LET'S TALK
Times OF OMAN

HM SENDS GREETINGS

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Sylvanie Burton of the Commonwealth of Dominica on her country's Independence Anniversary. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes to President Burton and the people of her country. — **ONA**

HM THE SULTAN GREETS PRESIDENT OF PANAMA

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Laurentino Cortizo of the Republic of Panama on his country's National Day.

In the cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes to President Cortizo and the people of Panama. — **ONA**

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SAUDI FUND INVESTS OVER OMR1.1 BILLION IN SULTANATE

Saudi Fund for Development has been investing in Oman since 1977

Engineer Sultan bin Abdul Rahman Al Murshid, CEO of SFD

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The strong bilateral trade relationship between Oman and Saudi Arabia is poised for further growth, with Engineer Sultan bin Abdul Rahman Al Murshid, CEO of the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD), highlighting the significant progress made over the past four decades. During this period, the Saudi Fund for Development has invested over OMR 1.1 billion (equivalent to SAR 11 billion) in various development projects.

Al Murshid noted that the Saudi Fund for Development commenced financing development projects in the Sultanate of Oman in 1977. These projects have spanned critical sectors such as infrastructure, transportation, education, health, water, and energy.

Speaking to the Oman News Agency, Al Murshid expressed his optimism about the continued growth and strengthening of the development cooperation between the Saudi Fund for Development and the Sultanate of Oman.

He also mentioned that the Fund has recently inked an agreement to provide funding for the construction of infrastructure within the integrated economic zone in Al Dhahirah, with an approximate value of OMR 1,168.8 million (SAR 1.2 billion). The implementation of this project is expected to commence in the first quarter of 2024. >A2

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Call for urgent truce in Gaza Strip

1 Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, and Yoko Kamikawa, Foreign Minister of Japan, stressed the need for an urgent truce in Gaza Strip. >A3

WORLD

Death toll in Nepal quake mounts to 143

2 The death toll in the fatal earthquake that jolted Nepal on Friday, has surged to 143, and 140 have suffered injuries, according to Nepal Police. >A7

SPORTS

Fakhar, Babar inspire Pakistan to DLS win

3 Pakistan beat New Zealand on DLS in a rain-affected match in Bengaluru to boost their semi-final qualification chances. >A8

GAZA BOMBING

Oman condemns killing of civilians in Palestine

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman has condemned the ongoing massacres and war crimes committed by the Israeli occupation forces against the Palestinian people and targeting of civilians and health sector facilities.

Among them are the horrific and brutal attack on Osama bin Zaid School affiliated with UNRWA in the northern Gaza Strip on Friday, where hundreds of Palestinian families sought refuge in search of safety from the devastating bombing of the occupation forces, as well as Saturday's bombing of Al-Fakhoura School affiliated with UNRWA in Jabalia, strike at the entrance of Al-Nasr Hospital for children in western Gaza and bombing of a public water tank supplying water to several neighbourhoods, east of Rafah. >A5

PROUD MOMENT

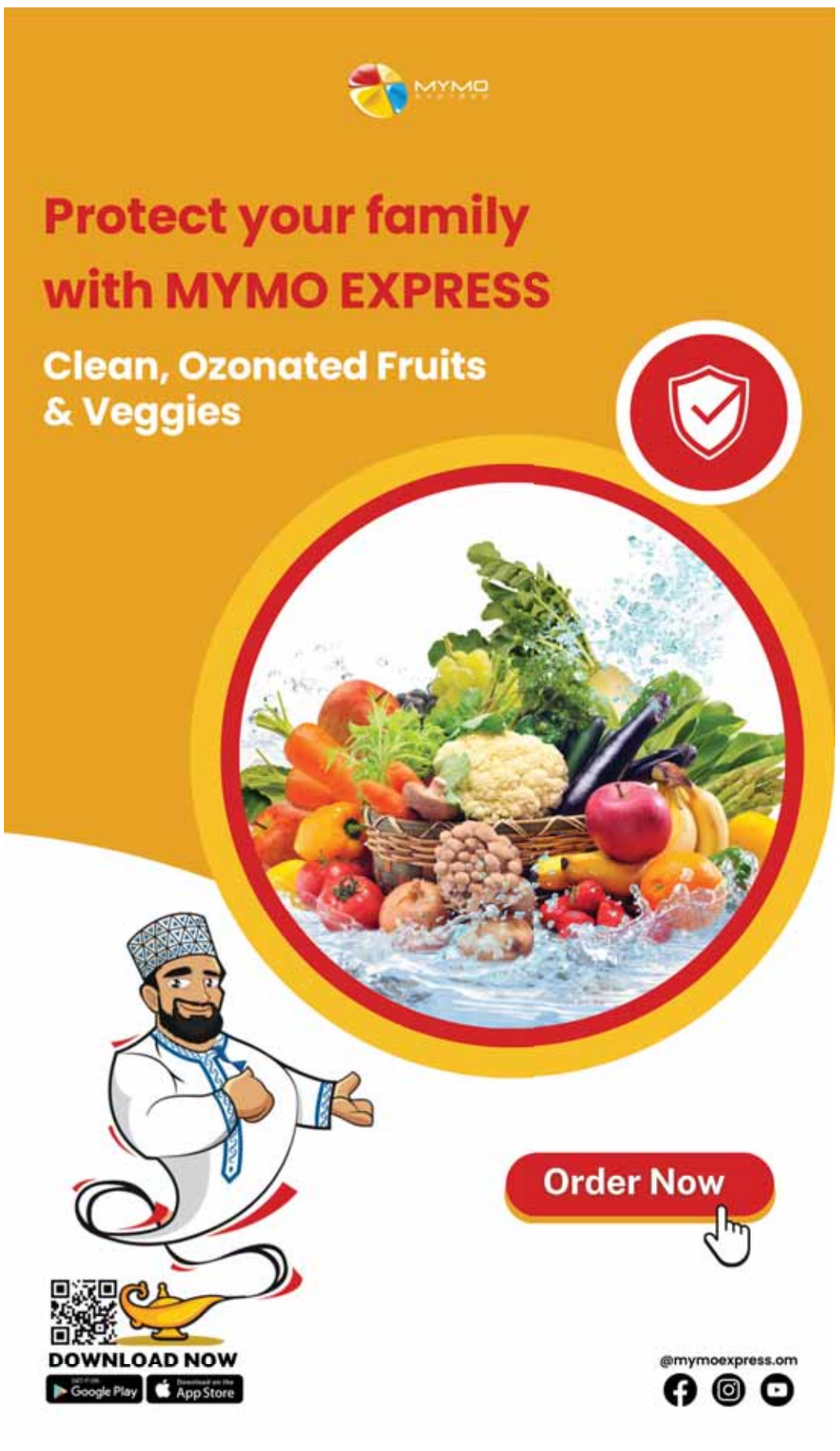
Cricket fraternity celebrates as Oman secure spot in T20 World Cup 2024

MUSCAT: Cricket enthusiasts in Oman were filled with joy and pride as the Men in Red earned their spot in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 with a dominating ten-wicket victory over Bahrain in the semi-finals of the ICC Men's T20 Asia Qualifier Final 2023 in Kirtipur, Nepal, on Friday.

Nepal also secured their place in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 by defeating the UAE in the other semi-final.

Duleep Mendis, Oman's coach, commended his team's outstanding performance, saying, "This is a significant achievement and the result of meticulous planning. The five-match T20 series against Afghanistan A ahead of the Nepal tour in Muscat played a crucial role. We are the only GCC nation to qualify for the T20 World Cup three times."

S Shankar, a devoted Oman cricket fan, expressed his joy, and said, "This is an incredible achievement by our team, especially considering that the players are not even full-time professionals. The strong support from Oman Cricket has allowed the game and the team to leave a significant mark at the continental level. I am eagerly anticipating Oman's participation in the T20 World Cup, where they will compete with some of the top cricketing nations, including India and Pakistan." >A5



OMAN

PRAYER TIMINGS

Dhuhr....11:55pm
Asr....3:08pm
Maghrib....5:31pm
Isha....6:43pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).... 4:58am

Palestinian people have right to self-determination: Oman

Oman also questioned the long-term occupation, settlement and annexation of the Palestinian territories since 1967 by Israel

NEW YORK: In its speech before the United Nations (UN) General Assembly, which convened to discuss Item (73) of the report of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the Sultanate of Oman, commended the central role of the ICJ in promoting peaceful settlements and resolving disputes by peaceful means in accordance with the provisions and principles of the UN Charter.

Mohammed Ali Al Shehhi, member of the Sultanate of Oman's permanent delegation to the United Nations in New York, underscored Oman's commitment to the principles and the UN Charter, which, he said, stipulate respect for international norms and laws, non-interference in the internal affairs of countries, settling disputes between countries by peaceful means, preventing the use of force or threat of force, supporting cooperation and enhancing opportunities for dialogue among nations.

Oman reiterated its position in support of the ICJ's mandates aimed at adhering to provisions of international law and the deep-rooted principles of the UN Charter.

Oman valued the ICJ's role in consolidating ties among UN organs, notably the ICJ in its capacity as the UN's main judicial body.

Al Shehhi explained that the Sultanate of Oman reaffirms its solid stance on the necessity of peaceful settlement of disputes and non-use of force or threat of force, as indicated in the UN Charter and UN principles.

The Sultanate of Oman supported UN General Assembly's Resolution No. 247/77, dated 30 December 2022, in which the UN General Assembly requested the International Court of Justice to issue an advisory opinion on the legal consequences arising from Israel's persistent violation of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, Israel's long-term occupation of Palestinian lands, its unlawful settlement and annexation of Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 and on the legal consequences of Israel's policies and practices emanating fromsuch occupation and implications of the same to all countries and the United Nations as a collective body.

Oman submitted its written argument before the International Court of Justice in The Hague, pursuant to UN General Assembly's Resolution No. 247/77 requesting the International Court of Justice to issue a jurisdiction on the consequences of Israel's persistent violations of the right of Palestinian people to self-determination.

The statement also reaffirmed Oman's permanent stance in supporting the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and expressed Oman's position backing the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with Al Quds Al Sharqiya (East Jerusalem) as its capital. -ONA

Denounces targeting of hospitals, ambulances

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman expressed its strong denunciation and condemnation of the Israeli occupation forces' targeting of Al-Shifa, Al-Quds and Indonesian hospitals and ambulance convoys in the Gaza Strip, which led to deaths and injury of hundreds of civilians.

This represents a continuation of war crimes and genocide and a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law and international conventions.

In a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry, the Sultanate of Oman expressed its sincere condolences and sympathy to the families of the victims, affirming its solidarity with the Palestinian people in obtaining all their legitimate rights and their steadfastness in the face of the Israeli occupation.

The Sultanate of Oman called on the international community to take deterrent measures against Israel to stop its ongoing and heinous attacks against the Palestinian people, and to take effective action to uphold the authority of international law and end aggression and illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories.-ONA

OMAN

Japanese honour

MUSCAT: The Government of Japan announced, on November 3, the conferment of 'The Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star' on Dr. Rawya bint Saud Al Busaidiya, former Minister of Higher Education of Oman, and 'The Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette', on Harib bin Abdullah Al Kitani, President and Founder, Kitani International LLC and former CEO, Oman Liquefied Natural Gas LLC (Oman LNG) and Qalhat LNG, in recognition of their outstanding contributions to the development of friendly relations between Japan and Oman.

The Order of the Rising Sun, one of the prestigious decorations in Japan, was introduced in 1875. The award of the order for non-Japanese nationals started in 1981.

INVESTMENTS

Marine fishing

< FROM A1

Al Murshid emphasised that the integrated economic zone in Al Dhahirah is a pivotal project that will benefit both countries by increasing trade, fostering key industries, and encouraging partnerships across sectors. This, in turn, will enhance the production of goods and reduce export costs between the two brotherly nations.

Regarding the marine fishing port in Duqm, Al Murshid stated that the Fund has allocated OMR 50.89 million (SAR 500 million) for the establishment of a fish industries complex within the marine fishing port located in the Special Economic Zone in Duqm. The infrastructure construction for the port has been completed.

LOGISTICS CHALLENGES

Health ministry making efforts to meet shortage of medicines

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health, represented by the Directorate General of Medical Supplies, is exerting efforts to meet the shortage of medical supplies and ensure its availability.

Ibrahim bin Nasser Al Rashdi, Director General of the Directorate General of Medical Supplies at the Ministry of Health, said that the Sultanate of Oman, like other countries, faces challenges associated with the shortage in medical supplies, which in turn affects the availability of medicines.

He said that one of the main reasons for shortage is the logistics challenges due to restrictions associated with shipment or delay of goods at the customs points or the difficulties associated with availability of raw materials besides the political factors and the economic fluctuations which affect the flow of medicines.

He also pointed out that the shortage of medicines affects the public health coupled with its impacts on health units and pharmacies in the government sector and the private sector.

