

MEET ON PROMOTING TOURIST SPOTS IN NORTH AL BATINAH

The tourism committee of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) branch in North Al Batinah Governorate, held a meeting to discuss its participation in a campaign to promote tourist attractions in the Wilayat of North Al Batinah. **>A2**



HIS MAJESTY THE SULTAN CONGRATULATES KING OF MOROCCO

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to King Mohammed VI of the Kingdom of Morocco on the occasion of his birthday. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere congratulations along with his best wishes of good health, wellbeing and a long life to King Mohammed VI, praying to the Almighty Allah for the return of this and similar occasions on King Mohammed and on his country's people with achievement of aspirations of further progress and prosperity. **-ONA**



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NCSI REPORT

Road mishaps killed over 20 children in '21

Times News Service

MUSCAT: More than 53 per cent of road traffic accidents in 2021 were caused by speeding and over 20 children under the age of 7 years were among the victims. Traffic accidents in Oman during 2021 caused the death of 24 children under the age of 7 years, at a rate of two children every month, according to a National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) report. **>FULL STORY ON A3**



37°
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TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES



OMAN

Ministry plans Jabal Akhdar tourism fest

1 The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has unveiled the first-of-a-kind tourism festival for Al Jabal Al Akhdar. To be known as Al Jabal Al Akhdar Tourism Festival, it will take place between August 23 and 27 2022. **>A2**

WORLD

EU plans to stretch monkeypox jab supply

2 The European Medicines Agency (EMA) on Friday approved a way of stretching supplies of the Imvanex monkeypox vaccine to inoculate up to five times more people. **>A6**

MARKET

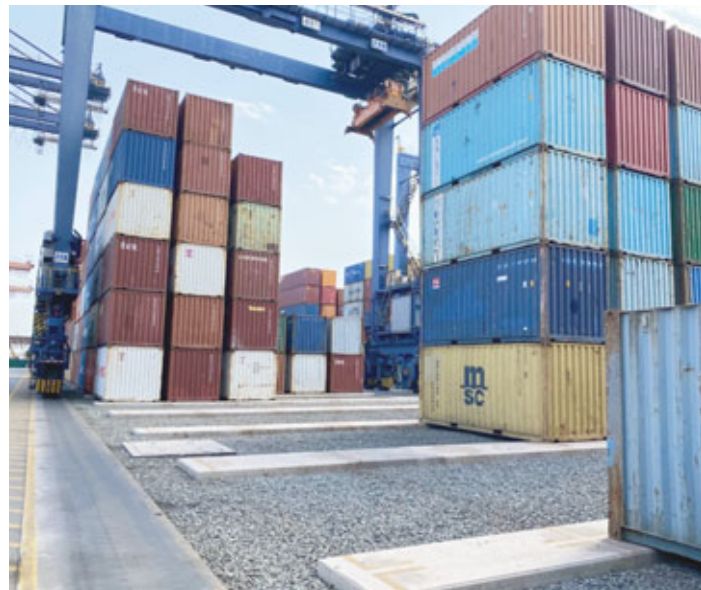
Sohar International authorised capital up

3 Sohar International Extraordinary General Meeting held for its shareholders on August 18 has approved an increase in its authorised share capital to OMR1 billion. **>B1**



VALUE OF INSURED SALES OF OMANI EXPORTS SOAR BY 179% IN FIRST HALF

Credit Oman continues efforts to encourage Omani product exports to world markets by giving protection to exporters and local vendors



MUSCAT: The total value of insured sales of Omani exports and the local sales in the first half of this year surged by 179 percent to reach OMR153.404 million compared to OMR55.032 during the same period in 2021.

Credit Oman in a statement to the Oman News Agency said the bulk of value of insured sales of exports from the Sultanate of Oman to the other countries stood at OMR93.630 million registering an increase of 183 percent compared to the same period of last

year at OMR33.079 million.

The total value of insured sales for local sales amounted to OMR59.773 million, an increase of 172 percent compared to OMR21.952 million during the same period in 2021.

Credit Oman said it is extending continued efforts to encourage exports and Omani products to reach the world markets through protection of exporters and local vendors against com-

mercial and non-commercial risks related to bankruptcy or insolvency of buyers or their failure in repayment after acceptance of the goods that meet the terms of the contract of export.

Credit Oman also contributes to the growth of the volume of the business of exporters and local sellers through the increase of the volume of production and exports, the company said its statement. **-ONA**

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CAMPAIGN PLANNED

Meet held on promoting tourist attractions in North Al Batinah

SOHAR: The tourism committee of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) branch in North Al Batinah Governorate, held a meeting to discuss its participation in a campaign to promote tourist attractions in the Wilayat of North Al Batinah. Abdulaziz Mohammed Al Ajmi, Head of the committee, said that the panel is taking steps to prepare a vision for the tourism promotion campaign scheduled to be held in October 2022. The campaign coincides with Oman's hosting a round of the World Men's Volleyball Beach Pro Tour Futures. — **ONA**



Tourism festival to be held in Al Jabal Al Akhdar

The extravaganza, to be known as Al Jabal Al Akhdar Tourism Festival, is scheduled to take place between 23 and 27 August 2022



MUSCAT: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has unveiled the first-of-a-kind tourism festival in the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdar (Green Mountain), Governorate of A'Dakhiliyah. The extravaganza, to be known as Al Jabal Al Akhdar Tourism Festival, is scheduled to take place between 23 and 27 August 2022. It is being organised in co-operation with Office of Governor of A'Dakhiliyah, Office of the Wali of Al Jabal Al Akhdar and 'Oman on horseback' team. The festival features a variety of entertainment and tourism events that shed light on the unique tourist potential of Oman's Al Jabal Al Akhdar (Green Mountain) area. It will highlight tourist trends, as well as innovative initiatives for encouraging domestic tourism and attracting different segments of visitors. The festival includes activities like mountain adventures undertaken by horse riders. It will also be an opportunity to highlight the pomegranate season and its significance to the local community. The event fits with the approaches of Oman Vision 2040, through emphasis on social welfare programmes and balanced economic development for the country's governorates. Organised at a height of 3,000 metres above sea level, Al Jabal Al Akhdar Tourism Festival is set to be an exotic annual extravaganza in its own right. — **ONA**



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Road accidents killed over 20 children in 2021

On an average two children fell victim to traffic accidents every month during the course of last year, according to NCSI's traffic system report

Times News Service

MUSCAT: More than 53 per cent of road traffic accidents in 2021 were caused by speeding and over 20 children under the age of 7 years were victims of these accidents.



Traffic accidents in the Sultanate of Oman during 2021 caused the death of 24 children under the age of 7 years, at a rate of two children every month, according to the traffic system report published by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

According to the report, 84 children under the age of 7 were injured in the traffic accidents last year, constituting 5.3 per cent of the total traffic accident victims in 2021.

The report also revealed that

more than half of the deaths in traffic accidents were in the age group of 26 to 50 years, that is, 221 people, constituting 51.2 per cent of the traffic deaths in Oman.

Over 53 percent or 820 traffic accidents in 2021 were caused by speed, 282 due to misconduct, 453 due to negligence, 122 caused by disregard for safe distance norms, 56 due to overtaking, 41 due to defects in vehicle and 65 traffic accidents were caused by other reasons.

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FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 2022-23

Indian School Darsait to host science, technology and innovation mega event

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Science Technology and Innovation (STAI), the mega event which is conducted under the aegis of the Board of Directors, Indian Schools in Oman for the Academic Year 2022-23, is hosted by Indian School Darsait in a blended form. It is a platform for young brains to explore their talents and to apply their ingenious skills.

STAI attempts to spread an interest, develop the curiosity and kindle the young minds to think beyond the horizons and to feel the euphoria as they progress in inventions in the field of Mathematics, Science and IT.

A press meet in this connection was organised on Saturday, 20th August 2022 at Indian School Darsait. Dr Sivakumar Manickam, Chairman, Board of Directors, Indian Schools in Oman who chaired the press meet shared the details of the upcoming mega event STAI-2022.

The other officials from the Board of Directors who attended the press meet were Syed Salman, Vice Chairman, Ashwini Sawrikar, Finance Director, Sirajudeen Nhelat, Academic Chair and Vinoba M.P. Senior Principal and Edu-



cation Advisor. From Indian School Darsait Ajit Vasudevan, Convenor - SMC and In Charge - STAI 2022, and Amar Srivastava, Principal were present during the press meet.

STAI 2022 comes with a tag line 'Ingenious Creative Mind' which showcases talented students from Indian Schools across Oman and for the first time binding private schools in the Sultanate too under one umbrella. The event fascinates the science enthusiasts from different schools who collaborate to share their common interest and take great inputs, to dwell in the moment and to accelerate their views and skills for their further development in the chosen fields.

A total number of 18 schools have registered with around 400 participants for various events in

the field of science, mathematics and IT showcasing their insatiable hunger for creating and presenting brand new innovations which include code wars, mobile app development, digital symposium, science and mathematics exhibition, science skit, and e-Magazine. The inaugural ceremony of the event will be held on 27th August and on 3rd September an exhibition showcasing the talents of students in Science and Mathematics is arranged followed by the valedictory function.

The imagination and efforts of the aspiring young scientists of classes V to XII under the junior and senior category are set to enthrall the audience. The event will be inaugurated by Dr. Ali Saud Al Bimani, Vice Chancellor, National University of Sci-

ence and Technology.

Dr Sivakumar Manickam in his address appreciated the efforts and time put in by the administrators, teachers and students of all the participating schools and highlighted the importance of science and technology in children's life.

He added that the research and efforts will provide the students innumerable opportunities for the advancement of career and to pursue the field of interest, equipped with enhanced creative theories and adaptations or discoveries which could pave their path to reach greater heights.

The Chairman spelled out the significant achievements of the Board during the past two years. The Board has started Indian School Virtual Learning Environment and Samriddhi Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching through which Psychometric Assessment was carried out in February this year for the students of Classes IX and X. A similar test will be conducted in view of Avenir 2022 for all senior students to measure their skills, talent and ability which will help them in selecting the stream or their carrier.

Full story @ timesofoman.com/oman

IN WASHINGTON

Omani cultural evening held

MUSCAT: The Sultan Qaboos Centre for Culture in Washington organised an Omani cultural evening, introducing the civilization, history and the renewed renaissance witnessed by the Sultanate of Oman.

The evening's activities includ-

ed introducing the Omani civilization and history and the renewable renaissance witnessed by Oman, and its rich tourism components and heritage and cultural materials, in addition to displaying some Omani industries, products and food. — *Times News Service*

"AZADI KA AMRIT MAHOTSAV"



GREAT ENTHUSIASM AND PATRIOTISM: The Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman and other dignitaries at the ceremony. — Supplied picture

Indian School Bousher holds 76th Independence Day celebrations

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The 76th Independence Day of India was celebrated with great enthusiasm and patriotic fervour on the 15th August 2022, as "Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav" in Indian School Bousher.

It was a Red-letter Day in the history of ISB as the Chief Guest the Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman, His Excellency Shri Amit Narang and Mrs. Divya Narang along with Indian Navy's Contingent from INS Chennai under Commander Praveen Mathur, Lieutenant Commanders Abhay Dwivedi and Gulshan Kumar graced this momentous occasion.

