

Digital Excellence Award for govt sector launched

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology launched the first edition of Government Digital Excellence Award on Wednesday.

The award is part of Oman's commitment to fast-track digital transformation and foster innovation in line with Oman Vision 2040. It also aims to elevate the sultanate's standing in the Global Competitiveness Index for e-governance development by enhancing digital competencies and promoting the culture of innovation within the governmental framework.

H E Said bin Hamood al Mawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, emphasised the fact that the award is designed to propel the government sector's digital transformation, making



administration more efficient, comprehensive and innovative. "The Digital Excellence Award is a testament to our collective resolve to harness cutting-edge technologies in enhancing government services and setting new standards of excellence."

The award focuses on improving digital services and utilising advanced technologies to develop a dynamic and innovative administrative structure capable of shaping the future. It also aims to cultivate a culture of digital transformation, recognise out-

standing national talents, and reward exceptional achievements that significantly accelerate digital transformation in the government sector.

The award has four main categories - Institutions, which includes awards for the 'Best Institution Achieving Government Digital Transformation' and 'Best Institution for Digital User Experience and Beneficiary Satisfaction'; Initiatives, featuring awards for the 'Best Integrated Digital Transformative Initiative', 'Best Initiative for Digital Community Participation', and 'Best Initiative in Innovation and use of Advanced Technologies'; Services, which awards the 'Best Digital Government Service Provided to Beneficiaries' and 'Best Digital Government Service Provided to the Business Sector'; and Competencies, honouring the 'Best Team for Digital Transformation' and 'Best Digital Change Leader'.

The prestigious award marks a significant milestone in Oman's journey towards achieving its digital aspirations. It recognises and celebrates the remarkable progress being made in digital transformation and innovation across government institutions.

Oman adopts plain packaging for tobacco products

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Represented by the National Tobacco Control Committee, the sultanate has introduced plain packaging for tobacco products, becoming the second Arab country after Saudi Arabia to enforce this measure.

This initiative places Oman among 22 countries worldwide that have implemented plain packaging as a strategy to combat tobacco use.

In March 2023, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion issued the Omani Standard Specification (OS 1655:2022) for plain packaging of tobacco products, which became binding and took effect from April 4, 2024.

Plain packaging is defined by World Health Organization (WHO) as a measure that restricts the use of logos, colours, brand images or promotional information on tobacco packaging.

According to the measure,



only the brand and product name are allowed, displayed in a standard colour and font type. This initiative follows the guidelines of Article 11 and 13 of WHO's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, ratified by Oman in 2005 through Royal Decree 20/2005.

The main objectives of plain packaging are to reduce attractiveness of tobacco products, prevent packaging from being used as a form of advertising and promotion, and eliminate misleading packaging that might suggest certain products are less harmful than others. Additionally, plain packaging aims to make health warnings more prominent and effective on tobacco product packaging.

UN calls for investigation into mass graves at Gaza hospitals

New York, USA - The United Nations called for 'a clear, transparent and credible investigation' of mass graves uncovered at two major hospitals in war-torn Gaza that were raided by Israeli occupation troops.

Credible investigators must

have access to the sites, UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters, and added that more journalists need to be able to work safely in Gaza to report the facts.

On Tuesday, UN human rights chief Volker Türk said he was

"horrified" by the destruction of the Shifa medical centre in Gaza City and Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, as well as the reported discovery of mass graves in and around the facilities after the Israeli occupation force left.

He called for independent and

transparent investigations into the deaths, saying that "given the prevailing climate of impunity, this should include international investigators".

"The intentional killing of civilians, detainees and others who are incapable of engaging in com-

bat is a war crime," Türk said.

Meanwhile, the UN Relief and Works Agency is seeking US\$1.21bn to address the unprecedented humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip and respond to needs in the West Bank as violence increases.

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Qasim al Farsi and Hamood bin Hamid Koofan win Kuwait photography contest

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Indian School Ghubra alumnus crowned Miss Teen Universe India 2024

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National Museum showcases Habsi football memorabilia

Our Correspondent
Muscat

National Museum on Oman, in collaboration with Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, unveiled a collection of memorabilia belonging to international goalkeeper Ali bin Abdullah al Habsi on Wednesday.

The collection includes Habsi's medal from his 2012-2013 English Football Association Cup victory playing with Wigan Athletic and the jersey worn during the final match at Wembley Stadium.

The final, held on May 11, 2013, saw Wigan Athletic beat Manchester City 1-0, marking a historic win for the club.

The exhibition aims to celebrate and document Habsi's illustrious career and his contribution to football both in



Oman and internationally.

The inauguration ceremony was graced by prominent figures including Jamal bin Hassan al Moosawi, Secretary-General of National Museum, and H E Basel bin Ahmed al Rawas, Undersecretary for Sports and Youth in the Ministry of Culture, Sports

and Youth, among other dignitaries and Habsi himself.

On the occasion, Moosawi expressed his pride in showcasing Habsi's achievements. "We are honoured to exhibit memorabilia of the achievements of our veteran goalkeeper Habsi here at the National Museum. This exhibi-

tion not only highlights his inspiring journey and stature in the world of football but also aims to inspire our youth to achieve greatness through dedication and hard work," he stated.

Sharing his feelings about the recognition of his sporting achievements, Habsi said, "I am proud and delighted to inaugurate this corner showcasing my sporting achievements. These achievements, attained by the grace of Allah, represent my journey as a professional football player where I had the honour of representing our beloved country for two decades."

He also emphasised how recognition and motivation are crucial for success and how linking athletes' accomplishments to national heritage can inspire future generations to strive for excellence.



(Supplied photo)

MoSD opens centre to support 80 Autistic children in Dhofar

Our Correspondent
Salalah

Ministry of Social Development (MoSD), in collaboration with OQ, opened Salalah Autism Center on Wednesday in Dhofar.

The opening was graced by H E Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development.

The facility was made possible through support of OQ Salalah, which funded the project as part of its commitment to bolstering community partnerships. It aims to provide support and rehabilitation for children diagnosed with

autism spectrum disorder, facilitating their seamless integration into society.

Umayyah bint Hassan al Nahdi, head of Al Wafa Centre for Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities in Salalah, provided insights into the centre's operations. She highlighted the facility's state-of-the-art rehabilitation tools tailored to meet the diverse needs of 80 individuals with autism. These tools encompass special education, physical therapy and psychological support.

Spread over 1,550sqm, the centre will conduct rehabilitative

and therapeutic programmes, in addition to raising awareness on autism spectrum disorders in the community.

Designed to the latest international standards, the centre prioritises individual needs of children with autism, ensuring an environment conducive to their growth and development. In addition to providing therapeutic interventions, the centre offers invaluable guidance, counselling and support to families, helping them navigate the challenges associated with autism spectrum disorders.

Oman, Bahrain to sign pacts to boost ties; discuss Arab Summit agenda

Muscat - H E Sayyid Badr Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, received Dr Abdulatif Rashid al Zayani, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain, on Wednesday.

During the meeting, the two sides underscored the historical ties binding Oman and Bahrain. They also discussed the agenda of the joint committee's upcoming session to be held in Oman this year.

The two countries plan to sign new agreements and memoranda of understanding with the

primary objective of boosting co-operation and pushing ties towards wider horizons.

In light of the 33rd Arab Summit which Bahrain will host on May 16, H E Sayyid Badr expressed Oman's confidence in the success of the summit in producing constructive results that serve regional interests, and reflect the directives of Arab leaders and the aspirations of the peoples of the region for security and peace for all.

H E Sayyid Badr also affirmed that Oman is confident the sum-



mit will pass resolutions for the benefit and prosperity of the region and boost joint and constructive Arab action.

The two sides also reviewed regional developments and stressed the importance of de-escalation. In this context, the

two ministers reiterated that emphasis should be laid on ceasefire efforts in Gaza to reach a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian

crisis based on the two-state solution in accordance with international resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

The meeting was attended by Sayyid Najeeb Hilal al Busaidi, Acting Head of the GCC and Regional Department, H E Dr Juma Ahmed al Ka'abi, Ambassador of Bahrain to Oman, and several Foreign Ministry officials.

Discussion with Serbian counterpart

H E Sayyid Badr reviewed aspects of bilateral cooperation with Ivica

Dacic, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, in a telephonic conversation on Wednesday. They also discussed ongoing efforts to finalise an agreement on avoidance of double taxation between Oman and Serbia.

The ministers also discussed several regional and international matters and stressed the importance of advocating dialogue, while espousing constructive consultation to find tangible solutions for the realisation of stability and peace for all. ONA

Navigating Oman's thriving real estate market

Judit Lestak, Business Director and Owner of Vista Real Estate Company

Founded in 2020, Vista Real Estate Company has witnessed rapid growth since its inception and is counted among the top real estate firms in Oman. In an exclusive interview with Muscat Daily, Judit Lestak, Business Director and Owner of Vista Real Estate, talks about her company's journey and strengths in Oman's real estate market. Excerpts:

1 What inspired the founding of Vista Real Estate, and what sets it apart from other real estate companies in Oman?

I began my real estate journey in Oman back in 2005. After navigating through various companies, sponsors, and challenges, Vista Real Estate emerged as my final destination. Maintaining honesty and earning the trust of clients is no simple feat in the real estate industry. Therefore, I attribute the company's success to my own reputation within the real estate market.

2 Vista Real Estate was founded in 2020. How do you assess the company's performance in the initial years of its operations?

Despite lacking substantial investment or franchise backing, Vista Real Estate experienced rapid growth during past four years. Our diverse portfolio of properties, broad client base, and extensive marketing efforts have positioned us as one of the premier real estate companies in Oman.

3 How many properties are currently under management by Vista Real Estate, and what types of properties are included in the company's portfolio?

Our primary focus has been on leasing. We currently manage nearly 100 units exclusively in Al Mouj Muscat, and we have additional rental properties all over Muscat, spanning from Jebel Sifah to Seeb. We have expanded our leasing department and commercial of-



JUDIT LESTAK

Business Director and Owner

ferings, which now include commercial properties, business centers, and offices for corporate clients.

Moreover, we have recently created a 'One-Stop-Shop' for freehold properties in Oman. The sultanate is attracting investments from all over the world. Keeping this in mind, we are currently building an advisory to advise Omanis and foreign investors about investing in Oman's real estate sector. Our services will be tailor-made as per the requirements of individual investor.

4 How does Vista Real Estate plan to establish itself as a leading real estate company in Oman while fostering personal business relationships with its clients?

We have a team of dedicated professionals, and personalised real estate services remain at the forefront of our priorities. We strive to address the needs of property owners and developers while aligning them with the requirements of our customers.

VISTA REAL ESTATE

5 What is your company's approach to ensuring customer satisfaction, particularly when it comes to personalised treatment and individual needs of clients?

High levels of customer satisfaction lie at the heart of our success in real estate. Our approach entails prompt responses to inquiries, swift actions from our agents, meticulous property matching for clients, and ensuring optimal rent or sale prices for property owners. In the Omani market, we are famous for our prompt replies to clients and serving them in the best possible way.

6 What strategies does Vista Real Estate employ to successfully bring property owners and renters or buyers together? How does it create positive relationships that satisfy both parties?

One of the top skills to learn in real estate is active listening and asking the right questions. Finding the properties for the client will only work if we have full information on our products. Customers are always right; we intend to be polite and respectful, even when we have 50 phone calls a day. We prioritise respectful and courteous interactions, ensuring that both property owners and clients are content with the outcome.

7 What do you think are the major challenges in the Omani real estate market, and how has Vista Real Estate addressed these

challenges?

Unfortunately, Oman's real estate market has not yet built a professional environment. When the property manager is the 'watchman' and so many assets are being wasted because of the lack of understanding the market, we always aim to give consultation to owners who simply do not understand how to utilise their assets. We anticipate that new projects will usher in a brighter future for Oman's real estate landscape.

8 What are some emerging trends or opportunities in the Omani real estate market that Vista Real Estate is excited about?

We are very excited about the new projects in Oman. We are particularly enthusiastic about the burgeoning international developers' projects in Muscat. These projects present lucrative opportunities for real estate companies like ours to facilitate future sales and rentals.

9 What advice would you give to someone looking to invest in the Omani real estate market, and how can Vista Real Estate support them in this process?

I would like to advise them to visit our website at <https://vistaoman.com/itc-properties-in-oman/> for comprehensive information. We possess unparalleled insights into freehold properties/projects in Oman and offer realistic rental yield projections. Additionally, we facilitate visits to developer offices, ensuring that clients are well-informed throughout the investment process.

Our Correspondent

Muscat

Omani photographers Hamood bin Hamid Koofan and Qasim al Farsi have made a mark at the Kuwait Aerial Photography Competition, clinching top honours in the highly competitive event.

The third edition of the competition featured over 300 participants from across the Gulf, who submitted more than 1,000 photographs.

Koofan, hailing from Taqah in Dhofar, secured first place with a stunning image of Al Houta Beach in Rakhyut photographed in the last khareef season.

