

HM GREETES PRESIDENT OF KOREA
MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Yoon Suk Yeol of the Republic of Korea on his country's Independence Anniversary. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Yoon Suk Yeol. His Majesty also wished the people of Korea further progress and prosperity. — **ONA**



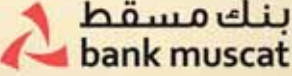
**HIS MAJESTY THE SULTAN
GREETES PRESIDENT OF INDIA**

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Droupadi Murmu of the Republic of India, on the occasion of her country's Independence Anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan wished President Murmu good health and happiness and the people of India further progress and prosperity. — **ONA**



Founded 1975 · Volume 48 No. 117 | 20 Pages · Baisas 200 · Subscription OMR63 | ISO 9001:2008 Certified Company | Chairman/Editor-in-Chief: Mohamed Issa Al Zadjali | Printed & Published by Muscat Media Group

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VIDEO ASSISTANT REFEREE

For the first time, VAR technology to be used in 2023-24 Omantel League

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The 2023-24 Omantel League, the top-flight domestic football competition in Oman, will see the introduction of Video Assistant Referee (VAR) technology as the Oman Football Association (OFA) and Omantel jointly launched the season at the Omantel headquarters on Monday.

The introduction of VAR technology will be a huge step in domestic football as the top-tier league aims to gain more prominence in the region. The Omantel League will kick-off with 12 teams this season on August 17 with defending champions Al Nahda taking on Al Shabab in the opener at the Rustaq Sports Complex.

The launch ceremony was presided over by Oman Football Association Chairman Sheikh Salim Al Wahaihi and Omantel CEO Sheikh Talal Al Maamari in the presence of clubs' representatives and other dignitaries.



Mohammed Al Yahmadi, OFA general secretary, unveiled the major highlights of the upcoming season. Besides confirming the introduction of VAR technology in phases after a trial run. For the first time, he said that the top six clubs will receive cash awards. "We may have the technology in few games this season and it will be used only where matches are telecast live. But from next season we will be ready to have VAR in all matches," said Al Yahmadi.

The Omantel League win-

ner will receive OMR50,000 while the runner-up will get OMR30,000 and the third-place team will take home OMR20,000. The next three teams will receive OMR15,000, OMR10,000 and OMR5,000 respectively.

The His Majesty's Cup winner will receive OMR25,000 from the OFA while the runner-up will get OMR15,000. The top-two teams of the OFA First Division, which will also feature 12 teams will receive OMR20,000 and OMR15,000 respectively. **>A8**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN Oman LNG inks binding term-sheet agreement

1 Oman LNG announced the signing of a binding term-sheet agreement with SEFE Secure Energy for Europe (SEFE) to supply 0.4 million metric tonnes per annum (mtpa) of LNG starting from 2026. The agreement aims to enhance the ever-growing partnership between Oman LNG and international energy firms. **>A5**

WORLD India set to celebrate its Independence Day

2 Indian PM Narendra Modi will lead the nation in marking its 77th Independence Day as the grand stage is all set for celebrations on Tuesday at the iconic Red Fort in the national capital. PM Modi will hoist the National Flag and deliver the customary address to the nation from the ramparts of the historic monument. **>A6**

MARKET Treasury bills worth OMR28.5mn issued



3 The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) raised OMR28.5 million by way of allotting treasury bills. The value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to OMR2.5 million, for a maturity period of 28 days. The average accepted price reached OMR99.660 for every OMR100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at OMR99.660 per OMR100. **>B1**



71.5%

INCREASE IN NUMBER OF PASSENGERS TRAVELLING THROUGH OMAN AIRPORTS

Muscat International Airport, the country's busiest airport, reported a staggering 79.5% increase in passengers by the end of May

MUSCAT: The total number of passengers travelling through airports of the Sultanate of Oman saw a massive growth of 71.5 percent to reach 5.22 million until the end of May 2023.

Elaborating further in its latest report of preliminary data by the National Centre for Statistics and information (NCSI) said that the number of passengers through Oman airports was 3.04 million during the corresponding period in 2022.

The report said that Muscat International Airport, the country's busiest airport, reported a stag-



5.22 million

Was total number of passengers who travelled through Oman airports until the end of May 2023

gering 79.5% increase and stood at 4.71 million at the end of May 2023 compared to the same period of the previous year. Those passengers, the NCSI report said travelled onboard 36,315 flights, constituting an increase by 65.6 percent.

Meanwhile, the number of passengers using the Salalah Airport increased by 32.7 percent to reach

470,950 in 3,468 flights, with an increase in the number of flights amounting to 26.4 percent, compared to the same period in 2022.

The total number of passengers using the Sohar Airport reached 6,999 passengers on board 110 flights, while the number of passengers via Duqm Airport reached 27,546 passengers on 258 flights. — **ONA**

IN A BUSY PLACE

People recount horror of gas explosion in Mabela restaurant

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Shattered glasses, broken windows and doors, wires hanging out, huge cracks on walls. The scene seemed to be straight out of a war zone when a *Times of Oman* scribe visited the gas explosion site in Mabela on Sunday.

People were scared and as they recounted the horror of the explosion, one was forced to think that adequate safety measures were in place and could the explosion be avoided.

The massive damage to the restaurant told a horrific story and it was a lucky escape for many as the official count of injured was 18 following the explosion.

The condition of one remains critical but a closer look at the building speaks of an escape of many lives.

So huge was the explosion that



the impact was felt in a school located opposite side of the road.

A Bangladeshi worker at a nearby private school, who was an eyewitness, said: "I start my day around 6 am and the explosion happened around 7:30am. I heard a loud explosion, which, in fact, shattered the glasses of the

school windows. It was a terrifying experience and I thank God that the glasses didn't hit me. I couldn't understand for some time what had happened until I reached the school's door and saw all that smoke and the restaurant's employees asking for help."

In his remarks to *Times of*



Oman, one of the owners of the adjacent building near the accident site, said: "I wasn't present at the time of the incident. Like many others, I too saw the video which was shared on social media around 9:30am. I didn't visualise that the damage could be so extensive when I came down to see my build-

ing and saw the restaurant. Such impactful was the explosion that both the front and rear side of my building got affected. Luckily this is a commercial building as a residential building would have been disastrous."

Another shop owner next to the explosion site said: "Everything

in my shop has been destroyed. We were lucky that the employees had not come as the explosion took place around 7.30am in the morning. Had there been employees, had there been employees, had there been employees in danger."

One civilian who lives in the restaurant neighbourhood expressed his deep concerns on the safety measures of the restaurant. "The explosion happened in a busy place in Mabela where there are schools, shops and a lot of people move around. I dread to think what would have happened if there were students in the school and more people were around. Luckily it was early morning when commercial shops did not open. I wonder what safety measures were in place in the restaurant. Had there been proper measures, the gas leak could have been notified earlier and the tragedy averted."

PRAYER
TIMINGS

Dhuhr.....	12:17pm
Asr.....	3:43pm
Maghrib.....	6:46pm
Isha.....	8:01pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....	4:23am

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OMAN SENDS CONDOLENCES TO IRAN OVER ATTACK ON SHRINE

The Sultanate of Oman has expressed its sincere condolences and sympathy to the Islamic Republic of Iran on victims of the attack that took place in Shah Cheragh Shrine in Shiraz on Sunday, wishing the injured a speedy recovery. In a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry, Oman has underscored its permanent stance in denouncing all forms and motives of terrorism. — ONA

IN SCOTLAND

RAFO band wins third place in World Music Competition

PERTH: The Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) music band, represented by the bagpipes and drums divisions, won the overall third place among 40 bands that took part in 4th stage competitions of the World Music Competition held in Perth, Scotland.

RAFO band also secured second place at the level of drummers, as per the reports of the competition's organising committee.

The 4th stage of the competition included musical performances by bagpipes and drums, in addition to concerts, infantry musical compositions scheduled for the competition, a walking stick competition and military marches.

RAFO had also won overall first place among competitors from outside the United Kingdom in the second competition held at Bridge of Allan in Scotland. — ONA

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**Happy
Independence Day**

INDIA

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MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Rent agreement registrations rise in Muttrah

Times News Service

Muscat: Statistics for 2023 shows that in the first half of the year, 3,323 new rent agreements were registered in the Wilayat of Muttrah, in addition to 21,239 contract renewals, revealed Muscat Municipality.

Residential contracts represented the highest percentage followed by commercial contracts, compared to the same period in 2022. Approximately 747 new contracts were registered and 11,999 contracts were renewed.

This increase in the registration of contracts indicates the awareness efforts exerted by Muscat Municipality to encourage the public to register rent agreements.

This practice saves the rights of both the parties of the contract, determines the amount of the fee and the duration of the contract, which reduces the emergence of disputes later between landlords, investors or tenants.

It is worth mentioning that article (14) of the Muscat Municipality law No. 38/2015, which is one of the legislative determinants and regulatory frameworks

for rental relationship between landlords and tenants, as the article states: "Anyone who violates the provisions of this law and the regulations and decisions implementing it shall be punished by a fine not less than OMR50 and not more than OMR5,000, or imprisonment for not less than 24 hours, not more than six months, or by one of the two penalties."

For these reasons, Muscat Municipality emphasises the need to register lease contracts with the competent municipality in order to preserve their rights and benefit the parties to the contract, avoid the penalty/ fine, and in order to achieve a fair tax distribution that enhances the sustainability and development of services.

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HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY

15th AUGUST

India INDEPENDENCE Day

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CULTURAL HERITAGE



Symposium on Omani frankincense held

SALALAH: A symposium on Omani frankincense and cultural heritage was held at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah. Titled “Frankincense and Cultural Heritage”, the symposium was organised by a research team specialised in social life narratives of frankincense. The symposium included four working papers, a visual presentation on associations of Omani

frankincense with social life and ancient civilizations. On the sidelines of the symposium, the organisers held an exhibition featuring a collection of paintings, types of frankincense and traditional tools used in the extraction of frankincense. The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr. Abdullah Ali Al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority.

— ONA

AT WORLD MUSIC COMPETITION

RAO band continues to excel in Scotland

GLASGOW: The band of the Royal Army of Oman (RAO) continues to achieve advanced results in the world music competition currently being held in Scotland. RAO band excelled in the second stage of the competition that qualifies to the final event, scheduled to take place in Glasgow, Scotland. The second stage of the competition included the third and the fourth contests. In the third contest, held in North Berwick, RAO band won second place, among 37 international bands, in playing different musical instruments. Staff Sergeant Mohammed Khamis Al Amiri won second place in a baton bearer event.



In the fourth competition of the second stage, held in Perth, the RAO band won second place, among 50 world bands, in musical instruments' playing competition. This time, Staff Sergeant Al Amiri won first place in a leading event.

— ONA

STARTUP GENOME INITIATIVE

Programmes and initiatives taken to stimulate startups' system discussed

MUSCAT: Halima Rashid Al Zar'ee, Chairperson of the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED) on Monday held a meeting with a delegation from Startup Genome on strategic goals that ASMED seeks to achieve through the development of startups whose business is based on technology and innovation. It also discussed efforts, programmes and initiatives undertaken by government and private establishments in Oman to stimulate the startups' system. The meeting underscored the significance of getting Oman-based startups included in the international startups' report, which offers an opportunity to raise the competitiveness of the nascent firms, enhance their international status and promote their attractiveness by helping them keep pace with global trends. Startup Genome provides analyses on policies and programmes that contribute to maximizing economic growth in the startup sector. The international firm de-



veloped more than 145 startup systems in more than 50 countries around the world. Recently, Startup Genome released a report on the performance of the startup systems around the world. In the report, Oman ranked among the top 10 countries in

the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) in areas of attractive markets for talent and abundance of venture capital financing. Oman also figured among the top 15 countries that excelled in the rapid development and performance of the startup systems.

The total market value of Omani startups exceeds \$300 million, according to a report issued by Startup Genome. Moreover, Startup Genome is an international innovation policy advisory and a research firm.

— ONA

NORTH AL-BATINAH GOVERNORATE

Students honoured for educational excellence

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Students who got 99 percent in the basic subjects of the general education diploma were honoured by Mohammed Suleiman Al-Kindi, the Governor of North Al-Batinah on Monday. The students from different schools in North Al-Batinah were honoured in a ceremony attended by a number of honourable Walis of North Al-Batinah, public and private bodies' officials, students' parents and families and the educational family of the governorate. The ceremony included various segments and started with a speech by Mohammed Suleiman Al-Kindi, the Governor of North Al-Batinah. He emphasised that this ceremony is big motivation



for students to keep up their brilliant efforts and consistency for acquiring knowledge to get on the stages of excellence which require very hard work and responsibility by the students, families, and schools. He further said that this ceremony and honours are a well-deserved outcome of the efforts and

consistency shown by each hard-working citizen of this country in general and especially of North Al-Batinah. Students will go to the next level of their journey by acquiring specialised knowledge and sciences in which they are required to keep up their hard work and persistence to achieve more excellence

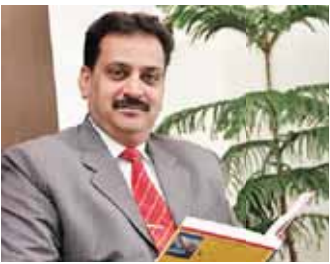
and distinction in different fields and to be on various national and international stages of honours. He also emphasised the role of the Ministry of Education in providing the required care and ingredients of a perfect educational environment for students to take education quality to the next level. During the ceremony audience witnessed a visual show about the most important advice for students after the general education diploma and the best specialised jobs of the future in North Al-Batinah Governorate. This goes in line with the governorate's needs in crucial sectors, especially the logistic and industrial sectors that keep up with the future projects of the Sultanate of Oman and Oman Vision 2040.

