote the culture of peace and mould our youth to be the future shapers of this country."

Meanwhile, Mindanao State University said that it was "deeply saddened and appalled" by the attack. Mindanao State University condemned the "senseless and horrific act" and added that classes have been suspended until further notice.

The university said, "We unequivocally condemn in the strongest possible terms this senseless and horrific act and extend our heartfelt condolences to the victims and their families." — **ANI**

REPATRIATION

Pakistan sends back 402,312 'illegal' Afghans

ISLAMABAD: At least 402,312 illegal foreigners, including Afghans, have so far been repatriated to their home countries in a dignified and safe manner from Pakistan, ARY News reported on Sunday.

It reported that the process for repatriation of undocumented foreign nationals is ongoing in Pakistan.

"Thousands of Afghans are returning to their homeland on a daily basis through Chaman and Torkham borders, thanking Pakistan for its generosity," Radio Pakistan reported.

Further, according to ARY News, the caretaker Pakistan government has built transit camps in various districts for the temporary accommodation of undocumented foreigners and their safe repatriation from the country.

A further 3,776 more 'illegal' Afghan nationals returned to their country on Friday.

Earlier, caretaker Provin-



cial Information Minister Jan Achakzai reiterated the government's resolve, saying that the illegal immigrants will be repatriated to their own country at any cost, ARY News reported.

He said the government has set a target of deporting 10,000 im-

migrants every day. So far 135,000 illegal immigrants have returned to Afghanistan and this process is gradually progressing towards success.

ARY News quoted the minister as saying further that the Afghans were involved in 16 bomb attacks

and sabotage incidents in the past year. The interim government has decided to send back 10,000 'illegal' immigrants every day, he said.

Six arrested

Six suspects have been arrested for allegedly connected with an attack on an Islamabad-bound bus in Gilgit-Baltistan's (GB) Chilas on Saturday, Dawn reported.

Diamer police on Saturday registered a First Information Report (FIR) against the suspects.

In the attack, at least nine people, including two soldiers, lost their lives and 21 passengers suffered injuries after an unknown gunmen targeted a bus from nearby hills, which caused the vehicle to collide with a goods truck.

Gilgit-Baltistan's interior minister said that the bus driver stepped on the accelerators as the gunmen started firing, which led to its head-on collision with a goods truck. — **ANI**

UNIQUE INITIATIVES

On a mission mode to restore balance with our planet

Times News Service

MUSCAT The world produces approximately 300 million tonnes of plastic waste every year and half the plastic waste comes from single-use products, such as plastic bottles and plastic cutlery, used just once and then discarded, Palmade co-founder Lamis Al Hashimy says.

She is a first generation family-business owner and the company makes a range of eco-friendly disposable cutlery made from natural materials, including discarded leaves from the date palm tree.

In order to respond to this global problem and make a better choice we at Palmade are committed to bringing innovative and locally developed solutions that make it easy for our communities to adopt eco-friendly products and reshape our future.

"We are on a quest to build a new economy based on date palm-derived products that help replace single-use plastics. More than just making products, our goal is to assist our community in transitioning to a more sustainable way of life," she further added.

In an exclusive interview with *Times of Oman* Lamis outlines Palmade's unique initiatives and wide range of products with an aim to reduce our environmental impact, ways to reduce single-use plastics, and help in transitioning away from plastics on a mission mode to restore balance in our planet.

Excerpts:

What has been your inspiration to start Palmade Biodegradable Cutlery and what are your expansion objectives into Oman?

Palmade embodies the connection most of us in the region have with the date palm tree. Throughout history, this bountiful tree has



always provided its benefits from nourishing fruits, shelter, medicinal properties, and today; through Palmade, it is playing a role in addressing the climate crisis we are all facing.

In our seven-year journey, we were successfully able to unlock value from the discarded biomass of the date palm leaves, and we believed it was important that the product is sustainable from both, a manufacturing process, and a finished good solution.

Our inspiration always stemmed from the intention to create a meaningful and purposeful product that provides a solution. The date palm tree made our realisation a reality. It was also very important to us that our innovation uses local resources; making it a more sustainable and impactful product that addresses a global problem with a local solution.

With the expansion, which businesses do you plan on targeting and how would your products be of specific benefit to them?

Our business model is currently that of a B2B, where our products are sold to hotels, restaurants, airlines, and other hospitality businesses. The businesses that purchase Palmade cutlery are usually sustainably driven through the tone at the top with leadership that supports initiatives geared towards sustainable alternatives. We consider these businesses pioneers in the industry and believe they are paving the path for other businesses to follow suit.

We are very keen on also expanding to a B2C model in the near future. We believe that our end customers have the awareness and preparedness to switch from single use plastics to biodegradable alternatives, and we would like to empower them with that choice.

Do you plan on opening manufacturing units in Oman? With the expansion, how do you see the employment rate increasing?

We continue to consider our business that of a manufacturing start-up; and as we expand our market



share and grow our business, we are keen to expanding to other GCC countries, such as Oman. Not only is Oman a true neighbour to the UAE, we also believe that its values towards preserving nature and addressing our climate crisis are aligned with that of the UAE.

The markets that are most compatible with us to expand to are those that value the purpose of sustainability and intend on eliminating the use of single use plastics on a large scale.

We have been very fortunate with the UAE's vision on eliminating single use plastics in the next two years, and we hope that other countries will follow suit.

How are you reaching out to potential consumers to make the switch to using sustainable products? Are you facing any challenges?

The circular nature of our product has helped us tell our story in a way that resonates with our customers and especially those that are interested in contributing to supporting our environment. The

fact that our cutleries are compostable and can be used to plant more trees allows for our community to come together plays its role in achieving the circularity of our products. This sense of collaboration fosters the ethos that is crucial to supporting a more sustainably driven mindset in our society.

Convincing businesses to switch to eco-friendly alternatives has been a complex endeavour. Many factors and existing stigma around sustainable products hinder the decision-making process for businesses. Although businesses express their desire to become more eco-friendly, they are not willing to compromise on the additional cost that accompanies sustainable products. It is important for businesses to understand the underlying tangible and intangible value in choosing sustainable products, which can only be realised in the long term.

We are continuously striving to raise awareness on the importance of sustainable decision making through participation in conventions and industry specific panels

and to highlight the value that can be generated from these sustainable choices.

Having started your business in the UAE, as you expand regionally, do you see a difference in the acceptance of using sustainable products?

In the UAE, there is a growing awareness of environmental issues and the desire to address them. The UAE government actively promotes sustainability through policies, events, and incentives. Hosting COP28 in ExpoCity Dubai demonstrates the position the UAE is taking in addressing climate change and its commitment to advancing global climate action. As a result, we are seeing an increase in interest from businesses that are keen on playing their part in the sustainable space.

At the end of the day, businesses should not aspire to ride the wave, but instead, create the waves of sustainability that lead its community to a more sustainable way of living.

SPORTS



Al Nahda set up semis date with Al Nasr, Dhofar to take on Bahla

Holders Al Nahda hold Seeb to a goalless draw in the second-leg to win 2-1 on aggregate in the quarter-finals of the 2023-24 HM's Cup Football Championship in Buraimi on Saturday

MUSCAT: Defending champions and red-hot Al Nahda moved a step closer to their title defence of the prestigious His Majesty's Cup Football Championship as they secured a spot in the semi-finals of the 2023-24 edition on Saturday night.

