



'5-MINUTE WALK' SOHAR SMART CITY MASTER PLAN REVEALED

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

A master plan for the establishment of Sohar Smart City has been released by global architecture and design studio Hassell.

It was appointed by Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning to design a master plan that will position Sohar as a centre of trade, commerce and innovation by 2040.

Part of the broader Sohar Master Plan, the new city will capitalise on the economic growth resulting from the free port and arrival of an international rail link to Abu Dhabi. It will include over 19,000 new homes and 520,000sqm of office space, besides schools, mosques, hospitals and a new commuter railway station.

Creating thriving local neighbourhoods and communities, 30% of the new city features public parks and open land, promoting wellbeing of Sohar residents, and a green network of car-free nature corridors, fostering biodiversity within the city.

Ashley Munday, Principal and Head of Design at Hassell, said, "One of the biggest challenges we confronted during the briefing stage of the new city was its reliance on vehicles, a conse-

We applied a 'five-minute city' principle to establish and grow a network of connected communities anchored around amenity clusters, each within a five-minute walk of where residents live and work

ASHLEY MUNDAY



(Supplied image)

'NEW FRONT DOOR' TO THE WORLD

Earliest completion date - 2040

New homes - 19,000

Office space - 520,000sqm

Public parks and open land - 30%

Master plan spread over - 700 hectares

quence of both the desert climate and limited public transport. To increase micro-mobility in residential areas, we applied a 'five-minute city' principle to establish and grow a network of connected communities anchored around amenity clusters, each within a five-minute walk of where residents live and work.

"These clusters provide greater convenience towards local commerce, support flourishing neighbourhoods and eliminate the need to drive shorter journeys (even in extreme tem-

peratures). The neighbourhood centres will include community services, shops and restaurants all accessible on foot, alongside deliberately unprogrammed spaces that sow the seeds for neighbourhoods to develop their own character over time - allowing Sohar residents to be at the forefront of their city's future design."

In addition to local neighbourhoods, a car-free network of 'nature corridors' running from north to south and east to west will transform walkability of the

city centre, creating super-highways that prioritise pedestrians and cyclists, featuring green infrastructure that will generate habitat for local wildlife and biodiversity.

The master plan encompasses over 700 hectares of former agricultural land and will support widespread future population growth in the region making Sohar an important international gateway.

In response to the national spatial strategy developed by the Omani government and in-

cluded in the design brief, the framework envisions a new future for the city as the centre of trade, commerce and innovation within the Arabian Peninsula and beyond, Hassell stated.

The new city will be clustered around two district parks that create view corridors to the existing Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque. The new parks will hold civic and cultural functions in a new opera house, museum and library as well as a Wadi Museum. "While the proposed city as a whole will offer numerous

arts and education opportunities for local communities, the master plan also aims to attract international business and innovation to establish the city's place as a 'new front door' to the world. This initiative will complement the considerable transport and logistics infrastructure already in place."

Sustainability is at the heart of this new city framework, which is responsive to the needs of shifting climates, natural resources and socio-economic parameters. Informed by both

traditional values and contemporary lifestyle choices, the new city aims to fulfil the needs of residents, visitors and tourists through an appropriate sustainable lens. The master plan introduces bio-diversity and nature back into the fabric of the city and is underpinned by carefully curated planting, irrigation and water recycling strategies.

With phased construction planned over the next two decades, the city in the Sohar Master Plan suggests 2040 as its earliest completion date.

Oman up 18 places in press freedom index

Muscat - Oman has advanced 18 places in World Press Freedom Index 2024 issued by Reporters Without Borders. The sultanate ranked 137th, earning 42.52 points, compared to 37.87 last year, when it ranked 155th.

The index assesses the state of press freedom in 180 countries and regions, and uses five indicators to evaluate the freedom - political, legislative, economic, social and security. In the GCC, Bahrain is ranked 173rd, Saudi Arabia 166th, UAE 160th, Kuwait 131st and Qatar at 84th.

Norway topped the index, followed by Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands and Finland and making the top five, while Iran, North Korea, Afghanistan, Syria and Eritrea were at the bottom.

Oman-UAE rail construction set to commence: Asyad CEO

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

Abdulrahman bin Salem al Hatmi, CEO of Asyad Group, has confirmed that preparations are underway for construction of the Oman-UAE Rail Network, known as Hafeet Rail, which will connect the Sultanate of Oman with the United Arab Emirates.

In a statement to ONA, Hatmi informed that the rail network has been designed with innovative engineering solutions to address the terrain and climate conditions. The network will feature two tunnels, each 2.5km long, and 36 bridges, some of 34m height.

The project will include passenger stations in Sohar and Al Ain, and freight stations in Sohar, Buraimi and Al Ain. The train is expected to travel between Sohar and Abu Dhabi in



100 minutes and between Sohar and Al Ain in 47 minutes.

Highlighting the project's potential economic benefits, Hatmi stated that each trip of the freight train will have capacity to carry more than 25,000 tonnes of general cargo or transport more than 270 standard containers, reducing carbon emissions ten times compared to other forms of transport. The freight train will

travel at a speed of 120kmph, while the passenger train will operate at 200kmph.

The project is expected to reduce goods transportation cost by 35% to 40% compared to other means of transport. It will also save up to 80% of travel time in transporting goods between Sohar and Abu Dhabi compared to sea transportation, and up to 50% compared to road transportation.

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03

Oman Sustainability Week

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صديق للبيئة CO2

Liwa girls develop device to cut carbon emissions

09

'Significant progress' in Gaza ceasefire talks: Media

Oman Air appoints new chief executive

Muscat - National carrier Oman Air has named Con Korfiatis, head of Saudi low-cost airline flyadeal, as its chief executive officer.

H E Said bin Hamood al Mawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology and Chairman of Oman Air, announced the appointment of Korfiatis on Thursday.

A highly accomplished leader with over 30 years of experience in the aviation industry, Korfiatis is set to steer Oman Air's ongoing transformation, which aims to turn the airline's financial operations around, according to a press release.



Con Korfiatis

H E Mawali said, "Korfiatis' professional background, coupled with his expertise in organisational transformation and strategy development, make him the perfect fit to lead Oman Air through this crucial phase of its transformation. We have full confidence in his ability to steer

the company towards sustainable, long-term success while guiding it through the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead."

Korfiatis' three-decade-long career includes numerous CEO appointments across Asia-Pacific and the Middle East, with notable accomplishments including founding four start-up initiatives in Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Singapore and China.

He has also held a string of other executive management roles in finance, strategy, commercial, alliances, operations, network, branding and marketing, across some of the world's most successful airlines.



Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry

### Tender

Oman chamber of commerce and industry would like to announce the following public tenders:

| Tender No. | Tender Name                                      | Tender Fees (irrevocable)                                            | Specialized companies                                                  | Deadline for Obtaining Documents | Deadline for Tender submission |
|------------|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 5/2024     | consulting and developing in franchising program | 100 /-R.O for all companies.<br>25/-R.O for companied holding Riyada | companies specialised in consulting and developing franchising program | 19 May 2024                      | Before 12 pm 26 May 2024       |

Companies may obtain the tender documents from the Administration Department at the Second Floor of the chamber's Headquarters in Ruwi , during the official working hours against the payment of tender fees.

**Tender Terms:**

- Provide valued CR,OCCI membership and taxation certificate .
- Interested companies should enclose their bids a 1% Bank guarantee/ certified cheque of proposal value issued by one of the banks operating in Oman valid for 120 days from the deadline of submitting the bids addressed in the name of **Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry**. The bids without this temporary guarantee will not be considered.
- Omanization percentage in the company is considered one of the technical evaluation criteria and preference is given to companies that have higher Omanization percentages.
- The bids should be submitted in red waxed envelopes addressed to - Head of main tendering Committee, OCCI, written outside the Number and title of the Tender. No indication about the bidder is allowed on the envelope.
- Offers should be deposited in the tender box kept at the Administration Department in the Second floor of OCCI Head office.
- OCCI is not bound to accept the lowest or any other bids. It has the right to accept or reject any bids without showing reasons.
- Interested companies should submit the Tenders before 12 pm on 26 May 2024

For any inquiries please contact as on : 24763881

Email : [Shahla.zadjali@omanchamber.om](mailto:Shahla.zadjali@omanchamber.om)

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# Red Cross recognises expat for saving life

Our Correspondent Muscat

The American Red Cross has recognised Shaandar Bukhari, a Pakistani national residing in Oman, for his heroic intervention that prevented a suicide attempt. Bukhari, a social worker, was alerted when he saw a WhatsApp status from a friend indicating suicidal intent. Bukhari described the tense experience as harrowing, saying, "It was a horrible experience, and I wish no one goes through it."

As a martial artist, he relied on his training to stay calm under pressure. "I stayed focused and maintained contact with him. I managed to reach his place in Al Khuwair and saved him from hanging himself." Bukhari's courage came amidst his own grief over the recent loss of his father. "The loss



... saw a WhatsApp status from a friend indicating suicidal intent. I maintained contact with him. I managed to reach his place and save him

SHAANDAR BUKHARI



of my father left a huge impact on my mental health," affecting sleep and ability to cope. Despite lacking professional emergency response training, Bukhari credits his father's influence for his fearless yet responsible attitude. "I was not out of grief, and then this situation arose. For a week or two, I couldn't sleep properly, thinking about what could have happened if I hadn't

seen the WhatsApp status message. But I stayed determined to save this life." The American Red Cross contacted Bukhari months later to recognise his efforts just before Ramadan with a 'Certificate of extraordinary personal action for selfless and humane action using lifesaving skills'. Reflecting on the recognition, he said, "Being appreciated vali-

dates one's existence and tells us that we matter. It is fuel for the human soul. I am happy that my efforts helped save a life and can inspire others." Bukhari's recognition marks a significant milestone as he claims he is the first civilian in Oman to receive such an honour from the Red Cross. He has since urged authorities to establish a hotline for those struggling with mental issues.

## Two new dams to come up in N Sharqiyah

Our Correspondent Muscat

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Water Resources (MAFWR), in collaboration with the Tender Board, has initiated a process for the construction of two new dams in North Sharqiyah, demonstrating its commitment to bolstering the water sector in the sultanate.

In a statement, MAFWR said that these dams, to be built on Wadi Amad and Wadi Al Ghubaira in the wilayat of Dima Wa At Taien, aim to enhance groundwater recharge capabilities.

The ministry, informing about the floating of the tender, said that the deadline for submission is June 10.

As of 2020, the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) reported existence of 169



dams across the sultanate, comprising 115 surface storage dams, 51 underground recharge dams, and three protection dams.

Highlighting the ongoing efforts to maintain and improve water infrastructure, MAFWR disclosed that during the first quarter of 2024, 38 aflaj (irrigation channels) and water springs

received maintenance.

Additionally, 71 projects are underway to further bolster the water sector.

Statistics provided by MAFWR showcase the distribution of maintained aflaj across various governorates. Notably, one aflaj each was maintained in Musandam and North Batinah,

with five aflaj in South Batinah, four in North Sharqiyah, three in South Sharqiyah, and seven in Dhahirah.

Furthermore, maintenance activities encompassed 17 water springs in Dhofar governorate.

Aflaj projects play a crucial role in supporting farmers and enhancing irrigation services, leveraging traditional water sources that have sustained Omanis for generations. The types of aflaj vary based on geological and hydrological characteristics.

North Batinah boasts 993 aflaj, including 408 in Sohar, 277 in Khabourah, 123 in Saham, 76 in Shinas, 73 in Liwa, and 36 in Suwaiq.

Across all governorates, Oman is home to 4,112 aflaj, underscoring their significance in the nation's water management infrastructure.

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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|---------------|--|
| Profit and Loss account for the year ended 31st December 2023                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |              |               |  |
| (In RO 000's)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |              |               |  |
| Details                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Current Year | Previous Year |  |
| Gross interest income                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | 2,097        | 3,471         |  |
| Interest Expense                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | (1,571)      | (3,524)       |  |
| Net Interest Income                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 526          | (53)          |  |
| Other operating Income :                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |              |               |  |
| 1. Dividend Income                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | -            | -             |  |
| 2. Net Fees and Commission Income                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 353          | 420           |  |
| a) Fee and commission Income                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 504          | 485           |  |
| Less: b) Fee and commission Expense                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | (151)        | (65)          |  |
| 3. Net Foreign Exchange Income                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 230          | 163           |  |
| a) Income                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 230          | 163           |  |
| Less: b) Expense                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | -            | -             |  |
| 4. Net Income from dealing in Securities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | -            | -             |  |
| a) Gain / (Loss)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | -            | -             |  |
| Less: b) Expense                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | -            | -             |  |
| 5. Net Income from Investment Securities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 497          | 1,050         |  |
| a) Income                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 497          | 1,050         |  |
| Less: b) Expense                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | -            | -             |  |
| Gross Income                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 1,606        | 1,580         |  |
| General Administrative Expenses                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | (2,983)      | (3,141)       |  |
| Depreciation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | (360)        | (418)         |  |
| Total Operating Cost                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | (3,343)      | (3,559)       |  |
| Net operating Profit (Profit on ordinary activities before provisions)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | (1,737)      | (1,979)       |  |
| Income from subsidiaries                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |              |               |  |
| a) Income from associate companies                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | -            | -             |  |
| a) Income from other Licensed Activities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | -            | 8             |  |
| a) Investment Activities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | -            | -             |  |
| Other Income                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 963          | 145           |  |
| Profit from sale of non-banking assets                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | -            | -             |  |
| Bad debts written off                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | -            | -             |  |
| ECL Allowance(net) charged for Loans & Advances                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | (9,907)      | (3,539)       |  |
| ECL Allowance(net) charged for Investments                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 4            | (156)         |  |
| ECL Allowance(net) charged for Placements                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | -            | 1             |  |
| ECL Allowance(net) charged for Off Balance Sheet Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 104          | 46            |  |
| ECL Allowance(net) charged for Others(if any)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 2            | (96)          |  |
| Provision for diminution in value of investments                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | -            | -             |  |
| Provision for crystallized un-booked risks & commitments                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | -            | -             |  |
| Profit for the year after loan loss provisions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | (10,571)     | (5,570)       |  |
| Taxation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | (2,043)      | 835           |  |
| Net Profit After Tax                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | (12,614)     | (4,735)       |  |
| Other Comprehensive Income for the Year                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |              |               |  |
| - Movement in fair value of available for sale /FVOCI investments , for the year                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | -            | -             |  |
| - Effects of currency translation for the year                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | -            | -             |  |
| - Any other comprehensive income for the year (Please Specify)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | -            | -             |  |
| Total Comprehensive income for the year                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | (12,614)     | (4,735)       |  |

| Balance Sheet as on 31st December, 2023                                           |              |               |  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|---------------|--|
| (In RO 000's)                                                                     |              |               |  |
| Assets (Net of total ECL)                                                         | Current Year | Previous Year |  |
| 1. Cash                                                                           | 182          | 611           |  |
| 2. Balances with Central Bank of Oman                                             | 4,559        | 6,143         |  |
| 3. Capital Deposit with CBO                                                       | 500          | 500           |  |
| 4. Government & Other Securities                                                  | -            | -             |  |
| 5. Treasury & Other Bills                                                         | 15,000       | -             |  |
| 6. Balances due from H.O., Branches, Principal shareholders & Affiliates abroad   | 591          | 1,041         |  |
| 7. Due from Banks                                                                 |              |               |  |
| (i) Placements                                                                    | 3,846        | 3,381         |  |
| (ii) Loans & Advances                                                             | -            | -             |  |
| 8. Other Money Market placements                                                  | -            | -             |  |
| 9. Investments                                                                    | 122          | 15,121        |  |
| 10. Loans, Advances & Overdraft (Net of loan loss provision and reserve interest) | 34,565       | 56,510        |  |
| 11. Tangible fixed assets                                                         | 2,572        | 2,796         |  |
| 12. Losses carried forward                                                        | -            | -             |  |
| 13. Other assets                                                                  | 2,408        | 4,941         |  |
| Total assets                                                                      | 64,345       | 91,044        |  |
| Liabilities                                                                       | Current Year | Previous Year |  |
| 1. Deposits (incl. Govt.)                                                         | 34,007       | 46,694        |  |
| a) Demand                                                                         | 9,247        | 14,534        |  |
| b) Savings                                                                        | 4,243        | 7,426         |  |
| c) Time                                                                           | 20,517       | 24,734        |  |
| 2. Certificate of Deposits                                                        | -            | -             |  |
| 3. Due to HO branches, principal shareholders & affiliates abroad                 | 27           | 84            |  |
| 4. Due to Banks :                                                                 |              |               |  |
| (i) Placements                                                                    | 515          | 1,694         |  |
| (ii) Borrowings                                                                   | -            | -             |  |
| 5. Other Money Market Deposits                                                    | -            | -             |  |
| 6. Borrowings from CBO                                                            | (11,879)     | 735           |  |
| 7. Assigned Capital                                                               | 40,500       | 40,500        |  |
| 8. Reserves                                                                       | -            | -             |  |
| 9. Retained Earnings                                                              | 1,175        | 1,337         |  |
| 10. Other Liabilities                                                             | -            | -             |  |
| Total Liabilities                                                                 | 64,345       | 91,044        |  |

## Region's 1st Club Med Resort to come up in Musandam

Our Correspondent Muscat

The hospitality scene in Oman is about to get a major boost with the official signing of the Club Med Musandam project, marking the debut of the first Club Med Resort in the Middle East.

