

OJA FELICITATES PARTICIPANTS IN WORLD IFJ CONGRESS

Oman Journalist Association (OJA) held a ceremony yesterday to honour the committees, working teams and public and private establishments that participated in the "31st World IFJ Congress", under the auspices of Dr. Abdullah Nasser Al Harrasi, Minister of Information. **>A2**



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IMMUNISATION RATE OF CHILDREN IN OMAN REACHED 100% IN 2021

The number of health care establishments in the Sultanate of Oman reached 1,848 in 2021. Of those, 65 percent are private clinics, according to the Health Bulletin 2022. With regard to indicators of health in Oman, the rate of coverage of children's immunisations in 2021 reached 100 percent. **>A3**



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ENVIRONMENTAL MEETING

Sayyid Theyazin patronises environment sustainability conference opening

MUSCAT: His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham Al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth yesterday patronised the opening ceremony of the first edition of "Oman Conference for Environmental Sustainability".

The three-day conference focuses on topics related to air pollution and climate change.

Dr. Abdullah Ali Al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority, Head of the committee organising the conference, said during the opening statement that the Sultanate of Oman was and still is on the lead among countries that accord attention to environmental systems and biodiversity.

The first environment-related institution was established in the 70s and legislation to protect the environment was issued in 1976, he added.



Al Amri reiterated that the conference stems from a deep-rooted belief in the importance of research and its role in reaching effective solutions to tackle various issues and challenges.

He pointed out that the conference comes at a time when climate

change and air quality issues are at the top of the agenda of various international political, environmental and economic events.

Al Amri said that the conference aims to discuss integrated management, best practices, international experiences and en-



vironmental legislations in fields related to air quality and climate change. The event also highlights the latest technologies, innovations and 4IR tools used in detecting and reducing air pollution and alleviating its social, health and environmental effects.

Oman Conference for Environmental Sustainability sheds light on the latest policies and strategies related to the adaptation and reduction of climate change effects in a bid to achieve net carbon emissions, Al Amri added.

He further pointed out that the

number of scientific papers participating in the conference reached 80 out of hundreds of submitted papers. The selected papers will be published on the *Journal of Environmental Science and Pollution Research*. Al Amri added that the number of participants is 400 from 25 countries. In addition, 100 participants are taking part in the youth ecathon, which is held on the sidelines of the conference.

In his turn, Sami Dimassi, representative of the UN Environment Programme and Director of the UN West Asia Office said that climate change and air pollution are two sides of the same coin, which necessitates addressing both issues coherently.

Dimassi added that based on science, the planet is facing a climate crisis, a biodiversity crisis and waste pollution crisis. **>A5**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN App to detect breast cancer developed

1 A team of researchers in the Sultanate of Oman has developed a smart app that involves using a DMR-IR database and deep learning network for the early detection of breast cancer. **>A3**

WORLD Oxfam for windfall tax on food firms

2 Food companies that have increased their profits as inflation surged should pay windfall taxes to help tackle global inequality, anti-poverty group Oxfam said on Monday at the Swiss ski resort of Davos as the World Economic Forum kicks off this week. **>A7**

MARKET Asyad Shipping inks pact to build vessels

3 Asyad Shipping, part of Asyad Group, signed a pact with Hyundai Samho Heavy Industries - a renowned Korean shipyard - to build and deliver two LNG vessels in 2026. The agreement aims to meet growing customer need on energy logistics services. **>B1**

OMAN STORM INTO GULF CUP FINAL



OMAN VS BAHRAIN
1 - 0



Two-time champions Oman to play with Iraq in the Arabian Gulf Cup final on Thursday

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Two-time champions Oman will eye their third title, come this Thursday, as they sealed their berth in the summit clash of the 25th Arabian Gulf Cup with a 1-0 win over defending champions Bahrain in the second semi-final match at Al Mina'a Olympic Stadium in Basra, Iraq, on Monday night.

A peach of a goal by Jameel Al Yahmadi with just 7 minutes re-

maining powered Oman to the final. The pile-driver from Yahmadi beat the diving Bahrain goalkeeper Saad Jaffer to put Oman into their fifth ever final.

Oman's last appearance in the final was during their title-winning triumph in Kuwait in 2017-2018. The Red Warriors, coached by Croatian Branko Ivankovic, will take on Iraq in the final after the hosts edged past reigning Asian champions Qatar 2-1 in an earlier semi-final at Basra Inter-

national Stadium.

Both Oman and Bahrain failed to break the deadlock in the first 45 minutes though the teams had goal-scoring chances.

Bahrain started on a positive note with a couple of raids on Oman citadel. The Red Warriors slowly got into the groove and made two threatening moves in the 11th and 12th minutes with Salah Al Yahyei getting the best chance.

Oman's goalkeeper Ibrahim Al

Mukhaini was also kept busy by Bahrain strikers. Mukhaini had to come up with a good save to deny Bahrain's Abdullah Yusuf in the 22nd minute as the teams fought an attritional mid-field battle for the last quarter of the first half.

In the second half, both teams put up a more aggressive approach in search of the elusive goal and finally the efforts of Oman were rewarded with a magical strike from Yahmadi.

NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Global demand for adventure tourism in Oman

MUSCAT: Adventure tourism in the Sultanate of Oman is receiving an increasing international demand.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism exerts efforts to achieve an optimal utilisation of natural and cultural resources which contributes to developing the tourism and heritage sector, enhancing economic diversification, building a sustainable tourism economy and achieving the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

Yousef Rashid Al Harassi, Head of Product Development at the Directorate of Product Development and Tourism Experiences in the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, said: "Diversifying tourism products is one of the most prominent methodologies of the ministry in developing the tourism flow



and enhancing tourism experiences, especially global adventure tourism activities that attract tourists and adventurers."

"Adventure tourism contributes to boosting economic growth. Oman is ranked among those countries that attract

many segments of tourists, including those interested in adventure tourism." He pointed out that the geographical nature of the Sultanate of Oman, ranging from mountains, caves, valleys, sandy deserts, and marine environments, contributes to raising

the number of adventure tourists that come from all over the world, in addition to domestic tourists who also enjoy this type of tourism.

He added that the number of adventure tourism enthusiasts are constantly growing in all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is closely following this growth, in cooperation with authorities concerned, to provide all necessary services to tourists and to make Oman among the safest tourist destinations for adventure tourism activities in the world.

Al Harassi underscored Oman's unique natural diversity, which is reflected in the diversity of tourist destinations that are preferred by the adventurers. **>A5**

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MUSCAT

Smart app for early detection of breast cancer developed

A new tool based on thermography, deep learning and health applications on smartphones and cloud computing has been approved for early detection of breast cancer

Times News Service

MUSCAT: A team of researchers in Oman has developed a smart app that involves using a DMR-IR database and deep learning network for the early detection of breast cancer.

A new tool based on thermography, deep learning and health applications on smartphones and cloud computing has been approved for early detection of breast cancer.

Dr. Mohammed Abdullah Al Husaini, Engineer in the Technical Services Department at Sultan Qaboos University, stated that breast cancer is the most common cause of death among women around the world and it is increasing in Omani society. The team also designed the application in a graphical user interface and connecting it to the Android application to send thermal images from the smartphone to the cloud and send the results to the smartphone.

According to Dr. Mohammed, after repeated experiments, the results of early detection of breast cancer showed high accuracy performance.

Some of the most important finding include the detection accuracy of the system was 99.748 percent and the error rate was +-0.18%, the ability of artificial intelligence to detect breast cancer in early stages through artificial networks that the team designed specifically to detect this disease, and the ability of small, inexpensive thermal cameras to give reliable results.

The research project also contributed to the detection of breast cancer in early stages, contributed to community awareness of



Dr. Mohammed Abdullah Al Husaini, Engineer in the Technical Services Department at Sultan Qaboos University.

The 9th National Research Award, organised by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, has witnessed an array of research projects that serve a set of national priorities

home self-care, reduced surgical operations, including amputation, in case disease was detected in early stages, contributed to reducing mortality rates, preserved health of individual without using radiation devices such as x-rays and others, and created an accurate and reliable database with the concerned health institutions. This demonstrated the significance of using thermal camera, deep learning, cloud computing and smartphone health applications for early detection of breast cancer.

Challenges

As for research challenges, Dr. Mohammed mentioned that there were some challenges that the team faced in completing this scientific research, including designing a new artificial intelligence network took nearly a year, thermal images were taken from Iran, and all the equipment, research and studies were done at his own expense, which were very expensive.

The research team included Dr. Mohammed Al Husaini, Dr.Mohamed Hadi Habaebi,

Dr.Teddy Surya Gunawan, and Dr.Md Rafiqul Islam. Dr. Mohammed and his team published this research project in MDPI journal.

Sharing his thoughts about his project winning the National Research Award 2022, Dr. Mohammed stated: "First, the success that I have achieved makes me proud of my abilities. Second, it is a patriotic motivation towards moving forward in completing scientific research and publishing research papers while serving Omani society and humanity."

The ninth National Research Award, organised by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, has witnessed an array of research projects in various fields that serve a set of national priorities.

In the Information and Communication Technologies field in the Young Researcher's category, 'Self-Detection of Early Breast Cancer Application with Infrared Camera and Deep Learning' led by principal investigator Dr. Mohammed Abdullah Al Husaini, was one of the winning projects in latest edition of the National Research Award.

Children immunisation rate in 2021 reached 100%

MUSCAT: The number of health care establishments in the Sultanate of Oman reached 1,848 in 2021. Of those, 65 percent are private clinics, according to the Health Bulletin 2022, issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The number of workers in public and private health establishments stood at 56,119.

With regard to indicators of health, the rate of coverage of children's immunisations in 2021 reached 100 percent while the maternal mortality rate increased significantly from 20.2 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2017 to 45.7 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2021, and Al Buraimi Governorate came the highest among governorates in the percentage of caesarean section deliveries out of the total number of deliveries in the institutions of the Ministry of Health, as it accounted for 29.7 percent in 2021. -OHA

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Meeting on aviation sector challenges

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman is hosting the third meeting of the Middle East Aviation Security Group, which kicked off in Muscat on Monday in cooperation with the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO).

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Eng. Nayef Ali Al Abri, Chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).

Al Abri affirmed Oman's keenness to continue cooperation with ICAO members to overcome all future challenges in the international civil aviation sector and forge harmonious methods between countries to enhance aviation security.

Meanwhile, Eng. Mohamed Abubaker Farea, ICAO Regional Director, Middle East Office, said that the meeting will coordinate efforts to upgrade the standards of the civil aviation sector in the Middle East.

Enhance cooperation

"The meeting constitutes an opportunity to discuss key challenges facing this vital sector and consider the best ways to enhance cooperation frameworks and coordinate efforts to promote the civil aviation sector in the Middle East region," Farea added.

Attended by experts and specialists in the field of aviation security, the meeting seeks to

establish a regional cooperation framework to limit the associating risks and foster initiatives that keep pace with the international plan of the ICAO.

The meeting also aims to develop and update the Middle East's civil aviation security facilitation plan, promote related accomplishments and prioritize countries' needs in relation to the aviation security and facilitation programme. This covers establishing capacity-building projects and coordinating necessary assistance activities with the countries concerned.

Working papers

Oman will present 6 working papers at the meeting. The papers will deliver the findings and views of security experts at the national and operational levels, specialists in the Civil Aviation Authority and the General Administration of Airports Security, airport and aircraft operators, and ground service providers.

