



HM SENDS CONDOLENCES TO KING OF BAHRAIN

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa of Bahrain on the death of Sheikh Abdullah bin Salman bin Khalid Al Khalifa. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere condolences and sympathy, praying to the Almighty Allah to rest the deceased's soul in peace in paradise and grant his family patience to bear the loss. — **ONA**

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HIS MAJESTY THE SULTAN TO VISIT KUWAIT ON MONDAY



The visit of His Majesty will explore areas of the existing cooperation between the two countries in various spheres

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik will go on a state-visit to the State of Kuwait on Monday, during which he will meet with Sheikh Mishal Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait.

A statement was issued by the Diwan of the Royal Court to this effect. It reads as follows: "In affirmation of the deep-rooted and

fraternal relations bidding the Sultanate of Oman and the State of Kuwait, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik will go on a state-visit to Kuwait with effect from Monday, 13 May 2024, during which he will meet with Sheikh Mishal Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait.

"The visit stems from distin-

guished relations between the two sides. It also reflects the keenness of the two countries' leaderships to push the joint co-operation towards wider horizons. The visit will explore areas of the existing cooperation between the two countries in various spheres and means of promoting them to serve interests and aspirations of the Omani and Kuwaiti peoples. It will also discuss a set of topics that boost the march of the GCC action, in light of the regional and international developments.

"During the visit, His Majesty the Sultan will be accompanied by a high-ranking official delegation comprising HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, HH Sayyid Bilal bin Haitham Al

Said, Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal Al Busaidi, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, Gen. Sultan bin Mohammed Al Nuamani, Minister of the Royal Office, Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal Al Busaidi, Minister of Interior, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, Dr. Hamad bin Said Al Aufi, Head of the Private Office, Abdussalam bin Mohammed Al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority, Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and Dr. Saleh bin Amir Al Kharousi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the State of Kuwait.

"May the Almighty Allah protect His Majesty the Sultan in his journeys and grant the two wise leaders success for the welfare of their countries!" — **ONA**

BEACON OF ART AND CULTURE

The Honourable Lady visits New Administrative Capital of Egypt



Times News Service

MUSCAT: Her Highness the Honourable Lady Assayida Ahd Abdullah Hamed Al Busaidi, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman, visited the New Administrative Capital (NAC) of Egypt, along with Egypt's First Lady Intisar Al Sisi, Spouse of the Egyptian President who was at the forefront of her reception. During her journey, Her

Highness the Honourable Lady the Sultan of Oman, visited the Egyptian Opera House in the City of Culture and Arts in the New Administrative Capital.

The Honourable Lady expressed her great admiration for the advanced infrastructure and equipment included in this cultural space, which makes it an added value to the new capital and a beacon of art and culture in Egypt. **>A4**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

OCCI delegation hails Singapore visit

1 The visit by the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry delegation to Singapore from May 5 to 10 achieved good results as some members inked initial agreements to enter into partnerships with a number of Singaporean companies. **>A2**

OMAN

Omani doctor risks life to save wounded

2 Omani doctor Dr. Khalid Al Shmwsy has decided to remain in Gaza despite rising Israeli attack. **>A3**

WORLD

Kuwait Emir dissolves parliament

3 Kuwait emir's dissolved the country's parliament once again, a month after elections were held. **>A6**

GAZA DEATH TOLL

as of May 11, 2024

Deaths
34,971

Injured
78,641

END OF THIRD QUARTER OF 2023

Foreign investment in Oman tops OMR25bn

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The volume of foreign direct investments (FDI) in the Sultanate of Oman exceeded OMR25 billion by the end of third quarter of 2023, marking an increase of OMR4.8 billion compared to the third quarter of 2022. The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), said that the FDI in the manufacturing sector reached OMR1.4 billion, attracting 35 industrial projects with investments surpassing OMR800 million in various industrial activities across industrial and free zones.

"Total trade exchange between

Oman and the world amounted to around OMR37.6 billion in 2023, with Omani commodity exports totalling OMR22.6 billion, including OMR13.7 billion from the oil and gas sector and OMR7.4 billion from the non-oil sector," MoCIIP said in a statement.

Additionally, the contribution of the re-export sector reached OMR1.4 billion, reflecting a 12.8 percent increase from 2022.

Different forms of investments contribute to expanding economic growth and targeting projects in diversification sectors, thereby boosting gross domestic product (GDP) growth, providing job opportunities for Omanis, and



facilitating the export of Omani products to various countries worldwide.

The MoCIIP said that it is actively working on collaborations with relevant entities to improve the investment environment in the Sultanate of Oman by overcoming challenges facing foreign investors.

Registration fees

To enhance the investment environment in Oman, the MoCIIP has begun implementing the Council of Ministers decision to reduce commercial registration fees for foreign investors and treat them on par with Omani investors, with the requirement of employing at

least one Omani employee as a minimum, in addition to providing incentives to foreign investors to encourage them to establish projects that contribute to the national economy and promote economic activity.

Incentives and facilitating measures

MoCIIP said that Oman's investment sector witnessed numerous facilitations and streamlined procedures for investors. This includes allowing foreign investors to invest and own 100 percent, investing in over 1,700 commercial and industrial activities via Oman Business Platform. **>A5**

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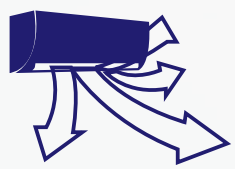
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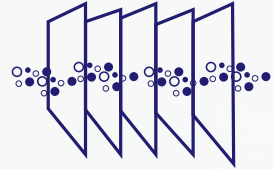
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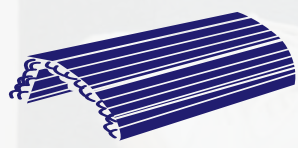
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OCCI delegation visit to Singapore hailed

A number of OCCI members confirmed that the visit gave them a real experience of the business environment in Singapore

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The visit by the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry delegation to the Republic of Singapore from May 5 to 10 achieved good results as some members inked initial agreements to enter into commercial projects and partnerships with a number of Singaporean companies.

A number of OCCI members confirmed in a statement to the Oman News Agency that the visit gave a hands-on experience of the business environment in Singapore, the laws and procedures related to establishing businesses, and the mechanisms used in supporting small and medium enterprises, in addition to reviewing the commercial and investment opportunities available in various sectors and learning about Singaporean experiences.

Engineer Hussein bin Abdul Hussein, a member of the Board of Directors of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said that the visit came within the framework of the chamber's plan to conduct trade visits to a number of countries, so that the delegations get an opportunity



to learn about economic experiences and expertise, pointing out that the Singaporean economy is one of the most important global economies in the world.

For products, it is considered a gateway to the Association of East Asian Countries (ASEAN), which constitutes a great opportunity for the exports of Omani products to Singapore.

He added that a number of members of the delegation agreed during the visit with a number of Singaporean companies to communicate for investments, in addition to informing business owners to share their experiences and expertise that may help them in establishing their commercial projects.

For his part, Kaleem bin Mohammed Al-Yaqoubi, member of the Finance and Insurance Committee at the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, explained that the visit provided the opportunity to explore opportunities and benefit from the Singaporean experience in the fields of renewable energy, facilities management, building construction, and sustainability technologies.

He said that the visit will enhance the confidence of investors on both sides by entering into commercial partnerships that will contribute to strengthening trade relations between the two friendly countries in various sectors.

Khalid bin Abdullah Al Hosani, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Titronic Middle East, described the visit to Singapore as "positive and fruitful," which gave him the opportunity to learn about the Singaporean experience in the field of developing the business environment and ways to support local companies, especially small and medium enterprises.

He said that the Republic of Singapore imports 90 percent of all products, and this is an indicator that gives the possibility of Omani products entering the Singaporean market, calling for the necessity of entering into commercial partnerships with the Singaporean side and benefiting from their expertise and experience in various fields.

Dr. Amjad bin Amer Al Dhahli, member of the Digital Economy and Artificial Intelligence Committee at the OCCI, said that the delegation achieved great results during its visit to the Republic of Singapore by learning about investment, commercial and innovative experiences in a variety of industrial sectors, digital economy, artificial intelligence, logistics, the small and medium enterprises sector and food security and urban planning.

He added that during the visit, opportunities were identified in industrial innovation and the use of modern technologies in the logistics and agricultural sectors.

Oman, Kuwait have strong historic and cultural ties



Times News Service

MUSCAT: The bilateral relation between the Sultanate of Oman and the State of Kuwait is witnessing tangible development in all spheres, which reflects the deep and strong historic, cultural, political and economic ties between the two countries.

The visit, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, will pay to Kuwait on Monday, and his meeting with Sheikh Mishal Al Ahmed Al Jabir Al Sabah, Emir of Kuwait, translates the deep and strong bilateral relations between the two countries.

The Sultanate of Oman and Kuwait have set an example in handling the regional and international causes. In 2003, a joint committee was formed to work on boosting the bilateral relations in the various spheres between the two countries.

A number of agreements and memoranda of understanding in the various fields have been signed. The economic relations between the two countries are remarkably developing following execution of joint projects in the Special Economic Zone- Duqm including Duqm Refinery.

The Oman-Kuwait Joint Committee held its latest meeting in



remarkable significance in terms of boosting the bilateral relations between the two countries in the various spheres. He also pointed to the continued coordination between the two countries in several regional and international causes.

The economic side also enjoys great attention, he said, pointing out that Duqm Refinery was opened under Royal Care from His Majesty the Sultan and Emir of Kuwait, last February, for the value of USD 9 billion, which is the biggest joint Gulf investment.

Dr. Mohammed Nasser Madhi, ambassador of Kuwait accredited to the Sultanate said that the visit His Majesty will pay to Kuwait comes within enhancement of the distinct relations between the leaders of the two countries.

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FIRST NON-STOP FLIGHT

Pakistan's low-cost carrier Fly Jinnah begins Muscat flight

Times News Service

KARACHI: Fly Jinnah, Pakistan's low-cost carrier, commenced its first non-stop flight from Islamabad International Airport in Pakistan to Muscat International Airport.

Upon arrival at Muscat International Airport, the flight was greeted with a traditional water cannon salute and a welcome ceremony. The newly added route will initially start with a frequency of two weekly flights connecting the two capitals.

The flight schedule between Muscat International Airport and Islamabad International Airport, effective from 10 May, 2024 is: Fly Jinnah will depart Muscat at 19.50 and reach Islamabad at 23.35 while in Return it will leave Islamabad at 17.10 and reach Muscat at 19.00 hours.

Commenting on the inauguration of the airline's third international flight, Fly Jinnah's spokesperson said: "Celebrating our continued growth and commitment to enhancing air travel opportunities, we are proud to have commenced non-stop flights between Islamabad in Pakistan and Muscat, our third international destination. This expansion underscores our dedication to offering more affordable and quality air travel solutions domestically



and internationally".

"Fly Jinnah remains steadfast in offering convenient and affordable service to its passengers. With its modern fleet of five Airbus A320 aircraft, the airline

serves five major cities in Pakistan: Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Peshawar, and Quetta. This new route adds to Fly Jinnah's growing list of international destinations, complementing the existing

flight route to Sharjah, UAE."

"In addition to the extra comfort provided by the most generous seat-pitch of any economy cabin, the carrier offers affordable and value-driven travel experiences through the "SkyCafe" onboard menu where passengers can enjoy a wide variety of delicacies between snacks, sandwiches, and meals at affordable prices. The aircraft is also equipped with "SkyTime", a free in-flight streaming service that allows passengers to stream a wide selection of entertainment directly to their devices."

Customers can now book their flights by visiting Fly Jinnah's website (www.flyjinnah.com), by calling the call centre (2284-7650) or through travel agencies.