The event was attended by Dr. Sivakumar Manickam, Chairman Board of Directors, Syed Salman, Vice Chairman of the Board, Ashwini Sawrikar, Finance Director of the Board, Vinoba M.P., Senior Principal and Education Advisor Ajayan Poyyara, President School Management Committee, Dr Anchan C.K., Vice President School Management Committee, and the officials from the Indian Embassy, the Members of the School Management Committee, Bhavesh Bhalerao, Principal of Indian School Bousher, teachers, students and their parents.

His Excellency Shri Amit Narang witnessed the march past parade of contingents from the Indian Schools in the capital area, viz., Indian School Muscat, Indian School Darsait, Indian School Wadi Kabir, Indian School Al Ghubra, Indian School Al Seeb, and Indian School Bousher.

All the Indian Schools displayed the parade marvelously. The programme commenced with a patriotic song by the School Choir.

His Excellency the Ambassador addressed the gathering with his influential speech in appreciation of students for their dedication and love towards the Nation.

He explicated the meaning of freedom by quoting the famous talisman of Mahatma Gandhi, "Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test - Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him."

His Excellency also shared valuable inputs from the President of India's Address to the Nation.

It was followed by a patriotic dance performance by the students depicting various States of India through colourful gesture

and rhythm.

A video from the tiny tots from Grade 1 & 2 depicted the tableau representing some of the Indian states' attire and culture. It was well-appreciated by one and all.

His Excellency Shri Amit Narang was felicitated by Chairman Dr. Sivakumar Manickam and Finance Director Ashwini Sawrikar. The Naval officers were felicitated by President Mr. Ajayan Poyyara and Vice President Dr. Anchan C.K.

The Indian Navy contingent was honoured by other School Management Committee members. The event was memorialised by the presence of the dignitaries from the Board of Directors and the School Management Committee.

The Dance performance on Patriotic theme was performed by the students with their graceful movements and expressions.

The event concluded with the Vote of Thanks.

His Excellency Shri Amit Narang was escorted to inaugurate 'Green Studio - Bousherian's Buzz', the new opening for the Indian School Bousher YouTube Channel.

The Honourable Guest inaugurated the Studio for the YouTube channel and it was a grandiose moment for Indian School Bousher to be cherished forever.



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68/2022/MM/-PA-23	Supply of Electrical Materials	25/- OMR	06/09/2022	22/09/2022	26/09/2022
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EU approves plan to stretch supplies of monkeypox vaccine

The European Medicines Agency said the Imvanex jab can now be given just below the top layer of skin instead of fully below the skin

BRUSSELS: The European Union's drug regulator on Friday approved a way of stretching supplies of the monkeypox vaccine to treat up to five times more people. The European Medicines Agency (EMA) said the Imvanex jab can now be given just below the top layer of skin (intradermally), instead of fully below the skin (subcutaneously). The advice is in line with the approach endorsed by US regulators, who backed using one vial of Bavarian Nordic's vaccine to administer up to five separate doses. The Amsterdam-based agency said the temporary measure would allow EU states to stretch out their limited stocks of the vaccine.

Similar level of protection offered
Despite giving one-fifth of the originally intended dose, the shot produces similar levels of antibodies, a statement from EMA said, adding, however, that there was a



greater risk of skin irritation. People still need to get two doses, about four weeks apart. European Health Commissioner Stella Kyriakides said the decision was "extremely important as it allows the vaccination of five times as many people with the vaccine supply we have." "This ensures greater access to vaccination for citizens at risk and health care workers," she said in a statement. The unusual recommendation acknowledges that there are extremely limited supplies of the vaccine, which was originally developed against smallpox. Bavarian Nordic has said it expects to have about 16 million doses available this year.

Germany currently giving just one dose
Due to the lack of available vials, Britain, Canada and Germany are administering one dose per person instead of two, which may offer less or less-durable protection. The EMA authorized Imvanex in July based on experimental data that suggested it would work; the World Health Organization has estimated that the shot is about 85% effective at preventing monkeypox. The latest outbreak of monkeypox is unusual as it has occurred in more than 80 countries outside of Africa, where it does not usually spread. More than 40,000 confirmed cases, including a handful of

deaths, have been confirmed. **Monkeypox cases up 20% in two weeks**
WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said this week that monkeypox cases had increased by 20% over the past two weeks. The global health body reported that nearly all infections have been reported in men who have sex with other men. Monkeypox spreads when people have close physical contact with an infected person's lesions, their clothing or bed sheets. Most people recover without needing treatment, but the lesions can be extremely painful and more severe cases can result in complications including brain inflammation or even death. **AW**



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ON AUTOPILOT MODE

Two pilots flying at 37,000 feet fall asleep, miss runway to land



NEW DELHI: Two pilots flying a plane from Sudan to Ethiopia fell asleep when the aircraft was 37,000 feet above sea level, and missed their landing. The incident happened on Monday (August 15), and the pilots subsequently succeeded in safely landing the aircraft without reporting any injuries, according to The Aviation Herald. Flight ET-343 – a Boeing 737 – was scheduled to land at the Addis Ababa airport. The Herald report said the aircraft continued past the top of descent and followed the route planned by the Flight Management Computer (FMC) without, however, descending. Aviation analyst Alex Macheras tweeted: "Deeply concerning incident at Africa's largest air-

line – Ethiopian Airlines Boeing 737 #ET343 was still at cruising altitude of 37,000ft by the time it reached destination Addis Ababa. Why hadn't it started to descend for landing? Both pilots were asleep." The flight was on autopilot mode the whole time the pilots were asleep and failed to descend. The Air Traffic Controllers (ATC) tried to contact them multiple times but did not receive a response. When the flight overflew the runway, the autopilot got disconnected, and sounded an alarm. It was this sound that finally woke the pilots up. They quickly maneuvered the aircraft and safely landed it nearly 25 minutes after overflying the runway. **ANI**

FOR UN HUMAN RIGHTS

India contributes \$400,000 to UN trust funds, underlines its support for human rights

GENEVA : Reflecting its commitment to global promotion and protection of human rights and support for UN Human Rights, India has contributed \$400,000 to four voluntary trust funds. The funds are for Victims of Torture, Technical Cooperation, Implementation of Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and for supporting participation of least developed countries (LDCs)/ Small Island Developing States (SIDS). In a Tweet, India's Permanent Mission of India at UN wrote, "Reflecting our commitment to global promotion & protection of human rights and support for @ UNHumanRights India has contributed \$ 400,000 to 4 Voluntary Trust Funds on Torture, Technical Cooperation, Implementation of UPR & LDCs/SIDS." As a founding member of the United Nations, India strongly supports the purposes and principles of the UN and has made significant contributions to implementing the goals of the Charter,



and the evolution of the UN's specialized programmes and agencies. India's deepening engagement with the United Nations is based on its steadfast commitment to multilateralism and dialogue as the key for achieving shared goals and addressing common challenges. India strongly believes that the United Nations and the norms of international relations that it has fostered remain the most efficacious means for tackling today's

global challenges including those related to sustainable development, poverty eradication, environment, climate change, peace building and peacekeeping, terrorism, disarmament, human rights, migration and health and pandemics. The UN also has an important role in new emerging areas such as cyber security, space and frontier technologies like Artificial Intelligence. India is steadfast in its efforts to work with the comity of Nations in the spirit of multilateralism to achieve comprehensive and equitable solutions to all global challenges. As a strong votary of reformed multilateralism, India favours a comprehensive reform of the United Nations and its institutions, to make them reflective of 21st century realities, thereby facilitating stronger collective action. In 2007, India became the first country to deploy an all-women contingent for Formed Police Unit to the UN peacekeeping mission in Liberia. **ANI**

ON LOCAL SERVICES

Rail strikes bring transport network to a crawl in London

LONDON: Rail strikes broadened to the entire country on Saturday, following two days of disruption in London on local services, as workers across various sectors pushed for pay hikes, among other demands. Transport for London (TfL), responsible for most of the capital's network, said on its website that Saturday's strike "will affect all National Rail train operating companies on Saturday." TfL advised people to "only travel on national rail services if absolutely necessary." Meanwhile, buses services are expected to be affected in west and southwest London, and parts of Surrey and Tube services will also probably face some disruptions, TfL said. The disruptions are likely to spill over to Sunday. **Unions striking over jobs, pay and pensions**
On Friday, a strike by London Underground workers brought the British capital's transport system to a grinding halt. This came a day after a nationwide walkout by



railway staff. The members of the Rail, Maritime and Transport Union are striking over jobs, pay and pensions, amid decades-high inflation and soaring cost of living. Commuters, having a harrowing time due to the strikes, appear to be unsympathetic to the cause. "I'm not happy at all about this strike. I didn't think much about what they're claiming. I'm more focused about how I'm going to get to work now," Arlene Morson, a 52-year-old sales consultant, told AFP. Then again, French finance worker Joachim, 21, told AFP he was slightly confused about all the fuss: "When I look at France and the number of strikes – here the metro closes for one day and

everyone talks about it!" **Labor disputes brewing as costs of living rise**
The dispute has continued for several months now, with several strikes during that period. The UK government has taken a hard line on strikes, refusing to participate further in talks on the modernizations and reforms that form part of the unions' complaints. Currently, the government's lame duck status – with Boris Johnson still in 10 Downing Street while the Conservative Party's longwinded leadership contest drags on – makes any action from Transport Minister Grant Shapps or the government even less likely. **AW**

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FORMER PRESIDENT

Gotabaya Rajapaksa set for return to Sri Lanka next week: Report

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's former President Gotabaya Rajapaksa is all set to return next week to the island nation that he was forced to flee in July after massive protests against him, local media reported.

Former Sri Lankan Ambassador to Russia, Udayanga Weeratunga, who is also related to Gotabaya, hinted that Rajapaksa will return to the country on August 24, the Daily Mirror said on Wednesday. Sri Lanka has been facing its worst economic crisis, which led to massive protests in the country that forced Rajapaksa to flee abroad and also hand in his resignation last month.

Responding to a question on Rajapaksha's return, Weeratunga said, "The date could change. I am saying it with responsibility today. I can't help if he changes the date later."

Weeratunga was arrested in February 2022 and released on bail several months later told mediapersons after giving a statement to the Criminal Investigation Department with regard to embezzling millions of US dollars in a deal connected to procurement of MiG-27 fighter jets to Sri Lanka from Ukraine in 2006, when Rajapaksa served as the Secretary to the Defence Ministry.

When asked whether Gotabaya Rajapaksa would engage in politics again, Weeratunga said he was not a clever politician but a clever officer.

"I don't think our people should be foolish again. He is not a clever person as a politician. He is a clever military officer. He does not have any qualities that Mahinda Rajapaksa has. That is why he got all wrong," he added as quoted by Daily Mirror.

Weeratunga said the former President Rajapaksha would render service to the country.

