



HM SENDS WRITTEN MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT OF TUNISIA

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a written message to President Kais Saied of the Republic of Tunisia. The message deals with bilateral relations between the two countries and their peoples. The message was handed over by Hilal Abdullah Al Sinani, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of Tunisia. **>A3**



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OMAN Foreign Minister meets Bahraini counterpart

1 Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister received Dr. Abdullatif Rashid Al Zayani, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bahrain. During the meeting, the two sides underscored the historic ties binding Oman and Bahrain. They also touched on agenda of the joint committee's upcoming session, due to be held in Oman this year. **>A2**

OMAN Salalah Autism Centre opened

2 Al Wafa Centre for the Rehabilitation of People with Disabilities yesterday celebrated the opening of a building for the autism unit (Salalah Autism Centre). **>A4**

WORLD Jamaica recognises State of Palestine

3 Jamaica announced yesterday its recognition of the State of Palestine, bringing the number of countries that recognize the State of Palestine to 142 countries. **>A6**

GAZA DEATH TOLL

as of April 24, 2024

Deaths
34,262
Injured
77,229

OMAN-UAE RAILWAY PROJECT TO CUT CARBON EMISSIONS

“Tender allocation reflects a clear vision aimed at empowering and developing national cadres and contractors
Eng. Mohammed Zahran Al Mahrouqi, Deputy CEO of Hafeet Rail



With a speed of 200km per hour, each passenger train to accommodate up to 400 travellers

MUSCAT/ABU DHABI: The UAE-Oman railway project will serve multiple sectors in both countries and contribute to the development of new sectors previously nonexistent due to the difficulty in transport of goods, said Eng. Mohammed Zahran Al Mahrouqi, Deputy CEO of Hafeet Rail company.
He pointed out the project's environmental benefits by reducing carbon dioxide emissions. The train's capacity, equivalent to 300



100 minutes

The expected time for train to cover distance between **Sohar and Abu Dhabi**

trucks, will reduce 80 percent of carbon emissions generated by trucks.
Speaking to the Emirates News Agency (WAM) on the sidelines of the joint UAE-Omani Business Forum in Abu Dhabi, he said, “Today, during the forum, we witnessed the signing of the partnership agreement for the UAE-Oman railway project between ‘Etihad Rail’ and ‘Oman Rail’ along with Mubadala Investment Company.” **>A4**

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Maghrib.....	6:37pm
Isha.....	7:52pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....	4:17am

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MEETING

Oman and Bahrain review regional issues, stress need for de-escalation

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister received on Wednesday Dr.Abdullatif Rashid Al Zayani, Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

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

The two countries seek to sign new agreements and memoranda of understanding with the prime aim of boosting the cooperation relations and pushing them towards wider horizons.

In light of Bahrain's forthcoming hosting of the 33rd Arab Summit, scheduled to be held in 16 May 2024, Sayyid Badr expressed



Oman's confidence in the success of the summit and in producing constructive results that serve the general regional interest and reflect the directives of the Arab leaders and the aspirations of the

and constructive Arab action, affirmed Sayyid Badr.

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

In this context, the two ministers affirmed that emphasis should be laid on ceasefire efforts in Gaza to reach a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian cause on the basis of the two-state solution in accordance with international resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

The meeting was attended by Sayyid Najeeb Hilal Al Busaidi, Acting Head of the GCC and Regional Neighborhood Department, Dr. Juma Ahmed Al Ka'abi, Ambassador of Bahrain to Oman and a number of officials at the Foreign Ministry. -ONA

BILATERAL COOPERATION

Sayyid Badr holds talks with Serbian counterpart

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister and Ivica Dacic, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia reviewed aspects of bilateral cooperation, including ongoing efforts to conclude an agreement on the avoidance of double taxation between Oman and Serbia.

During a phone call, the two ministers discussed several regional and international matters. They also stressed the importance of advocating a language of dialogue and espousing constructive consultation to find tangible solutions for the realisation of stability and peace for all. -ONA



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SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Ministry keen to provide housing options to citizens



Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning launched the 'Exchange Your Land' service for facilitating and automating procedures and transactions through digital transformation.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning seeks to improve its services in line with its ambitious vision of 'sustainable urban development for prosperous communities', and to apply the principle of digital transformation in all services, including the government land grant system.

Since the issuance of Royal Decree No. (42/2021) regarding granting government lands, the Ministry has been keen to provide various housing options to citizens entitled for government residential plots, and to make the family a priority in these options, in fulfillment of Oman Vision 2040.

The starting point was "Choose

Your Land", which enables a citizen entitled to government residential lands to choose the appropriate plot according to interactive geographical maps showing the details of the plot within the available residential plans.

More than 25,000 beneficiaries benefited from it during 2023. This was followed by many housing options, such as "Own Your Land," which allows the beneficiary to acquire distinctive land at a government-subsidised price in distinctive plans and locations with integrated services through interactive geographical maps that show the location and details of the plot.

"Your Land Plans" enables the beneficiary to designate suitable land in areas where there are no available housing plans and outside the scope of urban planning, provided that it is in the village/area of permanent residence.

The Ministry seeks to provide

different options in plans and integrated residential units, such as villas, apartments, and give the beneficiaries an opportunity to live in future city projects, the first of which is Sultan Haitham City.

The option of future cities was provided with facilities that enable the beneficiaries to choose what suits them from the available options.

The Ministry launched its new housing option, "Exchange Your Land," which provides the opportunity for citizens who have been granted government residential land and wish to exchange it for one of the housing options offered, except "Choose Your Land," in the area of his current work or residence, provided that he is its first owner.

The Ministry continues its efforts to serve citizens in order to achieve its vision of achieving sustainable urban development for prosperous communities.

BILATERAL RELATIONS

HM sends written message to President of Tunisia

TUNIS: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a written message to President Kais Saied of the Republic of Tunisia.

The message deals with bilateral relations between the two countries and their peoples.

The message was handed over by Hilal Abdullah Al Sinani, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of Tunisia when Nabil Ammar, Tunisia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Migration and Tunisians Abroad received him at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tunis on Wednesday. -ONA



ROP

Five arrested for illegal entry

MUSCAT: The Royal Oman Police (ROP) said that the Musandam Governorate Police Command arrested five people of Asian nationality in the Wilayat of Bukha for entering Oman illegally.

A citizen was arrested for practicing sorcery and defrauding a group of women after luring them.

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DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Royal Academy of Management marks graduation of third cohort

MUSCAT: The Royal Academy of Management (RAM) celebrated the graduation of the third cohort of the National Programme for Developing Leaders and Future Foresight, an initiative pivotal in preparing national leaders for changing global landscape.

The programme was designed in partnership with the Ministry of Finance (Offset) and the Eller Centre at the University of Arizona.

The programme, which aligns with Oman Vision 2040, focuses on developing critical leadership skills among thirty-two middle management officials from various sectors of the state's administrative apparatus.

This cohort's graduation marks another step forward in the Academy's commitment to fostering a future-ready leadership community within Oman, in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance and the Eller Center for Executive Education at the University of Arizona. The comprehensive programme is designed to cultivate a broad spectrum of leadership capabilities, including systematic institutional thinking, innovation driving, strategic decision-making, and agility in leadership.

Dr. Fathiya Abdullah Al Rashdi, Acting Vice President for Programme Affairs, underscored the programme's holistic approach, emphasizing the development of



a growth mindset, resilience, and effective communication among participants. The multi-faceted learning modules, enriched by the partnership with Eller Center, aim to instill participants with the latest leadership strategies and insights, supported by mentors and supervisors from the private sector.

Highlighting the importance of this occasion, Dr. Luigi A. Pecoraro, Executive Director of Eller Executive Education at the Eller College of Management, University of Arizona, extended his heartfelt congratulations to the graduates.

He praised the RAM for its partnership and shared commitment to providing an innovative and impactful educational journey. Dr. Pecoraro noted that the graduates are now well-equipped to make a significant and enduring impact on Oman's future growth and warmly welcomed them into the extended alumni network of both Eller Executive Education and the University of

Arizona, wishing them continued success and a lasting impact.

The training journey of this cohort spanned six months, covering five modules designed to equip national leaders with essential skills for effective networking, cultural understanding within institutions, and influential communication strategies. The Royal Academy of Management continues to play a crucial role in Oman's developmental strategy, contributing to the creation of a dynamic leadership pool capable of navigating and leading in an ever-evolving global context. Further enhancing its mission to localise knowledge and expertise, RAM has established a community of Omani trainers in partnership with the Eller Centre. This initiative ensures the transference of cutting-edge leadership training to national competencies and certifies Omani trainers to lead future cohorts, promoting leadership excellence on both regional and global stages. -ONA

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Salalah Autism Centre opens

SALALAH: Al Wafa Centre for the Rehabilitation of People with Disabilities on Wednesday celebrated the opening of a building for the autism unit (Salalah Autism Centre). The ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr. Laila Ahmed Al Najjar, Minister of Social Development.

The opening included a visual presentation by OQ Salalah, which funded the project as part of its efforts to strengthen its partnership with the Ministry of Social Development. The project also promotes the company's community support initiatives aimed at empowering autistic children and integrating them into society.

Omaima Hassan Al Nahdi, Head of Al Wafa Centre in Salalah, said that the facility features a broad range of rehabilitation equipment that will help extend special education to 80 autistic children, as



well as physical and psychological rehabilitation.

Salalah Autism Centre will also help spread awareness among members of society about the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

The autism centre's building,

which occupies an area of 1,550 square metres, will provide a safe environment of therapy for autistic children, to be groomed by a highly qualified team of technicians and specialists who have extensive experience in the field

of ASD.

Besides therapeutic assistance, the centre also provides support for families of autistic children, advising them about standard ways to deal with disorders and adapt to this type of disability. -ONA

HELP FLOOD-HIT PEOPLE

Banks, finance firms urged to defer loan repayments

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) has urged all banks/finance and leasing companies to defer loan/finance installments to alleviate the sufferings for people affected by the recent rainfall.

In a statement, the CBO said: "The Central Bank of Oman directs to postpone installments to mitigate the repercussions of the weather condition that Oman witnessed recently for individuals whose salaries are less than OMR3,000 and small and micro enterprises."

The postponement shall be in accordance with the follow-

ing controls:

1-Banks/FLCs shall defer up to a maximum of three installments of the loans/finance based upon the request of the borrower or defer up to a maximum of four instalments (including Eid waivers).

2-Interest / profit on interest / profit should not be levied during the period of deferment.

3- No charges shall be levied for processing the deferment request.

4- The impact of deferment and the revised repayment schedule should be provided to the 'affected persons' before granting deferment, the statement added.

REVIEW COOPERATION

Oman, Japan review implementation of projects in economic, free zones

TOKYO: Dr. Ali bin Masoud Al Sunaidi, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) held a meeting in Tokyo with Saito Ken, Japanese Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry.

The meeting reviewed aspects of the economic cooperation between Oman and Japan, and the most significant projects being implemented in Oman's economic zones, free zones, and industrial cities.

The most significant project is the low-carbon iron production project, which is in the Spe-



cial Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD). Dr. Al Sunaidi also held meetings with a number of representatives from companies producing reduced iron and its de-

rivatives, manufacture equipment for the production of renewable energy, build aircraft, ships, and other vehicles, stations for receiving, storing and exporting hydro-

gen. He also held meetings with other financial organizations to discuss potential of funding for the targeted projects.

Dr. Al Sunaidi and his accompanying delegation were briefed on the experience of Yokohama Port in receiving ships specialised in transporting energy and petroleum products and receiving and storing vehicles.

He also held meetings with the Mayor of Yokohama City and several Yokohama Port officials. They meetings discussed means of cooperation between the Ports of Yokohama and Duqm. -ONA

RAIL PROJECT

Train to have latest control, communication system for safety

<FROM A1 Eng. Mohammed Zahrani Al Mahrouqi, Deputy CEO of Hafeet Rail company added, "The signing of the agreement marks the actual start of the project and construction works."

He further stated, "Construction works were the focus of the second agreement signed on Tuesday during the forum, assigning the works to a national alliance led by Trojan Construction Group and Galfar Engineering and Contracting. The tender allocation reflects a clear vision aimed at empowering and developing national cadres

and contractors, enhancing local value-added, and involving the private sector in this vital project."

He highlighted the signing of an agreement to allocate control and communication systems to Siemens and HIC Corporation, providing the latest systems and technologies for train control and communication with the network.

He explained that the control system will be based on the latest European Train Control System (Level 2), providing ease and smoothness in train control and communication while ensuring necessary safety measures.

He anticipated that the joint railway project would achieve various objectives, including fostering closer ties between the two nations, with a passenger sector in the project accommodating up to 400 passengers per train.

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

He noted that the passenger train's speed will reach 200

kilometres per hour, covering the distance between Sohar and Abu Dhabi in 100 minutes, while freight trains will take about 120 minutes.

