

RAFO RECEIVES A NEW BATCH OF CITIZENS

The Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) in coordination with the Ministry of Labour received a new batch of citizens for military training after they passed out the required tests. **>A5**



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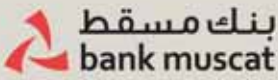
HIS MAJESTY THE SULTAN ISSUES TWO ROYAL DECREES

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Sunday issued two Royal decrees reading as follows: Royal Decree No. 2/2023 ascribes the public utility status to the project of constructing a dam for protection against flood water in Wadi Adoubab (Project A1B) in the Wilayat of Salalah, Governorate of Dhofar. **Full report>A2**



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OMAN'S 2023 BUDGET PROJECTS OVER OMR10BN REVENUES

The Ministry of Finance has pointed out that the average price of oil per barrel was calculated at \$55 in the State Budget for fiscal year 2023.

\$55



Oil revenues for 2023 were estimated at OMR5.320 billion, registering an increase of 18 percent, compared to the 2022 budget

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman's State Budget 2023 projects total revenues of OMR10.050 billion, lower by 5 percent from estimates endorsed in the State Budget 2022.

"The decline was due to a projected decrease in gas revenues registered in State Budget 2023 following the establishment of the Integrated Gas Company (IGC)

with a view to realising a number of goals," the Ministry of Finance said in a statement on Sunday.

These include the improvement of Oman's fiscal performance indicators by removing gas purchase and transport expenses from the State Budget and transferring the net revenues from gas sales to the state treasury.

In State Budget 2023, oil revenues were estimated at about

OMR5.320 billion, registering an increase of 18 percent, compared to Budget 2022, as oil revenues constitute about 53 percent of total general revenues.

The Ministry of Finance has pointed out that the average price of oil per barrel was calculated at \$55 in the State Budget for fiscal year 2023. The estimate is in line with the principle of hedging in accordance with the state's financial policy. The calculation takes into account potential fluctuation in global prices that might occur as a result of unstable geopolitical events. It also seeks to offset any uncertainty of future expectations about the performance of the global economy.

Gas revenues in State Budget 2023 were estimated at OMR1.4

billion, thanks to the establishment of Integrated Gas Company, which will purchase and sell gas and then transfer gas revenues directly into the treasury. Gas revenues constitute 14 percent in the revenues, the Ministry said.

Non-oil revenues in the endorsed State Budget 2023 are estimated at about OMR3.330 billion, down by 0.3 percent from Budget 2022 estimates.

Current revenues in State Budget 2023 are estimated to stand at about OMR3.280 billion. Of these, revenues from value-added tax (VAT) and excise tax are estimated to be about OMR590 million, while income tax revenues (on profits of companies and institutions) are estimated to be about OMR560 million. **>A4**

Royal Decree ratifies State's General Budget 2023

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Sunday issued Royal Decree No. (1/2023) on the ratification of the State's General Budget for the Fiscal Year 2023, after the same was presented before the Council of Oman. Article (1) ratifies the State's General Budget for Fiscal Year 2023 according to the tables attached to this

decree. Article (2) instructs all units of the State's Administrative Apparatus and other public legal entities to implement the provisions of this decree, each within the scope of its prerogatives.

Article (3) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from the 1st of January 2023. — **ONA**



Governors and Chairs of Municipal Councils take oath

A4

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

SPORTS

Al Nasr regain HM's Cup hockey title

1 Salalah giants Al Nasr began the New Year on a victorious note as they regained His Majesty's Cup hockey glory with an emphatic 5-2 win over 12-time champions Ahli-Sidab in a thrilling final at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex on Sunday night.

>A8

WORLD

Nine dead in Uganda mall stampede

2 Police in Uganda said at least nine people were killed in a stampede at a shopping mall during a New Year's Eve event on Sunday.

"The Katwe Territorial Police are investigating an incident of rash and neglect that occurred at a New Year's Eve event in Namasuba and resulted in the deaths of nine people." **>A6**

MARKET

PASI signs pact with Bank Muscat

3 The Public Authority for Social Insurance signed an agreement with Bank Muscat for the collection of contributions through a direct debit solution. This solution will help enhance the efficiency of revenues and expenditures, minimise the time and effort spent on managing and collecting contributions. **>B1**

BASRA

Confident Oman ready for Arabian Gulf Cup

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Buoyed by the back-to-back wins in international friendly games against a strong Syria side, Oman football team will depart for the Iraqi city of Basra on Monday high on confidence in a bid to vie for their third Gulf Cup title.

Coached by Croatian Branko Ivankovic, Oman will be heading for the 25th Arabian Gulf Cup, which will be held in Basra from January 6-19.

Coach Ivankovic has preferred to keep the core of the team that has been with him for the past year as he announced on Sunday the 23-member squad.

The team concluded a week-long camp in Dubai, UAE, where they played two friendly matches against Syria. Oman won both the matches with the first match ended in 2-1 in their favour while the second match, Oman won 1-0 on Friday.

The camp concluded on Sunday and Ivankovic released five players from the camp with Jameel Al Yahmadi joining the squad only on Saturday.

Experienced goalkeeper Faiz Al



Rusheidi and defender Mohammed Al Musalami are among the senior squad members with Ivankovic relying on his young forces, led by Salah Al Yahyaei and Al Monther Al Alawi upfront.

Earlier in November, the national team earned plaudits for a strong showing against four-time World Cup champions Germany in a friendly match held at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex.

Oman Football Association (OFA) vice-chairman Mohsin Al Masroori will be the leader of the

Omani delegation at the Gulf Cup.

Two-time champions Oman will begin their campaign against hosts Iraq in a Group A match on January 6 soon after the opening ceremony. Oman won their maiden Gulf Cup title in Muscat during the 19th edition hosted in January 2009 under Frenchman Claude Le Roy. The second title came during the 23rd edition hosted by Kuwait in 2017. Dutchman Pim Verbeek's Red Warriors won against the UAE in the final. Verbeek passed away in 2019. **>A2**

Visa requirements waived off for GCC citizens to attend Gulf Cup

MUSCAT: Omani football fans welcomed the decision of the Iraq government to allow GCC citizens to attend the forthcoming 25th Arabian Gulf Cup which will be played from January 6-19 in Basra, without applying for an entry visa.

"Fans of the 25th Arabian Gulf Cup will be exempted from visa fees, and their vehicles will be exempted from customs, tax, insurance and sponsorship fees. Vehicles will enter through Safwan and Arar border crossings only," the Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman in Iraq said in a statement on Sunday.

"On the occasion of the 25th Gulf Cup tournament to be held in Basra, the competent authorities

decided to approve the entry stamp for holders of valid passports from the GCC countries and the Republic of Yemen until January 20, 2023, in order to allow entry to Iraq through air, land and sea ports to attend the tournament," the embassy added.

Nasser Mohammed, an ardent supporter of Oman national team, said: "This is welcome news and it will encourage fans to travel to Basra to cheer for the national team."

Meanwhile, the Iraq Football Association launched a website for selling match tickets. The organising committee for the 25th Arabian Gulf Cup has allocated five outlets to sell match tickets directly in Basra.



PRAYER
TIMINGS

Dhuhr.....	12:16pm
Asr.....	3:17pm
Maghrib.....	5:37pm
Isha.....	6:52pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....	5:29am



ROYAL DECREE

HM the Sultan issues two Royal Decrees

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

Royal Decree No. 2/2023 ascribes the public utility status to the project of constructing a dam for protection against flood water in Wadi Adoubab (Project A1B) in the Wilayat of Salalah, Governorate of Dhofar.

Article (1) states that the project of constructing a dam for protection against floods in Wadi Adoubab (Project A1B) in the Wilayat of Salalah, Governorate of Dhofar, as defined in the memo and diagram attached to this decree, is henceforth deemed a public utility project.

Article (2) stipulates that the authorities concerned may expropriate, through direct implementation, the properties and lands necessary for the aforementioned project, along with all the installations therein in accordance with the Public Utility Expropriation Law promulgated by Royal Decree 64/78.



Article (3) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its

date of issue. Royal Decree No. 3/2023 ascribing the public utility status to the project of constructing a dam for protection against floods in Wadi Anaar and side protection

for the Port of Salalah, Governorate of Dhofar.

Article (1) states that the project of constructing a dam for protection against floods in Wadi Anaar and side protection for the Port of Salalah, Governorate of Dhofar, as defined in the memo and diagram attached to this decree, is henceforth deemed a public utility project.

Article (2) stipulates that the authorities concerned may expropriate, through direct implementation, the properties and lands necessary for the aforementioned project, along with all the installations therein in accordance with the Public Utility Expropriation Law promulgated by Royal Decree 64/78.

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

OMAN VISION 2040

Plan to streamline govt services begins



MUSCAT: The first phase of a project named “Manjam Labs” kicked off on Sunday with the aim of streamlining government service procedures.

The project is undertaken in cooperation between the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology and Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, in addition to other departments concerned.

The opening session was held at Oman Oil Institute at Sultan Qaboos University.

The project, which stems from the principle of achieving common interests of all, will continue until March 2023.

It constitutes part of the executive plan of the government digital transformation programme (2021-2025), which aims at facilitating access to services and meeting the aspirations of users.

The initiative targets more than 1,000 services within the government’s digital transformation programme. The participants will discuss three approved workflows, the business cycle and employment process procedures.

The project sees the participation of more than 300 experts representing government and private stakeholders from various commercial, industrial and service sectors, municipalities and government institutions.

It deals with re-engineering the steps of service supply, specifically with the aim of improving them and presenting them in an innovative manner that ensures speed and efficiency in serving beneficiaries. -ONA

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Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848)

Performed By Teatro Lirico Di Cagliari

5th January | 7:00 PM

7th January | 4:00 PM

This classical rendering of Donizetti’s well-known opera directed by Michele Mirabella takes place with a vibrant feast of costumes from heralded designers. Featuring an all-star cast, performed by Teatro Lirico di Cagliari and conducted by the acclaimed conductor Jordi Bernàcer. A love story challenging social divisions, with a happy ending.

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SEASON 2022-2023

MINISTRY OF LABOUR

Performance scheme launched

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Labour on Sunday launched Ejada scheme of measuring institutional performance. The system is aimed at providing appropriate instruments for developing the performance of government units and providing an instructional guide and standardised criteria for gauging the progress made by the units in achieving their goals.

Ejada scheme also seeks to spread a culture of proficiency, improve knowledge about the best ways to improve the quality of public services, reward distinguished performance and promote the spirit of innovation and creativity in all government

units. The ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr. Mahad Said Ba’Owain, Minister of Labour. Ejada is envisaged as a means of realising the objectives of annual plans and ensuring the sustainability of the units in their drive to identify aspects of improvement and strengths in the unit. Through Ejada, three questionnaires will be launched to monitor the extent to which government institutions strive to development the work environment, the satisfaction of service recipients and the level of cooperation among government units.

By this week, Ejada would have been fully implemented in all government units. - ONA

GULF CUP

Oman to take on Yemen on January 9

<FROM A1 The Group B include Asian champions and World Cup 2022 hosts Qatar, defending champions Bahrain, UAE and 10-time champions Kuwait.

Besides Iraq and Oman, the other teams in the group are Yemen and fancied Saudi Arabia. Oman take on Yemen on January 9 and play their last group-stage match against Saudi Arabia on January 12.

The official mascot for the 25th edition of the Gulf Cup is Sindbad. Iraq will host the tournament for the second time in its history after they had hosted the fifth edition of the tournament in 1979 in Baghdad.

