

A8



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Muscat book fair to be organised from 21 February

The book fair will host a group of prominent intellectuals and media experts to enliven the cultural scene during the 11-day extravaganza

MUSCAT: The 28th edition of Muscat International Book Fair will be held from 21 February to 2 March, said Sayyid Said Sultan Al Busaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Culture.

The opening ceremony will be held under the auspices of Dr. Mohammed Said Al Maamari, Minister of Endowments and Re-

ligious Affairs.

During a press conference held at the Ministry of Information yesterday, Al Busaidi said that Al Dhahirah Governorate will be the guest of honour at the book fair this year. He added that a special pavilion and a number of programmes will be dedicated to Al Dhahirah Governorate's intellectual and cultural history.

The book fair will host a group of prominent intellectuals and media experts to enliven the cultural scene during the 11-day extravaganza.

Outlining the data of the book fair, Ahmed Saud Al Rawahi, Director of the Muscat International Book Fair, said that 847 publishing houses this year from 34 countries will exhibit their literary products at the book fair. Among these, 676 publishers will participate directly and 171 others through agents, Al Rawahi explained.

As many as 622,000 book titles and publications are listed on the site, said Al Rawahi, noting that about 269,000 of these appear in Arabic and 200,000 in foreign languages.

The Omani collection includes about 19,000 books, of which 35,989 are new books printed in 2023 and 2024, he added.

Al Rawahi pointed out that a special section has been allocated for "children and family" events and activities, including a drama shows, workshops, a language corner, a children's museum corner and a green corner. "Cultural cafés have also been established in a number of participating pavilions," he said.

Al Rawahi observed that the State of Palestine will be strongly present at Muscat International Book Fair, notably through events that focus on the Palestinian cause.

The theme of the book fair this year will be artificial intelligence (AI), said Al Rawahi, adding that many cultural events and activities will highlight AI advantages.

For his part, Mohammed Said Al Balushi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Information, said that media coverage will be on a daily basis through various podiums and platforms that will establish live relay of the book fair's events and activities. -ONA



MACROECONOMIC STABILITY REPORT

Notable upswing seen in Oman's real and nominal GDP

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) has released its highly anticipated Macroeconomic Stability Report for the year 2023. The move comes in line with the CBO's commitment to provide information and statistics and analyse the updated economic developments and as part of its efforts to increase transparency and public disclosure in the Omani banking sector.

The report meticulously analyses the economic landscape using the latest available data, shedding light on recent macroeconomic developments within the Sultanate of Oman while emphasising strengths, weaknesses, and potential risks.

The report highlights a notable upswing in both real and nominal GDP during 2022, primarily attributed to the surge in oil prices. This surge not only spurred growth in both oil and non-oil sectors in an unprecedented manner but also bolstered control over public financial conditions, resulting in a surplus in the public finance balance.

Addressing challenges in formulating the financial budget for 2022, the report underscores the strategic response that fortified the government's commitment to achieving medium-term fi-

nancial equilibrium. Unexpected gains from oil revenues and prudent financial management facilitated partial repayment of the public debt portfolio, leading to a reduction in indebtedness.

Furthermore, the report indicates a shift in the current account balance to a surplus in 2022, propelled by an improvement in the trade balance. Additionally, the sovereign ratings upgrade by major rating agencies throughout the year signifies a decrease in perceived systemic risks, marking a testament to the resilience and stability of Oman's economic foundations.

Moreover, the report highlighted that despite the unprecedented surge in global inflation due to escalating energy and food prices, Oman's inflation remained comparatively moderate, largely attributed to the fixed exchange rate system, raise the number of essential commodities exempted from VAT, and continuing subsidise fuel prices.

The Central Bank of Oman concluded that the 2023 Macroeconomic Stability Report underscores Oman's adaptive capabilities in overcoming formidable challenges amid a rapidly evolving global economic landscape.

- ONA

CABLE

His Majesty sends greetings to President of Finland

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to Dr. Alexander Stubb on the occasion of being elected as the new president of the Republic of Finland.

Best wishes

In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Dr. Alexander Stubb. His Majesty

also wished him success in realizing aspirations of the people of Finland, wishing the relations between the two countries further progress and prosperity.

- ONA

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KEY CONTRACTS

Sultan Haitham City project’s development, partnership agreements signed under auspices of Sayyid Theyazin

<FROM A1 This is in addition to a design consultancy agreement that was signed to provide consultancy services the public schools complex to serve neighbourhood No. 6 and Neighborhood No. 9. This contract was signed with SOM consultants.

Another designing consultancy agreement was signed with SOM consultants to provide a detailed design for the city centrw Neighbourhood No. 12.

A consultancy agreement was signed for making designs for the rehabilitation centre for people with disabilities to serve Neighbourhood No. 16. This agreement was inked with Panter Hudspith Architects.

An agreement was signed with Altivia consultants for designing to serve Neighbourhoods No. 9 and No. 12.

Agreements were also signed with partners from local and international real estate developers to develop 8 residential neighbourhoods in Sultan Haitham City, with an investment value of more than OMR1 billion. The neighbourhoods will cover a total area more than 2.2 million square metres, to house more than 6,000 residential units. These will be completed in a period of 6 years.

To support small and medium enterprises (SMEs) at the Sultan Haitham City project, an agreement was signed with a limited liability company to develop part of Neighbourhood No. 6 that exceeds more than 33,000 sqm and will include about 45 residential units, of which 100 percent will be dedicated to Omani ownership.

An agreement was signed with Tibiaan Real Estate Company to develop Neighbourhood No. 6A, on an area of more than 58,000 sqm that includes about 116 residential units.

An agreement was signed with Edraak Development Company to develop the neighbourhood 12D on an area of 56,000 sqm to include about 339 residential units.

An agreement was signed with Amana Real Estate Development Company to develop neighbourhood No. 13A on an area of 86,000 sqm that will include about 278 residential units.

An agreement was signed with Rumman International Company to develop neighbourhood No. 12 A and B on an area of more than 378,000 sqm to include about 1,001 residential units.

An agreement was signed with Al Ahly Real Estate Development Company to develop neighbourhood No. 12 E and F on an area of 275,000 sqm to include approximately 1,919 residential units.

An agreement was signed with Muscat National Development and Investment Company (ASAS) to develop neighbourhood 8 on an area of 368,000 sqm to include approximately 1,333 residential units.

An agreement was signed with Al-Abrrar Real Estate Company to develop neighbourhood 10 on an area of 770,000 sqm to include about 1,644 residential units.

A technical cooperation agreement was signed to provide stations for electric vehicles. It includes offering special discounts to residents of Sultan Haitham City. It was signed with Premium Motors (Al Mutamayza Motors Company), agents of Audi cars.

Meanwhile, in implementation of the Royal directives of His Majesty the Sultan, “Singapore Street” will be built as part of the SHC project. The 4-km road will be distin-

guished for its dense trees. It will pass by the College of Advanced Technology, cross the central park and the valley to the heart of the city. It will be a vibrant centre of activity. The road project was first announced during the visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the Republic of Singapore.

Also, in implementation of urban strategic projects, six engineering consultancy services agreements were signed to design detailed plans for such projects.

These included one to provide draft requirements for the Omani building code. It was signed with the International Code Council.

An agreement for consultancy services for the layout plan in the Wilayat of Ibri was signed with F&M Middle East Engineering Consulting Company and the international company Broadway Money.

A consultancy services agreement for the layout plan in the wilayat of Al Rustaq was signed with the consultancy company “Lea Associates South Asia”.

A consultancy services agreement was signed for the layout plan in the Wilayat of Sur with the consulting company “Ibn Bahla Engineering Consultations” and the international company K-Cap / DSP.

A consultancy services agreement for the detailed plan of the agricultural city in the Al-Najd area was signed with the consulting company “Dar Al-Handasah Consulting and the international company Foresters & Partners.

A consultancy services agreement for the detailed plan of the agricultural city in the Wilayat of Saham was signed with the consulting company “Surbanaguring Consulting.”

An agreement was also signed to prepare the detailed plan and engineering designs for Al Khuwair Downtown project. It was provides for drafting a detailed plan and engineering designs for the city centre project and to develop the waterfront. It was inked with the consulting company “Zaha Hadid with CBRE”.

An initial cooperation agreement to develop a mixed-use tower in the Al Khuwair Downtown project was signed with Al Tawoos Company.

In pursuance of efforts to achieve family stability, three agreements were signed. The first provides for the construction of 20 housing units in the village of Kamzar in the Wilayat of Khasab, the Musandam Governorate.

The second provides for the construction of 20 housing units and to maintain 32 housing units in the Wilayat of Shaleem W’ Al-Halaniyyat Islands in the Dhofar Governorate.

The third deal was signed to implement a electronic platform for housing services for the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, HH Sayyid Theyazin accepted a gift in the form of an iconic bridge. This was announced to come up at the Sultan Haitham City. It will be a suspension bridge in the middle of the central park, crossing the valley at a distance of 500 metres.

The ceremony was attended by some Royal Family members, ministers, undersecretaries, partners from various government and 500 other people who included representatives of private agencies, international consultants, investors and real estate developers. - OMA



PRESIDENT OF ISWK CAMBRIDGE

'Vision and Mission' for new academic year at ISWK Cambridge Wing

MUSCAT: Mrs. Gargi Chugh, the President of ISWK Cambridge, School Management Committee speaks to *Times of Oman* about her vision for the school.

As President of ISWKi School Management Committee, I am pleased to share with you our ambitious vision for the upcoming academic year, reaffirming our commitment to being the 'School of Choice' and it is my honour to present our collective aspirations for the future.

In the pursuit of academic excellence, we are dedicated to enhancing the learning experience through innovative teaching methodologies and advanced technological integration. In alignment with the evolving teaching and learning needs, we have diligently worked to create a more conducive and modern educational space over the past months and years. Our state-of-the-art facilities, including the



new indoor sports facilities, a swimming pool, multipurpose hall, and modern classrooms, are a testament to our commitment to fostering academic excellence and the overall development of our learners.

Our primary focus remains on the holistic development of our learners.

Investment in extracurricular activities, sports, and the arts will continue, fostering well-rounded individuals who excel, not only in academics but also socially and emotionally. The creation of a positive and inclusive school culture is paramount, where every learner feels valued, respected, and empowered, reflecting our commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Collaboration with parents is integral to the success of our learners. We aim to strengthen this partnership by enhancing communication, engagement,

and involvement throughout the coming academic years.

Together, we can create a supportive community that actively contributes to the success and well-being of our learners. Being the 'School of Choice' goes beyond academic achievements; it is about creating an environment where learners, parents, and staff actively choose to be part of our school community.

Through a commitment to excellence, holistic development, inclusivity, and continuous improvement, we are poised to achieve this distinction.

I am confident that, collectively, we will make this academic year transformative and fulfilling for everyone associated with our school. Let us work collaboratively to make ISWKi the preferred choice for those seeking quality education, holistic development, and a nurturing Future Global citizens of our community.

MEETING

Oman, UK review ties

< FROM A1 During the meeting, the two sides discussed areas of joint cooperation and reviewed the march of relations between Oman and the UK.

They also touched on several matters of common concern.

The meeting was attended by Vice Admiral Abdullah Khamis Al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces. It was also attended by the Ambassador of the United Kingdom to the Sultanate of Oman and the Defence Attaché of the British Embassy at Muscat. — ONA



Nama invites tender for treatment of Wadi Dayqah Dam water project

The project aims to enhance water security and ensure the sustainability of potable water services for subscribers

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Nama Water Services has recently announced a tender for the purification of Wadi Dayqah Dam water in the Wilayat of Quriyat in partnership with the relevant government entities.

The project aims to enhance water security and ensure the sus-

tainability of potable water services for subscribers.

Potential contractors actively investigated the project site through dedicated visits to prepare tender bids.

Commenting on the project, Eng. Abdullah bin Mohammed Al Naimi, Chief Operation & Maintenance Officer at Nama Water



Services, said: "This project will transform water security in the region by unlocking the full potential of Wadi Dayqah Dam."

Regarding the station's business plan, Al Naimi confirmed that the upcoming water treatment station

will employ cutting-edge technology and global best practices to transform dam water into a safe and reliable source of water.

In response to a question about the difference between dam water and seawater treatment, Al-Naimi

said: "Dam water has a much lower salt content than seawater, which will result in lower energy consumption and reduced costs."

"The station's total capacity is 65 thousand cubic metres per day, and the station is expected to be

completed from 12 to 18 months after the tender is awarded."

The station boasts an emergency exchange line, enabling shared resources and ensuring water continuity during crises," he further added.



