



WAKAN VILLAGE IN NAKHAL ATTRACTS 32,000 VISITORS

Wakan village in the Wilayat of Nakhal, the Governorate of South Al Batinah, is witnessing a large turnout of visitors from the Sultanate of Oman and abroad during the winter season. During 2023, the number of visitors to Wakan village exceeded 32,000 visitors from different nationalities, according to the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism. **>A2**



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HIS MAJESTY ANNOUNCES DEVELOPMENT PACKAGE FOR MUSANDAM GOVERNORATE



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik met with Sheikhs, Dignitaries, Council of Oman and Municipal Council members, and the business community in Khasab

KHASAB: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik held a meeting on Sunday at the Royal Camp in Saih Al Mahasin valley in the wilayat of Khasab, Musandam Governorate, with sheikhs and dignitaries of Musandam, some members of the Council of Oman and members of the Municipal Council and the business community in the governorate.

The meeting was in pursuance of His Majesty the Sultan's keenness to engage with citizens all over the Sultanate of Oman. It also reflects His Majesty the Sultan's conviction to directly listen to the visions and proposals of citizens about measures to promote the development of their respective governorates and upgrade economic and service projects.

At the outset of the meeting, His Majesty the Sultan gave thanks and praise to Allah the Almighty for the bounties He has bestowed on Oman. He prayed to Allah to perpetuate these blessings on Oman.

Then, His Majesty the Sultan reviewed matters of local concern. His Majesty the Sultan affirmed that the Sultanate of Oman is pressing ahead with plans and programmes in various spheres.

He commended the accomplishments made in 2023 which, he said, reflected positively on economic conditions and maintained the amelioration of financial performance indicators—an evidence of the government's success in implementing development of strategies

and goals of Oman Vision 2040. This paved the way for a verdant present and a future that promises sustainability for the Omani economy and prosperity for the people of Oman, His Majesty noted.

His Majesty the Sultan also lauded the positive outcome of implementing decentralisation, the System of Governorate and the Municipal Council Law, besides delegating broad powers to governors and assisting them with the financial and administrative resources necessary to manage and develop their governorates.

This, His Majesty the Sultan observed, crystallised in upgrading infrastructure, advancing public and municipal services in the wilayats and ensuring high levels of performance. His Majesty the Sultan valued public wel-

DEVELOPMENT OF MUSANDAM

- HM orders charting out a masterplan for commercial, residential compound in Al Jaradiya and Sana'eia
- HM gave directives for the construction of houses and development of coastal villages
- Setting-up a number of ready-built factories in Mahas and Seih Al Wasat valley
- HM lauded the decentralisation process, besides delegating broad powers to governors

come accorded to this approach. He pointed out that steps are underway to grant the governorates more powers during the forthcoming period.

In this context, His Majesty urged Sheikhs, Dignitaries and members of the business community to cooperate and work diligently with the Governor and members of the municipal council to achieve comprehensive development in Musandam Governorate in a manner that meets the hopes and aspirations of citizens. His Majesty expressed his personal keenness on witnessing the economic growth of Musandam due to the Governorate's strategic location and the investment opportunities that abound there, notably in the sectors of tourism, fisheries and services. **>A4**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES



OMAN Construction work of Yanqul dam completed

1 The field and construction work of Wadi Juby Dam in the village of Al Shuiyah, Wilayat of Yanqul in Al Dhahirah Governorate has been completed. The dam has been constructed at a cost of over OMR85,000. **>A2**

WORLD India, Maldives hold high-level meeting

2 India and the Maldives discussed finding a "mutually workable solution" for operation of Indian aviation platforms to humanitarian services to the people of the Maldives. **>A6**

MARKET 'Liquidity Provider' Services launched

3 Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) on Sunday celebrated by the opening of a new "Liquidity Provider" service, which constitutes part of the Market Making Initiative. **>B1**

2024 OLYMPIC GAMES

Eight teams to vie for Olympic hockey ticket

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifier will begin in Muscat today as eight teams will vie for the three direct tickets to the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris.

The newly-built Oman Hockey stadium is set to host both groups matches as the pool A comprises Great Britain, Malaysia, Pakistan and China while Pool B features Germany, New Zealand, Canada and Chile. Muscat city is among the three cities around the World to host the Hockey Olympic Qualifier beside Valencia (Spain) and Ranchi (India).

The 2024 FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifier event will begin with four matches being played on Monday.

The Germany team will take on Canada in the opener at 2:00 pm and this match will be followed by New Zealand and Chile encounter



at 4:15 pm.

Then, Malaysia will play against China at 6:30 pm and Great Britain will face Pakistan at 8:45 pm. It is expected that the opening round of group matches will be very tough as all the teams look

to register victory to keep their hopes alive for the semifinals.

The playing format in the Hockey Olympic Qualifier will be based on the league system as the first and second ranked teams in each pool will advance to the semi-

finals and the top three teams will secure tickets to the Olympic Games.

The third and fourth ranked teams in the pool will play classification matches for 5th to 8th positions. The group matches will run until Thursday. On Saturday, the semifinal matches and classification matches will take place while the following day the final match and bronze winner will be decided.

The team manager of China team, Wang Haiqin, said that the players began their preparations for the FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifier early as they had booked the ticket in the Asian Games in China last September.

"It was not an easy task to secure the ticket from the Asian continent. Thanks to the team heroes as they managed to earn one of tickets to reach the final stage of the qualifier," he said **>A5**

HM’s visit to enhance economic growth of Musandam: Governor

Thanks to the Royal visit, the Governorate of Musandam will draw more attention

KHASAB: Sayyid Ibrahim Said Al Busaidi, Governor of Musandam, has said that the Royal tour of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the Musandam Governorate will give a strong boost to the development march in the Governorate.

Sayyid Ibrahim pointed out that the Royal visit, the first of its kind to the governorate since His Majesty the Sultan assumed the reins of leadership in Oman, was aimed at providing a closer look at the projects being implemented in economic and developmental fields. His Majesty the Sultan was



keen to learn, in person, about the most important achievements that are currently being made to stimulate spatial economy in the governorate, he added.

Thanks to the Royal visit, the Governorate of Musandam will draw more attention, notably through emphasis on economic growth that directly benefits society, said Sayyid Ibrahim.

He explained that major projects currently underway include Dibba - Lima - Khasab road, the new Musandam Airport (which will be built in the Wilayat of Khasab) and the development of residential neighborhoods and city centres.

In the meantime, the logistics sector (by sea, land or air) will take centre stage in discussions, said

Sayyid Ibrahim, noting that Khasab Port serves both the transportation sector and the fishing sector.

Sayyid Ibrahim said that, due to the fact that the geographical nature limits to space areas that can have tangible development, steps are underway to overcome this difficulty by establishing an industrial zone outside the port and integrating the services with it. — **ONA**



DURING THE WINTER SEASON

Wakan Village in Wilayat of Nakhal attracts 32,000 visitors

NAKHAL: Wakan village in the Wilayat of Nakhal, the Governorate of South Al Batinah, is witnessing a large turnout of visitors from the Sultanate of Oman and abroad during the winter season.

During 2023, the number of visitors to Wakan village exceeded 32,000 visitors from different nationalities, according to the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism.

Dr. Al Mutasim Nasser Al Hilali, Director General of Heritage and Tourism in the Governorate of South Al Batinah said that the weather in Wakan is relatively cold, which is similar to the weather in some villages of the Wilayat Al Jabal Al Akhdar (or the Green Mountain). — **ONA**



TENDER
ANNOUNCEMENT

The Internal Tender Committee at the Ministry of Labour announces the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender title	Last date for tender purchase online	Bid submission date
01/2024	Completion of the first floor of the building of the Directorate General of Labour in South Al Sharqiyah Governorate	Monday 05/02/2024 2:00 p.m.	Thursday 22/02/2024 10 a.m.

- Specialized establishments may obtain the tender's documents online through the following link, starting from Monday 15/01/2024 at 08:00 a.m.: [/https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om](https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om)
- Bids shall be submitted online.
- Bids shall be opened at 11:00 am on Thursday 22/02/2024.

(The Ministry shall not be bound to accept the lowest or any other bid)

labour_OMAN

VILLAGE OF AL SHUIYAH



Wadi Juby Dam construction work in Yanqul completed

YANQUL: The construction work of Wadi Juby Dam (Al Shuiyah Dam) in Al Shuiyah village, Wilayat of Yanqul in Al Dhahirah Governorate has been completed.

The dam has been constructed with the efforts of society and under the supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior represented by Yanqul Municipality. The cost of the project is over OMR85,000.

Ali bin Humaid Al Badi, supervising the project, said that the length of the dam is 69 metres, the height is 9 metres with storage capacity of 22, 000 cubic metres.

He said that the dam has been constructed under the specifica-



tions for construction of dams in the Sultanate of Oman and accommodates a number of tourism and entertainment facilities to attract visitors.

The dam would serve a number of villages in the wilayat of Yanqul including the villages of Al Shuiyah, Al Muraibi, Al Mashak, Al Roudha, Al Jazirat and Al Buwair-

da among other villages and areas.

The dam accommodates several public facilities for the visitors and a certain area was allocated for tourism investment.

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology would carry out the maintenance work of the road leading to the dam, he added. — **ONA**



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COMMENTARY



Why are we littering the beaches?



SALEH AL-SHAIBANY

The beaches in Muscat are fast becoming dumping yards where thousands of waste is being thrown on the sands on a daily basis. The weather now is cool with temperatures between 19 to 23 degrees and the beaches are an ideal place to camp overnight or just a family gathering on the sands after sunset. But after an evening of fun on a cool environment, beach campers leave their barbecue remains, bottles, plastic bags, food and tissue papers behind them. The surprising thing is that they don't even have to take their waste with them at home. The Muscat Municipality have waste bins every-

where around the beaches for them to drop their rubbish in. All they have to do is collect them and walk to the nearest bin and dispose them. But I guess that is too much for almost all of them. They put enjoyment first before hygiene. But who are the losers of littering? Certainly it is the environment we live in. Also, tourism. Over the years, the government has been spending billions of rials to improve the leisure and hospitality infrastructure to bring in tourists to enjoy our beautiful country. The beaches are vital part of it since over 70 percent of our hotels and resorts are near the sea. Especially, when we consider that Oman has the longest coastline in the Arabian Peninsula that stretches from Musandam in the north all the way to Dhofar in the south. Statistics also tell us that over 80 percent of both domestic and international tourists visit the beaches or stay at hotels near the beaches. Littering beaches is certainly against the Oman Vision 2040. The Sultanate is targeting about 16 million tourists by 2040. Currently, the country is attracting around 3 million tourists a year. Again, it is not just about leaving the beaches clean

but it is about boosting our economy. It is also about employment where the hospitality and leisure industry is employing thousands of graduates a year. Not to mention, the business attraction and the tax income tourists pay to the government. They will all stop coming if one of Oman's top attraction is full of rubbish. Having said all that, do the dumpers of rubbish really care? Certainly not, otherwise they would clean up when they leave. Second question is: who is to blame? Of course, it is the litterers but I am not talking on these lines. We can go further back perhaps to schools and as far as all the way back when these litterers were growing up. Teachers are certainly to blame from kindergarten all the way to secondary schools. Cleanliness of the environment must be part of the basic education curriculum. The Ministry of Education must insist that this subject is embedded deep in the classes of students of all ages. Parenting is to blame, too. If we don't tell our children to pick up things on the floor in our own homes, they grow up becoming litterers of the environment. It all starts there and spills out to the open areas on the streets.

CULTURAL HERITAGE



Ministry conducts joint excavation in Bausher

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is carrying out a joint excavation that includes specialists from the authorities in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) concerned with cultural heritage. The excavation is being carried out at the Sanab site in the Wilayat of Bausher, Muscat Governorate from January 13 - 22, 2024. The excavation aims to document the site affected by urban sprawl and learn about its archaeological components to understand the various cultural aspects of the period of human settlement, in addition to exchanging experiences between specialists from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and embodying the goals of the Secretariat of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, which approved

this programme.

