

HM GREETES PRESIDENT OF GABON

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Ali Bongo Ondimba of the Gabonese Republic on the occasion of his country's National Day. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Ondimba. His Majesty also wished the friendly people of Gabon further progress and prosperity. **-ONA**



HIS MAJESTY THE SULTAN GREETES PRESIDENT OF INDONESIA

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Joko Widodo of the Republic of Indonesia on his country Independence Anniversary. In the cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Widodo. His Majesty also wished the friendly people of Indonesia further progress and prosperity. **-ONA**



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ANNOUNCEMENT

HM issues four Royal Decrees

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik has issued four Royal Decrees reading as follows:

Royal Decree No. 53/2021 amends some provisions of the Motor Insurance Law, after presenting the same before the Council of Oman.

Article (1) introduces the amendments attached (to this decree) to the aforesaid Motor Insurance Law promulgated under Royal Decree No. 34/94.

Article (2) cancels all that contradicts the attached amendments or contravenes their provisions.

Article (3) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from the day following its date of publishing.

>A4



SAYYID SHIHAB RECEIVES UAE ARMED FORCES CHIEF

His Highness Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs received in his office at Al Murtafaa Camp here on Monday Lt. General Hamad Mohammed Thani Al Rumaithi, Chief of Staff of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Armed Forces and his accompanying delegation. The two sides reviewed the fraternal relations binding the two countries and exchanged views on matters of mutual interest. The meeting was attended by Vice Admiral Abdullah Khamis Al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces. **-ONA**

NEW FORMS OF TREATMENT TO FIGHT CANCER IN OMAN



Cutting-edge devices and qualified employees provide highest levels of treatment and care for cancer patients

Times News Service

MUSCAT: New forms of treatment used in Oman to fight cancer can help cure patients of the disease in a far shorter time, and ensure patients suffer from less side effects during their recovery.

The team at Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Centre (SQCCCRC) used a process called the partial breast irradiation technique to treat breast cancer patients in the country.

The technique uses photon beams as a virtual scalpel to remove cancer cells, while ensuring healthy ones remain intact.

"This non-invasive technique speeds up treatment, allowing it

to be completed in five sessions across ten days, instead of having a full treatment programme that may extend to between 15 and 30 sessions," explained Dr Zahid Al Mandhari, a senior consultant in radiation oncology at SQCCCRC.

Al Mandhari, who is also a member of the centre's operational committee, added, "This technology is used only in the early stages of breast cancer. It also helps to reduce side effects significantly, with clinical results identical to a full course of treatment."

Another treatment employed is the Hypo-SIB technique, with a patient at SQCCCRC becoming the first to be treated in this manner at the centre. Under this treatment, patients are provided both



Dr Zahid Al Mandhari

radiation and complement doses in the same session.

This too helps reduce the sessions a patient requires to recover from cancer from 30 to 15 sessions.

"These two new techniques are considered the latest additions to our experience in treating cancer patients in Oman," explained Al Mandhari.

Adding to this, Dr Iqbal Al Amri, of the Department of Therapeutic Medical Physics, said, "Such modern technologies require high accuracy in diagnosis and treatment planning. The centre has used cutting-edge devices and appropriately qualified staff to provide

the highest levels of treatment and care for cancer patients.

"For instance, Surface-Guided Radiation Therapy (SGRT) uses sophisticated 3D camera technology, where the cameras monitor the exact position of the patient to make sure the radiation is targeted at the right areas and kills cancer cells precisely."

As part of the soft opening of SQCCCRC, the centre began to welcome patients at its outpatient clinics, following the comprehensive care principle, which is carried out by a multidisciplinary team including oncologists, psychiatrists, dietitians and pharmacists. These personnel visit the patient in the examination room individually, making them feel comfortable and taken care of.

The centre is expected to receive about 80 percent of cancer patients within Oman.

There were about 2,118 reported cancer patients in 2018, according to figures released by the Ministry of Health in 2021. There were 1,911 Omanis with cancer: 836 of them were male, the other 1,075 were female. **>A4**

ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION REPORT

Despite pandemic, Sultanate's Tanfeedh plans make progress

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Despite COVID-19 pandemic, the projects and initiatives under Oman's Tanfeedh plans have shown robust progress in achieving the key performance indicators (KPIs), the Economic Diversification Report 2020 reveals.

The National Programme for Enhancing Economic Diversification (Tanfeedh) is an economic initiative started to ensure both public and private sectors have a part in the government's economic diversification plan as fixed by the Ninth Five-Year Plan in line with Oman's Vision 2040.

This report helps in preparing the targeted economic sectors to cope with the requirements of Oman Vision 2040, and accelerate the economic diversification through identifying methodologies that include implementing projects and initiatives, and finding solutions to the challenges they are facing.

In order to reduce the dependence on the oil sector, Tanfeedh had identified several sectors like manufacturing, logistics, tourism, labour market and employment, business environment, fisheries, energy, mining and information and communication technology (ICT). The report further elaborates on the progress made by these sectors.

Manufacturing

Despite the challenges COVID-19 pandemic, the manufacturing sector projects made good progress in 2020 due to huge efforts made by the projects' owners and teams. As a result, the manufacturing dashboard, which contains 23 projects and initiatives, showed 61 per cent achievement in 2020. In addition, its contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) reached 10.8 per cent in 2020.



Logistics

Omani ports showed excellent performance, efficiency and reliability, as the general cargo handled from January to the end of December 2020 reached around 54 million tonnes, and the number of containers that were handled reached around 5.2 million, with an increase of 5 per cent compared to 2019.

Khazaen Project is one of the most significant integrated economic cities in the Sultanate. It is strategically located in the Wilayat of Barka between Sohar Port, Muscat Airport and Muscat City, and is being developed over 51.6 million square metres.

Moreover, after being a department under Oman Shipping Company, Oman Container Lines (OCL) expansion project was introduced in 2018, in order to become a specialised company in moving containers. In 2020, the focus was mainly on volume growth, service expansion, signing vessel sharing agreements and entering new markets. Also, OCL is offering value added services and reefer container services starting from 2021 onwards, in order to promote connectivity between Omani ports, introduce new direct lines to connect them with some regional centres, and attract major liner operators. **>A4**

UNIQUE PAVILION

Oman takes possession of its pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman has taken possession of its pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai, and will be ready to welcome guests by 1 October, after all of the construction and final touches have been completed.

Possession of the pavilion was officially taken by Mohsin bin Khamis Al Balushi, advisor to the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion (MOCIIP), and Commissioner General of the Sultanate at Expo 2020 Dubai, reported Oman News Agency (ONA).

"Oman seeks to participate alongside the world in finding innovative solutions to meet the challenges facing humanity, and affirm the concepts and principles of sustainable development to ensure a bright future for the coming generations," he said, at the handover ceremony.

"Oman also strives to work towards maximising our gains at all levels, the most important of which are economic, social, and cultural in nature," he added.



"We aim to highlight our country as a distinct destination for tourism, and for doing business, as well as highlight our Omani identity, rich legacy and ancient heritage."

Oman will also seek to promote investment opportunities across various sectors, and during the expo, interact with people from all over the world, and specialists in

various fields. The country's participation at Expo 2020 involves organising and attending a series of events over six months, including those in the fields of science, art, culture and the economy.

Oman's pavilion - which is built in the shape of a frankincense tree - has been built according to the plans drawn up in

coordination with the organising committee and relevant contracting companies.

However, because of the COVID-19, construction of the pavilion had to be rescheduled, which was in keeping with postponing the expo for a year. Additional precautions were taken while building the pavilion, shipping the required materials to Dubai, and during its operation, to ensure the safety of workers, management staff, and visitors to the expo.

A number of initiatives will be spearheaded from the pavilion, including a special women's pavilion to Celebrate Omani Women's Day next October, as well as plans to organise a cruise for Shabab Oman II, the country's friendship yacht. **>A4**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN 2.15mn vaccinated

1 2.15mn people have been vaccinated against COVID till 15 August. **>A3**

WORLD Gunfire at Kabul

2 At least three people lost their lives on Monday following gunfire at Afghanistan's Kabul airport. **>A6**

MARKET Sohar Port results

3 Sohar Port and Freezone has announced encouraging results for the second quarter of 2021. **>B1**



Times of Oman

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MUSCAT, THURSDAY, AUGUST 17, 1978—RAMADAN 12, 1398

PRICE BAIZAS 200

ARMY BLOWS UP MORTAR BOMBS NEAR RUWI

50 FOUND LIVE ON OLD RANGE WHEN BULLDOZER DIGS SITE

Army bomb experts were called in to blow up live mortar bombs in Wadi Kabir near Ruwi on Tuesday. It had been accidentally unearthed by a bulldozer.

Police cordoned off the area, used as a firing range about 20 years ago, while 30 specially trained soldiers of the Sultan's Forces Engineers, and three ordnance experts, swept the area with mine detectors.

They found more than 50 three inch unexploded mortar bombs weighing up to 5 lbs. each. Half of them were buried in the ground.

AGAIN WHAT'S NEW IN THE TIMES

Believe it or not, cooler weather is on the way, which will get you out and about more. To help you make the most use of it, we publish today the first of a series "Day Out on a Day Off". See it on Pages 9 and 18. Other articles on other centres of interest for day trips will appear soon. We suggest you cut them out and keep them until you are ready for each jaunt.

For sportsmen, the first of a 36 strip series "Soccer Teach In". Scripted by a top sports writer who is also an English Football Association qualified coach, it will help you play the game better...on the field, on the touchline, or even in front

(Continued on Page 28)

All were reported to be "blind" bombs, a term which usually refers to bombs which have been fired but have failed to explode on impact. Normally these would be disposed of in situ immediately, because of their sensitive condition.

An officer at the scene of the incident commented: "Our men have done an excellent job in what has been a highly dangerous situation."

The drama began at lunchtime on Monday when a workman started clearing the site, part of the large industrial area on the road to Bustan.

His bulldozer ran over two bombs before he realised what they were and raised the alarm.

