LET'S TALK
Times OF OMAN

SHURA REPRESENTATION FOR 2 NEW WILAYATS IN 10TH TERM

As per the Royal orders of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal Al Busaidi, Minister of Interior issued a statement regarding the representation of the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdar (the Green Mountain) and the Wilayat of Sinaw at the Shura Council. >A3

HM THE SULTAN SENDS CONDOLENCES

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) on the death of Prince Saud bin Mohammed bin Turki bin Abdulaziz bin Turki Al Saud. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sympathies to King Salman, praying to Allah the Almighty to rest the deceased's soul in peace in paradise and to grant his family patience and fortitude to bear the loss. - ONA

Founded 1975 · Volume 47 No. 77 | 16 Pages · Baisas 200 · Subscription OMR63 | ISO 9001:2008 Certified Company | Chairman/Editor-in-Chief: Mohamed Issa Al Zadjali | Printed & Published by Muscat Media Group

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BEFORE HM, OFFICIALS TAKE OATH OF OFFICE

Several officials took the oath of office at Al Barakah Palace on Sunday

MUSCAT: Before His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, several officials took the oath of office at Al Barakah Palace on Sunday. The oath of office was taken by the following:

- His Highness Sayyid Marwan bin Turki bin Mahmoud Al Said, Governor of Dhofar.
- Sayyid Mohammed bin Sultan bin Hamoud Al Busaidi, Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council.
- Eng. Salim bin Nasser bin Said Al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals.
- Dr. Mohammed bin Said bin Khalfan Al Ma'amari, Minister of Endowments and Religious Affairs.
- Dr. Hilal bin Ali bin Hilal Al Sabti, Minister of Health.
- Sheikh Ghusun bin Hilal bin Khalifa Al Alawi, Chairman of the State Audit Institution.

This comes after His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Thursday issued 12 Royal Decrees restructuring the Council of Ministers and appointing some new positions. According to ONA , the decrees shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced the day following its date of publishing. -ONA

HM Issues Royal Decree >A5

HM CONFERS OMAN CIVIL ORDER ON FORMER HEAD OF ROYAL PROTOCOLS

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik conferred Oman Civil Order, 2nd Class, on Juma Rashid Said Al Balushi, Former Head of the Royal Protocols. The conferment took place at Al Barakah Palace on Sunday. The conferment comes as recognition from His Majesty for the efforts exerted by Al Balushi in carrying out his duties during his tenure at the Royal Protocols in the Diwan of Royal Court. — ONA

DIGITAL INDICATORS

95% of users access internet in Oman through smartphones

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Ninety-five percent of internet users in Oman access the internet through their smartphones, says a new report released by the government.

The Digital Indicators report, released by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MTCIT), added that internet coverage was 94 percent in 2021, roughly the same as it was in 2020.

While a majority of the people prefer going online through smartphone, only 66 percent use desktops, laptops and tablets to access the web.

Far fewer people connect to the internet using newer devices, although the number of such users is rising. Twenty-seven percent of people used smartwatches to access the internet in 2021, up from 18 percent in 2020.

Smart printers were used by 18 percent of internet users in 2021, compared to 14 percent in 2020, and the use of smart cameras also rose from 14 to 16 percent between 2020 and 2021, according to a survey titled 'Access to, and Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) by Households and Individuals Survey 2020 – 2021'.

Smartphone ownership is also extremely high: 94 percent of the total population aged 18 and above owned a smartphone in both 2020 and 2021.

Given the ubiquitous presence of social media in people's lives, sending messages through email, WhatsApp and SMS services was the number one reason why people used the internet, with 97 percent of the population saying they used it for this purpose in 2021, up from 92 percent in 2020. Eighty-seven percent of respondents used ICT infrastructure to access copy and paste tools, up from 84 percent in 2020.

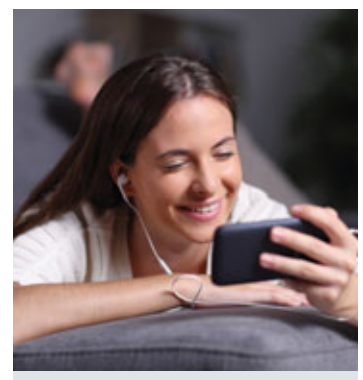
However, the percentage of people who used ICT to download, install and configure software and programmes dropped sharply, from 67 percent in 2020 to 48 percent in 2021. Another key reason claimed by 56 percent of people who accessed ICT was to set up effective security measures.

Fifty-five percent users accessed ICT to change privacy settings on their device, account or apps to limit the sharing of personal data and information, and 48 percent used it to transfer files between a computer and other devices. Thirty-two percent made use of ICT to connect and install new devices, while a sizeable 65 percent of people made use of ICT to perform arithmetic formulas in spreadsheets.

Thirty-three percent people took advantage of ICT services to create electronic presentations using software available online, while about 12 percent took to ICT to learn programming such as computer software or app development in a digital environment.

"The Sultanate of Oman has made great strides in laying the foundations for a thriving digital economy by strengthening the information and communications technology sector as an enabling tool for other economic sectors," said MTCIT in its report.

"In addition, the digital economy is projected to become a major contributor to the national economy," added the ministry, explaining that the latest version of the report – its second edition – aims to reflect the various features of Oman's digital economy at both local and international levels.



94%

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TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

First IKEA outlet opens in Oman

1 Swedish home furnishings giant IKEA, opened doors to its first store in Oman at Oman Avenues Mall on Sunday. In the run up to the official inauguration, a large crowd of 3,100 customers were waiting for the store to officially open. Featuring inspirational room setups and creative solutions for visitors with over 9,000 articles, the store is located in the centre of the city, making it accessible for customers. >A3

WORLD

CDC nod to COVID jabs for children under 5

2 The US regulators, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recommended the first COVID-19 vaccines for kids under the age of five. CDC Director Rochelle Walensky termed it an important step in the fight against COVID-19 and said that the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines available here in the US can be used safely. >A6

MARKET

FDI in Oman soars by 19% to over OMR17bn

3 The volume of foreign direct investment in the Oman crossed OMR17 billion by the end of the first quarter of 2022, an increase of 19 per cent compared to the same period in 2021."The volume of foreign direct investment in the Sultanate of Oman increased by 19 per cent by the end of the first quarter of this year to reach OMR 17,940 million compared to the same period in 2021," Oman News Agency said. >B1

OMAN

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PRAYER TIMINGS

Dhuhr	12:13pm
Asr	3:31pm
Maghrib	7:01pm
Isha	8:24pm
Fajr (Tomorrow)	3:53am

MINISTRY OF HOUSING AND URBAN PLANNING

Ministry pressing ahead to complete distribution of land plots to 23,000

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning affirmed that it is pressing ahead with completing the distribution of lands to 23,000 applicants in all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman as per the Royal orders of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

This was stated when Shura Council on Sunday hosted Dr. Khalfan Said Al Shu'aili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning during its 15th regular session of the 3rd annual sitting of the 9th term to discuss the ministry's statement. The Council discussed the statement, which covered five main axes namely general policies for housing and urban planning, a study of the reality of land reconstruction in the Sultanate of Oman, the ministry's objectives during the implementation period of the 10th Five-Year Development Plan (2021-2025), and activating the ministry's role as part of the projects and programmes of vital sectors within the framework of the 10th Five-Year Development plan, and the partnership with the private sector.

In the statement, Dr. Khalfan Al Shu'aili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning, said that the ministry had completed the preparation of drafts of the real estate

development law, the unified addressing system law and the law on expropriation for the public benefit. "Work is also underway to prepare a draft for amending the land registry system, the housing law and the urban planning law," he said.

He added: "The drafts of these laws will be referred to the Council of Oman in accordance with the legislative cycle, and we hope that the Shura Council will enrich them with visions that contribute to their precision and achieve their prospective goals."

Al Shu'aili pointed out that the ministry is working to float another batch of lands using the usufruct (land lease) system. As many as 430 lands with usufruct rights and fees set for each purpose, and 200 lands with the usufruct system by bidding distributed over all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. The move contributes to achieving the goals related to the economic sectors.

He reaffirmed that the distribution of residential lands according to an approved methodology takes into account the gradation in the specified number of distribution to ensure the efficiency of 'Choose Your Land' platform after linking it with the government departments concerned.

Within this context, the distribution of nearly 8,000 residential plots was completed until mid-June 2022.

He added that the ministry is planning to establish several smart cities (model cities) resembling the Smart City project in the Wilayat of A'Seeb, which is a model scheme for a new residential city with special standards and a modern concept to achieve urban sustainability, economic diversification, and raise the quality of life.

The Minister of Housing and Urban Planning said: "The general data before the issuance of Royal Decree No. 42/2021 on granting government lands was represented by the issuance of Royal Decree No. (93/2020), which stipulated amending the name of the Ministry of Housing to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, defining its terms of reference and approving its organizational structure." — ONA

Indian school alumnus eyes Olympic glory

Janani Ananthakumar, an alumnus of Indian School Al Wadi Al Kabir, has won a glittering collection of trophies in badminton

AWARD: Janani secured her latest athletic achievement, when she was part of the university team that won the gold medal at the Khelo India Youth Games.

Times News Service

MUSCAT: A former Indian expatriate has her eyes firmly set on representing her country at the 2024 Olympic Games and is making all-out efforts along with her family to achieve that dream.

Nineteen-year-old Janani Ananthakumar, an alumnus of Indian School Al Wadi Al Kabir, moved to India in 2014 to pursue her career as a professional badminton player and has won a glittering collection of trophies as she seeks to pull on the blue jersey at the highest-ever levels of sport.

Janani – who is also pursuing a commerce degree from Jain University in Bangalore – secured her latest athletic achievement, when she was part of the university team that won the gold medal at the Khelo India Youth Games, an annual multidisciplinary grassroots sports competition for school and university-level students.

She also recently won the Yonex Sunrise Assocham badminton tournament, in senior and under-19 levels, where she won gold in both the women's and mixed doubles.

"She has her eyes firmly fixed on representing India at the 2024 and 2028 Olympic Games, and if she remains fit, at the 2032 Olympics as well," said her father, Ananthakumar Rajamani, in an exclusive interview with Times of Oman. "She knows the hard work and sacrifice it takes to achieve that, but she is prepared to do all it takes to get there."

While Janani is prepared to endure all hardships on way to the Olympics, her family also requires to make sacrifices along the way.

"Janani is up at 5:15 every day – her mother gets up even earlier at 4:45 to prepare her breakfast and lunch – because her warm up and practice sessions begin at 6am," said Rajamani. "Her diet has to be special, rich in protein so that she has the energy and stamina to play the game for long periods, with little to no fats or oil content. When she is injured, her food composition needs to change, so that she is able to heal, while not putting on weight because of lack of training.

"It is imperative that she gets to practice on time, otherwise her training gets disrupted," he explained. "Earlier, we used to hire drivers to take her for practice in the morning, but with every driver, the same thing used to happen: They would come on time for a few days, but began making excuses, which left us with no transport option at short notice."

Although the family is strictly vegetarian, they have eased that restriction and allowed Janani to eat non-veg food so that she gets even more strength and stamina to excel at the game.

Post-training, it's time for lunch, with the rest of the afternoon spent on physical training and conditioning. Janani has dinner at about 8:30, before going to bed about an hour later, so that she can once again be up at the crack of dawn the next day.

"It is a hard schedule, but she knows she must adhere to it," admitted her father. "Of course, like any youngster, she also sometimes wants to enjoy with her friends, enjoy an ice-cream or pizza with them, go out for a movie: These things are after all natural to all of us.

"However, she makes sure to ask her coaches whether it is okay to participate in such activities, because her eyes are firmly fixed on her long-term goals," he added. "She knows that any deviation now could cost her dear later. Her coaches also sometimes use these breaks as incentives to get her to perform better."

Tryst with badminton

Her tryst with badminton began by chance when she was just about eight or nine years old, on summer vacation in Bangalore. Her neighbour invited her to play a game of badminton jus to pass time, and by the time she returned to Oman, she was hooked to the sport.

With the support of her parents, Janani undertook professional coaching in Oman, but realised that she needed to move back to India so that she could practice with the feathered version of the badminton shuttlecock: Her training in Oman consisted primarily of playing with a plastic one that has a different trajectory and flight pattern.

