

BHA ANNOUNCES TOP TEN PROJECTS FOR FINAL STAGE

The Bilal bin Haitham Award (BHA) for Architectural Design announced the names of the ten top projects qualified for the final of the award's second edition. **>A4**



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HM SENDS CONDOLENCES TO PRESIDENT OF PHILIPPINES

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. of the Republic of the Philippines for victims of floods and landslides which devastated several parts of the Philippines. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sympathies to President Ferdinand, families of the victims and the people of the Philippines. — **ONA**



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HIS MAJESTY PRAISES EFFORTS TAKEN TO BOOST LOCAL, FOREIGN INVESTMENTS



HM began the meeting by discussing fiscal, economic and social indices achieved last year

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik presided over a meeting of the Council of Ministers at Al Barakah Palace on Tuesday.

At the outset of the meeting, His Majesty the Sultan gave thanks and praise to Allah, the Almighty, for the bounties He has bestowed on Oman and its loyal people. His Majesty the Sultan expressed gratitude to Allah for the accomplishments made in all spheres of life in Oman. He invoked the Almighty to perpetuate these riches, praying that all efforts would meet with success in realising the good of the nation.

Then, His Majesty the Sultan reviewed local, regional and in-

Before HM, ambassadors take oath of office **>A4**

ternational conditions. He opened the meeting by exploring the economic, fiscal and social indices achieved last year (2022).

His Majesty voiced his satisfaction with the positive outcome of national action at all levels. He underlined the significance of maintaining the pace in implementing the strategies, plans and programmes aimed at realising sustainable development and preserving the national gains.

His Majesty the Sultan spoke about the efforts undertaken by the authorities concerned to attract more local and foreign investments, develop sources of economic diversification and augment the share of non-oil investments in the gross domestic product (GDP).

After reviewing the executive status of initiatives and programmes being implemented by the authorities concerned, His Majesty the Sultan laid emphasis on the necessity of follow-up of these aspects.

In particular, he gave directives to consolidate investment and diversify its sources, streamline related procedures and addressing pertaining challenges in a way that reflects positively on investor confidence and enhances Oman's competitive indices.

The Council of Ministers listened to a briefing about the fiscal performance of Oman Investment Authority and its role in boosting the national economy. **>A2**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN 137.6% rise in flights at Oman's airports

1 The total number of international and domestic flights at the airports of the Sultanate of Oman (Muscat, Salalah and Sohar) surged at the end of October 2022 by 137.6 percent to reach 51,017 compared to 21,466 flights during the corresponding period in 2021. **>A5**



SPORTS Martina diagnosed with cancer

2 Tennis legend Martina Navratilova has informed that she has been diagnosed with Stage 1 throat and breast cancer. It is not the first time she will battle cancer having overcome the disease earlier. The veteran player was diagnosed with cancer for the first time in 2010. **>A8**

MARKET MSX among best performers in GCC

3 The MSX index recorded gains for the second consecutive year and was the second-best performing market in the GCC during 2022, according to a new report. The MSX 30 Index surged 17.6 per cent during the year as compared to a slightly smaller growth of 12.9% during 2021. **>B1**



5,000-year-old settlement unearthed in Al Mudhaibi

A5

STIMULUS PACKAGE ENDS

Fees for foreign investors return to pre-COVID times

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The stimulus package that offered discounted commercial registry fees to foreign investors in the Sultanate of Oman from early 2021, due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, ended on December 31, 2022.

A senior official from the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MOCIIP) told *Times of Oman* that the fee for commercial registry and licence from the Oman Chamber of Commerce (OCCI) and Industry for foreign investors has gone back to pre-COVID days.

It may be mentioned that during the pandemic, foreign investors were offered a discounted fee of OMR96 instead of the regular



OMR3,000 for opening a commercial register and getting a licence from the OCCI.

The official said: "The rumour that is going around that the fees have been hiked from January 1, 2023, is incorrect. The stimulus package that was offered to foreign investors due to the pandem-

ic was introduced from March 9, 2021 and was due to expire on December 31, 2022. The fees now charged are according to the pre-COVID days."

The official, who requested anonymity, said: "As part of the economic stimulus plan, the foreign investors were given the same benefits as provided to Omani businessmen in the commercial registry fees if they were investing in one of the economic diversification activities that were approved in the tenth five-year plan, which was limited to approximately 1,106 economic activities. A total of 70 activities are prohibited for the foreign investors. A lot of foreign investors renewed their commercial records during the permit period, by paying a fee

of OMR96 until the end of 2022. Once the economic stimulus plan ended, the fees were restored to pre-COVID days."

The economic stimulus plan was approved by the Council of Ministers. It was based on five pillars – reduction in taxes and fees, improving the business and investment environment, support to small and medium enterprises, labour market and employment incentives, and ease in banking and loans procurement.

The aim was to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the national economy by presenting a set of measures and initiatives aimed at supporting economic recovery efforts, enhancing the performance of economic activities and attracting foreign investments. **>A2**

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Asr.....3:18pm

Maghrib.....5:38pm

Isha.....6:54pm

Fajr (Tomorrow).....5:30am

HM presides over Cabinet meeting

<FROM A1 His Majesty the Sultan commended the performance of the OIA and its ability to realise good financial gains since its inception.

He gave directives to channel the OIA's investments towards achieving added value in the national economy and consolidating production frameworks in a manner that augments local content and generates more jobs for citizens.

His Majesty the Sultan touched on the executive position of employment initiatives and programme. His Majesty the Sultan underlined the importance of raising the awareness of youth about global standards of work culture and the need to encourage them to undertake self-employment. In this context, His Majesty the Sultan instructed the departments concerned to furnish appropriate environment for citizens to take all types of jobs and enterprises.

His Majesty the Sultan also reviewed the outcome of assessment of the performance of government units in 2022, prepared by the Government Performance Measurement Unit, which indicated the existence of tangible improvement in performance. He stressed the need to continue upgrading government performance at all levels to achieve the desired goals, visions and aspirations and keep pace with global developments. He urged all institutions to study areas of strength and weakness and to find the best ways to address the challenges facing them.

After reviewing the results achieved through the "Manjam" labs on streamlining government services, His Majesty the Sultan stressed the need to effectively participate in the upcoming stages of the laboratories. He instructed that such action would be undertaken in accordance with regulatory standards of governance based on institutional partnership to achieve the satisfaction of the citizen, residents in Oman and the business sector.

In this context, he lauded government departments' improvement of performance in the Digital Transformation Programme,



and he gave directives to maintain such efforts.

While reviewing the progress made in conducting municipal councils' elections, His Majesty the Sultan hailed citizens' earnest quest to engage in the elections, both from abroad and within Oman, as they compete to select the members who represent them in the 3rd term Municipal Councils.

His Majesty also commended the application of technology which empowered the citizens to remotely

vote through smartphones and enabled those interested to follow up results of the elections.

His Majesty the Sultan expressed his satisfaction with the efforts exerted by the authorities concerned in organising the elections.

He gave his blessings to the new formation of municipal councils. He also laid emphasis on the collaboration of efforts, in the next stage, to develop municipal services and develop governorates so that they could play their prospective roles in

the nation building process.

While referring to the data on the spread of drugs and psychotropic substances, His Majesty the Sultan valued the efforts made by the departments concerned in combating the phenomenon.

He pointed out that a five-year national strategy was endorsed to address drugs and psychotropic substances in the Sultanate of Oman (2023-2028). He gave directives to authorities to take necessary deterrence action to limit the negative



(health, social, economic and security) impacts of the phenomenon.

His Majesty the Sultan also spoke about developments taking place in regional and international arenas as a result of changing behaviour and alien concepts, which often challenge human rights, and other proclaimed justifications to impose certain visions, programmes and conducts that do not fit with prevalent principles.

In this context, His Majesty the Sultan underscored the signifi-

cance of engaging in upright action to consolidate innate Omani principles and values that stem from the teachings of true religion. He urged families to bring up their children in accordance with sound educational values.

At the conclusion of the meeting, His Majesty the Sultan spoke about various aspects of concern to the nation and citizens. He wished all success in realising prosperity and progress for this dear homeland. -ONA



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FOREIGN MINISTRY STATEMENT



Oman denounces raid of Al Aqsa Mosque compound

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman has expressed its condemnation of Israel's continuous, provocative and illegal practices. It rejected Israel's enabling one of its hard-line officials to enter Al Aqsa Mosque compound under the occupation forces' protection. Oman stresses that this action constitutes a provocation of Muslim feelings and a violation

of the International Law.

In a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry, Oman called upon the international community to shoulder its responsibilities towards protecting the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, ending the occupation of Palestinian lands and establishing a fair and comprehensive peace. - ONA

ECONOMY

Untrue that Omani businessmen pay more than foreign investors

<FROM A1 The official also said that it is untrue that Omani businessmen pay more than foreign investors. "The financial fees for opening or renewing a commercial registry depend on the capital in the commercial reg-

istry. While the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MOCIP), charges a certain fee that ranges between OMR60-64, the fees charged by the OCCI for obtaining licence is separate from the ministry."

The official stressed that when

the government approved the economic diversification plan, it was targeting economic diversification activities, namely the logistics sector, the tourism sector, the transportation sector, the manufacturing sector, the agricultural and fisheries sector.

STATE AUDIT INSTITUTION

Shura Council reviews report

MUSCAT: The Office of Shura Council on Tuesday studied the 2021 report of the State's Audit Institution (SAI) during the council 4th regular meeting of the 4th annual convening (2022-2023) of the 9th term.

The meeting was held under the auspices of Sheikh Khalid Hilal Al Ma'awali, Chairman of the Shura Council.

The meeting also touched on other topics and endorsed the agenda of its 5th ordinary session of the current sitting. It reviewed a message filed by the Economic and Financial Committee comprising a number of reports, remarks and recommendations.

- ONA

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Omani golfer to play 54 holes in a day to raise funds for charity

Ayman hopes that his efforts will raise the money needed for the playground and also hopes that he keeps on playing the game at the university level for the next few years

Times News Service

MUSCAT: At an age when majority of children are busy trying out the latest play station or spending time in other hobbies, a Muscat-based teenager has come up with a unique initiative to raise funds for a leading charity organisation in the Sultanate of Oman – Association of Early Intervention For Children with Disability.

Champion golfer

A champion golfer, who tasted success at an early age of nine and who is currently one of the most promising Oman national team players, Ayman Al Busaidi, has devoted the past few months on an initiative that has received widespread applause. Come this Thursday, Ayman will play non-stop 54 holes over three golf courses in a day with the 16-year-old teeing off at the Al Mouj Golf.

After completing 18 holes at the Greg Norman-designed course, he will then travel to the Ghala Golf Club to play the next 18 be-

“A champion golfer, who tasted success at an early age of nine and who is currently one of the most promising Oman national team players, Ayman, has devoted the past few months on an initiative that has received applause

fore rounding off his charity campaign lasting nearly 12 hours at the flood-lit Ras al Hamra Golf Club. The teenager, who is a student of ABA Oman International School, has received strong backing from the Oman Golf Association and support from leading corporates – Omantel and Kempinski Hotel Muscat - and Azzan Bin Qais International School. All the proceeds of this unique charity drive will go to the Association of Early Intervention For Children with Disability. Speaking to *Times of Oman*, ahead of the event, Ayman, who

has been a member of the national age-group and senior team for the past seven years, said: “I am studying in ABA and am a Grade XI student. As part of the IB curriculum, we have to do activities that are creative, action, and that serve the community. This encourages students to volunteer at charitable organisations to give back to the community and as part of the volunteering activities I started going to the Association of Early Intervention For Children with Disability. “I was moved by the students there and when I got to know that

they are moving to a new campus and funds are needed for a playground tailor-made for the students there, I decided to do something that was unique and I am good at.” A GCC champion in the U13 category and a member of Oman squad that won the GCC U13 and U15 titles, Ayman’s passion for golf drove him to plan out a charity that would link him up to a game that he enjoys the most and also help raise funds. The youngest player to be drafted in the national senior team in 2022, Ayman’s aim is not only to raise funds but also create awareness about children with disability. **Children with Disability** “When I started volunteering at the Association of Early Intervention For Children with Disability, I became close to one of the students, who liked sports. The Early Intervention programme identifies and treats developmental problems, providing services to prevent or minimise the impact of risk factors on a child’s disability and well-being. The rehabilitation that the programme provides

ensures that these children have a better quality of life and can integrate into society. It also provides essential support to the families.” Having won silver medals at the GCC U18 Gold Championship and Arab U18 tournament, Ayman’s decision to devise a golf-centric charity was a natural course and the teenager thanked his teachers at the ABA for their strong support and shaping him into a competitive golfer and a caring student. Ayman said: “I plan to raise funds around OMR10,000 and am happy that individuals, companies and organisations are coming forward to back me in this campaign. On the 5th of January, I will challenge myself to play 18 holes on three different golf courses: Al Mouj, Ghala and Ras Al Hamra golf clubs. Playing 54 holes in one day will take around 12 hours to complete. “The aim of this challenge is to raise awareness and money towards children’s new playground at the Association of Early Intervention For Children with Disability campus. The playground will be an important asset towards children’s physical and mental de-

velopment such as walking, running, balance, as well as increasing attention and self-confidence.” The golfer has already made a mark at junior level, having also qualified as the only Omani to finish among top-75 in the R&A Junior Open 2022 at Monifieth Golf Club in Scotland. And when he was selected for the national senior team to play in the 40th Pan Arab Golf Championships in Egypt, Ayman made another record- youngest player to play in the senior team at the age of 15. Ayman hopes that his efforts will raise the money needed for the playground and also hopes that he keeps on playing the game at the university level for the next few years. Commenting on his son’s charity drive, Ghalib al Busaidi said: “I am proud of him and this initiative will go a long way in helping the Association of Early Intervention For Children with Disability, which has been doing a great job under its CEO, Sabah Bint Mohammed Al Bahlani. I hope corporate sector and individuals join this one-day event to support the noble cause.”

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BEFORE HIS MAJESTY THE SULTAN, AMBASSADORS TAKE OATH OF OFFICE

Muscat: Before His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, a number of ambassadors took the oath of office at Al Barakah Palace on Tuesday.

They are:
Sheikh Mohammed bin Ahmed

Al Shanfari, the Sultanate of Oman's Ambassador to the Republic of Indonesia,

Eng. Nasser bin Said Al Munawari, the Sultanate of Oman's Ambassador to the Republic of the Philippines,

Issa bin Saleh Al Shaibani, the Sultanate of Oman's Ambassador to the Republic of India.

