

NEWS BRIEF

WEATHER
DISTURBANCE
EXTENDS TILL
SUNDAY

Muscat - Rain of varying intensity lashed several governorates on Saturday with the weather disturbance likely to extend till Sunday, Civil Aviation Authority has stated.

Search and rescue teams of Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority responded to 15 reports of vehicles being stuck in wadis, while 15 people were rescued in the governorates of Dakhliyah, North Sharqiyah and Dhahirah since the effects of the inclement weather started on Friday. From Friday to Saturday 4pm, Khasab recorded the highest amount of rainfall - 81mm.

Abdullah bin Rashid al Khaduri, Director General of Meteorology at Civil Aviation Authority, informed that there was a delay in rains on Friday. While expected to begin in the morning, it rained in the evening in many areas.



11th Muscat International Film Festival concludes

Omran to invest \$3bn in tourism

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In a significant move to bolster Oman's tourism landscape, Omran Group has announced plans to invest US\$3bn in strategic tourism projects in the next five years in alignment with the ambitious goals set by Oman Vision 2040 to cultivate a sustainable and diversified economy.

Hashel bin Obaid al Mahrrouqi, CEO of Omran Group, emphasised that this investment underscores the company's commitment to enhancing tourism infrastructure in the sultanate. "Our focus on developing sustainable tourism destinations and assets is aimed at propelling economic growth and diversifying income sources," Mahrrouqi stated.

He further highlighted the group's achievement in attracting nearly US\$2bn in foreign investments for key tourism projects, and pointed out the critical role of the national travel operator platform - Visit Oman - in promoting local tourism offerings and connecting these with international markets, significantly boosting the influx of tourists to the sultanate.

Omran Group's participation in ITB Berlin 2024, from March 5 to March 7, in Germany, where Oman was the host country, marked a pivotal moment for the group. Mahrrouqi lauded the event as an invaluable opportunity to showcase Oman's tourism potential and the group's upcoming projects and investment openings. The participation aimed at drawing attention to Oman's unique tourism attractions, wooing more tourists and investors to the sultanate.



Musandam, RAK launch joint tourism campaign

Muscat - The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, in collaboration with Omran Group and Ras al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTDA), have launched a joint tourism campaign.

The See Double campaign, unveiled on March 5 at the ITB Berlin trade fair in Germany, is the first joint promotion between the two neighbours, aiming to entice visitors to explore nature in the UAE emirate of Ras al Khaimah and neighbouring Musandam governorate in Oman in one experience-packed trip this summer.

The campaign, twinning the two destinations, encourages travellers to experience adventure and beauty, thereby creat-



We are excited to unveil our first collaboration with RAKTDA, which unlocks the outstanding tourism offering to travellers from all over the world

HAITHAM AL GHASSANI

ing double the memories. As an additional incentive, the promotion offers a 'Kids Go Free' feature available at many hotels and attractions in Ras al Khaimah and Musandam.

Running from June 15 to September 15, See Double will allow travellers to maximise their experience by visiting two remarkable destinations within

a 90-minute drive of each other. With an easy border crossing and the shared natural beauty of the majestic Hajar Mountain range, as well as a rich, intertwined history and cultural heritage, the campaign promises to captivate visitors.

Haitham al Ghassani, Director General for Tourism Promotion in Ministry of Heritage

and Tourism, said, "We are excited to unveil our first collaboration with RAKTDA, which unlocks the outstanding tourism offering that our destinations have to offer families and travellers from all over the world. From adventure and sports to unearthing historic treasures, there is something for everyone in Musandam and Ras al Khaimah, and with the mountains and the sea remaining cooler during the summer, there's no better place to be."

On his turn, Raki Phillips, CEO of RAKTDA, said, "Our See Double campaign brings together the best of Ras al Khaimah and Musandam governorate in one sensational

summer promotion. This joint marketing effort marks the beginning of numerous cross-destination promotions we plan with Oman. It aims to highlight the diverse attractions and experiences available to international travellers in both destinations. Pioneering in the region, the campaign is testament to our strong synergy, aligning with the international trend towards frictionless, borderless travel, and enhancing accessibility and convenience for travellers."

Ras al Khaimah and Musandam boast remarkable natural assets, historic landmarks, a rich cultural offering and adventure experiences, with a focus on the great outdoors.

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Reliable International Automotive LLC. C.R. No. 1707183, Wattayah: 24579840, Al Mawaleh: 99473174, Barka: 93201347, Ibra: 99874368, Ibra: 99874368, Nizwa: 99874368, Sohar: 26858600, Sur: 25546190, Suwaiq: 93201347, Rustaq: 92869449, Salalah: 23211460

*Winners are through Raffle coupons only. Raffle coupons to customers will be provided only after the finalization & approval of their standard deal by their FC companies/Banks. 8 units Pegasis 1.4 PMG 24MY (2 cars/week during fasting period). Raffle Dates: 18/03/2024, 25/03/2024, 01/04/2024 & 08/04/2024. 1 unit Seltos 1.5 VL SPL 24MY as Grand raffle at the end of the campaign. Grand Raffle Date: 06/05/2024. Subject to full payment of purchased car. Raffle is NOT available on purchase of K4000. The handover of the Raffle prize will be done after 15th May 2024 upon completion of all legal & financial documents towards purchase of new vehicle such as formal delivery note & invoice and new vehicle ROP Registration. Customer winning weekly raffle will not be eligible for any subsequent raffles. **Insurance applicable would be given to the extent of a private vehicle. Additional premium as per insurance norm would have to be paid by the buyer. For models where Insurance is offered as a benefit, additional cash gift can be availed by the customer in lieu of Insurance. Additional Cash Gift can also be offered in lieu of the Service benefits on models where only service benefit (no Insurance benefit) is applicable. ***Total applicable Service benefit will be from 5 Years/50,000Kms to 10 years/100,000Kms whichever is earlier. The Service Benefit offer is not applicable to the EV6 & K4000G models. All the above benefits are not applicable on Ministry, Bulk fleet, Corporate & RAC deals. Vehicles may also include some Dealer Installed Accessories. Pictures & Colors are Indicative. For further details, please visit your nearest Kia showroom.



صندوق مزون الأول
The First Mazoon Fund

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Invitation for Annual General Meeting

The First Mazoon Fund takes the pleasure in inviting all the unitholders to attend the Annual General Meeting which will be held on Saturday March 23, 2024, at 2 pm via the electronic platform to hold general meeting which can be accessed through the website of Muscat Clearing & Depository Company (www.mcd.gov.om). If the quorum to convene the annual General Meeting is not complete the second general meeting will be held on Sunday March 24, 2024, at 7 pm via the electronic platform to hold general meeting which can be accessed through the website of Muscat Clearing & Depository Company (www.mcd.gov.om) to decide on the following:

Agenda of Annual General Meeting (AGM):

- 1- To consider and approve the Fund Management Body's Report for the financial year ending on 31 December 2023.
- 2- To consider and approve the auditor's report on the fund's audited financial statements for the financial year ending on 31 December 2023.
- 3- To consider and approve the proposed cash dividend to unitholders, as of the date of the AGM, equivalent to 0.090 Baisa per unit for the financial year ending on 31 December 2023.
- 4- To approve the sitting fees paid to the Fund Management Body for the financial year ending on 31 December 2023 and to determine their sitting fees for the next financial year (as per the attached annexure).
- 5- To consider and approve the proposal to distribute remuneration fees to the Fund Management Body's for an amount of RO (20,500) for the year ending on 31 December 2023 (as per the attached annexure).
- 6- To consider and approve the related party transactions entered into by the Fund during the year ending on 31 December 2023 (as per the attached annexure).
- 7- To consider and approve the proposed related party transactions entered into by the Fund during the financial Year ending on 31 December 2024 (as per the attached annexure).
- 8- To appoint auditors for the financial year ending on 31 December 2024 and approve their fees (as per the attached annexure).

According to the Fund Article of Association, and the controls for holding General Meetings using modern technology issued by Capital Market Authority, we would like to draw your attention to the following:
a. A legal person, exclusively, has the right to delegate a natural person to attend the general meeting and vote on its behalf through technical means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in MCDC.
b. Voting on any of the agenda items begins no more than 3 days before the date of the general meeting until the voting process ends on the day of the General Meetings. If the shareholder's shares are increased or decreased, the voting process will be cancelled, and the shareholder will have to vote again on the day of the general meeting.

For any inquiries please contact on telephone No 24949061 /24949043

Bachelors look forward to communal iftars

Our Correspondent
Muscat

With Ramadan around the corner, people are hoping that the long-standing tradition of communal iftars at mosques is revived, a practice deeply missed in the last few years.

For many bachelors and blue-collar workers in Oman, mosque iftars served as a critical support system, offering nourishing meals after a day of fasting and hard work.

The suspension of communal iftars at mosques in recent years, following the COVID-19 pandemic, disrupted a vital source of sustenance for many.

Mohammad Jamal, a helper, is hopeful of mosque iftars returning this year. "Iftars at mosques were not just a meal but a lifeline for us. Stopping this practice was a significant inconvenience. The return of mosque iftars is a highly anticipated event."

For labourers like Salim Aleem, discontinuing mosque iftars posed a challenge. "Working long hours leaves little time for cooking. Mosque iftars were a blessing."

Aleem is eager for the resumption of the tradition. Many workers rely on these communal



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MOHAMMAD JAMAL

meals in mosques spread across Muscat city.

Anees Alam, an engineer who will observe his first Ramadan in Oman this year, highlighted the importance of mosque iftars for those new to the country or with

limited cooking abilities or facilities. "I have heard about the mosque iftars from colleagues. This is my first Ramadan in Oman and I will need some time to settle in. Besides, I am a bachelor. Communal iftar options will

undoubtedly make my first Ramadan away from home more manageable," Alam said, emphasising the role of mosque iftars in not only meeting practical needs but also fostering the community spirit that defines Ramadan.

The sentiment among many workers is one of hope and gratitude in anticipation of the return of mosque iftars, considering the fact that more than just a meal, these provide a sense of belonging and support that is the essence of the holy month.

CLASSIFIED LISTINGS

Muscat Daily offers a variety of classified listings for individuals and establishments:
Situations Vacant/Wanted, Accommodation Wanted or Available, Sale of Household Items, Cars for Sale or Wanted, Matrimonial Alliances, etc
Please email your listing to dailyclassifieds@apexmedia.co.om or call: 99104346

TENDER NOTICE

The Internal Tender Committee of Port of Duqm Company SAOC., hereby announces the following Tender:

Tender No.	Description	Last Date of receiving Specifications	Date of Bid Submission	Suppliers	Tender Fee OMR (Inclusive of VAT)	Place of Submission
PODC/MT/04/2024	Consultancy Services for Reviewing and Updating the Port Masterplan	17th Mar 2024	24th Mar 2024	Only Specialized Companies	50/- Non-refundable	Online

Taking into consideration the following:

All specialized companies that wish to participate in the tender must deposit the tender amount into the bank account of the Company (details of the bank account is set out hereunder) and send the payment receipt of the tender along with a copy of the Commercial Registration Certificate and the contact details of the authorized individual (business card) to the following e-mail address procurement@portofduqm.om

From 07:00 – 15:00 (Sunday – Thursday).

Payment Information:

1- Bank Transfer:

Account Name	Port of Duqm Company S.A.O.C
Account Number	0423047518510013
Bank Name	Bank Muscat
Branch	Ghala Corporate Branch
Bank ID Code	BMUSOMRXXXX

- The company is not obliged to accept the lowest offer or any other offer without any justifiable reasons.
- The company reserves the right to issue the order either in part or full for the quoted items without any justifiable reasons.
- The company reserves the right to reject the tenders not complying with the tender documentation requirement.

For any clarification, please contact us through procurement@portofduqm.om

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Municipality to build sports complex in Wadi Kabir

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Muscat Municipality issued a tender for the development of a sports complex in Wadi Kabir Park in Muscat.

An official spokesperson for Muscat Municipality highlighted the significance of the project, for it can adequately cater to sports enthusiasts and families alike.

The proposed complex, over an area of 9,780sqm within the 41,209sqm Wadi Kabir Park, is

expected to become a central hub for recreational activities, the spokesperson exhorted.

Key features of the complex include a gym building, outdoor playgrounds featuring two football fields, two padel courts, and a multi-use court to accommodate a diverse range of interests.

Beyond sports facilities, the complex will also house additional amenities such as a bowling alley, a dedicated sports equipment store, restaurants, and shaded terraces.

MTCIT opens Rusayl-Bidbid Road after expansion

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology (MTCIT) on Thursday officially opened the Rusayl-Bidbid Road, after a significant expansion with two more lanes added over a stretch of 27km.

The addition of the third and the fourth lane extends from the Rusayl-Nizwa interchange on the Muscat Expressway to the Sharqiya Expressway interchange in the wilayat of Bidbid.

According to an MTCIT statement, the road expansion was meticulously designed to cater to the comprehensive needs of its users. Enhancements include the provision of service roads and pedestrian crossings to ensure seamless

integration of the urban communities flanking the roadway.

The project undertook the expansion of the existing bridges on Wadi Jifnain and Wadi Fanja in the town of Amqat, and introduced two new intersections at Ghala and Al Sih Al Ahmar.

Further developments encompassed the widening of the Fanja and Bidbid interchanges and the erection of a new bridge across Wadi al Dabun.

Box culverts were also constructed for efficient rainwater drainage, while adequate measures were taken to safeguard services and other facilities.

The expanded road features lighting poles, concrete and metal barriers, along with comprehensive signage and road markings to foster a secure driving environment.

MoSD provided RO122mn for social security

Our Correspondent
Muscat

The Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) disbursed RO122.17mn in 2023 to aid 79,597 beneficiaries under social security, and gave an additional RO7.8mn as financial assistance during emergencies, including relief efforts for disasters.

These figures were disclosed during the ministry's annual media briefing on Thursday, which shed light on its accomplishments, key performance indicators, and forthcoming projects designed to address a variety of social needs.

Minister H E Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar outlined MoSD's projects in 2023, emphasising its dedication to tackling social challenges.

The ministry conducted 2,202 anti-begging campaigns, resulting in the detention of 156 individuals, with 17 cases handed over to Royal Oman Police and 13 undergoing investigation.

Efforts to prevent bullying among school children and combat violence against women were also increased through targeted media campaigns.

The ministry supported persons with disabilities, worked for the development of families and communities, encouraged volunteer work, and fostered partnerships for social responsibility demonstrating its commitment to social care and protection.

Assistance was extended to 82,215 social security and low-income individuals, with RO4,982,820 allocated to various programmes and activities. MoSD registered 52,455 persons with disabilities, improved facilities at autism centres and provided prosthetic devices and support to 7,897 beneficiaries.

In promoting family empowerment, the ministry supported 42 women in launching home-based enterprises in 2023 with financial backing of RO24,000.



H E Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar

Assistance was extended to 82,215 social security and low-income individuals, with RO4,982,820 allocated to various programmes

An electronic platform called Maksab was introduced to assist families engaged in the cottage industry, alongside establishing temporary local markets for 86 productive families. Three cooperation agreements and memorandums of understanding were signed to enhance the economic and social empowerment of families.

For 2024, H E Laila has unveiled an initiative call Tasmu aimed at empowering 50 women in supervisory roles across the governmental and private sectors, and civil society. Additional efforts will focus on organising volunteer work through a platform for volunteers currently in the pipeline, and creation of a Department of Voluntary Work and Social Development Committees, marking a significant step towards fostering a more inclusive and supportive society.



Maryam Farouk Abdullah al Balushi (L) and Reem Salem Rashid al Muqbali

Students design device to control phone use while driving

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In an impressive display of youthful innovation, Maryam Farouk Abdullah al Balushi and Reem Salem Rashid al Muqbali, students of Al Turaif School for Basic Education in Suhar, have developed a device aimed at reducing traffic accidents caused by mobile phone use while driving.

Called 'Mobile Use Controller', the device was highlighted at GCC Traffic Week 2024 in Muscat, held under the theme 'Driving Without a Phone'.

Maryam and Reem's project, which began in September 2023, was supervised by Muzoon Said Rashid al Muqbali.

Elaborating on how the device functions, Muzoon said it features a camera positioned to monitor the driver, designed to detect mobile phone usage. Upon detection, the driver is alerted through audio and visual warnings. Persistent phone use while at the wheel triggers a mechanism that gradually reduces vehicle speed until the mobile is no longer in use.

Muzoon emphasised the cost effectiveness of the device, noting its construction from simple, affordable materials. "The de-

vice's ability to process visual data to discourage phone use has potential to significantly reduce traffic-related incidents and losses. Furthermore, its design factors in other traffic regulations, such as traffic fines, alerting the driver accordingly."

The device has successfully passed testing phases, showcasing its ability to positively influence driver behaviour and reduce distractions. The team's dedication, guidance from engineers and participation in Arduino programming courses have helped overcome several challenges, including identifying cost-effective material and sourcing electronic components.

Muzoon thanked school director Fatima al Shibli and Liwa Science and Innovation Centre for its support and mentorship. The project marks a significant step towards addressing a critical safety issue while inspiring other young innovators to pursue their ideas with conviction and creativity.

"To transform their innovative concept into a market-ready product and garner support from manufacturers, the students seek financial backing. Their vision is rooted in becoming a creative and innovative generation that pioneers solutions to current problems," Muzoon added.

Registration begins for loose weight and win fitness challenge

Our Correspondent
Muscat

In efforts to promote active lifestyles and healthy body mass index, KIMS Hospital announced launch of the second edition of Muscat Fitness Challenge at a press conference held on Thursday.

Targeting individuals in the age group of 22 to 45 years, the fitness initiative is geared towards combating obesity, promoting weight loss and fostering a healthy lifestyle among people in Muscat.

The 40-day challenge requires contestants to adhere to personalised diet and exercise plans devised by KIMS doctors, following a thorough evaluation and blood test. The plans will be tailored to align with the daily routine of each participant, ensuring sustainable and effective results without resorting to shortcuts like stimulants or keto diets.

Registration for the challenge

- costing RO25 - opens on March 10. Individuals in the target age group are invited to embark on a transformative journey towards fitness. The challenge will commence on April 15 and conclude on May 25.

