



HM RECEIVES CABLE OF THANKS

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from King Hamad bin Issa Al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain, in response to His Majesty's greetings cable on the occasion of his country's National Day. In the cable, King Hamad expressed his appreciation for His Majesty the Sultan's heartfelt sentiments. He prayed to the Almighty Allah to protect His Majesty and grant him good health and wellbeing. King Hamad also prayed for the Omani people to realise aspirations of further progress and prosperity under the wise leadership of His Majesty. — **ONA**



Founded 1975 · Volume 49 No. 211 | 16 Pages · Baisas 200 · Subscription OMR63 | ISO 9001:2008 Certified Company | Chairman/Editor-in-Chief: Mohamed Issa Al Zadjali | Printed & Published by Muscat Media Group

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BILATERAL RELATIONS

His Majesty sends written message to Iranian President



TEHRAN: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a written message to President Dr. Masoud Pezeshkian of the Islamic Republic of Iran, dealing with bilateral relations between the two friendly countries and means of upgrading them in all fields.

The message was delivered by Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, when President Pezeshkian received him in Tehran yesterday. During the

meeting, Sayyid Badr conveyed His Majesty's greetings and wishes of good health and happiness to the Iranian President, along with His Majesty's wishes of progress and prosperity for the friendly people of Iran.

President Pezeshkian asked Sayyid Badr to convey his greetings and best wishes to His Majesty the Sultan. He also wished the people of Oman further progress and prosperity. — **ONA**

GLOBAL EVENT

Sayyid Theyyazin chairs meeting to review Oman's participation in Expo 2025 Osaka

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Theyyazin bin Haitham Al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, chaired the meeting of the main committee tasked with the Sultanate of Oman's participation in Expo 2025 Osaka, in Japan.

In its meeting, held in Muscat yesterday, the committee reviewed the latest preparations for the Sultanate of Oman's participation in the global forum, including the readiness of the pavilion, now in its final stages of construction, and the start of experimental activities therein. HH Sayyid Theyyazin, Chairman of the Main Committee, valued the efforts made by the Committee and the Commission for the readiness of the pavilion. He stressed that Oman's participation in the global event should reflect the country's unique status among the countries of the world.

Sixteen agreements were signed by the Commission to support the Sultanate of Oman's pavilion. The signing ceremony was attended by the Main Committee and CEOs of the supporting establishments and companies, including St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort.

Sayyid Said bin Sultan Al Busaidi, Commissioner General of the Sultanate of Oman Pavilion at Expo 2025 Osaka, signed the agreements in the presence of rep-



representatives of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED), Oman Environmental Services Holding Company (Be'ah), ITHCA Group and Onsor Technologies LLC, in addition to representatives of other companies and public and private sector establishments.

The meeting included a visual

presentation about Oman's preparations for Expo 2025 Osaka and the design of the pavilion.

During the event, a briefing was given about various aspects of co-operation between Oman and Japan and the rights and privileges that will be granted to the supporting establishments and companies during the Sultanate of Oman's participation in Expo Osaka 2025.

Expo 2025 Osaka is hosted

by the Japanese city of Osaka under the slogan "Designing Future Society for Our Lives.". It is scheduled to take place from 13 April to 13 October 2025 on the Island of Yumeshima in Osaka Bay. The global event brings together different countries that will together celebrate innovation and technological advancements and discuss solutions to global challenges. — **ONA**

OMAN EYE SPOT IN GULF CUP FINAL

Coach Rasheed Jaber rallies Red Warriors ahead of semi-finals against Saudi Arabia on Tuesday



Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman's national football team, led by head coach Rasheed Jaber, stands on the cusp of second successive final as they gear up to face Saudi Arabia in the semi-finals of the 26th Arabian Gulf Cup on Tuesday at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium in Kuwait City.

With the match scheduled for 6:30pm Oman time, the Red Warriors are determined to secure their place in the final and take another step towards their third Gulf Cup title. Oman lost to Iraq in the 2023 edition and have been winners in 2009 and 2017-18 editions.

Speaking at the pre-match

press conference on Monday, Jaber exuded confidence in his team's ability to rise to the occasion despite injury setbacks and key absences.

"We are ready for this crucial match against Saudi Arabia, a team with a strong footballing pedigree," he said.

"Our focus is clear - to qualify for the final. Matches like these are decided by the smallest details, and my players must show concentration and be mentally present from the first to the final whistle."

Oman's journey to the semi-finals has been marked by resilience. The team finished atop Group A, securing a 2-1 win

against Qatar and hard-fought 1-1 draws against both Kuwait and the UAE. Remarkably, Oman came from behind in each of these games, showcasing their grit and determination.

Jaber acknowledged the challenges posed by absences, including those of Amjad Al Harthi, Salah Al Yahyaie, and Mohammed Al Musalami.

However, he stressed the strength of the team as a cohesive unit.

"While absences are always significant, we trust every player in the squad. We play as a system, and our players are prepared to step up. Big games like these are

not new to us, and the team is used to performing under pressure in front of large crowds," he added.

Captain Faiz Al Rusheidi echoed his coach's sentiments, underscoring the team's readiness and belief in their capabilities. "This is a challenging match, but we've proven ourselves in the group stages. The players are ready to give everything and make our nation proud," said Al Rusheidi.

Saudi Arabia, runners-up in Group B, reached the semi-final with the tournament's best attacking record, scoring eight goals in the group stage. While Herve Renard's side brings considerable firepower, Oman can take heart from their recent Gulf Cup success against the Green Falcons.

In the last edition of the tournament in Basra, Iraq, Oman defeated Saudi Arabia 2-1, a result that still resonates within the squad.

Jaber emphasised the importance of tactical discipline against Saudi Arabia's dynamic style.

"They are a strong team with experienced and young players, but we have identified areas where we can take advantage. The players know what is expected, and we are confident in our ability to execute," he said. **>A2**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES



OMAN

Oman Geological Heritage Exhibition opens

1 The fourth edition of Oman Geological Heritage Exhibition 'Sustainability and Job Opportunities' opened at Al Hazm Fort in the Wilayat of Rustaq in the South Al Batinah Governorate yesterday and will continue until the end of June 2025. **>A2**

OMAN

Oman, Iran affirm to boost cooperation

2 Oman and Iran have underscored the importance of consolidating cooperation and partnership in various fields, such as economy, trade, energy, transport and tourism. **>A3**

MARKET

Treasury bills worth OMR49.1mn issued

3 The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) raised OMR49.1 million by a way of allotting treasury bills. The value of the allotted treasury bills stood at OMR3.1 million, for a maturity period of 28 days. **>B1**



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Oman, Iran affirm to boost partnership in various vital sectors



Sayyid Badr said that the two sides agreed to take practical steps to enhance ties of trade and investment, augment the volume of inter-trade and facilitate transport, shipping and travel

TEHRAN: The Sultanate of Oman and the Islamic Republic of Iran have underscored the importance of consolidating cooperation and partnership in various fields, such as economy, trade, energy, transport, tourism and other

areas. This took place during a joint press conference held in Tehran yesterday by Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, and Dr. Abbas Araghchi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Sayyid Badr said that the two sides agreed to take practical steps to enhance ties of trade and investment, augment the volume of inter-trade and facilitate transport, shipping and travel. He also underscored the importance of cooperation in establishing projects of food security and health. Sayyid Badr pointed out that the press conference also discussed regional and international developments. It stressed the need to step up diplomatic efforts and enhance the mechanisms of constructive dialogue to address the current challenges facing the region, he added. The Foreign Minister also said that the two sides agreed to focus on finding sustainable solutions to regional conflicts, without prejudice to the sovereignty of

countries and non-interference in their internal affairs, noting that the overall aim is to boost stability of the region and ensure the realisation of a lasting peace. Sayyid Badr affirmed that the Palestinian cause figured high in the press conference which, he said, laid emphasis on backing the Palestinian people's legitimate rights and their aspirations for freedom, independence, security and peace. The two sides also underlined the importance of respecting the national sovereignty of Syria and Lebanon and supporting efforts for establishing stability and development. For his part, Dr. Abbas Araghchi commended the Sultanate of Oman's constructive role in enhancing regional stability and deepening bilateral and international cooperation. At the conclusion of the press conference, the two ministers agreed to pursue communication and joint coordination about various issues, achieve common interests and enhance peace and stability in the region and the world at large. — **ONA**

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

His Majesty sends a cable of condolences to President of USA

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to President Joe Biden of the United States of America (USA) on the death of the former US President Jimmy Carter. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sympathies to the family of the deceased and the people of the USA.



MEETING



Oman, Iran review bilateral ties

TEHRAN: Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister met on Monday in Tehran with Abbas Araghchi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iran. The two ministers reviewed the march of bilateral relations and explored means of enhancing them in various fields to serve joint interests. They also discussed several regional and international developments, namely the Palestinian cause and the situation in the Gaza Strip, Lebanon and Syria. The two foreign ministers underscored the importance of efforts aimed at enhancing stability and backing political efforts in a bid to achieve security and peace



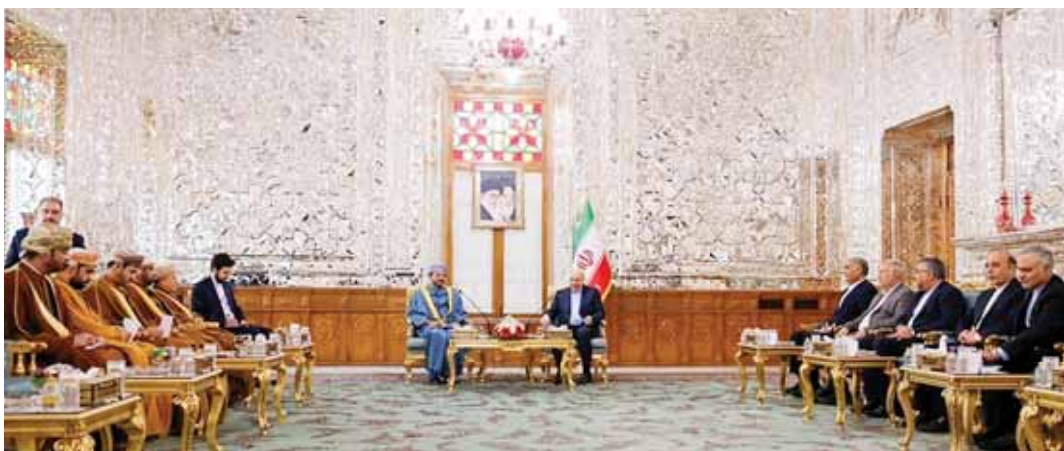
for the region at large. The meeting was attended by Sheikh Ahmed Hashel Al Maskari, Head of the GCC Department at the Foreign Ministry, Ibrahim Ahmed Al Muaini, Ambassador of Oman to Iran and several officials from both sides. — **ONA**

BILATERAL RELATIONS

Sayyid Badr meets Iranian officials



TEHRAN: Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister met yesterday in Tehran with Mohammad-Bagher Ghalibaf, Speaker of the Parliament of the Islamic Republic of Iran. During the meeting, the two sides reviewed bilateral relations, notably the existing parliamentary cooperation between the two countries' Shura councils. They also discussed regional and international matters of mutual interest. **Enhance security and stability** The two sides underscored the importance of bilateral cooperation to enhance security and stability in the region. Furthermore, the Foreign Minister also met with Ali Akbar Ahmadian, the Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC).