EDUCATION

Indian School Muscat principal resigns

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Indian School Muscat Principal, Dr Rajeev Kumar Chauhan has resigned from his post. One of the largest co-educational institutions in the Gulf with over 9000 students, Indian School Muscat, started its journey in 1975 with 135 children. In a farewell note, Dr Rajeev Kumar Chauhan said that he is preparing to embark on a new journey and will return to his hometown after serving more than 6.5 wonderful years in Oman. “I wanted to take a moment to express my heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of you. The time I've spent here has been enriched by the relationships I've formed and the support I've received from friends and well-wishers like you. Your encouragement, camaraderie, and warm gestures have truly made my stay in Oman a memorable and rewarding experience.” He also said, “Together, we've navigated challenges, celebrated achievements, and created a vi-



brant community that values education, growth, and togetherness. The memories we've shared will always hold a special place in my heart. “As I transition to this new chapter, please know that the friendships we've forged will continue to be cherished. While the physical distance may separate us, the connections we've established will remain strong. I want to express my deepest appreciation for your kindness, support, and positivity which have enriched my time in Oman. As I return to my hometown, I carry with me the fond memories of our interactions and the knowledge that the bonds we've formed will endure,” he said.

SEA TURTLE RESERVES

‘Turtle Commandos’ programme in Oman steps into third phase

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The “Turtle Commandos” programme for the protection, control and monitoring of sea turtles, which is supervised by the Environment Authority, continues its third phase with the participation of local and international volunteers. Its activities will continue until the end of December.

Sea turtle reserves Manar bint Abdullah Al Riyami, head of the “Turtle Commando” programme, said that the idea came about due to the unorganised increase in the number of visitors in sea turtle reserves, which caused inconvenience to

the turtles and a decrease in their numbers.” “The solution was to use volunteers to support and activate the role of oversight, develop environmental responsibility, encourage visitors and activate their roles to protect the marine environment,” she said. Al Riyami further added that the programme aims to enhance community members' awareness of the importance of sea turtles, encourage young people to volunteer in the environment, and clean the beaches where turtles nest from plastic and fishing waste. In addition to working to find solutions to a number of challenges and problems faced by these turtles through environmental projects that contribute to the

process of reproduction and the preservation of the environment. **Three sites** Al Riyami pointed out that the activities of the programme in its third edition began in June through three sites: the Turtle Reserve in Ras Al Hadd, Masirah Island, and Daymaniyat Island. The programme focuses on attracting volunteers from inside and outside the Sultanate of Oman to experience turtle observation and educate them on the importance of taking responsibility for protecting the marine environment. The head of the “Turtle Commandos” programme explained that the most prominent chal-

lenges facing sea turtle reserves before the implementation of this programme are the presence of human disturbances in nesting sites without adhering to the laws, and the use of artificial lighting that affects the direction of young turtles to the sea. **Sabotaging turtle nests** In addition to sabotaging turtle nests, whether by driving on them with cars or digging up nests, plastic pollution, oil or chemical leaks, as well as population encroachment on turtle nesting sites or construction in nesting sites. The programme was launched in 2021, and its tasks are to monitor, protect and work on the environmental conservation of turtles.





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CR No. 1/26749/4

Oman LNG inks binding term-sheet agreement with German company

The agreement is based on a 4-year contract, starting in 2026. Signing term-sheet agreements beyond 2024 emphasises Oman LNG's role in sustaining the Sultanate of Oman's reputation as a reliable and trusted LNG supplier



ny was held under the auspices of Eng. Salim Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals. The agreement was signed by Hamed Al Naamany, CEO of Oman LNG, and Frederic Barnaud, Chief Commercial Officer of SEFE. Mahmoud Abdulsatar Al Balushi, Chief Commercial Officer of Oman LNG, said, "The term-sheet signing with SEFE marks another milestone. Going further, the agreement leverages our constant efforts to add value to Oman's economy through growth and collaborations."

Egbert Laege, CEO of SEFE said, "We are delighted to announce the historic contract signing between SEFE and Oman LNG, marking a significant milestone for both entities. As pioneers among German companies to embark on this partnership, SEFE is proud to lead the way towards enhanced collaboration."

— ONA

SEFE has become the latest beneficiary of Omani LNG marking the first LNG term deal with a German firm. The move is considered a remarkable milestone for both countries, thus opening doors for new opportunities in the European markets.

The signed term-sheet agreement encapsulates supplying a total volume of 0.4 million metric tonne per annum of LNG from Oman LNG to SEFE.

The agreement is based on a 4-year contract, starting in 2026. Signing term-sheet agreements beyond 2024 emphasises Oman LNG's role in sustaining the Sultanate of Oman's reputation as a reliable and trusted LNG supplier, coupled with the effective management of business processes to produce reliable energy, and deliver it to customers around the world safely.

The agreement signing ceremony

ROP

Two persons arrested for trying to smuggle drugs into Muscat

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Two persons were arrested for attempting to smuggle a large quantity of crystal drug into the Sultanate of Oman, said the Royal Oman Police (ROP).

The Royal Oman Police said in a statement: "The Coast Guard Police Command boats

managed to arrest two infiltrators of Asian nationality on board a boat before they could land at the Al-Khairan beach in the Wilayat of Muscat. A large quantity of crystal drug was seized from their possession. The legal procedures are being completed against the accused."



ENVIRONMENT AUTHORITY

Jail, fine up to OMR5,000 for illegal sand mining

Times News Service

MUSCAT: An imprisonment for a period not less than ten days and not exceeding three months and a fine up to OMR 5,000 will be charged on anyone for removing soil and sand from waterways, beaches and valleys without a permit from the Environment Authority in the Sultanate of Oman.

From waterways, beaches

"The removal of soil and sand from waterways, beaches and valleys without a permit from the Environment Authority is an explicit violation of Article No. (21) of the Environmental Protection and Pollution Control Law," Environment Authority said in a statement.

The Authority added that the penalty is imprisonment for a period of not less than ten days and not exceeding three months, and a fine of not less than OMR500 and not more than OMR5,000, or one of the two penalties.



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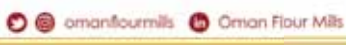
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Date for Visit location	15.8.2023 till 22.8.2023
Closing date of the tender	22.08.2023
Mode of payment of tender fee	By cash – Admin dept.
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وزارة التنمية الاجتماعية
Ministry of Social Development



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
273/2023	supply and installation of air conditioners for the Omani Women's Association building in the Wilayat of Madha	Companies specialized in the field of supplying electrical, mechanical and industrial machinery and equipment and spare parts registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the first, second, third or fourth degree	Sunday 3-9-2023 02:00 PM	Sunday 24-9-2023 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O
274/2023	General work for the building of the Department of Social Development, Nizwa	Companies specialized in the field of building contracting and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the second degree	Sunday 3-9-2023 02:00 PM	Sunday 24-9-2023 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O

❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the Tender Board may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>), On Tuesday 15/8/2023

❖ 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"

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India set to celebrate 77th Independence Day

Indian PM Modi will hoist the National Flag and deliver the customary address to the nation from the ramparts of the historic monument



NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lead the nation in marking its 77th Independence Day as the grand stage is all set for celebrations on Tuesday at the iconic Red Fort in the national capital.

As per a release by the Ministry of Defence issued on Sunday, PM Modi will hoist the National Flag and deliver the customary address to the nation from the ramparts of the historic monument.

This year's Independence Day will culminate the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' celebrations, which were launched by the Prime Minister from Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad, Gujarat on March 12, 2021, and will, once again, usher the country into 'Amrit Kaal' with renewed vigour to realise PM Modi's dream of making India a developed country by 2047.

According to the release, a number of new initiatives have been planned to mark the 77th Independence Day celebrations and a large number of guests have been invited as compared to 2022.

Upon his arrival at the Red Fort, PM Modi will be received by Defence Minister, Rajnath Singh, Raksha Rajya Mantri, Ajay Bhatt, and Defence Secretary, Giridhar Aramane.

The Defence Secretary will in-

roduce the General Officer Commanding (GoC), Delhi Area, Lieutenant General Dhiraj Seth to the Prime Minister.

The GoC Delhi Area will then conduct Narendra Modi to the Saluting Base where a combined Inter-Services and Delhi Police Guard will present a general salute to the Prime Minister. Thereafter, the Prime Minister will inspect the Guard of Honour, the release said.

The Guard of Honour contingent for the PM will consist of one officer and 25 personnel each from the Army, Air Force and Delhi Police and one officer and 24 personnel from the Navy, the release said.

"The Guard of Honour will be commanded by Major Vikas Sangwan. The Army Contingent in the Prime Minister's Guard will be commanded by Major Indrajeet Sachin, the Naval contingent by Lieutenant Commander MV Rahul Raman and the Air Force contingent by Squadron Leader Akash Ganghas. The Delhi Police contingent will be commanded by Additional DCP Sandhya Swami," it added.

After inspecting the Guard of Honour, PM Modi will proceed to the ramparts of the Red Fort where he will be greeted by Raksha Mantri, Rajnath Singh, Raksha Rajya Mantri Ajay Bhatt,

Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan, Chief of the Army Staff General Manoj Pande, Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral R Hari Kumar, and Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal VR Chaudhari, the Ministry said.

The GoC, Delhi area will conduct the Prime Minister to the dais on the ramparts to hoist the National Flag.

After being hoisted, the Tricolour will receive a 'Rashtriya Salute'. The Army band, consisting of one JCO and 20 Other Ranks, will play the National Anthem during the unfurling of the National Flag and presenting of the 'Rashtriya Salute'.

The Band will be conducted by Naib Subedar Jatinder Singh, the official release said.

Major Nikita Nair and Major Jasmine Kaur will assist the PM in hoisting the National Flag.

21-Gun salute

"It will be synchronised with the 21-Gun Salute by the valiant gunners of the elite 8711 Field Battery (Ceremonial). The ceremonial battery will be commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Vikas Kumar and the Gun Position Officer will be Naib Subedar (AIG) Anoop Singh," it added.

The National Flag Guard comprising five officers and 128 other

ranks from the Army, Navy, Air Force and Delhi Police will present Rashtriya Salute at the time of the hoisting of the national flag by PM Modi. Major Abhinav Detha from the Army will be in command of this Inter-Services Guard and Police Guard, it said.

The Army Contingent in the National Flag Guard will be commanded by Major Mukesh Kumar Singh, the Naval contingent by Lieutenant Commander Harpreet Mann and the Air Force Contingent by Squadron Leader Shrey Chawdhary. The Delhi Police contingent will be commanded by Additional DCP Shashank Jaiswal, the release said.

As soon as the national flag is hoisted by the Prime Minister, flower petals will be showered at the venue by two Advanced Light Helicopters Mark-III Dhruv of the Indian Air Force in the Line Astern Formation. The captains of the helicopter will be Wing Commander Amber Agarwal and Squadron Leader Himanshu Sharma.

Furthermore, after the showering of flower petals, the Prime Minister will address the Nation.

At the conclusion of the speech of the Prime Minister, the cadets of the National Cadet Corps (NCC) will sing the National Anthem, the release added. -ANI



Printed and published by:
Muscat Media Group
Post Box: 770,
Postal Code: 112



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EXERCISE MALABAR

Australian PM meets Quad naval leaders



CANBERRA: Australian Prime Minister on Sunday said that the navies of India, Japan, US and Australia (Quad) are participating in Exercise Malabar. He met naval leaders of four nations and noted that the Exercise Malabar for the first time is being held in Australia.

Australian PM Albanese and Deputy PM Richard Marles welcomed naval leaders from all four nations in Sydney. He stated that it was an opportunity to discuss their shared vision for a prosperous and secure Indo-Pacific region.

Taking to his official Twitter handle, Albanese stated, "This year's Exercise Malabar brings together the navies of India, Japan, the United States, and Australia. And for the first time ever it's being held in Australia."

The naval forces of the United

States, Japan, Australia and India began their Malabar joint defence exercise in Sydney on Friday, marking the first time Australia has hosted the war games amid China's growing assertiveness in the region.