To facilitate their workout regimens, contestants will receive complimentary membership to 4U Gym or Biggest Gym in Muscat.

The first prize winner - for the maximum weight loss in 40 days - will take away RO500.

Addressing the press conference, Dr Samantha de Silva, CEO of KIMS Hospital, said, "Muscat Fitness Challenge is not just about weight loss; it's about embracing a holistic approach to health. In addition to exercise routines, participants will benefit from yoga and meditation sessions, emphasising holistic fitness."

Last year, over 50 health enthusiasts of different nationalities participated. The winner lost 15kg.

Parents call for enhanced safety on Al Bustan road

Indian School Wadi Kabir student dies in accident on Thursday

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Parents have called for improved road safety measures in the city, especially on Al Bustan Road in the vicinity of Indian School Wadi Kabir (ISWK). These include accessible and user-friendly foot overbridges. Students often cross the busy road to reach school or return home in the afternoon sometimes leading to accidents.

These calls follow an accident that claimed the life of Sameeha Tabassum, an eighth-grade student of ISWK, on Thursday. Tragedy struck as Sameeha and her mother were crossing the road in front of her school.

Expressing the views of many parents in Wadi Kabir, Sonal Sharma, a homemaker said, "We cannot afford to lose more lives due to inadequate safety measures. It's imperative that authorities address these concerns immediately and provide safer alternatives for our children. We parents are urging authorities to



implement enhanced safety measures, including the construction of foot overbridges so that students can cross roads safely. Students often cross the busy Wadi Kabir main road to reach school or return home, risking their safety."

According to Ayesha Khan, another resident of the area, the current conditions around ISWK "pose a constant threat" to students' safety. "Authorities must take swift action to prevent such

The tragic death of Sameeha is a wake-up call for immediate and effective safety improvements. Our children deserve safer environments. The authorities must prioritise their wellbeing on roads.

SUSAN D'SOUZA

tragedies. There must be foot overbridges from the school to the other side of the road. It is our duty to look after every child's safety. We have foot overbridges in other parts of the city. Why not at this crucial location?" she asked.

Ayesha also suggested installation of speed limit boards on the main road near ISWK.

A subway connecting Souq Juma to the other side of the main road near ISWK remains

mostly unused, raising the need for an accessible and user-friendly solution like a footbridge.

Susan D'Souza, a mother of two children studying at Indian School Muscat, said, "Instead of blaming one another, I think the best remedy is to find an immediate solution. Having a foot overbridge from ISWK to the other side of the road is the best option. Also, staff must be delegated immediately after school gets over - for minimum 30 minutes thereafter - to ensure no student crosses the road. Schools must understand that their responsibilities do not end at the school gate or walls."

Susan added that the tragic death of Sameeha is a wake-up call for immediate and effective safety improvements. "Our children deserve safer environments. The authorities must prioritise their wellbeing on roads."

Either side of Al Bustan road has several schools, including Indian School Wadi Kabir International and Sri Lanka School Muscat.

شركة تاجير للتصويل Taageer Finance Co. SAOG		
Board of Directors' Report for the year ended 31 December 2023		
	Dear Shareholders,	
	On behalf of the Board of Directors of Taageer Finance Company SAOG, I am pleased to present the audited financial statements for the year ended 31st December 2023.	
Performance Summary		
As per the financial results for the year 2023 the total portfolio increased by 19.50% to 366 Million, as compared 307 Million in 2022. Total Income for the year ended December 31, 2023 is RO 29.4 million as compared to RO 23.2 million for the year ended December 31, 2022 registering an growth of 26.35%. Interest Expenses for the year 2023 stood at RO 12.26 Million as compared to RO 9.35 million for the year 2023, an increment of 31.17%. The Company recorded Operating Profit of RO 10.672 Million before Expected Credit Losses (ECL) charge and taxation for the year 2023 as against RO 7.967 Million for the previous year, a growth of 33.95%. Net Profit after ECL and taxation stood at RO 4.824 Million for the year 2023 vis-à-vis RO 3.380 Million for the year 2022, a rise of 42.72%. Cumulative borrowings including unsecured non-convertible bonds stood at RO 188 million (2022 – RO 162 million).		
ECL increased from 3.991 million in 2022 to 4.997 million in the current year, an increase of 25.21%. Cumulative provisions as at December 2023 were RO 30.920 million as per IFRS 9 requirements, an increase of 25.31% as compared to last year, reflecting prudence judgement on ECL.		
Funding Diversification		
Focusing on the need for diversification of funding avenues, Taageer Finance successfully issued another Unsecured Non-convertible Subordinated Bonds worth RO 14.956 million through private placement which were oversubscribed by 150%, showing the continued and strengthened trust of investors in the company after the success of the previous bond issues in 2021 and 2022. The bonds were issued after the repayment of the 2021 issue on maturity to the investors.		
Furthermore, the company increased its corporate deposits base to 32 million in 2023 as compared to 22 million in 2021 recording an increase of 48.20%.		
Digitalization		
The company achieved several milestones relating to its digital transformation strategy including redesign and relaunch of website, relaunch of more customer centric and service oriented Mobile App, investment in infrastructure upgrades and internal process automation to ensure superior services to customers.		
Portfolio Quality & Customer Service		
The company has taken several measures to enhance quality of portfolio through strengthening credit requirements and streamlining the collection processes. The company has been constantly focusing on coming up with innovative ways to retain clients and serve them in the best possible way.		
Proposed Dividends		
The company has distributed dividends consistently year on year since the commencement of business. The Board of Directors are pleased to recommend a cash dividend of 7 Balzas per share (RO 1.847 m) and stock dividend of 2.75 Balzas per share (RO 0.726 m) for the financial year 2023, for the approval of the shareholders at the Annual General Meeting to be held on March 24, 2024.		
Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)		
During the year the company kept its spirit of contributing to the community by taking several initiatives to support CSR activities in the areas of Education and Health. The company made a total of RO 28,340 in donations in the above mentioned fields including RO 6,000 made to Oman Charitable Association as per Ministerial Decision No. 205/2021 (Article 1).		
Corporate Governance		
Company continued its commitment of adhering to the highest standards of Compliance and Corporate Governance. As elicited more elaborately in the Corporate Governance Report, we assure that the Company has in place policies and procedures that are commensurate to the operations and established internal controls.		
Future Outlook		
The infrastructure sector continues to play role in paving the way for societies towards economic recovery, reinforced by sustainable and resilient growth. With an anticipated growth of 3% in the economy ongoing efforts to maintain inflation levels at moderate levels continue.		
Rating agencies have improved the sovereign ratings following positive movements in key fiscal metrics, including government debt, GDP, and the budget deficit.		
With its strong leadership and skilled management team, the Company is well placed to maintain its high standards in doing business through technological innovation, liability management, process automation. With the expected improvement in the economy and the customer-centric approach being adopted by the Company, the year 2024 looks promising.		
Acknowledgement		
On behalf of the Board of Directors, I wish to express sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tareq bin Taimour for his vision and wise leadership.		
I would also like to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation and acknowledgement for the guidance and support from the Central Bank of Oman, Capital Market Authority and Muscat Securities Market. We are also grateful to our shareholders, bankers, dealers and customers for their continued trust, confidence and support. Finally, the Board would like to appreciate and thank the management and the staff for all their hard work and efforts.		
On Behalf of the Board of Directors Rashid bin Saif Al Saadi Chairman		
Note: The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who requests them in Arabic or English as requested, within 7 days of receipt of the request.		
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AT 31 DECEMBER 2023		
	2023 RO'000	2022 RO'000
ASSETS		
Cash and bank balances	12,023	17,329
Net investment in finance leases, working capital finance and factoring receivables	228,603	193,805
Other receivables and prepayments	586	646
Vehicles, equipment and right-of-use assets	937	852
Intangible assets	48	-
Deferred tax asset – net	79	79
Statutory deposit	250	250
Total assets	242,526	212,961
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY		
LIABILITIES		
Creditors, accruals and other liabilities	3,041	2,895
Short-term loans	52,071	40,040
Tax payable	866	600
Provision for employees' end of service benefits	309	247
Unsecured non-convertible bonds	29,800	28,088
Corporate and security deposits	32,472	21,911
Long-term loans	73,470	72,214
Total liabilities	192,029	165,995
EQUITY		
Share capital	26,384	25,866
Legal reserve	6,215	5,733
Impairment reserve	2,222	2,222
Fair value reserve	(441)	(441)
General reserve	478	152
Retained earnings	15,639	13,434
Total equity	50,497	46,966
Total equity and liabilities	242,526	212,961
Net assets per share (balzas)	191	182
STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023		
	2023 RO'000	2022 RO'000
Income		
Finance income	26,866	21,104
Interest expense	(12,263)	(9,349)
Net finance income	14,603	11,755
Other operating income	2,492	2,131
	17,095	13,886
Expenses		
Operating expenses	(6,018)	(5,561)
Depreciation and amortization	(405)	(358)
Impairment on net investment in finance leases, working capital finance and factoring receivables	(4,997)	(3,991)
	(11,420)	(9,910)
Profit before taxation	5,675	3,976
Taxation	(851)	(596)
Profit for the year	4,824	3,380



Gulf International Bank opens branch in Oman

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Bahrain-headquartered Gulf International Bank (GIB) has taken a significant step forward in its GCC expansion strategy by entering the Omani market.

GIB officially launched its wholesale banking branch in Muscat on Thursday, marking another milestone in the group's expansion strategy and further commitment to the sultanate as a core target market for the GIB Group.

Operating as a wholesale branch of GIB, the Omani branch will provide comprehensive wholesale banking solutions, including a wide range of credit, global transaction banking, and treasury services, according to a press statement.

Having already established a strong franchise in Oman, the GIB branch will enable the bank to be closer to and better serve its clients, which include a growing number of the country's leading corporates, financial

institutions, and government entities.

The branch was inaugurated at a reception held at the Royal Opera House Muscat, Seafront Maidan, under the patronage of H E Tahir bin Salim al Amri, Executive President of the Central Bank of Oman. Also attending the event were GIB's Chairman, Abdulla bin Mohammed Al Zamil, and the Group CEO of GIB, Abdulaziz al-Helaissi. The event was also attended by distinguished guests, GIB's board members, GIB's senior management, and clients.

Speaking on the occasion, H E Amri said, "The branch opening of Gulf International Bank in Oman will contribute to supporting the Omani banking sector with new expertise and providing various financial services to investors and institutions, thus enhancing the provision of liquidity required to finance investments and development projects, which will reflect positively on the national economy."

He added, "GIB's new branch

strengthens the cooperation and trade exchange in Oman. I wish success to the bank in providing unique banking services and playing an active role in the banking and financial ecosystem."

GIB Chairman Zamil said, "We are delighted to announce the establishment of our branch in Oman, further strengthening our position as a leading pan-GCC universal bank with a global reach and a presence in all key Gulf markets. While we have been providing clients in the country with innovative financial products and solutions for decades, this move allows us to better anticipate and meet their needs and grow our participation in the local economy."

"The establishment of our branch also reflects the strong opportunities we see in the market driven by Oman's commitment to sustainable growth and its ambitious Vision 2040. We look forward to building our position on the ground and adding further value for our clients and stakeholders."

Financing deal signed for second phase of Khazaen

Our Correspondent
Muscat

Following the success of the first phase of the Khazaen Economic City, ahli islamic, the Islamic banking window of Ahlibank, has signed a financing agreement for the development of the second phase of Khazaen Economic City.

Located in Barka, the heart of the sultanate's most populous district, Khazaen is a city brimming with commercial activity. It is growing at an exceptional rate, standing as Oman's premier economic development zone. As an innovative player taking a transformative leap, ahli islamic showcased its expertise in financing a project of such scale, ushering in a new age of sustainable development and economic prosperity.

In a press statement, Zainab al Lawati, AGM - Head of Corporate Banking at ahli islamic, said, "At ahli islamic, our pride is demonstrated in our innovation, as we drive the progress of the community and the Omani people. Through such projects, we aim to foster growth and prosperity. By providing substantial financial support, we will leave an indelible mark and a lasting impact, now, and for future generations to come."

"Khazaen is one of the many projects that we anticipate will cause a transformative shift in how people perceive modern cities. Ahli islamic is grateful to have played a pivotal role in such a grand endeavor, and we look forward to seeing Khazaen upon its full completion," she added.

Eng Salim al-Thuhli, CEO of



Khazaen Economic City, said, "At Khazaen, our goal is to bolster the gross domestic product through economic diversification, attracting valuable local and foreign in-

tors underscores the significance of the banking industry in advancing development and economic growth in the country, as well as enhancing the business

The city offers a plethora of investment opportunities across key sectors such as logistics, food, industrial, pharmaceutical, clean energy, technology, and business. These sectors play a crucial role in driving economic and social development.

Khazaen Economic City has successfully attracted total investments worth approximately \$1bn, including significant foreign direct investments exceeding \$583mn by the end of 2023.

The partnership of ahli islamic in financing Khazaen Economic City underscores its dedication to supporting initiatives that propel the national economy forward, thereby bolstering the private sector's contribution to the country's development trajectory.

Khazaen Economic City has attracted total investments worth approximately \$1bn, including significant foreign direct investment exceeding \$583mn by end of 2023

vestments, fostering commercial opportunities for SMEs, optimising spending on goods and services, and generating job opportunities for our national workforce."

"This collaboration with ahli islamic in various promising sec-

ecosystem to streamline the investors' journey."

Khazaen Economic City is a hub that seamlessly integrates logistical and industrial facilities, complemented by top-notch infrastructure, positioning it as a prime location for investment.

CBO's foreign assets reach RO6.7bn

Muscat - Statistics released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) indicate that the total foreign assets held by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) increased by 0.1% to RO6.734bn by the end of 2023 compared to the corresponding period in 2022, when it was RO6.727bn.

Narrow money supply (M1), which comprises the total cash outside the banking system along with current accounts and demand deposits in the local currency, saw a 6.6% increase, reaching RO5.981bn, compared to RO5.611bn at the end of 2022.



Preliminary data from the NCSI reveals that broad money supply (M2) at the end of 2023 stood at RO23.001bn, marking a 13.1% increase compared to the corresponding period in 2022.

Narrow money supply, which

includes total cash outside the banking system along with current accounts and demand deposits in the local currency, rose by 6.6% to RO5.981bn, compared to RO5.611bn in 2022.

ONA

Oil prices drop last week on US demand fears

Muscat - Oil prices decreased more than 1% during the last week over demand uncertainty in the US market while several bullish factors including OPEC+ production cut decision, weak US dollar and rising hopes over US Federal Reserve's interest rate cuts aided price increases.

International benchmark Brent crude traded at \$82.48 per barrel on Friday, decreasing by 1.29% relative to the closing price of \$ 83.55 a barrel on Friday previous week.

West Texas Intermediate (WTI) traded at \$78.39 a barrel at the same time on Friday, for a fall of around 1.97% from last Friday's session that closed at \$79.97 per barrel.

Oil prices started the week on a positive note after several big producers in the OPEC+ group including Saudi Arabia and Russia agreed to continue production cuts until the end of June.

Saudi Arabia and Russia said they would cut output by 1mn barrels per day (bpd) and 471,000 bpd, respectively while Iraq and UAE agreed to reduce daily production by 220,000 barrels and 163,000 barrels, respectively.

At the end of June the countries will re-evaluate their output cuts and could change their output level according to market conditions, OPEC announced.

A weaker US dollar against other currencies also supported the rise in oil prices. The weak dollar is expected to enhance demand by making oil cheaper for those who use foreign currencies.

Agencies

شركة الأسماك العمانية ش.م.ع.ع

Oman Fisheries CO.S.A.OG

P.C: 112, P.O Box: 2900 Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman. www.omanfisheries.com

Invitation to attend the annual ordinary general meeting AGM

The Board of Directors of the Oman Fisheries Company SAOG is pleased to invite the shareholders to attend the company's annual ordinary general meeting, which is scheduled to be held at exactly five o'clock in the evening on Monday, 25/03/2024, via the electronic platform for holding general meetings. Which can be accessed through the Muscat Clearing and Depository Company website (www.mcd.gov.om). If the quorum is not reached, the second meeting will be held on Tuesday, 26/03/2024, at five o'clock in the evening, through the Muscat Clearing and Depository Company website www.mcd.gov.om to discuss the following agenda:

1. Study the Board of Directors' report on the company's activity and financial position during the fiscal year ending on 31/12/2023 and approve it.

2. Study the Board of Directors' report on the organization and management of the company during the financial year ending on 31/12/2023 and approve it.

3. Study the auditor's report and approve the balance sheet and profit and loss account for the financial year ending on 31/12/2023.

4. Approving the allowance for attending Board of Directors and sub-committee's sessions received by members of the Board of Directors for the past fiscal year, and determining the amount of the allowance for the next fiscal year.

5. Informing the shareholders of the transactions conducted by the company with related parties during the financial year ending on 31/12/2023.

6. Study and approve the proposal for transactions that the company will conduct with related parties during the fiscal year that will end on 31/12/2024.

7. Informing the shareholders of the donations disbursed to support the local community during the

8. Study a proposal to allocate an amount of (10,000 OMR) ten thousand Omani Riyals to support the local community during the fiscal year that will end on 31/12/2024 and approve it.

9. Informing the shareholders of developments in the company's plan to achieve breakeven and profits.

10. Approval of the Board of Directors' performance report (Annex No. 6).

11. Appointing the company's auditors for the financial year that will end on 31/12/2024 and determining their fees

12. Electing new board members for the company from shareholders and/or non-shareholders. Anyone who wishes to run for membership in the Board of Directors must fill out the nomination form prepared for that purpose and submit it to the company at least five (5) days before the date of the General Assembly, no later than the end of business on Wednesday, corresponding to 20/03/2024. The candidate must take into account the fulfillment of the requirements set for membership in the Board of Directors. Company.

In accordance with the company's bylaws and the controls for holding general meeting using modern technological means issued by the Authority, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

(A) A legal person has the exclusive right to authorize a natural person to attend the General Assembly meeting and vote on his behalf through technical means, provided that this natural person has an investor number with the Muscat Clearing and Depository Company.

