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EA COMPLETES FINAL PHASE OF CORAL REEF REHABILITATION PROJECT

The Environment Authority (EA) has implemented the final phase of the coral reef rehabilitation project in the Daymaniyat Natural Reserve. On Sunday, the EA, in cooperation with the Ministry of Defence, implemented a project to dump out-of-service military equipment in the marine environment (an underwater museum) to create a suitable environment for the growth of coral reefs. **>A5**



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KUWAIT READY TO WELCOME HM



HM's visit to strengthen bond with Kuwait, says Al Budaiwi

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Jassim Mohammed Al Budaiwi, GCC Secretary General, confirmed that the visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the State of Kuwait will strengthen the bonds of brotherhood and interdependence between the GCC countries.

The GCC Secretary-General stressed that the visit of His Majesty the Sultan to Kuwait and his meeting with Sheikh Mishal Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait, strengthens the bonds of brotherhood and interdependence between the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council and consolidates the principles of integration among the people, and is an important building block in the path of joint Gulf action.

He said in a statement: "This visit confirms the depth of the historic ties between the Sultanate of Oman and the State of Kuwait, which have always been a role model for strategic partnership, and reflects the mutual desire to raise the level of cooperation and integration to broader horizons."

He added: "This visit represents a strong impetus for the entire Gulf integra-



Jassim Mohammed Al Budaiwi, GCC Secretary General.

tion process, reinforced by the desire of the leaders of the GCC countries to work jointly towards achieving a future vision that contributes to achieving security and prosperity for the peoples of their countries."

He touched on the visit made by Sheikh Mishal Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait, to the Sultanate of Oman which included the opening of the Duqm refinery and petrochemical industries, and represented the culmination of relations, especially related to fruitful economic cooperation between the two brotherly countries. **-With ONA inputs**

Hopes are high for stronger cooperation and strategic relations between the two nations

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Anticipation and excitement are palpable and visible as Kuwait eagerly awaits the 'State' visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, on Monday.

With Kuwaiti citizens and media professionals eagerly awaiting this significant event, hopes are high for strengthened cooperation and strategic relations between the two nations.

Leading Kuwaiti media figures have said that the visit is a milestone in the deep-rooted fraternal

ties between the two nations. They anticipate that this visit will not only bolster the existing bilateral relations but also pave the way for broader horizons of collaboration.

Mohammed Abdul Latif Al Bahar, Deputy Editor-in-Chief of Kuwait News Agency for Arab Publishing Affairs, emphasised the historic significance of His Majesty's visit, highlighting the enduring bond between the leaderships and peoples of Kuwait and Oman.

Al Bahar said that the unique depth of Kuwaiti-Omani relations is anchored in historic ties



Mohammed Abdul Latif Al Bahar

between the two leaderships and peoples. He pointed out the shared visions and common aspirations of both nations, stressing their mutual commitment to advancing relations towards new horizons.

He pointed to the landmark visit

of the Emir of Kuwait to Oman in February, which played a big role bolstering economic and investment ties, underscoring its role in enhancing the overall trajectory of bilateral relations.

Al Bahar underscored the alignment between Kuwait and Oman in their approach to media engagement, pointing to their shared commitment to professional responsibility and excellence.

He noted the credibility and respect accorded to the media of both countries by the public, reflecting a mutual dedication to upholding journalistic standards.

The senior Kuwaiti journalist believed that the visit will be significant in advancing bilateral progress at both official and grassroots levels, envisioning it as a milestone to be cherished in the national memory of both nations. **>A4**

GAZA DEATH TOLL

as of May 12, 2024



Deaths
35,034

Injured
78,755

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN National Award for Research announced

1 The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation on Sunday invited interested competitors to contest the 2024 National Award for Research. Applicants may contest this 11th edition of the award from 12 May 2024 until 11 July 2024, the Ministry said. The award seeks to encourage researchers to conduct high-standard research that deals with national priorities and publish them in specialised journals. **>A2**

OMAN Development Bank's lending grows by 4%

2 The Development Bank's lending portfolio posted a growth of 4 percent reaching OMR245.8 million in the first quarter of 2024 compared to the end of December 2023. Statistics issued by the bank indicated that the number of loans approved in the first quarter of 2024 amounted to 1,499, worth OMR33.6 million, an increase of 26 percent compared to the first quarter of 2023. 136 loans were approved in Muscat in the first quarter of 2024. **>A5**



WORLD Over 330 dead in Afghanistan floods

3 More than 330 died as rainstorms and flash floods hit major parts of the provinces of Baghlan, Takhar, Badakhshan and Ghor of Afghanistan, according to the Afghanistan office of the World Food Programme and local Afghan officials. The UN agency said on social media that more than 300 people died in northern Baghlan province alone, with more than 1,000 houses destroyed. **>A6**

AIRFARES SURGE

Airfares surge as Air India Express cancels flights

By Times News Services

MUSCAT: The cancellation of Air India Express flights has sent airfares between India and Oman skyrocketing, leaving travellers in dismay.

Despite efforts to resume normal operations after cabin crew-related issues on Friday, Air India Express flights remained disrupted, with services from Mumbai to Muscat and Kannur to Muscat cancelled on Sunday, according to a travel agent.

While the airline managed to operate its Muscat-Kochi and Trivandrum-Muscat flights, the news of cancellations prompted a surge in ticket prices among other airlines, according to travel agents.

"Ticket prices to Kannur, which typically ranged from OMR30 to OMR40, spiked to around OMR 160, marking a staggering 400 percent increase," revealed a prominent travel agent based in Ruwi.

Go First cease operations

With Go First ceasing operations on the Muscat-Kannur route, travellers now rely on airlines operating from Calicut, a significant distance (around 100km) away, further exacerbating the situation.

The impact extended beyond South India, with airfares from Mumbai to Muscat witnessing a drastic surge. A two-hour flight that typically cost around OMR150 soared to unprecedented levels on Monday and Tuesday.



However, there may be a glimmer of hope for travellers, as starting May 24, one-way tickets from Mumbai to Muscat are expected to be priced below OMR 50.

Residents expressed frustration over the escalating prices, with some condemning airlines

for exploiting the situation. "This is completely illegal," said Suresh Babu, a resident of Muttrah.

For others, the urgency to return to Oman due to impending visa expiration added financial strain. "I paid around OMR200 for a one-way ticket," lamented an

expatriate, highlighting the challenges faced by travellers amidst the flight disruptions.

As travellers grapple with soaring fares and uncertain flight schedules, there is a need for regulated pricing and proper scheduling in the India-Oman sector, an issue that remains a matter of concern for expatriates in Oman.

A large number of cabin crew at Air India Express called in sick last week, forcing the budget carrier to cancel 85 flights since Tuesday evening and disrupting the travel plans of thousands of passengers. Air India Express operates more than 2,500 flights each week, servicing 45 domestic and international airports including Muscat.



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Dhuhr.....	12:08pm
Asr.....	3:31pm
Maghrib.....	6:46pm
Isha.....	8:04pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....	4:02am



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MEETING

DISCUSSION

State Council Chairman meets Arab Parliament delegation

MUSCAT: Sheikh Abdulmalik Abdullah Al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council, affirmed the keenness of the Sultanate of Oman in actively participating in deliberations and activities of the Arab Parliament through its different committees.

This was stated when Al Khalili received on Sunday Adel Abdul-Rahman Al Asoomi, Speaker of the Arab Parliament and his accompanying delegation.

The Chairman of the State Council, commended the important roles undertaken by the Arab Parliament in promoting the joint Arab action and its contributions to international parliamentary forums.

He wished the Arab Parliament success in its efforts to realise



more achievements in terms of strengthening Arab solidarity.

Al Khalili highlighted the existing cooperation between the Council of Oman and the Arab Parliament, which comes within the framework of strengthening joint Arab action.

For his part, the Speaker of the

Arab Parliament stressed the support and role of the Sultanate of Oman and its active participation in various parliamentary activities, in addition to the role of the State Council and its appreciated contribution to improving the performance of the Arab Parliament.

-ONA

Al Maawali lauds role of Arab Parliament on regional issues

MUSCAT: Khalid Hilal Al Maawali, Chairman of the Shura Council, on Sunday received Adel Abdulrahman Al Asoomi, Speaker of the Arab Parliament, who is currently on an official visit to the Sultanate of Oman.

During the meeting, Al Maawali stressed the importance of roles undertaken by the Arab Parliament in consolidating parliamentary diplomacy and supporting joint Arab action.

He commended the Parliament's support for Arab issues at regional and international parliamentary events.

He also stressed Oman's keenness to participate in the activities of the Arab Parliament. In this context, he said that the existing cooperation between the Council of Oman and the Arab Parliament stems from a desire to activate joint Arab action and the role of parliamentary diplomacy.

For his part, Al Asoomi expressed appreciation for Oman's balanced stands on Arab issues and its support for peaceful coexistence and its permanent stance in backing the Palestinian cause at regional and international meetings.



Al Asoomi valued Oman's active participation in the activities of the Arab Parliament. He underlined the high level of Shura Council's participation in improving the performance of the Arab Parliament.

Al Asoomi pointed out that Oman achieves the goals of parliamentary diplomacy through the active participation of the Council of Oman in different events of the Arab Parliament. In particular, he underlined the prominent contributions of the Shura Council in upgrading the performance of the Arab Parliament.

Al Asoomi noted that the Shura practice in Oman stems from the country's wise political policy that reflects positively locally and abroad. He affirmed that Shura practice in Oman proved to be a success, notably through progres-

sion in exercising powers.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed ways to develop cooperation between the Shura Council and the Arab Parliament in a way that serves the common interests and contributes to rapprochement in addressing issues on the agenda of regional and international parliamentary unions.

Al Asoomi and his delegation toured the sections of the Council of Oman. They took note of the modern techniques used in running the council's sessions, including the use of advanced digital apps to vote electronically on topics debated at the council.

They also took note of the architectural model of the Shura Council's structure, which is inspired by the Omani heritage. They also visited the library of the Council of Oman and were briefed about the library's role in

promoting legislative action and expanding general knowledge through its reference books, encyclopaedias and electronic content that also benefit researchers.

The meeting was attended from the Omani side by Said Hamad Al Saadi and Tahir Mabkhout Al Junaibi—the two deputies to the Shura Council Chairman, in addition to Sheikh Ahmed Mohammed Al Nadabi, Secretary-General of the Shura Council, and Sariya Khalfan Al Hadi, Member of the State Council, and other members of the Shura Council.

The meeting was also attended by Khadija Hajooobi, deputy head of the Arab's Parliament's Committee for Social, Educational and Cultural Affairs and Women's and Youth Affairs, in addition to members of the Arab Parliament: Shadya Khudhair Al Jamal and Ali Zaid Ahmed Shadli. -ONA

ENCOURAGE RESEARCHERS

Higher education ministry announces research award

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation on Sunday invited interested competitors to contest the 2024 National Award for Research. Applicants may contest this 11th edition of the award from Sunday (12 May 2024) until 11 July 2024, the Ministry explained.

The award seeks to encourage researchers to conduct high-standard scholarly research studies that deal with national priorities and publish them in specialized journals. The award lends support to scholars, researchers and innovators and motivate them to conduct sound research that provides practical solutions to national and global challenges.

The award also seeks to develop research talents, enhance awareness about the importance of scholarly research and support the publication of national research



papers in highly-rated scientific journals.

The National Award for Research falls in two categories: (1) The Best Published Research that is submitted by holders of the doc-

torate (PhD) in the medical field or its equivalent (senior consultants, specialists and other seniors); and (2) the Best Published Research submitted by junior researchers (who do not hold a PhD). -ONA



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CENTRAL BLOOD BANK



People urged to donate blood urgently in Oman

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Department of Blood Banks Services (DBBS) has urgently appealed to people with A(-ve) blood group to donate blood at the Central Blood Bank in Bausher.

DBBS said: "The Department Blood Banks Services would like to point out that the Central Blood Bank in Bausher is experiencing a significant decrease in blood group A-, so we urge blood donors to donate as soon as possible."

"The donation hours at the Central Blood Bank in Bausher are from Saturday to Thursday, from 8am to 8pm, and on Friday from 8am to 2pm. For inquiries or to book an appointment to donate, please contact WhatsApp at 94555648," DBBS added.

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COMMENTARY

Does a picture really say a thousand words?



SALEH AL-SHAIBANY

for my mobile phone and take a photo but I respected their privacy. But the ‘virtual photo’ has remained in my mind as I write these lines. Was that a picture that said a thousand words? It certainly was for me. Good pictures just land on your lap when you least expect them. They usually ‘reside’ deep in our minds and remain there for quite a long time.

The sad thing is that they cannot be hanged on the wall or propped up on our living room side table. However, they stir up emotions when they ‘crop’ up. I find the streets an ideal place for ‘outstanding pictures.’ They happen all the time but most of us look the other way when they come up. How many of us have noticed when a bird lands right on top of a stray dog on the side of a busy street? That kind of ‘picture’ lasts only a few seconds and then vanishes forever.



But what really are the reasons behind them? I cannot really figure out but I think emotions or some degree of mischiefs inspire them. But that is not the point. The subjects do not pause for the photo. It happened instantaneously and that make them memorable. They linger on in our minds longer than when we pick up the camera to capture them in our mobile phones.

But would exactly be an award winning ‘memory’ photo? I guess the one that stirs up deep emotions within yourself. Great photographers would tell you that their most prized pictures are planned carefully in every detail. They are ‘manufactured’ all the way from the scenario to production. But the pictures in our minds just land in front of us unexpectedly. It is about every day moments but sadly, we miss them all the time because of our very busy schedules. It is either that or we are not looking at the right direction.

