

HM SENDS GREETINGS

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulation to Margrethe II Queen of Denmark on her birthday. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings coupled with his wishes of good health and happiness to the queen and for her country's people further progress and prosperity. — **ONA**



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RAMADAN PRAYER TIMINGS	
DHUHR	12:12pm
ASR	3:39pm
MAGHRIB	6:33pm
ISHA	7:46pm
FAJR (APRIL 17)	4:27am

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CALL FOR MORE LOCAL PRODUCTION OF DRUGS

Despite challenges, Oman is making efforts to overcome the shortages, said a senior health ministry official

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Local pharmaceutical industry needs to increase production of medicines to avoid shortages, a senior official of the Ministry of Health said. Recently, the Minister of Health, Dr Hilal Al Sabti, called

for the establishment of more local pharma factories after citizens complained of shortages of medicines at the health centres.

The Minister of Health said that there is an increase in consumption, and the supply chain has been interrupted due to closure of some small and emerging companies.

“So we started looking for some investors to set up some pharmaceutical factories in the Sultanate of Oman. Two months ago, a pharmaceutical factory was opened in Salalah, and we hope to open another at the end of the year,” he said.

Speaking to *Times of Oman*, a senior official from the Oman's Ministry of Health, said that in June 2022 there was a shortage of 214 medicines from the list of 1,200, while a month ago the scarcity was of 90 medicines, and currently the deficit is of 54 drugs.

The official also confirmed that

there are many reasons for the shortages. “While some are supply-related due to great demand all over the world, others are production-related.”

But the most important cause of drug shortage is lack of raw materials. “This is due to the impact of global supply chains, including political tensions in Europe and Russia and increase in raw material prices as a result of rise in energy prices.”

The official also said that one of the reasons for short supply is the backlog of a large number of operations and appointments in Oman during the COVID-19 pandemic. He said that due to supply disruptions, some of the drugs were reaching Oman eight months behind the schedule.

He also said: “As the pharmaceutical market is regulated, it is not allowed to import products

except from factories that are registered and approved locally and internationally as a result of their sensitivity and their direct impact on human health. Therefore, the availability of some medicines are very limited.”

He also said that lack of medicines is also due to the lesser number of local factories, as most of the medicines are imported from outside.

The official said that despite great challenges, Oman is making efforts to overcome the shortages, as 95 percent of the approved and essential medicines were provided, according to the latest report issued in March 2023.

Doctors have been urged to adhere to the policies approved by the Ministry of Health for distributing medicines and to not force patients to buy it from the private sector.

Gulf standard must to operate EVs in Oman

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Electric vehicles in Oman will be bound by Gulf Standard technical specifications in Oman, according to the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP).

In a statement issued on Saturday, the Ministry said, “Starting on May 1, 2023, the Ministerial Resolution No. (45/2023) will come into effect, which considers the Gulf standard as binding for the technical specifications of electric vehicles in Oman.”

The Gulf standard specification aims to specify the technical safety requirements for electric vehicles in terms of the safety of the driver and passengers by avoiding accidents and electric shocks and to ensure driving of high-performance car at a lower cost than conventional combustion vehicles.

As part of the implementation, manufacturers and importers are required to submit a certificate



approved by the Gulf standardisation Organisation before they can operate new electric vehicles in the Sultanate.

Engineer Yaqoub bin Saleh Al Saadi, a mechanical engineer in the Compliance Department of the General Directorate of Standards and Metrology at the MoCIIP, said: “The application of this standard comes with the aim of creating a new sector for electric car spare parts, maintenance services workshops, skilled national labour, advanced technology, vehicle charging stations, opportunities to localise modern industries and strengthen supply chains.”

>**A2**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Foreign Ministry urges dialogue in Sudan

1 The Foreign Ministry expressed deep concern over the developments in Sudan following the ongoing clashes there. The ministry urged all parties to exercise maximum restraint and prioritise dialogue to reach the desired political agreement. >**A5**

WORLD

Several killed in Sudan clashes

2 Clashes erupted on Saturday in Khartoum between the country's military and the powerful Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitary, in what appears to be an attempted coup. >**A6**

MARKET

Oman's inflation rate stabilises at 1.58%

3 The consumer price inflation in Oman during March 2023 was about 1.58 per cent, according to the data of the monthly survey of consumer prices. >**B1**

OMAN HOCKEY ASSOCIATION

New Al Amerat stadium to host Hockey5s World Cup in 2024



Times News Service

MUSCAT: In a development that will go along way in promoting the game of hockey in the Sultanate of Oman, the Oman Hockey Association (OHA) has announced the construction of a new stadium for the inaugural FIH Hockey 5s World Cup 2024 in Al Amerat.

The new stadium will be built next to the existing Oman Cricket Academy Grounds and near to Al Amerat Club.

In an exclusive interview with *Times of Oman*, the OHA chairman, Dr Marwan Juma Al Juma, confirmed that the new stadium

will host the inaugural FIH Hockey5s World Cups (Men and Women) to be played in January 2024.

“The inaugural edition of the Hockey 5s World Cup was initially scheduled to take place at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher. In fact, the designs for the expansion of the hockey arena at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex were approved and work was due to begin. However, there has been a change in the plans for the good of the game.”

Al Juma, who recently became the first Omani to be elected as vice-president of the Asian Hockey Federation (AHF), said: “The

decision to build a new venue for the Hockey 5s World Cup came at the behest of the Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth (MCSY), His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham Al Said.”

“The green signal for a new stadium at Al Amerat will fulfil the long-awaited dream of the hockey lovers in Oman,” added Al Juma.

The top OHA official said: “Given the fact that it is the inaugural edition of FIH Hockey 5s World Cup, which Oman won after a tight bid, His Highness Sayyid Theyazin wanted that Oman leaves a big impression on the sporting map of the hockey world.” >**A2**

A four-page Sohar supplement with today's edition of Times of Oman

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Shift towards green economy

<FROM A1 Reducing carbon emissions

Al Saadi added: “The Gulf Standard supports the transition from vehicles powered by fossil fuels to reliance on new and renewable energy, in a way that serves the trend towards a green economy

and keeps pace with the country’s efforts and policies aimed at reducing carbon emissions that arise from fuel combustion, to achieve zero carbon neutrality.”

Gulf Standard

The official said: “The key objective of the Gulf Standard is to de-

termine the safety of the technical requirements of electric vehicles for the safety of the driver and passengers by reducing accidents, deaths and electric shocks that can result due to leakage of electricity from batteries, and leakage of battery components in the passenger compartment.”

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HOCKEY ARENA

Al Amerat stadium to mark a new chapter in game’s history: Al Juma

<FROM A1 Al Juma added: “The world-class stadium in Al Amerat will mark a new chapter in Oman’s rich and glorious history of the game. The hockey arena will be a turning point for Oman hockey. The construction of the stadium will feature one full-fledged hockey pitch (11-a-side) and a five-a-side pitch for the World Cup and will have a capacity of 5,500 seats.

The state-of-the-art hockey arena will also get the second full-fledged floodlit astro-turf pitch after the conclusion of the Hockey 5s World Cup. Once completed, the venue will serve as a destination for bigger tournaments and international camps.”

“We will also promote it as a neutral venue for top Asian teams like India and Pakistan. The long-term strategy is to make Oman a hockey hub in the region. My role as an Asian Hockey Federation vice-president is also to grow the game in the GCC countries and Middle East nations like Jordan



The OHA chairman, Dr Marwan Juma al Juma.

it hosted the ICC T20 World Cup in 2021. It was a proud moment for the Sultanate to have the T20 World Cup opening ceremony and the event begin in Oman. We will now try to make the FIH Hockey 5s a bigger success.”

Al Juma said: “Plans are in place to work closely with Oman Cricket to further enhance the facilities in Al Amerat. We are keen to have a top-class accommodation facility for the visiting teams and owing to proximity, both Oman Hockey and Oman Cricket can have a common place. We may also see more sports federations come on board in the development of Al Amerat as a sports city with swimming pool, indoor and an integrated complex likely to come up in the future with the ministry’s land in the adjoining areas.”

Al Juma thanked the support of Muscat and Al Amerat municipalities with the work to level the area already begun for the construction of the new stadium.

NORTH AL BATINAH

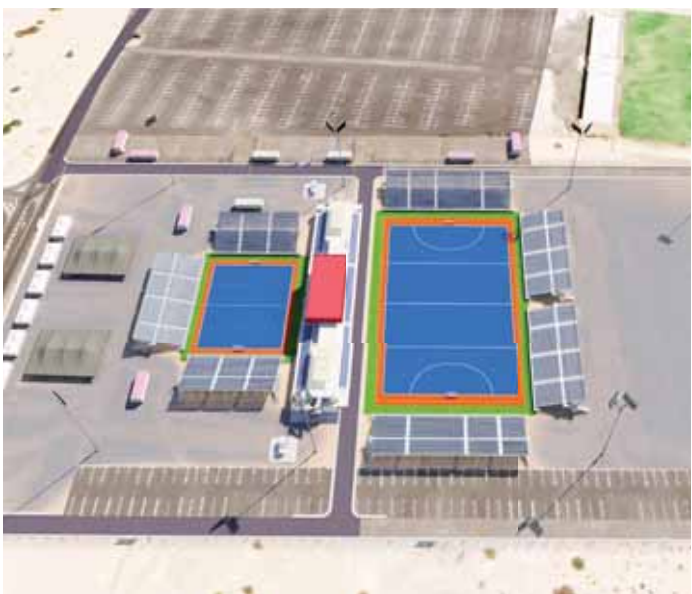
CDAA douses factory fire in Liwa wilayat

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) has extinguished a fire that broke out in a recycling factory for cardboard materials in the Wilayat of Liwa, North Al Batinah Governorate.

The CDAA said in a statement: “The firefighting teams of the Civil Defence and Ambulance Department in North Al Batinah Governorate controlled a fire that broke out in a factory for the recycling of cardboard materials in the Wilayat of Liwa, without any injuries reported.”

HOCKEY ARENA



State-of-art telecast facilities at arena

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The hockey arena has been designed by well-known Muscat-based consultants – Design Group Engineering Consultants LLC, the company that also designed the Oman Cricket Academy pavilion.

Speaking to *Times of Oman*, Damodar Katti, Design Group managing director said: “It is a matter of pride for us to design the world-class hockey arena in Al Amerat where Oman will host the first edition of the FIH Hockey 5s World Cup. A total of 32 teams, 16 men and 16 women will be taking part. We have designed to cater the needs of the tournament.”

The arena will boast 4 changing rooms with lockers for players, dedicated washrooms, including an ice tub facility.

The changing rooms will open to the pitch, providing easy access to the players. There is a medical treatment room including a drug-testing area.

One of the highlights will be state-of-the-art rooms for telecasting and broadcasting agencies that will cover the World Cup in a high-definition mode.

Katti said: “The first floor of the main hockey arena will provide a gallery for a good viewing experience and will also have an area for VIP hospitality.

There will be lifts for VIPs and for physically challenged spectators while the second floor will comprise a royal box that will otherwise be called a red box which is designed to give the whole of



Damodar Katti, Design Group managing director.

the stadium a majestic look.

The floodlit stadium will have 2 LED large screens to display replay and scores.

Katti said that the 5s pitch will be converted to a regular 11-a-side pitch after the World Cup and another 11-a-side pitch will be added after the hosting of the World Cup.

The managing director of Design Group added: “We have also designed and project managed the Oman Cricket pavilion, which hosted ICC T20 World Cup qualifiers in September 2021. We were instrumental in getting the complete infrastructure required in a record time of less than 90 days under the able guidance of Oman Cricket chairman Pankaj Khimji.”

Katti said: “We are hopeful that once the hockey arena, which boasts of world-class facilities, is completed, it will be a desired arena to host top-class series and events.”

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Beware of cyber laws while posting messages online

People must review the Information Technology Crimes Law, while attacking, slandering, insulting and bullying others on social media

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Most social media users are unaware of the fact that the inappropriate messages they write on online platforms can land them into trouble as per the Omani Penal Code, a specialist on combating cybercrime said.

While speaking to *Times of Oman's* sisterly radio channel Al Shabiba, Mohammed bin Khamis Al-Ajmi, a specialist in combating cybercrime, said that cyber-crimes are of many types as per the Anti-Cybercrime Law in the Sultanate of Oman.

The most common and widespread crime in the Sultanate falls into the cyber bullying category, which involves electronic extortion and fraud, he said.

Mohammed Al-Ajmi said that most of the responses of people on social networking sites are classified as electronic crimes, and the person who writes the message is not aware that this is an electronic crime and is liable for punishment.

He advised that individuals must review the Information Technology Crimes Law, espe-



cially with regard to attacking, slandering, insulting and bullying in all its forms.

Mohammed Al-Ajmi said that there are many cases of impersonation of accounts on social networking sites by fabricating an account of a celebrity, influencer, media person, or even officials, as well as individuals at times, and these accounts are dealt with after objections about these impersonated platforms, and companies respond to by closing such accounts.

He added that it is not possible to file a complaint with the judicial authorities about these kinds of impersonations on social platforms, as many of these accounts are managed from outside the Sultanate of Oman, which make it difficult for authorities to reach the accused and prosecute him. He pointed out that the role of community members should be to not respond to such impersonated accounts.

"There are many accounts claiming to provide financial assistance, documented with the authentication mark of the platform, but in reality they are fake accounts. The general rule is that no person can provide financial assistance through social platforms and this is what people should be aware of," he added.

OSAKA

Oman takes part in foundation stone laying for expo in Japan

OSAKA: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, participated in the official ceremony of laying the foundation stone for Expo 2025 in Osaka, Japan, in the Osaka-Kansai region.

The event will be held from April 13 to October 13, 2025 under the slogan "Creating the Future." to improve the lives of communities.

The Sultanate of Oman was represented at the ceremony by Sayyid Said bin Sultan Al Busaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Culture and Commissioner General of the Sultanate of Oman Pavilion at Expo 2025.

Expo Osaka focuses on 3 sub-axes: "Ensuring life sustainability, improving life, and enhancing life through communication." -ONA

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Kerala expats mark Vishu in Muscat



BLESSINGS: People visit Krishna temple in Darsait with their family members to seek blessings. - Purusothaman K

Times News Service

MUSCAT/THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: People belonging to the southern India state of Kerala celebrated Vishu on Saturday, which marks the beginning of the agricultural New Year.

Hundreds of them in their traditional attire went to the temples in Muscat to seek the blessings of deities.

