

HM THE SULTAN GREETSPRESIDENT OF NICARAGUA

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Daniel Ortega of the Republic of Nicaragua on his country's Independence Anniversary. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Ortega. His Majesty also wished the people of Nicaragua further progress and prosperity. - **ONA**



HIS MAJESTY THE SULTAN GREETSPRESIDENT OF HONDURAS

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Xiomara Castro of the Republic of Honduras on his country's Independence Anniversary. In the cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness. His Majesty also wished the people of Honduras further progress and prosperity. - **ONA**



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MEETING



HM receives written message from Algerian President

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik received a written message from President Abdel Majid Taboun of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria. The message was handed over here on Wednesday to HH Sayyid Asa'ad bin Tarik Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Inter-

national Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan by Mohamed Arkab, Algerian Minister of Energy and Mines.

During the meeting of Sayyid Asa'ad with the Algerian minister, the two sides reviewed the distinguished relations binding the two

countries, and means of promoting them in all areas. The meeting was attended by the Secretary General and the two Advisors at the Office of Sayyid Asa'ad, as well as Filali Guenni, Ambassador of Algeria to the Sultanate of Oman and members of the delegation accompanying the guest. - **ONA**

AIR INDIA EXPRESS

Plane passengers, crew evacuated after smoke

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Some passengers suffered minor injuries during an evacuation operation after smoke started billowing out of an Air India Express flight at Muscat International Airport on Wednesday morning.

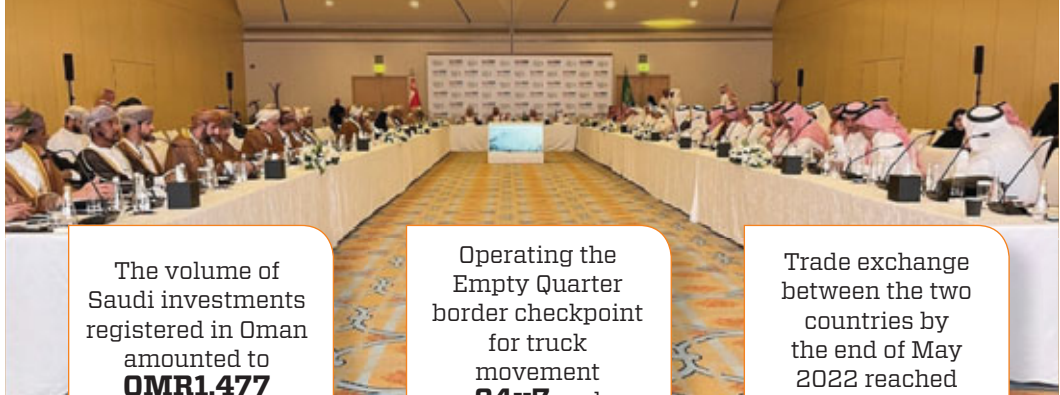
The aircraft was taxiing towards the runway for take-off to Kochi at 11.20 am on Wednesday when officials noticed the smoke coming out of aircraft.

Airport officials said the passengers were immediately evacuated from the Air India Express flight on slides.

According to the airline, the Air India Express Muscat to Kochi flight IX 442, with 141 passengers on board, was preparing to depart from Muscat at 1120 Hrs (local time) on Wednesday.

"While it was taxiing towards the runway, the crew in another aircraft reported fumes from one of its engines. However, there was no fire warning indication in the cockpit. As a matter of abundant precaution, and following the prescribed SOPs, the crew stopped on the taxiway and activated the onboard engine fire extinguishers. Thereafter, the passengers were evacuated from the aircraft. Full support was extended by Muscat Airport authorities and the passengers were brought to the terminal building. There were no major injuries reported except minor bruises to some passengers sustained during evacuation. The matter is being investigated by the regulatory authorities and also the Airline's Flight Safety Department," the airline said. **>A3**

STAGE SET FOR NEW ERA IN OMAN-SAUDI TRADE



The volume of Saudi investments registered in Oman amounted to **OMR1.477 billion**

Operating the Empty Quarter border checkpoint for truck movement **24x7** and allowing transit

Trade exchange between the two countries by the end of May 2022 reached **OMR1.009 billion**

The website of the Oman-Saudi Business Council launched

RIYADH: The stage is set for a new era of prosperity and strategic cooperation between Oman and Saudi Arabia that will take both nations to a new level.

With the volume of Saudi investments registered in Oman amounting to OMR1.477 billion, both the countries are now looking at more areas of investments.

The Oman-Saudi Business Council held its 4th meeting for 2022 at Riyadh on Wednesday.

The meeting aims to boost business relations and address challenges facing the private sectors of the two countries, as well as review establishing joint projects.

The Omani side was headed by Qais Mohammed Al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, while the Saudi side was headed by Eng. Khalid Al Falih, Minister of Investment.

During the meeting, the website of the Oman-Saudi Business Council was also launched. The website aims to highlight the activities of the council and investment opportunities in the two countries.



The meeting reviewed the initiative of establishing the Saudi Franchise Exhibition. It also discussed the issue of operating the Empty Quarter border checkpoint for truck movement 24x7 and allowing transit.

The council's meeting also covered the issue of facilitating the entry of Omani products into Saudi markets.

Several B2B meetings were held on the sidelines of the council's meeting between Omani and Saudi businesspersons.

Eng. Ridha Juma Al Saleh, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), said that indicators show a continued rising curve in trade exchange between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA).

Al Saleh added that trade exchange by the end of May 2022 reached RO1.009 billion between the two countries.

In his turn, Sheikh Ali Hamad Al Kalbani, Head of the Oman-Saudi Business Council (Omani side),

affirmed the keenness of the two countries' private sectors to contribute to economic integration.

Eng. Tariq Mohammed Al Haidari, First Vice President of the Federation of Saudi Chambers of Commerce, said the council will play a leading role in bolstering economic partnerships by implementing an action programme that prepares a suitable milieu for the enhancement of economic cooperation between businesspersons of the two countries.

Moreover, Nasser Said Al Hajri, Head of the Oman-Saudi Business Council (Saudi side), indicated that Saudi Arabia is keen to achieve greater and broader cooperation in the field of investment and attract Omani investors to invest in the KSA.

Al Hajri added that six specialised sectoral committees stemmed from the Oman-Saudi Business Council, including the fields of energy and mining, food security, technology, logistics, industries and construction and services. - **ONA**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Oman takes part in 7th world religions congress



1 The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry Endowments and Religious Affairs, took part in the 7th Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, held at Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan. Oman's participation in the congress comes within the framework of enhancing dialogue between religions through religious tolerance, mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence. **>A2**

WORLD

College evacuated after blast in Boston

2 The Boston Police bomb squad on Tuesday cordoned off an area of Northeastern University to examine a pair of suspicious packages amid reports of an explosion and minor injuries to at least one person. **>A6**

MARKET

Regional outlook remains positive

3 A positive regional outlook has been revealed despite a significant downgrade in global gross domestic product (GDP) growth against a backdrop of rising inflation and interest rates in a new report. **>B1**

TOURISM

Serb season set to begin in Dhofar



Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Serb season in the Governorate of Dhofar is a time when the warmth of the sun mingles with the gentle morning breeze, trees assume a lush green hue and flowers bloom in all their glory.

On Wednesday, 21 September of every year in the Governorate of Dhofar, the 'Serb' spring season, as it is locally called, begins, and lasts for three months until December 21 of each year.

The atmosphere during the 'Serb' season is characterised by the bright sun, moderate weather, low humidity, cessation of turbulence in sea, and the splendour of the landscape is magnified manifold in the mountains, plains and deserts.

The governorate, during the season is known for the beautiful weather and wonderful scenery that attract tourists to witness the beauty of nature after the fog has cleared and the air is clear.

Serb plays an integral part in the

seasonal agricultural harvest in mountains and the plains that are dependent on the rains. The season also has its economic importance to farmers, fishermen and livestock breeders, besides boosting honey production and availability of fish.

Meanwhile, the Environment Authority (EA) is pressing ahead with the 70,000 tree-planting project in different wilayats of the Governorate of Dhofar. The project comes within the framework of the national initiative to plant 10 million wild trees.

Eng. Mohammed Salim Al Hardan, Director General for Environment Conservation told Oman News Agency (ONA) that the project includes planting trees in government-owned and private sites. Al Hardan added that 9,278 trees have already been planted at different areas in Dhofar.

Moreover, the national initiative to plant 10 million wild trees aims to improve the green cover in depleted natural grazing areas.



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PRAYER TIMINGS



Dhuhr.....	12:07pm
Asr.....	3:34pm
Maghrib.....	6:16pm
Isha.....	7:27pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....	4:38am

HEARING IMPAIRMENT

Pact inked for hearing aid devices

MUSCAT: Imam Jabir bin Zaid Waqf Foundation and Oman Association for the Hearing Impaired today signed an agreement for the provision of hearing aid devices for people with hearing impairment.

The agreement was inked by Eng. Ismail Sulaiman Al Sawafi, Chairman of Al Ata'a Committee at Imam Jabir bin Zaid Waqf Foundation and Mohammed

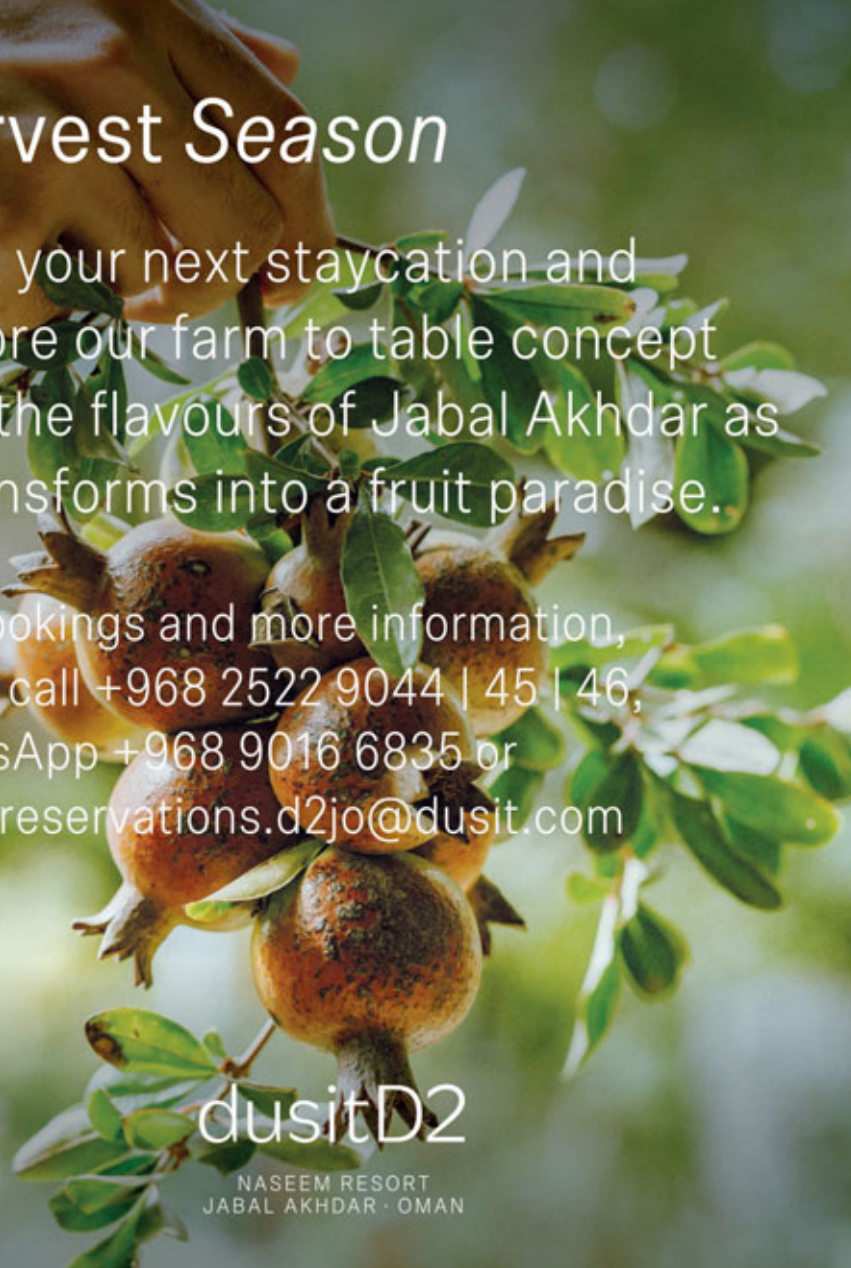


Mubarak Al Amri, Chairman of Association for the Hearing Impaired. -ONA

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NASEEM RESORT
JABAL AKHDAR · OMAN

Oman takes part in 7th congress of world religions

Oman's participations in the congress comes within the framework of enhancing dialogue between religions through mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence

NUR-SULTAN: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry Endowments and Religious Affairs, took part on Wednesday in the 7th Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions,



MEETING: Oman's delegation in the congress was headed by Sheikh Ahmed Saud Al Siabi, Secretary General of the Ifta Office at the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs.

held at Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan.

Oman's participation in the congress comes within the framework of enhancing dialogue between religions through religious tolerance, mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence.

Oman's delegation in the congress was headed by Sheikh

Ahmed Saud Al Siabi, Secretary General of the Ifta Office at the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs.