This meeting touched on the bilateral cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Both sides exchanged views on developments in the regional and international arenas.

The two officials highlighted means of supporting channels of dialogue as a peaceful means to consolidate security and stability in the region. The two meetings were attended by Sheikh Ahmed Hashel

Al Maskari, Head of the GCC Department at the Foreign Ministry, Ibrahim Ahmed Al Maani, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Islamic Republic of Iran and several officials from both sides. — **ONA**

MINISTRY OF FINANCE



Value of subscription requests for Ijarah Sukuk oversubscribed by over three times

MUSCAT: On behalf of the Government of the Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Finance, Oman Sovereign Sukuk Company on Monday announced the results of the auction of the 8th issue of Ijarah Sukuk worth OMR286 million. **8th issue** The company said in a statement that the total value of subscription requests for the 8th issue exceeded three times the total announced value, amounting to approximate-

ly OMR326.87 million. The average acceptable return was 4.75 percent, compared to a maximum acceptable return of 4.85 percent and a minimum acceptable return of 4.6 percent. The statement affirmed that the bonds will be issued today, 30 December 2024. The profit due on the Ijarah Sukuk will be paid twice a year: On 30 June and 30 December, for a period of seven years until the sukuk's maturity date on 30 December 2031. — **ONA**



MUSCAT NIGHTS DRAWS MASSIVE CROWDS AT THRILLING MENA DRIFT CHAMPIONSHIP



The arena was packed with fans, their faces illuminated by the dazzling lights and the roar of engines, as they witnessed some of the top drivers compete in high-speed drifts

The Muscat Nights festival has transformed the city into a vibrant hub of activity, drawing thousands of visitors to its diverse venues. One of the most exhilarating events was the MENA Drift Championship, held at the Oman Automobile Association Arena on Saturday.

The arena was packed with fans, their faces illuminated by the dazzling lights and the roar of engines, as they witnessed some of the region's top drivers compete in high-speed drifts.

The championship featured 32 professional drivers from across the Middle East and beyond, including Oman, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, India, Belarus, and El Salvador.

The competition was fierce, with drivers pushing their vehicles to the limit on challenging technical tracks.

In the end, Omani driver Ahmed Al Ameri clinched the top spot, while Nasser Al Harbali from El Salvador secured second place, and Omani driver Tariq Al Shihani finished third.

The prize-distribution was held under the auspices of Faisal al Rawas, Chairman of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), and Ahmed Al Hamidi, Chairman of Muscat Municipality, in the presence of OAA's chairman Brigadier Jamal Al Tai and a large number of officials and drift fans.

The dignitaries commended the success of the championship and its role in enhancing Oman's reputation in the international motor-sport arena.

Beyond the adrenaline-fueled competitions, Muscat Nights has been a resounding success, attracting large crowds to various venues across the city.

The festival, which began on December 23, 2024, and runs until January 21, 2025, offers a wide array of activities catering to all ages.

Highlights include the Flower Festival at Qurum Natural Park, featuring stunning floral displays and drone shows; theatrical performances and a heritage village at Al Amerat Park; and a drift track along with fireworks at Naseem Park.

Seeb Beach has also been a hot-spot, offering beach football, drum shows, and magic performances.

The Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre is hosting the 'Celebrate Every Story' event, featuring beloved characters like Looney Tunes and Scooby-Doo. Additionally, Wadi Al Khoudh is offering adventure activities such as zip lines and 4WD challenges.

Muscat Nights underscores the city's commitment to providing diverse and engaging experiences for both residents and visitors. The festival has not only showcased Oman's rich cultural heritage but also its capacity to host world-class events, solidifying Muscat's position as a premier destination for entertainment and tourism in the region.





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‘Oman welcomes people from all nations to become a part of society’

The national identity of any country is not just a logo but a comprehensive strategic programme, said His Highness Dr. Faris bin Turki Al Said, Assistant Professor at Sultan Qaboos University

Times News Service

MUSCAT: His Highness Dr. Faris bin Turki Al Said, Assistant Professor at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) and member of the technical team of the unified national identity project of the Sultanate of Oman, said that the national identity of any country is not just a logo but a comprehensive strategic programme.

“That is why we are keen to introduce the best image with the participation of the community,”

he said.The voting on the national identity continued for days and concluded on Sunday, 29 December 2024, he added.

In a statement to Shabiba FM, he said: “Under the new era of renewed renaissance, there is a significant effort on diversification of income in the Sultanate of Oman along with opportunities in the non-oil sectors. Oman is trying to tap its tourism potentials and other sectors, including the logistics sector, as part of its new outlook for the upcoming years. The pro-



motion identities are important for all countries, mainly in sending clear images and messages for those looking for investment, tourism, and other opportunities, he said, pointing to the expected investments that support other sectors.

“There is another sector not adequately dealt with by the media, which is the attraction of local talents,” he said, adding to the significance of interaction between the employment/labour sector (mar-

ket) and foreign countries for the exchange of expertise, which is not possible without specialized visits to Oman. For instance, visits of people with specific skills are required in Oman—say, for five-year contracts.”

He also spoke on the innovative skills in entrepreneurship, saying that whenever there are investment opportunities, we could use such expertise and skills in other countries.

He said that any identity pro-

gramme is a strategic programme and not just a logo.

He said that we have received inquiries on opening the door for residents to vote.

“Our response to such inquiries is that Oman always welcomes people from all countries to become a part of society, and we welcome their participation in the building of the country for the interest of both the citizens and residents.”

Decision-making process

By the “Together we progress” programme, we aim to empower citizens to make them an integral part of the decision-making process, he added.

He said that the participation of society in decision-making did not start during the era of the renewed renaissance but started with Oman Vision 2040.

There is a difference between the identity of society and the national identity. He said that when we speak about the Omani people, the dagger, and the two swords, we

do not speak on changing the said identity, but we speak on a unified, comprehensive promotional identity with economic spinoffs.

Regarding the dagger and the two swords, we have received several responses; however, some people forgot that there were prior experiences for the Sultanate, and unfortunately we did not come out of the scope of tourism, but now our move is to stand together to reach out to other countries of the world with a package of potentials, not just the tourism potentials, as each sector is related to other sectors.

“I stress that the Khanjar (dagger) and the two swords are a logo of the state and will remain a constitutional and untouchable original Omani logo. The aim of the identity is to boost the image of Oman outside the political framework, he said, adding that the countries compete for attracting investments and tapping talent to develop tourism and the economy, and Oman must excel in this field, he further added.

Chairman of Strategic Studies Academy meets Jordanian delegation

MUSCAT: Maj.Gen. Hamid Ahmed Sakroon, Chairman of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies, received in his office at Bait Al Falaj Camp yesterday a delegation from the Royal Jordanian Command and Staff College (RJCSC), headed by Brig. Tariq Khalaf Al Hajaya, Commander of the Royal Jordanian Command and Staff College, currently visiting the Sultanate of Oman.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed several matters of mutual interest, particularly academic aspects.

The meeting was attended by

Air Commodore Abdullah Fayeze Al Dhafri, Director General of Administrative and Financial Affairs, Commodore Khalid Amer Al Salti, Director General of Studies and Academic Affairs, senior officers of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies, and the Military Attaché of Jordan’s Embassy in Muscat.

Meanwhile, the Jordanian delegation also visited the National Defence College (NDC) at the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies.

Upon their arrival at the NDC, they were greeted by Brigadier



Mansoor Ali Al Amri, Acting Commandant of the NDC.

The delegation members were

briefed on the college’s facilities and its strategic curriculum, which focuses on preparing na-

tional competencies capable of making strategic decisions at various levels. They also toured the NDC’s departments and various halls.

Furthermore, the Jordanian delegation also visited the Joint Command and Staff College (CSC) at the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies.

Upon their arrival, the guests were received by the Acting Commandant of the CSC.

The delegation toured the CSC and was briefed on the college’s general curriculum and its facilities. -ONA

ENVIRONMENT AUTHORITY



Oman celebrates GCC Wildlife Day

MUSCAT: Represented by the Environment Authority (EA), the Sultanate of Oman on Monday celebrated the GCC Wildlife Day under the slogan “Sustainable Marine Wildlife”.

The celebration of the GCC Wildlife Day, which falls on 30 December every year, highlights the efforts of GCC states to preserve biodiversity and enhance the awareness of citizens and residents about the significance of wildlife conservation.

The event also seeks to underline the Convention on the Conservation of Wildlife and its Natural Habitats and the preservation of ecosystems and endangered wildlife species that are exposed to extinction.

The Environment Authority

has implemented a number of initiatives, projects and conducted research surveys and field studies related to the assessment of biodiversity, the enactment and updating of related laws and the intensification of operations to minimise the risks posed to endangered organisms in the Sultanate of Oman.

The EA lays emphasis on preserving the basic components of wildlife and safeguarding their biodiversity and sustainability. Action in this context includes the tasks undertaken through the “National Biodiversity Survey Project”, the “Marine Mammal Species Survey Project” and the “National Campaign to Combat Invasive Birds”.

