LET'S TALK
Times OF OMAN

## OMAN, FINLAND REVIEW TIES IN ECONOMIC FIELD

Dr. Said Mohammed Al Saqri, Minister of Economy received in his office yesterday Ville Skinnari, Minister for Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade of Finland. >A5

## HM GREETS PRESIDENT OF ITALY

**MUSCAT:** His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Sergio Mattarella of the Italian Republic on being re-elected as a President of his country for a new presidential term. In the cable, His Majesty expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes of success to President Mattarella in leading the Italian people towards further progress and welfare. His Majesty also wished the relations between the two countries further development and prosperity. - ONA

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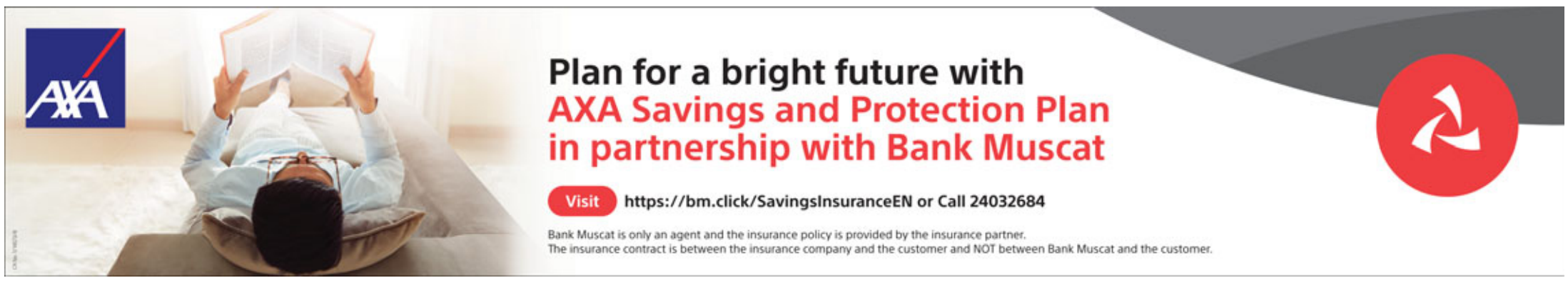


TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

### Good time to send money home

1 Expats from South Asian countries who wish to send money back home are presently able to get very good rates for the Omani Rial, owing to its exchange values remaining high. Indians in Oman who wish to send money home can get INR195 for every Rial they exchange, with exchange rates hovering around that value for the fourth day in a row. >A3

WORLD

### Storm Malik pounds Northern Europe

2 A fierce storm continued to pound northern Europe on Sunday, causing coastal surges and forcing public transport to be cancelled. The storm system, which is known as Nadia in Germany and Malik in other countries, intensified a day earlier bringing hurricane-level winds at times to the North Sea and Baltic Sea coastlines. >A6

MARKET

### NBO hosts Indian ambassador

3 Continuing to pave the way for international relations, the National Bank of Oman (NBO) hosted Amit Narang, the Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman, at its headquarters in Azaiba where the envoy met with the bank's Chief Executive Officer, Abdullah Al Hinai, and other members of the senior management. >B1

# INCENTIVES GALORE FOR INVESTORS IN OMAN

The authority's objectives in creating economic engines that afford comparative and competitive advantages in Oman will help achieve balanced, diversified and sustainable economic development, Dr Ali bin Masoud Al Sunaidi, chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones told Majlis Al Shura

These measures will add local value and create more jobs for Omani youth

*Times News Service*

**MUSCAT:** Customs exemptions on raw materials and equipment imported by companies, exemptions on corporate income tax, 100 per cent foreign capital for investment projects, removal of restrictions on import, trade and transfer to foreign countries and granting of long-term usufruct rights over State-owned lands are some of the incentives being offered to investors in Oman's special economic zones (SEZs) and free zones.

The incentives available to investors were elaborated before the Majlis Al Shura by Dr Ali bin Masoud Al Sunaidi, chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones.

During the meeting with the Shura Council, Al Sunaidi also explained at length the need to invest in free zones and SEZs, and the benefits they can bring.

"The authority's objectives in creating economic engines that afford comparative and competitive advantages in Oman will help achieve balanced, diversified and sustainable economic development by encouraging the setting up of large factories and making use of locally available natural resources, including oil and gas, renewables, metal ores, and fisheries," he said during the meeting.

"This in turn will help increase added local value, create job opportunities – both directly and indirectly – among the local workforce and boost tourism in these areas," added Al Sunaidi.

The Shura members were also shown a presentation on the success stories free zones and SEZs can achieve, through a case study on the zone at Duqm, which is being developed as a central node in Oman's non-oil future, featuring companies specialising in renewable energy, hydrocarbons, logistics and export-driven industries. >A4

## *Fast track residency for Duqm investors*

**DUQM:** The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) has launched investor residency fast track service, which will be accessible via the one-stop-station, both for immediate registration of commercial register and the investment license in the same day.

The service benefits from ongoing coordination between the Authority and the Royal Oman Police (ROP). Earlier, OPAZ coordinated with the departments concerned to grant long term residency visas for periods ranging between 5 and 10 years. The service was offered to foreign investors with high added value businesses that contribute to the employment of jobseekers and the development of small and medium enterprises.

Dr. Said Khalifa Al Tuweirshi, In-charge of the tasks at OPAZ, pointed out that the new service will enable investors registered with OPAZ to submit residency visa requests to obtain the investment license via the portal.

Since Royal Decree No. 105/2020 was issued, OPAZ unveiled fast visa e-services in all of its zones. -ONA

WIDE SPECTRUM

## Bilarab Bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design gathers momentum

**MUSCAT:** For the third week in a row, Bilarab Bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design continued to attract inputs from Omani youth who showcased a wide spectrum of designs this year, notably to highlight the significance of the seaport enclave of Wilayat of Muttrah.

The aim is to erect a landmark symbolising the past 50 years of renaissance in the Sultanate of Oman, as well as the launch of the country's flagship development programme, Oman Vision 2040.

In an approximate area of 7,500 sqm, the seafront site comprises Port Sultan Qaboos and boasts a wide view of captivating natural scenery that has for ages been a tourist hotspot, besides its historical and cultural prominence in Omani civilisation. >A3

AMAZING OMAN

## Discovering the mysteries of Empty Quarter with Guide Oman

Balz Abplanalp with his friend Hani Al-Zubair

*Times News Service*

**MUSCAT:** When Balz Abplanalp, Ambassador of the Swiss Confederation to the Sultanate of Oman, was sitting under the starry sky amidst the vast expanse of the desert dunes in the Empty Quarter, he got the feeling as if he was on a visit to another planet. It was like a world where everything seemed straight from the pages of a fiction and where the silence of the desert was broken only by the wind.

"When you stand on top of a sand dune and the wind hits your face, you feel as if you are on the top of the world," said Balz Abplanalp.

Last November, the Swiss envoy had gone on a desert escapade to the Empty Quarter with Guide Oman. Located in the Wilayat of Al Mazyona, the Empty Quarter is known for some of the largest sand dunes in the world. One of the largest deserts in the world, the Empty Quarter is teeming with wildlife, ranging from reptiles to various birds of prey and smaller mammals. Exploring the area is only possible by 4WD vehicle. It is recommended to go as part of a group with more than one car just in case one gets stuck in the sand.

Talking about his first impressions of Oman's deserts, Balz Abplanalp said that the trip was more exciting and unique for him as he hasn't seen deserts in Switzerland.

"While we crossed the huge dunes during the day and at night, we would spend time under the stars totally disconnected with the world," he said.

Given the demanding geography of the region, the 80-member team in 50 cars not only crossed the high sand dunes but also adapted to the desert weather.

Reminiscing the adventures, Mohammed Al Zadjali, an expedition team member of Guide Oman, said that though he has made several trips to the Empty Quarter in the past, this was certainly one of the most memorable ones.

"There were about 50 cars and almost 80 people. Balz Abplanalp had flown from Muscat to Salalah and took a car from Salalah to Thumrait. From the base camp in Thumrait, we travelled further deep inside the Empty Quarter and reached Al Hishman. As you drive through the spectacular sand dunes of Al Hishman, you can see the changing colours of the dunes.

Since this was his first experience of the Empty Quarter, Balz Abplanalp knew that there would be several challenges for him.

"There were challenges but with every challenge we got better and felt better. And whenever there was any problem the excellent rescue team from Guide Oman immediately came to help. In the Empty Quarter it was as if I was in an environment of science fiction with a strange beauty all around. Sitting with my Omani friends by the fire and under the open skies and talking and eating leisurely added to the charm," said Balz Abplanalp while sharing his experiences.

Despite the challenges, Mohammed Zadjali said that the team's spirit always remained high. "The weather gets harsher as we get deeper into the desert, but we were determined to not get demotivated."

Balz Abplanalp remembers how mesmerising it was for him to see the beauty and the geometrical shapes of the sand dunes.

"It was a feast to the eyes." A trip that gave him a chance to witness nature in its purest form shall forever remain etched in his heart and mind.

# OMAN

PRAYER TIMINGS

| | |
|---|---|
| Dhuhr | 12:25pm |
| Asr | 3:35pm |
| Maghrib | 5:58pm |
| Isha | 7:10pm |
| Fajr (Tomorrow) | 5:30am |

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CONSULTATIVE MEETING

## Kuwait Crown Prince meets Arab Foreign Ministers

**KUWAIT:** Sheikh Mishal Al Ahmed Al Jaber Al Sabah, Deputy Emir, Crown Prince of the State of Kuwait on Sunday received the Arab foreign ministers participating in the consultative meeting, hosted by Kuwait.

Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister conveyed greetings and best wishes of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to Sheikh Nawaf Al Ahmed Al Jaber Al Sabah, Emir of Kuwait.

The meeting underscored the importance of Arab solidarity and cooperation towards regional issues; the foremost of which is the Palestinian cause. It also touched on regional and international matters of common interest.

The meeting was attended by Sheikh Sabah Al Khalid Al Sabah, Prime Minister of Kuwait. -ONA

SECURITY AND STABILITY

## Kuwait meeting reviews issues of concern to Arab countries

**KUWAIT:** The Sultanate of Oman took part in the consultative meeting of the Arab foreign ministers, held in the State of Kuwait.

Oman's delegation was led in the meeting by Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister.

The meeting reviewed a range of current issues of concern to the Arab countries.

It also reiterated the importance of solidarity and cooperation among the Arab countries in dealing with the challenges facing the Arab region.

The meeting also laid emphasis on enhancing pillars of security and stability and realising aspirations of development and prosperity for leaderships and peoples of the Arab countries. -ONA

MINISTRY OF LABOUR

## 540 jobs announced for Omanis in private sector

**MUSCAT:** The Ministry of Labour on Sunday announced 540 job vacancies in the private sector.

Of the announced jobs, 150 are for holders of Bachelor's degree or higher. Another 96 jobs are for post-GED (General Education Diploma) holders, while 294 are for GED holders.

The move comes to support the private sector and to stimulate the employment of the national workforce. This announcement is considered the 4th batch of job vacancies in the private sector within the initiative of wage subsidy. -ONA

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# Remittance time as South Asian currencies falter

Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan and Bangladeshi currencies have all declined

*Times News Service*

**MUSCAT:** Expatriates from South Asian countries who wish to send money back home are presently able to get very good rates for the Omani Rial, owing to its exchange values remaining high.

Indians in Oman who wish to swap Omani currency for Indian tender can get INR195 for every Rial they exchange, with exchange rates hovering around that value for the fourth day in a row.