People in queues could be seen at the Krishna temple in Darsait with their family members.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi conveyed his best wishes on the occasion. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan reminded people of their rich agrarian tradition. He called for unity and rejection of divisive forces that conspired to spread hatred.

Kerala Governor Arif Muham-

mad Khan greeted people of the State on the occasion. He asked people to use the occasion to spread happiness and strengthen the bonds of togetherness.

Opposition Leader V. D. Satheesan and Speaker AN Shamsheer also conveyed their Vishu greetings. Hundreds of people thronged temples including Sabarimala and Guruvayur temples to seek divine blessings.

On the day celebrations begin with the ritualistic practice of viewing 'Vishu Kanni' (a collection of auspicious items such as fruits, flowers, paddy stalks, vegetables, ornaments, a mirror and an image of God Krishna among other items set before an illuminated lamp. It is believed that if one views this as the first sight on waking up, it heralds prosperity for the entire year. With ANI inputs

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Ramadan

» IFTAR TIMING

6:33 pm



» PRAYER TIMINGS

Dhuhr	12:12 pm
Asr	3:39 pm
Maghrib	6:33 pm
Isha	7:46 pm
Fajr (April 17)	4:27 am

» IFTAR RECIPE

MOROCCAN HARIRA

Recipe by Firdaus Noorain

INGREDIENTS

- 250g chicken chopped
- 3-4 tsp oil
- 1 cup chickpeas, soaked
- 2 green chillies
- 1 large onion chopped
- 1 celery with stick, chopped
- 1/4 cup parsley finely chopped
- 1/4 cup coriander leaves finely chopped
- 1/2 cup carrot shredded
- 1/2 cup cabbage shredded
- 2 tsp chopped capsicum
- 2 tsp ginger and garlic paste
- 1 tsp red chili powder
- 1/2 tsp turmeric
- 1/2 coriander powder
- 1 tsp garam masala
- 100g tomato paste
- 3 tsp masoor dal (washed)
- 3 tsp moong dal (washed)
- 1/2 cup rice (washed)
- 1/2 cup roasted vermicelli
- 1/2 cup noodles
- Salt

PREPARATION

- Take a Dutch pot or a soup pot.
- Add oil, on a medium flame.
- Add ginger and garlic paste along with chicken, and cook for 5 minutes.
- Add chopped onions and tomato paste and cook for 2 mins.
- Once the chicken oozes out water, add shredded carrot, cab-



bage, capsicum, soaked chick peas, rice and lentils along with all the spices. Pour 5 glasses of water and cook for 45 minutes on medium flame or pressure cook for 4 to 5 whistles.

- After 45 minutes, check if the chick peas has turned soft.
- Now add vermicelli and noodles along with a glass of water and cook for 5-10 minutes until done.
- Tip: If you prefer the soup thicker, whisk 4tsp of flour in half cup water and add it to the soup and whisk briskly. Make sure no lumps are formed.
- Close and cook for 1 minute.
- Sprinkle chopped coriander leaves or parsley.
- Delicious Harira is ready to be served for Iftar.

» WORDS OF WISDOM

“Say, ‘O My servants who have transgressed against themselves [by sinning], do not despair of the mercy of Allah . Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. Indeed, it is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful” [Quran 39:53]

Another verse of the Holy Quran that reminds us of the greatness of Allah's mercy, this is another source of inspiration for those who need the gentle reminder that Allah will always be there for us. Knowing that with sincere repentance, Allah can and inshallah will forgive us, this verse is another reminder of the greatness of Allah's mercy and compassion.

» CUISINE



SUHOOR IN MOROCCO

A traditional favourite for Moroccan suhoor is undoubtedly kefta. As the sound of it, kefta is technically kofte, which is made with meat (shaped to form little balls) cooked in a curry made with onions, tomatoes and herbs and spices. This delicious gravy is served with hot pita breads called Batbout. These are flavourful breads with a chewy texture. Batbouts are perfect to be filled in with curry or be stuffed like sandwiches. It is one of the most popular recipes in Morocco during Ramadan for suhoor.

» HEALTH

FASTING TIPS FOR CHILDREN

IF YOUR CHILD is observing fasts during Ramadan, add fruit salads during Suhoor and Iftar meals to keep up their energy levels. Watermelons or other high water content fruits and vegetables are also great ways to rehydrate. A fun and healthier way to encourage consumption of fruits is to slice them in small cubes and shapes and serve them as popsicles. Make sure your children stay hydrated and drink plenty of water during non-fasting hours. Organic juices and yoghurt based drinks can be used if your child won't eat fruit.

Ensure that your kids get the right start by planning a protein powered Suhoor. It is essential that kids consume a lot of proteins, such as peanut butter, cheese, yoghurt or milk. Adding nuts, especially almonds, to Suhoor because they have protein and carbs in them. Other protein based items that can be included are beans, lentils, eggs, and other dairy products. If lactose intolerant, there are choices such as almond or soy milks. Serving dried nuts with French toasts and pancakes is a great way to encourage their consumption. Scrambled eggs and omelettes are other alternatives that are appealing to kids

and contain protein, iron, and other important nutrients.

Encourage your child to break their fast with high-fibre items, such as dates and lentil soups. Breaking fast with items rich in fibre, minerals, and vitamins helps in retaining hydrating ingredients and fluids and also prevents constipation. Fruit salads and soups are another great way of ensuring that your children get the right amount of nutrients. Dates are also excellent natural power packs and are rich in fibre. Encourage the tradition of breaking fasts with a date.

Avoid deep fried items and consuming too much oil, as it could lead to nausea attacks and vomiting. Stick to grilled meats instead, especially during Iftar. Using cooking methods such as air frying and steaming can be used as an alternative to deep frying. A common mistake made by parents is to encourage their children to overeat during Suhoor or Iftar. This is an extremely unhealthy habit which causes indigestion and bloating. Overeating can also lead to extreme cases of vomiting and nausea.



IFTAR

Secretary-General of United Nations praises Oman’s peace efforts in Yemen

WASHINGTON: Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, praised the role of the Sultanate of Oman in supporting the international efforts exerted to settle and resolve differences in the Republic of Yemen, and to bridge the divide among the countries of the region.

He stressed that the establishment of good relations among the countries is one of the basics for stability and development, adding that Muscat is the gateway to peace.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations stressed during



the annual Iftar held by Ambassador Dr Mohammed bin Awadh Al Hassan , Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Nations in New York, at the headquarters of the Sul-

tanate of Oman’s mission in New York, in the presence of their Excellencies, ambassadors of the GCC countries.

He said that the international community appreciates the Sultanate of Oman for peace efforts, which lead to peace and coexistence.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations expressed his regret for the human suffering experienced by the Palestinian people in the occupied Arab territories, stressing that support for the humanitarian and relief efforts to help the Palestinian refugees should not be abandoned. -ONA

FOREIGN MINISTRY

Oman calls for utmost restraint in Sudan

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Foreign Ministry expressed deep concern over the developments in Sudan following the ongoing clashes there.

The ministry in a statement urges all parties to exercise maximum restraint and prioritise peaceful dialogue to reach the desired political agreement and thus protect the lives and capabilities of the Sudanese people to realise their aspirations of security and stability.



STUDENT COMPANY ‘HYAAL’

Omani students develop biodegradable fishing lines

MUSCAT: An Omani student company ‘Hyaal’ has succeeded in creating environment-friendly, safe and biodegradable fishing lines.

The student company, ‘Hyaal’, from the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Muscat has made the fishing line using cellulose fibres extracted from the mesquite tree (marine Ghaf).

“The idea came with the aim of creating an environmentally friendly product with the aim of reducing the negative impact of the current fishing equipment in order to reach high quality, effective, sustainable and environmentally friendly fishing products,” Husna bint Khalfan Al Habsi, CEO of the company (Hyaal), said.

“The team began searching for sustainable materials for making fishing lines, and after conducting studies and research, we managed to extract the materials from the Prosopis juliflora tree, known as mesquite (marine Ghaf), which is one of the invasive species harmful to the environment, “Al Habsi added.

Al Habsi confirmed that the company was able to turn the damage of mesquite trees on the environment into a solution by using cellulose fibres from the mesquite tree to create biodegradable fishing lines, in addition to creating a local product and



not relying on imported products from abroad.

“Making the end product was a big challenge with a lot of difficulties including obtaining sustainable materials that met the needs of fishermen was a major challenge. So we spent a great deal of time researching and testing different materials before settling on cellulose fibres extracted from the mesquite tree, “ the CEO of Hyaal company said.

The CEO of Hyaal Company stated that developing the manufacturing process to produce high-quality and durable fishing lines also posed another challenge. It is currently being worked on by conducting different technical trials and processes to get the right balance between strength and flexibility in the produced yarns.

Al Habsi pointed out that environmentally friendly products can sometimes be more expensive than traditional products, so it was necessary that we work hard to keep our costs down while ensuring that our products meet high standards and specifications.

With regard to the impact of products, Al Habsi confirmed that this innovation will reduce the negative impact of fishing equipment on the environment.

Where traditional fishing line is often made from synthetic materials that can take hundreds of years to decompose and contribute to ocean pollution. Our product made from cellulose fibres derived from the mesquite tree will degrade in a matter of months and have a much lower environmental impact.

PREPARATION

Heavy rush seen in Rustaq market ahead of Eid holidays

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Rustaq market in South Al Batinah Governorate is witnessing heavy footfalls in preparation for Eid Al-Fitr.

This is in preparation for the blessed Eid Al-Fitr, due to the varying commercial exhibits, especially the local ones.

The Wilayat of Rustaq is a popular commercial market centre for all the wilayats of South Al Batinah Governorate. Goods and merchandise come to it from the various wilayats of the governorate as well as neighbouring governorates.

Various goods are displayed in the large market, as it is crowded with active movement since the early hours of the morning.

Essential supplies

Citizens and residents from all wilayats and villages of the governorate come to buy their essential supplies and needs, which are used in Eid Al-Fitr.

The pre-Eid souq (Habta) was visited by many citizens, whether they came to display their goods or those who came to buy their needs for the Eid.

The Rustaq market is also one of the main markets in the South Al Batinah Governorate, as its products are varied, such as fruits and vegetables, and others that are offered these days especially, such as local honey and Omani sweets.

Habta is a traditional social phenomenon, and a marketing event that begins days before the advent of Eid.

Al Jabal Al Akhdhar Hotel فندق الجبل الأخضر

Invitation to attend the annual general assembly meeting
Al Jabal Al Akhtar Hotels & Tourism Company S.A.O.C.

An invitation from the Board of Directors of Al Jabal Al Akhtar Hotels and Tourism Company S.A.O.C to the distinguished shareholders to attend the meeting of the regular Annual General Assembly to be held at 11:00am on Thursday, 27/04/2023 at Jabal Akhtar Hotels. If the quorum of the assembly is not completed, the second meeting will be held on Sunday morning, April 30, 2023 at 11:00 am to study and discuss the following agenda:

1. Study and approve the report of the Board of Directors for the year ended 31/12/2022
2. Study and approve the report of the auditors and financial statements for the year ended 31/12/2022
3. Propose the distribution of cash dividends of 25% of the value of the share equivalent (250Bz) per share and approved.
4. Appoint auditors for the current fiscal year, which will end on 31/12/2023, and determine their fees and approve it.
5. Election of the Board of Directors for the next term

Each shareholder has the right to authorize whoever deems fit, to attend the meeting and vote on his behalf if he or she is unable to attend.

Chairman
Sheikh Saud Bin Sulaiman Bin Hamir Al Nabhani

PAKISTAN SCHOOL MUSCAT
ANNOUNCEMENT OF TENDER

PSM intends to offer Annual Contract for the year 2023 – 2024. The contractors with relevant experiences are invited for following bidding:

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Several killed as army battles paramilitary in Sudan capital

Flights from Khartoum airports were suspended as a result of the violence, with many aircraft sent back

KHARTOUM: Clashes erupted on Saturday in Sudan's capital Khartoum between the country's military and the powerful Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitary, in what appears to be an attempted coup.

The country's doctors' union said three civilians were killed and at least nine others wounded in the violence.

Sudan's military, led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, overthrew long-term ruler Omar al-Bashir in April 2019. Eighteen months later, the military and the RSF staged a second coup, upending a transition to democracy.

The two agreed to jointly hold power, but tensions between the military leadership and the paramilitary force have increased in recent months.

Conflicting information

RSF claims its units took control of the presidential palace and Khartoum's international airport, along with another airport and military base north of the capital.

The country's military, meanwhile, denied those claims, saying it had gained control over RSF leadership "without resistance" and had struck RSF bases, chasing after paramilitary units.

The military accused RSF of trying to take control of strategic locations, including the palace, but denied they had been successful.

The army also said fighting



broke out after RSF troops tried to attack its forces in the southern part of the capital.

It was not initially possible to verify the contradictory statements.

Local media reported that military forces were blocking entrances to the palace and surrounding the state TV building.

A TV anchor briefly appeared to say there were clashes inside the building, with gunshots heard in the background, according to the Reuters news agency.

Later Saturday, RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan Daglo told Al Jazeera that his fighters would keep on fighting until "we capture all the army bases and the honorable members of the armed forces join us."

Planes reportedly damaged, flights canceled

Reports also suggested that flights from Khartoum airports were suspended as a result of the violence, with many aircraft sent back.

Unverified videos on Twitter showed what appeared to be RSF forces on the runway of the international airport.

State-owned Saudi Arabian Airlines said one of its aircraft "had an accident" before its scheduled departure to Riyadh on Saturday,

without providing further details.

The airline said its flights to and from Sudan had been suspended until further notice.

Another plane — belonging to a Ukrainian carrier — appeared to have caught fire in the attack, the AP reported.

Eyewitnesses reported shooting in other Sudanese cities.

Calls to end the fighting

The US embassy in Khartoum said it ordered its staff as well as American citizens in the country to "shelter in place."

The UK embassy also issued a similar call, saying it was closely monitoring the situation.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said he was "deeply concerned" about the reports of violence and called for it to end "immediately."

European Union foreign policy chief Joseph Borrell called on all forces involved to stop the violence immediately and said in a tweet that all EU staff in the country were safe and accounted for.

Russia's embassy in Khartoum also expressed its concern due to the "escalation of violence" and called on the fighting parties to cease fire.

Regional players including

Egypt and Saudi Arabia also called for calm and expressed concern.

Why have tensions flared recently?

The crisis between the military and the RSF escalated after both forces failed to reach an agreement over restructuring the military, seen as a prerequisite before forming a new civilian government.

The agreement is vital to allow elections that would bring the country back on a civilian track after years of turmoil.

