



We at MHD-ITICS are indeed proud to be the winners of Oman's Most Trusted Brand Awards 2022 for three different categories this year. Being recognised as winners in three categories is a testament to the excellence of our products and service, and reaffirms the faith of our customers in the major international brands we bring to Oman. For MHD-ITICS the trust placed by our clients in our products and services are our most prized asset, and this award gives us the impetus to perform even better in future and strive to raise the bar for our customer satisfaction index and the value that we create for all our stakeholders.

HON LUJAINA MOHSIN DARWISH
CHAIRPERSON, MHD (ITICS)



We are very proud to be a winner in this category of paints and its always a pleasure to attend this event. We have been a winner in this category for the past five years, and probably, are the biggest brand in Oman. It is important for us to maintain this trust with consumers and take it to the retail stores, as well. If you enter any Jotun store, you will find our trophy displayed there – we use it in our marketing strategy.

ERIK DANIELSEN
Sales & marketing manager, Jotun Paints

50 TOP BRANDS RIDE THE BRANDWAGON

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Trust, as Sir Richard Branson famously said, is the foundation of every brand's success. And to celebrate the most trusted and reliable brands across industries, the much awaited Oman's Most Trusted Brand Awards (OMTB) 2022 function took place on Monday evening on the lawns of Al Bustan Palace, a Ritz-Carlton Hotel.

The ceremony was held under the auspices of H E Eng Said bin Hamoud al Ma'awali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology. The glittering event was attended by over 350 guests including their highnesses, excellencies, chairmen, managing directors, CEOs and senior officials from 50 winning companies, besides distinguished guests.

Senior representatives of the 50 winners received their Oman's Most Trusted Brand Awards from H E Ma'awali and Saleh Zakwani, executive chairman of Apex Media. H E Ma'awali congratulated the winners as he handed over the trophies to senior company officials that won Oman's Most Trusted Brand Awards for 2022.

The OMTB 2022 trophy was redesigned this year to give it a more contemporary as well as classy look. The trophy comprises a lucid tower of the alphabets OMTB mounted over each other and sprouting from an obsidian hued pedestal engraved with the winner's name.

Saleh Zakwani in his opening speech said, "It gives me great pleasure to welcome you this evening to celebrate Oman's Most Trusted Brands for 2022. It is my belief, that the brands which have risen to the top, are there for a reason. And the consumers in Oman, who have voted for them, do deserve a round of applause for their excellent verdict. It is also our honour to have H E Eng Said bin Hamoud al Ma'awali as the chief guest."

Oman's Most Trusted Brand Awards are based on the results of a month-long extensive survey which was open to general public for voting. In each passing year, voting for the awards has been growing consistently



Saleh al zakwani welcomes the chief guest H E Eng Said bin Hamoud al Ma'awali

and strongly – from nearly 130,000, in 2016, to over 900,000 in 2022. This large voter-base highlights the power of consumer perception in determining the level of trust that a brand enjoys in the Omani market.

Oman's Most Trusted Brand Awards is a validation of the public trust in a brand, and every year, this prestigious awards are presented to the most trusted brands



in the sultanate by Apex Media based on what the general public perceives as the brands they trust the most. The awards were set up by Apex Media in 2016 to recognise those brands that had succeeded in establishing themselves as 'No 1' in their customers' minds.

After receiving the awards, the representatives of the win-

ning companies spoke about the tremendous efforts that they had put in to become 'most trusted' and reputed brands in their respective industries.

Many winners said that the awards were a recognition of their commitment and efforts to deliver top quality products and services and customer experience. They said Oman's Most Trusted Brand Awards are a testament to their brands' commitment to excellence, innovation, and customer satisfaction.

Among those who commented, Bader al Mandhari from Takaful Oman Insurance, said the award endorses the 'trust' that our customers have put in them for years, while Mohammed al Rawahi, from OIG, felt the award will make sure their employees serve clients to the maximum. Also, Dr Maysa al Kindi (EMC) added that winning this award for the sixth year in a row motivated them to continue providing the best services.



It is with great honour and gratitude that I accept this award on behalf of NLGIC for being recognised as Oman's most trusted brand. This achievement is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our entire team, as well as the unwavering support of our customers and partners. At NLGIC, we understand the importance of trust in building long-lasting relationships with our stakeholders. We are committed to upholding this trust by continuously striving to provide exceptional services and solutions.

MARTIN RUEEGG (AE)
Group CEO, NLGIC Group



We at Al Mouj Muscat have always striven to provide the best experience to our customers and visitors. Al Mouj Muscat has something for everyone whether they want to work, stay, live or visit. Last year, we recorded more than 4 million visitors who came to Al Mouj to enjoy one hundred experiences. This award is an acknowledgement of our efforts and we are grateful to our customers and visitors who voted for Al Mouj Muscat in this awards survey.

NASSER AL SHEIBANI
CEO, Al Mouj Muscat

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And the winners are...

Business bigwigs representing 50 top brands attended Oman Most Trusted Brand Awards 2022 function to celebrate their 'tradition of trust' with consumers



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MG (MHD ACERE)



Automotive (Super Luxury)
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Bank Muscat



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Beverages (Juices)
Top Fruits (Oman Refreshment Co)



Beverages (Soft drinks)
Mountain Dew (Oman Refreshment Co)



Cosmetics & Dermatology
EMC



Dairy Products
Mazoon Dairy



Dental Clinic
Wassan Specialty Dental Center



Drinking Water
Oman Oasis



Eye Centre
Muscat Eye Laser Center



Facilities Management Company
OIG (Oman International Group SAOC)



Food Products
Minara (Areej Vegetable Oils & Derivatives SAOC)



Fuel Station
Shell Oman

Oman calls for boosting efforts to support LDCs

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The sultanate has underscored the significance of adhering to international cooperation towards meeting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as all pledges made to maintain balanced growth within the context of social, economic and environmental development.

In a speech at the 5th United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC5), held in Doha on Tuesday, H E Dr Said Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, affirmed that Oman has incorporated all three dimensions of sustainable development into Oman Vision 2040 and its long-term sectoral strategies.

The UN Conference aims to mobilise the international community's commitments towards the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action for the LDCs (2022-2031), adopted by the UN General Assembly in April 2022.

It will offer the opportunity for renewed partnership between LDCs and their development partners to overcome structural challenges, eradicate poverty, achieve internationally agreed development goals and enable gradu-



Oman has underscored the significance of maintaining balanced growth within the context of social, economic and environmental development

ation from the LDC category.

H E Dr Saqri said that the sultanate is participating in the conference - running till March 9 - in its belief in the importance of

partnership and cooperation to achieve the requirements of sustainable development, and in respect and commitment to international agreements and covenants.

He added that the conference represents an opportunity to exchange experiences, discuss solutions to common problems and to strengthen global efforts in order to provide the best methods and support to LDC to help them eradicate poverty, enhance their role in international trade and regional integration, and employ their resources for comprehensive and sustainable development for all.

H E Saqri said Oman calls on all countries to redouble their efforts to help countries eliminate conflicts and acts of violence and also help them achieve a quantum leap in combating poverty and advancing their societies.

"Oman encourages developed countries and international financial institutions - including the International Monetary Fund and various development banks - to adopt initiatives to finance development, rehabilitation and reconstruction plans in these countries, provided that these initiatives include debt repayment and debt restructuring," said H E Saqri.

Volunteerism set to take wings with e-platform

Our Correspondent
Muscat

To spread the culture of volunteer work in the sultanate, collect data of volunteers and save time and effort in mobilising initiatives, the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) will establish an electronic platform called 'Volunteers of Oman'.

The ministry and United Investment Development signed an agreement to this end on Tuesday.

A ministry official said the e-platform will include records of all volunteers and voluntary organisations, allowing MoSD to contact people involved in voluntary work across the sultanate quickly when the need arises.

'Volunteers of Oman' will also record the number of volunteering hours devoted by workers in different fields.

"After compilation of volunteering records in Phase 1, work will begin in coordination with the relevant authorities to provide benefits to volunteers who have put in a certain number of volunteer hours. This will be based on criteria to be announced in due course," the MoSD official added.

Announcement of the e-platform prompted quick response from volunteers. Speaking to *Muscat Daily*, Ahmed bin Hamad al Kharusi, a blood donor who



After compilation of volunteering records in Phase 1, work will begin in coordination with the relevant authorities to provide benefits to volunteers

MOSD OFFICIAL

has given the gift of life 188 times, said, "I have spent 37 years in volunteer work. This platform will encourage many youngsters to volunteer their time and efforts for others' good."

He added that the platform will provide data specific to needs and situations as and when these arise, especially in the field of blood donation, of

which there are severe shortages most of the year.

"The platform will help in communication and bonding between different groups of society, create solidarity, and solve the challenges volunteers face."

Kharusi hoped 'Volunteers of Oman' will pave the way to implementing electronic cards - gold, silver to bronze based on the volume of work - for all volunteers in the sultanate. "This will encourage them to dedicate more time and effort in volunteer work."

Ali al Shanfari, a member of the Iteen volunteer team in Salalah, said, "The e-platform is a good step to involve civil society in volunteer work in an organised manner."

He urged all volunteers and volunteer teams to register on the platform as soon as it is launched.

Qatar emir names new PM

Doha, Qatar - Qatar's emir named his top diplomat as prime minister on Tuesday and brought in a new interior minister in what observers called the completion of a change of the guard in the country.

The ruler's office announced that Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani had accepted "the resignation" of prime minister and interior minister Sheikh Khalid bin Khalifa bin Abdulaziz al Thani.

Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al Thani was named the new head of government and was sworn in within hours of the change, state media reported.

Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al Thani, who headed the government security committee for last year's World Cup, became interior minister.

At 42, the new prime minister, an economist, is the same age as



Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al Thani

the emir and the new interior minister is also of the same generation.

Sheikh Khalifa had also served in the Lekhwiya internal security force.

The outgoing prime minister, 55, had only been in office since January 2020. "He was the last real link in government to the father of the emir," said a diplomatic observer, speaking on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the topic.

The current emir's father Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al Thani abdicated in favour of his son in 2013. Sheikh Hamad had himself overthrown his father in a bloodless coup 18 years earlier.

The current emir has not introduced any major changes to the foreign policy of the resolutely pro-US Gulf state.

But Qatar's growing wealth built on its massive natural gas reserves has brought huge changes to the country and its international profile.

The population has increased by a third to about 3mn in the past decade, mainly fuelled by a massive influx of migrant workers, whose treatment has come under international spotlight.

Political parties are still banned but Qataris held a first direct election in 2021 for a consultative council.

AFP

SAYYID ASAAD RECEIVES WIPO DIRECTOR GENERAL



Sayyid Asaad bin Tariq al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs and Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, received in his office Daren Tang, Director General of World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), and his accompanying delegation, currently visiting Oman on Tuesday. During the meeting, the two sides exchanged cordial conversation and reviewed aspects of existing cooperation between Oman and WIPO and means of promoting these (ONA)



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MHT starts restoration of Omani-French Museum

Our Correspondent Muscat

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT) has started Phase 1 of a restoration and maintenance project of the Omani-French Museum in Muscat.

Prior to undertaking the restoration work, MHT conducted laboratory testing of the building and its structural strength. A work plan and scope of work was identified following the test results to ensure sustainability of the project.

A statement issued by MHT said, 'This phase of work consists of removal of the external wall cladding following best international practices adopted in restoration of historical buildings.'

The museum, which was opened to visitors in 1992, is housed in a 170-year-old structure located in the Old Muscat



(Supplied photo)

neighbourhood of Muttrah. It has eight display halls showcasing a collection of documents and items chronicling Omani-French relations dating back to the 18th century.

MHT's work plan for the project will ensure reuse of tradi-

tional and approved construction and restoration materials and methods in ancient buildings.

The restoration project is part of the ministry's efforts to develop and rehabilitate existing museums to achieve Oman Vision 2040.

Saudi airline flynas to connect Salalah to Dammam, Jeddah

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - Saudi budget carrier flynas has announced the addition of ten new destinations and routes in Asia, including Oman and Europe, in the 2023 summer season. The most popular destination in the region during the khareef season, Salalah will be connected with Dammam and Jeddah.