Archaeological missions The programme includes visiting several archaeological missions operating in the Sultanate of Oman to learn about Omani archaeological sites and the nature of their work. It is worth noting that the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism conducted many archaeological surveys and excavations in the Wilayat of Bausher, which includes many archaeological sites dating back to different periods. The Ministry carried out a salvage excavation for archaeological cemeteries affected by residential plans in the village of Sanab in the Wilayat of Bausher. The cemeteries of the village of Sanab were chosen to carry out the joint Gulf excavation for several reasons, the most prominent

of which is the presence of cemeteries on the list of archaeological sites in danger as a result of urban expansion and encroachments on those cemeteries, in addition to natural factors represented by successive floods due to successive climate extremes. The excavation work plan includes photographing and documenting the site, preparing it, surveying the surrounding areas using scientific methods, examining and documenting everything suspected of being an archaeological witness, preparing and cleaning the tombs to begin the excavation process, and recording archaeological tomb data according to the stages of work. In addition to recording the discovered artefacts, clarifying all the data of the archaeological finds, and preserving them in this manner.

OMAN CONVENTION AND EXHIBITION CENTRE

International pharmacy congress opens in Oman

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Dr. Hilal Al Sabti, Minister of Health inaugurated on Sunday the Oman International Pharmacy Congress and Exhibition (OIPCX). The event is organised by the Ministry of Health, represented by the Directorate General of Medical Supplies at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC). The inauguration ceremony included a welcome speech delivered by the Director General and Chair of OIPCX, Ibrahim Al Rashdi, who pointed out that this version of the annual event is distinct considering its inclusive scientific programme that covers various areas of pharmacy ranging from pharmacy education, supply chains, pharmaceutical regulatory affairs, moving to patient-centered pharmaceutical care, noting that Universal Health Care is of great importance to all professions and decision-makers working in the health field in general and in pharmacy in particular. Al Rashdi stated that in order to promote efforts in supply chains, the DGMS will contract with ASHP and CIPS to obtain professional certificates and establish an effective system for managing supply shortages. Biosimilar is one of the focus areas of the congress addressing the strategies for ensuring safe and effective usage of interchange-

able biosimilar, added the Director General of Medical Supplies. Dr. Paul W. Bush, Vice President of Global Resources Development and Consulting American Society of Health -System Pharmacists presented the Congress Keynote entitled "It Takes a Multidisciplinary Team to Manage Drug Shortages". The lecture reviewed the various definition of drug shortages, then addressed the unanticipated events impact drug supply, the current characterisation of shortages by category, and how are shortages managed. In addition, the drug shortages impact on inpatients and outpatients where also touched upon, concluding with strategies and the team to mitigate drug shortages. The patron of the event toured the accompanying exhibition of the international manufacturers of medicines and medical devices, as well leading pharmacies in the Sultanate of Oman, in addition to the pharmaceutical industry sector. The theme of this year Congress is " Shaping the Future of Pharmaceutical Services", which is guided by Oman Vision 2040 pillars, Health Vision 2050, the Sustainable Development Goals, the WHO Global action plan for the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases and the Global NCD Compact to move towards universal health coverage.

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MEETING

HM urges investors to take advantage of opportunities in Musandam

<FROM A1 He encouraged investors, merchants and entrepreneurs to take advantage of these opportunities and promote commercial activity based on ports and other infrastructure being developed by the government. He exhorted all to set up light industries in industrial zones, noting that this would undoubtedly help enhance economic activity and generate employment opportunities for citizens in the Governorate.

His Majesty the Sultan was briefed by some ministers about development and service projects being implemented in all wilayats of the Governorate. He gave instructions to the officials in charge to complete the projects on time and in accordance with the approved programmes. His Majesty also underlined the need to generate employment opportunities for citizens from these projects.

On this occasion, His Majesty the Sultan gave directives to implement more projects in the Governorate, including charting out a masterplan for commercial-residential compound in Al

Jaradiya Neighbourhood and Sana'eia Neighbourhood in Seih Al Wasat valley in the Wilayat of Madha, the construction of social houses in the Governorate and developing some coastal villages, as well as setting-up a number of ready-built factories in Mahas Industrial City in the Wilayat of Khasab and the industrial zone in Seih Al Wasat valley in the Wilayat of Madha to benefit entrepreneurs and startups.

These directives reflect the Royal interest of His Majesty the Sultan in boosting the economic growth, continuing to provide services, completing infrastructure, supporting private sector activities and generating more job opportunities for citizens, within the context of local action under the patronage of His Majesty.

May Allah the Almighty protect His Majesty the Sultan and guard him as a source of pride for this dear homeland! May He perpetuate the blessing of prosperity on Oman and its citizens and residents under the wise leadership of His Majesty! -ONA







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HM the Sultan visits Musandam

The citizens welcomed His Majesty the Sultan and chanted expressions of loyalty and gratitude

KHASAB: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik arrived yesterday in the Governorate of Musandam on a Royal meet-the-people tour during which he will closely inspect aspects of social and economic development. His Majesty will also meet sheikhs, dignitaries and some members of the Council of Oman, members of the Municipal Council and the business community in the governorate.

When the Royal Yacht, Fulk Al Salamah, approached the coastline, it was surrounded by a group of ships and boats boarded by local citizens. The flotilla was draped

with the flag of the Sultanate of Oman and adorned with His Majesty the Sultan's portraits, in a manifestation of warm welcome for the auspicious Royal visit.

His Majesty the Sultan greeted the loyal citizens, exchanged with them ardent sentiments and welcomed their hospitable reception.

When the Royal Yacht entered the Port of Khasab, two folklore troupes presented the art of Al Nadba, one of the governorate's most famous traditional arts.

As His Majesty the Sultan disembarked, another group of citizens presented the sung art of Al Razfa. Then, His Majesty the Sultan headed to Saih Al Mahasin valley in the wilayat of Khasab, where the people of the governorate came out in large numbers and lined both sides of the road.

The citizens welcomed His Majesty the Sultan and chanted expressions of loyalty and gratitude. His Majesty the Sultan reciprocated the gestures, waving back in recognition for the citizens' noble feelings. The interaction reflected the deep-rooted solidarity between the leader of Oman's Renewed Renaissance and the loyal public. -ONA



HOCKEY

‘Tough fight expected in league matches’

< FROM A1 Commenting on his expectation on the matches, he responded: “It is expected to be a tough fight as all the participating teams are top ranked. Furthermore, the China team has been allotted a very tough group which comprises Germany. We will work hard to vie for one of the spots of the Olympic Games. The team went to many training sessions a couple of days ago in Muscat. It is difficult to talk about the team's chances but I am assured that the team members will perform well,” he ended.

The head coach of New Zealand, Greg Nicol, affirmed that



the team started their preparatory programme a few weeks ago. “The team had organised some joint camps with Malaysia and South Korea teams. The team arrived in Muscat on January 3 and began their camp ahead of the actual start of the competition. The

focus is on preparing the players physically for the matches and creating different technical plans against the opposing teams. I am confident that our team will produce a good show in the event. However, currently we will concentrate on the group matches,” he added.

“We are very pleased to be here in Oman as the country has top hockey facilities. It is great to see the growth of Oman in hockey and they have some players who got opportunities to play abroad. Moreover, the new hockey infrastructure will support the nation to develop further in hockey,” he ended.



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India and Maldives hold high-level meeting to find ‘workable solution’: MEA

India and Maldives also discussed enhancing bilateral cooperation and expediting the implementation of ongoing projects

MALE: India and the Maldives discussed finding a “mutually workable solution” to continue the operation of Indian aviation platforms that provide humanitarian and medical evacuation services to the people of the Maldives, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Sunday.

The discussions were held during the first meeting of the India-Maldives High-Level Core Group that was held in Male on Sunday. India and Maldives also discussed enhancing bilateral cooperation and expediting the implementation of ongoing projects.

Wide-ranging issues discussed “During the meeting, both sides held discussions on wide-ranging issues related to bilateral cooperation towards identifying steps to enhance the partnership, including expediting the implementation of ongoing development cooperation projects,” the MEA statement read. “Both sides also held discussions on finding mutually workable solution to enable continued operation of Indian aviation platforms that provide humanitarian and medvac services to the people of Maldives,” it added. The two sides also agreed to hold

the next meeting of the High-Level Core Group in India on a mutually convenient date. Earlier, Maldives local media reported that Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu has asked the Indian government to withdraw the Indian troops from the island nation before March 15. Abdulla Nazim, the Policy Director of the Maldives President's Office, told reporters that President Muizzu had proposed to withdraw Indian troops from the Maldives. “During the meeting, the President proposed the removal of Indian troops before March 15. The government, the President's Office and the President have proposed this date for the agenda of the meeting. Those discussions are now underway,” Maldives-based Adhathu newspaper quoted Nazim as saying at the press conference. Nazim further said that Indian troops cannot stay in Maldives and

that is “what the people want,” the local newspaper reported. “The most important point is that Indian troops cannot stay in this country. That is the policy of this government. That is the promise of President Mohammed Muizzu and what the people want,” he said. Notably, the removal of Indian troops in the Maldives was the main campaign of Muizzu's party. Currently, there are around 70 Indian troops, along with Dornier 228 maritime patrol aircraft and two HAL Dhruv helicopters, stationed in the Maldives. On the second day of assuming office, Muizzu officially requested the Indian government to withdraw its military personnel from the Maldives. In December last year, President Muizzu claimed that, after dialogue with the Indian government, an agreement was reached to withdraw Indian military personnel. — **ANI**



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Deutsche Bahn keen on trains to London via Channel Tunnel

BERLIN: Germany's state-owned railway company Deutsche Bahn (DB) said on Saturday that it was vying to launch services through the Channel Tunnel under the English Channel. “Transport between London and the mainland through the Eurotunnel remains of fundamental interest to Deutsche Bahn,” a DB spokesperson told the Germany press agency dpa. The news comes as DB's long-distance cross-border passenger rail demand increases, amid greater demand for climate-friendly transport. The German operator had long looked at launching services through the Channel connecting England and the European continent, but years of dispute over safety requirements put the plan on hold. Currently travelers wishing to take a train from Germany to London have to change trains and train operators in Brussels for the last leg under the Channel. DB originally planned to run its high-speed ICE trains from Frankfurt to London, but years of safety disputes prevented this. The train would pass through Cologne, Brussels and Lille, France, according to the original plan that was drawn up in 2013. Eurostar, which operates pas-

senger trains that use the Channel, has had a monopoly for nearly 30 years. The plan has once again been set in motion after Getlink, the operator of the Channel Tunnel, said it had plans to introduce more services through the under-sea link. In a statement last month, Getlink said it aimed to double the number of high-speed rail services from London over the next 10 years. It specifically mentioned new routes from London to Cologne and Frankfurt in Germany, and to Geneva and Zurich in Switzerland. Among other things, Getlink said that a more rapid renovation of safety infrastructure would help enable this, making the stretch of rail compatible with other operators' trains. A DB spokesperson told dpa that routes and trains were currently not equipped with an end-to-end European Train Control System which is the European rail safety system. “The approval of our ICE trains for Belgium, northern France and England depends on this equipment,” the DB spokesperson said, referring to plans to connect major European cities and England. — **bw**

VOLCANO ERUPTS IN ICELAND ENDANGERING WHOLE VILLAGE

A volcano erupted in southwest Iceland on Sunday, posing an immediate threat to a nearby small fishing town although it had been evacuated earlier and no people were in danger, authorities said. Early-morning video footage from the site showed fountains of molten rock spewing from fissures in the ground, the bright orange lava flow glowing against the dark sky. — **ONA**



CARE INTERNATIONAL'S 2023 REPORT

Africa's crises fall out of focus as global attention drifts

JOHANNESBURG: Crises in Africa are being overlooked, with news about humanitarian emergencies on the continent buried beneath the weight of media attention focused elsewhere, Care International's 2023 report concludes. That means issues such as hunger in Angola, chronic malnutrition in Burundi and high child mortality in the Central African Republic are disappearing from public view, the authors concluded. Analyst Fredson Guilengue from the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation in Johannesburg sees reasons for the low interest in Africa's plight in the escalation of the two conflicts in the West. “The first is the continuation of the Russia-Ukraine war. It is getting a lot of attention worldwide, especially on the European continent, because the war is returning to Europe,” Guilengue told DW. The global media is now focusing more on Europe and less on Africa or other places. This will continue in 2024 as the wars continue. In addition, the second trouble spot, namely the conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, has exacerbated this dilemma: what is happening in other parts of the world hardly receives any attention. In the current “Breaking the Silence” report, the aid organisation draws attention to the “forgotten crises” for the eighth time. Every year, Care lists the ten humanitarian emergencies in the



world that have hardly been reported. In 2023 and 2022, they all took place in Africa, led in the second year by Angola. However, the Central African Republic occupied a place in this sad list every year, emphasised David Mutua, Care spokesperson for the African regions. The aid organisation commissioned the media monitoring service Meltwater to examine five million online articles in Arabic, German, English, French and Spanish from January 1 to September 30 in 2023. From a list of 48 humanitarian crises affecting more than one million people the ten crises with the lowest media presence were identified. Only 77,000 of the articles analysed dealt with Africa's humanitarian disasters, in contrast to the

new Barbie film, which topped the list with 273,279 publications, Care Africa spokesperson Mutua said at the presentation of the report. Angola accounted for just under 1,000 publications, although drought, flooding and hunger meant that more than seven million people needed humanitarian aid in 2023. Angolans have been struggling with drought for 40 years, there is a lack of clean drinking water and almost thirty years of civil war (1975 to 2002) have left a country littered with mines. Although it is rich in oil and diamonds, most of the approximately 37 million Angolans live in poverty. **Climate change drives crises** In second place is Zambia, where

1.35 million people are affected by hunger. The country is suffering greatly from the consequences of climate change. So, too, is Burundi where the population regularly battles floods. Almost 70,000 people have been displaced as a result, and almost 5.6 million children in the small East African country are chronically malnourished. Meanwhile, many people in Senegal and Mauritania also suffer from hunger. The impact of climate change on people and food security is serious and largely avoidable. “Climate change drives famine, it makes water problems worse, it destroys people's habitats and drives them out of their homes, it prevents children from going to school,” says Deepmala Mahla, Care's Director for Humanitarian Aid.