MARITIME SECURITY CENTRE

UK Chief of Defence Staff visits MSC

MUSCAT: Admiral Antony Radakin, Chief of the Defence Staff in the United Kingdom (UK) on Wednesday visited the Maritime Security Centre (MSC).

The guest was accompanied during the visit by Vice Admiral Abdullah Khamis Al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF).

Upon the guest's arrival at the centre, he was received by Rear Admiral Saif Nasser Al Rahbi, Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO).

The guest and his accompanying delegation were briefed on the tactical roles and tasks carried out by the centre in the safety of the Omani maritime environment.

They also toured the centre's facilities and viewed its latest equipment and technologies used in carrying out its national duties.

— ONA



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TENDER

The company invites offers for the following tender:

Sl.	Tender ID	Description	Tender Fee	Deadline for Purchasing of Tenders	Deadline for Submission of Offers
1	1560000083/24	Overhauling including parts replacement of atlas copco compressors	RO. 52.500	22nd February 2024, 1500 Hours	27th February 2024, 2359 Hours
1	16500000149/24	Supply of Red Shale to the Factory site	RO. 105	22nd February 2024, 1500 Hours	27th February 2024, 2359 Hours
1	01/2024	Sale of used IBC tank	RO. 52.500	22nd February 2024, 1500 Hours	27th February 2024, 2359 Hours

Tender documents can be obtained by paying the below amount online to Company's account detailed below:

Account name: **Oman Cement Company SAOG**
Bank Name: **Bank Muscat SAOG**
Account number: **0423 01086 3070 017**
Account Type: **OMR**
SWIFT Code: **BMUSOMRX**

Copy of deposit transaction of a non-refundable amount of writing on the above as tender fees to be emailed to GFOSecretary@omacement.com & Treasury@omacement.com with the Subject showing "Tender No." and "Tender Description" enabling the Company to provide tender document through email to your company. The above payment is a non-refundable amount.

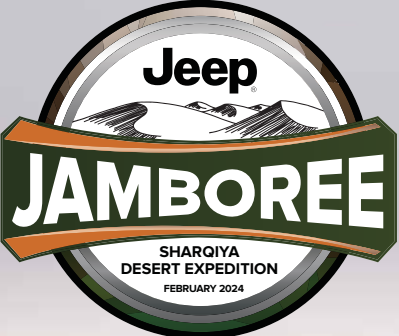
Contact details: Office number: +968 2443 5603, Mobile number: +968 97932277

The last date for submission of offers is on Tuesday, 2359 hours detailed date on the above table, accompanied by a bid bond issued by any local bank in Oman (equivalent to 1% of the total tender value). The bid bond must be valid for 120 days from the last date of submission of offers and the ORIGINAL bid bond must be submitted on the tender box at the reception on our Administration Building, Al Mafrah West factory Site, Bashaer, Muscat, Oman.

For Tender No. 3 (01/2024) Sale of Used IBC Tank the bid bond (100 OMR Receipt deposit).

Any tenders received beyond the above closing time and date or not being supported by a tender bond will NOT be considered. This publication is part of the tender documents.

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OMAN/WORLD

INDIAN SCHOOL MUSCAT

ISM celebrates annual graduation day

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Indian School Muscat (ISM) conducted Annual Graduation Ceremony to honour the outgoing batch of Grade XII students, on 3rd February, 2024 in the School's Multipurpose Hall.

It was a moment of pride and privilege not only for the students, but also for the parents, teachers

and well - wishers.

Dr Maha Kobeil, Dean and CEO, Majan University, Sultanate of Oman, Honourable members of the Board of Directors of Indian Schools in Oman, Dr. Syed Ziaur Rahman, Vice President, School Management Committee, Sharafdeen Yoosaf, Convenor, Mohammed Imran Khan, Treasurer, Zulfikar Hussain Desai, Co

convenor and Dr. Subramanian Muthuraman, Academic Chair, School Management Committee and other esteemed Members of Indian School Muscat Management Committee, Principal, Rakesh Joshi, Senior Vice Principal Administration, Vice Principals, Assistant Vice Principals, Heads of Departments and other dignitarieswitnessed the proceedings.

The ceremony commenced with a fine rendition of the national anthems of Oman and India led by the school choir. This was followed by the ceremonial lighting of the lamp which added a touch of divinity to the proceedings. The invocation dance seeking the blessings of the Almighty and gurus - a fitting tribute to all teachers - stood out as a perfect echo of the celebrations.

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CENTRAL BANK OF OMAN

CBO issues treasury bills worth OMR113 million

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) raised OMR113 million by way of allotting treasury bills on Wednesday.

The value of the allotted Treasury bills amounted to OMR50 million, for a maturity period of 28 days. The average accepted price reached OMR99.600 for every OMR100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at OMR99.600 per OMR100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 5.21429 percent and 5.23523 percent, respectively.

The value of the allotted Treas-

ury bills amounted to OMR41 million, for a maturity period of 91 days. The average accepted price reached OMR98.670 for every OMR100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at OMR98.665 per OMR100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 5.33413 percent and 5.40602 percent, respectively.

Meanwhile, the allotted treasury bills for a maturity period of 182 days, amounted to OMR22 million.

The average accepted price reached OMR97.485 for every

OMR100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at OMR97.485 for every OMR100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 5.04382 percent and 5.17394 percent, respectively.

The Treasury Bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance, and they provide licensed commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds. The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) acts as the Issue Manager and provides the added advantage of ready liquidity through dis-

counting and repurchase facilities (Repo).

It may be noted that the interest rate on the Repo operations with CBO is 6 percent while the discount rate on the Treasury Bills Discounting Facility with CBO is 6.50 percent. Furthermore, the Treasury Bills promote the local money market by creating a benchmark yield curve for short-term interest rates. Additionally, the Government may also resort to this instrument whenever felt necessary for financing its recurrent expenditures. - **ONA**

TAKATUF OMAN COMPANY

Registration commences for funding scholarships for students in Oman

MUSCAT: Takatuf Oman Company, a subsidiary of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), announced the start of registration for a scholarships programme known as (Oman Pioneers).

The programme provides for dispatching candidates for study at the best international universities. It enables the candidates to study specific specialisations that keep pace with the priorities of development and support of the national economy.

150 students

Sheikh Ibrahim Mohammed Al Harthi, CEO of Takatuf, told Oman News Agency (ONA) that the programme funds scholarships for 150 students over five batches. Registration in the programme

continues until 24 February, he added.

The programme targets Omani Grade 11 students (or equivalent). The candidates may register by filling out the electronic form available at the programme's website (www.takatufscholars.om) or

through social media accounts.

Each student who meets the standards will receive an international scholarship and begin studying at an internal school for two years, then join the affiliated university to obtain a bachelor's degree. - **ONA**

TRANSFORMATION PLAN

Oman Air adjusting its flight frequencies and capacities

< FROM A1 Al Ma'awali highlighted the new Board of Directors and senior international aviation consultants with local expertise, whose joint review of the company's financial situation culminated in the creation of a comprehensive 4-year transformation plan.

Over the last six months, the transformation has been focused on rolling out the key pillars of the plan: financial sustainability, corporate governance, commercial aspects, and human capital.

The airline is also adjusting flight frequencies and capacities while optimising schedules for passenger convenience.

Another highlight of the conference was the announcement of the upcoming appointment of

a new CEO with over 30 years of experience in international aviation and corporate transformation programmes.

Concurrently, the company is conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the remaining executive and administrative positions, ensuring all employees have a fair opportunity to apply for vacancies in the new organisational structure.

Oman Air is also enhancing its

digital capabilities, with ongoing projects including the revamp of its website and mobile app.

Due to be fully operational by April, these platforms are set to enhance the user experience by introducing state-of-the-art features such as a more seamless booking flow, real-time fare benefits, diverse payment options, and even Virtual Reality with 3D seat maps and cabin navigation.

- **ONA**

UNITED STATES

US House votes to impeach Biden's immigration chief

WASHINGTON DC: The US' Republican-led House of Representatives voted to impeach Democratic President Joe Biden's top border official, with migration policies taking center stage ahead of November's presidential election.

Conservatives blamed Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas for a surge in crossings of illegal migrants from the US-Mexican border. The vote narrowly passed with 214 in favour and 213 against.

It was the second attempt to impeach Mayorkas. Last week's impeachment attempt failed, in the absence of Republican House Majority Leader Steve Scalise, who was receiving cancer treatment.

Scalise attended Tuesday's session and gave the motion the decisive vote.

Mayorkas' impeachment is the first of a Cabinet secretary in some 150 years.

The move is however symbolic, as the upper chamber of Congress, the Senate, where the Democrats are narrowly in the majority, is expected to abort it.

The impeachment motion accused Mayorkas of failing to enforce US immigration laws, which Republicans argue has led to record migration figures at the US border to Mexico. They also say the Homeland Security Secretary made false statements to Congress.

"Next to a declaration of war, impeachment is arguably the most serious authority given to the House and we have treated this matter accordingly," said House Speaker Mike Johnson. "Since this secretary refuses to do the job that the Senate confirmed him to do, the House must act."

Biden's tenure has seen a record number of migrants illegally cross in from the Mexican border. Former President Donald Trump has turned migration to a focus of his campaign against Biden.

Mayorkas has in turn blamed illegal migration on Congress failing to update migration laws.

"There is no question that we have a challenge, a crisis at the border," Mayorkas told broadcaster NBC over the weekend. "And there is no question that Congress needs to fix it."

The impeachment has been lambasted by Democrats, President Biden, and even some Republicans.

"History will not look kindly on House Republicans for their blatant act of unconstitutional partisanship that has targeted an honorable public servant in order to play petty political games," Biden said in a statement.

Republican lawmakers Ken Buck, Tom McClintock and Mike Gallagher voted against it.

As Biden implied in his statement, some have questioned whether the impeachment demonstrated evidence of Mayorkas committing the "high crimes and misdemeanors" that are supposed to trigger impeachment, or whether he was being pulled into a partisan policy dispute. - **rw**

CONFRONTATIONS

UN Security Council concerned about 'escalating violence' in eastern Congo

GOMA: Recent fighting near the city of Goma in the eastern Congo has alarmed the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), which said on Monday that it was worried by the "escalating violence" in the region.

The council condemned the offensive launched earlier this month by M23 rebels.

Also on Monday, South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa announced that his country was deploying 2,900 troops as part of a joint effort of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to quell the fighting in the Congo. SADC forces are already combating alongside the Congolese army.

Confrontations between M23 and government forces are concentrated around the town of Sake. With its roughly 50,000 inhabitants, Sake, situated just west of Goma, the capital of North Kivu province, is seen as a strategic position. It is only a twenty-minute drive away from Goma, analyst Onesphore Sematumba from the think tank Crisis Group told DW.

"Before this, there were already three big refugee camps around Goma. Now it is all of Sake plus the agglomerations that lie beyond - whose inhabitants had fled to Sake before - advancing toward Goma," Sematumba said.

"I came to Goma where I don't know anyone," said Benoit Safari, one of many refugees who made the roughly 20-kilometre (12.4 miles) trip from Sake. "I don't know where to spend the night, nor where to find something to eat," he told DW upon arrival last Wednesday.

The city, which is already struggling to feed its one million inhabitants and refugees from the north, is under mounting pressure to provide for the hundreds of internally displaced arriving

every day, aid organisations say. People told DW that Goma had become an open-air prison, with all land routes leading out blocked by rebels. This has sent prices for basic goods skyrocketing.

Goma's western outskirts have been struck by bombs, purportedly by accident. But it was enough for many to feel the looming threat. Anita Banga from Goma's Mugunga neighborhood told DW: "I am moving out because I suffer from high blood pressure. I couldn't spend another night here."

Sematumba said the arrival of

internally displaced persons is causing tensions to rise in the city. Goma's inhabitants are beginning to fear for their safety and looking for a way out he said, adding: "But how can you do that when the only way out of the city leads to Rwanda?"

Rwanda is widely thought to support M23, although the government in Kigali has steadfastly denied the accusation.

Resentment is growing among the population against international organisations like the UN mission to Congo, MONUSCO, seen as at least partially responsible for the situation. A resident of Sake told DW how some people attacked cars of international troops. "When they arrived at the roundabout in Sake, people held them up, saying they were siding with M23. They began throwing stones at the MONUSCO cars."

In Congo's capital of Kinshasa, 2,000 kilometre (1,243 miles) to the west, fierce protests have been directed not only at MONUSCO headquarters, but also at the embassies of

France and the United States, among others.

