

HM GREETES KING OF KSA

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) on the occasion of the Founding Day. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments to King Salman, wishing him good health, happiness and a long life. His Majesty also prayed for the return of this and similar occasions while the Saudi people realise aspirations of further progress and prosperity. - **ONA**



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INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE IN UPCOMING RAIL NETWORK

ALTERNATIVE ROAD TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO AL JABAL AL AKHDAR

BRIDGE TO CONNECT MASIRAH ISLAND WITH OMANI MAINLAND

PLANS TO BE DRAWN UP TO LAUNCH WATER TAXIS IN OMAN

MINISTRY PAVES WAY FOR INVESTMENT IN TRANSPORT SECTOR

THE MINISTRY LOOKS FORWARD TO MAXIMISING THE BENEFIT OF THE LOGISTICS SYSTEM AND DEVELOPING SECTORS THAT CAN BE DEVELOPED FOR ECONOMIC BENEFIT IN OMAN, ESPECIALLY MARITIME AFFAIRS AND ROAD TRANSPORT, IN ADDITION TO DIGITAL ECONOMY, AS THESE SECTORS ARE THE MOST LIKELY TO GROW

ENG. SAID HAMOUD AL MAAWALI
MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Plan afoot to strengthen existing logistics corridors and add new ones

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Investment opportunities in Oman's transportation sector have increased after the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MTCIT) opened up more areas for

potential investors in the country.

Among the most interesting areas of investment when it comes to land transportation are a proposed land bridge to connect Masirah Island to the Omani mainland and the country's upcoming railway network, which will boost con-

nectivity and accessibility. Other opportunities for investment are the Amerat A'Tayeen road and an alternative route to connect Jabal Akhdar to South Al Batinah.

Truckers-only roads

Plans have also been drawn up to lay truckers-only roads between Salalah and Thumrait and Maabala and Thamid. The ministry also aims to monitor the weights of trucks travelling on the country's roads.

Eight ports are also open for investors: Khasab, Shinas, Shaleem, Shannah, Masirah, Manji, Sadah

and Dhalkut. The ministry is also exploring a number of development plans, including a pier dedicated to the export of rocks and minerals and marinas for yachts. Studies will be conducted to review and evaluate the infrastructure of ports and evaluate their current condition. The plans of the MTCIT were unveiled during a press conference to announce its plans for 2022 as well as to take stock of the work done in 2021.

"The ministry looks forward to maximising the benefit of the logistics system and developing sectors that can be developed for

economic benefit in Oman, especially maritime affairs and road transport, in addition to digital economy, as these sectors are the most likely to grow," said Eng. Said Hamoud Al Maawali, the Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology.

Road transport and logistics

To improve Oman's logistics capabilities, the country's existing logistics corridors will be strengthened and new ones will be added.

A dual link road will connect North Batinah to Al Buraimi and Al Dhahirah, while the roads that

connect Oman's border crossings with the rest of the country will also be made more efficient. To ensure more shipments to Oman without congesting the existing border crossings, more land ports of entry will also be established. Duqm, considered the heartbeat of Oman's non-oil future, will also receive better connectivity with the rest of the country's road network.

The road network in Oman is also considered a key element of its ties with Saudi Arabia, following the opening of the strategic Empty Quarter road and border crossing. **>A5**

Limited-edition photobook of Oman published by veteran photographer

A2

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN Deadline for Indian schools admissions

1 Online registrations for admission in Indian Schools in the capital area for the next academic year (2022-2023) will be closed on 28th February 2022. Admission is open to children of Indian and other expatriate communities in the Sultanate of Oman with valid resident visa. **>A3**

WORLD Hurricane-force winds hit Germany

2 Germany was hit by hurricane-force winds and thunderstorms on Sunday night as storm Antonia raged through the country — the third severe weather event in less than a week. Previously, Storms Ylenia and Zeynep left about €1.5 billion (\$1.7 billion) damage in their wake and killed at least six people in Germany. **>A6**

MARKET Regional energy investments to grow

3 Energy investments in the Mena region are expected to continue to grow on the strength of higher oil and gas prices throughout 2022. The uptick in regional energy investments, up \$13bn in Apicorp's five-year outlook issued in the second quarter of 2021, will continue over the mid-term, a new report says. **>B1**

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MUSCAT

OTAXI

200 women-driven taxis planned for Oman's roads within a year

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman aims to have 200 women taxi drivers operating on the country's roads within a year, to provide a mode of transport exclusively for women and families. Taxicab service Otaxi currently runs about 20 women-only cabs, after being given the green light to operate the special service in January 2022. The initiative has been rolled out on a trial basis in Muscat, and taxis that are part of the scheme are recognisable by their iconic pink and white paint job.

"We aim to have a fleet of 50 cars driven by women within the next three months, and 200 fe-



male drivers within a year," said Eng. Harith Al Meqbali, CEO of Otaxi. "Currently, our services are only limited to Muscat, but one of our plans is to expand to the other governorates in the near future. The service is also

exclusively available only to women and families.

"We aim to provide a service that is fast, affordable and accessible to our customers," he added. "The women-driven taxis do have some additional secu-

rity features, including a system for tracking and monitoring the routes they take, and prices that are fixed and agreed-upon with the customer before their trip begins, ensuring additional security and safety for them."

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TIMINGS



Dhuhr.....12:25pm
Asr.....3:44pm
Maghrib.....6:11pm
Isha.....7:22pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....5:19am

Limited-edition photobook of Oman published by veteran photographer

Released by Polish photographer, Dr Jerzy Wierzbicki, the photographs feature the diverse landscapes, varied wildlife and rich culture that Oman is known for

Times News Service

MUSCAT: A photobook featuring pictures that embody the very best of Oman has been limited to just 100 copies, all of which are signed and numbered by the man who clicked the photos.

Released by Polish photographer, Dr Jerzy Wierzbicki, who spent more than five years in Oman and later made many more trips to the country while staying overseas, the photographs feature the diverse landscapes, varied wildlife and rich culture that Oman is known for.

“My first project in Oman was in 2007. It was about Ras Madrakah, a town located some 500 km from Muscat,” recalled Jerzy. “Of course, now that place has changed a lot. When I got a job in Oman, it provided me the space to extensively research subjects and places for potential projects. While exploring the country, I found many hidden gems that the public had not yet discovered in the deserts, mountains and along Oman’s shoreline.

“That I might have been the first photographer to shoot these locations was one the biggest excitement for me,” he added.

The wonderfully varied landscape of Oman also gave him plenty of opportunities to make a very symbiotic connection with the land and enabled him to take back plenty of memories through photographs.

“In the summer of 2013, I went to Dhofar during the Khareef season, where I witnessed strange



weather near Mugshin, in the form of a massive dust storm. I also experienced heavy rains behind Taqah,” recalled Jerzy.

“I have some great photographs from this trip! I also undertook some solo trips to the Empty Quarter, where I was able to photograph the rare ‘shadow effect’ of sand dunes.”

So fascinated by Oman and its layers of history that stretch back to thousands of years, was Jerzy that he did his doctorate on the country, using Oman as a case study, titled “Eroding Traditions, Eroding Presence” that looked at

how people around the world had evolved while often putting aside the traditions of their forefathers. His PhD was based on photos of the abandoned settlements he had photographed in Dhofar.

Although he had tens of thousands of digital photographs with him when he left Oman, he was able only to properly catalogue and organise his work in the spring of 2020, shortly after the COVID-19 pandemic began, and several countries around the world went into lockdown to prevent infection rates, hospitalisations and deaths.

“After intensive work with my graphic designer, I published a photobook which contains my favourite locations across Oman,” explained Jerzy. “This book is printed on very high quality material and is a collector’s item. Only 100 copies were printed, all of them signed and numbered. It is also my personal tribute to all the wonders I have witnessed in this country.”

A second book on Oman brought out by him is more focused on cultural state of affairs, the migration of people and abandonment of settlements and the reality of

our modern world. Jerzy calls his publication “a modern kind of documentary photography book. I would definitely like to publish more copies of this book than my first one.”

Currently employed as a photography lecturer in Poznan in his native Poland, photography came to Jerzy at a rather young age: His father was a journalist, which meant photographic equipment was almost always found in his home when he was growing up.

“I love exploring places that humans are rarely come across; Oman is the perfect place for

someone who loves using his camera to capture natural, pristine landscapes,” he explained. “I found the people of Oman very special and kind.

“Of course, I would love to get back to Oman in the future to continue my adventures with photography,” he added. “I enjoy the diversity of the world that can be seen through my camera; photographic equipment was almost always found in his home when he was growing up. “I love exploring places that humans are rarely come across; Oman is the perfect place for



INDIAN SCHOOL MUSCAT



ISM felicitates ten student entrepreneurs

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Ten budding student entrepreneurs of Indian School Muscat (ISM) were felicitated with awards and certificates for their innovative and well-planned business ideas on February 10, 2022.

