



FOREIGN MINISTER, PALESTINIAN OFFICIAL CALL FOR GAZA CEASEFIRE

Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister and Hussein Al Sheikh, Secretary General of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organisation discussed during a phone call the developments in Palestine and the repercussions of the Israeli heinous war on the Gaza Strip. **>A5**



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THE MINISTRY IS WORKING ON LAUNCHING THE UNIFIED NATIONAL PORTAL PROJECT FOR ELECTRONIC GOVERNMENT SERVICES IN THE COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SECTOR FOR 2024, AND IMPLEMENTING A NUMBER OF PROJECTS FOR THE NATIONAL CENTRE FOR SPACE, AI.

ENG. SAID HAMOUD AL MAAWALI, MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY



INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN TRANSPORT & LOGISTICS REACH OMR1.6BN

Transport ministry reviewed plans for the current year and the projects implemented in 2023

MUSCAT: Total investment opportunities for the first and second phases of transport and logistics sector stood at OMR1.6 billion, said Eng. Said Hamoud Al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, on Sunday.

He pointed out that during the past year, 98 tenders were awarded with an estimated value of more than OMR612 million, including 56 tenders for the transport and logistics sector, and 32 others for the information and communications technology sector.

This was stated during the 11th media briefing of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, which was held to review the Ministry's executive plan for the current year (2024) and the projects implemented in 2023.

He explained during a visual presentation during the media briefing, that the Omani ports received about 11,000 ships in 2023. The volume of general and bulk cargo reached more than 93 million tonnes, and the number of Omani flagged ships and marine units was 662.

The minister added that the performance rate of government institutions in measuring government digital transformation reached 72 percent, as the procedures for 578 digital services were simplified.

He further said that the value of the partnerships and deals that were concluded at the COMEX 2023 stood at OMR40 million.

He pointed out that the cost of maintaining asphalt and dirt roads during 2023 amounted to OMR114 million. **>A4**

THE LAUNCH DATE OF OMANI SATELLITE WILL BE ANNOUNCED DURING THE COMING PERIOD, AND IT WILL BE DEDICATED TO COMMUNICATIONS SECTOR, SAID THE TRANSPORT MINISTER

THE TRANSPORT MINISTRY SEEKS TO BEGIN ASSIGNING THE WORK OF IMPLEMENTING THE JOINT RAILWAY PROJECT (SOHAR - ABU DHABI) AND PREPARE A DRAFT LAW FOR THE PROJECT

TO STRENGTHEN TOURISM CONNECTIVITY IN OMAN DURING CURRENT YEAR, THE TRANSPORT MINISTRY IS PLANNING TO BUILD AN ALTERNATIVE ROAD LINKING SOUTH AL BATINAH TO AL JABAL AL AKHDAR

Muscat Metro project advances: Consultancy studies set for completion by the year-end

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman's strategic urban development plan continues to progress with the Muscat Metro project, currently in its preliminary phase as consultancy studies are slated for completion by year-end.

During remarks on Sunday, Eng. Saeed bin Hamoud bin Saeed Al Mawali, Minister of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology (MTCIT), said, "The ongoing studies concerning the Muscat Metro are on track for completion by the end of this year."

The proposed metro line, requiring a huge investment, is envisioned to stretch over 55km and encompass 42 passenger stations.

It's worth noting that



MTCIT initiated the financial bidding process for the first consultancy study (phase-1 pre-feasibility outline) for the Muscat Metro last year.

The Muscat Metro's primary objectives include alleviating traffic congestion, enhancing the city's appeal to tourists, and establishing an efficient mass transit system connecting the

commercial centres of Ruwi and Muttrah to Seeb in the west, with an additional branch to the airport and integration with other public transportation modes.

Additionally, the metro project aims to contribute to environmental sustainability by reducing the city's carbon footprint.

The enhancement of the public transport infrastructure aligns with the Ministry's ambitious Greater Muscat Development Plan, aimed at accommodating the anticipated population growth, fostering investment, improving transportation networks, enhancing service quality, bolstering infrastructure, and preserving the environment. **>A3**



Campaign to combat palm weevil in Al Dhahirah Governorate continues

A4

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN Sorting results for Hajj announced

1 The Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs announced the results of sorting for those eligible for Hajj for the 1445 AH season via text messages. Those eligible for Hajj are required to complete contracting procedures and electronic payment of 50% the Hajj companies. **>A2**



SPORTS India beat England by massive 434 runs

2 A five-wicket haul by spinner Ravindra Jadeja and top-notch knocks from skipper Rohit Sharma, Shubman Gill, double centurion Yashasvi Jaiswal and debutant Sarfaraz Khan made England's 'Bazball' brand of cricket surrender to Team India, losing by 434 runs in the third Test. **>A8**

MARKET Pact inked for battery recycling plant

3 Sohar Port and Freezone signed a land lease pact with Starsun Sohar to establish a recycling plant dedicated to the sustainable management of lead-acid batteries in Sohar Freezone. Ensuring compliance with environment standards, this will boost the recycling industry. **>B1**

HITS HOUSEHOLDS

Rising onion prices prompt consumption cut in Oman

Times News Service

MUSCAT: As onion prices surge in Oman, consumers and shopkeepers alike are grappling with the repercussions of this sudden spike.

The once-affordable kitchen staple has become a luxury item for many households, prompting significant adjustments in consumption patterns.

In conversations with local residents and expatriates, sentiments of frustration and concern are palpable.

In her comments to *Times of Oman*, Saada Al Mahrouqi, a homemaker in Muscat, said: "Onions are a fundamental ingredient in our cooking, but with prices soaring, we have no choice but to



cut back on our consumption."

"It's challenging to adjust our recipes and dietary habits, but we simply cannot afford to spend so much on onions alone."

Shopkeepers are also feeling the

impact as they witness changes in consumer behaviour.

K Ravi, a grocer in Ruwi, said, "Customers are buying fewer onions than before. They're either opting for smaller quantities

or substituting with alternative ingredients."

According to a manager at a leading supermarket, "Prices were hovering around 280-300 baisas per kg in November.

However, over the past few months, the suspension of onion exports from India has led to a spike in prices with the prices hovering between 700-800 baisas per kg. India accounts for nearly 45 percent of the onion imports to Oman.

"It had reached 820bs per kg last week but on Sunday, it has slightly declined to 780 baisas per kg. Onions are now generally being imported from Pakistan, Türkiye, Egypt, Yemen, and Iran."

The ripple effects of the onion

price hike extend beyond individual households with small businesses, in particular, hotels and restaurants, impacting heavily.

"Onions are a basic commodity consumed by every household. When prices rise, it puts pressure on household budgets, leading to reduced spending on other goods and services," said Ranju, an academic.

"For us, onions are a crucial part of our cuisine. But with the prices skyrocketing, we're forced to rethink our meals," lamented Om Singh, an expatriate from India residing in Muscat. "It's not just about affordability; it's about maintaining our cultural culinary traditions within budget constraints." **>A3**



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25⁰
MUSCAT





PRAYER
TIMINGS

Dhuhr.....	12:26pm
Asr.....	3:43pm
Maghrib.....	6:09pm
Isha.....	7:20pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....	5:21am

Forum seeks to promote educational opportunities for scholarship students



The summit aims to showcase universities in Oman and the GCC as recognised institutions globally

MUSCAT: Deliberations of ICEF Middle East Scholarship Summit began in Muscat on Sunday. The 2-day event is hosted by the Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, in collaboration with the ICEF.

Dr. Rahma Ibrahim Al Mahrooqi, Minister of Higher Educa-



tion, Research and Innovation stressed the importance of this forum as it closely follows the success achieved by the private higher education institutions of Oman in 2024 edition of the “Qs” rankings.

In his turn, Markus Badde, CEO of ICEF explained that the forum seeks to explore opportunities for

the growth and promoting international education for scholarship students in the Middle East.

Three sessions were held during the first day of the summit. The first one was on regional visions and the opportunities for universities and scholarships, while the second one was on maximising

the value of scholarships in a sustainable way. Meanwhile, the third session was a roundtable themed discussion.

The summit aims to introduce universities in the Sultanate of Oman and the GCC countries as recognised institutions globally.

The event seeks to facilitate co-



operation and activate exchange programmes between institutions concerned with scholarships in the GCC countries and international educational institutions.

Moreover, it aims at enhancing student exchange and academic opportunities for Omani students and students from the GCC

countries.

As many as 100 international educational institutions and more than 150 Gulf government bodies are taking part in the summit, in addition to a number of representatives of relevant private scholarship universities and colleges.

-ONA

MORE THAN A TEACHER: A STORY FROM OMAN

Documentary highlights investment opportunities available in Oman



MUSCAT: The National Museum, represented by the Learning Centre, on Sunday hosted the inauguration ceremony of the documentary titled “More than a Teacher: A Story from Oman”.

The event was held under the auspices of Dr. Madiha Ahmed Al Shaibani, Minister of Education.

Aisha Sahar Wahid Al Kharousi, the film's producer, said that “the film celebrates Oman's rich history, compelling present, and promising future.

It spotlights the story of Don Yager as an example among countless stories that embody the scope of the bilateral relations between Oman and the United States and, by extension, the rest of the world.

It highlights the wise vision of the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said in prioritising the education sector since the early days of the renaissance, preparing leadership cadres in various sectors.

It subtly highlights, too, the investment opportunities abundant in Oman in its renewed renaissance under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq.”

Nayef bin Ali Al Abri, Chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority (one of the scholarship's graduates), said “The inauguration of the documentary that tells the story of a man who believed in this land and came from the eighties and then became attached to this good land. The film is a tool to promote the Sultanate of Oman and its cultural and tourism heritage and treasures”.



American professor Don Yager said that the documentary represents the fraternal relationship that unites him with the graduates of the program.

He added that it also evokes memories and important meetings that formed the depth of the bonds between them, and shows the leadership positions that the students have reached, contributing to developing the wheel of development in the country.

He explained that the film tells the stories of some Americans residing in the Sultanate of Oman and the special pride they hold for Oman in their hearts.

The film also sheds light on the modern renaissance of Oman and the successful initiatives and achievements related to the his-



tory and culture of Oman, the arts, tourism and the environment, which were achieved, thanks to the wise vision of the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said, which made the Sultanate of Oman a role model in development and international cooperation.

The documentary presents a distinctive cinematic experience, taking the audience on a sentimental and impactful journey that unveils significant aspects of the marvelous beauty of the Sultanate of Oman. It highlights its touristic charm, unique cultural diversity, and rich history.

Additionally, the documentary sheds light on the journey of the American educator “Don Yager” after being commissioned by the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said to manage the scholarship program of the Sultan's School from 1980 until his retirement in 2005.

Seminal encounters

The documentary explores the enduring relationship between programme graduates and Don Yager, recalling memories and seminal encounters that deepened the bonds between them. It also showcases the students' leadership positions, actively contributing to the development of the country.

Further, the documentary narrates stories of some Americans residing in Oman, expressing their special fondness for the country.

It also highlights modern Oman's renaissance and successful initiatives and achievements

related to its history, culture, arts, tourism, and environment.

These achievements are credited to the wise vision of the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said making Oman a role model in development and international cooperation.

The documentary reflects the broad creative interaction initiated by various stakeholders, all Omanis from production to direction, editing, and music.

The concept of “A Story from Oman” serves as an excellent and effective creative umbrella to showcase impactful and inspiring stories of individuals influenced by Oman, whether tourists or residents.

It provides an opportunity for young and creative filmmakers to explore their talents, express their artistic voices, and simultaneously promote their beloved country.

This step marks the opening of the “A Story from Oman” series, paving the way for the Omani film industry to showcase authenticity and innovative modernity to the world.

The documentary will be screened at the Sultan's School and later in the United States, in collaboration with educational institutes, cultural organizations and entities in the film industry and various creative circles, to raise awareness about the Sultanate of Oman across different states.

The event was attended by dignitaries, academics, students, and individuals in the cultural and creative space. -ONA

PILGRIMAGE

Results for those eligible for 1445 Hajj announced



MUSCAT: The Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs on Sunday announced the results of sorting for those eligible for Hajj for the 1445 AH season via text messages.

Those eligible for Hajj are required to complete contracting procedures and electronic payment of 50 percent for the Hajj companies they have joined within 10 days via the electronic registration system for pilgrims of the Sultanate of Oman (hajj.om).

This was stated during a meeting of the Permanent Committee for Hajj Affairs, headed by Ahmed bin Saleh bin Sufyan Al Rashdi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Endowments and Religious

Affairs.

The electronic registration system for pilgrims in the Sultanate of Oman is considered one of the most prominent governed systems for registering pilgrims.

The system automatically sorts those eligible according to specific criteria that take into account the priority of eligibility. The system is characterized by transparency and speed in showing the results and sending messages to the eligible ones. This step facilitates early preparation and selection for the citizen and resident who intends to go to perform the Hajj and to choose companies specialised in operating hajj missions. -ONA

DR YASMIN AL BULUSHI

Knowledge Oman Chairperson quits

Times News Service

MUSCAT: After successfully completing a year of community service, Dr Yasmin Al Bulushi has stepped down as the Chairperson of Knowledge Oman, from yesterday.

In a heartfelt message shared on various social media platforms, Dr Yasmin expressed her appreciation and gratitude to Knowledge Oman's founder and

leadership team for the opportunity given to serve the platform and for the support rendered throughout her tenure.

“I am immensely grateful to have had the opportunity to serve in this role and to be a part of such an impactful initiatives led by Knowledge Oman. The experience has been nothing short of transformative. I leave with a heart full of gratitude and memories that will last a lifetime.”