The sessions of the meeting include nearly 30 working papers related to the international and regional civil aviation system and ways to keep abreast of developments in the field of aviation. The papers will highlight measures to utilise all capacities and capabilities to face challenges to maintain security and safety of air transport. -OHA

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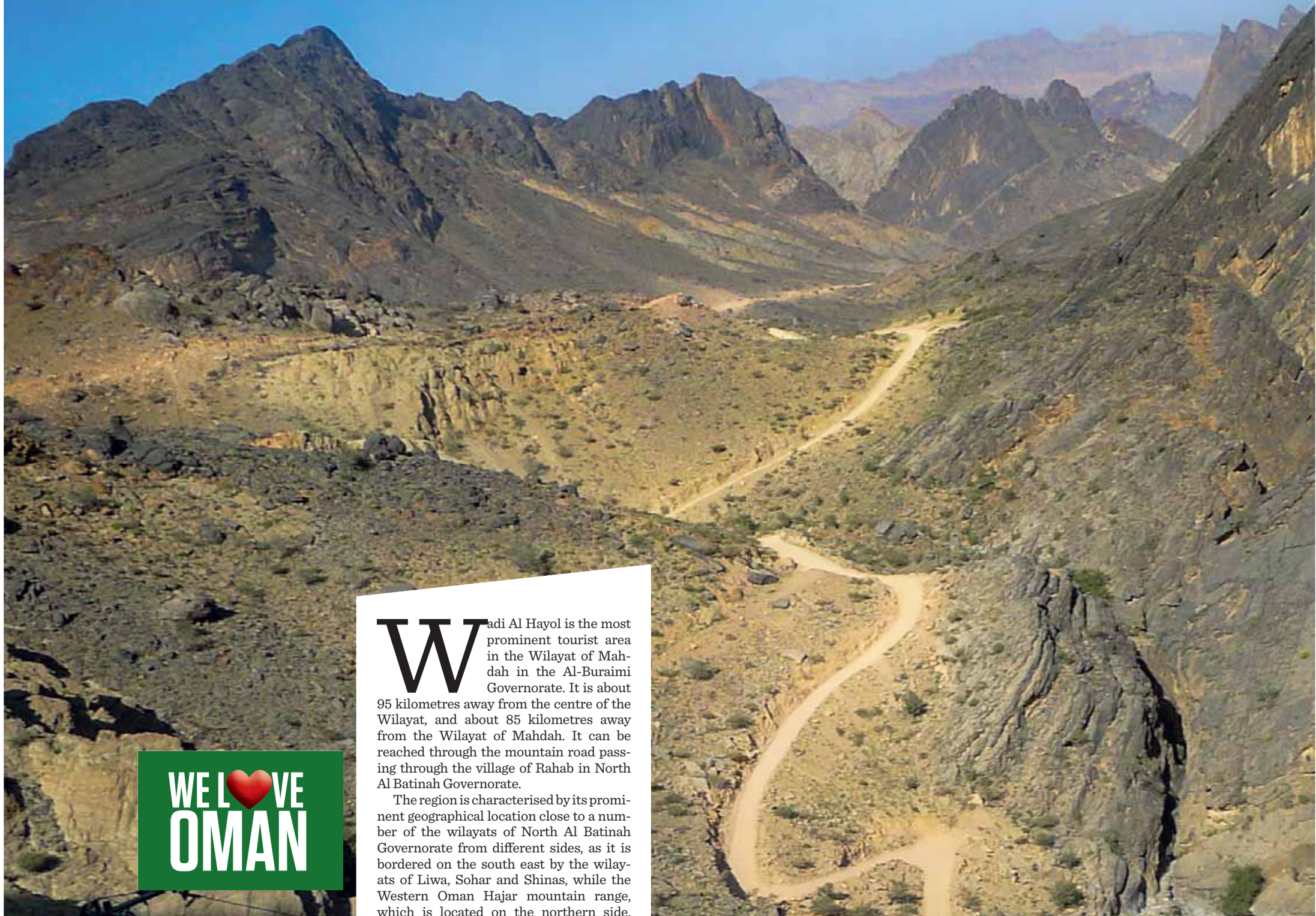
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WELCOMING MOUNTAINS AND STREAMS OF WADIAL HAYOL



Wadi Al Hayol is the most prominent tourist area in the Wilayat of Mahdah in the Al-Buraimi Governorate. It is about 95 kilometres away from the centre of the Wilayat, and about 85 kilometres away from the Wilayat of Mahdah. It can be reached through the mountain road passing through the village of Rahab in North Al Batinah Governorate.

The region is characterised by its prominent geographical location close to a number of the wilayats of North Al Batinah Governorate from different sides, as it is bordered on the south east by the wilayats of Liwa, Sohar and Shinas, while the Western Oman Hajar mountain range, which is located on the northern side, forms a natural separator between it and the centre of the wilayat, and its population is distributed in the 9 villages still inhabited today, namely Al-Aqrabeyah, Hail Al-Mashak, Al-Shwaimra, Hail Al-Qawasim, Al-Mazra'iya, Al-Tawi, Al-Dhaher, Al-Muhaidh, and Al-Hajer.

The town is unique with an attractive mountainous nature, and streams of water extending from the top of the mountains to be proud of throughout the year, in addition to tall palm trees of all kinds, and various crops, most notably mangoes, bananas, grapes, figs, and the Zam tree, which is one of the distinctive trees in the region and other seasonal crops. A number of plants are distributed in the village. The towers confirm the region's nobility and human connection with it since ancient times.

The sulphur springs distributed throughout it promote tourism and a therapeutic shrine, as there are seven springs distributed in its various parts, namely Ain Al-Khabta, Ain Qabil Lekhlio, Ain Ljal Al-Rasah, Ain Ljal Al-Sahma, Ain Al-Habisa, Ain Al-Hara, and Ain Ljal Al-Sukhaibri.





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ENVIRONMENTAL CONFERENCE

<FROM A1 ‘World needs to reduce greenhouse gas emission by 45%’

He also mentioned that many major scientific reports on climate action indicated that the world needs to reduce greenhouse gas emission by 45% in order not to go above 1.5 degrees Celsius of global warming by 2030.

He affirmed that organising this important conference which deals with issues at the core focus of the UN priorities, indicates the ability and political will in the Sultanate of Oman to organize such international environmental conference and events that address urgent environmental issues.

The inaugural ceremony saw the announcement of the winners of the Green Branch Award, designed to recognise the efforts undertaken by institutions and individuals to promote environment conservation and to highlight their distinguished contributions in this field.

In the Institutions Category, the prize went to Omani Indian Fertilizer Company (OMIFCO), International Integrated Energy Group (OKEO), Shell Development Company and the Environment Society of Oman (ESO).

In the individual category, the winners of the Green Branch



Award were: “Basmatna Ghair” Team, Qurayyat Divers Team and Mohammed Said Al Hinai. A company called “44.1 Firm” bagged the honorary prize of the Green Branch Award.

The first day’s tasks included a dialogue session titled “Reducing emissions and improving air quality: insights and results from the 6th Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change”.

In addition, 28 working papers

were presented during four parallel sessions, with the participation of experts, scientists and specialists from Oman and abroad.

The conference included an environment exhibition that showcased the latest technologies, solutions and technologies in various environmental fields.

Specialised workshops focusing on green hydrogen energy and methane management were held on the sidelines of the conference, which promotes the values of research, development and innovation through the establishment of environment-action initiatives like “Youth Ecothon” (“Manafaa Initiative”).

The initiative is designed to open up vistas for local participation of Omani students from public and private universities, so that they could propose ideas for environmental projects with low-risk developmental return, notably on the topic of “Air Pollution and Climate Change”.



conference in cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme, Sultan Qaboos University, the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation and Al Roya Foundation for Press and Publication.

The conference serves as a discussion platform aimed to present Oman to the world as a strategic centre that is capable of organizing and hosting such international environmental events for the management of urgent environmental issues.

The conference coincides with the Sultanate of Oman’s celebrations of Oman Environment Day. It underscores the significance of coordinating environmental action involving governmental, academic and research institutions, regional and international organizations, as well as private sector companies, civil society organizations and individuals.

The overall aim is to collaborate all efforts for the establishment of an environment whose elements are sustainable and safe, whose ecosystems function in an effective and balanced way and whose resources are renewable.

-ONA

FIRST MEETING OF 2023



Supreme Judicial Council holds meeting

MUSCAT: The Supreme Judicial Council on Monday held its first meeting of 2023, during which it discussed measures on developing judicial and administrative aspects of the legislative system in Oman.

The meeting considered ways of finding appropriate solutions to address the challenges facing the smoothness of the workflow and upgrading the efficiency of judicial rulings.

The meeting was chaired by Sayyid Mohammed Sultan Al Bussaidi, Vice Chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council.

At the outset of the meeting, Sayyid Mohammed highlighted

the efforts made in terms of performance of the judicial authority during 2022. His speech touched on steps taken in finalising lawsuits and establishing justice at all levels. Sayyid Mohammed stressed the importance of accelerating the adjudication process to achieve prompt justice, enforcing the law and preserving the rights of litigants.

The Supreme Judicial Council is mandated to draw up the general policy of the judiciary. It therefore strives to ensure the proper functioning of courts and the Public Prosecution Department, as well as the streamlining of litigation procedures. — ONA

MINISTRY OF HERITAGE AND TOURISM

<FROM A1 Electronic system to organise tourism trips to be launched



Natural sites such as the Eastern and Western Al Hajar Mountains and some sites at the Governorates of Dhofar and Musandam have become attractive destinations for practicing adventure tourism activities.

He said that during the first quarter of 2023 an electronic system will be launched to submit applications for licences to add the activity of organising adventure

tourism trips. The new system targets travel and tourism offices.

Launching the new system, he added, will help the Ministry in regulating this field in a more systematic and efficient manner.

Al Harassi mentioned that in an effort to maximise the benefit of the unique natural diversity of Oman, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is working on implementing many value-added



projects that complement natural aspects in adventure tourism.

These specialised projects related to adventure tourism will contribute to providing local communities with new sources of income and enhance economic performance in the governorates. Accordingly, organisers of tourist groups, tour guides, and small and medium enterprises will have good opportunities to invest in

adventure tourism activities, he added.

In addition, Al Harassi affirmed that the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism utilised research and best international practices in regulating and managing adventure tourism activities. The ministry also seeks to encourage the private sector to invest in adventure tourism projects of all kinds.

-ONA

INTERNATIONAL FORUM

Forum to focus on developing practices for marketing dates

MUSCAT: The international forum on developing practices for marketing dates will kick off on Wednesday (18 January 2023), and lasts for two days.

The forum is organised by the International Dates Council in conjunction with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

The forum will cover various aspects of dates production, marketing and promotion. It will discuss benefits that could be secured for all segments of the value chain (the farmers, manufacturers, marketing agencies, traders, consumers) as well as the national economy and the environment—with a view to maintain sustainable growth.



Held under the auspices of Dr. Saud Hamoud Al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, the forum will be attended by researchers and specialists from academic, research and consultative establishments from Oman and the regional and international arenas.

The forum is also attended by experts in the fields of dates marketing and production, economists, nutritionists and representatives of local and international organisations, government institutions, private sector establishments, embassies and commercial offices. — ONA



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FREEZING TEMPERATURES

Extreme cold claims 20 lives in Afghanistan

KABUL: A sudden fall in temperature has severely affected people, already hit hard by poverty, lack of food and fuel, in the trouble torn country, TOLO news reported on Monday.
 At least 20 people have been killed. In Badghis and other provinces, the cold has also killed at least 4,000 cattle.
 Husain, a Herat resident, said

he was hospitalised after being exposed to freezing temperatures on his way to an illegal migration to Iran. “We were on the way for four hours that snowfall started and we could move forward anymore,” he said, as per TOLONews.
 According to statistics from Herat Regional Hospital, at least 70 people were hospitalised for hypothermia, and four drug addicts

were killed. According to local officials, at least five people died in Badghis due to hypothermia, and all of them were shepherds.
 “One shepherd and four children were killed due to hypothermia,” said the spokesman for Badghis governor. Ahmad Hanzala.
 According to local officials, cold weather killed five people in Khost province, two in Faryab, and two

more in Jawzjan. In addition, one person was killed in Sar-e-Pul, and five drug addicts were killed in Baghlan province.
 Since the Taliban seized power in Kabul last year, 18 packages of \$40 million and more than 30 packages of \$32 million, worth of funds, have been given to Afghanistan, Khaama Press reported citing DAB records. — **ANI**

MESSAGE OF INSPIRATION

Omani media contributed to creating community awareness, preserving identity: Information Minister

MUSCAT: Dr. Abdullah Nasser Al Harrasi, Minister of Information, has said that Oman’s media experience can be defined in two main headings— “A True Mirror” and “An Honest Message.”
 Interviewed by *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* newspaper, Dr. Abdullah said that Omani media contributed to the creation of community awareness and enlightenment, as well as the preservation of Omani identity’s civilisational and human dimensions.
 The minister pointed out that Omani media fostered a national morale that consolidated the march of progress and prosperity and brought about change in all aspects of life.
 The media in Oman, Dr. Abdullah added, continued to disseminate a message of inspiration and it kept being a source for knowledge and an objective instrument of shaping Omani character, its traits and civilized role over the ages.
 This was highly significant as Oman extended bridges of fraternity and friendship with all countries and peoples of the world in line with a balanced policy, away from all forms of extremism and exaggeration, the minister observed.
 The minister added that “The media track” in Oman Vision 2040 is fundamental. Since the National