The consequences are dramatic. One Somali woman in Kenya told Mahla: “The climate, the drought and the weapons haven't killed me, but I feel dead inside.” In 2024, almost 300 million people worldwide will need humanitarian aid. Care International warned, almost half of them in Africa. David Mutua cites climate change as a decisive factor. From devastating droughts to extreme flooding — the continent suffers the most from climate change, even though it contributes the least to it. Worldwide, humanitarian need has never been greater than in 2023. For Mahla, it is therefore not surprising that disasters in Africa receive too little attention: “We have experienced an unprecedented series of humanitarian crises and natural disasters,” she says, referring to the earthquake in the Syrian-Turkish border region, floods in Libya, but also the wars in the Middle East and Ukraine. Many of the humanitarian crises in Africa would not make it into the news because they are all too familiar. They “already exist, sometimes they escalate in the shadow of the major crises,” added Mahla. “There is nothing new to report, as sad as that sounds.” For Fred Guilengue, fatigue over the numerous crises in Africa is a factor that inhibits attention: “But this tiredness has not just set in now, it already existed at the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s. Western countries were

already tired of not seeing results when it came to democracy on the African continent and foreign aid in particular,” he emphasised. In addition, Deepmala Mahlanotes that reporting from Africa is very expensive for foreign journalists and media groups. Many of these humanitarian crises are located in insecure regions that are subject to numerous restrictions imposed by governments, limiting access to these areas for journalists. One such example is the Central African Republic. An armed conflict has been raging there since 2013, “which has repeatedly escalated and displaced families several times,” says Deepmala Mahla from Care. Twenty percent of the population have been internally displaced or have fled to neighboring countries. “Two-thirds of the population, more than three million people, have been in need of humanitarian aid for years,” criticizes Mahla. According to Care International, there is also a lack of sufficient funding for humanitarian aid to save lives. In 2023, only 35% of the required financial resources were provided by donors. “We are also aware that people don't want to or can't consume news about disasters all the time, people are tired of crises,” emphasised Mahla. Better cooperation with the media and politicians is necessary to bring such emergencies to the attention of the global public, she concluded. — **aw**

JAPAN'S BIGGEST AIRLINE



Boeing 737-800 turns back after windshield crack

TOKYO: Japan's biggest airline said on Saturday that a domestic flight returned to its departure airport after pilots discovered a crack on the cockpit window of the Boeing 737-800 midair.

A spokesperson for All Nippon Airways (ANA) said there were no injuries and all 59 passengers and six crew members aboard the flight were safe.

The crack was discovered on the outermost of four layers of windows surrounding the cockpit, the spokesperson said.

"The crack was not something that affected the flight's control or pressurisation," the spokesperson added.

The ANA Flight 1182 was en route to the southern Toyama airport but returned to the northern Sapporo-New Chitose airport after the discovery.

The ANA aircraft was not one of Boeing's 737 MAX 9 planes — rather a model from the related but much older 737-800 series — but the US aerospace giant has been under scrutiny after a fuselage panel blew off a Boeing 737 MAX 9 flight operated by Alaska Airlines last week, prompting an emergency landing.

The US aviation regulator

on Friday said it was extending the grounding of the 737 MAX 9 planes indefinitely pending new safety checks.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) said it would increase oversight of Boeing and audit the production of the 737 Max 9s.

The 737 family of planes is Boeing's top-selling series, and second only to Airbus' rival A320 in terms of total orders for purchase for a commercial airliner.

The FAA added that it would judge whether Boeing and its suppliers followed approved quality procedures.

The regulator said it would reconsider its long-standing practice of relying on employees at aircraft manufacturers to perform some safety analysis of planes.

Members of Congress also criticized the practice of deputizing Boeing employees as inspectors after two deadly crashes involving Boeing 737 Max 8 planes in 2018 and 2019. That model was grounded worldwide for more than a year — and longer in many jurisdictions — before once again being given full flight clearance by the FAA late in 2020. — DW

Gaza misery 'staining our shared humanity'

The chief of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, Philippe Lazzarini, said during a trip to Gaza that the 'massive death, destruction, displacement, hunger, loss and grief of the last 100 days are staining our shared humanity'

GAZA: The UN on Saturday decried the humanitarian situation in Gaza as fighting there has now continued for almost 100 days.

The war first broke out on October 7, when Hamas carried out terror attacks on Israel, killing about 1,140 people, mostly civilians.

The group also took around 250 hostages, 132 of whom Israel says remain in Gaza, including at least 25 believed to have been killed.

In response to the October 7 attacks, Israel launched a military operation targeting Hamas in Gaza.

The chief of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, Philippe Lazzarini, said during a trip to Gaza that the "massive death, destruction, displacement, hunger, loss and grief of the last 100 days are staining our shared humanity."

While decrying the "horrific at-



tacks carried out against people in Israel," Lazzarini also noted the "largest displacement of the Palestinian people since 1948."

He said due to the war, many Palestinians "will carry lifelong scars, both physical and psychological. The vast majority, including children, are deeply traumatised."

"People live inhuman conditions, where diseases are spreading, including among children," Lazzarini said. "They live through the unlivable, with the clock

ticking fast towards famine."

Lazzarini said a "humanitarian cease-fire is still not in place to stop the killing of people in Gaza and enable the safe delivery of food, medicine, water and shelter."

"International Humanitarian Law, put in place to protect civilians and regulate the conduct of hostilities, is regularly flouted. Civilians and civilian infrastructure, including hospitals and UNRWA shelters, were hit over the last three months, killing hundreds of

civilians and injuring thousands. UNRWA installations should be protected at all times, and provide the protection civilians are seeking. They should never be used for military purposes by any party," he said. "Despite repeated calls, a humanitarian ceasefire is still not in place to stop the killing of people in Gaza and enable the safe delivery of food, medicine, water and shelter. The onset of winter makes life even more unbearable, especially for those living out in the open," he added.

"Aid workers, including 146 of my own UNRWA colleagues, were killed alongside doctors, journalists and children — no one is spared. Entire residential neighbourhoods, places of worship, and historic buildings were razed, wiping out centuries of history, civilization and people's memories.

"For the people of Gaza, the past 100 days have felt like 100 years.

"It is high time we restore the value of human life."

"It is time we restore the value of human life," Lazzarini concluded.

— Agencies

ROYAL FAMILIES

Across the world, monarchs continue to reign

BRUSSELS: The next generational change in one of Europe's seven reigning royal houses is underway. After the Netherlands (2013), Belgium (2013), Spain (2014) and Britain (2022), it is Denmark's turn: 83-year-old Queen Margarethe II is handing over the scepter to her son Frederik on Sunday after exactly 52 years on the throne.

The surprise announcement from the Danish royal family follows a trend. With the exception of Britain's royal family, many monarchs no longer die on the throne. Instead, they retire and make way for their children.

At 55, Frederik of Denmark has already spent a lifetime preparing for the job. But it is one that, according to his biographer, he has been reluctant to assume. "I don't want to be king," he is said to have shouted to his nanny as a child.

Frederik's wild days as a rebellious "party prince" have long since passed. He and his Australian wife, Mary, have produced heirs to the throne, guaranteeing the continuation of the oldest royal dynasty in Europe. His subjects seem to approve, with polls finding that 80% of Danes are satisfied with their ruler.

Swedish Crown Princess Victoria and Norwegian Prince Haakon are next up for their respective thrones. Victoria is in line to take over from her father, Carl XVI Gustaf, who has been on the throne for over 50 years. Haakon would replace his 86-year-old father, King Harald V, who now rarely appears in public because of his ill health.

In Europe, kings and queens have generally ceremonial roles, with scant political power. This applies to the princely houses of Luxembourg and Liechtenstein, along with the dwarf state of Monaco, where Prince Albert II has a relatively strong position. Another dwarf state, Andorra, tucked between the high valley of France and Spain, always has two co-princes who act as heads of state. One prince is the Spanish bishop of Urgell; the other is the president of France. This means that Emmanuel Macron is not only currently the president of the Republic of France, but also a prince



in the parliamentary democracy of Andorra. The only elective monarchy in Europe where the throne is not hereditary is the Vatican. Pope Francis not only heads the Catholic Church, but is also the absolute ruler of the world's smallest state: Vatican City.

"I think most citizens of states with a monarchical order actually enjoy their monarchy," University of Potsdam historian and royal expert Monika Wienfort said. There have been no serious efforts to abolish this form of government in the seven sovereign royal houses and five principalities in Europe. Resignations and successions have been seamless apart from minor protests by republican-minded groups, she said.

Royalty has persisted throughout Europe wherever there were

no revolutionary upheavals, such as those in France, Italy, Austria or Germany. As almost all royal houses are somehow related to each other, and chiefly to German nobility, there would always be the possibility of moving in with relatives in a pinch, Wienfort said.

Royal houses thrive on tradition, gossip, scandals and the public display of a happy family life, increasingly free of pomp and glitter. "I think we're a soap opera," the United Kingdom's then Prince Charles said about his family in 2008. His father, Philip, once also described the Windsors as a company tasked with producing beautiful images to aspire to in return for taxpayers' money.

43 monarchies globally
The monarchy model rules in 22%

of the countries in the world, or 43 of the 194 formally recognised states. In addition to in Europe, monarchies can be found in the Caribbean, Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Many date back to the British Empire, and the British king is still the head of state in 14 countries outside Europe — including Canada and Australia. Japan is the only empire in the world, though the Tenno has purely ceremonial duties in the country's democracy.

In some countries, such as Jordan or Morocco, the king has political power determined by the constitution. In Asia, Malaysia has the only major elective monarchy, currently held by Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah, determined by the sultans of the country's nine provinces.



There is no tabloid press in the Middle East to publicly report royal dramas, but gossip about monarchs is big business in Europe. The market leader is still the British royal family, even without the queen, who reigned for 70 years and died in 2022. Public interest in the dysfunctional family dramas surrounding King Charles; his sons, William and Harry; and wife, Camilla, remains steady.

"The fascination stems from the spectacular in the everyday," Wienfort said. The royals do completely normal things such as marry, raise children and die. But their biographies are representative and luxurious, or even pompous, she said. People want to look at carriages, uniforms, dresses and castles, even if they don't feel any particular awe.

Being a monarch is also fairly tale-level lucrative. The richest king in the world, Thailand's Rama X, is worth \$30 billion to \$43 billion (€27.3-€39 billion), according to estimates by US business magazines. Europe's richest prince is Hans-Adam II of Liechtenstein, with about \$3.5 billion. UK King Charles III has a private fortune of \$1.8 billion (€1.6 billion).