The congress highlighted the role of world and traditional religions' leaders in developing the social and spiritual lives of humans after the pandemic. -ONA

UNITED NATIONS

Summit to review COVID effects

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman will take part on Monday, 19 September 2022, in the Transforming Education Summit, to be held at the United Nations (UN) headquarters in New York.

The summit will review the repercussion of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on education.

The summit will also highlight matters related to education that need further improvement,



namely sustainable development, digital transformation and funding.

Oman's delegation in the sum-

mit will be headed by Dr. Mohammed Awad Al Hassan, the Sultanate of Oman's Permanent Representative to the UN. -ONA




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350 PUBLISHING HOUSES

Oman participates in Palestine book fair



RAMALLAH: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, is taking part in activities of the 12th Palestine International Book Fair, which began at the Palestinian National Library in Ramallah yesterday under the slogan "Palestine, is the homeland and Jerusalem the capital."

As many as 350 publishing houses and 150 writers representing 16 countries are participating in the exhibition, which runs until 24 September 2022.

Ahmed Saud Al Rawahi, Director of Muscat International Book Fair, told Oman News Agency (ONA) that the Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, is participating in a pavilion in the exhibition. The pavilion includes a diverse collection

of titles and recent publications, covering cultural, literary, artistic, jurisprudential and media aspects.

He added that this participation aims to shed light on the Omani culture, and highlight its bright civilized aspects of intellectual production, as well as heritage, literary and historical aspects. The participation also aims to extending bridges of communication with the brotherly Palestinian people.

The exhibition includes seminars, poetry evenings, and an art exhibition that includes 100 paintings by 40 Palestinian artists from Gaza Strip and the West Bank. It also includes a participation of artists with drawings featuring the late Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

-ONA



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SECOND EDITION

70 take part in Salalah Cycling Tour

SALALAH: The second edition of Salalah Cycling Tour in Dhofar Governorate, organised by Dhofar Municipality in cooperation with Oman Cycling Association concluded, yesterday, with the participation of seventy cyclists from within and outside the Sultanate.

In the final and fourth stage of the competition organised for 116 kilometres, cyclist Mohammed AlWahaibi from Salalah Club secured the first place followed by cyclist Super Shock from Thailand in the second place and cyclist Munther Al Hasani from Salalah Club in the third place.

In the overall category, cyclist

Saif Al Ka'abi (UAE) secured the first place and took the "Gold Shirt". He was followed by cyclist Jabir Al Mansouri (UAE) in

the second place and cyclist Abdullah Al Hamadi (UAE) in the third place.

In the overall category of under

23 years, cyclist Abdullah Al Hamadi (UAE) secured the first place and the "White Shirt" followed by cyclist Said Al Rahbi from the

team of the Royal Army of Oman in the second place, and cyclist of Salalah Club, Mohammed Al Wahaibi in the third place.

Overall ranking

In the overall ranking of teams, the first place went to the UAE team followed by Cycle Com team in the second place and the team of Thailand in the third place, respectively.

At the conclusion of the event, Dr. Ahmed bin Mohsin Al Ghasani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality honoured the winners in the race and the entities supporting the second edition of Salalah Cycling Tour. -ONA

AIR INDIA

Relief flight for Kochi

The airline is extending all facilities to the guests at Muscat. "The airline's local management and support staff are on hand to provide assistance at Muscat airport," the statement said. A relief flight has been arranged to bring back the passengers to Kochi.

PARLIAMENTARY MEET

REGIONAL MEETING: The 16th ordinary meeting of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Chairmen of Shura, National and Ummah Councils will be headed by Khalid Hilal Al Ma'awali, Chairman of the Shura Council. -ONA

Sultanate to host meeting of GCC legislative bodies

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman will host next Wednesday 21 September 2022 the 16th ordinary meeting of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Chairmen of Shura, National and Ummah Councils.

The meeting will be headed by Khalid Hilal Al Ma'awali, Chair-

man of the Shura Council. Sheikh Ahmed Mohammed Al Nadabi, Secretary General of the Shura Council, in a statement, said that the Sultanate of Oman is keen to support the march of joint Gulf Cooperation Council action in a bid to achieve the aspirations of GCC peoples. -ONA

SURGERY

FEAT: The team, led by senior surgeons Dr. Fahd Abdullah Al Kindi and Dr. Khalfan Salim Al Sunaidi, managed to improve the subject's oxygen flow level by 65 percent to 90 percent in sitting posture. -ONA

SQU medical team conducts rare surgical operation

MUSCAT: A surgical team from Sultan Qaboos University Hospital (SQUH) conducted a successful catheterisation surgery to patch two atrial septa and lend relief to a patient who suffered a rare case of orthopaedic dyspnea (shortness of breath).

The team, led by senior sur-

geons Dr. Fahd Abdullah Al Kindi and Dr. Khalfan Salim Al Sunaidi, managed to improve the subject's oxygen flow level by 65 percent to 90 percent in sitting posture.

Cases of orthopaedic dyspnea are rare, and so are heart openings causing them. -ONA

REF: OFM/TD-22/020

Fire Alarm Maintenance



Oman Flour Mills SAGC (OFM) invites specialized contractors to participate in our tender for "Fire Alarm Maintenance" as per the scope of work.

Tender Documents: Bidders wishing to participate in this tender are required to provide all details of their company, contact details and bank details no later than the date shown below via email: tender@omanflourmills.com

Oman Flour Mills SAGC (OFM) will send all the tender documents to participants after receiving a tender fee depositing receipt copy via email.

Tender fee shall be deposited directly to the Oman Flour Mills SAGC bank account as mentioned below:

Account Name: Oman Flour Mills Company SAGC
Bank: Sahar International
Account Number: 007020032407
Swift code: BSHRIDMRXXX

Tender Ref no	OFM/TD-22/020
Tender subject	Fire Alarms
Tender fee	8025/- (non-refundable)
Start date for tender collection	19/09/2022
Last date for tender collection	19/09/2022
Site visit	19/09/2022
Last date for receiving the technical queries	22/09/2022
Closing date of the tender	26/09/2022
Mode of payment of tender fee	By Bank Transfer
Email address for communication	tender@omanflourmills.com
Mode of submission	All bidders are required to submit their proposals addressed to the Chairman of Tender Committee and deposited in the tender box located at the reception of our Alqab Investment building on the 26 September 2022.

• Vendor selection will be based on "best and final offer". OFM is not bound to select the lowest bidder.
• All tender communication must be addressed to: tender@omanflourmills.com
• Notwithstanding the specific terms in the Tender Documents, Tender fee is not refundable
• Bids submitted shall consist of 2 separate sealed envelopes (Technical) & (Commercial), with bidder name on each and tender reference number (OFM/TD-22/020 - Fire Alarm Maintenance).



Sultanate of Oman
Consumer Protection Authority



EasyPact

Notification



EasyPact CVS 400-630A



EasyPact EZC 400-630A

Date of production 5/2019 to 4/2021

Reason	The potentially affected product may contain a nonconforming component that may result in the circuit breaker not operating as intended under certain conditions.
Resolution	If you have purchased one of these products and would like to check if it is potentially affected, please contact the company to schedule a visit of an authorized technician for inspection and repairs free of charge if necessary. Schneider Electric is requesting their customers to contact them at: 800 73 666 or ae-ccc-gulf@ae.schneider-electric.com



Sultanate of Oman
Consumer Protection Authority

FERRARI VEHICLES RECALL CAMPAIGN FOR ALL MODELS (2006 – 2023)



الفردان للسيارات
Alfardan Motors



Campaign Date:

Campaign Type:

Campaign Section:

15/09/ 2022
Safety Action
Mechanical / Replacement of brake fluid reservoir cap and updating of Instrument Panel Node (NQS) software.
Ferrari Vehicles

Product Description:

Production year	Vehicle Model	VIN No.		No. of affected vehicles
2006 –2023	All Models	From ZFFZE59B000149640	To ZFF98RNT2P0282497	205

Description:

The cap of the brake oil reservoir may not be able to ensure proper ventilation to maintain the atmospheric pressure inside the reservoir itself. This condition can cause partial or complete loss of the car's braking capacity.

Action:

Replacement of brake fluid reservoir cap and updating of Instrument Panel Node (NQS) software.

For More Information:

Owners of affected vehicles may contact Alfardan Motors to book an appointment starting 15/09/2022.

Contact Data:

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

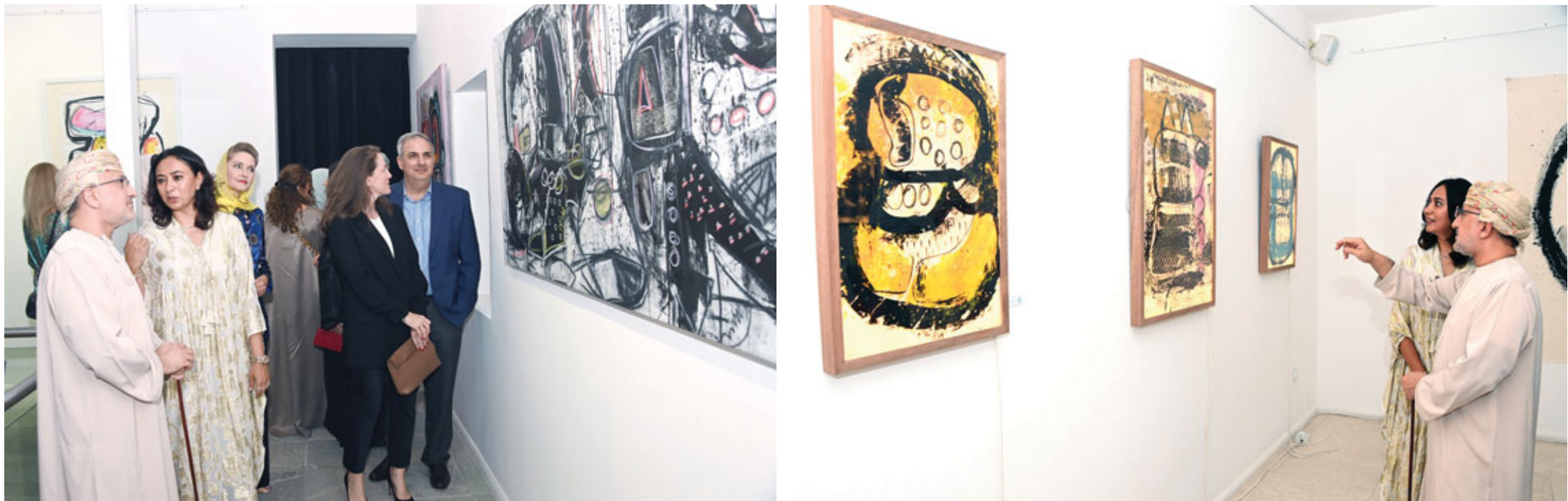


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ART EXHIBITION OF ARTIST RADHIKA

MUSCAT: The Art Exhibition of Artist Radhika Hamalai was opened under the patronage of Salim bin Mohammed Al Mahrooqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, on 13 September at Bait Muzna Gallery, Muscat Governorate. The exhibition was organised under the title

“sense of self”. The artist has worked on different ways including the ceramic works and mono print. The artworks of the exhibition are rich in content and the different styles of the work which ranged from semi-metaphorical works to extreme expressive work. -ONA

WE LOVE OMAN

Date palms of Nozouh village



Located in the Wadi Bani Hinai in the Wilayat of Rustaq in the Governorate of South Al Batinah, the Nozouh village is famous for its plantations of various types of date palms, seasonal crops, oats, wheat, barleys, legumes and fruits. Nozouh village is situated at a strategic location on the road connecting Wadi Bani Ghafir and the Niyabat of Al Houqain. It is also connected to the Wilayat of Rustaq and the Wilayat of Suwaiq. It is about 30 km from the centre of the Wilayat of Rustaq. The village gained great importance due to its ancient archaeological discoveries that date back to 3000 BC. Archaeological tombs were discovered on the road leading to the Niyabat of Al Houqain. The history of these tombs dates back to the period before Islam.



Ancient archaeological inscriptions were also discovered and those concerned believe that they might be related to the inscriptions found in Wadi A'Sahtan. These inscriptions date back to 3000 BC, whereas some of them date to 1000 BC. Such inscriptions are scattered across different places in the village. They represent littering and drawings that depict the events and environment experienced at that time.





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NEW LOOK

NEW LOOK



20 PERCENT OFF

Oman Air offering discounts on flights from Europe



Times News Service

MUSCAT: Escape to warmer climes this winter with Oman Air. The national airline of the Sultanate of Oman is offering exclusive discounts on flights from Europe. Up until 19th September 2022, those purchasing a Business or Economy class ticket from London, Frankfurt, Istanbul, Milan, Munich, Paris, Trabzon or Zurich can enjoy up to 20 percent off.

