

HIS MAJESTY THE SULTAN GREET'S PRESIDENT OF SERBIA
MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Aleksandar Vucic of the Republic of Serbia on the occasion of his country's National Day. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Vucic, and the friendly people of Serbia further progress and prosperity. — **ONA**



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TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES



OMAN Diego Ulissi wins fourth stage of Tour of Oman

1 After Diego Ulissi came close to victory in Quriyat and Al Hamra, the Italian cyclist ended the longest stage of this year's Tour of Oman with his arms aloft in triumph. Stage 4, a 204.9km climb from Izki through Muscat to Yeti Hills, had an explosive finale in store. **>A4**

WORLD Air India to buy 250 aircraft from Airbus

2 Air India will buy 250 aircraft from France's Airbus, in what is billed as the world's largest aviation deal in history. **>A6**

MARKET Vale Oman now 100% foreign capital firm

3 Vale SA has announced that it has acquired 30 per cent of Vale Oman Pelletizing Company (Vale in Oman) from OQ. **>B1**

GLOBAL TRADE

His Majesty the Sultan gives audience to WTO Director General at Al Barakah Palace

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik yesterday gave an audience at Al Barakah Palace to Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Director General of the World Trade Organization (WTO). At the outset of the audience, His Majesty the Sultan welcomed the guest. His Majesty valued WTO's efforts to streamline global trade and ensure its stability. His Majesty also lauded its remarkable role to overcome challenges facing the global economy.

In her turn, WTO Director General expressed the organisations' pride about its distinguished relations with Oman. She commended the open trade and investment policies espoused by Oman under the wise leadership of His Majesty.

The audience was attended by Dr. Hamad Said Al Aufi, Head of the Private Office, Qais Mohammed Al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, and Ambassador Eloy Lauro, Senior Adviser to the WTO Director General. — **ONA**



SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEM TO BENEFIT ALL SEGMENTS

The draft law reflects the Royal attention accorded by His Majesty the Sultan to Omani people

MUSCAT: The Council of Ministers' referral of the draft law on social protection to the Council of Oman reflects the Royal attention accorded by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the welfare of Omani people in accordance with the Basic Law of the State and Oman Vision 2040.

The social protection draft law establishes a system that covers instruments and programmes benefiting all segments of society and proposes extending social protection and retirement benefits to citizens and residents in the Sultanate of Oman.

The social protection system



provides for designing an integrated system by introducing monetary social benefit programmes and social insurance programmes, as well as the development of comprehensive basic social protection programmes that target different segments and life-cycle stages.

These provide a minimum level of social protection for individuals and society, besides developing the current social insurance programmes based on subscriptions, enhancing their financial sustainability and expanding them to cover all segments of the labour market.

The programmes will cover various risks to which an insured person might be exposed, notably the risks of decreased ability to earn due to old age, disability, work-related injuries, occupational diseases, sick leaves and other cases. **>A4**

Additional OMR400 million sanctioned for social security

MUSCAT: An additional amount of OMR400 million has been introduced in 2023 to implement programmes and benefits endorsed for the social protection system.

The Council of Ministers has approved the referral of the draft law on Social Protection to the Council of Oman to complete its legislative session.

The step was undertaken within the context of the Council of Ministers' keenness to finalize procedures linked to the restructuring of retirement and social protection systems.

The Council of Ministers commended the new social protection system designed in line with the best international practices, standards and experiences based on transition from case-study programmes to a comprehensive system of coverage.

It also introduces a transition from providing assistance to needy families to a concept of protection against life-cycle risks for all segments of society. The overall objective is to achieve



social and economic stability in line with Oman Vision 2040.

The draft law allocates new social benefits to the elderly, children, the orphans, widows and low-income families.

It also caters to old-aged retired personnel and to the designing of unified retirement systems for all sectors of the labour market, both government and private.

Such a process is envisaged to cover the stage of retirement, death and disability risks, work-related injuries, occupational diseases and job security. — **ONA**

SEARCHING FOR SURVIVORS

'Now I believe in miracles,' says Türkiye envoy to Oman

Times News Service

MUSCAT: "Now I believe in miracles," Muhammet Hekimoglu, Ambassador-Designate of the Republic of Türkiye to the Sultanate of Oman, said, after the Omani team extricated two Turkish citizens from the rubble.