— ONA



Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries
Wealth and Water Resources

TENDER

The Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources Announces the following Tenders:

Tender no.	Tender Title	Tender Document Sales Start Date	Tender Document Sales End Date	Bid Submission Closing	Companies that are eligible to participate	Tender Document fee (R.O)
1	974/2023/M AF-WR/HQ-103 Recall Supply and Installation of Pesticide Residue and Quality Control Analysis Instruments	Sunday 29/12/2024	Wednesday 15/1/2025	Sunday 26/1/2025	Specialized companies registered with, Excellent, First Second, Third, fourth grades	(25/-) Omani riyals for local companies (10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs
2	912/2024/M AFWR/HQ-70 Maintenance and Rehabilitation Central Labs in SAAL	Wednesday 18/12/2024	Tuesday 7/1/2025	Sunday 26/1/2025	Specialized companies registered with fourth grades	(25/-) Omani riyals for local companies (10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs
3	918/2024/M AFWR/HQ-71 Develop Treated Effluent Tariff Model for Food security projects	Thursday 19/12/2024	Wednesday 8/1/2025	Tuesday 28/1/2025	Specialized companies registered with first grades	(25/-) Omani riyals for local companies (10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs
4	925/2024/M AFWR/HQ-72 Rehabilitation and development of the hydrometric monitoring system in the Al-Najd agricultural region	Thursday 26/12/2024	Thursday 16/1/2025	Thursday 6/2/2025	Specialized companies registered with, Excellent, First Second, Third, fourth grades	(25/-) Omani riyals for local companies (10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs

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TENDERS COMMITTEE
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

Rising risk of famine in Gaza, warns UNRWA

UNRWA called for international cooperation and a ceasefire to provide life-saving assistance as famine approaches



NEW YORK: The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has warned of the increasing risk of famine in the Gaza Strip, where residents are suffering from food insecurity and a shortage of humanitarian aid, amid the ongoing Israeli war.

The UN agency, in a series of posts on the platform X, explained that its teams are working hard to deliver aid to those in need, but it is not enough, adding that the peo-

ple of Gaza are facing extreme food insecurity.

UNRWA called for international cooperation and a ceasefire to provide life-saving assistance as famine approaches.

Famine has spread across most areas of the Gaza Strip due to the ongoing Israeli blockade, especially in the northern governorate, as part of the persistent campaign of extermination and starvation aimed at forcing Palestinians to flee south.

Israeli occupation forces com-

mitted three massacres against families in the Gaza Strip over the past 24 hours, resulting in the killing of at least 27 Palestinians and the injury of 149 others, according to medical reports.

Local health authorities confirmed that the Palestinian death toll from the Israeli onslaught since October 7, 2023 has risen to 45,541 reported fatalities, with an additional 108,338 individuals sustaining injuries. The majority of the victims are women and children.

According to the same sources, emergency services are still unable to reach many casualties and dead bodies trapped under the rubble or scattered on roads across the war-torn enclave, as Israeli occupation forces continue to obstruct the movement of ambulance and civil defence crews.

Israel's genocidal onslaught continues unabated despite calls from the United Nations Security Council for an immediate ceasefire and directives from the International Court of Justice urging measures to prevent genocide and alleviate the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Amnesty International called on Israel to release detained health workers, including the director of Kamal Adwan Hospital, Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya, "immediately and unconditionally."

Amnesty International said that it is deeply concerned about the fate of the director of Kamal Adwan Hospital in the northern Gaza Strip, Hussam Abu Safiya, and called for his immediate and unconditional release. -Agencies

Times
OF OMAN

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

Founder: Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali
Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Mohamed Issa Al Zadjali
Deputy Editor-in-Chief: Anees bin Essa Al Zedjali
Chief Executive Officer: Ahmed Essa Al Zedjali

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ADVERTISING: Telephone: 24726666, Fax: 24812624, E-mail: advertising@timesofoman.com
CIRCULATION: Telephone: 24726666, Fax: 24818270, E-mail: circulation@timesofoman.com

DAZZLING PROGRAMMES

UAE to welcome New Year with fireworks

ABU DHABI: Millions worldwide are set to turn their attention to the UAE today to witness the dazzling programmes and celebrations marking New Year's Eve 2025, particularly the grand fireworks displays taking place across most of the country's emirates.

The UAE's New Year's Eve fireworks, renowned for their grandeur, are a significant attraction for international tourists as well as hundreds of thousands of residents and citizens. These events reflect the nation's dedication to

enhancing the entertainment industry. In Abu Dhabi, the Sheikh Zayed Festival's Supreme Organising Committee in Al Wathba has announced a New Year's Eve programme featuring a 53-minute continuous fireworks display aiming to set a record for the length, variety, and scale of the show.

Preceding the grand fireworks, 6,000 drones will light up the Al Wathba skies in a 20-minute show starting at 23:40, creating artistic formations. -ANI

CHRISTMAS MARKET

German security chiefs face grilling over Magdeburg attack

BERLIN: The German parliament's interior committee is to question security and intelligence officials on Monday over possible failures leading up to a deadly attack on the city of Magdeburg's Christmas market.

Five people were killed in the attack and some 200 others were injured when an individual drove a rented BMW sport utility vehicle through a crowd of revelers.

Police arrested 50-year-old Saudi psychiatrist Taleb A. at the scene.

Up for discussion are apparent missed clues and security shortcomings before the December

20 attack in the eastern city of Magdeburg.

German Interior Minister Nancy Faeser and officials from the state of Saxony-Anhalt — of which Magdeburg is the capital — are among those to be questioned.

The suspect, A., had a history of brushes with the law and court appearances in Germany, and Saudi Arabia said it had repeatedly warned German officials about the suspect. A. arrived in Germany in 2006 and was granted refugee status 10 years later.

The Magdeburg attack was similar to previous jihadist ones in Berlin and in the French city of

Nice in 2016, although A. had previously voiced strongly anti-Islam views and sympathies with the far right.

Green Party domestic policy spokeswoman Irene Mihalic, a member of the parliament's intelligence committee, said she expected a comprehensive review of the way that information had been used.

"We expect that the exact sequence of events before, during and after the attack, the flow of information and responsibilities will be presented in the most precise way," Mihalic told the RND publishing group.

"We owe this to the relatives of the victims and the many injured — also to the public, who can rightly expect that no one will evade responsibility," explained Mihalic, who chaired the investigative committee on a 2016 truck attack on a Christmas market in Berlin.

The conservative Christian Democrats, and the business-focused Free Democrats, formerly part of the coalition government, have called for enhancements to Germany's security apparatus, including improved coordination between federal and state authorities. -DW

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World leaders mourn passing of former US president Jimmy Carter

Carter’s turbulent term in the White House was followed by more than three decades as an international envoy of peacemaking and democracy

WASHINGTON DC: World leaders have expressed condolences following the death of former US President James Earl Carter Jr, who passed away at the age of 100 in Plains, Georgia.

The tributes highlighted his lifelong commitment to peace, democracy, and humanitarian efforts.

UK’s Prime Minister Keir Starmer paid tributes to Carter’s decades of “selfless public service” and highlighted Carter’s “lifelong dedication to peace”.

French President Emmanuel Macron said, “Throughout his life, Jimmy Carter was a steadfast advocate for the rights of the most vulnerable and tirelessly fought for peace. France sends its heartfelt thoughts to his family and to the American people.”

Australia’s Prime Minister Anthony Albanese underlined how Carter rose from humble begin-



nings and remarked that his legacy is “best measured in lives changed, saved, and uplifted.”

Calling him a “lifelong humanitarian”, Canadian President Justin said, “My deepest condolences to the Carter family, his many loved ones, and the American people”.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has expressed sadness over the passing away of former US President Jimmy Carter, describing him a “statesman of great vision.” PM Modi said that Carter’s contributions to fostering strong ties between India and US leave a lasting legacy.

In a post on X, PM Modi stated, “Deeply saddened by the passing of former USA President Mr. Jimmy Carter. A statesman of great vision, he worked tirelessly

for global peace and harmony. His contributions to fostering strong India-U.S. ties leave a lasting legacy. My heartfelt condolences to his family, friends and the people of the US.”

In 1978, Jimmy Carter travelled to India as US President. He met India’s then-President Neelam Sanjiva Reddy and then-Prime Minister Morarji Desai. During his visit, he also addressed Parliament of India.

January 9 to be national day of mourning, Biden says

US President Joe Biden has declared January 9, 2025, a national day of mourning to honor the passing of Carter.

“I call on the American people to assemble on that day in their respective places of worship, there

to pay homage to the memory of President James Earl Carter, Jr. I invite the people of the world who share our grief to join us in this solemn observance,” Biden said in a statement.

The president also ordered that the US flag be flown at half-staff at the White House and on all public buildings, grounds, and embassies abroad for 30 days from the day of Carter’s death.

Earlier, US President Joe Biden and First Lady Jill Biden had also expressed their condolences on the demise of Jimmy Carter. They called him a “man of great character and courage”.

The White House statement noted that an official state funeral will be held in Washington DC for James Earl Carter Jr, “who gave his full life in service to God and

country.”

Former US President James Earl Carter Jr passed away at the age of 100 on Sunday at his home in Plains, Georgia, as reported by the Washington Post, citing his son, James E Carter III.

Carter’s son confirmed his death but did not provide an immediate cause. According to the Carter Center’s statement from February 2023, after a series of hospital stays, the former US President decided to stop further medical treatment and spend his remaining time at home under hospice care.

In recent years, he had been treated for an aggressive form of melanoma skin cancer, with tumors that spread to his liver and brain.

Beijing says Carter was ‘driving force’ behind formal China-US ties

China has offered its condolences over Carter’s death, saying he was the “driving force” behind the establishment of diplomatic relations between Beijing and Washington over 40 years ago.

“China expresses its deep condolences on the passing of former United States President Jimmy Carter,” Mao Ning, spokesperson at China’s Foreign Ministry, said at a regular press briefing.

“Former President Carter was the driving force behind the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the United States, and made important contributions to the development of China-United States relations and the friendly exchanges and cooperation between the two coun-

tries,” Mao added.

At the time of Carter’s presidential tenure from 1977 to 1981, the US government established formal relations with Beijing, building on the groundwork laid by former President Richard Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in the early 1970s.

“His historic contribution to the normalisation and development of China-US relations will always be remembered by the Chinese people,” Xie Feng, the Chinese envoy to the US, wrote on social media platform X.