The airline said six new routes will be launched, including Dammam to Salalah, the Turkish cities of Istanbul and Trabzon, and the Albanian capital of Tirana. In addition, two more routes will be operated from Jeddah to Salalah and the Turkish city of Bodrum.

Four new destinations will be served out of King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh, including the Maldives, the Armenian capital of Yerevan, Antalya in Turkey, and Tivat in Montenegro.

Summer destinations and routes already launched as sea-



The new destinations and routes reflect the company's commitment to its growth and expansion strategy under the slogan 'We Connect the World to the Kingdom'

BANDER ALMOHANNA

sonal will be re-operated, including the Czech capital of Prague, Vienna and Salzburg in Austria, the Azeri capital of Baku, Tbilisi and Batumi in Georgia, the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo, Hurghada and Sharm el Sheikh in Egypt, and Trabzon and Bodrum in Turkey, besides Salalah. The total number of summer destinations in 2023 for the carrier now is 20.

Bander Almohanna, CEO of flynas, said that the new destinations and routes reflect the com-

pany's commitment to its growth and expansion strategy under the slogan 'We Connect the World to the Kingdom' to cement its leading position as the best low-cost airline in the Middle East and one of the top ten airlines in its category worldwide. "This approach is in line with the objectives of Saudi Vision 2030 and the civil aviation strategy to reach 330mn passengers, 250 international destinations and 100mn tourists annually."

INVITATION TO TENDER

Would like to invite all reputed & specialized companies, who have relevant experience to provide the required services mentioned against the below tender for Fertilizer/Oil and Gas/Refinery/Petrochemical Industries to submit their best offer for the below Tender:

Tender No	02/12429/2023
Tender Description	Contract for operation and maintenance of the entire HVAC system at OMIFCO site.
Brief Details	The contractor is required to provide complete operation & maintenance of OMIFCO HAVC, Cooling Systems & all sorts of Window/Spilt/Compact AC Units.
Tender Collection	08 March –19 March 2023
Tender Fees (Non-Refundable)	OMR. 250/= (Omani Rial Two Hundred Fifty, only).
Bid Bond	OMR. 5,000/= (Omani Rial Five Thousand, only)
Bid Submission due date	Not later than 12:00pm on 03 MAY 2023 (Oman time)
Minimum Experience	Five (5) Years of experience in the subject filed in similar scale of scope of work.

All bidders shall submit their offer in THREE (3) separate envelopes as following:

- Technical Bid and Un-priced Commercial Bid.
- Commercial Priced Bid.
- Bid Bond valid for 120 days, with total amount as mentioned Above.

All three envelopes shall be sealed and tagged with the Envelop Title, Tender Title and Tender Number. Also, the company profile and registration documents should be submitted along with the Technical Bid. All three envelops should be submitted at OMIFCO Head Office in Sur - Tender Box at the Main Gate.

Further details can be obtained from OMIFCO Purchase and Contracts Department at Sur Industrial Estate
Tel: +968 2553 2081 | Fax: +00968 2556 2824 | E-mail: Purchase@omifco.com
P.O. Box: 67, P.C 411, Sur, Sultanate of Oman

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Oman participates in UN meeting on status of women

New York - The sultanate is joining the international community at meetings of the 67th annual session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. The session is taking place at the UN headquarters in New York from March 6 to 17.

Oman is being represented in the meeting by H E Dr Mohammed Awadh al Hassan, Permanent Representative of Oman to the United Nations, and officials from the Ministry of Social Development.

The current session is reviewing the progress made by mem-



ber states in enhancing the status of women, innovation, technological transition, education in the digital age and the best practices for bridging the digital gender gap, focusing on empowering women in all aspects of life.

The gathering at the UN session will hear a recorded speech

by H E Dr Laila Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development. The speech will outline the efforts made by the Government of Oman to enhance the status of women and ensure their access to all rights cited in the laws approved by the government.

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Companies specialized in the field and registered with Tender Board, may obtain Prequalification documents for the website through the following link: (https://:etendering.tenderboard.gov.om) against non-refundable fees as mentioned below starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated below.

Reference No	Description	Deadline for Document Submission
2023/MM/HQ -4 (PRE-23-051)	Request For Prequalification For Supply And Laying Of Asphalt In Muscat Governorate 2023	23/03/2023

1. Participated companies shall submit their Documents electronically in the above mentioned website.

2. Clarification and Support:

- For any inquiries regarding Prequalification, please send it throgh e-tendering website: (https://:etendering.tenderboard.gov.om).
- For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om) or call (+96824402200).

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بنك عُمان العربي OMAN ARAB BANK

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present Oman Arab Bank's annual results for 2022. Oman's economic recovery has been gaining traction in 2022; its Credit rating was upgraded multiple times during the year. The latest announcement was by Standard & Poor's (S&P) in November who upgraded the Sultanate's rating from "BB-" to "BB" with a stable outlook, noting that GDP growth will reach approximately 4% in 2022. It also highlighted that total public debt is projected to decline to 44% of GDP in 2022, down from 61% in 2021.

Financial Performance

Consolidated results

The Bank recorded net profit of OMR 16.2 million for the year ending December 31, 2022 compared to OMR 71 million in 2021, an increase of 129% driven by a healthy growth in its core operations in both Conventional and Islamic banking.

The Bank's Operating profit of OMR 47.8 million increased by 11% compared to OMR 43.2 million in 2021. This growth was attributed to higher operating income of 4% and nil increase in cost. Excluding the one-off income of OMR 5.9 million, the operating profit and operating income would have shown increases of 28% and 9% respectively.

Net interest income and net income from Islamic financing grew by 10% to reach OMR 100.2 million in 2022 compared to OMR 90.7 million in 2021. Net fees and commission stood at OMR 17.8 million in 2022 and was 43% higher than the previous year.

Net loans and advances, including Islamic finance, increased by 11% to OMR 3,067 million at 31 December 2022 compared to OMR 2,753 million at 31 December 2021. Customer deposits reached OMR

2,992 million at 31 December 2022 compared to OMR 2,810 million at 31 December 2021, an increase of 6%.

Parent company performance

The parent company's net profit increased by 236% to OMR 10.2 million in 2022 compared to OMR 3.0 million in 2021 driven by improvements across all of its core banking activities.

Total operating income reached OMR 92.7 million in 2022 compared to OMR 92.1 million in 2021. Operating expenses declined by 3% to OMR 55.2 million compared to OMR 56.9 million last year. Operating profit increased from 35.2 million in 2021 to OMR 37.5 million in 2022. Excluding the one-off income of OMR 5.9 million recorded in 2021, operating profit would have shown an increase of 27%.

Net interest income increased by 7% to OMR 74.5 million in 2022 compared to OMR 69.4 million in 2021, while net fees and commissions increased by 52% to reach OMR 14.2 million in 2022.

Loans and advances to customers grew by 10% to OMR 2,165 million at 31 December 2022 compared to OMR 1,961 million at 31 December 2021. Customer deposits increased by 6% to OMR 2,089 million at 31 December 2022 compared to OMR 1,965 million last year.

Alizz Islamic Bank performance

Net Profit of Alizz Islamic Bank increased by 43% to reach OMR 6.3 million in 2022 compared to OMR 4.4 million last year supported by a strong growth in Islamic financing activities. Net financing receivables increased by 14% to OMR 903 million in 2022 compared to OMR 793 million in 2021. Customer deposits reached OMR 903 million in 2022 compared to OMR 845 million in 2021, an increase of 7%.

Enriching clients' experience

In its efforts to promote a culture of saving, OAB launched its Child Savings Plan, a unique and rewarding savings account designed to encourage parents to start saving for their children's future. This account enables parents to make monthly payments into their children's savings account and watch their children's savings grow at a competitive

annual interest rate, with free life insurance. OAB also launched its new reloadable prepaid card "Banki" that empowers customers to manage their family's expenses seamlessly.

OAB continued to drive forward its digital transformation agenda with the latest digital solution targeting small businesses specifically. OAB collaborated with Visa to launch the OAB Point of Sale (Mobile Pay) Payment Solution for small business owners and SMEs. With this new solution, merchants will be able to transform their smartphones into a payment terminal and accept contactless payments from their customers using an NFC-enabled Android devices. When using this payment solution, customers will be able to pay using their contactless cards and receive their payment receipt by e-mail or SMS seamlessly.

Additionally, AIB launched a special offer in partnership with a leading regional airline. The promotion offered Alizz Islamic Bank cardholders a 12% discount on economy and business class tickets. Alizz Islamic Bank also launched multiple discounts for its cardholders at various retail outlets, approved by the Fatwa and Sharia Supervisory Board.

Awards

OAB received a number of prestigious awards this year, including the "The Leadership Award in social responsibility" in recognition of its efforts towards supporting local communities. Alizz Islamic Bank won "The Sultanate's Best Islamic Bank on Social Media" award by Global Banking and Finance. Alizz Islamic Bank also received the "Fintech Solution Provider Award of the Year" award for its iFIN (Islamic Finance Initiation Network) Instant Goods and Auto Financing during the CER (Oman Economic Review) Live Digital Transformation Conference & Awards.

Omanisation and Talent Management

In 2022, OAB implemented global HR best practices to foster a positive, growth-nurturing culture. As part of this initiative, OAB introduced a job rotation policy and re-structured certain divisions and teams within the Bank to enhance efficiencies, boost overall performance and create opportunities for young Omani talent.

As a testament to its commitment to create a strong pipeline of Omani talent in senior leadership roles, OAB announced a number of senior Omani appointments and has successfully maintained one of the highest Omanisation rates in the banking sector at 96%. We are proud to see this commitment reflected across the group, with Alizz Islamic Bank maintaining an Omanisation rate of 92%.

Alizz Islamic Bank launched the 'Ruwad Alizz' programme in 2022, a holistic and accelerated development programme for mid-level leaders, in collaboration with Harvard University. With this program, Alizz Islamic Bank endeavors to develop leadership potential to align to the "Future of Work". The program aims to certify 60 delegates every year, across two batches, and includes delegates from different industries in Oman as part of the bank's commitment to share knowledge and give back to the society.

OAB places significant importance on promoting gender diversity in the workplace and developing female talent to take up leadership positions. At OAB, women make up 36% of all middle management positions. OAB is also proud to have 40% of its branches led by female talents, and for the first time in the history of the Bank, two female employees were appointed as Regional Managers recently.

In support of Oman's socio-economic agenda, OAB also continued to provide on-the-job training opportunities for university and college students, with over 230 training opportunities offered in 2022.

Our commitment to the community

Our commitment to society as a whole is well reinforced by the platforms and initiatives we have introduced to create sustainable value in the community. In 2022, OAB and Alizz Islamic Bank organized a forum in collaboration with the Supreme Judicial Council to discuss and identify opportunities to simplify procedures related to commercial judicial proceedings. OAB also collaborated with the Environmental Authority to support its national initiative to plant 10 million trees, with volunteers from the Bank planting 3,000 mangrove trees in Wadi al-Arsh.

Alizz Islamic Bank, in cooperation with the Omani

Society for Petroleum Services (OPAL), organized a workshop on financial inclusion and literacy for small & medium enterprises in the energy sector. The objective was to enable these institutions to grow and strengthen their competitiveness and contribution to the GDP.

In addition, Alizz Islamic Bank celebrated Omani Women's Day by launching the second edition of its 'Hiyya Awards' to recognize successful female entrepreneurs. As part of Alizz Islamic Bank's commitment to corporate social responsibility and its pioneering role in supporting people with disabilities in the Sultanate, the Bank in coordination with Ministry of Social Development and The Association of Early Intervention for Children with Special Needs launched a crowdfunding project to raise OMR 2 million to build the Centre of Excellence for Children with Disabilities. The crowdfunding website was open to all sectors and segments of society and successfully raised the required funds. The Center, which is scheduled to open soon, will be the first-of-its-kind in Oman, and is designed to provide comprehensive services to children of various disabilities.