The three inch mortar was in use in Oman until about 1975, when it was superseded by the more modern 81mm mortar.



A mortar bomb found on the site of the old range near Ruwi, last used 20 years ago. Anyone finding an object such as this should leave it alone and call the Police.

150 NOW FEARED DEAD AS BLAST WRECKED BEIRUT BUILDING

All Palestinian organisations are working together in an effort to discover who planted the explosives which devastated a nine-storey building in central Beirut on Saturday night, leaving an estimated death toll of 150.

The Palestinian groups agreed not to start blaming each other. A joint investigating committee was formed. This followed speculation that the explosion might have resulted from feuding between the Palestinian Liberation Front and Fatah.

It was pointed out in Beirut, however, that both groups had offices in the building. One theory advanced was that the explosion might have been set by someone wishing to aggravate the inter-group discord.

Around 40 members of the Palestinian Liberation Front were killed in the explosion, according to the Iraqi News Agency.

Over 100 bodies have now been recovered from the wreckage of the building. Three survivors were found alive after being buried for more than 30 hours under the rubble. Two of them were children, one only two years old.

In Pakistan, Iraq's ambassador denied that his country had anything to do with the recent attack on the PLO offices there. He said that Iraq had written to Yasser Arafat, asking for a meeting to discuss their differences

OPTIMISM ON SUMMIT FOLLOWS CHECK TO ISRAELI PLAN FOR MORE SETTLEMENTS

American leaders are expressing cautious optimism about the forthcoming Middle East peace talks at Camp David. This follows a briefing by Secretary of State Vance of members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Senator Frank Church told reporters after the briefing that Mr. Vance had assured them that the United States would not present its own peace plan at the meeting. It would only make suggestions to bridge the difference between the Egyptian and Israeli leaders.

The United States, it is reported in the semi-official Egyptian newspaper, Al Ahram, has asked both sides to list the matters they think should be studied. The State Department will be keeping in touch with them during the time between now and the conference, in order to crystallise their ideas into a working paper.

All three countries will consider this paper in laying down how the talks should be conducted.

An Israeli plan, which could have sunk the talks before they

even began, has been halted. A scheme to build five new Jewish settlements on Arab land on the West Bank has been stopped at least until after the tripartite summit.

The plan had far from universal approval in Israel. Put forward by 'hawkish' former war hero general and now Agriculture Minister Kamil Sharon, it was bitterly opposed by the minority Liberal leader in the coalition Government, Mr. Yadin.

Although details were only released on Monday, rumours of the plan had been rife for some time. President Carter had made it plain to the Israeli Government that settlement schemes should cease while negotiations went on. It was a similar scheme which is believed to have caused Egypt to break off talks earlier this year.

President Sadat, who has pledged to do his utmost to achieve peace at the Camp David three-day summit, is expected

(Continued on Page 28)

40 Hurt by Teheran Restaurant Bomb

Some 40 people were injured, it is now reported, by a bomb blast in a Teheran restaurant on Sunday night. The restaurant was packed with diners at the time of the explosion.

This was the first attack of its kind in the Iranian capital. Correspondents in the city suggest that it was the work of one of the dissident groups responsible for recent rioting.

(See Story on Page 28)



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COVID cases fall as vaccinated population rises

The number of those who took the first dose of vaccine stood at 1,360,206 or 63% while the number of those who are fully vaccinated stood at 795,726, or 37%



Times News Service

MUSCAT: More than 2.15 million people have been vaccinated against COVID-19 in Oman since launch of the National Immunisation Campaign till 15 August, which is 61 per cent of the targeted population.

The Sultanate has also witnessed a remarkable decrease in the number of daily new infections of COVID-19, to less than 215, as well as in the number of deaths as a result of COVID-19, after a severe wave in the past three months.

Speaking exclusively to the *Times of Oman*, Ibrahim Al Maimani, social activist and data analyst, said, "Today we are optimistic as the number of new infections have come down to under 215, where 162 cases were recorded on Friday, 163 cases on Saturday, and 214 cases were recorded on Sunday, and we expect that the numbers will decrease further in the coming days."

"The active cases reached 7,707, and the number of hospitalised patients decreased by 12 cases and the intensive care by 9 cases. Currently the total number of inpatients in intensive care is 107 after we had 538 cases on third of July, 2021," he added.

"The number of deaths during three days amounted to 19 over the weekend, and we note that the number of deaths on Thursday was 5, and on Friday also 5. This is a significant decrease in the number of deaths, and today 6 deaths were recorded," he said.

He pointed out also about the most prominent statistical indicators during the last period in general, especially the last 5 months, when the Sultanate experienced a difficult situation with a large number of infections. In five months, Oman recorded 155,000 infections, at a rate of 1,000 infections per day. He said, "Praise be to God, today the daily average is 240 in the first 16 days of the month of August. The deaths in the last five months were 2,256, with an average of 15 deaths,

and today the daily average is 10 deaths per day, and the numbers started declining in the last week."

Al Maimani said that in general, the situation is much better in August. "We have partial and complete closures, continued prevention of travellers coming from several countries, and the ongoing immunisation process are all factors that led to the current situation."

According to Oman News Agency, the number of vaccinated people has till 15 August 2,155,932. The number of those who took the first dose of the vaccine stood at 1,360,206 comprising 63% while the number of those who are fully vaccinated (two doses) stood at 795,726, comprising 37%.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Health continues vaccinating target segments against COVID-19 in all governorates of the Sultanate.

"Today, vaccination centres in all governorates witnessed a good turnout from the target segments," the statement added.

THE ROAD TO EXPO 2020 DUBAI

Discussion aims to give Omani business owners new insights

KHALID ORABI

MUSCAT: As part of a drive to educate owners of small and medium enterprises, a virtual discussion on "Craftsmen of 21st Century" will be organised today by Omade platform today through ZOOM.

The drive is part of a project on development of Omani products, worldwide (The Road to Expo 2020 Dubai), in which the Sultanate is represented by the General Commission to the Sultanate's Pavilion in Expo 2020 Dubai.

The discussion session would see the participation of Dr. Bashayer Al Riyami, Director of Innovation at the Food and Beverages Sector of the Industrial Innovation Centre; Faras Al Musafir, CEO of Innovation Factory; Nada Bassam, Director General of Oman Trading Platform (Taiseer) and Emad Khurais, expert in development of

crafts industries sector, traditional crafts and entrepreneurship.

The session would be held under the management of Ghassan bin Isa Al Roshdi.

Dr. Bashayer Al Riyami would speak on the future economic changes in the food and beverages sector in Oman as well as the region, the SMEs operating in the field and the role of the food craft industries in enhancement of value added products.

Innovation Factory

The speech of Faras Al Musafir, CEO of Innovation Factory would deal with the craftsmen of the 21st century and the extent to which they benefit from the technologies of the 4th industrial revolution, the experience of the Innovation Factory in the design of the Sultanate's pavilion in Expo 2020 Dubai and the opportunities it has provided to Omani craftsmen.

Nada Bassam, Director General of Oman Trading Platform (Taiseer) would speak on the definition of craftsmen of the 21st century and the opportunities international participations and exhibitions such as Expo 2020 Dubai provide to Omani craftsmen in terms of marketing and promotion of their craft industries and products, worldwide.

Emad Khurais, expert in development of crafts industries sector, traditional crafts and entrepreneurship would speak on the craftsmen of the 21st century, the future of the Omani traditional craft industries emerging to the international markets, the mechanisms of development of craft industries in the Sultanate and the way craftsmen of the 21st century develop their business and products for the post-COVID 19 stage.



إِنْمَا

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MEETINGS

Royal Office Minister receives UAE Chief of Armed Forces and French ambassador



MUSCAT: Gen. Sultan Mohammed Al-Numani, Minister of Royal Office received in his office on Monday Lt.Gen Hamad Mohammed Thani Al-Rumaithi, Chief of Staff of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Armed Forces and his accompanying delegation.

The meeting reviewed the fraternal relations between the two brotherly countries and aspects of the existing cooperation in several spheres between them to serve the joint interests. The two sides also exchanged views on issues of common interest.



Al-Numani also received ambassador of France to the Sultanate at the end of his tour of duty as his country's ambassador to Oman. The ambassador expressed his gratitude and appreciation for the care extended to him by officials in the Sultanate.

The Minister of Royal Office thanked the ambassador for his efforts exerted during his duty in the Sultanate to enhance the existing bilateral relations between the two countries in various fields. He wished the ambassador continued success. -ONA

NEW TREATMENT

< FROM A1 Breast cancer

The most common cancers found in Oman are breast cancer in women, followed by colorectal cancer and thyroid cancer, according to the Department of Non-Communicable Diseases at the Directorate General of Primary Health Care, represented by the National Cancer Registry.

The average age at which women are diagnosed with breast cancer is 48 years. 32 percent of breast cancer patients were diagnosed in the third and fourth stages of their condition, while there has been an increase in breast cancer incidence rates.

EXPO 2020 DUBAI

< FROM A1 Pavilion highlights Oman's role as a key trading power

A number of government and private-sector organisations, including the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, Ministry of Social Development, the SME Development Authority, and the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry have collaborated in making Omani products available to visitors at the expo.

These will be available at a store that features more than 2,000 products made by Omani

craftsmen, home business owners, and women from rural areas, with the aim of promoting and selling them at this vital global event. Oman will take part at Expo 2020, which runs from 1 October, 2021, to 31 March, 2022, among 192 countries, under the slogan 'Connecting Minds and Creating the Future'.

The frankincense tree pavilion of the country will play an important role in highlighting Oman's place as a trading power

with the other civilisations of the ancient world. The design tells the story of Oman throughout history, and the main idea behind the Sultanate's participation is to embody the civilisational and human achievements of Oman throughout history, in addition to highlighting the Sultanate's current achievements, its renewed renaissance and future aspirations under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik, may God protect him.

ANNOUNCEMENT

< FROM A1 Four Royal Decrees

Royal Decree (No. 54/2021) implements the GCC Unified Law (System) on Combating Commercial Deception, after presenting the same before the Council of Oman.