The young winners were extolled by Sachin Toprani, President ISM Management Committee. The participants had virtually shared their nascent inspiring business ideas through ‘Elevator Pitch’, a three-minute summary of their business plans, on 2nd February 2022.

The esteemed guests, on the presentation day, Samira Bint Salloum Bin Khalouf Al Tali’yya, Head of Entrepreneurship Department, Ministry of Education, and Gaurav Anil Nahar, CEO and Creator, Akeed Delivery App, shared their expertise with the young entrepreneurs.

The students focused on solutions to social problems, carbon reduction, creating cloud com-

puting, mentorium education app, financial networks platforms, GIZMO and a host of other brilliant ideas.

Tarun Raj of XI-A bagged the first position for his presentation of the innovative idea on ‘Mentorium Edu’. Parween Kumar of XI-F and Kartikeyan Vinod of IX-E won second and third positions for their presentations on ‘Cloud Computing’ and ‘Carbon Red’ respectively. ISM BRIDGE, an initiative of Indian School Muscat, nourishes students’ fresh ideas, empowering them with skills to bring a positive change in themselves and the world.

Principal, Dr. Rajeev Kumar Chauhan said, “ISM BRIDGE is not about ideas, but it’s about making ideas happen.”

Appreciating the efforts of students and the teacher-mentors he expressed the hope that ISM BRIDGE will continue to improve the entrepreneurial skills of the young minds, who will benefit society and the world economy at large.

SULTAN QABOOS UNIVERSITY

Forum discusses role of social sciences in achievement of sustainable development

MUSCAT: Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), represented by the College of Arts and Social Sciences, organised on Monday the 4th International Conference titled “Social Sciences and Sustainable Development”.

The conference was organised under the auspices of Dr. Rahma bint Ibrahim Al Mahrooqi, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

The conference reviewed the various regional and international experiences in the relation

between social sciences and sustainable development. The conference also tackled the role of social sciences in achievement of sustainable development.

Fifty five researchers from the colleges of human and social sciences and specialised research centres from within the Sultanate of Oman, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Saudi Arabia, UAE and Iran are taking part in the conference.

— ONA



MEASURING INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE

Workshop held on Ejada electronic system

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Education in cooperation with the organisers of the Ejada project for measuring individual performance at the Ministry of Labour, organised on Monday a training workshop on the application of the electronic system of Ejada.

The workshop targeted the Director-Generals at the Ministry’s main office and the Director-Generals of the Directorate-Generals in the various governorates. The workshop took place at the Scout Musical Band Theatre under the patronage of Majid bin Saeed Al Bahri, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education for Administrative and Financial Affairs.

Dr. Salwa Al-Qasabieh, Director of Implementation of the Individual Performance Measurement System and Institutional Proficiency Project, delivered a speech



and said: “This meeting comes in the process of supporting work, with a proficiency system for performance measurement in the stage of actual application. We stress in this regard the importance of your support for your sectors in this transitional stage.”

“The implementation of the Ejada system for measuring performance is one of the capabilities of Oman’s 2040 vision, and that there is an obligation for all sectors to deal and work according to this system, which requires us to join efforts and provide sup-

port towards improving the construction of individual plans for the employees of the Ministry of Education, in order to contribute to raising the general level of proficiency of the institution.”

Specialists from the Ministry of Labour presented a paper titled “Preparation of functional plans, objectives and main results using the OKRs methodology” in which they discussed the methodology of objectives and key results (OKRs), and the process of listing objectives and projecting them onto administrative divisions.

It also discussed administrative objectives, sources, types and method of formulation, main results, types and method of identification, with examples and models. At the end of the workshop, attendees were given the opportunity to discuss and ask questions about what was raised in the paper.

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MILITARY TIES

Qatari Naval Forces Commander visits Military Technological College

MUSCAT: Rear Admiral Abdullah Hassan Al Sulaiti, Commander of the Qatari Emiri Naval Forces visited the Military Technological College (MTC) on Monday.

The guest was accompanied during the visit by Rear Admiral Saif Nasser Al Rahbi, Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO).

Upon the guest's arrival, he was greeted by Air Commodore Mohammed Abdulaziz Al Seyabi, Commandant of the MTC.

The Qatari guest and members of the visiting delegation were briefed on the college's educational and service facilities, in addition to its general curriculum, technical specialisations and various educational levels.



Sultan's Armed Forces

The Vice Admiral Abdullah Khamis Al Ra'eesi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), also received in his office at Al Murtafa'a Garrison Rear Admiral Al Sulaiti. The two sides exchanged views on several military matters of common interest.

The meeting was attended by Rear Admiral Saif Nasser Al Rahbi, Commander of Royal Navy of Oman (RNO), Commodore Issa Salim Al Owaisi, Assistant Chief

of Staff for Administration and Supply.

Commander of RNO

Meanwhile, Rear Admiral Saif Nasser Al Rahbi, Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) received in his office Rear Admiral Al Sulaiti.

The two sides reviewed fields of the existing maritime cooperation between the RNO and the Qatari Emiri Naval Forces. They also ex-

changed views on several matters of common interests.

Maritime Security Centre

Rear Admiral Al Sulaiti and his accompanying delegation also visited the Maritime Security Centre (MSC) on Monday.

During the visit, the guest was accompanied by Rear Admiral Saif Nasser Al Rahbi, Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO). Upon the guest arrival at the MSC,

he was greeted by the acting Head of the MSC.

The guest toured the centre's facilities and viewed its latest equipment and technologies. He was briefed on the duties, tasks and roles carried out by the centre within its national duties, as it coordinates with authorities concerned in search and rescue missions and in the safety of the maritime environment.

— ONA

CHINA

His Majesty receives cable of thanks

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from President Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China in reply to His Majesty's greetings cable on the occasion of the Chinese New Year.

In the cable, President Xi ex-

pressed his utmost appreciation to His Majesty's sincere sentiments. He stressed his keenness on promoting the joint strategic relations between the two countries, wishing His Majesty good health and permanent success.

— ONA

GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF SAINT LUCIA

HM sends greetings

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to Cyril Errol Charles, Governor-General of Saint Lucia on his country's Independence Anniversary.

In the cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes to the Governor-General of Saint Lucia and his country's people.

— ONA

TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS SECTOR

FROM A1 Upgrade plan for key tourist sites

"This is one of the major achievements of the transport and logistics sector, as it paves the way for new prospects of social integration on the one hand and economic logistics integration between Oman and Saudi Arabia on the other," said the MTCIT. "This is owing to...logistics facilities, ports, free zones and airports in both countries."

Similar to the ministry's logistics upgrade plan, a similar one has been drawn up for key tourist sites in the country. Areas such as Wadi Bani Khalid, Tiwi, Wakan Village, Al Hamra, Jabal Akhdar and Jabal Shams are all in line for better linkages via road.

The government also intends to repair the damage caused to roads by Cyclone Shaheen, which battered parts of North Al Batinah last year. The Batinah dual carriageway, as well as roads in Wadi Al Jahawar, Wadi Al Hawasna, Wadi Al Qunoot and Wadi A'Sarami are all in line for repairs and upgrades.

Roads damaged by other adverse weather events such as Cyclone Luban and Cyclone Mekunu will also be improved.

The ministry also laid down plans for regular maintenance of dirt and asphalt roads that make

up the country's network to ensure there is no disruption in the flow of goods and people across the country.

Maintenance of roads

Tenders are to be issued for specialised fields of maintenance such as the painting of road surfaces, removing sand dunes that form on roads and repair of safety railings and signboards. Moreover, Oman also aims to improve the quality of public transportation by setting up a ground transportation control centre, raising the service quality of taxis, building rest areas on major roads and setting up integrated transfer stations for people to easily switch between modes of transport when required.

To make Omani nationals more inclined to pursue a career in transport, the attractiveness of the transportation sector will also be raised.

"There is a trend towards allocating many services to the private sector," said Minister Al Maawali. "This includes new roads for trucks. There is also talk of new land ports, especially at places near the border. These ports will form the nucleus for the growth of new economic zones."

MSC'S ROLE HIGHLIGHTED



NATIONAL DEFENCE COLLEGE

French Navy chief visits Oman's NDC



MUSCAT: Air Vice Marshal Eng. Saleh Yahya Al Maskari, Commandant of the National Defence College (NDC) on Monday received Admiral Pierre Vandier, Chief of Staff of the French Navy and his accompanying delegation.

The two sides exchanged several matters of common interests. The guest and his accompanying delegation toured the NDC's facilities. They were briefed on the college's facilities and equipment, as well as various departments and halls designed according to the latest specifications and equipped with the best educational systems, training aids and multi-purpose electronic network systems. — ONA

ENVIRONMENT AUTHORITY

Specialists honoured

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Environment Authority felicitated specialists working for its projects and initiatives for 2021 plan in appreciation of the roles they have played.

