

OMAN TO PARTICIPATE IN ARAB INTERIOR MINISTERS MEETING

The Sultanate of Oman will participate in the 40th session of the Arab Interior Ministers Council in Tunisia on Wednesday. Oman's delegation will be led by Sayyid Hamoud Faisal Al Busaidi, Minister of Interior, who arrived in Tunis yesterday. **>A5**



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TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN Over 50,000 invasive birds eliminated

1 More than 50,000 invasive birds were eliminated in Dhofar Governorate till February 25, 2023 by the EA. Since the launch of the drive on December 13, 2022, 52,248 birds have been eliminated. **>A3**

OMAN



Oman takes part in Geneva discussion

2 The Sultanate of Oman on Tuesday took part in a panel discussion on the death penalty organised by the Human Rights Council at the United Nations (UN) headquarters in Geneva. **>A6**

WORLD

'India-Europe ties stronger than ever'

3 Indian Union External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Tuesday said that India's relations with Europe are stronger and deeper than ever before. **>A7**



WINNING PROJECTS OF SECOND EDITION OF BHA ANNOUNCED



Sayyid Bilarab thanked Omanis who took part during the second edition of the award

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham Al Said patronised the closing ceremony of the 2nd edition of Bilarab bin Haitham Award (BHA) for Architectural Design at the German University of Technology in A'Seeb, Muscat on Tuesday evening.

The top three winning projects of the BHA's 2nd version were announced during the ceremony, as well as naming the winner of the contest on designing the Sultanate of Oman's pavilion at Expo Japan 2025.

In his opening speech, HH

Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham Al Said underlined the positive interaction witnessed by the public in the second edition of the award and the achievement of its goals being a gateway for young people towards providing them with the opportunity to highlight their capabilities and implement them on the ground, thus making the award a success.

He added the award will continue to renew its ideas, benefiting from the experience gained during the first and second cycles.

He expressed his sincere thanks to the Omani youth who par-

ticipated and interacted with the award during the second version.

He also congratulated the winners of the first places and those who qualified for the final stage of the award, the competition to design the Sultanate of Oman's pavilion at Expo Japan 2025.

He called on those who were not fortunate enough to reach the podium not to despair, urging them to strive to develop their skills and abilities, in a manner that qualifies them for any upcoming competitions.

Mohammed Salah Al Balushi won the first place for his design

inspired by the scene of the gathering of ships in Khor Al Battah in Sur during periods of prosperous maritime activity. The building of Sur Maritime Museum was designed to embody the Omani maritime heritage at the peak of its prosperity with the aim of reviving this history. In addition to the basic components of the museum, the project includes a main walkway "Boulevard" containing cafes, restaurants and a park, as well as another walkway overlooking the sea, linking the sea street walkway to Khor Al Battah Bridge and the Ship Factory. **>A4**



MEETING

Discussion on Draft Labour Law

MUSCAT: The Shura Council yesterday discussed the draft labour law referred by the government.

The draft law came in 144 articles, divided into 10 chapters and detailed in 14 sections, which include definitions and general provisions, organisation of work, work contract and obligations of the employer and worker.

It also includes a chapter on working hours, vacations, wages, and employment of juveniles.

The draft law also includes a chapter on occupational safety



and health, another on trade unions, general unions, the General Federation of Workers, the law for settling collective labour dis-

putes, strikes and closures, in addition to a chapter on labour inspection and joint dialogue between production stakeholders. The last section of the draft law includes penalties.

The Council's session held under the chairmanship of Khalid Hilal Al Ma'awali, Chairman of the Council, reviewed a report of the draft labour law that includes opinion of the Youth and Human Resources Committee, as well as views of the Legislative and Legal Committee of the Council. - **ONA**

AL MOUJ GOLF

Oman Golf Trophy to promote sports tourism, boost economy

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The grand finale for the Oman Golf Trophy, a unique golf diplomacy initiative, is set to be played at the award-winning Al Mouj Golf in Muscat from 3 to 7 March 2023.

The initiative is characterised by a robust public-private partnership to promote investment and tourism opportunities in Oman in line with Oman Vision 2040, with the Sultanate of Oman aiming to leverage golf as an elegant ambassador to highlight the natural beauty of the country for travellers and strengthen diplomatic ties between Oman and Italy.

Created in conversation over a game of golf between Francisco

Palau Grieg, Honorary Consul of Oman in Milan, Italy, and Ali Daud, CEO of Daud Group, as they discussed how golf could be a vehicle to bring Oman to Italy and Italy to Oman, the Oman Golf Trophy was launched as a joint initiative with the blessing of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.

The Italian leg of the Oman Golf Trophy tournament was played across seven of the most prestigious courses in Italy between September and November 2022, with as many as 14 players from over 800 participants qualifying for the grand finale, that will provide local golfers with the unique experience of playing alongside Italian golfers.

In addition to competitive golf at



Al Mouj Golf, participants will also have the opportunity to explore many of the key experiences that make Oman one of the region's top tourist destinations, including the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque, the Royal Opera House Muscat,

Old Muscat, and the historic area of Nizwa. The Oman Golf Trophy invites Italians and Europeans to discover Oman's exclusive tourism experiences and rich business opportunities. It is stewarded by the Oman Golf Association (www.gol-

foman.com) under the patronage of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth with technical as well as financial support of the Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion, coupled with sponsorship by some of the most well-known groups in the country including Daud Group, Oman Air, OHI, The Zubair Corporation, Al Mouj Muscat and Kempinski Hotel Muscat.

Speaking ahead of the Oman Golf Trophy grand finale at Al Mouj Golf, Basil Al Rawas, Undersecretary for Sports and Youth at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, said, "The Oman Golf Trophy is the first-ever Omani

tournament to be hosted overseas. The grand finale will provide a great opportunity to continue promoting the Sultanate of Oman, utilising golf, as it is one of the most popular elite sports in the world. Having hosted seven events in Italy, it is amazing to be closing the tournament in Oman as there are many benefits to be achieved at all levels, particularly for promoting sports tourism and boosting the economy."

"After successfully hosting the grand finale, we look forward to rolling out similar events through different sports, in order to promote Oman, alongside our international partners and supported jointly by the public and private sectors." **>A4**

Noted adventurer calls for setting up geopark in Oman

Dr Khaled Abdul Malak has urged the government to protect Majlis Al Jinn, the ‘Mt Everest of Oman’, from mass tourism

Times News Service

MUSCAT: One of the best-known adventurers and a well-known expert on caves and canyons in the Sultanate of Oman, Dr Khaled Abdul Malak, has reiterated the need to set up a geopark in the country. Speaking to *Times of Oman* on the sidelines of a talk show titled ‘Unique Oman’ on Monday evening, Khaled said, “This is one of the projects I am working upon, in coordination with the Oman government, and I hope that we can have a geopark in the Sultanate of Oman soon. “We have yet to define the area where the geopark will come up



but once decided, it will be a big boost to eco-tourism in the Sultanate of Oman.” Geoparks are single, unified geographical areas where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development. Khaled, who has been exploring Oman’s amazing landscape for the past 27 years, has already published two books – ‘In Search of the Sublime, a journey through Oman,’ in 2008 and ‘Canyoning in Oman – 12 Exceptional Wadis’, in 2014. An oral surgeon for many years, Khaled has now devoted himself totally to promote the geological wonders of the Sultanate of Oman across the world through his books

and talk shows. Khaled said: “There are two exceptional things I found in Oman. First the Ophiolites [large slab of oceanic crust, made of volcanic rocks and ultramafic rocks from the Earth’s upper mantle, that was over thrust onto continental crust] and second the cave system. “I have spoken a lot about caves in Oman at international symposiums and have always found huge interest and curiosity among people to know more about the caves.” Majlis Al Jinn: Oman’s Mt Everest, is of one of the best cave wonders in the world, Khaled said. **Cave explorer** The experienced cave explorer said: “I always say Majlis Al Jinn is the Mt Everest of Oman. We need



to protect this geological wonder. I am against moves to make the site open for mass tourism. It may do more harm than good for this amazing site.” Majlis Al Jinn, literally translated as ‘the meeting place of the genies’, is one of a kind of geological wonder located at the Selman plateau near Fins village in Wilayat of Quraiyat. This is situated at a staggering height and consists of caves and caverns connected by underground tunnels. Visitors need to descend the cave through ropes to explore the stunning features of the cave. Khaled during the talk show on Monday was emphatic in putting his point that Majlis Al Jinn, which is considered to be one of the largest underground caves in

the world, should be protected and was against the development of tourism sites near the cave. The area of this enormous cave is 58,000 square metres and its capacity is 4 million cubic metres. The length of Majlis Al Jinn Cave is 310 metres and its width is 225 metres. A dome-shaped ceiling tops the cave at a height of 120 metres. Khaled expressed his gratitude and thanks to the Ministry of Information and in particular, former Minister of Information, Dr Abdul Munim bin Mansoor Al Hassani. Dr Hassani was in attendance along with other guests at the talk show on Monday. Khalid thanked his mentors, French climbers - Patrick Cabiro and Nathalie Henriot - who whetted his appetite for climbing and

inspired him since his first meeting in Oman in 2000. On Monday, Khaled also presented a series of photographs depicting the beauty of Oman and a short video film on his various trips. In his first book, ‘In Search of the Sublime, a journey through Oman,’ he featured caves, mountains, canyons and beaches. The second book, ‘Canyoning in Oman – 12 Exceptional Wadis’, was produced with the help of the Ministry of Information and he also came out with a fascinating film on Oman’s nature – ‘Adventure has an address – Oman’. The preface of the second book reads as: “Since the Sultanate of Oman boasts a large number of wadis (valley), the overall theme of this book is to take the readers on an exploratory tour around the twelve famous wadis which are located in different parts of the country.” Khaled said: “The book is a rare manual and a graphic evidence of the beauty of Oman wadis and their unique features.” Khaled has been a regular contributor of features of his explorations to a local English daily and has written several articles for a British publication called The Arab Weekly. He also made a documentary with the BBC on canyoning in Oman.



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SEASON 2022 -2023

AWARENESS PROGRAMME

Sri Lanka to mark ‘World Seagrass Day’



Times News Service

MUSCAT: The UN General Assembly had adopted on May 23, 2022 a resolution submitted by Sri Lanka declaring March 1 as the ‘World Seagrass Day’.

The landmark resolution was co-sponsored by 24 other member countries.

Accordingly, on March 1, 2023, the entire world marks the first ever ‘World Seagrass Day’.

Seagrasses are one of the most valuable marine ecosystems on earth covering around 300,000 square kilometres in 159 countries and six continents. They provide a range of critical environmental, economic and social benefits.

The most significant benefit being the enormous carbon sequestration potential of seagrasses, storing up to 18 percent of the world’s oceanic carbon, which is greater than that of rainforests which makes protection and restoration of seagrasses a vital tool in efforts to adapt and mitigate the adverse effects of climate change.

The vital functions of seagrasses also include its role in stabilising the sea bottom and providing ecosystem support via food and shelter for a number of marine creatures, including commercial and recreational fish species, as well as endangered and charismatic species such as turtles, dugongs and manatees.

However, seagrass ecosystems are being destroyed as a result of human activity.

The United Nations Environment Programme Publication ‘Out of the Blue: the value of seagrasses to the environment and to people’ states that “7 per cent of seagrass marine habitat is being lost worldwide per year, which is equivalent to a football field of seagrass lost every 30 minutes”.

The UNGA resolution has attracted global interest with many countries and communities being sensitised to the importance of this vital ecosystem.

In Sri Lanka, the Ministry of Environment has given this day wide publicity among people of all walks of life, inclusive of young people, to create awareness of the contribution of seagrasses to the goals of climate preservation and sustainability to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Embassy of Sri Lanka in the Sultanate of Oman also joins commemorating this important day in Muscat-Oman with a special awareness programme.



Over 50,000 invasive birds eliminated

The Environment Authority is making efforts to combat invasive birds due to the threat posed by them to other bird species in different regions of Oman

Times News Service

MUSCAT: More than 50,000 invasive birds were eliminated in Dhofar Governorate till February 25, 2023 by the Environment Authority (EA). Since the launch of the campaign on December 13, 2022, 52,248 birds have been eliminated, of which 15,739 were crows and 36,509 mynas.

Talib bin Ali Al Abri, Assistant Director General of the General Directorate of Environment in Dhofar Governorate and head of the sub-committee for the national campaign to combat invasive birds in the governorate, said: "The statistics of the field survey carried out by the Environment Authority in most of the governorates of the Sultanate of Oman and field observations proved that these birds are widely spread and concentrated in coastal areas in the governorates of North Al Batinah, South Al Batinah, and Muscat, all the way to Dhofar Governorate."