According to currency converter site XE, one Rial was worth INR195.19 on 30 January, rising slightly from INR195.05 the previous day. The INR rate crossed the 195 mark for the first time this year on 27 January, rising to INR195.5 from the previous day value of INR194.7.

This is the fourth time in under six months that the Indian Rupee rate has touched the 195 mark. The last time it did so was in mid-December, when the Rial exchange value for the currency threatened to cross the INR200 mark.

Similarly, in October, the exchange rate rose to about INR196, before dipping to INR192 in the second week of November. The value of the Indian Rupee when compared to the Omani Rial also briefly crossed the INR195 mark on 20 July, but stayed there for only a day before dipping below that figure once again.

The exchange rate for the Omani Rial to the Pakistani Rupee has also steadily risen since May 2021, when one Rial was worth slightly less than 400 PKR.

Since then, however, the exchange rate has got better against the Rial, rising to PKR421 at the end of July, and PKR444 at the end of September. The exchange rate for the PKR briefly dipped to 440 in the middle of November, but continued its upward march to reach PKR456 on 14 November.

By the end of December 2021, the rate had climbed to PKR464 for an Omani Rial, before dropping slightly to PKR458 on 1 January. Its value rose slightly to 462.97 on 27 January, before dropping again to its previous rate.

Similarly, the exchange rate for the Omani Rial to the Bangladeshi Taka has also been rising, although it has been fluctuating since around August 2021.

The value of one Omani Rial stood at BDT220 on 30 January, roughly the same as it was a year ago, but it has fluctuated against the Bangladeshi currency between BDT220 and 224.

It has been a similar journey for the Sri Lankan Rupee, which stands at about SLR525 to the Omani Rial. In mid-April 2021, the value of the Sri Lankan Rupee was less than SLR500 for a Rial, but it has – like the other South Asian currencies – continued to steadily rise since then.

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

## Requirements for Bilarab Bin Haitham Award

< FROM A1

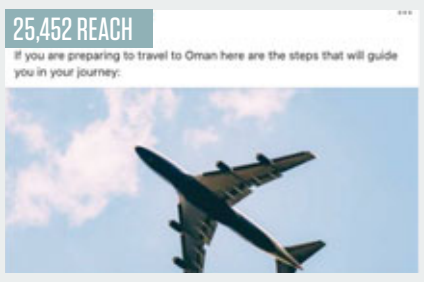
Bilarab Bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design requires the competitors to introduce the primary idea of the project by sending a layout of the site with full details of facilities proposed to be set up and sketches and diagram in A3 maps, in addition to a project summary of not more than 500 words.

Bilarab Bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design is accessible via its website (www.bha.om). The deadline for sending contributions is 5 February 2022. The arbitration committee will sort out the works and contact the participants on 27 February to discuss details in the preliminary round.

The award is open for specialists in architectural design, urban planning and architecture-related specialisations, including students and jobseekers aged 35 years and above. The prize was launched on 15 January 2022. The top performers will be shortlisted in three participants who can claim the top three places. -ONA

## Trending ON SOCIAL MEDIA

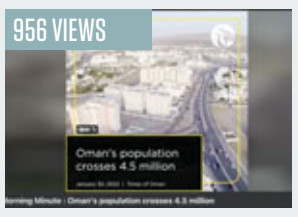
### MOST READ ON FACEBOOK




***A story on travel guidelines by Oman Airports***

*A story on travel guidelines by Oman Airports reached 25,452 people and had 5,847 engagements on Facebook.*

### MOST WATCHED VIDEO ON FACEBOOK



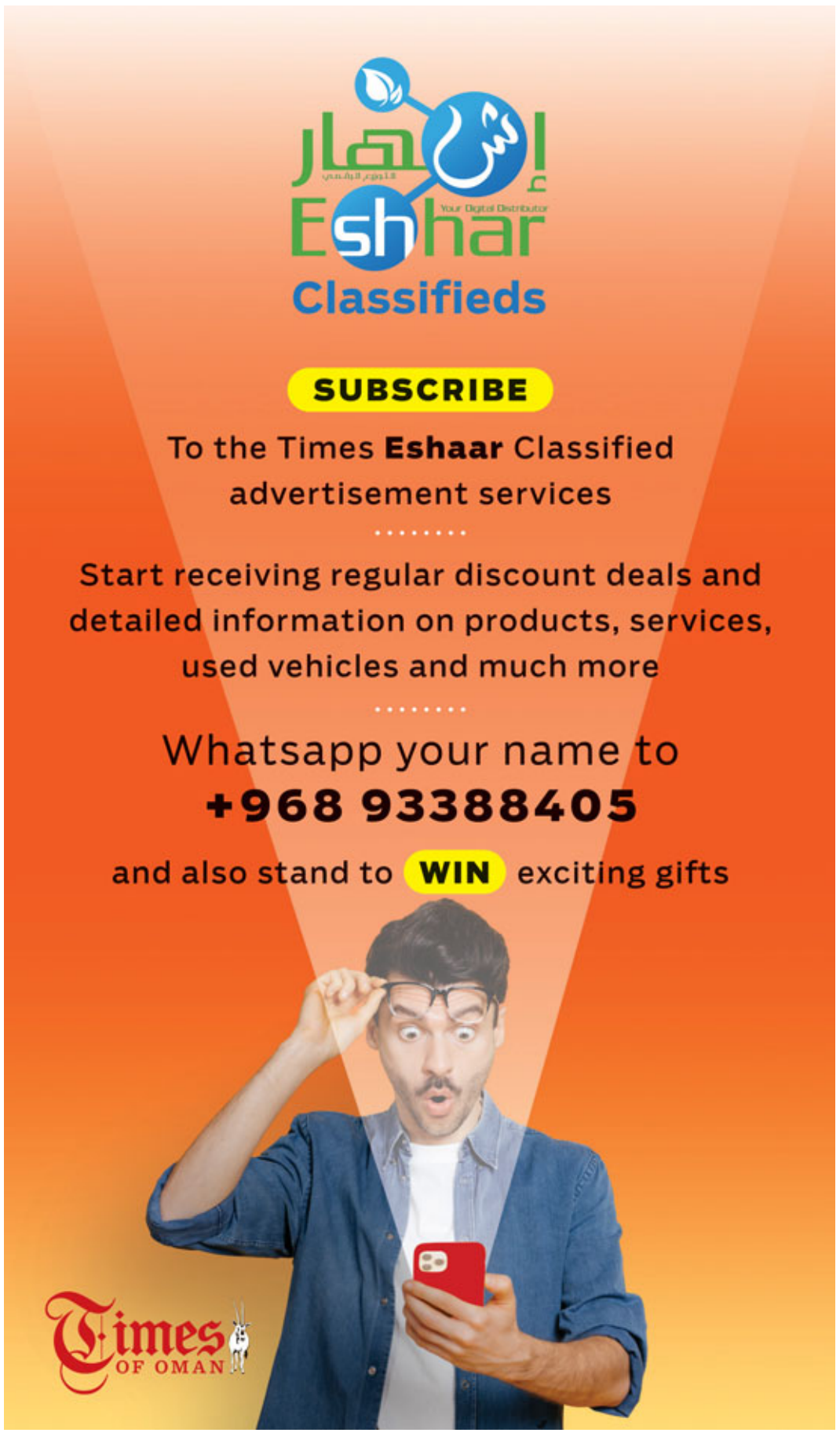

***Morning Minute video on Oman's population***

*The Morning Minute video on Oman's population had 956 views and reached 5,100 people on Facebook.*

### MOST VIEWED VIDEO ON INSTAGRAM

***Morning Minute video on the Oman Rally***

*The Morning Minute video on the Oman Rally campaign had 683 views and 27 likes on Instagram.*



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# Royal Oman Police takes part in Gulf Security drill

**DHAHRAN:** The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Royal Oman Police, concluded its participation in the activities of the Gulf Security Drill (3), held at the Training Institute for Security and Protection of Establishments in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal Al Busaidi, Minister of Interior participated in the function.

The drill was organised under the patronage of HRH Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud bin Naif Al Saud, Minister of Interior in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

At the conclusion of the event, HRH Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud bin Naif Al Saud gave away the Prince Naif Abdulaziz Award for Security Research to the winners.

A number of their highnesses, interior ministers of the GCC States and the Secretary General of the GCC attended the ceremony. -ONA

BILATERAL TRADE

## Sunaidi's meeting with Shura focuses on employment

< FROM A1

Al Sunaidi also answered a number of queries from the council on pertinent subjects, including the volume of actual investments in the above zones, growth indicators, the mechanisms for allocating plots of land for free zones and SEZs, and the extent to which these zones are prepared to use alternative sources of energy, in line with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Concerns were also raised by the Shura members on other challenges facing these zones, including issues that stand in the way of foreign and local investment and the government's efforts to overcome them, efforts towards digital transformation and the extent to which these areas contribute to the national gross domestic product.

Employment was a key area of discussion during the meeting; Shura Council members stressed the need to provide employment across various sectors to Omanis, especially those that are skilled in areas that add value, and in specialised roles. Another pertinent issue brought up was the need to employ people living in areas surrounding the free zones.

Al Sunaidi also pointed out the presence of a one-stop system to make it easier for investors to understand investment procedures and quickly secure approvals to begin operations. Another point brought up was the efforts taken to create clear-cut economic feasibility studies that would help Omani youth set up their companies in these areas.

The availability and use of infrastructure was another key point of interest at the meeting.

When asked about the mechanism of distribution of facilities, he said, "Some infrastructure is under the supervision and implementation of the authorities, while others are handled by their operating companies."

With the setting up of such zones in line with Oman Vision 2040, the Public Authority for Free Zones and Special Economic Zones has also taken steps to attract investors, including promotion of competitive advantage of Oman over other countries, as well as a specific and clear strategy that is being worked on, Al Sunaidi told the council members.

To help the authority further its plans to develop free zones and SEZs, the Shura Council also pointed out the extent to which existing laws were being aligned with the plans of the government, as also ensuring sustainable development.

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# OMAN

INCENTIVES

## Oman, Finland sign pact to sharpen skills of Omanis

**MUSCAT:** Qais Mohammed Al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion received yesterday the Finnish Minister for Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade.

The two sides reviewed the bilateral relations, as well as fields of investment and economic cooperation. They also discussed several matters of common interest.

The meeting explored the incentives offered by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

### Tourism, industry

It also touched on available opportunities in the two countries, particularly in the fields of tourism, industry, research, mining and economic diversification sectors that are targeted by Oman Vision 2040.

Moreover, an agreement of cooperation was signed by companies from both countries, which will contribute in the transfer of knowledge and grooming the skills of Omani youth.

The meeting was attended by officials from both sides. -ONA

BILATERAL RELATIONS

## Oman, Finland review ties in economic field

**MUSCAT:** Dr. Said Mohammed Al Saqri, Minister of Economy received in his office here yesterday Ville Skinnari, Minister for Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade of Finland.

The two sides reviewed the bilateral relations between the two countries and discussed various aspects of cooperation, particularly in the economic fields.

### Free trade agreement

They also discussed issues of common interest, such as the free trade agreement and the agreement on avoidance of double taxation. The two sides also explored opportunities of boosting trade exchange between the two countries, as well as enhancing cooperation in the fields of manufacturing, logistics and education.

