

**AL NU'AMANI MEETS
CHAIRMAN OF PAKISTAN'S
JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF**

Gen. Sultan Mohammed Al Nu'amani, Minister of the Royal Office received Gen. Nadeem Raza, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJSCS) of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on Wednesday. **>A5**



**CHOOSE YOUR RESIDENTIAL PLOT
SERVICE ANNOUNCED**

As part of the programme of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning for distribution of residential land plots, the Ministry has launched an online service, 'Choose your plot' on 6 February. The beneficiaries under the programme include families who do not own a house or residential land plot in their name. **>A5**



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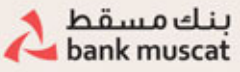
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COVID RESTRICTIONS EASED IN OMAN



The Supreme Committee takes decisions after reports of flattening of the COVID curve

MUSCAT: In a number of decisions taken on Wednesday, the Supreme Committee has eased restrictions for Friday congregational prayers, public halls and holding of local and international conferences.

According to the new decisions, all activities in mosques and public halls can be continued under COVID-19 protocol with reduced attendance.

The Supreme Committee tasked with tackling developments resulting from coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has monitored updates on the pandemic, means of protection against the virus and ways of curbing its spread.

The committee studied reports on the COVID-19 scenario indicating the flattening of the curve of positive cases and this supports the stable status of positive tests, despite a rise in number of people of admitted to COVID-19 wards or intensive care units. Accordingly, the Supreme Committee took the following decisions scheduled to be implemented on the date of publication of this statement:

1. To resume Friday congregational prayers and maintain the daily five prayers provided the number of worshippers does not exceed 50% of each mosque and in condition that all abide by the precautionary measures set in this regard.

2. To end the downsizing of staff required to attend at the workplace in units of the State's Administrative Apparatus and other legal entities, while at the same time observing compliance with the precautionary measures set in this regard to avoid the spread of the disease.

500,000 jabbed with booster dose



Times News Service

MUSCAT: More than half a million people in Oman have been administered booster doses to protect them against infection from COVID-19, reveal figures released by the Ministry of Health.

507,440 people among those eligible had been given booster doses until 9 February, 2022. Of them, 144,198 are Omani nationals and the remaining 363,242 are expatriates. "I think there is more demand among expatriates to get third/ booster doses because it is considered a requirement as

part of procedures for travel to other countries," said Ibrahim Al Maimani, a data analyst in the country.

As part of the country's national immunisation campaign against COVID-19, 6,676,224 doses have been administered to eligible people. 3,191,912 first doses, 2,976,872 second doses, and 507,440 boosters have been used to inoculate the population.

1,770,692 Omanis and 1,420,950 expatriates have been vaccinated with at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccines and 1,665,562 Omanis and 1,311,310 expatriates have

been jabbed with at least two doses. However, Al Maimani revealed that about 160,000 people in the country are yet to be vaccinated with even the first dose. "There are also some 215,000 people who have been administered the first dose, but have not taken the second yet," he added.

In this context, Dr Jean Jabbour, the representative of the World Health Organisation to Oman, explained that vaccines are still the best way to prevent the virus from spreading and replicating to form potentially harmful strains of the coronavirus. **>A5**

ROYAL DECREES

HM issues two Royal Decrees

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Wednesday issued two Royal decrees reading as follows:

Royal Decree No. 6/2022 on the promulgation of Personal Data Protection Law.

Article (1) stipulates that the Personal Data Protection Law attached to this decree shall be enforced.

Article (2) instructs the Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology to issue the Executive Regulation of the attached law, as well as the decisions necessary for the implementation of its provisions. Till such time, the existing regulations and decisions shall continue to be applied without prejudice to the provisions of this law.

Article (3) cancels the 7th chapter of the Electronic Transactions Law issued under Royal

Decree No. 69/2008, as well as all that contradicts the law attached here or contravenes its provisions.

Article (4) says that this Royal Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced after one year from its date of publishing.

Royal Decree No. 7/2022 ratifies the agreement signed in Muscat on 24 January 2022 by the Government of the Sultanate of Oman and the Government of the Republic of Colombia on mutual waiver of visas for holders of Diplomatic, Special, Service and Official passports.

Article (1) states that the aforementioned agreement shall be ratified in accordance with the version attached to this decree.

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

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES



OMAN

Excitement in air as Tour of Oman set to start

1 Pro-cyclists from 18 international teams will take to the asphalt on Oman today, as the Tour of Oman gets underway. Running from 10 to 15 February, the event will test the mental endurance and physical abilities of cyclists across a route that spans the length and breadth of the country and features a variety of terrains. **>A4**

WORLD

Bahrain Golden Visa

2 Bahrain has announced a new and indefinitely renewable Golden Residency Visa scheme for high income expatriates. **>A6**

MARKET

TRA launches Access

3 The Telecommunication Regulatory Authority, in partnership with the Global Computer Services Company, launched the Access platform. **>B1**



25th
MUSCAT



FEBRUARY 14

Hotels in the Sultanate roll out red carpet for Valentine's Day guests

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Hotels in Oman have planned a host of offers for people who wish to celebrate their love this Valentine's Day.

From Oman's highest peaks to the urban setting of its capital and the seashore of the southern Dhofari coastline, hotels have prepared dinners, spa days and a lot more to mark February 14.

"An exclusive romantic getaway is available for guests who want some time away with their loved ones in a luxury suite that comes with a daily in-suite breakfast, a choice of dinner for two at Bukhara, Soi Soi or Zale Lounge, a decadent Pink High Tea at Amwaj Lounge and a beautiful set-up in



the room," said Kempinski Hotel at The Wave.

The memorable dinner at Zale is priced at OMR35 per couple, while at Bukhara, the hotel's other restaurant, couples can enjoy a

four-course set meal with a Thai or Indian twist at OMR25 a couple.

Also, at Al Mouj, Mysk by Shaza has introduced a Valentine's Day package starting from OMR 100, featuring a memorable stay, can-

dleight dinner, breakfast in bed and a late checkout.

"Escape with your special one on a romantic getaway, somewhere magical," said the hotel.

The five-course meal at Al Falaj Hotel is also priced at OMR25. Couples are requested to book in advance, said General Manager Praveen George.

"Every couple who dines with us on Valentine's Day gets a rose from our side," he said. "We encourage our customers to book in advance so that we can order the required number of roses. If we run short, I will end up giving them petals!"

To know more about what hotels in Oman have on offer this Valentine's Day, see Page A2.

**MIND POPPING
NEW LOOK!**





Couples or individuals can get amazing food at reasonable prices as hotels across Oman are offering very good offers

Times News Service

MUSCAT: People looking to spend a memorable Valentine's Day this February 14th are spoilt for choice this year. Here is all (and more) you can do next Monday:

Sheraton have also organised two swanky evenings on 14 February: couples can treat themselves to a five-course meal at Reehan Lounge priced at OMR45, or a four-course dinner for OMR30 at the swish Cliff Deck in Muscat Bay.

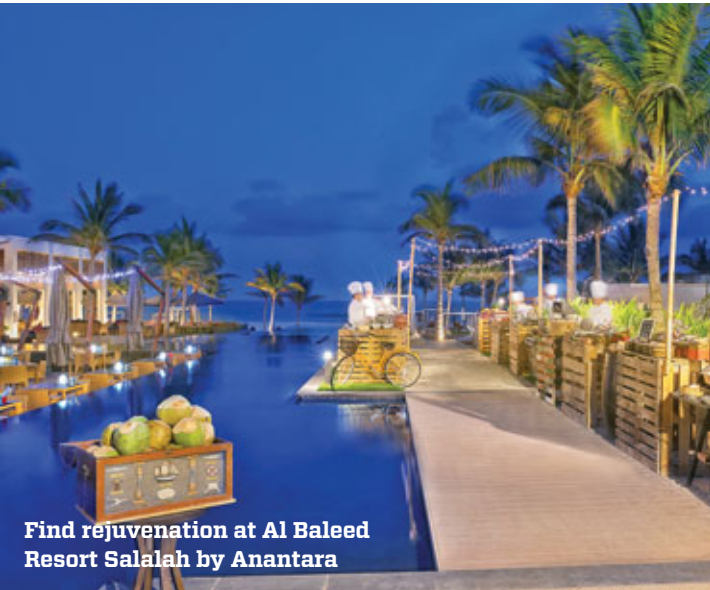
"All you have to do is come dressed to impress, and let these star chefs do the rest," said Sheraton.

People who want to spend a day ensconced in luxury and get away from the stresses of life can check into Shangri-La Al Husn, where a meticulously-prepared spa day, including treatments featuring frankincense grown in Oman, awaits them. The spa is named after 'luban', the Arabic word for frankincense.

At the Luban Spa, which is supposed to be the first of its kind in Oman, people can enjoy "a different way of living that sends you to a world of beauty, peace and luxury," said the hotel. "For thousands of years, luban has been known as the gift of kings and has been as highly valued as gold. As such, Luban Spa offers a myriad range of precious Omani frankincense treatment rituals for the body and mind infused with warm Arabian hospitality."

Al Husn's Couple Paradise package includes a two-night stay, breakfast for two, dine by design at a location of choice, couples' massage at the only Luban Spa in Oman, and daily afternoon tea and the signature aperitif hour. Rates begin at OMR197 per night.

At the Dunes by Al Nahda, enjoy an amazing experience at OMR115 for a stay and a special Valentine's



Day dinner at Fleur Restaurant, inclusive of house beverages. "Solennise your bond of timeless love this Valentine's," said the resort.

Up in the mountains, guests staying at Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar can enjoy a feast for all the senses. The luxurious elevated resort - located 2,000 metres above sea level - offers an exquisite array of elegant dining experiences and cuisines, as well as exclusive spa retreats.

Veritable feasts for diners to choose from have been laid out at all of the resort's restaurants: there's Italian at Bella Vista, the modern flavours of Arabia at Al Qalaa, and a private, intimate din-

ner for guests in the privacy of their own villa. While all of these experiences begin at OMR80, the one that is not to be missed is the exclusive OMR500 Dining by Design package.

"Set up only on request with a private table, roses and all the trimmings, this package will create the ideal romantic setting for you and your significant other," said the resort. "Dine amongst the clouds, with spectacular views of the mountains, and complete privacy to truly get the one-on-one time you and your loved one deserve."

Another blowout has been planned at Alila Jabal Akhdar, where guests can indulge in a four-

course menu starting at OMR 54.

"Guests can soak up the surroundings in a romantic rose petal bath and enjoy a complimentary couples massage along with an inclusive daily à la carte breakfast and luxury three-course set dinner menu at the award-winning Juniper Restaurant," said the hotel.

Guests can also enjoy a special four-course menu, while cherishing an intimate private dining experience.