His photograph, which captured the serene beauty of Dho-far, won the nature category of the competition and was praised by the jury.

Farsi, from Samail in Dakhliyah, claimed the second



place in the cities and urbanism category with a photograph of a football pitch in the Taiwiyah area of Sur.

Speaking with *Muscat Daily*, Koofan expressed his joy and pride in the achievement. "I am thrilled to win this recognition. It

marks a milestone in my photography career."

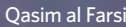
Koofan started photography in 2014 when he was in school and

I am thrilled to win this recognition. It marks a milestone in my photography career. This achievement is not just mine; it belongs to all photographers in Oman

**HAMOOD BIN
HAMID KOOFAN**

attributes his success to continuous learning and skill development. Expressing gratitude for the support he has received, he said, "This achievement is not just mine; it belongs to all photographers in Oman."

Besides nature and urbanism, the categories included wildlife. The competition aims to highlight



the natural and architectural beauty and tourism potential of Gulf cities. It provides photographers a platform to showcase

their skills while highlighting the rich cultural and environmental diversity of the region through their lenses.

Our Correspondent

Muscat

The recent heavy rains across Oman, particularly in Buraimi governorate, dramatically transformed the arid landscape into lush green expanses, drawing visitors from across the region to newly beautified natural sites.

The deluge filled all dams in the wilayat of Mahda to capacity, with collected water measuring a staggering 3.331mn m3, creating sprawling water bodies spread over vast areas.

The Al Hawiyah area, nestled between the wilayats of Buraimi and Mahda, is now a prime example of nature's swift and splendid transformation. Here,



large tracts of previously parched land have turned into verdant fields, burgeoning with a variety of vegetation that beautify the

region. The greenery has attracted numerous species of wildlife, returning to graze in their natural habitats.

The beauty of these rain-fed landscapes has not only enhanced the visual appeal of the region but also boosted tourism significantly. Oman's varied natural treasures, particularly in Buraimi governorate, have been augmented by the seasonal rains, enriching the sultanate's diverse ecology and geology.

The rains have rejuvenated the governorate's numerous wadis, turning these into vibrant ecosystems teeming with life. Streams and wadis such as Wadi Sharm, Al Qahfi, Al Khadra, Abu Qalaa, Wadi Wasit, Al Fayad, Aijan and Katnah are now alive with flowing water, attracting enthusiasts eager to explore nature and tranquil settings.

Our Correspondent

Muscat

An Omani tech startup is set to revolutionise education with introduction of an innovative three-dimensional technology.

Onsor Technologies presented its 'AMAD Device', which allows students to experience 3D education without the need of special glasses, at Future Dimensions Week 2 held at Independent Learning Centre in Sultan Qaboos University from April 16 to 23.

Blending knowledge and modern technology, Future Dimensions Week 2 showcased a revolutionary educational experience opening new horizons for students and faculty members.

Describing the device, Maadh bin Ahmed al Hinai, CEO of Onsor Technologies, said, "AMAD relies on advanced technology that enables the user to interact with 3D content through precise cameras that monitor eye movements. Thanks to this technology, the screen becomes a gateway to

rich cognitive worlds, where images become clearer and more understandable, making it easier for students to grasp information in an engaging and effective way."

Hinai added, "It enhances interaction with educational content, adding a fun dimension to the educational process. Three-dimensional images help deep understanding of concepts, especially complex ones that are difficult to visualise in two-dimensional space."

"AMAD represents a signifi-

cant step towards enhancing the use of technology in education. It is also a qualitative addition to the efforts of Sultan Qaboos University and Onsor Technologies in developing the educational process and providing an environment conducive to learning for all students."

Essam al Ismaili, CCO of Onsor Technologies, said the company is committed to providing this innovative technology to all educational institutions to improve the quality of education and enhance student learning.

Washington, US - The first Omani-American Economic Forum was held on Wednesday in Washington with the aim of enhancing trade and investment exchange between the two countries.

The forum was organised by the Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman in the United States in co-operation with the American Chamber of Commerce on the sidelines of the second Omani-American Strategic Dialogue.

H E Sheikh Khalifa Ali al Hart-
hy, Undersecretary for Political
Affairs in the Foreign Ministry,
delivered a speech reaffirming
the importance of the historical
and strategic relations between
Oman and the US, and the efforts
exerted to enhance trade and in-
vestment exchange between the
two countries to achieve the
goals of Oman Vision 2040.

The forum was attended by a number of officials from the US government, representatives of American companies, and figures from the private sector.

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Galfar shares surge 20% on Oman-UAE Rail contract



Our Correspondent
Muscat

Shares of Galfar Engineering & Contracting Company have surged by 20% over the past two trading sessions, following the company's success in winning a RO521mn contract for the Oman-UAE Rail project in a consortium with UAE's Trojan Construction Group.

Galfar shares recorded a 9.87% increase on Wednesday at the Muscat Stock Exchange, extending sharp gains for the second consecutive day after a 9.35% jump on Tuesday.

'We are pleased to inform our esteemed shareholders that Oman-Etihaad Rail Company (Hafeet Rail) has awarded the joint venture of Galfar and partners the design and build contract of the Abu-Dhabi-Sohar railway link project at a total esti-

Galfar shares recorded a 9.87% increase on Wednesday at the Muscat Stock Exchange, extending sharp gains for the second consecutive day after a 9.35% jump on Tuesday

imated value of RO521mn,' Galfar said in a disclosure to the Muscat Stock Exchange on Wednesday.

The Oman-Etihaad Rail Company, a joint venture between Oman Rail and Etihaad Rail, will operate the railway network connecting Sohar Port to the UAE National Rail Network, with a total project investment of \$3bn. The Oman-Etihaad Rail Company

on Tuesday unveiled 'Hafeet Rail' as the new identity of the Oman-UAE Rail Network.

Three significant agreements related to the joint rail project were signed in Abu Dhabi on Tuesday. The first is a partnership agreement between stakeholders such as Etihaad Rail, Oman Rail, and Mubadala Investment, signaling the project's commencement.

The second agreement involves awarding civil contracts for the joint network to an Omani-Emirati alliance led by Trojan Construction Group and Galfar Engineering and Contracting. Lastly, the third agreement pertains to the systems and integration contracts for the railway network, awarded to a partnership between Siemens and HAC.

In its disclosure to the Muscat Stock Exchange, Galfar Engineering & Contracting Company ex-

pressed its gratitude towards Hafeet Rail for the trust placed in the joint venture consortium.

Galfar noted that securing this major project would significantly enhance its order book and strategically position the company to diversify into railway infrastructure projects.

In a statement to the Emirates News Agency on Tuesday, Mohammed bin Zahran al Mahruqi, Deputy CEO of Hafeet Rail, said, "Construction works were the focus of the second agreement signed on Tuesday, assigning the works to a national alliance led by Trojan Construction Group and Galfar Engineering & Contracting. The tender allocation reflects a clear vision aimed at empowering and developing national cadres and contractors, enhancing local value-added, and involving the private sector in this vital project."

Oman-UAE Rail project enters implementation phase

Abu Dhabi, UAE - Ahmed al Musawa al Hashemi, CEO of Hafeet Rail, confirmed that the railway project connecting Oman and the United Arab Emirates has entered the implementation phase.

This development follows several significant steps, beginning with the signing of a partnership agreement between stakeholders and the awarding of major contracts for the project to a UAE-Omani consortium comprising companies from both nations operating as one team.

Speaking to the Emirates News Agency (WAM) on the sidelines of the joint UAE-Oman Business Forum in Abu Dhabi on Tuesday, Hashemi said that the project will yield numerous economic and social benefits.

He expressed his expectations that the UAE-Oman railway project will serve as a catalyst for further cooperation in various economic and industrial sectors, noting its direct impact on passenger movement between the two countries, further boosting tourism and ties between their peoples.

Hashemi added that the rail-



Ahmed al Musawa al Hashemi

way line in this project extends from the existing network in the UAE, specifically from the Al Wathba area to the city and port of Sohar, passing through diverse geographical regions, including deserts, mountains, and valleys, and running alongside Jebel Hafeet, from which the joint venture company Hafeet Rail derives its name.

In his statement to WAM, Mohammed bin Zahran al Mahruqi, Deputy CEO of Hafeet Rail affirmed that the UAE-Oman railway project will serve multiple sectors in both countries and contribute to the devel-

opment of new sectors previously nonexistent due to the difficulty of transporting goods.

He pointed out the project's environmental benefits by reducing carbon dioxide emissions. The train's capacity, equivalent to 300 trucks, will reduce 80% of carbon emissions generated by trucks.

Mahruqi discussed the economic impact, highlighting freight trains' role in enhancing trade exchange between the two countries, with a cargo capacity of up to 15,000 tonnes of general goods and approximately 270 standard containers.

Investcorp launches \$1bn platform to invest in GCC and China

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Investcorp, a leading global alternative investment firm, and China Investment Corporation (CIC), one of the world's largest sovereign wealth funds, on Wednesday announced the launch of Investcorp Golden Horizon to invest in high-growth companies across Saudi Arabia, the rest of the countries of the GCC and China.

The platform has a target size of \$1bn and will be anchored by reputable institutional and private investors from the GCC, as well as CIC. Target companies are expected to have high growth potential in attractive sectors, including consumer, healthcare, logistics and business services. The Investcorp Saudi Pre-IPO Growth Fund, which is part of the Platform, has already announced three investments in the GCC.

This anchor commitment from CIC to the platform comes at a time when the GCC's appeal to institutional investors is gathering pace, thanks to its stable



Mohammed Alardhi

regulatory environment and its pro-business policies, including its economic diversification drive and strategic privatisation mandates.

Investcorp's Executive Chairman, Mohammed Alardhi, said, "This commitment by CIC, one of the world's largest sovereign wealth funds, is a testament to Investcorp's unparalleled franchise in the GCC and reinforces the trust placed in the firm's global platform and teams. We are looking forward to building on this relationship and growing

our partnership in the future."

Dr Bin Qi, Executive Vice President and Deputy CIO of CIC, said, "As one of the world's largest sovereign wealth funds, CIC has been actively investing in both developed and emerging economies. During the past couple of years, we have built several bilateral funds with leading financial institutions to facilitate industrial cooperation between China and major economies in the world. Currently we are working closely with Investcorp to build a similar bilateral fund to strengthen financial and industrial ties between China and GCC countries."

Hazem Ben-Gacem, Co-CEO of Investcorp, commented, "We're delighted to be partnering with CIC to participate in the economic transformation and investment opportunities presented across the GCC. Investcorp is perfectly placed to facilitate cross border cooperation and investments between the GCC and China.

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Abu Dhabi's ADQ acquires stake in Plenary Group

Abu Dhabi, UAE - ADQ, an Abu Dhabi-based investment and holding company, and Plenary Group, an independent investor, developer and manager of public-private infrastructure projects headquartered in Australia, Wednesday announced a partnership aimed at expediting the expansion of public and social infrastructure through strategic investments.

ADQ will acquire a 49% stake in Plenary, including all shares currently owned by Canadian pension fund Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec, which will continue to be heavily invested in a range of Plenary's Australian assets and remains the major shareholder in Plenary's separate Americas business.

The primary capital contribution by ADQ will be used to accelerate Plenary's growth ambitions across its key markets in Australia, the Middle East, Asia, the UK and Europe.

UAE firms eye impactful projects in Oman

Abu Dhabi, UAE – Abdulla Mohamed al Mazrui, Chairman of the Federation of UAE Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UAE Chambers) and Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), highlighted the strong collaboration with the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), emphasising ongoing efforts to enhance exceptional and strategic relations.

This collaboration aims to facilitate the exchange of best practices and experiences for the mutual benefit of the people of both countries.

In a statement to the Emirates News Agency (WAM) on the sidelines of the joint UAE-Oman Business Forum on Tuesday in Abu Dhabi, Mazrui said that both parties are committed to further streamlining processes to overcome any obstacles that investors in the UAE and Oman might encounter in the future.

He said, "Our relationship with Oman is exceptional due to our proximity as neighbours. Many Omani companies function almost as if they were Emirati, and likewise, we have a



UAE stands as the foremost investor in Oman. The Sultanate boasts an economically conducive investment environment primed to attract capital and foster business expansion for companies from both nations

ABDULLA MOHAMED AL MAZRUI

significant presence of Emirati merchants and companies in Oman, operating seamlessly like any other Omani entity."

Regarding the UAE-Oman Business Forum, Mazrui elaborated that numerous leaders of Emirati companies attending the

event aim to usher in a new era in Oman by spearheading the establishment of high-impact projects in the sultanate.

He emphasised that Oman boasts an economically conducive investment environment primed to attract capital and foster business expansion for companies from both nations.

He highlighted that the UAE stands as the foremost investor in the Sultanate of Oman and ranks third globally. He underscored the pivotal role of the agreements inked on the sidelines of the forum in bolstering closer economic and strategic ties. These agreements encompass cooperation in renewable energy, aluminium, iron, and various projects within Oman's free zones. He emphasised that these initiatives will swiftly propel both nations toward significant achievements.

