



**SPECIAL
SUPPLEMENT
ON ZUBAIR EDC
WITH TODAY'S
EDITION**



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HIS MAJESTY EXCHANGES CONGRATULATIONS WITH LEADERS OF FOUR COUNTRIES

MUSCAT: On the occasion of the Holy Month of Ramadan, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik exchanged congratulations and blessings with the leaders of four countries.

His Majesty received calls from King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, King of Bahrain, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, Dr Bashar Al

Assad, President of the Syrian Arab Republic, and President Abdel Fattah El Sisi, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

His Majesty and the leaders of four countries hoped that the Almighty would bless their peoples, with progress, prosperity and happiness.

-ONA

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DIPLOMACY

Biden praises Oman's role in Yemen truce

Times News Service

MUSCAT: US President Joe Biden has expressed gratitude for the leading role played by Oman and Saudi Arabia towards helping broker a truce in neighbouring Yemen, which coincides with Ramadan.

Welcoming the temporary end to hostilities, Biden said, as reported by Oman News Agency that the truce "entails a halt to

all military activities by any party inside Yemen and across its borders, the entry of fuel ships into Hodeidah port and the renewal of commercial flights to and from Sanaa to agreed destinations."

He added, however, that these were "important steps, but they are not enough. The ceasefire must be adhered to," saying it is "imperative" this dispute is ended after seven years of conflict. **>A5**

HM GREETES CITIZENS, RESIDENTS, ISLAMIC NATION ON RAMADAN

His Majesty the Sultan has urged everyone to take precautionary measures against the coronavirus pandemic



MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has addressed a message of greetings to Omani people, residents in Oman and the Islamic nation on the occasion of the Holy Month of Ramadan.

The Diwan of Royal Court issued a statement to this effect reading as follows:

"Upon the advent of the holy month of Ramadan 1443 AH and, as Muslims all over the globe revel over the blissful onset of the month—expressing gratitude to the Almighty Allah for making them witness to the new month, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has addressed a message of greetings and congratulations to Omani citizens, residents in the Sultanate of Oman and the whole Islamic nation on the advent of the holy month.

His Majesty the Sultan prayed to the Almighty Allah to shower abundant blessings of Ramadan on all Muslims and to bring back this occasion at a time all are enjoying good health, happiness and peace.

>A5

Ramadan begins in Oman

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Today marks the first day of the Holy Month of Ramadan in Oman. "Sunday, 3rd April 2022 will mark the beginning of Holy Ramadan, as on this blessed occasion, the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs (MERA) is pleased to deliver its sincere congratulations and good wishes to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik,"

said MERA in an official announcement confirming the start of Ramadan.

Among the most important traditions of Ramadan is fasting from dawn to dusk – a practice followed by those taking part in the practices of this month. Those who aren't following these traditions, however, are reminded that eating and drinking in public places during the hours of fasting, is strictly prohibited. **>A5**



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ON RAMADAN WITH
TODAY'S EDITION**

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34⁰
MUSCAT

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN COVID-19 job losses

1 300,000 workers lost their jobs due to the COVID-19 in Oman in '20 and '21. **>A2**

WORLD India-Australia pact

2 India on Saturday signed a historic trade deal with Australia aiming to boost bilateral economic ties. **>A6**

MARKET Oman's public debt

3 Oman's public debt to be down by OMR2.85 billion by April-end. **>B1**



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PRAYER TIMINGS

Dhuhr.....	12:15pm
Asr.....	3:43pm
Maghrib.....	6:28pm
Isha.....	7:39pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....	4:40am

300,000 workers lost jobs due to COVID-19 impact

Times News Service

MUSCAT: 300,000 workers in Oman lost their jobs in 2020 and 2021 because of the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to Dr Saeed Al Saqri, the Minister of Economy. Of those who lost their jobs, a vast majority, around 292,500 people, were expatriates, the Minister of Economy added during an interview with national broadcaster Oman TV.

“The year 2020 and 2021 are not a measure of the performance of the private sector,” he explained. “The pandemic, low demand, economic downturn and other reasons led to the exit of about 300,000 workers from their jobs. Of them, approximately 7,500 are Omanis.”



Indian expats take efforts to make Oman an even better place to live



INITIATIVE: Sewa Utsav is a country-wide initiative in which the members of the Indian community all across Oman will take part.

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Cleaning beaches around the country and helping plant more than a million trees are some of the ways in which Indian nationals in Oman aim to make the country a nicer place to live.

The initiative of the Indian nationals stems from Sewa Utsav (Hindi for ‘Festival of Service’), an effort launched worldwide by the Indian government to celebrate 75 years of India’s independence. In Oman, the efforts come through the Embassy of India during the Holy Month of Ramadan, a period characterised by selflessness and good deeds to help the community.

“It is customary to celebrate such a grand occasion through cultural and other performances. However, we decided to celebrate this momentous occasion through community service,” said Amit Narang, the ambassador of India to Oman. “This is in line with the emphasis placed in Indian culture on the virtue of social service and in sync with the service and piety-oriented spirit of the Holy Month of Ramadan.

“The range of activities being organised under the ‘Festival of Service’ is aimed to highlight the positive contribution of the Indian community as peaceful and productive members of the Omani society. This is also an occasion for the Indian community to express their appreciation and solidarity with their friendly brothers and sisters in Oman for their love and hospitality.”

The Sewa Utsav is a country-wide initiative in which the members of the Indian community across Oman will take part. This includes the cities of Sohar, Sur and Salalah, in addition to Muscat. The initiative will also involve the students of Indian schools in Oman who have come forward enthusiastically to contribute.

One of the important pillars of this activity is caring for the environment as responsible citizens. Thus, the Indian community members and students will join hands to simultaneously undertake beach cleanups and wadi cleanings at



five different locations in Oman. A tree plantation drive involving Indian students will contribute to the Government of Oman’s drive to plant 10 million trees.

Amit Narang lauded the efforts of the Care and Special Education (CSE), a centre for children with special needs run at the premises of the Indian School Muscat with the support of all Indian schools.

“Inclusive education is the need of the hour and we are honoured to join hands with CSE to focus on this important facet of education,” he explained. “CSE is doing commendable work with the support of all Indian schools in Oman to give quality care and support to the children with special needs. It was a pleasure indeed to interact with these special children and spend some time with them.”

He said: “The Sewa Utsav or the Festival of Service is a fitting celebration of 75 years of India’s independence as it highlights the core Indian thoughts of ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbkam’ and ‘Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah’ i.e. treating the world as one family and working for the welfare of others. It is also a celebration of India-Oman friendship that is time-tested and will only be strengthened in the months and years to come.”

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HONOUR

Educator in Oman awarded for services to community

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Dr Baby Sam Saamuel has been awarded with the community leadership award for his contribution to the development of the Knowledge Oman Initiative. The award, which was presented to him in the presence of founder Tariq Al Barwani and President Balqeess Al Hassani, was in recognition of the impact Saamuel's efforts have had on society.

"We are honoured to recognise and award Dr Saamuel for his excellent contribution to the platform and ultimately the society as a whole," said Al Barwani. "He has indeed played a significant role in Knowledge Oman's success since he joined the team 10 years ago as a volunteer member, serving multiple roles, including its vice chairman. Dr Saamuel is an energetic and passionate social entrepreneur who never fails to deliver excellent results."

Baby Sam Saamuel joined Knowledge Oman in 2012 as a volunteer member where he was engaged with a pool of volunteers to learn about the platform and contribute activities towards the betterment of society.

Following a series of promotions over the years, he was named vice chairman in 2020,



and supported the growth and development of the organisation. With more than 22 years of senior management experience across several sectors, he has served as the director and chairman of the Board of Directors, Indian Schools in Oman, in addition to engaging as advisory/ board roles with several higher educational institutions and social impact organisations. "Knowledge Oman has offered me the opportunity to have ground level understanding of the educational needs of communities and offered me a different perspective about living with purpose. I am fortunate to be part of this society-impacting

platform," said Saamuel. Meanwhile, Saamuel was also felicitated by his former company InterTech LLC, one of the country's largest system integration specialists. During his farewell, he was the subject of plenty of praise from Chairman Saif Al Maskery and Managing Director Said Al Maskery. "Dr Saamuel has played a significant role in growing our organisation, supporting the company at its most crucial times," said Said Al Maskery. "His contribution to InterTech has been exemplary. While we are sure to miss him, we wish him the very best for his future endeavours."

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HM THE SULTAN EXCHANGES RAMADAN GREETINGS WITH ARAB, ISLAMIC LEADERS

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has exchanged cables of greetings on the advent of the holy month of Ramadan with the Arab and Islamic leaders of the brotherly and friendly countries.

In his cables, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments along with his best wishes of good health, happiness and a long life to them and their countries' people further progress, prosperity and welfare. His Majesty also prayed to the Almighty Allah to bestow his blessings on all Muslims, wishing that it would be a month of security, peace and stability all over the world.

In their cables, the leaders expressed their sincere greetings along with their best wishes of good health, happiness and a long life to His Majesty the Sultan to achieve all aspirations of progress, prosperity and welfare for the Omani people under His Majesty's wise leadership. They prayed to the Almighty Allah for the return of this occasion on His Majesty, the Omani people and Arab and Muslim nations with blessings, bounties and prosperity.

His Majesty the Sultan exchanged greetings on this occasion

with the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, King Hamad bin Issa Al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, Sheikh Nawaf Al Ahmed Al Jabir Al Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait, King Abdullah II Ibn Al Hussein of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, King Mohammed VI of the Kingdom of Morocco, President Kais Saied of the Republic of Tunisia, President Abdelmadjid Tebboune of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, President Ismail Omar Guelleh of the Republic of Djibouti, Gen. Abdel Fattah Abdelrahman Burhan, Chairman of the Sovereignty Council of Sudan, President Dr. Bashar Al Assad of the Syrian Arab Republic, President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmaajo of the Federal Republic of Somalia, President Dr. Barham Ahmed Salih of the Republic of Iraq, President Mahmoud Abbas of the State of Palestine, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation

“
In their cables, the leaders expressed their sincere greetings along with their best wishes of good health, happiness and a long life to His Majesty the Sultan.

Ilham Heydar Aliyev of the Republic of Azerbaijan, President Joko Widodo of the Republic of Indonesia, President Dr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev of the Republic of Uzbekistan, President Dr. Ebrahim Raisi of the Islamic Republic of Iran, President Dr. Arif Alvi of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, President Mohammad Abdul Hamid of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, President Serdar Berdimukhamedov of the Republic of Turkmenistan, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of the Republic of Turkey, President Samia Hassan of the United Republic of Tanzania, President Ali Bongo Ondimba of the Gabonese Republic, President Adama Barrow of the Republic of Gambia, President Macky Sall of the Republic of Senegal, President Emomali Rahmon of the Republic of Tajikistan, President Sadyr Japarov of the Kyrgyz Republic, President Kassym Jomart Tokayev of the Republic of Kazakhstan, President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih of the Republic of the Maldives, President Mohamed Bazoum of the Republic of Niger and President Muhammadu Buhari of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. -ONA

Organisation, President Othman Ghazali of the Union of the Comoros, Dr. Mohamed Al Menfi, Chairman of the Presidential Council of Libya, President Abdel Fattah El Sisi of the Arab Republic of Egypt, President Mohamed Ould Ghazouani of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, Field Marshal Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi, President of the Republic of Yemen, Sultan Haji Hassanah Bolkiah of Brunei Darussalam, Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah of Malaysia, President Dr.

RESCUE OPERATIONS

Al Dhahirah rockslide incident: Rescue operations come to an end

Times News Service

IBRI: A search for survivors at a quarry in Ibri in the Al Dhahirah Governorate has ended, with rescue teams finding the bodies of six people who died on the spot, as well as discovering another eight people trapped under the rubble, and five injured, who were taken to hospital to receive medical care.

Teams at the quarry used advanced equipment and techniques, supplemented by thermal imaging and sniffer dogs to retrieve the eight people under the rubble, who were sadly pronounced dead once they were rescued.

The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA), with assistance from the Royal Oman Police, engineering services from the Ministry of Defence, and other relevant authorities, conducted a strenuous and thorough search for a week, in an attempt to find more survivors and rush them to safety.

CDAA Operations Centre received a distress call on Sunday, 27 March, prompting rescue and

paramedic teams to rush to the site. However, because of the size and extent of the collapse, the difficult terrain, and the number of people trapped under the rubble, CDAA personnel requested assistance from their National Search and Rescue Teams to search for survivors, and established a forward operations centre on-site to manage the incident.

To provide further assistance, the National Committee for Emergency Management (NCEM) organised a meeting to determine what men and material would be required.

The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority extended its sincere condolences and sympathies to the families of the deceased, and wished a speedy recovery to those injured in the accident.

The organisation also thanked all the emergency services and other organisations involved in the search and rescue operation, which helped unearth all those who had been trapped under the rubble, despite the difficulties and challenges posed by the nature of the rockslide. -ONA





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S&P revises Oman’s credit rating to BB- with stable outlook

Standard and Poor’s ascribed this improvement to the financial measures taken by the government

MUSCAT: Standard and Poor’s (S&P) has revised its rating for the Sultanate of Oman from B+ to BB- with a stable outlook for the first time since 2015, due to the improvement of the general financial indices of the state and the reduction in the general debt risks.

According to its report issued on Friday, Standard and Poor’s ascribed this improvement to the financial measures taken by the government within the medium-term financial plan and to the increase in average sale price of oil and the average production of oil.

The report stated that “the Sultanate is expected to achieve a fiscal surplus of 5.7 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) this year, against the deficit estimated deficit of 4.6 per cent in 2021.”

The report pointed out that the Sultanate of Oman has set a medium-term plan to mitigate dependency on oil returns.

This plan, included measures to reduce the public spending. The general debt rate from the GDP in 2022 is expected to decrease to



NON-OIL SECTOR: The non-oil sector during the upcoming three years is expected to drive the growth, said Standard and Poor’s. — ONA

49.6 per cent , which is lower than was earlier expected by Standard and Poor’s at 65.1 in its earlier report, according to the current report.

This has boosted the advancement of the Sultanate’s credit rating.

The real GDP is expected to improve by approximately 3.9 per cent in 2022, according to Standard and Poor’s.

The report pointed out that the government’s liquid assets remains strong and is estimated at 47 per cent of the GDP in 2022.

The non-oil sector during the upcoming three years is expected to drive the growth, said Standard and Poor’s, which expected the growth of non-oil activities to improve by an average of 2.2 per cent during 2023- 2025 compared to 1.8 per cent in 2022.

The report pointed to that the Sultanate’s credit rating may advance to a higher level in case the economic growth and the financial conditions remarkably improved compared to the expectations of Standard and Poor’s or in case the foreign currency reserves or external assets increased, which would support the financial condition of the Sultanate.

— ONA

HOLY MONTH OF RAMADAN < FROM A1 HM sends greetings

While according close attention to the safety of citizens and residents, His Majesty the Sultan has underscored the significance of all individuals and establishments’ maintaining compliance to precautionary measures to tackle coronavirus pandemic, notably by adhering to relevant instructions issued by the authorities concerned. May the Almighty Allah bestow His plentiful bounties on His Majesty the Sultan and guard him as a treasured source of pride and inspiration to this nation, its citizens and residents!

