

OIA LAUNCHES PROGRAMME FOR FINANCE, ACCOUNTING GRADUATES
OIA and its companies are making efforts to develop Omani talents and close the gap between the labour market's needs and qualified Omani professionals. In collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Higher Education institutions, OIA launched a new employment programme under the name 'Mu'tamad'. **>B1**



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SAYYID BADR CONVEYS HM'S GREETINGS TO ITALIAN PM

Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, Head of Oman's delegation, conveyed greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik along with best wishes of success to Giorgia Meloni, Prime Minister of Italy in organising and hosting the International Conference on Development and Migration, wishing the Italian people continuous growth and prosperity. **>A2**



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MINISTRY OF TOURISM

'Bloom Hawana Salalah Festival' to start from July 27



Times News Service

MUSCAT: The first edition of 'Bloom Hawana Salalah Festival (Flowers and Life Festival)' will be organised by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism in conjunction with Taiseer Platform, government institutions and private sector's establishments.

The event will be organised as part of activities of Khareef Dhofar season 2023. The festival will take place from 27 July to 11 August 2023 at Hawana Salalah, Dhofar Governorate.

The opening ceremony of the festival will be held under the patronage of Sheikh Faisal Abdullah Al Rowas, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI).

The Festival is expected to attract around 10,000 visitors a day. It aims to provide an immersive and unforgettable experience that combines creativity and entertainment in a delightful environment, in addition to spreading awareness about environment preservation and sustainability, which will be reflected in the festival through various events and activities.

Through partnering with different government parties and private sector companies, Taiseer Platform aims to contribute

to the promotion of Khareef Dhofar (monsoon season 2023), and thus enhance the position of the Sultanate of Oman as a distinguished destination for tourists and visitors from all over the world.

The Festival includes a mini-exhibition of plants that grow in the land of the Dhofar Governorate.

The talented Omani youth will add a distinctive touch and enrich the festival across the event sites, such as painting, playing music, street theatre, and other arts, along with many other youth talents and creations.

The festival also includes an entertaining Bloom challenges corner for families, youth, and children, which will be available free of charge for entertainment, enthusiasm, and excitement lovers. It includes fun and exciting games, in addition to a mini corner for birds and pets that harmonise with visitors and the festival's agenda.

In addition to a number of educational workshops, a diverse list of recreational activities will be held, which will be divided into several areas, including flowers and plants area, artistic and talent shows area, garden of rare plants, birds and animals, tropical food area, and many other activities. **>A2**

OMAN'S MINERALS SECTOR REVENUES LIKELY TO TOUCH OMR100MN



The Energy and Minerals Forum also highlighted wide use of hydrogen that will contribute towards diversifying energy sources and reduce carbon emissions



amounted to about OMR98 million and the total production of mineral ores (metallic and non-metallic) amounted to about 63 million tonnes. Meanwhile, the volume of sales of building materials in the local market amounted to about 16 million tonnes, which is fully proportional to the local demand for building materials in 2022.

These figures were unveiled during the activities of the Energy and Minerals Forum, which began in Salalah on Sunday un-

SALALAH: The total revenues of the minerals sector in Oman increased by 11 percent during 2022 compared to 2021, according to the date of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals.

The total sales value of mineral ores (metallic and non-metallic)



der the patronage of His Highness Sayyid Marwan Turki Al Said, Governor of Dhofar.

Mohsen Hamad Al Hadrami, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals in his speech pointed out that the forum mainly discusses the minerals sector in Oman and Dhofar Governorate in particular. It also introduces the participants to the hydrogen sector and the most important projects supervised by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, and the energy sector's preparations for the Khareef Season 2023, he added.

Al Hadrami added that the forum is part of an integrated system of activities that the Ministry of Energy and Minerals is implementing to develop the sector and attract investment, as it represents a platform through which we seek communication and discussion about the ministry's basic sectors, with our partners from the public and private sectors, investors and the local community. **>A5**



Omani musicians leave an indelible imprint at Basel Military Music show

A2

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN New tech for early detection of cancer

1 The Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Centre has launched a new service for the diagnosis of breast cancer through magnetic resonance imaging-guided biopsy. The technology is highly accurate for diagnosing cases and assessing risks. **>A3**

WORLD 30,000 evacuated as Greece wildfires rage

2 Officials on the Greek island of Rhodes said on Saturday they had moved 30,000 people threatened by wildfires to safety, including 2,000 who had to be ferried off beaches. Tourists and some locals were being taken to gyms, schools and hotel conference centres on the island. **>A7**

MARKET Oman's energy sector appears promising

3 Oman's energy sector is undergoing a significant transformation, driven by the government's focus on diversifying its energy sources and enhancing the efficiency of its infrastructure, according to a new report. Oman's energy sector is primarily driven by oil and gas production. **>B1**

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MUSCAT



JOINS ILLUSTRIOUS LIST

Culture ministry felicitates award-winning novelist Al Qasbi

Times News Service

MUSCAT: It has been two months since novelist Zahran Al Qasbi made the Sultanate of Oman proud with his novel 'The Water Diviner'.

The novel won the 2023 International Prize for Arabic Fiction (IPAF), plus translation, and a cash award of US\$50,000 at an award ceremony in Abu Dhabi, UAE in May. The novel, published by Dar Rashm, was named as the winner by the jury chair, Mohammed Achaari.

Al Qasbi is the first Omani winner and joins an illustrious list of Omani writers that include Jokha Al Harthi, who won the International Booker Prize along with translator Marilyn Booth

for Celestial Bodies in 2019. The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MCSY) acknowledged the contribution of Al Qasbi and felicitated him for winning the 2023 International Prize for Arabic Fiction on Sunday.

A statement from the Oman News Agency (ONA) said: "The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth honoured the Omani writer, Zahran bin Hamdan Al Qasbi, after his novel 'The Water Diviner' won the International Prize for Arabic Fiction for the year 2023."

Sayyid Saeed bin Sultan Al Busaidi, Undersecretary at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Culture felicitated Al Qasbi at his office on Sunday.

Al Qasbi's honour comes as an



affirmation of the ministry's interest in felicitating the achievers, and recipients of regional and international awards in the cultural, sports and youth fields.

The winning entry was the

fourth novel from the Omani author and is the 16th winner of the International Prize for Arabic Fiction. Al Qasbi's International Prize for Arabic Fiction underlines the progress made by Omani writ-

ers in recent times with two of the world's most prominent honours in contemporary fiction awarded in a space of five years.

'The Water Diviner' - its title was listed by the prize for its long-list on January 24 and its short-list on March 1 as "The Exile of the Water Diviner" - is Al Qasbi's work that is said to be "steeped in the world of aflaj," an irrigation system that has much to do with Omani village life.

On the winning entry, the jury chair Mohammed Achaari said, "The Water Diviner by Zahran Al Qasbi explores a new subject in modern fiction: water and its impact on the natural environment and the lives of human beings in hostile regions. **>A5**

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Sayyid Badr conveys His Majesty’s greetings to Prime Minister of Italy



ROME: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Foreign Ministry, took part in the International Conference on Development and Migration being held in Rome under the auspices of Giorgia Meloni, Prime Minister of Italy.

At the beginning of his meeting with the Italian Prime Minister, Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, Head of Oman's delegation, conveyed greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik along with best wishes of success to Meloni in organising and hosting the International Conference on Development and Migration, wishing the Italian people continuous growth and prosperity.

In her turn, the Italian Prime Minister expressed her sincere

appreciation and gratitude to His Majesty the Sultan for Oman's participation in the International Conference on Development and Migration. She also wished His Majesty and the Omani people permanent progress and welfare.

The conference aims to address the phenomenon of migration and combat human trafficking, promote economic development within the framework of multi-lateral cooperation and find solutions to the challenges facing many countries of the world with regard to migration, illegal movement, smuggling and trafficking of migrants. This can be realised by launching a platform for joint cooperation between all countries concerned to ensure the active participation and mutual commitment of all countries receiving and exporting migrants, as well as international organisations.

Participants in the conference explored mechanisms for strengthening legal tracks, and ways to contribute to joint development projects that serve the aspirations of all countries to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which constitute the grounds for security, stability, and economic and social progress.

The conference was attended by representatives of the countries of the world, including heads of states and governments, in addition to some international bodies and organisations. **-ONA**

Omani musicians leave an indelible imprint at Basel Military Music show

In the corner dedicated to the Sultanate of Oman, a group of musicians from the Royal Cavalry and the Royal Guard of Oman played various pieces of Omani music

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Royal Cavalry of the Royal Court Affairs and the Royal Guard of Oman, concluded its participation in the 2023 Tattoo Basel Military Music show.

The show was held in Basel, Switzerland, with the participation of musical groups from many countries around the world.

The closing day of the Tattoo Basel show 2023 witnessed various activities during the day with the joint band presenting a musical performance in the main arena of the Tattoo Basel show, where they played Omani, Arab and international music.

In the corner dedicated to the Sultanate of Oman, a group of musicians from the Royal Cavalry and the Royal Guard of Oman played various pieces of music. Omani Halwa, incense and Omani Luban



were presented to visitors.

On the other hand, another group of musicians, during the children's open day, played musical compositions and taught children different types of music, instruments and their uses, in addition to training them to ride horses.

The main show and the closing ceremony of the Tattoo Basel show 2023 were held with the participation of all musical groups, where the musicians of the Royal Cavalry and the Royal Guard of Oman gave a musical show on Arab horseback, which included playing of various pieces of music that reflected the richness of Omani music and cultural and heritage of the Sultanate of Oman.

Engineer Hilal bin Mohammed Al-Waeli, Head of Horse, Camel, Farms and Royal Gardens Affairs

at the Royal Court Affairs, said that the participation of the Sultanate of Oman was exemplary through its musicians on horseback, and that the invitation extended to the Sultanate of Oman to participate in this show showed the reputation the Omani music has achieved during previous events.

Mahmoud bin Hamad Al Hasani, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Swiss Confederation,



confirmed that participation in such international shows represents promotion of the Sultanate of Oman as a rich cultural heritage destination, adding that the participation of the Royal Cavalry in the affairs of the Royal Court and the Royal Guard of Oman had left a good impression.

Idris bin Abdulrahman Al-Khanjari, Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Nations and international organisations in Geneva, expressed his happiness with the participation of the Sultanate of Oman during the Tattoo Basel show of military music, because music represents a message of rapprochement, as it is not just an art, but rather an effective and influential diplomatic tool to introduce people to different world cultures.

Eric Juilliard, CEO and Producer of Tattoo Basel show 2023,

said: "I am grateful for the Omani show, which represented the Omani culture, and what the Sultanate of Oman presented is a great and wonderful addition to this year's Tattoo Basel show."

She said also that it was wonderful to see the musicians playing on horseback, as everyone loved the Omani show, and we noticed the crowd's interaction and greetings to the male and female riders, and I am sure that they would like the Sultanate of Oman to come again to participate in the future shows".

Carol Jones, Production Director of the Tattoo Basel 2023 show, said that the performances presented by the Omanis in the Swiss Confederation this year were beautiful and joyful, and the audience had a mini-experience about life in the Sultanate of Oman and the Omani culture.

SOUTH AL BATINAH GOVERNORATE

Ministry to monitor salinity of water in wells of Barka and Musannah

Times News Service

RUSTAQ: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources is implementing a project to measure the salinity of groundwater in a number of wells in wilayats of Barka and Musannah in South Al Batinah Governorate.

The aim is to monitor the changes in the water quality of the wells located in the coastal regions and to know the extent of the impact resulting from the interaction between fresh and salt water.

Engineer Ahmed bin Ibrahim Al-Esayi, Director of the Water Resources Department at the Directorate General of Agricultural, Fisheries and Water Resources in South Al Batinah Governorate, said: "The implementation of the project comes within the framework of efforts to protect water wealth and develop its resources, whether in terms of quantity or quality, and to confront the phenomenon of seawater overlapping in the coastal parts."

He pointed out that the implementation of the groundwater salinity measurement project, which the ministry is implementing, targets about 1,400 wells



distributed along the Al Batinah coast and the Salalah Plain, to monitor the change in the water quality of the wells on a regular basis and to know the extent of the

impact resulting from the interaction between fresh and salt water.

He explained that samples are currently being taken from wells in the wilayats of Barka and Mu-

sannah, and it will continue until the end of this month to find out the current situation and find out the extent of the overlap between salty and fresh water.