Implementation phase

Ahmed Al Musawa Al Hashemi, CEO of Hafeet Rail, affirmed that the railway project between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates has entered into the implementation phase on Tuesday.

He said that several tangible steps have been made, starting with the signing of the partner-

ship agreement between stakeholders, and the awarding of major contracts for the project to a UAE-Omani alliance comprising companies from both countries operating as one team.

Al Hashemi emphasised that the project will yield numerous economic and social benefits. He highlighted that the railways operate with high efficiency in terms of safety and security and are among the most sustainable means of transportation environmentally.

He affirmed his expectations that the UAE-Oman railway project will serve as a catalyst for

further cooperation in various economic and industrial sectors, noting its direct impact on passenger movement between the two countries, further boosting tourism and ties between their peoples.

He added that the railway line in this project extends from the existing network in the UAE, specifically from the Al Wathba area to the city and port of Sohar, passing through diverse geographical areas from desert to mountainous and valley regions, and running alongside Jebel Hafeet, from which the joint venture company Hafeet Rail derives its name.

Oman-USA forum discusses ways to boost investment

The forum was

organised by the

Embassy of Oman

in conjunction with

the US Chamber

of Commerce on

the sidelines of the

Second Oman-USA

Strategic Dialogue



Sheikh Khalifa Ali Al Harthi, Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs, delivered a speech in which he underscored the importance of the historical and strategic relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the USA, and the efforts made to promote trade and investment exchange between the two countries to achieve goals of the Oman Vision 2040.

Ana Escrogima, USA Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman, appreciated all efforts aimed at strengthening cooperation and economic relations between the

two countries.

The forum included two discussion sessions on themes pertaining to "Trade and Investment" and "Renewable Energy" during which specialists from both sides spoke about the opportunities offered by the Sultanate of Oman in these two sectors and how to maximize the benefit from the free trade agreement signed between the two countries.

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

-ONA

BILATERAL RELATIONS

Oman, USA hold 2nd strategic dialogue

WASHINGTON: The Sultanate of Oman and the United States of America (USA) on Wednesday explored means of promoting trade and investment, in addition to addressing shared challenges during the 2nd Strategic Dialogue held in Washington.

The Omani side was chaired by Sheikh Khalifa Ali Al Harthi, Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs whilst the USA side was chaired by Jose W. Fernandez, Under Secretary for Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment at the US Department of State. The two sides discussed the opportunities for US companies in the Omani market, highlighting information and communication technology services, semiconductors, and clean energy as areas of opportunity.

The two countries explored op-

portunities to collaborate on demonstrating and deploying carbon capture, use, and storage, and carbon dioxide removal technologies, including via technical exchanges, investment, and trade missions. US-Oman cooperation on geologic carbon was reinforced by a technical workshop hosted in Muscat in September 2023 by Oman's Ministry of Energy and Minerals in collaboration with the US Department of Energy and the signing of MoU between Oman's Ministry of Energy and Minerals and US firm Eden GeoPower to study and demonstrate the potential of stimulated hydrogen production in Oman.

The two sides committed to pursue new avenues to strengthen cooperation in developing clean energy solutions, including by leveraging US private sector expertise, as well as opportunities. -ONA



MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT, COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Digital Excellence Award launched

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology on Wednesday launched the first edition of the Digital Excellence Award in the government sector.

The award forms as part of the ministry’s commitment to accelerate the pace of digital transition and enhance innovation in the government sector in line with the goals of Oman Vision 2040. It also seeks to upgrade the Sultanate of Oman’s ranking in the Global Competitiveness Index for e-Government Development by raising awareness about the concept of innovation and the culture of digital transition.

Eng. Said Hamoud Al Ma’awali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information

Technology, said that the Digital Excellence Award embodies the ministry’s determination to utilise the latest technologies in government services, apply new standards of excellence in rendering government services and provide a model to be emulated by others.

The award is also aimed at rewarding outstanding entities operating in the field of digital transition, he added.

Digital transition categories

The Digital Proficiency Award falls in 4 digital transition categories classified as: Government institutions, initiatives, services and human resources.

The first category comprises “The Best Institution in Achieving Government Digital Transi-

tion” and “The Best Institution in Achieving Digital User Experience and Beneficiary Satisfaction”.

The second category has three sections: “The Best Integrated Digital Initiative for Digital Transition”, “The Best Initiative for Electronic Community Participation” and “The Best Initiative in Innovation and Utilization of Advanced Technologies”.

The third category includes “The Best Digital Government Service Provided to Beneficiaries” and “The Best Digital Government Service Provided to the Corporate Sector”.

The fourth category is dedicated to “The Best Team for E-Government Transition” and “The Best Employee Leading Digital Change”. – **ONA**

Dhofar Governorate

Oman celebrates World Intellectual Property Day

SALALAH: Represented by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, the Sultanate of Oman yesterday celebrated the World Intellectual Property Day under the theme of “Intellectual Property and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—Building Our Common Future with Innovation and Creativity”.

The celebration was held in partnership with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, the Ministry of Economy, Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry’s branch in Dhofar Governorate and firms supporting the event.

The ceremony was held at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment under the auspices of HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki Al Said, Dhofar.

A department for intellectual property and patents was inaugurated, to enhance institutional cooperation and realize the SDGs.

Then, HH Sayyid Marwan launched the Omani version of “DL101”, a standard course that provides basic knowledge about various aspects of IP and enables the participants to understand the rights of IP owners and users.

The course, which is compatible with the laws and culture of the Sultanate of Oman, seeks to link

theoretical aspects with practical aspects, notably by transferring knowledge from the institutional domain to the social arena.

The activities of the World Intellectual Property Day included a discussion panel on defining the role of IP in sustainable development. The discussion panel elaborated on means of soliciting public opinion and drafting proposals on how to benefit from IP and use it in realising SDGs.

The ceremony also included the opening of a roadshow that showcased the contribution of various public and private establishments, innovators and inventors. -**ONA**

MAZOOON THEATRE



Oman wins awards at Sitfy Monodrama Festival in Poland

WARSAW: Represented by Mazoon Theatre, the Sultanate of Oman has won several awards at the Sitfy Monodrama Festival, held in the Republic of Poland.

The contest saw the participation of competitors from 12 countries around the world.

Director Yousef Al Balushi won the Best Scenography Award, while actor Ahmed Al Oweini won the Best Actor Award. – **ONA**

DOCUMENTARY

‘House of Wonders’ screened in governorates across Oman

MUSCAT: The documentary titled “House of Wonders”, which embodies the Omani presence in Zanzibar and East Africa, was screened in cinema halls in the governorates of Muscat, Dhofar and A’Dakhiliyah. Screening the documentary targets school students from grades 10-12.

The documentary aims at informing school students about the important aspects of Omani history and the cultural roles of the Omanis in East Africa.

The documentary, produced by the Ministry of Information, represented by Nizwa Magazine, focuses on the cultural contribution of Omanis to the political, commercial, social and cultural fields in East Africa. It is an essential feature of 3 films, each part lasting 50 minutes, in three languages: Arabic, English and Swahili.

Further, the documentary presents a group of stories of a human nature glorifying the Omani values that have been passed



down through generations.

Additionally, the documentary consolidates the role of these values in building the modern Omani identity, with an emphasis on the importance of passing down these stories to generations through visual media that are compatible with the spirit of the age utilizing technological and cultural transformations in

production methods.

Each part of these films presents a main character within related political, social, and cultural events. The films were shot in various locations around the world, including Zanzibar, African and Asian countries, and locations in Europe, America, and the Sultanate of Oman.

— **ONA**



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1	1530000040/24	Consultancy Services for 2000 TPD MSW-RDF PLANT	RO. 105	06th June, 2024 1500 Hours	18th June, 2024 2359 Hours
2	1530000050/24	SEMI-AUTOMATIC TRUCK LOADING PLANT.	RO. 105	06th June, 2024 1500 Hours	18th June, 2024 2359 Hours

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Contact details: Office number: +968 22705601, Mobile number: +968 97932277

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

Note: The successful bidder awarded the Consultancy Services contract for the Municipal Solid Waste to Refuse-Derived Fuel (MSW-RDF) project shall be ineligible to participate, either directly or indirectly or as a part of any consortium, in any subsequent tendering process for the Engineering, Procurement, and Construction (EPC) contract related to the same MSW-RDF project.



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Sr. No.	Tender No.	Tender Name	Last date for obtaining the documents	Bid Submission Date	Requirements from participants	Tender Document's Fees (Including VAT) (RO)
1	23/2024 (Refloat)	Repairing and Refurbishment of Grid Station Doors and Rolling Shutter Doors in South & North Batinah & Al Buraimi Governorates.	09/05/2024	04/06/2024	Local Companies with Experience in Same Field, Have A Valid Commercial Registration.	26/250
2	49/2024	Validation and Verification of Energy Meter at OETC Grid Stations.	09/05/2024	04/06/2024	Local Companies with Experience in Same Field, Have A Valid Commercial Registration.	26/250
3	51/2024	Supply of Thermal Cameras.	09/05/2024	04/06/2024	Local Companies with Experience in Same Field, Have A Valid Commercial Registration.	26/250
4	52/2024	Consultancy Services for Design and Supervision of 400kV Mahout Wind Farm Grid Station along with Associated 400kV LILO from Duqm GS to Mahout GS.	09/05/2024	04/06/2024	Local Companies with Experience in Same Field, Have A Valid Commercial Registration.	525/-

Participation	Interested Companies may obtain Tender Document with the necessity Apply on E-tendering
Buying the Tender	By E-Tendering System.
Fees	Against non-refundable payment as mentioned above against each set of document. (Payment Through Bank Transfer), SMEs are exempted from tender's fees.
The deadline for clarification	Before (21) Days from bid submission date.
Submission	The submission of hard copy will be only for Bid Bond & other documents by E-Tendering
Terms and conditions	- Specifying the name of the Company or whatever refers to in the Bid Guarantee Envelope. - The bid should be valid for not less than (90) days from bid submission date. - The Tenderer should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of 1% of the bid value and should be valid for (90) days from bid submission date, addressed to Oman Electricity Transmission Company (SAOC). Small & Medium Enterprises are exempted from the submission of 1% of the bid bond. - Any bid not comply with the required guarantee, will not be accepted.
Offer	The bid bond should be submitted in Tender Box No. (1) at the company's building before 11:00 am on the assigned date for submission of the Tenders.
Company Address	Road No: 2153 - Building No. 423 O Block No: 321 - Contact Details: 99105413, 99849517, 91777378
Email and Website	tenders@omangrid.com www.omangrid.com / link of E-Tendering System https://www.omangrid.com/en/Pages/Services.aspx



OETCOMAN







السوادي
السلوادي للطاقة
AL SUWADI POWER

AL SUWADI POWER COMPANY SAOG
P.O. Box: 39, P.C. 103, Bareeq Al Shatti, Sultanate of Oman, alsuwadipower.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Al Suwadi Power Company SAOG (the "Company"), I have the pleasure to present the Directors' Report of the Company for the three months ended March 2024.

Operational Results:

The operational performance of the plant during the quarter was excellent. The consistently high plant's reliability and technologically superior fuel-efficient operations of the plant continues to place it at the higher end of the merit order list for dispatch.

The plant achieved an excellent reliability of 99.85%. The plant delivered 1079 GWh to the Omani grid as compared to 844 GWh delivered in Q1 2023.

The plant successfully conducted the Annual Plant Performance test on 2 April 2024.

All operating equipment and the balance of plant equipment were serviced as per the agreed annual maintenance program. Consistent level of high plant availability is a testament of efficient and timely plant upkeep and periodic maintenance as per the equipment suppliers' manual and 'condition-based' monitoring.

The Plant's good operational performance was achieved with no Lost Time Accidents to any of our staff, thereby clocking 4,655 Lost Time Accident-free days since inception and is reflective of our continued internal focus on Health, Safety, Environment and Quality Management.

Financial Results:

	3-month-2024 RO'000s	3-month-2023 RO'000s	Percentage change
Revenues	15,050	12,815	17.4%
Direct costs	(14,251)	(12,171)	(17.1%)
Gross profit	799	644	24.0%
Profit before interest and tax	651	503	29.5%
Finance costs	(1,326)	(1,571)	15.6%
Profit(Loss) before tax	(644)	(1,065)	39.6%
Net profit (loss) for the period	(1,280)	(1,672)	23.5%

It is to be noted that contractually, the winter tariff is lower and the Q1 net loss will be largely recouped during summer period when the agreed tariff within the Power Purchase Agreement is substantially scaled up. The net financial results for Q1 2024 was 23.5% higher than Q1 2023 mainly due to higher capacity charge on account of leap year, higher indexation, lower heat rate losses, and lower interest cost due to scheduled repayment of loans

Consistent with earlier announcements, the Company reaffirms that it has effectively refinanced its Commercial loan facility, consequently removing the Cash Sweep provision. As a result of refinancing, the Company will be able to make future dividend distributions subject to the availability of cash and fulfillment of other covenants agreed within the Finance Documents which include making adequate provisions for forecasted loan repayments and operating expenses.