Early on Tuesday, Congo's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, Peter Kazadi, barred motorcycle taxis and street vendors from entering Gombe. "We make a point of reminding everyone that the grounds of foreign diplomats and MONUSCO personnel are not to be violated," Kazadi said.

Protests flared up after Congo's football team lost to Ivory Coast at the AFCON football championship semi-finals last week. To raise awareness for the violence engulfing their country, Congolese players mimicked pistols pointed at their temples and held their hands before their mouths. The images went viral on social media, stirring controversy.

Sematumba said that blaming forces outside the Congo, be it international players or Congo's eastern neighbor Rwanda, was a common reflex. But he cautioned that the problem was more complex. - **rw**

SINCE OCTOBER 7

Gaza Health Ministry says death toll reaches 28,576

GAZA: The Health Ministry in the Gaza Strip said at least 28,576 Palestinians, mainly women and children, have been killed, with another 68,291 injured in Israeli retaliatory strikes on the territory since October 7.

The toll includes 103 people killed in the last 24 hours, the ministry added. Israel's assault on the Gaza Strip came in response to the terror attacks by Hamas in the south of Israel in which some 1,200 Israelis were killed, mostly civilians, and some 240 people kidnapped. Meanwhile, the German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock is set to visit Israel in what is her fifth trip to the country. Upon arrival in Jerusalem, she is scheduled to meet her counterpart Israel Katz followed by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the afternoon. A meeting with President Isaac Herzog and opposition leader Yair Lapid is also planned.

Baerbock's visit comes after Israel announced a ground offensive in Rafah — “the last bastion” according to Netanyahu. During her visit, the minister intends to speak about how Israeli hostages can be rescued without worsening the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, she said in a statement. “An offensive by the Israeli



army on Rafah would bring the humanitarian situation to a breaking point. Because the people in Rafah cannot simply vanish into thin air,” she said in a German-language statement.

“They need safe places and safe corridors to avoid being caught in the crossfire even more. They need more humanitarian aid. And they need a cease-fire.”

Israel has steadily expanded ground operations in Gaza toward the south, leaving Rafah as one of the last refuges for over half of the enclave's 2.3 million residents fleeing the violence. The city's population, which stood at circa 250,000 before the war, has ballooned to about 1.5 million, according to several UN agencies.

Many refugees live in makeshift camps and UN shelters there.

Military operations in Rafah could lead to a slaughter in Gaza

and put a fragile humanitarian operation at death's door, UN Undersecretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths warned.

In a statement issued, he noted the warnings from the international community against the dangerous consequences of a ground invasion in Rafah in southern Gaza, saying that the government of Israel cannot continue to ignore these calls.

He said people in Rafah and the rest of Gaza are victims of an assault that is unparalleled in its intensity, brutality and scope.

Stressing that humanitarian workers have been doing the near-impossible to assist people in need for more than four months, he warned that “we lack the safety guarantees, the aid supplies and the staff capacity to keep this operation afloat.” — **Agencies**

Indian PM Modi inaugurates first Hindu temple in Abu Dhabi

DUBAI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday inaugurated the majestic Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) Mandir, the first Hindu temple in Abu Dhabi, UAE.

Upon his arrival at the temple premises, PM Modi was welcomed by BAPS' Ishwarcharan-das Swami. He offered prayers at the temple and performed aarti. The temple was inaugurated on the auspicious occasion of Basant Panchmi.

As the first Hindu temple in Abu Dhabi, the BAPS Mandir has become a focal point of cultural and spiritual significance, drawing devotees from various corners.

Earlier today, the consecration ceremony of the BAPS Hindu Temple in Abu Dhabi was held ahead of its inauguration by PM Modi. The priests conducted rituals before the inauguration.

PM Modi arrived in UAE on Tuesday on a two-day visit and talked about the BAPS temple at the ‘Ahlan Modi’ diaspora event held yesterday.

He thanked UAE President Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan for giving approval for the BAPS Hindu Mandir, saying that it reflects his love and respect for India and couldn't have been possible without his love and support.

Notably, the Mandir, the first



traditional Hindu temple in the United Arab Emirates, sits on 27 acres of land that was generously gifted by the UAE leadership.

Standing tall at 108 feet, the BAPS Hindu Mandir is not only a symbol of spiritual devotion but also a marvel of engineering and craftsmanship. The foundation stone, a cornerstone of cultural unity, was laid by Prime Minister Modi in 2017, reflecting the collaborative effort to bring this vision to life.

The incorporation of advanced technology, including 300 sensors, elevates the temple to the status of a scientific marvel.

The estimated cost of this magnificent construction, a testament to the devotion and commitment of the community, is

Dh400 million.

The BAPS Hindu Mandir has emerged as a testament to architectural brilliance and cultural significance in the heart of the region, marking the first stone Hindu temple in the area, proudly standing as the largest in West Asia.

Situated in the Abu Mureikha area, this majestic structure embodies the spirit of cultural peace and collaboration and is a testament to the enduring friendship between India and the UAE.

Prime Minister Modi's visit to UAE also marks the third by the PM to the Gulf country in the past eight months.

PM Modi is on a two-day visit to the UAE from February 13-14, after which he will proceed to Doha.

— **ANI**

BRIEFS

Prabowo Subianto claims victory in Indonesia elections

JAKARTA: Indonesian Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto on Wednesday claimed victory in the Indonesian presidential election as unofficial tallies indicated that he and his running mate, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, were poised to win in a single round. “All counts, all pollsters... showed figures that Prabowo-Gibran won in one round. This victory should be a victory for all Indonesians,” he told a crowd at an arena in central Jakarta.

North Korea fires multiple cruise missiles: Seoul

SEOUL: North Korea fired multiple cruise missiles into the sea on Wednesday, Seoul's military said in a statement, marking the latest in a string of weapons tests conducted under leader Kim Jong Un this year. “Our military detected several unknown cruise missiles over the waters northeast of Wonsan around 09:00 today (0000 GMT/UTC) and South Korea-US intelligence authorities are conducting a detailed analysis,” South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement.

Addressing climate change key to preventing conflicts

UNITED NATIONS: Simon Stiell, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, emphasised the critical need for rapid action against climate change to prevent future conflicts. Addressing the Security Council high-level open debate on the impact of climate change and food insecurity on the maintenance of international peace and security, Stiell highlighted the dire state of global hunger exacerbated by climate change.

Another endangered gorilla born at London Zoo

LONDON: London Zoo announced the arrival of a second endangered western lowland gorilla baby on Tuesday. The infant, who was born to mother Effie on February 8 and is yet to be named, arrives just three and a half weeks after another western lowland gorilla was born at the zoo. Both arrivals boost numbers of a subspecies that is critically endangered. While the exact numbers of lowland gorillas in the wild are unknown, their numbers are thought to have declined by around 60% in the last 25 years. — **Agencies**



INDIAN SCHOOL MUSCAT
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Tel: 24702567, Ext. 108 Fax: 24794919, Email: purchase@ismoman.com
Website: www.ismoman.com



TENDER NOTICE
REF: ISM/ADMIN/TENDER/2023-24/005
Sealed tenders are invited from potential service providers /contractors for the following requirements of the school.
1. SUPPLY & INSTALLATION OF COMPUTER LAB FURNITURE (WORKSTATIONS)
2. REPAIR OF THE EXISTING TURF GROUND AND ATHLETIC TRACK
3. ORGANIZING ASTROTOUR (NASA) USA TRIP 2024
4. GENERAL INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR THE FOLLOWING
• Group Personal Accident Insurance for Students • Group Life policy for Staff & Dependents • Workmen Compensation policy for staff members
• Fire & Theft Insurance Policy • Fidelity Guarantee Insurance Policy • Public Liability Insurance Policy • Money Insurance Policy • Fleet Insurance
Interested parties shall collect the tender documents from the school cash counter against the payment of **RO.10/-** as a non-refundable tender fee from **18th February 2024 to 26 th February 2024** during the working days (Sunday to Thursday) of the school between **7.30 a.m. and 02.00 p.m.**
The completed tender shall be dropped in the Tender Box kept in the school office before the due date. The tender should be in a sealed envelope, addressed to The Chairman, Purchase Sub Committee, Indian School Muscat, P.O. Box: 2470, PC: 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman
Note: Respective tenders shall clearly mention the “name of service quoted for” by the bidding party. Any tender without the name of service/supply will be considered disqualified.
Last date of tender submission: Refer to the tender document



CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT - 31 DECEMBER 2023
Dear Shareholders,
By the grace, assistance, and direction of the Almighty God and in a period of renewed renaissance under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq, it gives me pleasure on behalf of the Board of Directors of Al Jazeera Steel Products Co., SAOG, to invite you all to the 26th Annual General Meeting of the Company and to present the Annual Report for the company, Audited Financial Statement and Auditors Report for the year ended 31 December 2023.
Key points of 2023 Operational Performance
The Company focused on the health and safety of its employees as a paramount concern and continues to do everything possible to ensure that employees stay protected, and the plant operations continued uninterrupted.
The company performed strongly in 2023. Sales for the year recorded a significant 25% jump in terms of volumes year on year. This was achieved by smart forecasting and inventory management at the same time optimizing the product mix and market penetration. The company could capitalize on the rebound in the construction sector along with new project awards notably in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.
While the US economy and banking institutions have withstood the risk of meltdown, however the ongoing conflict in the Middle East on top of the Ukraine conflict have created new near-term risks for the world economy and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. This comes even as economies grappled with sluggish global trade and the "tightest financial conditions in decades".
According to World Steel Association (WSA), global steel demand is expected to nominally reach 1,814 million MT following an increase of 1.8% in 2023. Chinese steel exports in 2023 were seen at a 7-year high topping 90 million MT.
Steel producers in the region and worldwide continued facing the additional challenge of coping with commodity price fluctuations, high interest rates along with disruptions to supply chain and inflationary pressures amid geo political uncertainties.
Nonetheless, the measures taken by the company helped in alleviating many of the challenges. The upgrades of our Merchant Bar Mill (MBM) and Tube Mills are being implemented as planned.
In spite of the multiple challenges faced, the company with its consistent operations, sales and smart procurement could end the year with a consolidated net profit of RO 4.12 million which represents a 31% jump year on year. This is commendable especially considering numerous unexpected challenges faced by the team.

Particulars	Group			Parent		
	2023	2022	Growth %	2023	2022	Growth %
Production quantity in MT	449,061	360,123	25%	449,061	360,123	25%
Sales quantity in MT	476,319	384,391	24%	476,045	382,798	24%
Sales Value in RO	142,402,924	149,266,823	(5%)	140,676,654	147,397,621	(5%)
Net Profit in RO	4,099,514	3,142,623	30%	4,024,107	3,102,705	30%

Looking Ahead
The ongoing conflict in the Middle East has heightened uncertainty and geopolitical risks in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region with risk of a wider contagion along with disruptions of shipping routes and supply chains.
According to the World Bank outlook January 2024, global growth is projected to slow for the third consecutive year with GDP growth dropping from 2.6% in 2023 to 2.4% in 2024. Similar sentiments are also echoed by IMF forecasts for 2024. The World Bank on a cautious note has a more optimistic growth forecast for the Middle East and North Africa region at 3.5% in 2024 and 2025 assuming that there is no escalation of the conflict. The major GCC economies of Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates are expected to grow at well above the global average at 4.1% and 3.7% respectively by the World Bank. The growth rate in major economies like Europe, China are expected to remain subdued on the back of tight monetary policies to rein in decade high inflation.
It is encouraging to note that inflation is seen to be declining in most regions due to the tighter monetary policies. IMF anticipates global inflation to ease to 5.8% in 2024 from 6.9% in 2023.
The GCC region has more than US \$2.50 trillion worth of projects planned or underway with Saudi Giga projects market alone has more than US \$750bn worth of contracts in the pipeline. There has been a rebound in construction sector in UAE. Saudi along with increased spending on Oil and Gas projects on the back of strong oil prices. There are also major investments into renewable and clean energy with Oman alone signing US \$20 billion worth of agreements for green hydrogen.
We remain cautiously optimistic about the future growth of our company and the region with the hope of a speedy recovery from the Middle East conflict.
All our major upgrades in our Merchant bar as well as Tube Mills are progressing as planned. We are confident that with the actions we are taking, we will be in a reasonably good position to handle the challenges. The company continues with innovative planning and forecasting to mitigate risk and optimize opportunities.
Dividends:
The Board of Directors is pleased to recommend a cash dividend of Bz 19 for the year for every share held. The following table shows the dividend declared during the past years.

