

CREDIT OMAN CONTINUES TO SUPPORT EXPORTERS, SELLERS

The food and consumer goods sector topped the value of sales insured by Credit Oman registering a growth of 23 percent to OMR43.33 million during the first quarter of 2023 compared to OMR35.23 million during the same period of 2022. **>B2**



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HM RECEIVES WRITTEN MESSAGE

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a written message from Philippe Leopold Louis Marie, King of the Belgians. The message deals with the bilateral relations between Oman and Belgium. It was handed over to Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, when he received in Muscat Hadja Lahbib, Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Affairs and Foreign Trade and the Federal Cultural Institutions. **>A5**



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“Under the restructuring plan, one company will focus on supply services, including billing and collection operations, while the other will specialise in distribution services.”

The diesel power plants in Oman will be phased out in the future as part of a comprehensive initiative to review the expenditures of electricity sector

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Diesel power plants in the Sultanate of Oman will be phased out gradually as they are proving to be expensive and also harming the environment, the Chief Operating Officer (CEO) of Nama Supply said.

Speaking to *Times of Oman's* sisterly radio channel Al Shabiba, Salim Said Al Kamyani, CEO of Nama Supply, said: “We plan to gradually abandon the diesel power plants in Oman in the future as part of a comprehensive initiative to review the electricity sector's costs and restructure of the distribution and supply companies.”

The recent decision by Nama Group to merge all power supply and distribution entities will go a long way in improving the efficiency of supply and distribution of electricity besides reducing the overall operational costs.

The companies have been brought under two main companies: Nama Electricity Distribution and Nama Supply.

Al Kamyani said, “With 90 percent of subscribers receiving e-bills and 70 percent utilising electronic bill payment, the company has already made significant progress in streamlining the processes.”

Unified call centre

“Also, the unified call centre (telephone number 1011) will ensure seamless handling of requests and inquiries. It will upgrade the standard of services and will help keep pace with technical developments in the field of subscriber



Salim Said Al Kamyani, CEO of Nama Supply Company

services,” he further add.

Seamless transition

Al Kamyani said there has been a seamless transition of assets and employees to Nama Electricity Distribution and Nama Supply, ensuring continuity of business operations and projects.

Collaborating with key government agencies, Nama Group went for the merger of various companies to optimise resources and enhance overall performance.

The two main companies – ‘Nama Electricity Distribution’ and ‘Nama Supply’ – incorpo-

rated and replaced the following companies: Muscat Electricity Distribution Company, Mazoon Electricity Company, Majan Electricity Company, and Tanweer Company.

Nama Group had earlier said that the new structure applies to the management and supply of electricity services in all governorates of Oman, except for Dhofar Governorate where electricity, water and waste services are provided through Nama Dhofar Services Company.

Low-voltage networks

Nama Electricity Distribution will shoulder the responsibility of providing distribution services and related matters, like regulating electricity metres and establishing low-voltage networks and transformers to ensure the reliability of services rendered to subscribers. Nama Supply will handle billing and collection operations.

“Under the restructuring plan, one company will focus on supply services, including billing and collection operations, while the other will specialise in distribution services. This strategic realignment aims to reduce costs, enhance system efficiency, improve services, and elevate customer satisfaction,” said Al Kamyani.

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES



OMAN

Applications sought for kiosks in Dhofar

1 The Dhofar Municipality seeks applications from citizens for operating kiosks and food carts temporarily in the governorate for the fall season 2023. Requests are being accepted from June 10 till June 16. **>A3**

WORLD

4 children found alive after plane crash

2 Four Indigenous children who went missing in the Colombian Amazon after surviving a plane crash 40 days ago have been found alive, Colombian President Gustavo Petro said. **>A7**

MARKET

MSX sees positive performance

3 Oman's benchmark Muscat Securities Exchange (MSX) witnessed some volatility this week but was able to see a positive performance, according to an expert. **>B1**

MINISTRY OF FINANCE

OMR520mn budget surplus for Oman

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The State's General Budget of Oman registered a surplus of OMR520 million at the end of April 2023 compared to a surplus of OMR468 million achieved over the same period in 2022.

The Ministry of Finance affirmed that the government will continue utilising the surplus for liability management exercise and reducing public debt, enhancing social spending and stimulating economic recovery.

As far as public spending is concerned, it amounted to OMR3.87 billion at the end of April 2023, up by OMR123 million, 3 percent compared to actual spending over the same period in 2022. This is due to an



increase in current expenditure of civil ministries.

Current expenditure at the end of April 2023 amounted to OMR2.67 billion, down by OMR269 million, i.e. 9 percent when compared to an amount of OMR2.94 billion registered over the same period in 2022.

-With ONA inputs



First phase of National Biodiversity Survey completed

A4

23STYLE

Young Omani entrepreneur realising his fashion dream

Times News Service

MUSCAT: A young Omani entrepreneur is doing brisk business from his outlet in Sohar and he plans to open more such shops across the Sultanate of Oman to meet the needs of people.

Belonging to the group of next-generation, he said, “I chose to open a shop selling clothes and shoes because everyone wants to look beautiful and elegant.

When *Times of Oman* contacted Omar Mohammed Al-Farsi, from Sohar, North Al-Batinah Governorate, he said: “As you know, everyone wants to look good whether at their workplace or even while



going to markets, parks, or visiting their relatives. There are three things that distinguish a person from others-they are clothes, shoes, and accessories such as pens and watches.”

Omar Al-Farsi said: “Wearing clothes and shoes of international brands is very important for each of us. I have been particularly fond of international brands since I was young. I dreamed of having my own outlet to sell clothes, shoes and accessories, and today I have fulfilled my dream of owning my own business.”

Al-Farsi confirmed that he opened this project from his own money in November 2022 by giving the name 23style. When asked

about this name, he said: “I wanted to be different, especially since I love number 23. Actually it is my lucky number, so I added style to it, meaning fashion to keep pace with the current time and suit the taste of people of all types.”

He pointed out that with the passage of time, the taste and inclination of customers change in terms of shape, quality of products.

Al-Farsi chose to open his own project in his home Wilayat of Sohar so that he can manage it by himself and meet the demands of customers. He said that his products are in great demand as he receives more than 15 requests daily.

Omar also confirmed that the number of requests increases at the end of each month, more on holidays and on a seasonal basis. Omar Al-Farsi has an account on Instagram that displays the products of his shop on (155t) and receives orders electronically for male products only. He added there is a special corner for women to sell shoes and some accessories.

Regarding Omar's future plans, he confirmed that he is seeking to open more branches in various governorates of the Sultanate, especially in Muscat, Salalah, Nizwa, Al Buraimi and Ibri, hoping that everyone will support him in his private venture.

OMAN

PRAYER
TIMINGS



Dhuhr.....12:11pm

Asr.....3:30pm

Maghrib.....6:58pm

Isha.....8:20pm

Fajr (Tomorrow).....3:52am

‘Private schools complement education of public schools’



The meeting targeted 60 directors of private school departments and heads of departments in the Directorates-General of education in the governorates

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Education, represented by the Directorate-General of Private Schools, organised a meeting with those concerned in the departments of private schools in the educational directorates of the governorates. The meeting targeted 60 directors of private school departments and heads of departments in the Directorates-General of education in the governorates.

The meeting was held under the auspices of Dr. Abdullah bin Khamis Ambosaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education, in the presence of representatives from the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, the Petroleum Development Oman Company, the Ministry’s Legal Department, and a number of the Directorate’s employees, at the Training and Emergency Centre in the Civil Aviation Authority building. The meeting began with a reci-

tation of two poems, the first was titled “Falak al-Mahaba” by the poet Salim Al-Kalbani, and the second was titled “Cradle and Glory” by the poet Yahya Al-Hasani. The two poems were recited by student Mansour bin Nasser Al-Husseini, a sixth grader at Sheikh Hamdan Al-Yousifi School (5-6) in Seeb, followed by a welcome panel entitled “Welcome, Hala,” and was presented by the students of Al-Mouj Private School in Seeb. Dr. Abdullah bin Khamis Ambosaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education, said: “Private school education is complementary to public school education, and the School Education Law emphasised the role and importance of private schools, which are an important gain and support for the role of the Directorate-General of Private Schools in organising the private school education sector. We hope from this meeting to enhance the status of private schools

and the roles they play, and there is no doubt that there is continuous support from the Ministry for private schools, in accordance with the laws and regulations in force for private schools.” Dr. Khadija Al Salami, Acting Director-General of Private Schools, delivered a speech in which she said: “This forum comes within the framework of the continuous efforts of the Ministry of Education represented by the Directorate-General of Private Schools, and its constant interest in improving work in the private school education sector, and its keenness to develop human resources in supervising these schools, and following up their work progress as a basic pillar aimed at increasing knowledge, skills and capabilities, and exchanging experiences in order to raise the level of performance and productive efficiency to the maximum extent possible, and achieve the desired aspirations. All

of which is reflected in the development of the educational process and the quality of services provided by the private school education sector, in line with Oman Vision 2040 in empowering human capabilities to compete locally and globally, and to promote an educational system characterised by high quality and community partnership to be an effective national system for scientific research, creativity and innovation.” The meeting included the presentation of four papers where the first paper was titled “Presentation of a Lean Methodology” and was presented by Saria Al Hashimi, Continuous Improvement Trainer at PDO. The second paper was titled “Invest Easy” and was presented by Abdullah Al Kalbani, Head of the Business Development and Consulting Department, Department of Commercial Affairs and E-Commerce at the Directorate-