— ONA

IN YEMEN < FROM A1 Truce welcomed

“Negotiators must undertake the hard and necessary work to reach political compromises that can bring about an enduring future of peace for all the people of Yemen,” added President Biden.

Hans Grundberg, the UN Special Envoy, said the aim of the truce was to give Yemenis a necessary rest from violence and alleviate human suffering, as well as to show there is hope for an end to the conflict, stressing that he would press for a permanent ceasefire.

The announcement of the truce was welcomed by Oman’s Foreign Ministry.

“The Foreign Ministry expresses the Sultanate of Oman’s welcome to the announcement by Hans Grundberg, the Special Envoy to Yemen of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, of a truce in the Republic of Yemen for a period of two months, and commends the positive discussions held by the UN envoy during his recent visits to Muscat,” said the ministry in a statement.

FOR PRIVATE SECTOR < FROM A1 Working hours reduced

Working hours during Ramadan have already been announced by the Ministry of Labour. Official working hours for government bodies will be from 9am to 2pm. Meanwhile, in the private sector, working hours for those observing the traditions of Ramadan will be reduced to six hours per day, or 30 hours per week.

Veterinary clinics

Similarly, veterinary clinics will operate for reduced hours, remaining open to visitors only from 7:30am to 12:30pm, said the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

The announcement concerning Ramadan came following a meeting of the ministry’s main committee for moon sighting on 1 April, chaired by Abdullah bin Mohammed Al Salmi, Minister of Endowments and Religious Affairs.

Others on the committee include His Eminence Ahmad bin Hamad Al Khalili, Grand Mufti of the Sultanate of Oman, Undersecretary Dr Mohamed bin Said Al Mamari, Mohamed bin Salim Al Akhzami, Supreme Court judge, Abdulrahman bin Abdulsattar Al Kamali, chairman of the Court of Appeal in Musandam and Mohamed bin Salim Al Nahdi, judge at the Court of Appeal.

Trending
ON SOCIAL MEDIA

118,272 REACH

Oman

Ramadan 2022: The first day has been announced!



First day of Ramadan announced in Oman

A story on the first day of Ramadan reached 118,272 people and had 28,493 link clicks on Facebook.

MOST VIEWED VIDEO ON INSTAGRAM

1,461 VIEWS



Most popular post on Instagram

The Maghrib Minute news wrap-up had 1,461 views and 76 likes on Instagram.

MOST WATCHED VIDEO ON FACEBOOK

2,500 VIEWS



Most viewed video on Facebook

The Maghrib Minute in Hindi had 2,500 views and reached 11,400 people on Facebook.

Ministry of Defence

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry of Defense invites MOD registered suppliers to participate in the following tender:

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EQUITY AND LIABILITIES:			ASSETS:		
Capital and reserve	5,222	5,030	Cash in hand	976	587
Borrowing from bank	--	--	Deposit with Central Bank of Oman	170	110
Balances due to branches	--	--	Precious metals	--	--
Balances due to money exchangers	--	--	Balances due from banks	4,577	4,553
Loans and advances payable	--	--	Balances due from branches	--	--
Cheques and draft issued and outstanding	56	43	Balances due from money changers	--	--
Other liabilities	1,034	878	Cheques and draft purchased (collection)	--	--
			Loans and advances	--	--
			Investments	--	--
			Fixed assets	209	195
			Other assets	380	506
Total	6,312	5,951	Total	6,312	5,951

We certify that the above balances are in agreement with the books and records of Modern Exchange Company LLC as of December 31, 2021.

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Muscat



HISTORIC PACT

India, Australia sign trade pact, PM Modi calls it ‘watershed moment’

NEW DELHI: India on Saturday signed a massive historic trade deal with Australia aiming to boost economic ties between the two countries.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that the India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement is a “watershed moment” for bilateral ties. The interim free trade deal aims to eliminate 85 per cent tariffs on Australian goods exports to India.

“Consensus on such an important agreement in such a short period of time shows the mutual trust between the two countries. This is truly a watershed moment for our bilateral relations,” PM Modi said at a virtual signing ceremony of the agreement. PM Modi said the newly signed trade deal will contribute to the increasing supply chains resilience and stability of the Indo-Pacific region.

“Great potential between our two economies to fulfill each other’s needs. With this Agreement, we will be able to benefit from opportunities. On the basis of this Agreement, together we will be able to contribute to increasing supply chains resilience and stability of the Indo-Pacific region,” PM Modi said.

The Agreement was signed virtually in Melbourne by Dan Tehan, Australian Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment, with Un-



ion Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal in New Delhi.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said that the signing of the Agreement further develops on the promise of economic relationship between the two countries.

In his opening address, Dan Tehan thanked PM Modi and Australian PM Scott Morrison for inking the trade deal. “Thank You for what you have invested into this agreement through your friendship and your determination to bring out two countries together to find ourselves at this

historic moment,” the Australian trade minister said.

He also thanked his Indian counterpart Piyush Goyal. Tehan said, “To my good friend Piyush Goyal, Thank You for your friendship over the last seven to eight months. We have worked tirelessly with our negotiators to make sure that we have got to this occasion.”

“We are very confident that this deal will see two-way trade, the trade between our nations will double in the coming years. We also know that this agreement will underpin the economic stability of

the Indo-Pacific. It is an agreement for its time, it is an agreement for this moment and it’s wonderful to be able to join with you to sign it. What a wonderful occasion to be doing with on India’s New Year. This will create a new dawn for our nations but also it is wonderful to be able to celebrate on such an occasion,” added Tehan.

The Australian government said that the deal will eliminate tariffs on more than 85 per cent of Australian goods exports to India, rising to almost 91 per cent over 10 years. **ANI**



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Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Mohamed Issa Al Zadjali
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Chief Executive Officer: Ahmed Essa Al Zedjali

EDITORIAL: Telephone: 24726666, Fax: 24813153, E-mail: editor@timesofoman.com
ADVERTISING: Telephone: 24726666, Fax: 24812624, E-mail: advertising@timesofoman.com
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NEWSPAPER REPORT

German man received COVID-19 jab 87 times

DRESDEN: A German man is under investigation after authorities discovered he’d received the coronavirus vaccine at least 87 times, the Freie Presse newspaper reported on Friday.

The report comes as Germany battles a wave of COVID-19 infections and struggles to raise its vaccination rates compared to other western European countries.

According to information attained by the Freie Presse paper, the 61-year-old man visited several vaccination centers in the eastern German states of Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt.

The man is believed to have gotten the jab up to three times a day at different job sites — log-

ging 87 coronavirus vaccinations in the state of Saxony alone.

A staff member at a center in the city of Dresden grew suspicious when he recognized the man, a spokesman for the German Red Cross, Kai Kranich, told the paper.

The next time he entered a vaccination centre in the town of Eilenburg, outside of Leipzig, staff called the police and he was detained. The German Red Cross pressed charges against the man on suspicion of his involvement in selling vaccination passports. Criminal investigations are currently ongoing in the state of Saxony, with authorities in other German states also investigating the man. — **DW**

STATE OF EMERGENCY

Sri Lanka declares emergency after violent protests over economic crisis

COLOMBO: Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa declared a nationwide state of emergency on Friday evening after protesters clashed with the police the previous day.

Rajapaksa said in a government gazette notification that the decision was taken in the interests of public security, the protection of public order and to ensure the maintenance of essential services.

He said he believed there was a “public emergency in Sri Lanka” and tougher laws were needed to deal with the crisis.

Shops opened on Saturday amid tightened security as police and military personnel parolled the streets of Colombo, the capital city.

Protesters clash with police

Sri Lanka was rocked by violent protests Thursday evening, as hundreds of protesters gathered outside Rajapaksa’s private residence outside of Colombo.

People largely demanded that Rajapaksa step down from office, with people clashing with the police later.

Police fired tear gas and used water cannons to disperse crowds that protesters set fire to police vehicles and threw bricks at officers.

Police arrested 53 protesters and imposed a curfew in and around Colombo to contain protests on Friday. But protests continued Friday as well.

Government officials have decried violent protests, with Tourism Minister Prasanna Ranatunga warning of “economic consequences” should



protests continue.

Colombo to receive food aid

India, the world’s biggest rice exporter, is preparing to send 40,000 tonnes of rice for prompt shipment to Sri Lanka, Reuters reported.

This would mark the first major food aid since Colombo secured a \$1 billion credit line from New Delhi for assistance with food items and fuel last month.

The shipment could bring down rice prices that have doubled in a year.

Sri Lanka’s crisis deepens

Sri Lanka’s foreign currency reserves are at a critical low, which means that a shortage of money has led to a shortage of fuel and other essential items.

Meanwhile, skyrocketing inflation and soaring food prices have also made things difficult for Sri Lankans.

The economic crisis has only worsened through the month and the country ran out of diesel at gas stations on Thursday.

The government said it had no fuel for power generators and imposed a 13-hour power cut from Thursday.

Several state hospitals have also been forced to stop routine surgeries because of a shortage of life-saving medicines.

Sri Lanka is due to speak with the International Monetary Fund for loans in the coming days, with Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa, the president’s youngest brother, expected in Washington D.C. **DW**

Ramadan Iftar Program

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "He who provides a fasting person something with which to break his fast, will earn the same reward as the one who was observing the fast, without diminishing in any way the reward of the latter."

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WORLD

AMID PEACE TALKS

Russia alleges Ukrainian choppers attacked Belgorod fuel depot

KYIV: Russia has accused Ukraine of a fire that broke out at a fuel depot in Belgorod, a Russian city near the Ukrainian border, even as war continues to rage in Ukraine and both countries are in the midst of peace talks to reach a ceasefire agreement.

Russia said the fire was caused by an airstrike from Ukrainian helicopters. The Ukrainian Ministry of Defence, however, told CNN it had no information about the incident. When asked whether it was Ukraine who had carried out the attack, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, echoed the same sentiment and said that he could not verify it.

The Russian Ministry of Defence on Friday stated that two Ukrainian Mi-24 helicopters carried out an attack on a fuel storage facility in southern Russia.

“On April 1, at about 5:00 a.m. Moscow time, two Ukrainian Mi-24 helicopters entered the airspace of the Russian Federation at extremely low altitudes. Ukrainian helicopters launched a missile attack on a civilian oil storage facility located on the outskirts of Belgorod. As a result of the missile hit, individual tanks were damaged and caught fire,” Russian MOD spokesperson Maj Gen Igor Konashenkov said in a statement.

UK Defence Ministry said in the latest intelligence update that oil tanks at a depot in Belgorod mean probable loss of fuel and ammunition supplies to the Russian forces.

The update further suggested that the Friday strike at the depot will likely add more strain to Russia’s already stretched logistic chains. Meanwhile, Russian troops are “slowly but noticeably” moving out of the north of Ukraine, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a video address on Friday. “The occupiers are withdrawing forces in the north of our country. The withdrawal is slow but noticeable. Somewhere they are expelled with battles. Somewhere they leave positions on their own,” Zelenskyy said. He also urged Ukrainians to remain cautious in the north as troops withdraw. “We are moving forward. Moving carefully. And everyone who returns to this area must also be very careful. It is still impossible to return to normal life as it was,” he said. **ANI**

UKRAINIAN INVASION

Biden blames Putin for spike in gas, food prices



WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden on Friday blamed Russian President Vladimir Putin for rising gas and food prices due to his invasion of Ukraine.

In lieu of the rising prices, Biden announced the release of 1 million barrels of oil per day from the nation’s strategic petroleum reserve for six months in a bid to control gas prices that have spiked after the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war that entered its 38th day on Saturday.

“Putin’s invasion of Ukraine has driven up gas prices and food prices all over the world. To help deal with that, yesterday I authorised the release of 1 million barrels per day for the next six months from our Strategic Petroleum Reserve,” tweeted Biden.

Biden said that it was not known how much gasoline prices could decline as a result of his move, but he suggested it might be “anything from 10 cents to 35 cents a gallon.”

“The bottom line is if we want

Biden announced the release of 1 million barrels of oil per day from the nation’s strategic petroleum reserve for six months in a bid to control gas prices that have spiked after the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war

lower gas prices we need to have more oil supply right now,” Biden said. “This is a moment of consequence and peril for the world, and pain at the pump for American families,” he added.

Meanwhile, Pentagon announced USD 300 million more in security assistance to Ukraine. The new package means the US

has now committed more than USD 2.3 billion in security assistance to Ukraine since the start of the Biden administration, according to the statement from Pentagon press secretary John Kirby.

The new package includes -- Switchblade suicide drones, Anti-drone systems, Armoured vehicles, Night-vision equipment, Ammunition and more.

The new package comes as Ukraine has pushed for more advanced weaponry from the US and European nations.

Much of the equipment provided to Ukraine fulfils those requests, but the US has not acquiesced to some of the biggest requests, such as aircraft.

The statement on security assistance is an unusual departure from past practice, in which the Pentagon and the administration have been discrete about the equipment provided. This time, the Pentagon laid out in some detail the systems and equipment that Ukraine will receive. **ANI**

ELECTION RALLY

Emmanuel Macron holds 1st rally as tight election looms



PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron held his first election rally on Saturday ahead of a first round on April 10, as a study shows four-fifths of voters no longer have confidence in any political party.

The rally comes after several weeks in which Macron has been more focused on international diplomacy over the war in Ukraine than domestic affairs, allowing far-right rival Marine Le Pen to gain ground on issues closer to home for the French public.

How are the candidates doing?

The latest survey by pollster Elabe, published on Wednesday, showed Le Pen winning 47.5% of the vote in a likely run-off against Macron scheduled for April 24. The poll showed Macron gaining 52.5%, a reduced margin of victory compared to the same poll

conducted a week earlier.

Le Pen has benefited somewhat from the candidature of Eric Zemmour, another far-right candidate, whose extreme positions on immigration and Islam have made hers seem almost mainstream in comparison.

Macron has gained support in some quarters for what is seen as his strong leadership in international diplomacy amid the Ukraine conflict. However, he has suffered some image damage from the so-called McKinsey Affair, named after a US firm of consultants that was hired to advise the French government on its vaccination campaign during the pandemic, among other things.

The company was accused of tax evasion in a new French Senate report that also questioned the government’s use of consultants. **ANI**



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World Cup groups for FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 revealed

The action-packed group stage matches will run until December 2, when 16 sides will make their way through to the knockout rounds

DOHA: Following a dazzling final draw for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, the tournament match schedule has been published by the football's world governing body.

Given the compact nature of Qatar, event organisers were able to assign, for the first time ever, group stage games to a stadium and kick-off time for each matchday after the final draw, optimising the match schedule for the benefit and comfort of spectators, teams, media and the global audience.

Qatar in 2022 will host the first FIFA World Cup in the Middle East and Arab world and will only be the second one to be played on the Asian continent.

The 22nd edition of the tournament will kick off on November 21, 2022, when Qatar -- the reigning champions of Asia -- take their FIFA World Cup bow at the tournament's first match



FIFA WORLD CUP Qatar 2022 Final Draw Results			
Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D
Qatar	England	Argentina	France
Ecuador	IR Iran	Saudi Arabia	FIFA IC Play-off 1
Senegal	USA	Mexico	Denmark
Netherlands	Euro Play-off	Poland	Tunisia
Group E	Group F	Group G	Group H
Spain	Belgium	Brazil	Portugal
FIFA IC Play-off 2	Canada	Serbia	Ghana
Germany	Morocco	Switzerland	Uruguay
Japan	Croatia	Cameroon	Korea Republic

at the stunning 60,000-seat Al Bayt Stadium in Al Khor City.