Conclusion

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to thank our shareholders for their continued support, confidence and trust. I would also like to thank the Bank's Senior Leadership team and employees for their commitment. Their tremendous efforts have brought us to where we are today – and will shape what we become tomorrow. We move forward in 2023 with a new Chief Executive Officer, and I am optimistic for the future stewardship of the Bank.

I would also like to thank the Central Bank of Oman and the Capital Market Authority for their continuous support, and I would like to extend our utmost appreciation to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik – may the Almighty protect and preserve him – for his wise leadership. May the Almighty protect Oman, its leader and its people.

Rashad Al Zubair
Chairman

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2022

	Consolidated		Parent Company	
	31-Dec-22	31-Dec-21	31-Dec-22	31-Dec-21
	RO'000	RO'000	RO'000	RO'000
Cash and balances with central bank	99,913	188,904	31,034	105,954
Due from banks	53,671	50,972	48,161	54,480
Loans, advances and financing to customers	3,067,063	2,753,434	2,164,984	1,961,011
Investment securities	331,656	302,496	268,426	240,031
Investment in subsidiary	-	-	107,144	107,144
Property and equipment	38,496	43,303	35,659	40,337
Intangible assets	6,900	7,210	-	-
Other assets	84,131	89,340	55,454	59,358
Total assets	3,681,830	3,435,659	2,710,862	2,568,315
Due to banks	94,141	13,359	59,101	13,359
Customer deposits	2,992,180	2,810,412	2,089,284	1,965,197
Other liabilities	94,496	84,498	71,114	66,064
Subordinated loans	-	-	-	-
Taxation	3,412	3,051	3,412	3,051
Total liabilities	3,184,229	2,911,320	2,222,911	2,047,671
Share capital	166,941	166,941	166,941	166,941
Share premium	36,565	36,565	36,565	36,565
Legal reserve	48,570	46,921	47,506	46,482
General reserve	25,560	25,560	25,560	25,560
Subordinated loans reserve	-	-	-	-
Special reserve	3,837	3,837	3,837	3,837
Fair value reserve	(3,160)	(1,081)	(3,110)	(1,017)
Impairment reserve	9,130	9,130	9,130	9,130
Retained earnings	71,355	67,663	62,719	64,343
Shareholders' equity	358,798	355,536	349,148	351,841
Perpetual Tier 1 capital bonds	138,803	168,803	138,803	168,803
Total equity	497,601	524,339	487,951	520,644
Total equity and liabilities	3,681,830	3,435,659	2,710,862	2,568,315
Net assets value per share (RO)	0.215	0.213	0.209	0.211
Contingent liabilities and commitments	393,241	451,183	272,193	344,920

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2022

	Consolidated		Parent Company	
	2022	2021	2022	2021
	RO'000	RO'000	RO'000	RO'000
Interest income	127,085	119,054	127,100	119,058
Interest expense	(52,616)	(49,613)	(52,616)	(49,613)
Net interest income	74,469	69,441	74,484	69,445
Net income from Islamic financing	25,683	21,221	-	-
Net fee and commission income	17,836	12,514	14,204	9,371
Net income from investment securities	223	3,338	223	3,338
Other operating income	4,365	11,481	3,773	9,908
Total income	122,576	117,995	92,684	92,062
Operating expenses	(74,776)	(74,780)	(55,181)	(56,856)
Net allowances for credit losses	(30,344)	(35,214)	(26,871)	(31,179)
Profit before tax	17,456	8,001	10,632	4,027
Income tax expense	(1,275)	(920)	(392)	(983)
Net Profit for the year	16,181	7,081	10,240	3,044
Other comprehensive (loss) / income				
Items that will not be reclassified to profit or loss in the subsequent years				
- Equity investment at FVOCI – net change in fair value	36	197	17	197
Items that are or may be reclassified to profit or loss in the subsequent years				
- Debt investment at FVOCI – net change in fair value	(2,168)	(571)	(2,163)	(238)
Other comprehensive loss for the year	(2,132)	(374)	(2,146)	(41)
Total comprehensive income for the year	14,049	6,707	8,094	3,003
Earnings per share:				
Basic and diluted (RO)	0.003	(0.002)	(0.0003)	(0.004)

Minimum Disclosure Requirements in Year-end Financial Statements Profit and Loss Account for the year ended 31 December, 2022

Details	Consolidated		Parent	
	Current Year	Previous Year	Current Year	Previous Year
	RO'000	RO'000	RO'000	RO'000
Gross Interest Income	114,152	108,162	114,167	108,166
Interest Expense	(52,616)	(49,613)	(52,616)	(49,613)
Net Interest Income	61,536	58,549	61,551	58,553
Other Operating Income	193	5,938	193	5,938
1. Dividend Income	256	149	256	149
2. Net Fee & Commission Income				
a) Fee and Commission Income	26,119	20,207	21,812	15,155
Less: b) Fee and Commission Expense	(8,223)	(6,205)	(7,548)	(5,466)
3. Net Foreign Exchange Income				
a) Income	4,112	4,055	3,520	3,652
Less: b) Expense	-	-	-	-
4. Net Income from dealing in securities	-	-	-	-
a) Gain / (loss)	-	3,120	-	3,120
Less: b) Expense	-	-	-	-
5. Net Income from Investment Securities				
a) Income	12,933	10,892	12,933	10,892
Less: b) Expense	-	-	-	-
Gross Income	96,926	96,705	92,717	91,993
General Administrative Expenses	(65,547)	(64,578)	(47,071)	(48,381)
Depreciation	(9,229)	(10,202)	(8,110)	(8,475)
Total Operating Costs	(74,776)	(74,780)	(55,181)	(56,856)
Net Operating Profit (Profit on ordinary activities before provisions)	22,150	21,925	37,536	35,137
Income from Subsidiaries	-	-	-	-
a) Income from Islamic financing	25,683	21,221	-	-
Income from Associate Companies	-	-	-	-
Income from Other Licensed Activities	-	-	-	-
Profit from sale of non-banking assets	-	-	-	-
Bad debts Written off	-	-	-	-
ECL Allowance (net) charged for Loans & Advances	(30,135)	(34,144)	(26,602)	(30,002)
ECL Allowance (net) charged for Investments	43	188	39	(209)
ECL Allowance (net) charged for Placements	38	(33)	41	(33)
ECL Allowance charged (net) for Off-balance sheet items	(290)	(1,225)	(349)	(935)
ECL Allowance charged (net) for Others (if any)	-	-	-	-
Provision for diminution / Gain in value of investments	(33)	69	(33)	69
Profit for the year after loan loss provisions	17,456	8,001	10,632	4,027
Taxation	(1,275)	(920)	(392)	(983)
Net profit after tax	16,181	7,081	10,240	3,044
Other Comprehensive Income for the year				
- Movement in fair value of available for sale / FVOCI investment for the year	(2,132)	(374)	(2,146)	(41)
- Effect of currency translation for the year	-	-	-	-
- Any other comprehensive income for the year (please specify)	-	-	-	-
Total Comprehensive Income for the year	14,049	6,707	8,094	3,003

Minimum Disclosure Requirements in Year-end Financial Statements Assets & Liabilities as at 31 December 2022

Assets	Consolidated		Parent	
	Current Year	Previous Year	Current Year	Previous Year
	RO'000	RO'000	RO'000	RO'000
1. Cash	27,769	32,735	21,711	25,900
2. Balances with CBO	71,119	155,144	8,823	79,554
3. Capital Deposit with CBO	1,025	1,025	500	500
4. Government & other Securities	259,695	236,070	241,600	217,975
5. Treasury Bills & Other Bills	-	-	-	-
6. Due from H.O., branches, principal shareholders & affiliates abroad	18,106	23,157	18,106	23,157
7. Due from banks:	-	-	-	-
i) Placements	35,565	27,815	30,095	31,323
ii) Loans & Advances	-	-	-	-
8. Other Money Market Placements	-	-	-	-
9. Investments	71,961	66,426	133,970	129,200
10. Loans and advances	3,067,063	2,753,434	2,164,984	1,961,011
11. Tangible Fixed Assets	38,496	43,303	35,659	40,337
12. Losses carried forward	-	-	-	-
13. Other Assets	91,031	96,550	55,454	59,358
Total Assets	3,681,830	3,435,659	2,710,862	2,568,315
Liabilities	Consolidated		Parent	
	Current Year	Previous Year	Current Year	Previous Year
	RO'000	RO'000	RO'000	RO'000
1. Deposits (incl. Govt.)				
a) Demand	1,034,812	970,867	758,752	698,334
b) Savings	546,812	565,407	347,610	354,326
c) Time	1,410,556	1,274,138	982,922	912,537
2. Certificate of Deposits	-	-	-	-
3. Due to H.O., branches, principal shareholders & affiliates abroad	22,410	583	22,410	6,358
4. Due to Banks:				
i) Placements	71,731	12,776	36,691	7,001
ii) Borrowings	-	-	-	-
5. Other Money Market Deposits	-	-	-	-
6. Borrowings from CBO	-	-	-	-
7. Capital	166,941	166,941	166,941	166,941
8. Reserves	120,502	120,932	119,488	120,557
9. Retained Earnings	71,355	67,663	62,719	64,343
10. Capital Bonds	138,803	168,803	138,803	168,803
11. Other Liabilities	97,908	87,549	74,526	69,115

British delegation scouts for investment avenues in Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

A delegation of British investors - representing companies operating in the sectors of mining, technology, agriculture, services and logistics - visited 'Invest Oman' lounge on Tuesday and took note of various incentives offered to investors in Oman.

The delegation was briefed about the most important services provided to investors wishing to do business in Oman.

A visual display that was presented to the delegation demonstrated investment advantages, the Investor Residency Programme, incentives and facilities available at special economic zones and free zones.

This visit was organised by the Sultanate of Oman's Embassy in the United Kingdom, in cooperation with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP).

The event reflected the concept of promoting and attracting



Oman is a leading destination for British investors... the investments by British companies in Oman touched US\$23.5bn in 2022 - a 9.3% growth compared to the figures of 2021

AHMED SALIM AL RASBI

foreign investments to the sultanate, while presenting the incentives and facilities earmarked for foreign investors.

Ahmed Salim al Rasbi, Director General of the Investment Services Centre at MoCIIP, said that the British delegation was

briefed about the salient features of the investment climate in Oman, the role of the lounge and the services it provides to investors within the context of a clear mechanism and basic tools to streamline an investor's business.

Rasbi presented Oman as a leading destination for British investors, while informing that the investments by British companies in Oman touched US\$23.5bn in 2022 - a 9.3 per cent growth compared to the figures of 2021.

Rasbi pointed out that this partnership expanded in the past few years and covered several sectors, notably oil and gas, technology and infrastructure.

The volume of trade exchange between Oman and the UK grew up to US\$362.3mn by October 2022 - 20.3 per cent higher than the figures of the corresponding period in 2021.

The British delegation will meet a number of Omani entrepreneurs to discuss partnership opportunities.



Revenue, guests, occupancy go up considerably in star hotels

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Revenues of start hotels in Oman showed a significant jump during the first month of the year as compared to the figures achieved in January 2022.

Revenues of 3- to 5-star hotels increased 50.8 per cent to RO20.79mn until the end of January this year, compared to 13.78mn in January 2022, the latest data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) showed.

The occupancy in those hotels also recorded a growth of 31.3 per cent during the same period this year, NCSI reported.

The occupancy rate was 53.7 per cent in January this year as against 40.9 per cent recorded in January last year.

The number of hotel guests in star hotels recorded an increase of 65 per cent to 173,313 in January, compared to 105,043 in the same period in 2022.

According to NCSI, the number of Oceanian guests recorded a significant

growth, amounting to 383.1 per cent, increasing from 767 guests in January last year to 3,705 in January this year. They were followed by Europeans, whose number grew from 26,461 in January

Revenues of 3- to 5-star hotels increased 50.8% to RO20.79mn until the end of January this year, compared to 13.78mn in January 2022

2022 to 58,256 in January this year, registering a growth of 120.2 per cent.

The data also revealed that the number of Asian guests was 21,098 in January, recording an increase of 96.1 per cent compared to the same period in 2022; while the number of Gulf guests increased by 81.9 per cent from 5,919 to 10,767 in January this year.