BLOOM CONTAINER

Marina Hawana Salalah to host the festival

<FROM A1 The 'Bloom Hawana Salalah' festival will be held in Marina Hawana Salalah, and it is expected to enrich visitors with many unique and new activities.

As it is full of sites for capturing memories, the gardening and flowering area, in addition to the tropical fruits and planting area, the relaxation area, and the Bloom Container, through which visitors enjoy viewing natural life through a photo gallery with the support of a number of government institutions.

Marwan Abdul Hakim Al Ghasani, Director of Tourism Promo-

tion Department at the Directorate General of Tourism in the Governorate of Dhofar said that this festival is organised in line with the approach of the authorities concerned in distributing tourist traffic to tourist destinations and sites in the Dhofar Governorate during the Khareef season.

He added that the festival is in harmony with the efforts made in the entertainment industry and the implementation of specialised programmes by creating innovative activities with a positive and sustainable impact that contribute to activating and creating new tourism patterns.





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COMMENTARY

The Social Classes in the Graveyard



Saleh Al-Shaibany

While we were queuing up to wait for our turn to condole the family of the deceased, a man behind me said in a low voice, “do they have a VIP lounge in this graveyard?”

I thought he was joking. I turned around and said quite irritably, “this is not an airport. It’s a place that reminds us that we are all going to be eaten by worms, no matter how important you were in this world.”

An elderly man in front of me shushed me up and asking me to be sensitive to the family of the deceased. The man behind me tapped me on the shoulder and raised his eyebrows towards a small, white building on top of a rock. An usher was politely guiding half a dozen important looking men down the steps. He parted the queue to allow the VIP to pay their respect first while the rest of us just waited. They looked embarrassed as they were coming down knowing that they were breaking the ethical codes that separated decency and vulgarity. Yet, they allowed it to happen.

I thought if we walked half an hour in the sun to carry the coffin, watched the body being lowered in its final resting place, offer our prayers as a sign of respect, then waiting just a few more minutes would not take anything away from us. There was no shame in



that. As a matter of fact, we would go back to our homes knowing that we walked the distance and did not take a short cut to a road that we will use for our final journey. I am not sure how the VIP people would justify themselves for being in a luxury isolation from the rest of the crowd, talking and joking, insensitive to the memory of the dead person.

I took this debate beyond the grounds of the cemetery to a couple of wise old men. Their argument was not just unacceptable but shocking. They explained to me, in such a way, as if I were an imbecile, that we are not all the same. God meant to separate us in different social classes. I had to restrain myself from being rude to the two gentlemen. But at the same time I could not let it pass without protesting. It was no use but I thought I should mention that worms would also feast on dead ‘VIP’ lying six feet down. They just glared at me and brought the curtain down on the debate.

I am not exactly confused but as I shake hands with the royals, dignitaries and their

Excellencies, not to mention people with a few millions in the bank, I wonder if a common man like me would miss something important in the Day of Judgment.

If the two old gentlemen were right, then I am missing some riches in this life and a lot of blessings in the next for just being a commoner. I also now wonder what is happening to the old theory that if you live a hard life now than heaven will be your permanent abode when you move on. Perhaps it always has been a wishful thinking for the poor and that successful people we see now would have the best of both worlds.

As a psychiatrist friend of mine once told me, there would be no mad people in heaven. And he would be jobless once he reaches there. He might as well overcharge the rich now while he has the chance because such people would be beyond his reach in the afterlife. Well, in conclusion, all I can say is that VIP lounges at the graveyards is an insult, not respect, to a dead person.

New tech to help in early detection of breast cancer

The technology is highly accurate for diagnosing cases, assessing risks, and determining the appropriate treatment plan for patients

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Centre (SQCCRC) has launched a new service for the diagnosis of breast cancer through magnetic resonance imaging-guided biopsy.

The technology is highly accurate for diagnosing cases, assessing risks, and determining the appropriate treatment plan for patients.

It performs MRI-guided tissue sampling of breast lumps, to locate suspicious tissues and accurately extract samples for the purpose of checking for cancer, usually invisible on a mammogram, ultrasound, or other examinations.

Introduction of MRI-guided biopsy technology in the Sultanate of Oman will contribute to the early detection of breast cancer in groups that are at high risk of the disease.



EXAMINATION: Introduction of MRI-guided biopsy technology in Oman will contribute to the early detection of breast cancer. -ONA



sibility of cancer or other conditions. This technology can detect subtle changes in the breast early.

Diagnosed cases

Breast cancer is among the most common cancers among women globally and in Oman. According to a Ministry of Health report for the year 2019, the rate of diagnosed cases of breast cancer in the third and fourth stages was 31 percent.

The existence of such advanced technology will contribute to increasing the rates of early detection of cancer and improving the chances of recovery from the disease.



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NEW SYSTEM

Social Protection Law is ‘a bold reform’ that responds to the needs of Omani society, says top ILO official



MUSCAT: Peter Rademaker, Deputy Regional Director for Arab Countries at the International Labour Organisation (ILO), reaffirmed that the Social Protection Law is “a bold reform” that responds to the needs of the Omani society.

The new system is in line with the standards of the ILO, he added.

In a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA), he said that the scheme provides greater protection for various segments of society, which covers the elderly, people with disabilities, and others.

He added that the social protection system will have a positive impact on the labour market, by giving workers a clearer picture of the benefits they will receive, which will help them better determine their job choices.

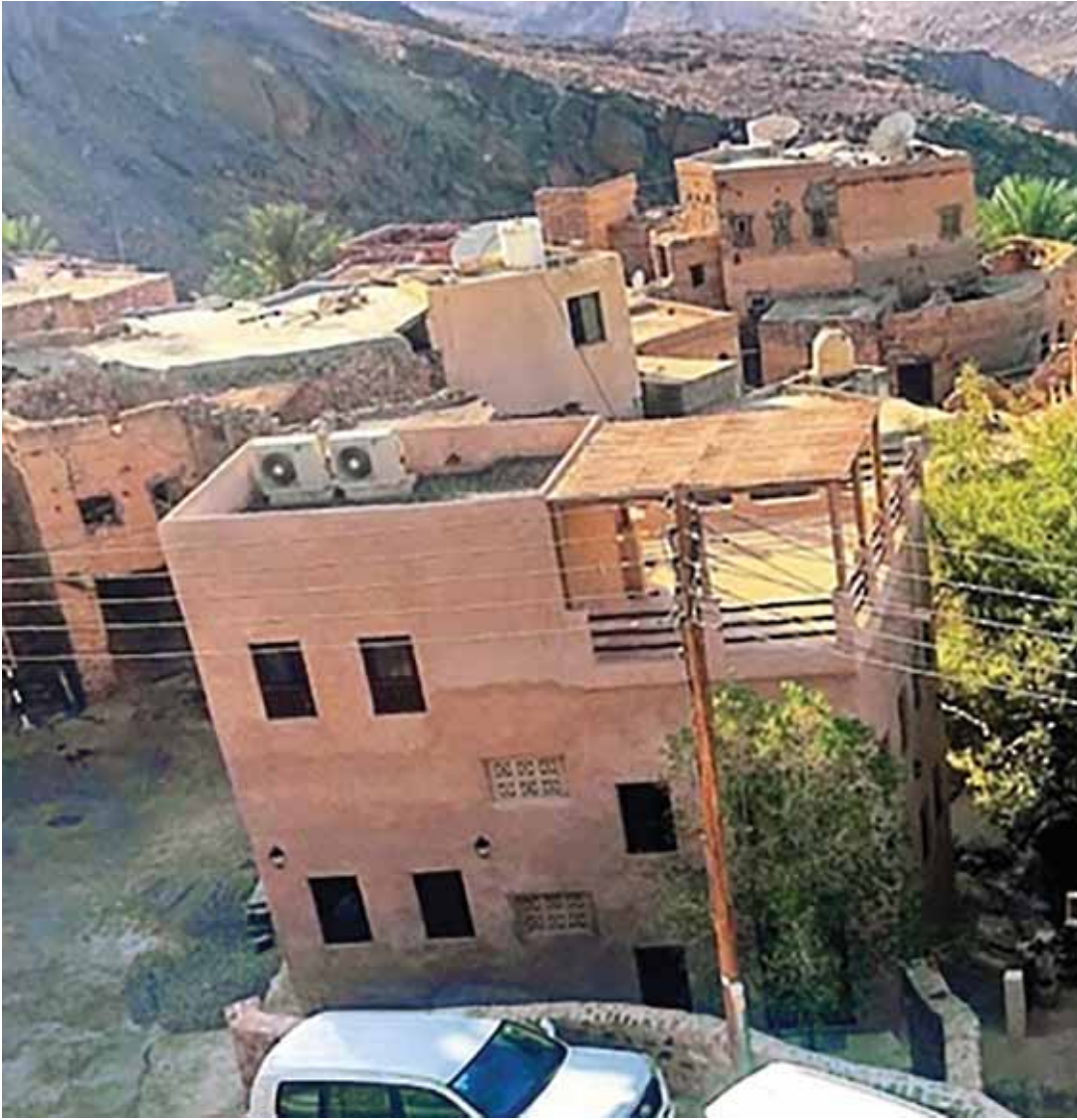
He pointed out that these remarkable reforms allow Oman to provide the necessary protection for workers in light of diverse challenges they may face in their lives, which will increase their contribution to the promotion and development of the economy.

He pointed out that the social protection system, in light of the current global conditions of soaring inflation and other challenges, will increase the cohesion and competitiveness of Omani society.

The Deputy Regional Director for Arab Countries at the ILO further said that the organisation provided support through its specialists on various aspects of the social protection system, such as allocating benefits against costs, economic modelling, and keeping pace with international standards while taking into account the local context. **-ONA**

GUEST HOUSES IN AL DAKHILIYAH

A SOURCE OF INCOME FOR OMANIS



Ali bin Saif Al Shukali, the assistant director of heritage and tourism department in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, said that the heritage inns with their tourism activities are showcasing to visitors Omani lifestyle of the past and present in the rural and urban areas.



NIZWA: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism seeks to invest in guest houses to enhance the revenue and diversify income sources of people in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate.

The statistics issued by the heritage and tourism department in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate show that the total number of heritage inns up to the end of the first half of current year are 17 units, the number of green inns are 16 while the number of guest houses are 31.

Ali bin Saif Al Shukali, the assistant director of heritage and tourism department in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, said that the heritage inns with their tourism activities are showcasing tourists Omani lifestyle of the past and the present in the countryside and urban areas.

The green inns provide an opportunity to the tourist to live among Omani farms and be acquainted with the lifestyle of the Omani farmers, which is a mix between the old and modern life.

He added that the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate is looking after these facilities by supervising the renovations and maintenance work to be used as heritage hotels.

These offer income opportunities for Omani youth, he said, adding that in the Wilayat of Al Hamra and Wilayat of Nizwa there are heritage establishments, all of which are managed by the local community and by ambitious young Omanis.

He pointed out that the guest houses are competing in the market with other hotel establishments as they are providing a family atmosphere and privacy in view of their simple type mixed with the comprehensive services including luxury and family recreation.

The Assistant Director of the Heritage and Tourism Department in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate explained that the Ministry is studying the applications submitted for the establishment of green and heritage inns and guest houses based on the market needs to balance the supply and demand.

The ministry is also reviewing the architectural engineering of these projects to be compatible with the hotel establishments and to enable them to compete in the market to achieve sustainability.





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MEETING

Royal Office Minister meets UK ambassador

MUSCAT: Gen. Sultan Mohammed Al Nu'mani, Minister of the Royal Office received in his office on Sunday Dr. Liane Saunders, appointed-ambassador of the United Kingdom (UK) to the Sultanate of Oman.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed relations between Oman and the UK.

They also reviewed areas of co-operation and means of promoting them to serve the joint interests, in addition to touching on a number of matters of common interest. -ONA



REVIEW TIES: Gen. Sultan Mohammed Al Nu'mani, Minister of the Royal Office with Dr. Liane Saunders, appointed-ambassador of the United Kingdom (UK) to the Sultanate of Oman. -ONA

SPECIAL OLYMPICS WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

Raysut Cement Co. honours its staff from HR department

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The CEO of Raysut Cement Company Khalid Ramis Al Rawas honoured Ayman Khamis Bait Maqas, an employee in the Company's Human Resources Department, who participated in the Special Olympics World Championship in Berlin.

He achieved two medals (bronze in doubles and gold in singles) in badminton.