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Omani doctor risks his own life to save wounded people in Gaza

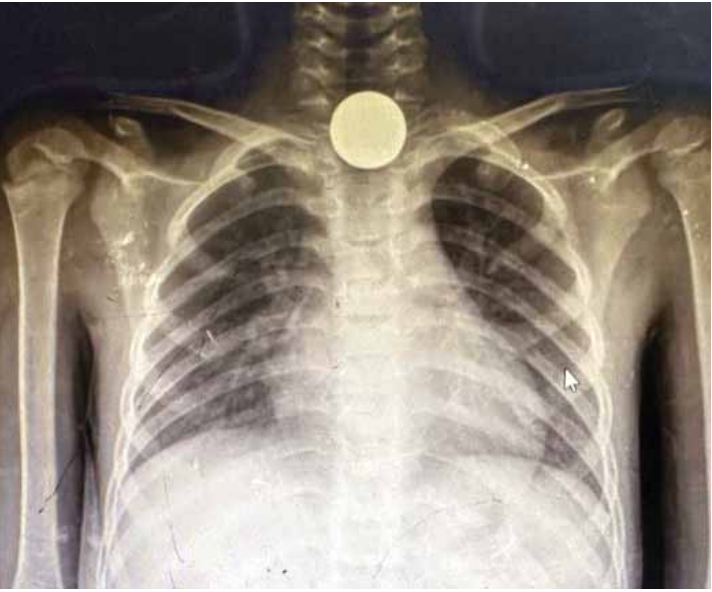
Dr Khalid said that Gaza children are eating coins, pebbles and small batteries to stop their hunger pangs

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Omani gastroenterologist Dr. Khalid Al Shmwsy has decided to remain in Gaza despite the intensification of the Israeli military attack on Gaza and its threat to capture the Rafah crossing. “The Jews took control of the Rafah crossing port; we are now with the people of Gaza living with them and dying with them,” Dr Shmwsy said in a post on his official account on the X platform. We are fine, don't worry. We work in endoscopy. He added: “My life is not more precious than the life of any child in Gaza. I thank you for your interest in my situation but do not forget that in Gaza, there are more human beings than me, better and more important than me, men, women and children, who were tied up and expelled from their homes, and fought and were killed, may be you



are ignorant of their name.” Dr. Khalid used to share his diaries of his experiences in Gaza and what he witnessed with the injured in the European Hospital in Gaza. Here, we highlight what the doctor published during his time in the war zone in Gaza: Dr Khalid shared a photo of a patient's X-ray and said: “Gaza children eat coins, pebbles and small batteries out of hunger; this 8-year-old swallowed a piece of metal, and it got stuck in his oesophagus.” In another case, he extracted a battery from the body of a 5-year-old girl in Gaza. Out of extreme hunger, she ate the watch battery. He added: “For your information, there is no endoscopist in



Gaza to treat this case. Because of God's mercy on me and the little girl, I was in Gaza then. This war is criminal and has made children eat pebbles and batteries.” On heavy bombing and fierce battles near him in Gaza. He explained: “They woke us up with their explosions, the shaking of the place, and the roar of their bullets as if they were wiping out cities completely. At the hospital, a woman came with a body without a head and a chest split from the force of the bombing.” “One of the scourges of war is the amputation of children's limbs. Here is one of them: because of the bombing, his legs and hands were amputated. Imagine a child without legs to walk on and with-

out hands to eat with. How does he feel? How does he live? What is his future? War is a crime, and bombing is a crime,” he added. He arrived in Gaza on the 2nd of May with a team of doctors from different specialties with the help of the FAJR scientific organisation. The organisation said: “Our second batch of mission team members has safely arrived in Gaza. There's a lot of work ahead, and we are committed to making a real impact. We are proud of our dedicated volunteer, gastroenterologist Dr Khalid Al Shmwsy from Oman, who works tirelessly to provide critical care. His commitment to health in challenging conditions is truly inspiring.”

MAJORITY VOTE

UN vote on Palestine's bid for full membership welcomed by Oman

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman has welcomed the overwhelming majority vote of the members of the United Nations General Assembly on a resolution supporting Palestine's right to obtain full membership of the United Nations, the Foreign Ministry said in a statement. The ministry underscored the potentially transformative impact of the global majority's appeal to the Security Council to recognise the State of Palestine. This is the practical path that will pave the way for the two-state solution and the establishment of a just peace in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy. On Friday, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly approved a resolution that would grant new “rights and privileges” to Palestine by a vote of 143 to 9 with 25 abstentions. The vote also recognises Palestine's right to become the 194th member of the body. This second part means that a Palestinian membership bid will be forwarded to the UN Security Council to “reconsider the matter favourably.” However, a Palestinian bid submitted to the Security Council last month was vetoed by the United States, a move that is expected to be repeated despite widespread support in the Gen-



eral Assembly. Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Secretary-General Jassem Mohammed Al-Budaiwi welcomed the United Nations General Assembly's adoption of a resolution supporting Palestine's right to full membership at the world body and the recommendation that the UN Security Council reconsider the Palestinian bid. The GCC secretary-general pointed out that the fact that the resolution received a vote from 143 countries comes as an affirmation and belief in the Palestinian right to this recognition so that the State of Palestine can exercise all its rights and duties at this world body. He stressed the GCC's firm position in supporting the Palestinian cause and reaching a solution based on ending the Israeli

occupation and establishing an independent Palestinian state on the 1967 borders, with east Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) welcomed the UN General Assembly's adoption of a historic resolution, with a sweeping majority, stressing that Palestine's state is qualified to become a full member and granting it additional rights. In a statement, the OIC said this resolution expressed an international consensus on backing the legitimate rights of Palestinian people, including self-determination, freedom, justice, independence and the need to end the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories occupied since 1967.



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The Honourable Lady visits Grand Egyptian Museum and Children’s Cancer Hospital

MUSCAT: Egypt’s First Lady Intisar Al Sisi, Spouse of the Egyptian President, received Her Highness the Honourable Lady Assayida Ahd Abdullah Hamed Al Busaidi, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman, on her special visit to the sisterly Arab Republic of Egypt.

Warm reception and hospitality

The first lady of Egypt, expressed her warm welcome and great happiness with this visit. The Honourable lady, Spouse of His Majesty, expressed her great appreciation to the wife of the Egyptian President for the warm reception and hospitality she and her accompanying delegation received.

In honour of the Honourable lady, the Spouse of His Majesty the Sultan, Mrs. Intisar Al-Sisi, held an official dinner at Al-Qubba Palace.

Gracious visit

As part of the visit, the Honourable Lady, paid a gracious visit to the Grand Egyptian Museum in the Egyptian capital, Cairo, and Mrs. Intisar Al-Sisi, was at the forefront of the recipients.

The HH Honourable Lady, expressed her admiration for the collections of the Grand Egyptian Museum and expressed her over-

whelming happiness with this visit.

Cultural and tourism edifice

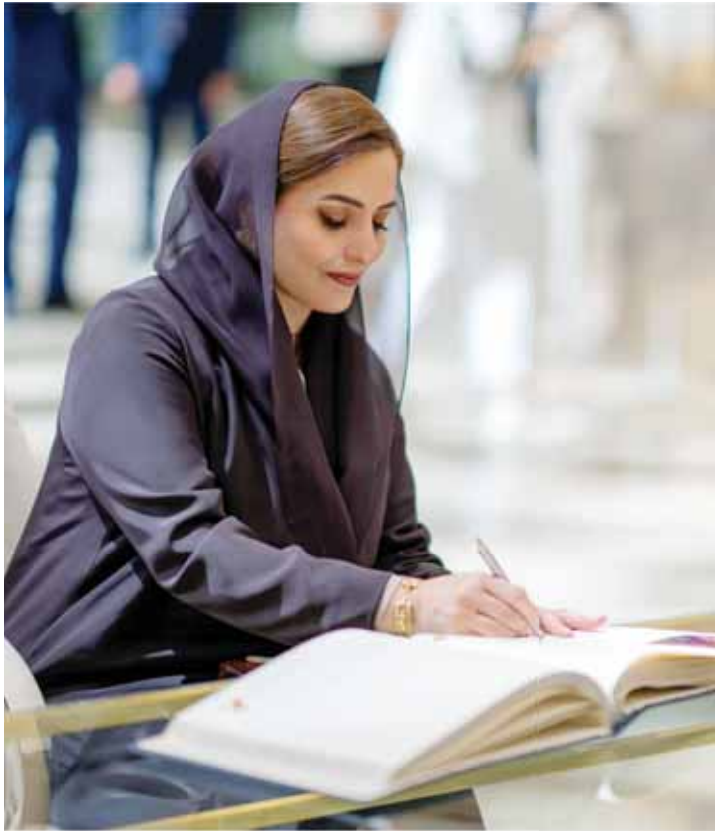
Her Highness praised this comprehensive civilisational, cultural and tourism edifice that tells the story of the ancient Egyptian civilisation and its great history.

She also praised the role that Egypt plays in documenting the material heritage and preserving artifacts, and expressed her sincere thanks to those in charge of the museum for their tireless efforts in making the Grand Egyptian Museum an attractive destination for scientific and cultural tourism, thereby contributing to enriching visitors’ experiences and enhancing cultural understanding among peoples.

Supporting children with cancer

The Honourable Lady also toured a number of facilities at the Children’s Cancer Hospital in Egypt, which reflects humanity’s commitment to supporting children with cancer, solidarity with them and their families, and the importance of dedication to the health sector in general and caring for children and people with cancer in particular.

— ONA



EGYPT VISIT

< FROM **A1** The Honourable Lady expresses great admiration

The Honourable Lady, Spouse of His Majesty the Sultan, accompanied by Egypt’s First Lady Intisar Al Sisi, Spouse of the Egyptian

President, also visited the Grand Mosque of Egypt.

The Honourable Lady expressed her great admiration for

the lofty Islamic edifice and its striking design inspired by the style of Egyptian architecture in the Mamluk era, stressing its

prominent role in strengthening the city’s identity and promoting the values of peace and tolerance.

— ONA



Oman’s cultural riches showcased at Doha International Book Fair

The Oman pavilion at the Doha International Book Fair continues to display rare manuscripts, literary works and cultural treasures



DOHA: Oman’s pavilion, the guest of honour at the 33rd Edition of Doha International Book Fair, which will continue until 18 May, has seen a big number of visitors to acquaint with rare manuscripts and publications, reflecting the achievements of the country during the past decades.

Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad Al Thani, Qatari Minister of Culture and Imad Al Din Hamdan, Palestinian Minister of Culture toured the various sections of the pavilion and acquainted with the key manuscripts at the pavilion.

The Oman pavilion at the Doha International Book Fair is showcasing manuscripts, literary works, and cultural treasures, earning admiration for Oman’s rich literary heritage.

The publications and titles of



books displayed by several printing houses in the pavilion included publications on the history of the Peninsula, poetry, arts, research and politics among other fields.

Abdulaziz bin Mubarak Al Rahbi, representative of the Omani Society for Writers and Literati, said that the participation in the event is the first for the Omani Society for Writers and Literati.

The visitors of the Sultanate’s pavilion are looking for the publications on history and literary studies in general.

Royal Oman Symphony

Regarding the participation of the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra in Doha International Book Fair, Lt Colonel Fahd bin Said Al Farsi, said that the musical pieces played

by the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra reflect the Sultanate’s musical and cultural heritage and the young gifted personnel who excel in playing musical instruments.

A workshop was organised on Saturday aimed to acquaint the children with awareness related to environment and preservation of the environment among other aspects. — **ONA**

PUBLIC HEALTH CONCERN

Symposium organised to raise awareness on Sickle Cell

Times News Service

MUSCAT: To raise awareness on Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) and reveal key findings from the Sickle Cell Health Awareness, Perspectives, and Experiences (SHAPE) survey conducted in several countries, including those in the GCC, a media roundtable was organised in Muscat on Thursday by Pfizer.

Attended by leading healthcare professionals, the roundtable was designed to share valuable insights on patient experiences, psychosocial burdens, and the impact of SCD on the quality of life of patients and caregivers.

Inherited disorder

SCD is an inherited disorder that adversely impacts the physical and emotional well-being of patients and caregivers. People with SCD have what are called atypical hemoglobin molecules - proteins that carry oxygen in red blood cells - which can cause the shape of red blood cells to be distorted. These distorted red blood cells can then clump in blood vessels and prematurely break down, causing anaemia, fatigue, swelling, and severe pain enduring for days or weeks.



In a systematic review, SCD was found to be a significant public health concern in the GCC countries, with prevalence rates ranging from 0.24% to 5.8%.

A quantitative SHAPE survey was conducted among SCD patients, caregivers, and healthcare providers from 10 countries in-

cluding the GCC, contributing to the mounting real-world evidence of the tremendous burden of SCD.

Improving patient access to care, strengthening the patient-HCP relationship, and enhancing patient, caregiver, and HCP knowledge are shared responsibilities among all those whose

lives are impacted by Sickle Cell Disease and those with the means to drive change.

Among SHAPE’s key findings, fatigue, bone aches, and vaso-occlusive crisis pain emerged as prevalent symptoms significantly impacting the quality of life for both SCD patients and caregivers.

The survey also highlighted SCD’s profound effect on daily activities, with patients and caregivers reporting an average of 3.9 missed school or work days per month.

Innovative treatment

Dr. Salam Al Kindi, Professor and Consultant Hematologist at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital, Oman said: “Recent advancements in SCD research and clinical practices including innovative treatment approaches and ongoing initiatives aimed at improving patient outcomes and quality of life, underscore the nation’s commitment to tackling sickle cell disease.”

Zakareya Al Khadem, Founder and Chairman of Bahrain Sickle Cell Society, said: “The findings of the SHAPE survey provide invaluable insights into the lived experiences of individuals grappling with SCD and their caregivers. By amplifying the voices of the SCD community, we aim to drive greater awareness, understanding, and action to address the unmet needs and disparities faced by those affected by this condition.”