Article (1) states that the provisions of the GCC Unified Law on Combating Commercial Deception shall be implemented, while at the same time consulting the provisions of this decree.

Article (2) stipulates that, when implementing the provisions of this attached law (system), the phrases listed below shall have the meanings indicated against each: The specialised "Authority" concerned: Consumer Protection Authority; The "Minister" concerned: The official tasked with implementing the provisions of the attached law/system (Chairman of the consumer Protection Authority). Employees designated as "Judicial Inspectors": Employees of the specialised "Authority" and the ministries of "Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion", "Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources", "Health" and other departments concerned, in accordance with the laws and Royal Decrees awarding such officials the designation/mission of 'judicial inspection' as regards crimes stated in the attached law/system that are related to their job tasks.

Article (3) states that the provi-

sions of the attached law/system are deemed complementary to the provisions of the Food Security Law (promulgated under Royal Decree No. 84/2008).

Article (4) cancels all that contradicts this decree or the attached law/system or contravenes their provisions.

Article (5) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from the day following its date of publishing.

Royal Decree No. 55/2021 ratifies the agreement on establishing the GCC Accreditation Centre and its Annex-1.

Article (1) ratifies the aforesaid agreement and its Annex-1 as per the version attached to this decree.

Article (2) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree No. 56/2021 ratifies the agreement between the government of the Sultanate of Oman and the GCC Secretariat General pertaining to the headquarters of the GCC Statistical Centre, signed in Muscat on 8 June 2021.

Article (1) ratifies the aforesaid agreement as per the version attached to this decree.

Article (2) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue. -ONA

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

214 more catch COVID-19

MUSCAT: As many as 214 new cases of coronavirus were registered in the Sultanate during the past 24 hours, in addition to 6 new COVID-19-related deaths.

This brings the total number of positive COVID-19 cases to 300,408 in the Sultanate.

The total number of COVID-19-related death cases reached 3,999, the Ministry of Health said.

The Ministry added that 313 new cases have recovered, bringing the total number to 288,702 recoveries.

-ONA

TANFEEDH PLANS

< FROM A1 Oman implementing several alternative energy projects

Tourism

Tourism sector is one of the dynamic sectors directly affected by the local and international circumstances. In 2020, the sector, like many other sectors, was affected by the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite challenges faced by the sector, the former Ministry of Tourism (MoT) worked hard towards achieving the milestones set for 2020.

Labour market and employment

The ISFU followed up a range of initiatives that serve to enhance the national workforce in compliance with the constantly changing labour market.

This is done by adapting policies and procedures, like recruitment in real estate, facilitation of part-time and temporary work and movement of labour in the private sector, in addition to enhancing recruitment policies in the ministries overseeing the economic sectors.

Also, the former ISFU, in cooperation with the former Ministry of Manpower (MoMP), worked on providing solutions in line with the economic situation, such as activating the former National Centre for Employment and establishing the Job Security Fund.

In addition, it supported the growth of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) through an ini-



tiative that lists the jobseekers in the logistics sector, and finding entrepreneurship opportunities.

The labour reconciliation committees were able to increase the percentage of labour disputes resolved at the ministry to above 60 per cent in 2020.

Business environment

Business environment is one of the most enabling sectors for the national economy.

The overall goal of the business environment team under the former ISFU was to enhance the investment environment, as well as facilitate the services within the sector.

In addition to the main dashboard of the business environment sector and the two separate dashboards developed in 2019: 'Invest Easy' and 'Lean', 'Doing Business' dashboard was introduced in 2020.

Fisheries

As all economic sectors in Oman, the fisheries sector was affected by the widespread COVID-19 in 2020. However, there were some success stories in 2020 where a number of projects have operated effectively despite the crises. For instance, the first commercial abalone aquaculture project in Oman was launched in December 2020. Moreover, commercial fishing continued to grow as the fishing fleet of Al Wusta Company maintained its fishing trips rate in 2020.

Energy

The Sultanate seeks to diversify energy resources, through implementing several alternative energy projects and improving their efficiency. This is for the aim of meeting the increasing need for electricity, in order for the participation of renewable energy resources to reach a range of about

20 per cent and 35-39 per cent of total power generation in the years 2030 and 2040, respectively. Consequently, the total investment in renewable energy will increase gradually in the coming years to support the shift to the energy mix, as per the target of Oman Vision 2040.

Mining

The mining sector in Oman has great potential in diversifying the national economy. The wide range of minerals in the country create significant opportunities for investors. Consequently, bringing more investments will help increase the national income, exports, and job opportunities for Omanis.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

All entities utilised technology as the safe haven to solve the chal-

lenges that faced the work environment, as the pandemic proved the importance of digitisation for all kinds of services.

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) played a key role in managing the situation through providing several applications to deliver groceries, goods and restaurant orders, and such service providers were allowed to reach the areas that were locked down. In addition, technology companies benefited the most from the pandemic, especially the ones providing services that can be leveraged while staying at home, like digital broadcasts, video calls, and video-conferences. Moreover, the pandemic encouraged the entities to accelerate the pace of work in their projects, as commercial entities and individuals were allowed to provide video conferencing services, which increased the efficiency of working outside the office.

Knowledge transfer programme

Since its establishment in August 2020, the unit designed and held several workshops with government entities responsible for economic sectors. All these workshops were part of a comprehensive program to transfer knowledge, as well as sharing initiative development process, in order for relevant entities to complete the economic diversification initiatives and projects. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Economy is monitoring the progress of Tanfeedh initiatives and projects and tracking its outputs to ensure that goals are achieved.

During these workshops, the unit shared the progress made in the implementation of economic diversification projects and initiatives, as they contribute to achieving Oman Vision 2040, in addition to exploring a methodology to follow up and support programs of vision priorities and preparing the entities for the next phase.

Moreover, the unit worked on the development workshops with the relevant entities, in order to design a framework for Attracting Private Investments and Enhancing the Presence of Omani Exports in Foreign Markets Programme (Invest in Oman), aiming at identifying investment projects and initiatives for every economic sector in the next three years (2021-2023).



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TALIBAN TAKES OVER

Over 60 nations urge Taliban to let foreign nationals, Afghans leave

WASHINGTON: Over 60 countries including the US, United Kingdom, Japan, Germany and Canada on Sunday urged “all parties” to safeguard the departure of foreign nationals and Afghans who wish to leave the war-torn country, and said that roads, airports and border crossing must remain open.

The joint statement released by the US Department of State comes after the Taliban entered Afghanistan’s capital Kabul and seized control of the presidential palace. “Those in positions of power and authority across Afghanistan bear responsibility -- and accountability -- for the protection of human life and property, and for the immediate restoration of security and civil order,” read the statement released on late Sunday.

Asserting that Afghan people deserve to live in safety, security and dignity, the statement said that the international community



stand ready to assist them.

“Given the deteriorating security situation, we support, are working to secure, and call on all parties to respect and facilitate, the safe and orderly departure of foreign nationals and Afghans who wish to leave the country,” the statement added.

Taliban terrorists have assumed control of the Afghan capital of Kabul and have taken control of the presidential palace.

As the Taliban claimed control over the Afghan capital, several countries evacuated diplomatic personnel from the country, and crowds of people flocked to the Ka-

bul airport in an attempt to leave Afghanistan. Reports suggest that the movement will soon proclaim the re-establishment of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

Taliban deputy leader Mullah Baradar on Sunday said that the terror group’s victory, which saw all of the country’s major cities fall in a week, was unexpectedly swift and had no match in the world.

In a short video message, he said the real test would begin now with meeting the expectations of the people and serving them by resolving their problems, Al Jazeera reported. Meanwhile, the United States has announced that it will be taking over air traffic control at Kabul airport and will expand the country’s security presence to nearly 6,000 troops to facilitate the safe departure of the American and allied personnel from Afghanistan via civilian and military flights.



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EVACUATION EFFORT

Heavy gunfire kills 3 at Kabul airport as Afghans gather to leave country

KABUL: At least three people lost their lives on Monday following gunfire at the passenger terminal of Kabul’s international airport.



The incident happened after thousands of Afghans gathered at the Kabul airport to seek an evacuation flight amid Taliban’s takeover of the country, The Wall Street Journal reported. Witnesses reported seeing the prone, bloodied bodies lying on the ground just outside the terminal building.

Officials at the US Central Command were not immediately available for comment, the report stated. Meanwhile, the US military has taken over the security at the Kabul airport to execute the massive airlift of diplomat presence in Afghanistan following the Taliban’s takeover of the capital city, The Wall Street Journal reported.

Earlier, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Sunday informed that the President has sent additional forces to ensure an orderly and safe evacuation of the US diplomatic presence in Kabul.

Commercial flights suspended

All commercial flights have been suspended at Hamid Karzai International Airport in Afghanistan’s Kabul, local media citing a statement reported on Monday.

According to TOLO News, the statement called on the people to avoid crowds at the airport. “All commercial flights are suspended at Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul, a statement reads. The statement calls on the people to avoid crowds at the airport,” TOLO News said in a Tweet.

A video shared by the Afghanistan media outlet showed thousands of people gathered at the Kabul airport last night to leave the war-torn country. **ANI**



Pakistan School Muscat
ANNOUNCEMENT OF ANNUAL TENDER

PSM intends to offer **Annual Contract for the year 2021-2022**. The contractors with relevant experiences are invited for following bidding:

Tender No.	Tender's Name	Tender Collection Date	Submission Date
2021/001	Group Medical Insurance for Staff	August 18 to August 31, 2021 09:00 AM to 01:00 PM Working Days/Hours	Before and Until September 01, 2021

Experience contractor(s) having relevant experience of at least 3 years of similar nature jobs preferably in Oman, who wishes to participate in the bidding may collect the documents after payment of **RO. 20,000** (non-refundable) per Job.

Accounts Office
Pakistan School Muscat
P.O. Box 987, P.C. 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman; Tel 24702489, Fax: 24709746
In case of any query you may contact: Email: zaigchem@pakistanschool.edu.om; 00968 9551 8680

The tenders shall be submitted in Original and complete with all relevant documents.
Tenders not in compliance with tender's requirements shall not be considered.