Gotabaya Rajapaksa arrived in Thailand last week following his departure from Singapore. He was granted entry into Thailand following a request from the Sri Lankan government, according to media reports. **ANI**

OVERNIGHT SIEGE

Death toll from attack on Mogadishu hotel rises to 12

MOGADISHU: At least 12 people have died in an overnight siege after terrorist group al-Shabab attacked a hotel in Mogadishu, Somalia, on Friday.

Security forces were working to retake the building, much of which has been destroyed in the process, early on Saturday.

"So far we have confirmed 12 people, mostly civilians, died," Mohammed, an intelligence officer who only gave one name, told Reuters. "The operation is about to be concluded but it is still going on."



What happened at the hotel?

The Hayat Hotel is located near Mogadishu's international airport. It is a popular venue with lawmakers and other government officials.

Al-Shabab militants blasted their way into the hotel on Friday evening with two car bombs, sending huge plumes of smoke over the area. The attackers then opened fire on guests and staff.

"We were having tea near the hotel lobby when we heard the first blast followed by gunfire. I immediately rushed toward hotel rooms on the ground floor, and I locked [myself in]," one eyewitness told the Associated Press. "The militants went straight upstairs and started shooting. I was

inside the room until the security forces arrived and rescued me."

The state-run Somali National News Agency said the "unsung heroes of Somali Police Special Unit" rescued dozens of people during the attack, including children.

What is al-Shabab?

Al-Shabab is a terrorist group linked to al-Qaida that has been fighting against the Somali government — and foreign peacekeepers — for more than 10 years. It seeks to impose a strict interpretation of Sharia law and has been known to stone women to death in the areas that it controls.

The militant group has claimed responsibility for numerous attacks in Somalia and east Africa, including the 80-hour siege of Nairobi's Westgate shopping mall in 2013 in which at least 67 people died.

Al-Shabab spokesperson Abdi-aziz Abu-Musab said on Saturday that its forces were still in control of the hotel and that they had "inflicted heavy casualties."

Last month, Somalia's new President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud said that ending Al-Shabab's insurgency required more than a military approach, but that his government would negotiate with the group only when the time was right.

Earlier this month, new Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre announced that high-profile al-Shabab defector Muktar Robow, who previously served as the group's former deputy leader and spokesman, would be the country's new religion minister. **DW**

SHOWING SUPPORT

Salman Rushdie's friends, authors rally in support after attack

NEW YORK: Salman Rushdie's friends and writer colleagues spoke out against extremists and in support of his life and work during a rally on the steps of the central branch of the New York Public Library in midtown Manhattan Friday. The rally was held a week after he was attacked in a rural part of the US state.

Rushdie was hospitalised and placed on a ventilator following the stabbing attack. His agent, Andrew Wylie, has said his condition has improved since then.

What happened at the rally for Rushdie?

Writers so famous they are celebrities, including Paul Auster, Gay Talese, Jeffrey Eugenides and Kiran Desai, were joined by editor Tina Brown in rallying to Rushdie's cause and sharing their well wishes and reminiscences of all Rushdie stood for as a writer and symbol of free expression.

They read from his works and shared reminiscences of what all his work meant to them in their lives.

Eugenides recalled traveling to London and deciding he wanted to meet Rushdie at a time the author was on vacation in Italy, years before the declaration of a 1989 fatwa. Eugenides said he merely left a note with his regards with Rushdie's then mother-in-law at his then place of residence.

"That was the world we used to live in," Eugenides said.

The authors read passages from Rushdie's works on the steps of the New York Public Library's majestic central branch at 42nd Street and Fifth Avenue. They had a prolific collection of novels, essays and speeches to choose from — as well as from "The Satanic Verses," the book that led to Rushdie's troubles and Khomeini's fatwa.

After Khomeini denounced the work as blasphemous and issued a fatwa against him, Rushdie spent years in hiding, though over the past couple of decades he had lived openly again in New York City with minimal security.

The New York Public Library, Rushdie's publisher Penguin Random House, and the literary and human rights organisation PEN America organised Friday's gathering. **DW**



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SECOND ODI

All-round India down Zimbabwe by five wickets in second ODI, clinch series 2-0

HARARE: Top knocks from Sanju Samson, Shubman Gill and Shikhar Dhawan coupled with world-class bowling from Team India crushed Zimbabwe by five wickets in the second ODI of three-match series here at Harare on Saturday.

With this victory, India has a 2-0 lead in the series and have captured it with one match to go. The day was not memorable for Zimbabwe as they failed as a batting unit miserably. Though Luke Jongwe gave Team India a small scare during their chase with two quick wickets, the hosts do not have a lot of positives to walk away with. Samson (43*), Gill and Dhawan (33 each) played some good knocks for India.

Chasing 162, India was off to a shaky start. KL Rahul could not do anything special on his return, scoring only one run in five balls before he was trapped leg before wicket by Victor Nyauchi. India was at 5/1 at this point.

Then Shikhar Dhawan and Shubman Gill carried on the innings, ticking the scoreboard for a while. Both batters hit some great shots that reached the fence. Their 42-run stand was broken when Dhawan was caught for 33



by Innocent Kaia at square leg on a Tanaka Chivanga delivery.

Then Gill and Ishan Kishan continued the chase. Gill was the aggressor throughout the innings while Kishan did not hit big. At the end of 10 overs, India was at 75/2, with Gill (33*) and Ishan Kishan (4*) on the crease.

The 36-run stand between the duo was broken after Kishan when medium-pacer Luke Jongwe dislodged his stumps. India at this point at 3/83.

Jongwe produced another breakthrough for Zimbabwe, dismissing Gill for 33 after he was caught by Brad Evans at deep third man.

Deepak Hooda and Sanju Samson had the responsibility to keep India going after these sudden hiccups. The duo started playing an aggressive brand of cricket to help India get those final few runs.

Samson in particular was more aggressive. He brought up a fifty-run stand between himself and Hooda with a huge six in the 23rd over.

However, Sikander Raza delivered a breakthrough to Zimbabwe, though really late. Deepak Hooda's stumps were dislodged when he was at 25 off 36 balls. Half of Team India was back in the pavilion at 153 runs.

— ANI

FOOTBALL

Real Madrid coach Ancelotti confirms Casemiro's imminent departure

MADRID: Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti on Friday confirmed that midfielder Casemiro is on the verge of leaving the club to join Manchester United in a deal thought to be worth up to 70 million euros (about 70.4 million U.S. dollars).

Rumours about Manchester United being interested in the 30-year-old began to circulate

this week, with Casemiro to be offered a five-year contract to move to Old Trafford.

Friday morning saw Casemiro omitted from the Real Madrid squad to travel to play Celta Vigo on Saturday and when asked about the player's future in his pre-game press conference, Ancelotti was very clear.

"I talked to (Casemiro) this

morning and he wants to try a new challenge, a new opportunity," explained Ancelotti, adding that "The club and I understand it."

The Brazilian joined Real Madrid in 2013 and has won three La Liga and five Champions League titles with the club, along with three UEFA Supercups and three World Club Championships. Xinhua



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INDIA'S INFLATION RATE

Though inflation has moderated and plateaued since its recent peak of April 2022, it remains unacceptably and uncomfortably high, Reserve Bank of India Governor Shaktikanta Das said in his intervention during the Monetary Policy Committee Meeting.

MARKET BUSINESS & FINANCE



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SUNDAY, AUGUST 21, 2022



OMANTEL'S 5G COVERAGE

Omantel has come a long way in leading the 5G deployment in Oman. In a breakthrough achievement, the company has now covered the populated areas in the governorates of Muscat, Al Batinah South and Al Batinah North with real 5G speeds.

Sohar International approves increase in authorised share capital to OMR1bn

The Extraordinary General Meeting ratified all the items on the agenda which included increasing the authorised share capital of the company from OMR400 million to OMR1 billion while amending Article 5 of the Articles of Association accordingly

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Sohar International held its Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) for its shareholders on August 18. The EGM ratified all the items on the agenda which included increasing the authorised share capital of the company from OMR400 million to OMR1 billion while amending Article 5 of the Articles



EGM: The meeting was presided over by Mohamed Mahfoodh Al Ardhi, Chairman of the Board of Directors, and attended by other members of the board, the executive management team of Sohar International and the shareholders of the bank. - Supplied picture

of Association accordingly.

It also approved the issuance of up to 75,000 additional Tier 1 capital instruments in the form of perpetual bonds comprising an issue of up to 50,000 bonds with a greenshoe option for up to an additional 25,000 bonds on a private placement basis, for OMR1,000 per bond, aggregating up to OMR75 million.

The meeting was presided over by Mohamed Mahfoodh Al Ardhi, Chairman of the Board of Directors, and attended by other members of the board, the executive

management team of Sohar International and the shareholders of the bank.

Held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Qurum, the EGM was streamed via the electronic platform for convening General Meetings which is accessible through the Muscat Clearing and Depository's website (www.mcd.gov.om).

In addition, the EGM authorised the Board of Directors to determine the other terms of issuance in relation to the Tier 1 issue and take all the necessary procedures and actions to complete the process.

Commenting on the bank's steadfast performance and growing reverence, Mohamed Mahfoodh Al Ardhi said, "As the bank progresses alongside the nation and economy, responding to the evolving market conditions and needs, Sohar International continues to deliver on multiple fronts, contributing to the country's progress and supporting the larger community.

"The increase in the bank's capital will enable the bank to further grow, and in the process, play a significant role within Oman as well

as contribute to Oman's Vision 2040. We are hence more fortified than ever before to increase market share and add value to all our stakeholders."

Sohar International's financial indicators play testimony to its stellar performance in the past quarter. Profit for the period ending 30 June 2022 increased by 21.5 per cent to reach OMR 18.47 million compared to OMR 15.20 million for the same period last year. Driven by an increase in loans, advances, and Islamic financing the bank was also able to grow its

total assets by 8.2 per cent to OMR 4,364 million as of 30 June 2022.

Meanwhile, the bank's customer deposits also increased by 11.5 per cent to OMR 2,568 million as compared to OMR 2,304 million on 30 June 2021. Further attesting to the highly successful rights issue in Q3 2021 of OMR 50 million, Sohar International also witnessed an increase in shareholder's equity from OMR340.3 million to OMR396.0 million.

Sohar International's Chief Executive Officer, Ahmed Al Musalmi said, "By staying committed to its growth strategy, Sohar International has continued to play a proactive role in Oman's socioeconomic development, actively work to provide compelling offerings, transform customer experience thru well-qualified workforce and cutting edge technologies.

"The bank has been progressing well on its strategic agenda toward realising its vision of becoming a world-leading Omani service company that helps customers, communities and people to prosper and grow.

"Backed by the strong support of our shareholders, we are confident that Sohar International will continue to deliver market-leading performance and continue to contribute meaningfully to the socioeconomic development of Oman."

In line with the bank's vision, Sohar International will continue to set industry benchmarks while enhancing its market propositions, spearheading innovation, and delivering premium services to customers.

PIPELINE

Gazprom to shut Nord Stream 1 for 3 days

MOSCOW: The Nord Stream 1 pipeline, which supplies gas from Russia to Europe under the Baltic Sea, will be shut down from August 31 to September 2 for maintenance, Gazprom said on Friday.