Notably, Qatar will host the most compact version of the

tournament in modern history. All eight stadiums are within 50km of central Doha, while fans, players, and offi-

cials will be able to stay in one accommodation throughout the event, which will conclude with the final at the 80,000-seat Lusail Stadium on December 18, 2022 -- which is also Qatar National Day.

The action-packed group stage matches will run until December 2, when 16 sides will make their way through to the knockout rounds. The round-of-16 fixtures are due to take place between December 3 and 6, with the quarter-finals being held on December 9 and 10.

Semi-final showdowns with plenty at stake are pencilled in for December 13 and 14, with the final pulling in a global audience of billions on December 18 - the day after a third-place play-off has seen bronze medals handed out. **ANI**

MASCOT REVEALED



La'eeb unveiled as official mascot for FIFA World Cup

DOHA: FIFA has unveiled La'eeb as the official mascot for this year's FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

La'eeb is an Arabic word meaning super-skilled player. "He belongs to a parallel mascot-verse that is indescribable - everyone is invited to interpret what it looks like. La'eeb encourages everyone to believe in themselves as 'Now is All', FIFA in a statement said. La'eeb was unveiled during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 Final Draw, which took place on Friday in Doha.

Khalid Ali Al Mawlawi, Deputy Director-General, Marketing, Communications and Tournament Experience, Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy, said: "We are delighted to unveil La'eeb as the Official Mascot for the first FIFA World Cup in the Middle East and the Arab world. He comes from the mascot-verse - a place that is indescribable. We encourage everyone to imagine what it looks like."

"We are sure fans everywhere will love this fun and playful character. La'eeb will play a vital role as we engage fans young and old in Qatar's FIFA World Cup experience," added Al Mawlawi.

La'eeb will be everywhere - welcoming the world, inspiring young fans, and cheering the action during the tournament, which will take place from November 21 to December 18.

"The courageous and uplifting La'eeb has attended every previous FIFA World Cup tournament and has contributed to some of the most famous moments in football history, including a number of iconic goals. La'eeb will be known for his youthful spirit; spreading joy and confidence everywhere he goes. La'eeb comes from a parallel world where tournament mascots live. It is a world where ideas and creativity form the basis of characters that live in the minds of everyone," FIFA added. **ANI**



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INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE

Jos Buttler shines as Rajasthan Royals beat Mumbai Indians

NAVI MUMBAI: Century from Jos Buttler was backed by the sensational effort from Rajasthan Royals' spinners as they defeated Mumbai Indians by 23 runs in their Indian Premier League 2022 match here at Dr. DY Patil Sports Academy, Navi Mumbai on Saturday.

RR's spin twins Yuzvendra Chahal and Ravichandran Ashwin broke the game open as the five-time champs fell way short in the end. Chasing 194, Mumbai Indians didn't enjoy such a great start as their score read 50/2 after the powerplay. Prasidh Krishna removed Rohit Sharma in the second over. MI skipper cut straight

to Riyan Parag at point, who took a really good catch as the ball flew to him off the middle of the bat.

In the 4th over, Navdeep Saini dismissed Anmolpreet Singh. The ball stopped a bit off the pitch and Anmolpreet was early to the shot which then chipped to Padikkal at extra covers.

The middle overs were better for MI batters, as they amassed 86 runs with the loss of two wickets. In the last ball of 13th over Trent Boult sent dangerous-looking Ishan Kishan back into the hut for 54 off 43. Kishan pulled the ball flat and it travelled with great speed as Saini took a stupendous catch in the deep square leg.

In the very next over, youngster Tilak Varma brought his maiden fifty in the IPL. With MI chase going on with a comfortable pace, the experienced spin duo of Yuzvendra Chahal and Ravichandran Ashwin tilted the momentum back in favour of RR.

Ashwin first removed Tilak for 61 and then Chahal struck twice in the 16th over to send Tim David and Daniel Sams back to the pavilion in consecutive deliveries.

With 39 runs needed from 12 balls, Prasidh Krishna leaked only 10 runs in the penultimate over. Navdeep Saini then proceeded to win the match for RR in the last over. **ANI**

T20 TOURNAMENT

Oman Cricket announces start of All-Omani T20 tournament

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman Cricket has announced the start of the All-Omani T20 tournament, which will be the final event of the 2021-22 cricket season. It will be held from April 4 to April 13, 2022 at the Oman Cricket Academy, with the start time for all matches being 8 pm.

7 teams will compete, namely Oct Ruwi, Oct Muscat, Oct Al Mabela, Oct Al Amerat, Oct Al Hail 'A', Oct Al Hail 'B' and Oct Seeb. The teams have been split in groups of 2, with 4 teams in Group 'A' and 3 in Group 'B'. A round-robin format will be employed for the league stage before moving to the knockouts on April 10th.

Speaking on the eve of the tournament, Chief Development Officer of Oman Cricket Duleep Mendis said, "It gives me great joy to announce the start of this all-Omani competition. One of our aims at Oman Cricket has always been to build on the successful staging of the T20 World



Cup in the Sultanate last year and further cultivate an active interest towards the game of cricket, in the nation's local residents. In addition, I believe that grassroots cricket is the foundation that holds up the game as a whole in any country. We have already taken multiple steps in ensuring its robust health in Oman and this event is another milestone on that same road. I thank all the players and teams

that signed up and wish them the very best of luck".

Spectators are welcome to watch the games live at the Oman Cricket Academy. Proof of double vaccination against Covid-19 must be displayed on entry.

The groups for the tournament are as follows: Group A - Oct Ruwi, Oct Muscat, Oct Al Mabela, Oct Al Hail 'B' Group B - Oct Al Amerat, Oct Seeb, Oct Al Hail 'A'

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BUSINESS & FINANCE



KHAZAEN SIGNS PACT

Khazaen Economic City signed an agreement with a foreign investment company to establish a factory for the production of solid soap products to the tune of OMR2 million for the first phase.



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DEBT MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Oman reduces its public debt by repaying loans worth OMR2.85bn

MUSCAT: As part of its Debt Management Strategy, the Ministry of Finance (MoF) will cut down its public debt by more than OMR2.85 billion (\$7.4 billion) at the end of April 2022.

This is in addition to the MoF's strive to utilise fiscal surplus (emanating from the uptake of oil prices average rates) to minimise fiscal deficit and shrink the public debt portfolio's cost and risks.

Budget 2022 earmarked OMR1.3 billion for the refund of interests on loans, but without prejudice to a commitment to repay maturing premiums to the tune of OMR2.7 billion.

The MoF pointed out that steps are underway to tap other fiscal surpluses to inspire economic growth in line with His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's Royal directives to implement more development projects that support the private sector, notably by augmenting the Developmental Budget's allocations to OMR1.1 billion.

At the end of March 2022, the MoF repaid debt worth OMR1.49 billion (\$3.88 billion), including the refund of an OMR850 million loan facility (\$2.2 billion) before its maturity. In addition, the MoF is prepaying the OMR1.365 billion loan (\$3.55 billion) in April 2022. This comes in line with the MoF's efforts to reduce public debt which is estimated to total OMR19.46 billion by the end of April 2022.



As part of its liability management efforts, the MoF recently settled an OMR1.55 billion (\$ 4 billion) loan facility agreement. The loan was obtained through a group of 26 local, regional and international financial institutions. The loan was oversubscribed by more than 150 per cent with a significantly tightened pricing inside the Oman curve, reflecting the market's validation of Oman's fiscal reform initiatives and active liability management.

In the last few years, the MoF has undertaken a set of fiscal measures intending to reduce the annual fiscal deficit, whilst addressing the financial situation and enhancing the efficiency of public spending.

Furthermore, it seeks to implement a Debt Management Strategy that aims to smoothen the redemption profile and minimize

the refinancing risk of the debt portfolio by replacing high-cost loans with low-cost loans, while extending the maturity.

The MoF pointed out that the fiscal consolidation measures taken by the government helped improve fiscal performance indicators, which led to increased confidence from various international institutions and rating agencies. The MoF seeks to utilise the surplus arising from higher oil prices to reduce the fiscal deficit and public debt, affirming that the government is in a better position to overcome any external shocks.

The MoF reiterated that the Sultanate of Oman is making good progress towards the achievement of its national goals and this has been reflected in low-interest rates on financing, in addition to expanded engagement of financial institutions. **-ONA**

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



Renaissance shareholders approve dividend of 20 baisas per share at AGM

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Renaissance Services, Oman's leading accommodation, services solutions and IFM company in Oman held its Annual General Meeting on March 30.

Amongst other resolutions on the agenda, the shareholders approved a dividend of 20 baisas (20 per cent of the paid-up capital).

Samir J Fancy, Chairman, Renaissance Services said, "2021 was a good year in terms of improved performance, although that remains below our ambition, capacity and capability. Client and government support to implement agreed minimum worker welfare standards in Duqm remains key to realise the full promise and potential of our business."

SOHAR PORT & FREEZONE

New CEO appointed for Sohar Port



MUSCAT: Board of Directors of Sohar Port and Freezone announced the appointment of Emile Hoogsteden as the new Chief Executive Officer of Sohar Port, a joint venture of the Port of Rotterdam Authority and Asyad Group.

Emile succeeds Mark Geilenkirchen effective 1 July 2022, bringing a solid track record of building and managing robust business strategies in the global logistics industry. His stellar background will continue to pave the way for more growth opportunities for the port and tenants at Sohar.

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Sale of Al Kamil Power Plant Equipment

Al Kamil Power Company SAOG (under liquidation) is offering for sale all the Plant equipment as part of winding down its business operations in the Sultanate of Oman, with preference given to buyers interested in purchasing the entire plant either for continuing operations in Oman or dismantling the equipment and transporting it to their own jurisdiction for their own use. To the extent that a buyer for the entire plant cannot be found, the equipment will be sold at the best price offered.

The Plant comprises of three (3) General Electric Frame 9171E gas turbines designed for operation in open cycle configuration, together with related ancillary equipment required for a fully independent operation. Turbines are also designed to run on both natural gas and light distillate fuel oil. Gas is supplied through a pipeline from Oman Gas Network, while light distillate is transported by road tankers to the site.

The entire plant and individual equipment items are being offered for sale on an "as is where is" basis, with bid prices to be submitted to the Company no later than May 23, 2022.

Tender documents which include further detailed information and data about the power assets can be obtained by downloading the Tender Document from the Company's website at:

<http://www.alkamilpower.com/Tenders/Tender.pdf>



View of Three Gas Turbines

The bid price for all or some part of the equipment shall be submitted in a sealed envelope addressed to:

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Pact signed to establish factory worth OMR2mn

The agreement comes within the framework of Khazaen's efforts in attracting foreign investments

MUSCAT: Khazaen Economic City signed an agreement with a foreign investment company to establish a factory for the production of solid soap products to the tune of OMR2 million for the first phase. The project will be set up on an area of 5,000 square metres. The agreement was signed with the investing company by Eng. Salim Sulaiman Al Thuhli, CEO of



Khazaen Economic City. Al Thuhli said that the agreement comes within the framework of Khazaen's efforts in attracting

foreign investments. This investment, he added, is important for the local and regional market and it directly con-

tributes to economic diversification in Oman, as well as providing job opportunities for national cadres. -**ONA**



Bank Muscat organises seminar on marketing

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSME) sector has been playing an important role in the creation of jobs and driving global economic growth and development. Hence, the sector has received keen support from Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate, in line with its vision 'To serve you better, everyday'.

The bank has supported thousands of enterprises with banking facilities over the years, and its Retail Enterprises (Najahi) unit, in particular, offers both financial and non-financial support to entrepreneurs as part of the bank's drive to promote sustainability. Recently, Najahi organised a seminar on successful marketing by Ahmed Al-Mutawa, CEO of Mubader Company and a business consultant to the MSME sector where he talked about starting and marketing successful businesses, and the latest marketing tools and the best businesses you can market. It was attended by Ahmed Faqir Al Bulushi, Chief Banking Officer, Bank Muscat and other senior officials at the bank.

Addressing the seminar and thanking the entrepreneurs for their enthusiastic participation, Amjad Iqbal Al Lawati, Deputy General Manager - Customer Segments, said: "The Government of Oman provides a lot of encouragement and opportunities to the MSME sector. As the leading financial services provider in Oman, Bank Muscat, which is celebrating the 40th anniversary of its launch in 2022, has

also been keenly supporting the sector with a number of initiatives. The non-financial support offered by Bank Muscat's Najahi includes training sessions and mentoring programmes, which help young Omani entrepreneurs to guide their businesses through some of the most critical phases of growth and development. The bank has always been an enabler of opportunities for budding entrepreneurs to bring about sustainable development and financial inclusion in our society. I would also like to thank our MSME customers for their confidence in Bank Muscat and for working hard to ensure the development and progress of Oman."

Bank Muscat set up the Najahi (Retail Enterprises) unit in 2014 as part of a major initiative to support the MSME sector. Over the years, Najahi has been growing from strength to strength in expanding the various products and services to MSMEs.

Today, the beneficiaries of Najahi's products include businesses operating in retail, trading, services, manufacturing and processing, construction, hospitality, travel and tourism, mining and agricultural sectors.

The Najahi products suite includes the value-added Najahi Current Account, POS Terminal, Credit & Debit Card, Internet Banking and Collateral-free Financing. Najahi has received much praise from its customers for the various services and facilities provided since its inception as it has enabled customers to develop and expand their projects, in line with the development goals of economic diversification, job creation and increasing GDP.

PARTNERSHIP

Equinix to build first data centre in Salalah in partnership with Omantel

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Equinix, Inc. the world's digital infrastructure company, has announced plans to build a brand new data centre in the city of Salalah, which is located on the south coast of the Sultanate of Oman in the Middle East.

The data centre is being built in cooperation with Omantel, the regional leading wholesale carrier of the Middle East, and will be commercially and operationally managed in full by Equinix as a carrier-neutral and open access Equinix International Business Exchange (IBX) data centre.

The new site, named SN1, demonstrates Equinix's commitment to Oman and the Middle East region. SN1 will be the second carrier-neutral data centre to be built in Oman after MC1 in Muscat and will be Equinix's fifth data centre in the region alongside strategic sites in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. Once open, SN1 will become a key interconnectivity point for traffic flows between Asia, Europe, and Africa.

"We are delighted to extend our successful partnership with Equinix through establishing this new international subsea cable hub in Salalah, which is strategically located in the south of Oman, on the



coast of the Arabian Sea," Talal Al Mamari, Chief Executive Officer of Omantel stated.

"Salalah is the rising star of the Middle East for Asia to Europe and Africa subsea cable systems passing the region and is quickly establishing itself as the new main regional strategic interconnection point. Salalah will be the hub for a connectivity ecosystem much needed to meet an ever-increasing demand for onwards connectivity



to the Middle East and Africa," Al Mamari concluded.