Malabar series of maritime exercises began in 1992 as a bilateral exercise between the Indian Navy and the US Navy, the Ministry of Defence said in a press release earlier. The exercise now includes navies of four nations - India, Japan, Australia and US. Royal Australian Navy participated in the exercise for the first time in 2020.

The Malabar exercise started in 1992 as a bilateral initiative between the US and Indian navies, with Japan joining later. Australia rejoined the exercise in 2020 after having last participated in 2007. -ANI

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Anwarul Haq sworn in as caretaker Pakistan PM

Pakistan President Arif Alvi administered oath to the leader in the presence of outgoing Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif and his former cabinet ministers



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan former Senator and Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) leader Anwarul haq Kakar took oath as the Pakistan Caretaker PM on Monday, reported Geo News.

The Pakistan President Arif Alvi administered oath to the leader in the presence of outgoing Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif and his former cabinet ministers.

It reported that the Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani, and other high-ranking officials were also present on the occasion.

Earlier in the morning, Pakistan Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani accepted Anwarul haq Kakar's resignation as a Senate after he was appointed as the Pakistan caretaker PM.

"Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar, Member Senate of Pakistan, has resigned his seat, as his Principled stance of neutrality on becoming the caretaker Prime Minister, by writing under his hand in person before the Chairman Senate," a notification from the Senate Secretariat read.

"The Honourable Chairman Senate has been pleased to accept the resignation and consequently his seat has become vacant in terms of clause (1) of Article 64 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan with effect from 14 August," the notification added.

On August 12, Sharif and the

leader of the Opposition Raja Riaz met and concluded their last round of talks and decided to make Senator Kakar as caretaker PM.

Later on the same day, President approved the appointment of Kakar as Caretaker Prime Minister for the country.

On the social media account, X (formerly known as Twitter), the President's Office said that under Article 224 A of Pakistan's constitution, Alvi appointed Anwarul Haque Kakar as caretaker PM."President Dr Arif Alvi has approved the appointment of Anwarul Haque Kakar as Caretaker Prime Minister The President approved the appointment under Article 224 A of the Constitution," the office said in a tweet.

Balochistan lawmaker, Kakar was elected to the Senate in

2018 and has also served as the spokesperson of the provincial government prior to his election to the upper house, as per Geo News.

The lawmaker was selected as the 8th interim head of the government, a statement from the Prime Minister's Office said Saturday.

Kakar and his party had good ties with the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) during its government and he was among the people who former prime minister Imran Khan consulted on the matters of Balochistan.

For that reason, Balochistan Awami Party often faced criticism from PML-N for that reason. However, when the party changed sides, it faced criticism from PTI, reported Geo News.

The newly-appointed caretaker premier was born in 1971 in Muslim Bagh, an area of the Killa Saifullah district of Balochistan. He completed his schooling at St. Francis School, Quetta, and later enrolled in Cadet College Kohat but returned to the Balochistan provincial capital after his father's demise.

The leader has done a Master's in Political Science and Sociology from the University of Balochistan.

Kakar started his career by teaching in a school in his native town, according to Geo News. -ANI

Niger: Junta says will charge deposed leader with treason



NIAMEY: The military regime that took power in Niger in a coup in late July said on Monday it would bring deposed President Mohamed Bazoum to trial on charges of "high treason" and undermining state security.

In a televised announcement, junta spokesman Colonel Major Amadou Abdramane said the regime had "gathered the necessary evidence to prosecute before competent national and international authorities the ousted president and his local and foreign accomplices for high treason and for undermining the internal and external security of Niger."

Bazoum, the democratically elected president of the West African country, was deposed in the July 26 coup and has since been held in his presidential residence along with his son and wife.

The announcement came shortly after reports by mediators that the junta was ready to consider a diplomatic solution to its stand-off with West African bloc ECOWAS.

A group of senior Nigerian Islamic scholars quoted coup leader General Abdourahmane Tchiani as saying that "their doors were open to explore diplomacy and peace in resolving the matter."

They met the junta leader in the capital, Niamey.

Tchiani stressed the historic ties between Niger and Nigeria, saying the countries "were not only neighbors but brothers and sisters who should resolve issues amicably."

The discussion by the Nigerian scholars was led by Sheikh Abdullahi Bala Lau and came after ECOWAS' call for reinstating Bazoum as president. -DW

RIISING CASES

Bangladesh reports 11 more deaths due to dengue

DHAKA: Bangladesh has recorded 11 more deaths due to dengue and reported 2,905 additional cases in the past 24 hours till 8 am Sunday, *The Dhaka Tribune* reported. The overall death toll due to dengue in Bangladesh now stands at 398.

Since January 1, the total num-

ber of dengue cases in Bangladesh has reached 85,411. The rise in dengue cases comes despite the health authorities last week speculation that the number of dengue patients will drop to a tolerable limit by late August. However, the rise in dengue cases so far demon-

strates a harrowing picture of the outbreak.

Seven of the 11 deaths in Bangladesh were recorded in Dhaka. Of the new patients, 1,042 were hospitalised in Dhaka and the rest in other parts of Bangladesh, The Dhaka Tribune reported citing the

Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

A total of 9,733 dengue patients, including 4,335 in Dhaka, are undergoing treatment at hospitals across the country. So far, 75,280 people have recovered from dengue, according to DGHS.

In the first 13 days of July, Bangladesh recorded 9,404 cases of dengue and 46 deaths due to mosquito-borne disease. However, Bangladesh recorded 147 fatalities and 33,579 patients of dengue during the same period in August. Experts have warned that the out-

break could continue till November, with the peak expected this month.

According to DGHS data, Dhaka still remains the hotspot for dengue. Of the fatalities recorded so far in 2023, 301 deaths occurred in Dhaka alone. -ANI

GILGIT-BALTISTAN PROVINCE

Death on K2: Could the climber have been saved?

BERLIN: The photos and videos that have been circulating on social media for days about the recent death on K2 are disturbing. In them, climbers can be seen walking past the body of Pakistani climber Muhammad Hassan. At 8,611 metres above sea level, the mountain, located in Pakistan, is the world's second-highest.

As a result of the incident, a commission of inquiry has been set up by the government of Pakistan's Gilgit-Baltistan province. Among the questions it has been tasked with answering are: What exactly happened to Hassan on July 27? Was everything possible done to save his life? Should he even have been allowed up there based on his mountaineering skills? Was he sufficiently equipped for his work as a high-altitude porter on K2?

Hassan's widow told Austrian mountaineer Wilhelm Steindl and German filmmaker Philip Flämig during their condolence visit that her husband had previously only carried equipment up to the K2 base camp at around 5,100 metres. This time, though, the 27-year-old Hassan had embarked on a trek to over 8,000 metres because he needed money to pay for his sick mother's medical treatment.

Hassan supported the team that secured the route to the summit with ropes. Around 200 climbers were trying to reach the summit that day, about half of them succeeded in doing so.

Hassan lacked not only the necessary experience at extreme altitudes, but also the equipment. Norwegian climber Kristin Harila noted that the high-altitude porter was not wearing a down suit or an oxygen mask. She was among those who did reach the summit, with the support of her Nepalese mountain guide Tenjen Sherpa.

Harila says she has been subject to abuse on social media in recent days, being accused of failing to help Hassan — and even receiving death threats. Now she has responded with a statement on her website.



"This was no one's fault, you cannot comment when you do not understand the situation," she wrote.

"This happened at the most dangerous part of the deadliest mountain in the world, and you should remember that at 8000+ metres, your survival instincts impact the decisions you make."

She said her team immediately attended to Hassan when he suddenly slipped for an unexplained reason and initially hung upside down in the rope. Her cameraman, she said, spent about two and a half hours at the Pakistani's side and administered oxygen to him.

The accident happened at the so-called "bottleneck," a key point along the route. There, the climbers must cross a very steep, extremely avalanche-prone mountain flank, directly under a huge, overhanging glacier. It's been described as something akin to Russian roulette, with everyone trying to get through there as quickly as possible.

Due to the sheer volume of climbers trying to reach the summit on July 27, a long queue had formed at the bottleneck — and it lasted for hours. Several small avalanches occurred, but had there been a big one, it almost certainly would have ended in disaster.

Anwar Syed, head of the Lela Peak Expedition, the Pakistani agency that Hassan worked for, said the porter didn't suffer for long.

"After a few moments he passed away," Syed said. "So actually,

there was not enough time for his rescue."

This contradicts not only Harila's statement, but also drone footage shot by German filmmaker Flämig. This shows a climber massaging the Pakistani as he lies on the snow — in daylight. His leg still appears to be moving. The accident was reported to have occurred around 2:15 a.m. — long before daybreak. Everyone who reached the summit that day passed Hassan, some even twice; on the ascent and descent.

"Based on the accounts of three different eyewitnesses, I can report that this man was still alive while about 50 people passed him. This is also visible in the drone footage," Flämig told the Vienna daily "Der Standard."

"Some indicated that this person was still alive as they passed him on their descent."

Willi Steindl aborted his summit attempt below the site of Hassan's accident, deeming the risk of an avalanche to be too high.

"He died there miserably. It would have taken only three or four people to bring him down," Steindl told "Der Standard."

"I wasn't at the scene of the accident. If I had seen it, I would have climbed up and helped the poor person."

Although Steindl was not personally involved, he collected money from the expedition teams and delivered it to Hassan's family. He's also launched an Internet fundraising campaign to help pay for the education of the Pakistani's three young children. -DW

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SPORTS

West Indies’ King and Pooran deliver knockout blow to India

Shepherd plays the lead role for Windies with the ball as India go down in the T20I series decider

FLORIDA: India’s multi-format tour of the Caribbean and the USA ended with a T20I series defeat to West Indies, with their lack of lower-order batting muscle and a lacklustre bowling show playing a part in Sunday’s result in Florida. Nicholas Pooran and Brandon King were the architects of a superbly constructed chase for the West Indies, who wrapped the series 3-2. The pair put on 107 off 72 balls for the second wicket and didn’t allow India a foot in the door. West Indies eventually got home with 12 balls to spare to record their second straight T20I series win and their first against India since 2017. West Indies lost Kyle Mayers in



the second over to Arshdeep Singh, but it only spurred them to go even harder in drizzly conditions that forced the teams to have one eye on the DLS sheet. Pooran had a slice of luck when he was almost pounced by a diving Mukesh Kumar at mid-off in the third over of the innings, and he took full advantage of that by pummelling Hardik Pandya for back-to-back sixes soon after. Pooran continued to enjoy a charmed life when a small spike

on Snickometer - the thinnest of edges off the glove attempting a slog sweep - helped overturn an lbw decision off Kuldeep Yadav in the fifth over. The only bowler to rein in the batters somewhat was Kuldeep, who varied his pace and lengths nicely. In the previous two games, Pooran was out trying to take him on. Today, Pooran was intent on learning from that and milked singles off Kuldeep, whose first three overs went for just 16.

After going neck-and-neck for much of the innings, King pipped Pooran to the half-century when he stepped out and clobbered Chahal over long-off in the 13th over to get there off 38 balls. No sooner than the shot was hit, the players went off following a lightning warning. Upon resumption, with West Indies needing 47 off 42, Hardik threw the ball to Tilak Varma for some off-spin, and he struck the second ball when Pooran gloved an attempted reverse-sweep to slip.