The Chairman of UAE Chambers highlighted the UAE's expertise across various economic sectors, infrastructure, and transportation. The forum presents a unique opportunity for Omani counterparts to leverage and transfer this expertise, emphasising Oman's incentives

geared towards fostering comprehensive economic development.

In his statement to Emirates News Agency (WAM), Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said the UAE-Oman Business Forum affirms the historic relationship between the two countries, noting that several agreements have been signed that will help drive economic growth and provide more job opportunities in both countries, and boost bilateral trade exchange.

Rawas highlighted the key role of bilateral agreements signed during the forum in enhancing the private sector's contributions to the economies of both countries. This sector will benefit from more job opportunities in core or supportive services, he added.

Regarding investments between the UAE and Oman, he pointed out that investments between the two countries are continuing, with the UAE being the largest Arab investor in Oman and constantly seeking to increase its investments. WAM

Tesla plans to accelerate launch of cheaper cars

Pras Subramanian

Tesla stock jumped in pre-market trading on Wednesday after the company said it would accelerate the launch of more affordable vehicles, countering reports earlier this month the company would scrap these plans.

"We have updated our future vehicle line-up to accelerate the launch of new models ahead of our previously communicated start of production in the second half of 2025," Tesla said in its first quarter shareholder release.

On the earnings call, CEO Elon Musk said the timelines for new vehicles could be in early 2025, if not later this year. Tesla declined to say when the cheap EV will debut, though Musk did say the company would talk more about these vehicles on August 8, the day the robotaxi will be revealed.

"These new vehicles, including more affordable models, will utilise aspects of the next generation platform as well as aspects of our current platforms, and will be able to be produced on the same manufacturing lines as our current vehicle line-up," Tesla said in the release.

Despite reporting a revenue and earnings miss, investors seemingly cheered the much-needed update on the EV maker's current and future prospects. Tesla shares were up



Tesla CEO Elon Musk

as much as 11% in pre-market trade.

Tesla reported first quarter adjusted earnings per share of \$0.45, below the \$0.52 estimated, on revenue of \$21.3bn, which missed forecasts for \$22.3bn, according to Bloomberg data. Revenue fell 9% from a year ago, Tesla's first drop in four years.

Tesla reported \$1.2bn in operating profit in the first quarter and \$1.5bn in adjusted net income. Both numbers were short of forecasts and down more than 50% from a year ago. In terms of delivery guidance, Tesla said it still sees "notably lower volume," echoing what the company said in its Q4 earnings report.

In its shareholder letter, Tesla also showed preview images of a ridehailing feature in its app

showing how a Tesla robotaxi could work.

In Q1, Tesla reported 386,810 global deliveries, well below estimates of 449,080, and produced 433,371 vehicles, also below estimates of 452,976. Tesla did note in the first quarter report that Cybertruck production hit 1000 units a week in April.

The difference of around 46,500 vehicles produced versus sold led to concerns of demand waning globally for Tesla vehicles, which in turn has led to round after round of price cuts. On Monday, Tesla cut prices for vehicles in the US and China, leading to weakness in the stock during the day.

Nonetheless, Tesla confirmed that the long-awaited next-generation platform would underpin a sub-\$30,000 mainstream EV — dubbed the Model 2. That's a huge deal for investors, many of whom see the low-cost EV as a volume play for Tesla.

Tesla said upcoming vehicles, including the affordable models, would use aspects of the next-generation platform as well as existing platforms, allowing them to be built on the same assembly lines as current vehicles. The "purpose-built robotaxi," on the other hand, will use the revolutionary "unboxed" production line to be made, Tesla said.

(Source: Yahoo Finance)

Oil prices up over strong US demand data

Muscat – Oil prices continued their upward trend on Wednesday over robust demand indicators in the US, the world's biggest oil consumer, indicating some tightening in US markets as the summer vacation season approaches.

International benchmark Brent crude traded at \$88.55 per barrel at 0730 GMT, a 0.15% increase from the closing price of \$88.42 per barrel in the previous trading session.

The US benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) traded at \$83.46 per barrel at the same time, a 0.12% rise from the previous session that closed at

\$83.36 per barrel.

The American Petroleum Institute announced late Tuesday an estimated decrease of 3.23 million barrels in US crude oil inventories, against the market prediction of a build of 1.8 million barrels.

The data indicates some tightening in the US markets as the travel-heavy summer vacation season draws near.

If official data from the Energy Information Administration (EIA) later on Wednesday reveals a reduction in the amount of gasoline and oil stockpiles, prices are predicted to rise even further.

Meanwhile, the longstanding Israeli-Palestinian conflict showed no signs of abating and is continuing to raise geopolitical risks in the Middle East.

Israel is continuing its relentless onslaught for the 201st day despite a UN Security Council resolution demanding an immediate cease-fire in the besieged Gaza Strip.

Since last October, Israel's offensive has killed over 34,183 people and injured 77,143 others amid a crippling blockade that has left most of the population on the verge of starvation in Gaza strip.

Agencies

FINCORP AL AMAL FUND			
UNAUDITED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 MARCH 2024			
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDED MARCH 31, 2024			
Dear Unit holders, On behalf of the Investors' Committee, I hereby present to you the un-audited financial results of Fincorp Al Amal Fund (AIG), for the period ended March 31, 2024.			
Fund Performance			
Figures In OMR	31-Mar-24	31-Mar-23	31-Dec-23
Net Asset Value	206,813	283,356	873,095
Fund Income	-27,204	-23,421	-166,432
Fund Expenses	179,609	259,935	706,663
Net Profit / (Loss)			
Figures in OMR	31-Mar-24	31-Mar-23	31-Dec-23
Net Asset Value	4,458,386	4,452,935	4,598,221
Units Outstanding	4,259,249	4,544,670	4,259,249
Net Asset Value per unit	1.047	0.980	1.080
Fund Performance (net of fees)	3.91%	6.17%	16.98%
MSCI ACWI INDEX	7.78%	6.84%	20.09%
S&P GCC Composite Index	0.96%	-1.80%	6.19%
Blended MSCI ACWI and S&P GCC Composite Index	4.37%	2.52%	13.14%
Q1 2024 Performance			
At the beginning of 2023, investors' expectations were navigated to an imminent U.S. economic slowdown and a series of Fed rate cuts to go along with it. Now first quarter of 2024 has just crossed over and we are seeing substantial economic downturns in several countries, from UK, Ireland and Germany. Whereas global equity markets in the U.S., Europe, and Japan hit all-time highs in March Month enlightening the first quarter of 2024. In U.S., rate cuts continue to be postponed due to an economy that still seems to be in a relatively good condition according to the stock markets momentum.			
During Q1 2024, MSCI ACWI inclined by 7.78% led by February month upside of 4.17% alone. Alongside, S&P GCC Composite performance stands at 0.96% for Q1 2024 amidst oil market volatility, geopolitical tensions & high interest rates. U.S. 10-year Treasury yields are up from 3.95% in January to 4.2% in late March.			
Market Outlook			
US economic data published since the start of the year suggests that the World's largest economy continued to remain resilient in the first quarter. In the same line, U.S. Federal Reserve and other major central banks have made progress against inflation and kept policy rates stagnant which appears close to their peak levels. Annual Global GDP growth is now projected at 2.6% (from prior projection 2.3%). The upward revision reflects somewhat higher forecasts for growth in several countries, including US, UK, India & Brazil.			
Global trade has also fallen as new trade blocks emerge in the wake of Russia invasion of Ukraine, leading to more fragmentation, along with weakening trade links between China and U.S. Within emerging markets, India remains the top preferred market and clearly continuing to benefit from negative investor sentiment toward China. Global markets will continue to react to inflation and interest rate expectations on the forefront. That's probably still true, especially if inflation continues to run above 3% and if estimates for rate cuts continue to pare back we may see new dynamics emerge as well.			
GCC GDP Growth is projected at 2.7% for the year 2024 from 1% in 2023. Despite the energy sector exerting downward pressure on GCC economic growth, non-energy sector performance is expected to offset some of the impact. GCC Regional data of Non-Oil PMI index is slightly down in March month.			
Investment Strategy			
Among Global central banks, The European Central Bank is expected to initiate the first rate cut in June. But US is still more of a wildcard as investors continue to push back their bets on when cuts could begin, due to hotter-than-expected inflation data and a surprisingly resilient economy. Among advanced economies, the US has experienced the strongest rebound, helped by rising productivity growth. Advanced economies stand to benefit from AI sooner than emerging markets and developing economies, given greater emphasis on cognitive-intensive roles in Advanced economies.			
Hence the investment strategy focuses on genuinely diversified companies' portfolio in International & GCC Countries. This also focuses on fundamental, bottom-up value and long-term business forecasting remains our core investment approach which can provide strength over time despite the market's periodic knee-jerk reactions to evolving macro conditions.			
In Conclusion			
The Investors' Committee would like to express its appreciation and gratefulness to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq and the Omani Government for providing a secure and stable economic environment focused on driving growth and continued prosperity for all. The Committee also wishes to thank the Financial Services Authority and Muscat Securities Exchange for their sustained and continued efforts in building a vibrant capital market and the management team for their diligence and dedication in managing the fund successfully in a challenging economic environment.			
On behalf of the Investors' Committee, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all the unit holders for their continued support and confidence.			
On Behalf of the Investors Committee			
Ayman bin Hamed Al Busaidi Chairman Dated: April 23, 2024			
INTERIM STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 MARCH 2024			
	31 March 2024 RO	31 March 2022 RO	31 December 2022 RO
ASSETS			
Current assets			
Investments at fair value through profit or loss	4,071,536	4,239,401	4,470,182
Receivables	351,328	126,098	213,262
Cash and cash equivalents	60,150	107,002	185,159
Total assets	4,483,014	4,472,501	4,868,603
UNITHOLDERS' FUNDS			
Fund capital	4,259,249	4,544,670	4,259,249
Retained earnings	199,137	(91,735)	338,972
Total Unitholders' funds	4,458,386	4,452,935	4,598,221
LIABILITIES			
Current liabilities			
Redemption payable	-	-	177,370
Accruals and other payables	6,475	3,265	5,550
Amount due to related parties	18,153	16,301	87,462
Total liabilities	24,628	19,566	270,382
Total unitholders' funds and liabilities	4,483,014	4,472,501	4,868,603
Net asset value per unit	1.047	0.980	1.080
INTERIM STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE THREE-MONTH PERIOD ENDED 31 MARCH 2024			
	31 March 2024 RO (3 months)	31 March 2023 RO (3 months)	31 December 2023 RO (12 months)
INCOME			
Dividend income	62,799	66,604	134,582
Realised gain on sale of investments at fair value through profit or loss	132,659	79,762	331,788
Unrealised (loss)/gain on investments at fair value through profit or loss	9,767	134,004	397,504
Interest income	157	1,916	3,740
Redemption charges	-	116	870
Foreign exchange gains (net)	1,431	954	4,611
	206,813	283,356	873,095
EXPENSES			
Investors' committee's remuneration	-	-	(25,000)
Management fees	(6,700)	(6,183)	(26,376)
Administration fees	(5,482)	(5,059)	(21,580)
Advisory fees	(5,482)	(5,059)	(21,580)
Custodian service fees	(1,581)	(475)	(5,125)
Performance fees	-	-	(42,480)
Investors' committee's meeting attendance fees	(2,088)	(2,071)	(8,100)
Brokerage commission expenses	(1,440)	(1,253)	(3,701)
General and administration expenses	(4,431)	(3,321)	(12,490)
	(27,204)	(23,421)	(166,432)
Net profit for the period/ year	179,609	259,935	706,663
Earnings/(loss) per unit	0.042	0.057	0.156
Note: The complete accounts, either in Arabic and English as requested, will be sent by mail within 7 days of request to any unitholder who requests the Fund at the address: PO Box 782, PC 131, Sultanate of Oman, Tel : +968 24822327, Fax : +968 24822390			
P.O. Box 782, PC 131, Sultanate of Oman, Phone: (968) 24822327, Fax: (968) 24822390, E-mail: fincorp@fincorp.org, Website: www.fincorp.org			
Fincorp شركة المركز المالي ش.م.ع. The Financial Corporation Co. SAOG			
ادارة الاصول وساطة تمويل الشركات والاستشارات بحوث Asset Management Brokerage Corporate Finance and Advisory Research			

Geely floats unbeatable offers on all models

Geely Oman has announced exclusive offers on its lineup of vehicles, making it an ideal time to purchase your next car. From the sleek Coolray to the luxurious Azkarra, Geely has something for everyone.

Until April 26, customers can drive home the Coolray, a stylish and compact SUV designed to captivate with its modern aesthetics and advanced features. Equipped with a powerful yet fuel-efficient engine, cutting-edge technology, and a spacious interior, the Coolray offers an exhilarating driving experience for urban adventurers with an incredibly low EMI starting from just RO86.