(b) Voting on any of the items on the agenda begins no more than three days before the date of the meeting until the end of the voting process on the day of the meeting. If the shareholder's balance changes by increase or decrease, the voting process will be cancelled and he must repeat the vote again. On the day of the assembly meeting.

Please enter the link at least half an hour before the meeting time. If you have any inquiries, please contact Mr. Khalil bin Ali bin Ahmed Al Amri on phone number 98172905 or communicate via the following email: khalil.alamri@omanfisheries.net.

OMANFISHERIES

مستشفى الحياة الدولي

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190 OMR

170 OMR

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80 OMR

2nd Trimester

50 OMR

3rd Trimester

Normal Delivery

320 OMR

C-Section Delivery

580 OMR

*Package contains Delivery rates and Baby care charges including vaccines

MOH NO - 940380

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Lalan breaks ground for medical glove packing plant at Sohar Freezone

Sohar – Sohar Freezone has witnessed the groundbreaking ceremony of Lalan Middle East's \$5mn medical glove packing plant along with an ETO sterilisation unit on 5,000sqm land in the freezone. Lalan Middle East is a subsidiary of Sri Lanka-headquartered Lalan Group.

Once built, the project will supply the local, regional and international markets with surgical sterile gloves and disposable nitrile and latex gloves. The gloves will be available for purchase locally and will also be exported to both the GCC region and the US.

The plant will produce 60mn premium disposable gloves annually, from nitrile and latex. Launching by end of 2024, the production will begin with 20mn pairs of latex surgical gloves, scaling to 40mn pairs annually

thereafter. This milestone underscores Lalan's dedication to superior products and sustainable growth in global healthcare. Lalith Hapangama, Chairman of Lalan Group, explained the rationale behind choosing Oman as the regional hub, citing its strategic location, stability, and the warm welcome extended by the Omani people. He affirmed the group's long-term vision to expand operations in the sultanate and establish a robust supply network across the GCC, North African region, and the US, leveraging Oman's FDA association.

Highlighting the importance of the groundbreaking ceremony, Omar Mahmood al Mahrizi, CEO of Sohar Freezone, said, "Today's groundbreaking ensures our unwavering commitment to our investors, ensur-

ing their journey with us is both fruitful and rewarding at every step. As we strengthen Sohar Freezone growing pharmaceutical cluster with this new plant, we stand firm in our dedication to fostering an environment where businesses thrive. This milestone is a testament to the opportunities within the Freezone; it reflects our ongoing promise to support our partners in realising their ambitions and contributing to Oman's economic diversification goals."

This project exemplifies the Lalan Group's commitment to advancing economic growth and industrial development in Oman, harmonising with Sohar Freezone's strategic objective of attracting innovative companies and driving sustainable economic progress within the region.

Vodafone Oman's market share increases to 10%

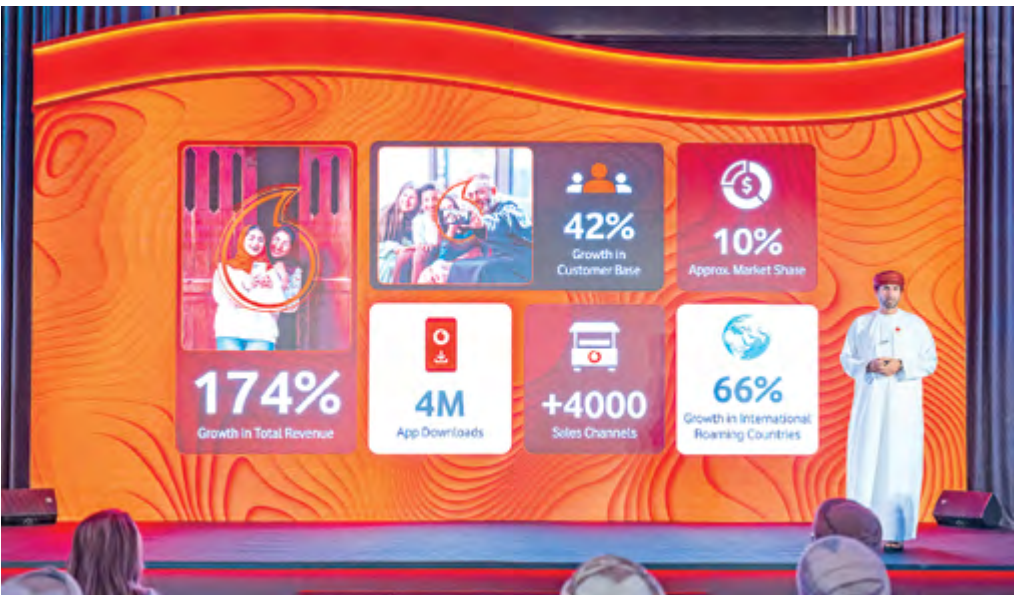
Muscat – Vodafone Oman is celebrating the second anniversary of its operations in the sultanate with exceptional results that earned it approximately 10% share of the country's telecom market.

Building on its impressive first year, the telecom operator focused on fast-tracking its 5G Next Level network reach, doubling its sites to 1,500 and increasing 5G population coverage by 120% while gaining a 42% growth in its customer base, resulting in a 174% revenue increase.

The company's prepaid market share was also on the rise closing at around 11% in 2023. In addition, Vodafone Oman reported 4mn App downloads as well as increasing its sales channels to over 4,000 and its international roaming countries by 66%.

The company's dedication to delivering exceptional value was further validated by Vodafone Oman's leadership of the Net Promoter Score for the second consecutive year. Supporting the company's forward trajectory was \$300mn in long-term financing secured through National Bank of Oman, Oman Arab Bank and BankDhofar, which catalysed its ambitious 5G Next Level network roll-out plan.

During the company's annual performance update on Thursday, Bader al Zidi, Vodafone



Bader al Zidi speaks during Vodafone Oman's annual performance update on Thursday

Vodafone Oman's customer base grew by 42% in the second year of operations while its revenues surged 174%

Oman CEO, said, "We are extremely proud of the tremendous growth achieved in our journey as the sultanate's first fully digital green-field telecom operator. Our vision remains unchanged: to digitalise the Omani way of life in a way that empowers individuals and communities to reach

their full potential, all the while safeguarding the heritage, culture and the very essence of the Omani character."

Recognising the important role of technology and integrating it into everyday life, Vodafone Oman has helped drive progress and innovation in the country, enhancing communication and connectivity among people and improving access to education and government services to name but a few.

The company remained committed to maximise its economic spend in Oman. As a result, Vodafone Oman's In-Country Value spending amounted to RO66mn in 2023, including

large-scale partnerships and short-term projects and contracts awarded to local businesses and SMEs.

Zidi added, "We continued to evolve as a leading tech-teleco, confidently achieving our objectives, overcoming challenges, and receiving wholehearted support from our partners, communities and customers. Our achievements were recognised locally, regionally and globally as we received over 17 awards and accolades. Most notably were our recent recognitions with Opensignal, where we dominated the Mobile Network Experience Report claiming 11 of the 14 categories."

US Fed 'not far' from beginning to cut interest rates: Powell

Washington, US - US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell said the central bank is "not far" from starting to lower interest rates.

"We are waiting to become more confident that inflation is moving sustainably at 2%," Powell told the US Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs during his testimony on Thursday.

"When we do get that confidence, and we're not far from it, it'll be appropriate to begin to dial back the level of restriction," he added.

The Fed on January 31 kept its federal funds rate unchanged in the 5.25%-5.5% target range, the highest level in 23 years. Powell, in his post-meeting remarks, said a rate cut is unlikely



at its next meeting that will conclude on March 20.

"We believe that our policy rate is likely at its peak for this

tightening cycle," he told the Senate. "But the economic outlook is uncertain, and ongoing progress toward our 2% inflation

We are waiting to become more confident that inflation is moving sustainably at 2%

JEROME POWELL

objective is not assured."

"Reducing policy restraint too soon or too much could result in a reversal of progress we have seen in inflation and ultimately require even tighter policy to get inflation back to 2%. At the same time, reducing policy restraint too late or too little could unduly weaken economic activity and employment," he said.

Anadolu Agency

Egypt signs \$8bn loan agreement with IMF

Cairo, Egypt – Egypt has signed an expanded \$8bn loan agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Cairo signed a \$3bn loan deal with the IMF in December 2022 to shore up its economy, but the two sides agreed to increase the package to \$8bn. Egyptian Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly said the deal with the IMF was part of structural reform policies for the

country's economy.

"This program is Egyptian and was prepared by the government and the Central Bank of Egypt," he added during a press conference with the head of the IMF mission, Ivanna Vladkova Hollar.

The loan deal was announced hours after the central bank devalued the Egyptian pound and raised interest rates by six points.

Hollar welcomed Egypt's

measures as "decisive steps to move to a flexible exchange rate system, starting with unifying the exchange rate between the official and parallel market rates."

The move would "help increase the supply of foreign currency," she added.

Egypt's foreign currency revenues were affected by a decline in tourist inflows.

Anadolu Agency

ECB keeps interest rates unchanged

Frankfurter, Germany – The Governing Council of European Central Bank (ECB) on Thursday decided to keep the three key ECB interest rates unchanged.

Since the last Governing Council meeting in January, inflation has declined further. In the latest ECB staff projections, inflation has been revised down, in particular for 2024 which mainly reflects a lower contribution from energy prices.

"The interest rate on the main refinancing operations and the interest rates on the marginal lending facility and the deposit facility will remain unchanged at 4.50%, 4.75% and 4.00% respectively," ECB said in a statement.

ECB staff now project inflation to average 2.3% in 2024, 2.0% in 2025 and 1.9% in 2026, the statement said.

The projections for inflation excluding energy and food have also been revised down and average 2.6% for 2024, 2.1% for 2025 and 2.0% for 2026. Al-



though most measures of underlying inflation have eased further, domestic price pressures remain high, in part owing to strong growth in wages.

ECB said that financing conditions are restrictive and the past interest rate increases continue to weigh on demand, which is helping push down inflation.

"Staff have revised down their growth projection for 2024 to 0.6%, with economic activity expected to remain subdued in

the near term. Thereafter, staff expect the economy to pick up and to grow at 1.5% in 2025 and 1.6% in 2026, supported initially by consumption and later also by investment," ECB said.

ECB said that the Governing Council is determined to ensure that inflation returns to its 2% medium-term target in a timely manner.

"Based on its current assessment, the Governing Council considers that the key ECB interest rates are at levels that,

maintained for a sufficiently long duration, will make a substantial contribution to this goal. The Governing Council's future decisions will ensure that policy rates will be set at sufficiently restrictive levels for as long as necessary," the statement said.

ECB said it will continue to follow a data-dependent approach to determining the appropriate level and duration of restriction. In particular, the Governing Council's interest rate decisions will be based on its assessment of the inflation outlook in light of the incoming economic and financial data, the dynamics of underlying inflation and the strength of monetary policy transmission.

"As banks are repaying the amounts borrowed under the targeted longer-term refinancing operations, the Governing Council will regularly assess how targeted lending operations and their ongoing repayment are contributing to its monetary policy stance," the ECB added.

شركة صناعة مواد البناء (ش.م.ع.)

Construction Materials Industries (S.A.O.G)

PO. Box: 1791, Ruwi, Postal Code 112, Sultanate of Oman, Tel: 26752247/26752287, Fax: 26750867

Invitation to attend the Annual General Meeting

The Board of Directors of Construction Materials Industry SAOG ("the Company") has the pleasure to invite the Shareholders to attend the Annual General Meeting of the company , which will be held on **Sunday at 03:00 PM on 24/3/ 2024** via the electronic platform which can be assessed through the website of Muscat Clearing & Depository Company (www.mcdc.om). If the quorum requirement for holding the Annual General Meeting is not fulfilled, a second Annual General Meeting shall be held on **Tuesday at 3:00 PM on 26/3/ 2024**, via the mentioned electronic platform to discuss the following agenda:

1. To consider and approve the board of directors' report on the activities of the company and its financial status for the financial year ended 31 December 2023.

2. To consider and approve the Corporate Governance Report for the financial year ended 31 December 2023.

3. To consider and approve the auditor's report on the company's audited financial statements for the financial year ending on 31 December 2023.

4. To approve sitting fees of the Board and Committee meetings paid to the Board Members for the previous financial year 2023 and to determine the sitting fees for the upcoming financial year 2024 (as per the annexure).

5. To consider the amounts allocated and spent for the company's social responsibilities for the year ended on 31/12/2023 (as per the Annexure).

6. To discuss and approve the proposed allocation of RO 5,000 to fulfill the Company's Corporate Social responsibilities for the year ending on 31 December 2024.

7. To elect a new Board of Directors for the Company from amongst Shareholders or non- shareholders. Any person who wishes to be nominated to the Board of Directors of the Company is required to fill in a Director's Nomination Form. Such a form can be obtained from the Company. The completed Form should be delivered to the Company at least five (5) days prior to the date of the Annual Ordinary General Meeting of the Company (no later than the end of the business hours on Monday, 18/3/2024. The candidate must satisfy the company's board membership requirements.

8. To appoint Auditors of the Company for the financial year ending on 31 December 2024 and to approve their fees.

According to the Company's Articles of Association and the controls for holding General Meetings using modern technology issued by the capital market authority , we would like to draw your attention to the following :

A- Legal person, exclusively, has the right to delegate a natural person to attend the General Meeting and vote on its behalf through technical means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in MCDC.

B- Voting on any of the agenda items begins no more than three days before the date of the General Meeting until the voting process ends on the day of the General Meeting. If the shareholder's shares are increased or decreased, the voting process will be canceled, and the shareholder will have to vote again on the day of the General Meeting.

If you have any inquiries, please contact Mr. Ahmed Odeh on phone 26752287 or Mobile No.96180700

Chairman of Board
Khalid Abdullah Al-Jabri

Legal Advisor
Rajab AlKathiri & Associates

External Auditor
Abu Timam Grant Thornton

Najahi from Bank Muscat empowering small businesses

The Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) segment has witnessed increasing attention worldwide due to the essential role they play in supporting economies.

Being an integral part in sustainable development plans, Micro, Small and Medium enterprises contribute directly in growing Oman's GDP, creating job opportunities for the youth and empowering them. The development of this sector is part of the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

Further, the National Programme for Fiscal Sustainability and Financial Sector Development (Estidamah) includes, as part of its key pillars, the importance of developing financing products that suit the needs of this sector.

Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the sultanate, realises this importance and works to enhance its role in supporting the sector. One step taken in this regard is the inauguration of Najahi Business Banking in 2014 to support SMEs by providing a suite of financing options.

The products and services provided are designed to help these enterprises grow and thrive in their business, thus creating a positive impact on the community.

About the services offered by Najahi Business Banking, Abdulnasir al Raisi, General Manager - Personal Banking, Bank Muscat, said, "Bank Muscat realises the



Since its inception, Najahi contributed in supporting more than 2500 businesses operating in retail trading, services, manufacturing and processing, and other areas

ABDULNASIR AL RAISI

vital role SMEs perform and we work relentlessly to develop financial services to support their growth and development. Najahi Business Banking is an excellent example of the bank's role as a

partner in sustainable growth and development.

"Since its inception, Najahi contributed in supporting more than 2500 businesses operating in retail trading, services, manu-

facturing and processing, construction, hospitality, travel and tourism, mining and agriculture sectors. These positive results have been made possible because of the continuous trust our valued customers put in the financing facilities and services offered."

The Najahi products suite includes three financing products, namely Najahi Flexi Loan, Najahi PoS Receivables Financing and Contract Finance.

All financing options are available to the bank's customers'

collateral-free'.

Entrepreneurs can make use of the Najahi Flexi Loan to take a loan that can be repaid in monthly instalments for up to a maximum tenure of 36 months. Customers will benefit from the flexibility to avail multiple disbursements as per their business cash flow demands and the interest is calculated only on the disbursed amount.

Customers with short-term financing needs will find the Najahi point of sale (PoS) financing product particularly useful.

Indian School Sur marks kindergarten graduation day

Indian School Sur celebrated a momentous occasion on March 7, as it joyfully bid farewell to its UKG students from the academic year 2023-24 during the Kindergarten Graduation Day celebration. This ceremony, brimming with joy, pride, and nostalgia, marked the conclusion of a pivotal chapter in the lives of these young learners.

Chief guest Yusra al Khilani, president of the Omani Women Association Sur, and guest of honour Intisar, Service Manager at Bank Muscat, Sur, along with School Management president Jami Srinivas Rao, SMC member Nishreen Basheer, and Principal Dr S Srinivasan graced the occasion, inspiring the young graduates with their words of wisdom and encouragement.

Yusra al Khilani extended heartfelt congratulations to the young graduates, highlighting the invaluable role children play in a community. She urged everyone present to cherish and embrace these young minds, emphasising their importance to society.

Principal Dr S Srinivasan commended the teachers for their dedication in nurturing the students, and congratulated the graduates, offering sincere wishes for a bright future.

He emphasised the transformative impact of quality education in fostering growth

and excellence.

The ceremony began with a warm welcome speech by Nivedha of UKG B, followed by the traditional lighting of the lamp.

The atmosphere was filled with enthusiasm as LKG students performed the popular 'Baby Shark' action song, showcasing their energy.

Nusrath Shoukath, KG & Primary in charge, delivered an inspiring address, stressing the importance of laying a strong foundation for the stu-

The atmosphere was filled with enthusiasm as LKG students performed the 'Baby Shark' action song, showcasing their energy

dents' academic journey.

The entertainment continued with captivating performances, including a mash-up dance by UKG students and action songs by LKG and UKG students.

A special moment honoured Yusra al Khilani for her exemplary contribution to society, followed by a captivating dance performance by Class 2, welcoming the students to their next academic phase.



Mall of Muscat brings 'new experiences' with exciting additions

Mall of Muscat, a leading leisure and entertainment destination, is set to welcome four exciting new outlets - Taiba Pharmacy, Bubble Lab, The Face Shop, and Torino, each bringing a unique offering to the mall's diverse range of services and products.

Taiba Pharmacy, a trailblazer in the Omani pharmaceutical industry, is set to open its doors, bringing with it a legacy of high-quality services and unparalleled customer care. As the leading

pharmacy chain in Oman, Taiba Pharmacy continues its mission to be the top choice among consumers in the region. With its rich history dating back to 1980, Taiba Pharmacy is dedicated to enhancing the Omani pharmaceutical industry and ensuring customer satisfaction through innovative solutions and comprehensive care.