But if we are determined, can we really find one? I am not sure but I guess it is all about our mental status. Stress cloud up our visions and our eyes do not ‘see’ much when we walk out of our houses. The best way to catch a picture worth a thousand words is to be observant when we venture out. This is the only way it happens.

EDUCATIONAL COOPERATION

Dr. Madiha meets head of ABA Oman International School

Times News Service



MEETING: Dr. Madiha bint Ahmed Al Shaibaniya, Minister of Education, with Craig Williamson, Head of ABA Oman International School.

MUSCAT: Dr. Madiha bint Ahmed Al Shaibaniya, Minister of Education, received Craig Williamson, Head of the ABA Oman International School, and his accompanying delegation, in the presence of a number of ministry officials, in her office on Sunday.

The meeting comes with the aim of discussing ways to enhance joint educational cooperation and took place at the Ministry's General Diwan.

At the beginning of the meeting, the Minister of Education welcomed the head of the school, praising the good efforts made by the school in providing educational service to students, and striving to improve its educational work in order to achieve the desired educational goals.

During the meeting, a number

of educational topics related to granting professional licences to teachers, the equivalency of the international diploma certificate, and other topics related to the educational process were also discussed. The minister stressed the importance of the school to propose educational programmes and initiatives for raising the achievement level of the students.



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Oman, Kuwait to further enhance economic and cultural partnership

Both the countries are currently working on implementing joint economic projects, anticipating the visit by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the State of Kuwait on Monday

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman and Kuwait are linked by strong bonds, and their relations are based on strong foundations of understanding, mutual respect, and sincere cooperation.

Both the countries are currently working on implementing joint economic projects, anticipating the visit by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the State of Kuwait on Monday.

His Majesty the Sultan's visit may witness the signing of a number of memorandums of understanding and executive programmes in the economic, cultural and artistic fields.

There has been an increase in the volume of trade exchange between the two countries and the volume of direct Kuwaiti investment in Oman is concentrated in manufacturing industries, real estate activities, hotels, trade, and financial intermediation.

The number of Kuwaiti visitors to the Sultanate of Oman increased from 32,000 tourists in 2022 to 40,000 in 2023, noting that the Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman in Kuwait has coordinated with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and the Municipality of Dhofar to implement a promotional campaign for tourism in the Sultanate of Oman this May, which will continue for several days. The aim is to increase the number of visitors from the citizens of Kuwait.

Dr. Saleh bin Amer Al Kharousi, the Sultanate's ambassador accredited to Kuwait, noted that there is ongoing cultural and artistic cooperation and exchange between the two countries, and activities are being coordinated in partnership with competent authorities, including the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, and the National Museum



in the Sultanate of Oman with the National Council for Culture and Arts. Arts and the House of Islamic Antiquities in Kuwait.

Dr. Mohammed Nasser Madhi, ambassador of Kuwait accredited to the Sultanate, the Ambassador of the State of Kuwait accredited to the Sultanate of Oman, said that His Majesty's visit will strengthen the bonds of the distinguished relationship between the leaderships of the two countries and the brotherly people.

The visit to Kuwait is historic due to the ancient and deep-rooted relations enjoyed by the State of Kuwait and the Sultanate of Oman, and will culminate in co-operation at the political level in many regional and international fields and is characterised by vision and coordination, he said.

On the cultural level, he pointed out that Kuwaiti students are present in the universities of the Sultanate of Oman, and in return there are Omani students in the universities of the State of Kuwait in various specialisations.

Statistics issued by the National Center for Statistics and Information indicate a significant increase in the volume of trade exchange between the Sultanate of Oman and the State of Kuwait, recording an increase of 211 percent, reaching by the end of 2023 about OMR876.72 million, compared to the year 2022, which amounted to OMR281.85 million.

The volume of direct investments from the State of Kuwait in the Sultanate of Oman amounted to OMR830.90 million until the end of the fourth quarter of 2023 while the value of Omani

exports to the State of Kuwait for the year 2023 amounted to OMR133.38 million, an increase of 24.2% percent compared to the year 2022, amounting to OMR107.41 million.

While the total value of the Sultanate of Oman's imports from the State of Kuwait during the past year was about OMR669.445 million compared to OMR131.21 million during the year 2022, meaning an increase of 410 percent.

The number of Kuwaiti companies registered in the Sultanate of Oman by the end of 2023 amounted to about 301 with a total invested capital exceeding OMR84.4 million, concentrated in the sectors of manufacturing, transportation, storage, real estate, financial, insurance, professional, scientific, technical, services, and other activities.

OMAN-KUWAIT TIES

<FROM A1 Deep-rooted fraternal relations

Dr. Noura Abdullah, a prominent Kuwaiti media personality, echoed these sentiments, expressing pride in the robust political and social ties between the two countries, which she views as a beacon of cooperation.

Kuwaiti journalist Hani Al Awad stressed the economic dimension of the visit, pointing to existing investments such as the Duqm Refinery in Oman, and anticipating further strides in economic cooperation.

"The visit of His Majesty the Sultan to Kuwait is not just a diplomatic formality; it is a testament to the deep-rooted fraternal relations between our two nations," said



wait, with the capital adorned with flags of the Sultanate of Oman in a display of warmth and fraternity.

Kuwaiti citizens are eagerly anticipating the outcomes of this visit, hoping for concrete steps towards enhancing cooperation in various fields, including trade, investment, and cultural exchange.

The forthcoming visit is expected to address a range of important issues and foster deeper understanding and collaboration between Kuwait and Oman, underscoring the enduring bond built on mutual respect and shared interests and also contribute to the broader stability and prosperity of the Gulf region.

TWO-DAY COURSE

Ministry of Education conducts training programme for staff

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Education, represented by the Directorate-General of Administrative Affairs (Office of Individual Performance System), implemented on Sunday morning a training programme titled 'Performance Management According to the Proficiency System for Measuring Individual Performance.'

The two-day programme targets 60 employees of the Directorate-General of Administrative and Financial Affairs and took place at Muscat Hall in the Ministry's General Diwan.

The training programme is presented by a number of trainers from the Office of the Individual Performance System and the Specialised Institute for Professional Training of Teachers.

The programme includes an introduction to performance measurement and the OKRs methodology, its implementing the strategy, the sources of the basic employee plan, its elements, classifications, standards for its formulation, the main results and its characteristics. It also includes types of indicators, the conditions that must be considered when choosing the indicator, and practical steps to help determine the indicator.

The programme also includes the final (annual) evaluation and its controls, the steps for approving its results, the definition of feedback, its stages, the possibilities for its success, and strategies for providing it, addressing and



developing performance.

The programme also includes dividing the results, steps to address low performance, analysing it using a radical analysis method, proposed solutions in the event that the development plan is not successful, Ejada kit tools, and visual displays for the stage of evaluating the role of the direct official and the employee.

The programme aims to improve the formulation of goals and main results in the individual plan, improve the selection of weights, indicators, and logical targets to measure goals and main results, identify the roles of the direct official, and calculate the result of the actual performance evaluation at the end of each (semi-annual) evaluation cycle.



Development Bank’s loan portfolio tops OMR245mn

Statistics issued by the bank indicated that the number of loans approved by the bank in the first quarter of 2024 amounted to OMR33.6 million



MUSCAT: The Development Bank’s lending portfolio posted a growth of 4 percent reaching OMR245.8 million in the first quarter of 2024 compared to the end of December 2023.

Statistics issued by the bank indicated that the number of loans approved by the bank in the first quarter of 2024 amounted to

1,499, worth OMR33.6 million, an increase of 26 percent compared to the first quarter of 2023.

Statistics showed that loan approvals during the first quarter of 2024 were 136 loans in Muscat Governorate, with a value amounting to OMR11.1 million, 182 loans worth OMR3 million in

Dhofar Governorate.

The Development Bank’s loan approvals in Governorate of North Al Batinah was 215 loans worth OMR3.5 million, in the South Al Batinah Governorate, 136 loans worth OMR3.5 million, 127 loans worth OMR1.1 million in Al Dhahirah Governorate, 58

loans worth OMR1.5 million in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate.

The bank further extended 93 loans worth OMR2 million in Al Wusta Governorate, 82 loans worth OMR700,000 in Musandam Governorate, 44 loans worth OMR600,000 in Al Buraimi Governorate, 88 loans worth OMR1.2 million in the North A’Sharqiyah Governorate and 338 loans worth OMR5.4 million in the Governorate of South Al Sharqiyah.

The number of loans in the agriculture and livestock sector reached 245 loans, worth OMR4.1 million whereas in the fisheries sector received 600 loans worth OMR6 million.

In the industrial sector, 292 loans worth OMR12.3 million were approved while in the mining sector, three loans worth OMR200,000 were granted.

Other loans were distributed among the educational, health, tourism, professional and public services sectors, with a total of 359 loans worth OMR11 million.

- ONA

SECOND MEETING

Supreme Judiciary Council discusses strategic plan



MUSCAT: The Supreme Judiciary Council on Sunday held its second meeting for 2024 under the chairmanship of Sayyid Mohammed Sultan Al Busaidi, Deputy Chairman of the council.

The meeting discussed the efforts exerted towards the success of preparing the long term strategic plan 2024-2040 for

the Supreme Judiciary Council and the first operational plan 2024-2030.

The meeting also discussed several topics on the agenda, including matters related to judicial work in courts and proposals of laws and regulations of relation to the council’s purviews, among other topics. -ONA

DAYMANIYAT NATURE RESERVE

Environment Authority completes final phase of the coral reef rehabilitation project



MUSCAT: The Environment Authority (EA) has implemented the final phase of the coral reef rehabilitation project in the Daymaniyat Nature Reserve.

On Sunday, the Environment Authority, in cooperation with the Ministry of Defence, implemented a project to dump out-of-service military equipment in the marine environment (an underwater museum) to create a suitable environment for the growth of coral reefs and the proliferation of marine organisms around it, in the Daymaniyat Natural Reserve off the coast of the Wilayats of Seeb and Barka.

The project aims to rehabilitate and increase the areas of coral reefs, compensate for the loss due to natural and human influences, and create a new ecosystem comparable to natural coral reefs. The site is expected to attract many marine creatures of various sizes, and there is an innovative idea to create an underwater military equipment museum.

The project also comes to support eco-tourism by creating a distinctive and innovative tourist attraction for tourists and diving enthusiasts that supports the tourism movement in the Sul-

tanate of Oman in general, and reduces visitor pressure on the natural coral reef sites in the Daymaniyat Nature Reserve.

It is noteworthy that coordination was made with the Ministry of Defence and the EA was provided with 8 equipment (7 Man Atlas trucks and a Skyven aircraft). A site was chosen near the island of the Daymaniyat Natural Reserve due to the suitability of the site in terms of the presence of natural coral reefs at an appropriate distance that may help in the rapid growth and presence of coral reefs and marine organisms at the project site.

FROM MAHARASHTRA

Indian social workers visit Oman

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Renowned Indian social activists, Dr. Prakash Baba Amte and Dr. Mandakini Amte, recently visited Oman, engaging in impactful discussions with the Indian community.

Hailing from Maharashtra, India, the couple’s trip to Salalah and Muscat was organised by expatriates from the Vidarbha region, honouring their extraordinary contributions to social welfare and community service.

Dr. Prakash Baba Amte is the recipient of the prestigious Padma Shri award, the fourth highest civilian honour in India. Along with his wife, Dr. Mandakini Amte, the pair was jointly conferred the prestigious Ramon Magsaysay Award in 2008.

The accolade recognised their collaborative efforts through the Lok Biradari Prakalp, a transformative initiative benefiting the Madia Gonds in Maharashtra, Telangana, and Madhya Pradesh.



Dr. Prakash’s visionary leadership, complemented by Dr. Mandakini’s unwavering support, has touched countless lives, earning global acclaim for their compassionate endeavours.

During their stay in Oman, the Amte couple engaged in thought-provoking discussions with the Indian community, inspiring dialogue on philanthropy and collective action.

The legacy of Dr. Prakash Baba Amte’s father, the late Baba Amte, looms large, his pioneering work in social activism, particularly in

leprosy rehabilitation, serving as a guiding light for future generations. Their meeting with Indian Ambassador Amit Narang at the Indian Embassy underscored their commitment to fostering cross-cultural connections and collaborative partnerships.

As ambassadors of compassion and change, the Amte couple continues to champion the values of empathy and inclusivity, leaving an indelible mark on communities worldwide.

Among the other honours Dr. Prakash received are Lifetime Achievement Award from ICMR presented by Bill Gates in 2019, Mother Teresa Award for Social Justice (2014), and Godfrey Philips Lifetime Achievement Award (2009). The Principality of Monaco brought out a postage stamp in honour of the life and work of Dr. Prakash and Mandakini in 1995. And in 2010, the couple were honoured with the Sheikh Hamdan International Award for Volunteers in Humanitarian Medical Services.

Sultan Qaboos University

ANNOUNCEMENT

Sultan Qaboos University announces their desire to sell Expired devices and their in sealed envelopes. Those wishing to enter the auction must adhere to the following conditions:

- Interested parties can view used Expired devices in auction yard and receive the bidding on Tuesday and Wednesday)14-15/05/2024 (from 03:00 pm to 05:00 pm.
- Deposit of (200) Omani riyals in cash as an insurance. This amount will be refunded to the unsuccessful bidders.
- Submitting the offer in a sealed envelope after viewing the Expired devices, entitled by the name of the head of the committee for selling Expired devices, and put the envelope in bid box.
- The presented offer is binding on its owner if it is placed on it, and in the event that the buyer does not pay the purchase price on time, the insurance amount will be forfeited, and the sale will be awarded to another applicant.
- Those who win the bidding will be contacted. They must pay the remaining sum, and they are responsible for moving their items within 3 days from 09:00 am to 03:00 pm.
- The Expired devices are sold in their current condition and SQU is not responsible for any loss or damage to the sold material if the shifting is not completed until 20/05/2024 and it will be imposed (10) Omani riyals as a penalty for each day after 20/05/2024.