Corporate Social Responsibility:

Within its CSR initiative, the Company contributed 20% of its CSR budget to Oman Charitable Organisation. The remaining budget will be utilized to implement Green Schools project for essential knowledge on the circular economy and sustainability, inclusion classes for student with disabilities, interactive screens and various other initiatives which have high impact on the community and in line with our vision and policy. The earmarked funds are expected to be spent in Q2 to Q4 of the current year.

Medium term Outlook:

During Q1 2024, routine maintenance of all plant equipment have been accomplished. No major maintenance programme is scheduled for the next 6 months. This is in view of the peak power demand during the ensuing summer period when the full availability of the plant is a dire requirement for maintaining the stability of Oman's power grid.

All reasonable measures are being taken by the management to maintain high reliability level. Consequently, we expect a steady progress in the Company's financial performance.

Acknowledgement:

I would like to extend my personal thanks to all personnel associated with the operation of the power plant and the staff of the Company for their hard work and dedication, as well as to those others such as our contractors, whose expertise has assisted us in achieving these excellent results.

Finally, on behalf of the Board of Directors, I heartily extend our best wishes to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq Bin Taimur Al Said. We thank the Government of Oman for creating an environment that allows us to participate effectively in the growth of the Sultanate's economy. We commit our efforts to the building of a strong Oman.

Julien Diaz
Chairperson

UNAUDITED CONDENSED INCOME STATEMENT FOR THE THREE MONTH PERIOD ENDED 31 MARCH

	2024 RO'000s	2024 USD'000s	2023 RO'000s	2023 USD'000s
Revenues	15,050	39,141	12,815	33,330
Direct costs	(14,251)	(37,064)	(12,171)	(31,655)
Gross profit	799	2,077	644	1,675
Other income	127	331	111	289
General and administrative expenses	(275)	(716)	(252)	(655)
Profit before interest and tax	651	1,692	503	1,309
Finance costs	(1,326)	(3,449)	(1,571)	(4,088)
Finance income	31	82	3	8
Profit/(loss) before tax	(644)	(1,675)	(1,065)	(2,771)
Tax expense	(636)	(1,653)	(607)	(1,578)
Net profit/(loss) for the period	(1,280)	(3,328)	(1,672)	(4,349)
Earnings per share				
Basic earnings per share (Baizas / cents)	(1.79)	(4.66)	(2.34)	(6.09)

UNAUDITED CONDENSED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT

	31 March 2024 RO'000s	31 March 2024 USD'000s	31 Dec 2023 RO'000s	31 Dec 2023 USD'000s
Assets				
Non-current assets				
Property, plant and equipment	231,543	602,195	233,547	607,405
Right-of-use assets	612	1,587	648	1,682
Derivative instruments	1,777	4,621	1,542	4,010
Total non-current assets	233,932	608,403	235,737	613,097
Current assets				
Inventories	2,735	7,114	2,672	6,951
Trade and other receivables	6,456	16,788	5,456	14,192
Cash and cash equivalents	7,235	18,818	6,958	18,095
Total current assets	16,426	42,720	15,086	39,238
Total assets	250,358	651,123	250,823	652,335
Equity and liabilities				
Equity				
Share capital	71,441	185,801	71,441	185,801
Retained reserve	11,331	29,467	11,331	29,467
Retained earnings	46,219	120,208	47,499	123,536
Equity before hedging reserve	128,991	335,476	130,271	338,804
Hedging reserve	348	902	283	733
Equity	129,339	336,378	130,554	339,537
Liabilities				
Non-current liabilities				
Term loans	60,914	158,426	60,969	158,570
Lease liabilities	582	1,513	663	1,724
Derivative instruments	1,368	3,559	1,210	3,147
Deferred tax liability	27,006	70,237	26,993	70,208
Asset retirement obligation	396	1,032	391	1,018
Total non-current liabilities	90,266	234,767	90,226	234,667
Current liabilities				
Current tax liabilities	2,995	7,789	2,360	6,137
Trade and other payables	8,683	22,580	8,511	22,132
Lease liabilities	156	406	153	399
Short term borrowings	-	-	100	260
Term loans	18,919	49,203	18,919	49,203
Total current liabilities	30,753	79,978	30,043	78,131
Total liabilities	121,019	314,745	120,269	312,798
Total equity and liabilities	250,358	651,123	250,823	652,335
Net assets per share (Baizas / cents) - adjusted	180.56	469.59	182.35	474.25

WORLD

TWO-STATE SOLUTION

Jamaica formally recognises State of Palestine

KINGSTON: Jamaica announced on Wednesday its recognition of the State of Palestine, bringing the number of countries that recog-

nise the State of Palestine to 142 countries. Jamaica continues to advocate for a two-state solution as the only viable option to resolve

the longstanding conflict, guarantee the security of Israel and uphold the dignity and rights of Palestinians. — **ONA**

US

Aircraft transporting fuel crashes in Alaska

ALASKA: A Douglas C-54 aircraft transporting fuel crashed into a frozen river shortly after takeoff on Tuesday in Fairbanks, Alaska, according to media report. The Federal Aviation Administration said that two people were on board the plane. The FAA said it is investigating the incident, ABC News reported. — **ANI**



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BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT		STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT MARCH 31, 2024	
Dear Shareholders, On behalf of the Board of Directors ("the Board") of Barka Desalination Company SAOG (the "Company"), I have the pleasure to present the unaudited financial statements for the period ended 31 March 2024. Operational Highlights The activity of the Company is to develop, finance, design, construct, own, operate and maintain a reverse osmosis desalination plant at Barka in the Sultanate of Oman with a capacity of 281,000 m³ per day. The Company commenced commercial operation on 13 June 2018. Since then, the Company has been supplying potable water to Oman Power and Water Procurement Company in accordance with the Water Purchase Agreement. The Company has supplied 23,025,837 m³ of water during the period ended 31 March 2024. The average scheduled plant availability for the period was over 99.8%, the result of a strict asset management program implemented by the Operator. The Company continues to uphold its reputation as the largest provider of potable water in the Sultanate. On 13 March 2024, the Plant successfully completed the Annual Performance Test for the Contractual Year 7 (CY7). Financial Highlights Revenue has increased by 13% (by RO 573K) as compared to the same period (01st January to 31st March) in the previous year. This is mainly due to more favorable Electricity Tariff (CRT to Flat) resulting in higher Electricity charge supported by higher Water Capacity Base charge as a result of indexation as well as higher Water Output charge. The cost of sales has increased by 20% (by RO 631K) as compared to the same period in the previous year. This is mainly due to higher Electricity Cost due to change in Tariff (CRT to Flat) followed by higher Capacity payment to the operator pursuant to the O&M contract and the Output Payment to the operator due to higher dispatch. The administrative and general expenses have increased by 41% (by RO 42K) as compared to the same period in the previous year. This is		mainly due to the timing difference of expenses. Finance expenses have increased by 6% (by RO 51K) as compared to the same period in the previous year. This is mainly due to the impact of higher LIBOR rate, as 17.5% of the long term loan is unhedged. The current year's profit before tax represents 6% of the revenue. The current year's profit after tax represents 3% of the revenue. Based on the financial results, the shareholders to the AGM approved authorizing the Board of Directors to determine and distribute cash dividends to the Company's Shareholders out of the retained earnings as per the Audited Financial Statements for the financial year ended 31 December 2023, the company shall distribute dividends of 6 Bz per share in May 2024 and 6 Bz per share in November 2024. Outlook for 2024 The Company is taking an endeavor to ensure that it continues to take reasonable and prudent measures to improve its performance for FY2024, by improving the Plant's reliability and availability, without compromising on HSE matters. Acknowledgement I would like to extend my personal thanks to all personnel associated with the operation of the plant and the staff of the Company for their hard work and dedication, as well as to those others such as our contractors, whose expertise has assisted us in achieving these excellent results. Finally, on behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to extend our deep appreciation and gratitude to His Majesty Haitham Bin Tarik Al Said and His Government for their continued support and encouragement to the private sector by creating an environment that allows us to participate effectively in the growth of the Sultanate's economy and to dedicate our achievements to the building of a strong nation. On behalf of the Board of Directors Murtadha Ahmed Sultan Chairman of the Board	
ASSETS		Unaudited 31 Mar 2024 RO'000	(Audited) 31 Mar 2023 RO'000
Non-current assets			
Property, plant and equipment		93,203	94,013
Right-of-use assets		540	544
Derivative instruments		6,219	5,939
Total non-current assets		99,962	100,496
Current assets			
Trade and other receivables		2,141	1,907
Short term deposits		-	1620
Cash and cash equivalents		887	814
Total current assets		3,028	4,341
Total assets		102,990	104,837
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES			
Capital and reserves			
Share capital		7,552	7,552
Legal reserve		519	504
Retained earnings		4,560	4,408
Hedging reserve		5,286	5,048
Shareholder loan reserve		485	493
Total equity		18,402	18,005
Non-current liabilities			
Long term loan		67,532	69,602
Shareholders' loan		3,876	3,868
Derivative instruments		-	-
Lease liabilities		550	555
Provision for end of service benefits		-	-
Provision for decommissioning obligation		1,120	1,102
Deferred tax liability		5,240	5,061
Total non-current liabilities		78,318	80,188
Current liabilities			
Current portion of long term loan		4,152	3,901
Current portion of Shareholders' loan		574	574
Current portion of lease liabilities		41	41
Derivative instruments		-	-
Trade and other payables		1,503	2,128
Total current liabilities		6,270	6,644
Total liabilities		84,588	86,832
Total equity and liabilities		102,990	104,837
STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2024			
		Unaudited 31 Mar 2024 RO'000	(Audited) 31 Mar 2023 RO'000
Revenue		5,050	4,477
Operating costs		(3,720)	(3,089)
Gross profit		1,330	1,388
General and administrative expenses		(145)	(103)
Other income		38	34
Other expense		-	-
Profit from operations		1,223	1,319
Finance costs		(927)	(876)
Profit before tax		296	443
Income tax expense		(137)	(155)
Profit for the year		159	288
Other comprehensive income			
Items that are or may be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss:			
Change in fair value of cash flow hedge		238	(960)
Other comprehensive income for the year		238	(960)
Total comprehensive income for the year		397	(672)
Basic and diluted earnings per share			
Basic earnings per share (Baizas)		2.11	3.81



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Nama Dhofar Services invites the specialized companies to participate and submit their offers for the below said tenders: -

EOI Number	EOI Name	Last Date for Collection of Documents	Time & Last Date for Proposal Submission	Tender Fee (OMR) Including VAT (5%)
DISC/2024/045	UNE LOT 03C/2024	05/05/2024	19/05/2024	52.500
DISC/2024/046	UNE LOT 03E/2024	05/05/2024	19/05/2024	52.500
DISC/2024/047	Construction of 33/11kV, 2x10MVA Primary Substation designated as Mudhai	05/05/2024	19/05/2024	1,575.00
DISC/2024/048	Construction of 33/11kV, 2x20MVA Primary Substation designated as SFZ -2	05/05/2024	19/05/2024	1,575.00
DISC/2024/049	Replacement existing floating aerators with new in Raysut STP	05/05/2024	19/05/2024	52.500
DISC/2024/050	Construction of Discharge Point, Access Roads, Guard Rooms and CCTV at Regional (Mirbat, Taqah and Hurait)	05/05/2024	19/05/2024	105
DISC/2024/051	Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of submersible pumps at APS	05/05/2024	19/05/2024	105

- To purchase the tender document website via the link or the Barcode below:
https://supplier.nama.om:4443/OA_HTML/OA.jsp?OAFunc=XTEN_TENDER_FLOAT_DISC_F
- Every company wishing to participate in this tender must attach with its bid a bid bond in the form of a bank guarantee from one of the banks operating in the Sultanate of Oman. Any bid that does not contain the bid bond will be disqualified.
- The original bid bond must be submitted in an envelope sealed with red wax and addressed to the chairperson of the minor tender committee and written on outside the Tender name and the Tender number and it should be paced in the tender box in Nama Dhofar Services in Salalah before 10:00 am of the last day for submitting Bids.
- Bids shall be submitted online through using "supplier portal". No hard copies are accepted.
- The Tender fees are not refundable. However, Tenderers who are holding "Riyada" card issued from public authority for SME development will be exempted from providing the tender fee and the Bid bond.
- The company is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other bid.
- In the event of receipt of the tender document on behalf of another company, the interested purchasers in the above tender document should provide details of the person's name and the company details.