"It is necessary to carry out maintenance every 1,000 hours" of operation, the Russian majority state-owned energy company said in a statement.

"On August 31, 2022, the only Trent 60 gas compression unit will be stopped for three days for maintenance" involving technicians from Germany's Siemens, Gazprom said.

Following the maintenance, flows of 33 million cubic meters a day will resume, it added. This corresponds to 20% of the pipeline's daily maximum output, as Nord Stream 1's full capacity is 167 million cubic meters per day.

Due to previous allegedly necessary repairs, Gazprom had drastically reduced gas deliveries to Germany because of an absent turbine. German officials have repeatedly said the move was an attempt by Russia to punish Germany for its stance on the war in Ukraine and for imposing sanctions on Russia.

Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine began in February, Berlin has rushed to wean itself off Russian gas. Across Germany, gas



storage levels are at 78 per cent, according to data from European gas storage operators. However, Germany's dependence on Russian gas has raised serious concerns about energy shortages during the cold winter months.

Earlier on Friday, Wolfgang Kubicki, deputy leader of the Free Democrats (FDP), a junior coalition partner in Chancellor Olaf Scholz's government, suggested that opening Russia's blocked Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline could be the answer to a looming energy emergency in the winter. However,

his statements met with widespread criticism, including from his own FDP.

After Gazprom's announcement, European gas prices soared to a new record high at the close of trading on Friday. The Dutch TTF Gas Futures contract jumped to a closing high of €257.40 (\$258.30) amid fears of winter energy shortages.

S&P joined Fitch in upgrading Ukraine's credit rating on Friday after the war-torn nation last week secured a two-year reprieve on its foreign debt from creditors.

Boosting the country's credit

score of foreign debt to CCC+ "reflects strong committed international financial support to Ukraine, coupled with eroding, albeit still relatively high, foreign exchange reserves," S&P Global Ratings said in a statement.

Ratings agency Fitch raised Ukraine's credit score on Thursday. However, even with the upgrade, S&P warned that "given the ongoing conflict with Russia, Ukraine's ability to stay current on its debt is highly dependent on factors largely outside of government control." -nw

DATA

German producer prices show record rise

BERLIN: Germans paid 37.2 per cent more to producers for commercial goods in July compared to the same month the previous year, according to new data from the country's federal statistics agency released on Friday.

The new report from the Destatis agency indicates that natural gas and electricity are the main drivers of the increase in prices.

More than half of the increases for July could be attributed to energy costs; the year-on-year increase was just 14.7 per cent when excluding them.

Producer prices, the amount charged for goods by sellers, are considered one of the clearest indicators of inflation.

"This was the largest rise compared to the same month of the previous year since data began to be collected in 1949," Destatis said.



Energy prices have doubled because of the considerable increase in the amount paid for natural gas and electricity. Power plants paid 234.7 per cent more for natural gas in July compared to last year, and industrial users paid 194.7 per cent more. The price of electricity increased by 125.4 per cent and that of petroleum

products by 41.8 per cent.

In June, the rate of change compared to the same month of the previous year was at 32.7 per cent, and economists had previously predicted this rate might flatten out or even recede, only for the rate to accelerate in July.

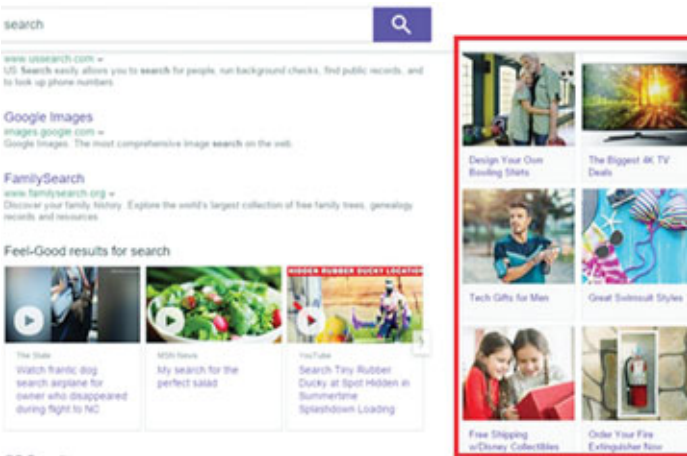
Prices paid to producers are

seen as a precursor to the development of inflation. The statistics in the report refer to the price straight out of the gate of factories, before the products are further processed or sold.

Two government measures aimed at driving down inflation for consumers, the tax cut on fuel and the 9-euro ticket for regional transport, are set to expire at the end of the month. This means that higher inflation rates are expected in autumn.

Energy prices have soared as Germany attempts to move away from the use of imported natural gas from Russia in response to Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. Before the start of the invasion, global inflation was already on the rise due to supply chain disruptions and other economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic. -nw

REPORT



1.3mn users encountered browser extension threats in the first half of 2022

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Kaspersky researchers have analysed what risks innocent-looking browser extensions pose to users and the activities of cybercriminals hiding threats under add-ons.

In the first half of 2022, more than 1.3 million users were affected by threats, hiding in browser extensions, at least once, which is over 70 per cent of the number of users affected by the same threat throughout the whole of 2021 – with still another half of the year to go.

Mimicking popular apps, such as Google Translator or extensions with useful functionality like PDF Converter or Video Downloader, threats in browser extensions can insert advertisements, collect data about users' browsing histories and even search for login credentials, making it one of the most desirable tools for cybercriminals.

Since the beginning of 2020, Kaspersky products have prevented approximately 6 million users from downloading threats disguised as browser extensions.

The most prominent threat spread under the guise of browser extensions has been adware – unwanted software designed to throw advertisements up on the screen. Such advertisements are usually based on the browsing history to catch users' interest, embed banners in web pages or redirect them to affiliate pages that the developers can earn money from, instead of legitimate search engine ads. From Janu-

ary 2020 to June 2022, Kaspersky experts observed more than 4.3 million unique users faced adware hiding in browser extensions, which means approximately 70% of all affected users have encountered this threat.

Adware can track everything the user searches for and then promote these products with affiliate ads on search engine

Malicious and unwanted add-ons have also been found to be distributed through official marketplaces. In 2020, Google removed 106 malicious browser extensions from its Chrome Web Store. All of them were being used to siphon sensitive user data, such as cookies and passwords, and even take screenshots. In total, these malicious extensions were downloaded 32 million times, putting the data of millions of users at risk.

However, this does not happen often, the main way malicious add-ons are distributed is through third-party resources. One of the threat families analysed by Kaspersky researchers in the report, dubbed FB Stealer, was spread solely through untrustworthy sites. FB Stealer is one of the most dangerous threat families because, in addition to the traditional search engine replacement and affiliate page redirection, FB Stealer is able to steal user credentials from Facebook.

When users tried to download a cracked software installer from third-party resources, such as SolarWinds Broadband Engineers Keymaker, they received a dangerous NullMixer Trojan.





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Omantel deploys 5G coverage to populated areas of Muscat, Batinah

Omantel has poured massive efforts into rolling 5G sites in populated areas across the country

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Omantel has come a long way in leading the 5G deployment in Oman. In a breakthrough achievement, the company has now covered the populated areas in the governorates of Muscat, Al Batinah South and Al Batinah North with real 5G speeds.

"We have successfully rolled out a large number of new 5G sites in the populated areas of Muscat, Al Batinah North and Al Batinah South governorates. These new sites will serve home internet and mobile internet alike, and users will get an optimum speed even at the edge of the coverage range," said Aladdin Bait Fadhil, Chief Commercial Officer at Omantel.

Similarly, Omantel has poured massive efforts into rolling 5G sites in populated areas across the



“

We have successfully rolled out a large number of new 5G sites in the populated areas of Muscat, Al Batinah North and Al Batinah South governorates. These new sites will serve home internet and mobile internet alike, and users will get an optimum speed even at the edge of the coverage range

Aladdin Bait Fadhil
Chief Commercial Officer at Omantel



Omantel has taken its services well beyond the traditional telecom offerings, and it is rapidly emerging as a youthful brand that adapts to people's lifestyles. 5G offers a seamless internet experience, and it takes home and mobile services to a whole new level of excellence. With the high throughput and ultra-low latency, customers can now experience immersive gaming, cloud gaming, Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR) capabilities and much more. Omantel was the first operator in Oman to announce the commercial launch of 5G for fixed home broadband and mobile.

Today, the company continues to bolster its 5G's leadership in the country with enhanced network coverage, versatile offerings, and strong partnerships.

Omantel is the Sultanate's first and leading integrated telecommunications services provider, enabling the digital society to flourish, allowing new ways of doing business and delivering a world of information, news, and entertainment. While striving to ensure optimum customer satisfaction, Omantel plays a key social role to provide the required support and subsidy to all sectors of Omani society.

SHARE MARKET

US stocks snap 4-week rally amid talks of another big rate hike by Federal Reserve

NEW YORK: Wall Street on Friday fell broadly for the first time in five weeks amid speculation that the Federal Reserve could embark on another major interest rate hike for September in a bid by the central bank to keep up with its fight against inflation.

The S&P 500 index, which represents the top 500 US stocks, closed Friday's session down 1.3 per cent. For the week, the S&P 500 lost 1.2 per cent.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average, which comprises stocks of 30 large US corporations, finished the day down 0.9%. For the week, the Dow fell 0.2 per cent.

The Nasdaq Composite Index, which comprises marquee names in technology such as Amazon, Apple, Netflix and Google, settled Friday's trade down 2 per cent. For the week, the Nasdaq tumbled 2.6 per cent.

Stocks gave up their upward



trajectory on Wednesday after the Fed's minutes from its July meeting failed to give a clear indication of the upcoming September 21 rate hike.

Fed officials have said that US rate hikes could slow at some point if inflation continues retreating from the four-decade highs seen earlier this year.

But some key policy-makers on the central bank's Federal Open Market Committee also wanted rates to be retained at a "sufficiently restrictive level" for an appreciable period to stop inflation in its tracks. "The data-dependent central bank is looking at a strong economy that could handle at the very

least a couple more massive 75 basis-point rate hikes if inflation does not cool quickly," Ed Moya, analyst at online trading brokerage OANDA, said.

Until the Fed's July meeting minutes released Wednesday, traders had been betting on the Fed raising rates by just 50 basis points at its next meeting in September, versus previous wagers for a 75 basis-point hike.

The Fed has carried out four rate hikes since March, bringing key lending rates from nearly zero to as high as 2.5 per cent by July.

Inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), however, remains at more than four times the US central bank's annual target of 2 per cent. The CPI grew at 8.5 per cent during the year to July. Before that, the CPI expanded at its fastest pace in four decades, growing 9.1 per cent during the year to June. -ANI/Sputnik

SECURITY VULNERABILITIES

Apple warns of security flaw for iPhones, iPads

SAN FRANCISCO: Apple disclosed serious security vulnerabilities for iPhones, iPads and Macs that could potentially allow attackers to take complete control of these devices.

Apple released two security reports about the issue on Wednesday, although they didn't receive wide attention outside of tech publications. The Associated Press (AP) reported.