Dr. Abdullah Nasser Al Harrasi, Minister of Information. - **ONA**

Conference for the vision, whose objectives were formulated under the supervision of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the media embarked on live relay of the conference’s dialogue sessions and played an effective role in motivating the acceleration of executive programmes aimed to find prompt and sustainable solutions for priority lanes that spearheaded the whole process—like fiscal balance, economic diversification and foreign investments attraction.”
 The minister noted that Omani media undertook an interactive

role amid exceptional global conditions, including the emergence of Coronavirus, the sharp collapse in oil prices and global political crises that pervaded all countries of the world in various ways.
 Omani media conveyed work plans, programmes and solutions envisaged by the government. This is done through dialogue sessions bringing together decision makers, analysts, experts, academics and specialists—with the prime aim of following up the performance of target sectors of growth. For this purpose, the media has also

established a permanent communication channel with the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit.
 “Omani media has a national and humanitarian message and it is utilizing its authentic and open experience with others in a positive way by reporting the facts with full transparency, professionalism and responsibility,” said Dr. Abdullah.
 The minister opined that freedom and responsibility are two inseparable concepts. “Professionalism constitutes a life jacket for responsible media freedom. An observer of Omani media finds that there is wide scope for all to comment on various topics of interest to society through a media approach that allows all opinions to contribute towards addressing common problems without defamation or unnecessary instigation of sentiments,” Dr. Abdullah added.
 The minister described investment in the broadcasting sector as “good”. He referred to endeavours to introduce private sector investment in the visual media industry (TV channels), noting that these attempts received the green light from the government. He indicated that the private sec-

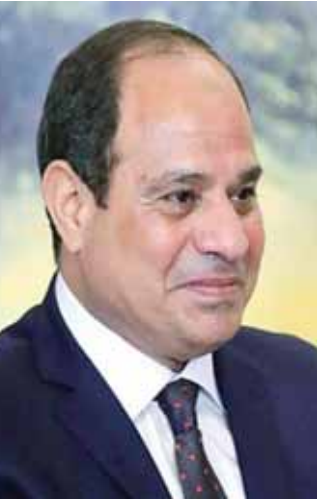
tor was interested to invest in the field of electronic media and was awarded a number of licenses for establishing electronic platforms, broadcasting and electronic visual channels.
 Dr. Abdullah underscored the importance of the role of the Omani media in highlighting investment and tourism in Oman, since these comprise basic features of Oman Vision 2040.
 “We are currently focusing on the economic media that supports these tracks, and we support the role of the authorities related to economic development to disseminate sufficient information about Oman,” said Dr. Abdullah.
 The minister pointed out that there are specialized programmes in various media fields with an interactive dialogue nature that embodies and underlines this role. The programmes receive the attention of followers from within the Sultanate of Oman and outside Oman, with emphasis on ‘economic diplomacy, as well as following up projects, agreements and memoranda of understanding between Oman and external partners.
 Speaking about the tourism aspect, the minister referred to the existence of media programmes dedicated to this purpose with the aim of activating tourism in various seasons and monitoring relevant news in all media.

“Oman TV’s daily business news bulletin constitutes an important window for introducing the Omani economy to the world,” said the minister, noting that various opportunities are abundant. He spoke about Omani laws that regulate foreign investment and facilitate the mission of investors.
 The Ministry of Information has also taken a step towards raising the efficiency and performance of external media, encouraging it to serve the goals of Oman Vision 2040. “We receive journalists and media professionals from different countries of the world who visit Oman and report their findings about the country, its society, its nature and development projects, in addition to the promising investment opportunities available in different sectors,” said Dr. Abdullah.
 At the conclusion of his statement, the minister said that, during the past period, the Ministry of Information embarked on preparing a new draft law for the media, due to new developments introduced by technologies and the need to make the media system more comprehensive in its response to contemporary changes. The draft, once it becomes law, will constitute a valid legal reference and a solid ground for the Omani media, he said. — **ONA**

‘MOMENTOUS OCCASION’

Egypt’s President to be chief guest at India’s Republic Day celebrations

NEW DELHI: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al Sisi has been invited by India as the chief guest at the Republic Day celebrations in January and to celebrate the ‘momentous occasion’ of completing 75 years of diplomatic relations between the two nations has further strengthened by mutual warmth, friendship, and goodwill.
 Calling the completion of 75 years of diplomatic ties between India and Egypt a ‘momentous occasion’, Sayeed said the two nations established formal relations three days after India attained independence on August 15 in 1947. He said Prime Minister Narendra Modi invited Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi as chief guest for the Republic Day and the invitation was warmly received.
 “This is indeed a momentous occasion in our bilateral relations with Egypt when our two countries are celebrating 75 years of diplomatic relations. I was told that When we became independent on the 15th of August, 1947 it was three days later on the 18th of August that the relations, formal relations were established which goes on to say the importance which we attach to our relationship with Egypt,”Ausaf Sayeed, secretary (Consular, Passport & Visa and Overseas Indian Affairs) MEA said on Monday.
 He further stated, “Our Prime Minister Narendra Modi has invited President Sisi as chief guest for our Republic Day and President Sisi has warmly accepted the invitation. We have invited Egypt as the guest country during our G20 Presidency this year. It is a matter of satisfaction and the civilization that links between



India and Egypt have not only stood the test of time but have also further strengthened by mutual warmth, friendship, and goodwill.”
 Sayeed added that the ties between the two nations received further momentum with Abdel Fattah El-Sisi’s visits to India and meetings between the two leaders at various forums, including the United Nations.
 Participating in a panel discussion on India-Egypt ties in changing global order, Vijay Thakur Singh, Director General of the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) also said that the Egyptian President has been invited as Chief Guest for the Republic Day.
 “This panel discussion is taking place on the occasion of the visit of his excellency Egypt’s President, who will be coming to India as Chief Guest for Republic Day celebrations on January 26... President El-Sisi will be the chief guest on Republic Day when India and Egypt celebrate the 75th year of the establishment of diplomatic relations,” she said. — **ANI**

Nepal recovers black boxes of crashed plane

The plane was en route from Kathmandu and went down on approach to a newly opened airport in the tourist town of Pokhara on Sunday, killing at least 69 of the 72 people aboard



Rescue operation suspended

KATHMANDU: The rescue operation was halted on Monday evening as one more body and the black boxes were recovered earlier in the day at the crash site of a passenger plane in central Nepal, officials said.
 “We have wrapped up the rescue operation for today,” said Brig. Gen. Krishna Prasad Bhandari, spokesperson of the Nepal Army.
 “The recovery of one additional body, the flight data recorder and the flight voice recorder is our achievement today,” Bhandari told Xinhua.
 The plane, operated by Nepal’s Yeti Airlines, crashed on Sunday into the Seti River gorge near the city of Pokhara when it was flying from Kathmandu to Pokhara with 68 passengers and four crew members aboard.
 A total of 69 bodies had been recovered by Monday evening and 41 victims had been identified, said a statement issued by the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal. — **ANI**
 we get the bodies,” a senior local official, Tek Bahadur KC, said.
 “We pray for a miracle. But, the hope of finding anyone alive is nil,” he said.
 Debris from the airliner was strewn across the crash site, including the mangled remains of passenger seats and the plane’s white-coloured fuselage.

“Bodies of passengers, whose identities have been established, have been sent for post-mortem. A group of experts also has arrived at the spot. The bodies will be handed over to the families here but those of the crew members, foreigners and the ones yet to be identified will be sent to Kathmandu this evening,” Assistant Chief District

Officer of Kaski, Nepal, Anil Kumar Shahi told ANI.
 Meanwhile, the search and rescue operations at the crash site resumed on Monday morning. The black box is a flight data recorder that records all flight information through a special algorithm.
 “Till last evening (Sunday) we had collected 63 bodies and shifted them to a hospital while 3 were spotted but could not be retrieved. Today (Monday), we recovered 6 more bodies. Three more are missing and a search is underway to retrieve these bodies at the earliest,” Shahi said.
Agonising wait for relatives
 Nepal declared a day of national mourning on Monday and set up a panel to investigate the disaster.
 Nepal’s Civil Aviation Authority said there were 15 foreigners on board, five Indians, four Russians, two South Koreans, and one each from Ireland, Australia, Argentina, and France. The rest were Nepalis.
 Hundreds of people gathered outside the Pokhara Academy of Health and Science, Western Hospital, where the bodies were being kept. Gyan Khadka, a police spokesperson in the district, said 31 bodies have been identified and will be handed over to family after officials finish post-mortem reports. — **Agencies**

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Quality Care Without Compromise

First G20 health working group meeting in India on January 18

The meeting will be attended by representatives of G20 member countries, special invitee countries and relevant international organisations

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: After assuming its G20 presidency on December 1, 2022 India will now host its First Health Working Group (HWG) meeting from January 18 to 20, 2023. The meeting will be held in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, according to a press release by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

These HWG meetings will be held in various locations of the country including Thiruvananthapuram in Kerala, Goa, Hyderabad in Telangana and Gandhinagar in Gujarat highlighting PM Modi's call to action to showcase India's rich and diverse cultures.

The meeting will be attended by representatives of G20 member countries, special invitee countries and relevant international



organisations.

India is currently part of the G20 Troika which refers to the top grouping within the G20 comprising countries like Indonesia, Brazil and India. It is the first time three developing nations are a part of this Troika. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has reiterated that India's G20 presidency will be inclusive, action-oriented and decisive.

This Health Track of the G20 under India's presidency will be comprised of four Health Working Group (HWG) meetings and one Health Ministerial Meeting (HMM), according to the same Health Ministry Press Release.

Regarding to the event the Health Ministry said in a tweet "India's G20 Presidency will focus on three main priorities: Health

Emergencies Prevention, Preparedness and Response (One Health & AMR); Access and Availability to Affordable Medical countermeasures (Vaccines, Therapeutics, and Diagnostics); and Digital Health.#G20India".

In addition to this India will hold side events along with each HWG meeting to enrich, supplement and support G20 discus-

sions. These will include events on Medical Value Travel and Digital Health; a workshop on collaborative research on drugs, diagnostics and vaccines; and a co-branded event on Global Centre for Traditional Medicine. The side event on Medical Value Travel will be held around the first HWG at Thiruvananthapuram between January 18th to 20th 2023.

As India has assumed the G20 presidency India aims to continue and consolidate health priorities and key takeaways from previous presidencies while highlighting critical areas that require strengthening, the same press release by Health Ministry reported.

Further according to the press release, India also aims to achieve convergence in discussions across various multilateral fora engaged in health cooperation and work towards integrated action.

For achieving India's G20 Presidency mission it has decided on three priorities. First Health Emergencies Prevention, Preparedness and Response (with a focus on One Health & AMR). Second Strengthening Cooperation in Pharmaceutical Sector with an emphasis on Access and Availability to safe, effective, quality and Affordable Medical Countermeasures (Vaccines, Therapeutics and Diagnostics) and finally Digital Health Innovations and Solutions to Aid Universal Health Coverage and Improve Healthcare Service Delivery.

There will be thematic discussions related to the above priorities across the HWG meetings. - ANI

Cosa Nostra mafia boss arrested after 30 years

SICILY: Italy's most wanted mafia boss, Matteo Messina Denaro, was arrested by the country's carabinieri police after being on the run for three decades, media reports said on Monday.

Messina Denaro, who is an alleged Cosa Nostra mafia boss, was arrested in his native region of Sicily.

What we know about the arrest

Pasquale Angelosanto, special operations commander of the carabinieri, said in a video circulated by police that the carabinieri had "arrested fugitive Matteo Messina Denaro inside a sanitary structure in Palermo, where he had gone for therapeutic treatment."

Messina Denaro was then taken to an undisclosed location after his arrest, Italian state television reported.

He had been on the run since 1993 and was number one on Italy's most-wanted list.

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said Messina Denaro was the "most significant" mafia boss.

She also hailed the arrest as "a great victory for the state that shows it never gives up in the face of the mafia."

Monday's arrest came 30 years after the capture of Salvatore "Totò" Riina, considered the "boss of bosses" of the Sicilian mafia.

MEDIA FREEDOM

Afghan journalists criticise restrictions, complain of lack of access to information

KABUL: Journalists and media outlets in Afghanistan strongly criticised the lack of access to information as well as harsh restrictions placed on media professionals by the Taliban since it took control of the Afghan land in August last year, TOLONews reported on Sunday.

While putting up a strong urge to the Taliban regarding basic freedom to the press, they said that access to information is the fundamental right of people and journalists. "When we contact the government or the officials or drop them a message, they don't respond to us; or they see our message but don't send back a reply on time," said Farkhunda Mehbi, a journalist.

Another journalist, Mustafa Shaharyar lamented that the Taliban spokesmen and government officials don't respond to journalists' questions, which is why many stories get published without balance, TOLONews reported.

In the wake of the excessive rise in crime against journalists in Afghanistan since the Taliban seized power, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) stated in its report in early November the human rights violation of at least 200 reporters.

Taking to Twitter, UNAMA said, "Human rights abuses of more than 200 reporters in Afghanistan recorded by UNAMA since August 2021. Record high numbers include arbitrary arrest, ill-treatment, threats and intimidation."

Since the Taliban took over Afghanistan in mid-August last year, it rolled back women's rights



advances and media freedom revoking the efforts on gender equality and freedom of speech in the country.

According to a report by the South Asian Media Solidarity Network (SAMSAN) over 45 per cent of journalists have quit since the terrorist outfit assumed power. The ever-increasing restrictions against media in Afghanistan have also drawn widespread criticism globally with the United Nations (UN) and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) decrying the arrests, demanding the Taliban stop harassing local journalists and stifling freedom of speech through continued detentions and threats.