UN chief hails Carter’s significant contributions to international peace

United Nations’ Secretary General Antonio Guterres said Carter had “contributed significantly to international peace and security,” remembering in particular his role in seeing through the Middle East Camp David Accords, the Salt II Treaty and the Panama Canal Treaties.

Guterres also noted that Carter’s contributions did not cease after his term at the White House.

“He played a key role in conflict mediation, election monitoring, the promotion of democracy, and disease prevention and eradication,” Guterres said, adding that such work not only earned him the Nobel Peace Prize, but also helped advance the UN’s work.

“President Carter will be remembered for his solidarity with the vulnerable, his abiding grace, and his unrelenting faith in the common good and our common humanity,” -Agencies

Khao San Road

Three people killed, seven others injured in hotel fire in Bangkok

BANGKOK: As many as three people were killed and seven others were injured in a fire incident in a hotel near Khao San Road in Phra Nakhon district of Bangkok on Sunday night, Bangkok Post reported.

Police said the fire broke out at The Ember Hotel on Tanee Road began at about 9:21 pm on Sunday. According to witnesses, the fire erupted on the fifth floor of the six-storey hotel.

Firefighters controlled the blaze for about an hour. At the time of the incident, there were 75 guests in the hotel. Of these, 34 people fled to the rooftop of the building and were evacuated using fire truck ladders.

The woman died in the room where the fire is believed to have erupted while two men succumbed to injuries at Vajira Hospital and Samitivej Chinatown Hospital, ac-



cording to Bangkok Post report.

The three victims included a 24-year-old Brazilian woman, Pimentel Canales Albuquerque, a 27-year-old Ukrainian man, Tuzov Victor, and a 35-year-old American man, Freeman Timothy Jr. The seven injured people were two Thai men, a Japanese man, a foreign woman, a German man, a German woman and a Chinese man.

The Brazilian woman was found dead in Room 511. Detectives assumed that she had mistakenly entered the room while attempting to flee from the smoke-filled hotel in the darkness, as its door was left open, Bangkok Post reported.

She had checked in the hotel along with her boyfriend who had proposed to her last week and they stayed in Room 504. According to the Bangkok Governor, the hotel, which opened in April 2022, had been constructed by the modification of 11 connected commercial building units covering a combined area of 1,515 square metres, the report said.

The hotel had two fire exits and sufficient fire extinguishers. He said that the hotel did not have a sprinkler system as it was a small hotel that was not required to have such equipment. -ANI

Italian Media

Italian man killed in Red Sea shark attack



CAIRO: A shark attack off Egypt’s Red Sea coast has left one tourist dead and another injured, authorities said on Sunday.

“Two foreigners were attacked by a shark in the northern Marsa Alam area, which led to the injury of one and the death of the other,” the country’s Environment Ministry said in a statement.

According to Italian media, both men were Italian nationals.

The attack occurred in deep water outside the designated swimming zone near the jetties in the popular resort town of Marsa Alam, Egypt’s Environ-

ment Ministry added.

A 48-year-old man from Rome was killed while diving, Italian news agency ANSA reported. He had been spending Christmas in Egypt with his family and had celebrated his birthday on December 21. A 69-year-old injured man was taken to a hospital in Port Ghalib.

Meanwhile, authorities have closed the area to swimmers for two days following the incident.

The Red Sea’s marine life makes it popular with divers. Shark encounters in the Red Sea are relatively rare. -DW

Muan International Airport

South Korea orders probe after Jeju Air plane crash

SEOUL: Acting South Korean President Choi Sang-mok has ordered an emergency safety probe of the country’s entire airline operation system after 179 people were killed in one of the worst plane crashes in South Korea’s history.

“As soon as the accident recovery is conducted, the Transport Ministry is requested to conduct an emergency safety inspection of the entire aircraft operation system to prevent recurrence of aircraft accidents,” Choi said at a disaster management meeting in Seoul.

Jeju Air flight 7C2216 was carrying 181 people from Thailand to South Korea on Sunday when it made a mayday call and belly-landed before skidding off the runway at Muan International Airport. It then crashed into a wall and burst into flames.

All passengers and four of the six crew were killed in the crash. Two crew members were pulled from the wreckage alive and taken to hospital.

Officials initially cited a bird strike as the likely cause of the crash.

Seoul said it would conduct a special inspection of all 101 Boeing 737-800s operating in the



country. It added that US investigators — possibly including from plane manufacturer Boeing — will join the investigation.

“We are reviewing plans to conduct a special inspection on B737-800 aircraft,” Joo Jong-wan, head of the aviation policy bureau at South Korea’s Transport Ministry, said on Monday.

South Korea mourns crash victims

Flags in the country flew half-mast on Monday as the nation began seven days of mourning following the disaster.

Meanwhile, investigators were trying to identify some of the last remaining victims as grieving families camped inside the Muan airport terminal.

According to authorities, investigators have identified 141 of the 179 dead with the help of DNA analysis or fingerprint collection.

Acting President Choi said the foremost priority was to identify the victims, support their families and treat the two survivors.

“Even before the final results are out, we ask that officials transparently disclose the accident investigation process and promptly inform

the bereaved families,” he said.

The Muan International Airport will remain shut through Wednesday, but the rest of the country’s international and regional airports are continuing operations as scheduled.

World leaders have expressed condolences and solidarity with South Korea after the tragic airplane crash in Muan claimed over 170 lives.

In a statement released by the White House, US President Joe Biden expressed his grief over the accident and pledged support to South Korea.

11 killed in Pakistan bus accident

ISLAMABAD: 11 people died and 22 were injured in a bus accident near Punjab’s Fateh Jang area in Pakistan, Geo News reported on Monday, citing motorway police.

As per Geo News, the bus overturned on the M-14 motorway en route from Bahawalpur to Islamabad.

The victims belonged to Bahawalpur, Vehari, Sharaqpur and Islamabad, added the rescue officials.

Rescue officials said that six people, including three women, have been shifted to Benazir Bhutto Hospital, and one injured has been transferred to Islamabad and District Headquarter Hospital, each.

The motorway Police attributed the mishap to drivers’ negligence, as per Geo News.

The Motorway Police Inspector General Riffat Mukhtar has ordered an immediate investigation into the bus accident.

Last month, an “over-speeding” bus with wedding guests plunged off a bridge into the Indus River, killing at least 14 people in Gilgit-Baltistan, Geo News reported. -ANI

SPORTS

Australia secure thrilling 184-run victory to take 2-1 Test series lead

A dramatic collapse saw India lose seven wickets during the final session of the Boxing Day Test at the MCG on Monday

MELBOURNE: Australia defeated India by 184 runs in a thrilling conclusion to the fourth Test at the MCG on the fifth and final day of the fourth Test on Monday, taking a 2-1 series lead ahead of the final match in Sydney for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

Set a daunting target of 340 runs in 92 overs, India batted cautiously but ultimately fell apart in the final session, losing seven wickets for just 34 runs to be bowled out for 155.

The tourists began their chase with India at 33-3, but opener Yashasvi Jaiswal played a patient and determined innings, holding up the Australian attack for 208 balls. Jaiswal's 84, combined with Rishabh Pant's 30 from 104 balls, were the only significant contributions. However, after tea, Pant's aggressive approach saw him dismissed by Travis Head, sparking the collapse.

Pat Cummins and Scott Boland were the standout bowlers, taking three wickets each, while Nathan Lyon added two to Australia's tally. The Australian bowlers combined to rip through India's lower order, with Cummins taking the final wicket, and Lyon delivering the match-clinching blow, dismissing Mohammed Siraj for a duck.

Australia's first innings was also characterised by resilience, as they scored 474, with Steve Smith (140) and Marnus Labuschagne (72) leading the charge. India responded with 369, largely due to a brilliant 114 from Nitish Kumar Reddy and a solid 82 from Jaiswal. However, despite their efforts, the gap proved too large for India to bridge.

Pat Cummins was named Player



of the Match for his all-round contribution, taking six wickets in the match and making key contributions with the bat, scoring 49 and 41. He was instrumental in Australia's dominant performance, which took the game away from India in the final sessions.

Australia's victory puts them in pole position for a spot in the

World Test Championship (WTC) final. A win in the final Test in Sydney would secure their place in the WTC final alongside South Africa.

However, India's hopes of reaching the final are now in jeopardy. They must win in Sydney and hope Sri Lanka defeats Australia in their series starting in late January for a chance to qualify.

If India loses in Sydney, Sri Lanka could leapfrog them, depending on their own results. While India can still retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy with a win in the final Test, their fate in the WTC final is now largely out of their hands.

In front of a record-breaking crowd of 373,691 spectators, Pat Cummins led from the front with a

masterclass both with the ball and in his tactics.

The Australian captain's key moment came early in India's innings when he dismissed both Rohit Sharma and KL Rahul in quick succession, while Mitchell Starc removed Virat Kohli just before lunch, leaving India on the back foot.

After the break, India found some resistance from Pant and Jaiswal, who formed a solid fourth-wicket stand of 88 runs. However, the breakthrough came when Cummins threw the ball to part-time spinner Travis Head, who made the key breakthrough with Pant's dismissal.

The collapse that followed was swift and decisive. Jaiswal, after a valiant knock, was dismissed by a Cummins bouncer, and the lower order fell apart in a flurry of wickets.

Jaiswal's resistance stood out as he fought hard against Australia's bowlers, showing maturity in his ability to adapt his game.

There was a dose of controversy, too, when Jaiswal's rearguard was ended via the DRS after he gloved a pull down the leg side against Cummins. Snicko did not register anything, but third umpire Sharf-uddoula ruled he had seen a clear deflection, which matched what was shown on TV. Jaiswal appeared to know he had hit it but spoke with the umpires on the way off. It meant India's lower order had 21 overs to survive and it proved too much.

With the fall of Jaiswal, India's chances evaporated. Washington Sundar provided some late resistance with an unbeaten five from 45 balls, but the final three wickets fell in the space of just four overs.

India captain Rohit Sharma expressed disappointment, acknowledging that despite their intent to fight until the end, they fell short. "We had our chances, but we didn't take them, especially that last-wicket partnership in Australia's second innings, which probably cost us the game," he said.

Pat Cummins reflected on the thrilling nature of the match, calling it "one of the best Tests I've been part of." He praised the crowd's energy throughout the week and highlighted the team's collective effort, especially the innings of Steve Smith, and the tactical decisions that ensured India would not chase down the target.