Dr. Jaafar Al Touq, Genetic Hematology Consultant at Hereditary

Blood Disorder Centre, Bahrain Ministry of Health, said: “In recognising the pivotal role of genetic hematology in the diagnosis and management of SCD, we aim to address inequities and enhance access to care for patients in Bahrain. Through collaboration with patient advocacy group leaders, we endeavor to raise awareness, advocate for improved quality of care, and provide support to those affected by sickle cell disease.”

Dr. Nadine Tarcha, Pfizer’s Gulf Medical Director, said: “At Pfizer, we believe people living with a rare disease such as SCD, along with the untold number of family members and caregivers who support them, deserve more. For more than 30 years, we have worked hand in hand with the rare disease communities around the world to forge a pathway toward life-changing innovations. Today, at Pfizer Gulf, we continue to work in close collaboration with a diverse range of key stakeholders to build a collective body of patient-informed awareness, expertise and shared resources that can help meet the spectrum of community needs along the sickle cell disease journey.”

MOCIIP INITIATIVES

836 services merged

< FROM A1 It has also helped in reducing and merging 836 government services, exempting investors from minimum capital requirements, providing lands and properties needed for investment projects, tax exemptions for up to 30 years, abolishing import or re-export fees.

Also MoCIIP had launched the Investor Residency Programme initiative to attract high-quality foreign investments. This programme facilitates residency for investors and their families interested in investing in Oman for periods ranging from 5 to 10 years, extendable.

Licensing for investments

The MoCIIP emphasised the importance of foreign investors obtaining investment licensing to ensure the implementation of their investment projects.

This involves providing all investor information (name, nationality, place of residence, banking details), specifying the type of activity to be undertaken, setting the project’s implementation timeline and start date, de-

termining the expected number of employees, demonstrating the investor’s expertise for project execution, presenting a feasibility study from a licensed office in Oman, and ensuring the estimated project value aligns with the feasibility study.

The MoCIIP press statement further said that foreign investors are now able to register all types of companies outlined in the Commercial Companies Law No. (18/2019) and engage in all economic activities, except those listed as prohibited for foreign investors.

These prohibited activities amount to 95, alongside activities regulated by specific laws. It’s worth noting that the Investment Services Centre at the MoCIIP collaborates with relevant entities to periodically review this list. The MoCIIP clarified that foreign workers who are under contracts with government or private entities can establish a company subject to the Foreign Capital Investment Law if their employer does not object or if their employment contract is terminated.



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A full fledged Ayurvedic Treatment Centre with MOH Licence and Commercial Registration is for sale at Barka, (Near Lulu). This one year old centre has 700 Sq. Mtrs space spread over 2 floors and has the following facilities.

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 - ▶ Dara stand with pot
 - ▶ Steam chamber and
 - ▶ Other accessories for Panchakarma Treatment.
- ▶ Two consultation rooms with examination tables, Doctors chairs, etc

Expected Price: OMR. 10,000 Only

Interested parties please contact
Mr. Aswath on Mobile: 95214372
or email: ashnan4@gmail.com



شركة إسمنت عمان (S.A.O.G.)
Oman Cement Company (S.A.O.G.)

P.O. BOX 185, MUSCAT, PORTAL CODE 115, SULTANATE OF OMAN
(Factory Al Muscat West, Muscat, Tel. & 09682 2453701 ext. 101, Fax & 09682 2445777)

TENDER

The company invites offers for the following tender:

Sl.	Tender ID	Description	Tender Fee	Deadline for Purchasing of Tenders	Deadline for Submission of Offers
1	1570000213-24	Engineering, Design, Supply, Installation, Testing, and Commissioning of Draw-out ACB and Panels	RO. 52.500	23rd May 2024 1500 Hours	28th May 2024 2359 Hours
2	1570000221-24	Design, Engineering, Installation, and commissioning of the existing logic with PLC control panels at KP Stacker and high Limestone Reclaimer	RO. 52.500	23rd May 2024 1500 Hours	28th May 2024 2359 Hours
3	1570000252-24	Replacement of VRF System for New Admin building in Factory Site	RO. 52.500	23rd May 2024 1500 Hours	28th May 2024 2359 Hours
2	1560000133-24	Water pipeline replacement	RO. 52.500	23rd May 2024 1500 Hours	28th May 2024 2359 Hours

Tender documents can be obtained by paying the below amount online to the Company’s account detailed below: Account name: Oman Cement Company SAOG

Bank Name: Bank Muscat SAOG
Account number: 0423 01086 3070 017
Account Type: OMR
SWIFT Code: BMUSOMRX

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

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

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

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

150,000 Palestinians have fled Rafah, says UNRWA

The UN agency for Palestine refugees pointed out in a separate post on the X platform that: “At least 300,000 people affected as further areas across GazaStrip receive new evacuation orders to move both towards central Rafah in the south and Jabalia in north Gaza

RAMALLAH: The UN agency for Palestine refugees (UNRWA) today said that 150,000 Palestinians have left Rafah in the southern blockaded Gaza Strip where an Israeli invasion is underway despite international outcry. “Everywhere you look now in west Rafah this morning, families are packing up. Streets are significantly emptier”, Louise Wateridge, a UNRWA spokeswoman, said on X. “UNRWA estimates 150,000



people have now fled Rafah. New areas have been issued evacuation orders towards central Rafah in south Gaza AND Jabalia in North Gaza,” she added. The UN agency for Palestine refugees pointed out in a separate post on the X platform that: “At least 300,000 people affected as further areas across GazaStrip receive new evacuation orders today, both towards central Rafah in the south AND Jabalia in north Gaza”. **Ground military offensive** On Monday, 6 May, Israel declared launching a ground military offensive in Rafah and issued warnings for some 100,000 Palestinians, forcing them to evacuate eastern Rafah. On the morning of Tuesday, 7 May, the Israeli occupation forces occupied the Palestinian side of

the Rafah border crossing and halted the flow of humanitarian aid into the Strip. This morning the occupation forces expanded their ground and aerial attacks to all districts of the war-torn Strip, and ordered the displacement of Palestinians from vast swaths of the northern Strip and central Rafah as they launched an aggression in the southern portions of Gaza city and the eastern portions of Khan Younes city and conducted a series of airstrikes, resulting in dozens of fatalities and casualties. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) estimated population residing in Rafah Governorate as of April 22nd, 2024 is approximately 1.1 million individuals living in an area of 63.1 square kilometers. The population density in Rafah on the eve of the

aggression was 4,360 individuals per square kilometer, while it has now reached approximately 17,500 individuals per square kilometer, which constitutes a humanitarian and environmental disaster and puts immense pressure on scarce services and the ability to access the most basic means of life in the midst of the aggression. It also estimated the population residing in Gaza and North Gaza Governorates was approximately 511,000 and 685,000 in Khan Yunis and the middle of Gaza Strip, taking into account the instability of displacement movement. Tried before the International Court of Justice for genocide against Palestinians, Israel has been waging a devastating war on Gaza since October 7, killing at least 34,971 Palestinians and injuring over 78,641 others. — Wafa



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Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Mohamed Issa Al Zadjali
Deputy Editor-in-Chief: Anees bin Essa Al Zedjali
Chief Executive Officer: Ahmed Essa Al Zedjali

EDITORIAL: Telephone: 24726666, Fax: 24813153, E-mail: editor@timesofoman.com
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CIRCULATION: Telephone: 24726666, Fax: 24818270, E-mail: circulation@timesofoman.com

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Kuwait Emir dissolves parliament once again

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait emir’s dissolved the country’s parliament once again, a month after elections were held in the nation. Sheikh Meshal Al Ahmad Al Jaber suspended several articles of the constitution on Friday as well, saying they would be suspended for a “period of no more than four years” without elaborating. The nation with some 4.2 million people, also one of the wealthiest in the world on a per capita basis, has seen a rise in domestic political turmoil. Kuwait is typically seen as one the more democratic Gulf monarchies, with some real power invested in elected officials, but that status seems increasingly at risk. The elections last month were the fourth to be held in as many years, again after the emir dissolved parliament at short notice. The assembly and the appointed government have not been able to move past political gridlock in recent years and that has prevented the enactment of basic reforms in the country. The impasse, for example, has prevented the country from taking on debt, and that has left it with little in its coffers to pay bloated public sector salaries despite its immense oil revenues. Many say the government has not properly invested in education, healthcare and other services. Kuwait, a staunch US ally, has the world’s sixth largest oil reserve. Sheikh Meshal Al Ahmad Al Jaber said in a speech carried by state television on Friday that the “unhealthy atmosphere experienced by Kuwait in previous years has encouraged the spread of corruption to reach most state facilities, and unfortunately it reached the security and economic institutions.” He added that he would “never allow the misuse of democracy to destroy the state, because the interests of the people of Kuwait, which are above all.” — DW



Flash floods kill 50 in Afghanistan

KABUL: Flash floods triggered by seasonal rainfall have killed at least 50 people and displaced many others in Afghanistan’s northern Baghlan province, a Taliban official said. The death toll figure is said to be preliminary and “might rise as many people are missing,” said Hedayatullah Hamdard, the provincial director of Natural Disaster Management in Baghlan. In a conversation with AFP, Hamdard said the death toll had risen to 62 people — mainly women and children — adding that the number “will probably increase.” The floods also caused severe damage to property and homes in some districts, he said. The Central Asian country’s capital, Kabul, was among the regions affected, according to Abdullah Janan Saiq, the Taliban’s

spokesman for the State Ministry for Natural Disaster Management. Rescue teams, armed with food, tents, blankets and other aid had been dispatched to affected areas. Emergency personnel were “searching for any possible victims under the mud and rubble, with the help of security forces from the national army and police,” Hamdard told reporters. Another Taliban government spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, assured that authorities would provide support to those impacted. The government “expresses its deep sympathy with the families of dead and wounded, and instructs the ministry of natural disaster management, ministries of defense and interior, and provincial authorities to spare no resource in rescue efforts,” his post on social media platform X read. — DW

CORONAL MASS EJECTIONS

First ‘extreme’ solar storm in 20 years strikes earth, brings spectacular auroras

WASHINGTON: The strongest solar storm in more than two decades struck Earth on Friday, triggering spectacular auroras worldwide. According to the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA) Space Weather Prediction Centre, the first of several coronal mass ejections (CME) occurred shortly after 1600 GMT. It was later upgraded to an “extreme” geomagnetic storm. It was the first such storm since the Halloween storms of October 2003, which caused blackouts in Sweden and damaged power infrastructure in South Africa. The green and blue lights — which are expected to continue for a few days — were seen from Britain to Tasmania, with officials in the US saying sightings might be possible as far south as Alabama and Northern California. Meanwhile, people from all over Germany posted photos of the aurora on social media. Scientists say the best views of the aurora may come from cell phone cameras, which are better at capturing light than the naked eye. Each eruption, known as a CME, can contain billions of tonnes of plasma and magnetic field from the sun’s outer atmosphere, or corona. More CMEs are expected to hit the planet in the coming days. Unlike solar flares, which travel



at the speed of light and take about eight minutes to reach Earth, CMEs travel at a more leisurely pace. Officials say the current average is 800 kilometres (500 miles) per second. The CMEs come from a massive sunspot cluster that is 16

times larger than our planet. The sun is nearing the peak of an 11-year cycle that brings with it heightened levels of activity. Authorities warned satellite operators, airlines and the power grid to take precautions in preparation for possible disruptions

due to changes in the Earth’s magnetic field. Fluctuating magnetic fields associated with geomagnetic storms induce currents in long wires, including power lines. These currents can potentially cause power outages. Long pipelines can also become electrified, causing technical problems. Spacecraft are also at risk from high doses of radiation. NASA said the storm posed no serious threat to the seven astronauts aboard the International Space Station. Its crew could move to a better-shielded part of the station if necessary. The atmosphere prevents this radiation from reaching the Earth. — DW

INDIAN SPACE RESEARCH ORGANISATION

Indian space odyssey touched a new high in 2023

NEW DELHI: Indian space odyssey touched a new high in 2023 after it became the first country to successfully soft land an unmanned spacecraft on the moon’s south pole with its Chandrayaan-3 mission. India’s space research agency, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), also attracted international admiration after it successfully conducted the Aditya-L1 mission to observe the dynamics of the Sun’s chromosphere and corona last year. India’s union cabinet recently passed a resolution on the success of the lunar mission, calling it a victory for the country as well as ISRO.