This exclusive resort will come up following a collaboration among Omran Group, Club Med, and Royal Court Affairs.

A deal to this effect was signed on Thursday in Muscat, which was attended by H E Salem Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism; Nasr Hamoud al Kindi, Secretary General of the Royal Court Affairs; Ibrahim Said al Busaidi, Governor of Musandam; Abdulsalam Mohammed al Murschidi, President of Oman Investment Authority; H E Véronique Aulagnon, Ambassador of France in Oman; H E Azzan Qasim al Busaidi, Undersecretary for Tourism in the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and Chairman of Omran; Dr Hashil Obaid al Mahruqi, CEO of Omran Group, and Henri Giscard d'Estaing, CEO of Club Med.

The agreement underscores Omran's commitment to boosting Oman's economy and promoting tourism through sustainable projects.

Located on the Musandam Peninsula, Club Med Musandam site is just a 5-minute boat ride from Khasab city.

The resort is expected to add another 300 rooms to Oman's hospitality portfolio, with a strong flair of the Omani culture as manifested in its interior, entertainment and even food and beverages.

"In light of our collaboration with Club Med, Oman's tourism sector is ushering in exciting new opportunities," remarked Hashil al Mahrouqi. "Oman's unparalleled natural beauty, rich traditions, and genuine hospitality are treasures we're eager to share with the world. This partnership reflects our dedication to attracting top-tier hospitality operators who share our common vision to enrich tourism experiences and innovate with diverse tourism products. By leveraging Musandam's stunning natural assets, we're committed to enhancing the tourism sector, showcasing Oman's beauty, peace, and warm hospitality on a global scale."

The Club Med brand has been offering unique holiday experiences around the world since 1950, and choosing Musandam for their first resort in the Middle East speaks volumes of how unique Oman's tourism potential.

"The history and success of Club Med lies on its pioneer approach, strongly contributing to the overall development of regions and areas where it has been implementing," said Giscard d'Estaing.

# Liwa girls develop device to cut carbon emissions

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

Aseel Abdullah bin Khuzam al Maamaria and Sarah Mohammed bin Saleh al Balushi of Riyadh al Azhar School in Liwa, North Batinah have developed a groundbreaking device aimed at reducing carbon emissions from human and industrial activities.

Their innovation won them fifth place in Petroleum Development Oman's Renewable Energy Award presented during Oman Sustainability Week which con-

cluded last week.

In an interview with *Muscat Daily*, Aseel said the idea behind the device, named 'Eco-Friendly', arose from the urgent need to tackle carbon emissions that are contributing to climate change, adversely affecting agriculture and industry. Their project began in October 2023 and was completed by April 2024.

The device operates using cold plasma technology paired with activated carbon, sourced from materials like charcoal and coconut shells. This combination



Aseel al Maamaria (R) and Sarah al Balushi (Supplied photo)

*Their innovation won 5<sup>th</sup> place in PDO's Renewable Energy Award presented at Oman Sustainability Week last week*

allows the device to absorb and break down carbon dioxide, effectively improving air quality and helping combat global warming.

"It first uses cold plasma technology to break down carbon

dioxide gas into highly reactive atoms, allowing for the efficient purification of polluted gases. This process not only conserves energy but also promotes environmental sustainability," Aseel said explaining how the device functions.

The process is completed by using activated charcoal, removing further excess carbon to purify the air and transforming harmful gases into environmentally friendly substances.

The efficiency of their innovation has been rigorously tested at

Sohar University and various companies in Sohar Port, confirming its feasibility.

Aseel and Sarah expressed their gratitude to Halima al Maamaria and Hajar al Ghaithia for their support throughout the development process.

"We aim to further develop the device to make it more compact, enabling its integration into vehicles and industrial facilities," Aseel added, highlighting their commitment to broadening the use of their innovative solution to cut carbon emissions.

# Exhibition to showcase Omani talent, tourism potential

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) in Muscat will host a photography exhibition on Sunday, May 5, to highlight Omani talent and promote tourism.

The two-week exhibition, titled 'Hess' - or 'Feeling' - will be held at Bait al Zubair Museum, showcasing 70 images by 21 photographers. The event aims to capture the beauty of Oman, boost tourism and celebrate local artistic talent.

Photographer Mohammed Sulaiman Nasser al Shaaيلي, who is overseeing the exhibition, said, "Photography serves as a medium for conveying emotions and artistic sentiments in society."

He stressed the need to support Omani photographers by creating environments conducive to artistic expression and offering platforms to showcase their work. He also highlighted the sultanate's achievements in photography, noting that many Omani photographers have earned prestigious accolades.

"The exhibition seeks to not only celebrate Omani talent in photography but also to under-



(Supplied photo)



*The exhibition seeks to not only celebrate Omani talent in photography but also to underscore its role in promoting cultural exchange and tourism*

**MOHAMMED SULAIMAN NASSER AL SHAAILI**

score its role in promoting cultural exchange and tourism, both domestically and internationally."

**Creative Industries Forum**

In addition to the exhibition, an event called Creative Industries Forum will be held on May 5 to 6 at Bait al Zubair Museum. The forum aims to highlight the significance of creative industries in fostering sustainable economic

development and cultural innovation. It will also spotlight UTAS's programmes in photography, design, journalism, digital media and advertising.

The forum's primary goal is to equip students with the knowledge and skills needed to thrive in the global knowledge economy, which increasingly relies on creativity. It will include dialogue sessions with industry professionals, focusing on the role of

creative industries in economic development and the impact of educational programmes on the creative economy and sustainable development.

Additionally, the forum will feature a workshop showcasing success stories of university graduates and entrepreneurs in the creative industries, aiming to inspire students towards continuous learning and self-development.

Tender Announcement

مدائن  
madayn

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) announces the following Tender:

| Tender Number       | Tender Name                                                                                    | Last date of buying | Date of submission | Type of work          | Register Degree | Fee (R.O) |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-----------|
| 10/2024/PEIE/H Q-10 | Maintenance of Roads Improving and Repairing Damaged Roads at Al Wadi Al Kabir Industrial City | 2024-05-19          | 2024-06-13         | Construction of Roads | Third and above | 70        |

Interested Companies registered with Tender Board may obtain the Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document. Tenders should be submitted on line on given website.

1. Tender Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at eTendering System.

2. eTendering System Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the eTendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: [etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om](mailto:etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om) and +968 24402200 Note: Bid Submission will be online only.

Madayn is not bound to accept the lowest or any other Offer and has the right to cancel these tenders and the tenderers have no right to claim for any compensations.

@madaynoman

madayn.om

# Bids invited for restoration of historic towers in Muttrah

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT) has announced a tender for restoration and maintenance of three towers in Sur al Lawatiya, located in the wilayat of Muttrah, Muscat.

The strategic location of Muttrah along the sea and its population size make it an important area for Oman's development.

Sur al Lawatiya is distinguished by its architectural beauty, characterised by intricate Islamic motifs and sea-facing balconies that offer stunning views. MHT is seeking

partnerships with the private sector for this project, with the deadline for bid submission on June 4.

The ministry's statement in this regard highlights the sultanate's focus on heritage sites, which attract both local and international tourists.

Muttrah is home to several notable historical attractions, including Muttrah Fort, Muttrah Souq and Al Alam Palace, which are popular among visitors.

According to MHT data, Oman welcomed more than 3mn tourists in 2023, representing a 41.2% increase over the previous year.

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Sultanate of Oman  
Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education

Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education (OAAAQA)

TENDER

| Tender Number | Tender Title                                                                                                 | Company Grade:      | Tender Fee | Dates             |                                    |                     |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|------------|-------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------|
|               |                                                                                                              |                     |            | Distribution Till | Last Day to receive Clarifications | Bid Submission Date |
| 1/2024        | Design, supply, implementation, management & support of OAAAQA Core Services digital transformation solution | Excellent and First | 40 OMR     | 15/05/2024        | 22/05/2024                         | 26/06/2024          |

The Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation & Quality Assurance of Education (OAAAQA) is hereby inviting all local, regional & international specialized bidders to participate in this TENDER as per the following instructions, in addition to all terms of TENDER enclosed in the TENDER documents.

For project brief, please visit the below link:  
<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>

**A. Purchase of Tender Documents**

The Bidders may obtain the TENDER document by registering the company at eTendering System (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)

**A. B. Submission**

All Proposals should be SUBMITTED ONLINE AT e-TENDERING System (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)

Proposals to be accepted for evaluation which will be submitted through the eTendering System ONLY.

**C. Correspondence Tender Inquiry:**

All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online through the eTendering System ONLY.

**e. Tendering System Inquiry:**

All correspondence pertaining to the eTendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: [etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om](mailto:etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om) and +968 24402200

All correspondence pertaining to the OAAAQA tender must be directed to the following email address and phone number: [tenders@oaaaqa.gov.om](mailto:tenders@oaaaqa.gov.om) and +968 24121706

**OAAAQA Business Hours**

Sunday – Thursday, 7:30 - 14:30 Oman Time, (+4 UTC)

OAAAQA Business Hours are to be considered in all correspondences.

[www.oaaaqa.gov.om](http://www.oaaaqa.gov.om)

@oaaaqa\_om

# KCA gets \$45mn project financing from OAB

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

KCA Deutag, a leading UK-based drilling, engineering, and technology company, has secured an additional \$45mn of project financing from Oman Arab Bank (OAB). This builds upon the previous \$45mn financing acquired by the company in 2023.

The total funding package of \$90mn supports the construction of four highly automated new build rigs, the first to be constructed in Oman. As previously announced, KCA Deutag will own and operate the rigs having secured ten-year contracts.

The first two rigs have been completed and commenced operations at the beginning of the year, while the construction of the remaining two rigs is underway and is expected to be completed in 2024. The project financing will be repaid over ten years following completion.

In a press statement, Sulaiman al Harthi, Chief Executive



*OAB's total funding package of \$90mn supports the construction of KCA Duetag's four highly automated new build rigs, the first to be constructed in Oman*

Officer of OAB, said, "This project strengthens our relationship with a key industry player in the world and demonstrates our commitment to financing high-value projects that drive eco-

nomic progress. It also underscores our belief in the power of partnerships and collaboration, enabling us to deliver solutions that not only meet our client's evolving needs but also drive

mutual value creation."

Sulaiman al Hinai, Chief Wholesale Banking Officer at OAB, added, "We take great pride in onboarding KCA Deutag with our new Corporate Internet Banking (CIB) platform. Our new CIB Platform is a key milestone in our ongoing digital transformation journey."

Jan Hetherington, Head of Corporate Development and Treasury at KCA Duetag, said, "We are delighted to be working with a local bank as we build and deliver these four highly-automated rigs in Oman. Our ongoing presence in the country, ten-year contracts, and enviable footprint in the Middle East region have made this project finance deal possible."

"We look forward to continue to work with OAB, and will review opportunities to further strengthen the banking relationship as construction progresses and the remaining two rigs commence operations later this year," he added.

# US Chamber focuses on Oman with new Working Group

Our Correspondent  
Muscat

The US Chamber of Commerce is focused on expanding partnerships with the Omani government and business leaders to ensure a future of mutually beneficial commercial collaboration, innovation, and growth, according to a statement issued by the chamber.

The US Chamber of Commerce formally announced the US-Oman Working Group during the first US-Oman Economic Forum on April 23, 2024. The forum took place on the sidelines of the second strategic dialogue in Washington, DC, and largely focused on the bilateral trade and investment relationship between the United States and Oman.

"We are pleased to observe an increasing interest in the Omani market from the business community in the United States in recent years. The comprehensive reforms undertaken by Oman since 2020 represent a pivotal advancement aimed at enhancing the market's appeal for investment from the United



States," said Khush Choksy, Senior Vice President of Middle East, Central Asia and Türkiye at the US Chamber of Commerce.

"We are looking forward to working closely with Omani government to further develop a balanced and predictable business environment where American companies can flourish," he added.

The meeting included keynote remarks from senior government officials from both the US and Oman, including H E Ana Escrogima, US Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman, and H E Sheikh Khalifa al Harthi, Undersecretary for Political Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Oman.

The first US-Oman Economic

Forum highlighted the benefits of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and ways both sides can expand the trade relationship, as well as highlighted opportunities to expand on renewables and the energy transition in Oman.

The US Chamber of Commerce said that the American companies have shown leadership in key sectors that promise to add value and pursue strategic ties in healthcare, technology, energy, and digitisation, among others in Oman.

'The US-Oman Working Group is a valuable business advocacy platform to showcase the leadership and innovation of the US business community as we continue collaboration with Oman,' the US Chamber added.

# India lifts ban on onion exports after robust production in 2024

New Delhi, India - India lifted the restrictions on onion exports from Friday. The decision comes on the heels of robust kharif crop production in 2024 and favourable monsoon forecasts, coupled with stable market conditions both at the mandi (wholesale market) and retail levels.

"All restrictions on onion export have been removed with effect from today," said Nidhi Khare, Secretary, Department of Consumer Affairs at a press conference in Delhi.

She said, "This is basically taking into account the Rabi 2024 production and approved Kharif prospect because of above normal monsoon."

She further added that "the current market situation which was stable both at Mandi and retail and also the international availability and prices situation."

According to the official estimate, the Rabi 2024 onion production is about 19.1mn tonnes, which is reasonably comfortable considering monthly domestic

consumption of about 17mn tonnes.

The export of onion had been prohibited with effect from December 8, 2023 to increase domestic supply against an estimated 20% decline in the Kharif and late Kharif production.

The restriction on export helped the government in maintaining stable prices till the arrival of Rabi 2024 crop.

The removal of export restrictions is expected to bolster India's onion trade and contribute to the country's overall economic stability. With favourable crop conditions and ample supply, the move is likely to benefit both domestic consumers and export markets, ensuring steady prices and ample availability of onions in the coming months.

Rabi onion harvested during April-June accounts for 65% of India's onion production and meets the consumer's demand till the Kharif crop is harvested in October-November. ANI



# Oil prices up over prospect of extended OPEC+ output cuts

London, UK - Oil prices increased on Friday over expectations that the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies, known as OPEC+, would continue production cuts.

International benchmark Brent crude traded at \$84.02 per barrel, an increase of 0.42% from the closing price of \$83.67 per barrel in the previous trading session.

US benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) traded at \$79.28 per barrel at the same time, a 0.42% rise from the previous session that closed at \$78.95 per barrel.

Oil prices plummeted to the lowest levels in the past seven weeks, with reduced supply risks in the Middle East

due to cease-fire negotiations between Israel and Hamas, while projected demand dwindled over concerns about the US economy after the US Federal Reserve (Fed) left the interest rate policy unchanged.

Higher prices were, however, bolstered by the possibility that the OPEC+ group, led by Saudi Arabia and Russia, would continue to reduce production.

The price declines come just weeks ahead of the OPEC+ group meeting on June 1. Experts predict that if oil demand does not improve by June, OPEC, which needs higher prices, could agree to sustain its voluntary production cuts of 2.2 million barrels per day.



# Muscat Finance (S.A.O.G)

P.O.Box: 888, Ruwi, P.C. 112, Sultanate of Oman, Tel: 24625300, Fax: 24625310

## Muscat Finance: Director's Report 2023

**Dear Shareholders,**

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Muscat Finance (SAOG), I am pleased to present the Directors' report for the quarter ended 31st March 2024.

**Economic Environment**

The Omani economy presented a mixed picture in Q1 2024. While the hydrocarbon sector faced challenges, the non-hydrocarbon sector's expansion, stable inflation, credit growth, and rising deposits suggest ongoing economic activity. However, rising interest rates due to a tightening monetary policy might impact credit availability.

Lower oil prices (down 2.0% YoY to \$80.2 per barrel in February 2024) and a 5.9% decrease in daily oil production impacted nominal GDP. This is after the nominal GDP declined 2.8% YoY in Q4 2023 which was driven by a decrease in hydrocarbon output and despite a 1.3% growth in real GDP driven by the non-hydrocarbon sector. With prudent monetary and fiscal policies, Oman's Consumer Price Index (CPI) remained stable with a YoY inflation of -0.04% as of February 2024.

The banking sector witnessed stability in credit and deposits. Total outstanding credit extended by Omani banks increased 2.7% YoY, with credit to the private sector rising 3.9% which suggests stable economic activity. The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) implemented a tightening monetary policy stance with average Repo rate at 6.0%. This could potentially impact interest costs across the industry.