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Cash Dividend (in Baiza)	16	5	14	44	15

Internal Control Systems and their adequacy
The Company has proper and adequate systems of internal controls required to ensure that all assets are safeguarded and protected against unauthorized use or disposition and that all transactions are authorized and reported correctly. The internal control system is supplemented by an extensive program of internal audits, review by management, documented policies, guidance, and procedures. The internal control system is designed to ensure that all data is reliable for preparing and maintaining financial statements.
The Company has an audit committee comprising of non-executive directors to review the audit work which in turn is reviewed by the Board.
The greatest strength of your Company is the quality and spirit of its people. Also, it enjoys a good reputation in the market for its quality and dependability. Both these factors have contributed positively to its growth and development. I would like to record my appreciation and sincere gratitude to all the employees of Jazeera Steel, who toiled under very difficult conditions taking all due precautions in producing positive results.
M/s KPMG the Company's Auditors have audited the accounts up to 31 December 2023 and their report is enclosed.
On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank all our stakeholders consisting of the Management, the Union, Bankers, Suppliers, Customers, Muscat Stock Exchange and all our Shareholders for their support and cooperation, which in turn reflects their confidence placed in us.
Above all, we pay tribute to the visionary leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq as he leads Oman into a new era and vow to support all his endeavors to take Oman to greater heights of prosperity and development.
On Behalf of the Board
Amal Suhail Salim Bahwan

Chairperson
5 February 2024

Consolidated and separate statement of financial position as at (Expressed in Omani Rial)

	Group		Parent Company	
	31-12-2023	31-12-2022	31-12-2023	31-12-2022
ASSETS				
Non-current assets				
Property, plant and equipment	18,561,586	14,372,589	17,061,353	14,333,163
Right-of-use assets	12,429,096	1,444,715	2,923,897	1,385,987
Intangible assets	320,781	413,914	320,781	413,914
Investment in a subsidiary	-	-	1,914,283	258,244
Deferred tax assets	137,800	279,615	68,127	279,615
Total non-current assets	31,449,263	16,510,833	22,288,441	16,670,923
Current assets				
Inventories	27,422,174	30,657,894	26,781,209	29,844,264
Trade and other receivables	39,194,446	40,399,926	37,168,132	40,460,325
Prepayments	225,031	139,170	189,993	123,300
Bank deposits	654,218	320,631	593,156	320,631
Cash and cash equivalents	10,753,793	5,570,904	9,692,215	5,201,599
Total current assets	78,249,662	77,088,525	74,424,705	75,950,119
Total assets	109,698,925	93,599,358	96,713,146	92,621,042
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES				
Equity				
Share capital	12,489,796	12,489,796	12,489,796	12,489,796
Share premium	13,856,484	13,856,484	13,856,484	13,856,484
Legal reserve	4,166,344	4,166,344	4,163,266	4,163,266
Retained earnings	21,513,187	19,031,773	20,826,135	18,429,038
Equity attributable to owners	52,025,811	49,544,397	51,335,681	48,938,584
Non-controlling interest	399,132	-	-	-
Total Equity	52,424,943	49,544,397	51,335,681	48,938,584
Non-current liabilities				
Bank borrowings	1,319,246	-	-	-
Employees' end of service benefits	2,044,383	1,894,253	1,997,428	1,870,205
Lease liabilities - non-current portion	13,292,909	1,475,833	3,057,790	1,441,970
Total non-current liabilities	16,656,538	3,370,086	5,055,218	3,312,175
Current liabilities				
Trade and other payables	18,749,020	14,688,606	18,481,169	14,424,737
Bank borrowings	21,102,981	25,375,475	21,102,981	25,375,475
Lease liabilities - current portion	233,560	196,603	223,664	164,349
Income tax payable	531,883	424,191	514,433	405,722
Total current liabilities	40,617,444	40,684,875	40,322,247	40,370,283
Total liabilities	57,273,982	44,054,961	45,377,465	43,682,458
Total equity and liabilities	109,698,925	93,599,358	96,713,146	92,621,042
Net assets per share	0.417	0.397	0.411	0.392

Consolidated statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the year ended 31 December (Expressed in Omani Rial)

	Group		Parent Company	
	2023	2022	2023	2022
Revenue from contract with customers	142,402,924	149,266,823	140,676,654	147,397,621
Cost of revenue	(122,719,155)	(129,873,292)	(122,032,989)	(128,815,717)
Gross profit	19,683,769	19,393,531	18,643,665	18,581,904
Other income	4,530	608,922	414,946	967,985
	19,688,299	20,002,453	19,058,611	19,549,889
Expenses				
Selling and distribution expenses	(8,546,205)	(11,020,131)	(8,434,780)	(10,944,581)
General and administrative expenses	(4,865,260)	(4,031,793)	(4,432,384)	(3,808,895)
Other operating expenses (Allowance for)/ Release of expected credit losses on trade receivables	(14,957)	(45,927)	(15,582)	(48,158)
	(72,179)	155,982	(63,841)	164,849
	(13,498,601)	(14,941,869)	(12,946,587)	(14,636,785)
Operating profit for the year	6,189,698	5,060,584	6,112,024	4,913,104
Finance expense	(1,528,467)	(1,440,793)	(1,468,650)	(1,363,828)
Finance income	101,787	85,347	101,787	85,347
Profit before tax for the year	4,763,018	3,705,138	4,745,161	3,634,623
Income tax expense	(663,504)	(562,515)	(721,054)	(531,918)
Profit for the year	4,099,514	3,142,623	4,024,107	3,102,705
Profit attributable to:				
Parent Company	4,114,392	3,142,623	4,024,107	3,102,705
Non-controlling interest	(14,878)	-	-	-
	4,099,514	3,142,623	4,024,107	3,102,705
Basic and diluted earnings per share attributable to shareholders of the Parent Company	0.033	0.025	0.032	0.025

SPORTS

Britain's Yates wins final stage to secure Tour of Oman crown

UAE Team Emirates rider beats Jan Hirt and Finn Fisher-Black on the slopes of Jabal Al Akhdar in final general classification

MUSCAT: UAE Team Emirates' British rider Adam Yates won the final stage of the Tour of Oman on the steep slopes of Jabal Al Akhdar (Green Mountain) to gain enough time on his rivals to secure the overall victory in the five-day stage race of the 2024 Tour of Oman.

Yates completed the full tour within 14 hours, 22 minutes and 30 seconds while Jan Hirt (Soudal-Quick Step) of Czech Republic finished as runners-up after ending the full tour within 14 hours, 22 minutes and 49 seconds.

New Zealand's rider, Finn Fisher-Black of UAE Team Emirates, ended in third place as he clocked 14 hours, 23 minutes and 9 seconds.

Heavy rain over the past two days had forced organisers to shorten the final stage from 139 km to just 72 km but the 5.7km climb on the slopes of Jabal Al Akhdar was always going to be decisive.

Four riders formed the early break and even started the final climb to the line ahead of the peloton. Huub Artz of Intermarché-Wanty even appeared to have a chance of victory after UAE Team Emirates struggled to reel in the breakaway.

However, on the steepest final kilometre of Jabal Al Akhdar, Hirt (Soudal-Quick Step) attacked and so Yates was forced to respond as his teammate and race leader Fisher-Black struggled.

Hirt was able to stay with Yates for a while but the British climber surged away again on the long final curve and was able to celebrate his double victory with his arms in the air.



Hirt finished second at 11 seconds, with Artz third at 29 seconds. Fisher-Black was sixth at 44 seconds.

Thanks to his time gap and bonus seconds, Yates won overall, 19 seconds ahead of Hirt and 39 seconds ahead of Fisher-Black.

A delighted Tour winner Yates said: "It was nice to win. We tried to set a hard pace on the climb for Finn (Fisher-Black) but it's a really steep climb and is not the best climb for him."

Yates added that his UAE Team Emirates tactics were spot on and he had to intervene to secure overall success for the team.

He said: "In these kinds of races, victory doesn't come for free and we had to work for it. We knew somebody would try to attack and so we set a hard space at the button with Diego Ulissi and Vegard Stake Laengen.

"With about two kilometres to go, I had to go, to make it a little bit harder. We were happy with the pace until Jan Hirt attacked."

On the final stage, the British rider said: "It's a tough climb, it goes up at 13 percent all the time. It's the first time here for me and so I didn't really know the roads but it's good to come here and experience a new race, a new country and to come out with a win."

Yates consoled and praised team-mate Fisher-Black beyond the finish.

"We've had an awesome week as a team and rode really well. We controlled the race all week and in the end, we got the win, so it's perfect," he said.

"I think we're in a really good place now heading into the UAE Tour next week."

The peloton roll began from Samail "Al Feyhaa Resthouse" for a

short stage, with a 72-km course adapted to the weather conditions in the Sultanate of Oman.

Pelegri takes golden jersey

Spanish rider Oscar Pelegri of Team Burgos-NH managed to end all the stages of Tour of Oman 2024 with a golden jersey.

Fisher-Black took the overall general white jersey classification (Best Young Rider) and also claimed the green jersey as he managed to lead the general ranking points with 24 points ahead of Luke Lamperti (Soudal Quick-Step).

Later, the chief guest, Basil bin Ahmed Al Rawas, Undersecretary at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, handed the awards to the top winners in presence of Saif bin Sebaa Al Rushaidi, Oman Cycling Association chairman and other officials.



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OMAN CRUDE PRICE RISES

The price of Oman oil has increased, with prices for delivery by April 2024 reaching \$82.39, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil rose by 53 cents from the price of Tuesday, which was \$81.86. - OMA

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 4,630.53 points, up by 0.89 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.94 per cent at 444.18 points. Al Suwadi Power, up 9.76 per cent, was the top gainer while Financial Corporation, down 10.00 per cent, was the top loser.

Forum calls for maximising in-country aluminium recycling

This first-of-its-kind forum in Oman, organised by Sohar Aluminium, featured several insightful presentations, discussions, and keynote speeches from industry pioneers

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Sohar Aluminium (SA) held Oman's first 'Aluminium Recycling Forum 2024: Forging the future,' under the patronage of Dr



Abdullah bin Ali Al Amri, Chairman of Environment Authority, at JW Marriott Hotel, Muscat.

The forum, which was supported by the Environment Authority, marked a platform bringing together key players in the Oman aluminium industry, metal recyclers, and academia to understand the current situation in the Sultanate of Oman for aluminium scrap and source opportunities for in-country recycling.

This first-of-its-kind forum featured several insightful presenta-

tions, discussions, and keynote speeches from industry pioneers such as Marlen Bertram, Director - Scenarios and Forecasts, International Aluminium Institute and presentations by Dr Majid Al Maharbi, Associate Professor at Sultan Qaboos University, and others, who explored the latest trends, challenges, and business opportunities in aluminium recycling, including for SMEs, sustainability practices, and the impact of technological advancements in the industry.

Other presenters included Eng. Abdullah Al Mufarji, Environment Specialist, from the Environment Authority, Karima Al Raaisi, from Be'ah, Hamad Al Jabri, Power Plant and Maintenance Director at Sohar Aluminium, Hammad Ali, Commercial Director at Oman Aluminium Processing Industries Limited, Bharath Natesan, Operations Manager at Oman Aluminium Rolling Company, Aiman Al Kharusi, Head HSSE and Omani- sation at Synergies Castings. Speaking on the occasion, Eng.

Said bin Mohammed Al Masoudi, CEO of Sohar Aluminium Company said, "Oman's Vision 2040 aims to promote upstream and downstream integration to enhance the contribution of non-oil sectors to the GDP. Aluminium recycling can play a part here too, as one company's scrap can be another's feedstock. To further this Vision, we need to collaborate on maximising aluminium recycling within our industry."

"At Sohar Aluminium, we are firm believers in innovation, sustainability, and a circular economy. While these initiatives are separate, they are also interdependent. Similarly, while we chart our individual paths, it is important that we join hands for the larger cause of serving Oman's economy and the communities in which we operate," the CEO commented.

Commenting on the national endeavours towards the effective use of resources, Nizar bin Salem Al Araiimi, Director of the Environment Department in North Al Batinah Governorate, pointed out, "Paying attention to the principles

of the circular economy to protect the environment and develop the national economy and include it in the national vision and economic strategy will ensure proper management of the waste management sector. It will not only contribute to complying with the national commitments of the Sultanate of Oman but also enhance the country's global classification in environmental performance."

Globally, studies disclose that more than 30 million tonnes of aluminium scrap are recycled every year, ensuring its status as one of the most recycled materials on the planet. Among the key outcomes of the Forum include collaboration between manufacturers, processors, and suppliers in addition to implementing digitalisation and technologies associated with the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

By embracing sustainable practices, the Sultanate of Oman can show its dedication to a greener future. Additionally, the forum underscored the need to streamline technologies and provide sustainable solutions across the supply chain.