By shortening the length and route of many highly strategic and important cables in the region, the new SN1 site in Salalah will change the landscape of global traffic flows by creating a much more cost-effective route to connect businesses to the Middle East. The new site will also offer direct fibre links to Equinix's MC1 in Muscat, the first carrier-neutral hub in the Middle

East, and enables carriers, content providers and cloud providers to co-locate critical IT infrastructure in the region.

"We are seizing on this fantastic opportunity to invest in Salalah by building a world-class data centre that will undoubtedly change the landscape of global traffic flows between three major continents," said Kamel Al-Tawil, Managing Director of Equinix Middle East and North Africa. "With access to several new and existing submarine cables, this major new interconnectivity point continues Equinix's strategy of developing network-dense and interconnectivity-rich ecosystems," he added.

The SN1 facility is the latest subsea landing site in a string of strategic subsea investments for Equinix. In December 2021, the company announced it had been selected by SUBCO for the hosting of the 9,800-kilometre Oman-Australia Cable (OAC) into its International Business Exchange (IBX) data centres in Perth, Australia and Muscat, Oman.

Additionally, in 2021, Equinix opened similar cable hosting sites in Genoa and Bordeaux as well as announced the opening of significant subsea connections with EllaLink in Portugal and Brazil.



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OIL MARKETS

Oil sees biggest weekly loss in 2 years, US crude below \$100 as Biden releases reserves

NEW YORK: Oil markets entered April with their worst weekly loss in two years as the Biden administration announced the largest ever crude reserve release that sent the benchmark US price below the key \$100-per-barrel support.

London-traded Brent, the global oil benchmark, settled down 32 cents, or 0.3 per cent, at \$104.39 per barrel after a session low at \$102.37. Week-to-date, Brent was down 13 per cent, its biggest weekly decline since April 2020.

Just on Thursday, Brent finished the first quarter up 39 per cent. New York-traded US crude benchmark West Texas Intermediate, or WTI, settled down \$1.01, or 1 per cent, at \$99.27 a barrel, after an intraday low of \$97.81. WTI was down almost 13 per cent on the week for its biggest weekly drop since April 2020. On Thursday, it settled in first-quarter trading up 33 per cent.

The Biden administration announced on Thursday that it will release a record of 1.0 million barrels per day of oil from the US Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) over the next six months to alleviate a global supply crunch.

The total of 180 million barrels from the release will be issued in two stages, the first between May and June and the second from August to October, the Department of Energy said.

The SPR had 568.3 million barrels



in stock as of the week ended March 25, according to the US Energy Information Administration. If 180 million barrels are taken out, the nation's oil reserve could be drawn down to a third of its current size.

Analysts across the energy sector warn of a worsening supply crunch in the coming months as the United States upholds its ban on Russian oil, while many other nations avoid business with Russia as well, due to sanctions im-

posed against Moscow over its war on Ukraine.

Despite such warnings, the world's biggest oil exporters in OPEC, along with their allies, which include Russia, decided on Thursday to do just a modest production increase for next month. The wider oil producers' alliance, known as OPEC+, said it would increase output in May by 432,000 barrels a day. That's a slight uptick from its typical monthly increment of 400,000 barrels per day in

market analysts said was in need of around 5 million barrels more.

President Joe Biden began tapping the SPR to provide US refiners with oil loaned from the reserve that they wouldn't have to pay for but return within a stipulated period. By doing this, his administration hoped there will be fewer transactions of oil in the open market and prices for both crude and fuel products like gasoline and diesel would come down.

Prior to this, Biden ordered the release of 50 million barrels from the SPR in November and 30 million last month, in coordination with the reserves released by other countries that included China, Japan, India, South Korea and Britain.

In recent months, the administration released some 3.0 million barrels weekly from the SPR. But its efforts have had a negligible effect so far on prices, with refiners turning out more fuel products than they usually do at this time of year, resulting in an extraordinarily high turnover of barrels.

OPEC+ said on Thursday that the recent volatility in oil prices was "not caused by fundamentals, but by ongoing geopolitical developments," in an apparent reference to the war in Ukraine. Brent hit 14-year highs of almost \$140 per barrel in the aftermath of the sanctions imposed on Russia and has largely held at above \$100 over the past month. -**ANI**



LIFE STYLE

EATING TWO SERVINGS OF AVOCADOS A WEEK MAY LOWER RISK OF CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE

A new study has suggested that eating two or more servings of avocado weekly was associated with a lower risk of cardiovascular disease.

The study was published in 'Journal of the American Heart Association'.

Avocados contain dietary fibre, unsaturated fats especially mono-unsaturated fat (healthy fats) and other favourable components that have been associated with good cardiovascular health. Clinical trials have previously found avocados have a positive impact on cardiovascular risk factors including high cholesterol.

Researchers have believed this is the first, large, prospective study to support the positive association between higher avocado consumption and lower cardiovascular events, such as coronary heart disease and stroke.

"Our study provides further evidence that the intake of plant-sourced unsaturated fats can improve diet quality and is an important component in cardiovascular disease prevention," said Lorena S. Pacheco, PhD, M.P.H., R.D.N., lead author of the study and a postdoctoral research fellow in the nutrition department at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health in Boston.

"These are particularly notable findings since the consumption of avocados has risen steeply in the U.S. in the last 20 years, according to data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture," she added.



For 30 years, researchers followed more than 68,780 women (ages 30 to 55 years) from the Nurses' Health Study and more than 41,700 men (ages 40 to 75 years) from the Health Professionals Follow-up Study. All study participants were free of cancer, coronary heart disease and stroke at the start of the study and living in the United States.

Researchers documented 9,185 coronary heart disease events and 5,290 strokes during more than 30 years of follow-up. Researchers assessed participants' diet using food frequency questionnaires given at the beginning of the study and then every four years. They

calculated avocado intake from a questionnaire item that asked about the amount consumed and frequency. One serving equalled half of an avocado or a half cup of avocado.

THE ANALYSIS FOUND:

1. After considering a wide range of cardiovascular risk factors and overall diet, study participants who ate at least two servings of avocado each week had a 16 per cent lower risk of cardiovascular disease and a 21 per cent lower risk of coronary heart disease, compared to those who never or rarely ate avocados.

2. Based on statistical modelling, replacing half a serving daily of margarine, butter, egg, yoghurt, cheese or processed meats with the same amount of avocado was associated with a 16 per cent to 22 per cent lower risk of cardiovascular disease events.

3. Substituting half a serving a day of avocado for the equivalent amount of olive oil, nuts and other plant oils showed no additional benefit.

4. No significant associations were noted in relation to stroke risk and how much avocado was eaten.

"The study's results have provided additional guidance for health care professionals to share. Offering the suggestion to replace certain spreads and saturated fat-containing foods, such as cheese and processed meats, with avocado is something physicians and other health care practitioners such as registered dietitians can do when they meet with patients, especially since avocado is a well-accepted food," Pacheco said.

"These findings are significant because a healthy dietary pattern is a cornerstone for cardiovascular health, however, it can be difficult for many Americans to achieve and adhere to healthy eating patterns," said Cheryl Anderson, PhD, M.P.H., FAHA, chair of the American Heart Association's Council on Epidemiology and Prevention.

"We desperately need strategies to improve intake of AHA-recommended healthy diets — such as the Mediterranean diet — that is rich in vegetables and fruits," said Anderson, who is a professor and dean of the Herbert Wertheim School of Public Health and Human Longevity Science at University of California San Diego.

"Although no one food is the solution to routinely eating a healthy diet, this study is evidence that avocados have possible health benefits. This is promising because it is a food item that is popular, accessible, desirable and easy to include in meals eaten by many Americans at home and in restaurants," Cheryl concluded. - **ANI**

IN PICTURES



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Tibetan antelopes seen in Gerze County of Ali Prefecture, Tibet

Aerial picture shows a number of Tibetan antelopes in Gerze County of Ali Prefecture, southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region. -Xinhua

Lao villagers enjoy better lives through selling tea leaves

Lao villagers sell tea leaves at the 36 Manor tea plantation in Champasak Province, Laos. Xinhua



Tabebuia Chrysantha blossoms in downtown Beirut, Lebanon

People walk past blooming Tabebuia Chrysantha trees in downtown Beirut, Lebanon. Xinhua

People visit International Date Palm Festival in Cairo

Exhibitors sell dates at the International Date Palm Festival in Cairo. Date is an essential food for breaking the fasting of Muslims during the Holy Month of Ramadan. Xinhua



People work on reeds to make decorative objects in Damascus, Syria

A man works on reeds to make a decorative object in Damascus, Syria. Xinhua



Art exhibition of 'Dream of the Red Chamber' opens in The Netherlands

Picture shows Anne Sytske Keijser (right) and Mark Leenhouts, both of whom are translators of the first full Dutch version of the Chinese novel 'Dream of the Red Chamber,' looking at a painting during an artistic exhibition at the China Cultural Centre in The Hague, the Netherlands. Xinhua



Chiranjeevi with Vivek Agnihotri during the promotion of Ravi Teja's upcoming movie 'Tiger Nageswara Rao'

Megastar Chiranjeevi exchanges greetings with film director Vivek Agnihotri during the promotion of actor Ravi Teja's upcoming movie 'Tiger Nageswara Rao', at HICC, in Hyderabad. ANI Photo



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ROUND-UP



All-new Nissan Pathfinder redefines standards of comfort performance

Embracing the toughness of its predecessors, the fifth-generation Pathfinder features a revolutionary design while redefining the standards of comfort, connectivity, and performance

MUSCAT: Furthering its SUV leadership and strengthening its line-up to cater to the evolving needs of customers in the Sultanate, Nissan Oman from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles (SBA) unveiled the all-new 2022 Pathfinder in the country recently. Embracing the toughness of its predecessors, the fifth-generation Pathfinder features a revolutionary design while redefining the standards of comfort, connectivity, and performance. Sharp, muscular design cues pay homage to the original 1987 model and convey both strength and capability, while an all-new 9-speed automatic transmission provides strong acceleration for a smooth and direct vehicle response. Within the cabin, infotainment and connectiv-



ity upgrades including the addition of ProPILOT technology help reduce distractions and enhance attentiveness for a more intuitive and confident driving experience. A spokesperson for Nissan Oman said, “The all-new 2022 Pathfinder

offers a bold, rugged, completely redesigned exterior and a family adventure-ready interior. A 271-horsepower 3.5-litre V6 engine is matched with an all-new 9-speed transmission for smooth, direct response. The all-new Intelligent

4WD with 7-position drive and terrain mode selector helps provide confident driving on-off and off-road, while Pathfinder’s best-in-class 1500 kg maximum towing capacity provides plenty of capability to haul heavy items. Available technology features include an all-new Head-up Display, 12.3-inch digital dashboard, ProPILOT Assist with Navi-Link and standard Nissan Safety Shield® 360.” Drivers can conquer the conditions with seven modes, including Eco, Sport, Sand and Mud. The all-new Pathfinder offers smarter towing with a driver-selectable tow mode, advanced tech, including trailer sway control, and a maximum capability to tow up to 1,500 kgs, you bring what you want with comfort and confidence. The tech-

nical specifications include 271 horse power, V6 Engine 3.5L, new nine-speed automatic transmission, Intelligent 4x4 New System, up to 1500kg of smarter towing capability. The all-new 2022 Pathfinder looks to the future with a return to its roots. This fifth generation is paying homage to the original one with elements such as three-notch front grille, triangular C-pillar and the side wheels fenders inspired by the first generation. The C-shape LED headlamps, V-motion grill and floating roof are complementing this modern design and show proudly our Nissan DNA. It boasts of a C-Shape LED standard headlamps, Up to 20” machine cut alloy wheels and is available in 10 single tone body colours and 5 dual tone body colours.

MID-SIZED SUV

New 2022 Chevrolet Traverse heralds revival of family getaways in Oman

MUSCAT: One of the world’s most highly rated mid-sized SUVs has arrived in the Omani market, offering large families the ultimate solution to their motoring needs in a roomy, luxurious, safety-enhanced and performance-packed setting. The 2022 Chevrolet Traverse, with a three-row configuration that can comfortably seat up to 8 passengers, is simply peerless in its segment. Its stylish looks, incredible roominess, top-class technology features, powerful V6 engine, user-friendly infotainment system and host of standard safety features, make it the enduring mid-size SUV of choice for families in the Sultanate of Oman. It is also designed and outfitted with an eye on adventure trips to the rugged outdoors, thus making the 2022 model an ideal option for family getaways. The 2022 Traverse’s exterior styling communicates robustness, albeit with a sporty edge. Accentuating its distinctive persona is the model’s all-new front fascia and grille design. But it’s the Chevy’s interior that speaks to its incredible value proposition. With the inclusion of a third row, the cavernous SUV can comfortably accommodate an entire family of up to eight passengers and yet offer ample cargo space in the rear. Fold away the third row and you have a cargo-hauling champ in the 2022 Trav-



erse with more space than any of its rivals in the segment. Even with a full load of passengers and cargo, the 2022 Traverse can pack a powerful punch. Standard across the trims is a 3.6L V6 engine that provides a substantial 310 horsepower and 266lb.-ft. (approximately 360 Nm) of torque. That considerable amount of power is sent to the front or all four wheels through a nine-speed shiftable automatic transmission. Complementing these power-packed features of the new Traverse is a profusion of tech enhancements and infotainment features, which help ensure a pleasurable drive. At its heart is an 8-inch Driver Infotainment Centre that provides convenience

through technology by having control of your vehicle right at your fingertips. Additionally, superior connectivity is assured through a plethora of USB ports distributed across the cabin. You can connect with some of your most used smartphone features, including music, messages and phone, on the touch-screen display. In the Sultanate of Oman, the new 2022 Chevrolet Traverse comes in three distinctive trims: LT, 2LT RS and Premier. Standard across all three trims are the following outstanding features: Automatic Start/Stop, 9-speed automatic transmission, Electronic Traction Control, Tri-Zone Automatic Air-Conditioning, Traction Mode Select, Keyless Entry &

Push Start Button, LED daytime driving lights, StabiliTrak Electronic Stability Control System and Forward Collision Alert. “With its stunning looks, spacious cabin and fuel-efficient powertrain, the 2022 Chevrolet Traverse cements its position as the ideal family SUV. It’s a solid, safe and sporty alternative to minivans, and aligns perfectly with the lifestyle choices of our high-end customers, particularly those with large families,” said Mandeep Singh, General Manager – Chevrolet, exclusive distributors of Chevrolet in the Sultanate of Oman. The 2022 Chevrolet Traverse is available in a range of striking colours at OTE showrooms distributed across the Sultanate.