But Shai Hope came in and played a sparkling hand, allaying any fears of a slowdown, by sealing victory with a six down the ground. Earlier, Yashasvi Jaiswal and Shubman Gill, the architects of the carnage from 24 hours earlier, fell cheaply to Akeal Hosein’s left-arm spin. Jaiswal was done in by the skid off the pitch while Gill was out lbw to a sweep he could’ve reviewed, with replays confirming the ball would’ve missed leg stump. Suryakumar Yadav and Tilak offset that early pressure with a superb counterattack. Tilak was especially dismissive of Alzarri Joseph as he took him for 4, 6, 4, 4 in the sixth over. At the other end, Suryakumar was having fun of his own, lofting Hosein, flat-batting a sweep down the ground for four and standing tall and driving elegantly. India’s third-wicket pair had added 49 off five overs to kick the innings into fourth gear before Roston Chase’s brilliance accounted for Tilak with a catch on his follow-through. Then Sanju Samson fell for his third low score of the series - a nine-ball 13 - to Romario Shepherd. At 87 for 4 in the 11th over, Hardik seemingly decided he wasn’t going to run

the risk of exposing the lower order too early and looked to bat himself in. India went from overs 10.2 to 14 without a single boundary, before Suryakumar launched Shepherd and then Joseph for six - the latter an inside-out six over cover to raise his half-century off 38 balls. At 121 for 4 in 15.5 overs, India seemed to have set themselves up for a final assault when the rain came down again. Hardik fell soon after resumption when he picked out long-on a delivery after he had smacked Shepherd over the long-off boundary. Suryakumar followed in the next over when West Indies overturned a not-out lbw decision via the DRS. The lower order just unravelled from there; a fortuitous boundary from the last man Mukesh (edged past the keeper) dragged India to 165 when, at one point, they had looked good for 190. The way the chase shaped up, perhaps even that may not have been enough. **Brief scores:** India 165/9 (Suryakumar Yadav 61, Tilak Varma 27; Romario Shephard 4-31, Akeal Hosein 2-24) lost to West Indies 171/2 in 18 overs (Brandon King 85*, Nicholas Pooran 47, Shai Hope 22*). - Agencies

OMANTEL LEAGUE



12 cars to be won by fans in raffle draws

<FROM A1 There are also cash awards for top-three teams of Under-20 league, Under-17 leagues. And in yet another first, 12 cars will be won over the season in raffle draws for fans. Fans engagement has been given a top priority with OFA declaring that there would be monthly prizes through a panel of experts and fans votes for the best player, best goal-keeper, and best coach and for the team fairplay team. The fans’ clubs in the top-flight will also be rewarded in the new season. Speaking to *Times of Oman*, OFA chairman Al Wahaibi said: I am happy that we are continuing our partnership with Omantel. This is the 14th season and next year we will conclude the current deal. We wish to continue with them but we will be having fresh negotiations as other competitors will also be making a bid for the new three-year deal.” The OFA chief termed it unfortunate that two teams including last season’s runner-up Al Suwaiq and Mussanah clubs have with-

drawn from the season this time to reduce the total number of teams from 14 to 12. Al Wahaibi said: “The withdrawal of two teams is a decision made by the respective clubs and I wish they had not. We will go ahead with the 12 teams though there were proposals to promote first division teams but the board took a decision to have the best 12 teams and we look forward to an exciting and entertaining season.” In his remarks, Omantel CEO Al Maamari said: We have been a long-standing partner of the top-tier league and the association has been since the 2008-2009 season. This is the second year of the new three-year deal and it has been a great journey together. “The aspirations have always been high to promote football. Our support goes beyond the game as we believe in the empowerment of Omani youth. We wish to create an ecosystem, where we treat football as an industry. We are satisfied with the partnership with the OFA and we hope to accomplish more ahead together.” Al Maamari affirmed that



Omantel will continue to support sports and athletes in the Sultanate of Oman, thus contributing to strengthening national efforts to push youth to local, continental and international podiums, achieving the goals and aspirations of the masses and satisfying the aspirations of our wise government.

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ENGLAND PACER

Finn announces retirement from all forms of cricket



LONDON: England fast bowler Steven Finn has announced his retirement from all forms of cricket. He suffered a knee injury that kept him out of action for most of 2023 and led to him calling time on his 18-year career. “I have been fighting a battle with my body for the last 12 months and have admitted defeat to it,” Finn, 34, said in a statement shared by Sussex, his county. “I feel incredibly lucky to have been able to play cricket as my vocation since I made my debut for Middlesex in 2005. The journey hasn’t always been smooth, but I have loved it, nonetheless.” Finn played 36 Tests, 69 ODIs and 21 T20Is after making his international debut in 2010 against Bangladesh. He showed his wares early in his career, returning 14 wickets in England’s win in the men’s Ashes of 2010-11. He also picked up 12 wickets - the second-most for England - in the 2015 Ashes that they won. Overall, he

finished with 125 wickets in Tests, 102 in ODIs and 27 in T20Is. Having played most of his domestic cricket for Middlesex, Finn moved to Sussex in 2022 and picked up 21 wickets in 20 appearances for them across formats. He bows out with 570 wickets in first-class cricket. “To have played 125 games for England, including 36 Tests, far surpassed what I dreamed of,” Finn said. “I want to thank Sussex Cricket for their support over the last 12 months especially and for welcoming me wholeheartedly into the club at the beginning of last season. It really is a great place to play cricket and I’m sorry that I wasn’t able to play more of a part on the field since joining the club.” “Cricket has given me a lot and I hope to give back to the game in some capacity in the future. But, for now, I’ll enjoy watching it without wondering whether my body will be able to make it through another day’s cricket.”

OMAN CRUDE PRICE FALLS

The price of Oman oil has decreased, with prices for delivery by October 2023 reaching \$87.69, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil fell by 23 cents from the price of Friday, which was \$87.92. - **ONA**

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS LOWER

The MSX index closed at 4,762.42 points, down by 0.14 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.22 per cent at 473.56 points. Sembcorp Salalah, up 6.12 per cent, was the top gainer while, the Pearl REIF, down 4.84 per cent, was the top loser.

CENTRAL BANK OF OMAN

CBO issues treasury bills worth OMR28.5 million



MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) raised OMR28.5 million by way of allotting treasury bills.

The value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to OMR2.5 million, for a maturity period of 28 days. The average accepted price reached OMR99.660 for every OMR100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at OMR99.660 per OMR100. The

average discount rate and the average yield reached 4.43214 per cent and 4.44726 per cent, respectively.

Whereas, the value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to OMR26 million, for a maturity period of 91 days. The average accepted price reached OMR98.710 for every OMR100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at OMR98.710 per OMR100. The

average discount rate and the average yield reached 5.17418 per cent and 5.24179 per cent, respectively.

Financial instruments

Treasury bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance, and they provide licensed commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds. The

Central Bank of Oman (CBO) acts as the Issue Manager and provides the added advantage of ready liquidity through discounting and repurchase facilities (Repo).

It may be noted that the interest rate on the Repo operations with CBO is 6.00 per cent while the discount rate on the Treasury Bills Discounting Facility with CBO is 6.50 per cent. -**ONA**

BRIEFS

Oil down 1% on strong dollar



SINGAPORE: Oil prices declined more than 1 per cent on Monday as concerns about China's faltering economic recovery and a stronger dollar weighed against seven weeks of gains on tightening supply from Opec+ output cuts. Brent crude futures fell \$1.07, or 1.2 per cent, to \$85.74 a barrel by 0631 GMT while US West Texas Intermediate crude was at \$82.12 a barrel, down 1.3 per cent, Reuters reported. Prices retreated as the US dollar index extended gains after a slightly bigger increase in US producer prices in July lifted Treasury yields despite expectations the Federal Reserve is at the end of hiking interest rates. A stronger dollar pressures oil demand by making the commodity more expensive for buyers holding other currencies.

-**BNA**

Asia suffers China hangover; dollar scales 2023 top on yen



SYDNEY: Asian shares slid on Monday as China's property woes amplified the case for serious stimulus even as Beijing seems deaf to the calls, while rising Treasury yields lifted the dollar to a 2023 peak on the embattled yen. MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan lost another 1.7 per cent, after shedding 2 per cent last week. Japan's Nikkei was off 1.3 per cent, even as exporters drew support from the weak yen, Reuters reported. Chinese blue chips fell 1.2 per cent, on top of a 3.4 per cent decline last week, amid a string of disappointing economic news culminating in a dire report on new bank loans in July. Figures on retail sales and industrial output are due Tuesday and analysts assume they will underwhelm, keeping downward pressure on the yuan. Adding to concerns about the deteriorating health of the country's debt-laden property developers was news two Chinese listed companies had not received payment on maturing investment products from Zhongrong International Trust Co. China's Country Garden, the country's top private property developer, is also set to suspend trading of its 11 onshore bonds from Monday. EUROSTOXX 50 futures slipped 0.4 per cent and FTSE futures 0.2 per cent. -**BNA**

OMAN TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMPANY (S.A.O.G)

Chairman's Report and unaudited Condensed Consolidated Interim Financial Results for the period ended 30 June 2023

Respected Shareholders,

We are pleased to present to you a summary of the results of the operations for the 6 months' period ended 30th June 2023.

Operating performance:

REVENUE:

Group Revenue for the period ended June 2023 has reached RO 1439.2 million compared to RO 1294.6 million for the corresponding period 2022, an increase of 11.2 %. The Group revenue include acquired business of Zain Group, which contributed revenues of RO 1149.4 Mn.

EXPENSES:

Group's total Operating expenses (including depreciation) increased to RO 709.4 Mn compared to RO 631.4 Mn for the corresponding period 2022, an increase of 12.3 %.

NET PROFIT:

The Group Net Profit after tax has grown by 31.3 % touching RO 168.9 Mn compared to RO 128.6 Mn in 2022. After adjusting for minority interest the net profit for the period is RO 38.5 Mn compared to RO 34.6 Mn in 2022, an increase of 11.2 %
Group Earning per Share (EPS) for the period ended June 2023 is RO 0.051 compared to RO 0.046 for the corresponding period of year 2022.

Omantel Domestic operations (Domestic performance)

Revenues reached RO 305.4 million compared to RO 276.8 million for the corresponding period 2022. Revenue growth is mainly coming from wholesale transit voice revenue which increased by 37.7 % and device revenue which increased by 56 %. Besides this growth was achieved in Core revenues which is coming from Mobile Postpaid revenue which increased by 11.1 % and Fixed Broadband revenues which increased by 4 %.

Net Profit for the six months ended June 2023 stands at RO 39.8 Mn compared to RO 40.2 Mn in the previous period. Inspite of the aggressive competition in both Mobile and Fixed segments net profit is maintained at similar levels compared to last year on account of sustainable revenue growth in Postpaid Mobile revenue, fixed broadband revenue and reduction in finance cost.

SUBSCRIBER BASE

The total domestic subscriber base as of June 2023 (including mobile and fixed businesses) was 3.3 Mn (excluding Mobile Resellers) compared to 3.1 Mn of the corresponding period of the previous year, an increase of 5.6 % over the last year. Total subscriber base with mobile resellers reached 3.8 Mn. Zain's total subscriber base as of Jun 2023 was 53.4 Mn compared to 51.7 Mn of the corresponding period of the previous year, an increase of 3.3 % over the last year.

SUBSIDIARY COMPANIES:

1) Mobile Telecommunication Company (Zain):

Zain Group revenues as of Jun 2023 was RO 1,149.4 Mn compared to RO 1,022.4 Mn of the corresponding period of the previous year, an increase of 12.4 % over the last year. EBITDA stands at RO 429.4 Mn, compared to the corresponding period EBITDA of RO 394.5 Mn recording an increase of 8.8 %. Net profit stands at RO 188.1 Mn compared to RO 135.4 Mn of the previous period, an increase of 39 % over the last year.

2) Domestic Market Share:

Omantel's Mobile market share (including Mobile Resellers) is 47.5 %.The Fixed Telephone (post & pre-paid) market share is 72.8 %.

Thanks and appreciation

We take this opportunity to express our heartfelt thanks to our shareholders and loyal customers for their continued support that enabled us to achieve these excellent results. Also, we wholeheartedly appreciate the sincere contribution of the Executive Management and Employees for the performance in the market challenging situation. With your support, we are confident that Omantel will continue its good performance and will be able to reach new heights of excellence.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and the staff, we are honored to express our sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq for His visionary leadership. We pray to Almighty Allah to grant him long live, health and welfare to achieve more progress, prosperity and welfare for Oman and its people.

CHAIRMAN

Note:
1. The unaudited consolidated financial statement will be delivered to any shareholders or other interested party who requests them, within 5 days of the written request. The request must indicate preference for Arabic or English.
2. Request may be addressed to Secretary, Board of Directors, Omantel P.O. Box 789, P.C. 112, Ruw' al-Salmani of Oman, Fax: 242 40 586.