Chandrayaan-3 mission’s success also received appreciation from the global leaders. Taking forward the country’s “walk to space”, ISRO started 2024 with a big announcement as the

space agency declared the names of four astronauts for its Gaganyaan mission, which is India’s first human space flight programme. Besides Gaganyaan-1 programme, the ISRO also unveiled

a compelling line-up of several other ground-breaking missions in 2024. India’s space research agency’s ventures — from probing the mysteries of cosmic X-rays to launching India’s first X-Ray Polarimeter Satellite — have promised to redefine the understanding of Earth, explore the depths of space, and set the stage for unprecedented human spaceflight. **PSLV-C58 with XPoSat** ISRO’s 2024 started with the successful launch of the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV-C58) carrying XPoSat, the country’s first X-Ray Polarimeter Satellite. The Indian space research agency lifted off PSLV-C58, which

successfully launched XPoSat satellite into an Eastward low inclination orbit on January 01. According to ISRO, X-ray Polarimeter Satellite or XPoSat is the first dedicated scientific satellite from ISRO to carry out research in space-based polarisation measurements of X-ray emission from celestial sources. It carries two payloads namely POLIX (Polarimeter Instrument in X-rays) and XSPECT (X-ray Spectroscopy and Timing), as per ISRO. ISRO said the main objectives of this mission include measuring polarisation of X-rays in the energy band 8-30keV emanating from about 50 potential cosmic

sources, carrying out long term spectral and temporal studies of cosmic X-ray sources in the energy band 0.8-15keV, and conducting polarisation and spectroscopic measurements of X-ray emissions from cosmic sources. **NISAR** The NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) mission represents a pathbreaking collaboration between India’s ISRO and the United States’ NASA. According to ISRO, NISAR is a Low Earth Orbit (LEO) observatory being jointly developed by the two leading space agencies. — ANI

Dhofar dethrone Al Nahda to clinch HM’s Cup for 11th time

In an exciting final, played at Khasab Sports Complex in Musandam Governorate for the first time, the Salalah heavyweights emerged winners under coach Younis Aman on Friday

MUSCAT: The desire and determination to collect trophies and adorn their overflowing cabinet at the club headquarters in Salalah continues for Dhofar players. A football powerhouse, Dhofar underlined their dominance yet again in the country with a comprehensive 2-0 win over holders Al Nahda in the final of 2023-24 His Majesty’s Cup Football Championship, played at Khasab Sports Complex in Musandam Governorate for the first time, on Friday.

This victory also marks another zenith in the enduring bond between Dhofar’s coach and legendary footballer, Younis Aman, and the club.

His Majesty’s Cup stands as the pinnacle of football supremacy in Oman, and on Friday, Dhofar inscribed their name yet again in the annals of the Sultanate’s sporting history by securing their 11th crown.

With a total of 22 major domestic trophies, including 11 top-flight league titles, Dhofar boasts a record unparalleled in Omani football.

On the field, in front of a respectable crowd of nearly 10,000 spectators, Dhofar sealed their triumph with goals from penalty kicks in each half.

Notably, the match witnessed a historic moment for Omani football, as Video Assistant Review (VAR) made its domestic debut. A VAR review in the dying minutes of the first half resulted in a penalty awarded to Dhofar, duly converted by their captain, Ali Salim, securing a 1-0 lead at halftime.

Despite efforts from Al Nahda, led by coach Hamad Al Azani, to mount a comeback, Dhofar’s resolute defense held firm, denying their opponents any chance of equalising.

In the 64th minute, another penalty was awarded by referee Mahmood Al Majrafi to Dhofar, which was coolly converted by Hussain Said, further solidifying their lead.

Dhofar defenders denied a series of attacks from Al Nahda attackers to deservedly emerge champions. Dhofar’s journey of HM’s Cup title triumphs began as early as 1977 after the launch of Oman’s most prestigious competition in 1972.

Dhofar then won back-to-back titles in 1980 and 1981 and after a long gap regained glory in 1990. Another hiatus of nine years saw them win again in 1999 before



clinching top honours in 2004 and 2006. Further title success of the Salalah heavyweights were achieved in 2011 and then another twin success was recorded in the 2019-2020 and 2020-21 seasons. Besides the 11 titles, Dhofar also finished runners-up on four occasions. Later, Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said al Busaidy, Governor of Musandam gave away the trophy to the Dhofar captain Ali Salim and gold medals to the players in presence of Undersecretary at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth Basil Al Rawas, OFA chairman Sheikh Salim Al Wahaibi, and other top dignitaries.



Aman, a Dhofar hero

MUSCAT: Having grown in Salalah, Younis Aman’s earliest memories are of playing football and following Dhofar Club. And the legendary footballer, who was one of the most famed strikers of Oman ever, remains a Dhofar man. Guiding Dhofar to their 11th HM’s Cup triumph on Friday signifies a full circle in Aman’s enduring connection with the club. Aman clinched the HM’s Cup twice as a player in 1980 and 1981 and later steered the club to victory as manager in 1999. Nearly 25 years on, he adds another accolade to his legacy by leading Dhofar to glory as a coach.



In his exclusive remarks to *Times of Oman*, Aman said: “I am thankful to Almighty Allah for giving me an opportunity to lead the club to HM’s Cup success. It was not an easy assignment when I took charge on September 4 last year. With a new team, a young bunch of all-Omani players, the goal was clear- claim the biggest prize of Oman’s football this year. And, I am happy and proud to have achieved it.” The 59-year-old former Dhofar star striker said: “On the first day of my taking over as a coach, I wrote on the whiteboard while having a meeting with the club’s board – we will play the final of HM’s Cup. And yesterday, we not only played but also won. So, I am absolutely thrilled as this was a team comprising only Omani players with the club facing sanctions and unable to hire foreign players.” Aman, who has to his credit maximum goals scored in a single edition of HM’s Cup, said: “As a Dhofar player and now as a coach, it was my duty to bring smiles on the faces of our fans. It was a tough final as we were playing the best side at the moment in Oman, Al Nahda. We had to give

our best and that’s what we produced. With teams like Al Nahda and Seeb [newly crowned Oman-tel League champion], we have to give 100 percent, or else we will be punished.” “For me, Dhofar Club is family and we are children. The sweetness of the title triumph is felt as we have been struggling in the domestic league and fighting relegation. We are now tenth and need at least a point in the remaining two games to escape relegation. With this win, I am sure our boys will be determined to put their best foot forward and stay in the top-flight league. We deserve to be there,” he added. Aman, who also tasted defeats in the final in 1982 and 1984 against Al Ahli, said: “This is special as we have won it after two years and we have not been in the best form in the league. I look forward to leading the club to escape relegation and then we can think ahead.”

ACTIVITIES TO MARK HM’S CUP FOOTBALL IN KHASAB

OFA Women’s Committee empowers girls’ football in Musandam



MUSCAT: The Women’s Committee of the Oman Football Association (OFA) organized a two-day event in the Governorate of Musandam to celebrate the historic hosting of the prestigious His Majesty’s Cup Football Championship in

Khasab for the first time. The event, which began on Thursday, aimed to foster a culture of football among women and promote their involvement in sports. A girls’ football festival was held at the Khasab Sports Complex, attracting 200 children below the age of ten. The festival, graced by the presence of Nabilah Abdulah Al Shehi, General Manager of the Directorate General of Sports in the Governorate of Musandam, featured players from Al Nahda and



Dhofar clubs, who demonstrated their skills to inspire the young girls. Lujaina Mohsin Haider Darwish, Chairwoman of the OFA Women’s Committee, along with committee members, engaged with women from the Omani Women’s Association

in the Governorate of Musandam. The meeting focused on establishing partnerships to support the women’s football sector systematically within the governorate. In her address, Lujaina urged young girls to embrace football as a



sport, emphasising the OFA’s commitment to gender equality. She stressed the importance of fostering real partnerships and communication channels to empower girls in the governorate to participate in football at competitive levels.

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OMANI SAROOJ PRODUCT

Sohar Industrial City has inked a cooperation agreement with Middle East Calcined Clay Company to establish a factory for manufacturing the Omani “Sarooj” product, which is used as a material in restoration, urbanisation and decoration.

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MENA IPO EYE Q1 REPORT

According to the EY Mena IPO Eye Q1 2024 report, IPO activity in the Mena region retained strong momentum. The quarter saw 10 IPOs in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) with combined proceeds of \$1.2 billion.

Muscat Stock Exchange trading value rises to OMR119mn in April

In April, the market capitalisation of securities listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange recorded gains of OMR390 million to OMR24.31 billion

MUSCAT: The value of trading on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) increased in April to OMR119 million, compared to OMR84.4 million in March, recording a 41 percent increase. The trading value benefitted from the increase in trading in bank shares and a number of companies that announced improved financial results in the quarter.

National Bank of Oman (NBO) accounted for 23.3 percent of the total trading value after witnessing trades worth OMR27.73 million. Sohar International Bank saw trades amounting to OMR12.12 million, Bank Muscat witnessed trades amounting to OMR11.72 million. Omantel saw trading value amounting to OMR9.48 million while OQ Gas Networks (OHQN) saw trades amounting to OMR6.59 million.

The financial results announced by public joint-stock companies in the first quarter had a positive impact on stock prices, with the stock market witnessing an increase in the prices of 46 shares, compared to 32 securities whose prices declined and 17 securities that re-



mained unchanged at their previous levels. These increases pushed the main index and sectoral indices to rise higher, with the exception of the services sector index, which lost 14 points and closed at 1,833 points. The financial sector index recorded the best increase, rising 404 points, the industrial sector index rose 198 points, the Sharia index rose 13 points, and the main stock index rose to 4,784 points, recording an increase of 148 points.

In April, the market capitalisation of securities listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange recorded gains of OMR390 million to OMR24.31 billion.

In April, the Muscat Stock Exchange witnessed the execution of 22,953 transactions compared to 26,625 transactions in March, recording a decline of 13.7 percent.

Al Hassan Engineering shares recorded the highest increase, rising 92 percent from 13 baisas to 25 baisas, Voltamp Energy shares rose 48 percent and closed at 262

baisas, Muscat Thread Factories shares rose 42 percent and closed at 94 baisas, and Al Madina Investment Holding shares rose 33 percent and closed at 68 baisas. National Aluminum Products shares rose to 50 baisas, recording an increase of 31 percent.

Dhofar Electricity Generation's shares was at the top of the losing stocks, declining by 24 percent and closing at 80 baisas, Oman United Insurance's stock fell 12.7 percent to close at 240 baisas and Gulf Hotels (Oman) Company's stock fell 10.8 percent and closed at OMR3.80.

In April, the Muscat Stock Exchange officially announced the transformation of Al Batinah Hotels Company from a public joint stock company to a closed joint stock company, as of April 4, 2024. The decision issued by the Muscat Stock Exchange indicated the transfer of the listing of Al Batinah Hotels Company from the follow-up market to the third market, where closed companies are listed

Omani stock market ends flat in weekly trading

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Omani stock market had a nearly flat performance during the week with the major index closing down by 0.07 percent and hovering close to the 48,00 level, which presents the next challenge for the recent rebound, according to an analyst.

“This movement reflects a quieter market environment with a drop in the number and value of shares traded as there were no significant news or events to influence the market's direction,” said Ahmed Negm Head of Market Research MENA at XS.com.

“The market could remain exposed to the volatility in oil markets as well as downside risks as geopolitical conditions continue to change,” he further added.

In terms of sector performance, both the services and financial sectors recorded losses, while the industrial sector posted gains.

The services sector was the weakest performer this week, declining by 1.21 percent. OQ Gas Networks fell by 1.39 percent, while telecommunica-



tions companies Oman Telecom and Ooredoo fell by 0.38 percent and 1.01 percent, respectively.

The financial sector also experienced a downturn, decreasing by 0.18 percent. Sohar International Bank dropped by 2.19 percent. The stock was the second most traded during the week and declined as traders moved to profit-taking following the last few weeks' gains, which were driven by a significant increase in first-quarter profits. Additionally, Global Financial Investment reported losses of 4.11 percent, and

Oman Emirates Holding also recorded losses of 2.33 percent.

Conversely, the industrial sector showed a positive performance, increasing by 0.90 percent. Galfar Engineering and Contracting led the sector's weekly performance with a 7.45 percent rise and was the most traded stock.

The OMR521 million contract for the Oman-UAE Rail project that the company secured last month could continue to support its performance. Moreover, Oman Cables Industry enjoyed an increase of 4.31 percent, continuing its upward trend of more than three years.

The stock market could benefit from expectations of a stronger tourism sector in Oman, said Ahmed Negm.

“The country's travel and tourism sector could see solid growth and could make significant contributions to gross domestic product (GDP) and job creation,” he further added.

“This surge could positively impact stocks in the hospitality, transportation, and retail sectors, while also bolstering the broader economy through increased international spending,” said Ahmed Negm.

STATISTICS



Oman's electricity generation rises by 16.3% by February end

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman's total electricity generation until the end of February 2024 recorded an increase of 16.3 percent to reach 5,365 gigawatts per hour, compared to 4,611.3 gigawatts per hour in the same period last year.

Statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) showed that the governorates of North Al Batinah, South Al Batinah and Al Dhahirah recorded a total electricity generation of 3,312.5 gigawatts per hour.

Total electricity generation in Muscat Governorate decreased by 94.2 percent to reach 1.1 gigawatts per hour, while in Dhofar Governorate it increased by 12.4 percent to reach 655 gigawatts per hour.

