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HM GREETING KING OF SAUDI ARABIA
MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) on his country's Founding Day anniversary. In the cable, His Majesty expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes to King Salman, wishing him good health, happiness and a long life. His Majesty also prayed to Allah the Almighty for the return of this and similar occasions on King Salman while the people of Saudi Arabia realise aspirations of further development and growth — **ONA**



Founded 1975 · Volume 48 No. 249 | 16 Pages · Baisas 200 · Subscription OMR63 | ISO 9001:2008 Certified Company | Chairman/Editor-in-Chief: Mohamed Issa Al Zadjali | Printed & Published by Muscat Media Group

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FOREIGN MINISTRY

Oman regrets UNSC's failure to issue ceasefire resolution on Gaza

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman expressed its regret over the United Nations Security Council's failure to issue a resolution for ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, as a result of the repeated use of veto that hampered the resolution.

In a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry on Wednesday, Oman reiterated its plea for the international community and the Security Council to facilitate all initiatives to implement an immediate ceasefire in the region. It urged the Security Council not to stand in the way of peace.

Oman also urged friendly countries to put into practice their positions and statements that support the establishment of peace.

It called upon all "to translate those positions into a just humani-



tarian reality".

Gaza's Hamas-run Health Ministry estimates more than 29,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's response since October 7, 2023.

2 dead in attack on staff shelter
Medical aid group Doctors Without Borders (MSF) says two people were killed when a shelter housing staff in the Gaza Strip was hit in an

Israeli operation on Wednesday. The strike took place in an area where Palestinians have been told to seek shelter, the group said. "While details are still emerging, ambulance crews have now

reached the site, where at least two family members of our colleagues have been killed and six people wounded. We are horrified by what has taken place," MSF said.

The strike occurred in Muwasi, a sandy and largely undeveloped strip of coastal land transformed into a sprawling tent camp.

G20 ministers meet in Brazil to talk Gaza and UN
G20 foreign ministers are meeting in Rio de Janeiro, where they are expected to discuss Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza and the threat of a conflagration in the Middle East.

Brazilian President Luiz Ignacio Lula da Silva has criticized the United Nations for failing to resolve the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. — **Agencies**



Oman bow out of Beach Soccer World Cup with head held high **A7**

AI AND FACTORY AUTOMATION ARE ESSENTIAL FOR OMAN'S INDUSTRIAL GROWTH. 'FACTORY AUTOMATION AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE', ARE AIMED TO PROPEL OMANI INDUSTRIES FORWARD. EMPOWERING OUR WORKFORCE WITH AUTOMATION SKILLS IS CRUCIAL... MAZIN AL SIYABI, DIRECTOR OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AT MINISTRY OF COMMERCE, INDUSTRY, AND INVESTMENT PROMOTION

AI REVOLUTIONISING OMAN'S INDUSTRIAL SECTOR LANDSCAPE

Commerce ministry plans to position Oman as a leading investment destination

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) in Oman is spearheading efforts to revolutionise the industrial landscape through the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) and factory automation technologies.

With a focus on enhancing



productivity, competitiveness, and sustainability, this initiative marks a pivotal moment in Oman's journey towards economic diversification and technological advancement.

Under the banner of 'Factory Automation and Artificial Intelligence', the MoCIIP is committed to empowering private sector entities with cutting-edge technologies to drive efficiency and innovation in manufacturing processes.

Mazin Al Siyabi, Director of Technical Assistance at Oman's Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion, underscored the pivotal role of AI and automation in Oman's industrial landscape.

"AI and factory automation are essential for Oman's industrial growth," said Al Siyabi, emphasising their potential to enhance efficiency and competitiveness.

Al Siyabi said initiatives like 'Factory Automation and Artificial Intelligence', are aimed to propel Omani industries forward.

"Empowering our workforce with automation skills is crucial," he noted, stressing collaboration with academia and the private sector.

Recognising the pivotal role of these advancements in the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the ministry aims to position Oman as a leading investment destination, aligning with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

The initiative encompasses two pathways: one targeting new factories built to the highest standards of efficiency, and the other aimed

at existing facilities, encouraging their transition towards operational excellence through the integration of advanced technologies.

Key stakeholders in the industrial sector have lauded these efforts, acknowledging the positive impact of supportive policies and strategic interventions in driving sectoral growth.

Notably, initiatives such as the Value-Added Localisation Programme and the launch of the 'Made in Oman' platform underscore Oman's commitment to fostering a conducive environment for industrial development and promoting locally manufactured products. **With ONA inputs**

See also >A4

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25th MUSCAT

AL DHAHIRAH GOVERNORATE, THE GUEST OF HONOUR

Muscat International Book Fair kicks off at OCEC

MUSCAT: Activities of the 28th edition of Muscat International Book Fair kicked off at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) on Wednesday. The extravaganza runs until 2 March 2024.

The opening of the event was held under the auspices of Dr. Mohammed Said Al Maamari, Minister of Endowments and Religious Affairs. The ceremony was attended by Dr. Abdullah Nasser Al Harrasi, Minister of Information, Chairman of the Main Committee of Muscat International Book Fair.

Al Dhahirah Governorate, the guest of honour at the current edition, has been accorded a special pavilion that showcases its intellectual and cultural history.

The chief guest toured the book

fair's pavilions and viewed titles on cultural, intellectual and scientific topics. He took note of the Ministry of Information's pavilion, which includes four sections representing the Oman News Agency (ONA), the Directorate General of Electronic Media (Ayn platform and the media portal), Nizwa Magazine and the Directorate General of Publications and Artistic Works.

Al Dhahirah Governorate's pavilion includes two exhibitions, one of which showcases visual arts inspired by the history of the governorate, and the other features the latest innovations and manuscripts dealing with the history of the governorate.

The governorate's cultural pro-



gramme consists of educational seminars, lectures, poetry evenings and discussion panels that will see the participation of an elite group of intellectuals, authors and literati. The display also includes antiques, sculptures, manuscripts and distinctive documents related to the history of the governorate, as well as visual presentations on tourism landmarks. A corner at the pavilion is dedicated to signatures of the governorate's writers and literati, to celebrate their contributions.

The chief guest also inaugurated the Oman Youth Encyclopaedia, whose entries are derived from the original Oman Encyclopaedia in an orderly manner that pertains to the target age group. **>A6**



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SQCCRC

Training to develop skills of social workers in cancer care

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Centre (SQCCRC) organised a training course to develop the skills of social workers.

This comes as part of the SQCCRC's efforts to empower social workers at clinical level and enrich their knowledge and in the management of cancer patients.

The five-day course included several topics and practical applications in case studies, assessing patient needs, designing treatment plans, and authoring professional reports, in addition to designing a



case management model. Professor Muhammad bin Misfer Al Qarni, a specialist in the field of clinical social work, from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, conducted the course.

Entesar Mohammed Al Yafai, a social worker, said: "Social workers have a positive impact on raising the quality of social care provided to cancer patients at SQCCRC."

Therefore, the course helps in the development of skills of social workers and improves their capabilities."

The workshop focused on case management and assessment

methodologies, and the mechanism for delivering accurate and effective clinical social interventions to patients.

It is worth noting that, coinciding with the beginning of receiving patients at SQCCRC in 2021, a four-month development programme was organised for social workers.

The programme aimed to qualify social workers in the medical field to provide clinical social care for cancer patients, within the integrated care programmes.

Social workers are members of the multidisciplinary team (MDT) that provide comprehensive care

for cancer patients at SQCCRC.

They study the patient's social and financial situation, providing MDT members with information and exchanging recommendations to improve the quality of life of patients and remove obstacles that hinder their treatment and life.

The social workers at SQCCRC help patients and their families to cope with cancer stress and effects on their social relationships, daily routines, and economic affairs. They make efforts to reintegrate survivors into society and provide support and consolation to families of patients in the advanced stages of the disease.

OQ8 dispatches its 100th export vessel from Duqm

This milestone highlights OQ8's flawless safety record since its start in May 2023



DUQM: OQ8, a \$9 billion joint venture between Oman's OQ and Kuwait Petroleum International (KPI), announced the dispatch of its 100th export vessel, from its terminal in Duqm.

This milestone highlights OQ8's flawless safety record since its commencement in May 2023 and underscores its vital role in enhancing global supply chain resilience, having successfully exported over 4.1 million tonnes of products to global customers.

Duqm's location and proximity to key markets along the Indian Ocean has been instrumental in facilitating seamless trade across critical markets, from Brazil to the Gulf of Mexico, East Africa to India, enhancing the Refinery's value proposition to global partners.

David Bird, CEO of OQ8, emphasised the company's pivotal

role in the global supply chain. "Our 100th shipment reflects our strategic foresight and operational expertise," Bird stated.

He added, "Located outside the Strait of Hormuz, our terminal is a vital link in global trade, offering a secure and dependable route for the flow of energy and commodities. This strategic position has been crucial in enabling seamless trade across key markets worldwide, enhancing our proposition to global partners. Our commitment to being a reliable supplier of high-quality products has never been stronger, and this milestone further cements our reputation in the global market."

OQ8 has set new benchmarks in maritime logistics, demonstrating its capability in safely managing the global supply of refined products. The terminal loaded a record-breaking 850,000 barrels of naphtha onto one of the

largest vessels it has serviced, an LR2, achieving a loading rate of 47,000 barrels an hour.

The refinery's adaptability is further highlighted by its ability to handle ships of all sizes, efficiently loading up to 44,000 tonnes of Petcoke in less than 68 hours. The terminal also smoothly facilitated large LPG shipments, up to 5,500 metric tons, and introduced night-time operations for unloading crude oil at Ras Markaz Terminal - a significant achievement in less than a year of operation.

As OQ8 gears up for its first sulphur shipment, it continues to showcase its commitment to diversifying export products and enhancing its service offerings.

Mubarak Al Naamani, Chief, Finance, Commercial and SCM, shared his insights on the achievement. "This milestone is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our team," Al Naamani remarked.

ani remarked.

He added, "It underscores our strategic advantage in Duqm as a crucial logistical hub, meeting the diverse needs of our international clientele and aiding Oman's economic growth. Our consistent delivery of projects and our ability to maintain uninterrupted supply chains, even amid global uncertainties, establish us as a trusted partner in the international market."

OQ8 is seamlessly integrated with a number of OQ Group investment projects, including Oman Tank Terminal Company (OTTTCO) and OQ Trading (OQT), as well as Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC).

The Ras Markaz Crude Oil Terminal, expertly managed by OTTTCO, is a shining example of this integration, as OTTTCO provides crude storage tanks from which crude is transported to the refinery via pipelines extending over 80km.

David Bird, added, "The collaboration between OQ8 and our partners OTTTCO, OQ Trading, and KPC has been pivotal to our journey and have significantly strengthened our supply chain. Their integral roles underscore our collective commitment to excellence and reliability in the global energy market. We appreciate their dedication and are excited about our continued partnership shaping the energy future." -ONA

MUSANDAM

OMR2.5mn breakwater project nearly complete



MUSCAT: Construction work continues on the OMR2.5 million breakwater project in the villages of Ghamdha and Al Jeri in the Wilayat of Bukha in Musandam Governorate. The project's completion rate has reached 80 percent.

Khalifa bin Ali Al Shehhi, Director of the Fisheries Wealth Department at the General Directorate of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in Musandam Governorate, said: "The project to construct breakwaters in the villages of Ghamdha and Al Jeri aims to address the accumulation of sand as a result of water currents and protect boats from high waves. The project also helps in fish landing operations, providing a suitable and attractive environment for fishermen to practice their profession."

Al Shehhi explained that the project consists of main breakwaters, secondary breakwaters, sheds, warehouses, boat slips, a

small boat docking area, and other service facilities that contribute to providing basic services to the fisheries sector in the two regions.

Al Shehhi added that the length of the main sea breakwater in the Ghamdha area is 203 metres, the secondary breakwater is 67 metres, and the area of the port basin is 12,155 square metres. As for the Al Jeri area, the length of the main sea breakwater is 124 metres, the secondary breakwater is 41 metres, and the area of the port basin is 3,173 square metres.

He indicated that the project is expected to be completed during the first half of this year. The project will contribute to providing facilities and rehabilitating fish landing areas for the benefit of Omani fishermen.

It will help them in achieving direct and indirect economic and social returns, support the national economy, and raise the fish sector's contribution to the gross domestic product.

CULTURAL HERITAGE

Over 47,000 people visit Al Dhahirah Tourism Festival

Times News Service

MUSCAT: More than 47,000 people visited Al Dhahirah Tourism Festival within six days.

The activities of the Al Dhahirah Tourism Festival continue since its launch last Thursday.

The festival witnessed a good turnout from all segments of society from Al Dhahirah and other governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, in addition to visitors from neighbouring countries.

Najib bin Ali Al-Rawas, Governor of Al Dhahirah, said: "The festival's daily programmes vary while embodying the Omani identity and originality through

various activities such as the heritage village and cultural theatres, in addition to the participation of popular bands that reflect the artistic and cultural heritage."

He added: "The festival goes beyond being of a touristic nature. There are many other goals that the people of the governorate hope to benefit from. There are more than 400 direct benefits for owners of the small and medium enterprises, productive families, job seekers, and rural women, in addition to being an opportunity for young people to hone their artistic, technical and theatrical skills and gain experience to rely on them as owners of projects and

institutions capable of moving forward in future activities."

Al-Rawas explained that the festival contributes to reviving the overall commercial activity in the governorate for individuals and institutions.

The festival programme, which continues until the 6th of next March, is full of many events and activities such as folk arts, horse show segments, heritage village activities, the Smurfs village, and carnival shows, in addition to circus shows, various theatrical acts for adults and children, laser shows, and daily competitions, children's toys and a consumer exhibition. -ONA

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Information Ministry to mark 30th anniversary of Nizwa magazine

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Information will on Thursday mark the 30th anniversary of Nizwa magazine's publication.

The celebration takes place as part of cultural activities accompanying the 28th edition of Muscat International Book Fair.

The event will explore the successful march of Nizwa magazine over the past three decades during which the publication continued to meet the aspirations of its readers. It will also demonstrate the extent to which Nizwa magazine contributed to scholarly discourse, spreading Omani culture and enriching the repertoire of Omani intellectuals and writers.

During the event, the participants will discuss Nizwa magazine's influence as a cultural guide to world writers and intellectuals.

Omani poetry

The event will include seminars and dialogue sessions that address several themes in critical analysis, Omani poetry styles, oriental writings and civilized methods of exercising cultural influence, to name a few.

The celebration of the 30th anniversary of Nizwa magazine also anticipates the publication's future potential amid interactions of a modern world of cognitive openness.

Nizwa magazine is issued by the Ministry of Information in the Sultanate of Oman. Its first issue was published by Oman Newspaper House in November 1994. The magazine is considered an Omani cultural arena where different Arab and international scholarly articles are presented to the readers.