The oath taking ceremony was attended by Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi. — **ONA**



BILARAB BIN HAITHAM AWARD



BHA announces top 10 projects that qualified for final stage

MUSCAT: The Bilarab Bin Haitham Award (BHA) for Architectural Design announced the names of the ten top projects qualified to the finalists in the award's second edition.

The second edition is devoted to competing for the design of the Maritime History Museum in the Wilayat of Sur, South A'Sharqiyah Governorate.

The finalists will contest the final three positions.

The six group-teams which qualified are as follows: the first team is represented by Qais Khalfan Al Rawahi and Adnan Ahmed Qatan; the second team is represented by Mwada Saif Al Sawafi and Mohammed Najm Al Tamami; the third team represented by Ammar Abdulhameed Al Kiumi, Firas Nasser Al Hashar and Mouaid Mubarek Al Araimi; the fourth team represented by Hafsa Mohammed Al Balushi, Reem Rashid Al Hashimi and Shatha Abdullah Al Sifi; the fifth team represented by Kawthar Nasser Al Azri, Fatima Abdullah Al Balushi and Amal Salim Al Zawawi and the sixth team represented by Mohammed



Khodabaksh Al Balushi, Ammar Saleh Al Saleh and Rawnaq Rashid Al Ismaili.

Individual finalists are Yousef Ahmed Al Ibrahim, Al Motaz Abdullah Al Nabri, Mohammed Salah Al Balushi and Ahmed Abdullah Al Abadi.

The finalists will present their projects before the jury panel, in the Wilayat of Sur, during the period from 30 January to 1 February 2023. Then, the committee will deliver its observations directly on the projects for the candidates to finalize those projects and submit the final format on 10 February 2023.

The top three projects will be announced during the final ceremony. — **ONA**

FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND

PDO weighs massive 3D printing of oilfield spare parts with French technology

Times News Service

MUSCAT- In a first for the Omani oilfield sector, Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) has teamed with Spare Parts 3D (SP3D), a French startup, to assess the 3D printability of 150,000 unique spare parts, the latter has revealed in a press statement.

Paris-headquartered Spare Parts 3D, a specialist firm that helps businesses digitalize their spare parts inventory through additive manufacturing, said a PDO team has processed 150,000 coded spare parts to define a 3D printing adoption matrix based on technical feasibility and economical attractiveness.

The roughly six-month-long exercise was made possible thanks to SP3D data-driven funnel approach methodology, its unique machine-learning based software DigiPART, the availability of material coding information records and the commitment of a multidisciplinary PDO team, SP3D stated.

PDO now has an agile decision-making tool to enable its 3D printing deployment roadmap, speeding up Additive Manufacturing (AM) deployment by an estimated two years, and helping the company to remain at the forefront of innovation in the Middle East, the French start-up said. The information provided was extracted from PDO ERP (Inventory management; Purchase Orders and Material Coding) limiting the time required to collect data on such a large number of parts.

The press statement quoted Mohammed Yahyai – 3D Scoping workstream Lead, Lead Rotating Equipment Engineer at PDO, as saying thus: "After having selected non-suitable parts, ourselves, we contracted SP3D for their ability to enrich our partial dataset. This helped to select



the right spare parts to focus on for PDO's AM journey."

To efficiently sift through 150,000 coded parts, DigiPART ran a number of algorithms, among which is the Semantic Recognition Algorithm (SRA). The SRA read through the parts descriptions and identified part names that are earmarked for further printability analysis. In parallel, DigiPART pre-

cisely defined the functional specifications of a part.

This level of automation and precision is the key to efficiently identifying the right AM material and print method like Selective Laser Melting (SLM), rapid casting, or material deposition on large amounts of data.

The data-driven outputs for these opportunities will support

the 3D printing deployment roadmap. "PDO now has access to an agile decision tool covering over 60,000 spare parts. Customised business case filters enable PDO to select the most relevant parts to print and install or switch from physical to digital inventory," added Paul Guillaumot, CEO of Spare Parts 3D.

The analysis will help PDO to realise the potential to print in Oman. SP3D regrouped the outcome to show the AM solutions and materials combinations with the most potential to increase local added value, including expected annual demand in US dollars. It will enable PDO to provide input to local investment decisions and support the localisation strategy based on facts, not estimates, the company explained.

"The ability to provide valorisation on AM potential is a first in Oman and of great support to accelerate In-Country Value initiatives and build our Industry 4.0 ecosystem in the sultanate," said Sulaiman Ruqaishi, PDO In-Country Value Business Development Lead.

The partnership allows PDO to accelerate its AM journey based on an extensive and comprehensive analysis. Enriching PDO's existing data via the use of algorithms enabled the creation of a 3D printing parts selection matrix, including both technical and commercial feasibility considerations.

"Our fundamental issue was to logically and quickly screen and identify 3D printing candidates to define PDO AM scope and move forward. With the support of our partner, SP3D PDO is now able to make informed decisions, accelerate deployment and support stakeholders," added Philippe Dupont, Head of Material Procurement & Inventory Management, PDO.

BANGLADESH SOCIAL CLUB

Gulf Exchange Gold Cup football tournament kicks off



Times News Service

MUSCAT: On the occasion of Victory Day of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Social Club Oman has inaugurated a football tournament named "Gulf Exchange Gold Cup" Football Tournament 2022-2023. Eight teams from different regions of Oman participated in the

Gulf Exchange Gold Cup football tournament, which started at the Muscat Club Stadium.

HOC Thawing of Bangladesh Embassy Muscat inaugurated the tournament at the Muscat Club Stadium ground on 30 December.

The CEO of Gulf Overseas Exchange, Iftekhar Ul Hasan Chowdhury was the guest of honor at the



inaugural function.

It was presided over by Club Chairman Sirajul Haque and anchored by Club General Secretary NM Amin.

Biman Bangladesh Country Manager Sharif Alam and Alhaj Mohammad Noman were special guests. Club Vice President Rezaul Karim, Treasurer Maula-

na Abdul Salam, Joint Secretary Mohammad Anwar Hossain and Abdul Rahim, Organizing Secretary Abul Bashar Sarkar, Publicity Secretary Hafez Mohammad Nazim Uddin Chowdhury, Ajit Shil, Tauhid, Manik, Jasim were also present.

The event was also attended by prominent people of the com-



munity namely Engineer Mustafa Kamal, Kibria Kalam Chowdhury, Engineer Abdul Hamid, Nur Hossain Talukder, Isa Chowdhury, Abu Taher, Mohammad Younus, SM Haroon, Gulf Exchange officials and many renowned community leaders.

The tournament kicked off at 6.30pm at Muscat Club Stadium

in presence of thousands football fans. In first match, Hamaria Football Ekadosh defeated NRB Football Club by 3-0 goals.

Bangladesh football fans and their family members watched the matches. Two matches will be played on every Friday and the tournament will continue till mid of February 2023.

IN KANDAHAR

3 killed, 13 injured in Afghanistan accident

KABUL: Three people have been killed and 13 others were injured in an accident in the Kandahar province of Afghanistan, TOLO-news reported on Tuesday.

The press officer of Spin Boldak district, Molavi Mullah Mohammad Haqmal, confirmed about the incident and said that the incident occurred around 7:30pm on the Spin Boldak - Kandahar road. “Mo-

lavi Mullah Mohammad Haqmal, the press officer of Spin Boldak district, confirmed this incident to TOLO News and said that this incident happened around 7:30 pm on the Spin Boldak - Kandahar road,” TOLOnews tweeted.

Reckless driving
The cause of the accident is still unknown as reckless driving and

overspeeding remain the cause of frequent accidents in Afghanistan, mostly.

Road erosions
Moreover, poorly designed roads, road erosions, and disobeying traffic laws have significantly increased the number of traffic accidents and traffic-related fatalities in Afghanistan. — **ANI**



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India defends its move to import Russian crude oil

India has been reiterating time and again that its oil imports will be determined by its national interest and its large consumer base



India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar. — ANI

NEW YORK: India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has taken a jab at Europe once again and said that Europe has imported six times the fossil fuel energy from Russia that India has done and that if a \$60,000-per-capita society feels it needs to look after itself, and I accept that as legitimate, they should not expect a \$2,000-per-capita society to take a hit.

According to a media report titled as “Russia's War Could Make It India's World” stated that the Ukraine war's compounding effects have fuelled the country's ascent. Global supply chains are reducing the risk by diversifying toward an open India and away from China's surveillance state.

India is relatively insulated from economic turbulence by its huge domestic market, the report said.

The report quoted Jaishankar as saying “world order which is still very, very deeply Western” is being hurried out of existence by the impact of the war in Ukraine, to be replaced by a world of “multi-align-

ment” where countries will choose their own “particular policies and preferences and interests.”

“I would still like to see a more rules-based world. But when people start pressing you in the name of a rules-based order to give up, to compromise on what are very deep interests, at that stage I'm afraid it's important to contest that and, if necessary, to call it out,” the report quoted Jaishankar as saying.

Earlier in December, Jaishankar defended India's stance on importing crude oil from Russia, and said that it's a sensible policy to go where we get the best deal in the interest of the Indian citizens.

The minister expressed “concern” over the “stability and affordability of energy markets” due to energy caps on Russian energy imposed by the West.

“We don't ask our companies to buy Russian oil, we ask them to buy what's the best option they get. It depends on the market, it's a sensible policy to go where we get the best deal in the interest of the Indian people,” Jaishankar said while addressing the Rajya Sabha

on the first day of the winter session of Parliament.

The war in Ukraine which started in February has had a significant impact on global food security and has led to a sudden increase in crude prices following western sanctions on Moscow.

During his assessment of global oil prices, Jaishankar has been saying that oil and gas prices are unreasonably high throughout the world.

According to him, Europe was buying more oil from the Middle East countries which were Asia's traditional suppliers, however, now it was diverted to Europe.

Earlier in November, during a joint press conference along with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in Moscow Jaishankar said that India's relationship with Russia has worked to its advantage and New Delhi would like to keep that going. He reaffirmed strong ties with Moscow, describing the country as a steady and time-tested partner.

India has been reiterating time and again that its oil imports will be determined by its national interest and its large consumer base. — **ANI**

BY REGULATORY BODY

Nepal at risk of being greylisted by Financial Action Task Force

KATHMANDU: Nepal is at real risk of being put on the greylist by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) as there are deficiencies in both its legislation and enforcement of laws related to money laundering and terror financing, writes Prithvi Man Shrestha according to a media report.

Nepal is struggling to address a number of deficiencies to comply with the standards of the Paris-based regulatory body related to anti-money laundering and terrorist financing and has identified at least 15 weak laws. The greylisting could be damaging to Nepal's struggling economy which is heavily reliant on foreign aid, remittances and imports. A country on the greylist could potentially face problems such as a lack of trade opportunities, a downgrade of ratings, and a subsequent shrinking of the economy.

A delegation of the Asia Pacific Group on Money Laundering (APG), a FATF-style regional anti-money laundering body recently visited Nepal for two weeks to assess the country's response to money laundering and terror financing, reported Shrestha.

Officials said that the APG would only include the progress made till December 16 in its mutual evaluation report, which puts Nepal in a vulnerable position again, and liable to being greylisted if not blacklisted.

‘Blacklist’ is a term used for the FATF's list of “High-Risk Jurisdictions subject to a Call for Action.” Currently, North Korea, Iran, and Myanmar are on the blacklist.

The ‘greylist’ is used to denote a group of countries/jurisdictions with “strategic deficiencies” in their regime to counter money laundering and terror financing.

Once listed as ‘jurisdiction under increased monitoring’ by the FATF, they must develop an action plan within a specific period. A country on the greylist is not subject to sanctions. However, the greylist signals to the international banking system that there could be enhanced transactional risks from doing business with the said country, media reported.

Nepal was on the greylist of the FATF from 2008-2014. After a series of progress made on the anti-money laundering regime that includes an amendment to the Anti-Money Laundering Act 2008. — **ANI**

FROM CUBA

Florida closes national park due to migrant influx

FLORIDA: US authorities announced on Monday the closure of Dry Tortugas National Park, a group of islands west of Florida, as a growing number of migrants arrived there from Cuba.

The US National Park Service said the park “will temporarily close to public access while law enforcement and medical personnel evaluate, provide care for and coordinate transport to Key West for approximately 300 migrants who arrived in the park over the past couple of days.”

“Like elsewhere in the Florida Keys, the park has recently seen an increase in people arriving by boat from Cuba and landing on the islands of Dry Tortugas National Park,” it added. The park will be closed until further notice.

Monroe County Sheriff Rick Ramsay criticised the federal government's response to the migrants, and his office described the situation as a “crisis.”



“This shows a lack of a working plan by the federal government to deal with a mass migration issue that was foreseeable,” he said in a statement.

The Dry Tortugas National Park is around 70 miles (110 kilometres) west of Florida's southernmost city of Key West. It is around 100 miles north of the Cu-

ban capital Havana.

The park said in a statement that when the migrants arrive, “first responders provide food, water and basic medical attention until the

Department of Homeland Security arrives and takes the lead.”

There has been an influx of migrants from Cuba to the US, as the Latin American country sees its worst economic crisis since the 1990s. Most of them take land routes, through Mexico.

A record 220,000 Cubans were caught at the US-Mexico border in fiscal year 2022.

Food shortages and inflation are driving people out of the country.

Thousands of migrants arriving in Florida after embarking on dangerous boat journeys are intercepted by the US Coast Guard, and often detained by the authorities. From October to late December 2022, US authorities detained more than 3,700 Cubans.

US order Patrol and Coast Guard crews patrolling South Florida and the Keys say they have been experiencing the greatest escalation of migrant arrivals by boat in nearly a decade. — **DW**

ZERO CARBON EMISSIONS

Why aviation industry is relying on used cooking oil as fuel?

TOKYO: The aviation industry has set an extraordinary goal for itself: zero carbon emissions by 2050. And, as per the latest report by NHK World, they may be able to achieve this goal with a raw material that was previously regarded as kitchen waste!

The Japan-based media house NHK World recently interviewed a bunch of people who opened up about the relevance of used cooking oil. The manager of an izakaya in Tokyo, Tsuboi Yasuyuki, while talking to the media house, claimed that each month, his restaurant routinely consumes several 18-litre drums of cooking oil.

He said that typically he would pay a disposal company to pick up the used oil. However, he has now started getting enquiries from businesses interested in taking it for free. Some are even offering to pay them for it.

“We used to consider it waste,” said Tsuboi. “Now, people are asking to take it off our hands, which is very strange.”

Because leftover cooking oil can now be utilised to create sustainable aviation fuel or SAF, there has been a significant increase in demand.