A top army general accused the RSF on Thursday of deploying forces across the country without the army's consent, warning of potential clashes in a rare televised speech.

The paramilitary force, which had deployed troops near the northern town of Merowe, some 330 kilometers (186 miles) north of Khartoum, defended the presence of its forces.

The military later said in a statement it was in control of the RSF's Merowe base, adding that paramilitaries had fled.

The RSF emerged from the Janjaweed militia, which al Bashir leaned on in his crackdown on the western Darfur region in the early 2000s. -DW

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Japan premier escapes unhurt, attacker held

WAKAYAMA: One person was arrested in connection with the incident in which Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida was evacuated after a "smoke bomb" was thrown at him during a campaign trail in Wakayama city on Saturday, CNN reported.

The man was arrested on "suspicion of forcible obstruction of business" after he threw "what appeared to be a smoke bomb" CNN said city Kyodo News.

In a speech broadcast on Japan's public broadcaster NHK following the attack the prime minister said police were investigating the explosion and apologized for causing concern, adding that "we are fighting an important election for our country."

Kishida resumed campaigning activities for his ruling Liberal Democratic Party shortly after and gave a speech at the Wakayama railway station, CNN reported.

The dramatic scenes took place in the city of Wakayama, shortly after a visit by Kishida to the local Saikazaki Fishing Port. The arrested man was taken to the Wakayama West Police Station for questioning.

Forcible obstruction

"Forcible obstruction of business" is a crime in Japan.

Officials at the Wakayama Ni-shi Police Station told CNN that they are unable to release any information about the suspect yet. They said more details would be announced in the future.

Video footage released by NHK shows members of the public fleeing and a man being arrested following the incident. The footage showed multiple men believed to be police officers, holding the suspect on the ground. Other pictures showed a silver cylinder that appeared to have been thrown in Kishida's direction, CNN reported.

The incident took place in Wakayama, where Kishida was giving a speech following his inspection of the Saikazaki Fishing Port.

According to CNN, the speech was part of the prime minister's support for an upcoming by-election for the House of Representatives in a Wakayama district.

As per a city council member who was present at the scene, a "cylindrical silver object" had flown "about two metres in front of me" shortly before the explosion was heard. -ANI

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BUILDDEX

SOUTHFORK DAIRY FARMS

Texas dairy farm blast kills 18,000 cows

NEW YORK: The explosion and fire blazed through the Southfork Dairy Farms near the town of Dimmitt in the southern US state of Texas, on Monday night.

"This was the deadliest barn fire for cattle in Texas history and the investigation and clean-up may take some time," said Sid Miller, Texas Agriculture Commissioner.

Overheated equipment is likely to have caused the fire, according to the Castro county sheriff Sal Rivera.

He said methane may have "ignited and then spread out with the explosion and the fire," and that fire marshals need to investigate further to confirm.

Police and firefighters rescued one person who was trapped inside, a female agricultural worker who is now being treated at a hospital in Lubbock in northwestern Texas.

It was not immediately possible to contact the owners of the farm, according to officials.

A video posted on Twitter showed footage of the barn, which is said to be more than 2.1 million square feet. -DW

ASSAM

Over 11,000 Bihu dancers create Guinness World record

GUWAHATI: A mega Bihu dance was organised at Sarusajai Stadium in Assam's Guwahati in order to globally showcase the Bihu dance as a mascot of the cultural identity and life of the Assamese people.

The event featured over 10,000 artists, performing Bihu dance, in a single venue. The event featured artists from across the 31 districts of the state.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma also received the certificate from the Guinness World Records team for the record-making feat of the "largest Bihu dance and largest dhol drum ensemble".

The feat was achieved by 11,304 folk dancers and 2,548 drummers who performed at Sarusajai Stadium in Guwahati on Thursday. -ANI

DESTROYING THE LIVES

Children bear the brunt of landmines in Afghanistan

KABUL: The deadly landmines scattered across the Afghanistan-Pakistan border are destroying the lives of children. So far it has killed and mutilated several people of all ages and genders in different parts of the tribal areas over the last several years, DW News reported.

Pakistan's North West Frontier Province (NWFP) is home to numerous terrorist groups and the unexploded land mines that were laid from time to time in the name of the so-called military operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have so far killed or mutilated several people of all ages and genders in different parts of the tribal areas over the last several years, DW news reported. "The region, especially tribal areas of the northwestern province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, had a strong presence of Tehreek Taliban Pakistan fighters. The government has launched several military operations in the area," he said.

The report pointed out that Pakistan's tribal areas have long been infested with local and international militant groups.

The military launched several operations during the last two decades prompted by terrorist attacks on Pakistan in the wake of Islamabad joining the US-led war on terror. Activists claim that the regions were not cleared of the land mines after these operations. But the government is not ready to accept these land mines exist at all, anti-war activist Alamzeb Khan told DW.

"Government's people say that these land mines were laid during the time of Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, but, in reality, they were laid by authorities during the last 20 years," DW said. -ANI



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▶ Serum Globulin

▶ Serum Albumin / Globulin Ratio

RENAL PROFILE

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▶ Uric Acid

▶ Blood Urea Nitrogen

▶ Serum Creatinine

▶ BUN / Serum Creatinine Ratio

▶ eGFR

IRON DEFICIENCY

▶ Total Iron Binding Capacity

▶ Serum Iron

COMPLETE HEMOGRAM-CBC(28)

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▶ Blood Sugar

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▶ Thyroid Stimulating Hormone

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▶ Total Cholesterol

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I don't-care mentality paid off, says Brook

Sunrisers Hyderabad batter slammed the first century of IPL 2023 season during the team's win against Kolkata Knight Riders

KOLKATA: Harry Brook of Sunrisers Hyderabad showed why he's being billed as a superstar for the future as the England batter, promoted to the top order against Kolkata Knight Riders on Friday, scored the first century of IPL 2023 off only 55 balls.

His century and quick-fire fifty from captain Aiden Markram propelled Sunrisers Hyderabad to 228/4 and then the team restricted the hosts to 205/7 for a 23-run win at Eden Gardens.

Speaking at the post-match presentation, Brook said: "I was putting pressure on myself a little bit for the first few games.

"I went on to social media, people were calling me rubbish, and you start to doubt yourself a little bit."

"I went out with an 'I-don't-care' mentality tonight, and thankfully it paid off," Brook said.

His innings was laced with 12 boundaries and three sixes.

The English batter said: "Indian fans out there are probably going to say 'Well done' tonight, but they were slagging me off a few days ago. Glad that I could shut them up."

Brook said that he is happy to

bat at any order. "A lot of people say that opening the batting in T20 is the best time to bat; you've only got two fielders out. But I'm happy to bat anywhere. [I] have [had] quite a lot of success batting at No. 5 and made my name batting at No. 5, but I'm happy to do this. Unfortunately my four Test hundreds will have to be above this one, but this is definitely up there."

Brook credited England coach Brendon McCullum for his aggressive approach towards batting. He also loves playing golf and revealed he has found a new partner in Brian Lara who joins him on the course.

Former England captain Eoin Morgan showered rich praise on Brook. Speaking on *JioCinema*, he said: "It was simply sublime from Harry Brook. We've seen this now for a couple of years at home both in England and for Yorkshire and even in The Hundred.

"He just continues to get better and better and better. And it's across all three formats. For everybody seeing him for the first time tonight, he does this every time in Test matches. He is as aggressive in a T20 game as he is in Test matches and it is great to watch."

Former India pacer Zaheer Khan said on *JioCinema*: "Brook played shots all around the park. He was hitting in front of the wicket, behind the wicket, on the offside and on the on-side. That made things difficult for bowlers. It will be interesting to see how he bats against other teams. They will try to use more spinners against him. But he showed what he can do on his good days."

Sunrisers Hyderabad, the 2016 champions, registered their second consecutive win after facing defeats in the first two games. - Agencies

NATIONAL CRICKET ACADEMY

Bumrah begins rehab after back surgery in NZ

BENGALURU: Star India pacer Jasprit Bumrah began his rehab, from Friday, at the BCCI's National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Bengaluru after having undergone back surgery in New Zealand last month.

The surgery was successful and Bumrah was "pain-free", according to a media statement from the BCCI on Saturday. The plan is to get him fully fit for the home ODI World Cup, which is likely to start on October 5.

Bumrah has not featured in any cricket since late September last year, when he pulled out of the home white-ball series against South Africa - the reason, reportedly, was a stress reaction in his lower back.

He attempted a comeback in January this year for the home series against Sri Lanka, but that didn't happen after he experienced pain in the back. He was subsequently sidelined from the ongoing IPL 2023 and the upcoming World Test Championship (WTC) final against Australia, which begins on June 7 at The Oval.

BCCI also informed that Shreyas Iyer, who has also been ruled out of IPL 2023 and the WTC final, will undergo surgery on his back next week. He will report to the NCA for his own rehab after remaining in the surgeon's care for two weeks.

Recovering really well, says Delhi Capitals' Pant

Meanwhile, Delhi Capitals' Rishabh Pant caught up with his teammates on the sidelines of the team's training session at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium, Bengaluru on Friday.

Pant is undergoing rehabilitation and recovery at the NCA.

"I am recovering very well and I'm getting better with each passing day. I came to visit the National Cricket Academy and the Delhi Capitals happened to be there. So I met the team," said Pant.

"I just saw how the team's practice is carrying on. I really love to be around the boys and I am missing it," Pant added. - Agencies

JUNIOR HOCKEY WORLD CUP QUALIFIER

India, Pakistan in same pool at Junior Asia Cup in Salalah

MUSCAT: India have been drawn along with arch-rivals Pakistan in Pool for the upcoming AHF Men's Hockey Junior Asia Cup, which will be held in Salalah, Oman from May 23 to June 1. The tournament also serves as an Asian qualifier for the FIH Junior Hockey World Cup.

Ten nations are taking part in the tournament. The other teams in Pool A are Japan, Thailand, and Chinese Taipei while Pool B will comprise South Korea, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Oman and Uzbekistan.

India, Pakistan, Japan, South

Korea and Malaysia, earned direct qualification on basis of their world rankings. Bangladesh, Oman, Thailand, Uzbekistan and Chinese Taipei qualified through the Junior AHF Cup in Muscat.

The top-three teams from Salalah tourney will earn qualification for the FIH Men's Junior Hockey World Cup 2023, which will be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, from December 5-16.

Pool A: India, Pakistan, Japan, Thailand, Chinese Taipei.

Pool B: South Korea, Malaysia, Oman, Bangladesh, Uzbekistan.

OFFICIAL CLOTHING PARTNER

Oman Cricket inks two-year deal with Omtex Sports

MUSCAT: As Oman Cricket (OC) gears up to take part in more international tournaments, with the national men's team aspiring to make it to the ICC Men's World Cup later this year in India, there has been a growing collaboration with leading companies.

Oman Cricket recently signed a two-year deal with one of India's top sportswear companies, Omtex Sports as its official clothing partner. Omtex Sports is a well-known name in manufacturing sports apparel and is a partner to many professional teams including couple of national cricket associations.

Oman Cricket officials and Omtex Sports at the signing ceremony.

The signing ceremony was held at the OC headquarters at Al Amerat in the presence of Paul Sheridan, OC vice-president,

and Kunal Patel, director, Omtex Sports. Also present were OC board member Kiran Ansari, OC treasurer Alkesh Joshi and OC chief develop-

ment officer, Duleep Mendis.

Speaking after the ceremony, Patel said: "The association with Oman Cricket is more than just being the official clothing partner as it brings value to us by associating with one of the top associate cricketing nations across the globe."

In his remarks, Sheridan said "We are delighted to have inked this partnership at a time when our national team is preparing to take part in the ICC Cricket World Cup Qualifiers in Zimbabwe in June-July 2023. We hope to achieve big things together."

TIE-UP

Zimbabwe unveils new T10 franchise tournament

HARARE: Zimbabwe Cricket (ZC), in association with T Ten Global Sports, has unveiled the country's eagerly awaited franchise-based T10 tournament that is aiming to feature cricket stars from across the world.

The inaugural edition of the Zim Afro T10 will be played in August this year with six privately-owned teams involved. This is the third tournament franchise established by T Ten Global Sports, the same company behind the Abu Dhabi T10 and the Lanka T10.

ZC Chairman Tavengwa Mukuhani said: "We are thrilled to unveil our own franchise-based T10 league, a powerful format that we believe is exactly what our changing, fast-paced world needs right now."

T Ten Global Sports Founder and Chairman Nawab Shaji Ul Mulk said: "As our association with cricket continues to grow, we are delighted to bring to Zimbabwe an exciting format."

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GT	4	3	1	0		+0.341	6
KKR	4	2	2	0		+0.711	4
CSK	4	2	2	0		+0.225	4
PBKS	4	2	2	0		-0.226	4
RCB	4	2	2	0		-0.316	4
SRH	4	2	2	0		-0.822	4
MI	3	1	2	0		-0.879	2
DC	5	0	5	0		-1.488	0

CSK: Chennai Super Kings, DC: Delhi Capitals, GT: Gujarat Titans, KKR: Kolkata Knight Riders, LSG: Lucknow Super Giants, MI: Mumbai Indians, PBKS: Punjab Kings, RCB: Royal Challengers Bangalore, RR: Rajasthan Royals, SRH: Sunrisers Hyderabad

DEBUTANT VYSHAK SHINES IN RCB WIN

Delhi Capitals suffer their fifth straight loss of the season as Royal Challengers Bangalore ease to 23-run victory

BENGALURU: Debutant Vijay-kumar Vyshak impressed with the ball as he picked three for 20 in Royal Challengers Bangalore's 23-run win against Delhi Capitals at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bangalore on Saturday.

While the victory saw Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) get back to winning ways, after the defeat to Lucknow Super Giants, it was fifth straight defeat of the season for Delhi Capitals (DC).

Bangalore's Virat Kohli spar-kled with the bat with a breezy 50 off 34 balls to help the hosts post a competitive 174/6. Vyshak's bril-liant spell followed as Capitals were restricted to 151/9.

Delhi Capitals were dealt with early blows as RCB's Impact Player Anuj Rawat pulled off a spectacular direct-hit run out to send back Prithvi Shaw in the first over. Mitchell Marsh departed in the next over, top-edging one to point, off Wyne Parnell. And four balls later, Yash Dhull was trapped leg-before by Mohammed Siraj to leave DC tottering at 2/3.