Dhofar Integrated Services Company s.a.o.c.
CR Number 2185229, PO Box 2409
PC 211, Salalah - Sultanate of Oman
Phone Number 23232523, Fax 23201183
www.dhofarservices.nama.om





شركة عُمان للمرطبات ش.م.ع.ع
OMAN REFRESHMENT COMPANY SAOG

P.O. Box 30, C.P.O. A'Seeb P.C. 111, Sultanate of Oman, Tel. 24589000, 24589100, Fax : 24589099 e-mail : info@pepsioman.com, Website: www.pepsioman.com

PARENT AND CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 MARCH 2024

	PARENT		GROUP	
	Q1 2024 RO	Q1 2023 RO	Q1 2024 RO	Q1 2023 RO
Assets				
Non-current assets				
Property, plant and equipment	28,917,963	29,718,489	58,040,375	57,227,988
Intangible assets	-	-	1,434,724	1,486,266
Right-of-use assets	-	-	18,721	43,912
Investment in subsidiaries	730,715	730,039	-	-
Other investments	-	-	7,697	-
Deferred tax asset (net)	-	-	898,587	952,802
Term deposits	-	-	-	-
Financial assets at amortised cost	3,261,830	2,735,578	3,261,830	3,548,938
Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	13,765	13,827	13,826	13,765
Total non-current assets	32,924,272	33,197,933	63,675,760	63,273,671
Current assets				
Inventories	7,516,212	10,490,422	14,153,117	15,539,022
Trade and other receivables	8,102,788	10,327,315	9,418,787	12,279,039
Loan to a subsidiary	23,741,161	23,740,641	-	-
Term deposits	19,000,000	29,000,000	19,000,000	29,000,000
Cash and cash equivalents	1,702,495	9,313,643	3,232,294	10,536,403
Total current assets	60,062,656	82,372,021	45,804,198	67,354,464
Total assets	92,986,928	116,369,954	109,479,958	130,628,135
Equity and liabilities				
Equity				
Share capital	5,000,000	5,000,000	5,000,000	5,000,000
Legal reserve	1,666,667	1,666,667	1,696,167	1,696,167
Foreign currency translation reserve	-	-	604,954	203,644
General reserve	2,500,000	2,500,000	2,500,000	2,500,000
Retained earnings	69,587,683	69,900,229	68,934,984	67,398,099
Total equity	78,754,350	79,366,896	78,736,105	76,797,910
Liabilities				
Non-current liabilities				
Term loans	5,988,349	14,988,612	6,494,181	16,159,656
Lease liabilities	-	-	9,643	48,266
Deferred tax liabilities (net)	341,800	266,097	356,915	295,065
Employees' end of service benefits	1,587,492	1,355,824	1,616,021	1,372,731
Total non-current liabilities	7,917,641	16,510,533	8,476,760	17,875,718
Current liabilities				
Term loans	-	7,951,412	8,728,616	17,113,843
Lease liabilities	-	-	12,227	-
Trade and other payables	5,551,974	11,021,026	12,692,682	17,376,860
Provision for income tax	762,963	1,420,087	833,569	1,463,804
Total current liabilities	6,314,937	20,392,525	22,267,094	35,954,507
Total liabilities	14,232,578	37,003,058	30,743,854	53,830,225
Total equity and liabilities	92,986,928	116,069,954	109,479,958	130,628,135

BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORT

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present the un-audited results on the performance of the Company for the three-month period ended on 31st March 2024.

The Company has reported a net loss after tax of OMR 1.59 million (ORC Group) on a turnover of OMR 13.63 million during the three- months period ended on 31st March 2024, compared to a net profit after tax of OMR 1.19 million on a turnover of OMR 22.04 million for the corresponding period of last year.

Revenue has decrease by 38.2% during the three months period ended on 31st March 2024, and Profit after Tax decreased by 234% vs corresponding period of last year, mainly due to the far-reaching implications of the regional geo-political situation which has significantly impacted our revenues. The management

is proactively working to minimize the impacts of the evolving situation and continue to work on its diversification strategies in addition to focusing on the efficiency of operations.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I take this opportunity to extend our sincere appreciation to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq and his Government for their wise leadership, guidance and direction which continue to motivate and inspire us towards greater participation in the development and service of Oman.

We pray to the Almighty Allah to bestow His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq with the best of health and bless him with long life to lead the Sultanate of Oman on the path of prosperity.

Buti Obaid Al Mulla
(Chairman)

SEPARATE AND CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

	PARENT		GROUP	
	Q1 2024 RO	Q1 2023 RO	Q1 2024 RO	Q1 2023 RO
Revenue	8,071,843	15,923,621	13,631,431	22,038,982
Cost of sales	(5,973,097)	(10,514,556)	(9,897,116)	(14,836,354)
Gross Profit	2,098,746	5,409,065	3,734,314	7,202,628
Selling and distribution expenses	(3,286,463)	(3,626,639)	(4,167,388)	(4,675,830)
General and administrative Expenses	(966,554)	(941,871)	(1,356,394)	(1,376,793)
Impairment loss on financial assets	(10,000)	-	(10,000)	61,883
Other income	55,289	71,723	71,700	146,462
Finance income (net)	258,863	195,250	166,344	17,095
Profit before income tax	(1,850,119)	1,107,528	(1,561,423)	1,375,445
Income tax	-	(166,129)	(31,986)	(188,159)
Profit after tax	(1,850,119)	941,399	(1,593,409)	1,187,286
Other comprehensive income				
Items that will be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss			(3,420)	
Foreign exchange difference on translation of goodwill			(78,727)	
Foreign exchange differences on translation of foreign operations				
Total comprehensive income for the year	(1,850,119)	941,399	(1,675,556)	1,187,286

Notes: The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder, who requests them either in Arabic or English, within 7 days of receipt of such request. The address to which the shareholder should send his/her request is as follows Oman Refreshment Company SAOG, P.O. Box 30, CPO Airport, PC 111, Sultanate of Oman

HEALTH SOURCES

34,262 Palestinians killed, 77,229 injured by Israeli forces in Gaza



GAZA: The Israeli occupation's ongoing aggression on the Gaza Strip killed at least 34,262 Palestinians and injured at least 77,229 others.

Health sources said that the Israeli occupation forces committed six massacres against families in the Gaza Strip, killing 79 Palestinians and injuring 86 others, during

the past 24 hours. Many victims are still under the rubble and on the streets, where ambulance and civil defence cannot reach them as the Israeli occupation prevents them from doing so, the sources added.

Unprecedented aggression
The Israeli occupation's intense

and unprecedented aggression against the Gaza Strip has continued for 201 consecutive days, launching dozens of air strikes and shelling by land and sea, and bombing health facilities, residential areas and citizens' homes and demolishing them with their residents inside - killing and wounding tens of thousands of

Palestinians.

The Israeli occupation has left behind an unprecedented humanitarian tragedy, as hundreds of thousands of residents of the Gaza Strip live in very difficult conditions in light of the occupation preventing the arrival of humanitarian aid and the lack of water, food, medicine and fuel. — **ONA**



P.O. Box: 572, P.C.320, Barka. Tel.: 26896499, Fax: 26894387

MANAGEMENT DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS REPORT (Q1 2024)

Overview

We are pleased to present Barka Water and Power Company SAOG (BWPC) operational performance and the un-audited financial statements for the period ended 31 March 2024.

BWPC has a 2-year WPA extension for both RO-1 and RO-2 facilities which were expected to be expired in March 2024. However, Nama Power and Water Procurement Company (PWP) has extended the WPAs for both RO plants by three months till 30 June 2024. Power generation facilities have been on maintenance preservation contract since PWPA expiry in February 2022. RO-1 and RO-2 have achieved 99.8% reliability during the reporting period.

The financial results of the period are summarized as under:

Figures in Thousands Riyal Omani

	Period Ended 31 March 2024
Gross Revenues	3,138
Gross Profit	591
Profit after tax	113

HSE

Safety continued to be the highest priority for the Company. No safety incident was reported during the period while utilizing the scheduled outage time available to perform various maintenance activities. The team continued to demonstrate vigilance and implementation of international best practices related to safety. Similarly, the focus on environment resulted in no exceedances during the period. There were no environmental exceedances during the quarter.

Operations

From an operational perspective, the reliability of the two RO Plants remained the focus as these plants continued to get affected by seawater quality failure during the quarter. Significant impact is adequately covered under the force majeure provisions of the WPA and will likely result in extension of the WPA term however it does expose the Company to cash flow challenges as revenue related to force majeure will be recovered at end of the contract term

Reverse Osmosis (RO) Phase 1 Facility

Period 31 March	Water Delivered (MMm3)	Load Factor	Reliability Factor ¹
2024	2.4	59.1%	99.9%
2023	2.5	60.6%	100.0%

RO Phase I was made available to the grid during the entire reporting period, and it achieved a reliability factor of 99.9% and a load factor of 59.1% for the reporting period.

A graphical presentation of the load and reliability factors during the reporting period is shown below:



Period 31 March	Water Delivered (MMm3)	Load Factor	Reliability Factor ²
2024	2.8	54.0%	99.9%
2023	2.9	56.6%	100.0%

RO Phase II was made available to the grid during the entire reporting period, and it achieved a reliability factor of 99.9% and a load factor of 54.0% for the reporting period.

A graphical presentation of the load and reliability factors during the reporting period is shown below:



Maintenance

The team believes in a risk-based approach towards maintenance to create a viable balance between predictive, proactive and scheduled maintenance. Therefore, to ensure the availability of the power plant and preserve it for any future operation (including Bilateral agreement), all machines, which include both gas turbines, the steam turbine and both heat recovery steam generators, have been subject to preventive maintenance.

At the same time, all required predictive, proactive, scheduled, and corrective maintenance activities were implemented in well manner to assure the operational and availability of both RO plants under the obligation of the extended WPAs.

Below are the maintenance activities undertaken by the Operator to ensure reliable operations of the plants during the period.

Power Block:

- Major overhaul of Steam Turbine completed.
- Steam Turbine Lube oil, Hydraulic, and HP/LP instrument inspection and calibration completed.
- Re-installation of Steam Turbine HP/LP instrumentation completed.
- Testing of Steam Turbine transformer, generator protection relay, main transformer and ULTC tanks oil filtration and GCB
- Testing of Gas Turbines #1&2 combustion chambers completed.
- Preventive Maintenance and inspection of Gas Turbines #1 & 2 Auxiliaries, lube system and air intake system completed.
- GENT Fire alarm system inspection
- Preventive Maintenance for Gas Turbines # 1 & 2 and Steam Turbine Excitation transformers & Static Frequency Convertor completed.
- Calibration of Gas Turbines #1 & 2 Pressure Reducing Terminal's gas detectors
- Inspection of steam drum of Heat Recovery Steam Generator #1
- Inspection of Heat Recovery Steam Generators # 1&2 Water and Steam pipe line and Safety and Control valves
- Lifetime Assessment of Heat Recovery Steam Generators.

RO-1 plant:

- Replacement of Cartridge filters # 1,2, and 3 completed
- Preventive Maintenance for Self-Cleaning units
- Preventive Maintenance for all Three Racks booster pumps
- Monthly transformer checking completed
- FM200 detector cleaning checking and inspection
- Fire alarm system and Diesel Fire pump inspected and tested
- Full plant greasing work completed.

RO-2 plant:

- Preventive Maintenance for filtered water pumps carried out.
- Membranes inspection carried out.
- Inspection for Micro Filtration system carried out.
- Preventive Maintenance for Micro Filtration's Backwash Pump-2 Motor, motor winding resistance and Insulation resistance test completed.
- Preventive Maintenance for ERS Feed Pumps Motor, motor winding resistance, and Insulation resistance test completed.
- Product water primary and backup flowmeter verification.
- Inspection of FM200 systems.

	Period Ended 31-Mar-24	Period Ended 31-Mar-23
Total revenues	3,138	3,161
Operating costs	(2,547)	(2,545)
Gross profit	591	616
Other costs / Other Income	(478)	(381)
Net profit after tax	113	235
Earnings per share	0.001	0.001

Revenue

The marginal decrease in revenue by RO 0.02m is due to lower availability and load factor.

Gross Profit

The gross profit decreased slightly by RO 0.02m mainly attributable to lower capacity revenue.

Other Costs / Other Income

Other costs (net of other income) for the current period are higher by RO 0.1m. In the prior year, the gain of 0.2 million was recognized on sale of diesel inventory. It has been marginally netted off with lower finance cost on account of principal repayment of loan.

	Period Ended 31 Mar 2024	Year Ended 31 Dec 2023
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the period	3,419	2,097

The next debt service is due in June 2024.