The Green Brigade battled to a resilient goalless draw against four-time champions Seeb in the second-leg of their quarter-final clash at the Al Buraimi Sports Complex, clinching a 2-1 aggregate victory, having won the first-leg 2-1.

Facing Seeb's relentless attacks, Al Nahda showcased unwavering determination, maintaining their defensive stronghold throughout the match.



Their triumph sets the stage for an electrifying semi-final against five-time champions and Salalah powerhouse, Al Nasr, who secured a commanding 4-1 aggregate victory over nine-time champions Fanja on Friday. Al Nasr had won the first-leg 2-1 and in the second-leg cruised to a 2-0 win.

Coached by Hamad Al Azani, Al Nahda's excellent season continues as they recently booked their spot in the AFC Cup West Zone semi-finals.

There would be two clubs from Dhofar Governorate in this HM's Cup semi-finals with record ten-time winners Dhofar also sealing a spot in the semi-finals on Saturday.

Dhofar beat Oman 4-2 on aggregate, winning the first-leg 2-0, and on Saturday, playing out a well-fought 2-2 draw.

Dhofar will be eyeing another title, having won the last in the 2020-2021 season. They face surprise semi-finalists Bahla, who will be playing in the last-four of the coveted tournament for the first time.

Bahla edged past Ibri 3-2 on aggregate, winning the second-leg 1-0 after the first-leg had ended in a 2-2 draw.

The second-leg match between Dhofar and Oman produced an exciting battle with four goals scored. Both the teams failed to break the stalemate in the first half and the

second 45 minutes yielded four goals.

Dhofar's Sultan Al Marzouqi opened the scoring soon after resumption and the record champions were soon 2-0 up when Hussein Bin Said scored in the 49th minute.

Oman fought back and reduced the margin when they earned a spot kick in the 72nd minute. Mahmoud Al Hasani successfully converted and eight minutes later, Oman found the equaliser when Abdulwahid Al Hinai scored.

Earlier on Friday, a ten-man Al Nasr Club cruised to a 2-0 win in the return leg at the Al Saada Sports Complex. The hosts drew the first blood in the tenth minute



through Walid Al Musallami but the hosts were down to ten men when Al Musallami was given the marching orders for a foul before the interval.

Despite the numerical advantage, Fanja failed to capitalise and it was Al Nasr who extended the lead when Ahboub Carted converted a 60th-minute penalty.

The hosts held on defensively to win the match and march into the semis.

Bahla beat the hosts Ibri Club 1-0 in the second-leg at Ibri Club Stadium on Friday. After a goalless first half, the all-important goal came in the 76th minute when Anis al Maarif found the back of the Ibri net.

TEST SERIES AGAINST PAKISTAN

Uncapped Morris named in Australia squad for first Test

MELBOURNE: Uncapped pacer Lance Morris has been included in Australia's 14-man squad for the first Test against Pakistan in Perth, which will be played from December 14.

Morris, nicknamed 'The Wild Thing' for his ferocious pace, has enjoyed a great start to his first-class career, taking 74 wickets in just 22 games so far at an average of 25.44. He could be making his Test debut in front of his home fans in the state of Western Australia.

Capable of bowling 150kmph deliveries with ease, Morris returned to the Sheffield Shield after a back injury. He played like an injury never happened, taking 11 wickets in just three matches.

Morris joins the likes of skipper Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood, and Scott Boland in a world-class pace attack.

Cameron Green and Mitchell Marsh, both pace-bowling all-rounders, are selected and will likely battle for one slot in the XI, while off-spinner Nathan Lyon beat Todd Murphy for a berth in the squad after recovering from a calf injury that kept him out of the Ashes series.

Usman Khawaja, Travis Head, Marnus Labuschagne, and Steve Smith were predictable batting additions, with David Warner also retaining a vital part of the squad, despite the fact that no backup batsman was picked.

Warner had long forecast the series against Pakistan, and specifically the third Test in Sydney as his desired farewell from Test cricket. His Test form over the last two years, even with a lone double



century against South Africa last year, has raised questions as to whether he deserved to go out on his own terms. But Australia's selectors believe he is one of the best two openers in the country and has been named for the first Test, having made a half-century in his last Test innings at the Oval and coming off a stunning World Cup in India.

Alex Carey has retained his place as the first-choice Test wicketkeeper despite losing his ODI place to Josh Inglis at the start of the World Cup. But the selectors still see him as the clear-cut Test wicketkeeper and he tuned up for the series with a classy 81 for South Australia in their tight loss to Victoria last week. Those in contention for a spot in the team, especially Cameron Bancroft, Matt Renshaw, and Marcus Harris, have been chosen to the Prime Minister's XI for an audition against Pakistan on December 6.

Men's selection panel chairman George Bailey said that the stars who lifted the ICC World Test

Championship earlier this year deserve to return but there are still opportunities for fringe players to contribute in the new WTC cycle of 2023-2025.

"This group led by Pat Cummins, has built a strong resume over an extended time period. We believe they have earned the opportunity to start in our first home Test match of the new World Test Championship cycle," said Bailey.

"As ever, there will be opportunities in the short to medium term to break into this squad and we look forward to seeing the continued strong performances from players who have been performing domestically, many of whom will get a tremendous opportunity in the PM's XI fixture against Pakistan later this week," Bailey said.

Australia squad: (First Test only) Pat Cummins (c), Scott Boland, Alex Carey, Cameron Green, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Usman Khawaja, Marnus Labuschagne, Nathan Lyon, Mitch Marsh, Lance Morris, Steve Smith, Mitch Starc, David Warner. - Agencies

HERO WORLD CHALLENGE

Woods 'pleasantly surprised'

BAHAMAS: Tiger Woods says he has been pleasantly surprised by his return to action after shooting a one-under-par 71 in round three at the Hero World Challenge on Saturday.

The 15-time major champion is competing for the first time since withdrawing from the Masters in April with injury. He is tied for 16th in the Bahamas on level par in the 20-man field, 16 shots behind leader Scottie Scheffler, *BBC Sport* reported.

"I'm very pleasantly surprised at how I've recovered every day," said Woods, 47.

"I still have the game; it's whether the body can do it or not." His American compatriot Scheffler, the world No.1, is three shots



clear of England's Matt Fitzpatrick after both players completed seven-under rounds of 65.

Woods began Saturday with two bogeys before birdies at the third, sixth, eighth and ninth - where he got up and down from a greenside bunker.

He had two bogeys and a birdie

on the back nine, which included a seven-foot par putt miss at the 18th.

"It could have been a little bit better than the score indicates. I think I could have shot something in the high 60s today," said Woods, who shot 75 and 70 in his opening rounds.

Woods had fusion surgery on a bone in his ankle to address post-traumatic arthritis following the 2021 car crash that kept him out of golf for nearly 14 months.

He said recently that he had "zero issues" with the ankle, but other injury problems - including with his back - remain. Woods hopes to play one tournament per month in 2024 and that this event will help to determine his schedule for next season. - Agencies

9 TEAMS FOR AUDITORS CUP CRICKET TOURNAMENT

A total of nine teams will compete for the annual Auditors Cup 2023 cricket tournament that will be played at the Oman Cricket Academy ground from December 14-16. The ten-a-side softball event features leading audit firms in the Sultanate. The tournament has been organised for the past 15 years. The teams participating are EY, Deloitte, PwC, KPMG, Crowe, Moore, GT, BDO and Al Nuha International.



TREND MICRO SIGNS PACT

Trend Micro Incorporated, a global leader in cybersecurity, recently announced that it signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Ooredoo Oman, a leading international communications company, with operations spanning North Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia.