Apple's explanation of the vulnerability means a hacker could get "full admin access" to the device. That would allow intruders to impersonate the device's owner and subsequently run any software in their name, said Rachel Tobac, CEO of SocialProof Security.

Security experts have advised users to update affected devices — the iPhone6S and later models; several models of the iPad, including the 5th generation and later, all

iPad Pro models and the iPad Air 2; and Mac computers running MacOS Monterey. The flaw also affects some iPod models.

Apple did not say in the reports how, where or by whom the vulnerabilities were discovered. In all cases, it cited an anonymous researcher.

Commercial spyware companies such as Israel's NSO Group are known for identifying and taking advantage of such flaws, exploiting them in malware that surreptitiously infects targets' smartphones, siphons their contents and surveils the targets in real time.

NSO Group has been blacklisted by the US Commerce Department. Its spyware is known to have been used in Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America against journalists, dissidents and human rights activists. -BNA

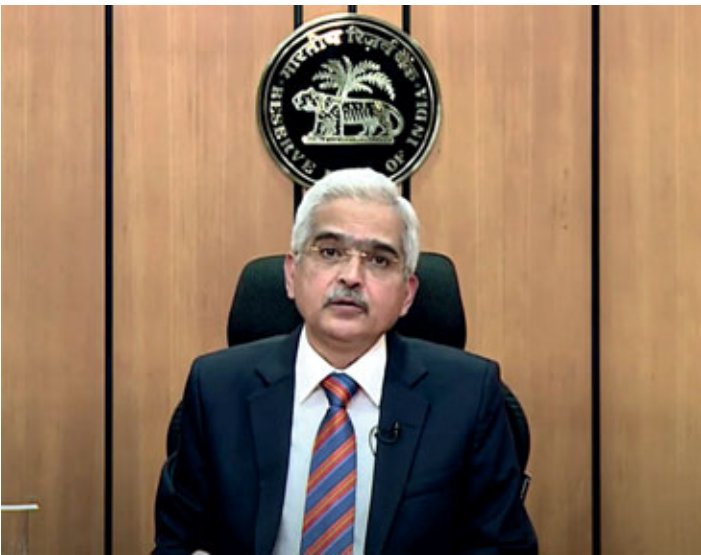
RESERVE BANK OF INDIA

India's inflation remains unacceptably and uncomfortably high: RBI Governor

MUMBAI: Though inflation has moderated and plateaued since its recent peak of April 2022, it remains unacceptably and uncomfortably high, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das said in his intervention during the Monetary Policy Committee Meeting held August 3-5, as per the minutes of the meeting released on Friday.

"Sustained high inflation, unless addressed effectively, could result in unanchoring of inflation expectations and their second-order effects. This necessitates an appropriate monetary policy response to prevent upward drift in inflation from the target rate. I am of the view that at this juncture a 50 bps increase in the repo rate is necessary and, therefore, vote accordingly. I also vote for remaining focused on withdrawal of accommodation," Das said while making a pitch for the hike in policy repo rate. During the MPC meeting, Das noted, "the high level of inflation continues to be broad-based with 13 out of 23 CPI sub-groups/groups, comprising close to 60 per cent of the CPI basket, registering more than 6 per cent inflation in June 2022."

"Going forward, though there are early indications that inflation might have peaked in April, significant uncertainties remain on account of adverse global spillovers coming from simmering geopolitical tensions, volatile



global commodity prices and financial markets.

"While the let-up in global food and industrial metals prices should lower imported inflation, the appreciation of the US dollar could offset some of the gains. Persistently elevated cost of living conditions can engender wage-price spirals, especially as firms regain pricing power," he said.

During the meeting, the MPC decided to increase the policy repo rate under the liquidity adjustment facility (LAF) by 50 basis points to 5.40 per cent with immediate effect. Consequently, the standing deposit facility (SDF) rate stands adjusted to 5.15 per cent and the

marginal standing facility rate and the Bank Rate to 5.65 per cent.

The MPC also decided to remain focused on the withdrawal of accommodation to ensure that inflation remains within the target going forward, while supporting growth. These decisions are in consonance with the objective of achieving the medium-term target for consumer price index (CPI) inflation of 4 per cent within a band of +/- 2 per cent, while supporting growth, the RBI said.

The 37th meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee, constituted under section 45ZB of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934, was held during August 3 to 5, 2022.

During the meeting, the Monetary Policy Committee decided to increase the policy repo rate under the liquidity adjustment facility by 50 basis points to 5.40 per cent with immediate effect. Consequently, the standing deposit facility rate stands adjusted to 5.15 per cent and the marginal standing facility rate and the Bank Rate to 5.65 per cent

In order to decide on the policy rates, the MPC reviewed the surveys conducted by the Reserve Bank to gauge consumer confidence, households' inflation expectations, corporate sector performance, credit conditions, the outlook for the industrial, services and infrastructure sectors, and the projections of professional forecasters. -ANI

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STUDY REVEALS WHY HEAT MAKES US SLEEPY

Temperature affects the span of human behavior, from eating and activity levels to sleep-wake cycles. We may have a harder time sleeping in the summer and be slow to get out of bed on colder mornings. But the link between sensory neurons and neurons that control this cycle are not understood completely.

Northwestern University neurobiologists have found a few clues about what's happening. In a new study, published today (Aug. 17) in the journal Current Biology, researchers found that fruit flies are pre-programmed to take a nap in the middle of the day. A follow-up to their 2020 Biology paper that identified a brain thermometer only active in cold weather, the new paper explores a similar "thermometer" circuit for hot temperatures.

"Changes in temperature have a strong effect on behavior in both humans and animals, and offer animals a cue that is time to adapt to the changing seasons," said Marco Gallio, associate professor of neurobiology in the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences. "The effect of temperature on sleep can be quite extreme, with some animals deciding to sleep off an entire season -- think of a hibernating bear -- but the specific brain circuits that mediate the interaction between temperature and sleep centers remain largely unmapped."

Gallio led the study and said fruit flies are a particularly good model to study big questions like "why do we sleep," and "what does sleep do for the brain" because they don't attempt to disrupt instinct in the same way humans do when we pull all-nighters, for example. They also allow researchers to study the influence of external cues like light and temperature on cellular pathways.

CELLS THAT STAY ON LONGER

The paper is the first to identify "absolute heat" receptors in fly head, which respond to temperatures above about 77 degrees Fahrenheit -- the fly's favorite temperature. As it turns out, the common laboratory fruit fly (*Drosophila*) has colonized nearly the entire planet by forming a close association with humans. Not surprisingly, its favorite temperature also matches that of many humans.

Just as they expected based on the results of their previous paper on cold temperature, researchers found that brain neurons receiving information about heat are part of the broader system that regulates sleep. When the hot circuit, which runs parallel to the cold circuit, is active, the target cells that promote midday sleep stay on longer. This results in an increase in midday sleep that keeps flies away from the hottest part of the day.

The study was enabled by a 10-year

initiative that produced the first completed map of neural connections in an animal (a fly), called the connectome. With the connectome, researchers have access to a computer system that tells them all possible brain connections for each of the fly's ~100,000 brain cells. However, even with this extremely detailed road map, researchers still need to figure out how information in the brain goes from point A to B. This paper helps fill that gap.

The different circuits for hot versus cold temperatures make sense to Gallio because "hot and cold temperatures can have quite different effects on physiology and behavior," he said. This separation may also reflect evolutionary processes based on heat and cold cycles of the Earth. For example, the possibility that brain centers for sleep may be directly targeted in humans by a specific sensory circuit is now open to be investigated based on this work.

NEXT STEPS

Next, Gallio's team hopes to figure out the common targets of the cold and hot circuit, to discover how each can influence sleep.

"We identified one neuron that could be a site of integration for the effects of hot and cold temperatures on sleep and activity in *Drosophila*," said Michael Alpert, the paper's first author and a post-doctoral researcher in the Gallio lab. "This would be the start of interesting follow-up studies."

Gallio added that the team is interested in looking at the long-term effects of temperature on behavior and physiology to understand the impact of global warming, looking at how adaptable species are to change.

"People may choose to take an afternoon nap on a hot day, and in some parts of the world this is a cultural norm, but what do you choose and what is programmed into you?" Gallio said. "Of course, it's not culture in flies, so there actually might be a very strong underlying biological mechanism that is overlooked in humans." -ANI

NEUROBIOLOGISTS HAVE FOUND THAT FRUIT FLIES ARE PRE-PROGRAMMED TO TAKE A NAP IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DAY. THE NEW ARTICLE EXPLORES A 'THERMOMETER' CIRCUIT FOR HOT TEMPERATURES.



“Changes in temperature have a strong effect on behaviour in both humans and animals, and offer animals a cue that is time to adapt to the changing seasons,” said Marco Gallio, associate professor of neurobiology in the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences.

IN-PICTURES



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‘Hanging Gardens - Mexican Roots’ floral display held in Singapore

Tourists view the floral and cultural exhibits during the opening day of ‘Hanging Gardens - Mexican Roots’ floral display, held at Flower Dome of the Singapore’s Gardens. **xinhua**



Street flooded after heavy rain in Sanaa, Yemen
Picture shows a flooded street after heavy rain in Sanaa, Yemen. **xinhua**



Entrepreneurs, artists keep silk making heritage alive in Macclesfield, Britain

Picture shows a view of the town of Macclesfield in Britain. The town of Macclesfield in northwest England was dubbed the ‘silk capital of England’ in the 18th century, and now local entrepreneurs and artists are trying to keep this heritage alive. **xinhua**



Press conference for The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power
Bollywood actors Hrithik Roshan and Tamannaah Bhatia with American Creator and ‘showrunner’ of the series The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power John D. Payne pose for a photo during the press conference of Prime Video’s upcoming series The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power, in Mumbai. **ANI Photo**



Highlight of bridal festival fashion show in Pakistan
Models present creations during a bridal festival fashion show in southern Pakistani port city of Karachi. **xinhua**



2022 Canadian National Exhibition held in Toronto
People visit a photo exhibition during the 2022 Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto, Canada. The exhibition is held here from August 19 to September 5 this year. **xinhua**



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ROUND-UP



Changan EADO Plus 2023 model now available on low EMI

The Changan EADO Plus comes with 1.4 Turbo engine and is equipped with 7-speed dual clutch transmission



MUSCAT: Arabian Gulf Automobiles and Equipment LLC (AGAE), which is part of Bahwan International Group, has announced a low EMI on Changan EADO Plus model 2023. Customers can now avail an exceptionally low EMI rate of OMR 104 on Changan EADO Plus model

(terms and conditions apply). EMI is calculated based on 20% down payment for 8 years loan tenure. It is subject to credit approvals from banks and applicable on vehicles purchased for personal use. The Changan EADO Plus (2023

model) comes with 1.4 Turbo engine is equipped with 7-speed dual clutch transmission. The 'beyond your expectation' Changan EADO Plus is a compact yet aggressive family sedan with premium styling, luxurious interior,

and plenty of safety features. With intelligent safety features to assist, EADO Plus lets drivers be at peace when on the road. The top variant EADO Plus Limited comes with Dual 10" screens for driving convenience, adaptive

cruise control, panoramic sunroof, 360° camera, side airbags, navigation, dual exhaust features available mostly in luxury sedans. A spokesperson for AGAE said, "We are pleased to offer a low EMI on the 2023 model of Changan EADO Plus. It is truly beyond one's expectation. It is stylish, energetic, and practical and has a perfect design that integrates fashion with function. As a family car it impresses with its appealing exterior, luxurious and spacious interior, interactive dashboard, driver-assist features for utmost safety." Some of the standout features of Changan EADO Plus 1.4 Turbo are Star Eye LED Headlamp with point grille, 7" Dual Tone Alloy Wheels, Full LCD Integrated Dual Screens, Sport Seats in Leather, Rear AC vents, Front Collision Warning and fuel efficiency of 18.3 Km/Ltr as per GSO conditions. With an engine of 1.4 Turbo, the

Changan EADO Plus sport edition offers power of 155 hp, Nm torque and transmission of 7 speed DCT. The model offers a dimension of 4730x1820x1505 mm (LxWxH), a wheelbase of 2700 mm, fuel tank of 53 litres. The highlights of Changan EADO Plus 1.4 T 7 DCT's limited edition includes EADO Plus 1.4 T 7 DCT SPORT features and some extra features. The exterior has dual tone 17" alloy wheels, sportier front grille, ORVM - electrically folding, panoramic sunroof. The interior features includes sporty red interior, front seats ventilation, six-way driver seat electrically adjustable, rear armrest and 60:40 rear seat split. Safety attributes include adaptive cruise control, forward collision warning, automatic emergency brake and 360° Camera. The Infotainment section has 10" LCD instrument cluster, six speakers and navigation features.