Brief scores: Australia 474 (Smith 140, Labuschagne 72; Bumrah 4-99) and 234 (Labuschagne 70; Bumrah 5-57) beat India 369 (Reddy 114, Jaiswal 82; Boland 3-57) and 155 (Jaiswal 84; Cummins 3-28, Boland 3-39) by 184 runs. - Agencies



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Campaign period: 24th November 2024 to 23rd January 2025. The above benefits are applicable for all purchases except RAC, Government Organizations & Ministries. *5 Years/50,000kms (whichever is earlier) covering 5 services at 1 year/10,000kms service interval (whichever is earlier) on 23 & 24 Model Years. **Free first year registration where applicable. Vehicles specifications are subject to change without notice. Pictures & colours are indicative. For further details, please visit your nearest Saud Bahwan Automotive showroom.

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OMAN CRUDE PRICE RISES

The price of Oman oil has increased, with prices for delivery by February 2025 reaching \$75.47, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil rose by 96 cents from the price of Friday, which was \$74.51. - **ONA**

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 4,544.96 points, up by 0.64% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 1.42% at 417.27 points. Takaful Oman, up 9.52%, was the top gainer while Raysut Cement, down 3.64%, was the top loser. **>B2**

Buraimi Industrial City attracts OMR7.9 million in investments

The newly signed projects during the second half of 2024 represent a variety of industries, showcasing the industrial city's appeal as a hub for diverse business ventures

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Al Buraimi Industrial City, part of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madaayn), has successfully signed 16

investment contracts during the second half of 2024, with a total investment value of OMR7.97 million. These agreements pave the way for new projects spanning a combined area of more than 165,000 sqm.

The newly signed projects represent a variety of industries, showcasing the industrial city's appeal as a hub for diverse business ventures. These include automotive oil manufacturing, wood impregnation, carton production, production line manufacturing, water tank manufacturing, food packaging factory, storage facility for new car spare parts, water production and bottling plant, medical supplies factory, and a commercial showroom.

Al Buraimi Industrial City undertakes constant ongoing efforts to enhance its investment environment and provide streamlined facilities for businesses. By attracting a wide array of investments, the industrial city continues to contribute to Oman's economic growth and support the realisation of national strategic goals.



REMARKABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH

UAE's GDP grows by 3.6% in H1 2024

ABU DHABI: Abdulla bin Touq Al Marri, Minister of Economy, has asserted that the preliminary estimates of the UAE's GDP in the first half of 2024, issued by the Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Centre, reflect remarkable economic growth and competitiveness, solidifying the country's position as a leading economic power for business and investment.

Bin Touq explained that the value of the UAE's real GDP (at constant prices) reached AED879.6 billion in the first half of 2024, recording a notable increase of 3.6 percent. Meanwhile, the value of the non-oil GDP during the same period was approximately AED660 billion, with a growth of 4.4 percent, compared to the same period last year. With this, the contribution of non-oil sectors to the country's GDP has reached 75 percent.

The estimates also indicated that the UAE's nominal GDP (at current prices) during the first half of 2024 reached approximately AED981 billion, registering a growth rate of 5.6 percent. Meanwhile, the value of non-oil GDP at current prices during

the same period rose to about AED749 billion, with a growth rate reaching 6.8 percent, compared to the first half of 2023.

Bin Touq said, "The achievements highlight the visionary leadership of President His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, and strategic guidance of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai. The UAE has successfully laid the foundation for a sustainable, diversified economy driven by innovation and knowledge, aligning with global trends while maintaining its position as a premier economic hub regionally and internationally."

"This progress paves the way for achieving the economic goals outlined in 'We the UAE 2031' vision, including raising the UAE's GDP to AED3 trillion within the next decade."

The Minister of Economy stated that the robust growth of non-oil sectors during the first half of 2024 reflects the dynamic nature of the UAE's economy and its capacity to seize emerging opportunities across multiple fields. **-WAM**

CENTRAL BANK OF OMAN

Treasury bills worth OMR49.1mn issued

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) raised OMR49.1 million by a way of allotting treasury bills on Monday.

The value of the allotted treasury bills stood at OMR 3.1 million, for a maturity period of 28 days.

The average accepted price reached OMR 99.685 for every OMR 100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at OMR 99.685 per OMR 100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 4.10625 per cent and 4.11923%, respectively.

The value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to OMR 30 million, for a maturity period of 91 days. The average accepted price reached OMR 98.922 for every OMR 100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at OMR 98.920 per OMR 100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 4.32385 per cent and 4.37097%, respectively.

The value of the allotted treasury bills stood at OMR 16 million, for a maturity period of 182 days.

The average accepted price reached OMR 97.790 for every OMR 100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at OMR 97.790 per OMR 100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 4.43214 per cent and 4.53231 per cent, respectively.



Treasury bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance, and they provide licensed commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds.

The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) acts as the Issue Manager

and provides the added advantage of ready liquidity through discounting and repurchase facilities (Repo).

It may be noted that the interest rate on the Repo operations with CBO is 5.00 per cent while the discount rate on the Treasury Bills Discounting Facility with CBO is

5.50 per cent.

Furthermore, treasury bills promote the local money market by creating a benchmark yield curve for short-term interest rates. Additionally, the government may also resort to this instrument whenever felt necessary for financing its recurrent expenditures. **-ONA**

Q3 2024

India's smartphone market hits record value as 5G models dominate shipments

NEW DELHI: India's smartphone market grew 3 per cent YoY in volume and 12 per cent in value in Q3 2024, to achieve a record-high quarter, according to Counterpoint research monthly India Smartphone tracker.

5G smartphones accounted for 81 per cent of the total shipments, with 93 per cent penetration was in the Rs 10,001-15,000 range because of Indians choice for budget-friendly 5G models.

The market share breakup for smartphones sold by Chinese, Indian and global brands have largely remained the same over the last five years. Make in India's efforts to localise production of smartphones to the Indian soil has made no dent in the dominance of Chinese smartphones in the Indian market.

The Price-sensitive Indian consumers are consistently showing a strong preference for affordable Chinese smartphones with cutting-edge features.

As a result, despite the government's efforts to reduce the dominance of Chinese brands in smartphones, their prevalence remains largely unaffected.



But if we talk about Chipsets, MediaTek dominated the India's smartphone chipset market with a 54 per cent share. Apple led the premium smartphone segment holds 35 per cent share, followed by Qualcomm with 28 per cent. This highlights growth driven by affordability and technological advancements by these companies.

A smartphone chipset provides

a core set of functions ranging from cellular communication, to Wi-Fi and Bluetooth uses, to general computing, power management, memory, storage interface, and peripheral interfaces.

Chinese smartphone brands have maintained a consistent market share in India, but Chinese chipset producers have witnessed very modest growth in the Indian market.

Chinese chipset producers are entering the Indian market and have witnessed a modest but growing market share in India. According to Counterpoint, UNISOC held an 11 per cent global smartphone chipset market share from Q2 2023 to Q3 2024, while HiSilicon (Huawei) held a 2 per cent share.

Globally, China is facing challenges due to US-led restrictions and with reports suggesting that the US is preparing to blacklist Chinese chipmakers on security concerns and data privacy.

In such a situation India has a great opportunity and is taking mega steps to build its chip industry from scratch. It is making a strategic push to establish a domestic semiconductor ecosystem.

The semiconductor mission of the government with a USD 10 billion investment will not only reduce the over dependence on imported semiconductor supplies but also make India an exporter of chips.

The global semiconductor market is projected to reach USD 1 trillion by 2030 and India aims to capture a significant share with these initiatives. **-ANI**

OIL PRICES



Oil edges lower as investors eye China, US data

SINGAPORE: Oil prices edged lower in thin trade ahead of the year-end as traders awaited more economic data from China and the United States later this week to assess growth in the world's two largest oil consumers.

Brent crude futures fell 8 cents to \$74.09 a barrel, while the more active March contract was at \$73.73 a barrel, down 6 cents.

US West Texas Intermediate crude dropped 5 cents to \$70.55

a barrel. Both contracts rose about 1.4% last week buoyed by a larger-than-expected drawdown from US crude inventories in the week ended 20 December 2025 as refiners ramped up activity and the holiday season boosted fuel demand.

Oil prices were also supported by optimism for Chinese economic growth next year that could lift demand from the top crude oil importing nation. **-ONA**

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Takaful Oman, up 9.52%, was the top gainer while Raysut Cement, down 3.64%, was the top loser



MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,544.96 points, up by 0.64% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 1.42% at 417.27 points. Takaful Oman, up 9.52%, was the top gainer while Raysut Cement, down 3.64%, was the top loser. Shares of OQBI were the most active in terms of number of shares traded while OQEP were the most active in terms of turnover.

A total number of 1738 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of RO 6.2 million, with more than 35.68 million shares changing hands. Out of 58 traded securities, 31 advanced, 14 declined, and 13 remained unchanged. At the session close, foreign investors were net sellers for RO 110K while GCC & Arab investors were net buyers for RO 62K, followed by domestic investors for RO 48K worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,606.51 points, up 0.44%. Prices of Takaful Oman, Al Sharqia Investment, National Finance, Oman

Arab Bank, Sohar International Bank were up by 9.52%, 4.48%, 3.70%, 2.74%, 2.24% respectively. Prices of Liva Group, United Finance, Bank Dhofar, Bank Muscat were down by 3.03%, 1.75%, 1.25%, 0.40% respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,224.85 points, up 1.23%. Prices of Al Anwar Ceramics, A'Saffa Foods, Oman Cables Industry, Oman Flour Mills, Salalah Mills were up by 9.47%, 5.13%, 3.85%, 2.27%, 1.38% respectively. Prices of Raysut Cement, Voltamp Energy, Galfar Engineering were down by 3.64%, 3.61%, 1.24% respectively.

Services Index was up by 0.95% before closing at 1,732.57 points. Prices of OIFC, Barka Water & Power Company, Sembcorp Salalah, Oman Telecom, Ooredoo were up by 6.25%, 5.00%, 2.04%, 1.84%, 1.77% respectively. Prices of Al Jazeera Services, Phoenix Power, Dhofar Generating, Barka Desalination, SMN Power Holding were down by 8.61%, 1.70%, 1.56%, 0.83%, 0.29% respectively.