He also said that the shortage of medicines hits patients with chronic disease who need it on a regular basis.

He reaffirmed that the health system is determined to make available vital medicines for patients including improvement in the supply operations and enhancement of local production of medicines.

Pharmaceutical industries

He said that there are several procedures taken to meet the shortage and these include improvement in supply of medicines from pharmaceutical industries.

He said that the ministry is cooperating with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and several countries to ensure availability of medicines in the Omani market.

Hiba bint Najim Al Abri, a pharmacist at the Directorate General of Medical Supplies at the Ministry of Health, said that the procedures followed to control the shortage in medicines include increase in investment in this field where the government is working on boosting cooperation with the private sector to ensure availability of medicines, besides establishing partnerships for purchase and distribution of medicines in a more efficient manner.-ONA

NIZWA

Winners honoured at Gulf police sports and Royal Oman Police shooting championships

Times News Service

NIZWA: The 2nd Gulf Police Sports Federations Shooting Championship and the 2023 Royal Oman Police Shooting Championship concluded under the patronage of Lt. Gen. Hassan Mohsin Al Shuraiqi, Inspector General of Police and Customs , at the shooting range of the Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences in Nizwa on Thursday.

The Sultanate of Oman's national team won the second Gulf Police Sports Federations Championship Cup for rifle drop shooting, while the Special Tasks Police Command team won the Royal Oman Police Shooting Championship Shield title for the men and women's police categories.

Competitions were held to determine the first places in the overall standings of the Second Gulf Police Sports Federations Championship for plate-dropping with a rifle, and competitions to determine the first and second places in the plate-dropping competitions with a rifle and pistol at the levels of officers, other ranks and women police officers

In the overall standings of the Gulf Police Sports Federations Championship, the Sultanate of Oman's team won the championship cup and first place, the United Arab Emirates team won the second place cup, and the Kingdom of Bahrain's team won the third place.

The Sultanate of Oman's national team won the first place trophy in the Gulf Police Shooting Competition for throwing plates in the men's category, the national team of the State of Qatar won second place, and the national team of the United Arab Emirates came in third place.

The Sultanate of Oman's national team won the first place cup in the Gulf police shooting competition for throwing plates in the women's police category, the United Arab Emirates' national team won second place, and the Kingdom of Bahrain's national team won third place.

In the overall standings of the Royal Oman Police Championship, the Special Tasks Police Command team won the championship shield and first place, the Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences team won the second place, and the General Department of Equipment and Supplies team won the third place.

The Special Tasks Police Command Team also won the championship shield and first place in the overall championship standings for the women's police category, the General Administration of Airport Security team, the General Administration of Police Aviation and the Special Security Police Unit won the second place, and the Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences team won the third place.

The Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences team won first place in the rifle-dropping competition for officers at the team level, and the Al-Dhahirah Governorate Police Command team was able to achieve second place. The General Administration of Prisons team achieved first place in the rifle-dropping competition for other ranks at the team level.

The General Administration of Prisons team won first place in the women's police rifle-dropping competition at the team level, the Special Tasks Police Command team won second place, and the Special Tasks Police Command team won first place in the pistol-dropping competition for officers at the team level, and the Defence Forces team was able to Civil and ambulance won second place.

The Special Tasks Police Unit team in the state of Mahdha achieved first place in the pistol-throwing plate competition for other ranks at the team level, and the Special Tasks Police Command team came in second place, and the Special Tasks Police Command team achieved first place in the pistol-throwing plate-throwing competition for the women's police at the team level.

The Al Dhahirah Governorate Police Command Team won the Pistol Shooting Competition Cup for the Officers category, the Special Tasks Police Command Team won the Cup for the Other Ranks Category, the Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences Team won the Competition Cup for the Women Police Category, and the Special Tasks Police Command Team won the Rifle Shooting Competition Cup for the Women's Police Category.

In conclusion, Lt. Gen. Hassan Mohsin Al Shuraiqi, Inspector General of Police and Customs , sponsor of the occasion, crowned the winners and handed over cups and shields to the winning teams in the presence of a number of Their Excellencies, senior officers of the Royal Oman Police and military and security agencies.

Karwa Motors signs MoU for school bus supply

The number of buses to be replaced annually is estimated to be 1,000

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Karwa Motors, the leading Omani company in the bus manufacturing sector, has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Education and Oman Development Bank (ODB) for manufacturing and supply of Karwa school buses for the Ministry of Education with finance from the Oman Development Bank.

The memorandum of understanding aimed to replace the old school buses with Karwa school buses known for high specifications in the field of safety. The number of buses to be replaced annually is estimated at 1,000.

Dr. Saad bin Ahmed Al Mohannadi, Chairman of the Board of Karwa Motors said that the MoU signing paves the way for Karwa Motors to provide transport solutions in the Sultanate of Oman, which cope with the requirements of the school transport and safety standards.

He also expressed his appreciation for the Ministry of Education and Oman Development Bank for their cooperation during the past months, which led to the MoU signing.

He added that the MoU aimed to raise the efficiency of the school transport sector and boost the in-country value of the sector.

The design of Karwa school bus has been made after consideration of all challenges the school transport sector faces in terms of the public safety and the school transport requirements, he said, adding that Karwa school bus is designed to exceed all expectations of safety and quality. He said that the safety of students is the top priority of the company.

He also pointed to the significance of such projects to the national economies as they add to the in-country value and the local content for bus manufacturing in the Sultanate of Oman, which would help activate the trade movement in the Special Economic Zone Duqm and in attraction of more investments and support services for Karwa Motors Factory.

He said that Karwa Motors is keen to boost its contribution to the In-Country Value, encourage dealing with the SMEs and the sustainability of manufacturing of buses in the Sultanate of Oman.

Dr. Ibrahim bin Ali Al Balushi, Chief Executive Officer of Karwa Motors said that Karwa school buses are equipped with the latest equipment and safety systems in line with "Darb Al Salama', the school bus security system approved by the Ministry of Education, which reflects the compliance with the safety of students and the requirements of educational institutions.

Among the key specifications is the bus seating capacity of 23 to 25 students which is in line with the standards of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Photo: During MoU signing within the activities of the 22nd session's meetings of the Omani Qatari Joint Committee, held in Muscat on 1 and 2 November.

The Karwa school bus is also provided with an internal and external camera, safe passenger seating , emergency exit , firefighting system, high quality air conditioning system, safe door lock system , special design of side doors and first aid kits among other features, he said, adding that the company would provide spare-parts for the buses for not less than ten years, maintenance and after sale services in all governorates of the Sultanate.

Karwa school buses are expected to be available in the local market effective from the beginning of 2024, he added.

PHONE CALL

Sayyid Badr, Japan foreign minister call for Gaza truce

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, and Yoko Kamikawa, Foreign Minister of Japan, stressed the need for achieving an urgent truce in Gaza to enable the supply of humanitarian needs of the population, and to stop more civilian casualties.

They also stressed, during a phone call, the importance of dialogue in finding a final and permanent solution to the Palestinian issue on the basis of the two-state solution and international law, which will lead to breaking the cycle of violence and extremism.

Regarding the friendly and cooperative relations between the two countries, the Foreign Minister and his Japanese counterpart expressed their support for further commercial, economic and tourism partnerships and encouraged ways to expand exchange and cooperation in various fields

NOVEMBER 5

Oman to mark World Tsunami Awareness Day

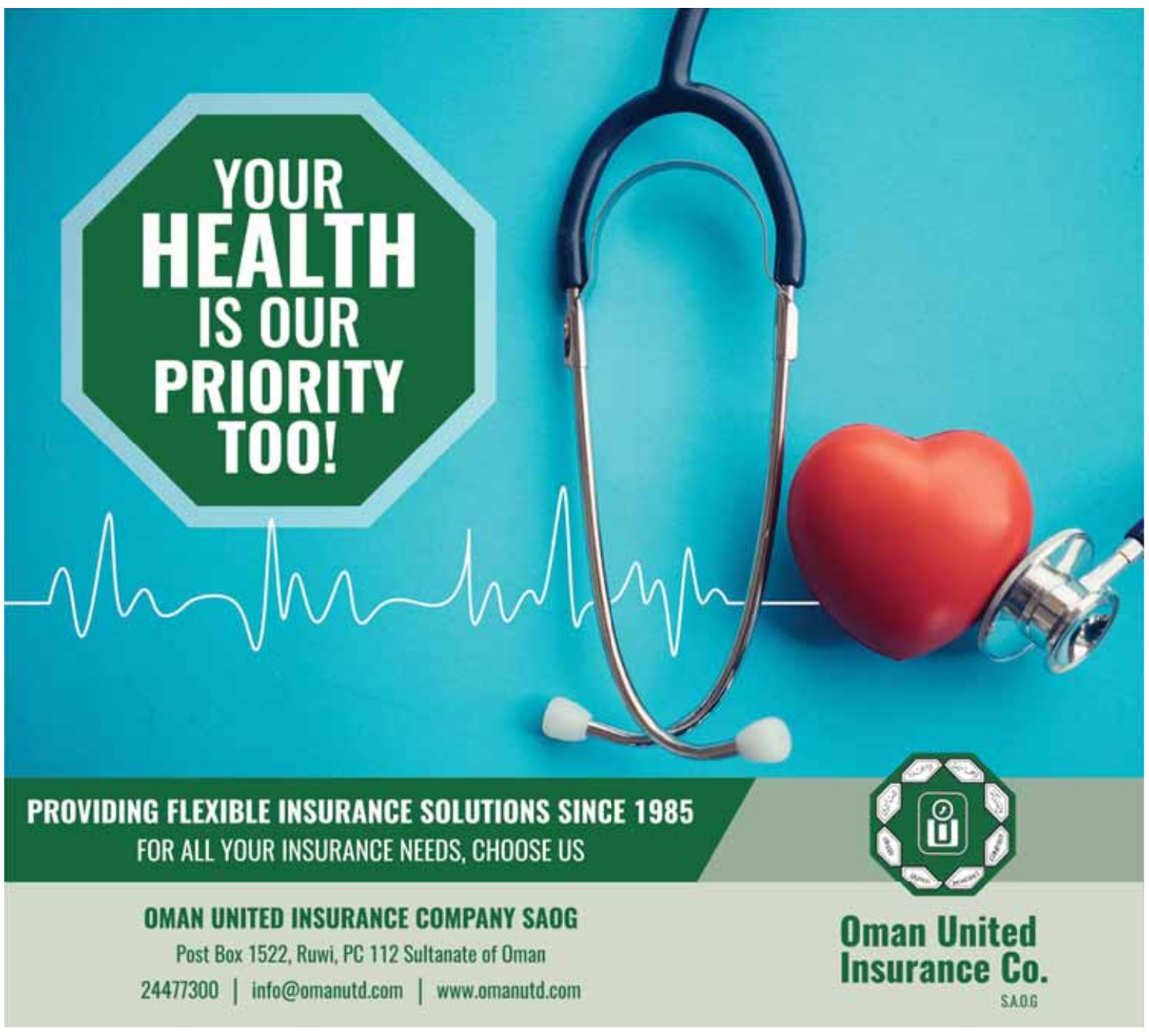
MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Civil Aviation Authority, will participate in the celebration of World Tsunami Awareness Day, which falls on November 5 of each year.

On this occasion, the Civil Aviation Authority is implementing programmes to raise awareness of the dangers of tsunamis in cooperation with the National Committee for Civil Defence and the Ministry of Education by organising lectures for school students in the Sultanate of Oman for raising the level of community awareness, preparedness and response, through which information on the dangers of tsunami waves is reviewed.

The National Multi Hazard Early Warning Centre and the CAA role is important in dealing with tsunami risks, in addition to preparing future plans in this aspect.

The Authority participated in the regional exercise Indian Ocean Waves 2023 (IOWave23), in October of this year, with the participation of the National Committee for Emergency Situations Management, the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority, the Ministry of Information, and the Royal Oman Police for evaluating and improving the effectiveness of the early warning system and management of tsunami risks in the Indian Ocean, through regional centres, in addition to ensuring that the procedures in place ensure that tsunami warnings reach all members of society.

The exercise was meant for a hypothetical earthquake situation of a magnitude of 9 on the Richter scale in the Makran Fault off the coast of Pakistan, leading to tsunami waves that would reach the coast of the Sultanate of Oman in less than 30 minutes, and the height of the waves was estimated at about 11 metres.. -ONA



MUSCAT ACADEMIES YOUTH FOOTBALL LEAGUE KICKS OFF

A total of 30 teams and around 500 players are participating in the league across five age-groups

MUSCAT: The Muscat Academies Youth League 2023 commenced its exciting journey on Saturday at the Cheltenham Muscat ground. This league promises an action-packed season with games scheduled every Saturday until March 2024.

Featuring a total of 30 teams and approximately 500 players, the league will witness intense competition in five distinct age categories: under-9, under-11, under-13, under-15, and under-17.