In Japan, around a third of the 4,00,000 tonnes that were gathered in the previous year were used as fuel for aeroplanes and other types of vehicles, as per NHK World.

The aviation sector refers to fuel obtained from non-fossil sources as SAF. Although leftover cooking oil is the primary material utilised in production, research is being done to find other potential waste sources.

If we talk about why the avia-



tion industry is relying so much on used cooking oil or SAF, it's important we mention that SAF is being used to reduce carbon emissions.

International carriers must reduce their carbon emissions to almost nothing by 2050, according to a goal set by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) in October. In response to growing public pressure on the aviation sector to lessen its environmental impact, this was done.

According to experts at the Air

Transport Action Group, the aviation sector produced 115 million tonnes of CO2 emissions in 2019. That represents about 2 per cent of all world emissions.

Minimise emissions
In recent years, airlines have started to minimise emissions. Shorter flight paths and more fuel-efficient aircraft are now being used. However, as per NHK World, it is likely that these actions will only succeed in cutting emissions by 20 to 30 per cent of the ICAO objective. Manufacturers are also developing aircraft powered by hydrogen and electricity, but they are still far from being ready for use in commercial aviation.

Because of this, the aviation sector increasingly views SAF as its saviour. According to estimates, switching to SAF from conventional jet fuel would lower emissions across the board by almost 80 per cent.

Because of the EU policy that supports SAF, the fuel is mainly used in Europe. However, a sizable plant is currently being built in Singapore that will have a one million tonne yearly production capacity, which is around five times

the present global total of 2,00,000.

As per the report by NHK World, the concept is being worked on by Neste, a Finnish business that produces the most SAF in the world. SAF is provided by the corporation to Japanese airlines through the trading company Itochu Corporation.

Sami Jauhiainen, a Neste executive, claimed that the plant is a component of his company's efforts to expand the market and increase the usage of SAF in Asia.

“The Asia Pacific region accounts for nearly 40 per cent of global jet fuel consumption, and this will continue to grow in the coming years and decades,” Jauhiainen told NHK World.

“We will be well-positioned to meet the needs and customer demands of the entire Asia Pacific region from our production plant in Singapore.”

Earlier this year, a bunch of prominent Japanese companies formed ‘Act For Sky’ in order to create and promote SAF.

According to the report by NHK World, major airlines All Nippon Airways and Japan Airlines are among the members, as well as companies outside the

aviation sector such as Itochu, Idemitsu Kosan, and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries.

The group's main area of interest is producing used cooking oil. A list of companies ready to collaborate has been established by the organisation, including significant fast-food chains, frozen food producers, sushi franchises, and hotels.

JGC, Cosmo Oil, and REVO International, three members of Act For Sky, are spearheading the initiative to manufacture SAF domestically. They are now constructing a facility in Sakai City, Osaka, with a three-year output objective of about 30,000 tonnes. Even though it's a relatively small sum, Japan has many more initiatives of this nature planned.

Establishing a domestic production base, according to Nishimura Yuki, a JGC executive involved in Act For Sky, is essential to guaranteeing the long-term viability of the entire SAF project.

“Used cooking oil is currently sent overseas, processed into SAF, and brought back to Japan,” said Nishimura. — **ANI**

How will EU approach Mali’s security in 2023?

France, Germany and their EU allies shut down security operations in the West African country this year, signalling further security risks in the country

BAMAKO: Disputes with Mali’s ruling military junta and their close relationship with Russia over the past two years have caused France, Germany and their EU allies to wind down security operations in the West African country this year, signalling further security risks in the country.

In February, France announced that French forces in Mali would withdraw over a period of months after nearly 10 years of fighting unrest in West African country. Relations between the two nations began deteriorating when Mali’s ruling military junta took power in a coup in 2021.

“We cannot remain militarily engaged alongside de facto authorities whose strategy and hidden aims we do not share,” said French President Emmanuel Macron at the time. He added that French troops and French-led missions would be deployed elsewhere in the Sahel, a vast semi-arid region separating the Sahara Desert to the north and tropical savannas to the south.

Two months later, the EU’s foreign policy chief Josep Borell announced that the bloc’s military training mission, called EUTM, would suspend its operations



after noting the military junta’s cooperation with Russian mercenaries from the Wagner Group, a private military organisation with close ties to the Kremlin. Wagner operatives have been accused of serious abuses in countries like Syria and Ukraine, as well as in Mali. Meanwhile, Germany has spent months debating the issue of their troops’ presence in Mali.

German forces have been involved in two missions in Mali, both the EU training mission and the UN’s peacekeeping mission, known as MINUSMA. But the African nation’s close ties to the Wagner Group caused the German government to agree it would start pulling out troops by mid-2023 and completely withdraw its soldiers by May 2024.

The announcement came after the UK said it would withdraw its contingent earlier than the planned date of December 2023. Malian Foreign Minister Ab-

doulaye Diop and Defence Minister Colonel Sadio Camara have welcomed bilateral negotiations with European partners who wish to cooperate in maintaining security in the country, and African Union President Macky Sall has called for more solidarity with African nations in the Sahel.

“If there’s no peace and security in Africa, then the world won’t have peace and security,” he said in a DW interview in February, shortly before France announced the withdrawal of its troops.

West Africa expert Jonathan Guiffard, a senior fellow at the Institut Montaigne, a French think tank, told DW that the impact of each country’s withdrawal had been different so far.

“The French withdrawal is the end of the Barkhane military operation, which was a very aggressive military operation against the militant group in Mali,” he said. “Since then, France has proposed a new way of continuing to

work with Mali’s authorities. But they refused and currently, cooperation between France and Mali does not exist.

“On the other hand, the British and German troops were part of the UN and EU operations and their presence involved more military training but not really battle operations. So the hard blow mainly came from the French withdrawal,” he added.

Since 2012, the security situation in Mali has been murky, with several separatist groups fighting against the government and instigating coups and militant forces killing scores of people in north and central Mali.

While the military junta led by Colonel Assimi Goita continues to remain in power, the security situation on the ground is very dramatic according to Guiffard, especially in north and central Mali. — DW

Full story @ timesofoman.com/world

PRECAUTIONARY LANDING



Phuket-bound IndiGo flight returns to Delhi due to technical glitch

NEW DELHI: An IndiGo flight returned to the Indira Gandhi International Airport, soon after taking off for Phuket in Thailand due to a technical glitch on Tuesday, according to an official.

IndiGo 6E-1763 was scheduled for Thailand and the pilot took off at 6:41 am. However, the flight returned to the bay at around 7:31 am at Delhi airport after the aircraft reported a technical glitch.

“Indigo pilot asked for a precautionary landing after a technical fault was detected in the aircraft, ATC allowed to land and announced full emergency landing as per procedure,” an airport official told ANI.

“IndiGo flight 6E1763 operating from Delhi to Phuket today experienced a technical issue after take-off from Delhi. The aircraft returned back to Delhi for necessary maintenance,” an IndiGo statement read, confirming the incident.

All passengers were deboarded and shifted to the terminal building, while an alternate aircraft was arranged for the next operation.

“An alternate aircraft is being provided to the passengers for the flight to Phuket. We regret the inconvenience caused to the passengers,” IndiGo said. — ANI



Royal Oman Police

ANNOUNCEMENT

On the occasion of ROP Annual Day, Royal Oman Police - Directorate of Public Relations and Security Information - announces to all citizens and residents that Sunday 08/01/2023 shall be observed as an official holiday for ROP formations that follow the official-working-hours system.

As for police stations, they will be practicing their regular duties and providing all services entrusted to them around the clock.

Best wishes for all

Caribbean Citizenship: What makes it so popular?

The gorgeous beaches and magnificent seashores are just some of the attractions that make the Caribbean Islands appealing. The beautiful group of island nations in this region offer some of the best citizenship by investment programs. These programs have a short processing period, provide visa-free entry to over 140 countries and numerous other benefits.

In this article, we will see what makes the citizenship of the Caribbean islands so popular among potential investors and those looking for dual citizenship. In Oman, these services are provided by M-J Global, the pioneers in this industry. There are five Caribbean countries that offer citizenship under this program-

- **Dominica**
- **Antigua and Barbuda**
- **Grenada**
- **St Lucia**
- **St Kitts and Nevis**

For details about what Dominica and Grenada offer through these programs, take a look at the blog in M-J Global's website, which is about some of the best Citizenship By Investment programs that are available.

What are the benefits?

Apart from the fact that you can visit so many other countries visa-free with Caribbean citizenship, the waiting period to get a US visa also reduces drastically. This is because you can apply through the E-2 visa treaty or the B-1/B-2 visa programs, which offer quick access to the country. The typical wait time for a US visa can be up to 6 months and, in some cases, even longer. Apart from the US, you get visa-free entry to the European Union's Schengen area and the UK as well as to countries that are usually tough to enter, such as China and Russia.

The benefits of Caribbean citizenship are not limited to easy access to so many countries; there is much more to it, some of which are stated below.

- A major benefit of holding a Caribbean passport is that it can allow you entry to countries with closed borders, in case of an emergency. You will not be denied entry.
- Another highlight is that you and your immediate family can receive citizenship at the same time.
- In most cases, you will also not have to let go of other citizenships that you hold. The Caribbean islands are lenient in such matters.
- The tax benefits are numerous. There is no tax on personal income or tax on wealth and inheritance.
- In Grenada you are also exempt from import duties.

Country	Minimum Investment Amount (USD)	Investment Type	Processing Period	Benefits
Antigua and Barbuda	100,000	National Development Fund or an approved charity	3-6 months	● Visa-free travel to 150 countries
	400,000	Approved real estate		● Fivedays residence over five years
St Lucia	100,000 (Single Applicant)	Saint Lucia National Economic Fund	3-4 months	● Visa-free access to 146 countries ● No requirement to travel to St Lucia
	300,000(Main Applicant)	Approved Real estate		
St Kitts and Nevis	150,000 (Single Applicant)	Sustainable Growth Fund	3-6 months	● Retain your current citizenship
	200,000(Two Applicant)	Government Real Estate		
Dominica	400,000(Single Applicant)			
	100,000 (Single Applicant)	Economic Diversification Fund (EDF)	3-4 months	● Travel visa-free to more than 145 countries ● 10-year B-1/B-2 visa to the USA.
	200,000	Real Estate		
Grenada	150,000	National Transformation Fund	3-4 months	● Travel visa-free to more than 144 countries ● Entry to USA through E-2 treaty
	220,000	Real Estate		

The eligibility criteria are simple for most of the five countries. As an applicant, you should have an outstanding character, no criminal record and a clean bill of health.

As you can see, the hassle-free and short processing period combined with the tremendous benefits that come along with Caribbean citizenship is the main reason why it has become so popular among people. The Caribbean Islands are a perfect getaway but more than that, they offer you amazing opportunities to make it your second home.

Contact M-J Global on 71719028 to begin your journey to living a happy life in the Caribbean. The magnificent islands are calling!



How does the citizenship by investment program work in each country?



Rules differ for each country as to how long an applicant is required to be physically present in the country after they receive their citizenship (like in Antigua and Barbuda, you are only required to be present for 5 days in the first 5 years of citizenship).

One thing is common to all of them: the investment costs increase with the number of

family members included in the application. Another thing to keep in mind is that you will have to pay for due diligence (background check) in some countries like Dominica and other government fees while applying for citizenship.

For an easier understanding of how each country offers its citizenship program, check out the table below.

SPORTS

FIH president to arrive in Oman on January 6

Ikram’s visit coincides with the inaugural match of the Junior AHF Cup Hockey Championship that will be played from January 6-12

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The president of the International Hockey Federation (FIH), Tayyab Ikram, will be making his first visit to the Sultanate of Oman since being elected as the world hockey supremo in November last year.

Ikram’s visit coincides with the inaugural match of the Junior AHF Cup Hockey Championship that will be played at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex from



Tayyab Ikram, president of the International Hockey Federation.

January 6-12.

In his exclusive remarks to *Times of Oman* from Pakistan, Ikram said: “I am looking forward to having fruitful discussions with the top bosses in Oman to ensure that the inaugural edition of the Hockey 5s World Cup is organised in the best possible manner.”

Ikram was elected as the FIH president after beating Marc Coudron of Belgium 79-47 in the

voting conducted during the FIH Congress in November.

Prior to becoming the world chief, Ikram, was the chief executive of Asian Hockey Federation (AHF) and had made several visits to the Sultanate of Oman.

A senior OHA official said that the visit will go a long way in strengthening the Sultanate of Oman’s relationship with the world body.

Oman is poised to host the in-

augural edition of the FIH Hockey 5s World Cup, the quadrennial world championship for men’s and women’s hockey 5s teams in January 2024. Ikram’s visit gains significance as the FIH chief is expected to hold discussions with top officials of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MCSY) and the Oman Hockey Association office-bearers.

In the last edition of Junior AHF Cup in December 2021, Oman lost to China 4-2 in a penalty shoot-out in the final. Eight teams are vying for the honours in two groups. Pool A includes hosts Oman, Thailand, Chinese Taipei and Indonesia while Pool B comprises top-ranked Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Hong Kong and Uzbekistan.

In the Junior AHF Cup, Oman will meet Chinese Taipei on January 6 and then take on Thailand on January 8.

The hosts round up their Pool A matches with a match against Indonesia on January 9.

The semifinals and classification matches for fifth to eighth places will take place on January 11. The tournament will conclude with the final and play-off matches for third place and other classification matches on January 12.

ADELAIDE

Djokovic starts 2023 season with win

ADELAIDE : In his first singles match of the year on Tuesday, Serbian Novak Djokovic defeated Frenchman Constant Lestienne 6-3, 6-2 to go to the second round of the Adelaide International 1.

“For the first match, I can’t complain. I played very well. I thought the first six games were very competitive and I have never faced him before. He is a counterpuncher, he doesn’t make too many mistakes. He has a tricky serve and hits his spots. But once I made that break at 3-2 in the first set I thought I stepped it up and played really good tennis for the rest of the match,” said Djokovic.

Djokovic pushed through the gears while a large audience watched on, hitting his impenetrable groundstrokes with constant



depth and accuracy to seize immediate control.

Djokovic defeated World No 65 Lestienne in his debut ATP head-to-head match in 75 minutes af-

ter winning 44 per cent (17/39) of the points on his opponent’s first serve.

The top seed is playing in Adelaide for the first time on a tour

since 2007 when he was 19 and won the championship. At the ATP 250 competition, Djokovic will take on Quentin Halys to complete his title defence.