This honour aims to support and encourage the talented employees of the Company in general, and the Omani talented people in particular.

It's worth mentioning that the



Omani delegation participating in the Olympics includes 36 players with mental disabilities, and 9 players who are partners in various competitions.

The delegation participated in

athletics, unified badminton, unified bocce, bowling, and equestrian, and unified football futsal, golf, weightlifting, and roller skating, sailing, swimming, table tennis, unified tennis.

It is worth mentioning that the Special Olympics World Summer Games this year is the 16th edition of the competition and its activities in Berlin is being held between 17 June and 25 June 2023.

It included 26 different sports, with the participation of nearly 7,000 male and female players. The competitions are being held in historic facilities like the Olympic Park, Berlin Fair and Europa sport park.

ROYAL OMAN POLICE

One person arrested for fraud and promoting counterfeit currency

MUSCAT: A person has been arrested by the Royal Oman Police (ROP), for fraud and promoting counterfeit currency in Muscat Governorate.

ROP stated that Muscat Governorate Police Command, in cooperation with the General Department of Inquiries and

Criminal Investigation, arrested an expatriate of Arab nationality on charges of fraud and promoting counterfeit currency through dealings with the owners of shops selling jewellery and valuables.

"The legal procedures are being completed against them," ROP added. - Times News Service



AWARD

Al Qasmi is the author of 4 novels

<FROM A1 He added: "The Water Diviner" transports us to the world of Oman's riverbeds and the affaj - water channels - showing how natural forces influence the relationship between individuals, environment, and culture.

"Blurring the boundaries of reality and myth, the novel's precise structure and sensitive poetic language are the conduit for compelling characters like the water diviner, which plays an essential role in people's lives, yet simultaneously inspires their fear and revulsion."

Achaari's fellow jurors for this year's prize were Egyptian novelist and academic Reem Bassiouney, Algerian novelist, researcher, and journalist Fadila El Farouk, Swedish university professor and translator Tetz Rooke, Omani writer and academic Aziza Al Ta'e.

Al Qasmi's book has been praised not only for its literary value and for its focus on the ground-water culture of Oman.

The inaugural edition of the prestigious award was in 2008 with Sunset Oasis by Bahaa Taher (Egypt) winning it.

While the International Prize for Arabic Fiction has been mentored by the Booker Prize Foundation in London, in a disclaimer about a frequently heard inaccuracy, the IPAF organisers have said, "Although the prize is often referred to as the 'Arabic Booker,' this is not instigated nor endorsed at all by the International Prize for Arabic fiction or the Booker Prize Foundation, two completely separate, independent organisations.

"The International Prize for Arabic Fiction is not in any way connected with the Booker Prize."

Born in Oman in 1979, Al Qasmi is an author of four published novels and 10 poetry collections.

Al Qasmi was among six Arab writers shortlisted for the award. The shortlisted authors received US\$10,000 each, with a further \$50,000 going to the final winner.

MINISTRY OF ENERGY AND MINERALS

Oman has taken steps for investment in hydrogen

<FROM A1 The Undersecretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals stated that the Ministry has taken important steps towards accelerating the procedures for regulating the hydrogen sector, setting the legal frameworks and policies necessary for its growth, and allocating suitable sites for its production to enhance the attraction of investments.

He further said that given the wide uses of hydrogen, its use will contribute towards diversifying energy sources, reduce carbon emissions and promote economic



growth, and help in achieving zero carbon neutrality, which will contribute to maintaining a balance between sustainable development and limiting the repercussions of climate change.

The forum included a presentation on mining in the Sultanate of Oman, which dealt with the historic and geographical dimension of minerals, the geology of the Sultanate of Oman, and the most important minerals in Oman.

Another presentation was given on investment in the mineral sector, which touched on the new mechanisms for investment in the sector, represented in the concession areas and public sites.

Meanwhile, OQ Group gave a presentation on the group's preparations for the Khareef Season 2023.



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Nama Dhofar Services invites the specialize companies to participate and submit their offers for the below said tender in Dhofar Governorate.

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last Date for Collection of Tender Documents	Time & Last Date for Proposal Submission	Tender Fee (OMR) Including VAT (5%)
DISC/2023/117	CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE OF SECURITY GUARD ROOMS IN SOME VITAL LOCATIONS	7th August 2023	30th August 2023	RO. 52.500

- To view the tender details, you can visit www.dhofarservices.nama.om / scan the QR code
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Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Health

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry of Health - Directorate General of Health Service AL Dhahira Governorate of Health (Ibri Regional Hospital) invites specialized companies to participate in the following Bid: -

Tender Ref	Description	Eligibility	Last date for Collection Document	Closing Time/ Day/ Date Before	Tender Fee (Non-Refundable)
1/2023	Gifts and flowers shop rental.	Specialized Companies	THURSDAY 12:30 PM on 17/ 08 /2023	11 AM on SUNDAY 03/ 09 /2023	R.O 25/= Per set

- Priority is given to small and medium-sized enterprises(SME) ,subject to quality matching.
- It is necessary to attach a copy of the registration certificate with the Tender Board and a copy of the commercial register when submitting the application.
- Bidding documents can be purchased from the Financial Affairs Department at Ibri Hospital on 23/7/2023 starting from 8:30 in the morning until 12:30 in the afternoon during official working days.
- Ibri Hospital is not bound to accept the highest bid or any other bid.

BY THE EU

Taliban official criticises fresh sanctions

KABUL: Taliban’s acting minister of justice, Abdul Hakim Sharai has denounced the imposition of fresh sanctions by the European Union (EU) on some of the its leaders and said that the time will come soon when the organisation will put sanctions on them, according to TOLONews.

Speaking at a religious-scientific conference put on by the Min-

istry of Higher Education, the Taliban official said, “If we stand united and support this system, I give you the assurance and good news that today they impose sanctions on the officials of the Islamic Emirate but the time will come when we impose sanctions on them.”

According to a statement from the European Union, the Taliban

officials were subject to fines for violating human rights, particularly by denying girls access to school, TOLONews reported.

“It is obvious that the distance between the Islamic Emirate and the international community for political interaction will increase if the officials of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan do not travel to foreign countries for meet-

ings,” a political expert, Ahmad Khan Andar said, according to TOLONews.

The EU imposed sanctions on 18 people and five organisations on Thursday this week for “serious human rights violations and abuses” in Afghanistan, Russia, Ukraine, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic.

— ANI



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Calls to ensure energy demand is matched by sustainable supplies

The G20 ministers aimed to advance technological collaboration and cooperation amongst members to strengthen energy systems with a view to ensuring energy security

PANAJI: G20 Ministers responsible for Energy underlined the importance of ensuring that the growing global energy demand is matched by sustainable and affordable energy supplies.

The ministers aimed to advance technological collaboration and cooperation amongst G20 members, other international partners and multilateral institutions to strengthen energy systems with a view to ensuring energy security and stabilising energy markets,



read the outcome document of the G20 Energy Transitions Ministers’ meeting in Goa on Saturday.

During the meeting, the ministers emphasised the importance of maintaining undisrupted flows of energy from various sources, suppliers and routes exploring paths to enhanced energy security

and markets stability, including through inclusive investments to meet the growing energy demand, in line with our sustainable development and climate goals, while promoting open, competitive, non-discriminatory, and free international energy markets.

The G20 Energy ministers met

under India’s G20 Presidency, with the theme ‘One Earth, One Family, One Future’ in Goa on July 22, 2023, with the aim to share, collaborate and build on the sense of responsibility and solidarity amongst the G20 members in accelerating the clean, sustainable, just, affordable and inclusive en-

ergy transitions, following various pathways, as a means of enabling secure, sustainable, equitable, shared and inclusive growth.

“We attach importance to the promotion of dialogue between consumers and producers as well as global cooperation in the business sector, and the need for adequate energy investments towards sustainable, affordable, reliable, resilient, and cleaner energy systems,” the meeting’s outcome document read.

Sustainable supply chains

The ministers acknowledged that certain minerals, materials and technologies are critical for energy transitions and there is a need to maintain reliable, responsible and sustainable supply chains of such critical minerals and materials, as well as semiconductors and related technologies, complying with the principles of market economy and international trade rules while respecting the sovereign rights of countries.

The meeting brought together over 100 delegates from G20 member countries, special invitee countries, and several international organisations, as per a release by the Ministry of Power.

The G20 ministers agreed to support voluntary and mutually agreed technology diffusion, skill development, beneficiation at

source and increased flow of finance to address the lack of capital, human or technical resources; to produce them sustainably and with a view to enhancing local value creation through beneficiation.

“We support research and development for increasing efficiencies, increasing scale of beneficiation at source, promoting circularity, and enabling sustainable alternatives to maintain, supply chain balances of such minerals and materials,” the outcome document read.

The ministers reiterated the need to reduce the potential negative impacts on people and the environment and intend to leverage multilateral cooperation as well as cooperation between the G20 members. “In this regard, we take note of the Presidency documents: “Voluntary High-Level Principles for Collaboration on Critical Minerals for Energy Transitions” (Annex A) and the report ‘Addressing Vulnerabilities in the Supply Chain of Critical Minerals.’”

The G20 ministers also agreed to recognise the role of grid interconnections, resilient energy infrastructure and regional/ cross-border power systems integration, where applicable, in enhancing energy security, fostering economic growth, and facilitating universal energy access for all, in an affordable, reliable and sustainable manner. — ANI

SNAP GENERAL ELECTION



Spain votes in close election as far-right looms

MADRID: Spaniards are voting in a snap general election that could see the country become the latest in Europe to swing to the right.

Polls suggest Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez’s Socialists could be beaten by Alberto Nunez Feijoo’s conservative Popular Party.

Going into Sunday’s vote, around one in five voters were, however, still undecided.

Neither the Socialists nor Popular Party are expected to win an absolute majority of Spain’s 350-seat Congress.

Sanchez called the election early after the left took a drubbing in local elections in May.

More than 37 million voters eligible to vote

A record number, 2.47 million, of the 37.5 million registered voters have cast an absentee ballot even before the polls opened.

The election takes place at the height of summer, when a significant number of voters may be away from their usual polling locations due to vacations.

Sunday’s election also comes on the tail of a month of heat waves and temperatures are expected to average above 35 degrees Celsius

(95 degrees Fahrenheit). All polling stations are equipped with fans and water bottles.

Officials, however, still expect a 70% turnout in the vote.

Polling stations will stay open until 8:00 pm, with near-final results expected by midnight.

Vox poised to play kingmaker

According to polls, although the conservative People’s Party is expected to come in first, but it is unlikely to secure an absolute majority. They may have to depend on the far-right Vox party’s support to form a government.

It would be the first time a far-right party had entered government since Francisco Franco’s dictatorship ended in the 1970s.

In an interview published on Friday by El Mundo, Feijoo stated that a candidate should not disclose their alliances just two days before an election. He added a government with Vox “is not ideal,” he added.

In turn, the Socialists would rely on the new movement called Sumar, which brought together 15 small leftist parties to form a government for the first time ever. — DW

VIRTUALLY UNOPPOSED

Cambodia’s ruling party claims landslide win in one-sided poll

PHNOM PENH: Prime Minister Hun Sen’s Cambodian People’s Party (CCP) declared victory in a general election on Sunday, in which it ran virtually unopposed.

“We’ve won in a landslide...but we can’t calculate the number of seats yet,” said Sok Eysan, CPP spokesman said.

“The Cambodian people won’t let the cheating groups destroy the country,” Hun Sen said in an apparent reference to opposition groups.

Even before Sunday’s poll the CCP was likely to hold on to all 125 seats in the lower house. The 70-year-old has ruled since 1985 and is the longest-serving leader in Asia.

The only serious opposition party was disqualified on a technicality and the other smaller parties may not have much chance of winning seats.

Hun Sen has suggested that, in a once-in-a-generation leadership transition, he will soon hand over the reins to his son — Hun Manet — during the upcoming five-year term.

The CCP’s spokesperson said that it was “very clear” that Hun Manet had won a seat in the National Assembly on Sunday.

Over 9.7 million people are able to vote in Cambodia’s seventh



election since independence from France. Voter turnout at 6:00 p.m. local time (1100 UTC) stood at 84%.

Camodia’s election a ‘farce’ — opposition

Sam Rainsy, a leading opposition figure, told DW that he expected Cambodia’s general election to be a “farce.”

“It will be a farce, a sham election,” Rainsy said.

Rainsy urged voters to “spoil their ballots” in a bid to “show their support for the opposition.”