Tender Documents shall be submitted in sealed envelope with clearly mentioned Tender Number/name, Company Name/Number and POC's Name/Number.
The sealed envelope shall be dropped in the Tender Box available at Admin Office on or before the date mentioned above and addressed to:

Chairman Steering Committee
Pakistan School Muscat
(PSM is not bound to accept the lowest Tender or any Tender)

COOPERATION

China willing to develop ‘friendly relations’ with Taliban

BEIJING: Following the fall of Kabul into the hands of the Taliban, China on Monday said that it is willing to develop “friendly relations” with the terrorist outfit.

“China respects the right of the Afghan people to independently determine their own destiny and is willing to continue to develop... friendly and cooperative relations with Afghanistan,” foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told reporters, said ARY News. The Taliban declared the war in Afghanistan was over after they took control of the presidential palace in Kabul on Sunday after US-led forces departed and Western nations scrambled to evacuate their citizens.

President Ashraf Ghani fled

the country as the Taliban entered the city, saying he wanted to avoid bloodshed, while hundreds of Afghans desperate to leave flooded Kabul airport.

The world has been left stunned at images of the Taliban’s blitzkrieg across Afghanistan, as that country’s military evaporated with remarkable swiftness.

Earlier on July 28, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met formally in Tianjin with a nine-member Taliban delegation.

Wang publicly acknowledged the Taliban as “a crucial military and political force in Afghanistan that is expected to play an important role in the peace, reconciliation and reconstruction process of the country”. **ANI**



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Tender Announcement

MUSCAT ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION COMPANY S.A.O.C INVITES INTERESTED COMPANIES TO PARTICIPATE IN THE FOLLWING TENDER

Tender No.	Description	Last Date of Buying	Date of Submission	Grade	Tender Price (R.O)
MEDC-14/2021	Supply & Installation of new (218 nos.) ACs for Primary Stations in Muscat Governorate	2/9/2021	28/9/2021	Specialized	157.500

The table below shows the instructions for participation: -

Participation	
	- Companies registered with Tender Board may obtain Tender documents. - The amount specified above is including 5 % VAT. - The amount specified above is Non-Refundable payment (Terms and Condition apply) - For payment procedure and to obtain the tender document, please contact us via e-mail Contract@medcoman.com 24588600 – Ext: 8577 - 8726
Purchase timing	Tender documents can be purchased at the official working time between 08:00 – 13:00 hours
Enquiries	Any inquiry can be sent using clarification available in the tender documents , one week before bid submission date
Tender Submission	- Tenders should be submitted in a sealed and stamped envelope addressed to the CHAIRMAN OF INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE, MUSCAT ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION CO. marked only with tender number and the subject - Please follow SUBMISSION OF TENDER mentioned in clause 20.0 in Prime Document
Guarantee	- The Tender should enclose a bank guarantee or a certified cheque issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman Unconditional and irrevocable and shall be disbursement as soon as it is submitted for the value of (1%) of the tender value valid for a period of at least ninety (90) days from the last date of tender submission and addressed to the CHAIRMAN OF INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE, MUSCAT ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION COMPANY S.A.O.C. - Any bid that does not meet the bank guarantee will not be considered Any bid that does not meet the bank guarantee will not be considered
Terms and Conditions	- The name of the bidder, other marks or any reference must not be specified on the envelope - Tenders received after the deadline stated in the Invitation to Tender, including any extension thereof, for any reason whatsoever will not be considered - The Tender shall be valid for a period of at least ninety (90) days from the last date of tender submission - If the submission date extended, the bank guarantee or a certified cheque shall be extended in accordance with the bid extension date - MEDC is not bound to consent the lowest Bid or any other Tenders. - Preference of awarding the tender will be given to those bidders who achieved a high percentage of purchasing from Local Products and have a High-level percentage of Omanization - Muscat Electricity Distribution Company gives priority to award the projects to SMEs companies. - For projects whose value is less than OMR 10K, the priority to award will be given to registered companies that hold a valid certificate Of Royadah
Bid Placement	The Completed Tender should be deposited in the Tender Box No. 1 in the ground floor of MEDC Head Office building at Airport Heights, before 10 a.m. on the assigned date of tender submission





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WORLD



DISSOLUTION OF PARLIAMENT

Canada PM Justin Trudeau calls for snap election

OTTAWA: Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Sunday announced that an early election would take place on September 20. The Canadian leader is seeking a new mandate to ensure voters approved of his government's COVID-19 pandemic recovery plan.

What did Trudeau say?
The move comes at a "pivotal, consequential moment" for Canada amid a new wave of COVID-19 cases "amongst unvaccinated people," Trudeau said.

Trudeau formally requested the dissolution of parliament from Governor General Mary Simon, who holds a mostly ceremonial position representing Britain's Queen Elizabeth II as head of state. "We will be taking decisions that will last not just for the coming months but for the coming decades. Canadians deserve their say. That's exactly what we're going to give them," Trudeau told reporters after he spoke with Simon. "We've had your back, and now it's time to hear your voice," Trudeau said. "Canadians need to choose how we finish the fight against COVID-19."



What can be expected?
Since the last election two years ago, Trudeau's Liberal Party has had only a minority of seats, forcing it to rely on other parties to pass legislation. A recent Leger Marketing poll showed that Liberals would win 35% of the vote, compared with 30% for the Conservatives and 19% for the left-leaning New Democrats. The Liberals must win at least 170 of the 338 seats in the House of Commons to regain majority. They currently hold 155 seats. Although Trudeau isn't as popular as he once was, he has been praised for his government's handling of the coronavirus pandemic.

Malaysia Premier Muhyiddin resigns

The Prime Minister said he was stepping down after losing majority support in parliament

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysian Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin has resigned, following months of political turmoil. Muhyiddin gave confirmation of his resignation in a televised address after meeting with King Abdullah. Muhyiddin said he was stepping down after losing majority support in parliament. The king said Muhyiddin would stay on in a caretaker capacity until a new government could be formed. His cabinet resigned earlier on Monday morning according to Science Minister Khairy Jamaluddin writing on Instagram. Muhyiddin chaired a Cabinet meeting at his office on the same day, according to state news



agency Bernama. Muhyiddin was seen entering the national palace on Monday to tender his resignation to the king. It is not immediately clear who could form the next government, seeing as nobody commands a clear majority. King Al-Sultan Abdullah will likely make a decision in the case. The national police chief, the Election Commission chairman and the attorney-general were also summoned to the palace before Muhyiddin arrived, according to local media. Muhyiddin was under pressure to resign from both political and civilian fronts. People were angry over his handling of the COVID crisis in the country.

His resignation brings to an end a tumultuous 17 months in office. Muhyiddin had previously said he would seek the backing of opposition parties to keep the government from collapsing and would hold elections next year. Muhyiddin's resignation could return the premiership to the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), Malaysia's 'grand old party.' UMNO was voted out in 2018 after allegations of corruption tainted the party. -aw

HUNDREDS MISSING

Death toll in Haiti's massive earthquake rises above 1,200

PORT AU PRINCE: At least 1,297 people were killed in Saturday's 7.2 magnitude earthquake in Haiti, authorities said on Sunday. Hundreds of people are still missing and more than 2,800 were injured, Haiti's civil protection services added. Sunday's figures are a tragic rise in the death toll, which was at just over 300 on Saturday. Rescue workers are racing against the clock to pull survivors from the rubble of destroyed buildings as Haiti braces for a tropical storm.



What help is Haiti receiving?
The US Agency for International Development (USAID) has sent a 65-person urban search and rescue team to Haiti, as well as 52,000 pounds (23.6 tons) of tools and medical supplies, the agency's chief Samatha Power said on Twitter. Cuba and Ecuador also sent medical or search-and-rescue

teams. Mexico, Chile, Argentina, Peru and Venezuela offered help. The United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the body was "working to support rescue and relief efforts." Pope Francis called on nations to send quick aid in his Sunday blessing in the Vatican. "May solidarity from everyone lighten the consequences of the tragedy," he said on Twitter. German Chancellor Angela Merkel expressed her "heartfelt condolences" to the Haitian people. "My special sympathy goes to the relatives of the victims and

to all those who have lost their belongings. To those injured, I wish a speedy recovery," she said in a statement issued on Sunday. A state of emergency was declared in Haiti after what the government described as a "dramatic" earthquake — also felt in Cuba and the Dominican Republic. An approaching tropical storm is likely to complicate rescue efforts. According to the US National Hurricane Center, Tropical Storm Grace is forecast to bring heavy rainfall over Haiti on Monday. Flash flooding is also a possibility. -aw



Sultanate of Oman

MINISTRY CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH

MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH, Muscat, hereby give notice of tenders for the following projects

TENDR. No.	Project Category	Location	Grade In Tender Board Registration
8/2021	Services	Maintenance, Operating & Gardening Services To Horse Riding Centre At Barka From 01/01/2022 To 31/12/2023	First Grade
9/2021	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	Maintenance, Operating Services To Sohar Sports (Including Director Of Culture At Sohar) Complex From 01/01/2022 To 31/12/2023	Excellent Grade
10/2021	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	Maintenance, Operating Services To Nizwa Sports Complex (Including Nizwa Culture Center & Sports Centre At tzk) From 01/01/2022 To 31/12/2023	Excellent Grade
11/2021	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	Maintenance, Operating Services To Buraimi Sports Complex (Including Art Association At Buraimi & Sports Centre At Sunaina) From 01/01/2022 To 31/12/2023	Excellent Grade
12/2021	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	Maintenance, Operating Services To Rustaq Sports Complex (Including Sports Centres At Nakal & Awabi And Beach Game Facility At Musannah Sports City) From 01/01/2022 To 31/12/2023	Excellent Grade
13/2021	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	Maintenance, Operating Services To Sur Sports Complex (Including Annex Sports Centre At Sur & Sports Facilities At Tiwi, Khalhat And Ras Al Haad) From 01/01/2022 To 31/12/2023	Excellent Grade
14/2021	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	Maintenance, Operating Services To Saadah Sports Complex (Including Sports Centres At Thumrait, Mughshin, & Sadah) Dhofar Governorate From 01/01/2022 To 31/12/2023	Excellent Grade

Companies, which are registered with the Tender Board and engaged in same category with experience in and same Grade as noted above, can obtain the Tender Documents at the Tender Board E-tendering digital portal link (<http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) until 27/08/2021. The last date of tender submission on above E-tendering site at 09:00am 31 /09 /2021

A Tender Bond equivalent to 1% of the tender sum issued from a registered bank, in the prescribed form, in Sultanate of Oman and valid for 90 days should enclosed with the tender.