Notes:

- Prices are sorted according to groups and the higher price is taken.
- Funds will be collected electronically through visa cards.
- Entering the auction yard through Gate No (3).
- For more information, contact on 24146137 /95535599.

More than 330 dead in Afghanistan flash floods

Due to flooding, nearly 2,000 homes have been damaged, and widespread destruction has taken place in several provinces

KABUL: The death toll from flooding in Afghanistan has crossed 330, said the World Food Programme on Sunday, according to media report. Resulting in a massive humanitarian crisis, the floods have wreaked havoc in the Afghan provinces of Badakhshan, Ghor, Baghlan, and Herat. Due to flooding, nearly 2,000 homes have been damaged, and widespread destruction has taken place in the provinces. “Flash floods ravage Afghanistan, killing more than 300 people in Baghlan and destroying more than 1000 houses,” the WFP said in a post on X. “This has been one of many floods over the last few weeks, due to unusually heavy rainfall. WFP is now distributing fortified biscuits to the survivors,” it added. Following the deadly floods in four districts of Baghlan, at least 130 people have died, and approximately 100 others have been injured.



Moreover, local officials in Baghlan Province stated that the death toll may rise even further. According to officials, more than a thousand residential homes, thousands of hectares of agricultural land, and hundreds of heads of livestock have also been lost in the floods, reported CNN.

the International Rescue Committee (IRC), which is organizing its emergency response to the flooding that affects seven provinces. Salma Ben Aissa, director of IRC Afghanistan, stated, “These latest floods have caused a major humanitarian emergency in Afghanistan, which is still reeling from a string of earthquakes at the beginning of this year as well as severe flooding in March,” according to CNN. “Livelihoods have been decimated and entire families have been lost in communities,” she said. Earlier this month, heavy downpours, followed by floods, claimed the lives of at least 14 people and has also resulted in widespread destruction across the nation. Last month, nine people were killed after their houses collapsed due to heavy rainfall and flooding in the Greshk and Kajaki districts of Afghanistan’s Helmand province. — ANI

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Nepal’s Sherpa climbs Everest for 29th time

KATHMANDU: Nepal’s Kami Rita Sherpa also known as ‘Everest Man’ on Sunday morning broke his record by climbing the world’s highest peak, Mount Everest for the 29th time. The 54-year-old Sherpa climber and guide in the last spring season had climbed the 8848.86 meters tall highest peak two times within a week setting a record for the 28th summit. But the climber has hinted at his plans to climb the peak twice this time again. Before the summit, Kami Rita had stated that he “has no plan of climbing Sagarmatha (Nepalese name for Mount Everest) for any specified number of times.” As per the officials from the Department of Tourism, the record-setting climber reached the summit of Everest at 7:25 AM (NST) on Sunday while guiding an expedition organised by the ‘Seven Summit Treks’. “Congratulations to Kami Rita Sherpa @kamiritasherpa a senior guide at Seven Summit Treks for the 29th successful ascent of Mt Everest this morning at 7:25 AM, 12 May 2024. This ascent earns Kami Rita the title of ‘Most Successful Ascent of Mt. Everest by an Individual,’” the Seven Summit Treks shared in an Instagram post on Sunday morning breaking the news about the successful summit. Sherpa at the end of May had begun his expedition from Kathmandu accompanying a mountaineering expedition team comprising about 28 climbers. Kami Rita has been climbing Sagarmatha as a guide for the climbers. Kami Rita is a record-setter climber for the highest number of ascents on the world’s tallest peak in the 71-year-long history of Sagarmatha climbing. Pasang Dawa Sherpa, also from Solukhumbu, climbed Sagarmatha for the 27th time last year. But, it is not confirmed whether he will be climbing Sagarmatha this time. He has scaled the 8,849-meter (29,032-foot) peak almost every year since his first successful ascent in 1994, according to the Guinness Book of World Records. “Guess who’s back, back again for the 29th summit to the top of the world... One man’s job, another man/woman’s dream,” Sherpa wrote on Instagram from the Everest base camp last week. Kami Rita has said in past media interviews that he never set out to break records and that he’s been “just working” all these years. Last year, he climbed Everest twice, reclaiming his record after another Sherpa guide, Pasang Dawa, matched his number of ascents. The Sherpas’ mountaineering expertise and local knowledge is vital for the safe passage of the hundreds of climbers who ascend Everest every year. — Agencies

CHINA LAUNCHES NEW SATELLITE INTO SPACE

China on Sunday launched a Long March-4C rocket, placing a satellite in space. The rocket blasted off at 7:43 a.m. (Beijing Time) from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in northwest China and sent the satellite Shiyan-23 into preset orbit. The satellite will mainly be used for space environment monitoring. It was the 522nd flight mission of the Long March series rockets.. — ONA

INDIA LOK SABHA ELECTIONS

Phase 4 campaigning ends, 96 constituencies to witness polling today

NEW DELHI: The campaigning for Phase 4 of Lok Sabha elections which will see voting on 96 constituencies, ended on Saturday. A total of 1,717 candidates from 10 States/UTs will contest elections in this phase. The Election Commission of India informed that a total of 4,264 nominations were filed for 96 parliamentary constituencies across. The poll body further stated that the maximum number of nomination forms were received from Telangana (1488) followed by Andhra Pradesh with 1103 nominations from 25 constituencies. ECI further mentioned that the average number of contesting candidates in a parliamentary constituency for the fourth phase is 18. The last date for filing nominations for phase 4 for all 10 States/UTs was April 25, 2024.

Key constituencies Baharampur The Congress, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and the Trinamool Congress (TMC) are the main parties that are in a fierce contest in Baharampur. Yusuf Pathan will contest against Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, president of the West Bengal unit of Congress, and the BJP’s candidate, Dr Nirmal Kumar Saha. West Bengal Congress President Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury is the current sitting Member of Parliament from Baharampur. Chowdhury has been a strong and influential leader in Baharampur, having secured victory for the



Congress party in three consecutive terms from 2009 to 2019. **Hyderabad** Hyderabad is bracing itself for the big showdown between Bharatiya Janata Party candidate Madhavi Latha and sitting All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen MP Asaduddin Owaisi for the Lok Sabha election. AIMIM chief is popular in the constituency and has been campaigning from door-to-door, seeking a fifth term in the constituency. He has also raised the issue of political representation and minority rights. In the 2019 Lok Sabha Elections, Asaduddin Owaisi from AIMIM won the seat with a margin of 282,186 votes. Asaduddin Owaisi polled 517,471 votes with a vote share of 58.9 per cent and defeated Dr. Bhagavanth Rao from the BJP, who got 235,285 votes (26.80 per cent). **Krishnanagar** Trinamool Congress’ (TMC) leader Mahua Moitra will face the BJP’s Amrita Roy. n the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, TMC’s Mahua Moitra won the seat with 614,872 votes, defeating BJP leader Kalyan Chaubey who secured 551,654 votes. CPI(M)s Dr Shantanu Jha received 120,222 votes. Mahua Moitra was recently expelled from the Lok Sabha. **Begusarai** BJP leader Giriraj Singh is pitted against CPI candidate Awadhesh Rai in the Lok Sabha polls. In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP’s Giriraj Singh defeated Kanhaiya Kumar who contested on a CPI ticket. Singh got 692,193 votes with 56.48 per cent, while

Kumar got 269,976 votes with 22.03 per cent votes. **Munger** Janata Dal (United) leader Rajiv Ranjan Singh (Lalan Singh) will face RJD leader Anita Devi. In the 2019 elections, Lalan Singh of JD (U) emerged victorious in Munger with a margin of over 1.67 lakh votes, defeating RJD’s Neelam Devi, who is the wife of Anant Singh. **Srinagar** National Conference has fielded Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi, who will face PDP’s Waheed Parra from this seat. Apni Party has fielded Mohammad Ashraf Mir. The seat is currently held by National Conference chief Farooq Abdullah. **Asansol** The ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) in West Bengal has chosen to wield the star power of Shatrughan Sinha against Bharatiya Janata Party’s (BJP) Surinderjeet Singh Ahluwalia from Asansol which will go to polls on Monday. The Bihari Babu of the Indian film industry, Shatrughan Sinha joined TMC in 2022 after a brief stint in the Congress. Sinha quit the BJP in 2019 claiming that the party has become a “one-man show”. In the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, Babul Supriyo, a popular singer, who was then with the BJP, won the Asansol Lok Sabha seat. However, the seat fell vacant when Supriyo joined the TMC. Sinha, who was fielded by the TMC in the by-polls, won the election, winning 56.62 per cent of the polls.

Kannauj Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav will face incumbent MP and BJP leader Subrat Pathak. Akhilesh Yadav served as Lok Sabha MP from 2000-2012. He resigned from the Kannauj parliamentary seat in 2012 after he became the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh. **Kadapa** Andhra Pradesh Congress chief YS Sharmila will face sitting MP Avinash Reddy. Sharmila is the cousin of two time sitting MP Avinash Reddy. **Khunti** One of the most high-profile constituencies in Jharkhand, and a BJP’s stronghold too, will witness a contest between the BJP’s Arjun Munda and the Congress’ Kali Charan Munda as its candidate. Arjun Munda is the sitting MP from this seat. Andhra Pradesh will witness polling for the 25 Lok Sabha constituencies and 175 assembly seats simultaneously on May 13. The ruling YSR Congress Party, National Democratic Alliance (NDA), and Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) bloc will be in a triangular contest in the polls. In Andhra Pradesh, NDA comprises the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu’s Telugu Desam Party (TDP), and Pawan Kalyan’s Jana Sena Party. The TDP will contest 17 seats in the state. While the BJP will contest 6 constituencies, the JSP will

contest two seats, as per the seat-sharing arrangement for the Lok Sabha polls. In the previous general elections, the YSRCP bagged 22 out of 25 seats in the state and the TDP was reduced to only 3 seats. Congress and the BJP failed to win any seats in the southern state. As part of a seat-sharing deal reached between the NDA partners, the TDP will contest 144 Assembly and 17 Lok Sabha constituencies in Andhra, while the BJP will put up candidates in 6 Lok Sabha and 10 Assembly constituencies. The Jana Sena will contest two Lok Sabha and 21 Assembly seats. On preparations for the polling in Telangana, Chief Electoral Officer Vikas Raj said, “The silence period has started in 13 segments, where the polling will be held on May 13, from 7 am to 4 pm. We are ready. Our distribution centres will start sending the material and polling personnel tomorrow morning. The police personnel have arrived. Our EVMs are ready. We are confident that we will be able to conduct free, fair and peaceful elections.” Voting for all 17 Lok Sabha seats in Telangana will take place in a single phase on May 13. In this phase, Prime Minister continued attacking opposition parties on the reservation issue, saying that INDIA bloc will snatch away rights of reservation rights of ST, SC and OBC community. — ANI

UN chief reiterates call for immediate ceasefire in Gaza

UN chief in a video address to an international donors' conference in Kuwait said that a ceasefire will only be the start. It will be a long road back from the devastation and trauma of this war

KUWAIT: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres urged today an immediate ceasefire that would end the Israeli aggression on Gaza and increase humanitarian aid to the besieged Palestinian territory.

"I repeat my call, the world's call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire," said the UN chief in a video address to an international donors' conference in Kuwait, calling for "an immediate surge in humanitarian aid."

"But a ceasefire will only be the start. It will be a long road back from the devastation and trauma of this war," he affirmed.

In addition, thousands are feared dead under the rubble as ambulance and rescue teams continue to face enormous chal-



Israeli occupation bombs various areas in Gaza Strip

The Israeli occupation's artillery and aircraft on Sunday bombed several areas in the Gaza Strip, murdering many Palestinians and injuring others.

Palestinian news agency (Wafa) said that the bodies of 12 murdered Palestinians reached Kamal Adwan Hospital, north the Gaza Strip, while dozens of Palestinians are still missing under the rubble as a result of the continuous Israeli raids in the city of Beit Lahiya, north of the Gaza Strip.

The occupation forces expanded their incursion east of the town and refugee camp of Jabalia, shooting at displaced shelter centers, Wafa added.

Medical sources reported that 18 murdered Palestinians, and six injured others arrived at the Kuwaiti Hospital in Rafah, south of the Gaza Strip, during the past 24 hours, as a result of continued bombing on various areas in Rafah.

Death toll in Gaza surpasses 35,034

The Palestinian death toll from Israel's deadly aggression against the Gaza Strip since October 7th, 2023, has now surged to 34,904, medical sources confirmed on Sunday.

Sources added that at least 78,755 others have also been injured in the onslaught.

At least 63 people were killed

and 114 others were injured in Israeli attacks that took place in the last 24 hours, they added.

The sources said that many victims are still trapped under rubble and on the roads as rescuers are still unable to reach them.

According to the same sources, the occupation forces killed 493 health personnel, arrested 310 others, while dozens are still missing.

They pointed out that the occupation troops completely destroyed the health system in the Gaza Strip, put 33 hospitals and 55 health centers out of service, and targeted 130 ambulances since the start of the aggression.

Earlier this morning, Israeli occupation forces demolished the house of a Palestinian political prisoner in the town of Beit Ummar, north of Hebron in the south of the occupied West Bank, according to local sources.

Mohammed Awad, a local activist, reported that Israeli forces demolished the house of Nadeem Sabarneh—a Palestinian prisoner in Israeli jails—in the town of Beit Ummar, citing unpermitted construction as a pretext for the demolition.

The building, which housed six individuals, consisted of one floor with an area of 150 square meters. The demolition was carried out under the pretext of lacking an Israeli construction permit.