General of Commerce at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion. Jassim Al Belushi, Director of the Legal Department at the Ministry of Education, presented the third paper entitled “School Violations and Legal Actions Against Them” whereas the fourth paper was titled “Directorate-General of Private Schools,” and was presented by Mahmoud Al-Husseini, Assistant Director-General for Administrative and Financial Affairs at the Directorate-General of Private Schools. In between the presentation of the papers, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education honoured the presenters of the papers, followed by the Acting Director General of Private Schools presenting a gift to the Undersecretary of Education. At the end of the meeting, the Acting Director General of Private Schools honoured the participants.





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Applications for operating kiosks sought in Dhofar

Requests are being accepted from June 10, 2023 till June 16, 2023, and no application will be considered beyond the specified date



Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Dhofar Municipality seeks applications from Omani citizens for operating kiosks and food carts temporarily in the governorate for the fall season 2023.

In a statement, the Dhofar Municipality said: “The municipality would like to announce to the honourable public that it has opened the door for submitting applications to practice temporary activities (kiosks and food carts) for Omani citizens during the Khareef season 2023 in the Governorate.

Requests are being accepted from June 10, 2023 till June 16, 2023, and no application will be considered beyond the specified date.

It noted that the acceptance of registration does not mean final approval of the application as it will be subjected to study, evaluation and approvals according to the procedures followed in the municipality.

Priority will be for job seekers



Photo for representative purpose only.

and Riyada card holders, in addition the kiosks will be exempted from fees after verification and the applicants are obligated to employ Omani cadres throughout the specified period.

Meanwhile, a meeting was held at the office of the Governor of Dhofar on Wednesday to assess the preparedness of government and private establishments for the Khareef (monsoon) season 2023.

The readiness procedures were discussed during the meeting,

which was held here under the auspices of His Highness Sayyid Marwan Turki Al Said, Governor of Dhofar.

HH Sayyid Marwan expressed gratitude for the directives of His Majesty the Sultan to provide direct subsidies on fuel prices at Salalah Airport and equate fuel prices with counterparts at Muscat International Airport.

This, he said, will encourage the operation of more direct inbound and outbound flights to Salalah Airport.

AL KHUWAIR

Two women injured after fire breaks out in an apartment



FIRE EXTINGUISHED: The firefighting teams of the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) were able to put out the blaze.

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Two women received moderate injury after a fire broke out in a residential building in Al Khuwair area of the Wilayat of Bausher in the Muscat Governorate. Firefighting teams of the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) were able to put out the blaze.

A statement issued by the CDAA said: “The firefighting teams of the Civil Defence and Ambulance Department in Muscat Governorate were able to put out a fire that broke out in an apartment in one of the buildings in Al Khuwair area, Wilayat of Bausher.”



The statement added that the incident resulted in two women being hospitalised with moderate health issues due to inhaling of smoke.

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FIRST PHASE OF NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY SURVEY COMPLETED IN AL BURAIMI, AL DHAHIRAH



MUSCAT: The preliminary field surveys of the National Biodiversity Survey project in Al Buraimi Governorate unveiled the existence of 11 species of birds, 3 species of wild mammals and 6 types of wild reptiles.

The survey also tracked recent remains of 6 species of wild mammals, such as the wild and sand cat, the Arabian tahr (mammal) and the lynx.

In Al Dhahirah Governorate, the survey points to the existence of 12 species of birds, two types of wild mammals, 3 types of reptiles, as well as footprints and remains of 4 species of wild mammals, such as the mountain fox and the wild rabbit.

The National Biodiversity Survey project in the Sultanate of Oman aims to build a national database of species, especially wild mammals. The project seeks to document and update data about the animals' areas of existence and the changes that occurred to them as a result of economic and urban activities.

The project lays emphasis on providing access to accurate statistics for a census aimed to cover all types of medium and large wild mammals. -ONA

THE SURVEY POINTS TO THE EXISTENCE OF

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HM the Sultan receives written message from King of the Belgians

During the meeting, the guest minister conveyed the greetings of King of the Belgians to His Majesty the Sultan

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a written message from Philippe Leopold Louis Marie, King of the Belgians. The message deals with the bilateral relations between Oman and Belgium.

It was handed over to Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, when he received in Muscat Hadja Lahbib, Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Affairs and Foreign Trade and the Federal Cultural Institutions.

During the meeting, the guest minister conveyed greetings of King of the Belgians to His Majesty the Sultan. She extended thanks for the efforts made by Oman to secure the release of the Belgian citizen, as well as an Austrian citizen a Danish citizen.

As far as the bilateral relations between Oman and Belgium are concerned, the two ministers lauded the progress witnessed by these relations in various economic, trade, investment and cultural areas.

They also commended the co-operation between Duqm Port and the Port of Antwerp, stressing the importance of expanding the



cooperation to cover other fields, particularly in the renewable energy projects and green hydrogen production.

The two sides also underlined the joint keenness to expand cultural, academic and student exchange programmes and cooperation in the fields of science and technology, as well as promoting tourism and investment opportunities between the two countries.

The meeting further discussed the developments at the regional and international arenas. In this context, both sides affirmed that they will continue exchanging views on these developments, stemming from the joint keenness to come up with peaceful solutions for various issues in a way that maintains security and stability.

The meeting was attended by a number of officials from both sides. — **OMA**



POWER THROUGH A GRID

GCC electric interconnection project yielding vital benefits

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Mohsen bin Hamad Al-Hadhrami, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Gulf Interconnection Authority, participated in a ceremony for sharing of power through a grid between the city of Arar in the northern region of Saudi Arabia and the Yousifiyah region in Iraq, on Saturday.

The initial capacity of the electricity network will be 1,000 megawatts.

“The Gulf electrical interconnection project is one of the most important infrastructure interconnection projects approved by the leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council states,” Mohsen bin Hamad Al Hadhrami, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Gulf Interconnection Authority, said.

He added that this strategic project has given technical and economic benefits every year for the GCC countries. It gives support during emergency cases, thus sparing the networks of the GCC countries during electrical outages. This network helps by immediately transferring the required energy through the electrical interconnection network that



extends to a distance of approximately 1,050 km from Kuwait to the Sultanate of Oman.

He stated that the project, since its operation until now, has supported approximately 2,700 cases, and has also contributed in achieving savings for the GCC countries ranging from \$200 million to \$300 million annually, and the cumulative savings for the GCC countries since the start of the project has reached about \$3 billion.

He stressed that the project aims to meet part of the demand for electrical energy in the south of the Republic of Iraq.

This will be with about 500 megawatts of energy from the

GCC countries through the Gulf electrical interconnection network as a first stage. The work on the project will take about 24 months.

The Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Jassem Al-Budaiwi said that the Gulf electrical interconnection project is one of the most important projects for linking the infrastructure among the GCC states.

This involves optical fiber networks, providing the foundations for the exchange and trade of electrical energy between member states in a way that serves the economic aspects, supports the reliability of electrical supply, and deals with emergency crises.

METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT WARNING

Fishermen in Al Wusta urged to move boats to safer areas

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Directorate of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in the Al Wusta Governorate has urged all fishermen and sea-goers to follow the alerts issued by the meteorological department regarding the effects of Beparjoy tropical condition. People have been advised to anchor

their fishing vessels, boats and equipment at safe places to avoid damage or loss due to high waves.

The Meteorological Department issued a warning to fishermen to avoid going to the sea and desist from marine activities due to rough waves, reaching (3-6) metres on the coasts of the Arabian Sea during the next three days, and the average wave height

on the coasts of the Sea of Oman will reach (1.5-2.5) metres, starting from Monday.