-ONA

ECONOMIC SECTOR

## Oman takes part in Riyadh conference on fisheries

**RIYADH:** A delegation from the Sultanate of Oman is taking part in the International Conference and Exhibition on Fisheries, held in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Oman's delegation is headed by Eng. Yaqoub Khalfan Al Busaidi, Undersecretary for Fisheries.

The participation in the conference comes within the framework of Oman's keenness in developing the fisheries field being an economic sector that is vital within Oman Vision 2040, as well as for its economic and social importance.

The event is considered an opportunity to get familiar with regional and international approaches in enhancing fishing, fish farming and value-added fish industries.

The conference sees the participation of representatives from 29 countries. It also includes 6 sessions, with 50 local and international speakers. Moreover, 70 international and local exhibitors are taking part in the event, including 7 Omani companies operating in various related areas.

The Sultanate of Oman's delegation comprises several companies from the Oman Investment Authority (OIA), Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) and private companies.

-ONA

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

## Oman's defence secretary general, military officials head to India

**MUSCAT:** Dr. Mohammed Nasser Al Zaabi, Secretary General at the Ministry of Defence left on Sunday heading to the Republic of India, to lead the Omani side in the 11th meeting of the Joint Military Cooperation Committee between the ministries of defence of the two countries.

The meeting will be held in New Delhi from 31 January to 1 February 2022.

The Secretary General is accompanied during the visit by a military delegation comprising of senior officers from the Ministry of Defence and the Sultan's Armed Forces.

Al Zaabi was seen off at A'Seeb Air Base by Air Vice Marshal Khamis Hammad Sultan Al Ghafri, Commander of the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO), Ambassador of India to Oman and seniors SAF officers. -ONA

# WORLD

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HURRICANE-LEVEL WINDS

## Storm Malik pounds Northern Europe, causes coastal surges, leaves four dead

**BERLIN:** A fierce storm continued to pound northern Europe early Sunday, causing coastal surges and forcing public transport to be cancelled.

The storm system, which is known as Nadia in Germany and Malik in other countries, intensified a day earlier bringing hurricane-level winds at times to the North Sea and Baltic Sea coastlines. As the storm moved eastward on Sunday, the fire department in the German capital, Berlin, declared an emergency and ordered residents to stay home, where possible.

### Several killed by falling trees

On Saturday, one person in Germany was killed when he was hit by an election poster that had been loosened by the wind, Bild newspaper reported. A companion was also injured.

Scotland saw winds of 100 miles per hour, where a 60-year-old woman in Aberdeen died after being hit by a fallen tree.

In central England, a nine-year-old boy died when a tree fell on him and a man.

Some 130,000 homes across England were without electricity after power lines were cut.

In Poland's Wejherowo County, on the Baltic Coast, one person was killed and another injured by a falling tree, according to the Rzeczpospolita newspaper. Across the country, more than 680,000 people were without power.

### Hamburg market flooded

The storm surge also struck the northern German city of Hamburg, where the Elbe River extends to the North Sea.

The waters flooded the fish market in Hamburg's St Pauli district and several cars in the city were washed away.

Also in Hamburg, a barge loaded with an excavator was pushed against a bridge by the storm.

Bild reported that the excavator operator and captain fell overboard but survived.

Water levels in the Elbe reached several meters higher than usual high tides.

Off the northern German coast, an empty freighter drifted in the strong winds.

Emergency command from the port of Cuxhaven sent tugs to steady the 190-metre (623 foot) long Vienna, which took six hours.

Flood warnings were also issued for other parts of the northern German states of Schleswig-Holstein and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.

The storm disrupted train services in Schleswig-Holstein due to fallen trees, German rail operator Deutsche Bahn said.

In the northern German city of Bremen, a fire department spokesperson said they were sent out on nine separate calls to deal with fallen trees in the area, although no injuries were reported. DW

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SINGLE MISSILE

## North Korea fires projectile into sea, says South Korea

**PYONGYANG:** North Korea fired projectiles into the sea off its east coast, the South Korean and Japanese government reported on Sunday.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff reported that a projectile believed to be a single missile was launched at around 7:52 a.m. local time (2252 UTC) from North Korea's northern Jagang province.

Later on Sunday, the Joint Chiefs of Staff reported that the projectile had been identified as a medium-range missile that had flown 800 kilometers towards the open sea. Japan's Defense Ministry and prime minister's office said the weapon was possibly a ballistic missile. DW

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Campaign Type : Safety
Description : Lower Steering Shaft

| Model | Year of Import | VIN Range | No of Vehicles |
|---|---|---|---|
| INFINITI Q30 & QX30 | MY17 | HA034561 - HA034690 | 08 |

Defect and Action :

| Model | Concern Background | Field Action |
|---|---|---|
| INFINITI Q30 & QX30 | Steering column lower joint needle bearing can become loose in the housing and can cause damage to the bearing. Customer may experience poor steering feel and noise. | Replacement of the lower steering shaft |

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SUPPORT

## NATO, UK will 'support' Ukraine if invaded by Russia, but won't send troops

**MOSCOW:** NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg reiterated on Sunday that NATO would not send troops to Ukraine should Russia invade.

"We are focusing on providing support," Stoltenberg said, adding, "There is a difference between being a NATO member and being a strong and highly valued partner (such) as Ukraine. There's no doubt about that," he said in an interview with BBC.

UK Foreign Secretary Liz Truss told Sky News that her country will seek to tighten sanctions on Vladimir Putin so there is no place for his oligarchs to hide.

She said the short-term profits came at a real cost of longer term threats to democracy and freedom in the UK and other Western allies.

### 'Londongrad' under the microscope

So-called "Londongrad" has come under renewed attention as a primary destination for politically sensitive Russian businessmen and their capital.

Last week, the US warned that the UK's acceptance of what it called Russian "dirty money" threatened the effectiveness of any sanctions regime Washington will seek to impose to deter and potentially punish Russia.

Washington has been coordinating with allies should Moscow follow through on its military build-up on Ukraine's borders and invade and occupy parts of that country beyond Crimea and the eastern region known as the Donbas.

Truss did say it was "very unlikely" British troops would be involved should there be a fight for Ukraine.

"This is about making sure that the Ukrainian forces have all the support we can give them," Truss said.

CNN reports UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Russian leader Vladimir Putin will speak this week. On Sunday, Johnson said the potential for Russian military action in Ukraine is "increasingly concerning."

### Russia: Its security concerns are defensive

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov also reiterated his position that NATO cannot claim to be defensive with foreign interventions such as the ones that occurred in Afghanistan, Libya and the former Yugoslavia under its belt.

Russian state-run Tass reported Lavrov told the program "Sunday Time" on Russia's Channel One that Russia intends to protect its interests.

"When the Cold War was going on and the Berlin Wall existed, it was clear what territory to defend," he said.

He added that requests are being sent to NATO and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Russia's requests are a follow up to ultimatums against NATO expansion and force posture in NATO member states previously issued by Russia.

Russia has sent over 100,000 troops to Ukraine's borders and in recent days moved blood supplies closer to what could evolve into a front line.

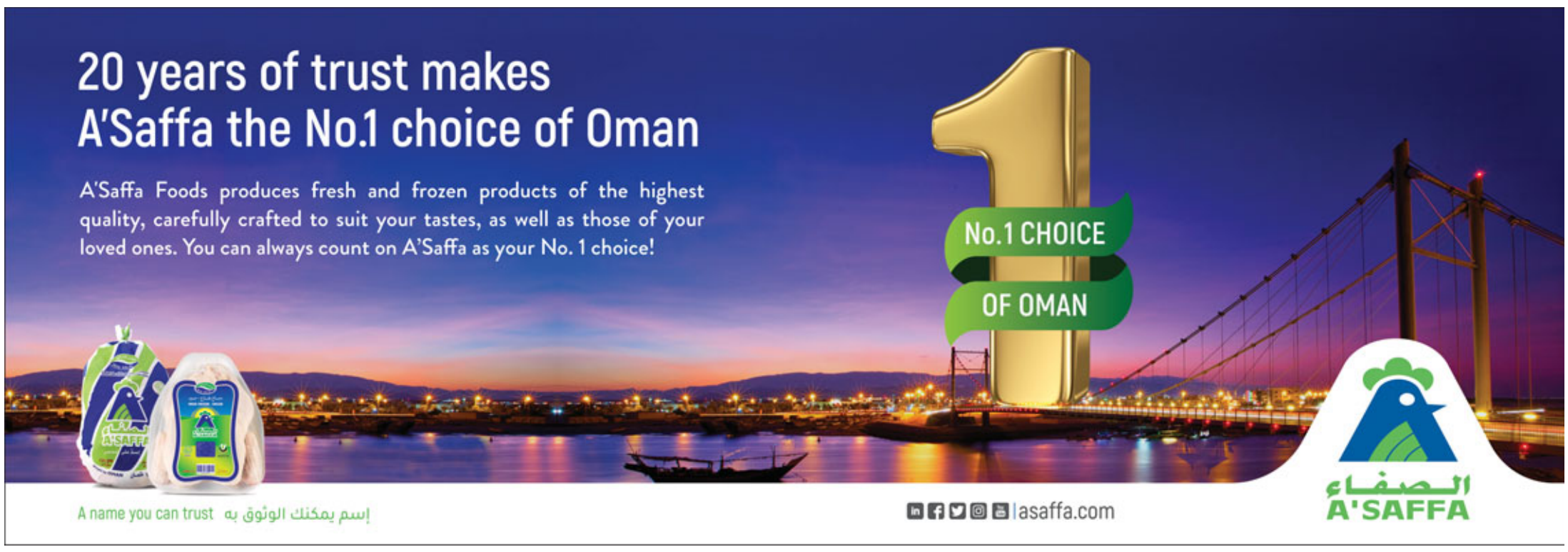
Nonetheless, Russia's national security adviser Nikolai Patrushev said talk of war with Ukraine consisted of "self-serving fabrications" of the West.

"We don't want war, we don't need it at all," Russian state-run Interfax news agency quoted Patrushev.

### What has the US offered to quell tensions?

The US and NATO rejected Russia's demands but US Ambassador to Moscow John Sullivan has said the US offered to reduce military exercises and missile numbers in Europe. Lavrov previously derided both the US and NATO's responses, but he conceded that the US proposals offered "grains of rationality" on secondary issues.

Former US Ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul wrote on Twitter, "For the Russian Foreign Minster (with whom I interacted with for five years back in the day), that's as (complimentary) as he gets!" DW



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# Rafael Nadal becomes first man to win 21 Grand Slams in history

With this triumph, Nadal has broken his tie with Novak Djokovic and Roger Federer

**WINNER:** Two sets down, the legendary Spaniard rallied to defeat the world number two, Daniil Medvedev, by 2-6, 6-7(5), 6-4, 7-5 as he clinched the record-breaking Australian Open trophy.

**MELBOURNE**: Rafael Nadal on Sunday created history as he became the first man to win the 21 Grand Slams.

Two sets down, the legendary Spaniard rallied to defeat the world number two, Daniil Medvedev, by 2-6, 6-7(5), 6-4, 7-5 as he clinched the record-breaking Australian Open trophy at Rod Laver Arena. The title clash lasted for incredible five hours and 24 minutes. With this triumph, Nadal has broken his tie with Novak Djokovic and Roger Federer for the most men's singles Grand Slam titles in history.

The Spaniard has also become the fourth man in history to claim multiple crowns at all four majors.

As expected the match started at very high intensity for the Russian as he broke Nadal twice early and grabbed a lead after the first set.

The second set had its up and downs as the sixth-seeded broke Medvedev early. But the Russian was quick to respond with another break. With both players managing to hold their serves, the set went into the tiebreak.