Condensed Consolidated Interim Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2023

	30 June 2023 Unaudited RO '000	31 December 2022 Audited RO '000
ASSETS		
Current assets		
Cash and bank balances	409,296	451,324
Trade and other receivables	1,273,647	1,122,000
Contract assets	116,327	108,940
Inventories	95,017	69,573
Investment securities at fair value through profit or loss	112,859	50,708
Investment securities at amortised cost	-	1,000
Assets of disposal group classified as held for sale	282,491	322,956
Total Current assets	2,289,637	2,126,501
Non-current assets		
Contract assets	65,060	65,983
Investment securities at FVTPL	25,374	24,528
Investment securities at FVOCI	24,166	21,794
Investment securities at amortised cost	1,000	-
Investments in associates and joint venture	169,456	150,027
Other non-current assets	67,347	59,752
Deferred tax asset	30,956	29,269
Right of use of assets	180,091	206,539
Property and equipment	1,690,504	1,761,504
Intangible assets and goodwill	3,322,975	3,389,546
Total Non-current assets	5,576,929	5,708,942
Total Assets	7,866,566	7,835,443
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY		
Current liabilities		
Trade and other payables	1,670,806	1,466,164
Deferred revenue	123,202	122,772
Income tax payables	32,366	38,652
Borrowings	439,622	547,584
Lease liabilities	36,771	33,078
Liabilities of disposal group classified as held for sale	104,337	109,318
Total Current liabilities	2,407,104	2,317,568
Non-current liabilities		
Borrowings	1,758,420	1,740,067
Lease liabilities	214,846	210,914
Other non-current liabilities	614,323	679,958
Total Non-current liabilities	2,587,589	2,630,939
Equity		
Share capital	75,000	75,000
Capital contribution	7,288	7,288
Capital reserve	36,893	36,893
Legal reserve	25,000	25,000
Voluntary reserve	49,875	49,875
Foreign currency translation reserve	(91,749)	(90,719)
Investment fair valuation reserve	(3,532)	(3,653)
Other reserves	1,147	5,204
Retained earnings	527,645	530,408
Attributable to the Company's shareholders	627,567	635,296
Non controlling interest	2,244,306	2,251,640
Total equity	2,871,873	2,886,936
Total Liabilities and Equity	7,866,566	7,835,443

Condensed Consolidated Interim Statement of Profit and Loss - 30 June 2023 (Unaudited)

	Three months ended 30 June		Six months ended 30 June	
	2023	2022	2023	2022
	RO'000	RO'000	RO'000	RO'000
Continuing operations				
Revenue	705,311	659,806	1,439,190	1,294,610
Cost of sales	(227,368)	(234,346)	(488,799)	(451,817)
Operating and administrative expenses	(200,099)	(166,289)	(411,154)	(336,977)
Depreciation and amortization	(138,247)	(138,932)	(270,121)	(275,708)
Expected credit loss on financial assets (ECL)	(15,735)	(8,053)	(28,095)	(18,740)
Interest income	4,114	1,497	9,944	3,087
Investment income	1,635	582	3,116	2,745
Share of results of associates and joint venture	929	915	1,265	2,866
Other (expense)/ income	(2,404)	(4,993)	(20,108)	(8,562)
Gain on sale and lease back transaction	-	-	42,041	-
Finance costs	(46,611)	(36,256)	(93,473)	(68,771)
(Loss)/Gain from currency revaluation	490	(657)	(431)	2,604
Net monetary gain/ (loss)	-	-	-	-
Profit before income tax from continuing operations	82,015	73,274	183,375	145,337
Taxation	(7,035)	(5,576)	(14,479)	(14,812)
Profit for the year from continuing operations	74,980	67,698	168,896	130,525
Discontinued operations				
Profit/(Loss) for the period from discontinued operations	-	(1,569)	-	(1,905)
Profit for the period	74,980	66,129	168,896	128,620
Attributable to:				
Shareholders of the Company	17,258	16,108	38,487	34,603
Non-controlling interests	57,722	50,021	130,409	94,017
	74,980	66,129	168,896	128,620
Earnings per share				
Basic and diluted from continuing and discontinued operations - RO	0.023	0.021	0.051	0.046

MARKET

MSX index ends lower



Sembcorp Salalah, up 6.12 per cent, was the top gainer while, the Pearl REIF, down 4.84 per cent, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,762.42 points, down by 0.14 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.22 per cent at 473.56 points. Sembcorp Salalah, up 6.12 per cent, was the top gainer while, the Pearl REIF, down 4.84 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of Bank Muscat were the most active in terms of number of shares traded while Oman Telecom were the most active in terms of turnover. A total number of 438 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of OMR2.39 million, with more than 6.98 million shares changing hands. Out of 29 traded securities, 5 advanced, 14 declined, and 10 remained unchanged. At the session close, GCC & Arab investors were net buyers for OMR13,000 while domestic investors were net sellers for OMR9,000, followed by foreign investors for

OMR4,000 worth of shares. Financial Index closed at 7,784.01 points, down 0.05 per cent. Prices of Al Madina Investments, Sohar International Bank were up by 2.44 per cent, 1.89 per cent respectively. Prices of Ominvest, Bank Nizwa were up by 1.30 per cent, 1.03 per cent respectively. Industrial Index closed at 6,088.13 points, up 0.04 per cent. Prices of Galfar Engineering were up by 0.62 per cent respectively. Prices of Oman Chromite were up by 0.63 per cent respectively. Services Index was down by 0.14 per cent before closing at 1,664.54 points. Prices of Sembcorp Salalah were up by 6.12 per cent respectively. Prices of Phoenix Power, Barka Water & Power Company, Muscat Desalination, SMN Power Holding, National Gas were up by 3.23 per cent, 2.38 per cent, 2.15 per cent, 1.24 per cent, 1.06 per cent respectively. -United Securities

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff%
MSX 30 INDEX	4,779.09	4,760.55	4,762.42	4,768.87	-6.45	-0.14
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,804.77	7,768.84	7,784.01	7,787.81	-3.80	-0.05
Industry Index	6,088.13	6,084.27	6,088.13	6,085.61	2.51	0.04
Services Index	1,671.10	1,662.61	1,664.54	1,666.91	-2.36	-0.14
MSX Shariah Index	474.45	473.09	473.56	474.61	-1.05	-0.22
MSX TR INDEX	6,289.18	6,264.78	6,267.25	6,275.74	-8.49	-0.14
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,516.43	8,477.23	8,493.78	8,497.93	-4.15	-0.05
SERVICES TR IDX	1,844.68	1,835.31	1,837.45	1,840.06	-2.61	-0.14
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	6,503.63	6,499.52	6,503.63	6,500.95	2.69	0.04

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
6,981,057	2,393,588	438	23,934,875,948	5	14	10	29

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR MONDAY, AUGUST 14

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET																
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	537,565	57,511	11	0.106	0.108	0.106	0.108	0.106	0.002	1.887	0.108	0.107	0.108	0.100	495,726,727
OM0000001087	OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	10,195	2,702	3	0.265	0.265	0.265	0.265	0.000	0.000	0.265	0.265	0.265	0.100	26,500,000	
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO	1,625	111	1	0.068	0.068	0.068	0.068	0.000	0.000	0.068	0.068	0.070	0.100	8,287,500	
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	86,350	5,267	5	0.061	0.061	0.061	0.061	0.000	0.000	0.061	0.061	0.061	0.100	21,723,765	
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	2,544,864	715,323	190	0.281	0.282	0.281	0.281	0.000	0.000	0.281	0.275	0.281	0.100	2,109,297,574	
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	2,000	750	1	0.375	0.375	0.375	0.375	0.000	0.000	0.375	0.370	0.386	0.100	88,653,750	
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	501,350	187,005	26	0.376	0.376	0.372	0.372	0.003	-0.800	0.372	0.370	0.373	0.100	242,151,254	
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	1,085,829	1,096,160	22	1.010	1.010	1.000	1.000	1.010	-0.010	-0.990	1.000	1.000	1.000	0.100	750,000,000
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	303,049	24,309	19	0.082	0.082	0.080	0.080	0.081	-0.001	-1.235	0.080	0.080	0.082	0.100	15,970,848
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	215,625	81,938	10	0.380	0.380	0.380	0.380	0.385	-0.005	-1.299	0.380	0.380	0.389	0.100	253,978,862
Total	10	5,288,452	2,171,075	288												
Parallel Market																
OM0000004735	SEMBCORP SALALAH	15,000	1,560	3	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.098	0.006	6.122	0.104	0.097	0.102	0.100	99,275,483
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	6,000	252	1	0.042	0.042	0.042	0.042	0.041	0.001	2.439	0.042	0.039	0.042	0.100	3,570,000
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	1,850	300	1	0.162	0.162	0.162	0.162	0.161	0.001	0.621	0.162	0.160	0.167	0.100	32,883,804
OM0000001897	MAJAN COLLEGE	5,000	535	2	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.000	0.000	0.107	0.100	0.107	0.100	9,630,000
OM0000002572	OMAN OIL MARKETING	1,900	1,900	5	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	0.000	0.000	1.000	0.000	1.000	0.100	61,275,000
OM0000004825	ALBATINAH POWER	110,000	2,970	3	0.027	0.027	0.027	0.027	0.000	0.000	0.027	0.026	0.027	0.100	18,221,961	
OM0000001020	OMAN CHROMITE	3,200	15,222	6	4.751	4.770	4.751	4.770	4.800	-0.030	-0.625	4.770	4.750	4.900	1.000	14,310,000
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	336,854	99,617	69	0.299	0.299	0.294	0.295	0.297	-0.002	-0.673	0.294	0.294	0.294	0.100	227,209,000
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	854,245	81,576	24	0.095	0.096	0.095	0.096	0.097	-0.001	-1.031	0.096	0.096	0.096	0.100	214,747,491
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	22,200	2,065	3	0.093	0.093	0.093	0.093	0.094	-0.001	-1.064	0.093	0.090	0.095	0.100	7,905,000
OM0000007084	MUSCAT CITY DESALINATION	7,692	700	6	0.091	0.091	0.091	0.091	0.093	-0.002	-2.151	0.091	0.091	0.093	0.100	14,155,086
OM0000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	5,000	205	3	0.041	0.041	0.041	0.041	0.042	-0.001	-2.381	0.041	0.041	0.044	0.100	6,560,000
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	42,103	2,528	5	0.061	0.061	0.060	0.060	0.062	-0.002	-3.226	0.060	0.060	0.062	0.100	87,756,088
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	225,000	6,075	7	0.027	0.027	0.027	0.027	0.028	-0.001	-3.571	0.027	0.026	0.027	0.100	19,288,971
OM0000008868	THE PEARL REIF	26,821	3,165	3	0.118	0.118	0.118	0.118	0.124	-0.006	-4.839	0.118	0.120	0.124	0.100	50,122,885
Total	15	1,662,865	218,670	141												

GLOBAL SLOWDOWN

India's overall exports decline 5% in July

NEW DELHI: India's overall exports, both merchandise and services combined, are estimated to be worth \$59.43 billion in July 2023, exhibiting a degrowth of 5.06 per cent over July 2022, Ministry of Commerce and Industry said. Overall imports in July 2023 are estimated to be \$67.77 billion, exhibiting a degrowth of 12.92 per cent over July 2022. In July, however, the trade balance, meaning the difference between exports and imports, narrowed from \$15.24 billion to \$8.35 billion. So far in 2023-24 (April-July), India's overall exports is estimated to exhibit a negative growth of 5.98 per cent over April-July 2022. Overall imports in April-July 2023 are estimated to exhibit a negative growth of 11.09 per cent over April-July 2022, the ministry said. The trade deficit in April-July 2023-24 period too narrowed from \$46.72 billion to \$28.26 billion, data showed. -ANI

CHINESE MARKET

Rendezvous with vibrant blooms in Asia's leading flower market

KUNMING: While many Chinese cities are currently experiencing scorching heat, the essence of spring lingers in the Dounan Flower Market in Kunming, southwest China's Yunnan Province. An array of blossoms, including lotuses, roses and sunflowers, grace the scene here, ready to embark on a journey across the nation, adorning shopping malls, conference halls, wedding venues and the cosy corners of people's homes. About 30 years ago, the Dounan Flower Market was just a street with roadside stalls selling flowers, but today it has become Asia's largest fresh-cut flower trading market. Its floral beauty reaches more than 40 countries and regions, with the export value hitting 520 million yuan (about \$71.7 million in 2021, ranking first nationwide. Yunnan's fresh-cut flower growing area totalled 21,700 hectares in that year. "This is a market for all people,



where everyone can buy their favorite flowers at the lowest price," said Shi Jinlong, a seller hailing from the northwestern Shaanxi Province. The Dounan market springs to life around 5 am every day. Upon entering the bustling market, Shi starts his day by looking through the array of flowers brought by wholesalers and jostling down price details as he goes. The wholesale trading session

normally ends by 9am. By then, retailers like Shi arrange their flowers at their stalls, waiting for buyers. A portion of Shi's flowers had been procured from wholesalers earlier, while the remaining were homegrown. "When the business is good, around 600 bouquets could be sold in a day," Shi told Xinhua, adding that he has also involved his relatives in the flower industry. -Xinhua

SANDALS

German sandal maker Birkenstock heads to New York Stock Exchange

BRUSSELS: Birkenstock doesn't actually mean "sandal" in German, but it might as well. Around the world, the name has become synonymous with a two-strap leather and cork sandal. Fashion is fickle. But Birkenstocks are timeless. Founded in 1774, the company was run by the same family until 2013, when professional managers came in and completely reorganised it. Even after these changes, the newly named Birkenstock Group was still owned by the founding family, then in its sixth generation. In early 2021, the family sold a controlling majority of the business to L Catterton, a private equity firm backed by Bernard Arnault and his luxury conglomerate LVMH. Though details were not released, it was reported the investment valued the company at \$4.9 billion (€4 billion at the time, €4.48 billion today). Now just ahead of its 250th birthday, another change is heading the company's way as plans move forward to list on the New York Stock Exchange as early as September. Current estimates value the company from \$6 billion all the way up to a whopping \$10 billion. With such sums, the new owners will surely want to cash in, plus unlock value for future investments. An initial public offering (IPO) seems obvious, even if it



means giving up some control.

Always in fashion

Birkenstock was long associated with hippies, health food and sock-wearing Germans. Yet somehow it has managed to become a must-have brand for people around the world. Today the sandals are sold in over 100 countries. Recently Birkenstock has collaborated with high-end names Dior, Valentino, Jil Sander and Manolo Blahnik. More people working from home could account for a jump in sales of comfy footwear. Over the past few weeks, Margot Robbie's decision to wear a pink pair in "Barbie" has brought new colour and a big push to the brand. Yet no matter how mainstream,

they still make a statement. They are an "anti-fashion shoe that says I don't care about fashion," said Allyson Stewart-Allen, London-based CEO of International Marketing Partners, a marketing consultancy. What we wear tells others who we are and what our values are.