The Indian authorities have declared a state of alert in the states of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, western India and other coastal areas, after meteorologists warned of an increase in the strength of a cyclone over the Arabian Sea during the next 24 hours.



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Interested bidders may view the auction items online starting on Tuesday, June 06, 2023 at 10:00a.m. by going to <https://online-auction.state.gov/en-US>. Online bidding for all items will open on Thursday, June 08 at 10:00a.m. Bidders must first register on the website before placing a bid.

All items offered for sale will be sold "as is, where is," which means that there are no warranties, either expressed or implied. Bidding closes on Sunday, June 11, 2023 at 2:00p.m.

After the auction closes on June 11, successful bidders will be notified and must make full payment in the **Bank Muscat U.S. Embassy account** before the payment deadline of June 13, 11:00a.m. Prospective bidders can view payment instructions in the "How it works" link on the auction website after the auction goes live. **Please note payment instructions may be different from previous auctions and failure to follow payment instructions will result in the forfeiture of your lots and possible bank fees. Please read instructions carefully. Late payments will not be accepted.**

Successful bidders with fully paid lots must collect their items or arrange for someone to collect them on Saturday, June 17 at the Ghala warehouse during the specific scheduled time (BEFORE 3:00pm). If you are unable to arrange pickup on that date, please do not participate in the auction as there are no alternate pickup dates. Directions to the Ghala warehouse will be provided to winning bidders.



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PRE/22/145 2022/MM/QS-74 (Re-tender)	Stray Dogs Control Project (Re-Tender)	40	15/06/2023	22/06/2023	Specialist
PRE/23/107 2023/MM/QS-39	Construction of Proposed Solutions to resolve Water Stagnation at Bousher (37)	25	28/06/2023	20/07/2023	Forth
PRE/23/108 2023/MM/QS-40	Construction of Proposed Solutions to resolve Water Stagnation at Al Ansab	25	28/06/2023	20/07/2023	Fourth
PRE/23/116 2023/MM/QS-41	Supply of Polymerization devices and accessories	25	28/06/2023	20/07/2023	Specialist
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EU ministers strike key deal on asylum reforms



The plans should see migrants more fairly distributed across member states and shake up asylum application practices to allow authorities to deport people more swiftly

BRUSSELS: After almost a decade of wrangling, European Union countries have finally agreed to reform the bloc's migration and asylum policy.

The plans, given the green light by ministers on Thursday, should see migrants more fairly distributed across the EU's 27 member states and shake up asylum application practices to allow authorities to deport people more swiftly.

"I didn't really believe I would be sitting here saying this, but here we are," Swedish Migration Minister Maria Malmer Stenergard told reporters after chairing 12 hours of talks.

"It is a historic step and a great success to finally be able to unite so many member states."

The deal, which needed back-

ing from a qualified majority of the bloc's members — representing at least 65% of its population — paves the way for final negotiations with lawmakers at the European Parliament. But critics say Europe is shutting itself off from asylum seekers and shirking responsibility.

EU countries should take in migrants or pay

Years of thorny debate have centered on one issue: How to distribute irregular migrants — those entering the EU illegally — across member states more fairly.

Most irregular migrants arrive on the EU's southern coast, in countries such as Italy, Spain and Greece, often making dangerous journeys in small boats that depart

from Turkey, Tunisia, or Morocco.

EU law states that people must claim asylum in the country where they first arrive, which has left southern states demanding more help. In the past, Brussels tried to force northern and eastern EU countries to take in a certain number of migrants based on the size of their population. But the attempt failed, and migration policy expert Helena Hahn told DW that such an approach is no longer "politically feasible."

Under the new compromise, EU countries can opt out of relocating migrants if they pay a fee of €20,000 (\$21,553) per person into a fund managed by Brussels.

"The idea is that there is a pool of options available to member states in order to showcase solidarity with a country that is experiencing so-called migratory pressure," Hahn explained ahead of Thursday's make-or-break meeting.

But some EU governments are not on board

"Brussels is abusing its power," Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orban wrote on Facebook on Friday. "This is unacceptable! They want to turn Hungary into a country of immigrants by force."

Poland also complained, but both countries' objections were overruled in the majority voting system.

Campaigners too have slammed the deal for different reasons, with Oxfam's migration expert Stephanie Pope accusing EU countries of trying to "buy themselves out of their responsibility to welcome refugees."

EU ministers also agreed on a new system to separate asylum applicants based on how likely they are to be granted protection.

In 2022, only 40% of those who sought refuge in the EU qualified for asylum and authorities want to beef up deportation powers.

Under the plans, people from countries considered safer would have their applications filtered through a fast-track assessment procedure at the border. This would apply to those hailing from states with recognition rates below 20%.

In 2022, that included India, North Macedonia, Moldova, Vietnam, Tunisia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Nepal, according to the EU's asylum agency. — **DW**

Full story @ [timesofoman.com/world](https://www.timesofoman.com/world)



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WITH IMMEDIATE EFFECT

Boris Johnson resigns as UK MP

LONDON: Former UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson has announced he has resigned as an MP with immediate effect, according to media report.

The former prime minister said he is standing down in his Uxbridge and South Ruislip constituency ahead of the Privileges Committee report into whether he misled Parliament. It is pertinent to mention that former UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson was grilled by a cross-party parliamentary panel for several hours in March to establish whether he knowingly misled the House of Commons over the party gate scandal of COVID law-breaking parties at Downing Street.

In a statement, the former prime minister said he has received the findings from the privileges committee report into whether he misled MPs over party gate.

"Much to my amazement they are determined to use the proceedings against me to drive me out of parliament", he said.

Johnson's statement did not say what sanction the committee recommended, but a suspension from the Commons of 10 days or more - if approved by MPs - would trigger a recall petition which would then result in a by-election if 10 per cent of his constituents backed the move, SKY News reported.

Johnson said, "I have written



to my association in Uxbridge and South Ruislip to say that I am stepping downward with and triggering an immediate by-election.

"I am very sorry to leave my wonderful constituency. It has been a huge honour to serve them, both as Mayor and MP.

"But I am proud that after what is cumulatively a 15-year stint I have helped to deliver among other things a vast new railway in the Elizabeth Line and full funding for a wonderful new state-of-the-art hospital for Hillingdon, where enabling works have already begun," SKY News reported.

The cross-party privileges committee, led by Labour MP Harriet Harman, has been assessing whether Mr Johnson misled parliament with his statements claiming all COVID rules and guidelines were followed by Number 10 during lockdown gatherings, SKY News reported.

ON GLOBAL FRONT

India's low-cost digital platforms project technological dominance

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi aspires to turn India into a Vishwaguru, or 'teacher to the world'. In a little over a decade India has built a collection of public-facing digital platforms that have transformed its citizens' lives, according to the Economist.

Once known as the 'India Stack', they have been rebranded 'Digital Public Infrastructure' (DPI) as the number and ambition of the platforms have grown. It is this DPI that India hopes to export--and in the process build its economy and influence, reports The Economist. It said it is India's low-cost, software-based version of China's infrastructure-led Belt and Road Initiative. "The benefits of digital transformation should not be confined to a small part of the human race," said PM Modi at the G20 summit in Indonesia last year.

'DPI' involves a triad of identity, payments and data management. It started with the aptly named Aadhaar, or 'foundation', a biometric digital-identity system rolled out under the former Congress-led government in 2010, which now covers nearly all of India's 1.4 billion people.

Next came the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), which makes digital payment as easy as sending a text or scanning a QR code. Launched in 2016, the platform accounted for 73% of all non-cash retail payments in India in the year to March.

The third DPI pillar involves data management. Using their 12-digit Aadhaar number, Indians can access online documents whose authenticity is guaranteed by the government.

This system, called Digilocker, is connected to tax documents, vaccine certificates and more. To make payments, verify identity and get access to crucial documents, an Indian can rely on their phone.

For the affluent, such innovations are convenient. For millions of others, they are transformative. Vendors of everything from coco-



nuts to jewellery can now accept digital payments. This has made their lives easier, more profitable and more secure.

The hundreds of millions in India's welfare system receive "direct benefit transfers" straight to their Aadhaar-linked bank accounts, which has slashed corruption, according to the Economist.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) thinks the government thereby saved 2.2 trillion rupees (34 billion dollars), or 1.1 per cent of GDP, between 2013 and March 2021. The system also helps disburse emergency funds, such as during the pandemic, reported the Economist.