Janani currently trains with ISports academy in Bangalore – one that is relatively close to her home – and more crucially, has an affiliation to the Prakash Padukone Academy, run by the legendary Indian shuttler who was ranked world number one in 1980, that enables her to train under the best coaches in the country and practice alongside some of India's finest talents.

Her hard work, dedication and talent have translated into a host of steadily growing honours: Janani finished runner-up in the under-17 division of the All India National Championship and was crowned champion at the Karnataka State Championship Doubles in the under-19 category in 2018.

A year later, she was selected by the Badminton Association of India to play at the Khelo India Youth Games, before earning a team gold medal for Karnataka State at the School Games Federation of India's National Championships.

Among many of her other prizes is the gold medal she earned as part of the Karnataka contingent that won the South Zone Interstate Badminton Championships in under-19 level. In 2019, she also won gold in the under-17 category at the All India National Doubles Championships. More gold medals followed at the Yonex Sunrise State Championship in Karnataka, where she won the under-17 girls' doubles, mixed doubles and girls' singles events.

In December 2019, alongside fellow rising star Suhas Venugopal, Janani won the National Badminton Championship when the two were crowned mixed doubles gold medalists in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. Overseas, she and her teammate Tanya Hemanth made it to the last 16 of the Asia Junior Championships 2019, in Surabaya, Indonesia.

Janani's star was slated to continue to rise, when the COVID-19 pandemic brought sports all around the world to a grinding halt.

"The pandemic has taken away plenty of precious time for athletes around the world," said Ananthakumar.

"Any athlete has only a few years at the top, and unless they don't train every day, they lose their sharpness, and to get it back is very difficult.

"The toll taken on all of us is quite heavy: We have in the past made arrangements for her to travel to places like Mexico, as well as to Europe for tournaments, but some of those had to be scrapped because of the COVID pandemic," he added.

"We had made all the arrangements for her to travel, even booked the Schengen visas, but her tournaments were postponed because of the pandemic. We did not book Schengen visas subsequently, because we do not know when those tournaments will be rescheduled, and whether our visas will be valid until then."

Badminton idol

Janani returned to action in spectacular form in 2021, emulating her badminton idol Li Chong Wei when she put her best foot forward at the Yonex State Badminton Championship for selection into the Indian Olympic squads for Paris 2024 and Los Angeles 2028.

She went all the way to the semis of the open women's singles and mixed doubles, while also reaching the finals of the under-19 mixed doubles, and the quarter finals of the women's doubles.

"If you want something hard enough and work hard, it will eventually be yours," said Ananthakumar Rajamani.

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PHOTO: SHABIN E

Sultanate's first IKEA outlet opens doors at Oman Avenues Mall

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Swedish home furnishings giant IKEA, opened doors to its first store in Oman on Sudnay at Oman Avenues Mall. In the run up to the official inauguration, a large crowd of 3,100customers were seen waiting for the store to officially open. Featuring inspirational room setups and creative solutions for visitors with over 9,000 articles across Living Room, Bedroom, Kitchen, Bathroom, and other home furnishing accessories, the store is located in the centre of the city, making it accessible for customers to visit.

The opening event was attended by Omar Al Futtaim, Vice Chairman and CEO of Al-Futtaim Group, His Highness Sayyid Harib bin Thuwaini Al Said, HE NiclasTrouve, Ambassador of Sweden to the Sultanate of Oman, Sheikh Mohammed bin Saud Al Khalili, Sheikh Taher bin Saud Al Khalili, Sheikh Saad bin Suhail Bahwan, Vinod Jayan, Managing Director of Al-Futtaim IKEA, UAE, Egypt, Qatar and Oman along with selected VIP guests and customers who queued up to witness the opening.

Visitors at the opening were welcomed with performances that included Omani national drums, face painting for children and a dedicated photobooth to mark the launch day.

Oman's first IKEA comprises a 394-seat restaurant, directly connected to the shopping centre for easy access and convenience. Featuring self-service kiosks, the IKEA restaurant extends into the mall for more seating options for customers. Customers can shop from the Swedish Food Market for their favourite Scandinavian ingredients and enjoy fresh pastries, cookies and more at the IKEA Bistro. As one of the world's largest food providers, IKEA has taken the next step towards making healthy and sustainable food more affordable and accessible to the many people. The retailer continues to inspire better food choices at its Oman store, with a food and beverage range that includes IKEA's popular plant-based meatballs, ASC-certified salmon, and UTZ-certified coffee.

Hired Omani nationals

IKEA has hired Omani nationals across different departments and positions. The retailer received over 48,000 applications to fill various roles across different departments and positions with a focus on equal opportunities to bring balance into the workplace. All IKEA employees have access to IKEA's development programmes in Oman and across the global IKEA network that helps them to enhance their skills.

Vinod Jayan, Managing Director – Al-Futtaim IKEA UAE, Egypt,Qatar and Oman, said, "We are so delighted to have finally opened doors to IKEA's first store in the Sultanate of Oman. It has been amazing to see the number of visitors at the store today. This is the first milestone in a journey of many more to come in Oman. IKEA brings affordable, comfortable, and sustainable furnishing solutions to its customers. Reflecting our core ethos, we keep our customers at the heart of all that we do and offer various different shopping experiences to suit everyone's needs. We can't wait to become a part of the everyday life of the residents and citizens of Oman."

The newly launched store offers the convenient and contactless Click and Collect service to the Sultanate. This gives customers the option to pick up essential items from the store on the same or the next day, without even leaving their car. The store is also equipped with the competent staff, services and technology to provide customers with everything they need from A-Z. Additionally, the store also offers services such as instore planning tools and picking services, to help customers create and find everything they need to build their dream space.

NEW WILAYATS

Shura representation for two new wilayats in the 10th term

MUSCAT: As per the Royal orders of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal Al Busaidi, Minister of Interior issued a statement regarding the representation of the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdar (the Green Mountain) and the Wilayat of Sinaw at the Shura Council. As per the statement, the Shura council representatives of the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdar in the Governorate of A'Dakhiliyah and the Wilayat of Sinaw in the Governorate of North A'Sharqiyah will be elected during the council's 10th term, scheduled to be held in 2023. -ONA

Sultanate of Oman
Consumer Protection
Authority

FERRARI VEHICLES RECALL CAMPAIGN FOR
(F8 Spider, F8 Tributo) 2021-2022

الفردان للسيارات
Alfardan Motors

Campaign Date: 20/06/ 2022
Campaign Type: Safety Action
Campaign Section: Mechanical / software update Engine Control Node.
Product Description: Ferrari Vehicles

Production Year	Vehicle Model	VIN No.	No. of affected vehicles
2021 -2022	F8 Spider F8 Tributo	ZFF93LMT7M0268569 ZFF93LMT0N0271153 ZFF92LMT6N0272150 ZFF93LMT3N0276766 ZFF93LMT0N0278832	5

Description:
Involves performing a software update of the Engine Control Node (NCM). The update is required to ensure compliance with the UNECE-R83 NEDC emissions cycle.

Action:
A software update must be performed on the Engine Control Node (NCM) ECU to ensure compliance with the UNECE-R83 NEDC emissions cycle.

For More Information:
Owners of affected vehicles may contact Alfardan Motors to book an appointment starting 20/06/2022.

Contact Data:
Alfardan Motors service center, Ghala, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman.
Tel: 24501170 – Mob: 92882926
Sunday to Thursday, From 8:00 AM To 5:00 PM

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Aquamarine blue skies, sun-kissed views, vast peaceful valleys of the Al Hajar mountains, and a plethora of activities to enjoy the season in its truest sen

- Daily à la carte breakfast for two at Juniper Restaurant
- Sunrise yoga and meditation, based on a weekly schedule
- Play Alila and adventure activities, based on a weekly schedule

ملاذ مميز في أليلا الجبل الأخضر لقضاء إقامة رائعة وسط الجمال الخلاب والهواء النقي حيث تكون مغامرة ١٥ درجة أبرد على عتبة داركم.

سماء زرقاء صافية، مناظر مشمسة، وديان شاسعة و هدوء جبال الحجر الساحر ، و العديد من الأنشطة الحضرية للاستمتاع بالموسم كما يجب.

- إفطار يومي من قائمة مختارة لشخصين في مطعم جونيبر
- يوجا الشروق والتأمل ، بناءً على جدول أسبوعي
- عرج أليلا وأنشطة المغامرة، بناءً على جدول أسبوعي

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WORLD OF HYATT

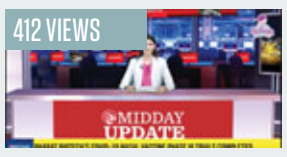
Trending ON SOCIAL MEDIA

MOST READ ON FACEBOOK

Story on IKEA opening its first store in Oman

A story on IKEA opening its first store in Oman reached 51,030 people and had 3,991 link clicks on Facebook.

MOST WATCHED VIDEO ON FACEBOOK



Midday Minute news update

The Midday Minute news update had 412 views and reached 890 people on Facebook.

MOST VIEWED VIDEO ON INSTAGRAM

Morning Minute video on two people missing at sea found

The Morning Minute video on two people missing at sea found after 10 days had 1,245 views and 84 likes on Instagram.

PROMOTIONS AND PLACEMENTS

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. — ONA

HM issues Royal Decree

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Sunday issued Royal decree No. (48/2022) on conducting promotions and placements at the Internal Security Service.

Article (1) promotes Brigadier Mohammed bin Rab'e bin Jam'aan Al Shujaibi to the rank of Major General and appoints him as Assistant to the Head of the Internal Security Service for Operations.

Article (2) promotes Brigadier Saif bin Salman bin Salim Al Shukhaili to the rank of Major General and appoints him as Assistant to the Head of the Internal Security Service for Administrative Support.

Article (3) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue. — ONA

OMAN'S QUOTA OF PILGRIMS RAISED BY 2,000

The Ministry of Hajj and Umrah of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) agreed to increase the Sultanate of Oman's quota for the 1443 AH Hajj season by 2,000 pilgrims, thus bringing the total to 8,338 pilgrims. — ONA

ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY SANDHURST

RMAS Commandant visits MSC

MUSCAT: Maj. Gen Duncan Capps, Commandant of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS) on Sunday visited the Maritime Security Centre (MSC).

He was greeted upon his arrival at the centre by the Acting Head of the MSC.

The guest was briefed on the centre's tactical roles and tasks in managing and leading search, rescue and environment preservation operations. He also toured the centre's facilities and viewed its latest equipment and technologies used in carrying out its national duties.

— ONA

COINCIDING WITH 'WORLD FOOD DAY'

Indian School Bausher hosts competitions for its students

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Indian School Bausher organised yet another amusing event with an objective of 'Care for Health and Nutritive Food', on 14th June 2022 coinciding with 'World Food Day'.

To enlighten the students, the Science department of the school conducted a 'salad-making' competition for Grade 3 to 7 and 'poster making' competition for Grade 8 to 11. The Grade 1 and 2 students made fruit salad. The objective of this activity was to inculcate healthy eating habits and to imbibe a life skill to the little stars of ISB.

The theme of poster making was to 'avoid the wastage of food'. The students displayed various types of vegetable and fruit salads such as watermelon basket salad, combo salad, jumbo salad and many more ingenious salads using commonly available ingredients. The participants explained the specialty of their salad and also the importance of including salad in the regular diet for maintaining good health and keeping diseases at bay.

The participants' creativity, cleanliness, safety, taste, and presentation were the basic criterion for the judgment. Judges exhorted the students to make salad eating a routine habit for enabling them to maintain a healthy life.

The objective behind the 'poster-making' competition was to discover the fervor of imagination and creativity in the students along with understanding the need of the hour ie save food by not wasting it. The whole world is struggling to maintain the standard storage of food for all.

The young students from all the four houses displayed their artistic skills through an array of posters with immense zeal and enthusiasm. It was a great opportunity to witness young creative minds displaying their ideas on paper and the events were overwhelmingly enjoyed by the students. The Science Department successfully achieved the objective by sowing the seed of understanding among students about the 'nutritive value of food' and the importance of zero wastage of food.

MEETING

Sayyid Shihab meets senior US Central Command officer

MUSCAT: His Highness Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs received in his office at Al Murtafa'a Garrison on Sunday Lt. Gen Michael E. Kurilla, Commander of the United States (US) Central Command.