Speaking to *Times of Oman*, Muhammet Hekimoglu, said: "We thank the Omani National Team and all its crews for their humanitarian and painstaking efforts in searching for survivors under rubble after the devastating earthquake in Türkiye."

"This news, which we received in these difficult times, consoles us, eases our pain, and gives us hope that some people are still



Muhammet Hekimoglu

alive under the rubble."

An official from the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority, spoke exclusively to *Times of*



Oman about search and rescue operations in southern Türkiye, saying: "After strenuous efforts by the National Search and Rescue Team, two Turkish citizens were rescued on Monday, and emergency medi-

care was provided to them by the crews at the site."

He also confirmed that the team has been continuing its search and rescue operations since its arrival. The official from the CDAA

pointed out that the National Search and Rescue Team is composed of individuals of various skills, including teams specialised in search and rescue, equipped with modern equipment such as thermal cameras that help them find survivors under the rubble.

He continued: "The team consists of 46 people including a group of civil engineers who have the knowledge of buildings of all kinds. There are also communications engineers and medical staff of various specialties, including nurses, doctors and paramedics."

The official said: "The National Search and Rescue Team is an internationally accredited team from the Advisory Body for Search and Rescue of the United Nations. **>A3**

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MUSCAT



Dhuhr.....	12:26pm
Asr.....	3:42pm
Maghrib.....	6:07pm
Isha.....	7:18pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....	5:23am



ASSIGNED BY HIS MAJESTY

Foreign Minister to preside over HM the Sultan Football Cup’s final

MUSCAT: Assigned by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister will patronise the final match of His Majesty the Sultan Football Cup for the sport season (2022 – 2023).

The final will be played on Thursday, 9 March 2023 at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in the Wilayat of Bausher, Governorate of Muscat.

In the first leg of the semi-final of the tournament, A'Seeb Club, reigning champions, will take on A'Suwaiq Club on Monday, 20 February 2023 at A'Seeb Stadium. In the second fixture to be held on the same day, A'Rustaq Club, the runner-up, will face Al Nahdha Club at



A'Rustaq Complex.

In the second leg of the semi-final, Al Nahdha Club will host A'Rustaq Club at Al Buraimi



Complex 25 February whereas A'Suwaiq Club will encounter A'Seeb Club at A'Rustaq Complex on 26 February. -ONA



7TH TERM



State Council office holds 2nd meeting

MUSCAT: The State Council Office on Tuesday held its 2nd meeting of the 4th annual sitting of the 7th term under the chairmanship of Sheikh Abdulmalik Abdullah Al Khalili, Chairman of the Council.

The meeting discussed a study

presented by the Economic Committee on Governance of Water Resources in the Sultanate of Oman. It also touched on a study presented by the Culture, Media and Tourism Committee on Arts and their Role in Supporting National Economy. -ONA

MEETING

Sheikh Khalifa meets US Special Envoy to Iran



MUSCAT: Sheikh Khalifa Ali Al Harthy, Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry for Diplomatic Affairs received at general diwan of the ministry here yesterday, Robert Malley, US Special Envoy to Iran.

The meeting touched on the bilateral relations between the

two countries in various fields. The two sides also touched on a spectrum of regional and international issues of mutual interest, as well as the efforts exerted to achieve peace and stability in the region.

The meeting was attended by officials from both sides. -ONA

ADAM



Al Bashayer Camel Festival continues

ADAM: Competitions of the 6th annual Al Bashayer Camel Festival continued in the Wilayat of Adam, Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah yesterday.

The festival witnesses a wide participation of camel owners and slimming specialists from different governorates of the

Sultanate of Oman and the GCC states.

Tuesday saw the organisation of 20 rounds where 750 camels of different categories took part.

At the end of the rounds, Sheikh Dr. Mohammed Ali Al Mahri, Wali of Adam honoured winners of top places. -ONA



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EARTHQUAKE

Oman team trained to deal with calamities



<FROM A1 The team is equipped and trained to deal with various types of calamities, and this is not the first international operation of the team since its formation. It participated in the devastating earthquake in the Republic of Nepal in 2015.”

Disasters
“The national team takes part in the natural disasters occurring in the Sultanate, such as rock-slides and falls from mountain heights. It has also participated during the climatic conditions that affected the Sultanate in the past, such as cyclones Gonu, Me-kunu and Shaheen,” he added.