CAPTIVATING TRADITIONS

‘Waves of Colors’ exhibition: Unveiling Oman’s vibrant canvas

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The enchanting beauty and rich cultural heritage of Oman took centre stage at the ‘Waves of Colors’ exhibition, mesmerising visitors at Oman Avenues Mall recently.

In a celebration of Oman's diverse landscapes and captivating traditions, the exhibition invited guests on a beautiful journey through the country's natural wonders and artistic expressions.

Oman's rugged mountains, majestic forts, meandering streams, and lush valleys have long inspired artists from around the world, drawing them into its colourful

embrace.

Curated by Rema Sivakumar, the exhibition featured the works of 19 artists, each offering a unique interpretation of Oman's allure through various artistic styles and genres.

The focal point of attraction was a captivating display of free-style sculptures, showcasing the artists' skill and imagination. Among the treasures, a standout piece was the captivating mirror art, igniting conversations and awe-inspiring moments among visitors.

Inaugurated by Abdul Latheef, Managing Director of Badr Al Samaa Group of Hospitals and expatriate representative on the Oman

Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, the event underscored the growing appreciation for art and culture in Oman.

Over three days, thousands of curious visitors thronged the venue, eager to immerse themselves in the kaleidoscope of colours and textures adorning the atrium.

Masterpieces

The participating artists unveiled their masterpieces, offering unique perspectives on Oman's natural wonders and cultural heritage.

From breathtaking photographs capturing the essence of the landscape to intricately crafted scul-

tures, the exhibition celebrated the boundless creativity of the human spirit.

Notable artists such as Aisha Zahir Dosani, Reji Chandi, Mina Rezaee, were among the artists who showcased their work along with Rema Sivakumar, Mheart, Neethu Chabria, Parul B Razdan, Mehraan Badbor, Mohammed, Ajayan Poyara, Krishna Syam, Vaddepalli Kavitha Shali, Radhakrishnan, Anuradha Shanbhag, Kavitha Shali, Rachel Epen, Simran, and Sutanwi Raic.

Beyond its visual allure, the exhibition served as a platform for dialogue, fostering connections between artists and the public.



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COMMENTARY

The Marvel of the Empty Park



SALEH AL-SHAIBANY

I would not have noticed it if it had not been for the slight wind that was blowing over the top of a large thorny tree.

It was the only rose in the bush and it was doing its best to hold on against the strength of the wind. I braked my car but the driver behind me did not expect it and honked angrily at me.

I raised my hand from the window to apologise and parked the car safely.

I walked through the gate of the public park and found a bench and sat on it. At that time of the day, I was the only one inside there. It was eleven in the morning and most of the people were in their offices or busy with their routines.

I was lucky because the bench I was sitting on was only a few meters from the rose. I took a photo of the red rose from different angles. I put the phone down and admired it. Then a rustle from the bush behind me took away my intense concentration.

I looked and saw a black and white cat standing there. I thought amusingly that the beautiful rose had another admirer. It was not another human but an animal who had nothing better to do like I was.

The cat sniffed at my feet then rubbed itself on my legs.



I patted its back and it looked at me straight on my eyes. I stroked its head. The cat purred and closed its eyes to enjoy the attention. Then a loud noise from the road made by the engine of a passing truck made the cat jump.

It ran back to the bush. I now returned my gaze at the rose. It was still swaying from the slight force of the wind. I fought the impulse of walking towards the flower and pluck it out. But then another admirer flew from nowhere and started making a circle around the rose. It was a large yellow butterfly.

It had all the intention of landing on it but the wind made it difficult for the butterfly to land. So I leaned back to watch the display. I watched the colours of three different species moving in the air. The petals of the rose were red, the leaves of the bush were green and the butterfly was yellow.

I felt lucky because I did not have to pay for the entertainment. To add to the magic of the moment, a sparrow flew in and landed on a branch of a tree just a few meters away on my left. It started chirping noisily. It made the cat come out of the bush. The animal looked at the bird. I knew what was in its mind. It was a meal but there was no way the cat could crawl up there and get it.

I clapped noisily and the bird flew away. The cat did not like it and stared at me. I clapped again and it quickly went back into the bush. When I looked back at the rose, the butterfly had given up landing on it. It was gone but the wind was still ruffling up the red petals.

Minutes later, I had enough of the marvels of the empty park but I felt like I should give it the last bow before walking out.

ONION PRICE

Price will stabilise, hope consumers

<FROM A1 As Oman grapples with the consequences of soaring onion prices, stakeholders are closely monitoring the situation, hoping for stability in the market and relief for consumers.

However, until prices stabilise, Omanis are forced to navigate this challenging landscape, mak-

ing tough choices to adapt to the changing economic reality.

B Sujoy, a banker, said: "It's not just about onions; it's a reflection of broader supply chain disruptions and market dynamics. As a result, consumers are forced to tighten their belts, impacting overall spending patterns."

As Oman navigates the chal-

lenges posed by soaring onion prices, stakeholders are urging for measures to stabilise the market and alleviate the burden on consumers.

Until then, residents, including expatriates, are left grappling with the realities of higher living costs and the need to adapt to this new economic landscape.

SHANGRI-LA

SHANGRI-LA

FROM SHANGRI-LA

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AANGAN

IMPLEMENTATION

<FROM A1 Oman-KSA rail link

Al Mawali also disclosed ongoing studies for a railway link between Oman and Saudi Arabia, while the joint railway endeavour between Oman and the UAE (Sohar-Abu Dhabi) is slated for implementation within the year, alongside the formulation of relevant legislation.

The landmark Muscat Metro project was initially announced in 2021, with the current phase

of tendering primarily focusing on the pre-feasibility stage and soliciting support for critical decision-making from the Ministry.

The Ministry has commissioned an impact study to evaluate the socio economic advantages of the project for the Muscat governorate and broader economy, ensuring the long-term viability of the proposed metro system.

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MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT, COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Plan to build a dry dock, open first hydrogen-powered station

<FROM A1 The ministry paved more than 200 kilometres, including 16 kilometres of new lengths, and 185 kilometres of existing roads damaged by climatic conditions, at a cost amounting to about OMR96 million.

Al Maawali explained that in 2024, the ministry seeks to establish a dry dock and a project to build and maintain medium and large vessels, open the first hydrogen-powered station in the Sultanate of Oman, and begin assigning the work of implementing the joint railway project (Sohar - Abu Dhabi) and preparing a draft law for the project.

The minister said, “The Ministry is working on launching the unified national portal project for electronic government services in the communications and information technology sector for the current year (2024), and implementing a number of projects for the National Centre for Space, Artificial Intelligence and Advanced Technology.”

He stated that the Omani satellite, the launch date of which will be announced during the coming period, will be dedicated to communications.

For his part, Eng. Khamis Mohammed Al Shamakhi, Undersec-



retary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Transport, explained that the most prominent strategic road projects for the current year (2024) are the project to complete Al Batinah Coastal Road (Part One, Phase One), which includes completing the remaining parts from the Wilayat of Barka to the Wilayat of A'Suwaiq, in addition to A'Suwaiq link and Barka link, completing the construction works of the Al Sharqiyah Expressway (Al Kamil - Sur), and the

remaining works of the Al Batinah Expressway (third package), in addition to the design and implementation of (Diba - Lima - Khasab) road in Musandam Governorate, and the existing dual-carriageway from the wilayats of Al Kamil and Al Wafi to the Wilayat of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali in the South Al Sharqiyah Governorate, and (Adam-Thumrait) dual-carriageway project, (parts third, fourth, and fifth: Haima-Thumrait).

Regarding logistical connectivity projects for the year (2024), Al

Shamakhi said that the ministry is currently implementing Khazaen Economic Zone's roads project, which is planned to be completed in the first quarter of this year.

He added that the ministry has proposed a project to complete the dual-carriageway leading to the border crossing in the Empty Quarter (first phase), and implement a surface intersection on the Souq roundabout in the Wilayat of Ibri, the remaining works of Al Batinah Expressway (Package 5 - Free Zone Link) in Sohar, and the

establishment of a factory for Nakheel Oman Development Company in the Wilayat of Nizwa, Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah.

Regarding tourism connectivity projects for the current year (2024), Al Shamakhi said, “The ministry is working to find an alternative road linking South Al Batinah to Al Jabal Al Akhdar, design and implement the Wadi Bani Jaber Road (Phase 2), complete the remaining works for the Saih Qatna Road in Al Jabal Al Akhdar, and implement the Jabal Shams Road.

As for road rehabilitation projects during the year 2024, He pointed out that the ministry will rehabilitate several roads, the most important of which are Bidbid-Nizwa, Al Hazm-A'Rustaq in the Wilayat of A'Rustaq, and paving Al Aflaj road in the Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi. The Ministry will also work to repair the damage to the Nadan-Bahla Road.

For his part, Dr. Ali Amer Al Shithani, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Communications and Information Technology, pointed out that the value of internal investments in artificial intelligence (AI) in the private sector in the Sultanate of Oman during the

past year (2023) stood at about OMR30 million.

He added that the ministry seeks to digitize basic services by 80 percent by the end of 2025, explaining that these services have been initiated in the “Antakhib” application for the Shura Council and the Childhood and Elderly Benefit of the Social Protection Fund.

Al Shithani said, “The ministry is working on creating a generative artificial intelligence model for Omani content that will be trained on Omani cultural, historical, artistic, scientific, cultural and political content, and starting the national institutional infrastructure project for information technology and digital transformation, inaugurating the “Hadatha” Award for cybersecurity, inaugurating “Hadatha” centres for the cybersecurity industry at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, starting the space accelerator project, and starting the project to upgrade the electronic certification system”.

During the media briefing, the “Green Mobility Award” was launched, the organisation of the second Green Mobility Forum was announced during the current year (2024), and the designation of the 30th of April each year as a day for the logistics sector in Oman. **-ONA**

CAMPAIGN TO COMBAT PALM WEEVIL IN AL DHAHIRAH GOVERNORATE CONTINUES

The campaign is expected to continue until the 28th of this month and aims to combat the red palm weevil in an area of 7,920 acres

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The fourth expanded campaign to combat the red palm weevil continued on Sunday in the wilayats of Al Dhahirah Governorate. The Directorate General of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in Al Dhahirah Governorate said that the campaign was launched last Sunday and targets 101 villages in the various wilayats of the governorate where this insect is widespread.

The campaign is expected to continue until the 28th of this month and aims to combat the red palm weevil in an area of 7,920 acres will also discover the insect, treat and remove the palm trees infected with it and to reduce the negative effects it produces and also to maintain sustainability of this important vital resource.

The red palm weevil is a serious pest that threatens the health and sustainability of date palms and causes huge losses in the palm industry.

During the campaign, farmers and various segments of society

will be educated about the importance of dealing with the red palm weevil and taking the necessary preventive measures.

The 67 field teams, with about 314 participants participating during the campaign, work to monitor symptoms and take immediate preventive and control measures, whether by treating infected palm trees or removing severely infected palm trees to limit their spread.

It is worth noting that the implementation of campaigns and work camps to combat the palm weevil insect comes within the framework of the interest of the Directorate General of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in Al Dhahirah Governorate and its continuous follow-up to preserve date palm trees and in implementation of the integrated management project for the red palm weevil insect, which is implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources to eliminate the insect to preserve and raise the productivity of the Omani palm crop.



COMPREHENSIVE POLITICAL SOLUTION

Sayyid Badr, Palestinian official stress importance of ceasefire in Gaza Strip

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister and Hussein Al Sheikh, Secretary General of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organisation discussed during a phone call the developments in Palestine and the repercussions of the Israeli heinous war on the Gaza Strip.

Release of all prisoners
The two sides stressed the importance of reaching an immediate ceasefire, the release of all prisoners and detainees, the entry of necessary humanitarian and relief needs into Gaza and ending to the siege on it, as well as the

withdrawal of all Israeli forces from the Strip, in preparation for achieving a just and comprehensive political solution to the Palestinian cause.

Two-state solution
They also underlined the significance for the international community to recognise the establishment of an independent Palestinian state and the practical implementation of the two-state solution, while emphasising the leadership of the Palestinian National Authority as the legitimate representative of all sects and faction of the Palestinian people.

— OMA



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Symposium on AI held

MUSCAT: Activities of the annual symposium of strategic issues titled “Artificial Intelligence and Sustainability of Development” began on Sunday in the National Defence College at the Academy of Strategic and Defence Studies.

The event was held under the auspices of MajGen Abdullah Ali Al Harthy, Assistant Inspector General of Police and Customs for Operations.

The symposium includes a set of themes, most importantly the national challenges and artificial intelligence, and international experiences in utilising artificial intelligence.

It also reviews the importance of investing in artificial intelligence technologies and ways to apply them in the fields of security,



health, economics, and education in a manner that enhances the quality of life

It is worth noting that the annual symposium on strategic issues comes within the curriculum of the 11th national defence course, which runs till 22 February.

A number of government units in Oman and some academics and specialists from Arab and foreign countries are taking part in the symposium. — OMA

AUTHORITY FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES DEVELOPMENT

SMEs registered at ASMED increased by 30% to 135,064 at the end of 2023

MUSCAT: The Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED) organised on Sunday a media briefing in which it highlighted 2023 efforts and indicators and touched on strategic approaches for 2024.

In devising its annual plan for 2024, the Authority relied on enhancing the culture of entrepreneurship, continuing to implement programmes to accelerate the expansion of enterprises regionally and globally, maximising the benefit of local added value programmes and access to financing with broader and more innovative options, as well as progressing at an accelerated pace to achieve the digital transformation of its systems, programs and services.