Any tender without the bond will be reject and the tender committee is not bound to accept the lowest or any tender received.

INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE OF MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH

Any participants have doubt in adopting e-tendering can contact over the phone 24166670 or through email etenderhd@ita.gov.om

Invitation to Tender

Dhofar Integrated Services Company S.A.O.C (DISC)
"Electricity Service" invites reputable contractor for carrying out following works in Dhofar Region.

Tender Reference	DISC/E/Tender/2021/074
Subject	Supply, Installation, testing, commissioning of GPRS Router (compactable to configure UNIPOWER Power Quality Meter) at DISC Primary Substations.
Tender Fee	RO. 105.000 Inclusive VAT (5%) Note: Tenderer who wish to participate in the above tender should collect the tender document from DISC's office or send an e-mail to below mentioned mail id's for tender document.
Experience	The Tenderer should be a registered business owner with proper commercial registration with ministry of commerce. The Tenderer must show previous experience in performing similar jobs in the past.
Pre-qualification	Contractor should be submitted along with technical bid showing the past successful configuration experience of GPRS router with Unipower PQM using smartcom service.
Last date for issue of tender documents	03:00 PM on 31 st August 2021
Last date for seeking pre-bid clarifications	03:00 PM on 2 nd September 2021
Last date for providing pre-bid clarifications	03:00 PM on 6 th September 2021
Last date for submission of bids	02:00 PM on 13 th September 2021
Any Queries Please Contact	Phone 23232554 /624, lawrances@dpcoman.nama.om ; praveena@dpcoman.nama.om

Tenderers are requested to note that the bids accompanied with Tender Bond (2% of the quoted bid price and having 150 days validity) shall only be considered for evaluation.



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Dhofar Integrated Services Company

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Messi receives rapturous ovation as PSG beat 4-2 Strasbourg

The six-time Ballon d’Or winner joined Neymar and his fellow Argentine Angel di Maria to watch from the stands

PARIS: Lionel Messi was introduced to some 49,000 fans in a full Parc des Princess stadium before watching his teammates beat Strasbourg 4-2 on Saturday’s Ligue 1 action. The former Barcelona ace was presented with PSG’s other four summer signings Sergio Ramos, Gianluigi Donnarumma, Georginio Wijnaldum, and Achraf Hakimi in a welcome ceremony



ACE FOOTBALLER: The former Barcelona ace was presented with PSG’s other four summer signings Sergio Ramos, Gianluigi Donnarumma, Georginio Wijnaldum, and Achraf Hakimi in a welcome ceremony.

at the center of the pitch just one hour before the kick-off. The six-time Ballon d’Or winner then joined Neymar and his fellow Argentine Angel di Maria to watch from the stands as Mauricio Pochettino’s side escaped a fightback from the visitors in the second half to pocket their second win in as many games in the new season. Mauro Icardi opened the scoring for PSG only two minutes into the game and Kylian Mbappe made it 2-0 in the 25th minute before the French forward set up another for Julian Draxler only two minutes later. Strasbourg created more chances in the second half and clawed back to 3-2 thanks to two headers from Kevin Gameiro and Ludovic Ajorque. But they suffered a blow in the closing period when Alexander Djiku fouled on Icardi to receive his second yellow card and make his team being reduced to 10 men. Pablo Sarabia tapped in PSG’s fourth from Mbappe’s cross in the 86th minute to make the score out of Strasbourg’s reach. Mbappe, whose contract with PSG is to expire next year, has been linked with Real Madrid recently as home fans whistled at the 22-year-old amid transfer speculation. “I did not hear the whistles,” Pochettino insisted. “I am happy with him. He’s focused on what he needs to do and had a really good game. He must continue on this path.” PSG’s president Nasser al-Khelaifi has said on Wednesday, at the unveiling ceremony of Messi, that Mbappe “has no reason to leave” since PSG now is the right place for him to seek for the trophies. Earlier in the day, defending champions Lille were hammered 4-0 at home by Nice, whose coach Christophe Galtier had led Lille to the title last season and arrived in the southern French team this summer. Denmark striker Kasper Dolberg hit a brace for Nice with Hicham Boudaoui and Amine Gouiri were also on target. **Xinhua**

FOOTBALL

FOOTBALL

Barca show there is life without Messi while Atletico, Real Madrid both win

MADRID: FC Barcelona showed there is life without Messi as they kicked off their season with a 4-2 win at home to Real Sociedad on Sunday. Martin Braithwaite scored twice for Barca after Gerard Pique had put them ahead with a header from a free-kick, and with Memphis Depay involved in two of Barca’s goals, Sergio Busquets, Pedri and Frenkie de Jong impressive in midfield and Eric Garcia confident in defense, the home side looked to be cruising. Two goals in the 81st and 83rd minute from debutant Julen Lobete, who was making his debut for Real Sociedad, and Mikel Oyarzabal gave Real Sociedad a lifeline, but Sergi Roberto popped up at the far post to assure the points for Barca after a pass from Braithwaite. Angel Correa scored twice to get Atletico Madrid’s title defense off to a winning start with a 2-1 win on their difficult visit to Celta Vigo. Atletico showed their typical defensive toughness and Correa, who scored the goal that won the title for the club at the end of last season, opened the scoring in the first half. Celta equalized from the penalty spot after Marcos Llorente handled in the Atletico area, but Correa was sharp once again to net the decisive goal after a pass from Koke. Aspas had a great chance to equalize but incredibly put the ball wide in the closing minutes after taking the ball past Atletico keeper Jan Oblak. Thanks to a brace from new



SEASON OPENERS: Saturday’s three other games all ended in draws with Wu Lei playing 63 minutes as Espanyol returning to LaLiga with a 0-0 draw away to Osasuna

Argentine recruit Erik Lamela, Sevilla beat Rayo Vallecano 3-0 late on Sunday night. Moroccan international Youssef En-Nesyri scored a first-half penalty for the home side. Real Madrid got off to a winning start with two goals from Karim Benzema, a header from defender Nacho Fernandez and a late goal from Vinicius Jr giving them a 4-1 win away to Alaves on Saturday night. Benzema and Luka Modric were the star performers for Real Madrid, while both Gareth Bale and Eden Hazard were in Carlo

Ancelotti’s starting 11. Saturday’s three other games all ended in draws with Wu Lei playing 63 minutes as Espanyol returning to LaLiga with a 0-0 draw away to Osasuna. Mallorca also returned to La Liga with a point as they drew 1-1 at home to Betis with an own goal from Mallorca keeper Manolo Reina after Juanmi’s shot salvaging a point for Betis after Brian Oliván had put Mallorca ahead. There was late drama in Cadiz as a goal in the sixth minute of injury time from Alfonso Espino

rescued a point for the home side after they had been outplayed by Levante for most of the game and led through Jose Luis Morales’ 50th top-flight goal. On Friday night, Carlos Soler got Valencia and new boss Pepe Bordalas off to a winning start with a 1-0 win at home to Bordalas’ former club Getafe. Valencia had defender Hugo Guillamon sent off in the second minute of the game, but Soler’s first-half penalty was enough to give them a win in a bad-tempered match. **Xinhua**

Man City start title defence with defeat while title rivals all kick off with wins

LONDON: Manchester City’s title defence got off to a false start as they lost 1-0 to Tottenham in their opening game of the season on Sunday afternoon. Heung Min-Son’s 55th-minute goal gave Tottenham all three points in a game given extra spice by Manchester City’s well-publicized pursuit of Spurs’ captain, Harry Kane. Kane was not included in his side’s squad with coach Nuno Espirito Santo saying that the striker, who only returned to training a week ago, was not match fit. Jack Grealish made his debut for Manchester City, but the game showed just why Pep Guardiola is looking to sign Kane as his side played some pretty football, but lacked bite in their rivals’ area. West Ham began where they left off last season with a 4-2 win away to Newcastle United after twice coming back from behind in Sunday’s other game. Callum Wilson put Newcastle ahead in the fifth minute only for Aaron Cresswell to level in the 18th minute and although Jacob Murphy put Newcastle back in front before halftime, a second-half blitz saw Said Benrahma, Tomas Soucek and Michail Antonio blitz Newcastle with three goals in 13 minutes, with Antonio also seeing a penalty saved in that spell. Bruno Fernandes scored a hat-



trick on Saturday as Manchester United beat Leeds United 5-1. Fernandes put his side ahead in the 30th minute and although Luke Ayling drew Leeds level three minutes after halftime, goals from Mason Greenwood and Fernandez in the 52nd and 54th minute decided the game before Fernandes completed his hat-trick on 60 minutes and Fred made it 5-1 eight minutes later. Jadon Sancho made his debut as a late substitute to end a perfect start for Ole Gunnar Solskjaer’s side. Chelsea also got off to a confident start as they ruined Patrick Viera’s debut as Crystal Palace coach with a 3-0 win at Stamford Bridge, with Marcos Alonso and Christian Pulisic putting them 2-0 up at the break before defender Trevor Chalobah scored his first Premier League goal just before the hour. **Xinhua**

RC’S FATEENAH MARE WINS FIRST PLACE IN FRANCE

Horses of the Royal Cavalry (RC) achieved good results at their external participations in France. The mare ‘Fateenah’ of the RC breed, won the first place in a 1400-metre-long race dedicated for pure Arabian horses while the mare ‘ZF Al Muzoon’ owned by Adil Al-Mazrouée came second. The colt “Labib” of RC also won the silver medal in the Arabian Horse Show championship (colt category). The contest was organised in France by the European Conference of Arab Horse Organisations (ECAHO). – **ONA**