“If the number of spoiled ballots is very large, it means that the Cambodian people reject the current regime and that they

want to vote for the opposition, even though the opposition is not allowed to take part in this election,” he said.

Rainsy has been living in exile in France. He claimed that he has received death threats from the Cambodian government.

“I have no means to go back to Cambodia,” he said.

Who is Hun Manet?

Hun Manet, the 45-year-old eldest son of Sen, has a bachelor’s degree from the US Military Academy, a master’s degree from New York University and a Ph.D. from Bristol University in Britain.

Currently, he is the chief of Cambodia’s army.

Cambodians do not foresee any immediate shift in policy when power is handed over to Manet. He is part of what is expected to be a broader generational change within the CPP.

“I don’t think anyone expects Hun Sen to sort of disappear once Hun Manet is prime minister,” said Astrid Noren-Nilsson, a Cambodia expert at Sweden’s Lund University.

“I think they will probably be working closely together and I don’t think that there is a big difference in their political outlook, including foreign policy,” she said.

Suppression of opposition

The Candlelight Party (CP), the only serious opposition party, was disqualified on a technicality in May.

The move came after the CP performed better than expected in last year’s local elections and won 22% of the popular vote.

There is not much hope for any of the 17 other small, poorly funded parties to win seats.

Election laws were changed as per Hun Sen’s orders in June. Under the new rules, anyone who fails to vote in the upcoming polls will be barred from running for office — a move that will affect exiled rivals. — DW

BID ADIEU TO THE TWITTER BRAND

Elon Musk says Twitter to change logo

LOS ANGELES: Elon Musk on Sunday revealed his plan to change the logo of Twitter.

In a tweet, he mentioned that the little blue birdie is likely to be replaced by an “X”.

“And soon we shall bid adieu to the twitter brand and, gradually, all the birds,” Musk tweeted.

“If a good enough X logo is posted tonight, we’ll make go live worldwide tomorrow,” he said in another tweet. A few hours later,

Musk also tweeted an image of a flickering “X” shared by one of the users. Musk’s tweets have garnered mixed reactions from netizens.

“Will miss little blue birdie,” a social media user commented.

“Waiting to see how X will look,” another one wrote.

The billionaire has had the name “X” on his mind for some time now.

Under Musk’s tumultuous

tenure, since he bought Twitter in October, the company has changed its business name to X Corp, reflecting the billionaire’s vision to create a “super app” like China’s WeChat, New York Post reported. A while ago, Musk dropped a picture of him making an “X” with his hands and also expressed his liking for the letter.

“Not sure what subtle clues gave it way, but I like the letter X,” he captioned the post. — ANI



30,000 people evacuated as wildfires rage on the Greek island of Rhodes



ITALY

Tourists and some locals were being taken to gyms, schools and hotel conference centres on the island where they will stay, while firefighters battle the blaze

ATHENS: Officials on the Greek island of Rhodes said on Saturday they had moved 30,000 people threatened by wildfires to safety, including 2,000 who had to be ferried off beaches.

Tourists and some locals were being taken to gyms, schools and hotel conference centres on the island where they will stay over-

night, while firefighters battle the blaze.

Operation still ongoing

George Hadjimarkos, regional governor of the South Aegean, told Skai television that the operation, which was still ongoing, had been hampered by fires cutting off some road access.

A Rhodes municipality official said that members of the coast-guard, the armed forces and local authority workers used dozens of buses to help move people away from the fires.

Wildfire forces thousands to flee

Wildfires on the Greek Island of Rhodes have sparked the biggest wildfire evacuation operation ever in the country, authorities said on Sunday. Thousands of people have been evacuated as flames threatened homes and hotels.

"This is the biggest fire evacuation ever in Greece," Konstantia Dimoglidou, Greek police spokeswoman said.

"We had to evacuate an area of 30,000 people. Everything thank God went smoothly. Everybody, especially tourists, followed what

we ordered," she added.

After burning for six days, the fires continued to rage with no relief in sight.

UK outbound flights to Rhodes cancelled

Jet2 and holiday group TUI announced on Sunday they would be halting all incoming passenger flights to Rhodes.

"Until Tuesday, no more new tourists will be flown" to the island by the German group, TUI spokesperson Linda Jonczyk said, adding that empty planes were still being flown in to help evacuate the thousands of tourists affected.

The fires were considered under control on Thursday, but strong winds on Saturday drove the flames directly towards villages and holiday resorts.

Some of the evacuated, includ-

ing tourists, are being accommodated in other hotels, gyms and a conference center.

The area around the holiday resort of Lindos with its famous 4th Century Acropolis was particularly affected.

The weather remains hot in the Mediterranean country on Sunday, temperatures had already reached 38 C (100 F).

Planes, helicopters deployed to fight the blaze

Despite receiving reinforcements, including water bomber planes, firefighters have been struggling to control the blaze. The fire is being fanned by strong winds as the region suffers through a brutal heat wave.

More than 200 firefighters and 40 fire engines were operating on the ground, assisted by

three planes and five helicopters, fire department spokesperson Artopios said.

The team also included reinforcements from Slovakia. Israel, Jordan and Turkey have also sent reinforcements.

The wildfire had initially been confined to the island's mountainous central region, but winds, very high temperatures and dry conditions had helped it spread towards the eastern coast.

The fire department has warned of a high risk of further fires breaking out on Rhodes, as well as on the island of Evia and the eastern part of the Greek mainland, on Sunday.

While weather experts predict a brief respite from the heat wave on Monday, they have warned it will likely resume on Tuesday and could last until at least next Friday.

— Agencies

ITALY



Conference organised to address illegal migration from Mediterranean and Middle East countries

ROME: Italy on Sunday is hosting an international conference involving Mediterranean and Middle East states to address some of the causes of "irregular migration flows."

"The Conference aims to govern the migration phenomenon, combat human trafficking and promote economic development based on a new model of collaboration between states," the Italian government said in a statement.

Italy's government said that the conference had been "organized at the initiative" of Prime Minister Georgia Meloni, who promised during her 2022 election campaign to "stop the disembarkation" of migrants in the country.

The full list of participants attending the International Conference on Development and Migration in Rome is unknown, although far-right Prime Minister Georgia Meloni confirmed the attendance of Tunisian President Kais Saied.

The prime ministers of Egypt and Malta will also be attending.

Italy's migrant clampdown

Meloni's administration has tried to clamp down on humanitarian ships rescuing migrants in the Mediterranean by passing legislation compelling vessels to head to port immediately

following a rescue.

Italian authorities have also ordered rescue vessels to sail to ports hundreds of kilometers away.

Meloni has said the measures were taken to stop charity vessels from becoming "ferry boats" for migrants.

Tunisia offered funds

Italy along with the European Commission have increased engagement with Tunisia and have promised funding if the country — where many migrants embark — takes measures to curb movement from its territory.

Last week the EU signed a memorandum of understanding with Tunisia, a step towards a proposed a €900 million (\$971 million) economic aid package for the country, as well as another €150 million in immediate budget assistance and a further €105 million for border management and anti-smuggling activities.

According to figures from UN agency, the International Organization for Migration, there have been 109,688 arrivals in Europe so far in 2023, and there have been 2,153 deaths or instances of missing people.

During 2022 there were 189,620 arrivals and 2,965 deaths or instances of missing people.

— DW

DRIVER'S CARELESSNESS

17 killed and 35 injured as bus falls into pond in Bangladesh

DHAKA: At least 17 people, including three children, were killed and 35 others were injured after the bus plunged into the pond in Bangladesh's Chhatrakanda area under Jhalakathi Sadar Upazila on Saturday, according to media report.

The survivors blamed the driver's carelessness for the accident. They also said the bus was overloaded with passengers, which might have contributed to the accident. The Barishal-bound bus of "Bashar Smriti Paribahan", which was carrying over 60 passengers against its capacity of 52, left Pirojpur's Bhandaria around 9:00 am and fell into a roadside pond in Chhatrakanda on the Barishal-Khulna highway around 10:00 am.

"I boarded the bus from Bhandaria. The bus was overcrowded with passengers. Some of them were standing on the aisle. I saw the driver talking to the supervisor. Suddenly, the bus came off the road and crashed," said Md Momin, a survivor. "All the passengers were trapped inside the bus. As it was overloaded, the bus drowned instantly. I could somehow manage to scramble out of the bus," Momin added.

Barishal Divisional Commissioner Md Shawkat Ali confirmed that all 17 people died on the spot and the remaining injured were carried to the hospital, reported The Daily Star.

Most of the victims are residents of Pirojpur's Bhandaria upazila and Jhalkathi's Rajapur area, said police.

Bus accidents in Bangladesh have become common. According to the Road Safety Foundation (RSF), a total of 559 road accidents occurred only in June, the accidents claimed 562 people and 812 others sustained injuries. — ANI

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SPORTS

Australia retain Ashes after 4th Test washout

No play was possible on the final day of the match that was dominated by the hosts at Old Trafford



MANCHESTER: Australia have retained the Ashes on Sunday after escaping a fourth Test dominated by England with a rain-ruined draw. The visitors will leave Manchester on Monday morning with a 2-1 lead, and have the opportunity to clinch a first series win in England since 2001 at The Oval next week.

After only 30 overs of play were possible between showers on Saturday, Australia trailed by 61 runs in their second innings with five wickets remaining heading into the fifth day at Emirates Old Trafford.

But persistent showers meant that Sunday's play was abandoned without a ball bowled, with the draw finally confirmed at 5.24pm (local time).

Heavy overnight rain delayed the start on the fifth day, and planned inspections were then pushed back by persistent showers which swept across the ground. A start time of 1pm was announced during an early lunch break, but the rain returned almost immediately and then set in for the rest of the afternoon.

The rain only became heavier, with a substantial volume of standing water on the covers and puddles forming on the outfield.

By the time the umpires decided to call play off for the day, the vast majority of the sold-out crowd had gone home - with the Party Stand utterly deserted.

Pat Cummins shook hands with Joel Wilson and Nitin Menon, before telling his team-

mates that they could celebrate retaining the urn.

After the match was called off, England skipper Ben Stokes said: "Tough one to take, playing the cricket we played then to get on the wrong side of the weather.

"All part of the journey. We knew the task at hand which played into our hands. Do or die, bowling them out then scoring 570 at six an over, couldn't have done too much more. Lot of pride to play for."

Stokes spoke in the build-up to the Test about the prospect of the weather forecast forcing England to "push the game on even more" than usual and there was not much more they could have done.

They scored at 5.49 runs per over in their only innings, and took 15 wickets in 161.2 overs in the field.

SECOND TEST

India in command as WI stumble

PORT-OF-SPAIN: India's attack toiled away on a placid Port-of-Spain pitch, taking just four wickets on a rain-interrupted third day of the second Test on Saturday.

In reply to India's first innings 438, West Indies reached 229 for 5 at just over two runs an over at stumps, raising their hopes of a draw. Kraigg Brathwaite led West Indies' stubborn resistance, with 75 off 235 balls, before India's spinners and Mohammed Siraj exposed their lower-middle order.

Earlier on Saturday morning, India's debutant Mukesh Kumar first snagged West Indies' debutant Kirk McKenzie for 32 off 57 balls before rain forced an early lunch.

R Ashwin then breached the strong defences of Brathwaite in a 15-over shift post lunch.

Mukesh had McKenzie wafting behind for 32 off 57 balls for his first Test and 150th first-class wicket.

Ravindra Jadeja, too, applied pressure on West Indies' batters and ended Jermaine Blackwood's vigil from over the wicket.

Jadeja extracted turn and bounce from that angle, but the dismissal was made possible by a stunning one-handed catch from Ajinkya Rahane at slip.

Despite being blinded by wick-

etkeeper Ishan Kishan, who deflected the ball off his glove, Rahane held on to the ball in a sensational play.

The first session was anything but sensational. The wet weather allowed only 10.4 overs on the third morning in which West Indies scored 31 for the loss of McKenzie. After having started the day on 37, Brathwaite got to his 29th half-century - his second slowest in Test cricket - in the post-lunch session.

He tiptoed to the landmark off 170 balls. His slowest fifty had come off 174 balls against Bangladesh in North Sound last year.

Rain was a constant presence on a day where just 67 overs were bowled and a total of 143 runs were scored

Local lad Joshua Da Silva hung around with Blackwood in a 30-run partnership for the fifth wicket before Siraj castled him with his wobble-seam delivery that swerved in like a fast offcutter.