Choose from a wide selection of global destinations including Oman Air's hub, Muscat, which offers the perfect base to explore the natural beauty, rich heritage and warm and friendly culture of Oman. Meanwhile, in anticipation of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, the airline has announced a number of initiatives and promotions, including Match Day Shuttle flights between Muscat and Doha, and special stopover packages

courtesy of Oman Air Holidays. With seamless connections to Qatar for the year's most un-missable matches, football fans are presented with the perfect chance to combine a historic sporting moment with the holiday of a lifetime. Jamal Al Azki, Regional Vice President - Europe, Middle East and Africa, at Oman Air, said, "The winter is a peak season for travel, especially for our European guests seeking to escape the colder cli-

mates and go somewhere warm. As global travel continues to pick up, we wanted to offer our guests even more opportunities to go on their dream holiday. Our latest offer not only provides great value luxury travel but, coinciding with the FIFA World Cup, offers the perfect chance to stopover in Muscat and attend the matches in Doha, just an hour and a half away." Combining exceptional value-for-money with the best hospitali-

ty, leisure and tourism experiences on offer, Oman Air Holidays unlocks unforgettable experiences at some of the world's most popular destinations. Whether for a quick getaway or a leisurely holiday, every journey is enhanced by Oman Air's award-winning service and signature Omani hospitality. Offers valid for travel up until 31st March 2023. To book a ticket and to view terms, conditions and pre-departure requirements, visit omanair.com

Oman, Lithuania to cooperate in transport, ICT

The two sides also discussed the government digital transformation programme in both countries



DISCUSSION: Eng. Said Hamoud Al Ma'awali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology met on Wednesday with Marius Skuodis, Minister of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Lithuania. -ONA

MUSCAT: Eng. Said Hamoud Al Ma'awali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology met here on Wednesday with Marius Skuodis, Minister of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Lithuania.

Investment opportunities
The two sides discussed enhancing the existing cooperation between the two countries. They also explored investment opportunities available in logistic services, ports, information and communication technology (ICT). Al Ma'awali underscored the

importance of developing the joint relations with Lithuania particularly laying focus on logistic services and IT, as well as expanding partnership and augmenting the volume of trade exchange between the two countries. **Opportunities available**
A visual presentation was given during the meeting highlighting Oman's ports and their associated infrastructure and investment opportunities available in partnership with the private sector. Oman Logistics Centre also

gave a briefing on its works, tasks and initiatives. The Oman Logistics Strategy (SOLS) 2040 of which implementation supervised by the centre, was also spotlighted. The two sides also discussed the government digital transformation programme in both countries. They also explored aspects of cooperation in digital transformation at various government sectors. The two sides also reviewed successful experiences and sharing expertise between them. -ONA



منتجع بر الجصة ، سلطنة عمان
Barr Al Jissah Resort & Spa
SULTANATE OF OMAN

TENDER NOTICE

Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah Resort & Spa would like to invite companies to tender:

Commercial shop space for lease (size 60m²).

For selling luxury branded swimming & beach wears in the hotel.

Tender forms will be available at the Resort's Purchasing Department in Al Bandar hotel from 15th of September 2022 onwards.

Applicable non-refundable fee of OMR 25,000 per form.

Tenders are to be submitted via email to tender.slmu@shangri-la.com with respective tender in subject line for the attention of Director of Finance

Last date for submissions: 20th Sept 2022.

For more information, please contact:

Purchasing Department
P.O. Box 644, PC 100, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: (968) 2477 6150 / 2477 6155

Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah Resort & Spa reserves the right to accept, reject or cancel any or all applications without thereby incurring any liability to the applicants / without assigning any reasons.

2022-2023



ROHM's new season to start with 'La Traviata'

MUSCAT: The Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) will present Verdi's beloved classical opera La Traviata to launch its new season (2022-2023). The season has a packed programme of musical performances spanning an impressive range of genres. ROHM's new season is designed to offer audiences a varied and world class programme to enjoy until the end of May 2023. ROHM's production of La Traviata returns to the opera house following the world premiere in 2019. A critically acclaimed pro-

duction, directed by Marta Domingo, the setting is WWII in Italy, amidst the uncertainty of the future. For this performance Plácido Domingo will star as Germont for opening night, with internationally acclaimed singers Nino Machaidze as Violetta and Vittorio Grigolo as Alfredo, while Giampaolo Bisanti conducts the Orchestra and Chorus of Teatro Carlo di Genova. Domingo will conduct the second and third performances with an all-new cast. The performance is enriched with choreography from Compania

Antonio Gades. Verdi's three act opera tells the story of a courtesan, Violetta, who has captured the heart of a young admirer, Alfredo. True love blossoms and they leave behind the social whirl to begin a new quiet life together. Penury and twisting fate separates them temporarily, leaving Violetta vulnerable to the emotional blackmail of Alfredo's father who wants his son to marry someone of his own social status. The tragedy slowly unfolds with bittersweet heartache to a final scene of reconciliation.



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CABLES

HM sends greetings to El Salvador, Costa Rica

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Nayib Bukele of the Republic of El Salvador on his country's Independence Anniversary.

In the cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Bukele. His Majesty also wished the people of El Salvador further progress and prosperity.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Dr. Rodrigo Chaves of the Republic of Costa Rica on his country's Independence Anniversary.

In the cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes to President Chaves and the people of Costa Rica. -OMA

Princess Anne pens tribute to late Queen

The Princess Royal wrote that she was fortunate to share the last 24 hours of her dearest mother's life



LONDON: Anne, The Princess Royal, only daughter of the longest serving monarch of the UK Queen Elizabeth II, and Prince Philip, wrote a heartfelt note for her mother, as she accompanied her coffin back to Buckingham Palace.

Grieving the loss of her mother, the Queen's second child, The Princess Royal wrote that she was fortunate to share the last 24 hours of her dearest mother's life, as the coffin of the Queen travels from Balmoral to London for the final rites. "It has been an honour and a privilege to accompany her on her final journeys. Witnessing the love and respect shown by so many on these journeys has been both humbling and uplifting," she wrote.

"We will all share unique memories. I offer my thanks to each and everyone who shares our sense of loss," she added.

Princess Royal thanked the countrymen for extending support to her brother Charles III, who ascended the throne as King after the demise of Queen Elizabeth II.

"We may have been reminded how much of her presence and contribution to our national identity we took for granted. I am also so grateful for the support and understanding offered to my dear brother Charles as he accepts the added responsibilities of The Monarch," The Princess Royal

wrote. Born on August 15, 1950, Anne, The Princess Royal is 16th in the line of succession to the British throne after the death of her mother on September 8, 2022. The eldest daughter of Queen Elizabeth II was granted the title of 'Princess Royal' in 1987.

Meanwhile, the coffin of Queen Elizabeth on Tuesday II arrived at Buckingham Palace from Edinburgh and will rest overnight in the Bow Room of the palace.

"Her Majesty The Queen's coffin has arrived at Buckingham Palace, where it will rest overnight in the Bow Room. Tomorrow the coffin will be borne in Procession on a Gun Carriage of The King's Troop Royal Horse Artillery to the Palace of Westminster," The Royal Family wrote on Twitter.

The British queen Elizabeth II breathed her last in Balmoral Castle in Scotland on September 8. The coffin of Queen Elizabeth II began a six-hour journey from her home in the Scottish Highlands to Edinburgh on Monday.

It arrived at the Palace of Holyroodhouse and was at rest in a Church in Edinburgh for people to pay their last respects to the queen.

On the afternoon of Monday, a Procession was formed on the

forecourt of the Palace of Holyroodhouse to convey the Coffin to St Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh.

It was flanked by the Bearer Party from the Royal Regiment of Scotland and escorted by the King's Body Guard for Scotland and the Queen's children at the Palace of Holyroodhouse.

The Queen's children on Tuesday held a Vigil beside her coffin in St Giles' Cathedral church.

"The people of Scotland bid their final farewells to Her Majesty The Queen as her coffin travels from Edinburgh to Buckingham Palace," The Royal Family said.

On the afternoon of Wednesday, the Coffin will be borne in Procession on a Gun Carriage of The King's Troop Royal Horse Artillery from Buckingham Palace to the Palace of Westminster, where The Queen will Lie-in-State in Westminster Hall until the morning of the State Funeral.

The Procession will travel via Queen's Gardens, The Mall, Horse Guards and Horse Guards Arch, Whitehall, Parliament Street, Parliament Square, and New Palace Yard. After the coffin arrives at Westminster Hall, The Archbishop of Canterbury will conduct a short service assisted by The Very

Reverend Dr David Hoyle, Dean of Westminster, and attended by The King and Members of the Royal Family, after which the Lying-in-State will begin.

During the Lying-in-State, members of the public will have the opportunity to visit Westminster Hall to pay their respects to The Queen. On the morning of Monday 19th September, the Lying-in-State will end and the Coffin will be taken in procession from the Palace of Westminster to Westminster Abbey, where the State Funeral Service will take place at 1100 hrs BST.

Following the state funeral, the coffin will travel in procession from Westminster Abbey to Wellington Arch. From Wellington Arch, the coffin will travel to Windsor, and once there, the State Hearse will travel in procession to St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle via the Long Walk. A Committal Service will then take place in St George's Chapel.

The death of the 96-year-old Queen ended a generation-spanning, seven-decade reign that made her a beacon of stability in a tumultuous world. The UK has entered a period of official mourning, with tributes pouring in worldwide. -ANI

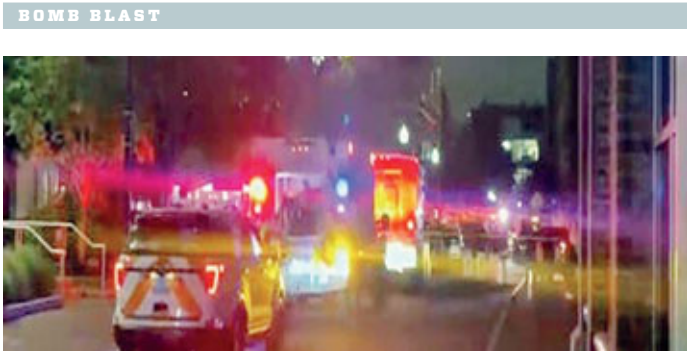


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One injured after blast in Boston, college evacuated

BOSTON: The Boston Police bomb squad on Tuesday cordoned off an area of Northeastern University to examine a pair of suspicious packages as there were unconfirmed reports of an explosion and minor injuries to at least one person, according to US media.

Boston police said they were investigating a package that apparently exploded when it was opened near the university's Holmes Hall, which is home to Northeastern's creative writing programme. The FBI was assisting the investigation, NBC Boston reported. The Boston Police are investigating two suspicious packages left near the university's Holmes Hall, which is home to Northeastern's creative writing program.

They declined to elaborate, but WCVB-TV said an individual was taken to a hospital and that firefighters and paramedics were at the scene. WBZ-AM radio, citing unidentified police officials, said the person suffered minor injuries.

Meanwhile, the bomb squad was also at the scene of a second package near the city's prestigious Museum of Fine Arts.

Northeastern University said the package was delivered to Hol-

mes Hall on Leon Street around 7 pm and detonated when a staff member opened it. That person, a 45-year-old man, suffered minor hand injuries and was taken to the hospital.

Police responded shortly before 7:30 pm, and the university asked students who had gathered for an evening journalism class at the hall to evacuate the building.

Northeastern is a private university in downtown Boston.

The Boston Bomb Squad, Boston police, Boston fire and Boston EMS have all responded and the building has been evacuated. Additionally, an FBI spokesperson says they are assisting the Boston Police Department in an investigation at Northeastern University.

When asked if there was a threat to the general public at Tuesday night's presser, police say the investigation is ongoing and that updates would be provided later. Northeastern University police stressed that the campus was secure as investigators work.

"It's very important to note that our campus is secure and we will maintain a secure campus in perpetuity," Northeastern University Police Chief Michael Davis said. -ANI

INTEGRATED SYSTEM

Oman School Sports Association unveils strategy for 2022/2027 term

MUSCAT: Oman School Sports Association unveiled yesterday its strategy for the term 2022/2027, in a ceremony organised under the patronage of Dr. Madiha bint Ahmed bin Nasser Al Shaibani, Minister of Education.

The strategy aims to generate an integrated system consistent with the school sports.

It also aims to introduce a well-established system for identifying talent who excel in sports and competent educational and sports cadres as well as build an association that is administratively and financially empowered and technically capable.

Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambusaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education for education and



Chairman of Oman School Sports Association, said in a speech that the 2022- 2028 Strategy of Oman School Sports Association would

add value to the field of the various school sports not just at the level of qualifying the sports cadre in the various sports activities but

also at the level of the impact of the message of the Association on the values and principles of the personnel in the field of education.

Since the announcement of Oman School Sports Association in 2016, the Association has sought to develop the school sports and its environment to further cement the sports as a way of life in the educational field, he said.

He added that the strategy was established on precise diagnosis and analysis of the actual condition of school sports under the best international practices in the field.

Hisham bin Salim Al Adwani, Vice Chairman of Oman School Sports Association, briefed on the establishment of the strategy which he said has undergone four stages which are the diagnosis and analysis of the current condition of Oman School Sports Association; setting the vision, objectives

and mission of the strategy; setting the executive plans and the mechanisms of transforming the objectives into programmes, initiatives and activities; and the stage of evaluation and following with the strategy.

Basil Ahmed Al Rawas, Undersecretary for sports and youth at the Ministry of Sports, Culture and Youth said that the strategy aimed to achieve the targeted objectives of Oman School Sports Association.