The 24th edition was held in Qatar in 2019 and was initially scheduled to be held in Iraq but was shifted to Doha due to security reasons.

The Gulf Cup was initially set to take place in December, 2022 but was pushed back due to the Qatar World Cup.

Two stadiums will host the Gulf Cup matches in Basra. Basra International Stadium will be

the main venue with a capacity of 65,000 spectators and 30,000 fans can be seated in the newly built Al-Minaa Olympic Stadium.

A third stadium of 10,000 seating will be used for team training and friendly games.

The first Arabian Gulf Cup was held in Bahrain in 1970 and is organised every two years. Kuwait is the most successful team in the tournament’s history with ten titles, while Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Iraq won the event three times each. Oman and the UAE came on top in two editions each.

Oman squad: Ahmed al Rawahi, Faiz al Rusheidi, Mohammed al Musalami, Juma al Habsi, Mahmood al Mushaifri, Harib al Saadi, Salah al Yahyaei, Ahmed al Khumaisi, Amjad al Harthy, Ahmed al Adawi, Issam al Subhi, Ahmed al Matrooshi, Ibrahim al Mukhaini, Ahmed al Kaabi, Moataz Saleh, Jameel al Yahmadi, Musaab al Maamari, Fahmi Bait Doorbeen, Khalid al Breiki, Zahr al Akhbari, Omar al Malki, Arshad al Alawi and Al Monther al Alawi. Coach: Branko Ivankovic.



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COMMENTARY

Now that the year 2023 is here



SALEH AL-SHAIBANY

Another year that has dawned on us and perhaps more plans. But personally, I don't anymore go ahead with plans that are born from the optimism of the moment. The rush of the blood, in my own experience, leads to personal disappointment. I now try to stay calm and let ideas mature before I take action. In the past, I used to waste a lot of resources with plans that were hastily sealed that turned out to be a complete disaster.

For me, this year will be just a reflection of the past. I will have no urgency of beating the time or being there first. I have learned that putting a decision on a fast train has always taken me off the track. It takes quite a while to come back where I started, not to mention the time I wasted. I am not worried anymore of getting it right all the time. I am not infallible as I thought I was and the admission has removed a lot of load off my head. I try to polish some rough edges in my life but I make no attempt these days to come out sparkling clean. Yes, I resist temptations and succumb to some because I know I am only human.

I also don't over indulge on lost opportunities, either. They come and go. Opportunity, the word itself, has been excessively exaggerated by educators who themselves stick to just one discipline in life, that is teaching.



Photo by Purushothaman

Look at it this way, a cleaner may struggle in the financial aspect but it does not mean they missed the opportunity to lead a successful life. They usually raise law-abiding children and that saying a lot more than the word 'opportunity' can express.

Anyway, grabbing opportunities does not always make you clever, or fulfilled, for that matter. A businessman bought all the livestock from the market traders. Then he asked the same traders to sell the animals at 20 percent profit, splitting the gain with them. As it turned out, just half of the livestock found buyers and the businessman lost money. The traders made profits both ways and they were supposed not to have seen the 'opportunity'.

Good ideas never come with the rush of the blood. They slowly simmer and take shape in good time. As they mature, it gives you the 'opportunity' to spot faults and correct them, instead of taking the plunge to the deep

end, as the livestock businessman did. The brave thing, I have learned the hard way, is to courageously abandon the plan when there are too many faults, instead of trying to save face. There is always the next time.

Dreams, hopes and desires all mean the same thing, leading to the same destination. Write ten of them on a piece of paper that you have been expecting to achieve in the past five years. How many of them have come true? If none, perhaps you have been rushing them, instead of giving them time to flourish. If the tick goes to a couple than you must feel good about it. In a wider net, you caught a few and you should be grateful. Perhaps you should ask an eighty-year old man about the achievement in his list. What he would have to say must be reflected. After all, the philosophy of taking one thing at a time is part of the life's wisdom. It has got nothing to do with any opportunity that flashes by in a runaway train.

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OPERA

ROHM to present L'Elisird'Amore



Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) will present Gaetano Donizetti's beloved opera, L'Elisird'Amore performed by the Orchestra and Chorus of Teatro Lirico di Cagliari conducted by Jordi Bernacer.

The opera features an incredible all-star cast including Erwin Schrott in the role of the wicked charlatan Dulcamara.

Childhood friend

L'Elisird'Amore tells the story of Nemorino, a simple country lad, who years for his childhood friend to return his love.

He is convinced by the promises of a travelling 'doctor', who offers him a mysterious elixir, one which will render him irresistible to his true love.

Time is against him, as his love welcomes the advances of a dash-



ing soldier, in haste he sells himself into the army to fund another bottle of the potion.

Enjoy a pacy, theatrical extravaganza, with a vibrant staging and beautiful costumes. Nina Minasyan sings Adina, René Barbera sings Nemorino, while Germán Enrique Alcántara takes the role of Belcore. L'Elisird'Amore will take place at the Royal Opera House Muscat on Thursday, 5 January at 7pm and Saturday 7 January, at 4pm for a matinee performance. A pre-performance talk will take place one hour ahead of the show.

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OATH OF OFFICE



Governors, Chairs of Municipal Councils take oath of office before Interior Minister

MUSCAT: The Governors who are Chairmen of Municipal Council in the governorates, today took the oath of office before Sayyid Hamoud Faisal Al Busaidi, Minister of Interior.

The governors are as follows: Dr. Yahya Badr Al Ma'awali, Governor of South A'Sharqiyah, Sheikh Hilal Said Al Hajri, Governor of

A'Dakhiliyah, Sheikh Saif Hamyar Al Malek Al Shihi, Governor of South Al Batinah, Sheikh Me'athad Mohammed Al Yaqoubi, Governor of Al Wusta, Najeeb Ali Al Rowas, Governor of A'Dhahirah, Mohamed Sulaiman Al Kindi, Governor of North Al Batinah, Sheikh Ali Ahmed Al Shamsi, Governor of North A'Sharqiyah and Sayyid

Dr. Hamad Ahmed Al Busaidi, Governor of Al Buraimi.

The Minister of Interior wished the governors success. He also underscored the importance of the role of Municipal Councils in the upcoming period through the additional powers granted to the councils to serve citizens and the nation. -ONA



STATE BUDGET

<FROM A1 Financial procedures to cut down public spending

Revenues from the distribution of dividends from the Oman Investment Authority (OIA) are expected to stand at about OMR800 million, while revenues from government service fees are set to be about 1.330 billion.

Aggregate revenues and capital returns from State Budget 2023 were estimated to be about OMR50 million.

Budget 2023 is in pursuance of the government's efforts to implement policies aimed at developing the management of the general finance and upgrading the efficiency of spending.

Hence, spending was estimated according to a set of variables. These include estimating the expenditures of civil ministries in accordance with the actual needs of all civil units, calculating employees' periodic allowance and promotions of employees who are 2012 seniors, as stipulated by Royal orders.

The estimate also comprises financial control procedures and the outcome of government departments' initiatives to cut down public spending. The exclusion of expenses for purchasing and

transporting gas as a result of establishment of the Integrated Gas Company also plays a role in the estimates.

Therefore, the volume of spending in Budget 2023 is estimated at about OMR11.350 billion, down by 6.4 percent from spending endorsed in State Budget 2022.

Current expenditures in State Budget 2023 were estimated to be OMR8.620 billion distributed as follows: 35 percent as defence and security expenditures, 51 percent as expenditures of civil ministries and 14 percent as public debt service.

The allocations of the 'ministries and government units spending item' in State Budget 2023 were raised by 2.7 percent—estimated to be about OMR4.420 billion, including the cost of periodic allowance for employees and promotions of employees who are 2012 seniors.

In the item of public debt service expenses, a sum of OMR1.2 billion was endorsed by calculating the expected interest payments on existing and planned loans for 2023.

The approved budget for 2023

allocated a sum of OMR900 million for development projects, distributed as follows: 6.7 percent for the commodity production sector, 10.8 percent for the service production sector, 29.3 percent for the social segments sector, 42.1 percent for the infrastructure sector, and 11.1 percent for other sectors.

Spending on contributions and other expenditures in the 2023 budget was estimated at about OMR1.830 billion, which constitutes about 16 percent of the total public spending.

It is worth noting that two items were introduced (projects with a developmental impact) with a sum of OMR200 million and (supporting the social protection system) with a sum of OMR384 million.

The total endorsed spending in the state's general budget for the fiscal year 2023 for social and basic sectors amounted to about OMR4.3 billion, or 38 percent of the total public spending, distributed as follows: 44 percent for the education sector, 22 percent for the social security and welfare, 12 percent for the housing sector, and 22 percent for the health sector.

The estimated deficit in the

2023 budget is expected to reach about OMR1.3 billion, which means 13 percent of total revenues and 3 percent of GDP.

It is planned to finance the deficit of OMR900 million through internal and external borrowing, and about OMR400 million through withdrawals from reserves.

The Sultanate of Oman will not resort to borrowing and withdrawing from reserves to finance the 2023 budget deficit in the event of an increase in public revenues and the realisation of additional financial revenues, especially the increase in the average price of a barrel of oil compared to what is endorsed according to the principle of hedging by \$55 per barrel.

The government may borrow to refinance government loans and replace them with low-cost loans.

Regarding the investment spending, the volume of investment spending financed by Oman Investment Authority (OIA) in the 2023 budget was estimated at about OMR1.9 billion, while the contribution of the Energy Development Oman (EDO) in investment projects for oil and gas production was estimated at

OMR1.5 billion.

On the other hand, preliminary results indicated that the state's general budget for the fiscal year 2022 witnessed remarkable positive development. The financial performance of the budget improved, recording an increase in revenues by 34.5 percent compared to what was endorsed at the beginning of 2022, with expectations of achieving a financial surplus of about OMR1.146 billion compared to an estimated deficit at the beginning of the year of about OMR1.550 billion.

Public revenues for the 2022 budget recorded about OMR14.234 billion, compared to what was endorsed at the beginning of the year, which amounted to OMR10.580 billion.

This rise is mainly attributed to the surge in average oil prices achieved to about \$94 per barrel, compared to \$50 per barrel approved in the budget, and the increase in oil revenues by 66 percent, to reach about OMR7.457 billion, and total gas revenue by 29 percent, to reach about OMR3.557 billion.

The preliminary results of the financial performance for 2022

indicated that a financial surplus of about OMR1.146 billion was achieved. Therefore, the government did not resort to borrowing and withdrawing from reserves to finance the deficit, which is estimated at about OMR1.550 billion as approved in the 2022 budget.

The 2022 budget achieved additional financial revenues as a result of the rise in global oil prices. This contributed to accelerating economic recovery and improving financial and economic indicators, by directing these additional financial revenues towards managing the lending portfolio, reducing public debt, enhancing social spending, and stimulating economic growth.

The additional financial revenues enabled the government to pay off part of the public debt and manage the lending portfolio. This contributed to reducing the total volume of public debt from OMR20.8 billion at the end of 2021 to OMR17.7 billion in 2022. The public debt ratio decreased in 2022 to reach about 43 percent of the GDP compared to the percentage estimated in the Medium-Term Fiscal Plan (83 percent). -ONA

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SEAGULLS ENJOYING SUNSHINE

A flock of Seagulls enjoying sunshine along the Muttrah Corniche on a wintry Sunday morning. — **Purusothaman/Times of Oman**

NCSI DATA

Fish output in Oman declines 22.4 per cent by October 2022

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman's fish production declined by 22.4 percent to stand at 556,151 tonnes at the end of October 2022 compared to 716,272 tonnes during the corresponding period in 2021, according to the latest data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The total value of fish production grew by 2.2 percent and stands at OMR339.592 million compared to the same period in 2021. Traditional fishing, which constitutes the largest share of Oman's fish production, dropped by 24.8 percent to reach 515,318 tonnes at the end of October 2022 compared to 685,244 tonnes during the corresponding period in 2021.