Capitals could manage just 12 off the first four overs. Skipper David Warner released some pressure as he hit three fours in a row off Siraj in the fifth over. Warner hit another four off Vyshak in the next over but the Australian became the first of his three victims, out for 19 off 13 balls. Capitals were 32/4 at the end of the powerplay.

Manish Pandey and Abhishek Porel tried to steady the ship with a 23-run stand off 19 balls but Harshal Patel struck in his first over to remove Porel. Axar Patel tried to put on some fight with a 14-ball 21 but was outfoxed by the knuckle ball from Vyshak. Pandey then went after Wanindu Hasa-ranga, smacking a couple of fours and a six in the 14th over to bring up his fifty off 37 balls. Hasaranga, however, had the last laugh as he trapped Pandey leg-before.

Vyshak pick his third wicket in his final over as he dismissed Lalit

Yadav and Siraj got the wicket of Aman Khan. Anrich Nortje (23 off 14) hit a few boundaries but Delhi could reach only 151.

Earlier, RCB openers, Virat Kohli and Faf du Plessis, got off to a brisk start but the latter (22) departed inside the powerplay, caught superbly by Aman Khan off Mitchell Marsh. Kohli got into the groove and hammered a couple of fours off Nortje in the first over.

RCB reached 47/1 at the end of the powerplay. Kohli continued to strike boundaries and was severe on Mustafizur Rahman as he hit him for a four and six to bring up his 50 off 33 balls and Bangalore were 89/1 in 10 overs with Kohli and Mahipal Lomror at the crease.

Lalit Yadav provided the break-through in the 11th over, sending back Kohli (50 off 34). Glenn Max-well smacked a couple of sixes in the same over.

Marsh send back Lomror (26

after the southpaw had hit him for a six off the previous ball. Maxwell and Harshal Patel then counter-attacked but Axar Patel dismissed Harshal to apply brakes.

Kuldeep Yadav struck off the first ball in the 15th over, sending back Maxwell (24 off 14). He then dismissed Dinesh Karthik off the next ball and ended up bowling a wicket maiden. Bangalore had lost three wickets in three balls as Kuldeep and Lalit pulled things back and gave away just 12 runs between 15-17 overs.

Bangalore garnered 12 off the penultimate over from Mustafi-zur but could only garner 8 off Nortje's last over as they posted 174/6. Rawat was unbeaten on 15 and Shahbaz Ahmed on 20.

Brief scores: Royal Challengers Bangalore 174/6 (Kohli 50, Lom-ror 26; Kuldeep Yadav 2/23) lost to Delhi Capitals 151/9 (Pandey 50, Axar Patel 21; Vyshak 3/20). - **Agencies**

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GUTECH, ASYAD JOIN HANDS
GUtech and Asyad Group kicked-off a meeting to start promising CO2 capturing system project. Both of them have collaborated to develop a research project to reduce the CO2 emissions from marine vessels significantly.

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BUSINESS & FINANCE



WORLD OIL DEMAND
World oil demand will climb by 2 mb/d in 2023 to a record 101.9 mb/d, according to the IEA Oil Market Report for April. Reflecting the widening disparity between regions, non-OECD countries, buoyed by a resurgent China, will account for 90% of growth.

Omani stock market on solid footing, to extend rebound

Shares on the MSX were able to see more sustained growth from 2020 and were less impacted by global factors and the decline in energy prices



Daniel Takieddine, BDSwiss CEO Mena

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Omani stock market was able to rebound this week after a series of price corrections and the market could be heading for another bout of gains and a return to its uptrend, according to an industry expert.

“Contrary to other markets in the region, Omani stocks were able to see more sustained growth from 2020 and were less impacted by global factors and the decline in energy prices,” Daniel Takieddine, BDSwiss CEO Mena, said.

“The market was able to find some support in a solid local banking sector in particular at a time when turbulence has roiled banks in the US and Europe and has eroded international investors’ confidence,” he further said.

Oman’s benchmark index of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) closed at the end of last week’s trading at 4,811 points, recording a weekly increase of 54 points.

The financial sector index rose 131 points, the industrial sector index 3 points, and the Sharia index 1 point, while the services sector index recorded the only decline after it fell to the level of 1685 points, down 25 points.

Last week witnessed the flow of preliminary financial statements for the first quarter of this year, which showed an increase in the profits of banks and companies operating in the financial sector.



In this regard, most banks have reported strong increases in their profits for the first quarter of this year compared to the same period last year. Unlike some US banks, Omani financial institutions have been able to withstand rising interest rates and have benefitted from a more stable and diversified customer base.

“However, they could face some challenges as economic growth is expected to slow down compared to the previous year,” he further added.

Omani banks could continue to attract investors’ attention due to the consolidation potential in the sector. In this regard, Bank Dhofar

made an offer to Ahli Bank which was declined. The initiative could potentially prompt other banks to move in this direction. Smaller banks could vie to close the gap with Bank Muscat in terms of size. Successful mergers could help improve banks’ competitiveness and operating conditions, which could in turn be a positive factor for the stock market.

Over the medium to long term, the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) oil production cut could play in Oman’s favour as it raised the baseline for crude prices and could help push the energy market to the upside,

in particular, if the Chinese demand rebounds more strongly. “Oil prices have been trending higher even before the cut with demand expected to exceed supplies. This trend could provide better support for banking and other non-oil sectors, which could help the main index drive more gains in the coming weeks,” Takieddine said.

Investors could keep an eye on developments in other regional and global markets. GCC stock markets will face a shortened trading week with the Eid al-Fitr holidays, leaving a minimal window for traders to react to the rapidly changing global economic condi-

tions. As a result, markets could see some volatility during the following week. In the meantime, Emirati stock markets could record good performances thanks to the solid local economic fundamentals with Dubai in particular extending gains. The Abu Dhabi stock market could recover to a certain extent as well if oil prices remain stable.

Takieddine further explains that US inflation and job market data releases have been major influences on market movements this week as investors evaluate the direction of the US economy and the reaction of the Federal Reserve at the next meeting in May. Expectations have shifted toward a softer stance from the US central bank. Markets in the US and Europe could see significant volatility next week with the start of earnings season. Investors could remain cautious as banks release their figures in particular since some concerns linger about the health of financial institutions.

In addition to company earnings, traders could focus on several economic data releases next week. Chinese GDP growth figures are expected on Tuesday and could affect expectations on crude demand from the country and oil prices in the process. Eurozone inflation figures are scheduled on Wednesday and could impact investors’ views on monetary policy.

For the moment, the European Central Bank is expected to continue raising interest rates but in smaller increments.

OTHER DEPOSITORY CORPORATIONS



Credit granted by Oman’s ODCs reaches OMR29.80bn

MUSCAT: The total balance of credit granted by Oman’s conventional and Islamic banks, or what is known as Other Depository Corporations (ODCs), increased by 6.8 per cent to reach OMR29.80 billion at the end of February 2023.

About credit granted to the private sector, it recorded a growth of 5.3 per cent, to reach OMR24.80 billion at the end of last February.

The data relating to its distribution among various sectors indicated that non-financial companies acquired the largest share, which amounted to 46.1 per cent, followed by the individual sector at 44.7 per cent, while the remaining percentage was distributed to the financial companies sector at 5.6 per cent, and other sectors at 3.7 per cent.

Total deposits with the banking sector recorded a growth of 2.9 per

cent, to reach OMR26.60 billion at the end of February.

When looking at the distribution of the total deposit base within this total, private sector deposits with the banking system increased by 0.53 per cent to reach OMR17.50 billion. The individual sector accounted for the largest share of the total deposit base, which amounted to about 51.8 per cent, followed by the non-financial companies sector and the financial companies sector with a share of 28.6 per cent and 16.8 per cent, respectively, while the remaining 2.8 per cent was distributed among other sectors.

On the other hand, the total balance of credit granted by conventional commercial banks increased by 5.4 per cent at the end of February 2023, while credit

extended to the private sector increased by 2.9 percent to reach OMR19.70 billion.

The total investments of conventional commercial banks in securities decreased by 14 percent to reach about OMR4.50 billion at the end of last February.

Within this item, investment in government development bonds (GDBs) increased by 1.7 percent, compared to the same period in 2022, to reach OMR2.20 billion.

As for the investments of conventional banks in foreign securities, they increased by 31.7 percent to OMR1.10 billion at the end of last February.

On the liabilities side, total deposits with conventional commercial banks increased by 1.5 percent to reach MR21.70 billion at the end of last February. - **ONA**

NCSI DATA

Inflation rate stabilises at 1.58%

MUSCAT: The consumer price inflation in the Sultanate of Oman during March 2023 was about 1.58 per cent, according to the data of the monthly survey of consumer prices issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The data further indicates an increase in the prices of the main commodity groups in March 2023 compared to the same month in 2022. The prices of the food and non-alcoholic beverages group rose by 4.08 per cent, the furniture, fixtures, household equipment and regular home maintenance group by 3.81 per cent, the restaurants and hotels group by 3.75 per cent, and the cultural and entertainment group rose by 2.28 per cent.

The miscellaneous goods and services group rose by 1.73 per cent, the health group by 1.23 per cent, the clothing and footwear group by 0.70 percent, the transport group by 0.32 percent, the education group by 0.05 percent, and the housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels group by 0.03 percent. However, the communications group decreased by 0.15 percent, and the tobacco group decreased by 0.02 percent.

According to data for the food and non-alcoholic beverage group; the price index of milk, cheese and eggs increased by 10.44 percent, the prices of fish and seafood by 8.56 percent, the prices of oils and fats by 8.18 per-



cent, the prices of bread and cereals by 4.68 percent, the prices of non-alcoholic beverages by 4.56 percent, the prices of other food-stuffs by 4.19 percent, and the prices of sugar, jam, honey and sweets increased by 3.78 percent, fruit prices increased by 3.57 percent, meat prices increased by 2.12 percent, while the vegetable group decreased by 3.63 percent.

At the governorate level; the Governorate of Al Buraimi witnessed the highest rate of infla-

tion at 2.35 percent, followed by the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah at 1.78 percent, followed by the Governorate of Muscat at 1.77 percent.

The Al Dhahirah Governorate saw an inflation rate of 1.71 percent, followed by the Governorate of North Al Batinah at 1.40 percent, then the Governorate of Dhofar at 1.39 percent while North and South Al Sharqiyah recorded the lowest inflation rate of 1.01 percent. - **ONA**

ASIA NIKKEI REPORT

Big US banks beat earnings expectations on higher interest rates

NEW YORK: Top American banks delivered healthy quarterly profit gains on Friday, beating analyst forecasts as the sector’s biggest names emerged unscathed from the turmoil hitting smaller lenders, Asia Nikkei reported.

JPMorgan Chase, the country’s largest bank, reported a \$12.6 billion net profit for the first quarter of 2023, up 52 per cent from a year earlier. Earnings per share jumped 56 per cent to \$4.10.

The results gave the first indicator of how JPMorgan and its peers are faring since the March failures of midsize lenders Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank.

Citigroup’s \$4.6 billion and Wells Fargo’s \$5 billion in profits were also improvements over the first quarter of 2022, as were earnings per share for both banks, Asia Nikkei reported.

JPMorgan Chase shares rose over 7 per cent. Citigroup gained nearly 5 per cent, while Wells Fargo stock was little changed.

The March turmoil, which so far has not been followed by new US bank failures, drove depositors to bigger financial institutions.

Total deposits fell 7 per cent on the year at JPMorgan Chase and 8 per cent for Wells Fargo, while Citigroup’s deposits held steady.

The March turmoil, which so far has not been followed by new US bank failures, drove depositors to bigger financial institutions

But JPMorgan deposits were up from the fourth quarter, according to Asia Nikkei.

“As you would expect, we saw significant new-account-opening activity and meaningful deposit and money market fund inflows,

most significantly in the commercial bank, business banking and AWM [asset and wealth management],” JPMorgan Chief Financial Officer Jeremy Barnum said on an earnings call, soon adding that the bank estimates it had retained

about \$50 billion of these deposit inflows.

The bank’s full-year outlook for net interest income -- the difference between revenue from interest-bearing assets and expenses from interest-bearing liabilities -- still assumes “modest deposit outflows,” Barnum added.

Rising interest rates fuelled a massive spike in net interest income for JPMorgan Chase, which logged a 49 per cent year-on-year jump, Asia Nikkei said, adding net interest income for Wells Fargo was up 45 per cent.

But there were signs of unease for the months ahead, notably the

potential for losses on lending for commercial real estate, which is under pressure from higher interest rates, Asia Nikkei said. JPMorgan increased its provision for credit losses by 55 per cent, and Wells Fargo put USD 643 million into its allowance for credit losses heavily driven by commercial real estate loans for offices.