	As at 31 Mar 2024	As at 31 Dec 2023
Total assets	69,879	69,846
Net shareholder's equity	34,785	34,671
Paid up capital	16,000	16,000
Current ratio	0.37:1	0.33:1
Gearing ratio	32:68	32:68
Net assets per share – Riyal Omani	0.217	0.217

Outlook

The Company is striving to maintain its safety record in future without safety or environmental incident and to remain in compliance of local regulations.

The Company will continue its maintenance preservation for the power plant and believes that there are reasonable chances that the Company will secure long-term power contract. Further the Company will seek spot market participation as well as industrial consumers for direct sales during peak summer period in case of no long-term contract. Similarly for RO plants, the Company is seeking to secure long term contract as well as exploring opportunities for extension of the existing WPAs.

Power 2024 and Water 2024 Procurement Process

PWP had commenced the formal procedures for Power 2024 and Water 2024 procurement process and the Company registered its interest to participate in both. Management completed proposals' submissions as per NPWP timelines and the final outcome is expected in 2Q 2024.

Chief Executive Officer

Finance Manager

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
AS AT 31 MARCH 2024
(Expressed in Omani Rial)

	31 MARCH 2024 Unaudited	31 DECEMBER 2024 Audited
ASSETS		
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	60,413,418	61,300,910
Intangible assets	3,565	3,710
Right-of-use assets	380,954	388,348
Total non-current assets	60,797,937	61,692,968
Current assets		
Inventories	3,898,432	3,899,653
Trade and other receivables	1,763,008	2,155,969
Cash and cash equivalents	3,419,487	2,097,400
Total current assets	9,080,927	8,153,022
Total assets	69,878,864	69,845,990
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
Equity		
Share capital	16,000,000	16,000,000
Legal reserve	5,333,333	5,333,333
Special reserve	85,555	85,555
Retained earnings	13,365,631	13,252,339
Total equity	34,784,519	34,671,227
Non-current liabilities		
Deferred tax liability	5,442,154	5,473,773
Provision for site restoration	4,149,592	4,087,562
Employee benefit liabilities	11,049	9,851
Lease liabilities	789,883	779,027
Total non-current liabilities	10,392,678	10,350,213
Current liabilities		
Long-term loan - current portion	15,242,459	15,236,374
Trade and other payables	7,914,280	8,042,748
Lease liabilities - current portion	10,767	11,267
Taxation	1,534,161	1,534,161
Total current liabilities	24,701,667	24,824,550
Total liabilities	35,094,345	35,174,763
Total equity and liabilities	69,878,864	69,845,990
Net assets per share (RO)	0.217	0.217

These financial statements were approved and authorised for issue by the Board of Directors on 22 April 2024.

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER
COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE THREE MONTHS
PERIOD ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

	3 months ended 31 March 2024 Unaudited	3 months ended 31 March 2023 Audited
Revenue		
Direct costs	(2,547,055)	(2,545,437)
Gross profit	591,076	615,733
Other income	-	203,140
General and administrative expenses	(204,047)	(261,414)
Profit from operations	387,029	557,459
Finance costs	(305,356)	338,815)
Profit before tax	81,673	218,644
Income tax	31,619	15,910
Net profit and total comprehensive income for the period	113,292	234,554
Basic and diluted earnings per share	0.001	0.001

SPORTS

Oman are ICC Asia Regional Winner for men’s performance of year 2023

Double delight for Oman Cricket as it is awarded for 100% Cricket Female Cricket Initiative of the Year

MUSCAT: Oman Cricket (OC) has emerged as a powerhouse among ICC Associate Members, as underlined by its impressive victory in two categories at the 2023 International Cricket Council (ICC) Regional Development Awards.

The unveiling of regional winners on Wednesday highlighted the remarkable progress made by various cricketing nations, showcasing Oman’s exceptional achievements on and off the field.

ICC unveiled full list of regional winners across six award categories, who will now be put forward as nominees for global recognition

Oman were among 21 nations who celebrated another ground-breaking year on and off the field for ICC Associate Members

The regional winners in the 2023 edition of the ICC Development Awards, highlighted the remark-

able success stories to have taken place in emerging cricket nations during the 2023 calendar year.

In the 2023 edition of the ICC Development Awards, Oman claimed the title of Asia winner in the ICC Associate Member Men’s Performance of the Year. Additionally, Oman clinched the 100% Cricket Female Cricket Initiative of the Year award, marking a momentous double victory.

Under the leadership of chairman Pankaj Khimji, Oman Cricket has reached numerous milestones, notably with the national men’s team securing qualification for the ICC Men’s T20 World Cup for the third time, scheduled for June this year.

The men’s team also showcased commendable performance during the ICC ODI World Cup Qualifiers, progressing to the Super Six stage in Zimbabwe.

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

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



ing on-field performances in men’s and women’s international cricket in 2023.

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

Speaking on the announcement of regional winners, ICC General

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

“The ICC Development Awards is a long-running initiative that recognises and rewards the outstanding efforts to grow and strengthen the game in our 94 ICC Associate Member nations. 2023 was an extraordinary year for emerging nations and their relentless passion for the sport is evident in the nominations we have received.

“Through a variety of participation programmes, digital innovations and inclusive social impact programmes we have once again seen how cricket continues to enrich communities around the world. With the addition of some historic on-field successes, there is plenty to celebrate and we look forward to crowning the six global winners later in the year.”

The ICC Development Initiative of the Year award recognises the outstanding development initiative delivered during the year.

The 100% Cricket Female Cricket Initiative of the Year acknowledges the outstanding female cricket focused initiatives and among the programmes highlighted as regional winners are Oman Cricket’s ‘Cricket4Her’ programme – an effort to redefine the landscape of women’s cricket in the country through tournaments and skill development.

Full List of regional winners:

ICC Development Initiative of the Year

Africa Regional Winner – Nigeria Cricket Federation
Americas Regional Winner – Mexico Cricket Association
Asia Regional Winner – Qatar Cricket Association
EAP Regional Winner – Cricket PNG
Europe Regional Winner – Federazione Cricket Italiana

100% Cricket Female Cricket Initiative of the Year

Africa Regional Winner – Sierra Leone Cricket Association
Americas Regional Winner – Costa Rica Cricket Federation
Asia Regional Winner – Oman Cricket
EAP Regional Winner – Japan Cricket Association
Europe Regional Winner – Cricket Belgium

ICC Associate Member Men’s Performance of the Year

Africa Regional Winner - Sierra Leone
Americas Regional Winner - Canada
Asia Regional Winner - Oman
EAP Regional Winner - Indonesia
Europe Regional Winner - Netherlands

ICC Associate Member Women’s Performance of the Year

Africa Regional Winner - Sierra Leone
Americas Regional Winner - Argentina
Asia Regional Winner - UAE
EAP Regional Winner - Indonesia
Europe Regional Winner - Scotland

ICC Digital Fan Engagement of the Year

Africa Regional Winner – Cricket Namibia
Americas Regional Winner – Bermuda Cricket Board
Asia Regional Winner – Cricket Association of Nepal
EAP Regional Winner – Persatuan Cricket Indonesia
Europe Regional Winner - Koninklijke Nederlandse Cricket Bond

Cricket 4 Good Social Impact Initiative of the Year

Africa Regional Winner - Sierra Leone Cricket Association
Americas Regional Winner – Mexico Cricket Association
Asia Regional Winner – Bahrain Cricket Federation
EAP Regional Winner – Samoa Cricket
Europe Regional Winner – Cricket Scotland

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OMAN CRUDE PRICE RISES
The price of Oman oil has increased, with prices for delivery by June 2024 reaching \$88.97, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil rose by 29 cents from the price of Tuesday, which was \$88.68. - **ONA**

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



WWW.TIMESOFOMAN.COM
THURSDAY, APRIL 25, 2024



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER
Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) general index (30) gained 10.8 points, comprising a rise by 0.23 per cent to close at 4707.10 points, compared to the last session, which stood at 4696.30 points.

Pact signed to explore projects in green steel, renewable energy

OETC along with other Omani institutions and companies will work with the correspondents from UAE to conduct the feasibility studies and the electricity connection requirements to connect the renewable energy, green steel, and aluminium projects

Times News Service

MUSCAT: In a strategic move to strengthen bilateral ties and drive sustainable development, the Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) and prominent Omani institutions have sealed a landmark agreement with leading counterparts from the United Arab Emirates (UAE).



This pact, aimed at propelling green industries and renewable energy sectors, stands as a significant milestone in the region's business landscape. The signing ceremony was attended by a trade delegation comprising representatives from the Sultanate of Oman, along with their counterparts from leading companies in the United Arab Emirates. This memorandum will enable the commencement of feasibility studies to explore the projects in the areas of renewable energy, green steel, and aluminium. OETC

along with other Omani institutions and companies will work with the correspondents from UAE to conduct the feasibility studies and the electricity connection requirements to connect the renewable energy, green steel, and aluminium projects, identify the required investments, and achieve the highest security and reliability standards in line with accredited policies, laws, and criteria. This step comes as part of the two countries' efforts to unleash opportunities and potential in the fields of green metals, renewable energy, and environmental

sustainability, and to provide the right climate and groundwork for the private sector to invest in these areas. It is also a step that will contribute added value to the Sultanate of Oman's efforts towards achieving carbon neutrality by 2050. The private sector and investments through leading companies in green metals, renewable, clean energy, and environmental sustainability are key drivers in contributing to this transformation and enhancing the standing of both countries among the advanced nations driving the wheel of innovation in these sectors.

OETC is keen to support continuous growth in sectors such as renewable and clean energy, green industries, and others, due to its significant positive impact and added value in achieving the national visions embodied in Oman Vision 2040. This vision aims to develop the Omani economy, promote local, regional, and international investment opportunities, build a fertile and prosperous business and investment environment, as well as improve social welfare and continue the developmental journey in all sectors across Oman. It is worth mentioning that

OETC, a member of the Nama Group, is the only company responsible for the transmission and control of electricity across the Sultanate's network. The electricity is transmitted from production stations to distributed load centres in the governorates. The transmission network operates at a voltage of 132kV and above to cover most of the governorates in the Sultanate, whether in the north or the south. Furthermore, OETC manages the interconnection lines between Oman and the GCC interconnection network, which operates at a voltage of 220kV.

CENTRAL BANK OF OMAN



CBO announces auction results of 70th GDB issue

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) announced the auction results of the 70th Government Development Bonds (GDB) issue worth OMR125 million. According to a media release issued by CBO's Market Operations Department, the 70th GDB Issue, which received overwhelming response from investors, has received applications amounted OMR212,981,700.

The average yield was 5.03 percent at an equivalent price of OMR99.660 while the highest yield was 5.20 percent at an equivalent price of OMR99.345 and the lowest was at 4.50 percent at an equivalent price of OMR100.660. The two-year bond will be issued on Thursday, 25 April 2024 and it will mature on 25 April 2026, carrying a coupon rate of 4.85 per cent p.a. - **ONA**

TECHNOLOGY

Google plans to shut down its podcast service globally by June

WASHINGTON: The American company Google announced that it plans to shut down its podcast service Google Podcasts globally by next June in an expected move. The company recently closed the service in the US, but residents outside the US can still use it. The Google Podcast service is widely popular, especially with its simple applications with an easy interface, and the many improvements that were added to it in recent years before the company decided to close it, including the ability to resume listening to podcast episodes on a different device, adding subscriptions via RSS feed, easy controls, and others. After the expected closure of the podcast service globally in June, users will be forced to move to the

YouTube Music service in order to transfer and listen to podcast subscriptions, and Google allows users to export their subscriptions in an OPML file, then transfer them to any other app or service to follow their favourite episodes. Google gives users plenty of time to complete the process of transferring their subscriptions to different applications until 29 July 2024, but users may notice that some podcast programs do not appear if they are not available in YouTube Music. The company seeks to make YouTube Music a comprehensive platform for all the audio services it provides, to enhance its presence and compete with similar services, such as Apple Music and Spotify. - **ANI**

PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

Oman-UAE alliance marks commencement of construction works of joint railway project