EA said: "His Excellency Dr. Abdullah bin Ali Al Omari, Head of the Authority, during his tour this morning in a number of employee offices at the headquarters of the Authority, honoured a group of employees responsible for the approved work plan projects in 2021 in the Authority." He praised the complementary roles played by the employees responsible for the projects and initiatives of the Authority's plan for the year 2021 according to a specific timetable.

Saudi military delegation visits Maritime Security Centre

MUSCAT: A delegation from the Command and Staff College and National Defence University of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), headed by Brigadier Hussain Al Harbi on Monday visited the Mari-

time Security Centre (MSC).

Upon their arrival, they were received by the Deputy Head of the MSC.

Members of the Saudi delegation were briefed on the tactical roles and tasks carried out by the

centre in search and rescue missions, as well as in the safety of the maritime environment.

They also toured the centre facilities and viewed its latest equipment and technologies. — ONA

AT OCEC

Muscat International Book Fair 2022 to begin on Thursday

MUSCAT: Deliberations at 26th Muscat International Book Fair 2022 will begin at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) this Thursday and last till 5 March.

The opening ceremony of the fair will be held under the patronage of His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham Al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth.

The extravaganza will boast a strong comeback and host an elite selection of literati, media personnel, publishers and exhibitors, with the Governorate of South A'Sharqiyah as the Guest of Honour.

It will showcase a wide range of programmes and cultural activities carrying the insignia of its heritage and cultural legacy through-



out the days of the book fair.

As many as 114 cultural activities, among them 29 unique to the South A'Sharqiyah Governorate,

will be staged, but children's activities will be limited to 85 in line with COVID-19 precautionary measures. — ONA

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Fresh hurricane-force winds hit Germany as storm Antonia rages

Antonia is now estimated to have caused a further €100 million in damages

BERLIN: Germany was hit by hurricane-force winds and thunderstorms on Sunday night as storm Antonia raged through the country — the third severe weather event in less than a week.

Previously, Storms Ylenia and Zeynep left about €1.5 billion (\$1.7 billion) damage in their wake and killed at least six people in Germany.

Antonia is now estimated to have caused a further €100 million in damages, according to insurance company Aon.

What was the impact of Storm Antonia?

Antonia caused further damage to rail infrastructure and disruptions to services, with the German rail operator, Deutsche Bahn, shutting down its regional services in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia on Sunday evening. The company



said on Monday that cancellations and delays were still to be expected on several services in the state during the morning.

Firefighting services in several German cities were called out amid damage to houses and fallen trees. In Worms in the western state of Rhineland-Palatinate, authorities said several parked cars and buildings had been damaged by falling rafters from another building.

In Herdecke in North Rhine-Westphalia, the roof of an apartment building was blown off, hitting the roof of another building and spreading debris on the street.

No injuries were reported.

On Monday, the famous fish market in the Altona district of Hamburg was reported to have been flooded by a storm surge caused by Antonia.

Hurricane-like gusts of wind

The German Weather Service (DWD) had issued a red alert for gale force winds of up to 120 kilometres per hour (75 miles per hour) for pockets of mostly western and southern Germany, but also along the Baltic Sea coast.

An orange alert for winds of up to 90 kilometres per hour was issued for the rest of the country,

with stronger hurricane-like gusts at times.

Several flights were redirected from Dusseldorf International and Weeze Airport to other nearby airports in Germany due to the strong winds. The storm, under its international name of Franklin, also hit the UK and Ireland on Sunday.

Some parts of Northern Ireland saw severe flooding. More than 150 flood warnings have also been issued across northern England, particularly for Yorkshire and Manchester. Hundreds of people in Manchester were evacuated as a precaution.

Cleanup from earlier storms continues

More than a dozen people were killed by Zeynep, known as Eunice outside Germany, which struck Ireland, Britain, Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany on Friday and Saturday.

Storm Ylenia, also known as Dudley, landed in Germany a day earlier, also causing considerable damage.

In Germany, repair teams were still working on Sunday to repair overhead rail lines and remove fallen trees from Zeynep.

Rail operator Deutsche Bahn warned that around 1,000 kilometres (621 miles) of the network remained impassable. **dw**



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MURDER/SUICIDE

Wall Street fraudster Bernie Madoff's sister, husband found dead

WASHINGTON: The sister of late Wall Street fraudster Bernie Madoff was found dead with her husband in an apparent murder-suicide in Florida, authorities said on Sunday.

Sondra Wiener, 87, and her 90-year-old husband, Marvin, were found unresponsive, with gunshot wounds, inside their residence.

"Detectives from the Violent Crimes Division arrived on scene to investigate further. After further investigation it appears to be a murder-suicide," the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office said in a statement.

The medical examiner will determine the official cause of death. When contacted by phone, a woman identifying as their son David Wiener's wife requested privacy "at this time of grief."

"We are not making any comment at this time," she said.



Madoff, the man behind the biggest Ponzi scheme in history, died in prison last year at the age of 82. He ran a ripoff pyramid scheme that conned thousands of people around the world. He was serving a 150-year sentence after pleading guilty to fraud and other charges in 2009.

At the time of his death, court-appointed trustees had clawed back an estimated \$14 billion (£11.7 billion) of the estimated \$17.5 billion that investors had put into his business. **dw**

TRUTH SOCIAL

Trump's social media platform begins rollout

WASHINGTON: Former US President Donald Trump's new social media platform, "Truth Social," began to become available on Monday, with a gradual rollout planned for this week, according to an executive.

Donald Trump has been banned from a number of social media platforms, including YouTube, Twitter and Facebook, for more than a year.

Trump's ban followed the attack on the US Capitol on January 6, 2021, as he has been accused of posting messages that incited violence.

Rollout gets underway

The app was available to download shortly before midnight ET in Apple's App Store and was automatically downloaded to Apple Inc devices belonging to users who had pre-ordered.

Some users reported either having trouble registering for an account or that they were added to a waitlist, with a message telling them that this was "due to massive demand."

On Sunday, the App Store was allowing users in the US to pre-order the app ahead of the launch on Monday, the Presidents' Day holiday in the United States.

Platform for 'cancelled' voices

In an interview with broadcaster



Fox News on Sunday, Trump Media & Technology Group (TMTG) executive Devin Nunes said the platform was aiming to become fully operational in the US by the end of March.

"That's going to be awesome, because we're going to get so many more people that are going to be on the platform," said Nunes, a former Republican US representative and Trump loyalist.

Speaking of people who had pre-ordered, Nunes said, "It's actually very moving for me to see people that are on the platform that have had their voice canceled." The platform is claiming to champion free speech and hopes to attract users who feel their views are suppressed on

more-established platforms.

Other social media ventures

TMTG reportedly has \$1.25 billion (£1.1 billion) in funds, which it will use to compete with a number of other conservative social media platforms such as Gettr, Parler and Gab.

So far, all of the newer platforms have failed to gain anything like the popularity of mainstream ones. In January last year, Amazon took social media app Parler offline, amid accusations that the platform was failing to moderate extremist content and allowing users to incite violence.

Previously, Google and Apple had removed the app from their stores. **dw**

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 Number	Title of the Tender
DISC/E/Tender/2022/025	Supply and Installation of Two Panels of 11kV Switchgears for Power Supply to New Sultan Qaboos Hospital (SQH) at Salalah
Tender Fee	RO. 52,500 Inclusive VAT (5%) Each Tender. Note: Tenderer who wish to participate in the above tenders should collect the tender documents from DISC's office or send an e-mail to below mention mail id for tender documents.
Experience	The Tenderer should have performed similar works in the last three (3) years in Sultanate of Oman.
Pre-qualification	Contractors participating in the tendering process shall be at least Grade-A registered electrical contractor with Distribution Code Review Panel (DCRP), Sultanate of Oman. Apart from the above, the Contractors participating in the tendering process shall have Competent Electrical Person (CEP) certified by DISC and copy of the valid CEP certificate shall be submitted along with bid without which the bids will not be considered for evaluation. Further, Tenderers will be evaluated as per the HSE qualification criterion specified in the Tender documents.
Last date for issue of tender documents	03:00 PM on 8 th March 2022
Site Visit	10:00 AM on 9 th March 2022
Last date for seeking pre bid clarification	03:00 PM on 13 th March 2022
Last date for response pre bid clarification	03:00 PM on 16 th March 2022
Last date for submission of bids	02:00 PM on 23 rd March 2022
Any Queries Please Contact	Phone 23232554, purchase@disc.nama.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.



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P.O. Box: 2609, P.C.: 211, 23rd July Street, behind West Salalah Health Center
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OMAN CRUDE PRICE RISES

The price of Oman oil has increased, with prices for delivery by April 2022 reaching \$92.24, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil rose by \$1.35 from the price of Friday, which was \$90.89. - ONA

MARKET

BUSINESS & FINANCE



WWW.TIMESOFOMAN.COM
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2022



MSX INDEX ENDS LOWER

The MSX index closed at 4,084.28 points, down by 0.09 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.23 per cent at 496.20 points. Takaful Oman, up 9.52 per cent, was the top gainer while, Phoenix Power, down 6.00 per cent, was the top loser.