Jason Holder then got his eye in with a square-driven four off Siraj and gave Alick Athanaze decent company until stumps.

Brief scores [day three]: India 1st innings 438 vs West Indies 1st innings 229/5 (Brathwaite 75, Athanaze 37 n.o.; Jadeja 2-37, Mukesh Kumar 1-35). - **Agencies**

ACC MEN'S EMERGING TEAMS ASIA CUP

Pakistan A emerge champions

COLOMBO: Tayyab Tahir's swashbuckling century (108) and Sufiyan Mugeem's efforts with the ball (3/66) took Pakistan A across the finish line against India A in an encounter that was one-sided for the majority of the game in the final of the ACC Men's Emerging Teams Asia Cup 2023 on Sunday.

Pakistan A went on to lift the trophy with a thumping 128-run victory. The Indian team started to fall behind after losing their first wicket while chasing the elusive target. Arshad Iqbal dismissed Sai Sudharsan for 29 as India ended the powerplay with a score of 69/1.

Mohammad Wasim Jr handed India a second blow by getting the better of Nikin Jose. Skipper Yash

Dhull (39) and opener Abhishek Sharma (61) then built a stand but once Mugeem dismissed Abhishek, the team fell apart.

India's inability to build a partnership became one of their biggest downfall as each batting pair struggled to put up a decent stand, as India were bowled out for 224 in 40 overs.

Earlier in the innings, Pakistan openers Sahibzada Farhan (65) and Saim Ayub (59) got off to a steady start and put 50 runs on the scoreboard without losing any wickets, off 8.3 overs. They reached the 100-run mark without any loss of wickets. Manav Suthar, however, dismissing a well-set Saim Ayub. Farhan was run out be-

fore a mini collapse saw Pakistan reduced to 187/5 in 29 overs.

Mubasir Khan and Tayyab Tahir then drove the Pakistan innings ahead thereafter, helping Pakistan raise the 200-run mark in the 34th over. Tahir brought up his fifty off 42 balls and reached his century of just 66 balls in the 44th over, with a boundary off Suthar.

His innings ended in the 45th over, with Rajvardhan Hangargekar scalping him for 108.

Brief scores: Pakistan A 352/8 (Tayyab Tahir 108, Sahibzada Farhan 65, Saim Ayub 59; Riyan Parag 2/24, Rajvardhan Hangargekar 2/48) beat India A 224 in 40 overs (Abhishek Sharma 61, Yash Dhull 39; Sufiyan Mugeem 3-66). - **ANI**





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CENTRAL COOLING PLANT

The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation signed a strategic partnership agreement with Tabreed Oman. Tabreed will undertake the construction of the central cooling plant for Innovation Park Muscat and operate it following the highest technical and professional standards.

MARKET BUSINESS & FINANCE



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MSX INDEX ENDS LOWER

The MSX index closed at 4,800.52 points, down by 0.09 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.18 per cent at 475.68 points. Raysut Cement, up 2.96 per cent, was the top gainer while ASaffa Foods, down 2.21 per cent, was the top loser.

Oman's energy sector appears promising

The growing emphasis on renewable energy, energy efficiency, and alternative energy sources, such as nuclear power and hydrogen, is expected to reshape the country's energy landscape in the coming years

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman's energy sector is undergoing a significant transformation, driven by the government's focus on diversifying its energy sources and enhancing the efficiency of its infrastructure, according to a new report.

"The growing emphasis on renewable energy, energy efficiency,



and alternative energy sources, such as nuclear power and hydrogen, is expected to reshape the country's energy landscape in the coming years," the London-based EnergyPortal.eu said in its latest report titled 'Oman's Energy Market: Key Trends and Future Outlook'.

The report further said that addressing the challenges of investment, human capital development, and regulatory support will be crucial for the successful realisation of Oman's energy sector goals.

The country's energy sector is primarily driven by oil and gas production, which has been the backbone of its economy for decades, the report said.

The Omani government has been actively pursuing alternative energy sources, such as renewables, to ensure sustainable growth and

reduce the country's dependence on hydrocarbons. One of the most notable trends in Oman's energy market is the growing emphasis on renewable energy, the report said.

"The government has set ambitious targets for renewable energy generation, aiming to achieve 10 per cent of the country's total power generation capacity from renewables by 2025. This is a significant increase from the current levels, which stand at less than one percent. To achieve this target, Oman has been actively investing in solar and wind power projects, with several large-scale projects currently under development," the report further added.

For instance, the 500 MW Ibri II Solar Independent Power Project (IPP) is set to become the largest utility-scale solar power plant in

Oman upon completion in 2022. Additionally, the 50MW Dhofar Wind Farm, the first utility-scale wind farm in the country, began operations in 2020, marking a significant milestone in Oman's renewable energy journey. These projects, along with several others in the pipeline, highlight the government's commitment to expanding the country's renewable energy portfolio.

The report further said that another key trend shaping Oman's energy market is the increasing focus on energy efficiency and conservation. The government has been implementing various initiatives to promote energy efficiency, such as the adoption of energy-efficient building codes and the introduction of energy performance labels for electrical appliances. Moreover, Oman has been investing in upgrading its existing power infrastructure to reduce transmission and distribution losses, thereby enhancing the overall efficiency of the energy sector.

In addition to renewables and energy efficiency, Oman has also been exploring the potential of other alternative energy sources, such as nuclear power and hydrogen. In 2019, the country signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the United States to cooperate on the peaceful use of nuclear energy, signalling its interest in exploring nuclear power as a potential energy source.

AGREEMENTS



OQGN signs financing facilities worth \$1.2 billion

Times News Service

MUSCAT: OQ Gas Networks (OQGN), the exclusive operator of the natural gas transportation network in Oman, has signed three complex financing agreements with local and regional banks for a total commitment of \$1.2 billion. Together, this financing is considered the largest syndicate of Islamic financing in the Sultanate of Oman, providing the company with access to capital in dual currencies to support its ongoing business activities and refinancing requirements.

In June 2023, OQGN concluded a complex multi-currency, multi-structure transaction with 16 local and regional banks. The agreed terms included Sharia-compliant financing rules. This sets a positive precedence for future transactions. The transaction was oversubscribed, demonstrating the strength of the relationship between OQ and its subsidiaries with banks. It also demonstrated the trust of banks in the robustness of OQ and OQGN's business models.

Meethaq Islamic Banking, Bank Muscat, Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank and Commercial Bank of Dubai acted as mandated

lead arrangers and book-runners in this transaction. In addition, the role of lead arrangers and book runners were performed by Maisarah Islamic Banking, Muzn Islamic Banking, Oman Arab Bank, First Abu Dhabi Bank, Arab Banking Corporation and National Bank of Oman.

OQGN holds a natural monopoly over critical gas transportation infrastructure in Oman as the exclusive owner and operator of the natural gas transportation network. OQGN aims to champion the management and development of energy infrastructure through innovative and sustainable solutions. OQGN has more than 450 talents that are responsible for overseeing the smooth running of more than 4,030km of pipeline network. OQGN prides itself on its operational excellence and has delivered 99.99+% gas availability over the last 10 years and recorded no gas supply interruptions in 2022.

OQGN's health and safety record is also a testament to its commitment to global standards. Sustainable practices are essential to our operations, and our work is proudly aligned with Oman Vision 2040 to deliver cleaner, more sustainable energy.

FOR FINANCE AND ACCOUNTING GRADUATES

OIA launches employment and development programme

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman Investment Authority (OIA) and its companies put in continuous efforts to develop Omani talents and close the gap between the labour market's needs and qualified Omani professionals.

In that vein, OIA, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Higher Education institu-

tions in Oman, launched a new employment and development programme under the name 'Mu'tamad.' The programme focuses on recruiting and developing Omani graduates in finance and accounting disciplines to qualify them for the Chartered Certified Accountants Certificate (ACCA).

Mu'tamad seeks to onboard 20-25 graduates and offers them the

opportunity to obtain the ACCA within three years of their recruitment. This career development journey includes tiered educational programmes in addition to technical and behavioural training in line with international standards. The programme will help create a pool of local professionals who can lead the financial and accounting sectors in the future. To achieve this, the pro-

gramme will enhance their skills in various financial and administrative fields, build their capabilities, develop their knowledge, instil positive values, and increase their competitiveness locally and internationally.

Commenting on the launch, Ayad Al Balushi, Assistant Deputy President for Finance and Assurance at OIA, said that the new Mu'tamad programme comes as part of a se-

ries of other training programs initiated by OIA, such as Nomou and Ea'dad programmes that have already trained many national talents most of whom were later employed at various government units and companies. He further noted that such programmes reflect OIA's commitment to training national talents, qualifying them, developing their capabilities, and preparing

them for the labour market.

He added that supporting national competencies and encouraging them to obtain professional certificates will also help fill the need for these specialised disciplines. It will also enhance the companies' overall finance and accounting performance, increase productivity, create job opportunities for job seekers and improve Omanisation.



Announcement



The Tax Authority would like to draw the attention of taxpayers who are subject to Excise Tax to submit their returns for the second quarter of 2023, according to the forms prepared for this purpose through Tax Authority's Portal: www.taxoman.gov.om not later than **July 30, 2023**

We hope everyone will abide and commit to the deadline of submitting.



Announcement



The Tax Authority would like to draw the attention of taxpayers who are subject to VAT to submit their returns for the second quarter of 2023, according to the forms prepared for this purpose through Tax Authority's Portal www.taxoman.gov.om not later than **July 30, 2023**

We hope everyone will abide and commit to the deadline of sumbitting.

MARKET

MSX index ends lower

Raysut Cement, up 2.96 per cent, was the top gainer while A'Saffa Foods, down 2.21 per cent, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,800.52 points, down by 0.09 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.18 per cent at 475.68 points. Raysut Cement, up 2.96 per cent, was the top gainer while A'Saffa Foods, down 2.21 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of Oman REIT Fund were the most active in terms of the number of shares traded while Galfar Engineering were the most active in terms of turnover. A total number of 269 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating a turnover of OMR2.2 million, with more than 11.81 million shares changing hands. Out of 37 traded securities, 6 advanced, 15 declined, and 16 remained unchanged. At the session close, domestic investors were net sellers for OMR142,000 while foreign investors were net buyers for OMR92,000, followed by GCC &

Arab investors for OMR50,000 worth of shares. Financial Index closed at 7,849.79 points, down 0.04 per cent. Prices of Ahli Bank were up by 1.52 per cent respectively. Prices of Oman United Insurance, Muscat Finance, Global Financial Investments, Oman Arab Bank, and Bank Muscat were up by 1.89 per cent, 1.75 per cent, 1.61 per cent, 0.70 per cent, and 0.36 per cent respectively. Industrial Index closed at 6,113.90 points, down 0.25 per cent. Prices of Raysut Cement, Gulf Mushroom Products, and Voltamp Energy were up by 2.96 per cent, 1.79 per cent, and 0.83 per cent respectively. Prices of A'Saffa Foods, Galfar Engineering, and Oman Chromite were up by 2.21 per cent, 1.77 per cent, and 1.08 per cent respectively. Services Index was down by 0.01 per cent before closing at 1,693.39 points. — United Securities

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	4,805.07	4,796.11	4,800.52	4,805.07	-4.55	-0.09
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,857.01	7,837.74	7,849.79	7,853.00	-3.20	-0.04
Industry Index	6,141.32	6,113.90	6,113.90	6,129.12	-15.22	-0.25
Services Index	1,693.93	1,690.46	1,693.39	1,693.50	-0.11	-0.01
MSX Shariah Index	476.54	475.10	475.68	476.54	-0.86	-0.18
MSX TR INDEX	6,319.31	6,307.53	6,313.33	6,319.31	-5.99	-0.09
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,573.44	8,552.42	8,565.57	8,569.06	-3.50	-0.04
SERVICES TR IDX	1,862.18	1,858.36	1,861.58	1,861.70	-0.12	-0.01
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	6,560.46	6,531.16	6,531.16	6,547.43	-16.26	-0.25

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
11,813,432	2,204,224	269	23,900,789,281	6	15	16	37