Endorsed by the Oman Football Association, this youth league is a collaborative venture involving the Muscat Football Academy (MFA), Premier Sport Tourism Company, Muscat Media Group, and Cheltenham Muscat.

Prominent football academies, including Muscat Football Academy, Viva Academy, Future Academy, Seeb Club, Bausher Academy, Junior Star Academy, and Sporting De Kerala, are actively participating, fielding teams across all age groups.

The championship will recognise exceptional talent through awards honouring the best player, top scorer, and the prestigious player of the season award.

MFA Director Chick Martini expressed his enthusiasm for the youth league, emphasising that matches will take place every Saturday from 8am to 12pm, following the 'Super Saturday' model reminiscent of the English Premier League.

Martini, a former goalkeeper for Leicester City and a former Morocco international footballer, aims to bring excellence to this tournament. He believes that providing consistent and competitive football opportunities for young athletes is crucial and that genuine growth and development occur when players experience the thrill of actual match play.

Martini also highlighted the league's unique contribution to Oman's sports scene, filling a gap by providing a comprehensive league format with regular weekend matches.

The matches at Cheltenham Muscat on Saturdays are expected to create a vibrant atmosphere for spectators, with parents, friends, and football enthusiasts coming together to cheer for their favorite teams, making it a true festival-like tournament.

The league's official mascot, the G.O.A.T, pays tribute to Oman's natural ecology and honours legendary footballers who have served as inspirations for the next generation of aspiring talents.

COMMENTARY

Reflections on Gaza: An open letter to fellow humans

NOOH AL BUSAIDI

Dear Fellow Humans,

In these troubled times, humanity faces a great trial, a test of its collective conscience.

This challenge transcends religious, cultural, and ideological boundaries. It's not about whether you are a Muslim, Jew, Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, or an atheist.

Rather, it is an individual test of our capacity to discern between justice and injustice, regardless of what the media may portray. The ultimate judge of what is right lies within your own heart.

Let us momentarily set aside discussions of the causes and assigning blame. Instead, let's contemplate whether the senseless loss of innocent lives, including babies, children, and the elderly, is ever justified for economic, political, or security reasons.

Are there not alternative paths to resolve this conflict?

In a world where humanity has achieved remarkable advancements in numerous domains, must we resort to slaughtering one another?

Undoubtedly, there exist myriad approaches to conflict resolution.

However, these solutions often go unheard amidst the clamour of power, a false sense of superiority, and military might. When your vision is clouded, it's challenging to see the path to peace.

Your stance on this matter is a deeply personal one.

But always remember the wisdom of these sayings:

"Speak the truth, and the truth will set you free."

"Those who live by the sword, will perish by the sword."

"Treat others as you wish to be treated."

The karma you emit will inevitably return to you, sooner or later.

Now, humanity as a whole faces a choice. You can stand for justice, seek redemption, and purify your soul, or you can align with injustice and bear the eternal burden of your conscience.

Every one of us possesses an inner compass for judgment in our hearts, which never falters - only we can decide whether to acknowledge it or let it go ignored.

In the end, each individual has a choice. Test your humanity; examine your heart. Engage in a conversation with your inner self and seek the path that resonates with the true essence of your being.

GAZA

Foreign ministry calls for immediate end to violence

< FROM A1

In a statement, the Foreign Ministry of the Sultanate stressed the need for a real awakening of the international community, based on its moral, legal and humanitarian responsibilities, to put an end to this clear recklessness and arbitrariness of Israel and its violation of international laws, and conventions.

It requested the International Criminal Court to form a court for war crimes committed against the Palestinian people in Gaza and prosecute war criminals for the massacres.

The foreign ministry stressed the need for immediate stopping of this brutal war and the necessity of the international community to take a firm stance towards the ongoing Israeli violations against innocent, defenceless civilians and enable the delivery of urgent and necessary humanitarian aid to them.

It stressed the resolutions of international legitimacy and the firm Omani positions towards the Palestinian issue, calling for Israel's withdrawal from all occupied Palestinian territories to the 1967 borders and enabling the Palestinian people to establish their independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the principle of the two-state solution and on the basis of international law.

YOUR BIGGEST ROAD HAZARD IS IN YOUR HAND

A TIMES OF OMAN HANDS-FREE DRIVING INITIATIVE

T20 WORLD CUP

World Cup to have 20 teams

< FROM A1

For the first time, the 2024 T20 World Cup will feature 20 teams, divided into four groups of five, and will be co-hosted by the USA and the West Indies. The top two teams from each group will progress to the Super Eight phase, where the remaining teams will be split into two groups of four. The top two from each group will advance to the semi-finals.

Oman's qualification for the T20 World Cup marks their third appearance in the tournament, having previously qualified in India in 2016 and in 2021, when Oman co-hosted the event with the UAE.

On Friday at the TU ground, Bahrain won the toss and chose to bat first, but Oman's incisive bowling left them struggling at 77/8 by the 16th over. A late surge led by Ahmed Bin Nisar (26*) helped Bahrain reach a total of 106/9 in their 20 overs. Aqib Ilyas was the standout bowler with a career-best 4/10 in four overs, while Shakeel Ahmed contributed with 2/24.

Openers Kashyap Prajapati (57 off 44) and Pratik Athavale (50 off 42) comfortably chased down the target by the 15th over. Prajapati struck six fours and two sixes, and Athavale had six fours to his name. Aqib Ilyas was named the Player of the Match for his outstanding bowling performance.

In the other semi-final, Nepal played in front of a jam-packed crowd at the Mulpani Cricket Ground and defeated the United Arab Emirates by eight wickets to secure their place in the T20 World Cup, marking their second appearance at the global event.

INDIAN SCHOOL SALALAH

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Tender Notice
Tender Ref No :ISS/015 – 06/11/2023

Sealed Tenders are invited from authorized Suppliers/Service providers for the following items:-

1. Supply and Installation of 2 ton Panasonic Split A/C (Malaysian make – 2023 model air conditioners. (32 numbers)
2. Supply and Installation of 45 Dell PCs as per the required configuration
3. Supply of student furniture 1200 nos. (individual desk and chair)One Sample desk and Chair to be submitted along with Tender.

Interested parties shall remit a non refundable Tender fee of OMR 10/- each at School fee counter (Main Building) and can collect the Tender document between 9 am to 3 pm (Sunday to Thursday) from 6th November 2023 to 14th November 2023.

Indian School Salalah reserves the right to accept or reject any Tender.

Last Date for submission of Sealed Tender is 19-11-2023 on or before 3 PM

U.S. Embassy Muscat

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT
MUSCAT-2023-018
MAILROOM CLERK POSITION

The U.S. Embassy in Muscat is seeking qualified candidates for the below position:

Mailroom Clerk: The Mailroom Clerk receives, dispatches, sorts, and distributes mail from multiple sources. These include but are not limited to local and international mail, Diplomatic Post Office (DPO) mail, diplomatic pouch material, and commercial courier services. The incumbent spends a large percentage of the time serving customers at the Mailroom service window. The incumbent is supervised by the Mailroom Supervisor with overall supervision by a designated IMO employee.

TO APPLY:
All applications must be submitted through Electronic Recruitment Application (ERA) to be considered. To view a current list of all available positions at the U.S. Mission in Muscat and to apply online, please visit the U.S. Embassy-Muscat website using **Google Chrome** and click on "jobs at the Embassy" then click on "Electronic Recruitment Application (ERA)" to see the current vacancies. Please make sure of listing all your experience with details of the duties performed, education, languages, levels, and attach all the required documents through ERA. **Paper or E-mailed applications or documents will not be accepted.**

Ministry of Social Development

Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender committee of Ministry of Social Development hereby announces the following tender :-

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of tender document	Last date for tender submission	Tender Document Price (non-retundable)	
					small and Medium companies	local companies
283/2023	Implementation of an introductory campaign on the services of the Ministry of Social Development	Companies specialized in the field of design, installation and maintenance services of programs and information systems registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the excellent, first, second or third degree or fourth degree	Thursday 23-11-2023 02:00 PM	Thursday 14-12-2023 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O
296/2023	Supply of desktop Macs to employees of the Ministry of Social Development	Companies specialized in the field of supplying communications and information technology equipment and accessories registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board with the excellent, first, second, third or fourth degree	Thursday 23-11-2023 02:00 PM	Thursday 14-12-2023 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O

- Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at theTender Board e-tendering digital portal link **(https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om)**, On Sunday 5/11/2023
- For Inquiry , please contact though the e-tendering website **(reg@tenderboard.gov.om)** **tel. (24402200)**

" The lowest or any other tender shall not be binding to the Ministry "

www.mosd.gov.om

WORLD

UN chief 'horrified' by Israeli strike

According to the Palestinian Red Crescent, one of its ambulances was hit "by a missile fired by Israeli forces" near the entrance to the Gaza City hospital

New York: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was "horrified" by a strike from Israeli forces on a convoy of ambulances in Gaza on Friday, he said in a statement. The conflict "must stop," he added.

"I am horrified by the reported attack in Gaza on an ambulance convoy outside Al Shifa hospital. The images of bodies strewn on the street outside the hospital are harrowing," Guterres said.

He added that the humanitarian situation in Gaza was "horrific" and reiterated his call for a ceasefire and the release of hostages taken by Hamas in its initial attack on October 7.

According to the Palestinian Red Crescent, one of its ambulances was hit "by a missile fired by Israeli forces" near the entrance to the Gaza City hospital. The attack killed 15 people and wounded more than 60 others, it said.

Meanwhile, Israel's military said it had launched an air strike on "an ambulance that was identified by forces as being used by a Hamas terrorist cell in close proximity to their position in the battle zone."

US pushes hard to free Gaza hostages

.US officials are making intense efforts to gain the release of hostages held by Hamas militants in Gaza, but there is no guarantee of success or a timeframe, a senior Biden administration official said.

The official, briefing reporters on condition of anonymity, said there was "indirect engagement" aimed at finding a way to get the hostages out but that the work was extremely difficult.

The official said it would require a "very significant pause in the conflict" to get the hostages out.

"It is something that is under a very serious and active discussion. There is no agreement as of yet to actually get this done, but it's something we're working on extremely hard," he said. -DW

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PUNJAB PROVINCE

Pakistan Air Force foils terror attack at Mianwali Air Base

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Army had said that it has foiled a terror attack at the Mianwali Training Air Base in the Punjab province.

The ISPR says that 3 terrorists were neutralised while entering the base while the remaining 3 terrorists have been cornered due to timely and effective response by the troops. However, during the attack, some damage to three already grounded aircraft and a fuel bowser also occurred.

According to a press release from the Pakistan's ISPR, on November 4 in the early hours of the day, Mianwali Training Air Base of Pakistan Air Force came under a failed terrorist attack which has been foiled by the swift and effective response of the troops.

The action of the troops has ensured the safety and security of personnel and assets says the release.

The ISPR said a comprehensive joint clearance and combing operation is in final stages to completely clear the area. ISPR says they remain committed to eliminating menace of terrorism from the country at all costs.

According to Pakistan media reports, a spokesperson of the terror group Tehreek-e-Jihad took responsibility for the attack on the Air Force base.

Earlier last week, terrorists launched two separate attacks on security forces in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), according to a statement from the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

In the Tirah area of Khyber District, an Intelligence-Based Operation was conducted, resulting in an intense exchange of fire.

As a result, one terrorist was killed, and two terrorists were injured and subsequently apprehended by security forces, the ISPR said in a statement.

These terrorists were found in possession of weapons and ammunition and had been actively involved in terrorist activities against security forces. -ANI

2 MILLION AFGHAN REFUGEES,

Afghanistan PM appeals to Pakistan not to expel refugees

KABUL: As Pakistan announced to expel nearly 2 million Afghan refugees, Afghanistan Prime Minister Mullah Mohammad Hassan Akhund said that the action is against international laws, reported TOLO News.

PM Akhund in a video message, appealed Pakistan to not "expel Afghans in an undignified manner, to not harass Afghans and to give them sufficient time so that they can return in a dignified manner."

"If their (Pakistan) reason is to expel undocumented migrants only, then why are they humiliating the refugees, stealing their property, and destroying their houses?" he added.

He further warned Pakistan of further consequences of the mistreatment of Afghan refugees, TOLO News reported.

"You (Pakistan) are a neighbour, you should think about the future," he stressed.

Earlier, US National Security spokesperson John Kirby said that Washington wants to see all nations do "what they can to help refugees and asylum seekers."

Meanwhile, the UN Secretary General's Spokesman Stephane Dujarric said that the United Nations is appealing to Pakistan to continue its protection of all "vulnerable" Afghans who sought safety in the country, reported TOLO News.