Anantara's other resort in Oman, Al Baleed in Salalah, also has many options, depending on how much people want to spend. The Asian buffet at Mekong is priced at OMR 20 per head, and a

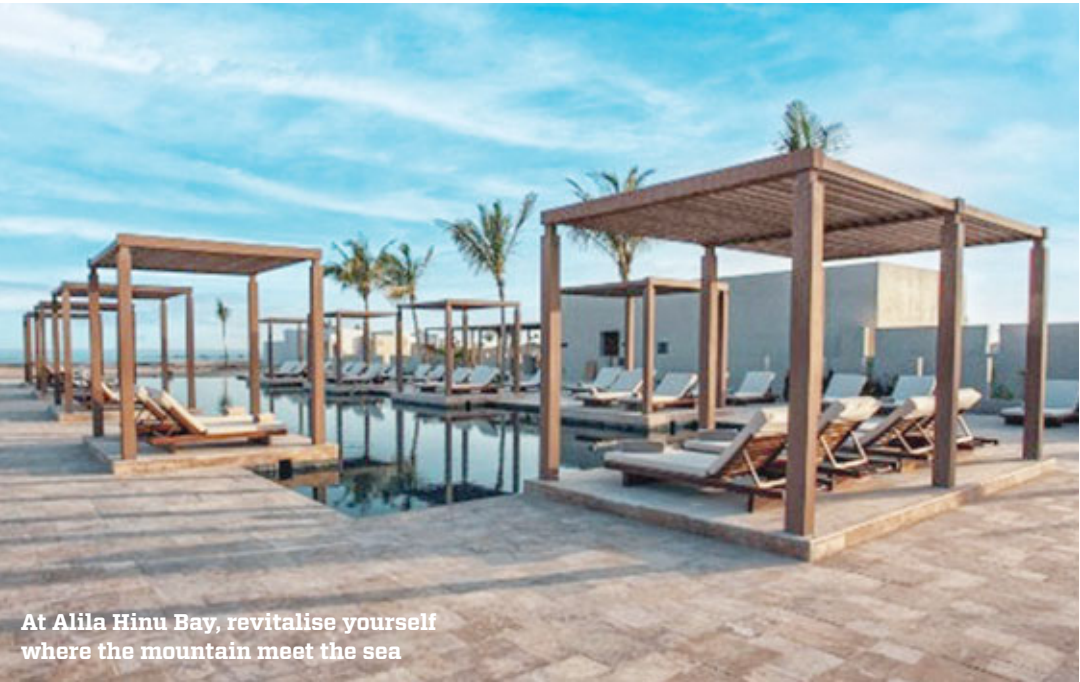
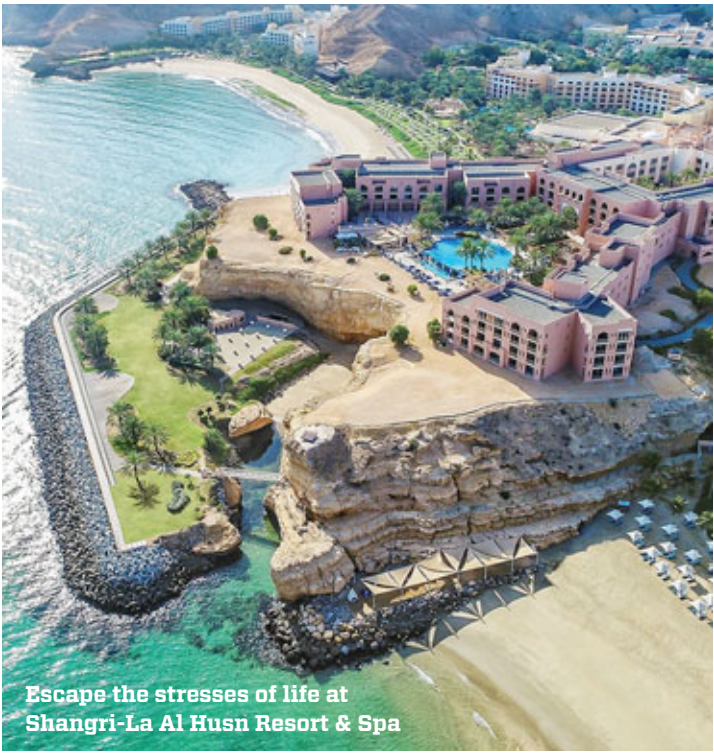
five-course set menu is also set out by the beach, but a far more private setting is available for couples who want something more intimate, starting at OMR160 per couple.

"Love is truly a splendoured thing when the right ingredients are gathered," said Al Baleed Resort. "Relish the romance of a private dining experience on the sands in a private cabana, beside the lapping Arabian Sea. Your personal chef will help curate the perfect five-course menu to take your love to greater heights."

The resort's signature spa also has a number of exquisite massages and rejuvenating treatments on hand.

Meanwhile, Alila Hinu Bay in the Dhofar, located in Mirbat, where the mountains meet the sea, can enjoy a sophisticated yet quaint setting. "Guests can rejuvenate at Spa Alila and enjoy an inclusive couples massage or cosy up for a romantic dinner at Sea Salt Restaurant, serving the finest fresh catch and decadent dishes all from locally sourced produce," said the resort.

Beginning at OMR56, visitors to the hotel can enjoy daily a la carte breakfast and dinner, Valentine's inspired in-room amenities, a 60-minute long couples' massage, and complimentary hospitality from Alila.





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SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Omani research on cutting carbon emissions awarded

Times News Service

MUSCAT: A study conducted by a research team led by Dr. Zainab Al Ani, Research Assistant at Sultan Qaboos University, is among the winning innovative research projects in the 8th National Research Award, organised by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation. The award is given in the Young Researcher's category in energy and industry. The subject of the research is 'Simultaneous Energy and Environment-based Optimisation and Retrofit of TEG Dehydration Process: An Industrial Case Study'.

Elaborating on the project, Dr. Zainab Al Ani said that Carbon dioxide emissions (CO2) during the dehydration process of natural gas are of great concern as this gas negatively affects the climate and environment in general. Dehydration process also encounters many heating, cooling and pumping units, which leads to high energy consumption. Reducing these emissions along with minimising the utilised energy while keeping the production unaffected is a complex problem that can be solved by multi objective optimisation (MOO).

She maintained that the research project focused on minimizing CO2 emissions, energy consumption (ENG) along with water content in the gas (WT), which meant that the performance of the plant has improved from operational, environmental and energy point of view. Furthermore, the process was simulated with ProMax 4.0 and approved to be valid with the real plant data. Non-dominated sorting genetic algorithm (NSGA-II) was used for attaining the Pareto fronts for the decided MOO cases.

According to Dr. Zainab, the affecting decision variables and limitations were decided based on the capacity of the plant and



Dr. Zainab Al Ani, Research Assistant at Sultan Qaboos University said that cutting emissions and minimising the utilised energy while keeping the production unaffected is a complex problem that can be solved by multi-objective optimisation.

industrial practice. Two bi-objective cases and a tri-objective case were considered, which were minimizing CO2 emissions and WT (case 1), minimizing ENG and WT (case 2) and minimizing WT, ENG and CO2 emissions simultaneously (case 3). An attempt to retrofit the current process was also proposed and the cases were carried out with the modified process. The results showed noticeable improvement and enhancement in the given process.

Dr. Zainab maintained that the results revealed that the wet gas temperature decision variable was an important factor in both cases. Increasing it led to an increase in WT objective function. For example, in case 1, increasing it from 316.22 to 321.98 K increased WT from 51.99 to 72.02 mg/Sm3. The other impactful decision variable was found to be Reboiler Temperature, since it caused the conflict between the objectives. For instance, in case 2, at Reboiler temperature of 468.22 K, WT was found to be 49.95 mg/

Sm3 and ENG was 2200 kW. As Reboiler temperature increased to 473.15 K, WT and ENG reached values of 44.91 mg/Sm3 and 2400 kW, respectively.

Dr. Zainab further clarified that the dry gas flow decision variable affected the results of case 1 due to its reversible effect on CO2 emissions and WT. The suggested retrofitting proved to be successful with respect to the studied objectives. It reduced the values of the Pareto solutions of WT remarkably in all cases. The addition of the polishing column also improved CO2 emissions and ENG Pareto solutions because it minimised the load on the reboiler. Thus, the retrofitting affected the convergence of Reboiler temperature which, in turn, affected the objective values.

She added that in both bi-objective cases, Reboiler temperature converged to values higher than 464.15 K in the original process configuration. On the other hand, in the retrofitted configuration, this value was reduced to 440.38 K, while generally, the other decision variables converged to the same range of values in both original and retrofitted cases. Dr. Zainab suggested that these findings could be implemented in the real industrial plant for enhancement and could also be used to provide a better understanding of any similar dehydration process.

This research project was conducted by Dr. Zainab Al Ani, Dr. Ashish M. Gujarathi and Prof. G. Vakili-Nezhaad and was published in the Process Safety and Environmental Protection journal. Dr. Zainab stated that "I am extremely honoured in receiving the National Research Award, which is such an important recognition a researcher can have for his work. The value of this award is even more important for us (the research group) because of the difficulties that we faced during work on this project."



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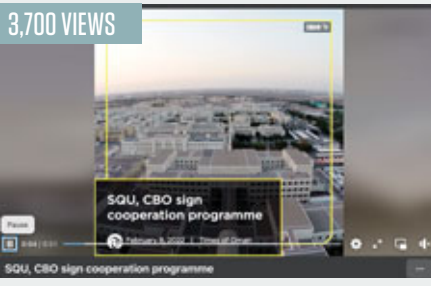


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EXCITEMENT IN THE AIR AS TOUR OF OMAN BEGINS TODAY



Gautam Viswanathan

MUSCAT: Pro cyclists from 18 international teams will take to the asphalt on Oman today, as the Tour of Oman gets underway.

Running from 10 to 15 February, the event will test the mental endurance and physical abilities of cyclists across a route that spans the length and breadth of the country and features a variety of terrains from wide open roads to winding, mountainous paths.

Cyclists will need to be prepped on many levels for the arduous route mapped out for them: stage 1 sees them race across asphalt as they hit the ground running from Al Rustaq Fort to the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre in the capital, Muscat, a distance of 138km.

The riders will need to up and at 'em for the next day of racing: departing from Naseem Garden, the competitors will hug the coastline as they see who can win the 167.5 km race to the Sohar Corniche. They're back in Muscat for stage 3, which begins at Sultan Qaboos University and ends a good 180 km later in Quriyat.

After a short journey to Al Sifah by the sea, the drivers begin stage 4 by making a beeline for the Royal Opera House Muscat, some 119.5km away. Stage five takes the riders into the hinterland of the country, and marks by far the most challenging leg of the race: after setting off in Samail, the cyclists will need to brave the steep slopes and thinner atmosphere of Jabal Akhdar, the Green Mountain that stands nearly 3,000 metres above sea level, all the while making sure they have enough energy for the 150.5km they need to complete.

It's a race to finish in stage six,



with cyclists taking off from Al Mouj Muscat and heading for the Muttrah Corniche, covering a distance of 135.5km.

Oman's national cycling team are among those taking part at the Tour of Oman. Four teams have come from France: B&B Hotels KTM, Groupama FDJ, Cofidis, and Team Arkea Samsic. Three Belgian teams will also take part in the race: Bingoal Pauwels Saucers WB, Intermarche Wanty Gobert Materiaux, and Quick-Step Alpha Vinyl Team. The last of these three teams will feature famed British cyclist Mark Cavendish, who won the Tour de France in 2011 and 2021.

"I've been here before and I enjoy the race," said the Isle of Man native, ahead of this year's event. "You got mountains, sprints, crosswinds ... and it's a beautiful place to ride. My family was here the last time I raced here and we had a good time."

Rein Taaramäe, who will be turning out for Intermarche, also has no illusions as to what lies ahead of him.

"I expect to be ready for the start of the season," he said. "I feel better than I was 12 months ago. The battle for the General Clasification in Oman is a nice first challenge."

There are two teams from Spain



– Euskaltel Euskadi and Burgos BH. Famed Kazakh cycling team Astana are also in contention this year. Russia (Gazprom Rusvelo), Italy (Bardiani CSF Faizane), Australia (Team Bike Exchange Jayco), the Netherlands (Team DSM), and Norway (Uno-X Pro Cycling) have all sent teams to the Tour of Oman. Team Emirates will also be taking part from the neighbouring United Arab Emirates.

The 2022 edition also marks the first appearance at the event by US cycling team Novo Nordisk. The debutants will be led by captain Charles Planet, who has overcome illness to return to cycling after a lengthy layoff.

"I'm so excited to be back racing," began Planet. "I can't describe the feeling after having such a tough year in 2021. It's been a long time since I was at the pointy end of a race fighting for a result and that's where I want to get back to. I'm actually a bit nervous to be honest, but I've worked hard over the winter and done everything I can to be ready, so we

will see how my body responds."

In support of Andrea Peron and Planet will be the experienced Irishman Stephen Clancy alongside the younger faces and legs of Italian Filippo Ridolfo and Dutchman Jan Dunnewind who makes his senior debut for the pro team. Italian Umberto Poli and Dutchman Gerd de Keijzer complete the team, with the latter overcoming chronic knee problems over the last year.

While the organisers are keen to see some racing action, they are also fully aware of what this means beyond just the cycling.

"We have all the ingredients for a successful edition: routes through spectacular landscapes and talented riders," said Saif Al Rashidi, the chairman of the Oman Cycling Federation.

"We aim to promote Oman as a tourist destination, to inspire our youth and the people of this land with the importance of sport, and I am pleased to say that the Oman Cycling Federation is participating this year in the Tour of Oman."

– gautam@timesofoman.com



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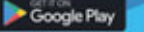
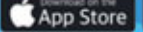


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MEETING

Al Nu’amani meets Chairman of Pakistan’s Joint Chiefs of Staff

MUSCAT: Gen. Sultan Mohammed Al Nu’amani, Minister of the Royal Office received Gen. Nadeem Raza, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJSCS) of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on Wednesday.