Halima Rashid Al Zari, Chairperson of ASMED affirmed that the authority’s working teams in various governorates of Oman work diligently to meet the aspirations of entrepreneurs in vari-



ous sectors.

She also touched on the achievement made by Oman in the entrepreneurship index as it ranked in the 11th place out of 49 countries participating in the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor report for 2023/2024, 27 places ahead of its ranking in 2022/2023.

She said that Authority will organise an exhibition in March of every year in governorates of Oman, noting that the exhibition will display products of enterprises.

Al Zari said that the SMEs sec-

tor in Oman is witnessing progress at a rapid pace. She elaborated: “The number of SMEs registered at ASMED increased by 30 percent by the end of 2023 to reach 135,064, compared to 104,141 in 2022. The number of enterprises holding an entrepreneurship card (Riyada) reached approximately 29,000 by the end of 2023, representing 22% of the total SMEs registered at ASMED.”

Ishaq Khalifa Al Shukaili, Director of the Local Added Value Department at ASMED pointed



out that the number of SMEs at various business incubators stands at 103. These enterprises, he said, have managed to provide 382 job opportunities for the Omani youth in various business activities and generated revenue of more than OMR4 million.

He explained that the number of small enterprises whose classification upgraded to medium enterprises during 2023 reached 167, while the number of medium enterprises that grew into large enterprises reached 31 institutions. — OMA

Announcement

Vendor Registration Announcement

Oman Flour Mills Co. invites SMEs holding a Riyada card to join our network of suppliers.

Established in 1977, Oman Flour Mills Co. SAOG began its journey with a wheat milling capacity of 150 metric tons per day, gradually expanding to today's impressive capacity of 800 MT per day.

From a humble milling company, we have evolved into a diversified Group with over 15 entities, operating across various industries.

We believe in empowering SMEs. Together, we can contribute to their growth and foster a resilient business ecosystem.

To be a part of this endeavour, follow the guidelines on our Vendor Registration Page and complete the registration process: www.omanflourmills.com/VendorRegistration

For any inquiries or more information, you can contact our Vendor Management team at vendor@omanflourmills.com or call us on 24717329

The deadline for submissions is **29th February 2024**

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INVEST IN OMAN'S FUTURE

SAFE - FIXED AND ATTRACTIVE RETURNS - LIQUIDITY

Auction of RO.100 million (with Greenshoe option) 3 years @ 4.9% p.a.

Oman Development Bonds

On behalf of the Government of Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Finance, the Central Bank of Oman announces an issue of Government Development Bonds to be sold by auction. The 69th Issue of Government Development Bonds will be issued on Thursday, 15/02/2024, carrying a coupon rate of 4.9% per annum for a maturity period of 3 years (maturing on 27/02/2027). These Bonds will be auctioned on Sunday, 25/02/2024. Investors may apply for these Bonds through competitive bidding only.

Security of Capital

Total security is offered as the Bonds are registered and transferable only by means of a document evidencing the transaction between a buyer and a seller through Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX). The Bonds are direct and unconditional obligations of the Government of the Sultanate of Oman.

Fixed and Attractive Returns

Interest of 4.9% per annum is payable every 6 months during throughout the tenure of the Bonds from the date of issue (Thursday, 27/2/2024). The interest will be paid semi-annually on 27th August and 27th February, every year till maturity of the Bond.

Liquidity

The Bonds can be listed and traded before maturity in MSX at the prevailing market price.

Collateral Advantage

The Bonds can be used as a collateral security to obtain loans from any licensed commercial bank.

Who Can Invest?

Resident and Non-resident Investors, such as Banks, Financial Institutions, Companies, Individuals and any other entity of any nationality.

How to buy the bonds?

Investor may obtain bonds through any licensed commercial bank operating in the Sultanate of Oman, upon the submission of eligible application form. Investor must provide the MSX Investor Code in the application.

MSX Investor Code

Anyone who does not have MSX Investor Code, can obtain it from Muscat Clearing and Depository Co. (MCD) through their website at least one day prior to submitting the application to the commercial bank. (www.mcd.gov.om)

For any enquires:

Tel: +968 24822222 | 24822297 | 24822280 | 24822235

Fax: +968 24810555

E-mail: mcd.support@mcd.gov.om

Bank Account Details

An investor must provide the same Bank Account details registered with MCD.

 **Opens on Thursday, February 15th, 2024 & Closes on Thursday, February 22nd, 2024.**
The minimum subscription amount is RO 500 and in multiples of RO 100.

To view the 69th Issue of Government Development Bonds, please visit the following websites:

Ministry of Finance | www.mof.gov.om

Central Bank of Oman | www.cbo.gov.om

Contact the Central Bank of Oman (Monetary Operations Department) or any licensed commercial bank for details.
Tel: +968 24777145 / 24777635 / 24777837 **E-mail:** mod@cbo.gov.om
P.O Box 1161, Postal Code 112, Sultanate of Oman **Fax:** +968 24777772


MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY
Advertisement No.(5/2024)

International Companies specialized in the field and registered with Tender Board, may obtain tender documents for the website through the following link: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) against non- refundable fees as mentioned below starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated below.

Tender Number	Tender Description	Last date to collect the tender	Tender return date
PRE/23/210	Construction of Remedial Measures for Revetment Failure along Al Bahri Road in Muttrah Area Phase 1	09/03/2024	31/03/2024
PRE/24/004	Paving Works infront of Jami Al Baseer at Al Amirat	09/03/2024	31/03/2024
PRE/24/039	Construction of Water Stagnation Solution at Al Amirat	09/03/2024	31/03/2024
PRE/24/040	Roads Paving at A' Seeb	09/03/2024	31/03/2024
PRE/24/047	Supply & Installation of Street Lights with Control Panel at Muscat Governorate	09/03/2024	31/03/2024
PRE/24/048	Consultancy Services for Carrying out Road Safety Audit on Al-Jabal Street	09/03/2024	31/03/2024
PRE/24/050	Consultancy Services for Advertising & Commercial Signs	09/03/2024	31/03/2024

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



ACCLAIMED LEBANESE PERFORMER

Oud player Marcel Khalife performs at ROHM

MUSCAT: The Royal Opera House Muscat hosted two special evenings with the acclaimed Lebanese performer, Marcel Khalife accompanied by his son, composer Rami Khalife, for a unique concert titled “Homage to Palestine” at the Royal Opera House of Musical Arts.

The legendary performer Marcel Khalife is a renowned singer,

songwriter and oud player known for his unique style, blending traditional Arabic techniques with his own innovative approach. His beautiful voice as well as his politically charged lyrics have resonated with people around the world for generations.

His appeal, rooted in its ability to address contemporary issues such as justice, freedom and love,

has inspired social change, making his music timeless. Following in his father's footsteps, Rami Khalife's style is defined by a bold and eclectic musical journey, adding a new dimension to the family legacy. Together, they shared the stage, blending piano and oud in a captivating display of intergenerational talent and collaboration. For two nights, Marcel

Khalife performed at the Royal Opera House Muscat in a special concert in tribute to the Palestinian people. Sought after across the Middle East, his concerts in Muscat included the performance of some of his most famous songs including Rita w'al-Bunduqiya (Rita and the Rifle), Ya Sari Min Jadhum, Oh The Breeze of The Wind and Al Hanna.

Ministry approves OMR15mn budget for artificial intelligence projects for 2025

The forum was held under the patronage of HH Sayyid Dr. Kamil bin Fahd bin Mahmoud Al Said, Secretary General at the Secretariat General of the Council of Ministers



solutions in various sectors, in an effort to complete cooperation between the government and private sectors and to enhance ICV from national projects, benefit from the expertise of the private sector, and inform various government agencies of the latest technologies and innovations in the AI field.

The forum was held under the patronage of HH Sayyid Dr. Kamil bin Fahd bin Mahmoud Al Said, Secretary General at the Secretariat General of the Council of Ministers.

Dr. Said bin Mohammed Al Saqri, Minister of Economy, revealed that the ministry's approval of the development budget allocated for AI projects for 2025 will be about OMR15 million, of which OMR10 million allocated for government agencies and OMR5 million for the governorates.

In his speech, the minister said “This forum comes out of the be-

lief in the necessity of urging national efforts to keep pace with this global rapid development in technologies and to prepare the economy to be more flexible, responsive to changes, and more capable of investing in opportunities, which pushes the Sultanate of Oman to be a leader in AI and future technologies.

Al Saqri explained that the 10th five-year development plan (2021-2025) has attached an importance to AI for its role in economic growth. The same plan has also underlined in its goal related to stimulating economic activity the need to encourage the contribution of small and medium enterprises in innovation activities, the knowledge economy, AI, and specialized markets. The plan also approved the priority of information and communications technology by amplifying the contribution of the digital economy to the gross do-

mestic product (GDP) by 2040 to about 10 percent. This was translated into the form of a national program for the digital economy, driven by the strategic approach towards building a prosperous digital economy that contributes effectively to the GDP.

The minister pointed out that the Ministry of Economy launched in June 2023 the “National Initiative to Empower the National Economy Enhanced with Artificial Intelligence”. The step aims to integrate AI applications and technologies into development projects and programs in the diversification sectors specified in the 10th five-year development plan. The move aims to enable government agencies and institutions to use AI applications and technologies in development projects. The ministry has approved RO 10 million allocated to the initiative's projects for 2024.

The forum also included a review of the projects approved within the Artificial Intelligence Economics Initiative, with a focus on their social, developmental and economic impacts, and highlighting the capabilities of Omani companies in the AI field. A discussion session was held between government agencies and companies to explore the possibilities of cooperation and utilize local expertise in improving government projects and initiatives related to AI.

During the forum, the winning projects of the initiative were announced, which are: the “Smart Management” project for the Ministry of Labour, the “Smart Electronic Portals” project for Dhofar Municipality, the “Environmental Information Bank with Artificial Intelligence and Blockchain Technology” project of the Environment Authority, the “Supporting Promising Omani Start-ups in the field of AI Applications and Technologies,” the “National Center for Virtual Health” project of the Ministry of Health, the “Ayn” platform of the Ministry of Information, the “Linguistic Model for Omani Content” and “Artificial Intelligence Studio” projects of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, and the “Simulation Laboratory and Media Center based on smart so-

lutions” for Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education, the “Investment Dashboard” project of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, and the “Analysis of Geological Data in Energy and Minerals” project of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals.

The economic impact of these projects represented in augmenting the efficiency of service provision. This enhances the efficiency of government spending, reduces costs, stimulates innovation, opens up vistas for innovation and research, and improves the efficiency of exploring natural resources, leading to improving the national economy and attracting investments in various sectors.

The social impact of these projects represented in improving access to medical services, sustainable management of resources that preserves the environment and the local community, stimulates interaction between innovators and companies, and enhances communication between government levels, leading to improved coordination and user experience to enhance digital communication and social interaction and improve awareness of Omani content, including strengthening the national identity. – ONA



AL SUWADI POWER COMPANY SAOG

P.O. Box: 39, P.C. 103, Bareeq Al Shatti, Sultanate of Oman, alsuwadipower.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Al Suwadi Power Company SAOG (the "Company"), I have the pleasure to present the Annual Report of the Company for the year ended 31 December 2023.

Corporate Governance:

The Company has complied with the Code of Corporate Governance and applicable circulars issued from time to time by the Capital Market Authority (CMA).

Operational Results

The operational performance of the plant during the year was excellent. The consistently high plant's reliability and technologically superior fuel-efficient operations of the plant continues to place it at the higher end of the merit order list for dispatch and, as such, the plant continues to be dispatched at a high plant load. Following graph highlights the consistent high plant load and the energy generated by the Company over the last five years:

The Company has seen growth in its revenue over the past years. Revenue includes capacity income and energy income. The following graph depicts the growth in the gross revenue and good reliability highlighting the Company's sustained importance in the Oman's power grid:

Due to the plant's inherent deficiency, the Company does not fully recover the fuel gas cost expended to generate power. During the year, the Company continued to experience thermal inefficiency at high generation levels as also at operating configurations that are inherently unfavorable and together, these lead to heat rate loss suffered by the Company. The Company continues to make efforts to address the high heat rate loss.

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

The plant operated for 4564 days without any lost time accident. This was the result of sustained focus on excellence in Health, Safety, Environment and Quality Management at the plant. For this excellent performance, we acknowledge the efforts of the dedicated and diligent team of STOMO. The Company duly met all the stringent environment permit conditions promulgated by Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs. The cyber security for the plant has also been strengthened in association with STOMO. The Company has strived to adhere to the cyber security regulations issued by the Authority for Public Services Regulation and other regulations promulgated by the CMA.

Financial Results

The following graph depicts the Company's financial performance as compared to the previous year:

The net income for 2023 was remarkably 12.5% higher than 2022. Revenue growth was predominantly due to annual gas price increase, lower forced outages and indexation partly offset by lower plant load factor. The operating costs decreased due to the lower plant load factor and lower O&M fees due to extended hot gas path inspection of the gas turbine during the previous year. The increased other income in 2023 was due to a higher income tax reimbursement receivable from OPWP on account of change in the income tax rate from 12% to 15%, which the Company was entitled to under the Buyer Risk event clause embedded in the Power

	Actual 2023	Actual 2022
Revenue	84.07	83.70
Operating costs	53.39	53.48
Other income	0.36	0.14
Dep.	8.17	8.16
Financial charges (net)	6.38	7.00
Tax Expense	2.57	2.28
Net Income	14.34	12.92

Purchase Agreement (PPA). On a positive note, the reduced finance cost on account of scheduled repayment of project loans and higher interest income delivered higher net profit.

During 2023, OPWP duly settled all invoices including payments for gas charges. The Company has duly met all its commitments under the term loan agreements. During the year, the Company successfully transitioned from LIBOR to the Secured Overnight Financing Rate (SOFR) without any impact on the financial statements.