For Muscat Finance, this environment presents both opportunities and challenges. The growth in credit and deposits indicates a potential demand for our financial services. However, rising interest rates could elevate our borrowing costs and potentially affect customer loan affordability. We will continue to monitor economic developments and adapt our strategies to best serve our customers in this evolving environment.

**Business Results**

The first quarter of the year 2024, brought with it a set of formidable challenges for the financial sector in view of the rising interest rates. However, your Company successfully maneuvered through these testing times to achieve profitability.

Q1 2024 marked a transition in your Company's management with the new Chief Executive Officer ("CEO"), assuming office in February 2024. Resultantly, following a year-on-year decline in asset base in January 2024 and February 2024, your Company recorded a robust rebound in business booking in March 2024 with a 42.7% Year on Year growth in business booking in retail segment. Your Company has witnessed the momentum continuing in April 2024 and looks forward to bolstering its asset base by booking high quality business at optimal pricing.

Your Company has recorded a net profit of RO 127K for the period ended March 2024 against RO 341K of net profit for the corresponding period in the previous year.

The Net Investment in Finance Debtors moderated to RO 911Mn compared to RO 101 Mn in the same period of the previous year. Your company generated net cash from operating activities of RO 1,973K in the first 3 months of 2024 compared to the outflows of RO 1,211K in the same period in the preceding year. As a result, the total liabilities reduced by RO 7,353K, representing 11% from RO 65,598K as on to RO 58,245K. This translated to a reduction in leverage ratio from 1.89 to 1.82.

**The financial results are summarized below:**

| PARTICULARS                       | Amount in RO'000  |                   |          |   |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------|---|
|                                   | YTD 31st Mar 2024 | YTD 31st Mar 2023 | % Change | % |
| Net investment in finance debtors | 91,019            | 100,541           | (9%)     |   |
| Net operating income              | 1,358             | 1,534             | (11%)    |   |
| Operating expenses                | (919)             | (835)             | 10%      |   |
| Operating profit                  | 439               | 699               | (37%)    |   |
| Provisions                        | (312)             | (358)             | 13%      |   |
| Net profit after tax              | 127               | 341               | (63%)    |   |

Your Company continues to focus on increasing its core retail business and adopted a selective approach for the corporate business. With the current momentum in business booking, your Company is optimistic about returning to growth trajectories in the near future.

The Company also continued its focus on recovery and controlling the non-performing assets. Given the macroeconomic landscape, your Company is also focussing on optimizing interest rates to achieve sustainable profitability and growth.

**Human Capital**

Your Company fully recognises that having a competent, highly motivated, and performance-led workforce is key to ensuring the success of our business.

In February 2024, Mr. Rashad Al Shaikh assumed responsibilities as CEO of your Company. Mr. Shaikh is an accomplished leader having over 25 years of exceptional leadership experience in banking industry with various specializations including corporate and retail banking, investment banking and project finance. I welcome him to your Company and wish him well to take your Company to greater heights.

To further its digitization focus, your Company has appointed Mr. Ali Al Khawaldeh as the Chief Digital and Transformation Officer. Mr. Khawaldeh brings 25 years of experience in the banking industry specializing in areas such as Digital Banking, Process Transformation, Credit, and Analytics. Your Company plans to further its strategic vision by leveraging on his experience in the implementation of the company's digital and transformation roadmap.

Emphasizing human capital development, the Company invests in employee training and has recently developed additional online modules to complement offsite and in-house training initiatives.

**Embracing Technology for a Transformed Customer Experience**

Your Company is leading the charge in leveraging technology to revolutionize your customer experience. It is developing solutions aligned with recent technological advancements across the globe to develop best solutions for its customers. In the first quarter of 2024, your Company witnessed a grand inauguration of its state-of-the-art headquarters in Q1 2024. Designed to foster a dynamic work environment, the new facility boasts Wi-Fi-enabled infrastructure that empowers the use of smart technologies and the Internet of Things (IoT). This translates to enhanced mobility, collaboration, and productivity for employees, ultimately enabling delivery a more efficient and responsive service to customers.

The customer journey is at the heart of the new headquarters. The open-plan layout facilitates seamless collaboration between departments, leading to faster turnaround times and an elevated level of customer service.

Furthering its commitment to digitalization, your Company saw the implementation of many several industry-leading solutions. Your Company established a B2B payment integration with a major bank, streamlining payment processes and contributing to our sustainability goals of reducing paper usage. Additionally, your Company introduced a game-changing 24/7 unmanned kiosks for convenient customer access.

In the First Quarter of 2024, your Company also implemented a Whatsapp-based queue system which not only reduces paper consumption but also empowers customers with better scheduling. This translates to significantly reduced wait times and an overall enhanced experience.

**Business outlook for the year 2024**

Oman's fiscal performance remains robust, with consecutive surpluses in 2023 and the preceding years, demonstrating effective fiscal management. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) forecasts a 2.7% real GDP expansion for Oman in 2024, which is likely to propel economic growth.

Your Company is well-positioned to contribute to this national growth trajectory, aligning its own expansion with the country's economic momentum. Going forward, your Company is planning optimizing and digitizing most of its processes to make it available to customer across multiple convenient channels at lightning speeds.

While maintaining an optimistic outlook, your Company acknowledges potential risks arising from geopolitical developments and emerging internal or external threats. Your Company remains committed to applying prudent lending norms in asset creation ensures sustainable growth for the foreseeable future.

**Acknowledgement**

On behalf of the Board and the Company, I would like to express our sincere gratitude and best wishes to His Majesty Sultan

Haitham Bin Tariq to lead the Sultanate of Oman with his wisdom and vision, towards a path of prosperity.

I would like to thank His Majesty's Government, the Central Bank of Oman, the Capital Market Authority and other regulatory Authorities for their continued support and guidance. We are grateful to customers for their continued patronage and support, to our bankers for their unwavering trust and support, and to all the shareholders for the confidence reposed in its Board. On behalf of the Board, I would like to express our appreciation to the dedicated management and staff of the Company for their hard work, commitment, and support.

On Behalf of the Board of Directors

Mr. Faisal Mohamed Al Yousef  
**Chairman**

| Condensed interim statement of financial position as at 31 March 2024 |                                        |                                        |                                        |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
|                                                                       | 31 March 2024<br>RO' 000<br>Un-audited | 31 March 2023<br>RO' 000<br>Un-audited | 31 December 2023<br>RO' 000<br>Audited |
| <b>ASSETS</b>                                                         |                                        |                                        |                                        |
| Cash and bank balances                                                | 1,169                                  | 905                                    | 1,752                                  |
| Investment securities                                                 | 359                                    | 1,069                                  | -                                      |
| Net investment in finance debtors                                     | 91,019                                 | 100,541                                | 92,254                                 |
| Other receivables and prepayments                                     | 353                                    | 449                                    | 298                                    |
| Deferred tax asset                                                    | 485                                    | 833                                    | 485                                    |
| Investment property                                                   | 2,258                                  | 157                                    | 2,284                                  |
| Property and equipment                                                | 703                                    | -                                      | 710                                    |
| Statutory deposit                                                     | 250                                    | 250                                    | 250                                    |
| <b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>                                                   | <b>96,596</b>                          | <b>104,204</b>                         | <b>98,033</b>                          |
| <b>EQUITY</b>                                                         |                                        |                                        |                                        |
| Share capital                                                         | 30,715                                 | 30,715                                 | 30,715                                 |
| Legal reserve                                                         | 3,126                                  | 3,098                                  | 3,126                                  |
| Impairment reserve                                                    | 6,285                                  | 3,955                                  | 5,743                                  |
| (Accumulated losses)/ retained earnings                               | (1,775)                                | 838                                    | (1,360)                                |
| <b>Total equity</b>                                                   | <b>38,351</b>                          | <b>38,606</b>                          | <b>38,224</b>                          |
| <b>LIABILITIES</b>                                                    |                                        |                                        |                                        |
| Short term borrowings                                                 | 28,160                                 | 21,781                                 | 31,818                                 |
| Other liabilities                                                     | 5,852                                  | 6,955                                  | 5,232                                  |
| Corporate deposits                                                    | 18,504                                 | 18,299                                 | 17,030                                 |
| Long term loans                                                       | 5,729                                  | 7,563                                  | 5,729                                  |
| <b>Total liabilities</b>                                              | <b>58,245</b>                          | <b>65,598</b>                          | <b>59,809</b>                          |
| <b>TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES</b>                                   | <b>96,596</b>                          | <b>104,204</b>                         | <b>98,033</b>                          |
| <b>Net assets per share (RO)</b>                                      | <b>0.125</b>                           | <b>0.126</b>                           | <b>0.124</b>                           |

| Condensed interim statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the period ended 31 March 2024 |                                                     |                                                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                 | Period ended 31 March 2024<br>RO' 000<br>Un-audited | Period ended 31 March 2023<br>RO' 000<br>Un-audited |
| Interest income                                                                                                 | 2,082                                               | 2,113                                               |
| Interest expense                                                                                                | (903)                                               | (856)                                               |
| Net interest income                                                                                             | 1,179                                               | 1,257                                               |
| Other operating income                                                                                          | 179                                                 | 277                                                 |
|                                                                                                                 | 1,358                                               | 1,534                                               |
| <b>Expenses</b>                                                                                                 |                                                     |                                                     |
| Selling, general and administrative expenses                                                                    | (863)                                               | (811)                                               |
| Depreciation                                                                                                    | (46)                                                | (3)                                                 |
| Director's remuneration and sitting fees                                                                        | (10)                                                | (21)                                                |
|                                                                                                                 | (919)                                               | (835)                                               |
| Profit before allowance for impairment and litigation losses                                                    | 439                                                 | 699                                                 |
| Allowance for impairment                                                                                        | (312)                                               | (358)                                               |
| <b>Net profit/ (loss) before tax for the year</b>                                                               | <b>127</b>                                          | <b>341</b>                                          |
| Income tax                                                                                                      | -                                                   | -                                                   |
| <b>Net profit after tax for the year</b>                                                                        | <b>127</b>                                          | <b>341</b>                                          |
| <b>Total comprehensive income for the year</b>                                                                  | <b>127</b>                                          | <b>341</b>                                          |
| <b>Basic and diluted earnings per share (Baizas)</b>                                                            | <b>1.65</b>                                         | <b>4.44</b>                                         |

**NOTE** - The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder or other interested party who requests them, in either Arabic or English, within 7 days of such request.

# OECD expects steady global growth in 2024 and 2025

Paris, France – The global economy is continuing growing at a modest pace, according to the OECD's latest Economic Outlook. The Economic Outlook projects steady global GDP growth of 3.1% in 2024, the same as the 3.1% in 2023, followed by a slight pick-up to 3.2% in 2025.

The impact of tight monetary conditions continues being felt, particularly in housing and credit markets, but global activity is proving relatively resilient, the decline in inflation continues, and private sector confidence is improving, OECD said in a statement.

The OECD unemployment rate stood at 4.9% in February, close to its lowest levels since 2001. Real incomes are rising in many OECD countries as inflation moderates, and trade growth has turned positive. The outlook continues to differ across countries, with weaker outcomes in many advanced economies, especially in Europe, and strong growth in the United States and many emerging market economies.

Headline inflation in the OECD is projected to gradually ease from 6.9% in 2023 to 5.0% in 2024 and 3.4% in 2025, helped by tight monetary policy and fading goods and energy price pressures. By the end of



OECD headquarters in Paris, France

2025, inflation is expected to be back on central bank targets in most major economies.

GDP growth in the United States is projected to be 2.6% in 2024, before slowing to 1.8% in 2025 as the economy adapts to high borrowing costs and moderating domestic demand. In the euro area, which stagnated in the fourth quarter of 2023, a recovery in real household incomes, tight labour markets and reductions in policy interest rates will help generate a gradual rebound. Euro area GDP growth is projected at 0.7% in 2024 and 1.5% in 2025.

Growth in Japan should recover steadily, with domestic demand underpinned by stronger real wage growth, continued accommodative monetary policy and temporary tax cuts. GDP is projected to expand by 0.5% in 2024 and 1.1% in 2025.

China is expected to slow moderately, with GDP growth of 4.9% in 2024 and 4.5% in 2025, as the economy is supported by fiscal stimulus and exports.

"The global economy has proved resilient, inflation has declined within sight of central bank targets, and risks to the outlook are becoming more bal-

anced. We expect steady global growth for 2024 and 2025, though growth is projected to remain below its longer-run average," OECD Secretary-General Mathias Cormann said.

"Policy action needs to ensure macroeconomic stability and improve medium-term growth prospects. Monetary policy should remain prudent, with scope to lower policy interest rates as inflation declines, fiscal policy needs to address rising pressures to debt sustainability."

According to OECD, significant uncertainty remains. Inflation may stay higher for longer,

resulting in slower-than-expected reductions in policy interest rates and leading to further financial vulnerabilities. Growth could disappoint in China, due to the persistent weakness in property markets or smaller-than-anticipated fiscal support over the next two years.

High geopolitical tensions remain a significant near-term risk to activity and inflation, particularly if the evolving conflict in the Middle East and attacks in the Red Sea were to widen or escalate. On the upside, demand growth could prove stronger than expected, if households and firms were to draw more fully on the savings accumulated during COVID-19.

Against this backdrop, the Economic Outlook lays out a series of policy recommendations, highlighting the need to ensure a durable reduction in inflation, establish a budgetary path that will address rising fiscal pressures and undertake reforms that improve prospects for medium-term growth. Monetary policy needs to remain prudent, to ensure that inflationary pressures are durably contained. Scope exists to lower policy interest rates as inflation declines, but the policy stance should remain restrictive in most major economies for some time to come.



Jerome Powell

## US Fed 'unlikely' to hike rates

Washington, US – The US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell said the central bank is "unlikely" to make an interest rate increase despite inflation still hovering above its 2% target.

"It's unlikely that the next policy rate move will be a hike," he told in a post-meeting press conference after the Fed kept its federal funds rate unchanged in the 5.25%-5.5% target range, as widely expected, which is the highest level in 23 years.

"We need to see persuasive evidence that our policy stance is not sufficiently restrictive to bring inflation sustainably down to 2% over time," Powell said.

"That's not what we think we're seeing."

Consumer inflation annually rose 3.5% in March, above market expectations, still above the Fed's target of 2%.

Powell stressed that the members of the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) want to see "greater confidence"

that inflation is falling toward the 2% target.

"So far this year, the (macroeconomic) data have not given us that greater confidence," he said. "It is likely that gaining such greater confidence will take longer than previously expected."

"We are prepared to maintain the current target federal funds rate for as long as appropriate," Powell added.

The probability of a Fed rate cut of 25 basis points at the Fed's June meeting stood at just 9% as of Wednesday, according to the FedWatch Tool provided by the US-based Chicago Mercantile Exchange Group.

The probability of a cut of 25 basis points at the July meeting was 26% and 42% for the September meeting.

Most analysts believe that the Fed's first interest rate cut could be delayed to November, or even December this year.

Anadolu Agency

## Turkey halts all trade with Israel

Eleanor Butler

Turkey suspended all trade with Israel on Thursday, citing the "worsening humanitarian tragedy" in Gaza as its motive.

Business deals between Turkey and Israel were worth almost \$7bn last year.

"Export and import transactions related to Israel have been stopped, covering all products," the ministry said in a statement.

"Turkey will strictly and decisively implement these new measures until the Israeli Government allows an uninterrupted and sufficient flow of humanitarian aid to Gaza."

Earlier on Thursday, Israel's Foreign Minister had accused Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of acting like a "dictator" when reports of blockades first emerged.

On X, Israel Katz said that Erdogan was "disregarding the interests of the Turkish people and businessmen and ignoring international trade agreements".

Katz added that he had instructed officials to "immediately engage with all relevant parties in the government to create alternatives for trade with Turkey, focusing on local production and



Recep Tayyip Erdogan

imports from other countries."

The move to halt all trade follows partial blockades.

Last month, Turkey announced that it was restricting exports of 54 types of products to Israel, including aluminium, steel, construction products and chemical fertilisers. Israel responded by announcing its own trade barriers.

Turkey was the first Muslim-majority nation to recognise Israel in 1949, although the relationship between the two countries has been strained in recent years over Israel's killing of Palestinians.

President Erdogan has notably been a vocal critic of the military offensive in Gaza, launched after Hamas' attack on Israel last year. (Source: Euronews.com)

## ADNOC, G42 and Presight partner to accelerate AI solutions for energy sector

Abu Dhabi, UAE – UAE's ADNOC, G42 and Presight AI Holding announced a new shareholding structure for AIQ. Under the agreement, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Big Data Analytics leader Presight will acquire a 51% stake in AIQ with ADNOC retaining a 49% shareholding (previously G42 40%, ADNOC 60%).

AIQ will continue as a standalone company, leveraging data to deliver transformational AI-powered solutions to the energy sector. The transaction is subject to Presight's shareholder and regulatory approval.

As part of the transaction, ADNOC will receive 4% in Presight shares currently from G42, in exchange for 11% of its shareholding in AIQ, which, at current Presight market value, values AIQ at over \$1.4bn.

