

HM SENDS CONDOLENCES

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to President Katerina Sakellaropoulou of Greece on the death of Christos Sartzetakis, former president of Greece. In the cable, His Majesty expressed his heartfelt sympathies to President Sakellaropoulou, family of the deceased and the people of Greece. - **ONA**



HM CONDOLES EMIR OF KUWAIT

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to Sheikh Nawaf Al Ahmed Al Jaber Al Sabah, Emir of Kuwait on the death of Sheikh Hamad Badr Khaled Al Salman Al Sabah. In the cable, His Majesty expressed his heartfelt sympathies, praying to Allah the Almighty to rest the deceased's soul in peace in paradise and grant his family patience. - **ONA**



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Know more



Exports cross OMR12bn during first nine months

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Exports from Oman crossed OMR12bn during the first nine months of 2021, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

NCSI numbers show that out of the OMR12.28bn exports during the period, OMR7.8bn came from oil and gas exports, while OMR 4.18bn was earned through non-oil exports. Re-exports contributed OMR1.2bn.

The figures were reported by Oman News Agency as part of the announcement for the celebration of Industry Day, which falls on 9 February every year.

The celebrations also serve to commemorate the day on which Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said bin Taimour visited Rusayl Industrial Estate in 1991.

During the celebrations, Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousuf, the Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, will meet through video conferencing industrialists, project owners and investors to exchange views on investment opportunities in the industrial sector as also analysing the challenges facing them.

Foreign Direct Investments to Oman also rose during the first nine months last year, reaching OMR1.48bn in 2021 as compared to OMR1.42bn in 2020. The industrial sector, during this period, contributed 8.5 per cent to the country's GDP, or OMR 2bn.

There are 33,359 Omanis working in the industrial sector, representing 12.64 per cent of the 263,913 nationals who work in the country's private sector.



SAYYID SHIHAB RECEIVES PAKISTANI JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF CHAIRMAN

His Highness Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs received at Al Murtafa'a Garrison on Monday Gen. Nadeem Raza, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJSCS) of Pakistan. The two sides exchanged views on various topics of joint interest. The meeting was attended by Vice Admiral Abdullah Khamis Al Ra'eesi, Chief of the Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), the Ambassador of Pakistan to Oman and the military attache of the Pakistani embassy in Muscat. - **ONA**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN 100 teams for beach games carnival

1 One hundred teams from across Oman are expected to participate in the February 17-26 First Beach Games Carnival at Sur Al Hadid. **>A3**

OMAN eXtra offers up to 50 percent discount

2 To celebrate its 9th anniversary since operations began in Oman, eXtra is offering discounts between 20 and 50 percent. **>A2**

MARKET Barka Desalination IPO oversubscribed

3 Phase I of Barka Desalination Company IPO, being managed by Bank Muscat, has been oversubscribed 4.83 times. **>B1**

GUIDELINES ISSUED ON HOW TO SPOT FAKE REAL PRODUCTS

Al Shabiba FM organised a discussion on consumer awareness with senior officials

Times News Service

MUSCAT: To help consumers get a better idea of counterfeit goods while shopping, the Consumer Protection Authority has provided a list of guidelines to which they can refer.

The guidelines were issued as part of efforts by the CPA to educate people on how to spot counterfeit goods.

Customers need to make sure the goods they buy have original logos that distinguish them from other brands, as opposed to fraudulent goods that use fake logos, feature text that has errors and is in a colour scheme that is not the same as the original.

Original products also contain serial numbers and barcodes that are engraved on the package.

What to look for

On fake goods, however, these may be simply stuck on to the packaging with adhesive tape.

Similarly, people looking to buy a particular product must make sure that the country of origin on the packaging is the same as the one listed inside.

Original goods come in packaging that is made of good quality and thick material, engraved with the company logo, a serial number and data relevant to the product.

In some cases, these goods

may be wrapped in a soft and light covering that does not show proof of adhesives used such as glue or tape.

Another way to identify a fake product is the price tag: Fake goods are often less expensive than their original versions.

When it comes to leather goods, original versions have a soft, rich texture, as opposed to the rough feel of fake goods.

Similarly, aromatics such as perfumes can be recognised as counterfeit when they have a dark pigment in them that leaves behind colour, as opposed to original products.

When going out to shop, customers need to make sure they buy from trusted stores, as fraudulent goods are not often sold at these places.

Always also ask for a guarantee or warranty certificate to make sure your goods come with a period during which they can be repaired or replaced.

Committing fraud

Very often fake goods do not come with such forms of after-sales service.

People who sell counterfeit goods are chasing profit and committing fraud in doing so, say officials from Oman's Consumer Protection Authority (CPA). **>A4**

FIRST SEASON

Legends League Cricket in Oman reaches over 703mn fans

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The recently concluded first season of Legends League Cricket (LLC) in the Sultanate of Oman has garnered a cumulative global reach of 703 millions across the world through TV, Digital, Social media and other mass media platforms. Muscat Media Group (MMG) was the official media sponsor of the tournament.

As per data from BARC (India), Sony Liv (India), Medialogic (Pakistan), B-Sports (Pakistan), LMRB (Sri Lanka), YouTube & Facebook (Global), the matches were watched live by over 250 million people around the world. Besides, the match highlights, video clips, audio commentary, mass media & other ancillary content were watched by over 450 million fans around the world.



The first season of LLC has created history with the highest viewership for any International T20 League (outside India) on Sports channels, broadcaster Sony Sports said, citing BARC data.

Raman Raheja, Co-Founder & CEO, Legends League Cricket said, "The average ratings for the League is almost 300 per cent higher than any other International T20 league," citing

data from BARC. He added, "We have had 140 million plus viewers watching us on TV in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka alone besides 50 million in other parts of the world. Our digital viewership crossed 60 million across streaming platforms of Sony Liv (India), B-Sports (Pakistan), Crictracker (Rest of the World)."

The League started with a bang on January 20, 2022 with the

India Maharajas vs Asia Lions match garnering the highest viewership on TV & digital platforms across the world. It had glimpses of India vs Pakistan rivalry with top legends from India and Pakistan featuring against each other. Even the 2nd match with Asia Lions playing against the World Giants saw high viewership at a time when the current India team was playing against South Africa in

the ODI series.

Ravi Shastri, Commissioner, Legends League Cricket, said "the 1st edition of the League is billed as 'Boss Logon ka game' and was the first T20 league of 2022. And true to its billing, LLC has been able to attract massive interest from cricket lovers not just in India but around the world too."

The League was broadcast on Sony Ten 1, Ten 3 & Sony Liv in India, Geo Sports & B Sports in Pakistan, Supreme TV in Sri Lanka & Crictracker channels streamed it in the rest of the world. The League has seen 7 sponsors on-board for the 1st season. The first season of LLC had 54 former cricketers from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Australia, England, among other cricketing nations divided into 3 teams representing India, Asia and the Rest of the World.

MIND POPPING
NEW LOOK!





Dhuhr.....	12:26pm
Asr.....	3:39pm
Maghrib.....	6:03pm
Isha.....	7:15pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....	5:27am

eXtra offers discounts of up to 50 percent to customers in Oman

Celebrating its 9th Anniversary, eXtra is offering discounts on all latest products

Times News Service

MUSCAT: To celebrate its ninth anniversary since operations began in Oman, eXtra is offering discounts of between 20 and 50 percent over 200 products to its customers. Redeemable gift vouchers are also being given when customers purchase from over 800 models present in-store and online.

For eXtra online shoppers, there are exclusive benefits such as free home delivery on orders worth OMR10 and above along with 24 to 48 hours delivery within Muscat. Furthermore, eXtra is offering delivery of mobile phones, laptops, and small appliances all over Oman.

“Our commitment to customer service as well as product pricing is sincere, and eXtra always seeks to offer the best prices in the market, along with the best shopping experience,” said eXtra. “We offer a well-framed price match policy which applies to a wide range of products sold at our stores or on the eXtra website in Oman.”

Under this policy, a customer, on purchasing a product from eXtra, is entitled to a price difference refund in case eXtra either drops the price of the product, or if the item was advertised at a lower price by a listed competitor after the purchase.

In case a listed competitor offers a product with a price lesser than the one put up by eXtra, prior to the purchase, the customer has the right to get this product at the same price as the competitor's, along



with an additional discount of 10 percent on the price difference.

Started in 2013 with a flagship store in Al Ghubra, with a vision to be a leading retailer of consumer electronics, appliances and communication solutions in the region, eXtra has come a long way in Oman.

Despite the challenges posed by natural calamities and vagaries of the economy, eXtra has stood the test of time and emerged stronger and better equipped to serve its customers.

“We have always sought to en-

hance consumers' life by providing innovative quality products, services and solutions that meet or exceed customers' expectations,” added the brand. “eXtra firmly believes in the strength of collaborative relationships and operational excellence and honesty.”

In its 3 showrooms in Al Ghubra, Al Mawaleh, and Sohar, eXtra stocks an extensive and latest product range including TV, audio systems, computers, mobile phones and IT communications, cameras, home appliances and



personal care products. The product range is supported by comprehensive after sales services such as extended warranty, new accidental warranty covering breakages and mobile phone coating services.

eXtra also presents a user-friendly mobile application for an-

nytime, anywhere shopping experiences. You can shop over 10,000 great products from brands like Apple, Samsung, Sony and many more – all from your smartphone.

Download the app to access the latest phones, laptops, TVs and home appliances with free deliv-

ery and exclusive offers, wherever applicable. With eXtra celebrating nine years of serving its customers, it reiterates its commitment to enhance shopping experiences by providing only up-to-date and best quality products and services.

Welcome to eXtra, once again!

GCC SECRETARIAT GENERAL

Oman participates in project on traffic tickets in GCC states

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman took part on Monday in the extraordinary meeting of GCC ministries of Interior undersecretaries, hosted by the GCC Secretariat General.

Oman was represented during the online meeting by Brigadier Eng. Mohammed Awad Al Rawas, Director General of Traffic.



The meeting reviewed several matters related to the project of connecting traffic tickets among GCC countries. -ONA

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Investors who wish to subscribe will have to examine and carefully review the Prospectus in order to decide whether it would be appropriate to invest in the Offer Shares. Investors willing to subscribe should contact their collection brokers or apply through the Collecting Banks' digital channels or by filling the application form on the Muscat Clearing & Depository website (www.mcd.gov.om) and submitting it to the Collection Banks.

This advertisement should be read in relation to the Prospectus of the IPO. All abbreviations have the same meaning as mentioned therein. Investing in shares involves certain risks as described in Chapter 13 (Risk Factors and Methods of Mitigation) of the Prospectus which is available on the company website www.barkadesalination.com.

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17 TO 26 FEBRUARY

100 teams likely in Seeb beach games carnival

KHALED ORABI
khaled@shabiba.com

MUSCAT: One hundred teams from across Oman are expected to participate in the First Beach Games Carnival, to be held from 17 to 26 February at Sur Al Hadid by Seeb Beach.

“We have six tournaments taking place at the carnival: Football, volleyball, basketball for persons with special needs, hockey and skiing, besides other ancillary sports classified on the basis of age group,” said Islam Ahmed, an investor at Al Rahi Investment Co., the organisers of the events, in partnership with the Ministry of Education.

“The carnival will see the participation of a number of teams from the Ministry of Education, represented by a number of schools and teams,” he added. “The carnival will also see the participation of teams from private sector organisations.”

Ahmed said: “So far, we have received confirmation from 20 teams representing different schools and 16 teams representing the private sector. The number of participating teams is expected to reach over 100.”