“To see the packed house for my first match was definitely a very pleasant surprise, and lots of support, lots of love. That obviously motivated me and allowed me to express myself in the best possible way on the court with my game. I thought I played a very solid, competitive start. I think for six games, we were kind of close. He had also break point. I managed to play solid in important moments and got rewarded with the break, and after that I didn’t look back. I played really well in the second set,” said the Serbian as quoted by ATP Tour.

com. -ANI

DOMESTIC CRICKET

Fagor FCC beat Strenserv, ISM thrash MCCC



ISM’s Aditya Gurumukhi, Aditya Girish, Aditya MPR , Tanuj Sivakumar



From left: Shazaf Ali, Nobish Gopi, Aneermon A of Fagor FCC.

Times News Service

MUSCAT, Oman: Fagor FCC thumped Strenserv by 96 runs in the A Division League game while Indian School Muscat (ISM) beat Muscat Cricket Coaching Centre (MCCC) by 216 runs in the U19 Junior League.

Put to bat first Fagor FCC posted

a total of 221, courtesy Aneermon A and Shazaf Ali’s half centuries. Jaleel K picked 5 wickets while Abdul Rauf bagged 3 wickets. Vijesh took 2 wickets.

In response, Strenserv were bowled out for 125. Mustaqeem Asif scored a half century in vain. Nobish Gopi bagged five wickets while Aneermon A claimed three.

Brief scores: Fagor FCC 221 all out in 47.2 overs (Aneermon A 68, Shazaf Ali 50; Jaleel K 31/5, Abdul Rauf 37/3, Vijesh V 52/2) beat Strenserv 125 all out in 32.4 overs (Mustaqeem Asif 51; Nobish Gopi 16/5, Aneermon A 19/3).

In an U19 match, ISM scored 334/4 with Tanuj Sivakumar hitting a century and Aditya Guru-

mukhi scoring 68. Harshil Shetty picked 3 wickets. In response, MCCC was bundled out for just 118. Aditya Girish claimed 4 wickets and Aditya MPR took 3 wickets.

Brief scores : ISM 334/4 in 50 overs (Tanuj Sivakumar 136, Aditya Gurumukhi 68; Harshil Shetty 58/3) beat MCCC 118 all out in 38.1 overs (Aditya Girish 22/4, Aditya 14/3).

MERC

OAA to host Oman International Rally from January 26

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Oman Automobile Association (OAA) will host Oman International Rally, the opening round of the FIA Middle East Rally Championship (MERC), on January 26-28, 2023.

Challenging special stages

The Sultanate has some of the smoothest and most challenging gravel special stages on the planet and the Oman event has been one of the most popular in the regional calendar since it burst on to the international scene way back in 1979 and then became a round of the inaugural MERC in 1984.

The 2023 event is being run under the chairmanship of Briga-

dier (Retd.) Salim Ali Khalifa Al-Maskiry and will offer 13 special stages over two legs. Chris Hodgson will act as the new Rally Director, working with Clerk of the Course Ahmed Al-Zadjali and his deputies, Saud Al-Rawahi and Younis Al-Balushi.

Administration checks will take place at rally headquarters on Wednesday evening (January 25th), with scrutiny scheduled for Thursday morning at the OAA. Both the official ceremonial start and opening super special will then take centre stage from 15.00hrs on Thursday afternoon.

The OAA will then host the prize giving (17.30hrs) and post-event press conference (18.30hrs) on Saturday afternoon (January

28th) after two days of competitive action on the surrounding gravel trails.

Friday’s action will be fought out over two passes through the Al-Khoud, Jafnayn and Sa’al special stages, split by a midday service stop and regroup. Saturday’s timetable

will use two passes of the Murayrat, Misfah and Mulinah stages.

“We are delighted to be hosting the opening round of the FIA Middle East Rally Championship again in 2023,” said OAA managing director Suleiman Al-Rawahi. “We invite drivers and teams from around the world to take up the challenge of racing on our country’s varied gravel and sandy stages.”

Nasser Saleh Al-Attiyah is the most successful driver in recent seasons in Oman, the Qatari defending regional champion now having seven wins under his belt, spanning a time period of 21 years between 2003 and 2022.

The current FIA President Mohammed Ben Sulayem also won the event on seven occasions between 1986 and 1998, while Saeed Al-Hajri recorded three successive wins (1983-1985).

The late Björn Waldegård (1988), Tony Georgiou (1992), Michel Saleh (1993), Khalid Al-Qassimi (2007), Abdulaziz Al-Kuwari (not an MERC round - 2014) and Abdullah Al-Rawahi (2021) have taken solitary wins in recent MERC history.

PREMIER LEAGUE

Liverpool miss chance to close in on EPL top 4

LIVERPOOL: Brentford scripted history after registering a memorable 3-1 win over Premier League giant Liverpool, their first victory over the Reds since 1938 at the Brentford Community Stadium, England on Monday.

The stunning victory was achieved thanks to goals from Yoane Wissa, Bryan Mbeumo and an own goal from Liverpool centre-back Ibrahima Konate.

Like Leicester’s Wout Faes on Friday night, Konate unintentionally put the ball in his net to score the game’s first goal in the 19th minute while Wissa duly extended the hosts’ score off a cross from Mathias Jensen in the 42nd minute.

Following a dramatic triple substitution from Jurgen Klopp in which Virgil van Dijk was removed, which caused a change in shape and momentary change in fortune, Liverpool sprang into action after the interval.

Trent Alexander-Arnold’s precise delivery was met by Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain, giving his Reds career new life, who flicked a header beyond David Raya (50) and Brentford held off the rest of

Liverpool’s haphazard pressure, putting an end to any chance of an unlikely comeback.

Liverpool’s defensive flaws were exposed when they locked horns against Brentford, who were without their leading scorer Ivan Toney but still managed to tear apart the Reds’ shaky defence to pieces with their incisive counterattacking tactics.

Brentford manager Thomas Frank termed the win the most satisfying victory of his four-year tenure. Brentford can now add their victory over Liverpool to their shocking 4-0 win over Man United in August and their 2-1 victory against champions Manchester City in November. The Reds missed out on the chance to get closer to the Champions League berths and are currently four points behind Man United in fourth place, while resilient Brentford ascend to a soaring seventh place and fall two points short of their Merseyside rivals.

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp was disappointed with the team’s performance and called Brentford’s second goal a gift seemingly frustrated about it. -ANI

TENNIS LEGEND

Martina Navratilova diagnosed with throat, breast cancer



NEW YORK : Tennis legend Navratilova has informed that she has been diagnosed with Stage 1 throat and breast cancer.

It is not the first time the 66-year-old will battle cancer having overcome the deadly disease earlier. The veteran tennis player was diagnosed with cancer for the first time in 2010 when she was 53.

“This double whammy is serious but still fixable. I’m hoping for a favourable outcome. It’s going to stink for a while, but I’ll fight with all have I got,” said Martina in a statement as quoted by the WTA website.

The champion tennis player’s resilience is well known having amassed 59 Grand Slam victories throughout the singles, doubles, and mixed doubles divisions.

She underwent testing after seeing an enlarged lymph node in her neck at the WTA Finals in Fort Worth back in November. Doctors found Stage 1 breast cancer initially but further examinations also led to the discovery of Stage 1 throat cancer.

However, doctors have found

human papillomavirus (HPV), one of the more curable malignancies which increases Navratilova’s chances of successfully overcoming cancer.

The tennis legend will have to forfeit her plans of commenting in the first Grand Slam of the year, the Australian Open which begins on January 16 but hopes to make a handful of virtual appearances through Zoom.

Her treatments, which will mostly take place in New York City, will start next week with an optimistic outlook.

The Czechoslovakia-born legend is without a doubt one of tennis’ all-time greatest players. Navratilova began her professional career in 1975 and went on to have one of the longest careers of any athlete, continuing to win championships far into her 30s, 40s, and 50s. She retired in 2006 at the age of 50 and holds numerous records to her name.

Navratilova held the No 1 ranking in the world for 331 weeks, second only to Steffi Graf, who was No 1 for 377 weeks.

-ONA

OMAN CRUDE PRICE RISES

The price of Oman oil has increased, with prices for delivery by March 2023 reaching \$82.26, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil rose by \$2.87. - **ONA**

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 4,871.30 points, up by 0.6 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.14 per cent at 507.17 points. United Finance, up 7.46 per cent, was the top gainer while Oman Oil Marketing, down 9.72 per cent, was the top loser.

MSX ends 2022 as second best performing market in the GCC

The index surged 17.6 per cent during the year as compared to a slightly smaller growth of 12.9 per cent during 2021 and closed at 4,857.4 points surpassing its pre-pandemic levels

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Muscat Securities Exchange (MSX) index recorded gains for the second consecutive year and was the second-best performing market in the GCC during 2022, according to a new report.

"The MSX 30 Index surged 17.6 per cent during the year as compared to a slightly smaller growth of 12.9 per cent during 2021 and closed at 4,857.4 points surpassing its pre-pandemic levels," the Kuwait-based investment, strategy and research firm Kamco Invest said.

"The index surged to the highest



level in almost five years but receded towards the last few trading sessions. Most of the index growth happened during the second half of the year.

"During the year, the index recovered from its lowest level recorded in February-2022 by 21.4 per cent until its yearly peak closing price of 4,898.86 points on 13 December 2022," the report added.

Sectoral performance was generally positive for the year as two of the three main sectors witnessed year-on-year (y-o-y) gains. The Financial Sector was the best-performing index on the MSX, gaining 20.1 per cent to close at 7,903.4

points, as a significant number of the sector's constituents posted yearly double-digit growth. The Industrial index followed with a gain of 5.8 per cent, closing the year at 6,427.4 points, the Kamco Invest report said.

Oman Chlorine Co (+184 per cent) was the top-performing stock on the index followed by Dhofar Poultry Co (+150 per cent) and Galfar Engineering and Contracting (+135.6 per cent 0). The Services index recorded a marginal dip of 0.3 per cent in 2022 to close the year at 1,616.6 points. The Services index had some of the largest yearly decliners including

the top two decliners, ACWA Power Barka (-50 per cent) and Sohar Power (-48.7 per cent), which affected the sector's overall performance during the year.

Trading activity on the exchange was mixed during the year as compared to 2021. Total value traded rose by 36.8 per cent to reach OMR 882.7 million in 2022 as compared to OMR 645.2 million in 2021. Comparatively, the total yearly volume traded also dropped during 2022 registering a 13.3 per cent decline to reach 4.2 billion shares as compared to 4.9 billion shares in 2021. Bank Muscat topped the yearly value traded

chart for the third consecutive year with OMR 196 million worth of shares changing hands during the year as compared to OMR 103.8 million value of shares traded in 2021. Oman Telecom and the National Bank of Oman followed as the second and third recording value traded at OMR 112.3 million and OMR 40.7 million, respectively. Bank Muscat lead the way in terms of volume traded during the year with 736.1 million shares traded during the year against 99.1 million shares in 2021 followed by NBO and Bank of Nizwa with 423.6 million and 246.5 million in traded shares for each of these stocks, respectively.

GCC index

GCC equity market index closed 2022 with a decline of 6.4 per cent after demonstrating one of the biggest gains globally last year. Markets in the region remained volatile during the year and gains made during the first four months of the year were more than offset by declines for most of the months thereafter.

The oil market also influenced markets in the region while additional volatility came from volatile global financial markets. The Russia-Ukraine war and its impact on the global supply chain, especially for commodities, and the strict lockdowns in China affected technology and components supply

chains during the year.

The trend in global inflation and the steps taken by global central banks with the unprecedented pace of rate hikes also affected markets. This was worsened by sanctions on Russia that came into effect in December 2022.

Within the GCC, Qatar reported the biggest decline during 2022 with the DSM Index receding by 8.1 per cent followed by Saudi Arabia which dropped by 7.1 per cent. This was the first decline in the Saudi index after six consecutive years of gains. On the other hand, Abu Dhabi was once again the best-performing market in the GCC with a gain of 20.3 per cent followed by Oman and Bahrain with gains of 17.6 per cent and 5.5 per cent, respectively.

Global equity markets also had an uneventful year with almost all prominent markets recording declines during the year. The MSCI World index dropped 19.5 per cent reflecting double-digit declines in most major markets globally. The S&P 500 index dropped almost 20 per cent in 2022 while Emerging Markets showed a bigger decline of 22.4 per cent. Technology stocks in the US were battered with the Nasdaq Composite Index losing a third during the year. The UK was the only major market that showed a marginal gain while India and Brazil were two emerging markets that reported healthy gains.

CENTRAL BANK OF OMAN



Treasury bills worth OMR10mn issued

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) raised OMR10 million by way of allotting treasury bills on Tuesday.

The treasury bills are for a maturity period of 182 days, from January 4 until July 5, 2023.

The average accepted price reached OMR97.483 for every OMR100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at OMR97.470 per OMR100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 5.04883 per cent and

5.17922 per cent, respectively.

Financial instruments

Treasury bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance, and they provide licensed commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds. The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) acts as the Issue Manager and provides the added advantage of ready liquidity through discounting and repurchase facilities (Repo).

It may be noted that the interest rate on the repo operations with CBO is 5.00 per cent while the discount rate on the Treasury Bills Discounting Facility with CBO is 5.50 per cent.

Furthermore, treasury bills promote the local money market by creating a benchmark yield curve for short-term interest rates. Additionally, the government may also resort to this instrument whenever felt necessary for financing its recurrent expenditures. - **ONA**

GOVERNOR OF AL DAKHLIYAH

Delegation briefed on investment climate in Nizwa Industrial City

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Sheikh Hilal bin Said Al Hajri, Governor of Al Dakhiliyah, accompanied by members of the Shura Council and representatives of the wilayats of Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, visited Nizwa Industrial City to get familiarised with the key localised industrial, commercial and service projects in the industrial city.

Receiving the delegation, Ahmed bin Salim Al Hajri, Director-General of Nizwa Industrial City, gave a brief overview of the investment climate in the industrial city.

Madayn officials said that the investment volume in Nizwa Industrial City has surpassed OMR470 million, and the number of the workforce at the industrial city has exceeded 6,000, of which 2,900 are national cadres, marking an Omanisation rate touching 42 per cent.

The governor was also briefed on the role played by Nizwa Industrial City in social responsi-



bility aspects and the associated challenges. The meeting then discussed the significance of setting clear frameworks to promote investment opportunities in Nizwa Industrial City and the governorate in general.

The delegation then visited

Masar Service Centre at Nizwa Industrial City, which offers an ideal and integrated platform for local and foreign investors to benefit from a wide range of services delivered by several government bodies in addition to the Sanad Service Centre.

STATEMENT

China to raise retail prices of gasoline, diesel

BEIJING: China will raise the retail prices of gasoline and diesel from Wednesday, based on the recent rise in international oil prices.