On the level of governorates, the Governorate of Al Wusta came first in the volume of fish landing through traditional fishing as pro-



duction stood at 182,460 tonnes, comprising a fall by 34.2 percent at the end of October 2022.

The Governorate of South A'Shargiyah came second by producing 162,047 tonnes, constituting a drop by 29.2 percent at the end of October 2022. They were followed by the governorates of North Al Batinah and South Al Batinah as production stood at 58,307 tonnes, comprising a rise by 2.7 percent.

Sectors of commercial and coastal fisheries grew by 34.5 percent and 9 percent, respectively. Small pelagic fish comprised the largest share of traditional

fishing at the end of October 2022 to hit at 250,989 tonnes, comprising 35.9 percent compared to the corresponding period in 2021.

Moreover, large pelagic fish declined by 10.5 percent to stand at 140,157 tonnes compared to the corresponding period in 2021.

— **ONA**

NOTICE

To the clients of Al Seeb Technical Est. (SARCO)

Al Seeb Technical Est. (SARCO) would like to inform all its customers that a number of home appliances, consumer electronics, mobile phones, office equipment, and IT products of Samsung brand that were brought for repair and repair estimates to our service centers in Azaiba, Oman Avenues Mall, Gala, Sohar, and Salalah before 09/10/2017 have not been received by their owners till date.

Therefore, we kindly ask our dear customers to receive these devices within one month from the date of publishing this notice, accompanying the original repair receipt.

As for the devices whose owners do not come to receive them until 09/11/2017, their right to them will be forfeited, and the company will not accept any claims for any reason.

ROYAL AIR FORCE OF OMAN

New batch of citizens joins RAFO

MUSCAT: The Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) received a new batch of citizens for military training at RAFO after passing the tests required for admission, evaluation, medical examinations and fitness tests.

The training programme comes within the national efforts of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) for employment of national jobseekers. Citizens who meet the terms

will undergo the basic military training programme as recruits to join RAFO various airbases.

The RAFO has employed all its experiences, specialised manpower and health requirements to accelerate procedures for joining the military service in accordance with the plans and programmes set for employment of citizens at SAF and other departments of the Ministry of Defence. — **ONA**



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UGANDA

Nine dead in Uganda mall stampede

KAMPALA: Police in Uganda said at least nine people were killed in a stampede at a shopping mall during a New Year's Eve event on Sunday.

"The Katwe Territorial Police are investigating an incident of rash and neglect that occurred at a New Year's Eve event at the Freedom City Mall Namasuba and resulted in the deaths of nine

people, including several juveniles," Uganda's police posted on Twitter.

Authorities said the incident took place at midnight when the master of ceremonies of the event allegedly encouraged revellers to go outside and watch a fireworks display. A large number of people began trying to push through a passage which resulted in the

deadly crush.

"Emergency responders arrived on the scene and transported the injured individuals to the hospital, where nine were confirmed dead," police said in a series of tweets.

Sylvia Nakalema survived the incident and told AFP news agency the stampede began, "When we went to view the fireworks on

the platform and while returning downstairs."

"There was a huge crowd. People begun pushing each other for space leading some to fall and the stampede ensued," Nakalema said.

The mall is a popular venue for concerts and events and is situated near the highway which links Kampala to Entebbe airport. — **dw**



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Sweden takes over European Union presidency in crisis mode

Russia's war against Ukraine, its effects on security and energy supplies for all of Europe, and strengthening the EU's military capabilities and supply chains will be the overarching issues of Sweden's six months at the head of the Council of the EU



BRUSSELS: When it comes to the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union, Sweden's new minority government of the Moderate Party, Christian Democrats and the Liberals, which is reliant on support from the far-right Sweden Democrats, will continue where the Czech government left off.

Russia's war against Ukraine, its effects on security and energy supplies for all of Europe, and strengthening the EU's military capabilities and supply chains will be the overarching issues of Sweden's six months at the head of the Council of the European Union. Stockholm will hold about 1,500 meetings of various EU bodies and

spend countless hours negotiating compromises among the 27 member countries, the European Commission and the European Parliament.

Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson said the war in Ukraine would have decisive effects on his country's leadership of the Council of the European

Union.

"In some respects we know exactly what these will be: maintaining European unity in our support for Ukraine; expanding the economic, humanitarian and military assistance to Ukraine; continuing to gather countries and resources for Ukraine's reconstruction; safeguarding international law;

demanding accountability; and carefully monitoring Ukraine's progress as a candidate country," Kristersson told Swedish lawmakers in December. "In other respects, we have no idea what the repercussions will be. What will be happening a year after the invasion? Later in the spring or in the summer of 2023? During its presidency, Sweden will be prepared to act quickly and resolutely."

The war in Ukraine will overshadow other issues, including climate change, migration policy and accession talks with West Balkan states. When it comes to these other issues, Kristersson, who won power following parliamentary elections in September, will receive little support from his unpopular partners in the far-right Sweden Democrats.

The Sweden Democrats, led by Jimmie Akesson, got 20% of the vote in September's elections but did not become part of the govern-

ment coalition. Akesson has denied climate change, pursued an anti-migration policy, and demonised the European Union as the root of all evil. These policies make the Sweden Democrats natural allies of other right-wing nationalist parties, including those currently governing in Hungary and Italy.

Kristersson said Sweden would protect the rule of law in all EU member countries, adding that steps taken against Hungary and Poland would be "moderately" pushed forward. The Sweden Democrats have rejected the penalties placed on Hungary, which include withholding EU funds until the country implements measures to protect the rule of law and fight corruption.

Jacop Dalunde, a member of the European Parliament whose Green Party is in Sweden's opposition, expressed his doubts about the government's plans for its presidency. — **dw**

TACTICAL WEAPONS

North Korea's Kim calls for expansion of nuclear arsenal

PYONGYANG: North Korea's Kim Jong Un has called for an "exponential" increase in the country's nuclear arsenal, along with the development of new intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), state media reported on Sunday.

According to the official Korean Central News Agency, Kim stressed the need to secure "overwhelming military power" to defend North Korea's sovereignty and security at a recent meeting of the ruling Workers' Party.

Kim accused South Korea of being "hell-bent on imprudent and dangerous arms build-up" and trumpeting its preparations for war with Pyongyang.

That, the North Korean leader said, highlights the need to mass-produce battlefield tactical nuclear weapons and calls for "an exponential increase of the country's nuclear arsenal," KCNA reported.

Kim also said that the United States and South Korea were trying to "isolate and stifle" the North with US nu-



clear strike assets constantly deployed in the South, calling it "unprecedented in human history."

He pledged to develop another ICBM system "whose main mission is quick nuclear counter-strike" under a plan to boost the country's nuclear force, KCNA said.

Military tensions on the Korean Peninsula saw a dramatic rise in 2022.

After what was a record-breaking year for launches — capped

LOGOS HOPE

Floating book fair brings hope, joy to Lebanese in hard times

BEIRUT: At the turn of the year, tens of thousands of Lebanese had a chance to get on board of the ship Logos Hope to bid farewell to 2022 and greet the New Year.

Since Logos Hope, the world's largest floating book fair, docked at the Beirut port on Dec. 15, about 50,000 people have visited the book fair which closed on Saturday.

The library ship, home to about 5,000 titles, brought knowledge and hope to the Lebanese struggling for three years from a steep financial crisis, dragging most of them into despair.

"It feels great to see this ship dock in Beirut; it diverts people's attention from the daily suffering they experience due to the current crisis," said Hala Nassar, a 43-year-old mother of two children.

Nassar, who visited the ship along with her family, told Xinhua her children were amazed by the collection of children's books offered on Logos Hope.

"They were amazed by the idea of the ship and asked questions



about how it operates and its goals," she added.

For Elie Msalem, another visitor, the ship is unique as it gathers people of all ages from different cultures and countries where they can communicate and learn from each other.

About 350 volunteers from 65 countries tour the world on Logos Hope to spread the joy of reading and bring hope and help to the needy.

The ship stays in each port for a few weeks and receives thousands of visitors daily. — **Xinhua**

AUSTRALIA CELEBRATED NEW YEAR 2023 AMID FIREWORKS, LIGHT SHOWS

In order to mark the New Year 2023, people in Australia witnessed dazzling fireworks as they acknowledged the new year with a celebration. The dazzling fireworks lightened up the Sydney Harbour Bridge on New Year's eve as the sky got painted with different colours. Visuals showed Sydney Harbour Bridge in a well-lit state with flashy illuminations all around..



SUPPORTED BY 72 COUNTRIES

International Year of Millets 2023 kicks off in India

NEW DELHI: The International Year of Millets 2023 has officially kicked off.

The government of India under Prime Minister Narendra Modi spearheaded the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution for declaring the year 2023 as the International Year of Millets and the proposal of India was supported by 72 countries. UNGA declared 2023 as the International Year of Millets in March 2021.

January 2023 is the focussed month for the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs, and the States of Chhattisgarh, Mizoram, and Rajasthan for conducting events and activities related to the millets year. India pushed for recognizing the importance of millet and creating a domestic and global demand along with providing nutritious food to the community.

What are millets?

Millet is a common term for categorising small-seeded grasses that are often called Nutri-cereals. Some of them are sorghum (jowar), pearl millet (bajra), finger millet (ragi), little millet (kutki), foxtail millet (kakun), proso millet (cheena), barnyard millet (sawa), and kodo millet (kodon).

An essential staple cereal crop for millions of smallholder dry-land farmers across Sub-Saharan



Africa and Asia, millets offer nutrition, resilience, income and livelihood for farmers, and have multiple uses such as food, feed, fodder, biofuels and brewing.

Significance and benefits of millets

Millets are nutritionally superior to wheat and rice owing to their higher protein levels and a more balanced amino acid profile. Millets also contain various phytochemicals which exert therapeutic properties owing to their anti-inflammatory and anti-oxidative properties.

Further, besides being climate

resilient, millet grains are rich sources of nutrients like carbohydrates, protein, dietary fibre, and good-quality fat; minerals like calcium, potassium, magnesium, iron, manganese, zinc and B complex vitamins.

Most importantly, millet production is not dependent on the use of chemical fertilizers.

Millets were traditionally consumed, but due to the push given to food security through Green Revolution in the 1960s, millets were less consumed and almost forgotten. —ANI

Full story @ timesofoman.com/world

Berlin firefighters attacked 38 times during New Year celebrations

BERLIN: Berlin's fire department on Sunday said its emergency crews had been attacked 38 times as the city rang in the New Year.

There were attacks in other parts of the county as well as numerous instances of revellers being injured as many Germans celebrated with their first turn-of-year firework displays since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

In a series of incidents in Berlin, 15 emergency responders were injured with one of them needing hospital treatment.

The police department said 18 of its officers had been hurt in the unrest. Berlin's firefighters had to re-

spond to 1,700 calls over the evening and into the morning, only to be met with violence on numerous occasions. The fire department reported that assailants had shot fireworks and thrown beer crates at crews, and had also looted fire vehicles.