In particular, Nizwa magazine stands out for its openness to various intellectual and literary schools, in a fabric that combines heritage and modernity. This enabled the magazine to gain great reputation, both at home and in Arab world.

-ONA



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ROYAL HOSPITAL

CABLE

Cardiac patient gets 3 device implants in Nizwa

Times News Service

MUSCAT: For the first time, the Royal Hospital succeeded in performing three device implants to treat cardiac arrhythmia at Nizwa Hospital, Al Dakhiliyah Governorate.

A specialised medical team at the National Centre for Cardiac Medicine and Surgery at the Royal Hospital succeeded in performing three device implants to treat heart arrhythmia for the first time at Nizwa Hospital.

The operations were performed by a medical team headed by Dr. Ismail bin Abdullah Al Abri, a cardiologist consultant at the National Centre for Cardiac Medicine and Surgery, with the participation of Ahmed Al Kharusi, a cardiac catheterisation technician, and Zakaria Al Maawali and Nizar Al Muharbi, a catheterisation



laboratory nurse.

These type of operations are important achievements for Nizwa Hospital, as they contribute to improving the quality of health services provided to patients, and reduce the need to transfer them

to other hospitals.

Medical services

This step comes within the efforts of the Ministry of Health to expand the scope of its specialised medical services to patients



in various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

This new service offers hope to many heart patients in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, as it helps them overcome heart rhythm disturbances and improve their

quality of life.

It is noteworthy that the catheterisation laboratory at Nizwa Hospital was opened last September, and cardiac catheterisation operations are performed on a regular basis.



HM sends greetings to Saint Lucia

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to Governor-General Cyril Errol Charles of Saint Lucia on his country's Independence Anniversary.

In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments to Governor-General Cyril Errol Charles.

His Majesty also wished the people of Saint Lucia further development and growth. -ONA

Indian students welcome NEET centre in Muscat

NTA, an autonomous organisation under India's Department of Higher Education (Ministry of Education), stated its decision to conduct examinations in foreign cities



on February 20, NTA, an autonomous organisation under India's Department of Higher Education (Ministry of Education), stated its decision to conduct exams in foreign cities.

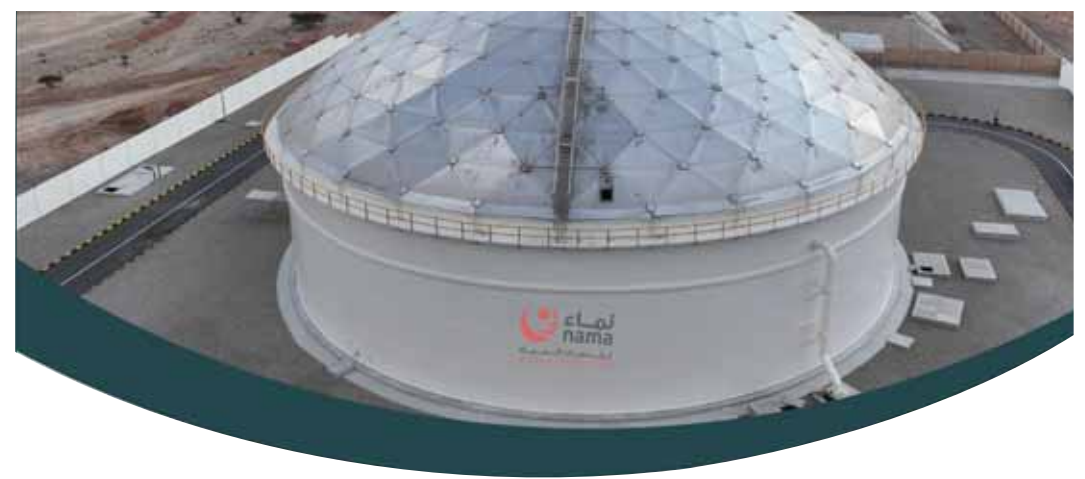
Online application

"In continuation to the public notice dated 9 February 2024, where in NTA has invited online application forms for the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test NEET (UG) 2024, it has been decided that the exam will be conducted in the foreign cities as per details mentioned below," states the notice, which lists Kuwait, United Arab Emirates (Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Sharjah), Thailand (Bangkok), Sri Lanka (Colombo), Qatar (Doha), Nepal (Kathman-

du), Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur), Nigeria (Lagos), Bahrain (Manama), Oman (Muscat), Saudi Arabia (Riyadh), and Singapore as foreign centres for NEET UG 2024 exams.

The NEET centre at the Indian School Muscat was started in 2022 after continuous requests and representations from the parents of Indian Schools students in Oman.

Based on the requests from many of the parents in the previous years, Kairali Oman community had given memorandums to the Parliament members in India, made many representations to them and accordingly Rajya Sabha members Elamanam Kareem and John Brittas had raised the issue in the Indian House.



TENDER NOTICE

Oman Water & Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) hereby announces the following Tenders:

Tender No.	Description	Eligibility	Tender Fee (RO)	Last Date of Sale Tender Documents	Bid Submission Date
T/257859/2024	Implementation of Endpoint Security Protection for SCADA With Annual Maintenance for Three Years	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board and specialized in the works mentioned	R.O. 50/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	07/03/2024	25/03/2024
T/2481928-2/2024	Refloat Data Discovery and Classification Solution	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board and specialized in the works mentioned	R.O. 50/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	07/03/2024	25/03/2024
T/2522939-2/2023	Refloat Call Off Contract for Supply and Delivery of Ultrasonic AMRBULK Meters DN (50,80,100,150,200, 250,300) for Two Years	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board and specialized in the works mentioned	R.O. 500/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	29/02/2024	11/03/2024
T/2514934-2/2024	Refloat Call Off Contract for Supply and Delivery of DI Flange Adaptor, Couplings, Dis Joints & Repair Clamps for 2 Years	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board and specialized in the works mentioned	R.O. 100/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	29/02/2024	11/03/2024
T/2551980/2024	Call off Contract for Supply and Delivery of Glass Reinforced Plastic (GRP) Water Tanks	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board and specialized in the works mentioned	R.O. 100/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	07/03/2024	25/03/2024
T/2588960/2024	Call off Contract for supply and delivery of Water Meter House Connection Fittings	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board and specialized in the works mentioned	R.O. 2500/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	07/03/2024	25/03/2024
T/2563961/2024	Supply & Installation of aeration system at Saham STP 5000 m3/day	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board and specialized in the works mentioned	R.O. 500/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	07/03/2024	25/03/2024
T/2587965/2024	Four Years Maintenance Contract for Lifting Equipment for all STPs & Pumping Stations in Muscat	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board and specialized in the works mentioned	R.O. 500/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	07/03/2024	25/03/2024
T/2594959/2024	Call off Contract for Supply & Delivery of Diesel to O & M Assets of Nama Water Services for 5 years	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board and specialized in the works mentioned	R.O. 1500/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	07/03/2024	18/03/2024
T/2592962/2024	Road Construction at Hall Al-Ghaf Sewage Treatment Plant	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board and specialized in the works mentioned	R.O.150/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	07/03/2024	25/03/2024
T/2564960/2024	Consultancy Services for Design Review and Construction Supervision of Construction of Water Distribution Networks for Ibri, Yanqul and Dank Wilayats in Ad Dhahirah Governorate - Package 2	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board and International Companies specialized in the works mentioned	R.O.1500/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	07/03/2024	01/04/2024
T/2592960/2024	Construction of Water Distribution Networks in Barka	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board in Excellent Grade and International Companies specialized in the works mentioned	R.O. 2500/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	07/03/2024	08/04/2024
T/2592964/2024	Consultancy Services for Design of Water Distribution Networks in Al Amerat Wilayat -Package 3	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board and International Companies specialized in the works mentioned	R.O. 100/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	07/03/2024	01/04/2024

The tender document can be purchased from Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) e-tendering page (Supplier Login) from the date of publication of this announcement. The applicants shall pay the tender fee through electronic payment gateway through Supplier Login.

Applicants who are not registered with Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) shall register from <https://owwsc.nama.om/Business-with-Us/Vendor-Registration> to have the login credentials of Supplier portal.

All applicants who have paid the tender fee shall have access to the Tender Documents through Nama Water Services e-tendering page (Supplier Login). All participating Companies shall submit a Bid Bond of 1% of the bid value in a sealed envelope to Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) Chairman of Tender Committee not later than 2:00 pm on the bid submission date.

Bid Bond must be obtained from a Bank registered in the Sultanate of Oman and it should be addressed in favour of Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services). The bid along with all required documents shall be uploaded through Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) e-tendering page not later than 2:00 pm on the date specified above. For more details refer to Tender Page of our website www.owwsc.nama.om or Email to: tender@owwsc.nama.om



1442 Call Center

RNO

Naval drill 'Sea Lion' commences

MUSCAT: Activities of the naval drill "Sea Lion 1/2024" began on Wednesday.

It is implemented by the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) in the Sea of Oman, with the support of the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) and the Maritime Security Centre (MSC).

The exercise began with a briefing on the drill's plan presented by Commodore Jasim Mohammed Al Balushi, Director General of Operations and Plans at the RNO.

Carrying out this drill comes within the framework of the RNO annual training plans, which aim to sustain preparedness. -ONA

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Manufacturing sector has become a key driver of Omani economy

The objective is to empower private sector with best global practices related to technology and digital transformation

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) continuously works towards developing the industrial sector and increasing its contribution to the local GDP.

This is achieved through the constant updating of laws, providing incentives and exemptions for Omani factories. The ministry proactively addresses challenges facing the sector, finding appropriate solutions, reviewing available opportunities, and marketing them domestically and internationally. Initiatives aimed at localising investments and creating added value to the gross domestic product (GDP) are undertaken to position the Sultanate of Oman as a leading investment destination within the framework of the transition towards a sustainable economy.

'Factory Automation and Artificial Intelligence' constitute the focal point for the ministry during this year. The objective is to empower private sector entities with global best practices related to technology and digital transformation. The ministry believes that the rapid and systematic adoption of these technologies enhances production efficiency and elevates product competitiveness.

The MoCIIP emphasized that the choice of the slogan 'Factory Automation and Artificial Intelligence' for celebrating Oman's Industry Day this year (2024) is aimed at continuing the growth journey towards broader horizons and sustainable development. It has become imperative for the Omani industrial sector to embrace modern technologies to enhance efficiency, diversify products, improve quality, and enhance environmental and economic sustainability. This aligns with the accelerating global shift towards the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

The MoCIIP affirmed that the industrial sector is a key cornerstone for economic diversification and achieving the targets of Oman Vision 2040.

It emphasized that the global shift towards Fourth Industrial Revolution technologies requires the industrial sector to rapidly adopt these technologies to maintain its position, enhance production efficiency, and foster innovation.

Underscoring the vital importance of adopting artificial intelligence and factory automation technologies aims to boost the competitiveness of companies in the industrial sector.

This adoption is crucial for improving planning and production processes, augmenting productivity, enhancing equipment maintenance, and improving the overall customer experience.

Last week, the MoCIIP launched the initiative 'Factory Automation and Artificial Intelligence', the initiative adopts global methodologies to enhance the capabilities of local industries and propel the national industry to advanced positions. The initiative operates on two pathways: the first targets new factories, designed and built according to high standards in manufacturing and production efficiency.

The second path focuses on existing factories, encouraging them to transition into facilities that adhere to operational excellence standards and adopt advanced technologies.

As Oman celebrates its Industrial Day, officials and business leaders in the industrial sector praised the progress and growth achieved by the sector.

They acknowledged the success due to supportive policies aimed at boosting sector revenues and maximising reliance on non-oil income, aligning with plans to diversify the economy.

Particularly, the manufactur-



ing sector, over the past years, has made significant gains, attributed to direct and indirect support from governmental and private entities. They emphasized that these accomplishments resulted from initiatives and programmes implemented by the wise government, fostering sector development, achieving remarkable levels of progress, quality, expansion, competitiveness, and the adoption of technological solutions across production stages.

This, in turn, has increased the sector's contributions to the GDP, attracting capital and investments.

Mazin Al Siyabi, Director of Technical Assistance Office for Trade and Industry at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion, affirmed that the manufacturing sector has become a key driver of the Omani economy since the beginning of the third millennium. The sector has played a crucial role in reducing Oman's reliance on crude oil.

Al Siyabi explained that the ministry is working to enhance the sector's role through various initiatives and programmes aimed at increasing its contribution to Oman's overall GDP.

Among these initiatives is the Value-Added Localization Programme, which seeks to localise several industries, prioritise government procurement, expand and increase the productivity of existing factories, and establish new industries to boost value-added contributions.

The launch of the National Product Identity 'Made in Oman' platform is an electronic service platform aimed at expediting the licensing and certification process for the national product identity. It allows the usage of the 'Made in Oman' logo on Omani products. The platform's establishment contributes to creating a database of registered Omani products, serving as a reference for various activities supporting local products, highlighting their quality and diversity, stated Al Siyabi.

Professor Ghassan Al Kindi, Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation at Sohar University, noted that since the speech of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq in February 2020, he emphasised the importance of focusing on scientific research, innovation, and artificial intelligence to continue the journey of development and construction. Certainly, achieving global competitiveness and industrial progress requires the adoption of modern technolo-

gies, including the technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, such as automation.

Oman has made significant strides in establishing its industrial base in recent years. To ensure the sustainability of its industrial activities and enhance the competitiveness of its products in both local and global markets, it has become imperative for Oman to adopt modern automated production technologies and Fourth Industrial Revolution techniques, he added.

Prof. Al Kindi added that there is widespread consensus on the substantial value that the adoption of automation brings to diverse industrial projects. Automation, exemplified by increased production quantities and efficiency, cost reduction, stimulation of innovation, and enhancement of product quality, significantly bolsters the competitive edge of products and services in global markets.

The crucial role of automation and the integration of Fourth Industrial Revolution technologies in generating new jobs with elevated professional, technical, and scientific standards further contribute to the development of a knowledge-based economy. This, in turn, results in higher salaries and improved well-being for workers.

The Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation at Sohar University explained that the MoCIIP recognises the importance of encouraging industrial companies in Oman to develop their operations, embrace automation, and adopt Fourth Industrial Revolution technologies to ensure sustainability and continuous improvement. Therefore, the ministry has initiated a promising project to assess and qualify industrial companies in the path of automation and Fourth Industrial Revolution technologies.

The ministry has detailed plans to promote these companies by providing scientific assessment services based on globally recognised standards. This aims to determine the readiness of these companies to transition to higher levels of automation and Fourth Industrial Revolution technologies. Additionally, the ministry has outlined plans to offer support and incentives to encourage companies to upgrade their production lines, reduce reliance on unskilled labour, especially expatriate workers, and shift towards modern production technologies, creating suitable jobs for Omanis.