Fluctuations

Gasoline and diesel prices will be up by 250 yuan (about \$36) per tonne and 240 yuan per tonne, respectively, the National Development and Reform Commission said in a Tuesday statement. The commission predicts that the international market will continue to see fluctuations in the short term.

Under the current pricing mechanism, the prices of refined oil products are adjusted in accordance with international crude oil price changes. The commission had cut retail prices on three consecutive occasions before the latest hike.

China's oil companies will continue to ensure a stable supply in the domestic market, according to the statement. - **Xinhua**

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MARKET

MSX index ends higher

United Finance, up 7.46 per cent, was the top gainer while Oman Oil Marketing, down 9.72 per cent, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,871.30 points, up by 0.6 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.14 per cent at 507.17 points. United Finance, up 7.46 per cent, was the top gainer while Oman Oil Marketing, down 9.72 per cent, was the top loser.

Shares of Bank Nizwa were the most active in terms of the number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 566 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating a turnover of OMR3.57 million, with more than 24.09 million shares changing hands.

Out of 42 traded securities, 13 advanced, 10 declined, and 19 remained unchanged.

At the session close, foreign investors were net buyers for OMR346,000 while GCC and Arab investors were net sellers for OMR177,000, followed by domestic investors for OMR169,000 worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,968.90 points, up 0.76 per cent. Prices of United Finance, Global Financial Investments, Oman & Emirates Investment, Sohar International Bank, and Bank Dhofar were up by 7.46 per cent, 3.57 per cent, 2.56 per cent, 1.87 per cent and 1.74 per cent respectively. Prices of Oman Qatar Insurance and Al Sharqia Investment were down by 4.00 per cent and 2.44 per cent respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 6,443.40 points, down 0.24 per cent. Prices of National Aluminium was up by 4.00 per cent. Prices of A'Saffa Foods, Oman Fisheries and Jazeera Steel Products were down by 1.89 per cent, 1.85 per cent and 1.74 per cent respectively.

Services Index was down by 0.03 per cent before closing at 1,623.34 points. — **United Securities**

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff%
MSX 30 INDEX	4,871.30	4,837.09	4,871.30	4,842.39	28.91	0.60
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,968.90	7,960.34	7,968.90	7,908.64	60.26	0.76
Industry Index	6,476.79	6,439.71	6,443.40	6,458.77	-15.36	-0.24
Services Index	1,624.60	1,619.53	1,623.34	1,623.81	-0.47	-0.03
MSX Shariah Index	508.25	506.52	507.17	507.89	-0.72	-0.14
MSX TR INDEX	6,148.47	6,105.29	6,148.47	6,111.98	36.49	0.60
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,338.56	8,256.35	8,338.56	8,275.51	63.05	0.76
SERVICES TR IDX	1,717.06	1,711.70	1,715.73	1,716.23	-0.50	-0.03
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	6,743.14	6,704.53	6,708.38	6,724.37	-16.00	-0.24

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
24,092,242	3,566,253	566	23,768,801,941	13	10	19	42

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR TUESDAY, JANUARY 3

	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST RD	LAST OFFER	PR VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET																
	OMD000003125	GLOBAL INV. H	5,000	290	1	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.056	0.002	3.571	0.058	0.057	0.058	0.100	11,600,000
	OMD000003398	SOHAR INT. BANK	80,214	8,743	3	0.107	0.109	0.107	0.109	0.002	1.869	0.109	0.106	0.111	0.100	500,316,790
	OMD000002796	BANK MUSCAT	1,435,651	399,180	83	0.278	0.279	0.276	0.279	0.276	0.003	1.087	0.279	0.278	0.279	0.1002,094,284,780
	OMD000003026	OMAN TELECOM	143,937	133,534	49	0.920	0.932	0.920	0.928	0.920	0.008	0.870	0.928	0.920	0.928	0.1000,686,000,000
	OMD000001152	OMAN NAT. ENG.	70,000	8,070	8	0.115	0.116	0.115	0.116	0.116	0.000	0.000	0.116	0.115	0.117	0.1000,16,240,000
	OMD000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	2,897,145	825,815	48	0.288	0.288	0.285	0.285	0.285	0.000	0.000	0.285	0.282	0.285	0.1000,463,394,711
	OMD000001533	OMINVEST	203,160	87,359	13	0.430	0.430	0.430	0.430	0.430	0.000	0.000	0.430	0.422	0.430	0.1000,287,397,133
	OMD000001749	OMAN CEMENT	5,000	1,520	1	0.304	0.304	0.304	0.304	0.304	0.000	0.000	0.304	0.302	0.304	0.1000,100,585,304
	OMD000002200	AHLI BANK	5,076	843	2	0.166	0.166	0.166	0.166	0.166	0.000	0.000	0.166	0.161	0.170	0.1000,323,643,139
	OMD000003224	RENAISSANCE SER.	28,424	13,246	38	0.466	0.466	0.466	0.466	0.466	0.000	0.000	0.466	0.460	0.464	0.1000,110,167,060
	OMD000003968	OOREDOO	139,556	59,972	48	0.430	0.430	0.428	0.430	0.430	0.000	0.000	0.430	0.426	0.428	0.1000,279,906,019
	OMD000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PROD.	1,000	226	1	0.226	0.226	0.226	0.230	-0.004	-1.739	0.226	0.227	0.240	0.1000,28,226,839	
	OMD000002440	AL SHARQIA INV.	259,626	20,750	11	0.079	0.080	0.079	0.080	0.082	-0.002	-2.439	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.1000,7,200,000
	Total	13	5,273,789	1,559,547	306											

Parallel Market

OMD000002374	UNITED FINANCE	3,185,354	221,867	50	0.068	0.072	0.068	0.072	0.067	0.005	7.463	0.072	0.071	0.072	0.1000,25,138,398
OMD000001178	MUSCAT GASES	5,000	600	1	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.115	0.005	4.348	0.120	0.118	0.126	0.1000,3,600,000
OMD000001319	ALUMINIUM PROD.	1,000	78	1	0.078	0.078	0.078	0.078	0.075	0.003	4.900	0.078	0.078	0.080	0.1000,2,618,573
OMD000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	365,628	29,043	18	0.078	0.081	0.078	0.080	0.078	0.002	2.564	0.080	0.080	0.081	0.1000,9,750,000
OMD000002549	BANK DHOFAR	193,143	33,521	4	0.172	0.175	0.172	0.175	0.172	0.003	1.744	0.175	0.171	0.188	0.1000,524,361,501
OMD000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	120,713	8,208	9	0.067	0.069	0.067	0.068	0.067	0.001	1.493	0.069	0.069	0.069	0.1000,20,885,950
OMD000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	1,599,138	144,910	51	0.088	0.092	0.088	0.091	0.090	0.001	1.111	0.091	0.090	0.091	0.1000,18,200,000
OMD000000866	THE PEARL REIF	5,000	963	2	0.116	0.117	0.116	0.117	0.116	0.001	0.962	0.117	0.115	0.119	0.1000,49,696,115
OMD000007043	NATIONAL LIFE INS	7,000	2,380	1	0.340	0.340	0.340	0.340	0.338	0.002	0.592	0.340	0.000	0.340	0.1000,135,447,276
OMD000001160	NATIONAL GAS	156,000	17,272	19	0.110	0.112	0.110	0.111	0.111	0.000	0.000	0.111	0.110	0.111	0.1000,9,435,000
OMD000001418	RAYSUT CEMENT	299,100	49,062	21	0.164	0.165	0.164	0.164	0.164	0.000	0.000	0.164	0.161	0.164	0.1000,32,800,000
OMD000002287	GULF MUSHROOM P.	67,590	16,222	9	0.240	0.240	0.240	0.240	0.240	0.000	0.000	0.240	0.240	0.243	0.1000,3,985,265
OMD000002366	AL BATINAH DEV.	31,520	1,389	4	0.045	0.045	0.044	0.044	0.044	0.000	0.000	0.044	0.040	0.044	0.1000,1,320,000
OMD000003521	GALFAR ENGINEER	105,790	17,974	10	0.173	0.173	0.169	0.170	0.170	0.000	0.000	0.170	0.169	0.172	0.1000,34,507,696
OMD000003961	VOLTAMP ENERGY	3,714	357	1	0.096	0.096	0.096	0.096	0.096	0.000	0.000	0.096	0.089	0.105	0.1000,7,814,664
OMD000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	1,959	94	1	0.048	0.048	0.048	0.048	0.048	0.000	0.000	0.048	0.046	0.048	0.1000,9,852,509
OMD000004420	BANK NIZWA	12,005,976	1,200,584	8	0.068	0.100	0.068	0.100	0.068	0.100	0.068	0.069	0.100	0.069	0.1000,223,685,303
OMD000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	190,650	5,238	10	0.028	0.029	0.027	0.029	0.029	0.000	0.000	0.029	0.028	0.029	0.1000,19,571,735
OMD000005963	PHOENIX POWER	51,159	2,251	6	0.044	0.044	0.044	0.044	0.044	0.000	0.000	0.044	0.000	0.044	0.1000,64,354,464
OMD000004735	SEMBORP SALALAH	10,000	650	1	0.065	0.065	0.065	0.065	0.066	-0.001	-1.515	0.065	0.064	0.065	0.1000,62,047,177
OMD000001566	OMAN FISHERIES	13,000	1,176	3	0.107	0.107	0.106	0.106	0.106	-0.002	-1.852	0.106	0.107	0.110	0.1000,19,300,310
OMD000002804	ASAFAA FOODS	2,200	574	3	0.270	0.270	0.260	0.260	0.265	-0.005	-1.887	0.260	0.260	0.260	0.1000,31,200,000
OMD000007910	AMAN REAL ESTATE	8,000	761	4	0.094	0.098	0.092	0.092	0.096	-0.004	-4.167	0.092	0.092	0.094	0.1000,18,400,000
OMD000006979	OMAN QATAR INSUR.	75,000	14,250	7	0.190	0.190	0.190	0.190	0.200	-0.010	-5.000	0.190	0.190	0.190	0.1000,19,000,000
OMD000002572	OMAN OIL MARKETING	1,107	987	2	0.892	0.892	0.892	0.892	0.968	-0.096	-9.717	0.892	0.892	0.968	0.1000,54,657,300
Total	25	18,505,732	1,770,041	246											

DATA

India's coal production up by 16.4%

NEW DELHI: India's overall coal production increased 16.39 per cent so far in the financial year 2022-23 to 607.97 million tonnes, official data showed on Tuesday.

During the same period of the last financial year, the output was 522.34 million tonnes. State-owned Coal India reported coal production of 479.05 million tonnes up in December, as compared to 413.63 million tonnes during the same period of last year, representing an increase of 15.82 per cent.

The Ministry of Coal has paved the way for releasing additional coal in the market by greater utilisation of mining capacities of captive coal blocks which has led to an increase in production of coal by captive and other companies by 31.38 per cent to 81.70 million tonnes so far in 2022-23 as compared to 62.19 million tonnes produced during the corresponding period of last year.

Besides, the Ministry of Coal's amendment of the Mineral Concession (Amendment) Rules, 1960 under MMDR (Amendment) Act,



REPORT: State-owned Coal India reported coal production of 479.05 million tonnes up in December. — Photo used for illustrative purpose only

2021 to allow the lessee of captive mines to sell coal or lignite up to 50 per cent of the total excess production after meeting the requirement of the end-use plants also seemed to have borne fruit.

"The ministry is taking steps to augment rail connectivity infrastructure for all major mines under PM Gati Shakti to ensure faster

evacuation. As a result, the total coal despatch has been to the tune of 637.51 MT during April-December 22 as compared to 594.22 MT during the same period of FY 22 representing a growth of 7.28 per cent which shows a steady and efficient amount of coal despatch to various sectors across the nation," a Ministry of Coal statement said. — **ANI**

Gold climbs to six-month peak in thin trade ahead of Fed minutes

WASHINGTON: Gold prices hit a six-month high on Tuesday in thin trading, with the market's attention turning to minutes from the US Federal Reserve's latest policy meeting due this week.

Spot gold was up 0.8 per cent at \$1,838.69 per ounce as of 0257 GMT. US gold futures rose 1 per cent to \$1,843.90, Reuters reports.

The dollar index slipped 0.1 per cent, making greenback-priced bullion more attractive for overseas buyers.

"We're seeing a slight bid for gold and the \$1,830 level appears to be a bit of a magnet. But with liquidity very low this time of the year, it appears to be technical buying as opposed to fundamentally driven," said Matt Simpson, a senior market analyst at City Index.

"I doubt the minutes will pack as much of a punch as the Fed's December meet had, but traders will look for confirmation of the lower terminal Fed rate expressed



in the median dot plot and that could support gold."

Minutes from the Fed's December policy meeting are due on Wednesday, which could offer hints on the central bank's tightening path. The Fed raised rates by 50 basis points (bps) in December after four consecutive increases of 75 bps each.

Gold is considered a hedge against inflation and economic uncertainties, but higher inter-

est rates increase the opportunity cost of holding gold as it pays no interest. The dollar and yield movements will be a key focus for the gold market, Ole Hansen, head of commodity strategy at Saxo Bank said in a note dated Monday.

"The de-dollarisation seen by several central banks last year, when a record amount of gold was bought, looks set to continue, thereby providing a soft floor under the market." — **BNA**

OIL PRICES

Oil slides on IMF slow-growth expectations

SINGAPORE: Oil prices slid on Tuesday from their highest levels in a month after Chinese economic data dampened market sentiment and the head of the International Monetary Fund warned of a tougher 2023.

Brent crude futures had fallen by 25 cents, or 0.29 per cent, to \$85.66 a barrel by 0400 GMT, while US West Texas Intermediate crude was at \$80.06 a barrel, down 20 cents, or 0.25 per cent, Reuters reports.

Weaker factory data from China, the world's largest crude importer and second-largest oil consumer, weighed on prices. The Caixin/Markit manufacturing purchasing managers' index fell to 49.0 in December from 49.4 in November. The index has stayed below the 50-point mark that separates growth from contraction for five straight months.

Yet there was a return to regular activity in China on Monday, as some people in key cities braved the cold and a rise in COVID-19 infections, raising the prospect of a boost to the economy and oil demand as more recover from infection.

This followed news of a larger-than-expected increase in the first batch of oil product export quotas for 2023 released by China's government. Handful traders attributed that to expectations of poor domestic demand as the country continued to battle COVID-19 waves.

Furthermore, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said on Sunday that the United States, Europe and China - the main engines of global growth -



were all slowing simultaneously, making 2023 tougher than 2022 for the global economy.