The Environment Authority is making efforts to combat invasive



birds due to their threat to other bird species in different regions of Oman.

He added: "The presence of these birds was observed in large numbers in coastal areas and neighbouring villages, in addition to their presence in agricultural areas and areas with high population density and at sites where ornamental plants abound, such as gardens and natural parks and on roadsides and green spaces."

Ecosystem

Regarding the impact of invasive birds, Al Abri said: "The myna bird is considered one of the most intrusive invasive birds affecting the ecosystem and the balance of

its components by targeting the prey of species that feed on them. Myna causes an imbalance in the food chain, explaining that this type of bird is known for its diverse feeding sources. It includes the chicks of other birds and their eggs, reptiles, insects and rodents, in addition to agricultural crops, fruits and grains, which negatively affects the economic resources and sources of income in the Sultanate of Oman."

He added: "Crows in turn, affect biodiversity and create a kind of competition for prey with the myna bird and other local birds that feed on the same species. Myna and crow are fierce and aggressive birds, and they fiercely defend their meals they seize, which leads to damage to local species. Other birds do not find anything to feed on and this leads to a decrease in their numbers and disruption of the elements of the food chain."

Al-Abri said that these type of birds mainly live in South Asia, such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and parts of China, but because of their enormous and rapid ability to adapt to various climatic and geographical conditions, they spread and have expanded in many countries and continents.

CONCERT

Hussain Al Jassmi to perform at ROHM



MUSCAT: The Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) announced two nights in concert with one of Arabia's giants in the music world, Hussain Al Jassmi.

Renowned throughout the world for his heart-warming anthems and charismatic personality, Al Jassmi will sing two concerts, both of which have sold out, on the 2nd and 3rd of March 2023.

Following a programme of some of his greatest hits, Al Jassmi is coming to the opera house for the second time, bringing his message of peace and stability, to share with audiences from around the world. Al Jassmi sings in a mixture of Arabic, Moroccan and English and has captured the heart of fans from across coun-

tries and across generations.

His career launching singles include Bawada'ak, Wallah Mayiswa and Bassbour Al Fourgakom. In 2008, Al Jassmi received the Murex d'Or award, under the category of 'Best Arabic Male Singer'.

His most popular song is an Egyptian Shaabi song, called Boshret Kheir, written and composed by Amr Mostafa as a pro-elections campaign in Egypt. Al Jassmi has performed all around the world including a performance in the Vatican's annual Christmas concert, becoming the first Arab to do so.

This weekend, Al Jassmi will perform on the stage of the Royal Opera House of Musical Arts at 7.30pm. -ONA

EXCHANGE VIEWS

Oman, Maldives to boost relations

MUSCAT: Sultan Salim Al Habsi, Minister of Finance met with Ibrahim Amir, Minister of Finance of the Republic of Maldives on Tuesday. Ibrahim Amir is currently on a three-day visit to the Sultanate of Oman.

The two sides discussed topics of common interests and exchanged views on some financial matters. They explored means of boosting ties between the two countries in various fields.

The Finance Minister of Maldives also met during his visit

with Eng. Salim Nasser Al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals and Nasser Khamis Al Jashmi, Secretary General of the Ministry of Finance, who supervises the National Program for Financial Sustainability and Development of the Financial Sector, as well as a number of government officials.

These meetings come within the context of enhancing the Omani-Maldives relations in the economic sectors and the fields of energy. -ONA



Sultanate of Oman
Consumer Protection Authority



Zawawi Trading Company LLC

Recall Campaign for Mercedes-Benz
ML, GL (164 platform) R-Class (251 platform)
Model year: 2004-2015

Date of Campaign: 31.03.2023
Recall Segment: Mechanical
Recall Type: Safety

Product Description:

Number of vehicles	Chassis number	To	Chassis number	Sales Designation
3	4JG1641751A012259	TO	4JG1641751A038486	ML 500 4MATIC
24	WDC16417*1A007792	TO	WDC16417*1A742688	ML 500 4MATIC
5	***1641771A130965	TO	***1641771A554238	ML 63 AMG 4MATIC
202	WDC1641861A007349	TO	WDC1641861A709167	ML 350 4MATIC
57	WDC1648711A184583	TO	WDC1648711A785298	GL 450 4MATIC
49	WDC1648861A119006	TO	WDC1648861A797193	GL 500 4MATIC
3	WDC2511541A139651	TO	WDC2511541A119258	R 300
3	WDC2511541A111267	TO	WDC2511541A141549	R 280
9	WDC2511561A077945	TO	WDC2511561AC99685	R 350
32	WDC2511651A008086	TO	WDC2511651A162663	R 350 4MATIC
1	WDC2511751A008870			R 500 4MATIC
1	4JG2511651A028394			R 350 4MATIC
1	4JG1641861A359644			ML 350 4MATIC

Description of defect:
Based on analysis of reports coming to Mercedes-Benz for certain vehicles of the ML, GL (BR 164) and R-Class (BR 251) series from the production period 2004 - 2015, we have found that in some of those vehicles, the function of the brake booster could be affected by advanced corrosion in the joint area of the housing. This would affect the process of applying the brake leading to failure of the braking process accompanied by a hissing or airflow noises with the possibility of complete failure. Thus, the risk of a crash or injury would be increased.

Procedure:
As a precautionary measure Zawawi Trading Company will check the brake booster on the affected vehicles and - depending on the result of this inspection - replace it, where necessary. The intended work procedure (check and if necessary replacement of the brake booster) will take up to 4 hours and will be free of charge.

For more information:
Sultanate of Oman customers affected by the recall who have not been contacted already will be telephoned by representatives of Zawawi Trading Company LLC, so that they can arrange a convenient time from 01.03.2023 to get their car inspected.

Contact details:
Toll free number: 80079777 on all working days between 08:00 to 17:30 hrs with effect from Wednesday 01.03.2023.

Mercedes-Benz



SECOND EDITION

< FROM A1 Bilarab architectural design award winners announced

The project also includes a public square that contains an open theater overlooking the coast, in addition to office spaces. All these components are directly related to the urban structure of the region, as all spaces and services can be used separately from the museum.

The second place went to Al Moataz Abdullah Al Nabri. The design idea is characterized by its response to the routes of maritime traffic between the eastern and western axis. It blends with the surrounding urban environment. It also reflects the movement of Omani sailors that extended to the coasts of western India and eastern Africa. Visitors will enjoy a journey through a series of exhibition spaces extending towards the west, while the eastern side of the building houses most of the operations and services.

One of the most important elements of the building is the dynamic, wind-responsive façade that seems to undulate smoothly as the wind energizes the dangling metal panels, in response to the ever-changing wind patterns. The flowing movement on the outside surface refers to the white sails, while the inside gives a view of the shimmering ripples to simulate fish scales and the reflection of the sun on the moving water.

As for the third place, it went to the team consisting of Ammar Salah Al Saleh, Mohammed Khodabakhsh Al Balushi and



Rawnaq Rashid Al Ismaili. The team's project's idea was inspired by the voyage of the Omani sailors where the journey begins with traditional songs and folklore as bidding farewell through the alleys and residential neighborhoods until they reach the sea, where they sail in small scattered boats to the vessel of the voyage, before it makes its way in the ocean and sets off on its journey. The idea of designing this project aims to provide the visitor with the opportunity to experience the voyage of the ancient Omani sailor in real details, accompanied by arts, songs and marine sciences.

The appreciation award the jury was won by the team consisting of Ammar Abdulhameed Al Kiyoumi, Firas Nasser Al Hashar, and Moayad Mubarak Al Araimi. "Mast Al Khor" project aims to



reflect Oman's maritime history architecturally. The external shape of the project is inspired by the beauty and complexity of Omani ships, in consistency with the landscape of the general horizon

of the city of Sur. The project includes a public outdoor arena for community activities, a boarding path, and a viewing platform.

The winning project in the competition to design the Sultanate of



Oman's pavilion at Expo Japan 2025 was announced. It was a team consisting of Bayan Musallam Al Ramadani, Ammar Abdulhameed Al Kiyoumi, and Nayera Khamis Al Hina.

On the sidelines of the ceremony, an accompanying exhibition was held, which reviewed the ten projects qualified for the final rounds, and their technical details in audio and video. — **ONA**

MUSCAT BEATS

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- Additional bus routes to and from the venue (routes 1, 1A and 12).

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Tamam Oman project to build future leaders

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Education, represented by the Office of the Undersecretary for Education, implemented the Tamam Oman Laboratory, headed by Professor Dr. Abdullah Ambosaidi, Undersecretary for Education.

The laboratory targeted the supervisors of the School Administration Unit, the administrations of Tamam schools, and active members of the teams, while launching the project.

It envisages to build a deep understanding of school development according to the Omani context on the recommendations of the previous evaluative study of the project.

The idea of implementing the Tamam Oman Laboratory came to work for institutionalising the Tamam project in the Ministry, and to work on the project's structure, requirements, and the mechanism for its future implementation.

The laboratory began with presenting the strategic directions of the Tamam project presented by Dr. Ali Al-Balushi, Director of the Community Service and Continuing Education Centre at Sultan Qaboos University and a trainer in the Tamam project.

Dr. Hajar Al-Saadi, Assistant Director of the School Administration Supervision Department presented a proposal for Tamam institutionalisation, and the teams worked in groups on the themes of the laboratory, which is represented in the structure of the project, the requirements and the mechanism for its implementation.

The work was managed by Khaled Al-Bassami, Assistant Director in the Office of the Undersecretary for Education. At the end of the laboratory, Professor Maryam Al-Mashrafi, a senior educational researcher in the Office of the Undersecretary for Education, presented the recommendations.

OMAN GOLF TROPHY

Most sought-after golf destination

< FROM A1 Highlighting the benefits of strengthening diplomatic relations with Italy through this initiative, Honorary Consul, Francisco Palau Grieg, added: "We were thrilled to host the Oman Golf Trophy between September to November 2022, particularly the last course in Rapallo where His Highness Sayyid Nazar AlSaid, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Omani to Italy, was able to participate.

"The seven tournaments have opened a magnificent view on a beautiful country many Italians hadn't known anything about, let alone visited!

"Thanks to the superb work done by the sponsors, professionally coordinated by the Foreign Ministry and the Oman Golf Association. Superb videos and images were showcased, and this created amongst so many of the club members and their family and friends, a great interest - as a result many decided to visit Oman over the Christmas and new year holidays! I'm looking forward to arriving in Muscat for the Grand Finale with the 14 winners and leaders of industry, representing multiple sectors:

Pirelli Group, the world leader in tyres, Bankers, Hirsh Private Equity, FINSEA one of the leading logistics companies in Italy, Real Estate, Water Treatment, among others. All discovering Oman and its tourism and investment potential while doing what they love - playing golf - at one of the top 100 best golf courses in the world."

Situated along a stretch of pristine coastline, flanking the Indian Ocean and stunning Hajar mountain range, Al Mouj Golf is one of the most sought-after destination in golf, with its impressive 18-hole Championship layout complemented by a number of world-class facilities that include a teaching academy, a floodlit par 3 nine-hole course, a floodlit driving range, and a restaurant specialising in Mediterranean and International style cuisine.

Welcoming over 16,000 golfers annually, Al Mouj Golf is ranked within the World Top 100 golf courses, and has been recognised with a number of international awards. Al Mouj Golf is a key component of Al Mouj Muscat, the Sultanate's leading leisure and lifestyle destination.

Sayyid Hamoud and his accompanying delegation were received at Tunis Carthage International Airport by Tawfiq Charafeddine, Tunisian Minister of Interior, Dr. Mohammad Ali Kuman, Secretary General of the Arab Interior Ministers Council, Maj/Gen Abdullah Ali Al Harthy, Assistant Inspector General of Police and Customs for Operations and Dr. Hilal Abdullah Al Sinani, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman



to the Tunisian Republic. The session will discuss a number of topics, including the perception of activating the Council's work in the field of cybersecurity and combating electronic crimes, as well as the field of respecting human rights in security work. — **ONA**

Oman, Tunisia plan to boost cooperation

He pointed out that the deliberations of the Omani-Tunisian Committee has culminated in the signing of several agreements and memorandums of understanding (MoUs), which constitute an important basis ground for cooperation between the two countries in various common fields. He added that (28) agreements and memorandums of understanding were signed and (32) agreements and memorandums of understanding are underway. The most impor-



Dr. Hilal Abdullah Al Sinani, Ambassador of Oman to Tunisia, concluded his speech by saying that the Omani Embassy in the Tunisian Republic is working to contribute to promoting the Sultanate of Oman and its investment components and incentives in line with Oman Vision 2040, which focuses on developing the private sector and investment and strengthening international cooperation to attract investments and push towards economic diversification. — **ONA**

Development topics discussed

The second meeting of the council also reviewed a number of requests and proposals submitted by the members of the Council on various topics. — **ONA**



شركة بركاء لتحلية المياه
Barka Desalination Company

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors ("the Board") of Barka Desalination Company SAOG (the "Company"), I have the pleasure to present the audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2022.