PIVOTAL FORUM

Asyad showcases integrated logistics prowess as strategic partner for Breakbulk Middle East

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Asyad Group, Oman's global integrated logistics provider, took centre stage as the strategic partner at Breakbulk Middle East 2024.

Held on February 12 and 13 in Dubai, this paramount event attracted over 8,000 professionals and key decision-makers from the global oil & gas, energy, chemicals, and infrastructure sectors, reinforcing its position as the region's foremost venue for initiating new project ventures.

Asyad's showcase featured its integrated logistics capabilities, including Asyad Shipping, Asyad Ports, Port of Duqm, Asyad Logistics, Oman& Etihad Rail, all backed by the strategic support of Asyad's Free Zones. This holistic approach not only highlighted the group's important role in facilitating major projects, but also positioned Oman as a key logistics hub in the region.

"As part of our group-wide com-



mercial integration efforts, we're committed to showcasing our comprehensive suite of services to regional and global players," asserted Dr Ahmed Al Abri, CEO of Asyad Ports. "Aligned with our ambitious objectives, we're aggressively expanding into global markets to understand customer needs and promote Oman and Asyad as the ideal logistics hub and global supply chain facilitator."

Breakbulk Middle East 2024 is a pivotal forum for exploring the

latest trends and challenges facing the breakbulk and project cargo sector, including sustainability, decarbonisation, and the handling of project cargo. Asyad highlighted its leadership in these critical areas. This participation reflected the group's dedication to steering the industry towards more sustainable and efficient paradigms, embodying Asyad's commitment to integrating innovation with sustainability in maritime and logistics operations.

Asyad Group interacted directly with an array of project owners, EPC contractors, industrial manufacturers, and global project forwarders. These pivotal interactions are essential for sculpting the logistics industry's future, enabling Asyad to both influence and respond to the evolving demands of the sector.

"This event enabled us to fortify our connections with industry leaders and pave the way for future collaborative endeavors that will significantly bolster Oman's and the wider region's sustainable development objectives," Dr Al Abri added.

The strategic partnership with Breakbulk Middle East 2024 aligned with Asyad's objectives to highlight its leading role in the logistics sector, emphasising sustainability and efficiency in project cargo handling. By participating in this premier event, Asyad aimed to solidify its position as a catalyst for economic growth and a leader in the transition towards sustainable logistics solutions.

OMAN POST



Workshop organised to drive eCommerce solutions in GCC

Times News Service

MUSCAT: In a significant step toward enhancing e-commerce in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Oman Post, the national postal operator, hosted a workshop on activating the express delivery initiative for e-commerce clients of the postal operators in the GCC.

This event represented a concerted effort to tackle the logistical

challenges confronting the rapidly expanding e-commerce sector in the region. The workshop gathered postal operators from across the GCC to consider cooperative strategies for improving e-commerce logistics and enhancing and speeding up delivery services throughout the region. Aimed at providing a consistent and reliable delivery experience, this concept seeks to meet the growing demands of the e-commerce sector.

KEY PROJECTS

Duqm Port unveils OMR177 million infrastructure enhancements

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Special Economic Zone at Duqm (Sezad) marked a significant milestone with the inauguration of several key projects, including the marine fishing port, the Freight Services and Customs Terminal, and the main roads No. 1 and 5 at Duqm Port.

The opening ceremony was attended by Lieutenant-General Hassan bin Mohsen Al-Sharqi, Inspector General of Police and Customs, in the presence of several public and private sector officials.

During the opening ceremony, Eng. Ahmed bin Ali Akaak, acting CEO of Sezad, said: "With the completion of the Marine Fishing Port, the Shipping and Customs Services Station, and the main highways at Duqm Port, the primary and fundamental infrastructure system in Sezad is completed. He explained that the total cost of the three new projects amounted to about OMR177 million."

The largest commercial fishing port in Oman, the Sea Fishing Port in Duqm, spans 7.5 square kilometres and was built to accommodate the largest international commercial fishing vessels, with a depth of 10 meters, according to Engineer Ahmed Akaak. It is made up of two 3.3 km long breakwaters and 1.3kmF of permanently installed ship docks. Six floating berths and a dedicated quay for Coast Guard police boats have been made available to the port.



The customs station project, he noted, is part of the third package of projects at the Port of Duqm, which includes a number of buildings within the Port of Duqm. The main road No. (1) is approximately 3.93 km long and is a dual road with two lanes in each direction. Similarly, the main road No. (5) is around 3.3 km long and is also a dual road.

"Sezad represents a model of economic integration," Akaak continued, "as it includes several economic and service development zones: a fishing port, a multipurpose port, a dry dock for ship repair and development, multiuse areas for tourism, industry, and logistics, and a modern residential city. All of these are served by a road transport network that connects Duqm to the various zones in Oman."

Fishing port in Duqm

Fishery factories, fish sales outlets, artisanal and commercial fish-

ing vessel servicing areas, and a fisherman's training centre are all housed within Sezad's fishing port. To facilitate fish transport vehicles, a network of paved roads has also been built. Both the fish and food industries complex and the fishing port span 7.8 and 7.5 km2, respectively. Both are important regional economic drivers that will help draw both domestic and foreign companies with a focus on fishing and related industries. Environmentally friendly green energy initiatives are something that the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (Opaz) is also looking to accommodate at the Duqm fishing port.

It is worth mentioning that the Sea Fishing Port in Duqm is developing and implementing commercial facilities for Marsa Al Duqm Investment Company, which is a consortium led by several Oman Investment Authority companies, represented by Oman Fisheries Development Group, Asyad Ports



Company, Al Wusta Fisheries Industries Company and Oman Food Investment Holding Company "Nataj". The consortium also includes the French Port of Lorient, which is one of the largest fishing ports in Europe.

Cargo and customs services terminal

The ceremony included the opening of the customs station within the projects of the third package at the Port of Duqm, which consists of buildings designated for the Port of Duqm Company. The

station consists of a one-stop shop building, a building for truck registration, a building for transit permits, inspection buildings designated for the Royal Oman Police and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, as well as a medical clinic affiliated with the Ministry of Health. In addition, it has customs gates for the movement of vehicles into and out of the port, management of the import and export procedures, and utility facilities such as power plants, sewage stations, and fire-fighting water tanks.

The works of the freight and customs services station included infrastructure facilities containing a potable water network, sewerage network, electricity network, communication, rainwater drainage channels, etc. in addition to 8 km of roads and parking lots for vehicles designated for the station.

Main roads No. 1 and 5

Roads (1) and (2) are vital projects

in Sezad. Both roads connect the Port of Duqm area with the refinery, the city centre and many strategic projects that are being implemented in the Heavy & Industry Industries Zones. Road No. (1) Connect the port and the Dry Dock with National Road 32, which facilitates access to the port projects for those coming from the centre of Duqm and from the Governorate of Muscat via the Muscat - Sinaw - Duqm road. Thus, the road is the third thoroughfare leading to the Port of Duqm and the dry dock, while Road No. (5) stretches from the existing crossroads connecting both roads (1) and (6) and ends at the Duqm Port Bulk Liquid Dock.

The two highways have been built in accordance with normal requirements, with an average total width of 40.9 meters, an internal shoulder of 1.5 meters, an external shoulder measuring 3 meters, and a lane width of 3.75 meters. In general, the road is between two and four meters above the surrounding terrain.

Road No. (1) is a dual road that spans around 3.93 km and has two lanes in each direction. Similarly, Road No. (5) is a dual road that spans approximately 3.3 km.

The two service roads, each measuring approximately 6.7 km in length, the installation of LED lighting for the new roads, soil development projects (Sabkha), and the building of water drainage channels are all included in the two road (1) and (5) projects.

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Al Suwadi Power, up 9.76 per cent, was the top gainer while Financial Corporation, down 10.00 per cent, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,630.53 points, up by 0.89 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.94 per cent at 444.18 points. Al Suwadi Power, up 9.76 per cent, was the top gainer while Financial Corporation, down 10.00 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of Al Anwar Investment were the most active in terms of number of shares traded while OQGN were the most active in terms of turnover.

A total number of 1027 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of OMR2.52 million, with more than 20.97 million shares changing hands. Out of 50 traded securities, 20 advanced, 12 declined, and 18 remained unchanged. At the session close, domestic investors were net buyers for OMR510,000 while GCC & Arab investors were net sellers for OMR371,000, followed by foreign investors for OMR139,000

worth of shares. Financial Index closed at 7,361.02 points, up 0.72 per cent. Prices of National Bank Oman, Oman & Emirates Investment, Al Anwar Investment, Al Sharqia Investment, Sohar International Bank were up by 6.80 per cent, 5.88 per cent, 1.45 per cent, 1.45 per cent, 0.90 per cent respectively. Prices of Financial Corporation, Muscat Finance, Bank Muscat were down by 10.00 per cent, 4.44 per cent, 0.37 per cent respectively. Industrial Index closed at 5,529.88 points, up 1.51 per cent. Prices of Al Anwar Ceramics, Voltamp Energy, Jazeera Steel Products, Muscat Thread Mill, Al Maha Ceramics were up by 9.70 per cent, 6.45 per cent, 2.56 per cent, 1.52 per cent, 1.19 per cent respectively. Services Index was up by 1.02 per cent before closing at 1,657.21 points. — **United Securities**

OMAN STOCKS

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	4,630.73	4,590.78	4,630.53	4,589.80	40.72	0.89
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,361.02	7,289.22	7,361.02	7,308.60	52.43	0.72
Industry Index	5,531.22	5,488.35	5,529.88	5,447.86	82.02	1.51
Services Index	1,657.40	1,643.20	1,657.21	1,640.53	16.69	1.02
MSX Shariah Index	444.18	439.56	444.18	440.02	4.16	0.94
MSX TR INDEX	6,106.37	6,053.69	6,106.10	6,052.40	53.70	0.89
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,032.23	7,953.88	8,032.23	7,975.02	57.21	0.72
SERVICES TR IDX	1,849.17	1,833.33	1,848.96	1,830.35	18.62	1.02
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	5,908.72	5,862.92	5,907.28	5,819.67	87.61	1.51
FIXED INCOME INDEX	992.89	992.89	992.89	992.89	0.00	0.00

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
20,973,431	2,518,375	1,027	23,860,662,607	20	12	18	50

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PR.	LAST BID	LAST OFFR	PAN VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET																
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	1,725,681	312,248	40	0.181	0.181	0.181	0.181	0.165	0.016	9.697	0.181	0.181	0.181	0.100	39,820,000
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	41,068	9,253	18	0.222	0.231	0.222	0.231	0.213	0.018	8.451	0.231	0.226	0.231	0.100	14,138,187
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	25,000	6,671	4	0.265	0.267	0.265	0.267	0.250	0.017	6.800	0.267	0.255	0.272	0.100	434,127,677
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	2,256	114	3	0.050	0.054	0.050	0.054	0.051	0.003	5.882	0.054	0.050	0.054	0.100	5,581,250
OM0000001152	OMAN NATIONAL ENGINEERING & INVESTMENT	388,489	46,385	36	0.120	0.130	0.119	0.119	0.115	0.004	3.478	0.119	0.119	0.120	0.100	17,850,000
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	70,288	19,356	13	0.276	0.281	0.275	0.281	0.274	0.007	2.555	0.281	0.274	0.281	0.100	35,096,327
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIA INVESTMENT HO.	193,808	13,567	17	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.069	0.001	1.448	0.070	0.070	0.071	0.100	6,300,000
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	52,075	8,848	9	0.168	0.170	0.168	0.170	0.168	0.002	1.190	0.170	0.168	0.170	0.100	9,350,000
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	2,649,030	294,329	48	0.111	0.112	0.111	0.112	0.111	0.001	0.901	0.112	0.111	0.112	0.100	612,403,512
OM0000003988	OOREDOO	571,670	194,279	38	0.335	0.340	0.335	0.340	0.338	0.002	0.582	0.340	0.320	0.340	0.100	221,321,038
OM0000001087	OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	10,000	2,690	3	0.269	0.269	0.269	0.269	0.269	0.000	0.000	0.269	0.261	0.269	0.100	28,900,000
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	3,740	1,141	1	0.305	0.305	0.305	0.305	0.305	0.000	0.000	0.305	0.300	0.305	0.100	100,916,177
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	10,000	580	1	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.000	0.000	0.058	0.057	0.058	0.100	20,655,383
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	12,500	1,875	1	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.000	0.000	0.150	0.146	0.150	0.100	449,452,715
OM0000003000	ALMAHA PETROLEUM PRODUCTS MARKETING	300	318	2	1.060	1.060	1.060	1.060	1.060	0.000	0.000	1.060	1.060	1.076	0.100	73,140,000
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	140,226	8,414	7	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.000	0.000	0.060	0.060	0.062	0.100	12,000,000
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	282,694	23,536	24	0.082	0.084	0.082	0.083	0.083	0.000	0.000	0.083	0.083	0.084	0.100	16,569,755
OM0000004788	MADINA TAKAFUL	5,000	440	1	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.000	0.000	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.100	15,400,000
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	404,310	109,484	22	0.271	0.271	0.270	0.270	0.271	-0.001	-0.369	0.270	0.270	0.271	0.100	2,028,727,207
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	88,437	95,552	23	1.085	1.085	1.079	1.080	1.085	-0.005	-0.461	1.080	1.085	1.080	0.100	810,000,000
Total	20	6,676,522	1,149,175	311												