The prisoner, Awad, is currently detained in Israeli jails without charges or trial under Israel's so-called administrative detention procedure. He has previously spent more than 10 years in Israeli occupation prisons. — Agencies

Thousands protest 'foreign agent' bill in Tbilisi

TBILISI: Thousands of people took to the streets of Georgia's capital, Tbilisi, to protest a "foreign agent" bill critics argue will undermine the country's civil society.

The Reuters news agency cited witnesses as saying that around 50,000 protesters took part in the march. Red and white Georgian flags could be seen waving alongside the blue and yellow flags of the EU.

The bill, which passed its second reading in parliament this month, has been called "the Russian law" by critics who liken it to legislation adopted by Moscow in 2012 and then tightened in 2022 following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

If adopted, the law would require any NGO or media organisation receiving more than 20% of its funding from abroad to register as an "organisation pursuing the interests of a foreign power."

Large rallies held

Several large rallies have been held over the bill over the past month. The ruling Georgian Dream party had dropped the bill last year following substantial backlash, but revived it earlier this year.

On April 30, Georgian police broke up a demonstration using tear gas, water cannons and rubber bullets and making dozens of arrests. The European Union, the United States and the United Nations have voiced opposition to the bill. The EU has warned that the proposed law could threaten Georgia's chances of joining the bloc.

"Misled" youth

Saturday's rally comes a day after Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze said the government would go ahead with the proposal despite objections from what he described as "misled" youth.

Kobakhidze and his Georgian Dream have argued that the bill will increase transparency over the foreign funding of NGOs.

Last month, Georgian Dream honorary chairman and former Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili made a speech condemning NGOs, calling them a "pseudo-elite nurtured by a foreign country." He also blamed Western countries for Moscow's 2008 invasion of Georgia and the war in Ukraine.

Ruling party

The ruling party has been accused of trying to steer the country closer to Russia following years of nurturing relations with the West.

Georgian Dream has said that it plans to sign the bill into law by mid-May. The former Soviet country is set to hold parliamentary elections in October.

— DW

WEST SUMATRA PROVINCE

28 killed in flash floods, cold lava flow in Indonesia



JAKARTA: At least 28 people, including children, have died after flash floods and cold lava flow from a volcano hit western Indonesia, according to media report, citing rescue officials.

Basarnas Search and Rescue Agency said in a statement on Sunday, mentioning that the disaster hit Agam and Tanah Datar districts in the West Sumatra province at about 10:30 pm (15:30 GMT) on Saturday after hours of heavy rain, triggering a flash flood and a cold lava flow from Mount Merapi.

Cold lava, also known as lahar, is volcanic material like ash, sand and pebbles carried down a volcano's slopes by rain.

Moreover, photos and videos posted on social media showed

large rocks and thick mud covering the streets of West Sumatra, as reported by Al Jazeera.

The disaster comes just two months after another deadly flooding hit the same island.

Following the floods, the authorities dispatched a team of rescuers and rubber boats to look for the missing victims and to transport people to shelters.

Evacuation centres

Meanwhile, the local government set up evacuation centres and emergency posts in several spots in the two districts to extend help, as reported by Al Jazeera.

Notably, Indonesia is prone to landslides and floods during the rainy season.

Last week, 15 people were killed

in South Sulawesi after landslides and flooding swept away homes and damaged roads in the region.

Earlier in March, at least 26 people were found dead after landslides and floods hit West Sumatra.

However, the floods in floods in Agam and Tanah Datar also carried cold lava down from Mount Merapi, the most active volcano in Sumatra and one of nearly 130 active volcanoes in the Indonesian archipelago.

Moreover, in December last year, Marapi erupted and spewed an ash tower 3,000 metres (9,800 feet) into the sky, higher than the volcano itself, reported Al Jazeera. At least 24 climbers, including university students, died in the eruption. — ANI

FEDERAL MINISTRY FOR HOUSING, URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND BUILDING

How German government plans to end homelessness

BERLIN: For two decades, Dirk Dymarski was homeless, living partly in emergency homeless shelters, and partly on the streets. It was, he says, "not something you can just shake off." But it also changed the way he thought.

"Being homeless for 20 years was a lesson for me in every way because I used to think and act in a discriminatory, stigmatising way myself," he told DW. "But in the last few years, I realised that anyone can get into that situation, and it is difficult to get out of it."

Dymarski is now part of the Freistätter Online Zeitung, a local newspaper written by homeless people in the small town Freistatt, Lower Saxony, and a member of Selbstvertretung Wohnungsloser Menschen ("Self-Representation for Homeless People"), an organisation aimed at giving the homeless a political voice in Germany.

The biggest obstacle for homeless people trying to find a home, he says, is the stigma. "If you want to get out of homelessness and find an affordable place to live, the first question you get asked is: Where do you live at the moment? And if you tell a potential landlord you live in a shelter, you'll fall through the cracks pretty quickly."

Homelessness has risen over the last few years, thanks to an ongoing lack of affordable housing. Though exact figures are difficult to ascertain, the German government estimates that there are around 375,000 homeless people in the country, while the

Federal Working Group on Assistance for the Homeless (BAG-W) puts the number at 600,000, some 50,000 of whom live on the streets. Those figures include anyone who doesn't have a rental contract or their own home. German authorities are obliged to provide emergency shelters for people living on the streets, but many opt to stay outside because such shelters often cannot guarantee either privacy or safety.

To combat the problem, the German government released a "National Action Plan in late April to tackle what it calls the "mammoth task" of ending homelessness in the country by 2030 — the first time a German federal government has ever put together such a document."

The 31-point plan, published by the Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building, offers ideas like giving money to state governments to build social housing, combating discrimination on the housing market, helping people get access to health insurance, and making counseling services more accessible.

More affordable housing

"More affordable housing is at the heart of the fight against homelessness," Germany's Social Democrat Housing Minister Klara Geywitz said in a statement. "The existence of this nationwide guideline was an explicit wish of civil society, the many people who care for homeless people."



All of this sounds very good, according to the homeless charities and organisations who were consulted before the plan was formulated — but only as a start.

Dymarski and his colleagues praised how well-prepared and respectful Minister Geywitz was in their consultations, but he thinks that the resulting plan is too vague and undercooked.

So do other homeless organisations. "Action Plan" sounds like: 'Here we go, now we have a plan and now we'll put it into action.' But I wonder if it isn't really more of a position paper," said Corinna Müncho, director of the Housing First project in Berlin. "The people who have to actually implement the plan — the state and local authorities — still don't know how they're supposed to do it."

The Housing First initiative helps homeless people find their

own homes — unconditionally because the project starts from the principle that having your own place to live is simply a right. Müncho has seen what living on the streets does to people.

"One of our clients once told me that living on the streets is like being at war," she told DW. "Every day you're in fight mode or in survival mode. People are completely without protection, constantly vigilant, have no private space, no room where they have any intimacy — everything you might have as a primary need is not covered. That does something to your psyche. Your brain actually reconstructs itself in order to cope with it."

The government's action plan is something that charities have been calling for for a long time, said Lars Schäfer, spokesperson for helping the homeless at the Protestant Church's Diakonie charity. "The

fact that politicians are even addressing this issue is positive," he told DW. "This means that we can keep reminding the government what targets it has formulated."

But he also says that the plan's 31 points are no more than "a collection of measures already agreed on earlier by the government, and a few new ones that neither involve major changes in the law or cost money — and those are the two most important levers."

A case in point would be point number one: A commitment of €18.15 billion (\$19.45 billion) that the federal government is to give the federal states to build social housing for the period 2022 to 2027. Rent-controlled apartments are desperately needed, but this fund was already announced two years ago — and the government was forced to admit last year that only 22,545 new units were made

available in 2022, a long way behind its target of 100,000 per year.

"That makes me think: Sure, you can write that in there, but it doesn't help because in the end all that is being done isn't leading to the homelessness figures going down," said Müncho.

Schäfer thinks there are concrete measures that governments could take, but which the Action Plan shies away from: For example, the prejudices of landlords could be circumnavigated if local authorities established quotas for homeless people in the new social housing. Similarly, the federal government could stipulate that a certain proportion of the money handed over to states to build social housing could be used to house the homeless.

It isn't just a matter of spending more money, says Müncho — it's about better allocation. "The money is there — emergency accommodation costs an incredible amount of money for very, very poor standards," she said. "We're talking about daily rates of €1,000 for one person per month in Berlin. No apartment should cost that much in Berlin. That doesn't even include any support services, nothing at all."

At the moment, charities say the situation on the housing market is so desperate that many people are stuck in mass shelters for years at a time. The government's new plan is an attempt to tackle that — but for the activists, it is little more than a statement of intent. — DW

SPORTS

CSK keep playoff hopes alive with five-wicket win over RR

Chennai Super Kings' bowlers executed their plans perfectly on a slow pitch to consign Rajasthan Royals to their third straight defeat

CHENNAI: Chennai Super Kings (CSK) signed off their home league campaign with an easy five-wicket win over Rajasthan Royals (RR) on Sunday, giving themselves a decent chance of coming back to Chennai for the last two playoff games. With this win, CSK are in the third spot with seven wins and six losses, giving them 14 points. RR are in second spot, with eight wins and four losses, giving them 18 points. Despite being asked to field in the afternoon heat 40 hours after finishing their last match in Ahmedabad, the CSK bowlers used a slow pitch expertly to keep Rajasthan Royals (RR) down to 141, which they chased down with relative ease. The slow pitch was right up the home bowlers' alley, and they kept Royals quiet in a wicketless powerplay after which Simarjeet Singh kept getting wickets every time



Royals tried to push back. Royals never really succeeded in mounting an attack, which CSK's New Zealand batters, Rachin Ravindra and Daryl Mitchell, successfully did to put their chase on course with a Shivam Dube putting them on top. The win took CSK up to 14

points from 13 matches, level with Sunrisers Hyderabad who have a game in hand, and two points clear of the nearest challengers outside the top four. Royals suffered their third straight defeat, which will be a cause for concern for them going into the playoffs, especially with

Jos Buttler not expected to be available for the final week. Royals' 42/0 was the slowest wicketless powerplay of IPL 2024, one run behind their 43/0 against Punjab Kings. Playing only his third match this year, Simarjeet dismissed Yashasvi Jaiswal and then in his next

over, got Buttler out. Sanju Samson just kept looking for singles while Riyan Parag tried the odd boundary as they were 89/2 in 14 overs. Simarjeet got another wicket, this time Samson. Deshpande and Thakur stuck to their plans in the death overs, and Royals never got the big

overs. Only Parag's 47 off 35 took them to 141. CSK's Ravindra flicked Sandeep Sharma for a six over midwicket in the second over, and went after compatriot Trent Boult in the third. Even though R Ashwin got Ravindra out in the fourth, Mitchell kept up the intent. Their 56/1 was their fourth-highest power-play of this IPL. In the middle overs, Royals clawed their way back. Yuzvendra Chahal got Mitchell, the spinners kept Moeen Ali and Ruturaj Gaikwad quiet, Moeen got out for 10 off 13, and 39 balls went without a boundary. Still it was 50 needed off seven overs. This was when Ashwin came on to bowl his last over with Dube on strike. Dube took the veteran spinner on for 6, 4, 4, with a leg-side wide in between, and while Ashwin came back with Dube's wicket, CSK needed 35 off the last six. Captain Gaikwad stayed true to his anchor role for this chase, and saw his team home despite Jadeja getting himself out obstructing the field. **Brief scores:** Chennai Super Kings 145/5 (Ruturaj Gaikwad 42*; R Ashwin 2-35) beat Rajasthan Royals 141/5 (Riyan Parag 47*, Simarjeet Singh 3-26; Tushar Deshpande 2-30). - Agencies

TODAY'S MATCH

Gujarat Titans vs Kolkata Knight Riders

Ahmedabad, 6pm

ONE OF THE GREATEST BOWLERS

England great Anderson to retire this summer

LONDON: England bowler James Anderson confirmed on Saturday that he will retire from Test cricket this summer. The 41-year-old, England's leading wicket-taker and one of the greatest bowlers of all time, said the first Test against West Indies at Lord's on 10 July will be his last. The decision comes after Anderson held talks with Test coach Brendon McCullum, who wants to build a bowling attack for the future. "I'm going to miss walking out for England so much," Anderson said in a statement. "But I know the time is right to step aside and let others realise their dreams just like I got to, because there is no greater feeling." Anderson made his debut in 2003 and has taken 700 wickets in 187 Tests - the most by any pace bowler in Test history. He is third on the all-time list of wicket-takers in Tests behind spinners Muttiah Muralitharan (800) of Sri Lanka and Australia's Shane Warne (708). Anderson was due to play two matches for Lancashire in June but it is now unclear whether he will play for his county again. "It has been an incredible 20 years representing my country, playing the game I've loved since



I was a kid," Anderson said. "I'm excited for the new challenges that lie ahead, as well as filling my days with even more golf. "Thank you to everyone who has supported me over the years, it's always meant a lot, even if my face often doesn't show it." Richard Thompson, the chair of the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), said English cricket owes Anderson a "send-off like no other". "I don't think we'll ever see a bowler to match Jimmy again," he said. "It has been an honour as an England fan to watch him, and he is a true inspiration and role model for peers and younger generations alike." - Agencies

IPL 2024

Kolkata seal spot in playoffs

KOLKATA: Kolkata Knight Riders' spin twins - Varun Chakravarty and Sunil Narine - stifled Mumbai Indians' chase to seal a playoffs berth for their side, with an almost-certain finish in the top two as well on Saturday. After Mumbai Indians (MI) were set 158 overs in 16 overs, Varun and Narine started a strangle that saw MI score just 22 runs in the five overs after the powerplay for two wickets that mounted the pressure on the visitors. Suryakumar Yadav and Tim David had no choice but to go after the quicks and fell to Andre Russell's variations that saw MI stumble to 92 for 5 and there was no coming back from there, barring a late cameo from Tilak Varma. He reduced the equation to 22 required from the six balls, but his wicket early in the last over eventually handed MI their ninth loss in 13 matches. After rain had delayed the start of the game by an hour and 45 minutes, the match was reduced to 16 overs a side. Even though KKR lost their openers early, Venkatesh Iyer and some lower-order hitting powered them to 157, which may have seemed short early on but proved to be enough. Rohit Sharma was struggling for runs and scored at under run a ball in the first six overs. So the onus of



hitting was on Ishan Kishan who flat-batted his way to 37 off 17 in the powerplay (which was five overs for this game). But Narine was ready with his riposte in his next over and had Kishan hole out for 40. Rohit's struggle ended on 19. Suryakumar Yadav and Tilak also hardly attacked the spinners and the equation soon became 77 required from 36. Russell then got the ball. His scrambled seam snared Suryakumar and the slower ball removed David. In between, Varun had Hardik Pandya caught for 2 to add to MI's woes.