The total electricity generation in the Governorates of North Al Sharqiyah and South Al Sharqi-

yah increased by 36.5 percent to reach 1,292.5 gigawatts per hour, while the total electricity generation in the Al Wusta Governorate decreased by 77 percent to reach 11.2 gigawatts per hour, and in the Musandam Governorate, the total electricity generation increased by 118.2 percent, recording 92.8 gigawatts per hour.

Statistics indicated that the Sultanate of Oman's net electricity generation until the end of February 2024 increased by 15.9 percent to reach 5,171.6 gigawatts per hour.

On the other hand, statistics showed that the total amount of water produced in the Sultanate of Oman increased by 2.6 percent to reach about 81.28 million cubic metres by the end of February 2024, compared to 79.26 million cubic metres in the same period in 2023. - ONA

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

ahlibank's profit rises by 3.4% to reach OMR8.63mn in first quarter

Times News Service

MUSCAT: ahlibank announced its results for the first quarter of 2024, reflecting its commitment to excellence in the banking sector in the Sultanate of Oman.

According to financial indicators, ahlibank's customer deposits grew by 6.7 per cent reaching OMR2,496.3 million during the first quarter, compared to the same period in 2023. Net loans, advances and financing expanded by 9.0 per cent amounting to OMR2,802.1 million. The bank's operating income increased by 4.4 per cent to reach OMR24.35 million, and its operating expenses rose by 8.6 per cent reaching OMR11.03 million. As showcased by its overall performance, profit during the period reached OMR8.63 million, increasing by 3.4 per cent in the first quarter of 2024, compared to the same period in 2023.

Reinforced by its strong performance in the previous year, the bank continues to achieve many notable achievements. The year 2024 marks ahlibank's 16 year anniversary of having been established in Oman, an indication of its distinguished financial performance.

Commenting on the financial results, Said Abdullah Al Hatmi, Chief Executive Officer at ahlibank, said, “As we move forward on our promising journey into the year 2024, ahlibank's performance during the first quarter reaffirms our strategic direction and resilience that characterise our operational processes. At ahlibank, we are committed to maintaining excellence in all aspects of our ethos, while implementing digital solutions, thereby empowering our customers through a seamlessly integrated diverse portfolio of digital products and services.”

The first quarter of the year witnessed several achievements. Most noteworthy was the financ-



“
ahlibank's performance during the first quarter reaffirms our strategic direction and resilience that characterise our operational processes

Said Abdullah Al Hatmi
Chief Executive Officer, ahlibank

ing of the second phase of the Khazaen Economic City (KEC), in which the Bank played an active role in providing its expertise in financing large-scale development projects, in line with the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

The first quarter also witnessed the launch of “Al Majd”, the new segment from ahli Islamic. Al Majd was tailor-made to meet the needs of ahli Islamic's upper mass customers. Moreover, ahli Islamic launched the “Tamkeen Islamic” crowdfunding initiative with the aim of enhancing ease of access to financing solutions for small and medium enterprises (SMEs). ahlibank and ahli Islamic also enhanced the Pearl Points rewards programme to provide an enriching experience that allows customers to easily earn points when conducting their daily banking transactions.

The inauguration of the new Al Shumookh Premium Banking

Center, held under the patronage of Azzan bin Qassim Al Busaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, underscored ahli Islamic's commitment to providing unparalleled banking experiences in line with Sharia-compliant principles. The new center is located in Shatti Al Qurum in Muscat. Additionally, ahli Islamic opened a new branch in the Wilayat of Quriyat, further enhancing its presence to a wider customer base.

Al Hatmi collectively praised the diligent efforts made by the employees of ahlibank as innovators in the banking sector. He stated, “ahlibank plays a pivotal role in driving innovation in the banking sector in Oman. Through our customer-centric approach, we aim to meet their evolving needs and surpass their expectations, thereby raising the standards for delivering excellence and quality services.”

In terms of developing human cadres, ahlibank welcomed the ninth batch of participants in its “HIMAM” program, which aims to empower and develop the skills and capabilities of the youth, equipping them with the knowledge needed and the tools necessary for excellence in the banking sector. Additionally, the Bank welcomed the second batch of participants in the iGeneration programme, which seeks to develop the youth's skills in the digital field.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is an integral part of ahlibank's ethos. During the holy month of Ramadan, the Bank launched a number of initiatives aimed at enhancing the spirit of sharing and solidarity among the members of the community. In cooperation with the SMEs Development Authority ‘Riyada’, the bank launched the “ahlibank Ramadan Souq.” The initiative took place in the main building of ahlibank and it aimed to promote local entrepreneurs by providing them with a distinguished platform to display and sell their various products.

With the aim of enhancing the well-being of the community, ahlibank cooperated with various teams and charitable organizations authorised by the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD). ahlibank employees participated in distributing Iftar meals to students residing in university and college hostels, as well as distributing food boxes to families in need. These efforts consolidate the culture of volunteerism and community participation within ahlibank.

ahlibank reaffirms its commitment to providing an exceptional banking experience while ensuring to leave a positive impact on the community, and meeting the evolving needs of its customers. With its strong financial performance and innovative solutions,

MARKET

Mena region sees 10 IPOs valued at \$1.2bn in first quarter of 2024

Globally, Q1 2024 witnessed a total of 287 IPOs, raising \$23.7 billion – a 7 per cent increase in value year on year – as market participants navigated uncertainties stemming from recent economic fluctuations and a global election year

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The IPO activity in the Mena region retained strong momentum. The first quarter of 2024 saw 10 IPOs in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) with combined proceeds of \$1.2 billion, according to the EY Mena IPO Eye Q1 2024 report.

Globally, Q1 2024 witnessed a total of 287 IPOs, raising \$23.7 billion – a 7 per cent increase in value year on year (YoY) – as market participants navigated uncertainties stemming from recent economic fluctuations and a global election year. An additional 25 private companies and 10 funds across various sectors intend to list on Mena exchanges in 2024. KSA leads with 21 announced IPOs, fol-

lowed by the UAE with one. Outside of the GCC, Raya Information Technology in Egypt and Cr dit Populaire d’Alg rie in Algeria have announced their planned IPOs.

In terms of Mena stock exchange performance, the Egyptian Exchange (EGX30) emerged at the top with an 8 per cent gain during Q1 2024, followed by Boursa Kuwait Premier Market with 7.5 per cent and Dubai Financial Market (DFM) with 4.6 per cent. At the end of the quarter, eight out of the 10 Mena IPOs had a positive return compared to their IPO price, with MBC Group achieving the highest gain of 128 per cent.

Brad Watson, EY Mena Strategy and Transactions Leader, says, “The first quarter 2024 started off on a positive note with 10 IPOs concentrated in the GCC region,



raising a total of \$1.2 billion. Saudi Arabia continued to dominate listing activity with nine IPOs across diverse sectors, while DFM welcomed its first listing in 2024. The region has retained a robust pipeline, with several companies in the GCC and North Africa having announced their intentions to list.”

Saudi Arabia continues to lead in IPOs

KSA was again the frontrunner in listing activity in Q1 2024. The country’s largest – and the region’s second-largest – IPO was raised by Modern Mills Company at \$724 million, accounting for 27.3 per cent



of the overall proceeds. This was followed by MBC Group with \$222m and Middle East Pharmaceutical Industries Company with \$131 million. All three IPOs were listed on the Tadawul Main Market. The remaining six listings took place on the Nomu – Parallel Market with total proceeds of \$57 million. The funds have been sourced from a variety of sectors, such as healthcare, F&B, and media and entertainment.

The Kingdom also continued to lead the pipeline activity for the Mena region with several companies, such as Saudi Manpower Solutions Company (SMASCO), Mi-ahona, and Panda Retail Company,

announcing their plans to list.

Region’s largest IPO

In the UAE, Parkin Company PJSC raised the highest proceeds in the region in Q1 2024 with \$0.4 billion on DFM, contributing 37.2 per cent of the total IPO value. The IPO was oversubscribed 165 times, with the highest first-day gain among the quarter’s listings at 35 per cent. This is the third Roads and Transport Authority (RTA) asset to have listed after Salik and the Dubai Taxi Company (DTC). The country also announced significant upcoming listings, including Spinneys, Lulu

Group and Etihad Airways.

Growing prominence of ESG factors

The UAE has issued mandatory environmental, social and governance (ESG) reporting guidelines for listed companies on Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange (ADX). The move marks a significant step toward enhancing transparency and promoting sustainable practices in the region’s financial markets. In addition, Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) introduced voluntary ESG disclosure guidelines in 2023, with mandatory sustainability reporting expected to be implemented by 2025. Meanwhile, Saudi Green Initiative, which aims to plant 10 billion trees by 2030, among other goals, demonstrates a commitment to environmental protection and a shift towards renewable energy sources. By embracing ESG reporting, GCC can unlock sustainable growth, attract responsible investments and contribute to a greener global economy.

Gregory Hughes, EY Mena IPO Leader, says: “The start of the year has been strong with no sign of a slowdown in IPO activity. The successful listing of Parkin Company PJSC on the DFM demonstrated a continued commitment toward the Dubai government’s privatisation programme that involves listing state-owned companies as part of the nation’s economic diversification drive.”

BEST PRACTICES



MSX’s ESG 30 Metrics Masterclass concludes

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The MSX are leading the initiative to improve corporate reporting of ESG activities, aligned to the Oman 2040 vision of achieving net zero emissions by 2050, said Haidhem Al Salmi, CEO of Muscat Stock Exchange.

He was addressing the participants at the two-day collaborative workshop on ESG 30 Metrics Masterclass organised by Muscat Stock Exchange in partnership with Crowe Oman at the Seeb Novotel hotel. The workshop was attended by delegates from almost all the listed companies and few government institutions.

Welcoming the participants Davis Kallukaran Managing Partner of Crowe Oman said, “Of all the countries in the Middle East, Oman is in the forefront of embracing the best practices, be it the environment, sustainability or corporate governance. This is clearly evident from the goals of Oman’s Vision 2040 strategic objectives.

“The government has allocated OMR190 billion towards net zero emissions by 2050. While this opens a plethora of opportunities in sectors other than in oil & gas, to the private sector to initiate projects towards attaining these sustainable development goals (SDG). ESG 30 metrics refers to a set of metrics used to measure an organisation’s environmental and social impact.

“This had become increasingly important in investment decision-making over the years. While the term ESG was first coined in 2004 by the United Nations Global Compact, the concept has been around for much longer. If we go back to history, we will see that the concept of sustainability started since 1970, when socially responsible investing emerged as a way for investors to align their portfolios with their values.

“The movement gained momentum in the 1980s with the disinvestment campaigns against companies doing business in South Africa during the apartheid. Over time, socially respon-

sible investing (SRI) evolved into corporate social responsibility (CSR) and was primarily focused on social issues such as human rights and supply chain ethics.

“By 1997, the Global reporting initiatives (GRI) was founded with the aim of addressing environmental concerns and it soon broadened its scope and focus on social and governance issues. In year 2000, the United Nations hosted the Millennium Summit to discuss on work conditions, human rights, environment, and anti-corruption.

“They created the millennium development goals (MDG). In 2015, MDG was replaced by the sustainable development goals (SDG), which has later on evolved into ESG.”

The Security Exchange Commission of North America is considering mandatory ESG reporting to public companies as is the case in Canada, Brazil, India, Australia, and Japan, and same in Europe with the EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directives (CSRD).

As the world is facing increasing challenges related to climate change and social issues, ESG considerations will continue to play a crucial role in the way companies and investors operate and measure their performance,” Davis added.

Karl Jackson engaging the first session said, “In response to the growing complexity of existing sustainability frameworks, the IFRS launched IFRS S1 and IFRS S2, the sustainability standards effective from January 2024. ESG is no longer a fringe concept but a mandatory concept for both companies and investors. Today, ESG data is used to evaluate a company’s performance on specific environmental, social and governance issues. The companies have to report on the environmental and social impact of their business activities and the impact of their ESG initiatives.”

Bilal Imran, Manager ESG at Crowe and Paco Lari from Spain engaged the participants on various metrics.

SOHAR INDUSTRIAL CITY

Agreement signed to set up factory for making Omani ‘Sarooj’ product

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Sohar Industrial City, affiliated to the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madaen), has inked a cooperation agreement with Middle East Calced Clay Company to establish a factory for manufacturing the Omani “Sarooj” product, which is used as a material in restoration, urbanisation and decoration. The project is set to be situated on an area of 45,000 sqm with an investment of OMR5.4 million.

The agreement was signed by Eng. Abdullah bin Ahmed Al Mayasi, Director General of Sohar Industrial City, and Eng. Abdulaziz bin Said Al Maqbali, Project Manager at Middle East Calced Clay Company.

This factory comes in the framework of the innovation project in the mining sector undertaken and financed by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals. The Industrial Innovation Academy has played a key role in conducting laboratory and market analyses, and practical experiments on the product’s



efficiency for commercial production, particularly in the restoration of forts and archaeological sites, in cooperation with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism.