This comes as the Pakistan caretaker government announced October 31 as the deadline for Afghan refugees to leave the country. -ANI

فولتامب VOLTAMP

VOLTAMP ENERGY SAOG

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Interim Report for the period ended 30th September, 2023

DIRECTORS' REPORT

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I present the un-audited results of Voltamp Energy SAOG for the nine-month period ended on 30th September 2023.

REVIEW OF OPERATIONS:
The Company's performance (including subsidiaries) is summarized as follows compared to the same period in the previous year:

Amount in RO

Particulars	Nine months period ended 30th Sept 2023	Nine months period ended 30th Sept 2022	% Increase/ (decrease)
Revenue	20,340,751	26,398,357	(22.95)
Other Income	85,060	160,285	(46.93)
Expenditure	(19,880,292)	(28,536,275)	(30.33)
Profit/(Loss) Before Tax	545,519	(1,977,633)	127.58
Taxation	(85,818)	303,205	(128.30)
Profit/(Loss) After Tax	459,701	(1,674,428)	127.45
Basic Profit/(Loss) per share Bz	4.433	(17.661)	125.10
Net assets per share Bz	0.208	0.203	2.24

Maintaining its profitability drive through cost reduction and efficiency gains, the company generated RO 7.42 million in revenues and RO 349,085 in net profit in the third quarter.
For the nine months ended 30th September 2023, the company achieved a consolidated net profit of RO 459,701, reversing last year's net loss of RO 1.67 million.

OUTLOOK
Building on its product mix, technological edge, and ability to secure large-scale projects across the region, the company is cautiously optimistic about its ability to achieve sustainability and transition to products and markets that generate strong sales and margins, driving growth.

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE:
The Board and Management are committed to the highest standards of professionalism and integrity in all their operations, and ensure full compliance with the Code of Corporate Governance.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:
On behalf of the Board of Directors, I express my sincere gratitude to all our clients, banks, shareholders, human resources, and government authorities, including Madayin, for their unwavering support and contributions. Your trust, collaboration, and dedication have enabled us to thrive in a stable economic environment, driving growth and prosperity for all.

We all express our sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik for his vision and guidance on the path of the renewed Renaissance.

Aymen bin Hamed Al Busaidi
Chairman
Voltamp Energy SAOG

UNAUDITED CONDENSED INTERIM CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AT

Assets	30th Sep, 2023 RO	30th Sep, 2022 RO	31st Dec, 2022 (Audited) RO
Non-current assets			
Property, plant and equipment	8,577,776	9,145,183	9,039,348
Intangible Assets	458,988	315,927	504,505
Investments at fair value through other comprehensive income	148,964	677,175	295,041
Right-of-use assets	1,171,955	955,183	1,068,288
Deferred tax asset	1,115,785	1,179,903	1,190,900
Total non-current assets	11,473,468	12,273,371	12,098,082
Current assets			
Inventories	9,430,138	8,454,242	9,571,660
Trade and other receivables	14,347,305	20,493,207	19,020,854
Cash in hand and at banks	583,426	314,389	281,679
Total current assets	24,360,869	29,261,838	28,874,193
Total assets	35,834,337	41,535,209	40,972,275
Equity and liabilities			
Equity			
Share capital	8,140,275	8,140,275	8,140,275
Share premium	3,146,070	3,146,070	3,146,070
Derivative Reserve		(50,429)	
Fair value reserve	(1,237,626)	(2,090,123)	(1,409,557)
Legal reserve	3,084,771	3,031,496	3,031,496
Retained earnings	3,758,543	4,345,000	3,692,636
Equity attributable to the share holders of of the Parent Company	16,892,033	16,522,289	16,600,920
Non controlling interest	1,042,181	839,245	953,239
Total equity	17,934,214	17,361,534	17,554,159
Liabilities			
Non-current liabilities			
Long term loan	-	345,983	-
Non-current portion of lease liabilities	1,000,157	850,232	866,756
End of service benefits	661,917	668,297	675,547
Total non-current liabilities	1,662,074	1,864,512	1,542,303
Current liabilities			
Bank borrowings	8,380,795	13,432,846	11,615,889
Current portion of long term loan	176,159	228,485	733,262
Trade and other payables	7,483,660	8,413,663	9,102,049
Current portion of lease liabilities	101,140	134,325	132,511
Income tax payable	-	77,206	-
Amount due to related parties	96,295	22,638	292,102
Total current liabilities	16,238,049	22,309,163	21,875,813
Total liabilities	17,900,123	24,173,675	23,418,116
Total equity and liabilities	35,834,337	41,535,209	40,972,275
Net assets per share	0.208	0.203	0.204

UNAUDITED CONDENSED INTERIM CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

	Quarter ended 30th Sept 2023	Quarter ended 30th Sept 2022	9 months ended 30th Sept 2023	9 months ended 30th Sept 2022
Revenue	7,418,479	9,255,407	20,340,751	26,398,357
Cost of sales	(5,885,974)	(8,728,856)	(16,153,423)	(24,744,114)
Gross profit	1,532,505	526,551	4,187,328	1,654,243
Other income	62,779	31,958	71,481	159,352
Selling, administrative and general expenses	(1,087,956)	(1,008,592)	(3,371,702)	(3,224,725)
Impairment (loss) / reversal on trade receivables	27,500	-	49,648	(29,000)
Profit from operations	534,828	(450,083)	936,755	(1,440,130)
Finance income	5,872	303	13,579	933
Finance cost	(128,456)	(187,178)	(404,815)	(538,436)
Profit / (Loss) for the period before taxation	412,244	(636,958)	545,519	(1,977,633)
Taxation	(63,159)	92,346	(85,818)	303,205
Profit/(Loss) for the period after taxation	349,085	(544,612)	459,701	(1,674,428)
Basic earnings per share (Bzs)			4.433	-17.661
Net Income attributable to :				
Equity holders of the Parents	321,379	(490,680)	360,876	(1,437,623)
Non controlling interest	27,706	(53,932)	98,825	(236,805)
Other comprehensive income				
Items that are or may be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss				
Hedging Instruments - net change in fair value		(50,429)		(50,429)
Items that will not be reclassified to profit or loss				
Investments at FVOCI - net change in fair value	(79,646)	(115,616)	(79,646)	(115,616)
Total comprehensive (loss)/ income for the period, net of tax	269,439	(710,657)	380,055	(1,840,473)

Nepal's catastrophic quake death toll mounts to 143

Nepal experienced additional aftershocks, with a magnitude of 3.3, on Saturday afternoon

KATHMANDU: Nepal is reeling from the disastrous aftermath of a 6.4-magnitude earthquake that has now claimed the lives of 143 people, according to the Nepal police. The impact of this catastrophe has left a trail of destruction, leaving countless individuals injured and communities in turmoil.

Nepal experienced additional aftershocks, with a magnitude of 3.3, on Saturday afternoon. This has only exacerbated the challenges faced by the affected population, further testing the resilience of the region.

The Nepal Police reported the details of the devastation caused by the earthquake passing through Rami Danda in Jajarkot. "Dated 2080.07.17 at 23:47 hours, details of the damage caused by the earthquake passing through Rami Danda in Jajarkot," posted Nepal Police on X.

The Nepal Home Ministry's spokesman, Narayan Prasad Bhattarai, said that a meeting was convened in Kathmandu by the Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister to address the crisis. "Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister held a meeting in Kathmandu over the earthquake that hit the country. A few decisions were taken in the meeting. Decisions were also made to resume the electricity supply and communication system. Nepal Telecom has been ordered to make its services free for the coming 5 days in the affected areas," he said.

Efforts are underway to provide medical assistance to those injured in the earthquake. Security personnel have been actively involved in transporting the injured to the TV Teaching Hospital in Kathmandu.

"Those injured in the earthquake that passed through Jajarkot have been brought to Kathmandu for further treatment. Security personnel helping to take the injured to the TV Teaching Hospital," Nepal Police's post added.

India, Nepal's neighbour, has extended its support during this trying time. Following the initial earthquake, India released an emergency contact number for Indians in Nepal who require urgent assistance.

"OP Mishra, the Director of the National Center for Seismology (NCS), emphasised the critical role that building structures played in the severity of the earthquake's impact.

"The intensity in Nepal was very strong, but when it came to Delhi it was reduced. Intensity is the degree of sitting, but magnitude 6.4 is the content of energy. Earthquakes do not kill people, it is the structure that kills people," Mishra told ANI.

Nepal's Prime Minister, Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', arrived in Jajarkot today to assess the situation and extend his support to those affected. Government officials have been directed to deploy ambulances near the helipad of Nepalgunj Airport and military barracks to ensure swift medical assistance to those in need.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed his deep sorrow over the loss of lives and extensive damage caused by the earthquake in Nepal. PM Modi offered support to Nepal and expressed India's willingness to extend all possible assistance.

The earthquake's impact has not been confined to Nepal alone. Tremors were felt in several districts of North India, including Delhi-NCR, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar. -ANI

COP28

Arab countries to launch new climate initiatives

ABU DHABI: Arab countries plan to launch new climate initiatives and complete a number of previously announced initiatives at the 28th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28), which provides a major opportunity for these nations to enhance their efforts and actively participate in finding fair solutions to the challenges of climate change.

Arab countries support the implementation of the Paris Agreement, which was adopted at COP21, to achieve net-zero emissions, sustainable economic development, and addressing climate change to balance economic growth and environmental protection.

Although the contribution of Arab countries to carbon emissions is limited, the Arab region is one of the most affected by climate change, according to the Abu Dhabi-based Arab Monetary Fund (AMF).

With the UAE hosting COP28 from November 30 to December 12, 2023, Arab countries account for 18 per cent of all climate summits, with 5 out of 28 summits hosted by Arab countries.

COP summit

Morocco was the first Arab country to host a COP summit (COP7) in 2001, followed by Qatar (COP18) in 2012, Morocco (COP22) in 2016, and Egypt (COP27) in November 2022.

Arab Group: The 22 Arab countries are one of the main negotiating groups in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The group holds a meeting before each UN climate summit, according to the report "Negotiations of Arab Countries under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change" by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation Middle East and North Africa.

The report states that the Arab Group meets daily at COP to develop strategies for their positions. All members of the Arab Group are also part of other groups, such as the African Group and the Group of 77 and China.

Renewable Energy: Arab countries are increasingly adopting renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind power, to diversify their energy mix and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

They have also expanded their role in compensatory measures, such as tree planting, carbon capture technologies, and carbon dioxide recycling in the context of the circular economy, according to the Arab Monetary Fund report "A vision on the position towards climate change and policy options - the road to "COP28".

The report explains that rising temperatures, extreme weather events, and declining rainfall, with their significant impact on desertification, declining food security, and forced displacement, are just examples of the risks posed by climate change. -ANI

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Tender No.	Description of Tender	Last date to collect the tender	Tender return date
PRE/23/061 Re-call	Construction of Side Protection For Internal Road in Bousher	25/11/2023	17/12/2023
PRE/23/187	Maintenance of Track Roads at Quriyyat	25/11/2023	17/12/2023
PRE/23/188	Maintenance of Track Roads at Al Amerat	25/11/2023	17/12/2023
PRE/23/207	Road construction at Umq Rubakh	25/11/2023	17/12/2023
PRE/23/234	Demolition of Building at Muscat	25/11/2023	17/12/2023
PRE/23/244	Supply, replacement of Computers – Unit Rate	25/11/2023	17/12/2023
PRE/23/245	Construction of Box Culvert and Road in Mabellah South	25/11/2023	17/12/2023
PRE/23/246	Supply, installation & Upgrade of IT Infrastructure	25/11/2023	17/12/2023
PRE/23/253	Beautification Works in Al Daqal at Al Amerat	25/11/2023	17/12/2023
PRE/23/258	Post QS Services for Construction of Dualzation of Al Ansab- Al Jifnain	25/11/2023	17/12/2023

1. Bidders shall submit their offers electronically.
2. Clarification and Support:
- For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (https//:etendering.tenderboard.gov.om) .
- For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om) or call (+96824402200).

SPORTS

ZAMAN, AZAM INSPIRE PAKISTAN TO CRUCIAL DLS WIN OVER NZ

Rain plays spoilsport in Bengaluru as Pakistan's chase in the high-scoring match is cut short after Ravindra and Williamson help New Zealand reach a total of 401

BENGALURU: Pakistan defeated New Zealand on DLS in a high-scoring rain-affected match at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru on Saturday at the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 to hand their semi-final qualification chances a huge boost.

Rachin Ravindra's century (108) led New Zealand to a huge first-innings total of 401/6. But a sensational partnership between Fakhar Zaman and Babar Azam boosted Pakistan to 200/1 after 25.3 overs, well ahead of the required rate when the rain ended the match early.

Zaman (126*) was the star of the show, slamming nine sixes en route to a century off just 63 balls. And with Azam (66*) content to play second fiddle at the other end, Pakistan's hope grew by the over. And as rain began to fall in the 22nd over, Pakistan were remarkably ahead on DLS. A lengthy delay for rain and then a wet outfield saw the overs reduced to 41, with Pakistan's target changed to 342 as a result. And the second-wicket pair picked up where they left off after the relay, rattling along in search of their reduced target.