SHOP AND WIN

Lulu picks winners of first three draws

MUSCAT: Lulu has announced a set of winners of the 1st, 2nd & 3rd draw of the Shop and Win promotion which offers OMR100,000 worth of cash prizes. The first-of-its-kind promotion, which coincides with pre-Ramadan shopping, kicked off on March 10 and will continue till May 7. To be part of the promotion, customers have to spend RO 10 at any Lulu stores to register for the e-Raffle draws. The promotion will give 281 customers the opportunity to win amazing cash prizes. There will be a Grand Prize of OMR 10,000 cash as well as Weekly Cash Prizes of OMR 5000, OMR 750, OMR 500, OMR 200 and OMR 100. The winners of the first three draws were selected through the e-Raffle draw held on the 18th, 25th and 30th of March at the



Baushar, Darsait & Wadi Lawami outlets respectively. While 105 winners were declared in these three draws, Hanan Al Barwani, Mohamed Ismaeel Al Dosawqi and Dipin E.V won a cash prize of OMR 5000 each and Yousef Al Farsi, Mohit Balani and Marvin Lupa took home OMR 750 each. 9 winners each won OMR 500, 30 win-

ners won OMR200 and 60 others won OMR100 each. Shabeer K.A., Regional Director - Lulu Hypermarkets Oman stated, “I congratulate the winners of the three draws of our Shop and Win Promotion. It’s really heartening to see the warm response to the promotion so far. We have organized this promotion in time

for Ramadan and Eid to offer customers a more rewarding experience while shopping at Lulu. We hope our shoppers make use of all the offers and deals available this Ramadan and Eid purchases too.” “There are five more draws left for our customers to try their luck during this period. This will be the perfect time for customers to take home some valuable cash prizes too,” he added. The Shop & Win promotion has set the tone for the festivities and has received a warm response from customers. There has been an increased footfall during the promotional period, which shows the excitement building up among customers. In an effort to enhance the experience, Lulu has also lined up several other offers to make shopping a memorable and fun-filled experience during Ramadan.

DIVERSE COLLECTION

Malabar Gold unveils Studs & Drops festival

MUSCAT: Malabar Gold & Diamonds announced the ‘Studs & Drops Festival’, showcasing an extensive collection of earrings in gold, diamonds and precious gems, giving their customers a unique chance to view and own a diverse collection of earrings from over 20 countries. The festival will run until April 17. Women often use earrings to complement their outfits and accentuate their style, preferring to always own an extensive collection. The jewellery chain presents a marvellous range of earrings for

today’s woman, considering the different roles she plays, be it at work, home, celebrating special occasions or adding sparkle to just another ordinary moment in life. This exclusive festival offers a stunning collection of earrings in gold, diamonds, and precious gems designed and handcrafted by skilled artisans from around the world. The customer gets to choose from hundreds of designs that are suitable to use as office wear, casual wear, party wear or bridal wear along with other international designs at affordable prices.

COSMETIC SERVICES

EMC skin clinic inaugurates vascular surgery department



MUSCAT: EMC inaugurated vascular surgery department and launched the new product IQ- 7 Frankincense Age Define Secret under the patronage of Her Highness Sayyida Hujaija bint Jaifar Al Said, Chairperson of the Association for the Care of Disabled Children along with felicitating the mothers with the token of appreciation on the occasion of Omani Mother’s Day on March 21. EMC is the leading centre in cosmetic services in dermatology, hair removal laser, dental, orthodontics and plastic surgery which has been proven by several awards which EMC received for the best

clinic, exceptional services. Dr Deep Makkar, General Manager welcomed the guests and said, “Owing to the great popularity of EMC services and products and to cater to the demand of EMC patients to get the solution for their varicose veins problems, it gives me immense pleasure to add vascular surgery department with highly qualified and skilled, UK certified consultant surgeon Dr Tamer Fouad Sayed with more than 20 years of experience and launching of our Product IQ-7 Frankincense Age Define Secret for the youthful appearance of the skin.”



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ROUND-UP

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Youth Sada and BP Oman launch 4th edition of Reading Family programme

It aims to instil the culture of reading and literature within the Omani community



MUSCAT: In partnership with BP Oman, Youth Sada launched its fourth version of the Reading Family programme. It aims to instil the culture of reading and literature within the

Omani community by nurturing children's enthusiasm in reading. It also encourages Omani youth to develop their capabilities in delivering literature workshops

and raises awareness within the community on narrative methods involved to encourage reading among the future generations. The programme includes eight

main activities which are the Reading Family Forum, the Reading Ambassadors Network, the 'Rawafid' Training Programme (Youth Training Programme), 'My Child Reads' sessions, 'Hakawati' sessions, a picture story telling competition, educational publications and a book fair to sell children books. This social investment programme managed by bp is continuously benefiting communities with the contribution of our Block 61 partners. The Reading Family Forum offers various academic workshops, games and recreational challenges designed for children. Whereas the 'Rawafid' Training Programme aims to qualify and train

30 Omanis in children literature. As for the Reading Ambassadors Network, it aims to enhance the reading performance among 35 kids with the support of parents through continuous reading and evaluation by specialised supervisors. The programme also offers 'My Child Reads' sessions which targets mothers and helps develop the essential skills needed on how to communicate with their children and encourage them to read. Shamsa Al-Rawahi, bp Oman social investment manager, commented: "We are proud of our partnership with Youth Sada as it works on creating a rich culture of reading in the Al Dhahirah region by de-

living specialised reading programmes. Reading is a core part of education and seeking knowledge, which is in line of Oman's 2040 vision of advancing education." Suleiman Al Maqrashi, Project Manager at Youth Sada, commented saying: "There's no doubt that these types of programmes encourage the culture of reading and literature among children and families, and this was evident through the outcomes of the last three versions of the programmes whereby 1096 children benefitted from this programme. We were able to encourage the habit of reading among hundreds of families within our region."

OFFER



'Biggest Excitement' benefits on Toyota RAV4

MUSCAT: Now is the best time to own the exciting Toyota RAV4 SUV and get exclusive benefits - Service from 2 Years / 20,000 Kms up to 4 Years / 40,000 km (Whichever is earlier) and 1 Year of Insurance or Cash Gift in lieu of insurance OMR250. (Prospective buyers may be advised that the benefits vary between model variants, model year and manufacturing year. Terms & Conditions apply.) The campaign

is valid up to May 19. Visit the showroom for exact details. The RAV4 makes a fine mark with its two powertrain options. One is a 2.5-litre four-cylinder engine which produces 204 hp and 24.8 kgm. of torque and is mated to a an eight-speed automatic transmission. The other is a hybrid system that combines two power sources consisting of a petrol engine and electric motor producing a combined power of 219 hp.

OMAN INTERNATIONAL HOSPITAL

OIH conducts series of electrophysiology intervention

MUSCAT: Oman International Hospital is happy to share the news that it has successfully performed Electrophysiology Intervention with Ablation at Oman International hospital which is a new service in the private sector in Oman. The invasive cardiac electrophysiology procedure was conducted by a well-known international cardiologist and Senior Consultant in Cardiology / interventional Electrophysiology, Dr Ghaliah Al Mohan i(MBBS, MD, EP MSc, PHD, CEPS, FHRS, FESC). She is one of the most eminent certified electrophysiologists and heart failure in the MENA region. The EP procedure is performed by cardiologists with subspecialised heart rhythm disorders to ascertain heart conditions and determine the risk of sudden cardiac arrest/death. Cardiac ablation is very effective and is successful in more than 90 per cent of patients undergoing



the treatment. It also eliminates the need for long-term medication and reduces the high risk of morbidity and sometimes mortality. Dr Ghaliah joined OIH as part of an expert team of cardiologists with over 20 years of experience in cardiology and 14 years in electrophysiology (EP) and arrhythmias and has performed more than 6000 procedures between device



implantation and ablation with different energies. She is aiming to develop an arrhythmia unit at OIH to screen and treat all patients suffering from arrhythmias including an expert opinion regarding cardiac screening of athletes to stratify them for risk of syncope or sudden death. Dr Ghaliah as an admirable record of qualifications and achievements, being a certified heart rhythm doctor/ (IBHRE) specialist and holds a PHD in Heart Failure management including im-

plantation of cardiac devices like PM, ICD and CRT, EP studies and ablation of Complex Arrhythmias and syncope. She is also a Fellow of Heart Rhythm Society (FHRS), Fellow of European Society of Cardiology (FESC), Member of European Heart Rhythm Association (EHRA) and board of trustees at the World Arrhythmia society. After working in Italy for over 10 years, Dr Ghaliah moved to Royal Hospital Muscat in September 2015 as a Sr. Consultant Cardiologist and developed the service of arrhythmia for the Sultanate, and was recognised for this. Dr Ghaliah is well known international speaker in world class conferences, reviewer of Europace and editorial board of JAFIB Journal. She is also on the advisory board of emerging new technologies. She was a winner of Cuore Sabina Award in Italy for great Professionality and Humanity in Cardiology in 2013.

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ART AND CRAFT EXTRAVAGANZA

Timeless celebration of Maldivian culture at HukuruUfaa by Ozen Reserve Bolifushi



MUSCAT: HukuruUfaa, which means Friday Happiness in Dhi-vehi, is an inspiring art and craft extravaganza that unfolds under starry twilight skies - inviting guests to discover passionate stories of local craftsmen, soak in enchanting music performances, and immerse in an elegant cultural experience that is distinctly Maldivian. Ozen Reserve Bolifushi stays true to its brand promise of curating a melange of exceptional experiences rooted in indigenous culture with the soulful 'HukuruUfaa' - launched on March 8. HukuruUfaa offers an authentic glimpse into the Maldivian way of life. Every week on Friday evening, three different craftsmen are invited to the resort to participate in the elegant island bazaar, set to the backdrop of majestic sunset hues.

Peaceful poolside settings, charming displays of intricate jewellery, handloom, and handicraft, and free flowing conversations with local artists evoke an indulgent bohemian vibe. Traditional motifs are highlighted throughout the experience. Dhoni-shaped display platforms and food stations mirroring Badhiges (traditional kitchens in the Maldives) transform the OZAR poolside deck and beach. Guests can savour authentic Maldivian, Indian and Sri Lankan aperitifs as they walk around and appreciate the enchanting art displays. Luisa Lali, General Manager of Ozen Reserve Bolifushi, says, "It is with the spirit of preserving Maldivian culture, that we launched our first HukuruUfaa event. Bolifushi Island offers an enriching island lifestyle."

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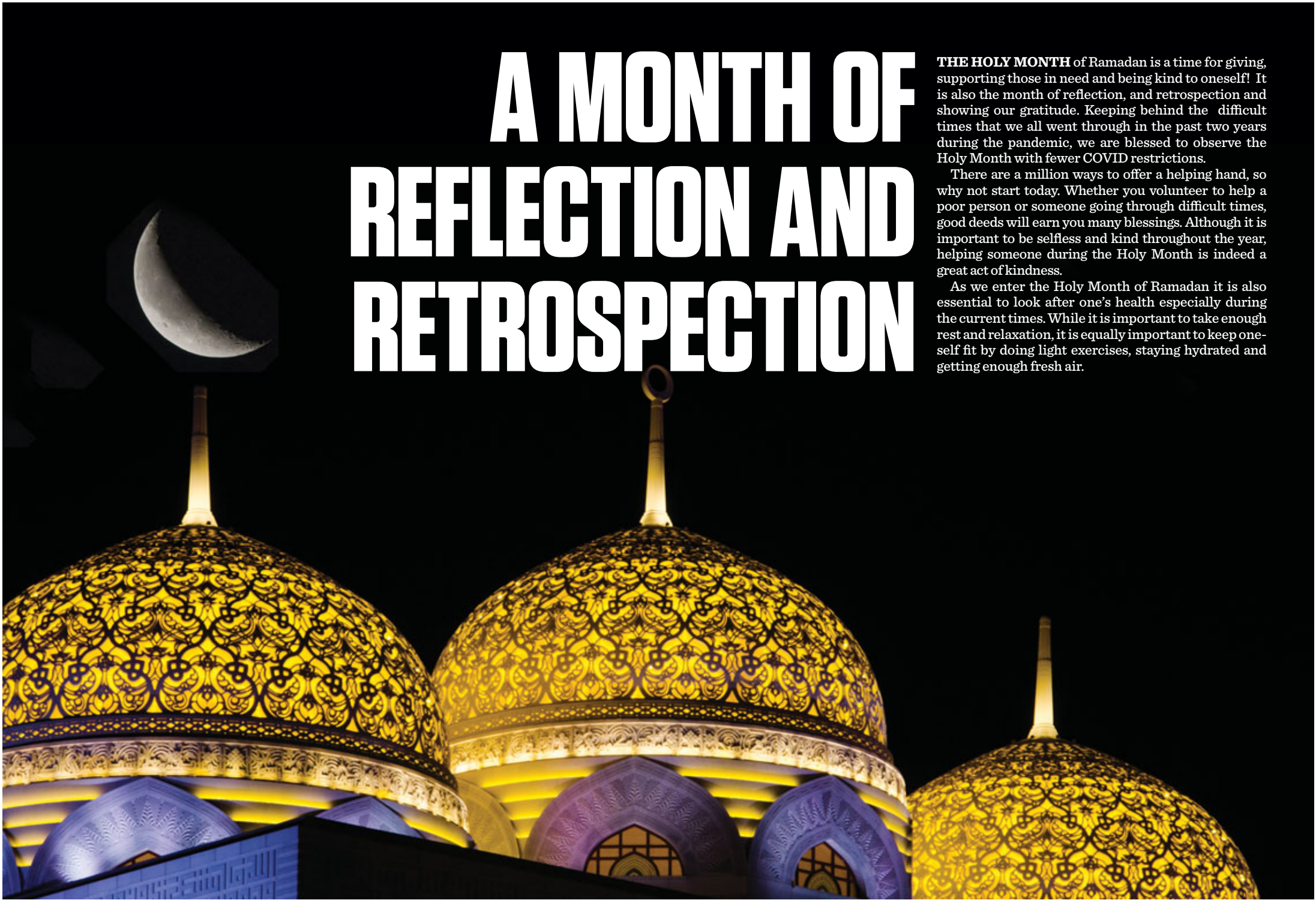




Ahlan Ramadan

TIMES OF OMAN SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

SUNDAY, APRIL 3, 2022



A MONTH OF REFLECTION AND RETROSPECTION

THE HOLY MONTH of Ramadan is a time for giving, supporting those in need and being kind to oneself! It is also the month of reflection, and retrospection and showing our gratitude. Keeping behind the difficult times that we all went through in the past two years during the pandemic, we are blessed to observe the Holy Month with fewer COVID restrictions.

There are a million ways to offer a helping hand, so why not start today. Whether you volunteer to help a poor person or someone going through difficult times, good deeds will earn you many blessings. Although it is important to be selfless and kind throughout the year, helping someone during the Holy Month is indeed a great act of kindness.

As we enter the Holy Month of Ramadan it is also essential to look after one's health especially during the current times. While it is important to take enough rest and relaxation, it is equally important to keep oneself fit by doing light exercises, staying hydrated and getting enough fresh air.