Operational Highlights

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.

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 83,039,256 m3 of water during the year ended 31 December 2022.

The average scheduled plant availability for the period was over 99%, 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.

On March 9th and 10th, 2022, the Plant successfully completed the Annual Performance Test for the contractual year 5 (CY5).

Financial Highlights

Revenue has increased by 3% (by RO 516K) as compared to the same period in the previous year. This is mainly due to higher Operating and Maintenance charge as well as higher Water Output charge and higher Electricity charge.

The cost of sales has increased by 5% (by RO 646K) as compared to the same period in the previous year. This is mainly due to higher Capacity payment to the operator pursuant the O&M contract.

The administrative and general expenses have increased by 18% (by RO 71K) as compared to the same period in the previous year. This is mainly due to additional expenses applicable to the Company incurred being a listed public company.

Finance expenses have decreased by 27% (by RO. 1,114K) as

compared to the same period in the previous year. This is mainly due to the impact of the decrease in outstanding loans payable to lenders and shareholders along with the hedge arrangement.

The current year's profit before tax has increased by 68% (by RO 916K) as compared to the same period in the previous year, due to the above reasons.

The current year's profit before tax represents 12% of the revenue. The current year's profit after tax represents 8% of the revenue.

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 2021, the Company has distributed dividend of baiza 6 per share in April 2022 and basia 6 per share in October 2022.

Outlook for 2023

The Company is taking endeavor to ensure that it continues to take reasonable and prudent measures to improve its performance for FY2023, by improving the Plant's reliability and availability, without compromising on HSE matters.

Acknowledgement

I would like to express 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.

Finally, on behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to extend our deep appreciation and gratitude to **His Majesty Haitham Bin Tank 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.

On behalf of the Board of Directors

Murtadha Ahmed Sultan
Chairman of the Board

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2022

	2022 RO'000	2021 RO'000
ASSETS		
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	97,251	100,48
Right-of-use assets	563	588
Derivative instruments	6,464	-
Total non-current assets	104,278	101,073
Current assets		
Trade and other receivables	1,865	2,934
Short term deposits	1,640	2,085
Cash and cash equivalents	791	95
Total current assets:	4,296	5,114
Total assets	108,574	106,187
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
Capital and reserves		
Share capital	7,552	7,552
Legal reserve	433	282
Retained earnings	4,641	4,149
Hedging reserve	5,494	(1,003)
Shareholder loan reserve	531	571
Total equity	18,651	11,551
Non-current liabilities		
Long term loan	73,351	77,020
Shareholders' loan	4,495	4,960
Derivative instruments	-	1,129
Lease liabilities	559	569
Provision for end of service benefits	19	18
Provision for decommissioning obligation	1,033	1,323
Deferred tax liability	4,460	2,560
Total non-current liabilities	83,917	87,579
Current liabilities		
Current portion of long term loan	3,670	3,572
Current portion of Shareholders' loan	396	768
Current portion of lease liabilities	46	52
Derivative instruments	-	56
Trade and other payables	1,894	2,609
Total current liabilities	6,006	7,057
Total liabilities	89,923	94,636
Total equity and liabilities	108,574	106,187

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND COMPREHENSIVE INCOME For the year ended 31 December 2022

	2022 RO'000	2021 RO'000
Revenue	18,945	18,429
Operating costs	(13,316)	(12,670)
Gross profit	5,629	5,759
General and administrative expenses	(475)	(404)
Other income	55	852
Other expense	-	(800)
Profit from operations	5,209	5,407
Finance costs	(2,948)	(4,062)
Profit before tax	2,261	1,345
Income tax expense	(752)	(192)
Profit for the year	1,509	1,153
Other comprehensive income		
<i>Items that are or may be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss:</i>		
Change in fair value of cash flow hedge	6,497	2,741
Other comprehensive income for the year	6,497	2,741
Total comprehensive income for the year	8,006	3,894
Basic and diluted earnings per share		
Basic earnings per share (Baizas)	19.98	17.77

[illegible]



Sultanate of Oman
Consumer Protection Authority



Zawawi Trading Company LLC

Recall Campaign for Mercedes-Benz

C-Class (W 204 platform) YR 2004-14, GLK (X 204 platform) YR 2013-15, SLK (171 platform) YR 2006-08,
 E-Class Coupé/ Convertible (207 platform) YR 2004-16
 ML & GL (164 platform) YR 2004-16,
 R-Class (251 platform) YR 2004-16









Date of Campaign: 01.03.2023
Recall Segment: Mechanical
Recall Type: Safety
Product Description:

Number of vehicles	Chassis number	To	Chassis number	Sales Designation
1119	000550	TO	963281	C-Class (204 platform)
144	232250	TO	951000	GLK (X 204 platforms)
15	137402	TO	185188	SLK (171 platform)
26	001185	TO	098183	E-Class Coupé/Convertible (207 platform)
176	443357	TO	797193	ML & GL (164 platform)
26	0090230	TO	2511651	R-Class (251 platform)

Description of defect:
 Mercedes-Benz AG has determined that within Takata driver airbags equipped with non-desiccated ammonium-nitrate airbag inflators, certain climatic circumstances could over time lead to a chemical alteration of the propellant in the inflator of affected vehicles. In case of a crash with front Passenger airbag deployment, this alteration could subsequently cause a rupture of the airbag inflator. Should an airbag inflator rupture, the airbag would lose its restraint function and potentially separating inflator parts could enter the passenger compartment. In consequence the risk of injury would be increased. In addition, local legal requirements might not be met.

Procedure:
 As a precautionary measure Zawawi Trading Company LLC will replace the airbag module/modules on the effected vehicles. The expected workshop visit for the check and replacement of the airbag module/ modules will take around four hours and will be free of charges

For more information:
 Sultanate of Oman customers affected by the recall who have not been contacted already will be telephoned by representatives of Zawawi Trading Company LLC, so that they can arrange a convenient time from 01.03.2023 to get their car inspected.

Contact details:
 Toll free number: 80079777 on all working days between 08:00 to 17:30 hrs with effect from 01.03.2023.

Mercedes-Benz



RECENT STUDY

Researchers use artificial intelligence to predict cardiovascular disease

NEW YORK: According to a recent study, researchers may be able to predict cardiovascular illness in individuals by using artificial intelligence (AI) to look at the genes in their DNA. Cardiovascular disease includes things like atrial fibrillation and heart failure. “With the successful execution of our model, we predicted the association of highly significant car-

diovascular disease genes tied to demographic variables like race, gender and age,” said Zeeshan Ahmed, a core faculty member at the Rutgers Institute for Health, Health Care Policy and Aging Research (IFH) and lead author of the study, published in Genomics. According to the WHO, cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death globally, yet it is es-

timated that more than 75 per cent of premature cardiovascular disease is preventable. Atrial fibrillation and heart failure contribute to about 45 per cent of all cardiovascular disease deaths. Despite significant advancements in cardiovascular disease diagnostics, prevention and treatment, about half of the affected patients reportedly die within five

years of receiving a diagnosis because of a variety of reasons. including genetic and environmental factors. Researchers said the use of AI and machine learning can accelerate our ability to identify genes that have important implications for cardiovascular disease, which can lead to improvements in diagnoses and treatment. Researchers from IFH analysed

healthy patients and patients diagnosed with cardiovascular disease and used AI and machine-learning models to investigate the genes known to be associated with the most common manifestations of cardiovascular disease, including atrial fibrillation and heart failure. They identified a group of genes that were significantly associated with cardiovascular disease. Re-

searchers also found significant differences among race, gender and age factors based on cardiovascular disease. While age and gender factors correlated to heart failure, age and race factors correlated to atrial fibrillation. For example, in the patients examined, the older the patient, the more likely they were to have cardiovascular disease. —ANI

‘India-Europe ties stronger and deeper than ever before’

Between us, rests the largest democratic and free market space globally, Indian Union External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said



States and the High Representative of the European Commission at least once last year.” He said these interactions contributed to the resumption of the India-EU FTA negotiations, the India-EU Trade and Technology Council. “The announcement of that, dialogues in the areas of security and defence, and human rights, and not least, a jump in bilateral trade,” he added. For a sharper focus, Jaishankar said, “We recently announced three Working Groups within the India-EU TTC for strategic cooperation in Trade, cooperation in Green Transition and cooperation in Digital Partnership. I am glad that these three pillars are reflected in the agenda of this Conclave.” The EU is one of India’s largest and most important trade partners. Jaishankar said, “Our bilateral trade was in excess of USD 115 billion in the FY 2021-22, which is the highest ever. With the UK and other non-EU countries added, I believe that the number is even greater. We expect the India-EU FTA will be a game-changer for the India-EU relationship.” He said, “We look forward to a mutually beneficial, mutually advantageous conclusion to the negotiation process within a reasonably short planned timeline.” —ANI

NEW DELHI: Indian Union External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Tuesday said that India’s relations with Europe are stronger and deeper than ever before. In the inaugural session of CII India-Europe Sustainability Conclave, S Jaishankar said India’s relations with Europe are stronger and deeper than ever before and this event itself is a testimony of that assertion. The Conclave focuses on the strategic role of India-Europe partnership in changing geo-political scenario, strengthening bilateral engagements and discussions on emerging economic opportunities.

“Between us, rests the largest democratic and free market space globally. The business communities of India and Europe have a large stake and an enabling role in this transformation,” Jaishankar said, adding “The business communities of India and Europe have a large stake and an enabling role in this transformation.” He said, “I hope your deliberations will reflect what is at stake here, not just for us but for the entire world, and how we can join hands to realise the economic dividends and democratic values that are inherent in our partnership.” In the opening lines of his speech, Jaishankar said, “Businesses have a primary role in

driving sustainability and that is why we are all meeting here today. The enabler, however, is the larger partnership and the understanding between India and Europe.” Jaishankar said India and the EU believed in a multi-polar global order, shared a commitment to promoting effective multilateralism and were increasingly considerate to each other’s geopolitical, economic, strategic and security concerns. He said, “Visits and exchanges at the highest level are today a regular feature between India and Europe, including at the Prime Minister’s level. I have personally interacted with the Foreign Ministers of all the 27 EU Member

Full story at timesofoman.com/world

BALKAN NEIGHBOURS



Serbia, Kosovo accept EU proposal to normalise ties

BRUSSELS: The leaders of Serbia and Kosovo on Monday accepted a European Union proposal to normalise the long-strained ties between the Balkan neighbours, EU foreign affairs chief Josep Borrell said. Borrell made the announcement after hosting meditation talks with Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic and Kosovo’s prime minister, Albin Kurti, in Brussels. “Progress was made today, and I commend the parties for their engagement,” Borrell told the media. “At the same time, more work is needed, to ensure that what was accepted today by the parties will be implemented. It is important to agree (but) it is still more important to implement what has been agreed.” Borrell said that a next meeting with Vucic and Kurti is slated to take place in March, with a focus on how to implement the plan. The EU foreign policy chief also said that the two sides vowed not to take unilateral measures that could lead to tensions and put the agreement in jeopardy. “This agreement is above all for the citizens of Kosovo and Serbia,” he said. Kosovo, which is predominantly Albanian, declared independence from Serbia in 2008, nearly a decade after war brought an end to Serbian rule.