The Company could not declare any dividend in 2023 due to the activation of Cash Sweep Mechanism from 30 April 2023 as previously disclosed by the Company. The share price stood at 21 Baizas per share at the close of 2023.

Corporate Social Responsibility

The Company takes its role as a responsible corporate citizen seriously. During the year, the Company completed the pending CSR initiatives which were commenced in 2022: (i) commissioned PV solar system at Omamah Bint Al Harith School of Ministry of Education at Wilayat of Nakhal and (ii) Ministry of Education's program to enhance students knowledge and skills about the peaceful application of nuclear technology.

Within its CSR initiative for 2023, the Company contributed 20% of its CSR budget to Oman Charitable Organisation based on the Ministerial Decision No. (205/2021) issued by Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion. The Company is simultaneously working on several projects (i) Street Lighting Project in collaboration with other Power and Desalination plants in Wilayat Barka for improving street lighting utilizing solar power and LED lights (ii) Aquaponics farming system in collaboration with Al Batinah Power company SAOG and SWIN Power Company's Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with OPWP expires in March 2028. Consequently, as the Company's tariff is already agreed in the PPA, the spot market process will have no impact on the revenue stream of our Company until the expiry of the PPA.

The Company continuously endeavors to identify and implement areas of improvement in plant operations. All reasonable measures have been taken by the management to ensure that we maintain excellent plant's operational performance in the coming years. The financial performance of the Company is mainly derived from plant's availability and reliability and as such, plant's operation and maintenance will continue to be accorded highest priority and consideration.

The Company and STOMO have strived to steadily increase the Omanisation in the staff members while ensuring smooth and reliable operation of the plant.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I wish to express gratitude to OPWP, the Authority for Public Services Regulation, the Capital Market Authority and other governmental and non-governmental bodies for their guidance and support. I would also like to thank all personnel associated with the operation of Al Suwadi Power plant and the staff of the Company for their hard work and dedication, and also to those others such as our contractors, whose expertise has assisted us in achieving these excellent results.

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

Chairperson **Director** **CEO**

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AT 31 DECEMBER 2023

	2023 RO'000s	2023 USD'000s	2022 RO'000s	2022 USD'000s
ASSETS				
Non-current assets				
Property, plant and equipment	233,547	607,405	241,559	628,241
Right-of-use assets	648	1,682	793	2,060
Derivative instruments	1,542	4,010	2,570	6,683
	235,737	613,097	244,922	636,984
Current assets				
Inventories	2,672	6,951	2,688	6,993
Trade and other receivables	5,456	14,192	6,249	16,251
Cash and cash equivalents	6,958	18,095	1,865	4,852
	15,086	39,238	10,802	28,096
TOTAL ASSETS	250,823	652,335	255,724	665,080
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES				
Equity				
Share capital	71,441	185,801	71,441	185,801
Legal reserve	11,331	29,467	9,877	25,687
Retained earnings	47,499	123,536	34,418	89,513
Equity before hedging reserve	130,271	338,804	115,736	301,001
Hedging reserve	283	733	443	1,155
Total equity	130,554	339,537	116,179	302,156
LIABILITIES				
Non-current liabilities				
Term loans	60,969	158,570	79,311	206,269
Lease liabilities	663	1,724	817	2,124
Derivative instruments	1,210	3,147	2,048	5,325
Deferred tax liability	26,993	70,208	26,817	69,746
Asset retirement obligation	391	1,018	371	966
	90,226	234,667	109,364	284,430
Current liabilities				
Current tax liabilities	2,360	6,137	683	1,776
Trade and other payables	8,511	22,132	10,383	27,004
Lease liabilities - current	153	399	144	374
Short term borrowings	100	260	-	-
Term loans - current	18,919	49,203	18,971	49,340
	30,043	78,131	30,181	78,494
Total liabilities	120,269	312,798	139,545	362,924
TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	250,823	652,335	255,724	665,080
Net assets per share (Baizas / cents) - adjusted	182.35	474.25	162.00	421.33

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS OF THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

	2023 RO'000s	2023 USD'000s	2022 RO'000s	2022 USD'000s
Revenues	84,072	218,652	83,704	217,696
Direct costs	(60,633)	(157,696)	(60,806)	(158,142)
GROSS PROFIT	23,439	60,956	22,898	59,554
Other income	561	1,459	136	355
General and administrative expenses	(818)	(2,128)	(836)	(2,177)
OPERATING PROFIT	23,182	60,287	22,198	57,732
Finance costs	(6,295)	(16,369)	(7,071)	(18,390)
Finance income	214	557	76	197
PROFIT BEFORE TAX	17,101	44,475	15,203	39,539
Tax expense	(2,566)	(6,672)	(2,281)	(5,933)
PROFIT FOR THE YEAR	14,535	37,803	12,922	33,606
Earning per share				
Basic and diluted earnings per share (Baizas / cents)	20.35	52.92	18.09	47.04

ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR



Gaza Strip’s second-largest hospital fully out of service

GAZA: The Gaza Strip's second-largest hospital — the Nasser Hospital in the southern city of Khan Younis — is now “completely out of service”, a spokesperson for the Gaza Ministry of Health says.

“There are only four medical teams, 25 staff, currently caring for patients inside the facility,” inside the hospital, spokesperson Ashraf al-Qidra told the Reuters news agency.

Health officials said fighting, fuel shortages, and Israeli raids had all contributed to the situation.

Hospitals in the Palestinian territory have been a focal point

of the war between Israel and the Palestinian group Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip.

Hospitals have special protections under international humanitarian law, although they can lose that protection if they are being used to cause military harm to the other side.

Qatar talks to secure new truce ‘not really promising’

Talks to agree a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in Gaza were “not very promising” in recent days, mediator Qatar has said.

Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani met with negotiators from both Israel

and Hamas this week.

“The pattern in the last few days is not really very promising,” he said at the Munich Security Conference.

Separately, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said demands by the Palestinian militant group Hamas during talks in Cairo were “delusional.”

Those demands included ending the war and leaving Hamas as it is, freeing “thousands of murderers” from Israeli jails, and even demands regarding a flashpoint holy site in Jerusalem, he said.

Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh, meanwhile, blamed Israel for a lack of progress. — Agencies

DR CONGO

US condemns Rwandan support for M23 rebels

KINSHASA: The United States condemned the worsening violence in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo and called on M23 rebels to cease hostilities immediately.

In a statement released on Saturday, the US State Department also condemned Rwanda for supporting the rebels.

— DW

ISSUE OF SOVEREIGNTY

British Foreign Secretary David Cameron to visit Falkland Islands

LONDON: British Foreign Secretary David Cameron is set to visit the Falkland Islands this week as part of a tour of South America, the British government said on Sunday.

The trip comes after Argentina's recently elected president, Javier Milei, renewed calls for talks for the islands to come under Argentine sovereignty.

Cameron is also scheduled to visit Paraguay this week, which will make him the first British Secretary to do so. He will then attend a foreign ministers' meeting of the G20 bloc of countries in Brazil.

Cameron said that he wanted to underscore the fact that the archipelago is part of “the British family.”

“The Falkland Islands are a valued part of the British family, and we are clear that as long as they want to remain part of the family, the issue of sovereignty will not be up for discussion,” he said.

The foreign office said that



Cameron would pay his respects to British soldiers who died in a 1982 war with Argentina and thank personnel currently stationed on the islands.

He will also “reiterate the UK's commitment to uphold the islanders' right of self-determination” and “see their work to build a thriving community and protect their natural environment,” according to the ministry.

Argentina has long claimed the Falkland Islands, which it knows

as the Malvinas. They lie about 300 miles (480 kilometres) east of Patagonia in the Atlantic Ocean.

Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands in 1982, leading to a war that lasted over two months and that the UK won.

In 2013, Falkland Island residents voted overwhelmingly to remain under UK sovereignty. Argentina argues that Britain illegally took the islands in 1833. The UK says that its territorial claim dates to 1765. — DW

INDIAN SCHOOL IBRI

Contact No:- 25690767, Fax: 25691622, Email:- indianschoolibri@gmail.com

1 S Ibr/009/ Tender/2023-24

TENDER NOTICE

SEALED SEPARATE QUOTATIONS ARE INVITED FOR THE FOLLOWING:

1. Tender for laying natural grass in the existing playground and upgrading the sports & games amenities.

2. Tender for Supply of 'stolon grass'.

Please Note:-

a. Scope of work can be collected from the School Office during office hours.

b. The quote should include all the required particulars.

c. Tenderers should visit the site for the actual measurements.

d. Only quotations in the sealed envelopes will be considered.

Tenderers are requested to send the quotations clearly indicating the subject & Date of advertisement on the top of the Sealed Cover addressed to:- "Principal, Indian School Ibr, P.O. Box 160/511 Ibr , Sultanate of Oman" within 12 days from the date of Tender.

Principal



SULTANATE OF OMAN

Governorate of Muscat

Wilayat Seeb | Wali Office

FOR RENT

A residential/commercial building located in the commercial market at south Ma'bella, block (NE/46) consisting of:

FIVE SHOPS – SIXTEEN APARTMENTS – GUARD ROOM

Those interested to rent the whole building should contact Khalifa Ahmed Al Mazroui within 30 days, Phone 24420000, 92595901.

The Committee is not bound to accept the biggest of any other tender offer



AL BATINAH POWER COMPANY SAOG

P.O. Box 39, P.C 103, Bareeq Al Shatti, Sultanate of Oman, albatinahpower.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Al Batinah Power Company SAOG (the "Company"), I have the pleasure of presenting the Company's Directors' Report for the year ended 31 December 2023.

Operational Highlights:

The plant crossed 4,560 lost time accident-free days since inception, maintaining its excellent track record of zero lost time accidents and zero environmental incidents, which reflects our continued focus on health, safety, security, and environment.

The plant's operation was excellent during the year, achieving a reliability of 99.85%. The plant delivered 3,051 GWh to the grid, translating to a load factor of 47.29% compared to 48.91% for corresponding period of 2022.

Financial Results

	12-month-2023 RO'000s Audited	12-month-2022 RO'000s Audited	Percentage change
Revenues	66,332	66,774	-0.7%
Direct costs	(45,263)	(45,023)	
Gross profit	21,069	21,751	-3.1%
Other income	477	61	
General and administrative expenses	(842)	(873)	
Profit before interest and tax	20,704	20,939	-1.1%
Finance costs	(6,016)	(6,716)	
Finance income	260	94	
Profit before tax	14,948	14,317	4.4%
Tax	(2,243)	(2,148)	
Net profit for the period	12,705	12,169	4.4%

Lower revenues compared to the previous year were attributed mainly to a lower plant load factor. The variability of the plant load factor influences the fuel and energy charges received from Oman Power & Water Procurement Company SAOC ("OPWP"), however, these charges are passed through to the gas supplier and the O&M service provider hence there is no material impact on the Company's profitability. Lower gross profit was mainly attributed to higher maintenance costs. In addition, the steady reduction in the finance costs positively contributed to better profit before tax. As a result, the net profit was 4.4% higher than the previous year.

The share price was 20 Baizas at the end of December 2023.

The Cash Sweep mechanism under the Finance Documents became effective on 30 April 2023, impacting the Company's ability to distribute dividends in 2023. However, the Company successfully refinanced its commercial loan facility on 31 January 2024, thereby eliminating the cash sweep. As a result of refinancing, the Company will be able to make future dividend distributions subject to the availability of cash and fulfillment of covenants agreed upon within the Finance Documents, which include adequate provisions for forecasted loan repayments and operating expenses

Corporate Social Responsibility:

Striving to ensure that the Company positively impacts people and the country, an amount of 50,000 OMR was allocated for the CSR initiatives for the year 2023. As per the Ministry of Commerce and Investment decision number 205/2021, the Company contributed 20% of its CSR budget to Oman Charitable Organization.