Bubble Lab introduces a fresh twist on the traditional tea and gelato experience. As Oman's

popular bubble tea and gelato outlet, Bubble Lab offers an innovative selection of iced teas, alongside a delicious range of smoothies and gelato flavours. With its commitment to bringing joy and smiles to its customers, Bubble Lab is set to become a favourite spot for those seeking to indulge in a bubbly bliss of flavoursome beverages and sweet treats.

The opening of Korea's pioneering beauty brand, The Face

Shop in Mall of Muscat marks a significant milestone, offering Oman's shoppers access to world-class skincare and beauty solutions inspired by nature. The Face Shop brings its commitment to pure ingredients and skincare to Mall of Muscat. With over 3,000 stores worldwide, The Face Shop is renowned for its extensive range of beauty products made from natural ingredients, including flowers, grains, and oriental medicine.

Torino, established in 2014, is expanding its footprint with a new outlet in Mall of Muscat. Known for its stylish and high-quality shoes, bags, and accessories for women, Torino prides itself on competitive prices, exceptional customer service, and a keen eye for the latest trends. With a vision to become the preferred shopping destination in the Middle East, Torino is set to captivate the hearts of fashion-forward shoppers in Oman.



Reinsurance Protection Beyond Expectations

OMAN REINSURANCE COMPANY S.A.O.C

Post Box 1968, Postal Code 114, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman
Telephone: 24397700 Fax: 2439 7777

Invitation for Annual Ordinary General Meeting of OMAN REINSURANCE COMPANY S.A.O.C

The Board of Directors ("Board") of Oman Reinsurance Company S.A.O.G. ("Company") cordially invites the respected shareholders to attend the Annual General Meeting ("AGM") of the Company due to be held at 9:00 P.M. on Tuesday corresponding to 26th March 2024, on Muscat Clearing and Depository electronic platform (www.mcd.gov.om).

In case the attendance quorum was not met, a second AGM will be held at 9:00 PM on Wednesday corresponding to 27th March 2024, on the same mentioned above electronic platform, to discuss and approve the following agenda items:

- To consider and approve the Board of Directors' report for the Company's activity and its financial position during the financial year ended on 31 December 2023.
- To consider and approve the Report on Corporate Governance for the financial year ended 31 December 2023.
- To consider and approve the Auditor's Report and Audited Financial Statement of the company for the financial year ended on 31 December 2023.
- To consider and approve the related party transactions of the Company for the financial year ended 31st December 2023;
- To ratify the payment of sitting fees to the Board of Directors and Sub-Committees for the financial year ended 31 December 2023 and to determine the sitting fees of the Board of Directors and Sub-Committees for the next financial year 31 December 2024.
- To notify the General Assembly of donations disbursed to support community services during the financial year ended on 31 December 2023.
- To consider and approve the allocation of a budget of 20000 OMR (Twenty Thousand Omani Rials) to support community services during the financial year ending 31 December 2024.
- To appoint the auditors for the financial year ending 31st December 2024 and fixing their fees.

In accordance with the articles of association and Rules for Convening General Meetings via Electronic Means, issued by the CMA we would like to call your attention to the following:

(a) only a corporate person may authorize a natural person to attend and vote on its behalf on decisions/ resolutions of the AGM through electronic means, provided such natural person has an investor number with the MCD.

(b) voting on any item of the agenda shall commence prior to the convention of the AGM at a maximum of three (3) days and ends on the day of the AGM. If a shareholder's balance is changed either by increase or decrease, the voting process shall stand canceled and must re-vote at the AGM.

For further information please contact Mr. Khalid Al Balushi on telephone number 00968 96000855.

Chairman of the Board

Legal Advisor



Reinsurance Protection Beyond Expectations

OMAN REINSURANCE COMPANY S.A.O.C

Post Box 1968, Postal Code 114, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman
Telephone: 24397700 Fax: 2439 7777

Invitation for Extra Ordinary General Meeting of Oman Reinsurance Company S.A.O.G

Respected Shareholders,

After Compliments,

The Board of Directors ("Board") of Oman Reinsurance Company S.A.O.G. ("Company") cordially invites the respected shareholders to attend the Extra Ordinary General Meeting ("EGM") of the Company due to be held on Muscat Clearing and Depository electronic platform (www.mcd.gov.om) at 9:00 P.M. on Tuesday corresponding to 26th March 2024.

In case the attendance quorum was not met, a second EGM will be held at 9:00 PM on Wednesday 27th March 2024 on the same mentioned above electronic platform, to discuss and approve the following agenda item:

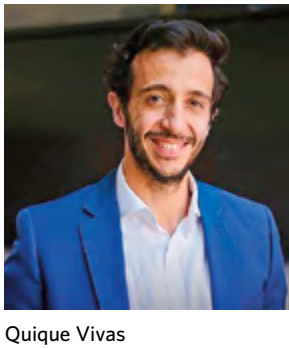
- To consider and approve the attached Articles of Association of the Company which have been amended/prepared in accordance with the requirements of Commercial Companies Law (Royal Decree 18/2019), Capital Market Decision ("CMA") Administrative Decision no. E/17/2020 issuing standard articles of association for public joint stock companies and in accordance with regulations for public joint stock companies issued by the CMA Decision No. 27/2021. ("Annexure A")

In accordance with the articles of association and Rules for Convening General Meetings via Electronic Means, issued by the CMA we would like to call your attention to the following:

(a) only a corporate person may authorize a natural person to attend and vote on its behalf on decisions/resolutions of the AGM through electronic means, provided such natural person has an investor number with the MCD.

(b) Voting on any item of the agenda shall commence prior to the convention of the AGM at a maximum of three (3) days and ends on the day of the AGM. If a shareholder's balance is changed either by increase or decrease, the voting process shall stand canceled and must re-vote at the AGM.

For further information please contact Mr. Khalid Al Balushi on telephone number 00968 96000855.



Quique Vivas

Ooredoo appoints new CCO

In a move to maximise organisational growth and market presence in Oman, Ooredoo welcomes Quique Vivas as its newly appointed Chief Commercial Officer (CCO).

As one of the latest members of the telco's C-suite, the new CCO will oversee all commercial operations and aim to ensure that Ooredoo's commercial strategy and objectives stay aligned with its business strategy.

With a career that has revolved around spearheading the commercial direction of companies such as Vodafone, United Group and BCG, Quique brings a diverse wealth of expertise to his new role at Ooredoo. He is a strategic thinker with robust leadership skills and a proven ability to drive positive change in an organisation.

Quique has previously overseen teams across various functional areas, a release stated.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Embassy of India celebrates with fifth lecture of 'Mandvi to Muscat' Series



On the occasion of International Women's Day, the Indian Embassy in Muscat hosted the 5th lecture in the 'Mandvi to Muscat' series with Dr Sandhya Rao Mehta, Associate Professor at Sultan Qaboos University, focusing on empowering narratives of diaspora women.

Divya Narang, the spouse of H E Amit Narang, Ambassador of India to Oman, delivered the keynote address, highlighting the Indian tradition of honouring women and their multifaceted roles. She linked this to 'Ardhanarishvara' in Indian tradition, symbolising gender harmony and advocating for shared responsibilities to foster inclusivity. Divya also celebrated the

achievements of women in India, emphasising their invaluable contributions to society and the importance of embracing equality.

The lecture by Dr Sandhya, titled 'Empowering Narratives of Women in the Historical Indian Community in Oman', garnered enthusiastic participation from a diverse audience, including members of the Indian community, Omanis of Indian origin,

scholars, and distinguished guests.

The speaker captivated the audience by delving into the rich tapestry of diaspora women's lives, tracing their historical journey and uncovering stories of triumph, resilience, and community building.

Drawing from first-hand oral sources, she offered a unique perspective on their experiences, shedding light on the un-

written history of these remarkable women.

Dr Sandhya meticulously detailed the history of Indian women in Oman, spanning from the early 20th century to the present day. She classified this journey into three distinct periods: 'The Pioneers' who arrived in the early 20th century, 'The Settlers' from 1970-2000, and 'The Entrepreneurs' representing the present and beyond.

She also highlighted the impressive stories of diaspora women's public participation in Oman and recounted the engaging tale of diaspora women celebrating Indian independence on August 15th, 1947, in Muscat.



ICAI Muscat Chapter felicitates puppeteer Anupama Hoskere

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) Muscat Chapter - under the sponsorship of the College of Banking and Financial Studies (CBFS) - felicitated Padma Shri award winner for the year 2024 Anupama Hoskere at an event conducted at CBFS in connection with the International Women's Day.

The event - held on March 5 in the presence of various dignitaries, members of ICAI Muscat Chapter and invited guests - had Najat al Lawatia, GM- Finance and Investment Monitoring & Reporting, Social Protection Fund as the chief guest.

Anupama Hoskere, an engineer-turned-puppeteer and Founder-Director of Dhaatu Puppet Theatre, Bengaluru, is keeping an ancient Indian art-form alive. She has also been



recognised with the Sangeet Natak Akademi Puraskar, the highest accolade for practicing artistes in India.

An Independent Director in the a public sector company NPCC, she is a multifaceted personality, a puppeteer, culture educator and horticulturist. She addressed the gathering highlighting the hidden potential of the women of India by drawing from examples of illustrious women from the epics of Bharata and her own life story.

Sangeeta Suresh Kumar, chairperson of Women Excellence Committee of the Chapter, welcomed the gathering. "On this auspicious occasion of celebrating International Women's Day, we are delighted with the presence of an unsung heroine of India, whose life is the best example of how women can change the world and spread happiness," she added.

"Our chapter and ICAI has always supported the women leaders, not just by words but by example. Out of 16 Chairpersons in past, three of them were women leaders. One third of the ICAI members are female CAs and almost half of the CA students are female students, all this is achieved without any reservation," highlighted Jim Joseph Itty, chairperson of the Chapter.

Sri Lanka thanks 19,000 women workforce in Oman

The Sri Lanka Embassy in Muscat marked the day with special activities to thank some 19,000 strong Sri Lankan women workforce in the sultanate who are diligently contributing to the socio-economic development of the two countries.

A national celebration of International Women's Day was held for the first time in Sri

Lanka in 1978. Since then, the government has taken measures to empower women through a series of concurrent programs and a national celebration on various themes every year.

The theme of 2024 International Women's Day was 'Rapid progress through women's investment', and at

the same time, 'Strength for her - Progress for God' has been used as the national theme in Sri Lanka.

The national celebration of the day in Sri Lanka takes place under the chairmanship of the President on March 8, while many concurrent programmes are implemented on the days before and after the day under

the leadership of the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Empowerment.

International Women's Day originated through the labour movement in 1908, when 15,000 women in the garment industry marched in New York City to demand shorter hours, higher wages, suffrage and child labour.



OQ receives HXM Excellence Award at SAP SuccessFactors HR Connect event

OQ, the integrated energy company, is proud to announce its recent success at the prestigious SAP SuccessFactors HR Connect Middle East event, where it has been awarded the HXM Excellence Award - OMAN 23.

This achievement underscores OQ's commitment to innovation and excellence in the field of HR technology. This award is a testament to the commitment to excellence and the ability to achieve exceptional results in the field of human resources technology. Maryam bint Ahmed al Shaibani, Vice President of Information and Digital Solutions, received the award following her participation in the SAP Conference for Human Capital Management Programs in the Middle East in Dubai, the UAE.

OQ's receipt of the Excellence Award is the result of its efforts in developing technical aspects in the field of human development.

OQ operates according to a digital transformation strategy aimed at digitising all transactions, in line with the goals of Vision 2040 in Oman. OQ's digital transformation strategy accelerates its vision to maximise the use of energy resources and support the transition to a sustainable future by deploying advanced technologies in all its operations and sectors.

On this occasion, Maryam al Shaibani, Vice President of Information Technology, Technology, and Digital Transformation, said, "Participating in an event like SAP HR Connect Middle East not only allows us to showcase our innovative solutions but also provides an excellent platform for networking and learning from industry peers."

Maryam al Shaibani emphasised OQ's commitment to supporting OQ's developing national competencies in various technological fields in line with the goals

of the 2040 digital transformation. She also emphasised the importance of leveraging SAP SuccessFactors to improve and develop employees, enhance their positive experience, and gain a competitive edge.

"This recognition underscores our position as a leading company in the field of human resources technology, and it confirms the extent of dedication to leading positive change and innovation in the energy sector."

OQ is committed to adopting modern technologies by partnering with specialised global institutions to bring technology to Oman and develop small and medium-sized enterprises and national capacities in technological fields.

OQ has made significant strides in digital transformation by launching several digital projects at all group sites, in addition to introducing artificial intelligence applications.

Sohar International honours enduring partnership with PDO

Sohar International, Oman's fastest-growing bank, hosted a memorable event at Sheraton Oman to celebrate its enduring relationship with Petroleum Development Oman (PDO).

The event was held to pay homage to the longstanding connection between the two entities, showcasing the significant collaborative efforts that have elevated their partnership to new heights. The event was marked by heartfelt recognition of the extensive collaboration between Sohar International and PDO, underscoring the vital contributions made by both parties and highlighting the milestones achieved through their robust partnership.

The event was attended by Ahmed al Musalmi, Chief Executive Officer at Sohar International, Haifa al Khaifi, Finance Director at Petroleum Development Oman, and members of the executive management from both entities.

Sohar International CEO Ahmed al Musalmi said, "At Sohar International, we are driven by a profound ethos that transcends the conventional boundaries of banking; it is a steadfast dedication to nurturing enduring partnerships founded upon trust and unwavering commitment, exemplified by our esteemed partnership with



Petroleum Development Oman.

"We are committed to adeptly addressing the various challenges of serving our diverse clients. Today, we stand resolute in our firm dedication to provide innovative solutions and unparalleled service, thereby ensuring an unmatched standard of excellence that pervades every aspect of our client's journey. Together, we embark upon a grand and ambitious mission to redefine the very essence of banking, both within the Sultanate of Oman and beyond, transcending borders and reshaping industry paradigms."

As a token of appreciation, 49 outstanding staff members from Sohar International and PDO were honoured during the event for their dedication and contribution to the partnership's success.



Their determined efforts and exemplary performance have been instrumental in fostering mutual growth and prosperity.

Finance Director at Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) Haifa al Khaifi said, "The leadership spirit, PDO witnessed in Ahmed al Musallami was seen through his entire organisation which was very impressive and a testament for his effective direction. Sohar International Bank demonstrated their commitment

in terms of assuring a seamless integration, assessing associated risks and ensuring that there are proper mitigation measures in place, while safeguarding PDO's payment process towards employees and vendor community.

"Despite the obstacles and challenges that are prevalent in any type of project merger scale, Sohar International offered a lot of agility in terms of finding solutions, as failure was not an option which PDO was ready to tolerate. We are so grateful to both teams from both organizations for that tenacity. We recognise that this step is just the beginning of a strategic partnership with Sohar International."

The event marked a celebration of the enduring partnership between Sohar International and Petroleum Development Oman.

India to continue deporting Myanmar nationals who fled fighting

New Delhi, India - India will continue to deport Myanmar nationals who crossed into the country fleeing the ongoing ethnic conflict in Myanmar, according to officials on Saturday. On Friday, the first batch of Myanmar nationals who had entered India 'illegally' were deported, Biren Singh, the chief minister of Manipur state, said. "The number is huge, so we cannot deport (them) all together at one time. So, part by part, we are deporting and there are some legal procedures that we need to take... we are following them (procedures)," Singh told reporters in Manipur on Saturday, adding that the deportation will continue. Hundreds of people, including security personnel, from



Myanmar, which is entangled in an internal ethnic conflict, have so far crossed into India and Bangladesh. A total of 6,746 Myanmar nationals, who had crossed borders 'illegally', have been detected in the state from May 3, 2023 to February 27 this year, according to officials. Amid the ongoing ethnic conflict in Myanmar, India decided to end the free movement arrangement between India and the southeast Asian nation. Myanmar has been under junta rule since February 2021 and the military, locally known as Tatmadaw, has faced severe resistance from ethnic groups in many regions of the country. At least three ethnic armed groups, which united under the so-called Brotherhood Alliance,

have been fighting the junta regime to take control in the northern parts of Myanmar since late October. The groups are attacking junta forces, which rule the Buddhist-majority southeast Asian nation, capturing many towns and junta outposts. Many people have been reported killed during the attacks. Anadolu Agency

Pakistan: Zardari elected new president

Islamabad, Pakistan - Pakistani lawmakers on Saturday elected Asif Ali Zardari, the co-chairman of centre-left Pakistan People's Party (PPP), as the country's 14th president. Zardari, 68, the widower of the two-time Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and the candidate of the ruling coalition, defeated Mahmood Khan Achakzai, a veteran politician from the southwestern Balochistan province, and a candidate of the opposition Sunni Ittehad Council, a religious-political group and new home to lawmakers belonging to jailed ex-Prime Minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party. The voting started at 10am local time (0500GMT) at the National Assembly building in Islamabad and all four provincial capitals and continued until 4pm (1100GMT). Zardari is the only politician elected to the country's highest, yet symbolic, constitutional office



Asif Ali Zardari is the only politician elected to the country's highest constitutional office for a second term

for a second term. In the Balochistan Assembly, Zardari secured a clean sweep, with all 47 members casting their votes in his favour. None voted for Achakzai, while 15 members were absent from the assembly, Dawn reported earlier citing unofficial results.