The Emgrand, a versatile sedan combining elegance with practicality, is perfect for city commuting and long journeys alike. With its sleek design, spacious cabin, and impressive fuel efficiency, the Emgrand is available at an EMI starting from RO68.

For those seeking a premium



family SUV, the Okavango offers a harmonious blend of luxury, comfort, and performance. With ample seating capacity, advanced safety features, and versatile cargo space, the Okavango is designed to accommodate the needs of modern families with style and sophistication. Opt for the Okavango, with an EMI starting from RO104 and enjoy free

insurance on all variants.

If you aspire to set new standards in luxury and refinement, the Azkarra is a premium SUV that exudes sophistication and elegance. Featuring state-of-the-art technology, premium materials, and exceptional craftsmanship, the Azkarra provides a first-class driving experience for discerning individuals

who demand nothing but the best. You can bring it home with an EMI starting from RO106.

In addition to the attractive EMI prices, Geely is offering a range of added benefits to enhance the ownership experience. Customers purchasing the Azkarra Signature 2WD will receive free servicing for 3 years or 30,000km, whichever comes

earlier. For those opting for the Azkarra Platinum 4WD, enjoy complimentary service for 5 years or 50,000km, whichever comes earlier. All variants of the Azkarra come with free registration for 1 year, making it an irresistible offer.

Furthermore, all Geely models come with a manufacturer warranty of 5 years or

150,000km, whichever comes earlier. As an added bonus, customers will also receive free AAA roadside assistance for 3 years, providing peace of mind on the road.

Geely is also introducing a Walk in & Win promotion, offering customers the chance to win exciting prizes. From a set of Apple AirPods to fuel cards and

Lulu vouchers, there are plenty of rewards up for grabs.

"We are thrilled to offer our customers these exclusive offers on our popular models," said a spokesperson for Geely Oman. "With unbeatable EMI prices, complimentary servicing, and exciting prizes to be won, there has never been a better time to own a Geely vehicle."



BankDhofar enhances customer service

BankDhofar is pleased to announce extended working hours in 13 branches across the Sultanate of Oman exclusively for Small and Medium Enterprise customers. This move is in line with Oman Vision 2040 focus on this sector.

This initiative reflects the bank's dedication to deliver customer-centric solutions to its entrepreneurial clients, thereby supporting them in their growth and reflect on nation's economic prosperity, a press release said. This strategic move is complemented by the recent launch of a specialized business bank account tailored for SMEs, offering a comprehensive suite of banking solutions to meet their unique requirements. With an expanded branch network and advanced digital offerings, entrepreneurs can meet the relationship managers at their convenience.

SME customers can visit the mentioned branches from 3pm to 8pm on a daily basis except Friday and Saturday. The branches operating at extended hours are Ruwi (Lulu Center),

Muttrah, Seeb, Al Maabelah Industrial City and Al Khoud in Muscat Governorate, and Barka (the old BankDhofar branch). South Al Batinah Governorate, and Fanja Bidbid in Dakhliyah Governorate. In addition to Ibri branch in Wilayat Al Dhahirah Governorate, Sur in South Sharqiyah Governorate, Duqm in Al Wusta Governorate, and Salalah Industrial Zone in Dhofar Governorate.

BankDhofar is committed to empowering SMEs through innovative services such as Android smart phone enabled Point-of-Sale (SoftPOS) and traditional POS systems, facilitating cash collections and aiding in incremental sales. Additionally, Wage Protection System simplifies salary payments and streamlines employee salary management. Entrepreneurs can also benefit from remote cheque collection and deposit services, providing flexibility in business operations.

The Banks payment gateway enables SMEs to seamlessly collect online payments, while customized credit and debit cards cater to their specific needs.



ISC Sanskrit Wing celebrates Indian New Year

Indian Social Club Sanskrit Wing celebrated the 7th edition of Varsha-Pratipada Utsav (Indian New Year) on April 20 at the 'Oman Hall' of the College of Banking and Financial Studies in Bowsher, Muscat.

H E Amit Narang, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman, was the chief guest at the event which presents India's rich cultural heritage. This is the most awaited flagship event of the ISC-Sanskrit wing under the um-

brella of the Indian Social Club, a press release said.

The cultural richness of India was witnessed from various states like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh/Telangana, Maharashtra, Gujarat,

Rajasthan, West Bengal and Bihar. Around 120 children of various age groups along with 80 parents participated in the Shobha Yatra at the start of the programme. The festival of Varsha-Pratipada marks the begin-

ning of the New Year and marks beginning of the Vasant Ritu (season of spring). It is a manifestation of gratitude towards mother nature and a reminder that there is a cosmic balance at the core of our existence.

Wali of Muscat meets elders for review of projects

Ali bin Saeed al Saidi, Wali of Muscat, held a meeting with the sheikhs and leaders of the wilayat.

Al Sayyid Shabib bin Harib al Busaidi, director general of Muscat Municipality attended this meeting in the Wali's office, a press release said.

Many topics of concern on the wilayat's affairs were reviewed, including service projects to be implemented in the wilayat, like roads, lighting, landscaping, and public parks.

The national campaign to



combat the monkeypod tree was discussed at the meeting. Additionally, the importance of cooperation between civil society groups and the private sector in order to eliminate it was also discussed.

The Muscat Wali listened to the requests of the wilayat's leaders and sheikhs and also drew their attention towards the importance of citizens' awareness about the dangers of using psychotropic substances and the need for cooperation to prevent them.

Bank Nizwa fortifies its support for SMEs

In alignment with the Sultanate of Oman's robust endeavours to promote Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), Bank Nizwa reaffirms its status as the preferred banking partner for SMEs, offering an array of comprehensive benefits to its valued customers.

Through tailored financial solutions and personalised services designed specifically to address the varied requirements of businesses, Bank Nizwa aims to provide SMEs with an elevated level of flexibility in their financial operations. This commitment underscores the bank's dedication to providing unparalleled Sharia-compliant solutions to SMEs,



thus driving their success at every stage of their operations, a press release said.

Commenting on the bank's customer-centric approach, Mohamed al Ghassani, deputy gen-

eral manager – Retail Banking, Bank Nizwa, said, "At Bank Nizwa it is our endeavour to empower SMEs to realise their full potential. Leveraging our extensive expertise in Islamic finance, we have crafted a suite of solutions that will set them up for success throughout their entrepreneurial journeys."

"In tandem with our array of services, our dedicated team of seasoned professionals at every branch is poised to deliver personalized assistance and expert guidance. This approach ensures that each SME receives the attention and support required to navigate the intricacies of the modern business landscape with

confidence and agility, propelling them toward enduring success."

With a keen focus on enhancing convenience, Bank Nizwa ensures that SME owners can effortlessly initiate account openings at any of its branches across the Sultanate. Additionally, keeping with its digitalization efforts, Bank Nizwa's Internet Banking platform caters to the evolving digital preferences of SME owners, providing an efficient means to manage their accounts, transactions, and financial operations remotely. In line with the bank's commitment to supporting day-to-day operations, SMEs also receive up to 5 complimentary cheque books.

Sri Lanka introduces new e-Visas

With effect from April 17, all tourist or business travellers to Sri Lanka must have an e-Visa for entering Sri Lanka by applying at the official website: <https://www.srilankaeva.lk>. The visitors should register at the official website and apply online.

When applying for an e-Visa through third parties, payments should be made only through official website <https://www.srilankaeva.lk>. Therefore, it is the applicant's responsibility to always ensure that the payments are made by accessing the official e-Visa website, in

order to avoid repayments or scamming by third parties, a press release said, adding that the previous visa scheme, Electronic Travel Authority (ETA), has been discontinued.

On the basis of reciprocity, citizens of Singapore, Maldives, Seychelles and Czech Republic are exempted from the requirement of obtaining tourist standard 6-months e-Visa to visit Sri Lanka. Travellers of certain nationalities cannot avail e-Visa and should apply for a visit visa at the nearest Sri Lankan Mission or at the Department of Immigration and Emigration. All passengers on transit in Sri

Lanka are eligible for an e-Visa waiver, if transiting through any of the Sri Lankan airports. The waiver is valid for a maximum of 2-day transit period only.

All tourist/business travellers should carry printed copy of the e-Visa approval issued by the Sri Lanka Department of Immigration and Emigration, passport with at least six months validity from the date of entry and return ticket or proof of onward travel from Sri Lanka. Passengers from certain countries need to submit yellow fever vaccination certificate to comply with international health regulations.

Saudi condemns massacres by Israel following discovery of mass graves

Ankara, Turkey - Saudi Arabia on Wednesday condemned the Israeli war crimes committed against Palestinians following the discovery of mass graves in the courtyard of the Nasser Medical Complex in the city of Khan Younis in southern Gaza.

In a statement, the kingdom's Foreign Ministry expressed 'condemnation of the continued and unchecked heinous war crimes committed by the Israeli occupation forces, the latest of which is the mass graves discovered in the Nasser Medical Complex in the city of Khan Younis'.

It also said the international community's failure to hold Israel accountable for its violations of international law 'will only result in more violations and exacerbation of humanitarian tragedies and destruction'.

The statement reiterated Saudi Arabia's call for the inter-



Over 300 bodies have been recovered so far from the mass grave at Nasser Medical Complex after the Israeli army withdrew from the city on April 7

national community to assume 'its responsibility to stop the Israeli occupation's attacks on civilians in the Gaza Strip'.

Over 300 bodies have been recovered so far from the mass grave at Nasser Medical Complex after the Israeli army with-

drew from the city on April 7 following a four-month ground offensive, according to Gaza's civil defence agency.

Israel has waged a brutal offensive on the Gaza Strip since a cross-border attack by the Palestinian group Hamas on Oc-

tober 7 last year, which Tel Aviv says killed nearly 1,200 people.

More than 34,180 Palestinians have since been killed, mostly women and children, and 77,000 others injured amid mass destruction and severe shortages of necessities.

Meanwhile, hundreds of illegal Israeli settlers on Wednesday stormed into the Al-Aqsa Mosque complex in occupied East Jerusalem to mark the Jewish Passover holiday.

In a statement, the Islamic Endowments Department in Jerusalem said nearly 703 illegal settlers, who were protected by the Israeli forces, stormed the mosque.

Passover, which commemorates the Israelites' exodus from Egypt during the time of Prophet Moses, is considered one of the most important holidays on the Jewish religious calendar.

The Israeli forces imposed restrictions on the movement of Palestinians inside the Al-Aqsa Mosque complex during the settlers' tour in its courtyards, the statement said.

Witnesses told Anadolu that the Israeli forces were heavily deployed inside the mosque to secure the settlers who entered the mosque in groups from the Al-Mugharbah Gate area, west of the holy mosque.

Al-Aqsa Mosque is the world's third-holiest site for Muslims. Jews call the area the Temple Mount, claiming it was the site of two Jewish temples in ancient times. Israel occupied East Jerusalem, where Al-Aqsa is located, during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. It annexed the entire city in 1980 in a move never recognised by the international community.

Anadolu Agency



Israeli army calls up 2 combat brigades for fighting in Gaza

Jerusalem - The Israeli army on Wednesday announced transferring two combat brigades from northern Israel to carry out fighting missions in Gaza.

In a statement, the Israeli army said the 2nd Reserve Brigade of the 146th Division and the 679th Reserve Brigade of the 210th Division will be transferred from northern Israel, at the Lebanon border, to the Gaza Strip.

The two brigades have finalised their combat training preparedness for their mission in Gaza, the Israeli army added.

The statement, however, did not clarify the nature of the mission in Gaza, but the move came amid the Israeli army's plans to attack the Rafah city, southern Gaza Strip.

Last week, an Israeli government spokesperson said Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu set a date for invading Rafah.

Rafah is the last remaining area in the enclave where Israel has not yet formally announced

Rafah is the last remaining area in the enclave where Israel has not yet formally announced the entry of its troops to continue the onslaught against Palestinians

the entry of its troops to continue the onslaught against Palestinians.

Meanwhile, the Pentagon said on Tuesday that the US military still has concerns about a potential Israeli ground operation in the southern Gaza city of Rafah.

Speaking at a press briefing, spokesman Pat Ryder recalled a meeting between US and Israeli officials in which he said the two countries agreed on a 'shared objective' to defeat Hamas and

shared their thinking on Rafah.

"We've shared ours, but in terms of what their plan looks like. We still have some concerns in terms of the various courses of actions. And so we'll continue to discuss those concerns related to how they're going to take into account civilian safety and humanitarian assistance," said Ryder.

He said there is no indications at this point that any type of major ground operation has begun. "And so, again, those conversations will continue to be very important, and it will also continue to be something that we feel is essential, that before any type of operation that they're taking civilian safety and humanitarian considerations," said Ryder.

Some 15 rockets were fired from southern Lebanon toward Israeli northern Galilee areas on Wednesday, triggering the activation of sirens in the area, according to Israeli media.

Anadolu Agency

US Senate passes \$95bn aid bill

Washington, D.C., US - The US Senate approved a long-awaited US\$95bn foreign aid package for Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan on Tuesday.