Parallel Market

OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	1,892,724	85,113	48	0.044	0.045	0.044	0.045	0.041	0.004	9.756	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.100	33,148,285
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	100	4	1	0.039	0.039	0.039	0.039	0.036	0.003	8.333	0.039	0.039	0.000	0.100	26,320,610
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	139,671	22,775	27	0.155	0.166	0.152	0.165	0.155	0.010	6.452	0.165	0.165	0.168	0.100	13,431,454
OM0000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	608,352	28,616	28	0.045	0.049	0.045	0.048	0.046	0.002	4.348	0.048	0.048	0.049	0.100	7,680,000
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	549,991	30,211	27	0.054	0.055	0.054	0.055	0.054	0.001	1.852	0.055	0.055	0.055	0.100	80,443,080
OM0000002036	MUSCAT THREAD MILLS	8,480	569	2	0.070	0.070	0.067	0.067	0.066	0.001	1.515	0.067	0.067	0.070	0.100	1,076,868
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	5,185,579	358,831	121	0.089	0.070	0.089	0.070	0.069	0.001	1.449	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.100	14,420,000
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	25,260	1,976	4	0.078	0.079	0.078	0.079	0.078	0.001	1.282	0.079	0.078	0.079	0.100	6,715,000
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	24,370	7,685	10	0.315	0.316	0.315	0.316	0.315	0.001	0.317	0.316	0.316	0.316	0.100	243,383,200
OM0000002275	SHELL OMAN MARKETING	1,000	802	1	0.802	0.802	0.802	0.802	0.800	0.002	0.250	0.802	0.802	0.000	0.100	76,190,000
OM0000001178	MUSCAT GASES	685	75	1	0.108	0.108	0.108	0.108	0.108	0.000	0.000	0.108	0.000	0.108	0.100	3,340,000
OM0000001418	BAYSUT CEMENT	154,000	19,250	15	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.000	0.000	0.125	0.120	0.125	0.100	25,000,000
OM0000001426	OMAN REFRESHMENT	2,377	3,328	2	1.400	1.400	1.400	1.400	1.400	0.000	0.000	1.400	1.400	1.540	0.100	70,000,000
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	1,267	2,749	2	2.150	2.250	2.150	2.250	2.250	0.000	0.000	2.250	2.150	2.250	0.100	201,825,000
OM0000003281	TAAGEER FINANCE	93,209	5,973	7	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.000	0.000	0.107	0.107	0.108	0.100	28,230,349
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	136,890	13,059	16	0.095	0.096	0.095	0.096	0.096	0.000	0.000	0.096	0.096	0.099	0.100	214,747,491
OM0000005260	OMAN ARAB BANK	28,543	3,425	1	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.000	0.000	0.120	0.113	0.120	0.100	200,329,200
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	449	37	1	0.083	0.083	0.083	0.083	0.083	0.000	0.000	0.083	0.000	0.083	0.100	39,108,470
OM0000008710	BARKA DESALINATION	55,000	6,600	3	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.000	0.000	0.120	0.110	0.120	0.100	9,062,640
OM0000004735	SENBICORP SALALAH	200,000	19,738	6	0.099	0.100	0.098	0.099	0.099	-0.001	-1.010	0.098	0.098	0.099	0.100	93,544,051
OM0000009072	OQ GAS NETWORKS	4,182,684	607,072	339	0.147	0.147	0.144	0.145	0.147	-0.002	-1.361	0.145	0.145	0.145	0.100	627,940,468
OM0000007811	MUSANDAM POWER	620	195	2	0.315	0.315	0.310	0.310	0.315	-0.005	-1.587	0.310	0.283	0.310	0.100	21,820,900
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	76,883	3,371	6	0.044	0.044	0.043	0.043	0.045	-0.002	-4.444	0.043	0.043	0.044	0.100	13,207,282
OM0000007407	DHOFAH GENERATING	669,960	30,047	21	0.047	0.047	0.045	0.045	0.048	-0.003	-6.250	0.045	0.044	0.048	0.100	10,000,800
OM0000002911	FINANCIAL CORPORATION	1,140	1	1	0.054	0.054	0.054	0.054	0.060	-0.006	-10.000	0.054	0.000	0.000	0.100	3,781,618
Total	25	14,036,244	1,255,562	691												

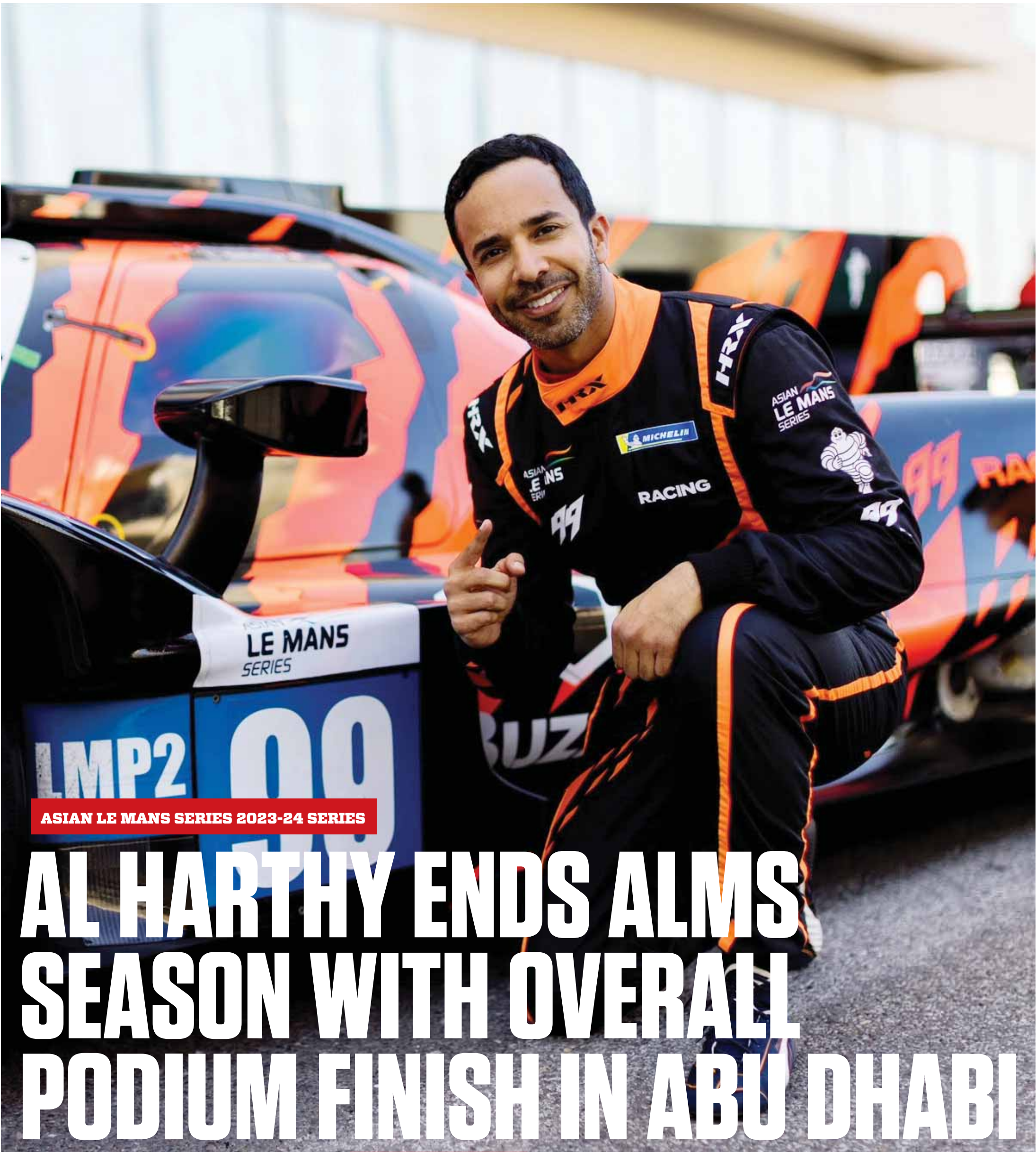
MINISTRY OF COMMERCE, INDUSTRY

Commerce Ministry marks Omani Industry Day

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion yesterday marked the Omani Industry Day. The event, held in the Wilayat of Sohar, the Governorate of North Al Batinah, was themed 'Automation of Factories & Artificial Intelligence'.

The ceremony was attended by Qais Mohammed Al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

Dr Saleh Said Masn, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion gave a speech in which he underscored the importance of the industrial sector to achieve comprehensive



MUSCAT: It was heartbreak for Oman's Ahmad Al Harthy as he along with his team-mate, Louis Deletraz, missed the overall title in LMP2 class of the 2023-24 Asian Le Mans Series (ALMS) that concluded recently at the Yas Marina circuit in Abu Dhabi.

However, the 99 Racing team managed to finish on the podium with an overall third place following their stellar victories in two of the five races held.

At the 4 Hours of Abu Dhabi double-header on the weekend, Al Harthy, Deletraz and and Filipe Albuquerque - standing in for the unwell Nikita Mazepin - raised hopes after grabbing pole positions in both the qualifying sessions of the final round.

Going into the final two races of the campaign with an overall lead of 20 points, Al Harthy got things off to a perfect start in the No.99 Oreca 07-Gibson LMP2 car by dominating qualifying, 0.8 seconds faster than anyone, securing a memorable double pole position for rounds four and five.

Race one was nothing short of luckless, with surprising lap one contact spinning Al Harthy out of the lead. Mounting a rousing recovery, more dramas then undid the Omani's drive and heavy damage sustained during an incident behind the Safety Car led to a devastating retirement.

Following incredible work by 99 Racing overnight and throughout Sunday morning, and with thanks to the AF Corse team from whom a new Oreca tub was acquired, Al Harthy lined-up on pole position for round five - he and Deletraz now three points adrift in the title battle.

Even though having to serve a controversial drive-through penalty early on, ordered by officials as a result of the race-ending incident the day prior, Al Harthy performed strongly in the opening stint. In the end, though, the car couldn't deliver the performance required and Al Harthy, Deletraz and Albuquerque finished in 11th position.