Times News Service

ABU DHABI: Coinciding with the state visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq to the United Arab Emirates, Etihad Rail, Oman Rail and Mubadala Investment Company, signed a partnership agreement as shareholders marking the commencement of construction works of the joint railway project with immediate effect. An agreement was also signed to award the civil works and construction tender for the joint venture to an Omani-Emirati alliance led by Trojan Construction Group (NPC) and Galfar Engineering and Contracting, aligning with joint efforts to build national capabilities and drive in-country value, which includes the involvement of the private sector in the implementation of the joint project. The alliance will also include Tristar Engineering & Construction (TE&C) and National Infrastructure Construction Company (NICC). In addition, another tender for the systems and integration of the railway network, was awarded to a joint venture between Siemens and HAC, ensuring Hafeet Rail's fleet are equipped with the latest rail technologies and advancements. The trains will be equipped with the European Train Control System (ETCS) Level 2, the most advanced such system in the world, to ensure the highest levels of efficiency and safety in accordance with international standards and best practice. As a result, the network's advanced infrastructure will include full digital train control and tracking through GPS technology, enhancing the network's reliability. The signing ceremony was at-

tended by His Highness Sheikh Hamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Managing Director of the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, Abdulsalam bin Mohammed Al Murshidi, President of the Oman Investment Authority, Suhail bin Mohammed Al Mazrouei, Minister of Energy and Infrastructure of the UAE, Mohamed Hassan Al Suwaidi, Minister of Investment of the UAE and Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of ADQ, Mohamed bin Hadi Al Husaini, Minister of State for Financial Affairs in the UAE, Khaldoon Khalifa Al Mubarak, Managing Director and Group Chief Executive Officer of Mubadala, and Sheikh Nasser bin Sulaiman Al-Harthi, Deputy President of Operations at Oman Investment Authority and Chairman of Asyad Group. Also in attendance were senior officials from ADQ, Etihad Rail, Mubadala Investment Company, the Oman Investment Authority, and Asyad Group, as well as representatives of the Emirati-Omani alliance that won the civil works and construction contract for the project. Etihad Rail, Oman Rail and Mubadala Investment Company also unveiled the new corporate identity of their joint venture, which will now be known as Hafeet Rail (formerly Oman and Etihad Rail Company). The name pays homage to Jebel Hafeet, stretching between the Sultanate of Oman and the UAE. Jebel Hafeet holds strategic significance and historical importance for both countries, serving as a link between the two neighbours through its rugged terrain, which includes mountains, deserts, and unique limestone formations. Rising to a

towering 1,249 meters above sea level, its numerous picturesque natural landmarks have long captivated citizens and tourists alike from across the globe. Commenting on the occasion, His Highness Sheikh Theyab bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Chairman of Etihad Rail, said the agreements were in line with the wise directives of the leadership of the two neighbouring countries, enhancing the longstanding historical relations between them, supporting economic and commercial integration, and strengthening their social and cultural ties. His Highness added that the project is another step forward in a long history of joint cooperation and will kickstart a new phase of planning for a better future for the two neighbouring countries and their people. Abdulsalam bin Mohammed Al Murshidi, President of the Oman Investment Authority, noted that the joint railway network is a significant addition to the logistics sector, and will play a crucial role in stimulating various industrial sectors and economic activities, providing increased commercial and investment opportunities for the private sector, supporting the integration of Omani port activities and linking them to regional and international markets, in addition to its contribution to attracting national and foreign investments. This will drive the competitiveness of the two neighbouring countries at a global trade level, which will in turn enhance their economic prosperity. Suhail bin Mohammed Al Mazrouei, Minister of Energy and Infrastructure of the UAE, took the opportunity to emphasise the sig-

nificance of the accomplishments already achieved by the company since its inception. He highlighted its commendable levels of efficiency and dedication in taking early steps to establish a safe and sustainable joint railway network, in alignment with the strong bilateral relations and ties between the two nations. He also underscored the vital role of the network in facilitating local and regional trade, whilst also opening new opportunities in the infrastructure, transportation, and logistics sectors. This, in turn, contributes to the diversification of the national economy and fosters sustainable development across both countries, he concluded. Eng. Abdulrahman Al Hatmi, Chief Executive Officer of Asyad Group, highlighted the role of the project in reaffirming Oman and the UAE's position as strategic logistical hubs for import and distribution of good to regional and global markets in light of the current economic boom in the GCC and particularly in Oman and the UAE. He went on to commend the strategic vision and economic foresight of Oman and the Emirates which aims to foster an integrated transportation ecosystem that will reshape the logistics landscape in the region. The project reaffirms the strategic and economic visions of both countries, bolstering their positions as logistical hubs for the import and distribution of goods to regional and global markets. It will significantly transform the logistics landscape in the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates, increasing economic competitiveness.

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

The trading value stood at OMR13,282,660, comprising a rise by 453.1 per cent, compared to the last session, which stood at OMR2,401,279



MUSCAT: Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) general index (30) gained 10.8 points, comprising a rise by 0.23 per cent to close at 4707.10 points, compared to the last session, which stood at 4696.30 points. The trading value stood at OMR13,282,660, comprising a rise by 453.1 per cent, compared to the last session, which stood at OMR2,401,279. The report released by MSX

pointed out that the market value went up by 0.043 per cent to reach about OMR24.13 billion. The report added that the value of shares bought by non-Omani investors reached OMR355,000, comprising 2.67 per cent. The value of shares sold by non-Omani investors reached OMR311,000, comprising 2.34 per cent. The net non-Omani investment rose by 0.33 per cent to OMR44,000. — **ONA**

NEW FEATURE

WhatsApp tests transferring, sharing files without Internet

WASHINGTON: WhatsApp is testing a new feature called 'People Nearby', which may enable users to transfer and share files without the need for an Internet connection, which means that users will be able to share documents, photos and other files with their contacts without requiring a direct Internet connection. According to what was observed in the latest beta version of the application for the Android system, the new feature works similarly to the famous Android feature Nearby Share and the Air-Drop feature on Apple devices. The People Nearby feature in WhatsApp uses Bluetooth technology to transfer files between devices, so the transfer process does not require an Internet connection, and as shown in the published screenshots, there will be a dedicated section in the application settings that reveals people nearby, and through that section it is possible to send and receive files. Using this feature requires granting the WhatsApp applica-



tion all the necessary permissions for it to function properly. These permissions include access to stored files, Bluetooth, and geolocation to find and connect to nearby devices. To use the feature, users can go to Settings then choose 'People Nearby', this feature will automatically then search for nearby devices. The feature must be turned on in the two connected devices in order for the transmission process to be completed. The transmission process will be protected by end-to-end encryption technology, and the phone number will remain hidden during the process to maintain privacy. — **ONA**

SURVEY

Is EU's image failing in Southeast Asia?

BRUSSELS: The European Union's reputation appears to have taken a hit in Southeast Asia, according to a region-wide survey of "elites" conducted by the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute in Singapore. The researchers gathered the data by questioning some 2,000 representatives of academia, business, government and civil society in January and February this year. The respondents come from Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos and Brunei. The results show that there is now less trust in the EU to uphold free trade or the rules-based order compared with last year. Less than 14% of the respondents see the EU as the leading champion of the global free trade agenda, down from almost 22% in last year's survey. Last year, the EU ranked second as the country or bloc Southeast Asians trusted the most to uphold the international rules-based order and international law. However, in this year's survey, the EU slipped into third place with its percentage score dipping to nearly 17% from 23%. The bloc was behind the United States and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). **What was the response from Brussels?** The survey also showed there is now less confidence that the EU would "do the right thing" to con-



tribute to global peace, security, prosperity and governance. As a regional average, only 41% agreed with that proposition, down from around 51% last year. Of those who had little or no trust in the EU to "do the right thing," almost a third said it was because they thought Brussels was "distracted with its internal affairs and thus cannot focus on global concerns and issues." "The findings of the State of Southeast Asia 2024 survey underline that the European Union needs to increase its cooperation efforts with Southeast Asia substantially," said David McAllister, chair of the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee. Bernd Lange, chair of the European Parliament's Committee on International Trade, described the survey as "a bit like getting a lukewarm report card. It is not all bad, but it is clear we have some homework to do."

PERIODIC LABOUR FORCE SURVEY

India saw significant growth in jobs and dip in unemployment rate, govt data show

NEW DELHI: Employment is a major issue this election, especially after the ILO report which claimed that India's youth account for 83 per cent of the unemployed workforce. ANI has tried to analyse government data from five different sources to find that there has been significant growth in jobs over the last few years of the Modi government. Data from the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), EPFO, RBI, National Career Services or NCS portal and various job-intensive schemes of the union government, all show a growth in jobs and a decline in the unemployment rate over the last few years. Periodic Labour Force Survey or PLFS data of the last six years indicates an improving trend in labour participation rate and worker population ratio. PLFS data of the last six years suggests that employment has increased in the country from 46.8 percent in 2017-18 to 56 per cent in 2022-23. Similarly, the labour force participation has also gone up from 49.8 per cent in 2017-18 to 57.9 per cent in 2022-23. The unemployment rate has declined from 6 per cent in 2017-18 to 3.2 per cent in 2022-23. In 2022-23, there is a 3.1 per cent growth in WPR as against a LFPR of 2.7 per cent — more jobs than demand. Unemployment rate in rural ar-



eas have declined from 5.3 percent in 2017-18 to 2.4 per cent in 2022-23. In urban areas, it has reduced from 7.7 per cent to 5.4 per cent during the same period. The data also suggest a significant decline in the unemployment rate among females, from 5.6 per cent in 2017-18 to 2.9 per cent in 2022-23. Among youth unemployment rate has declined from 17.8 per cent to 10 per cent for the same period. PLFS data also showed that employment for educated persons has substantially increased in the last six years. The employment for graduates has gone up from 49.7 per cent in 2017-18 to 55.8 per cent in 2022-23. For post graduate and above employment rate has gone up from

67.8 per cent to 70.6 per cent. Analysis of Employee Provident Fund Organisation data suggests that over last six years 6.1 crore new members have joined the EPFO fold. The latest KLEMS database released by RBI (covers 27 Industry/sectors of the economy) too suggest that in 9 years estimated employment in the country have gone up from 47 crore in 2013-14 to 55.3 crore in 2021-22. The National Career Service (NCS) portal launched by the government to bring employers and employees to one meeting place, saw a surge of 214 per cent in job vacancies in 2023-24 as compared to 2022-23. As on March 31, 2024, the NCS platform has a user base of 25.58 lakh employers. The NCS portal

hosted around one million active job vacancies, on an average, on a daily basis. The vacancies on NCS have mainly increased in Finance, Insurance, Construction, manufacturing, transportation and storage sector and IT and communications sector. As compared to previous year 2023-24 saw a significant surge in jobs. There was a surge of 134 per cent in the financial sector, 285 per cent in operations and support sector, 155 per cent in IT and Communications sector and 121 per cent in the education sector. Add to this various policy initiatives of government have also significantly added jobs. Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY), under the scheme a loan amount of Rs 5,32,358.35 crore has been disbursed as on March 2024. Under Atmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana (ABRY), total benefits of Rs 10,188.5 crore have been given to 60.49 lakh beneficiaries as on March 2024. Various other schemes like MGNREGS, PM SVANidhi, PMEGP have also helped in generating jobs. Employment opportunities were also created through various flagship programmes of the government like, Make in India, Start-up India, Digital India, Smart City mission, Housing for All, Infrastructure development and Industrial corridors. — **ANI**

BILATERAL TRADE AGREEMENT

Jaipur becomes major contributor as India-UAE trade sees significant spike

JAIPUR, INDIA: After the signing of the bilateral trade agreement between India and UAE, the bilateral trade between both countries has registered a 16 per cent increase reaching \$85 billion from \$73 billion two years ago highlights UAE official in an exclusive interview to ANI. "Since two years, After the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement was signed, we've noticed a 16 percent increase in trade between both countries. Total trade has reached \$5 billion from 73 billion throughout the last fiscal year" said Ahmed Aljneibi, Director of the UAE-India Cooperation and Coordination Office (UICC) at the UAE-India CEPA Council Business Roundtable held in Jaipur. Officials from the UAE and India highlighted the significant economic opportunities arising from the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between the two countries.