On the outlook for US interest rates, JPMorgan CEO Jamie Dimon said that “people need to be prepared.” “They shouldn’t pray that they don’t go up,” he said. “They should prepare for them going up. And if it doesn’t happen, serendipity.” - **ANI**

MARKET

World oil demand set to climb by 2 mb/d in 2023

Reflecting the widening disparity between regions, non-OECD countries, buoyed by a resurgent China, will account for 90 per cent of growth, according to IEA Oil Market Report

PARIS: World oil demand will climb by 2 mb/d in 2023 to a record 101.9 mb/d, according to the IEA Oil Market Report (OMR) for April. "Reflecting the widening disparity between regions, non-OECD countries, buoyed by a resurgent China, will account for 90 per cent of growth. OECD demand, dragged down by weak industrial activity and warm weather, contracted by 390 kb/d y-o-y in 1Q23, its second



consecutive quarter of decline. Jet/kerosene accounts for 57 per cent of 2023 gains," the OMR said. It noted that extra cuts by Opec+ will push the world oil supply down 400 kb/d by end-2023. From March-December, gains of 1 mb/d from non-Opec+ failed to offset a 1.4 mb/d decline from the producer bloc. For the year as a whole, global oil production growth slows to 1.2 mb/d versus 4.6 mb/d in 2022. Non-OPEC+, led by the US and Brazil, drives the 2023 expansion, rising 1.9 mb/d. OPEC+ is expected to drop by 760 kb/d. Global refining throughput is forecast to average 82 mb/d this year, 0.1 mb/d lower than in last month's report due to weaker 1Q23 data. Annual gains will double to 2.1 mb/d from 1Q23 to 2Q23, as runs in the US normalise and with Chinese activity materially higher than a weak 2Q22 baseline. On average, 2023 crude runs will approach pre-covid levels but remain 0.3 mb/d

below 2019 average throughputs. Global inventories held largely steady in February after surging by 58 mb in the previous month. Oil on water and non-OECD stocks fell by 11.5 mb and 2.1 mb, respectively, while total OECD inventories rose by 8.8 mb. OECD commercial stocks built by 9.6 mb, narrowing the deficit against the five-year average to 7.5 mb. Preliminary data for the US, Europe and Japan show a hefty 38.9 mb decline in March. -WAM

AMERICANS CUT SPENDING



US retail sales fall 1% amid high inflation, rising rates

WASHINGTON: Americans cut their spending at retail stores in March for the second straight month, a sign consumers are becoming more cautious after a burst of spending in January. Retail sales dropped 1 per cent in March from February, a sharper decline than the 0.2 per cent fall in the previous month. Sales jumped 3.1 per cent in January, as unusually warm weather and a big jump in Social Security benefits likely spurred more spending. Sales fell among most retailers, including at auto dealers, gas stations, electronics stores, and home and garden stores. Gas-station sales plunged 5.5 per cent in March, though the data isn't adjusted for price changes, and gas prices fell last month. Excluding car dealers and gas stations, retail sales fell a less-dramatic 0.3 per cent. Spending jumped 1.9 per cent at online re-

tailers and ticked up 0.1 per cent at restaurants and bars. The decline in sales adds to other recent evidence that the economy is cooling as consumers grapple with higher interest rates and the impact of a year-long bout of elevated inflation. Companies are posting fewer open jobs, hiring has slowed even as it remains solid, and layoffs have ticked up. The slowdown in spending has fuelled fears that the economy could be nearing a recession. Growth likely reached about 2 per cent at an annual rate in the first three months of this year, but falling retail sales suggest that consumers, who power about two-thirds of economic activity, are losing momentum. If consumers remain weak, the economy could even contract in the April-June quarter, economists said. -BNA

COMMENTARY

Real needs of today's retail customers



Mohammed Anwar Al Balushi

MUSCAT: Is retail banking today the same as it was in the 80s and 90s or the 20s? What changes and new trends have been introduced to its customers? In what ways does the new technology appeal to retail customers? Retail bankers and retail banking leaders: how do they serve retail customers? What are the things that sate

retail customers, whether they visit a bank branch or use the bank's application? Isn't it true that retail customers are smarter than retail bankers when it comes to business and profit today? "What made you choose bank "X" instead of bank "Y"?", I asked one of my friends. According to him, he had to do his research when visiting the bank branch for banking transactions and needs. Today's retail customers have more options than they used to, so they are not as susceptible to being persuaded. Considering this scenario, what can retail banking leaders do to persuade and retain customers? This is not a challenge for them, is it? Retail banking is all about the individual and not all customers have the same mentality, so their psychology must be studied well, and the retail banking leaders must study the psychology of bank branch employees since they are on the front line when it

comes to studying the psychology of customers. It is important to realise that sometimes dissatisfied employees can cause customers to be dissatisfied, which will lead to disaster for the customer service of that branch of the bank. **Customer service** What are the real needs of retail customers? In the first place, they look for excellent customer service, which comes from happy and satisfied employees who are not stressed out or under pressure. Second, they want better products that are meaningful to them, and this will come from a knowledgeable employee who knows which product is right for this customer. Third, they want all their extra questions to be answered, and this will be done by an employee who is well-versed in retail banking, the global economy, and current business issues. Four, they expect their banking problems to be

resolved without delay by employees who know how to solve problems. In light of the fact that traditional retail banking has been shifted to retail digital banking, customers should not have any challenges using these channels. It is essential to conduct a properly designed survey to determine how satisfied customers are with the bank. Considering and appreciating customers' suggestions is important, and it will be a good idea to call and thank them for their suggestions. Leaders of retail banking could invite these customers to a "Cup of Tea" and give them a gift in appreciation. In retail banking, leadership must now determine how to create products or services that will attract retail customers, instead of going after them. It is now the time for retail banking leaders to become "Profit Lights" for their banks in the competitive market.

STATISTICS

German imports from Russia down by 91%

BRUSSELS: Germany's imports from Russia have fallen by a staggering 91 per cent in the first year of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. The country's federal statistics agency, Destatis said on Thursday that imported goods from Russia were worth €300 million (roughly \$330 million) in February 2023, when compared to imports amounting to €3.7 billion in the same month of 2022. Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24 last year. Russia drops to 46th spot in German import league table. The total meant that Russia had dropped from being Germany's 11th biggest source of imports to its 46th in just a year. According to the government's statistical agency, Destatis, Germany was only importing a few energy products from Russia. The agency said that oil and natural gas imports had fallen from €2.2 billion in February 2022 to €4.2 million in February 2023, a drop of 99.8 per cent. Imports of coal-based coke products and mineral oil products

fell from €353 million to €30 million, a decrease of 91.4 per cent. Coal imports dropped from €347 million to €26 million, representing a decline of 92.5 per cent. German exports to Russia meanwhile dropped by 60.5 per cent to €800 million when compared to the €2.1 billion figure from February 2022. Destatis also said that this February, for the first month since December 2020, Germany had a trade surplus with Russia. A year prior in the same month it had a deficit of €1.6 billion. Since Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine, Germany has dramatically reduced its dependence on Russian sources of energy and has entered into various partnerships with other countries. Most coal and oil deliveries were either halted or limited via EU sanctions. Although the EU never imposed natural gas sanctions, Russia halted most deliveries last summer and soon after, the Nord Stream delivery pipelines were damaged in apparent sabotage. -DW

PARTNERSHIP

GUtech and Asyad collaborate to start promising CO² capturing system project

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Gas emissions from marine transport are a significant contributor to global climate change. It's predicted that by 2050, the amount of greenhouse gas emissions from marine transport could reach 2-3 billion tonnes, which is a substantial increase from current levels. This increase is primarily driven by the fact that over 90 per cent of global trade is transported by sea, making the shipping industry a critical contributor to global emissions. Asyad, Oman's global integrated logistics service provider and the German University of Technology (GUtech) are collaborating to address this issue. "Asyad and GUtech are showing an excellent example of Industry-Academia collaboration that contributes to Oman Vision 2040 and Oman's commitment towards the environment by achieving Oman's net zero emission goal. Therefore, we have developed a research project to reduce the CO2 emissions from vessels significantly," said Assistant Professor Dr Eng. Najah Al Mhanna, the principal investigator of the project at the Engineering Department at GUtech. Commenting on the exciting new partnership principal of Oman's prestigious higher learning institutions, Ahmed Al Ghafri, Digital and Innovation Manager at Asyad Group, said: "As Oman's



global integrated logistics service provider and a responsible corporate citizen, Asyad Group has taken the initiative to invest in research and development in collaboration with GUtech, to develop innovative solutions that incorporate carbon capture technology in the shipping industry. This is one of many impactful initiatives carried out under our sustainability strategy designed to decarbonise logistics in the Sultanate." Asyad Group and GUtech are aiming to achieve finishing phase 1 of this project in 2023. The hope is to obtain an excellent result that can move the proposed technology to the implementation phase.

A significant increment in global carbon emissions from fossil fuel combustion and industry was recorded over the past 50 years. According to the International Energy Agency, IEA, energy-related CO2 emissions globally reach 36.8 GT, gigatonne, which is a new high. "The primary objective of this investment is to pioneer the development of new technologies and practices that will drive sustainability in the shipping industry," Al Ghafri said. "By doing so, Asyad Group aims to reduce its carbon footprint and contribute to global efforts towards combating climate change, in line with Oman's 2050 net-zero emissions target."

Many attempts and methods have been used to tackle the issue of greenhouse gas emissions from industry. For instance, increasing the efficiency of the engine, using alternative fuel, using renewable energy, and recovering the waste heat are among these methods. "However, vessels have no existing alternative system to reduce the CO2 emission. Changing the fuel type or increasing the efficiency can be seen as long-term applications. Therefore, we are designing an advanced carbon capture and storage system that can be used in vessels as a short-midterm solution" added Dr Eng. Najah Al Mhanna.

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More than *just a* Moustache!

Linda Goodman’s ‘Sun Signs’ has been one of my favourite books for the simple reason that it was a bold attempt to showcase the whole of mankind clinically segregated in twelve distinct clusters through a zodiac prism. One of the reasons for the book’s success was that most readers found the observations of the similarities in motivations and patterns of people born under the same zodiac sign stunningly accurate irrespective of how they viewed the esoteric science of astrology.... and that includes yours truly.

However, as much as the book triggered my interest in astrology, my new learning on the subject got derailed suddenly one afternoon, as I was lazily browsing through a “General Knowledge” magazine that my daughter had borrowed from her school library. The book had a page that listed the birthdays of famous personalities who shaped the twentieth century. Amongst the names mentioned were two personalities who certainly deserved their place in the distinguished list but for diametrically opposite reasons... two characters who were perceived to be as different as ‘chalk and

cheese’ as the cliché goes... two passionate men whose MAD attitude and outlook brought two distinct results to the table with respect to world order and I refer to MAD only as an abbreviation for “Make A Difference”. One made the world laugh while other made the world weep... and both of them born just four days apart in this same week in the April of 1889....Sir Charles Spencer Chaplin on the 16th and Adolf Hitler on the 20th....and so much for zodiac signs I thought.

And then I noticed that they did have one thing common after all...the trademark toothbrush moustache. Did the similarity end there? I was suddenly intrigued and decided to explore more. Even on political ideologies they seemed to be so naturally opposite.

While Hitler made no secret of his dislike for the communists, Chaplin’s leftist leanings were well known and he was under the FBI scanner for being a suspected communist sympathizer which eventually

forced him to leave America and resettle in Europe in the fifties.

As contemporaries, Hitler and Chaplin were not oblivious to each other and the difference they were making to the world. There are conflicting stories on Hitler’s disposition to Chaplin. Some reports say that he was secretly an admirer and there are other reports that say that Chaplin was on the hit list as early as 1931 when he received an overwhelming reception from fans on a trip to Berlin much to the chagrin of the authorities who were yet to assume absolute power over Germany. It is also believed that Hitler watched Chaplin’s first talkie movie “The Great Dictator” more than once. In the movie, Chaplin’s portrayal of Adnoid Hynkel...a caricature spoof on Adolf Hitler is rated as one of his finest performances ever, earning him an Academy Award nomination. Who can forget his solo dance where he indulges with a globe balloon, relishing nudging it around in the air and kicking it with the heel of his shoe... all this done with artistic elegance to Wagner’s music playing in the background. It was Chaplin’s way of showing us how Hitler treated the world as a toy for

his amusement. Nevertheless, the grim seriousness embedded within the subtle humour could not be missed when the balloon finally burst in his hand.

Hitler committed suicide in his Berlin underground bunker in 1945, thereby effectively bringing down the curtains to the six year war he began, a war that killed millions and changed the face of the world. Chaplin went on to live for another 32 years which also saw him being awarded an honorary Oscar for his colossal contribution to the field of filmmaking. But one might say that an uncompromising excellence in a career dedicated to making people laugh in an era that spanned across two world wars, their aftermath and the great depression qualifies for an award for contribution to humanity at large.

So I wondered how these two men with apparently nothing in common except a toothbrush moustache and perhaps a love for Wagner’s music could have similarities just because their birth signs fell in the same zodiac constellation. Then on closer study, certain observations became more evident. They were both denied the best of childhood. Their artistic

inclinations were another point to be noted. As a child, Hitler was an aspiring painter who unsuccessfully tried his luck at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts. They both possessed a fiery temper. It was well known that the innocent ‘Tramp’ on the screen often brought the roof down on the sets. However these things get trivialized when compared to the single most important factor that worked common for both Chaplin and Hitler – their passion. They were both strong willed men with a mission. Again they were both incredibly successful in the art of communication. Apart from their ability to stretch beyond the mind’s frontiers, their mastery in the art of influencing the masses was the biggest common factor in these two men. Hitler’s rhetoric and oratorical prowess ignited his nation and inspired the Germans on the road to self redemption though the path chosen may have been wrong.

Chaplin too was no less a genius when it came to connecting with the masses. That he did most of it through the medium of ‘silent’ movies is a testimony to this. As a matter of fact there was a lot of skepticism and resentment amongst his fans when he

announced ‘The Great Dictator’ as his first talkie movie. They felt that he would miss his connection with them if he talked in his movies. They felt that his unique identity would be compromised. How he proved them wrong is a part of cinema history. “The Great Dictator” went on to become his biggest hit ever and his last speech in the movie delivered in an uncharacteristic fashion is referred even today as one of the all time greatest speeches ever delivered.

Chaplin and Hitler, the madness they brought to the table came with a method...as much as their method came with an element of madness. As different as they seem at a peripheral level, one could see that their lives and destinies were meant to intermingle with the lives of millions. The lives they led and values they carried may have been different. But that is perhaps only a reflection of the circumstances and environment they found themselves in. The commonality that cannot be denied is that destiny chose roles for them that shaped their generation and brought the world to what it is today.

So does the zodiac have a story to tell after all??

By Pradeep Govind

(The writer is an executive staff of Muscat Media Group and an International Award winning author of two books – “The ‘Capillary’ Effect & Other Short Stories” and “I, Duryodhana...”)

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This luxury car embodies elegance, sophistication, and modernity, making it the perfect choice for young Omanis in the corporate world and entrepreneurs who want to experience the world of automotive luxury



MUSCAT: MHD ACERE, the exclusive distributor of Hongqi in Oman, announced the arrival of the all-new Hongqi Ousado.

This luxury car embodies elegance, sophistication, and modernity, making it the perfect choice for young Omanis in the corporate world and entrepreneurs who want to experience the world of automotive luxury.

The Hongqi Ousado boasts a prominent exterior that reflects a strong and sophisticated aura, with lines that trail from the core, offering a powerful, quiet, and smooth drive. The interior design distinctly balances comfort and harmony with nobility and luxury, making driving a unique and pleasurable experience.

According to Mohsin Hani AL Bahrani, CEO of MHD ACERE, “We are thrilled to introduce the all-new Hongqi Ousado to Oman. This car is a masterpiece of design and engineering, and we are confident that it will exceed the expectations of our discerning customers.”

The car is powered by a high-performance aluminium 2.0T turbocharged engine that produces 223 horsepower and 340 Nm of torque, offering better combustion and lower fuel consumption. Coupled with an 8-speed transmission, the car accelerates from 0 to

100 km/h in just 7.8 seconds.

The Hongqi Ousado also leads its class in spaciousness, thanks to its long wheelbase measuring 2920 mm. The seats are finished with soft material specially designed to suit everyone, and it sports a 12-position electronic setting for the driver’s seat in the Flagship category, contributing to a unique and enjoyable trip.