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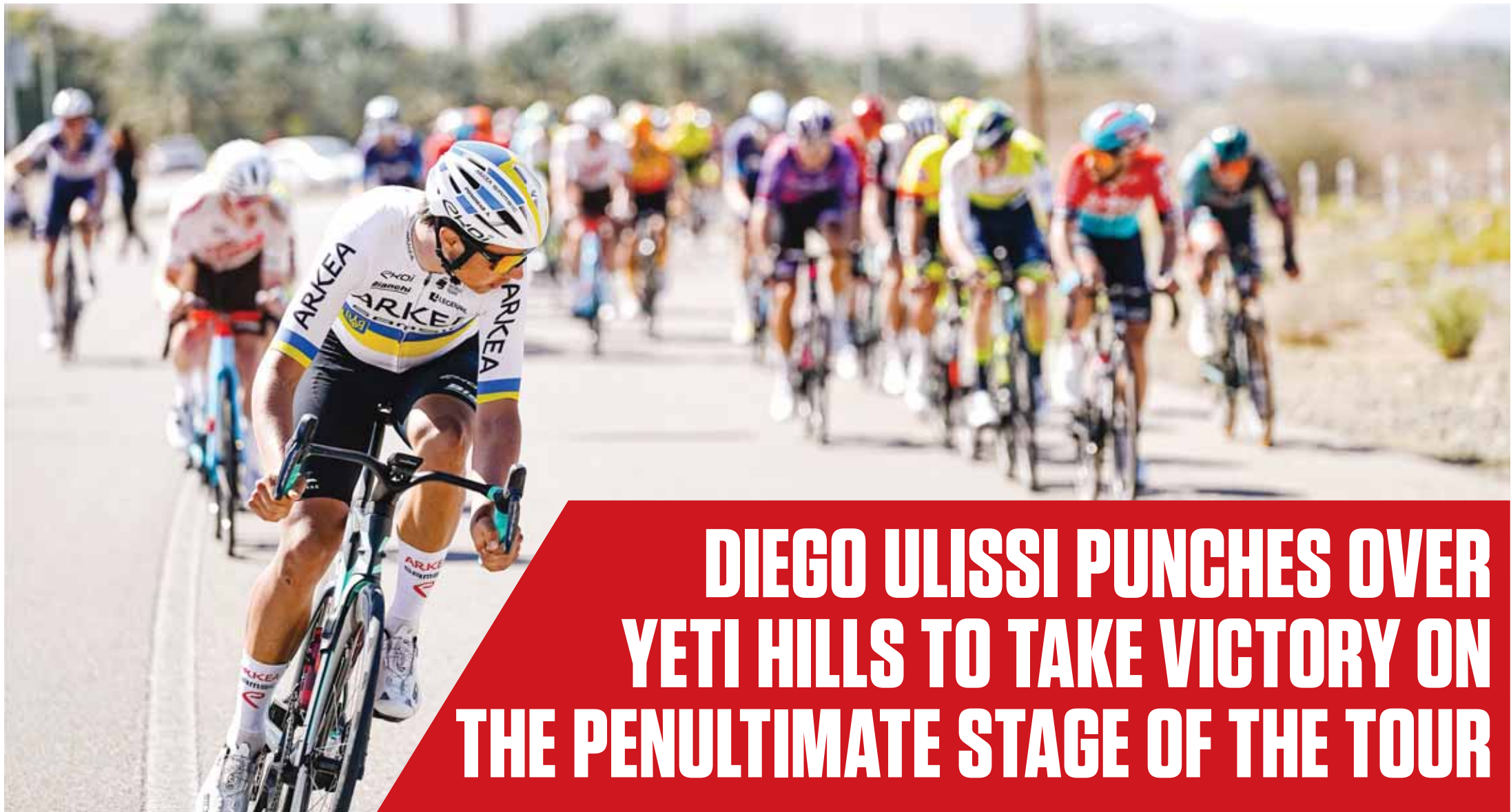
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The overall winner of the Tour of Oman will be crowned after a mighty climb up Jabal Al Akhdar on February 15.

MUSCAT: After he came close to victory in Quriyat and Al Hamra, Diego Ulissi (UAE Team Emirates) ended the longest stage of this year's Tour of Oman with his arms aloft in triumph.

Stage 4, a 204.9km climb from Izki through Muscat to Yeti Hills, had an explosive finale in store for the peloton with a series of ascents in the last 10km.