On Sunday, Margarethe II of Denmark will hand over a comparatively meager \$30 million in the crown's coffers to her son Frederik, though it would certainly be enough to hold a veritable court. It's also still significantly more than what the Spanish king has to make do with — just \$10 million, putting him in last place among royals in Europe.

— DW

SPORTS

Djokovic, Wozniacki move into second round of Australian Open

In her first match at Melbourne Park since 2020, Wozniacki led 6-2, 2-0 until Linette quit after 55 minutes

MELBOURNE: The World No.1 Novak Djokovic made a winning start to his quest for a record-extending 11th Australian Open title with a 6-2, 6-7(5), 6-3, 6-4 triumph against Dino Prizmic in first-round on Sunday.

Djokovic, in typical manner, dialled in from there, winning the next eight games and all but extinguishing his youthful opponent's prospects of pulling off a shocking upset.

The Serbian played his best tennis of the match in the latter stages to outlast a tired Prizmic, though the Croatian saved six match chances before Djokovic sealed victory.

"He deserved every applause,



every credit that he got tonight. He's an amazing player, so mature for his age and he handled himself on the court incredibly well," Djokovic said of Prizmic as quoted by ATP.

"This is his moment, honestly. It could easily have been his match as well. He was a break up in the third, he fought even though he was 0-4 and a break point down [in the fourth set]. He fought. He showed great mentality and resilience. He really made me run for

my money tonight."

Prizmic looked to relax and begin to impose himself against his more experienced opponent. Despite giving up a 3-1 lead in the second set, the Croatian created a 6/2 advantage in the tie-break and stayed strong to convert his fourth set point, changing the course of the match.

Former No.1 Caroline Wozniacki on Sunday moved into the second round of the ongoing Australian Open after No.20 seed Magda Linette was forced to retire



due to injury.

In her first match at Melbourne Park since 2020, Wozniacki led 6-2, 2-0 until Linette quit after 55 minutes. Linette, who was a surprise semifinalist in Melbourne last year, had an awful outcome. Wozniacki will face qualifier Maria Timofeeva in the second round.

"It's never nice to see that. Magda's a good friend of mine, I've known her for so many years. I obviously followed her last year and [saw] how well and unbelievable

she was playing here so I knew coming into today's match that it was going to be a very tough one," Wozniacki said on the court as quoted by WTA.

"This is not how I wanted to finish it, and I really hope that it's not too serious and that she'll recover soon," she added.

Wozniacki came out of retirement last summer for the North American hard-court swing and advanced to the round of 16 at the US Open. The Australian Open is

her second Grand Slam appearance after returning to the Hologic WTA Tour. She began her season in the ASB Classic in Auckland, New Zealand, where she lost in straight sets to Elina Svitolina in the first round.

Earlier, on Day 1 of the 2024 Australian Open, seeded players Barbora Krejickova and Leylah Fernandez defeated opponents rated outside the Top 100, while No.13 seed Liudmila Samsonova was defeated by resurgent Amanda Anisimova.

Fernandez of Canada defeated Czech qualifier Sara Bejlek 7-6(5), 6-2 in a clash between left-handers at John Cain Arena.

"It was a good match. It wasn't a perfect match, but I'm just glad that I was able to fight through some of the tough moments that I encountered in the first set and just kept fighting. When I had my chance to close it out in the breaker, I was just happy that I was able to execute it," Fernandez told the press.

Fernandez will lock horns with Alycia Parks of the United States, in their first meeting.

Krejickova of the Czech Republic defeated Japanese wild card Mai Hontama 2-6, 6-4, 6-3 at Margaret Court Arena. -ANI

STRONG BOND

I thought of saying him hello....: Kohli opens up on his bond with Djokovic

INDORE: Star India batter Virat Kohli opened up on Sunday about his bond with Serbian tennis superstar Novak Djokovic and how their journey of friendship and mutual admiration started.

In a video posted by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), Virat said that his talks with Djokovic started when he happened to check his text to him by chance, after once trying to say "hello" to the star tennis player.

"I got in touch with Novak very organically. I was just looking at his Instagram profile once and happened to press his "Message" button. I thought I would say him 'Hello, maybe.' Then I saw a message from him on my DM already. I never saw it myself. The first time I saw my own messages, I saw that he had messaged me himself. Then I was like, Lets check if it is a fake account or not. But then I checked it and it was legitimate. Then we started talking, exchanging messages every now and then. I would congratulate him on all of his fantastic achievements," recalled Virat.

Virat said that when he got his 50th ODI century during the ICC Cricket World Cup semifinal against New Zealand last year, Djokovic sent him a nice message and put up a story for him, congratulating him.

"There has been mutual admiration and respect. It is nice to connect with global athletes who are excelling at a high level. Collectively, it is sending out a message of inspiration to the next generation in a way," said Virat.

Virat said that he has a lot of respect for Djokovic, his journey as a player, and his passion for fitness. He expressed hope of meeting the Serbian icon soon.

"I have a lot of respect for him and his journey; his passion for fitness is something I follow and believe in myself. So there is a lot to connect on. Hopefully, when he comes to India or if I happen to be in a country where he is playing, I will catch up with him and just



chill out and have a cup of coffee," said Virat.

Talking about a recent viral video of the Australian batter playing tennis with Djokovic, which also saw the multi-time Grand Slam champion try his hand at cricket, Virat said that Djokovic is better at swinging a bat than cricketers are at swinging a racquet.

"I think Steve did well to return his serve. When you play cricket and have hand-eye coordination, you feel tempted to say, "Yeah, I can do this (play racquet sports). But I have seen racquet sports and how fast these serves are. So I have no chance with it. It will be nice to do that (play tennis) with him as well. The only thing I can maybe teach him is how to hold a bat," said Virat.

In the end, Virat wished Djokovic the very best for the Australian Open, where Djokovic is defending his men's singles title.

He also told Djokovic that Australia is personally his favourite place to play cricket and the tennis star will enjoy the support from



the Aussie crowd.

"Novak I would like to wish you the very best for the Australian Open. I know how excited and prepared you are for these big events, these grand slams. I have no doubt that we will see Djokovic we have seen over the years. I hope you have a great tournament. Australia is a lovely place to visit and play a tournament. It is my favourite place to play cricket. The love and support from Australians is something great, as they appreciate true sportsmanship and fierce competition, which you have in abundance," he concluded.

Ahead of the tournament, starting on Sunday, Djokovic had also talked about his bond with Virat and described a trip to India.

Speaking to Sony Sports Network, Djokovic said, "Virat Kohli and I have been texting a little bit for a few years and we never got the chance to meet in person. But it was really a privilege and honour to listen to him speak nicely about me and I obviously admire his career, and achievement and every-

thing he has done."

"I have been to India only once so far in my life. It was, I think, 10 or 11 years ago. I came to play an exhibition event in New Delhi for two days. It was a very short stay. So, I really hope that I will be able to come back in the near future, too, because I have a great desire and a great wish to explore your beautiful country, which has so much history, so much culture to offer the world and so much spirituality as well. It is amazing," the 36-year-old continued.

Both Djokovic and Virat are the legends of their sports. Djokovic is a 24-time Grand Slam champion, the most by a male tennis star. If he wins his record-extending 11th Australian Open title, this will be his 25th Grand Slam title, which will break the record of Australia's Margaret Court, who also has 24 major titles.

Virat, on the other hand, has won the ICC Cricket World Cup 2011 and the ICC Champions Trophy with India. He is the only player to have smashed 50 ODI centuries. He has also won 'Player of the Tournament' in the ICC T20 World Cup 2014 and 2016 and the ICC Cricket World Cup 2023 in India for his remarkable batting performances.

Virat Kohli was also crowned the 'ICC Cricketer of the Decade' in 2020.

In 520 matches, he has scored 26,704 runs (8,848 in Tests, 13,848 in ODIs and 4,008 in T20Is) at an average of 54.27 across all formats, with 80 centuries and 139 fifties.

His best score is 254*. He is the fourth-highest run-getter in international cricket history and is chasing legendary Sachin Tendulkar's mark of 100 international centuries and 34,357 runs.

India will take on Afghanistan in the second T20I at Indore and Virat will be making his return to T20Is after more than a year following India's crushing loss to England in the ICC T20 World Cup 2022 semifinal by 10 wickets. -ANI

CRICKET



India coast to six-wicket victory over Afghanistan

INDORE : Yashasvi Jaiswal and Shivam Dube treated the Indore crowd with some thunderous hitting as India wrapped up the three-match T20I series 2-0 with a 6-wicket victory over Afghanistan in the second game at the Holkar Cricket Stadium on Sunday.

Dube played an unbeaten knock of 63 off 32 balls with the help of 5 fours and 4 sixes while Jaiswal scored a blistering 68 off 34. For Afghanistan, Karim Janat came on and stalled the end by picking two in his first over. India took an unassailable 2-0 lead in the series.

India got off to a shaky start as opener Rohit Sharma, who was playing his 150th T20I, lost his wicket for a duck to Fazalhaq Farooqi in the first over of the game.

Number three batter Virat Kohli then came out to join hands with opener Yashasvi Jaiswal and hammered the Afghanistan bowlers all around the ground. Jaiswal was in magnificent form as the batter smoked both spinners and pacers of visitors.

Jaiswal and Kohli hammered Mujeeb Ur Rahman for 19 runs with the help of four boundaries. Naveen-ul-Haq cut Kohli's 29-run stay at the crease in the 6th

over of the game. Shivam Dube then came out to bat. Jaiswal brought his fiery half-century in 27 balls.

Dube with the powerful shots continued the carnage as he slammed back-to-back three maximums off Mohammad Nabi, gathering 21 runs.

Dube also brought up his 22-ball fifty. Jaiswal's fireworks at the Holkar Stadium was cut short as Karim Janat removed India batter for 68 runs. In the same over Janat dismissed Jitesh Sharma for a two-ball duck.

The left-handed batter Rinku Singh then came out to bat. Dube kept his fine form going and led his team to a six-wicket victory over Afghanistan.

Earlier, Arshdeep Singh and Axar Patel's fiery bowling performances helped India bundle out Afghanistan for 172.

Gulbadin Naib's fitting half-century and Mujeeb Ur Rahman and Karim Janat's crucial 30-run partnership powered Afghanistan to 172 against India.

Gulbadin played a fabulous knock of 57 runs in 35 deliveries while Mujeeb and Karim's crucial partnership of 30 runs in 12 balls powered their team to a competitive total. -ANI

PREMIER DIVISION

Muscat CT trounce Oman Stallions, VLCC stun Renaissance



Sachindu Colombage



Afriedh KT, Samay Shrivastav and Kashyap Prajapati

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Muscat CT trounce Oman Stallions in the Premier Division League 2023-24 at the Oman Cricket Academy Turf 1 on Saturday.

Muscat CT posted a total of 205 courtesy Kashyap Prajapati's salient 82 along with Sidharth Bukkapatnam contributing 41.

Hasnain Ali Shah picked 4 wickets while Gagan Sodhi and Jiten Ramanandi scalped two. In response, Hasnain Ul Wahab had the innings chase in control, however,

Samay Shrivastav spelled through the Oman Stallions line-up claiming 6 wickets while Afriedh KT picked 3 wickets to ensure Muscat CT an crucial victory.

Brief scores : Muscat CT 205/10 in 49.4 overs (Kashyap Prajapati 82(95); Hasnain Ali Shah 4/46) beat Oman Stallions 183/10 in 33.5 overs (Hasnain Ul Wahab 87(76); Samay Shrivastav 6/37) by 22 runs.

In another Premier Division match played on Friday, VLCC stun Renaissance at the Oman Cricket Academy Turf 1.

VLCC managed to score only

95 runs courtesy Ahmed Fayyaz Butt's spell of 5 wickets along with Wasim Ali and Imran Ali picking 2 wickets. Sachindu Colombage scored 23 for VLCC.

In response, Renaissance were bundled to a paltry 79 as Sachindu Colombage picked 5 wickets while Abdullah Adil and Mehran Khan picked 2 wickets.

Brief scores: VLCC 95/10 in 31.2 overs (Sachindu Colombage 23(11); Ahmed Fayyaz Butt 5/17) beat Renaissance 79/10 in 21.4 overs (Wasim Ali 29(32); Sachindu Colombage 5/21) by 16 runs.