Pakistan were 21 runs ahead on DLS when the rain returned and became too heavy to continue. The win moves Azam's side up to eight points, level with New Zealand.

A brief spell of drizzle had impeded the start of the second innings but the teams eventually got on with the game after New Zealand had laid the foundation for a huge total courtesy of Ravindra's third century in the tournament.

The young star, moved up to open as Kane Williamson returned, was brilliant once again, hitting 108 from 94 runs and adding 180 for the second wicket. Barring Mohammad Wasim, who finished with 3/60, all other Pakistan bowlers found the going tough.

A brilliant catch from Williamson removed Abdullah Shafique (4) in the second over to hurt Pakistan's chances of chasing down such a mammoth score. But New Zealand were put to the sword from thereon, with Zaman lighting up the evening with a breathtaking display of hitting. The opener built a steady partnership through the first powerplay and brought up his half-century in the 14th over. And it was from that point on that Zaman went big.

It took him just 14 deliveries to go from 50 to 100, racing through the gears in spectacular fashion and putting Pakistan ahead of the DLS target score before the first rain delay came. Both Zaman and Azam accelerated when play resumed, with the Pakistan captain hitting two maximums of his own. The skipper was on 66 from 63 balls and Fakhar on 126 from 81 when the rain returned for good, with Pakistan 200/1.

Earlier, Ravindra went on to make 108 from 94 balls, while captain Williamson also helped put Pakistan on the ropes with a stirring knock after overcoming a thumb injury to return to the side.

Heavy-hitters Daryl Mitchell (29) and Mark Chapman (39) then joined forces to lift the scoring rate even more as New Zealand passed 300 for the loss of only three wickets and with more than 10 overs to spare. The final push was provided by Glenn Phillips (41) and Mitchell Santner (26*), who ensured a late flourish. Ravindra initially combined with fellow opener Devon Conway to compile 66/0 at the end of the powerplay.

Hasan Ali picked up his 100th ODI wicket in the next over, having Conway (35) caught behind by Mohammad Rizwan as the pacer made an impact after being called back into the Pakistan XI.

Williamson soon picked up the pace alongside Ravindra to guide the total past 150 without further loss at the halfway mark of the innings. The New Zealand stalwart reached 95 from 79 balls until caught on the boundary barely centimetres from a six that would have brought up his ton. - (cricketworldcup.com)

ICC MEN'S CRICKET WORLD CUP INDIA 2023

WORLD CUP 2023 GROUP STANDINGS

TEAM	P	W	L	N/R	T	NRR	PTS
India	7	7	0	0	0	+2.102	14
South Africa	7	6	1	0	0	+2.290	12
Australia	7	5	2	0	0	+0.924	10
New Zealand	8	4	4	0	0	+0.398	8
Pakistan	8	4	4	0	0	+0.036	8
Afghanistan	7	4	3	0	0	-0.330	8
Sri Lanka	7	2	5	0	0	-1.162	4
Netherlands	7	2	5	0	0	-1.398	4
Bangladesh	7	1	6	0	0	-1.446	2
England	7	1	6	0	0	-1.504	2

INDIA ALL-ROUNDER

Pandya out of World Cup with ankle injury

MUMBAI: India all-rounder Hardik Pandya has been ruled out of the ODI World Cup due to the ankle injury he suffered against Bangladesh on October 19. Fast bowler Prasidh Krishna has replaced him in India's squad.

Pandya had injured himself last month when he appeared to twist his left ankle while trying to stop a shot in his follow-through during his first over against Bangladesh.

He played no further part in that match and was taken for scans.

ESPNcricinfo understands he suffered ligament damage and has been undergoing rehabilitation at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Bengaluru.

Prasidh, who has 29 wickets in 17 ODIs, last played for India in two ODIs against Australia during the series just before the World Cup. He took three wickets in those games and also took five wickets in as many matches for Karnataka in the ongoing Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy.

Prasidh had marked his return from a long layoff due to a stress fracture of the back when India toured Ireland in August and was also part of the Asia Cup squad, though he was largely on the bench and only played one game against Bangladesh.

"[It is] tough to digest the fact that I will miss out on the remaining part of the World Cup," Pandya said.

"I'll be with the team, in spirit, cheering them on every ball of every game.

"Thanks for all the wishes, the love, and the support has been incredible.

"This team is special and I'm sure we'll make everyone proud." - Agencies

ENGLAND'S TITLE DEFENCE OVER

Australia knock holders out of semi-finals race

AHMEDABAD: Australia's bowlers successfully defended 286 to beat England and strengthen their grip on a top-four spot at the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 in Ahmedabad on Saturday.

Marnus Labuschagne top-scored with 71 against the defending champions but a superb bowling display denied England a morale-boosting win, with Adam Zampa starring once again to become the tournament's leading wicket-taker and bowl them out for 253 in 48.1 overs

Dawid Malan (50), Ben Stokes (64) and Moeen Ali (42) were the pick of the batters in another disappointing display from the 2019 champions, but Zampa's extraordinary figures of 3/21 helped tie England in knots. Australia's win sees them put one foot into the semi-finals, while England's sixth defeat finally sees them mathematically out of contention to finish in the top four.

The wicket of Jonny Bairstow to the very first ball of the second innings from Mitchell Starc gave Australia's chances a significant boost. Joe Root and Malan looked to rebuild through the first powerplay. But Root's run of low scores continued to leave the team 19/2

Stokes and Malan were then involved in a partnership worth 84 runs. But Malan fell shortly after reaching his half-century, holing out to Pat Cummins to depart for 50.

And Jos Buttler's disappointing tournament continued as he scored just one run before falling to Zampa. It was Stokes who held the key for England, reaching his half-century in style with a six and putting on a decent partnership with Moeen Ali. But Stokes fell to Zampa, letting out a howling "no!" as he swept a catch to Marcus Stoinis to swing the match momentum firmly in Australia's favour. Liam Livingstone departed for just two runs, brilliantly caught by substitute fielder Sean Abbot off Cummins.

Moeen was next to go as David Warner took the catch in the deep off Zampa for 42.

Moeen's departure ended England's realistic hopes, and, after a brief flurry from David Willey (14), Chris Woakes (32) and Adil Rashid (20), Australia wrapped up the win with 33 runs to spare.

Earlier, England's Woakes struck early, removing the dangerous Travis Head (11) in his very first over. Head's partner, David Warner, looked to keep up the attack from the other end, but Woakes accounted for him in the sixth over to leave Australia at 38/2.

Steve Smith and Labuschagne yielded a 75-run partnership from 96 balls. But Australia failed to build on that platform, with Rashid coming into the attack to take two quick wickets.

First the spinner accounted for Smith (44) , before Inglis fell with a clip to the same area – with both catches taken by Moeen.

Labuschagne eventually succumbed trapped lbw for 71 from 83 balls. Cameron Green put together another helpful partnership with Marcus Stoinis to take the total beyond 200 but was cleaned up by Willey for 47.

A brilliant catch by Bairstow accounted for Stoinis (35) to halt that momentum, and Wood removed captain Cummins (10) as the wickets continued to fall.

A fortuitous but helpful contribution from Zampa came to an end when he was caught behind off Woakes for 29, and Starc was the final wicket.

Brief scores: Australia 286 in 49.3 overs (Marnus Labuschagne 71, Steve Smith 44; Chris Woakes 4/54, Adil Rashid 2/38, Mark Wood 2/70) beat England 253 in 48.1 overs (Dawid Malan 50, Ben Stokes 64, Moeen Ali 42; Mitchell Starc 2/66, Josh Hazlewood 2/49, Pat Cummins 2/49, Adam Zampa 3/21). - (cricketworldcup.com)

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE

OMAN'S PARTICIPATION

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, participates in the 23rd global summit of the World Travel and Tourism Council under the slogan (Building Bridges for a Sustainable Future), which began its deliberations in the capital of the Republic of Rwanda, Kigali.

ANNUAL BANKERS' MEETING

The Annual Bankers Meeting 2023 was held with the attendance of Tahir Salim Al Amri, the Executive President of the Central Bank of Oman (CBO), CEOs and senior officials of licensed banks, payment service providers operating in Oman and Oman Banks Association.

Oman's stock market faces 3rd consecutive week of losses

OQ Gas Networks (OQGN) continued to dominate the stock market's activity, representing 70 percent of the total volume traded. The company's initial public offering (IPO) has resulted in a strong increase in trading volumes

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman's stock market experienced losses for the third consecutive week, reaching a new low for the year, according to an analyst.

"The MSX 30 index declined rapidly since the middle of October and moved below the range within which it was able to maintain itself since the beginning of the year. The market could remain on a downtrend although it recorded a brief period of stabilisation in the middle of this week," Ahmed Negm, Head of Market Research MENA at XS.com, said.

The three key sectors of the stock market recorded losses, mirroring the previous two weeks' performances. The services sector declined the most and saw a 1.71 percent decrease, followed by the financial sector at -1.33 percent, and the industrial sector at -1.17 percent. Market activity plummeted significantly compared to the previous week but remained somewhat elevated. Trading volumes decreased by 60 percent while the value traded retreated by 63 percent and the number of trades by more than 31 percent.

OQ Gas Networks (OQGN) continued to dominate the stock market's activity, representing 70 percent of the total volume traded. The company's initial public offering (IPO) has resulted in a strong increase in trading volumes. However, OQGN's stock price declined with the rest of the market. In the services sector, Abraj and Ooredoo also fell, recording 1 percent and 6 percent losses respectively.

Bank Muscat, the second most traded stock in the market, rose slightly this week, stabilising to a certain extent but remained well below the levels seen during the last few months.

However, most other stocks in the financial sector were recording significant losses with Oman Arab Bank (OAB) recording the largest decline among banks.

"In contrast, other stock markets in the GCC region ended the week positively and were able to rebound to a certain extent and recoup some of the losses recorded since the flare-up in geopolitical tensions in the Middle East," Ahmed Negm said.

"However, uncertainty on the matter could continue to weigh on performances in the region due to the concerns of an impact on local economies," he added.

Markets also reacted to the Federal Reserve's decision this week to leave its interest rates unchanged for the second time in a row. "While the Federal Reserve left the door open for another rate hike this year, market expectations have shifted toward a softer path in monetary policy with rates potentially declining toward the middle of next year," Ahmed Negm said. "However, high-interest rates could continue to weigh on the local economy and the stock market's performance," he further added.

MSX records best trading value in October

MUSCAT: The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) recorded the best trading value during October in the current year at OMR161.9 million, benefiting from the listing of OQ Gas Networks (OQGN) Company and the increase in the trading value of Bank Muscat shares following Dubai Financial Group selling part of its stake in the bank.

The trading value of OQ Gas Networks shares, which were listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange last October 24, amounted to OMR61.8 million, representing 38.1 percent of the total trading value, while Bank Muscat recorded 31.8 percent of the total trading value after the value of its traded shares reached OMR51.4 million.

OQ Gas Networks led the Muscat Stock Exchange to record numbers in trading volume and transactions executed. Last month, the MSX witnessed the trading of 749.6 million securities, which is the highest monthly level of securities traded on the stock exchange during the current year, and OQ Gas Networks recorded 54 percent of the total number of securities.

Traded transactions also recorded a new record level, rising to 31,056 deals, compared to 29,315 deals executed in March, when Abraaj Energy Services was listed on the stock exchange. The number of transactions executed on OQ Gas Networks shares reached 22,362 deals, with the stock acquiring 72 percent of the shares. The total number of transactions executed, and the stock closed at the end of last month at 150 baisas, up 10 baisas from the listing price of 140 baisas and 24 baisas above the subscription price for the individual category of 126 baisas.

OQ Gas Networks also pushed the market capitalisation of securities listed on the MSX to rise at the end of last month to OMR23.71 billion, recording gains of OMR204.3 million compared to its level at the end of September of OMR23.51 billion.

Last month, the Muscat Stock Exchange was subjected to a number of pressures that affected stock prices, the main index, and sectoral indices. The main index of the stock exchange declined by 132 points and closed at 4,545 points, the financial sector index recorded the highest decline at 238 points, the industrial sector index declined by 218 points and the Muscat Stock Exchange index fell. The services sector lost 38 points, and the Sharia index lost 29 points. - ONA

POLICY RATE

CBO keeps its repo rate unchanged at 6%

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) decided to keep its repo rate for local banks fixed at 6 per cent, after the US Federal Reserve decision to leave its key policy rate unchanged at the range of (5.25 per cent - 5.50 per cent).

The repo rate is the policy rate that allows commercial banks to acquire short term liquidity from the Central Bank of Oman as the lender of last resort.