Asif Ali Zardari, 68, is the widower of the two-time Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and the candidate of the ruling coalition

In the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, Achakzai garnered 91 votes, surpassing Zardari, who received only 17 votes. Out of 118 members, 109 cast their ballots, with one vote being rejected. In the Sindh Assembly, Zardari secured 58 votes, while Achakzai received three votes. The counting of votes took place under the Election Commission of Pakistan's presiding officer, Nisar Durrani, according to Dawn. Several parties, like Maulana Fazlur Rehman's Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) and Jamaat-e-Islami boycotted the election. The current ruling coalition, comprising PML-N, PPP, and MQM-P, had thrown its support behind Zardari. The president is chosen by an electoral college consisting of members from the Senate, the National Assembly, and the four provincial assemblies. The joint session of the parliament was conducted at the parliament house in Islamabad, where members from both the National Assembly and the Senate cast their votes, according to ARY News. Simultaneously, provincial assemblies convened their sessions, after the election commission designated all four assemblies as polling stations for the smooth conduct of the electoral process. The breakdown of voting members includes at least 162 from the provincial assembly in Sindh, 353 in Punjab, 65 in Balochistan, and 115 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, all contributing to the election of the new president. Agencies

Indian tourists in Maldives drop amid diplomatic row

Male, Maldives - The number of Indian tourists visiting the Maldives has dropped by 33 per cent as compared to last year, Maldivian website Adhadhu reported, citing data from the Maldives Tourism Ministry. This comes as the diplomatic row between New Delhi and Male continues to deteriorate. According to Tourism Ministry statistics for 2023, 41,054 Indian tourists visited the Maldives by March 4 last year. The number of Indian tourists recorded as of March 2 this year was 27,224. This was 13,830 lesser than last year, Maldives-based Adhadhu reported. In the same period last year, India was the second largest source market for tourists to the Maldives with a 10 per cent market share. However, India is now in sixth place on the list with a six per cent market share. ANI



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Al Maha Ceramics SAOG

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Fax: 26752177, Email: info@almahaceramics.com, web: www.almahaceramics.com

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present the results of Al Maha Ceramics SAOG for the financial year ended 31st December 2023

Company's Performance:

Your company has achieved a revenue of RO 5,707 million in this year as compared to the previous year's revenue of RO 9,977 million, a decrease of 42.8 %

Operational Profit of parent company is RO 0.582 million as compared to RO 3.154 million in the previous year, a decrease of 81.5 %.

Net (Loss)/profit after tax for the year is RO (1,121) million as compared to RO 3,124 million in the previous year, a decrease of 135.8 %. The company recorded Share of Loss from its associate, amounting to RO 1.615 million. The net carrying value as on 31st December, 2023 of the investment in associate is OMR 0.897 million.

Your Company complies with the Organisation requirements and invests in continuous training and improvement programs to enhance the skills of our human resources.

Dividend:

The Board of Directors is pleased to recommend cash dividend of 15 Bz per Share (OMR 825,000), (2022: 40 Bz per Share, OMR 2,200,000), subject to approval of shareholders at the Annual General Meeting.

Future Outlook:

The economic environment is still volatile due to continued geopolitical disruptions in the region. However, the business confidence is likely to gradually stabilize, and, as a result, the economic activity is expected to show signs of recovery.

The industry is facing certain risks and challenges such as rising utility costs, logistics cost upsurge, constant pressure on raw material costs, continuation of cheap imports which impacts the overall margins. Market situation is expected to be challenging in Oman as well as in the region. Your company will continue to explore opportunities for value-based technology and business synergies.

There is continuous endeavor to explore new and untapped markets regionally and globally. Your company has maintained the Saudi Arabian Standards Organization (SASO) and ISO accreditations and is exploring newer opportunities to expand its footprint in various geographies.

It gives us immense pleasure to inform that your company has been conferred with the following awards in the past years:

- HM Sultan Award for Industrial Excellence
- OER Award for Excellence in Manufacturing
- AINA Awards 2021 and 2022 for Best Performing Company
- Oman's Most Trusted Brands awards 2023 (OMTB)

Provided that global economic situation does not deteriorate, we remain optimistic about our business trend in 2024. We feel that the tile industry will continue to show healthy growth for next couple of years and we are committed to progress ahead.

Corporate Social Responsibility

The Company believes in supporting the community and has a policy to contribute. Over the years our company has contributed significantly towards the welfare of the society through various social activities. Under the CSR policy the company mainly emphasis on healthcare, education and society.

Thanks, and Appreciation

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to our honorable shareholders, customers, banks and suppliers for their support during the year. Also, thankful to the executive management and all employees of the company for their sincere efforts, and we look forward for achieving better results in the years to come.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and employees, we pray to Almighty Allah to bless His Majesty with long life, health and grant him success to pursue the march of goodness and development for the prosperity of Oman and its people.

For Al Maha Ceramics SAOG

Masoud Humaid Malik Al Harthy
Chairman

Note: The complete accounts of Al Maha Ceramics SAOG will be delivered to any shareholder or the interested party, who request them at the above address, in either Arabic or English as requested, within 7 days of receipt of such request.

Audited Statement of Financial Position

At 31 December

	2023 RO	2022 RO
ASSETS		
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	5,018,783	5,699,606
Investment property	225,000	225,000
Investment in associate	897,655	2,513,013
Right-of-use assets	599,062	518,084
	<u>6,740,500</u>	<u>8,955,703</u>
Current assets		
Inventories	1,835,957	1,637,318
Trade and other receivables	2,440,291	3,190,999
Fixed deposits	600,000	2,500,000
Cash and bank balances	47,768	341,251
	<u>4,924,016</u>	<u>7,669,568</u>
Total assets	<u>11,664,516</u>	<u>16,625,271</u>
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
Equity		
Share capital	5,500,000	5,500,000
Share premium	88,199	88,199
Legal reserve	1,833,333	1,833,333
Retained earnings	2,219,470	4,440,063
Total equity	<u>9,641,002</u>	<u>11,861,595</u>
Liabilities		
Non-current liabilities		
Non-current portion of lease liabilities	543,995	483,374
Employees' end of service benefits	323,673	266,075
Deferred tax liability	172,074	225,498
	<u>1,039,742</u>	<u>974,947</u>
Current liabilities		
Current portion of lease liabilities	100,502	72,078
Bank borrowings	-	600,000
Trade and other payables	742,413	2,598,687
Income tax payable	140,857	517,964
	<u>983,772</u>	<u>3,788,729</u>
Total liabilities	<u>2,023,514</u>	<u>4,763,676</u>
Total equity and liabilities	<u>11,664,516</u>	<u>16,625,271</u>
Net assets per share	<u>0.175</u>	<u>0.216</u>

Audited Statement of Comprehensive Income

for the year ended 31 December 2023

	2023 RO	2022 RO
Revenue	5,707,121	9,977,477
Cost of sales	(4,382,545)	(5,962,395)
Gross profit	<u>1,324,576</u>	<u>4,015,082</u>
Other income	202,902	194,602
Selling and distribution expenses	(284,173)	(574,783)
General and administrative expenses	(482,591)	(448,454)
(Allowance for)/reversal of expected credit loss	(130,854)	6,980
Profit from operations	<u>629,860</u>	<u>3,193,427</u>
Share of (loss)/profit of associate for the year	(1,615,358)	388,061
Finance charges	(47,422)	(39,633)
(Loss)/profit for the year before taxation	<u>(1,032,920)</u>	<u>3,541,855</u>
Income tax	(87,673)	(418,237)
Net (loss)/profit and total comprehensive (loss) / income for the year	<u>(1,120,593)</u>	<u>3,123,618</u>
(Loss)/earnings per share - Basic and diluted	<u>(0.020)</u>	<u>0.057</u>

FOR THE PEOPLE



Students hold a placard as they take part in a rally to create awareness about the importance of voting, ahead of the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, in Chennai, India, on Saturday (ANI)

Britain has no 'credible plan' to fund Defence Ministry: PAC

London, UK - The UK's Public Accounts Committee (PAC) issued a scathing assessment on Friday that asserted the government's current approach lacks a 'credible plan' to adequately fund the Defence Ministry (MoD). It said that undermines the credibility of the nation's armed forces. Chancellor Jeremy Hunt pledged that defence spending will rise to 2.5 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) once 'economic conditions allow'. But the PAC contended that the absence of a solid strategy casts doubt on the feasibility of the promise. In a report on Friday, the PAC urged the government to exercise firmer control on defence procurement processes, highlighting the unprecedented disparity between the MoD's budget and its military capability requirements. "Despite a budget increase of £46.3bn (US\$59.7bn) over the next ten years compared to last year's Equipment Plan, this year's

Plan's £16.9bn deficit marks an unmistakable deterioration in its financial position," it said. The PAC's findings suggest that the deficit could balloon by an additional £12bn if all branches of the armed forces were to fully account for the costs associated with delivering the government's expected military capabilities. Attributing part of the financial strain to inflation and adverse foreign exchange movements, the report identifies the MoD's decision to fully fund the nuclear enterprise as a primary driver ,behind escalating costs. Expenses at the Defence Nuclear Organisation, responsible for managing the UK's nuclear deterrent, surged by £38.2bn since last year's plan. "In an increasingly volatile world, the Ministry of Defence's lack of a credible plan to deliver fully funded military capability as desired by Government leaves us in an alarming place. But this problem is not new," Dame Meg Hillier MP, chair of the committee, said in a statement. Anadolu Agency



UNSC adopts draft resolution for an immediate cease-fire in Sudan

United Nations, US - The UN Security Council (UNSC) adopted a draft resolution on Friday that demands an immediate cease-fire in Sudan during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

The resolution, presented by the UK, was voted on during a UNSC session and was approved with 14 votes of the 15-member Council and one abstention.

"We have no illusions as to the true intentions of Western countries," said Russia's Deputy Permanent Representative for Political Affairs, Anna Evstigneeva.

Evstigneeva accused members of a 'double standard' regarding Gaza, 'where a massacre is taking place, where over five months more than 30,000 people have died'.

She noted that it is time for diplomacy in Sudan.

Resolution of cease-fire in Sudan
The resolution demands an ur-

gent cessation of hostilities throughout Ramadan in Sudan, and encouraged efforts toward a resolution through dialogue.

It further demands full humanitarian aid access and urges parties to fulfil their obligations under international humanitarian law.

Sudan has been mired by fighting between the army, led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, who is the head of the ruling Sovereign Council, and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces.

At least 12,260 people have been killed and more than 33,000 injured in the conflict that started last April, according to UN figures.

A humanitarian crisis continues to worsen as nearly 6.8mn people have fled their homes seeking safety in Sudan and neighbouring countries.

Several cease-fire agreements brokered by Saudi Arabia and US mediators have failed to end the violence.

Anadolu Agency

Nearly 11,000 civilians have died in Ukrainian war: UN

United Nations, US - The UN said on Friday that the war in Ukraine has resulted in at least 10,703 deaths.

The deaths include '594 children' and 20,146 more, including 1,316 children, have been injured, Mohamed Khaled Khair, UN assistant head for Middle East, Asia and Pacific, said at a Security Council meeting on Ukraine.

"We condemn all attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure - they are prohibited under international law," he said, stressing that the attacks are 'unacceptable and must stop now'.

Lisa Doughten, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Director for the Humanitarian Financing and Resource Mobilization Division, emphasised that attacks against civilians constitute a violation of international humanitarian law and noted the need for all parties to protect civilians.

The UN continues 'to face significant obstacles to reaching everyone in need', she said and added that humanitarian access to parts of Russian-occupied Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and the Zaporizhzhia regions are restricted. There is 'an estimated 1.5mn people in need of life-saving assistance', she said.

'Beginning of Third World War'
Meanwhile, Russia on Saturday requested a UN Security Council meeting to discuss French President Emmanuel Macron's idea to send NATO troops to Ukraine.



The deaths include 594 children, and 20,146 more, including 1,316 children, have been injured

We condemn all attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure - they are prohibited under international law

MOHAMED KHALED KHAIR

Speaking at a UN Security Council meeting in New York, Russia's deputy Permanent Representative to the UN Security Council Dmitry Polyansky said Moscow would like to know more about such 'ideas fraught with the beginning of the Third World War'.

On February 27, Macron confirmed his offer to NATO partners to send troops to Ukraine.

However, he added that an official consensus to send ground troops 'has not yet been reached, but nothing can be ruled out'.

Later, he said France would send soldiers if Russia moved to Kyiv or Odesa.

Polyansky added that it is equally important to discuss leaked conversations between German Air Force officers about

supplying Taurus missiles to Ukraine, as well as the media reports that the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has deployed a network of spy bases in Ukraine, near the Russian border.

"It would be interesting to hear a comment in connection with a conversation leaked to the media by high-ranking German military officials who talked about how to help Ukrainians destroy the Kerch Bridge in Crimea and strike deep into Russian territory," he said.

Last week, the German government faced criticism after conversations between Air Force officers about supplying Taurus

missiles to Ukraine were leaked. Potential strategies were discussed, such as providing satellite intelligence through third parties rather than direct German involvement.

The New York Times said on February 27 that over the past eight years, the CIA has trained and equipped Kyiv's intelligence officers in underground bunkers, some of which are buried deep in Ukraine's forests.

Regarding the incident with a strike in Odesa on Wednesday, Polyansky said its target was a workshop for assembling naval drones from parts delivered from the UK.

Anadolu Agency

BALLOON SPECTACULAR



Hot air balloons hover over Canberra, Australia, on Saturday. As one of the most important events in the capital city of Australia, Canberra Balloon Spectacular is held here from March 9 to 17 (Xinhua)

US Senate passes 6 bills hours before shutdown

Washington, US - The US Senate narrowly avoided a partial government shutdown by passing a comprehensive six-bill package aimed at funding federal programmes through September.

With Congress's approval and President Joe Biden's impending signature, preparations for a shutdown have been halted, ensuring federal agencies continue uninterrupted operations, according to the White House. The Senate approved the bill by a vote of 75 to 22 just before the Friday mid-



night deadline, sending it to Biden's desk for expected signature on Saturday.

This achievement marks a significant breakthrough, ending months of reliance on temporary funding measures and pro-

viding updated legislation to finance crucial government departments for the remainder of the fiscal year, according to CNN. Despite this progress, lawmakers still face finalising additional funding bills before the March 22 deadline.

Both Democrats and Republicans claim victories in the package, which covers a wide range of government departments and programmes, from agriculture to veterans affairs, CNN reported.

The package aims to bolster various programmes and initia-

tives, including the recruitment of personnel in critical sectors like air traffic control and rail safety, as well as investments in scientific research to enhance US economic competitiveness, especially against global rivals like China. While House Republicans secured bipartisan support for the package, some conservatives, including members of the House Freedom Caucus, have expressed opposition, citing concerns about the bill's failure to address key Republican priorities.

Anadolu Agency

Pentagon says no evidence of existence of alien life, UFOs

Houston, US - The Pentagon released a study on Friday about UFOs, aliens and extraterrestrial intelligence and said it has found no evidence of their existence after investigating sightings of nearly eight decades of unidentified flying objects.

"All investigative efforts, at all levels of classification, concluded that most sightings were ordinary objects and phenomena and the result of misidentification," said a report, which analysed government investigations of unidentified anomalous phenomena (UAP) dating to 1945.

The report, which was mandated by Congress, is dispersed in two volumes of research. The first is an accumulation of decades-old sightings. The second will focus on more recent research and will be released at a later date, according to Pentagon officials. While the fascination about UAP sightings in America continues, with conspiracy theories running around regarding flying saucer landings in Roswell, New Mexico, or



aliens being kept at the Area 51 military base north of Las Vegas, Nevada, the Pentagon report said it found no evidence of alien spacecraft, alien life or that the US government and private companies had reverse-engineered extra-terrestrial technology and were hiding it.

"The proliferation of television programmes, books, movies, and the vast amount of internet and social media content centered on UAP-related topics most likely has influenced the public conversation on this topic, and reinforced these beliefs within some sections of the population," according to the

study.

A 2021 government report that reviewed 144 sightings of aircraft or other devices apparently flying at mysterious speeds or trajectories found no extra-terrestrial links and did not identify any evidence of extra-terrestrial life, but officials did call for better data collection.

The authors of the report by the Defence Department's All-Domain Anomaly Resolution Office (AARO) said the purpose of the study was to apply a rigorous scientific analysis to a subject that has long captured the American public's imagination.

Anadolu Agency

Indonesia: 10 killed in floods, landslides

Jakarta, Indonesia - At least 10 people were killed and 10 others went missing as floods and landslides hit the Indonesian regency of Pesisir Selatan in the province of West Sumatra, according to the local management agency on Saturday.

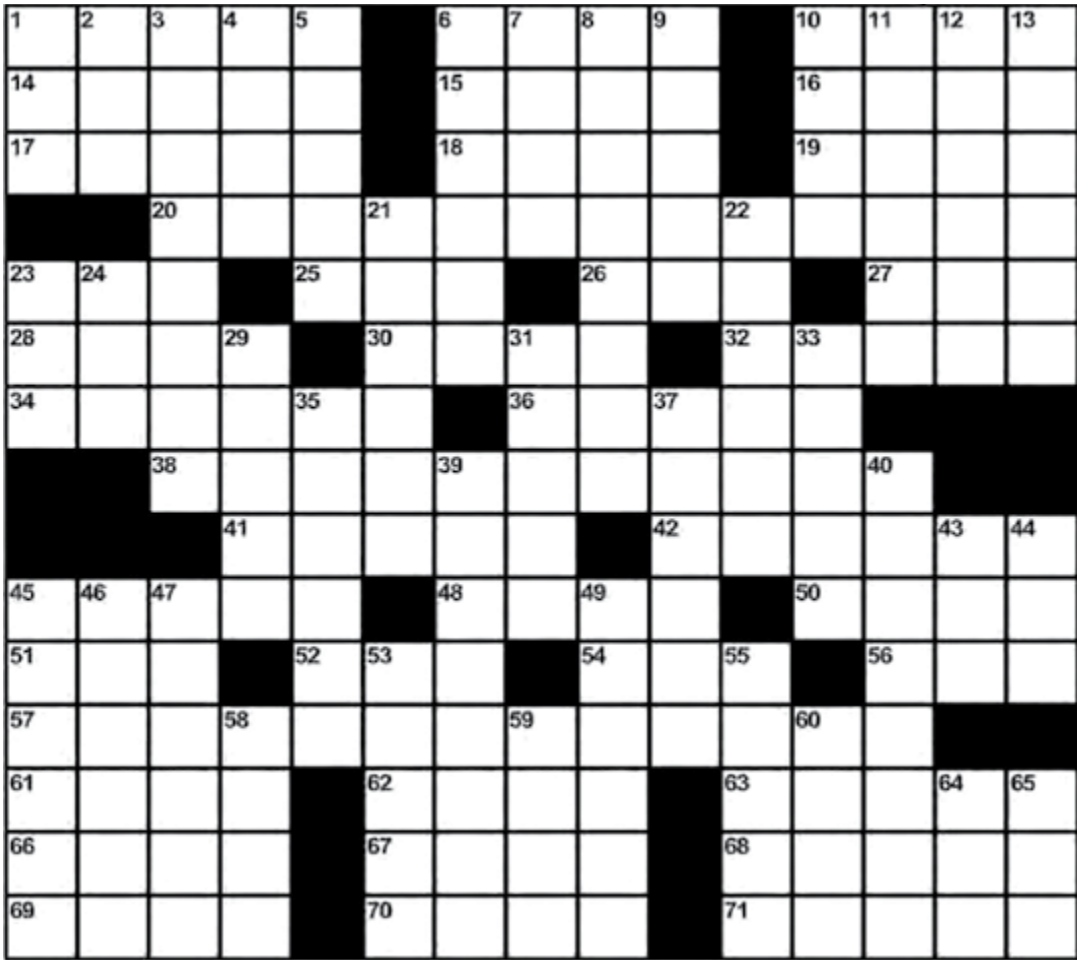
Pesisir Selatan disaster mitigation agency chief Doni Gusrizal said in a statement that rescuers were still searching for other missing people and evacuating those affected by the floods and landslides amid torrential rains. "The rain was still pouring until this morning. Several access points were still cut off, making it difficult to get through. Then, we use boats to help those isolated villagers," he said.