GRADUATION CEREMONY

Academy at MCBS and Oman Investment and Finance conclude growth programme

MUSCAT: The Academy, Center for Professional Studies at Modern College of Business and Science welcomed Oman Investment and Finance Company management and employees for a graduation ceremony on completion of the growth programme. The growth programme is a course that has been specially designed for Khedmah OIFC professionals and employees of different profiles. It consisted of a few courses that empowered the employees to pursue higher positions and/or different career paths. English language, Information Technology and customer service were a springboard; soft skills like time management, communication, leadership and negotiation gave the participants relevant soft skills while marketing and human resources helped OIFC employees gain more information in each



area and thus continue their career path more equipped with relevant knowledge and skills. Senior management of both MCBS and Khedmah addressed the participants and congratulated them on successful completion of the course, taking charge of their educational development and career growth. Dr Said Al Kitani, MCBS Associate Dean, spoke about the academy and its purpose, current work environment and employee profile. The academy,

he stated, is a practical response to society's training and development needs. Dr Said emphasised that in the ever-changing work environment - the one that relies more and more on machines and innovation - an employee must be flexible and adaptable. Saud Al Siyabi thanked the academy team as well as Khedma's HR team for the hard work and successful programme completion. He said that there is a need to embrace change more than ever and emphasized how proud he is that so many people worked hard for many months which, in his opinion, is proof that the change in his company is coming. Khedmah and The Academy will no doubt continue their cooperation in educating Omanis and preparing them for work environment challenges which, they all agreed will be turned into opportunities.

area and thus continue their career path more equipped with relevant knowledge and skills. Senior management of both MCBS and Khedmah addressed the participants and congratulated them on successful completion of the course, taking charge of their educational development and career growth. Dr Said Al Kitani, MCBS Associate Dean, spoke about the academy and its purpose, current work environment and employee profile. The academy,

INDIAN SCHOOL DARSAIT



ISD celebrates 76th Independence Day

MUSCAT: Indian School Darsait (ISD) organised the 76th Independence Day celebration with patriotic zeal and zest coupled with enthusiasm to mark 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav'. Ajit Vasudevan, convenor, head academic and staff welfare and grievances subcommittee, school management committee was the chief guest on the occasion. The programme witnessed the benign presence of other members of SMC, Principal, various dignitaries, staff, students, parents and well-wishers of ISD. The celebration commenced with a patriotic rendition of the National Anthem. Magandha Dinesh, Head Boy of the school welcomed the gathering. Speaking on the occasion, the chief guest gave an insight into the greatness of India as a nation and the progress that the nation achieved since its Independence. He read out the excerpts of the message delivered by the President of India, Droupadi Murmu on the eve of Independence Day. Quoting from the excerpts, he stated that India has achieved

milestone as a nation because the nation was celebrating 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav'. The president's speech urged the fellow citizens to understand their fundamental duties towards the country. It also emphasised the significance of 'Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat' and a host of government policies and exercises launched to add to the verve and implemented for the betterment and progress of the nation which in turn will help all to fulfil the dreams of our galaxy of freedom fighters. The patriotic song presented by the little ones from the Primary Section boosted the morale and rekindled pride in who we are, and what we represent, as a great nation. The students from primary section presented the glimpses of the journey for freedom and the progress we made through 'Nav Bharat' which symbolises the new developments like Digital India, Skilled India, Fit India, etc replete with energy, dynamism and transformational ethos.

75TH INDEPENDENCE YEAR

Pakistan School Sohar celebrates Independence Day



MUSCAT: The 75th Independence year of Pakistan was observed with high spirit in Pakistan School Sohar, Oman on the eve of August 14. The school building was fully illuminated in green and white on August 13 and 14. Saeed bin Muhammad Al Raisi (Supervisor International Schools Sohar, Ministry of Education, Oman) as a chief guest together with Hamad bin Muhammad Al Sarhi (Incharge Football Association Hi Alrafa) attended the event. Parents and children beautifully clad in white and green also attended the ceremony.

The ceremony started with the holy name of Allah followed by the national anthem of Pakistan and Oman, along with a cake cutting ceremony and Dua for the welfare of the country respectively. The vigorous and the keen Soharis passionately participated in various activities including welcome performance, mime on Pakistan Movement, regional dress show, singing of national songs and a few speeches from students on the value of freedom in Urdu and English. At the end of the ceremony, a shield was presented to the chief guest by Mazhar Bokhari.

OUTSTANDING LOADING CAPACITY

Toyota showcases LITE ACE compact commercial vehicle for Middle East

MUSCAT: Toyota recently showcased the all-new LITE ACE compact commercial vehicle set for launch in the Middle East. Pairing ample capacity and easy loading with fuel economy, the highly practical vehicle is set to redefine the compact commercial vehicle segment. The new Toyota LITE ACE caters to a wide range of customers, including fleet businesses in need of compact commercial vehicles and last-mile delivery service providers in the flourishing e-commerce market. With better payload, load space, and sliding doors on both sides, the vehicle offers outstanding loading capacity and comfort with practical and reliable performance. Masaharu Tezeni, Chief Engineer of the new vehicle, said: "The new Toyota LITE ACE is on its way. Its reliability is highly valued by loyal customers in regions where it has already been introduced. We are confident businesses across the Middle East will also embrace the new vehicle's many advantages. With features such as the powerful, economic engine and the suspension that provides a balance



between increased stability when loaded and outstanding ride comfort, the new Toyota LITE ACE represents a complete solution for the safe, seamless, and cost-effective transportation of cargo." Kei Fujita, Chief Representative, Middle East and Central Asia Representative Office, Toyota Motor

Corporation, said: "We are delighted to launch the new Toyota LITE ACE in the region, which brings new levels of practicality, reliability, and efficiency to the compact commercial segment. Designed for those looking for ample loading capacity and passenger comfort, the Toyota LITE ACE offers a high

degree of utility and greater peace of mind for drivers and businesses. I would like to thank our loyal customers in the region for their constant support and inspiration, which continue to motivate us to create 'ever-better' cars." The new Toyota LITE ACE has been designed to maximise loading

capacity in a compact, easy-to-maneuvre vehicle, while providing a comfortable driver and passenger experience. Low steps just 425 mm in height enable smoother cabin entry, with a roomy foot area. Moreover, the placement of the gear shift lever next to the steering wheel also facilitates easy access to the front passenger seat. The vehicle's large LED rear combination lamps enhance visibility for vehicles travelling behind in poor weather conditions, such as rain and fog, contributing to a safer driving experience. The cockpit is designed to provide enhanced operability and visibility, creating greater convenience and peace of mind for the driver. Switches are located where they can be easily seen and reached from the driving position, while ample storage spaces are provided in various locations that prioritize usability. The comfortable seat positions offer a wide field of view for stress-free driving, with reclining and sliding seats helping reduce driver tiredness. The electric power steering also comes as standard to alleviate the driving burden.

With a low floor height of 620 mm and a spacious rear door entrance, the Toyota LITE ACE makes it easy to load and unload cargo from the hold. The vehicle also features large, 815-mm sliding doors on both sides, enabling users to load and unload cargo even in tight spaces. The square-shaped space is designed to allow the cargo to be loaded right to the corners. With a maximum length of 2,075 mm and a height and width of 1,305 and 1,495 mm, respectively, the cargo hold is capable of carrying cardboard boxes, tall objects, furniture, and other large cargo. Delivering a dynamic driving experience, the new Toyota LITE ACE comes with a 1.5-ltr four-cylinder engine that generates a maximum output of 96.5 hp and 134 nm of torque. It incorporates Dual VVT-i (Variable Valve Timing-intelligent) technology, which continuously optimizes intake and exhaust valve timing in response to driving conditions for exceptional performance. The engine is mated to either a five-speed manual transmission or a four-speed automatic transmission for a smooth shifting experience with superior fuel efficiency.



ROUND-UP



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OTE Group adds Great Wall Motor to its auto distribution portfolio

The partnership underscores OTE Group's pre-eminence in the Omani automotive distribution space, characterised by its vast network of showrooms, workshops, service centres and parts outlets spanning the length and breadth of the country

MUSCAT: OTE Group, one of Oman's biggest automotive distributors, has added Great Wall Motor (GWM), China's largest SUV and pickup manufacturer, to its portfolio of leading global automotive brands exclusively marketed in the Sultanate of Oman.

An agreement to this effect was formalised at a virtual ceremony attended by top executives representing the two sides on August 10. In attendance from OTE Group were Sheikh Salim Saad Suhail Bahwan, Director – Automotive, and Sudhir M, OTE Group CEO. Representing the Chinese automaker were Tony Sun, Vice General Manager - GWM International, David Xu, Managing Director

- GWM Middle East and others.

GWM is one of China's top-rated automotive brands with a growing international presence. It was one of the first Chinese car manufacturers to go global in 1998 and now boasts a geographical footprint that spans over 60 countries across the world. Sales of its SUVs, pickup trucks and passenger cars surpassed one million units globally in 2021, attesting to its strong growth ambitions.

The partnership underscores OTE Group's pre-eminence in the Omani automotive distribution space, characterised by its vast network of showrooms, workshops, service centres and parts outlets spanning the length and



breadth of the country. Overseeing this sprawling retail and service infrastructure is a highly competent workforce backed by a professional and dynamic management team. The group's continuing success is underpinned by its solid reputation for corporate integrity, public trust and unmatched customer satisfaction.