In their first press conference following their takeover in August, the Taliban made promises on women's rights, media freedom, and amnesty for government officials. However, a number of people, including journalists, activists, and former government workers, continue to experience retaliation. - ANI

AT DAVOS

Anti-poverty group Oxfam calls for a windfall tax on food companies

DAVOS: Food companies that have increased their profits as inflation surged should pay windfall taxes to help tackle global inequality, anti-poverty group Oxfam said on Monday at the Swiss ski resort of Davos as the World Economic Forum kicks off this week.

The organisation asserted that food companies — like energy companies — have used climate change, the surging cost of living, Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the COVID-19 pandemic as an excuse to increase prices for consumers.

Soaring inequality

Oxfam said the world's top 1% gained nearly twice as much wealth as the remaining 99% combined. Meanwhile, 1.7 billion workers live in countries where inflation is outpacing wage growth. The organisation also analysed 95 companies that posted windfall profits and found that most pass on these profits to shareholders while charging consumers higher prices.

Oxfam executive director Gabriela Bucher told the AP, "The number of billionaires is growing, and they're getting richer," Germany's Development Minister Svenja Schulze told the dpa news agency on Monday.

"If we do not reduce inequality worldwide, we will not be able to overcome these crises," Schulze noted.

At least one country has already implemented a windfall tax similar to what Oxfam has proposed.

For the whole of 2023, Portugal has introduced a 33% tax on food and energy companies that record profits 20% higher than the average of the last four years.

Revenue raised from this windfall tax will go towards welfare programs and to help smaller food retailers. - DW



Young 'Global Shapers' hungry for change

DAVOS: "I saw a man walking toward my school. He was only wearing one shoe. Then I realised it was my father and suddenly I was incredibly proud. Because I knew that he had invested everything he had in my education."

Wanjui Njoroge sits wrapped up in a thick quilted coat in a Davos hotel as she tells this story. It is cold and snowing outside. She is a member of the Global Shapers Community network and has come to Switzerland from Nairobi to attend the World Economic Forum (WEF). The environmental and education activist grew up in a small Kenyan village. Her father was a farmer and her mother was a teacher.

Programming in the

countryside

For the family getting their children a good education was a priority. Still, Njoroge only learned how to use a computer in high school. But she realized very early on that access to technology means access to education. Now through her advocacy she is making sure that more and more young people from rural areas of Kenya are learning to work with computers. She wants them to have the opportunities it took her a long time to find.

Another important issue for her is reforestation and rescuing Kenya's indigenous trees. #SaveOurForestsKE is the name of the campaign she launched in 2018. And in that short time she says "it led to a

total ban on forest harvesting" in Kenya. But then she hesitates for a moment. It's as if she has a vision of devastated forests and says, "I have seen the impact of climate change."

Global Shapers meet

But what do Kenyan trees have to do with the World Economic Forum? Wanjui Njoroge thinks they have a lot to do with it. The WEF offers a unique platform for exchange. It is a place where people can learn from each other, share and discuss projects, and come up with action plans. First of all the young Global Shapers can get together among themselves. They additionally have the opportunity to sit with the decision makers who attend the WEF. - DW

SPORTS

Iraq beat Qatar to reach Arabian Gulf Cup final after ten years

Three-time champions Iraq had lost to the UAE in the 2013 Gulf Cup final and last won the title in 1988 in Saudi Arabia

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Ten years since they last played in the final of the region's most coveted football tournament, Iraq inched closer to the title as they defeated reigning Asian champions Qatar 2-1 in the first semi-final of the 25th Arabian Gulf Cup at Basra International Stadium in Basra, Iraq, on Monday.

Ibrahim Bayesh put the hosts ahead early with a strike in the 19th minute but the joy was short-lived as Amro Siraj found the equaliser for Qatar in the 28th minute.

Iraq's Aymen Hussein put the team ahead with a goal in the 43rd minute, which proved decisive as Qatar failed to break down the rival defence in the second half against the home side backed by a partisan crowd at the packed 60,000 capacity venue.

The hosts had the first few chances



with Hussein's run on the left flank causing trouble in Qatar defence.

Iraq continued to control the tempo of the game for the majority of the half, but Qatar's Siraj eventually got a chance on goal after running past his marker, only for his effort to be ruled offside.

Moments later, Iraq took the lead after the Qatari goalkeeper couldn't hold the ball and it laid squarely on Bayesh's feet who couldn't miss in an open goal.

Qatar fought back and Siraj, whose first time volley found the equaliser to open up the game.

Iraq went ahead just before half-time following a Qatari defensive blunder as Amjad Attwan teed off Hussein, who chipped the ball over the goalie's head for the goal.

For the rest of the match, Iraq resorted to a high defensive line despite the Qatari threats. Long balls to striker Hussein became a frequent strategy. While the rather tall and quick striker managed to win some aerial duels, he never controlled the ball for a shot before a defender intervened.

The second half's crossing lull was sometimes interjected by energetic

Qatari counter attacks that were stopped by the Iraqi defence before even reaching the penalty box.

Iraq came very close to their third goal when Attwan got a through ball on the right flank but his shot on goal from a difficult angle went just wide of the post.

Three-time champions Iraq had lost to the UAE in the 2013 Gulf Cup final and last won the title in 1988 in Saudi Arabia when they had defeated UAE. The previous two titles of Iraq came in 1984 and in 1979 when they hosted the Gulf Cup for the first time.



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OMAN CRUDE PRICE RISES

The price of Oman oil has increased, with prices for delivery by March 2023 reaching \$81.91, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil rose by 82 cents from the price of Friday, which was at \$81.09. - **ONA**

MARKET BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS LOWER

The MSX index closed at 4,827.09 points, down by 0.84 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 1.42 per cent at 486.51 points. Al Hassan Engineering, up 10.00 per cent, was the top gainer while National Aluminium, down 9.72 per cent, was the top loser.

Asyad Shipping inks pact to build two liquefied natural gas vessels

The agreement aims to meet the growing customer need for energy logistics services in anticipation of global growth in gas transportation demand

MUSCAT: Asyad Shipping, part of Asyad Group, signed an agreement with Hyundai Samho Heavy Industries – a renowned Korean shipyard - to build and deliver two Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) vessels in 2026.

The agreement aims to meet the growing customer need for energy logistics services in anticipation of global growth in gas transportation demand. It also brings the total number of Asyad Group vessels to 72 tankers for various uses.

The building of two state-of-the-art 5th generation tankers is in line with Asyad Shipping's business plan towards a more balanced and diversified fleet serving the LNG, crude, petrochemical, bulk and container markets.

Dr Ibrahim Bakhit Al Nadhairi, Asyad Shipping and Asyad Drydock CEO said the introduction of new vessels would reinforce Asyad Group's fleet with the latest international models. The agreement is also another step towards achieving the expansion plans of Asyad Group and boosting its competitiveness by providing reliable solutions to its growing local and international customer base.

He said, "Given the trends in today's energy market that indicate higher demand for LNG compared to conventional fossil fuels,

we have chosen to expand our logistics capabilities in this sector and bring in advanced LNG carriers with a capacity of 174,000 cubic metres. The two vessels will be managed by our Ship Management Company which was recently named among the best international ship management companies."

"We chose these fifth-generation carriers in line with the highest international standards of environmental and commercial sustainability, as they have a high level of fuel efficiency and a low carbon footprint compared to other carriers. In addition, through these new assets, Asyad Shipping seeks to increase the in-country value in the LNG sector by integrating with Omani production and export companies and providing them with comprehensive logistics solutions that support the entire value chain in particular and the national economy in general," he added.

The world-class carriers will, thus, increase Asyad Group's presence as an integrated logistics provider in global and regional energy markets as one of the fastest-growing national shipping lines in the region, and bolster Oman's position as a vital global energy logistics hub. - **ONA**



COMPETITIVE RATE

Bank Nizwa partners with IFIN to offer instant Islamic goods financing

Times News Service

MUSCAT: A progressive bank built on innovation, Bank Nizwa, the leading Islamic bank in the Sultanate, has been embracing the latest technological advancements to remain at the forefront of spearheading digitalisation in the local community. In line with the same, the bank has furthered its partnership with the leading Islamic FinTech provider, Islamic Finance Initiation Network (IFIN), to introduce instant Islamic 'Goods Financing' to its customers.

This partnership will enable Bank Nizwa to leverage IFIN's cloud-based platform to make Islamic financing processes quicker, easier and hassle-free. Eliminating the need to visit a branch, the bank's customers can now apply and obtain instantaneous finance to purchase goods from a list of authorised dealers in the Sultanate. These include Danube Home, Enza Home, Fahmy Furniture, Muscat Furniture, ID Design, Mustafa Sultan Electronics, Sky Orbits, Al Madina Cement and others. Following the success of Bank Nizwa's 'Instant Auto Finance' proposition that helped customers avail on-the-spot financing with a record '10-minute financing process' time, the bank has continued to join hands with IFIN to set new industry benchmarks with pioneering digital financing solutions.

Commenting on the partnership, Khaled Al Kayed, Chief Executive Officer at Bank Nizwa, said, "Staying true to our digital transformational agenda, Bank Nizwa, through such strategic collaborations with leading FinTechs, will continue to introduce first-of-its-kind Sharia-compliant financing solutions to offer enhanced value to clients. The instant 'goods financing' proposition has also helped us to strengthen our bonds with retail institutions whilst enabling us to contribute to advancing the dynamic business environment."

He added, saying, "Bank Nizwa



has been committed to playing an active role in driving transformational change in a thriving financial ecosystem. We will continue to focus on delivering a seamless banking experience with a comprehensive suite of bespoke Sharia-compliant financial solutions that are geared at positively influencing the lives of our customers."

Set to revolutionise the in-store shopping experience for customers, Bank Nizwa's instant Islamic goods financing solution, besides significantly reducing the finance applications' Turn-Around-Time, will also reduce operational costs while boosting efficiency and competitiveness. By mirroring Bank Nizwa's increased attention to protecting customers' data, IFIN's platform will also ensure the highest levels of cybersecurity. Maintaining utmost transparency in all operations, the bank's customers will also be given absolute clarity of the bank's profit margins and instalment plans upon application and at the time of signing the contract.

Partnering with a reputable body like IFIN, which is the world's first Sharia-compliant, multi-institutional, multi-product, Islamic FinTech, Bank Nizwa has reiterated its commitment to the nation's digitalisation goals.

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

Davos 2023 hosts global elite amid recession fears

GENEVA: The Davos crowd is returning to a familiar setting. But the lush green meadows that formed the backdrop of the first-ever "spring Davos" last May have been replaced by snow-covered slopes, where snow boots and fur coats have made a comeback.

While the weather may have changed from last year, the main talking points remain the same. The war in Ukraine and its massive economic fallout are once again expected to dominate the agenda of the annual event in the Swiss Alpine resort.

The World Economic Forum's annual meeting attended by global political and business leaders, celebrities and prominent social activists is taking place at a time the world economy is under extreme stress, reeling from high inflation, an energy crisis and other supply disruptions caused by the war, and a resurgence of COVID-19 cases in China.

"Economic, environmental, social and geopolitical crises are converging and conflating, creating an extremely versatile and uncertain future," WEF founder Klaus Schwab told reporters. "The annual meeting at Davos shall try to make sure that leaders do not remain trapped in this crisis mindset."

The five-day meeting, which convenes under the banner of "Cooperation in a Fragmented World," will see over 50 heads of state and government takes part. Among the expected guests are German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez.

Some recently elected leaders, including South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol, Colombian President Gustavo Petro and President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. of the Philippines are also expected. The African contingent will be led by President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa and President Samia Suluhu Hassan of Tanzania.

The US will be represented by President Jo Biden's climate en-



voy, John Kerry, and Trade Representative Katherine Tai.

There will be no participation from Russia, as the country's politicians and business leaders remain shunned from the meeting. The WEF froze its ties with Russian entities last year after Moscow invaded Ukraine in late February. Ukraine will, once again, be sending a high-level delegation. However, organisers have refused to share further details for security reasons.

Recession risk

The 53rd edition of the Davos meeting takes place amid one of the steepest economic slowdowns of this century, with the head of the International Monetary Fund, Kristalina Georgieva, warning that a third of the global economy could be hit by a recession this year.

The conflict in Ukraine and Western sanctions against Russia have led to an unprecedented energy crunch. While inflation in advanced economies such as the US and the eurozone seems to have peaked, it remains uncomfortably high, forcing central banks to stay on course with aggressive rate hikes. That means higher borrowing costs in the face of a slowing economy, and it also risks worsening a global debt crisis in develop-

ing countries, including in Africa.

The World Bank has warned that the current economic crisis could cause poverty to rise in sub-Saharan Africa, which is already home to about 60 per cent of the world's extreme poor.