The meeting was attended by Vice Admiral Abdullah Khamis Al Ra'eesi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), some senior officers at the office of the Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, the Charge d'Affairs at the US embassy in Muscat and the embassy's Military Attaché.

-ONA

US CENTRAL COMMAND

Nu'amani receives top US commander

MUSCAT: Gen. Sultan Mohammed Al Nu'amani, Minister of the Royal Office received on Sunday Lt. Gen Michael E. Kurilla, Commander of the United States (US) Central Command.

Lt. Gen Michael expressed his appreciation for Oman's role in enhancing areas of cooperation between the two countries.

— ONA

WORLD

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CDC recommends COVID vaccines for kids under five in US

Biden assured that the vaccines are safe, highly effective, and will give parents the peace of mind

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden on Saturday called the announcement of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to recommend the first COVID 19 vaccines for kids under the age of five, a monumental step forward in the nation's fight against the virus.

"For parents all over the country, this is a day of relief and celebration. As the first country to protect our youngest children with COVID 19 vaccines, my Administration has been planning and preparing for this moment for months, effectively securing doses and offering safe and highly effective mRNA vaccines for all children as young as six months old," he said. He said that with this, every American now is eligible for the protections that COVID 19 vaccines provide and the country is ready to build on the progress of the historic vaccination program that has resulted in over 220 million Americans fully vaccinated, more than 100 million Americans boosted, and over 2 million American lives saved.

He further said that the parents can make appointments for the vaccine at places like paediatricians' offices, children's hospitals, and pharmacies.

"In the coming weeks, every parent who wants a vaccine will be able to get one. As the vaccination program ramps up, Vaccines.gov will be live next week with vaccine availability and appointments increasing throughout the week," he added.

Biden assured that the vaccines are safe, highly effective, and will give parents the peace of mind of knowing their child is protected from the worst outcomes of COVID-19.

"If you are a parent who wants to protect your child, I urge you to speak with your child's paediatrician and make a plan to get your child vaccinated as soon as the vaccine becomes available to you," he said.

CDC Director Rochelle Walensky termed it an important step in the fight against COVID 19 and said that the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines available here in the US can be used safely and effectively in children under five.

She encouraged the parents to get their children vaccinated against COVID 19 and said that with this recent authorization from FDA and recommendation from CDC, nearly 20 million children are now able to get vaccinated against COVID 19.

The US regulators, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorized and recommended the first COVID-19 vaccines for kids under the age of five.

An official statement from the CDC said that the parents and caregivers can now get their children 6 months through 5 years of age vaccinated with the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines to better protect them from COVID-19. All children, including children who have already had COVID-19, should get vaccinated.

The CDC recommended parents and caregivers to sign in personalized and confidential health check-ins via text messages and web surveys for their children, in order to monitor the safety of the vaccines.

With this, they can easily share with CDC how a child feels after getting a COVID 19 vaccine, read the official statement. ANI

Times OF OMAN

Printed and published by: Muscat Media Group
Post Box: 770,
Postal Code: 112

Founder: Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali
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ECONOMIC CRISIS

Sri Lankan govt announces to shut down schools amid power shortage

COLOMBO: Amid the unprecedented economic crisis, the Sri Lanka government on Saturday announced to shut down all the schools for the coming week, a local media reported.

Sri Lanka Education Ministry announced that "all government and government-approved private schools in Colombo city limits, as well as schools in other main cities in the other provinces, will be closed during the next week due to prolonged power cuts," Daily Mirror reported. Sri Lanka Education Ministry Secretary Nihal Ranasinghe asked the schools to conduct online classes and said that the schools at the divisional level will be allowed to conduct classes with less number of students under conditions where transportation difficulties do not affect the students, teachers and principals.

He announced that the Public Utilities Commission of Sri Lanka (PUCSL) has agreed not to have powercuts from 08.00 am to 01.00 pm to facilitate online teaching on weekdays, the Daily Mirror reported.

Since March this year, Sri Lanka, formerly an upper-middle-income country, has been in the grip of an economic crisis unparalleled since the country gained independence in 1948.

Severe protests have sparked political unrest leading to the resignation of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's brother Mahinda Rajapaksa from the Prime Minister's post and the appointment of Ranil Wickremesinghe as the country's Prime Minister in May.

The food inflation in May stood at 57.4 per cent, while shortages of key food items, as well as fuel for cooking, transport, and industry, remain widespread, with ongoing daily power outages.

The economy is bracing for a sharp contraction due to the unavailability of basic inputs for production, an 80 per cent depreciation of the currency since March 2022. ANI

ELECTIONS

France votes in crucial second round of parliamentary elections

PARIS: Voters in France headed to polls on Sunday for the final round of parliamentary elections that could change the face of French politics.

The high-stakes election pitches President Emmanuel Macron's centrist grouping against a newly formed left wing alliance led by Jean-Luc Melenchon.

Voting started at 8 a.m. (0600 GMT), with initial projections expected to come in at 8 p.m. (1800 GMT), right after polls close.

Opinion polls suggest that Macron's coalition Ensemble will receive the most seats in the next National Assembly, but possibly fall short of the 289 seats needed for an absolute majority.

Far-right leader Marine Le Pen is also looking at major gains for her National Rally party, which had just eight seats in the outgoing parliament.

Projections from pollsters show that the far right is likely to see its biggest parliamentary success in decades while the left-green alliance NUPES could find itself becoming the largest opposition group.

Projections show the conservatives likely becoming kingmakers.

How it works?

In the first round of elections, held last weekend, Ensemble was ahead of NUPES.

However, the vote was neck and neck and the left-wing alliance presented a challenge to Macron with 25.66% of popular votes nationwide against Ensemble's 25.75%.

But as per France's electoral system, the outcome will only be decided in Sunday's polls when two top candidates from nearly all 577 constituencies face off.

Macron's agenda at stake

The vote comes on the heels of presidential elections in April that saw Pro-European Macron retaining power for a second term.

The vote is crucial for Macron who is looking to push through his second-term agenda, which includes welfare reform, promised tax cuts and a rise in the retirement age.

But in order to govern with a free hand and maintain full control of his reform agenda the 44-year-old needs to win a majority in the lower house of parliament. DW

UNION FORMATION

Apple store employees vote to form their first US union

WASHINGTON: Workers at an Apple store in the United States have voted to join a trade union, becoming the first retail employees of the tech giant to unionize in the country.

A total of 110 employees at the shop in Towson, Maryland, cast their votes on Saturday to seek entry into the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM), with 65 in favor and 33 against, as per a live count broadcast by the federal agency overseeing the vote.

The employees are demanding a say in deciding on wages, hours and safety measures.

The vote follows a campaign for unionization by a group of employees called AppleCORE (Coalition of Organized Retail Employees).

"We did it Towson! We won our union vote! Thanks to all who worked so hard and all who supported! Now we celebrate... Tomorrow we keep organizing," AppleCORE said on Twitter.

Unionization efforts gaining ground in the US

In a statement, IAM International President Robert Martinez Jr applauded the workers' "courage."

"They made a huge sacrifice for thousands of Apple employees across the nation who had all eyes on this election. I ask Apple CEO Tim Cook to respect the election results and fast-track a first contract for the dedicated IAM CORE Apple employees in Towson," he said.

"This victory shows the growing demand for unions at Apple stores and different industries across our nation."

The union and the workers wanting to organize said they had sent Cook a notice last month that they were seeking to form a union.

Apple is yet to comment on the vote. The Silicon Valley giant has so far tried to discourage attempts to unionize.

Last month, Apple workers in Atlanta withdrew their request to unionize, claiming intimidation.

Saturday's vote at the Maryland Apple store comes as unionization efforts are gaining ground at some of the largest corporations in the US, including Amazon Inc and Starbucks Corp. DW

SAUDI ARABIA

VISION رؤية 2030

HRH CROWN PRINCE MEETS WITH MALAYSIAN DEFENCE MINISTER

HIS ROYAL Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, met with the Malaysian Minister of Defence, Hishammuddin Hussein.

During the meeting, they reviewed aspects of bilateral cooperation between the two countries, especially in the defence fields, and ways to develop it.

The meeting was attended by Prince Turki bin Mohammad bin Fahd bin Abdulaziz, Minister of State and Cabinet Member, Prince Khalid bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, Deputy Minister of Defence, and a number of senior officials from both sides. -SPA

MEETING

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques sends a letter to Emir of Kuwait on strengthening relations

THE CUSTODIAN of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud has sent a letter to Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait, on consolidating and strengthening the solid relations between the two countries.

The letter was handed over by Prince Sultan bin Saad bin Khaled, Saudi Ambassador to Kuwait, during a meeting today with Sheikh Dr. Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, Kuwaiti Foreign Minister. -SPA

WCY

Saudi Arabia ranks second globally in cybersecurity Index

SAUDI ARABIA ranked second globally in the cybersecurity index within the World Competitiveness Yearbook (WCY) for 2022 published by the Switzerland-based International Institute for Management Development (IMD), which is considered one of the most comprehensive reports in the world that seeks to analyze and rank the capabilities of countries to create an empowering and stimulus environment for competitiveness, maintaining and developing it, the paper said.

The National Cybersecurity Authority noted that this achievement is the result of support and empowerment efforts of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and HRH Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, for the cybersecurity sector, which gave it a strong boost on the way towards global entrepreneurship in light of the Saudi Vision 2030, and a representation of the excellence of the "Saudi model in cybersecurity" at the global level and its continuation of realizing qualitative leaps on international digital indexes, where it is considered a leading role model internationally, the paper added.

Al-Yaum newspaper reported in its editorial that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has made unprecedented progress in the field of cybersecurity.-SPA

DISCUSSION

Minister of Commerce, US Secretary of Commerce discuss means to boost economic partnership in Washington

MINISTER OF COMMERCE Dr. Majid bin Abdullah Al-Qasabi held a discussion session with U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina M. Raimondo in Washington, with the participation of Princess Reema bint Bandar bin Sultan, Saudi Ambassador to the USA, over means to enhance economic and commercial relations between the two friendly countries.

Dr. Al-Qasabi, who heads a Saudi delegation on a visit to the United States of America, said: These discussions are part of both countries' keenness to increase bilateral coordination according to a joint action plan that can increase the commercial exchange opportunities in several promising economic sectors, such as: building the green economy, strengthening the role of women in doing business, developing small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and promoting innovation.

Later on, Al-Qasabi held a meeting at the Georgetown University with Professor Jennifer A. Hillman, President of the world trade academy, and several officials at the university in the presence of the Saudi ambassador and Deputy Minister of Commerce and CEO of the National Competitiveness Center Dr. Eiman Al-Mutairi, where the meeting touched on the academy's experiments and other recently launched programs of the academy, such as the center of comprehensive trade and development, in addition to going over cooperation opportunities.

Al-Qasabi also met with President and Chair of the Board of Directors of the Export-Import Bank of the United States (EXIM) Reta Jo Lewis, in the presence of the Saudi ambassador, over means to enhance Saudi-U.S. economic partnership.

The delegates also held bilateral meetings with several U.S. government's officials at the U.S. Department of Commerce with the aim of institutionalizing and enhancing government communication between the two sides at all levels, in addition to reviewing the top reforms implemented to increase the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's competitiveness.

The Saudi delegates and U.S. officials discussed bilateral partnership and promising opportunities in the fields of hydrogen production, waste management, promoting innovations through protecting intellectual property, enhancing the knowledge economy based on artificial intelligence, cloud storage, data flow, developing SMEs, and the role of women and their participation in the economic development.

The delegation included Governor of the Saudi Standards, Metrology and Quality Organization (SASO) Dr. Saad bin Othman Al-Qasabi and CEO of the Saudi Authority for Intellectual Property (SIAP) Dr. Abdulaziz bin Mohammed Al-Suwailem.

The delegation also included representatives from the ministries of energy; environment, water and agriculture; investment; and Small and Medium Enterprises General Authority (Monshaat); Saudi Authority for Data and Artificial Intelligence (SDAIA); General Authority for Foreign Trade; National Competitiveness Center (NCC); Saudi Aramco; and Saudi Investment Recycling Company (SIRC). -SPA

Read online

timesofoman.com

SAUDI ARABIA ADVANCES EIGHT POSITIONS IN THE WORLD COMPETITIVENESS YEARBOOK 2022: IMD

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia continues its upward ascent in the global competitiveness rankings in the just-released World Competitiveness Yearbook 2022, published by Switzerland-based International Institute for Management Development (IMD). Saudi Arabia is ranked as the 24th most competitive economy among the 63 countries covered by the benchmark, up eight positions from a year earlier.»