"The Ministry of Sports, Culture and Youth cooperates with Oman School Sports Association and together we would work on creation of a strategy with clear objective that meet the aspirations of the youth", he said. -OMA

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Xi Jinping meets Kazakh leader on first trip since pandemic

The Chinese President is scheduled to attend a leaders' summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in Uzbekistan

KAZAKHSTAN: Chinese President Xi Jinping travelled to Kazakhstan on Wednesday on his first international trip since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

He is scheduled to attend a leaders' summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in Uzbekistan alongside Vladimir Putin. Xi was welcomed by Kazakh leader President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev.

Chinese President Xi Jinping in Kazakhstan Chinese Xi Jinping met with the Kazakh leader Tokayev to discuss security and law enforcement issues

Tokayev's government said the two leaders would discuss energy markets and global economic tur-



ARRIVES: Chinese President Xi Jinping is seeking to deepen cooperation with Kazakhstan in law enforcement and security. - ONA

moil. Kazakhstan is a major oil and gas producer, and China is one of its leading customers.

"China is willing to work with Kazakhstan to deepen cooperation in law enforcement, security and defense," Xi wrote in an article for local Kazakh media that was later republished by Chinese state broadcaster CCTV.

Beijing also wanted to work with Kazakhstan to combat drug trafficking and transnational organized crime, he went on to say.

Xi also mentioned the "three evils", defined as terrorism, separatism and religious extremism, and that China was seeking to help Kazakhstan to combat them.

What's on the agenda at the SCO summit?

India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan and Tajikistan are part of the eight-nation SCO that Putin and Xi spearhead and see as a counterbalance to US alliances in East Asia. Observers of the organization include Iran and Afghanistan.

Xi and Putin are scheduled to hold a one-on-one meeting to discuss Ukraine, as Putin's foreign policy adviser Yuri Ushakov stated. Xi has been promoting a "global security initiative" following Beijing's more assertive foreign policy and the formation of a quad by the US, Japan, Australia and India.

It is unclear what this exactly entails. US officials are concerned that the initiative echoes arguments by Russia in support of the invasion of Ukraine. -DW

Modi, Putin to discuss Russia and India's cooperation in UN, G20 during SCO summit

MOSCOW: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be in Uzbekistan on September 15 and 16 to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit where he will meet Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Both leaders will discuss Russian-Indian cooperation within the UN and G20 during the SCO summit, Presidential aide Yuri Ushakov told reporters Tuesday. "A conversation on the international agenda with PM Modi will also take place, the sides will discuss issues of strategic stability, the situation in the Asia Pacific Region, and, of course, cooperation within major multilateral formats, such as the UN, the G20 and the SCO," Ushakov said, reported Russian news agency Tass.

It is reported that India will lead the SCO and will also chair the G20.

"This is particularly important, because India will preside in the UN Security Council in December, and, in 2023, India will lead the SCO and also chair the G20," he added.

PM Modi is expected to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping besides Russian President Putin.

As per sources, PM Modi is likely to have bilateral meetings with Putin and Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev on the sidelines of the SCO summit in Samarkand.

"PM Modi's bilateral meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev are almost



fixed and the meetings will take place on the sidelines of the SCO summit in Samarkand," a source told ANI.

The Prime Minister would also have other bilateral meetings during the summit which begins on September 14 at Samarkand in Uzbekistan.

The Indian Ambassador to Uzbekistan Manish Prabhat had said earlier that Prime Minister Narendra Modi would attend the summit and hold bilateral meetings with several leaders.

"Leaders of SCO member countries are meeting after two years due to the COVID pandemic. Some bilateral meetings will take place on the sidelines of the SCO. Still, the programme of the meetings will be finalised in due course," Ambassador Prabhat had told ANI in an exclusive interview.

"Economic cooperation in the SCO is an important question, which will be discussed in the SCO meetings. When we are meeting with central Asian countries, we discuss connectivity which will promote trade, investment and other exchanges between Indian and central Asian countries," he told ANI. -ANI

ARMENIA-AZERBAIJAN CLASHES

Almost 100 killed along border near Nagorno-Karabakh

YEREVAN: Fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan flared up again on Monday night, with both sides reporting intense artillery shelling and nearly 100 dead.

Just after midnight on Tuesday morning, Azerbaijani forces shelled Armenian troops at several locations along the border.

Azerbaijan said it was responding to a buildup of Armenian landmines and weapons near the border. Armenia fired back in retaliation.

The fighting took place near the Nagorno-Karabakh region, an area within Azerbaijan where ethnic Armenian separatists declared a breakaway republic — later known as Artsakh — in 1991.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has urged Armenia



and Azerbaijan "immediate steps to deescalate tensions, exercise maximum restraint and resolve any outstanding issues through dialogue" as per previous agreements, his spokesman said late on Tuesday.

Death toll climbing

At a press briefing early on Tuesday, Armenian defense spokesperson Aram Torosyan said the situation remains "extremely tense" as fighting continues.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol

Pashinyan later told parliament that "we have 49 [troops] killed and unfortunately it's not the final figure."

Later on Tuesday, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev's office released a statement following his meeting with military leadership, saying: "Provocations committed by Armenian forces at the border have been averted and all necessary objectives were fulfilled."

The country's defense ministry then said that at least 50 service members had been killed in the clashes as Russian President Vladimir Putin appealed for calm on both sides.

Armenia, Azerbaijan trade blame for violence

Both countries claimed to have

launched proportionate responses against what they saw as provocations from the other side.

"At 00:05 a.m. [local time] on Tuesday, Azerbaijan launched intensive shelling, with artillery and large-caliber firearms, against Armenian military positions in the direction of the cities of Goris, Sotk, and Jermuk," Armenia's Defense Ministry said.

However, Azerbaijan accused Armenian forces of carrying out "large-scale subversive acts" earlier on Monday night near the border districts of Dashkesan, Kelbajar and Lachin by placing landmines and mobilizing weapons.

"The countermeasures taken by the Azerbaijani military in response to the provocation by the

Armenian military are local and directed against legitimate military objects that serve as firing points," Azerbaijan's Defense Ministry added.

Armenian forces said they subsequently launched a "proportionate" response.

The Azerbaijani Defense Ministry said its troops came under "intense shelling from weapons of various caliber, including mortars, by units of the Armenian army."

France to bring up clashes at Security Council

Armenia has said it will appeal to the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) — a security bloc of former Soviet states — as well as the UN Security Council. -DW

BOMB ATTACK

Taliban kill local chief in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: The Taliban claimed responsibility on Wednesday for a bomb attack that killed a local pro-government militia chief in the Swat region of Pakistan on Tuesday.

Idrees Khan was killed by a roadside bomb, along with two police officers, two private guards, and three laborers, local police told French news agency AFP.

The Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP) — the Pakistani Taliban group is not directly connected to its Afghan counterpart, but shares a similar ideology — claimed that Khan had been involved in killing their members.

"We killed the leader of the peace committee Idrees Khan in the area of Brai Bandi in the district of Swat with a bomb," the TTP said in a statement. "Khan was involved in killing Taliban and torturing mujahedeen and their families in safe houses. The mujahedeen were pursuing him for almost 13 years."

Attacks on the rise again

The Swat valley, in the north-western province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa which borders Afghanistan, had been a stronghold for the TTP.

They were kicked out by a major military operation between 2007 and 2009.

Residents have complained recently that the militant group,

which aims to set up an Islamist state in Pakistan, has returned to the area.

Tuesday's attack was reported by DPA as the first in the Swat valley since the Taliban shot Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai in 2012.

Islamabad has also reported more attacks by the TTP since the Taliban took power in Afghanistan, especially along their largely porous shared border.

Reports of Taliban regrouping amid truce

Besides the attack in Swat, the TTP also claimed responsibility for a clash with Pakistani soldiers on Tuesday in the Kurram district on the Afghan border that left three soldiers dead.

Another attack that resulted in the kidnapping of at least seven people working for the Norwegian telecom giant Telenor in Swat on Tuesday also bore the hallmarks of a Taliban operation.

Recent weeks have seen mass demonstrations in the region against the central government's failure to act against the apparent regrouping of the militants.

The TTP agreed to an indefinite cease-fire with Islamabad in June as a step toward peace talks facilitated by their allies in Afghanistan. The series of attacks since then appear not to have broken the truce. -DW

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Barcelona undone by Bayern Munich's four-minute salvo



MUNICH

The two clubs are no strangers having faced one another in the group stage last season

MUNICH: Bayern Munich extended their undefeated run in the Champions League group stage to 30 games by defeating Barcelona 2-0 at the Allianz Arena.

The two clubs are no strangers

having faced one another in the group stage last season.

Tuesday's match followed a similar script, with the Germans coming out on top once again, thanks to goals from Lucas Hernandez and Leroy Sane.

Robert Lewandowski was playing against his former club for the first time since joining Barcelona in the summer.

Unfortunately for him and Barcelona, nerves got the better of him as he missed two big chances inside the opening 20 minutes, firing over from close range and then being denied by Manuel Neuer on the second, the Spanish MARCA newspaper reported.

Bayern finally responded through Noussai Mazraoui, who

came on for the injured Benjamin Pavard, but his effort was easily stopped by Marc-Andre ter Stegen.

A last-ditch tackle by Mazraoui denied Lewandowski to close the half, with Barcelona heading into the break with 10 attempts on goal compared to Bayern's four.

The missed opportunities proved costly for the away side as Bayern broke the deadlock in the 50th minute. Lucas Hernandez managed to escape the clutches of debutant Marcos Alonso and header home to the delight of the home fans, who erupted with joy.

Before Barcelona could find their bearings, they conceded a second four minutes later.

Sane slalomed through the Blaugrana defence after a brilliant ball from Jamal Musiala, and the former Manchester City man kept his footing before slotting home past Ter Stegen.

Pedri came close to getting Barcelona back in the match in the 63rd minute.

After collecting a return pass from Sergio Busquets, he lifted the ball over an onrushing Neuer only for it to come back off the post. From there Bayern used all their experience to see out the rest of the game, with the result moving them atop the Group C standings, while Barcelona sit level with Inter, who defeated Viktoria Plzen earlier in the day, on three points. **ONA**

WORLD BOXING COUNCIL



World Boxing Council sets foot in Oman

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The World Boxing Council (WBC), one of the largest international boxing organizations in the World, has extended the invitation of the WBC Amateur representation in Oman to Baqar Haider, Coach at Muscat Fight Club.

Together they aim to further advance boxing in Oman and to use the WBC as a tool to collaborate with local authorities, neighbouring countries and help develop the sport for the youth, through joint events and promotions.

For those unfamiliar with WBC, it is an organisation which was established in 1963, headquartered in Mexico. It is considered the elite of the boxing federations and boasts world renowned champions from the ages such as Mohammed Ali, Mike Tyson, Prince Naseem Hamed and Floyd Mayweather, and more notably the current heavyweight champion such as Tyson Fury to name a very few.

This was almost 4 years in the making and is a big step towards having the sport of Boxing reaching out to the youth of Oman says Baqar. The main advantage of this representation is that it allows us to benchmark future events and to follow international best practices when it comes to event management, governance, safety and most importantly it gives the Omani youth a trajectory to compete for

and win WBC approved belts and allows us to get on the international ranking system.

WBC amateur bouts are usually 3x2 minute rounds, where the athletes are scored on a 10-point system wearing fully protective gear, including head guards, gloves etc. Quantity and duration of rounds may increase depending on the experience levels of the athletes and if it is a title fight. All bouts are judged by 3 independent judges, have an independent referee, and the entire event is supported with all the required medical support and facilities before, during and after the competition. Stringent health checks and precautions are taken to maximise the safety and wellbeing of the athletes. The sanctioning body and independent commissions will ensure complete transparency and fairness and will govern the safety and protocols throughout the event.

Whilst this is amateur level only, it's a step in the right direction and with the number of athletes currently available along with the number of active clubs teaching boxing the future of the sport now has a much brighter outlook.

Baqar follows by saying that this representation ties with the Oman 2040 Vision bridging the gap between the public and private sector partnerships promoting the health of the nation and developing tourism in our case being through sports.

RESCHEDULED

Arsenal-PSV game in Europa League rescheduled

LONDON: Arsenal's postponed Europa League game against PSV Eindhoven has been rescheduled for next month after the English Premier League (EPL) agreed to push back the London club's midweek match against Manchester City.

UEFA said the Arsenal-PSV game will be played on 20 October 2022 after being postponed from tomorrow (Thursday) because police did not have resources in London during preparations for the state funeral of Queen Elizabeth II.

Arsenal was due to host Man City on 19 October 2022 in a clash of the current top two teams in the EPL standings.

The EPL said no new date was yet agreed for the Arsenal-Man City game. The season is already congested because of the World Cup in Qatar being played from 20 November to 18 December 2022.

"UEFA would like to thank the Premier League and the clubs concerned for their flexibility and cooperation," the European soccer body said.



UEFA wanted the Europa League program completed on schedule by 3 November 2022 ahead of the draw for the round of 16 four days later. Arsenal had no clear midweeks available ahead of the World Cup.

Though policing in London has

allowed Chelsea's Champions League game against Salzburg to go ahead tonight, the visit of a large group of PSV fans traveling from the Netherlands was more challenging.

Chelsea's home league game against Liverpool on Sunday was also postponed. **ONA**

EDUCATOR COURSE

ACC Level 1 Umpires Educator Course held

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman Cricket recently conducted an Asian Cricket Council Level 1 Umpires Educator Course for the domestic senior Level 2 umpires.