During the carnival, prizes worth over OMR10,000 will be given away, while video games and other

BIG PRIZES: During the carnival, prizes worth over OMR10,000 will be given away, while video games and other forms of entertainment will also be on offer.

forms of entertainment will also be on offer. All the precautions stipulated by the Supreme Committee will also be in effect.

Owing to the support of Dr Marwan Al Jumrah from the Oman Hockey Association, there will also be activities involving hockey and skiing. “Compared to previous

events of this nature, we expect to see more games organised and more participants across different age groups at the carnival,” said Ahmed.

Adding to this, Amna Nasser, partner at Al Rahi Investment Co., said: “We expect to see tough competition among the participating

teams as they pursue victory and bag valuable prizes, cups and medals in various tournaments. The festival will also include entertainment activities such as theatrical plays, competitions for visitors, traditional games and entertainment options for children.”

Dr. Abdullah bin Khamis bin

Among the many sponsors contributing to the event is Muscat Media Group, the parent company of *Times of Oman* and *Al Shabiba* newspapers

Ali Ambusaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education, said, “The Ministry of Education has accorded due care and attention to such carnivals on account of the significance they represent. Such festivals, apart from their economic, social and sports advantages, help achieve a true partnership between the government and private sector under the Royal Directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik and His Majesty’s wise government.

“We are open to such partnerships and have several agreements in various fields, including education, information technology and welfare of students and employ-

ees,” he added. “Our participation in this festival is to be impactful, and the ministry will have a strong presence through our employees, and school students.

“We hope that the ministry’s participation can contribute to the development of the upcoming editions of the carnival,” he added. “Such festivals are important in terms of promoting both sports and healthy lifestyle.

Awareness

“Sadly, we have seen health issues such as obesity and diabetes among our youth, who sometimes adopt unhealthy lifestyle practices. Festivals like this help spread awareness about healthy living, so I hope that in future, such carnivals are present across all governorates of the Sultanate.”

Ambusaidi added: “The Ministry of Education and the education sector accommodate over 60,000 employees and over 700,000 students. When a private sector company targets the participation of this sector, such efforts will motivate us to partner with other companies, and share with them the successes that follow.”

Among the many sponsors contributing to the event is Muscat Media Group, the parent company of *Times of Oman* and *Al Shabiba* newspapers.



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¹ Any entity or individual who brings in investment in SLDBs.



https://www.cbsl.gov.lk/sites/default/files/cbslweb_documents/about/sldb_direct_window_offer_information_e.pdf
Note: The necessary instructions regarding the acquisition of the SLDBs have been issued to all banks by the Central Bank. The details of the offer are available in the Document of Offer dated 25 January 2022.

Available SLDB Maturities and Applicable Fixed Rates for Investment²

Remaining Maturity as at 25 January 2022	Applicable Fixed Rate (Per cent per annum)	Remaining Maturity as at 25 January 2022	Applicable Fixed Rate (Per cent per annum)	Remaining Maturity as at 25 January 2022	Applicable Fixed Rate (Per cent per annum)
6-month	7.50	2-year	7.90	4-year	7.95
10-month	7.65	2-year 3-month	7.90	4-year 6-month	7.95
1-year	7.80	3-year	7.90	4-year 11-month	7.95
1-year 3-month	7.85				

¹ Remain unchanged until the opening of the next SLDB auction. More details are available in the Offer Information document accessible via the above link.

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(g) Licensed Specialised Banks and Licensed Finance Companies, which have been permitted to accept deposits in foreign currency.



OMAN



CONSUMER PROTECTION



< FROM
A1

Consumer awareness programme
on how to identify fake products

Keen to spread awareness among people on how to identify fake or poor quality goods, Mohammed Al Kasbi, the head of the Contracts and Agreements Department at CPA, said people committing commercial fraud purposely make imitation products or alter existing goods so that they lose some of their value.

“The Consumer Protection Law is clear: There is no tolerance if the law is violated, and the law also covers the use of imitation products,” he said. “We have seen many forms of commercial fraud and to make sure we are able to stop such

practices, we jointly operate with other authorities to stop the sale of fraudulent goods.

Complaints

“Most of the complaints during the last two years, are to do with vendors who have provided customers improper service by exceeding the agreed-upon time period,” added Al Kasbi.

Salem Al Abri, the director of the Consumer Protection Department in South Al Batinah, said that all reports submitted by consumers are confidential in nature.

“The consumer is the first line of awareness when it comes to checking the quality of goods,” he said.

“We rely on them to submit reports, should they come across fake items. Our awareness programmes are not just limited to consumers, but merchants and suppliers as well. In case we do find goods that are the result of commercial fraud, we will not hesitate to seize them.”

The CPA officials were speaking about consumer awareness to Al Shabiba FM, the radio arm of *Al Shabiba*, which is the Arabic publication of the *Times of Oman*.

WINTERS ARE THE
BEST TIME TO VISIT

NIYABAT
AL MASHASH



In Wilayat Muqshin in the southern Dhofar Governorate, there are lake formations that are a major attraction for both tourists and locals in the area.

Winters are often the best time to visit Niyabat Al Mashash, when the area experiences ideal weather. People sometimes choose to camp in the desert during the nights, which can get quite chilly, while the day sees excursions of hikers and adventurers explore the golden sands and what lies beyond them.

Desert sports on the dunes are also rather common at this time. Niyabat Al Mashash is located northwest from the centre of Dhofar, on the south-eastern borders of the Empty Quarter, about 400km away from the regional capital of Salalah. People who wish to visit the area from Maqshin can take a 130km-long dirt road, which also crosses the area of Al Manadir.



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Ministry launches strategic research projects programme

It is a programme directed to address research challenges of national priority in government institutions and it is an updated version of the project established in 2010



MUSCAT: With the aim of strengthening cooperation between the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI) and various government bodies in alignment with Oman Vision 2040, the ministry announced the launch of the Strategic Research Projects Programme (SRPP).

It is a research programme directed to address research challenges of national priority in government institutions and it is an

updated version of the Strategic Research Programme established in 2010.

The programme's mechanism of action depends on the principle of partnership between the ministry and government bodies. The outputs of these research projects will contribute to building a strong economy based on knowledge and scientific evidence.

With regard to the objectives of the programme, Dr. Salah Al Zedjali, Director General of Research

Programs and Capacity Building at MoHERI, said that the Strategic Research Projects Programme seeks to find scientific and applied solutions through competitive research proposals that focus on national priorities in various service, economic and social fields.

He added that the programme will contribute to enhancing constructive cooperation between the parties to the research system (governmental, academic and private sectors), transferring knowl-

edge and increasing the number of research in the Sultanate of Oman, in addition to promoting research excellence in accordance to international research standards.

The programme also aims to build national capabilities and a strong knowledge-based economy, which will contribute to diversifying sources of income in the Sultanate, creating job opportunities, and coming up with recommendations for decision makers to create or update policies, legis-

lations and general procedures.

In regard to the financial requirements, Dr. Salah Al Zedjali elaborated that the ministry undertakes the contribution of a maximum of 50 percent of the cost of one project, and in an amount not exceeding OMR50,000 for each research project approved, and in return, the remaining partners, who either manage or implement these research projects, shall cover the remaining cost of the project and provide the necessary support.

The evaluation of research proposals is based on the criteria of research excellence, the criteria for linking to institutional challenges, the impact of the research outputs and their applicability, with the priority be given to research proposals and projects that serve a set of national priorities.

Refereed research proposals submissions will be announced annually through the Research Information Management System (RIMS). The opening of applications will also be announced through the ministry's social media platforms.

For this year, submissions are currently open for the Strategic Research Projects Programme through RIMS since January and it will close on the 17 March 2022. -ONA

TRANSITION

Oman Air moves to new terminal at Jeddah airport

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman Air has moved to the new Terminal 1 at King Abdulaziz International Airport, signalling the airline's ongoing commitment to scheduled passenger service linking Muscat and Jeddah.

The transition was marked by an official ceremony attended by the Consul General of Oman, Mubarak Al Hanai along with a number of Omani and Saudi officials on 29 January 2022, and coincided with the arrival of Oman Air flight WY1675 which was welcomed with a traditional water salute.

Passengers disembarking the flight were presented flowers while the flight's crew had their photo taken with Al Hanai during an Oman Air-themed cake cutting.

Hamad Al Harthi, Oman Air Senior Manager of Sales (GCC, Middle East & Africa), said, "We're delighted that our flights will now arrive and depart from the new Terminal 1 in Jeddah, which offers passengers a seamless travel experience in a truly state-of-the-art facility. Oman Air has a long-standing presence in Jeddah and this transition reflects our renewing of that presence as we look forward to growing our flight frequencies in the years ahead."

MILITARY TIES

SAF Chief of Staff receives Pakistani Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman

MUSCAT: Vice Admiral Abdullah Khamis Al Ra'eesi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) received in his office at Al Murtafa'a Garrison yesterday Gen. Nadeem Raza, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJSCS) of the Islamic Republic

of Pakistan.

The two sides reviewed military matters of common interest.

The meeting was attended by several senior SAF officers, Ambassador of Pakistan to Oman and the Military Attache at the Pakistani embassy in Muscat. -ONA



MEETING: Vice Admiral Abdullah Khamis Al Ra'eesi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) with Gen. Nadeem Raza, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee of Pakistan. -ONA

NAZDAHIR

National Programme for Investment explores initiatives



MUSCAT: The technical committee of the National Programme for Investment and Exports Development, a public drive code-named "Nazdahir", yesterday held its annual meeting under the auspices of Aseela Salim Al Samsami, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for

Investment Promotion, chairperson of the committee.

The meeting brings together representatives of government departments concerned.

The meeting familiarised the members about major initiatives undertaken by the programme, including "Fast Track", "Economic Diversification Investment

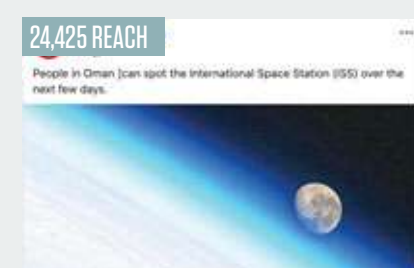
Initiatives", "Foreign Investor Residency".

The meeting also looked into the 2022 annual plan, delegating tasks and roles to sectors tasked with enhancing the competitiveness of the investment climate in the Sultanate of Oman and the outcome of the Fast Track Initiative during 2021.

The National Programme for Investment and Exports Development figures among the efforts of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion to improve entrepreneurship, attract foreign investments and expedite the implementation of investment projects. -ONA

Trending ON SOCIAL MEDIA

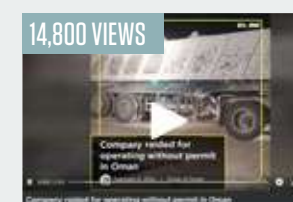
MOST READ ON FACEBOOK



Story on spotting International Space Station

A story on spotting the International Space Station from Oman reached 24,425 people and had 1,310 engagements on Facebook.

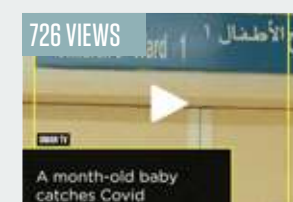
MOST WATCHED VIDEO ON FACEBOOK



Maghrib Minute video

The Maghrib Minute video had 14,800 views and reached 43,100 people on Facebook

MOST VIEWED VIDEO ON INSTAGRAM



The Morning Minute video

The Morning Minute video on children with Covid in Oman had 998 views and 46 likes on Instagram.