LONG SCHOOL HOLIDAYS ATTRACT VISITORS TO BEACHES OF UMLUJ IN TABUK

The beaches of Umluj governorate in Tabuk region in the northwestern of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are witnessing a large influx of citizens, residents and visitors to the governorate, which confirms its importance as one of the main tourist destinations in the Kingdom.

Duqm tourist beach in Umluj is one of the most popular beaches visited by sea lovers because it is located on a unique waterfront that combines sandy hills and coral reefs amid the availability of many services that tourists need.»

LONG WEEKEND

'Boulevard Riyadh City' witnesses large turnout over long weekend

THE "BOULEVARD RIYADH CITY" zone has provided entertainment, games and cinema enthusiasts free entry to it coinciding with the long weekend.

The zone was distinguished by providing entertainment options suitable for all age groups, by activating the fields of culture, technology and fashion, through musical theatres, electronic games and international malls, in addition to a set of integrated entertainment activities that suit different segments of society, including citizens, residents and visitors.

Visitors expressed their admiration for the diverse entertainment options, and the unlimited possibilities in the creative mix between entertainment, diverse experiences and unique global tastes, which made the zone of Boulevard Riyadh City as the most diverse entertainment destination, since it includes activities and attractions that cater to different tastes.

The zone receives its visitors and makes use of its designated car parks weekly from Sunday to Wednesday free of charge, while the value of parking on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays is calculated at 10 riyals for the first hour, and 5 riyals for each additional hour.

The Boulevard Riyadh City is one of the most prominent Saudi entertainment destinations, as it includes a set of international cafes, restaurants with diverse tastes, a number of gardens and theaters, in addition to the dancing fountain.

Visitors can access various entertainment events through modern entrances and gates. -SPA

SPORTS

Max Verstappen claims Canadian GP pole ahead of sensational Alonso

The reigning world champion was more than six tenths clear of surprise front-row star Fernando Alonso

CANADIAN GRAND PRIX: Lapping on intermediate tyres on the drying Circuit Gilles Villeneuve, Verstappen clocked a time of 1m 21.299s, leaving him a full 0.645s clear of the pack.

MONTREAL: Red Bull's Max Verstappen dominated a wet/drying qualifying for the 2022 FIA Formula 1 Canadian Grand Prix to take his second pole position of the season on Saturday.

The reigning world champion was more than six tenths clear of surprise front-row star Fernando Alonso of Alpine and third-placed Carlos Sainz of Ferrari. Lapping on intermediate tyres on the drying Circuit Gilles Villeneuve, Verstappen clocked a time of 1m 21.299s, leaving him a full 0.645s clear of the pack, headed by Alonso - who will make his first front row start since taking pole in Germany 10 years ago.

Completing the top three was the Ferrari's Carlos Sainz, whose team mate Charles Leclerc is set to start P19 after taking on new power unit elements. Lewis Hamilton showed his wet weather prowess to take P4, ahead of a fine performance for the Haas drivers Kevin Magnussen and Mick Schumacher, sharing the third row in P5 and P6.

Esteban Ocon claimed P7 ahead of the second Mercedes of George Russell - an attempt to set a lap on slicks in the closing stages coming to nought for the Englishman, as he spun at Turn 2 - with Daniel Ricciardo heading Zhou Guanyu. The Chinese driver was making his first ever Q3 appearance, but will be investigated after the session for an infringement at Turn 14.

Valtteri Bottas was 11th, ahead of the Williams of Alex Albon, then Sergio Perez - who crashed his Red Bull out of Q2, bringing out red flags - ahead of Lando Norris, the Briton experiencing a power unit issue.

Leclerc was P15, but will fall back with his penalty, promoting Pierre Gasly, Sebastian Vettel, Lance Stroll and Nicholas Latifi, who all dropped out in Q1.

Yuki Tsunoda will bring up the rear of the field, having also taken engine penalties for power unit changes. ANI

PREMIER LEAGUE

Eddie Nketiah extends stay with Arsenal

LONDON: Eddie Nketiah is extending his stay with Arsenal after agreeing to a new long-term contract with the Premier League club.

Eddie has been with the Gunners since he was 14, making 92 first-team appearances and scoring 23 goals since his first-team debut in 2017. The 22-year-old made the transition from Hale End to London Colney during a highly successful youth career for both club and country, and marked his home debut with two goals against Norwich City in the Carabao Cup in 2017.

Eddie also featured in the teams that won the FA Cup and Community Shield in 2020 and finished the recent 2021/22 season in fine form, starting in the last eight league games for Arsenal and scoring five goals.

Eddie is the England Under-21s all-time top scorer with 16 goals in 17 appearances and captained the side that won the 2021 European Under-21 Championships.

Manager Mikel Arteta, said: "I'm delighted Eddie is staying with us. He represents what we are all about and all the values of the club. We are very happy that he has extended his contract and now we have to get to work and continue to develop the great talent and person that we have in him."

Technical Director Edu, added: "The foundations of this squad are built on young talent and in particular those who have come through our Academy system. Eddie was released by another club as a young man but has always shown he has the attitude as well as the ability to become a top player. The fact he's signed a new contract is an important part of our squad planning for next season and we're all delighted."

Eddie will wear the number 14 shirt from next season, having previously worn the number 30. The new contract is subject to the completion of regulatory processes. ANI

TENNIS

Daniil Medvedev enters Halle Open final, to face Hurkacz

HALLE: World No. 1 Daniil Medvedev reached the final of the 2022 Halle Open after defeating home favourite Oscar Otte on Saturday.

Medvedev is currently on an impressive grass-court form as the top seed powered past Otte to reach his second consecutive ATP Tour final. The World No. 1 fended off a set point in the opening set before rallying to a 7-6(3), 6-3 semi-final victory in his first ATP meeting with World No. 51 Otte.

It is a second tour-level final for Medvedev in as many weeks on the grass, after he appeared in the championship match in 's-Hertogenbosch just seven days ago.

Last year in Halle, Medevedev fell in the first round to another German, Jan-Lennard Struff, on tournament debut. Since that defeat, the World No. 1 is 14-2 on grass, a tally which includes a title run at the 2021 Mallorca Championships.

"I didn't play well in Halle last year, so I'm happy that this year I managed to raise my level," said Medvedev after his semi-final victory.

"As I've always said, I love playing on grass, so I'm happy to show to myself that I'm capable of being in the final of one of the greatest tournaments, especially on grass, and of course, I'm looking forward to tomorrow."

In Sunday's final, Medvedev will face fifth seed Hubert Hurkacz, who clawed past wild card Nick Kyrgios in the second semi-final of the day.

Despite his run-in Halle coming to an end, Otte will be pleased with his performance this week in his homeland. The 28-year-old has now reached three tour-level semi-finals in 2022, and his latest run lifts him to No. 37 in the ATP Live Rankings. ANI

FOOTBALL

Liverpool signs Ramsay as backup right back

LIVERPOOL: Liverpool today signed Scotland under-21 defender Calvin Ramsay from Aberdeen as a backup to right back Trent Alexander-Arnold.

The 18-year-old Ramsay, who hasn't played for Scotland's senior team, has joined for a reported fee of 4.2 million pounds ($5.15 million).

He only made his senior debut for Aberdeen in March last year and played 39 games for the team in Scotland's top division, making nine assists and scoring one goal.

Ramsay is Liverpool's third signing of the offseason following the arrival of Uruguay striker Darwin Nunez and 19-year-old forward Fabio Carvalho. ONA

LIGUE DE FOOTBALL PROFESSIONNEL

2022-2023 Ligue 1 fixtures unveiled

PARIS: The LFP (Ligue de Football Professionnel) have released the complete schedule of all 38 rounds of Ligue 1 and Ligue 2 for the 2022-23 season.

Ligue 1 2022-23 campaign will start on the weekend of 5, 6 and 7 August 2022 and will end on June 3, 2023, with the Round 38 final-day multiplex. PSG chasing their 11th French league title will begin their quest for another championship away from home, with a trip to Clermont on the opening day of the season.

In their first outing at the Parc des Princes on Matchday 2, the capital club will host Montpellier, whilst the first big home game will be played on Matchday 4, when we entertain Monaco.

To get the ball rolling, the fixture list for Round 1 is: Angers SCO vs FC Nantes, Clermont Foot 63 vs Paris Saint-Germain, LOSC Lille vs AJ Auxerre, Montpellier Herault SC vs ESTAC Troyes, Olympique Lyonnais vs AC Ajaccio, Olympique de Marseille vs Stade de Reims, RC Lens vs Stade Brestois 29, RC Strasbourg Alsace vs AS Monaco, Stade Rennais FC vs FC Lorient, and Toulouse FC vs OGC Nice.

Scheduled for the weekend of 11, 12 and 13 November 2022, Ligue 1 Round 15 will be the last round before the start of the international break for the 2022

FIFA World Cup.

Ligue 1 Round 16 will mark the resumption of the league after the 2022 FIFA World Cup. It will take place on December 28. Round 17 will take place in the form of a completely new French-style boxing day on January 1 and 2, 2023.

On January 1, four matches will be shown in multiplex at 15:00, one match will be scheduled at 17:00 and another will be played in the evening at 20:45. On 2 January, the programme will be broken down into four matches kicking off respectively at 15:00, 17:00, 19:00 and 21:00.

Finally, in this particular context of the resumption of the season, Round 19 - scheduled for the weekend of 14 and 15 January - will be structured as a classic matchday and no longer in the form of a multiplex. ANI

BADMINTON

Tai Tzu claims badminton women's singles title at Indonesia Open

JAKARTA: The second-seed Tai Tzu Ying defeated Asian champion Wang Zhi Yi of China on Sunday in Jakarta to claim the women's singles title at the badminton's Indonesia Open 2022.

Chinese Taipei's Olympic silver medallist narrowly lost the first game (21-23) but immediately reacted by taking the second period 21-6. Then Tai, who's going to turn 28 on Monday, took control of the decider and saw off Wang 21-15 to take her second consecutive title in the BWF World Tour after the Thailand Open.

The final day started with the success of China's Zheng Si Wei and Huang Ya Qiong, who earned the mixed doubles title after seeing off Watanabe Yuta and Higashino Arisa of Japan in two games (21-14, 21-16).

In the semi-final clash, Tai Tzu Ying saw off Tokyo 2020 gold medallist Chen Yu Fei. The second seed of the tournament lost the first game in 13 minutes but then tied the score in a thrilling second set (33') after saving five match points (26-24).

Tai, who had lost to Chen in the last Olympic final, then comfortably won the decide.

Later in the day, men's world number one Viktor Axelsen will clash with Zhao Jun Peng for the Super 1000 title. The summit clash against the Chinese shuttler will see the world No.1 in his fourth final of the season.

The Olympic champion saw off Lee Zii Jia in a dramatic semi-final to enter the summit clash of Indonesia Open 2022.

The Dane veered close to only his second defeat of the year from 30 matches, but the focus was unrelenting even at the end of a contest that had slipped out of his grasp. Axelsen narrowly lost the opening game (19-21) but forced a decider after taking the second 21-11. In the third game, Axelsen was leading 20-16 until Lee made a stunning comeback with five straight points.

However, the Dane held his nerve and won 23-21 after one hour and 10 minutes. ANI

CRICKET

Hardik Pandya reveals MS Dhoni's advice helped his game

RAJKOT: India all-rounder Hardik Pandya, who scored 46 runs in the fourth T20I against South Africa, revealed MS Dhoni's advice early on in his career which has helped him become a better player. Hardik has recently made a comeback into the India squad during the T20I series against South Africa, making some vital contributions. His inclusion came on the back of a sensational IPL with the Gujarat Titans, where he proved his form and fitness, leading them to the title. Pandya scored 487 runs in the IPL while also chipping in with 8 wickets. "For me, genuinely nothing changes because I play (according to the) situation, I play the symbol which is there on my chest. The only thing which I obviously want to get better with time is how smoothly and frequently I keep doing the things I did for Gujarat Titans and for India," Hardik told fellow teammate Dinesh Karthik. ANI

MSX INDEX ENDS LOWER

The MSX index closed at 4,120.55 points, down by 0.05 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.6 per cent at 455.69 points. HSBC Bank Oman, up 9.74 per cent, was the top gainer while, Muscat Desalination, down 8.33 per cent, was the top loser.