INDIA VS ENGLAND

England totter at 67 for four after India declare their innings at 298

LONDON: Indian pacers Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami, and Ishant Sharma struck as England lost four quick wickets - Rory Burns (0), Dominic Sibley (0), Haseeb Hameed (9), and Jonny Bairstow (2) in their 272-run chase. Nine balls into the post-lunch session, India captain Virat Kohli declared the visitors’ second innings and set England a target of 272 off 60 overs on the final day of the second Test here at the Lord’s Cricket Ground on Monday. India declared with the score on 298/8 in the second innings. Shami (56* off 70) and Bumrah (34* off 64) frustrated the English bowling attack throughout the final morning as they added 89 crucial runs for the 9th wicket and gave India the upper hand going into the final two sessions. Resuming the final day on 181/6, India was handed a huge blow after Pant was sent packing by Ollie Robinson as he poked at the ball and edged it to Jos Buttler. He departed for 22 off 46 balls. The Indian pacers completed their 50-run partnership off 72 balls. Shami then with a 4 and a 92-meter six in two consecutive deliveries against Moeen Ali brought up his half-century. Only after 1.3 overs in the second session, India declared their innings and gave the hosts a mountain to climb on the final day. The declaration also meant that it was the first time in ten innings that Anderson went wicketless against India at Lord’s. **ANI**

OMAN CRUDE PRICE FALLS

The price of Oman oil has decreased, with prices for delivery by October 2021 reaching \$68.94, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil fell by \$1.15 from the price of Friday, which was \$70.09. - **ONA**

MARKET

BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS LOWER

The MSX index closed at 4,011.16 points, down 0.21 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index up 0.15 per cent at 591.58 points. National Aluminum Product, up 5.13 per cent, was the top gainer while Al Suwadi Power, down 7.46 per cent, was the top loser.

Sohar Port, Freezone throughput rises 14% in second quarter of 2021

The number of containers handled was 190,000 TEU in addition to 804 vessel calls, up by 18 per cent from the same period in 2020. The land occupancy also rose by 10 per cent during the same period last year



ONE-STOP SHOP: Sohar's abundance of energy, raw materials and world-class logistics, coupled with generous incentives for local and international partners and the One-Stop-Shop system for all government clearances, provides a significant advantage for a business that is sure to attract major players in the industry. - **File picture**

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Building on its positive momentum, Sohar Port and Freezone has announced encouraging results for the second quarter of 2021. Among them, it reported that the port's handling of goods in and out of the Sultanate (throughput) increased by 14 per cent over

the same period in 2020 and Ship-to-Ship (STS) cargo increased by an impressive 168 per cent.

Meanwhile, the number of handled containers came in at 190,000 TEU in addition to 804 vessel calls, up by 18 per cent from the same

period in 2020. The land occupancy at the freezone has also shown a rise of 10 per cent since the same time last year. With a number of planned projects underway and coming up, Sohar's strategy to position itself as a central logistics

hub in the region is well on track.

Continual growth

"Although the global economy is beginning to show signs of recovery, there is still a fair amount of uncertainty due to the ongoing

pandemic. Given these dynamics, our efforts to refine our business scenarios in order to emerge more resilient and adaptive have shown themselves to be well-placed and projections indicate that we are on course to exceed the amount

of cargo that passed through in 2020. The port's continual growth is a testament to the long-term value that we provide to our clients as we operate safely and efficiently to serve the industrial and economic sectors," said Mark Geilenkirchen, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar Port.

Omar Mahmood Al Mahrizi, CEO of Sohar Freezone, Deputy CEO of Sohar Port, added, "Sohar's rise to prominence has been extremely gratifying, but for us, it's still only the beginning. In alignment with the port's impressive growth, we continue to make major investments in the freezone, while promoting it, and Oman in general, as a favourable business destination. The strategic location and an amenable trade environment presented a huge potential for our stakeholders and partners. The vision to become a prosperous global trading hub is coming to fruition."

Sohar's abundance of energy, raw materials and world-class logistics, coupled with generous incentives for local and international partners and the One-Stop-Shop system for all government clearances, provides a significant advantage for a business that is sure to attract major players in the industry.

SHARES

Asian stocks slip as China's economy stumbles

SYDNEY: Asian shares slide on Monday after a raft of Chinese data showed a surprisingly sharp slowdown in the engine of global growth, just as much of the world race to stem the spread of the Delta variant of COVID-19 with vaccinations.

Figures on July retail sales, industrial production and urban investment all missed forecasts, a trend that is only likely to get worse given the recent tightening in coronavirus restrictions there.

"Asia's low vaccination rates and a low tolerance for community spread suggest it is the region most at risk economically from the Delta variant," said JPMorgan economist Bruce Kasman.

"China is in the midst of removing policy support, which looks likely to restrain domestic demand growth and weigh on re-



RETAIL SALES: Figures on July retail sales, industrial production and urban investment all missed forecasts, a trend that is only likely to get worse given the recent tightening in coronavirus restrictions there. - **BNA**

gional performance through the rest of this year," he added. "With these drags building in recent weeks, we have been lowering

2H21 regional growth forecasts."

There was added uncertainty about the possible geopolitical implications of the sudden col-

lapse of the Afghan government and what it means for political stability in the region.

MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan eased 0.5 per cent, nudging back toward the lows for the year touched last month. Chinese blue chips were hanging onto gains of 0.2 per cent, perhaps in anticipation of a more aggressive policy easing from Beijing.

"The data will likely intensify speculation of further reserve requirement cuts in the weeks ahead and be positive for bonds," wrote analysts at TD Securities in a note.

"The central bank is also unlikely to welcome appreciation of the CNY on a trade-weighted basis while limiting CNY appreciation vs USD." - **BNA**

AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

Virtual sessions on Value Added Tax to begin today

MUSCAT: The Tax Authority will launch today a series of virtual sessions on the Value Added Tax (VAT), which come as part of the awareness campaign themed 'With You, For You'.

Social awareness

The campaign aims to introduce VAT and the mechanism of applying it. It also aims to raise social awareness on the legal regulations for applying the tax in a manner that maintains the right of the consumer and the merchant.

The sessions will be broadcasted

every Tuesday through the official channels of the Tax Authority on different social media platforms at 5 pm. The first session will be titled 'Value Added Tax', its Application Mechanism, and Method of Submitting Tax Declaration. The second and third sessions will discuss the mechanism of calculating VAT, invoices and tax records.

It should be noted that the Tax Authority started applying the VAT on July 16 as the number of those registered with the tax till the mid of 2021 stood at 17,500 merchants and service performers. - **ONA**

NEW STUDY

5G smartphone sales revenue to touch \$337bn by 2025 from \$108bn in 2021

HAMPSHIRE: 5G compatible smartphones will account for over 50 per cent of smartphone sales revenue by 2025; rising to \$337 billion from \$108 billion in 2021, a new study by Juniper Research has found.

It urged mobile handset vendors to ensure hardware maximises the benefits of future mobile cloud computing solutions. Mobile cloud computing enables service providers to offload intensive tasks to the cloud, freeing on-device resources for essential device processes.

The new research, 5G Smartphones: Trends, Regional Analysis & Market Forecasts 2021-2026, predicts that successful handset vendors will include radios that can process large bandwidths and ultra-low latency to ensure that handset users can use cloud computing services efficiently, whilst remaining price competitive.

Android OS handsets to dominate in emerging regions

The report anticipates that increasing the availability of lower-tier 5G smartphones is crucial to propagate 5G handset adoption in

emerging markets. It predicts that by 2025, global Android smartphone prices will be 65% lower than global iOS smartphone prices. It also highlights that this lower average cost of Android devices will lead to Android dominating 5G handset markets in regions such as Latin America.

Conversely, the research expects that the enduring popularity of iOS devices in developed markets will make 40 per cent of global 5G smartphone revenue attributable to North America and Europe by 2025.

'Right-to-Repair' laws to impact shipments

The report warns that long-term 5G smartphone shipment revenue will be limited by impending 'right-to-repair' legislation in North America and Europe, as more handset users choose to repair older models rather than upgrading to newer generation devices.

Research author Adam Wears explained, "The effect of these laws will not be felt initially, as consumers adopt 5G smartphones to leverage the high speeds and reduced latency of 5G networks."

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Create an edible garden — anytime, anywhere



People have become more health-conscious in the last year, seeking relaxing activities and projects that give them a sense of accomplishment. According to the National Gardening Association in the US, 67% of Americans are growing or planning to grow their own fruits, herbs and vegetables in 2021, and there are more than 18.3 million new gardeners trying their hand at growing their own flowers or produce.

While growing your own edible garden can be exciting, there are a few things to consider before you start. It can all feel a bit overwhelming, but with tips from Garrett Magee, the design mastermind behind the landscape design firm Manscapers based in the US, you can create the ultimate edible garden — no matter the time of year or where you live. Here are a few suggestions to help your garden sprout:

1 Think about what you already eat
Before you start digging, plan your edible garden by looking inside your fridge to see what kinds of produce you buy from the grocery

store for inspiration. By growing fruits and veggies you like, you don't have to worry about them going to waste. If you have kids, grow the fruits and veggies they enjoy too.

2 Start small
When building your edible garden, start small by growing plants out of a window box or small garden bed. As you get more comfortable, slowly expand and scale up the following year. Fruit and vegetable gardens are typically low maintenance, but they're never no maintenance, so be patient and stay on a regular schedule - you'll develop your green thumb in no time.

3 Grow a vertical garden if you live in a big city
If you live in an urban environment or don't have a traditional back yard, every square inch of space is precious. However, that doesn't mean it's impossible to garden. Focus on growing your produce up rather than out with tools like a garden trellis, which works well for supporting high-climbing plants like cucumbers.

4 Go green
For the quickest turnaround on your homegrown crops, focus on leafy greens like lettuce, kale, spinach and herbs. These vegetables are easy to grow, whether in a window box or a big backyard garden. Plus, you can continuously harvest them throughout the season.