Several other digital platforms have recently been launched or soon will be. The Open Network for Digital Commerce is a newish government-backed non-profit dedicated to helping e-commerce services work together. The idea is to help millions of small businesses connect to third-party payments and logistics providers.

Sahamati, an NGO, is setting up a platform to allow "account aggregators" to enable individuals to share financial information in a standardised format with, for instance, lenders. It hopes this will mitigate the need for the forestsworth of documents applying for a loan in India entails.

According to the Economist,

the digital ecosystem behind these developments is complex. Its members include government agencies, regulators, tech firms, quasi-public corporations, NGOs and universities, all building different parts of the digital edifice.

Aadhaar is run by the government; UPI is managed by a public-private venture, the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).

Other platforms, such as for health and sanitation management, are created by NGOs and sold to state and local governments. Many have been designed by it experts with private-sector experience.

As per the Economist report, India wants to coax other developing countries to follow its example. It views this as a way to push its claim to lead the developing world.

Partly to that end, India invited 125 such countries to a 'Voice of the Global South Summit' in Delhi in January.

"I firmly believe that countries of the global south have a lot to learn from each other's development," PM Modi told the delegates, offering DPI as an example.

Starting without legacy systems such as credit cards and desktop computers, developing countries can leapfrog the West, reported the Economist. — **ANI**

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4 children found alive in Colombian jungle after plane crash 40 days ago

The military also celebrated the rescue, sharing photos of its personnel apparently with the rescued children

BOGOTÁ: Four Indigenous children who went missing in the Colombian Amazon after surviving a plane crash 40 days ago have been found alive, Colombian President Gustavo Petro said. The small crash triggered a massive rescue operation for the four siblings.

“A joy for the whole country! The 4 children who were lost 40 days ago in the Colombian jungle were found alive,” Petro wrote on Twitter. He posted a photo of military personnel and indigenous people, purportedly involved in the rescue operation. The rescue operation



also included Colombian military airplanes and helicopters. The military also celebrated the rescue, sharing photos of its personnel apparently with the rescued children. The children were transported by army medical plane to a military airport.

They were then taken to ambulances in order to be transferred to hospital.

What do we know about the crash?
The children were rescued near the border between the Colom-

bian provinces of Caqueta and Guaviare, not far from the site of the crash. The plane was carrying seven people from Araracuara, in the Amazonas province and the Guaviare province's city of San Jose del Guaviare on May 1. An engine failure caused it to crash, killing three adults, including the pilot and the children's mother. The bodies of all the deceased were found inside the aircraft. Meanwhile, three children aged 13, 9, and 4 years old and their 11-month-old sibling survived the

impact. They are believed to have fled the plane into the rainforest in search of help.

A handout picture released by the Colombian army shows a soldier with a dog checking a pair of scissors found in the forest in a rural area of the municipality of Solano, department of Caqueta, Colombia, on May 17, 2023.

A handout picture released by the Colombian army shows a soldier with a dog checking a pair of scissors found in the forest in a rural area of the municipality of Solano, department of Caqueta, Colombia, on May 17, 2023.

Rescuers earlier found various items which gave them hope the children were not too far.

In their search operation, rescuers aided by search dogs found traces of the children's presence, including discarded fruit and improvised shelters made with jungle vegetation. “They were together, they are weak, let's let the doctors assess them. They found them, it makes me very happy,” Petro told journalists on Friday, adding the children had defended themselves alone in the middle of the jungle.

On May 17, Petro had announced finding the children, only to later retract his claim. — **bw**



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Ministry of Social Development

Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender committee of Ministry of Social Development hereby announces the following tender :-

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of tender document	Last date for tender submission	Tender Document Price (non-refundable)
164/2023	General maintenance work for the building of Al-Wafa Center for Rehabilitation of disabled people in the Wilayat of Bahla	Companies specialized in the field of building contracting and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the second degree	Thursday 29-6-2023 02:00 PM	Wednesday 19-7-2023 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=
166/2023	The work of supplying, preparing and providing nutrition meals for the inmates of the Social Welfare House at Rustaq	Companies specialized in the field of catering and nutrition services and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the first or excellent degree.	Thursday 29-6-2023 02:00 PM	Wednesday 19-7-2023 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=

❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the Tender Board may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) , On Sunday 11/6/2023

❖ For Inquiry , please contact though the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (24402200)

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SPORTS

DJOKOVIC TO PLAY RUUD IN FINAL



Full body cramps ruined my winning chances: Alcaraz

PARIS: World No. 1 Carlos Alcaraz said on Saturday that the stress of playing 22-time major champion Novak Djokovic led to the full body cramps which ruined his chances of winning their French Open semi-final on Friday.

Spain's Alcaraz, 20, started cramping early in the third set before Serbia's Djokovic, 36, won 6-3 5-7 6-1 6-1.

"It is not easy to play against Novak, he is a legend of our sport," he said.

"It has been really tough for me. I have never felt tension like I did in that match."

Top seed Alcaraz was only playing Djokovic for the second time and it was their first meeting at one of the four Grand Slams.

"If someone says he goes onto the court with no nerves playing against Novak, he lies," added the US Open champion, who will be replaced as world No. 1 by Djokovic if he beats Casper Ruud in Sunday's final.

Last year's runner-up and fourth seed Casper Ruud of Norway beat No. 22 seed Alexander Zverev of Germany 6-3, 6-4, 6-0 to reach his third Grand Slam final.

Alcaraz said: "The tension of the match was why the cramping happened. I started the match really nervous."

Djokovic, who said he had faced the same experiences when he was younger, added: "It is part of the learning curve. It is part of the experience."

"He's only 20, he's got plenty of time. He has shown so much maturity in the last couple of years. His career will be very successful if he manages to keep healthy because the game is there."

Alcaraz won his first Grand Slam title in New York last year, but this was only his second major semi-final and he faced an opponent playing in his 45th.

Alcaraz was out-of-sorts in a first set where he looked anxious in his shot-making and his body language, while

Djokovic used all of his experience and know-how to move in front.

The Spaniard improved in what was another lengthy set, levelling what was turning into a classic contest even though the cramps had already started.

Djokovic took a medical time-out for an arm problem in the second set, taking a six-minute break before the third set while Alcaraz remained on court.

Shortly after, the seriousness of the physical issues for the Spaniard soon became even clearer.

After hitting a return into the net at 40-30 on Djokovic's serve in the second game, Alcaraz immediately pulled up and limped back to his chair to receive treatment.

"I would say the first set and the second set were really, really intense and I started to cramp in my arm," he said.

"At the beginning of the third set I started to cramp every part of my body, not only the legs. The arms, as well, every part of the legs."

"It was really tough for me to move at the third set, and in the fourth set let's say I had a little chance, but it was really tough."

"My full body started to cramp."

Alcaraz twice received treatment on court, also taking a lengthy bathroom break at the end of the third set, but insisted quitting the match never crossed his mind.

"I would have felt sorry about myself if I retired. I'm in a semi-final of a Grand Slam. If I retired from that, it could have been really tough for me," said Alcaraz.

"Thinking about the fourth set, I thought that probably I have a 1% chance to come back."

"In the fourth set I had break points in the first game and after that, I just continued playing. I was not thinking about retirement." - Agencies

Iga Swiatek reigns supreme in Paris

Defending champion defeats Czech's Karolina Muchova to clinch her third Roland Garros crown

PARIS: Poland's Iga Swiatek maintained her recent grip on the French Open by fighting past Czech Republic's Karolina Muchova to win her third Roland Garros title in four years on Saturday.

The top seed and defending champion had to dig deep to beat 43rd-ranked Muchova, before winning 6-2, 5-7, 6-4.

Muchova, 26, broke for 4-3 in the decider, but Poland's Swiatek, 22, finished strongly to triumph.

Swiatek, who has now won four Grand Slams, is the first woman to defend the title since Justine Henin in 2007. At 22, she is the youngest player to secure four Grand Slam titles since Serena Williams (US Open 1999, Roland Garros 2002, Wimbledon 2002 and US Open 2002).

Muchova - told to quit last year by doctors because of injuries - showed remarkable resolve to fight back from a set and 3-0 down, not only making a contest of what had been a one-sided match but moving to within two service holds of a first major title.

However, she lost in one of the cruellest ways by producing a double fault on Swiatek's first match point.

Swiatek instantly dropped her racquet and dropped to her haunches, bursting into tears on the court before hugging Muchova when she came around the net.

As Swiatek ran up to the stands to celebrate with her team - like she did after winning 12 months ago - Muchova sat in her chair contemplating what might have been.

Swiatek was all praise for runner-up Muchova.