According to Gusrizal, more than 45,000 people fled to temporary shelters provided by the agency in each subdistrict in the regency. Over 20,000 houses were inundated and at least eight bridges were broken, he added.

The floods and landslides in Pesisir Selatan were triggered by torrential rains.

Xinhua

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) Some computers
- 6) "Father" in the nursery
- 10) Union buster
- 14) Doofus
- 15) Declare firmly
- 16) Henry VIII's sixth wife
- 17) Driving force?
- 18) Rudolph's high beam
- 19) Arsenal contents
- 20) Pouring down, briefly?
- 23) "... In the Family"
- 25) Coin of Afghanistan, once
- 26) "...whiz!"
- 27) Brief moment?
- 28) Barely passing grades
- 30) Campus VIP
- 32) Rodeo rope
- 34) Wash one's hands of
- 36) Staircase post
- 38) Baby aids, briefly?
- 41) Trail user
- 42) Pekoe server
- 45) Foofaraws
- 48) Nursemaid in India
- 50) Achieve through hard work
- 51) "Give us this day_ daily bread"

- 52) Cool, once
- 54) Gun, in a car

- 56) It divides a tennis court
- 57) Enjoying the see-saw, briefly?
- 61) Cathedral section
- 62) Suffix with "scan"
- 63) Bathroom floor pieces, often
- 66) Carnal craving
- 67) Inventor's brainchild
- 68) Give notice to
- 69) Eyelid swelling
- 70) Wilder ending?
- 71) One place for potted plants

DOWN

- 1) Lower, as lights
- 2) Tokyo before it was Tokyo
- 3) Like the runt
- 4) Weaver's apparatus
- 5) Airfield
- 6) Behave like a misused participle
- 7) Solemnly swear
- 8) Hilfiger or Lauren, e.g.
- 9) Sharp mountain ridge
- 10) Bandy words

- 11) Lily-family member
- 12) General assemblies?
- 13) Denver athlete
- 21) Persistent pest
- 22) Curtis of hair care
- 23) Use a plus sign
- 24) Souvenir from Kauai
- 29) Bantu language group
- 31) Furious
- 33) Pond scum, e.g.
- 35) Shush, in the U.K.
- 37) Shrivel in the heat
- 39) Low-range sea change
- 40) U.S. anthem word
- 43) Tron man's quest?
- 44) Explosive initials
- 45) Destroys utterly, as a car
- 46) Production in general
- 47) Formal, fashion-wise
- 49) Madison Square Garden and others
- 53) Red cosmetic dye
- 55) All-important
- 58) Network of veins
- 59) Boot tips
- 60) Longest river
- 64) Physics class unit
- 65) Jeanne d'Arc's title (Abbr.)

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

With every step you take today, you are approaching a major turning point, so you've got to be primed and ready to act when you see a great opportunity heading your way. Changes can happen at any time in your life if you are ready and waiting for them. It might not be comfortable for you to act quickly at first, but eventually you will get into the excitement and enjoy the unpredictability of it all. You'll never feel more in charge of your life than you do today.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

When a surge of energy hits you today, you won't be able to help but use it to help others. You are moving out of a self-centered stage and into a very selfless one. Someone needs help around the house, and this family member will be very appreciative of the extra set of hands. It feels good to know that you have the right priorities, and you will make a huge deposit into your good karma account. Giving to others enables you also connect to others, which is always enjoyable.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

Things are starting off wonderfully today, but by afternoon you might sense some heavy stuff going on just under the surface with someone you care about. Don't let this emotional weight slow you down, though. You're doing them a disservice by letting their drama ruin your day, and you might make them feel responsible for putting you in a blue mood. It's much better for you to balance them out by keeping your outlook bright. Try to cheer them up.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Nick Leeson became famous in 1995 for what activity?

- A. Bombings
- B. Serial killings
- C. Fraud
- D. Internet hacking

2. Who formally opened the 2020 Summer Olympics?

- A. President Xi Jinping of China
- B. President Moon Jae-in of South Korea
- C. President Emmanuel Macron of France
- D. Emperor Naruhito of Japan

The names of how many continents end with the same letter that they started with?

- A. 3
- B. 7
- C. 5
- D. 1

Answers: 1.C 2.D 3.C



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

Your fiery enthusiasm for what you believe in is powerful. You can always make things happen with your emotional conviction, but today, rein in that power and keep it to yourself. Controversial conversations could be filled with traps. If you jump into things headfirst, you may end up getting burned, or at least putting your foot in your mouth. Experiment by taking an impersonal point of view. Don't let your listening skills be hampered by your passion.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

You're in a mood to get rid of every single one of your bad habits today, which is a wonderful goal, but is it a realistic one? Don't try to make yourself perfect in one day! You are a work in progress and you should stay a work in progress. After all, your imperfections make you charming. Today, just pick one thing you want to change about yourself and take plenty of time to change it. Expecting too much of yourself isn't wise now.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

You'll be walking right in step with your friends today, and everyone is wearing a big smile. One of the biggest perks of friendship is that you all get to share your thoughts and ideas with each other without fear of recrimination. You know that these folks have your back at every turn. And you need to make sure they know that you're there to support them as well. Connecting with others is so much easier now in part because you are feeling much more comfortable in your own skin.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Your fiery enthusiasm for what you believe in is powerful. You can always make things happen with your emotional conviction, but today, rein in that power and keep it to yourself. Controversial conversations could be filled with traps. If you jump into things headfirst, you may end up getting burned, or at least putting your foot in your mouth. Experiment by taking an impersonal point of view. Don't let your listening skills be hampered by your passion.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Your imagination, creativity, and intuition can be combined today to give you almost superhuman powers, so use them with abandon to get an edge. Is everyone around you scratching their heads at the big mystery that's been plaguing them? Cook up a theory about what's been going on, and chances are you will be right on the money. This is a wonderful time if you are in any kind of leadership position. People will know that what you say goes because what you say is usually right.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You're excited about your new plans, and you should be! Take advantage of all this positive energy, because it could give you a lot of momentum that will help you get your new plans launched as soon as possible. Be prepared to swallow your pride in order to ask for the help you need, especially from a person who intimidates you. Now is not the time for the luxury of pride. It's simply not useful. Be open about what you want to do and share your excitement.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

Don't get too close to the center of the action right now. The pull of power is great, but it can also complicate your life way too much. You need to know when to step back today. There will be a lot of intensity and even some emotional upheaval, and you could get the brunt of someone's anger. Today, try to find a place where you can go and be by yourself for a while. At the very least, hang around the people you can totally relax and be yourself with.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

Money is starting to play a different role in your life. It is beginning to seem like there are more important things in the world than account balances and shiny new possessions. As material goods lose their luster, more humble and beautiful things are starting to hold a magnetic appeal for you. Other people in your life might be confused by your new focus on quality over quantity, but they will be quick to join you in this new way of thinking. Priorities are shifting.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Your plate is way too full right now. Something has got to go, and it's got to go today. If you don't delegate, cancel, or reschedule one or two or ten things, your stress level is only going to get higher and you're only going to get groucherier. The good news is that you probably already know of at least one thing you can toss someone else's way, and you probably know of someone who might be quite eager to take it over. Your annoyances could be someone else's opportunities.

KIDS COLOURING



READING TIME

BOGGLER

A	C	D	B
R	S	I	O
D	R	A	N
A	N	I	E

Each game will present you with a matrix filled with letters. The objective is to form words by linking adjacent letters - to the left, right, on top, bottom, or diagonal to each other. The Boggles Classic game uses a 4 x 4 matrix. Words are valued at one point for each letter in excess of two letters. A three letter word is worth one point, a four letter word is worth two points, and so on. Valid words must be at least three letters long.
Solution 20-25 words: Excellent, 15-20 words: Very good, 10-15 words: Good, 5-10 words: Average

DO YOU SUDOKU?

LEVEL EASY: Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9 and only one instance of each number

1	6	3	9		7			
9		2	3					
	4							6
			6	1		8	2	
6	8			3			7	9
	2	9		5	8			
8							1	
					2	4		5
			5		1	7	8	3

WORD BUILDER



You have three minutes to find all the words contained in this word.

Rules: Words should be at least four letters long, proper nouns and duplicates don't count

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

8	3	7	1	9	6	2	5	4
6	5	4	2	7	8	9	1	3
2	1	9	8	6	4	7	3	5
1	9	8	5	7	6	2	4	3
6	7	5	4	8	2	1	9	3
4	2	8	6	1	9	7	3	5
9	3	6	5	2	1	8	7	4
4	7	1	9	3	8	2	5	6
8	5	2	7	4	6	9	1	3

YAMAL TAKES CENTRE STAGE

Teenager’s late goal hands
Barca 1-0 win over Mallorca

Barcelona, Spain - Barcelona teenager Lamine Yamal struck a fine late goal to secure a hard-fought 1-0 home win against plucky Mallorca on Friday to move within five points of leaders Real Madrid.

The victory put the hosts provisionally in second place on 61 points, two clear of Girona, as



and the clean sheet. I tried to hold the full back and as they left me some space I looked for the shot,” Yamal told DAZN.

“It was a game of hard work. They made it difficult for us. Anything that helps the team is great for me. Scoring a goal with our fans in front of us is always a dream.”

LAMINE YAMAL

Mallorca boss Javier Aguirre was full of praise for Yamal.

“I saw Messi when he was with the Barça youth team. I saw him for five minutes and he was

They made it difficult for us. Anything that helps the team is great for me. Scoring a goal with our fans in front of us is always a dream.



Barcelona’s Lamine Yamal celebrates after scoring against Mallorca on Friday

a rat, he didn’t stop scoring goals. This scoundrel also looks like a rat,” he said.

“He’s young, they work well with young people here and yes keep it up and he will bring many more joys to Can Barça.”

Xavi was quick to point out that Messi comparisons was unfair when he spoke after the game. “I get [the comparison] but it doesn’t benefit Lamine to make it,” he told reporters.

“Anyone who has ever been compared with Messi has lost. It is not good to compare players with him.

“But Lamine is left footed, he comes inside ... there are flashes of Messi, but we are talking about the best footballer ever, so it is best not to compare them.”

Ilkay Gundogan could have put Barcelona ahead in the 24th minute with a penalty following a VAR check for a challenge on Raphinha. However, Mallorca goalkeeper Predrag Rajkovic dived to his left to deny the German international.

Copa del Rey finalists Mallorca were dangerous on the break and created several chances but could not find the finish. They stay in 15th on 27 points, eight clear of the relegation zone.

Xavi, who lost midfielders Frenkie De Jong and Pedri to injury in the last game, was forced to take off Raphinha in the 37th after a foul on the Brazilian forward. However, the manager said the right winger does not have a serious injury and will be available when they host Napoli in their Champions League last 16-second leg on Tuesday, with the game level at 1-1.



Xabi Alonso

Alonso: I’m not too scared of the first defeat

Leverkusen, Germany - Bayer Leverkusen were minutes away from seeing their unbeaten season come to an end on Thursday but coach Xabi Alonso said the thought of losing holds no fear for him and he is more concerned with how his team reacts when defeat finally comes their way.

Leverkusen took their unbeaten run to 35 games in all competitions after Patrik Schick’s 92nd minute equalizer earned them a 2-2 Europa League draw at Azerbaijan’s Qarabag.

The German side were 2-0 down with 20 minutes left before midfielder Florian Wirtz started the comeback in the first leg of the last-16 tie.

Asked about how close his side came to experiencing their first defeat of the season, Alonso said: “To be honest, I’m not too scared of the first defeat.

“It can happen, that’s football... I won’t be worried.

“The most important thing for me is that the momentum, the mood and the energy in the team is good. And hopefully that will still be the case after a defeat.”

Leverkusen, who host the second leg on March 14, have a 10-point lead in the Bundesliga with 10 league games left.

‘I know I am not bad but Pep is the best’

Liverpool, England - Liverpool have nothing but respect for their title rivals Manchester City, manager Jurgen Klopp said on Friday as he played down the debate over Trent Alexander-Arnold’s comments before this weekend’s top of the table clash.

In an interview with FourFourTwo, the Liverpool defender said that trophies meant more to Liverpool than for City because of the financial situation at both clubs.

City’s Erling Haaland and Ruben Dias responded saying that Alexander-Arnold doesn’t know how it feels to win a treble, and Klopp was asked to comment on the argument ahead of Sunday’s meeting with City.

“I’m not sure how often in this club we have to say how much we respect the opponent, in this case City, and mean it,” Klopp told a press conference.

“Pep (Guardiola) is the best manager in the world, I have a really good life with not being even close to that. Haaland is the best number nine, Kevin De Bruyne will go down in history, Phil Foden best English player at the moment.

“Trent respects that, but he’s born in Liverpool, he played through all the youth teams. One of our slogans that I love is “This Means More” and it means



Jurgen Klopp (L) with Pep Guardiola

I don’t feel there’s a rivalry, I understand why you call it like that but we’re both pretty competitive, we both want to win games

JURGEN KLOPP

more, to us, we have no clue 100% what it means to other people.”

Much has been made of the fact that this could be the last meeting between Klopp and

Guardiola, with the Liverpool manager leaving at the end of this season, but the German said they were not rivals.

“I don’t feel there’s a rivalry, I understand why you call it like that but we’re both pretty competitive, we both want to win games,” Klopp said. “But it’s not a rivalry. If we meet in the future it will be full of respect, I think I’ve said it often enough how much I respect him, and we would have a lot to talk about.

“On Sunday it’s not about me having that opportunity last time, anyway we’re not sure, we could meet again in the FA Cup... but it’s probably the game of the

weekend.”

While Klopp admitted that Guardiola is a better manager than him, it isn’t something which bothers him.

“I knew 3,000 players who were better than me but I still loved the game,” Klopp said. “It never frustrated me, he made me a better manager. I know I am not bad but he is the best.”

Defenders Joe Gomez and Ibrahima Konate were substituted during Thursday’s 5-1 Europa League win over Sparta Prague, and while Klopp said that Gomez is fine, Konate will have a scan on an injury and is still a doubt.

Stuttgart beat Union Berlin to close in on second spot

Stuttgart, Germany - VfB Stuttgart secured a 2-0 home win over Union Berlin with goals from Serhou Guirassy and Chris Fuehrich on Friday as they closed in on second-placed Bayern Munich in the Bundesliga.

Stuttgart have now gone seven games unbeaten to reach 53 points, nine clear of Borussia Dortmund in fourth and one behind Bayern, both with a game in hand. Bayer Leverkusen lead on



VfB Stuttgart’s Serhou Guirassy scores against Union Berlin

64. Bundesliga second-top scorer Guirassy put the hosts ahead in the 19th minute with 21st league goal this season thanks to a fine finish at the far post.

Fuehrich doubled Stuttgart’s lead with a superb strike in the 65th minute and the visitors were down to 10 men four minutes later when Andras Schafer was sent off for a foul on Joshua Vagnoman.



Napoli’s Victor Osimhen (L) with Torino’s Alessandro Buongiorno

Wasteful Napoli held to 1-1 draw by Torino

Naples, Italy - Napoli had to settle for a 1-1 draw at home to Torino after Khvicha Kvaratskhelia’s strike was cancelled out by substitute Antonio Sanabria’s overhead kick in Serie A on Friday.

Reigning champions Napoli stay seventh on 44 points, seven behind Bologna in fourth, and their hopes of qualifying for the Champions League are fading.

Kvaratskhelia scored his 10th league goal of the season in the 61st minute by skillfully guiding home a cross from Mario Rui after missing several chances earlier in the match.

But three minutes later Sanabria equalised with a bicycle kick a minute after coming on, firing the ball into the roof of the net despite the efforts of goalkeeper Alex Meret.

“There is regret for the result, but I am satisfied with the performance,” said Napoli coach Francesco Calzona. “I reiterate that I am very happy with how the team is interpreting the games in the right way and results will come on this path.”

It was a frustrating night for the hosts and especially their lively forward Kvaratskhelia who had several chances to secure a third consecutive win for his side.

He came close to breaking the deadlock early in the first half when he found space inside the box but Vanja Milinkovic-Savic made an exceptional save to thwart the Georgian.

Just before the break, Milinkovic-Savic made a diving save on the line to stop a header from Kvaratskhelia.

Napoli had most of the possession but Torino were solid at the back and Kvaratskhelia was denied again when his attempt in stoppage time was tipped over by Milinkovic-Savic.

“We had overwhelming dominance and I have nothing to blame the boys for because if we always perform like this, we can go far,” Calzona added.

Torino, who were without their suspended coach Ivan Juric, are 10th on 38 points.

Napoli visit Barcelona for the second leg of their Champions League last-16 tie on Tuesday.