— United Securities

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	4,560.51	4,515.16	4,544.96	4,516.00	28.96	0.64
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,624.38	7,570.01	7,606.51	7,573.07	33.45	0.44
Industry Index	5,245.57	5,182.42	5,224.85	5,161.35	63.50	1.23
Services Index	1,738.70	1,716.20	1,732.57	1,716.20	16.37	0.95
MSX Shariah Index	420.39	412.94	417.27	411.44	5.83	1.42
MSX TR INDEX	6,387.00	6,323.47	6,365.21	6,324.65	40.56	0.64
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,662.08	8,600.31	8,641.78	8,603.78	38.00	0.44
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	6,052.14	5,979.28	6,028.23	5,954.97	73.27	1.23
SERVICES TR IDX	2,080.58	2,053.67	2,073.26	2,053.67	19.59	0.95
FIXED INCOME INDEX	1,067.21	1,067.21	1,067.21	1,067.21	0.00	0.00

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap.	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
35,688,981	6,203,375	1,738	27,401,429,033	31	14	13	58

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR MONDAY, DECEMBER 30

ISINSECURITY NAMEVOLUMETURNOVERTRADESOPEN PRICEHIGHLOWCLOSE PR.PREV. CLOSEDIFF BD.DIFF %LAST PR.LAST BD.LAST OFF.PREV. VALUEMARKET CAP

REGULAR MARKET

OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	90,446	9,148	34	0.098	0.104	0.098	0.104	0.095	0.009	9,474	0.104	0.101	0.104	0.100	22,880,000
OM0000002804	ASAFA FOODS	94,700	37,296	24	0.390	0.410	0.386	0.410	0.390	0.020	5,128	0.410	0.390	0.410	0.100	49,200,000
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIA INVESTMENT HO.	134,705	9,419	7	0.070	0.070	0.069	0.070	0.067	0.003	4,478	0.070	0.069	0.070	0.100	6,300,000
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	6,031,655	826,948	86	0.134	0.138	0.134	0.137	0.134	0.003	2,239	0.137	0.137	0.137	0.100	906,562,739
OM0000004735	SEBPCORP SALALAH	236,770	23,265	17	0.098	0.100	0.098	0.100	0.098	0.002	2,041	0.100	0.098	0.100	0.100	95,457,195
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	205,310	189,978	38	0.925	0.950	0.922	0.942	0.925	0.017	1,838	0.942	0.942	1.010	0.100	706,500,000
OM0000003989	OOREDOO	7,050	1,630	3	0.234	0.234	0.230	0.236	0.004	0.004	1,770	0.230	0.225	0.230	0.100	140,771,713
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	39,480	25,996	27	0.065	0.066	0.065	0.066	0.065	0.001	1,538	0.066	0.065	0.066	0.100	44,542,570
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	169,628	11,195	15	0.066	0.066	0.066	0.066	0.065	0.001	1,538	0.066	0.066	0.066	0.100	47,150,818
OM0000001681	OMAN EMBRATES HO.	35,540	2,385	5	0.068	0.068	0.067	0.068	0.067	0.001	1,483	0.068	0.067	0.073	0.100	5,287,500
OM0000003234	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	385,242	151,726	44	0.380	0.387	0.380	0.381	0.376	0.005	1,330	0.381	0.379	0.383	0.100	80,072,210
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	157,000	13,031	15	0.083	0.083	0.083	0.083	0.082	0.001	1,220	0.083	0.082	0.083	0.100	16,600,000
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	3,700	1,398	2	0.377	0.378	0.377	0.378	0.374	0.004	1,070	0.378	0.378	0.378	0.100	125,069,884
OM0000001987	OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	80,000	18,960	8	0.237	0.237	0.237	0.237	0.235	0.002	861	0.237	0.250	0.237	0.100	23,700,000
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	274,270	76,371	31	0.277	0.280	0.276	0.278	0.277	0.001	0,361	0.278	0.272	0.278	0.100	214,115,600
OM0000002275	SHELL OMAN MARKETING	2,900	1,746	1	0.602	0.602	0.602	0.602	0.602	0.000	0,000	0.602	0.602	0.600	0.100	57,190,000
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	327,721	104,114	45	0.319	0.320	0.315	0.319	0.319	0.000	0,000	0.319	0.319	0.319	0.100	213,208,571
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	1,499	429	1	0.286	0.286	0.286	0.286	0.286	0.000	0,000	0.286	0.287	0.286	0.100	35,720,817
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	376,612	30,508	16	0.081	0.082	0.081	0.081	0.081	0.000	0,000	0.081	0.081	0.089	0.100	14,175,000
OM0000003072	QAS GAS NETWORKS	5,155,720	709,295	216	0.137	0.138	0.136	0.137	0.137	0.000	0,000	0.137	0.137	0.145	0.100	593,298,477
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	4,535,090	1,134,854	149	0.251	0.252	0.249	0.251	0.252	-0.001	-0,397	0.251	0.250	0.253	0.100	1,884,105,663
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	109,390	6,126	4	0.056	0.056	0.056	0.056	0.057	-0.001	-1,754	0.056	0.056	0.057	0.100	19,943,129
Total	22	16,519,828	3,383,789	788												

Parallel Market

OM0000004778	TAKAFUL OMAN	168,853	7,432	12	0.043	0.046	0.041	0.046	0.042	0.004	9,524	0.046	0.042	0.046	0.100	11,500,000
OM0000004447	OMAN REIT FUND	1,638,586	131,482	38	0.078	0.082	0.076	0.080	0.076	0.004	5,263	0.078	0.078	0.078	0.100	40,690,504
OM0000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	238,460	67,502	23	0.279	0.294	0.280	0.294	0.280	0.014	5,000	0.280	0.280	0.280	0.100	47,040,000
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	41,480	115,478	53	2.700	2.860	2.700	2.700	2.600	0.100	3,846	2.700	2.700	2.700	0.100	242,190,000
OM0000002648	NATIONAL FINANCE	10,100	1,414	3	0.140	0.140	0.140	0.140	0.135	0.005	3,704	0.140	0.140	0.140	0.100	80,316,599
OM0000005260	OMAN ARAB BANK	221,000	32,986	5	0.146	0.150	0.146	0.150	0.146	0.004	2,740	0.150	0.150	0.154	0.100	250,411,599
OM0000001400	OMAN FLOUR MILLS	10,650	4,687	5	0.440	0.450	0.440	0.450	0.440	0.010	2,273	0.450	0.435	0.450	0.100	70,875,000
OM0000001509	DHOFAR INTERNATIONAL DEV & INV HO.	2,597	547	1	0.235	0.235	0.235	0.235	0.230	0.005	2,174	0.235	0.235	0.230	0.100	86,172,884
OM0000001889	SALALAH MILLS	3,000	1,763	3	0.585	0.585	0.585	0.588	0.580	0.008	1,379	0.588	0.000	0.587	0.100	36,728,282
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	10,000	780	2	0.078	0.078	0.078	0.078	0.077	0.001	1,299	0.078	0.075	0.078	0.100	6,830,000
OM0000009908	QI BASE INDUSTRIES (SFZ)	77,781,152	865,414	434	0.111	0.112	0.111	0.112	0.111	0.001	0,901	0.112	0.112	0.111	0.000	387,465,975
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	242,187	15,816	29	0.066	0.066	0.065	0.065	0.065	0.000	0,000	0.065	0.065	0.066	0.100	13,731,700
OM0000002287	GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS	1,884	414	1	0.220	0.220	0.220	0.220	0.220	0.000	0,000	0.220	0.221	0.242	0.100	10,068,476
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	149,640	14,631	12	0.097	0.098	0.097	0.097	0.097	0.000	0,000	0.097	0.097	0.098	0.100	216,984,444
OM0000004669	SHARQIYAH DESALINATION	11,060	1,415	2	0.127	0.128	0.127	0.128	0.128	0.000	0,000	0.128	0.128	0.000	0.100	12,518,676
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	2,000	254	1	0.127	0.127	0.127	0.127	0.127	0.000	0,000	0.127	0.128	0.130	0.100	5,985,000
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	227,781	79,463	28	0.347	0.346	0.346	0.347	0.347	-0.001	-0,288	0.346	0.331	0.347	0.100	69,073,918
OM0000009759	QI EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION	3,492,826	1,159,191	160	0.333	0.333	0.330	0.332	0.333	-0.001	-0,300	0.332	0.332	0.333	0.010	2,856,000,000
OM0000008710	BARKA DESALINATION	198,950	23,883	10	0.121	0.123	0.120	0.120	0.121	-0.001	-0,826	0.120	0.118	0.123	0.100	9,062,640
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	1,701,182	138,654	72	0.082	0.082	0.079	0.080	0.081	-0.001	-1,235	0.079	0.079	0.080	0.100	16,238,916
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	221,000	34,908	5	0.155	0.160	0.155	0.158	0.160	-0.002	-1,250	0.160	0.150	0.160	0.100	473,423,527
OM0000007007	DHOFAR GENERATING	8,200	517	2	0.063	0.063	0.063	0.063	0.064	-0.001	-1,563	0.063	0.062	0.063	0.100	14,001,120
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	170,665	9,926		0.058	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.000	0,000	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.100	84,808,888
OM0000009569	JABAL REIF	1,000	101	1	0.101	0.101	0.101	0.101	0.103	-0.002	-1,942	0.101	0.101	0.101	0.100	1,575,000
OM0000007043	LIVA GROUP	3,113	996	2	0.320	0.320	0.320	0.320	0.330	-0.010	-3,030	0.320	0.320	0.297	0.100	127,479,788
OM0000003861	VOLTAPE ENERGY	5,741	1,496	3	0.400	0.400	0.400	0.400	0.415	-0.015	-3614	0.400	0.400	0.440	0.100	32,561,100
OM0000003526	AL JAZEERA SERVICES	232	44	1	0.191	0.191	0.191	0.191	0.200	-0.010	-8,012	0.191	0.191	0.200	0.100	8,833,011
Total	27	16,537,079	2,711,213	916												



LIFESTYLE

TEA BAGS
RELEASE
BILLIONS OF
MICROPLASTICS
INTO WATER:
STUDY

A recent study by the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) has revealed the alarming release of micro- and nanoplastic (MNPL) particles from tea bags into water, raising concerns about potential health risks.