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



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MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 4,658.18 points, up by 0 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.31 per cent at 44761 points. Barka Water & Power Company, up 7.32 per cent, was the top gainer while Salalah Port Services, down 9.79 per cent, was the top loser.

MSX registers gain of 2.5% in November

The Financial Sector Index recorded the biggest increase among the indices registering 11.7 percent gain during November-2023 to close the month at 8,275.45 points

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The MSX 30 index registered a gain of 2.5 percent during November-2023 to close the month at 4,658.18 points recording the first monthly gain after two consecutive declines, according to a new report.

"In terms of sectoral performance, all the three sector indices on the exchange also recorded broad-based increases during November-2023. The Financial Sector Index recorded the biggest increase among the indices registering 11.7 percent gain during November-2023 to close the month at 8,275.45 points," Kamco Invest said in its GCC Markets Monthly Report November 2023.

This mainly driven by a rise in shares of most of the companies in the sector such as Al Madina Investment (+44.7 percent) and Oman Investment & Finance Co (+18.75 percent). The monthly gain for such heavyweight companies contributed to both the sector index as well as the general index. In comparison, the Services Index registered 11.5 percent monthly gain during November-2023 to close the month at 1,773.5 points while the Industrial Index witnessed an increase of 5.2 percent closing at 5,720.9 points.

In terms of company perfor-



mance, National Aluminium Products Company topped the gainers list with a share price gain of 45 percent followed by Al Madina Investment Holding and the National Detergent Company with 44.7 percent and 32.1 percent monthly share gains, respectively.

On the decliner's side, Dhofar Cattle Feed led the league with a 14.5 percent share price fall followed by Oman Refreshment Company and Muscat Gases which witnessed a share price drop of 12.5 percent each, the Kamco Invest report said. Shares of Al Madina Investment surged after the company announced that its board had decided to convert the company from a public joint stock company to a closed joint stock company.

Trading activity on the exchange witnessed significant gains during November-2023 and stood at the highest level since October-2015. Total volume of shares traded in the exchange increased by 65 percent to 1.2 billion during November-2023 shares as compared to 721 million in October-2023. Similarly, total value traded in the exchange increased by 93.7 percent to OMR274.4 million against OMR141.7 million in October-2023. Oman Telecommunications Company topped the monthly value traded chart with trades at

OMR19.7 million followed by Bank Muscat and Sohar Bank with total value traded at OMR15.8 million and OMR8.9 million, respectively. In terms of monthly volume traded, Bank Muscat topped the list for the fifth consecutive month with 827.6 million shares followed by Bank Sohar Bank and Oman Telecommunications Co with volumes at 126.6 million shares and 18.8 million shares, respectively, the Kamco Invest report said.

Economic news

In economic news, the IMF recently concluded its Article IV consultation visit to Oman. The agency forecasts 1.3 percent growth for Oman's gross domestic product (GDP) for 2023 as compared to 4.3 percent expansion during 2022. The IMF underlined that Oman's economy is supported by favourable oil prices and sustained reform momentum as inflation remains contained. The agency said that the Sultanate's structural reform agenda under Vision 2040 is progressing, with numerous reforms under the implementation stage to foster Oman's inclusive growth, enhance job creation, and bolster resilience. The IMF highlighted Oman's prudent fiscal management and high oil prices as the impetus for the economic improvement of 2022. However,

despite the falling GDP growth forecast in 2023 due to OPEC+ oil cuts the IMF has indicated that it expects the Sultanate's GDP to recover in 2024 supported by higher hydrocarbon production as well as stronger non-oil growth.

GCC markets

The GCC equity market index witnessed the first gain in four months after benchmarks across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries witnessed gains during the month, the Kmaco report said. The MSCI GCC index was up by 5.2% during November-2023 mainly led by optimism in the global markets following expectations that interest rates have peaked and central banks may start cutting rates next year, most likely during the second half.

Qatar was the best performing market in the GCC with a return of 5.4 percent followed by Saudi Arabia and Dubai with gains of 4.6 percent and 3.0 percent, respectively. The monthly gains lowered the year-to-date (YTD)-2023 decline for the region to 2.4 percent as four out of the seven regional benchmarks still showed declines while Dubai followed by Saudi Arabia showed healthy YTD gains of 19.7 percent and 6.7 percent, respectively.

On the international front, almost all key global markets were up during the month with healthy gains.

ILO OFFICIAL

Mena region could accelerate GDP to 7.2% by 2050 via serious climate action approach

DUBAI: Peter Rademaker, International Labour Organisation (ILO) Deputy Regional Director for the Arab States, has confirmed that the Middle East and North Africa (Mena) region could create 10 million new jobs and accelerate GDP to 7.2 per cent by 2050 via taking a serious approach to climate action.

In a statement to the Emirates News Agency (WAM) on the sidelines of COP28, Rademaker said that the trend towards new energy has helped to create 13.7 million jobs in the renewable energy sector worldwide.

He revealed that the report "Social and Employment Impacts of Carbon Removal and Green Industrial Growth: Scenarios for the Mena Region" will be launched today during COP28. He explained that the report is the first of its kind conducted by the ILO and the Islamic Development Bank on the Mena region.

The ILO Deputy Regional Director for Arab States stressed the need for countries to follow enhanced energy policies, link climate to development policies and investment.

He confirmed that the ILO is participating in COP28 to ensure that climate change efforts include all people worldwide, to ensure their commitment to addressing this phenomenon, and to monitor the consequences of its impact on jobs in many regions, including Mena.

He added, "According to our assessments in the Mena region, there'll be a total of 6.6 million jobs created thanks to a just transition approach to climate change."

He praised the UAE's efforts in operationalising the Loss and Damage Fund, as it was the first country to support the Fund.

He described the step as crucial in pushing climate action and "taking care of people affected by climate change", especially those



Peter Rademaker, International Labour Organisation (ILO) Deputy Regional Director for the Arab States said that the trend towards new energy has helped to create 13.7 million jobs in the renewable energy sector worldwide

who will lose their jobs, as well as providing some alternative livelihoods.

He added, "It's important that this cop really takes on board all the views, all of society. So it's important that governments are negotiated, but it's important also that around the blue and Green Zone, delegates listen to what people have to say. NGOs, trade union, the private sector, and indeed, this just transition approach really becomes the cornerstone of what comes out of this cop in the UAE." -WAM

FISHERIES DEVELOPMENT OMAN

FDO to showcase products and sustainable practices at Oman AgroFood Exhibition

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Fisheries Development Oman (FDO), a pivotal entity in Oman's fisheries and aquaculture sector, is set to participate in the highly anticipated 5th Oman AgroFood Exhibition and Conference. Taking place from December 4 to 6 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC), Muscat, this event aligns with FDO's commitment to sustainable growth and supporting the economic diversification goals outlined in Oman Vision 2040.

FDO, along with its subsidiary companies Blue Waters, Natural Shrimp Aquaculture Company (NSA), and Oriental Shrimp Aquaculture Company (ORA), will showcase a range of products, including White Pacific Shrimp and Seabream, demonstrating its dedication to quality and innovation. Representatives will be available for discussions, explaining the product range to visitors. Other FDO subsidiaries that will also be present at the event are Blue Waters, which specialises in finfish operations, and Shrimp Aquaculture Company, which focuses on developing shrimp aquaculture projects and processing facilities.

Live cooking sessions during the event will provide visitors with a taste of fresh Omani seafood products, fostering engagement and exploring business expansion opportunities with suppliers and distributors.