INDIA UNSTOPPABLE

Ashwin takes five wickets to wreck England in Dharamsala as hosts win series 4-1

Dharamsala, India - India bulldozed England by an innings and 64 runs inside three days of the final Test on Saturday to complete a 4-1 series victory at the picturesque Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association stadium.

The hosts held an unassailable 3-1 lead heading into the match and were on the ascendancy since taking a first-innings lead of 259.

Ravichandran Ashwin (5-77) wrecked England's top order and India eventually shot out the tourists for 195 with only Joe Root (84) offering some resistance with the bat.

"To win a Test series, a lot of things have to fall into place and go right and our players did that, and that's why we are standing here with this series result," India captain Rohit Sharma said.

India were without several frontline players and fielded five debutants in the series.

Rohit was pleased with how the likes of Dhruv Jurel and Sarfaraz Khan responded to the challenge. "They responded very well to pressure throughout the series and there were a lot of times where we came back from behind during the series."

Resuming on 473-8, India could add only four runs before losing their last two wickets when play restarted on day three.

England warhorse James An-



India's Ravichandran Ashwin (2L) celebrates with teammates after the fall of an England wicket on Saturday

To win a Test series, a lot of things have to fall into place and go right and our players did that, and that's why we are standing here with this series result

ROHIT SHARMA

derson became the first fast bowler to claim 700 Test wickets, when he dismissed Kuldeep (30) caught behind.

India harnessed Ashwin with Jasprit Bumrah for new ball duties and the off-spinner bowled Ben Duckett (two) in his first over.

Ashwin struck again in his

third over, dismissing Zak Crawley for a duck.

Ollie Pope made a breezy 19 before attempting a sweep against Ashwin, and Yashasvi Jaiswal took a running catch to dismiss the England vice captain.

Jonny Bairstow smacked Ashwin for three sixes in an enthralling duel between two fierce

competitors both playing their 100th tests. Kuldeep Yadav, replacing Ashwin in the attack, ended Bairstow's entertaining knock of 39, trapping him lbw.

Ashwin returned to disturb Stokes' stumps with the final delivery before the lunch break after which England's defeat was only a matter of time.

Root waged a lone battle but did not get much support from the other end and was the last man out.

"We are man enough and big enough to accept that we have been outplayed by the better team since the first test," Stokes said afterwards.

"We are going to take the positives from this series with the amount of cricket that we have got coming up and I'm really looking forward to drive this team even further forward."

Kuldeep was adjudged player of the match primarily for his five-wicket haul in the first innings.

India opener Jaiswal won the player of the series for his aggregate of 712 runs, which included two double hundreds, from nine innings.

This was India's 17th consecutive Test series win at home, where they have not lost a Test series since an Alastair Cook-led England bested them in 2012.



England's James Anderson celebrates after dismissing Kuldeep Yadav for his 700th Test wicket on Saturday

Ageless Anderson enters 700 Test wicket club

Dharamsala, India - England's James Anderson became on Saturday only the third bowler, and the first seamer, to claim 700 Test wickets, in the fifth and final Test against India in Dharamsala.

The 41-year-old, already the most successful fast bowler in Test cricket's history, entered his 187th Test two wickets short of the 700-mark. Anderson clean bowled Shubman Gill on Friday and Kuldeep Yadav became his 700th victim on day three of the contest, when the batter fell caught behind. Anderson held the ball aloft while his team mates mobbed him.

The travelling 'Barmy Army' fans gave him a standing ovation as Anderson led his team off the field at the innings break at the picturesque Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association stadium.

Sri Lanka's Muttiah Mu-

ralitharan leads the all-time chart with 800 wickets from 133 Tests, followed by Australia's Shane Warne (708).

While Anderson is immensely skillful, his remarkable longevity, attributed to his smooth action, as a fast bowler continues to amaze the followers of the game.

"At the foothills of the Himalayas, James Anderson has reached the insurmountable summit for a fast bowler in Test match cricket," former England bowler Steven Finn told the BBC.

Indian batting great Sachin Tendulkar praised Anderson's "stellar achievement" on X, formerly known as Twitter.7

"A fast bowler playing for 22 years and performing so consistently to be able to take 700 wickets would have sounded like fiction until Anderson actually made it happen..." Tendulkar wrote.

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إعلان

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باسم : زهور الحريرة
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Iga Swiatek

Swiatek wins, Rybakina pulls out with illness

Indian Wells, California - World number one Iga Swiatek blasted past American Danielle Collins 6-3 6-0, Angelique Kerber upset 10th seed Jelena Ostapenko and defending champion Elena Rybakina withdrew with illness in second round action at Indian Wells on Friday.

Swiatek edged Collins in an epic at the Australian Open and the familiar foes appeared primed for another blockbuster when they were on serve with the Pole leading 4-3 in the first set. But Swiatek raised her level, breaking to love for 5-3 and winning the final nine games to advance at the tournament she won in 2022.

"I started to make a few less mistakes, which gave Danielle a chance to make a few more," Swiatek said. "It's a small difference but at the end, I was ready to play well in those important moments, on break points and stuff like that. I'm happy I kept my focus and stayed with my game, no matter what Danielle was doing on the other side of the net."

MAX TAKES CHARGE

Verstappen on pole in Jeddah

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia - Red Bull's triple world champion Max Verstappen continued his perfect start to the Formula One season with pole position for the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix on Friday and Ferrari's Charles Leclerc again alongside on the front row.

Red Bull's Sergio Perez, last year's winner in Jeddah in one of only three races that Verstappen did not claim, qualified third for Saturday's race which has been brought forward a day to accommodate Ramadan.

The pole under the floodlights was another first for Verstappen, winner in Jeddah in 2022, who has never previously started from the top slot at the Corniche circuit.

The champion now has a career 34 poles and Friday was his third in a row.

He was fastest in all three phases of qualifying and ended up with a pole lap of one minute 27.472 seconds, with Leclerc 0.319 slower in 1:27.791.

Verstappen's provisional time was so good he did not need to improve on it.

"That was a very lovely qualifying. The car was on rails," the Dutch 26-year-old, who won from pole in the Bahrain season-opener with the fastest lap and leading from start to finish, said over the team radio.



Red Bull's Max Verstappen won his 34th career pole and will start from the top slot at the Corniche circuit for the first time

That was a very lovely qualifying. The car was on rails. Today I felt very comfortable in the car. Throughout qualifying, it was pretty crazy how fast you go around here.

MAX VERSTAPPEN

"Today I felt very comfortable in the car. Throughout qualifying, it was pretty crazy how fast you go around here," he said later.

Saturday will be the fourth successive race that Verstappen, now chasing a ninth straight win, and Leclerc have lined up along-

side on the front row.

"Overall, Max had a tremendous lap and that wasn't possible for me today but being on the front row was achievable," said Perez.

"Anyway, we are still in the fight for tomorrow. It's a long race and anything can really happen."

Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso, third in Jeddah last year, qualified fourth with Oscar Piastri fifth for McLaren and team

mate Lando Norris sixth.

George Russell and Lewis Hamilton will start seventh and eighth for Mercedes with Yuki Tsunoda ninth for RB and Lance Stroll completing the top 10 for Aston Martin.

British 18-year-old Oliver Bearman will make his race debut in 11th place for Ferrari after being drafted in as a late replacement for Carlos Sainz, who developed appendicitis and had surgery on Friday.



Jorge Martin

Martin takes pole for Qatar Grand Prix

Lusail, Qatar - Pramac Racing's Jorge Martin took pole position for the MotoGP season-opening Qatar Grand Prix after he smashed the lap record at the Lusail International Circuit on Saturday.

The Spaniard took pole with a time of 1:50.789, beating Aprilia's Aleix Espargaro by a whisker, while Enea Bastianini from Ducati's factory team completed the front row, 0.086 seconds behind Martin -- last year's championship runner-up.

"I'm the fastest in one lap, another pole is super nice," a smiling Martin said. "I'm happy, but the important job is later (in the sprint) and tomorrow."

Red Bull KTM's Brad Binder was fourth-fastest, ahead of Ducati's defending champion Francesco Bagnaia and six-times MotoGP champion Marc Marquez, who made the switch from Honda to Gresini Racing for the 2024 season. Last year's Qatar GP winner Fabio Di Giannantonio was seventh-fastest with his new team VR46 Racing, while 19-year-old rookie Pedro Acosta finished eighth-fastest in his first MotoGP qualifying session.

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Sinner storms past Kokkinakis in Indian Wells, Murray loses

Indian Wells, California - Jannik Sinner crushed Australia's Thanasi Kokkinakis 6-3 6-0 to reach the third round of Indian Wells and extend his winning streak this season to 13 matches on Friday, while Andy Murray fell to Andrey Rublev and defending champion Carlos Alcaraz advanced.

Sizzling Sinner stayed hot on centre court under sunny but breezy skies in the California desert, fighting off a break point at 2-2 in the opening set with a forehand winner and breaking serve for a 5-3 advantage.

After capturing the first set the Australian Open champion

Jannik sinner

never looked back, losing just five points across the second set to book a third-round meeting with either 25th seed Jan-Lennard Struff or Croatian Borna Coric.

Rublev piled up the errors in the opening set against the vet-

eran Scot and was forced to save four set points while his opponent enjoyed the support of the crowd on Stadium 2.

But Rublev found his range with the forehand to roll through the second set and secure a 7-6(3) 6-1 win. The Russian will meet Czech 32nd seed Jiri Lehecka in the third round.

Second seed Carlos Alcaraz overcame a sluggish start to dispatch Italy's Matteo Arnaldi 6-7(5) 6-0 6-1. The Spaniard did not drop a set en route to the Indian Wells title a year ago but dumped a backhand into the net to hand the first set to a fired-up Arnaldi.

Manchester United's Marcus Rashford celebrates his goal against Everton

Manchester United battle past Everton

Manchester, England - Bruno Fernandes and Marcus Rashford fired in penalties to give Manchester United a 2-0 win over Everton on Saturday, their first Premier League victory in three games and one that will no doubt fan the embers of their top-four hopes.

Erik ten Hag's team remain sixth but with 47 points they crept closer to fourth-placed Aston Villa on 55 with a game in hand. Fifth-placed Tottenham, who host Villa on Sunday, have 50 points and two games in hand.

"Every game we have to win, so every game is a must-need," Ten Hag said. "We could have scored three or four goals not just the two penalties. We could have been calmer and more composed on the ball."

Sean Dyche's Everton -- winless in 11 straight league games - are 16th on 25 points, five points above the drop zone.

Both penalties came courtesy of clumsy tackles in the box on Alejandro Garnacho and both

were against the run of play, with Everton the dominant team for long stretches against a United midfield that repeatedly gave away the ball.

"We have to win every single game," Garnacho told TNT Sports. "The manager wants me to go one V one, to shoot, to dribble. I won two penalties. It's important."

"It's like a dream with my age. A full Old Trafford stadium chanting my name is incredible. I am very proud and happy," he said.

Fernandes fired in the first from the spot in the 12th minute, and United's captain then handed the ball to Rashford to take the second in the 36th minute.

"We both kick the penalties. I asked Marcus if he wanted to take, and he said he was confident," Fernandes said. "I felt I had my one, Rashy could get his goal from the penalty."

Rashford stutter-stepped before sending keeper Jordan Pickford the wrong way.

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THE 11TH MUSCAT INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL (MIFF) CONCLUDED WITH A GRAND CELEBRATION OF OUTSTANDING CINEMA, AS THE SPOTLIGHT SHONE ON DIVERSE TALENTS FROM OMAN AND AROUND THE WORLD

Celluloid dreaming

The curtains came down on the 11th Muscat International Film Festival, which featured a diverse line-up of 56 films from 11 countries, showcasing the global reach of cinematic storytelling, last Thursday. But, apart from screening meaningful cinema, it also served as a pointer to the creative flair of young filmmakers from Oman who finally seemed to have found their feet.

The prestigious awards ceremony, held on Thursday, saw Iranian movie 'Al Hares,' directed by Sadek Abu Talib, clinching the coveted Dagger Award, marking a triumphant end to the cinematic extravaganza.

Kuwait's Ahmed al Khadari received the Best Director Award for 'Amakor,' while Egypt's Zafar al Abdine was u with the Best Actor Award for 'Nose and 3 Eyes.' Adding to the international recognition, Morocco's Sonia Akasha claimed the Best Actress Award for her compelling performance in 'Casablanca's Divorcees.'

The awards were presented by H H Sayyidah Hujaija bint Jaifer al Said, who congratulated the winners across five categories, including feature films, Omani short films, documentaries, Omani short documentaries, and animation movies.

Oman's 'Al Mubadala,' directed by Yasser Ahmed, earned the prestigious jury award, with a panel led by Ghita al Khayyat (Morocco) and featuring international members including Sabrina Cleaver, Magdi Ahmed, Essam al Zadjali, and Philip Robertson.

In a historic moment for Omani cinema, 18-year-old Nilanjana Sha, a resident of Oman and a cinematic art studies student at the University of Southern California, clinched the Best Actress Jury Prize for her outstanding performance in the Indian film 'What the Birds Want to Say'. Directed by Sudha Radhika, a filmmaker based in Oman, the film not only marked a significant moment for Nilanjana but also served as a proud representation of Oman on the global film stage.

Nilanjana Sha's directorial debut, 'The Watch Tower,' stood tall as Oman's sole representative in the festival, earning a well-deserved spot among the finalists. Set against the breathtaking backdrop of Al Hamra, the film provides a fresh perspective on Omani cinema, blending a rich narrative with stunning visuals.



The film revolves around the life of an elderly man, offering viewers a unique journey through the picturesque mountain village. The standout feature of the film lay in its commitment to inclusivity, with Omani actor Faisal Jandub, a member of the Blind Association Oman, portraying the lead role. This movie not only adds authenticity to the film but also breaks barriers in Omani cinema.

The film's exploration of Oman's

scenic locations, particularly the mountain village of Al Hamra, added an extra layer of depth to the storytelling, immersing the audience in the natural beauty and cultural richness of the region.

As the only feature film representing Oman at MIFF 2024, 'The Watch Tower' symbolises a new era for Omani cinema, signalling the country's commitment to fostering creativity and storytelling on an international level. Nilanjana Sha and her team have successfully placed Oman on the global cinematic map, offering a captivating addition to the diverse landscape of international films.

The Omani Short Films included Haitham Suleiman's 'Dayanat Al Maa' which claimed the Dagger Award for the Best Omani Short Narrative Film. Saleh al Raisi received the Best Actor Award for 'Al Fa and Beta,' while Hamza al Hashmi won Best Actress for 'Dayana Al Maa.' Asim al Hashmi's 'Al Fa and Beta'

secured the jury award, with a panel led by Saad Hindawi from Egypt, and including Ahmed al Hamdani, Ibrahim al Balushi, and Hamid al Hawij.

Documentaries

'The Hidden Beauty of Iraq' by Sahim Omar Khalifa and Jürgen Böttcher secured the Dagger Award for Best Feature-Length Documentary. Frederic received the Best Cinematography Award for 'House of Wonders' from Oman. The jury award went to Anis al Aswad for 'Allah's Borders' from Tunisia and Fouad al Suweiba for 'Maul Al Maa' from Morocco. The jury, led by Oman's Abdullah al Sha'ili, included international members Jean Saragolo, Alex Mousa, Malak Dahmani, and Mohamed Al Thabet.

Omani Short Documentaries

Walid al Kharousi's 'Sahar Al Rimal' won

the Dagger Award for Best Short Documentary. The jury award recognised 'Bint Al Raml' by Salah al Hadrami and 'Lonely Diver' by Fahd al Maamari. The jury, featuring Mahboub Issa from Oman, Saeed al Nazam from Morocco, Sameh Sameer from Egypt, Rima al Majid from Saudi Arabia, and Mohammed al Ajmi from Oman, highlighted the diverse perspectives presented.

International and Omani Animation Films

Bilal Abu Samra's 'The Sea' from Egypt secured the Dagger Award for Best International Animated Film. 'Dream on the Wall' by Iyad Abdul Hussein from Iraq claimed the Best Visual Design Award, while the jury award went to 'Without Words' by Nour Jamal from Egypt. The jury, including talents like Najlaa Mohammed, Khaled Jallal, Abdullah Abari, Hassanein al Hani, and Munir al Sulaimi from Oman, recognised exceptional contributions in the animation genre. The festival also paid tribute to artists such as Bahrain's Zainab al Askari and Omani talents Khalil al Sinani and Abdullah Habeib, along with directors Khamees al Musafir and Hussain Amir from the UAE.

On the sidelines of the festival's closing ceremony, an exciting collaboration was announced. Kuwaiti artist and director Ahmed al Khadari joined forces with the 'Aks for Short Films' platform, represented by Fahd al Maamari. This collaboration aims to showcase 10 short films on the platform, attracting an international audience keen on exploring Oman's rich cultural heritage. The 'Aks' platform, recognised as a youth cultural initiative, takes centre stage in promoting Oman's vibrant cultural expressions.

The success of MIFF 2024 echoes the growing influence of Omani cinema on the global stage. The festival not only celebrates cinematic brilliance but also fosters cross-cultural collaboration, making a significant contribution to the ever-evolving world of film, the organisers said.

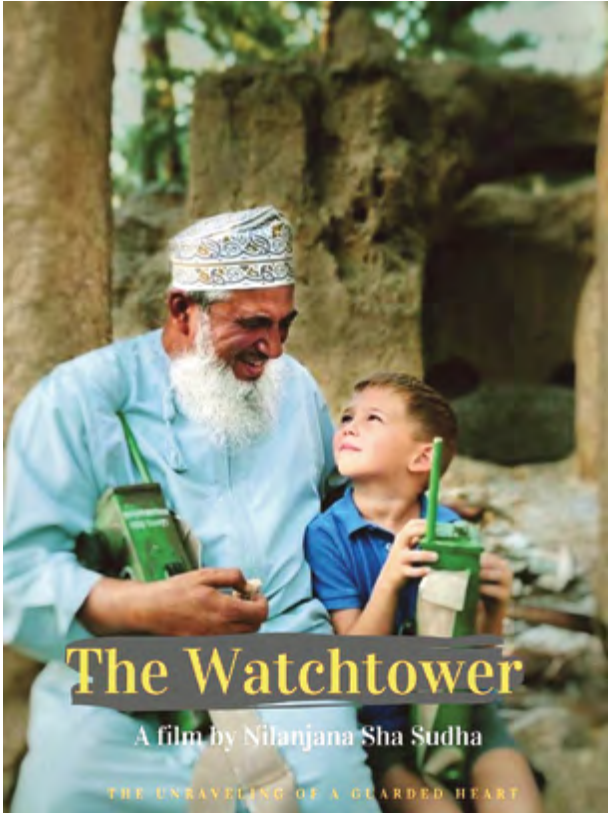
Sudha Sha, in-charge of international collaboration for the festival, said, "I brought the French film anatomy of a fall and other red carpet screening to the festival. Vox Cinema was our official partner while film personalities like Phil Robertson, Marie Perrie and Sohan Roy, were our key guests in the festival this year."