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DOUBLE-VACCINATED TRAVELLERS

Australia to reopen borders to international arrivals

CANBERRA: Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison on Monday announced that the country's international borders will reopen to tourists starting from February 21, provided that the arriving individuals are double vaccinated.

"I know the tourism industry will be looking forward to that and over the next two weeks they'll get the opportunity both for visitors to be coming and for them to be gearing up to welcome interna-

tional visitors back to Australia," Morrison said after a meeting of the National Security Committee, as quoted by The Australian. The Australian prime minister informed that people entering Australia starting from February 21 will need to be double vaccinated.

He had announced plans to reopen Australia's borders to foreigners back in October, stating that it should happen at some point in 2022. **ANI**



Ottawa declares state of emergency amid COVID-19 protests

Thousands of protesters descended in Ottawa on the weekend, joining a hundred who remained from the last weekend



OTTAWA: The mayor of Canadian capital Ottawa declared a state of emergency on Sunday amid trucker protests against COVID-19 restrictions. Thousands of protesters descended in Ottawa on the weekend, joining a hundred who remained from last weekend.

The demonstrations began as truckers protested against vaccine requirements when crossing the border between the US and Canada, and later turned into a broader protest against COVID-19 restrictions and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government.

Last week, crowdfunding site GoFundMe pulled funds for the protests.

What did Ottawa mayor Jim Watson say?

Mayor Jim Watson said that the declaration highlights the need for support from other jurisdictions and levels of government.

The declaration gives the city

additional powers around procurement and how it delivers services, and may also help the city purchase equipment required by frontline workers and first responders.

Earlier in the day, Watson had described the situation as "completely out of control."

"Clearly, we are outnumbered and we are losing this battle," Watson told local radio station CFRA.

Watson also called the truckers "insensitive," criticizing the noise produced by the protests. According to Watson, protesters have continued "blaring horns and sirens and fireworks, and turning it into a party."

Meanwhile, police announced new measures to stop people from helping the protesters.

"Anyone attempting to bring material support (gas, etc.) to the demonstrators could be subject to arrest," Ottawa's police force tweeted.

Police also said that they had issued more than 450 tickets since Saturday.

'A nationwide insurrection'

Similar demonstrations hit Toronto, Quebec City and Winnipeg on Saturday.

Police in Quebec City said some 30 big trucks were blocking a major artery and had been warned they would face fines if not moving soon. City council member Diane Deans said that the protests are "bigger than just a city of Ottawa problem, this is a nationwide insurrection."

On Saturday, Ottawa police chief Peter Sloly called the demonstrations a "siege" and asked for reinforcements.

The federal Canadian Mounted police are due to send reinforcements of 250 officers to Ottawa.

US Republican support for the protests

The trucker protests have drawn support from members of the US Republican Party, including former President Donald Trump. Trump called Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau a "far left lunatic" who has "destroyed Canada with insane COVID mandates."

On Sunday, a former US ambassador to Canada denounced such statements, saying that the US should stop interfering in the domestic affairs of its neighbor.

"Canada US relations used to be mainly about solving technical issues," Hayman tweeted.

"Today Canada is unfortunately experiencing radical US politicians involving themselves in Canadian domestic issues," he added. "Trump and his followers are a threat not just to the US but to all democracies." **DW**

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EASTERN AFGHANISTAN



Avalanche kills over a dozen people in Afghanistan

KABUL: At least 15 people were killed after being buried by an avalanche in eastern Afghanistan, state-run news agency Bakhtar reported on Monday.

The incident happened in the province of Kunar, close to the border with Pakistan. An official from the province told German news agency dpa that the avalanche occurred on Sunday evening.

Officials reported that 20 people had been hit by the avalanche, but so far only 15 bodies had been found.

Remote border crossing

A Taliban official told AFP that the victims had been caught by the snow in a remote mountain pass while trying to get into Pakistan.

The province official said that some of the victims had been local villagers who had also become trapped after trying to help.

Rescue workers were still searching for more bodies.

The movement of people across the largely porous Afghanistan-Pakistan border is continuous, often with Afghans crossing to look for jobs or to buy goods.

Pakistan is trying to build a fence along the 2,670-kilometre (1,660-mile) border to stem to flow of migrants.

Heavy snowfall

Passes in the mountainous terrain prove difficult to police. But they also bring their own risks with such avalanches occurring regularly.

In 2015, some 250 people were killed in deadly avalanches. Last month five people were killed during heavy snowfall in the Badakhshan province.

Snowfall this year has closed many routes, especially in less developed regions. The country is already experiencing a humanitarian crisis as the loss of aid and the imposition of sanctions since the Taliban took power have taken their toll. **DW**

DETERRENCE EFFORTS

Biden discusses Ukraine with French President: White House

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden has discussed the Ukraine situation with French President Emmanuel Macron over the phone, ahead of the latter's meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, the White House informs.

"President Joe Biden spoke today with President Emmanuel Macron of France. The leaders discussed ongoing diplomatic and deterrence efforts in response to Russia's continued military build-up on Ukraine's borders, and affirmed their support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity," the White House said in a Sunday statement.

According to the release, Biden and Macron agreed that the two sides will stay in close touch, including in consultation with EU partners and Ukraine.

Macron will meet with Putin in Moscow on Monday. According to Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov, the two leaders are expected to discuss European security, bilateral relations and the Ukraine situation.

On Wednesday, Biden and Macron held a telephone call discussing Ukraine, following the Pen-

tagon's announcement regarding the deployment of additional US forces to Poland, Germany, and Romania in the next few days. US officials said the deployment is designed to reinforce NATO's eastern flank amid the Ukraine crisis.

In the past few months, the West and Ukraine have accused Russia of a troop build-up near the Ukrainian border in alleged preparation for an "invasion." Moscow has denied these accusations, repeatedly stating that it is not threatening anyone and at the same time expressing strong concerns over NATO's military

activity near the Russian borders, which it deems a threat to its national security.

Moscow has also said Russia has the right to move troops within its national territory.

Russia has also warned Western countries that military deliveries to Kiev may encourage the latter to use them against the breakaway Russian-speaking region of Donbas.

The United States has been in the process of delivering USD 200 million worth of security assistance approved by President Joe Biden in December. **DW**

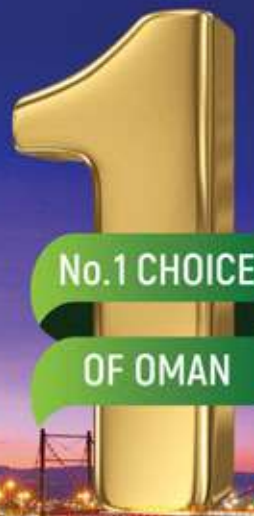


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1	Sweden	3	0	0	3
2	ROC	2	3	2	7
3	Netherlands	2	2	1	5
4	People's Republic of China	2	2	0	4
5	Germany	2	1	0	3
6	Norway	2	0	2	4
7	Slovenia	2	0	1	3
8	Italy	1	3	1	5
9	Canada	1	1	4	6
10	Japan	1	1	2	4
11	Australia	1	0	1	2
11	Switzerland	1	0	1	2
13	New Zealand	1	0	0	1
14	France	0	3	0	3
14	United States of America	0	3	0	3
16	Austria	0	2	2	4
17	Hungary	0	0	2	2
18	Finland	0	0	1	1
18	Poland	0	0	1	1

timesofoman.com

China edge past Japan in shootout, US get third victory

Defending champion United States won their third consecutive game after beating Switzerland 8-0 in Group A



BEIJING: China's women's ice hockey team defeated Japan 2-1 in a penalty shootout to claim its second win in Group B at the Beijing Winter Olympics on Sunday. Defending champion the United States won its third consecutive game after beating Switzerland 8-0 in Group A. China offered waves of offense after the opening puck dropped, even with forward Zhang Mengying injured in the middle of the first period. But Akane Hosoyamada seized the opportunity to score at 18:02 on a powerplay, securing Japan's 1-0 lead into the second period.

No more goals were scored until China's Hu Baozhen equalized at the very beginning of the third period. The 1-1 deadlock ensued and saw the game head into the first overtime at Beijing 2022. A dramatic moment arrived as a review was made after a China player moved the puck into the net with her body as she slipped, and the goal was ruled out. During the penalty shootout, Japan failed to score, while Mi Le netted the winner to end the tightly

contested match in China's favor. "For this game and the last, I think the key is that we trusted ourselves and fought hard," China goalkeeper Zhou Jiaying said. "We want to play more and we will be ready for tomorrow." The U.S. team dominated in the first period for a 5-0 lead, and extended the lead to 7-0 in the second period, before scoring once more in the third period. Seeded according to the 2020 IIHF Women's World Rankings, the top five U.S., Canada, Finland, ROC and Switzerland teams play in Group A of the preliminary round. Group B consists of Japan, the Czech Republic, Sweden, Denmark and hosts China. The Group A teams and the top-three Group B teams will play in the quarterfinals. China is scheduled on Monday to face its last opponent Sweden, who remains pointless in the preliminary round, and Denmark, also without a win, will play against the Czech Republic. **xinhua**

FREESTYLE SKIING

Jakara Anthony ends Australia's gold medal wait

SYDNEY: Mogul skier Jakara Anthony has broken Australia's 12-year-wait for a Winter Olympic gold after dominating the freestyle skiing women's moguls at the Beijing 2022 Games. "It's been a dream of mine my whole life to be an Olympic champion, actually I don't think I've ever stopped dreaming about it," said the 23-year-old after her golden final run on Sunday night. The Olympic dreamer dominated the slopes with a score of 83.09 (from a total 100), 2.81 points ahead of American runner-up Jaelin Kauf. But the Aussie champion remained calm and controlled throughout her final run, paid little mind to her scores until it was announced she came out on top. "I pay zero attention to what the other scores are, in fact, I don't even know what my score was, all I saw was the number one after my name," said Anthony. Her first-place finish broke a number of Winter Olympic records for the unlikely summer nation. Anthony became the sixth Australian to claim gold at a Winter Olympics and was able to follow in the footsteps of Australia's last Winter gold medalist Lydia Lassila, who won in the freestyle skiing aerials at the Vancouver 2010 Games. Anthony also helped Australia record its best-ever single-day medal result as Tess Coady claimed bronze in snowboard



slopestyle earlier on Sunday. The Queensland native's Olympic destiny began at just four years old when she began skiing with her family. She began competing on the world stage at just 16 at the World Cup in Deer Valley USA as part of the Australian Development Ski Team. Since then, she moved on to bigger and better feats, making her Olympic debut at Pyeongchang 2018, where she finished just shy of a medal in fourth place. Coming into the 2022 games Anthony touted a cool excitement to hit the slopes of Zhangjiakou's

Thaiwoo Ski Resort. "They build a really great course and can't wait to see what they bring first in February," she said in the lead-up to the Games. And despite the harsh competition and Australia's underdog position in Winter sports, she knew she and Australia was up for the challenge. "I know that I'm capable of skiing like that. And I was able to let myself do that tonight, which was something really special and something I take a lot of pride in," said Anthony during an international press conference. **xinhua**

SNOWBOARDING



China's Su makes history as Canada's Parrot wins snowboard slopestyle

CHONGLI: Parrot of Canada upset Chinese favorite Su Yiming to win gold in the men's snowboard slopestyle at the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics here on Monday. Despite missing out on the gold medal, the 17-year-old Su has become the first Chinese male snowboarder to reach the Olympic podium. Pyeong Chang Olympic silver medalist Parrot secured the victory with 90.96 points in the second run, where he contributed smooth performance in every section along the course and displayed a triple cork 1620 respectively in his fourth and sixth tricks.