BANKS TO FACE FINES

South Korea's Financial Supervisory Service said that two global investment banks were engaged in illegal stock short selling worth over a combined \$38 million. The FSS said it plans to swiftly take necessary steps to impose a penalty on the two banks and conduct an additional investigation into other global IBs. - **BNA**

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 4,629.41 points, up by 0.48 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.29 per cent at 443.81 points. Dhofar Cattle Feed, up 10.00 per cent, was the top gainer while, Barka Water & Power Company, down 4.26 per cent, was the top loser.

Oman bourse launches new 'Liquidity Provider' service

Through the new service, the Muscat Stock Exchange aims to enhance the liquidity of stocks to maintain the availability of shares for purchase and shares for sale in the selected securities

MUSCAT: The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) celebrated the opening of a new Liquidity Provider service, which constitutes part of the Market Making Initiative. The service was introduced in cooperation with the National Financial Sustainability Programme.

Haitham Salim Al Salmi, CEO of the Muscat Stock Exchange, said that the Liquidity Provider service seeks to provide a liquidity portfolio from approved stocks.



Al Salmi pointed out that, in this context, two agreements began to be implemented yesterday under the auspices of Oman Telecommunications Company (Omantel), which appointed United Securities Company as a liquidity service provider for Omantel shares, and Sohar International Bank (SIB), which appointed Ubar Capital as a liquidity service provider for the SIB shares listed on MSX.

Through the new service, the Muscat Stock Exchange aims to enhance the liquidity of stocks to maintain the availability of shares for purchase and shares for sale in

the selected securities. The stock exchange also seeks to furnish the criteria needed to upgrade the standards of MSX through abundant liquidity.

Mustafa Ahmed Salman, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the United Securities Company, said that the liquidity provider is a mechanism for stock trading that offers opportunities to purchase and sell shares daily at an estimated ratio of 2 per cent between supply and demand. This, he observed, would contribute to the development of a good trading volume for the listed shares. - **ONA**



'CERTIFIED INNOVATION PROFESSIONAL'



Opaz organises training programme for its employees

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (Opaz) organised the training programme titled 'Certified Innovation Professional'.

In addition to professional skills in innovation and development, the programme aims to provide participants with a basic understanding of science.

The design and structure of this vocational training programme reflect Opaz's conviction that it is critical to certify its professional cadres and offer a welcoming workplace that fosters kindness and creativity. Given the global changes in the business world, programme participants received training

on a range of foundational skills related to business innovation. These included managing innovation projects and their various forms, maximising the use of creativity, coming up with ideas and brainstorming, and attaining best practices in professional training. Employees also received training on how to create open horizons that can lead to success in the workplace and how to design and use innovation spaces.

The five-day training programme was attended by several staff members from Opaz and the Special Economic Zone at Duqm. Opaz has designated training programmes for staff members in the training plan for 2024 to enhance and qualify these skills and competencies.

PRELIMINARY UNAUDITED RESULTS

Bank Muscat posts net profit of OMR212.45 million for year ended December 31, 2023

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the flagship financial institution in the Sultanate of Oman, announced its preliminary unaudited results for the year ended December 31, 2023.

The bank posted a net profit of OMR212.45 million for the period compared to OMR200.75 million reported during the same period in 2022, an increase of 5.8 per cent.

The key highlights of the results for the year are as follows:

Net Interest Income from Conventional Banking and Net Income from Islamic Financing stood at OMR374.82 million for the year ended 31 December 2023 compared to OMR344.86 million for the same period in 2022, an increase of 8.7 per cent.

Non-interest income was OMR138.0 million for the year ended 31 December 2023 as compared to OMR135.18 million for the same period in 2022, an increase of 2.1 per cent.

Operating expenses for the year ended 31 December 2023 was OMR196.39 million as compared to OMR184.52 million for the same period in 2022, an increase of 6.4 per cent.

Net Impairment for credit and other losses for the year ended 31 December 2023 was OMR64.66



million as against OMR59.94 million for the same period in 2022.

Net loans and advances including Islamic financing receivables increased by 4.9 per cent to OMR9,877 million as against OMR9,417 million as at

31 December 2022.

Customer deposits including Islamic customer deposits increased by 9.1 per cent to OMR9,438 million as against OMR8,647 million as at 31 December 2022.

The full results for the year

ended 31 December 2023 along with the complete set of unaudited financial statements will be released following the approval of the Board of Directors of the Bank at its meeting scheduled later during January 2024.

MEETING

SAI chairman, Japan Board of Audit review modern technologies used in audit works

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Sheikh Ghuson bin Hilal Al-Alawi, Chairman of the State Audit Institution, met Hiki Fumiko, Commissioner of the Japan Board of Audit, on January 12, 2024, in the presence of specialists from the Institution and from the Japan Board of Audit.

The visit of the institution's delegation came within the framework of pursuit of common interests, exchange of experiences, and transfer of knowledge.

The visit aimed to ensure continuous improvement of professional development programmes for the institution's employees to achieve maximum readiness to implement its responsibilities with high efficiency by the best international practices.



During the visit, strong relations between both countries were reviewed and best practices for building capabilities and enhancing job competencies were discussed and reviewed. Modern technologies used in implementing audit works as well as aspects of contribution and benefit from specialised regional and international organisations were also discussed. Both Institutions also highlighted their efforts in improving the efficiency of their employees in carrying out their assigned roles through training, qualification and knowledge transfer in cooperation with peer institutions and international pro-

fessional institutions. At the end of the visit, Hiki Fumiko, Commissioner of the Japan Board of Audit, expressed her appreciation for the visit of Sheikh Ghuson bin Hilal Al-Alawi, and for the great interest, he expressed in reviewing Japan's experience in audit fields, as well as his keenness to strengthen cooperation to serve common interests.

Sheikh Ghuson bin Hilal Al-Alawi further stressed the keenness of Oman, represented by the State Audit Institution, to participate with the international community by exchanging experiences through international organisations or strengthening bilateral cooperation with peer institutions, which will enhance the comprehensive and sustainable development process witnessed by Oman.

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NAIROBI COFFEE EXCHANGE



Kenya's coffee market sees rebound in prices

NAIROBI: Coffee trade at Nairobi Coffee Exchange (NCE) bounces back with increased volumes and prices after market uncertainty. Data reveals a surge from 3,773 to 20,199 bags offered for sale between August 15 and December 13, 2023.

Coffee bean sales also rose

from 40 per cent to 84 per cent of bags offered. AA grade saw a price drop to \$240.10 from \$249.95.

NCE attributes the rebound to restored confidence among market participants and improved global coffee prices, with the average buyers per auction rising to 18. - **ONA**

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Dhofar Cattle Feed, higher by 10 per cent, was the top gainer while, Barka Water & Power Company, lower by 4.26 per cent, was the top loser at the end of Sunday's trading session



MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,629.41 points, up by 0.48 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.29 per cent at 443.81 points. Dhofar Cattle Feed, up 10.00 per cent, was the top gainer while, Barka Water & Power Company, down 4.26 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of Sohar International Bank were the most active in terms of number of shares traded while Oman Cables Industry were the most active in terms of turnover.

A total number of 616 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of OMR1.4 million, with more than 5.94 million shares changing hands. Out of 34 traded securities, 10 advanced, 9 declined, and 15 remained unchanged. At the session close, foreign investors were net buyers for OMR86,000 while domestic investors were net sellers for OMR198,000, followed by GCC & Arab investors for OMR49,000 worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,538.97 points, up 0.52 per cent.

Prices of Sohar International Bank, Al Madina Takaful, Bank Nizwa were up by 4.00 per cent, 1.19 per cent, 1.03 per cent respectively. Prices of Al Batinah Development Company, Bank Muscat were down by 2.27 per cent, 0.37 per cent respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,433.63 points, down 0.22 per cent. Prices of Dhofar Cattle Feed, Gulf Mushroom Products were up by 10.00%, 1.33 per cent respectively. Prices of Al Anwar Ceramics were down by 3.51 per cent respectively.

Services Index was down by 0.09 per cent before closing at 1,581.96 points. Prices of Al Batinah Power, Al Suwadi Power, OIFC, Oman Telecom, Abraj Energy were up by 5.00 per cent, 4.76 per cent, 2.78 per cent, 0.66 per cent, 0.66 per cent respectively. Prices of Barka Water & Power Company, Sembcorp Salalah, Phoenix Power, Muscat Desalination, OQ Gas Networks were down by 4.26 per cent, 2.17 per cent, 1.82 per cent, 1.27 per cent, 0.87 per cent respectively.

— United Securities

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff%
MSX 30 INDEX	4,637.19	4,610.97	4,629.41	4,607.10	22.31	0.48
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,547.37	7,507.67	7,538.97	7,499.97	39.00	0.52
Industry Index	5,470.41	5,433.63	5,433.63	5,445.54	-11.91	-0.22
Services Index	1,587.05	1,580.76	1,581.96	1,583.35	-1.40	-0.09
MSX Shariah Index	444.57	442.99	443.81	442.53	1.27	0.29
MSX TR INDEX	6,112.38	6,077.82	6,102.12	6,072.71	29.41	0.48
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,235.57	8,192.25	8,226.40	8,183.85	42.55	0.52
SERVICES TR IDX	1,765.58	1,758.58	1,759.91	1,761.47	-1.56	-0.09
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	5,843.76	5,804.47	5,804.47	5,817.19	-12.73	-0.22
FIXED INCOME INDEX	991.33	991.33	991.33	991.33	0.00	0.00

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
5,948,085	1,399,301	616	23,957,778,414	10	9	15	34

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR SUNDAY, JANUARY 14

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET																
OM00000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	1,289,040	133,321	64	0.102	0.104	0.102	0.104	0.100	0.004	4.000	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.100	568,660,404
OM00000004788	MADINA TAKAFUL	107,452	9.133	9	0.085	0.085	0.085	0.084	0.001	1.190	0.085	0.084	0.084	0.087	0.100	14,875,000
OM00000003026	OMAN TELECOM	235,912	252,196	123	1.066	1.075	1.065	1.070	1.063	0.007	0.659	1.070	1.069	1.070	0.100	802,500,000
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	20,000	6.105	4	0.310	0.310	0.305	0.305	0.305	0.000	0.000	0.305	0.300	0.310	0.100	100,916,177
OM00000002374	UNITED FINANCE	50,000	2.900	2	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.000	0.000	0.058	0.058	0.060	0.100	20,655,383
OM00000002440	AL SHARQIYA INVESTMENT HO.	2,750	184	1	0.067	0.067	0.067	0.067	0.067	0.000	0.000	0.067	0.067	0.071	0.100	6,030,000
OM00000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	210,000	12.810	8	0.061	0.061	0.061	0.061	0.061	0.000	0.000	0.061	0.061	0.067	0.100	12,200,000
OM00000003968	OOREDOO	53,532	16,816	10	0.315	0.315	0.314	0.314	0.314	0.000	0.000	0.314	0.310	0.314	0.100	204,396,488
OM00000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	6,470	498	1	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.000	0.000	0.077	0.070	0.077	0.100	15,371,941
OM00000002796	BANK MUSCAT	602,550	162,693	30	0.270	0.272	0.269	0.269	0.270	-0.001	-0.370	0.269	0.269	0.270	0.100	2,019,220,810
OM00000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	1,090,335	184,553	61	0.171	0.171	0.165	0.165	0.171	-0.006	-3.509	0.165	0.156	0.165	0.100	36,300,000
Total	11	3,668,041	781,209	313												
Parallel Market																
OM00000001301	DHOFAR FOODS AND INVESTMENT	89,900	4,920	6	0.054	0.055	0.054	0.055	0.050	0.005	10.000	0.055	0.055	0.054	0.100	10,872,231
OM00000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	31,650	665	3	0.022	0.022	0.021	0.021	0.020	0.001	5.000	0.021	0.020	0.021	0.100	14,172,636
OM00000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	280	6	1	0.022	0.022	0.022	0.022	0.021	0.001	4.762	0.022	0.020	0.022	0.100	15,716,939
OM00000002267	GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS	4,465	1,025	2	0.230	0.230	0.229	0.229	0.226	0.003	1.327	0.229	0.227	0.233	0.100	10,480,368
OM00000004420	BANK NIZWA	6,520	639	2	0.098	0.098	0.098	0.098	0.097	0.001	1.031	0.098	0.095	0.098	0.100	219,221,397
OM00000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	403,821	122,306	38	0.303	0.304	0.302	0.304	0.302	0.002	0.662	0.304	0.303	0.304	0.100	234,140,800
OM00000001418	RAYSUT CEMENT	29,720	3,628	10	0.123	0.123	0.122	0.122	0.122	0.000	0.000	0.122	0.122	0.122	0.100	24,400,000
OM00000001707	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	119,172	276,099	18	2.286	2.340	2.286	2.300	2.300	0.000	0.000	2.300	2.250	2.300	0.100	206,310,000
OM00000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	96,975	7,273	7	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.000	0.000	0.075	0.070	0.082	0.100	15,450,000
OM00000002200	AHLI BANK	500	83	1	0.165	0.165	0.165	0.165	0.165	0.000	0.000	0.165	0.157	0.165	0.100	387,693,482
OM00000002275	SHELL OMAN MARKETING	810	672	3	0.830	0.830	0.830	0.830	0.830	0.000	0.000	0.830	0.830	0.830	0.100	78,850,000
OM00000002804	ASAFFA FOODS	100	32	1	0.320	0.320	0.320	0.320	0.320	0.000	0.000	0.320	0.300	0.320	0.100	38,400,000
OM00000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	3,000	420	1	0.140	0.140	0.140	0.140	0.140	0.000	0.000	0.140	0.140	0.145	0.100	11,396,385
OM00000000972	OQ GAS NETWORKS	1,217,938	180,394	165	0.148	0.149	0.148	0.148	0.149	-0.001	-0.671	0.148	0.148	0.148	0.100	640,932,340
OM00000008868	THE PEARL REIF	5,407	660	2	0.122	0.123	0.122	0.123	0.124	-0.001	-0.806	0.123	0.122	0.122	0.100	62,496,736
OM00000007084	MUSCAT CITY DESALINATION	5,135	401	4	0.078	0.078	0.078	0.078	0.079	-0.001	-1.266	0.078	0.078	0.079	0.100	12,132,831
OM00000005963	PHOENIX POWER	113,280	6,161	17	0.055	0.055	0.054	0.054	0.055	-0.001	-1.818	0.054	0.053	0.059	0.100	78,980,479
OM00000004735	SEMBCORP SALALAH	14,900	1,341	5	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.092	-0.002	-2.174	0.090	0.088	0.092	0.100	85,911,476
OM00000002366	AL BATINAH DEVELOPMENT & INV. HO.	77,340	6,651	10	0.086	0.086	0.086	0.086	0.088	-0.002	-2.273	0.086	0.081	0.095	0.100	2,580,000
OM00000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	8,000	352	3	0.043	0.045	0.043	0.045	0.047	-0.002	-4.255	0.045	0.043	0.045	0.100	7,200,000
Total	20	2,228,913	613,727	299												