> "Congratulations to @RafaelNadal for 21st GS. Amazing achievement. Always impressive fighting spirit that prevailed another time. Enhorabuena @Medwed33 gave it his all out there and played with the passion and determination we have come to expect from him," Novak Djokovic tweeted

The tie break was dominated by the big-server Medvedev who gave Nadal rarely a chance to fight his way back into the match.

With momentum on his side, the 25-year-old kept charging at the Spaniard in the third set as one of the highlights and the decisive moment of the match came in the sixth game when Nadal won a 19-shot rally and then a 21-shot rally.

In the 9th game, Nadal showed his absolute mental fortitude as he broke Medvedev serve and then held his next to win an epic 62-minute set.

The fourth set was quite brutal tennis from both finalists as they traded huge blows. Nadal who upped the ante was first to break, but the world number two responded by another break to keep the scores level.

Nadal changed the level of his tennis after the first two sets broke Medvedev for the second time in the penultimate set during the 5th game. But this time the second-seed was unable to respond as Nadal held onto his serve and took the match into the decider.

The 5th set was all about nerves and Nadal was the first to draw blood in the fifth game when he broke the serve of his opponent. After some epic holds, when the Spaniard was serving for the championship in the 10th game, the match took another turn as the Russian broke Nadal.

With stakes so high, Nadal delivered another masterpiece in the next game as he broke the Russian and held his serve in next avoid any upset as he marched towards the record-breaking Grand Slam.

"For me, it's just amazing," Nadal told the crowd at the Rod Laver Arena. "Being honest, one and a half months ago I didn't know if I'd be able to be back on the tour and today I'm here in front of you with this trophy. You don't know how hard I fought to get here. Without a doubt this has been one of the most emotional [periods] of my tennis career." ANI

CRICKET

# Root was never going to be successful leader, he is 'poor captain', says Ian Chappell

**MELBOURNE:** Former Australia skipper Ian Chappell has said that Joe Root is a poor captain and the Three Lions' Test leader quickly runs out of ideas.

Under Root, England stumbled to a 0-4 loss in the recently-concluded Men's Ashes. The Three Lions' skipper came under severe scrutiny for his decision making and poor selection calls. "The captaincy failure, despite having led his country more times than any other captain, is Joe Root. It doesn't matter what Root or any other English devotee tells you, Root is a fine batter but a poor captain. He was never going to be a successful leader. Though England under him have a reasonably presentable record at home, Root has lacked imagination as a captain, quickly run out of ideas, and showed little "gut feel" for the game. Too often his choice of bowlers to begin a session caused head-scratching, but the real killer were his tactics: they often made no sense," Chappell wrote in his column for ESPNcricinfo.

"There is a distinct feeling that Root listened to far too many off-field advisers. A good captain has to take charge and this was an area where Root failed dismally. There's no doubt his last tour was badly hampered by player injuries and he was poorly treated by fate. Nevertheless, ten Tests for eight losses and two unflattering draws is a fair summation of Root's leadership in Australia. It was poor captaincy accompanied by bad luck," he added.

Chappell also talked about how pacer Stuart Broad would not be an ideal candidate to take on Test leadership of England.

"To suggest that the answer to the leadership void is Stuart Broad lacks understanding of cricket captaincy. Apart from Broad's advanced (cricket) age and articulate off-field responses, he's a negative influence - particularly with field placings - and would be a poor choice as captain," said Chappell.

"In press conferences Root kept saying, "We are going to learn from our mistakes and take the positives out of this match." This raised the question of precisely when they were going to learn. England kept making the same mistakes under Root and rarely learned. Although it will be a difficult task, if England want to improve, they first have to find a new and capable captain," he added.

England will next lock horns against West Indies in a three-match Test series in March. ANI

CRICKET ROUND-UP

# Aflag Group, Royal Gulf, Team Coorg secure wins

*Times News Service*

**MUSCAT**: Farrukh Jamal struck a vital 48 to steer Aflag Group to an exciting 6-wicket victory against Mazoon Dairy Company in an E Division T20 League match at Muscat Municipality ground 3 in Amerat on Friday.

Invited to bat first, Mazoon Dairy posted 149 for 8 on the board thanks to Kjalid Mazhoor's 35 and Yusuf Patanwala's 30. Arnold Lewis, Ahmed Mohammed and Tahir Abbas all took two wickets each.

Farrukh Jamal and Haris Alam (34) led the way with solid knocks as Mazoon Dairy secured victory in the 19 th over, scoring 152 for 4. Ameer Hussain bagged 2 for 29.

**Brief Scores** (E Division): Mazoon Dairy Company 149 for 8 in 20 overs (Khalid Mazhoor 35 – 3x4, 1x6, Yusuf Patanwala 30 – 2x4. Arnold Lewis 2-16, Ahmed Mohammed 2-32, Tahir Abbas 2-31) lost to Aflag Group Ct 152 for 4 in 18.3 overs (Farrukh Jamal 48 – 7x4, Haris Alam 34 – 4x4, 1x6, Ameer Hussain 2-29) by 6 wickets.

### Jebin bowls Royal Gulf to victory

Jebin James picked up 3 for 16 to help Royal Gulf beat OCT Al Hail B in a low-scoring F Division match at OAC 3 ground in Seeb.

Royal Gulf failed to put a big total on the board, getting dismissed for 100 in 14.1 overs due to brilliant bowling by Asim Abdul (3 for 15) and Khalid Rahim (3 for 27). Amal Raj (36) and Alif Hameed (25) were their notable scorers.

OCT Al Hail B failed to rise to the occasion, folding up for a disappointing 64 in 13.4 overs due to superb spells by Jebin, Alif Hameed (2 for 2) and Sameer (2 for 12).

**Brief Scores** (F Division): Royal Gulf 100 all out in 14.1 overs (Amal Raj 36 – 2x4, 2x6, Alif Hameed 25 – 4x4, Asim Abdul 3-15, Khalid Rahim 3-27) beat Oct Al Hail 'B' 64 all out in 13.4 overs (Zulfikar Habibullah 17 – 2x4, Jebin James 3-16, Sameer Hameed 2-12, Alif Hameed 2-2) by 36 runs.

### Prayag stars in TCM win

In another F Division match, Prayag Bollia's excellent spell of 4 for 17 and Poonacha Pattada's 46 off 25 powered Team Coorg Muscat (TCM) to a thumping 7-wicket win over FFC Oman.

FFC Oman was bowled out for a lowly 104 in 19.3 overs as Prayag Bollia and Milind Bhujwala ran through the side with their brilliant bowling.

TCM raced to the target in only 9.2 overs thanks to Poonacha Pattada's top knock. Shamil Riaz claimed 2 for 12.

Brief Scores (F Division): FFC Oman 104 all out in 19.3 overs (Syed Azhar 20 – 2x4, Prayag Bollia 4-17, Milind Bhujwala 2-12) lost to Team Coorg Muscat (TCM) 106 for 3 in 9.2 overs (Poonacha Pattada 46 – 7x4, Shamil Riaz 2-11) by 7 wickets.

**HAVE YOUR SAY**

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FOOTBALL

# Luis Diaz joins Liverpool from FC Porto

**LIVERPOOL:** Liverpool Football Club has completed the signing of Luis Diaz from FC Porto, the Premier League club announced on Sunday.

The 25-year-old has signed a long-term contract with the Reds after passing a medical and finalising personal terms. Diaz will arrive on Merseyside once he has completed international duty with Colombia, who face Argentina in a World Cup qualifier in Cordoba on Tuesday evening.

He joins Liverpool after two-and-a-half seasons with FC Porto, where he made 125 appearances and scored 41 goals, and will wear the No.23 shirt.

The forward faced the Reds twice in this season's Champions League group stage with the Portuguese side and had netted 14 times in 18 league runouts this term. -ANI

## MSX INDEX ENDS LOWER

The MSX index closed at 4,151.82 points, down by 0.46 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 1.81 per cent at 501.46 points. National Finance, up 4.55 per cent, was the top gainer while, Construction Material down 11.11 per cent, was the top loser.

# NBO hosts Indian envoy to discuss trade and business opportunities

Meeting with the bank's Chief Executive Officer, Abdullah Al Hinai, and other members of senior management, the ambassador addressed NBO's Indian employees, noting their valuable contributions to the bank, as well as discussing India-Oman bilateral relations and the wealth of opportunities for Indian businesses in Oman

*Times News Service*

**MUSCAT:** Continuing to pave the way for international relations, the National Bank of Oman (NBO) hosted Amit Narang, the Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman, at its headquarters in Azaiba.

Meeting with the bank's Chief Executive Officer, Abdullah Al Hinai, and other members of senior management, the ambassador addressed NBO's Indian employees, noting their valuable contributions to the bank, as well as discussing India-Oman bilateral relations and the wealth of opportunities for Indian businesses in Oman.

Amit Narang commented, "Our nation's long-standing and friendly relationship with Oman has opened up many new opportunities for both sides. It was a pleasure to visit NBO as we explore the possibilities for further cooperation in the banking sector in particular for the Indian diaspora, as well as business people from India who are interested to make investments in Oman."

Abdullah Al Hinai, Chief Executive Officer at NBO, added, "We continue to work closely with all communities to ensure that they can manage their finances seamlessly, regardless of whether they are banking in Oman or anywhere in the world. We welcomed His Excellency's visit as part of our impetus to Oman's efforts to foster and promote bilateral trade and development, for which the banking industry plays a major role."

NBO offers a range of innovative products and services designed to meet the evolving needs of its expatriate customers. As a market first, its dedicated Lite App features international remittance services in six of the most widely-spoken Indian languages: Hindi, Tamil, Malayalam, Telugu, Kannada and Bengali, in addition to English and Arabic. Easy to register and operate, customers can make remittances in just three clicks and the funds will be credited to the beneficiary's account in less than 60 seconds. It's part of NBO's efforts to make its customers' lives better and more convenient while helping to promote financial inclusion among all sectors.

PURCHASING MANAGERS' INDEX

# China's manufacturing PMI expands as economy recovers

**TOY BRICKS:** A factory producing toy bricks is pictured in Shantou City, south China's Guangdong Province, December 2, 2021. - Xinhua

**BEIJING:** The purchasing managers' index (PMI) for China's manufacturing sector came in at 50.1 in January, down from 50.3 in December 2021, data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed Sunday.

A reading above 50 indicates expansion, while a reading below reflects contraction.

Expansion of the industry slowed in January as some subsectors entered a traditional off-peak period and market demand contracted, said NBS senior statistician Zhao Qinghe.

In January, the sub-index measuring purchase prices of major raw materials rose 8.3 percentage points from December 2021 to 56.4. The sub-index for prices at the factory gate was 50.9, up 5.4 percentage points from last month. The sub-index for production reached 50.9, down 0.5 percentage points from last month but has remained in the expansion area for three consecutive months.