The course was organised as part of OC's development programme. Following the conclusion of the five-day course at the Oman Cricket Academy, the senior umpires will now be able to share their knowledge and experience with the junior level umpires.

Sarika Prasad, an ACC Senior Umpire and Match Referee, conducted the course for umpires who completed their Level 2 certification before 2020. Oman Cricket's Chief Development Officer, Duleep Mendis said, "We



congratulate all the participants who have successfully completed the Level 1 Educators course. The course will develop our panel of umpires and raise the level of umpiring to a higher level. We encourage new participants to

participate in Oman Cricket organized courses for Coaches, Educators, Umpires, Scorers etc."

The umpires certified as Level 1 Educators are: Harikrishna Pillai, Rahul Asher, Vinod Babu, Navaneetha K and Azad KR.

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MSX INDEX ENDS LOWER

Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) general index (30) lost 7.9 points, comprising a decline of 0.17 per cent to close at 4489.97 points, compared to the last session, which stood at 4497.83 points.

Regional outlook remains positive

According to the third quarter report, the positive Middle East outlook is underpinned by solid projections for activity in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) economies

Times News Service

MUSCAT: A positive regional outlook has been revealed despite a significant downgrade in global gross domestic product (GDP) growth against a backdrop of rising inflation and interest rates in a new report.

"Middle East GDP growth in 2022 is now projected at 5.5 per cent, slightly up on Oxford Economics' forecast three months ago," according to the latest Economic Insight report for the Middle East, commissioned by ICAEW and compiled by Oxford Economics.

According to the third quarter (Q3) report, the positive Middle East outlook is underpinned by solid projections for activity in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) economies.

"GCC GDP is expected to grow by 6.7 per cent this year, the fastest rate since 2011, driven by higher oil production, the recycling of government revenues into investment initiatives and, to a lesser extent, household and business spending. However, the possibility of a global



The Middle East is withstanding global economic pressures, but the broader outlook is challenging

Scott Livermore
ICAEW Economic Advisor, and Chief Economist and Managing Director, Oxford Economics Middle East

recession limiting oil demand remains a key downside risk to this view," the report further stated.

Although oil prices are expected to average \$103.8 per barrel, easing from the second quarter (Q2) average of \$113.5 per barrel, they remain supportive of public finances and are expected to contribute to an overall budget surplus of 9.7 per cent of GDP for the GCC region, the widest since 2012.

"This should drive a decline in the debt-to-GDP ratios since much of the GCC retains plenty of fiscal headroom," the report said.

Fiscal breakeven prices (as estimated by the IMF) are below \$80 per barrel in all GCC countries except Bahrain, suggesting economic growth across the region will remain robust in the coming quarters.

Travel and tourism activity has also gathered momentum, shrugging off the impact of strong dollar-pegged regional currencies and underpinning non-oil recovery.

Inbound travel to the region is outpacing global trends, in part thanks to major international events in the region in 2022, including the forthcoming FIFA World Cup in Qatar, which hopes to attract 1.5 million visitors.

Recent tourism statistics point to a 19 per cent increase in visitor numbers in Qatar in the first half of 2022 compared to 2021 overall due to a surge in arrivals from other GCC countries, India, the US, and the UK.

Qatar looks set to surpass 2019 visitor levels this year (2.1 million), with other countries, the UAE in particular, also benefitting. That said, in Dubai, the number of visitors was still about 15 per cent lower than in the first half of 2019, notwithstanding the boost from the delayed Expo 2020.

Mark Billington, ICAEW Managing Director, International, said: "While oil continues to buffer GCC economies, the looming possibility

of a recession in the US and Europe reinforces the importance of accelerating economic diversification efforts. Fortunately, current indicators measuring the region's non-oil performance point to ongoing strength, even as inflation remains high."

Scott Livermore, ICAEW Economic Advisor, and Chief Economist and Managing Director, Oxford Economics Middle East, said: "The Middle East is withstanding global economic pressures, but the broader outlook is challenging. The windfall from an increase in oil prices has seen markets like Saudi Arabia boom. However, with the OPEC+ alliance likely to cut production as the demand outlook weakens, such growth cannot be sustained without more diversification. Continued reinvestment of budget surpluses into public projects, increasing non-oil trade and new fiscal policy should help shield the GCC economies from the worst of the recessionary tension."

Inflation slowed in July in Kuwait, Oman and Qatar, thanks to easing food prices, though it edged up in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. While official UAE inflation data has not been published since December 2021, ICAEW predicts GCC inflation to average 3.1 per cent this year, up from 2.3 per cent in 2021, before falling back to 2.7 per cent in 2023.

As the US Federal Reserve continues its hiking cycle to tackle rising inflation, all central banks across the GCC region have tightened monetary policy. Given the currency pegs to the US dollar, regional policy rates tend not to fall too far out of step with the US, which is expected to continue hiking until early 2023. Given supportive energy and fiscal trends, higher borrowing costs will gradually drag down demand and growth, with the impact being felt more in 2023.

INTEREST-FREE INSTALMENTS

Bank Muscat and IKEA join hands on easy payment plan for customers

MUSCAT: In line with its customer-centric vision, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has joined hands with global home furnishing brand IKEA to facilitate affordable home furnishing options for customers in Oman through the bank's Easy Payment Plan (EPP).

The EPP facility has been extended to all holders of Bank Muscat Credit Cards (except Corporate Cards) shopping at IKEA Oman, whereby they can repay their total bill amount in 12 monthly instalments at a zero per cent interest rate.

Bank Muscat's EPP scheme offers customers the ability to avail of goods and services at selected merchant partners across the Sultanate and repay the billed amount in fixed monthly instalments over 12 months at zero per cent interest. As a valued merchant partner, IKEA will promote the EPP offers to its customers in Oman. The bank also announced that customers will benefit from the dedicated checkout counter that has been provided for Bank Muscat EPP customers at the IKEA Oman store. Customers can utilise the EPP facility at IKEA Oman for all bills that are above OMR100.

Customer-centric

Speaking on the occasion, Abdalnassir Al Raisi, General Manager – Personal Banking, Bank Muscat, said, "In line with the bank's customer-centric vision and providing of excellent financing facilities, Bank Muscat's Easy Payment Plan allows customers to avail goods and services and pay conveniently over a period of 12 months. Customers can easily purchase high-value items

without having to delay their purchase decisions or pay very high-interest rates. We thank IKEA Oman for partnering with the bank to offer this facility, which will greatly help in making world-class products affordable to as many customers as possible and also improve the quality of life for people in Oman."

Commenting on the same, Omar Abushaban, Store Manager of Al-Futtaim IKEA, Oman Avenues Mall said, "As a brand that believes in creating a better everyday life for many people, it is important that we constantly improve the way we do things. Everyone deserves a space that can be used to create a better everyday life no matter what it is being used for."

Bank Muscat's EPP scheme is available at over 100 participating merchant outlets including home furniture, electronics, auto services, jewellery, insurance and healthcare. The bank's credit cards are a preferred mode of payment in Oman, and the EPP scheme reiterates the bank's commitment to promoting secure digital payments in Oman. To make use of the scheme, customers should request an EPP at the checkout counter of the merchant partner before making the payment.

The bank has also announced that credit card cardholders will continue to be eligible for rewards points (for all eligible cards) as per the amount spent through the card. It is also important to note that customers are not required to provide any additional documents at the time of payment to qualify for the scheme, which makes the option a smooth and quick payment option for customers.

SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE AT DUQM



OMR2.6mn electrical transformers station in Duqm completed

MUSCAT: The Special Economic Zone at Duqm (Sezad), in cooperation with the Rural Areas Electricity Company (Tanweer), completed the construction of the main electricity transformers station in the Fisheries and Food Industries Zone, with a capacity of 40 megavolt-amperes and the possibility to expand in the future up to 60 megavolt-ampere.

The OMR2.6-million-project is developed as part of Sezad's plan to keep pace with the ongoing economic growth witnessed in the zone.

In this regard, Eng. Ahmed Ali Akaak, Acting CEO of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, affirmed that the station is designed with high Omani standards and equipped with the latest electrical equipment and systems.

He explained that it will feed several existing and under construction projects in the Fisheries and Food Industries Zone, the multi-purpose Fishing Port and the Artificial Intelligence Zone.

The distribution network consists of 11 kV and 415 V ground cables, which are connected to distribution stations divided into the targeted zones.

However, the main station contains many electrical transformers, control rooms, measurement and protection equipment and

devices, and a SCADA control and monitoring system.

The station feeders operate on 33 kV annular voltage to ensure continuous power supply to the projects in case of any feeder gets an emergency failure. The station will feed the current and future electrical loads in these areas.

"Electricity has already been supplied to different investors' projects while a number of other requests for electricity are being reviewed for the under-construction projects in the Fisheries and Food Industries Zone, Artificial Intelligence Zone, and the multi-purpose Fishing Port project. On the other hand, the electricity network has been connected to nine projects, such as fish factories, ice factories, fish oil factories and fish canning factories, while work is underway to connect the Port and main water tank to the Fisheries and Food Industries Zone," Eng. Ahmed Akaak stated.

He further clarified that work is underway to cover all the targeted zones with the electrical network in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm. This, he said, serves to complete the necessary electrical connections plan to include all blocks and zones by 2023, by supplying required electrical loads to all investment projects. -ONA

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

ahlibank signs agreement to offer attractive mortgage loans for housing project in Barka



Times News Service

MUSCAT: Aiming to provide financial solutions to help clients achieve the goal of owning a decent home that offers peace of mind and ensures their family's future, ahlibank has announced the signing of a new agreement with Al Adrak Contracting and Trading Company to provide attractive mortgage loans for customers aspiring to buy properties at the exclusive Hai Al Naseem Housing Project in Barka.

Described as an 'Urban Oasis,' the prime property is a pilot initiative under the government's 'The Affordable Housing Project.'

The Memorandum of Understanding was signed by Muneer Al Balushi, AGM- Head of Retail Distribution, ahlibank, and by Joseph Thampan – General Manager, Commercial and Mahmood Masoud Al Ghafri – Director of HR & Administration from Al

Adrak Contracting and Trading Company at a formal ceremony held in the presence of officials from both parties.

Speaking on the sidelines of the signing ceremony, Muneer called it a decisive step in its endeavours to collaborate with the government in achieving national development goals.

"This significant agreement is a huge affirmation of our commitment to upholding government initiatives and partnering with relevant authorities to achieve the objectives of Oman's Vision 2040, which has social well-being as the main pillar. One of the Vision's key features is 'people and society'. Due to this, we have continually emphasised social responsibility programmes.

"It is an honour for ahlibank to be associated with a project of this stature. I want to take this opportunity to reaffirm our intent to facilitate a way forward to bridge

gaps in realising the national development agenda. Through Hai Al Naseem, the pilot project - in Barka - under the government's 'The Affordable Housing Project' that was launched in 2017, we will, in cooperation with Adrak Developers, contribute to achieving the financial stability that the Omani citizen aspires, by providing adequate housing units," he added.

Reiterating similar sentiments, Muzna Sulaiman Al Busaidi – Corporate Communications Manager of Al Adrak Contracting and Trading Company, said, "We are happy to have ahlibank on board to provide an essential financial link to prospective customers. As the contracting arm of the consortium, our focus has been on creating a rare industry blend of turnkey solutions with complete in-house facilities, and this will prove to be a winning formula for ahlibank customers who have the opportunity and the

solution on their hands. We have designed and built the housing unit to reflect a modern lifestyle, with facilities on par with global standards. And with Barka being a vibrant beachside city, homeowners are guaranteed safety and contentment at the 'Urban Oasis.'"

The agreement aims to fulfil the homeownership goals of the Bank's customers, by providing a new lease on the lifestyle in Hai Al Naseem. ahlibank offers a mortgage loan - at attractive interest rates starting at 4.5 per cent per annum - before issuing the property to provide various housing alternatives to eligible citizens of residential lands.

It will also mark a new phase in ahlibank's inspiring growth trajectory, as it demonstrates its flexibility in crafting financial solutions to fit the needs and aspirations of its varied clientele while partnering with the government in its development projects.

MARKET



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MSX index ends lower

The trading value stood at OMR1,529,198, comprising a rise of 42.4 per cent



MUSCAT: Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) general index (30) lost 7.9 points, comprising a decline of 0.17 per cent to close at 4489.97 points, compared to the last session, which stood at 4497.83 points.

The trading value stood at OMR1,529,198, comprising a rise of 42.4 per cent, compared to the last session, which stood at OMR1,074,135.

The report released by MSX

pointed out that the market value went up by 0.011 per cent to reach about OMR23.24 billion.