Published in Chemosphere, the study analysed three types of tea bags and found that billions of plastic fragments are released per milliliter of water. Tea bags made from polypropylene

released the highest amount of particles, averaging 1.2 billion per millilitre, followed by cellulose and nylon-6 bags, which released 135 million and 8.18 million particles respectively.

Using advanced laser techniques, researchers identified the size of these particles, ranging from 136 to 244 nanometers, and their composition.

Tests showed that MNPL particles could penetrate human intestinal cells and reach the nucleus, potentially dis-

rupting cellular functions.

The researchers warned that exposure to these particles might lead to health issues such as inflammation, genotoxicity, and long-term risks like cancer. The findings underscore the need for stricter regulations on plastic use in food packaging.

Researchers called for urgent action to address MNPL contamination and its broader implications for ecosystems and human health. **OWA**

SPORTS

Liverpool rout West Ham to extend lead at the top

Arne Slot's Reds machine looks unstoppable in the current Premier League season

LONDON: Liverpool surged to an eight-point lead at the top of the Premier League with a ruthless 5-0 demolition of West Ham United at the London Stadium on Sunday night, further cementing their title credentials.

Arne Slot's side, fresh from a scintillating 6-3 victory over Tottenham last week, produced another devastating display in the capital, leaving West Ham in their wake after a first-half masterclass.

The result was never in doubt as the visitors took total control from the outset, leaving a passive West Ham side battered and beaten.

Despite creating several early chances, Liverpool were patient, and on the half-hour mark, Luis Diaz opened the scoring with a powerful finish.

Just ten minutes later, Cody Gakpo doubled their lead, benefiting from a moment of magic from Mohamed Salah, whose dazzling footwork set up the Dutchman for a tap-in. The Egyptian then got in on the act himself just before the break, firing a low drive into the net for his 20th goal of the season, sending Liverpool into the dressing room with a commanding 3-0 lead.

West Ham offered little resistance after the break, and their misery was compounded in the 54th minute when Trent Alexander-Arnold's long-range shot deflected off Max Kilman and past goalkeeper Alphonse Areola. Despite Mohammed Kudus' efforts - hitting



the woodwork twice - there was no respite for the hosts, who were outclassed in every department by a Liverpool side that oozed quality.

Salah, imperious throughout, added the icing on the cake with a brilliant solo run from his own half, evading several defenders before setting up Diogo Jota for a clinical finish six minutes from time. The fifth goal exemplified Liverpool's relentless attacking threat, with Salah at the heart of another sublime team move.

West Ham, despite some flashes of promise, including Kudus' woodwork strikes, could not muster a serious challenge against their dominant visitors. The gap in quality was evident, with Liverpool's fluid attacking play proving far too much for the hosts to handle.

Liverpool's form has now reached such heights that they exert psychological dominance over their opponents.

West Ham were already beaten before the first whistle blew, and even as they tried to regroup, the visitors continued to apply pressure with ease. Their only scare came when Kudus hit the inside

of the post, but it was clear that Liverpool's victory was never in doubt.

While twists and turns are expected in any title race, Liverpool's

form shows no signs of slowing down, and Slot's side look destined for their first Premier League title since 2020. Arsenal and Chelsea may still harbor hopes of challeng-



ing, but with Liverpool playing with such belief and confidence, it seems an unlikely scenario that will see them falter.

At this stage, only a remarkable

challenge from their rivals - or a catastrophic collapse - could prevent Liverpool from lifting the title come May. For now, they remain the team to beat. - Agencies

Mohamed Salah 'far away' from securing new Liverpool deal

LONDON: Mohamed Salah has revealed he is "far away" from securing a new contract with Liverpool as speculation over his future continues. The Egyptian winger, who is in the final year of his contract, will be free to negotiate with non-English clubs from January 1, potentially leading to a free transfer when his deal expires at the end of the season.

Asked about his contract situation following the win against West Ha., Salah was candid but focused on the immediate task at hand. "No, we are far away from that [contract] and I don't



want to put anything in the media," he told *Sky Sports*. "The only thing on my mind is I want Liverpool to win the league and I want to be part of that. I will do my best for the team to

win the trophy. There are a few other teams catching up with us, and we need to stay focused, humble, and go again."

Alongside Salah, Liverpool captain Virgil van Dijk and England full-back Trent Alexander-Arnold are also out of contract in the summer, with all three able to enter pre-contract talks with foreign clubs in just a few days.

However, Liverpool manager Arne Slot expressed confidence that the uncertainty would not distract his key players. "I think I have a lot of control over what they do," Slot said. "If they're in the training pitch, if they're in

a meeting with me... but talking about their private lives, I don't have control over them. I have control to a certain extent over what I expect from them on the pitch, and I'm really pleased with what Virgil, Trent, and Mo (Salah) bring."

Earlier this season, Salah had expressed disappointment at Liverpool's failure to offer him a new deal, adding to the growing tension around his future. After a 2-1 victory over Man City, Salah hinted that he might be playing his final match against Pep Guardiola's side, raising further speculation. - Agencies

SOOTH GAME

Guardiola celebrates milestone as City secure win at Leicester

LONDON: Pep Guardiola marked his 500th game in charge of Manchester City with a hard-fought 2-0 victory over Leicester City on Sunday, lifting his team's spirits after a difficult run of form.

Savinho and Erling Haaland were the scorers for City, securing just their second win in their last 10 Premier League outings. However, despite the result, the defending champions remained in fifth place, still 14 points behind leaders Liverpool, who dispatched West Ham 5-0 earlier in the day.

Guardiola, having endured the worst run of his managerial career, had promised not to give up, but City's win at the King Power Stadium was anything but smooth sailing. Leicester posed significant threats, with Jamie Vardy going close on two occasions and Facundo Buonanotte hitting the post.

City took the lead in the 21st minute through Savinho's first goal for the club. The Brazilian winger pounced after Leicester goalkeeper Jakub Stolarczyk parried Phil Foden's shot, and Savinho finished coolly from close range.

City's defence was tested



throughout the match as Leicester pressed for an equaliser.

Haaland put any Leicester hopes of a comeback to bed, however, heading in Savinho's cross with 16 minutes remaining.

Guardiola's reaction to the victory was one of relief. The City manager, visibly worn after recent disappointments, had been subdued following their 2-1 defeat at Aston Villa before Christmas, but the win at Leicester sparked celebrations from the players and supporters alike.

Guardiola was serenaded by the away fans throughout the match, a testament to the loyalty he has built at City following four consecutive Premier League titles.

While the result against Leicester does not solve all of City's issues, it provides a much-needed platform for the team to build on. Guardiola himself admitted in the post-match press conference that it was more about relief than happiness, acknowledging that City cannot afford to slip further away from the top four. - Agencies

ITALIAN SERIE A

AC Milan dismiss Fonseca after six months in charge

MILAN: AC Milan have parted ways with manager Paulo Fonseca after just six months at the helm following a disappointing 1-1 draw at home against Roma on Sunday. The result left the seven-time European champions languishing in eighth place in Serie A, 14 points behind joint-leaders Atalanta and Napoli.

Milan's performance in the Champions League has also been underwhelming, with the club sitting in 12th place in the 36-team table, having secured only four wins from six matches, alongside two losses.

Fonseca, who took over in June, was brought in to replace Stefano Pioli, who had led Milan to a second-place finish in Serie A last season and their first league title in 11 years in 2022. Despite the club's high expectations, Fonseca's tenure fell short, with the team struggling to deliver consistent results.

"The club extends its gratitude to Paulo for his great professionalism and wishes him the very best in his future endeavors," read a statement from Milan.



Fonseca, appearing to confirm his dismissal, spoke to reporters outside the San Siro. "Yes, it's true. I'm out," he said from his car. "That's life. I did everything I could."

As Milan moves forward, the club will face Juventus in the first leg of the Italian Super Cup semi-final on January 3, with the return leg scheduled for January 18. Italian media reports indicate that former Porto manager Sergio Conceição, who departed Porto in June after six successful seasons, is set to replace Fonseca at Milan.

Juventus' Thuram salvages draw

Meanwhile, Juventus were forced to settle for a 2-2 draw at home against Fiorentina on Sunday, with Khephren Thuram rescuing a point for the Bianconeri in a thrilling Serie A encounter. Thuram, the son of French football legend Lilian and brother of Marcus, scored both goals, his first-ever strikes for the club.

Thuram opened the scoring in the 20th minute, calmly slotting the ball into the bottom corner. Fiorentina responded before half-time with Moise Kean's header, leveling the score at 1-1. After the break, Thuram restored Juve's lead, finishing well to put his side 2-1 up.

However, Fiorentina refused to be beaten, and with just three minutes left, Riccardo Sottil fired a left-footed volley into the top of the net, for the equaliser.

The result extended Thiago Motta's unbeaten run to 26 matches, but Juventus remain sixth in Serie A, level on points with Fiorentina and nine points adrift of leaders Atalanta. - Agencies

BRISBANE INTERNATIONAL

From rivals to partners: Djokovic and Kyrgios shine in 'awesome' doubles debut

BRISBANE: The notion of Novak Djokovic and Nick Kyrgios ever becoming friends seemed almost impossible at the height of their long-running feud. How could Djokovic ever warm to someone he had "not much respect for" off the court? And how could Kyrgios ever shake off his view of the Serb as a "tool" and "strange cat" with an obsessive need to be liked?

Fast forward a few years, and the once-bitter rivals have become best buddies, teaming up for a thrilling doubles debut.

Kyrgios, the Australian firebrand known for his polarising yet always entertaining style, promised a fun spectacle at the Brisbane International, and he delivered. In

front of an excited sell-out crowd, the duo secured a 6-4, 6-7 (4-7), 10-8 victory over Austria's Alexander Erler and Germany's Andreas Mies, capping off the win with a celebratory chest bump on their third match point - a symbolic gesture of the unexpected bromance.

"That was awesome," said Djokovic, the 24-time major champion. "I want to thank Nick for playing. He said it should be a pleasure to play with him, and it was a pleasure. I'm glad to share the court with him on his comeback."

The duo was greeted with loud cheers from the boisterous Pat Rafter Arena crowd, a testament to how far their relationship has come since Kyrgios supported



Djokovic over his 2022 Australian deportation saga. The two have since grown closer, with this match marking a milestone in

their newfound camaraderie.