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR SUNDAY, JULY 23

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PRE VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET																
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	1,665	498	1	0.299	0.299	0.299	0.299	0.299	0.000	0.000	0.299	0.285	0.299	0.100	486,157,960
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	2,000	508	1	0.254	0.254	0.254	0.254	0.254	0.000	0.000	0.254	0.000	0.254	0.100	55,880,000
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	7,500	1,800	3	0.240	0.240	0.240	0.240	0.240	0.000	0.000	0.240	0.235	0.240	0.100	14,689,026
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	115,807	7,014	8	0.061	0.061	0.060	0.061	0.061	0.000	0.000	0.061	0.061	0.061	0.100	21,723,765
OM0000002440	AL SHARIQA INVESTMENT HO	4,634	338	2	0.073	0.073	0.073	0.073	0.073	0.000	0.000	0.073	0.073	0.080	0.100	6,570,000
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	300,500	31,553	9	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.000	0.000	0.105	0.104	0.115	0.100	481,956,540
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	26,000	2,236	2	0.086	0.086	0.086	0.086	0.086	0.000	0.000	0.086	0.086	0.089	0.100	15,050,000
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	394,492	110,070	37	0.280	0.280	0.278	0.279	0.280	-0.001	-0.357	0.279	0.279	0.279	0.100	1,002,094,284,780
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	17,000	16,907	8	0.990	0.998	0.990	0.995	0.999	-0.004	-0.400	0.995	0.995	0.995	0.100	746,250,000
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	189,033	15,894	10	0.085	0.085	0.084	0.084	0.085	-0.001	-1.176	0.084	0.084	0.086	0.100	16,769,390
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO	19,740	1,204	4	0.061	0.061	0.061	0.061	0.062	-0.001	-1.613	0.061	0.061	0.062	0.100	12,200,000
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	46,200	17,371	11	0.379	0.379	0.373	0.373	0.380	-0.007	-1.842	0.373	0.370	0.379	0.100	242,803,198
OM0000001087	OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	19,000	4,940	4	0.260	0.260	0.260	0.260	0.265	-0.005	-1.887	0.260	0.259	0.260	0.100	26,000,000
Total	13	1,143,571	210,332	100												
Parallel Market																
OM0000001418	RAYSUT CEMENT	100	17	1	0.174	0.174	0.174	0.174	0.169	0.005	2.959	0.174	0.170	0.173	0.100	34,800,000
OM0000004735	SEMBICORP SALALAH	125,000	12,264	3	0.098	0.100	0.098	0.100	0.098	0.002	2.041	0.100	0.095	0.102	0.100	95,457,195
OM0000002287	GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS	7,500	1,710	2	0.228	0.228	0.228	0.228	0.224	0.004	1.786	0.228	0.224	0.238	0.100	10,434,602
OM0000002200	AHLI BANK	398,618	79,663	11	0.198	0.200	0.198	0.200	0.197	0.003	1.523	0.200	0.200	0.200	0.100	389,931,493
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	166,810	11,097	14	0.066	0.067	0.066	0.067	0.066	0.001	1.515	0.067	0.066	0.067	0.100	97,994,298
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	2,382	307	2	0.130	0.130	0.121	0.121	0.120	0.001	0.833	0.121	0.121	0.130	0.100	9,849,733
OM0000001095	DHOFAR INSURANCE	3,670	804	1	0.219	0.219	0.219	0.219	0.219	0.000	0.000	0.219	0.000	0.000	0.100	23,907,106
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	2,000	172	1	0.086	0.086	0.086	0.086	0.086	0.000	0.000	0.086	0.082	0.086	0.100	17,716,000
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	5,000	225	2	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.000	0.000	0.045	0.042	0.045	0.100	3,825,000
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	51,565	4,899	4	0.095	0.095	0.095	0.095	0.095	0.000	0.000	0.095	0.095	0.099	0.100	212,510,538
OM0000004925	ALBATHINAH POWER	500	15	1	0.029	0.029	0.029	0.029	0.029	0.000	0.000	0.029	0.027	0.029	0.100	19,571,735
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	1,100	31	2	0.028	0.029	0.028	0.029	0.029	0.000	0.000	0.029	0.027	0.029	0.100	20,717,784
OM0000007084	MUSCAT CITY DESALINATION	45,481	4,149	6	0.092	0.092	0.091	0.091	0.091	0.000	0.000	0.091	0.090	0.095	0.100	14,155,086
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	332,342	100,443	38	0.302	0.304	0.302	0.303	0.304	-0.001	-0.329	0.304	0.303	0.304	0.100	233,370,600
OM0000005260	OMAN ARAB BANK	51,890	7,368	4	0.142	0.142	0.142	0.142	0.143	-0.001	-0.699	0.142	0.141	0.142	0.100	137,056,200
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	5,285,087	496,798	9	0.094	0.094	0.093	0.093	0.094	-0.001	-1.064	0.093	0.089	0.100	43,820,334	
OM0000001020	OMAN CHROMITE	8,300	37,650	13	4.500	4.600	4.500	4.600	4.650	-0.050	-1.075	4.600	4.600	4.600	1.000	13,800,000
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	7,000	392	1	0.056	0.056	0.056	0.056	0.057	-0.001	-1.754	0.056	0.056	0.057	0.100	17,200,194
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	3,275,348	555,600	39	0.170	0.170	0.167	0.167	0.170	-0.003	-1.765	0.167	0.166	0.167	0.100	33,898,736
OM0000002804	A'SAFFA FOODS	6,410	1,987	2	0.310	0.310	0.310	0.310	0.317	-0.007	-2.208	0.310	0.310	0.316	0.100	37,200,000
Total	20	9,776,103	1,315,590	156												

SUSTAINABLE COOLING PLANT



Pact inked to build central cooling plant for Innovation Park Muscat

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation signed a strategic partnership agreement with Tabreed Oman (the leading operator of sustainable district cooling plants in the Sultanate of Oman). According to this agreement, Tabreed Oman will undertake the construction of the central

cooling plant for Innovation Park Muscat and operate it following the highest technical and professional standards. The sustainable cooling plant will be located within Innovation Park Muscat, with a total land area of 1,500 square metres. It will provide the necessary cooling infrastructure for a wide variety

of existing and future buildings, with a total concession cooling capacity of 10,000 Refrigeration Tonnes (RT). The agreement was signed by Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim Al Mahrouqi, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation and Eng. Abdullah Said Al Hinai, CEO of Tabreed Oman. -OMA

MEETING

G20 bloc fails to reach agreement on phasing down fossil fuels

BAMBOLIM: The Group of 20 (G20) major economies meeting in India failed on Saturday to reach a consensus on phasing down fossil fuels following objections by some producer nations. Scientists and campaigners are exasperated by international bodies' foot-dragging on action to curb global warming even as extreme weather from China to the United States underlines the climate crisis facing the world, Reuters reported. The G20 member countries together account for over three-quarters of global emissions and gross domestic product, and a cumulative effort by the group to decarbonise is crucial in the global fight against climate change. However, disagreements including the intended tripling of renewable energy capacities by 2030 resulted in officials issuing an outcome statement and a chair summary instead of a joint communique at the end of their four-



day meeting in Bambolim, in the Indian coastal state of Goa. A joint communique is issued when there is complete agreement between member nations on all issues. "We had a complete agreement on 22 out of 29 paragraphs, and seven paragraphs constitute the Chair summary," Indian Power Minister R.K. Singh said. Sections urging developed countries to deliver on the goal of jointly mobilising \$100 billion per

year for climate action in developing economies from 2020-2025, and a description of the war in Ukraine, also eluded consensus. Fossil fuel use became a lightning rod in day-long discussions, but officials failed to reach a consensus over curbing "unabated" use and argued over the language to describe the pathway to cut emissions, two sources familiar with the matter said. However, the chair statement released on Saturday evening included concerns from some member nations which were missing in the Friday draft, noting that "others had different views on the matter that abatement and removal technologies will address such concerns". Singh, in a press briefing after the conference, said some countries wanted to use carbon capture instead of a phase-down of fossil fuels. He did not name the countries. -BNA

ROUNDTABLE

OAB addresses industry challenges and opportunities in banking sector

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman Arab Bank (OAB) took part in roundtable talks on shaping the future of the financial and banking industry with representatives of the National Programme for Financial Sustainability and Financial Sector Development (Estidamah), alongside other industry experts from Alizz Islamic Bank (AIB) and National Bank of Oman (NBO). The discussions addressed the opportunities and challenges in the banking sector and highlighted how Estidamah can play a role in catalysing alignment, and creating opportunities for growth and development. Discussions covered supporting SMEs, innovation in the banking sector, growing the fintech ecosystem, financial literacy, talent management and green financing. Sulaiman Al Harthi, CEO of Oman Arab Bank, said: "We are confident that our discussions with Estidamah will help provide a crucial blueprint for the development of the industry, and our counterparts in the banking sector. OAB's commitment to Oman's socioeconomic growth agenda and Vision 2040 remains steadfast as we continue harnessing innovation to enhance our product offerings and deliver an overall superior banking experience. Understanding the key role, the SME sector is



playing, we have also introduced many initiatives and solutions tailored for them, starting with workshops and training programmes to credit facilities and exclusive offers. In addition, we financed several strategic green projects and continue to develop local talent through various programmes designed for the local market." Ali Al Maani, General Manager of Alizz Islamic Bank, said: "Considering the banking sector's crucial role as a fundamental pillar of the Sultanate's economic progress, these dialogues carry immense significance. They provide a platform for sharing valuable banking experiences from diverse sectors, foster a deeper understanding, and charter a path for the future." Abdullah Al Hinai, CEO of National Bank of Oman said, "I am delighted to have participated in this roundtable discussion, and

I thank Oman Arab Bank for the invitation. One of the objectives of Estidamah is to enhance the readiness of the financial sector and transform it into a key enabler in achieving the goals of Oman Vision 2040. At the National Bank of Oman, we are committed to supporting Estidamah to promote the economy as a whole and the financial sector in particular." Mahmood Al Aweini, Director of Estidamah stressed the importance of the engagement and co-ordination between government units and private sector entities in the Sultanate of Oman to achieve the ambitious goals set for the financial sector. Al Aweini further explained, "Estidamah will lead the creation of an advanced green financing framework as well as an attractive innovation hub for financial technology solutions. The ultimate goal is to nurture investment opportunities for interna-

tional and local entrepreneurs." He further emphasised the importance of collaborating between the banking sector and Estidamah, to enhance the competitive advantages of the Sultanate of Oman and achieve the economic and social goals outlined in Oman Vision 2040. Established in November 2022, Estidamah aims to study the current situation of the financial sector, diagnose the most important challenges associated with it, prepare for workshops and specialised laboratories to set strategic goals and propose solutions, initiatives and projects to be implemented. The programme seeks to strengthen sustainable financing opportunities for the economic sectors prioritised by Oman Vision 2040, empowering the private sector to assume a prominent position in economic development.

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RESEARCHERS DISCOVER HOW LACK OF SLEEP REDUCES COGNITIVE BENEFITS OF EXERCISE

The study conducted by UCL researchers and findings published in The Lancet Healthy Longevity, looked at cognitive function over 10 years in 8,958 people aged 50 and over in England. The study looked at how different combinations of sleep and physical exercise habits affected people's cognitive performance over time. They discovered that persons who were more physically active yet slept for shorter periods of time - fewer than six hours on average - had quicker cognitive loss overall, implying that their cognitive ability was equal to peers who conducted less physical activity after ten years.

Lead author Dr Mikaela Bloomberg (UCL Institute of Epidemiology & Health Care) said: "Our study suggests that getting sufficient sleep may be required for us to get the full cognitive benefits of physical activity. It shows how important it is to consider sleep and physical activity together when thinking about cognitive health.

"Previous studies examining how sleep and physical activity might combine to affect cognitive function have primarily been cross-sectional - only focusing on a snapshot in time - and we were surprised that regular physical activity may not always be sufficient to counter the long-term effects of lack of sleep on cognitive health."

The study found, in line with previous research, that sleeping between six and eight hours per night and higher levels of physi-

cal activity were linked to better cognitive function.

Those who were more physically active also had better cognitive function regardless of how long they slept at the start of the study. This changed over the 10-year period, with more physically active short sleepers (less than six hours) experiencing more rapid cognitive decline.

This rapid decline was true for those in their 50s and 60s in this group, but for older participants (aged 70 and over) the cognitive benefits of exercise appeared to be maintained, despite short sleep.

Co-author Professor Andrew Steptoe (UCL Institute of Epidemiology & Health Care) said: "It is important to identify the factors that can protect cognitive function in middle and later life as they can serve to prolong our cognitively healthy years and, for some people, delay a dementia diagnosis.