The equations like 57 needed from 18 have become all the more achievable in this IPL, and Tilak kept MI's flame burning when he took on Harshit Rana in the 14th over for 16 runs by dispatching his slower ones to the ropes. No. 8 Naman Dhir took inspiration from Tilak to smash Russell for a couple of sixes and a four for a 19-run over that brought MI back in the game. With 22 needed from six, Dhir and Tilak fell in the first three deliveries of the last over, which sealed MI's fate. Earlier, KKR opener Phil Salt kicked off the innings with a first-

ball six against Nuwan Thushara but fell in the same over. From the other end, Bumrah showed some magic Narine had no answer for and was dismissed for first duck in this IPL. Venkatesh took charge of the innings. He went down the track, rocked back to pull the short balls, and used his reach to score 25 off 10 in the powerplay. It also included 14 off five balls against Bumrah. Piyush Chawla had Venkatesh hole out for 42 off 21. Out walked Russell and smoked Chawla over his head for a six and a four in his next two overs, along with a drill through the covers. Russell took KKR past 100. After being hit for another six in the 13th over, this time by Rinku Singh, Chawla had the last laugh as Russell skied a 117kph thunderbolt to deep midwicket. Thushara and Bumrah then sent down a flurry of yorkers in the last two overs and it was only because of a six each from Rinku and Ramandeep Singh that KKR crossed 150. **Brief scores:** Kolkata Knight Riders 157/7 (Venkatesh Iyer 42, Harshit Rana 33; Piyush Chawla 2-28, Jasprit Bumrah 2-39) beat Mumbai Indians 139/8 (Ishan Kishan 40, Tilak Varma 32; Varun Chakravarty 2-17, Andre Russell 2-34, Harshit Rana 2-34). - Agencies

FIA WORLD ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP

Ahmad Al Harthy positive despite retirement at Spa



MUSCAT: Despite a contact that badly damaged the car and forced an early retirement from FIA World Endurance Championship 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps on Saturday, Oman's LMGT3 class racer Ahmad Al Harthy remained positive after the disappointment. Carrying high hopes into race three of the 2024 season, after qualifying a season-best second on the LMGT3 grid in the No.46 BMW M4 GT3, the Omani stayed in the podium battle during the first hour of racing in Belgium on Saturday and looked well placed to challenge for a podium finish. Holding fourth position after the first round of pit-stops, Al Harthy settled into the race again ahead of stints for teammates Valentino Rossi and Maxime Martin. The Omani firmly stuck to the plan while also remaining competitive in the top four

of LMGT3. Roughly halfway through the second hour of action, though, he was powerless to prevent his retirement. As he approached Fagnes, Al Harthy's involvement in the encounter ended prematurely after the BMW was hit by the No.38 Team JOTA Porsche 963 Hypercar - a consequence of contact between the Porsche and another of the Hypercars. Al Harthy was devastated to post the entry's first non-finish of the FIA WEC season but remained positive having exceeded expectations in qualifying and knowing a strong result was all but assured. Despite this weekend's non-finish, the No.46 trio remain fourth in the LMGT3 points standings. The OQ, Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Omantel and BMW Oman supported Al Harthy and is now ready to hit

back strongly at the next event - the 24 Hours of Le Mans. Speaking after the retirement, Al Harthy said: "I'm obviously disappointed not to finish the race. We started the race in a strong position. We knew we had to save the tyres for the two hours during my stint. "We were holding our position in the top four or five, and that was a good place to be with our strategy for the remainder of the race. "We were running our own race and unfortunately, when I had about nine laps to go before the second pit-stop, two Hypercars made contact and that resulted in them ending our race - there was nothing I could do to avoid it. "This is racing, things like this happen, and with our experience we know how to get back and be stronger for the next round. "There were huge positives from this weekend, we out-performed

ourselves in qualifying which was great, and now we look forward to the next round at Le Mans. I also want to thank our sponsors from OQ and Oman's Ambassador to Belgium, Rua Issa Ashraf Alzadjali, for attending the race." The next race in the FIA World Endurance Championship of the 2024 calendar is the 24 Hours of Le Mans. The event will run from June 12-15. **FIA World Endurance Championship LMGT3 Driver Standings (after round three)"** 1. Aliaksander Malykhin / Joel Sturm / Klaus Bachler, 72pts 2. Augusto Farfus / Darren Leung / Sean Gelael, 37pts 3. Alex Riberas / Daniel Mancinelli / Ian James, 37pts 4. Ahmad Al Harthy / Maxime Martin / Valentino Rossi, 36pts 5. Clement Mateu / Erwan Bastard / Marco Sorenson, 30pts

COOPERATION AGREEMENTS

Intaj Sohar, affiliated to the Industrial Innovation Academy, signed cooperation agreements with Muna Noor Plastic Industries, Areej Vegetable Oils and Derivatives, Techno Plastic Industry, and National Aluminum Products Company.

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 4,778.53 points, up by 0.18 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.09 per cent at 450.48 points. Raysut Cement, up 2.54 per cent, was the top gainer while DIDIC, down 6.67 per cent, was the top loser.

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

Q1 2024

Our Values

Safety | ESG | Respect | Vision | Integrity | Caring | Empowerment

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I present the unaudited financial statements for Renaissance Services SAOG for the first quarter ended March 31, 2024.

The trajectory for the future remains promising, with the potential for substantial growth and value generation in the quarters ahead. While lower occupancy due to mobilisation delays across our accommodation facilities and the cost impact of the Holy month of Ramadan coincided to flatten growth, the quarter ended on an upswing which is expected to continue.

Financial Performance

RS Consolidated

	RO mn		USD mn	
	2024	2023	2024	2023
Revenue	25.72	26.82	66.81	69.66
EBITDA	5.41	5.81	14.05	15.09
Operating profit	3.35	3.84	8.70	9.97
Net profit after tax	1.86	2.82	4.83	7.32
Net profit after non-controlling interest	2.29	2.71	5.95	7.04

Performance

The contract services segment performed well with a consistent focus on improving efficiencies and operational excellence. We secured contract awards of c. RO 7mn through a mix of new business, contract extensions and variations. This includes waste management and FM services for an upcoming large public facility in Oman.

Significant growth opportunities in terms of public-private partnership (PPP) tenders submitted last year (in Oman and Saudi Arabia) are under review and remain on target for award decisions this year. We are also participating in large tenders in the oil and gas, and utilities sectors in Oman.

Though later than anticipated, Off Plot Delivery Contracts (ODC) contractors have begun mobilising in Q1 at the new expansion of Permanent Accommodation for Contractors (PACs) in PDO's oil and gas fields. This is expected to continue in Q2 2024, with anticipated benefits materialising as per plan.

As we move forward on Renaissance 2.0, our strategy is feeding into our commercial proposals, where the emphasis is on providing value-based solutions that align with customers' goals and priorities, rather than solely competing on price. In such a scenario, we will aim to win and retain contracts that best deliver on stakeholders' expectations.

We have always promoted the potential for cost savings and efficiencies of private sector outsourcing on a long-term Integrated Facilities Management (IFM) basis. This allows time and incentive for investment in technology, innovation and automation that ultimately deliver increased In-Country Value.

Renaissance Village Duqm

We have advised that the transition period between major projects in Duqm would continue into 2024. While RSVD is EBITDA-positive, it has a negative impact on PAT and PATMI. The visibility on new projects has started to build up, but we still await confirmed data on the quantum of demand for occupancy at Renaissance Village Duqm (RSVD). How quickly new projects mobilise during the course of 2024 shall determine how soon RSVD returns to profit.

However, despite the long gap between the demobilisation of large contractors and the commissioning of new projects and manpower mobilisation, the residual occupancy at RSVD provides a stable base ahead of the expected rebound in Duqm.

RSVD continues to progress on its journey of improving efficiencies through cost and process optimisation, and operational excellence initiatives such as an AI-powered solution to reduce food waste, IoT-driven measurement and control of energy costs, among others. A combination of proactive financial planning and a favourable room-

category mix also helped partially mitigate the impact of lower occupancy.

ESG

We are formalising the Board's oversight of ESG and sustainability responsibilities relevant to Renaissance's operations through the constitution of an ESG Committee. We believe that effective integration of ESG principles is an essential part of good management and best practices, and a vital tool in securing the company's longevity and relevance in a rapidly evolving marketplace.

Water conservation and sustainability are important for Renaissance, given the arid desert geography in which it primarily operates. We are pleased to report that the implementation of an IoT-based Smart Water Management System at RSVD and the ongoing installation of inverter ACs with optimised default temperature settings at PDO PACs are playing a major role in managing and controlling our energy and water consumption. This effort is also reducing our carbon footprint and conserving scarce resources.



Renaissance Village Fahud

At present, Renaissance is the first and only Omani company, to be a part of the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi), a global benchmark for corporate commitment to mitigating climate change.

CSR

We view Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as an opportunity to create positive change and empower local communities. CSR commitments for 2024 prioritise accessibility, inclusion, community development and capacity building, along with a keen focus on a greener living environment.

In particular, we would like to highlight the plan this year to improve accessibility for the physically disabled to a high-footfall public space. Another of our new CSR initiatives involves partnering with Oman Golf Association to encourage Omani women and girls to explore new opportunities in the sport. We believe that this initiative will help strengthen community bonds, and more importantly, create jobs in sports-allied sectors like hospitality, thereby contributing to long-term benefits to the nation.

We remain focused on capacity-building initiatives in Oman by collaborating with several leading civil society organisations to upskill our future leaders. This includes a partnership with Oman Sail to develop 900 young sailors from government schools and engage with up to 600 families through a community-development programme. The company remains committed to promoting a positive social impact, and we are confident that our CSR efforts this year will play an important role in achieving this goal.

Outlook

Amidst a turbulent world of live conflicts and the prospect of political change in some parts of the world, the outlook for the global economy remains confused and uncertain, typically affecting supply chains and causing fluctuations in market demand and investment decisions. While high material costs are likely to have an impact on



Renaissance partners with several leading civil-society organisations like Outward Bound Oman for capacity-building initiatives

our business, we continue to prove, as we did during COVID, that our service offerings are needed at all times, good or bad. We are confident that our future-focused strategy remains relevant and necessary for our customers and us.

Tribute

We express our thanks and support to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik. Under His Majesty's leadership and initiatives including Oman Vision 2040, the Sultanate is witnessing economic and structural reforms that enables us to look ahead to the future with optimism and confidence.

Samir J. Fancy
Chairman

UNAUDITED FINANCIAL RESULTS CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT MARCH 31, 2024		
	2024 RO '000	2023 RO '000
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	136,984	136,846
Intangible assets	1,925	1,928
Investments	6,227	5,946
Deferred tax asset	596	-
	<u>145,732</u>	<u>144,720</u>
Current assets	68,646	71,413
Current liabilities	51,153	49,822
Non-current liabilities		
Term loans excluding current maturities	53,099	62,063
Deferred tax liability	435	-
Other non current payables	10,874	10,367
	<u>64,408</u>	<u>72,430</u>
Net assets	98,817	93,881
Equity		
Share capital	23,641	23,641
Treasury shares	(6,853)	(6,853)
Share premium	26,936	26,936
Legal reserve	9,139	9,012
Other reserves	408	478
Retained earnings	25,007	19,398
	<u>78,279</u>	<u>72,612</u>
Non-controlling interest	20,538	21,269
Total equity	98,817	93,881

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS FOR THE THREE MONTHS ENDED MARCH 31, 2024		
	2024 RO '000	2023 RO '000
Revenue	25,722	26,824
Operating expenses	(22,371)	(22,988)
Profit from operations	3,351	3,836
Net finance costs	(1,038)	(995)
Profit before tax	2,314	2,841
Tax	(457)	(17)
Profit for the period	1,857	2,824
Net profit attributable to:		
Shareholders of the Parent Company	2,294	2,712
Non-controlling interest	(437)	112
	<u>1,857</u>	<u>2,824</u>

Notes
1) The complete accounts will be sent by mail to shareholders within 7 days of receipt of request.
2) The complete set of financial results can be accessed at www.renaissanceservices.com



Renaissance Village Duqm

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Raysut Cement, up 2.54 per cent, was the top gainer while DIDIC, down 6.67 per cent, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,778.53 points, up by 0.18 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.09 per cent at 450.48 points. Raysut Cement, up 2.54 per cent, was the top gainer while DIDIC, down 6.67 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of Sohar International Bank were the most active in terms of number of shares traded while Oman Telecom were the most active in terms of turnover.