MoHERI, WIPO review areas of cooperation in IP

Muscat - H E Dr Rahma Ibrahim al Mahrouqi, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, met with Daren Tang, Director General of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), on Tuesday.

During the meeting, the two reviewed areas of joint cooperation in the field of intellectual property. They also touched on means of support extended by WIPO to establish a specialised institute for intellectual property under the ministry's supervision.

In addition, they also highlighted WIPO's support for training people concerned in the field of intellectual property in Oman, including students, researchers,



innovators and entrepreneurs.

The Director General of WIPO underscored the vital role of intel-

lectual property in developing the world's economy and driving a knowledge-based economy.

On her turn, H E Dr Rahma encouraged providing support to universities that plan to offer

programmes related to intellectual property.

The meeting was attended by H E Dr Saif Abdullah al Hadabi, Undersecretary for Research in the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation and Eng Khalid Hamoud al Hinai, Head of the patents and industrial designs department at the National Office for Intellectual Property and other officials from both sides.

Tang also visited Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, where he was received by its chairman Dr Khamis Saif al Jabri. The two explored means of cooperation.

ONA

MoHERI extends submission period for SRPP

Muscat - The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI) has extended the period for accepting research proposals for approved research priorities in the second round of the Strategic Research Projects Programme (SRPP) until March 30.

The ministry also announced the extension of submission period for the research priorities of the Ministry of Health till March 14, and the Ministry of Education and the Environment Authority until March 15.

It is worth noting that the Strategic Research Projects Programme - for the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism; Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and



Water Resource and the Ministry of Information - is one of the most important programmes of MoHERI to support and fund research projects.

The programme serves strategic directions and focuses on national priorities in various service, economic and social fields, keeping in line with Oman Vision 2040.

Oman, UAE sign MoU to boost environmental efforts

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates have signed a memorandum of understanding aimed at driving sustainable development and boosting cooperation in the various areas related to environmental protection.

The MoU was signed by Environment Authority and UAE's Ministry of Climate Change and the Environment, during an official visit by a delegation from the UAE, headed by H E Mariam bint Mohammed Almhairi, Minister of Climate Change and the Environment, last week.

During her visit, ways of enhancing cooperation in fish farming, achieving net-zero targets, mangrove plantation and the UAE's preparations for the 28th session of the Conference of the



Parties (COP 28) were the main areas of discussion.

According to Mariam, the emirates seeks to encourage the implementation of eco-friendly solutions to address environmental challenges, in line with its hosting of COP28 and its efforts

to push forward climate action locally and globally. This was reported by the UAE's official news agency WAM.

Mariam's visit included meetings with Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of Environment Authority; and H E Dr Saud

Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources of Oman.

As per the MoU, the two sides will exchange research and studies, and conduct joint research in the fields of environmental preservation, enhancing air qual-

ity, biodiversity conservation, achieving sustainable development goals and preparing sustainable development progress reports.

Both sides will also exchange best practices and policies related to environmental conservation and reducing pollution.

Oman and the UAE held an official session of talks on environmental issues, in Muscat on Wednesday.

During the session, the two sides discussed plans to combat plastic pollution and refrigerant gases. The two also viewed the experience of wind energy and electric energy, in addition to devising the necessary mechanism for activating research between the two countries in the field of fish farming and marine fisheries, as well as exchanging expertise and best practices, among other topics of concern.

High Protein Snacks

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Asyad Shipping cohosts international forum on tanker crew safety solutions

Asyad Group, represented by its shipping arm Asyad Shipping, cohosted the Informal Tanker Operators' Safety Forum's (ITOSF) 164th meeting, alongside NYK Group, at the Kempinski Hotel IN Muscat recently.

The forum, established in early 1970s, brings together more than 70 tanker management companies from around the world to discuss the latest trends and share experiences in tanker safety.

Asyad Shipping cohosted the first ITOSF meeting held in Oman, reaffirming its status as a leading maritime player committed to crew safety and well-being and the use of cutting-edge tanker safety technologies.

The international forum was also an opportunity to connect with stakeholders and industry experts and an ideal global platform for Asyad Shipping to share its knowledge and expertise in tanker safety.

Covering a host of topics, the 164th ITOSF meeting welcomed non-member safety experts from different companies to present emerging trends and share in-



sights on best practices in tanker safety. Attendees had the unique opportunity to take part in several sessions on safety-related issues, including a session on safety measures during maintenance and drydock presented by Asyad Drydock's Head of HSE. Other speakers presented ses-

sions on the latest developments and topics, such as cybersecurity, TMSA, SIRE 2.0 and risk management.

"Having ITOSF meeting in Muscat reflects our unwavering commitment to crew safety and well-being as a top priority which is aligned with the people-first

culture adopted across Asyad Group," said Khalil Al Balushi, Vice President Marine at Asyad Shipping. "As a key player responsible for setting HSSE benchmarks and identifying industry-changing practices, we seize this opportunity to share valuable experiences and lessons

on safety with fellow industry experts and shape a safer more sustainable future for the maritime industry."

Speaking on the location of the 164th meeting, Ko Ka Naing, Chairman of ITOSF said: "It was a pleasure to hold the ITOSF meeting in Oman for the first

time. The country's growing reputation as a logistics hub made it an ideal destination for us to discuss tanker safety, an issue we feel is imperative to the efficient flow of global trade.

We are grateful to Asyad Shipping and NYK Group for hosting the meeting and look

ITOSF brings together experts from over 70 tanker management companies around the world... Asyad Shipping shares lessons and experiences with top industry players to shape a safer future for shipping

forward to further collaboration."

Asyad Shipping is forging ahead in its quest to optimize the safety of its operations by employing the latest standards and technologies and gaining insights from industry experts.

These efforts are reasserting Asyad Group's standing as an integrated logistics provider and cementing Oman's position as a global logistics hub.

Lulu kicks off Ramadan promotion, offers cash prizes worth RO100,000

With Ramadan approaching, Lulu Hypermarket has unveiled its much-awaited Ramadan promotion with an exciting range of special deals, promotions and offers for shoppers.

The promotion started on March 1 will run till April 29, at all Lulu stores in Oman. There will be discounts and exclusive offers on all essential commodities, including beverages, frozen foods, fresh produce and other grocery items. In addition to this, customers get a chance to win RO100,000 worth cash prizes during the promotional period.

The special Ramadan offers will be available both in-store and in Lulu online platforms. There will also be numerous daily deals on the online shopping app, which will make shopping more convenient and full of savings for shoppers.

Special Ramadan Kits will also be available to make shopping



for Ramadan essentials an easy experience for customers.

The kits will include essential grocery items, such as milk powder, rice, sugar, instant foods, jellies, ketchup, oil, pulses, pasta, grains, coffee and tea, at the lowest consolidated prices.

Since Ramadan is a time of sharing, Lulu has introduced an array of gift items, such as watches, perfumes, sweet boxes, and assorted gift baskets, for

customers who wish to gift something to their loved ones.

As part of Ramadan promotion, customers get a chance to shop and win cash prizes worth RO100,000 during the entire promotional period. Shoppers are entitled to an e-affle coupon on purchase of products worth RO10. Cash prizes include a grand prize of RO10,000 and weekly prizes of RO100, 200, 500, 750 and 5,000 for 8 weeks

totaling to 281 lucky winners.

"Ramadan is the most blessed time of the year, and Lulu is glad to be the ultimate shopping destination for customers to fulfill all their Ramadan needs under one roof!" said Shabeer K A, Regional Director - Lulu Hypermarkets, Oman. He informed that there will be huge discounts across categories including groceries, household, non-food etc.

"Our special Ramadan kit is a boon for customers who find shopping for essentials a tedious task," the Lulu official asserted.

"Our staff are working round the clock to improve customers' experience and to make shopping easy and enjoyable during Ramadan. We are also taking necessary steps to boost the availability of stocks at all times and maintain price stability to meet the increased demand throughout the fasting month," he added.

Bank Muscat offers corporate finance, advisory services for marquee deals

Bank Muscat, the leading financial service provider in the sultanate of Oman, stated to have had a successful year in 2022, providing corporate finance and advisory services for a number of prestigious clients including for government related entities as well as large corporate entities.

Bank Muscat successfully advised on multiple transactions spanning across various sectors including telecom, financial services, gas networks, utilities and supplier financing, which resulted in fundraising in excess of RO800mn in 2022.

Khalifa Abdullah al Hatmi, Deputy General Manager - Investment Banking and Capital Markets, Bank Muscat, said, "The bank is synonymous with innovation, customer-centricity, agility and trustworthiness and always aims to deliver reliable, dynamic and customised solutions, which suit the unique requirements of our customers.



"We are pleased to continue delivering on these principles consistently. Bank Muscat prides itself in its intricate understanding of diverse business requirements of its clients, offering unmatched financial expertise and guidance, innovative funding solutions and wide array of services for various customer needs."

In 2022, Bank Muscat's investment banking team engaged with the Ministry of Finance to achieve a unique financing solution to offer an alternative solu-

tion to meet working capital requirements for various suppliers and service providers to various ministries of the Government of Oman.

It also advised and raised funds for Helios Towers' acquisition of Omantel's telecom towers and related assets, which is the first of its kind acquisition in Oman by a UK-listed entity. The bank also helped a leading finance and leasing company in the sultanate to raise financing for its business.



OOC Secretary General receives Oman national boxing champions

Taha bin Sulaiman al Kishry, Secretary General of Oman Olympic Committee (OOC), received in his office on Tuesday morning the champions of Oman who were crowned with a number of medals.

Boxer Fares bin Ahmed al Muqballi is a gold medal winner in the 92kg category, while Firas bin Fida al Balushi won the silver medal in the 56kg category in the fifth Katara Open Boxing Championship held in Qatar from February 15 to 18.

The meeting was attended by

the Olympic boxing trainer Afaf al Qarniyeh, the first Qatari female boxer, Nasser bin Ali al Eisari, President of the Master Academy for Martial Arts, and the academy players and administrators.

Kishry, on behalf of OOC Chairman and Board Members, congratulated the players for winning medals in their first international participation in boxing, and wished them and other Omani athletes to achieve more as represent Oman well in international events.

New Mitsubishi L200 GLS arrives in Oman

General Automotive Company (GAC), the official distributor of Mitsubishi vehicles in Oman, has announced the launch of the luxurious new L200 GLS model.

The new flagship version of the L200 model range, the L200 GLS model, boasts a range of exclusive features that set it apart from the crowd. These include stylish new 18-inch alloy wheels, larger brakes, automatic climate control with an independent rear-seat air circulator, A/T with electronically controlled 4WD gear selector, tilt and telescopic steering and much more.

"We are excited to launch the L200 GLS model in Oman, a pickup truck that seamlessly combines a tough and rugged disposition with total comfort and an enjoyable driving experience. With a host of luxury features, the L200 GLS is firmly positioned as a lifestyle and leisure pickup. We are confident that it will appeal to our customers who prefer adventuring in comfort," said Manoj Ranade, General Manager of General Automotive Company.



The current generation L200 has been developed to embody the 'Engineered Beyond Tough' key phrase, incorporating the latest iteration of the Dynamic Shield front design concept, newly sculpted body curves with contrasting sharp lines, extended wheel flares, and bright accents,

further embodying the strength of a Mitsubishi Motors pickup truck and adding modernity.

The L200 GLS takes this further with stylish new 18-inch alloy wheels and removes the outer hooks for a sleeker, more elegant look. The L200 also makes significant advances in

terms of its pickup capability, thanks in part to the 2.4l powerplant under the hood.

On the inside, the newly redesigned crystal clear dash offers a car-like driving position, taking in vehicle info and enjoying the comfort of automatic climate control. The comfortable seating,

ample space, and independent air circulator for rear seat passengers ensure that every ride is comfortable.

In Oman, the L200 is offered with a choice of petrol or diesel engines, each delivering lower emissions and improved fuel efficiency resulting in significant fuel savings in the real world.