FDI in Oman soars by 19% to over OMR17bn

With an investment of OMR8.49bn, the UK became the top investor in Oman

MUSCAT: The volume of foreign direct investment (FDI) in Oman rose by 19 per cent to reach more than OMR17 billion at the end of the first quarter of 2022 compared to the same period in 2021.

"The volume of FDI at the end of the first quarter of this year reached OMR17.94 billion compared to the same period in 2021," according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The United Kingdom came at the forefront in FDI into the Sultanate of Oman, with total investments amounting to OMR8.49 billion, followed by the United States of America at OMR2.66 billion and by the United Arab Emirates at OMR1.23 billion.

The oil and gas sector accounted for the largest proportion of foreign direct investments at OMR11.80 billion in the first quarter of 2022, a growth of 21.8 per cent compared to the same period in 2021, the NCSI report added.

This was followed by the manufacturing sector attracting FDI amounting to OMR1.60 billion in 2022, a decrease of about 5.6 per cent compared to the same period in 2021. The financial sector in the first quarter of 2022 attracted FDI worth OMR1.48 billion compared to the same period in 2021. - ONA

CURRENT FINANCIAL YEAR

India's domestic coal production rises by 28%

NEW DELHI: After a record-breaking coal production of 777 million tonnes (MT) in 2021-22, domestic coal production continues to witness an increasing trend in the current financial year as well.

The total domestic coal production in 2022-23, as of May 31, 2022, is 137.85 MT, which is 28.6 per cent more as compared to the production of 104.83 MT in the same period of last year.

This trend is being maintained in June, 2022 also, the Ministry of Coal said. The coal production by Coal India Ltd (CIL) is 28 per cent more than the production in the same period of the previous year (as of June 16, 2022). The domestic coal production target for the current financial year is 911 MT which is 17.2 per cent more than the previous year.

The coal imports for blending by the Domestic Coal Based (DCB) power plants have dropped to 8.11 MT in the year 2021-22 which has been the lowest coal import in the last eight years. This was possible solely due to the robust coal supply from domestic sources and increased domestic coal production.

The Imported Coal Based (ICB) power plants had imported coal of more than 45 MT per year from 2016-17 to 2019-20. However, coal import by the ICB power plants dropped to the lowest level of 18.89 MT in 2021-22 and the generation from these plants also dropped to 39.82 billion units (BU) in the year 2021-22 as compared to the 100+ BU which these plants have been generating since quite some time.

This year too their generation remains very low due to high price of imported coal.

In the last five years, the coal-based power generation has grown at a CAGR of 1.82 per cent whereas the domestic coal supply to power sector had grown at a CAGR of 3.26 per cent. Thus, coal supply to power sector has outpaced the growth in coal-based power generation and continues to do so in the present year too.

In the year 2021-22, coal supply from CIL to the DCB power plants has been more than the supply required to be made under Fuel Supply Agreement (FSA). CIL had supplied 540 MT coal, out of which 483 MT coal was supplied against FSA.

This coal was sufficient for the power plants to run at 69 per cent PLF whereas the DCB power plants operated at a PLF of only 61.3 per cent in the year 2021-22. In the year 2022-23, as per FSA, CIL was supposed to supply 120.67 MT coal to its linked power plants (at 85 per cent PLF) whereas CIL had supplied 129.58 MT coal (till 16.06.22).

This supply is 7.4 per cent more than the supply required by the plants if they operate at 85 per cent PLF. The plants have operated at about 70 per cent PLF and the CIL coal supply to its FSA-linked plants is 30.4 per cent more than their requirement.

With increased production, the rake supply from CIL to the power sector has also been at an all-time high. The rake loading to power sector increased from 215.8 rakes per day in 2020-21 to 271.9 rakes per day in 2021-22, registering a growth of 26 per cent. -ANI

SUSTAINABLE APPROACH

Al Mouj Muscat creates employment and boosts key skills of workforce

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Since its inception, Al Mouj Muscat has generated 2,200 permanent jobs and through its Al Mouj Muscat Impact campaign has shown how talented Omanis and women are integral to the success of the Integrated Tourism Complex's (ITC) diverse workforce, with its sustainable approach to job creation and training set to have a major impact on the future generation of business leaders in the country.

Al Mouj Muscat is a partnership between Majid Al Futtaim, Omran and Tanmia and is in line with the targets as set out in Oman's 2040 Vision. The leading lifestyle destination also draws on knowledge-sharing and skills development from Majid Al Futtaim's expertise in retail, leisure, hospitality, and communities. As well as a joint venture partner at Al Mouj, the UAE-based organisation has invested in Oman since 2001 and is committed to contributing to the development of the Sultanate's economy, people and culture.

Al Mouj Muscat is committed to boosting employment opportunities as well as furthering the objectives of Omanisation. Currently, 71 per cent of the lifestyle and leisure destination employees are Omani, a much higher figure than the 45 per cent goal mandated by the government for the real estate sector. In addition, 40 per cent of its senior roles are held by women.

Developing employment opportunities and enhancing the breadth and depth of Omani talent has been a key objective since Al Mouj Muscat was established in 2006. To date, it has created 2,200 permanent jobs, a figure which will rise to an expected 5,500 permanent roles following project completion. As well as long-term employment, Oman's leading ITC is highly focused on providing rewarding career paths.

The nurturing of individuals through development and training is central to Al Mouj Muscat's approach which includes company-wide training programmes and internships for nationals with linked tangible targets.

With processes in place to develop their abilities and further careers, Al Mouj Muscat's Head of Customer Experience, Harwa Al Lawati believes that Al Mouj is cultivating tomorrow's leaders for the benefit of the nation.

"Al Mouj Muscat provides every opportunity to build skills and capabilities that will serve both individuals and organisations over the long-term. I have experienced for myself that it believes in and invests in Omani talent, and, as one of the 40 per cent of women who hold leadership positions, I'm proud to serve a company that is dedicated to creating a positive impact for people, community and our country."

Al Mouj Muscat's CEO, Nasser bin Masoud Al Sheibani added: "Al Mouj Muscat is committed to our national interests at every level. We have incredibly talented individuals working across highly diverse roles and our management systems support us to measure and improve performance.

"It is a holistic way of creating efficiencies and opportunities to advance that will ensure a continuous pipeline of exceptional talent and which will have an impact far beyond our organisation. We can be confident this generation will go on to use their impressive skills to lead organisations and ensure a bright and prosperous future for our nation."

Al Mouj Muscat has delivered significant socio-economic benefits beyond the growth of employment opportunities and includes a significant impact on growth in the tourism sector, development, and foreign direct investment by providing an environment where Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises can flourish.

FEDERAL RESERVE

Fed's Waller backs another big rate hike for 'all in' inflation fight

WASHINGTON: Federal Reserve Governor Christopher Waller on Saturday became the latest US central banker to pledge a whatever-it-takes approach to fight inflation, three days after the Fed raised interest rates by three-quarters of a percentage point and signalled more hikes to come.

"If the data comes in as I expect, I will support a similar-sized move at our July meeting," Waller told a Society for Computational Economics conference in Dallas. "The Fed is 'all in' on re-establishing price stability."

A surge in inflation, which is at its highest level in 40 years, has made hawks of nearly all Fed policymakers, only one of whom dissented earlier this week against what was the central bank's biggest rate increase in more than a quarter of a century, Reuters reports.

Policymakers currently expect to raise the Fed's benchmark overnight interest rate, now in a range of 1.50 per cent-1.75 per cent, to at least 3.4 per cent in the next six months.

A year ago, the majority thought the rate would need to stay near zero until 2023.

On Friday, the Fed called its fight against inflation "unconditional," and Atlanta Fed President Raphael Bostic, who had been its most dovish policymaker, declared "we'll do whatever it takes" to bring inflation back down to the central bank's 2 per cent target.

Inflation, as measured by the Personal Consumption Expenditures Price Index, is running at more than three times that level.

"That's the most important thing I'm worried about," Waller said on Saturday, adding that moving rates quickly up to the neutral level and into the restrictive territory is necessary to slow demand and put a check on inflation. That monetary tightening will likely drive unemployment, now at 3.6 per cent, to between 4 per cent and 4.25 per cent, or possibly higher, Waller said, "but my goal is just to slow the economy." Rising worries that Fed rate hikes will cause a recession, he said, "are a bit overblown."

Waller also said there are limits to how fast the Fed can move: markets would have a "heart attack" if the central bank raised rates by a full percentage point in a single move.

Risk of overshoot

Speaking at the same event in Dallas, former Fed Vice Chair Donald Kohn blamed high inflation in part on a decision to delay the tightening of policy that he traced to a framework the US central bank adopted in 2020. That framework ruled out raising rates to preempt inflation triggered by falling unemployment.

Waller, however, argued that it was the Fed's overly specific promises about when it would end its massive asset purchases, implemented in 2020 to shelter the economy from pandemic-related fallout, that was at fault. Structural changes to the economy mean there is a "decent chance" the Fed will in the future need to again slash its policy rate to zero and buy bonds to fight even a typical recession, he said. -BNA

Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of labor

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

The Internal Tender Committee at the Ministry of Labour announces the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender title	Last date for tender purchase online	Bid submission date
08/2022	Providing e-mail protection program licenses to the Ministry of Labor	Wednesday 29/06/2022 at 2:00 pm	Monday 04/07/2022 at 10 a.m.

- Specialized establishments may obtain the tender's documents online through the following link, starting from Monday 20/06/2022 at 07:30 am: /https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om
- Each bid shall enclose a bank guarantee for 1% of the total bid value issued by a local bank addressed to the Ministry of Labour and valid for 90 days from the date of bid submission.
- Bids shall be submitted online along with a copy of the bank guarantee. The original bank guarantee shall be submitted when requested by the Ministry.
- Bids shall be opened at 11:00 am on Monday 04/07/2022

(The Ministry shall not be bound to accept the lowest or any other bid)

labour_OMAN

MARKET

MSX index ends lower

HSBC Bank Oman, up 9.74 per cent, was the top gainer while, Muscat Desalination, down 8.33 per cent, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,120.55 points, down by 0.05 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.6 per cent at 455.69 points. HSBC Bank Oman, up 9.74 per cent, was the top gainer while, Muscat Desalination, down 8.33 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of HSBC Bank Oman were the most active in terms of the number of shares traded while Oman Telecom were the most active in terms of turnover.

A total number of 214 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating a turnover of OMR0.77 million, with more than 4.3 million shares changing hands. Out of 38 traded securities, 3 advanced, 27 declined, and 8 remained unchanged. At the session close, foreign investors were net sellers for OMR323,000 while domestic investors were net buyers for OMR18,000, followed by GCC & Arab investors for OMR305,000 worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 6,609.28 points, up 0.26 per cent. HSBC Bank Oman was the only gainer for today up by 9.74 per cent. Prices of United Finance, Oman Arab Bank, Al Sharqia Investment, Taageer Finance and Oman & Emirates Investment were down by 5.38 per cent, 4.8 per cent, 3.23 per cent, 2.33 per cent and 2.22 per cent respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,806.98 points, down 0.76 per cent. There were no gainers for the day. Prices of Voltamp Energy, Construction Materials, Oman Fisheries, Raysut Cement and National Aluminium were down by 6.14 per cent, 3.61 per cent, 2.61 per cent, 2.53 per cent and 2.3 per cent respectively.