Under the patronage of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Water Resources, the 5th Oman



AgroFood Exhibition and Conference brings together key decision-makers, thought leaders, and technology providers. The event highlights Oman's stable economy, robust infrastructure, and commitment to expanding non-oil sectors in line with Vision 2040.

As an investment and development group, FDO actively contributes to Oman's economic landscape through diversified investments and infrastructure development. FDO and its subsidiaries engage in fishing fresh Horse Mackerel and a local mackerel species in the Arabian Sea area. Additionally, the company is involved in aquaculture, producing shrimp, shellfish, and other aquatic animals. FDO's participation in the event aims to introduce fresh catch to the Omani market, catering to both retail and businesses.

Khalid Al Balushi, Sales Manager at Natural Shrimp Aquaculture

Company (NSA), an FDO subsidiary emphasised the significance of their participation, stating, "Our involvement in the Oman AgroFood Exhibition and Conference is crucial as it provides an opportunity to engage with local traders, enhance FDO's standing in regional and global markets, and cultivate collaborations. Our primary goal is to finalise significant deals and draw investments into the fisheries and aquaculture sector, in addition to popularising fresh catch in the local market."

In addition to showcasing current endeavours, Khalid Al Balushi, shared plans for growth, including exploring opportunities in aquaculture projects and expanding into modern boats and coastal fleets in the fisheries sector. Exciting projects on the horizon include Oyster farming and sea cucumber farming, highlighting FDO's commitment to innovation and diversification.

COP28

World Bank offers to host Lost and Damage Fund

DUBAI: "World Bank has offered to host the Lost and Damage Fund, so we'll work very closely with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to create that fund," according to a World Bank's official.

In a statement to the Emirates News Agency (WAM) during the climate summit, Axel van Trotsenburg, World Bank's Senior Managing Director (SMD) responsible for Development Policy and Partnerships, said, "COP28 started with great announcements on the Loss and Damage Fund. I think it has been an extremely important decision, and it now needs to be set up."

Trotsenburg explained, "This is actually a negotiation among the key stakeholders. So they will have to set up the governance structure and how people could be eligible for the resources." He added, "This is a very positive step that about a dozen countries have come forward already with pledges, which is a very strong political signal."

Regarding the UAE's role in COP28, the World Bank official said, "Well, we are extremely pleased to be here at the COP28. The UAE has worked very hard during the whole year to organise this." "We need to be global. We need all countries to participate in this global challenge," he noted, adding, "We need to make sure that we can keep the 1.5 degrees." -WAM

BRIEFS

Chinese automaker Chery produces 1st EV in Indonesia



JAKARTA: The first electric vehicle (EV) of China's automotive company Chery has rolled off the production line in Indonesia, the company said on Saturday at its production base in Bekasi, a city east of the capital Jakarta. President of Chery International Zhang Guibin is optimistic about the Indonesian market, as the carmaker has received positive appreciation from customers. "The OMODA E5 EVs locally assembled in Indonesia will be launched soon. They carry the latest technology and our commitment to environmentally friendly innovations that are comfortable for consumers as well," Zhang said. Indonesian Coordinating Minister for the Economy Affairs Airlangga Hartarto expressed his hope that Chery would make Indonesia a production base for exports, especially for consumers in Southeast Asian countries. -Xinhua

South Korea and Japan to resume economic talks

SEOUL: South Korea and Japan are expected to resume high-level economic talks later this month. During a summit in Lithuania's Vilnius in July, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida agreed to resume the economic talks and have since reaffirmed the commitment in two follow-up summits in August and last month, Yonhap reported. First launched in 1999, the forum has since been held alternately in South Korea and Japan before being suspended following the 14th session in Tokyo in January 2016. On Friday, the two countries also clinched a \$10 billion currency swap deal, eight years after the former deal ended. -BNA



MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Barka Water & Power Company, up 7.32 per cent, was the top gainer while Salalah Port Services, down 9.79 per cent, was the top loser



MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,658.18 points, up by 0.1 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.31 per cent at 447.61 points. Barka Water & Power Company, up 7.32 per cent, was the top gainer while Salalah Port Services, down 9.79 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of Bank Muscat were the most active in terms of number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 1062 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of OMR4.41 million, with more than 19.35 million shares changing hands. Out of 41 traded securities, 16 advanced, 7 declined, and 18 remained unchanged. At the session close, foreign investors were net buyers for OMR139,000 while domestic investors were net sellers for OMR133,000, followed by GCC & Arab investors for OMR6,000 worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,600.36 points, up 0.22 per cent. Prices of Al Madina Investments, Ominvest, Global Financial In-

vestments, Al Sharqia Investment, Al Madina Takaful were up by 5.46 per cent, 3.19 per cent, 1.75 per cent, 1.45 per cent, 1.21 per cent respectively. Prices of Bank Nizwa, Bank Dhofar were down by 3.00 per cent, 1.24 per cent respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,371.46 points, up 0.3 per cent. Prices of Galfar Engineering, Voltamp Energy, Al Anwar Ceramics were up by 2.03 per cent, 1.56 per cent, 1.14 per cent respectively. Prices of National Aluminium, Oman Cement were down by 3.45 per cent, 0.65 per cent respectively.

Services Index was up by 0.14 per cent before closing at 1,596.43 points. Prices of Barka Water & Power Company, SMN Power Holding, Muscat Desalination, Oman National Engineering, Dhofar Generating were up by 7.32 per cent, 4.11 per cent, 3.85 per cent, 2.83 per cent, 2.70 per cent respectively. Prices of Salalah Port Services, Abraj Energy were down by 9.79 per cent, 1.64 per cent respectively.

— United Securities

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff%
MSX 30 INDEX	4,669.618	4,621.608	4,658.178	4,658.153	0.025	0.00
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,610.834	7,554.337	7,600.355	7,583.917	16.438	0.22
Industry Index	5,371.463	5,352.051	5,371.463	5,355.428	16.035	0.30
Services Index	1,597.086	1,582.532	1,596.430	1,594.162	2.268	0.14
MSX Shariah Index	449.818	447.612	447.612	448.002	-1.390	-0.31
MSX TR INDEX	6,155.118	6,091.834	6,140.038	6,140.005	0.033	0.00
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,304.818	8,243.169	8,293.383	8,275.447	17.936	0.22
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	5,738.059	5,717.322	5,738.059	5,720.929	17.130	0.30
SERVICES TR IDX	1,776.744	1,760.553	1,776.014	1,773.491	2.523	0.14

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
19,352,732	4,405,298	1,062	23,780,410,391	16	7	18	41

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3

ISINSECURITY NAMEVOLUME TURNOVER TRADES OPEN PRICEHIGHLOWCLOSE PR.PREV. CLOSEDIFF (RD)DIFF %LAST PRLAST BDLAST OFFER.PAR VALUESECURITY SYMBOLMARKET CAP