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Ahlan Ramadan





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Promo Period - 20 March to 23 April 2022

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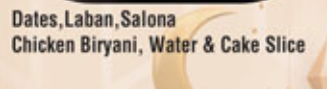
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omr 2.990 discount 20.26%
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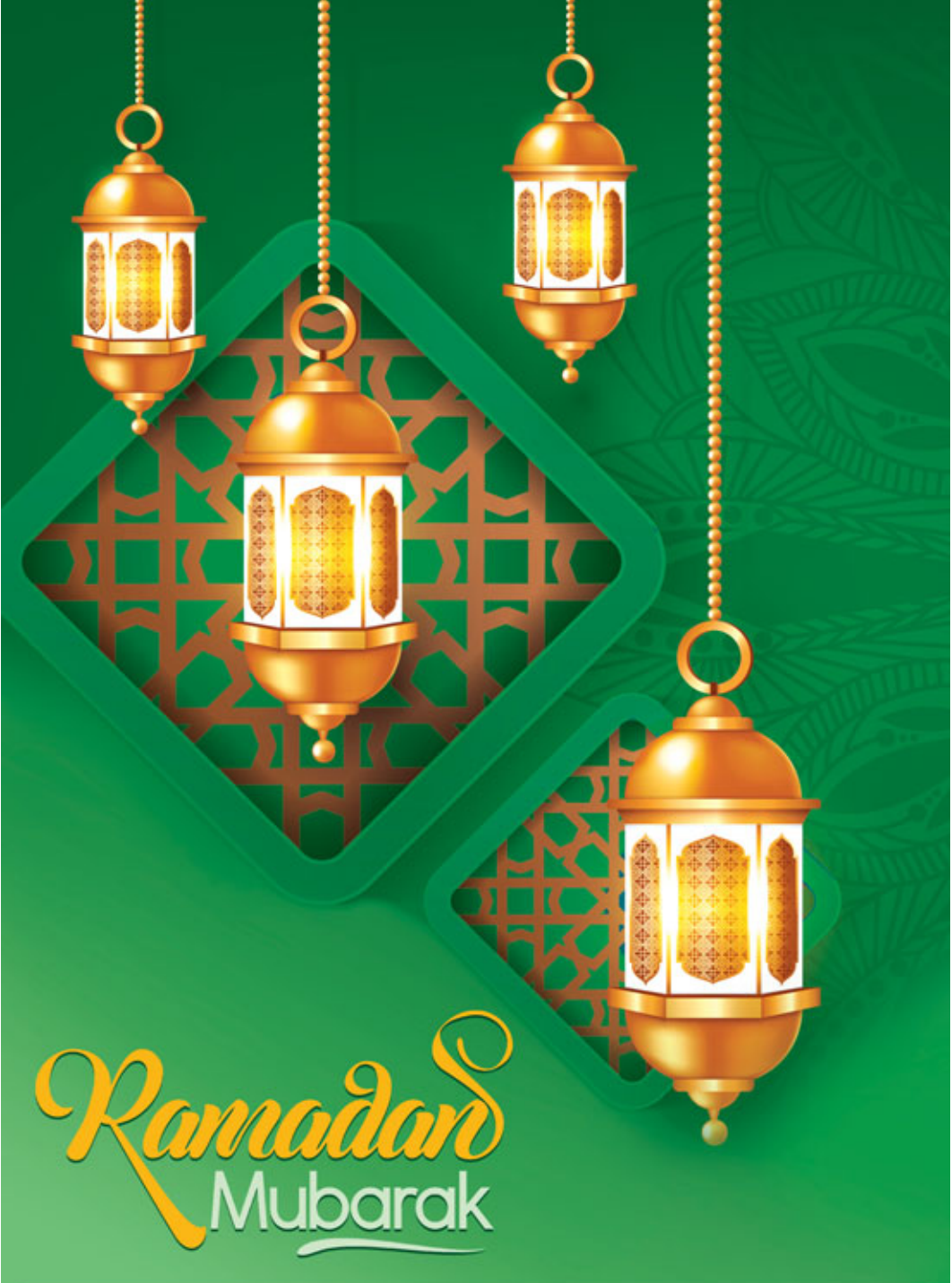
omr 1.390 discount 38.35%
~~2.255~~
غسلول الادي اصلي ديتول ٢٠٠x٣ مل
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omr 0.990 discount 28.77%
~~1.390~~
رول سفرة مخطط سبار ١٢٠ x ١٠٠ سم
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omr 0.990 discount 36.12%
~~1.550~~
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Ahlan Ramadan



RAMADAN RECIPES



Stuffed flatbread with pumpkin

- INGREDIENTS**

 - 2 cups self-raising flour
 - 1/2 teaspoon salt
 - Water
 - Pumpkin filling:
 - 1 large onion, finely chopped
 - 1 can of pumpkin puree
 - 2-3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
 - 1/2 cup walnuts, finely ground or crushed with a mortar and pestle
 - 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper
 - 1 teaspoon black pepper
 - 1 tablespoon coriander seeds, crushed
 - Salt, to taste
 - Oil, for frying
- Plain yoghurt, for serving

PREPARATION

 - Measure flour and salt into a large bowl. Knead or several minutes more until it is smooth and elastic. Cover the bowl and let it rest for at least 20 minutes while you make the filling.
 - For the filling: Place chopped onion in a bowl with pumpkin puree (roasted pumpkin grated into a bowl), chopped garlic, crushed walnuts, cayenne pepper, black pepper, and coriander seed. Mix well and add salt to taste.
- Roll the dough (each tennis ball size) about 10 inches in diameter. Spread a spoonful of filling evenly on one side of the dough circle with the back of a spoon; fold the other half over the top of the mixture to form a semicircle and crimp the edges with your fingers.
 - Heat a tablespoon of oil in a large skillet. Place the flatbread one or two at a time in the pan, flattening them a bit more with your fingers. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes on each side, flipping with a spatula, until golden brown all over.
 - Serve with plain yoghurt.

Mango mint drink

- INGREDIENTS**
- 1 large raw mango
 - A bunch of mint leaves
 - 2 cup sugar
 - 2 big lemons, squeezed
 - 2 1/2 cups water
 - 1/2 tsp roasted cumin powder
 - 1 tsp black salt
 - Ice cubes, a handful
- PREPARATION**
- Cut the raw mango into pieces.
 - Mix all the above ingredients except ice and blend well.
 - Put the ice cubes in individual glasses and pour the drink.
 - Garnish with mint leaves.





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Chicken Stew

INGREDIENTS

- 2 medium white onions, sliced
- 2 carrots, peeled and cut into 5cm pieces
- 2 chillies, cut in half, seeds and ribs removed
- One piece ginger, peeled and sliced
- 5-6 peppercorns
- 2 bay leaves
- 4 cups water
- 4 boneless, skinless chicken thighs, each cut into 4 pieces
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 potatoes, peeled and cut into cubes
- 4 tomatoes, cut into cubes
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 3-4 spinach leaves, cut into pieces

PREPARATION

- Combine the onions, carrots, chillies, ginger, bay leaves, peppercorns, and water in a medium pot and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to medium, add the chicken thighs, and simmer, uncovered, for 15 minutes. Add the chicken breasts and simmer until cooked, about 10 minutes.
- Remove the chicken from the cooking liquid and set aside. Transfer the vegetables to a food processor; discard the bay leaves. Puree the vegetables until smooth; set aside.
- Heat the oil in a large sauté pan over medium heat. When it begins to shimmer, add the potatoes and sauté until they are golden brown, about 10 minutes. Add the chicken pieces and brown them on all sides, about 10 minutes.
- Remove the pan from the heat.
- Stir in vegetable puree along with the tomatoes, chicken, and potatoes. Bring to boil, then reduce and simmer until heated through, about 5 minutes.
- Remove from the heat and season to taste with salt. Add spinach and stir well.
- Serve with rice.



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How to transform your eating habits this Ramadan

GAUTAM VISWANATHAN

As many people all across Oman and the rest of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries gear up for Ramadan, they have been advised to switch to healthier eating options to make sure they get the most out of their fast, and to reduce the stress their body undergoes after an entire day of abstaining from food and water.

The Gulf Health Council of the GCC has provided people who plan to fast with a list of healthy food alternatives that they can benefit from both in the short-term during Ramadan, and afterwards, so that they can lead healthy lives.

Oman's Ministry of Health has also advised people to cut down on foods that have excessive salt. "Excess salt has many damaging effects on health, such as high blood pressure, heart disease and kidney problems," said the ministry in an advisory. "Reduce the amount of salt in your menu, and live a long, healthy life."

As part of the ministry's National Nutrition Campaign, MOH also provided people alternatives to salt that they could add to their food, reminding people that refined salt is more harmful than its natural counterpart.

"Reduce salt gradually until your taste buds adapt, and use herbs, spices, garlic, and citrus instead of salt to add flavour to your food," said the ministry. "Use other alternatives to salt, such as garlic,

spices such as cinnamon and cardamom, and other flavourings that replace the taste of salt."

The Royal Hospital in Muscat also launched an awareness campaign to advise people on how unhealthy eating during Ramadan can affect people's hearts.

"In our keenness to educate patients, we are pleased to present the 'My Medicine during Ramadan' initiative to present pharmaceutical advice and instructions related to heart patients, while responding to all inquiries people may have," said the Royal Hospital in a statement prior to the event.

The event was organised by the National Centre for Cardiac Medicine and Surgery in the hospital, in collaboration with the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs, the Nursing Department at the National Medical Centre, and the Nutrition Department of the Royal Hospital.

While it is recommended for those who observe Ramadan to fast from sunrise until sunset, people with diabetes are advised to fast only if they are able to.

"Your ability to fast depends on the type of diabetes, the type of treatment, and presence of any complications or comorbidities," said the Ministry of Health in an awareness alert addressed to people with diabetes. "Therefore, you have to consult your treatment team on your ability to fast, and to adjust your medication to avoid any complications."



Excess salt has many damaging effects on health, such as high blood pressure, heart disease and kidney problems. Reduce the amount of salt in your menu, and live a long, healthy life.



What you're currently eating	What you may want to switch to
Food high in salt content	Add spices or some lime to your food
Fried foods	Grilled foods
Potato chips	Unsalted nuts
Flavoured yoghurt with high sugar and fat content	Fruits and low-fat yoghurt – add a teaspoon of honey
Soft drinks that have high amounts of added sugar	Sparkling fruit waters
French fries	Oven-baked carrots and/or sweet potatoes

Source: Gulf Health Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council



DIABETES

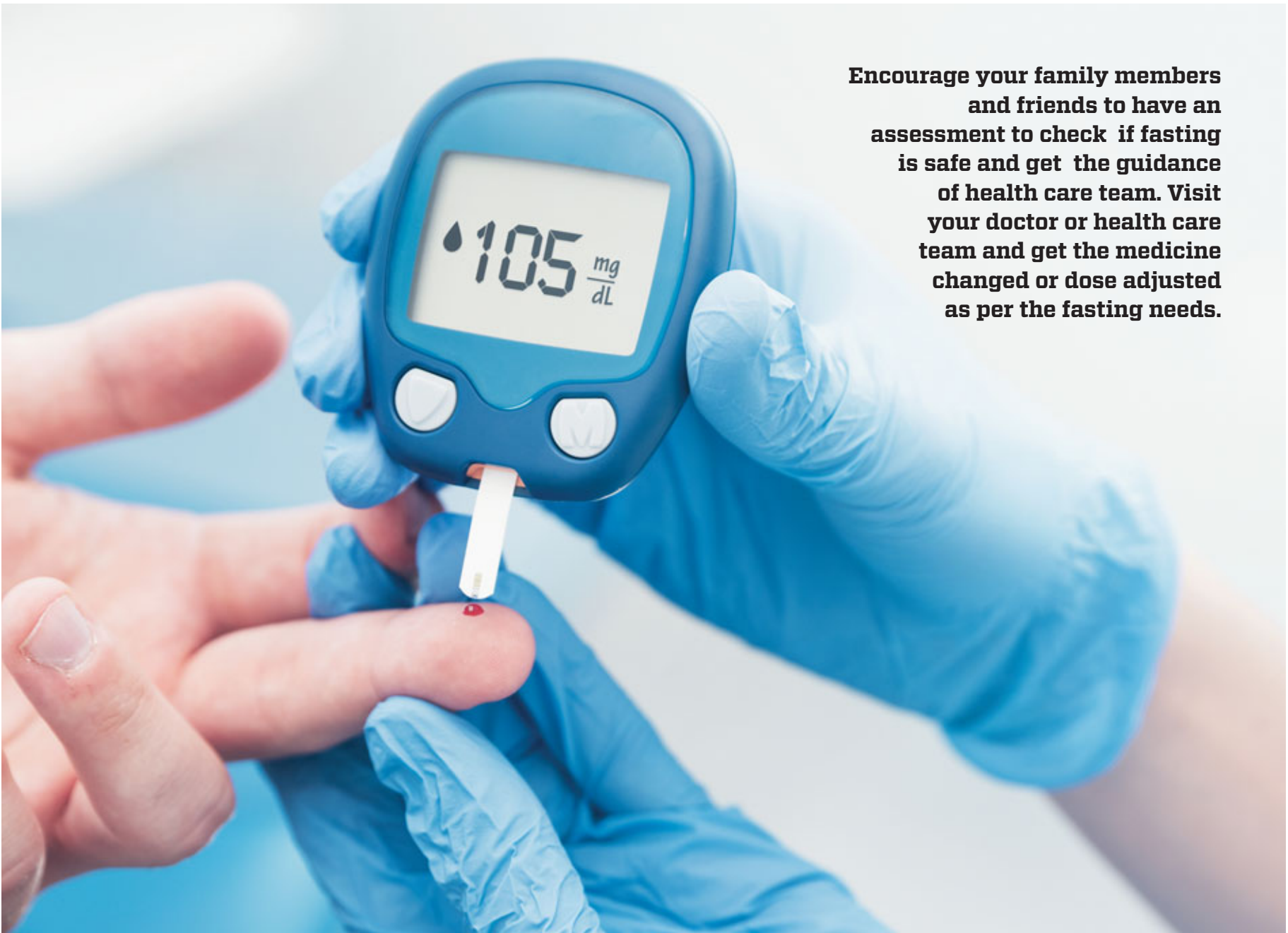
Management of diabetes during the Holy Month

Sumaira Fatima

Fasting during the Holy Month of Ramadan is one of the five pillars of Islam. Fasting helps to attain spiritual growth, better self control and learn kindness. People with diabetes need special care during the fasting month. The total time of fasting ranges from 12 to 19 hours in various countries. Awareness plays a significant role in better management of diabetes during Ramadan.

It is based on five important factors.

- Assessment of risk
 - Glucose monitoring
 - Diet, nutrition and hydration
 - Medication
 - Exercise and sleep
- Encourage your family members and friends to have an assessment to check if fasting is safe and get the guidance of health care team.
- Visit your doctor or health care team and get the medicine changed or dose adjusted as per the fasting needs.
 - Blood glucose monitoring at home is needed in moderate risk patients and among insulin users. It should be done at various times of the day. Awareness of hypoglycemia or low blood sugar (less than 70mg/dl or 4mmol) is essential. Usual symptoms are trembling, sweatings, headache, palpitations and loss of orientation. If that occurs, patients need to break the fast with fast acting sugars like dates, honey or juice. If the blood glucose reading is between 70-90 mg/dl, it needs to be rechecked in 1 hour again.
 - Encourage healthy eating. Fasting period will be approximately 14 hours in Oman.
 - Suhoor is the most important meal of Ramadan. Do not skip Suhoor. Have your Suhoor meal before Fajr prayers. Use whole grains with high fibre content. Depending on your convenience divide the evening meals in two — Iftar and dinner. If needed add an



Encourage your family members and friends to have an assessment to check if fasting is safe and get the guidance of health care team. Visit your doctor or health care team and get the medicine changed or dose adjusted as per the fasting needs.

additional snack among insulin users post Taraweeh.

- Plan simple time-saving meals which are stomach friendly and easy to digest. Opt for whole cereals grains avoid refined flour or white breads.