However, Belgrade does not recognise the move Flare ups between the former wartime foes have fanned fears of a return to conflict. Towards the end of 2022, tensions between ethnic Serbs and Albanians in northern Kosovo were high after the arrest of a former police officer of Serbian ethnicity over allegations of inciting attacks on officials of the electoral commission. On Monday night, Borrell’s office published the previously secret European peace plan, which was drawn up in Germany and France, but is now, according to the EU’s top diplomat, backed by all 27 EU members. Under the new deal, Belgrade stops short of recognizing Kosovo as an independent nation but agrees to recognize official documentation such as passports, diplomas and license plates. The 11-point plan says, without prejudicing recognition of each other’s status, that neither side will resort to violence to resolve a dispute, nor seek to prevent the other from joining the EU or other international bodies, a crucial demand from Kosovo. “The parties shall develop normal, good-neighborly relations with each other on the basis of equal rights. Both parties shall mutually recognise their respec-

tive documents and national symbols, including passports, diplomas, license plates, and customs stamps,” according to Article 1 of the document. “Serbia will not object to Kosovo’s membership in any international organisation,” Article 4 adds. **Two leaders not aligned yet** Later on Monday, Kosovo’s Kurti said that he had been ready to sign the deal at the meeting in Brussels. “It is a pity that we did not sign the deal tonight despite the fact that we all agree,” he told reporters. Speaking to the Serbian media, Vucic said that more discussion was needed. “It’s good that we talked and I believe we will be able to overcome unilateral moves which would endanger the safety of the people on the ground,” the Serbian president said. However, he stressed: “We don’t have a roadmap, people, we don’t. We need to sit and work on the roadmap.” Vucic said he had insisted on the need for the association of Serb municipalities within Kosovo and would not budge on recognizing Kosovo documents until this came about.

—DW

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Invitation to attend the 7th General Assembly meeting

The founding board of the Nepalese Community Social Club in Oman is pleased to invite its members and all Nepalese to attend the schedule General assembly meeting.

With reference to Ministerial Letter No: 222469696 the General Assembly has been scheduled for Friday 17th March 2023 in Azaibah Auditorium Muscat at 11.30 AM.

Agenda of Discussions:

- Activity Report for tenure 2021-2023.
- Financial Reports 2021-2023.
- Election of New Board Members-2023-2025
- Draft Road Map for Tenure-2023-2025.

Notes: The Last day of submission for Board candidate is 15th March-Wednesday 2023.

For details and Queries please contact below:
Non-Resident Nepali Social Club Oman
President: 98451839
General Secretary: 96748373
FB Page: <https://www.facebook.com/NRNSC>.

دعوة لاجتماع الجمعية العمومية السابع

في سلطنة عمان دعوة أعضائه وجميع النيباليين لحضور اجتماع الجمعية العامة الجدول الزمني.

بالإشارة إلى الرسالة الوزارية رقم: ٢٢٢٤٦٩٦٩٦، تم تحديد موعد انعقاد الجمعية العمومية يوم الجمعة ١٧ مارس ٢٠٢٣ في العذبية / مسقط قاعة الحاضرات وذلك في الساعة ١١:٣٠ صباحاً.

جدول أعمال المناقشات:

- تقرير النشاط للفترة ٢٠٢١-٢٠٢٣.
- التقارير المالية ٢٠٢١-٢٠٢٣.
- انتخاب أعضاء مجلس الإدارة الجدد - ٢٠٢٣ - ٢٠٢٥.
- مسودة خارطة الطريق للفترة ٢٠٢٣-٢٠٢٥.

ملاحظات: آخر يوم لتقديم مرشح مجلس الإدارة هو ١٥ مارس - الأربعاء ٢٠٢٣.

لزيد من التفاصيل والاستفسارات - يرجى الاتصال أوتاً:
التنفيذي الاجتماعي للجمعية النيبالية النقيب في سلطنة عمان
الرئيس: ٩٨٤٥١٨٣٩ - السكرتير العام: ٩٦٧٤٨٣٧٣
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SPORTS

FIFA awards: Lionel Messi, Alexia Putellas crowned best players in Paris

The talismanic striker beat France's Kylian Mbappe and Karim Benzema to clinch the laurel

PARIS: World Cup-winning captain Lionel Messi took home the award for the Best International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) Men's Player following Argentina's historic World Cup 2022 triumph, at The Best FIFA Football Awards 2022 held in Paris on Monday, February 27.

The talismanic striker beat France's Kylian Mbappe and Karim Benzema to clinch the laurel. The Argentine star scored seven goals in the side's World Cup triumph, missing out on the golden boot by just one goal. This was the PSG star's second FIFA Best title, his first coming in 2019. Messi has also won a record seven Ballon d'Or awards. "It's amazing. It was a tremendous year and it is an honour for me to be here tonight and win this award. I want



to express my thanks to [coach Lionel] Scaloni and my teammates; without them, I would not be here. I achieved a dream I had been hoping for so long and finally, I achieved it. It's a dream for any player; very few people can achieve that and I was lucky



enough to do so," said Messi as quoted by ESPN.

FC Barcelona Femeni's Spanish midfielder Alexia Putellas was recognised as the Best FIFA Women's Player for the second time in a row after a successful year which saw her club win a third successive

league title.

Mary Earps was voted the Best FIFA Women's Goalkeeper after a year in which she lifted the UEFA Women's EURO 2022 with the Lionesses.

Argentina goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez got his hands on the Best FIFA Men's Goalkeeper prize following his outstanding performances throughout FIFA World Cup 2022.

The English national team's manager Sarina Wiegman won the Best FIFA Women's Coach after leading the Lionesses to European

glory and her second successive UEFA EURO title, while Argentina boss Lionel Scaloni added the Best FIFA Men's Coach to his trophy cabinet, alongside the FIFA World Cup trophy.

The Best FIFA Football Awards ceremony also recognised the standout goal of the year as Marcin Oleksy won the FIFA Puskas Award for his impressive finish.

Georgian player Luka Locho-shvili picked up the FIFA Fair Play Award in recognition of his exemplary reaction whilst playing for Wolfsberger AC when an opposing player fell unconscious on the pitch and Luka rushed to his aid.

In addition, Argentinian fans were recognised for their support of the national team during the FIFA World Cup 2022, which saw impressive numbers travel to Qatar and millions of fans then welcomed their winning heroes home to Buenos Aires and across the country.

The winners of the Best player, goalkeeper and coach awards were determined through a voting process in which four groups had an equal say: football fans, selected media representatives and the captains and head coaches of national teams from around the globe. -ANI

LIGUE 1

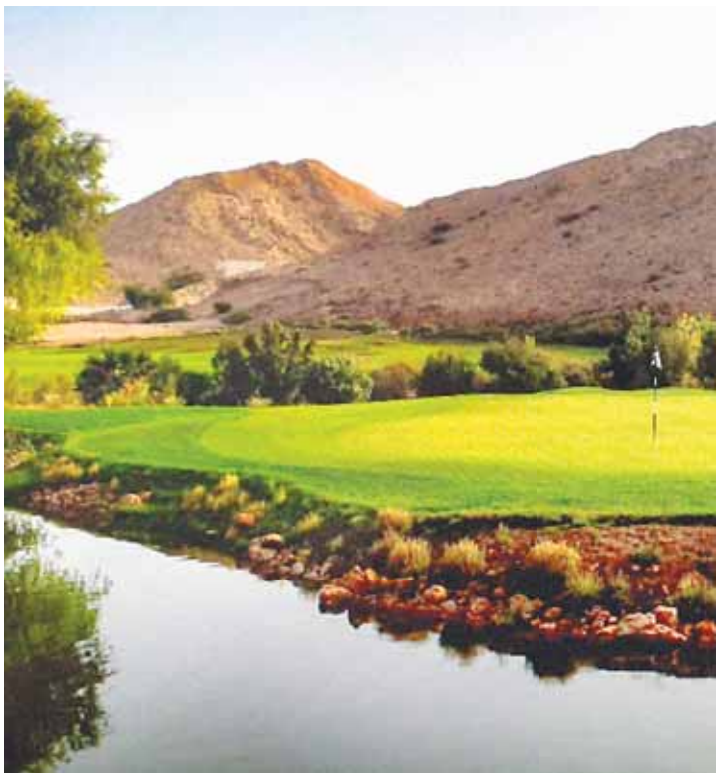
PSG suffer big shock before second leg tie against Bayern Munich

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain received a huge blow just a week before their second-leg clash against Bayern Munich in the UEFA Champions League Round of 16, as manager Christophe Galtier revealed that Presnel Kimpembe would remain sidelined for the rest of the season.

PSG cruised through Marseille with a 3-0 victory with the help of the deadly duo of Lionel Messi and Kylian Mbappe. But before PSG could write the story of Marseille's downfall the 27-year-old French defender tried to sprint back to his own goal to stop Nuno Tavares. However, he went straight to the ground despite visible pain on his face. After the medics' initial medical examination on the pitch, Kimpembe was stretched off the pitch. -ANI

18 HOLE STROKE-PLAY EVENT

RAHGC to host 49th Muscat Open golf



MUSCAT: Muscat Open is the oldest amateur golf tournament in the Sultanate of Oman. The 49th edition is all set to tee off at the Ras Al Hamra Golf Club (RAHGC) on March 3 and the two-day event is expected to attract the best golfers in the nation and few players from the neighbouring countries.

The two-day 18-hole stroke-play event this year has received a tremendous response with 88 entries with Oman's leading amateur and defending champion Azaan al Rumhy among the front-runners for the title. Last year, Azaan had claimed the Muscat Open title for the sixth time.

The organising committee president, Jas Dhanju, was delighted at the response received as the prestigious tournament, which is nearing a historic 50 years of existence next year.

"We are thrilled to, once again, host this exciting golf tournament and look forward to welcoming players from all over Oman," said

“We are thrilled to, once again, host this exciting golf tournament and look forward to welcoming players from all over Oman

Jas Dhanju
Organising committee president

Dhanju. "This event is a great opportunity for some of the best golfers in the country to come together, compete and have fun."

This year's event gains significance as the organisers have launched the Muscat Ladies Open and the Muscat Junior Open.

Carlos Moreno, RAHGC vice-captain and member of the Open organising committee, said: "The inaugural Open competitions for ladies and juniors is a milestone for the club. This gives everyone a chance to play and compete, and is also a platform for inspiring young golfers."

Dhanju said that the RAHGC is witnessing continued development on and off the course, including the new driving range and practice facilities. "With the support of the sponsors, this year's Muscat Open is set to be one of the biggest and best to be held," said Dhanju.

The event is supported by Petroleum Development Oman and other sponsors. Bank Muscat, Hydro and OHI are the platinum sponsors while the gold sponsors are CMS and Mohsin Haider Darwish. The silver sponsors are Anantara and Seven Seas while Al Tasnim, Milly's Golf Society and Oman Shapoorji are the bronze sponsors.

WELLINGTON

New Zealand pull off thrilling 1-run win against England in second Test



WELLINGTON: New Zealand scripted history in Wellington on Tuesday as they became the fourth team ever to win a Test match after being forced to follow on when they pulled off a thrilling one-run victory over England in a classic final-day contest in the second Test.

Pacer Neil Wagner (4/62) was the hero for the Kiwis as he had James Anderson caught behind down the leg side to clinch a famous victory for New Zealand at Basin Reserve. New Zealand were asked to follow on after their first innings for just 209 in their first innings in reply to England's 435/8 declared. Kane Williamson's 26th Test century on the penultimate day of a topsy-turvy contest gave them some hope.

England had to chase down 258 for victory in the fourth innings and they looked to be in

control when Joe Root (95) and Ben Stokes (33) were at the crease and less than 60 runs were required.

But Wagner and Tim Southee (3/45) dug deep during a tense finale to ensure New Zealand picked up a thrilling triumph to level the two-match series at one game apiece.

New Zealand join three other teams to have won a Test match after being forced to follow on, with the most recent prior to this clash coming back in 2001 when India clinched an unlikely win against Australia in Kolkata.

The Kiwis' winning margin of one run is just the second time in the history of Test cricket that a match has been decided by that narrow margin, with the only other occurrence coming in 1993 when the West Indies pulled off a similar triumph over Australia in Adelaide. -ANI

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OMAN CRUDE PRICE RISES

The price of Oman oil has increased, with prices for delivery by April 2023 reaching \$81.97, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil rose by 2 cents from the price of Monday, which was at \$81.95. - **ONA**

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 4,753.28 points, up by 1.9 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 1.43 per cent at 486.08 points. SMN Power Holding, up 18.97 per cent, was the top gainer while Construction Materials, down 9.76 per cent, was the top loser.

Report explores developments in special economic and free zones

A new report provides detailed coverage of how fiscal incentives, infrastructure projects and robust connectivity to external markets are combined to attract businesses to Opaz-affiliated zones

Times News Service

MUSCAT: A new focus report shines a spotlight on investment opportunities opening up in the industry, logistics and energy as efforts to diversify the economy intensify. The report explores the developments taking place in the Sultanate of Oman's special economic zones and free zones in an easy-to-navigate and accessible format, supported by key data and infographics.

Oxford Business Group (OBG) produced the analysis in partnership with Oman's Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (Opaz) and Centralised Utilities Company, Marafiq.

It provides detailed coverage



of how fiscal incentives, infrastructure projects and robust connectivity to external markets are combined to attract businesses to Opaz-affiliated zones.