Regional energy investments expected to grow in 2022: Report

Volatility in commodity markets expected to persist in 2022 due to the pandemic, macroeconomic policy uncertainty, and supply chain disruptions

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Energy investments in the Mena region are expected to continue to grow on the strength of higher oil and gas prices throughout 2022, according to a new report.

"The uptick in regional energy investments, which registered a \$13 billion increase in Apicorp's latest five-year outlook issued in the second quarter of 2021, will continue over the mid-term," the Arab Petroleum Investments Corporation (Apicorp) said in a report outlining the key trends that are expected to shape the Middle East and North Africa (Mena) energy markets landscape this year.

Among the trends the report examines is the impact of oil and gas prices on energy investments in the region and the main factors weighing down on broader economic recovery.

"Despite the volatility in commodity prices which is expected to



APICORP REPORT: Among the trends the report examines is the impact of oil and gas prices on energy investments in the region and the main factors weighing down on broader economic recovery. - Photo used for illustrative purpose only

persist throughout 2022, the good news in the short-term is that oil and gas prices will likely remain elevated throughout the year, providing support for energy investments including renewable energy and ESG-related projects," Dr Ahmed Ali Attiga, CEO of Apicorp, said.

"Power sector investments in Mena are also expected to continue to thrive, with an accelerating shift towards renewables. Collectively, the region is expected to add nearly 20 GW of solar power over the next

five years," he further added.

The Mena region will take centre stage in the ongoing global energy transition as all eyes shift to Egypt, which will host COP27 in November - and UAE for COP28 in 2023. Yet while the transition continues to steadily gain momentum, the report notes that it may be marred by mixed policy signals from governments as they attempt to balance imperatives that are oftentimes very difficult to align: emissions reduction, energy af-

fordability and energy security.

Thus, a sustainable and comprehensive policy is needed to avoid tilting the policy scale too far in favour of one of these factors, as this may lead to unintended consequences such as market distortions, heightened volatility, and energy shortfalls.

The already substantial pressure on policymakers is expected to be further exacerbated by continued volatility in commodity markets in 2022 due to the pan-

dem, uncertainty over macro-economic policy, and supply chain disruptions. Despite the modest --albeit uneven--recovery in 2021, it will take time for this improvement to migrate downstream and ease cost pressures this year.

As for the energy markets, the report forecasts that they will remain comparatively stable during 2022 due to higher oil production by Opec+ and non-Opec countries and increased gas production and LNG supply. Brent is expected to average between \$65 per barrel and \$75 per barrel. As for gas, the JKM and TTF/NBP hub prices in Asia and Europe are expected to cool down considerably from their all-time highs of 2021, especially after the winter season.

The report's analysis of energy investment trends suggests that the expected robust oil and gas prices in 2022 have triggered an opportunity to return to pre-pandemic activity. As a result, energy investments in Mena are forecast to grow in 2022 from the \$805 billion in Apicorp's Mena Energy Investment Outlook 2021-2025 and continue in the upcoming 5 years, namely on the strength of sustained higher oil and gas prices and planned unconventional gas and upstream investments.

For petrochemicals, the drive for further integration and rationalisation will continue with reconfigurable petrochemical plants shifting to high-margin products such as plastic packaging films and healthcare and hygiene products.

"The strong pipeline of investments we are seeing in the downstream projects reflects the region's push to direct more funds to this sector, especially in brown-field petrochemicals projects versus greenfield ones. This makes

sense in light of the current market conditions which favour improving cost and operating efficiencies in existing projects rather than sheer expansion," said Nicolas Thevenot, Managing Director of Corporate Banking at APICORP.

The uncertainty around COVID recovery will continue to influence how market dynamics will ultimately play out.

Given the global vaccine inequity and a constantly evolving virus governments are still grappling with the dilemma of public health versus economic recovery.

In addition to global trade, supply chains and services, the current surge in cases globally will also adversely affect international travel and tourism. This will dent economic growth during 2022, which has already prompted a slight downward revision of the 2022 GDP growth forecasts in some regions and a likely asymmetric global recovery that is not necessarily sustainable for all countries.

Another uncertainty stems from the need for governments to introduce fiscal austerity measures to rein in spending and curb soaring inflation. Although markets ended 2021 with high returns (27 per cent in the case of the S&P 500 index), high jobs growth and soaring commodity prices pushed inflation rates higher.

A fear of stagflation looms as public fiscal stimulus packages are withdrawn, asset purchasing programs are tapered and interest rates rise. While these measures will very likely cause economic recovery to slow down, the lagging unemployment rates are expected to remain relatively high amid a simmering inflationary cycle that may turn out not to be transitory after all.

AIRCRAFT INTERIOR'S EXHIBITION

Industry leaders to help drive forward digital innovation and sustainability

DUBAI: The joint organisers of MRO Middle East & Aircraft Interiors Middle East (AIME), Aviation Week Network and Tarsus F&E Middle East have announced an abundance of high-calibre local and international companies who will be participating at this year's exhibition to help drive forward industry innovation and sustainability.

The region's premier MRO and aircraft interior's exhibition will take place on February 22 and 23 at the Dubai World Trade Center, Dubai. Key exhibitors include Etihad Engineering, Dubai South, Sanad, HEICO, Lufthansa Technik, StandardAero, HAECO Group, Gerflor and SAEI (Saudia Aerospace Engineering Industries).

The exhibition also features an expanded Airline Buyers Programme with 350 top airline representatives from leading regional and international airlines including Emirates, Etihad, Air Arabia, Air France, PIA, Kenya Airlines, Oman Air, Flynas and others.

"The calibre and number of exhibitors at the region's only dedicated MRO and aircraft interiors event exemplifies the rejuvenation of the aviation industry as a whole with demand for air travel returning full-force. We are proud to be hosting some of the top MRO and interior companies in the world. This year's edition promises to be a productive gathering, where exhibitors and attendees can capitalise on all the latest innovations within the sector with exciting networking opportunities for sustainable growth and collaboration," said Tim Hawes, Managing Director of Tarsus Middle East.

This year sees the launch of a new AI-powered networking application, which attendees can use to network pre-event and book meetings onsite. The mobile application is free to download via the Apple Store or Google Play under "AIME MRO Middle East".

"The industry is clearly evolving towards enhanced innovation and digital-led technologies, which are necessary to be future-ready and resilient. The Go Live!



MRO EVENT: The calibre and number of exhibitors at the region's only dedicated MRO and aircraft interiors event exemplifies the rejuvenation of the aviation industry as a whole with demand for air travel returning in full-force. - WAM

Theatre will provide engaging and forward-thinking content that will benefit participants and visitors alike. These critical learning opportunities will also have a renewed focus on the strong recovery of the aviation industry," said Lydia Janow, SVP Events at Aviation Week Network.

The Go Live! Theatre will bring together key cabin interior and MRO decision-makers from airlines, MROs, OEMs, lessors, suppliers and aircraft interior specialists; highlighting the latest innovations within sustainability, digitalisation, workforce and supply chain through the content programme and showcasing new technologies with displays of the latest products and services on the exhibition floor.

Highlights of the agenda include an MRO Leaders Panel exploring

the state of the regional landscape for the lessors and the leasing market with speakers including Fahd H. Cynndy, CEO of SAEI, Fraser Currie, CEO of Joramco, Ziad al-Hazmi, CEO of Lufthansa Technik Middle East and Lee Ann Shay, Executive Editor, MRO & Business Aviation, Aviation Week Network.

Sam Chui, one of the world's most-followed aviation bloggers with over 650 million YouTube views, moderates an exciting Aircraft Interiors Panel on day one, focusing on connectivity collaboration through the value chain. Speakers on this session include Andrii Kusyi, Technical Manager Cabin Operations at Wizz Air, Nina Schulz, Managing Director at Independent Aircraft Modifier Alliance and Naveed Khan, Manager Aircraft Cabin Maintenance at Emirates. The discussion will

focus on technologies spearheading innovation and the benefits of a truly connected aircraft.

On the second day of the show, a key conference session focuses on the MRO Supply Chain, a session to discuss what the supply chain will look like in 2022 and what some of the key cost-saving opportunities are. Key speakers include Patrick Markham, Vice President Technical Services at HEICO, Robert Gill, Group Head of Procurement and Supply Chain Management at Sanad, A Mubadala Company and Sergey Stelnikov, Director Logistics and Procurement at VD Gulf.

This will be closely followed by a thought-provoking session focusing on the evolution of passenger behaviour and expectations led by Mohamad Al Charif, Aircraft Interior and Duty Manager Engineer at Gulf Air. -WAM

APPOINTMENT

New CEO at Al Suwadi Power Co. appointed

MUSCAT: After an eventful stay in the Sultanate of Oman for 41 years, Navneet Kasbekar, the current CEO of Al Suwadi Power Company (ASPC), is retiring on March 15, after having worked in the power sector for over 21 years out of which seven years were as the CEO of ASPC.