The fire brigade said it had been prepared for the situation in light of previous attacks, but that it was surprised by "the number and intensity of attacks on our emergency services."

"There is no justification for this behavior, and I can only condemn it in the strongest possible terms," regional fire chief Karsten Homrighausen said.

Police departments across the country, such as Düsseldorf, also reported "heavily drunk people, rioters, disputes and bodily harm."

In the eastern city of Leipzig, police said a 17-year-old was fatally injured while handling unauthorised fireworks.

Police the northern Bavarian region of Central Franconia said they had experienced "the most intense New Year's Eve in recent years."

Fire officials in Germany's second largest city Hamburg said the night had been "terrifying," with emergency services "aggressively approached" and "literally shot at" with fireworks. —DW

QIC logo and text: NOTICE TO THE CREDITORS. Oman Qatar Insurance Company SAOG "OQIC" which is registered with the Secretariat of the Commercial Register in Muscat under the number (1760882) ("Merging Company") announces that Vision Insurance Company SAOG registered with the Secretariat of the Commercial Register under the number (1025783) is in the process of merging with OQIC ("Merged Company") in accordance with the resolutions of the Extraordinary General Assembly held on 27/12/2022 and announces the company's creditors those who have any objection to the merger, shall submit their objections to the Registrar within (30)days accompanied by the supporting documents at the following address: Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion Secretariat of the Commercial Registry pursuant to the provisions of Article (37) of the Commercial Companies Law No. (18/2019). And a copy of it to the following company address: Bawshar - Al-Khuwair, Al-Nawras Commercial Building 4th Floor, P.O.Box 3660 Postal Code:112 Ruwi, Phone Number: +968 90960835.

Invitation to Tender. Dhofar Integrated Services Company S.A.O.C (DISC) invites reputable contractor for carrying out following works in Dhofar Region. Tender Reference: DISC/Tender/2022/234. Subject: UNE - LOT 12K - 2022. Tender Fee: RO. 52.500 Inclusive VAT (5%); Tender fee exempted for SME Company (No Tender fee for Riyada card holders of SME). Note: Tenderer who wish to participate in the above tender should collect the tender document from DISC's office or send an e-mail to below mention mail id for tender document. Experience: The tenderers shall be registered electrical contractor with Distribution Code Review Panel (DCRP) Oman (Minimum C-Grade for 11 kV jobs and D-Grade for LV jobs) and should have performed similar UNE jobs in Sultanate of Oman. Pre-qualification: Bids to be attached along with valid "DCRP Registration Certificate" and valid "CEP Authorized card copy issued by DISC" Shall only consider for evaluation, Further, Tenderers will be evaluated as per the pre-qualification criterion specified in the Tender documents. Tender document sales cut-off date: 03:00 PM on 16th January 2023. Tender document published date: 03:00 PM on 17th January 2023. Site Visit: N/A. Last date for seeking pre bid clarification: N/A. pre - Last date for response bid clarification: N/A. Last date for submission of bids: 03:00 PM on 24th January 2023. Any Queries Please Contact: Phone 23232554, purchase@discnama.om. Tenderers are requested to note that the bids accompanied with Tender Bond (1% of the quoted bid price and having 90 days validity) shall only be considered for evaluation. Tender Bond /Bid Bond exempted for SME Company. Dhofar Integrated Services Company logo and contact information.

UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AND APPLIED SCIENCES LOCAL ONLINE TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT. The Internal Tender Committee at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences announces the tenders shown in the following table: Table with 6 columns: Tender No., Tender subject, Establishments eligible to bid, Document's Price, Last date for bid purchase online, Last date for bid submission. Broad Horizons logo and contact information.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE MERGER OF VISION INSURANCE COMPANY SAOG WITH OMAN QATAR INSURANCE COMPANY SAOG BY WAY OF INCORPORATION. Pursuant to the resolutions of the Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) of Vision Insurance Company SAOG, a public joint stock company registered under the laws of the Sultanate of Oman with commercial registration number 1025783 (the Company), held on 26 December 2022, and the resolutions of the EGM of Oman Qatar Insurance Company SAOG, a public joint stock company registered under the laws of the Sultanate of Oman with commercial registration number 1760882 (OQIC), held on 27 December 2022, and in accordance with Article 37 of the Commercial Companies Law (Royal Decree No. 18/2019), the Company announces that it is in the process of merging with OQIC by way of incorporation (the Proposed Merger). As such, the Company invites its creditors to submit their objections to the Proposed Merger (if any) to the Commercial Registrar at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, with a copy of such objection to be deposited at each of the Capital Market Authority of Oman and the Company's registered address (Vision Insurance Company SAOG, P.O. Box 1882, Postal Code 114, Bait Al Falaj), within thirty (30) days of the date of this announcement.

SPORTS

Al Nasr regain HM’s Cup hockey title

Salalah powerhouse claim their ninth crown after defeating Ahli-Sidab 5-2 in the final

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Salalah giants Al Nasr began the New Year on a victorious note as they regained His Majesty’s Cup hockey glory with an emphatic 5-2 win over 12-time champions Ahli-Sidab in a thrilling final at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex on Sunday night.

The victory also gave Al Nasr their ninth HM’s Cup and halted Ahli-Sidab’s bid for 13th crown as the 52nd edition of the tournament concluded.

The last time Al Nasr won the trophy was in 2019 when they beat the same rivals.

It was an amazing fightback from Mohammed Al Batrani-coached side as they were trailing by two goals at the end of the first quarter.

Ahli-Sidab began in whirlwind fashion scoring two goals in two minutes as Ahmed Al Shuaibi and Rupinder Pal Singh found the target in the fourth and fifth minute.

The Salalah powerhouse then clawed their way back to reduce

the lead by the end of second quarter and drew parity in the third quarter, courtesy a brace from Abdul Hanan Shahid.

It was a terrific display by Al Nasr in the final quarter as they pumped in three more goals, and importantly, denied Ahli-Sidab any further goals to emerge as deserving winners. The scorers were Osama al Khamis, Bassim Al Rajab and Al Qadir al Nofli.

Both the clubs have been dominating the Oman hockey scene for decades and now share a total of 21 titles between them in the 52 years of the history of the oldest competition in the Sultanate of Oman.

Later, Sheikh Salim Mustahail Al Mashani, Advisor at the Diwan of Royal Court, was the chief guest and gave away the trophy and awards, in the presence of ministers and Oman Hockey Association officials.

Both the teams were on the podium at the previous edition with Ahli-Sidab finishing runners-up and Al Nasr third. Ahli-Sidab 12th



record title was won in 2021. 11-time champions Seeb had edged Salalah 6-5 in penalty shoot-out to finish third last week. Al Nasr received a glittering trophy and a cash award of OMR40,000 while Ahli-Sidab got OMR25,000 with the third-placed club Seeb took home OMR15,000.

Sri Lanka team departs for India tour

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka white-ball cricket team has left the country for their tour of India, which kick-starts from Tuesday onwards.

Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) took to social media to share the news. “Sri Lanka limited over squad led by Dasun Shanaka left the SLC HQ premises short while ago to embark on their tour to India. #INDvSL,” tweeted SLC.

Sri Lanka Cricket Selection Committee on Wednesday announced the 20-member squad to take part in the upcoming white-ball series tour of India.

Dasun Shanaka will lead Sri Lanka’s T20I and ODI squads against India, while Kusal Mendis will play the role of his deputy.

The tour comprises three T20Is and as many ODIs. Sri Lanka will be touring India from January 3 to January 15 for three T20Is and three ODIs. The first match of the series will be held on January 3, 2023, in Mumbai while the second and third will take place on January 5 and 7 in Pune and Rajkot respectively.

The ODIs will be held in Guwahati, Kolkata and Trivandrum on January 10, 12 and 15 respectively.

BCCI also announced India’s squads for the upcoming white-ball series against Sri Lanka. -ANI

FOOTBALL

Arsenal beat Brighton, extend lead at top Premier League

BRIGHTON: Table-toppers Arsenal consolidated their lead at the top of the English Premier League after a comprehensive 4-2 victory over Brighton.

Arsenal took the lead within two minutes of the start of the game thanks to Bukayo Saka’s clinical finish. Before halftime, Martin Odegaard scored, and Eddie Nketiah made it two goals in two games since replacing the injured Gabriel Jesus. Brighton’s Kaoru Mitoma halved the gap, but Gabriel Mar-

tinelli sealed the victory with an incredible assist from Odegaard. Evan Ferguson, 18, became Brighton’s youngest Premier League scorer, and Arsenal survived a late scare when Mitoma had the ball in the net for 4-3 with stoppage time remaining, but the goal was ruled out for offside by Video Assistant referee (VAR).

Arsenal survived and have now won nine of their past ten Premier League games, putting them in a strong position to capture their

first league title since 2003/04.

Arsenal will lock horns with Newcastle at the Emirates Stadium on Tuesday and maybe 10 points clear by the time Manchester City visits Chelsea at Stamford Bridge next Thursday.

The Gunners lead the Premier League by seven points after 16 games, a lead that no previous Premier League leader has relinquished.

“That was a big win against a really good side. We had big mo-

ments, we were ruthless, really clinical. We had some great moments and then as well there were moments where we had to dig in and suffer because they put you in trouble and are a really good side. If you expect to come here against Brighton and play them off the park and don’t concede anything, it’s extremely difficult. It was a big test for us to win again, three in a row. It’s a big win and now onto the next one,” mentioned Mikel Arteta as quoted by Sky Sports. -ANI



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LA LIGA

Barcelona reach top spot after draw against Espanyol

BARCELONA:

Barcelona managed to reach the top spot in the points table despite a 1-1 draw against local rivals Espanyol at the home ground of Camp Nou in their La Liga match on Saturday.

Real Madrid took the top spot in the standings after a 2-0 win over Real Valladolid, which made it important for Barcelona to secure a positive result against Espanyol.

Marcos Alonso gave Barca an early lead in the seventh minute. The home side started strongly, Alonso’s header after a corner was met with loud cheers from the fans. Xavi Hernandez led side dominated the ball possession and their passing was on point. But for the rest of the first

half, they could not convert their chances into actual goals.

Barca managed to continue their domination after the break. But Alonso’s foul to Joselu turned him into a villain as the opponents got a penalty and Joselu himself wasted no time to hit an equaliser

in the 73rd minute, rolling the ball straight down the middle.

The equaliser caused tempers to flare up as Barca’s Jordi Alba was sent off after two straight yellow cards for protesting against the referee. Vinicius Souza of Espanyol was also shown a second yellow card for fouling Robert Lewandowski.

Leandro Cabrera was also shown a red card for kneeling on Lewandowski but a VAR review overturned the decision.

Barca is on top of the points table with 38 points, having won 12 out of 15 matches, drawn two and lost one. Real Madrid is at second spot with same statistics, but have conceded more goals. -ANI

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OMANTEL MARKETPLACE

Omantel is set to break new ground in e-commerce by working with Amazon Web Services in the Sultanate of Oman. Omantel has announced plans to develop 'Omantel Marketplace', a one-stop online shop for businesses and individuals to securely discover, purchase and sell goods, services, and innovative solutions.

MARKET
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MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 4,872.67 points, up by 0.31 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.92 per cent at 509.87 points. Takaful Oman, up 8.16 per cent, was the top gainer while National Aluminium, down 3.85 per cent, was the top loser.