An annual risks survey published by the WEF on Wednesday put the global cost of the living crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine as the top immediate risk, saying energy and food supply crunches are likely to persist for the next two years.

The meeting in Davos "will happen against the most complex geopolitical and geo-economic backdrop in decades," said WEF President Borge Brende. "There really is a lot at stake when it comes to the global economy to make sure that we avoid a global recession, how to avoid low growth, high inflation and high debt."

A record 56 finance ministers are coming to Davos this year, and so are 19 governors of central banks.

Back to business

The Davos meeting is returning to its traditional winter slot for the first time since 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic first hit the world. The event was held virtually in 2021 and was organised in May last year. - **AW**

REPORT

India's overall exports fall 5.25% in December 2022

NEW DELHI: India's overall export declined 5.25 per cent to \$61.82 billion, against \$65.25 billion in December 2021, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry said on Monday.

The ministry also said India's overall December imports also dipped 1.95 per cent to \$73.80 billion as against \$75.27 billion in December 2021.

According to the statement released on Monday, India's overall exports during April-December 2022 have seen a 16.11 growth. The ministry said India's overall April-December 2022 exports grew to \$568.57 billion as against \$489.69 billion in the year-ago period.

India's overall during April-December 2022 imports grew 25.55 per cent to \$686.70 billion, against \$546.95 billion in the corresponding period the previous year, according to the ministry of commerce and industry.

Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal during a briefing on Monday said, "India's exports to the Netherlands have seen a significant rise. Exports to Brazil have also seen a significant rise. Similarly, on electronic goods, the developed world in terms of the US has seen a huge rise in imports from India. New areas, new geographies are increasing, and the depth in these countries where we are, already."

Explaining the export data, Barthwal said, "Despite some restrictions on some food products, our rice exports have risen. This shows that India is trying to become a good source of food security for other countries. In spite of the kind of recessionary headwinds in the purchasing countries, we have been able to raise our garment exports, raise it not to very high but at least in the way we are able to maintain. We have moved away from exporting agriculture products to finished goods...If we see our export basket...you will find that in our total basket, 24 per cent is now being represented by engineering goods." - **ANI**

MARKET

MSX index ends lower



Al Hassan Engineering, up 10 per cent, was the top gainer while National Aluminium, down 9.72 per cent, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,827.09 points, down by 0.84 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 1.42 per cent at 486.51 points. Al Hassan Engineering, up 10 per cent, was the top gainer while National Aluminium, down 9.72 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of Sembcorp Salalah were the most active in terms of the number of shares traded while Bank Muscat were the most active in terms of turnover. A total number of 749 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating a turnover of OMR3.5 million, with more than 26.1 million shares changing hands. Out of 52 traded securities, 12 advanced, 18 declined, and 22 remained unchanged. At the session close, GCC & Arab investors were net buyers for OMR528,000 while domestic investors were net sellers for OMR366,000, followed by foreign investors for OMR162,000 worth of shares. Financial Index closed at 7,851.31 points, down 0.64 per cent. Prices of Global Financial Investments and Taageer Finance were up by 9.09 per cent and 1.01 per cent respectively.

Prices of Al Anwar Investment, Al Madina Takaful, United Finance, Dhofar Insurance, and Ominvest were down by 10.00 per cent, 3.23 per cent, 3.03 per cent, 2.44 per cent and 2.33 per cent respectively. Industrial Index closed at 6,192.09 points, down 1.4 per cent. Prices of Al Hassan Engineering, Voltamp Energy and Galfar Engineering were up by 10.00 per cent, 4.40 per cent and 3.89 per cent respectively. Prices of National Aluminium, Al Anwar Ceramics, Salalah Mills, Oman Fisheries, and Raysut Cement were down by 9.72 per cent, 8.60 per cent, 8.33 per cent, 3.00 per cent and 2.60 per cent respectively. Services Index was down by 0.24 per cent before closing at 1,610.93 points. Prices of Sembcorp Salalah, SMN Power Holding, Muscat Desalination, Salalah Port Services, and National Gas were up by 6.06 per cent, 4.17 per cent, 3.13 per cent, 2.22 per cent and 1.91 per cent respectively. Prices of Sharqiyah Desalination, Renaissance Services, Al Batinah Power, Ooredoo, and Phoenix Power were down by 9.35 per cent, 3.85 per cent, 3.33 per cent, 2.72 per cent and 2.27 per cent respectively. — United Securities

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

Trading Summary																
Volume		Turnover		Trades		Market Cap		Up		Down		Equal		Sec. Traded		
26,106,255		3,495,167		749		23,725,977,913		12		18		22		52		
SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR MONDAY, JANUARY 16																
SEC	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BD	LAST OFFER	PBR VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET																
OM0000003125	GLOBAL INV F	826,976	48,475	37	0.058	0.060	0.058	0.060	0.055	0.005	9.091	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.100	12,000,000
OM0000002281	TARGETER FINANCE	30,100	3,010	2	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.099	0.001	1.010	0.100	0.097	0.100	0.100	25,866,180
OM0000001525	OMAN INVST&FIN	55,000	7,048	3	0.128	0.130	0.128	0.130	0.129	0.001	0.775	0.130	0.128	0.132	0.100	30,810,000
OM0000001152	OMAN NAT.ENG.	345,500	41,005	19	0.121	0.121	0.118	0.119	0.119	0.000	0.000	0.119	0.115	0.119	0.100	16,660,000
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	343,598	89,643	6	0.290	0.290	0.290	0.290	0.290	0.000	0.000	0.290	0.286	0.290	0.100	471,524,443
OM0000002077	AL OMANYA FIN.S	9,000	1,290	1	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.000	0.000	0.150	0.140	0.156	0.100	45,482,045
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PROD.	11,000	2,530	3	0.230	0.230	0.230	0.230	0.230	0.000	0.000	0.230	0.226	0.230	0.100	28,726,531
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIA INV.	186,500	14,035	17	0.080	0.080	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.000	0.000	0.075	0.074	0.075	0.100	6,750,000
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	2,667,382	746,911	58	0.280	0.280	0.279	0.280	0.280	0.000	0.000	0.280	0.279	0.282	0.100	3,101,791,177
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	46,880	44,029	17	0.952	0.940	0.952	0.940	0.940	0.000	0.000	0.940	0.938	0.940	0.100	705,000,000
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	12,774	5,365	7	0.420	0.420	0.420	0.420	0.420	0.000	0.000	0.420	0.400	0.420	0.100	23,100,000
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	90,337	27,462	5	0.304	0.304	0.304	0.304	0.306	-0.002	-0.654	0.304	0.304	0.306	0.100	100,585,304
OM0000003398	SOHAR INT. BANK	1,523,520	159,569	17	0.106	0.106	0.104	0.105	0.107	-0.002	-1.869	0.105	0.103	0.105	0.100	481,966,540
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	205,613	87,589	10	0.436	0.440	0.420	0.420	0.430	-0.010	-2.326	0.420	0.420	0.420	0.100	280,713,479
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	199,262	86,312	20	0.440	0.440	0.430	0.430	0.442	-0.012	-2.715	0.430	0.430	0.430	0.100	279,906,019
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SER	110,824	50,181	8	0.456	0.458	0.450	0.450	0.468	-0.018	-3.846	0.450	0.450	0.450	0.100	106,384,500
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	41,460	14,418	7	0.372	0.372	0.340	0.340	0.372	-0.032	-8.602	0.340	0.340	0.340	0.100	74,800,000
Total		67,05,476	1,440,069	237												
Parallel Market																
OM0000004735	SEMBORP SALALAH	5,380,143	365,428	73	0.066	0.070	0.066	0.070	0.066	0.004	6.061	0.070	0.070	0.072	0.100	66,820,037
OM0000003681	VOLTAMP ENERGY	101,000	9,723	19	0.095	0.100	0.095	0.095	0.091	0.004	4.396	0.095	0.089	0.095	0.100	7,733,261
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	457,102	23,003	23	0.050	0.052	0.050	0.050	0.048	0.002	4.167	0.050	0.049	0.051	0.100	9,981,780
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEER	3,864,689	718,418	99	0.185	0.188	0.180	0.187	0.180	0.007	3.889	0.185	0.187	0.187	0.100	37,958,465
OM0000007084	MCT DESALINATE	65,771	6,516	4	0.100	0.100	0.099	0.099	0.096	0.003	3.125	0.099	0.099	0.103	0.100	15,399,490
OM0000002333	SALALAH PORT SR	330	152	1	0.460	0.460	0.460	0.460	0.450	0.010	2.222	0.460	0.450	0.000	0.100	82,725,204
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	425,200	46,774	36	0.111	0.111	0.107	0.107	0.105	0.002	1.905	0.107	0.105	0.109	0.100	9,955,000
OM0000008710	BARKA DESALINATION	27,021	3,704	2	0.137	0.137	0.137	0.138	0.137	0.000	0.730	0.138	0.138	0.138	0.100	10,422,036
OM0000001301	DHOFAR FOODS AND INVESTMENT	5,000	350	4	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.000	0.000	0.070	0.070	0.072	0.100	5,659,500
OM0000001317	HSEC BANK OMAN	2,513,480	402,157	12	0.160	0.160	0.160	0.160	0.160	0.000	0.000	0.160	0.157	0.176	0.100	320,050,046
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO	43,806	3,196	4	0.079	0.079	0.072	0.072	0.072	0.000	0.000	0.072	0.074	0.073	0.100	8,775,000
OM0000002267	GULF MUSHROOM P	15,000	3,450	1	0.230	0.230	0.230	0.230	0.230	0.000	0.000	0.230	0.220	0.235	0.100	9,569,212
OM0000002275	SHELL OMAN MRK	1,001	825	2	0.824	0.824	0.824	0.824	0.824	0.000	0.000	0.824	0.824	0.824	0.100	78,280,000
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	351,553	34,133	12	0.098	0.099	0.097	0.098	0.098	0.000	0.000	0.098	0.097	0.098	0.100	219,221,397
OM0000004776	TAKAFUL OMAN	133	6	1	0.048	0.048	0.048	0.048	0.048	0.000	0.000	0.048	0.040	0.048	0.100	12,000,000
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	375,000	10,875	7	0.029	0.029	0.029	0.029	0.029	0.000	0.000	0.029	0.029	0.030	0.100	20,717,784
OM0000007811	MUSANDAM POWER	15,000	5,010	2	0.334	0.334	0.334	0.334	0.334	0.000	0.000	0.334	0.310	0.334	0.100	23,510,260
OM0000001178	MUSCAT GASES	8,585	987	3	0.115	0.115	0.115	0.115	0.116	-0.001	-0.862	0.115	0.105	0.115	0.100	8,775,000
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	127,585	5,612	8	0.044	0.044	0.044	0.044	0.044	0.000	0.000	0.044	0.041	0.043	0.100	62,891,863
OM0000001095	DHOFAR INSURANCE	30,764	6,343	3	0.225	0.225	0.200	0.200	0.205	-0.005	-2.439	0.200	0.200	0.224	0.100	20,952,409
OM0000001418	RAYSUT CEMENT	29,320	4,398	7	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.154	-0.004	-2.597	0.150	0.150	0.152	0.100	30,000,000
OM0000001566	OMAN FISHERIES	11,500	1,132	6	0.099	0.099	0.096	0.097	0.100	-0.003	-3.000	0.096	0.096	0.096	0.100	17,661,605
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	4,765,575	313,168	113	0.066	0.066	0.064	0.064	0.066	-0.002	-3.030	0.064	0.063	0.064	0.100	22,345,242
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	503,544	46,010	34	0.093	0.093	0.090	0.090	0.093	-0.003	-3.226	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.100	15,750,000
OM0000004925	ALBATTINAH POWER	109,000	3,170	6	0.030	0.030	0.029	0.029	0.030	-0.001	-3.333	0.029	0.029	0.030	0.100	19,571,735
OM0000001772	ALAN FISHERIES	900	54	1	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.086	-0.006	-6.977	0.080	0.080	0.086	0.100	16,000,000
OM0000001889	SALALAH MILLS	3,371	2,665	5	0.788	0.792	0.788	0.792	0.864	-0.072	-8.333	0.792	0.792	0.792	0.100	39,570,747
OM0000004669	SHARQIYAH DESALIN	51,444	7,143	3	0.140	0.140	0.126	0.126	0.139	-0.013	-9.353	0.126	0.126	0.152	0.100	12,323,072
OM0000001319	ALUMINIUM PROD.	10,244	668	2	0.072	0.072	0.065	0.065	0.072	-0.007	-9.722	0.065	0.065	0.072	0.100	2,182,144
Total		19,292,961	2,025,079	493												



INFUSE FUN INTO YOUR FAMILY ROUTINE

It can be challenging to motivate your kids after a holiday break. By shaking up the routine and infusing some fun and creativity into family activities, you can help beat the holiday blues.