Pascal Ackermann, Ulissi's teammate with UAE Team Emirates, went on the move on the up and down sections before he was caught with 2km to go when Ivan Cobo (Kern Pharma) launched a counter attack on the final ascent but was caught right at the summit with less than 1km remaining.

It was then time for the Italian puncheur Ulissi to show his power in the final sprint and take victory ahead of Axel Zingle (Cofidis) and Ide Schelling (BORA-Hansgrohe), while Matteo Jorgenson (Movistar Team) retained the leader's red jersey.

After a week of racing, the final challenge awaits the riders today: a mighty climb up Jabal Al Akhdar, where the overall winner of the Tour of Oman will be crowned.

Norway's Fredrik Dversnes (Uno-X Pro Cycling) won 'Most Active Rider' today, breaking Jeroen Meijers' domination of the category. Matteo Jorgenson won 'Best Young Rider' for the day after maintaining his overall lead of the Tour of Oman, while Diego Ulissi claimed the 'Individual Points' award for his stage victory.

Dversnes said, "We have a good fight today, and I knew it would be

a hard day to take the Red Jersey but with help from my teammates I was able to. It was a hard stage and a long stage, the longest of the Tour of Oman, but it was a stage I was looking forward to. My goal for this Tour was to go for a win, and I decided to go for it a bit earlier today. We will try to defend the jersey tomorrow and aim for the sprints."

The final stage on 15th February, will finally see the riders reach the Green Mountain - Jabal Al Akhdar.

The 152.2km course begins in Samail and follows the mountain range through the villages of Sayja and Manal, before turning off at Al Afiah towards Wadi Mahram, Wadi Sqt and Wadi Adam.

The peloton will then turn inland and circle the town of Izki before the final approach at Birkat Al Mouz and the finishing line in Jabal Al Akhdar.

Fans from all around the world can follow the action and enjoy the best images of the Tour of Oman. All the action and the best images will also be available on social media with live coverage on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, and updates on Daily Motion. Footage of the races is also available in 190 territories through 50 TV/Digital broadcasters with daily highlights and full race highlights.

The Tour of Oman 2023 is organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Muscat Municipality and the Oman Cycling Association, and supported by JETOUR, Mohsin Haider Darwish LLC, and Badr Al Samaa Hospital.



STAGE CLASSIFICATION

1. Diego Ulissi (UAE Team Emirates) 04h36'48"
2. Axel Zingle (Cofidis) +00"
3. Ide Schelling (Bora - Hansgrohe) +00"

GENERAL CLASSIFICATION

1. Matteo Jorgenson (Movistar) 16h02'36"
2. Diego Ulissi (UAE Team Emirates) 16h02'41"
3. Mauri Vansevanant (Soudal Quick-Step) 16h02'41"



DRAFT LAW

< FROM A1 Social protection system to benefit all segments

Also envisaged is the establishment of a central management and a unified community database for providing cash assistance programmes and social insurance programmes, making them easily accessible to target groups, with clear-cut and unified terms entitlement.

This is in addition to ensuring that the social protection system is capable of accommodating economic and social variables.

The new social protection system's programmes were designed according to the principles guiding the state's policy stipulated in the Basic Law of the State and national and other priorities included in Oman Vision 2040.

This provides for devising retirement systems and social security programmes in line with economic and social developments and international practices on the application of social insurance programmes, social protection benefits and the ability of funding parties to contribute to the Social Protection System in a manner

that realizes optimal distribution of available financial resources.

The draft law includes the endorsement of several monetary benefits extended within social protection programmes where "the entitlement of most cases does not necessarily depend on social research". The benefits also cover social insurance programmes and savings programmes. The benefits are stated as follows:

- The "Assistance to the Elderly Benefit", which is a monthly cash payment for every Omani citizen. It seeks to compensate for a decline in an elderly person's ability to earn a living.
- The "Childhood Benefit", which is a monthly cash benefit for each child and targets risks that some face during the childhood stage.
- The "Persons with Disability Benefit", which is a monthly cash payment disbursed to persons with disability whose condition requires care and support, including disabilities incurred from birth or due to an incident or a symptom

developed at a later stage.

- The "Orphans and Widows' Benefit", which is a monthly cash payment. It targets orphans and widows who are not covered by the social insurance systems or who receive pension shares less than the level of entitlement specified in this new system of benefits.