The two sides explored ways of enhancing cooperation between the two countries to achieve the joint interests. They also discussed several matters of common concern.

General Nadeem Raza, Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and his accompanying delegation left after a several-day official visit to the Sultanate.



On departing at Seeb Airbase, General Raza was seen off by Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis Al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan’s Armed Forces (SAF), a number of senior officers, the ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the military attaché at the embassy of Pakistan. -ONA

OMAN, IRAN REVIEW BILATERAL COOPERATION

Dr. Ahmed Mohammed Al Sa’eedi, Minister of Health received Seyyed Reza Fatemi Amin, Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade of Iran on Wednesday. The two sides reviewed ways of enhancing the bilateral cooperation between the two countries in the health field. – ONA



BILATERAL COOPERATION

Oman-Iran discuss ways to enhance business relations

MUSCAT: The Omani-Iranian Joint Committee held here on Wednesday its 19th meeting to discuss areas of bilateral cooperation in economic, financial, investment, technical and industrial fields.

The Omani side was headed by Qais Mohammed Al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, whilst the Iranian side was headed by Seyyed Reza Fatemi Amin, Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade.

The two sides agreed on exerting more efforts in enhancing business relations and augmenting the volume of trade exchange between the two countries in areas of goods, as well as technical, tourism and investment services.

The two sides also discussed collaboration in the fields of industry, mining, finance, banking and free zones. They also touched on completing the process of signing a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for cooperation in areas of agriculture, livestock, fisheries and the exchange of research experiences.

They affirmed the importance of activating the agreement of



cooperation in maritime transportation and the MoU on the mutual recognition of maritime competency certifications between the two countries.

The two sides explored investment opportunities in ports and the customs field. They also touched on cooperation in oil, gas, petrochemicals, heritage, tourism, culture, sports and youth areas.

The two sides underscored the importance of activating cooperation between Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) and the Omani-Iranian Joint Chamber to exchange business delegations and encourage holding specialised exhibitions, aimed at supporting the private sector. – ONA

Choose your residential plot service announced

Citizens entitled to plots can choose them online through the ministry’s platform, which has digital maps, and through an application that is simple to fill

Times News Service

MUSCAT: As part of the programme of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning for distribution of residential land plots, the Ministry has launched an online service, ‘Choose your plot’ on 6 February. The beneficiaries under the programme include families who do not own a house or residential land plot in their name.



The programme is part of the implementation of the Royal Directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on distribution of 23,066 government residential land plots. Based on the provisions of Royal Decree No. 42/2021, government land plots are to be allotted to eligible families.

Citizens entitled to plots can choose them online through the ministry’s platform, which has digital maps, and through an application that is simple to fill.

As per the Royal Decree No. 42/2021, families with no houses in their names would be eligible. The title deed would be in the name of the family breadwinner/head of the family, said the ministry. The priority list will be prepared by the Council of Ministers and the age of the applicant should not be less than 23 years on the date of submission of application.

The Ministry stated that on receiving a text message stating the eligibility of the applicant for a residential land plot, the applicant could access the service portal through the link within five days.

The citizen entitled to a residential plot may examine the site physically or virtually (within five days) before confirming his decision.

The ministry reaffirmed that if the selection process and allotment begins, but the applicant concerned does not confirm the reservation of the plot within the stipulated time or in case of non-payment of the prescribed fee within three months from confirming reservation, the application would be automatically struck off the rolls.

Persons with special needs, families under the umbrella of social security and those with monthly income of less than OMR300 are exempted from payment of fees. Certain families, including pensioners with monthly income of less than OMR300, are exempted from payment of 50% of the land plot value.

It may be mentioned that the electronic system launched by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning provides smooth and transparent digital processing while choosing the plot.

HEALTH SECTOR

‘Vaccinations an important public health measure’

“For pharmaceutical or medical interventions, vaccines are most important,” he said, speaking to TTV. “This resulted in either the elimination or eradication of viruses, bacteria and other microbes that caused infection. Vaccinations are an important public health measure that is important to cut the transmission of the coronavirus.”

Jabbour also addressed the concerns of those who believed rumours and misinformation against vaccines that are sometimes circulated on social media.

“On social media, you have a lot of information, but not all this information is correct or based on scientific evidence,” he explained. “Vaccines are safe, effective, are the most important measures to stop the pandemic. When I hear such things among the population, I sometimes go into discussions with them and I tell them that it is better to have something that is planned, scientific and to understand its impact on the community.”



He added: “We ask people to follow government policy, listen to them and see what recommendations they issue. Why would you go and listen to other sources? Why would you listen to other policies? Every country has its own specific context. This is why you need to understand your government policy, and thank God their policies are moving on the right track and progressing very well.”

“The more coverage we have, the more hope we have. All countries should have high coverage rates of vaccination to

stop the transmission rates of the pandemic.”

Governorates across Oman continue to encourage people to get vaccinated through initiatives run at local level. In Al Buraimi, where vaccination programmes continue to run strong, there are only seven patients admitted to hospital because of COVID, of whom four are in intensive care.

“Vaccinations contributed to a decrease in infection rates, as those who are vaccinated suffer only mild symptoms of the disease,” said Hamad bin Salem Al Alawi of the office of the Director General of Health Services in Al Buraimi.

“During the previous wave, the admission rates for unvaccinated people to intensive care was very large,” he added. “I stress once again the importance of getting vaccinated with the booster dose, as this will contribute to a decrease in infection rates and the number of inpatients in hospitals, as well as relieve pressure on the nation’s health sector.”

Ministry of Higher Education Research & Innovation

Electronic Tenders

The Internal Tenders Committee of the Ministry of Higher Education Research & Innovation announces the re-launch of the tender shown in the following table:

Tender No.	Tender Name	Company that are entitled to participate	Tender Price	Last Date for purchasing Tender	The deadline for submission of tenders
(2/2022)	Design and supervision of a guard house for the road leading from AlKhoudh 7 to Innovation Park Muscat	Specialized in providing Same service and registered with the Tender Board with Grade: Second	25/= OR	28/02/2022	20/03/2022

The purchasing of the tender documents by E-Tendering system will starting on Wednesday 9/02/2022 at 07:30 am. To purchasing, please visit the following link:
<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om/>

All companies that are bidding must provide a bank guarantee or a certified cheque from a bank operating in the Sultanate for at least (1%) of the tender value on behalf of His Excellency Dr. / Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee.

Preference will be given to companies' or small and medium enterprises registered with the General Authority for the development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) that includes the largest proportion of its tender Omanization.

Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest or any other tender.

Chairman of tender committee
Ministry of Higher Education Research & Innovation



WORLD



GLENMARK

Nasal spray for treating adult COVID-19 patients launched

NEW DELHI: Mumbai based innovation-driven global pharma company Glenmark has launched Nitric Oxide Nasal Spray (FabiSpray) in India, in partnership with SaNOTize, for treatment of adult patients suffering from COVID-19. Glenmark received manufacturing and marketing approval from India's drug regulator, Drugs Controller General of India, for Nitric Oxide Nasal Spray as part of the accelerated approval process.

"Phase 3 trial in India met the key endpoints and demonstrated reduction of viral load of 94 per cent in 24 hours and 99 per cent in 48 hours. Nitric Oxide Nasal Spray (NONS) was safe and well-tolerated in COVID-19 patients. Glenmark to market NONS under the brand name FabiSpray," reads the official statement.

The company claims that when the Nitric Oxide Nasal is sprayed over nasal mucosa it acts as a physical and chemical barrier against the virus.

"FabiSpray is designed to kill the COVID-19 virus in the upper airways. It has proven anti-microbial properties with a direct virucidal effect on SARS-CoV-2. — **ANI**





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Bahrain announces indefinitely renewable Golden Visa for expats

The new decision would reinforce Bahrain's competitiveness and support the development of various economic, investment, and service sectors

MANAMA: Bahrain's Interior Ministry Undersecretary for Nationality, Passports and Residence Affairs (NPRA), Shaikh Hisham bin Abdulrahman Al Khalifa, hailed the announcement of the Golden Residency Visa for expats.



The new visa was announced during the Cabinet session chaired by His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, as part of the economic recovery plan.

He said that the announcement would reinforce Bahrain's competitiveness and support the development of various economic, investment, and service sectors.

In addition, the visas would also

attract talents by giving them permanent residency for themselves and their families.

The Undersecretary expressed thanks and gratitude to His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and HRH the Crown Prince and Prime Minister for their wise directives to provide comprehensive services for citizens, residents and visitors.

He highlighted that during a press conference at the Public Security Officers Club, which was held in the presence of Assistance Undersecretary for NPRA, Shaikh Ahmed bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, to highlight details about the Cabinet's announcement.

He noted that the NPRA development plans come through the follow-up and support of Interior Minister, General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa.

He said that the plans reinforce

LONG-TERM RESIDENCE PERMIT

- Own one or more properties in Bahrain, valued no less than BD200,000 (\$530,000)
- Retirees with an income of BD4,000 per month or more
- Be 'highly- talented' individuals who meet the relevant requirements.
- Must be present in the Kingdom of Bahrain for 90 days a year, to ensure their visa continues to be valid.

will see their visas renewed indefinitely, provided they continue to meet the qualifying criteria. Those in receipt of residency will receive a raft of benefits, including; multiple entry and exit from the Kingdom of Bahrain without restriction, residency for close family members, and the right to work in Bahrain.

To qualify for the Golden Residency Visa, existing residents must have resided in Bahrain continuously for at least five years and earned an average basic salary of no less than BD2,000 (\$5,305) per month throughout the five-year period.

The long-term residence permit may be renewed indefinitely provided the candidate continues to meet the qualifying certain important criteria.

In addition, the Golden Residency Visa will be issued on an immediate basis to applicants (whether resident or non-resident) who meet certain criteria: To apply for the Golden Residency Visas please visit: <http://bahrain.bh/Golden-residency>. — **BNA**

UKRAINE CRISIS

'Our goal is to avoid a war in Europe,' says German Chancellor Olaf Scholz

BERLIN: German Chancellor Olaf Scholz hosted French President Emmanuel Macron and Polish President Andrzej Duda in Berlin on Tuesday, on the heels of talks with US, Russian and Ukrainian leaders.

The three were meeting over fears about Russia amassing military hardware and more than 100,000 troops near the border with Ukraine.

What did the leaders say?

"The leaders call on Russia to de-escalate the situation at the Ukrainian border and engage in a meaningful dialogue on security on the European continent," the German government said in a statement. "They underscore that any further military aggression by Russia against Ukraine will have massive consequences and severe costs."

Scholz said the NATO allies were in agreement on the situation at present and what the consequences should be if Ukraine's territory and sovereignty were violated.

"Our common goal is to avoid a war in Europe," said the chancellor, flanked by Duda and Macron.



"The deployment of Russian troops on the border with Ukraine is very worrying and our assessment of the situation here is very much the same," he said.

"Just as our attitude is that further violation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine is unacceptable and would have far-reaching consequences, politically, economically and certainly also geo-strategically."

Polish President Duda said the three countries would not give up

in their efforts to de-escalate tensions between Moscow and Kyiv.

"We have to find a solution to avoid war," said Duda. "As I've said, this is currently our main task. I believe that we will achieve it. In my opinion what's most important today is unity and solidarity."

French President Macron called for security talks with Moscow in order to stress the inviolability of Europe's borders.

"We must together find ways and means to engage in a demand-

ing dialogue with Russia," said the French president.

Macron is seeking to revive the "Normandy Format" peace talks — aimed at bringing to an end fighting in eastern Ukraine, in which more than 14,000 people have died.

Leaders from the "Normandy Format" last met in Paris in 2019. However, envoys from the four countries involved — France, Germany, Russia and Ukraine — are to meet on Thursday in Berlin.

— **DW**

NEW INVESTMENT SCHEME

EU plans to invest €1.6bn in Morocco

BRUSSELS: The European Union (EU) will invest €1.6 billion (\$1.8 billion) in Morocco to produce green energy, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said on Wednesday. Von der Leyen is on a two-country African trip to promote Europe's new Global Gateway investment scheme.

Morocco is the first country to receive funding under the infrastructure programme.

"This is a great opportunity for the green and digital transition," von der Leyen wrote on Twitter after meeting the Moroccan Prime Minister, Aziz Ajanuch.