Services Index was down by 0.95 per cent before closing at 1,576.78 points. SMN Power Holding was the only gainer for the day up by 2.22 per cent. Prices of Muscat Desalination, Musandam Power, OIFC, Phoenix Power and Al Suwadi Power were down by 8.33 per cent, 3.75 per cent, 3.57 per cent, 2 per cent and 2 per cent respectively. — **United Securities**

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	4,136.27	4,120.55	4,120.55	4,122.51	-1.97	-0.05
FINANCIAL INDEX	6,649.40	6,609.27	6,609.27	6,592.12	17.15	0.26
Industry Index	5,846.98	5,806.98	5,806.98	5,851.55	-44.58	-0.76
Services Index	1,591.30	1,576.78	1,576.78	1,591.83	-15.05	-0.95
MSX Shariah Index	458.04	455.21	455.69	458.42	-2.73	-0.60
MSX TR INDEX	5,212.49	5,192.68	5,192.68	5,194.52	-1.84	-0.04
FINANCIAL TR IDX	6,951.97	6,910.02	6,910.02	6,892.09	17.94	0.26
SERVICES TR IDX	1,645.37	1,630.35	1,630.35	1,645.92	-15.56	-0.95
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	6,068.19	6,026.66	6,026.66	6,072.93	-46.26	-0.76

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
4,308,583	770,442	214	22,308,725,428	3	27	8	38

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR SUNDAY, JUNE 19

REGULAR MARKET

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RO)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	3,500	1,071	1	0.306	0.306	0.306	0.306	0.306	0.000	0.000	0.306	0.302	0.306	0.100	204,519,820
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	322,376	281,112	1	0.872	0.872	0.872	0.872	0.872	0.000	0.000	0.872	0.860	0.876	0.100	654,000,000
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SER	85,435	36,224	1	0.424	0.424	0.424	0.424	0.424	0.000	0.000	0.424	0.410	0.420	0.100	100,237,840
OM0000007407	DHOFAR GENERATING	20,000	1,200	1	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.000	0.000	0.060	0.000	0.000	0.100	13,334,400
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	50,000	10,300	2	0.206	0.206	0.206	0.206	0.207	-0.001	-0.483	0.206	0.187	0.210	0.100	334,944,949
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	28,973	15,453	3	0.534	0.534	0.530	0.530	0.534	-0.004	-0.749	0.530	0.530	0.534	0.100	1,989,195,221
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	51,622	26,324	5	0.510	0.510	0.508	0.508	0.512	-0.004	-0.781	0.508	0.508	0.508	0.100	27,940,000
OM0000003398	SOHAR INT. BANK	989,171	103,700	56	0.105	0.105	0.104	0.104	0.105	-0.001	-0.952	0.104	0.102	0.104	0.100	310,966,478
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PROD.	1,400	490	1	0.350	0.350	0.350	0.350	0.354	-0.004	-1.130	0.350	0.350	0.356	0.100	43,714,286
OM0000003281	TAAGEER FINANCE	179,553	15,214	8	0.085	0.085	0.084	0.084	0.086	-0.002	-2.326	0.084	0.084	0.084	0.100	21,727,591
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIA INV.	10,000	900	2	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.093	-0.003	-3.226	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.100	8,100,000
OM0000001525	OMAN INVST& FIN.	58,400	7,884	4	0.135	0.135	0.135	0.135	0.140	-0.005	-3.571	0.135	0.135	0.139	0.100	31,995,000
Total		12	1,800,430	499,872												85

Parallel Market

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RO)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
OM0000001517	HSBC BANK OMAN	1,264,972	153,870	29	0.117	0.124	0.117	0.124	0.113	0.011	9.735	0.124	0.124	0.124	0.100	248,038,786
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	22,900	1,053	1	0.046	0.046	0.046	0.046	0.045	0.001	2.222	0.046	0.042	0.046	0.100	9,183,238
OM0000002341	OMAN CHLORINE	100	32	1	0.318	0.318	0.318	0.318	0.318	0.000	0.000	0.318	0.318	0.000	0.100	21,656,964
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	37,596	1,805	3	0.048	0.048	0.048	0.048	0.048	0.000	0.000	0.048	0.048	0.048	0.100	32,394,597
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	1,100	77	2	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.000	0.000	0.070	0.065	0.070	0.100	32,983,047
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEER.	35,508	3,703	4	0.105	0.105	0.104	0.104	0.105	-0.001	-0.952	0.104	0.104	0.110	0.100	21,110,590
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	485,924	45,103	17	0.093	0.094	0.092	0.093	0.094	-0.001	-1.064	0.093	0.092	0.093	0.100	16,275,000
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	185,000	15,650	6	0.085	0.085	0.084	0.084	0.085	-0.001	-1.176	0.084	0.084	0.092	0.100	16,800,000
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	40,000	2,680	2	0.067	0.067	0.067	0.067	0.068	-0.001	-1.471	0.067	0.065	0.067	0.100	20,578,804
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	118,691	5,816	7	0.049	0.049	0.049	0.049	0.050	-0.001	-2.000	0.049	0.048	0.051	0.100	35,005,911
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	3,863	189	2	0.049	0.049	0.049	0.049	0.050	-0.001	-2.000	0.049	0.049	0.050	0.100	71,667,472
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	76,384	7,173	14	0.094	0.094	0.093	0.093	0.095	-0.002	-2.105	0.093	0.090	0.095	0.100	208,036,632
OM0000001806	MUSCAT INSURANCE	7,000	3,220	1	0.460	0.460	0.460	0.460	0.470	-0.010	-2.128	0.460	0.440	0.460	1.000	5,071,521
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	31,370	2,761	5	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.090	-0.002	-2.222	0.088	0.085	0.095	0.100	10,725,000
OM0000001319	ALUMINIUM PROD.	24,525	2,085	3	0.085	0.085	0.085	0.085	0.087	-0.002	-2.299	0.085	0.084	0.090	0.100	2,853,573
OM0000001418	RAYSUT CEMENT	3,300	508	2	0.154	0.154	0.154	0.154	0.158	-0.004	-2.532	0.154	0.152	0.160	0.100	30,800,000
OM0000001566	OMAN FISHERIES	5,000	560	1	0.112	0.112	0.112	0.112	0.115	-0.003	-2.609	0.112	0.104	0.112	0.100	20,392,781
OM0000001368	CONSTRUCTION M.	30,882	2,471	6	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.083	-0.003	-3.614	0.080	0.078	0.082	0.100	5,000,000
OM0000007811	MUSANDAM POWER	2,212	681	1	0.308	0.308	0.308	0.308	0.320	-0.012	-3.750	0.308	0.308	0.316	0.100	21,680,120
OM0000005260	OMAN ARAB BANK	55,914	6,654	8	0.119	0.119	0.119	0.119	0.125	-0.006	-4.800	0.119	0.117	0.119	0.100	198,659,790
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	21,600	1,940	2	0.090	0.090	0.088	0.088	0.093	-0.005	-5.376	0.088	0.088	0.090	0.100	30,724,708
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	22,748	2,434	6	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.114	-0.007	-6.140	0.107	0.107	0.125	0.100	8,710,094
OM0000007084	MCT DESALINATE	1,282	141	1	0.110	0.110	0.110	0.110	0.120	-0.010	-8.333	0.110	0.111	0.120	0.100	17,110,544
Total		23	2,477,871	260,604												124

RUSSIAN ENERGY GIANT

Gazprom cuts gas supplies to Italy, many EU countries

ROME: Italy's energy firm Eni said on Friday that Russian energy giant Gazprom was reducing its gas supplies to Italy by 50 per cent.

In recent weeks, Moscow has reduced or cut off gas deliveries to several European Union countries, which have imposed sanctions on Russia over its invasion of Ukraine.

French network operator GRTgaz also said on Friday that France has not received any Russian gas via Germany since May 15, citing the effects of reduced Russian supply.

Russian officials blamed maintenance issues at the Nord Stream 1 pipeline from Russia to Germany.

Italy gets around 40 per cent of its imported gas from Russia, though it is trying to reduce this reliance. France gets around 17 per cent of its gas from Russia through network connections with Germany.

Italy accuses Gazprom of 'lies'

Previously this week, Gazprom's gas deliveries to Italy had already been reduced — 15 per cent on Wednesday and 35 per cent on Thursday. Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi, who was on a visit to Kyiv with German and French leaders, rejected Gazprom's "technical reasons" as an excuse.

"Both Germany and us, and others, believe these are lies. In reality they are making a political use of gas like they are using grain for political use," Draghi said at a news conference in Kyiv with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and French President Emmanuel Macron.

Less Russian gas deliveries to Europe

Gazprom cut deliveries to Germany by more than 60 per cent this week. The Russian state-controlled company said that supply reductions via the undersea Nord Stream 1 pipeline were due to delays in repair work by the German company Siemens.

But Germany claimed that Gazprom's move was politically motivated. Nord Stream 1 is the main pipeline of Russian gas to Europe after gas flows through Ukraine were reduced amid the war.

On Thursday, EU Economy Commissioner Paolo Gentiloni warned that the bloc's economy could enter into a recession if Russian gas supplies stop, but stressed that this was not the case so far. -DW

FULLY-INTEGRATED SMART LOGISTICS PARK

Saudi Ports Authority signs new pact to build logistics park in Jeddah Islamic Port

JEDDAH: The Saudi Ports Authority (Mawani), with the attendance of the Minister of Transport and Logistic Services and Chairman of Mawani Eng. Saleh Al Jasser, signed an agreement with DP World to establish a new fully-integrated smart logistics park in Jeddah Islamic Port with over SAR 500 million worth of investment from the company, making it the fifth deal following a series of agreements signed with local and global leading companies in maritime transport and logistics including: (Maersk, CMA CGM, LogiPoint, and Bahri).

The agreement was signed by President of the Saudi Ports Authority Omar bin Talal Hariri and Group Chairman and CEO of DP World and Sultan Ahmed Bin Sulayem, with the attendance of several leaders from the transport and logistics entity.

Eng. Al-Jasser emphasised that signing this agreement aligns with the National Transport and Logistics Strategy (NTLS) objectives of positioning Saudi Arabia as a global logistics hub, and supports the growth of the logistic services industry on the Red Sea coast.

"With the support from the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and HRH the Crown Prince, the transport and logistics services entity continues to achieve the development objectives in line with Saudi Vision 2030, by establishing logistics parks that enable the transport and supply chains, following a thorough developmental plan, and strengthening the strategic partnership with the private sector, aiming to increase the attractiveness of investment opportunities in Saudi ports and the maritime transport sector," the minister added, as he commended the remarkable achievement by Saudi ports in the Container Port Performance Index 2021.

He pointed out how the Saudi ports have become a prominent location on the global maritime transport map, as they have accomplished a lot of operational and developmental achievements, which contribute to reaching developmental and economic sustainability, enabling trade and investment, along with strengthening the economic growth, all of which will help achieve the strategic objectives and the integration with a transport entity, to position the Kingdom as an eminent logistics hub internationally.

For his part, Hariri stated that the agreement aims to build a logistics park over a total area of 415,000 m2, with a capacity of 250,000 TEU and 100,000 m2 of warehouses area, as it will provide advanced and eco-friendly e-services, and integrate the operations of the south container terminal with the logistics park, which is part of the authority's continuous efforts of providing integrated logistics parks to enhance the competitiveness of Jeddah Islamic Port, and increase the volumes of transhipment cargoes, in line with the objectives of NTLS.

As he added that this partnership will connect the port's operations with the logistics park, which will allow for providing integrated logistics services with a high level of operational efficiency, as well as expanding cooperation with the largest logistic services providers, and strengthen the reexports operations, to deliver the best services for customers and investors.

Whereas Group Chairman and CEO of DP World commented: "We are proud and honoured to contribute effectively towards the achievement of Saudi Vision 2030, which includes the development of a prosperous and sustainable maritime transportation ecosystem that supports the Kingdom's socio-economic ambitions and consolidates its status as a global logistics hub.

"On this occasion, we reiterate our commitment to investing in the modernisation of this facility by providing the highest standards of logistics services and technology-enabled trade solutions. We are confident that today's milestone will contribute to increasing efficiency and productivity levels and creating new jobs".

"We are committed to enhancing the role and the status of Jeddah's Islamic port, which is strategically located on the Red Sea and has historically played a pivotal role in facilitating the movement of trade between the East and the West," Bin Sulayem added. -SPA

LIFESTYLE

COLOURFUL URBAN ENVIRONMENTS, EVEN IN VIRTUAL REALITY, BOOSTS HAPPINESS

Colourful patterns were found to increase alertness, fascination and curiosity. The study illustrates the potential of simple interventions to improve the lives of urbanites, and also the power of virtual reality to test such interventions.

Researchers studying effects of vegetation and colourful patterns in an urban setting used virtual reality to discover that green vegetation caused volunteers to walk more slowly while also raising their heart rate, which led to a pleasurable experience.

The findings of this new research have been published in the journal 'Frontiers in Virtual Reality'.