The rollout of advanced transport infrastructure is a particular focal point. In this section, the report considers the part that new facilities and services, such as digitalised logistics infrastructure, have played in boosting Oman's trade capacity and enabling companies to efficiently transport goods, both internally and farther afield.

Oman's drive to encourage value-added production and downstream processing at Opaz-affiliated zones, while harnessing the country's abundant hydrocarbon resources

to support businesses in these segments, is also mapped out.

In addition, the report highlights the opportunities emerging in renewable energy and green hydrogen, as Oman works towards reaching its target to be a net-zero economy by 2050.

It also shines a spotlight on Opaz's growth story, tracking the milestones reached and their close alignment with the objectives laid out in Oman's Vision 2040 roadmap for economic diversification and sustainable development.

The report includes a wide-ranging interview with Ali bin Masoud Al Sunaidy, Chairman, Opaz, in which he explains how Oman's strengths, including its geographical

position, are supporting efforts to attract foreign direct investment and drive industrial growth.

"As a link between east and west, Oman's strategic location in the global supply chain is beneficial for investors, thanks in part to its proximity to shipping lanes that are home to the majority of the world's commercial maritime traffic. Opaz aims to eliminate barriers to investment and boost the efficiency of industrial zones," he said.

Jana Treeck, OBG's Managing Director for the Middle East, said a combination of rising energy prices, far-reaching structural reforms and higher oil and gas production had put Oman on track for a strong post-pandemic recovery, with the

non-oil sector well-placed to increase its contribution to growth.

"Industrial expansion is at the heart of Oman's efforts to diversify its economy, as is evident from the business-friendly policies being introduced and the many projects underway aimed at expanding industrial capacity," Treeck said. "Special economic zones and free zones have an important role to play in attracting foreign investment, boosting exports and creating jobs, all of which will produce ripple effects through the economy and help the sultanate to achieve its long-term objectives."

Dana Carmen Agarbicean, Country Director, Oxford Business Group, said the report also high-

lighted the many investment opportunities emerging in logistics at Opaz-affiliated zones.

"Disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and geopolitical disputes have prompted Oman to sharpen its focus on trade regionalisation, with the result that several major collaborative projects are taking shape across the special economic and free zones, including state-of-the-art port and logistics facilities," she said. "These ventures will pave the way for Oman to position itself as a cargo and transshipment hub while enabling the Sultanate of Oman to further capitalise on its strategic location en route to emerging markets in Africa and Asia."

Abdullah Mohammed Al-Hashimi, Managing Director, Centralised Utilities Company, Marafiq, said, "Oman is focusing on boosting efficiencies in the use of water and electricity in special economic and free zones. This is creating significant opportunities for investments in technology throughout the entire value chain, as well as projects in renewable energy and hydrogen as Vision 2040 drives change across the economy. Marafiq is well positioned to deliver national strategic objectives."

The report on Oman's special economic zones and free zones forms part of a series of tailored studies that OBG is currently producing with its partners, including ESG Intelligence and Future Readiness reports, and other highly relevant, go-to research tools, such as country-specific Growth and Recovery Outlook articles and interviews.

CENTRAL BANK OF OMAN

CBO issues treasury bills worth OMR28 million

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) raised OMR28 million by way of allotting treasury bills on Tuesday.

The value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to OMR13 million, for a maturity period of 91 days. The average accepted price reached OMR98.777 for every OMR100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at OMR98.770 per OMR100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 4.90729 per cent and 4.96807 per cent, respectively.

Whereas, the value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to OMR15 million for a maturity period of 182 days. The average accepted price reached OMR97.510 for every OMR100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at OMR97.475 per OMR100. The



average discount rate and the average yield reached 4.99368 per cent and 5.12122 per cent, respectively.

Treasury bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance, and they provide licensed commercial banks with the opportunity to invest their surplus funds. The Central Bank of Oman

acts as the Issue Manager and provides the added advantage of ready liquidity through discounting and repurchase facilities (Repo).

It may be noted that the interest rate on the Repo operations with CBO is 5.25 per cent while the discount rate on the Treasury Bills Discounting Facility with CBO is 5.75 per cent. - **ONA**

CAPITAL MARKET AUTHORITY

Introductory meeting on credit life insurance policy organised

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Capital Market Authority (CMA) organised an introductory meeting on the standards of credit life insurance policy. It was attended by chief executive officers, life underwriting managers and compliance officers of the insurance companies and a number of employees of the CMA.

The meeting discussed the key inquiries of the insurers on the policy issued under Decision No. 4/2023 to cement the mutual understating of the policy details to ensure proper implementation by the contracting parties.

Ahmed Al Harrasi, Director of the Audit and Compliance Department said the meeting came within the awareness efforts to ensure sound implementation of the credit life insurance policy by



the main stakeholders in the credit life insurance process, namely the insurers, as the partnership aims primarily at the interest of the policyholders to ensure the sustainability of the management of the companies to provide insurance coverage of the risk that require coverage by the policy.

The meeting witnessed interaction on the clauses of the policy and key challenges facing the implementation process. It also emphasised the importance of educating the borrowers during the underwriting and contracting process or while filing compensation claims.

NCSI DATA



Value of fish production in Oman tops OMR379mn

MUSCAT: The total value of fish production in Oman grew by 0.7 per cent and stands at OMR379.7 million by November 2022 compared to OMR376.9 million during the same period in 2021, according to the latest data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The fish production declined by 22.5 per cent to stand at 637,116 tonnes at the end of November 2022 compared to 821,801 tonnes during the corresponding period in 2021. - **ONA**

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MARKET

MSX index ends higher

SMN Power Holding, up 18.97 per cent, was the top gainer while Construction Materials, down 9.76 per cent, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,753.28 points, up by 1.9 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 1.43 per cent at 486.08 points. SMN Power Holding, up 18.97 per cent, was the top gainer while Construction Materials, down 9.76 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of Al Madina Takaful were the most active in terms of the number of shares traded while Oman Telecom were the most active in terms of turnover. A total number of 509 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating a turnover of OMR4.29 million, with more than 15.69 million shares changing hands. Out of 43 traded securities, 25 advanced, 7 declined, and 11 remained unchanged. At the session close, foreign investors were net buyers for OMR29,000 while domestic investors were net sellers

for OMR19,000, followed by GCC and Arab investors for OMR10,000 worth of shares. Financial Index closed at 7,671.76 points, up 1.8 per cent. Prices of Ominvest, Oman & Emirates Investment, Global Financial Investments, Al Omaniya Financial Services and Al Sharqia Investment were up by 9.62 per cent, 7.14 per cent, 5.26 per cent, 3.70 per cent, 2.63 per cent respectively. Prices of Oman Arab Bank and Oman United Insurance were up by 4.24 per cent and 2.42 per cent respectively. Industrial Index closed at 5,942.48 points, up 1.48 per cent. Services Index was up by 1.12 per cent before closing at 1,714.04 points. Prices of SMN Power Holding, Ooredoo, Sharqiyah Desalination, Phoenix Power and National Gas were up by 18.97 per cent, 6.53 per cent, 5.11 per cent, 3.64 per cent and 2.97 per cent respectively. — **United Securities**

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDECIES

Index.....	High.....	Low.....	Value.....	Prev. Value.....	Diff.....	Diff%
MSX 30 INDEX.....	4,753.28	4,682.24	4,753.28	4,664.65	88.63	1.90
FINANCIAL INDEX.....	7,671.76	7,581.37	7,671.76	7,536.21	135.55	1.80
Industry Index.....	5,942.65	5,855.35	5,942.48	5,855.92	86.56	1.48
Services Index.....	1,714.04	1,689.33	1,714.04	1,695.02	19.03	1.12
MSX Shariah Index.....	486.35	479.24	486.08	479.24	6.85	1.43
MSX TR INDEX.....	6,001.82	5,912.12	6,001.82	5,889.91	111.91	1.90
FINANCIAL TR IDX.....	8,027.64	7,933.06	8,027.64	7,885.80	141.84	1.80
SERVICES TR IDX.....	1,818.37	1,792.16	1,818.37	1,798.19	20.19	1.12
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX.....	6,187.04	6,096.14	6,186.85	6,096.74	90.12	1.48

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap.....	Up.....	Down.....	Equal.....	Sec. Traded
15,697,107	4,291,664	509	23,669,006,801	25	7	11	43

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 28

ISIN.....	SECURITY NAME.....	VOLUME.....	TURNOVER.....	TRADES.....	OPEN PRICE.....	HIGH.....	LOW.....	CLOSE PR.....	PREV. CLOSE.....	DIFF (RD).....	DIFF %.....	LAST PR.....	LAST RD.....	LAST OFFER.....	PRN VALUE.....	MARKET CAP.....
REGULAR MARKET																
OMD000001533.....	OMINVEST.....	1,467,898	667,711	53	0.440	0.456	0.440	0.456	0.416	0.040	9.615	0.456	0.456	0.456	0.100	304,774,634
OMD000003968.....	OOREDOO.....	448,846	185,228	16	0.404	0.424	0.404	0.424	0.398	0.026	6.333	0.424	0.414	0.424	0.100	276,000,354
OMD000002188.....	AL ANWAR CERAMIC.....	247,000	81,554	9	0.330	0.340	0.330	0.330	0.310	0.020	6.453	0.330	0.330	0.330	0.100	72,600,000
OMD000003125.....	GLOBAL INV. H.....	133,882	7,941	11	0.057	0.060	0.057	0.060	0.057	0.003	5.263	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.100	12,000,000
OMD000002077.....	AL OMANIYA FIN.S.....	10,000	1,400	1	0.140	0.140	0.140	0.140	0.135	0.005	3.704	0.140	0.132	0.140	0.100	42,448,909
OMD000002440.....	AL SHARQIA INV.....	90,000	7,020	6	0.078	0.078	0.078	0.078	0.076	0.002	2.632	0.078	0.078	0.078	0.100	7,020,000
OMD000002796.....	BANK MUSCAT.....	17,930,394	501,022	77	0.288	0.292	0.286	0.292	0.287	0.005	1.742	0.292	0.314	0.292	0.100	219,187,942
OMD000001152.....	OMAN NAT. ENG.....	85,081	10,193	11	0.117	0.119	0.117	0.119	0.117	0.002	1.709	0.119	0.118	0.119	0.100	16,600,000
OMD000003026.....	OMAN TELECOM.....	1,237,164	1,180,135	31	0.948	0.960	0.944	0.960	0.944	0.016	1.695	0.960	1.035	0.960	0.100	720,000,000
OMD000001483.....	NATIONAL BANK OMAN.....	7,834	2,081	3	0.265	0.266	0.265	0.266	0.266	0.000	0.000	0.266	0.266	0.265	0.100	432,501,731
OMD000002176.....	JAZEERA STEEL PROD.....	52,838	13,261	7	0.255	0.255	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.000	0.000	0.250	0.251	0.260	0.100	31,224,490
OMD000003224.....	RENAISSANCE SER.....	390,965	172,025	8	0.440	0.440	0.440	0.440	0.440	0.000	0.000	0.440	0.420	0.440	0.100	104,020,400
OMD000003398.....	SQAR INT. BANK.....	873,294	87,329	11	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.000	0.000	0.100	0.098	0.100	0.100	459,088,229
OMD000005005.....	ALMAHA CERAMICS.....	170	71	1	0.420	0.420	0.420	0.420	0.420	0.000	0.000	0.420	0.410	0.400	0.100	23,100,000
OMD000001525.....	OMAN INVST& FIN.....	5,000	627	2	0.123	0.129	0.123	0.129	0.130	-0.001	-0.769	0.129	0.126	0.129	0.100	30,573,000
OMD000001087.....	OMAN UNITED INSUR.....	52,700	16,882	14	0.320	0.324	0.314	0.322	0.330	-0.008	-2.424	0.322	0.322	0.326	0.100	32,200,000
Total.....	16.....	6,842,986	2,934,480	261												