On Thursday, she will meet Senegalese President Macky Sall, who has recently assumed the African Union presidency.

Her visit comes ahead of the European Union - African Union Summit in Brussels next week.

"The summit should identify a first set of strategic interventions in infrastructure, value-chain and private-sector development, vocational training and health," von der Leyen told the AFP news agency.

While in Senegal, she will take part in a signing ceremony for the Ndici Madiba Project, in



which the EU will provide support to build a plant to produce vaccines against COVID-19 and other diseases.

Widely seen as a competitor to China's Belt and Road strategy, Global Gateway aims to secure up to €300 billion in investments.

It relies on both public and private sector investment as an alternative to Chinese loans.

"(Investment options in Africa) too often have hidden costs. The financial, political, environmental and social costs are sometimes very heavy. These options often create more dependency than real links," von der Leyen said. — **DW**

 Full story at timesofoman.com/world



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3	Sweden	4	1	2	5
4	Netherlands	3	3	1	5
5	PR China	3	2	0	11
6	Austria	2	4	3	3
7	Italy	2	4	1	5
8	ROC	2	3	6	1
9	Slovenia	2	1	2	11
10	United States of America	1	5	1	5
11	France	1	5	0	9
12	Canada	1	2	5	4
13	Japan	1	1	2	13
14	Switzerland	1	0	3	13
15	Australia	1	0	1	15
15	Republic of Korea	1	0	1	15
17	Czech Republic	1	0	0	18
17	New Zealand	1	0	0	18
17	Slovakia	1	0	0	18
20	Belarus	0	1	0	18
21	Hungary	0	0	2	15
22	Finland	0	0	1	18
22	Poland	0	0	1	18

timesofoman.com

Geisenberger wins ‘family gold’ in luge

Geisenberger's achievement was all the more remarkable coming as it did just six months after returning to the sport following the birth of her son, to whom she dedicated her medal



OLYMPIC GOLD: The 34-year-old has now overtaken compatriots Tobias Arlt and Tobias Wendl to become the most successful luge athlete ever.

BEIJING: Natalie Geisenberger's domination of the women's individual luge continued as she won gold for the third Games in a row, teammate Anna Berreiter finishing just half a second slower to win silver and make it a German one-two.

Geisenberger's achievement was all the more remarkable coming as it did just six months after returning to the sport following the birth of her son, to whom she dedicated her medal.

"It feels great, it's so amazing and I'm so thankful that I have another gold medal," she told DW. "I think it's a family gold medal now!"

Having already won team golds in Sochi and Pyeongchang, plus bronze in Vancouver back in 2010, the 34-year-old has now overtaken compatriots Tobias Arlt and Tobias Wendl to become the most successful luge athlete ever.

"It's difficult to compare the gold medals," she told DW. "In Sochi, it was my first Olympic medal. My dream came true. Then I had Pyeongchang, and repeating it is sometimes more difficult, so that was great, too. And now I'm an Olympic champion as a mother, what more can I say?"

Meanwhile, the fallout has continued from Monday's chaotic mixed team ski jumping event, which saw five female athletes disqualified for suit violations – including Germany's Katharina Althaus, who had won silver in the individual event on Saturday wearing the same suit.

Japan, Austria and Norway – also fell foul of the complex rules which link suits and skis to bodyweight in order to remove any advantage that might be gained by athletes being lighter.

"I have no words for the decision," Althaus wrote on Instagram. "Athletes and their dreams have been destroyed. I have never been disqualified in 11 years. This was one of the most important competitions for us women, a first for the sport, and now this! I am floored, I can't understand it."

With the favourites disqualified, Slovenia won gold while the Russian Olympic Committee and Canada took advantage of the chaos to take silver and bronze respectively. There more positive news for USA's Nathan Chen, who produced a sensational world record-breaking performance in the figure skating short program.

Four years after failing to complete any of his jumps and finishing fifth in Pyeongchang, the 22-year-old multiple world champion went some way to exorcising those demons.

The American opened with a perfect quad flip, nailed a triple axel that sometimes causes him problems, then completed his quad flip-triple toe loop combination to stun the crowd, set a mark of 113.97 points and beat the previous record set by longtime rival Yuzuru Hanyu.

Chen is now sitting nearly six points ahead of Yuma Kagiyama in second, and nearly 20 ahead of Hanyu, the two-time Olympic champion. **-DW**

FEEDBACK

CRICKET

Don't think Langer should be surprised, it's been two years of evaluation: Cummins

SYDNEY: Australia Test skipper Pat Cummins on Wednesday said that Justin Langer should not be surprised with the feedback the players and support staff gave regarding him because there were two years of evaluation.

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.

"I think he tweaked and changed quite a bit. He deserves a lot of credit for that. I think the question then became do we think that it's sustainable. We thought it is the right time to make a change. I think some of these skill sets are perhaps a little bit different to perhaps his traditional coaching style," Cummins told reporters on Wednesday.

"I think he tweaked his coaching style in the last six months



and did a really good job, but we think now is the right time for a different direction. It's a matter of opinion but we think it's the right one. I don't think he should be surprised though, it's been two years of evaluation. I don't think there's any big surprise," he added.

After Langer's resignation, former Australia pacer Mitchell Johnson labelled Cummins as "gutless" and said the Test skip-

per has an agenda to bring his own coach.

"Mitchell Johnson is just standing up for his mates. I absolutely disagree with what he said. No, he hasn't reached out, but that's fine. He's entitled to his opinion, he's standing up for his mate. I can hold my head high so I'm fine. I actually haven't really had much of it (personal criticism) before, so it's actually been good to get it out of the way early in the captaincy," said Cummins.

"I knew when I took on the job it's gonna come with added scrutiny. The last week's been good ... I'll cop it, but I'm absolutely fine with it. I know a lot of it's come from the right place. We all want to do what's best for Australian cricket. There's been a lot of emotion flying around. Added to the feedback, you've got to take everything in that kind of context. They're all people I really respect so I listen to them for sure. I'd welcome chatting to any of them directly

about feedback and thoughts they have," 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.

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.

"We're custodians of the Australian cricket team. It's not forever. We just want to do what's best. Me as captain, I want to do what's best for Australian cricket and what's best for the team. It's a responsibility I've been given and I take that really seriously," said Cummins. **-ANI**

England drop Anderson, Broad from Test team

LONDON: England Men's selection panel, consisting of Sir Andrew Strauss (interim managing director of England Men's Cricket), interim head coach Paul Collingwood and head scout James Taylor, on Tuesday named a 16-strong squad for the three-match Test tour of the Caribbean starting next month.

Durham opener Alex Lees and Yorkshire seamer Matthew Fisher are called-up for the first time. Lees, 28, captained the Lions squad in Australia and has shown great potential in the LV= Insurance County Championship over the past few years with Durham and previously Yorkshire. He scored 625 runs in last year's Championship campaign, with the highest score of 129.

Fisher took 20 wickets for Yorkshire last season at an average of 19.65 from County Championship matches. His control with the ball has impressed the England set-up for some time, and he was a stand-

out performer for the Lions during the winter programme.

Alongside the new additions to the squad, the Lancashire duo of Saqib Mahmood and Matthew Parkinson will be aiming to make their Test debut in the Caribbean having featured in previous squads.

Surrey wicketkeeper Ben Foakes returns to the squad for the first time in under a year when he played the fourth Test in Ahmedabad last March against India.

Eight players - James Anderson, Dom Bess, Sam Billings, Stuart Broad, Rory Burns, Buttler, Haseeb Hameed and Dawid Malan - who featured in the recent Ashes series, have missed out on selection.

Interim Managing Director for England Men's Cricket, Sir Andrew Strauss, said: "With the start of a new cycle, it has allowed the selection panel to refresh the Test squad with a particular focus on competing away from home." **-ANI**

CRICKET ROUND-UP

OWCA too good for Pakistan Women, Lakshmi slams 213 in ISAS win

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Sakshi Vijaya's magnificent 101 not out off 71 powered Oman Women Cricket Academy (OWCA) to an emphatic 71-run win over Pakistan Women in a Women's League T20 match at OC Turf 2 in Amerat on Monday.

OWCA amassed 205 for 2 in 20 overs thanks to brilliant batting by Sakshi and fellow opener Nitya Joshi (44) who were involved in a 101-run stand for the first wicket.

Pakistan Women were never really in the race as nobody stayed long enough to form a meaningful partnership with opener Fiza Javed who remained unbeaten at 83 off 69 in her team's final score of 134 for 5. Hira Javed was the only other batter to reach a double figure score of 18.

Brief Scores (Women's League T20): OWCA Women 205 for 2 in



20 overs (Sakshi Vijaya 101 – 13x4, 1x6, Nitya Joshi 44 – 7x4) beat Pakistan Women's Team 134 for 5 in 20 overs (Fiza 83 – 8x4) by 71 runs.

Hema helps MCCC Yellow to victory

Prathiesh Hema struck a vital 61 not out off 39 to help MCCC Yellow to a comfortable 9-wicket vic-

tory against Boshier Sports Centre (BSC) in a 30-over Junior League Under-16 clash at Muscat Municipality ground 2 on Saturday.

Hema was outstanding with the ball too, taking 2 for 5 in his 4-over spell as BSC was dismissed for 113 in 29.4 overs. Hamza Muhammed picked up 2 for 6.

MCCC Yellow raced to the tar-

get in only 11.4 overs, scoring 114 for 1 thanks to top knocks by Hema and Shanbhag Mitul (34).

Brief Scores (Junior Division U16): BSC 113 all out in 29.4 overs (Vedan Sable 25 – 3x4, Prathiesh Hema 2-5, Hamza Muhammed 2-6) lost to MCCC Yellow 114 for 1 in 11.4 overs (Prathiesh Hema 61 – 5x4, Shanbhag Mitul 34 – 4x4) by 9 wickets.

Lakshmi double ton powers ISAS win

In another Under-16 match, Indian School Al Seeb's (ISAS) run machine Lakshmi Narayana's unbeaten 213 off 111 was the highlight of his team's huge 134-run victory against MCCC Blue at OAC 3 ground in Seeb.

Lakshmi struck 30 fours in his massive knock, pushing ISAS to 287 for 2 in 30 overs.

MCCC Blue failed to respond with equal force, folding up for 153

in 25.2 overs, Khasbage Toyash topscoring with 49. Pradhyun Srivatsan, Abdul Samad and Abdul Sami all took two wickets each.

Brief Scores (Junior Division U16 30-overs): ISAS 287 for 2 in 30 overs (Lakshmi Narayana 213 – 30x4) beat MCCC BLUE U16 153 all out in 25.2 overs (Khasbage Toyash 49 – 3x4, Pradhyun Srivatsan 2-6, Abdul Samad 2-22, Abdul Sami 2-17) by 134 runs.

Brief Scores (Junior Division U16): ISWKA 138 all out in 22.5 overs (Aum Nrupen 43 – 7x4, Madhav Manish 4-34, Rishab Shivadas 2-32, Ayush Karthiyl 2-16) lost to ISG 140 for 6 in 27.2 overs (Abhishek Prakash 42 – 6x4, Pillai Arav 2-21) by 4 wickets.

Brief Scores (Junior Division U16): OCA 197 for 3 in 30 overs (Kriv Rajesh 73 – 7x4, Mohammad Aseel 62 – 6x4, Matto Aleem 30 – 4x4) beat SLSM 136 all out in 26.3 overs (Mohamed Muaz 67 – 6x4,

Rahildaniyal Habibulla 2-35, Matto Aleem 2-31, Ahmed Al Zadjali 2-20) by 61 runs.

Brief Scores (Junior Division U13 T20): BSC B 166 for 3 in 20 overs (Omkar Meesala 56 – 9x4, Aarav Saraiya 48, Shah Kevin 2-24) beat MCCC Purple 13 136 for 7 in 20 overs (Kaavyansh Pratap 42 – 1x4, Avi Pandya 2-24) by 30 runs.

Brief Scores (Junior Division U13): OCA U13 188 for 4 in 20 overs (Aryan Joshi 76 – 8x4, Arjun Swamy 46 – 6x4, Harihesh Narayanan 2-40) lost to ISAS 192 for 2 in 17.5 overs (Sujay 73 – 8x4, Abu Bakar 64 – 5x5) by 8 wickets.