Dr Sultan Ahmed al Jaber, the UAE's Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology and ADNOC Managing Director and Group CEO, will assume the role of AIQ's Chairman.

The transaction will combine AIQ's breakthrough AI energy solutions with Presight's cross-sector big data analytics, prod-



*AI is revolutionising entire sectors and ADNOC aims to be the most AI-enabled company in the energy industry*

uct development, and international markets access to position AIQ as a leading energy-focused AI organization. By integrating AIQ and Presight's big data analytics and AI offerings, the companies will realise operational efficiencies and synergies while meeting a wider array of customer requirements, and deliver greater value for ADNOC, Presight, G42 and the UAE.

AI is revolutionising entire sectors and ADNOC aims to be the most AI-enabled company in the energy industry. For decades, ADNOC has developed its digital infrastructure, enabling the company to rapidly expand its business, unlock untapped opportunities, and responsibly supply energy to meet customer needs.

In 2023, ADNOC announced that it generated \$500mn in value by deploying AI solutions, from the integration of over 30 industry-leading AI tools across its full value chain, from field operations to smarter and quicker corporate decision making. Together, these applications also abated up to 1mn tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions between 2022 and 2023, the equivalent of removing around 200,000 gasoline-powered cars from the road.

Launched in 2020 in partnership with G42, AIQ quickly established itself as a leading provider of AI solutions in the en-

ergy sector, reinforcing Abu Dhabi's position as a leading global hub for AI.

AIQ has already developed over 20 AI applications and filed 16 patents. Its key AI tools are already driving efficiency and unlocking value across ADNOC's operations, identifying, monitoring, and helping ADNOC to drive down emissions, and improve safety.

The company's AI solutions, which are trained using vast amounts of current and historical data, are being commercialized and will be the foundation for transformative growth of AIQ.

WAM

## China's industrial and service robots earn global acclaim

Shenyang, China – With the rapid advancement of technology and the development of increasingly sophisticated products, China's high-end intelligent manufacturing sector continues to provide new opportunities for the global manufacturing industry.

At the 2024 Hannover Messe, one of the world's largest trade fairs, a diverse array of cutting-edge intelligent products from SIASUN Robot and Automation Co, Ltd, based in Shenyang, capital of northeast China's Liaoning Province, took center stage.

This year's edition of Hannover Messe, launched in 1947, took place from April 22 to 26. Chinese exhibitors comprised 30% of nearly 4,000 exhibitors hailing from around 60 countries and regions, placing them second only to Germany in representation.

As the leading Chinese robotics enterprise expanding globally, SIASUN has continued to refine its technology through innovative advancements, deepening its expertise and bolstering its product prowess.



Among the company's exhibits showcased at the fair, a single-lifter assembly mobile robot captured the attention of visitors. The robot utilises dynamic tracking technology to seamlessly track and synchronise its movements with the vehicle body in real time. It can meet the diverse needs of modern automotive plants, facilitating the zproduction of multiple vehicle models.

"SIASUN's assembly mobile robots are extensively deployed in the assembly workshops of both traditional fuel and new en-

ergy vehicle plants. They excel in tasks such as handling the entire body-in-white chassis, front and rear axle assemblies, as well as the lifting and assembly of new energy battery packs," said Wang Baohua, senior director of the Automated Guided Vehicle (AGV) Business Group of SIASUN. Prominent global automotive giants such as General Motors, Toyota, Jaguar, Land Rover, Honda, Ford and Nissan, as well as numerous notable domestic and international new energy vehicle brands, rely on

SIASUN's mobile robots for smooth automotive assembly operations, Wang added.

A welding robot from SIASUN also captured the attention of visitors at the trade fair. It features a 12-kg rated payload and a 1465-mm reach. Equipped with SIASUN's proprietary intelligent control system and integrated autonomous knowledge-based intelligent welding software, it seamlessly combines robotic, welding and process systems into a cohesive entity.

Xinhua

# Liva Insurance named ‘Brand of the Year’

The group has also been awarded for ‘Pioneering Customer Experience’ at Oman Forum 2024

Liva Insurance, the premier insurer in the Sultanate of Oman, is thrilled to announce its recent triumph with two distinguished awards: ‘Brand of the Year’ at the esteemed Top Omani Brands Awards Ceremony and the prestigious ‘Pioneering Customer Experience’ accolade at Oman Forum 2024.

These awards showcase the company’s robust brand identity and dedication to delivering top-tier insurance solutions to the local market, while also recognising its exceptional efforts in providing a seamless, personalised, and responsive customer experience across all fronts.

Hosted by Alam Al Iktissad Magazine, the annual ‘Top Omani Brands Awards’ applaud the most influential and successful brands in Oman.

Conversely, the Oman Forum is a renowned platform that showcases the country’s leading businesses and their achievements across various sectors.

Commenting on these achievements, Hanaa al Hinai, CEO of Liva Insurance, said, “We



are honoured to receive these esteemed awards, which showcase our unwavering commitment to building a trusted brand, offer innovative services, and

placing customer satisfaction at the core of our operations.

“We remain committed to our pursuit of setting new benchmarks in customer service and

innovation within the Omani insurance sector.”

Liva Insurance’s customer-centric approach is reflected in its innovative product offerings,

intuitive digital platforms, and dedicated team of insurance experts. By continuously seeking feedback and insights from its customers, the company has

been able to achieve customer satisfaction and tailor its services to address their evolving needs and preferences.

Earlier this year, the company

introduced a rewards programme with exclusive benefits and deals to enhance the overall customer experience and enrich their everyday lives.

Speaking on the customer experience accolade, Sara al Abri, Head of Customer Service at Liva Insurance said: “We are deeply honoured to receive the ‘Pioneering Customer Experience’ accolade at Oman Forum 2024. This award is a testament to our commitment to our customers and our relentless pursuit of excellent customer experiences.

“At Liva Insurance, we believe that the core of our success lies in understanding and anticipating the needs of our clients, ensuring that every interaction is personalised, seamless, and enriching. This recognition motivates us to continue setting new benchmarks in the insurance industry.”

As it aspires to become the region’s leading multi-line insurer, Liva Insurance offers a comprehensive suite of insurance solutions to individuals and businesses alike.

## OETC’s journey filled with aspirations and achievements

The Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) celebrated its 19th anniversary on May 1, in a journey filled with achievements and aspirations, and vital strategic plans and projects that align with both national visions and global practices in the various relevant fields.

The OETC’s efforts have succeeded in enhancing the electricity sector through the establishment and completion of various projects spread throughout all governorates in Oman, ensuring the sustainability, reliability, safety, and availability of the electricity network.

Furthermore, the company responds to the continuous growth in all sectors along with empowering the national economy in line with the developmental journey pursued by the Sultanate of Oman.

OETC has completed and inaugurated more than 110 Grid Stations, extended 132kv electricity transmission lines for a distance exceeding 4600km, 220kv electricity transmission lines for more than 1800km, and 400kv electricity transmission lines reaching over 2800km.

In addition, it has achieved the highest standards of quality in various operations and reached high levels of reliability and availability of the electricity network, which confirms OETC’s commitment to achieving the highest levels of performance and meeting targets at the institutional and national levels.

Additionally, OETC, in collaboration with other partners, thrives to achieve the sultanate’s Net Zero goal by 2050, alongside connecting the electricity generation stations with renewable energy resources.

The electricity transmission network will also contribute to enabling and connecting various strategic projects, including the green hydrogen projects, which will have a direct and positive impact on supporting the national economy.

The company has achieved an Omanization rate of up to 97%, reflecting the OETC’s confidence in national competencies across various positions that require high levels of knowledge, experience, and skills. OETC also monitors relevant international systems and policies, ensuring



their application and compliance to guarantee the highest levels of health, safety, and environmental standards. This is demonstrated by achieving over 48 million safe manhours since the last lost-time injury (LTI) and “Zero” major environmental incidents, as all OETC’s members strive to achieve environmental sustainability.

Saleh Nasser al Rumhi, OETC’s CEO, emphasised the company’s commitment to supporting the developmental journey in the Sultanate, continuing to work efficiently and with high quality to achieve the aspirations and visions according to national plans.

Rumhi also highlighted the OETC’s commitment to establishing various professional relationships and communicating with experts in the field to transfer knowledge, expertise, and skills, and enhance the company’s performance to reach the highest global standards in this field. “As we celebrate the sector’s day, we recall the starting point and sharpen our ambitions to continue the developmental journey in the country under the wise and visionary leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik - may Allah protect him - with OETC working as one of the leading institutions and major supporters of continuous growth in all sectors. Through every new vital project, we reaffirm our commitment to ensuring and improving the quality, reliability, sustainability, and safety of the electricity transmission network, which extends throughout the Sultanate to supply all sectors with the life’s nerve to continue our developmental journey together for a more prosperous future for Oman.”

## Omantel hosts 1st Oman chapter meeting of MEIRA

Omantel, the leading provider of integrated telecommunication and ICT services in Oman, on Wednesday hosted this year’s first meeting of the Oman chapter of the Middle East Investor Relations Association (MEIRA), marking a significant milestone in its commitment to advancing Investor Relations (IR) practices within the region.

This significant event, held for the first time at Omantel’s headquarters, underscores the company’s dedication to promoting transparency and best practices in investor relations. By facilitating this important meeting, Omantel not only reinforced its role as an industry leader but also demonstrated its commitment to boosting Oman’s investment landscape.

Omantel’s Chief Financial Officer Ghassan al Hashar said, “Hosting the MEIRA Oman chapter meeting aligns with Omantel’s strategic vision to lead by example in the realm of investor relations. Omantel strongly believes in the need to drive initiatives that foster a deeper understanding of the fi-



nancial markets and create a more transparent dialogue between companies and investors. We are extremely proud to host this meeting and network with organisations having similar focus on Investor Relations.”

MEIRA’s Chief Executive Officer Paolo Casamassima said, “This Oman chapter meeting comes at a time when the regional capital markets are witnessing higher levels of maturity as well as global interest. We are confident this event will be a catalyst for greater networking

among all MEIRA members, and that we can all benefit from learning about new trends in Investor Relations. We appreciate Omantel’s role in hosting this important meeting.”

The meeting brought together leading professionals and stakeholders from across the Middle East, comprising with more than 100 attendees, including 14 CFOs, 25 IROs, and a significant representation of local Analysts. Discussions focused on current IR trends, challenges, and strategies to elevate the overall invest-

ment framework within the region. The networking highlighted the crucial role of cross-regional knowledge exchange in enhancing the standards and practices of investor relations.

The event began with a presentation by Omantel CFO Ghassan al Hashar on “The importance of the Investor Relations function in communicating with institutional investors” highlighting key aspects of ‘Omantel IR program and Equity Story’.

The presentation also demonstrated how Investor Relations can foster transparency and communication and how effective IR practices, especially in ESG disclosures, can boost any company’s international presence. Omantel’s proactive approach in hosting the MEIRA meeting not only reflects its commitment to best IR practices but also its dedication to contributing to the economic prosperity of Oman. By leading such initiatives, Omantel supports the Muscat Stock Exchange in attracting more investors and elevating Oman’s position as a key investment destination in the

Middle East.

Omantel has succeeded, through the integration of its operations, processes, and extensive expertise in the field of communications and digital technology, in establishing its position as a leading telecommunications company within Oman and beyond. The company’s innovative approaches have contributed to providing the latest solutions to various consumer and business sectors. The company aims to deliver an unparalleled, exceptional experience to its subscribers and strives to always exceed their expectations. Omantel works towards contributing to the achievement of Oman Vision 2040 objectives by investing in emerging technologies and providing cutting-edge solutions in modern technology, information and communications technology, such as cloud solutions, ICT solutions, AI, Smart solutions, cybersecurity, and much more, in addition to harnessing its technological capabilities to enhance innovation and leadership in new and advanced technologies.

## Association of Early Intervention for Children with Disabilities paving way for inclusive future in Oman

Early Intervention is an integrated system of programmes, procedures, and policies for children with disabilities and their families.

The association aims to detect disabilities early, provide appropriate rehabilitation, and improve the quality of life of children and their families through support and education on handling children’s disabilities best. It reduces the burden on families by supporting them continuously, every step of the way.

With a deep commitment to the inclusion and empowerment of children with disability and their families. The association provides a holistic rehabilitation services to support each child and families by encompassing rehabilitation, social, training, educational, therapeutic, and recreational programmes tailored to meet their unique needs.

AEICD’s Chief Executive Officer Sabah al Bahlani said, “We would like to thank His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik for the



Vision 2040, in which the objective has been reinforced by having well-being and social protection as a primary national priority. The strategic direction to have a decent and sustainable life for all, including people and children with disabilities.”

He also accorded much grati-

tude to the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said “for granting association the land and three hundred thousand to support the construction of the building; he believed in our mission in helping children with disability to receive the rehabilitation needed.”

The association has been pro-

viding services since the year 2000, thanks to the Ministry of Endowment and Religious Affairs for providing the building where we served three thousand children. Due to the association’s merit and the increased demand for its services, it was imperative for the Board of Directors to de-

cide building a headquarter that will encompasses a state of art rehabilitation centre, which will enable the association to expand its services with improved facilities and high standard and strive for best practices.

“We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Al Jisr foundation for supporting the construction of the association headquarters building along with several foundation, Oman LNG Development Foundation, Eshraqa Foundation, Soud Bahwan Charitable Foundation, MB foundation, and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority and Sohar Aluminum, Company, individuals and community. Thanks to Bank Al Izz developing crowd fund to support on fund raising and to Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral and petroleum companies for purchasing the furniture and equipment. Their tremendous support allowed the association to expend and provide services to more children and their families.”

# Muscat - The cultural and heritage capital of Middle East

The second edition of Oman tourism forum organised by Horwath HTL took place at Crowne Plaza Muscat under the patronage of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism.

The forum was presided over by H E Azzan bin Qasim al-Busaidi, Undersecretary for Tourism in the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism.

The forum discussed at length the global trend in tourism, the valuation models and trends in Omani hotel and tourism sector, unlocking the potential of water taxis in Muscat, and organising and setting up a biennale of arts to project Muscat as the Cultural and Heritage capital of the Middle East.

Welcoming the gathering, Davis Kallukaran, Managing Partner at Crowe Oman - one of the leading auditing and advisory firms in the sultanate - said, "The tourism conference you are witnessing today is the culmination of the joint efforts of Crowe with the Tourism and Foreign Investment committees of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and the Indo Gulf Middle East Chamber of Commerce, India. We are gathered here to celebrate the rich heritage and culture of Oman and explore the possibilities of polishing and showcasing it to the world. Last week, I read in the



*The Big Tourism Research highlights that the Access, Accommodation, Amenities and Attractions known as the 4As of Tourism are the components that all tourism managers should consider in the development of a destination*

newspapers the inauguration of Oman's pavilion at the Venice Biennale, wherein five of the best artists of Oman are displaying their artwork. Next year, we should be able to bring Venice to Muscat creating the Muscat Biennale and giving great opportunity for thousands of our children, our youth, and our students to view and experience art in Muscat."

"As stewards of Oman's cultural legacy, it is our responsibility to instill in the minds of our youth, a deep appreciation for the arts and traditions that define

us. It is not enough to simply showcase our heritage; we must also actively engage with our youth, igniting in them a passion for creativity and expression. By integrating arts and culture into the fabric of our educational system, we empower our future leaders to become custodians of our heritage, ensuring its continuity for generations to come. Tourism, as a major driver of

growth, is not merely about attracting visitors; it is about creating experiences that leave a lasting impression on the hearts and minds of all who journey through our land," Davis added. James Chappell, Global Director of Horwath Hotel, Tourism and Leisure Consulting, in his presentation on Global Tourism Update, emphasised on the development of tourism industry

commonly known as the Tourism Boards or Authorities, plays a significant and undeniable role in the development and promotion of a location as an attractive travel destination.

He said, "The Big Tourism Research highlights that the Access, Accommodation, Amenities and Attractions known as the 4As of Tourism are the components that all tourism managers should consider in the development of a destination."

"The Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) or more

focused on amusement, theme parks, events and attractions. He said, "The Big Tourism Research highlights that the Access, Accommodation, Amenities and Attractions known as the 4As of Tourism are the components that all tourism managers should consider in the development of a destination."

## Authentic 'Flavours of Mexico' at Jumeirah Muscat Bay

Jumeirah Muscat Bay is delighted to announce the arrival of 'Flavours of Mexico', set to enchant diners with its authentic flavours and lively ambiance.

Taking over the elegant surroundings of the Peridot Restaurant on the first floor, 'Flavours of Mexico' will delight guests from May 1 to May 7, from 7.00pm to 10.30pm.

With 'Flavours of Mexico', guests will embark on a gastronomic journey curated by the esteemed Guest Chef Jorge Rodriguez, renowned for his mastery of traditional Mexican flair celebrating the rich tapestry of Mexican cuisine and culture.