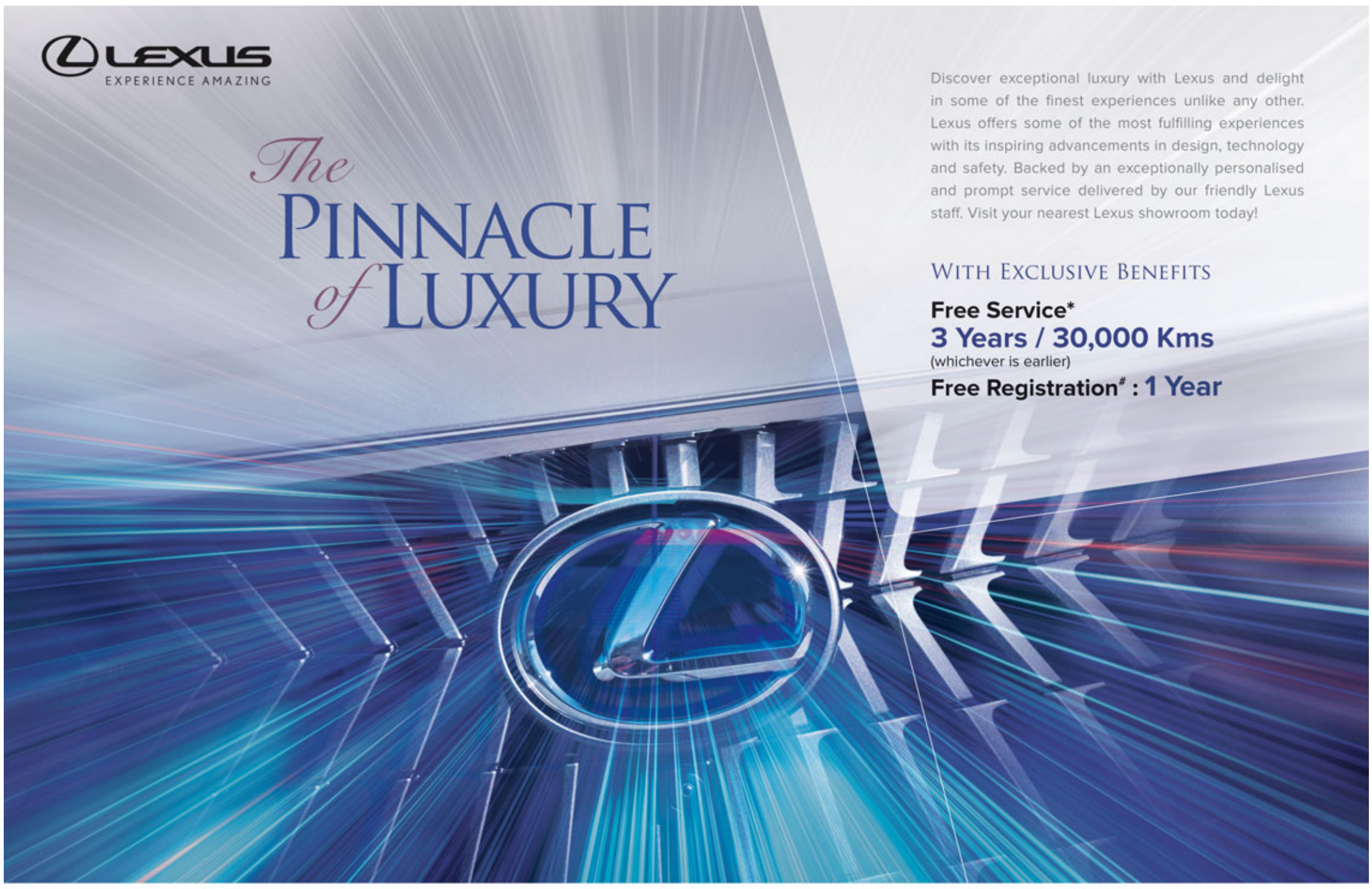
The new order sub-index decreased 0.4 percentage points to 49.3, pointing to shrinking demand in the manufacturing market.

Manufacturing companies' confidence was on the rise, with the sub-index for production and operation activity expectations at 57.5, up 3.2 percentage points from last month. Sunday's data also showed that the PMI for China's non-manufacturing sector came in at 51.1 in January, down from 52.7 in December.

Affected by the sporadic resurgence of COVID-19 cases recently, the sub-index for business activities in the services sector stood at 50.3, down 1.7 percentage points month on month.

The January PMI indicated that domestic demand is still insufficient and the economy is under downward pressure, said Wen Bin, the chief analyst at China Minsheng Bank.

The country should maximise the use of cross-cyclical adjustment in its macroeconomic policy, boost market confidence and further expand domestic demand to ensure the economy runs within a reasonable range, Wen said.-Xinhua

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Campaign Period: Up to 23rd March 2022. The above benefits are applicable for all purchases except RAC, Government Organisations & Ministries. *3 Years / 30,000 kms (whichever is earlier) covering 3 services at 1 Year / 10,000 kms service interval (whichever is earlier) for all models except LX2022YM. #Free one year registration on all models except LX2022YM. Vehicle specifications are subject to change without notice. Pictures & colours are indicative. For further details, please visit your nearest Lexus showroom.

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# MARKET

# MSX index ends lower

National Finance, up 4.55 per cent, was the top gainer while, Construction Material down 11.11 per cent, was the top loser

**MUSCAT:** The MSX index closed at 4,151.82 points, down by 0.46 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 1.81 per cent at 501.46 points. National Finance, up 4.55 per cent, was the top gainer while, Construction Material down 11.11 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of National Bank Oman were the most active in terms of the number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 399 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating a turnover of OMR4.4 million, with more than 25.5 million shares changing hands. Out of 44 traded securities, 10 advanced, 20 declined and 14 remained unchanged. At the session close, GCC and Arab investors were net buyers for OMR44,000 while domestic investors were net sellers for OMR43,000 followed by foreign investors for OMR1,000 worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 6629.05 points, down by 0.45 per cent. Prices of National Finance, Ominvest, United Finance, Ahli Bank, and Al Omaniya Financial Services were up by 4.55 per cent, 1.92 per cent, 1.72 per cent, 0.83 per cent, and 0.76 per cent respectively. Prices of National Bank Oman, Taageer Finance, Al Anwar Investment, Muscat Finance, and Global Financial Investments were down by 5.5 per cent, 2.38 per cent, 2.3 per cent, 1.72 per cent and 1.47 per cent respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5791.83 points, down by 0.29 per cent. Services Index was down by 0.86 per cent before closing at 1604.65 points. — **United Securities**

OMAN STOCKS

## MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

**INDICES**

| Index | High | Low | Value | Prev. Value | Diff | Diff % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| MSX 30 INDEX | 4,171.53 | 4,147.83 | 4,151.82 | 4,170.85 | -19.03 | -0.46 |
| FINANCIAL INDEX | 6,662.30 | 6,616.03 | 6,629.05 | 6,659.05 | -30.00 | -0.45 |
| Industry Index | 5,812.14 | 5,791.82 | 5,791.82 | 5,808.55 | -16.72 | -0.29 |
| Services Index | 1,618.52 | 1,604.65 | 1,604.65 | 1,618.52 | -13.87 | -0.86 |
| MSX Shariah Index | 505.58 | 501.47 | 501.47 | 510.69 | -9.22 | -1.81 |
| MSX TR INDEX | 5,021.47 | 4,992.94 | 4,997.75 | 5,020.65 | -22.90 | -0.46 |

**Trading Summary**

| Volume | Turnover | Trades | Market Cap | Up | Down | Equal | Sec. Traded |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 25,557,682 | 4,405,913 | 399 | 22,306,809,126 | 10 | 20 | 14 | 44 |

## SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR SUNDAY, JANUARY 30

**REGULAR MARKET**

| ISIN | SECURITY NAME | VOLUME | TURNOVER | TRADES | OPEN PRICE | HIGH | LOW | CLOSE PR. | PREV. CLOSE | DIFF (RO) | DIFF % | LAST PR | LAST BID | LAST OFFER | PAR VALUE | MARKET CAP |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| OM0000001418 | RAYSUT CEMENT | 25,500 | 5,055 | 4 | 0.198 | 0.200 | 0.198 | 0.198 | 0.193 | 0.005 | 2.591 | 0.198 | 0.174 | 0.200 | 0.100 | 39,600,000 |
| OM0000001533 | OMINVEST | 6,000 | 1,908 | 1 | 0.318 | 0.318 | 0.318 | 0.318 | 0.312 | 0.006 | 1.923 | 0.318 | 0.302 | 0.318 | 0.100 | 212,540,205 |
| OM0000003026 | OMAN TELECOM | 740,420 | 591,956 | 19 | 0.792 | 0.800 | 0.784 | 0.800 | 0.792 | 0.008 | 1.010 | 0.788 | 0.788 | 0.804 | 0.100 | 600,000,000 |
| OM0000002200 | AHLI BANK | 20,000 | 2,420 | 1 | 0.121 | 0.121 | 0.121 | 0.121 | 0.120 | 0.001 | 0.833 | 0.121 | 0.120 | 0.123 | 0.100 | 235,908,553 |
| OM0000002077 | AL OMANIYA FIN.S | 97,000 | 12,814 | 7 | 0.133 | 0.133 | 0.131 | 0.132 | 0.131 | 0.001 | 0.763 | 0.131 | 0.131 | 0.132 | 0.100 | 38,535,443 |
| OM0000001707 | OMAN CABLES INDSTR | 1,300 | 1,300 | 2 | 1.000 | 1.000 | 1.000 | 1.000 | 1.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 1.000 | 1.000 | 1.000 | 0.100 | 89,700,000 |
| OM0000001749 | OMAN CEMENT | 5,000 | 1,180 | 1 | 0.236 | 0.236 | 0.236 | 0.235 | 0.235 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.236 | 0.234 | 0.236 | 0.100 | 77,755,087 |
| OM0000002440 | AL SHARQIA INV. | 3,000 | 288 | 1 | 0.096 | 0.096 | 0.096 | 0.093 | 0.093 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.096 | 0.091 | 0.096 | 0.100 | 8,370,000 |
| OM0000006920 | VISION INSURANCE | 330,000 | 27,060 | 9 | 0.082 | 0.082 | 0.082 | 0.082 | 0.082 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.082 | 0.082 | 0.087 | 0.100 | 8,200,000 |
| OM0000002796 | BANK MUSCAT | 1,065,505 | 560,403 | 30 | 0.528 | 0.528 | 0.520 | 0.526 | 0.528 | -0.002 | -0.379 | 0.524 | 0.520 | 0.524 | 0.100 | 1,880,173,741 |
| OM0000002176 | JAZEERA STEEL PROD | 44,096 | 17,109 | 11 | 0.388 | 0.388 | 0.388 | 0.388 | 0.394 | -0.006 | -1.523 | 0.388 | 0.386 | 0.402 | 0.100 | 48,460,408 |
| OM0000003968 | OOREDOO | 10,026 | 3,629 | 2 | 0.362 | 0.362 | 0.362 | 0.362 | 0.368 | -0.006 | -1.630 | 0.362 | 0.362 | 0.370 | 0.100 | 235,641,811 |
| OM0000001590 | MUSCAT FINANCE | 100,000 | 5,700 | 2 | 0.057 | 0.057 | 0.057 | 0.057 | 0.058 | -0.001 | -1.724 | 0.057 | 0.057 | 0.059 | 0.100 | 17,507,341 |
| OM0000001525 | OMAN INVST& FIN. | 21,892 | 3,393 | 1 | 0.155 | 0.155 | 0.155 | 0.155 | 0.158 | -0.003 | -1.899 | 0.155 | 0.155 | 0.162 | 0.100 | 36,735,000 |
| OM0000005005 | ALMAHA CERAMICS | 56,300 | 24,209 | 14 | 0.430 | 0.430 | 0.428 | 0.430 | 0.440 | -0.010 | -2.273 | 0.430 | 0.428 | 0.430 | 0.100 | 23,650,000 |
| OM0000001772 | ALANWAR INVESTMENT | 594,140 | 50,525 | 24 | 0.087 | 0.087 | 0.085 | 0.085 | 0.087 | -0.002 | -2.299 | 0.085 | 0.085 | 0.085 | 0.100 | 17,000,000 |
| OM0000002226 | ALJAZEERA SERVICES | 130,080 | 40,824 | 30 | 0.310 | 0.318 | 0.310 | 0.314 | 0.324 | -0.010 | -3.086 | 0.312 | 0.312 | 0.312 | 0.100 | 19,218,142 |
| Total | 17 | 3,250,259 | 1,349,774 | 159 | | | | | | | | | | | | |