Important tip: When harvesting leafy greens, use scissors to cut off the outer leaves at the base of the stem. That way, they can grow new leaves in the centre.

5 Find more ways to incorporate fruits and veggies into your life
Growing an edible garden can help you to eat more of the fresh produce you love. However, you can also incorporate fruits and veggies into your daily routine with juice smoothies. Made from the juices of apples, mangoes, bananas, kiwis, blueberries, blackberries and red beets, smoothies provide all the essential nutrients. "Beets are not only one of the ingredients but also my favourite superfood," says Magee. "They are a great end-of-season vegetable and can be planted at the end of spring or from June to September." - **BPT**



ROUND-UP



COLOUR FESTIVAL HELD IN JURMALA, LATVIA



ROUND-UP

ahlibank sponsors first-of-its-kind documentary ‘Not Discovered Yet’

In a recent development, ahlibank has signed an agreement with Oman InFocus to sponsor the first of its kind exploration project, ‘Not Discovered Yet’, which promotes the wildlife and natural beauty of Oman

MUSCAT: Recognised as a leading bank in the Sultanate, ahlibank has gained increasing popularity not only as a bank that offers premium financial services but also as an organisation that has played its part as a responsible corporate citizen.

With ongoing corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives in place, ahlibank has demonstrated utmost commitment to contribute towards the social, cultural and environmental progress of the country.



bank has signed an agreement with Oman InFocus to sponsor the first of its kind exploration project, ‘Not Discovered Yet’, which promotes the wildlife and natural beauty of Oman.

The agreement was signed between Najla Al Lawati, AGM, Head of Private Banking and Wealth Management, ahlibank and Maisa Fahad Al Hooti, Founder and CEO, Oman InFocus on August 3 at ahlibank’s head office.

On the occasion of signing the agreement, Najla Al Lawati said, “ahlibank is proud of its well-established experience in Corporate Social Responsibility. Community welfare makes up an integral part of our operations. In line with the same, ahlibank endeavours to support such initiatives that not only help talented Omani individuals follow their passion but also aids in the country’s overall progress.”

“The ‘Not Discovered Yet’ programme is a noble initiative aimed at strengthening Oman’s tourism sector and highlight its environmental and tourism features in line with Oman Vision 2040, which in turn supports the country’s economic growth and development in many areas. By supporting Omani youth and targeted national projects, we are seeking innovative ways to strengthen co-operation between the bank and the community,” she added.

Aligning itself to Oman Vision 2040, this initiative endeavours to promote awareness about Oman’s diverse wildlife and abundant natural beauty. It will also highlight the country’s efforts towards protecting its environment and wildlife while positioning the country as a top destination for international travellers, photographers and filmmakers.

The final product of the project will be two documentaries. The first of which will be broadcasted on well-known international channels as a two-part series, featuring the full extent of Oman’s

Wildlife; including marine, terrestrial and bird-life. The second documentary will showcase the various ongoing conservation efforts that are being implemented by Oman’s government and private sectors. By partnering with prestigious channels, publications and other media houses, ‘Not Discovered Yet’ guarantees an extensive international reach and will put Oman in the spotlight.

“A project of this scale could not be achieved without the support demonstrated by the Omani government and leading institutions like ahlibank. They have placed immense faith in our capabilities and also mirror our vision, values and passion towards the environment,” said Maisa Al Hooti. “A unique initiative in itself, ‘Not Discovered Yet’ will help people from all over the world learn more about Oman’s heritage and culture, its diverse wildlife and the marine-rich oceans that provide a sanctuary for aquatic life.”

ahlibank’s strategic approach highlights its commitment to social responsibility as a very important part of its key activities. The bank is keen on creating a framework that helps in adding value to the community through ‘ahli Cares’ initiative and implement programs aimed at enriching the lives of individuals across Oman. In addition, the bank continues to support various social, educational, cultural, health and sports activities in the Sultanate as part of its corporate values and ambitious vision, which are critical to the bank’s staff and leadership.

ONLINE FLOWERS AND GIFTS

Floward launches its services in Egypt

MUSCAT: Floward, the go-to online flowers and gifts delivery destination in the Mena region launched its services in Cairo, Egypt on August 1, making it its 8th country and 22nd city to launch in.

For starters, Floward launched its operations in Cairo only and will gradually expand to other cities and regions within the country.

Floward CEO Abdulaziz B. Al Loughani said, “After cementing our position as the go-to destination for flowers and gifts in the GCC and London - UK, we are now very excited to expand further into the Mena region starting with Egypt. We are always looking into expanding into large markets so we can reap the benefits of our major efforts put towards growing Floward and servicing our wide customer base.

“We have great confidence in the Egyptian economy, valued at more than \$350 billion, with the flowers industry estimated at nearly \$300 million. This makes it a very promising and attractive market to launch our services in and to also provide job opportunities for the Egyptian youth and talents.”

He added, “Additionally, there is a historic and strong relationship between the GCC countries and Egypt, and their peoples and we are proud to offer them our services and help them share



their feelings with their loved ones in Cairo.”

Established in 2017, Floward is a full-fledged e-commerce solution that offers prime fresh-cut flowers

sourced from the best growers and farmers around the world and arranged locally by a team of florists and designers. Floward also offers cakes, chocolate and perfumes cur-

rated by the region’s most exciting designers bundled with its flower arrangements and manage the last-mile same-day delivery to ensure the best customer experience.

WWW.FLORADLITE.COM

Floral boutique Flora D’Lite launches website



MUSCAT: Flora D’Lite, boutique floral retailer in Oman has announced the exciting launch of a new platform for patrons in Muscat. The floral boutique has opened up its website www.floradlite.com to the public which will enable customers to book and plan their deliveries with ease throughout the city. The website is simple to use and has categorised sections for cakes, flowers and gifts for special occasions.

With 2 floral boutiques currently in operation in strategic Qurum and Muscat Hills areas, the development of the website which began months ago is meant to add convenience and provide a broader reach. Customers booking through the website can expect offers of the month or even daily discounts on some products which will be uploaded as soon as available. Payments can be made online and from the convenience of one’s home, office or even from abroad.

“The launch of our own website has propelled our business into a

new arena in Oman. While people have the option of ordering online we have the unique advantage of also having our own retail outlets. This provides the choice of online ease or firsthand selection and overall brand reinforcement at all levels,” said a spokesperson for Flora D’Lite. “Ordering flowers for self or loved ones is made easy with some simplistic browsing. The website was planned to keep pace with the ever changing market with more consumers turning to online platforms to make their purchases,” he added.

Flora D’Lite has offered online services through other platforms in the past but the launch of the new dedicated website which has been in the works for a while is expected to be a game changer.

The brand hopes to make Flora D’Lite the go to name for flowers for every occasion. Future plans include expanding the delivery services beyond the Muscat area to cover more of the country before end 2021.

SPECIAL WEDDING THEME SONG



Malabar Gold unveils ‘Brides of India’ campaign

DUBAI: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, one of the largest gold and diamond jewellery retail chains in the world with over 260 stores across 10 countries, has kicked off the 9th edition of its ‘Brides of India’ campaign with a special wedding theme song titled #MakeWayForTheBride which depicts the grand entry of brides, the hallmark of modern-day Indian weddings.

The wedding anthem, released in an aesthetically shot 3-minute video that has already garnered two million views on social media platforms within the first 48 hours, features celebrity brand ambassadors of Malabar Gold & Diamonds, Anil Kapoor and Kareena Kapoor along with brides from diverse regions of the country.

The Brides of India 2021 wedding anthem has been conceptualised by the creative agency Dentsu India and developed by some of the gifted professionals from the world of celluloid. Directed by Kookie Gulati, who has also directed movies such as The Abhishek Bachchan-starrer The Big Bull, the anthem also boasts of Amit Roy, who was Director of Photography (DoP) for Love Aaj Kal as DoP, Piku-fame Anupam Roy as music composer and Vicky Donor fame writer Juhi Chaturvedi as a lyricist.

The wedding anthem theme song video shows brides from various states such as Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, Punjab, Maharashtra, Bengal, etc., entering the wedding arena in the grandest possible manner, thus breaking the stereotypes and conventional practices.

This way, the new-age bride hopes to inspire other brides-to-be to express their true self at their wedding, too.

Malabar Group Chairman MP Ahammed said, “The Brides of India Campaign is our tribute to the new-age brides and their

awe-inspiring individuality. Over the last ten years, Brides of India has played a pivotal role in showcasing our versatility in catering to all bridal jewellery needs from all around the country. The theme of Brides of India 2021 encourages all to make way for the bride. Because this is her moment, it’s her big day, and she’s here to own it. She’s here to shine and make sure the world knows it. With the launch of the Brides of India 2021 campaign, we celebrate the brides who choose to make the big day all about her. With designs that cater to varied sensibilities of new-age brides across regions, there is something unique for every bride to complement her unique entry.”

The campaign features 13 brides from various parts of the country in two distinctive looks. These 26 unique looks include the Bejewelled bride featuring Polki jewellery, the Statement bride and the Shimmering bride featuring diamond jewellery, the Contemporary reception bride featuring handcrafted jewellery, the Classic Gold bride, the Kerala bride, the Karnataka bride, the Telugu bride, the Tamil bride, the Uttar Pradesh and Bihar bride, the Punjabi bride, the Bengali bride, the Odia bride, the Marathi bride and the Gujarati bride.

All these looks are captured in an exquisite range of bridal jewellery shot by ace photographer Avinash Gowarikar. The campaign also features all the major jewellery sub-brands of Malabar Gold & Diamonds including Mine, Era, Precia, Divine, Ethnix and Polki collections. As part of the campaign, the jeweller will also showcase a specially curated range of bridal jewellery catering to the new-age brides at their showrooms. The curation of jewellery has been done with great care by keeping local community tastes and preferences in mind after in-depth research.