Oil prices settled more than 2 per cent higher on Friday, with Brent and WTI ending 2022 up 10.5 per cent and 6.7 per cent on a year before, respectively.

Commodities saw a substantial \$12.3 billion bullish flow in the week that ended on December 27, the single largest weekly bullish flow in 2022, Societe Generale analysts said in a Jan. 3 note.

"The commodity with the largest flow was Brent, which saw a \$3.4 billion bullish flow as Russia outlined its response to the EU and G7 imposed price cap on the country's crude exports to third parties," the analysts said.

President Vladimir Putin banned the supply of crude and oil products from Feb. 1 for five

months to nations that abided by the cap. His decree also included a clause that allowed him to overrule the ban in special cases.

Russian crude has been diverted to India and China from Europe. Traders said Moscow planned to increase diesel exports from the Baltic seaport of Primorsk to 1.81 million tonnes in January, but exports from Tuapse were expected to fall to 1.333 million tonnes.

Looking to the coming months, lead energy analyst at DBS Bank Suvro Sarkar expects concerns over the global economic slowdown to continue competing with the pace of China's reopening in driving oil prices.

"A weaker USD will help to an extent, (while) short-term factors will include inventory updates and data on Russian supplies," he said. — **BNA**

EXHIBITION



OCTOPUSES

MIGHT LINK EVOLUTION OF COMPLEX LIFE TO GENETIC ‘DARK MATTER’

Octopuses have captivated scientists and the general public with their extraordinary intelligence, which includes the use of tools, engaging in creative play and problem-solving, and even escaping from aquariums. Their sharpness may now be a crucial link in understanding the evolution of complex life and cognition, including the human brain.

An international team led by researchers at Dartmouth College and the Max Delbrück Center (MDC) in Germany report in the journal *Science Advances* that octopuses are the first known invertebrates -- creatures that lack a backbone and constitute roughly 95% of animal species -- to contain a high number of gene-regulating molecules known as microRNAs. The genes of two octopus species show an increase in microRNAs -- which are linked to the development of advanced cells with specific functions -- over evolutionary time that has so far only been found in humans, mammals and other vertebrates.

When combined with the known intelligence of octopuses, the findings provide crucial support for the theory that microRNAs are key to the evolution of intelligent life, said co-corresponding author Kevin Peterson, a Dartmouth professor of biological sciences. The nervous systems of octopuses and squids -- which both belong to a type of mollusk known as cephalopods -- evolved independently of vertebrates. Yet, the prevalence of microRNAs in both octopuses and vertebrates suggest a common role for the molecules in advanced cognition.

"MicroRNAs are known as the 'dark matter' of the animal

genome -- they don't make protein, but they regulate the expression of proteins," Peterson said, referring to the hypothetical form of matter thought to constitute most of the universe.

"This is the only instance in all of the invertebrates of dramatic microRNA increase and those genes are all expressed in the brain," he said. "This was always a big test for the hypothesis, that it is not specific to vertebrates. This was a big moment -- we discovered the secret to complex life, and the secret to complex life is microRNAs."

MicroRNAs were first reported in 1993 by Victor Ambros, a professor at Dartmouth from 1992-2007 who is now a professor at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. For nearly 15 years, Peterson and his research group have sequenced the genes of various animal species in order to link microRNAs to complex tissue development and brain evolution.

For the latest paper, Peterson's group worked with the lab of co-corresponding author Nikolaus Rajewsky, professor of systems biology at MDC, which had a wealth of RNA data on octopus species, particularly the common octopus (*Octopus vulgaris*). Peterson and co-author Peter Chabot, of Dartmouth's Class of 2022, worked through raw data of microRNAs sequenced from octopus species and identified specific sequences that were either new or already found in these animals. Their work provided an organized and annotated data set that was essential to the paper's findings, Chabot said.

Peterson's research has shown



In order to have new cognitive abilities and behaviours requires new cell types, Peterson said. The two places you get this -- in placental mammals and cephalopods -- is also where we see these microRNA-expressed genes. Animals that don't seem to have changed very much in the past 500 million years don't have very many microRNAs.



that creatures such as placental mammals whose genes have increased in number and complexity over evolutionary time also exhibit increasing concentrations of microRNAs. On the other hand, organisms such as parasites have lost ancestral genes -- and microRNAs -- as they have become less complex.

"In order to have new cognitive abilities and behaviors requires new cell types," Peterson said. "The two places you get this -- in placental mammals and cephalopods -- is also where we see these microRNA-expressed genes. Animals that don't seem to have changed very much in the past 500 million years don't have very many microRNAs."

"Every time we've tested this hypothesis, we've found it very viable, and we've not been able to refute it yet. That's what made this paper particularly exciting," he said.

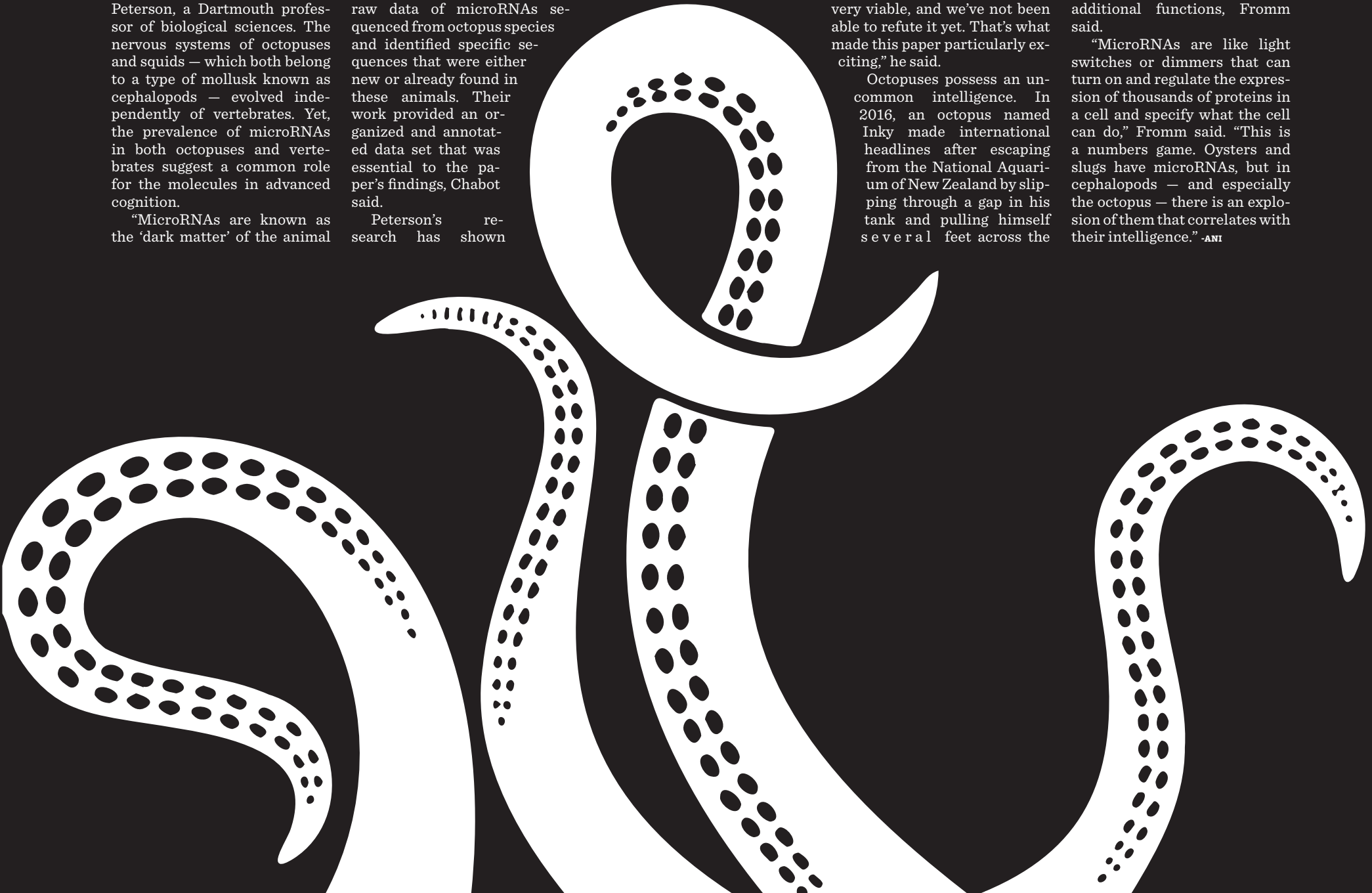
Octopuses possess an uncommon intelligence. In 2016, an octopus named Inky made international headlines after escaping from the National Aquarium of New Zealand by slipping through a gap in his tank and pulling himself several feet across the

floor to a nearly 150-foot drainpipe leading to the sea -- and his freedom. Octopuses also have been observed collecting and building shelters from discarded coconut shells, and using water currents to play catch with various objects.

This kind of intelligence potentially stems from microRNAs' role in diversifying cell function, said study co-author Bastian Fromm, a research group leader at the University of Tromsø in Norway who collaborates with the Peterson lab on its research and building the online microRNA database, MirGeneDB.

Cells in complex organisms perform specialised tasks, which means surrounding cells need to be calibrated to carry out additional functions, Fromm said.

"MicroRNAs are like light switches or dimmers that can turn on and regulate the expression of thousands of proteins in a cell and specify what the cell can do," Fromm said. "This is a numbers game. Oysters and slugs have microRNAs, but in cephalopods -- and especially the octopus -- there is an explosion of them that correlates with their intelligence." -ANI





FEATURE



DUBAI SHOPPING FESTIVAL SEASON 28 IS BACK

The 28th edition of the world's longest-running festival will run until 29 January 2023

WITH A SPECTACULAR LINE-UP OF THE BEST THE CITY HAS TO OFFER

The Dubai Shopping Festival (DSF) is back with the very best Dubai has to offer, including unmissable deals, a kaleidoscope of entertainment experiences, mouth-watering food, and mega prizes. The 28th edition of the world's longest-running retail festival started on 15 December 2022 and will run until 29 January 2023 across an action-packed 46-day calendar.

Over seven weeks, the DSF will feature only-in-Dubai shopping, winning, entertainment, and gastronomic experiences at citywide locations, including malls, high street shops, festival and community markets, and beachside destinations. The festival will see unique dining experiences, life-changing raffles, the best deals from homegrown and global brands, and live concerts by regional and international music icons.

WHAT'S HAPPENING THIS DSF?

Daily Fireworks: With a daily show running until 29 January, the stunning DSF fireworks displays by the Al Zarooni group will provide pyrotechnic spectacles at Burj Al Arab, Bluewaters, Dubai Creek, Al Seef, Dubai Frame, Dubai Festival City Mall, and JBR at 8:30 or 9 pm.

DSF Drone Show: The DSF Drone Show will host two all-new themed shows: Dubai Shopping Festival, inspired by the DSF's retail offerings, and The Future of Dubai, inspired by the 2040 vision. Shows will be held twice daily throughout DSF at 7 pm and 10 pm at The Beach and Bluewaters opposite Jumeirah Beach Residence.

Shopping Haven: Over 800 participating brands across 3,500 outlets will offer 25% to 75% reductions throughout the festival. Top international brands will provide unmissable discounts and bargains across Dubai's malls and shopping destinations.

Tourists can enjoy tax-free



shopping in Dubai! Refunds for VAT are available for purchased goods, with a minimum spend of AED 250. Make sure to secure a tax-free tag when shopping, and to validate your purchase to get a refund.

The DSF Daily Surprises are back with incredible deals from different brands each day of the festival, with deals revealed only 24 hours before they go live.

Outdoor Markets: The free-to-attend DSF Markets will bring outdoor and pop-up community shopping experiences at iconic locations across the city, including the Al Seef Market at Dubai Creek, DSF Market at Al Muraqqabat, and Vibes by the Bay at Dubai Festival City.

The annual Etisalat MOTB,

the original alternative shopping concept for Dubai, celebrates its 10th year and will take place from 19 to 29 January at Dubai Design District (D3). It will celebrate homegrown F&B and retail vendors with on-ground activities alongside live entertainment by local and regional artists.

New Concepts: New for this edition is the Dubai 80s pop-up at Last Exit Al Khawaneej. From 23 December to 8 January, Dubai 80s will serve nostalgia with old-school pop-ups from the 80s, 90s, and early 2000s. The COREUNITY Festival will take over Dubai's adventure capital Hatta to deliver incredible music, movement and wellness from 13 to 15 January 2023.

Incredible Prizes: Get a chance to win fantastic prizes during DSF including attraction passes and dining experiences, gadgets, gold and jewellery sets, cars, cash, and even an apartment in Downtown Dubai! Visitors can also participate in different raffle draws including the DSF Mega Raffle, DSF Lucky Receipt, DSF Share Millionaire, Dubai Festival City's The Greatest Deal of the Year, and more!

World-class Entertainment: DSF will also feature performances by talented local and international artists. Tunes DXB will run from 6 to 15 January in 12 locations across the city, showcasing talented local artists, including Hamdan Al Abri, Alya Al Ali, Maitha Al Mansoori,



and Shebani.

Iconic Hollywood film music composer Hans Zimmer and his 45-piece band, orchestra, and dancers will give a sensational show on 27 January 2023 at the Coca-Cola Arena.

Art and cultural experiences: High-energy and high-acrobatic production of OVO by Cirque du Soleil will run from 12 to 18 January at the Coca-Cola Arena. The Quoz Arts Fest will return to Dubai's artistic hub Alserkal Avenue on 28 and 29 January 2023. The infamous Murder Mystery experience will be performed live at Al Seef Heritage Hotel Dubai until 12 February. Throughout DSF, Performing Arts of Dubai will feature a jam-packed schedule of in-mall and

outdoor entertainment.

City lights and decoration: The second edition of Dubai Lights will showcase ten unique interactive light installations by renowned artists and studios worldwide. The city will also be decked with lighting decorations and structures, creating an ambience of fun and festivity. Giant illuminated DSF shopping bag structures will be situated in different locations across Dubai.

Plan your Dubai holiday and make the most of the exciting deals and entertainment during the Dubai Shopping Festival. For more information, visit www.mydsf.ae. @Styled-ByDubai and @CelebrateDubai on social media channels.

Foton Auman Medium Duty Truck: Preferred choice for businesses

Making it easier to own Foton Auman Medium Duty Truck, Gulf Great Sands, the exclusive importer of Foton vehicles in Oman, has announced a low EMI rate of OMR425 for six years

MUSCAT: A medium-duty truck with a significant on-road presence, Foton Auman incorporates the latest design and technology, providing a distinct and refined driving experience.