Yahya bin Ahmed Al Kharoosi, Director of Local Content and Business Opportunities at the Industrial Innovation Academy,

emphasised the role of ‘Sarooj’ product in enhancing the added value of Omani natural resources, being one of the key products used in restoring historical landmarks. He noted the significant impact of research and development in utilising local materials while empowering companies to produce

marketable products efficiently. Al Kharoosi also emphasised the academy’s contribution to developing the product using top global standards specifically designed for restoration purposes.

On his part, Eng. Abdulaziz bin Said Al Maqbali, Project Manager at Middle East Calced Clay Company, commented on the significance of this cooperation to compete internationally in clay and construction materials markets. “The factory features two production lines with a combined annual capacity of approximately 250,000 tons, incorporating energy-saving technologies and automated production processes. Additionally, the factory features a modern laboratory for sample testing and quality control.

Initial production operations are expected to commence in the first quarter of 2025, providing employment opportunities for nationals and aligning with the goals of the National Zero Net Emissions Programme by reducing carbon dioxide emissions.

INNOVATIVE SOLUTION

Airbus to unveil its new smart and secure collaborative platform Agnet Turnaround

DUBAI: Airbus will officially unveil its latest innovative solution at Critical Communications World (CCW) 2024, Agnet Turnaround, a new smart and secure collaborative platform to address and overcome challenges in the aviation industry.

Tailored specifically for airport infrastructure, this innovative solution is set to revolutionize operations at facilities worldwide through cutting-edge technology. While empowering airports with real-time monitoring and communication capabilities for seamless coordination and management processes, Agnet Turnaround delivers newfound value and efficiency through improved punctuality, reduced environmental impact, increased air traffic capacity, and more cost-effective functions.

“With Agnet Turnaround, we’re proposing a new way for airports to think about and manage their operations with a truly groundbreaking solution,” said Selim Bouri, Airbus Vice President for Public Safety and Security in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. “Agnet Turnaround is introduced with an unequivocal promise – to empower and enhance airport operations. Airbus looks ahead to the future with great anticipation



with quick and efficient practices, reduced response times, and tremendous overall throughput all assured for airports globally – without sacrificing safety, security, or environmental responsibility.”

Designed to meet the unique demands of airport operations and accommodate vast requirements, Agnet Turnaround brings a sophisticated blend of real-time monitoring and smart communication technologies to the forefront. The solution enables airports and public safety agencies to seamlessly coordinate and manage collective ground operations, ensuring smoother transitions with

streamlined processes.

With Agnet Turnaround, airports can look forward to more punctual operations, minimizing delays in environments typically busy 24 hours a day, seven days a week. By improving the efficiency of operations, the solution also supports airports in their efforts to reduce their environmental footprint, aligning with global sustainability goals. Additionally, it enhances air traffic management, allowing for increased capacity without compromising safety standards.

“This solution has been introduced to empower airports with unprecedented operational ca-

pabilities – and what sets Agnet Turnaround apart are its advanced communication features,” revealed Bouri. “Direct communication tools such as smart groups and instant connectivity are utilized to accelerate key decision-making processes involving personnel and departments, while enhanced planning and control protocols are availed with live monitoring a fundamental component behind world-class predictive processes.”

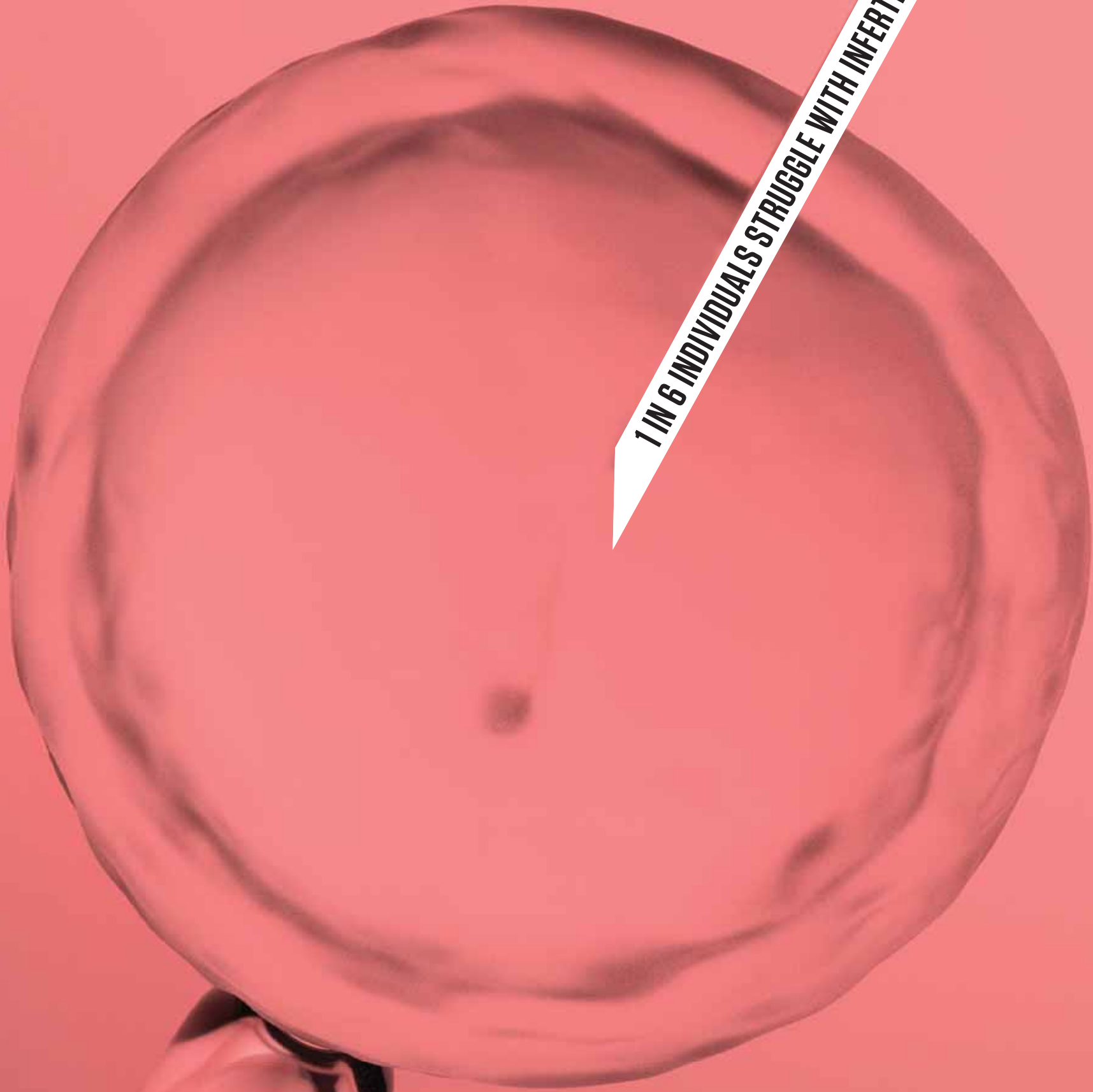
The benefits of implementing Agnet Turnaround are many with automation another outstanding feature. Automatic alerts, group creation, task assignment, and workflow statuses are all prerequisites for streamlined operations and minimized instances of human error.

Airports can also use Agnet Turnaround to instantly connect with key personnel, bypassing lengthy search processes and saving valuable time. Live tracking of operations enables airports to respond swiftly and plan more effectively, improving overall operational foresight. With global access and no distance limitations, managing outstation operations also promises to become simpler and more efficient immediately following solution integration.



LIFESTYLE

1 IN 6 INDIVIDUALS STRUGGLE WITH INFERTILITY; IVF CAN TURN MOTHERHOOD DREAMS INTO REALITY



NEW DELHI: Mother's Day (May 12) celebrates the invaluable role of mothers worldwide. While many women embrace motherhood, infertility makes it a distant dream for some. Globally, according to WHO data, approximately 1 in 6 individuals grapple with infertility, affecting both men and women. However, in-vitro fertilisation (IVF) treatments offer hope for those struggling to conceive.

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General, WHO, emphasises the need for wider access to fertility care, saying, "The high proportion of people affected shows the need to widen access to fertility care and ensure it's prioritised in health research and policy. This ensures safe, effective, and affordable ways to achieve parenthood are available for those who seek it."

In India, infertility impacts 10-20% of couples seeking children, according to an ICMR study. However, IVF offers hope with a 35-40% success rate. This assisted reproductive technology enables external fertilisation,

increasing the chances of a successful pregnancy for those facing natural conception challenges.

Dr. Jyoti S Bali, Medical Director of Baby Soon Fertility and IVF Centre, speaks on the emotional impact of infertility and the role of IVF, stating, "Childlessness due to infertility deeply impacts the emotional and social well-being of individuals, especially women. Fortunately, advancements in IVF offer hope for childless women to achieve motherhood."

Dr. Bali elaborates on Baby Soon's approach, asserting, "We conduct infertility assessments and counseling to provide the best solutions and bring happiness to our patients' lives. Our centre claims a remarkable 60 per cent success rate through IVF, surpassing national averages. We take a personalised approach with tailored solutions for each patient, aiming to bring joy to families. We utilise assisted reproductive treatments (ART) for maximum success. With over 6,000 assisted conception cycles overseen worldwide, I employ a unique ART

approach and address the emotional challenges associated with infertility."

Dr. Bali's extensive experience encompasses successfully handling numerous failed IVF cases, recurrent miscarriages, and complex infertility conditions. Her holistic approach covers a broad spectrum of infertility issues. Her contributions to the field are recognised by prestigious awards, including the Navshakti Award, the 8th National Women Excellence Award, the Pride of India Award for IVF Expertise, Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam's Appreciation Award, and the Economic Times Inspiring Gynaecologist of North India Award.

Dr. Bali's commitment extends beyond clinical care. Renowned for her expertise, she actively educates and empowers couples facing infertility challenges. Her dedication, combined with personalised treatment plans, has positioned Baby Soon Fertility & IVF Centre as a guiding light for couples aspiring to start their families, and for women to attain motherhood. -ANI

SPORTS

Front-row start at Spa for Al Harthy's Team WRT

Oman's Ahmad Al Harthy and his teammates, Maxime Martin and Valentino Rossi, clinch P2 in the third round of the FIA World Endurance Championship qualifying



MUSCAT: Oman's Ahmad Al Harthy delivered an impressive qualifying performance at Spa-Francorchamps on Friday to secure his first LMGT3 front-row start of the season for the third round of the FIA World Endurance Championship campaign. Going into the weekend fourth in the championship standings

along with team-mates Maxime Martin and Valentino Rossi, Al Harthy relished the prospect of being back at Spa, a track where he has enjoyed considerable GT racing success over the years, and he didn't disappoint in qualifying. Lapping second fastest around the Ardennes track in the main LMGT3 session, producing a time of 2m21.233 seconds (178.5 km/h),

the BMW M4 GT3 driver easily progressed into the all-important Hyperpole shoot-out to continue his unbroken run of doing so this season. Al Harthy was able to shave a tenth of a second off that time in Hyperpole shortly after, producing a best of 2m21.138 seconds (178.6 km/h), which secured third on the LMGT3 grid for this after-

noon's TotalEnergies 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps. Following an exclusion for the No.95 McLaren, though, Al Harthy was elevated onto the front-row, less than 0.4 seconds shy of pole position. Much of the focus for the squad throughout free practice on Thursday, and earlier on Friday, was on delivering the strongest possible car for the race.

As a result Al Harthy – who is partnered by OQ, Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Omantel and BMW Oman – was especially pleased with the pace he showed in qualifying trim. After lapping fifth fastest in the opening free practice, the squad was third quickest in session two and then in session three, the final chance to prepare the car ahead of qualifying, they ended 13th on the times. A delighted Al Harthy said: "To go through into Hyperpole and to get a front-row grid start here at Spa is very good. I'm really happy

with the result. It puts us in a very good situation to start the race and then, hopefully, we can build on that. The six hours here is very difficult, obviously tyre degradation is much higher and so it's about managing it for the race." The Omani ace driver added: "We've been working a lot in the last few days to make sure we have a good race car. "Qualifying was a great surprise, a positive surprise, so we aim to build on that and have a good race and continue the strong start we have made to the season with BMW and Team WRT."

BRIEFS

Casemiro left out of Brazil squad for Copa America

RIO DE JANEIRO: Manchester United midfielder Casemiro has been left out of Brazil's squad for next month's Copa America. The 32-year-old, who has won 75 caps for Brazil, has endured a difficult season at Old Trafford and was omitted from coach Dorival Jr's 23-man squad. Tottenham forward Richarlison, Arsenal striker Gabriel Jesus and Casemiro's United team-mate Antony were also not selected. As expected, Neymar was not included as he continues his recovery from a knee ligament injury sustained during Brazil's 2-0 defeat to Uruguay last October. Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson and Manchester City counterpart Ederson are among nine Premier League players to make the cut for the tournament in the United States from 20 June to 14 July.