His career, after becoming Chartered Accountant, has spanned for 44 years out of which over 31 years has been in a general managerial position in Oman and varied fields like trading, real estate, hospitality and printing. ASPC's Board has lauded his dynamic and successful leadership and wishes him well in his planned retirement.

In the ASPC's Board meeting held on February 17, Abdullah Al Rawahi, a highly qualified engineer from Sultan Qaboos University with 28 years of experience in power and desalination plants in Oman, has been appointed as the new CEO.



Abdullah has worked at various managerial positions, including that of CEO of Al Kamil Power Company, in different companies in the field of Power Generation and Water Desalination. He brings to ASPC his vast experience in the management of power and desalination plants. The Board of ASPC wishes Abdullah all the success to lead the company to a higher level.

STOCK MARKET

Asian shares end mostly lower as investors watch Ukraine crisis

BANGKOK: Asian shares were mostly lower on Monday after a retreat on Wall Street, as investors watched for developments in Ukraine after Russia rescinded earlier pledges to pull tens of thousands of its troops away from Ukraine's northern border.

Tokyo, Seoul, Hong Kong and Shanghai declined while Sydney advanced. Russia is a major energy producer and a military conflict also could disrupt energy supplies and make for extremely volatile energy prices.

Tokyo's Nikkei 225 index lost 0.8 per cent to 26,910.87, while the Hang Seng in Hong Kong shed 1.1 per cent to 24,062.67. In Seoul, the Kospi gave up 0.2 per cent to 2,739.59 and the Shanghai Composite index fell 0.4 per cent

to 3,476.47. India's Sensex lost 0.2 per cent and Thailand's benchmark was 0.5 per cent lower.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 gained 0.2 per cent to 7,233.60 as the country reopened its borders to more international travel after nearly two years of being mostly sequestered due to the pandemic.

Outbreaks of coronavirus fuelled by the highly contagious omicron variant are also a worry. A preliminary reading on factory data for Japan on Monday showed a sharp drop in the manufacturing purchasing manager's index, to 52.9 from 55.4 on a 0-100 scale where readings above 50 indicate expansion.

But analysts said they expect activity to rebound as the latest wave of infections subsides. -ONA

MARKET

MSX index ends lower

Takaful Oman, up 9.52 per cent, was the top gainer while, Phoenix Power, down 6.00 per cent, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,084.28 points, down by 0.09 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.23 per cent at 496.20 points. Takaful Oman, up 9.52 per cent, was the top gainer while, Phoenix Power, down 6.00 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of United Finance were the most active in terms of the number of shares traded while Bank Muscat was the most active in terms of turnover.

A total number of 610 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating a turnover of OMR4.85 million, with more than 27.48 million shares changing hands. Out of 40 traded securities, 6 advanced, 15 declined and 19 remained unchanged. At the session close, Domestic investors were net buyers for OMR551,000 while GCC & Arab investors were

net sellers for OMR300,000 followed by foreign investors for OMR250,000 worth of shares. Financial Index closed at 6462.36 points, down by 0.2 per cent. Prices of Takaful Oman, United Finance, Taageer Finance, Bank Muscat, and Vision Insurance were up by 9.52 per cent, 6.41 per cent, 3.7 per cent, 0.39 per cent, and 0 per cent respectively. Prices of Al Sharqia Investment, Global Financial Investments, Oman United Insurance, Muscat Finance, and Al Madina Takaful were down by 3.23 per cent, 2.67 per cent, 2.07 per cent, 1.56 per cent, and 1.03 per cent respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5763.6 points, down by 0.15 per cent. Services Index was down by 0.56 per cent before closing at 1638.33 points. — **United Securities**

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff.	Diff%
MSX 30 INDEX	4,088.86	4,082.79	4,084.28	4,087.99	-3.71	-0.09
FINANCIAL INDEX	6,476.54	6,462.35	6,462.36	6,475.08	-12.73	-0.20
Industry Index	5,791.24	5,763.60	5,763.60	5,772.04	-8.44	-0.15
Services Index	1,647.50	1,638.33	1,638.33	1,647.49	-9.17	-0.56
MSX Shariah Index	496.20	493.98	496.20	495.06	1.14	0.23
MSX TR INDEX	4,921.95	4,916.45	4,916.44	4,920.90	-4.46	-0.09

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
27,483,228	4,855,003	610	22,029,263,628	6	15	19	40

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR MONDAY, FEBRUARY 21

	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PD	LAST BD	LAST OFFER	PDA VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET																
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDSTR	20,000	19,360	2	0.968	0.968	0.968	0.968	0.956	0.012	1.255	0.968	0.000	0.964	0.100	86,829,600
OM000003026	OMAN TELECOM	1,031,885	845,223	29	0.812	0.820	0.812	0.820	0.812	0.008	0.985	0.820	0.820	0.820	0.100	615,000,000
OM000000786	BANK MUSCAT	2,106,462	1,090,233	45	0.514	0.522	0.512	0.518	0.516	0.002	0.388	0.522	0.518	0.530	0.100	1,851,577,942
OM000001525	OMAN INVST&FIN	100,000	15,600	3	0.156	0.156	0.156	0.156	0.156	0.000	0.000	0.156	0.150	0.155	0.100	36,972,000
OM000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	618,378	49,354	29	0.079	0.080	0.079	0.080	0.080	0.000	0.000	0.080	0.079	0.080	0.100	16,000,000
OM000002077	AL OMANIYA FIN	2,988,500	407,725	50	0.136	0.138	0.136	0.136	0.136	0.000	0.000	0.138	0.138	0.138	0.100	39,033,183
OM000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	107,150	45,505	10	0.420	0.428	0.420	0.424	0.424	0.000	0.000	0.422	0.422	0.428	0.100	85,380,000
OM000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PROD.	131,596	51,029	20	0.390	0.390	0.384	0.386	0.386	0.000	0.000	0.386	0.374	0.386	0.100	48,210,613
OM000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	12,699	4,031	8	0.320	0.320	0.316	0.318	0.318	0.000	0.000	0.316	0.316	0.318	0.100	19,462,959
OM000003000	AL MAHA MARKETING	3,169	2,168	1	0.684	0.684	0.684	0.688	0.688	0.000	0.000	0.684	0.000	0.684	0.100	47,472,000
OM000003254	RENAISSANCE SER	185,000	83,250	10	0.450	0.450	0.450	0.450	0.450	0.000	0.000	0.450	0.442	0.454	0.100	106,384,500
OM000001533	OMINVEST	70,488	20,799	3	0.295	0.300	0.295	0.295	0.298	-0.003	-1.007	0.300	0.295	0.300	0.100	197,167,801
OM000001418	RAYSUT CEMENT	7,940	1,509	2	0.190	0.190	0.190	0.190	0.192	-0.002	-1.042	0.190	0.180	0.190	0.100	38,000,000
OM000000368	OOREDOO	124,244	43,894	6	0.356	0.356	0.354	0.354	0.358	-0.004	-1.117	0.354	0.352	0.358	0.100	230,434,257
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	309,025	19,566	14	0.065	0.065	0.062	0.063	0.064	-0.001	-1.563	0.062	0.062	0.065	0.100	19,350,218
OM000001087	OMAN UNITED INSUR	1,453,840	549,037	67	0.388	0.388	0.374	0.378	0.386	-0.008	-2.073	0.374	0.364	0.374	0.100	37,800,000
OM000002440	AL SHARQIA INV.	36,235	3,272	3	0.091	0.091	0.090	0.090	0.093	-0.003	-3.226	0.090	0.091	0.092	0.100	8,100,000
Total		17	9,307,021	3,251,654	302											