'Flavours of Mexico' promises to be a feast for the senses, offering a meticulously crafted menu that showcases the essence of Mexican excellence.

With its vibrant atmosphere, delectable offerings, and renowned guest chef, Flavours of Mexico is set to become a must-visit destination for discerning food enthusiasts throughout the duration of its limited engagement. 'Join us as we step into a culinary adventure through Flavours of Mexico,' a release said.

## Changan Oman launches all-new CS75 Plus 2024

Changan Oman has launched the all-new CS75 Plus 2024 model, showcasing its dedication to sportiness, luxurious comfort, and advanced safety. This latest entry into the Changan lineup sets a new benchmark for SUV aficionados, merging innovative technology with upscale luxury and leading-edge safety attributes.

Boasting a robust 2.0-litre turbo engine, the CS75 PLUS delivers 224 hp and 360 Nm of torque, paired with an optimised 8-speed automatic transmission for a blend of vigorous performance and exceptional fuel efficiency, recording an outstanding 13.7km per litre in accordance with GSO standards.

The new model boasts extraordinary dimensions of 4700mm in length, 1865mm in width, and 1710mm in height, providing a spacious and comfortable interior. With a substantial wheelbase of 2710mm, it ensures a stable and smooth ride, complemented by a fuel tank capacity of 58 litres for extended journeys without frequent stops for refuelling.

The extraordinary car combines elegance and functionality in its exterior design, appealing to SUV enthusiasts. It features 19" dual-colour alloy wheels that



add a touch of sophistication and sportiness to its overall appearance. The SUV is equipped with rain-sensing boneless wipers that automatically adjust their speed according to the intensity of the rain, ensuring clear visibility at all times.

A key highlight is the panoramic sunroof that comes with an auto-close feature during rain and anti-pinch technology, offering passengers a view of the sky while providing safety and convenience. Additionally, the

rear of the vehicle includes a wiper, enhancing rear visibility in adverse weather conditions.

For ease of access, the CS75 PLUS is fitted with a power tailgate, allowing for effortless opening and closing of the boot space. The front of the vehicle boasts LED headlamps with an adaptive function, which adjusts the light beam according to driving conditions, paired with LED daytime running lights (DRL) for improved visibility and safety.

The outside rear-view mirrors

(ORVMs) come with a power fold and memory function, which automatically folds the mirrors when the car is locked and recalls the driver's last used position, adding an extra layer of convenience and protection.

These meticulously thought-out exterior features underscore Changan's commitment to providing superior comfort, convenience, and safety to its drivers and passengers.

The Changan CS75 Plus' interior is crafted for ultimate com-

fort and control, featuring electric power steering with Comfort, Normal, and Sport modes, alongside auto AC with dual temperature control and rear vents for climate comfort. It's equipped with a smart key, push-button start, and remote engine start for convenience. The vehicle includes an electronic gear shift and drive mode selection, offering precise control. The cabin boasts genuine leather, a manual tilt and telescopic steering wheel with multifunction controls.

## French academic society, Madeleine ImKey jointly launch cultural initiative

The Academic Society Arts-Sciences-Lettres, an association dedicated to promoting artists, people of letters, and scientists worldwide, has announced the launch of the ground-breaking international initiative in Muscat.

Christened 'Bridging Nations with Interculturality, Inclusivity, and SDGs', the initiative has been taken in partnership with Madeleine ImKey, a release stated. This historic event marks the first international cultural endeavour undertaken by the Academy outside of French territory in its illustrious 109-year history, showcasing the global significance of Oman's cultural landscape.

This visionary project seeks to cultivate intercultural dialogue, inclusivity, and promote the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the transformative medium of art. For the first time, the academy will bestow highly coveted medals for artistic creations originating outside of France, underscoring the exceptional talent and cultural impact of the artworks crafted during this monumental occasion.

Under the leadership of

Madeleine ImKey, the initiative unites 17 children and young adults with special needs, each bringing forth unique talents and backgrounds. Over three immersive days, these participants will collaborate with 17 esteemed artists from Oman and other international countries, infusing their creations with inspiration drawn from the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The initiative aspires to amplify marginalised voices and break down barriers through collaborative artistic exploration. By partnering with associations dedicated to supporting marginalised communities, the project aims to empower participants and raise awareness about pressing global issues.

The upcoming event, scheduled from Sunday to Thursday, promises an enriching experience for all attendees. It commences with the grand opening ceremony on Sunday, presided over by H H Sayid Dr Kamil bin Fahad al Said, at the Kempinski Hotel. Following this, enriching workshops will be held for five days at the Music Palace in Al-Mouj, providing a platform for artistic expression.

## New Panamera more digital, more luxurious, more efficient

The Porsche Panamera is entering its third model generation. The sports car manufacturer's luxury sedan emphasises its sporting character with even more powerful drive systems. The profile is enhanced by a fundamentally modernised operating concept and plenty of innovative technology.

These include the new Porsche Active Ride suspension system, which combines a significantly higher level of comfort with the sporting driving characteristics for which Porsche is famous. The technical yet elegant,

dynamic design of the new Panamera gives the model line's attractive proportions a fresh update. A fundamentally redesigned, driver-centred interior enhance the driving experience.

The new Panamera already comes with dual-chamber two-valve air suspension with Porsche Active Suspension Management (PASM) as standard. The two-valve technology separates the rebound and compression stages of the damper control and therefore offers an even wider range between comfort and sportiness: The system noticeably dampens



impacts from transverse joints and road damage while at the same time ensuring more body stability in dynamic driving situations. The car's handling can be further improved thanks to optional all-wheel steering.

In addition, the innovative Porsche Active Ride active suspension system is available as an option for the E-Hybrid models of the new Panamera. This system surpasses other suspension concepts in all relevant parameters and offers an unprecedented range between driving comfort and driving dynamics. The basis

for this is newly developed active shock absorbers - also with two-valve technology - each connected to an electrically operated hydraulic pump. This generates a volume flow in the damper according to demand and can therefore build up forces between the body and wheels in a lightning-fast, highly precise and targeted manner, which counteract and almost completely compensate for the forces resulting from the road excitation. A weight-saving single-chamber air-suspension system complements this technology.

# Sudan faces largest hunger crisis: UN

Hamilton, Canada - UN's World Food Programme (WFP) on Friday sounded the alarm about the situation in Sudan, saying the African country is on the brink of becoming the 'world's largest hunger crisis'.

Leni Kinzli, WFP's spokesperson in Sudan, said at a virtual news conference that the agency is 'warning that time is running out to prevent starvation' and that the escalation of clashes in El Fasher are hindering efforts in humanitarian assistance to the region.

"One year of this devastating conflict in Sudan has created an unprecedented hunger catastrophe and threatens to ignite the world's largest hunger crisis," she said, adding that food aid is limited in El Fasher and Darfur regions due to the 'fighting and endless bureaucratic hurdles'.

Kinzli mentioned that they are attempting to reach 700,000 people before the start of the rainy season while roads are still usable and they have 8,000 tons of food stocks in Chad, but distribution is hindered due to constraints. Highlighting WFP's urgent need for unhindered access and security guarantees, she emphasised that the escalating conflict in El Fasher is deeply affecting the 1.7mn people already suffering from hunger.

Noting that about 28mn people in Sudan and South Sudan are facing food insecurity, she called on the international community to take action. Kinzli further reminded the parties in Sudan of their obligations to adhere to international humanitarian law.

The Sudanese army controls El Fasher, and it is supported by



About 28mn people in Sudan and South Sudan are facing food insecurity

*One year of this devastating conflict in Sudan has created an unprecedented hunger catastrophe and threatens to ignite the world's largest hunger crisis*

LENI KINZLI

armed movements that signed the Juba peace agreement with the government in 2020.

The war in Sudan broke out in April 2023 over disagreements about integrating the RSF into the army between army General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan

Dagalo.

The conflict has caused a devastating humanitarian crisis, and clashes have killed nearly 16,000 people and displaced millions.

On March 29, Sudan filed a complaint with the UN Security Council against the United Arab Emirates for allegedly supporting

the RSF, which the UAE denied.

Meanwhile, UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell on Friday expressed grave concern over the escalating violence in Sudan's North Darfur, particularly in and around the city of El Fasher.

In a statement released, she highlighted the devastating impact of the conflict on children, with at least 43 people, including children and women, killed in recent weeks. "There are deeply concerning reports of children being separated from their families or reportedly going missing," she said, emphasising the urgent

need for parties to the conflict to step back from the brink of a potentially catastrophic confrontation, especially with the looming threat of an imminent military attack on El Fasher.

Russel underscored the dire situation facing the city, which shelters at least 500,000 people displaced by violence, with the lives and wellbeing of 750,000 children at risk.

"At the same time, a severe lack of humanitarian access and an inability to deliver commercial goods due to the insecurity have led to the scarcity of essential services and rocketing costs for

water, food, and fuel. More than 330,000 people are reportedly facing acute food insecurity in El Fasher," she added.

Urging all parties to the conflict to prioritise the protection of civilians, and allow the safe movement of those seeking refuge in safer areas, she also called for rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access. She said that the escalating violence in Sudan is pushing the country towards a conflict-induced famine and urged immediate action to prevent further loss of life, especially among children.

Anadolu Agency

## Internet usage hits 99% in Saudi in 2023

Ritadh, KSA - Saudi Arabia recorded a significant increase in internet usage in 2023, with a penetration rate reaching 99 per cent, demonstrating near-universal access among its population.

According to the 2023 'Internet Saudi Arabia' report by the Communications, Space, and Technology Commission, internet usage is notably high among men and women, at 99.3 per cent and 98.5 per cent respectively. The report, carried by Saudi Gazette, reveals that over half of the users (52.3 per cent) spend more than seven hours daily on the internet, with the majority accessing from home (84.7 per cent), on the move (72 per cent), and from workplaces (43.4 per cent). Peak internet usage hours are between 9pm and 11pm, with Fridays seeing the highest activity. December is identified as the peak month for internet usage.

In terms of devices, mobile phones dominate as the primary means of internet access at 98.9 per cent, followed by computers at 55 per cent and tablets at 39 per cent. The mobile operating systems are predominantly Android at 61.5 per cent and iOS (38.1 per cent).

WAM

## Japan, Brazil agree to jointly protect Amazon rainforest

Brasilia, Brazil - Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva agreed on Friday to strengthen efforts to combat climate change, including enhancing the protection of the Amazon rainforest, Kyodo News reported on Saturday.

During their talks in Brasilia, Kishida and Lula signed a comprehensive cooperation agreement on decarbonisation and other environmental issues.

The Green Partnership Initiative agreement features financial contributions and assistance for regenerating degraded farmland to prevent deforestation and promote sustainable agriculture.

After the meeting, Kishida told a joint press briefing with Lula that Japan will 'make a contribution to realising carbon neutrality in the world'. Lula called for more investment in clean energy businesses, saying climate change is a serious problem. Japan is seeking to deepen relations with emerging and developing coun-



Amazon rainforest is often referred to as the 'lungs of the Earth'

tries, collectively dubbed the Global South, and Brazil is seen as a key player among them, along with India and Indonesia.

The prime minister has said Japan is ready to work with Brazil, this year's chair of the Group of 20 major economies, to address global issues.

Brazil is slated to host the 30th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, known as COP30, in 2025. Lula

is eager to take steps to save the Amazon rainforest, often referred to as the 'lungs of the Earth'.

Kishida offered Japan's cooperation in efforts to protect the rainforest in the northern Amazon region, including a contribution to a fund for that end. The leaders agreed to make efforts to spur measures for decarbonisation such as joint projects using Brazil's biofuel technology and Japan's hybrid engines.

WAM

## Heavy rains in Brazil: Toll rises to 39

Sao Paulo, Brazil - The death toll from heavy rains in the southern Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul has risen to 39 with some 70 people still missing, the Civil Defence agency said on Friday.

The heavy rain was one of the worst climate tragedies that has so far affected 235 municipalities, including the state capital of Porto Alegre, according to the agency.

The state has seen persisting rainfall since Monday, causing rivers to swell, destroying bridges, and putting the city of Porto Alegre, with a population of more than 1.4mn, on alert.

Heavy rains also spread to the neighbouring state of Santa Catarina, where a person was killed in the flooding and landslides. Recognising the calamity, the Brazilian government has sent equipment and financial aid to Rio Grande do Sul.

More than 24,000 people were displaced by the disaster, according to the agency.

"These will be difficult days. We ask people to leave their homes. Our goal is to save lives. Things will be lost, but we must



A view of the flooded urban area in Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil

preserve lives. Our priority is to rescue people. As for the rest, we'll find the way ahead," Governor Eduardo Leite said.

Leite confirmed that this is 'the biggest disaster in the state' and that Rio Grande do Sul is in a 'state of war'.

President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva pledged full support to the affected region, assuring that 'there will be no lack of human or material resources' to alleviate the suffering caused by the extreme weather conditions.

Federal assistance has already been mobilised, with 12 aircraft, 45 vehicles, and 12 boats deployed alongside 626 soldiers to aid in rescue and relief operations. The focus is on clearing roads, distributing essential supplies such as food, water, and mattresses, and establishing shelters for displaced individuals.

Forecasters have issued warnings of further peril, as the state's main Guaiba river is anticipated to reach alarming levels,

exacerbating the existing crisis. Entire communities have been cut off, with infrastructure severely compromised by the relentless downpour.

The dire situation has prompted authorities to urge residents to evacuate from high-risk areas near rivers and hillsides susceptible to mudslides. Access to basic amenities such as drinking water has been disrupted, leaving hundreds of thousands without essential services.

Agencies

## UK's ruling Conservative Party suffers heavy losses in local elections

London, UK - Britain's ruling Conservative Party has suffered one of its worst ever election days as massive numbers of voters switched their allegiance in town hall elections across England.

By Friday evening, results had been declared in 100 of the 107 councils in England that held elections on Thursday, and the Conservatives have so far lost 433 seats in council chambers, while the main opposition Labour Party have gained 169 seats.

The Conservatives also lost seats at the expense of minority parties, with Liberal Democrats gaining 94 seats, while the Green

Party gaining 66 seats.

One example of the changing political fortunes was at Adur Council in West Sussex where Labour won eight seats to take control of the council chamber from the Conservatives for the first time since the council was created 50 years ago. It was one of eight councils where the Conservatives have so far lost control. As well as local councillors, millions of people were also voting for regional mayors and police commissioners.

Although the Conservatives clung on in the key Tees Valley mayoral election, Labour won the



A voter leaves a polling station in London, Britain, on Thursday (Xinhua)

*Conservatives have so far lost 433 seats while the Labour Party have gained 169 seats*

race to become the mayor of the new York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority, an area that includes Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's parliamentary constituency of Richmond.

A Labour Party spokesperson described it as a truly historic result. As the general election is

only months away, elections expert Professor Stuart Wilks-Heeg from the University of Liverpool, in an exclusive interview with Xinhua, said 'it's quite possible that, like in the 1997 general election, which Labour won by a landslide, there'll be a very strong mood of just get the Conservatives out'.

The bad news for the Conservatives was made worse by the loss of one of their seats in the House of Commons. In a by-election in the British seaside resort of Blackpool, the Labour Party won the seat from the Conservatives.

Xinhua

# Saudi Arabia renews call for immediate ceasefire in Gaza

**Banjul, Gambia** - Saudi Arabia on Saturday renewed its call for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip amid the ongoing Israeli onslaught in the besieged enclave.

"The issue of Palestine remains a priority for the Islamic Ummah (Muslim community), reflecting the voice of the Islamic community in support of the brotherly people of Palestine to ensure that they access their rights," Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah said at the 15th summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) held in the Gambian capital Banjul.

"Since the launch of this aggression, the kingdom has been cooperating with brotherly people and countries to protect the people of Gaza," he added.

"Israeli aggression remains ongoing and is even being escalated against civilians, hospitals, schools, and infrastructure, resulting in thousands upon thousands of victims," the Saudi



*The OIC summit, with the theme 'Enhancing unity and solidarity through dialogue for sustainable development', will address global issues, notably the war on Gaza*

minister noted.

"The kingdom reiterates its demand for an immediate and permanent ceasefire in the Gaza Strip," he said, also renewing his country's call for 'the provision of safe passages and for the alleviation of the ordeal of the Palestinian people'.

The OIC summit started on Saturday in the Gambian capital Banjul.

The two-day summit, with the theme 'Enhancing unity and solidarity through dialogue for sustainable development', will address global issues, notably the current situation in Palestine and the ongoing Israeli war in the Gaza Strip, which has so far killed over 34,600 people.

During the summit, three key documents - a draft Palestinian resolution, draft Banjul statement, and the draft final document - will be presented to the Council of Foreign Ministers and subsequently to the summit for discussion.

Anadolu Agency



US Senator Bernie Sanders

## Pro-Palestinian students get US senator support

**Washington, D.C., US** - US Senator Bernie Sanders voiced support on Friday for students protesting Israel's onslaught in the Gaza Strip.