Prof. Al Kindi emphasised the necessity of overcoming challenges facing the technological transformation towards automation and Fourth Industrial Revolution technologies. Among the crucial challenges is encouraging company management to believe in the necessity of transitioning towards automation. It is also essential to prepare qualified and fully trained Omani professionals who align with the needs of modern technologies.

He noted that the success of the technological transformation program requires collaboration between the academic sector, vocational training, and the business sector to implement innovative programs. These programs aim to equip Omani professionals with specialised skills in designing, installing, and programming automated equipment and complementary control systems.

They also involve building computer systems necessary for data collection and analysis, decision-making using some artificial intelligence techniques. Consequently, these Omani professionals will be ready to provide continuous development, maintenance, and operation services for modern technologies in various factories. This enhances the successful local value and ensures the sustainability and competitiveness of industrial companies.

Ahmed Al Barwani, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Sectoral Skills Unit for the Industrial Sector (SSUM) hosted by the Omani Industrialists Association, said that the unit aims to enhance the skills of the Omani industrial sector, increase its competitiveness, and build a skilled and competitive workforce in the Omani industry.

He pointed out that the unit works towards achieving this by studying the current and future skill needs in the industrial sector, defining them, and developing national standards that establish professional and national standards for various professions in the industrial sector. The unit also implements skills accreditation programmes, confirming that individuals have the necessary skills for specific jobs. It actively participates in setting national standards for training and professional assessment in the industrial sector.

Additionally, the unit provides support and advice to economic sectors on developing the skills of their workforce, conducts research on the labour market to identify current and future skill

needs, and encourages companies to enhance the skills of their employees through training and education programs.

Al Barwani added, "In the future, the unit will issue certificates of professional competence that recognize individuals' skills and their ability to work in specific jobs."

He emphasised that the Sectoral Skills Unit for the Industrial Sector works closely with various stakeholders in the industrial sector, including the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, public and private technical training institutes, the Omani Industrialists Association, and the industrial sector in general, to achieve its goals.

He explained that developing the skills of the industrial sector is essential to enhance the competitiveness of the sector and contribute to the growth of the national economy.

He pointed out that Oman's Industrial Day is an opportunity to discuss the developments in the industrial sector and envision its future. After developing the necessary plans and strategies to address the challenges posed by both the domestic and international environments, he affirmed that the industrial sector is one of the promising economic sectors. It has a significant impact and economic benefits by generating added value for all economic sectors, opening up vistas for local and global investments, and creating new prospects for the future of the Omani industry. It aligns with Oman's economic trajectory and contributes to achieving Oman Vision 2040.

Hilal Al Hosni, CEO of Cimart Global stated "The meeting with officials at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion represents an opportunity to activate the partnership between the government and the private sector by considering the views of industrialists and investors regarding the necessary mechanisms to attract investment, develop exports, and establish partnerships aimed at supporting the competitiveness of Omani products in local and international markets".

He noted that celebrating Omani Industry Day serves as an impetus for the sector to enhance its role in economic diversification, especially as Oman, represented by government and private entities, is committed to organizing a meeting

with industrialists, project owners, and investors as part of the celebrations. This meeting serves as a platform to review the challenges and difficulties facing the sector and find appropriate solutions.

He emphasised that adopting modern technologies in manufacturing processes contributes to reducing errors, minimizing manual labour, increasing production speed, and enhancing quality.

He also highlighted the creation of modern and advanced industries and the increased percentage of domestic supply chains for the industry.

The CEO of Cimart Global affirmed that the upcoming phase will witness a transition to more competitive industries, especially with the advent of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and artificial intelligence. This necessitates preparation through training and qualification. Leveraging indicators and forecasts that determine market and modern technology trends should be integral to scientific research efforts aimed at developing local industries, reducing production costs, and preserving and sustaining the environment.

Abdul Hakeem Al Qasbi, Acting Managing Director of Sohar Sulphur Fertilizers, stated: "Omani Industry Day is an icon of pride for all industrialists in the Sultanate of Oman, reflecting the importance of the industry in Oman and the government's commitment to this vital sector. Direct interaction with officials at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion is a fundamental cornerstone for addressing the challenges faced by industrialists in terms of government procedures and other internal and external challenges.

He added, "The trend of Omani factories towards modern technologies used in manufacturing processes contributes to maximising the utilization of raw materials and reducing the margin of waste materials, ultimately increasing their production quantities.

Sohar Sulphur Fertilizers produces granulated sulphur fertilizers along with minor elements, with an annual production capacity of 60,000 metric tons. The factory exports 99% of its products outside Oman, serving 25 countries worldwide. Al Qasbi emphasized that the shift towards automation reduces production losses, decreases unskilled labour, resulting in improved productivity and profitability for companies. -**ona**



IN AL GHALA HEIGHTS

Smart Home project for residential apartments, smart offices launched



Times News Service

MUSCAT: Under the auspices of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Salem Al Said, Al Faiha Development Company celebrated the inauguration of the Smart Home project for smart residential apartments and offices in Al Ghala Heights, opposite Madinat Al Irfan. This project, distinguished as a pioneering real estate endeavour, presents guaranteed investment opportunities. It boasts comprehensive smart specifications within its residential units, enabling remote control via mobile devices, alongside the integration of artificial intelligence within the building to provide essential services for families. These include childcare services, a private cinema for residents, laundry facilities, taxi services, morning coffee preparation, and various other unique smart amenities.

This was announced during the press conference held by Al Faiha Development Company at the launch event at the W Hotel. Sheikh Saud bin Hamad Al Ta'i, Chairman of Al Faiha's Board of Directors, said: "We are delighted today to express our joy and pride in this momentous occasion, where these smart residential apartments embody our aspirations to deliver a unique living experience. This amalgamation of comfort and technology aims to create a sustainable and secure environment for all residents."

"This project is not merely a residential building but a realisation of a futuristic vision, as we strive to provide comfort and convenience to residents through

the utilisation of the latest technologies in the realm of artificial intelligence within real estate development."

The Smart Home project in Al Ghala Heights is a pioneering model in the realm of smart buildings, encompassing a wide array of features that render it unique and sophisticated. Spanning an area of 13,000 square metres, the project comprises nine floors and a penthouse, in addition to parking facilities and a variety of residential units of different sizes.

Furthermore, the project includes a commercial mall covering an area of 5,000 square metres, luxurious restaurants, a temperature-controlled swimming pool, and a comprehensive health club, ensuring a comfortable and sustainable environment for residents. Smart apartments are an integral part of the project concept, allowing residents to benefit from cutting-edge technologies to enhance their quality of life. These aim to provide a smart and sustainable living environment that promotes quality of life and offers a comfortable and secure lifestyle, affirming an integrated residential experience that includes entertainment, marketing, and sports facilities to meet all family needs.

Sheikh Saud bin Hamad Al Ta'i, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Al Faiha Development Company (the project developer), added: "The project aligns with the Sultanate's 2040 income diversification plan, affirming that upon completion, the Smart Home project will positively impact both the economic and social spheres. We are proud of the vital

role of the private sector in supporting the official directives for the development of the country's tourism and real estate infrastructure, which in turn serves the efforts of tourism promotion and real estate development." "It is a pioneering investment project that combines luxury and technology in the heart of the Sultanate of Oman. This project reflects our commitment to providing an exceptional residential experience that blends comfort and innovation in the world of smart residential apartments and offices." "When completed, the project will be an architectural icon, combining modern designs with authentic Omani architecture."

Additionally, Tariq bin Mohammed Al Farsi, CEO of Al Faiha Development Company, said: "The project, overall, strikes a balance between commercial and residential aspects, with over 5,000 square metres allocated to a smart commercial mall featuring designs tailored to global brand specifications. The residential and service units will extend over an area of 13,000 square metres."

"The project will be equipped with the finest integrated services, meeting the highest international standards and aligning with future technological advancements. Modern communication networks and diverse parking facilities, totaling over 800 spaces distributed underground and some in front of residential units, will be provided. The commercial mall, offices, and residential units will be interconnected to form an integrated environment and an attractive place for living, working, and shopping under one roof."

Oman and GCC review criminal judicial laws

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman on Wednesday participated in the 2024 interactive programme for employees of GCC Supreme Courts and Courts of Cassation. The Supreme Judicial Council represented Oman at the meeting, held via videoconferencing.

Issues of criminal conciliation
The meeting elaborated on issues of criminal conciliation and criminal settlement, in addition to a proposal on "Placement of offenders under electronic surveillance, submitted by the Federal Supreme Court in the United Arab Emirates. — ONA



الشركة الهندية الجديدة للتأمين المحدودة
THE NEW INDIA ASSURANCE CO. LTD

Address : Building No.931, Way No.4911, Al Nada Street, Next to Old German Embassy, Hamriya, Sultanate of Oman

TENDER NOTICE

Notice inviting Tender (online) for Appointment of Statutory Auditors for three years.

Last date for submission of proposals
28.02. 2024 till 5.00 P.M

The Tender requirements available in our web site
[www.newindiaoman.com/about-us/tender menu](http://www.newindiaoman.com/about-us/tender-menu).

Interested parties may submit their bids directly by mail to colsk@newindiaoman.com.

For any queries contact: 24838871



شركة بركاء للمياه والطاقة ش.م.ع.ع
BARKA WATER AND POWER COMPANY S.A.O.G

NOTICE AND INVETATION TO ATTEND THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Board of Directors of BARKA WATER AND POWER COMPANY SAOG (the "Company") has the pleasure to invite the shareholders to attend the Annual General Meeting , which will be held on Monday at 03:00 PM on 11/03/2024, via the electronic platform which can be accessed through the website of Muscat Clearing & Depository Company (www.mcd.om). If the quorum requirement for holding the Annual General Meeting is not fulfilled, a second Annual General Meeting General Meeting shall be held on Monday at 03:00 PM on 18/03/2024, via the electronic platform which can be accessed through the website of Muscat Clearing & Depository Company (www.mcd.om) to discuss the following agenda:

Annual Ordinary General Meeting Agendas:

- To consider and approve the Board of Director's Report for the financial year ended 31 December 2023.
- To consider and approve the Corporate Governance Report for the financial year ended 31 December 2023.
- To consider the Auditor's Report and to approve the Financial Statements of the Company for the financial year ended 31 December 2023.
- To ratify the sitting fees of Board of Directors and sub-committees for the financial year ended 31 December 2023 and to determine the sitting fees for the next financial year ending 31 December 2024 (Attachment 1).
- To notify the shareholders with transactions carried out with related parties during the financial year ended 31 December 2023 (Annexure 2).
- To notify the shareholders of donations disbursed to support community services during the financial year ended on 31 December 2023 (Annexure 3).
- To consider and approve a budget of RO 25,000 for the year ending 31 December 2024 for Corporate Social Responsibility activities.
- To appoint the statutory auditors for the financial year ending 31 December 2024 and approve their fees.

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

- Legal person, exclusively, has the right to delegate a natural person to attend the General Meeting and vote on its behalf through technical means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in MCDC.
- Voting on any of the agenda items begins no more than three days before the date of the General Meeting until the voting process ends on the day of the General Meeting. If the shareholder's shares are increased or decreased, the voting process will be canceled, and the shareholder will have to vote again on the day of the General Meeting.

For further information please contact on telephone No 92084869 or email: AHussain@acwapower.com

Chairman	Legal Advisor	External Auditor
STEFAN ENGELBERTUS DIJKERS	Trowers & Hamllins	KPMG L.L.C.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT		STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2023																																																																																																																																																																																																																																											
<p>Dear Shareholders,</p> <p>On behalf of the Board of Directors ("the Board") of Barka Desalination Company SAOG (the "Company"), I have the pleasure to present the unaudited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2023.</p> <p>Operational Highlights</p> <p>The activity of the Company is to develop, finance, design, construct, own, operate and maintain a reverse osmosis desalination plant at Barka in the Sultanate of Oman with a capacity of 281,000 m³ per day.</p> <p>The Company commenced commercial operation on 13 June 2018. Since then, the Company has been supplying potable water to Oman Power and Water Procurement Company in accordance with the Water Purchase Agreement. The Company has supplied 87,382,308 m³ of water during the period ended 31 December 2023.</p> <p>The average scheduled plant availability for the period was over 99.5%, the result of a strict asset management program implemented by the Operator. The Company continues to uphold its reputation as the largest provider of potable water in the Sultanate.</p> <p>On 14 th March 2023, the Plant successfully completed the Annual Performance Test for the Contractual Year 6 (CY6).</p> <p>Financial Highlights</p> <p>Revenue has increased by 3% (by RO 522K) as compared to the same period in the previous year. This is mainly due to higher Water Capacity Base charge as a result of indexation as well as higher Water Output charge and higher Electricity charge.</p> <p>The cost of sales has increased by 6% (by RO 783K) as compared to the same period in the previous year. This is mainly due to higher Capacity payment to the operator pursuant to the O&M contract and the Output Payment to the operator due to higher dispatch.</p> <p>The administrative and general expenses have decreased by 6% (by RO 27K) as compared to the same period in the previous year. This is mainly due to application of robust cost reduction plans.</p> <p>Finance expenses have increased by 24% (by RO 701K) as compared to the</p>	<p>same period in the previous year. This is mainly due to the impact of higher LIBOR rate as 17.5% of the long term loan is unhedged in addition to that 2022 was positively impacted by the remeasurement of Decommissioning Cost.</p> <p>The current year's profit before tax represents 7% of the revenue.</p> <p>The current year's profit after tax represents 4% of the revenue.</p> <p>Based on the financial results, the shareholders to the AGM approved authorizing the Board of Directors to determine and distribute cash dividends to the Company's Shareholders out of the retained earnings as per the Audited Financial Statements for the financial year ended 31 December 2022, the company has distributed dividends of 6 Bz per share in May 2023 and 6 Bz per share in November 2023.</p> <p>Outlook for 2024</p> <p>The Company is taking an endeavor to ensure that it continues to take reasonable and prudent measures to improve its performance for FY2024, by improving the Plant's reliability and availability, without compromising on HSE matters.</p> <p>Acknowledgement</p> <p>I would like to extend my personal thanks to all personnel associated with the operation of the plant and the staff of the Company for their hard work and dedication, as well as to those others such as our contractors, whose expertise has assisted us in achieving these excellent results.</p> <p>Finally, on behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to extend our deep appreciation and gratitude to His Majesty Haitham Bin Tariq Al Said and His Government for their continued support and encouragement to the private sector by creating an environment that allows us to participate effectively in the growth of the Sultanate's economy and to dedicate our achievements to the building of a strong nation.</p> <p>On behalf of the Board of Directors</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Murtadha Ahmed Sultan Chairman of the Board</p>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th style="text-align: right;">2023 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liabilities	6,644	6,006	Total liabilities	86,832	89,923	Total equity and liabilities	104,837	108,574	Net asset value per share	0.238	0.247	STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023				2023 RO'000	2022 RO'000	Revenue	19,467	18,945	Operating costs	(14,099)	(13,316)	Gross profit	5,368	5,629	General and administrative expenses	(448)	(475)	Other income	48	16	Profit from operations	4,968	5,170	Finance costs	(5,040)	(3,302)	Financial income	1,459	393	Profit before tax	1,387	2,261	Income tax expense	(681)	(752)	Profit for the period	706	1,509	Other comprehensive income	(446)	6,497	Items that are or may be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss:			Change in fair value of cash flow hedge (net of tax)	(446)	6,497	Other comprehensive income for the year	260	8,006	Total comprehensive income for the year	260	8,006	Basic and diluted earnings per share			Basic earnings per share (Baizas)	9.35	19.98	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; 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سلطنة عُمان
وزارة النقل والاتصالات وتقنية المعلومات
Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology

إعلان مناقصات
Tender Notice

The Internal Tenders Committee at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology invites for the Following Tenders:

TENDER NUMBER	TENDER NAME	DATE OF PUBLISHING	LAST DATE TO PURCHASE TENDER DOCUMENT	SUBMISSION DATE	COMPANIES WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THIS TENDER	DOCUMENT PRICE
MTCIT/ 20/2024	SUPERVISION CONSULTANCY SERVICES FOR DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF UPGRADING THE LINK LEADING TO THE DIAR INVESTMENT PROJECT (SOUTH AL SHARQIYAH GOVERNORATE)	21-02-2024	06-03-2024	31-03-2024	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF TENDER BOARD (FIRST & SECOND)	(75/-) SEVENTY-FIVE OMANI RIAL FOR LOCAL COMPANIES (10/-) TEN OMANI RIAL (FOR SME) NON-REFUNDABLE
MTCIT/ 22/2024	CONSULTANCY SERVICES TO DEVELOP OMAN GOVERNMENT TECHNOLOGY STACK	21-02-2024	06-03-2024	02-04-2024	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF TENDER BOARD (FIRST & EXCELLENT)	(300/-) THREE HUNDRED OMANI RIAL FOR INTERNATIONAL AND LOCAL COMPANIES (22/500) TWENTY TWO OMANI RIAL AND FIVE HUNDRED BAISA (FOR SME) NON-REFUNDABLE

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

CORRESPONDANCE:

- Tender Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at e-Tendering System. (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
- E-Tendering System Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the e-Tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number:
Tel: +968 24402200 e-mail: etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om

@mtcitoman www.mtcit.gov.om

OMAN/WORLD

MINISTRY OF INFORMATION

Book fair sees continuous growth

<FROM A1 Key features of the OYE highlight the themes of citizenship, cognitive values and rich data that appeal to the youth segment, notably scientific innovations and related matters.

In his speech, the chief guest said, "Today we celebrate the opening of the 28th edition of Muscat International Book Fair, the illustrious event that gathered momentum year after year, since its first inception in 1992, writing new chapters of dazzling development in the book industry, publishing, and culture."

"The book fair has experienced continuous growth and updates that keep pace with the latest global developments, affirming its international status as a lighthouse that illuminates the arenas of culture and scholarly development of our society," Al Maamari added.

"We take pride in the elaborate preparations that yielded such a spectacular cultural extravaganza, highlighting the remarkable progress made by Omani publishing houses and their valuable contribution towards enriching the readers' experience," he said.

Al Maamari pointed out that the steady rise in the number of participating countries and the diversity of cultural programmes reflect the sincere efforts of individuals, supporting institutions and the Ministry of Information in organising this event.

He described the initiatives as a firm commitment to the continuous amelioration of this rich cultural event namely Muscat International Book Fair.

Al Maamari stressed that indicators surveyed so far affirm this great development and emphasise the book fair's noble goal in inspiring knowledge, expanding the book market and enriching the Omani library with the latest publications from international publishing houses and scholarly domains.

For his part, Sayyid Said Sultan Al Busaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Culture, Deputy Chairman of the book fair's main committee, said that Muscat International Book Fair figures among the most important cultural events in the Sultanate of Oman. The book fair provides a great opportunity for exchanging knowledge and cultural dialogue, notably through interaction among intellectuals, media professionals and authors. "Muscat International Book Fair is a prominent cultural platform par excellence," he observed.

In a statement to ONA, Al Busaidi said that the 28th edition of the book fair includes a range of activities organised by the Cultural Committee, government institutions and private establishments, including poetry evenings, symposiums, lectures, training seminars and theatrical performances.



This is in addition to an exclusive cultural programme at Al Dhahirah Governorate. There will be two dialogue sessions, one of which will be dedicated to the late actor Saud Al Darmaki and the other to the late director and playwright Mohammed Al Muhandis Al Yaf'ee.

Al Busaidi pointed out that artificial intelligence (AI) constitutes the main theme of the book fair this year, due to the technology's significance in all sectors.

He added that AI will be accorded attention in children and family events.

Najeeb Ali Al Rowas, Governor of Al Dhahirah, expressed pride at choosing Al Dhahirah Governorate as the guest of honour at the 28th edition of Muscat International Book Fair. He said that the event provides an ideal opportunity to introduce the governorate's cultural, artistic and literary components that stem from Oman's culture and heritage.

"The hosting highlights the cultural, literary and scholarly aspects of the governorate and its ancient history that enriched Om-

ani heritage throughout the ages. It spotlights the governorate's glorious heritage and promote efforts to focus on sources of civilization around the country," Al Rowas added.

Al Rowas told ONA that Al Dhahirah Governorate prepared a programme of activities that embody the diversity that characterizes the governorate. "For the first time, there will be models of prominent governorate-based development projects," said Al Rowas, noting that there is an innovation corner for Al Dhahirah Governorate's students that showcases their achievements. There is also a special edition for 32 publications issued by the governorate's authors, he added.

As many as 847 publishing houses from 34 countries participate in the book fair. Of these, 676 publishers are participating directly and 171 others are participating through agents.

As many as 622,000 titles are listed at the book fair's website, including approximately 269,000 are Arabic books and 200,000 are foreign books. The Omani collec-

tion comprises 19,000 books. The number of newly issued publications (between 2023 and 2024) stood at about 35,989.

Events for children and families include workshops, an Arabic language corner, a children's museum, a green corner for environment-friendly activities and cultural cafés.

During the book fair, there are book signing ceremonies in which a number of authors participate. There will also be agreements signing ceremonies that will see institutions ink contracts with authors and related procedures.

The book fair's Data Centre offers services that include electronic application, mobile indexing and a 3-D map of the Muscat International Book Fair 2024.

The service facilities of the book fair were expanded to cover restaurants along the front garden of Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, as part of measures to support local SMEs. In the facilities, electronic payment is also applied in coordination with Bank Dhofar, the banking partner of the current edition of the book fair. -ONA

Times OF OMAN

Printed and published by:
Muscat Media Group
Post Box: 770,
Postal Code: 112



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

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ADVERTISING: Telephone: 24726666, Fax: 24812624, E-mail: advertising@timesofoman.com
CIRCULATION: Telephone: 24726666, Fax: 24818270, E-mail: circulation@timesofoman.com

DESPITE TRAILING IN POLLS

Nikki Haley says she will not quit White House race

SOUTH CAROLINA: Republican presidential candidate Nikki Haley has vowed to remain in the race, regardless of the outcome of Saturday's South Carolina primary, where she is badly trailing former US president Donald Trump.

Addressing a campaign rally in Greenville City, the former South Carolina Governor reiterated that she "is not going anywhere" and will continue her bid "till the last person votes," after speculations that Haley may drop out of the race soon. "Some of you--perhaps a few of you in the media--came here today to see if I'm dropping out of the race. Well, I'm not. Far from it," Haley said.

Haley, the former South Carolina governor, faces difficult polls in her home state - on top of three consecutive losses to Trump. He and Haley have been in a head-to-head contest for the Republican nomination since Florida Governor Ron DeSantis suspended his campaign in January.

"That's why I refuse to quit. South Carolina will vote on Saturday. But on Sunday, I'll still be running for president. I'm not going anywhere," she said. "I'm campaigning every day, until the last person votes, because I believe in a better America and a brighter future for our kids."

The former UN Ambassador who served under Trump continued to sharpen her critiques of her former boss, calling him a "disaster", and assessing that he is "more unstable and more unhinged" than he was during his first turn in the White House. Haley's bid has been fueled by hefty donations from deep-pocketed donors. And a few Indian Americans appear on Haley's donor list.

Technology entrepreneur and investor Jiten Agarwal, who is among the major donors of Nikki Haley, has affirmed confidence in the campaign of the former UN Ambassador and said that she will not back down "without a



fight."

Speaking to ANI, Agarwal said, "Whether she can secure the nomination against Trump remains to be seen, but one thing is certain: Nikki Haley will not back down without a fight. She is going to be in the race till the Republican National Convention in July this year where the Republican party (GOP) presidential nominee will be chosen."

Agarwal hosted a fundraiser for Nikki Haley's presidential bid this week in Houston. Haley also held a rally in Dallas and a meet and greet in San Antonio in addition to fundraisers in Texas.

The entrepreneur further said that Haley's message of "unity" and "strong leadership" in an atmosphere of "division and partisanship" in the country has struck a chord with the people of Texas.

"In a political landscape marked by division and partisanship in today's America, Haley's message of unity, no chaos and strong leadership has struck a chord with Texans. Texas Republicans are always looking for a good conservative," he told ANI.

He added, "A large percentage of the party that's not as vocal as they probably should be is looking for somebody who is a no chaos leader of next generation, who has a vision for America, who puts country first rather than own personal interest and who can serve for eight years. Haley is the right choice." - ANI

US vetoes UN resolution for immediate Gaza ceasefire

The draft resolution won 13 votes in favour from the 15 members of the Security Council. The United States voted against it and Britain abstained



UNITED NATIONS: The United States on Tuesday vetoed a Security Council draft resolution that would have demanded an immediate humanitarian cease-fire in Gaza.

The draft resolution won 13 votes in favour among the 15 members of the Security Council. The United States voted against it. Britain abstained.

To be adopted, a Security Council draft resolution needs at least nine votes in favor and no veto from any of the council's five permanent members -- Britain, China, France, Russia, the United

States.

The Algerian-drafted resolution would have demanded an immediate humanitarian cease-fire in Gaza and would have deplored all attacks against civilians. The draft would have forced displacement of the Palestinian civilian population and would have demanded unhindered humanitarian access to Gaza. The draft also would have demanded the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages.

Before the vote on the draft resolution, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-

Greenfield, said the Algerian draft would jeopardise ongoing efforts toward a hostage deal.

She said her delegation was working on a rival draft resolution that would call for a "temporary cease-fire" based on the formula that all hostages are released.

Russia's permanent representative to the United Nations, Vassily Nebenzia, said before the vote that Washington continues to give Israel "a license to kill." He asked Security Council members "to counter the lawlessness of Washington."

Speaking after the vote, Nebenzia

said full responsibility for the consequences of Tuesday's outcome falls on Washington, no matter how hard the United States tries to evade it by talking about its "important mediation efforts."

In an explanation of vote after the voting, China's permanent representative to the United Nations, Zhang Jun, expressed his country's strong disappointment at and dissatisfaction with the outcome of the vote.

"The US veto sent a wrong message, pushing the situation in Gaza into a more dangerous one,"

he said.

The US claim that the Algerian-drafted resolution would interfere in ongoing diplomatic efforts is totally untenable, said Zhang.

The Security Council must take action to push for a cease-fire, which is its legal responsibility. The US veto cannot muffle the strong call for a cease-fire and an end to the war in Gaza. The Security Council cannot stop its work to uphold justice and fulfill its responsibilities just because of the veto, he said.

French UN ambassador Nicholas de Riviere regretted that the draft resolution was not adopted given the disastrous situation on the ground.

"There is an extreme urgency to conclude, without further delay, an agreement on a cease-fire, which finally guarantees the protection of all civilians and the massive delivery of emergency aid," he said.

"The human toll and humanitarian situation in Gaza are intolerable and Israeli operations must stop," he further added.

The Algerian text was the eighth Gaza-related draft resolution that the Security Council has voted on since Oct. 7, 2023. Only two draft resolutions have been adopted, neither of which calls for a cease-fire. - XINHUA

INDIAN RADIO PRESENTER



Indian radio personality Ameen Sayani dies at 91

MUMBAI: Legendary radio personality Ameen Sayani passed away due to a heart attack late on Tuesday, his son Rajil Sayani confirmed on Wednesday. He was 91.

According to Rajil Sayani, the iconic radio presenter suffered a heart attack on Tuesday night, after which he was taken to the HN Reliance Hospital in Mumbai, where he breathed his last.

"The doctors at the hospital attended him but couldn't save him and he was declared dead," Rajil said.

Funeral on Thursday

His funeral will take place on Thursday, as the family is waiting for some relatives to reach Mumbai today, he added.

Ameen Sayani, was born on December 21, 1932, in Mumbai and over the years became famed for his melodic voice and fascinating flair. Starting off as an English-language broadcaster, he soon switched to Hindi. - ANI



Oman bow out of Beach Soccer World Cup with head held high

Talib Hilal's men go down fighting to two-time world champions Portugal 2-3 to end their campaign in the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup with two defeats and one victory in Dubai



MILAN: Oman made their exit from the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup in Dubai, UAE, on Tuesday night but not before putting up a stirring fightback against multiple world champions in the group stage.

If Talib Hilal's men won the hearts against five-time champions Brazil in their opening Group D match despite the defeat, the loss against two-time world champions

and heavyweights Portugal 3-2 was yet another story of so near yet so far.

It was another determined performance by Oman, this time, against Portugal on Tuesday. The loss also ended their campaign at the event with a win against Mexico and defeats against world champions Brazil and Portugal.

Qualifying for a group that comprised the two powerhouses was always going to be an

uphill task but Talib Hilal's players impressed with their grit and determination.

On Tuesday, Portugal struck with just 10 seconds remaining to end Oman's knockout stage hopes, with Leo Martins' goal securing the European side a 3-2 win and a place in the quarter-finals.

The win meant Portugal finished on six points with Oman making their Group B exit with three points.

It was a heartbreaking loss for Oman, who had rallied from two goals down to draw level through Abdullah Al Sauti and Khalid Al Oraimi in the third period.

Leo Martins scored a sumptuous back-heel. Jordan bagged a brilliant bicycle kick. When Oman netted twice in the third, however, it took a rare Martins header to snatch the mighty Portugal a place in the last eight.



Martins has remarkably registered 11 combined goals and assists at UAE 2024 Dubai.