**Parallel Market**

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| OM0000002648 | NATIONAL FINANCE | 19,000 | 2,185 | 3 | 0.115 | 0.115 | 0.115 | 0.115 | 0.110 | 0.005 | 4.545 | 0.115 | 0.115 | 0.115 | 0.100 | 62,241,502 |
| OM0000001152 | OMAN NAT. ENG. | 690,998 | 80,372 | 46 | 0.114 | 0.118 | 0.114 | 0.116 | 0.112 | 0.004 | 3.571 | 0.118 | 0.118 | 0.118 | 0.100 | 15,080,000 |
| OM0000004933 | AL SUWADI POWER | 139,792 | 6,793 | 19 | 0.048 | 0.049 | 0.048 | 0.049 | 0.048 | 0.001 | 2.083 | 0.049 | 0.048 | 0.049 | 0.100 | 35,005,911 |
| OM0000002374 | UNITED FINANCE | 155,050 | 9,201 | 12 | 0.059 | 0.060 | 0.059 | 0.059 | 0.058 | 0.001 | 1.724 | 0.060 | 0.058 | 0.063 | 0.100 | 20,599,520 |
| OM0000008447 | OMAN REIT FUND | 37,289 | 3,066 | 5 | 0.082 | 0.086 | 0.082 | 0.082 | 0.081 | 0.001 | 1.235 | 0.086 | 0.082 | 0.086 | 0.100 | 38,637,284 |
| OM0000001178 | MUSCAT GASES | 251 | 41 | 1 | 0.163 | 0.163 | 0.163 | 0.161 | 0.161 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.163 | 0.000 | 0.163 | 0.100 | 4,830,000 |
| OM0000001319 | ALUMINIUM PROD. | 100 | 12 | 1 | 0.115 | 0.115 | 0.115 | 0.113 | 0.113 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.115 | 0.113 | 0.115 | 0.100 | 3,793,574 |
| OM0000002275 | SHELL OMAN MRK | 6 | 5 | 1 | 0.860 | 0.860 | 0.860 | 0.860 | 0.860 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.860 | 0.860 | 0.900 | 0.100 | 81,700,000 |
| OM0000002549 | BANK DHOFAR | 10,000 | 1,220 | 1 | 0.122 | 0.122 | 0.122 | 0.122 | 0.122 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.122 | 0.120 | 0.122 | 0.100 | 365,554,875 |
| OM0000003661 | VOLTAMP ENERGY | 1,000 | 93 | 1 | 0.093 | 0.093 | 0.093 | 0.092 | 0.092 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.093 | 0.093 | 0.000 | 0.100 | 7,489,053 |
| OM0000004248 | SMN POWER HOLDING | 2,277 | 114 | 2 | 0.050 | 0.050 | 0.050 | 0.052 | 0.052 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.050 | 0.050 | 0.050 | 0.100 | 10,381,051 |
| OM0000004420 | BANK NIZWA | 23,184 | 2,318 | 4 | 0.100 | 0.100 | 0.100 | 0.100 | 0.100 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.100 | 0.100 | 0.101 | 0.100 | 223,695,303 |
| OM0000004925 | ALBATINAH POWER | 145,198 | 6,970 | 14 | 0.048 | 0.048 | 0.048 | 0.048 | 0.048 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.048 | 0.047 | 0.048 | 0.100 | 32,394,597 |
| OM0000007910 | AMAN REAL ESTATE | 1,100 | 101 | 1 | 0.092 | 0.092 | 0.092 | 0.096 | 0.096 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.092 | 0.000 | 0.092 | 0.100 | 19,200,000 |
| OM0000001384 | FINANCIAL SERV. | 1,784,615 | 317,661 | 1 | 0.178 | 0.178 | 0.178 | 0.178 | 0.179 | -0.001 | -0.559 | 0.178 | 0.000 | 0.178 | 0.100 | 3,560,000 |
| OM0000001517 | HSBC BANK OMAN | 1,625,767 | 162,577 | 12 | 0.100 | 0.100 | 0.100 | 0.100 | 0.101 | -0.001 | -0.990 | 0.100 | 0.100 | 0.100 | 0.100 | 200,031,279 |
| OM0000004768 | MADINA TAKAFUL | 61,500 | 5,904 | 7 | 0.096 | 0.096 | 0.096 | 0.096 | 0.097 | -0.001 | -1.031 | 0.096 | 0.096 | 0.096 | 0.100 | 16,800,000 |
| OM0000004735 | SEMBCORP SALALAH | 167,950 | 11,960 | 17 | 0.072 | 0.072 | 0.070 | 0.071 | 0.072 | -0.001 | -1.389 | 0.070 | 0.071 | 0.077 | 0.100 | 67,774,608 |
| OM0000003125 | GLOBAL INV. H | 7,400,000 | 495,800 | 1 | 0.067 | 0.067 | 0.067 | 0.067 | 0.068 | -0.001 | -1.471 | 0.067 | 0.065 | 0.069 | 0.100 | 13,400,000 |
| OM0000007407 | DHOFAR GENERATING | 10,000 | 590 | 1 | 0.059 | 0.059 | 0.059 | 0.059 | 0.060 | -0.001 | -1.667 | 0.059 | 0.059 | 0.060 | 0.100 | 13,112,160 |
| OM0000003281 | TAAGEER FINANCE | 387,640 | 31,733 | 26 | 0.084 | 0.084 | 0.081 | 0.082 | 0.084 | -0.002 | -2.381 | 0.081 | 0.078 | 0.084 | 0.100 | 20,794,380 |
| OM0000003521 | GALFAR ENGINEER | 930,137 | 68,103 | 29 | 0.075 | 0.075 | 0.073 | 0.073 | 0.075 | -0.002 | -2.667 | 0.073 | 0.073 | 0.077 | 0.100 | 14,818,011 |
| OM0000005963 | PHOENIX POWER | 238,907 | 11,014 | 20 | 0.048 | 0.048 | 0.046 | 0.046 | 0.048 | -0.002 | -4.167 | 0.047 | 0.046 | 0.050 | 0.100 | 67,279,667 |
| OM0000001483 | NATIONAL BANK OMAN | 8,108,127 | 1,532,436 | 11 | 0.189 | 0.189 | 0.189 | 0.189 | 0.200 | -0.011 | -5.500 | 0.189 | 0.185 | 0.189 | 0.100 | 307,303,861 |
| OM0000002580 | OMAN EDU TRAINING | 10,000 | 2,070 | 1 | 0.207 | 0.207 | 0.207 | 0.207 | 0.229 | -0.022 | -9.607 | 0.207 | 0.207 | 0.240 | 0.100 | 14,490,000 |
| Total | 25 | 21,949,888 | 2,752,337 | 237 | | | | | | | | | | | | |

BRITISH BUSINESSES

## Omicron slows UK growth to weakest since April

**LONDON:** British businesses grew at the slowest pace since April 2021 during the past three months, after the demand for face-to-face services slumped due to the Omicron variant of coronavirus, the Confederation of British Industry said on Sunday.

Britain's economy only recovered to its pre-pandemic size in November, before being hit by the highly infectious Omicron variant which led to government advice to work from home and restrictions on hospitality in Scotland and Wales.

"Consumer services have borne the brunt of 'Plan B' restrictions and general Omicron caution, with activity here shrinking sharply," CBI economist Alpesh Paleja said, Reuters reported.

The CBI's monthly growth index - which is based on quarterly growth rates from its previously published surveys of manufacturers, retailers and other services businesses - fell to +12 in January from +21 in December.

That was the lowest reading since April's, which covered three months when restaurants and non-essential retailers were largely closed due to a previous COVID wave. COVID-19 cases in Britain have fallen sharply since a peak in early January, and most economists think the output will soon recover. -BNA

INVESTMENT FIRM

## Investcorp announces sale of 10 UK industrial and logistics assets

**MANAMA:** Investcorp, a global alternative investment firm announced that it has completed the sale of 10 UK industrial and logistics assets to three different purchasers, Kennedy Wilson, Realty Income and Investra Capital, for a combined total of £108.4 million.

The first sale to Kennedy Wilson comprised a portfolio of eight mid box industrial and logistics warehouses located in the established distribution markets of Doncaster, Leeds, Bilston, Glasgow and Motherwell, totalling 588,997 sq. ft.

The second sale to Realty Income comprised a modern detached industrial unit located in Hull, totalling 270,388 sq. ft.

The third sale to Investra Capital comprised a collection of manufacturing and distribution units located in Tamworth, totalling 201,309 sq. ft.

Investcorp acquired all 10 assets during H2 2017 for a combined price of c.£69m and successfully implemented its asset management strategy, involving significant lease extensions and improvements in revenue across the assets. The firm launched a full marketing process in September 2021. -BNA

LIFESTYLE

# Study finds brain can multitask while walking

A team of scientists has shown that the healthy brain is able to multitask while walking without sacrificing how either activity is accomplished.

The study has been published in the 'NeuroImage Journal'.

"This research shows us that the brain is flexible and can take on additional burdens," said David Richardson, an MD/PhD student in his fifth year in the Pathology & Cell Biology of Disease Program, and first author of the study.

"Our findings showed that the walking patterns of the participants improved when they performed a cognitive task at the same time, suggesting they were actually more stable while walking and performing the task than when they were solely focused on walking," he added.

During these experiments, researchers used a Mobile Brain/Body Imaging system, or MoBI, located in the Del Monte Institute's Frederick J. and Marion A. Schindler Cognitive Neurophysiology Lab. The platform combines virtual reality, brain monitoring, and motion capture technology. While participants walked on a treadmill or manipulate objects on a table, 16 high-speed cameras recorded the position markers with millimetre precision, while simultaneously measuring their brain activity.

The MoBI was used to record the brain activity of participants as they walked on a treadmill and were cued to switch tasks. Their brain activity was also recorded as they performed these same tasks while sitting. Brain changes were measured between the cued tasks and showed that during the more difficult the tasks the neurophysiological difference was greater between walking and sitting — highlighting the flexibility of a healthy brain and how it prepares for and executes tasks based on difficulty level.

"The MoBI allows us to better understand how the brain functions in everyday life," said Edward Freedman, PhD, lead author on the study.

"Looking at these findings to understand how a young healthy brain is able to switch tasks will give us better insight to what's going awry in a brain with a neurodegenerative disease like Alzheimer's disease," he added.

"Understanding how a young healthy brain can successfully 'walk and talk' is an important start, but we also need to understand how these findings differ in the brains of healthy older adults, and adults with neurodegenerative diseases," said Richardson.

"The next stage is expanding this research to include a more diverse group of brains," he added.