Thiem forced into early retirement after injuries

PARIS: Former US Open champion Dominic Thiem on Friday said he will retire later this year because of the wrist injury that derailed his career. The 30-year-old Austrian, who reached four Grand Slam finals, hopes to finish his career at a home event in Vienna in October. "It is a very important, very sad, very beautiful message that this season will be my last one," Thiem said. "There are some reasons behind it: firstly, of course, my wrist. It is not exactly the way it should be and how I want it. "The second reason is my inner feeling: I have been thinking about this decision for a very long time." Thiem won his only Grand Slam title at the 2020 US Open, lifting him to a career-high ranking of third in the world. He had previously finished runner-up at the 2018 and 2019 French Opens and the 2020 Australian Open.

India's Chopra secures second spot in Doha

DOHA: Reigning Olympic and World Champion Neeraj Chopra finished second in Doha Diamond League 2024 on Friday with the best attempt of 88.36m falling just 2 centimetres short of Jakub Vadlejch's of Czech Republic winning effort of 88.38m. The two-time world champion Anderson Peters from Grenada finished third with his best throw of 86.62m at the Qatar Sports Club on Friday. Asian Games silver medallist Kishore Jena finished ninth with a throw of 76.31m.

Pant suspended for a match due to slow over-rate

NEW DELHI: Delhi Capitals captain Rishabh Pant has been suspended for one match for breaching the IPL Code of Conduct after his team maintained a slow over-rate during the match against Rajasthan Royals in Delhi on May 7. As a result, he will miss a crucial fixture, against Royal Challengers Bengaluru, at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium on Sunday. Additionally, Pant has also been fined INR 30 lakh while the rest of the members of the DC playing XI of that game, including the Impact Player, have also been individually fined either INR 12 lakh or 50% of their respective match fees, whichever is lesser. This was Pant's third over-rate breach this IPL.

Djokovic struck by water bottle at Italian Open

ROME: Serbian star Novak Djokovic was hit on the head by a water bottle as he signed autographs after his win at the Italian Open on Friday. A video on social media showed world No.1 Djokovic falling to the floor after being hit by the object, which came from the stands. Tournament organisers said the hard bottle had fallen out of the bag of someone in the crowd. The 24-time Grand Slam champion stayed on the ground for a while before being helped out of the arena in Rome by security. "This is not being treated as a deliberate act, but as an accident," said tournament organisers. - Agencies

EUROPEAN FOOTBALL

French striker Mbappe to leave PSG at the end of the season

PARIS: France striker Kylian Mbappe on Saturday said that he will leave Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) at the end of the season.

Mbappe, 25, announced the decision in a video released on his social media, external accounts. "I've always said that I would speak with you when the time comes," Mbappe said. "It's my last year at Paris Saint-Germain. I will not extend and the adventure will come to an end in a few weeks."

Mbappe's contract with PSG expires in June and BBC Sport reported in February that he has agreed a deal to join Real Madrid in the summer. The World Cup winner is PSG's record goalscorer with 255 goals and will play his final home game at the Parc des Princes against Toulouse in Ligue 1 on Sunday. After that PSG have away fixtures at Nice (15 May) and Metz (19 May) before the French Cup final against Lyon at the Stade Pierre-Mauroy in Lille on 25 May. Paris-born Mbappe, who joined PSG from Monaco for £165.7m in



August 2017, said the club helped him "grow as a player" and "grow as a man as well". He added: "It's a lot of emotions, many years where I had the chance and the great honour to be a member of the biggest French club, one of the best in the world. "It allowed me to arrive here, to have my first experience in a club with a lot of pressure, to grow as a player of course, by being alongside some of the best in history, some of the greatest champions.

"It's hard and I never thought it would be this difficult to announce that. But I think I needed this, a new challenge, after seven years." Mbappe was set to leave PSG on a free transfer at the end of the 2021-22 season but ultimately signed a two-year contract extension, with the option of a further year. However, after Mbappe told PSG he would not agree to the additional 12 months of the deal, he was not selected for their pre-season tour to Japan last July.

He later returned to first-team training following what PSG said were "very constructive and positive" talks. Mbappe met PSG president Nasser Al-Khelaifi on 13 February and told him he was leaving and joining Real. It was anticipated Mbappe would make an announcement over his future when it was no longer possible for PSG to meet Real in this season's Champions League. PSG suffered a 2-0 aggregate defeat to Borussia Dortmund in the semi-finals earlier this week as Mbappe struggled to make an impact in both legs of the tie. Mbappe acknowledged in his video message he was "not the most demonstrative player" and "hasn't always lived up to the love" PSG fans gave him. "PSG is a club that never leaves anyone indifferent. We can love it or hate it and I made the choice of loving it and I did for seven years," Mbappe said. "I do not regret, at any moment, signing with this prestigious club. It is a club I will keep in my memory my entire life." - Agencies

IPL 2024

GT's Gill, Sudharsan hammer tons in facile victory over Chennai

AHMEDABAD: Skipper Shubman Gill and B Sai Sudharsan of Gujarat Titans (GT) tore apart the Chennai Super Kings (CSK) attack and the record books to keep Gujarat Titans' (GT's) playoff hopes just alive on Friday.

The result, however, diminished CSK's chances and left them facing a tricky route to the playoffs. GT captain Gill (104) handsomely contributed with the bat in a 210-run partnership with Sudharsan (103) - the joint-highest opening stand in the history of the IPL as they finished at 231/3. Along the way, Gill and Sudharsan pushed the IPL century count past 100.

After Gill's early blast, Sudharsan, caught fire, whacking Ravindra Jadeja for 21 off seven balls at a strike rate of 300. The presence of the spin-hitting Sudharsan meant Jadeja could not bowl more than two overs on the night. Ruturaj Gaikwad turned to Daryl Mitchell's cutters, but he was dispatched for 4-0-52-0. Sudharsan accelerated so quickly that he and his captain had identical scores at the end of the 16th over: 96 off 48 balls. Gill was the first to bring up his hundred with a four, and four balls later, Sudhar-



san joined him there with a six. In the next over, however, Tushar Deshpande had both Sudharsan and Gill holing out in the space of five balls. After their fall, GT batters scored only 41 runs off the last five overs. In the chase, CSK were reduced to 2 for 2 within two overs. Rachin Ravindra, who was brought back into the team to beef up the top order, was run out for 1. On the very next ball, Sandeep Warrier bested Ajinkya Rahane in the battle of the

Impact Players. Rahane fell for one off five balls. Captain Gaikwad, then was out for duck. CSK managed only 43/3 in the powerplay. Mitchell went after GT's ace spinner Rashid Khan, taking him for 18 off seven balls. At the other end, Moeen struggled to pick Rashid's variations but he lined up Noor Ahmad, the left-arm wristspinner, and tonked him for three successive sixes to start the 11th over. At 119 for 3 in 12 overs, CSK

TODAY'S MATCHES

Chennai Super Kings
vs
Rajasthan Royals
Chennai, 2pm
Royal Challengers Bengaluru
vs
Delhi Capitals
Bengaluru, 6pm

were in with a chance until Mohit Sharma's intervention. Mohit struck with his second ball, a well-disguised knuckle ball, which tricked Mitchell into sky-ing a catch to long-off for 63 off 34 balls. In his next over, he dug an on-pace delivery into the surface and had Moeen holing out for 56 off 36 balls. Mohit also snagged Shivam Dube for 21 off 13 balls and came away with 3 for 31 - the best figures on the day. **Brief scores:** Gujarat Titans 231/3 (Shubman Gill 104, Sai Sudharsan 103; Tushar Deshpande 2-33) beat Chennai Super Kings 196/8 (Daryl Mitchell 63, Moeen Ali 56; Mohit Sharma 3-31, Rashid Khan 2-38). - Agencies

Lulu Hypermarket’s ‘Mango Mania’ lures lovers of juicy delight

For this year’s fest, Lulu has stacked up its aisles with a wide range of juicy and scrumptious mangoes from several countries, namely India, Yemen, Thailand, Spain, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Indonesia, Colombia, Brazil, Mexico, Kenya, and Uganda

MUSCAT: Lulu Hypermarket Oman has launched the ‘Mango Mania’, a delectable occasion for mango lovers from every corner of the country to unite and revel in the succulent glory of this juicy golden fruit. The mango festival will be held from May 11 to May 18 across all Lulu stores in Oman as a celebration of the goodness of the King of Fruits. The event, which was inaugurated by Amit Narang, Indian Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman, on May 11, will showcase some of the sweetest, juiciest mangoes brought



in from all over the world. The yearly event is an attraction for both locals and expatriates alike to indulge in the flavours of the best mangoes. Speaking on the occasion, the ambassador underscored the importance of the annual Lulu Mango Mania festival. He expressed his

sincere appreciation to Lulu for curating a selection of over 75 distinct varieties of mangoes, aptly named the “King of Fruits,” for the customers. The ambassador further remarked on the widespread appreciation for Indian mangoes amongst Lulu’s clientele, highlighting their



prominent position on customer palettes. He concluded by warmly acknowledging the presence of Yusuff Ali M.A., Chairman and Managing Director of Lulu Group. “We see ourselves as a responsible entity, and that means offering not just a wide range of products,



but also offering a dynamic and engaging shopping experience. Strategic promotions and events like ‘Mango Mania’ are key to achieving this. We’re confident these initiatives will drive high customer involvement, and we’re showcasing a wide selection from

across the world,” Yusuff Ali M.A., told reporters at the inauguration of ‘Mango Mania’ festival. Be it just a juicy slice, or blended into a refreshing smoothie, or incorporated into decadent mouth-watering desserts, the ‘Mango Mania’ is the perfect opportunity for customers to relish some of the special mango treats in the hot-food, bakery, sweets and pickles section. Special mango delicacies, pickled mangoes, as well as mango preserves, smoothies, pulps, juices, jellies, and jams will also be available during the promotion. For this year’s fest, Lulu has stacked up its aisles with a wide range of juicy and scrumptious mangoes from several countries, namely India, Yemen, Thailand, Spain, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Indonesia, Colombia, Brazil, Mexico, Kenya, and Uganda. Locally grown mangoes from Oman will also be part of the event.

UNMATCHED VERSATILITY



Foton Aumark leading charge in Oman’s light duty truck sector

MUSCAT: Foton Aumark is increasingly favoured for light duty truck requirements, blending an array of features with great value. Tailored for the needs of users in Oman, it provides efficient and dependable logistics solutions. A spokesperson for Gulf Great Sands said, “In Oman, the Foton Aumark light duty truck has become highly popular, receiving favourable customer feedback for its key attributes. It is tailored to fulfil the regional need for streamlined and efficient logistics, establishing an international benchmark in its category. “With two wheelbase options of 3360 mm and 3800 mm, this 3-ton truck provides diverse configurations, such as cargo, refrigerator, light dump, and open cargo body trucks.” Foton Aumark, a three-ton light duty truck, boasts a Cummins engine and a 6-speed ZF manual transmission, enhancing its fuel efficiency, safety, and performance in the logistics and cargo sector. Available in two wheelbase lengths, 3360 mm and 3800 mm, it is equipped with a variety of features such as cruise control, low engine noise, a reverse sensor, remote central door locking, ABS+EBD, air and exhaust brakes, and power windows. The light duty truck Foton Aumark is perfect for transporting goods within and between cities, and features advanced technology to elevate the driving experience and ensure superior safety. Its standout qualities include a high load capacity, fuel efficiency, and long service intervals of up to 20,000 kilometres. Catering to bespoke transportation requirements, the Foton

Aumark delivers excellent value for the investment. It is equipped with a premium turbo engine that offers a perfect blend of potent power and outstanding fuel efficiency. Its superior braking system boosts safety, and the truck’s impressive loading capacity makes it ideal for long-haul journeys, maintaining excellent stability throughout. The Aumark light truck excels in performance, embodying Foton’s commitment to creating innovative driving technologies that offer a tailored experience to customers. The truck captures the essence of the Foton brand, featuring exceptional design, cutting-edge technology, and robust performance. Foton is dedicated to offering high-quality, cost-effective vehicles to global markets by leveraging both existing and emerging technologies. Through strategic partnerships with globally recognised manufacturers and key component brands, Foton has incorporated sustainable engineering, advanced systems, and the latest technology into each of its vehicles. Foton Aumark’s dependable features like Cummins ISF 3.8L turbo diesel engine, Bosch electronics and ZF transmission make it a dependable logistic solution for city needs as well as short haul transportation needs of the industry such as fishing, poultry, furniture, grocery, recovery, water tanker and FMCG. The Foton Aumark is fully customisable with versatile body options to make it a productive work tool for everyday use. Aumark is what a truck should be – solid and reliable at a good value.