In her on-court interview after the title, the Polish star said: "First of all, congrats to Karolina - my members of my team are witnesses that since we first played I knew that you were going to play these tough matches, these finals, because I was really struck with your variety on court."

"I really hope you are going to have many more finals. Congrats to your team as well - I know how important teams are in our sport, even though it's an individual sport. I wouldn't be here without my team so thank you guys. Sorry for being such a pain."

'It is my favourite place on tour'

"I know I have said every year it is not about the performance but I really love being here - basically it's my favourite place on tour so



thank you to everybody, tournament organisers, sponsors, people who are working behind the scenes, you make this tournament so great for us that it is always a pleasure to come back and just give 100%."

"I want to thank you guys for coming and giving us so much energy - it was so loud today and

for the semi-finals too, incredible really. I hope next year the atmosphere is going to be even better."

Speaking after her loss, Muchova said: "It's been amazing to actually be here for three weeks in Paris here for me and my team. This was so close and yet so far. This happens when you play one of the best."

"Iga, I want to congratulate you

WORLD TEST CHAMPIONSHIP FINAL: DAY FOUR

Kohli and Rahane keep India's hopes alive in hunt of 444

LONDON: Australia were in driver's seat in the ICC World Test Championship (WTC) Final on day four, with India 164/3 at the close and still requiring 280 runs to reach what would be a record target.

At stumps, Virat Kohli and Ajinkya Rahane were at crease and a lot of India's hopes will be on the pair who will return to the middle unbeaten on 44 and 20 respectively when play resumes on Sunday.

The forecast on the final day suggest a small chance of rain on what promises to be an otherwise sunny day in south London.

Earlier, an excellent and unbeaten half-century from Alex Carey and contributions from Mitchell Starc and Cameron Green saw Australia reach 270/8 when they declared midway through the day's second session.

And, after an encouraging opening stand, India lost each of their top three to leave them facing an uphill task on the final day.

India's attempt at chasing an all-time high 444 to win a Test started at a fair lick, and it was skipper Rohit Sharma who set the tone, pulling the second ball of the innings to the boundary. But Shub-



man Gill fell just before tea when Cameron Green was adjudged to have held on to a low catch at gully, giving Australia an opening.

It was a nice delivery from Scott Boland that found the edge of Gill's bat, with the statuesque Green getting down low to his left with the grab but which was debated for long.

Gill stood his ground, waiting for the decision to go upstairs to the television umpire. And, after a lengthy review process the decision was made and a disappointed Gill had to make way.

Rohit Sharma departed after tea as the shadows began to lengthen at The Oval, trapped in-front

by Nathan Lyon after missing a sweep shot.

And with the two dangerous openers back in the hutch and the risk of being put under fifth-day pressure minimised, Australia settled into their bowling effort. And they were handed an extra scalp when Cheteshwar Pujara at-

tempted an uncharacteristic ramp shot that he edged through to Alex Carey behind the stumps.

Kohli and Rahane put on an unbeaten stand of 71 through to the close, with Kohli joining an elite group during his innings, becoming only the fifth Indian batter to reach a career tally of 2,000 runs in Tests against Australia.

Anything other than an Aussie win at this stage would be one of the all-time great cricket stories, particularly given the presence of a reserve day. Yet while the draw or an India win looks implausible, it's not impossible while Kohli and Rahane survive.

Australia had resumed on 123/4 on day four, 296 ahead and four wickets down in their second dig, with India hoping to restrict the eventual target.

Umesh Yadav took the ball for the first spell in an unexpected tactical move from India, and the decision reaped rewards when the pacer found the edge of Marnus Labuschagne, with Cheteshwar Pujara holding on in the slips to send him back for 41.

Australia built a sizeable lead thanks to a partnership worth 43

between Carey and Green took the sting out of India through the first hour. But the excellent Ravindra Jadeja made it two wickets in the session when he removed Green in unusual fashion.

Carey and Mitchell Starc upped the run rate in the half hour before the interval to take a lead of 374. Runs flowed fast after lunch, as Carey reached a fine half-century and Starc had some fun at the other end. The pair put on 93 runs in 120 balls before Starc got a touch on a Shami bouncer to depart for 41.

Cummins opted against taking the declaration at that stage, coming out to the middle. But the captain added just five runs in five balls before skying a catch to Axar Patel at point, and that was the signal for the declaration to come.

Brief scores: Australia 1st innings 469 and 2nd innings 270/8 decl (Alex Carey 66 n.o., Mitchell Starc 41, Marcus Labuschagne 41; R Jadeja 3/58, Umesh Yadav 2/54, Mohammed Shami 2/39) **vs India 1st innings 296 and 2nd innings 164/3** (Rohit Sharma 43, Cheteshwar Pujara 27, Virat Kohli 44 n.o, Ajinkya Rahane 20 n.o.; Nathan Lyon 1/32).



DRINKING BEETROOT JUICE

Consuming beetroot juice daily for six months following the placement of a stent decreased the likelihood that angina patients would experience a heart attack or require a repeat treatment, according to recent research presented at the British Cardiovascular Society conference.

The research on the advantages of vegetable juice was presented at the conference in Manchester and was supported by the British Heart Foundation (BHF) and the National Institute for Health and Care Research. The researchers, based at St Bartholomew's Hospital and Queen Mary University in London, found that 16 percent of angina patients had a serious heart or circulatory incident, like a heart attack or need for another procedure, in the two years after having a stent fitted. However, when patients had beetroot juice daily, this dropped to 7.5 per cent.

Thousands of coronary heart disease patients each year in the UK have a stent implanted to widen one of the blood vessels in their heart and ease their angina, in a procedure known as a percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI).

Around 10 percent of patients experience restenosis, where the stented blood vessel narrows again and heart disease symptoms return, within five years of a PCI. By advising that patients drink beetroot juice, doctors could soon reduce the chance that the stent fails in this way.

When the blood vessel width of patients was measured six months after stenting, the vessels of those who had beetroot juice showed around half as much narrowing in that time as those who had the placebo treatment.

By stopping restenosis, beetroot juice could stop patients from having to have another PCI procedure that may also fail or a much more invasive coronary bypass surgery.

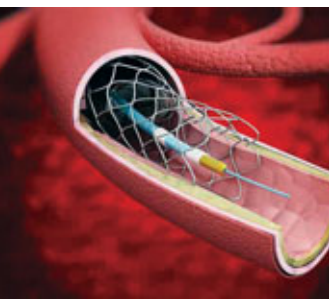
Dr Krishnaraj Rathod, Clinical Senior Lecturer at the William Harvey Research Institute, QMUL, who led the trial, said:

"Experiments in the lab suggested that the inorganic nitrate, which is found naturally in beetroot juice, would have these ef-

LINKED TO REDUCED RISK OF HEART ATTACKS IN ANGINA PATIENTS WITH STENTS: STUDY



Stenting is one of the most crucial tools we have in the fight against coronary heart disease but work still needs to be done to ensure that every patient sees a long-term benefit from the procedure



fects, and it is very encouraging to see it create such a big improvement in the clinic for angina patients. Our patients liked that their treatment was a completely natural product that has no significant side effects.

"We will now take this to the next stage of trials in the hope that doctors can soon prescribe beetroot juice to ensure stents last longer to provide even more effective relief of symptoms."

Professor James Leiper, Associate Medical Director at the British Heart Foundation, said:

"Stenting is one of the most crucial tools we have in the fight against coronary heart disease but work still needs to be done to ensure that every patient sees a long-term benefit from the procedure.

"Thousands of patients each year have to go through the stress of a medical procedure on their heart more than once before it is successful. This small study offers hope that this can be prevented. The trial must now be scaled-up to confirm the initial observation that beetroot juice can make a difference."

The researchers were able to show that beetroot juice helps patients thanks to its natural high level of inorganic nitrate. Patients in the trial that had beetroot juice with inorganic nitrate removed did not get the same beneficial effects.

Inorganic nitrate is a nutrient that gets converted to nitrite by naturally found bacteria in the mouth, which is then turned into the signalling molecule nitric oxide (NO) by enzymes in the body. It is thought that NO is the cause of the positive effects on patients' blood vessels.

Beetroot juice was shown to be a safe and reliable way to get inorganic nitrate into the body, with no significant side effects experienced by any of the 300 patients on the trial other than pink urine.