A total number of 775 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of OMR2.08 million, with more than 10.73 million shares changing hands. Out of 49 traded securities, 15 advanced, 21 declined, and 13 remained unchanged. At the session close, foreign investors were net buyers for OMR97,000 while GCC & Arab investors were net sellers for OMR76,000, followed by do-

mestic investors for OMR21,000 worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,687.98 points, down 0.42 per cent. Prices of Oman United Insurance, ahli bank, Ominvest, Sohar International Bank were up by 2.00 per cent, 1.24 per cent, 1.08 per cent, 0.75 per cent respectively. Prices of DIDIC, Oman Arab Bank, Takaful Oman, United Finance, Muscat Finance were down by 6.67 per cent, 3.85 per cent, 3.77 per cent, 3.33 per cent, 2.04 per cent respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,928.40 points, up 0.03 per cent. Prices of Raysut Cement, Gulf Mushroom Products, Oman Cement, Oman Cables Industry, Al Maha Ceramics were up by 2.54 per cent, 1.81 per cent, 1.37 per cent, 1.24 per cent, 0.61 per cent respectively.

Services Index was up by 0.14 per cent before closing at 1,816.40 points. – **United Securities**

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff%
MSX 30 INDEX	4,779.82	4,765.54	4,778.53	4,769.96	8.57	0.18
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,722.64	7,685.14	7,687.98	7,720.49	-32.52	-0.42
Industry Index	5,939.74	5,922.90	5,928.40	5,926.53	1.87	0.03
Services Index	1,817.73	1,809.93	1,816.40	1,813.87	2.52	0.14
MSX Shariah Index	452.18	450.06	450.48	450.88	-0.39	-0.09
MSX TR INDEX	6,632.20	6,612.39	6,630.41	6,618.52	11.89	0.18
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,754.29	8,711.78	8,715.00	8,751.86	-36.86	-0.42
SERVICES TR IDX	2,100.35	2,091.34	2,098.81	2,095.89	2.92	0.14
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	6,853.05	6,833.62	6,839.96	6,837.81	2.16	0.03
FIXED INCOME INDEX	1,068.20	1,068.20	1,068.20	1,068.20	0.00	0.00

Trading Summary

Volume	.....	Turnover	.....	Trades	.....	Market Cap	.....	Up	.....	Down	.....	Equal	.....	Sec. Traded
10,733,447	.....	2,079,527	.....	775	.....	24,400,434,647	.....	15	.....	21	.....	13	.....	49

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR SUNDAY, MAY 12

ISRNSECURITY NAMEVOLUME TURNOVER TRADES OPEN PRICEHIGHLOW CLOSE PR.PREV. CLOSEDIFF (RD)DIFF %LAST PDLAST BDLAST OFFRPREV VALUEMARKET CAP

REGULAR MARKET

OM0000003968	QOEDOO	267,386	80,230	25	0.300	0.301	0.300	0.301	0.295	0.006	2.034	0.301	0.290	0.301	0.100	195,934,213
OM0000001087	OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	15,370	3,853	3	0.250	0.255	0.250	0.255	0.250	0.005	2.000	0.255	0.245	0.255	0.100	25,500,000
OM0000004735	SEMOBOP SALALAH	151,800	15,821	7	0.105	0.106	0.104	0.105	0.103	0.002	1.942	0.105	0.104	0.105	0.100	100,230,055
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	367,580	136,005	18	0.370	0.370	0.370	0.370	0.365	0.005	1.370	0.370	0.367	0.370	0.100	122,422,903
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	81,000	30,780	3	0.380	0.380	0.380	0.380	0.375	0.005	1.333	0.380	0.380	0.380	0.100	48,833,500
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	47,000	17,672	2	0.375	0.376	0.376	0.376	0.372	0.004	1.075	0.376	0.375	0.376	0.100	251,305,400
OM0000001152	OMAN NATIONAL ENGINEERING & INVESTMENT	75,900	8,758	5	0.113	0.116	0.113	0.116	0.115	0.001	0.870	0.116	0.113	0.116	0.100	17,400,000
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	2,924,058	394,241	40	0.134	0.135	0.134	0.135	0.134	0.001	0.746	0.135	0.127	0.142	0.100	752,928,246
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	100,000	5,400	2	0.084	0.084	0.084	0.084	0.080	0.004	0.000	0.084	0.076	0.084	0.100	10,237,500
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	309,685	80,940	47	0.263	0.263	0.261	0.263	0.263	0.000	0.000	0.263	0.263	0.263	0.100	1,974,182,427
OM0000000972	OQ GAS NETWORKS	913,698	129,885	127	0.142	0.143	0.142	0.142	0.142	0.000	0.000	0.142	0.142	0.146	0.100	614,948,597
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	386,095	405,062	97	1.052	1.052	1.046	1.049	1.050	-0.001	-0.095	1.049	1.048	1.049	0.100	786,750,000
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	245,807	73,328	30	0.299	0.300	0.298	0.298	0.298	0.000	-0.002	0.298	0.293	0.308	0.100	229,519,600
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	480,000	13,414	5	0.274	0.274	0.273	0.273	0.275	-0.002	-0.727	0.273	0.273	0.273	0.100	443,883,355
OM0000004788	MADINA TAKAFUL	13,400	1,085	3	0.081	0.081	0.081	0.081	0.082	-0.001	-1.220	0.081	0.081	0.082	0.100	14,175,000
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	82,200	6,223	14	0.076	0.076	0.075	0.076	0.077	-0.001	-1.299	0.075	0.073	0.075	0.100	51,291,445
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	110,800	7,645	7	0.069	0.069	0.069	0.069	0.070	-0.001	-1.429	0.069	0.069	0.069	0.100	13,800,000
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	31,000	5,632	11	0.182	0.182	0.181	0.181	0.184	-0.003	-1.630	0.181	0.181	0.182	0.100	39,820,000
OM0000004923	AL SUWADI POWER	425,983	32,896	26	0.078	0.078	0.077	0.077	0.079	-0.002	-2.532	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.100	55,009,288
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	20,000	1,160	2	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.060	-0.002	-3.333	0.058	0.058	0.060	0.100	20,655,383
Total	20	6,616,642	1,453,032	474												

Parallel Market

OM0000002267	GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS	1,210	272	1	0.225	0.225	0.225	0.225	0.221	0.004	1.810	0.225	0.223	0.228	0.100	10,297,305
OM0000007084	MUSCAT CITY DESALINATION	72,371	5,632	6	0.077	0.078	0.077	0.078	0.077	0.001	1.299	0.078	0.076	0.077	0.100	12,132,931
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	4,743	11,620	5	2.450	2.450	2.450	2.450	2.420	0.030	1.240	2.450	2.450	2.495	0.100	219,769,000
OM0000002200	AHLI BANK	123,000	20,172	5	0.164	0.164	0.164	0.164	0.162	0.002	1.233	0.164	0.164	0.170	0.100	385,343,624
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	5,000	825	1	0.165	0.165	0.165	0.165	0.164	0.001	0.610	0.165	0.165	0.180	0.100	5,073,000
OM0000001095	DHOFAIR INSURANCE	10,000	2,050	2	0.205	0.205	0.205	0.205	0.205	0.000	0.000	0.205	0.205	0.208	0.100	22,378,798
OM0000001772	ALBATINAH INVESTMENT	131,914	11,608	12	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.000	0.000	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.100	12,278,000
OM0000001982	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	77,200	5,277	15	0.068	0.069	0.068	0.069	0.069	0.000	0.000	0.069	0.069	0.069	0.100	5,865,000
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	409,340	40,934	48	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.000	0.000	0.100	0.097	0.100	0.100	223,693,303
OM0000004669	SHARQIYAH DESALINATION	28,570	3,714	2	0.130	0.130	0.130	0.130	0.130	0.000	0.000	0.130	0.130	0.135	0.100	12,714,281
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	53,360	3,252	6	0.061	0.061	0.060	0.061	0.061	0.000	0.000	0.061	0.060	0.061	0.100	89,218,689
OM0000007910	AMAN REAL ESTATE	8,000	768	3	0.096	0.096	0.096	0.096	0.096	0.000	0.000	0.096	0.096	0.097	0.100	19,200,000
OM0000003821	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	1,916,666	332,017	122	0.174	0.175	0.171	0.172	0.173	-0.001	-0.578	0.172	0.172	0.173	0.100	34,914,669
OM0000008868	THE PEARL REEF	53,390	6,304	5	0.117	0.117	0.116	0.116	0.117	-0.001	-0.855	0.116	0.116	0.117	0.100	58,940,011
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	1,647	477	4	0.283	0.290	0.283	0.290	0.293	-0.003	-1.024	0.290	0.290	0.290	0.100	23,606,798
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	10,000	800	2	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.081	-0.001	-1.235	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.100	6,800,000
OM0000007407	DHOFAIR GENERATING	6,330	506	2	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.081	-0.001	-1.235	0.080	0.077	0.078	0.100	17,779,200
OM0000003281	TANGIER FINANCE	86,000	9,004	11	0.104	0.105	0.104	0.104	0.106	-0.002	-1.887	0.104	0.104	0.105	0.100	28,192,412
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	415,350	19,987	18	0.048	0.049	0.048	0.048	0.049	-0.001	-2.041	0.048	0.048	0.053	0.100	174,743,024
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	204,000	67,118	6	0.330	0.330	0.328	0.328	0.338	-0.010	-2.959	0.328	0.328	0.334	0.100	15,740,000
OM0000004776	TAKAFUL OMAN	27,930	1,422	4	0.050	0.051	0.050	0.051	0.053	-0.002	-3.774	0.051	0.049	0.051	0.100	12,750,000
OM0000005200	OMAN ARAB BANK	380,000	45,000	4	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.130	-0.005	-3.846	0.125	0.126	0.130	0.100	208,676,250
OM0000001509	DHOFAIR INTERNATIONAL DEV & INV HO.	2,352	494	1	0.210	0.210	0.210	0.210	0.225	-0.015	-6.867	0.210	0.210	0.000	0.100	85,941,726
Total	23	4,008,883	589,255	285												

PARTNERS WITH BBH GROUP

Pact inked to enable Alizz Islamic customers to purchase units in Khalid Logistics City

Times News Service



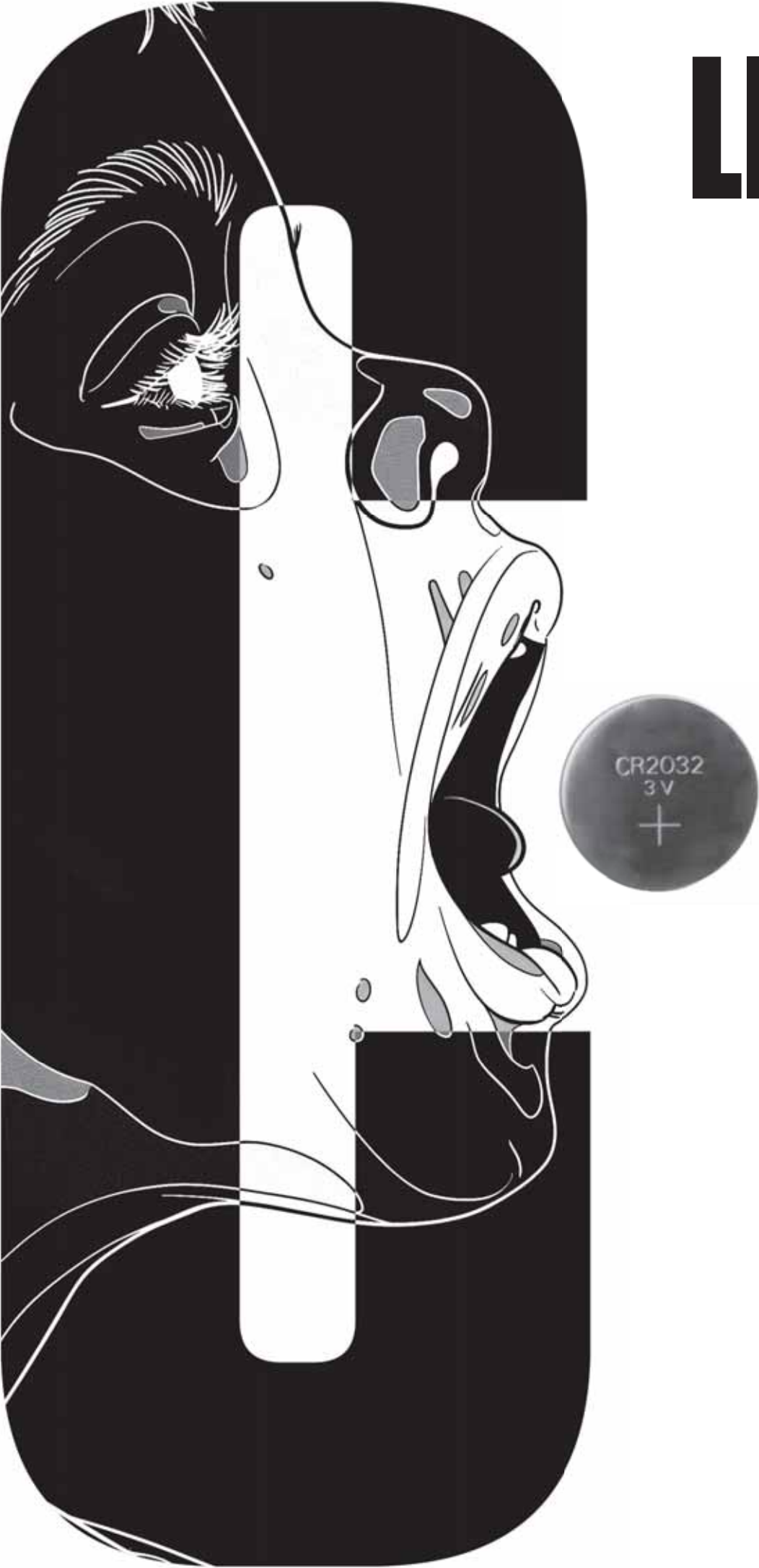
LIFESTYLE

About 7,000 children in the United States visit emergency rooms for battery-related injuries each year, according to the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System. Lithium coin batteries, those small, disc-shaped batteries about the size of a nickel, are particularly dangerous. The exact right size to get lodged in a child's throat if accidentally swallowed, they can turn deadly, burning a hole in an esophagus in as little as two hours. And, they're everywhere – in key fobs, key finders, flameless candles, remote controls, thermometers and many common home devices.