Here are a few fun, family-friendly ideas to help keep spirits up:

1. Get creative in the kitchen. A great (and tasty!) way to have some fun and teach your kids a thing or two is to get creative in the kitchen. Get them started with an easy recipe they can take the lead in preparing.

3. Get a change of scenery. Sometimes a change of scenery is all you need. Check out local event sites and plan one day each month for your family to explore a new festival, museum, indoor or outdoor market, park, music show or other unique local offering.

2. Make a point to get moving. Motivation and movement go hand in hand, and there are lots of ways to get everyone in the family moving, even during the chillier months. Explore your local hiking trails or go bowling. Consider starting an exercise challenge and up the excitement by offering prizes that your kids will be motivated to earn.

4. Throw a party. Planning a gathering is sometimes just as fun as the party itself. Host a party with your kids and let them be involved in coming up with the theme, menu and guest list. Let them get creative by making up games for a game night that both kids and adults will enjoy. Take it one step further and have them create handmade party decorations and a trophy for the winner to take home.

Explore your local hiking trails or go bowling. Consider starting an exercise challenge and up the excitement by offering prizes that your kids will be motivated to earn.

5. Volunteer together. Brainstorm a few simple but meaningful things to do at home that can benefit the world. Seemingly small things like starting a compost pile, collecting food shelf donations or contributing to a charity event at school are great ways to get involved and make a difference. Or consider signing the entire family up for volunteer and fundraising opportunities, such as working at a food bank, participating in park cleanups or walking or running to raise money for a charity.



SPORTS

Fans to get an opportunity to meet drift drivers today



World class drift drivers from this year’s championship can be approached for photos and signed autographs on Tuesday

MUSCAT: Fans will get an opportunity meet their celebrity drifters for photos and signed autographs at the Muscat Drift Arena on Tuesday.

The drift racers will be lined up with their cars to greet their fans after their spectacular performances in Round 1 of the Oman International Drift Championship 2023.

OIDC Race Director, Fahmi Al Busaidi said: “The drivers on both days gave us a remarkable show and we could clearly see the excitement they held and brought to this competition.

“It’s difficult to say who would

take home the winning cup as each and every one of them are giving their all to each race, on the track.”

At the end of Round 1, Omani Drifter Haitham Al Hadidi who won first place in the National category, said: “This was an amazing round of battles, which I have to thank Oman Automobile Association for the way they organised it, and I’m ready and super excited for the challenges coming up in the next few weeks.”

The Association will be arranging a digital drifting challenge, which will take place after the Meet and Greet at the same location, with the competition set between the OIDC pro drift drivers and local gamers.

Qualifiers will begin on Monday, the 16th of January, for all video gamers in the country who are interested in participating in this digital contest.

Following the Round 1 prize giving, Ahmad Daham, Jordanian drifter who earned first place in the MENA category, said: “I’m happy as long as I put on a good show for the crowd because honestly, we actually do this for them. Hearing the noise coming from the audience filled with their cheers is what lifts my spirits and it would have been the cherry on top to get first place this time, but it was just bad luck.”

When asked what was going through his mind when the battle between him and Nikolass Bertans took an unexpected turn with his car catching on fire, he said: “I actually knew something like this would happen. When we took a five-minute break to fix the car, we felt that the engine wasn’t doing very well.

“It was a 50-50 chance whether it was going to last or not so we could only do what we could in that space of time and the rest was up to the car.”

The digital drift competition will be followed by a spread of food and side activities for both the drift drivers and their fans to enjoy.

The Oman Automobile Association will continue to host the next three rounds of the OIDC at the Muscat Drift Arena, and are anticipating a great deal of action from the competitors.

After winning the Round 1 International category, Nikolass Bertans from Latvia said: “I’m at a loss for words but it feels so good to be back in Oman to compete after two years, and I just want to have the best time here with some good fun.”

The reception at OAA is open every day for inquiries and issuing international licences. Karting facilities at Muscat Speedway are open from 3.30PM to 11PM, from Monday to Saturday.

SCORE 3-1 AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Barcelona thrash Real Madrid in final to win Spanish Super Cup

RIYADH: Barcelona defeated Real Madrid 3-1 on Sunday in Saudi Arabia to win the Spanish Super Cup, with goals from Gavi, Robert Lewandowski, and Pedri handing them the victory over bitter rivals.

It almost seemed too simple. Antonio Rudiger mishandled the ball. Robert Lewandowski received it from Pedri, who subsequently gave it to an unidentified Gavi.

The midfielder calmly put the ball into the far corner to give his team a 1-0 lead. His goal was the first of three skillful plays that helped Barca defeat a sluggish Real Madrid team and give Xavi his first championship as manager.

Barcelona had a chance, but Lewandowski’s strike was deflected onto the post by a stretched-out Courtois. It was also a portent of things to come. After Rudiger’s error, Gavi finished a nice move to score the game’s first goal.

Gavi raced forward and squared for Lewandowski, who made no mistake from five yards out.

Halfway through the second



half, the Blaugrana scored their third goal, with Gavi once more contributing. He dashed down the left and spotted Pedri running toward the back post, who was already jubilant before the ball was sent into the goal.

But despite how much the Blaugrana was pleased, Madrid put on a terrible performance. The first significant Los Blancos opportunity didn’t come until Karim Benzema scored off a fortunate rebound inside the six-yard area

in the 92nd minute.

His effort was the only hiccup in Barca’s otherwise overwhelming display. Although they now possess the first domestic prize of the year, the outcome has considerably greater significance. **-ANI**

MELBOURNE : Top-seed Rafael Nadal won another nail-biting match at the Rod Laver Arena in Melbourne on Monday to begin his Australian Open title defence by defeating British rising star Jack Draper.

The Spaniard delivered in the crucial moments to secure a 7-5, 2-6, 6-4, 6-1 victory against 21-year-old debutante Jack Draper to reach the second round for the 17th time.

In a match with only left-handed players, Nadal won sets one and three with crucial, late breaks to make up for Draper’s nearly 6-0 second-set lead. The Briton faced up against Nadal and outplayed him for periods of time before succumbing to the Spaniard’s constant pressure.

Draper started to experience cramps and needed treatment during multiple changeovers as the Spaniard regained control of the match in the third set, locating his forehead from all parts of the court.

Early in the fourth set, both men played some of their finest tennis, with Draper collecting his fourth break to take the lead. But as Draper’s health difficulties grew worse, Nadal won the final six games.

The inaugural ATP Head-2Head encounter between the two players was briefly stopped early on by rain, and the play on the court seemed to reflect the match’s stop-start nature as each player took turns controlling from the baseline. Draper quickly built a 4-0 lead in the second set thanks to his powerful forehand after barely losing the first set.

As Draper rallied from a set down to tie the third set, the outcome of the match was in doubt; however, Nadal did just enough to hold his opponent at bay and end any chance of an upset; the fourth set was never in doubt.

Playing for a record-extending 23rd Grand Slam singles title, Na-



dal is seeking his third Australian Open crown (2009, 2022). He will lock horns with Mackenzie McDonald in the second round after the American’s 7-6(5), 7-6(1), 1-6, 6-7(10), 6-4 win against countryman Brandon Nakashima on Monday.

Straight-set triumph

No.7 seed Coco Gauff opened her 2023 Australian Open campaign with a straight-set triumph over the Czech Republic’s Katerina Siniakova here at the Rod Laver Arena on Monday.

The 18-year-old American advanced to the second round with a 6-1, 6-4 victory. Gauff will face 2021 US Open champion Emma Raducanu next. Playing in her fourth Australian Open, Gauff opened up play and advanced through the first set in just 22 minutes.

After winning the longest rally of the match (22 strokes) and breaking Gauff to lead 4-2, Siniakova came back in the second set and appeared poised to force a third set. However, the lead was short-lived.

Gauff immediately broke again, earning a chance to serve out the victory. Before the American sealed the victory with a backhand volley winner in the longest game of the match, Siniakova fought valiantly to save six match points. **-ANI**

MEN’S HOCKEY

Important that we did not concede a goal, says India hockey coach Reid

ROURKELA : Following his side’s goalless draw against England at the FIH Men’s Hockey World Cup, Indian head coach Graham Reid expressed happiness that his team did not concede a goal, but was disappointed that his side gave away too many penalty corners.

India played a goalless draw against England to take home one point each in a crucial Pool D, Hockey World Cup match at the Birsa Munda International Hockey Stadium in Rourkela on Sunday. “It is very important that we

did not concede a goal. We did give away too many penalty corners,” said Reid in a post-match press conference.

England praised

Indian skipper Harmanpreet Singh also lauded England for defending well.

“We are getting chances to score. We also decide who will take those PCs. But they (England) defended well, tried variations,” said Harmanpreet.

Reid said that both sides were

bound to feel disappointed after a goalless draw that offered many chances to score to both the sides. He also admitted that they did not start well.

“Both teams will feel that way when the match ends in a 0-0 draw and a lot of opportunities were available to both the sides. It was a missed opportunity, we need to get better results in the circle. But I am happy with the fight and commitment shown today. It was a nice game to watch, there was a lot of high-skill hockey played. Both

teams will be in high stead for the next match,” said the coach.

The Indian team looked to take an early lead against England in the crucial game and hit the blocks running from the word go as they penetrated the English circle in the opening minutes.

Harmanpreet Singh who had an off day in the previous game looked in spectacular touch. He was impressive on the field with his interceptions and tackles in the opening minutes, putting pressure on the opposition. **-ANI**

CRICKET

Khanco LLC beat Modern Muscat Mountains

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Khanco LLC beat Modern Muscat Mountains by 30 runs and Oman Cricket Academy U19 beat Sri Lankan School Muscat U19 by 60 runs.

Khanco LLC posted a total of 181 runs batting first, courtesy knocks from Muhammed Irfan (28 of 12 balls with 3 sixes) and Allen Danti (25 of 9 balls with 4 fours and 1 six). Muthumurugan M and Edwin AS picked up 3 wickets each and Sidhi Suman claimed 2 wickets.

In response, Modern Muscat

Mountains got off to a steady start with Suseendran S (42 of 35 balls with 6 fours) and Parthipan K (35 of 24 balls with 4 fours) taking the chase ahead before Haroon Asghar struck them with a hat-trick and completing his spell with 5 wickets packing them at 151 runs.

Khanco LLC register their 4th win of the league

OCA U19’s opener Narayana Satish (39 of 68) along with crucial contribution from Mohammed Aseel (36 of 85) and Kavish Shah (30 of 75) took OCA U19 to a defendable total

of 171 runs in 50 overs.

Himesh Raj, Talha Khalid and Omidu Puladith were the key for SLSM U19 picking 2 wickets each.

In response, the SLSM batmen struggled against the bowling of OCA U19 with just 3 of their batsmen able to score runs in double figures.

Exceptional bowling from Prathiesh Hema Ramesh (4/15) and Kavish Shah (3/17) ensured the OCA bundle SLSM down to just 111 runs in 38.4 overs. OCA registered their 3rd consecutive win of the league.



Haroon Asghar - Khanco LLC.



Prathiesh HR and Kavish Shah - OCA U19.

Asalah customers hail Priority Banking WhatsApp service

Launched in 2021, the service has been witnessing increasing usage and has received excellent feedback from a large number of Asalah Priority Banking customers

MUSCAT: In line with its vision ‘To serve you better, everyday’ and commitment to customer service excellence, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate, offers an automated WhatsApp service to its Asalah Priority Banking customers.

Launched earlier in 2021, the service has been witnessing increasing usage and has received excellent feedback from a large number of Asalah Priority Banking customers. Using the service is as simple as saving the dedicated Asalah Call Centre number (24779999) in the phone contacts list, following which it will automatically appear within WhatsApp as Bank Muscat Asalah Priority Banking. Customers can send the message ‘Hi’ or ‘Hello’ to the number through WhatsApp to receive the menu list as a reply. Replying with the relevant code from the menu list will enable

customers to get more details on the specific topic of their interest through its improved navigation functionality.

Customer service executives are available on all days from 8am to 10.30pm, while automated WhatsApp chat is available 24/7 to help answer different queries that customers may have. In 2019, Bank Muscat became the first bank in the Sultanate to launch a dedicated WhatsApp channel for its personal banking customers through 24795555 and followed this up with the launch of a dedicated Asalah WhatsApp service in 2021. The implementation of this service offers customers one more channel of communication with the bank so as to quickly get answers to their queries, and demonstrates the bank’s keenness to keep abreast with the latest technological developments, so as to better serve its customers.

Speaking about the dedicated Asalah WhatsApp service, Abdulnasir N. Al Raisi, General Manager – Personal Banking, Bank Muscat said: “Bank Muscat has always been keen to meet the expectations of its valued customers and offer them a sophisticated banking experience backed by high-tech products, innovative financing facilities, and world-class customer-centric services. In line with our vision ‘To serve you better, every day’, the bank is always working on strengthening its communication channels with its customers and enhances banking convenience by setting new benchmarks as the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate.”