The team is now looking to start a larger trial soon. They are hoping that, if successful, beetroot juice can be prescribed as a treatment to be taken after stent implantation. This may then extend beyond angina patients to those who have had a stent for a different reason, like after a heart attack

— ANI

“Around 10 percent of patients experience restenosis, where the stented blood vessel narrows again and heart disease symptoms return, within five years of a PCI. By advising that patients drink beetroot juice, doctors could soon reduce the chance that the stent fails in this way.

SPORTS

Turki is National Hopes TT champ

Organised by the OTTA, the national championship witnessed the participation of 57 paddlers from across the country

MUSCAT: Ibri Club's Turki al Abri claimed the National Hopes (U14) Table Tennis Championship title with a convincing 3-0 win over Saham Club's Nasser al Zaabi in the final at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex on Friday.

Organised by the Oman Table Tennis Association (OTTA), the national Hopes tournament turned out to be a successful event with the participation of 57 paddlers.

Ali al Ajmi of Saham bagged the third place after defeating clubmate Nasser al Balushi in the bronze medal playoff.

The paddlers' participation came from nine clubs, namely Masirah, Seeb, Salalah, Ibri, Yanqul, Al Ittifaq, Qurriyat, Nakhal and Saham.

The players were distributed into 14 groups and each group consisted of four players except one that had five. The top two paddlers from each group advanced to the knockouts stages.



Turki made a clean sweep in the group stage as he beat Said al Alawi (Yanqul) and Anwar al Sabqi (Al Ittifaq). He got past Tariq al Jassasi (Ibri) before defeating Yazn al Ghafr in the round of 16.

In the quarter-finals, Turki overcame clubmate Ali al Rawahi before outplaying Ali al Ajmi in the semi-finals.

After the title, Turki said: "I am very glad to win this title. The victory will encourage me to do much better in the upcoming domestic and events abroad. I am attending the ongoing ITTF international camp in Muscat and I will later join the national team camp this week. I hope to bring good results in the forthcoming championships in Oman and in the region."

ICC QUALIFIER IN ZIMBABWE

Sri Lanka drop experienced Mathews from ICC World Cup Qualifier squad

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka dropped experienced all-rounder Angelo Mathews from the 15-man squad set to fly out to Zimbabwe for the ICC World Cup Qualifier later this month.

Mathews had been recalled to the ODI side ahead of Sri Lanka's tour of New Zealand earlier this year following an absence of two years. The decision had given the 36-year-old hopes of a World Cup swansong. However, following a string of subpar showings - since his return, he has made scores of 18, 0 and 12 - he was dropped from the playing XI ahead of the second ODI against Afghanistan last week.

Sadeera Samarawickrama, Mathews' replacement for that match, made a brisk 44, which saw him retain his place in the third ODI that followed, though he wasn't required to bat. Thus, Mathews, who has 221 ODIs under



his belt, now seems unlikely to add to that number.

His recall ahead of the Afghanistan series, along with that of Dimuth Karunaratne, was seen as a shift from the selectors to focus more on experience during a World Cup year. But Karunaratne's retention for the World Cup Qualifier is

proof that he remains in their minds, though the 35-year-old certainly seems to have earned his opportunity, racking up back-to-back fifties on his return to the ODI side as Sri Lanka secured a come-from-behind series win against Afghanistan.

The rest of the squad, though, has few surprises. The batting unit

mostly picks itself, with captain Dasun Shanaka leading the likes of Kusal Mendis, Pathum Nissanka, Charith Asalanka, Dhananjaya de Silva and Samarawickrama.

Chamika Karunaratne, Shanaka and Wanindu Hasaranga fill the all-rounders' slots, while Hasaranga also leads a spin department that also includes Maheesh Theekshana and leg-spinner Dushan Hemantha. Sri Lanka begin their qualifying campaign on June 19 against UAE in Bulawayo, prior to which they will play three warm-up games.

Squad: Dasun Shanaka (capt), Kusal Mendis (wk), Pathum Nissanka, Dimuth Karunaratne, Dhananjaya de Silva, Charith Asalanka, Sadeera Samarawickrama, Chamika Karunaratne, Dushan Hemantha, Wanindu Hasaranga, Lahiru Kumara, Dushmantha Chameera, Kasun Rajitha, Matheesha Pathirana, Maheesh Theekshana.

BUNDESLIGA RETURN



Liverpool's Keita moves to Werder Bremen

BERLIN: Central midfielder Naby Keita returns to the Bundesliga on a free transfer after signing an undisclosed contract with Werder Bremen, the Green-Whites confirmed on Friday.

"It's clear that when a player like Naby Keita is on the market on a free transfer, there are plenty of prospects. That's why we're very happy that Naby chose us despite several offers. With his qualities, he will be a great asset to the team," said Clemens Fritz, head of Bremen's scouting department.

Bremen's new arrival knows the Bundesliga very well as he had played for RB Leipzig between 2016 and 2018, scoring 17 goals in an overall 71 competitive outings. Since his transfer in 2018, Keita has won all major titles with Liverpool, including the Premier League, FA Cup and the UEFA Champions League.

"I am really looking forward

to my new task in Bremen," said the Guinea international. "The talks with those responsible, the environment and style of play from Werder convinced me. The coach made me feel comfortable and showed me that I can help the team. Werder is a special club and I know the Weser stadium from my time in Leipzig".

Werder Bremen finished 13th last season and is now trying to bolster up its offense with the signing of Keita.

"Naby is a strong midfielder who makes us much more flexible. He is a threat in the final third but can also set up. For our squad, he is an important building block in our central axis. Last year he played in the Champions League final and brings a lot of international experience to the team, which will benefit from as a team," said Bremen head coach Ole Werner. - **Xinhua**

SHOULDER INJURY

British player Draper to miss Wimbledon



PARIS: British tennis player Jack Draper will not be able to play in the Wimbledon Open after he suffered a shoulder injury at the French Open.

The injury came against Tomas Etcheverry in the first-round clash on Monday.

Jack Draper was forced to do an underarm serve but after trying for a few minutes he decided to withdraw from the match.

Draper wrote on Instagram: "It's clear my shoulder is going to need time and rehab to get back to where it needs to be. My team and I have made the difficult decision to miss the grass court season this year. "I guess in this sport there are so many ups and downs but this one is tough to take. The only thing for sure is that I will keep persevering."

Draper made his Wimbledon debut in 2021 losing to Novak Djokovic, while last year he pushed Alex de Minaur to four sets in the second round, according to Sky Sports. - **ANI**

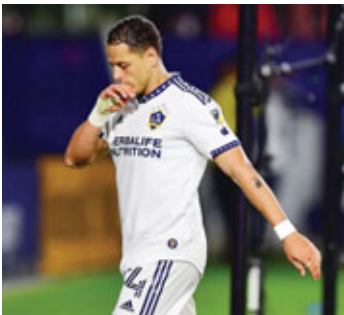
LA GALAXY STAR

Hernandez to undergo knee surgery

MEXICO CITY: LA Galaxy's Mexican striker Javier 'Chicharito' Hernandez will require surgery after suffering a torn anterior cruciate ligament in his right knee, the Major League Soccer (MLS) club said on Friday.

The 35-year-old sustained the injury during the Galaxy's US Open Cup quarter-final defeat at Real Salt Lake on Wednesday and scans confirmed his worst fears.

The injury comes barely two months after Mexico manager Diego Cocca said Hernandez was under consideration for a return to the national team. The former Manchester United and Real Madrid player has not represented his country since September 2019 after falling out with former manager Gerardo Martino. Hernandez has scored 38 goals in 74 MLS appearances since joining the Galaxy in 2020. - **Xinhua**



FORMULA ONE

'Aston Martin keen to keep Alonso for several years'

BARCELONA: Aston Martin Aramco Cognizant Formula One Team's principal Mike Krack intends to keep Spanish driver Fernando Alonso at Aston Martin. After the Spanish Grand Prix last Sunday, 41-year-old Fernando Alonso made his intentions clear, he will drive for Aston Martin for another few years.

When asked about Alonso's decision to stay at Aston Martin Formula One team, team principal Mike Krack said, "It's nice to hear that, that he has said that several years, we would be happy with that.

"I think the main thing, and this is one of the big qualities, is the desire to be at the front, the motivation. And I think this is fully on with Fernando," Krack was



quoted by the official website of Formula 1.

Krack said: "We take it race by race, and we try to do well in every race."

Since driving for Aston Martin,

Fernando Alonso has been in great form this year. I

n the opening seven races of the season, Alonso has claimed five podium finishes. The Spaniard is currently in the third position in

the drivers' championship.

Krack said, "We don't think so much about that, to be honest, as you guys know. We take it race by race, and we try to do well in every race. It's nice to hear that but we



didn't think too much about it yet. Let's make it happen."