Despite parents' thirst for knowledge on how to keep their children safe, the potential dangers of lithium coin batteries are not widely discussed. It's no surprise then that 55% of parents with children ages 6 and under don't realise that lithium coin batteries are more dangerous than button batteries – in fact 45% think there is no difference. That's according to a 2023 Duracell survey conducted by Wakefield Research. This is why the brand is reminding parents that when it comes to lithium coin batteries, #BitterIsBetter.

HELP KEEP
KIDS SAFE
FROM
LITHIUM

It's no surprise then that **55%** of parents with children ages 6 and under don't realise that lithium coin batteries are more dangerous than button batteries – in fact **45%** think there is no difference.



As part of the #BitterIsBetter campaign, Duracell is sharing these simple tips to help keep you and your family safe:

- One in 4 parents with kids aged 6 and under don't know how many devices in their homes require lithium coin batteries to operate. Do a survey of your devices, and move those that contain lithium coin batteries away from and out-of-reach of children. Examples of common devices include flameless LED tealight candles, key fobs and thermometers.
- Get down to your child's eye level to see what they see. Look for loose lithium coin batteries in couch cushions, on low tables and shelves or any other areas that a child can reach.
- Inspect devices and secure lithium coin battery compartments by tightening the screws or securing them with tape for an extra layer of protection.
- Keep all new lithium coin batteries in a secure compartment, up high and out of children's reach. Remove expired batteries from devices, and place them away safely out of reach of children until you can recycle them properly.
- Power your devices with batteries that have child safety features. When it comes to lithium coin batteries, Duracell offers a non-toxic bitter coating that helps discourage children from accidentally swallowing them. Look for the "Bitter Taste" icon on the packaging. The batteries also come in child-secure packaging, which is nearly impossible to open without scissors, making sure little hands, and mouths, cannot access them.
- Keep a watchful eye. Toddlers and young children are curious by nature so close supervision is key.
- If you suspect that your child has ingested a lithium coin battery, act fast. Take them immediately to an emergency room. If you aren't able to drive, call 911 for help.
- Team up with friends and family to spread this information.

For more resources and tips, visit [Duracell.com/BitterIsBetter](https://www.duracell.com/BitterIsBetter) and follow @Duracell on social media.

A battery-related accident can happen in an instant. By being vigilant and by choosing products wisely, you can help keep your family safe. -StatePoint



BATTERIES

Man City move closer to title

Josko Gvardiol scored twice for holders as they outplay Fulham 4-0

LONDON: Josko Gvardiol scored twice as holders Manchester City put the pressure on Arsenal in the title race by beating Fulham 4-0 to move two points clear at the top of the Premier League on Saturday. In a game they dominated from start to finish, the visitors opened the scoring early on when defender Gvardiol produced a clinical finish after a good move opened up the Fulham defence. Phil Foden then continued his excellent form this season with a second after the break, sending a first-time finish past Bernd Leno. Erling Haaland should have added a third midway through the second half but the Premier League's top scorer somehow drove high over when through on goal. But Manchester City did not have to wait long for another goal as Gvardiol stabbed in at the far post to put the result beyond Fulham. Issa Diop was shown a second



yellow card in stoppage time as he brought down Julain Alvarez inside the box, and the Manchester City substitute then duly converted the penalty. The result means the Gunners head to Manchester United on Sunday needing to win to be cer-

tain of taking the title race to the final day of the season. Manchester City are at Tottenham on Tuesday and if Arsenal fail to get a positive result at Old Traf-

Kompany 'not sulking' after Burnley relegation
 Burnley manager Vincent Kompany says "tomorrow is day one" in the club's quest to regain their place in the Premier League next season. The Clarets were relegated back to the Championship after one season by a 2-1 defeat at Tottenham on Saturday. "I'm not here sulking and feeling sorry for us but if you take every game, every season as a learning experience, this is a step we need to get into our game," Kompany said. "Today the Premier League is over but tomorrow we start day one of doing everything we can to get back to the Premier League." The 38-year-old Belgian led the Lancashire club to the Championship title in his first season, having amassed 101 points during a dominant campaign. But the step up to the Premier League has been a difficult one. Kompany's squad, which is largely made up of younger players with little Premier League experience before this season, have won five of their 37 matches. "It's way too early to answer if I'd have done things differently," said Kompany, who signed a new five-year deal with the Clarets after leading them to promotion. Losing to Tottenham means Burnley stayed in 19th place with one game left, five points adrift of fourth-bottom Nottingham Forest. - Agencies

SPANISH LA LIGA

Real Madrid set new record



MADRID: Newly crowned Spanish champions Real Madrid cruised past Granada 4-0 thanks to goals from Fran Garcia, Arda Guler and a double from Brahim Diaz on Saturday. The victory for Carlo Ancelotti's side stretched their unbeaten league run to 29 matches, surpassing the previous club record in a single campaign of 28 matches set during the tenure of John Toshack in the 1989/90 season. After a first half of few chances, young full-back Garcia opened the scoring after 40 minutes, latching onto a low cross at the back post to slam home his first goal for the club. Fellow youngster Guler doubled the lead in first-half stoppage time. Garcia turned provider this time, cutting a cross back to the penalty spot for the Turkey inter-



national to steer into the bottom corner. Four minutes into the second half Diaz added the third, intercepting a stray pass near the half-way line before racing up field and firing in from the edge of the box. He got his second just nine minutes later, slotting home a low finish after a sweeping

ITALIAN OPEN

Hurkacz knocks Nadal out

ROME: Rafael Nadal's hopes of an 11th Italian Open title are over after defeat to world No.9 Hubert Hurkacz on Saturday. In what is likely to be the Spaniard's final appearance in Rome, Nadal, 37, was comfortably beaten 6-1, 6-3 by the big-serving Pole in just 93 minutes. Nadal, a 10-time winner in the Italian capital, has indicated that 2024 is likely to be his final season before retirement. The 14-time French Open champion says he is yet to decide whether to play at Roland Garros this year. The tournament starts on 26 May. "The decision, as you can imagine, is not clear in my mind today," Nadal said. "But if I have to say what I'm feeling and if my mind is closer one way or the other way, I'm going to say 'be in Roland Garros and try my best'. "Physically, I have some issues, but not probably yet enough to say not playing in the most important event of my tennis career." Elsewhere, Great Britain's Cameron Norrie will face Stefanos Tsitsipas after beating Spain's Jaume Munar 6-3, 1-6, 6-3. British number two Jack Draper was unable to join Norrie in the next round following a 7-5, 6-4 defeat by defending champion Daniil Medvedev, who will face qualifier Hamad Medjedovic in the last 32.



Polish world No.1 Iga Swiatek booked her place in the women's last 16 with a 6-3, 6-4 win over Yulia Putintseva. Swiatek came from 4-1 down in the second set to extend her winning streak to eight matches, and plays Angelique Kerber next after her straight-set win over Aliaksandra Sasnovich. Naomi Osaka has still not dropped a set in the tournament so far after beating Daria Kasatkina 6-3, 6-3.

The Japanese former world No.3 plays Qinwen Zheng in the last 16. Coco Gauff survived a scare to book her place in the next round, where she will face Spain's Paula Badosa. American Gauff, 20, beat Romania's Jaqueline Cristian 6-1, 0-6, 6-3 in just over two hours in Rome. The US Open champion failed to win a game in the second set, but she overcame world No.68 Cristian in the third and deciding set. - Agencies

OMAN SAIL

13th edition of Mussanah Race Week from October 1

MUSCAT: The 13th edition of the popular Oman Sail's Mussanah Race Week (MRW) will be held from October 1-8, according to a press release from the organisers on Sunday. The MRW will bring together sailors from across the globe in Optimist, ILCA 4, ILCA 6 and ILCA 7 classes, as well as the para inclusive RS Venture Connect class. The event will be hosted by the Barceló Mussanah Resort and is open to men and women sailors of all nationalities. Competition will be held over 12 races in each class, with no more than three per day. Racing will take place following three practice days, from October 4-7. Prizes will be awarded for the overall top three in each class, as well as the junior top three for sailors under the age of 12, and the girls' top three, as well as the overall team racing competition. Ahmed Al Qasmi, Head of Sailing at Oman Sail, said, "Mussanah Race Week is one of the highlights in our sailing calendar and we are delighted to bring the event back to

the Barceló Mussanah Resort this year. We look forward to welcoming a diverse fleet of sailors in all of the event classes." Shaima Al Asmi, Mussanah Race Week Project Manager, added, "The waters of Barceló Mussanah Resort offer excellent sailing conditions and the chance to learn new skills, make new friends and compete in a world class environment. "We are also very pleased to be able to support sailors of all abilities with Optimist, ILCA 4, ILCA 6, ILCA 7 and RS Venture Connect races all being held again this year." Oman Sail's Mussanah Sailing School at the Barceló Mussanah Resort was recently named a Category A High Performance Centre by the Asian Sailing Federation. Visiting sailors, as well as Omani participants, will have the opportunity to train and sail at the same venue where Asia's best sailors will hone their skills in preparation for some of the world's highest profile events.



ROUND-UP

Customers express delight with DhofarPay

BankDhofar’s customers expressed their satisfaction with Dhofar-Pay’s security, convenience and ease of use



MUSCAT: BankDhofar has recently launched “Dhofar-Pay”, an innovative mobile payment service. Customers can simply tap their mobile to make transactions easily without the need for a physical debit card, offering a seamless payment experience.

The bank’s customers expressed their satisfaction with Dhofar-Pay’s security, convenience and ease of use. They activated the service through the bank’s application without any difficulty. The overall experience was described as “smooth”.

Convenience of payment
Ahmed Abdullah Al Mashaykhi ac-

tivated Dhofar-Pay service without hesitation upon its launch. He considers it a service that provides him with convenience in eliminating the need to carry a wallet while shopping. He said: “I learned about “Dhofar-Pay” service through WhatsApp groups and social media posts. The process of activating the service was very easy without assistance of any of my relatives or friends, taking just a few minutes.”

Saying goodbye to wallets
Aisha Abdullah Al Hamdaniya said: “I no longer need to carry my wallet everywhere. All I have to do is to tap my smartphone on the POS machines at various out-

lets while shopping. The process is easy and convenient.”

Al Hamdaniya learned about Dhofar-Pay through BankDhofar’s account on “X” platform, and quickly activated it for an exceptional shopping experience. She also confirmed that the process of activating this service is smooth, easy and uncomplicated.

Fast activation process
Amjad Saif Al Zakwani believes that Dhofar-Pay service makes life easier and more flexible in today’s fast-paced world, as no need to present a plastic debit card when shopping. Pointing out that he had learned about Dhofar-Pay service

through “X” platform and activated it with ease without assistance as the process of activating “Dhofar-Pay” is straightforward,” he said.

High security
Asim Said Al Maamari praised the high security of “Dhofar-Pay” service, emphasising that the service cannot be used without unlocking the mobile device. This insures protection in case of phone loss. “If a customer loses his mobile phone with his debit card details stored in it, he shall not worry much about anyone using the bank’s card for unauthorised transactions,” he stated.

Al Maamari learned about “Dhofar-Pay” service through “WhatsApp” application, and did not hesitate for a moment to activate it, as he said: “The process is very easy, and I did not seek aid of a relative or friend to activate it.”

BankDhofar is keen to keep pace with the latest technology practice, which contribute to providing leading digital banking solutions to meet the diverse needs of customers and guide the way they interact with their financial resources to enhance customer experience, simplify operations, and provide a comprehensive range of digital services.

THREE AWARDS



Zawawi Trading recognised at Mercedes-Benz General Distributor Conference

MUSCAT: Zawawi Trading Company (ZTC), the authorised general distributor of Mercedes-Benz in Oman, was fittingly bestowed three awards for its outstanding sales performance at the prestigious Mercedes-Benz General Distributor Conference.

ZTC has won coveted accolades for Best AMG Sales Performance, Best G-Class Sales Performance, and Best Online Sales Performance. The award ceremony took place during the conference held in the grandeur of Stuttgart in Germany and was attended by representatives of Mercedes-Benz general distributors from around the world.

“These three accolades are a tapestry of recognition, celebrat-

ing our customer-oriented sales performance as the Authorised General Distributor of Mercedes-Benz in Oman. It also showcases the increased demand amongst our discerning customers that appreciates innovative and forward-looking technologies and safe high-quality vehicles that fascinate and excite. It is a privilege to earn such acknowledgments for providing our customers with a superior and highly personalised experience,” said Shaun Michael, Chief Executive Officer at Mercedes-Benz Oman.

Apart from the award ceremony, strategy and new product launches were among the topics discussed during the general distributor conference.

MCBS



International conference on Innovation in IT and Business organised

MUSCAT: The Department of Mathematics and Computer Science at the Modern College of Business and Science (MCBS) organised the second international conference on Innovation in Information Technology and Business on April 29 and 30.

This event was organised in collaboration with two reputed international universities; Singidunum University, Serbia and Christ University, India.

The hybrid mode of the event started with a grand opening ceremony at MCBS Campus. Eng. Bader Bin Saud Al Zaidi, CEO-Vodafone, Oman was the Chief Guest of the ceremony. Dr Moosa Al Kindi, Dean, MCBS delivered the inaugural speech, followed by a keynote speech on ‘Machine Learning’ delivered by Eng. Ahmed Al Saidi, Senior Specialist in Data Science, Vodofone, Oman.