"The World Health Organisation already identifies physical activity as a way to maintain cognitive function, but interventions should also consider sleep habits to maximise long-term benefits for cognitive health."

For the study, the researchers used data from the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA), a nationally representative cohort study of the English population. Participants were asked how long they slept on an average weeknight and were split into three sleep groups: short (less than six hours), opti-

mal (six to eight hours) and long (greater than eight hours).

They were also given a score based on the frequency and intensity of self-reported physical activity and divided into two groups: more physically active (the top third of scorers) and less physically active (the other two thirds).

Cognitive function was assessed on the basis of an episodic memory test (asking participants to recall a 10-word list, both immediately and after a delay) and a verbal fluency test (asking participants to name as many animals as they can in a minute).

The researchers adjusted for a number of confounding factors, such as participants having done the same cognitive test before and therefore being likely to perform better.

They also excluded people with self-reported dementia diagnoses and those whose test scores indicated some cognitive impairment, so that behaviour changes linked to preclinical Alzheimer's disease (such as sleep disturbance) did not inadvertently affect the results.

In terms of study limitations, the researchers relied on participants self-reporting their sleep duration and physical activity.

The next steps, the researchers said, may be to repeat the results in more diverse study populations, examine more cognitive domains and more domains of sleep quality, and use objective measures such as a wearable physical activity tracker. -ANI

A group of researchers discovered that regular physical exercise may protect against cognitive deterioration as one ages, but this protective effect may be diminished in persons who do not get enough sleep

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SPORTS

Verstappen in seventh heaven

Dutchman clinches his seventh win in a row and ninth overall for the season as Red Bull celebrates record-breaking 12th consecutive triumph

HUNGARORING: Max Verstappen's cruised to victory at the Hungarian Grand Prix to set a wins record for his Red Bull team on Sunday. The Dutchman's seventh victory in a row and ninth of the season was Red Bull's 12th consecutive win, dating back to the final race of 2022 in Abu Dhabi. The achievement broke the record of 11 straight wins set by McLaren with Ayrton Senna and Alain Prost in 1988. McLaren's Lando Norris fended off a threat from Red Bull's Sergio Perez to take second place. Lewis Hamilton, who had started from pole position, closed on Perez in the final laps but was not able to attempt an overtake and had to set-



tle for fourth. Verstappen passed pole-sitting Mercedes rival Hamilton at the start before settling into the lead and pulling clear of the chasing pack with aplomb, chalking up a lights-to-flag win that puts further distance between himself and team-mate Perez in the drivers' standings. Verstappen took the chequered flag comfortably clear of Norris, who dropped behind fellow McLaren driver Oscar Piastri early on but regained the place at the first round of pit stops, while Perez - one of only two drivers, along with George Russell, to go long in the first stint on hard tyres - rose from ninth to third with another strong recovery drive. Hamilton's hopes of turning his 104th pole into a 104th win were dashed at the start when he lost out to Verstappen, Piastri and Norris in quick succession, before that was compounded when he fell victim to Perez's alternate strategy, but the seven-time champion at least salvaged fourth via a late move on the Australian rookie Piastri. Charles Leclerc crossed the line in sixth position but dropped behind the other Mercedes of Russell after the chequered flag when a five-second penalty for speeding in the pit lane was applied, with Ferrari team-mate Carlos Sainz coming home eighth. Aston Martin ended an any-

mous race weekend with a minor double points finish, Fernando Alonso the last driver to stay on the same lap as winner Verstappen in ninth and team-mate Stroll finishing one tour down in 10th to round out the points. Fresh from their recent points-scoring exploits, Alex Albon and Williams had to settle for 11th this time out, followed by the lead Alfa Romeo of Valtteri Bottas in 12th after the Hinwil team's high-flying qualifying display turned sour on race day through incidents and a general lack of pace. Indeed, Zhou Guanyu's fifth-place starting position became a lowly 16th on race day after he tried to make up for a slow getaway and ran into F1 returnee Daniel Ricciardo at the start, triggering a four-car collision that led to both Alpine drivers retiring from proceedings once again. Ricciardo recovered to take 13th in his first race back since the 2022 season finale in Abu Dhabi, ahead of Haas driver Nico Hulkenberg, AlphaTauri team-mate Yuki Tsunoda, the aforementioned Zhou and final finisher Kevin Magnussen. Williams rookie Logan Sargeant pulled into the pits after a late spin, with Esteban Ocon and Pierre Gasly doing the same in the early stages due to the significant damage their cars picked up in the chaos sparked by Zhou. - Agencies

FIFA WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

Netherlands edge Portugal; Sweden down South Africa

DUNEDIN: Stefanie van der Gragt's first-half goal gave the Netherlands a 1-0 victory over FIFA Women's World Cup debutants Portugal in a Group E match in the New Zealand city of Dunedin on Sunday. Van der Gragt's powerful header was ruled out by referee Kateryna Monzul before the Video Assistant Referee (VAR) encouraged her to review her decision. The win moved the Netherlands second in Group E, below reigning world champions USA on goal difference. Despite coming under pressure from a high-pressing Portugal early on, it was the Netherlands with the first opportunity as Lineth Beerensteyn's sliding strike was deflected off the boot of Carole Costa and out for a corner. That corner proved to be the game's decisive moment as it was whipped in by Netherlands captain Sherida Spitse to the back post, where Van der Gragt towered over Tatiana Pinto to head the ball down across goal and into the bottom right-hand corner. Elsewhere in a Group G match on Sunday, Sweden's Amanda Ilestedt scored a last-minute winner as Sweden beat South Africa 2-1 in Wellington, New Zealand. South Africa opened the scoring with a 48th-minute goal from Hildah Magaia, but it was cancelled out by a deflected Frida Rolfo effort before Ilestedt's decisive header. Sweden top Group G, with Argentina and Italy to meet on Monday. And in a match in Group F played in the Australian city of Sydney, Jamaica, ranked 43rd in the world, held on with only 10 players to grab a goalless draw against France, fifth in the rankings. It is the first ever time Jamaica have not lost a World Cup match. - Agencies



NZ players evacuate hotel after fire

AUCKLAND: It's been an eventful few days for New Zealand's players at the FIFA Women's World Cup. The Football Ferns woke to the news of a deadly shooting in Auckland hours before the start of the tournament, secured a historic first win on the global stage - with many of their players overcome with emotion at full-time - before being forced to evacuate the team hotel after a suspected arson attack. The co-hosts were moved to a separate location in New Zealand's largest city on Saturday night before finally being allowed to return to the hotel. **Devastating** "It was devastating and it definitely threw a spanner in the works for us," said Leicester City's Bott about the fire. "The fire does not appear to have been targeted at the team, FIFA or the FIFA Women's World Cup in general," a statement issued by New Zealand Football read. It said a 34-year-old has been charged with burglary and arson, while no players or staff suffered any ill effects. - Agencies

PRE-SEASON FRIENDLIES

Fernandes named Man United captain

NEW JERSEY: Bruno Fernandes has vowed not to change his ways after being appointed as Manchester United's permanent captain. Fernandes led United for the first time since taking over from Harry Maguire in Saturday's pre-season 2-0 win over Arsenal in New Jersey, USA. Former United captain Gary Neville called Fernandes "a disgrace" for his behaviour in the 7-0 defeat by Liverpool in March. "The manager liked my discipline and passion and everything I give," midfielder Fernandes said. Erik ten Hag excused Fernandes for his petulant behaviour against Liverpool, with Fernandes saying before the FA Cup final in June that he felt he owed the Dutchman for standing by him. However, Fernandes is adamant he will not change, even if that means on occasion he gets it wrong. "The manager chose me because of what I was doing last season and the way he worked with me," the Portugal international said. "I don't see why I should change. You have to be as natural as you can. "Sometimes I can be wrong and it is not the best way, but there are big players in the dressing room. Everything I say to them is because I think they can do big things." Fernandes said Ten Hag gave him no advance warning of his decision to name him as Maguire's successor. "My feeling was that I would like it to be me, but I didn't hear anything," Fernandes said. "The manager wanted to tell the team together." United gained bragging rights over rivals Arsenal as first-half goals from Fernandes and Jadon Sancho sealed a 2-0 friendly win at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey. The match was played in front of a stadium soccer record crowd of 82,262.



Chelsea 4-3 Brighton Chelsea manager Mauricio Pochettino said that new striker Nicolas Jackson will need "time to adapt" to the Premier League after an impressive performance in their pre-season 4-3 win over Brighton in Philadelphia, USA on Saturday. The 22-year-old scored once and registered two assists as the Blues came from behind to beat Brighton 4-3. The Senegal international joined Chelsea from Villarreal in June. Christopher Nkunku cancelled out Danny Welbeck's early strike for Brighton in Philadelphia, before Chelsea scored three goals in 11 minutes from Mykhailo Mudryk, Conor Gallagher and Jackson. Brighton defender Jan Paul van Hecke was sent off for a second bookable offence in the 60th minute, but the 10 men rallied. A penalty from Joao Pedro and an 89th-minute strike from Deniz Undav ensured Brighton pushed the Blues all the way. - Agencies

FILIPINO BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

Dominos clinch OPBL B Division title

MUSCAT: Dominos Pizza/Elevate side claimed an unassailable 2-0 lead against Team Excellence in the three-match championship series to emerge Oman Philippines Basketball League (OPBL) B Division champions at the Oman Club recently. In the second match series, Dominos Pizza/Elevate won 78-70 to complete a 2-0 rout, having won the opener 85-62 to defend their title. Dominos' Karl Anthony Lorion was named the best player of the opening match. However, Team Excellence put up a good fight in the next game but eventually lost 78-70 to Dominos. Lagundi, Torrefalma, Ellamil, Dayag, DePaz and Acob had a good game for Team Excellence as they



took a 42-30 lead at the halfway stage. Team Excellence led 70-65 till the dying stages and were looking to take the series into decider.

However, Dominos' Austin Parole scored consecutive crucial baskets to stage a fightback and supported by Ronnie Hernando, Karl Lorion, Mark Israel, and

tournament MVP Joshua Alcarde, they won 78-70. It was two successive titles for Dominos, who are coached by Allan Minoza. The coach also won

back-to-back best coach awards. The tournament was organised by OPBL, supported by Hussain Al Rasbi, Alain and Ruby Garcia of Alasm New LLC.

PERMANENT TRANSFER

United's Telles joins Al Nassr in Saudi Pro League

LONDON: Brazil defender Alex Telles has left Manchester United to join Al Nassr in a permanent transfer. Telles, 30, is set for a reunion with former United teammate Cristiano Ronaldo, who signed for the Saudi Pro League side in January. Telles made 50 appearances for United at left-back having signed from Porto in 2020, but spent last season on loan at Sevilla. Telles is the latest Premier League player to make the switch, following players such as Chelsea's N'Golo Kante and Liverpool striker Roberto Firmino. The Brazilian has 12 international caps and made two appearances at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar. - Agencies

IN PICTURES



Severe flood hits eastern province of Canada
A flooded section of Highway 14 is seen near Three Mile Plains in Hants County, Nova Scotia, Canada. A province-wide state of emergency was declared in Nova Scotia in response to severe flooding across the eastern province of Canada.

Xinhua



Ugandan high school launches Chinese Club in Luwero
Students dance during the launch ceremony of Chinese Club at Ndejje Senior Secondary School in Luwero, Uganda. The renowned Ugandan high school has launched a Chinese Club with an aim of popularising Mandarin and culture, where over 700 of its students are currently studying the Chinese language as one of their main courses.

Xinhua



Scenery of Baiyangyu section of Great Wall in Qian'an of N China's Hebei
This aerial picture shows the scenery of the Baiyangyu section of the Great Wall in Qian'an City of north China's Hebei Province.

Xinhua



Annual celebration of ethnic festival 'Liuyueliu' in Jianhe County
This aerial picture shows people taking part in activities to celebrate 'Liuyueliu', an ethnic festival, in Jianhe County of Qiandongnan Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture, southwest China's Guizhou Province.

xinhua



Neil Nitin Mukesh during the 100th birth anniversary of his grandfather Mukesh
Bollywood actor Neil Nitin Mukesh along with his family members pose for a group photo during the 100th birth anniversary of his grandfather and legendary singer Mukesh, in Mumbai.