Emphasising on the importance of Jaipur in facilitating trade between the UAE and India, amounting to approximately half a billion dollars, the UAE officials expressed the intention to engage with local businesses in Jaipur to explore partnership opportunities with UAE counterparts. "We've identified that Jaipur has a significant contribution to the trade between the UAE and India, approximately half a billion dollars in terms of trade. In Jaipur, we're planning to have a group of businesses that we can meet with and understand the requirements and see how we can perhaps partner them with businesses in the UAE" said Aljneibi. UAE's Ras Al-Khaimah was also highlighted as an important location for the business leaders of India for its economic investment policies and infrastructure. "I believe our economic investment and trade policies, coupled with the strategic location of Ras

Al-Khaimah and together with the world-class infrastructure that we have, this will provide an immense value for the Indian companies that are seeking to further expand their international footprint" said Txomin Goitia, Director of International Relations at the Office of the Ruler, Government of Ras Al-Khaimah. "The need of the hour, as per Indian business is, how we can make the Indian business local to global. In this aspect, Ras Al-Khaimah plays a very vital role. Indian businesses can take advantage of multiple bilateral agreements that the UAE has already signed" said Mohammad Haseeb, Strategic Country Manager-India at Ras Al-Khaimah Economic Zone (RAKEZ). The UAE-India CEPA Council (UICC) was launched on the sidelines of the Vibrant Gujarat Summit in January this year. The UAE-India CEPA, which came into force on May 1, 2022, offers numerous

benefits for businesses from both countries. These include greater access to each other's markets, reduction or removal of tariffs on a significant portion of products, an open and non-discriminatory trading environment, and enhanced market access for service providers across various sectors. Additionally, the agreement addresses technical barriers to trade, ensures the use of international standards for technical regulations, and provides support for UAE businesses in government procurement tenders. Moreover, UAE products will be exempt from India's anti-dumping investigations when transshipped, and a Joint Committee will oversee the implementation and improvement of the CEPA. As both countries continue to deepen their partnership, businesses stand to gain from the conducive regulatory framework and enhanced market access facilitated by the agreement. — **ANI**

DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

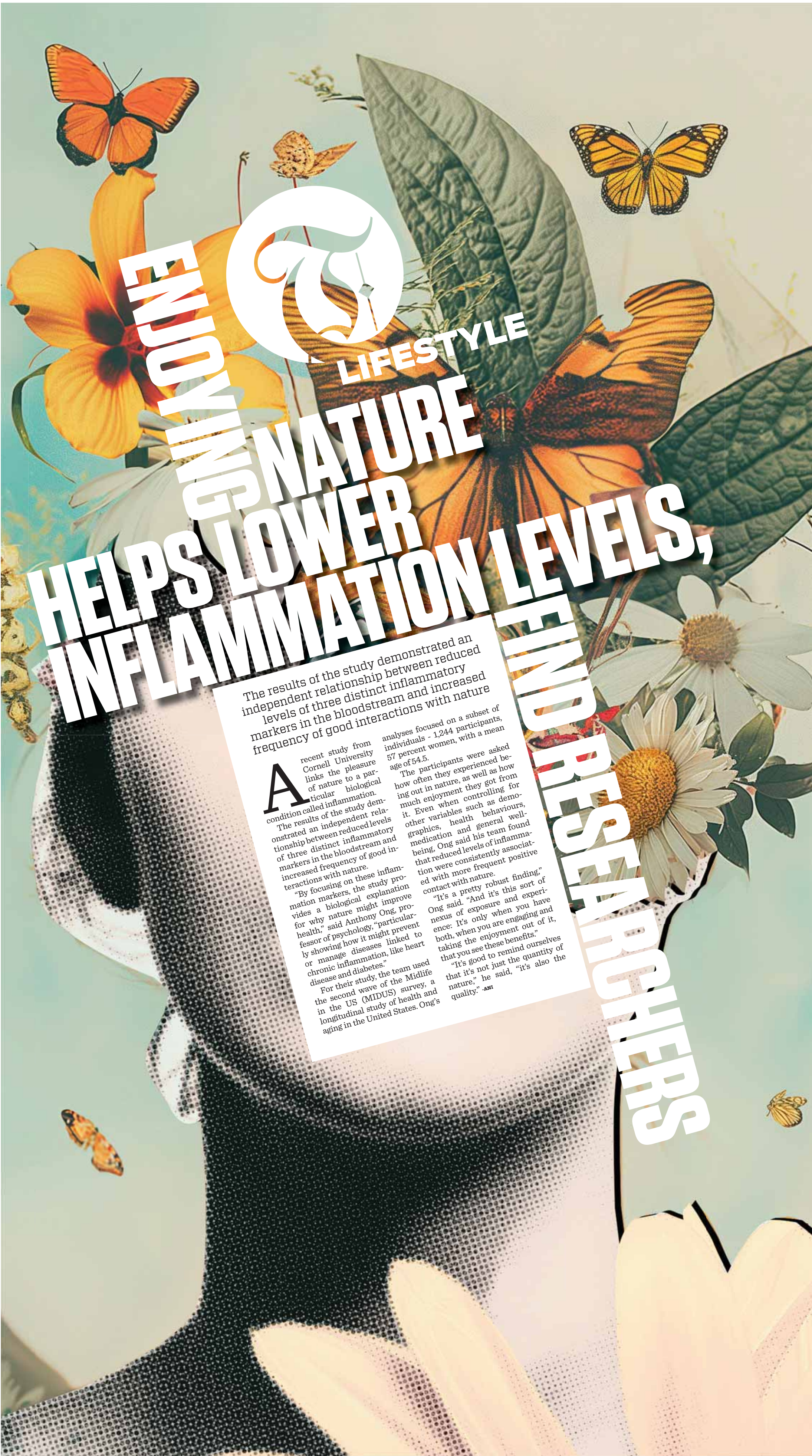
China's silver economy witnesses more talent, infrastructure support

BEIJING: After learning about an automatic pill dispenser in class, Tang Shijie, 20, recommended the machine to his mother who operates a nursing home in the city of Changzhou, east China's Jiangsu Province. "Pills can be distributed precisely and delivered on time," said Tang. As a child, Tang often played and did homework at the nursing home, and he views many of the old people there as friends. He hopes to improve the quality of their lives through the knowledge he has acquired. Tang is a student at the School of Elderly Care Services and Management of Nanjing University of Chinese Medicine, which started recruiting undergraduate students in 2021. He takes classes in medicine, management and elderly care, and in his free time, he looks after elderly people on a voluntary basis. "The silver economy has huge development potential in tackling the challenges of an aging population. This is the reason why I chose to study here," said Tang. The school has designed multidisciplinary curriculums and provides extracurricular activities, such as visiting and doing

internships in elderly care enterprises and service rating institutions, to build students' skills in policy research, management and medical care, according to the school's associate professor Peng Xiang. Peng said there is greater awareness within society about the elderly care industry these days, and this is reflected in the school's enrolment process. "During consultations, fewer parents and students ask simple questions such as what elderly care is and whether it is easy to find a job by studying the subject. They are more concerned about course content and career development paths," said Peng. He said that the stereotype of low education levels and low salaries of practitioners in the industry has been changing. This March, 168 elderly care practitioners in Jiangsu were accredited with professional titles, among the earliest in the country. Lin Li, an official in the civil affairs department of Jiangsu, said the establishment of a professional title system will increase the social recognition of elderly care practitioners and give them a sense of achievement, thus attracting more talent to the industry. — **Xinhua**

EU's support for Israel making it less popular Bridget Welsh, an honorary research associate at the University of Nottingham Asia Research Institute Malaysia, said the Israel-Hamas war has been by far the most "damaging" issue for the EU over the past 12 months. "Many in Southeast Asia see [the EU's] unfettered support for Israel and the carnage against Palestinians in Gaza as unacceptable," she told DW. Indeed, the same State of Southeast Asia survey found that Southeast Asians ranked the Gaza conflict as the most important geopolitical issue, beating the region's own concerns, such as tensions in the South China Sea and a civil war raging in Myanmar. **Malaysia and Indonesia at loggerheads with the EU** Even before the war in Gaza escalated, the EU had been locked in a

spat with Malaysia and Indonesia, the world's two largest palm oil producers, over Brussels' deforestation legislation. The EU plans to ban the import of goods that can be traced to deforestation. Several Southeast Asian states say this unfairly impacts their agricultural sectors and doesn't recognize the climate efforts they are making. In March, a World Trade Organization (WTO) panel technically ruled in the EU's favor after Malaysia had brought a case to the global trade body. But the WTO also agreed with some of Malaysia's complaints about the way the EU had prepared, published and administered its deforestation regulations. **EU as best 'third option' between US and China** Despite these issues, EU foreign affairs spokesperson Peter Stano said that the latest results actually show that trust in "the EU as a partner to ASEAN remains strong." He told DW that the poll, for instance, found that the EU is ASEAN's fourth most important dialogue partner, after China, the US and Japan, and that it maintained its leading position as ASEAN's preferred strategic partner in hedging against US-China rivalry. "The 2023 survey showed an uptick in the region's appreciation for the EU's role compared with 2022," he added. "While this year the EU's position overall has weakened slightly, the overall assessment of the EU's role remains strong and positive," Stano said. — **Ww**



ENJOYING NATURE HELPS LOWER INFLAMMATION LEVELS, FIND RESEARCHERS



LIFESTYLE

The results of the study demonstrated an independent relationship between reduced levels of three distinct inflammatory markers in the bloodstream and increased frequency of good interactions with nature

A recent study from Cornell University links the pleasure of nature to a particular biological condition called inflammation. The results of the study demonstrated an independent relationship between reduced levels of three distinct inflammatory markers in the bloodstream and increased frequency of good interactions with nature.

"By focusing on these inflammation markers, the study provides a biological explanation for why nature might improve health," said Anthony Ong, professor of psychology, "particularly showing how it might prevent or manage diseases linked to chronic inflammation, like heart disease and diabetes."

For their study, the team used the second wave of the Midlife in the US (MIDUS) survey, a longitudinal study of health and aging in the United States. Ong's

analyses focused on a subset of individuals - 1,244 participants, 57 percent women, with a mean age of 54.5.

The participants were asked how often they experienced being out in nature, as well as how much enjoyment they got from it. Even when controlling for other variables such as demographics, health behaviours, medication and general well-being, Ong said his team found that reduced levels of inflammation were consistently associated with more frequent positive contact with nature.

"It's a pretty robust finding," Ong said. "And it's this sort of nexus of exposure and experience: It's only when you have both, when you are engaging and taking the enjoyment out of it, that you see these benefits."

"It's good to remind ourselves that it's not just the quantity of nature," he said, "it's also the quality." -ANI

SPORTS

Oman’s Al Nahda go down fighting to Lebanon’s Al Ahed

Erwin’s brace powers Al Ahed into AFC Cup summit clash after 3-2 aggregate win in the AFC Cup West Zone final

MUSCAT: Oman’s domestic league champions Al Nahda put up a brave performance before bowing out to Lebanon’s Al Ahed in the AFC Cup West Zone final at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex on Tuesday night.

In the second-leg match, Al Nahda drew with Al Ahed 2-2 but made their exit after the Lebanese club won 3-2 on aggregate following a narrow 1-0 win in the first leg played at Karbala, Iraq last week.

Al Ahed booked their place in the AFC Cup 2023/24 final, courtesy a brace from Lee Erwin.

They will either face Australia’s



Central Coast Mariners or FK Abdysh Ata Kant of Kyrgyz Republic in the AFC Cup final on May 5.

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

However, despite dominating in the opening 30 minutes, a shot from range by Inters Gui was all



the Oman side had to show for their efforts.

A handful of corners for Al Nahda were dealt with, as Al Ahed’s game plan worked for the first half at least.

Despite 80% possession, a half-hearted penalty appeal from Billel Bensaha was waved away, and the two sides went in level at the break.

Less than eight minutes into the

second half, Al Nahda’s pressure paid off. Salah Al Yahyaiei drove into Al Ahed’s penalty area, finding an unmarked Omer Al Malki to tap home his fifth goal of the competition.

The hosts continued to poke and probe for a second, with both Al Yahyaiei and Bensaha at the heart of the action down the channels.

With 20 minutes left on the

FULL-TIME STATISTICS	
15	SHOTS
5	SHOTS ON TARGET
73.2	POSSESSION
1	YELLOW CARDS
0	RED CARDS

visitors ahead on aggregate in the 82nd minute.

As the hosts began to push forward, Al Ahed countered and found Erwin once again, who carried the ball into the penalty box and scored his third AFC Cup goal.

Al Nahda weren’t finished just yet. Walter Bwalya scrambled home from close range in the 90th minute to bring the game back to 2-2.

The hosts had a final opportunity to draw level on aggregate when Al Yahyaiei’s cross from the left found Al Malki, but his header bounced over the bar as Al Ahed took their spot in the final.

[With inputs from www.the-afc.com]

PREMIER LEAGUE

Emery extends Villa contract to 2027

LONDON: Aston Villa boss Unai Emery on Tuesday extended his contract with the club until 2027. Villa were 16th in the Premier League and fighting relegation when the Spaniard took over from Steven Gerrard in November 2022.

In a remarkable turnaround, Emery, now 52, guided Villa to a seventh-place finish to qualify for the Europa Conference League, the club’s first participation in European football since 2010-11.

This season, they sit fourth in the Premier League with Champions League qualification in their sights. They are six points clear of Spurs, who have two games in hand.

Renowned for his expertise in European competition, Emery has steered Villa into a semi-final in the Conference League, where



they will face Greek side Olympiakos with the hope of reaching a first European final since 1982.

Emery won the Europa League in three consecutive seasons with Sevilla before also lifting the trophy in 2021 with Villarreal. - Agencies

ITALIAN CUP: SECOND LEG

Milik fires Juve into final

TURIN: Juventus booked their place in the Italian Cup final in dramatic fashion after a 3-2 aggregate win over Lazio on Tuesday.

Arkadiusz Milik scored seconds after coming on as a substitute in the 83rd minute to send the Old Lady through at the Stadio Olimpico. Lazio’s Valentin Castellanos headed in after 12 minutes into the match in Rome, before adding his second of the tie three minutes

after half-time. Despite losing the second leg 2-1, Massimiliano Allegri’s side progressed.