REGULAR MARKET

OM0000001087	OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	2,500	665	1	0.266	0.266	0.266	0.266	0.000	0.000	0.266	0.260	0.292	0.100	OUIC	26,600,000	
OM0000001152	OMAN NATIONAL ENGINEERING & INVESTMENT	28,129	3,037	3	0.107	0.109	0.107	0.109	0.106	0.003	2.830	0.109	0.108	0.109	0.100	ONES	16,350,000
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	70,573	20,113	6	0.285	0.285	0.285	0.285	0.000	0.000	0.285	0.285	0.285	0.100	NBOB	463,394,711	
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	169,167	81,753	5	0.460	0.485	0.460	0.485	0.470	-0.015	3.191	0.485	0.460	0.485	0.100	OMVS	324,157,322
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	4,820	1,485	1	0.308	0.308	0.308	0.308	0.310	-0.002	-0.645	0.308	0.308	0.000	0.100	OCOI	101,908,795
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	138,751	24,521	5	0.175	0.177	0.175	0.177	0.175	0.002	1.143	0.177	0.175	0.177	0.100	AACT	38,940,000
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	5,000	1,150	1	0.230	0.230	0.230	0.230	0.230	0.000	0.000	0.230	0.230	0.235	0.100	AJSS	14,076,983
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIA INVESTMENT HO.	25,000	1,750	4	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.069	-0.001	1.449	0.070	0.068	0.070	0.100	SIHC	6,300,000
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	5,000	900	1	0.160	0.160	0.160	0.160	0.162	-0.002	-1.235	0.160	0.155	0.178	0.100	BKDB	479,418,239
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	6,103,833	1,685,258	345	0.271	0.274	0.271	0.273	0.272	-0.001	0.388	0.273	0.273	0.273	0.100	BKMB	2,048,246,388
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	1,217,690	1,335,181	48	1.026	1.100	1.026	1.080	1.080	0.000	0.000	1.080	1.081	1.081	0.100	OTEL	810,000,000
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	47,681	2,765	6	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.057	-0.001	1.754	0.058	0.057	0.058	0.100	GFIC	11,600,000
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	5,000	2,000	1	0.400	0.400	0.400	0.400	0.400	0.000	0.000	0.400	0.390	0.430	0.100	RNSS	94,564,000
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	5,653,208	582,233	19	0.102	0.103	0.102	0.103	0.102	-0.001	0.980	0.103	0.103	0.103	0.100	BKSB	563,192,516
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	13,600	4,624	4	0.340	0.340	0.340	0.340	0.340	0.000	0.000	0.340	0.338	0.340	0.100	ORDS	221,321,038
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	387,560	29,030	24	0.074	0.076	0.074	0.076	0.073	-0.003	4.110	0.076	0.075	0.078	0.100	SMNP	15,172,366
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	11,080	929	5	0.083	0.084	0.083	0.084	0.083	-0.001	1.205	0.084	0.083	0.084	0.100	AMAT	14,700,000
Total	17	13,889,502	3,757,295	479													

Parallel Market

OM0000001368	CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL INDUSTRIES	4,618	208	2	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.000	0.000	0.045	0.045	0.048	0.100	CMII	2,812,500
OM0000001418	RAYSUT CEMENT	3,000	411	1	0.137	0.137	0.137	0.138	0.138	0.000	0.000	0.137	0.137	0.137	0.100	RCCI	27,600,000
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	50,712	3,905	6	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.000	0.000	0.077	0.075	0.079	0.100	AAIC	15,862,000
OM0000001897	MAJAN COLLEGE	6,877	743	1	0.108	0.108	0.108	0.108	0.108	0.000	0.000	0.108	0.100	0.108	0.100	BACS	972,000
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	230	13	1	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.055	-0.003	5.455	0.058	0.052	0.059	0.100	AMII	4,930,000
OM0000002333	SALALAH PORT SERVICES	9,065	3,173	2	0.350	0.350	0.350	0.350	0.388	-0.038	-9.794	0.350	0.350	0.000	0.100	SPSI	62,943,090
OM0000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	252,045	10,679	21	0.042	0.044	0.041	0.044	0.041	-0.003	7.317	0.044	0.043	0.044	0.100	BWPC	7,040,000
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	234,500	34,794	16	0.148	0.151	0.147	0.151	0.148	-0.003	2.027	0.151	0.145	0.151	0.100	GRCS	30,659,953
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	901	116	2	0.128	0.130	0.128	0.130	0.128	0.002	1.563	0.130	0.130	0.128	0.100	VOES	10,582,358
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	2,378,113	236,760	39	0.100	0.100	0.097	0.097	0.100	-0.003	-3.000	0.097	0.097	0.100	0.100	BKNZ	216,984,444
OM0000004735	SEMBORP SALALAH	1,000	95	1	0.095	0.095	0.095	0.095	0.095	0.000	0.000	0.095	0.094	0.095	0.100	ESFW	90,684,335
OM0000004925	ALBATAH POWER	156,669	3,345	14	0.021	0.024	0.020	0.022	0.022	0.000	0.000	0.022	0.020	0.022	0.100	BATP	14,847,523
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	366,975	7,717	22	0.021	0.022	0.020	0.022	0.022	0.000	0.000	0.022	0.020	0.022	0.100	SUWP	15,716,939
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	28,604	1,564	5	0.054	0.055	0.054	0.055	0.054	-0.001	1.852	0.055	0.054	0.055	0.100	PHPC	80,443,080
OM0000007084	MUSCAT CITY DESALINATION	9,500	753	4	0.079	0.081	0.079	0.081	0.078	-0.003	3.846	0.081	0.079	0.081	0.100	MCDE	12,569,582
OM0000007407	DHOFAR GENERATING	19,000	722	1	0.038	0.038	0.038	0.038	0.037	-0.001	2.703	0.038	0.036	0.038	0.100	DGEN	8,445,120
OM0000007910	AMAN REAL ESTATE	5,100	490	2	0.099	0.099	0.098	0.099	0.098	-0.002	-2.041	0.099	0.096	0.098	0.100	AMAN	19,200,000
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	9,550	745	2	0.078	0.078	0.078	0.078	0.078	0.000	0.000	0.078	0.078	0.085	0.100	OMRF	36,752,538
OM0000008634	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	98,352	29,532	30	0.300	0.301	0.299	0.300	0.305	-0.005	-1.639	0.300	0.298	0.300	0.100	ABRJ	231,060,000
OM0000009072	OQ GAS NETWORKS	1,699,610	259,046	402	0.152	0.153	0.151	0.153	0.153	0.000	0.000	0.153	0.153	0.152	0.100	OQGN	662,585,460
Total	20	5,334,421	594,810	574													

COLLABORATION

Trend Micro to offer its advanced cybersecurity services to Ooredoo customers in the Sultanate

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Trend Micro Incorporated, a global leader in cybersecurity, recently announced that it signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Ooredoo Oman, a leading international communications company, with operations spanning North Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia.

Through this partnership, Trend Micro will offer its advanced cybersecurity services to Ooredoo customers in Oman. These services can be seamlessly integrated into Ooredoo's core offerings, ensuring that customers have access to top-tier security solutions. Ooredoo's customers can opt for these services as bundled add-ons to its core services or as standalone offerings through flexible pricing models.

According to the recent Trend Micro's mid-year cybersecurity report, its solutions successfully identified and blocked more than 6 million threats in Oman during the first half of this year alone. This partnership stands as a testament to Trend Micro's unwavering commitment, extending beyond delivering outstanding security services; its goal is to elevate the Ooredoo's overall customer experience. Additionally, both companies have outlined plans to initiate awareness campaigns for cybersecurity, further cementing



their position as industry leaders.

"In today's ever-evolving digital landscape, we've come to understand that true digital resilience is not merely about standing firm against challenges. It's about combating them and emerging from those challenges stronger, more agile, and better prepared to drive innovation," said Assad Arabi, Managing Director, Gulf and Emerging Markets, Trend Micro.