Parallel Market

OM000004776	TAKAFUL OMAN	13,000	897	1	0.069	0.069	0.069	0.069	0.063	0.006	9.524	0.069	0.000	0.069	0.100	6,900,000
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	11,620,582	959,722	93	0.082	0.083	0.078	0.083	0.078	0.005	6.410	0.080	0.080	0.082	0.100	28,978,986
OM000003281	TAAGEER FINANCE	1,034,000	86,554	42	0.082	0.085	0.082	0.084	0.081	0.003	3.704	0.083	0.080	0.084	0.100	21,301,560
OM000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	144,877	27,527	5	0.190	0.190	0.190	0.190	0.190	0.000	0.000	0.190	0.185	0.190	0.100	308,929,808
OM000001081	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	27,139	1,900	7	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.000	0.000	0.070	0.070	0.071	0.100	8,331,250
OM000002549	BANK DHOFAR	15,740	1,826	7	0.116	0.116	0.116	0.116	0.116	0.000	0.000	0.116	0.116	0.116	0.100	347,575,767
OM000002648	NATIONAL FINANCE	20,000	2,360	1	0.118	0.118	0.118	0.118	0.118	0.000	0.000	0.118	0.118	0.129	0.100	63,865,194
OM000003361	VOLTAMP ENERGY	519	45	1	0.087	0.087	0.087	0.089	0.089	0.000	0.000	0.087	0.087	0.088	0.100	72,444,845
OM0000007711	SOLAR POWER	16,999	714	7	0.042	0.042	0.042	0.042	0.042	0.000	0.000	0.042	0.042	0.044	0.100	9,282,420
OM000004420	BANK NIZWA	3,934,131	380,608	53	0.097	0.098	0.096	0.097	0.097	0.000	0.000	0.097	0.097	0.098	0.100	216,984,424
OM000004735	SEMBOOP SALALAH	3,702	274	2	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.000	0.000	0.074	0.072	0.075	0.100	70,638,324
OM000004833	AL SUWADI POWER	20,000	1,000	1	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.000	0.000	0.050	0.049	0.050	0.100	35,720,317
OM000007684	MCT DESALINATE	25,481	3,146	7	0.124	0.124	0.123	0.123	0.123	0.000	0.000	0.124	0.123	0.123	0.100	19,132,899
OM000007407	DHOOFAR GENERATING	5,555	300	1	0.054	0.054	0.054	0.054	0.054	0.000	0.000	0.054	0.050	0.054	0.100	12,000,960
OM000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	183,125	17,580	14	0.096	0.096	0.096	0.096	0.097	-0.001	-1.031	0.096	0.095	0.096	0.100	18,800,000
OM000001030	OMAN CHROMITE	13,245	47,533	2	0.360	0.360	0.360	0.360	0.360	-0.050	-1.374	0.360	0.000	0.320	1.000	10,770,000
OM000003521	GALFAR ENGINEER	261,754	18,323	11	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.071	-0.001	-1.408	0.070	0.070	0.071	0.100	14,209,051
OM000004925	ALBATHINAH POWER	60,919	2,935	5	0.049	0.049	0.048	0.048	0.049	-0.001	-2.041	0.048	0.048	0.050	0.100	32,394,597
OM000001132	OMAN NAT. ENG	29,800	3,447	8	0.116	0.116	0.115	0.116	0.115	0.001	-2.521	0.115	0.115	0.115	0.100	10,080,000
OM000003125	GLOBAL INV. H.	314,450	22,377	23	0.075	0.075	0.072	0.073	0.075	-0.002	-2.667	0.073	0.073	0.073	0.100	14,600,000
OM000001566	OMAN FISHERIES	133,400	8,705	10	0.065	0.067	0.065	0.065	0.067	-0.002	-2.985	0.065	0.065	0.066	0.100	8,125,000
OM000001319	ALUMINIUM PROD.	20,000	1,820	3	0.091	0.091	0.091	0.091	0.094	-0.003	-3.191	0.091	0.091	0.091	0.100	3,025,002
OM000005963	PHOENIX POWER	277,789	13,135	14	0.050	0.050	0.047	0.047	0.050	-0.003	-6.000	0.048	0.048	0.049	0.100	68,745,289
Total		23	18,176,207	1,603,348	308											

IN 2021

China remains biggest export country for German electrical, digital industry

BERLIN: China remained the biggest export country for Germany's electrical and digital industry in 2021, the country's Electro and Digital Industry Association (ZVEI) said on Monday. The industry's exports to China increased by 7.5 per cent to 25.1 billion euros (\$28.5 billion)

last year, according to ZVEI. The United States ranked second, with exports up 10.2 per cent year-on-year at 19.1 billion euros. Total exports by Germany's electrical and digital industry reached 224.6 billion euros last year, exceeding pre-crisis levels in 2019 by 4.6 per cent, according

to ZVEI. Exports to other European countries in 2021 recovered strongly by 11.4 per cent to 144.9 billion euros, while the industry's exports to Asia grew 7.1 per cent to 49.4 billion euros. For the sixth year in a row, China was Germany's most important trading partner in 2021. — **Xinhua**

ABU DHABI STOCKS

ADX's market liquidity jumps five-fold in 2021 amid IPO boom

ABU DHABI: ADX's market liquidity jumps five-fold in 2021 amid the IPO boom. Traded values (buy + sell) on the exchange increased 407 per cent from AED145 billion in 2020 to AED739 billion in 2021, driven by higher levels of domestic and international investment. Local investors accounted for 70 per cent of the exchange's traded value, while foreign institutional investors accounted for 30 per cent.

Meanwhile, net foreign investment on the exchange reached AED15 billion in 2021, the highest level recorded in the exchange's history. The market value of shares owned by foreign investors in 2021 increased by 100 per cent from AED78 billion to AED156 billion, while those held by UAE nationals reached AED1.5 trillion compared to AED685 billion in 2021, an increase of 117 per cent.

At the same time, the number of new investors who registered on the exchange in 2021 increased by 701 per cent from 2,362 in 2020 to 18,938 in 2021. The number of new institutional investors increased 77 per cent to 708 in 2021 versus 400 in 2020.

The increased demand for Abu Dhabi stocks helped propel the exchange's benchmark index 64 per cent higher. — **WAM**

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DOES AUTISM AFFECT THE BRAINS OF BOYS AND GIRLS DIFFERENTLY?

Autism is a serious developmental disorder that impairs the ability to communicate and interact. Autism spectrum disorder impacts the nervous system and affects the overall cognitive, emotional, social and physical health of the affected individual. According to a new study from the Stanford University School of Medicine, brain organisation differs between boys and girls with autism. The study was published in 'The British Journal of Psychiatry'.

The differences, identified by analysing hundreds of brain scans with artificial intelligence techniques, were unique to autism and not found in typically developing boys and girls. The research helped to explain why autism symptoms differed between the sexes and may pave the way for better diagnostics for girls, according to the scientists.

Autism is a developmental disorder with a spectrum of severity. Affected children have social and communication deficits, show restricted interests and display repetitive behaviours. The original description of autism, published in 1943 by Leo Kanner, MD, was biased toward male patients. The disorder is diagnosed in four times as many boys as girls, and most autism research has focused on males.

"When a condition is described in a biased way, the diagnostic methods are biased," said the study's lead author, Kaustubh Supekar, PhD, a clinical assistant professor of psychiatry and behavioural sciences. "This study suggests we need to think differently."

"We detected significant differences between the brains of boys and girls with autism, and ob-

tained individualised predictions of clinical symptoms in girls," said the study's senior author, Vinod Menon, PhD, a professor of psychiatry and behavioural sciences and the Rachael L. and Walter F. Nichols, MD, Professor. "We know that camouflaging of symptoms is a major challenge in the diagnosis of autism in girls, resulting in diagnostic and treatment delays."

Girls with autism generally have fewer overt repetitive behaviours than boys, which may contribute to diagnostic delays, the researchers said.

"Knowing that males and females don't present the same way, both behaviourally and neurologically, is very compelling," said Lawrence Fung, MD, PhD, assistant professor of psychiatry and behavioural sciences, who was not an author of the study.

Fung treats people with autism at Stanford Children's Health, including girls and women with delayed diagnoses. Many autism treatments work best during the preschool years when the brain's motor and language centres are developing, he noted.

"If the treatments can be done at the right time, it makes a big, big difference: For instance, children on the autism spectrum receiving early language intervention will have a better chance of developing language like everyone else and won't have to keep playing catch-up as they grow up," Fung said. "If a child cannot articulate themselves well, they fall behind in many different areas. The consequences are really serious if they are not getting diagnoses early."

The study analysed functional magnetic resonance imaging brain scans from 773 children with autism — 637 boys and 136 girls. Amassing enough data to include a sizeable number of girls in the study was challenging, Supekar said, noting that the

small number of girls historically included in autism research has been a barrier to learning more about them. The research team relied on data collected at Stanford and on public databases containing brain scans from research sites around the world.

The preponderance of boys in the brain-scan databases also set up a mathematical challenge: Standard statistical methods used to find differences between groups require that the groups be roughly equal in size. These methods, which underlie machine-learning techniques in which algorithms can be trained to find patterns in very large and complex datasets, can't accommodate a real-world situation in which one group is four times as large as the other.

"When I tried to identify differences [with traditional methods], the algorithm would tell me every brain is a male with autism," Supekar said. "It was over-learning and not distinguishing between males and females with autism."

Supekar discussed the problem with Tengyu Ma, PhD, assistant professor of computer science and of statistics at Stanford and a co-author on the study. Ma had recently developed a method that could reliably compare complex datasets, such as brain scans, from different-sized groups. The new technique provided the breakthrough the scientists needed.

"We happened to be lucky that this new statistical approach was developed at Stanford," Supekar said.

Using 678 of the brain scans from children with autism, the researchers developed an algorithm that could distinguish between boys and girls with 86 per cent accuracy. When they verified the algorithm on the remaining 95 brain scans from children with autism, it maintained the same accuracy at distinguishing boys from girls.

The scientists also tested the algorithm on 976 brain scans from typically developing boys and girls. The algorithm could not distinguish among them, confirming that the sex differences the scientists found were unique to autism.