A Panel Discussion on ‘Machine Learning - its capabilities, limitations, ethical implications, and societal impact’ was moderated by Dr Abdullah Al-Zakwani, Executive Director, Research &

Innovation, Lamad. The panel comprised Laila Al Hadhrami, Executive Director, Smart Sustainable Cities Advisor, Dr Haidar Al-Lawati, Sr. Manager - Artificial Intelligence, Oman Data Park and Nasr Al-Nabhani, Chief Executive Officer, Tatweer Cybersecurity as its members.

Dr Nebojsa Becanin, vice-rector for scientific research at vice-rector for scientific research at Singidunum University, Serbia delivered a keynote speech on ‘Swarm Intelligence’ on the second day of the conference. The conference mainly focused on innovative ideas, approaches, research, and developments in the areas of Artificial Intelligence, Block Chain Cyber Security and Data Analytics. More than 50 speakers from several countries presented their research findings at this conference either face to face or virtually. Many meritorious students also found a place at this conference. They presented their research findings at the conference to make the event extremely successful.

AWARENESS

Centre of Excellence for Human Resources at Zubair Corporation organises HR Forum

MUSCAT: The Centre of Excellence for Human Resources at The Zubair Corporation, in its endeavours to maintain a high calibre of awareness towards human resources regulations and legal affairs, has organised its first Human Resources Forum for this year.

The forum discussed various aspects, among which, the Personal Data Protection Law and its executive regulations, which were presented by researcher, Bashaer Yaqoub Al Hosaniyah, a legal affairs researcher from the Legislation Department at the Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology. Likewise, Hamoud Khamis Al Sulaimi, Head of Human Resources Department for the Real Estate Development Sector at The Zubair Corporation, presented the group’s leave management law, in addition to a number of topics related to human resources management.

The forum was attended by a number of executive managers from The Zubair Corporation, human resources managers and employees from the Zubair Group companies, and representatives from the Social Protection Fund. The Centre of Excellence aims to develop a wide scale of awareness across the group with regard to legal affairs organising the relationship between the establishment and the employee.

The organisation of this forum comes within the framework of the Centre’s endeavour to foster an environment of mutual collaboration between the management and the human resources, through developing an attractive and accommodating work environment within The Zubair Corporation and its subsidiaries.

Al Hosaniyah spoke about the



Personal Data Protection Law and its executive regulations and shed light on many other topics related to this law, its definitions and general provisions, duties and powers of the Ministry, the rights of the personal data owner, the obligations of the controller and processor, and penalties.

Hamoud Al-Sulaimi, Head of Human Resources Department for the Real Estate Development Sector at The Zubair Corporation, provided an overview of the group’s leave management policy, types of leaves and the general guidelines applied to the leaves policy, which is part of The Zubair Corporation’s Human Capital Policy Manual.

Sharifa Al Balushi, Head of the

Centre of Excellence for Human Resources, confirmed the Centre’s keenness to develop the current legislations related to the human resources in a manner consistent with the government legislation and The Zubair Corporation future vision.

She pointed out: “This is why we discuss the implementation of the Personal Data Protection Law in our organization and its subsidiaries and the leave management law in The Zubair Corporation, which is in line with the decision issued by the Social Protection Fund. She also confirmed that during the forum, many new and existing policies in human resources management were reviewed and general frameworks were developed

to achieve and enhance efficiency within The Zubair Corporation and its subsidiaries.

Al Hosaniyah said, “At the beginning, we thank The Zubair Corporation for giving us this opportunity to shed light on the applications of the Personal Data Protection Law and the available devices to protect personal data through enacting legislation and penalties.” She explained, “This comes within the framework of the government’s endeavour to simplify procedures, apply modern technology in various services and enhance electronic facilities, to correspond to the ongoing transition to the e-government which increasingly demands a sound protection of personal data.”

IMPRESSIVE PROFILE

All-new 2024 Kia Sorento now available in Oman

MUSCAT: The all-new 2024 Kia Sorento is one of the much awaited Kia models in Oman. The all-new Sorento with its impressive profile, build quality and performance is designed to make lasting impressions.

The all-new Sorento is a perfect companion for adventure enthusiasts looking forward to escaping the city’s routine with a drive by the country side. Equipped with the advantage of space and comfort, the Sorento packs more punch with its impressive features that offer owners and families alike several opportunities to realise their desires.

The 2024 Kia Sorento is designed to draw attention with its stylish LED headlamps, LED rear combination lamps, LED front and rear fog lamps and LED daytime

running lights. The Sorento’s 19-inch machine finished alloy wheels and panoramic roof, give it a style statement that makes the bold SUV a completely desirable model.

The 2024 Sorento’s front design, has a strong yet sensual look emphasizing its pronounced look and stance. The hood sculpted with a stronger sense of volume provides an upscale SUV image. The three-dimensional radiator grille and Kia’s next-generation signature vertical Star-map DRL graphics emphasize the progressive and hi-tech SUV image. The rugged and confident front mask with a skid plate that harmonises with the boldly proportioned wide bumper design. A wide & technical-shaped rear skid plate in harmony with black cladding realizes a solid SUV



presence. A new star-map graphic that connects the two vertical tail lamps reinforces the new Kia design identity.

The 2024 Sorento interior is spacious, appealing and emphasizes

wideness with a horizontal layout. The interior includes a high-tech image through a panoramic curved display and a switchable Keyboard. Info/Climate switchable control provides convenient and efficient

usability by applying Info/Climate switchable controller. Horizontal air vent creates a wide sense of space with a horizontally arranged air vent design. Passengers in the 2024 Sorento can benefit with leather seats, multi-colour ambient mood lighting, rear side manual curtains and more.

The all-new Sorento makes moments fun and exciting with its range of safety features and technology that includes anti-lock braking system, electronic stability program, vehicle stability management, downhill brake control, hill-start assist control, driver and passenger front airbags, blind spot collision avoidance assist, lane keeping assist, reverse parking collision avoidance assist, forward collision avoidance assist, lane fol-

lowing assist and more.

The Sorento packs a punch with its powerful 268 hp, 3.5L engine that is paired to an 8-speed automatic transmission. The highly capable SUV sports a 2815mm wheelbase with 176mm ground clearance, allowing enthusiasts to make the most of their adventurous journeys.

More than just a striking new presence on the road, the Sorent offers a new way of appreciating the beauty of the world passing by. A driving experience that keeps you more engaged, relaxed, and in harmony with everyone and everything around you.

Reliable International Automotive (RIA), the distributor for Kia in Oman provides a rewarding ownership experience for customers.

ROUND-UP

Lulu expands its retail footprint with 30th store opening in Oman

Spanning over 150,000 square feet, the latest shopping destination offers enriching shopping experience to the citizens and residents of Al Ansab and its surrounding areas

MUSCAT: To further expand its presence in the Sultanate of Oman, prominent retailer in the region Lulu Group has unveiled its latest retail destination in the country. Shaikh Faisal Abdullah Al-Rawas, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce & Industry officially inaugurated the store, which is also 30th in Oman at Al Ansab in the august presence of Amit Narang, Indian Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman, Brig./ Jamal Saeed Al-Taie, Director General of Financial Affairs, Royal Oman Police (ROP), other senior officials from the ROP, Yusuff Ali M.A., Chairman of Lulu Group and other dignitaries. During the inauguration ceremony, Shaikh Faisal Abdullah Al-Rawas emphasised Oman's commitment to being an attractive destination for investors and welcome large-scale projects, such as Lulu, to invest and thrive in the region. During the event, Al-Rawas presented a copy of the latest edition of the Al Ghorfa Magazine to Yusuff Ali M.A. Spanning over 150,000 square feet, the latest shopping destination offers enriching shopping experience to the citizens and residents of Al Ansab and its surrounding areas. Special features of Hypermarket include an emphasis on healthy and diet food choices, an extensive range of 'Free From' foods, pet foods, a seafood section that also extends to freshly made



sushi and grilled fish, premium meats and an expansive imported product range. There will be a global spread of fresh fruit and vegetables along with a wide choice of freshly made items, from fresh-squeezed juices to fresh-baked breads and cakes. Lulu Hypermarket offerings also include latest fashion, beauty

products, electronics & IT Products, home appliances, sports, luggage, stationery and much more. Lulu Al Ansab also hosts fine selection of brands that includes Banks, money exchanges, ATMs, coffee shops and restaurants, fitness centre, pharmacy, perfume shops, Funtazmo Children's Amusement centre, optical centre

and other amenities making it a complete retail and entertainment destination in the neighbourhood. Speaking at the launch, Yusuff Ali, said, "Lulu Group is delighted to add yet another landmark to the landscape of Oman and we extend our sincere gratitude to Royal Oman Police and the government for entrusting us to manage this



prestigious project. Brand Lulu has always been known for catering to shoppers based not only in city centres, but as well as the outskirts areas and suburbs, where people do not need to drive long distance. We commit to provide world-class shopping and we shall continue meeting the lifestyle needs of our clientele base. He further said, "We have also focused on promoting and providing local employment opportunities which have been critical to our success through a structured recruitment process that aims to provide necessary training and skill enhancement opportunities to local work force." "At present, we employ over 3,000 Omani nationals in all the hypermarkets across the country in various positions out of which almost half of them are women and another 300 nationals have been given part time job opportunities. Our aim is to encourage more youth in our workforce thereby ensuring greater economic participation."

As part of our expansion plan in the Sultanate, "We will open another four new hypermarkets in two years, which will add more employment to the local youth. Apart from this, a state-of-art facility for fruits and vegetables will also be set up in the upcoming Khazaen Economic City by next year," he said. The progressive and dynamic policies under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has given a fillip to development plan focused on diversification, industrialisation and privatisation of the economy and cemented Oman's position as a rapidly growing economy. We are proud to be part of Oman's overall development and will continue to support sustainable development strategies. Thanks to the wise leadership," added Yusuff Ali. Also present on the occasion were Ashraf Ali M.A, Lulu Executive Director, Ananth A.V, Lulu Oman Director, Shabeer K.A., Lulu Oman Regional Director and other officials.

RECOGNITION

Meethaq Islamic Banking wins GIF Market Leadership Award

MUSCAT: Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat has been honoured with the Global Islamic Finance (GIF) Award for Market Leadership in recognition of its unwaveringly committed stance of advancing the Islamic banking landscape within the Sultanate of Oman. This accolade underscores Meethaq's continuous dedication to providing top-tier Sharia-compliant services and products to its diverse customers, comprising both individuals and institutions. Since the inception of Meethaq, it has remained steadfast in its pursuit of excellence, consistently raising the bar in providing innovative financial solutions tailored to the evolving needs of our customers. Speaking on the occasion, Ali Ahmed Al Lawati, Assistant General Manager, Meethaq Corporate Banking, expressed his delight about receiving this prestigious award, stating: "We are immensely



pleased to receive this recognition, which serves as a testament to Meethaq's enduring journey of accomplishments. We extend our gratitude to the GIFA team for acknowledging Meethaq's market leadership position in the Sultanate's market. Meethaq remains dedicated to delivering unparalleled value propositions and ser-

vices that align with the evolving needs of our esteemed customers. We also extend our sincere appreciation and support to all our valued customers for their confidence and belief in Meethaq. Looking ahead, we are dedicated to continuously innovating and providing customer-centric solutions to fulfil their aspirations." Building upon its legacy of success, Meethaq Islamic Banking has continually expanded its footprint across the Sultanate, currently operating 28 branches, with over 13 branches situated in Muscat governorate and 14 branches distributed across other governorates. Additionally, Meethaq Islamic Banking offers its customers access to a dedicated network of over 50 ATMs/CDMs and provides free access to over 850 ATMs and CDMs of Bank Muscat, ensuring convenient and accessible banking services for a wide base of customers.

PREMIUM FUEL CATEGORY

Shell Oman wins award for Shell V-Power

MUSCAT: Shell Oman announced its recent accolades at the Top Omani Brands 2024. Shell Oman was awarded top honours in the Premium Fuel category for its Shell V-Power. The annual awards ceremony, hosted by Alam Al Iktisaad magazine, celebrates outstanding contributions and achievements of leading brands in Oman's vibrant economic landscape. This recognition marks a significant milestone for Shell Oman, affirming its position as a leader in its sector by providing high-quality, advanced fuel solutions. Shell V-Power, a standout beyond conventional fuels, is engineered to provide the engine optimum performance. It is now available at 77 Shell service stations in Oman and will be expanded to all Shell sites in a phased manner. At Shell Oman, our focus extends to offering a wide variety of fuels coupled with a retail experience prioritising convenience, quality, and choice. Recently, Shell introduced the



new and improved Shell V-Power, designed to clean up to 100% of critical engine parts—such as fuel injectors and/or inlet valves—to maximize engine performance, keep engines running like new*, and make your drive feel like the best drive. Celebrating the achievements, Suresh Nair, General Manager - Mobility at Shell Oman Marketing Company, expressed, "We are immensely honored to receive this award for our Shell V-Power. This accolade is a reflection of our

team's steadfast commitment to excellence and our pursuit of innovation in all facets of our operations. Shell V-Power is engineered to provide your engine optimum performance, setting the standard for advanced fuel technology. At Shell Oman, we believe in not just meeting, but pioneering industry standards for product quality and customer satisfaction. Our focus has always been on powering progress with cutting-edge solutions that cater to the evolving needs of our customers."

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Which mountain on the Oman-UAE border lends its name to the railway project between the two countries?

'Hhalas', 'Hhunaizi' and 'Fargh' are varieties of which fruit associated with Omani heritage?

Two violins, one viola, and one cello make up a "String _____"

What is the name given to Taylor Swift's fanbase?

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