ANI Photo



Louis Koo honoured with Extraordinary Star Asia Award in New York
Actor Louis Koo poses for a group photo with audience at an awarding ceremony in New York, the United States. Louis Koo, one of Hong Kong's biggest stars, was recently honoured with the prestigious Extraordinary Star Asia Award at the New York Asian Film Festival.

xinhua

ROUND-UP

All-new Geely Emgrand sets trend in convenience features

The latest addition to the Geely range is the visually attractive, 4th generation all-new Emgrand, a stylish sedan designed to impress



MUSCAT: The fastest-growing automotive brand in the world, Geely's lineup of exceptional vehicles is designed to offer the ultimate driving experience, combining cutting-edge technology,

advanced safety features, unparalleled comfort, bold styling, high-quality, superior performance and smart interiors.

The latest addition to the Geely range is the visually attractive, 4th

generation all-new Emgrand, a stylish sedan designed to impress. Made in Geely's advanced Changxing (an advanced 5G smart) factory using the B-segment Modular Architecture (BMA), it has been

designed to exceed the criteria for 5-star NCAP safety ratings. The sedan is equipped with a lightweight 1.5-litre engine and 8CVT transmission that delivers excellent performance, fuel efficiency

and features a sleek and aerodynamic design. It offers a maximum power of 101HP and high rotational torque of 142Nm, for smooth and responsive acceleration.

The elegant exterior design comes with Geely's latest 'Energy Pulse' radiator grille flanked by projector LED headlamps and LED daytime running lights. The skyline rhythmic tail lights comprise 190 LEDs. The 17-inch alloy wheels ensure a comfortable ride while the sunroof adds style to make that strong impression.

The plush interiors of the All-New Geely Emgrand are second to none with nearly 1.5m transverse space. The 6-way electric adjustment ensures the driver feels comfortable in his seat. Another value addition is the Remote Key Start/Stop Engine. Added to this are the 8" central media screen and 12.3" HD Digital Instrument, the auto

folding rearview mirror and the Cruise Control system.

The All-New Emgrand has advanced safety and technical features such as ABS with EBD, Electronic Stability Program, Traction Control, Hill Hold Control, electric parking brake with auto hold, six SRS airbags, Intelligent Seating Monitoring System and the BOSCH 9.3 ESP System that enable a safe ride. It comes with Normal/Sport/ECO driving modes.

In Oman, Geely vehicles are brought to you by Towell Auto Centre. With the introduction of this new model, Geely continues to lead the way in the automotive industry with its innovative designs, customer satisfaction, and commitment to quality. Omani drivers can be confident that they will get the very best in performance, comfort, and safety when they choose a Geely vehicle.

VEHICLE RENTAL COMPANY

MHD Leasing opens new branch at Muscat International Airport



MUSCAT: MHD Leasing, Oman's leading vehicle rental company, has opened a new branch at Muscat airport. This expansion aims to provide people with a seamless and convenient car rental experience as soon as they arrive in Muscat.

With a diverse fleet ranging from affordable sedans to high-end luxury vehicles, MHD Leasing ensures customers can find the perfect car to match their preferences and travel requirements. The company also prioritises the safety of its customers and has implemented rigorous cleaning and sanitisation protocols to ensure the cleanliness of its vehicles.

The new airport branch of MHD Leasing provides customers with a convenient and quick pick-up and drop-off service. The

rental counter is easily accessible upon arrival, and the vehicles are parked nearby. Customers can choose from a variety of flexible rental options, including short-term and long-term rentals. The company's friendly and knowledgeable staff are committed to providing excellent customer service throughout the rental process, from reservation to return, ensuring a seamless rental experience.

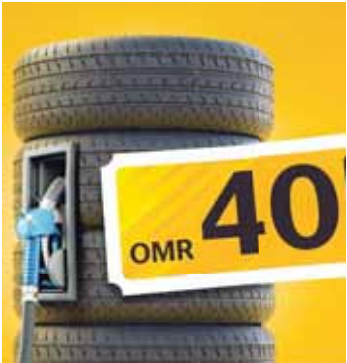
"Our expansion to the airport is a testament to our commitment to providing convenient, quality, and affordable vehicle rental services," said Mohsin Hani Al Bahrani, CEO of MHDACERE. "We look forward to being an easily accessible option for tourists and residents, and promoting tourism for Oman with our exceptional service and diverse fleet."

PROMOTION

Continental Tyres unveils exciting campaign

MUSCAT: Customers looking to change their tyres can now benefit with Continental tyres' latest campaign. Purchase four new Continental tyres and get OMR40 fuel voucher. The campaign is valid till August 17 (Conditions apply. Please visit Saud Bahwan Automotive Tyre Retail Outlets.)

Opting for Continental tyres for your vehicle is the finest choice one can make as Continental tyres is renowned for prioritising safety on road.



Manufactured with world-class German tyre technology Continental has developed tyres that offer higher mileage, better fuel efficiency, improved braking on wet surfaces, and high levels of safety and comfort.

Continental tyres make a good choice because of their vast range that has a tyre for every type of vehicle and also their innovative designs and special tread patterns. Revolutionary features like asymmetrical tread pattern, bionic

contour, flat belt concept and advanced silica technology result in performance that's yet to meet its match internationally.

Continental is also seriously committed to the tuning market. For Continental, it's a highly technical & emotional experience. An experience that pushes the limits of possibility in a way that no tyre has done before as tuning means enhanced safety - because what's safe for very high speeds is especially safe for everyday motoring.

ISLAMIC BANKING

Bank Nizwa organises session on Islamic finance knowledge

MUSCAT: Bank Nizwa, the leading and most trusted Islamic bank in the Sultanate, organised two impactful lectures as part of its educational programme for Islamic banking at the Cultural Center in Sinaw and Imam Abdulmalik Bin Humaid Mosque.

The lectures aimed to enhance the level of awareness within the local community about the principles and concepts of Islamic banking in line with Sharia principles. Both lectures witnessed significant attendance and active participation.

The first lecture at the Cultural Center in Sinaw was delivered by Mustafa bin Nasser Al-Na'bi, Deputy Manager of Shari'a Training at Bank Nizwa, while the second lecture at Imam Abdulmalik Bin Humaid Mosque was delivered by Sheikh Dr Ali bin Sulaiman Al-



Jahdhami, said, "At Bank Nizwa, we are dedicated to spreading awareness about Islamic banking among the local community through our educational programme for individuals interested in financial solutions aligned with our Islamic beliefs."

"This programme equips them with the necessary knowledge to make sound financial decisions that meet their aspirations and financial needs, through the provision of innovative financial products and services that comply with Islamic Sharia principles and the lifestyle of the community. Bank Nizwa will continue its efforts to keep pace with developments in the Islamic banking industry and contribute to the community by providing comprehensive Islamic banking solutions."

Jahdhami, a member of the Shari'a Board at Bank Nizwa.

These informative lectures reflect Bank Nizwa's continuous efforts to instil the principles of Islamic banking within the community and equip individuals with the necessary knowledge to maximize the benefits offered by Islamic banking services and innovative

solutions that adhere to Sharia principles, provided by Bank Nizwa. By providing comprehensive Islamic banking solutions, Bank Nizwa ensures that individuals can make sound financial decisions that align with their aspirations and financial needs.

Commenting on the lectures, Sheikh Dr Ali bin Sulaiman Al-

GRADUATION

ahlibank invests in future leaders: Celebrating Etimad programme graduates



MUSCAT: In line with its continuous efforts to empower the youth through significant initiatives that add value, ahlibank announced the graduation of a new batch of its employees who enrolled in the Etimad programme. Through such programmes, the bank aims to develop leadership skills and support the careers of its employees, furthering its investment in the future of National talents.

During the ceremony, five employees from ahlibank graduated from the Etimad Leadership De-

velopment programme. These talented individuals were recognised for their exceptional zeal, enthusiasm, and commitment to reaching new heights. This falls in line with the country's objectives to support the youth as well as further the goals of the Omanisation strategy.

The employees were felicitated by the senior management of ahlibank. The Etimad programme serves as a platform to instil leadership competencies in young Omani professionals in middle and senior management positions

within the private sector. As a collaborative effort between the public and private sectors, ahlibank remains steadfast in its commitment to upskilling young Omani nationals and equipping them for future competitive roles. During the celebration, the graduates were honoured with certificates and a range of valuable gifts, symbolising the joyous moment of acknowledging their hard work and dedication.

The Etimad programme aims to enhance Omani youth's leader-

ship skills, as it is part of the future goals of Oman. Etimad falls under a comprehensive suite of programmes created in partnership with international and local institutions which aim to empower the youth and future leaders of the country under The Royal Academy of Management.

ahlibank has launched a number of initiatives alongside the Etimad programme. The bank's unwavering efforts are aimed at building a confident and capable workforce and achieving Oman Vision 2040.



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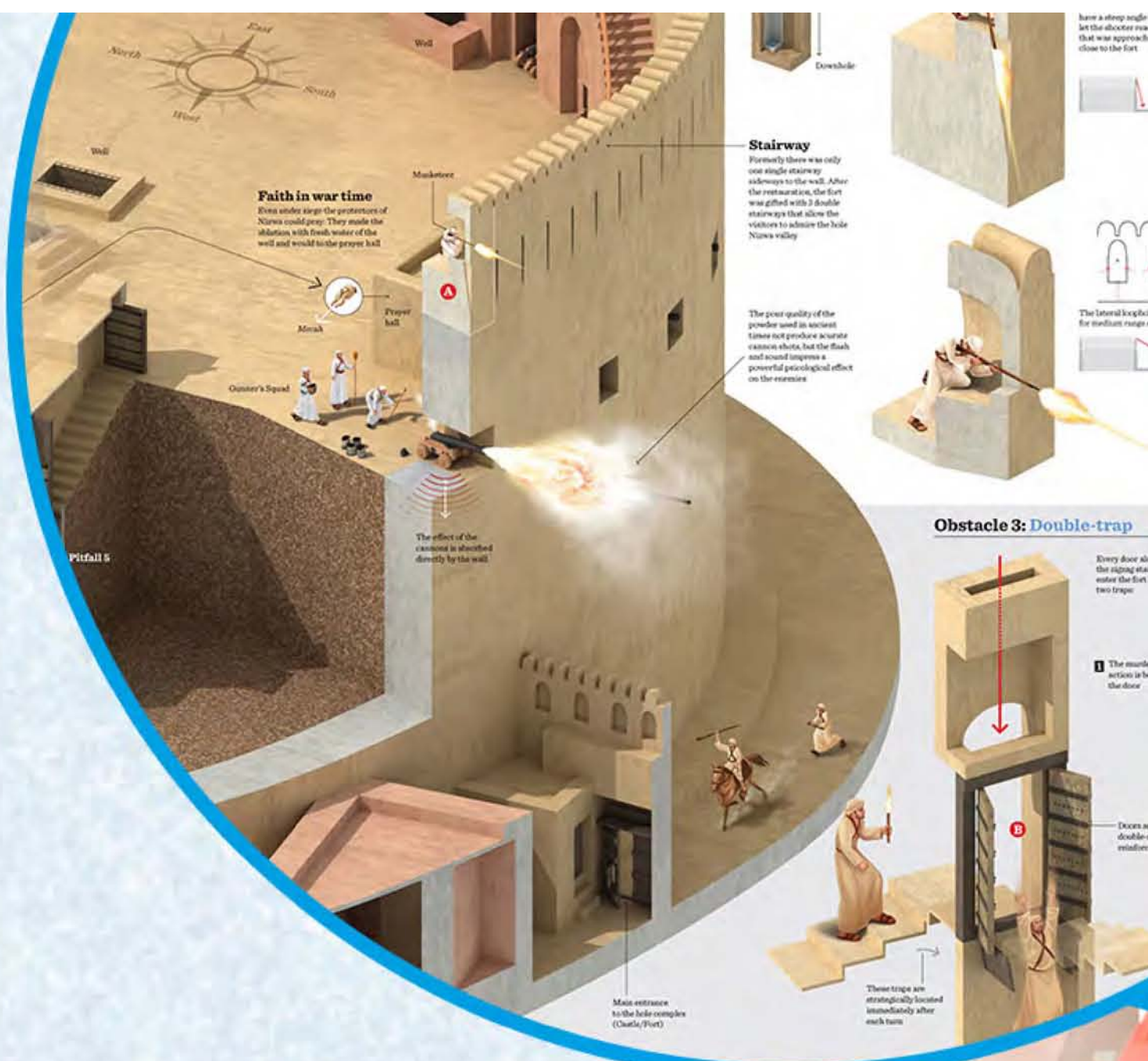
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