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

	2023 RO'000s	2023 USD'000s	2022 RO'000s	2022 USD'000s
Revenues	66,332	172,516	66,774	173,664
Direct costs	(45,263)	(117,718)	(45,023)	(117,094)
GROSS PROFIT	21,069	54,798	21,751	56,570
Other income	477	1,241	61	158
General and administrative expenses	(842)	(2,190)	(873)	(2,272)
OPERATING PROFIT	20,704	53,849	20,939	54,456
Finance costs	(6,016)	(15,650)	(6,716)	(17,465)
Finance income	260	676	94	245
PROFIT BEFORE TAX	14,948	38,875	14,317	37,236
Income tax expense	(2,243)	(5,832)	(2,148)	(5,587)
PROFIT FOR THE YEAR	12,705	33,043	12,169	31,649
Earning per share				
Basic and diluted earnings per share (Baizas / cents)	18.83	48.96	18.03	46.90

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2023

	2023 RO'000s	2023 USD'000s	2022 RO'000s	2022 USD'000s
ASSETS				
Non-current assets				
Property, plant and equipment	216,618	563,379	224,065	582,750
Right-of-use assets	3,292	8,560	2,772	7,208
Derivative instruments	1,366	3,552	2,312	6,011
	221,276	575,491	229,149	595,969
Current assets				
Inventories	2,548	6,627	2,606	6,778
Trade and other receivables	5,285	13,745	2,342	6,091
Short term deposit	-	-	192	500
Cash and cash equivalents	8,290	21,560	3,250	8,452
	16,123	41,932	8,390	21,821
TOTAL ASSETS	237,399	617,423	237,539	617,790
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES				
Equity				
Share capital	67,489	175,523	67,489	175,523
Legal reserve	10,130	26,345	8,859	23,041
Retained earnings	45,177	117,498	33,743	87,759
Equity before hedging reserve	122,796	319,366	110,091	286,323
Hedging reserve	179	466	364	945
Total equity	122,975	319,832	110,455	287,268
LIABILITIES				
Non-current liabilities				
Term loans	55,169	143,482	73,626	191,484
Lease liabilities	3,755	9,765	3,098	8,057
Derivative instruments	1,155	3,004	1,884	4,899
Deferred tax liability	24,772	64,426	24,594	63,967
Asset retirement obligation	355	923	337	876
End of service benefits	10	26	38	99
	85,216	221,626	103,577	269,382
Current liabilities				
Current tax liabilities	2,033	5,288	304	790
Trade and other payables	8,104	21,078	5,232	13,609
Lease liabilities - current	134	348	166	433
Short term borrowings	1,050	2,731	-	-
Term loans - current	17,887	46,520	17,805	46,308
	29,208	75,965	23,507	61,140
Total liabilities	114,424	297,591	127,084	330,522
TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	237,399	617,423	237,539	617,790
Net assets per share				
(Baizas / cents) - adjusted	181.95	473.21	163.13	424.25

SPORTS

Jaiswal and Jadeja power India to record Test win

England were bowled out for 122 as the hosts recorded a massive 434-run victory in the third Test in Rajkot

RAJKOT: England spiralled to a miserable and massive defeat by India on the fourth day of the third Test in Rajkot on Sunday. In perhaps their worst performance since captain Ben Stokes and coach Brendon McCullum took charge, England were dismantled by Yashasvi Jaiswal 214 not out, then capitulated with the bat. Set a notional 557 to win, the tourists were bundled out for an embarrassing 122 in a blur of irresponsible strokes. The 434-run margin of defeat is England's largest in terms of runs since 1934 and India's biggest of all time. India, who take a 2-1 lead in the series, were led by the brilliant Jaiswal's second double century in as many Tests.

The opener returned on 104 after retiring hurt on the third evening and took his tally to 12 sixes, equalling the record for a single Test innings. In partnership with Sarfaraz Khan, who made 68 not out, Jaiswal took India to a declaration on 430-4. Left-arm spinner Ravindra Jadeja ran through England's middle order for figures of 5-41, to go with the century he made in the first innings. The fourth Test begins on Friday in Ranchi, where an India win will preserve an unbeaten home record that stretches back to 2012.

Visitors wasteful and humbled
This was an astonishing implosion from England players, who began Saturday with a golden opportunity to take control of the match, only to be crushed by Sunday evening. Most disappointing was England's own batting. They surrendered



dered the initiative with a collapse of eight wickets for 95 runs in their first innings, then were absolutely awful in the second. So often England talk about their love of chases, whereas just taking this game into a final day would have been the minimum requirement.

What makes the defeat all the more galling is the fact India played more than a day of the match with 10 men after Ravichandran Ashwin returned home because of a family emergency. Ashwin, who withdrew on Friday evening, returned on Sunday and took a wicket in his six overs.

England suffer at hands of 'Jaisball'
Jaiswal made 209 in the second Test and finished 214 not out in Rajkot. This is turning into Jaiswal's series, confirming that the 22-year-old has arrived as a superstar of the global game.



He had to retire with a back injury on Saturday, but not before helping India to 196-2 overnight. Returning after Shubman Gill was run out for 91, Jaiswal's awesome demolition of the England bowling effectively meant he made two separate hundreds in the same innings without being dismissed. Just like on day three, Jaiswal slipped gears in an instant, scooping James Anderson over his shoulder in the first over after lunch. In Anderson's next over, Jaiswal played three consecutive sixes. Debutant Sarfaraz kept pace with Jaiswal for his second half-century of the match. The sixth-wicket pair added 172 in 158 riotous balls, laying waste to the England bowling in the unbearable afternoon heat. Jaiswal's single off Joe Root made him the third youngest man, after Vinod Kambli and Don Bradman, to make double hundreds in successive Tests. He hit the next two balls for six to match the record set by Pakistan's Wasim Akram against Zimbabwe in 1996. India declared at the end of the following over, the first team to do so against England since Stokes and McCullum took charge just under two years ago.

England were given 131 overs to chase their record target, but could not last 40 of them. Ben Duckett was the first wicket to fall - run out after pushing into the leg side and setting off, before Zak Crawley rightly sent him back. Mohammed Siraj's throw was smartly gathered by wicketkeeper Dhruv Jurel to leave Duckett well short. Crawley was aggrieved when replays showed Jasprit Bumrah's lbw shout to be just clipping leg stump, then England fell apart. Ollie Pope forced Jadeja to slip, while Jonny Bairstow and Root were both out sweeping the same bowler. Stokes also missed a sweep, this time to Kuldeep Yadav, the wrist-spinner then enticing Rehan Ahmed to hole out to long on. Ben Foakes and Tom Hartley flirted with the fifth day, but Foakes edged Jadeja and Hartley chopped on off Ashwin to leave England 91-9. Mark Wood smeared 33 from 15 balls before lofting to long-off to give Jadeja his fifth and end England's sorry showing. **Brief scores:** India 445 and 430/4 (Yashasvi Jaiswal 214*, Shubman Gill 91; Tom Hartley 1/78) beat England 319 and 122 (Mark Wood 33, Tom Hartley 16, Ravindra Jadeja 5/41). - Agencies

BADMINTON ASIA CHAMPIONSHIPS



Indian women clinch Asian crown for the first time

SELANGOR: Indian women's badminton team on Sunday scripted history after they won their maiden Badminton Asia Championships title in Malaysia's Selangor. The Indian women's badminton team defeated Thailand by 3-2 in the final match to get hold of their first-ever medal at the prestigious Badminton Asia Championships. India displayed a quality performance at the Badminton Asia Championships as they beat China, Hong Kong and Japan on the road to the final. Olympic medallist PV Sindhu started for Team India and beat the 17th-ranked Supanida Katethong 21-12, 21-12. Sindhu dominated her Thai opponents in the opening singles rubber and ended

the game in just 39 minutes. In the second game, Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand stepped up yet again. Jolly-Gayatri clinched a win over Jongkolphan Kititharakul and Rawinda Prajongjai by 21-16, 18-21, 21-16 to give India a 2-0 lead. However, Thai badminton players gave a fightback with Busanan Ongbamrungphan defeating Ashmita Chaliha by 21-11, 21-14 in the second singles rubber of the tie. Priya Konjengbam and Shruti Mishra then lost 21-11, 21-9 to Benyapa Aimsaard and Nuntakarn Aimsaard, and took the match to the final round. The 17-year-old Anmol Kharb had to play a pivotal role in the final round, and she did not disappoint. While facing world

No. 45 Pornpicha Choeikeewong in a high-pressure deciding match, Kharb walked away with a 21-14, 21-9 win to hand India a historic win in the tournament. "Make way for the history makers, the girls of India #Badminton. Kudos to these powerhouses as they clinch Indian Women's Team's FIRST-EVER medal at #BadmintonAsiaChampionships, smashing through obstacles to emerge as CHAMPIONS against Thailand. Many congratulations to all! This will indeed be a Sunday to remember," the Sports Authority of India (SAI) wrote on their official X (formerly Twitter) account. Earlier on Saturday, the Indian women's team defeated Japan by 3-2 in a thrilling semifinal. - ANI

FIRST SA COACH IN POST-APARTHEID ERA

Legendary South Africa cricket allrounder Mike Procter dies

JOHANNESBURG: Mike Procter, South Africa's legendary allrounder and their first coach of the post-Apartheid era, has died on Sunday at the age of 77, following complications during heart surgery, *ESPNcricinfo* reported. Widely renowned as one of his country's greatest players, Procter's international career was cut short due to South Africa's sporting isolation in the 1970s and 1980s, and he was limited to just seven Tests, all of which came against Australia in 1966-67 and 1969-70. In those, however, he claimed 41 wickets at 15.02, bowling high-class seam and swing famously "off the wrong foot" - an inimitable chest-on action that involved him releasing the ball early in his delivery stride, at high pace and often from unconventional angles, wide on the crease or from round the wicket. He helped South Africa to victory in six of his seven Tests, the other being a draw, with his best figures of 6 for 73 coming in the second innings of his final appearance at Port Elizabeth, to seal a crushing 323-run victory. Procter was a formidable ball-striker too - he averaged 34.83 in the second of his two Test series, a memorable 4-0 whitewash of Bill Lawry's Australia in 1969-70, alongside fellow members of South Africa's lost generation, including Barry Richards, Graeme and Peter Pollock and captain Ali Bacher. Thereafter, however, his greatest performances were limited



to domestic cricket, for Natal initially and then Rhodesia in the Currie Cup, and perhaps most famously for Gloucestershire, where he was a stalwart for 14 seasons between 1968 and 1981. In that time he made 259 first-class appearances for Gloucestershire, scoring 14,441 runs at 36.19 with 32 centuries and a best of 209 against Essex in 1978, and claiming 833 wickets at 19.56, including his career-best haul of 8 for 30 against Worcestershire at New Road in 1979. He was named as one of Wisden's five Cricketers of the Year in 1970, after a 103-wicket season for Gloucestershire in 1969, and at Taunton in August 1979, he secured another niche entry in the record books by slamming Somerset's Dennis Breakwell for six consecutive sixes, albeit not in the same over. Back in South Africa, he emu-

lated Don Bradman and CB Fry in scoring six centuries in consecutive innings, starting with 174 from 203 balls against North Eastern Transvaal on New Year's Day 1971, and encompassing a career-best 254 against West Province. After South Africa's readmission to international cricket, Procter was named as the team's head coach, overseeing their famous return to Test cricket against West Indies in Bridgetown, as well as their 1992 World Cup campaign, in which he guided the side to the semi-finals before falling foul of the tournament's infamous rain rules in defeat to England in Sydney. He later served as an ICC match referee between 2002 and 2008, and was also South Africa's convener of selectors. He died in hospital near his home in Durban, and is survived by his wife Maryne and two daughters.

THE ZUBAIR CONNECT

The Zubair Corporation unveiled its latest initiative, 'The Zubair Connect', in alignment with the Sultanate of Oman's Vision 2040 and as a testament to its commitment to sustainable development. > B2

MARKET BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 4,636.78 points, up by 0.15 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.21 per cent at 443.67 points. Al Batinah Power, up 19.05 per cent, was the top gainer while Oman Arab Bank, down 4.17 per cent, was the top loser. > B2

Land lease pact signed to establish lead acid battery recycling plant

Ensuring compliance with environmental standards, this project is set to enhance the recycling industry, highlighting Sohar Port and Freezone's dedication to circular economy principles in Oman



Times News Service

MUSCAT: Sohar Port and Freezone signed a land lease agreement with Starsun Sohar (FZC) to establish a recycling plant dedicated to the sustainable management of lead-acid

batteries in Sohar Freezone.

Ensuring compliance with environmental standards, this project is set to enhance the recycling industry, highlighting Sohar Port and Freezone's dedication to circular economy principles in the

Sultanate of Oman.

With a total investment of \$3 million and an area of 7,000m², the recycling plant, furnished with cutting-edge technologies, is focused on recovering valuable materials from locally used batteries,

with a projected production capacity of 1,000 tonnes per month, along with exporting lead ingots, lead oxide, and red lead oxide to key markets, including India, China, Korea, and several European countries. These products will be

traded on the London Metal Exchange, thereby bolstering global trade capacities.

The agreement between Sohar Freezone and Starsun Sohar SFZ leverages existing industrial activities in Sohar, transforming

waste into resources and fostering a sustainable economic ecosystem. Israil Khan, Chief Managing Director of Starsun Sohar stated, "We are excited about this agreement with Sohar Freezone and the promising opportunities it offers to investors. By leveraging the strategic advantages provided by Sohar Freezone and its continued growth, this project will create new avenues for economic growth and advance the technology behind lead acid battery recycling."

Commenting on this agreement, Omar bin Mahmood Al Mahrizi, CEO of Sohar Freezone- DCEO Sohar Port, said: "By establishing this new recycling plant, the third in Sohar Freezone, we are taking a step forward in demonstrating our commitment to circular economy. We are setting a model for sustainable industrial practices, where waste is transformed into valuable resources, thereby fostering a greener, more resilient economic ecosystem. Through strategic industrial synergy, we are harnessing the collective strengths of our partners to drive positive change in the industry, pioneering the transition towards a sustainable greener future."

BLOCKS 3&4



Tethys January oil production in Oman hits 263,552 barrels

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Tethys Oil's share of the production, before the government take, from Blocks 3&4 onshore in the Sultanate of Oman, in January 2024 amounted to 263,552 barrels of oil, corresponding to 8,502 barrels of oil per day. The Official Selling Price (OSP) for Oman Export Blend Crude Oil for January 2024 was \$83.17 per barrel. The OSP, as published by the Sultanate of Oman's Ministry of Energy and Minerals, is the benchmark price for Tethys Oil's monthly oil sales excluding trading and quality adjustments.

Tethys Oil, through its wholly-owned subsidiary Tethys Oil

Block 3 & 4, has a 30 percent interest in Blocks 3&4. Partners are Mitsui E&P Middle East with 20 percent and the operator CC Energy Development (Oman branch) holding the remaining 50 percent.

Tethys Oil is an oil exploration and production company with a focus on onshore areas with known oil discoveries. The company's core area is the Sultanate of Oman, where it holds interests in Blocks 3&4, Block 49, Block 56 and Block 58. Tethys Oil has net working interest 2P reserves of 21.7 mmbo and net working interest 2C Contingent Resources of 15.5 mmbo and had an average oil production of 8,818 barrels per day during 2023.