- Reduce the frequency of deep fried foods. Instead use stews, grilled or baked foods or use an air fryer.
- Cut down on sweets, desserts, jellies which contain lot of added sugars. Avoid junk foods, processed

foods and carbonated drinks .

- Most of the people prefer to eat post Taraweeh. Avoid eating heavy meals at late night.
- People with diabetes should not exercise during fasting hours to avoid hypoglycemia or low blood

sugars . Ideal time to exercise is post Iftar with good hydration.

- Night sleep is the most neglected factor in Ramadan. Try to have at least 4 to 5 hours of sleep to worship better and function well throughout the day.

- Family members should stay aware of low blood sugar signs and provide care in terms of right diet, medications and sleep.

(The writer is a clinical dietitian & diabetes educator at IMC-Apollo Sugar Muscat .

FASTING DURING RAMADAN

What you need to do if you want to stay full for longer this Ramadan

Gautam Viswanathan

Whole grains, cereals, fresh fruits and vegetables and foods with high water content have been advised by doctors for people who will be fasting this Ramadan.

“You should cut down on caffeinated drinks like coffee, tea and colas, as they have a diuretic effect and cause fluid loss,” said Dr Maisa Mahmood Al Salmi, dietitian at Al Hayat International Hospital. “Some vegetables such as watercress and bottle gourd and fruits like watermelon and kiwis are known to have high water content and are recommended.

She asked people fasting to try incorporating foods from all major food groups, including fruits and vegetables. Consuming fibre-rich foods such as oatmeal, whole grains and chickpeas during Ramadan is also ideal, as they are digested slower than processed foods so people feel full longer.

“During iftar, break your fast with dates and laban, along with fresh fruits,” she said. “If needed, porridges can be added as well. Do not have fried foods immediately after breaking your fast. You can go for prayers and then have one or two pieces of fried item like samosas or kababs. It is preferred however, that you use an air fryer.

“Soon afterwards, have a proper balanced meal with carbohydrates, pulses, lentils, laban, and a protein source such as skinless or lean meat cooked in less oil. You can add salads for fibre, and even some soup,” she added. “For suhoor, add more proteins and healthy fats, along with complex



Whole grains, cereals, fresh fruits and vegetables and foods with high water content have been advised by doctors for people who will be fasting this Ramadan.

carbohydrates so that you have energy for the whole day.”

Parents overeating after breaking their fast also sends the wrong message to children, who could take it as a sign to indulge in their favourite foods often: a habit that could lead to obesity. Obesity in children leads to high blood pressure, cholesterol, joint pain, low self-confidence, type-2 diabetes, anxiety and depression, according to the Gulf Health Council.

Oman’s Ministry of Health has

also put out a list of dos and don’ts for nursing mothers: during the early stage of childhood development, mother’s milk is considered extremely important for the child, while it also protects the mother from many diseases such as diabetes, while reducing the risk of breast and ovarian cancer, said Saada bint Mohammed Al Maamari, a senior legal nurse.

“It also helps women lose weight after birth,” she said. “A nursing mother can fast during Ramadan safely, if she does not suffer from anaemia, kidney problems or any other concerns identified by a medical specialist.”

According to Al Maamari, during Ramadan, nursing mothers are required to eat healthy, balanced meals that meet all their nutritive needs, and must start their breakfast with a cup of water or fat-free milk, along with some dates or any other fruit.

“Take the necessary nutritional supplements, according to the doctor’s instructions,” she added. “Avoid drinking caffeinated liquids such as coffee and soft drinks; eat several small meals in the period after breaking your fast, and until the time of suhoor.”

Also a no-no for nursing mothers are salty foods, items high in fat, and pickles. They are also required to drink enough water, and to focus on eating foods that stimulate milk production, such as oats. “If you develop a severe headache, blurred vision, low blood pressure, fatigue, a drop in blood sugar levels or dizziness, any abnormal ailment, or if the growth and weight of the infant are affected, you should consult a doctor,” she said.



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From the speech of **His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik**,
23 February, 2020



Sunday, April 3, 2022
Special Supplement



As part of its strategy aimed at enhancing its social and economic impact Zubair SEC Unveils its New Identity

MUSCAT: Nearly nine years after its establishment in 2013, The Zubair Small Enterprises Centre “The Zubair SEC” today revealed its new identity, which was designed to match its strategy of expanding by providing its services to the local community.

The Centre revealed its new name ‘The Zubair Enterprise Development Centre’, which reflects its new direction to provide its diversified advisory services to the largest number of institutions and commercial companies, regardless of their size.

The new identity of the Centre was revealed during a special ceremony held at Bait Al Zubair Museum, in the presence of a number of members of The Zubair Corporation’s

Board of Directors, as well as the strategic partners of the Centre, and a number of representatives of government and private entities related to the development of institutions, as well as a number of the Centre’s members from small enterprises.

On the inauguration, Al-Zubair bin Muhammad Al-Zubair, Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Zubair Corporation, Commented: “Today we are meeting again after the recent crisis that the world has experienced as a result of Covid-19, asking The Almighty to grant us good health and help us to serve our dear country. Today, we celebrate together the launch of the centre’s new identity, which was designed to comply with

its strategy of expanding by providing its services to the local community, which reflects the new trend to provide diversified advisory services to the largest number of institutions and commercial companies, regardless of their size.”

Commenting on this step, Said Salim Al Sahib, Director of The Zubair Enterprise Development Centre said, “Over the past years, the Centre has been able to occupy a leading position in supporting small enterprises and emerging entrepreneurs, as the number of the Centre’s members exceeded 1,000 during this period. Today, the Centre is taking a strategic step by launching its new identity, ‘The Zubair Enterprise Development Centre’ in order to expand its services

to include institutions and companies of all sizes. This step is in line with our aspirations to play a greater role in achieving Oman’s future vision 2040, which aims to enhance entrepreneurship opportunities in the Sultanate.”

He added, “The past years have proven the necessity of providing quality advisory services to emerging companies to help them grow and expand, which will have a positive impact on the national economy. We are happy to have played this role over the past few years, and today we are expanding in this field to serve all types of companies, which will maximize the impact at all levels. We would like to extend our thanks and appreciation to The Zubair Corporation, which

established this entity to be its main arm in the field of social responsibility, believing in the importance of this sector in supporting the national economy of the Sultanate. Also, we would like to extend our thanks and appreciation to all partners in the public and private sectors who have participated in this march over the years. Thanks also goes to the Centre’s team, who spared no effort in providing everything that would help and support institutions to grow sustainably.”

The Centre is one of the initiatives emanating from the vision of The Zubair Corporation for its role in society.

Since its establishment, The Zubair SEC has been distinguished by its high professionalism, and the diversity in the

fields of knowledge it provides, as well as the multiplicity of its accumulated experiences through its support and communication with various institutions.

In addition to its network of contacts and strategic partners locally and internationally, the Centre offers a wide range of services, including advisory solutions, guidance, business development opportunities, capacity building, opportunities for networking and knowledge transfer.

In addition to signing business contract opportunities, the direct support programme annually selects ten winners to obtain extensive consultations, business identity building services, and assistance in product or service stability.

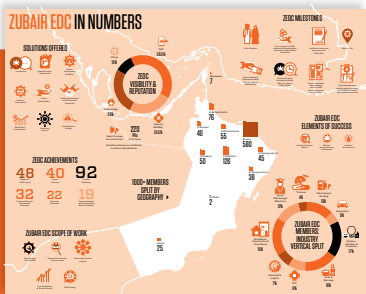


The Centre has changed its name to ‘Zubair Enterprises Development Centre’ to reflect its new direction to provide its diversified advisory services to the largest number of commercial institutions and companies, regardless of their size: **Said Bin Salim Al Sahib, Director of The Zubair Enterprises Development Centre > 6**



Zubair Enterprises Development Centre (Zubair EDC) enables young entrepreneurs to run their businesses efficiently and effectively

7



4-5



The name has been changed to “Zubair Enterprises Development Centre (Zubair EDC)” to reflect its new trend to provide various consulting services to the largest number of commercial institutions and companies, regardless of their size.



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Zubair EDC
مركز الزبير لتطوير المؤسسات
Zubair Enterprises Development Centre

This is in line with our aspirations to play a greater role in achieving Oman Vision 2040, which aims to enhance entrepreneurship opportunities in Oman.



As part of its strategy aimed at enhancing its social and economic impact The Zubair Small Enterprises Centre unveils its

New Identity



Al-Zubair Bin Muhammad Al-Zubair,
Vice Chairman of the Board of
Directors of the Al-Zubair Foundation

MUSCAT: The Zubair Small Enterprises Centre recently revealed its new identity, which is designed to comply with its strategy of expanding its services to the local community. This comes after about nine years of its establishment in 2013. The Centre revealed its new name, “Zubair Enterprises Development Centre”, which reflects its orientation to provide its diversified consulting and advisory services to the largest number of commercial institutions and companies, regardless of their size. The new identity of the Centre was revealed during a special ceremony held at Bait Al Zubair Museum in Muscat, in the presence of a number of members of the Zubair Corporation’s Board of Directors, as well as the Centre’s strategic partners, and a number of representatives of government and private agencies related to enterprise development, as well as a number of members of the Centre from small and medium enterprises.

On this inauguration, Al Zubair Bin Mohammed Al Zubair, Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Zubair Foundation, said: “Here we are meeting again after the harsh conditions that the world has experienced as a result of the Covid-19 crisis, asking Allah to grant us abundant health and help us to serve our dear country.”

“We celebrate the launch of the Centre’s new identity, which was designed to comply with its strategy of expanding its services to the local community. This reflects the new trend to provide diversified consulting and advisory services to the largest number of commercial institutions and companies regardless of their size,” he added.

For his part, Said Bin Salem Al Sahib, Head of the Zubair Enterprises Development Centre, said: “Over the past years, the Centre has been able to occupy a leading position in supporting small enterprises and emerging entrepreneurs. The number of the Centre members has exceeded 1,000 members benefiting from its various services. Today, the Centre is taking a strategic step by launching its new identity, “Zubair Enterprises Development Centre”, to be able to expand its services to in-

clude institutions and companies of all sizes. This is in line with our aspirations to play a greater role in achieving Oman Vision 2040, which aims to enhance entrepreneurship opportunities in the Sultanate.”

“The past years have proven the necessity of having bodies concerned with providing quality advisory services to emerging companies to help them grow and expand, which will have a positive impact on the national economy. We are happy to have played this role during the past years. Today we are expanding in this field to serve all types of companies, which will maximize the impact at all levels.

“Here, we have to thank and appreciate the The Zubair Corporation, which established this entity to be its main arm in the field of social responsibility, believing in the importance of this sector in supporting the national economy of the Sultanate. Thanks are due to all the partners in the public and private sectors who have joined us in this march over the years. The first and last thanks go to the Centre’s team, who spared no effort in providing everything that would help and support institutions to grow sustainably,” he added.

Since its establishment, the Zubair Centre has been distinguished by its high professionalism, the diversity of the fields of knowledge it provides, as well as the multiplicity of its experiences, which have been accumulated through its support and communication with various institutions, in addition to its network of contacts and strategic partners locally and internationally. The Centre offers a range of services, including consulting and advisory solutions, guidance, business development opportunities, competency building, opportunities for networking, acquaintance, and knowledge transfer, in addition to the direct support program that annually selects ten winners to obtain financial grants, extensive consultations, business identity building services, and assistance in product or service stability, in addition to opportunities for obtaining commercial contracts.



مركز الزبير Zubair EDC

مركز الزبير لتطوير المؤسسات
Zubair Enterprises Development Centre



Said Bin Salim Al Sahib,
Director of The Zubair
Enterprises Development Centre



OUR PROFILE

Zubair Enterprises Development Centre (Zubair EDC) is one of the initiatives which emanated from The Zubair Corporation's social responsibility strategic vision towards the Omani society. The vision reflects the corporation's belief in the importance of small enterprises in enhancing the national economy and contributing to sustainable socio-economic development.

Established in 2013, Zubair EDC is today a professional body that capitalises on its high pro-

fessionalism, diversified offered knowledge, wide range of accumulated expertise, and its own global and local network and strategic partners. The Centre also builds on The Zubair Corporation's strengths to lead positive change in the local business environment, which supports small businesses and promising initiatives in the Sultanate. Services extended to Zubair EDC members include clinical solution-based advisory, capacity building, networking platforms, business development, and a yearly programme that se-

lects ten winners who receive a financial grant, as well as intensive advisory services, branding, packaging, product stabilization, as well as business development. Zubair EDC has opened its membership to Omani entrepreneurs to provide them with various benefits, including:

- Direct access to the Centre's experts for business advisory services and the opportunity to connect with the respective staff in person or through various other channels.
- Management tools such as

business plan templates, organisational structure options, and feasibility studies.

- Professional, educational and social programmes and events held regularly for small enterprises, including seminars, training workshops, and networking engagements.
- Advisory services by specialised advisors.
- Facilitated communication and interaction among fellow small enterprises.
- Access to the Centre's strategic partners.

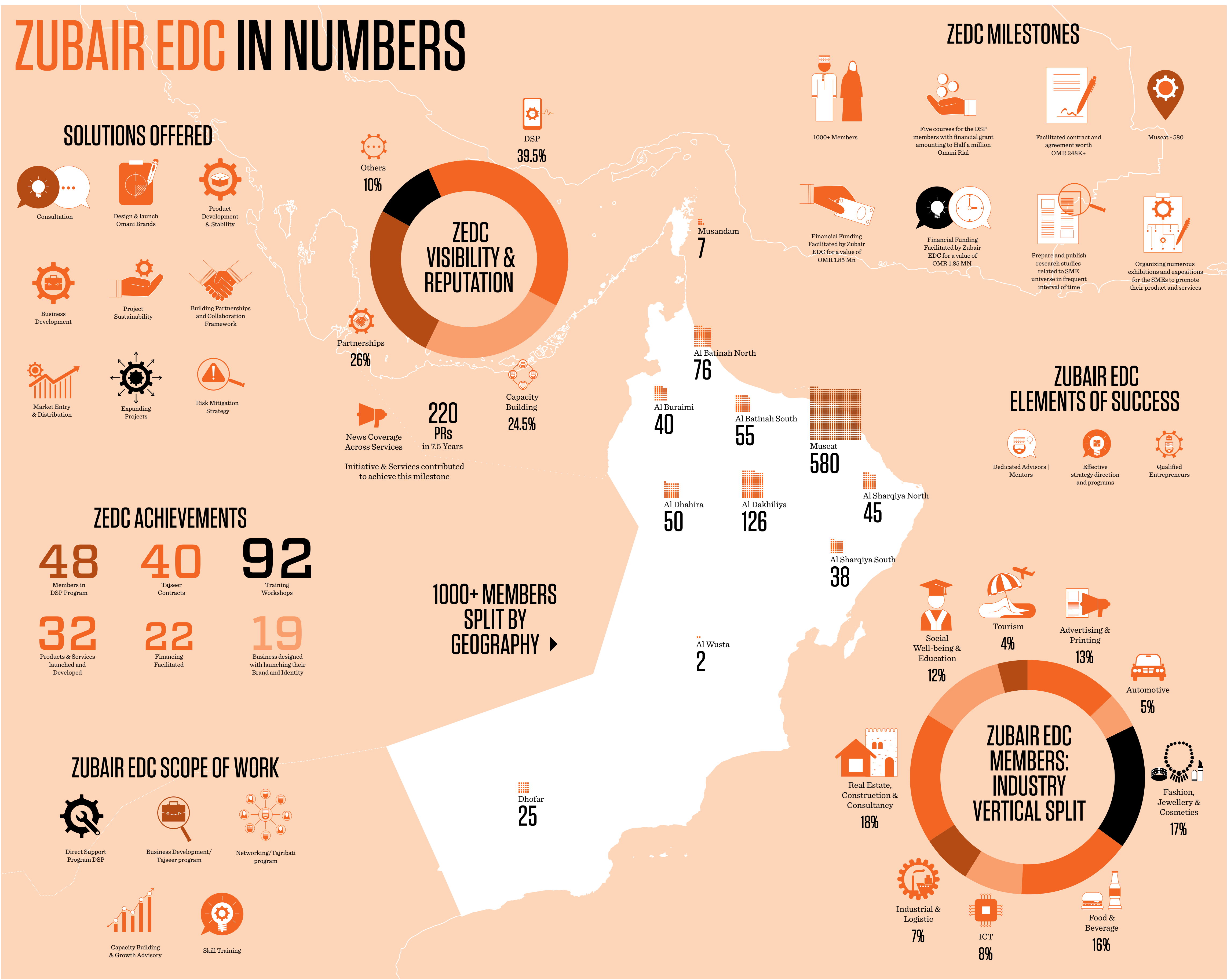
- Preferred prices, offers and benefits from both local and national partners interested in supporting SEs.
- Facilitated communication with selected financial institutions and reputable business corporations; Financial grants for selected entrepreneurs who get selected for the annual Direct Support Programme.
- Business development opportunities.