The chamber passed the bill in a bipartisan 79-18 vote, sending it to President Joe Biden's desk for his signature.

Biden said he will sign the bill into law as soon as it reaches his desk on Wednesday.

"The need is urgent: for Ukraine, facing unrelenting bombardment from Russia; for Israel, which just faced unprecedented attacks from Iran; for refugees and those impacted by



conflicts and natural disasters around the world, including in Gaza, Sudan and Haiti; and for our partners seeking security and stability in the Indo-Pacific," he said in a statement released shortly after the Senate passed the bill.

The bill includes more than US\$60.8bn for Ukraine, US\$26.6bn for Israel and US\$8bn for Indo-Pacific allies to counter China.

The bill would also allow nearly US\$9.1bn for humanitarian efforts in Ukraine, Israel and Gaza.

It also includes language to force the Chinese owner of TikTok to sell off the social media app or risk being effectively banned in the US. Independent Senator Bernie Sanders called the passing of the bill a 'dark day' in the US Senate.

Anadolu Agency

Unaudited Interim condensed financial statements for the three-month period ended 31 March 2024

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Muscat City Desalination Company SAOG ("MCDC" or the "Company"), I am pleased to present the Directors' Report together with the unaudited financial statements of the Company for the three-month period ended on 31 March 2024.

Health, Safety and Environment (HSE)

The HSE performance of the Company to date has been satisfactory, with no Lost Time Accidents ("LTA"). The operator entity, Muscat City Desalination Operations and Maintenance Company LLC ("MCDOMC") has completed 2,954 days without any LTA since the plant's commercial operations commenced on 19 February 2016. Similarly, there were no environmental incidents for the same period.

Operations

During the first three months of 2024, the Company achieved a higher availability of 94.74%, as compared to 91.98% during the same period in 2023. The water dispatch during the first three months of 2024 was 15,043,800 m3, a decrease of 4.36% as compared to 15,729,462 m3 during the same period in 2023. The total forced outage rate for the three-month period ending on 31 March 2024 is 0.08% (31 March 2023: 0.18%).

Financial Results

The Company's revenue for first three months of 2024 was RO 4.166 million whilst the direct operating cost was RO 2.567 million. Accordingly, the gross profit for the period was RO 1.599 million, which is 1.2% higher as compared to the corresponding period last year. General and administrative expenses for the first three months of 2024 were RO 0.235 million, which is higher by 1.3% as compared to the corresponding period last year. Finance costs for the first three months of 2024 were RO 0.678 million, which is 3.6% lower than the finance costs incurred for the corresponding period last year.

The Company recorded profit before tax (PBT) of RO 0.687 million which is 6.3% higher than the PBT for the same period last year. Overall, the Company achieved profit after tax of RO 0.578 million for the period as compared to profit after tax of RO 0.544 million for the corresponding period in 2024.

As at 31 March 2024, the share price of MCDC was 74 Baizas (31 March 2023: 99 Baizas).

During the Annual General Meeting held on 25 March 2024 ("AGM"), the Company's shareholders resolved to authorise the Board of Directors to determine and distribute cash dividends in May and November 2024, out of the retained earnings of the Company as reflected in the Company's audited financial statements for the financial year ended on 31 December 2023, provided that the aggregate amount of the dividends shall not exceed Baiza 4.822 per share (i.e. totalling circa RO 750,000), to the Company's shareholders who are registered in the Company's shareholders' register at Muscat Clearing & Depository Company SAOC as at dates to be determined by the Board of Directors.

Pursuant to the authority granted by the shareholders at the above-mentioned AGM, the Board of Directors, at its meeting held on 24 April 2024, has resolved to distribute cash dividends with a value of Baiza 2.411 per share out of the Company's retained profits for the period ended 31 December 2023 to the shareholders who are registered in the Company's register at Muscat Clearing & Depository Company SAOC as at 15 May 2024, amounting to circa RO 375,000.

Corporate Governance

The Board of Directors and Management of the Company believe in the importance of the internal control system. The Company has a comprehensive system of internal controls in place. The Company has periodically carried out comprehensive reviews of its key internal policies and procedures in order to ensure its compliance.

The Audit Committee has approved the Internal Audit Plan for 2024 which will be implemented throughout the year.

Information Security

The Company has developed information technology ("IT") and security policy and procedures pursuant to the Capital Market Authority ("CMA") Circular No. E/1/2022 on Information Security Guidelines for Public Listed Companies.

During the first quarter of the financial year, some enhancements were being implemented as suggested by consultants based on their assessments of the policy, procedure and IT infrastructures in the Financial Year 2023.

The Internal Audit Unit will review the implementation of the enhancement projects with supervision by the Audit Committee.

Future Outlook

All reasonable and prudent measures have been and will continue to be taken by the Company to ensure high standards of health, safety and environmental compliance, and to sustain and improve reliability and availability going forward.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to extend our utmost appreciation and gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik bin Taimur Al Said and His Government for their continued support and encouragement to the private sector by creating an environment that allows the Company to participate effectively in the growth of the Sultanate's economy and to contribute in the building of a strong nation.

Anwar Syahrin bin Abdul Ajib
Chairman of the Board

Note: The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who requests them either in Arabic or English to the company's address at PO Box: 1935, PC: 114, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman or go to our website www.mcdcoman.com



MUSCAT CITY
DESALINATION
COMPANY SAOG

Unaudited interim condensed statement of financial position as at 31 March 2024

	Unaudited 31 March 2024	Audited 31 December 2023
	RO'000s	RO'000s
Assets		
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	79,025	79,659
Lease asset (right of use assets)	226	229
Non-current portion of fair value of derivative financial instruments	1,974	1,499
Total non-current assets	81,225	81,387
Current assets		
Trade and other receivables	1,517	1,528
Cash and cash equivalents	2,319	1,969
Current portion of fair value of derivative financial instruments	321	240
Total current assets	4,157	3,737
Total assets	85,382	85,124
Equity and Liabilities		
Equity		
Share capital	15,555	15,555
Legal reserve	2,726	2,668
Retained earnings	3,433	2,913
	21,714	21,136
Hedging Reserve	1,950	1,478
Net Equity	23,664	22,614

Non-current liabilities		
Non-current portion of term loans	41,713	42,637
Provision for decommissioning obligation	238	234
Deferred tax	5,902	5,709
Lease liability - non-current portion	243	245
Shareholders' bridge loans	6,509	6,473
Shareholders' stand-by equity loans	754	754
End-of-service benefits	40	36
Total non-current liabilities	55,399	56,088
Current liabilities		
Current portion of term loans	3,714	3,709
Lease liability - current portion	4	3
Shareholders' bridge loans	509	509
Trade and other payables	2,092	2,201
Total current liabilities	6,319	6,422
Total liabilities	61,718	62,510
Total equity and liabilities	85,382	85,124
Net assets per share (RO)	0.152	0.145

Unaudited condensed statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the three-month period ended 31 March 2024

	Unaudited 2024	Unaudited 2023
	RO'000s	RO'000s
Operating revenue	4,166	4,209
Operating cost	(2,567)	(2,629)
Gross profit	1,599	1,580
Other income	1	1
Administrative and general expenses	(235)	(232)
Finance costs (net)	(678)	(703)
Profit for the period before tax	687	646
Income tax	(109)	(102)
Profit for the period	578	544
Other comprehensive income/(loss) for the period – Items that may be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss		
Changes in fair values of derivative financial instruments	555	(482)
Deferred tax on changes in fair values of derivative financial instruments	(83)	72
Other comprehensive income / (loss) for the period net of income tax	472	(410)
Total comprehensive income / (loss) for the period	1,050	134
Earnings per share – basic and diluted	0.004	0.003

Over 50,000 flee amid renewed conflict in northern Ethiopia, says UN

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia - More than 50,000 people have been forced to flee their homes in Ethiopia's north amid renewed conflict in the northern region bordering the Amhara and Tigray regions, tripling from its initial 15,000 just days before, the UN said.

This surge in internally displaced persons comes after tens of thousands of residents were displaced following clashes that erupted last Saturday, with many heading south to Kobo, a nearby town, for safety.

A statement by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs underscored the severity of the situation, particularly for vulnerable women and children who urgently require broad humanitarian support to survive.

Despite efforts by the government and humanitarian partners to provide assistance, primarily focusing on food and health services, resources are stretched thin, unable to keep pace with the escalating crisis, according to the statement.

The conflict intensified as



the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) launched a renewed military venture after the Pretoria agreement was signed to end a two-year war between the Federal government and the TPLF, seizing control of areas adjacent to Alamata, which it claims as part of Tigray based on 'constitutional grounds'.

The clashes, resulting in at least three casualties, highlight the escalating tensions in the region, with TPLF forces engaging with local militias.

Local authorities in the Kobo

area, the nearby town for Alamata, said that despite the aid from the federal government to regional authorities like that of Tigray, no government authorities made arrangements to receive the displaced, leaving them to fend for themselves without designated shelters.

While the opposition party Amhara National Movement accuses the TPLF of aggression, the TPLF in turn said that this is an escalation by those who don't want the Pretoria agreement to work.

Anadolu Agency

China to send Spain new giant panda couple on April 29

Beijing, China - China will send a new giant panda couple to Spain next week. The previous pair returned nearly two months ago after living in Spain for more than a decade.

The China Wildlife Conservation Association said on Wednesday that giant pandas Jin Xi and Zhu Yu will embark on their journey on April 29 from the southwestern Chinese city of Chengdu in Sichuan Province. They will start their 10-year residency at a zoo in Spain's capital, Madrid.

Currently, the two giant pandas are in good health and are undergoing quarantine procedures, according to the association.

The couple come from the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding. Jin Xi, the male, was born on September 1, 2020, while the female, Zhu Yu, was born on October 25, 2020.

The base has prepared special air transport cages to ensure the giant pandas can move, feed and rest freely, while a sufficient amount of fresh Sichuan local bamboo and bamboo shoots will be available for them to eat. The breeders of these giant pandas and veterinarians will also be on the flight to Spain.

To welcome these giant pandas, Madrid Zoo Aquar-

ium adopted the advice of Chinese experts in upgrading its giant panda enclosure, including rebuilding the breeding room and adding game facilities, such as climbing frames and logs.

Bing Xing and Hua Zui Ba, two other giant pandas sent to

Giant pandas Jin Xi and Zhu Yu will embark on their journey from Chengdu in Sichuan Province. They will start 10-year residency at a zoo in Madrid

Spain in September 2007, flew back to Chengdu last month, along with three Spain-born cubs. The Spanish zoo hosted a farewell party for this beloved giant panda family before their return to China.

China and Spain have for several years worked together to promote giant panda protection, with six cubs successfully born and bred thanks to these joint efforts. Various cultural activities have also been held to raise giant panda awareness, including the giant panda culture week.

Xinhua

Witness drops bombshell testimony in Trump trial

New York, US - David Pecker, former publisher of the *National Enquirer*, delivered a bombshell testimony on Tuesday, revealing the inner workings of a scheme to suppress damaging stories during Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign.

The criminal hush money trial involving the former US president saw its first witness take the stand in the US courtroom on Tuesday.

Pecker disclosed to the New York court that the *Enquirer* engaged in a practice known as 'catch and kill', wherein he paid individuals with potentially damaging stories about Trump and then buried those stories, preventing them from reaching the public eye.

His testimony shed light on payments made to two individuals who had stories of Trump's alleged sexual misconduct.

"When someone's running for public office like this, it is very common for these women to call up a magazine like the *National Enquirer* to try to sell their stories," Pecker said during his testimony.

Pecker also revealed the decision to suppress these stories stemmed from a 2015 meeting with Trump himself.

He claimed to have assured Trump of favourable coverage in the *National Enquirer* and pledged to shield him from damaging revelations.



Former US President Donald Trump

One such payment involved former *Playboy* model Karen McDougal, who allegedly had a relationship with Trump in 2006 and 2007 but the former US president denied having an affair with McDougal. Pecker asserted that he purchased McDougal's story after Trump declined to do so himself.

Another payment was made to a Trump Tower doorman, Dino Sajudin, who falsely claimed Trump fathered a child

with a maid.

"I made the decision to buy the story because of the potential embarrassment it would have to the campaign and Mr Trump," Pecker noted.

David Pecker is due to testify again when the trial continues on Thursday.

Legal battle intensifies

Prosecutors claim Pecker helped Trump deceive voters by

suppressing alleged affair stories in 2016.

They have charged Trump with falsifying records to conceal a US\$130,000 payment to Stormy Daniels.

Trump denied the encounter, pleading not guilty to protect his reputation.

This trial, one of four against Trump, could affect his candidacy if he is found guilty.

Pecker's testimony came after a hearing addressing pros-

When someone's running for public office like this, it is very common for these women to call up a magazine like the National Enquirer to try to sell their stories

DAVID PECKER

ecutors' request to fine Trump US\$10,000 for breaching a gag order.