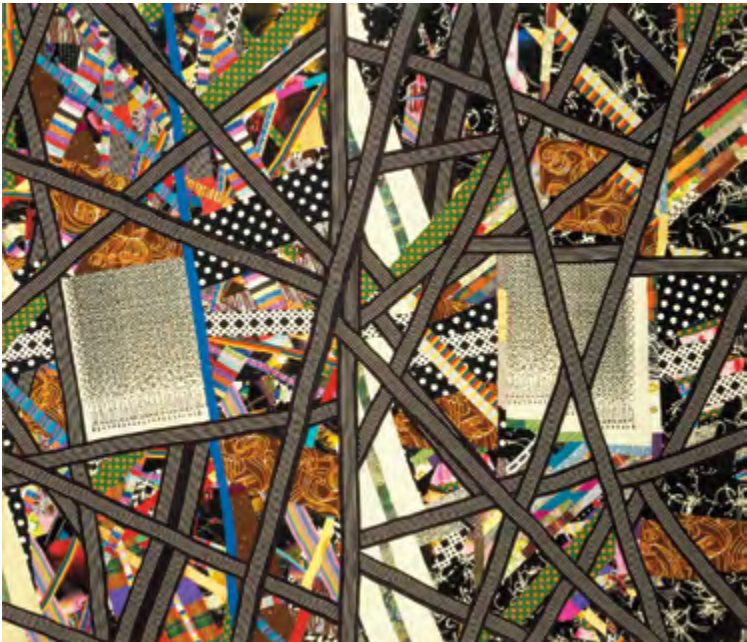
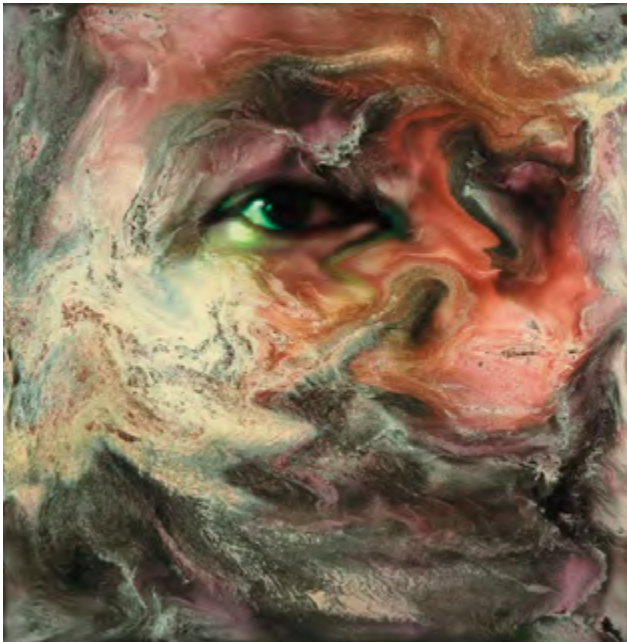
Asked how the success of MIFF 2024 would pave the way for future ventures, Sha said, "The international film foundation of Oman, focused on creating, developing, and establishing the Arab film industry than on making a one-day event for stars to celebrate. We invited project proposals from Oman residents, both Omanis and expats, and we selected 5 feature films, 5 documentaries and 10 short films for which we will support in finding funds and market.

"Our Omani film - 'The Watch Tower' - represented Oman in the festival. We will also announce the selected project proposals soon and those films will be pitched in Cannes film festival this year. At present, there are 5 films from Oman getting ready to shoot under IFFO, which will finish by 2030. More projects and programmes will be announced soon."

My film is a timeless tale of personal and social commitments, revealing itself through Oman's breathtaking landscapes. I'm happy to note that it was the only film from Oman among feature films

Nilanjana Sha





Lucas Samaras, an artist whose work in many mediums channeled alternate psychological states, passed away last Thursday at the age of 87, his longtime gallery, Pace, which had mounted 30 exhibitions of his work, announced.

Since the 1960s, Samaras has been a beloved figure in New York for artworks that have never conformed to any specific movement. He produced unclassifiable sculptures, photographs, digital artworks, and more, and he always seemed to function along his own wavelength. "To a certain extent," he once said, "I'm an outsider."

So disparate were his many bodies of work that he seemed to elude critics, even as they heaped praise upon them. "There appears to be not one Lucas Samaras, but several artists of that name," remarked the New York Times's Grace Glueck in 1996.

The sculptures that first brought Samaras fame during the '60s took the form of ready-made objects that he augmented with pins, razors, and shards. The most famous of these are his 'Boxes' of the early 60s, a grouping of lidded containers that seem to beg viewers to open and close them while also warding off any curious handlers.

Poses and portrayals

By the end of his career, Samaras had veered in many directions. He created walk-in installations that were covered in reflective surfaces. He shot pictures that he manipulated using both analog and digital means. He even produced a series of NFTs.

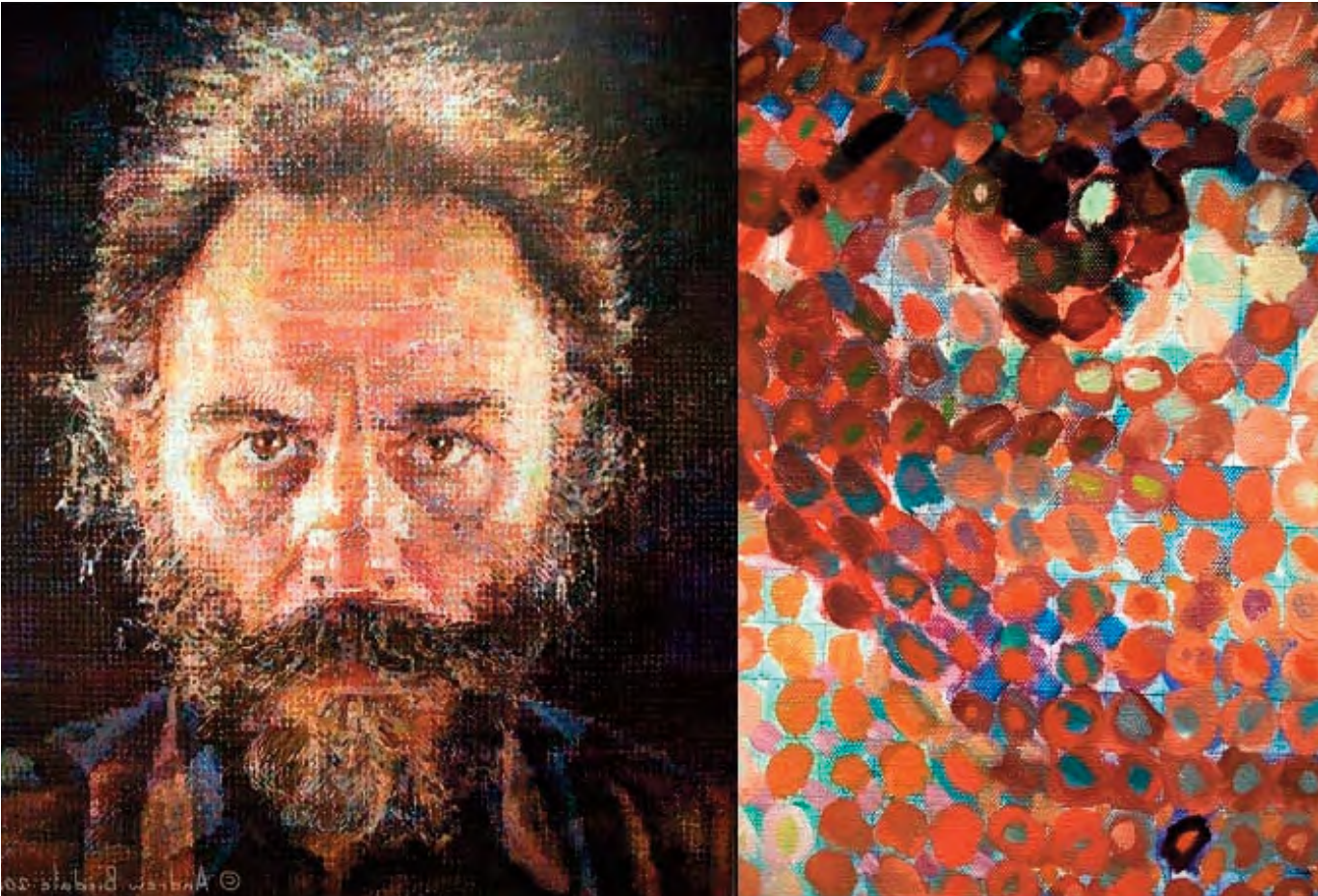
In many works, Samaras enlisted his own body, repeatedly shooting Polaroid pictures of himself in poses that were sometimes considered obscene. He seemed unusually interested in images of himself, leading some to suggest his work was about narcissism and other self-reflective mindsets - an interpretation compounded by the fact that Samaras had a habit of interviewing himself.

"He is an intrepid self-investigator and he has made a career out of mutating his own image and likeness," Interview magazine once wrote.

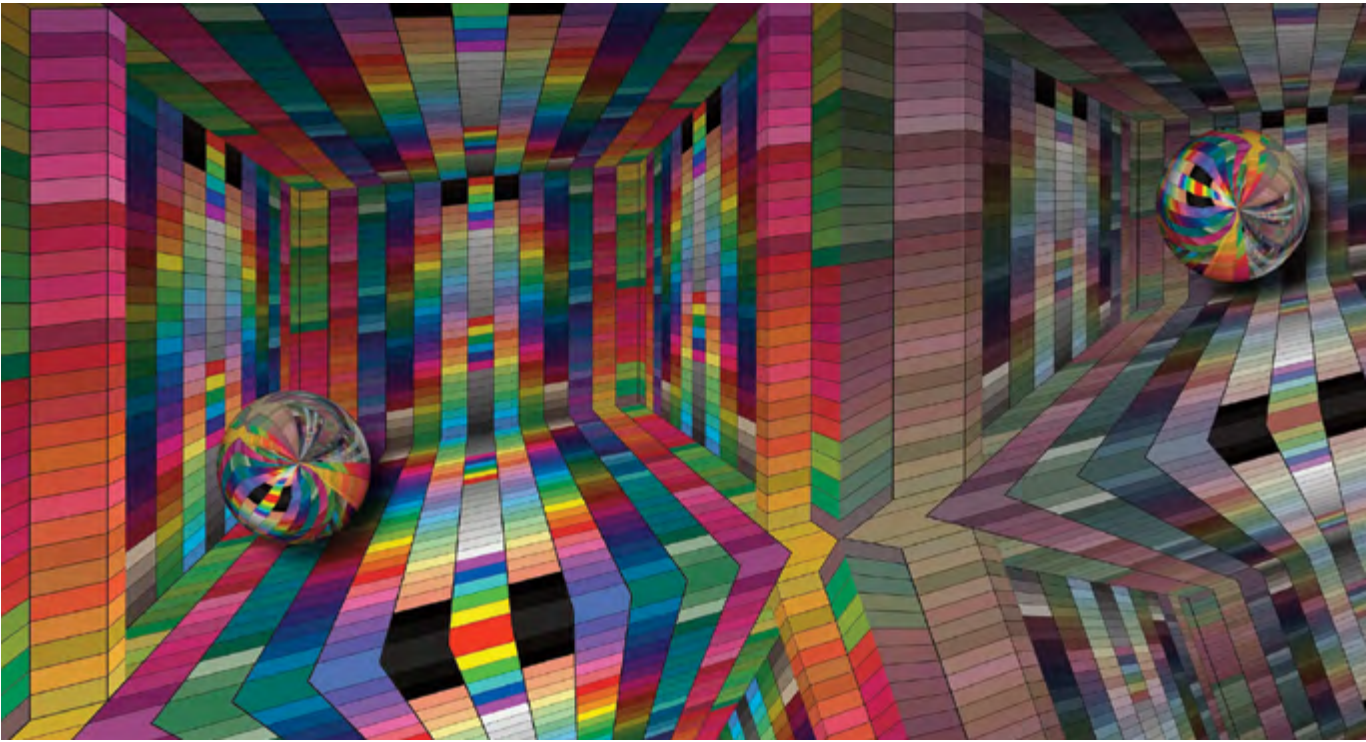
His most famous works remain his 'photo-transformations', produced during the mid-1970s. For these Polaroids, Samaras photographed himself in poses that are often hard to make out because he has altered these images so intensively, using chemicals on the prints and then scratching and rubbing at them. In the end result, Samaras appears to dissolve into multihued warps, coming perilously close to self-obliteration.

Early years

Lucas Samaras was born in 1936 in Kastoria, a Greek city in the Western Macedonia region. His father left Greece when Samaras was only three years old, and when they reconnected after World War II, they fought frequently. Samaras was raised Greek Orthodox, and the religion would continue to inform his work.



MYSTIC ARTIST ‘Pace’ maker LUCAS SAMARAS, ARTIST WHOSE UNCLASSIFIABLE WORKS EVOKED STRANGE PSYCHOLOGIES, DIES AT 87, LEAVING BEHIND A UNIQUE VOID IN THE ART WORLD



Early on, art provided a respite for Samaras - and put him on the pathway to making it a profession full-time, even as his father wished otherwise. Samaras came to the United States with his family when he was 11, ending up in West New York, New Jersey, and he would remain there for much of his career.

Still, even later on, echoes of his Greek heritage resounded through his art. He once said, "Because I was Greek, I could deal with the body freely. Consider the Greek Vases."

While in high school, Samaras was awarded a competition scholarship by Allan Kaprow, an artist who was then serving as chair of the art department at Rutgers University in New Jersey. There, Samaras studied with Kaprow and sculptor George Segal, putting Samaras on the path to joining New York's avant-garde.

Kaprow would go on to pioneer Happenings, a type of work that was something akin to a temporary installation that contained performances. Samaras, still a budding artist, ended up taking part in them during the late 1950s while at the same time taking graduate courses at Columbia University and studying acting at Stella Adler's famed conservatory.

During the mid-1960s, Samaras began making structures that viewers could enter. The most famous of them, Mirrored Room (1966), now held at the Buffalo AKG Art Gallery in Upstate New York, is covered in glass and contains within it a table and chairs that are also lined in reflective material. When viewers step inside, their images multiply, seemingly without end.

Digital blasts

Samaras died just months before a series of sculptures from the 1990s are to go on view at Dia Beacon in Upstate New York this September. His decorated CV includes four appearances in Documenta, the famed exhibition that occurs once every five years in Kassel, Germany, and the Greek Pavilion for the 2009 Venice Biennale.

While Samaras's art from the intervening decades most commonly takes the form of images of himself, he also began to turn his lens on those in his circle, from critic Ingrid Sischy to artist Jasper Johns. Yet these works are just as off-putting as many of his self-portraits. An austere 2009 shot of Johns features the artist pressed close to Samaras's camera and lit from beneath.

The hallucinatory quality of Samaras's photography became only more pronounced during the 1990s and 2000s, as he began using computers and software such as Photoshop to create digital blasts of colour. And in his final years, Samaras also began shooting himself using an iPhone camera.

As his art grew increasingly phantasmagorical, he defended it as a reaction against what he felt to be an increasingly dull art world. "Millions of people are making art by putting something on a wall," he told ARTnews in 2017. "I say to myself, 'What happened to beauty?' You have to open that part of your brain."

(Courtesy: artnews.com)



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Supplies required -

Coloured craft papers, plain cards, glue, pencil, scissors, and gel pen

HOW TO DO

- 1** Download and print a lantern shape and cut out different decorative shapes
- 2** Trace the shapes on light coloured craft papers
- 3** Stick these decorative pieces together to make lantern shapes
- 4** Cut a suitable size of your card paper and fold it.
- 5** Stick the coloured paper lanterns on the front of the card in different formations
- 6** Use a gel pen to draw lantern strings and write a greeting



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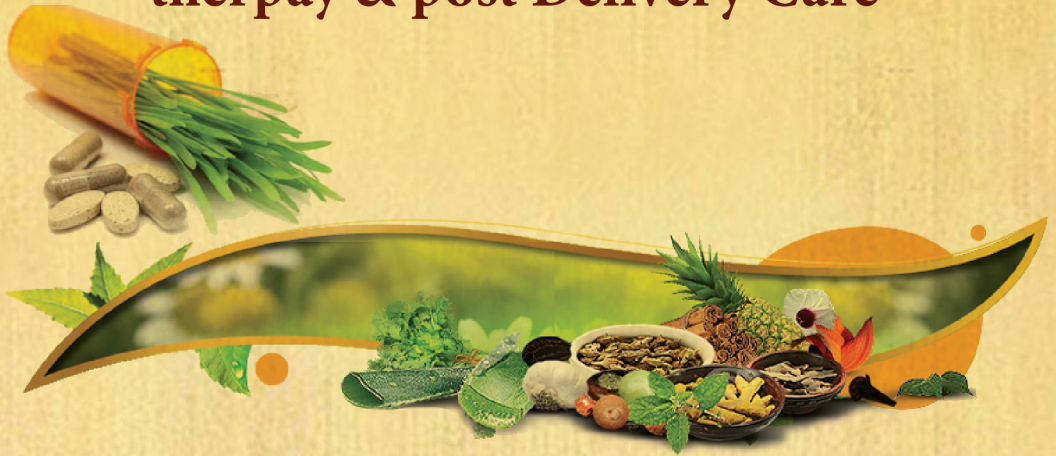
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