"In this spirit of innovation and resilience, Trend Micro is thrilled to embark on a strategic partnership with Ooredoo. This is not just a collaboration; it's a testament to our shared commitment to empower Ooredoo's customers with best-in-class cybersecurity."

"Ooredoo's customers are at the heart of our alliance with Trend Micro. As they navigate the digital landscape, they deserve more than protection; they deserve digital empowerment," said Saied Al Lawati, Director of Business Marketing, and ICT Solutions at Ooredoo. "Through this partnership, our customers can look forward to a future where every digital step is secure, every connection is confident, and every endeavour is infused with the potential to redefine what's possible. The importance of this partnership lies in our collective commitment to safeguarding the digital future of our customers."

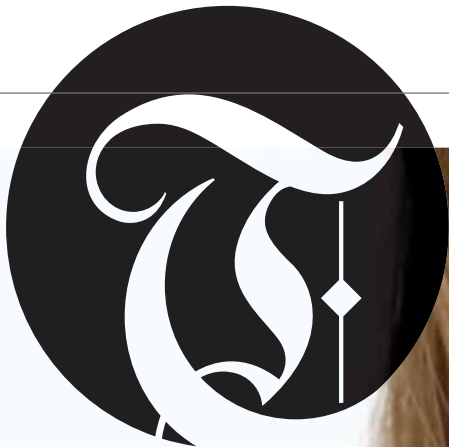
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LIFESTYLE

NUSRAT JUNG, an assistant professor in the Lyles School of Civil Engineering, discovered that several chemicals, particularly cyclic volatile methyl siloxanes, which are ubiquitous in hair care products, linger in the air after use in a newly published paper in Environmental Science & Technology, a journal of the American Chemical Society (ACS).

According to Jung’s team, a person can inhale a total of 1-17 milligrams of potentially dangerous substances in a single home hair care session.

“We found the results to be extremely alarming,” Jung said. “We did not expect to see such significant emissions of volatile chemical mixtures from off-the-shelf hair care products during typical hair care routines that many people perform each and every day.”

The often greatest -- and most concerning -- chemical inhaled, Jung said, is decamethylcyclopentasiloxane (aka D5 siloxane). It is an organosilicon compound and is often listed first or second in the ingredient lists of many hair care products, indicating it can be among the most abundant ingredients.

It has become a common ingredient over the past few decades in many personal care products due to its low surface tension, inertness, high thermal stability and smooth texture.

“D5 siloxane has been found to lead to adverse effects on the respiratory tract, liver and nervous system of laboratory animals,” Jung said.

“The use of the chemical in wash-off cosmetic products has already been restricted in the European Union because of this. Many of these products are scented, too, and some of the chemicals used to make these fragrances are potentially dangerous to inhale as well.”

According to the European Chemicals Agency, D5 siloxane is classified as “very persistent, very bioaccumulative.” And while the test results on laboratory animals are already concerning, Jung said, there is little information on their human impact.

“There has not been much in-depth research into this, so we really have no idea to what extent the threat these chemicals pose when inhaled over a long period of time,” Jung said.

“There have been tests into ‘wash-off’ products like shampoos, but almost none for ‘leave-on’ products like hair gels, oils, creams, waxes and sprays.”

Jung’s research also noted that applying high heat to these chemicals, such as through curling irons and hair straighteners, serves to further release the chemicals into the air.

When met with temperatures of 210 degrees Celsius, researchers found the chemical emissions from the hair care products increased anywhere from 50 per cent to 310 per cent.

To make matters worse, Jung said, these airborne chemicals do not merely remain in a single room or even just the home.

“Home ventilation is likely a major pathway of indoor-to-outdoor siloxane transport,” Jung said.

HAIR CARE
PRODUCT CHEMICALS
CAN REMAIN IN SURPRISING
CONCENTRATIONS
IN AIR

According to Purdue University researchers, the normal morning routine for many Americans includes inhaling several milligrams of pollutants that may be hazardous to their health.

“In urban environments, this is especially significant as you will have hundreds -- even thousands -- of homes ventilating out potentially harmful chemicals into the urban atmosphere all in a short span of time as people get ready for work and school in the morning. These chemicals are then collectively piped back into buildings through ventilation systems once more. So even if using products with harmful chemicals is not part of your hair care routine, you will still be impacted due to your surroundings in an urban environment.”

Considering an average use frequency of hair care products between two and five times per week, based on surveys on hair care product usage patterns, and assuming that 10 per cent of leave-on hair care products are siloxane-based, the total indoor-to-outdoor emission of D5 could reach 0.4 to 6 metric tons per year in the US.

“The best solution is to simply not use these products,” Jung said. “I used to use similar products myself to straighten my hair, but after we analysed the data, it became immediately clear that the best thing I could do to protect my own health was to stop using them.”

If one must use these products, the next best thing is to have an exhaust fan running to minimise the amount of chemicals inhaled, said Purdue civil engineering PhD student and researcher Jinglin Jiang.

“Ventilation can be an effective way to reduce siloxane exposures during indoor hair care routines,” Jiang said. “Our model shows that turning on the bathroom exhaust fan can reduce D5 inhalation exposures by over 90 per cent.”

That, however, further contributes to its environmental impact. Jung’s research reports that the cumulative indoor-to-outdoor D5 emission with the exhaust fan always off reaches 710 milligrams within three hours, while the indoor-to-outdoor D5 emission with the exhaust fan always on reaches 900 milligrams within only one hour.

“There’s a good reason why these chemicals are restricted from being used in wash-off hair care products in certain parts of the world,” Jung said.

“The effects on people and the planet need to be studied further and regulatory action needs to be taken.” -ANI

SPORTS

Germany to play Scotland in Euro 2024 opener on June 14

Spain and Italy drawn in same group while England in with Denmark

HAMBURG: Scotland will play Germany in the opening match of Euro 2024 on June 14 after being drawn in the same group as the hosts following the draw on Saturday, *BBC Sport* reported. Hungary and Switzerland complete Group A, while England are in Group C alongside Denmark, Slovenia and Serbia. Wales would be in Group D with France, the Netherlands and Austria at next summer's tournament should they qualify via March's play-offs. Germany will face Steve Clarke's Scotland in the opener at the Allianz Arena in Munich on Friday, June 14. Euro 2020 finalists England will begin their campaign on June 16 against Serbia. Defending champions Italy, who beat Gareth Southgate's side on penalties in the 2020 final, are up against three-time winners Spain, Croatia and Albania in Group B. The final of Euro 2024 will take place on July 14 at Berlin's Olympiastadion. Former England striker Alan Shearer said Southgate will be "extremely happy" with the draw, with Serbia and Slovenia outside the world's top 30, while 1992 champions Denmark are ranked 19th. "I don't think England can complain with that group," Shearer said. "I think it's pretty favourable when you look at some of the



teams that have been drawn out against each other." Chris Sutton, who was capped for the Three Lions in 1997, added that it was a "pretty soft" group for England. Despite it not appearing the toughest group, Southgate says all the teams in Group C are "more than capable". "You can look at it on paper, but the games aren't played on paper," Southgate said. If Wales qualify for next summer's tournament, their first game will be against the Netherlands - winners in 1988 - in Hamburg on 16 June, before fixtures against

Austria and France, who are ranked second in the world. Robert Page's side face Finland in the play-off semi-finals on 21 March, and should they win they will play either Poland or Estonia in the play-off final on 26 March. "It looks like one of the toughest groups there," Page said of Group D. "We've got a lot of work to do to get there but the rewards are there. We're all in football because we want to play against the best teams, players and managers and they certainly fall into that category." **Draw:** **Group A:** Germany, Scot-

land, Hungary, Switzerland. **Group B:** Spain, Croatia, Italy, Albania. **Group C:** Slovenia, Denmark, Serbia, England. **Group D:** Play-off winners A, Netherlands, Austria, France. **Group E:** Belgium, Slovakia, Romania, Play-off winners B. **Group F:** Türkiye, Play-off winners C, Portugal, Czech Republic. **Play-off winners A:** Poland, Wales, Finland, Estonia. **Play-off winners B:** Israel, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Ukraine, Iceland. **Play-off winners C:** Georgia, Greece, Kazakhstan, Luxembourg.