Judge Juan Merchan expressed scepticism towards Trump's defence, stating that it lacked evidence.

"I have to tell you right now, you're losing all credibility with the court," Merchan warned.

Trump claimed the order violated his free speech rights.

Prosecutor Christopher Conroy argued Trump knowingly violated the order, citing derogatory social media posts.

The US\$10,000 fine sought by Conroy may seem small compared to Trump's bonds in other cases.

Trump's lawyer Todd Blanche argued the social media posts were responses to political attacks and not connected to the anticipation of his former lawyer's testimony.

Anadolu Agency

19 irregular migrants drown off Tunisia's coast

Tunis, Tunisia - At least 19 irregular migrants have drowned off the coast of Tunisia's northern city of Sfax, according to Tunisian authorities on Tuesday.

In a statement, the National Guard said the bodies of 19 migrants were recovered in the last 24 hours.

"Five people involved in organising irregular migration operations have been apprehended," the statement said. Sfax is a main route for illegal migrants trying to cross from Tunisia into Europe.

Last February, the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights said that it had documented 'more than 1,300 Tunisians who have been lost' due to irregular migration in 2023.

For years, North African countries such as Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, and Morocco have witnessed attempts by migrants - mainly from sub-Saharan Africa - to reach Europe, hoping for a better life. While some of the migrants manage to



Tunisian authorities announce almost every week the foiling of migration attempts through its shores toward Europe

reach their destination, others often die during the journey.

Tunisian authorities announce almost every week the foiling of migration attempts through its shores toward Europe.

The announcements are seen as trying to pressure the European Union to offer additional

support to Tunisia to curb the waves of irregular migration.

In September 2023, the European Commission allocated 127mn to Tunisia under a memorandum of understanding aimed at curbing the influx of irregular migrants.

Anadolu Agency

Malawi: Rising waters displace hundreds

Mangochi, Malawi - Yusuf Alid, a local fisherman, stares at his nearly submerged house, feeling the weight of his hard work and investment in what was meant to be his future home.

The house, which cost him close to 14mn Kwacha (about US\$8,080), represents a significant sum for an ordinary individual in the lakeshore community of Lake Malawi, now inundated with water.

"My house was almost ready for occupation, but it is now damaged. I never thought this could happen to me as the shores have been safe for years. I saved money for 10 years to move my family here. People have lived here for generations without this ever happening. It is really sad," said 35-year-old Alid, who has five kids in Mangochi, a lakeshore town in eastern Malawi.

Another victim of the wandering waters, Amina Saidi, a 26-year-old mother of three, complained that the development is a threat not only to her security but to her health and that of her family. "As a mother, what scares me the most isn't just the water going up, but the hidden dangers



A woman washes kitchen utensils at the lakeshore of Lake Malawi in Mangochi, Malawi, on April 21 (Xinhua)

it brings," Amina explained, her voice shaky with emotion. "Every little splash, every drop could bring a sickness that might hurt my family and take away our future."

"My house has not been affected by the rising water levels, but with the water encroaching on a wider part of our lakeshore community, there is a high risk of waterborne diseases such as cholera. This is a threat to us," she said.

Earlier this year, flash floods

devastated two lakeshore districts of Malawi, namely Nkhosha in the central region and Karonga in the northern region, leaving thousands displaced and seven persons dead, according to authorities.

In the months of March and April, hundreds of households have had to evacuate their homes along the lakeshore, a development reported in most lakeshore districts such as Nkhosha Bay in the north, Nkhosha and Salima in the centre, and Mangochi in the

east. The flooding of Lake Malawi has also disrupted the hospitality industry as lodging places and waterfront structures along the shore have completely closed due to the floods.

According to the spokesperson for the National Water Resources Authority, Masozi Kasambala, the rise in water levels in Malawi has occurred due to heavy downpours of rain this year, sending large amounts of water into the lake.

Xinhua

ARSENAL RUTHLESS, CHELSEA TOOTHLESS

Havertz scores brace as Gunners thrash Blues to move three points clear at the top

London, England - Ruthless Arsenal threw down the gauntlet in the Premier League title race with a 5-0 thrashing of London rivals Chelsea to roar three points clear at the top of the table on Tuesday.

Any remaining doubts about Arsenal's staying power were answered emphatically as Leandro Trossard gave them an early lead before Ben White and Kai Havertz scored two each in a dazzling spell after the break to sweep aside a dazed Chelsea.

It was a powerful statement by Arsenal who have recovered impressively from a home defeat by Aston Villa and bowing out of the Champions League and with four games remaining they are piling the pressure on Liverpool and Manchester City.

Arsenal have 77 points from 34 games with Liverpool, who face Everton on Wednesday, on 74 from 33. Reigning champions Manchester City have 73 points but have two games in hand starting with a trip to Brighton and Hove Albion on Thursday.

It was the sixth time Arsenal have scored five or more in a Pre-



Arsenal's Kai Havertz scores against Chelsea on Tuesday

mier League game this season and in such a tight race they have a huge goal difference advantage which could prove crucial.

For ninth-placed Chelsea it was their heaviest ever defeat by Arsenal and a hammer blow in their bid to creep into a European place.

Havertz shines

Havertz took a long time to win

over the Arsenal fans after his summer move from Chelsea but there will be few doubters left after his clinical double against his old club.

Havertz took 10 appearances to mark his first Arsenal goal and for those first few months in north London the player who scored the winner for Chelsea in a Champions League final looked like a player struggling for iden-

tity. But those difficult times now look behind him and 12 goals in all competitions looks a decent return while his all-round play gives Arsenal's attacking flexibility.

"He deserves it. He's been outstanding since he's come in. You don't realise how good he is until you play with him," White, who also scored twice, said.

Manager Mikel Arteta showed loyalty to Havertz earlier in the

When you add the two goals he (Havertz) scored and the link-up play that he had in big moments, it was a great performance

MIKEL ARTETA

season and is now being richly rewarded with the former Bayer Leverkusen striker unleashing his

full potential. "His overall contribution in every phase of play was tremendous," Arteta said. "When you add the two goals he scored and some of the link-up play that he had in big moments, it was a great performance."

While Manchester City still have a fourth successive Premier League title in their own hands, the nature of Arsenal's demolition of Chelsea piled on the pressure.



Al Nahda's Omer al Malki celebrates his goal

Al Nahda go down fighting in AFC Cup semifinals

Muscat - Al Ahed booked their place in the AFC Cup final after securing a 2-2 draw against Al Nahda at Sultan Qaboos Sport Complex Stadium on Tuesday.

Lee Erwin scored both goals as Lebanon's Al Ahed won 3-2 on aggregate and will face Australia's Central Coast Mariners, who defeated FK Abdysh-Ata Kant of Kyrgyz Republic 3-0 in the second leg for a 4-1 aggregate win, in the final on May 5.

In Muscat, the hosts saw plenty of the early possession, pinning Al Ahed back in their own half as they looked to level the score up as quickly as possible.

However, despite dominating in the opening 30 minutes, a shot from range by Inters Gui was all the Oman side had to show for their efforts.

Less than eight minutes into the second half, Al Nahda's pressure paid off. Salaah Al Yahyaei drove into Al Ahed's penalty area, finding an unmarked Omer Al Malki to tap home his fifth goal of the competition.

However, against the run of play, substitute Erwin was picked out by Ali Al Haj inside Al Nahda's box, who curled the ball into the back of the net to draw level and put the visitors ahead on aggregate in the 82nd minute. As the hosts began to push forward, Al Ahed countered and found Erwin once again who carried the ball into the penalty box and scored his third AFC Cup goal.

Late Milik goal takes Juventus into Coppa Italia final

Rome, Italy - A late goal by striker Arkadiusz Milik sent Juventus into the final of Coppa Italia with a 3-2 aggregate win over Lazio despite a 2-1 defeat in the second leg of their semi-final on Tuesday.

Juventus beat Lazio 2-0 at home in the first leg but forward Valentin Castellanos levelled the tie when he scored twice by the 48th minute, before substitute Milik netted the decider from close range seven minutes from time.

Record 14-times winners Juventus, who lifted their last trophy when they won the Italian Cup in 2020-21, have reached their 22nd Coppa Italia final.

"Lazio had to turn the game around, it was normal to expect aggression," Juventus coach Massimiliano Allegri told a press conference.

"After the 2-0 at the start of the second half we improved and we got the result against an excellent Lazio. (But) we should have scored first. Today was an important match, our elimination would have led to a dangerous psychological repercussion given that we are not yet mathematically (qualified for) the Champions League."

Lazio were quick to revive the fans' hopes for a turnaround from the first leg's deficit when Castellanos outjumped the Juve



Arkadiusz Milik of Juventus celebrates after scoring against Lazio

defence to give the hosts the lead on the night with a towering header in the 12th minute, nodding home a Luis Alberto corner.

He could have scored the second just before halftime, when he broke into the area after latching on to another neat pass by Alberto, but Juve keeper Mattia Perin kept his low shot out.

However, Castellanos made no mistake after the break when Alberto teed him up just outside the box and the Argentine sent the ball low past Perin and into the net to level the tie.

That shook Juventus up and Dusan Vlahovic had two close chances soon after, before Milik struck from point-blank range.

Al Zubair, Grenier begin International GT Open programme in Portugal

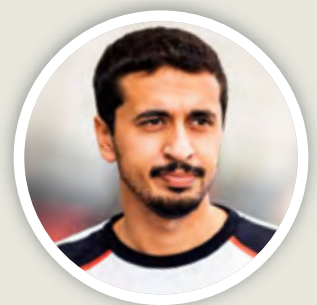
Muscat - Oman's Al Faisal al Zubair and new Canadian teammate Mikael Grenier will compete in this weekend's opening round of the 2024 International GT Open at the Autodromo Internacional Algarve, in Portimão, Portugal.

After Portugal, the eight-round 2024 International GP Open calendar continues in Germany and Belgium next month, Hungary in June, the Paul Ricard circuit in France in July, a pair of races in Austria and Spain in September and the finale at Monza in Italy on October 20th.

However, the Al Manar Racing by Getspeed Mercedes AMG GT3 duo will only compete in Spa and Barcelona after this weekend.

Al Zubair said: "I am really looking forward to the start of the International GT Open season. I will be participating in

three rounds, all with Mick Grenier. Not only is he a very strong driver but he is someone I get along with very well. He will be with me in GT World Challenge Endurance and for these three rounds.



Al Faisal al Zubair

"We are with Getspeed and Al Manar Racing and we feel our package is extremely strong. We don't see a reason why we shouldn't be fighting for the win."

Al Zubair teamed up with

Fabian Schiller to win the Portuguese race outright last year in their Al Manar Racing by Getspeed Mercedes AMG GT3. It marked the Omani's seventh GT Open race success after he finished third overall in the championship in his first full season in 2021.

The Optimum Motorsport duo of Samuel de Haan and Charlie Fagg were their closest challengers in second place in a McLaren 720S GT3. Team Motopark's Diego Menchaca and Marcos Siebert finished third.

Al Zubair and Grenier will crew the Mercedes in both the International GT Open and the Fanatec GT World Challenge powered by AWS Endurance Cup this season.

Grenier finished second in the International GT Open back in 2019 after winning four races with the Emil Frey Racing Lamborghini.

Oman Cricket garner two honours at ICC Development Awards

Muscat - The International Cricket Council (ICC) announced the regional winners in the 2023 edition of the ICC Development Awards, highlighting the remarkable success stories to have taken place in emerging cricket nations during the 2023 calendar year.

The ICC Development Awards were established in 2002 to celebrate the world-leading initiatives and innovative programmes delivered by ICC Members to grow the game around the globe.

21 nations have been honoured as regional winners spanning six award categories: the ICC Development Initiative of the Year, the 100% Cricket Women's Cricket Initiative of the Year, the ICC Digital Fan Engagement of the Year and the Cricket 4 Good Social Impact Initiative of the Year, plus two awards recognising the outstanding on-field



Oman enjoyed stunning success in ODI and T20I cricket

performances in men's and women's international cricket in 2023.

Among the standout initiatives that have been recognised as regional winners are vibrant participation programmes in Italy, Mexico and Nigeria, women's cricket initiatives in Oman, Sierra Leone, Costa Rica

and Japan, plus social impact projects in Bahrain, Samoa and Scotland.

Also honoured are performances by Canada, Indonesia as well as the Netherlands, who provided plenty of highlights during the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 in India.

Regional winners will now be

put forward for voting to determine the global awardees in each category, selected by a specialist panel of game development experts, former international cricketers and media personnel.

Speaking on the announcement of regional winners, ICC General Manager - Development, William Glenwright said: "We are delighted to announce the regional winners in the ICC Development Awards for 2023. I want to thank all of our Members for the work that they commit to growing the game like it has never grown before and congratulate all of the successful member federations on their remarkable achievements in 2023.

The ICC Development Initiative of the Year award winners include Nigeria Cricket Federation, Mexico Cricket Association, Cricket PNG, Qatar Cricket Association, and Federazione Cricket Italiana.