Equipped with nearly 100 shock absorbers and more than 30 acoustic technologies, the car mitigates road noise while driving by emitting an inverted sound wave to maximise the cabin’s silence. The Dynaudio surround sound system with 12 loudspeakers in the Flagship category creates an immersive feeling for passengers as they indulge in the musical ambience.

The Hongqi Ousado also features a one-of-a-kind panoramic sunroof measuring 1010x890mm, providing an unbelievably wide view to enjoy the sunlight during the day and the twinkling stars at

night. It also has an adaptive driving beam, parking assist system, and wireless charging capability for various devices to ensure fast and safe charging.

Safety features in the Hongqi Ousado include 9 airbags carefully distributed within the vehicle, a strong steel structure, and a Smart Emergency call function. With all these features, the Hongqi Ousado promises an extremely comfortable driving experience that ensures the safety of the family.

The Hongqi Ousado is now available in Oman, and interested customers can visit MHD ACERE’s Hongqi showroom to experience the car’s luxury and performance firsthand. Hongqi is a luxury automotive marque of FAW Group, China, which is ranked 66 among global fortune 500 companies. Hongqi strives to be an icon in the automobile industry with its pursuit of new technologies, intelligent-driving features, and absolute safety assurance – all combined with excellent design aesthetics.



ROUND-UP

With EMI as low as OMR71, Wingle 7 pickup takes wing this Ramadan

Although a pickup truck in its categorisation, this versatile product from Haval can be easily adapted for family travel, urban transportation and various other purposes

MUSCAT: Great Wall Motor's flagship pickup truck, Wingle 7, has never had it so good since it made its debut in Oman a couple of years ago. With its uniquely striking design and powerful driveline, this powerhouse from the Haval lineup of China's biggest automaker is rapidly gaining traction in the



domestic market, more so during Ramadan as customers cash in on an unmatched package of pricing offers and benefits. For the duration of the holy month, EMIs on the Wingle 7 start at an unbeatable OMR 71. Bundled with this fabulous offer are the following exciting freebies: Insurance for the first year; Registration for the first year, and 50,000km service warranty. To top it all, customers receive window tinting from the renowned 3M brand packaged with this incredible offer. All told, these benefits represent a huge bargain on the Wingle 7, given its reputation as a workhorse, as well as a multi-tasker. Although a pickup truck in its categorisation, this versatile product from Haval can be easily adapted for family

travel, urban transportation and various other purposes. Powered by a 2.4L 4-cylinder petrol engine, the Wingle 7 comes in a 4-door configuration that is impressive in its outward demeanour as it is muscular in its performance – both on-road and off. Exterior dimensions - 539.5cm length, 180cm width, 176cm height, 335cm wheelbase, and a

weight of 2885kg – attest to the Wingle 7's imposing presence. Also unmistakable are the Wingle 7's outsized front bumper, enlarged hexagonal shaped grille and different headlights with integrated daytime running lights on the LED-matrix. The sides feature 16-inch wheels, side steps, body-coloured door handles, and body-coloured side mir-

rors with turn signals. The rear is equally striking with LED taillights, spare tyre, cargo bed access, and exhaust system. Available in a 4x4 configuration, Haval's flagship pickup truck features a 2.4L (2378cc) inline 4-cylinder petrol engine, offering a power output of 148hp (110kW) @5000-5500rpm, and max torque of 220Nm@4000-4400rpm. Ensuring a powerful performance, yet comfortable motoring experience, is an array of advanced technologies, safety features and interior amenities. The list includes: Adjustable Steering Column, Cruise Control, Daytime Running Lights, Push Button Start, Nappa Steering Wheel, Dual Airbags, Rear View Camera, Remote Control Central Door Lock, Anti-lock Braking System + Electronic Brake Distribution, Anti Roll Bar, and Electric 4WD, among other conveniences. Technology and infotainment features include an 8-inch touchscreen, Bluetooth, AUX and USB ports, MP5, and a 4-speaker sound system. OTE Group is the exclusive dealer for the diverse product lineup of vehicles from Great Wall Motor in Oman.

RAMADAN SHOP AND WIN

Lulu picks next set of promotion winners

MUSCAT: Lulu Group Oman announced the third, fourth, fifth and sixth set of winners of its Ramadan Shop and Win promotion. The promotion, which coincides with Ramadan, kicked off on March 1 and will run till April 29 at all Lulu stores in Oman. The winners of the third, fourth fifth and sixth draws were selected through the e-Raffle draw held on 22 March, 29 March, April 5 and April 12 at the Mall of Muscat, Barka, Jalan Bani Bu Ali and Nizwa stores, respectively. Assam Ali, Naresh, Abdullah and Salim Abdullah Al Mukbali won cash prizes of OMR5,000 each. While 136 winners took home cash prizes ranging from OMR750 to OMR500, OMR200 to OMR100. Shabeer K. A., Regional Director - Lulu Hypermarkets Oman, stated



"I congratulate all the winners of the third, fourth and fifth draws. As we understand the importance of the holy month for our customers, we strive to provide the best products and services to make the season even more special. We are glad that the Shop and Win promotion has received a very positive response to date. We have 3 more

draws, which will be conducted across different Lulu outlets in the next three consequent weeks." "As part of Ramadan, Lulu has also launched special deals, promotions and offers both for offline and online shoppers. There are also Special Ramadan Kits with all the essential grocery items being offered at the lowest prices. Customers can also check out the daily deals in our online shopping apps, which will make shopping more convenient for them," he added. Customers who spend just OMR10 at any Lulu store can participate by registering for the e-Raffle draws. The promotion will allow 281 customers to win amazing cash prizes. There will be a grand prize of OMR 10,000 cash as well as weekly cash prizes of OMR5,000, OMR750, OMR500, OMR200 and OMR100.

OFFER



Benefits on Ford Explorer

MUSCAT: The popular Ford Explorer is now available with Ford's Season of Generosity campaign. Customers can now benefit with service 5 years / 100,000km and registration 1 Year on a brand new Explorer. (Conditions apply. For details visit a Ford showroom.) The Ford Explorer boasts

impressive style, advanced capability and a list of driver and passenger-focussed features and technology. Whatever the journey, the Explorer encourages you to go the distance with a powerful 2.3-litre turbocharged EcoBoost engine that produces 300 horsepower and 420Nm of torque.

Oman's MPES enters strategic partnership with Gradiant



Times News Service

MUSCAT: Muscat Projects and Environmental Services, a leading waste water management company in Oman, said that it has entered into a strategic partnership with Gradiant International Overseas, a global industry leader in clean-tech water solutions. For this, Gradiant have entered into a partnership with Muscat Projects & Environmental Services LLC (MPES). MPES is a leading waste water management company in Oman and is a leading service provider to Oman Water and Wastewater



Services Company (NAMA), Royal Oman Police (ROP), Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) and many public and private companies in the Sultanate. "We look forward to integrating our expertise with Gradiant to expand the impact of our water and wastewater solutions," said E.M. Badhrudeen, Managing Director of MPES. "We are fortunate that today, we are the leading operations and maintenance service provider in Oman, and by joining hands with Gradiant, we will extend our operations know-how into projects across the Middle East

region," he further added. This strategic partnership between a strong local company and an international company with global footprint will bring in synergy in their business operation to provide latest technology, innovation and quality services to the ever expanding wastewater and water sector in the region. Gradiant was founded at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and is uniquely positioned to address the world's increasing challenges created by industrialisation, population growth, and water stress. Gradiant operates from its global headquarters in Boston, regional headquarters and Global Innovation Centre in Singapore, and offices across fourteen countries. Gradiant was established to solve the world's most important water challenges using sustainable and cost-effective technologies. For further details please contact - 24591884/fb@mpesllc.com.

AREEJ VEGETABLE OILS AND DERIVATIVES

Avod's non-hydrogenated products fortify Oman's health and wellbeing

MUSCAT: Areej Vegetable Oils and Derivatives (Avod) transformation strategy has always put health and customers' wellbeing at the forefront, and this has gained it the distinction of being Oman's Most Trusted Brand year after year. The brand's Unique Selling Proposition (USP) is its consistent delivery of products, which offer the ideal balance of nutrition, health and wellness and taste, and encourage consumers to adopt healthier lifestyles for themselves and their families. "Eat Right, Live Well" philosophy is the epicentre of the company's product development process and has made Avod a trustworthy specialist in refining, processing, packaging and distribution of high-quality trans fat free cooking oils, non-hydrogenated margarines, vegetable ghee, fats and mayonnaise. The company's continuous transformation takes a multi-pronged approach to create



health-focused products. The state-of-the-art modern factory is constantly upgraded to meet stringent quality controls. Packing materials such as tins, cans, plastic bottles, etc are manufactured in-house and filled immediately using automatic packing machines to ensure highest standards of hygiene. The company's commitment to safeguarding health and safety has earned it the ISO 9001 certificate for Quality Management System, ISO 14001 certificate for Environmental Management System and ISO 22000 certificates for Food Safety Management.

Eng. Salem Bortmany, CEO – Avod, says, "Every product that comes out of the Avod stable is a testament to its commitment to offer consumers the best of health and value. After thorough research on the health risks that hydrogenated and partially hydrogenated oils pose to the physical well-being, which is trans-fats is converted into saturated fat. Avod decided to invest in technology to ensure that all its products are non-hydrogenated and free from harmful trans-fats. All products go through a heart-friendly process which is recognised and recommended by WHO."



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SOHAR: A STRONG DRIVER OF OMAN'S ECONOMIC GROWTH

A sizable part of Oman's industrial and manufacturing GDP comes from Sohar, which is home to a massive industrial cluster within Sohar Port, a burgeoning free zone adjoining the port, and a major industrial city managed by Madayn. >C2



SPECIAL MONTHLY COVERAGE





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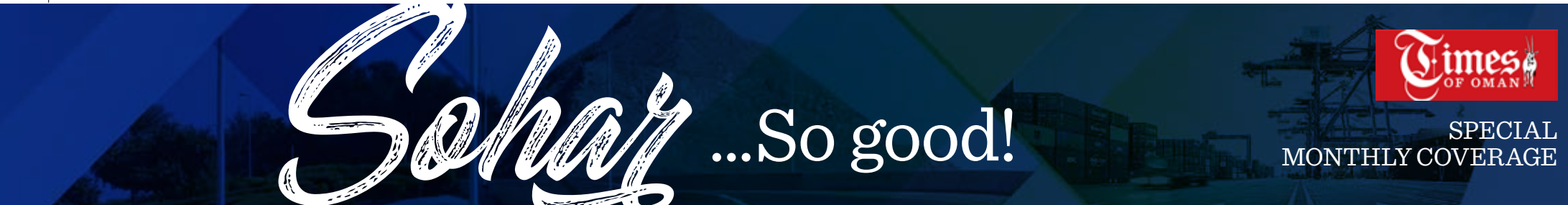
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ECONOMY

<FROM C1

Sohar: A strong driver of Oman’s economic growth



Sohar is playing a key role in the diversification of Oman's economy, spurred by its prime strategic location.

Already established as a modern and sustainable hub with modern infrastructure, Sohar is one of the strong drivers of Oman achieving the Vision 2020 objectives.

A sizable part of Oman's industrial and manufacturing GDP comes from Sohar, which is home to a massive industrial cluster within Sohar Port, a burgeoning free zone adjoining the port, and a major industrial city as well managed by Madayn.

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates, now known as Madayn, was established in 1993 in continuity of the industrial march that began in the Sultanate with the establishment of Rusayl Industrial city in 1983. Sohar Industrial City is one of the ten industrial cities managed by Madayn.

Sohar Industrial City recently marked 30 years of successful operations as part of a network of industrial parks distributed across the Sultanate of Oman.

Inaugurated in November 1992 as part of the celebrations of the 22nd Glorious National Day - Sohar is one of the economic cities that attract local and foreign investment.

One of the important strategies adopted by the Sultanate of Oman is to pay attention to industrial cities that support the diversification of income sources, due to the industrial city's characteristics of incentive factors for investment represented by the presence of a typical business environment with a legal system encouraging investment, in addition to its strategic location and the availability of an integrated infrastructure equipped with all services.

Through Sohar Industrial City, Madayn aims to attract foreign investments, localise national capital, stimulate the private sector to contribute to achieving sustainable and comprehensive economic and social development.

It aims to introduce modern technology and provide workers with the necessary technical skills to develop their production, and create new job opportunities for national cadres.

Among the other goals are encouraging exports, developing international trade, encouraging the establishment of export industries, and revitalising the economic sectors operating in the Sultanate of Oman, such as: the transportation sector, the banking sector, the tourism sector, and other sectors.

The total investments in Sohar Industrial City currently is around OMR 2.3 billion with as many as 360 industrial projects in operation across a 29 million square metre area of the hub.

Madayn is presently working with its partners to launch a complex for plastic industries on a 1 million square metre site within the industrial city. This plastics park will utilise feedstock from the Liwa Plastics complex of OQ Group operating in Sohar Port. The output from the plastics park is primarily targeted at overseas export markets.

Further, to support the decarbonisation of industries operating within Sohar Industrial City, Madayn is inviting investors to set up renewable energy projects within a solar farm to be established on a 2 million square metre site nearby.

In this regard, Madayn recently signed a usufruct contract with Wadi Solar, an Oman renewable energy company, for the allocation of land within Sohar Industrial City for the installation of a 100 MW capacity solar photovoltaic project.

The project will be established as part of Madayn's comprehensive strategy to provide a large part of the energy needs of its tenants from a sustainable source of renewable energy in line with the sustainability goals of Madayn 2040 Vision.

The solar plant aims to provide the cost of electricity for tenants in Sohar Industrial City as an initial stage, in conjunction with efforts to attract new investors and increase the competitiveness of all companies within the industrial cities in Madayn and free zones.

It will also provide sustainable energy solutions for the economic and social environment for all investors in Sohar Industrial City, relying on renewable solar energy.

A significant player in Sohar's growth is fuelled by the presence of Sohar Port – the nation's principal commercial gateway, which also anchors a major industrial and petrochemicals hub.

The cargo throughput handled at Sohar Port rose 11.3 per cent to 77 million tonnes in 2022, with both the port and free zone recording impressive growth in all key areas. As compared to 2021, Dry Bulk and Liquid Bulk increased by 9.6 per cent and 25 per cent respectively. Vessel calls enjoyed a slight increase to 3,192 while containers remained steady at 725,000 TEU.

Also in 2022, the port and free zone attracted US\$366 million in new investments, taking the aggregate to US\$27 billion.