Kyrgios, back on court for the first time in 18 months following a wrist injury that threatened to

end his career, had no idea how the match would unfold. The first uncertainty was how his body would react; the second, how two players with "very different personalities" would fare as partners.

"We might get absolutely snipped," joked Kyrgios, referencing his 2022 Wimbledon loss to Djokovic, the only major final of his turbulent career. Any doubts about Kyrgios' physical condition evaporated with a commanding hold to love in his opening service game, proving he had lost none of his trademark power.

"What a game I played, huh?" Djokovic laughed, clearly enjoying the chemistry between them.

The match intensified, with

Djokovic providing two spectacular moments worthy of any highlight reel. In the 10th game of the first set, he threaded a backhand through a narrow gap between the net post and umpire's chair, then set up a pair of set points with a perfectly measured lob. Kyrgios sealed the first set with a forehand winner that clipped the line, igniting joyous celebrations.

The second set remained tight, but Kyrgios delivered a vintage moment with a trademark twener on his serve at 3-3, followed by a sharp volley and a satisfied smile as he basked in the crowd's adoration. Djokovic, equally delighted, raced over to join him in the celebration. - Agencies

IN PICTURES

THE MOST



Destoryed houses in Kanazawa, Japan



Flood of the century in Spain



Spectacular surfer photo during Olympics in Tahiti



Clear the stage for the full moon in Athens

IMPRESSIVE PICTURES



Ceremonial reopening of Notre Dame



Paris celebrates the Olympic Games



Severe flooding in southern Brazil



Football fever in Germany

OF 2024

ROUND-UP

Bank Muscat enhances financial literacy among students: A step towards enabling new generations

Bank Muscat, in partnership with the Ministry of Education, recently organised a two-day training workshop on the concepts of financial literacy, as part of the Bank Corporate Social Responsibility Maliyat Academy initiative

MUSCAT: Financial literacy is one of the basic skills that individuals need in their daily lives, especially in light of increasing economic challenges and rapid changes in financial markets. Financial literacy contributes to enabling individuals to make wise decisions about their money, which enhances their ability to manage their personal budgets, invest wisely, and plan properly for their financial future.

In this context, Bank Muscat, in partnership with the Ministry of Education (MOE), recently organised a two-day training workshop on the concepts of financial literacy, as part of the Bank Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Mali-



yat Academy initiative. It targeted a group of life skills teachers, vocational guidance specialists and a number of members of the Khazna project team.

The workshop aimed train the trainers and provide participants with the necessary knowledge and skills to learn basic financial concepts, such as making smart choices, learning to earn, spending & saving, growing your money, and giving back to community. The participants considered the workshop as a valuable opportunity to enhance financial awareness, and provide the necessary tools to help school students achieve their fi-

nancial goals through experiments and ideas that will be applied.

This survey aims to gather feedback from participants about their experience in this workshop, to highlight the knowledge and skills they have acquired, how this experience may impact their personal financial situation, and the potential influence this gained knowledge could have on the students to whom the participants will impart this information.

Dr. Mohammed bin Hilal Al Siyabi, Supervisor of Life Skills Subject in MOE at Al Dakhiliya Governorate, stressed that promoting financial literacy in schools is a

strategic step towards building a strong and solid society. He said: "through this workshop, I learned more about the importance of teaching students how to plan for their financial future, and we will seek to transfer this knowledge to students through dedicated workshops where they learn how to prepare a budget, the importance of saving, and how to invest wisely. These skills are not just theoretical information, but real tools that will actually enable them to achieve financial independence in their lives in the long term."

Raja bint Rashid Al Yazidiya, Vocational Guidance Specialist at

Wadi Al Hayoul School in Buraimi governorate, said: "Firstly, I would like to thank Bank Muscat and the Ministry of Education represented in the Khazna project team for giving me the opportunity to present my experience in spreading the financial culture to the school's students. This programme contributes to the development of financial competencies and the skills of dealing with money such as saving, investing and giving."

She added that the importance of financial literacy students lies in their ability to deal with economic variables and financial developments their monthly expenses are optimal.

Rahab bint Awadh Al Sinaniya, Vocational Guidance Specialist at Bahr Oman School for Basic Education in South Sharqiya Governorate, confirmed that her participation in the training workshop of Maliyat Academy has given her many skills in the correct way of budget management and financial planning. She clarified: "Financial culture is one of the skills necessary to instill in people from a young age, enhance this awareness and encourage them to save."

Al Sinaniya extended her deep thanks to Bank Muscat for this op-

portunity.

Khalid bin Saeed Al Siyabi, Vocational Guidance Supervisor in MOE at Al Dakhiliya Governorate, explained that this workshop comes as a complement to the first workshop, which was held last year to train supervisors and specialists on the basics of financial literacy, adding: "We transferred the knowledge from the previous workshop to the guidance specialists from different schools in the governorate, who in turn held training seminars for tenth grade students from various schools in the governorate. Students really showed their enthusiasm and passion to learn these knowledge and financial concepts. Teaching these principles to students from an early age is very important because it will eventually lead to the creation of a financially independent generation that can make well-thought-out plans for the money in its hands and knows the balance between spending and saving."

Samira bint Khamis Al Alawi, Supervisor of Life Skills Subject in MOE at Buraimi Governorate, expressed her gratitude for participating in the workshop, stressing that participation in the training workshop gave her the opportunity to develop her knowledge about financial concepts and acquire new skills that help to make sound financial decisions. She added: "These tools, when passed on to school students, will undoubtedly contribute to building a financially conscious and educated generation that is able to search for ways to earn money and develop them to be financially independent individuals and able to face financial crises and changing economic challenges."

AGREEMENT

ahlibank reaffirms its commitment to sustainability through installation of solar energy systems at its headquarters

MUSCAT: Reaffirming its commitment to sustainability and innovation, ahlibank has signed an agreement with Nafath Renewable Energy to install solar energy systems on its premises. This initiative is a milestone in the bank's efforts to further its Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) objectives, solidifying its position as a responsible and visionary financial institution.

The initiative includes installation of state-of-the-art solar car park system on the rooftop of the head office car parking building, utilising bifacial solar panels capable of capturing light from both sides, significantly increasing energy output. Notably, ahlibank will be one of the first in the Sultanate of Oman to adopt the cutting-edge technology-based solar panels. The proposed solar panel project is fully aligned with Oman Vision 2040 and its commitment to achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, as it demonstrates a clear path towards a more sustainable and environmentally friendly energy future.

The signing ceremony was attended by senior representatives from both organisations, with Taher Albakhsh Al Balushi, Senior General Manager of Strategy, Transformation, Technology, and Projects, at ahlibank, and Musab



Al Farsi, Co-Founder and General Manager of Projects, at Nafath Renewable Energy, formalizing the agreement. This agreement underscores ahlibank's commitment to fostering impactful partnerships with industry leaders who share its vision for sustainable development.

ahlibank's collaboration with Nafath Renewable Energy, a pioneer in sustainable energy solutions, reflects the bank's commitment to sustainability as an integral part of its business philosophy and its strategic vision to adopt advanced technology

enabling a positive change in the Sultanate. This collaboration aims to develop innovative and sustainable solutions that aim not only to address pressing environmental challenges, but also to set new standards for responsible corporate practices.

During the initial construction of the car parking structure, ahlibank strategically designed the infrastructure to accommodate future solar energy systems, complete with net metering capabilities. This forward-thinking approach underscores the Bank's commitment to building a greener

future and aligning its operations with Oman's sustainable development priorities. The newly installed solar energy system will be directly linked to one of the bank's four utility meters, designated specifically for net metering. Excess energy generated will be fed back into Nama's national grid, thereby contributing to broader environmental goals.

This project also highlights the financial prudence of ahlibank's sustainability strategy. By harnessing solar power, the bank not only optimizes its energy consumption but also achieves measurable cost savings, reinforcing the financial viability of its ESG-focused initiatives.

Additionally, the contribution of surplus energy to the national grid demonstrates ahlibank's support for the country's energy sustainability while encouraging other organizations to adopt innovative renewable solutions.

As Oman accelerates its transition to a sustainable future, ahlibank continues to reinforce its position as a leader in responsible banking. Through its proactive initiatives and strategic collaborations, the bank reaffirms its role in shaping a more sustainable and prosperous tomorrow, embodying the principles of ESG excellence at every step.

FESTIVE SEASON

Experience magic of season at Sheraton

MUSCAT: As the festive season descends upon the elegant halls of the Sheraton Oman Hotel, a palpable air of excitement and merriment fills every corner. The lobby sparkles with twinkling lights, tasteful decorations, and an impressive Christmas tree, creating a warm and inviting atmosphere that beckons guests into a world of holiday enchantment.

Kids can unleash their creativity and imagination as they craft their own gingerbread masterpieces. Parents can indulge in an exquisite Festive Degustation menu at Asado; the Steakhouse unveils a special menu to tantalize the taste buds of guests seeking a gourmet experience. The chefs have curated a feast that captures the essence of the season, featuring delectable signature dishes infused with festive flavours.

As guests step into the festively adorned pool terrace, the enchanting aroma of Christmas spices and delectable delights wafts through the air. The Sheraton Oman Hotel's Christmas buffet is a culinary journey that unfolds across various stations, each offering a unique and mouthwatering experience.

The sizzle of the grill and the enticing aromas draw guests towards the live cooking stations. Here, succulent cuts of prime rib and turkey are expertly grilled, tantalizing taste buds with their savory perfection. The chefs



engage in friendly banter with diners, adding a touch of personalized service to the culinary spectacle.

As the clock ticks closer to the grand finale of the year, Sheraton Omen Hotel prepares to bid adieu to the old and welcome the new with a spectacular New Year's Eve celebration. The pool terrace transforms into a dazzling venue, adorned with glittering decorations and an atmosphere of anticipation. Guests are treated to a lavish dinner that marks the end of the year in style, with a menu curated to elevate the senses. The pinnacle of the New Year's Eve celebration lies in the live entertainment and the vibrant beats of the DJ and live band. The live performances add an extra layer of glamour to the evening, ensuring that the transition to the new year is celebrated with a bang. The hotel's New Year's Eve celebration becomes a memorable experience, marking the beginning of a new chapter most festively and joyously possible.

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