The report added that the value of shares bought by non-Omani investors reached OMR150,000, comprising 9.78 per cent. The value of shares sold by non-Omani investors reached OMR95,000, comprising 6.24 per cent. The net non-Omani investment increased by 3.54 per cent to OMR54,000. -**ONA**

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff.	Diff%
MSX 30 INDEX	4,503.10	4,484.29	4,489.97	4,497.83	-7.86	-0.17
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,216.86	7,188.44	7,188.44	7,196.97	-8.53	-0.12
Industry Index	6,340.31	6,301.98	6,301.98	6,340.31	-38.33	-0.60
Services Index	1,630.07	1,602.91	1,616.72	1,624.58	-7.86	-0.48
MSX Shariah Index	480.46	477.30	477.47	480.46	-2.99	-0.62
MSX TR INDEX	5,679.46	5,655.73	5,662.90	5,672.81	-9.91	-0.17
FINANCIAL TR IDX	7,521.90	7,521.90	7,521.90	7,530.82	-8.92	-0.12
SERVICES TR IDX	1,692.68	1,664.47	1,675.82	1,686.98	-11.16	-0.66
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	6,580.17	6,540.39	6,540.39	6,580.17	-39.78	-0.60

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
5,725,963	1,529,198	335	23,235,009,234	4	19	20	43

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14

SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST RD	LAST OFFER	PUR VALUE	MARKET CAP
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REGULAR MARKET

000000002440	AL SHARGIA INV	99,000	8,207	13	0.083	0.083	0.082	0.082	0.081	0.001	1.235	0.082	0.081	0.082	0.100	7380,000
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SER	10,445	5,153	5	0.460	0.496	0.460	0.496	0.490	0.006	1.224	0.496	0.462	0.496	0.100	117,259,360
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	134,293	78,413	20	0.586	0.586	0.580	0.584	0.580	0.004	0.690	0.584	0.584	0.586	0.100	219,867,942
OM0000001525	OMAN INVEST & FIN	418,488	52,728	13	0.126	0.126	0.125	0.126	0.126	0.000	0.000	0.126	0.126	0.126	0.100	29,862,000
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	1,550	508	1	0.328	0.328	0.328	0.328	0.328	0.000	0.000	0.328	0.330	0.330	0.100	219,223,860
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDSTR	122,500	175,180	2	1.430	1.440	1.430	1.440	1.440	0.000	0.000	1.440	0.000	1.430	0.100	128,168,000
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	2,000	592	1	0.296	0.296	0.296	0.296	0.296	0.000	0.000	0.296	0.296	0.302	0.100	97,938,322
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	6,430	5,787	4	0.900	0.900	0.900	0.900	0.900	0.000	0.000	0.900	0.824	0.900	0.100	675,000,000
OM0000003281	TAGEER FINANCE	22,779	2,115	3	0.093	0.093	0.092	0.092	0.092	0.000	0.000	0.092	0.092	0.093	0.100	23,796,886
OM0000003398	SOHAR INT. BANK	597,000	60,904	29	0.103	0.103	0.102	0.102	0.102	0.000	0.000	0.102	0.102	0.102	0.100	468,186,354
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	16,666	4,565	4	0.276	0.276	0.272	0.274	0.276	-0.002	-0.725	0.274	0.272	0.274	0.100	16,769,971
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	832,000	357,832	13	0.432	0.432	0.430	0.430	0.434	-0.004	-0.922	0.430	0.430	0.430	0.100	23,650,000
OM0000001152	OMAN NAT. ENG.	76,050	8,207	14	0.108	0.108	0.107	0.107	0.108	-0.001	-0.925	0.107	0.107	0.116	0.100	14,980,000
OM0000003968	QOREDOO	511,000	198,967	20	0.390	0.390	0.388	0.390	0.394	-0.004	-1.015	0.390	0.388	0.390	0.100	253,868,250
OM0000002168	ALANWAR CERAMIC	571,393	222,479	41	0.392	0.392	0.388	0.390	0.400	-0.010	-2.500	0.390	0.390	0.390	0.100	85,800,000
OM0000003000	AL MAHA MARKTING	100	79	1	0.792	0.792	0.792	0.792	0.816	-0.024	-2.941	0.792	0.800	0.800	0.100	54,648,000
OM0000003125	GLOBAL INV. H.	239,003	14,541	17	0.062	0.062	0.059	0.059	0.062	-0.003	-4.839	0.059	0.060	0.061	0.100	11,800,000
Total		3,660,697	1,196,258	201												

Parallel Market

OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	276,170	38,746	21	0.142	0.145	0.137	0.137	0.136	0.001	0.735	0.137	0.137	0.138	0.100	11,645,000
OM0000001095	DHOFAIR INSURANCE	20,000	4,000	1	0.200	0.200	0.200	0.200	0.200	0.000	0.000	0.200	0.000	0.200	0.100	20,952,409
OM0000001517	HSBC BANK OMAN	508,429	78,133	23	0.153	0.154	0.153	0.154	0.154	0.000	0.000	0.154	0.154	0.154	0.100	308,048,170
OM0000001566	OMAN FISHERIES	25,000	2,725	6	0.109	0.109	0.109	0.109	0.109	0.000	0.000	0.109	0.106	0.115	0.100	19,846,545
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	51,400	4,112	4	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.000	0.000	0.080	0.078	0.080	0.100	16,000,000
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAIR	7,400	969	1	0.135	0.135	0.135	0.135	0.135	0.000	0.000	0.135	0.130	0.138	0.100	404,667,444
OM0000002648	NATIONAL FINANCE	8,062	961	1	0.118	0.118	0.118	0.118	0.118	0.000	0.000	0.118	0.000	0.118	0.100	63,865,194
OM0000003265	NAT. DETERGENT	97	52	1	0.538	0.538	0.538	0.538	0.538	0.000	0.000	0.538	0.538	0.538	0.100	10,760,000
OM0000004735	SEMBORP SALALAH	2,000	128	1	0.064	0.064	0.064	0.064	0.064	0.000	0.000	0.064	0.064	0.066	0.100	61,092,065
OM0000004769	MADINA TAKAFUL	7,181	629	2	0.087	0.088	0.087	0.088	0.088	0.000	0.000	0.088	0.087	0.088	0.100	15,400,000
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	300	12	1	0.041	0.041	0.041	0.041	0.041	0.000	0.000	0.041	0.039	0.041	0.100	27,670,385
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	4,000	160	3	0.041	0.041	0.040	0.040	0.040	0.000	0.000	0.040	0.039	0.040	0.100	28,576,254
OM0000001418	RAYSUT CEMENT	1,500	318	1	0.212	0.212	0.212	0.212	0.214	-0.002	-0.935	0.212	0.211	0.212	0.100	42,400,000
OM0000002028	GULF INT. CHEMI.	83,834	8,954	5	0.094	0.097	0.094	0.097	0.098	-0.001	-1.039	0.097	0.097	0.100	0.100	2,037,000
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	638,672	61,774	23	0.097	0.098	0.096	0.096	0.096	0.000	-1.031	0.096	0.096	0.096	0.100	214,747,491
OM0000002804	ASAFA FOODS	12,000	3,426	8	0.286	0.286	0.284	0.284	0.288	-0.004	-1.389	0.284	0.270	0.286	0.100	34,080,000
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	97,776	6,263	12	0.065	0.065	0.064	0.064	0.065	-0.001	-1.538	0.064	0.064	0.066	0.100	19,657,365
OM0000002287	GULF MUSHROOM P	4,000	1,000	2	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.255	-0.005	-1.961	0.250	0.250	0.255	0.100	10,401,318
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	1,835	81	1	0.044	0.044	0.044	0.044	0.045	-0.001	-2.222	0.044	0.000	0.045	0.100	64,354,464
OM0000004428	SMN POWER HOLDING	33,500	1,129	3	0.033	0.034	0.033	0.033	0.034	-0.001	-2.941	0.033	0.033	0.037	0.100	6,587,975
OM0000001301	DHOFAIR CATTLE	5,000	440	1	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.092	-0.004	-4.348	0.088	0.000	0.100	0.100	7,114,800
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	89,900	9,889	3	0.110	0.110	0.110	0.110	0.117	-0.007	-5.983	0.110	0.110	0.115	0.100	8,954,303
OM0000001319	ALUMINIUM PROD.	200	16	1	0.081	0.081	0.081	0.081	0.087	-0.006	-6.887	0.081	0.079	0.086	0.100	2,719,287
OM0000002896	BATINAH DEV.	73,469	3,453	3	0.047	0.047	0.047	0.047	0.051	-0.004	-7.943	0.047	0.047	0.050	0.100	1,410,000
Total		1,959,716	227,390	130												

GOVERNMENT DATA

India's exports rise by 1.62% in August; trade deficit widens

NEW DELHI: India's merchandise exports rose by 1.62 per cent to \$33.92 billion in August 2022 as compared to \$33.38 billion recorded in the same month last year while imports surged by 37.28 per cent year-on-year leading to widening in the trade deficit, as per the government data released on Wednesday.

India's overall exports (Merchandise and Services combined) in August 2022 are estimated to be \$57.47 billion, exhibiting a positive growth of 6.75 per cent over the same period last year, according to data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Overall imports in August 2022 are estimated to be \$75.84 billion, exhibiting a positive growth of 33.15 per cent over the same period last year.

Merchandise exports in August 2022 were \$33.92 billion, as compared to \$33.38 billion in August 2021, exhibiting a positive growth

of 1.62 per cent. Merchandise imports in August 2022 were \$61.90 billion, which is an increase of 37.28 per cent over imports of \$45.09 billion in August 2021.

The merchandise trade deficit in August 2022 was estimated at \$27.98 billion as against \$11.71 billion in August 2021, which is an increase of 138.88 per cent.

India's overall exports (Merchandise and Services combined) in April-August 2022 are estimated to be \$311.82 billion, exhibiting a positive growth of 19.72 per cent over the same period last year. Overall imports in April-August 2022 are estimated to be \$390.91 billion, exhibiting a positive growth of 43.78 per cent over the same period last year.

Merchandise exports for the period April-August 2022 were \$193.51 billion as against \$164.44 billion during the period April-August 2021, registering a positive growth of 17.68 per cent.

Merchandise imports for the period April-August 2022 were \$318.03 billion as against \$218.22 billion during the period April-August 2021, registering a positive growth of 45.74 per cent.

The merchandise trade deficit for April-August 2022 was estimated at \$124.52 billion as against \$53.78 billion in April-August 2021, which is an increase of 131.52 per cent.

Non-petroleum and non-gems & jewellery exports in August 2022 were \$24.88 billion, registering a negative growth of (-) 1.64 per cent over non-petroleum and non-gems & jewellery exports of \$25.29 billion in August 2021.

Non-petroleum, non-gems & jewellery (gold, silver & precious metals) imports were \$37.53 billion in August 2022 with a positive growth of 40.63 per cent over Non-petroleum, non-gems & jewellery imports of \$26.69 billion in August 2021. -**ANI**

US STOCKS

Wall St. tumbles to biggest loss in two years following CPI data

NEW YORK: A broad sell-off sent US stocks reeling on Tuesday after a hotter-than-expected inflation report dashed hopes that the Federal Reserve could relent and scale back its policy tightening in the coming months.

All three major US stock indexes veered sharply lower, snapping four-day winning streaks and notching their biggest one-day percentage drops since June 2020 during the throes of the COVID-19 pandemic, Reuters reports.

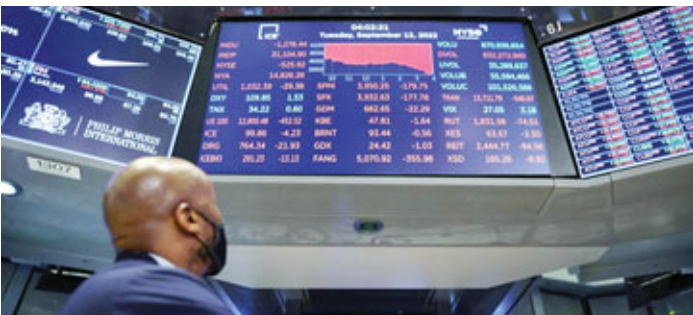
Surging risk-off sentiment pulled every major sector deep into negative territory, with interest-rate-sensitive tech and tech-adjacent market leaders, led by Apple, Microsoft and Amazon weighing heaviest.

"The sell-off" is not a surprise given the rally running up to the data," said Paul Nolte, portfolio manager at Kingsview Asset Management in Chicago.

The Labor Department's consumer price index (CPI) came in above consensus, interrupting a cooling trend and throwing cold water on hopes that the Federal Reserve could relent after September and ease up on its interest rate hikes.

Core CPI, which strips out volatile food and energy prices, increased more than expected, rising to 6.3 per cent from 5.9 per cent in July.

The report points to "very persistent inflation and that means



the Fed is going to remain engaged and raise rates," Nolte added. "And that's an anathema to equities."

FedWatch

Financial markets have fully priced in an interest rate hike of at least 75 basis points at the conclusion of the FOMC's policy meeting next week, with a 32 per cent probability of a super-sized, full-percentage-point increase to the Fed funds target rate, according to CME's FedWatch tool.

"The Fed has increased (interest rates) by three full percentage points in the last six months," Nolte said. "We have not yet felt the full impact of all those increases. But we will feel it." "We are at recession's doorstep."

Worries persist that a prolonged period of policy tightening from the Fed could tip the economy over the brink of recession.

The inversion of yields on two- and 10-year Treasury notes, regarded as a red flag of an impending



Twitter shareholders approve \$44bn buyout deal by Musk

SAN FRANCISCO: Twitter said an initial count showed shareholders endorsed Elon Musk's proposed \$44 billion buyout of the social media platform.

The tally was arrived at with most of the votes having been cast online, during a shareholder meeting that lasted just minutes. Although the deadline for the shareholder vote on the deal was set for Tuesday, it was believed that enough investors had voted by Monday evening for the outcome to be certain.