AL MOUJ MUSCAT, BE'AH AND WAKUD

MoU signed to revolutionise waste recycling through educational and sustainable practices

Times News Service

MUSCAT: In a stride towards environmental stewardship and innovative waste management, Al Mouj Muscat signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Oman's waste management authority be'ah, and biodiesel producer Wakud to launch a pilot project aimed at converting Used Cooking Oil (UCO) from its residences and commercial outlets into biodiesel.

Residents of Al Mouj Muscat will be equipped with special bottles and funnels, facilitating the safe and efficient collection of UCOs, and thereby contributing directly to the production of biodiesel. The collected UCO will be processed into green fuel at Wakud's advanced biofuel facility in Khazaen Economic City, symbolizing significant advancements in sustainable waste management, recycling efforts, and circular economy developments in Oman.

Nasser Al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, said, "This partnership with be'ah and Wakud underscores our commitment to sustainability and our vision for a greener future. By turning waste into energy, we are contributing to the creation of a circular economy that benefits our community and the environment."

As one of the fastest-growing alternative fuels globally, biodiesel aids sectors such as trucking, transport, shipping, and construction in dramatically reducing their carbon



footprint. It provides a cost-competitive solution that supports the achievement of climate goals, demonstrating the practical value of sustainable energy sources. As such, it represents a pivotal element for Oman to reach its 2050 Net Zero emissions goals.

Emphasizing the extensive potential of these partnerships, Khamil Ahmed Al Lawati, Vice President of Business Development at be'ah, remarked, "These agreements mark concrete progress in be'ah's mission to implement its strategy and contribute to the realization of Oman Vision 2040. Our collaborations are crucial instruments that we will leverage fully to uphold our dedication to sustainable resource management and

environmental stewardship." Al Lawati further stated, "The implications of this agreement extend beyond environmental advantages, as it creates fresh opportunities to engage with biofuel buyers."

Maher Al Habsi, CEO of Wakud mentioned, "I am proud to announce the signing of this groundbreaking memorandum in the Sultanate of Oman, aligning with our nation's Vision 2040 and commitment to carbon neutrality by 2050. Our goal is to promote waste recycling and produce eco-friendly biofuels, safeguarding both the environment and community health. This partnership exemplifies the potential of local companies to drive positive change, and we thank the management of Al

Mouj Muscat and be'ah for their trust and support in Wakud's pioneering initiatives.

This tri-party Pilot Project at Al Mouj Muscat hopes to achieve more than the conversion of waste into green energy; it also aims to educate residents and retailers on the importance of responsible waste disposal, the broader implications of environmental sustainability, and the value of a circular economy as a driving force for a better future.

By promoting practices that minimise waste and repurpose resources, this waste management program demonstrates how communities can adopt strategies that are environmentally and economically rewarding.

MEETING

Meethaq Sharia Supervisory Board discusses future plans for better delivery of services

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat convened its first Sharia Supervisory Board meeting of 2024 at the bank's head office.

The meeting was attended by esteemed members of the Sharia Supervisory Board (SSB), including Sheikh Dr. Abdullah bin Mubarak Al Abri, the Board Chairman, alongside Shamzani Mohammed Hussain, General Manager of Meethaq Islamic Banking, and the Sharia Supervisory and Audit management members.

The session commenced with a comprehensive presentation delivered by Meethaq's team, covering Meethaq's performance in the preceding year and outlining



its strategic initiatives for 2024. During the meeting, the SSB also discussed and scrutinized into various details and reports pertaining to Meethaq's transactions. The Sharia Supervisory Board also deliberated on various topics, including the implementation of a

structured mechanism for seeking the SSB's guidance and resolutions effectively. In addition to this, the SSB reviewed and accredited the financial data of the financial year ended 31st December 2023, the Sharia annual certificate of separating Meethaq's capital, the con-

solidated annual Sharia -based audit report, and the amendments made within a number of legal documents and restructured financing transactions. During the meeting, the SSB also discussed effectiveness of the Temenos Islamic Core Banking system (T24) which Meethaq has recently launched. The SSB regular meetings play a pivotal role in deliberating on topics pertaining to Islamic transactions, business contracts and practices, thereby facilitating the formulation of requisite recommendation and resolutions.

The Sharia Supervisory Board is composed of scholars renowned for their expertise in Islamic jurisprudence, particularly in Islamic transaction processing and contemporary economy.

CAPITAL MARKET AUTHORITY

CMA appoints new member in BoD of Raysut Cement Co.

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Capital Market Authority (CMA) has issued a decision appointing Shabib Mohammed Saif Al Darmaki as a new member of the Board of Directors of Raysut Cement Company to succeed Mobin Jaleel Khan who resigned for personal reasons.

CMA issued on December 11, 2022, a decision dissolving the Board of Directors of Raysut Cement Company and appointed an independent board of directors comprising five experienced and competent persons to temporarily steer the business and works of the board of directors for three



years. The move comes as part of CMA's follow-up on the work of the existing board of directors.

CMA emphasises that the procedures come under the powers conferred on the CMA under the Commercial Companies Law and the Securities Law to protect the investors and maintain the stability of the capital market.

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Al Batinah Power, up 19.05 per cent, was the top gainer while Oman Arab Bank, down 4.17 per cent, was the top loser



MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,636.78 points, up by 0.15 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.21 per cent at 443.67 points. Al Batinah Power, up 19.05 per cent, was the top gainer while Oman Arab Bank, down 4.17 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of Sohar International Bank were the most active in terms of number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 771 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of OMR3.22 million, with more than 27.8 million shares changing hands. Out of 47 traded securities, 19 advanced, 9 declined, and 19 remained unchanged. At the session close, domestic investors were net sellers for OMR35,000 while GCC & Arab investors were net buyers for OMR29,000, followed by foreign investors for OMR6,000 worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,309.58 points, down 0.54 per cent. Prices of Dhofar Insurance,

Al Batinah Development Company, Al Sharqia Investment, Bank Muscat were up by 5.78 per cent, 2.25 per cent, 1.43 per cent, 0.74 per cent respectively. Prices of Oman Arab Bank, National Bank Oman, Al Anwar Investment, Al Madina Takaful were down by 4.17 per cent, 1.85 per cent, 1.39 per cent, 1.12 per cent respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,502.35 points, down 0.31 per cent. Prices of Dhofar Cattle Feed, Muscat Thread Mill, Voltamp Energy were up by 5.36 per cent, 1.45 per cent, 0.61 per cent respectively. Prices of Al Anwar Ceramics were down by 3.67 per cent respectively.

Services Index was up by 1.85 per cent before closing at 1,692.57 points. Prices of Al Batinah Power, Phoenix Power, Dhofar Generating, Al Suwadi Power, SMN Power Holding were up by 19.05 per cent, 9.09 per cent, 8.89 per cent, 8.70 per cent, 4.76 per cent respectively.

Prices of Sharqiyah Desalination were down by 1.34 per cent respectively. — **United Securities**

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	4,644.35	4,629.95	4,636.78	4,629.95	6.83	0.15
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,361.13	7,309.58	7,309.58	7,349.33	-39.75	-0.54
Industry Index	5,542.64	5,482.44	5,502.35	5,519.73	-17.38	-0.31
Services Index	1,692.57	1,662.78	1,692.57	1,661.82	30.75	1.85
MSX Shariah Index	444.60	441.80	443.67	444.60	-0.94	-0.21
MSX TR INDEX	6,124.33	6,105.34	6,114.34	6,105.34	9.00	0.15
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,032.34	7,976.09	7,976.09	8,019.47	-43.38	-0.54
SERVICES TR IDX	1,888.41	1,855.17	1,888.41	1,854.10	34.31	1.85
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	5,920.92	5,856.61	5,877.88	5,896.45	-18.56	-0.31
FIXED INCOME INDEX	992.89	992.89	992.89	992.89	0.00	0.00

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
27,803,712	3,223,259	771	23,878,703,446	19	9	19	47

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET																
OM0000000428	SMN POWER HOLDING	578,089	50,026	34	0.085	0.088	0.085	0.088	0.084	0.004	4.762	0.088	0.087	0.089	0.100	17,567,833
OM0000000240	AL SHARQIYA INVESTMENT HO.	5,500	391	1	0.071	0.071	0.071	0.071	0.070	0.001	1.429	0.071	0.070	0.071	0.100	6,390,000
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	387,383	104,829	19	0.270	0.272	0.270	0.272	0.270	0.002	0.741	0.272	0.269	0.272	0.100	2,041,740,001
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	38,831	13,373	9	0.344	0.345	0.344	0.345	0.344	0.001	0.291	0.345	0.334	0.345	0.100	224,575,759
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	82,438	89,159	25	1.088	1.088	1.080	1.082	1.080	0.002	0.185	1.082	1.080	1.083	0.100	811,500,000
OM0000001159	OMAN NATIONAL ENGINEERING & INVESTMENT	131,000	15,695	8	0.120	0.120	0.119	0.119	0.119	0.000	0.000	0.119	0.119	0.119	0.100	17,850,000
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	33,300	1,798	8	0.054	0.054	0.054	0.054	0.054	0.000	0.000	0.054	0.051	0.054	0.100	6,581,250
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	3,167	890	1	0.281	0.281	0.281	0.281	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.281	0.270	0.281	0.100	35,096,327
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	415,000	23,655	11	0.087	0.087	0.087	0.087	0.087	0.000	0.000	0.087	0.086	0.089	0.100	20,239,256
OM0000002396	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	11,706,458	1,300,126	59	0.112	0.112	0.111	0.111	0.111	0.000	0.000	0.111	0.110	0.111	0.100	606,555,624
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	15,650	1,387	2	0.089	0.089	0.088	0.088	0.089	-0.001	-1.124	0.088	0.088	0.089	0.100	15,400,000
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	316,500	83,973	6	0.270	0.270	0.265	0.265	0.270	-0.005	-1.852	0.265	0.265	0.275	0.100	430,875,784
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	1,009,096	186,878	123	0.197	0.197	0.184	0.184	0.191	-0.007	-3.665	0.184	0.184	0.184	0.100	40,480,000
Total	13	14,722,402	1,872,179	306												
Parallel Market																
OM0000004825	ALBATINAH POWER	285,850	14,293	7	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.042	0.008	19.048	0.050	0.050	0.000	0.100	33,744,372
OM0000005983	PHOENIX POWER	1,078,254	62,860	46	0.056	0.060	0.056	0.060	0.055	0.005	9.091	0.059	0.059	0.059	0.100	87,730,088
OM0000007407	DHOFAR GENERATING	454,043	21,394	37	0.046	0.049	0.046	0.049	0.045	0.004	8.889	0.049	0.049	0.049	0.100	10,889,760
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	294,476	14,724	13	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.046	0.004	8.896	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.100	35,720,317
OM0000001095	DHOFAR INSURANCE	11,100	2,612	3	0.235	0.238	0.235	0.238	0.226	0.013	5.778	0.238	0.235	0.247	0.100	25,981,238
OM0000001301	DHOFAR FOODS AND INVESTMENT	5,000	295	1	0.059	0.059	0.059	0.059	0.056	0.003	5.357	0.059	0.054	0.059	0.100	11,662,938
OM0000004735	SEMBORP SALALAH	7,155,250	720,176	37	0.098	0.101	0.098	0.101	0.098	0.003	3.061	0.101	0.099	0.105	0.100	96,411,767
OM0000002386	AL BATINAH DEVELOPMENT & INV. HO.	19,495	12,544	10	0.092	0.094	0.091	0.091	0.089	0.002	2.247	0.091	0.091	0.093	0.100	2,730,000
OM0000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	888,738	42,988	46	0.048	0.049	0.048	0.049	0.048	0.001	2.083	0.049	0.049	0.049	0.100	7,840,000
OM0000002036	MUSCAT THREAD MILLS	11,750	823	1	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.069	0.001	1.449	0.070	0.070	0.074	0.100	1,125,086
OM0000000972	Q GAS NETWORKS	696,163	101,227	114	0.144	0.147	0.144	0.146	0.145	0.001	0.690	0.146	0.146	0.150	0.100	632,271,092
OM0000003651	VOLTAMP ENERGY	18,588	3,086	11	0.166	0.166	0.166	0.166	0.165	0.001	0.606	0.166	0.166	0.168	0.100	13,512,857
OM0000004735	SEMBORP SALALAH	7,155,250	720,176	37	0.098	0.101	0.098	0.101	0.098	0.003	3.061	0.101	0.099	0.105	0.100	96,411,767
OM0000002386	AL BATINAH DEVELOPMENT & INV. HO.	19,495	12,544	10	0.092	0.094	0.091	0.091	0.089	0.002	2.247	0.091	0.091	0.093	0.100	2,730,000
OM0000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	888,738	42,988	46	0.048	0.049	0.048	0.049	0.048	0.001	2.083	0.049	0.049	0.049	0.100	7,840,000
OM0000002036	MUSCAT THREAD MILLS	11,750	823	1	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.069	0.001	1.449	0.070	0.070	0.074	0.100	1,125,086
OM0000000972	Q GAS NETWORKS	696,163	101,227	114	0.144	0.147	0.144	0.146	0.145	0.001	0.690	0.146	0.146	0.150	0.100	632,271,092
OM0000003651	VOLTAMP ENERGY	18,588	3,086	11	0.166	0.166	0.166	0.166	0.165	0.001	0.606	0.166	0.166	0.168	0.100	13,512,857
OM0000004735	SEMBORP SALALAH	7,155,250	720,176	37	0.098	0.101	0.098	0.101	0.098	0.003	3.061	0.101	0.099	0.105	0.100	96,411,767
OM0000002386	AL BATINAH DEVELOPMENT & INV. HO.	19,495	12,544	10	0.092	0.094	0.091	0.091	0.089	0.002	2.247	0.091	0.091	0.093	0.100	2,730,000
OM0000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	888,738	42,988	46	0.048	0.049	0.048	0.049	0.048	0.001	2.083	0.049	0.049	0.049	0.100	7,840,000
OM0000002036	MUSCAT THREAD MILLS	11,750	823	1	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.069	0.001	1.449	0.070	0.070	0.074	0.100	1,125,086
OM0000000972	Q GAS NETWORKS	696,163	101,227	114	0.144	0.147	0.144	0.146	0.145	0.001	0.690	0.146	0.146	0.150	0.100	632,271,092
OM0000003651	VOLTAMP ENERGY	18,588	3,086	11	0.166	0.166	0.166	0.166	0.165	0.001	0.606	0.166	0.166	0.168	0.100	13,512,857
OM0000004735	SEMBORP SALALAH	7,155,250	720,176	37	0.098	0.101	0.098	0.101	0.098	0.003	3.061	0.101	0.099	0.105	0.100	96,411,767
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	2,982	294	1	0.076	0.076	0.076	0.076	0.076	0.000	0.000	0.076	0.075	0.078	0.100	2,460,000
OM0000001418	RAYSUT CEMENT	23,691	2,899	4	0.122	0.123	0.122	0.123	0.123	0.000	0.000	0.123	0.123	0.123	0.100	24,600,000
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	1,366	2,977	5	2.150	2.250	2.150	2.250	2.250	0.000	0.000	2.250	2.150	2.249	0.100	201,825,000
OM0000002572	OMAN OIL MARKETING	350	298	1	0.850	0.850	0.850	0.850	0.850	0.000	0.000	0.850	0.850	0.850	0.100	52,083,750
OM0000002804	ASAFA FOODS	150	48	1	0.319	0.319	0.319	0.319	0.319	0.000	0.000	0.319	0.000	0.319	0.100	38,280,000
OM0000003281	TAGEER FINANCE	41,353	4,425	4	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.000	0.000	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.100	28,230,349
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	883,852	135,396	51	0.155	0.158	0.152	0.155	0.155	0.000	0.000	0.155	0.152	0.155	0.100	31,463,899
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	185,697	17,718	8	0.095	0.096	0.095	0.095	0.095	0.000	0.000	0.095	0.095	0.096	0.100	212,510,538
OM0000004776	TAKAFUL OMAN	28,500	1,254	2	0.044	0.044	0.044	0.044	0.044	0.000	0.000	0.044	0.044	0.047	0.100	11,000,000
OM0000007084	MUSCAT CITY DESALINATION	2,564	190	2	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.000	0.000	0.074	0.074	0.081	0.100	11,510,730
OM0000008710	BARKA DESALINATION	18,071	2,189	2	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.000	0.000	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.100	9,062,640
OM0000008934	ALBATINAH SERVICES	318,999	101,694	21	0.318	0.321	0.312	0.317	0.317	0.000	0.000	0.317	0.316	0.319	0.100	244,133,436
OM0000008868	THE PEARL REEF	1,000	122	1	0.122	0.122	0.122	0.122	0.123	0.001	-0.813	0.122	0.122	0.122	0.100	61,988,633
OM0000004669	SHARQIYAH DESALINATION	47,219	7,082	9	0.150	0.150	0.147	0.147	0.149	-0.002	-1.342	0.147	0.147	0.150	0.100	14,376,918
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	394,966	28,223	12	0.072	0.072	0.071	0.071	0.072	-0.001	-1.389	0.071	0.071	0.072	0.100	14,626,000
OM0000007910	AMAN REAL ESTATE	1,500	141	1	0.094	0.094	0.094	0.094	0.096	-0.002	-2.083	0.094	0.091	0.104	0.100	18,800,000
OM0000005280	OMAN ARAB BANK	27,780	3,195	1	0.115	0.115	0.115	0.115	0.120	-0.005	-4.167	0.115	0.110	0.130	0.100	191,982,150
Total	29	13,014,247	1,305,043	452												