"In 1962, we organised sit-ins to end racist policies at the University of Chicago. In '63, I was arrested protesting segregated schools. But we were right.

"I'm proud to see students protesting the war in Gaza. Stay peaceful and focused. You're on the right side of history," Sanders wrote on X. Sanders previously said students, including himself, joined demonstrations 60 years ago to demand an end to the Vietnam War.

"This may be Biden's Vietnam," he said, arguing that President Joe Biden is putting himself in a weak position, politically and morally, by his support for Israel.

More than 2,000 people, including students, have been arrested during the pro-Palestine demonstrations in the US, with protestors demanding universities divest from Israel and condemning the onslaught on Gaza.

*More than 2,000 people, including students, have been arrested during the pro-Palestine demonstrations in the US*

Nationwide demonstrations gained momentum last month after Columbia University asked the New York Police Department to forcibly evict students who staged an encampment on a campus lawn. More than 100 people were arrested, but the protesters quickly adapted and formed another sit-in.

They were forcibly removed late on Tuesday by police from that site, as well as a building they occupied.

Students in other countries including Canada, Australia, France and Egypt have also organised demonstrations at universities in solidarity with Palestine.

Anadolu Agency

# 'Significant progress' in Gaza ceasefire talks: Egyptian Media

**Egyptian channel Cairo 24** suggested emergence of a 'consensual formula' on several points



The recent proposal reportedly suggests a six-week ceasefire, during which Hamas would release 33 hostages

**Ankara/Gaza City** - Egyptian media reports on Saturday indicated 'significant progress' in the Gaza ceasefire negotiations between the Palestinian resistance group Hamas and Israel.

Egyptian channel Cairo 24 suggested the emergence of a 'consensual formula' on several contentious points.

Quoting an unnamed high-level source, the channel said that 'a Hamas delegation arrived at Egypt', adding that 'there has been significant progress in the negotiations' between Hamas and Israel.

"An Egyptian security delegation reached a consensus formula on many points of disagreement," the channel added.

On Friday, Egypt's state-run Al-Qahera News channel quoted a senior informed Egyptian source saying Egypt will receive a delegation from Hamas on Saturday to discuss the ceasefire proposal.

Hamas is estimated to be holding more than 130 Israeli hostages, while Tel Aviv is hold-

*Israel continues its onslaught on the Gaza Strip where at least 34,654 Palestinians have been killed, mostly women and children, and 77,908 injured since October 7*

ing more than 9,100 Palestinians in its jails.

A deal last November saw the release of 81 Israelis and 24 foreigners in exchange for 240 Palestinians, including 71 women and 169 children.

The recent proposal reportedly suggests a six-week cease-

fire, during which Hamas would release 33 hostages, including women, female soldiers, elderly individuals, and injured captives, in exchange for the release of a large number of Palestinians from Israeli jails.

Hamas is demanding an end to Israel's deadly offensive on the Gaza Strip and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the territory for a hostage-prisoner swap deal with Tel Aviv.

**32 more killed**

At least 32 more Palestinians were killed and 41 others injured over the last 24 hours, as Israel continues its onslaught on the besieged Gaza Strip, the territory's Health Ministry said on Saturday.

"The Israeli occupation (forces) committed three massacres against families in the Gaza Strip, leaving 32 martyrs and 41 injured during the past 24 hours," a ministry statement said.

"Many people are still trapped under rubble and on the roads as rescuers are unable to reach them," it added.

Flouting the International Court of Justice's provisional ruling, Israel continues its onslaught on the Gaza Strip where at least 34,654 Palestinians have been killed, mostly women and children, and 77,908 injured since October 7, according to Palestinian health authorities.

Anadolu Agency

# Displaced teachers establish 'tent school' for students in Rafah

**Gaza, Palestine** - Now being displaced to the southernmost Gazan city of Rafah, Nihad Badreia, a Palestinian teacher, established a 'tent school' for about 600 school-age children living in a refugee camp, as the current Palestinian-Israeli conflict has deprived students of their studies for nearly seven months.

"It's too hard for our students to continue education due to the war. They also cannot meet their classmates, which would have affected their psychological states negatively," said Badreia.

Currently living in a refugee camp with more than 2,000 children, Badreia often saw teenagers playing in the streets without having any positive activities that would develop their characters.

What's worse, they were sometimes involved in quarrels or even violence, partly due to the psychological pressure caused by the long-time exposure to the war, he added.

As the sign of an end to the war is yet to loom, children 'will absolutely suffer from the consequences' of the prolonged crisis, the teacher said.

This was why he decided, to-



Palestinian students are seen in a classroom at a tent school in the southern Gaza Strip city of Rafah

gether with about 20 other displaced teachers in the refugee camp, to establish a school themselves with tents being its classrooms.

Maths, Arabic, Science, and the Holy Quran are among the curriculums delivered. After

launching a fundraising campaign and with the help of the Palestinian Ministry of Education, they returned the students to school.

"Despite the lack of equipment, I am so happy to return to classrooms," Neama Abu Hajjaj, a Palestinian student in the sev-

enth grade at the school, told Xinhua.

"It is amazing to have new teachers, but I do not know if my former teacher is still alive or not," Abu Hajjaj said, expressing her hope to return to her house,

neighbourhood, school, and normal life as soon as possible. Until then, she said, 'I will enjoy my current educational life'.

The same happiness is experienced by Shahd al-Amasi, another student from the Gaza Strip. "I am so glad to return to

school and write in my notebooks once again. I missed my lessons, friends, and teachers."

Both Abu Hajjaj and al-Amasi were among the 300 female students who went to the school three days a week.

Xinhua

## Indonesia: 15 people killed in flooding

**Jakarta, Indonesia** - At least 15 people were killed after flooding and landslides struck Indonesia's South Sulawesi province, an official from the country's disaster agency said on Saturday.

The natural disasters, which were triggered by heavy downpours, had occurred since Friday in Luwu regency, Spokesman of the National Disaster Management and Mitigation Agency Abdul Muhari said.

Consequently, more than 1,800 houses and mosques had been submerged by the waters by up to three metres, and a total of 103 houses were destroyed.

In addition, 42 other houses were swept away by the current, the spokesman said. Moreover, 115 people were forced to flee home and take shelter in their relatives' houses or mosques located on safer grounds.

Xinhua

INDIA

# Mock drills held at key locations in Delhi

A series of mock drills were held following the recent hoax bomb threats targeting over 250 schools

New Delhi, India - After recent hoax bomb threats that targeted over 250 schools in the Delhi-NCR region, security forces have intensified their preparedness through a series of mock drills across various key locations in the city, including schools, airports, metro stations, and government buildings, said officials.

On Saturday, a mock drill took place at Delhi Public School in Delhi's RK Puram area. This drill, involving the Delhi Police and the National Security Guard (NSG), was designed to test the readiness and response capabilities of security forces in case of emergencies.

Both male and female officials from the police and NSG participated, with NSG vehicles and buses on site for the exercise. In addition to schools, the security forces have expanded these mock drills to other critical locations.

On Friday, the NSG and Delhi Police conducted a similar exercise at the Parliament building, emphasising the importance of security at high-profile government sites.

Furthermore, drills took place near Delhi's Jhandewalan Temple and at Hyderabad House, underlining the comprehensive



Delhi Police stand guard outside the Mother Mary School after a bomb threat to several schools in Delhi-NCR, at Mayur Vihar Please 1 in New Delhi on Wednesday (ANI)

approach taken by security agencies to ensure safety across multiple public and government facilities.

Hyderabad House is the State Guest House of the Prime Minister of India. It is used by the Government of India for

banquets and as a venue for meetings with visiting foreign dignitaries.

Another drill was carried out at Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport, with DCP Usha Rangnani stating that 'different agencies are coordinating and

checking their drills' to ensure seamless response during emergencies.

The security forces also extended their mock drills to Delhi's public transportation system, with a significant exercise conducted at Rajiv Chowk

metro station, one of the busiest transit points in the city.

Earlier on Thursday, taking note of false news circulating in WhatsApp groups that bombs were detected in schools, Delhi Police urged people not to believe in rumours and stop

spreading fake news.

"We have received some messages that many parents were having conversations regarding a suspicious object found inside schools over WhatsApp group. I want to say whenever you get such mes-

*In addition to schools, security forces have expanded these mock drills to critical locations including airports, metro stations, and government buildings*

sages, you should first identify its source, and then forward it. This is the time of artificial intelligence (AI) and deep fake. Any fake news spreads like wildfire," Delhi Police PRO Suman Nalwa said.

"I want to appeal to people that we have to become responsible citizens and should not forward any unverified information on social media. I request everyone not to believe in rumours and stop spreading fake news. We will take strict action against those who spread fake news," she added.

Detailing the Delhi schools bomb threat case, Suman Nalwa said that more than 250 calls were received by the police on Wednesday.

ANI

## Indian warship helps Pakistani crew onboard Iranian vessel

New Delhi, India - Indian Navy has responded to a distress call and provided critical medical assistance to a Pakistani crew member onboard an Iranian fishing vessel *Al Rahmani*, an Indian Navy spokesperson said.

The warship, *INS Sumedha* deployed for anti-piracy operations in the Arabian Sea, intercepted fishing vessel *Al Rahmani* in early hours of April 30, according to the statement released by Indian Navy Spokesperson on X. The ship's boarding team and medical specialists boarded the fishing vessel and rendered medical acceptance to the crew member.

The Spokesperson stated: "In a swift response to a distress call, #INSSumedha, mission deployed for #antipiracy ops in the #ArabianSea provided critical medical assistance to an Iranian FV (with 20 Pakistani crew), for a near drowning case of one of its crew member."

"Responding swiftly to the



*The warship, INS Sumedha deployed for anti-piracy operations in the Arabian Sea, intercepted fishing vessel Al Rahmani in early hours of April 30*

distress call, *INS Sumedha* intercepted FV *Al Rahmani* in early hours of #30Apr 24. Ship's boarding team & medical specialists boarded the FV & rendered medical assistance to

the crew member, who was experiencing laboured breathing with active seizures," it added.

The Indian Navy Spokesperson said that the patient after medical management was con-

scious and relieved clinically.

"Post medical management, the patient was oriented, conscious and relieved clinically. Relentless efforts by mission deployed units of #IndianNavy symbolises its steadfast commitment towards safeguarding and assisting seafarers operating in the region," Indian Navy Spokesperson posted on X.

On April 28, Indian warship, *INS Kochi*, responded to the maritime security incident involving an attack on a Panama-flagged crude oil tanker, *MV Andromeda Star PM*, Indian Navy said in a statement.

The distressed oil tanker was intercepted by the Indian Navy ship and an aerial recce was carried out by the Indian Navy helicopter to assess the situation.

Additionally, an Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) team was also deployed onboard the distressed vessel for residual risk assessment.

ANI

## India not xenophobic: Jaishankar

New Delhi, India - External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has rejected recent remarks by US President Joe Biden describing India as 'xenophobic' and emphasised that the country has been open and welcoming to people from diverse societies.

Speaking to the *Economic Times*, Jaishankar also refuted the allegation that the Indian economy was faltering. The Union Minister said that the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) introduced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government showcases India's welcoming approach.

Biden had said the 'xenophobic' nature of India, China, Japan and Russia is responsible for their economic troubles and argued that America's economy is growing because it welcomes immigrants to its soil. He made the statement while campaigning for his re-election at Washington fundraising event and argued that Japan, along with Russia and China, would perform better economically if the countries embraced immigration more.



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar (ANI)

"Why? Because we welcome immigrants. We look to - the reason - look, think about it. Why is China stalling so badly economically? Why is Japan having trouble? Why is Russia? Why is India? Because they're xenophobic. They don't want immigrants," Biden said.

Jaishankar said in the interview published on Saturday: "First of all, our economy is not faltering."

"India is always... India has been a very unique country... I would say actually, in the history of the world, that it's been a society which has been very open... different people from different societies come to India," he said.

"That's why we have the CAA, which is to open up doors for people who are in trouble... I think we should be open to people who have the need to come to India, who have a claim to come to India," he said.

"There are people who publicly said on record that because of CAA, a million Muslims will lose their citizenship in this country." He further said: "Why are they not being held to account? Because nobody has lost citizenship," he added.

During the roundtable on *The Economic Times*, Jaishankar also spoke on the ongoing anti-Israel protests in American university campuses and criticised a section of the Western media for its biased coverage, suggesting that it is 'very ideological' and not 'objective' reporting. He said that this section of media wants to shape the global narrative and is targeting India.

Meanwhile, hours after Biden's remarks, the White House clarified the President's intentions, emphasising his 'respect' for allies and partners.

ANI

## Measles outbreak kills 42 in Nigeria

Lagos, Nigeria - At least 42 people, mostly children, have died following an outbreak of measles in a northeastern Nigerian state, an official said on Friday.

"The death toll stands at 42 out of 131 and 177 affected persons in Mubi and Gombi," Commissioner of Health and Human Service for Adamawa State, Felix Tangwame, said at a news conference in the state's capital of Yola.

He said almost all local governments in the state have been on red alert to ensure the disease does not spread to other areas.

Tangwame said the government has activated machinery for the management and control of the airborne disease.

Measles outbreaks frequently occur in Nigeria, particularly in the northern region with severe heat and hash weather conditions.

In January, the Medicins Sans Frontiers (MSF) medical charity announced 591 new cases in an outbreak in Borno State in the northeast region.

Cases had risen to 9,000 as of early February, according to MSF.

Anadolu Agency

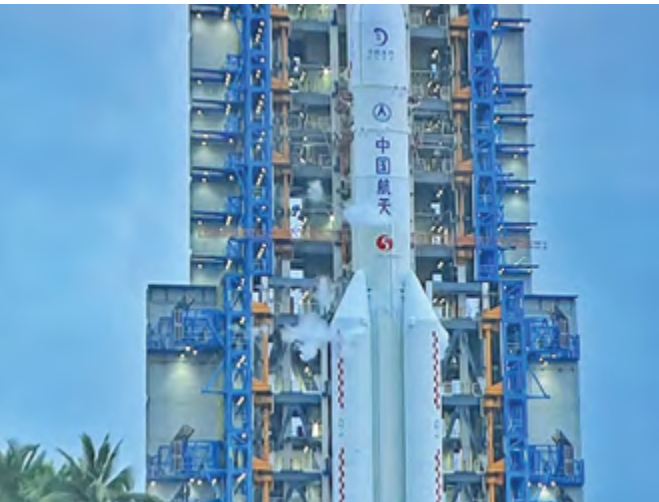
## Pakistan launches its first-ever lunar mission

Islamabad, Pakistan - Pakistan on Friday launched its first-ever lunar mission iCube-Q aboard China's unmanned *Chang'e 6* probe from the Chinese city of Hainan.

The iCube-Q, or CubeSats, was launched at around 5:27pm China time (0927GMT) from the Wenchang Space Launch Site, aboard *Chang'e-6* mission which blasted off into space on the Long March5 Y8 rocket.

Pakistan's top diplomat in Beijing Khalil Hashmi confirmed on X that the launch was 'successful'. It will be 'deployed in Moon orbit on May 8', said Hashmi, who attended the launch ceremony in Hainan.

The iCube-Q orbiter carries two optical cameras to image the lunar surface.



Pakistan's Institute of Space Technology, in collaboration with China's Shanghai University and Pakistan national space agency SUPARCO, jointly developed the iCube-Q.

The primary purpose of CubeSats is to facilitate scientific research, technology development, and educational initiatives in space exploration. According to China National

Space Administration, *Chang'e 6* probe will collect samples from the far side of the moon, making the mission the first of its kind in human history.

The *Chang'e-6* spacecraft, like its predecessor *Chang'e-5*, comprises an orbiter, a lander, an ascender and a returner. The *Chang'e-5* was returned to earth in December 2020 with first lunar soil samples in over four decades.

"After it reaches the Moon, it will make a soft landing on the far side. Within 48 hours after landing, a robotic arm will be extended to scoop rocks and soil from the lunar surface, and a drill will bore into the ground. Scientific detection work will be carried out simultaneously," Xinhua News reported.

After collecting samples, the unmanned spacecraft will return to Earth, landing in north China's Inner Mongolia autonomous region. The entire flight is likely to take 53 days.