The L200 GLS features Mitsubishi's electronically controlled Easy Select 4WD system. This system makes traction in any condition or terrain second nature with the simple turn of a dial, delivering superior off-road performance. As a result, the L200's off-road expertise is second to none in its class.

"The Mitsubishi L200 GLS is now available for sale at our showrooms across Oman, and we are thrilled to bring this new lifestyle and leisure pickup to our customers in Oman. We encourage everyone to come and visit us for a test drive and experience the comfort, performance, and off-road capability of the L200 GLS first-hand," concluded Manoj Ranade.

Turkey's opposition unites against President Erdogan

Ankara, Turkey - Turkey's bickering opposition leaders ended months of fierce debate on Monday and agreed to name the head of the main secular party as their joint candidate against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in May 14 polls.

A last-ditch deal aimed at averting a split of the opposition vote will see CHP chief Kemal Kilicdaroglu name the popular mayors of Istanbul and Ankara as vice presidents should he end Erdogan's two-decade rule.

"We would have been eliminated had we split up," Kilicdaroglu told huge crowds of cheering supporters after emerging from hours of tense talks.

Erdogan faces the fight of his political life in what many view as Turkey's most consequential election since its birth as a post-Ottoman republic 100 years ago.

The 68-year-old leader needs to overcome the twin hurdles of an economic crisis and that aftermath of a devastating earthquake as he seeks to extend his Islamic style of rule until 2028.

Opinion polls point to a tight race that remains far too close to call.

But Erdogan's task had appeared to become a little easier when one of the main leaders of the six-party opposition alliance walked out of the talks on Friday.

Return to power

Meral Aksener has argued that



Leader of Felicity Party (Saadet) Temel Karamollaoğlu (right) shakes hands with leader of İYİ Party Meral Aksener ahead of a meeting between opposition party leaders in Ankara on Monday (AFP)

Leaders agreed to name the head of the main secular party as their joint candidate against President Erdogan in May 14 polls

Kilicdaroglu - a soft-spoken 74-year-old from Turkey's long-marginalised Alevi community - lacked the public appeal to defeat Erdogan in the presidential ballot.

She has instead urged the popular CHP mayors of either Is-

tanbul or Ankara to step into the race.

The two met Aksener on Monday in a make-or-break attempt to bring her nationalist İYİ Party back into the opposition fold.

"Our nation cannot tolerate a split," Ankara mayor Mansur Yavas told reporters after the meeting.

The opposition last united in an effort to unseat Erdogan's allies in municipal elections held in 2019.

Their ability to regain control of Turkey's two main cities shattered Erdogan's aura of invincibility and set the stage for the possible return to power by the

party of the secular state's revered founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

But Kilicdaroglu wanted Yavas and Istanbul mayor Ekrem Imamoglu to keep their posts to avoid the threat of handing back control of either city to Erdogan's Islamic-rooted party.

A 12-point text hammered out on Monday committed Kilicdaroglu to naming the other five party leaders as vice president for a post-election transition period should he win.

Kilicdaroglu would then appoint the two mayors as vice president 'at a time deemed appropriate by the president'.

AFP

Pentagon chief visits Iraq nearly 20 years after US-led invasion

Baghdad, Iraq - US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin arrived in Iraq on Tuesday on an unannounced visit barely two weeks before the 20th anniversary of the US-led invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein.

"I'm here to reaffirm the US-Iraq strategic partnership as we move toward a more secure, stable and sovereign Iraq," Austin tweeted as he landed in Baghdad. His visit comes ahead of the March 20 anniversary of the ground invasion which ushered in two decades of bloodshed that Iraq is only now beginning to exit.

In the run-up, Iraq has hosted a raft of foreign officials, including UN chief Antonio Guterres and the Iranian, Russian and Saudi foreign ministers.

Since US-led coalition troops ousted Saddam's Sunni Arab-dominated regime, Iraq's Shiite majority has led Iraq under a confessional power-sharing system. Successive governments have forged close ties with Iraq's Shiite-led neighbour Iran, while Iraq also maintains relations with the United States, Iran's arch foe, in a delicate balancing act.

Both Washington and Tehran provided extensive support during Iraq's fightback against the Sunni extremists of the Islamic State group, who overran swathes of northern and western Iraq in 2014.

The militants were ousted from Iraq territory in 2017 but retain sleeper cells in desert and mountain hideouts in both Iraq



Iraq PM Mohammed Shia al-Sudani (right) meeting with US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin in Baghdad on Tuesday (AFP)

and neighbouring Syria.

Iraq announced the end of combat operations by US-led coalition troops at the end of 2021 but some units remain deployed to provide advice and training.

Austin's visit comes after he held talks in neighbouring Jordan with King Abdullah II, a staunch US ally in the region.

"Secretary Austin shared his concerns on a range of shared challenges, including... maintaining focus on security and stability in Iraq, and countering other destabilising activities in the region," a Pentagon statement said.

Despite its vast oil and gas reserves, Iraq suffers from decades of underinvestment in its infrastructure and public services that have sparked repeated waves of protests. October 2021 elections were followed by a whole year of political vacuum before Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Su-

dani was sworn in at the head of a government led by pro-Iran factions.

The political arm of Iraq's Hashed al-Shaabi (Popular Mobilisation) paramilitary force, made up heavily of Tehran-trained groups, has long demanded the departure of all remaining coalition troops, although its calls have been less shrill since it entered government. US ambassador Alina L. Romanowski holds regular talks with Iraqi officials and this week again hailed the "strong" relationship between the two countries.

There had been a sharp deterioration in ties under the Donald Trump administration after the then US president authorised the assassination of Iran's foreign operations chief General Qassem Soleimani in a drone strike at Baghdad airport in January 2020.

AFP

Israel strike knocks out airport in Syria's Aleppo, says ministry

Damascus, Syria - Israeli warplanes struck Aleppo airport before dawn on Tuesday, causing significant damage that halted flights to and from Syria's war- and quake-battered second city, the defence ministry said.

The airport has been a major conduit for aid flights since a February 6 earthquake devastated swathes of southeastern Turkey and neighbouring Syria, and they too were brought to a stop, a transport ministry official said.

"At exactly 2:07am (2307 GMT Monday), the Israeli enemy carried out an air attack from the Mediterranean west of Latakia targeting Aleppo international airport," the defence ministry said in a statement.

The damage forced authorities to close the airport to all flights, the ministry added. There was no immediate word on any casualties.

More than 80 aid flights have landed in Aleppo over the past month with relief supplies for quake-hit areas, transport ministry official Suleiman Khalil told AFP.

"It is no longer possible to receive aid flights until the damage has been repaired," he said,



A view of Aleppo International Airport in Syria (AFP)

adding that the strike had put the runway out of service.

Aid deliveries have been diverted to Damascus and Latakia airports, a ministry statement said.

An Israeli military spokesman declined to comment on the reported strike.

Syria's foreign ministry decried a 'double crime', saying the strike targeted 'a civilian airport... and one of the key channels for the arrival of humanitarian aid' for quake victims.

It marked the second Israeli attack on government-held areas since the devastating quake

struck Turkey and Syria, killing more than 50,000 people in the two countries.

On February 19, an Israeli strike killed 15 people in a Damascus district housing state security agencies.

Damascus ally Iran condemned the strike, calling it a 'crime against humanity'.

"While the Syrian earthquake victims in Aleppo are experiencing difficult conditions, the Zionist regime (Israel) is attacking Aleppo airport," foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani said in a statement.

AFP

Israeli troops kill one in Jenin raid

Nabuls, Palestinian Territories - Israeli troops on Tuesday killed one Palestinian and wounded several others in a raid in Jenin, scene of frequent clashes in the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian health ministry said.

Witnesses in the Jenin refugee camp reported heavy gunfire between fighters and soldiers as the Israeli forces surrounded a house.

Two witnesses said rockets had been fired at the building housing a group of fighters and reported gunfire in the streets

of the northern West Bank camp, the latest in a string of fatal military operations in the territory.

The Israeli army said 'security forces are currently operating in the Jenin camp', but gave no further details.

"Mohammad Wael Ghazawi, 26, was killed by occupation (Israeli) bullets to the chest in Jenin," the Palestinian ministry said in a statement.

At least five other Palestinians have been wounded, including one with a serious injury to the stomach, it added.

The raid comes amid a surge in violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and specifically in the West Bank, which Israel has occupied since the Six-Day War of 1967.

Since the start of the year, the conflict has claimed the lives of 66 Palestinian adults and children, including fighters and civilians. Thirteen Israeli adults and children, including members of the security forces and civilians, and one Ukrainian civilian have been killed over the same period.

AFP

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REPORT OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I welcome you to the 27th Annual General Meeting of your Company to present and discuss the Annual Report and Audited Financial Statements for the year ended on 31 December 2022.

Financial Results and Company Performance:

The company clocked its highest ever sales of OMR 13 Million during the current year which is 12% higher when compared to the of Previous year's sales. The sales increase was largely driven by improvement in average selling prices driven by price increase and improvement in product/customer mix.

However, the company faced major headwinds on the cost front in its raw material (mainly Soda Ash) and packaging costs. The annual contracts of Soda Ash were cancelled and replaced by spot pricing by our suppliers citing force majeure (Geo-Political situation driving energy increases and increased logistics costs and improvement in demand given post covid revival thereby disturbing the supply-demand balance) which largely negated the revenue improvement.

The company progressed significantly in its plan implementation to increasingly drive its twin strategy of increasing sales to the food sector and also higher export sales to more developed markets.

Performance Highlights:

Particulars	Ye 2022	Ye 2021	Change +/- %
Statistics			
Sales Million Bottles	361	357	1%
Production Million Bottles	347	355	-2%
Operational data RO million			
Sales	13,023	11,624	12%
Gross Profit	1,556	2%	
Net Profit/(Loss) before Tax	-0.654	-0.843	22%
Net Profit After Tax	-0.985	-1.069	8%
EBITDA	0.591	0.779	-24%

Dividend

After considering the financial performance and taking account of the company's cash flow requirements for various capital expenditures envisaged in 2023, the Board of Directors do not recommend any dividend for the financial year ended 31 December 2022.

Future Outlook:-

I am happy to mention we are cautiously optimistic about the year 2023 with a good order booking/forecasts from customers to secure almost its total manufacturing capacity for 2023. Our focus continues to optimise our Customer/Market Mix to driver higher pricing and further grow the food category. The company is negotiating higher pricing with its customers given the cost increases in 2022 and is receiving positive response from almost all its customers.

We expect operational improvements to continue, including increased output and increased efficiency.

Corporate Social Responsibility:-

The company believes that giving back to society is extremely important. We provide monetary and intangible support and guidance to the organizations that are dedicated to improving the quality of life for the concerned people in the society and will continue to do so.

Internal Control:-

The Management regularly reviews the effectiveness of internal controls in discussion with the Audit Committee, Statutory Auditors, and External Internal Auditor, in line with the approved company policy and the charter. The company presently has an External Internal Audit agency, which keeps on reviewing internal controls in various areas of operations under the Audit Committee's guidance. The Board of Directors is pleased to inform the shareholders that, in their opinion, adequate and effective internal control systems are in place.

Omatisation :

The company is committed to recruiting and providing training to Omani employees to enable them to undertake responsibilities in various Operations and Administration areas. The Company had an Omatisation percentage of around 48% at the end of 31 December 2022.

Acknowledgments:-

On behalf of the Board of Directors and Management of the Company, we thank His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq bin Taimur for his leadership and vision- God protect him, to work for Oman and its dear people for a brighter and more prosperous future. The company also acknowledges the continuous support and commitment from its Shareholders, Customers, Suppliers, Bankers, and the Management & Employees' constant efforts.