FORECAST

India's natural gas consumption likely to grow by 5-6%

NEW DELHI: Sharing insights into India's burgeoning gas sector, Executive Director and CEO of Adani Total Gas Limited Suresh P Manglani has forecast a 5 per cent to 6 per cent increase in natural gas consumption in 2024, commensurate with an estimated economic growth of 6 per cent-7 per cent in the country.

He said this in an interview with S&P Global Commodity Insights.

"India's natural gas consumption in 2024 will likely grow 5 per cent-6 per cent corresponding to an estimated economic growth of 6 per cent-7 per cent, with its share boosted in future if the country taps two 'hidden jewels' - Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and LNG for transport and mining (LTM)," Manglani said.

According to S&P Global Commodity Insights, Manglani outlined strategic opportunities for growth, emphasising the pivotal roles of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and LNG for transport and mining (LTM) in driving future demand.

Executive Director and CEO of Adani Total Gas Limited Suresh P Manglani underscored the potential for an additional demand of around 100-120 MMSCMD (Million Metric Standard Cubic Metre per Day) if MSMEs are provided with a supportive ecosystem to transition to natural gas

Manglani underscored the potential for an additional demand of around 100-120 MMSCMD (Million Metric Standard Cubic Metre per Day) if MSMEs are provided with a supportive ecosystem to transition to natural gas. He advocated for consumption-linked incentives to



LIFESTYLE

DO YOU KNOW PROTEIN-RICH BREAKFAST CAN INCREASE SATIETY, IMPROVE CONCENTRATION? STUDY

A new Danish study looked into the relationship between nutrition and cognitive function, and the results showed that a protein-rich breakfast can improve satiety and concentration.

According to the researcher, this is vital knowledge in a culture where obesity rates and lifestyle-related disorders are on the rise.

"Breakfast is the most important meal of the day." This is a well-worn platitude that has never had much basis in scientific evidence.

But a new Danish study has explored how different types of breakfast affect satiety and concentration and it has added new fuel to the old cliché.

The study followed 30 obese women aged 18 to 30 for three days, during which the women consumed a protein-rich breakfast, a carbohydrate-rich breakfast or no breakfast at all. The women's sense of satiety, hormone levels and energy intake were measured at lunchtime. Their total daily energy intake was measured as well.

The participants also had to complete a cognitive concentration test during the study.

"We found that a protein-rich breakfast with skyr (a sour-milk product) and oats increased satiety and concentration in the participants, but it did not reduce the overall energy intake compared to skipping breakfast or eating a carbohydrate-rich breakfast," says Mette Hansen, associate professor and PhD at the Department of Public Health, and one of the authors of the study.

The number of overweight people is increasing both in Denmark and across the globe. Obesity is often accompanied by lifestyle-related diseases such as type 2 diabetes.

Previous studies have shown that people who eat breakfast have a lower BMI than people who do not eat breakfast, and protein-rich foods have generally been shown to have an increased satiety effect compared to carbohydrate-rich and high-fat foods with the same calorie content.

The idea was therefore to test whether a protein-rich breakfast could be a good strategy to achieve greater satiety during the day and thus reducing daily calorie intake.

However, the solution is not that simple, said Mette Hansen: "The results confirm that protein-rich meals increase a sense of satiety, which is positive with regard to preventing weight gain. However, the results also suggest that for this nutritional strategy to be effective, it's not enough to just eat a protein-rich breakfast."

The potential of replacing a carbohydrate-rich diet with a protein-rich diet can clearly be seen in the satiating effects measured in the study.

Several of the subjects had difficulty consuming the entire protein-rich breakfast consisting of skyr and oats.

"It's intriguing that there can be such a big difference in the satiety effect of two different meals with the same calorie content. Had the women in the project been allowed to choose the size of the meal themselves, it's likely that they'd have consumed more food and thereby more calories on the day they were served bread and jam than on the day they were given skyr and oats," explained Mette Hansen.

According to the researcher, although the study has provided important insights, it also has its limitations because only overweight young women participated in the study. The study is also based on relatively short-term observations, leaving open the question of how long-term dietary changes can affect health and weight.

Mette Hansen therefore points out that the study underlines the need for further research to understand how different types of food affect health over time.

"We already have new data incoming from a trial where participants received either a high-protein breakfast or a low-protein breakfast. The objective was to study how the different types of breakfast affect body composition and other parameters such as microbiota and cholesterol levels," said Mette Hansen. **-ANI**



SPORTS

Saka hits double for five-star Gunners; Chelsea hold City

Arsenal continue their goal scoring form as they rout Burnley 5-0 in Premier League game

LONDON: Arsenal continued their blistering goal scoring form to thrash Burnley 5-0 and close the gap at the top of the Premier League to two points on Saturday.

Following their 6-0 win at West Ham last week Arsenal were soon among the goals again, captain Martin Odegaard opening the scoring on four minutes with a crisp strike into the bottom corner after Gabriel Martinelli's pass.

Bukayo Saka converted from the spot to double the lead after Lorenz Assignon fouled Leandro Trossard in the box.

"We are in a good moment, we have won all of the games so far so it feels good," Kai Havertz said after the match.

"Behind that was hard work and there are many hard games to come. We have to continue the hard work."

England forward Saka got his second just after the restart as Arsenal kept up the pace, latching on to a clever Odegaard pass then cutting inside and rifling a shot into the roof of the net.

Havertz's scuffed effort was blocked in the box but Trossard was alert to curl in for his third goal in as many league games.

Jakub Kiwior's long throw down the line then found an unmarked



Havertz, who ghosted in behind the defence and drilled past home goalkeeper James Trafford to complete a comprehensive win for the Gunners.

Arsenal, who have 21 goals in five straight wins, move two points behind leaders Liverpool, while Burnley remain in the relegation zone.

Arsenal have scored five or more goals in successive away league matches for the first time in their history

The Gunners, following up last week's comprehensive win at London Stadium, have started a calendar year with five consecutive league wins for the first time in their history, and blew Burnley away with their slick football.

Saka has scored in four consecutive league appearances for

the first time in his career, netting six across those four games, more than in his previous 19 league games.

"We are really pleased because it is a difficult place to come and Burnley have been very competitive in the big games they have played so far this season," the Arsenal boss told BBC Match of the Day.

"We are generating competition within the squad. They are a joy to work with, the way they train every day and apply themselves, and how they want to improve.

Rodri strike rescues a point for Man City

Rodri dramatically rescued a point with a late leveller for Manchester City to deny Chelsea victory (1-1)



and maintain his side's long unbeaten home record.

City still lost ground in the title race after seeing Liverpool and Arsenal both post emphatic wins earlier on Saturday, but this has to go down as a point gained given how close they came to defeat.

Raheem Sterling gave Chelsea the lead against his old team just before half-time, finishing off a brilliant counter-attack by meeting Nicolas Jackson's cross, cutting inside Kyle Walker and curling his shot home.

The visitors looked threatening on the break all game, with Jackson earlier spurning an even better chance from Malo Gusto's cross when a heavy touch allowed Ederon to smother his shot, and City's keeper also denied Sterling a sec-

ond from point-blank range.

City were racking up the chances too, but seemed unable to take any of them, or even seriously test Chelsea goalkeeper Djordje Petrovic despite piling on the pressure in the second half.

Erling Haaland was the main culprit, with his worst miss coming when he somehow headed wide from a delicious Kevin de Bruyne cross.

The defending champions were facing their first home league defeat since November 2022, until Rodri struck with seven minutes to go.

After Walker's shot was deflected into his path on the edge of the box, Rodri fired in a ferocious first-time strike that was going in anyway but took a touch off Chelsea

substitute Trevoh Chalobah on its way into the net.

The draw sees City drop to third in the table, four points behind leaders Liverpool but with a game in hand - they can close the gap, and leapfrog second-placed Arsenal, if they beat Brentford here on Tuesday.

Haaland, in particular, will wonder how he failed to score. Three of his nine efforts were from clear sights of goal but he squandered an early header from Julian Alvarez's cross, then miscued when Phil Foden set him up and missed the target from De Bruyne's pinpoint delivery.

Other results: Fulham 1 Aston Villa 2, Newcastle 2 Bournemouth 2, Nottingham Forest 2 West Ham 0, Tottenham 1 Wolves 2. - Agencies

SPANISH LA LIGA

Lewandowski nets winner as Barca edge Celta Vigo

BARCELONA: Barcelona returned to winning ways by nicking a 2-1 victory at Celta Vigo as Robert Lewandowski kept his cool to convert a retaken 97th-minute penalty on Saturday.

The Poland striker put the visitors, who drew 3-3 at Granada last weekend, ahead with a powerful angled drive.

Iago Aspas levelled for Celta, who are fourth bottom of La Liga, shortly after the restart with a deflected strike.

But Lewandowski clinched victory from the spot, leaving third-placed Barca seven points behind Real Madrid.

Leaders Real, who travel to city rivals Rayo Vallecano on Sunday, are five points clear of second-placed Girona after they were held 1-1 at Villarreal on Friday.

Barcelona have claimed 24 points with goals scored after the 76th minute - the most in the Spanish top-flight this season.

The Catalans are also unbeaten in four matches since head coach Xavi announced he would step down at the end of the season.

Xavi's side face Napoli on Wednesday in the Champions League last 16, with the European competition being their last realistic chance of silverware this season.



Atletico Madrid are fourth, three points behind Barca, after they thrashed visitors Las Palmas 5-0 on Saturday.

Marcos Llorente and Angel Correa both scored twice for Atletico before substitute Memphis Depay added a late fifth.

The hosts recorded a comfort-

able victory despite Rojiblancos manager Diego Simeone resting key players - including France forward Antoine Griezmann - before their midweek Champions League last-16 tie at Inter Milan.