OUR VISION AND MISSION

Our Vision is to provide compre-

hensive support to Oman's promising small enterprises to enable them to succeed and grow in a sustainable manner, and contribute to positive change in the local business environment.

Our Mission is to create an independent, not-for-profit ecognized (Zubair EDC) to act as a solution-based advisory centre for Oman's small enterprises, help explore business development and market penetration opportunities for them, and enable them to progress and grow by achieving the required critical success factors.





After nine years of its establishment in 2013, the Centre adopts a new strategic direction that aims to provide more services to institutions and companies, in addition to its quest to play a greater role in achieving Oman Vision 2040, which aims to enhance entrepreneurship opportunities in the Sultanate.



The strategy will focus on the sectors that play a major role in the comprehensive development of the country within the framework of the determinants of Vision 2040, such as the logistical, tourism, industrial and agricultural sectors.



The Centre has been renamed as a non-profit organisation that focuses on providing comprehensive services to businesses and entrepreneurs.

Said Bin Salim Al Sahib, Director of The Zubair Enterprises Development Centre:

The new commercial identity of the Centre converges with Oman Vision of 2040 and is the result of our future strategy

MUSCAT: The Zubair Small Enterprises Centre launched its new identity in line with its strategy of expanding its services to the local community. The Centre has changed its name to "Zubair Enterprises Development Centre" to reflect its new direction to provide its diversified advisory services to the largest number of commercial institutions and companies, regardless of their size. After nine years of its establishment in 2013, the Centre adopts a new strategic direction that aims to provide more services to institutions and companies, in addition to its quest to play a greater role in achieving Oman Vision 2040, which aims to enhance entrepreneurship opportunities in the Sultanate. Al Shabiba interviewed Said Bin Salim Al Sahib, Director of The Zubair Enterprises Development Centre, to tell us about this direction and the future strategy of the Centre.

Tell us about the new commercial identity of the Zubair Enterprises Development Centre! What is the goal of becoming a non-profit organization?

Al Sahib replied: "The work of the Centre in the establishment stage comes within the framework of supporting small enterprises and adopting their projects to take the organizational path in the commercial environment. The focus has been on projects and initiatives that require a lot of direction and guidance, developing commercial and marketing plans and preparing each of them to be an institution capable of providing a service or a product that enjoys a position among other services and products in the market and generating an appropriate income for



the entrepreneur and is a starting point for the establishment of a commercial institution that contributes to creating job opportunities and is within the system of institutions that feed the national economy."

"With the beginning of the renewed renaissance led by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and within the framework of Oman Vision 2040 and to give the private sector more opportunities to participate in comprehensive development in partnership with the public sector with a focus on supporting small and medium enterprises, we had to develop our strategy in the Centre and develop a commercial identity that converges with Oman Vision of 2040 and provides various services targeting various small and medium commercial enterprises and other institutions that require growth

in their commercial activities and geographical presence. This is what prompted us to change the name of the Centre to become a non-profit institution focused on providing comprehensive services to businesses and entrepreneurs," he added.

What is the new strategy of the Zubair Enterprises Development Centre?

The new strategy focuses on supporting and developing small and medium commercial enterprises in general. This includes institutions that are at the beginning of their inception and the existing institutions that seek to expand their services vertically, i.e., to increase their products and their diversity in different forms, hence an increase in productivity and revenue to achieve an increase in profits, as well as the horizontal expan-

sion of institutions, i.e., to increase their market share by expanding in space and places to enhance their presence with consumers. Therefore, the strategy will focus on the sectors that are hoped to play a major role in the comprehensive development of the country within the framework of Oman Vision 2040, such as the logistical, tourist, industrial and agricultural sectors, and the enablers that support these sectors. Thus, the Centre will play a key role in determining the path from which the commercial establishment will proceed through the various services of the Centre and the initiatives and programs offered by the Centre.

What are the programmes on which the Centre is working during the coming period?

The Director of The Centre said that there are many services and

centres on which the Centre works and focus within the framework of its orientation to support and develop commercial institutions and projects. These are services and programmes that have been carefully selected to constitute an important addition to what is required by entrepreneurs in particular and commercial institutions in general. The direct support programme has been developed, which attracts a number of projects with specific controls that provide participants with the skills to manage their projects and enable them to increase their productivity and achieve the financial sustainability of the project.

"There is another programme, which acts as an incubator for a number of projects that are carefully selected in light of the specific selection mechanism. The beneficiary benefits from all kinds of basic services provided by the Centre, such as developing work plans, marketing, consulting, participating in workshops, accessing the Centre's electronic library and other services. It is under sponsorship, supervision and direction of the work team at the Centre," he said.

"There is a third programme that works to attract a number of projects that have been established for more than two years and are in the process of development and expansion and need support in investment through a strategic partnership that enhances the status of the project and increases its value. A training programme was designed for participants in co-operation with one of the international institutions that have been training entrepreneurs for more than 50 years and have accumulated experience to provide spe-

cialized programmes to develop commercial enterprises to achieve returns and financial sustainability. Thus, it is hoped that these projects will have the status that qualifies them to become successful projects through the services provided by the Centre, as well as the strategic partnership with some investors," Al Sahib said.

"We also have a fourth programme that provides projects with advisory services, feasibility studies, work plans and other services. It also works on preparing projects, whether they are among the Centre's internal programmes or other investment projects, to present them to some promising investors and strategic partners and invite them to invest in them. Hence, the Centre works to qualify the projects that are proposed through this program and plays the role of linking between the investor and the project owner," he said.

"There are other programmes such as Tajribati (My Experience) and Tajseer, which are enablers for the basic programmes and work to maximize the chances of project success by spreading commercial awareness among entrepreneurs and achieving interconnection between large institutions and small and medium enterprises by facilitating business contracts," he said.

He concluded saying: "These services and programs would develop institutions and projects and create a supportive work environment for entrepreneurs. Thus, we believe that the Zubair Enterprises Development Centre, with its comprehensive services and programs, is a centre of excellence with services that keep pace with the development process of small and medium enterprises."



The centre is proud of the wonderful group of specialised advisors who are always ready to take the hands of its members from among the entrepreneurs



The centre provides a range of consultations that suit the requirements of business growth for its members from small and medium enterprises

Zubair EDC enables young entrepreneurs to run their businesses efficiently and effectively

The Zubair Enterprises Development Centre (Zubair EDC) is one of the most important initiatives emanating from the Zubair Foundation's strategic vision in the field of social responsibility. It reflects the Foundation's belief in the importance of small enterprises in advancing the national economy and contributing to sustainable economic and social development. Since its establishment in 2013, the Centre has succeeded in introducing many initiatives that have contributed to enabling young entrepreneurs to manage their commercial projects efficiently and effectively. Here, we review the most important of these initiatives.

1

Direct Support Programme

Zubair EDC's Direct Support Programme rewards members who prove throughout their work with the Centre their commitment towards success and dedication in applying the consultancy and advice provided to them by the Zubair EDC team. These members' projects and businesses should also reflect proper strategic planning and accurate feasibility studies that reflect their owners' eagerness to apply best business administration measures with the assistance of Zubair EDC. Accordingly, selected members for the Direct Support Programme receive additional direct advisory and consultancy services as well as a financial grant to support their businesses. Although all members of Zubair EDC benefit from advisory and training services, financial facilitation, and support that the Centre and its network of cooperative partners provide, only a specific number of members get selected every year for the Direct Support Programme, as an approach to create positive competitiveness amongst members and to encourage them to work harder and be more committed and dedicated towards achieving their objectives and ambitions.

2

Business Advisory Services

Zubair EDC offer a range of business advisory services tailored to meet the business growth needs of our member small enterprises. Much of our work involves advising our members on regional and economic strategies, benchmarking their business delivery, mapping both demand for and supply of their business concepts, and developing practical training and development tools for use across a wide range of business environments. Our unique position means that we are called upon to deliver business advisory services for entrepreneurs on a regular basis. Our continuous monitoring efforts by our team ensure that the targets envisaged in the business plan are met consistently and that the Management has been able to tide over its initial challenges and is set to plan for upcoming expansion stages.



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3

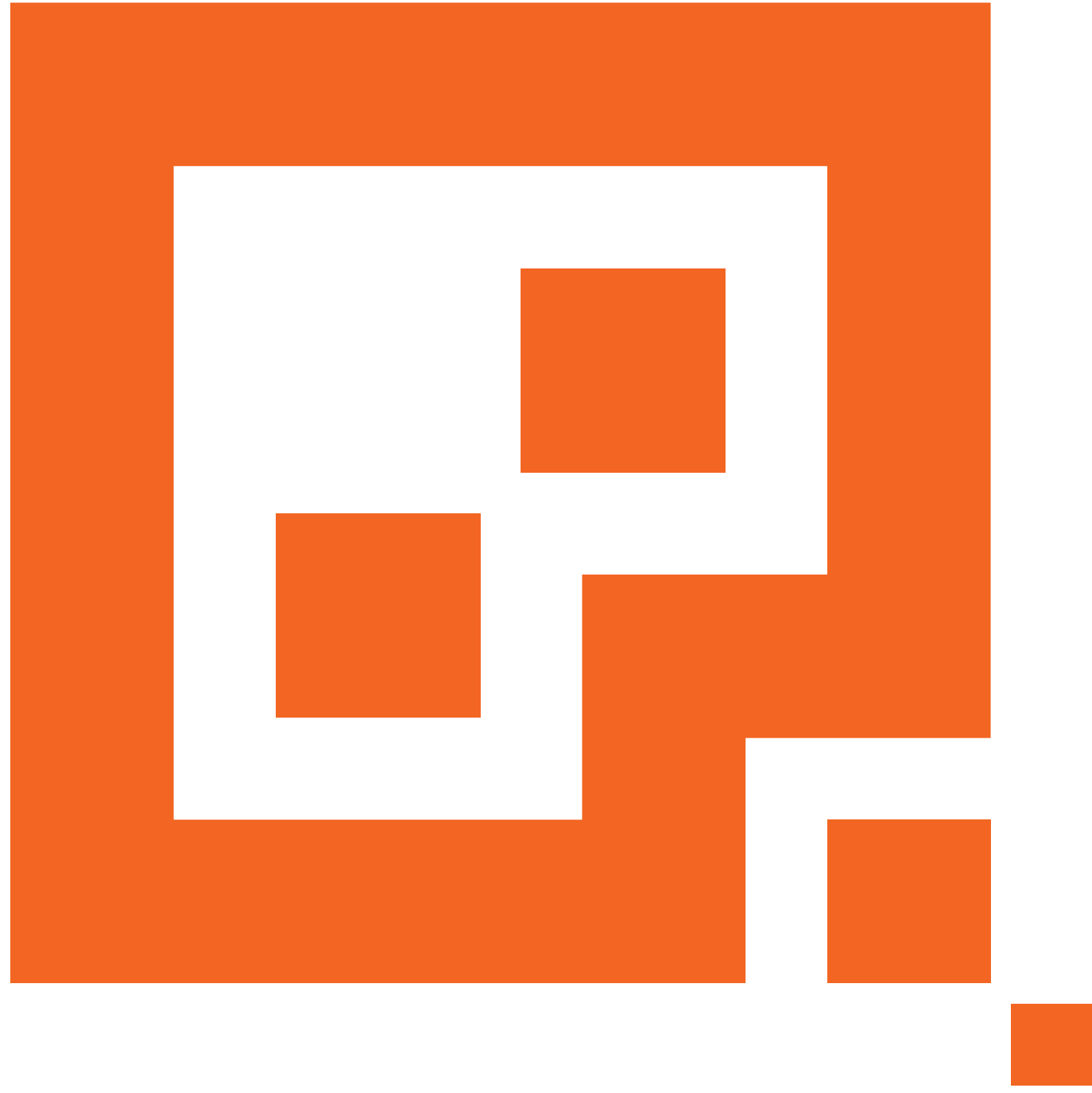
Tajseer Initiative

Believing that the success of an entrepreneur or a small project requires the existence of sustainability and stability, that is, the initial success is not enough to build on it in the future, and from this point of view, Zubair EDC had to strive to enable its members to continue their businesses and develop them in a sustainable manner. From this standpoint, the Tajseer Initiative was born. It is concerned with building and consolidating communication and cooperation between the leading companies in Oman and the small enterprises members of Zubair EDC, in order to enable small business owners to find business development opportunities with leading companies to develop their projects. The initiative offers an opportunity to network between representatives and decision makers of both sides, in a way that could result in positive outcomes for all. In this regard, the Centre is devoting its efforts and various tools to create this cooperation and, at the same time, working closely with its members to ensure their readiness in matter of quality, professionalism, customer excellence, and production and service capacity to meet the needs of large companies and to build strong and enduring relations.

4

Tajribati Initiative

With the ever increasing number of entrepreneurs who are joining the Centre, Zubair EDC has become a great platform for communication and collaboration, giving every member the opportunity to meet, discuss, learn from others' experiences, and grow in business. In this regard, the Centre launched 'Tajribati' initiative which allows members to attend a monthly general discussion session, attended by entrepreneurs and people of expertise from various public and private organizations. The initiative allows entrepreneurs to discover various opportunities to develop their business and learn best practices that help improve management practices. 'Tajribati' – the Arabic word for "My Experience" – has become one of the most important experiences that entrepreneurs undertake to discover successful ways to face challenges and overcome them through the application of best practices. Tajribati Initiative targets the topics of priority from the point of view of the Centre members and their need for them as a matter of knowledge and learning.



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