PASI and Bank Muscat sign pact for direct debit solution

This solution will help enhance the efficiency of revenues and expenditures, minimise the time and effort spent on managing and collecting contributions

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Public Authority for Social Insurance (PASI) signed an agreement with Bank Muscat for the introduction of collections of contributions through a direct debit solution.

This solution will help enhance the efficiency of revenues and expenditures, minimise the time and effort spent on managing and collecting contributions.

It aims to shift from manual to automated work methods that are more efficient and accurate, and it



can be accessed through various channels.

Constructive partnerships

It will help customers pay their contributions on time, as well as enhance constructive partnerships with local banks in Oman.

The agreement was signed by Dr Faisal Abdullah Al Farsi, General Manager, Public Authority for Social Insurance, and Ilham Murtadha Al Hamaid, General Manager - Corporate Banking, Bank Muscat.

PASI is the public authority in the Sultanate, providing social protection to insured Omani citizens and their dependents. It attaches great importance to technological developments to provide

high-quality insurance services to customers.

Digital services have witnessed remarkable development over the past few years. It offers ease, speed and high security, and it provides innovative smart systems available in new advanced applications and software. PASI is committed to contributing to digital transformation to help achieve strategic goals in line with the government's guidelines.

Throughout the past years, the public authority has implemented various policies and projects which aim to simplify procedures and make them faster.

Bank Muscat has been a pioneer in Oman in implementing

digital banking solutions for its customers and is focused on helping corporates to make a smooth transition towards efficient tech-focused processes and use cutting-edge technology to their best advantage.

Through this collaboration with the bank, PASI will offer collections of contributions to the corporates, ministries and institutions through the direct debit solution. With the growing requirement and need for multiple avenues for making payments of contribution from the entities, the direct debit solution will be an added transformative digital solution that will make the entire collection process efficient and seamless.

This collaboration further enhances the existing relationship of Bank Muscat with PASI which includes a wide range of digital banking solutions and services comprising Corporate Online Banking, Business to Business (B2B) and Bill Payments.

Alia Marhoon Al Hinai, Head of Finance and Accounts, Public Authority for Social Insurance, said: "Direct debit is a payment order issued for debiting from the customer's bank account to the Authority's account directly based on the approved instalment plan.

This project is one of the initiatives that PASI is working on to achieve strategic objectives aimed

at enhancing the efficiency of revenues and expenditures, as well as providing integrated services by investing in digital transformation and providing electronic insurance services for customers.

Wafa Ibrahim Al Ajmi, Assistant General Manager - Transaction & Government Banking, Bank Muscat, said: "As a foremost financial service provider in the country, we are constantly working towards empowering government and private institutions to succeed in a rapidly changing digital environment. We are fortifying our already strong relationship with PASI, with our new-age digital solution of Direct Debit which will make the Public Authority for Social Insurance the first government institution to implement this solution. We are excited and confident that this collaboration for the collection of contributions from entities with our direct debit solution will enhance banking convenience for PASI and their clients. Through the direct debit solution, PASI now will benefit from complete control over the entire collection process and PASI's clients will have a convenient mode for paying contributions. We look forward to continuously bringing sophisticated digital solutions for our customers and supporting Oman's vision 2040 for establishing a knowledge-based digital society."

ENERGY GROUP

OQ Gas Networks launches its new corporate identity

Times News Service

MUSCAT: OQ Gas Networks (OQGN) launched its new corporate identity. Many countries around the world seek to increasingly utilise conventional natural gas in their power and utilities service production such as factories and electric power plants due to its role as an enabler of the energy transition that could generate benefits for the well-being of people.

The new visual identity brings together the vision and mission of OQ, the globally integrated energy group.

In line with the integrated framework of all business lines under OQ Group, OQ Gas Networks is determined to contribute to the Sultanate of Oman's zero carbon target by 2050. Hence, the new OQGN brand identity comes to create synergy towards this aspiration. This is particularly reflected in the new identity design which is inspired by the mother brand focusing more on energy and integration; not to mention the emphasis on efficiency and environmental sustainability.

Mansoor bin Ali Al-Abdali, Managing Director of OQGN said, "The launch of OQGN's new brand aims to support the vision of OQ as one of the biggest integrated groups operating in the energy sector in the Sultanate of Oman."

OMAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

INMECC and OCCI to work together: Faisal Al Rawas

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Chairman of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) Faisal Al Rawas met with Davis Kallukaran, Founder Director of Indo Gulf Middle East Chamber of Commerce (INMECC) and the Oman chapter Secretary Chander Khanna in the presence of OCCI board member Abdul Latheef at the chamber office.

Davis felicitated the chairman and congratulated him on his election. Davis and Al Rawas discussed the synergy of both chambers working together for the development of trade and services between Oman and India. The chairman emphasised the skill set development of the Omani youth by inviting INMECC to facilitate the setting up of universities of higher education in Oman.

Davis said, "As announced by the chairman of INMECC Dr Sharafudeen and endorsed by the Minister of state for foreign affairs, Government of India, V Muralidharan in last week's meeting held in Cochin, India, INMECC is taking forward the project of 'Sick industrial units



Revival'. This is also being initiated in Oman.

"The units have become sick because of weaknesses in the application of technology, mismanagement of funds, lack of availability of raw materials and lack of marketing capabilities or access to markets etc. If we take the thousands of units that are sick, we can see that the strength of many units in certain areas above mentioned could be serious weaknesses in

Certain other units. INMECC in association with OCCI can bridge this gap by mentoring and handholding the entrepreneurs to bring about synergy which is very much required."

Davis informed the chairman that INMECC is establishing chapters across multiple states in India and abroad. The chapters are already established in Oman, UAE, Saudi, Kuwait, Maharashtra and Kerala. The Oman Chapter is

headed by Suresh Virmani former CEO of Bahwan Engineering supported by Mohiyuddin Mohammed Ali as Vice Chairman and Chander Khanna as secretary. The other members of the board are Aftab Patel, Warith Al Kharusi and Ahmed Rayees.

The meeting concluded with a note to speed up the signing of the MoU between the chambers and meet again to work out the formalities of pursuing the objectives.

CRIMES OF MONEY LAUNDERING

Several substantive risk-assessment reports approved

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Several substantive risk-assessment reports on the crimes of money laundering, financing of terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction were approved.

This was done in coordination with the National Counter-Terrorism Committee (NCTC), the National Committee for Combating Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing on December 29, 2022.

The approved reports are a culmination of effective coordination between all relevant AML/CFT entities and a clear realisation of the national strategies, aimed at improving the prevention and control systems in the Sultanate of Oman and are consistent with the developments at the local and regional levels.

It is noteworthy that the approved reports are meant to identify,

assess and understand the risks resulting from the crimes of money laundering, financing of terrorism and financing proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

This is in addition to understanding the risks that might be faced by the legal entities and arrangements, and service offices in Oman. It is further to be noted that the two national committees aim to utilise the assessments to update and develop national strategies and action plans for combating such crimes.

The outcome of these assessments would effectively contribute to the allocation of the available risk management resources, and reinforcement of the capabilities of national authorities, including the pre-emptive measures and operational procedures.

Besides, the outcome would also enhance the capabilities of the relevant authorities, expand the scope of their legal framework.

CHINA

Over \$682mn of goods benefit from RCEP in Guangzhou

GUANGZHOU: Guangzhou Customs in south China's Guangdong province issued over 14,000 certificates of origin for goods worth a total of 4.75 billion yuan (about \$682 million) under the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) free trade agreement during the first 11 months of 2022.

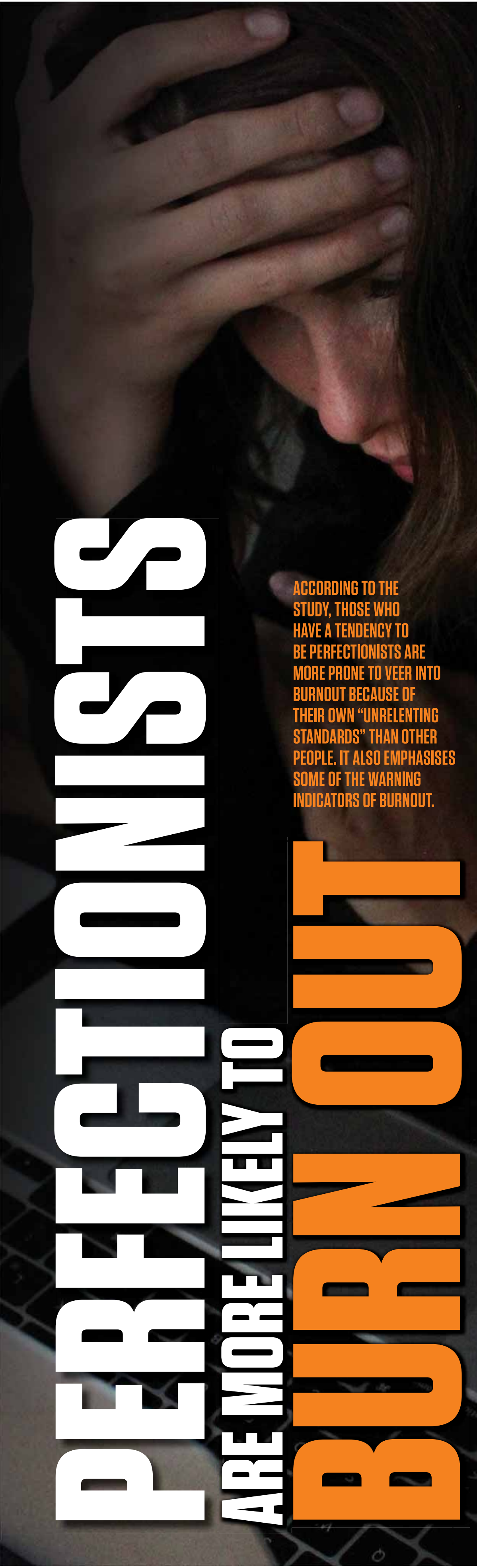
During the period, enterprises declared imports totalling 5.4 billion yuan under the RCEP to Guangzhou Customs, bringing the total worth of goods that benefited from the RCEP in Guangzhou alone to over 10 billion yuan, the customs office said.

Certificates of origin are documents widely used in international trade transactions. They state that the products listed have met sufficient criteria to be considered as originating in a particular country. The issuance of these certificates is widely regarded as a barometer of foreign trade. *Xinhua*

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PERFECTIONISTS ARE MORE LIKELY TO BURN OUT

ACCORDING TO THE STUDY, THOSE WHO HAVE A TENDENCY TO BE PERFECTIONISTS ARE MORE PRONE TO VEER INTO BURNOUT BECAUSE OF THEIR OWN “UNRELENTING STANDARDS” THAN OTHER PEOPLE. IT ALSO EMPHASISES SOME OF THE WARNING INDICATORS OF BURNOUT.



For several years, a specialist in mental health and mood disorders has been attentively examining the phenomena of burnout. The first comprehensive self-help guide on burnout has been published based on a substantial study. According to the study, those who have a tendency to be perfectionists are more prone to veer into burnout because of their own “unrelenting standards” than other people. It also emphasises some of the warning indicators of burnout.

WHAT IS BURNOUT?