"This is so incredibly special, especially with the run I did today. It's the biggest run I've done in my entire career," said Parrot. "I've never done two triples in a row in a run, with that difficulty as well, and everything was so clean. I am extremely proud of myself and to take gold on that run means so much for me." Su, 17, scored the medal-winning 88.70 points in his second of three runs, by performing a triple cork 1800 in the last section, which is the first time for the trick to appear at a Winter Olympics. As the World Cup Big Air winner, Su was the first rider ever to land an 1800 both ways in a FIS competition. On October 28,

2021, he landed a backside 1980 during a snowboard training camp in Saas-Fee, Switzerland. Canadian Mark McMorris, also Su's idol, finished with 88.53 in his best score to grab the bronze. He managed to complete his classic triple cork 1620 in the third run to replace American Redmond Gerard on the ranking table. "I would like to thank my motherland, my parents and my friends. The medal belongs to everyone who supported me," said Su. "I am really excited to stand on the podium with my idol. I do not know how to express that feeling because I never had it before." **-Xinhua**

WOMEN'S FREESKI

China's Gu Ailing qualifies for freeski big air final at Beijing



BEIJING: Local favorite Gu Ailing qualified for the Beijing 2022 women's freeski Big Air final, finishing with 161.25 points after three runs at the Big Air Shougang here on Monday. Gu performed a left-side double cork 1080 with a safety-to-japan grab to rank third with 89.00 points after her first run, behind Tess Ledeux of France (90.50

points) and Kirsty Muir of Britain (89.25 points). After her second run, Gu dropped to 16th place with a combined score of 113.50 after she dropped a right-side cork 900 but slipped on the landing as one of her skis fell off. Canadian Megan Oldham, who finished fourth in her World Championship debut at Aspen

in 2021, delivered a stunning run to score a race-high 91.25 points. In the third and final run, Gu stomped the same tricks as her second run to receive 72.25 points to qualify for the finals with a combination of best two runs out of three - 161.25 points. Oldham, Ledeux, Russian Anastasia Tatalina and Sandra Eie

of Norway occupied the top four spots, while Gu's compatriot Yang Shuorui failed to qualify for the final. "The wind switched in between the first and second run that you can see a lot of people were going slow," said Gu. "I didn't really notice until it was too late." The 18-year-old admitted there was "a lot of pressure" going into

the third run. "I'm happy to be able to perform under pressure and I think it speaks a lot to the volume of mental training that I've been putting on." "I'm excited for tomorrow. Tomorrow is the big show and I hope I can put on a good show for everyone," she added. The women's freeski big air final will take place on Tuesday. **xinhua**

Shane Warne slams Cricket Australia after Langer’s exit

Cricket Australia on Saturday accepted men’s team head coach Justin Langer’s resignation

MELBOURNE: Former Australia spinner Shane Warne on Monday slammed Cricket Australia and labelled Justin Langer’s ousting as a coach an “absolute disgrace.”

Cricket Australia on Saturday accepted men’s team head coach Justin Langer’s resignation. “Justin was offered a short-term extension to his current contract, which sadly he has opted not to accept,” stated an official Cricket Australia release. “To treat the head coach the way they have, it’s an absolute disgrace what they’ve done. All of us who have played with Justin, we are



not coming out because he’s our friend or a great cricketer or a Hall of Famer. We are coming out because it’s the treatment of the coach,” Warne said on the Follow-On podcast, as reported by Fox Sports. “Forget it’s Justin Langer. It’s just the treatment of Cricket Australia and the way they have handled the coach of the Australian cricket team. It’s been pathetic. We were finally starting to see the integrity coming back to the

Australian cricket,” he added. The contract extension offered to Justin was the result of a thorough review process that evaluated many factors including future requirements of the team and the upcoming extensive schedule of fixtures. The extension was approved by the CA Board and was put to Justin last night. It included the opportunity to defend the T20 World Cup title in Australia at the end of this year. “It’s not a great Australian

cricket team we are talking about here. But all that Justin Langer put in over three or four years, we are just starting to see the rewards for his hard work. His brutality, his intensity and his kick up the backside to the players. You know why? They needed it,” said Langer.

“If they can start doing this for another five or six years. Not to lose at home, beat India away and beat England away. Then we might start talking about this great Australian cricket team. But they aren’t at the moment. If they didn’t like his style and he had lost the dressing room, well, they better start performing. They have to perform,” he added. Langer was appointed as the men’s team coach in 2018 after the Sandpaper Gate which saw David Warner, Steve Smith serving out one-year bans. Under Langer, Australia managed to win the T20 World Cup 2021 and then the Ashes.

In his resignation letter, Langer stated that he is content with his decision and the speculation regarding his tenure as coach took a toll on his family. **ANI**

Andy Flower, the Man with the Midas Touch

Anis Sajjan, Vice Chairman, Danube Group

I had the privilege to meet the great Andy Flower in person at my office two years ago but interviewing him on a zoom chat was a great learning experience.

My first question to Andy was what made him score so many runs against India and he replied with a smile that he loved playing in India. Zimbabwe’s first test was against India at Harare and their first overseas tour was also against India and he remembers the spirit of cricket in India and the amazing excitement which engulfs the country even when a tiny little county which is followed so passionately in India evokes feelings and gets the best out of any player. The love of cricket and the feeling which evoked playing against India. He added that he learnt playing spin from Dave Houghton and watching good players of spin and copying them made him good player of spin which eventually helped him score big against India.

He had scored 500 runs in the 2001 series against India dismissed only twice and using his feet against the spinners and watching great players like Sachin Tendulkar and Javed Miandad when he was wicket keeping made him understand to play spinner.

He had developed a good defence as well as could attack spinners and had an average of 52 in Test Cricket after playing 62 test matches.

He recalls the first test win against Pakistan in 1995 which got the monkey of their back as they used to come close before but could not win the games but this win was special with his brother Grant Flower scoring a double hundred and he scoring 140 made that win extra special.

This was very important for their nation as it gave a lot of confidence to the team and players individually which is so crucial to do well.

His two hundreds in the same test match against South Africa of 142 and one 199 not out against top class south Africa attack made those twin hundreds special.

When I asked him about his special bonding with his brother Grant flower, he said they used to both play in the garden of their house and his brother was his best coach than he was to him as he corrected his mistakes. They used to train together in the gym, bat on cement tracks together and got to know each other well and were good friends.

He made his ODI debut in the 1992 world cup and in the first game hit a hundred against Sri Lanka which was so special and Zimbabwe scored 315 batting first and he thought they would win that game but Sri Lanka chased down that target and he was quite gutted.

He spoke about the famous win against India where he was the highest scorer in 1999 in England when Henry Olunga knocked three batters in one over to pull off an astonishing win against heavy weights India.

That made them qualify for the Super 8’s where they beat South Africa too and it was one off the highest point of Zimbabwe cricket in ODI.

After his retirement he took over as an assistant coach of England under Peter Moore’s but after the fall out with Kevin Piterson , Andy got the head coach job and did wonders for team England. Under him as coach England won three Ashes



series which was special and specially the Ashes win down under where England won 3/1 was very pleasing as after that England has not managed to win a single game in England. He said as much as he was happy winning England winning against India 4/0 in England and attain the number one status but the series win against India in India where they came back from behind to win the series 2/1 was very very special.

He added another feather to his coaching hat by making England win the 2010 T20 World Cup which was England’s first ICC trophy win and he recalls how they changed their style of playing after loosing to England Lions in UAE and picking two attacking players on Craig Kiewitter and Michael Lumb and played a different brand of cricket in the 2010 world cup and winning it.

He is now enjoying his stint as coach in franchise cricket , he was not exactly sure how it would go about coaching in franchise cricket compared to a national team.

He met different people from around the world and made friends with them , be it coaching in CPL , PSL or IPL. He said he does not have any magic wand but learning from each franchise tournament and getting the best out of each team and maximizing every players talent. One of the biggest challenges is getting people together from different cultures and that’s the key for a franchise to do well.

When I asked him about his new challenge of being the head coach of Lucknow Super Giants for the IPL after being assistant coach in the IPL earlier to Anil Kumble, he said he thanks Anil Kumble for the experience he got from that stint and can’t wait to begin his new innings with new franchise Lucknow Super Giants.

I had to ask him about the big IPL Auction coming up on 12 and 13th of this month.

He says he is very fortunate that Doctor Goenka the owner of Lucknow Super Giants backed him and made him the head coach and he hope he can carry on the good work.

He has been working closely with Doctor Goenka, Raghu Iyer the CEO and Gautam Gambhir the consultant for the auction strategy and getting the right people on board for this exciting new Franchise Lucknow Super Giants. The range of variables which exist in the big auction is quite daunting as all ten teams have to build their team from scratch like his own team and for him this will be his first experience and he is looking forward to it along with his esteemed team. He added a combination of good preparation and home work is important but also being flexible in the moment is most important during the big auction.

FOOTBALL



Ronaldo, Pochettino possible swap between Manchester United and PSG

LONDON: Manchester United are keen on Mauricio Pochettino as their next manager - and superstar Cristiano Ronaldo could head in the opposite direction to join PSG in the summer.

According to the Daily Mirror, Cristiano Ronaldo and Mauricio Pochettino could be involved in an incredible football version of trading places in the summer.

Paris Saint-Germain are becoming increasingly confident that Ronaldo will leave Manchester United at the end of the season following his frustration

at a lack of progress since returning to the Premier League.

That disillusionment intensified on Friday night with United’s exit from the FA Cup leaving Ronaldo with the likelihood that he will end the season without any silverware.

PSG are long time admirers of the Portuguese superstar and haven’t been put off by him turning 37. And there is growing support in the PSG boardroom for Ronaldo’s former Real Madrid boss Zinedine Zidane to replace Pochettino if the ex-Spurs man-

ager fails to land the Champions League.

That would play into the hands of Manchester United with Pochettino on the Old Trafford shortlist to become their permanent manager once Ralf Rangnick’s interim period as head coach concludes.

He is Sir Alex Ferguson’s choice to take over, the Scot believing the former Spurs boss can reunite a splintered dressing room and go on to recapture some of the glory years of his silverware decked rein. **ONA**

CHAMPIONS

Senegal crowned African champions



YAOUNDE: Senegal won its first Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) title on Sunday after defeating Egypt in the summit clash here at the Paul Biya Stadium.

Sadio Mane converted a crucial penalty for Senegal in the shootout, and in the end, the side defeated Mohamed Salah’s Egypt in the summit clash. Senegal ended up defeating Egypt 4-2 on penalties. After the match, Sadio Mane embraced Salah and the pictures have now gone viral of both the Liverpool stars.

The normal 90-minutes action had ended at 0-0 and in the end, the match had to progress to the penalty shootout after the extra time could not also separate the sides.

Both Mane and Salah had earlier suffered losses in the AFCON final, with Senegal losing to Algeria in 2019 and Cameroon outclassing Egypt in 2017. In the opening minutes of the final, Sadio Mane went on to miss the penalty against Egypt, but he redeemed himself in the penalty shootout, and in the end, Senegal went on to win the match. **ANI**

CRICKET ROUND-UP

Victories for Al Jadidi, Design Group, Ideal, Danmark

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Aneermon Abdulrahman’s strokeful 54 off 31 and Wasim Ismail’s 4 for 11 were the highlights of Al Jadidi Stars’ 83-run victory against ABL Task in an A Division T20 League game at Oman Cricket Turf 2 ground in Amerat on Saturday.