Abdulnasir N. Al Raisi observed that large numbers of Asalah Priority Banking customers are today using the WhatsApp service after its launch in 2021, which was an encouragement to the bank to continue innovating and launching new products and services for enhanced banking convenience.

The new WhatsApp service will be particularly useful for customers in better understanding and utilising a number of exclusive benefits available to them including lifestyle and travel benefits, wealth and investment solutions as well as location services for all Asalah Centres across Oman amongst others.



JEWELLERY RETAILER



Malabar Gold & Diamonds continues rapid expansion; opens its 300th global showroom in Dallas

MUSCAT: The grand inauguration of the 300th global showroom of Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 6th largest jewellery retailer globally with a strong retail network of 300 showrooms across 10 countries, was held in Dallas, USA.

Susan Fletcher, Collin County Commissioner and Jeff Cheney, Mayor of Frisco, Texas, jointly inaugurated the showroom in the presence of Shamlal Ahamed, Managing Director – International Operations. The event was virtually attended by M P Ahammed, Chairman, Malabar Group; KP Abdul Salam, Vice-Chairman, Malabar Group; O Asher, Managing Director – India Operations, other team members, well-wishers and dignitaries.

“It is a moment of great pride for us as we touch the 300th mark with this new showroom in Dallas, USA. We started off with a small showroom in Calicut, Kerala, India and today, in less than 30 years, we have a strong retail presence of 300 showrooms across 10 countries; all thanks to our customers, shareholders, employees and other stakeholders. We will continue to strengthen our retail presence in the regions where we have established a robust presence, as well as enter new markets with our differentiated products, services and assurances. The acceptance and patronage received by the brand gives us the confidence to further speed up the expansion process in becoming the No. 1 jewellery retailer globally,” said MP Ahammed, Chairman, Malabar Group.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds currently operates in 10 countries and has immediate expansion plans into the UK, Bangladesh, Australia, Egypt, Canada, Turkey, South Africa. The future expansions are expected to create approximately 6,000 job opportunities in the retail, manufacturing, technical and management areas related to jewellery trade.

“Malabar Gold & Diamonds has played a vital role in making Indian jewellery more acceptable

and trustworthy at the global level in recent years. We are now crafting unique experiences targeting the individual and specific preferences of our customers. As the design discovery and initial decision-making of most customers are happening online these days, we are focusing greatly on strengthening our omnichannel retail strategy, for which we are making use of the services of global technology giants like Microsoft, IBM, Accenture, E&Y, Deloitte etc.,” said Abdul Salam KP, Vice Chairman, Malabar Group.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds is renowned globally for offering an unparalleled jewellery buying experience with convenience, and customer-friendly policies along with the ‘Malabar Promise’ of incomparable quality and service assurance. Malabar Promise includes assured lifetime maintenance from any of the showrooms across 10 countries, guaranteed buyback, IGI and GIA-certified diamonds ensuring 28-point quality check of global standards, zero deduction gold exchange, complete transparency, 916 hallmarked pure gold, responsible sourcing, fair price policy and fair labour practices.

“We are very excited about our future growth plan and will immediately be expanding into new markets, including the UK, Bangladesh, Australia and Canada, followed by Egypt, Turkey & South Africa. Apart from this, we will further strengthen our retail footprint within the existing markets as well. We constantly make efforts to evolve in line with the diverse preferences of our multicultural and multinational customers, as part of which we will focus further on product variety and a superior shopping experience, in addition to opening more stand-alone stores for local customers of the respective regions,” said Shamlal Ahamed, Managing Director – International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

The new showroom in Dallas has a stunning display of more than 30,000 jewellery designs from 20 countries across gold, diamonds, precious gems and platinum, catering to the design preferences of those residing in and around Dallas.

“We have an ambitious retail expansion plan in India as well, especially in the North and Central Indian states and are gearing up in a big way to enter new territories as well by setting higher standards in the jewellery trade. We understand the sensitivity of the industry and ensure compliance through responsible sourcing, ethical business practices, and transparent and professional fund management. Our association with trade bodies, financial houses, and government regulators help to ensure that our operations are infallible globally,” said O Asher, Managing Director – India Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

“We will further strengthen our manufacturing capabilities to support our retail expansion drive globally. We will also be hiring skilled artisans and related staff as part of this process. This will also further bolster our mission, ‘Make in India, Market to the World.’ Keeping in line with the brand’s outlook as a responsible jeweller, all our ongoing and upcoming facilities have and will be designed to provide safe and pleasant working conditions to the employees,” said Nishad AK, Group Executive Director, Manufacturing & B2B, Malabar Group.

Malabar Group believes that the most successful companies are those which integrate responsibility and sustainability into their core business and commit 5% of their profit to support socially responsible purposes both in India and abroad, since its inception in 1993. Hunger, health, education, women empowerment, housing and environment are the key focus areas for the group.

TYRE SOLUTION

Tyreplus opens its revamped and upgraded outlet in Barka



MUSCAT: Tyreplus adds another feather to its cap, with the opening of its revamped and upgraded outlet at Barka.

Tyreplus is the only destination where customers can expect world-class brands like Michelin, BFGoodrich, Varta, Optima and a range of facilities to suit every need: premium tyre brands, oil change service, professional fitment, wheel balancing & alignment, AC check, car battery, brake service, tyre puncture repair and general car checks.

Mohsin Hani Al Bahrani, CEO MHD ACERE said, “Our Tyreplus facility at Barka is among our most prominent outlets and caters to a large section of our customer base. To set newer benchmarks in customer satisfaction, we upgraded the facilities and tailored the services to provide top-class tyre solutions, range of finest

tyre brands and professional quick car services.”

The enhanced Barka facility is in a convenient and accessible location with a comprehensive set of products and services that help get your vehicle back on the road – quickly, safely and economically. With over 16 years of experience and 10 branches across Oman - Azaiba, Wadi Kabir, Mabela, Al Khuwair, Nizwa, Sur, Sohar, Bani Bu Ali, Salalah and Barka, there's always a Tyreplus centre near you.

The Barka centre will be open from 8am to 1pm & 3.30pm to 7pm from Saturday to Thursday.

Since its inception date in 2002 until today, Tyreplus has served customers from all over the world with an inviting experience, transparent service, and comprehensive care. A routine car inspection, car battery replacement, nitrogen tyre inflation service,

tyre fitting, wheel alignment, puncture repair, and other services are among the list at Tyreplus. It has more than 1600 franchise locations in 26 countries, including 10 branches in Oman. Tyreplus sustains unrivalled levels of service by throwing together high-quality materials, trained and educated technicians, and several fueling spots to ensure a safe and enjoyable trip.

MHD ACERE [Automotive, Construction Equipment and Renewable Energy] is one of the largest and most successful privately owned business conglomerates in the Sultanate of Oman and the Gulf region. It boasts of a diversified portfolio of products and services and brand partnerships from across the continents and is the exclusive distributor of some of the finest automotive brands in the world.

ROUND-UP

Nissan enhances safety suite features with six innovative technologies

Available in the Middle East, Nissan Safety Shield® 360 actively monitors, assists, and reacts to surroundings to prevent potential collisions

MUSCAT: As a testament to its commitment of making advanced technology accessible for all, Nissan has enhanced its suite of safety features and driver assistance technologies in the Middle East with Safety Shield® 360.

Forming part of the suite of Nissan Intelligent Mobility (NIM) technologies, which redefines how cars are driven, powered, and integrated into society, Nissan Safety Shield® 360 provides a comprehensive approach to safety with a cohesive system of hi-tech active safety features that are developed to help avoid collisions with objects and people.

Available in the Middle East across Nissan's vehicle line up ranging from Sunny to Patrol, Nissan Safety Shield® 360 uses a range of front, side and rear cameras and sensors to effectively monitor the area around the car, identify risks and stepping in when necessary. The various innovations alert drivers if they stray from their lane, if a vehicle is in their blind spot, or if there are any objects and pedestrians in their path – offering increased confidence and peace of mind while driving.

Abdulilah Wazni, Director of Product, Marketing, and Customer Experience at Nissan Middle East, said: "At Nissan, we are committed to creating a society with virtually zero avoidable traffic accidents. Part of realising this vision is the need for equipping our vehicles to better protect our customers and provide them with peace of mind and comfort as they embark on their journeys. Safety Shield® 360, which acts as an extra pair of eyes on the road to protect those both on



board and around our cars, is just one example of how Nissan delivers innovative safety technologies to broader segments of the market, strengthening our reputation as a brand for the people."

With a focus on making journeys safer, Nissan Safety Shield® 360 utilises a combination of cameras, radars, and sonar technologies to remain vigilant throughout the drive, and assist drivers swiftly and efficiently as soon as a danger is detected. The six technologies that work together to form Safety Shield® 360 are:

Automatic Emergency Braking with Pedestrian Detection
Utilising forward-facing radar and camera technology, the Automatic Emergency Braking with Pedes-

trian Detection system tracks vehicles and crossing pedestrians. It provides audible and visual warnings and can apply the brakes to avoid or reduce the severity of a frontal collision.

Lane Departure Warning
Designed to reduce unintentional lane changes, the system monitors the left and right-side lane markers of the traveling lane. If there is a risk of the vehicle leaving the traveling lane unintentionally, the system flashes an indicator and sounds a warning chime.

High Beam Assist
Monitoring oncoming traffic, High Beam Assist automatically switches to low beam headlights when a vehicle is detected and turns the high beams back on when needed,



making for a safer and more comfortable drive at night.

Blind Spot Warning
By gathering information from

sensors on either side of the vehicle, the Blind Spot Warning system alerts drivers of vehicles in their blind spot with an indicator light near the side mirror and a warn-

ing chime, guiding them to change lanes with more confidence.

Rear Cross Traffic Alert
Processing information from various cameras and radar sensors, the Rear Cross Traffic Alert system monitors moving vehicles, pedestrians, or objects that may be out of sight and alerts drivers when reversing out of a parking spot. The audible warning, combined with cameras and 360 degree view feature available on select models provides holistic assistance to drivers for a safe exit.

Rear Automatic Braking
The Rear Automatic Braking system detects stationary objects behind a vehicle and, if necessary, applies the brakes to avoid a rear collision or lessen the severity of an impact.

REFRESHING MENU

Mysk Al Mouj launches brand-new menu at Salt & Pepper Restaurant



MUSCAT: Salt & Pepper at Mysk Al Mouj, overlooking the beautiful Al Mouj Marina, take a step further with the unveiling of its refreshing menu.

The re-designed menu promises to take you through the journey of the silk route with inspired dishes and beverages to tantalise your taste buds.

The revamped menu boasts culinary classics such as Pastas, Risotto, butter chicken, and signature dishes such as spiced pumpkin soup, Bali beef rendang, Moroccan zaatar spiced double lamb chops, and baked gulab jamun cheesecake, to name a few.

Elated at the launch of the new menu, the EAM - Food & Bever-

age of the hotel, Meenu Singh, said, "Food is a sensory art that appeals to all the senses, and we have curated this menu to ensure our guests experience one of the finest dining experiences of the silk route inspired cuisine in Oman. All the dishes on the menu are authentic, with the right procurement of local ingredients.

TOP-QUALITY EQUIPMENT

GSD launches SKY Windows & Doors

MUSCAT: Gulf Services and Development (GSD), which has been doing incredibly well in various fields of operations has now added another feather to its crown, by registering and launching the brand SKY Windows and Doors. GSD is a registered Riyada company, which is for the development of Small and Medium Enterprises.

Sky Windows and Doors has a fully operational central manufacturing unit in Al Misfah, which possesses brand-new top-quality equipment imported from various parts of the world. These machines will make sure that clients will be able to obtain world-class products in Oman.

Sky Windows and Doors, launched its first showroom in Al Saad Souq, in Al Mazoon Street, Seeb. Currently, the showroom showcases a good range of products and services in the UPVC doors and windows category for residential/commercial buildings to the entire range of houses and villas.



The owner of GSD Said Al Badi emphasised the fact, "At Sky Windows and Doors, there is no compromise on the quality, and we are here to serve the nation's growth. Since we are operating on economies of scale, we have been able to keep the pricing very attractive as well. We might be in the production sector, but we wish to be known for the high quality of service that we provide to our customers."

Mohsin Ali - Sales Manager

/ Sky Windows and Doors mentioned that currently, they will be operating from Muscat, while they still cater for clients from the interior. Soon, they are in the process of opening outlets in various parts of Oman. They are also going to be focusing on the B2B models by actively being involved with various projects. Clients can also contact us through our social media handles on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok and LinkedIn as well.