A spokesperson for GGS said, “A medium-duty truck that looks and feels like a heavy-duty truck, the Auman is ideal for any job. Powered by the latest generation Cummins ISDe 245 30 engine, it provides 245 hp@ 2500 rpm and 950Nm of torque.

“Turbocharged and intercooled, this engine provides the Auman with a premium powertrain that is not normally found on medium-duty trucks. It has eight speed manual transmission.”

Making it easier to own Foton Auman Medium Duty Truck, Gulf Great Sands (GGS), the exclusive importer of Foton vehicles in Oman, has announced a low EMI rate of OMR 425 for six years. The offer is inclusive of the five per cent value added tax (VAT).

The Auman truck is also known for its legendary performance, reliability and durability and its striking exterior design is a combination of bold, purposeful, and dynamic hard lines.

Foton Auman Medium Duty Truck boasts of a 6.7 litre engine with 245 horsepower. Its Cummins engine features high burst pressure and strong power, with the maximum power output at 210ps and the power per litre in excess of 34kW/L. This 1,000,000km overhaul-free engine is manufactured strictly in accordance with the Cummins global quality system and manufacturing standard and passed the 2,000,000km stringent road reliability and durability test. The vehicle took the lead to pass the stringent German DEKRA test, with the accumulative test mileage.

A medium-duty truck that looks and feels like a heavy-duty truck, the Auman has a road presence that other trucks aspire to. The Auman is much more than the good looking truck with a Cummins engine, and comes with world-class features, innovative technology, and excellent design.

Specification
Cab Type-Single Cab; Driving System-4x2, Chassis Dimension (LxWxH) mm: 8560 x 2468 x 2780, Wheel Base mm: 4800; Engine -Model: Cummins ISDe 245 30, Type: In-line, Four-cylinder, Water Cooling, Four-stroke, DI, Turbocharging, Intercooling, Diesel Engine, Displacement (cc): 6700,



Max. Output: 245 hp @2500 rpm, Max. Torque (Nm/rpm): 950; Transmission - Model: Fast 8 MT, Safety: ABS; Fuel Tank Capacity:200 LT; Comfort- Windows: Power, Aided Driving: Reverse Parking Sensor, Media Equipment: Radio FM/AM/ MP3/ USB/ Bluetooth, Driver Seat: Air Suspended; Tyre -Size: 22.5 inch and Quantity: 6 + 1.

Partnering with Foton Motor Group, one of the world’s largest manufacturer of commercial vehicles, Gulf Great Sands LLC (GGS) have full range of commercial vehicles in Oman. Through this exclusive distribution partnership, Gulf Great Sands has commenced the supply of a range of Foton’s commercial vehicles in Oman including the Foton View – High roof wide body 13-Seater Mini-Bus and Cargo Van, FotonAumark – Light Duty Truck (Diesel), Tunland Gasoline Pickups, View Mini- Buses, Panel vans, and Fotonuman – Medium Duty Truck.

A global automotive legend with an extensive history, world-class rankings and impressive joint-ventures with internationally reputed companies, Foton has successfully positioned itself as a comprehensive commercial vehicle manufacturer. Gulf Great Sands LLC (GGS) is a part of the Bahwan International Group (BIG), an exclusive distributor for many reputed International automotive brands in Oman. Gulf Great Sands has a state-of-art service

centre in Ghala, Muscat, spread over more than 2900 square meters to provide aftersales services to customers. GGS has already tied up for Periodic Maintenance Services in key cities including Jalan, Salalah and Sohar.

With a business scope covering a full series of commercial vehicles, Foton has a record of an accumulative production and sales volume of approximately 10 million vehicles since being established in 1996. With a brand value which has been evaluated as about \$ 16.6 billion,

Foton has been ranked number one for 13 consecutive years in China’s commercial vehicle arena. Foton, which has a partnership with Daimler of Germany, ZF and Cummins of USA, is eye-

ing a significant share of Oman market through this partnership. Daimler provides technology supremacy in Medium and Heavyduty Trucks. Cummins Diesel Engines are renowned for their longevity, performance and economy. Foton is also partnered by Getrag (Germany), Aisin (Japan) and BorgWarner (USA) for transmissions, Bosch (Germany) for electronics and Dana (USA) for axles and differentials.

Foton products and services are available in 110 countries all over

the world. Foton has five major warehouses internationally, including a regional parts centre in Dubai. Foton has joined hands with several well-known worldwide enterprises such as Cummins, ZF, CEVA Logistics, Faurecia, Wabco, Continental Electron, TUV Rheinland and others to establish “Foton Global Innovating Alliance”, aiming to make breakthroughs in science and technology, and produce energy-saving, environmentally friendly and intelligently interconnected automobile products.

LEBANESE RESTAURANT ZAHR EL LAYMOUN

Al Mouj Muscat-based business adds another TripAdvisor Travellers’ Choice win to its list of Customer Service Excellence Awards



MUSCAT: Another Al Mouj Muscat-based operator has won a TripAdvisor Travellers’ Choice Award adding to the premier lifestyle destination’s growing list of restaurant and leisure experience providers to be rated in the world’s top 10 per cent based on customer feedback.

Lebanese restaurant Zahr El Laymoun has earned the accolade for the first time with the 2022 win taking Al Mouj’s tally of TripAdvisor awards up to 3 this year demonstrating its commitment to providing world-class service and customer experiences all year round.

Situated at the Walk and boasting incredible views over Al Mouj Marina, Zahr El Laymoun’s customers enjoy a combination of authentic Middle Eastern cooking and friendly hospitality with a comfortable and homely interior design that includes a pleasant garden-themed terrace.

The restaurant which is open all day seven days a week for breakfast, lunch, dinner or just drinks and snacks, has been based at Al Mouj since 2015 and its menu is inspired by traditional dishes that have been enjoyed over generations. The small independent chain has outlets in Qatar and Dubai, but has chosen Al Mouj as its only location in the Sultanate.

Nasser bin Masoud Al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, says: “I would like to congratulate the entire team behind Zahr El Laymoun for this superb achievement. Consistently delivering high standards of customer service underpins all

that we stand for at Al Mouj Muscat and to receive yet another TripAdvisor award from the people who matter most, the customers, is particularly rewarding.

“When we set out to create Al Mouj Muscat, it was to provide a premium leisure destination where world-class standards go hand in hand with choice so that people can enjoy a wide variety of restaurants and excursions and book them with the confidence that they can expect the very best experience.”

“From chains to family-owned independents SMEs, we support all our operators giving them visibility and generating footfall in addition to guidance and advice so they may succeed and grow. Ours is an environment that thrives on

positivity and where great moments are experienced and enjoyed every day and Travellers’ Choice awards provide the perfect external endorsement.”

Al Mouj Muscat was established in 2006 as Oman’s first integrated tourism complex and today it attracts around 3.9 million people a year and is home to 8,000 people from 85 nationalities.

Alongside its 85 shops and restaurants, visitors can choose from a variety of sporting, entertainment and leisure experiences including two luxury hotels with three more soon to complete. There is a championship golf course, a Gold Anchor marina, 2km of sandy beach, parks and landscaped boulevards with this figure set to grow as more amenities open.

ROUND-UP

Muriya unveils ‘Amazi’ residential project in Hawana Salalah

During an exclusive reveal event, potential homeowners, investors, and other stakeholders were able to discover Muriya’s upscale, biggest and unique lifestyle development, which will be nestled across 1 million square metres of Hawana Salalah’s lush prime land

MUSCAT: Amazi, the latest and highly sought-after waterfront residential resort development in Hawana Salalah was recently launched by Muriya, Oman’s leading real-estate and tourism developer.

Muriya, a subsidiary of Orascom Development Holding, an internationally acclaimed developer, and Omran, the leading government arm for tourism development in Oman, has teamed up with renowned SB Architects to design the project.

During an exclusive reveal event, potential homeowners, investors, and other stakeholders were able to discover Muriya’s upscale, biggest and unique lifestyle development, which will be nestled

across 1 million square metres of Hawana Salalah’s lush prime land. The project’s units that all offer exclusive waterfront living have already been selling quickly, luring discerning buyers tempted by the many appealing benefits of owning a property within the residential resort.

Tamer Dewidar at Orascom Development Holding, said, “Amazi at Hawana Salalah is expected to deliver an effortless waterfront lifestyle. The residences and villas will be ideal for holiday homeowners who want to celebrate the art of living, as well as visitors from the GCC and Europe looking for amazing curated experiences. In addition, the residences are partic-



ularly appealing to investors and buyers expecting long-term and high-yield returns while acquiring Oman’s residency.”

He added, “As part of our thoughtful, careful and imaginative planning and development, the world-class international architecture, our longstanding partner SB Architects led the conception of the superb collection of

Amazi waterfront residences.”

Situated along Oman’s stunning Indian Ocean coastline, Amazi, Hawana Salalah will offer spectacular and unobstructed vistas juxtaposing turquoise waters and white sand beaches with breathtaking landscapes. Each thoughtfully designed residence will capitalise on its prime location with access to an array of hotel resort-like ameni-

ties and personalised services that will make future residents feel like they are on a vacation.

Seif El Khouly, Chief Development Officer at Muriya said, “Our main focus is to develop low-density properties and openness for all units, allowing the best experience possible, while keeping an eye out for complete privacy and connectivity.”

He added, “Our designers used the natural beauty and elements of Oman to blend handcrafted designs that combine both contemporary and traditional architecture into a timeless functional design, integrating indoor and outdoor living using wrap-around pools and elegant arches to accentuate that experience.”

The word ‘Amazi’ can be generalised as ‘the source of all good things’, while the residential resort has been designed to become a true water sanctuary, bringing its residents and visitors closer to nature. Inspired by the natural beauty of Wadi Darbat in Salalah, Amazi will be reflective of its unique settings. The resort-style community will constitute multiple residential districts: Amazi Rise, situated on a natural hill; Amazi Cove, with canals surrounding all units; Amazi Islands, allowing for waterfront living on a ribbon of smaller connected islands; and Amazi Beach, offering oceanfront living just steps from the white sand beach.

Hawana Salalah is Oman’s largest and fastest-growing tourism destination. Freehold homes, superb marina, hotels, dining, activities and more are spread across 7km of beautiful sandy white beaches in the Governorate of Dhofar, creating an exceptional community for its residents and visitors.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Bank Muscat recognised for its CSR pioneering role in supporting persons with disabilities

MUSCAT: In line with its commitment to contribute in empowering persons with disabilities, Bank Muscat, the leading financial institution in the Sultanate, is keen to support persons with disabilities through CSR programmes and initiatives in partnership with government institutions and NGOs.

Recently, Bank Muscat participated in the event the Ministry of Social Development organised on the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. During the event, the Ministry of Social Development honored Bank Muscat for its constant support.

The event was held under the patronage of Laila bint Ahmed Al-Najjar, Minister of Social Development, where Hamza Abbas Al Ajmi, Deputy General Manager – Credit, Bank Muscat, received the honour from the minister.

On the same occasion, the bank was also honored for its CSR initiatives to provide support to persons with disabilities on the event the Oman Association of Persons with Disability held under the patronage of Sheikh Rashid Ahmed Al Shamsi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Development, where Taya Eid Bait Sabeea, Deputy General Manager, governorates, Bank Muscat, received the award.

On this occasion, Hamza Abbas Al Ajmi, Deputy General Manager – Credit, Bank Muscat, said: “We are proud to participate in this important event organised by the Ministry and of all the tremendous efforts that the Ministry of Social Development and various government and private institutions, NGOs and individuals are keen to put for the development of services and facilities for persons with disabilities. The bank pays great attention to activities, events and social responsibility programmes especially those



targeted at developing facilities and services for persons with disabilities. These efforts are in line with the bank’s commitment to deliver long-term benefits for the disabled and helping them integrate into mainstream society, as well as encourage all efforts working towards ensuring the welfare of persons with disabilities.” He further pointed out that the bank will continue working on developing sustainable programmes that provide support to the community.

Taya Sabeea said: “In Bank Muscat, we pay great attention to persons with disabilities and work closely with different institutions across Oman to provide suitable environment to enhance their role in society. On this occasion, we would like to extend our appreciation to Oman Association of Persons with Disability for their constant cooperation and partnership with the bank and for their contribution to develop vari-

ous services that can help persons with disabilities.”

Bank Muscat has taken many measures for the inclusion of persons with disabilities into mainstream society through its CSR initiatives and programmes. The bank’s efforts in this regard include the operation of a special ATM with a special transaction flow for blind and visually-impaired people. Also, special access ramps and other arrangements for easy access have been made available at different branches and ATMs in Oman. The bank has also trained a number of its branch employees in sign language to facilitate easy communication with the hearing impaired. Bank Muscat is constantly innovating to improve and enhance inclusivity through its various sustainability programmes and is keen to partner likeminded organisations to ensure the goals of inclusivity and overall renaissance of the country.

CHIC SALOON

Renault Megane impresses with its modern styling and smooth silhouette

MUSCAT: Combining eye-catching looks and stunning performance, Renault Megane, the chic saloon, has been impressing auto aficionados in Oman.

Admired for its driving performance, Renault Megane is known for its driving comfort, technology and safety features.

The charismatic Renault Megane is a real head-turner. With its sedan body, dynamic lines and generous proportions, it has a style of its own.

Mansour Al Hajri from Muscat likes Renault Megane for its attractiveness and vibrancy. He says, “Offering driving comfort and safety features, the incredible sedan makes a bold statement, unveiling its performance excellence and high-tech interior.”

Hamad Al Mahdouri cherishes Renault Megane for its smooth silhouette, hi-tech cockpit and sophisticated styling. He adds, “With a roomy trunk and enough space for four passengers to relax in comfort, Renault Megane is also an ideal road-trip partner, made even better by its comprehensive set of standard driver-assistance features and intuitive infotainment system.”

It is no wonder that with its elegant line and definite sense of French flair and style, Renault Megane is among the most exquisite cars found on Oman roads.

Usama Al Haddabi says, “With a near ideal blend of performance, driving range, and accessible pricing, Renault Megane is sedan that lives up to the sedan.”

Adil Al Siyabi feels with compact body, daring expressive design, assertive style - Renault Megane’s lines give a distinguished look for an exhilarating drive. He says, “With its sedan body, dynamic lines and generous proportions, it has a style of its own, both lively and elegant.”

Ahmed Al Balushi enjoys the pleasure of a smooth and relaxed drive. He says, “From the dynamic brand light to the ergonomics of



the digital instrument panel and the 550-litre boot capacity, it is a masterful example of originality; behind the wheel, assisted by a set of innovative aids.”