FINAL DRAW								
GROUP A			GROUP B			GROUP C		
	GERMANY		SPAIN		SLOVENIA		DENMARK	
	SCOTLAND		CROATIA		ITALY		ALBANIA	
	HUNGARY		ITALY		SLOVENIA		DENMARK	
	SWITZERLAND		ALBANIA		ENGLAND		SLOVENIA	
GROUP D			GROUP E			GROUP F		
	PLAY-OFF WINNER A		BELGIUM		TÜRKIYE		PLAY-OFF WINNER C	
	NETHERLANDS		SLOVAKIA		ROMANIA		PLAY-OFF WINNER B	
	AUSTRIA		ROMANIA		CZECHIA		PORTUGAL	
	FRANCE		BELGIUM		TÜRKIYE		PORTUGAL	

DRAW CEREMONY

UEFA probes after lewd noises disrupt broadcast

HAMBURG: UEFA says it is investigating after lewd noises were transmitted during the broadcast of the Euro 2024 draw on Saturday. Lewd noises could be heard as Switzerland were drawn in Group A with Scotland, Hungary and hosts Germany. A similar incident occurred on the BBC in the build up to January's FA Cup tie between Liverpool and Wolves. YouTube prankster Daniel Jarvis claimed responsibility for both that and the latest prank. Jarvis broadcast himself live on X, formerly Twitter, ringing a mobile phone at intervals to trigger the noises as the Euros draw, which was streamed on the BBC, took place in Hamburg, Germany. He told viewers: "Listen that was us, that was us. We got it in there, we put the phone in there, we rung it, sex noise at the Euro 2024 draw." Host Giorgio Marchetti, the deputy general secretary of European football's governing body, attempted to take control of the situation, saying: "There is some noise here that... has now stopped. No noise anymore." - Agencies

SPANISH LA LIGA



Diaz, Rodrygo score as Real return to top



MADRID: Real Madrid returned to the top of La Liga with a comfortable 2-0 victory over struggling Granada on Saturday, *BBC Sport* reported. Los Blancos started the day in first place but dropped to second for a matter of hours after Girona's earlier 2-1 win over Valencia. Germany midfielder Toni Kroos provided an excellent pass to set up Brahim Diaz for the opener on 26 minutes. The win was secured after 57 minutes when Rodrygo powered home the rebound after Jude Bellingham's shot was saved. Carlo Ancelotti's side have now won five consecutive games in all competitions and are unbeaten at the Bernabeu this season, despite missing a host of players, including Vinicius Jr, Luka Modric and Eduardo Camavinga, through injury. They are top of the league on goal difference ahead of Girona, who beat Valencia thanks to two late goals from ex-Middlesbrough striker Crisatian Stua-

ni, while Granada remain 19th with only one win from their opening 15 league matches. Bellingham and Antonio Rudiger were both yellow carded for showing their frustration to the referee after 22 minutes as they asked for a free-kick for a trip on the in-form midfielder which was not given. The hosts took the lead with an excellently worked goal - effectively a one-two - but owed much to an excellent return pass by Kroos which found the run of Diaz behind the Granada defence and the 24-year-old took a touch before finishing. Diaz was involved again three minutes before half-time with a deft backheel to set Bellingham through on goal but the England star's goalscoring touch deserted him as he scuffed a shot wide. They doubled their lead through another well-constructed goal as Joselu's flick put Diaz into space and his cross found Bellingham whose shot was well saved, only for the ball to drop to Rodrygo to grab his sixth league goal of the season. - Agencies

PREMIER LEAGUE

Gunners move four points clear of City with victory

LONDON: Arsenal moved four points clear at the top of the Premier League table with a 2-1 victory over Wolves at Emirates Stadium on Saturday. The Gunners, 6-0 winners over Lens in midweek, took an early lead when Bukayo Saka got the better of Craig Dawson in the penalty area before firing low into the bottom corner. It was 2-0 not long afterwards, Martin Odegaard finishing a magnificent team move involving Oleksandr Zinchenko and Gabriel Jesus to double the hosts' advantage, *BBC Sport* reported. Gabriel Martinelli struck the outside of the post with a low shot, while Leandro Trossard and Jesus both went close as Arsenal pressed for a third goal that would have put the result beyond doubt. Wolves improved in the second half and Matheus Cunha tested David Raya's reflexes with a powerful effort at the near post, before curling a superb drive into the top corner to give the visitors hope with five minutes remaining. Gary O'Neil's side were unable to complete the fightback, however, and Eddie Nketiah fired against the frame of the goal for Arsenal not long after Cunha's strike. The Gunners' second goal was a thing of beauty, Zinchenko playing a neat one-two with Jesus before cutting the ball back to Odegaard for a first-time finish beyond Jose Sa, who was injured while trying to save the Norwegian's effort. "It should have been a much bigger scoreline," Arteta told BBC Match of the Day. "We made a mistake and they take the chance, and it's game on in the Premier League. "We had chances and we didn't put them away, but we kept trying. We had some big, big chances to put the game to bed." The second half, as it was against Lens on Wednesday, was more low-key. Rice dragged a low shot off target and Trossard shot straight at Wolves' substitute goalkeeper Dan Bentley from a good position, before Cunha halved the deficit late on. It was a nervier finish than Arteta would have wanted, but the



41-year-old cut a very happy figure at full time as his side stretched their winning run in all competitions to five matches.

Gordon scores winner for Newcastle United

Anthony Gordon scored a 55th-minute winner as Newcastle United outplayed and defeated Manchester United 1-0 for the second time in just over a month on Saturday. In-form Gordon tapped in Kieran Trippier's low cross at the far post to give Newcastle a richly deserved success that took them above their opponents and to within reach of the Premier League's top four. It came 31 days after Eddie Howe's side recorded an emphatic 3-0 victory at Old Trafford in the Carabao Cup. Howe's already injury-ravaged side should have been in front before the break as Alexander Isak's shot was deflected narrowly wide by Harry Maguire before Trippier's brilliantly struck free-kick bounced to safety off the underside of the bar. When a goal finally came for Newcastle, there was no surprise it should come from Gordon, whose left-sided partnership with Tino Livramento had been too much for Manchester United to cope with. Newcastle's win means they have beaten Manchester United in three consecutive games for the first time in more than a century.