Additional authors included John Foxe, PhD, Kevin Mazurek, PhD, and Nicholas Abraham of the University of Rochester. This research was funded by the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and the Del Monte Institute for Neuroscience Pilot Programme. - ANI

# TRAVEL

ICONIC EUROPEAN CITIES:

# Berlin

**This edition of Europe's most iconic cities takes us to Berlin. We've picked out some must-see spots as well as insider tips for your next visit to the German capital.**

### You can't miss: The Berlin Wall

Be sure to check out the Berlin Wall Memorial, a 1.4 kilometer-long (0.86 mile) strip between what was once East and West Berlin. And be sure to visit the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, a 19,000-square-meter site covered with over 2,000 concrete block arranged in a grid pattern. An underground museum lists the names of millions of Jewish Holocaust victims.

### Must-see museum: The Humboldt Forum

Berlin's Humboldt Forum is certainly worth a visit. The edifice is a reconstruction of the former baroque Berlin Palace, albeit with a distinctly modern interior. Thousands of ethnological artifacts are on display here. The Jewish Museum Berlin is another must-see, presenting the history of Jews in Germany from the Middle Ages to the present day. Don't miss a visit to the rebuilt New Synagogue.

### Don't miss the Museum Island and Unter den Linden

Be sure to visit the Museum Island, a UNESCO World Heritage site situated on the Spree River. Here, you'll find several world-class art, history and ethnographic museums, among them the brand-new James Simon Gallery. Also consider strolling down nearby Unter den Linden boulevard, taking you past the German History Museum and Humboldt University until you reach the famous Brandenburg Gate.

### Visit Berlin's oldest neighborhood

Interested in learning about the history of Berlin? Then explore the charming Nikolai Quarter in Berlin's Mitte district. Tradespeople and merchants began settling in this small neighborhood next to the river in the Middle Ages. Two towns — Berlin and Cölln — emerged and eventually linked up to become what is now Berlin.

### Explore the green spaces

If you want to escape the hustle and bustle of Berlin, consider checking out Tempelhof Field, a now defunct city airport. The vast space is perfect for jogging, long walks and biking. Nature lovers will also enjoy Tiergarten, a lush, well-maintained park in the center of Berlin and modeled after an English garden. Covering an area of more than two square kilometers, its big enough to get lost in.

### Berlin offers plenty of culinary variety

Foodies should definitively pay a visit to Berlin's bustling Kreuzberg district, where one can find an abundance of restaurants and both indoor and outdoor markets, including Marheineke Market (pictured). For a taste of typical Berlin fast food inspired by Turkish cuisine, treat yourself to a döner kebab. Also be sure to sample Berlin's famous currywurst sausage.

### Best place to enjoy music : Mauerpark

It's common to find musicians playing at Mauerpark, a narrow park in Berlin's northern Prenzlauer Berg district, which also has a flea market on Sundays — donate some money if you're enjoying the tunes. For a truly unique experience, visit Berlin's Funkhaus concert venue, a former 1950s East German broadcast center. Silent Green, a crematorium-turned-concert hall, is also worth checking out.

### Best views of Berlin

The seat of German parliament, the Bundestag, boasts a publicly accessible glass dome on its roof, affording stunning views of the city center; admission is free. The surrounding area also features plenty of stylish government buildings, like the German Chancellery. More great views can be enjoyed from Berlin's 19th century Victory Column, and the famous 368-meter-tall Television Tower.

### Must-see districts

Berlin has a variety of diverse neighborhoods, each with its own character. Charlottenburg is sophisticated and chic, Kreuzberg and Neukölln are vibrant and multicultural. In Mitte (pictured) you'll find the big sights and museums. If you really want to experience the different neighborhoods, it's best to drift through the streets, observe people and work your way through the many bars and cafes.

### Insider tip to avoid the crowds

Feeling intrepid? Head for Natur-Park Südgelände, a former rail yard turned nature preserve. Amid the lush, wild vegetation, you will find railway infrastructure and art installations. Craving some exercise? Rent a bike and cycle along the Berlin Wall Trail, which follows the course of the former East German border encircling West Berlin.

# ROUND-UP

# Exclusive benefits on classy 2022 Lexus ES

The 2022 Lexus ES is crafted to offer the finest driving and ownership experiences with its inspiring design, detailed luxury and fuel-efficient performance

**MUSCAT:** Lexus is now offering the popular and classy ES with exclusive benefits. They include 3 Years / 30,000km (whichever is earlier), and 1 year of free registration. The campaign is valid up to March 23 (Conditions apply. Visit any Lexus showroom for details).

The 2022 Lexus ES is crafted to offer the finest driving and ownership experiences with its inspiring design, detailed luxury and fuel-efficient performance.

Complementing the Lexus ES emotional design, elevated by a new design front grille, is a thrilling drive personality imbued by two powertrain options.

The ES350 is powered by a 3.5-litre 24-valve V6 engine that produces 298hp and 36.3 kg-m of torque. While the ES250 is powered by, a high-efficiency 2.5-liter 16-valve DOHC engine that produces 204 hp and 24.8 kg-m of torque. The two powertrains on ES350 and ES250 are paired to an eight-speed direct-shift automatic transmission.

The class-leading hybrid electric model's batteries come with 8 years /160,000 Kms warranty and is automatically charged either by a petrol engine or during braking or decelerating, eliminating the need to plug in a power cord. Furthermore, it hosts a number of advanced technologies, yet drives like any other conventional car and does not require special fuel. The ES300h offers an impressive 24.1 km/L mileage.

Lexus ES350 F SPORT model further enhances the driving excitement so that drivers can enjoy a sense of oneness with the car, born of its ability to respond immediately to driving enthusiasts' intentions in various situations. In addition to a thrilling exterior that highlights its bold and aggressive personality, the Lexus ES350 FSPORT features numerous such as a retuned suspension, 19-inch wheels and tyres, and unique aluminium interior trim that gives the machine a more dynamic look and feel.

RECOGNITION

# A'Saffa Foods wins 'Oman's Most Trusted Brand' award 2021

**MUSCAT:** A'Saffa Foods was recently presented with the 'Oman's Most Trusted Brand' award in the 'Poultry Products' category at the 2021 edition of the renowned Award Ceremony.

The results are based on a month-long survey, which was open to the public for voting. Thus, this award is a clear demonstration of the public's confidence in A'Saffa Foods and its products.

The 2021 Oman's Most Trusted Brand Awards Ceremony was held at Al Bustan Palace, a Ritz-Carlton Hotel, on January 25, under the auspices of Dr Mohammed bin Hamad Al Rumhy, Minister of Energy and Minerals. Receiving the award at the event on behalf of A'Saffa Foods was the company's CEO, Eng. Mohamed Suhail Al Shanfari.

On receiving the award, Eng. Mohamed Suhail Al Shanfari said, "The essence of trust is delivering on your promises, something that has become increasingly critical in today's uncertain market. This is why with every passing year we continue to do our very best to live up to our promises of providing our customers with nothing but the finest poultry products. We are delighted to see that our unending efforts continue to pay dividends and we have once again been named as Oman's most trusted poultry products brand. The award is a wonderful honour for our brand, and we would like to thank Apex Media as well as everyone who voted for us during the survey."

FUNCTIONAL UTILITY VEHICLE

# Renault Dokker combines best features of space and dynamic performance

**MUSCAT:** A practical commercial vehicle, Renault Dokker combines the best features of space, comfort, and dynamic performance. Its functional utility vehicle and great design have found Renault Dokker many a fan in Oman.

Created to be exceedingly functional Renault Dokker is a harmonious and dynamic utility vehicle with great design.

Offering easy loading, quick access to objects, side door, on-board multimedia system, and more Renault Dokker combines the best features of space, comfort, and dynamic performance.

Pragmatic and spacious, functional utility vehicle Renault Dokker has found many fans in Oman.

Renault Dokker Van has everything to make the owner's work easier. Its 1.6 MPI 85 hp engine is efficient both in consumption and cost of usage. The engine allows for a very dynamic driving at a cost that is amongst the most frugal, 4 x 20 W radio, audio streaming and Bluetooth hands-free calling.

A spokesperson for Renault Oman, from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles, said, "Renault Dokker is a very efficient and dynamic vehicle. This is the reason why it loved so much."

Abdulla Jabri says, "Renault Dokker Van proficiently rises to the task of meeting his day-to-day needs. Its 750 kg payload is invaluable for a businessman like me."

Ghadeer Al Adi likes the easy loading feature of the Dokker Van. He says, "I find it functional because it comes with one or two sliding side doors and the loading width stands at 703 mm. The asymmetrical rear doors, meanwhile, open to a width of 1.08 m which is especially useful. Its lashing rings on the floor hold fragile items perfectly in place."

Ahmed Al Awaisi is captivated by its generous loading space and comfort. He says, "The 'Easy Seat' is foldable and removable; the passenger seat shows its full inventiveness when the backrest folds down to form a temporary desk. When fully removed, it frees up extra space, increasing the loading volume to 3.9 m3."

Rizwan Abbas says the "best part of Renault Dokker is that it acclimates to all circumstances. Its features including ABS & BA, ESP, TPMS, dual airbags make it a top-range car." He also adds, "The 1.6L 85hp Euro 4 engine that powers Dokker shows consumption levels among the lowest in its class, without having to resort to expensive and complex technologies or sacrificing performance."

Renault offers you a vehicle up to 3.9 m3, equipped as a saloon car, as robust as a utility vehicle and as practical as a Dokker van. Accessibility, loading volume and driving comfort - the Renault Dokker Van is packed with benefits and nice surprises. Renault Dokker Van has everything to make the owner's work easier: cruise control with speed limiter, rear parking sensors, practical storage areas. To enhance efficiency, it provides the Media Nav multimedia system and its large, 7-inch (18 cm) touchscreen, with navigation, 4 x 20 W radio, audio streaming and Bluetooth hands-free calling.

Available, open and spacious, the Renault Dokker aims to please, with an innate sense of practicality and versatility. It can take all kinds of loads, assisted byXL sliding side doors (more than 70 cm wide) and two asymmetrical rear doors. Meeting the challenges of transport and delivery with ingenuity and panache, the Renault Dokker Van moves with the times: its economical engine, low CO2 emissions and respect for both the environment and budget make it a truly model employee.

Exceed expectations; Dokker's loading area is equipped with eight lashing rings on the floor, ensuring that your most fragile items are firmly held in place. For added security, owners can choose between three types of partition: tubular, full glazed or pivoting wire-mesh(associated with Easy Seat). The side and rear doors can be either panelled or glazed. And for even greater efficiency, the Dokker Van is available with side panels and a robust, stylish boot carpet.

EDUCATION

# Future of higher education: The two main challenges

**MUSCAT:** Thanks to the Internet, the younger generation in the Arab world now has a global insight and will accept nothing short of what is available in the developed world in all aspects of life, with higher education being no exception.

University administrators in the Arab world need to figure out what changes they need to bring to their institutions today to give their graduates an edge tomorrow. By now, almost everyone agrees that changes in higher education are about changes in the curriculum and changes in the methods of instruction.

### The future university curriculum

We know from the writings of Peter Drucker that while it is impossible to predict the future, one can consider the future that has already happened, and then plan accordingly. We shall focus on three things that have already happened. First, we now know that not all jobs will be relevant to the workforce of the future, due mainly to the use of AI in automation, or robotics.

Hence, the need for universities to offer new majors that bring more of key skills of liberal arts majors into professional and technical education.

Second, we know that people now are living longer and are working at several careers during their lifetime. Hence, the need for universities to offer different models of degree and course delivery, not necessarily the typical 4-year college degree and the typical 15-week course.

The objective is to provide a flexible way for people to be able to constantly upgrade their skills so that they can meet the new requirements of their own career or those of another career altogether.