Brief Scores (Junior Division U13): MCCC Red 178 for 4 in 20 overs (Karnik Samir 41 – 3x4, Sivabalaaji Siddeshwaran 31 – 3x4) beat SLSM U13 122 for 8 in 20 overs (Aditha Endive 27 – 3x4, Sakarwala Hamza 2-2, Karnik Samir 2-29) by 56 runs.

SPORTS



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Prasidh takes four as India beat West Indies

India defeated West Indies by 44 runs in the second ODI of the three-match series

AHMEDABAD: Prasidh Krishna's four-wicket haul helped India defend 237 and defeat West Indies by 44 runs in the second ODI of the three-match series here at the Narendra Modi Stadium, Ahmedabad on Wednesday.

With this win, India has gained an unassailable 2-0 lead in the series. The final ODI will be played at the same venue on Friday. Chasing 237, West Indies openers Shai Hope and Brandon King put on 32 runs for the first wicket, but Prasidh Krishna led India's fight-



back as he dismissed King (18) and Darren Bravo (1) in quick succession. Shai Hope (27) also departed soon after as he was sent back to the pavilion by Yuzvendra Chahal and West Indies was reduced to 52/3 in the 17th over.

Stand-in skipper Nicholas Pooran had high hopes of the Windies' side but even he failed as he

innings started coming back on track, Deepak Hooda picked up his maiden ODI wicket as he dismissed Brooks (44) and the visitors were reduced to 117/6. Akeal Hosein (34), Odean Smith (24) and Fabien Allen (13) also chipped in, but in the end, it did not prove enough as India registered a 44-run win.

Earlier, Suryakumar Yadav and KL Rahul might have played knocks of 64 and 49 but the hosts kept on losing wickets at regular intervals, and in the end, West Indies restricted India to 237/9 in the allotted fifty overs.

Virat Kohli (18), Rishabh Pant (18), Washington Sundar (24), and Deepak Hooda (29) all got in, but none of them managed to stay at the crease for a long haul, and this resulted in the Men in Blue posting a score less than the 250-run mark.

For the West Indies, Alzarri Joseph and Odean Smith scalped two wickets each.

OC announces ITW ProgG as broadcasting partner

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman Cricket is pleased to announce ITW ProgG as its Commercial and Broadcasting partner for the upcoming quadrangular T20 series, starting February 11, 2022.



Quadrangular series

Pankaj Khimji, chairman of Oman Cricket said, "We see the upcoming quadrangular series as the perfect preparatory tool for the ICC World T20 qualifiers. But further, it is another advertisement of Oman's cricketing spirit."

"I'm delighted to have ITW on board for the same and it fills me with pride to know that fans from different parts of the globe can tune in to watch the games and support their teams".

Vivek Chandra, Director of ITW also expressed his excitement for the partnership and went on to confirm that the tournament would have WolfNews as presenting partner and SKY247.net as the Powered By partner, with TVS, SAT Sport and Fair-

play News as the other Associate Sponsors.

He said, "ITW has partnered with various TV channels, the matches will be live on Euro-sports in India, Geo Sports in Pakistan, Himalaya TV in Nepal, Next TV in USA. It would also be on digital mediums - Fancode in India; On YouTube it would be on OSR Sports in Nepal, CrickTracker in Rest of World & on Facebook it would be on Sports Eye".

Domestic league

ITW has partnered with Oman Cricket in the past, televising the D10 and D20 domestic league matches held in December 2021. Both parties expect this iteration of the deal to enjoy comparable, if not further success.

PREMIER LEAGUE

Burnley hold Manchester Utd to a draw

LONDON: Jay Rodriguez's second-half goal gave Burnley what could be a valuable point in their battle against relegation in the Premier League as they claimed a 1-1 draw with Manchester United at Turf Moor on Tuesday.

Man Utd dominated the first half and after Raphael Varane's goal was ruled out for offside, they went ahead on 18 minutes when Luke Shaw found Paul Pogba, who placed his shot into the corner. The visitors tried to add to their lead but Edinson Cavani, Bruno Fernandes and Marcus Rashford were denied by goalkeeper Nick Pope before half-time. United were left to rue those misses as three minutes into the



second half, Burnley's Wout Weghorst showed great skill before his reverse pass played in Rodriguez who ran in on goal to finish.

Elsewhere, Kieran Trippier's superb free-kick helped Newcastle United claim a come-from-behind 3-1 win over Everton which moves the Magpies out of the bottom three. A fourth match without defeat takes Newcastle up to 17th with 18 points, one place and one point below.

Everton who have played one match fewer.

At the London Stadium, Jarrod Bowen scored the only goal as West Ham United moved back into the top four with a 1-0 win over Watford. -ANI

LA LIGA

'All players know it's a special game'

BARCELONA: Espanyol striker Raul de Tomas ahead of the La Liga clash against FC Barcelona said all the players are aware of how special the derby is.

Espanyol is all set to host Barcelona in the derby on February 14 at RCDE Stadium. Barca are currently sitting at the fourth on the table from 22 matches while Espanyol is at 13 position, having played 23 matches.

Ahead of the derby, Raul de Tomas said: "All the players know it's a special game. We are all well aware of how much it means to the club and the fans. It would be great

to win this game, especially for our fans. We are the two big teams in the city, and of course there's a fierce rivalry between us. But if you are positive and work hard then rivalry can motivate you in a way no other game can."

"Vicente Moreno is the captain of the ship, there's no question about that. We listen to what he says, we try and carry out his ideas in training and games," he added.

Talking about the team's objectives, the striker shared: "Bearing in mind where we came from our main aim at the start of the season was obviously to stay up." -ANI

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MARKET

BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS LOWER

The MSX index closed at 4,089.42 points, down by 0.63 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.10 per cent at 505.99 points. Sharqiya Desalination, up 10.00 per cent, was the top gainer while, Dhofar Insurance, down 8.67 per cent, was the top loser.

Access platform to connect SMEs and independent entrepreneurs



CEREMONY: The launching ceremony was held under the patronage of Eng. Said Hamoud Al Ma'awali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, in the presence of Dr Mahad bin Said Ba'Owain, Minister of Labour. - **ONA**

TRA's Access platform aims to attract national competencies specialised in the fields of technology, communications and postal services

MUSCAT: The Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA), in partnership with the Global Computer Services Company, launched the Access (Nafad) platform. The platform aims to attract national competencies specialised in

the fields of technology, communications and postal services. It will allow licensed individuals in those sectors to float tenders, as well as requesting and bidding offers. The launching ceremony was held under the patronage of Eng.

Said Hamoud Al Ma'awali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, in the presence of Dr Mahad bin Said Ba'Owain, Minister of Labour. Al Ma'awali said that launching the Access platform as a virtual incubator is the fruit of concerted efforts in developing the concept of work in the enterprises' sector and part-time workers.

Transparency He added that the platform will increase transparency by giving access to opportunities. He also pointed out that there is OMR8 million-worth business that small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and freelancers can find through

the part-time work system. On his turn, Eng. Ahmed Hassan Al Hadabi, Executive Manager for Strategic Planning in the TRA said that the platform will boost In-Country Value (ICV). It also targets creating a milieu that supports entrepreneurship in the communications, information technology and postal sectors. The aims of the Access platform are comprised of maximising the ICV and connecting SMEs and independent entrepreneurs with opportunities in the fields of communications and postal services. It will also contribute to providing training programmes for job seekers in those fields, Al Hadabi added. - **ONA**

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Kerala offers huge investment avenues in tourism sector

Times News Service

DUBAI: As tourism in Kerala in India is set to bounce back from the COVID-induced crisis, the state offers high investment opportunities in the travel and hospitality sector with the government unveiling several ambitious projects to tap its potential as an extended tourist haven, Kerala's Tourism Minister P A Mohamed Riyas said.

Addressing a press conference at Dubai Expo, Riyas said the state is keen to partner with UAE based investors and Non-Resident Keralites (NRKs) in scripting a new story of growth and development in key sectors, especially tourism.

Major initiatives promising attractive investment opportunities are 'Exploring the Unexplored' destinations, opening up the untapped Malabar region, Caravan Tourism, safe and regulated adventure tourism, experiential tourism, workations and active holidays, the minister said.

While the recently launched Caravan Tourism is sure to provide a riveting experience to visitors, houseboats will continue to be one of the top holiday experiences in Kerala. Caravanning will help Kerala tourism to expand beyond established destinations, he said.

Riyas, who is leading a delegation from Kerala to Expo 2020 Dubai to showcase the state's strengths, said the new projects have opened up investment possibilities in MICE facilities, resorts and hotels, caravans and caravan parks, farm stays, adventure holidays and travel and tour operations. The delegation includes Dr Venu V, Additional Chief Secretary (Tourism) and VR Krishna Teja, Director, Tourism.



PRESS CONFERENCE: Addressing a press conference at Dubai Expo, Kerala's Tourism Minister P A Mohamed Riyas said the state is keen to partner with UAE based investors and Non-Resident Keralites in scripting a new story of growth and development in key sectors, especially tourism. - **Supplied picture**

Kerala has an investor-friendly institutional mechanism to provide quick approvals and mandatory clearances for investment proposals, the minister said.

When the pandemic fades away, Ayurveda/health and wellness holidays will become important, for which the state is well-positioned to attract clients from the Middle East for wellness and rejuvenation holidays.

A must-visit destination for nature enthusiasts, Kerala is well-positioned to attract young travellers with soft adventure activities in the hills and forests of Western Ghats. Kerala's forests cover nearly 30 per cent of the total land area and there are 15 wildlife sanctuaries, 2 tiger reserves, 5 national parks and 60 plus eco-tourism destinations. Kerala's tourism development is centred on the idea of Responsible Tourism with community participation. Sustainable growth is the right approach to development, he said.

Emphasising the strong government-to-government relations with UAE and people-to-people social and cultural ties, Riyas said he is confident that tourism will be a key driver in this relationship with more and more Keralites travelling to UAE, and vice-versa, in the future.

The reception accorded to the Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan by the Ruler of Dubai, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, has further strengthened the ties, he said.

Noting that the last few years have been challenging for Kerala, Riyas said the offer of help from the ruler of UAE and NRKs to carry out relief, rehabilitation and revival measures have been great.

"We have been successful in weathering these crises under the able and visionary leadership of the Chief Minister, Pinarayi Vijayan. There is growing optimism among the industry and the people that the worst is behind us," he added.

SHARE MARKET

Asian stocks track Wall St tech rally, US yields cling to highs

HONG KONG: Asian shares advanced on Wednesday with tech stocks particularly catching a lift following a strong session on Wall Street, while US treasury yields held near multi-year highs ahead of closely watched inflation data this week.

Investors across asset classes are devoting considerable thought to the pace and timing of interest rate hikes by central banks across the world.

Barring any big surprises, the consumer price index should cement expectations the US Federal Reserve will raise interest rates next month, with a strong print offering further support to those tipping a larger 50 basis point rise.

MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan added 1 per cent to its highest in two weeks, helped by a 3 per cent gain in Hong Kong-listed tech stocks.

Japan's Nikkei gained 0.9 per cent. All three main Wall Street indexes closed higher with tech stocks including Apple Inc and Microsoft Corp jumping, as did bank stocks supported by the prospect of higher US interest rates. Nonetheless, the Nasdaq Composite is still down 9.2 per cent this year after a brutal January.

Manishi Raychaudhuri, the Asia-Pacific equity strategist at BNP Paribas, said market volatility was lingering as investors tried to figure out how often, how far and how fast central banks would raise interest rates.

"The overarching theme for the market is central banks' monetary policies," he said. "I think volatilities will continue and will possibly increase...but over the longer-term corporate balance sheets, particularly in Asian emerging markets look a lot better than they



were earlier," he said.

Elsewhere in the Asia Pacific, gains in tech names helped Korea's KOSPI rose 0.8 per cent and Commonwealth Bank of Australia, the country's largest bank gained 5 per cent after announcing a A\$2 billion share buyback, Reuters reported.

Gains in Hong Kong financials and tech stocks meant the local benchmark rose 2 per cent, unfazed by tighter restrictions to combat a new wave of COVID-19. E-mini futures for the S&P 500 rose 0.23 per cent.

However, focusing on US inflation figures due Thursday is likely to cap further gains.

"Even though we sit in Asia, markets are still eagerly waiting for the Thursday CPI print out of the US so are sitting on their hands right now," said Marcella Chow Hong Kong-based global market strategist at JPMorgan Asset Management.