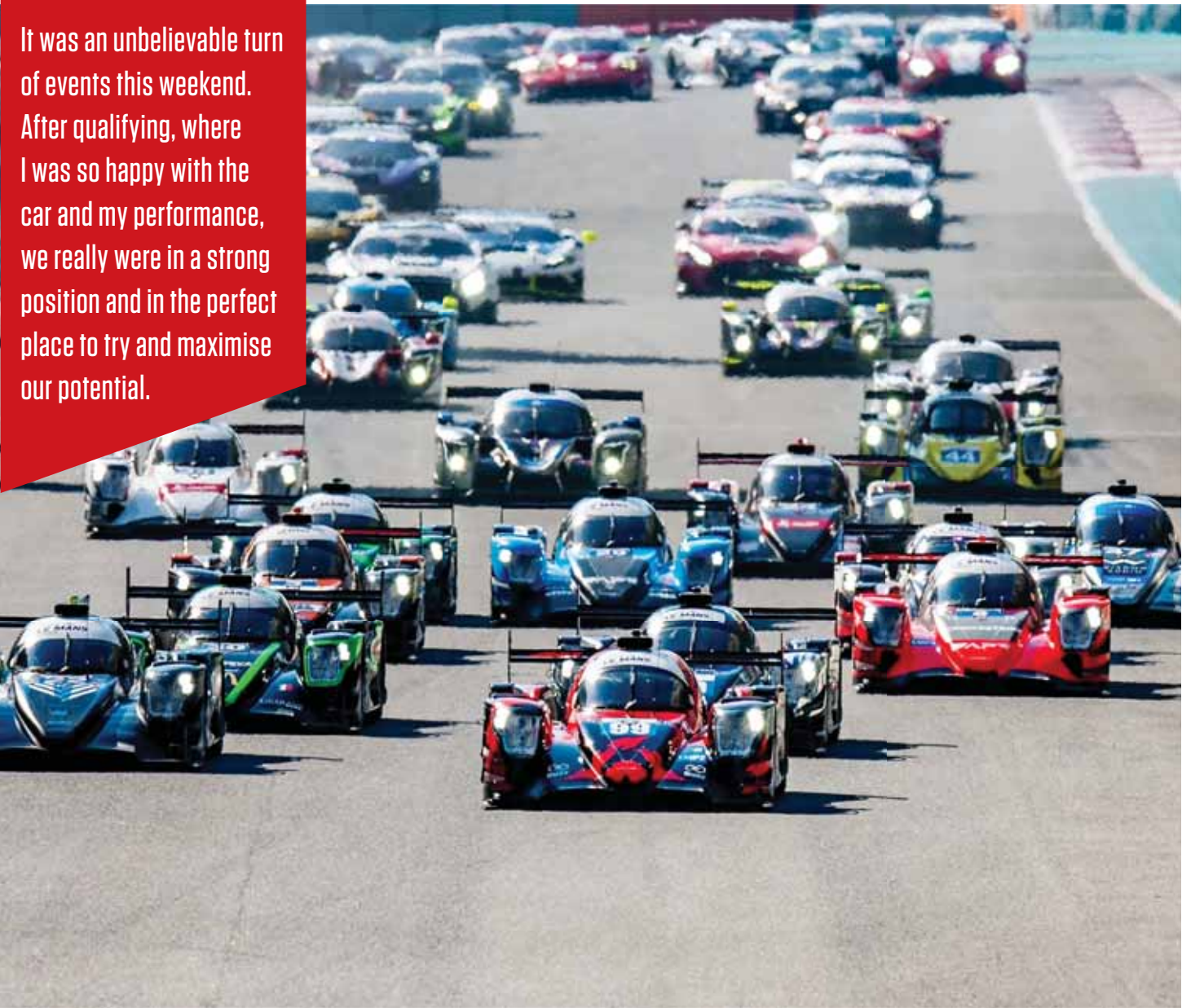
Disappointed on missing a good chance for title, Al Harthy said: "It was an unbelievable turn of events this weekend. After qualifying, where I was so happy with the car and my performance, we really were in a strong position and in the perfect place to try and maximise our potential. However, what happened in the two races were quite shocking. We still managed to finish the season P3 in the championship and with a couple of wins as well."

Having performed so faultlessly in qualifying on Saturday morning, Al Harthy relished the opening race later in the day and the team had a genuine chance of wrapping-up the ALMS title with one round to spare. Unfortunately, this was where the weekend's fortunes changed dramatically.

"The guys at the team worked so hard this weekend and the efforts everyone put in overnight on Saturday to make sure we could even get onto the grid for Sunday's race was amazing", said Al Harthy.

"Huge thank you to everyone and, of course, to Louis, Filipe and Nikita who have been great to work with. Abu Dhabi wasn't the weekend we wanted, to say the least, but we can still be proud of all we've achieved in the ALMS."

It was an unbelievable turn of events this weekend. After qualifying, where I was so happy with the car and my performance, we really were in a strong position and in the perfect place to try and maximise our potential.



SPORTS

Brilliant Brahim strike earns Real Madrid first-leg victory

The Spanish giants edged past Germany's RB Leipzig 1-0 in the Champions League Round of 16 game

MUNICH: A brilliant goal by Brahim Diaz handed Real Madrid the advantage following the 1-0 win in the first leg of their Champions League last-16 meeting with RB Leipzig on Tuesday, *BBC Sport* reported.

Diaz curled a superb finish into the top corner three minutes after half-time to give Real the win in Germany.

The Spanish midfielder started in place of Jude Bellingham, who missed the game due to injury.

His goal puts Real in a good position to reach the quarter-finals for the 12th time in the past 14 seasons.

Leipzig frustrated Real until the 48th minute, when former Manchester City midfielder Diaz turned on the right touchline and beat two players, before dancing past several others and curling the ball into the top corner.

The Spaniards could not add to their score however, coming closest when Vinicius Jr struck the outside of the post having



been set through by the impressive Diaz.

They were also grateful to goalkeeper Andriy Lunin - who kept a clean sheet despite Leipzig having nine shots on target - and for the decision to disallow Benjamin Sesko's second-minute header.

Real host the second leg at Santiago Bernabeu on 6 March.

Diaz steps up in Bellingham absence

The 14-time European champions are packed full of world-class talent but they clearly miss Bellingham, who suffered a sprained ankle in their 4-0 La Liga victory over Girona on Saturday.

The England midfielder had either scored or assisted in all five of his Champions League appearances for Real so far and has been involved in seven goals, more than any other player in the group stage.

Without him, Real lacked fluency in attack in the first half although Diaz, who replaced Bellingham in the attacking midfield role, showed quality and industry throughout before brilliantly providing the breakthrough.

Diaz further replicated Bellingham with his celebration, copying his team-mate in standing with arms wide after scoring. It earned the approval of the England inter-



national too, who posted "oh my god Brahim!" on X in response.

There was late concern for Real however as Diaz was forced off in the final minutes with a serious-looking calf injury.

Diaz's goal was a moment of magic in an uneven performance from Real - Leipzig created plenty of chances and could easily have taken at least a draw, while Sesko could have had a hat-trick in the opening 10 minutes.

Leipzig industrious but wasteful

After Dani Carvajal played a loose pass out for a corner after two

minutes, Sesko headed home the second ball but had his effort ruled out as Benjamin Henrichs was judged to be offside and impeding goalkeeper Lunin.

Immediately after, the tall Slovenian striker could not quite make contact with a lofted through ball, before he was denied one-on-one by the legs of Lunin.

Lunin was forced into action late on too, making a series of solid stops from Xavi Simons, Sesko and Amadou Haidara as the hosts pressed for an equaliser.

The Ukrainian started this season as Real's third-choice keeper, but following Thibaut Courtois'

season-ending injury he has superseded Kepa Arrizabalaga and showed why he has the trust of manager Carlo Ancelotti with this display.

Real's frustrations were summed up by Carvajal, who was lucky to escape a booking for scything down Simons in the first half before finally being carded in the second having almost constantly complained to the officials.

Leipzig's deep defence mostly did a good job of restricting Real, but they could do nothing to keep out Diaz's strike and were grateful to the woodwork for keeping the tie alive. - Agencies

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE - ROUND OF 16

De Bruyne shines in Man City's win

COPENHAGEN: Manchester City resumed their Champions League title defence with a comfortable 3-1 victory at FC Copenhagen in the first leg of their last-16 tie on Tuesday, *BBC Sport* reported.

After Kevin de Bruyne gave Pep Guardiola's side an early lead it looked like they would go on to claim a big win as the hosts barely laid a glove on them.

But Ederson gifted the ball straight to Copenhagen with a poor clearance and Magnus Mattsson took full advantage with a fantastic strike. Bernardo Silva put Manchester City ahead again just before half-time with a clever flick after a ball from De Bruyne deflected through to him.

De Bruyne and Erling Haaland had further chances to add to the lead after the break and, although City were not quite at their attacking best, they ensured they left with a two-goal cushion thanks to Phil Foden's late strike.

"The biggest players appear on the biggest stages," said Guardiola on TNT Sports. "It's the hour of truth. We started well. We have to do our job and finish it. I'm just really pleased with the result."

Manchester City will host Copenhagen in the second leg on Wednesday, 6 March.

Man City 'patient in the right moments'

This was Copenhagen's first game in two months after football in Denmark was paused for a winter break but Guardiola had warned



before the game that they would still not make things easy for his side.

The Danes had beaten Manchester United 4-3 at the Parken Stadium in the Champions League group stage back in November, and also held Manchester City to a goalless draw there in 2022.

Guardiola's side started like a train, but while they failed to sustain that momentum they did have plenty of chances to win by a greater margin.

However, ex-Liverpool goalkeeper Kamil Grabara played a key role in limiting the visitors to two goals, making good saves to deny Ruben Dias early on and Jer-

emy Doku in the second half.

But in the closing stages, the visitors stepped it up again to ensure they got a healthy advantage for the second leg and secured it when Foden drove in from De Bruyne's cutback.

"Today was perfect," Guardiola added. "They were patient in the right moments. Really good."

"I'm really proud of the team. The third goal helped us a lot. Hopefully we can finish it off at home and go to the next game."

City's early momentum was clearly disrupted by the early departure of Jack Grealish to injury.

The England forward was making his first start in six games but, pulled up with what appeared

to be a muscle injury after challenging for the ball with Diogo Goncalves.

Grealish, who missed three games in September with a hamstring injury, was then taken off in the 21st minute and City will be hoping the issue is not as bad as it initially looked.

"It looks like a muscular [injury] for Jack Grealish," Guardiola said.

"It is a pity. He helped us to play at the right tempo. He felt it when he rolled on the grass."

Guardiola also revealed Silva picked up an injury, adding: "Bernardo took a big knock on the ankle. Hopefully it is not a big issue, but we will see." - Agencies

LATEST ICC RANKINGS

Bumrah holds top spot in men's Test bowler rankings

NEW DELHI: Star India pacer Jasprit Bumrah maintained his top spot among Test bowlers in the latest player rankings released by the International Cricket Council (ICC) on Wednesday.

Bumrah took the No.1 spot in the men's bowler Test rankings after he became the fastest Indian pacer to pick over 150 wickets in long-format cricket during the second Test of the India-England Test match in Visakhapatnam. The speedster kept the top spot in the recently released rankings.

There was a slight change at the top of the batter's Test rankings, with New Zealand's Kane Williamson jumping to the top of the list after a pair of tons in the first Test against South Africa.

The Kiwi pacer Kyle Jamieson moved to the eighth place in the Test bowlers' rankings after taking six wickets against the Proteas at Mount Maunganui.

India cricketer Ravindra Jadeja still holds the Test all-rounders' rankings. However, Jamieson moved to 13th place on the chart.

After the T20I series between Australia and West Indies concluded, there has been a massive change in the T20 batting rankings, with Glenn Maxwell moving to 24th place, Tim David jumping to 27th, and David Warner up to 36th place.



In the bowlers' rankings of T20 cricket, Adam Zampa moved to 11th place just behind England's Adil Rashid. His Aussie teammate Marcus Stoinis climbed to second place on the T20I all-rounders' rankings.

Due to a back injury, Shakib Al Hasan was dethroned from the No.1 spot of the ODI all-rounder rankings. Mohammad Nabi claimed the top spot with his stunning 136-run knock against Sri Lanka in the first ODI match. Nabi also climbed to the seventh on the latest rankings for ODI bowlers.

Proteas spinner Keshav Maharaaj stayed on top in ODI bowlers' rankings. - ANI

INDIA VS ENGLAND TEST SERIES

Pacer Wood named Bashir's replacement for third Test

RAJKOT: England Cricket Board (ECB) on Wednesday named the playing XI for the third Test match against India in Rajkot, as pacer Mark Wood replaced off-spinner Shoaib Bashir in the playing squad. The third Test commences on Thursday.

Wood played as a lone seamer in England's victory in the first Test at Hyderabad but went wicketless on a surface that did not suit his express pace in Visakhapatnam.

"The Three Lions have made one change with Mark Wood replacing Shoaib Bashir," ECB said on Wednesday.

Skipper Ben Stokes will play his 100th Test match for England at Saurashtra Cricket Association

Stadium. "Captain Ben Stokes is set to make his 100th Test appearance in Rajkot," it added.

The series is currently level 1-1. After a 28-run loss in the first Hyderabad Test, India won the second Test at Visakhapatnam by 106 runs.

After the Rajkot Test, the fourth Test will be played in Ranchi from February 23.

The fifth and final Test of the series will be played in Dharamshala from March 7.

England squad: Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Ollie Pope, Joe Root, Jonny Bairstow, Ben Stokes (captain), Ben Foakes, Rehan Ahmed, Tom Hartley, Mark Wood, James Anderson. - ANI

NEW ZEALAND VS SOUTH AFRICA: SECOND TEST

Piedt helps SA take lead over New Zealand

HAMILTON: South Africa bowler Dane Piedt guided the Proteas to a small lead of 31 runs against New Zealand at the end of play on Day 2 of the second Test at Seddon Park on Wednesday.