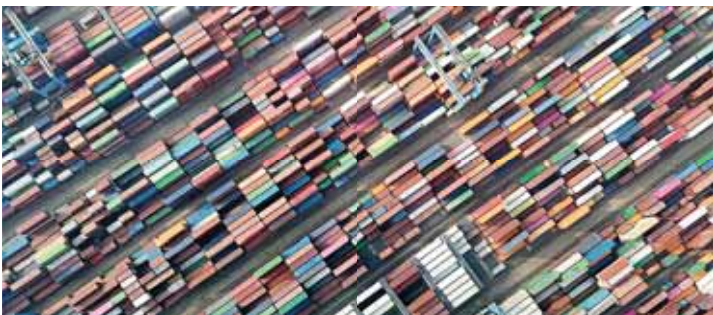
FREE TRADE PACT

RCEP fuels regional growth amid economic recovery and challenges

BEIJING: Two years on, the world's largest free trade pact in terms of population and trade volume, has unleashed tremendous benefits for regional integration in the Asia-Pacific region and powered up economic recovery.

The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which entered into force on Jan. 1, 2022, comprises 15 Asia-Pacific countries - 10 member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Australia, and New Zealand. Together, they cover about 30 percent of the world's population and 30 percent of global economic and trade volume.

The ASEAN remained China's largest trading partner in the first 11 months of 2023, with total trade between the two sides reaching 5.8 trillion yuan (about \$817 billion), according to the General Administration of Customs.



During recent global economic challenges, the RCEP played a crucial role in stabilising the economies of its member countries.

"It has helped member countries to boost post-pandemic recovery and sustainable long-term economic growth, contributing to enhancing regional peace, stability, harmony, development and prosperity," said the Cambodian Ministry of Commerce's Secretary of State and Spokesperson Penn Sovicheat.

Thanks to preferential tariffs under the RCEP agreement, Cambodia's trade with other pact members has surged. Cambodia exported products worth \$7.21 billion to RCEP members in the first 11 months of 2023, up 27 percent from 5.67 billion dollars in the same period of 2022.

In the first 10 months of 2023, the total value of China-Malaysia bilateral trade reached \$155.73 billion, accounting for 20.8 percent of

China's total trade with the ASEAN during this period.

The RCEP agreement covers various areas such as tariff reductions, trade facilitation, and the opening up of services and investment, highlighting the importance of multilateralism and an open world economy.

In November 2023, Chinese authorities issued 19,834 certificates of origin worth \$568 million under the RCEP agreement. The number of such certificates, issued to 3,434 enterprises, grew by 12.41 percent compared with the previous year, and these are expected to reduce tariffs for Chinese products by 9 million dollars in RCEP importing countries. In 2024, the continued success of this free trade pact will serve as a steadfast pillar, offering stability and certainty amid global economic recovery and challenges. The sustained dividends of this pact are sure to persist. -Xinhua

IN NEW DELHI

14th ministerial-level meeting of India-US Trade Policy Forum held

NEW DELHI: The 14th ministerial-level meeting of the India-United States Trade Policy Forum (TPF) was held here in the national capital on Friday. Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and US Trade Representative, Ambassador Katherine Tai, co-chaired the meeting.

The Ministers underlined the significance of the Forum in forging robust bilateral trade ties and in enhancing the overall economic relationship, as per a joint statement issued after the meeting.

They welcomed the strong momentum in India-US bilateral trade in goods and services, which continued to rise and likely surpassed \$200 billion in the calendar year 2023 despite a challenging global trade environment.

They acknowledged that, considering the size of their economies, the significant potential remains unrealised and expressed their mutual desire to further enhance engagement to continue to increase and diversify bilateral trade.

The ministers agreed that their governments will pursue enhanced engagement leading to mutually beneficial outcomes in several areas to deepen the trade relationship for the benefit of working people. They identified certain areas, including critical minerals, customs and trade facilitation, supply chains, and trade in



high-tech products, in which the United States and India will develop an ambitious and forward-looking roadmap for enhanced cooperation to achieve economically meaningful outcomes.

The ministers committed to pursuing these efforts to establish the foundation for future joint initiatives.

The ministers agreed to establish a pathway in which India and the United States will mutually recognise results from accredited conformity assessment bodies utilising International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) and International Accreditation Forum (IAF) mutual recognition arrangements (MRAs), on a bilateral basis whenever possible.

This will allow labs and conformity assessment bodies to certify that products are compli-

ant with certain standards. This would eliminate duplicative testing requirements and reduce compliance costs for trade in high-quality goods.

The ministers committed to identifying priority sectors of mutual interest for implementation and establishing a Joint Facilitative Mechanism (JFM) for the same, the terms of reference for which will be finalised at the earliest. The Ministers welcomed the finalisation of the Turtle Excluder Device (TED) design developed with the technical support of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

The collaboration between India and the United States to expedite the TED demonstrations will confirm that the TED design effectively minimises the impact of commercial shrimp trawl operations on sea turtle populations.

The ministers acknowledged that NOAA has scheduled its visit to India for February 2024 to carry out field demonstrations with the newly designed TED and conduct workshops for stakeholders.

Both sides acknowledged that the timely completion of the field demonstrations could contribute to the sustainable management and protection of marine and coastal ecosystems, thereby fostering enhanced seafood trade between the two countries.

The ministers emphasised their mutual interest in furthering public health discussions to ensure safe and effective medical products. India emphasised the need to increase the number of inspections by the US Food and Drug Administration (US FDA) in India to facilitate trade and continue to reduce the backlog.

The United States appreciated India's remarks, noting that the US FDA has increased staffing to increase pharmaceutical inspections conducted by the agency.

Ambassador Tai raised the issue of India's new import requirements for computers, tablets, and servers. Minister Goyal described India's objectives, including those related to national security concerns, and Ambassador Tai expressed a willingness to collaborate with India on the shared objective of supply chain resilience in this sector. -ANI

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EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT FUEL CELL ELECTRIC VEHICLES

AS MORE MOTORISTS look to trade in their gasoline-powered cars for something greener, many will consider different forms of electric vehicles. Fuel cell electric vehicles (FCEV) may not be on everyone's radar just yet, but they are a zero-emission electrified mobility solution that offers quick refueling time, and great driving range. These types of powertrains are expected to garner interest by everyone from casual commuters to heavy-duty commercial truck drivers in the years ahead.

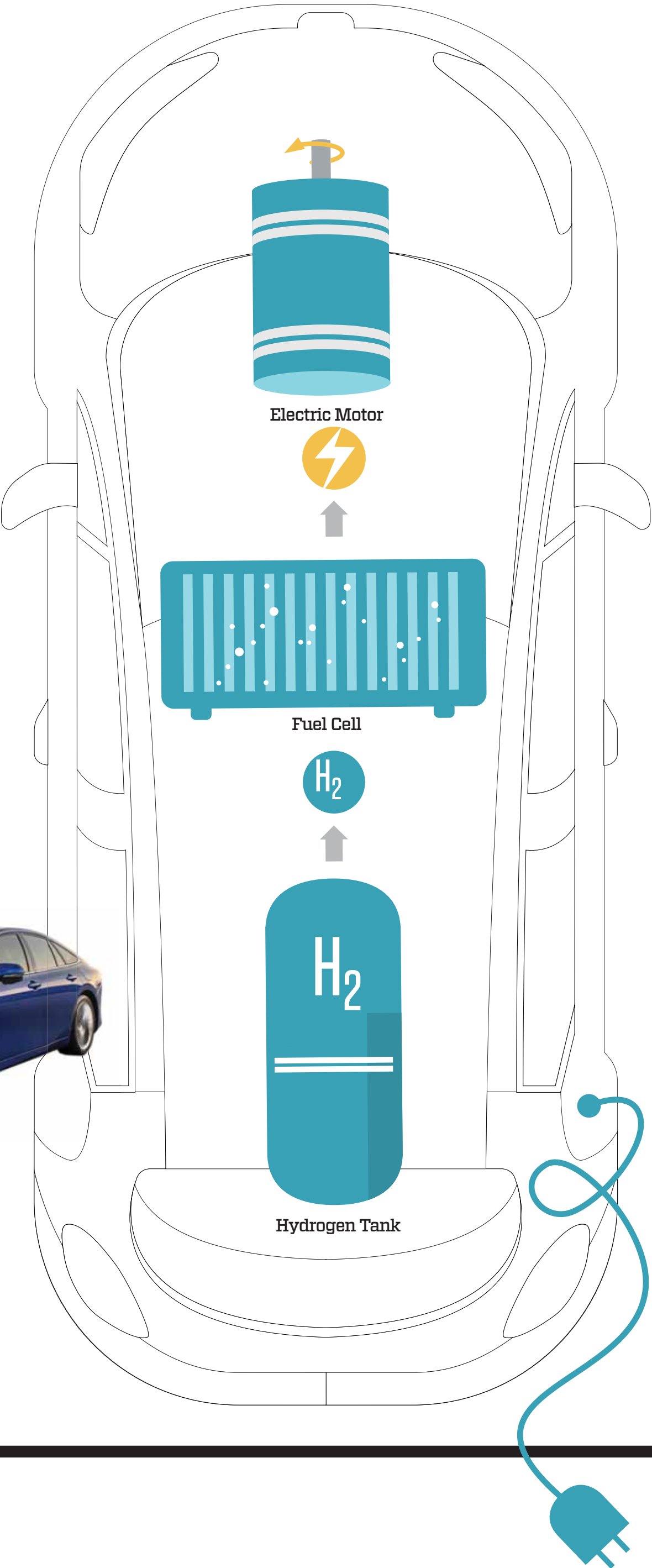
So what exactly is fuel cell technology? In fuel cell electric cars, hydrogen — stored onboard in fuel tanks — combines with outside air inside a fuel cell stack to create a chemical reaction that generates electricity to power the vehicle. The only by-product of this process is water, which drops out of a hidden vent pipe beneath the car.