With the worries accompanying pandemic lockdowns, the pressures of inflation and other life stressors, many people are feeling at the end of their tether. For some people, the cumulative effect of these prolonged periods of stress can result in burnout. Unlike normal tiredness, the experts suggest burnout symptoms include constant exhaustion, emotional numbness and confusion at home or in the workplace. Some conventional tools used to diagnose burnout focus on work-related stress, however mental health expert and lead author Professor Gordon Parker suggests that the impact is much more extensive. Professor Parker said: “Most people consider burnout to be extreme tiredness, but in our studies we have found that the symptoms are much more wide-ranging. “People struggling with burnout also suffer from cognitive dysfunction, sometimes known as ‘brain fog’ and disconnection from their friends and family, as well as the more typically-recognised reduced performance in work and tasks around the home.”

WHO IS MOST LIKELY TO BURN OUT?

Burnout is widespread among high achievers in the workplace - but is becoming increasingly more prevalent in personal lives. Professor Parker said: “Most people think that burnout is a work problem. Actually, we found that stress experienced at work or at home can set the wheels of burnout in motion. “Our analyses indicated that burnout may also develop as a result of predisposing personality traits, especially perfectionism. “People with perfectionistic traits are usually excellent workers, as they’re extremely reliable and conscientious. However, they’re also prone to burnout as they set unrealistic and unrelenting standards for their own performance, which are ultimately impossible to live up to.”

WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT IT?

Professor Parker is the founder of the Black Dog Institute, which conducts research into mood disorders and works to remove the social stigmas around mental illness. During his extensive research on burnout, and with decades of clinical work under his belt, he has determined how to best identify and manage it. This research is outlined in a recently published book - Burnout: A Guide to Identifying Burnout and Pathways to Recovery. Critically, the book offers a guide for navigating out of burnout, including identifying sources and coping strategies to minimise the impact of stress. It contains new evidence-based tools for readers to work out for themselves whether they have burnout and generate a plan for recovery based on their personal situation. Chapters help readers recognise their own burnout patterns and provide approaches to help them regain their passions and build their resilience. -ANI

IN-PICTURES

Guadalupe in Spain selected as one of 'Best Tourism Villages of 2022'
The picture shows a view of Guadalupe in Extremadura, Spain. The village has been selected by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) as one of the 'Best Tourism Villages of 2022'.
Xinhua



Anant Ambani gets engaged to Radhika Merchant
Reliance Industries Chairman and Managing Director Mukesh Ambani and Nita Ambani's son Anant Ambani arrive at a private airport after getting engaged to Radhika Merchant at the Shrinathji Temple in Rajasthan's Nathdwara, in Mumbai. ANI Photo



General Assembly approves UN regular budget for 2023
UN General Assembly (UNGA) President Csaba Korosi (left) presides over a plenary meeting of the assembly at the UN headquarters in New York. The UNGA approved the UN annual regular budget of \$3.396 billion. Xinhua



Daily life in Berlin
People take a selfie in front of a light installation in Berlin, Germany. Xinhua



People enjoy shopping in Kuala Lumpur
People walk outside a shopping mall as an electronic screen shows a video clip of Year of the Rabbit in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Xinhua



National college students ice sculpture contest held
A contestant carves during a national college students ice sculpture contest in Harbin, northeast China's Heilongjiang Province. Xinhua



Giant panda seen in Chiang Mai, Thailand
Giant panda Lin Hui takes food at Chiang Mai Zoo in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Lin Hui arrived in Chiang Mai on loan from China at the age of two in 2003. Xinhua

Al Jenaibi launches new 7 Series: BMW’s face of forwardism

At the official unveiling event in Oman, the all-new BMW 7 Series made its first appearance with Al Jenaibi International Automobiles, as the BMW Group brings forward a new era with sustainability and digitalisation at its core



MUSCAT: Al Jenaibi International Automobiles the official importer of BMW Group vehicles in Oman, launched the new BMW 7 Series. The complete luxury segment was presented at the event, including the new BMW X7 and BMW 8 Series.

At the official unveiling event in Oman, the all-new BMW 7 Series made its first appearance with Al Jenaibi International Automobiles, as the BMW Group brings forward a new era with sustainability and digitalisation at its core. Featuring a modern aesthetic in



its renewed exterior and interior, the BMW 7 Series celebrates 45 years of success since its initial debut with the inclusion of a range of new advancements. Forged from a rich design heritage, the new BMW 7 Series incorporates a modern style that fo-

cuses on the essentials in both its exterior and interior design. Bold and brilliant from every angle, the BMW 7 Series and its groundbreaking evolution bring forward the unwavering sense of luxury, featuring Swarovski crystals embedded across the front lights.

Innovative options such as the BMW Theatre Screen, the multi-sensory vehicle experience BMW iDrive with the latest generation of BMW Operating System 8 combine with the BMW Curved Display and the Manoeuvre Assistant for automated parking and manoeuvring to provide a luxurious yet user-friendly driving experience. Speaking on the success of the launch, Rachid Zamani, Managing Director of Al Jenaibi International Automobiles, said: “The unveiling of the all-new BMW 7 Series this evening has been truly exciting for us. It has been an absolute privilege to be involved with the journey of the next step in the BMW Group’s flagship model’s history. The innovation and creativity that has gone into this latest model has been truly revolutionary and we look forward to seeing the models take the roads of Oman very soon.” The new 7 Series is now available for pre-order and at the BMW showroom in Qurum.

SILVER JEWELLERY BRAND



Hilia jewellery opens its third outlet at Mall of Oman

MUSCAT: ‘Hilia’, a leading silver jewellery brand for men and women in Oman, has opened the doors of its third showroom at the Sultanate’s largest shopping destination – the Mall of Oman. The opening was held under the auspicious of Faisal Abdullah Al Rawas, Chairman of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The outlet’s launch ceremony commenced with a brief introductory presentation about the brand, its history and its development, right up to the opening of its first outlet. Subsequently, Salim Al Numani, CEO of Hilia delivered a speech, where he detailed the brand’s journey, right from the opening of its first showroom in Al Hail back in 2017, to the second branch in Al Araiimi Boulevard in 2019.

Speaking on the sidelines of the event, Salim Al Numani stated, “The success of ‘Hilia’ and its ability to expand its customer reach and market presence in a short time is based on our strategy of continuous growth and development. Equipped with innovative solutions and rich expertise in the silver industry, we aim to provide a world-class customer service experience and exquisite offerings of silver Jewellery in Oman.” “Our Mall of Oman outlet offers a distinctive collection of men’s and women’s silver jewellery, coupled with high-quality services from our experienced Omani staff to ensure a seamless end-to-end experience for our customers,” he added. With 28 years of expertise in making silver products, ‘Hilia’ has a long-standing heritage. The

brand’s new branch is located on level three of the biggest mall in Muscat - Mall of Oman – due to its strategic location in the heart of the city of Bausher. The new outlet’s collections are an embodiment of luxury, tradition and sophistication, made from best-quality silver grades, and encrusted with charming and sparkling stones. In addition to Jewellery, a collection of men’s products such as canes and khans-jars are also available at the showroom. The outlet is also home to antiques, items for children, and other accessories. It is noteworthy that all ‘Hilia’ outlets are managed by a team of talented, well-trained Omani staff, who have extensive experience; to offer a seamless experience for customers.

EXPANDS IN BATINAH

Nesto opens 3rd branch in Saham



MUSCAT: Nesto Hypermarket Oman strengthened its retail presence in Batinah region with the grand opening of its new store located at Saham. This is the retail giant’s 3rd in Batinah, 13th branch in the Sultanate and 107th in globally. The new store was inaugurated by Sheikh Fahd bin Majid Al Maamari, in the presence of K P Basheer, Chairman Western International Group, Managing Directors Siddique Pallolathil, K. P. Jamal, Regional Directors Haris Pallolathil, Mujeeb VTK and Nesto staff. Spread over an area of 75,000 sq ft., the store will offer a one-stop shopping experience complete with enhanced and expanded departments to better serve customers in Saham, its residential areas. The new store will feature sophisticated fit-outs and category bays with spacious layouts for categories like grocery, fruit & vegetables, dairy products, poultry, meat and fish and the ever-popular hot food and bakery. There is also a designated section for electronics, IT products, stationery, and home appliances. There are multiple check-out counters and ample parking spaces to contribute to a relaxed shopping experience.

Spread over an area of 75,000 sq ft., the store will offer a one-stop shopping experience complete with enhanced and expanded departments to better serve customers in Saham, its residential areas

country is rapidly progressing in all spheres and we thank His Majesty and the government for their pro-business approach. We thank the citizens and residents of Oman for their tremendous support towards all our ventures in this country. With every new store, our ultimate aim is to become the favourite shopping destination not just for customers in cities but also in the smaller towns of the country.” Siddique Pallolathil, Managing Director of Nesto Hypermarkets, stated “We are truly excited to bring Nesto’s unique combination of variety, value and service to customers in Saham and the surrounding areas. The new store will be the perfect location for a seamless shopping experience and convenience for customers in Saham.” K P Jamal, Managing Director of Nesto Hypermarket, said, “The new store in Saham will offer a delightful new shopping experience for the neighbourhood and will provide a great platform to local manufacturers and producers from the Sultanate to promote their local products. Customers in and around Saham will now be able to enjoy super value true savings, a wide selection of products, and world-class shopping options.”

LUXURY CROSSOVER

Changan CS75 elevates confidence and sophistication in every drive

MUSCAT: Changan CS75 Plus 2023 comes with premium design, comfortable automotive interior, and highly intelligent configuration, the compact crossover Changan CS75 Plus which comes in luxury and sport variants offers a host of special features. The Luxury Variant is equipped with fully automatic parking. A spokesperson for Arabian Gulf Automobiles and Equipment (AGAE) is official distributor of Changan brand in Oman said, “Ever since its launch in the Oman market, Changan CS75 Plus has been astounding car enthusiasts for its promising quality of innovation, aesthetics, functionality and stability. The model makes driving feel like winning with its stunning design, premium interior and intelligent features. The CS75 Plus is loaded with smart and innovative features that aim to elevate the confidence and sophistication in every drive.” The Changan CS75 Plus 2WD features a more sloped roofline and more power. Under the hood, it

has a 2.0-litre turbocharged 4-cylinder engine, mated to an 8-speed automatic transmission with a power of 224 hp and torque of 360 Nm. With a wheelbase of 2710 mm, and it measures 4700 mm in length, 1865 mm in width and 1710 mm in height. Standard features in the CS75 Plus include power windows, central locking, cruise control, dual-zone auto A/C, 8 speakers, multifunctional steering wheel, USB+AUX ports, 12-inch screen, Bluetooth, 360 camera, leather ventilated seats, sunroof, fog lamps, parking sensors LED headlamps, panoramic roof, keyless entry and start, and 19-inch wheels. Safety features includes dual front, side and curtain airbags, ABS, and hill assist. Its Blue Core Powertrain Technology, based on the principles of power, clean and quiet, provides owners a highly efficient and energy saving performance. CS75 Plus features a more streamlined body with flowing



lines and geometric patterns, creating the overall appearance of a vehicle from the future. To instill the confidence and sophistication in every drive, CS75 Plus offers a range of intelligent driving technologies and advanced safety features. To create a premium drive ex-

perience, CS75 Plus seamlessly integrates luxurious interior with high-tech convenience features, coupled with ample space. Changan CS75 Plus 2.0 T B AT Luxury includes the features of CS7S Plus 2.0 T 8 AT Sport features. Its exterior boasts of piercing front position headlamp, adaptive

high and low beam, ORVM with memory and puddle lamps. Its interior features multi colour ambient lighting, front seats ventilation, driver seat with memory and luggage cover. Its safety attributes intelligent adaptive cruise control, 360 Camera (HD) with 3D View, blind spot detection, rear approaching alarm, reverse auxiliary alarm, lane departure warning, rain sensor wiper and seat belt pretensioners. Intelligent Adaptive Cruise Control provides a safer and more pleasant driving experience. IACC facilitates smart driving features including heavy traffic assisted driving, lane keep assist, automatic deceleration during turns, intelligent speed limit assist, and voice-activated cruise speed setting. The 12 inch LCD touch screen in the middle displays a 360 degree camera view around the car. When the option is clicked a 3D model of the car is shown and within the screen itself you may rotate the car and view the surroundings.