Elsewhere, Cadiz remain in the relegation zone after a 2-0 defeat at 11th-placed Osasuna. - Agencies

GERMAN BUNDESLIGA



Leverkusen go eight points clear of Bayern

MUNICH: Bayer Leverkusen moved eight points clear of Bayern Munich at the top of the Bundesliga after a narrow 2-1 victory at mid-table Heidenheim on Saturday.

Jeremie Frimpong put Xabi Alonso's unbeaten side in front in first-half injury time with a deflected effort.

Amine Adli added a second after the interval, rounding goalkeeper Kevin Muller before slotting home.

Tim Kleindienst pulled one back for Heidenheim with four minutes left but Leverkusen managed to hold on.

Second-placed Bayern can reduce the deficit on their Bun-

desliga title rivals with victory at Bochum on Sunday.

Leverkusen's victory means they have now gone a record-equalling 32 games without losing.

Bayern went undefeated in 32 consecutive competitive matches under Hansi Flick from 2019 to 2020.

Leverkusen are chasing their first Bundesliga title having finished as runners-up in 1996-97, 1998-99, 1999-2000, 2001-02 and 2010-11.

Other results: Mainz 1 Augsburg 0, Darmstadt 1 Stuttgart 2, Hoffenheim 0 Union Berlin 1, Wolfsburg 1 Borussia Dortmund 1, RB Leipzig 2 Borussia Monchengladbach 0. - Agencies

FRENCH LIGUE 1

Mbappe comes off the bench to score for PSG



PARIS: Kylian Mbappe came off the bench to score a penalty as Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) continued their charge towards the Ligue 1 title with 2-0 victory at Nantes on Saturday.

The France striker was left out of the starting line-up the day after he told the French club he intends to leave at the end of the season.

Lucas Hernandez got the opener in the second half with a deflected strike.

Mbappe then won and converted a spot-kick to seal a victory that means PSG are 14 points clear at the top.

The former Monaco forward's deal with PSG is scheduled to expire in the summer and he has been heavily linked with a move to Real Madrid.

He also scored in the Champions League in midweek as the French champions beat Real Sociedad in their last-16 first-leg match.

It was his fourth goal in Europe's top competition this season and he now has 21 goals in the domestic league in this campaign.

Overall, he has 244 goals and 93 assists in 290 games for PSG and has helped the club to five Ligue 1 title wins.

In another match, Lille outplayed Le Havre 3-0. - Agencies

QATAR OPEN

Swiatek downs Rybakina to clinch third title in Doha



DOHA: World No.1 Iga Swiatek claimed the Qatar Open title for the third year in a row with a straight-set victory over Elena Rybakina on Saturday.

Poland's Swiatek trailed by a double break in the first set but regrouped to beat Kazakhstan's Rybakina 7-6 (10-8), 6-2 in Doha.

Swiatek lost her three matches against Rybakina in 2023.

It is four-time Grand Slam champion Swiatek's first WTA title of the year and her 18th overall.

She is the first player to win a WTA singles title three times in a

row since American Serena Williams claimed the Miami Open from 2013 to 2015.

Swiatek trailed Rybakina 4-1 in the first set but found her rhythm, forcing things back on serve and saving a set point before closing out the tie-break after 90 minutes. Rybakina had to take a medical timeout after hitting her leg with her racquet while serving in the first set.

Swiatek broke the Rybakina serve once more before serving out for victory.

Both are scheduled to play in

the Dubai Tennis Championship, which begins on Friday.

Elsewhere, Australia's Alex de Minaur marked his 25th birthday by beating Grigor Dimitrov 6-4, 6-3 to reach the Rotterdam Open final. De Minaur will face Australian Open champion Jannik Sinner on Sunday after the Italian beat Tallon Griekspoor 6-2, 6-4.

Wimbledon and defending champion Carlos Alcaraz missed out on a first final of the season as he lost 7-6 (7-2), 6-3 to Chile's Nicolas Jarry in the semi-finals of the Argentina Open. - Agencies

IN PICTURES

City view in Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area
This picture shows a city view of Nanshan District in Shenzhen, south China's Guangdong Province. The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, a city cluster, is one of the most open areas in China with economic vitality. *xinhua*



Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachchan shared his 'AI Photo' on X account
Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachchan shared this AI-generated photos of himself on X account as he celebrates 55 years in the cinema industry. *ANI Photo*



Shopping malls in Toronto launch various activities to celebrate Chinese Lunar New Year
Dragon dancers perform at a shopping centre in Toronto, Canada, recently to celebrate the Chinese Lunar New Year. *xinhua*



Over 2.3bn passenger trips made during Spring Festival holiday
Passengers arrive at Beijing South Railway Station in Beijing, capital of China. *xinhua*



Corals in Red Sea in Hurghada, Egypt
This picture shows corals in the Red Sea in Hurghada, Egypt. *xinhua*



Elephant Festival held in Xayaboury, Laos
Elephants have fun in a river in Xayaboury. The annual Elephant Festival was held to raise awareness of elephant conservation and promote local tourism and economic development. *xinhua*

ROUND-UP

Mövenpick makes its Oman debut with opening of Mövenpick Hotel and Apartments Ghala Muscat

Contemporary and stylish, the 340-key five-star property introduces the brand’s renowned Swiss hospitality to Oman



MUSCAT: Mövenpick, a premium Accor brand known for its Swiss hospitality, has commenced 2024 with a milestone hotel opening in Muscat as the debut property in Oman.

The contemporary, five-star property takes its design inspiration from Oman’s rich culture and heritage. Mövenpick Hotel & Apartments Ghala Muscat features 282 rooms and suites and 58 stylish hotel apartments, complemented by premium facilities, services and exceptional culinary experiences for which Mövenpick is renowned.

“This marks an important milestone for Accor as our expansionist vision for the Sultanate of Oman gains considerable momentum,” said Stevens, Chief Operating Officer, Premium, Mid-scale & Economy Division, Middle East, Africa & Türkiye at Accor. “The opening of Mövenpick Hotel & Apartments Ghala Muscat en-

riches the city’s hotel landscape by introducing a premium hospitality concept rooted in culinary excellence and unparalleled service. We are honoured to raise our first flag for the Mövenpick brand in Oman, a country known for its warm welcome, which perfectly complements the Mövenpick spirit providing guests an opportunity to indulge in life’s simple pleasures.”

Nestled in a central city location in Ghala Heights, Mövenpick Hotel & Apartments Ghala Muscat is close to Muscat International Airport, the Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre, and several commercial districts and tourist attractions. It is also easily accessible from the Sultan Qaboos Highway.

Offering convenience, comfort, flexibility and modern-day indulgence for all types of travellers, from short-stay visitors to those residing in the Omani capital, the rooms, suites and hotel apart-

ments are contemporary and spacious and feature premium amenities. The apartments are fully serviced and provide access to all hotel facilities, catering to the growing number of long-stay guests, making Muscat their home.

Guests can enjoy the hotel’s stand-out wellness facilities, which include a spa, a fitness centre offering personal training services with city views, and a rooftop infinity pool. For those travelling for business or looking to host an event, the property has four flexible venues that can accommodate up to 570 guests, including three meeting rooms with natural daylight and the exceptional 630 sqm pillar-free Al Falaj Ballroom, with each space offering the latest audio-visual equipment. Designed with the flexibility to host a wide range of memorable occasions, from ceremonies and gala dinners to glamorous weddings, the

elegant ballroom can be fully customised according to the desired set-up, theme and colour scheme, all orchestrated by the dedicated events team. It also features a unique video wall – the first-of-its-kind in Muscat – and for comfort and convenience, there is a dedicated Bride Room plus basement parking for guests.

A new sought-after dining destination in the heart of Muscat, Mövenpick Hotel & Apartments Ghala Muscat also presents four remarkable avenues. Amoun is an all-day dining outlet that captures the essence of Oman and Zanzibar, offering simple, unpretentious cuisine such as slow-roasted meats, sourdough pizzas, cheese boards, and more. For prime cuts and culinary theatre, Butcher House is the perfect spot, promising the best steaks in town, skillfully paired with beverages and creatively presented tableside, with curated mu-

sic completing the experience.

With Mövenpick being known for creating memorable moments and culinary excellence, Dates & Co does not disappoint, serving date-inspired pastries, delectable desserts and Mövenpick’s famous coffee in a modern and cosy space. This is also the place to experience Mövenpick’s daily ‘Chocolate Hour’, with in-house chefs offering chocolate treats and live presentations in a gourmet display that reflects the brand’s Swiss origins. For sky-high drinks and nibbles after dark, guests can head to the Watchtower on the eighth floor, enjoying creative concoctions in a venue with breathtaking city and mountain views and dynamic DJ vibes. There’s an outdoor terrace too, for chilled-out shisha with skyline vistas.

“We are thrilled to be opening the doors to the first Mövenpick Hotel & Apartments in the Sultan-

ate of Oman, and are committed to delivering enriching guest experiences that reflect the brand’s more than seven decades of culinary excellence and elevated service,” said Arshad Mahmood, General Manager, Mövenpick Hotel & Apartments Ghala Muscat. “Offering convenience and comfort, a range of accommodation options to suit long and short stays, plus a gastronomic offering unique to Muscat, we look forward to welcoming business and leisure travellers, as well as residents seeking to experience a unique blend of Swiss hospitality and Omani charm.”

The soft launch will see the property open select rooms, facilities and venues, with the full range of amenities and services set to be unveiled over the next few months.

Accor currently operates four properties in Oman (878 keys), with another five in the pipeline by 2026.

COLLABORATION

National Gas Company contributes OMR8,000 to Social Development Ministry



MUSCAT: The National Gas Company has fulfilled its commitment towards corporate social responsibility in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development by donating OMR8,000 from its allocated social responsibility budget for the year 2023.

The donation is designated to support the ministry’s programme which aims to provide medical equipment for individuals with disabilities and the elderly. The project is part of the ministry’s broader efforts to enhance the level of services provided

to individuals with disabilities and the elderly. Through this initiative, various medical devices and aids will be provided such as medical beds, wheelchairs, breathing devices, medical earpieces, orthopaedic shoes, and specialised chairs.

National Gas confirms its commitment to assisting individuals with disabilities and the elderly, reflecting its dedication to social initiatives within the community. “You contribute support donations to individuals with disabilities and the elderly.”

AMATEUR GOLF EVENT



Ominvest Masters Golf Tournament underscores potential of sports and tourism sectors in Oman

MUSCAT: Dedicated to bolstering the sports and tourism industries in the Sultanate of Oman, Oman International Development and Investment Company (Ominvest), orchestrated the Oman Ominvest Masters Golf Tournament which took place on February 16 and 17 in the La Vie Club at Muscat Hills, Madinat Al Irfan.

The closing ceremony was attended by His Highness Azzan bin Qais al Saeed, Abdulaziz Mohammed Al Balushi, Group CEO of Ominvest, CEOs of the group’s companies, and a number of amateurs and concerned parties.

The event drew 60 golfers from the GCC countries, featuring participation from national teams of the Sultanate of Oman, as well as teams from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the State of Qatar, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates.

His Highness Azzan bin Qais al Saeed and AbdulAziz Al Balushi, Group CEO of Ominvest present-

ed the award to the Saudi player Khalid Al Attiyah, who secured the championship title.

The Oman Ominvest Masters Golf Tournament recognised as the largest amateur golf event in the Sultanate of Oman, showcased the considerable potential within the sports and tourism sectors in the country.

Abdulaziz Mohammed Al Balushi, Group CEO of Ominvest, stated that the tournament played a role in advancing the opportunities within the Sultanate of Oman to support and foster the sport of golf. It also aimed to inspire talented individuals and amateurs to enhance their skills.

In a media announcement, he expressed, “La Vie Club, an investment of Ominvest, features mountainous terrain, lush greenery, and panoramic views of the Sea of Oman. This enhances the Sultanate of Oman’s standing in the realm of golf both regionally and globally.”

OMAN ARAB BANK

OAB hosts transformative banking workshop

MUSCAT: In a step towards fostering excellence in Oman’s banking sector, Oman Arab Bank (OAB) successfully hosted a transformative workshop hosted by Hamood Sangour Al Zadjali, the former executive president of the Central Bank of Oman.

The workshop brought together bank officials including the young participants from OAB’s Ruwad Al Arabi programme, and was centred around two main themes, ‘Adapting to Diverse Market Economies’ and ‘Envisioning the Future of Banking’.

Essam Al Busaidi, Chief Human Resources & Administration Officer at OAB, said, “Al Zadjali’s workshop perfectly aligned with our ethos of continuous learning and



adaptation. His session highlighted the keys to thriving in a transformative industry in Oman and showcased the active engagement and eagerness to learn among our team members. It was an honour to have him share his insights with Ruwad Al Arabi trainees and leaders and

with our management teams.”

The workshop focused on the evolution and prospects of Oman’s banking sector, placing substantial emphasis on customer-centricity as a core strategy for maintaining competitiveness and Al Zadjali shared invaluable insights on effectively ad-

ressing the challenges in steering transformations within the banking sector. The session served not only as a platform for fostering a deeper understanding of the industry’s dynamics but also played a role in highlighting the rapidly transforming financial landscape.

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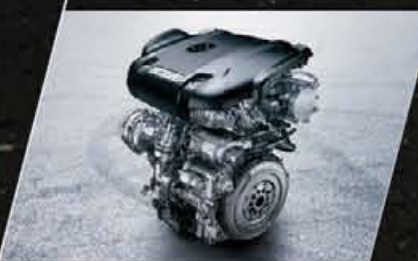
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