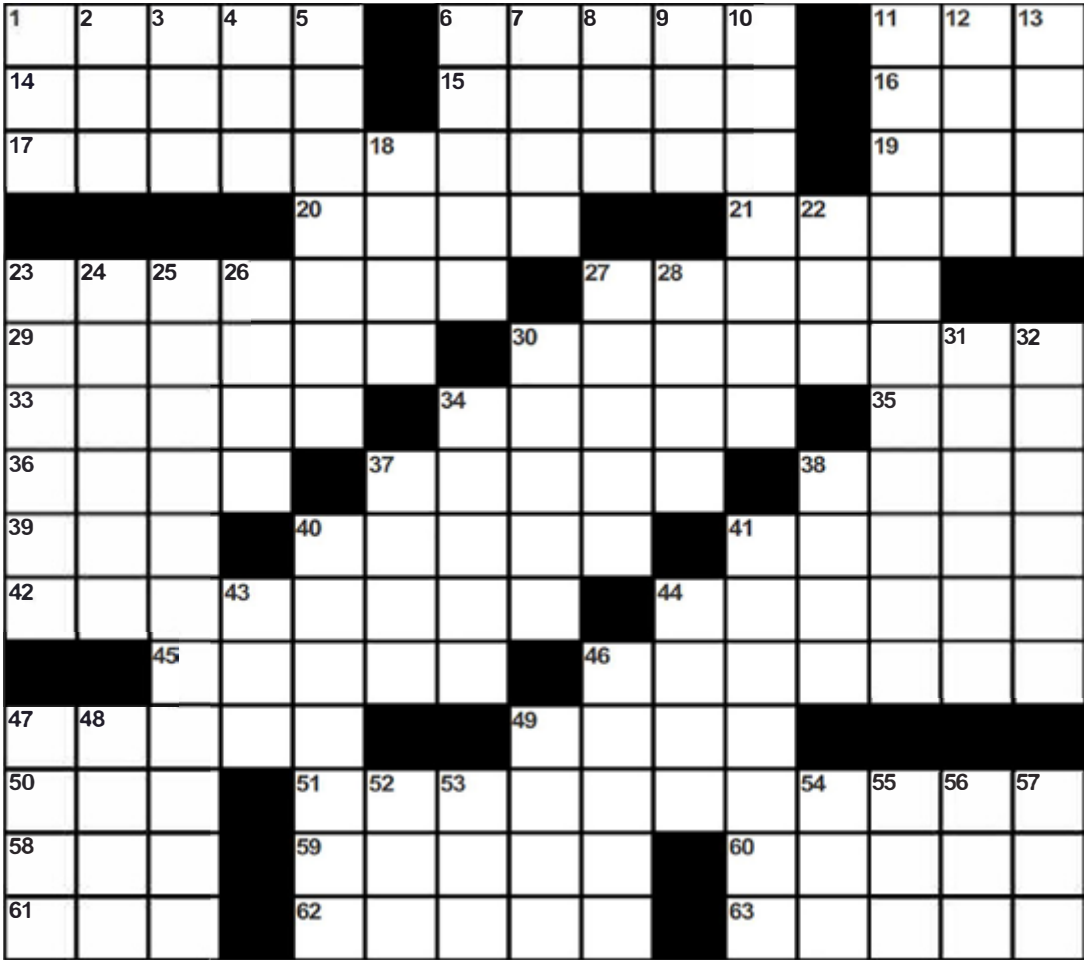
Ahead of the launch, some 50 officials from 12 countries including Pakistan, France, Italy, UN and the European Space Agency, attended a conference in Hainan about the space and possible cooperation among different nations.

The guests later gathered in Haikou to witness the launch of *Chang'e-6* lunar probe.

Besides CubeSat from Pakistan, the *Chang'e-6* mission also carries a number of other international payloads to the moon.

Anadolu Agency

DAILY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1) Gal's guy, slangily
- 6) Enjoyed a fine meal
- 11) Worker who serves a queen
- 14) Letter through a filter
- 15) Turn on the dramatics
- 16) " \_ be an honor"
- 17) Some nice soaks
- 19) Blossom
- 20) Did one-third of a triathlon
- 21) Dr. Sabin studied it
- 23) It goes around the world
- 27) \_ dog (zesty frankfurter)
- 29) Cedar tree
- 30) Sinks pink flowers
- 33) Hot, glowing coal
- 34) Birthplace of Charles de Gaulle
- 35) Pod occupant
- 36) Turns on the water-works
- 37) Jazz variation
- 38) Fake bedding item?
- 39) Full of trickery
- 40) Half a sawbuck
- 41) Engraved fabric
- 42) Held, as a dissolved substance
- 44) Ringlet producer
- 45) Corpulent

46) Sheens

- 47) Get-up-and-go
  - 49) " Arf!" or "Woof!"
  - 50) Pub pitcherful
  - 51) Tall plant with tiny white or pink flowers
  - 58) Lancelot's title
  - 59) Foaming at the mouth
  - 60) Licorice-like flavor
  - 61) Call to the Coast Guard
  - 62) Preoperative delivery of old
  - 63) Part-time employees, for short
- DOWN**
- 1) Black History mo.
  - 2) Bird in a herd
  - 3) Certain retriever, briefly
  - 4) "Ad" add-on
  - 5) Dream team pick
  - 6) Exclude from practice
  - 7) Muslim chief
  - 8) " \_ too shabby"
  - 9) Suffix on ordinal numbers
  - 10) Be unable to stand
  - 11) Lover of books
  - 12) Vanity case for milady
  - 13) Edible root of the taro
  - 18) Still life subject, perhaps
  - 22) Prehistoric
  - 23) Texas oil city
  - 24) Shape anew

25) Early Frank Sinatra fans

- 26) Bad day for Caesar
- 27) Use a crayon
- 28) Endangered one's cry
- 30) Was compatible
- 31) Eyeglass\_ ( optometry patient)
- 32) Identifiers
- 34) Flood embankment
- 37) Babies' protectors
- 38) Work with mail
- 40) Comped thing
- 41) Marsh denizen
- 43) Belt's relative
- 44) Street part
- 46) High-tech surgery tool
- 47) Kind of production
- 48) Miscellany
- 49) Computer file measure
- 52) It may be modern
- 53) Cry of contempt
- 54) Ship's dir., sometimes
- 55) Deadeye's forte
- 56) 1/6 of an ounce (Abbr.)
- 57) " \_just one of the guys"

NOTE PAD



YOUR DAILY HOROSCOPE



ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 19

Everything you do today will have a bigger impact than you intend, so be careful. Laugh at someone's joke and they may suddenly think they should be a stand-up comedian. Smile at a stranger and they may think you're flirting with them. But the good part of your potency today is that a little bit of action will go a very long way. If you focus your attention on a person you're trying to build a connection with, you can make lots of headway.



LEO JULY 23-AUGUST 22

An email from a former coworker or casual acquaintance has got you thinking hard about where you're going to take your life next. Future plans will definitely be on your mind today, although there is no need to nail down any particular plan of action. You're not quite in the right place yet for major moves. Stay put for now. Do some research and start exploring some of your wilder options. Have fun just thinking about where you could be in a decade.



SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21

You've worked hard to get where you are, and you should feel proud. But today, as you're contemplating which new gadget to buy, don't be surprised if guilt creeps into your mind. Not everyone is as lucky as you are, and you know that. It's time to get involved in a charity or volunteer effort that will make you feel more socially useful. Even if you just drop off some canned goods at a local food bank, doing something for others is important.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1 Luge and skeleton racing were developed in the late 19th century in which country?

- A. Switzerland
- B. England
- C. India
- D. Australia



TAURUS APRIL 20-MAY 20

You have big karmic payback coming your way today, so expect some interesting rewards for all the good deeds you have performed recently. This will be an educational and enriching day, and it will teach you many valuable lessons about how to win people over to your cause without sending them on a big guilt trip. You are learning more about how to use your charm to get ahead in your career prospects, and it is already starting to pay off.



VIRGO AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

In a contest of wills with a coworker today, you should try to take the more daring and aggressive position. Challenge them to make you believe in what they're saying. Even if you don't feel completely confident about playing devil's advocate, your bravado will go a long way toward letting them know you are a force to be reckoned with. Plus, you will be helping them to grow and communicate their ideas more clearly. Project more power than you think you have.



CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

More structure is coming into your life. And while you can rationally see how much easier it will make things in the long run, emotionally it's going to be difficult to get used to. You're resistant to change right now, which is unusual and temporary. There is something about consistency that is comforting, and that's okay. But if you keep things as they are for too long, you're going to prohibit your own emotional growth. Be patient and you'll get through.



GEMINI MAY 21-JUNE 21

Today, you will have a supernatural ability to cut right through all the noise and get to the real heart of any matter. You'll be an excellent peacemaker, clever negotiator, and respected leader, so naturally, your words will carry lots of weight right now. And even though keeping the peace is not your job, it will feel good to volunteer for that role. You like helping people get along. Today, you can make everyone happier and make your life much easier.



LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

Figuring out how to balance your life with the life of another person could finally start to get easier today. You're ready to make the necessary compromises and give them what they need -- without feeling like you are sacrificing your independence or your strength. You know how to clearly communicate with them too, which is probably the most important part. Suddenly your goals are aligned and you can make each other happy.



AQUARIUS JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You know what it's like to be the new kid in school or on the team, so remember that feeling when a new person comes into your group today. Welcome them warmly. A simple smile can open up a million possibilities with this new person and get them in your court should any disagreements arise with other people. By positioning yourself as compassionate and supportive, you'll gain this person's trust and give them someone to talk to. Plus, they might have useful news to share.



CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 22

It feels as if everyone has an opinion about how you should run your life right now. Your friends, family members, and even a few of your coworkers have a few words of advice. You might not want to know what they think, but they'll tell you anyway, and chances are it will be pretty interesting. Sure, little of it will be helpful, but they love thinking that they are helping you. Listen to them with an open mind. You have nothing to lose.



SCORPIO OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

This day could be a good one because great news might come your way. But don't get too caught up in the moment. Doing so will distract you and keep you from being as effective with this new opportunity as you are capable of being. It's important to remember that your future depends on how you act today. While being spontaneous and carefree is good for creating positive energy, you have to balance it with clear thinking and a focus on reality.



PISCES FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

Your work alliances speak volumes about you, but are they saying the right things to the right people? Take a second look at the company you're keeping at the office and ask yourself if they are bringing you down or lifting you up. Make sure you're with the people who help your career, not hinder it. And in your private life, you're growing distant from certain people who would love to hear from you today. Give them a call and start a conversation again.

Answers: 1.A 2.B 3.C

KIDS COLOURING



BOGGLER

|   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| O | R | E | R |
| D | Y | S | E |
| A | M | E | O |
| P | I | L | E |

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

**SOLUTION**  
20-25 words: Excellent,  
15-20 words: Very good,  
10-15 words: Good,  
5-10 words: Average

DO YOU SUDOKU?

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

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

WORD BUILDER



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

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

SUDOKU EASY ANSWER

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# Arsenal thump cherries

## Saka, Trossard and Rice on target as Gunners crank up pressure on Man City

London, England - London, England - Arsenal cleared another hurdle in their Premier League title quest with a 3-0 victory over Bournemouth in their penultimate home game on Saturday to pile the pressure on Manchester City.

A penalty shortly before half-time converted by Bukayo Saka gave Arsenal the lead, Leandro Trossard eased the nerves inside the Emirates Stadium with a second goal on 70 minutes and Declan Rice added the third deep into stoppage-time.

Victory put Arsenal on 83 points from 36 games with champions City on 79 from 34 ahead of their home clash with Wolverhampton Wanderers later on Saturday.

Bournemouth had cause to feel aggrieved with the Arsenal penalty confirmed after a long VAR check and they also had a goal ruled out in the second half after another VAR check.

Gabriel also had a goal ruled out for Arsenal but Rice put the icing on the cake as Mikel Arteta's team stayed firmly in the hunt to win a first Premier League title for 20 years.

With City playing later, Arsenal had the chance to crank up the pressure and they did so in relatively routine fashion even if it did take them a long time to get in front.

As expected, they dominated possession but 10th-placed Bournemouth frustrated the hosts with 10 men behind the ball for much of the opening half.



Victory put Arsenal on 83 points from 36 games with champions Man City on 79 from 34 ahead of their home clash with Wolverhampton Wanderers later on Saturday

Trossard twice had shots blocked as Bournemouth threw players in front of the ball and captain Martin Odegaard was also denied early on in the Arsenal siege.

The inevitable nerves surfaced as a mistake by Gabriel let in Bournemouth danger man Dominic Solanke but William Saliba rescued his side with a last-ditch tackle.

Arsenal made the breakthrough just before halftime thanks to a rather fortuitous penalty.

Kai Havertz was played in behind Bournemouth's defence and the German's first touch took him past keeper Mark Travers before

he fell to the ground and referee David Coote pointed to the spot.

A lengthy VAR check followed and the decision was allowed to stand despite Havertz appearing to have dragged his foot to initiate contact with the leg of Travers when it would have been simpler

Arsenal's Leandro Trossard scores against Bournemouth

for him to convert the chance.

Saka then calmly rolled the penalty into the net past a static Travers, his 16th league goal of the season met with relief around the stadium.

Bournemouth were more adventurous after the break, aided by Arsenal mistakes, and Solanke had a chance but his angled shot

was easily saved by David Raya.

Arsenal then doubled their lead with Rice setting up Trossard for a clinical finish.

There was still anxiety, though, and a crazy goalmouth scramble ended up with the ball in Arsenal's net but Solanke was adjudged to have impeded Raya with minimal contact.



Marco Reus

## Reus to leave Dortmund

Berlin, Germany - Borussia Dortmund's attacking midfielder Marco Reus will leave the club at the end of the season after they came to a mutual agreement not to extend his contract, he said on Friday.

The 34-year-old, who joined in 2012 and also spent a decade at the Ruhr Valley club as a youth player, scored 168 goals in 424 matches for Dortmund while setting up another 128. Known for his skill, goalscoring ability and clever gameplay, Reus captained the team for five years until 2023.

He won two German Cups but did not collect any other major titles. He could still crown his final season with Europe's biggest club title, with Dortmund in the Champions League semi-finals, where they beat PSG 1-0 in the first leg this week.



Luton Town's Elijah Adebayo scores against Everton

## Luton relegation worries deepen with Everton draw

London, England - Striker Elijah Adebayo scored a superb equaliser for Luton Town as they drew 1-1 at home to Everton on Friday, but the Hatters were guilty of some wasteful finishing en route to a result that does little to ease their Premier League relegation fears.

With 36 of their 38 league games played, Luton remain in 18th spot in the table on 26 points, behind Nottingham Forest on goal difference and with Forest having a game in hand over the Hatters, and two points ahead of Burnley in 19th.

Everton, who ensured their Premier League survival by beating Brentford 1-0 last week, took the lead when Luton's Teden Mengi wrestled Jarrad Branthwaite to the ground at a corner, and after a VAR review the penalty was awarded.

Everton's Dominic Calvert-Lewin stepped up and lashed the resulting spot kick low and hard into the centre of the goal in the 24th minute to give his side the lead.

Making his first start for Luton

since February 10 due to a hamstring injury, Adebayo put his side level with a tremendous old-fashioned centre-forward's goal, out-muscling Everton fullback Ashley Young to chest the ball down and then rattle it first-time into the net.

Luton's Carlton Morris then had a header cleared off the line late in the first half as the Hatters chased the win.

But their wayward efforts on target did not cause too much trouble for Jordan Pickford in the Everton goal.

Midfielder Ross Barkley - a former Everton player - drilled a shot straight at him late on before the home side mounted a huge offensive in second-half stoppage time to win a slew of corners and free kicks, but their attempts to score were either blocked or wide of the mark.

Luton's two remaining games see them travel to West Ham United before hosting Fulham on the final day of the season, and there was disappointment in the home side's dressing room following the final whistle.



Hoffenheim's Andrej Kramaric celebrates after scoring against RB Leipzig

## Kramaric last-minute goal helps Hoffenheim hold Leipzig

Berlin, Germany - Hoffenheim scored a 90th minute equaliser through Andrej Kramaric to snatch a 1-1 draw against visitors RB Leipzig on Friday, snapping their opponents' four-game winning run in the Bundesliga and leaving them in fourth place.

Benjamin Sesko headed in after 38 minutes - his fifth league goal with a header this season - to give Leipzig, who have already secured next season's Champions League participation, the lead.

The visitors, however, were left with 10 men when Xavi Simons was sent off with a second yellow card in the 72nd minute.

Hoffenheim made the extra man count when Kramaric headed in the equaliser from a Marius Buelter cross.

Leipzig are fourth on 63 points, one behind VfB Stuttgart who are in action against Bayern Munich on Saturday.



Japan players celebrate with the trophy after winning the Under 23 Asian Cup in Doha on Friday

## Japan win U23 Asian Cup after Kokubo's injury-time penalty save

Doha, Qatar - Japan lifted the Under 23 Asian Cup after they beat Uzbekistan 1-0 on Friday, an injury-time penalty save by Leo Kokubo securing the trophy for Go Oiwa's side.

Substitute Fuki Yamada gave the Japanese the lead when he

stroked his shot into the bottom corner of the Uzbek goal in the 91st minute, but a handball by Hiroki Sekine gifted Uzbekistan an opportunity to take the game into extra time.

Kokubo, however, dived to his right to keep out Umarali

Rakhmanaliyev's spot kick and earn the Japanese their second under 23 title since 2016.

Japan and Uzbekistan went into the final at Doha's Jassim bin Hamad Stadium having already claimed two of Asia's three berths at the Olympics in Paris in

the summer, with the tournament serving as the continent's final eliminator for the Games.