Chairman

Dated: 05 March 2023

Annexure to Directors' Report 2022

Statistical Table showing dividend declared and paid during past five years

Particulars	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Net Profit/(Loss) before taxation (in RO '000)	(654)	(844)	(1,180)	(715)	(2,611)	(1,359)
Net Profit/(Loss) after taxation (in RO '000)	(985)	(1,069)	(1,047)	(608)	(2,219)	(1,143)
Dividend declared %	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Cash Dividend Amount (in RO'000)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Stock Dividend Amount in the form of free bonus shares (in RO'000)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Net Equity ('000)	1,144	2,129	3,197	4,245	4,853	7,090

Statement of Comprehensive Income for the year ended on 31st December 2022 (AUDITED):

	For the year ended 31st December 2022	For the year ended 31st December 2021
	RO ' 000s	RO ' 000s
INCOME		
Sales	13,023	11,624
Cost of Sales	(11,467)	(10,098)
	1,556	1,526
Damage losses	-	-
Other income	225	99
	1,781	1,625
Expenses		
General and administration expenses	(909)	(976)
Selling and distribution	(1,140)	(1,079)
Depreciation	(28)	(31)
Amortisation	(2)	(2)
	(2,079)	(2,087)
Loss from operations	(298)	(462)
Finance cost	(356)	(381)
Loss for the year Before Taxation	(654)	(843)
Taxation	(331)	(225)
Net Loss for the year	(985)	(1,069)

Statement of Financial Position as at 31st December 2022 (AUDITED):

	31st December 2022	31st December 2021
	RO ' 000s	RO ' 000s
ASSETS:		
Non-current Assets		
Property, Plant & Equipment	3,322	3,729
Intangible asset	27	1
Right of use assets	71	173
Deferred taxation	378	709
Total non-current assets	3,798	4,612
Current Assets		
Inventories	3,695	3,852
Accounts & other receivables	2,764	3,415
Prepayments	61	82
Bank balances & cash	62	26
Total current assets	6,582	7,375
Total Assets	10,380	11,987
Current Liabilities		
Current portion of term loan	760	813
Current portion of Lease rent payables	64	111
Bank borrowings	2,815	1,947
Accounts & other payables	3,676	4,797
Total current liabilities	7,315	7,668
Non-current Liabilities		
Employees' end of service payables	271	280
Non-current portion of Lease rent payables	-	64
Non-current portion of term loan	1,650	1,847
Total non-current liabilities	1,921	2,190
Total Liabilities	9,236	9,858
Net Assets	1,144	2,129
Shareholders' equity		
Share capital	4,202	4,202
Legal reserve	1,273	1,273
Retained earnings	(4,332)	(3,347)
Total shareholders' equity	1,144	2,129

Notes:

1. All amounts are in RO '000s.
2. Previous year figures are regrouped / rearranged wherever required.
3. The complete financial statements of the Company would be made available to any shareholder or interested party on request in Arabic or in English within 7 days from the date of request. The request applications can be sent on the above mentioned address.

Xi slams US-led ‘suppression’

The Chinese president also urged his country’s private sector to boost innovation

Beijing, China - The United States is leading a ‘containment, encirclement and suppression of China’, President Xi Jinping has said, as he urged his country’s private sector to boost innovation and become more self-reliant.

China’s technology ambitions have been hit with a raft of restrictions by the United States and its Western allies, and Beijing has doubled down on the need to shift away from imports for sectors perceived as vital to national security, such as semiconductors and artificial intelligence. Washington has in recent months tightened sanctions on Chinese chipmakers, citing national security concerns and the risk of the technology being used by China’s military.

In a rare direct criticism of the US, Xi told industry leaders that ‘Western countries led by the United States have implemented all-round containment, encirclement and suppression of China, which has brought unprecedented severe challenges to our country’s development’.

Xi, who will be granted a third consecutive presidential term in the coming days at the National People’s Congress (NPC), said the past five years had been riddled with a new set of hurdles that threatened to weigh down China’s economic rise.

According to the state-run



China’s President Xi Jinping (left) speaks with National People’s Congress (NPC) Chairman Li Zhanshu during the second plenary session of the NPC at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Tuesday (AFP)

Xinhua news agency, Xi said China must ‘have the courage to fight as the country faces profound and complex changes in both the domestic and international landscape’, in the address to delegates at the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), which runs alongside the NPC.

The 69-year-old said private firms ‘should take the initiative to pursue high-quality develop-

ment’, Xinhua reported late on Monday.

Earlier this week Xi vowed to bolster China’s manufacturing capacity and said the country should be able to fend for itself.

“I’ve always said there are two critical areas for China: one is to safeguard our rice bowl, and the other is to build up a strong manufacturing sector,” he said.

“As a great nation of 1.4bn people, we must rely on our-

selves... We can’t depend on international markets to save us.”

‘Not a threat’

China’s foreign minister Qin Gang later reiterated the president’s forceful language on US ‘containment’, calling American competition ‘a zero-sum game of life and death’. Urging Washington to ‘meet halfway’, Qin said the two powers’ relationship needed to be based on mutual

interests and friendship, rather than ‘US domestic politics and hysterical neo-McCarthyism’.

In a wide-ranging press conference, former US ambassador Qin dismissed warnings from Western countries that China may supply arms to Russia for its war in Ukraine, saying it would not accept ‘blame-shifting, sanctions, suppression and threats’ targeting Beijing.

China last month released a

position paper outlining its stance on the Ukraine conflict, portraying itself as a neutral party and urging the two sides to enter peace negotiations.

Beijing’s claim to neutrality has been questioned by the US and other Ukrainian allies, with Russia and China describing their bilateral relationship as having ‘no limits’ just weeks before the invasion. Qin said China was

China must have the courage to fight as the country faces profound and complex changes in both the domestic and international landscape

XI JINPING

‘neither a creator of the crisis nor a party to it, and it has not provided weapons to any party’, adding peace talks should start ‘as soon as possible’.

Beijing’s relationship with Moscow is ‘not a threat to any country in the world’, he said.

Qin also reiterated the official line that China would ‘maintain the option of taking all necessary actions’ to reclaim Taiwan.

AFP

Earthquake rocks southern Philippines

Manila, Philippines - A 6.0-magnitude earthquake jolted the southern Philippines on Tuesday, the US Geological Survey said, but there were no reports of casualties or major damage.

The shallow quake struck at about 2pm (0600 GMT), a few kilometres from Maragusan municipality in the mountainous gold-mining province of Davao de Oro on Mindanao island.

Shallow earthquakes tend to cause more harm than deeper ones, but local authorities said there were no reports of major damage. Cherrylyn Dapiton of the Maragusan disaster office confirmed there had been a landslide near a road, but it had not affected anyone or blocked traffic.

Photos on the local government’s Facebook page showed patients on beds or in wheelchairs outside a hospital after they were evacuated from the facility.

The quake lasted about 30 seconds and was followed by aftershocks, said Corporal Stephanie Clemen, with police in the city of Tagurn, about 40km (25 miles) from Maragusan.

AFP

WWII forced labour victims lash out at South Korea’s ‘dirty money’ plan

Seoul, South Korea - South Koreans who were forced to work for Japanese companies during World War II on Tuesday denounced Seoul’s new plan to compensate them and end a historic dispute with Tokyo as ‘dirty money’.

Seoul announced plans on Monday to pay the victims with money taken from South Korean companies that benefited from a 1965 reparations deal, in a bid to break the ‘vicious cycle’ in its relations with Tokyo.

Japan and the United States immediately welcomed the plan, which does not involve a fresh apology and envisages only voluntary contributions from the Japanese companies involved, such as Mitsubishi and Nippon Steel.

But victims’ groups said it fell far short of their demand for a full apology from Japan and direct compensation from the companies involved.

“I am 95 years old and I don’t know if I die today or tomorrow. But never in my life have I felt so distressed,” Yang Geum-deok, who worked at a Mitsubishi factory during the war, said at a rally



South Korean lawmakers and protesters hold placards during a rally denouncing South Korea’s plans to compensate victims of Japan’s forced wartime labour, at the National Assembly in Seoul on Tuesday (AFP)

in Seoul.

“Even if I die of hunger, I would not accept that dirty money,” she yelled, waving a placard that said: “Mitsubishi must apologise and compensate!”

Seoul aims to resolve lingering issues stemming from Japan’s brutal 1910-45 occupation of the Korean peninsula as it seeks closer ties with Tokyo in the face of growing threats from North Korea.

Around 780,000 Koreans were conscripted into forced labour by Japan during the colonial period, according to data from Seoul.

That number does not include Korean women forced into sexual slavery by Japanese troops.

“It was the Japanese who dragged us to Japan. Who do we turn to demand an apology?” said victim Kim Sung-joo at the rally, which was also attended by

opposition politicians.

South Korea’s President Yoon Suk Yeol defended the plan on Tuesday, saying it was essential ‘for freedom, peace and prosperity, not only bilaterally but globally’. The two countries restored diplomatic ties with the signing of the 1965 treaty, which included a reparations package of about US\$800mn in grants and cheap loans.

AFP

Rescuers search for missing after deadly Indonesia landslide

Jakarta, Indonesia - Rescuers on a remote Indonesian island were searching on Tuesday for dozens still missing after a landslide that killed 15 people, a disaster official said.

Poor weather and downed communication lines have complicated rescue efforts on the far-flung island of Serasan, in the Natuna region between Borneo and peninsular Malaysia, home to about 8,000 people.

Pictures provided by Natuna’s communication and information agency showed houses reduced to rubble, with fallen trees and torn roofs visible.

Body bags were lined up on top of a blue tarpaulin as officials gathered to pray for the victims.

Abdul Muhari, spokesman for the national disaster mitigation agency (BNPB), told local broadcaster Metro TV that rescuers had recovered 10 bodies at the scene, while villagers put the death toll at 15. “Six (bodies) have been identified, while four are still being identified,” he said.

Muhari said 42 people were missing. Eight previously missing people had been found alive, though four remained in critical



A rescue team inspecting damages and searching for victims following landslides in Natuna islands on Tuesday (AFP)

condition. Rescuers were focusing their efforts along a stretch of road near a cliff where dozens of houses were reportedly buried by the landslide, Muhari said.

“Along this road, there are around 30 houses that were buried. This is our focal point of the search,” he said.

Muhari added that the agency was sending food and tents, as well as satellite communication equipment and two helicopters in a bid to establish communication lines and speed up aid.

Indonesia is prone to landslides during the rainy season, aggravated in some places by deforestation, and prolonged tor-

rential rain has caused flooding in different areas of the archipelago nation. Experts say the country’s weather-related disasters are likely being made worse by climate change.

Floods further south in Banjar district, in the Indonesian part of Borneo, have inundated more than 17,000 houses and disrupted lives for a month.

Neighbouring Malaysia has also been hit with torrential rains and vast floods. At least four people have died and nearly 41,000 were evacuated last week in several states of the country.

AFP

North Korea warns US against intercepting missiles during tests

Seoul, South Korea - North Korea warned on Tuesday that it would be a ‘clear declaration of war’ if its missiles were shot down during their test launches over the Pacific Ocean.

The United States and South Korea have ramped up defence cooperation, including joint drills, in the face of growing threats from nuclear-armed Pyongyang, which has conducted a wave of banned weapons tests in recent months.

North Korea has said its nuclear weapons and missile programmes are for self-defence, and has bristled over US-South Korea military exercises, describing them as rehearsals for

an invasion.

“It will be regarded as a clear declaration of war against the DPRK, in case such military response as interception takes place against our tests of strategic weapons,” Kim Yo Jong, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un’s powerful sister, said in a statement, using North Korea’s official name.

“The Pacific Ocean does not belong to the dominion of the U.S. or Japan.”

North Korea is ‘always on standby to take appropriate, quick and overwhelming action at any time’, added her statement, published by the official Korean Central News Agency



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un (AFP)

(KCNA).

This month, the US and South Korean militaries will hold their

largest joint drills in five years.

Ahead of those exercises, named Freedom Shield and

scheduled for at least 10 days starting March 13, the allies held air drills this week featuring a nuclear-capable US B-52 heavy bomber.

In a separate statement on Tuesday, North Korea’s foreign ministry accused the United States of ‘intentionally’ ramping up tensions.

“The recent joint air drill... clearly shows that the US scheme to use nuclear weapons against the DPRK is being carried forward at the level of an actual war,” it said in a statement published by KCNA.

“We express deep regret over the irresponsible and worrying muscle-flexing of the US and

South Korea.’