This policy is aligned with the structure and nature of the Omani economy. There are a number of advantages for the Sultanate of Oman that are derived from this policy among which are stability of the Omani Rial, the mitigation of capital outflow and promoting certainty among investors by removing exchange rate risk. -ONA

STATISTICAL BULLETIN

Deposits with commercial banks in Oman reach OMR15.29 billion

MUSCAT: The total value of private deposits with commercial banks in the Sultanate of Oman increased by 7.3 percent to reach OMR15.29 billion at the end of August of this year, compared to OMR14.24 billion during the same period in 2022.

The monthly statistical bulletin issued by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) stated that the total value of these deposits was represented by term deposits, amounting to OMR5.16 billion, savings deposits amounting to OMR5.28 billion, and demand deposits amounting to OMR4.71 billion.

The bulletin stated that the total value of deposits represented OMR13.40 billion in Omani rials and OMR1.88 billion in foreign currencies.

As for the banking indicators of Omani commercial banks in percentage terms at the end of August, the bulletin stated that the ratio of total cash and clearing to deposits in Omani riyals reached 7.2 percent, while the ratio of total cash and clearing to total deposits reached 6.1 percent, while the ratio of total loans to deposits reached 109.4. percent.

The ratio of deposits in foreign currency to total deposits was 14.5 percent, while the ratio of foreign assets to total loans was 12.6 percent, and the ratio of foreign assets to total assets was 8.2 percent.

As for the ratio of foreign liabilities to total liabilities, it reached 10.6 percent, the ratio of private demand deposits to total private deposits increased to 30.3 percent, the ratio of capital and reserves to total deposits reached 23.9 percent, while the ratio of allocations and retained interest to total credit reached about 5.5. percent. - ONA

EFFICIENT RAILWAY NETWORK

Oman, Etihad Rail Board review railway network project

MUSCAT: The Board of Directors of Oman and Etihad Rail, the developer and operator of the railway network linking the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), held a meeting in Muscat.

The board has reviewed the advancements that support the continued development of the project, which will see the construction of an efficient railway network that links Sohar Port with the UAE National Railway Network, in line with global standards.

Among the achievements highlighted were the innovative engineering solutions employed to tackle diverse terrains along the route, which led to a 25 per cent reduction in tunnel works and a 50 per cent reduction in bridge construction. The project boasts several 2.5-kilometre-long tunnels and bridges reaching a height of 34m. Specialised hydrological solutions were also incorporated to address diverse weather conditions along the network.

The board also reviewed the progress of different tenders for all project packages, encompassing civil works, systems, locomotives, and trailers.

The meeting highlighted the active involvement of local companies and their cooperation with prominent global companies specialised in these fields, as well as the significance of driving local added value across all aspects of the project.

In addition, the board recognised the advancements in tender processes for different project segments and commended the strong partnerships established, both domestically and globally. The importance of localisation in stimulating economic contributions was accentuated, alongside the efficient coordination between parties in the UAE and Oman, as demonstrated by the rapid issuance of permits and certificates.

The board also discussed the company's collaborative strategies with various firms in the UAE and Oman to establish integrated logistics solutions. These initiatives aim to interlink the railway network with ports, maritime and land shipping, and logistics services, including warehousing and distribution, to cater to the evolving demands of customers.

The meeting concluded with a discussion of plans required for the integration of logistics solutions, linking train networks, ports, freight, and services to meet customer needs.

The board emphasised the project's role in enhancing commercial activity and social cohesion by linking economic, industrial, commercial, and residential areas through a railway network, as part of the joint efforts by both parties in various aspects of economic and social development.

The meeting was attended by Sheikh Theyab bin Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Etihad Rail, Suhail bin Mohammed Faraj Faris Al Mazrouei, UAE Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Oman and Etihad Rail Company, and Eng. Said Hamoud Al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors and members of the Board. -ONA

MARKET

CBO meeting commends tangible role of Oman's banking sector

Annual Bankers Meeting 2023 commended the tangible role of the banking sector and its significant contribution towards the prosperity of the Omani economy, referring to the firmly established signs of recovery of the Omani economy

MUSCAT: The Annual Bankers Meeting 2023 was held with the attendance of Tahir Salim Al Amri, the Executive President of the Central Bank of Oman (CBO), CEOs and senior officials of licensed banks, payment service providers (PSPs) operating in the Sultanate of Oman and Oman Banks Association (OBA).

The meeting commended the tangible role of the banking sector and its significant contribution towards the prosperity of the Omani economy, referring to the firmly established signs of recovery of the Omani economy.

The meeting also highlighted the significant improvements in the outlook of the economy as a result of the steadfast implementation of fiscal reforms by the government and encouraged banks to further refine their strategies to benefit from the new opportunities and government economic development programmes.

Moreover, the Executive President of CBO in his presentation emphasised the need to strengthen partnership with PSPs to digitize payments in the Sultanate of Oman. He also highlighted the steps taken by CBO to support the government in building an ecosystem for the financial sector's digital transformation. He also encouraged banks and PSPs to leverage such initiatives for a more efficient and inclusive financial services industry, as well as creating innovative ways to offer customised additional financial solutions for individuals in line with the rapidly evolving electronic products and services in the financial sector.

Furthermore, the participants were updated about an important milestone in the ongoing efforts to combat money laundering and terrorist financing, as the Sultanate of Oman's National Risk Assessment (NRA) has been successfully conducted, setting the stage for the forthcoming Mutual Evaluation by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) starting from January 2024. Accordingly, the Executive President of the CBO urged the banking sector to be fully prepared for the assessment.

Moreover, the meeting highlighted the banking sector's journey towards digital innovations and transformation to electronic banking services. Further, OBA conducted a presentation on the readiness of the banking sector for the mutual assessment by FATF.

In the open discussion session, the participants had detailed discussions on improving the efficiency of the supervisory approach on licensed entities to ensure the safety and soundness of financial institutions for safeguarding financial stability. The participants also discussed challenges facing the banking sector, including technological advancements and the implementation of the International Bank Account Number (IBAN) in the Sultanate of Oman, as well as discussing various issues of concern to the Omani banking and financial sector. -ONA

TOURIST DESTINATION

Oman participates in 23rd global summit of World Travel and Tourism Council in Rwanda

KIGALI: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, participates in the 23rd global summit of the World Travel and Tourism Council under the slogan (Building Bridges for a Sustainable Future), which began its deliberations in the capital of the Republic of Rwanda, Kigali.

Heads of state and delegations from all over the world and as many as 100 business leaders and CEOs of major international companies take part in the summit.

Oman's delegation is represented at the summit by Salim bin Mohammed Al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism.

Participation in the world summit of the World Travel and Tourism Council comes within the framework of the tireless efforts to enhance the presence of the Sultanate of Oman in tourism organisations as a prestigious tourist destination in the region, and a centre of attraction for international investments and events.

This summit and its accompanying events provide the opportunity to communicate with leaders in the travel and tourism industry at the regional and international levels. It also allows for a review of investment opportunities that will contribute to enhancing tourism products and services and achieving the desired diversification of the tourism sector in Oman.

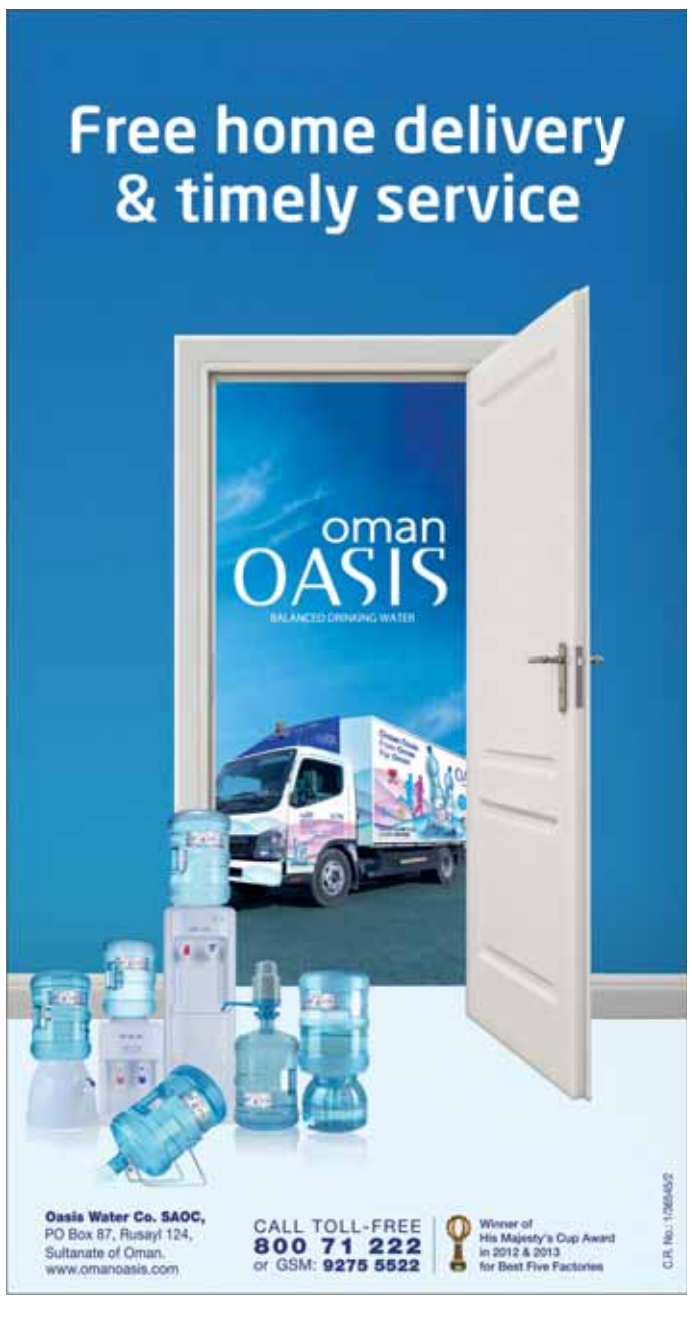
The summit aims to discuss how travel and tourism contribute to the development and sustainability of the economy, and their role in generating new job opportunities that contribute to the development of local communities, through multiple sessions. The sessions explore ways of strategic cooperation in the tourism and travel sector and enhance its ability to face various future challenges.

Further, the summit addresses the development and growth of the tourism sector and the search for attractions that keep pace with tourists' requirements and meet their expectations. It also aims at striking a balance between sustainability and growth, promoting innovation through sustainable investments, and how to restore travel activity globally at a time when the sector has begun to return to its normal levels. -ONA

MUSK'S AI STARTUP

X premium subscribers to get early access to chatbot Grok

SAN FRANCISCO: Elon Musk has announced that his artificial intelligence startup xAI Grok will start providing services to "a select group" of users starting on Saturday. "Tomorrow, xAI will release its first AI to a select group. In some important respects, it is the best that currently exists," Musk posted on X on Friday (local time). As soon as xAI is out of the early beta stage, xAI's Grok system will be available to all X Premium+ subscribers, Musk said qualifying those select users. -ANI



ONLINE TRADING

CFI expands its presence in Oman to further empower investors in region

Times News Service

MUSCAT: In yet another stride towards enhancing online trading accessibility and opportunities, and after receiving a regulatory license from the Capital Markets Authority (CMA), CFI announced the launch of its latest subsidiary, CFI Financial (CFI Oman).

CFI Oman is the fourth entity that CFI launched this year after Egypt, Kuwait, and Palestine. This marks CFI's 12th license, adding to its other licenses and entities in the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, the United Kingdom, Cyprus, Mauritius, and other regions. This expansion marks an important chapter in CFI's journey, bringing its world-class trading services to the heart of Oman and contributing to the growth of the region's financial landscape.

CFI Oman, whose head office is situated in the vibrant city of Muscat, is set to revolutionise the online trading experience in the region. The subsidiary will offer access to local and international financial markets, powered by its advanced platforms and technology, professional services and ultra-competitive trading conditions.

CFI Oman has received its license and is fully regulated by CMA in Oman, ensuring its dedication to upholding the region's strict regulatory framework and client safety measures.

> This expansion marks an important chapter in CFI's journey, bringing its world-class trading services to the heart of Oman and contributing to the growth of the region's financial landscape

Following the launch, CFI's Co-founder and Managing Director, Hisham Mansour, stated the following: "CFI's continued expansion is a testament to our commitment to empowering traders and investors everywhere. We are thrilled to announce the launch of CFI Oman, marking another strategic milestone in our journey."

"The Omani market holds immense potential, and through CFI Oman, we aim to provide Omani investors with access to global markets, advanced technology, professional services, and highly competitive trading conditions. Our mission is to put Omani traders one step ahead, and we are confident that our exceptional team, combined with our 25 years of industry experience, will contribute to the growth and excellence of Oman's trading landscape."