The model can avoid or ease the collision by alarm and auxiliary braking. The car detects blocks and sends a visual and an audible alarm to notify you. In a scenario where you brake suddenly and the car behind you is unaware of this and is approaching you with speed. Your car detects the challenge and alerts you in the screen in front of you and the rear lights of your car start blinking/flashing in order to capture the driver’s (Behind) attention. There are two options for this, the driver either sits in the car or he leaves the car. Under both the options the car parks itself by using sensors and by scanning the nearby areas. Infotainment showcases full LCD IC, eight Speakers, trip recorder with SD Card Slot and Qi-bla. Comfort factors include seat belt height adjustable remote key - window close, all windows - one button up down, auto IRVM and dual zone AC.

ROUND-UP

Muscat Bay launches exclusive limited offer for 2BR smart apartments

2BR smart apartments are available at Muscat Bay with a comfortable 3-year payment plan

MUSCAT: Muscat Bay has always been recognised as the first fully integrated tourism complex in Oman. It continues to entice buyers, tourists and investors, both local and global, with a mix of natural beauty, luxury hospitality and a range of exceptional residences designed to suit the discerning customer's unique lifestyle needs. Currently, the complex has very limited units for two bedroom Smart Apartments. A few rented units are also available for sale. 2BR smart apartments are available at Muscat Bay with a comfortable 3-year payment plan. Customers can just pay 10 per cent and move in right away. The apartments are fully furnished and bookings for these freehold properties are open to



all nationalities. As an owner you will get lifetime residency along with an array of exclusive benefits like park view, pool access, Residents Club benefits and access to Jumeirah Muscat Bay Resort, absolute privacy and a friendly community. The apartments are

located close to the commercial area called the Village Square and are nestled within a gated community that has 24/7 security, call centre and help desk. Speaking about the offer, Vice President at Muscat Bay, Jawad Sajid said, "Our smart apartments

have been welcomed with a lot of excitement and anticipation by a diverse set of buyers. "We are proud to announce an exclusive offer that is designed to help enrich the lives of our clients, which is a top priority for us. With few limited units available, the two bedroom smart apartments are part of a unique community that delivers nature and exceptional experiences. These fast-selling apartments are a testament to our strong brand reputation and operational excellence." As part of the Master Plan, Jumeirah Muscat Bay, the 5-star beach resort hotel was also inaugurated to expand the rich portfolio of hospitality assets and facilities. To reach a wider network of customers, Muscat Bay has expanded its offices to the Shatti Waterfront, Qurum and at the Mall of Oman with its head office at the Experience Centre in Qantab. A serene retreat set between the dramatic Al Hajar mountains and the sparkling Arabian Sea nestled within the secluded Bandar Al Jissah beach - located 15 minutes from Muscat - Jumeirah Muscat Bay combines sublime restaurants, stunning views, magnificent pools and Oman's finest beaches to deliver the ultimate adventurous wellbeing escape for tourists as well as residents looking to get away from it all.

QUICK SERVICE



Tyreplus launches its latest facility in Al Khuwair

MUSCAT: Oman's favourite one-stop shop for all quick service requirements, Tyreplus now launches one of its largest facility in Al Khuwair. The facility will provide a comprehensive set of products and services that help get your vehicle back on the road - quickly and safely. With over 16 years of experience and branches in Azaiba, Wadi Kabir, Mabela, Barka, Nizwa, Sur, Sohar, Bani Bu Ali, Salalah and now Al Khuwair, Tyreplus have you covered.

Mohsin Hani Al Bahrani, CEO MHD ACERE said "At MHD ACERE we are always looking for ways of enhancing customer satisfaction and providing customers with a delightful experience. This is why we have invested heavily in launching one of our biggest outlets in the heart of Muscat city - Al Khuwair. We hope our patrons now have more reasons to visit us and avail the added benefits." Tyreplus is a single destination where customers can expect

world-class brands like Michelin, BF Goodrich, Varta, Optima and a range of facilities to suit every need: premium tyre brands, oil change service, professional fitment, wheel balancing & alignment, AC check, car battery, brake service, tyre puncture repair, car sanitization services, general car checks and lots more. The Tyreplus facility at Al Khuwair will be open from 9am to 10pm and 4pm to 10pm from Saturday to Thursday.

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

NBO recognised by Ministry of Social Development for empowering disabled persons



MUSCAT: In recognition of its commitment towards empowering communities, National Bank of Oman (NBO) was recently awarded by the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) for supporting people with disabilities across Oman. The accolade was awarded during a ceremony organised by MoSD on the occasion of the United Nations-sanctioned International Day of Persons with Disabilities, which aims to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in all spheres of society. The event was held under the auspices of Dr Laila Ahmed Al Najjar, Minister of Social Development, while it was sponsored by National Bank of Oman. NBO aims to support and empower all members of the communities in which it operates, which is in line with its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme. The bank's CSR activities include efforts to support and promote a society that is inclusive of people with disabilities and that aims to further increase their participation in public life. Last year, NBO was awarded by MoSD for supporting people with disabilities in Oman as well. Through its active CSR programme, National Bank of Oman continues to fulfil its commitment to make a positive impact on

society. Its CSR activities, which are carried out throughout the year, include a variety of educational and youth-led programmes, donations and sponsorships, all reflecting the bank's core values and aimed at supporting those in need in particular. Earlier this year, for example, NBO undertook the full refurbishment of the children's playroom at the Oman Cancer Association's (OCA) Dar Al Hanan. Meanwhile, the bank also utilised its annual Holy Month of Ramadan community outreach programme, to share the spirit of giving across Oman by distributing food hampers to families in need and people with disabilities.



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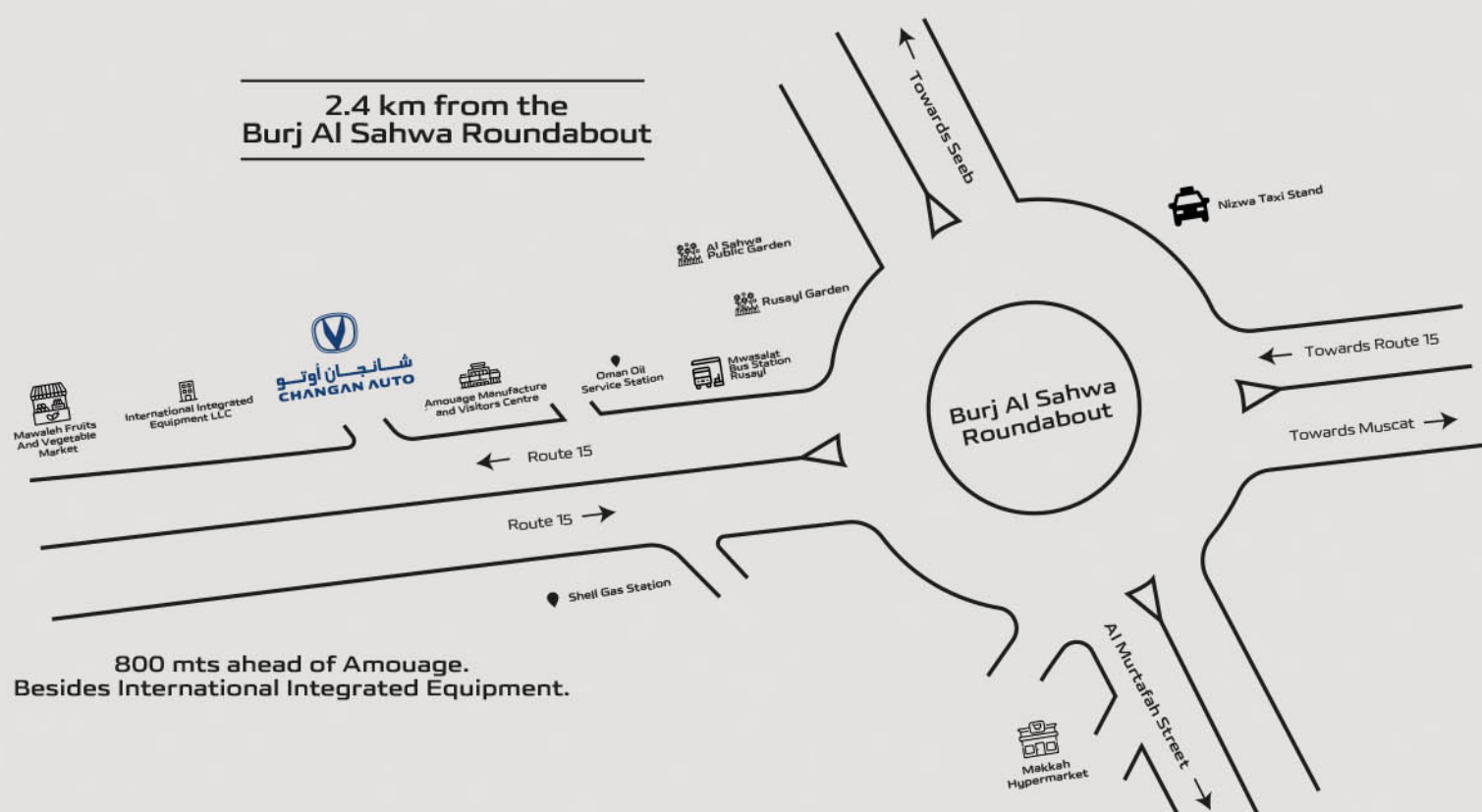