Colourful patterns were found to increase alertness, fascination and curiosity. The study illustrates the potential of simple interventions to improve the lives of urbanites, and also the power of virtual reality to test such interventions.

Crowded streets, noise and drab grey buildings can lead to stress and fatigue. In short, cities can be bad for your health and emotional wellbeing. An antidote to such problems may lie in nature, which can have calming and restorative effects. After all, humans evolved in natural surroundings, and city life is a relatively new phenomenon.

One way to make cities more hospitable may be to introduce patches of vegetation or colourful patterns. However, installing plants or covering buildings in paint to test these approaches is expensive and inconvenient. Moreover, studying these phenomena outdoors can be tricky, as a huge array of factors can affect the final results.

"Measuring pleasure and motivation in natural settings is difficult," explained Prof Yvonne Delevoye-Turrell of the University of Lille, senior author of the study. "Human reactions are sensitive to environmental changes, such as weather or traffic, and measurement biases. Consequently, we used virtual reality as a proof of concept to measure reactions to these interventions in a simulated urban space."

Using virtual reality, the team created an immersive urban environment with either no vegetation or some green vegetation. They also introduced colourful patterns onto a path in the virtual environment.

The researchers invited students at their universities to participate in the study. Each wearing a VR headset and walking on the spot, the student volunteers spent time exploring the virtual environment. To determine where the volunteers were looking, and for how long, each headset included an eye tracker.

The study found that the students walked more slowly when there was green vegetation present in the simulation and their heart rate increased. They also spent less time looking at the ground and more time observing their surroundings. These results, which indicate a pleasurable experience, have also been found when people spend time near vegetation in the real world.

Colour patterns alone did not have quite the same restorative effect as the green vegetation, but they stimulated interest and fascination in the students and attracted their gaze while increasing their heart rates, indicating increased physiological arousal.

This study showed that virtual reality could be a very useful tool for urban planners, allowing them to test the impact of various interventions virtually. The results also suggest that increasing the amount of green vegetation and colourful designs in urban environments could enhance the wellbeing of city dwellers, putting a new spin on the term "concrete jungle."

In the future, the researchers hope to make the VR experience even more immersive to obtain the most accurate results. "Odors and sounds could be the next step for VR to truly test the impact of colours on the pleasure of walking," said Delevoye-Turrell.

— ANI

> "Human reactions are sensitive to environmental changes, such as weather or traffic, and measurement biases. Consequently, we used virtual reality as a proof of concept to measure reactions to these interventions in a simulated urban space.

IN-PICTURES

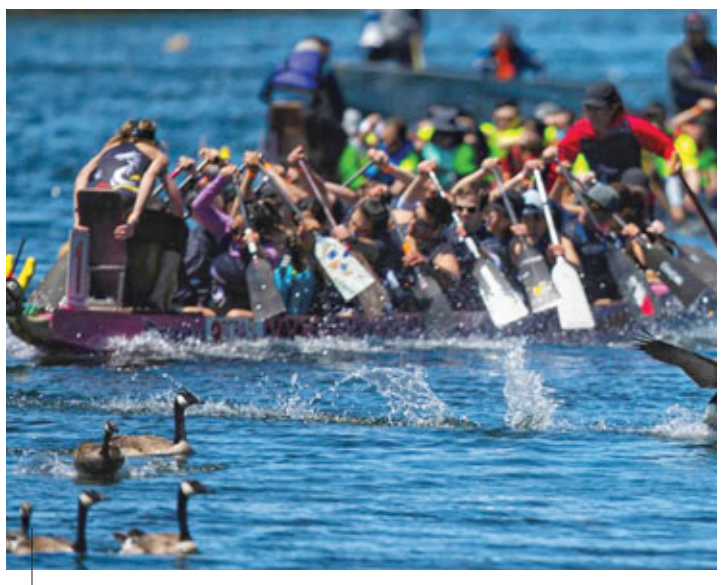
Rafeeq SHOP NOW rafeeq.om

People attend rally calling for attention to living conditions in Washington
People attend a rally calling for attention to the living conditions of the lower-income people and urging policymakers to do more to support those in the bottom, in Washington, DC, the United States. Xinhua

Abacus mental math competition held in Nigeria
Students take part in an abacus mental math competition in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. Xinhua

Celebratory decoration illuminated in Hong Kong
People walk past a celebratory decoration illuminated for the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to the motherland in Hong Kong, south China. This year marks the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to the motherland. Xinhua

Ranveer Singh and Anil Kapoor at the Pinkvilla Style Icons Awards
Bollywood actors Ranveer Singh and Anil Kapoor at the Pinkvilla Style Icons Awards held recently in Mumbai. ANI Photo



International Dragon Boat Race Festival held in Toronto
Contestants compete during the 2022 Toronto International Dragon Boat Race Festival in Toronto, Canada. The event is held here with the participation of dozens of teams. Xinhua

Scenery of Wusuli River National Wetland Park
Aerial picture shows the scenery of the Wusuli River National Wetland Park in northeast China's Heilongjiang Province. Xinhua

Re-enactment event held in Belgium to mark 207th anniversary of Waterloo Battle
Re-enactors perform during the re-enactment of the 1815 Battle of Waterloo in Waterloo, Belgium. Xinhua

Rafeeq
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Fuel-efficiency Toyota Yaris: Perfect companion for exciting journeys

Packed with power, comfort, fuel-efficiency and more, the Yaris scores well on all fronts in the mid-size sedan and hatchback category

MUSCAT: Toyota Yaris is a fun-to-drive vehicle that offers customers maximum excitement on every journey.

Packed with power, comfort, fuel-efficiency and more, the Yaris scores well on all fronts in the mid-size sedan and hatchback category.

The Yaris sedan and hatchback powers journeys with a 1.5L engine that churns out a maximum output of 106 hp and 14.3 kg-m of torque. This is paired to the CVT transmission to offer a smooth shifting experience with excellent fuel efficiency.

Cutting-edge design defines the exterior of the Yaris, with its dynamic angles as well as sleek headlamps and clearance lamps. The front of the Yaris has a horizontal grille for a wider yet more aerodynamic appearance, while rear combination taillights adorn the rear of the car with a unique look.

With an exciting interior featuring a distinctive design, and offering convenience and comfort with a layer of luxury, the Yaris sedan's cabin has an exclusive profile.

The centre console of the Yaris has been designed to create a greater sense of integration. The cabin has been adorned with a range of enhanced features, including keyless entry, cruise control, as well as a four-speaker audio system with AUX and USB.

As with any other Toyota model, safety remains a top priority for the Yaris sedan, which includes a comprehensive array of safety features to protect its occupants, such as driver and front passenger airbags, vehicle stability control (VSC), anti-lock braking system (ABS), electronic brake force distribution (EBD), brake assist (BA), traction control (TRC), among many others.

ZUBAIR ENTERPRISES DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

Zubair EDC partners with Brandz+ to promote integrated digital platform

MUSCAT: Zubair Enterprises Development Centre (Zubair EDC), recently entered into a strategic partnership agreement with Brandz+, to promote the company's integrated digital platform.

The Brandz+ application is an integrated digital platform specialising in trademarks. Through this means, the company aims to empower entrepreneurs and businessmen to monitor the performance of their brand from their smartphones from any location. Also, the company enables the marketing and promotion of brands to maximise its revenues and sales alongside increasing its market value as well as enhancing its presence among well-known international brands.

Commenting on the agreement, Said Salim Al Sahib, Director of Zubair EDC said, "Through this cooperation, the Center seeks to make this application one of the largest and most powerful mobile applications in the world. With this in mind, we are looking to develop a strategic platform that serves the FinTech sector, social platforms and small and medium-sized companies. Additionally, we are working to achieve a major leap in artificial intelligence technology to make this application the first of its kind in the world."

"After analysing the data and conducting the necessary research, we believe that there is a huge potential for robust growth. This will help raise the market value of the Brandz+ application within a short period, with the numbers indicating the achievement of significant success," he added.

From his side, Dr Salah Al Mahthori, CEO of Brandz+ stated, "We are proud to partner with Zubair EDC as it looks to expand its exposure across the local, regional and international markets. We believe that this fruitful partnership between the two parties will see the establishment of the initial structure, as well as align with the company's vision to achieve a comprehensive strategy that enables it to meet the needs of the market, based on a pre-agreed work plan between both parties."

The Brandz+ application is an integrated and comprehensive digital platform that analyses data in real-time according to highly complex mathematical algorithms that make it the unique digital platform in the world that specialises exclusively in brands. The company's smart application was developed by a highly professional team, to provide a product aimed mainly at empowering entrepreneurs, especially home-based businesses and small and medium enterprises. The service packages were expanded to add the category of businessmen and large companies. Expectations have exceeded local levels and Brandz+ services have been launched regionally and internationally.

Moreover, the Brandz+ smart application enhances the business sector by monitoring the performance of their brands from their smartphones from anywhere in the world covering more than 177 countries. Also, the company allows brand marketing and promotion of its products and services to include various categories, segments and classifications. The Brandz+ system analyses the databases in its cloud servers in real-time and builds accurate benchmark indicators, thus providing data that helps decision-makers in the market direction that maximises revenue and sales, whether in the form of a product, commodity or service provided by the brand owner. This would raise the market of that brand.

"We are proud that the application is Oman-based and was established as a local product. It has received widespread acclaim and has seen a significant number of downloads in record time across the Middle East as well as various countries in North America, Europe, Asia and Africa. This is an indication of the application's success and the extent of its excellence and innovation on a global level," Dr Al Manthori added.

Zubair Enterprise Development Center (Zubair EDC) works to support small and medium-sized companies in the Sultanate of Oman by exploring business development, including opportunities to penetrate the market, enabling them to progress and growth, providing acquisition opportunities and attracting investments. In addition, the Center works to provide success factors required for growth and spread, with a focus on business development, skills training, capacity building and consulting. The centre also assists in re-considering business plans to make these small and medium businesses profitable based on the principle of self-sufficiency. Today, Zubair EDC has become a leading organisation in its field. SMEs can benefit from its high professionalism, diverse knowledge, a wide range of expertise, and global, regional and local network, along with its strategic partners, providing all means to help entrepreneurs to succeed and reach new heights in their businesses.

COLLABORATION

Maserati partners with North Sails Apparel

FLORENCE: In the latest edition of Pitti Uomo, two titans of land and sea unite for the first time in a ground-breaking collaboration, bridging legacy and future-minded, ethically driven innovation.

Maserati, the visionary automotive leader, is partnering with North Sails Apparel to launch a capsule collection comprising a selection of products designed around the shared values of exclusivity, responsibility and performance.

The two businesses have a long history of using advanced engineering to develop high-performance products both on and off the water, which are showcased in this collection.

The clothes are developed in future-fit materials, from organic and recycled cotton to Gore-Tex Infinium fit for performance. Key pieces — from hybrid vests to an elevated update on the classic polo and a mobility-centred jacket in two lengths — capture the most relevant and acutely developed technologies available. Breathability, air permeability and durability are key considerations for this collection.

The colour palette, a deep navy, crisp white, bold black, grey dawn, mixed with electric blue and the distinct Maserati yellow, is refined and distinguished.

> Maserati, the visionary automotive leader, is partnering with North Sails Apparel to launch a capsule collection

"North Sails Apparel is committed to working with Maserati on building responsible exclusive collections that showcase our commitment to innovation and performance," said Marisa Selfa, CEO of North Sails Apparel.

Davide Grasso, Maserati CEO, commented, "Maserati is innovative by nature and is looking ahead to the future. The partnership with North Sails emphasises the close links between Maserati, dynamic performance, and technological innovation."

This collection is technically innovative, with products that are also environmentally conscious, reinforcing the brand's motto "Embrace the spirit of the ocean".

ROUND-UP

Ahli Islamic's 10% cash reward awaits salary transfer customers till July-end

All current and new Ahli Islamic customers from Oman and expatriates, whose monthly salary is at least OMR1,000, are eligible to receive a one-time offer

MUSCAT: Continuing to offer added benefits to its customers and assessing its various needs, Ahli Islamic has announced the extension of the salary transfer offer until the end of July, through which it offers a 10% cash reward of the total salary, up to a maximum of OMR500.

All current and new Ahli Islamic customers from Oman and expatriates, whose monthly salary is at least OMR1,000, are eligible to receive a one-time offer.