"The market is currently expecting January's CPI to be 7.3 per cent versus 7 per cent in December, and if it comes in higher than expected we could see 10-year yields go higher and even reach 2 per cent, and push a value rotation," she added.

Higher yields typically cause investors to move out of so-called growth stocks, particularly technology names, into value stocks.

US Treasury yields held firm in Asian trading, after touching multi-year highs the day before as did yields in the eurozone.

The yield on 10-year Treasury notes was 1.9559 per cent, having hit 1.97 per cent on Tuesday, its highest since November 2019, and the two-year was 1.3435 per cent, just below its highest since March 2020.

In Asia, the 10-year Japanese government bond yield rose 1 basis point to 0.215 per cent, its highest since January 2016. - **BNA**

EUROPEAN UNION

EU's chip output plan to reduce Asia dependency

BRUSSELS: The European Union announced a \$48 billion plan on Tuesday to become a major semiconductor producer, seeking to curb its dependency on Asian markets for the component that powers everything from cars to hospital ventilators and game consoles.

At a time when natural gas shortages and Europe's reliance on Russia for energy shows the political risks of economic dependency, the 27-nation bloc is moving to boost its economic independence in the critical semiconductor sector with its Chips Act.

"Chips are at the centre of the global technological race. They are, of course, also the bedrock of our modern economies," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said.

The EU move mirrors US President Joe Biden's \$52 billion push to invest in a national chip-producing sector to make sure more production occurs in the United States. - **BNA**

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MARKET

MSX index ends lower

Sharqiya Desalination, up 10.00 per cent, was the top gainer while, Dhofar Insurance, down 8.67 per cent, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,089.42 points, down by 0.63 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.10 per cent at 505.99 points.

Sharqiya Desalination, up 10.00 per cent, was the top gainer while, Dhofar Insurance, down 8.67 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of Shell Oman Marketing Company were the most active in terms of the number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 381 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating a turnover of OMR3.55 million, with more than 10.18 million shares changing hands. Out of 39 traded securities, 11 advanced, 17 declined and 11 remained unchanged. At the session close, domestic investors were net buyers for OMR259,000 while foreign investors were net sellers for OMR198,000 followed by GCC & Arab investors for OMR61,000 worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 6,522.98 points, down by 0.60 per cent. Prices of Al Sharqia Investment and HSBC Bank Oman were up by 1.09 per cent, and 1.02 per cent respectively. Prices of Dhofar Insurance, Al Anwar Investment, National Bank Oman, Bank Dhofar, and Global Financial Investments were down by 8.67 per cent, 6.59 per cent, 2.63 per cent, 1.67 per cent, and 1.41 per cent respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,760.98 points, down 0.71 per cent. Services Index was up by 0.42 per cent before closing at 1,612.61 points. — United Securities

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

MUSCAT
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EXCHANGE

INDICES							
Index.....	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value.....	Diff.....	Diff%	
MSX 30 INDEX.....	4,115.43	4,089.42	4,089.42	4,115.21	-25.79	-0.63	
FINANCIAL INDEX.....	6,561.04	6,522.98	6,522.98	6,562.09	-39.11	-0.60	
Industry Index.....	5,802.02	5,760.98	5,760.98	5,802.02	-41.05	-0.71	
Services Index.....	1,615.25	1,606.61	1,612.61	1,605.91	6.69	0.42	
MSX Shariah Index.....	507.34	505.99	505.99	506.50	-0.51	-0.10	
MSX TR INDEX.....	4,953.93	4,922.63	4,922.63	4,953.67	-31.04	-0.63	
=====							
Trading Summary							
Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap.....	Up.....	Down.....	Equal	Sec. Traded
10,186,422	3,547,526	381	22,030,030,422	11	17	11	39

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 9

	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PD	LAST BD	LAST OFFER	PDA VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET																
OM0000003000	AI MAHA MARKTING	25,000	17,500	2	0.700	0.700	0.700	0.700	0.692	0.008	1.156	0.700	0.680	0.700	0.100	48,300,000
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIA INV.	169,900	15,870	18	0.083	0.085	0.083	0.083	0.092	0.001	1.087	0.094	0.091	0.095	0.100	8,370,000
OM0000001087	OMAN UNITED INSUR.	5,000	1,755	2	0.352	0.352	0.350	0.376	0.376	0.000	0.000	0.350	0.350	0.378	0.100	37,600,000
OM0000001525	OMAN INVST&FIN.	47,000	7,238	2	0.154	0.154	0.154	0.154	0.154	0.000	0.000	0.154	0.150	0.154	0.100	36,498,000
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	57,797	18,299	9	0.318	0.318	0.312	0.316	0.316	0.000	0.000	0.312	0.312	0.312	0.100	19,340,550
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	106,379	55,671	10	0.524	0.524	0.522	0.524	0.522	0.002	0.384	0.520	0.520	0.530	0.100	1,873,024,791
OM0000003398	SOHAR INT BANK	222,000	23,976	8	0.108	0.108	0.108	0.108	0.108	0.000	0.000	0.108	0.108	0.000	0.100	322,828,727
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	47,400	22,596	4	0.478	0.478	0.464	0.476	0.478	-0.002	-0.418	0.464	0.464	0.472	0.100	26,180,000
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	165,256	129,313	21	0.788	0.792	0.780	0.784	0.788	-0.004	-0.508	0.792	0.780	0.792	0.100	588,000,000
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	20,275	7,259	3	0.360	0.360	0.358	0.358	0.360	-0.002	-0.556	0.358	0.358	0.360	0.100	233,038,034
OM0000001400	OMAN FLOUR MILLS	137,742	96,432	10	0.704	0.704	0.700	0.700	0.704	-0.004	-0.568	0.700	0.700	0.704	0.100	110,250,000
OM0000002077	AL OMANIYA FINS.	350,000	47,246	2	0.135	0.135	0.133	0.135	0.136	-0.001	-0.735	0.133	0.133	0.139	0.100	39,411,248
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PROD.	279,046	108,270	52	0.388	0.388	0.388	0.388	0.392	-0.004	-1.020	0.388	0.388	0.388	0.100	48,460,408
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	1,002,029	300,610	34	0.300	0.304	0.300	0.300	0.304	-0.004	-0.316	0.300	0.300	0.316	0.100	200,509,628
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	124,500	53,537	14	0.432	0.432	0.430	0.430	0.446	-0.016	-3.587	0.430	0.430	0.446	0.100	94,600,000
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	659,000	56,149	31	0.088	0.088	0.085	0.085	0.091	-0.006	-6.593	0.086	0.086	0.088	0.100	17,000,000
Total	16	3,418,324	961,719	222												
Parallel Market																
OM0000004669	SHARQIYAH DESALIN.	5,100	561	1	0.110	0.110	0.110	0.110	0.100	0.010	10.000	0.110	0.110	0.000	0.100	10,758,238
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	5,100	245	1	0.048	0.048	0.048	0.044	0.004	9.091	0.048	0.044	0.048	0.100	5,582,509	
OM0000002275	SHELL OMAN MK.	1,817,801	1,449,550	5	0.896	0.896	0.896	0.896	0.890	0.006	0.668	0.896	0.896	0.896	0.100	85,120,000
OM0000002572	OMAN OIL MARKETING	916,342	799,030	7	0.868	0.872	0.868	0.872	0.852	0.020	2.347	0.872	0.868	0.872	0.100	53,431,800
OM0000004735	SEMBCORP SALALAH	10,000	720	4	0.072	0.072	0.072	0.072	0.071	0.001	1.408	0.072	0.072	0.074	0.100	68,729,180
OM0000001517	HSBC BANK OMAN	25,000	2,475	1	0.099	0.099	0.099	0.099	0.098	0.001	1.020	0.099	0.099	0.105	0.100	198,030,966
OM0000001152	OMAN NAT ENGL	100,000	12,000	6	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.119	0.001	0.840	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.100	35,600,000
OM0000001178	MUSCAT GASES	186	30	1	0.163	0.163	0.163	0.161	0.161	0.000	0.000	0.163	0.152	0.163	0.100	4,830,000
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	20,000	1,504	4	0.078	0.079	0.074	0.075	0.075	0.000	0.000	0.074	0.074	0.080	0.100	9,140,625
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	1,471,142	96,402	51	0.066	0.066	0.065	0.066	0.066	0.000	0.000	0.065	0.065	0.066	0.100	23,043,531
OM0000003961	VOLTAMP ENERGY	1,000	89	1	0.089	0.089	0.089	0.089	0.089	0.000	0.000	0.089	0.081	0.089	0.100	7,244,845
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	86,111	8,439	6	0.098	0.098	0.098	0.098	0.098	0.000	0.000	0.098	0.097	0.099	0.100	215,221,297
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	191,000	18,567	10	0.098	0.098	0.097	0.097	0.097	0.000	0.000	0.097	0.096	0.099	0.100	16,975,000
OM0000001319	ALUMINIUM PROD.	11,500	1,231	3	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.108	-0.001	-0.926	0.107	0.106	0.109	0.100	3,592,145
OM0000003821	GALFAR ENGINEER	121,000	8,713	7	0.073	0.073	0.072	0.072	0.073	-0.001	-1.377	0.072	0.071	0.074	0.100	14,615,024
OM0000003125	GLOBAL INV H.	50,000	3,500	2	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.071	-0.001	-1.408	0.070	0.069	0.071	0.100	14,000,000
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	1,000,000	118,000	14	0.118	0.118	0.118	0.118	0.120	-0.002	-1.667	0.118	0.115	0.120	0.100	353,569,469
OM0000001566	OMAN FISHERIES	9,200	497	3	0.054	0.054	0.054	0.054	0.055	-0.001	-1.818	0.054	0.050	0.054	0.100	6,750,000
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	805,000	37,880	12	0.048	0.048	0.047	0.047	0.048	-0.001	-2.083	0.047	0.046	0.048	0.100	31,719,709
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	77,616	14,360	3	0.190	0.190	0.185	0.185	0.190	-0.005	-2.632	0.185	0.185	0.190	0.100	300,800,076
OM0000001086	DHOFAIR INSURANCE	25,000	4,475	1	0.179	0.179	0.179	0.179	0.196	-0.017	-8.673	0.179	0.000	0.000	0.100	17,900,000
Total	21	6,548,098	2,578,267	143												

India's Sensex surges 657 points on positive cues from global stock markets

MUMBAI: The Indian equities markets benchmark Sensex soared 657 points on Wednesday led by strong buying support in auto, IT, banking and financial stocks amid positive cues from the global markets.

Maruti Suzuki surged 4.14 per cent to Rs8951.55. IndusInd Bank rallied more than three percent.

HDFC Bank gained 2.5 per cent. The 30 stock S&P BSE Sensex closed 657.39 points or 1.14 per cent higher at 58,465.97 points against its previous day's close at 57,808.58 points. This is the second day of rally in the benchmark index. The Sensex had gained 187.39 points on Tuesday.

The broader Nifty 50 of the National Stock Exchange closed 197.05 points or 1.14 per cent higher at 17,463.80 points against its previous day's close at 17,266.75 points. The Nifty had gained 53.15 points on Tuesday.

There was strong buying support in banking and financial stocks. IndusInd Bank soared 3.02 per cent to Rs 965.55. —ANI

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INVESTMENT MANAGER

Investcorp puts in \$55 million investment in NDR Warehousing

MANAMA: Investcorp, an investment manager specialising in alternative investments, said that it has led a \$55 million investment in NDR Warehousing Private Limited (NDR), one of the largest Indian warehousing platforms.

NDR's asset portfolio comprises 18 logistics parks spread across over 8 cities including Chennai, Mumbai, the National Capital Region, Bangalore, Coimbatore and Kolkata.

Over the next few years, the company is planning to double its portfolio from the current 11.6 million square feet as it expands into other cities such as Pune and Goa. Its portfolio has performed resiliently even during the COVID pandemic due to its high-quality tenant base and has a current occupancy rate of over 99 per cent.

"Given the strong fundamentals and attractive secular tailwinds, Investcorp has been actively investing in the Warehousing sector globally for many years now," Ritesh Vohra, Partner and Head of Real Estate at Investcorp India said. "In our experience, warehousing has been one of the few sectors to have demonstrated resilience and continued growth." —BNA

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EXERCISING FOR EVEN THREE SECONDS A DAY HAS GREAT HEALTH BENEFITS

Weight training or resistance training has been known to have many benefits including building muscle, burning body fat, strengthening your bones and joints, reducing injury risk, and improving heart health. A new study from Edith Cowan University (ECU) has discovered that lifting weights for as little as three seconds a day can have a positive impact on muscle strength.