A disappointed Al Sauti said: "We controlled the game at times, but we weren't lucky enough to grab the win. The Portuguese are very good. The Omani national team did their best at the tournament, all our players gave everything they had. Our spirits are high."

Oman's only victory came

against Mexico when they won 5-2 on Sunday. Despite falling behind inside 17 seconds to a Yahya Al Muraiki strike, Mexico turned the game around and took the lead through Diego Martinez.

Omanis recovered, though, to score four unanswered goals through Yaqdhan Al Hindasi, Mandhar Al Araimi, Al Muraiki and Khalid Al Oraimi to earn three valuable points.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES OMAN

Japan's Kanaya hopes to defend title



MUSCAT: Japan's Takumi Kanaya begins the defence of his International Series Oman title on Thursday at Al Mouj Golf in Muscat - aiming to do "exactly the same" as his breakthrough victory 12 months ago.

In what was a week of many firsts at the inaugural International Series Oman for the Japanese star he recorded a fine four-shot win, for his maiden professional victory overseas.

It also marked the first time that an International Series event had been won by a player from Japan, and surprisingly he became the first golfer from his country to win an Asian Tour event outside of Japan since Tetsuji Hiratsuka claimed the Black Mountain Masters in 2010.

The 25-year-old from Hiroshima, said: "In 2023, I lined up against some of the best players in the world and proved that I could win. This year I want to do exactly the same. Defending my title will not be easy against this strong field, but I know I have what it takes on a truly challenging course."

A veritable feast of phenomenal players are competing in what is the first of 10 International Series events this season, at what is

the second stop of the year on the Asian Tour, following last week's IRS Prima Malaysian Open.

Last week's champion David Puig from Spain, and his compatriot Eugenio Chacarra, South Africans Louis Oosthuizen and Charl Schwartzel, Chileans Joaquin Niemann and Mito Pereira, plus India's Anirban Lahiri are just a few of the glittering names from the LIV Golf League playing along with a plethora of Asian Tour stars like Filipino Miguel Tabuena, Hong Kong's Taichi Kho and Jazz Janewattananond from Thailand.

Kanaya, world ranked 129, has been paired in one of the marquee groups along with two other standouts Denwit Boriboonsub from Thailand and Australian Lucas Herbert - who is making his debut on The International Series.

The stunning scenic coastline of Al Mouj Golf provided the perfect background for some brilliant front running golf by Kanaya last season.

"It is an honour to win the event, an International Series tournament," said Kanaya at the time, after what was his first success since April of 2021 when he won the Token Homemate

Ceremonial start to International Series Oman at Al Mouj Golf



MUSCAT: The US\$2 million International Series Oman tournament was officially opened at Al Mouj Golf, with His Highness Sayyid Azzan bin Qais Al Said playing the ceremonial first shot during an official practice day on Tuesday ahead of the start of the four-day event on Wednesday.

Sayyid Azzan was given the honour of playing a chip shot onto the 18th green of the iconic coastline course, in front of VIPs and guests assembled on the hospitality platform, ahead of the four-day event from Thursday to Sunday.

This year's event features a host of world-class names, Major winners and LIV Golf players including recent LIV Golf Mayakoba win-

ner Joaquin Niemann, 2010 Open champion Louis Oosthuizen, 2011 Masters champion Charl Schwartzel and the cream of the Asian Tour. Sayyid Azzan said: "It was a great feeling, I had lots of adrenaline. Usually, the first tee shot is the ceremonial start but this time it was a chip. It was a lot of fun, and I managed to keep it on the green so I am very happy about that."

International Series Oman is the first of ten tournaments on The International Series, the Asian Tour-sanctioned pathway onto the LIV Golf League.

It is the second edition of the event, with Japan's Takumi Kanaya defending the title he won by four shots last year.

Cup, on the Japan Tour.

Last year was only his third start as a professional in an Asian Tour event, and it was his maiden appearance in an International Series tournament.

Furthermore, no player has successfully defended an Interna-

tional Series event, so on a course that he loves and respects so much - and was voted by his peers on the Asian Tour as the joint-best course of the year - there is an excellent window of opportunity to make waves on the coast of Oman once more.

U13 INTER-SCHOOL AND INTER-ACADEMY LEAGUES

ISWK, MCCC Yellow emerge champions

MUSCAT: Indian School Wadi Kabir (ISWK) edged past Indian School Muscat (ISM)-A by 23 runs in the final of Oman Cricket Inter-School Junior Domestic League 2023-24 at Municipality Grounds in Al Amerat recently.

ISWK posted 177 in 20 overs, thanks to half-centuries from Cleon Mello (66) and Vivaan Malhotra (66). Pranav NS picked two wickets for ISM. Pranav's 64 went in vain for ISM as they fell short by 23 runs. Ayush Shetty and Mohammed Akeel took two wickets each.

Easy win for MCCC Yellow

In the Oman Cricket Inter-Academy Junior (U13) Domestic League 2023-24, Muscat Cricket Coaching Centre (MCCC) Yellow trounced Boshier Sports Centre (BSC)-C by ten wickets in the final recently.

MCCC Yellow bundled BSC-C for paltry 88 in 16 overs. Pranav NS claimed three while Shrahan SM

bagged two wickets. Aditya Chaudhari was the top scorer with 32. MCCC Yellow's Shrahan (44) and Ayush Shetty (37) shared an unbroken opening wicket partnership to seal a comfortable victory.

Later, Oman Cricket officials presented the awards.

Individual awards: Inter-School: Best batter and best allrounder: Ayush Shetty (ISWK); best bowler: Jose Cherian (ISWK Lions).

Inter-Academy: Best batter and best allrounder: Ayush Shetty (MCCC Yellow), best bowler: Pranav NS (MCCC Yellow).

Brief scores: Inter-School: ISWK 177/5 in 20 overs (Vivaan Malhotra 66, Cleon Mello 66; Pranav NS 2/27) beat ISM-A 154/7 in 20 overs (Pranav NS 64; Mohammed Akeel 2/23). Inter-Academy: BSC-C 88 all out in 16 overs (Aditya Chaudhari 32; Pranav NS 3/8) lost to MCCC Yellow 89/0 in 10.3 overs (Shrahan SM 44, Ayush Shetty 37).



EUROPEAN FOOTBALL

PSG's Mbappe agrees to join Real Madrid in summer



PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) striker Kylian Mbappe has agreed to join Real Madrid this summer, *BBC Sport* reported on Tuesday.

The France captain, 25, has told PSG he intends to leave the club with his contract expiring in June.

Mbappe has not signed a contract with Real yet, but the deal could be announced once it is no longer possible for the clubs to meet in this season's Champions League. The World Cup winner is PSG's record goalscorer with 244 goals.

Mbappe wanted his future sort-

ed before March, so on 13 February, before training, he met PSG president Nasser Al Khelaifi and told him he was leaving and joining Real.

After reports emerged last Thursday that he would leave, Mbappe was left out of the starting lineup for Saturday's match against Nantes, but came off the bench to score a penalty as PSG went 14 points clear at the top of Ligue 1.

He is set to sign a five-year deal with Real, earning 15m euros (£12.8m) a season, plus a 150m euro (£128m) signing-on bonus to be

paid over five years, and he will keep a percentage of his image rights. Real manager Carlo Ancelotti has already thought about how he will use Mbappe in his team, with England midfielder Jude Bellingham playing a deeper role, Brazilian Vinicius Jr playing on the left and Mbappe playing left of centre.

If Croatia midfielder Luka Modric leaves this summer, then Mbappe would inherit the No.10 shirt he wears for France.

PSG are 2-0 up against Real Sociedad after the first leg of their Champions League last-16 tie,

while Real lead RB Leipzig 1-0.

Mbappe won the French title with Monaco before joining PSG as an 18-year-old in 2017, initially on loan before a 180m euros (£165.7m) move.

Overall, he has 244 goals and 93 assists in 291 games for PSG and has helped the club to five Ligue 1 title wins.

Mbappe was set to leave PSG on a free transfer at the end of the 2021-22 season but ultimately signed a two-year contract extension, with the option of a further year. - Agencies



GROWING JAPAN-OMAN RELATIONS

On the occasion of His Majesty the Emperor's birthday, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and people in Oman.

Japan got off to a difficult start of Year 2024 with an earthquake on Noto Peninsula. During this difficult time, we are all comforted by the thoughtful words from the world, which give us the courage to move towards recovery and reconstruction. I would like to take this opportunity to show my sincere gratitude for your support.

On the fifth anniversary of the accession of His Majesty last year, Their Majesties Emperor and Empress paid a State Visit to Republic of Indonesia. It was Their Majesties' first goodwill visit after ascending the throne and showed their enthusiasm to work in the international arena.

30 years ago in 1994, Their Majesties Emperor and Empress, then Crown Prince and Crown Princess made their first official overseas trip, including Oman. The long-standing relationship between the Imperial Family of Japan and the Royal Family of Oman was further cemented by their visit, and I am confident that it will last in the years to come.

Last year, we have witnessed growing bilateral interactions in various entities. A visit by Ms. YAMADA Miki, former State Minister of the Environment/Secretary General of the Japan-Oman Parliamentary Friendship Association was a symbolic event to demonstrate our diversified connections.

We cannot discuss Japan-Oman relationship without referring to our economic ties. A number of Japanese delegations visited Oman aiming for business opportunities in February and March and organised Japan-Oman business mission. We are privileged to announce some of the business will be materialised shortly.

Collaborative tourism sector between two countries has also



HE JOTA YAMAMOTO
AMBASSADOR OF JAPAN

been evolving these days. Saud Bahwan Group is now in full swing to open a Japanese renowned hotel in Muscat. Japanese-styled hot spring spa will be introduced in Ain Al Kasfa, Rustaq, a city rich in history and culture. Speaking of one-of-a-kind product from Japan, SEIKO opened its first boutique at Mall of Oman.

As Oman is gearing up for developing clean energy in line with Oman Vision 2040, Japanese companies stand in support of their efforts. Kobe Steel, Ltd. and Mitsui & Co., Ltd signed a deal with the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) for the production of direct reduced iron. Marubeni Corporation under Salalah H2 Consortium agreed with Hydrom on studies for Green Ammonia. What makes unique in our ties is the Japanese liquified hydrogen carrier's port call during its world tour.

Our interactions have extended to defence, sports, culture, academic sectors and more. Bilateral defence authorities dialogue paved the way for future cooperation and exchanges, followed by a recent visit of Admiral SAKAI Ryo, Chief of Staff, Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force. I was honoured to present the Japan Foreign Minister's Commendation to Oman Karate Committee in the presence of many distinguished Shura Council members last December.

An exhibition to showcase Japan's proud cuisine, sushi, was held in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth. A Japanese professor delivered lectures on international politics at National Defence College and Diplomatic Academy. Works by archaeologists at historic sites in Oman were huge success as in the previous years.

We made a leap forward in many fields, and I have to highlight that we could successfully resume a long-awaited Japanese language course for people in Muscat. After nearly four-year suspension, Oman-Japan Friendship Association (OJFA) welcomed a professional Japanese teacher in November and the course has already attracted many active learners.

OJFA underwent a transformation last year with a new Chairman, Sheikh Abdullah Mohamed Bahwan. I would show my great respect and appreciation to Sheikh Mohammed Saud Bahwan for his leadership during the tenure to steer his team towards success. I am committed to working close with Sheikh Abdullah and OJFA to bring our friendship to a next level.

As more and more people start to see Japan as their academic destination, the Embassy of Japan participated in the education fairs, GHEDEX and EduTrac Oman for the first time and staged a campaign 'study-in-Japan' to meet a high demand. At these events, strong interaction with people was also demonstrated by Omani alumni who studied in Japan. Their first-hand experiences motivated visitors, and I could reaffirm the importance of people-to-people ties.

Year 2023 concluded with another milestone event where Oman officially announced its participation for Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai. High ranking delegation has repeatedly visited Japan to prepare for the event and more is expected to follow this year. Expo 2025 showcases arts and culture of the world, and at the same time, it will serve as a catalyst for the closer bonds of people.

OJFA

Warm Wishes to His Majesty Emperor Naruhito of Japan on the occasion of his 64th birthday

ON BEHALF of all the Members of the Board of the Oman Japan Friendship Association (OJFA), I take this opportunity to convey warm and heartfelt greetings to His Majesty Emperor Naruhito of Japan on the auspicious occasion of his 64th birthday.

It is a matter of joy that this year, Oman is celebrating the fourth Anniversary of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's, Accession day. Oman under the wise and visionary leadership and guidance of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, is making rapid progress on all fronts, guided by Oman Vision 2040. We pray to the Almighty to bless His Majesty with good health and long life.

Celebrating the deep-rooted and long-standing relationship between Oman and Japan is the Oman Japan Friendship Association (OJFA). Established in January 1974, OJFA in close co-operation with the Embassy of Japan, has played a pivotal role in nurturing lasting bonds between the two great nations through a range of impactful events and activities in the fields of culture, society, economy, arts and science.

The friendship between Oman and Japan is truly inspiring. It is forged on shared values and mutual respect. It has weathered the test of time, fostering deeper understanding of each nation's rich and diverse culture and heritage. It is interesting to note that our two nations, Oman and Japan have accomplished a remarkable milestone of sharing this unique relationship for over 50 years. This friendship is testament to the passion, commitment and understanding that have continued to play a binding role over the years. The Oman Japan Friendship Association has been a distinct platform for cultural exchange and deeper, more meaningful people-to-people connections. The association in close co-operation with the Embassy



ABDULLAH MOHAMED BAHWAN: Chairman of the Board, Oman Japan Friendship Association

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of Japan has held several events that have showcased the inspiring heritage and culture of Japan, here in Oman.

Last year in November, the Ship for World Youth (SWY) Committee-Oman commenced the 14th SWYAA Global Assembly in Muscat under the patronage of H.E. Khalid Bin Hashil Al Muslahi, Undersecretary of the Administrative and Financial Affairs of Foreign Ministry.

141 alumni from 25 countries participated in the opening ceremony. SWY is the international youth exchange programme

sponsored by the Japanese government, and Oman has been one the most active participating countries.

In the same month, the Oman-Japan Friendship Association in co-operation with the Embassy of Japan, commenced the Japanese language course conducted by a native Japanese language speaker.

Apart from this, several activities like book launches, specialised workshops for children and more, offered people in Oman opportunities to understand, be inspired and absorb the subtle nuances about the Japanese culture.

Beyond cultural bonds, Oman and Japan have a long-time partnership in the area of trade. Through exports and imports both Oman and Japan have benefited with each other's strengths. Japanese advancements in engineering has led to exports of products like Machinery, Electronics, Steel, Iron, Automotive and more to Oman. Japanese companies have also made their presence felt in Oman through joint ventures in various sectors including the growing energy sector. Similarly Oman, a nation reputed for its oil and gas, aluminium and fishery products has remained one of the largest exporters of these products to Japan.