In a press conference, when asked about whether Aston Martin could win a race this season, Krack said, "I think that is very difficult to say because it's such a relative competition that you are depending on the pace of others, you are depending on yourself, so I think it would be bold to say we will win this one, or that we are close to winning."

"We have to see. We have to be there at each opportunity that is coming and, if it comes, we have to be ready, and until then we have to work hard to keep ourselves in the position to be there.

"I will not make any predictions of when we're going to win a race," he added. - **ANI**

Bank Muscat inaugurates new branch at Al Hail in Seeb wilayat

The new branch at Al Hail is an integrated branch with a modern design that takes into account the advanced standards related to the banking sector

MUSCAT: As the largest financial services provider in Oman and aligned to its customer-centric vision, Bank Muscat celebrated the opening of its new branch in Al Hail in the Wilayat of Seeb.

The inauguration ceremony was held under the patronage of Sheikh Ahmed bin Ali Al Shehhi, Wali of Seeb, and in the presence of members of the bank's executive management and media representatives.

The new branch in Al Hail is an integrated branch with a modern design that takes into account the advanced standards related to the banking sector. It is designed to provide a comfortable experience to all customers to conduct transactions in one place as it includes an Asalah Priority Banking Center, special sections for Baituna and Sayyarti products as well as safe deposit boxes.

It is also equipped to facilitate access of persons with disabilities to various banking services. The new branch is operated by experienced Omani cadres, who are ready to provide the best services for customers. The services provided by the branch can be availed during weekdays from Sunday to Thursday, from eight in the morning until two in the afternoon.

On this occasion, Abdulnasir N. Al Raisi, General Manager, Personal Banking, Bank Muscat, said: "We are pleased to launch the newest addition to our retail banking branches to provide various banking services and facilities to customers, who can accomplish a wide range of banking transactions, including opening accounts, cards and financing services in addition to various commercial facilities to ensure the provision of the best and most quality services.

"The bank's branches form an important channel and a direct link with customers and we are always happy to listen to customer feedback and suggestions to continue developing services and meet their aspirations and needs, strengthen our relationship with them and develop it to new heights of successful and effective communication."

Saleh Mohammed Al Maaini, Deputy General Manager, Capital Regions, Bank Muscat, commented: "The bank is keen to make various banking services and facilities available and closer to customers. Today, we are delighted to open this new branch in Al Hail in the Wilayat of Seeb to add to the network of branches in Muscat



Governorate, where we now have 55 branches designed to meet the needs of a large segment of customers. The bank will continue the process of development and improvement, translating its vision "To serve you better, everyday". I take this opportunity to invite customers to visit the branch and take advantage of the various banking services and facilities offered by Bank Muscat."

As a leading financial services provider, Bank Muscat has an extensive branch network and more than 820 devices, including ATMs, CDMs and omnichannel devices distributed in all governorates. Thanks to this extended network, Bank Muscat is the first choice for more than two million customers in the Sultanate and plays a major role in enhancing financial inclusion in the country through the innovative products it develops

for customers. To provide the best services, the bank is constantly updating its digital channels of Internet and mobile banking to enhance the effectiveness and convenience of customers' experience through secure, easy and fast options at the same time.

Today, these digital channels have more than 1.6 million registered customers to take advantage of the wide range of benefits offered, including bill payment, fund transfers within the bank or Oman, fund transfers around the world through the SWIFT network and many others. Bank card options such as debit, credit and prepaid cards have seen wider popularity during the last period due to their contactless payment feature, in addition to the multiple modern mobile payment advantages such as payment using a QR code.

Premier banking customers can

benefit from exclusive and distinctive services provided by Private Banking, Asalah Priority Banking and Al Jawhar Privilege Banking. Various exclusive offers can be found through the website at Premier Banking - Bank Muscat.

Bank Muscat is always keen to develop its products and provide banking services that keep pace with all current and future developments. For its tireless efforts in this regard, the bank has been praised and appreciated by various local, regional and international institutions. Forbes Middle East has ranked the bank as one of the Top 30 Banks and the Top 100 Companies in the Middle East. The bank was also recently recognised by MEED as the Best Retail Bank in the Sultanate for its best practices, its customer-centric vision and the innovative and modern offers it provides.

EMBARK ON CULINARY ADVENTURE

Sri Lankan Food Festival at Grand Millennium Muscat

MUSCAT: Grand Millennium Muscat, an award-winning five-star hotel in the heart of the city, announced the Sri Lankan Food Festival, set to captivate food enthusiasts from June 12 to 30.

At the Sri Lankan Food Festival, visitors will immerse themselves in a vibrant tapestry of spices and aromas. The event promises an exceptional showcase of Sri Lankan delicacies, featuring live street food cooking stations and interactive cooking classes.

Food enthusiasts can indulge in an exquisite A la Carte Lunch menu, available daily from 12:30pm to 3:30pm.

Specialities

Carefully curated to cater to every palate, the menu will present a diverse range of Sri Lankan specialities, guaranteed to please even the most discerning taste buds. For those seeking an unforgettable dining experience, dinner options will be available from Friday to Wednesday, between 6:30pm and 10:30pm.

Thursdays at the Sri Lankan

Food Festival will offer a unique and exciting twist as guests can partake in the Sri Lankan Street Food Nights.

This particular evening event will provide an opportunity to savour the vibrant flavours and street food delights that Sri Lanka is renowned for.

For those passionate about exploring the art of Sri Lankan cooking, Grand Millennium Muscat is pleased to offer exclusive Sri Lankan Cooking Classes.

Led by expert chefs, these classes will take place on Mondays, specifically on June 12, 19, and 26. Held at the Bahriyat Restaurant from 10:30am to 12pm, the cooking classes will provide a unique opportunity to unravel the secrets behind traditional Sri Lankan recipes.

The Sri Lankan Food Festival at Grand Millennium Muscat promises to be an unforgettable event for both locals and tourists alike. It presents a unique opportunity to explore the rich culinary heritage of Sri Lanka, right in the heart of Muscat.



ROUND-UP

Lincoln Navigator stands out with its inspiring luxury and comfort

Powering the Lincoln Navigator is a twin-turbo V6, 3.5L engine with auto start-stop technology, that produces 440 horsepower delivered through a 10-speed automatic transmission with SelectShift paddle activation

MUSCAT: The flagship Lincoln Navigator has been a benchmark for luxury in the automotive industry. The Navigator stands out with its inspiring luxury, a host of advanced features and space and comfort that is one of the largest in its segment.

Powering the Lincoln Navigator is a twin-turbo V6, 3.5L engine with auto start-stop technology, that produces 440 horsepower delivered through a 10-speed automatic transmission with SelectShift paddle activation. Giving the Navigator a bold look are adaptive pixel projector LED headlamps with signature lighting, predictive curve lighting and sign-based lighting.

The Navigator is also equipped with a panoramic vista roof with a power sunshade and Lincoln Embrace: LED-illuminated exterior door handle pockets, Lincoln approach detection system, Lincoln logo illuminated mats and Lincoln signature lighting with a fade on/off.

The Navigator makes a fine mark on every journey with an impressive interior which includes 1st-row passenger seat memory, 3rd-row PowerFold 60/40 split bench seat with power recline, 12" configurable LCD instrument cluster, Head-up Display, ambient lighting-LED, enhanced active noise control, wireless charging pad and more.



Occupants can enjoy the available Revel® Ultima 3D audio system with 28 speakers that work in concert with Navigator's interior design and acoustics. Standard SYNC® 4 enables clients to manage audio, phone, navigation and more from the vehicle touch screen or steering wheel-mounted controls.

To navigate your drives safely, the Navigator easily adapts to changing conditions with adaptive cruise control with stop-and-go and lane centring assist, auto high-beam headlamps, blind spot information system with cross-traffic alert and trailer coverage, evasive steering assist, a lane-keeping system with blind-spot assist which includes lane-keeping aid, lane-

keeping alert, driver alert system and a pre-collision assist.

The Navigator is also equipped with driver and front passenger-dual-stage front airbags, front-seat side airbags, safety canopy side-curtain airbags with rollover sen-

sor, AdvanceTrac with RSC (Roll Stability Control), MyKey technology and SecuriCode invisible keypad.

In Oman, Lincoln vehicles are brought to you by Arabian Car Marketing Co.

KANZEE LOYALTY REWARD CARD

Sultan Hypermarket launches new loyalty reward card programme

MUSCAT: Sultan Hypermarket, one of the leading hypermarkets in Oman, announced the launch of its new loyalty reward card programme, Kanzee.