Parallel Market

OMD0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	425	29	1	0.069	0.069	0.069	0.069	0.058	0.011	18.966	0.069	0.069	0.000	0.100	13,774,856
OMD0000002804	ASAFFA FOODS	25,000	5,043	5	0.188	0.205	0.188	0.205	0.189	0.016	8.466	0.205	0.200	0.205	0.100	24,600,000
OMD0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO	15,385	1,153	3	0.074	0.075	0.074	0.075	0.070	0.005	7.143	0.075	0.068	0.075	0.100	9,140,625
OMD000003521	GALFAR ENGINEER	1,630,919	318,216	54	0.191	0.200	0.191	0.200	0.190	0.010	5.263	0.200	0.195	0.200	0.100	40,597,289
OMD0000004669	SHARQIYAH DESALIN	13,100	1,886	2	0.144	0.144	0.144	0.144	0.137	0.007	5.109	0.144	0.144	0.144	0.100	14,083,511
OMD0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	100	6	1	0.057	0.057	0.057	0.057	0.055	0.002	3.636	0.057	0.053	0.057	0.100	83,368,283
OMD0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	69,726	7,219	14	0.103	0.104	0.103	0.104	0.101	0.003	2.970	0.104	0.104	0.105	0.100	8,840,000
OMD000004735	SEMBORP SALALAH	175,650	13,730	16	0.078	0.079	0.076	0.079	0.077	0.002	2.597	0.079	0.078	0.079	0.100	75,411,184
OMD0000002267	GULF MUSHROOM P	2,704	971	3	0.249	0.249	0.245	0.245	0.228	0.006	2.510	0.245	0.220	0.245	0.100	10,193,291
OMD0000001418	RAYSUT CEMENT	1,032,500	125,062	27	0.125	0.127	0.120	0.125	0.123	0.003	2.459	0.125	0.125	0.127	0.100	25,000,000
OMD0000008868	THE PEARL REIF	255,400	30,393	5	0.119	0.119	0.119	0.119	0.117	0.002	1.709	0.119	0.117	0.121	0.100	50,547,655
OMD0000001517	HSBC BANK OMAN	1,000,000	161,991	3	0.160	0.162	0.160	0.162	0.160	0.002	1.250	0.162	0.162	0.162	0.100	324,050,672
OMD000001566	OMAN FISHERIES	500	42	1	0.083	0.083	0.083	0.083	0.082	0.001	1.220	0.083	0.000	0.083	0.100	15,112,507
OMD0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	3,546,780	319,148	62	0.089	0.090	0.089	0.090	0.089	0.001	1.124	0.090	0.090	0.091	0.100	15,750,000
OMD0000004420	BANK NIZWA	157,065	13,566	5	0.098	0.100	0.098	0.100	0.099	0.001	1.010	0.100	0.099	0.100	0.100	223,685,303
OMD0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	100,000	5,700	3	0.057	0.057	0.057	0.057	0.057	0.000	0.000	0.057	0.057	0.057	0.100	17,507,341
OMD0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	175,000	10,500	8	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.000	0.000	0.060	0.059	0.061	0.100	20,948,665
OMD0000002648	NATIONAL FINANCE	110,000	15,700	4	0.142	0.150	0.142	0.150	0.150	0.000	0.000	0.150	0.142	0.146	0.100	81,184,568
OMD0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	30,000	3,480	1	0.116	0.116	0.116	0.116	0.116	0.000	0.000	0.116	0.116	0.116	0.100	9,442,719
OMD0000004925	ALBATRAH POWER	47,000	1,484	6	0.031	0.032	0.031	0.032	0.032	0.000	0.000	0.032	0.032	0.032	0.100	21,596,398
OMD000002572	OMAN OIL MARKETING	400	381	1	0.952	0.952	0.952	0.952	0.950	0.000	-0.003	0.952	0.952	0.972	0.100	48,333,800
OMD0000007084	MCT DESALINATE	16,000	1,578	2	0.099	0.099	0.098	0.098	0.099	-0.001	-1.010	0.098	0.091	0.098	0.100	15,243,939
OMD0000005260	OMAN ARAB BANK	969	109	1	0.113	0.113	0.113	0.113	0.118	-0.005	-4.237	0.113	0.113	0.119	0.100	188,643,330
OMD0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	123,789	3,961	6	0.032	0.032	0.032	0.032	0.035	-0.003	-8.571	0.032	0.032	0.032	0.100	22,861,000
OMD0000001368	CONSTRUCTION M	10,000	740	1	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.082	-0.008	-9.756	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.100	4,625,000
Total		25	8,508,412	1,041,789	235											

FORUM ON HOTEL, TRAVEL AND LEISURE

Forum highlights opportunities in travel and tourism industry

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman Forum on Hotel, Travel and Leisure was organised by Crowe Oman, under the Horwath HTL umbrella and was inaugurated on Tuesday under the patronage of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism.

Horwath HTL is a member firm of Crowe Global and is a global leader, offering unparalleled experience and expertise exclusively across hotels, tourism and leisure spectrum.

The meeting was presided over by Faisal bin Abdullah Al Rawas, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industries (OCCI).

Welcoming the guests Davis Kallukaran, Managing Partner Crowe Oman, said that the contribution of the tourism sector to the gross domestic product (GDP) of Oman is only 2.4 per cent whereas the world average is around 10 per cent. "Oman is so unique and blessed with a diversified topography



from Salalah to Muscat with every nook and corner rich in heritage and culture. We should know our strength and available resources and leverage it by using technol-

ogy," he added.

The tourism sector in Oman is expected to contribute 5 per cent to the GDP by 2030 and 10 per cent by 2040. The government is

expected to invest OMR10 billion in the tourism industry by 2040. If unemployment in Oman is a challenge then tourism is the solution. With the right attitude, youth

could engage in tourism-related activities as it does not need high technical skills. With the right attitude, every youth in Oman could be self-employed in tourism.

John Fareed initiated the first session on the market scenario of the hotel industry in the Middle East region and highlighted hotel performances and investments in the pipeline. The hotel industry has successfully recovered in some countries, uncovering deficiencies that may slow recovery in the years ahead. By 2029, the region will see more than 100,000 new hotel rooms, he added.

James Chappell, the Global Director at Horwath HTL, spoke about outdoor tourism and said, "Our experience in this burgeoning sector and scope of services ensures that we can support our clients from the concept stage through opening and ongoing operations. Horwath HTL's outdoor hospitality provides a full range of hospitality consulting services

designed to address the unique operating, investment and environmental issues found in the nature-based outdoor sector of the hospitality industry. From initial location and site analysis, preliminary market research and feasibility work to operator selection, our team has the expertise to assist in new developments and repositioning of existing assets. These involve market analysis, accommodation types, players and market opportunities." He further emphasised that Oman has excellent potential in this line.

Sinisa Taplovic, Global head of Tourism advisory in his presentation talked about the developments in the region and presented case studies about the developments in other GCC countries.

He commented that Oman has unique advantages in the tourism area and is yet to take advantage of the potential. He said this is a virgin market and the sky's the limit for growth.

DISCUSSION

Jindal Shadeed advocates sustainable development in local manufacturing industry

Times News Service

MUSCAT: As a key player in one of the priority sectors identified by the Oman Vision 2040, Jindal Shadeed has been at the forefront of advocating sustainable development in the local manufacturing industry.

The company's Chief Executive Officer, Harssha Shetty recently participated as a panellist in the popular Tejarah Talks session on the theme 'Sustainable Manufacturing: Smart Manufacturing'.

Commenting on Jindal Shadeed's participation at the event, Shetty said, "Embracing sustainability is no longer a choice, it's a prerequisite for business viability. Whether customers, investors or stakeholders, the effects of climate change have made society double down on the importance of sustainable operations. Consumers are leaning more toward businesses that uphold strong ESG values. As a progressive, innovative, and community-centric organisation, Jindal Shadeed places keen emphasis on sustainability and ensures it is well-integrated into all its operations."

He added saying, "Through the informative Tejarah Talks session, we were able to highlight the role of innovation in powering productivity across the manufacturing value chain while staying committed to furthering the sustainability agenda. Leading by example,

Chief Executive Officer, Harssha Shetty of Jindal Shadeed recently participated as a panellist in the Tejarah Talks session on the theme 'Sustainable Manufacturing: Smart Manufacturing'

Jindal Shadeed, on the backs of strong data analysis and intelligent edge solutions, has devised breakthrough processes that have led to reduced carbon emissions and minimal negative impact on the environment.

"It is important for manufacturers to acknowledge that reimagining core processes and driving transformation across business ecosystems with an eye on sustainability also has the potential to significantly enhance the energy efficiency, decrease costs and reduce wastage of resources while simultaneously boosting brand credibility, image, and perception.

"As the country's youth grows to be more mindful of such aspects, it becomes even more quintessential to adhere to international best prac-

tices and position businesses as environmentally conscious entities."

The event was held recently at The Zain Auditorium in the Oman-tel head office. His Highness Sayy



HEALTHY FOODS THAT SHOULD BE CONSUMED THROUGHOUT THE WEEK

Bollywood actor, Arjun Kapoor shared a Sunday post with which people from all walks of life could probably relate.

The 'Gunday' actor posted how it started v/s how it ended video which shows an eternal tussle between 'stick to diet' and 'binge on junk food'. So there are two cents for everyone! If you want to enjoy your binge day on weekend, you have to stay fit and healthy throughout the week. Your plate should be full of whole grains, fish, beans and lentils so that you don't fall sick.

Here's a list of some foods that you should have throughout the week.



1 Dark green vegetables

Eat dark green vegetables at least three to four times a week. Broccoli, peppers, brussel sprouts and leafy greens like kale and spinach should be included in your diet.

2 Flaxseed, Nuts and Seeds

Add 1 to 2 tablespoons of ground flaxseed or other seeds to food each day or include a moderate amount of nuts — 1/4 cup — in your daily diet.



3 Fish

Try to eat two to three servings of fish a week. A serving consists of 3 to 4 ounces of cooked fish. You can go for local fish with an occasional serving of salmon, herring, and bluefish.



4 Whole Grains

Eat whole grains at least two or three times daily. Look for whole wheat flour, rye, oatmeal, barley, amaranth, quinoa or a multigrain. A good source of fibre has 3 to 4 grams of fibre per serving.

5 Beans and Lentils

Try to eat a bean-based meal at least once a week. Try to add legumes, including beans and lentils, to soups, stews, casseroles, salads and dips or eat them plain.



6 Berries

Include two to four servings of fruit in your diet each day. Try to eat berries such as raspberries, blueberries, blackberries and strawberries.



7 Organic Yoghurt

Men and women between 19 and 50 years of age need 1000 milligrams of calcium a day and 1200 milligrams if 50 or older. Eat calcium-rich foods such as non-fat or low-fat dairy products three to four times a day. Include organic choices.



Most importantly, don't forget to drink 8-12 cups of water daily.

Remember, food should be enjoyed. And to achieve that, following discipline is equally important. -ANI

IN PICTURES



People attend Limassol Carnival parade in Cyprus
 People attend the traditional Limassol Carnival parade in Limassol, in the eastern Mediterranean island of Cyprus.



WHO asks for more healthcare donations to help war-torn Yemen
 A Yemeni health worker holds the hand of a malnourished child at a hospital in Sanaa, Yemen.



International kite festival in Pattaya, Thailand
 Kites are pictured above the beach in Pattaya, Thailand. Kite enthusiasts and tourists gathered at Pattaya Beach to enjoy the international kite festival.



Aurora Australis seen from Fox Glacier, New Zealand
 This picture shows the Aurora Australis, also known as the Southern Lights, seen from Fox Glacier on the west coast of the South Island, New Zealand.



Ajay Devgn and Tabu promote their upcoming film 'Bholaa' in Mumbai
 Bollywood actors Ajay Devgn and Tabu promote their upcoming film 'Bholaa', in Mumbai.



59th International Agriculture Fair in Paris
 People visit the 59th International Agriculture Fair at the Porte de Versailles exhibition centre in Paris, France. The fair will last until March 5.