Among children with autism, girls had different patterns of connectivity than boys did in several brain centres, including motor, language and visuospatial attention systems. Differences in a group of motor areas — including the primary motor cortex, supplementary motor area, parietal and lateral occipital cortex, and middle and superior temporal gyri — were the largest between sexes. Among girls with autism, the differences in motor centres were linked to the severity of their motor symptoms, meaning girls whose brain patterns were most similar to boys with autism tended to have the most pronounced motor symptoms.

The researchers also identified language areas that differed between boys and girls with autism and noted that prior studies have identified greater language impairments in boys. "When you see that there are differences in regions of the brain that are related to clinical symptoms of autism, this seems more real," Supekar said. Taken together, the findings should be used to guide future efforts to improve diagnosis and treatment for girls, the researchers said.

"Our research advances the use of artificial intelligence-based techniques for precision psychiatry in autism," Menon said. "We may need to have different tests for females compared with males. The artificial intelligence algorithms we developed may help to improve diagnosis of autism in girls," Supekar said. At the treatment level, interventions for girls could be initiated earlier, he added. - **ANI**



FEATURE



Whether it’s heat or heavy rain, the consequences of climate change are putting our energy security at risk. Oil, gas and nuclear energy are particularly vulnerable. So, what does that mean for our future?

At the end of January, torrential rains poured over parts of the South American state of Ecuador. As a result, an oil pipeline in the eastern province of Napo in the Amazon region was severely damaged — thousands of liters of oil began to leak out and contaminate the surrounding soil.

“The accident is a disaster for the environment,” Hans-Joseph Fell, the founder of Energy Watch Group which is investigating a global transition to renewable energies, told DW. “The consequences of climate change, such as heavy rainfall or drought, have a very strong influence on the availability of conventional energy.”

Oil is particularly at risk, as the recent string of oil accidents shows. But it’s not the only energy source impacted by the increasing number of extreme weather events. During hotter months, nuclear power plants sometimes have to be shut down because rivers are too warm to be used as cooling water.

During the hot European summer in 2018, for example, France was forced to shut down four reactors and the Grohnde Nuclear Power Plant in Germany almost followed suit. Nuclear power plants by the sea do not have this problem, but even they could be threatened by rising sea levels.

Extremely low water levels in the Rhine in 2018 also caused the price of heating oil to rise sharply. Like many other goods, it was no longer possible to simply transport the oil across the entire river by ship.

Extreme drought also severely damages hydropower facilities. This has global consequences. Following long periods of extreme heat in the summer of 2021, numerous reservoirs in the US and many parts of Latin America almost dried up. The hydropower plant by Lake Mead near Las Ve-



gas produced a quarter less electricity than usual in July.

According to an analysis by the Institute of Energy Economics at the University of Cologne (EWI), lower levels of electricity generation from hydropower in Latin America led to high demand for liquefied natural gas from the US in 2021. The gas was sold on the American continent instead of to Europe, impacting the volume of gas available in Europe this winter.

Meanwhile, heavy rain and flooding in Indonesia, severe storms in Australia and the US, as well as flooding in China meant less coal was also mined in 2021, according to the study. As a result,

demand for gas — and gas prices — have risen even further.

“In contrast to fossil fuels, using wind and solar power to generate electricity is more resilient to weather extremes, and therefore more crisis-proof,” said Tim Bachmann, who manages the clean technology fund at asset management company, DWS group.

The decentralised generation of wind and solar energy has proven to be an advantage in extreme weather conditions, according to Bachmann.

“That’s why many large companies in the US, including internet companies, carmakers and others, have signed long-term power con-

tracts with wind and solar farm operators,” he said.

There are also far fewer logistical problems to contend with, because the electricity is directly generated from the wind and sun. Coal, oil, gas or uranium on the other hand must first be transported to power plants, where they are converted into energy. And there are various risks inherent in even just transporting the fuels.

How climate-proof is wind power?

But what about the risks posed by extreme weather when it comes to wind and solar power — for exam-

ple, when hurricanes barrel into wind farms?

Martin Dörenkämper, of the Site Assessment Department at the Fraunhofer Institute for Wind Energy Systems (IWES) explained the importance of decentralized networks, so if turbines in the north have to go off the grid, those in other regions can compensate.

“Even in a strong winter storm, only the wind turbines at the heart of the storm need to be shut down, but not those at the edge of the wind field,” he told DW, adding that modern wind turbines can withstand high speeds, and that engineers are currently working to equip them for winds of up to

200 kilometres per hour.

He says no other great climate change adaptation measures are necessary. In places where winters are becoming wetter as a result of global warming — such as in Scandinavia — the power plants must be heated to prevent ice from forming. During periods of heat, stronger cooling measures are necessary.

Solar panels vs hailstones

The risks posed by the climate crisis also seem manageable when it comes to solar power, according to the latest findings. In order to withstand stronger storms, the substructures and frames of future plants would need to be reinforced, as well as the glass of the solar modules. That’s according to Harry Wirth, who is responsible for photovoltaic modules and power plants at the Fraunhofer Institute for Solar Energy Systems (ISE). And it’s all technically feasible.

Wirth says solar power systems are also being prepared for stronger hailstorms. According to reinsurance company Munich Re, this risk has already significantly increased in Europe due to climate change.

“For this purpose, the modules are bombarded with artificial hail in the laboratory,” he told DW. “Hailstones between 2.5 and five centimeters in diameter are used.”

Whether conventional or renewable energy, it has to be transported to where it is needed — be that to private households, municipalities or industrial companies. And that means the entire power grid must be able to withstand the risks of the climate crisis.

Mathias Fischer is the press spokesperson for electricity grid operators Tennet. The group operates the entire Dutch high-voltage grid and is the largest grid operator in Germany. -DW



PHOTO-FEATURE



HONEY FESTIVAL

held in Damascus, Syria



People attend the Honey Festival in Damascus, capital of Syria, on Sunday.
Photos by Ammar Safarjalani/Xinhua





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ROUND-UP

Bank Muscat extends special offer on personal, auto and home finance



Customers will be particularly enthused by the fact that the bank is at present offering highly competitive rates, starting at just 3.5 per cent for auto finance, 3.75 per cent for personal finance and 4.95 per cent for Baituna home financing

MUSCAT: In line with its customer-centric vision, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate, is steadfastly working towards the financial inclusion of various segments of society in Oman.

Having expanded its range of products and services over the years, the bank currently offers a number of financing facilities including Personal Finance, Sayyarti Auto Finance, Baituna Home Finance, Education Finance, Green

Finance and Woqar banking package for pensioners. The bank recently announced an extension of its highly competitive offers on Personal, Auto and Baituna home financing options for Omani nationals working in the government sector, government-related entities and select corporates as part of its commitment to improving the quality of life of people in the Sultanate. The extension, which is effective till February 28, also includes takeover options on personal and home loans.

Customers will be particularly enthused by the fact that the bank is at present offering highly competitive rates, starting at just 3.5 per cent for auto finance, 3.75 per cent for personal finance and 4.95 per cent for Baituna home financing. All interested customers may use the loan calculator at <https://www.bankmuscat.com/en/Pages/Loan-Calculator.aspx> to view details of the financing options available to them.

Speaking on the occasion, Abdullah Tamman Al Mashani, General Manager –Products, Bank Muscat, said: “Bank Muscat endeavours to provide the best banking and financing products and services in Oman in line with the needs of different customer segments. We are delighted to extend our highly competitive offers on various financing options in keeping with the needs of our valued customers and aligned to the bank’s aim of facilitating a high standard of living for people in Oman.

“We would like to thank our customers for their strong confidence in the bank’s products and services as well their constant feedback, which helps Bank Muscat to continue innovating and offering new products and services in line with the bank’s customer-centric vision.”

As the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate for the last four decades, Bank Muscat has the largest banking network in Oman with 174 branches and over 800 ATMs, CDMs, FFM and statement printers. Its vast array of digital banking channels including Internet Banking and Mobile Banking are helping customers meet the vast majority of financial requirements and needs 27x7. The bank’s technology-driven products and services are in tune with Oman’s move towards an e-payments-based society and are playing an important role in realising the ambitious goals of Oman Vision 2040.

NETWORKING EVENT

ICF Oman Chapter hosts CEO of International Coaching Federation

MUSCAT: ICF Oman Chapter welcomed Magda Mook, the CEO of International Coaching Federation (ICF), the leading global organization of 50,000-plus professional personal and business coaches to Oman; hosting her talk in a networking event held in Muscat under the sponsorship of Takatuf Oman.

Mook riveted the audience of ICF Oman Coaches and Executives of Oman with her presentation on the new trends in coaching and highlights of the ICF 2022 Global Consumer Study emphasising the reasons people are seeking coaching and its impact in the Mena region.

ICF Oman Chapter operates as a non-profit organisation in Oman through a signed MoU with OSHRM which is registered with the Ministry of Social Development. Aqil Al Ajmi, President of ICF Oman Chapter stated, “It is a



great privilege to welcome Magda Mook to Oman and have such a prominent global representative of the coaching profession open the dialogue in Oman.”