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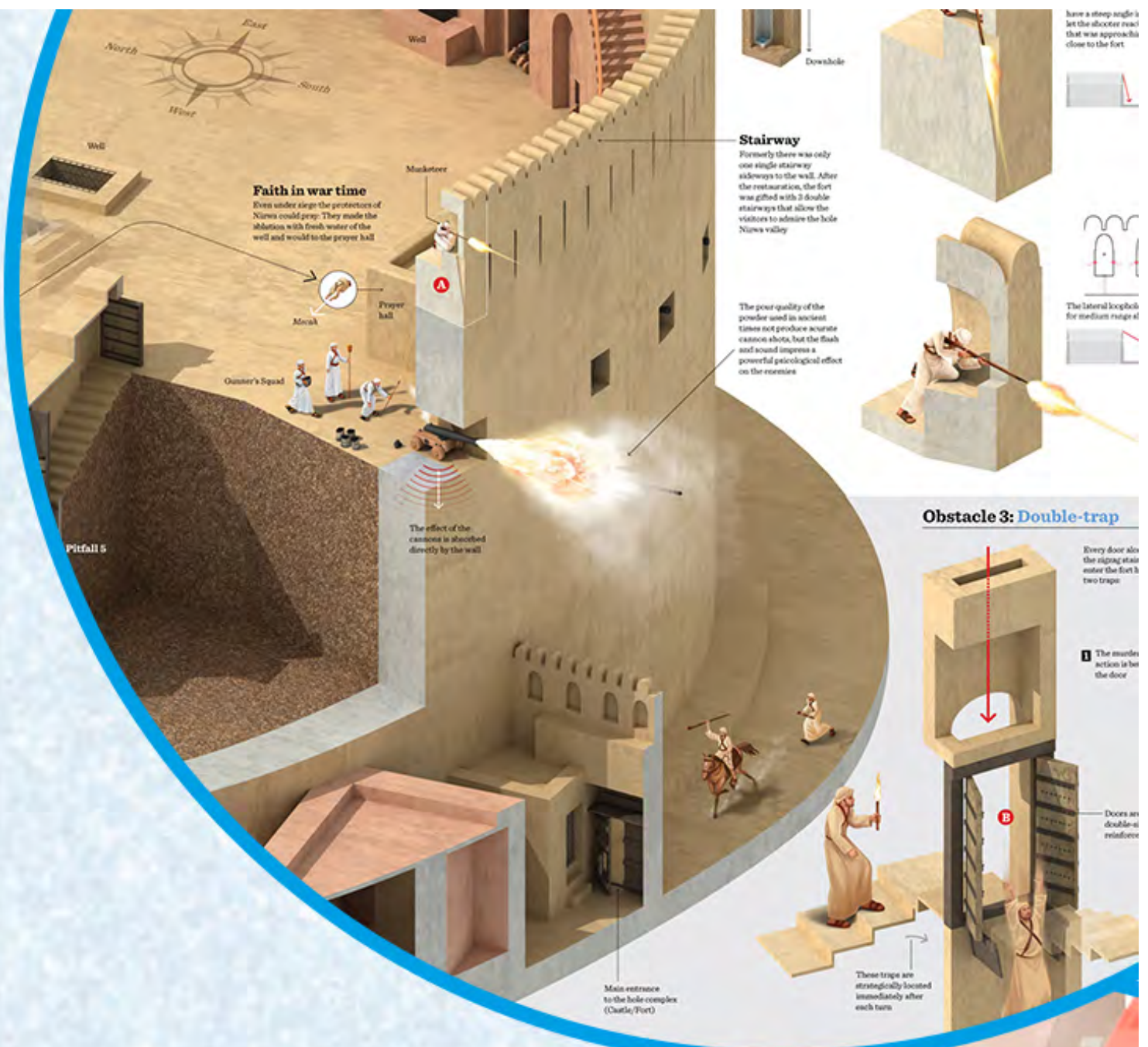
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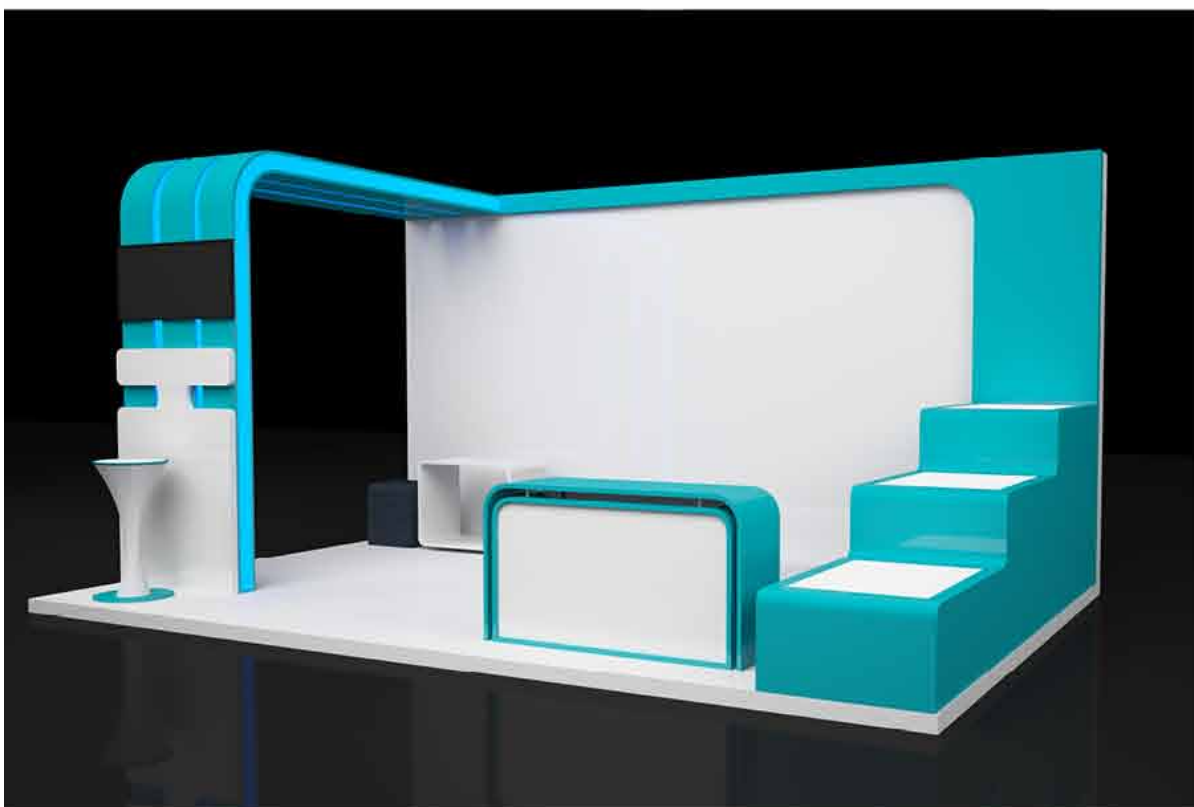
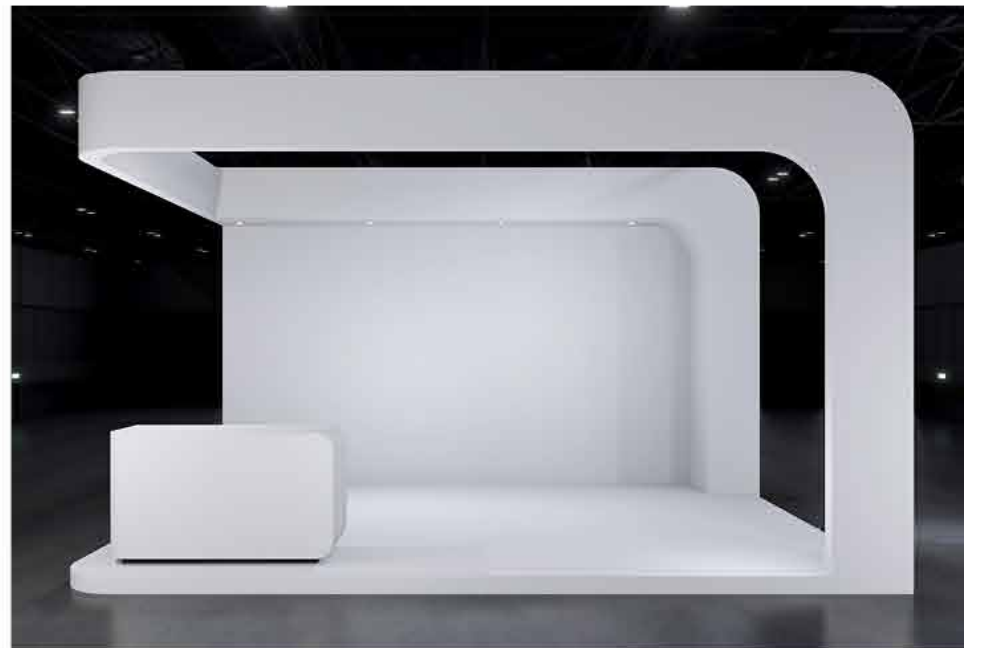
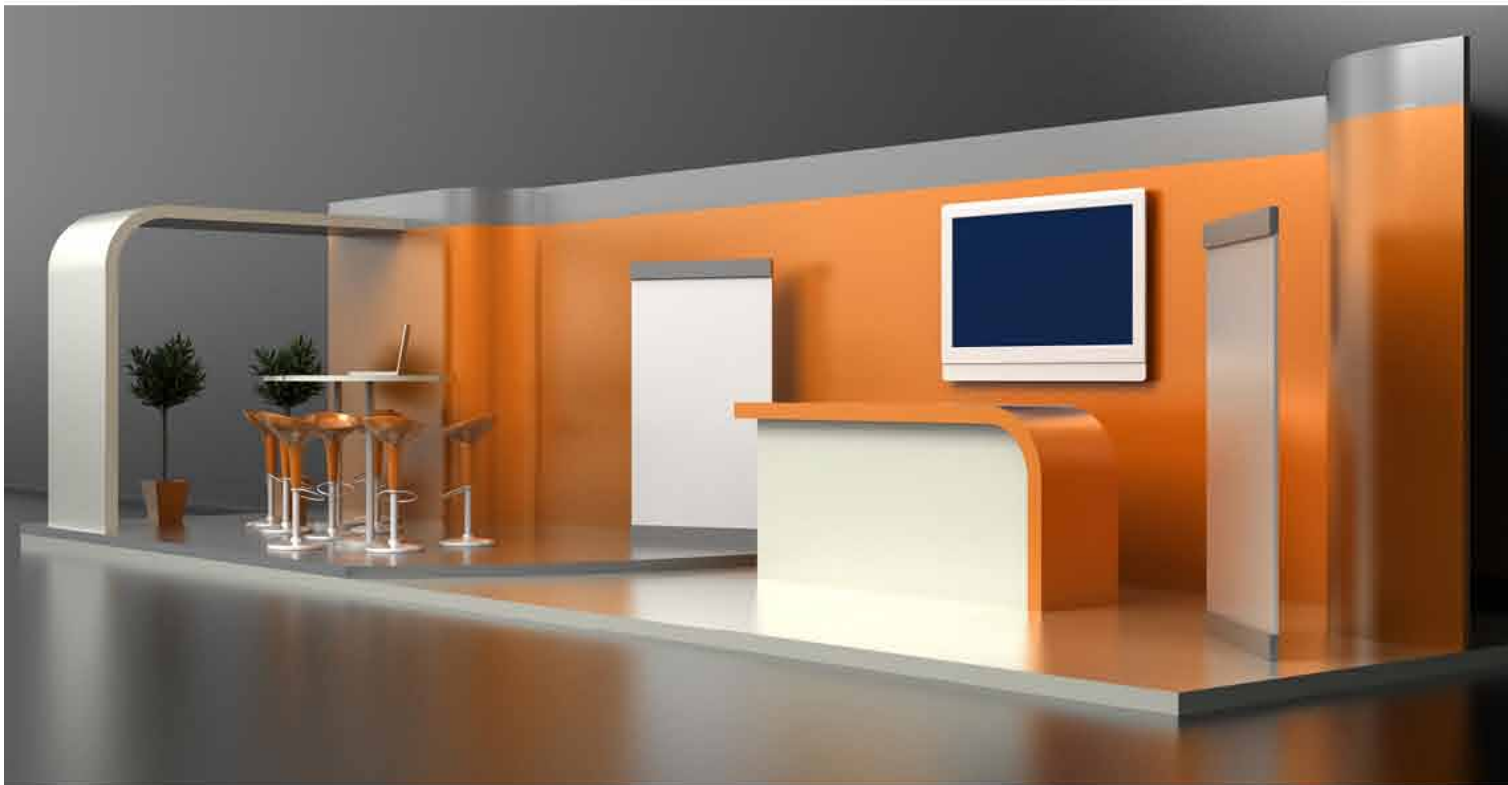


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