The shareholder decision is a green light for the contract to close, even as Musk — the world's richest man — seeks to exit the deal.

Why is Musk backing out?



CHILDREN LEARN FROM OBSERVATION AND EXPERIMENTATION

Children over the age of six are more likely to seek out extra information than children aged four and five.



Children learn by seeing and experimenting on their own. They also learn from what others say to them, particularly adults and authority figures such as their parents and teachers. When children discover something unexpected, they seek out more information by asking questions or testing claims. Previous research indicates that whether children investigate adults' surprise assertions varies by age, with children over the age of six being more likely to seek out extra information than children aged four and five. However, there has been little research into why children seek information after being given something startling by adults.

A new study published in Child Development by researchers at the University of Toronto and Harvard University aims to answer this question.

"The research shows that as children age, they become more skeptical of what adults tell them," said Samantha Cottrell, senior lab member from the Childhood Learning and Development (ChiLD) Lab at the University of Toronto. "This explains why older children are more likely to try to verify

“In the second study, which was conducted between September and December 2020, 154 4- to 7-year-old children were recruited from the same area as in the first study. Parents of 132 of the 154 children reported their ethnicity as 50% White, 20% Mixed Ethnicity or Race and 17% Southeast Asian.

claims and are more intentional about their exploration of objects.”

Across two pre registered studies, researchers set out to clarify whether and why children explore surprising claims.

In the first study, which was conducted in-person between September 2019 and March 2020, 109 children ages four- to six-years-old were recruited from the Greater Toronto

Area, Canada. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the laboratory was shut down for in-person testing in March 2020, which resulted in lower testing numbers than originally planned. Parents of 108 of the 109 children reported on the ethnicity of their child: 49% described their child as White, 21% Mixed Ethnicity or Race and 19% Southeast Asian. Nearly all parents answered questions about their educational background with 18% of children having parents who did not attend university, 34% having one parent who attended university and 48% having two parents who attended university.

Children were presented with three familiar objects: a rock, a piece of sponge-like material and a hacky sack. An experimenter began by asking children, “Do you think this rock is hard or soft?” All children stated that the rock was hard. Children were then randomly assigned to be told something that contradicted their beliefs about the world (“Actually, this rock is soft, not hard”) or told something that confirmed their intuition (“That’s

right, this rock is hard”). Following these statements, all children were again asked, “So, do you think this rock is hard or soft?” Almost all children who heard claims that aligned with their beliefs continued to make the same judgement as before: that the rock was hard. In contrast, few of the children who were told that the rock was soft continued to make the same judgement as before. The experimenter then told children that they had to leave the room for a phone call and left children to explore the object on their own.

Children’s behaviour was video-recorded. The study found that most children regardless of age engaged in testing surprising claims. The authors hypothesized that previously reported age differences in children’s exploration of surprising claims might reflect developments in children’s ability to use exploration to test more complex claims. It could also be that with increasing age, the motivation behind children’s exploration changes, with younger

children exploring because they believed what they had been told and wanted to see the surprising event and older children exploring because they were skeptical of what they had been told.

In the second study, which was conducted between September and December 2020, 154 4- to 7-year-old children were recruited from the same area as in the first study. Parents of 132 of the 154 children reported their ethnicity as 50% White, 20% Mixed Ethnicity or Race and 17% Southeast Asian. Nearly all parents answered questions about their educational background with 20% of children having parents who did not attend university, 35% having one parent who attended university and 45% having two parents who attended university.

Over Zoom (due to Covid-19 restrictions), an experimenter shared their screen and presented each participating child with eight vignettes. For each vignette, children were told that the adult made a surprising claim (for example, “The rock is soft” or “The sponge is harder than the rock”) and were asked what another child should do in response to

that claim and why they should do that. The results indicate that older children (six- and seven-year-olds) were more likely than younger children to suggest an exploration strategy tailored to the claim they heard (that is, touching the rock in the first example but touching the rock and the sponge in the second example). The results also show that with increasing age, children are increasingly justifying exploration as a means of verifying the adult’s surprising claim. These findings suggest that as children age, even when they are equally likely to engage in exploration of surprising claims, they become more aware of their doubts about what adults tell them, and as a result, their exploration becomes more intentional, targeted and efficient.

“There is still a lot we don’t know,” said Samuel Ronfard, assistant professor at the University of Toronto and lab director at the Childhood Learning and Development (ChiLD) Lab. “But, what’s clear is that children don’t believe everything they are told. They think about what they’ve been told and if they’re skeptical, they seek out additional information that could confirm or disconfirm it.” -ANI



FEATURE



FERRARI PUROSANGUE: UNLIKE ANY OTHER



- The Prancing Horse's first ever four-door, four-seater, the Purosangue was unveiled
- The Purosangue is equipped with Maranello's iconic naturally-aspirated V12 which can unleash a massive 725 cv
- Vehicle dynamics inspired by the Prancing Horse's most extreme sports cars make the Purosangue an authentic Ferrari four-door sports car
- The Purosangue sets a new standard in the automotive industry, thanks to its innovative layout

Lajatico, 13th September 2022 – After years of anticipation by the international automotive fraternity, Ferrari unveiled the Purosangue, the first ever four-door, four-seater car in the Prancing Horse's 75-year history, in the magnificently atmospheric surroundings of the Teatro del Silenzio in Lajatico (Pisa).

Since the marque's earliest years, 2+2 cars (i.e. with two front and two smaller back seats) have played a significant role in its strategy. Many Ferraris have made combining benchmark performance with first class comfort one of the pillars of their success. Now, in the culmination of 75 years of leading-edge research, Ferrari has created a car that is unique on the world stage: not only do performance, driving pleasure and comfort co-exist in perfect harmony, but it is also a peerless encapsulation of the Prancing Horse's iconic DNA. Which is the reason why the name Purosangue, Italian for 'thoroughbred', was chosen.

To enable the company to achieve the ambitious goals set for this project and create a car worthy of a place in its range, a completely different layout and innovative proportions compared to modern GT archetypes (so-called crossovers and SUVs) were adopted. The average modern GT's engine is mounted forwards in the car, almost straddling the front axle with the gearbox coupled directly to it: this results in less than optimal weight distribution that delivers driving dynamics and driving pleasure well short of the standards of excellence to which Prancing Horse clients and enthusiasts have become accustomed.

The Purosangue, on the other hand, has a mid-front-mounted engine with the gearbox at the rear to create a sporty transaxle layout. The Power Transfer Unit (PTU) is coupled in front of the engine to provide a unique 4x4 transmission. This delivers exactly the 49:51% weight distribution that Maranello's engineers deem optimal for a mid-front-engined sports car.

The Purosangue stands head and shoulders above the rest of the market thanks to its performance and comfort. It is the only car with these proportions to sport a mid-front-mounted, naturally-aspirated V12: Maranello's most iconic engine debuts in this brand new configuration to ensure the car unleashes more power than any other in the segment (725 cv) whilst guaranteeing the most enthralling Fer-

rari engine soundtrack. Furthermore, it can deliver 80% torque even at low revs for unique driving pleasure at all times.

The Purosangue's aero development focused on making the bodywork, underbody and rear diffuser as efficient as possible. New solutions include synergy between the front bumper and wheelarch trim which generates an air curtain that aerodynamically seals the front wheels, preventing turbulent transverse air flows being generated.

Ferrari has also given the Purosangue the very latest iterations of the vehicle dynamic control systems introduced on its most powerful and exclusive sports cars, including independent four-wheel steering and ABS 'evo' with the 6-way Chassis Dynamic Sensor (6w-CDS). Making its world debut is the F.A.S.T. (Ferrari Active Suspension Technology) system. This very effectively controls body roll in corners as well as the tyre contact patch over high-frequency bumps to deliver the same performance and handling response as in one of the marque's sports cars.

The all-new chassis has a carbon-fibre roof as standard to keep weight down and lower the centre of gravity. Redesigning the body-shell from scratch also meant the designers could incorporate rear-hinged back doors (welcome doors) to make ingress and egress easier while keeping the car as compact as possible. The cabin has four generous heated electric seats that will comfortably accommodate four adults. The boot is the largest ever seen on a Ferrari and the rear seats fold to increase the luggage space. Naturally enough, the Purosangue has a more commanding driving position than other Ferraris, but the configuration is the same as on every other Ferrari. As a result, the driving position is still intimate and close to the floor to provide greater connection to the car's dynamic capabilities.

The Purosangue offers class-leading performance figures (from 0 to 100 km/h in 3.3 s and from 0 to 200 in 10.6 s); the driving position and the heady, naturally-aspirated V12 soundtrack deliver an entirely new yet also entirely Ferrari driving experience. The fact that a vast array of comfort-focused content is provided as standard, such as the Burmester® audio system, and that the many optional extras including the brand-new Alcantara® upholstery, derived from certified recycled polyester, make the PUROSANGUE the most complete four-door, four-seater in the segment.

PUROSANGUE TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

POWERTRAIN

Type	V12 – 65° – dry sump
Overall displacement	6496 cc
Bore and stroke	94 mm x 78 mm
Max. power output*	725 cv at 7750 rpm
Max. torque	716 Nm at 6250 rpm
Max. revs	8250 rpm
Compression ratio	13.6:1
Specific power output	111 cv/l

DIMENSIONS AND WEIGHT

Length	4972 mm
Width	2028 mm
Height	1586 mm
Wheelbase	3018 mm
Front track	1720 mm
Rear track	1737 mm
Dry weight**	2173 kg
Dry weight/power ratio	3.0 kg/cv
Weight distribution	49% front / 51% rear
Fuel tank capacity	100 litres
Boot capacity	473 litres



TYRES AND WHEELS

Front	255/35 R22 J9.0
Rear	315/30 R23 J11.0

BRAKES

Front	398 x 38 mm
Rear	380 x 34 mm

TRANSMISSION AND GEARBOX

8-speed F1 DCT

ELECTRONIC CONTROLS

SSC 8.0, 4RM-S evo, FAST Active Suspension, F1-Trac, ABS 'EVO' with Grip Estimation 2.0, EDS

PERFORMANCE

Max. speed	>312 km/h
0-100 km/h	3.3 s
0-200 km/h	10.6 s
100-0 km/h	32.8 m
200-0 km/h	129 m

FUEL CONSUMPTION AND CO2 EMISSIONS

Under homologation

* with 98 RON petrol, including 5 cv of dynamic ram

** With optional lightweight content



the upper body, it makes up a spaceframe chassis comprised of closed-section extrusions connected by castings into which load-bearing aluminium sheet metal elements are integrated.

VEHICLE DYNAMICS

Development of the Purosangue's dynamic performance focused on creating a car that was completely unprecedented on the world stage: a model offering usability and comfort standards that would position it at the very top of the market as well as delivering signature Ferrari vehicle dynamics and performance on a par with the rest of the range.

AERODYNAMICS

The very different volumes and constraints of the truly unique Purosangue posed a completely new challenge for Ferrari's aerodynamic department, so a radical rethink of both methods and solutions was demanded. The extremely ambitious drag reduction target, the specific usability and accessibility demands of this particular model, and the need to cool the imposing V12 and ancillaries demanded hundreds of hours in the wind tunnel and thousands of CFD (Computational Fluid Dynamics) simulations. The kind of development work dedicated to the fastest and most powerful sports cars in the range, in fact.

CABIN

The Purosangue's cabin demanded absolutely meticulous design of both the space and furnishings as well as careful selection of the materials used to offer unprecedented occupant space and comfort for a Ferrari four-seater.

The cabin looks and feels like an extremely elegant, sporty lounge. When the doors are opened, a surprisingly generous amount of space is revealed. Equally surprising is the sophisticated luxury of the interior which exudes a sense of both elegance and modernity.

EXTERIOR

The Purosangue's bodywork has been deftly sculpted and chiselled to create its unique shape. The design features two separate and distinct levels: the lower more technical underbody and the gloriously sinuous, imposing upper-body. This division is underscored by the fact that the upper volume seems to float on the wheelarches.

STYLING

The Purosangue has created a new market segment in which the Prancing Horse opens entirely unprecedented new frontiers. Thanks to its unique modern architecture, the Purosangue is a versatile car that melds unparalleled comfort with Ferrari's signature performance and driving pleasure. Translating Prancing Horse DNA into a car that is not only innovative for Maranello, but the entire automotive world, was a huge but exhilarating challenge for the Ferrari Styling Centre headed by Flavio Manzoni.

OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT AND PERSONALISATION

The Purosangue offers a vast range of optional content and personalisation choices that will allow every owner to strike the perfect balance between comfort and performance. Aside from a huge array of exterior and interior colours, including some specific to the model, further innovative solutions have been introduced that are new to the Ferrari range or indeed the market as a whole.

7-YEAR MAINTENANCE

Ferrari's unparalleled quality standards and increasing focus on client service underpin the extended seven-year maintenance programme offered with the Purosangue. Available across the entire range, the latter covers all regular maintenance for the first seven years of the car's life. This scheduled maintenance programme for Ferraris is an exclusive service that allows clients the certainty that their car is being kept at peak performance and safety over the years. This very special service is also available to owners of pre-owned Ferraris.