At stumps on Day 2, the hosts were bundled out for 211 runs. The highest scorer for the Kiwis was their former skipper Kane Williamson who scored 43 runs off 108 balls with the help of seven fours.

For South Africa, the pick of the bowlers was Piedt who registered a fiver in his spell of 32.3 overs where he bowled five maiden overs and conceded 89 runs in his spell. Paterson grabbed three wickets and leaked just 39 runs in his spell of 17 overs where he



bowled six maiden overs.

Earlier on the second day, South Africa resumed their innings from 220/6 with Ruan de Swardt unbeaten on 55* and Shaun von Berg unbeaten on 34*. The Proteas managed to gather only 22 runs as they were bundled out by the Blackcaps for 242 runs.

After bundling out the South African side, New Zealand batters Tom Latham and Devon Conway came out to the crease to open the innings. The team lost their first wicket on the fourth ball of the innings as Conway was sent back.

The Kiwis lost half of their side at the score of 157 runs as their

top-order players were not able to capitalise on the start that they got in the match. Latham was dismissed at 40 runs, Williamson after scoring 43 runs, young Rachin Ravindra at 29 runs and wicketkeeper Tom Blundell was sent back after scoring just four runs.

After the five wickets, only batters Will Young and Neil Wagner were able to contribute to the team's total. Young went on to score 36 and on the other hand, Wagner scored 33.

Brief scores: South Africa 1st innings 242 (Ruan de Swardt 64, David Bedingham 39; William O'Rourke 4/59) vs New Zealand 1st innings 211 (Kane Williamson 43, Tom Latham 40; Dane Peidt 5/89). - ANI

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ROUND-UP

IntercityHotel Baushar Muscat opens its doors

The latest IntercityHotel opens with 96 units and innovative features including a fresh food and beverage concept: The Breakery



MUSCAT: The opening of the vibrant IntercityHotel Baushar in Muscat marks Deutsche Hospitality's fourth IntercityHotel branded property in the Sultanate of Oman, and the sixth IntercityHotel branded property in the Middle East. Situated near the Mall of Oman, the hotel opening was marked with a ribbon-cutting ceremony with distinguished VIPs and stakeholders. Intercity Hotel Baushar Muscat boasts 96 cosy guest rooms and state-of-the-art amenities that offer business and leisure travellers an urban and lively experience.

CityNest: Locally inspired private refuge
IntercityHotel Baushar Muscat redefines comfort and style, seamlessly blending modernity with Oman's rich heritage. Adorning the new CityNest design concept, each room category is designed with large floor-to-ceiling windows for abundant natural light, while the décor connects travellers to Oman's local heritage. The

hotel offers four room categories: the Deluxe Suite, Accessible King Room, Standard Twin Room, and Standard King Room. It caters to discerning travellers alike, offering scenic views of Sultan Qaboos Mosque, state-of-the-art amenities including fully equipped kitchenettes in the Deluxe Suites and more.

CitySquare: The place to work, meet, eat and relax
The hotel also offers guests smart food and beverage (F&B) offerings in the property's vibrant CitySquare - a dynamic space for meeting, working, and enjoyment. Whether a business or leisure traveller, Intercity Hotel Baushar Muscat promises a unique stay with a perfect blend of modernity and convenience.

The Breakery: Innovative F&B concept offering German bakery delights
IntercityHotel Baushar Muscat will feature the innovative food and beverage concept "The Breakery" where lively urban energy meets the IntercityHotel brand's

German roots. Guests can immerse themselves in the welcoming aroma of homemade and freshly baked delights to go for those on the move or to stay for those who want to take a break at the hotel. From contemporary designs and service to culinary offerings inspired by German tradition: Every detail is meticulously crafted to provide guests with an experience that encompasses flavour, health, and modernity.
Elevating the dining experience, The Gourmet House - the all-day-dining restaurant - presents a fusion of international delicacies and Omani cuisine.
Siegfried Nierhaus, Vice President of Middle East, Africa, India and Tunisia at Deutsche Hospitality says: "At Deutsche Hospitality, our commitment to innovation and guest-centric design takes centre stage, offering a seamless blend of the next generation of IntercityHotels and cutting-edge technology. Focusing on the evolving needs of our discerning guests, IntercityHotels embody a harmonious fusion of young and fresh aesthetics and unparalleled func-

tionality. As part of our planned growth strategy and the successful opening of the IntercityHotels in Salalah, Nizwa and Muscat, we are thrilled to introduce the fourth IntercityHotel branded hotel in the Sultanate of Oman, marking a significant milestone as we continue to grow our presence across the Middle East. We look forward to welcoming guests to a new era of hospitality, where the future meets comfort, redefining their travel experience at IntercityHotels."

State-of-the-art wellness and meeting facilities
IntercityHotel Baushar Muscat seamlessly caters to the diverse needs of travellers. The rooftop pool bar - Pentapool Bar - provides the ideal retreat for both easy-going and active travellers and boasts stunning Muscat mountain views, a tailored light menu and a refreshing beverage selection to unwind and recharge. Guests can also enjoy a relaxing day in the sun at the rooftop swimming pool and invigorating gym. The dynamic hotel provides the ideal destination for business travellers and corporate events with five modern meeting rooms equipped for seminars, training sessions and events, providing flexibility with easily separable spaces.
IntercityHotel Baushar Muscat is an energetic haven for adventurers, explorers and business travellers seeking hidden gems, seamlessly connecting the city's key attractions. Located in the upscale district of Baushar in Muscat, the vibrant and urban hotel is located just 600 meters from the famed Mall of Oman and within a convenient ten-minute drive to Muscat International Airport, the Royal Opera House and the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque.

11TH CONSECUTIVE PRODUCTION CAR VICTORY



Team Land Cruiser Auto Body excels at 2024 Dakar Rally

MUSCAT: Team Land Cruiser Auto Body (TLC) has secured their 11th consecutive Production Car category victory at the 2024 Dakar Rally in Saudi Arabia. These unprecedented results are thanks to the performance of Akira Miura and co-driver Mayeul Barbet, who took first place in their No. 500 Land Cruiser 300 GR Sport, with Ronald Basso and Jean-Michel Polato taking second in the No. 501 Land Cruiser 300 GR Sport.
The Dakar Rally, unfolding over Saudi Arabia for the fifth time, covered 7,891km from AlUla to Yanbu along the Red Sea Coast. The route included 4,727km of timed specials, guiding 778 competitors through the diverse landscapes of Saudi Arabia. The 2024 edition introduced a new stage, the "48H CHRONO STAGE," pushing participants' endurance to the limit across two consecutive days of driving to finish the stage. The rally's final stage was held on a challenging 174 km loop course in Yanbu, marking the conclusion of the 15-day event. The stage, characterized by sandy terrain and hidden obstacles, de-

manded careful driving.
Akio Toyoda, TGR Chairman, also known as Morizo, commented: "To everyone at Team Land Cruiser Auto Body, congratulations on winning the Production Car category for the 11th consecutive year! I think car No. 500 achieved victory thanks to three people: driver Akira Miura alongside two navigators, MayeulBarbe and the late Laurent Lichtleuchter, who was always watching over them. I'm really happy that car No. 500 was able to cross the finish line with the best result. Thank you for your continued support in "making-ever better Land Cruisers!"
The Land Cruiser 300, which marked its debut participation in Dakar Rally in last year's edition with high driving performance and a one-two finish, managed to overcome previous speed-related challenges this time around with improvements in the engine air intake system, rear suspension, and enhanced tires. This allowed TLC to reaffirm its dominance in the Production Car category and add another chapter to its illustrious legacy.

'HAPPY LIFE GEELY DRIVE'



Geely organises test drive event

MUSCAT: On February 2, the highly anticipated Geely test drive event "Happy Life Geely Drive" took place at Lulu Hypermarket in Sohar, creating excitement amongst the audience.
The event featured a grand display of all the Geely car models, aiming to showcase the brand's elegance, innovation, and superior performance. The event, organised with utmost care, aimed to engage the audience further by offering various interactive activities.
Face painting and henna artists were available throughout the event, providing attendees with captivating designs and transforming their experience into an immersive one. With an overwhelming response from the attendees, Geely Test Drive Event "Happy Life Geely Drive" in Sohar was undoubtedly one of the great events. The event left

the audience fascinated by the cutting-edge features and sleek designs of the Geely car models, and captivated by the smooth execution of the event itself.
Building on this success, Geely announced the continuation of the roadshow in various locations across Oman. The next event will be held at Lulu Hypermarket in Sur, Oman on the February 15 and 16. Attendees will once again have the opportunity to explore Geely's impressive car lineup and experience the brand's commitment to excellence firsthand.
As the roadshow progresses, Geely will be making stops at Lulu Hypermarket in Nizwa, Oman on February 22 and 23, at Barka, Oman on February 29 and March 1 at Grand Centre Mall, and finally, in Salalah, Oman on March 7 and 8 at Lulu Hypermarket.
The roadshow events in each

location will start from 5pm onwards, allowing attendees to indulge in a remarkable automotive experience.
Geely understands the importance of connecting with the local community and is committed to bringing its exceptional car models directly to the people. The roadshow events are a testament to this dedication, offering Oman residents the chance to explore the advanced features, luxurious interiors, and advanced technology that Geely has to offer.
Geely invites all car enthusiasts and residents of Oman to attend these upcoming events and witness the epitome of automotive brilliance. Make sure to mark your calendars for the Geely Test Drive Event "Happy Life Geely Drive" happening near you and get ready to embark on an unforgettable journey with Geely.

RECOGNITION

Bank Muscat receives North Batinah Award for Entrepreneurship

MUSCAT: In recognition of its pioneering and remarkable role in supporting the SME sector, Bank Muscat, the leading financial service provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has recently been bestowed the North Batinah Award for Entrepreneurship in the award's 2023 first edition.
The bank has won the award for the categories "The Best Financing Service Provider" and "The Best Banking Institution from the Public Perspective" during a monumental award ceremony organized by North Al Batinah Governor's Office in Sohar. The ceremony was held under the patronage of Dr Said bin Mohammed Al Sagri, Minister of Economy, in the presence of a number of executives and officials from various institutions as well as a vast audience of attendees. During the event, Ibrahim bin Khamis Al Balushi, Senior Assistant General Manager, SMEs, Bank Muscat, received the award trophy on behalf of the Bank. In essence, Bank Muscat's recognition with the NBA in both categories came based on the public views and reviews set forth by the award evaluation committee.
Speaking on this remarkable milestone, Ibrahim bin Khamis Al Balushi, Senior Assistant General Manager, SMEs, Bank Muscat, stated: "I would like to express my happiness and extreme pride in the Bank's success of winning the North Batinah Award in two categories. The first version of the North Batinah Award for Entrepreneurship can be said to be a



representation of the progress and development seen in the SME sector in Al Batinah North. Therefore, this recognition signifies a testament of the bank's contribution to the entire sector in the country through the wide range of banking services and facilities offered to the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The bank is constantly committed to financial inclusion and the development of the SMEs and entrepreneurs, aiming to go beyond banking and become a major driver of sustainable growth in the country. In line with Oman's vision 2040, the SME sector is a wide field where potential opportunities can be utilized to foster a market of economic competitiveness. Hence, the Bank will uphold its commitment to being a contributory and supportive part-

ner for the success of various businesses and economic sectors."
Ibrahim Al Balushi added: "The event also constitutes an instrumental initiative to recognize the roles and achievements of many other institutions and corporates that have contributed to the growth of commercial sectors in the Sultanate. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to the organizing committee of the North Batinah Award for Entrepreneurship and gratitude to the entire audience and the Bank's customers for their trust in the Bank as a pioneering institution in supporting the SMEs and entrepreneurs. We will maintain our commitment to better serving our customers from individuals and corporates."



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Annual General Meeting Invitation for the Year 2024

Oman Banks Association

Oman Banks Association's Board of Directors would like to invite all its members to attend the Annual General Meeting to be held at 15:30, on Sunday the 31st of March 2024 at Bank Muscat Head Office.

Meeting Agenda:

1. Present period ended 31 December 2023 Audited Financial Statements.
2. Present 2024 Budget.
3. Present Board of Directors Report including the past year activities and the upcoming year work plan.
4. Appointment of external auditors and determining their fees.
5. Voting to fill new Board of Directors positions.

Note that the last day for membership **nominations for the Board of Directors** will be on March 10, 2024 at 14:00 and applications received after this will not be considered.

All the above documents will be available to all members at the Oman Banks Association upon request.

For further information please contact
pm@omanbanksassociation.com

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