This innovative programme leverages the power of data analytics to provide customers with a tailored shopping experience, offering personalised rewards and exclusive offers based on their purchasing patterns and lifestyle preferences.

Formerly known as the reward card programme, Kanzee represents a significant upgrade in the customer experience. Effective immediately, customers are invited to sign up for Kanzee and enjoy the numerous benefits it offers. The reward card programme will run until July 11, 2023, during which time loyalty points can be accumulated through traditional card-based transactions.

With the introduction of Kanzee, customers will no longer need to carry a physical loyalty card. Instead, the programme will seamlessly integrate with Sultan Hyper-

market's mobile app, available for download on iOS and Android devices. Through the app, customers can conveniently track their loyalty points, redeem points for purchases, and explore a range of personalised offers and rewards specifically tailored to their needs and lifestyle.

Mohamed El Mokadmi, the General Manager of Sultan Hypermarket, expressed his excitement about the launch, stating, "We are thrilled to introduce Kanzee as the next evolution of our loyalty programme. With the power of data analytics, Kanzee enables us to create a truly personalised shopping experience for our customers. The more you shop, the more you are rewarded, ensuring that our loyal customers receive the recognition and benefits they deserve."

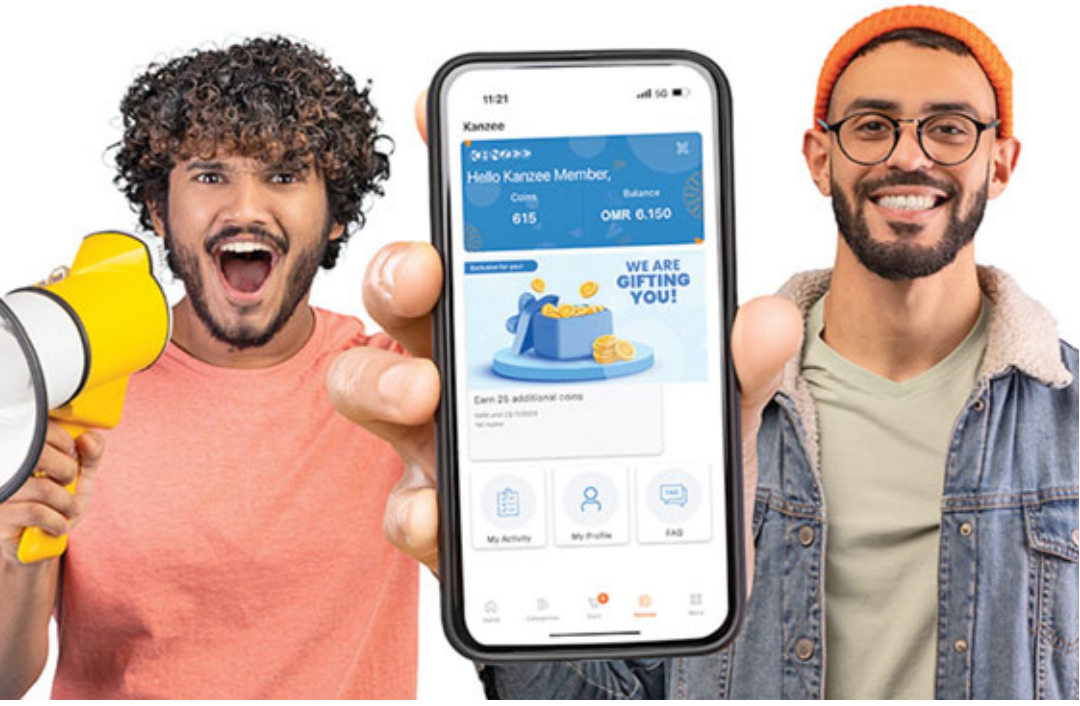
Kanzee offers an added layer of privacy and security, as customer purchase data is analysed anonymously. This data is then utilised to curate special offers and incentives exclusively for each customer. By leveraging this innovative

technology, Sultan Hypermarket aims to deliver a seamless and rewarding shopping experience that exceeds customer expectations.

Sultan Hypermarket has long been committed to providing exceptional quality products and outstanding customer service. The launch of Kanzee reflects the hypermarket's dedication to continuously enhancing the customer experience, ensuring that loyal patrons receive valuable rewards and personalised offers.

To join the Kanzee loyalty programme and start enjoying the benefits today, customers can download the Sultan Hypermarket mobile app from the App Store or Google Play Store.

Sultan Hypermarket is one of the leading hypermarkets in Oman, renowned for its high-quality products and exceptional customer service. With a commitment to continuously innovate and enhance the shopping experience, Sultan Hypermarket remains at the forefront of the retail industry.





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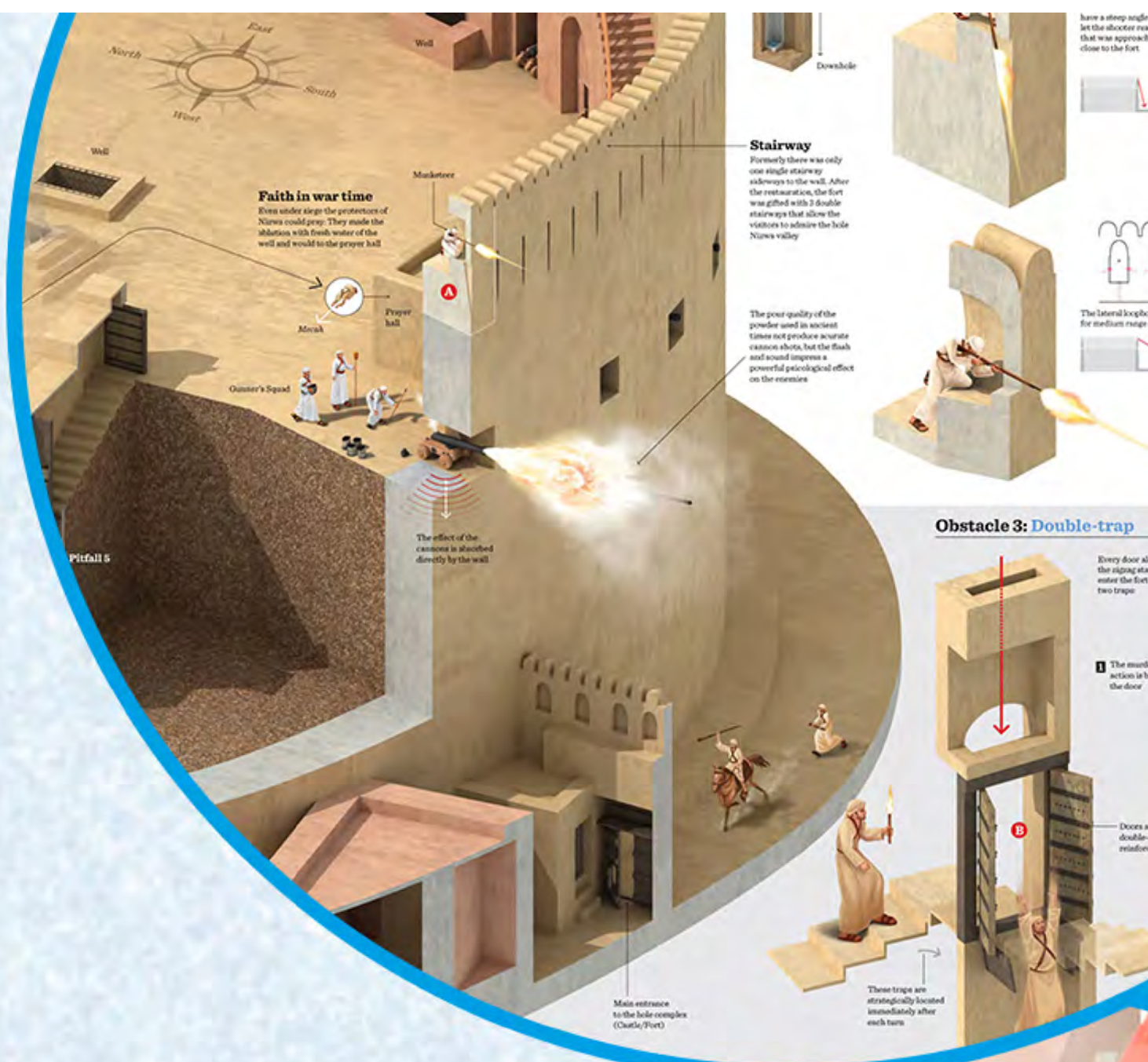
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