Believe it or not, fuel cell technology actually pre-dates the automobile by half a century and was used in American spacecraft in the 1960s, decades before car manufacturers began rolling out FCEVs. Fuel cell technology is scalable, and it can be made small enough to power a phone or large enough to power a building, or anything in between.

FUEL CELL TECHNOLOGY IS SCALABLE, AND IT CAN BE MADE SMALL ENOUGH TO POWER A PHONE OR LARGE ENOUGH TO POWER A BUILDING, OR ANYTHING IN BETWEEN.



THOSE LOOKING TO MAKE THE SWAP TO FCEVS HAVE OPTIONS LIKE THE 2023 TOYOTA MIRAI TO CONSIDER.



In essence, hydrogen-powered vehicles are “plug-less” electric vehicles. There's no need to charge a big battery, which can take several hours in a battery electric vehicle (or BEV), even with fast charging. Instead, the FCEV driver simply fills the fuel tank with hydrogen, just as millions of drivers do every day with gas vehicles. It's a great solution for drivers who would like an all-electric vehicle but may not have access to home charging options. With an FCEV, the fuel is non-toxic, compressed hydrogen gas rather than liquid gasoline.

Those looking to make the swap to FCEVs have options like the 2023 Toyota Mirai to consider. Now in its second generation, the Mirai XLE grade has a range rating of 402 EPA-estimated miles, and comes with all the features consumers expect today, such as engaging driving performance, a high-tech safety system, onboard navigation solutions and voice activated multimedia controls. The Mirai is currently only available in California since it is the only state at present with infrastructure to support daily FCEV commuters.

Likewise, the heavy-duty commercial transportation industry continues to explore ways to decarbonize, and fuel cell electric powertrains provide a viable solution for heavy-duty Class 8 commercial trucks. Original equipment manufacturers and operators are looking to offer fuel cell electric powertrains to help combat climate change and reduce vehicle-related emissions. Later this year, Toyota will begin production of new hydrogen-fueled powertrain kits for Class 8 trucks that include hydrogen fuel storage tanks, fuel cell stacks, batteries, electric motors and a transmission. These kits offer a viable alternative to traditional diesel powertrains used in commercial goods transportation as companies look to transition their fleets to zero-emission vehicles.

While there are still hurdles ahead in the widespread adoption of FCEVs, including building out the needed infrastructure, industry leaders are hopeful about the future. Toyota is looking to bring down costs of the technology by exploring other applications, such as stationary power generation. And hydrogen generation, much like electricity, will continue to develop more renewable sourcing options, making this a technology that will become increasingly affordable and sustainable, with options that include hydrogen produced from bio-resources or renewable electricity via electrolysis.

With these strides in mind, champions of FCEVs believe the technology will continue to gain support and recognition for the role it can play in electrified mobility solutions in an all-electric future. -StatePoint

SPORTS



De Bruyne’s shot helps Manchester City ease past Newcastle United

The attacking midfielder was playing his first match of the season and he came as a substitute for Bernardo Silva

LONDON: Belgium international Kevin de Bruyne guided his side, Manchester City, to a 3-2 victory over Newcastle United in the Premier League fixture on Saturday. The attacking midfielder was playing his first match of the season and he came as a substitute for Bernardo Silva (who scored the first goal of the match as well as

for City) in the 69th minute of the game. He made his comeback after recovering from a hamstring injury that he suffered on the opening day of the season. De Bruyne scored the goal just four minutes and 34 seconds after his arrival on the pitch and levelled the score line to 2-2. In the end (90+1), the 32-year-old assisted

the young Oscar Bobb, which was the winger’s first goal for the senior team. After the match, Blues manager Pep Guardiola applauded the midfielder on his brilliant comeback. “I’m so grumpy and upset with Kevin [De Bruyne] because his first touch was a free-kick and he couldn’t score. He’s a special player, a legend. He’s stretching his mind; five months is a long time and hopefully he can help us be there until the end in the second half of the season,” Guardiola was quoted as saying by Sky Sports. Talking about the home side (Newcastle United), they were 0-1 down and took a 2-1 lead with goals from Alexander Isak and Anthony Gordon in the 35th and 37th minutes, respectively. They have now lost four straight league matches in the Premier League. Following the game-changing performance by the experienced midfielder, he expressed his thoughts on his performance and the team’s victory. “I’ve missed this. I had a big injury and I needed the time off but I worked hard. To come here, to this stadium, in this environment - I think it was more willpower than sharpness,” De Bruyne said. “I know I’m not able to do that for 90 minutes at the moment but I can put in a shift for 20-25 at full pace. I can feel it in my lungs with the cold, but it can’t be any better than this can it?” the player added.

Cole Palmer helps Chelsea secure 1-0 victory over Fulham in Premier League



LONDON: England winger Cole Palmer was the only scorer in the Gameweek 21 match of the Premier League between Chelsea and Fulham at Stamford Bridge on Saturday. Chelsea came into this game after a disappointing performance in their Carabao Cup semi-final first-leg defeat to Middlesbrough on Tuesday. Palmer converted a penalty just before half-time (45+4), and this proved to be the only goal in the match and guided the home side to victory. Chelsea holds on to the lead despite the visitors making a lot of chances to equalise. The Blues goalkeeper, Djordje Petrovic made some brilliant saves to deny the Fulham players goals. With this victory, Mauricio Pochettino’s side moved up to the eighth spot and the Fulham side remains at 13th position despite the loss. It was not a good afternoon for the visitors as there was a mistake by the VAR. Fulham manager Marco Silva pointed out that the officials chose not to change Malo Gusto’s yellow card to a red for a studs-up challenge on Wilian in the first half.

“It’s a clear red card. It’s difficult for Anthony Taylor (the official) to see if it’s a red card. We have to be fair with him because the moment is really quick. In the Premier League, in 10 moments like that one, nine have been a red card,” Silva was quoted as saying by Sky Sports. On the other hand, Chelsea manager Pochettino backed the official’s decision and opined that his team has some luck as the decision went in their favor as earlier, he was sent off the field in the fixture against Aston Villa in September. “I remember the game against Aston Villa, it was a red card and I didn’t complain about that, but today it was a yellow card,” the Chelsea boss was quoted as saying by Sky Sports. “I have a very good relationship [with Marco Silva]. He is a great person and a great coach. And of course, if I’m put in his place, I would tell you it’s a red card. I understand,” Pochettino added. “But, sometimes, this type of situation is against you and the view of the referee is different. They thought it was a yellow card and it’s good for us,” the 51-year-old concluded.

OMAN SAIL’S

Young sailors arrive in Barceló Mussanah Resort for training ahead of Winter Cup 2024

MUSCAT: Eighty young sailors from Oman Sail’s Sailing Schools have arrived in Barceló Mussanah Resort for a Winter training camp from 14-25 January as they prepare for a busy winter season, beginning with the Winter Cup 2024 on 26 January. Each of the schools at Al Mouj Muscat, Mussanah and Sur will select sailors to compete in Optimist, ILCA 4, ILCA 6, ILCA 7 and windsurfing as all of the classes prepare for national, regional and international competition in the coming months. In total, 80 sailors aged 7-20 will be selected and will receive daily training on the water, as well as strength and nutrition sessions to prepare them for racing and to add to their knowledge as athletes. Sailors from the Race Club and Youth Club, national squad and international sailors will also be taking part in the camp as part of their preparation for the Winter Cup and season ahead. Mohsin Al Busaidi, Oman Sail’s Head of Performance, said, “The Winter Camp is essential preparation for what promises to be a busy year of competition. Starting immediately after the conclusion of the training camp is the Winter Camp, an important event in the selection process for upcoming competitions, and a chance to assess the sailors from all of Oman Sail’s Sailing Schools.” The Winter Cup 2024 will run from 26-30 January 2024 and will serve as the main opportunity for the coaches to select the best performing sailors for a busy season of events at home and abroad, including the Arab Sailing Championships 2024 in Kuwait and the Oman School Olympic Days 2024 both taking place in February. Also scheduled is the inaugural edition of the Gulf Youth Games in



Mohsin Al Busaidi

the UAE, in April. Later in the year, Oman will take part in the 2024 ILCA 4 Youth World Championship in Viana do Castelo, Portugal, in June and the 2024 Optimist Asian & Oceanian Championship at Marve Beach, Mumbai, India, in November.



BankDhofar investment banking sustains customer value with innovative financial strategies

The Investment Banking division excels in assisting clients in realising their capital-raising objectives, M&A goals, investment funds & portfolio management and other strategic milestones

MUSCAT: BankDhofar, at the forefront of innovation in Oman's banking and financial services landscape, is dedicated to fostering sustainable growth for its customers through a comprehensive suite of cutting-edge financial solutions offered by its Investment Banking Division.

Comprised of a dynamic team of market-savvy professionals boasting leading-edge industry expertise, analytical acumen and compelling communication skills,



the Investment Banking excels in assisting clients in realising their capital-raising objectives, M&A goals, investment funds & portfolio management and other strategic milestones.

The division's consistent success is underscored by its continuously expanding and diverse client base, encompassing startups to well-established corporations and inclusive of public and government sector organisations.

Demonstrating strategic proficiency in the structuring of project

finance, the Investment Banking unit is widely acknowledged for its keen understanding of client needs. Leveraging its robust relationships with local and regional banks, the division adeptly arranges project finance and syndicated loans.

Integrated support

Crucial to its success is the ability to harness the formidable in-house network and professional expertise of its sister departments, collectively reinforcing BankDhofar's dominant presence in Oman's financial services sector. This seamless and integrated support empowers BankDhofar to provide best-of-breed financial solutions tailored to the specific requirements of its clients— all within challenging timeframes and cost commitments.

Noteworthy among these offerings is the Corporate Finance department, renowned for its cutting-edge solutions in equity and debt capital markets, covering mergers & acquisitions, divestitures, equity placements, and various corporate finance needs. Insights and inputs from corporate finance are instrumental in identifying ideal buyers, partners, or targets for client business interests. Additionally, their expertise is harnessed to support client funding requirements for debt and equity through the creation of optimal structures in a timely and efficient manner.

Further enriching the capabili-

ties of the Investment Banking Division is the Asset Management Department, recognized for effectively managing client assets in a productive, profitable and sustainable manner. We offer a comprehensive suite differentiated services including investment funds management, discretionary and non-discretionary portfolio management and fund administration. Our focus products include money market, fixed income, real estate, equities and alternative assets. We provide attractive products to achieve investors' focus returns in both conventional and Sharia-compliant investment strategies

As per Faisal Hamed Sulaiman Al Wahaibi, Chief Government Banking & Investment Banking Officer: "BankDhofar is unmatched in the delivery of strategic financial advisory services, as the Investment Banking unit adeptly guides clients through the intricate landscapes of mergers, acquisitions, capital-raising initiatives and investment management. Within the Corporate Finance Advisory Division, we skilfully orchestrate comprehensive solutions in both equity and debt capital markets. Our expertise spans mergers & acquisitions, divestitures, equity placements and various other corporate finance requirements."

He further added: "BankDhofar's investment banking arm, driven by an unwavering commitment to client-centric precision, stands as a beacon of financial ingenuity."

COMPLEX SURGERY PERFORMED FOR 1ST TIME IN INDIA

24-year-old Khattab from Oman undergoes 5th open heart surgery with homografts at Jaslok Hospital, India

MUSCAT: A 24-year-old Khat-tab Omar Rashid from Oman was admitted to Jaslok Hospital & Research Centre in Mumbai on October 9, 2023 for the management of a complex heart problem. He had previously undergone four open heart surgeries, the most recent one being about two months ago in another hospital in India. The patient was in critical condition, experiencing heart failure and an active infection.

The sequence of surgeries began with the first operation addressing a birth defect of the heart (subaortic membrane removal). Subsequently, he required another operation to correct the aortic valve, which was replaced. However, a leak developed beside the valve, leading to two more surgeries in Oman. Despite a surgery in India for the infected valve, the patient continued to experience complications, ultimately being diagnosed with an ascending aortic aneurysm, a condition where the main blood vessel from the heart becomes dilated like a balloon, carrying a risk of rupture.