CFI's expansion into Oman aligns with the company's strategic vision of being the brand for all things trading and investing. With a reputation for innovation, transparency, and client-centricity, CFI is poised to drive positive change in Oman's local trading ecosystem. The launch of CFI Oman is a testament to the company's dedication to providing traders with the tools and platforms necessary to succeed in the financial markets.

"We are excited to spearhead the expansion of CFI into the vibrant Omani market. Our aim is to provide Omani traders and investors with a world-class trading experience, backed by CFI's reputation for excellence and innovation. We are dedicated to offering Omani traders advanced technology, exceptional services, and highly competitive trading conditions," stated Samer Amireh, CEO of CFI Oman.

As the company continues its journey of growth and expansion, CFI looks forward to contributing to the financial empowerment of traders in Oman, while further solidifying its position as the go-to broker in the Mena region and beyond.

AEROSPACE MAJOR

India's airline sector is growing fastest in world, says Boeing India President

NEW DELHI: Aerospace major Boeing India President Salil Gupte on Friday said that the airline sector in India is experiencing rapid growth as compared to the world, with an impressive growth rate of approximately 6.97 per cent over the past few years.

Speaking to ANI, Gupte emphasised that the growth in the airline industry is expected to persist, as it correlates with the country's robust GDP growth, making India's economy one of the strongest among major nations worldwide.

"The airline sector in India is the fastest-growing airline sector anywhere in the world. It has grown by roughly 6.97 per cent over the last number of years. It'll continue to grow at that level because it tends to grow along with GDP growth. And India has the fastest GDP growth and the strongest economy of any major nation in the world. So the airline sector will continue to boom over the next few years..." he said. He further said that the Indian government's Make in India programme has created an ethos that Indian companies should think big about doing business with the rest of the world. -ANI

HOW ARE BROCCOLI AND SPROUTS USEFUL? FIND OUT

REMEMBER how your parents used to tell you to "eat your greens, they are good for you"? They had a brilliant idea, for sure. Broccoli, one of the most popular vegetables in the United States, and other cruciferous vegetables are associated with a lower risk of diabetes and cancer because of their organosulfur compounds, such as glucosinolates and isothiocyanates, which exhibit a wide range of bioactivities including antioxidant activity.

On the other hand, hardly much research has been done on broccoli sprouts' endogenous polysulfide concentration.

Under the direction of Professor Hideshi Ihara and Assistant Professor Shingo Kasamatsu of Osaka Metropolitan University's Graduate School of Science, a study team examined the quantity of polysulfides in broccoli sprouts during their germination and growth.

The research team showed the abundance of polysulfide compounds in cruciferous vegetables, building on their earlier findings.

The team found that total polysulfide content in broccoli sprouts significantly increased during germination and growth, with an approximately 20-fold increase in polysulfides on the fifth day of germination. Furthermore, they discovered a number of unknown polysulfides with indeterminate molecular structures

These findings suggested that the abundance of polysulfides in broccoli sprouts may contribute to their well-known health-promoting properties.

Dr Kasamatsu stated, "The discovery of the significant increase in polysulfide content during the sprouting process from broccoli seeds was completely by chance and very surprising.

This finding suggests that polysulfides may play an important role in the process of plant germination and growth.

Further investigation of the pharmacological function of these unknown polysulfides could lead to the development of new preventive and therapeutic approaches and medicines for neurodegenerative diseases, stroke, cancer, inflammation, and other oxidative stress-related diseases." -ANI

SPORTS

Verstappen claims 11th pole of season

A stormy end to qualifying for the Sao Paulo Grand Prix at Interlagos wasn't enough to thwart Red Bull driver claim pole position

SAO PAULO: Red Bull's Max Verstappen beat Ferrari's Charles Leclerc to claim his 11th pole position of the season in a rain-affected qualifying session at the Sao Paulo Grand Prix on Friday.

Aston Martin's Lance Stroll and Fernando Alonso took third and fourth, benefitting from approaching rain, *BBC Sport* reported on Saturday.

The track stayed dry for every driver's first lap in the final session but Leclerc described conditions as "super-weird" as the wind shifted direction.

Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton was fifth and George Russell will start eighth.

Russell qualified right behind Mercedes teammate Hamilton but was given a two-place grid penalty for impeding Alpine's Pierre Gasly while leaving the pits. That promoted McLaren's Lando Norris to sixth and Ferrari's Carlos Sainz to seventh.

Gasly and his teammate Esteban Ocon, who qualified 13th and 12th, were both also found guilty of the same offence and given the same penalty.

Red Bull's Sergio Perez, under pressure after a series of shaky races, was ninth, unlucky to be behind McLaren's Oscar Piastri on track when the Australian spun at Juncao, the corner on to the pit straight.

The Mexican, under pressure after a series of shaky races, suffered because he was one of the last drivers out of the pits and Norris' team-mate Oscar Piastri spun at the final corner onto the pit straight in front of him, forcing the Red Bull driver to back off.

Other than Piastri, all the drivers in the top 10 managed a lap on a dry track before the rain hit, but they were all considerably slower than in the previous session.

Verstappen, who beat Leclerc by 0.294 seconds, said: "The gaps were very small between everyone. Q1, Q2, you could see everyone was using a lot of tyre sets. It made it quite interesting.

"We lined up for Q3 and you could see the sky was just black. I was like: 'Well, if that rain hits, it is going to be a lot.'"

A 31st career pole it may have been – but the 2023 champion was honest enough to admit that the lap hadn't been one of his finest.

"We went for the lap. The first sector felt alright and the rest felt shocking. The rain was coming in. It was not hitting the track yet but the wind increased a lot and changed direction to a tailwind in the middle sector.

"I was shouting on the radio saying: 'What the hell happened?' We were nowhere, but the team said everyone was struggling. I have never seen such an influence on car balance."

Leclerc added: "I've never experienced that in my career before. It felt like it was raining but there was no rain around.

"The wind change was crazy. There was just no grip from sector two onwards, which was extremely confusing because you had no idea where the balance would be at the corner you were approaching.

"At the end of the lap, I thought: 'This is not good enough, I am P10 for sure.' But luckily I wasn't."

Heavy rain did then start to fall, accompanied shortly afterwards by an electric storm, and the session was red-flagged with four minutes remaining, officials deciding not to restart it.

The heavy rain caused damage at the track, with photographers reporting that a grandstand roof had collapsed at the last corner. Two hours after the end of qualifying, organisers said there had been "a handful of very minor incidents but nothing serious at this time".

The changing conditions were typical of Brazil, where rain has often affected events at Sao Paulo's Interlagos circuit, a historic and charismatic venue which it was announced on Friday will be on the calendar until at least 2030 thanks to a new contract.

Ironically, a 15-minute delay to the start of the session, caused by the need to clear the track of dirt and debris, ensured the rain hit the session. - Agencies

PARIS MASTERS

Djokovic downs Rune to reach semi-finals

PARIS: World No.1 Novak Djokovic held off Holger Rune to reach the semi-finals of the Paris Masters.

Rune beat the Serb in last year's final to claim his first ATP Masters title.

Despite missing a match point in the second set this time, Djokovic clinched a 7-5, 6-7 (3-7), 6-4 win to leave Rune's place at the ATP Finals in doubt.

Djokovic will play Andrey Rublev for a place in his ninth Paris Masters final after the Russian beat Australia's Alex de Minaur 4-6, 6-3, 6-1.

Victory for Rune would have secured his spot for this month's ATP Finals in Turin, which features the world's top eight players, but the Dane - ranked seventh in the world - is still well placed to make his debut at the end-of-season event.

However, Poland's Hubert Hurkacz faces missing out on the showpiece in Italy after a 6-1, 4-6, 6-4 defeat by Grigor Dimitrov that means he cannot break into the top eight.

Dimitrov will play Stefanos Tsitsipas in the semi-finals on Saturday following the Greek seventh seed's straight-set victory against Russia's Karen Khachanov.

Tsitsipas, who secured his place in Turin on Thursday and is yet to drop a set in Paris, won 6-3, 6-4 to claim his 300th career singles win. - Agencies

PREMIER LEAGUE

Liverpool boss Klopp will let Diaz decide on availability

LONDON: Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp will allow Luis Diaz to decide whether he is able to play this weekend following his father's kidnapping in Colombia.

Klopp confirmed Diaz, 26, returned to training on Wednesday as the Reds prepare to face Luton on Sunday.

Luis Manuel Diaz and his wife were seized at gunpoint on Saturday. Diaz's mother was found in Barrancas but his father remains missing.

"We will wait to see how he is and go from there," Klopp said, *BBC Sport* reported on Saturday.

"We will not force the situation - it's out of our hands," he added.

"If he feels right, he will train with us. When he's with the boys he's fine but you can tell he hasn't slept a lot.

"He was in training two days ago and yesterday did a session."

The Colombian government says Diaz's father was kidnapped by left-wing rebels of the National Liberation Army (ELN), sparking a major military and police search.

A representative of the group has reportedly said it will free Diaz's father in the coming days.

Diaz was absent from the Liverpool side which beat Nottingham Forest 3-0 on Sunday, during which team-mate Diogo Jota held up Diaz's number seven shirt after scoring his side's first goal.

He was again absent for his side's EFL Cup last 16 win against Bournemouth on Wednesday.

"The news, I didn't personally get from Colombia, I always get it forwarded but everything that gives us a bit of hope is good," Klopp said. "We are waiting for really good news."

The kidnappers abandoned Diaz's mother, Cilenis Marulanda, in a car following the kidnapping in their hometown of Barrancas, in Colombia's northern province of La Guajira. - Agencies

FIA WEC FINAL ROUND

Al Harthy qualifies third in Bahrain

MUSCAT: Oman Racing with TF Sport's Ahmad Al Harthy has positioned the team well to compete for a podium finish in the final race of the 2023 FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC) season at the Bahrain International Circuit in Sakhir, Bahrain, after securing the third-fastest qualifying time on Friday.

The team prepared diligently throughout the three free practice sessions, with Al Harthy and his teammates, Michael Dinan and Charlie Eastwood, focusing on the race set-up for the eight-hour competition. During the qualifying session, Al Harthy showcased his usual impressive performance.

In the first lap, Al Harthy quickly secured a top-three position in the GTE Am class, clocking a time of 1 minute 59.199 seconds. On his next lap at the helm of the No.25 Aston Martin Vantage GTE, he further improved, becoming the second-fastest with a time of 1 minute 59.161 seconds.

Supported by Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, OQ, Omantel, and MHD-ITICS, Al Harthy finished in third place just before the chequered flag, falling short of the front row of the grid by less than two-tenths of a second.

Al Harthy is aiming for his third podium finish in his debut season in the championship. Heading into the final race of the season, Al Harthy, Dinan, and Eastwood are currently ranked fifth in the driver standings, with Oman Racing also occupying the fifth position in the team points table.

Reflecting on his third-place finish in qualifying, Al Harthy commented, "It was a solid qualifying. It's very challenging to achieve a perfect lap here in Bahrain due to high tire wear, but we came very close to maximising our performance. Starting from third place is a great position for the long eight-hour race ahead."

"We're content with our performance. P3 gives us a strong starting point for the race, and we've been working diligently during practice to ensure we have a competitive car for the race. Furthermore, the weather is the hottest it has been on the calendar, and we hope that as the sun sets, the temperatures will begin to drop."

MUSCAT TENNIS BALL LEAGUE

Kool Car emerge MTCL champions

MUSCAT: Kool Car defeated Abdas Cricket Team by five runs in the final to emerge champions of the third edition of Muscat Tennis Ball Cricket League (MTCL) recently.

In the final, Kool Car, led by Shaheer Ahmed, were put to bat and scored 169 runs for the loss of nine wickets in the stipulated 16 overs. Shaheer 23, Jibin 27, Shabbir 32 and Naseer 34 were among the run-getters.

Deepak and Shahil claimed three wickets each. Abdas' chase was slow but Deepak's 16-ball 40 took the game closer.

However, his departure put the brakes though Iqbal 35 and Shahil 22 tried to put up a fight. Mohammad Shanid stood out with his bowling to claim four wickets.

FEATURE

Child cancer deaths in Brazil: Is soy farming to blame?

The researchers explained that chemicals, primarily glyphosate, used to grow the crop travel through the country's rivers, ending up in the water supply and potentially contributing to child cancer deaths there

RESEARCHERS say they have have found a correlation between soy farming and leukemia deaths among young children in Brazil.

The results were published in an October 30 study in the journal *PNAS*.

Farmers began cultivating more soy in Brazil in the past years as they shifted away from cattle-based farming. The researchers explained that chemicals, primarily glyphosate, used to grow the crop travel through the country's rivers, ending up in the water supply and potentially contributing to child cancer deaths there.

People protesting glyphosate-People protesting glyphosate

In Europe, protesters hope that the agricultural use of glyphosate will be banned

The team estimated that, at the start of their study, about half the families living in the areas they surveyed had access to a well for water supply. The rest depended on surface water, which can become contaminated.