Today on this special occasion, the Oman Japan Friendship Association reiterates its commitment to taking this beautiful bond of friendship between Oman and Japan to even greater heights.

Once again, on behalf of all the Board members of the Oman Japan Friendship Association, I once again convey sincere greetings to His Majesty Emperor Naruhito on his 64th birthday.

On this special day, may God Almighty grant His Majesty good health and long life. And may the deep-rooted ties between Oman and Japan continue to be a source of inspiration.



OMAN JAPAN FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION

Congratulations and Warm wishes to the people of Japan on the occasion of the 64th Birthday of His Majesty Emperor Naruhito





**Inspiring Values.
Timeless Bond of Friendship.**

The two great nations Oman and Japan share a deep-rooted relationship built on trust and mutual respect. This relationship that has grown from strength to strength for centuries has also offered several opportunities for growth and success.

The Oman Japan Friendship Association has actively played a responsible role in bringing the people of both nations closer by celebrating the rich heritage and culture of Oman and Japan. Through periodic cultural events, book fairs and more, the association strives to foster a broader understanding, appreciation and friendship between the people of both the nations.

Today on this special occasion, the Oman Japan Friendship Association reiterates its commitment to taking this beautiful bond of friendship between Oman and Japan to even greater heights.

MARKET BUSINESS & FINANCE



OMAN CRUDE PRICE FALLS

The price of Oman oil has decreased, with prices for delivery by April 2024 reaching \$81.46, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil fell by \$1.31 from the price of Tuesday, which was \$82.77. - OMA



MSX INDEX ENDS LOWER

Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) general index 30 yesterday dropped 2.01 points, comprising a decline by 0.04 per cent to close at 4,579.49 points, compared to the last session, which stood at 4581.51 points. > B2

Omani food products draw huge crowd at Gulfood 2024 in Dubai

Marketing and sales officials of the participating Omani companies and factories emphasised on the pivotal role played by such international F&B events in enhancing the global presence of Omani products

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Omani companies and factories specialising in the food sector are capturing substantial attention and interest at Gulfood 2024 in Dubai, reflecting the quality and appeal of their offerings.

Represented by the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates



"Madayn", the Sultanate of Oman is actively present at this leading annual showcase for the global food and beverage industry.

Marketing and sales officials of the participating Omani companies and factories emphasised the pivotal role played by such international F&B events in enhancing the global presence of Omani products. The officials noted the promising prospects stemming from their participation, especially as they stand alongside a diverse range of regional and international counterparts, culminating in the signing of commercial contracts and agreements.

Commenting on the significance of participating in the event, Bader Al Rashidi, Marketing Manager at A'Saffa Foods, says, "Participating under the Sultanate's pavilion,

A'Saffa Foods is making its seventh appearance at Gulfood to connect with new clients, explore untapped markets, and stay abreast of latest technologies in poultry and food production. Our booth highlights a diverse range of products including meat, chicken, sausages, burgers, and frozen fruits and vegetables."

Abdullah Al Ghaithi, Sales Manager at Luban Foods (Delicio), emphasised how Gulfood helps broaden the company's product outreach by building connections with investors and business leaders globally. "Delicio, which is already present in the GCC markets, aims to expand its reach beyond the region through such international platforms. We can attain this goal owing to the exceptional quality and reputation of Omani



products, supported by positive feedback from visitors across the globe," Al Ghaithi pointed out.

Rami Al Lawati, CEO of Unique Food Solutions (Zaheb), said, "Our company, focusing on meat production, stands as a promising contributor to the Sultanate's food security. We are gradually aiming for global expansion, evident in our increased presence at Gulfood 2024."

Al Lawati continued, "From our participation together with the SMEs last year, we are proud this year to participate alongside major players in the food industry. This strategic move is expected to propel 'Zaheb' products into various GCC markets initially, with future plans for expansion into Asian and other promising markets. We extend our thanks to Madayn for their continued support to Omani factories,

which is crucial in enhancing our global market presence."

Mohammed Al Balushi, Business Development Manager at Areej Vegetable Oils and Derivatives, stated, "Our presence at Gulfood 2024 focuses on showcasing our new products, including ketchup and the latest line of olive oil. We have begun their production and distribution locally, and Gulfood 2024 serves as the ideal platform to introduce them globally, given its status as the world's largest event in the food and hospitality sector."

Al Balushi added, "This exhibition not only allows us to promote our products but also provides valuable insights into the latest trends in the food industry. Moreover, the event offers an excellent opportunity to network with

investors and producers worldwide, exploring new markets and expanding the reach for our oil products." Areej Vegetable Oils and Derivatives is garnering attention at Gulfood 2024 with its expansive lineup of products, featuring olive oil, ketchup, cooking oils, vegetable ghee, pure ghee, butter, and mayonnaise.

Malallah Al Hamadani, Marketing Director at Oman Foodstuff Factory (Al Mudhish), pointed out that the factory consistently prioritises showcasing the outstanding quality of Omani products at international events like Gulfood. "Our focus at Gulfood 2024 is geared towards achieving broader objectives such as effective marketing and promotion of our products, besides enhancing connections with investors, businessmen, distributors, and clients worldwide," Al Hamadani said.

It is worthwhile to mention that Madayn aims through the participation at Gulfood 2024 to reflect the objectives of the national 'Made in Oman' campaign by elevating awareness of Omani products on the global stage, accessing diverse consumer segments across regional and international markets, and fostering connections with key stakeholders in the global food industry.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Omantel unveils cloud dominance with launch of National Cloud

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Omantel, the leading provider of integrated telecommunication services in the Sultanate of Oman, has reiterated its leadership in cloud by forging a strategic partnership with Huawei, a global player in the cloud area, to build National Cloud. Huawei was selected on the basis of its track record in launching similar projects globally.

The alliance propels Omantel into a prominent position in the cloud arena, setting the stage for unparalleled advancements and achievements. It will empower Omantel to provide latest technology, global experience, data security and local data hosting to the entire nation, which includes government entities, state owned companies, financial sector, en-

ergy sector and SMEs, enabling them to accelerate digital transformation and thus support Oman's Digital Economy drive.

National Cloud is poised to elevate the landscape by providing tailored solutions for the entire nation, spanning various sectors such as Smart Cities, Smart Banking, Smart Campus, Government Data Solutions, Backup and Disaster Recovery, Medical Imaging, Smart Education, Digital Human Solutions, and more. These examples offer just a glimpse of the diverse benefits accessible to everyone in the transformed landscape.

Commenting on the partnership, Eng. Aladdin BaitFadhil, Chief Commercial Officer of Omantel, said, "We, at Omantel, continue to strengthen and enhance Omantel's comprehensive ecosys-



tem with the latest cloud technologies. We are confident that National Cloud will open new doors for our enterprise customers to delve into the future, while benefiting from the quality and security."

Omantel introduces cutting-edge technology into the cloud

project, ensuring data residency in Oman, and incorporating the highest industry standards for robust data security. Beside speeding up the National Digital Transformation program and contribute positively into the Digital Economy, the Oman Cloud Services Project

will enable different public and private sector entities to support the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

Qi Xiao, President, Middle East and Central Asia Cloud Business Huawei, said, "The history of partnership between Huawei and Omantel goes back to two decades and is manifested in some highly successful projects in Oman. We are pleased to have been selected to support Omantel in the National Cloud, a project of high national importance. Omantel is a trailblazer and leading provider of ICT services in Oman, playing a crucial role in the Sultanate's digital transformation. Huawei is thrilled to have been a steadfast long-term partner in driving Omantel's ambitious digital roadmap."

The new partnership comes on the heels of Omantel's success in

the integration of its operations, processes, and extensive expertise in the field of communications and digital technology, and achieving the status of a leading telecommunication company in the Sultanate of Oman and beyond.

The company's innovative approach has contributed to providing latest solutions to the entire nation. Omantel supports the Oman Vision 2040 objectives by investing in emerging technologies and providing cutting-edge solutions in modern technology, information and communications technology, such as cloud solutions, ICT solutions, AI, Smart solutions, cyber-security, and much more, in addition to harnessing its technological capabilities to enhance innovation and leadership in new and advanced technologies.

FINANCIAL INSTITUTION

Mashreq appoints Alsalt Al Kharusi as Country Head of Oman

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Mashreq, one of the leading financial institutions in the Mena region, which is currently working on the formation of its branch in Oman, has announced the appointment of Alsalt Mohammed Al Kharusi as the Country Head of Oman.

In his new role, Al Kharusi will be responsible for leading Mashreq Bank's strategy and operations in Oman, optimising the bank's performance, and ensuring compliance with local and international standards.

Bringing more than two decades of extensive experience in corporate and institutional banking to Mashreq, Al Kharusi will focus on enhancing client experiences, driving digital transformation, and fostering a culture of excellence and innovation.

Tarek El Nahas, Group Head of International Banking, Mashreq, said: "We are delighted to welcome Alsalt to the Mashreq family. Al Kharusi's remarkable track record in corporate and institutional banking, coupled with his strategic acumen and innovative mindset, aligns perfectly with our vision for growth and excellence. His leadership and expertise are crucial assets as we continue to expand and strengthen



our operations in the region. I am confident that under Alsalt's leadership, Mashreq will achieve new heights in service excellence and digital transformation."

Al Kharusi's career is marked by significant achievements and transformative leadership, including his distinguished tenure at Oman Arab Bank where he served as the General Manager Head of Corporate and Institutional Banking. Previously, Al Kharusi also served as Deputy General Manager and Head of Corporate Banking at HSBC Bank Oman. His experience in bringing future-focused stewardship, combined with his strategic vision, innovative approach, and commitment to excellence in customer service and risk management, positions him well to lead Mashreq's growth in Oman.

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MARKET

MSX index ends lower

Oman Fisheries, up 15.00 per cent, was the top gainer while DIDIC, down 9.09 per cent, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,579.49 points, down by 0.12 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.12 per cent at 446.72 points. Oman Fisheries, up 15.00 per cent, was the top gainer while DIDIC, down 9.09 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of OQGN were the most active in terms of number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 794 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of OMR2.66 million, with more than 15.02 million shares changing hands. Out of 48 traded securities, 20 advanced, 12 declined, and 16 remained unchanged. At the session close, domestic investors were net buyers for OMR167,000 while foreign investors were net sellers for OMR162,000, followed by GCC & Arab investors for OMR6,000 worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,201.79 points, down 0.42 per cent. Prices of Oman United Insurance, Al Madina Investments, Global Financial Investments, National Bank Oman, Al Sharqia Investment were up by 5.19 per cent, 4.17 per cent, 3.39 per cent, 2.00 per cent, 1.41 per cent respectively. Prices of DIDIC, Oman & Emirates Investment, Oman Arab Bank, Ominvest, Sohar International Bank were down by 9.09 per cent, 5.56 per cent, 4.35 per cent, 3.49 per cent, 0.91 per cent respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,513.22 points, up 0.18 per cent. Prices of Oman Fisheries, Muscat Thread Mill, Al Anwar Ceramics, Gulf International Chemicals, Raysut Cement were up by 15.00 per cent, 2.78 per cent, 2.22 per cent, 1.45 per cent, 0.82 per cent respectively. Prices of Jazeera Steel Products were down by 0.72 per cent respectively. - United Securities

OMAN STOCKS															
MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE															
INDICES															
Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff%									
MSX 30 INDEX	4,615.13	4,579.49	4,579.49	4,581.51	-2.01	-0.04									
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,281.07	7,201.79	7,201.79	7,232.50	-30.71	-0.42									
Industry Index	5,522.67	5,503.39	5,513.22	5,503.46	9.76	0.18									
Services Index	1,714.61	1,705.84	1,708.54	1,700.20	8.34	0.49									
MSX Shariah Index	447.17	446.18	446.72	446.18	0.53	0.12									
MSX TR INDEX	6,085.80	6,038.80	6,038.80	6,041.46	-2.66	-0.04									
FINANCIAL TR IDX	7,944.98	7,858.48	7,858.48	7,891.99	-33.51	-0.42									
SERVICES TR IDX	1,913.00	1,903.22	1,906.23	1,896.92	9.31	0.49									
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	5,899.59	5,878.99	5,889.49	5,879.07	10.42	0.18									
FIXED INCOME INDEX	992.89	992.89	992.89	992.89	0.00	0.00									
Trading Summary															
Volume	15,027,458	Turnover	2,661,785	Trades	794	Market Cap	23,799,408,200	Up	20	Down	12	Equal	16	Sec. Traded	48