ROUND-UP

Kia’s globally popular, powerful SUV all-new Sorento now in Oman

Powerful, progressive and versatile, the exciting new model nimbly pairs cutting-edge tech features with family-friendly practicality

MUSCAT: Get set to transform every experience with the stylish and powerful all-new Sorento SUV now in Oman.

Powerful, progressive and versatile, the exciting new model nimbly pairs cutting-edge tech features with family-friendly practicality. This distinguishes it as one of the most efficient and comfortable sport utilities ever made.

The first vehicle to be based on Kia’s new-generation midsize SUV platform, the Sorento is equipped with a larger body; enabling drivers to maximise cargo and luggage space. The Sorento’s redefined exterior and attractive cabin set it apart as much more than a work of engineering efficiency. Its innovative design catches the eye, adding a new layer of luxury to the Kia driving experience. The Sorento stands out with 19” alloy wheels, LED headlamps, LED daytime



running lights, LED front and rear fog lamps, LED rear combination lamps, remote engine start and a panoramic sunroof.

The interiors of the Sorento is enlivened by a modern suite of leading-edge features that firmly establish the Sorento as Kia’s most hi-tech car ever. The features include smartphone wireless charger, mood light, Android auto and car play, 8” audio display, audio remote control, power passenger seat, power driver seat, leather seats, dual full automatic A/C, 3rd row AC vents and more.

Powering the all-new Sorento SUV is the 3.5L engine with 268 hp and 33.8 kg.m. torque. This is paired with 8-speed automatic transmission for smooth driving experiences. Adding to driving delights is the auto cruise control, drive mode select offering the driver choices to enjoy exciting driving experiences on varied terrains.

The all-new Sorento is built to take you places with confidence. A range of advanced safety features in the all-new Sorento includes an anti-lock braking system (ABS), electronic stability program

(ESP), vehicle stability management (VSM), tyre pressure monitoring system (TPMS), driver and front passenger airbags, smart cruise control, blind-spot collision avoidance assist (BCA), lane-keeping assist (LKA), forward collision avoidance assist (FCA) and lane following assist (LFA).

“The new Sorento signals a new era for Kia and midsize SUVs. The stunning new model promises so much practicality, comfort and entertainment for the whole family, appealing to adventurous drivers who are as passionate about ex-

ploring the world as they are about the subtle flourishes, fine finishes and allure of luxurious statement vehicles. Boasting so much luggage and cargo space, the Sorento is a roomy delight, exhibiting Kia’s signature versatility — a feature that has endeared the brand to so many car enthusiasts across MEA. Its advanced tech specifications and the responsiveness of its impressive infotainment system makes it suited to the modern driver, delivering the level of connectivity today’s motorists demand and more,” said Yaser Shabsogh, Chief

Operating Officer, Regional HQs, Middle East & Africa.

“The new Sorento flies the flag for Kia and our reinvigorated lineup of SUVs. It represents the very best of contemporary car-making, sitting on the shoulders of its predecessors to reach new heights of engineering excellence.”

Named as the ‘All-Wheel Drive Car of the Year 2020’ in the Auto Bild Allrad contest and winning the ‘Das Goldene Lenkrad 2020’ award (Golden Steering Wheel), the fourth generation Sorento has been celebrated by automotive expert’s world over since its official debut in March 2020. As the winner of the J.D. Power quality award for 9 consistent years, Kia continues to produce thrill-seeking, durable cars for those who pursue only excellence.

Kia Sorento enthusiasts interested in experiencing the all-new Sorento SUV are invited to visit any Kia showroom.

Reliable International Automotive (RIA), the distributor for Kia in Oman provides a rewarding ownership experience for customers. Excellent product attributes and unmatched facilities easily ensure their absolute satisfaction, every mile of the way. No wonder then that Reliable International Automotive has been ranked amongst the top Kia distributors worldwide and has been honoured with prestigious accolades including the ‘Good Partnership award’, ‘Family Like Care’ Service award’, and ‘Kia ‘Distributor of Distinction’ award.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Omantel’s ICT offerings fuel digital economy

MUSCAT: Since the beginning of time, humans have evolved every single day in intellect and capacity. The result is the world we currently live in, abuzz with things our minds have created and on which, our way of life largely depends.

Information and communication technology (ICT) has now become the foundation on which the 4th Industrial Revolution is riding, and Omantel is leading the way in the national, regional, and international landscape.

This is why at the core of Omantel’s philosophy is the constant endeavour to harness the expanding ICT potential and making it available for the private & public sectors so that they optimally benefit from its infinite scope in different applications. Omantel’s ICT repertoire encompasses broad segments, which are Unified Communications, Cloud & Data Centre Services, Software as a Service and other Managed Services which form the axis of Omantel’s ICT solutions as these fields are what give users the cutting edge solutions and enable the digital ecosystem to grow and thrive using Omantel’s smart fixed & mobile connectivity solutions.

Unified communications

Omantel stands apart for its customer experience and takes this service beyond its traditional definition. The company’s Virtual Contact Centre that is being offered to the enterprise customers is not just a call centre, but a hub where services demands of various customer segments are met and are apt solutions provided. It is a full-contact centre ecosystem that has required no capital investment nor hardware, provided complete solutions, and gives the flexibility of pay as you go.

The emergence of COVID-19 as a prolonged threat to health required proactive solutions, and Omantel



was quick to offer video conferencing and screen sharing solutions through Cisco Webex Meetings, which has ensured business continuity during remote working while maintaining health safety during unprecedented times. Similarly, in cooperation with Microsoft, Omantel availed a remote collaboration & video conferencing solution for Enterprise customers, called Microsoft Teams that allows remote workers to meet, call and collaborate virtually. These easy-to-use solutions have boosted organisational productivity and broadened team collaborations in addition to Omantel’s flexible per-user payment option, off-the-shelf products and varied customised modules to cater to specific needs.

Omantel also brings enterprise-grade IP Telephony Solution (PBX) to customers with PBX system & SIP/PRI connection that is customised and offers end-to-end solution including connectivity.

Software as a service

Microsoft products offered by

Omantel include Office 365 suite, a complete IT solution that allows users to work from anywhere on all devices and up-to-date apps with an annual subscription. All Microsoft products and suites subscriptions are made accessible to customers through digital delivery.

Human Capital Management and customised software are brought to customers through partnerships with the industry leaders. These sets of enterprise grade software solutions come with a wide range of benefits like hybrid deployment models, end-to-end solutions including hosting and connectivity and offer immense flexibility in payment options and can be hosted in Omantel Data Centre or on the customer premise.

Omantel’s ERP solution is a one-stop world-class technology solution that is a quick to implement and affordable tool for SMEs to run their entire resource planning from a state-of-the-art locally hosted platform. A single application offers full control of all main

business areas including financial, sales, customer relationship management, vendor relationship management, inventory, purchasing, planning and reporting, thus saving costs and paving way for increased profits.

Cloud, data centre services

What sets Omantel apart in a crowded field of cloud and data centre services is its state-of-the-art infrastructure, quality, security, speed, efficiency and customer-centric approach. Omantel has been providing all kinds of data centre services augmented with cybersecurity. Highlights like zero capital investment in hardware, payment flexibility and end-to-end solutions like Email Hosting, SSL Certification, web hosting, domain registration, cloud server, Enterprise Virtual Private Server (VPS) among others underscore the many benefits of offerings.

Getting ‘smarter’

The company has been leading the digital transformation from

the front, and Smart City Solutions are a major component of its ICT offerings, touching the lives of people every day, in every sphere. Omantel is leveraging IoT to manage public facilities, safety and security, parking, streetlights, traffic management, waste management, and many other services.

Smart health solutions have remained a part and parcel of Omantel’s ICT offerings and have grown in importance since early 2020 with the pandemic’s outbreak. These solutions have improved productivity and boosted efficiency through asset tracking, patient tracking, virtual health clinics etc. It has partnered with Siemens to bring new e-health solutions to Oman’s healthcare sector.

To help organisations overcome health and safety vulnerabilities, Omantel has developed technologies that are essential to mitigate COVID-19 risks by providing a powerful workplace intervention using the latest technologies that are capable to easily transform how we work and interact. Some of these solutions include temperature & face mask detection and people count; AI-enabled chatbots for customer service, contactless biometrics and e-signature solutions that electronically prepare, sign and manage documents and agreements.

The latest implementation of Omantel’s ICT solutions has been at the Duqm Special Economic Zone. Here, in association with the Asyad Group, Omantel launched Smart Video Surveillance as a service trial powered by its 5G network and offered high-speed internet service for ships anchoring at the Drydock. Also, Omantel and Huawei entered a tri-party Proof of Concept (POC) Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Hutchison Ports Sohar for showcasing successful utilisations of the telecom giant’s 5G infra-

structure in boosting communication services and improving operational efficiency, accuracy, time management and security, among other services.

Education as a service

Omantel is collaborating with OMREN (Oman Research and Education Network, an initiative by The Research Council) to establish a national ecosystem that supports Oman’s Research and Education community and connects it with the international community.

Other managed services

Innovation is the foundation for all Omantel’s ICT solutions. TASIL epitomises this emphasis. An innovative, real-time online advertising platform, TASIL has been enabling Omantel’s enterprise clients to attract customers with map-enabled precise location filters and real-time marketing campaigns with measurable and meaningful reports. While registration is free, TASIL offers flexible pay as you go payment options and competitive tariffs through different communications channels like SMS & Whatsapp.

Another managed solution for SMEs is Omantel’s ‘Office Out of the Box’ which is covering fixed business internet broadband, mobile packages and ICT services in one monthly bundle.

Omantel continues to briskly march ahead on its path as an important economic driver effectively handling challenges and hurdles like risks to society from information overload, monitoring and infrastructural needs to name a few, using proactive, focused and positive approaches that include infrastructure expansion, acquisitions, strategic partnerships with leading ICT product providers, network services and technical know-how.



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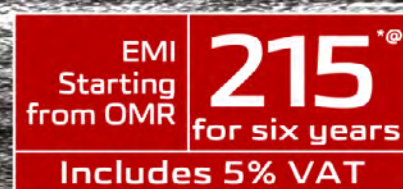
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