GWM, a privately-owned automaker headquartered in China's

Hebei province, has evolved into a truly global enterprise over the past decades. In addition to manufacturing bases in key locations across China, GWM also owns and operates manufacturing assets in Ecuador, Malaysia, Tunisia, Bulgaria and Russia. China remains the biggest of GWM's markets globally, where its four principal brands – Haval, Wey, Ora and GWM Pickup – enjoy a strong

presence domestically.

Since it commenced operations in the early 90s, GWM has been working with global industry giants to build the future community of the automotive industry. The company has developed strategic partnerships with well-known international suppliers to seek to integrate a community for the components and parts, strengthening the product quality. Through

tie-ups with world-leading R&D equipment and systems, GWM has positioned itself strongly in the design and development of SUVs, passenger cars and pickup series as well as powertrains.

Indeed, by the end of this year, some of GWM's choicest offerings are set to hit the Omani market. Leading the line-up is Haval JO-LION, a five-seater compact SUV that has charmed key markets around the world. Other flagship offerings from the GWM stable will include the Haval H6 (five-seater compact crossover SUV), Haval DARGO (seven-seater SUV), and Haval H9 (large family SUV) and GWM POER (petrol pickup truck). All five models promise to add new excitement to Oman's vibrant SUV market.

"We are immensely delighted to have signed this new partnership with GWM for the exclusive distribution of its popular SUVs and pickup trucks in the Sultanate of Oman. It heralds a new chapter in the growth of GWM's presence in the Sultanate. GWM's product line-up will reach the Omani market in the fourth quarter of this year, providing our esteemed customers with a wider choice of tech-driven, fuel-efficient and cost-competitive vehicles," said Sheikh Salim Saad Suhail Bahwan, Director- OTE Group.

NEW HOSPITAL

Aster Royal Hospital receives Korean envoy

MUSCAT: Following the Ministry of Health inspection successfully done, Aster Royal Hospital is ready to open its doors to the public and was honoured with the visit of the Ambassador of Korea in Oman, Kiejoo Kim.

During the tour, the hospital's group CEO, Dr Ashendu Pandey made an introduction to the services provided for the first time in the private sector to serve the Omani community, namely organ transplantation, cath-lab & interventional cardiology, nephrology and neuro-surgery.

Kiejoo Kim shared positive feedback about the hospital's state-of-the-art facilities and latest technologies. "It's with great satisfaction that I see one more healthcare institution opening its doors in Oman, especially with such kind of high-end standards and we look forward to experiencing the hospitality of their staff once it starts its functions."

Aster Royal Hospital avails all the medical specialties and has four major Excellence Centres: Gastroenterology - led by Dr Ashik



Sainu - Urology, Orthopaedics and Paediatrics, Gynaecology & Obstetrics. This last Centre will be located on the 6th floor, with the entire floor dedicated to Women & Children.

Aster Royal Hospital also counts on two underground parking areas, 200 inpatient beds - which turns it into the biggest private Hospital in

Oman - bringing a total of 150 new doctors and staff members, modern technologies and infrastructure, ready for any major operation or complication with 24-hour emergency services.

The soft opening is planned for the end of August and the hospital will initiate its operations with an

outpatient department and 24-hour emergency services.

The other departments & specialties will start operating in a phased manner.

Aster DM Healthcare is currently one of the largest and fastest-growing conglomerates in the MENA region.

INNOVATIVE PRODUCT

Bank Muscat offers Shahadati education financing with attractive benefits



MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate, developed its Shahadati Education Financing.

This innovative product with an attractive interest rate provides students opportunities to complete higher education both within and outside the Sultanate so as to get better career opportunities that benefits them and enables the Sultanate's growth and development. The flexible financing facility is proving to be a great advantage in helping Omani youth achieves their aspirations.

Shahadati Educational Finance comprises higher education finance and fees finance. In the case

of higher education finance, Omani nationals can get financing up to OMR75,000 for completing their higher education with a repayment period of up to 7 years at a competitive interest rate and convenient payment plans. The Shahadati Fees Finance on the other hand is designed for assisting in the payment of private school fees, summer courses and professional certificates. It offers a maximum finance amount of OMR10,000 with a repayment tenor of up to 1 year. The financing is available to all Omani employees in the government, quasi-government and listed private sector companies who meet the specific criteria.

Abdullah Tamman Al Mashani, General Manager - Products, Bank Muscat, said: "Throughout its history, the bank has always been keen to support the efforts of Omani youth to obtain certification and qualifications that are in tune to the needs of the job market.

"Excellent educational qualifications are one of the most important keys to securing a better future for students in the job market. At Bank Muscat, we are delighted with the confidence and trust placed in the bank's products and services by our customers and look forward to developing more products that meet their aspirations and needs.

WIDE RANGE



Danube Home's lighting solutions add sparkle to every home

MUSCAT: Great interiors need great lighting - and choosing the perfect style for your room may prove a difficult task when faced with typical lighting options.

As a central piece in every interior, lighting is often one of the first things people notice as they enter a room, and can make or break the intended effect of the design. Danube Home understands every home's need for great lighting and offers a range of stunning solutions to complement every style of decor, and home layout.

The wide range of lighting solutions includes ambient lighting, task lighting and accent lighting for the indoors, and a great range of outdoor lighting solutions as well to add sparkle to outdoor spaces. The lighting solutions are available as ceiling lights like chandeliers, hanging lights, panel and spotlights, table and floor lamps, wall lights including wall sconces and picture or mirror lights. The outdoor lighting range includes landscape lights, outdoor wall lights, flood lights and spike lights and underground lights.

The stars of the range, however, are the exquisite chandeliers in the Danube Home Chandelier

Collection. The beautiful centre-pieces reflect the brand's ethos of providing stylish and elegant pieces of high quality and durability. The brand's crystal chandeliers are made of the best quality K9 crystals that offer luxurious shine that doesn't dull over the years. The chandelier range is designed to suit homes of every size and budget and starts at an affordable price of AED 49.

Danube Home understands that purchasing a chandelier is an important decision, and to that end, the brand has taken every step to ensure that the process is as seamless and easy as possible for the customer. The brand offers a free site visit service to ascertain the suitability and feasibility of installing large-size chandeliers. In addition to this service, Danube Home also offers safe delivery and expert installation services by the brand's in-house lighting experts. What's more, the chandeliers even come with a one-year warranty, during which time, Danube Home's team will take care of any repairs, replacements and maintenance. All these services ensure that the customer can rest assured with their lighting decisions.



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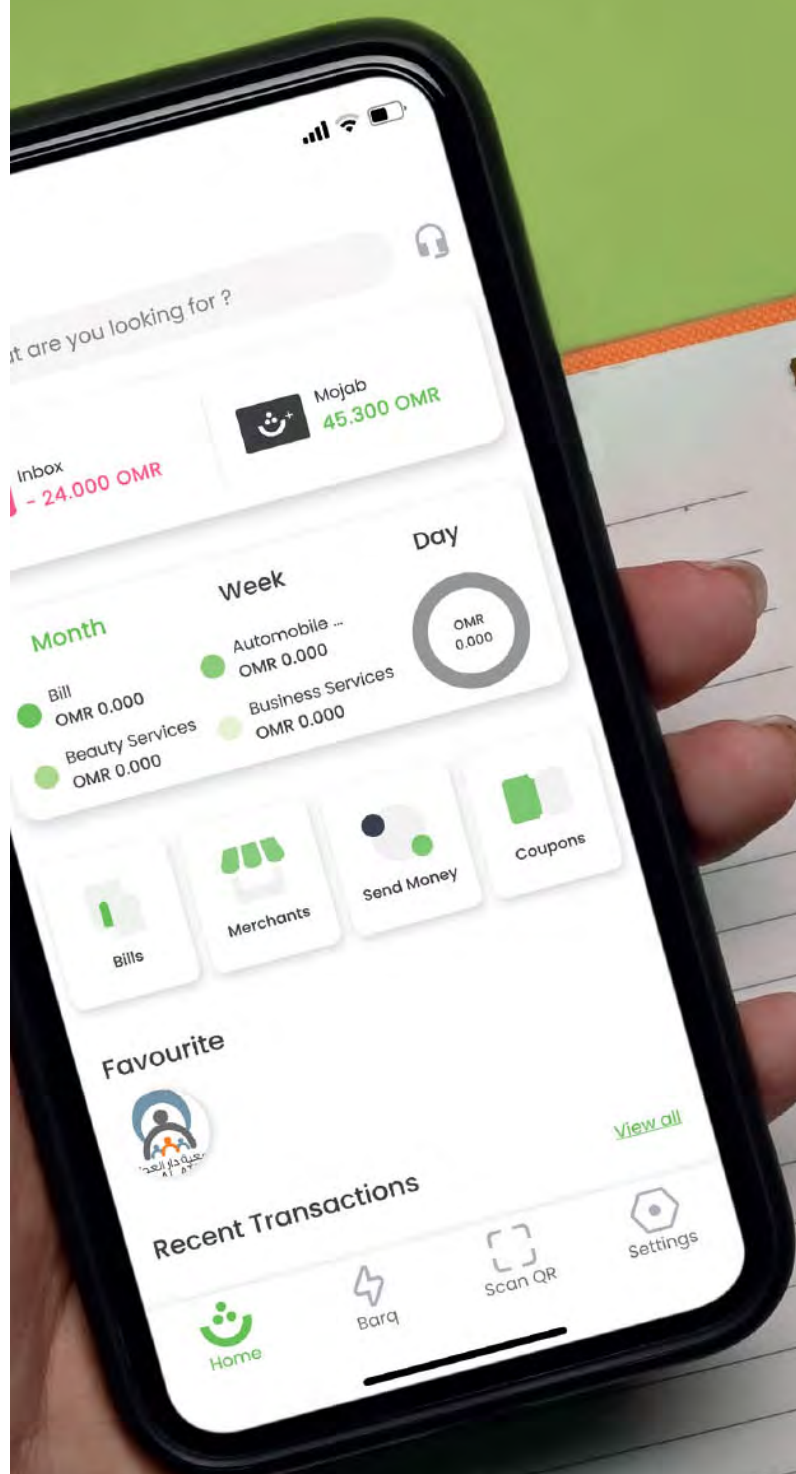