Marcus Stoinis of Lucknow Super Giants plays a shot during his unbeaten knock of 124 against Chennai Super Kings

Stoinis stuns Chepauk

Australian star's blazing century helps Lucknow beat Chennai

Chennai, India - "Fortress Chepauk," proclaimed a huge banner in CSK colours in the stands. By the end of the contest, though, Lucknow Super Giants had breached it to hand Chennai Super Kings their first defeat at home this season. It was their second loss against LSG in five days.

The star of the night was Marcus Stoinis, whose unbeaten 124 off 63 balls helped LSG pull off the highest successful chase at

Chepauk in T20 cricket. He was batting at No. 3 for the first time this season and achieved the target of 211 with three balls and six wickets to spare.

Stoinis' century came off 56 balls, just like Ruturaj Gaikwad's did earlier in the night after the CSK captain lost his seventh toss in eight games. Gaikwad's unbeaten 108 off 60 balls and Shivam Dube's 66 off 27 powered the Super Kings to 210 for 4. CSK had looked in control for

the majority of the defence. LSG needed 74 from the last five overs but Stoinis, with help from Nicholas Pooran and Deepak Hooda, silenced the Chennai crowd. The result took LSG to fourth place with ten points from eight games; CSK are fifth with eight points after eight games.

After LSG opted to bowl, Matt Henry struck in the first over. He bowled four balls on a good length, one slightly short of it, and then pitched the last one full. Ajinkya Rahane edged the drive, and with first slip wider than usual, KL Rahul dived full length to his right and completed a stunning, one-handed catch.

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Rahul's athleticism, though, was followed by some shoddy fielding from LSG. In the second over, Yash Thakur dropped Daryl Mitchell off Mohsin Khan at short third. A little later, at the same position, Henry could not get his hand to a tougher chance from Gaikwad off Ravi Bishnoi.

Mitchell did not take advantage of the reprieve and fell for 11 off 10 but Gaikwad did not miss out. While the other CSK batters struggled for timing, he looked sublime and brought up his fifty off 28 balls, with seven fours.

Gaikwad found an ideal partner in Dube, who also hit the first six of the innings in the 13th over.

Chennai 'not trying to find a quick fix'

Chennai, India - Form - or the lack thereof - and the unavailability of key players have left Chennai Super Kings searching for their ideal team combination, eight games into the season. This is the assessment of CSK head coach Stephen Fleming after they suffered their first defeat at home, against Lucknow Super Giants, on Tuesday.

CSK had left out Rachin Ravindra to bring back Daryl Mitchell and pair up captain Ruturaj Gaikwad with Ajinkya Rahane at the top. But the changes didn't bring the kind of output that CSK were looking for, with Mitchell falling for 11 off 10 balls and Rahane for 1 off 3.

"It's a mixture of trying to find that [combination] and also form," Fleming said at his post-match press conference. "We're a little bit uncomfortable with some areas, so we're trying to find not a quick fix, but the right combination where players are going to contribute for the back end of this tournament."

At various points during the

tournament, CSK's balance has been disrupted by injuries to Matheesha Pathirana (hamstring niggle) and Rahane (calf niggle). Mustafizur Rahman had also missed CSK's away game against Sunrisers Hyderabad to tend to his US visa for the upcoming T20 World Cup. Mustafizur is available to CSK till May 1, when they will face Punjab Kings at Chepauk, and will then return to Bangladesh for their home series against Zimbabwe. Devon Conway's replacement, Richard Gleeson, the England quick, is yet to join the CSK squad.

"We've got another change coming up with Mustafizur [leaving] in a couple of games," Fleming said. "So, we're just trying to prepare and get a side that will give us the run home. We've had injuries, we've been a little bit unsettled, but the main thing is getting guys in key areas and in form. That sometimes takes a bit of time. Yes, there has been more change; some were forced upon us and some of it is form."



We've had injuries, we've been a little bit unsettled, but the main thing is getting guys in key areas and in form

STEPHEN FLEMING

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‘Laugh recall’ works best for brands

About half of all ads around the globe are considered either ‘funny’ or ‘light-hearted’.

According to a new survey from B2B research and reviews firm Clutch, over half (53%) of consumers say they are most likely to remember and enjoy an advertisement if it’s funny.

A study from 1993 that still stands up today by the Journal of Marketing, however, found that when looking at the effects of humour in advertising, ‘humour is more likely to enhance recall, evaluation, and purchase intention when the humorous message coincides with ad objectives, is well-integrated with those objectives, and is viewed as appropriate for the product category.

Under such circumstances, humorous advertising is more likely to secure audience attention, increase memorability, overcome sales resistance, and enhance message persuasiveness.

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How to build Brand Loyalty quickly

The fact that brand loyalty—a long-term commitment to make repeat purchases of a particular brand—is not dependent on price makes this metric a particularly powerful driver of both profit and profitability. Unlike customer loyalty, which is money-based (prices and discounts), brand loyalty is perception-based (image and experience). Brand-loyal customers believe that a certain brand represents both higher quality and better service than any competitor—and the price does not matter. Brand-loyal customers might make fewer total purchases, but the profit margins on their purchases are larger.

Once established, brand loyalty is fairly easy to retain—assuming, of course, that product quality and service level remain high. Brand loyalty is also less expensive to retain than customer loyalty, which requires constantly offering low prices and regular discounts to maintain best-deal-on-the-market status. To thrive in this dynamic, marketing departments employ various tactics to create and maintain brand loyalty, including monitoring buying trends, analyzing spending data, and designing advertising campaigns targeting their existing-loyal and likely-to-become-loyal customer segments. Here are some strategies for brand loyalty that work well:



- Best-in-Class Quality**

Good quality is indispensable for brand loyalty. No matter how large your marketing budget is or how many celebrity endorsements you have, low-quality products and services always fall flat down the road.
- Customer Service**

Exceptional customer service is expensive but ensuring that customers always receive first-class service is an investment that drives the level of brand loyalty that generates big returns.
- Brand Ambassadors**

In addition to brand-loyal customers who provide free word-of-mouth advertising on social media, companies hire
- spokespersons with high professional credibility and esteem to function as brand ambassadors.

Loyalty Programmes

Establishing a programme to reward existing customers for their business is one of the most direct ways to build brand loyalty. Investing in the retention and loyalty of existing customers is far less expensive than marketing for new customers.

Online Community

Unlike static advertisements, social media has a range of tools to forge deeper, more personal connections with customers, from hosting live streams with employees to taking customers behind-the-scenes.

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Liven up your 7pm snack-time, churn out some quick delights for yourself



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ENTERTAINMENT
A peek into tinsel town in Hollywood and Bollywood

CARRISAA BOPANNA,
A FORMER STUDENT OF INDIAN SCHOOL GHUBRA WAS RECENTLY CROWNED MISS TEEN UNIVERSE INDIA 2024 IN JAIPUR, INDIA'S HISTORIC 'PINK CITY'

MISS TEEN UNIVERSE INDIA 2024

TEEN Queen

Hubert Vaz

For 19-year-old Carrisaa Bopanna, a former student of Indian School Ghubra, the tedious task of facing the glare of the arc-lights of the world of glamour has only begun...

Having been crowned India's Miss Teen Universe 2024 at a glittering event in Jaipur on April 17, the young Fashion Design student, hailing from Karnataka (India), aspires to keep her cultural roots intact even as she reaches for the Moon in the journey ahead.

Having spent her entire life as a third culture kid in the Arabian Gulf, she has now moved to Bengaluru to pursue a career in Fashion Design at the esteemed National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT). However, she is gifted with multiple talents including Indian classical dance, and hopes to shape her multi-faceted personality with a clear-cut mission.

The Miss Teen Universe India 2024 crown, she admits, not only celebrates her individual achievements but also highlights the inclusivity and diversity of India's beauty landscape into which she has just made inroads. She also wants to give a message to young girls in Oman to believe in themselves, hold fast to their dreams and set out to achieve them with sheer dedication, hard work and a positive attitude.

Acknowledging the support of her family, mentors, and supporters for their encouragement and belief in her abilities, she says, she will use her credentials in the beauty world to draw attention to certain pressing issues which have been swept under the carpet for long.

With a strong belief in the importance of women empowerment and education of the girl child in India, Carrisaa hopes to usher in some change in the scene in her own small way. She considers herself as a fervent advocate for menstrual health and hygiene.

Recognising the current stigma surrounding 'menstruation' and the lack of access to 'menstrual hygiene products' in India, Carrisaa has embarked on a mission to educate and empower women on the importance of menstrual hygiene. Through workshops, seminars,

and outreach programmes, Carrisaa will be enlightening women and girls on the significance of maintaining proper menstrual, in a bid to undo the stigma associated with it.

"Menstruation is a natural part of life, and every woman deserves to manage her period with dignity and respect. By breaking the silence and providing access to menstrual hygiene products, we can empower women to lead healthy, fulfilling lives," she asserts.

In preparation to represent India

on the global stage at the Miss Teen Universe pageant, Carrisaa's advocacy for menstrual health and hygiene serves as a powerful reminder of the impact that beauty queens can have beyond the runway. With compassion in her heart and a vision for a more inclusive future, Carrisaa is taking up one act of kindness at a time.

In the words of her parents, whose pride knows no bounds, "Carrisaa's passion for fashion has been evident since her childhood. From dressing up her dolls to sketching her own designs, she has always been drawn to the world of fashion and creativity. Her journey to Miss Teen Universe India is a testament to her relentless pursuit of excellence and her unwavering dedication to her craft."

"My motivation for pageantry and modelling began since a very young age. The fashion and glam world always fascinated me, hence I always knew what I wanted to do in life and have chosen this path," she said, explaining. "In preparation for this pageant, I had intense training since almost a year, which included makeup sessions as well as lessons in communication, speech, dental hygiene, table manners etc. My biggest support were definitely my parents, my team leader Trishna Ray, and Miss Teen Diva director Nikhil and his team."

ASPIRATIONS AND DREAMS

About her career aspirations, Carrisaa clarified, "I believe, there is no argument about a regular career and a career in the glamour world. If a person is interested in the glam industry and wants to do something unique it is because they do not want a regular life and have different goals. The same goes for me, I chose this path only because I do not want a regular career, and fashion and modelling is what I enjoy."

As a parting shot to young girls in Oman, many of whom might want to take up a similar path, Carrisaa says, "My advice to young girls in Oman is to dream big! Even if you feel it is im-



possible, with patience and hard work it will, indeed, become a reality someday. Not everyone gets support or equal opportunities, but if you are passionate about your goals, and believe in yourself, you can achieve them some day."

My motivation for pageantry and modelling began since a very young age. I always knew what I wanted to do in life and have chosen this path

CARRISAA BOPANNA

cook-up

INDIAN CHAAT



Papdi Chaat

- Ingredients

200g papdi crackers

½ cup cooked chickpeas

½ cup boiled and chopped potatoes

½ cup plain yogurt

½ cup tamarind chutney

½ cup mint chutney/green chutney

1tsp chaat masala

½ tsp chilli powder

1tsp chaat masala

Salt

*(All of the above, except potatoes, are available readymade)

For garnish

½ cup chopped coriander

½ cup pomegranate arils

½ cup nylon (fine) sev

Method

Arrange all the items upfront on your table. Lay out plates to serve the chat. Start by placing a ring of papdi crackers on each plate. Then place a layer of chopped potatoes and chick peas on top of it. Then drizzle the yogurt over the top so that it is evenly distributed. Place dots of the tamarind and mint chutney over every papdi. Sprinkle over the chaat masala, chilli powder and salt, to taste. Garnish with pomegranate seeds, sev, and chopped cilantro. Enjoy!

(As a variation, you can crumble the papdis into pieces and mix it with all ingredients, instead of placing them whole at the base.)

Preparing Indian Chaat items is not rocket science and you don't have to go to the nearby joint to tickle your taste buds with these tangy 7pm snacks. Here's how to conjure it in minutes... at home:



Channa Chaat

- Ingredients

2 cups boiled channa /chickpeas

½tsp red chilli powder

¼ tsp cumin powder

¼ cup green chutney

1tsp chaat masala

½ cup tamarind chutney

¼ tsp salt

½ onion - finely chopped

1 tomato - finely chopped

1 potato - boiled and chopped

½ cup chopped cucumber

1 green chilli - finely chopped

½ cup fine sev

½ cup coriander - finely chopped

Salt, to taste

Method

Start by lining up all the ingredients on your table. There is no hard and fast rule on the best ingredients - you can add chopped green mango, sweet corn, beet-root/ carrot or any other salad ingredients you like.

Take a large mixing bowl and add the boiled chickpeas. Add ½tsp chilli powder, ¼tsp cumin powder, ½tsp chaat masala, 1tsp green chutney, 2tbsp tamarind chutney and ¼tsp salt. Mix well making with a spoon or toss to coat well. Then add the onion, tomato, potato, cucumber and green chilli. Combine well and transfer to a serving bowl or plat. Before serving, garnish with sev and coriander leaves. This goes well with a hot cup of tea.