Managing an aortic aneurysm, particularly when it has eroded the back of the breastbone, and undergoing repeat open heart surgery is an exceedingly high-risk procedure. Such cases are typically handled in specialised quaternary care centers like Jaslok Hospital & Research Centre. These procedures pose significant risks, including excessive bleeding and potential damage to vital organs such as the brain, kidneys, and liver, especially when there is an active infection.

The patient's treatment at Jaslok Hospital involved a 'Heart Team Approach', a collaborative effort comprising experienced Cardiac Surgeons, Cardiologists, Anaesthetists, Intensivists, Infection Specialists, and Technologists. This complex surgery was successfully carried out by the team headed by Dr Suresh Joshi, Director Cardiovascular & Thoracic Surgery and assisted by Dr Upendra Bhalerao, Consultant Cardiovascular & Thoracic Surgery, Dr Rajashri Agasakar, Consultant Anaesthesia, Dr Anurag Jain, Consultant Cardiac Anaesthesia and Mr. Kiran Ambre, Heart & Lung Machine Technologist (special expertise for such complex cases). The post-operative care was looked after by Dr Indraneel Raut, Additional Director



Critical Care Medicine, Dr Rahul Chhabria, Consultant Cardiology, Dr. Mala Kaneria, Consultant Infectious Disease and Dr Samir Shah, Consultant Haematology, at Jaslok Hospital & Research Centre.

During the surgery, the aneurysm was removed along with the infected aortic heart valve, and the aortic root was replaced with an aortic homograft—a tissue graft obtained from a cadaveric donor. Procuring the homograft from the valve bank in Chennai posed logistical challenges. The use of a homograft, is a preferred option in the presence of infection, and is uncommon due to the scarcity of organ donations and valve banks. The nursing staff wholeheartedly endorsed and collaborated seamlessly with the medical practitioners

Dr. Suresh Joshi, Director Cardiovascular & Thoracic Surgery, Jaslok Hospital & Research Centre highlighted the Hospital's status as a referral center for complex aortic surgeries and re-operative heart surgeries across the world. He emphasized, "5th Repeat Open heart surgery is rare and poses extreme technical challenges. Considering the inherent risks associated with such multiple open heart surgeries and the intricate nature of the recent procedure. It speaks to the hospital's commitment to excellence in cardiac care, as well as the patient's resilience and the effectiveness of the 'Heart Team Approach' employed in managing such complex cases. We were confident that we could handle this case successfully. Jaslok Hospital continues to be a Centre of Excellence for heart valve surgery and minimally invasive heart surgery, attracting patients from across India and around the world."

"This is the first-time homograft is successfully used in recent times in Maharashtra and perhaps in the whole of India in case of a 5th repeat heart surgery. This is a testament to the precision, expertise, and comprehensive care provided by the medical team at Jaslok Hospital" added Dr Upendra Bhalerao, Cardiovascular & Thoracic Surgery, Jaslok Hospital & Research Centre who assisted the surgery.

Dr Indraneel Raut, Additional Director of Critical Care Medicine, Jaslok Hospital & Research Centre who looked after the post-operative care of the patient mentioned, "Khattab was a challenging case as he had already undergone multiple surgeries on the heart which was complicated further by endocarditis. However our surgeons did a fantastic job and the post-operative course was uneventful unlike what one would expect after such surgery. And with a team effort we could ensure a good recovery. We wish the patient a speedy recovery!"

The patient, Khattab Omar Rashid, and his brother Walid expressed their delight and gratitude to the Jaslok Hospital team for his

survival and restored health& he expressed gratitude for surviving his life-threatening heart issue, commending the meticulous planning and execution of the high-risk procedure by the Jaslok team. He was discharged on 8th November, 2023 hail and hearty.

The Jaslok Hospital & Research Centre is one of the oldest tertiary care, multi-specialty Trust hospitals of the country. In the early 70's when the establishment of large private hospitals was not common, the institution was conceptualized & endowed to the city of Mumbai by Seth Lokoomal Chanrai. Seth Chanrai came from a family of philanthropists who had businesses in many countries. The family had already supported many small & large projects. Seth Lokoomal entrusted Dr. Shantilal Mehta the task of establishing an ultra-modern centrally located medical center where people of all races and creeds could receive the benefits of advanced health care. Jaslok Hospital is situated at Dr. G Deshmukh Marg, Peddar Road which is a main artery of South Mumbai and overlooks the Arabian Sea. The name Jaslok was derived from the names of Seth Lokoomal & his wife Smt. Jasotibai. Seth Chanrai's vision was implemented and brought to reality largely by his Brother-in-law Dada Mathradas Assomull. The hospital was inaugurated on July 6, 1973 by the erstwhile Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

ENTERTAINMENT



The Wedding Show: A standup comedy show by Aakash Mehta

MUSCAT: Local comedy brand Humor Infection announced Aakash Mehta live in Muscat for the first time ever. An hour-long stand-up comedy show involving spies, millionaires, and a big fat Indian wedding. You are in for a crazy ride on this hilarious show.

The event will take place on January 25 in Hormuz Grand Muscat. Gates open at 7:30 and the show will kick off at 8:30. There are also giveaways during the show so make sure you get

your tickets on Platinumlist.net

Aakash Mehta is a comedian, actor, writer based out of Mumbai. He has been doing comedy since 12 years and has toured all over India and done International shows in Australia, UK, Canada & Dubai.

He is known to tour with multiple comedy specials and has released 3 of them already on his YouTube channel. He is also the winner of the recently released Netflix show *Social Currency*.

CREDIT CARD HOLDERS

ahlibank, Talabat partner to offer 50% discount

MUSCAT: As part of its continuous endeavours to provide exclusive discounts to its customers, ahlibank collaborated with Talabat to offer a 50% discount to the bank's credit card holders. The voucher is valid from January 15 to 17, 2024.

In line with ahlibank's strategic approach to being a Partner for Excellence to customers, the offer builds upon the bank's holistic products and services, and is applicable to the bank's valued credit card holders, and extends to ahl Islamic credit card holders as well.

Muneer Al Balushi, AGM - Head of Retail Distribution at ahlibank, stated, "We are always keen to communicate with our customers and take advantage of their feedback and suggestions. We are constantly studying market trends, which have been reflected in several initiatives and offers that we have launched over the past period. This new offer, which targets the category of ahlibank's credit cardholders, approves our belief in the importance of keeping up with



customers' needs and lifestyles, as the world is currently witnessing a marked shift towards digital services that ensure security, low cost, and speed of delivery."

Al Balushi further stated, "At ahlibank, we strive to provide products and services that add value to our customers, such as this discount voucher, our customers will enjoy perks that make their experience with ahlibank more rewarding. Anticipating more collaboration, we are eager to offer our customers more attractive propositions that show our appreciation for their trust and confidence in ahlibank as their chosen Partners for Excellence."

ROUND-UP

Own your favourite Toyota with exclusive ‘Toyota For Sure’ benefits



The benefits include service up to 5 years/50,000km (whichever is earlier) and insurance of 1 year (depending on the models)

MUSCAT: Own your favourite Toyota from the vast range and get exclusive ‘Toyota For Sure’ benefits. The benefits include service up to 5 Years / 50,000km (whichever is earlier) and insurance of 1 year (depending on the models). Apart from that customers can also avail

attractive instalments (Prospective buyers may be advised that the benefits vary between model variants, model year and manufacturing year. EMI calculated are for base models with 20 percent down payment for 10 years. Loan approval is based on the sole discretion of banks. Terms & Conditions apply. Customers can visit any Saud Bahwan Automotive showroom for exact details.) In Oman the Toyota range includes popular models like the Toyota Land Cruiser which is available with attractive instalments starting from RO 206. The Land Cruiser leads the pack with its powerful performance and inspiring capability. Powering the Land Cruiser is a choice of two powertrain options. The V6 twin-turbo 3.5-liter petrol engine achieves class-leading performance that surpasses that of a conventional V8, producing 409 hp and up to 650 nm. This is paired

to a 10-speed automatic transmission. Also available is a naturally aspirated 4.0-liter V6 petrol engine that produces 271 hp and up to 385 nm paired to a 6-speed automatic transmission. The Toyota Hilux is available with attractive instalments starting from RO 89. The popular pick-up choice of many in Oman – the Toyota Hilux is available as rugged Hilux with J-Deck and the sporty 4.0 Litre V6 Hilux Adventure with the A Deck. The 4.0 Litre V6 Toyota Hilux Adventure is a truly exciting mean machine that’s been developed by Toyota to get your pulse racing. The powerful Hilux Adventure is equipped with a mighty 4.0 Litre V6 Engine packing a mighty punch with 235 HP & 38.3 Kg-m Torque. It has an Auto Disconnect Differential to keep the tempo going. Similarly the Hilux 4X4 is equipped with a 2.7 Litre Petrol Engine that is available in 5-speed

Manual Transmission and 6 Speed Automatic Transmission, outputting 164 HP. The Toyota Crown is available with attractive instalments starting from RO 197. The Toyota Crown with its exceptional design, stunning technology and a host of features is becoming popular with enthusiasts here in Oman. The Crown comes exclusively with a choice of two environment friendly powertrains. The first hybrid electric powertrain consists of a front electric motor and Toyota’s first-ever 2.4-liter inline four-cylinder turbo engine all-wheel drive, paired with direct shift six-speed automatic transmission with a combined power of 340 HP and 40.7 Kg.m torque. The second hybrid electric powertrain consists of two electric motors and a 2.5-liter four-cylinder petrol engine, generating a total power of 222 HP. The hybrid-electric system,

paired with an Electric Continuously Variable Transmission (e-CVT), achieves the lowest fuel efficiency, with a consumption rate of 21.6 km/l. The Toyota Camry is available with attractive instalments starting from RO 103. The reliable partner for many customer – the Toyota Camry is available with a choice of three powertrain options. They include a 2.5-litre four-cylinder Dynamic Force engine that produces 204 hp and 24.8 kg.m of torque which is paired with an eight-speed Direct-Shift Multi-mode automatic transmission. A 3.5-liter V6 engine with D-4S fuel injection system that produces 298 hp and 36.3 kg.m of torque and which is mated to an eight-speed multi-mode automatic transmission. And an electrified hybrid system, which combines a petrol engine and two electric motors. The combined power of the two power

sources is 208 hp. It is also paired with an Electrically Controlled Continuously Variable Transmission (ECVT), delivering heightened driving pleasure. The Toyota Yaris is available with attractive instalments starting from RO 60. Toyota Yaris promises a dynamic driving experience thanks to its four-cylinder engine that is equipped with 16-valve DOCH and dual VVT-I. The vehicle is available with 1.5-liter capacity engine that delivers smooth acceleration and a quick response, producing 105 horsepower and 138 Nm of torque with fuel consumption of 20.5 km/l. This is paired with Continuously Variable Transmission (CVT), which simulates a seven-speed sequential shift transmission to deliver powerful, smooth acceleration from start-off and at low speeds, and quiet, efficient transmission at higher speeds with excellent fuel efficiency.

BANK OF NEW YORK MELLON'S

OAB receives ‘Straight Through Processing’ excellence award



MUSCAT: Oman Arab Bank (OAB) announced its receipt of the ‘Straight Through Processing’ (STP) Excellence Award from the Bank of New York Mellon (BNY Mellon). This recognition, consistently earned since 2018, highlights OAB’s leading position in the financial industry, emphasising its excellence in secure transaction processing and automotive processes. Asma Al Zadjali, Chief Banking Operations Officer at OAB, expressed her gratitude, stating, “We are honored to be recognized by BNY Mellon for our excellence in STP. This award underscores our commitment to customer service and integrating cutting-edge technology into our banking processes, further enhancing our position in the financial sector.”

She added, “The accelerated pace of processing times is a notable advantage arising from OAB’s embrace of automation. This enables transactions to be executed much faster than traditional manual processes.” OAB’s innovations in automation lead to smoother experiences for its customers, including modification-free rates, instant transactions, and highly accurate outcomes. The STP Excellence Award from BNY Mellon serves as a testament to how OAB leverages operational and technological excellence to deliver high-quality customer experience. This award signifies OAB’s strategic foresight in adopting and investing in STP technology, aligning with its goal to stay ahead in the competitive financial market.





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