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21

SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (MU)	DIFF %	LAST PR.	LAST BID	LAST OFF.	PAN VALUE	MARKET CAP	
REGULAR MARKET																
OM000001087	OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	550	159	1	0.284	0.284	0.284	0.270	0.014	5.185	0.284	0.000	0.284	0.100	28,400,000	
OM000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	104,097	6,286	5	0.060	0.061	0.060	0.061	0.000	0.000	0.060	0.061	0.060	0.000	12,200,000	
OM000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	493,321	90,653	49	0.183	0.186	0.181	0.184	0.180	0.004	2,222	0.184	0.184	0.185	40,480,000	
OM000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	70,940	18,289	9	0.258	0.260	0.255	0.250	0.005	2.000	0.255	0.258	0.255	0.100	414,618,321	
OM000002440	AL SHARQIA INVESTMENT HO.	13,201	946	2	0.071	0.072	0.071	0.072	0.001	1.408	0.072	0.071	0.072	0.100	6,480,000	
OM000004788	MADINA TAKAFUL	5,962	529	9	0.088	0.089	0.088	0.089	0.001	1.136	0.089	0.087	0.094	0.100	15,375,000	
OM000002796	BANK MUSCAT	685,153	184,304	46	0.269	0.269	0.268	0.269	0.000	0.000	0.269	0.269	0.269	0.100	20,919,220,810	
OM000002374	UNITED FINANCE	17,043	971	2	0.057	0.057	0.057	0.057	0.000	0.000	0.057	0.057	0.058	0.100	20,299,256	
OM000003026	OMAN TELECOM	538,703	565,341	43	1.081	1.086	1.080	1.080	0.000	0.000	1.080	1.085	1.080	0.100	810,000,000	
OM000000369	OCREDOO	50,000	17,000	2	0.340	0.340	0.340	0.340	0.000	0.000	0.340	0.330	0.340	0.100	221,321,038	
OM000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	113,367	10,063	19	0.089	0.090	0.088	0.089	0.000	0.000	0.089	0.088	0.089	0.100	17,767,568	
OM000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	4,000	684	1	0.171	0.171	0.171	0.171	0.000	0.000	0.171	0.170	0.171	0.100	9,405,000	
OM000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	326,184	134,767	17	0.420	0.420	0.410	0.412	0.002	-0.483	0.412	0.414	0.412	0.100	97,400,920	
OM000003178	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	24,000	6,600	3	0.275	0.275	0.275	0.275	-0.002	-0.722	0.275	0.275	0.275	0.100	34,860,000	
OM000003388	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	3,118,053	343,403	28	0.110	0.111	0.109	0.110	-0.001	-0.902	0.109	0.109	0.109	0.100	369,969,847	
OM000001152	OMAN NATIONAL ENGINEERING & INVESTMENT	10,000	1,180	1	0.118	0.118	0.118	0.120	-0.002	-1.667	0.118	0.118	0.120	0.100	17,700,000	
OM000001533	OMINVEST	49,325	20,745	13	0.430	0.430	0.415	0.415	0.430	-3.488	0.415	0.415	0.415	0.100	277,371,652	
OM000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	8,690	494	2	0.051	0.051	0.051	0.054	-0.003	-5.556	0.051	0.051	0.053	0.100	6,215,625	
Total		5,633,598	1,418,394	292												
Parallel Market																
OM000004925	ALBATAHA POWER	258,682	17,072	6	0.066	0.066	0.066	0.060	0.006	10.000	0.066	0.066	0.065	0.100	44,542,570	
OM000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	358,010	23,829	7	0.066	0.066	0.066	0.060	0.006	10.000	0.066	0.066	0.066	0.100	47,150,818	
OM000007084	MUSCAT CITY DESALINATION	27,551	2,084	3	0.078	0.078	0.075	0.074	0.004	5.405	0.078	0.075	0.078	0.100	12,132,931	
OM000001982	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	282,350	13,540	18	0.047	0.050	0.047	0.050	0.048	0.002	4.167	0.050	0.044	0.050	0.100	4,250,000
OM000002036	MUSCAT THREAD MILLS	540	40	1	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.002	2.778	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.100	1,188,378	
OM000002028	GULF INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS	21,000	1,470	2	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.000	0.000	0.070	0.067	0.071	0.100	1,470,000	
OM000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	853,818	61,540	34	0.072	0.073	0.072	0.073	0.001	1.389	0.073	0.072	0.074	0.100	15,038,000	
OM000004669	SHARQIYAH DESALINATION	361,781	53,905	10	0.149	0.149	0.149	0.147	0.002	1.361	0.149	0.140	0.149	0.100	14,572,522	
OM000001418	RAYSUT CEMENT	57,000	7,011	7	0.123	0.123	0.123	0.122	0.001	0.820	0.123	0.123	0.123	0.100	34,860,000	
OM000004972	QAS NETWORKS	4,794,448	695,309	246	0.144	0.147	0.144	0.145	0.001	0.694	0.145	0.145	0.145	0.100	627,940,468	
OM000003961	VOLTAMP ENERGY	5,755	1,106	3	0.194	0.195	0.182	0.195	0.194	0.001	0.515	0.195	0.182	0.195	0.100	15,873,538
OM000001095	DHOFAR INSURANCE	1,662	396	1	0.238	0.238	0.238	0.238	0.000	0.000	0.238	0.220	0.238	0.100	25,981,238	
OM000001190	NATIONAL GAS	54,080	4,188	10	0.078	0.078	0.077	0.077	0.000	0.000	0.077	0.070	0.077	0.100	6,545,000	
OM000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	26,000	1,118	3	0.043	0.043	0.043	0.043	0.000	0.000	0.043	0.043	0.040	0.100	13,207,292	
OM000001806	MUSCAT INSURANCE	440	163	1	0.370	0.370	0.370	0.370	0.000	0.000	0.370	0.000	0.370	1.000	4,079,267	
OM000002580	OMAN EDUCATION & TRAINING INVESTMENTS	2,000	850	1	0.425	0.425	0.425	0.425	0.000	0.000	0.425	0.425	0.425	0.100	29,750,000	
OM000003321	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	8,370	1,256	5	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.000	0.000	0.150	0.145	0.150	0.100	30,447,967	
OM000004420	BANK NIZWA	880,452	83,870	21	0.095	0.096	0.095	0.095	0.000	0.000	0.095	0.095	0.096	0.100	212,510,538	
OM000005943	PHOENIX POWER	375,910	20,675	31	0.055	0.055	0.055	0.055	0.000	0.000	0.055	0.055	0.056	0.100	80,443,080	
OM000007910	AMAN REAL ESTATE	1,000	94	1	0.094	0.094	0.094	0.094	0.000	0.000	0.094	0.094	0.094	0.100	18,800,000	
OM000008710	BARKA DESALINATION	10,000	1,180	1	0.118	0.118	0.118	0.118	0.000	0.000	0.118	0.000	0.118	0.100	8,911,566	
OM000008868	THE PEARL REEF	1,060	129	1	0.122	0.122	0.122	0.123	-0.001	-0.813	0.122	0.120	0.122	0.100	61,988,653	
OM000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	574,086	178,855	52	0.313	0.313	0.309	0.309	0.313	-0.004	-1.278	0.309	0.301	0.309	0.100	237,991,800
OM000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	100,000	4,500	3	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.000	0.000	-2.174	0.045	0.045	0.100	7,200,000	
OM000005260	OMAN ARAB BANK	238,621	26,442	10	0.115	0.115	0.110	0.110	0.115	-0.005	-4.348	0.110	0.106	0.110	0.100	183,633,100
OM000001509	DHOFAR INTERNATIONAL DEV. & INV. HO.	36,882	7,376	5	0.200	0.200	0.200	0.200	0.220	-0.020	-9.091	0.200	0.200	0.220	0.100	81,849,263
Total		9,291,478	1,206,377	483												

COLLABORATION

BankDhofar partners with The Entertainer to provide exciting offers to customers

MUSCAT: BankDhofar, the leading bank in Oman, has partnered with The Entertainer, the lifestyle savings app, to offer exclusive offers to its customers. Accessed through BankDhofar's Entertainer mobile app, Al Riadah (credit & debit cards) and Al Rifaa credit cardholders can enjoy several instant discounts, from personalised deals to thousands of exclusive 2 for 1 offers throughout Oman and GCC.



This collaboration reflects BankDhofar's commitment to providing its customers with unparalleled value and enriching their lives through unique experiences. Through the BankDhofar Entertainer app, the cardholders will unlock a world of savings on everyday activities, from enjoying delicious meals at top restaurants to thrilling adventures and relaxing spa treatments.

Bilal Faiz Al Raiisi, AGM- Cards & Bancassurance of BankDhofar said: "We are glad to partner with TheEntertainer and bring

their comprehensive platform of benefits to our valued customers. This collaboration aligns perfectly with our commitment to exceeding customer expectations and providing our Al Riadah and Al Rifaa customers with rewarding experiences beyond traditional banking services."

Vaibhav Goel, Chief Revenue Officer (B2B) of The Entertainer added, "We are extremely excited to collaborate with BankDhofar. It reflects a shared understanding that fantastic value can be unlocked when creating a unique app with BankDhofar. The Entertainer

brings all benefits and exciting offers forming a seamless and intuitive customer banking experience."

To activate the BankDhofar Entertainer App benefits, BankDhofar customers simply need to download the BankDhofar's Entertainer app and register using their BankDhofar's Al Riadah (credit & debit cards) and Al Rifaa credit cards details. They will then have instant access to a multitude of exciting offers, making every day an opportunity to save and discover something new.

BankDhofar's Entertainer Mobile App includes various offers, including food and beverage, attraction and leisure, beauty and fitness, fashion and retail and everyday services in Oman and GCC. It's one of many features that continue to make its customers' lives easier and more rewarding. The Entertainer offers are available for Al Riadah and Al Rifaa cardholders on the BankDhofar's Entertainer Mobile App.

CUSTOMER-CENTRIC

Bank Nizwa enhances its retail platform

MUSCAT: Continuing to stay abreast with technological advancements, Bank Nizwa, the leading and most trusted Islamic bank in the Sultanate of Oman, recently formalised a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Avanza, aiming to take advantage of the advanced Avanza platform to manage operations and customer service of the bank.

With a diverse array of transformative modules, the integration will empower Bank Nizwa to further optimise its procedures, boost operational effectiveness, and take customer experiences to new enhanced levels. Grounded in the principles of Sharia, this move exemplifies the bank's modern approach in staying attuned to the dynamic needs of its customers.

Commenting on this agreement, Mohamed Al Ghassani, Deputy General Manager Retail Banking at Bank Nizwa said, "At Bank Nizwa, we consistently strive for excellence, and staying true to this, we have actively pursued technologies that em-





LIFESTYLE

RESEARCHERS

Experts

EXPLAIN

at the University

WHY

of Bristol shared that

BLUEBERRIES

blueberries' blue colour

ARE BLUE

is created by small external structures

IN COLOUR

in their wax coatings

This applies to many fruits of the same colour, such as damsons, sloes, and juniper berries.

The finding, published in *Science Advances*, explains why blueberries appear blue despite the dark red pigments on their skin.

Their blue colour is generated by a layer of wax that surrounds the fruit and is composed of microscopic structures that scatter blue and UV light. This gives blueberries their blue appearance to humans and blue

UV to birds. The chromatic blue-UV reflectance arises from the interaction of the randomly arranged crystal structures of the epicuticular wax with light.

Rox Middleton, Research Fellow at Bristol's School of Biological Sciences, explained, "The blue of blueberries can't be 'extracted' by squishing - because it isn't located in the pigmented juice that can be squeezed from the fruit. That was why we knew that there must be something strange about the colour.

"So we removed the wax and re-crystallised it on the card and in doing so we were able to create a brand new blue-UV coating."

The ultra-thin colourant is around two microns thick, and although less reflective, it's visibly blue and reflects UV well, possibly paving the way for new colourant methods.

"It shows that nature has evolved to use a really neat trick, an ultrathin layer for an important colourant," added Rox.

Most plants are coated in a thin

layer of wax which has multiple functions, many of which scientists still don't understand. They know that it can be very effective as a hydrophobic, self-cleaning coating, but it's only now they realise how important the structure is for visible colouration.

Now the team plans to look at easier ways of recreating the coating and applying it. This could lead to a more sustainable, biocompatible and even edible UV and blue-reflective paint.

Furthermore, these coatings could have the same multiple func-

tions as natural biological ones that protect plants.

Rox added, "It was really interesting to find that there was an unknown colouration mechanism right under our noses, on popular fruits that we grow and eat all the time.

"It was even more exciting to be able to reproduce that colour by harvesting the wax to make a new blue coating that no one's seen before.

"Building all that functionality of this natural wax into artificially engineered materials is the dream! -ANI

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Nama Water Services organises beach cleaning initiative in Seeb

The campaign drew participation from Nama Water Services, the Environment Society of Oman, students from Schools, and many citizens and residents



MUSCAT: Deepening its commitment to the local community by building on its existing initiatives, Nama Water Services (represented by the Hematkom Team) recently organized a campaign to clean up A'Seeb Beach in cooperation with the Environment Society of Oman.

The campaign drew participation from Nama Water Services, the Environment Society of Oman, students from Schools, and many citizens and residents.

On the importance of the initiative, Taqi Mohammed Al Lawati, Chief Human Resources and Culture Officer at Nama Water Services, noted: "At Nama Water Services, we understand our responsibility to promote and embed community culture within society. We believe that it is an integral part that is no less important than our responsibilities in developing the services provided in the water sector.

He added: "Our inaugural community initiative, the Seeb Beach Cleanup Campaign, brought to-



gether the Environment Society of Oman, enthusiastic school students, and dedicated citizens and residents, leaving a lasting positive impact on the environment. We look forward to organizing more community initiatives this year."

He elaborated that these initiatives cultivate a strong volunteer ethic among employees and community members while fostering an environment of meaningful participation and collaboration between companies, civil society organizations, and individuals,

enhancing the sense of shared responsibility among different segments of society.

On the participation of school students in the campaign, he added that this initiative ignites a passion for volunteerism in young minds, equipping them with the skills and values to become active citizens. Our students' enthusiasm and commitment towards this campaign has been a driving force behind its progress."

He concluded by saying: "We extend our sincere gratitude to

the Environment Society of Oman for its participation and support, the school administration and students who participated in the campaign, and everyone who contributed to the success of this initiative from the public, private, and community sectors."

The campaign began at 7:00 am, with participants gathering at A'Seeb Beach to begin the cleaning process and collect waste in designated areas. The campaign covered the beach area in the Wilayat of Seeb, an area frequented by

citizens and residents for exercise, recreation, and relaxation.

On the Participation of the Environment Society of Oman, Suad Al Harthy, Executive Director of the society, said: "We are pleased to participate in this environmental initiative, which aligns with the goals of the Environment Society of Oman and our role as one of the civil society organizations that are concerned with the preservation and protection of the environment. We recognize our pivotal role in fostering community awareness about environmental issues. By collaborating on diverse initiatives, we strive to minimize our impact and maximize our contribution to a sustainable future."

Environment Society of Oman, as the only non-profit organization dedicated to protecting the environment and preserving its resources in the Sultanate, has been building a culture of sustainability for 16 years by educating and empowering communities. For more information about supporting the efforts of the society or to contribute in the initiatives, visit seo.org.om.

"We would like to express our sincere thanks and gratitude to the organizers of this initiative

from Nama Water Services. This initiative sets a commendable example for broader engagement in environmental protection. We invite public and private entities to contribute to safeguarding our environment within the Sultanate of Oman." Suad Al Harthy added.

This collaboration between educational institutions and entities like Nama Water Services cultivates students' understanding and appreciation for volunteerism that transcends organizational boundaries. It reinforces the concept of shared responsibility for community well-being.

Mariam Al Farsi, an employee at Nama Water Services, expressed her deep appreciation for the opportunity to participate in the campaign, she was particularly impressed by the collaborative spirit, seeing students, the Environment Society of Oman, and fellow community members all working together with enthusiasm to clean the beach. She underscored the lasting value of volunteer work, emphasizing that its impact transcends the immediate act and carries deeper dimensions that benefit the community and individuals far into the future.

PABLO DEL VAL, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, ART DUBAI

Art Dubai 2024: Shaping future of global contemporary art

How does your past experience influence your outlook for 2024, and what is the critical element in your strategy to guarantee the success of Art Dubai?

The cultural scene in Dubai is booming, reflecting the growth in both the city and the wider Gulf region. It's also maturing quickly - a combination of long-term investment, grass-roots initiatives and the key ingredient of time. In recent years, we have worked hard to very clearly define what Art Dubai is, and the communities we represent - what we do is unique, both in the region, but also in terms of the international art scene. Visitors to Art Dubai this year who haven't been for many years will notice a significant shift in the volume and quality of the programme, with a strengthened gallery roster, as well as a significantly expanded programme, talks and workshops. This is all achieved through partnerships and collaboration plus long-range strategic thinking - the aim being to ensure the success of Art Dubai for years to come.