Al Jadidi’s 174 for 5 also included 48 from Pradeep Kumar and 30 from Nishanth Meethalveedu. Mohammed Abbas picked up 3 for 33 whereas Prathiesh Hema grabbed 2 for 35.

ABL Task was shot out for a disappointing 91 in 19.1 overs due to brilliant bowling by Wasim, Ali Muhammed (2 for 11) and Para-

meswaran Shankar (2 for 13).

Brief Scores (A Division T20): Al Jadidi Stars 174 for 5 in 20 overs (Aneermon Abdulrahman 54 – 2x4, 6x6, Pradeep Kumar 48 – 3x4, 1x6, Nishanth Meethalveedu 30 – 3x4, 1x6, Mohammed Abbas 3-33, Prathiesh Hema 2-35) beat ABL Task 91 all out in 19.1 overs (Ravi 29 – 4x4, 1x6, Wasim Ismail 4-11, Ali Muhammed 2-11, Parameswaran Shankar 2-13) by 83 runs.

Design Group win
 Design Group rode on Sayeed Waseem’s magnificent 57-ball 117 to thrash OCT Al Amerat by 155 runs in a C Division T20 League match at Muscat Municipality

ground 2 on Friday.

Waseem’s 117 included 20 fours and one six as Design Group posted 238 for 9 on the board. Rafeeq Mohammed and Nasser Haider claimed three wickets each. After a forgettable day with the ball, OCT Amerat failed to impress with the bat too, scoring a lowly 83 for 8 in 20 overs due to superb spells by Satham Hussain (3 for 5) and Muhammed Althaf (3 for 13). Rafeeq Mohammed topscored with 26).

Brief Scores (C Division T20): Design Group Engineering Consultants 238 for 9 in 20 overs (Sayeed Waseem 117 – 20x4, 1x6, Parvez Beg 35 – 5x4, Rafeeq Mohammed 3-24, Nasser Haider

3-45) beat Oct Al Amerat 83 for 8 in 20 overs (Rafeeq Mohammed 26 – 4x4, Satham Hussain 3-5, Muhammed Althaf 3-13) by 155 runs.

Ideal thrashes Nibrass
 In another C Division game at Muscat Municipality ground 1, Ideal International trounced Nibrass Tech by 9 wickets thanks to Ruban Durai’s top knock of 57 and Salman Khan’s 3 for 20.

Salman was instrumental in Nibrass getting bowled out for 115 in the 18th over with Shahrukh Varus and Deepak Bhandari taking two wickets each.

Riding on Ruban’s fantastic fifty, Ideal raced to the target in only

11.5 overs, scoring 116 for 1. Wasim Jamadar chipped in with a fluent 30 off 17. Brief Scores (C Division): Nibrass Tech 115 all out in 17.2 overs (Waqas Khalid 23 – 4x4, Salman Khan 3-20, Shahrukh Varus 2-19, Deepak Bhandari 2-30) lost to Ideal International 116 for 1 in 11.5 overs (Ruban Durai 57 – 10x4, Wasim Jamadar 30 – 5x4, 1x6) by 9 wickets.

Danmark win
 Sankarlal Sasidharan’s outstanding all-round display powered Danmark CT to an impressive 53-run win over Safara International in a D Division T20 match at Muscat Municipality ground 3 in Amerat on Friday. Danmark

did well to reach 180 for 8 in 20 overs thanks to Sankarlal’s 42-ball 64 and Muhammed Basheer’s 36 off 22.

Akbaar Sardar took 3 for 22 whereas Nadeem Pewekar claimed 2 for 7. Sankarlal was brilliant with the ball too, taking 3 for 21 as Safara International was restricted to 127 for 9 despite Hardik Toprani’s unbeaten 45.

Brief Scores (D Division T20): Danmark CT 180 for 8 in 20 overs (Sankarlal Sasidharan 64 – 9x4, Muhammed Basheer 36 – 7x4, Akbaar Sardar 3-22, Nadeem Pewekar 2-7) beat Safara International 127 for 9 in 20 overs (Hardik Toprani 45 – 3x4, Sankarlal Sasidharan 3-21) by 53 runs.

OMAN CRUDE PRICE RISES

The price of Oman oil has increased, with prices for delivery by April 2022 reaching \$91.38, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil rose by 73 cents from the price of Friday, which was \$90.65. - **ONA**

MARKET BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) general index (30) gained 0.5 points, comprising a rise by 0.01 per cent to close at 4132.70 points, compared to the last session, which stood at 4132.16 points.

Barka Desalination IPO Phase I oversubscribed by 4.8 times

Phase II of the IPO, where shares would be offered to retail investors at the price of 145 baisas, would open for subscription from today till February 14

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Barka Desalination Company (BDC) has announced the successful closure of Phase I of its IPO for listing on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX).

Based on the price discovery process completed through book building by large and institutional investors, the allotment price for shares has been determined at 145 baisas at the highest end of the price range of baisas 115 to baisas 145 per share.

Phase I of the IPO, being managed by Bank Muscat, received a strong response with an oversubscription of 4.83 times of Phase I offer shares. The investors included a cross-section of Oman's leading corporates, banks, insurance companies, asset management companies, sovereign entities, pension funds, as well as high net



FIRST DIVIDEND: As per the company's prospectus, IPO investors are expected to receive the first dividend of 6 baisas in April 2022.

- Supplied picture

worth individuals.

As anchor investors to the IPO, each of National Power and Water Co. LLC, (an investment arm of Bahwan Engineering Group), and Bank Muscat SAOG had provided commitments to invest up to 10 per cent of the IPO at baisas 145 per share i.e. the highest end of the price range. A high number of bids submitted by investors also came at the 145 baisas, the top end of the price range.

The interest from institutional

and large investors demonstrates the strong interest in this offering from the investor community in Oman as an attractive offering.

As per the company's prospectus, IPO investors are expected to receive the first dividend of 6 Bzs in April 2022. Further, as per the prospectus, BDC is expected to declare semi-annual dividends of 6 baisas per share in April and October every year. (Refer to the prospectus for more details). As per the prospectus, IPO investors could expect a

stable annual dividend yield of 8.4 per cent on the issue price of 145 baisas (excluding the 2 baisas issue expenses) paid through two dividend payments each year.

The Phase II of the IPO, where shares would be offered to retail investors at the price of baisas 145, would open for subscription from February 8 to February 14.

Earlier, the IPO received positive coverage from the leading brokerages in Oman including Ubhar Capital and United Securities with a recom-

mendation to 'Subscribe' to the IPO.

Commenting on the success of Phase I, Patrick Thienpont, CEO of BDC said, "We are extremely pleased with the success of Phase I of the IPO, which is a positive indication of the confidence in the industry and market in BDC. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all investors who have made the Phase I process a success. Wide and strong participation in Phase I of the IPO is in line with our expectations and endorses

es the response we received during our investor meetings. Retail investors now have the advantage to see the strong response from the large investors and can now apply to become part of the success story of Barka Desalination and earn an average dividend yield of 8.4 per cent p.a. (excluding the 2 baisas issue expenses) and get the first dividend in April 2022". (Refer to the prospectus for the IPO for further details including the projected dividends and risk factors)."

Phase II offer to the retail investors will be through the process of E-IPO aimed at providing investors with the convenience to apply using mobile banking or internet banking channels of collection agents. Investors may approach any of the collection agents for the IPO to seek further clarifications to their questions.

Bank Muscat Investment Banking, Oman's largest and most experienced investment banking team is the financial advisor and sole issue manager for the IPO transaction. BDC has also appointed the largest ever collection syndicate for any IPO in Oman consisting of Ahli Bank, Bank Dhofar, Bank Muscat, Oman Arab Bank, Sohar International Bank, Ubhar Capital and United Securities.

Details of key investment highlights as well as risk factors are disclosed in the prospectus approved by the CMA. Interested investors can view and download a copy of the prospectus and summary information booklet of the investment highlights through the company's website at www.barkadesalination.com/ipo.

UNAUDITED FINANCIAL RESULTS

United Finance achieves net profit growth of 147% in 2021

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Sultanate's leading financial and leasing services provider - United Finance Company (UFC) - has announced its preliminary unaudited financial results for the year ending 2021.

The company has reported a net profit of OMR1.91 million; this translates into a 147 per cent growth from the net profit of OMR776,000 during the previous year. The increase in net profit is largely attributable to the prompt and prudent actions taken by the company's board of directors and management, who have reimagined the customer service experience in 2021 by enabling quick, secure and seamless financing and loan interactions through a comprehensive, customised and innovative products and services portfolio.

The net finance income of the company stood at OMR6.25 million in 2021, which is a 25 per cent growth over 2020's finance income of OMR4.99 million. The operating profit for 2021 was OMR3.62 million, as compared to OMR2.40 million in 2020, which is a 50 per cent growth in operating profit.

Financial performance

UFC's CEO, Nasser Salim Said Al Rashdi stated, "Our financial performance in 2021 is a sound indicator that we are well-positioned to continue our momentum of being a financial powerhouse in the country. Our robust balance sheet enables us to continue to support our customers while remaining resilient and emerging stronger in the long run.

"Going forward, we will continue to be proactive and enhance

our digital solutions to address our customers' needs."

In maximising long-term value for shareholders, with its experienced management team, UFC will continue to focus on high-quality products and services, key investments in technology, and employee engagement.

The company aims to continue to keep the customer at the core of everything they do while remaining focused on increasing employees' knowledge base and improving employee morale through periodic training and development programmes.

Rashdi also mentioned, "Despite the ongoing COVID-19 situation, we are grateful that our country's leadership has demonstrated extraordinary foresight and vision in creating necessary systems to support the recovery and growth of the economy. In do-

ing our bit for society, and in keeping with our values of putting the customer first - we offered relief measures to our customers facing financial troubles as a result of COVID-19."

Established in 1997, United Finance Company aims to become a next-generation Finance Powerhouse that uses technology to create a value-exchange ecosystem for digitally-engaged individuals, large corporates and small-medium enterprises (SMEs). The company provides a range of financial products and services - car loans (new and used cars), equipment loans, heavy vehicle financing, bill discounting, working capital funding, and corporate deposits. Headquartered in Wattayah, UFC has eight branches in Oman, in Barka, Mawaleh, Ibra, Ibri, Nizwa, Sohar and Salalah, besides its Head Office branch.

OIL PRICE



Oil turns higher on fears of tight supply

TOKYO: Oil prices rose on Monday, reversing earlier losses, as investors kept bullish sentiment on expectations that global supply would remain tight as demand picks up and shrugged off signs of progress in the US-Iran nuclear talks.

"Investors scooped up short-term profits on the news suggesting progress in the US-Iran nuclear talks, but fresh buying kicked in again after the technical corrections as global supply is expected to stay

tight," said Tatsufumi Okoshi, a senior economist at Nomura Securities.

US President Joe Biden's administration on Friday restored sanctions waivers to Iran to allow international nuclear cooperation projects, as the talks on the 2015 international nuclear deal enter the final stretch, according to Reuters. If the United States lifts sanctions on Iran, the country could boost oil shipments, adding to global supply. - **BNA**

SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

Bank Nizwa launches sustainable finance initiative



Times News Service

MUSCAT: Built on strong Shari'a-compliant values of finance, Bank Nizwa has been consistent in its endeavours to highlight the importance of following sustainable practices of business that promotes positive environmental and social impacts, especially in the face of growing climate concerns.