The study titled, 'Effect of daily 3-s maximum voluntary isometric, concentric or eccentric contraction on elbow flexor strength' was published in the 'Scandinavian Journal of Medicine and Science in Sports'.

A collaboration with researchers from Niigata University of Health and Welfare (NUHW) in Japan had 39 healthy university students perform one muscle contraction at maximum effort for three seconds per day, for five days a week over four weeks.

The participants performed either an isometric, concentric or eccentric bicep curl (see definitions below) at maximum effort, while researchers measured the muscles' maximum voluntary

contraction strength before and after the four-week period.

Another 13 students performed no exercise over the same period and were also measured before and after the four weeks.

Muscle strength increased more than 10 per cent for the group who performed the eccentric bicep curl after the four weeks, but less increase in muscle strength was found for the other two exercise groups.

The no exercise group saw no increase.

Lead researcher Professor Ken Nosaka from ECU's School of Medical and Health Sciences said the results showed people didn't need to spend vast amounts of time exercising to improve their muscle strength.

"The study results suggest that a very small amount of exercise stimulus — even 60 seconds in four weeks — can increase muscle strength," he said.

"Many people think you have to spend a lot of time exercising, but it's not the case. Short, good quality exercise can still be good for your body and every muscle contraction counts."

These three classifications relate to what the muscle is doing when being activated.

An isometric contraction is when the muscle is stationary under load, concentric is when the muscle is shortening and eccentric when the muscle is lengthening.

For a bicep curl, a dumbbell held with an arm by one's side, before lifting the weight upwards towards the chest and then lowering it back down via the elbow.

Lifting the weight sees the bicep in concentric contraction, lowering the weight sees it in eccentric contraction, while holding the weight parallel to the ground is isometric.

The study showed that all three lifting methods had some benefit to muscle strength, however eccentric contraction easily produced the best results.

Researchers measured each group's concentric, isometric and eccentric strength.

The concentric lifting group improved slightly (6.3 per cent) in isometric strength but saw no improvement elsewhere, while the isometric group only saw an increase in eccentric strength (7.2 per cent).

However, the eccentric group saw significant improvements in strength across all three measurements: concentric increased 12.8

per cent, isometric 10.2 per cent and eccentric 12.2 per cent.

The eccentric group's overall muscle strength improved 11.5 per cent after 60 seconds of effort in total.

"Although the mechanisms underpinning eccentric contraction's potent effects are not clear yet, the fact only a three-second maximal eccentric contraction a day improves muscle strength in a relatively short period is important for health and fitness," Professor Nosaka said.

Professor Nosaka said the findings were exciting for promoting physical fitness and health, such as prevention of sarcopenia — a decrease in muscle mass and strength with aging.

"We haven't investigated other muscles yet, but if we find the three-second rule also applies to other muscles then you might be able to do a whole-body exercise in less than 30 seconds," he said.

"Also, performing only one maximal contraction per day means you don't get sore afterwards," he concluded.

Professor Nosaka and NUHW's Dr Masatoshi Nakamura designed the study and the data were collected by Dr Nakamura and his PhD and Masters students. - **ANI**



FEATURE



“The Power of the Dog” leads the Oscars race with 12 nods, while sci-fi epic “Dune” has come in second with 10 nominations. Winners will be announced at the Academy Awards ceremony in Los Angeles on March 27.

2022 OSCAR NOMINEES ANNOUNCED



his year’s Oscar contenders were announced on Tuesday in a streamed broadcast hosted by actors Tracee Ellis Ross and Leslie Jordan.

Although the nominees are out, there’s plenty of time to speculate about who the big winners will be — the 94th annual Academy Awards take place on March 27 at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood.

Up for best picture is Stephen Spielberg’s remake of the 1961 movie “West Side Story” with a score by the late Stephen Sondheim. Spielberg is also nominated for best director for his film about two rival gangs, the Jets and the Sharks, set in a gentrifying Manhattan in the 1950s.

“Belfast,” which tells the story of a working class family in the 1960s in the midst of political turmoil in the Northern Irish capital, is another contender for best picture. Filmmaker Kenneth Branagh was also nominated for the best director award. The coming-of-age film is based on his childhood experiences of growing up in Belfast.

Award nominations

Another strong Oscar contender is a unique western — the psychological drama “The Power of the Dog” by Jane Campion. It leads the race with 12 Academy Award nominations, including best director and best picture, along with Benedict Cumberbatch playing rancher Phil Burbank up for best actor.

If the Netflix film takes home best picture, it would be the first western to do so since “No Country for Old Men” in 2007.

Sci-fi adventure film “Dune,” by “Blade Runner 2049” director Denis Villeneuve, garnered

10 nominations, including best picture. The movie is the first of a two-part adaptation of the 1965 novel by Frank Herbert. It’s also up for best visual effects, as well as best cinematography.

Guillermo del Toro’s film noir “Nightmare Alley” was nominated for four awards, best picture included. The Mexican director best known for “Pan’s Labyrinth” also took home Oscars in 2018 for best picture and best director for his Cold War romantic fantasy “The Shape of Water.”

Although it didn’t make the cut for best picture, Joel Coen’s “The Tragedy of Macbeth,” a remake of Shakespeare’s drama in black and white with surrealistic elements reminiscent of Alfred Hitchcock movies, is still up for several awards, including best cinematography and best production design. Denzel Washington, who plays the title character as he slips into madness, was nominated as best actor. Meanwhile, Frances McDormand who plays Lady MacBeth, was left out of the running, meaning she won’t have a chance to sweep the Oscars as she did last year as a producer and leading actress of the film “Nomadland.”

Comedies in the running

Netflix’s dark comedy “Don’t Look Up,” starring Leonardo DiCaprio, Jennifer Lawrence and Meryl Streep, could very well be the best movie of the year.

Another comedy, coming-of-age story “Licorice Pizza” by director Paul Thomas Anderson, is up for both best picture and best director.

Comedy-drama “Coda,” about a teenager with deaf parents by director Sian Heder, is also in the running for best picture, as well as best adapted screenplay.

Another nominee for the top

film is “King Richard,” a story based on the father of tennis superstars Venus and Serena Williams. The movie was produced by Will Smith, who also stars as the lead character and was nominated in the best actor category. Aunjanue Ellis, who plays the girls’ mother, is a contender for the best supporting actress award.

Nostalgia and foreign films

Fans of Lucille Ball and the US sitcom “I Love Lucy” will appreciate the nominations garnered for the movie “Being the Ricardos,” based on the lives of on and off-screen couple Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz. Actors Javier Bardem and Nicole Kidman are up for best actor and actress, respectively.

The nominees for best international film are especially diverse this year. They include Japanese film “Drive my Car” by Ryusuke Hamaguchi, who is also nominated for best director. The Japanese film is the only foreign work to be in the running for best picture, as well.

Italian director Paolo Sorrentino’s latest film, “Hand of God,” which is based on his childhood in Naples and is also out on Netflix, is another best foreign film nominee, along with Danish film “Flee,” Bhutan’s “Lunana: A Yak in the Classroom” and Norway’s “The Worst Person in the World.” Germany’s shortlisted entry, Maria Schrader’s “I’m Your Man,” was not among the final nominees.

This year, the ceremony in Hollywood will be in-person, as opposed to the slimmed-down, pandemic-safe 2021 event. The Academy also announced that the show would have a host for the first time since 2018, without however revealing who that might be. -nw

ROUND-UP

Maisarah Islamic offers attractive finance options

Recently, Maisarah announced new profit rates on its personal finance, home finance and auto finance

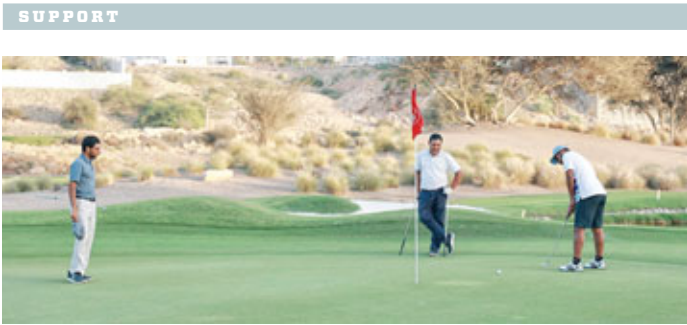
MUSCAT: In line with its commitment to making banking easy with a diverse bundle of Islamic financing solutions, Maisarah Islamic Banking Services – BankDhofar’s Sharia-compliant window – continues to offer attractive finance options with flexible payment plans, fast approvals and easy documentation. Recently, Maisarah announced new profit rates on its personal finance, home finance and auto finance in order to make it easier for customers to acquire financing for personal use, build or purchase



the house of their dreams, and own the automobile of their choice. As per terms and conditions of the revised finance profit rates, the starting profit rate for Personal Finance is 4.99% and it is applicable for all new, additional and take-over of finances from other banks. Meanwhile, 4.95% is the starting profit rate for Home Finance that is applicable for all new, additional and take-over of home finances from other banks, while Auto Finance is offered with a 4.95% profit rate, and it applies to new auto finance requests. Moreover, Maisarah’s Goods Fi-

nance covers up to 100% of basic goods cost with a flexible payment plan of up to 10 years, allowing customers to furnish their homes, purchase gadgets and electronic appliances, meet their basic needs and enjoy a convenient and contemporary lifestyle of their choice. Customers can also pay for their children’s education with a flexible finance period of up to 10 years via the Education Finance option that covers education fees, the cost of books, etc. The Islamic window also offers a Property Finance bundle with a flexible payment tenure of up to

25 years, covering up to 80% of the property value. Property Finance is available for the purchase of ready-to-use, under-construction properties, as well as the cost of property renovation. What adds exclusive value to this package is that customers can own the share in the property equal to the contribution they make monthly. Meanwhile, Maisarah also offers an exclusive Commercial Finance option for salaried Omani nationals who are looking for an additional income stream with a flexible payment plan for up to 15 years. This type of finance allows for the purchase of commercial vehicles, goods, equipment and real estate that would support customers in achieving their aspirations and contribute to their business growth and success. For those who wish to travel for work or leisure, or even plan a Haj or Umrah trip, the exclusive Travel Finance solution covers all types of travelling-related expenses with a finance period of up to 3 years. This includes expenses of transportation, accommodation, sightseeing and tourism packages.



Oman LNG sponsors 46th National Golf Championship

MUSCAT: As part of our strive to support our community and healthy lifestyle, Oman LNG sponsored the 46th National Golf Championship in Muscat. The sponsorship complements our consistent efforts to boost competitive sports capabilities and promoting different sports activities. The Golf Championship highlights the development of local youth in competitive golf tournaments raising self-esteem through recognition and appreciation. This grows sports enthusiasts and talents, who will represent our country in international tournaments and competitions. Oman’s encourages competitive sport, particularly at international circles, like a window that offers high profile events, a glimpse of the Sultanate - its hos-

pitable people and picturesque landscape - as a beautiful, attractive destination, with the possibility of drawing them to visit as holidaymakers. Despite the pandemic, Oman LNG spares no efforts to sponsor and support various activities, while adhering to all health measures and protocols. The sponsorship of this event further encourages the adoption of healthy lifestyles and marks the Sultanate of Oman on the touristic map as an excellent venue to hold local, regional and global events. Such a step comes in line with the Oman 2040 Vision, whose main goals involve drawing tourists from around the globe to appreciate Oman’s exceptional beauty and infrastructure through promoting such events.

AT BAIT AL GHASHAM MUSEUM

Oman American Business Centre hosts its first family day

MUSCAT: In partnership with Al Maamari Tours, the Oman American Business Centre (AmCham Oman) hosted its first-ever family day recently at Bait Al Ghasham Museum. Professionals and business leaders from within the OABC membership enjoyed the opportunity to bring their entire families for a day out together. Attendees enjoyed a delicious Omani lunch and, following current health and safety guidelines, mingled and made new connections with other families. Both OABC and Al Maamari Tours share the core value of conducting business sustainably, considering the local population and helping to preserve the cultural heritage of Oman. “Inviting members and their families to visit the 200-year-old Bait Al Ghasham Museum was an excellent opportunity to introduce members to the fascinating and rich history of the building itself, traditionally a royal



dwelling, as well as the local area,” says Jasmin Nutt, Managing Director at Maamari Tours. “We were also proud to connect with and support the local ecosystem, as the highlight of our day was the shared traditional meal, cooked by women from the surrounding village.”