A spokesperson for Renault Oman, from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles (SBA) said, “Megane presents a high-class driving experience, thanks to its technologies, design, and roominess. It is a popular car and much-loved car in the Sultanate.”

Status-enhancing appeal

Megane presents a high-class driving experience, thanks to its technologies, design, and roominess. Renault Megane, which is available in 2.0 litres engine configuration along with 1.6 litres variant, is a popular car and much-loved car in the Sultanate.

Renault’s designers have drawn upon their acclaimed expertise to seamlessly incorporate 503 dm3 VDA of boot storage capacity without compromising the vehicle’s aesthetic appeal. Its generous dimensions (4.63m long and 1.81m wide, with a record wheelbase in its class of 2.71m) underscore its status-enhancing credentials and provide addition-

al room for occupants. Its sleek profile is the result of painstaking work on the proportion of glass to metal (one-third / two-thirds), as well as its low height (1.44m) and ground clearance (13cm).

Fitted as standard either across the range or in the higher-end versions, chrome detailing (grille, side mouldings, door window strips, door handles and exhaust tailpipes) point to the model’s quality and reinforce its status-enhancing appeal. Its 1.57m front and rear track – the widest in its class – and its range of wheel sizes up to 18 inches imbue it with a striking stance. Its broad, sculpted shoulders express its sportier style.

Megane is available in a choice of eight exterior colours. Its seven metallic options include Pearl White, Mercury, Mink Brown, Cosmos Blue, Comet Grey, Flame Red, Dune Beige. It is one non-metallic finish: Glacier White.

The Megane shares many styling features with its larger sibling Renault Talisman, including its lighting signature which is visible night and day. Available as option on the top version of the Megane are full LED (LED Pure Vision technology) head lights.



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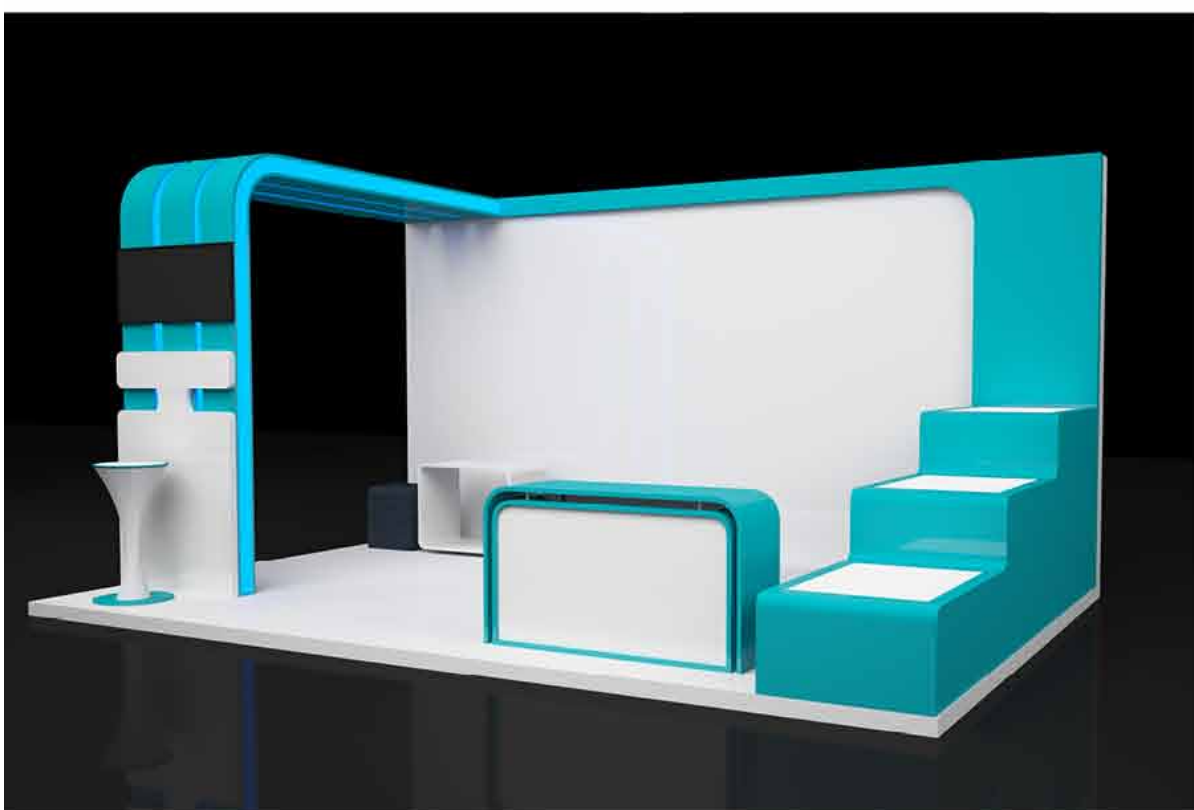
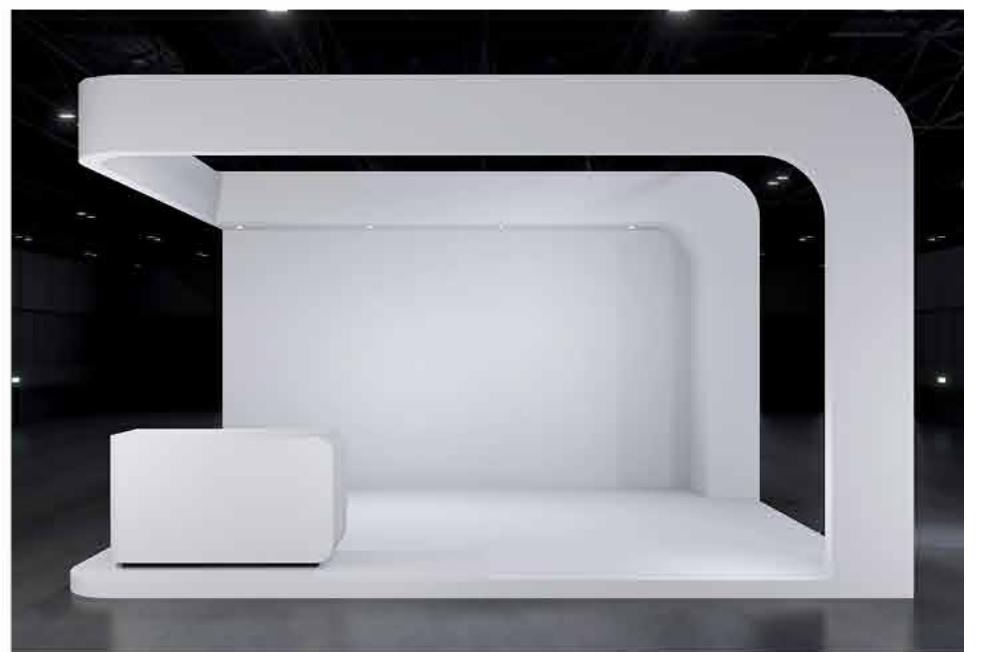
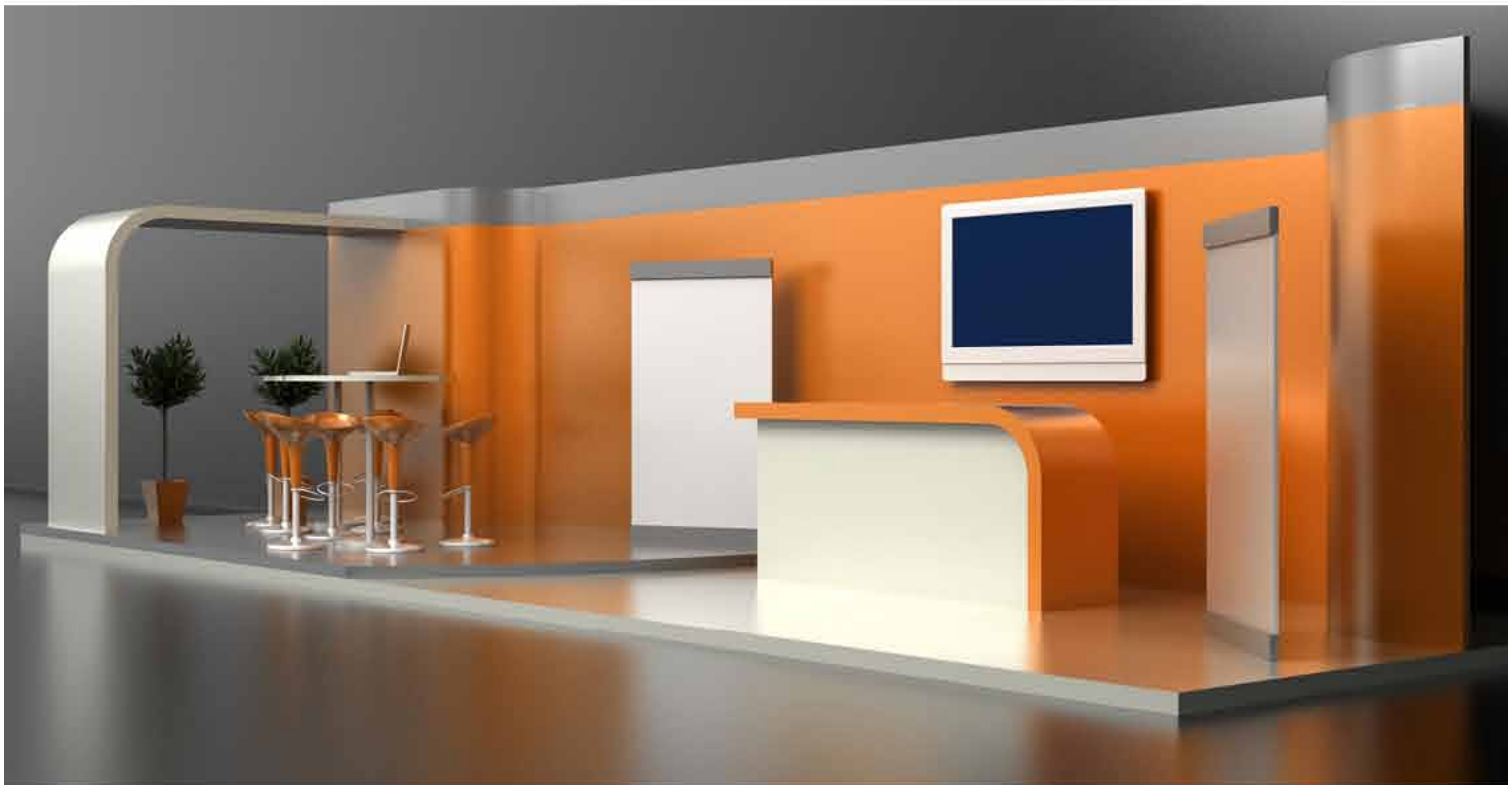
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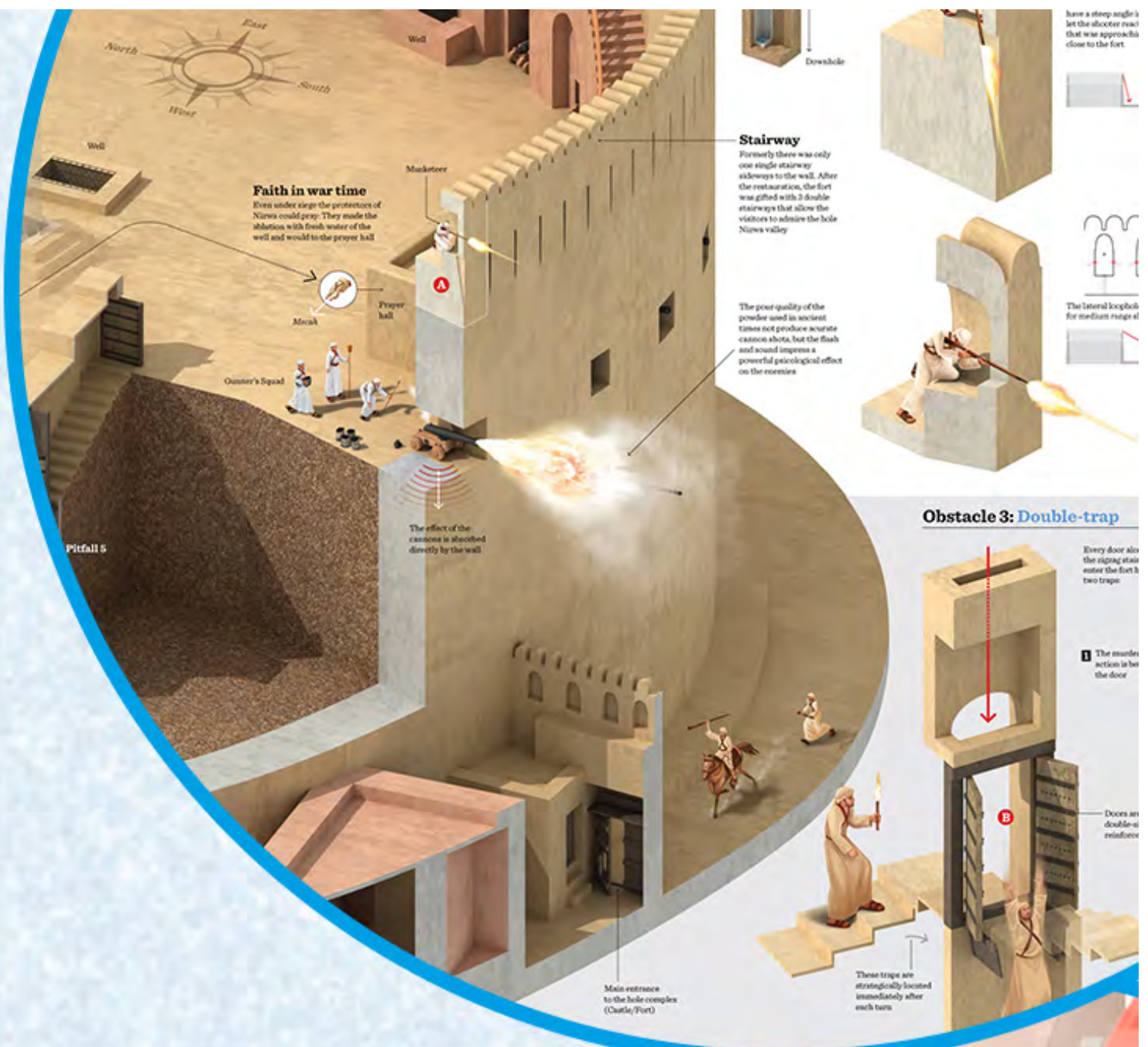
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