In line with the same, in a recent event, the bank launched its sustainable finance initiative that further attests to its commitment to achieving sustainable economic growth with minimal impact on the environment.

Commenting on the launch, Khaled Al Kayed, CEO of Bank Nizwa said, "While financial stability is essential to attain sustainable economic growth in the Sultanate, it is also imperative that we promote an all-inclusive ecosystem that factors in sustainable programs. These focus on climate

change, environmental protection and transitioning to a green, circular economy, which essentially implies enhancing the living conditions of people and giving opportunities to the local workforce to make their mark in society. Aligning ourselves to the Oman Vision 2040, we want to continue to contribute towards building an economic system that is more sustainable and integrates sustainability into all our core functions. Bank Nizwa has also remained invested in harnessing technology and innovation to readdress financial services from the perspective of sustainability. We will undertake all such initiatives that will help Oman achieve its goal to be listed among the top 20 countries in the worldwide Environmental Performance Index."

Credible sustainability strategies

By implementing credible and

transparent sustainability strategies and conceptualising innovative sustainable financing solutions for its clients, the bank has been at the forefront of supporting the collective efforts of the country as it moves towards Net Zero emissions and attaining a sustainable future. With a keen focus on helping clients integrate environmental, social and governance (ESG) criteria into their businesses, financing activities that support the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and encouraging customers to invest in practices that lower energy emissions, Bank Nizwa has paved the way forward with its sustainable finance solutions. The newly launched program is designed to incentivise companies towards applying more effort into achieving their sustainability goals.

Such initiatives will directly impact other sectors like housing, infrastructure and transport

making them more affordable for the masses while also providing the community equal access to essential services. With a comprehensive strategy in mind, Bank Nizwa's initiatives have also kept pace with the government's Omanisation drive to increase the number of skilled Omanis in the national workforce. There has also been a keen emphasis on increasing the number of Omani women in senior management positions in the Sultanate.

As an advocate of Islamic finance and sustainable practices, Bank Nizwa has spearheaded several initiatives that have a long-term positive impact on the community. With a growing trend amongst companies seeking to apply ESG criteria in their investment decisions, the bank will be able to provide the needed guidance in measuring sustainability risks while also helping them improve their sustainability practices.

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

The trading value stood at OMR5,321,644, comprising an increase of 5.4 per cent, compared to the last session



MUSCAT: Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) general index (30) gained 0.5 points, comprising a rise by 0.01 per cent to close at 4132.70 points, compared to the last session, which stood at 4132.16 points.

The trading value stood at OMR5,321,644, comprising an increase of 5.4 per cent, compared to the last session, which stood at OMR5,049,055.

The report released by MSX

pointed out that the market value dropped by 1.007 per cent to reach about OMR22.07 billion.

The report added that the value of shares bought by non-Omani investors reached OMR223,000, comprising 4.18 per cent.

The value of shares sold by non-Omani investors reached OMR48,000, comprising 0.90 per cent. The net non-Omani investment went up by 3.28 per cent to OMR174,000. -**ONA**

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff%
MSX 30 INDEX	4,137.65	4,127.52	4,132.16	4,127.52	4.64	0.11
FINANCIAL INDEX	6,603.08	6,582.05	6,583.40	6,577.35	6.05	0.09
Industry Index	5,766.16	5,731.32	5,766.16	5,752.35	13.81	0.24
Services Index	1,605.69	1,599.61	1,605.69	1,601.91	3.78	0.24
MSX Shariah Index	503.84	501.39	503.83	501.39	2.45	0.49
MSX TR INDEX	4,980.68	4,968.50	4,974.08	4,968.50	5.59	0.11

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
24,546,175	5,049,055	344	22,292,189,552	12	11	18	41

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR MONDAY, FEBRUARY 7

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PR.	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	P/B VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET																
OM0000006920	VISION INSURANCE	15,000	1,320	2	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.085	0.003	3.529	0.088	0.086	0.092	0.100	8,800,000
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	889,048	79,567	57	0.087	0.092	0.086	0.089	0.086	0.003	3.488	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.100	17,800,000
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	434,694	192,471	24	0.440	0.444	0.440	0.442	0.430	0.012	2.791	0.440	0.444	0.444	0.100	97,240,000
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	156,550	48,151	17	0.310	0.314	0.302	0.308	0.300	0.008	2.667	0.312	0.306	0.312	0.100	18,850,916
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	6,542	3,062	4	0.458	0.470	0.458	0.468	0.458	0.010	2.183	0.470	0.464	0.480	0.100	25,740,000
OM0000002200	AHLI BANK	167,500	20,430	7	0.122	0.122	0.120	0.122	0.120	0.002	1.667	0.122	0.120	0.122	0.100	237,558,211
OM0000003668	QOREDOO	22,042	7,883	6	0.354	0.362	0.354	0.358	0.354	0.004	1.130	0.362	0.354	0.362	0.100	233,038,094
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	1,823,818	962,973	9	0.528	0.528	0.526	0.528	0.524	0.004	0.763	0.526	0.524	0.526	0.100	1,001,887,322,690
OM0000002077	AL OMANIYA FIN.	318,437	41,397	11	0.130	0.130	0.130	0.130	0.130	0.000	0.000	0.130	0.130	0.133	0.100	37,951,572
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIA INV.	4,225	389	2	0.094	0.094	0.092	0.093	0.093	0.000	0.000	0.092	0.092	0.093	0.100	8,370,000
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SER.	135,976	59,829	11	0.440	0.440	0.440	0.440	0.440	0.000	0.000	0.440	0.410	0.444	0.100	104,020,400
OM0000003398	SOHAR INT. BANK	14,000	1,554	1	0.111	0.111	0.111	0.111	0.111	0.000	0.000	0.111	0.115	0.111	0.100	331,696,914
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PROD.	144,977	57,065	14	0.394	0.394	0.392	0.394	0.396	-0.002	-0.505	0.394	0.390	0.396	0.100	49,209,796
OM0000001525	OMAN INVST& FIN.	135,251	20,964	6	0.155	0.155	0.155	0.155	0.156	-0.001	-0.641	0.155	0.155	0.155	0.100	367,75,000
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	5,700	4,560	4	0.800	0.800	0.800	0.800	0.808	-0.008	-0.990	0.800	0.788	0.800	0.100	600,000,000
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	10,000	590	2	0.059	0.059	0.059	0.059	0.060	-0.001	-1.667	0.059	0.059	0.060	0.100	18,121,633
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	5,421	1,670	1	0.308	0.308	0.308	0.308	0.314	-0.006	-1.911	0.308	0.302	0.308	0.100	205,856,551
OM0000004148	RAYSUT CEMENT	27,984	5,189	9	0.184	0.188	0.184	0.185	0.189	-0.004	-2.116	0.188	0.181	0.192	0.100	37,000,000
Total	18	4,317,165	1,509,064	187												
Parallel Market																
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	979,824	70,555	16	0.072	0.072	0.072	0.072	0.066	0.006	9.081	0.072	0.072	0.072	0.100	8,775,000
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	6,000	294	2	0.049	0.049	0.049	0.049	0.047	0.002	4.255	0.049	0.048	0.049	0.100	71,667,472
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	8,500	706	2	0.084	0.084	0.082	0.083	0.082	0.001	1.220	0.082	0.082	0.085	0.100	99,108,470
OM0000003661	VOLTAIR ENERGY	21,100	1,999	5	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.089	0.001	1.124	0.090	0.089	0.090	0.100	7,236,248
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	17,000,000	3,196,000	2	0.188	0.188	0.188	0.188	0.188	0.000	0.000	0.188	0.188	0.200	0.100	305,677,915
OM0000001517	HSCB BANK OMAN	438,770	42,999	11	0.098	0.098	0.098	0.098	0.098	0.000	0.000	0.098	0.095	0.098	0.100	196,030,653
OM0000001568	OMAN FISHERIES	4,000	220	1	0.055	0.055	0.055	0.055	0.055	0.000	0.000	0.055	0.050	0.059	0.100	6,875,000
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INV.	140	7	1	0.052	0.052	0.052	0.052	0.053	0.000	0.000	0.052	0.050	0.055	0.100	3,710,000
OM0000003125	GLOBAL INV. H	15,000	1,065	3	0.071	0.071	0.071	0.071	0.071	0.000	0.000	0.071	0.070	0.078	0.100	14,200,000
OM0000003281	TAGEER FINANCE	19,215	1,556	4	0.081	0.081	0.081	0.081	0.081	0.000	0.000	0.081	0.078	0.085	0.100	20,540,790
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEER	13,600	963	3	0.073	0.073	0.073	0.073	0.073	0.000	0.000	0.073	0.073	0.076	0.100	14,818,011
OM0000003711	SOHAR POWER	110	5	1	0.042	0.042	0.042	0.042	0.042	0.000	0.000	0.042	0.040	0.042	0.100	9,282,420
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	10,324	1,002	2	0.098	0.098	0.097	0.097	0.097	0.000	0.000	0.097	0.096	0.098	0.100	16,975,000
OM0000004776	TAKAFUL OMAN	11,000	770	1	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.000	0.000	0.070	0.066	0.070	0.100	7,000,000
OM0000004925	ALBATHINAH POWER	15,075	724	3	0.046	0.046	0.046	0.046	0.046	0.000	0.000	0.046	0.046	0.048	0.100	32,394,597
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	10,200	500	2	0.050	0.050	0.049	0.049	0.049	0.000	0.000	0.049	0.048	0.049	0.100	35,005,911
OM0000007084	MCT DESALINATE	4,096	370	2	0.090	0.091	0.090	0.091	0.091	0.000	0.000	0.091	0.087	0.100	0.100	14,155,086
OM0000001152	OMAN NAT. ENG.	363,300	43,546	29	0.120	0.120	0.119	0.120	0.121	-0.001	-0.826	0.119	0.119	0.122	0.100	15,600,000
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	206,415	20,245	10	0.099	0.099	0.098	0.098	0.099	-0.001	-1.010	0.098	0.098	0.099	0.100	219,221,397
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	917,389	60,001	49	0.065	0.066	0.065	0.065	0.066	-0.001	-1.515	0.065	0.065	0.066	0.100	22,694,387
OM0000001319	ALUMINIUM PROD.	35,000	9,037	8	0.109	0.109	0.108	0.109	0.112	-0.003	-2.679	0.108	0.108	0.109	0.100	3,659,288
OM0000004735	SEWBOCOR SALALAH	15,452	1,097	1	0.071	0.071	0.071	0.071	0.073	-0.002	-2.740	0.071	0.071	0.077	0.100	67,74,698
Total	22	20,142,610	3,453,591	156												

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ANNUAL CRUDE STEEL PRODUCTION

India targets to double steel production capacity to 300 MT by 2030-31

NEW DELHI:

India targets to more than double its annual crude steel production capacity to 300 million tonnes (MT) by 2030-31 from the present 144 MT, Union Minister of Steel Ram Chandra Prasad Singh said on Monday.

"The present annual crude steel capacity of the country is 144 MT and is envisaged to reach 300 MT by 2030-31. National Steel Policy, 2017 aims to provide the conducive environment for attaining this objective by providing policy support and guidance to steel producers," Singh said.

The priority for this sector is evident from the fact that 40 per cent of investment in the manufacturing sector in India has been made by companies in the steel sector during 2020-21, the minister said. Singh said the government has taken several initiatives to increase usage of domestically manufactured steel and import substitution. -ANI

3D LEARNING PLATFORM

70+ global entrepreneurs invest in Invect Metaversity

SAN FRANCISCO:

More than 70 top global corporate leaders and founders of unicorns have come together to fund Invect-Metaversity, a cutting-edge startup at the intersection of education and metaverse.