Chevy Silverado ZR2: Standout performer on and off-road

ZR2 exceeds the expectations of adventure-lovers, given especially the opportunities for remote-travel, off-roading and camping

MUSCAT: Since its launch in the Middle East a year ago, the all-new Chevy Silverado ZR2 has earned an almost legendary reputation among off-road motoring buffs as a durable, versatile and powerful truck. On the one hand, ZR2 exceeds the expectations of adventure-lovers, given especially the opportunities for remote-travel, off-roading and camping. On the other, its refined design and new technology options, coupled with its unmatched muscular performance, turns this off-road truck into the ultimate travel companion of motoring aficionados. The culmination of an extensive makeover across all trims,



the Silverado ZR2 has emerged as Chevrolet's new flagship off-road truck. It comes with an enhanced exterior design, expressive interior, ramped-up technology integration and performance enhancement. Embellishing the exterior are LED headlights, daytime running lights, front fog

lights, high-mounted brake light, and a sleek exhaust system. Other distinguishing features in the ZR2 include a new black hood insert, a unique grille with integrated lighting and a "flow-tie" emblem, wheel flares, ZR2 badges, unique 18-inch wheels and multi-flex tailgate. Exemplifying the race-proven off-road performance of the Silverado brand, the ZR2 is powered by a standard 6.2L V-8 engine, teamed with 10-speed automatic transmission. At the same time, cutting-edge stability and safety features ensure that the ZR2 can balance driving comfort with

rugged performance even with a top payload of 553 kg and 4,000 kg in tow. Inside the cabin, the 2022 Chevy Silverado ZR2 is fashioned with high-end appointments like leather-trimmed seating and stylish dark trim. Plus, a 12.3-inch fully digital instrument panel and

13.4-inch touchscreen help you to stay connected and comfortable while on the road. Other standard highlights include: Centre console with T-shaped electronic shifter, 13-inch diameter head-up display, Crew-cab body style for expansive passenger space, 13.4-inch touchscreen infotainment system, Bose sound system, Wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, and Built-in Google voice assistance. As one can expect from any new Chevrolet vehicle, the Silverado ZR2 is armed with Chevy Safety Assist systems. This suite of innovative driver-assistive safety systems include Adaptive Cruise Control, automatic emergency braking, forward-collision warning, and many more — features that are also designed to help the driver tow with complete confidence. A digital rear view camera and bed-view camera augment overall safety. The expansive truck bed of the ZR2 is suitable for all kinds of cargo loads that will leave no scratches, thanks to the Chevytec Spray-on bed-liner that comes with the truck. The Chevrolet Silverado lineup, together with its new off-road flagship trim ZR2, are on display at showrooms of OTE Group, exclusive distributors of Chevrolet vehicles, distributed across the Sultanate of Oman.

WEEKEND OF ADVENTURE AND FUN

GAC organises adventurous second ‘Montero Mania’ desert excursion

MUSCAT: General Automotive Company (GAC), the official distributor for Mitsubishi vehicles in Oman, has once again set new standards in customer engagement with the successful completion of its second-ever ‘Montero Mania’ desert excursion. The event took place on February 24 and 25 and saw 180 participants in 40 Mitsubishi Montero Sport SUVs drive into the desert for a weekend of adventure and fun. The ‘Montero Mania’ event gave Montero enthusiasts and owners another opportunity to experience an authentic desert adventure in their trusty Mitsubishi Montero Sport, a vehicle perfectly equipped to tackle the challenge. The aim of the event was to enrich the customer experience by providing participants with the chance to test their vehicle's capabilities and gain a better understanding of its performance. Manoj Ranade, General Manager of General Automotive Company, said, “We are thrilled to have successfully completed the first season of our ‘Montero Mania’ desert excursion. We were delighted to welcome an additional 180 passionate Montero enthusiasts who joined us for a weekend of adventure and camaraderie in the Wahiba Sands. “The event provided an opportunity for our valued customers to experience the full potential of their vehicles in a safe and controlled environment. We remain committed to delivering exceptional customer experiences and look forward to hosting more exciting events in the future.” On 24 February, the ‘Montero Mania’ desert expedition officially commenced at the Mitsubishi showroom, where 180 enthusiastic customers arrived with their 40



Montero Sport SUVs. Accompanied by knowledgeable GAC staff members, the convoy embarked on a journey towards the picturesque Al Raha Camp at Wahiba Sands. At the camp, the drivers experienced an exhilarating dune bashing session, followed by a spectacular sunset view from the summit of a nearby dune. Back at the camp, families were entertained with a variety of activities, ensuring a fun-filled and enjoyable evening for all. The following day, participants could take in the desert landscape on a camelback ride or race across the sand on dune bikes. After an unforgettable weekend, the convoy departed from Wahiba Sands, successfully concluding the second-ever “Montero Mania” desert expedition. “We sincerely thank all participants who made the ‘Montero Mania’ desert excursion such a

resounding success. Your enthusiasm and passion for the Montero Sport made this event truly unforgettable for all involved,” added Manoj Ranade. The Montero Sport adopts a powerful yet refined exterior design with Mitsubishi's signature Dynamic Shield front view design. It emphasises the vehicle's width, with the headlights continuing from the front grille and the combination lamps at the bumper corners. This bold exterior is complemented by a refined interior that delivers high quality, comfort, and advanced functionality. The Montero Sport is also brimming with technology, thanks to several advanced and convenient new features. These include the easy-to-read 8-inch colour digital dash, 8-inch Smartphone-Link Display Audio (SDA) system, the MITSUBISHI Remote Control smart

phone app, and more. Powering the Montero Sport is a 3.0L MIVEC V6 gasoline engine that produces 218hp@6,000rpm and 285Nm@4,000rpm. This powerplant is mated to Mitsubishi's 8-speed automatic transmission that delivers a smoother, more luxurious ride and improved fuel efficiency. The Montero Sport also retains the Super-Select 4WD-II system, which delivers optimal traction regardless of the driving surface, and confidence-inspiring handling characteristics. The Montero Sport also comes with a very comprehensive list of active and passive safety features, including Mitsubishi's RISE (Reinforced Impact Safety Evolution) body design, seven SRS airbags, Forward Collision Mitigation system (FCM), Blind Spot Warning system (BSW), a Multi-view camera system and more.

CELEBRATION



Al Hashar Pharmacy hosts family get together

MUSCAT: The year-long Golden Jubilee celebrations of Al Hashar Pharmacy culminated with an incredible gala family get-together at an open-air venue. The event was an excellent opportunity where employees with their families to come together, celebrated this momentous occasion and spent a day filled with fun, laughter, and bonding. One of the main attractions of the event was the food stalls set up by employees and their families. A wide range of delicious food, including local and international cuisines, was on display. The stalls were decorated beautifully, and the variety of food on offer was a treat for everyone's taste buds. Another highlight of the event was the talent show put on by the kids. The children showcased their impressive talents, which included singing and dancing. It was heartening to see how confident and skilled these young performers were. The audience was amazed by the level of talent on display, and everyone thoroughly enjoyed the performances. The event was also packed with games and fun activities for both kids and adults. There were

carnival-style games, a bouncy castle, face painting, and much more that kept them entertained throughout the evening. For the adults, there were fun activities like the Lemon & Spoon race, Balloon Shooting, Tambola games and musical chairs. The event offered many exciting prizes to kids and adults, including a mega draw that added an extra level of excitement to the evening. The winners were thrilled with their prizes. The event finally concluded with a sumptuous dinner, everyone enjoyed, relaxed and bonded over a delicious meal. “The family get-together event was a huge success, and it was wonderful to see everyone come together to celebrate our golden jubilee, even families staying at remote interiors joined the event in good numbers. We hope to continue this tradition of bonhomie and togetherness in the coming years as well. I would like to thank all our colleagues and their families for their participation and my special thanks to the team of volunteers for their contribution and for making this event a memorable one,” said Suresh Gandhi, CEO of Al Hashar Pharmacy.

STUDENT ACCOUNT

Sohar Islamic new account to provide host of benefits to students

MUSCAT: Providing banking that fulfils the various needs of the society, Sohar Islamic introduces its new Student Account. Designed to complement the lifestyle of the local youth community, the account seeks to provide a host of benefits to the students within the country as well as contribute towards financial inclusion. Commenting on introducing the Student Account, Abdul Wahid Al Murshidi, Chief Islamic Banking Officer, said, “The young generation is the country's most prized asset and represents the future of the nation. It is, therefore, our

duty to ensure that they receive the right financial support, assistance, and empowerment to achieve their aspirations. Sohar Islamic believes in nurturing long-term relationships with its customers and the Student Account is an excellent way for students to begin acquainting themselves with dedicated banking products and services. Giving students the opportunity to monitor, control, and manage their finances on a daily basis leads to the inculcation of more prudent spending, saving, and investment habits. This will also go a long way in promoting fi-

nanacial independence.” Earlier this year, Sohar Islamic signed a cooperation agreement with GTS Alive Middle East, the exclusive regional representative for the International Student Identity Card (ISIC), to provide student account holders with opportunities and benefits complementing their life style with exclusive offers from over 100 merchants locally. The agreement signing came in line with the bank's efforts to enhance the overall offering and add more value to the customer. Sohar Islamic's new Student Account has numerous features,

privileges, and perks that are designed to suit the dynamic needs of students. With a deeper understanding of what students value most, it offers exclusive discounts at restaurants, cafes, electronic stores, and other fashion and retail outlets. Giving students more flexibility, it has free cash withdrawals from any bank ATM in Oman waiving off all minimum balance fees and zero debit card annual fees. These uniquely designed debit cards, which are equipped with the ‘Tap and Pay’ feature, can also be instantly issued, thus, making the process

even more efficient and quick. Sohar Islamic, through the Student Account, seeks to instil in the youth ethical financial habits, a savings mindset, and a sense of discipline when it comes to budgeting their finances. Students interested in opening the new account can simply head towards any of the Sohar Islamic branches with the necessary documentations that consist of ID card and a valid university or college student card. The branch, having processed the documents can then open the account and issue the debit card instantly.



ROUND-UP

Oman Japan Friendship Association welcomes Japanese delegates to Oman

The visit is part of Oman and Japan celebrating close to 50 years of diplomatic ties

MUSCAT: The Oman Japan Friendship Association (OJFA) recently welcomed 14 high-level delegates from Japan in Oman. The visit is part of Oman and Japan celebrating close to 50 years of diplomatic ties. Established in January 1974, the OJFA passionately strives to promote the warm relationship between Oman and Japan in the field of culture, society, economy, arts and science. During the visit, the Japanese delegates were all praise for the renowned Omani hospitality that they received wherever they went. They even lauded the passionate efforts of the tour guides team



MEMORABLE VISIT: High-level delegates welcomed at Muscat International Airport. - Supplied picture

from National Travel & Tourism (NTT), who helped them gain deep and interesting insights about the rich heritage and culture of Oman. Extremely delighted with

their overall experiences in Oman with NTT, they even rated Oman's popular Travel & Tourism agency's services as being at par with world-class standards.

To offer an exceptional and memorable visit to Oman, a detailed itinerary was specially prepared by National Travel and Tourism (NTT) which included

a tour of Muscat city, a visit to the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque, Al Nahda Dunes, Jabal Akhdhar, Dhow Cruise, Dolphin Watching and a special visit to the Amouage

Perfume Factory. Speaking about the deep-rooted bonds between Oman and Japan Mohammed Saud Bahwan, Chairman, Oman Japan Friendship Association said, "Japan is very close to me. I have been involved with the country in one way or another for many years. The relationship between Oman and Japan has been incredibly fruitful and characterised by depth, reliability and trust. It is about much more than economics and trade; it is a strong and special relationship. The joint efforts of Oman and Japan have offered numerous avenues for mutual development in diverse fields. These include diplomacy, economy, investment, trade, culture, sports, arts and more." Sharing their thoughts on the visit to Oman one of the delegates said. "We have been eagerly looking forward to visit Oman and personally experience the famous Omani hospitality. "Oman is indeed a very beautiful country. It is blessed with so much natural beauty. Even the people of Oman are so warm and friendly. We will definitely be coming back to experience more of this beautiful nation."

SUPPORT

Bank Muscat participates in 27th Muscat International Book Fair

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate, has announced its strong support for the 27th edition of the Muscat International Book Fair, which is being held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre until March 4. This year's festival which was inaugurated under the patronage of Sayyid Hamoud Faisal Al Busaidi, Minister of Interior, is witnessing an excellent turnout of visitors with the overall number slated to touch as many as 300,000 visitors over the course of the 11-day long fair. Aimed at enriching Omani culture through a number of events, lectures, literary and cultural seminars, the 27th edition will host an elite selection of intellectuals, publishers, and exhibitors, thereby contributing prominently to Muscat's cultural scene. Over the years, the fair has picked up a dedicated following amongst people in Oman and is also well covered by both local and international media. Bank Muscat's participation at the book fair comes as part of its strategy to highlight the Sultanate's cultural achievements and introduce prominent and upcoming Omani and Arab works and publications across various fields to a wider audience. In particular, the fair has a number of cultural halls like Ahmed Bin Majid Gallery, Al-Farahidi



Gallery, Ibn Dureid Gallery and Al-Awtabi Gallery, which is seeing an excellent response from visitors. It is a matter of pride that this year's fair features well in excess of half a million titles and publications, including as many as 22,950 Omani publications. The fair also includes a Children's Corner where an area has been allocated for family activities, a theatre, reading corners and cultural workshops. The bank is always keen to strengthen cooperation and partnership with various governmental, private and non-governmental organisations to successfully organise and conduct various events and initiatives that contribute to sustainable development across different sectors in the Sultanate.