ICF Oman Chapter is dedicated to serving its members by advancing the coaching profession in Oman and clarifying the definition

of coaching as partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximise their personal and professional potential.

Coaching is a distinct service and differs greatly from therapy, consulting, mentoring or training. Individuals who engage in a

coaching relationship can expect to experience fresh perspectives on personal challenges and opportunities, enhanced thinking and decision-making skills, enhanced interpersonal effectiveness, and increased confidence in carrying out their chosen work and life roles.

EXPANSION

NBO celebrates opening of new Bukha branch



MUSCAT: National Bank of Oman (NBO) recently celebrated the opening of its new branch in Bukha in the Governorate of Musandam.

Having relocated its existing branch to bigger premises, the new facility is fully modernised and equipped with a Full Function Machine (FFM), enabling customers to access a comprehensive range of services including account management, card issu-

ance, and inquiries. Opened under the auspices of Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said Al-Busaidi, Minister of State and Governor of Musandam, the branch marks the latest in NBO’s efforts to make the banking experience as convenient and as enjoyable as possible for its growing customer base.

Tariq Atiq, Chief Retail and Digital Banking Officer at NBO, said, “In our quest to make bank-

ing accessible to people across the Sultanate of Oman, we continue to place our branches in strategic and convenient locations. Our new branch in Bukha is an extension of our efforts to meet the needs of our customers in Musandam while offering them excellence through a tailored range of innovative products and services.”

As Oman’s local bank, National Bank of Oman provides a full

suite of innovative and high-quality banking solutions through 60 branches across the country, including two in the Governorate of Musandam, as well as a wide network of more than 189 ATM and deposit machines. Having built a rich history of innovative banking services that keep pace with the needs of its customers, it continues to modernise and evolve, in readiness for the future.

NEW DINING VENUE



Muriya brings best of Turkish culinary tradition with opening of Tugra at Jebel Sifah

MUSCAT: Continuing to bring one-of-a-kind hospitality experiences to residents and visitors, Muriya, Oman’s largest and most diversified developer, has announced the opening of a new dining venue at Jebel Sifah.

Offering uninterrupted views of the marina and a delicious menu of authentic Turkish cuisine, Tugra highlights the culinary traditions of a centuries-old culture in a vibrant and chic setting. All tastes are catered for with an array of expertly prepared favourites at the hands of Chef Faruk, from aromatic appetisers to beautifully grilled meats, freshly baked bread and mouth-watering sweets. Topped off with a selection of mixed beverages, it’s the ideal place for a laid-back lunch or luxurious dinner, for a quick bite or as part of a leisurely day out at Muscat’s most stunning lifestyle destination.

“At every Muriya destination, our aim is to enrich the lives of our communities, tourists and visitors from across the globe, and we continue to bring in new experiences that make every visit memorable and unique. As Jebel Sifah continues to expand and evolve, Tugra is a wonderful addition to its high-end dining options, catering to couples and families alike. Offering a tasty mix of regional dishes, and with outdoor seating that directly overlooks the water, it is sure to become a favourite al fresco dining experience to come back to time and time again,” said Tarek Eid, Hotel

Offering uninterrupted views of the marina and a delicious menu of authentic Turkish cuisine, Tugra highlights the culinary traditions of a centuries-old culture in a vibrant and chic setting

Manager Sifawy Boutique Hotel in charge of Tugra Restaurant.

With its natural surroundings, resort-style amenities and incredible living and hospitality options, Jebel Sifah is a hotspot for socialising. As well as Tugra, it offers a wide range of culinary venues, including the recently opened Dunes, a luxurious outdoor dining venue set on the beach, The Bank Beach Club, Skylark, The Breeze Lounge and Bar, Al Sabla, BakeAway, The View, Eat Street, Bar Ten and Crafty Kitchen. In addition, it boasts a Harradine designed golf course, a modern marina with superyacht berthing, and a beautiful Sifawy Boutique Hotel.

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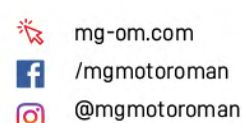
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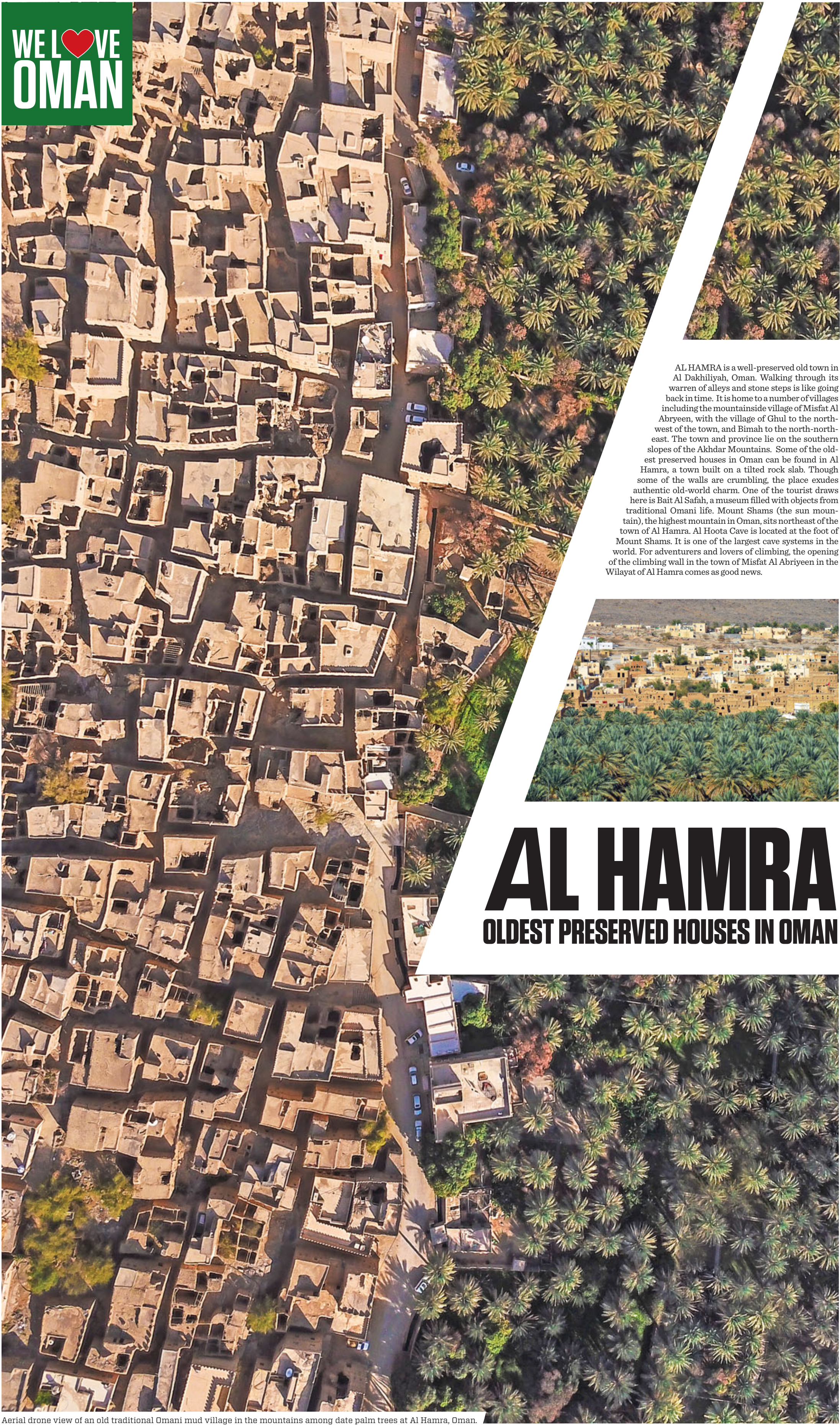
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OMAN





AL HAMRA is a well-preserved old town in Al Dakhiliyah, Oman. Walking through its warren of alleys and stone steps is like going back in time. It is home to a number of villages including the mountainside village of Misfat Al Abryeen, with the village of Ghul to the north-west of the town, and Bimah to the north-north-east. The town and province lie on the southern slopes of the Akhdar Mountains. Some of the oldest preserved houses in Oman can be found in Al Hamra, a town built on a tilted rock slab. Though some of the walls are crumbling, the place exudes authentic old-world charm. One of the tourist draws here is Bait Al Safah, a museum filled with objects from traditional Omani life. Mount Shams (the sun mountain), the highest mountain in Oman, sits northeast of the town of Al Hamra. Al Hoota Cave is located at the foot of Mount Shams. It is one of the largest cave systems in the world. For adventurers and lovers of climbing, the opening of the climbing wall in the town of Misfat Al Abriyeen in the Wilayat of Al Hamra comes as good news.

AL HAMRA

OLDEST PRESERVED HOUSES IN OMAN

Aerial drone view of an old traditional Omani mud village in the mountains among date palm trees at Al Hamra, Oman.