‘Irreversible’ nuclear power

Last year, Pyongyang declared itself an ‘irreversible’ nuclear power and fired a record-breaking number of missiles.

Kim Jong Un recently called for an ‘exponential’ increase in weapons production, including tactical nukes.

North Korea has framed its missile tests and military drills as justified countermeasures following US-South Korea drills.

Last week, it called on the United Nations to urge a halt to these exercises, and reiterated that its nuclear weapons en-

sured the balance of power in the region.

South Korea is eager to reassure its increasingly nervous public about the US commitment to so-called extended deterrence, where US military assets, including nuclear weapons, serve to prevent attacks on allies.

Last month, a tabletop US-South Korea exercise at the Pentagon focused on responses to a nuclear attack by North Korea.

Pyongyang responded to that exercise by firing cruise missiles, and claimed that ramped-up US-South Korea drills ‘can be regarded as a declaration of war’.

AFP

'GAME OF CHESS'

Smith relishes the challenge as Australia look to square India series

Ahmedabad, India - Stand-in captain Steve Smith is looking forward to a new "game of chess" against India as Australia aim to square the series on another spin minefield when the final Test begins in Ahmedabad on Thursday.

India were chastened by a rare home defeat in the third Test last week and are looking to bounce back to take the series 3-1, and with it secure their berth in the ICC World Test Championship final at the Oval in June.

Australia clinched their place in the showpiece with their nine-wicket third Test win, completed before lunch on the third day on a treacherous Indore track.

Australia captain Pat Cummins has remained at home because of a family illness, leaving his deputy Smith with another chance to pit his wits against India in the subcontinent, something he clearly relishes.

"It's a game of chess, every ball means something," said Smith after the Indore victory, which followed India's wins in Nagpur and Delhi. "It's good to just move people and try to make the batter do something different and just play games with them," Smith said after the Indore triumph.

"It's probably my favourite place in the world to captain."

India and Australia's prime ministers are scheduled to attend



Steve Smith

Out of the 10 wickets maybe one or two where the pitch did help the bowler, but other than that it was the skill of the bowler that foxed the batsman

ROHIT SHARMA



on Thursday where another sharply turning wicket is expected at the Narendra Modi Stadium, the world's largest cricket ground with a capacity of 132,000.

Joe Root's England were thrashed there twice two years ago, including inside two days in

a day-night game, the shortest completed Test since 1935.

'Too much' pitch talk

Despite the local Gujarat Cricket Association's assurances of a "normal pitch", both sides are again expected to pick three spinners, though India may opt for the

wrist-spin of Kuldeep Yadav instead of Axar Patel, who has taken only one wicket in the series. India may also strengthen their batting by dropping a seam bowler and bringing in the explosive Suryakumar Yadav.

Australia's spinners Nathan Lyon and Matthew Kuhnemann took full advantage of an Indore pitch officially rated as "poor" by the match referee to give Australia only their second Test victory on Indian soil since 2004.

Kuhnemann took five wickets and Lyon three as India were rolled for 109 in their first innings after opting to bat. Lyon ripped through with 8-64 as India made

163 in their second innings, before Travis Head and Marnus Labuschagne chased down the 76-run target with ease.

India captain Rohit Sharma said he was fed up with the constant focus on the playing surfaces and wanted to focus instead on some exceptional bowling performances.

"This pitch talk is getting too much," he said after the Indore Test. "Every time we play in India it's always about the pitch.

"Out of the 10 wickets maybe one or two where the pitch did help the bowler, but other than that it was the skill of the bowler that foxed the batsman".

Oman Cricket chairman Khimji named in ICC committees

Muscat - Oman Cricket (OC) Chairman Pankaj Khimji's stature as one of the leading cricket administrators continues to grow at the global level.

Less than a year since he became the first Omani to be elected as Associate Member Director of the International Cricket Council (ICC), the world cricket governing body, Khimji has now been named in two ICC committees and one ICC working group.



I am extremely honoured by the appointments made by the ICC

PANKAJ KHIJMI

The appointment in three ICC panels underlines Khimji's growing influence on the world stage, and the Omani cricket boss is humbled by the recognition.

"I am extremely honoured by the appointments made by the ICC, and I hope to serve the different committees to the best of my abilities," said Khimji.

Khimji, who is also the vice-chairman of the Asian Cricket Council (ACC), has been named as a member of the ICC Development Committee. The committee is chaired by Imran Khwaja of Singapore and comprises 12 members.

The Omani cricket administrator, who serves as advisor for foreign trade and international cooperation at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MOCIIP), has also been appointed to the eight-member HR and Remuneration Com-

mittee of the ICC. This committee is chaired by West Indies' Richard Skerritt.

Besides the two ICC committees, Khimji has also been named as a member of the ICC Governance Working Group, the third ICC panel in which he has been entrusted to play a key role.

"I hope my 30-40 years of corporate experience will help me in contributing positively to the ICC. There will be useful experiences in the time to come for me. Working with people who have some fantastic understanding of these committees will be a good learning experience for me initially."

New Zealand stand in way of Sri Lanka's world Test final quest

Christchurch, New Zealand - New Zealand will take momentum from their dramatic one-run win over England into this week's first Test against Sri Lanka, who could reach the ICC World Test Championship final with a 2-0 series sweep.

Tim Southee's hosts became just the fourth team to win a Test after following on as they secured a draw in the two-match series against England.

Kane Williamson, who became New Zealand's record run-scorer in the thrilling Wellington



Kane Williamson

win, said it was vital to kick on after the Black Caps ended a seven-Test winless run.

"It's been a long time for us to get over the line," former skipper Williamson said ahead of the first Test against Sri Lanka starting on Thursday in Christchurch.

"We haven't had the results we would've liked, despite putting the work in, so it's nice to get those rewards.

"It's an important series for us now as we are looking to improve and we're focused in trying to put out better performances."

Sri Lanka have only won two Tests of the 19 they have played in New Zealand.

England's Buttler sees room for improvement ahead of one-day World Cup defence

Chittagong, Bangladesh - Captain Jos Buttler warned his England side they have "areas to improve" ahead of their one-day World Cup defence after failing to seal a series clean sweep in Bangladesh.

England lost the third and final one-day international against Bangladesh in Chittagong on Monday by 50 runs, although the tourists had already secured the series.

With an eye on the World Cup later this year in India - where conditions will be similar to



England's captain Jos Buttler (R) speaks with teammate Moeen Ali during their third ODI against Bangladesh on Monday (AFP)

Bangladesh - Buttler changed his England side for the final match.

Sam Curran was promoted to number five in the batting order, scoring 23 off 49 balls, and the 18-year-old leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed made his ODI debut.

The game was England's last scheduled 50-over match until September 8.

"I think we played some really good cricket throughout the series and I've spoken a lot about these being great conditions for us to challenge ourselves in," Buttler said.

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An engineer with BTech in Computer Science & Engineering (1st class) from Bengaluru, India, trained in MERN Stack technologies, C++, JavaScript, GoLang, Git and Webdriver IO framework, with experience as an associate quality assurance engineer for automating test cases and regression runs for client websites, looking for a suitable job.

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Family of Salim Khamees Al Mamari and family of Sultan Bati Al Sawwafi convey their congratulations to their children Zakariyya and Sara on the occasion of their wedding. Wishing the couple a very happy life.

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SPLUTTERING SPURS

Tottenham face uncertain future despite Conte return for AC Milan clash

London, United Kingdom - Antonio Conte's uncertain future threatens to ruin Tottenham's spluttering season as the Italian returns to the bench for Wednesday's decisive Champions League showdown against AC Milan.

Conte is set to be back in charge of Tottenham after missing the last four games as he recovered from gallbladder surgery. Watching on television back home in Italy while remaining in contact with his assistant Cristian Stellini, Conte saw Tottenham endure a choppy period that encapsulated the club's inconsistent form throughout his reign.

A pair of 2-0 wins against West Ham and Chelsea suggested Tottenham were on course to clinch a top four place in the Premier League with a flourish.

But that optimism was punctured by a dismal 1-0 loss at second tier Sheffield United in the FA Cup fifth round and another drab league defeat by the same score at Wolves on Saturday.

Conte has walked back into Tottenham's plush training complex this week to find a club not exactly in crisis - they still sit fourth in the Premier League for now - but once again drifting seemingly without direction towards an anti-climactic end to the season. The north Londoners haven't won a major trophy since 2008 and even a manager of Conte's pedigree has been unable to break the drought.

While Jurgen Klopp memorably referred to his Liverpool players as "mentality monsters"



Tottenham Hotspur captain Harry Kane looks disappointed during their English Premier League match against Wolves on Saturday (AFP)

Conte has portrayed Tottenham's problems as beyond his control, subtly hinting at frustration with the transfer policy of chairman Daniel Levy without completely condemning him in public

during the peak of their success under the German, Tottenham's

often limp response to pressure has made them look more like

"mentality midgets".

Conte has portrayed Tottenham's problems as beyond his control, subtly hinting at frustration with the transfer policy of chairman Daniel Levy without completely condemning him in public.

But the 53-year-old is taking his share of the blame from Tottenham fans, who have grown tired of his conservative tactics

and questionable substitutions.

Stellini's run of three successive wins prior to the FA Cup defeat made some Tottenham devotees wonder what the future would look like without Conte.

The former title winner at Chelsea, Inter Milan and Juventus has yet to sign an extension to a contract that expires at the end of this season and would surely be in demand from Serie A clubs if

he was available.

Even if Tottenham finish in the top four to guarantee a return to the Champions League, it would be little surprise if Conte and Levy decided a parting of the ways was the only option in May.

Against that troubled backdrop, Tottenham host Milan in the last 16 second leg looking to overturn a 1-0 deficit from the first meeting at the San Siro.

Milan's season in balance ahead of showdown with Tottenham

Milan, Italy - AC Milan head to Tottenham Hotspur with a slender lead to protect and their season once again in the balance following a damaging defeat at the weekend. Stefano Pioli's side are a goal in front before Wednesday's last 16, second leg clash in London, Brahim Diaz's goal separating the two sides in the scrappy first encounter at the San Siro.

The seven-time European champions were completely outplayed in their 2-1 loss at Fiorentina, a mid-table team who before Saturday had not beaten anyone in the top half of Serie A this season.

That defeat, and Roma's win over Juventus on Sunday, left Milan outside Italy's top four on goal difference and with a rediscovered defensive solidity suddenly punctured.

Pioli insisted that his players weren't distracted by the importance of Wednesday's match but they were a shadow of the team which comfortably beat Atalanta last weekend.

Milan had gone into Saturday's match on a run of four wins - including the first leg against Spurs - in which they hadn't conceded a single goal. But the remodelled three-man defence fell apart in Florence, with Fikayo Tomori in particular having a dreadful night.

Toney strikes as Brentford beat London rivals Fulham

London, United Kingdom - Ivan Toney extended his hot-streak as the Brentford striker's 15th Premier League goal this season helped clinch a 3-2 win over west London rivals Fulham on Monday.

Toney has shown no signs of being distracted since he was charged with 262 breaches, dating back to 2017, of the Football Association's gambling laws.

The 26-year-old recently criticised the FA in an Instagram post over what he alledges are lapses of confidentiality as he prepares to argue his case.

But Toney has kept his focus on the pitch and his penalty at the Community Stadium made it eight goals in his last 10 games.

Only Manchester City's Erling Haaland and Tottenham's Harry Kane have scored more than Toney's tally in the league this term.

Toney's 15th goal put Brentford back in front after Fulham's Manor Solomon had cancelled out Ethan Pinnock's opener.

Mathias Jensen netted late on and Carlos Vinicius's stoppage-time strike was no consolation for Fulham as Brentford extended their unbeaten league run



Brentford's English striker Ivan Toney scores against Fulham from the penalty spot during their English Premier League match

to 12 matches.

Brentford, undefeated in the league in 2023, sit ninth, just one point behind seventh placed Fulham in the race to qualify for European competition.

Toney has scored 27 of his 28 career spot-kicks, with his only miss coming while playing for Peterborough in 2018.