Birkenstock: The numbers

On the German website, prices for men's sandals range from €40 (\$44) up to €260 for a sheepskin-lined pair. Kids' pairs start at €30. They come in an array of colours and materials. Some are the classic leather and cork, others are made of synthetic material, still others are vegan. Yet the company makes more

Sticking to its German roots?

Since 2014 sales at Birkenstock have climbed dramatically. Back then the company brought in €273 million, according to statistics data provider Statista. In 2020, that was up to €730 million. The latest numbers presented by the company show revenue of €1.24 billion for last year. -DW

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LIFESTYLE

STUDY LINKS COMMON COLD VIRUS TO POTENTIALLY FATAL BLOOD CLOTTING DISORDER

Platelets, also known as thrombocytes, are specialised cellular fragments that form blood clots in the event of a scrape or traumatic injury. Thrombocytopenia is a condition recognised as decreased platelet levels throughout the body as a result of viral infections, autoimmune disease, and other conditions.

After a robust clinical and research collaboration, Stephan Moll, MD, and Jacquelyn Baskin-Miller, MD, both in the UNC School of Medicine, have linked adenovirus infection with a rare blood clotting disorder. This is the first time that the common respiratory virus, which causes mild cold-and flu-like symptoms, has been reported to be associated with blood clots and severe thrombocytopenia.

“This adenovirus-associated disorder is now one of four recognized anti-PF4 disorders,” said Moll, professor of medicine in the Department of Medicine’s Division of Hematology. “We hope that our findings will lead to earlier diagnosis, appropriate and optimized treatment, and better outcomes in patients who develop this life-threatening disorder.”

Their new observation, which was published in the New England Journal of Medicine, provides fresh insight into the virus and its role in causing an anti-platelet factor 4 disorder. The discovery also opens up a whole new field of study because there are still many unanswered questions about how, why, and who is most likely to have this ailment.

HIT, VITT, and “Spontaneous HIT”

Antibodies are large Y-shaped proteins that can stick to the surface of bacteria and other “foreign” substances, flagging them for destruction by the immune system or neutralizing the threat directly.

In anti-PF4 disorders, the person’s immune system makes antibodies against platelet factor-4 (PF4), a protein that is released by platelets. When an antibody forms against PF4 and binds to it, this can trigger the activation and rapid removal of platelets in the bloodstream, leading to blood clotting and low platelets, respectively.

Sometimes, the formation of anti-PF4 antibodies is triggered by a patient’s exposure to heparin, called heparin-induced thrombocytopenia (HIT), and sometimes it occurs as an autoimmune condition without heparin exposure, which is referred to as “spontaneous HIT”

In the last three years, thrombocytopenia has been shown to rarely occur after injection with COVID-19 vaccines that are made with inactivated pieces of an adeno-viral vector. These vaccines are different from the ones made in the United States, such as those by Moderna and Pfizer. The condition is referred to as vaccine-induced immune thrombotic thrombocytopenia (VITT).

The Road to Discovery

The road to the discovery started when a 5-year-old boy who had been diagnosed as an outpatient with adenovirus infection had to be admitted to the hospital with an aggressive blood clot forming in his brain (called cerebral sinus vein thrombosis) and severe thrombocytopenia. Doctors determined that he hadn’t been exposed to heparin or the adeno-vector COVID-19 vaccination, the classical triggers for HIT and VITT.

“The intensive care unit physicians, the neuro-intensivist, and hematology group were working around the clock to determine next steps in the care for this young boy,” said Baskin-Miller. “He wasn’t responding to therapy and was progressing quickly. We had questioned whether it could have been linked to his adenovirus considering the vaccine data, but there was nothing in the literature at that time to suggest it.”

The collaborative clinical effort to help the patient expanded: Baskin-Miller reached out to Moll, who is an expert in thrombosis and has various connections throughout the field. To Moll, it looked like the pediatric patient could have “spontaneous HIT”. They then tested for the HIT platelet-activating antibody, which came back positive.

Collaboration is Key

Moll reached out to, Theodore E. Warkentin, MD, a professor of pathology and molecular medicine at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, who has been researching anti-PF4 disorders for three decades, to hear if he was aware of an association between adenoviral infection and spontaneous HIT. Warkentin, who is one of the premier international anti-PF4 disorders researcher, wasn’t aware of the condition.

Around the same time, Moll received a phone call from Alison L. Raybould, MD, a hematologist-oncologist in Richmond, Virginia, a previous trainee from UNC. She was seeing a patient who had multiple blood clots, a stroke and heart attack, arm and leg deep-vein thrombosis (DVT), and severe thrombocytopenia.

The patient had not been exposed to heparin or vaccines. However, this patient’s severe illness had also started with viral symptoms of cough and fever, and she had tested positive for adenoviral infection. Testing for an anti-PF4 antibody also turned out to be positive.

To help clarify the diagnoses of the two patients, Warkentin immediately offered to further test the patients’ blood and samples were directly to his laboratory in the Hamilton General Hospital for further study. They confirmed that the antibodies were targeting platelet factor 4, much like the HIT antibodies.

Surprisingly, the antibody resembled that of the VITT and bound to PF4 in the same region as VITT antibodies do. They concluded that both the patients had “spontaneous HIT” or a VITT-like disorder, associated with an adenovirus infection.

More Questions

Following such a groundbreaking conclusion, Moll and colleagues are now left with many questions about the prevalence of the new anti-PF4 disorder, whether the condition can be caused by other viruses, and why this condition doesn’t occur with every infection with adenovirus. They also wonder what preventative or treatment measures can be made to help patients who develop the new, potentially deadly anti-PF4 disorder. “How common is the disorder?” asked Moll. “What degree of thrombocytopenia raises the threshold to test for anti-PF4 antibodies? And then finally, how do we best treat these patients to optimize the chance that they will survive such a potentially deadly disease?” — **ANI**

IN-PICTURES



Ameesha Patel at the premiere of the film 'Gadar 2'
Bollywood actress Ameesha Patel at the premiere of the film 'Gadar 2', in Mumbai. ANI Photo



Annual carnival for scarecrows held in Lebanon
A scarecrow made from recycled materials is seen during an annual carnival for scarecrows in Jezzine, Lebanon. Xinhua



View of meteor shower in Civljane, Croatia
This picture shows a view of a meteor shower in Civljane, Croatia. Xinhua



Argentina holds presidential primaries
Voters cast their ballots at a polling station in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Argentina held presidential primary elections on Sunday to elect the candidates for the general elections scheduled for October 22. Xinhua



National Women's Day celebrated in Tunisia
Women dressed in traditional attire celebrate the national Women's Day in Tunis, Tunisia. Xinhua



People visit GAIKINDO Indonesia Int'l Auto Show 2023 in Tangerang
People visit the booth of Chery at the GAIKINDO Indonesia International Auto Show (GIIAS) 2023 in Tangerang of Banten province, Indonesia. The GIIAS 2023 will last till August 20. Xinhua



World Nomads Fashion Festival held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan
This picture shows a scene of the World Nomads Fashion Festival in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. A celebration event was held here to mark the 5th anniversary of the World Nomads Fashion Festival. Xinhua

ROUND-UP

ISWKi students achieve outstanding results in AS Level examinations



Indian School Wadi Kabir Cambridge International achieved a commendable total of 14 As in subjects including English Language, Business, Information & Technology, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Accounting, Economics and Mathematics

MUSCAT: The students of Indian School Wadi Kabir Cambridge International (ISWKi) have achieved outstanding results in their AS Level examinations, and we couldn't be prouder.

On August 10, 2023, the much-anticipated results were unveiled, and we are excited to announce that Mannat Ajmani has emerged as the school topper, achieving an incredible 7 As across all subjects. Moreover, our school achieved a commendable total of 14 As in subjects including English Language, Business, Information & Technology, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Accounting, Economics, and Mathematics.

We extend our warm congratulations to each student for this remarkable accomplishment. We also want to express our gratitude to our dedicated educators and parents whose hard work and guidance have contributed significantly to these achievements.

D N Rao, our Principal, had a special message for our students. He highlighted that while these results are indeed a testament to their efforts, they are just one step towards realising their larger dreams and goals. We believe in the immense potential of each learner, and we are confident that they will continue to shine in their future endeavours.

It's worth noting that success goes beyond examinations. Our students possess a range of talents, and we encourage them to embrace life with enthusiasm, hold their heads high, and always believe in their extraordinary abilities. The support of our school community, including parents and educators, has been instrumental in fostering this spirit of excellence.

We take this moment to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of our educators and the parents who have played an instrumental role in shaping our students' success. Each one of you has contributed to this remarkable feat, and we are immensely grateful.

Not only have our students made their parents proud, but they have also brought great honour to our school and its teachers. As the ISWKi family, we are excited to carry forward this momentum, continuing to achieve remarkable results with the same enthusiasm and dedication. Thank you for being a part of the journey that has made us the #SchoolOfChoice. Together, we will continue to inspire and nurture excellence.

BENEFITS

Continental tyres' exciting campaign ending soon

MUSCAT: Now customers can buy Continental tyres and enjoy exclusive benefits. Purchase 4 new Continental Tyres and get OMR40 fuel voucher. The campaign will end on 17 August, 2023 (Conditions apply. Please visit Saud Bahwan Automotive Tyre Retail outlets.)

Opting for Continental tyres for your vehicle is the finest choice one can make as Continental tyres is renowned for prioritising safety on road. Manufactured with world-class German tyre technology Continental has developed tyres that offer higher mileage, better fuel efficiency, improved braking on wet surfaces, and high levels of safety and comfort.

Continental tyres make a good choice because of their vast range that has a tyre for every type of vehicle and also their innovative designs and special tread patterns. Revolutionary features like Asymmetrical Tread Pattern, Bionic Contour, Flat Belt Concept and Advanced Silica Technology result in performance that's yet to meet its match internationally.

Continental is also seriously committed to the tuning market. For Continental, it's a highly technical & emotional experience. An experience that pushes the limits of possibility in a way that no tyre has done before as tuning means enhanced safety - because what's safe for very high speeds is especially safe for everyday motoring.

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India

INDEPENDENCE DAY

AUGUST 15, 2023
TUESDAY

India's G-20 Presidency — A moment of national pride and global solidarity

On the joyous occasion of 77th Independence Day of India, I am proud to convey my greetings and best wishes to all Indian nationals in the Sultanate of Oman.

As India marks the culmination of *Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav*, commemorating 75 years of independence of our beloved nation, it is fitting that it is leading the global effort towards peace, sustainability and progress under its Presidency of the G-20. A millennia old civilization and a proud young nation is today at the global crossroads, helping craft a global consensus on the defining issues of our time.

The vision of India's G-20 Presidency of "One Earth, One Family, One Future" exemplifies its ideals of the essential unity of humankind, its age-old testament to the protection and preservation of nature and the innate belief of its people towards global peace and amity.

As Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has noted "Housing one-sixth of humanity, and with its immense diversity of languages, religions, customs and beliefs, India is a microcosm of the world". Today as the G-20 President, India is acting as an 'agent of change' purposefully helping craft consensus to address critical developmental issues such as climate financing, debt vulnerabilities, ensuring progress on sustainable development goals and

Over the past seven decades, India has transformed itself into the fastest-growing major economy in the world, an IT and digital inclusion powerhouse, a global food basket, the pharmacy of the world and a major space power

evolving a framework for digital public infrastructure.

The agenda of India's Presidency of the G-20 is inclusive, ambitious, action-oriented, and decisive and we are determined to make ours a Presidency of healing, harmony and hope, fostering with our friends and partners from all over the world, a new paradigm of human-centric globalisation.

Friends,

On this joyous occasion, it is also fitting to recall the remarkable progress India has achieved since its independence. Over the past seven decades, India has

AMBASSADOR'S MESSAGE



AMIT NARANG, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman

transformed itself into the fastest-growing major economy in the world, an IT and digital inclusion powerhouse, a global food basket, the pharmacy of the world and a major space power. India's journey from a developing nation to a global player is a testament to the resilience, innovation, and determination of our people.

As we celebrate this historic occasion, I am delighted to reflect upon the strong and enduring relationship between India and Oman. India and Oman have forged a robust partnership, built on the foundation of mutual respect,

trust, and shared aspirations. Our bilateral relations encompass a wide array of sectors, including trade and investment, defence and security, energy, education, tourism, space and cultural exchanges. These multifaceted ties have flourished, contributing to the prosperity and progress of our peoples.