The total investment within the Freezone grew by 17 per cent while land occupancy grew 3.5 per cent to 77 per cent, with 14 new contracts awarded during the year.

At end of 2022, 52 countries are now represented within the freezone, an increase of three from 2021 as Sohar Port and Freezone cements its position as an engine of economic diversification.

In addition, Q1 2023, two land lease agreements were signed in the Freezone, which highlights its competitiveness and ability to attract more investors.

According to Emile Hoogsteden, CEO of Sohar Port and Freezone, progress in key areas throughout Sohar Port and Freezone is extremely positive and proof that the initiatives are in place to help deliver results.

The long-term goal is for Sohar Port to become an integrated industrial, logistics and port complex that hosts complete value chains in manufacturing, food production and energy, he noted.

By exploring investment and attracting key anchor tenants in diverse and new sectors, including green and renewable energy as well as a recycling cluster, the management aims to make the Port and Freezone more efficient and environmentally fit-for-the-future as well as a regional hub for many of Oman's major national industries.

Madayn stressed that the focus, in the coming period, will be on establishing specialised industrial complexes, and introducing technologies of the fourth industrial revolution in the existing factories.



Innovation and invention in focus

The AI laboratory was chosen as one of the 72 winning projects from 900 projects.



FOCUS on innovation and new inventions have brought spotlight on Sohar in recent months.

It was only last month that the Artificial Intelligence laboratory at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) in Sohar in the Wilayat in North Al Batinah Governorate brought laurels for the Sultanate of Oman when they bagged one of the awards at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Forum 2023, held in Geneva.

The AI laboratory was chosen as one of the 72 winning projects from 900 projects submitted from across the world.

The laboratory was established in cooperation with Sohar Port and Freezone in a bid to strengthen partnership between the public and private sectors.

The establishment of the laboratory comes in line with development goals of the UTAS aimed at building a knowledge economy,

investing in AI technologies, and keeping pace with the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) within the framework of Oman Vision 2040 goals related to education, learning, research and building national capacities.

If the limelight in March was on the AI laboratory, April saw the news of an invention from another department at the UTAS, Sohar.

This time, a group of students from Tamayuz Student Company have successfully invented a shock-proof water heater and a cooler.

The invention gains significance as in the past, Oman has witnessed unfortunate cases, including fatalities, due to electrocution.

The students claimed that the invention will be a good alternative to the products in the market, which at times have led to incidents of electrocution that have caused injuries.

Khalid bin Saud Al Shaqsi, one

of the members of the team that invented the product, said, "The product is a cylindrical water heater with maximum heating temperature of 65 degrees Celsius and also works as a water cooler in summer with minimum temperature of 23 degrees Celsius. It will have an option for the consumers to choose the desired temperature."

Detailing further, Al Shaqsi said: "The water heater includes a system, which would prevent electric shocks, as it is equipped with in-built sensors that would disconnect electricity when in use."

With renewable energy in focus, the team of young scientists plan to develop the product into a solar cooler.

"We plan to develop this product and make it solar-based with solar battery cells to be used for heating water rather than electricity," he added.

Al Shaqsi admitted that the team faced lot of challenges while developing the product as they struggled to find parts for the product and a specialised workshop. "Since, we are an emerging company, we also faced an uphill task to raise funds for this project," he added.

Al Shaqsi said: "The company is currently working on marketing the product through the available channels and we are also looking forward to participating in various scientific and technological competitions in the region."

He added that the company is in the process of obtaining a patent for the product intellectual property rights from the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MOCIIP).

Besides Al Shaqsi, the other members of the team that invented the product are Manal bint Salim Al Na'abi, Qusay bin Mohammed Al Mawai, Anas bin Khalaf Al Na'abi, Daniya Kafayat, Safa bint Salim Al Saidi, Al Yaqin bint Saif Al Saidi, Mohammed bin Mubarak Al Mahrooqi and Abdullah bin Adil Al Shiyadi.

Elsewhere, Sohar University in collaboration with Ministry of Higher Education Research and Innovation, conducted the 1st Sohar University Student Research and innovation competition under the theme of Promoting Oman Vision 2040 & UN Sustainable Development Goal(SDGs) in March 2023.

Earlier in February this year, UTAS in Sohar, with the support and funding of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, established an Internet of Things (IoT) laboratory.

Dr Hilal Ali Al Maqbali, Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs in UTAS Sohar said that the laboratory utilises IoT, which connects electronic devices together to provide certain services.

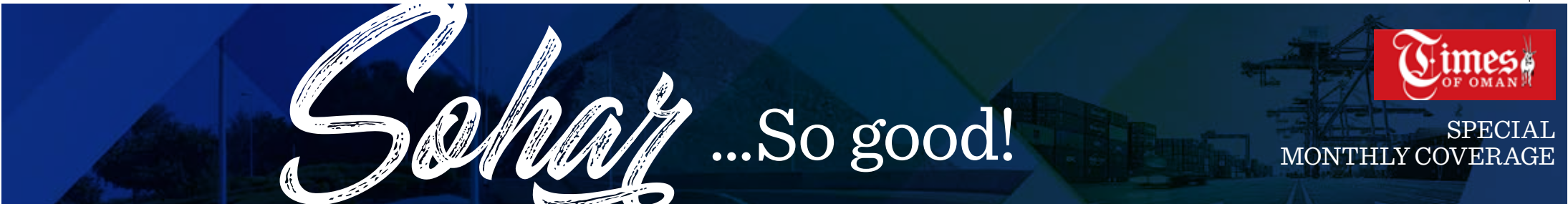
He added that the laboratory can be utilised by students, the educational cadre, as well as the public and private sectors.

Ramadan Mubarak

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BUSINESS

Oman-UAE railway project to boost business and jobs in Sohar

Saleh Al-Shaibany

MUSCAT: Sohar is set to receive an enormous boost to both businesses and employment with the planned \$3 billion train project from the city to the capital of the United Arab Emirates.

The 303km-long railway project to Abu Dhabi was signed in October last year between Oman Rail Company and UAE's Etihad Rail Company.

Academics and researchers say the project will be an economic catalyst to the Batnah Region to both social and economic growth.

"The completion of this important railway project will give a major support to Batinah Region. It will give a multisided platforms and sustainability for both its seaport and airport for the supply chain management to its local communities," Raiya Al-Hajri, a Phd candidate at the Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) researching on Supply Chain Management and Sustainability, told *Times of Oman*.

Ms Raiya, who is also teaching at the Muscat-based National University, said Sohar is an ideal place, because of its proximity to the UAE, to provide a trade link for the country's 2040 Vision.

"This project is very much in line with our 2040 Vision of Sustainability of Supply Chain since Sohar has a thriving multinational industrial estate and home to the biggest agricultural lands in the country. The railway will bring the much needed distribution of goods for foreign investors as well as local entrepreneurs," she added.

Farmers in Sohar are elated saying the train will enormously cut down the shipment time of their products to the UAE.

“

The completion of this important railway project will give a major support to Batinah Region. It will give a multisided platforms and sustainability for both its seaport and airport for the supply chain management to its local communities.

Raiya Al-Hajri

Phd candidate at the Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) researching on Supply Chain Management and Sustainability

"The project will really boost our business that relies heavily on congested road networks, which takes more than six hours of traffic and time consuming border checks when we transport our fruits and vegetable to the UAE," Suhail Al Asfoor, a farmer in Sohar, Told *Times of Oman*.

The tendering for the construction of the project has been invited last month. Work of railway tracks and stations are projected to commence in the first quarter of 2024. It is envisaged the construction will take two years to complete, hence operation of the railway will begin in the first quarter of 2026.

Company owners who have set up their businesses at the Sohar Industrial Area (SIA) say the train will create a speedy link between the two countries.

"It will boost manufacturing in the Sohar area. I am looking forward for the railway comple-

tion since I import raw materials direct from the UAE and I need a speedy transportation system to deliver them to my business," Khalifa Al Khaifi, owner of a bottling company in Sohar, told *Times of Oman*.

Sohar is home to over \$15 billion worth of projects in its industrial zone and the areas around it, including methanol, steel, a refinery, copper, chemical and a mining industry.

Employment experts also say the train link will boost job creation for graduates.

"Once the railway has started operating, it will create jobs for young Omanis, directly and indirectly. It is not just vacancies for the new railway but new businesses that will open up or the expansion of existing entrepreneurs," Salim Al Mabsali, a retired Human Resources Director at the Oman Steel Company, told *Times of Oman*.



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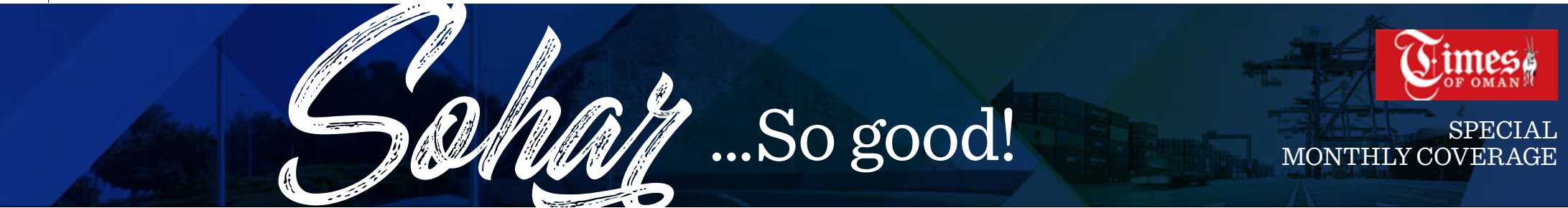
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Sohar Port & Freezone continues to make a meaningful societal impact

Sohar has a strong commitment in taking measurable steps towards a greener future and greater sustainability.



MAKING a lasting impact to the Omani society through engaging activities has been central to Sohar Port and Freezone overall strategy. This has been reflected in its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) contributions to communities in the Al Batinah region throughout the year 2022. Sohar sustainable social impact has been defined by a wide variety of activities, mainly focusing on education, environment, health, well-being, people with disabilities or special needs, as well as the youth and SMEs. Mohammed Al Shizawi, Executive Manager People and Support Services at Sohar Port and Freezone, said, “Throughout 2022, we have continued to engage with our communities and benefit the society-at-large through various initiatives that have all had a measurable, meaningful and, most of all, enduring impact. At Sohar, we believe that cor-

porate social responsibility partly derives from areas where our core business interacts with and thus can have the greatest impact on people and their livelihoods. This is why we have always prioritised local Omani suppliers and companies to serve the complex.” The Sidrah Youth Leadership Programme for Omani Girls is one leading example of how Sohar has helped create positive and continuing educational change in the communities where it operates. The first-of-its-kind initiative aims to support Omani women between the ages of 18 and 25 years old in developing self-awareness, resilience, collaboration and leadership identity. Meanwhile, the Teaching Women Reading and Writing initiative has so far empowered 20 women who learned basic reading and writing skills. Supporting people with disabilities and special needs has

been one of the key focus areas of Sohar contributions to the community. To that end, for example, a golf competition was organised to raise funds to facilitate the construction of a building for the Association of Early Intervention for Children with Disability. Another successful project saw Sohar donate several Perkins Braille Writers to the Al-Khattab Institute for the Blind to facilitate the teaching and learning of blind students. In 2022, Sohar continued to pursue long-term impact-driven initiatives that are deemed to enrich the community as a whole, including providing the Oman Charitable Organisation with 20% of its CSR budget in order to support ongoing welfare and community programmes. Closer to home, the company supported the Annual Camel Race Competition; the Volunteering Programme Initiative

that encourages youth engagement; as well as the Sohar Half Marathon which saw the participation of 300 students from North Al Batinah Governorate. A number of the other community-focused projects in 2022 that are expected to add long-term value to the local economy include the collaboration with the Oman Fishermen Association in view of the Fund Boat Winches Project that benefitted 54 fishermen from Liwa. Moreover, Sohar helped prepare the site of Sohar Festival Support Sohar Festival, which lasted from November 18 to December 18, 2022. The company’s support was in preparing the festival site to host the most considerable number of small and medium enterprises. The number of festival visitors reached about one million. Thirty-seven small and medium enterprises participated in the festival, including ten SMEs that participated in the consumer exhibition and twenty-seven institutions that provided various businesses such as cafes and restaurants. Sohar has also a strong commitment in taking measurable steps towards a greener future and greater sustainability. To this end, the complex made a significant contribution to the National Initiative of Planting 10 million trees, which seeks to boost conservation efforts, preserve biodiversity, while increasing vegetation and green spaces in Oman. Another effort to introduce trees in Oman and that has been supported by Sohar is the Afforestation Project in Liwa.



2022 SOHAR Port and Freezone CSR Projects & Initiatives

Making a lasting impact to our communities Oman is of paramount importance to us at SOHAR Port and Freezone through our Corporate Social Responsibility contributions programs & initiatives.