"Ivan is the best penalty taker in the world for a few reasons, his strategy, he practices it and he is very cool," Brentford boss Thomas Frank said.

"He is a special footballer. His

character is unique in terms of leadership and driving his team.

"His link-up play and the way he sees his team-mates in terms of combinations and then his ability to score goals. He is an all-around player."

Given the genteel west London districts that Brentford and Fulham call home, their encounters will never rank among football's most explosive derbies.

Before 2014, the neighbours had never even met above the third tier of English football.

AFP

Osimhen targets title with Napoli, then Premier League move

Rome, Italy - Serie A top scorer Victor Osimhen said on Monday he dreams of playing in the English Premier League.

The Nigeria striker, who was in Rome to collect the award for foreign athlete of the year in Italy from the foreign press association, said he wanted to deliver a league title to the Napoli fans but he was also looking further ahead.

"A lot of people worldwide consider the Premier league as the best and strongest league," said the 24-year-old.

"I'm in one the best league of the world, which is the Italian Serie A.

"Of course I'm working so hard to make sure that I achieve my dream of playing in Premier League someday, but it's a process and I just want to keep on this momentum."

Osimhen joined Napoli in 2020 from Lille.

He has 19 league goals this season as Napoli have built a 15-point lead as they chase a first title since the days of Diego Maradona.

AFP



Yann Karamoh has had plenty to celebrate this season

Karamoh's moment of brilliance gives Torino win against Bologna

Paris, France - Yann Karamoh tiptoed past four Bologna defenders and poked the ball into the net to give Torino a 1-0 victory on Monday in the last Serie A game of the weekend.

In the evening's early match Nedim Bajrami crashed in a half volley in added time to crush a Cremonese comeback and give Sassuolo a 3-2 victory.

In Turin, Karamoh conjured a moment of magic in the 22nd minute of a dour game.

Forward Antonio Sanabria laid the ball back to Karamoh just inside the area.

The Franco-Ivorian side-stepped a first tackle, leaving the defender on the ground, squeezed between two more defenders and, as a fourth defender lunged, scuffed the ball into the corner of the goal from the edge of the six-yard box.

The victory lifted Torino to ninth a point and place behind Bologna.

In Sassuolo, the home team took the lead when Armand Lauriente whipped a free kick over the wall and under the bar in the 22nd minute.

The French winger's backheel

set up Davide Frattesi to double the lead after 41 minutes.

Cremonese, who gained their first league victory of the season in the previous round, responded as half-time substitute Cyriel Dessers scored twice.

In the 62nd minute Nigeria's Dressers intercepted a bad pass and flipped the ball past goalie Andrea Consigli.

With seven minutes left, Dressers skipped round Consigli to level. Cremonese seemed on course for only their 13th point of the season.

AFP

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Paris Saint-Germain's Neymar gets injured after a contact with Lille's Benjamin Andre In this file photo (AFP)

PSG's Neymar will 'come back stronger' from ankle surgery

Paris, France - Neymar promised to "come back stronger" after Paris Saint-Germain said on Monday the forward requires ankle surgery and will be out of action for three to four months.

The Brazilian, who injured his ankle on February 19 against Lille in Ligue 1, "has had several episodes of instability in his right ankle in recent years," said the club, adding that its medical staff "recommended a ligament repair operation to avoid a major risk of recurrence". Neymar tweeted he would not be discouraged by his latest injury.

"I'll come back stronger," he wrote with a praying hands emoji.

Qatar-owned PSG said Neymar would go under the knife in Doha "in the next few days" and said it would take "three to four months before he can return to training with the team".

That would appear to end any prospect of Neymar playing again this season, with the Ligue 1 season due to end on June 3 and the Champions League final, if PSG were to get there, a week later in Istanbul.

PSG, still waiting for a maiden Champions League title, will bid to overturn a 1-0 first-leg deficit in the last 16 against Bayern Munich in Germany on Wednesday.

Neymar, who has scored 18 goals in all competitions for his club this season, was in fine form for the French champions before the World Cup break.

But the 31-year-old has netted only three times in nine appearances since returning from Qatar, where he injured the same ankle playing for Brazil.

He came off with a sprain in his country's 2-0 win over Serbia in their opening game and didn't play again in the group stage.

The ex-Barcelona man returned in the knockout rounds but Brazil lost to Croatia on penalties in the quarter-finals, despite Neymar putting them ahead in extra time in that game.

He has had injury problems at World Cups before.

In 2014, he suffered a broken vertebra in the quarterfinals against Colombia and missed the semi-final, which Brazil lost 7-1.

AFP



Paris Saint-Germain's Kylian Mbappe scores in the French Ligue 1 match against Nantes in Paris on Saturday (AFP)

'Clear aim of qualifying'

Record-breaking Mbappe determined to carry PSG past Bayern

Paris, France - Kylian Mbappe heads to Munich fresh from a record-breaking weekend with Paris Saint-Germain and determined to lead the French giants past Bayern and into the quarter-finals of the Champions League.

PSG trail 1-0 from the first leg of the heavyweight last-16 tie, after injury reduced Mbappe to a cameo appearance off the bench in that match last month.

Yet the 24-year-old France superstar did enough in his short

time on the pitch then - including having a goal disallowed for a marginal offside - to make it clear that he can swing the tie the Parisians' way.

Since that game, the Ligue 1 leaders have recovered from a worrying slump in form to claim three straight domestic wins, scoring 11 goals in the process.

Mbappe has netted five of them, including one in Saturday's 4-2 win over Nantes that saw him overtake Edinson Cavani and

become PSG's all-time top scorer, five and a half years after signing from Monaco in 2017.

The player who in December became the first to score a hat-trick in a World Cup final since Geoff Hurst in 1966, boasts the remarkable record of 201 goals from 247 games in a PSG shirt.

'Leave a mark'

"Every player plays to leave a mark and so that his name goes down in football history, to not

be forgotten. I think with this record that people will remember me here," Mbappe said after being awarded a trophy by PSG in a lavish on-field presentation before an adoring crowd.

Mbappe has 30 goals in 30 games for his club this season and has a strong claim to be the best player in the world right now, even if Lionel Messi recently pipped him to win The Best FIFA men's player award.

Messi, with 18 goals himself

for PSG this season, is mainly there to serve Mbappe in Christophe Galtier's side, for whom the absence of Neymar due to injury in Munich - and for several more months - may not matter.

Going out of the Champions League in the first knockout round for what would be the fifth time in seven seasons really would matter for PSG and their Qatari owners, however.

AFP



Bayern Munich players celebrate after their win against Stuttgart on Saturday (AFP)

PSG clash the true test for Bayern's Champions League recruits

Berlin, Germany - Bayern Munich host Paris Saint-Germain on Wednesday with the stage set for star turns from their 2022-23 additions Sadio Mane and Matthijs de Ligt.

With Bayern having won ten league titles in succession, the two big-name summer recruits were brought to Munich mainly with European nights in mind.

Bayern return to the Allianz Arena with a 1-0 advantage after former PSG forward Kingsley Coman's second-half goal at the

Parc des Princes in the first leg, the same scoreline and goalscorer of their 2019-20 Champions League final win.

Bayern need only to avoid defeat to ensure passage to the quarter finals.

But just as it is for PSG boss Christophe Galtier, Bayern manager Julian Nagelsmann is well aware that elimination will leave a burn that domestic results will not be able to cleanse.

Nagelsmann said as much after his side's tighter-than-

hoped win at Stuttgart on Saturday, saying he hoped it was not the "result" but "the manner and style of our game (against PSG) is how the season will be seen."

Early European exits are not to be tolerated in the Bavarian capital, regardless of the quality of their opposition. Only once have Bayern been knocked out before reaching the quarter finals in the past ten years, a decade in which they have lifted the European Cup twice.

AFP

UEFA to reimburse Liverpool fans who attended Champions League final in Paris

Paris, France - UEFA said Tuesday it will reimburse all Liverpool supporters who attended last year's chaos-hit Champions League final between the English club and Real Madrid at the Stade de France in Paris.

Heavily criticised in an independent report published last month for organisational failures which "almost led to disaster", European football's governing body said its refund scheme would cover the entire Liverpool allocation of nearly 20,000, as well as supporters of Real and other spectators affected by the trouble outside the stadium.

"Refunds will be available to all fans... where the most difficult circumstances were reported," UEFA said, adding that all ticket-holders who did not enter the stadium by the originally scheduled kick-off time, or could not get in at all, would also receive a refund. "Given these criteria, the special refund scheme covers all of the Liverpool FC ticket allocation for the final, i.e. 19,618 tickets."

Real's 1-0 win at France's national stadium on May 28 was overshadowed by events outside, with the kick-off delayed by 37 minutes as fans struggled to access the stadium after police funnelled them into overcrowded bottlenecks as they approached.

Police then fired tear gas towards thousands of supporters locked behind metal fences on the perimeter to the stadium.

UEFA tried to pin the blame on Liverpool fans arriving late despite thousands having been held for hours outside the stadium before kick-off.

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Foton (Suhail Bahwan Automobiles LLC)



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We have received this award for the first time and we would like to thank Apex Media and people in Oman who have put their trust in us – nationals as well as residents. We would also like to thank all our staff whose excellent service has won us this award and we would want to continue winning the hearts of people in Oman. For us, good service is of utmost importance, and we always put our patients first.

DR J RAMANNA
General manager, NMC



Winning the award for Oman's Most Trusted Dental Clinic for the fifth time is an amazing accomplishment. It shows that our clinic is dedicated to giving our patients the best dental care possible and that we hold ourselves to the highest standards of professionalism and patient care. We think our customers voted for us because we've been leaders in dental care in Oman for over 20 years.

DR SIJU GEORGE
Founder, Wassan Specialty Dental Center



This award is a testament from customers who have trusted in our brand. This came through consistency that has been practised and deployed year in and year out. We have won this award for the third year in a row and that shows our commitment to quality, consistency, collaboration and creativity, as a result of which we are the most trusted brand. It also means our journey does not end with this award.

SUNIL D'SOUZA
CEO of Travel Point



"We have been voted as the most trusted brand as we have always delivered top quality products at competitive prices, and paid dividend for every single year since our inception. We have best quality assets and our company has created great value for all stakeholders. This consistency and sustainability are two hallmarks of Al Omaniya Financial Services that have won the trust and confidence of all our stakeholders.

AFTAB PATEL
CEO of Al Omaniya Financial Services



It is good to know that we are among Oman's most trusted brands and I appreciate Apex Media's efforts in this regard. This award is a testimony to the trust we have earned among our customers – something which we have built over the years. It is also, not a sign of the technology and innovation that our company has, but of the shared values that we have, in terms of our partnership with our stakeholders.

BURAIR AL LAWATI
GM-Strategy, Shell Oman Marketing Co



We are very honoured to receive this award as the most trusted brand in Oman and we would wish to continue keeping the trust which we have earned from consumers. We have won this award for the second time and I would also like to thank our staff and customers for choosing us – they had a choice and they chose us. Maintaining availability of high quality products in our neighbourhood stores is our USP and we will strive to maintain this.

ANURAG KUMAR
Commercial head, Noor Shopping



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53	Tyres	Dunlop (Hamdan Trading Group)



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NEELMANI BHARDWAJ
CEO, Takaful Oman Insurance



It is an esteemed honour to receive the accolade for Oman's most trusted online food delivery and Q-commerce platform. At Talabat Oman, we consistently strive to offer our customers a seamless experience. This recognition is a testament to our unwavering dedication to fostering a strong relationship with our customers over the last decade. It serves as a motivation for us to further our efforts to enhance our offerings and expand our ecosystem, ensuring that we continue to support our customers in every possible way.

MOHAMED ZOUBOB
Managing director, Talabat



We started dealing with this brand in 2019 but Foton has already sold 10 million vehicles worldwide. Our trucks have been widely tested and well received in Oman and it is being used by all segments – from retail customers like fishermen to logistics companies and transportation companies. It is a high quality truck which people can rely on. We have five service centres across Oman and our primary focus is to enhance our after sales service and spare parts availability.

KARTHIK M G
Head-marketing, Foton – Bahwan International Group