Invect Metaversity has been at the forefront in working on the Metaverse concept which has been increasingly in the limelight over the past few months for the potential that it has in transforming new age business ventures from education to entertainment.

The tech world has been abuzz with mentions of Metaverse and investors across the globe scouting for opportunities to invest in this future of tech. Known to bring in a convergence of two ideas that have been around for many years: virtual reality and digital second life, Invect Metaversity is working towards bringing the benefits of this emerging concept to the world of education.

Invect Metaversity is the world's first 3D immersive virtual learning platform. It allows students to communicate with one another and their teachers via animated avatars regardless of their physical location. -ANI/PNN

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Study finds why people divulge other’s secrets

Secrets are a social phenomenon among humans. But when and why would someone divulge another person’s secret to others?

According to a new study by researchers at Arizona State University and Columbia University, the divulging of a secret has a direct correlation to a person’s morals.

The findings of the study were published in the ‘Journal of Personality and Social Psychology’.

It seems that when someone learns another person’s secret that breaks their own moral code, then the person who was confided in seems to be willing to divulge that secret so to “punish” the secret holder, according to Jessica Salerno, an associate professor of psychology in the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences at Arizona State University.

“Keeping things about ourselves secret is burdensome and has a negative impact on our relationships and our health,” Jessica Salerno said, an associate professor of psychology in the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences at Arizona State University.

“Confiding in others is important, but we assume that the people we confide in have similar motivations to keep the information quiet as we do to protect us and prevent us from being punished for that secret behaviour. Yet, our discovery is that it’s not just that people often don’t keep our secrets, but they may be inclined to actively reveal the secret to see us punished when they think the secret behavior is immoral.”

The research is based on a series of nine studies that asked participants how often they decide it is appropriate to

reveal someone else’s secrets and what their motivations were behind those decisions.

Salerno and her co-author, Michael Slepian of Columbia University, found a consistent trend in how often secrets were divulged and some of the motivations as to why they were divulged.

“Across a wide variety of commonly kept secrets, ranging from being unhappy at work to infidelity, people revealed other people’s secrets 30 per cent of the time on average,” Salerno said.

“When we specified that we only wanted to know about secrets that were directly confided in our participants by someone close to them, we expected this percentage to drop a lot, but it didn’t, people still revealed 26 per cent of other people’s secrets that had been directly confided in them,” she added.

“This means that the majority of secrets were kept but a meaningful percentage, that some might consider horrifying when they consider their own confided secrets, were revealed to at least one other person,” Salerno said.

As to why people divulged other’s secrets, Salerno said, morality played a key role.

“Across many studies and situations, people were significantly more likely to reveal someone else’s secret if they considered the secret to be an immoral behavior,” she explained.

“And we found out why: People are more likely to reveal other people’s secrets that they think are immoral because it satisfies a (perhaps unconscious) emotional need to see that person punished for the morally outraging secret behavior,” she said.

In fact, the role of punishment is a key in the divulging of a secret. If the person who was confided in thinks the person who holds the secret has already been punished, then they are less motivated to divulge the secret. Remove the

punishment, however, and then people are more motivated to divulge the secret to fulfill that need to see them punished, Salerno said. This motivation to reveal information as punishment appeared to be limited to the realm of secret information.

“We found that when the information was a confided secret, people’s decisions to reveal it or not were driven by their motivation to punish the person,” she said.

“But when the same information was presented as not being a secret, people’s decisions to reveal it or not was not driven by their motivation to punish the person, but instead by their desire to gossip about it,” she added.

“So, this phenomenon of being more likely to reveal someone else’s immoral behaviour to punish them is something specific to secrets—if the information is public, it is driven more by a desire to gossip,” Salerno explained.

So why even confide in another person if you know your secret could be damaging?

While people generally keep their own misdeeds quiet to avoid punishment and reputational damage, Salerno said confiding in someone provided a relief to the secret holder.

“Keeping secrets leads to social isolation, stress, damage to relationships and health problems,” she explained.

“People might reveal the secret to others to avoid these negative consequences, or also to feel close to the confidant, ask advice, or to receive social support. Being able to confide secrets — including those that are immoral— is important for people’s relationships and mental health, which is why it is important to know how to choose those confidants wisely,” she added. -ANI





- World Champions Cavendish and Costa, as well as Stewart, headline the startlist of the 2022 Tour of Oman.
- Classics experts such as Kragh Andersen will aim to show their strong early-season legs while Jabal Al Akhdar (Green Mountain) will provide a major test for climbers like Masnada.
- Oman National Champion Al Rahbi leads the local selection to do battle against the international cycling elite heading to the Sultanate.

The landscapes of the 2022 Tour of Oman are set to both amaze the world and push international champions to their limits over six days of racing (February 10th-15th).

Sprinters such as the British icon Mark Cavendish, climbing talents like the rising German champion Marco Brenner and all-rounders such as the 2014 World Champion Rui Costa will all find opportunities to shine and write glorious new pages in the history of the event. Since the first edition in 2010, winners have included riders of the calibre of Fabian Cancellara, Vincenzo Nibali and Chris Froome.

Fast men are expected to be immediately in action in this 11th edition of the race, provided they survive the windy traps of the first two stages leading to the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre and the Suhar Corniche, respectively. With Cavendish in the race, this portion proves to be particularly exciting – when it comes to sprinting, there aren't many riders in the whole history of cycling that can match his skills and achievements. The British superstar, who shares the record for most wins in the Tour de France (34) with Belgian legend Eddy Merckx, won the final stage of the Tour of Oman in 2011, on the historic Matrah Corniche. After a brilliant return to the forefront last year, the Manx Missile will be able to rely on a strong Quick-Step Alpha Vinyl Team to battle through the desert and lead him out in the final kilometres with partners such as the experienced Iljo Keisse and the gifted Mauro Schmid.

At 27 years old, Fernando Gaviria (UAE Team Emirates) also holds a place in the history books since he sprinted to the prestigious yellow and pink jerseys on the roads of the Tour de France and the Giro d'Italia. Coming off the Saudi Tour, the Colombian "Misil" will take on the Omani roads with the support of one of the best lead-out men of this century, Maximiliano Richeze. Belgian sprinter Amaury Capiot (Team Arkea-Samsic) will be eager to challenge these two icons, following a strong start of the season (winner in the GP La

Marseillaise). It will also be interesting to see how Campbell Stewart's talents fare on the road, after leading him to a World Champion title on the track. The New-Zealander, also a silver medallist in last year's Olympic Games, embarks on a new adventure with his first race for Team BikeExchange-Jayco alongside another young sprinting talent, Kaden Groves.

These fast men can expect to be pushed to their limits by all-rounders such as Soren Kragh Andersen, a stage winner in the Tour of Oman (in 2017, on the Quarayyat climb where the race returns this year) and the Tour de France. The Dane and his compatriot Casper Pedersen form a strong power duo for Team DSM. Other punchy and resilient riders like Max Walscheid (Cofidis) and Ryan Gibbons (UAE Team Emirates) can shred the bunch before they make the most of their pure speed in the final stretch. Rui Costa (UAE Team Emirates) is another versatile talent whose abilities already got him eight top-5 stage finishes in the Tour of Oman, with strong overall results (2nd in 2017, also in the top 5 in 2016 and 2019). Is it his year to move to the highest step of the podium?

Italian climber Fausto Masnada (Quick-Step Alpha Vinyl Team) should be among Costa's main rivals on the slopes of Jabal Al Akhdar (Green Mountain, 5.7km at 10.5%), where French climber Elie Gesbert (Team Arkea-Samsic) already showed his worth in 2019 (5th in 2019, alongside Costa). German teenager Marco Brenner (Team DSM) is a special talent, and the iconic climb could also inspire him to show his budding abilities to the world.

The young Said Al Rahbi is not much older (21 years old), and he'll also be determined to be at his best as the reigning Oman National Champion, crowned last Autumn in Qurayyat. He's joined by his runner-up, Mohammed Al-Wahibi and bronze medalist Husam Al Rawahi in the 7-man Oman National Selection who will be competing in the race for the first time in its history. With such an exciting debut, there's no doubt they're ready for battle!



18 TEAMS: THE MAIN PARTICIPANTS

- Australia**
Team BikeExchange-Jayco: Groves (Aus), Campbell (Nzl)
- Belgium**
Intermarché-Wanty-Gobert Matériaux: Taaramäe (Est)
Quick-Step Alpha Vinyl Team: Cavendish (Gbr), Masnada (Ita)
Bingoal Pauwels Sauces WB: Menten (Bel)
- France**
B&B Hotels-KTM: Lietaer (Bel)
Cofidis: Walscheid (Ger)
Team Arkea-Samsic: Gesbert (Fra), Capiot (Bel)
Groupama-FDJ: Scotson (Aus)
- Italy**
Bardiani CSF Faizane': Zana (Ita)
- Kazakhstan**
Astana Qazaqstan Team Development: Henao (Col)

- Netherlands**
Team DSM: Kragh Andersen (Den), Pedersen (Den)
- Norway**
Uno-X Pro Cycling Team: Eg (Den)
- Oman**
Oman National Team: Al Rahbi (Omn)
- Russia**
Gazprom-Rusvelo: Canola (Ita)
- Spain**
Euskaltel-Euskadi: Angulo (Esp)
Burgos-BH: Bol (Ned), Raim (Est)
- United Arab Emirates**
UAE Team Emirates: Costa (Por), Gaviria (Col)
- USA**
Team Novo Nordisk: Planet (Fra)



FEATURE

FROM COOK TO COLUMBUS: Explorers and their famous ships

Researchers have discovered what they believe is the wreck of British explorer James Cook’s ship “Endeavour,” that sank more than 200 years ago. It was not the only ship that paved the way for colonialist claims.



Vasco da Gama
Arab and Indian merchants regarded the appearance of the Portuguese explorer’s fleet, including the “Esmeralda,” as an attack on their trade monopoly, which led to skirmishes. The Phoenicians had already sailed around the southern tip of Africa for the first time around 600 BC, commissioned by the Egyptian Pharaoh Necho II.



Leif Eriksson
Vikings crossed the Atlantic about 1,000 years ago. Leif Eriksson must have set sail on a ship similar to the one pictured above. Sailing a so-called knarr boat, about 20 meters long and six meters wide, he discovered America about 500 years before Columbus.