Pani Puri

- Ingredients

For the pani

1 cup mint leaves

1 cup cilantro leaves - chopped

4-5 Thai green chillies - chopped

4cm piece ginger

1tsp aamchur powder

1tsp roasted cumin powder

½tsp rock salt

1tsp salt

1tsp sugar

6 cups water

12tbsp boondi

For the filling

2 medium potatoes – boiled and mashed

1cup boiled chickpeas or moong

- 1 cup ragda (boiled yellow peas)

1tsp rock salt - divided

1tsp salt - divided

½tsp aamchur powder

½ cup chopped coriander

1 cup sweet date-tamarind chutney

40-50 puffed puris (available ready-made)

Method

To prepare the pani, blend 1 cup mint leaves, 1 cup cilantro leaves, 4-5 Thai green chillies, ginger, 1tsp salt, 1tsp sugar, 1tsp roasted cumin powder. Transfer this to a large bowl and add the water and some ice cubes. Mix well to get a cool discoloured water. Add in aamchur and rock salt, boondis, and mix

well. Refrigerate till ready to use.

In another plate, place the boiled chickpeas/moong, potato and ragda. These can be used individually or in combination, mixed with chopped coriander, as the filling. Place the date and tamarind chutney by the side in a bowl.

To serve out the pani puris, place a ring of puris with their heads cracked open on each plate. Place a teaspoonful of the filling within each puri in whatever combination you like. Then, place a teaspoonful of the tamarind chutney over the filling in each puri. Mix nd serve the prepared pani in a small tumbler by the side of each plate.

To enjoy, pour the pani into each puri to the brim, and eat them one by one.

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IN TOWN

BANGLADESH NATIONAL DAY



Embassy of Bangladesh hosted a reception to mark the 54th Independence Day of Bangladesh



Photos: V K Shafeer

Marhaban Yoga



Embassy of India hosted 'Marhaban Yoga' to mark the 10th International Day of Yoga



Photos: V K Shafeer

BOGGLER

L	T	E	P
D	R	I	I
L	N	A	A
E	S	G	I

Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters. A three letter word is worth one point, a four letter word is worth two points, and so on. Valid words must be at least three letters long.

Solution 20-25 words: Excellent, 15-20 words: Very good, 10-15 words: Good, 5-10 words: Average

DO YOU SUDOKU?

LEVEL EASY:

Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9 and only one instance of each number

2			8		4		6	3
				1				2
3	7			2		8		9
						3		4
	4		1		3		7	
6		2						
9	8		5				3	1
7			2					
1	2		4		8			7

TRIVIA QUIZ - FOR TEENS

1. What is the main ingredient in Bombay Duck curry?



A. Duck
B. Chicken
C. Turkey
D. Fish

2. Which bird has eyes bigger than its brain?

A. Peacock
B. Vulture
C. Swan
D. Ostrich

3. What colour is an airplane's black box?

A. White
B. Blue
C. Black
D. Orange

Answers
3. D
2. D
1. D

WORD BUILDER



You have three minutes to find all the words contained in this word.

Rules: Words should be at least four letters long, proper nouns and duplicates don't count

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

4	6	5	8	3	7	9	2	1
6	7	8	6	1	2	5	3	4
1	5	2	4	9	5	7	8	6
8	1	6	5	7	4	2	3	9
5	4	9	3	2	1	6	7	8
4	2	3	9	8	6	7	1	5
6	8	4	2	5	9	1	7	3
2	3	7	5	2	1	7	8	9
3	9	1	6	3	8	4	5	7

YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE

**ARIES** MARCH 21-APRIL 19
If you're involved in any type of competitive challenge today, chances are very high that you will probably come out on top. Your mental game is stronger than ever, and any opponent you face will underestimate your abilities. Their premature cockiness will give you just the opening you need to beat them at their own game.

**TAURUS** APRIL 20-MAY 20
Mutual respect may feel like an endangered phenomenon when you are forced to deal with someone who thinks arrogance is a great way to impress someone. Luckily, the encounter will be fairly brief. You can try to teach them how to be more down to earth if you really want to, but it might be much more amusing if you just let them behave the way they want to.

**GEMINI** MAY 21-JUNE 21
You are likely to adopt a more opinionated attitude today. Certain situations and people are just going to rub you the wrong way, and you're not going to be shy about talking about it. This might ruffle a few feathers, but don't let that worry you. You can't put a lid on your feelings just to make other people happy.

**CANCER** JUNE 22-JULY 22
If you aren't on board with a plan, then make that clear to everyone else as soon as possible. That means that if a friend has their heart set on a crazy night out full of adventures and outrageous activities while you're more interested in getting into your pajamas, let them know. Tell them to go have fun without you, because there is no way that you can come to a compromise.

**LEO** JULY 23-AUGUST 22
The sun seems just a bit brighter today and your heart just a bit lighter. Do you feel the tide turning? Hope is a powerful thing, and you've been able to hold on to enough of it to make a real difference. Blue periods can be tough, but they can result in more self-awareness and contentment.

**VIRGO** AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22
You have too many tasks assigned to you today, but you're not up for much action. Your emotions are volatile right now, and your behaviour could get downright erratic if you get overwhelmed, so something has to give. You need to pare things down. Focus your brainpower on achieving one goal today. Prioritization is one of your strengths.

**LIBRA** SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22
You have a reputation as someone who really knows what they're doing, so don't be surprised if people start turning to you for all the answers. You are clearly going to be the leader today, but don't try to hold up a faltering idea or project all by yourself. Things are moving into an area in which you don't have much experience, so be smart and ask for help when you need it.

**SCORPIO** OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21
It may be time to start trimming back on indulgence. Don't fret, though. You don't have to give up everything. It's just that your time has been disproportionately spent in some unproductive areas lately. Think about building your abilities in one or two tasks and put other things on the back burner. Miscommunication will cause frustration.

**SAGITTARIUS** NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21
The fact is people sometimes disagree and fight about issues, but that doesn't mean that they can't ever find common ground. And it definitely does not mean that they don't care about each other. So if you are feeling especially mismatched or out of sync with a close friend or romantic partner now, don't worry. This is not the end.

**CAPRICORN** DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19
It's all about holding on to what you've got today. A lot of people are interested in getting things without doing any work to earn them, and they are looking your way. Watch out when it comes to sharing your resources. While you are offering your help or pen or money, they're thinking you're a real pushover. It's dangerous to send this message now.

**AQUARIUS** JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18
Have you heard of "gilding the lily"? It means overdoing something so much that you turn what was already beautiful into something way over the top and tacky. There's a danger of doing this today, so try to keep your fantastic taste at bay and leave well enough alone. Things are going to be their best if you leave them as is. It's tough to hold back when you get a strong vision.

**PISCES** FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20
You are full of so much positive energy today that your ego is enormous. Just be careful that you don't lose sight of what you're actually capable of. You can negotiate the difference between cocky and confident. It's a great time to try your most insane-sounding scheme and see how far you can take it. On any other day, reality might keep you from aiming so high, but today you don't feel so.

entertainment

WHAT GIVES KIM KARDASHIAN THE JITTERS

Kim Kardashian is spelling out the truth. In fact, when Jimmy Kimmel pressed the SKIMS founder about the validity of certain online claims about her, it turned out the rumour mill had a lot of things right. For instance, is it true Kim blow dries her jewellery before putting it on?

"Very true," she confirmed during her April 22 appearance on Jimmy Kimmel Live. "Because I hate being freezing and when you put on cold jewellery or like anything with a zipper - I just need it warm and then put it on. Or just like a mesh metal dress. Anything that's like a chain mail."

Other realities of Kim's life? She has to wash her feet before bed, she sleeps with her eyes slightly open (as proven in videos taken by her sisters), and she needs someone else to remove the cardboard sleeve on her Starbucks orders.

"I hate the feeling," she explained of the latter quirk. "Whoever I'm with, I just can't see it being done or I can't hear it and I can't feel it. Like the cardboard getting moved off the cup is like nails on a chalkboard to me."



GIGI HADID'S UNDENIABLE STATUS WITH BRADLEY COOPER

Saying no to dating is so last season for Gigi Hadid. Just a year ago, the model cryptically shared a photo of an 87-old-woman holding a sign saying, "Dating Advice: Don't." Which, naturally, the internet took to be a telling window into Hadid's state of mind. But then she connected with Bradley Cooper and a new romance was born.

It's been six months since Hadid and the Maestro auteur were first spotted enjoying autumn in New York together. And while initially those sightings could have just signalled the beginning of a beautiful friendship, holding hands in London, hanging out on Valentine's Day, and kissing at dinner has made their couple status undeniable.

And what are Cooper, 49, and Hadid, 29, bonding over, you might ask?

Katy Perry's 'on the edge'

Katy Perry wants to make one thing very clear to her longtime love, Orlando Bloom - she's very impressed. ET spoke with the 39-year-old pop star after a live *American Idol* episode about Bloom's extreme new adventure show, *Orlando Bloom: To the Edge*.

Perry, who shares 3-year-old Daisy Dove with her 47-year-old fiancé, admitted that the daring show - which features Bloom deep sea diving, free rock climbing and skydiving - definitely ups her blood pressure.

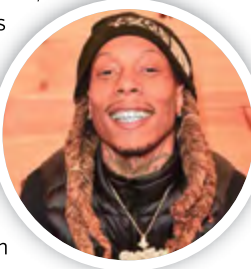
"Oh my gosh, I was like, I need a ginger ale. My stomach was turning!" Perry told *ET* of the time period where Bloom was filming. "Every time he called me I was just thanking god."



RAPPER CHRIS KING DEAD AT 32

Justin Bieber and more stars are mourning the loss of a beloved musician. Chris King (Christopher Cheeks), 32, was shot and killed in Nashville, Tenn, on April 20, in a shooting that left others injured, police confirmed in a press release.

Chris, who was accompanied by two friends, was shot in an armed robbery by three suspects between Hayes and Church Streets in Nashville. Another unnamed 29-year-old who was injured in the shooting told authorities three suspects were 'hanging out cordially' with their group before things took a violent turn.



Mithun Chakraborty gets 'Padma Bhushan'

Bollywood veteran Mithun Chakraborty was honoured with a 'Padma Bhushan' award at Rashtrapati Bhavan by Droupadi Murmu, President of India, at a glittering ceremony on April 22. The former member of parliament, who has starred in numerous Hindi and Bengali films, had also ruled the disco era in the Indian film industry due to his dancing skills. He has also been a recipient of three national film awards for 'Best Actor' and four Filmfare awards in the past. The 'Padma Bhushan' is the third-highest civilian award in the Republic of India, preceded by the 'Bharat Ratna' and the 'Padma Vibhushan'.

WHATS ON



Genre: Adventure
Starring: Amala Paul, Prithviraj Sukumaran, Jimmy Jean Louis
Language: Malayalam

AADUJEEVITHAM

Based on Benyamin's *The Goat Life*, the true life story of Najib, a man who leaves behind his wife, mother and his unborn child and goes from the lush green lands of Kerala, India to a barren desert country in the Middle East in search for a better life.

WHEN LOVE MEETS ART



HOLLYWOOD MOVIE REVIEW: **LA BOHÈME**
Genre: Drama, Romance
Starring: Federica Lombardi, Jonathan Tetelman, Davide Luciano, Roberto L

Great art is born from great tragedies and great deaths. Deaths that glorify love and deaths that immortalise work of art.

Its painful, its emotional and its dreadful...everything that Plato defines Catharsis of.

For decades, *La Bohème* by

Puccini holds a testimony of love, art and separation. The age old world popular opera took a new in another art avatar: the 35mm reel.

The literary piece is about falling into and out of love, friendship, and loss deals with two couples of different temperaments: Mimi and the poet Rudolfo, Musetta and the painter

Marcello along with their two friends musician Schauvard and philosopher Colline.

As the four struggle economically and with the often disillusioned world of art, Muse enters the life of Rudolfo where he frantically in affection speaks in loud' whispers to Mimi: I am the poet and you are my poetry. Jealousy, separation, union and again final



separation leads to a classic end of the film.

The two-hour movie was engaging not only for the classic opera and the artists but a unique way of being the two forms of art. Often the director breaks the 'Third wall' by incorporating the conductors, musicians and even spot boys among the mis-e-scene of the film. While the tenors and sopranos appeal the emotional part, the tight close-ups, POVs, and tracking shots tickle our visual experiences.

With spectacular acting and grand music, the film resembles an inspiration from the New Wave Movement (the scenes on

balcony and the couple running in the night streets of Paris)

La Bohème by Mario Martone is a cinematographic masterpiece revisiting the way an opera can be filmed. This is the first time the film is shown in the Middle East - making it a premiere in the region that bagged the Grand Prix at the Golden Prague Festival for its innovative approach, blending film and stage performances seamlessly.

In a special message to ROHM audience, Mario Martone, the director, extends a warm invitation to all to discover *La Bohème*.

Rating ★★★★★