Sidrah Youth Leadership Program for Omani Girls  Sidrah is the first-of-its-kind National Youth Development Program that targets Omani Girls ages 18 -25 to learn and develop self-awareness, resilience, collaboration, and leadership identity. +700 applications 34 participants from 8 governorates	Supply of Perkins Brailier writer Putting the community first, SOHAR provided several Perkins Braille machines to Omar bin Al Khattab Institute for the Blind to support students' education through advanced technology.  10 machines provided	Fund Boat Winches Project for Liwa Fishermen Contribute to the provision of boat winches for the fishermen from Liwa in collaboration with the Oman Fishermen Association. 54 fishermen from Liwa 	Sohar Half Marathon  300 students are sponsored to participate
Teaching Women Reading and Writing A program that targeted 20 illiterate women to have the basic know-how tools for reading and writing.  20 women from Liwa	Fund the Oman Charitable Organization  SOHAR continue allocating an amount of the CSR budget for the welfare programs and community support to the Oman Charitable Organization. 20% of CSR Budget allocated to the Oman Charitable Organization.	Contribution to the National initiative "10 million trees" Trees will be planted in North Al Batinah. 	Golf Fore Autism The golf competition is concerned with inviting companies to contribute to the competition so that it will benefit charitable cases. The competition benefits has been contributed to the construction of a building for the Association of Early Intervention for Children with Disability. 
Afforestation Project in Liwa The company contributed to the afforestation of the area in front of the Municipal Affairs Department building in Liwa. 	Fund Camel Race Competitions  Annual Camel Race Competition is sponsored by SOHAR. Supporting the Annual Camel Racing in Suhar.	Volunteering Program Initiative for the community members The program aims to refine the skills of youth and develop their skills to supervise and manage volunteer operations and various initiatives in different fields.  20 volunteers	Fund Suhar Festival  Support Suhar Festival, which lasted from November 18 to December 18, 2022. The company's support was in preparing the festival site to host the most significant number of small and medium enterprises. 1 million visitors. Participation of 37 SMEs

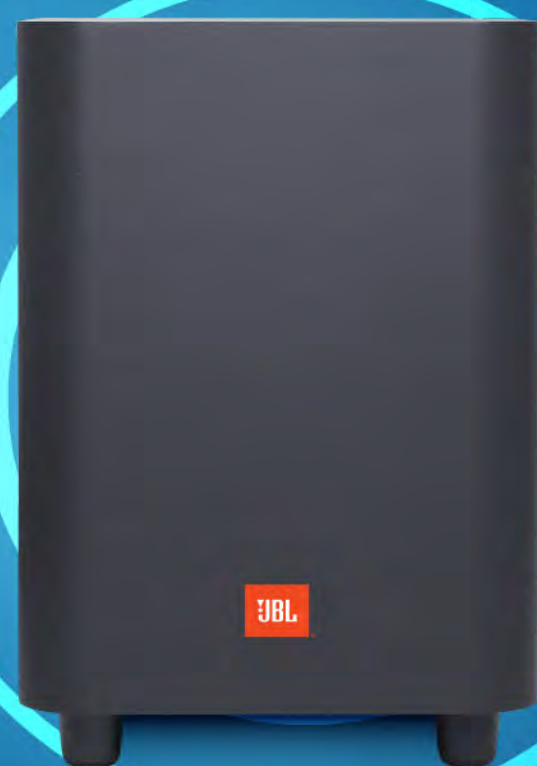
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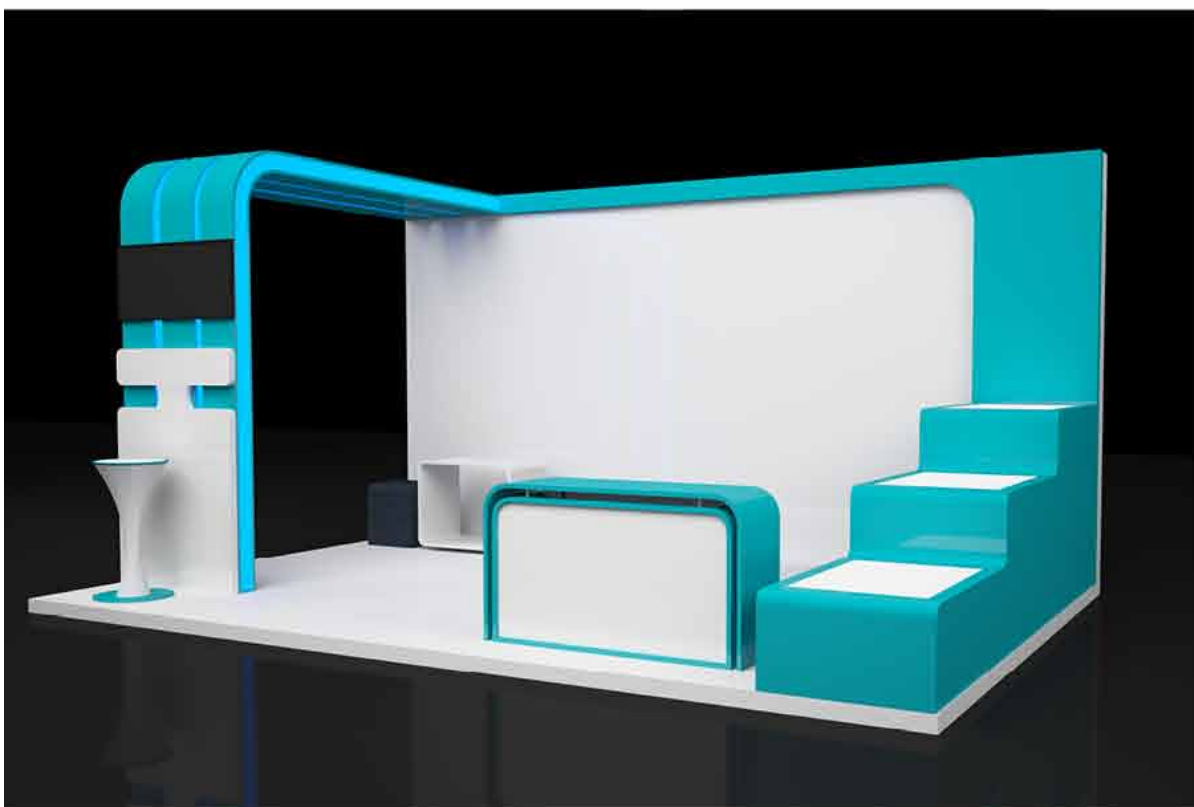
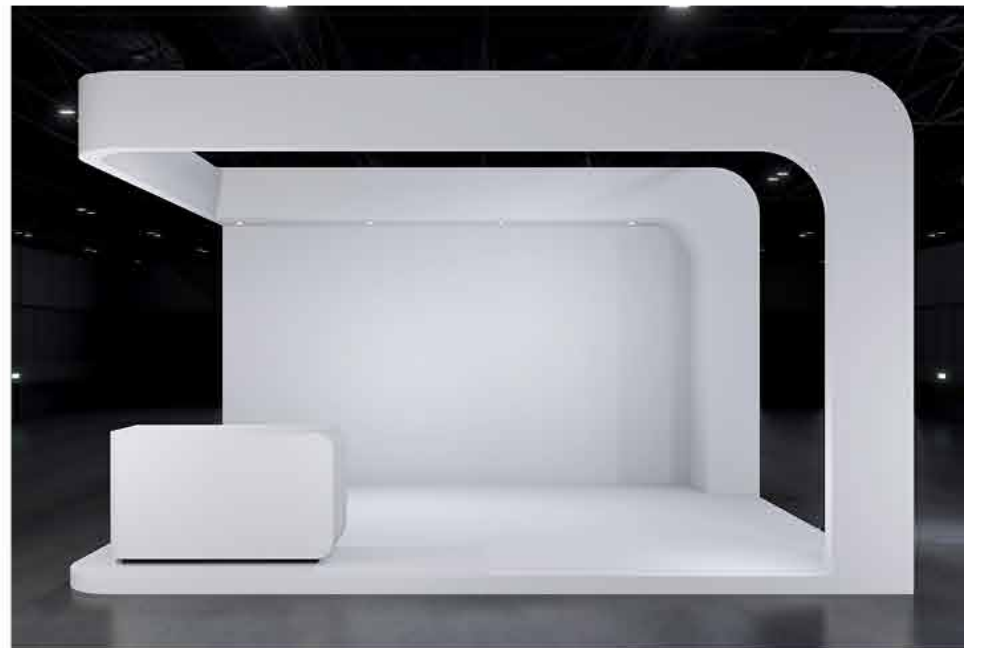
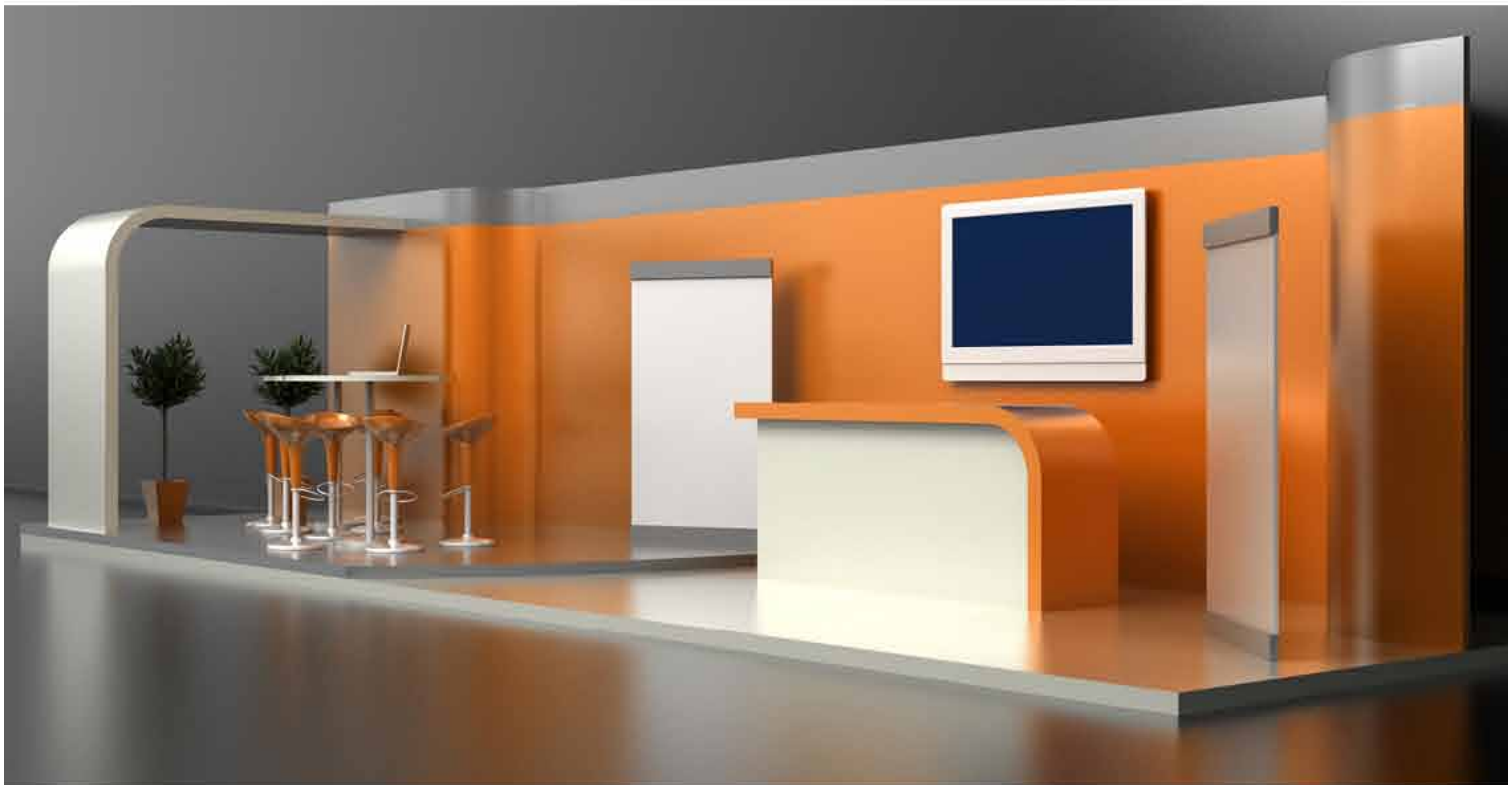
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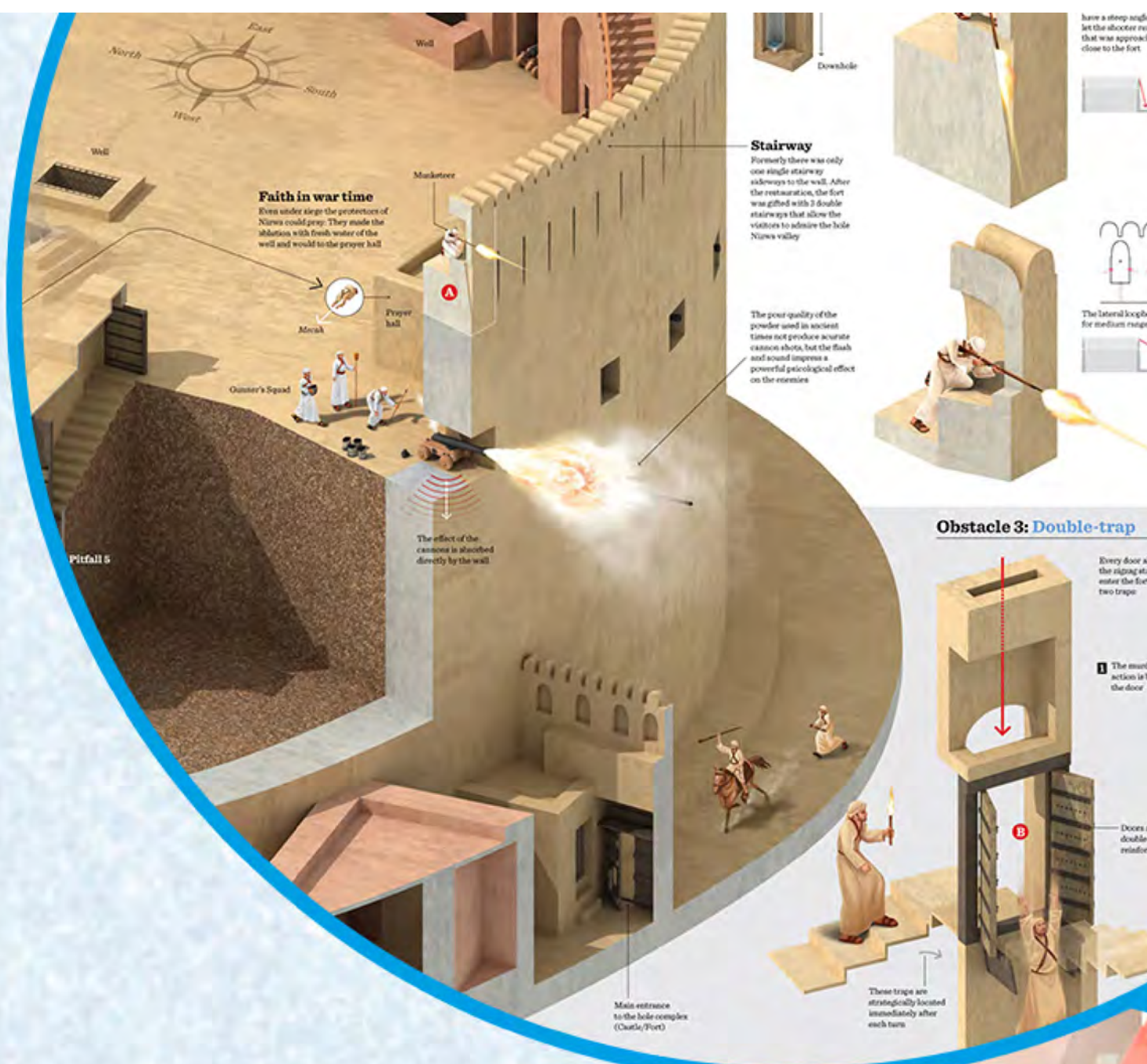


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