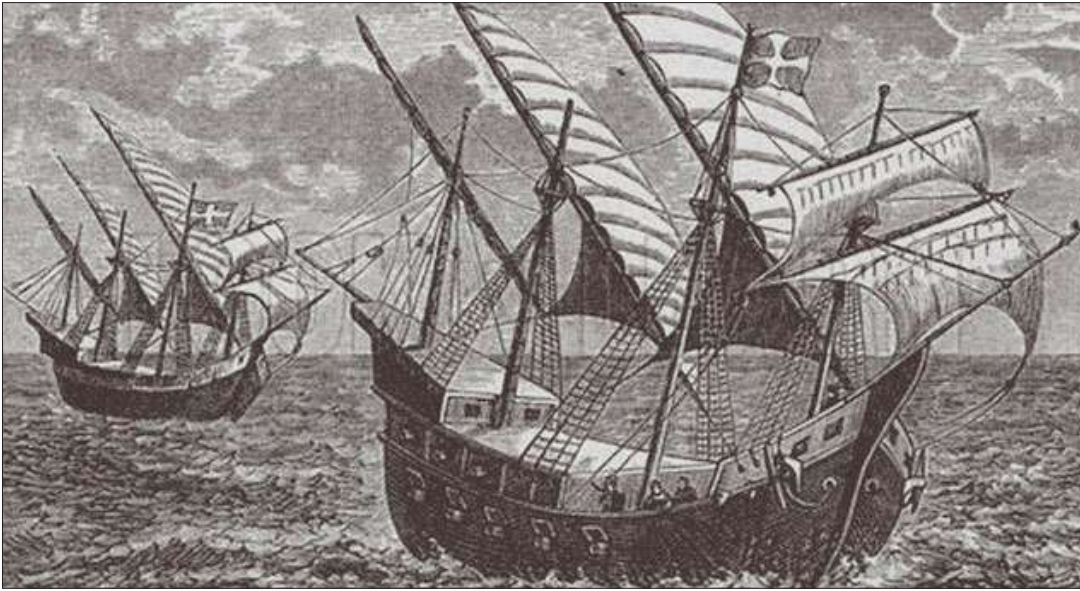
James Cook
This is a replica of the famous “Endeavour” — and now Australian researchers claim to have discovered the wreck. Captain Cook sailed from England to Tahiti and New Zealand on the ship before reaching Australia in 1770, where he charted the east coast. He in effect paved the way for British colonialism. In 1778, the ship sank in Newport Harbour. Cook was then already in command of another ship.



Ferdinand Magellan
Ferdinand Magellan set sail on the “Victoria” for the Spanish crown to find a western route to the Indonesian Spice Islands in 1519. Although he is often said to be the first person to circumnavigate the globe, he was killed by the locals when he landed in the Philippines in 1521. His surviving crew members however managed to complete the history-making voyage.



Luf boat
There is no famous captain in this case. In fact this Luf boat was looted when Germany took over the German New Guinea Protectorate from 1884-1914. It is an example of sophisticated craftsmanship because it was built without nails. The outrigger boat is one of many objects in German museums criticized because of their colonial provenance.



Bartolomeu Dias
Portuguese King John II commissioned him to find the southern tip of Africa. So Dias set sail with the Sao Cristovao and the Sao Pantaleao. In 1488, Dias was the first to sail around the Cape of Good Hope — the southern tip of Africa. He made it as far as the Indian Ocean, which helped Vasco da Gama reach India by sea 10 years later.



Marco Polo
Marco Polo sailed from China to the Strait of Hormuz on a junk in 1294 (above illustration). In his “Il Milone” notes, he writes: “The largest ships have a crew of three hundred, others of two hundred (...) people. One can load the ships with five to six thousand baskets of pepper.”



Christopher Columbus
He set out to sail to India by the shortest sea route — instead, Columbus landed in America in 1492. His discovery led to a history of conquest in which colonial rulers murdered or oppressed the indigenous people. The photo shows replicas of Columbus’ historic caravels, the “Pinta,” “Nina” and “Santa Maria.”



Christopher Jones
The “Mayflower” set sail on September 6, 1620 with Captain Christopher Jones at the helm and settlers onboard headed for America, including an arch-conservative group that called themselves the Pilgrims. For the British Puritans, Europe was not God-fearing enough. The colonists brought with them their ideology under the Christian cross.



Cutty Sark
In 1885, the Cutty Sark set several speed records under Richard Woodget, her 7th captain. These days, the clipper is a museum ship on the Thames in Greenwich, a London suburb. The merchant ship transported tea and perishable goods in the British Empire. Best performance: 73 days from Australia to London. It is a UNESCO cultural heritage site.

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ROUND-UP

Meethaq wins Most Trusted Brand Award

Driven by a strong customer-centric vision, Meethaq has been delivering world-class innovative Islamic banking products and services in the Sultanate



Minister of Energy and Minerals. The award was handed over to Sami Arfah Bait Rashid, Assistant General Manager, Meethaq Personal Banking, in the presence of Saleh Zakwani, Executive Chairman, Apex Media. Oman's Most Trusted Brand Awards function was attended by a number of dignitaries and senior executives from the Sultanate's corporate sector. It endorsed top-performing brands in Oman, based on public feedback obtained in a

consumer survey. The fifth edition of the annual survey is a validation of public trust in various brands. Every year, the prestigious award is presented to the most trusted brands in Oman based on what the general public perceives as the brands they trust the most. This year's awards generated over 700,000 votes in over 45 different categories. Speaking on the occasion, Sami Arfah Bait Rashid, Assistant General Manager, Meethaq Per-

sonal Banking, said: "As the pioneer of Islamic banking in Oman, Meethaq is delighted to win this prestigious award, which affirms its unrivalled position in Oman. Driven by a strong customer-centric vision, Meethaq has been delivering world-class innovative Islamic banking products and services in the Sultanate. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our valued customers for their trust and strong confidence in Meethaq Islamic Banking."



Offer on Ford Taurus

MUSCAT: Own a Ford Taurus and benefit with service 3 years/ 60,000 km and registration 1 year. (Conditions apply. For details visit a Ford showroom.) The offer is valid until March 9, 2022. The Ford Taurus has been redesigned with a focus on safety and practicality. The exterior of the Taurus has a shield-like, clipped trapezoidal five-bar grille is positioned prominently and flanked by slender, modern headlamps with signature daytime running lights and LED projector lamp technology. Chrome rings house supplemental LED driving lights.

In silhouette, a powerful hood profile and planted architecture give the Taurus a sense of solidity, sportiness and harmony. Designers elevated the exterior with fine details on the sides, including upswept chrome highlight trim on the doors. Polished 19-inch 10-spoke alloy wheels help to give a bold and premium stance. At the rear of the vehicle, multi-piece LED tail lights to incorporate a distinctive signature appearance. A bright chrome bar connecting the taillights highlights the vehicle's width for a sense of understated athleticism.

ICONIC RESTAURANT

Favourite Indian restaurant Qureshi Bab-Al-Hind reopens



MUSCAT: Carrying their father's Chef Intiaz Qureshi culinary torch, the Qureshi brothers, along with Radisson Collection's Chef Kishore are cooking up a storm of flavours with their newly crafted a la carte menu. With a focus on contemporary light and healthy organic ingredients, Qureshi's signature delicacies from North Indian regional cuisines will create an unforgettable experience for guests. "This cuisine has a far more delicate balance of spices than many other cuisines around the world allowing all to enjoy the finely crafted dishes we serve," said Chef Kishore. "We are thrilled to be reopening Qureshi Bab-Al-Hind in Mus-

cat, as it has been loved by foodies over the past decade," said Panos Panagis, District Director of Radisson Hotel Group in Oman. The Qureshi family dates back 60 years, making them India's first family of food. Their expertise blends perfectly with the vision of the Radisson Collection that embraces and offers unique experiences. The result is a timeless culinary journey that welcomes you to the exceptional. The iconic restaurant is ideal for entertaining business clients, family gatherings and special occasion dinners. The staff is known for their friendly approach to service, yet with an old-world charm, goes

to great lengths to personalise your choice of food and ensure an experience like no other. Qureshi Bab-Al-Hind has been lauded at several worldwide luxury awards. We are proud to be recognised as the best Indian and North Indian restaurant by Oman restaurant awards. Most recently restaurant was awarded as the best Indian cuisine at the World Luxury Restaurant Awards 2019. Opened for dinner service only from Tuesday to Saturday from 6:30 pm to 11pm, Qureshi also welcomes guests for private events for lunch either in the main restaurant or in its beautifully decorated private dining rooms.

FEMALE BANKING CARDHOLDERS

Alizz Islamic Bank offers variety of services to 'Hiyya' cardholders

MUSCAT: Alizz Islamic Bank has developed a suite of exclusive Sharia-compliant banking services for female customers that have the 'Hiyya' card that was designed exclusively for women. 'Hiyya' is designed to meet all the investment, health and financial needs of female customers and will provide customers with a tier-based savings account to enhance their profits. The Sharia-compliant account is based on the principle of Mudaraba where you will be Rabb-ul mal, and the Bank will be the Mudarib. Your funds will be invested in the common pool along with the other Mudaraba-based accounts. The generated profit will be shared between you and the bank according to a profit-sharing ratio specified earlier. Profits will be shared between customers and the bank according to the previously agreed distribution ratios. Instant debit cards will be offered with exclusive benefits to ensure an open platform for women to enjoy a host of discounts and special offers at spas, beauty salons and beauty products while availing deals from health clubs, fitness centres and perfume stores. Exclusive stores and branded outlets for clothing and accessories, home décor, restaurants and flow-



er shops are all pegged onto the account, which also includes priority express service at all Alizz Islamic Bank branches. Women who opt for the Hiyya account will also get free Takaful insurance services -this is designed specifically for women, as it covers some of the most common cancers that affect women and will also include insurance cover to obtain a second medical opinion. Additionally, it will also cover insurance on hand luggage and travel, the Takaful insurance provision also assures compensation for the loss of hand luggage while travelling anywhere in the world.

It will also provide compensation for the loss of personal documents or keys on account of the loss of handbag; the onus will be on the insurance company to reimburse the customer for the expense incurred in obtaining new personal documents/keys. The only condition for availing the Takaful insurance scheme, which has some of the best offers to meet all health needs of women and add value to their lifestyles, is that the woman must not be less than 18 years old and not more than 65 years old and that she be of Omani nationality or have a valid Omani residency visa.

DIGITISATION

OAB promotes ease of renewal for vehicle insurance facilities

MUSCAT: As part of its efforts to increase the range of innovative products and services as well as digitisation of its banking facilities, Oman Arab Bank (OAB) announced a vehicle insurance renewal policy via the OAB online app. This step stems from its agreement with National Life & General Insurance Company, one of the most trusted insurance companies in the Sultanate, which took place several years ago and was initially aimed at launching new Bancassurance products for OAB customers. Commenting on service, Rashad Al Shaikh, Head of the Retail Banking Division at OAB, said, "OAB always strives to offer its customers a wide range of services and products that will enrich their banking experience. As part of our transformational strategy, we are keen to enhance digitalisation. This process was accelerated by the pandemic, allowing us to transition a majority of our facilities to the digital sphere. This enabled customers to benefit from the ease of accessibility by conducting all their banking transactions and requirements via the OAB online app. The online vehicle insurance renewal facility is currently live on the OAB Online App and we are proud to



integrate our banking services with one of the leading insurance companies in Oman." The motor insurance renewal can be carried out in a few easy steps. By navigating to the OAB online app, customers can enter the required details such as the vehicle registration code and number, select the type of insurance and number of seats. Upon completion, they will be directed to the payment options section to choose the account from which they would like to pay for the insurance. "Through our partnership with National Life & General Insurance Company, we have successfully put together a holistic Motor Insurance plan for our customers. Together, we extend the best possible coverage at affordable prices. Moreover, it is our continuous endeavour to adapt to change,

considering the dynamic needs and expectations of our valued customers and building a customer-centric relationship based on trust and reliability," he added. "At National Life and General Insurance Co. (NLG), we are continuously working on providing multiple digital options of buying insurance by adapting to new technologies for a simplified customer journey. We have a strong Bancassurance partnership with OAB and now we shall be providing our insurance products and services through the banks mobile app as well, creating value for a vast base of our OAB customers," said S. Venkatachalam, CEO, NLG. In addition to motor insurance, the bancassurance umbrella hosts an array of plans for health, travel, home contents and comprehensive personal insurance.

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