Trade between our nations has more than doubled in two years, reaching a record \$12.4 billion in fiscal year 2022-2023. Investment ties between India and Oman have also witnessed substantial growth. There are more than 6,000 India-Oman joint ventures

'A journey towards global leadership' >C2

9 Years, 1 big footprint >C2

Powering Amrit Kaal >C3

Through Mann Ki Baat@100, the tale of New India >C4

These educational exchanges enhance our understanding of each other's cultures, strengthen the ties between our youth, and create a bridge of knowledge and friendship.

As we celebrate the *Azaadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav*, it is imperative to recognise the contribution of the Indian diaspora in Oman. They have played a vital role in promoting goodwill, fostering cultural understanding, and strengthening the bonds between our nations. With an estimated population of nearly 700,000 Indian nationals in Oman, they continue to be an integral part of Oman's social fabric, contributing to its development and progress.

Let me conclude by remembering the sacrifices of our freedom fighters, whose indomitable courage and determination paved the way for our independence. Today, we stand united as proud Indians, cherishing the values of democracy, diversity, and inclusivity that define our great nation.

Let us reaffirm our commitment to further strengthen the bonds between India and Oman, to deepen our cooperation, and to work together towards shared progress and prosperity.

I also take this opportunity to wish, on behalf of the Government and people of India, greetings and best wishes to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Government and the kind people of Oman for continued peace, progress and prosperity. Jai Hind!

Khimji Ramdas and the people of Oman congratulate all Indians on the occasion of India's 77th Independence Day.

We take this moment to celebrate Oman's ancient ties with India and look forward to a future of greater collaboration for progress and prosperity.

CELEBRATING 77 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE



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Best wishes to the
People of India on the occasion of
their 77th Independence Day.

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India

INDEPENDENCE DAY
TUESDAY, AUGUST 15, 2023



‘India’s technological revolution: A journey towards global leadership’

NARENDRA MODI

Prime Minister of India

Address at Bengaluru Tech Summit

India’s technology and innovation have already impressed the world. But the future will be much bigger than our present. Because India has: Innovative youth and increasing tech access.

The power of India’s youth is known across the world. They have ensured tech globalisation and talent globalisation. Healthcare, management, finance – you will find young Indians leading many domains.

We are using our talent for global good. Even in India, their impact

is being seen. India jumped to the 40th rank in the Global Innovation Index this year. In 2015, we were ranked 81! The number of unicorn start-ups in India has doubled since 2021! We are now the 3rd largest start-up hub in the world. We have over 81,000 recognised startups. There are hundreds of international companies that have R&D centres in India. This is due to India’s talent pool.

Indian youth are being empowered by increasing tech access. A mobile and data revolution is happening in the country. In the last 8 years, Broadband connections rose from 60 million to 810 million, Smartphone users went from 150



Prime Minister Narendra Modi

million to 750 million. The growth of the internet is faster in rural areas than in urban areas. A new demographic is being connected to the information superhighway. For a long time, technology was seen as an exclusive domain. It was said to be only for the high and mighty. But India has shown how to democratise technology. India has also shown how to give tech a human touch. In India, technology is a force of equality and empowerment. The world’s largest health insurance scheme Ayushman Bharat provides a safety net for nearly 200 million families. It means, about 600 million people! This programme is run based

on a tech platform. India ran the world’s largest COVID-19 vaccine drive. It was run through a tech-based platform called COWIN. Let us go from the health sector to education. India has one of the largest online repositories of open courses. There are thousands of courses available across different subjects. Over 10 million successful certification have happened. This is all done online and free. Our data tariffs are among the lowest in the world.

During COVID-19, low data costs helped poor students to attend online classes. Without this, two precious years would have been lost for them. **>C4**

MODI GOVT’S 9TH ANNIVERSARY

9 years, one big footprint



BY DR. S. JAISHANKAR,
External Affairs Minister

THE FOREIGN Minister, writing on Modi govt’s 9th anniversary, argues not only is India’s diplomacy far more influential, its handling of a volatile world is also much more sophisticated:

As the Modi government completes nine years in office, foreign policy would certainly be among the domains where it has made an impact. This is increasingly recognised by the world and in India itself. It is visible in its new approaches like Neighbourhood First and SAGAR, mechanisms like Quad and I2U2 and initiatives such as the International Solar Alliance. India is perceived as a responsible development partner, a First Responder, and a voice of the Global South. Each of these aspects reflects a quest towards becoming a leading power.

India’s rise takes place in a volatile and uncertain world. The turbulence of our era will not only have to be managed, but where possible even leveraged. Ongoing conflicts and big power competition determine the larger landscape. Indian diplomacy has responded through optimal positioning vis à vis the major power centres, less by hedging and more through active pursuit of interests and values. Our independence of policy and action has been a defining characteristic. In these nine years, many key partners have also witnessed radically different administrations. Yet India has ensured the trajectory of partnerships that remains consistently positive.

The Covid pandemic is the transformational event of our times. It highlighted the economic concentration and its ensuing vulnerabilities that characterise globalisation. Forging reliable and resilient supply chains is therefore a key to de-risking. India seeks to participate in that endeavour through Make in India, PLI schemes and Gati Shakti. PM Modi’s foreign policy focuses on exploring global opportunities, building deep strengths, absorbing technology and best practices, and expanding employment.

Our growing digital existence has brought to the fore concerns of trust and transparency. Critical and emerging technologies are gaining salience by the day.

This is particularly so in regard to communication, mobility, energy and health. New domains of competition are also visible, enabled by radical breakthroughs in diverse fields. As the knowledge economy encounters demographic constraints, Indian talent is a powerful card. Fostering trusted collaboration and making technology choices are consequently of utmost importance.

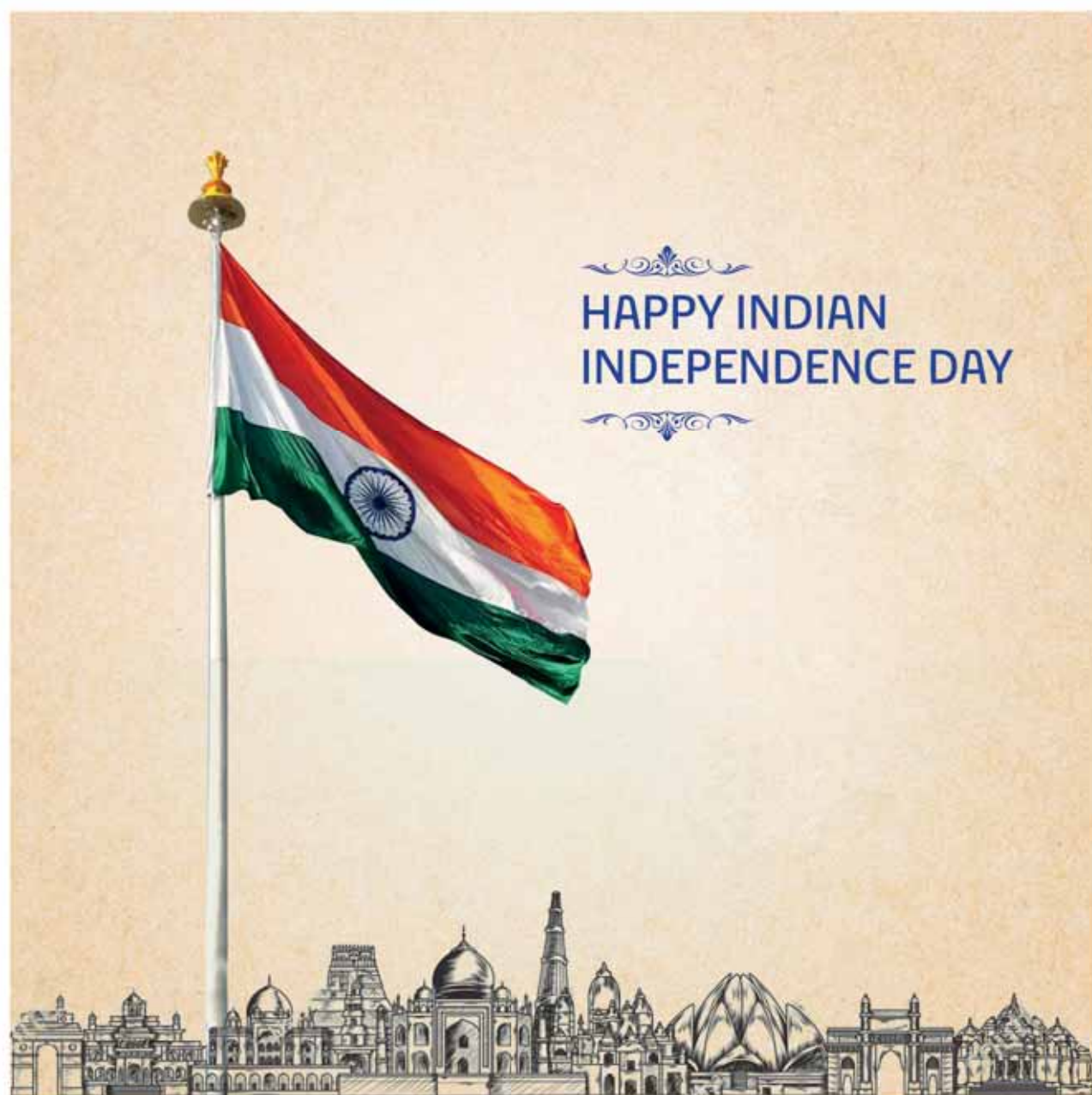
Envisaging a global workplace, the Modi government has concluded numerous mobility agreements, ensured fair-play for our professionals and students abroad, while securing them in times of distress. The Vande Bharat Mission and Operations Ganga and Kaveri are recent reminders.

India is today the most populous nation; the fifth largest economy and growing. But its greater influence comes from the power of ideas and initiatives. Whether it is climate action or counter-terrorism, connectivity or maritime security, financial inclusion or food security, India has actively shaped discussions and outcomes.

The Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, International Year of Millets and Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE) are notable expressions. Much of how India influences the world is through its own policies and delivery. When we ensure digital public goods and plug leakages, promote renewables and encourage energy efficiency or produce vaccines on scale and create a massive safety net, these are examples for others.

A willingness to share has also gained deep global appreciation. Vaccine Maitri, which made us the source for almost 100 nations, created abiding goodwill. On a more recurring basis, 600 development projects spanning 78 nations testify to our internationalism. And not least, India’s emergence as a First Responder in disaster situations like Türkiye recently underlines its capabilities.

India’s expanding diplomatic footprint reflects its growing interests. Vital partners need to be engaged continuously and intensively, but others too deserve attention. The frequency and expanse of high-level interactions has been widely welcomed by our partners. **>C4**



On the joyous occasion of Indian Independence Day,
we extend our gratitude to the visionary
leaders who played a pivotal role in fostering a sense of friendship,
unity, and prosperity among us.

LONG LIVE INDO-OMAN FRIENDSHIP





ENERGY SECURITY

Powering Amrit Kaal

HARDEEP S PURI
Union Minister for Petroleum & Natural Gas and Housing & Urban Affairs

AN INTEGRATED approach that focuses on renewable energy along with exploration of traditional fuels is the key to energy security in the next 25 years. As the world's fastest-growing major economy with rising energy needs, India will account for approximately 25 per cent of the global energy demand growth between 2020-2040, as per BP energy outlook and IEA estimates. Ensuring energy access, availability and affordability for our large population is imperative. This makes our case sui generis and has driven our energy strategy, now acknowledged the world over as being pragmatic and balanced.

How has India managed to do this?
When petrol and diesel prices went up by 35-40 per cent in the US, Canada, Spain and the UK, and despite importing over 85 per cent of its crude oil requirements and 55 per cent of its natural gas requirements, prices of diesel in India have actually gone down in the last 1 year. When several countries in our neighbourhood have had dry outs and power cuts to manage demand, there has been no shortage of fuel anywhere in India, even during floods and natural calamity situations.

This was made possible due to the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi for ensuring energy justice. The Centre and many BJP-ruled states announced massive cuts in excise duty and VAT rates, twice. Oil PSUs, being good corporate citizens, absorbed huge losses to ensure that the massive hikes in the prices of

crude oil and natural gas in the international market were not passed on to Indian consumers. Subsidised APM gas for the city gas distribution sector was drastically increased even at the cost of cutting down the captive use of domestic gas by our own PSUs. We even imposed an export cess on petrol, diesel and ATF, and a windfall tax on domestically produced petroleum products to prevent refiners and producers from profiteering at the cost of domestic consumers. Over the years, India has expanded its network of crude oil suppliers from 27 nations to 39 nations. India has also further strengthened ties with countries like the US (energy trade has gone up 13 times in the last four years) and Russia to ensure a reliable supply of crude oil. This strategic market card, as the world's third-largest importer, not only ensured affordable energy for Indian consumers but also had a calming effect on global petroleum markets.

What is inescapable is that India's purchase of petroleum products from certain nations has actually kept the global demand and supply of around 98-100 million barrels/day balanced, thereby keeping oil prices in check for the global value chain. Had this not been done, global prices would have shot up to \$300/barrel.