“This was the very first time we’ve hosted an event for families instead of executives only,” says Rebecca Olson, Executive Director of the OABC. “The feedback has been great – people are ready to make new connections in person, and find the OABC community a safe and positive place to do so. We’re thankful to Corporate Member Al Maamari Tours and Bait Al Ghasham for co-hosting this wonderful, historical, eye-opening experience for us all.” Located in the Al Shal’li village in the town of Afi, a 50-minute drive from Muscat, the museum is open from Saturday to Thursday: 9 am to 2 pm, and Friday: 9 am to 12 pm. As the official affiliate of the US Chamber of Commerce in Oman (AmCham Oman), the OABC promotes understanding, partnerships & other matters of mutual economic interest between business communities in Oman and the United States.

BEST SERVICES

Nissan emphasises regular after-sales service to ensure safety and functionality of vehicle

MUSCAT: Being a customer-centric organisation, Nissan Oman has urged customers to go for regular after-sales service to ensure the safety and functionality of the vehicle. Providing the best after-sales experience to customers, Nissan Oman offers the best global customer service practices across Oman. With service centres strategically located across Oman, there is always one near customers to serve their needs. Nissan Oman uses a wide-ranging strategy to offer customer’s top after-sales experience through innovative technology and enhanced services. The strategy is about giving customers more choices and new services to make the ownership experience unique. A senior official of Nissan Oman, from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles, said, “To guarantee the Nissan philosophy of providing the best services to customers, we are dedicated to making continued efforts to offer services to our customers on multiple fronts.”



He added, “Regular maintenance is vital to help keep your Nissan running efficiently. Our factory-trained technicians use advanced diagnostics and Genuine Nissan Parts, designed specifically for the vehicle. We employ fully factory-trained service technicians and they work hard to provide top class service. There are plenty of routine car maintenance tasks that should be performed on a Nissan. Therefore, we encourage our customers to talk to our service professionals for a comprehensive list of impor-

tant routine maintenance tasks. We urge customers to schedule their service and give their Nissan the care it needs.” In addition to regular after-sales service to cater to ever-changing, evolving customer needs and expectations, Nissan Oman has launched Nissan Express Service wherein customers can bring in their car and take it back after a quick service. The ‘wait and take service’ offer is valid for minor periodic maintenance services without concerns and is available in select locations.

PROMOTION

Changan CS95 now available at low EMI



MUSCAT: Changan’s high-performance intelligent seven-seat SUV CS95 is now available at an EMI starting from OMR 260 for six years. EMI is calculated based on a 20 per cent down payment and six years loan tenure. Subject to banks or finance company approvals. T&C ap-

ply, Arabian Gulf Automobiles and Equipment, which is part of Bahwan International Group has also announced that the price includes a five per cent Value Added Tax (VAT). A spokesperson for AGAE said, “CS95, a flagship model of Changan, is a perfect seven-seat-

er SUV for a large modern family who wants to travel in luxury, with business class comfort in all road conditions with its intelligent 4WD system. We are thrilled to offer low EMI on CS95 which is packed with endless features and has numerous advantages over its segment competition.”

PROMOTES TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS

Karwa Motors participates in Mena Transport Exhibition

MUSCAT: Karwa Motors, Oman’s first-ever bus brand and manufacturing facility was well received by visitors at the recent Mena Transport Exhibition. A dedicated stand at the exhibition provided Karwa Motors with the opportunity to promote its transportation solutions to over 2,000 attendees throughout the event, which ran from February 6 to 8. Perfect avenue Karwa Motors CEO, Dr Ibrahim Albalushi, commented on the company’s participation in the exhibition, saying, “The Mena Transport Exhibition is one of the foremost exhibitions of its kind in the region. It offered us the perfect avenue to meet with and showcase our brand, transportation solutions, technology, and manufacturing capabilities to leading industry experts, potential clients, and key decision-makers from the region.”

The Mena Transport Exhibition is a leading biennial business and networking platform for all the players of the public transport sector. The exhibition was held in Dubai and was organised by UITP (Union Internationale des Transports Publics) in partnership with RTA. It brought together over 50 exhibitors, comprising industry leaders, authorities, operators, and expert international voices to exchange experiences, solutions, ideas, and business opportunities concerning the latest innovations in the public transport sector. “Through our strong presence in such a significant expo, not only will we be able to establish ourselves as major players in the region’s transportation industry, but also proudly position Oman as a regional leader in automotive and industrial development,” said Dr Ibrahim Albalushi.



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ROUND-UP

Meethaq Islamic Banking: Continuously supporting corporate sector in Oman

The bank offers a wide range of products and services for corporates and small and medium-sized enterprises

MUSCAT: Since its inception, Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat, has always been at the forefront in actively supporting the Sultanate's economic development, especially in line with the strategic goals of the ambitious Oman Vision 2040.

Through rapid innovation, Meethaq's ever-growing suite of Islamic finance products and services is today catering successfully to the varied and sophisticated needs of its different customer segments. The bank offers a wide range of products and services for corporates and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Meethaq has been progressing from strength to strength over the years and enjoys the tremendous confidence of its ever-growing family of customers.

Highlighting Meethaq's strategic importance on the occasion of the Omani Industry Day, Ali Ahmed Al Lawati, Assistant General Manager, Meethaq - Corporate Banking, said: "Meethaq recognises the immense potential offered by the Sultanate. Our comprehensive suite of Corporate Banking solutions support corporate customers at every stage of their business evolution, and in growing to their full potential. Hence, it is no surprise that Meethaq has been playing a key role in the development of key sectors in the Sultanate including, manufacturing, logistics, telecommunication, fisheries, mining & energy.

"For example, in support of Oman's strategic food security, Meethaq has financed several local food producers in the past. Similarly, Meethaq has been providing



financing facilities to some of the leading companies in the transport and logistics sectors in the country. This is part of Meethaq's endeavours to help achieve the national goals of strong economic growth, sustainable development and ensuring prosperity for all. Meethaq is highly supportive of

Oman's overall strategic development goals and also the feedback from its customers.

"We would like to take this opportunity to thank all our valued customers for the tremendous confidence they have placed in Meethaq, and promise to continue developing our portfolio of prod-

ucts and services to serve them better, every day."

Ali Al Lawati further pointed out that Meethaq's large suite of cutting-edge Islamic banking offerings includes project financing, working capital facilities, trade financing, access to the largest Islamic banking branch network in the Sultanate, and digital banking facilities. Throughout the past, Meethaq has been continuously working on improving its services and supporting the corporate sector in enhancing its competitiveness by providing a variety of banking facilities. Meethaq's services include capital finance, term and project finance, contract finance, trade services, currency exchange services and tailored financing solutions for corporates based on their business needs. Other essential solutions offered by Meethaq include bank guarantees to third parties as well as Letters of Credit. These solutions facilitate the import and export of goods and the completion of various contracts for large entities.

The services also cover accounts like current accounts, deposits and call accounts and corporate purchase cards. Moreover, it offers special services related to

transfers, collection of cheques, digital services, payment and currency services. All of these are designed following Islamic Sharia-compliant contracts such as Murabaha, Musharaka, Ijarah and Wakala amongst others. The products and services are available through the extended network of 24 Meethaq branches across the Sultanate. This comes as part of Meethaq's endeavours to promote the national goals of the Sultanate of achieving strong economic growth and sustainable development and ensuring prosperity for all by supporting national initiatives because of their vital role in the state's well-being and the development of its economy.

Digital solutions

Meethaq is strongly committed to investing in state-of-the-art technology to further increase efficiency and improve customer service across customer segments including both personal and corporate banking. It is focused on maintaining its clear leadership in hi-tech products and services, including electronic payments and Online Banking, which are powered by state-of-the-art banking technology. Meethaq is continuously devel-

oping its digital services to cater to the future needs of SMEs and large corporates.

Customised SME solutions

Meethaq's Sharia-compliant SME solutions are well designed by keeping in mind the essential role that SMEs play in supporting the Sultanate's economy and Oman's 2040 vision. From this point of view, Meethaq's SME solutions, products and services are highly innovative helping its customers to grow their businesses through various initiatives like providing dedicated Relationship Managers. Meethaq's customers have also been able to benefit from CSR programmes like Al Wathbah, Irshad, Maliyatas well as free VAT registration and advisory services for SMEs.

Meethaq Islamic Banking also offers a variety of banking solutions including the Ijarah financing solution and Diminishing Musharaka. Other essential solutions offered by Meethaq include bank guarantees to third parties as well as Letters of Credit, liquidity management solutions and Foreign Exchange services.

Supporting the industrial sector

Meethaq is playing an essential role in supporting the economic sector in general and the industrial sector in particular, as it is the preferred choice for companies whether on the investment side or benefiting from the banking facilities.

Meethaq is continuously improving its services provided to companies to enhance their competitiveness, through providing different banking facilities, which include, for example, working capital financing which can be financed up to 80% and includes the purchase of goods and the fulfilment of short term commitments. It includes payment of salaries, rent and bills at competitive prices and a financing period of up to 5 years in addition to Takaful life insurance. Meethaq also provides project financing and term financing. Under the framework of this service, financing of the lease is available for real estate, project financing and Sukuk, in addition to commercial services provided with a high credit limit.

MILIPOL QATAR

International event for Homeland Security and Civil Defence returns to Doha from May 24 to 26

MUSCAT: Milipol Qatar, the Middle East leading international event for homeland security and civil defence, returns to the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre (DECC) from May 24-26 against a background of rising demand for innovative solutions and advanced security systems to face increasingly complex issues to homeland security.

Held under the patronage of His Highness the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani, the 14th edition of Milipol Qatar will be officially opened by Qatar's Prime Minister and Minister of Interior HE Sheikh Khalid bin Khalifa bin Abdulaziz Al Thani. The event is organised by Qatar's Ministry of Interior in partnership with Paris-based international event organiser Comexposium, acting on behalf of the GIE Milipol headed by Civipol, the cooperation implementer of the French ministry of the Interior.

Milipol Qatar 2022 is expected to attract over 240 official delegates and dignitaries from 30 nations including Ministers from Iraq, Leba-



non, Moldavia and Ukraine.

"In a context of heightened security challenges (Covid, intensification of cyber threats, geopolitical instability), decision-makers, security forces, technical implementers, infrastructure developers and citizens are seeking new solutions to tackle rapidly evolving security issues. To this regard, this year's event will be a powerhouse of innovation," explained Prefect Yann Jounot, CEO of Civipol and President of Milipol events.

"Milipol Qatar last year cemented its status as the region's

unrivalled homeland security and civil defence event with beyond €89 million of contracts and 82% exhibitor satisfaction rate."

With many international travel restrictions easing since Milipol Qatar's last edition in March 2021, the organisers believe this year's event could well surpass last year's edition which attracted over 220 exhibitors from 17 countries, more than half of which were new to the event as well as more than 8,000 visitors from 80 nations.

"The industry is eager to showcase its innovations to buyers and

opinion leaders, meet official international delegations, develop business in the Middle East and learn and network with security experts during Milipol Qatar's highly respected knowledge-sharing seminar programme," explained François Jullien, Milipol Events Director.

Milipol Qatar 2022 is being organized as the Middle East's homeland security market is estimated to grow by 14.5% annually during the forecasted period from 2019 until 2025, according to market research engine.

"Qatar's strategic location in the heart of the region makes it an ideal meeting point to access the business potential emanating from the forecasted sector growth," added M. Jullien. "Exhibitors are also eager to contribute to Qatar's own homeland and civil defence needs as encompassed within the country's National Vision 2030 which entails large investment in infrastructure projects all requiring advanced security solutions as well as local and international expertise."

PROMOTION



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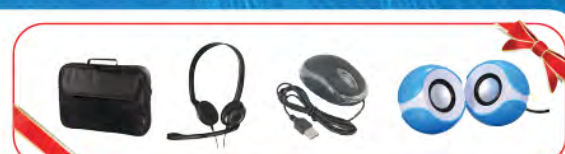
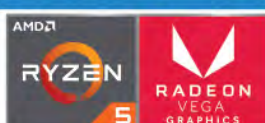
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