This initiative is part of the bank's strategic efforts to enhance its services and products, maximising benefits for its customers, within a framework that conforms to the Islamic Sharia principles. Through its new salary transfer campaign, which runs until the end of July 2022, Ahli Islamic aims to provide its customers with Islamic banking products and services that suit the ever-evolving choices of today's customers.

Yousuf bin Salim Al Rawahi, Deputy General Manager and Head of Ahli Islamic said, "Islamic banking has recently become increasingly popular among Oman's new workforce, which is characterised by being more aware, and decisive of their choices.

"The trend is attributed to customers' awareness of the benefits offered by Islamic banks. By extending our promotion period, we hope to expand the benefits of this offer to an increased number of our customers."

"The bank's cashback reward to its salary transfer customers is an exclusive opportunity that allows customers to make a wise choice and invest their money in line with their conviction. It also serves the national priority of financial inclusion among the community, especially among youth," he added.

Ahli Islamic is committed to ensuring that its innovative offers with Sharia-compliant products and services are catered to throughout the Sultanate. Based on the principle of honesty and transparency, the bank offers end-to-end Sharia-compliant banking solutions to retail, SME and corporate clients.

SHARIA-COMPLIANT

Alizz Bank expresses its appreciation to customers' and shareholders' trust in driving its success

MUSCAT: Sulaiman Al Harthi, Chief Executive Officer of Alizz Islamic Bank, expressed his appreciation for the trust of the bank's customers and shareholders in its Sharia-compliant banking services and products, given the impact of such trust on the bank's success in strengthening its financial position and achieving continuous growth in its financial results and figures during Q1 of 2022.

He explained that any success made by the bank is reflected in the performance of the group, Oman Arab Bank and Ominvest, adding that the bank wouldn't be able to achieve such success without the board's prudent approach and support. Meanwhile, he affirmed that the bank is determined to move forward to realize sustainable results for shareholders in line with the prudent strategy developed by the board of directors, and in light of the positive indicators of economic recovery. Al Harthi thanked the bank staff for their dedication, high performance and commitment to fulfilling their duties and meeting customers' expectations.

The bank proceeded to expand its services and products by targeting different segments of the society through organising various events, marketing campaigns, symposiums and lectures across different wilayats and governorates of the Sultanate to identify the community needs in the field of Islamic banking and explain complicated issues in this sector. As a result, demand increased in the sector, its financial results became significant, and its customer base grew significantly. Alizz Islamic Bank's customer base increased by 75% due to such efforts in line with the bank's commitment to supporting the growth and prosperity of our communities.

Moreover, the bank directed its investments to existing digital platforms and entered into partnerships aiming to offer fin-tech-based solutions.

It is committed to promoting the innovation culture and seeks to improve its basic capabilities. The bank is working on developing a digital business model to keep up with customers' changing needs and technological advances, which is reflected in the bank's ability to meet its customers' needs and streamline transactions.

In a step reflecting such success, Capital Intelligence has affirmed Alizz Islamic Bank's Long- and Short-Term ratings on the Oman National Scale at 'omAA' and 'omA1+', respectively with stable outlook which was improved during the year as a result of a change in the outlook of Oman Sovereign rating and strengthening of the bank's financial position.

The bank is committed to providing financing offers in line with the incomes of individuals and companies; e.g. during Q1 of 2022, it launched a varied package of offers to promote customer experience in the Islamic banking sector and provide them with customized choices, such as purchasing and building the suitable house in line with the source of monthly income, in addition to exclusive offers for purchase of vehicles or funding commodity, including electronics, furniture, etc, along with various options in terms of finance periods, payment and at low rates.

INVESTITURE CEREMONY

ISD creates leaders who care and share

MUSCAT: The 'Investiture Ceremony' for the academic year 2022-23 was held on 13th June 2022 with great solemnity in the Senior School Auditorium of Indian School Darsait.

The ceremony was attended by the proud parents of the elected Student Council Members, where the latter were bestowed upon with the responsibility. The ceremony began with the procession, prayer and lighting of the lamp. Vice Principal, Geeta Chauhan welcomed one and all present on the occasion.

Ashwini Sawrikar,Finance Director, Board of Directors, Indian Schools in Oman, the Chief Guest awarded badges to the Ceremonial Heads and General Prefects while Sebastian Chungath, President, SMC honoured them with sashes. The Chief Guest in her keynote address reinstated the qualities of a leader and inspired the young buds with an energetic speech.

The Head Boy, Magandha Dinesh pledged to uphold the honour and glory of the institution. The Cultural Secretary, Rebecca Ann Jacob, proposed vote of thanks.

ISC AWADHI WING

Awadh bowling contest held

MUSCAT: Indian Social Club Oman - Awadhi Wing hosted its third event of the year - Awadh Bowling Competition 2022. The Competition was recently held at Pinz Bowling Centre, Avenues Mall and was a delightful evening for the participating Families.

The competition was a mix of bowling & archery competition which was based on a points structure. Considering the concept of competition, more than 50 participants took active enrolments and enjoyed the game with their loved ones.

Children were the main focus of the competition.

The competition was conducted between 12 teams and the points structure was briefed by Maanas Kapoor Sports Secretary of ISC Awadhi Wing before the start of the competition. As a surprise, a bonus round was introduced in the game format and players took to keep the advantage of scoring maximum points. A round of archery was also introduced to players where Awadhi Family Players took much interest and enjoyed the concept.

HOME AND PERSONAL FINANCING

Bank Muscat to continue special financing offer till June 30

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate, has announced that customers can take maximum advantage of its discounted financing offers on home and personal financing till June 30.

The bank is at present offering highly-competitive interest rates starting at 4.5 per cent for Baituna Home Finance and 4.75 per cent on Personal Financing to employees of government and semi-government institutions as well as some Tier 1 companies. Customers can also enjoy lower interest rates on short-term personal financing that starts at just 4 per cent.

The special offer is in line with the bank's strategy of enhancing financial inclusion in the Sultanate and developing various products and services that address the needs of different customer segments. It is aimed at those who are currently not availing of any financing from the bank. New customers can also avail themselves of the attractive offer by applying for financing or transferring their existing financing to Bank Muscat.

Customers can get Baituna financing up to OMR500,000 for up to 25 years to construct or purchase new homes or buy land for residential construction. Bank Muscat customers can take advantage of the fast processing of applications and the excellent insurance coverage for their financing. Flexible payment options and quick documentation makes Baituna the leading home finance in the Sultanate. Documents required include ID card, Salary assignment letter, Krooki and Mulkiya copy, valuation of the property from an approved evaluator, Sales and Purchase agreement and seller ID. Construction legalisation (Ebahaa) and maps as well as an advisory letter and contractor agreement are required in case of construction loans. To apply for Baituna home finance, the customer may visit the bank's Baituna sales centres in Qurm, Maabelah, Barka, Sohar, Saham, Sur, Ibra, Nizwa, Ibri, Buraimi and Salalah or any Bank Muscat branch across different governorates in Oman.

To apply for personal finance, customers may visit their nearest Bank Muscat branch with the required documents including a salary transfer letter from their employer and their ID cards, which will ensure speedy processing of their applications. Financing up to OMR200,000 is available to customers based on the fulfilment of the eligibility criteria.

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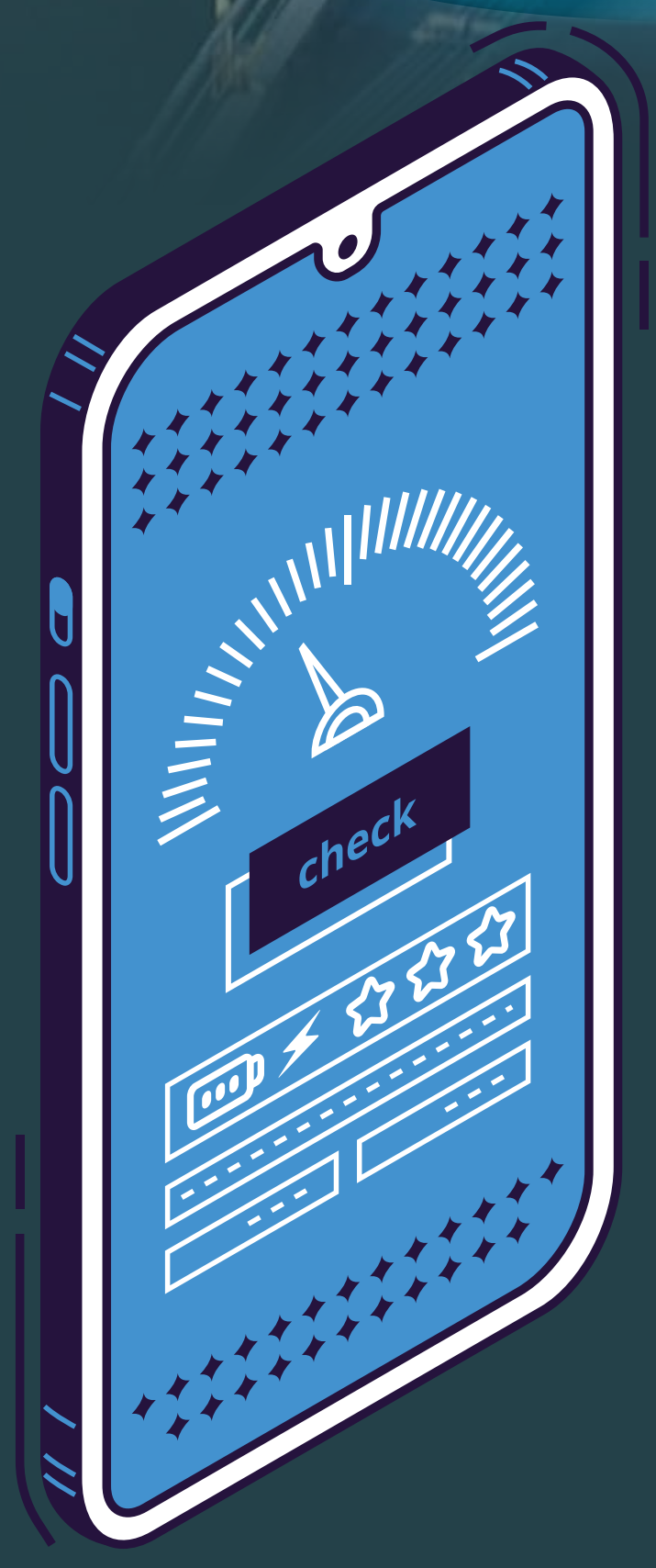

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MAGNIFICENCE OF FAZAH CASTLE

Fazah Castle is an archaeological monument in the wilayat of Liwa. It is located between the foothills of the village of Fazah, one of the mountain villages in the wilayat.

On the right side of the village, visitors can see a magnificent tower of the 17th century, that attracts visitors. To reach the castle, one has to pass through the narrow roads of palm groves, Ghaf trees and surrounding houses.

The castle is one of the old castles built in the late seventeenth century and was used for defence and protection. It consists of three floors and a control tower. The castle has 12 rooms used for different purposes. The ground floor has four rooms, stores and guest room.

There is an eight-kilometre tunnel linking the castle with the village of Dhab'een, which has a long history associated with it and also has very old observation towers.

When you reach the roof of the castle you can see spectacular views of palm trees, farms and houses surrounding the castle, as well as mountainous terrain and their dark colour.

The castle was maintained and restored in 2004 and the restoration work continued for two years, after which it was opened for visitors. The castle is currently used for official occasions, such as holidays where people gather every morning in front of the castle yard and exchange greetings and friendly conversations. One can also see folk arts, such as Razha, in addition to eating local Omani food, including a local food named "Al Orsiya".

THE CASTLE IS ONE OF THE OLD CASTLES BUILT IN THE LATE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY AND WAS USED FOR DEFENCE AND PROTECTION. IT CONSISTS OF THREE FLOORS AND A CONTROL TOWER

It is worth mentioning that the Village of Fazah in the wilayat of Liwa is about fifteen kilometres from the centre of the city, westward of Liwa roundabout, passing through many developmental projects in the wilayat, including the recently opened The Rehabilitation Centre for Children with Disabilities, Cultural Centre and Al Salam Sporting Club and Liwa Public Park, as well as Al Batinah Expressway to reach the Fazah village.

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