After losing the first leg in Turin 2-0, Lazio were given hope of turning the semi-final around when Castellanos nodded home from a corner. The striker then put Lazio 2-0 up on the night, and level on aggregate, after drilling a low shot beyond Mattia Perin just after the break. - Agencies

FIRST ROUND IN PORTIMAO

Al Zubair eyes race wins in International GT Open series

MUSCAT: Oman’s Al Faisal Al Zubair and new Canadian team-mate Mikaël Grenier are all geared up to compete in the 2024 International GT Open Series with the opening round of the series to be held at the Autodromo Internacional Algarve, in Portimão, Portugal, on the weekend.

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



However, the Al-Manar Racing by Getspeed Mercedes AMG GT3 duo will only compete in two more rounds after the opener with participation in the Spa and Barcelona rounds.

Speaking ahead of the Portimao race, Al Zubair said: “I am looking forward to the start of the International GT Open season. I will be participating in three rounds, all with Mick Grenier. Not only is he a very strong driver but he is someone I get along with very well. He will be with me in GT World Challenge Endurance and for these three rounds.

“We are with Getspeed and Al Manar Racing and we feel

our package is extremely strong. We don’t see a reason why we shouldn’t be fighting for race wins.”

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

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

Al Zubair and Grenier will crew the Mercedes in both the Interna-

tional GT Open and the Fanatec GT World Challenge powered by AWS Endurance Cup this season.

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

International GT Open competitors are sharing the Portuguese circuit with Euroformula Open, GT Cup Europe, Clio Cup Series and Alpine Elf Europa Cup entrants this weekend.

The circuit was designed by Ricardo Pina Arquitectos and finished in October 2008. It has been hosting ELMS, DTM and WEC for several years, while the International GT Open visited for the first time in 2010. Since 2020, it has also hosted MotoGP.

Private tests will be permitted on Thursday, before three free practice sessions take place on the 4.653km circuit on Friday. A televised 30-minute qualifying session follows on Saturday morning for one designated driver and the first 70-minute race gets underway with a rolling start later in the day.

The second qualifying session takes place on Sunday morning, prior to the one-hour second race of the weekend, which gets underway with a rolling start in the afternoon.

IPL



TODAY’S MATCH

Sunrisers Hyderabad vs Royal Challengers Bengaluru

Hyderabad, 6pm

Sensational Stoinis helps LSG stun CSK

CHENNAI: A magnificent counter-attacking maiden IPL century from Marcus Stoinis (124* off 63) helped Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) pull off a stunning chase of 211 against Chennai Super Kings (CSK) at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai on Tuesday.

Stoinis pulled LSG out of trouble from 33/2 and played a majestic knock, keeping the runs flowing at one end.

Nicholas Pooran (34 off 15) and Deepak Hooda (17* off 6) played handy knocks under pressure in helping Stoinis take LSG past the finish line.

It was fitting that with 17 needed off the last over, Stoinis took it upon himself to see LSG through as he smashed 6, 4, 4, 4 off Mustafizur Rahman to finish the game off in style as LSG pulled off the highest run-chase in IPL at Chepauk.

Earlier, Ruturaj Gaikwad became the first CSK captain to register a century in IPL as he put on an exhibition of elegant strokes and added a mammoth 104-run stand off just 46 balls with Shivam Dube to power CSK to 210/4 from 20 overs.



Gaikwad remained unbeaten on 108 off 60 balls as CSK hit 91 off the final six overs. Dube walked in at No. 5 with CSK losing steam through the middle overs, but upped the run scoring rate with a 27-ball 66. Before his arrival, Ravindra Jadeja and Daryl Mitchell combined to score only 21 in 29 balls.

Following the defeat, Gaikwad said: “Tough pill to swallow. But a good game of cricket. LSG played really well in the back end. We had the game in control till the 13th-

14th over but hats off to Stoinis. He played brilliantly.

“Dew played a part. I feel it was a slightly huge amount of dew and took our spinners away from the game. If there was no dew, we could have controlled the middle phase and taken the game deeper. It’s part of cricket. You really can’t change the non-controllable. Long way to go in the tournament.”

After completing the double over CSK in the league phase, KL Rahul said LSG’s victory at Chepauk felt “super special.”

“Very special, especially when it’s a game like that,” LSG skipper Rahul said. “A total of 210-plus runs were scored on either side. Felt like, for most of the innings when we were batting, we were way behind in the game and just to pull off a victory like that.... super special.

[Beating CSK earlier] didn’t make a difference, it was a fresh start. Both teams started on zero and there were different conditions here. They got off to a really good start here. And put pressure on our bowlers to get 210 on that pitch, I didn’t think it was a 200+ wicket, felt 170-180 was a good total on that pitch.

“They batted well and we didn’t start well, but all credit to Stoinis. The way he batted. Phenomenal to watch from outside. Not just power hitting, but also very smart batting.”

After suffering back-to-back defeats against LSG - and their third loss in their last five matches - CSK have slipped to fifth on the points table after eight games. LSG have climbed to fourth with ten points from eight games. - Agencies

Which mountain on the Oman-UAE border lends its name to the railway project between the two countries?

'Hhalas', 'Hhunaizi' and 'Fargh' are varieties of which fruit associated with Omani heritage?

Two violins, one viola, and one cello make up a "String _____"

What is the name given to Taylor Swift's fanbase?

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ROUND-UP

Get assured gold coins on jewellery purchase from Malabar Gold

With ‘Golden Gift’ offer, customers can get assured gold coins with gold and diamond jewellery purchases

MUSCAT: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 6th largest jewellery retailer globally with an extensive retail network of 350 outlets across 13 countries, has just unveiled their ‘Golden Gift’ offers providing customers the chance to get free gold coins.

With this offer, customers can

get assured gold coins with gold and diamond jewellery purchases. Malabar Gold & Diamonds will also be showcasing an exquisite array of jewellery collections in gold, diamond and precious gems across their numerous sub brands such as Mine, Era, Precia, Viraaaz, Ethnix & Divine etc., which are assured to be favourites amongst their customers. The limited period offer can be availed across all Malabar Gold & Diamonds outlets till 11th May.

As part of the Golden Gift offers, for every diamond or precious gem jewellery purchase worth OMR500, customers will get free 1g gold coin and for diamond and precious gem jewellery purchase worth OMR300 they will be eligible for half gram gold coin.

In light of the gold rate fluctuations, customers can take advantage of the Gold Rate Protection offer provided by Malabar Gold & Diamonds, wherein customers

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

Great value

“The Golden Gift offers from Malabar Gold & Diamonds will definitely be a great compliment to the prosperity that our customers usher in when they buy jewellery. With the assurance of free gold coins on jewellery purchase along with many more offers, we are certain that connoisseurs of jewellery across the nation will flock to our showrooms. Offering great value on purchase along with a wide host

of trendy designs that are a treat for jewellery lovers, Malabar Gold & Diamonds is once again solidifying its position as the go-to place for jewellery shopping”, commented Shamlal Ahamed, Managing Director-International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

The exclusive collection of jewellery that the brand has unveiled presents jewellery lovers with an enthralling array of designs in gold, diamond and precious gem jewellery. The special design has been made available across a wide range of sub-brands such as Mine, Era, Precia, Viraaaz, Ethnix and Divine, comprising of 22k gold, diamonds and precious gem jewellery. Furthermore, Malabar Gold & Diamonds is offering customers 24K gold bars at zero making charges as well as special buy counters across their showrooms, offering incredible discounts on selected jewellery designs.



CUSTOMER-CENTRIC SOLUTIONS



BankDhofar enhances customer service with extended branch hours for SMEs

MUSCAT: BankDhofar announced it has extended working hours in 13 branches across the Sultanate of Oman exclusively for Small and Medium Enterprise customers. This move is in line with Oman Vision 2040 focus on this sector.

This initiative reflects the bank's dedication to deliver customer-centric solutions to its entrepreneurial clients, thereby supporting them in their growth and reflect on nation's economic prosperity.

This strategic move is complemented by the recent launch of a specialized business bank account tailored for SMEs, offering a comprehensive suite of banking solutions to meet their unique requirements. With an expanded branch network and advanced digital offerings, entrepreneurs can meet the relationship managers at their convenience.

SME customers can visit the mentioned branches from 3:00pm to 8:00 pm on a daily basis except for Friday and Saturday. The branches operating at extended hours are: Ruwi (Lulu Center), Muttrah, Seeb, Al Maabelah Industrial City and Al Khoud in Muscat Governorate,

and Barka (the old BankDhofar branch). South Al Batinah Governorate, and Fanja “Bidbid” in the Al Dakhiliyah Governorate. In addition to Ibri branch in Wilayat Al Dhahirah Governorate, Sur in South Al Sharqiyah Governorate, Duqm in Al Wusta Governorate, and Salalah “Industrial Zone” in Dhofar Governorate.

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

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

With 118 branches and 350 remote banking devices including ATM's, CCDM's, Multi-Function Kiosks, it is committed to take banking closer to customers.

SHARING KNOWLEDGE

Alizz Islamic Bank hosts delegation from organisation of Muslim scholars in Sri Lanka



MUSCAT: Alizz Islamic Bank recently hosted a delegation from the organisation of Muslim scholars in Sri Lanka who were on a visit to the Sultanate of Oman on the invitation of the Awqaf and Religious Affairs Ministry.

The delegation lead by Sheikh Mufti Mohamed Ibrahim Mohamed Rizwe, chairman of All Cey-

lon Jamiyyathul Ulema - Sri Lanka was received by senior officials of the bank headed by the Chief Operating Officer, Asaad Al Kharusi. During the visit growth and development of Islamic banking in both countries were discussed as well as current developments. In addition promotion of Islamic values as a lifestyle was also highlighted.

All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama (ACJU) is the supreme body of Islamic theologian in Sri Lanka. The objectives of the ACJU are to serve the Muslim Community and the nation. At present ACJU has 163 branches in 24 districts in Sri Lanka and over 8,000 scholars as subscribed members.

Issa Al Riyami Head of Sharia

Compliance and Audit of Alizz Islamic Bank, said, “Being one of the first dedicated Islamic bank in Oman and since we tend to focus on sharing knowledge and experiences to support the development of Islamic banking both locally and globally; it was an honour for us to welcome the delegation in our head office to reflect our shared core values.”

BANK MUSCAT

Unparalleled features and benefits offered for Asalah Priority banking customers

MUSCAT: A wide range of banking products and services are carefully crafted to suit customers of Bank Muscat, the leading financial service provider in the Sultanate of Oman, and offer them a distinctive banking experience. Marking a long-standing and strong relationship with customers, Asalah provides a special banking experience based on understanding customers' dynamic needs.

Abdulnasir N. Al Raisi, General Manager – Personal Banking, Bank Muscat, said: “The expansion of the Asalah network highlights our focus to remain the nation's bank of choice in all parts of the country. With the widest reach in serving customers across regions, we are committed to meeting customer expectations by offering dedicated Relationship Managers and personalized products and services to fit their needs. We are also committed to catering to the complex financial needs of clients reflecting the customer-centric vision of



Bank Muscat.”

During the past period, Bank Muscat opened a number of new Asalah centers within its branches in Madinat Sultan Qaboos, Al Hail in Wilayat of Al Seeb, and also in the Wilayat of Izki and Adam in Al Dakhiliya Governorate, bringing the total number of 47 Asalah centers to date distributed in various governorates of the Sultanate.

Asalah Priority Banking extends many services and facilities, including Asalah's special contact centre operating around the clock

all days of the week. The Asalah Entertainer App brings customers great value with thousands of “Buy 1 and get 1 for free” offers in stores inside the Sultanate and international destinations.

Customers also get rewards and discounts in multiple places such as restaurants, entertainment, beauty and health.

Further, the Asalah Signature Credit Card offers 1% cash back on all local and international transactions, a number of 12 complimentary visits to more than 1000

airport lounges worldwide, free travel insurance, and 24/7 concierge service.

While Asalah Platinum Debit Cardholders have access to privileges encompassing lounge access, exciting offers at high-end merchants, restaurants and hotels, complimentary chauffeur service to and from Salalah & Muscat International Airports, preferential rates on transactions, higher cash withdrawal limit and free Asalah Entertainer App with numerous buy-1-get-1-free offers worldwide.



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What is the name given to Taylor Swift's fanbase?

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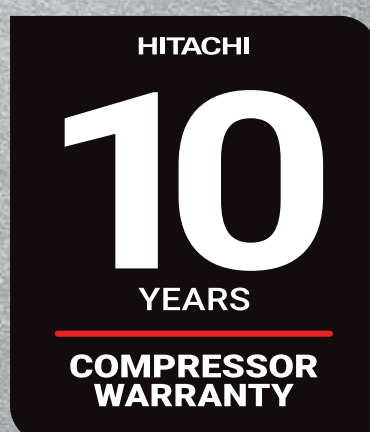
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