Bank Muscat's participation in social and cultural activities and events provide it with multiple opportunities to deepen its commitment and partnership for sustainable development. The bank has in the past extended strong support covering a wide range of sectors like technology, culture and sports etc., to important events like the Al Ahad Al Mashreq Shooting Championship, the Sayyid Abbas Golf Tournament and Comex. The bank is always keen to cooperate and partner with the organisers in order to maximise the achievements of the exhibition, and showcase the noble achievements of Oman's cultural heritage to an ever-growing and diverse audience. As the leading financial services

provider in the Sultanate for the last four decades, Bank Muscat has the largest banking network in Oman and provides ATMs and CDMs at various locations across the Sultanate including at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre. They offer a fast, comfortable and secure banking experience to customers who use them for a wide variety of transactions including real-time bill payments for utilities in Oman, such as electricity, water, telecom, mobile top ups, instant credit card bill payments, school fees payments etc. Customers can also set or reset PIN for their debit and credit cards and update mobile numbers round the clock through the network, which is spread across all governorates of the country.

OMAN ELECTRICITY TRANSMISSION COMPANY



OETC provides sterilisation devices to Ibra Hospital

MUSCAT: In line with the vision and goals of Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) towards the engagement and contribution of sustainable development to the economic and social development of society, OETC has provided sterilisation devices for the operations department at Ibra Hospital in Sharqiyah governorate. The sterilisation devices serve a wide range of citizens' needs and other several neighbouring provinces. In addition, it helps improve the service level provided by the hospital by helping speed up the sterilisation process, increasing the number of surgical operations performed per day and reducing the waiting time for patients. The inauguration ceremony took place last week in the presence of a number of officials from both parties. The inauguration included a visual explanatory presentation of the operation mechanism of the devices and

the benefits which the patients will receive. At the end of the ceremony, the hospital management team presented a memorial trophy to the company as a gesture and a token of appreciation for the efforts and continuous support provided by OETC. The Communication and Sustainability Manager, Samira Salim Al Mughairi said, "The company strives and ensures towards adopting sustainable initiatives that serve the largest segment of society. These particular sterilisation devices will improve, accelerate and have a positive effect on the process of scheduling appointments and operations. We are currently working on another initiative relying on renewable energy, clean and environmentally friendly energy sources that will serve the tourism sector in the country by providing solar panels to illuminate touristic areas that are a destination for many visitors and tourists locally and internationally."

LIMITED-TIME SPECIAL OFFERS

Mercedes-Benz Oman announces Ramadan exclusive packages



MUSCAT: Mercedes-Benz Oman has announced limited-time special offers for the holy month of Ramadan. Available from March 1 until April 30, the offers include a five-year/75,000km service package, four years of Mobilo on-road assistance service, three years of unlimited mileage warranty, free registration for the first year, and a complimentary gift from the stylish Mercedes-Benz Lifestyle collection. Customers can also benefit from

special services at the showrooms, as part of its commitment to creating a seamless and convenient luxury experience for its customers. Shaun Michael, Chief Executive Officer at Mercedes-Benz Oman, said: "The holy month of Ramadan is a special time of the year. And during this time, in true Mercedes-Benz fashion, we want to consistently place customers and their needs front and centre. "We welcome customers to

visit our showrooms, where our dedicated specialists are willing to delight customers with our wide range of products." The exclusive Ramadan offers extend across the Mercedes-Benz and Mercedes-AMG Cars and SUVs stock range - except for the Mercedes-AMG G-Class and Mercedes-Maybach. Customers are guaranteed an unrivalled experience throughout and after their buying process.



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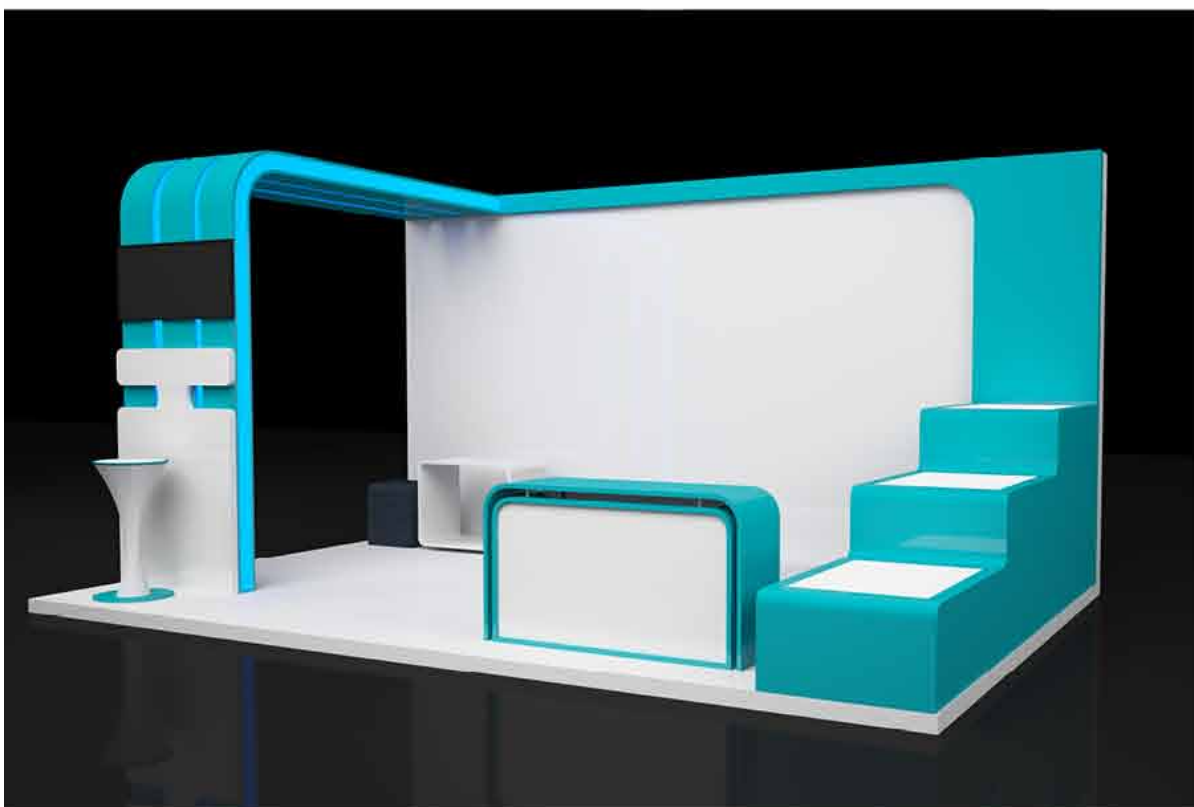
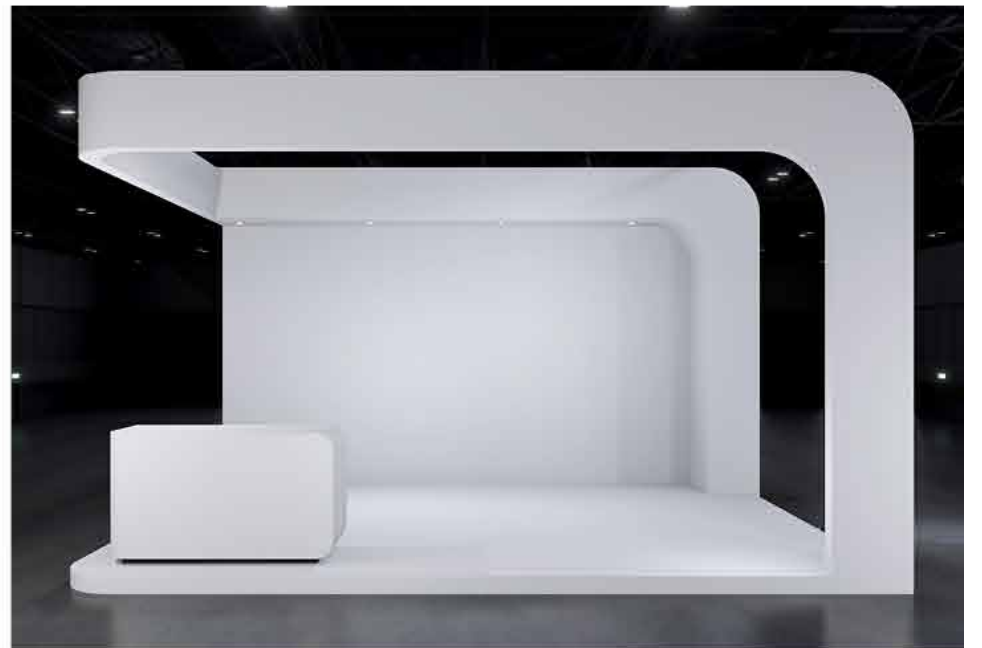
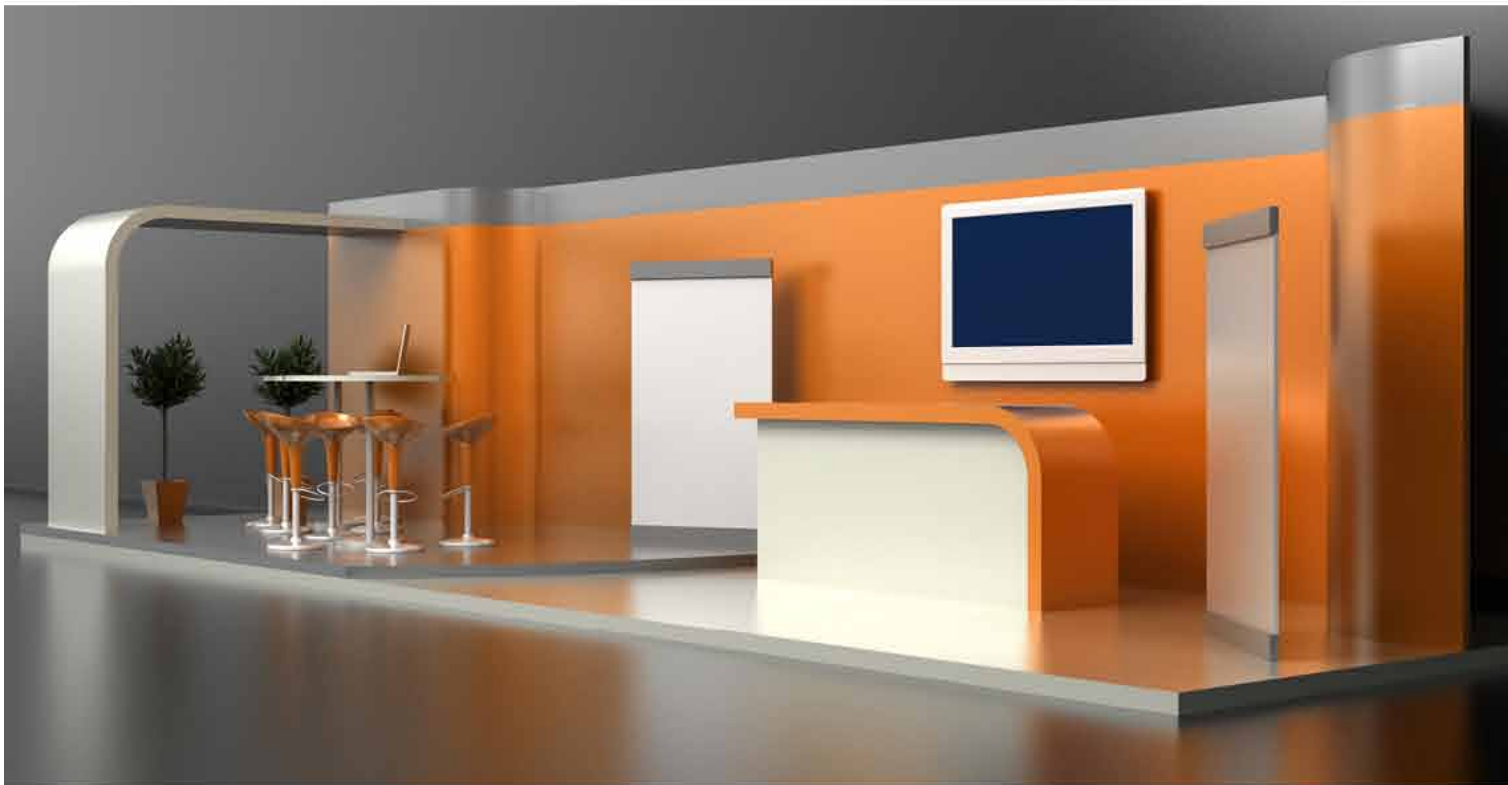
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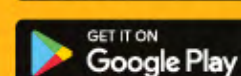
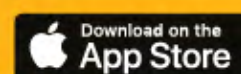
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