We are working on both traditional fuel exploration as well as energy transition. Our reforms in making India an attractive energy and power destination are reflected in the consulting firm Wood Mackenzie noting that India could be the licencing wildcard of 2023. By 2025, India wants to boost its net geographic area under exploration from 8 per cent (0.25 million sq km) to 15 per cent (0.5 million sq km). It has reduced the prohibited/no-go areas in our exclusive economic

zone (EEZ) by 99 per cent, releasing nearly 1 million sq km for exploration.

However, as demonstrated by PM Modi at Glasgow, we remain steadfast in our climate change commitments – becoming net-zero in emissions by 2070 and cutting down emissions by 1 billion tonnes by the end of 2030.

We are also rapidly expanding our petrochemical production, in line with the massive increase in living standards and rapid urbanization. India is a global exporter of petroleum products and its refining capacity is the fourth-largest in the world after the US, China, and Russia. Efforts are underway to further enhance this capacity to 450 MMT by 2040. The refining capacity expansion was also one of the major factors in ensuring fuel price stability during the international oil price volatilities of last year.

India is also accelerating its efforts to move towards a gas-based economy by increasing the share of gas from the current 6.3 per cent to 15 per cent by 2030. India has connected more than 90.5 million families with clean cooking fuel in the past nine years. PNG connections have increased from 2.28 million in 2014 to over 10 million in 2023. The number of CNG stations in India has gone up from 938 in 2014 to 4,900 in 2023. Since 2014, India has increased the length of its gas pipeline network from 14,700 km to 22,000 km in 2023.

At the recently-concluded India Energy Week 2023, India took a giant stride in its biofuel revolution by launching E20 – 20 per cent ethanol-blended gasoline, which will be rolled out in 15 cities across the country in the next two years. India's ethanol blending gasoline has grown from just 1.53 per cent in 2013-14 to 10.17 per cent in 2023.



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Independence Day Greetings to the People and the Government of India

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India

INDEPENDENCE DAY
TUESDAY, AUGUST 15, 2023



TECHNOLOGICAL REVOLUTION

A journey towards global leadership

< FROM C2 India is using technology as a weapon in the war against poverty.

Under Svamitva scheme, we are using drones to map lands in rural areas. Then, property cards are given to the people. This reduces land disputes. It also helps the poor to access financial services and credit. During COVID-19, many countries were struggling with a problem. They knew people needed help. They knew benefit transfers would help. But they did not have the infrastructure to take benefits to people. But India showed how technology could be a force for the good.

Our Jan Dhan Aadhar Mobile Trinity gave us the power to directly transfer benefits. Benefits went directly to authenticated and verified beneficiaries. Billions of rupees reached the bank accounts of the poor.

During COVID-19, everyone was worried about small businesses. We helped them but we went one step further. We helped street vendors access working capital to restart businesses. Those who start using digital payments are given incentives. This is making digital transactions a way of life for them.

Have you heard of a government running a successful e-commerce platform? It has happened in India. We have the Government e-Marketplace, also called GeM. It is a platform where small traders and businesses fulfil the government's needs. Technology has helped small businesses find a big customer. At the same time, this has reduced the scope for corruption.

Similarly, technology has helped with online tendering.

This has accelerated projects and boosted transparency. It has also hit a procurement value of Rs one trillion last year.

Innovation is important. But when backed by integration, it becomes a force. Technology is being used to end silos, enable synergy and ensure service. On a shared platform, there are no silos.

Take, for example, the PM Gati Shakti National Masterplan. India is investing over Rs100 trillion in infrastructure over the next few years. The number of stakeholders in any infra project is huge.

Traditionally, in India, big projects were often delayed. Exceeding expenses, and extending timelines used to be common. But now, we have the Gati Shakti shared platform. The central government, state governments, district administrations, different departments can coordinate. Each of these knows what the other is doing. Information relating to projects, land use and institutions are available at a single place. So, each stakeholder sees the same data. This improves coordination and solves problems even before they occur. It is accelerating approvals and clearances.

India is no more a place known for red tape. It is known for red carpet for investors. Whether it is FDI reforms, or liberalisation of drone rules, Or steps in the semiconductor sector, Or the production incentive schemes in various sectors, Or the rise of ease of doing business,

India has many excellent factors coming together. I invite you all to work with us as we lead the world in solving its problems.

Through Mann Ki Baat@100, the tale of New India

PIYUSH GOYAL

Minister of Commerce & Industry, Consumer Affairs & Food & Public Distribution and Textiles

PM Modi has sought to educate, guide, mentor and motivate fellow Indians to work for social change and national development beginning with their communities

The airing of the 100th episode of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's unique monthly radio outreach, Mann Ki Baat, is a milestone. 'Mann Ki Baat' is central to the PM's deep connection with the masses, who regard him as a caring, compassionate and decisive leader who is transforming the country to improve their lives.

Since the first episode of Mann Ki Baat on October 3, 2014, the PM has struck a rare chord with our countrymen, who have responded enthusiastically and reached out to him month after month to share their accomplishments, joys, concerns and their valuable suggestions for New India.

This regular outreach to countrymen has no parallel in terms of reach and popularity – a fact that has been globally applauded. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni recently described PM Modi as the world's "most loved" leader, while the US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo observed that the Indian Prime Minister was an "unbelievable visionary" and the world's most popular leader with the commitment to move India forward as a global power.

Mann Ki Baat captures the pulse of the nation in its progress towards becoming a developed country, in Amrit Kaal. Mann Ki Baat has attracted and inspired crores of Indians. The number of listeners has risen with each episode. PM Modi has sought to educate, guide, mentor and motivate fellow Indians to work for social change and national development beginning with their communi-



ties. Importantly, as Union Home Minister Amit Shah pointed out, Mann Ki Baat has been completely apolitical in nature.

The PM's Modi regular communication evokes a powerful sense of pride in the motherland. He has highlighted local art and artisans, giving them much-needed recognition and brand value to help them reach out to buyers in India and abroad. It has also promoted khadi, which boosts the rural economy.

The impact of the programme can be comprehended from the fact that since Modi's mention of domestic toy-making and support for the local toy industry in Mann Ki Baat, the import of toys fell sharply by 70 per cent from \$371 million in 2018-19 to \$110 million in 2021. Exports grew to \$326 million from \$202 million.

During the COVID-19 pandemic which disrupted lives and economies across the world, the monthly address lifted the spirit of the nation and infused a sense of positivity and cheer. PM Modi reached out to truck drivers and pilots through this programme and boosted their morale. He also had a word of appreciation for all Covid warriors. Another important dimension of Mann Ki Baat is that it gave a huge impetus to several flagship initiatives of the government and transformed them into mass movements.

These include Swachh Bharat (Clean India) and Beti Bachao and Beti Padhao (Save & Educate the girl child). Another eloquent example is the resounding success of "Selfie with Daughter". Domestic tourism has got a huge boost.

Apart from widespread social awareness of cleanliness thanks to the Swachhta Abhiyaan, the message of water conservation was disseminated nationally with a sense of urgency.

Similarly, the protection of the environment has now evolved into a movement. Mann Ki Baat acknowledges the strength and power of 1.4 billion people and motivates them to give their best in the mission of nation-building.

It is now being broadcast in 23 Indian and 11 foreign languages recording the nation's developmental journey under the PM's extraordinary leadership.

In these 100 broadcasts, he has covered and highlighted a wide array of topics, including weather, environment, cleanliness, social issues, indigenous crafts, examinations, clean India, fit India, saving and educating the girl child, water conservation, being vocal for local products, self-reliant India and celebrating the cultural diversity of our great nation.

Mann Ki Baat episodes feature inspirational stories about unsung heroes, grassroots champions and changemakers across India.

FOREIGN POLICY

New road, rail connectivity

< FROM C2 This is as true of immediate neighbours like Sri Lanka and Nepal as in the Gulf, or indeed in Africa, Europe or Latin America. Creating collective formats such as with the Pacific Islands, Caribbean community, Nordic nations or Africa has imparted a sustainable efficiency to the process.

Foreign policy begins on our borders and understandably, that has seen the greatest transformation. A generous and non-reciprocal approach to immediate neighbours has been backed by vastly improved project delivery. As a result, regionalism in South Asia is making rapid strides, reflected in new road, rail and waterway connectivity, power grids, fuel pipelines and border crossing facilities. Improvements in the hard infrastructure have been matched by arrangements to facilitate flow of goods and services.

A shared response to the Covid challenge has also strengthened a sense of solidarity. India's support for Sri Lanka during its economic crisis has had a strong resonance as well.

While development has been the main focus, challenges that emerged to our national security have been countered firmly. This includes the robust military deployment in our border areas to ensure that the status quo is not unilaterally altered by China. And a set of policies and actions to delegitimise and respond to cross-border terrorism from Pakistan.

An India that is more Bharat takes greater pride in its heritage and traditions.

Their expression at the international stage is essential to multipolarity and indeed, to India's rise. The celebration of yoga and propagation of ayurveda are important beginnings as also the creation of a lexicon. The broader goal of promoting a better global understanding of India's perspectives and beliefs is work in progress.



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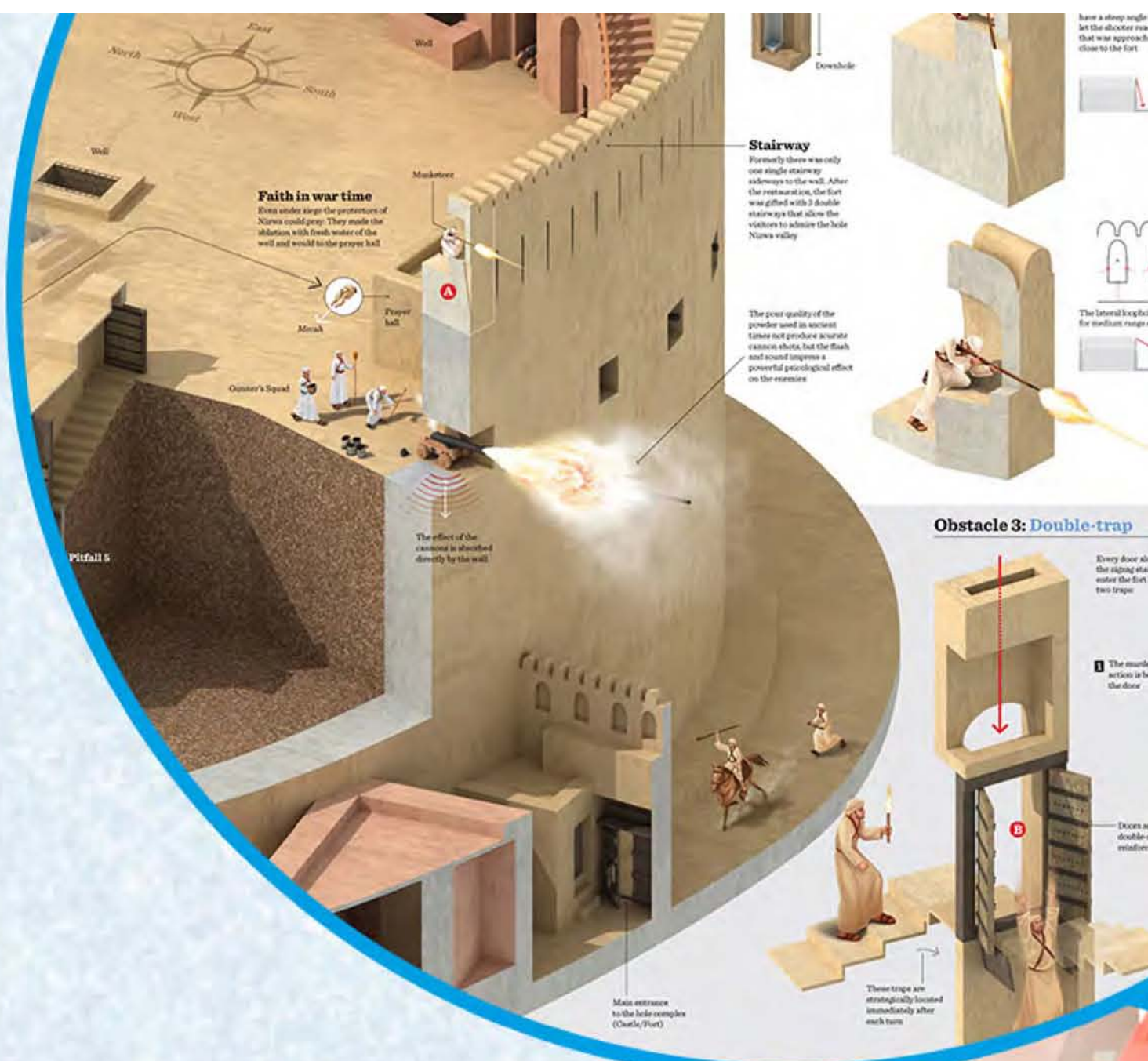
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