4 LUCKY WINNERS

Score your ticket to Olympic Games Paris 2024 with Bank Muscat Visa Credit Cards

MUSCAT: As part of its commitment to providing distinctive offers and services that meet the aspirations and needs of customers, Bank Muscat, the leading financial service provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has partnered once more with Visa, a world leader in digital payments, to present four special packages to attend The Olympic Games, courtesy of Visa, which will be held in Paris from July 26 to August 11, 2024. The offer is valid for cardholders of Bank Muscat’s Private Banking Visa Infinite credit card, Asalah Visa Signature credit card, Al Jawhar Visa Platinum credit card, as well as Bank Muscat Oman Air Visa Platinum credit cards. Customers will have the opportunity to enter the draw and win one out of four exclusive and unrepeatable packages to attend The Olympic Games in France, courtesy of Visa, when spending OMR250 or more when using the eligible credit cards via international Points of Sales (POS) or international e-



commerce during the promotional period, lasting until May 31, 2024. The Visa credit cardholders from these segments will have the opportunity to automatically enter the draws once they meet the eligibility criteria of minimum spends, after which they will receive additional chances for every OMR 50 spent via International POS and International e-commerce. To provide an exceptional experience for the bank’s customers, the four packages include the full

flight and attendance costs, including a 4-night stay for two in a luxury hotel with breakfast, as well as entrance tickets to the Olympic Games track, transportation to and from the Games circuit via the Paris metro and gifts worth \$400, courtesy of Visa. On this occasion, Abdulnasir N. Al Raisi, General Manager - Personal Banking, Bank Muscat, said: “This offer comes in cooperation with Visa with the aim of providing unique and distinctive benefits to Bank Muscat’s Private Banking, Priority Banking, Privilege Banking Visa credit cardholders, as well as holders of Bank Muscat Oman Air Visa Platinum credit cards. “A number of 4 lucky winners will attend and watch The Olympic Games in Paris, France during this summer and live wonderful experiences within a fully paid package.” Al Raisi also pointed out that the Bank is keen to develop new and exciting offers by collaborating with its partners to provide the best for its customers.

He added: “I would like to take this opportunity to thank all customers for their strong trust in the Bank and its products and various services. I am grateful to Visa for its continuous partnership and cooperation in offering such offers that provide added value to the Bank’s customers.” For his part, Manish Gautum, Visa’s Country Manager for Oman, said, “Bank Muscat’s Olympic Games Paris 2024 promotion is a great example of how our clients can leverage Visa’s sponsorship to create exclusive, rewarding, and memorable experiences for their Visa cardholders. Given that the Olympics is one of the most watched sporting events globally, it’s also a strategic move that can significantly help promote the use of digital payments and support local businesses. We’re proud to enable these initiatives that bring value to our clients and Visa cardholders, while also contributing to the Oman government’s digital commerce agenda.”

ANNUAL EMPLOYEE FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT

Winning teams, outstanding players honoured at Nama Water Football Tournament finals

MUSCAT: Nama Water Services wrapped up its annual employee football tournament on Monday, capping off a successful program designed to foster teamwork and solidarity among its staff. The tournament was part of the company’s commitment to building a strong and positive work environment. The championship match played at the Company Football Yard in Ghala at Al Ansab Wetlands site, was between Team assets against Team QHSE. The match was held under Qais bin Saud Al Zakwani, the company’s CEO, and attended by the international player Ali Al Habsi. A large and enthusiastic crowd of company employees created an exciting atmosphere for this exciting and high-caliber match, a testament to the tournament’s success throughout its rounds. The final match of the 2024 football tournament showcased the exceptional talent of both teams in a thrilling display of skill and sportsmanship. The closely contested



game culminated in a victory for Team assets crowning them champions. Team QHSE secured a well-deserved runner-up position. “Nama Water Services is proud to sponsor this tournament,” said Taqi bin Mohammed Al Lawati, Head of Human Resources and Culture. “We believe that sports and physical activity are crucial for individual and community health, leading to a more productive workforce. This tournament aligns with our vision of promoting sustainability and community

development by fostering teamwork, team spirit, and communication among our employees.” The Head of Human Resources and Culture at Nama Water Services Company added: “Organizing this tournament also comes within the framework of the company’s initiatives to create a platform to enhance and encourage engagement among employees through participation in various sports activities, in addition to discovering the football talents capable of representing the group in

future competitions.” Yusuf Al Balushi, Head of the Sports Committee at Nama Water Services Company, said: “This tournament goes beyond the game. Sports are a cornerstone of healthy communities, promoting physical well-being and vitally contributing to economic growth.” Al Balushi praised the entire team for their success in organizing this year’s annual football tournament. “This win represents the culmination of the hard work and dedication displayed throughout all tournament rounds.” “The company’s annual tournament has become a key event, fostering employee engagement and boosting technical skills. This not only strengthens ties among employees but also elevates the company’s team to compete effectively in inter-company and institutional competitions across Oman,” he elaborated. The ceremony concluded by awarding not only the winning teams but also recognising outstanding individual performances.

ROUND-UP

Matterz concludes Teqdar and Teqdar 60 Minutes

Teqdar programme aimed at upskilling the young national workforce to increase their employability and Teqdar 60 minutes further supported this by guiding and supporting the participants

MUSCAT: Matterz, in partnership with bp Oman, has concluded two programmes Teqdar and Teqdar 60 minutes in its fifth edition, in a closing ceremony held under the patronage of Sayyid Dr Munther bin Hilal Al Busaidi, Vice-Chairman of the Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit. Teqdar programme aimed at upskilling the young national workforce to increase their employability. Teqdar 60 minutes further supported this by guiding and supporting the participants toward exploring potential career paths in a safe environment and working with mentors to develop their strategic plans to achieve their goals. This year, a total of 193 participants benefitted from the



programme and 30 trainees advanced to the final training stage of the programme, of which 20% are currently employed. The programmes included various training workshops, interactive activities, on-going assessments, curriculum vitae guidance and real-time practice for job interviews with human resources specialists, simulations, and employment clinics. This provided an integrated training experience,

reducing the gap between the job-seekers' abilities and the labour market requirements. Maryam Al Amri, CEO of Matterz, commented, "Teqdar programme is an innovative model designed to create a positive impact on jobseekers in Oman. It works by upskilling and developing their capabilities to meet the requirements of the current labour market and in the future. This is done through comprehensive training which is



designed based on local and international research, as well as by consulting with various experts." The programme provided a three-month internship opportunity in both private and public sectors along with various consultation sessions facilitated by experts, notably in Teqdar 60 minutes, utilising mentor experiences to share knowledge and skills with the trainees. Ibrahim Al Hinai, Social Investment Manager at bp Oman, Kuwait, and Qatar, commented: "We are proud of the impact we have created through the Teqdar programme delivered by Matterz, which focuses on developing our national capabilities and increasing employment prospects for our future generation. This programme aligns with bp's sustainability aim of helping people build sustainable livelihoods and resilience as well as Oman 2040's vision of enhancing employment." Through the last five cycles of the programme, more than 860 trainees benefitted from the programme of which 14% are currently employed.

ISLAMIC FINANCE

Bank Nizwa launches Escrow services, heightening trust and transparency in real estate projects

MUSCAT: In response to the Sultanate of Oman's flourishing real estate landscape, Bank Nizwa, the leading and most trusted Islamic bank in the country, recently announced the launch of escrow account services. Designed to fortify trust and transparency in real estate dealings, this strategic initiative aligns with governmental directives outlined in Royal Decree 30/2018 and Ministerial Decision 72/2019 from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development which mandates that all real estate developers must direct funds related to projects with off-plan sales into Escrow accounts. As real estate transactions become increasingly complex, stakeholders seek the security of holding funds or assets in escrow until project completion. Developers are required to establish a bank account in the project's name at a licensed bank within the Sultanate, while buyers or project financiers are obliged to deposit payments into it. To meet this demand for efficient facilitation, there is a strong call for escrow service providers, and Bank Nizwa, renowned for its excellence and integrity, stands well-poised as the trusted partner throughout this process. As an escrow agent, Bank Nizwa assumes the pivotal responsibility of accepting, holding, and disbursing funds in accordance with the terms of the escrow agreement. Acting as a reliable intermediary, Bank Nizwa aims to streamline real estate transactions, enhance security, and contribute to the growth and sta-



bility of Oman's real estate sector. Supported by a team of seasoned professionals, the bank pledges efficiency at every juncture, delivering a hassle-free experience for all stakeholders while upholding the highest levels of excellence in its services. Khalid Al Barwani, Chief Wholesale Banking Officer, Bank Nizwa, said, "Our escrow services go beyond being a compliance measure; it serves as a cornerstone of confidence, ensuring the protection of all stakeholders' interests. With a plethora of new projects dotting Oman's horizon, these services will catalyse holistic growth within the real estate ecosystem. "By providing a secure framework for funds management, we aspire to bolster investor confidence, nurturing a conducive environment for sustainable development. Beyond property transactions, our initiative resonates as a pivotal contributor to the overarching economic goals, harnessing the sector's vitality to attract both domestic and international investors." It is worth noting that Bank Nizwa's Escrow account upholds the principles of Islamic finance, emphasising fairness and transparency at its core.

INAUGURATION

Saud Bahwan Group achieves new milestone investing in new Chery showroom in Al Hail



MUSCAT: With the expanding popularity of Chery Automobile in Oman, Saud Bahwan Group recently inaugurated the latest Chery Showroom in Al Hail, Muscat. The Guest of Honour at the function was Sheikh Ahmad Bin Ali Al Shehhi, Wali of Seeb. Attending the occasion were guests from various public and private sectors. The grand inauguration of the Chery Al Hail showroom offered an opportunity for automotive enthusiasts to experience the benefits of a strong partnership between Saud Bahwan Group and Chery Automobile. Sharing his thoughts on the occasion, Abdullah Mohamed Bahwan, Managing Director - Corporate, Saud Bahwan Group said, "For us at Saud Bahwan Group, contributing to Oman's growing economy has always been a priority. Through the investment made on the new Chery showroom in Al Hail, the Group has emphasised on offering talented Omanis opportunities to be at the forefront and play a vital role in making the brand Chery among the top automotive brands in Oman. Over the years, Saud Bahwan Group has

built a strong reputation for giving talented Omanis several platforms to demonstrate their skills and contribute to the Group's success. This milestone Chery showroom in Al Hail, is another step by the Group to offer Omanis an opportunity to succeed and grow whilst also contributing to Oman economy's robust growth story." Speaking about the partnership between Saud Bahwan Group and Chery Automobile and the Chery Al Hail showroom, he said, "Chery Automobile is one of China's top automotive brands. Evolving with rapidly changing technologies and advanced engineering methods, Chery Automobile has seen accelerated international growth over the years. Chery Automobile was awarded the first place in the 2023 J. D. Power China Initial Quality Study among Chinese brands and is listed by Kantar as one of the Top Chinese Brand Builders in 2023. Through the introduction of the Chery Al Hail showroom, we look forward to welcoming our customers to experience some of the finest high quality automotive products with the support and assurance from Saud Bahwan Group."

TRANSFORMING PAYMENTS

Sohar International introduces Soft POS



MUSCAT: Affirming its position as a leading digital bank in Oman, Sohar International, the fastest-growing bank in Oman, continues its commitment to enhancing customer experiences with the introduction of its Soft POS solution. Designed to revolutionise the payment landscape, Soft POS empowers businesses to conduct sales transactions effortlessly and securely through their Android smart devices. Sohar International's Soft POS solution enhances the payment experience for both merchants and customers by offering a convenient method for accepting payments. Customers can make secure transactions using their contactless cards, with the added convenience of accepting payments through Samsung Pay. By simply downloading the user-friendly Sohar International POS app, businesses can seamlessly integrate their NFC-enabled Android devices and eliminate the need for traditional POS machines. This advancement not only enhances convenience but also reduces procurement costs, streamlines merchant onboarding processes, and eliminates on-site installation and maintenance expenses. Additionally, the solution emphasises "Go-Green"

as a prominent feature, as it eliminates operational issues faced by merchants on paper roll supply for traditional POS systems, further aligning with sustainable business practices. Sajeel Bashiruddin, Chief Digital Officer at Sohar International, emphasised the necessity of adapting to the rapid evolution of the digital landscape. "In order to thrive, it's imperative to extend payment methods beyond cash. The soft POS is not only meeting this imperative but also establishing a new benchmark for seamless and convenient payment solutions. At Sohar International, we are committed to driving digital transformation within the banking sector. With the introduction of Soft POS, the bank aims to catalyse growth and innovation for businesses, unlocking unprecedented levels of convenience and efficiency in their day-to-day operations," Bashiruddin emphasised. The introduction of this innovative solution perfectly aligns with the bank's dedication to delivering exceptional banking experiences and supporting the success of its customers. The soft POS solution aims to offer innovative alternatives, enhancing payment procedures for merchants.



mai alkaline

pH 9.1 to 9.5

Alkaline Ionized Drinking Water

OmanOasis OmanOasisOfficial OmanOasisWater



HYDRATE SMARTLY

- ✓ Ultra-hydrating
- ✓ Revitalizing
- ✓ Energizing
- ✓ Electrolytes

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