Art Dubai has become a beacon for contemporary art from the Global South, offering a vibrant alternative to Western-centric narratives. Can you elaborate on how Art Dubai has succeeded in amplifying voices and narratives from the Global South within the contemporary art scene?

Art Dubai has always been a window to the "Global South", offering a glimpse into the rich community of artistic voices that shape it. Our guided curation across the fair's sections - Contemporary, Art Dubai Modern, Art Dubai Digital and Bawwaba - is a nod to our home city's distinctive identity and its diverse cultures. We are proud to champion art from regions including Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, South Asia and Southeast Asia and we have been doing this for nearly two decades.

What truly distinguishes us is our unwavering commitment to placing often-overlooked perspectives at the heart of the fair's programming. Over 65% of our presentations originate from the Global South, so we stand in contrast to any other international art fairs, which have a heavy reliance on what one might term the traditional Western art centres. Other art fairs have a much more regional focus. We are proud to be



truly global and our goal is to leave visitors with an authentic experience of the artistic vibrancy of the artists and galleries from across the Global South.

In 2024, we're exploring the concept of the 'Global South' across more than 120 presentations drawn from over 60 cities and more than 40 countries. The diversity is striking, with contributions from places as varied as Sao Paulo, Cairo, Tehran, Beirut, New Delhi, Seoul, and Buenos Aires, just to name a few, but also highlighting the communities and artists whose experiences may be defined as "Global South" but who are based in more traditional art centres.

And we're seeing the impact of Art Dubai on the evolution of the region's contemporary art scene, not just at the fair itself but also throughout the UAE, which is buzzing with exhibitions everywhere - from galleries, museums, national institutions, festivals and independent art organisations, as well as an extensive talks and conference programme, highlighting the appetite and opportunity there is for cultural education and learning here. From gallery openings in Al Quoz and DIFC, exhibitions at Jameel Art Centre and Ishara Art Foundation in Dubai, to venues like Sharjah Art Foundation, Louvre Abu Dhabi, and 421, there are so many reasons to visit the UAE during Art Dubai Week.

The Global Art Forum at Art Dubai 2024 is themed around "Whether or Not," focusing on the relationship between extreme weather and cultural responses. How does this theme contribute to broader discussions within the art world, and what outcomes do you hope to achieve through this forum



Artists have a significant influence in raising awareness and even inspiring action, including on urgent issues such as climate change. In this context, Art Dubai plays a key role in bringing the art communities of the Global South together in dialogue through initiatives such as the Global Art Forum.

Under this year's theme "Whether or Not", the forum will look into the cultures, technologies, sciences and initiatives surrounding extreme weather and change. Together with renowned artists, architects, academics, curators, and thinkers, its Commissioner Shumon Basar and Curator Nadine El-Khoury, have set out to shape an important debate on the future of our planet. It will be both insightful and thought-provoking to hear from speakers such as Dr. Stephanie Rosenthal, Director of the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi Project in Abu Dhabi, Anne Holtrop, Architect from Muharrag

(Amsterdam), Monira Al Qadiri, Artist based in Berlin, Samir Bantal, Architect and Director AMO at OMA in Rotterdam, Nadia Christidi, Researcher, and Arts Practitioner from MIT, Cambridge (Massachusetts), among others.

The Modern and Collector Talks at Art Dubai 2024 focus on exploring the impact of Soviet geopolitics on artistic developments in the Global South. How do these historical connections continue to shape contemporary art practices, and what role do they play in fostering cultural exchange and understanding?

We're collaborating with Dubai Collection, the first institutional collection of the city of Dubai, to deliver a series of Modern and Collector and extend our ongoing dialogue with Dubai's creative community. In 2024, the Art

forces with the Public Art Strategy to reveal a large-scale public art project led by a regional artist in the city.



The A.R.M. Holding Children's Programme, now in its fourth year, aims to engage young minds in creative exploration and critical thinking. The A.R.M. Holding Children's Programme at Art Dubai 2024 is set to reach over 15,000 students across the UAE. How does this initiative empower young participants to envision and shape the future of their cities through artistic expression and environmental stewardship?

The fair isn't just about the sale of the best art to top collectors; it's a platform to educate the next generation and one we take very seriously. One of our proudest initiatives in this space, now in its fourth year, is the A.R.M. Holding Children's Programme. Led this year by Indian artist Sahil Naik, it aims to ignite inspiration in young minds through art-making workshops, encouraging active participation in building and designing their cities. After the fair, the programme will reach over 15,000 children in 100 schools across the UAE, making it the most ambitious unified art education initiative in the region.

Our collaboration with A.R.M. Holding reflects a shared commitment to community development and artistic advancement in the region. Together, we design and implement joint programmes focused on educating and involving children in art education, contributing to larger societal impact and artistic enrichment.

The roots of the A.R.M. Holding Children's Programme trace back to the Sheikh Manal Little Artists Programme in 2012. Initially crafted to introduce young audiences to the world of art, it has evolved with each edition. Past collaborations have featured innovative artists like Cyrus Kabiru and Jacob Dahlgren, leading workshops that encouraged unconventional art techniques, such as transforming everyday objects into artworks.

In a similar vein, our flagship Campus Art Dubai professional development and traineeship programme has, over the past decade, provided opportunities for 400 alumni to engage with cultural initiatives and leading organisations. It has made a real impact on the foundational development of a dynamic cultural ecosystem.

ROUND-UP

Malabar Gold ranks 19th in Global Powers of Luxury Goods report

With an expansive retail presence spanning 13 countries across Asia, Europe, North America, and Australia, the brand's significant footprint played a pivotal role in securing this esteemed position

MUSCAT: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, an esteemed Indian brand, has clinched the 19th spot on the prestigious Global Powers of Luxury Goods 2023 list, marking its debut as the highest-ranking Indian international brand.

With an expansive retail presence spanning 13 countries across Asia, Europe, North America, and Australia, the brand's significant footprint played a pivotal role in securing this esteemed position.

Joining Malabar Gold & Diamonds on the global stage are various distinguished Indian watch and jewellery brands, each making notable appearances within the Top 100 rankings. Titan Company Ltd claimed the 24th position, while Kalyan Jewellers and Joy Alukkas secured the 46th and 47th

spots, respectively. Senco Gold & Diamonds and Thangamayil Jewellery also earned their places on the list, ranking 78th and 98th, respectively.

The release of the highly anticipated Global Powers of Luxury Goods 2023 report, published by Deloitte, saw luxury giant Louis Vuitton reigning supreme atop the list. This annual report meticulously evaluates the top players in the global luxury goods sector, ranking the top 100 brands based on annual sales figures, brand value, and various other factors. Notable global brands such as Kering SA, The Estee Lauder Companies, Chanel, and Hermes also featured prominently in the top 10 luxury retailers.

France emerged as the foremost

hub for luxury, boasting seven companies within the Top 100 list and collectively contributing to nearly a third of sales.

This comprehensive report, which is compiled based on data available in the public domain, examines and ranks the top 100 largest brands operating in various luxury goods sectors such as jewellery, watches, cosmetics & handbags based on annual sales figures, brand value and several other factors. The report also provides detailed insights into the luxury goods market, including trends, challenges, digital innovations, impact of Millennial & Gen Z demography, emphasis on sustainability and other opportunities, providing a key insight into the sector's performance last year.



PREMIER BEACH LOUNGE

Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah introduces SiO2 The Beach Lounge in Muscat

MUSCAT: Poised to become Muscat's premier beachfront destination, Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah, the leading dining destination in Muscat is introducing a new venue to complete its 13 existing dining offerings.

The SiO2 The Beach Lounge is set to redefine the coastal experience in Muscat, as the city's hot-spot for a feet-in-the-sand experience. Elegantly set on the edge of the 500m long stretched beach of Al Bandar hotel, opposite the resort's two dining venues Capri Court and Chow Mee, the SiO2 Beach Lounge draws its name from the very elements that make up the sandy shores - quartz, silicon and oxygen. This synthesis of nature serves as inspiration for a place where the elements of earth, breeze and sea converge to create an unforgettable afternoon and evening atmosphere.

The inspiration

The brainchild of the Area General Manager, Rene D. Egle and inspired by contemporary island beach lounges and elegantly combined with the beautiful views of the Gulf of Oman, SiO2 boasts a thoughtfully designed space with a thatched roof bar made from palm tree leaves. The combination of beach and contemporary furniture with light grey tones paired



with blue and grey cushions adds a glamour touch to the dramatic sunset setting behind the Hajar mountains. The white drapes around the rattan cozy lounge bring a light and yet cozy sense of place to the venue for a warmer experience. The beach lounge can cater for 70 guests while keeping the venue intimate and exclusive.

A creative menu

The menu is crafted to revive guests' senses with a creative blend of cocktails and mocktails to enhance guests' palate - all inspired by the four elements of nature - fire, water, earth, and air. The "Above the Clouds" and "The Flying Bird" cocktails, influenced by the air element, feature frankincense and a phoenix feather for a mythical touch. Under the fire element, savour the "Scarlet Glow" or opt for the non-alcoholic "Shazam! Mocktail," our unique classic passion fruit mojito.

The expertly curated beach lounge menu ensures an exquisite à la carte offering available daily from 5pm until 1am.

Complementing the beverage selection, SiO2 offers a tantalising array of light bites including hot and cold Mezze as well as arancini or prawn tempura, for an enhanced beachside experience, perfectly paired with the beverage selections. For shisha enthusiasts, SiO2 presents a unique opportunity to indulge in this cherished tradition right by the beach. Guests are welcomed to revel in the flavours as they unwind in the gentle sea breeze late afternoon. To top it off, the evening is

crowned with the sounds of our resident DJ, spinning the best chill-out and acoustic beats as well as seasonal entertainment throughout the year. There is no entrance fee for Muscat's diners who wish to visit us.

"SiO2 The Beach Lounge represents our commitment to providing not just a beach lounge but an experience that encapsulates the essence of luxury and relaxation. SiO2 is not just a place; it's a feeling, a destination where the rhythm of the night meets the tranquillity of the sea," shared Rene D. Egle, Area General Manager for Shangri-La Muscat, Oman.

In a city known for its rich culture and stunning vistas, you can step into the captivating spirit of the Middle East at SiO2 The Beach Lounge and experience the laid-back charm of Oman, where nature, entertainment, and varied gastronomy come together to create an unparalleled seaside escape.

SiO2 The Beach Lounge, located at Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah, Muscat is open daily from 5pm to 1am with live entertainment and an A la Carte menu (beverage selections and light bites) as well as shisha options.

Sunset RoséApéro takes place daily from 5pm to 6pm with 30% discount on our Rosé collection of beverages.

WORLD RALLY TEAM

Toyota Gazoo Racing one-two after fast full day of Monte Action



MUSCAT: Recently Toyota Gazoo Racing World Rally Team duo Elfyn Evans and Sébastien Ogier scored the first and second positions at Rallye Monte-Carlo with just 4.5 seconds between them after the first full day of stages on Friday.

After winning both of Thursday night's opening stages, Evans brought a lead of 15.1s into Friday and would demonstrate typically consistent pace throughout the day, where he was never outside of the top three stage times.

Ogier began the day third overall and claimed his first stage win of the rally in SS4 by one second over Evans, before a stunning time in SS5 where he was 11.2s faster

than anyone else. That promoted him up to second place and within 10.7s of his team-mate at the end of the morning loop.

The GR Yaris Rally HYBRID pair were closely matched in the first two stages of the afternoon, before Ogier recorded another stage win in the dark final test to further close the gap. It remains a three-way contest for the lead with Thierry Neuville (Hyundai) 11.6s behind Ogier.

Takamoto Katsuta was one of many drivers to be caught out on a particularly icy corner in the morning's first stage, and required the help of spectators to get back on the road. Having lost around five minutes, he is 12th overall.

KEY EXECUTIVES

Top management team from Europcar Mobility Group HQ in Paris visits new headquarters in Muscat

MUSCAT: Europcar Oman & Bahrain announced the recent visit of its top management team from Europcar Mobility Group HQ in Paris to the newly established Europcar Oman & Bahrain Headquarters in Muscat, Oman.

The delegation consisted of key executives, including the Group Chief Sales Officer Jose Blanco, the Group Director of International Partner Development Mark Lister and the Franchise Regional Director for the Middle East and Africa- Saif Salim.

The purpose of the visit was to strengthen the collaboration between Europcar Mobility Group and its franchise partner for over 35 years, Europcar Oman & Bahrain, and to explore new opportunities for growth in the region.

During the visit, the executives engaged in strategic discussions and exchanged ideas on enhancing



customer experiences, expanding service offerings, and optimising operational efficiency.

They were also captivated by the remarkable features of the facilities at our headquarters. The Employee Gaming Center, Energizer Lounge, Health & Fitness Spa, and the Networking Hub all garnered enthusiastic praise.

They experienced the grandeur

of the boardroom while engaging with dynamic live presentations bringing them up-to date with the latest business events and plans in the pipeline.

They also thoroughly enjoyed the warm Omani hospitality at the dinner hosted by Rishi Khimji Managing Director of Ajit Khimji group, the franchise owner of Europcar in Oman & Bahrain.

WHISPERS OF COLOUR

ABQ Education Group hosts art exhibition for charity

MUSCAT: ABQ Education Group is excited to host its inaugural student art exhibition, Whispers of Colour, at the Mall of Muscat from Thursday, 29 February to Saturday, 2 March. This unique showcase features outstanding artwork crafted by their students from ABQ Azzan Bin Qais (MQ Campus), ABQ Seeband ABQ Sohar, encompassing students of various ages.

Beyond showcasing talent, the ABQ students also embody the group's motto, 'we care,' as they will generously make their artworks available for purchase with all proceeds being donated to Dar AlAtta'a, a distinguished charity organisation known for its remarkable contributions to Oman and global projects over many years.

Humayun Kabir, CEO of ABQ



Education Group, emphasised the significance of a well-rounded education that prepares students for the real world. He stated, "Through this opportunity, students were not only able to unleash their creativity but also developed essential skills such as

time management, initiative and productivity. Witnessing their artworks framed and displayed for the community's appreciation is a reward in itself, coupled with the fulfilment of giving back to those in need."

Whispers of Colour marks the grand finale of a month-long celebration of art across ABQ's international schools. The selection process involved curating the finest works from each institution, culminating in the upcoming exhibition at the Mall of Muscat.

This initiative was spearheaded by ABQ Sohar's art teacher, Mariette Peens, an extraordinary artist herself. Reflecting on this initiative, Peens stated, "Cultivating an appreciation for the beauty that surrounds us should be ingrained in our daily lives."



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