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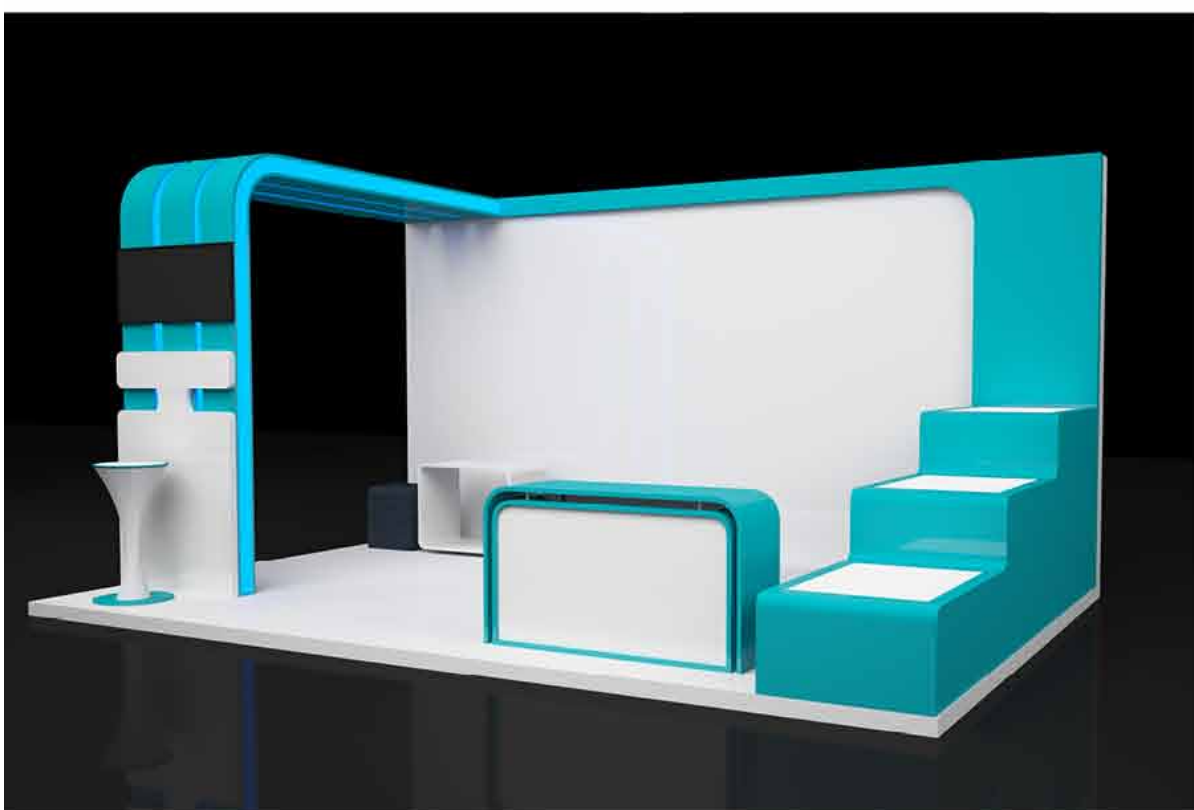
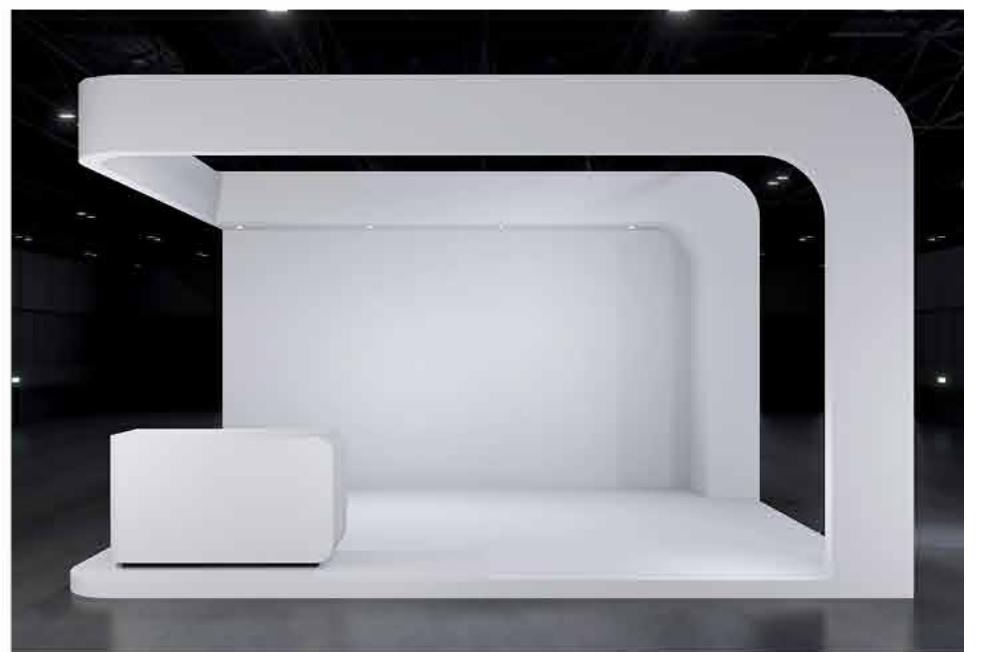
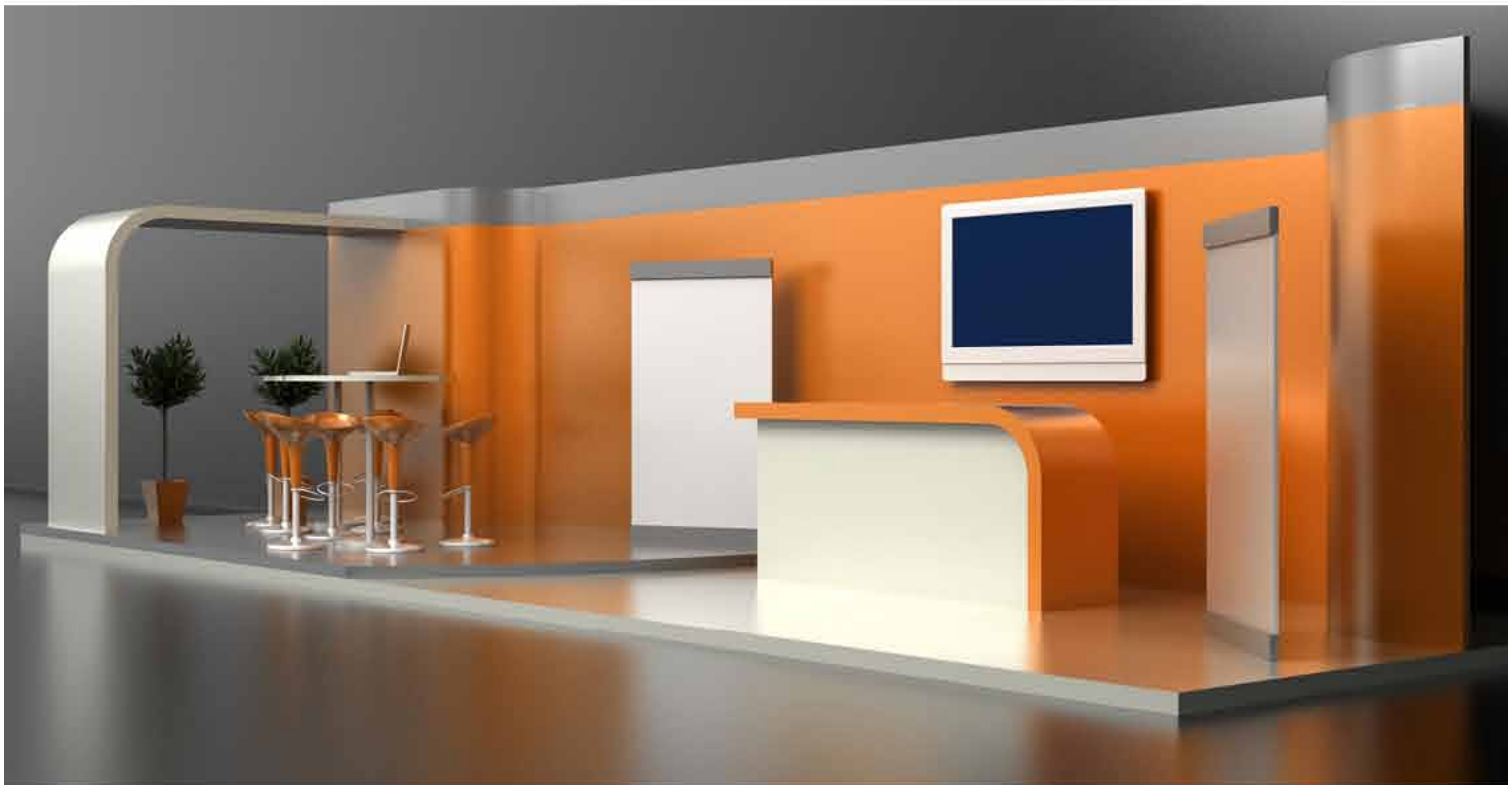
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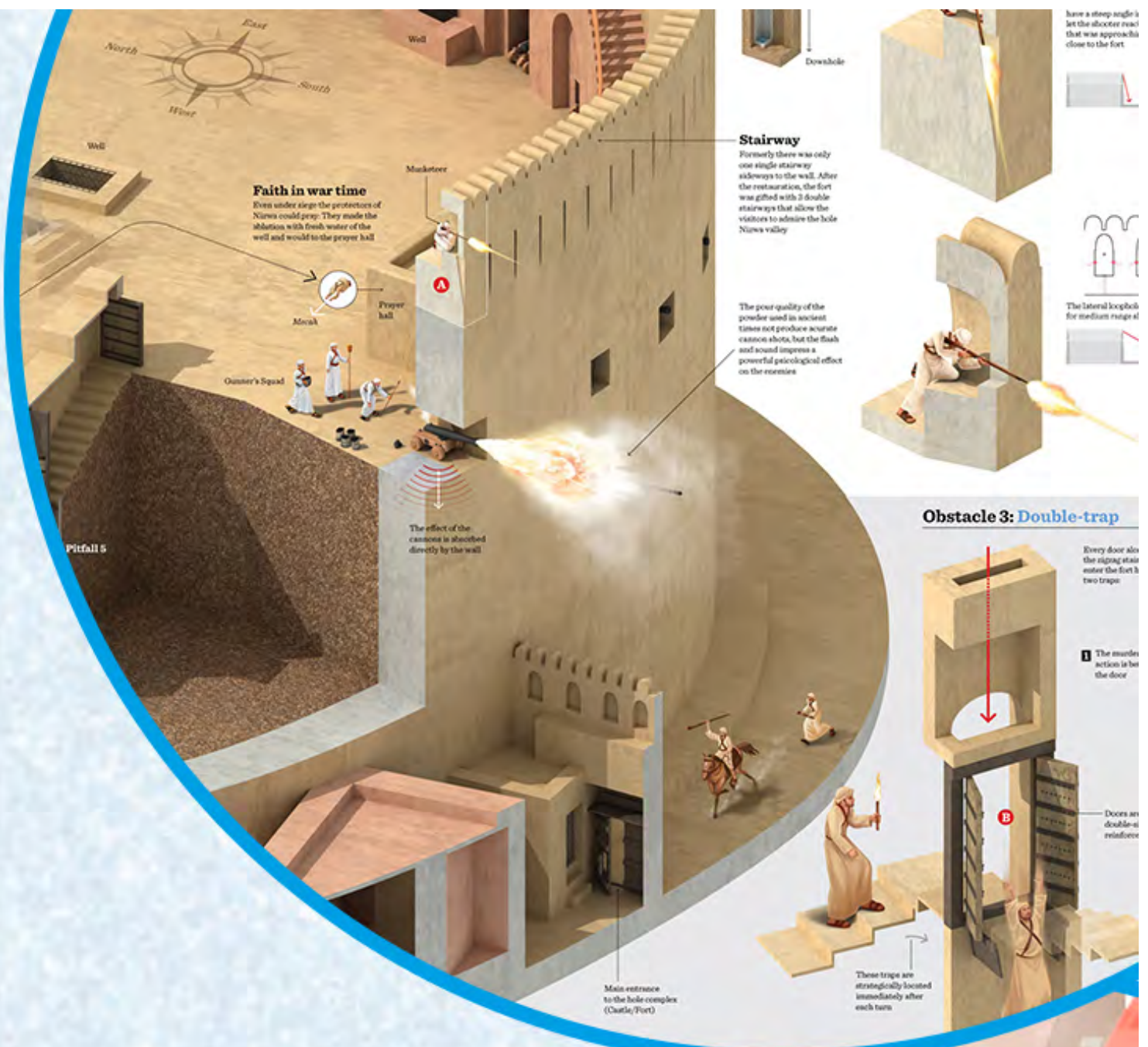
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