Although this contamination can have an impact on anyone nearby, the researchers focused on investigating cancer-related death in children under the age of 10 in rural farming areas.

They studied health data from 2008 through 2019, when soy farming increased in the Cerrado and Amazon ecosystems in Brazil. While examining the data, they took two main factors into account: the ill child's proximity to a river and distance to a hospital treating pediatric cancer cases.

Their examination suggests that 123 children died from acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) caused by soy production over the decade.

The researchers estimate that "about half of pediatric leukemia deaths over a ten-year period" could be linked to increased exposure to pesticides.

ALL is a highly treatable illness. The researchers' results seemed to confirm this: they found that the only pediatric ALL patients who died following the expansion of soy farming were those who lived over 100 kilometers from a hospital that treats child patients for the disease.

A major increase in soy production

Over the past decades, Brazil's Amazon region has moved from cattle production to the cultivation of soy in response to a high global demand for soybeans. Brazil is currently the world's largest producer of the crop.

"The expansion has happened really quickly," said lead researcher Marin Skidmore, assistant professor in the Department of Agricultural and Consumer Economics at the University of Illinois in the US.

From 2000 to 2019, soy production in the Cerrado area tripled, while the Amazon region saw a twentyfold increase, researchers said.

About 20% of global soy production is used in food products for humans, while some 80% is fed to livestock, especially in the areas of beef, chicken, egg and dairy production, according to the World Wide Fund for Nature.

What the study doesn't tell us

The study came with a number of caveats. First, it doesn't provide a direct causal link between cancer deaths and increased exposure to pesticides. It only shows an association between the two. The researchers note they worked to rule out other potential factors: they didn't find any connection between the consumption of soy and cancer, for example.

Jörg Rahnenführer, head of the Department of Statistical Methods in Genetics and Chemometrics at the Technical University of Dortmund, who was not involved in the research, said the researchers did not go far enough in their consideration of outside factors.

"Although the connection suggested here seems plausible and may be correct, there are many other possible explanations for the observed relationships in the data," he said. "The authors conduct some additional thoughtful analysis, but many other factors, such as socioeconomic variables, are not considered."

He added that the authors' findings are based on the supposition that pesticide-caused water pollution is the culprit behind the cancer deaths, and said this suggested that more reliable results could be gathered by directly measuring water pollution and the cancer cases that may be correlated with it.

He noted, however, that the facilitation of such an analysis would be "much more complex."

Matthias Liess, head of the System Ecotoxicology Department at the Helmholtz Center for Environmental Research (UFZ) in Leipzig, who was not involved with the research, said the data was good and the researchers' conclusion sound, given the caveats.

"It is plausible that the association between soy cultivation or pesticide use and the burden of disease in children is not just correlational, but (that) there is a causal connection," he said.

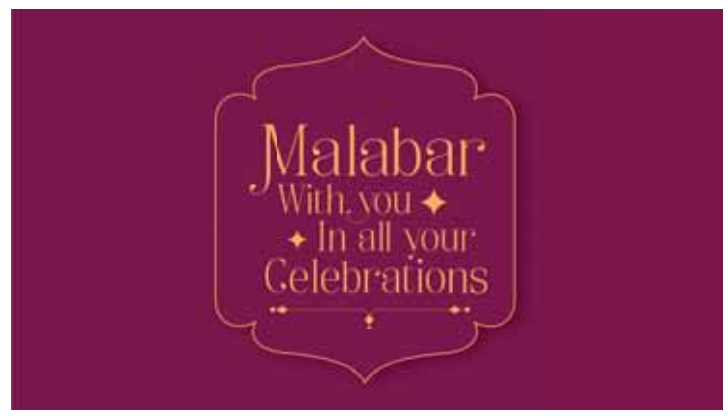
He attributes this to the fact that the researchers found a higher incidence of cancer deaths in areas downstream of soybean farmers than in areas upstream. He said this means it's likely the diseases are linked to the pollution of drinking water.

"It is difficult to imagine other causes than pesticides in this impact scenario," he said. -DW

ROUND-UP

Malabar Gold & Diamonds ushers in festive season with exciting offers

Malabar Gold & Diamonds has also unveiled a stunning array of festive jewellery collections in gold, diamond and precious gems, designed to be an alluring attraction to customers



MUSCAT: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 6th largest jewellery retailer globally with over 335 showrooms across 11 countries, has announced its much-awaited festive season offers.

Adding more sparkle to the numerous celebrations in the season, customers can get assured gold coins with their gold and diamond jewellery purchases.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds has also unveiled a stunning array of festive jewellery collections in gold, diamond and precious gems, designed to be an alluring attraction to customers. The limited period offer can be availed across all Malabar Gold & Diamonds outlets in the Middle East, Far east, the USA and the UK till November 12.

For every diamond or precious gem jewellery purchase worth OMR 500 customers will get free 1g gold coin and for diamond and precious gem jewellery purchase worth OMR 300 they will be eligible for half gram Gold Coin.

Embracing the spirit of the season, the festive jewellery collection that the brand has unveiled consists of exquisite and unique designs in gold, diamonds & precious gem jewellery that have been carefully curated by considering the varying jewellery preferences that exists amongst their vast customer bases. The special designs have been made available across a wide range of sub-brands such as Mine, Era, Precia, Viraaz, Ethnix and Divine. Elegant designs crafted in contemporary fashion have also been introduced in the 18K gold category as well.

Additionally, the brand will also be setting up Special Buy counters at their showrooms, offering incredible discounts on selected jewellery designs.

"The offers that we unveil during the festive season are always looked forward to by our customers. By giving away free gold coins with their festive jewellery purchase, we are ensuring that our vast plethora of customers gets to indulge in their festivities with all the pomp and vigour they can muster. The attractive offers and the exquisite array of designs that have been made available in our festive jewellery collection is our way of reiterating that Malabar Gold & Diamonds stands by our customers in all their celebrations," commented Shamlal Ahamed, MD - International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

In light of the gold rate fluctuations, customers can take advantage of the Gold Rate Protection offer provided by Malabar Gold & Diamonds, wherein customers can block the prevailing gold rates by paying just a 10% as advance, valid till the 12th of November. If the gold rate goes up during this period, customers can purchase at the blocked rate and if the rate happens to go down, customers can draw mileage from the lower rate. The Gold Rate Protection offer can be availed by visiting any of Malabar Gold & Diamonds outlet, or online through their mobile app.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds was established in 1993 and is the flagship company of Malabar Group, a leading diversified Indian business conglomerate.

With an annual turnover of $5.2 billion, the company currently ranks as the 6th largest jewellery retailer globally and today has a strong retail network of over 335 outlets spread across 11 countries in addition to multiple offices, design centers, wholesale units and factories spread across India, Middle East, Far East, USA & UK. The group, owned by more than 4,000 shareholders, has more than 21,000 professionals from over 26 countries working towards its continued success. Malabar Gold & Diamonds also features an online store www.malabargoldanddiamonds.com providing customers the opportunity to purchase their favourite jewellery at any time and on any day from the comfort of their homes.

The group also operates MGD – Lifestyle Jewellery, a retail concept offering trendy and light weight jewellery that represents the independent and the modern woman through its designs and collections.

ESG (Environmental, Social & Governance) has been the primary commitment of the group since its inception. The key ESG focus area of Malabar Group are Health, Housing, Hunger Free World, Education, Environment and Women empowerment. Integrating the principles of responsibility and sustainability into its core business, Malabar Group periodically strengthens its ESG goals to remain a socially conscious and responsible organisation. The group contributes 5% of its profit to such initiatives in the same country of operation.

BIOTECHNOLOGY COMPANY

BeiGene expands presence in Mena with opening of UAE office

DUBAI: BeiGene, Ltd. (NASDAQ: BGNE; HKEX: 06160; SSE: 688235), a global biotechnology company focused on developing and commercialising innovative medicines worldwide, announced the first step in the company's expansion in the Middle East and North Africa (Mena) region with the formal opening of its office in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Founded in 2010, BeiGene has built one of the largest and most efficient oncology research teams in the world, with a portfolio of 17 approved assets (3 internally developed) and a broad and deep pipeline focused on haematology and solid tumours with the potential to address 80 per cent of the world's cancers by incidence.

The new office is located within Dubai Science Park, the region's leading science-focused business community that is home to more than 450 customers and 5,500 professionals, and will house BeiGene's administrative, commercial, and medical colleagues.

"Our expansion into the Middle East and North Africa region is a significant step in our company's ongoing global expansion and an opportunity to reinforce BeiGene's commitment to deliver innovative, affordable and accessible medicines to more patients around the world," said Jurij Petrin, Head of New Market Development at BeiGene. "Dubai, renowned as the center of regional and international trade in the United Arab Emirates, is the ideal location for our first office in the region, signalling our growing presence in Mena and enabling us to better serve patients in the area."

"We're thrilled to announce our expansion into the United Arab Emirates, a pivotal location in the worldwide fight against cancer. This move marks our commitment to Mena, and we're eager to grow our talented team as we introduce innovative medicines to the region," said Mohammed Al-Kapany, General Manager, Mena. "Our presence at Dubai Science Park, with its state-of-the-art facilities, will best support our team and collaborations within the dynamic regional landscape to ensure patients across the region are able to equally access our innovative therapies."

Marwan Abdulaziz Janahi, Senior Vice President of Dubai Science Park, part of TECOM Group, said: "Cancer remains one of the leading causes of death worldwide, affecting millions of people and their families every year.

"Greater collaboration in the healthcare and biotechnology sector is essential to deliver breakthrough innovations that can improve survival rates and long-term outcomes for patients.

"Dubai Science Park is committed to making a meaningful impact in cancer treatment and nurturing innovative partnerships within the healthcare and biotechnology communities to benefit patients around the world. We are aligned with the goals of Dubai Economic Agenda 'D33', Dubai Research & Development Programme, and 'We the UAE 2031' vision to localise scientific advancements that deliver global impact, and welcome BeiGene's collaborationin our endeavour to deliver healthcare advancements across the world."

Through modern laboratories, innovation centres, co-working spaces, and a rich network of globally connected industry peers, Dubai Science Park's ecosystem enables and empowers R&D efforts that can unlock efficient and advanced treatment options to improve patient outcomes in cancer cases.

Dubai Science Park is part of TECOM Group's portfolio of 10 districts that includes Dubai Internet City, Dubai Media City, Dubai Studio City, Dubai Production City, Dubai Knowledge Park, Dubai International Academic City, Dubai Design District (d3), and Dubai Industrial City.

CROSS-BORDER PAYMENTS

Lulu Exchange Oman inaugurates new customer engagement centre at Al Hail

MUSCAT: Lulu Exchange - Oman's leading service provider of cross-border payments and foreign exchange officially inaugurated the 43rd customer engagement centre at Al Hail on Thursday.

The customer engagement centre was inaugurated by Sheikh Al Mutassim Abdullah Al Siyabi, Deputy Wali of Seeb Wilayat, in the esteemed presence of Sheikh Mohammed Hamed Ali Al Ghazali, Director, Lulu Exchange Oman, Adeeb Ahamed, MD, Lulu Financial Holdings and other senior management of the company.

The Lulu Exchange Al Hail customer engagement centre marks an expansion for the company in Oman, bringing the total number of customer engagement centres to 43. The broader global network under Lulu Financial Holdings now has 310 customer engagement centres.

While congratulating the Lulu Exchange Oman team on the opening, Sheikh Al Mutassim Abdullah Al Siyabi, Deputy Wali of Seeb Wilayat, said, "I extend my congratulations to the team of Lulu Exchange Oman for their achievement today, and I wish them more success in the forthcoming years. The new branch will add value to the residents of Al-Hail area by providing accessible and efficient payment services. Today's opening is a clear demonstration of Lulu Exchange's continued commitment to making a positive contribution to the Omani economy."

Adeeb Ahamed, MD, Lulu Financial Holdings congratulated team Oman and said, "Lulu Exchange Oman has fully embraced digital payment methods while concurrently expanding our physical presence in the nation. Our commitment lies in the advancement and enhancement of Oman's cross-border payment sector. The primary objective of the company is to provide exceptional services consistently. The establishment of the new engagement centre has been a strategic move aimed at not only fulfilling our customers' payment requirements but also ensuring a smooth transition towards future payment solutions."

Lulu Exchange Oman offers cross-border payment solutions, currency exchange services, and additional value-added services with a commitment to delivering prompt, transparent, and dependable services. The company's diverse services are facilitated through its extensive network of engagement centres and digital payments app, Lulu Money.

Having commenced operations in 2011, Lulu Exchange is among the leading and most trustworthy financial service providers in Oman. The company is a part of Lulu Financial Holdings – a global financial services conglomerate based in Abu Dhabi. Lulu Exchange Oman has strategic partnerships with global payment networks enabling it to service countries in the MENA, Indian sub-continent and APAC markets.

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