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FEATURE



THE OZONE LAYER IS SLOWLY GETTING HEALTHIER

Ozone-killing materials in Earth's stratosphere fell over 50% to levels seen before the ozone hole became a problem, scientists say. But there's still a way to go. Here's why we need a healthy ozone layer.



It's not much — but the ozone layer is all there is between you and UV. As the United Nations puts it, “if we could bring the entire ozone layer to sea level, it would be only about 3mm [0.118 inches] thick. That's what protects us from harmful ultraviolet radiation.” That really isn't very much, is it — just 3mm of protection? You can't even see it. And in some regions of the stratosphere, the ozone is so depleted that we refer to an “ozone hole.” In fact, we have known for decades that the ozone layer is itself under threat and needs our protection. The UN has been working to repair the hole for three decades via international treaties such as the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. According to meteorologists at the US-based National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, in early 2022, the amount of ozone-killing materials in our stratosphere had fallen by 50% to levels last seen before the ozone hole became a problem. But we still have a way to go before the ozone layer has healed. Here's our brief guide to what you need to know about our very precious ozone.

What is the ozone layer? Ozone is a molecule, consisting of three oxygen atoms (O₃). Ozone molecules occur naturally in the upper atmosphere — known as the stratosphere — and form a layer of gas. This layer of gas protects life on Earth by filtering some (but not all) of the sun's ultraviolet radiation. Ozone is also created by chemical reactions between air pollutants and other emissions in the lower atmosphere — the troposphere. While ozone provides us with a protective shield in the stratosphere, direct contact in the troposphere can be harmful to plants, animals and humans. **So, what's the problem with ultraviolet radiation (UV)?** It is often said we need the ozone layer to stop UV radiation from “sterilizing” the Earth's surface. We know that sun rays do have the power to sterilize things, and that can be good — think about your washing drying on the line on a hot summer's day. But what we really mean to say is that UV radiation can kill. There are three types of UV radiation: A, B and C. The ozone layer and atmosphere absorb all of the UVC — the most energetic form of UV radiation — and some UVB. UVA is not absorbed by the ozone layer and reaches the Earth's

surface in its entirety. Humans need UVB radiation to generate vitamin D, which is good for people in appropriate doses. But too much UVB and UVA can cause serious illnesses, such as skin cancer, cataracts, suppression of the immune system, and premature aging of the skin. An excess of UV is also linked with reduced crop yields and adverse effects in the marine food chain. **What causes ozone depletion?** To a large extent, humans cause ozone depletion through our use of “ozone depleting substances” (ODSs). Gases such as chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), halons, CH₃CCl₃ (Methyl chloroform), CCl₄ (Carbon tetrachloride), hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs) and methyl bromide destroy the ozone layer. These substances can be found in refrigerators, air conditioners, aerosols, solvents and pesticides, to name a few. They deplete the ozone layer by releasing chlorine and bromine atoms, which degrade ozone molecules in the stratosphere. Scientists warn that “very short-lived substances” (VSLs) also threaten the ozone layer. VSLs occur naturally in marine life, among seaweed and phytoplankton. But we also produce

human-made VSLs, such as dichloromethane. **The ozone hole — it's not really a hole, is it?** No, strictly speaking, there is no ozone “hole” — rather, there is a region of “exceptionally depleted ozone over the Antarctic.” It is also referred to as a “dramatic thinning” of ozone, which shows up during spring in the southern hemisphere (August-October). There are “mini-holes” and other aberrations in the northern hemisphere, too. **Will the ozone layer ever heal completely?** Scientists say the future looks good for the ozone layer. It may recover to pre-1980 levels over the next 50 years — sometime between 2050 and 2065 — if we stick to goals set in international treaties. The Vienna Convention and the Montreal Protocol, for instance, became the first treaties in the history of the UN to achieve universal ratification on September 16, 2009. And September 16 is now commonly known as World Ozone Day, or the International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer. NASA's Ozone Watch provides daily updates, including images and animations from 1979 to 2022.-dw



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Akbar Group set to open new branch in Oman

Backed by a rich legacy spanning over four decades, Akbar Travels led by K. V. Abdul Nazar, Chairman of Akbar Group has carved a niche for itself in the industry

MUSCAT: Akbar Group will open its new IATA registered branch in the Sultanate on September 16 in Ruwi. This will be its fourth branch in Oman, the others being located in Muscat and Ghubra.

Akbar Travels, with a global network of 155 branches worldwide and other network arrangements is India's largest travel agency in terms of the number of IATA registered branches.

In the Middle East, it has offices in UAE, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. Backed by a rich legacy spanning over four decades, Akbar Travels led by K. V. Abdul Nazar, Chairman of Akbar Group has carved a niche for itself in the industry and is the market leader in each of the regions they operate with its bouquet of travel and related portfolio.

Being a market leader in its own right, the group is quite multi-faceted and is known for its best practices in the industry.



The Oman operations of the Akbar Holidays in a short span of five years have emerged as one of the leading players in the travel sector in the country, not only enhancing the travel experience for the residents and expat community with their customer-driven services and special packages but also providing job opportunities and training for the Omani workforce in the travel industry thereby integrating their share to the country's economic progress.

The recruitment is backed by induction and in-house training equipping them with the necessary skill sets to further their personal growth in the industry and enhance their contribution to the nation's

continual economic growth.

"To nurture and encourage local talent in an area that holds great potential is an exciting prospect for us at Akbar Group and the expansion plans envisaged for Oman transcends the conventional travel products. The objective of this is to create opportunities and be a part of the growth story of Oman's 2040 vision," said Ashiana Nazar, Executive Director of Akbar Group, at the sidelines of the event.

Akbar Travels' services extend across the travel spectrum encompassing online and offline ticketing for corporate and individuals with a robust Ecom platform, inbound and outbound holidays, (Akbar Holidays), MICE, Destination Management (Arabian Journeys), Medical Tourism (Travocure), Umrah, Study Abroad and Al Jazeera Exchange.

Akbar Holidays with its extensive network across the world, have exciting customised and affordable packages suiting varied types of holiday seekers like honeymoon, adventure, family trips, shopping and food & weekend travel etc to exotic destinations. They are also tied up with hotels across price bands across the globe in cities like Bali, Washington DC, San Francisco, Kuala Lumpur, Budapest, Sydney,

Rome, Barcelona and more offering affordable accommodation and value for money.

In a rare synergy, Travocure, the medical tourism vertical of Akbar Travels has tied up with some of the leading health institutions across geographies and is intended to cater to the exacting demands of its customers by offering efficient packages at advanced hospital facilities, renowned doctors specialized in major disciplines and trained paramedical staff.

Akbar Travels also offers excellent 'standard', 'special' and 'premium' Umrah Travel Packages that cover tickets, stay and visa services from various cities. The packages include air-conditioned rooms, healthy meals, recommended airline services, and local transportation to ensure a pleasant trip.

One of the core areas of focus for Akbar Travels Oman in alignment with His Majesty's Vision 2040 is to promote Oman's inbound tourism industry with the Indo Oman sector being a segment that will be explored and exploited to the full potential on account of its pan India presence. Akbar Travels has plans to open and operate five new additional branches in Oman shortly as part of its expansion in the Sultanate.

GAZOO RACING WORLD RALLY TEAM



Toyota races to double-podium finish at Ypres Rally Belgium

MUSCAT: The GAZOO Racing World Rally Team scored another double-podium finish recently in the 2022 season of the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC) at Ypres Rally Belgium, as Elfyn Evans finished just five seconds from victory to claim second place in the No. 33 Toyota GR YARIS Rally1 Hybrid Electric Vehicle, while Esapekka Lappi took third in the No. 4 Toyota GR YARIS Rally1 Hybrid Electric Vehicle. The farmland roads of the West Flanders region lived up to their reputation as one of rallying's most demanding asphalt tests, with frequent surface changes and little margin for error.

Evans and his co-driver Scott Martin held third place at the end of day one in the No. 33 Toyota GR YARIS Rally1 Hybrid Electric Vehicle, before fighting back during day two to finish second. Despite continuing to close the gap on the leader with two stage wins on the third and final morning, they ultimately finished the race in second place. Lappi and co-driver Janne Ferm scored their third podium from six starts with a consistent and clean weekend in the No. 4 Toyota GR YARIS Rally1 Hybrid Electric Vehicle.

The result ensures Toyota continues to enjoy a strong lead of 88 points in the manufacturers' championship.

The public debut of the innovative GR Yaris H2 concept also took place in Belgium, and was completed by Toyota rally legend Juha Kankkunen driving the Power Stage ahead of the competitive field in the hydrogen-fueled vehicle. After driving the GR Yaris H2 himself on Saturday, Toyota Motor Corporation President and GAZOO Racing Team Founder Akio Toyoda had the chance to ride alongside Kankkunen on the most varied stage of the weekend before greeting his drivers at the podium.

Akio Toyoda commented: "First of all, I would like to express my appreciation to the mechanics. Thanks to them and all involved, I was able to see all four cars of TGR running up close. Also, thanks to the support and cooperation of many parties such as FIA, WRC Promotor, and the organizer, we were able to let WRC fans hear the exhaust sound of a hydrogen engine. Motorsport is really a sport, and I believe people get excited because sports stimulate our five senses."

TRAINING PROGRAMME



ZAG strengthens staff communication skills

MUSCAT: In line with its commitment to employee development, the Human Resources Department of the Zubair Automotive Group (ZAG) recently held a training programme on 'Communication Skills' for staff across the organisation and saw the attendance of employees from various Zubair Automotive Group companies.

Commenting on the training programme, Jamal Mohammed Juma Al Balushi, General Manager HR and Admin said, "To ensure operational excellence, ensuring our employees are equipped with the latest skills, tools, and techniques is vital. This is why we at the Zubair Automotive Group remain committed to investing in our staff through learning and development programs such as these.

"Given the rapidly evolving nature of our business and the market, there has never been a more

important time for effective communication in the workplace. Not only does it help us exceed customer expectations and maintain productivity, but also enhances team dynamics and improves employee retention."

Furthermore, there are several benefits of the program to improve good communication skills within the team. One of the most important things it does is improve everyone's listening skills. As a result, participants are better able to understand vocal tones and body language, as well as the needs and positions of the customers or persons they work with. It also helps enhance their self-confidence and ensures that they can communicate with brevity and impact. Consequently, they become better team players and leaders, as well as gain the impetus to take on greater responsibilities in the future.

CUSTOMER CONVENIENCE

OTE Connect app takes customer service standards to new heights

MUSCAT: Leading Omani automotive distributor OTE Group is harnessing the transformational power of smartphone technology to take customer service standards to new heights in Oman.

The group, which distributes an array of iconic auto brands as well as a number of prestigious auto-related franchises, has launched 'OTE Connect' - a 'must-have' mobile and online app that is helping OTE's vast customer base unlock further value from their purchases.

New customers are also discovering the elevated levels of convenience offered by the app in accessing OTE Group's services across preowned cars, auto leasing, and car, truck and pickup rentals.

Since its recent rollout, OTE Connect has notched up huge numbers of downloads that are growing in multiples of thousands



every month. An average of over 1,000 bookings for maintenance service appointments are logged on the app every month, thanks to the ease of convenience offered by this new electronic service. Other features connect customers to the Group's showrooms, customer

champions, service centres, and parts outlets.

Functionality is a key strength of the OTE Connect app. Customised for OTE's exclusive use, the app is available for smartphones based on both IOS and Android operating systems. By simply downloading the app and registering their particulars, customers - old and new - can stay abreast of various value-enhancing initiatives and schemes introduced by OTE Group from time to time. Notifications alert registered customers to everything from new auto launches and promotional campaigns, to discounts, giveaways and other incentives announced by the Group's various automotive divisions.

Besides securing service and maintenance appointments, customers can also use OTE Connect to schedule test drives of their

choice of automotive brands coming on the market - all from the convenience of their smartphones. In the same vein, rentals of cars, trucks and pick-ups from OTE's Value Plus service can be booked via the app as well. Furthermore, customers scheduling a service appointment can also rent a car when they drop off their vehicle for service - a seamless experience made possible by the OTE Connect app.

In essence, the app raises the bar on customer services extended by OTE Group to its diverse clientele. Through a combination of functionality and rich features, OTE Connect enables customers to make the most of the Group's portfolio of products and services with the ease of a click. It also establishes seamless connectivity between OTE Group and its vast customer base.

MASERATI

All-new GranTurismo takes to the streets



MODENA: The new Maserati GranTurismo has taken to the road ahead of its official reveal, in the Modena and Trofeo versions fitted with the V6 Nettuno engine.

GranTurismo is the brand's true icon and its energy is unstoppable: the high-performance coupé is already travelling many miles, with a selected number of employees from the Maserati Family in the

driving seat. The livery has only one main message: the return of a Maserati icon created 75 years ago.

It all began with the A6 1500, a model with a revolutionary spirit, the forerunner of a class of car that had never been seen before. It would go on to influence the automotive landscape all over the world, and successive generations of Maserati road cars.



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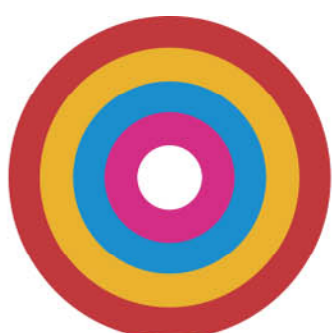
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