Everton secure first win since points deduction

Dwight McNeil's clinical strike gave Everton their first win since they had 10 Premier League points deducted as they hung on to beat Nottingham Forest 1-0 on Saturday. McNeil netted his first goal of the campaign at the City Ground with a crisp half-volley at the back post. The win also helped Sean Dyche's side, bottom at kick-off after Burnley's 5-0 win over Sheffield United earlier, move off the foot of the table to 18th. It heaps pressure on Forest boss Steve Cooper after consecutive home defeats. **Other Saturday results:** Brentford 3 Luton 1, Burnley 5 Sheffield United 0. - Agencies

NEWCASTLE GOALKEEPER



Pope suffers suspected dislocated shoulder

LONDON: Newcastle United and England goalkeeper Nick Pope suffered a suspected dislocated shoulder during the 1-0 win over Manchester United on Saturday. The 31-year-old injured himself diving for a shot during the second half and had to be replaced by Martin Dubravka, *BBC Sport* reported. He joins an already substantial Magpies injury list, with striker Callum Wilson and defender Dan Burn among those out. "I don't know what the future holds for Nick, whether he'll need an operation or not," Howe told BBC Sport. "It looks bad. It looks like a dislocation of his shoulder, which he has done before. He had it operated on and came back successfully. "We'll get it checked out and fingers crossed he's back soon." Pope has made 62 appearances since joining Newcastle from Burnley in the summer of 2022, playing in all 14 of their Premier League games so far this season. "It will be a massive blow for us if he is ruled out for any length of time," Howe added on TNT Sports. "It looked really innocuous, but that is usually the way and they are normally the more serious ones. "You could see he was in distress and it looked like he dislocated his shoulder just diving." - Agencies

IN PICTURES



Chameleons in Madagascar
This photo shows a chameleon in Marozevo, Toamasina, Madagascar. Madagascar is home to about half of the world's 150 or so species of chameleons. *Xinhua*



China-Greece International Theatre Festival debuts in Athens
Actors from the National Theatre of China perform at the Sino-Hellenic International Theatre Festival in Athens, Greece. *Xinhua*



Cat show in Zagreb, Croatia
A cat is seen during a cat show in Zagreb, Croatia. *Xinhua*



Miss Chinese Vancouver Pageant 2023 Final
Contestants perform during Miss Chinese Vancouver Pageant 2023 Final in Richmond, British Columbia, Canada. *Xinhua*



Lakeside Christmas market in Montreux, Switzerland
A woman visits the lakeside Christmas market in Montreux, Switzerland. The lakeside Christmas market in Montreux is one of the most famous of its kind in the country. *Xinhua*



Eastern Kenyans reeling from devastating floods
People cross the Tana River with a raft in Tana River County, Kenya. In the Mororo area at the border of Garissa and Tana River counties, eastern Kenya, residents are enduring the aftermath of severe flooding caused by recent heavy rainfall. *Xinhua*



Ranbir Kapoor, Bobby Deol and Rashmika Mandana during the promotion of their movie 'Animal'
Bollywood actors Ranbir Kapoor, Bobby Deol and Rashmika Mandana pose for a picture during the promotion of their movie 'Animal', in Mumbai. *ANI Photo*

ROUND-UP

Muscat International Jewellery Exhibition to open tomorrow



Over the five days of this exhibition, jewellery-enthusiasts will have a chance to view and purchase a truly splendid array of the finest jewellery and luxury goods from leading brands in the region



MUSCAT: Oman's premier events venue, Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre (OCEC), is organising the 12th edition of Muscat International Jewellery Exhibition 2023 (MIJEX), the GCC's most prestigious luxury good event, from December 5-9. The exhibi-

tion will take place between, from 12pm-10pm in the exhibition hall 5 at the OCEC.

In the 2023 edition, the Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre (OCEC), in partnership with Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran) and VEGA Inter Trade Exhibitions, is host-

ing a diverse range of local and regional luxury brands, featuring a captivating showcase of stunning examples of jewellery, authentic gemstones and pearls, diamonds and gold ornaments.

The five-day exhibition will feature a total of 45 exhibitors from over 10 countries, showcasing re-

nowned brands like Bhasker Devji Jewellery, Kriedy Jewellery Blue Diamond and Demanto Jewellery. Each exhibitor will present their latest collections for the season, along with a display of iconic designs and timeless classics.

Commenting on the exhibition, Eng. Said Al Shanfari, Chief Exec-

utive Officer, OCEC, stated: "Over the five days of this prestigious exhibition, jewellery-enthusiasts will have a chance to view and purchase a truly splendid array of the finest jewellery and luxury goods from leading brands in the region. At the same time, visitors will have unprecedented access to design-

ers, influencers and brands who are setting new trends in this ever-changing industry. Together with Omran and VEGA Intertrade and exhibitions, we look forward to welcoming visitors to this unique and prestigious exhibition."

Akavut Tangsilikusonwong (Tony), Managing Director of VEGA Intertrade and Exhibitions LLC stated, "Exhibitors present at MIJEX can look forward to displaying and selling products to high net-worth consumers, while reinforcing their brand's position in the regional market, expanding their networks, and tapping into the growing demand for fashionable jewellery and luxury accessories."

This year's Muscat International Jewellery Exhibition is one of the final events in the OCEC's successful 2023 calendar. The Mijex exhibition will also coincide with Oman Agro Food 2023 and The National Olympiad for Student Scientific Innovations. In the next few weeks, the OCEC is also set to host the Green Hydrogen Summit, a leading event discussing Oman's energy transition which will be happening a few days after COP28 in UAE.

HANDYMAN SERVICES PLATFORM

OAB partners with Musalih to bolster SME growth

MUSCAT: Oman Arab Bank (OAB) has announced a strategic collaboration with Musalih, the first Omani repair and maintenance platform. This marks the latest initiative in the bank's ongoing efforts to bolster SME growth in the Sultanate and accelerate the development of an innovative national economy.

Under the terms of the agreement, Musalih will be responsible for providing maintenance services for all 49 OAB branches across the Sultanate. To enhance its operations and expand capabilities, Musalih will be utilising the bank's easy-to-use, wireless order-taking and payment solutions. Exclusive offers will also be extended to both OAB customers and staff members.

Khalid Al Amri, Acting Head of Retail Banking at OAB, said: "Empowering and advancing the SME and Startup sector is a key strategic priority for Oman Arab Bank. Throughout our 50-year history, we



have always championed the needs of homegrown small businesses that play a pivotal role in contributing to the nation's GDP and will constantly strive to do more to unlock their full potential."

Musalih is a trusted one-stop-shop for repair and maintenance services that uses a web and mobile application to connect "Mahirs" (Service providers) with customers in need of household services.

Sultan Al Zadjali, CEO of Mu-

salih, said, "This partnership with Oman Arab Bank will be transformative for Musalih, not only in terms of the facilities and know-how that the bank is providing, but also the prestige that such a working relationship will generate. We are excited about what the future holds and to grow our business to new heights."

Earlier this year, OAB launched Tumouhi to provide a seamless banking experience for SME and startups.

INTERACTIVE WORKSHOPS



NBO's Rawabit programme builds strong connections to better serve its customers

MUSCAT: National Bank of Oman (NBO) continues its Rawabit programme, a thorough series of interactive workshops focusing on reinforcing the bank's values to deliver superior services.

Launched in 2022, the Rawabit programme focuses on how NBO employees interact with the bank's values and shape the workplace culture by promoting teamwork and collaboration,

embracing change and engaging effectively. The programme also aims to promote professional conduct in the workplace, integrate the bank's values into day-to-day operations, and create linkages between employees from different regions.

NBO strives to connect, build and grow with its customers, and for 50 years the bank has built strong bonds with customers by

delivering more intuitive and seamless banking. Enhancing the capabilities and effective deployment of NBO's people through empowering career development programs have been identified as key to achieving and delivering the bank's strategic and business objectives. The bank will continue to equip its employees with the skills required to better serve its customers.

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