Iraq took the third place with an extra-time win over Indonesia, who will play Guinea on May 9 in a playoff for the last remaining spot at the finals.

## Vitesse players donate salaries to save club

Arnhem, Netherlands - Desperate Dutch side Vitesse Arnhem have turned to crowdfunding in a bid to retain the club's license to play in next season's first division and raised over one million euros by Friday, with the club's players donating their salaries to the cause.

Vitesse were relegated from the top flight for the first time in 35 years this season after an 18-point deduction imposed by the Dutch football association for persistent breaches of their licensing conditions and providing



Vitesse Arnhem players are doing their bit to help the ailing club

incorrect information to authorities. Vitesse did not appeal the sanction but face a race against time to retain their license to compete at a professional level next season.

Reports in the Netherlands say they have until the next license committee meeting on May 17 to meet certain criteria, with debts of 18.9 million euros (\$20.35 million).

The club does not have to raise that amount, but must prove they have a sustainable plan for the future.



# STELLAR SHOW



Venkatesh Iyer (R) and Manish Pandey stitched an 83-run stand to rescue Kolkata Knight Riders

## Venkatesh, Starc shine as KKR break 12-year Wankhede jinx

Mumbai, India - Kolkata Knight Riders further embedded themselves near the top of the IPL table, and Mumbai Indians' hopes of qualifying for the final four took another big hit.

How MI managed to lose a match in which they took five KKR wickets in the first 37 legal deliveries, will require some examination from the franchise brains trust.

But essentially, MI didn't go for the kill when they had KKR on the ropes at 43 for 4, then 57 for 5. And although MI closed the innings nicely through Bumrah, their having allowed KKR to recover through an 83-run stand between Venkatesh Iyer and Manish Pandey, would haunt them in the end.

Their own top order was shambolic, as has been the case through the season. But still, thanks to a good innings from Suryakumar Yadav, MI were still in with hope into the death. Mitchell Starc put paid to those hopes, however, and MI were all out for 145 in the 19th over.

Despite their faltering start, MI still only needed 51 runs off the last five overs, with Suryakumar

at the crease on 56. Andre Russel bowled the 16th over, and Suryakumar will feel he should have done better with the knee-high full toss he got second ball. Instead of launching it into the legside stands, he got a huge top edge that flew towards fine leg, with wicketkeeper Phil Salt able to chase it down and take it comfortably in his gloves.

It was Starc who really ended MI's chances though. He bowled a spectacular 17th over in which he conceded only three runs. And when MI needed 32 off the last two overs, he did concede a six

off first ball of the 19th, but had Tim David caught at long on next ball, had Piyush Chawla chip one to extra cover immediately after, then wiped out the innings with a yorker that took out Gerald Coetzee's middle stump.

After a rough start to the IPL, Starc came back in this match with figures of 4 for 33, having also dismissed Ishan Kishan with the new ball. Before Starc could work his magic with the ball, KKR needed something to defend. And Venkatesh's 70 off 52 was the spine of KKR's innings.

He was quick early on, hitting

TODAYS MATCHES

MATCH 53

2 PM



PUNJAB KINGS  
VS  
CHENNAI SUPER KINGS

MATCH 54

6 PM



LUCKNOW SUPER GIANTS  
VS  
KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS

two fours off his first four balls, before settling down a little while wickets fell at the other end. But to KKR's great credit, their run rate did not slow substantially despite the dismissals. They were 51 for 4 after five overs, 83 for 5 after 10, and got to triple figures in the 12th over of the innings.

This was in large part thanks to Venkatesh, and to Pandey, who kept seeking out boundary opportunities. Pandey was out for 42 off 31 in the 17th over, but Iyer stayed till the 20th, and was the last to be out off the penultimate ball. Of his three sixes, the back away and crash over long off, off the bowling of Hardik Pandya, was the most memorable.

Though MI continue to stink up the IPL, Bumrah is their unerring talisman, today finishing with figures of 3 for 18 off 3.5 overs. In his first over he conceded just two runs, but Hardik did not bring his best bowler back even when KKR were struggling in the first seven overs.

ESPNcricinfo



Rohit Sharma

## ‘Mild back stiffness’ forced Rohit to play as impact player

Mumbai, India - A "mild back stiffness" forced Rohit Sharma to play as Impact Player in Mumbai Indians' match against Kolkata Knight Riders on Friday.

"He just had a mild back stiffness so it was just a precautionary thing," Piyush Chawla said at the post-match press conference.

Rohit made 11 off 12 balls as MI failed to chase down a target of 170 on a two-paced Wankhede pitch. It was their eighth defeat in 11 games, leaving them languishing in ninth position and their play-offs chances hanging by a thread. Upon being asked what's left for MI to play for, Chawla was candid.

"For the pride and the reputation," he said, "because sometimes when you enter on the field, you don't think whether you are going to qualify or you are not going to qualify. You have to play for your name and that's what we are playing for."

For Chawla, the silver lining during the match was becoming the second-highest wicket-taker in the IPL, going past Dwayne Bravo's tally of 183.

Chawla got there by having Rinku Singh caught and bowled with his first ball of the match. Reflecting on his record, Chawla said: "It has been a beautiful journey because IPL started 17 years back and at that time nobody gave that much preference to the spinners, but now if you see that in top few wicket-takers from India are all the spinners, [R] Ashwin, Yuzi [Yuzvendra Chahal], myself, so it's a good feeling."

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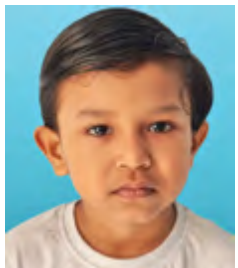
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BRONZE MEMORIAL

HER MAJESTY AND THE 'MOVING CARPET'

A NEW STATUE HONOURS ELIZABETH II AND HER BELOVED CORGIS. THE SEVEN-FOOT-TALL BRONZE MONUMENT IS BILLED AS THE 'FIRST PERMANENT MEMORIAL' TO THE LATE UK QUEEN

It's no secret that Elizabeth II loved her corgis. Wherever she went, the short-legged dogs followed, a sight Princess Diana once described as a 'moving carpet'.

Now, the late queen's relationship with her dogs has been immortalised in bronze - a seven-foot-tall statue of Elizabeth and her dogs, created by London-based sculptor Hywel Pratley, was unveiled Sunday on what would've been her 98th birthday (April 21). The monarch, who reigned for more than 70 years, died in September 2022 at age 96.

The Rutland County Council described the piece as 'the first permanent memorial' to Britain's much-loved and longest reigning monarch. The work depicts Elizabeth standing tall while wearing a state robe and a crown. A bronze corgi sits at her feet, nestled against the folds of her gown.

The statue of the queen rests atop a pedestal made of local Ancaster limestone, which features two additional bronze corgis - one with its front paws on the pedestal, and the other standing on all fours.

The dogs are meant to be 'a metaphor for the security and safety the nation somehow felt during the Elizabethan era', Pratley tells Tatler.

Pratley started working on the project in January 2023. Though his brief was simple, the artist wanted to achieve nothing less than perfection for the project. He spent four



The memorial to Queen Elizabeth II was unveiled next to Oakham Library

months sculpting the queen and her corgis - and used 800kg of clay in the process. Once satisfied with the clay maquettes, he made silicone and fiberglass moulds. Finally, he spent four months casting the statues in bronze, as per Tatler.

As for nailing the queen's look, Pratley studied the countless photos captured during her long reign.

"Her great beauty was in her young to early middle age, round about 40, when she had had some children and was at the height of her power," he tells BBC News' Dan Martin, Jo Hollis and Jeremy Ball.

He wanted the finished piece to express a "maternal" feeling, and he decided to incorporate the dogs to "tap into the queen's humanity," he tells BBC. He even had a few real corgis come into his studio and pose for him, according to an Instagram post.

"We've designed it with a bench you can sit on, and there's a corgi you can pat," he adds. "I do think it's inevitably going to be a statue that encourages selfies."

Pratley's statue is indicative of a sea change in how Britain's monarchs are depicted. Unlike the "stern statues of Queen Victoria found across Britain," the new and forthcoming depictions of Elizabeth present the queen as "warm and approachable," writes the New York Times' Alex Marshall.

Several other communities, including Newcastle-under-Lyme and Test Valley, are also planning to unveil Elizabeth statues in the near future. Additionally, a committee is working on a national memorial.

Pembroke Welsh corgis were originally bred in Wales to help herd cattle, as their short stature helps them avoid being kicked by cows.

Elizabeth first fell in love with the breed when she was just 7 years old, then still a princess. That year, her father, George VI, gave her a corgi named Dookie as a gift. Later, on her 18th birthday, she was given another corgi named Susan. Elizabeth loved Susan so much that she even brought the dog on her honeymoon with Prince Philip.

We've designed it with a bench you can sit on, and there's a corgi you can pat

HYWEL PRATLEY

Throughout her lifetime, the queen owned more than 30 dogs - some corgis and some 'dorgis', a cross between a dachshund and a corgi.

At the time of her death, she had at least three pups - a pair of corgis named Muick and Sandy, and a cocker spaniel named Lissy. Her dorgi, named Candy, reportedly died a few weeks before the queen's death, though there are conflicting accounts of Candy's fate.

The corgis went to live with Elizabeth's son, Prince Andrew, and his ex-wife, Sarah Ferguson. It's unclear what happened to Lissy.

(Courtesy: smithsonianmag.com)

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Lynne Drexler, Yorktown, 1960

Once again, Hauser & Wirth and White Cube, two blue-chip operations with galleries across multiple operations, were among those who reported big sales at the Frieze New York art fair. (Because sales of artworks at fairs are self-reported, they are difficult to verify independently.) Still, a range of mid-size operations spoke of moving works at lower price points.

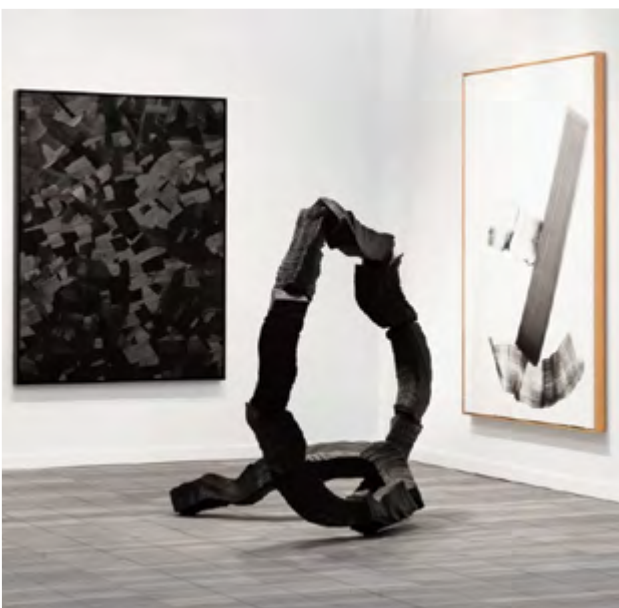
The Seoul-based Kukje Gallery sold all its paper collage works by Haegue Yang, with prices ranging from 27,000 to 42,000. Tif Sigfrids from Athens, Georgia, sold all the paintings in its booth by artist Hasani Sahlehe for between US\$15,000 and US\$20,000 each, the Georgia Museum of Art acquiring one of them. Stephen Friedman reported selling all its wall-based sculptures by British artist Holly Hendry for prices ranging from £6,500 to £15,000 each.

marked the culmination of market movement surrounding the late artist, whose paintings began to far surpass their estimates at auction, selling for over US\$1mn.

During the first day of Frieze New York, White Cube also sold Ed Clark's painting Yin and Yang for US\$800,000 and a new work by Tiona Nekkia McClodden in the region of US\$100,000, as well as works by artists including Tunji Adeniyi-Jones, Tracey Emin, Theaster Gates, Antony Gormley, Jessica Rankin, and Ilana Savdie.

Tony Cragg's 8-foot-tall steel sculpture Incident Solo was the top seller at Thaddaeus Ropac on the first day of Frieze New York this year. The gallerist said the opening day of the fair showed the continued strength of the American market through strong attendance, especially among American collectors.

"We're happy to have already sold to a number



The gallery's solo presentation of Lee Bae's paintings and sculptures



Tony Cragg, Incident Solo, 2023

FRIEZE NEW YORK

# ART arcade



Robert Mangold, Double Pentagon Oxide 3, 2023

The opening of the Frieze New York art fair this week attracted six-figure sales and a bunch of celebrities but no gallery reported any sizable transactions this time around

Against the backdrop of these purchases, celebrities from all sectors came to the fair. Musician David Byrne, former New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg, Chelsea Clinton, CNN anchor Anderson Cooper, and singer Kesha visited Frieze New York on its preview day, according to a fair representative.

Collectors were also in attendance, among them Agnes Gund, Marieluise Hessel, Gael Nee-son, Marty Eisenberg, Michael and Susan Hort, and Shelley Fox Aarons and Philip Aarons. And curators were there too: Studio Museum in Harlem director and chief curator Thelma Golden, High Line curator Cecilia Alemani, New Museum deputy director Isolde Brielmaier, Sharjah Art Foundation director Hoor Al Qasimi, and others were among those on hand.

The Ed Clark, Midi #5 Orange sold for US\$850,000. This 2001 painting was the top seller reported by Hauser & Wirth during the fair's preview day. The abstract work, nearly six feet in height, was also the most expensive one reported sold on the first day by a gallery showing at Frieze New York this year altogether.

Other notable sales at Hauser & Wirth on May 1 included Henry Taylor's Portrait of Larry Dunn (2020) for US\$750,000, Glenn Ligon's Stranger Study #43 (2023) for US\$700,000, a bench by Jenny Holzer titled Selection from Survival: People look like... for US\$400,000, Nicolas Party's Triptych with Mountains (2023) for US\$350,000, and multiple editions of Charles Gaines's Numbers and Trees: Charleston Series 2 (2024) for US\$210,000.

White Cube confirmed it sold two paintings by American abstract artist Lynne Drexler, an untitled work for US\$100,000 and Yorktown (1960) for US\$375,000. Last November, the blue-chip gallery announced it was globally representing the late artist's archive outside the United States, with shows to follow in London this November and another in Hong Kong. That representation deal



Galleries reported a busy first day at Frieze New York 2024

of new contacts who have engaged with the works of our artists on our stand," Ropac said in a press statement.

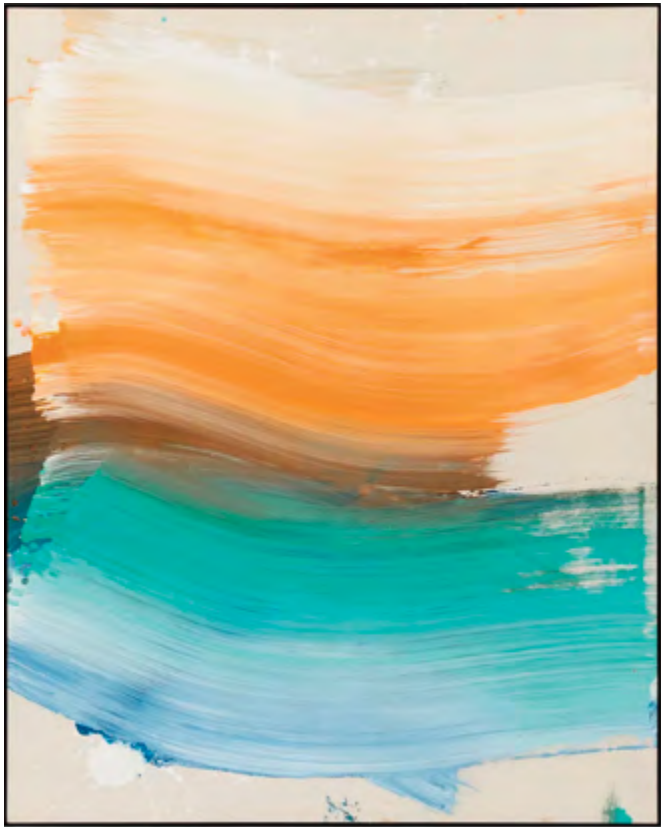
With a Lee exhibition taking place in Venice in tandem with the Biennale, Perrotin reported selling out its solo presentation of paintings and sculptures by the South Korean artist. These transactions seem to suggest more market action surrounding Lee, whose work was also seen in a YouTube video about RM's art collection in his home in 2022. RM is the 29-year-old leader of the

Korean pop group BTS.

On the preview day of the fair, Pace Gallery reported placing multiple new paintings by Robert Mangold priced in the range of US\$350,000 - US\$450,000 and nearly all of the presented sculptures by Arlene Shechet sold for US\$90,000 - US\$120,000.

The mega-gallery spotlighted Shechet's work ahead of a show featuring new work set to open at the Storm King Art Center.

(Courtesy: artnews.com)



Ed Clark, Midi #5 Orange 2001

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