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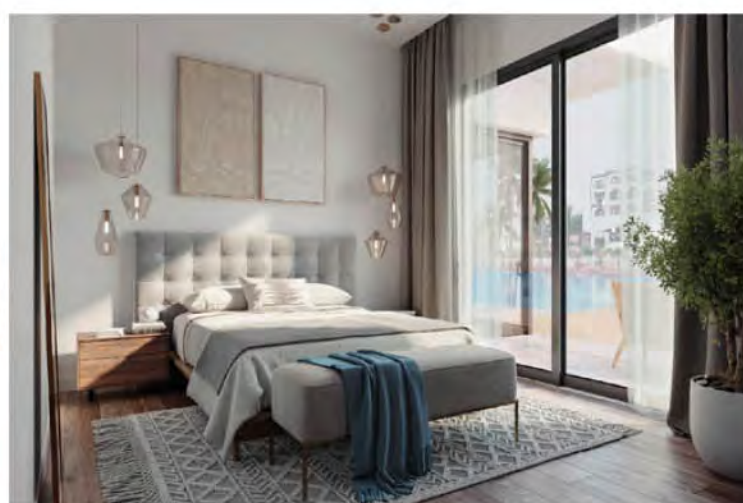
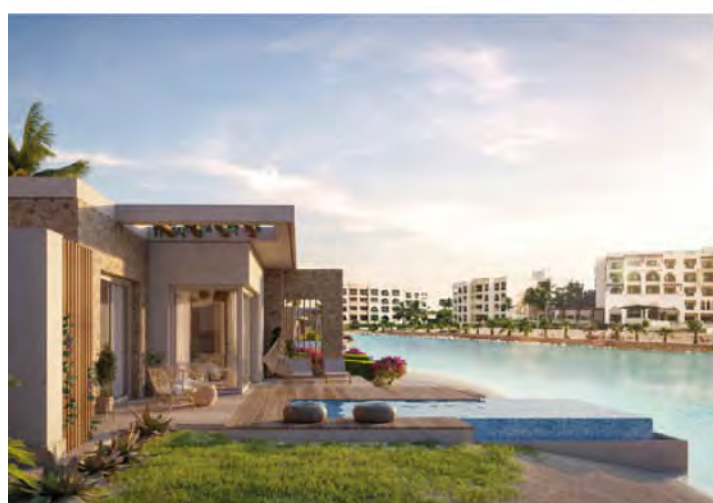
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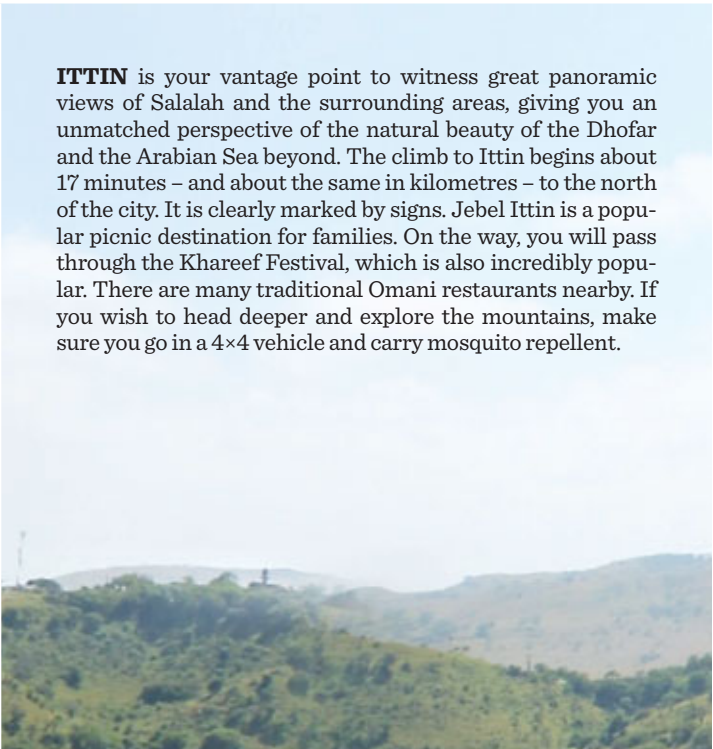
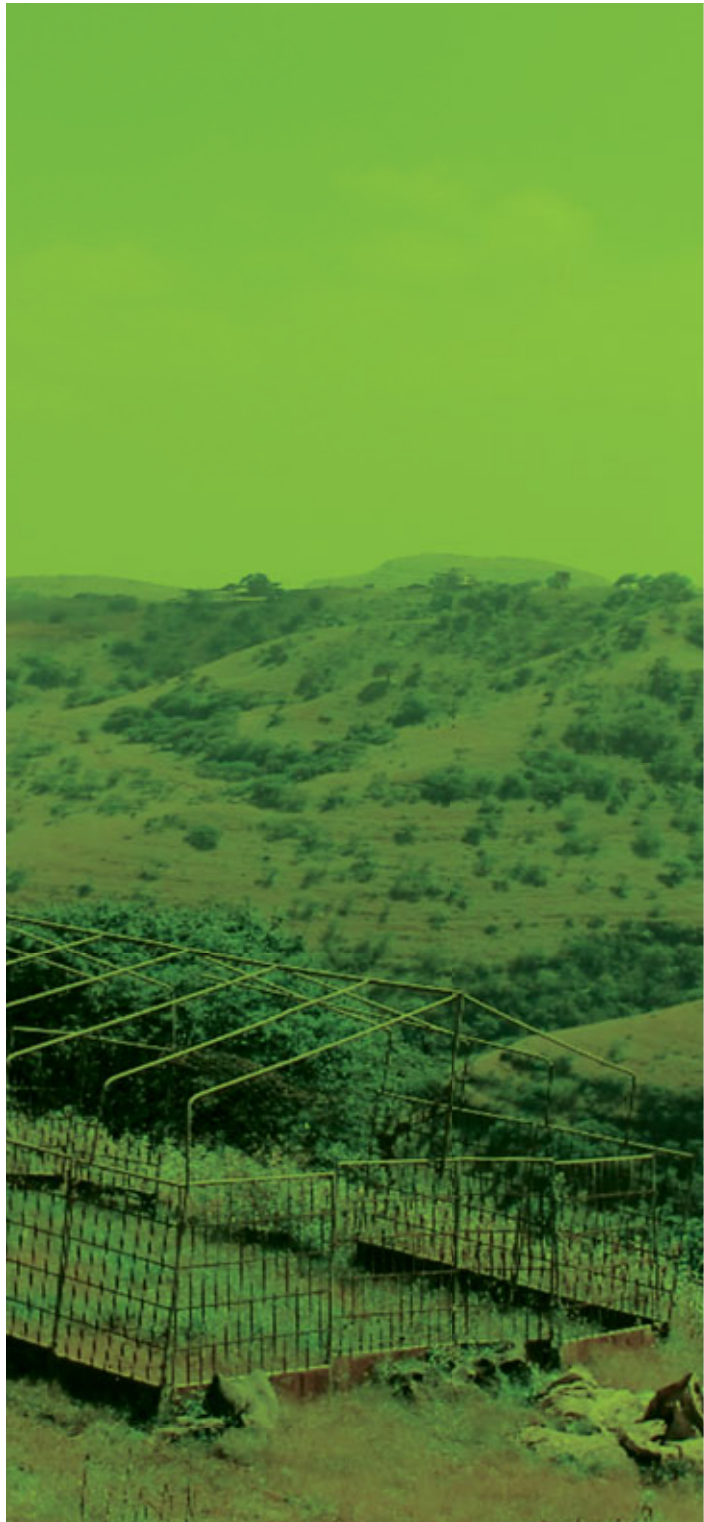
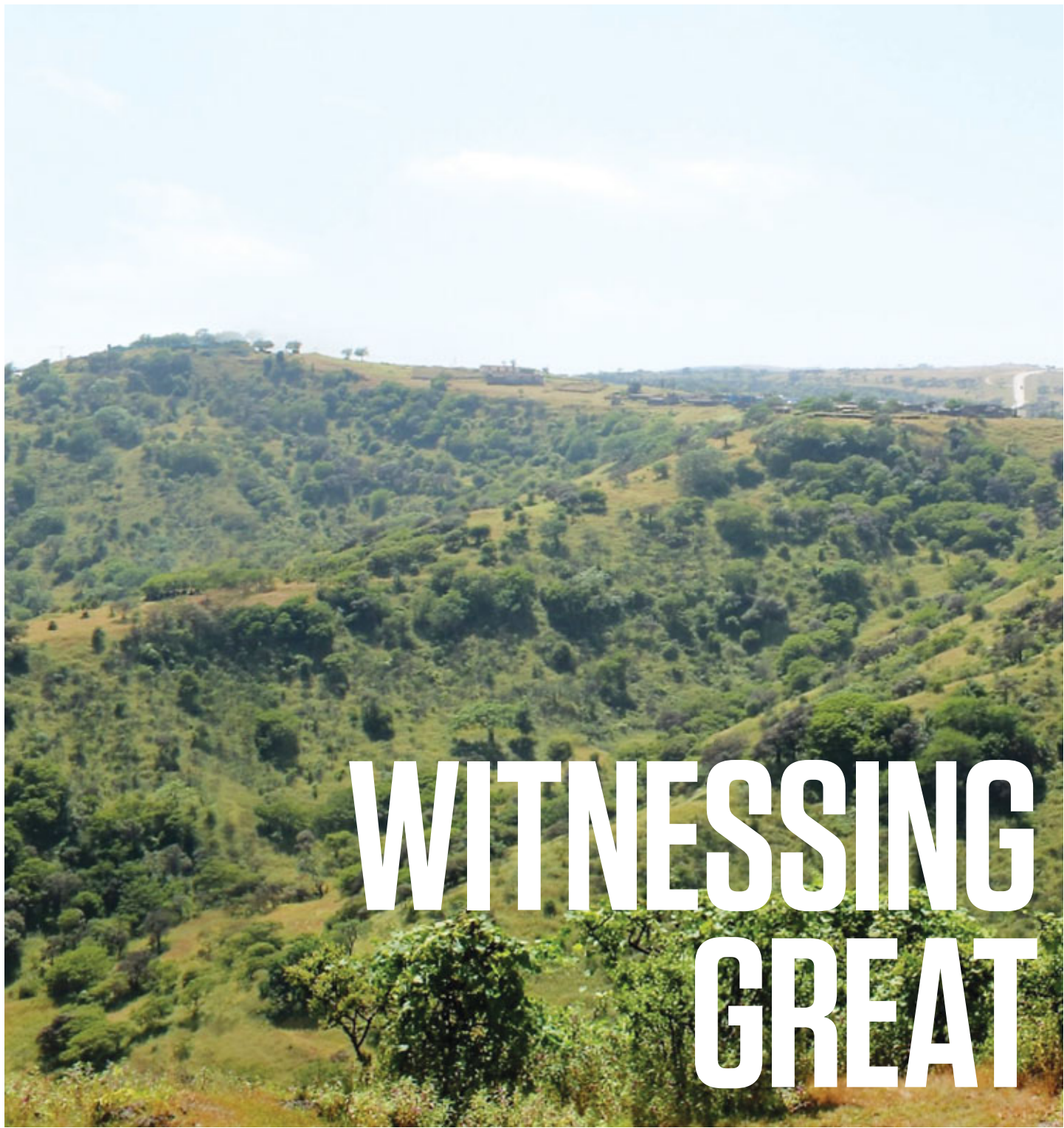
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ITTIN is your vantage point to witness great panoramic views of Salalah and the surrounding areas, giving you an unmatched perspective of the natural beauty of the Dhofar and the Arabian Sea beyond. The climb to Ittin begins about 17 minutes – and about the same in kilometres – to the north of the city. It is clearly marked by signs. Jebel Ittin is a popular picnic destination for families. On the way, you will pass through the Khareef Festival, which is also incredibly popular. There are many traditional Omani restaurants nearby. If you wish to head deeper and explore the mountains, make sure you go in a 4×4 vehicle and carry mosquito repellent.



PANORAMIC VIEWS OF SALALAH