Third, we now know that the Internet, social media particularly, has created a virtual world that seriously disrupted the norms and behaviours of societies. Universities have a responsibility to make sure that young people do not become aliens in their own countries. In addressing those three issues, university administrators may consider a revised curriculum that includes interdisciplinary majors, micro-credentials, and new general education courses pertaining to the culture of each country, respectively.

### The future methods of instruction

How best to teach remains a hard question with no satisfying answers. The coronavirus pandemic demonstrated to everyone that effective teaching can be done online. With so much effort put into online teaching worldwide in the past year and a half, we can be certain that online teaching is not a temporary arrangement that is going to lose momentum when the pandemic comes to an end. University professors know well that active learning, which brings about a high level of student engagement, is the best way to make sure that students learn what they are supposed to.

We now have AI making its stamp on almost all aspects of our lives, and we have all the reasons to believe that AI will soon bring online teaching to a higher level, by making it possible for every student to learn the material at their own pace, also called personalised teaching.

This solves a serious shortcoming in face-to-face teaching, where a professor must deal with a group of students with different abilities to learn.

At Al Sharqiyah University, personalised teaching is a topic that is currently being researched by our e-learning department.

In conclusion, university administrators are encouraged to embrace technology and to invest in their online capabilities as a strategic objective.

Still, the real problem is not the technology itself, but it is us, humans. Being social creatures, we need to find a way to accept technology into our lives without compromising the kind of matters that makes us humans in the first place. This could prove to be the biggest challenge of all.

*The writer, Prof. Fouad B. Chedid, is currently the Vice Chancellor of Al Sharqiyah University. He has taught at several universities in the USA, Japan, Lebanon, and Oman.*

ROUND-UP

# For optimum performance and safety, always insist on Nissan genuine parts

By fitting Nissan Genuine Accessories, customers can rest easy knowing its high-quality standards ensure the perfect fit, increased safety, and reliability, allowing them to future-proof their car

**MUSCAT:** Nissan Oman, from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles (SBA), offers a broad range of Nissan genuine parts which are designed, tested and manufactured to the same exacting standards to fit perfectly for optimum performance, durability and safety.

By fitting Nissan Genuine Accessories customers can rest easy knowing its high-quality standards ensure the perfect fit, increased safety, and reliability, allowing them to future-proof their car.

A senior official from Nissan Oman said, "Nissan genuine parts are forged and conceived under strict standards and rigorous rounds of quality control.

"The parts are tested for the best accuracy of fit and are available at a competitive price and covered for warranty. Every Nissan vehicle is an important investment so customers must never compromise on safety or reliability. They must always be aware of non-genuine parts and always insist on Nissan Genuine."

SBA, the exclusive distributor of Nissan genuine parts in Oman, over the years has become a trusted name in Oman automotive market and is renowned for its customer service excellence, fostering enduring customer relationships. The company leads the way across the region as a value-adding partner and has been recognised globally by Nissan. Living by the corporate core values and commitment to their customers, SBA continuously conducts awareness campaigns to educate their customers on the importance of using genuine parts.

The SBA official added, "Owners can also be assured that when their car is in for service, maintenance or repair, not only is it in the safe hands of experts who have genuine knowledge of everything that has to do with your car – they can count on lasting quality and a perfect fit every time."

### Genuine oil filters protect the car

Even the smallest particles can cause friction in the car's engine, and this leads to damage over time. Nissan genuine oil filters are built specifically for Nissan. Its high filtration function extends the engine's service life, so your car continues to run smoothly. Genuine oil filters last longer, perform better and save your money in the long run.

### Genuine brake pads – the smart choice

Braking is perhaps the most important function for your car's safety, so you must ensure the brake pads in your car are the best. Nissan genuine brake pads are made with higher-quality materials and to the exact specifications of Nissan, providing constant braking power (even under high temperatures) and control in any circumstances. They last longer, perform better and save money in the long run.

### Genuine air filters save your car

The combination of air and fuel powers the car engines. Inferior quality air filter elements sometimes have poor fitting and air-tightness properties which reduces filtering efficiency. Nissan genuine viscous-type air filter elements trap dust and foreign particles minimising air-flow resistance, improving fuel efficiency, prevents loss of engine power thereby saving your money in the long run.

### Genuine shock absorbers and struts

Shock absorbers and struts are important components of automobile suspension systems and help keep tyres in contact with the road. Genuine Nissan shock absorbers and struts maintain their damping performance over a long period. This is because their components such as the rod guide and piston are specially designed and engineered to minimise friction and have undergone severe endurance testing. Strict quality standards are applied to the manufacturing process.

Nissan genuine parts have undergone thousands of hours of rigorous testing to meet the highest standards of quality and performance, as your safety is our priority. Nissan genuine parts are built to be reliable, with the added peace of mind that they are covered by the Nissan New Vehicle Warranty.

Nissan genuine parts are made to perfectly fit your vehicle, ensuring it runs at its optimum level and is ready for any adventure.

Nissan genuine parts keep the vehicle complete, just like the day the customer bought it, maintaining its resale value.

PARTNERSHIP

## Ali Al Habsi to be brand ambassador of Belkin

**MUSCAT:** Aiming to enhance its leading position in the retail sector in the region, Aamaal Company – the official operator of Belkin in the GCC - signed a cooperation agreement with the national football star Ali Al Habsi, to be the ambassador of Belkin.

At this event, Sheikh Al Harith Al Khalili, Executive Partner at Aamaal, noted: "We are glad to sign the cooperation agreement with the football star Ali Al Habsi. This step adds to the Belkin brand, as Ali Al Habsi has achieved numerous successes during his career, and he is one of the famous figures in the region, being one of the most prominent Arab football stars who were able to achieve outstanding successes internationally. Our cooperation with Ali Al Habsi to be the ambassador of the Belkin brand will enhance our position in the Gulf region market and will help us achieve our planned goals for the upcoming period. We share with Ali Al-Habsi similar goals, ambitions and unlimited passion for success and excellence, and we are confident that together we will draw a new phase for Belkin. This partnership will be a milestone in Belkin's journey in Oman and the GCC. We hope that the Belkin brand will add to Ali Al Habsi's successful journey, and we are looking forward to a sustainable relationship of cooperation and partnership with him."

Expressing his happiness about the cooperation, Ali Al Habsi said: "Being an ambassador for a distinguished brand like Belkin is a source of pride for me. I am happy with this cooperation and I look forward to contributing to creating a new phase of success for the brand in the Sultanate of Oman and the Gulf region. This partnership imposes a great challenge for me to achieve the set goals. We will work closely in the coming period to make a paradigm shift that will contribute to the consolidation of the "Belkin" brand among lovers of the company's products, and help it reach a new segment of customers. The signing of the partnership agreement today is the first step in the joint work process with Belkin, and for me, it is important to be part of the history of this prestigious brand in the Sultanate of Oman and the Gulf countries. It is also important for me that my name will contribute to the successes of the Belkin brand in the region."

Sheikh Jehad Al Khalili, Executive Partner at Aamaal noted that this agreement will enhance the presence of the Belkin brand, as well as support the development plans in aiming to take the presence of the brand in the Gulf market to advanced levels. He added saying: "The selection of Ali Al Habsi to be the Belkin brand ambassador, highlights the goals which Belkin seeks to achieve for the global brand.

"We are proud to be the Official Operator of Belkin Stores in the Gulf region, we are fully aware that the reputation of Ali Al Habsi, our national star goalkeeper is a source of inspiration and confidence for Omanis, Gulf people and Arabs in general, as he is known for his successful football career in Europe. This will positively reflect on Belkin brand in terms of its presence in the region."

PRIZE SCHEME

## ahlibank concludes Wafra prize draws

**MUSCAT:** Endorsing its efforts towards rewarding its savings account customers, and supporting them in achieving their ambitions, ahlibank has conducted the last draws of its popular Wafra prize scheme that has helped in improving the lives of several individuals.

In a live-streamed event on the bank's official social media pages, the names of 20 winners were announced who won across various categories with more than OMR300,000, including one winner of the OMR250,000 'Salary for Life' grand prize (OMR1,000 per month for 250 months). At the beginning of the year, ahlibank revealed that the 2021 Wafra prize scheme was designed to reward more winners with prizes totalling more than OMR2 million, across its branch network in Oman.

Expressing his pleasure over the success achieved by the prize scheme in its last edition, Muneer Al Balushi, AGM - Head of Retail Distribution at ahlibank, acknowledged, "We are delighted with the success achieved by Wafra scheme since its launch. It has played an active role in promoting the culture of saving in the community and ensuring financial stability among our customers. The program was designed to feature a variety of prize categories. On behalf of the Bank, I am pleased to congratulate all the winners of our 2021 draws, wishing them a better future for themselves and their families."

"Wafra prize draws were a strategic approach towards inculcating a habit of savings amongst the people of Oman. Moving forward, we will continue to assess the needs of the local market, aligning them with the objectives of our strategy and giving our customers more reasons to bank with us, and more importantly save with us for their better, brighter future. Our innovative product portfolio and services confirm our commitment to delivering a banking experience that exceeds the expectations of our loyal customers," Al Balushi added.

With the conclusion of the 2021 Wafra scheme, ahlibank has successfully fulfilled its commitment to provide more prizes to its customers, including the 'Salary for Life' prize, which was drawn during each quarter of the year. Four winners received a sum of OMR 250,000, in 2021, which is to be paid to them at a rate of OMR 1,000 per month for 250 months. Through weekly draws, the bank rewarded a winner from each branch with OMR500. In addition to making weekly draws for Al-Nukhba and Exclusiv customers and another for Imtiyaz customers, the Bank awarded one winner each week a cash prize of OMR500.

The programme has also rewarded, through the monthly draws, one winner from each branch with OMR 1,000 each. In addition to two winners of OMR 1,000 per month in the 'Salary Transfer' category.

KIOSKS FOR SOCIAL WELFARE FAMILIES

## Bank Muscat inks pact with Office of Wali of Bidbid

**MUSCAT:** Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate, as part of its social responsibility and commitment to national growth and development, has signed an agreement with the Office of the Wali of Bidbid to provide kiosks for the welfare of social welfare families and job seekers.

These kiosks will be distributed in different places within the Wilayat of Bidbid.

The agreement was signed by Dr Humood Ali Humaid Al Marshodi, Wali of Bidbid, and Hamza Abbas Al Ajmi, Deputy General Manager - Credit, Bank Muscat.

Dr Humood Ali Humaid Al Marshodi, Wali of Bidbid, said, "This agreement is being implemented in cooperation between the Wali's Office and Bank Muscat as part of the strong public-private partnership in supporting development projects. It aims to support jobseekers and social welfare families in Bidbid to contribute towards the Sultanate's economy through small businesses. We extend our sincere thanks to Bank Muscat, which is well known for its pioneering CSR activities, for its support for this project and hope that the private sector will continue to support projects that contribute to national development and our community."

Hamza Abbas Al Ajmi, Deputy General Manager - Credit, Bank Muscat, said: "Bank Muscat has been a proud partner in the development of the Sultanate and our community over the past 40 years. Through this initiative with the support of the Office of His Excellency the Wali of Bidbid, we hope to benefit many social welfare families and job seekers in the wilayat. The kiosks, which are being built by an SME (Smart Industrious Co), will enable many citizens to play a greater role in enhancing their income through starting their businesses. We are delighted to be part of a strong Public-Private Partnership in Oman, which is creating a strong and positive impact on Omani society across multiple fields including the development of a vibrant MSME sector."

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