- The "Family Income Support Benefit", which is a monthly assistance that depends on social research and is intended to support families with the least chances for having sufficient earning. This depends on the number of family members and total income.

• Old Age, Inability to Earn and Death Programme:

This programme deals with risks posed to the elderly, inability to earn and death (within the context of the unified retirement system).

It is a basic, unified retirement programme that covers all sectors in the labour market, whether government or private. It has been designed in a manner that provides suitable insurance coverage for

various groups, jobs and occupations in the labour market.

The programme grants the right for voluntary retirement to the group of employees who completed 20 years of actual service and fulfil the conditions for retirement in the current regulations by the date of the law comes into force.

The target employees can avail this right without committing themselves to the years of service required in the new law. The value of their retirement pension is secured on the date this law comes into force.

• Social Insurance Programme for Work-related Injuries and Occupational Diseases:

This is an insurance programme that covers the insured during a work-related injury. It provides a cash allowance in the case of injury, as well as cash compensations in case of inability to work, in accordance with the percentage of disability resulting from the injury or occupational disease. It also stipulates a retirement pension in cases of total disability or death

due to work-related injuries or occupational diseases.

• Social Insurance Programme for Job Security Risks:

This is an insurance programme that covers the insured in cases of termination of service for reasons beyond the insured's control. It replaces the job security system. It has been designed to deal with some of the challenges facing the current job security system.

• Social Insurance Programme for Maternity Leave:

This is a new insurance programme dealing with maternity leave and it is introduced in consideration for the period of childbirth. It is aimed at covering the income of working women during the period of childbirth under a collaborative social insurance system to enhance social protection for the family.

• Social Insurance Programme for Sick Leaves and Non-scheduled Leaves:

This programme, which deals with sick leaves and unscheduled leaves, is an insurance programme

that modifies job entitlement from sick leaves and unusual or unscheduled leaves. It entitles the beneficiaries/the insured to avail an insurance protection and transfer the cost from the employer to the social protection system.

• Savings Programme:

This is an optional programme for Omanis designed to achieve several objectives, including the possibility of planning additional benefits upon retirement or scheduling benefits for several years prior to the retirement age specified in the law or determining retirement benefits in excess of the wage subject to the prescribed subscription ratio of insurance for the elderly.

It should be noted that the proposed Social Protection Law was drafted in several stages and that the opinion of a number of specialists, stakeholders, and international houses of expertise was sought when compiling the draft law. It was designed to keep pace with best practices and international standards. - OMA



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SQU RESEARCHER

Winning research paper explores seawater intrusion by using MAR techniques

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Principal investigator Shahad Mattar Al Yaqoubi from Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) is among the winning innovative research projects in the 9th National Research Award, organised by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

She has won the award in the Young Researcher's category for her work on 'Fresh-saline water dynamics in coastal aquifers: Sand tank experiments with MAR-wells injecting at intermittent regimes.'

Behind the idea of the research project, Shahad Al Yaqoubi explained that it is very important to gain a better understanding of seawater intrusion (SWI) problem in coastal aquifers for better management of groundwater resources.

In Oman, SWI has become a phenomenon that harms urban water supply and farming activities in Al-Batinah and Salalah coastal areas.

One of the wide-spreading approaches to control SWI is through enhancing aquifer recharge to maintain the hydraulic gradient seaward direction. However, the successful implication of managed aquifer recharge (MAR) to coastal aquifers requires a good understanding of the dynamics of intruding saline water and its response to different external stresses emerging under MAR practices.

Shahad stated that MAR is a mean by which water of good quality (relatively low salinity and density as compared with seawater) is injected into the aquifer to enhance its storage for later recovery.

Implementing MAR may both improve the quality of initially present groundwater and control SWI by creating hydraulic barriers. SWI has been widely investigated in physical sandbox-field experiments and analytical-numerical mathematical models.

However, to the best of the research team's knowledge, there were no studies of the commingled dynamics of the triad of saline water, natural fresh groundwater and freshwater injected in MAR



using sand tank experiments similar to the one presented in their research project.

Sand tank experiments at a laboratory scale is an excellent tool that allows better understanding and visualisation of what is most likely happening in real aquifers.

The main objective of this paper, according to Shahad, was to study SWI under MAR practices using sand tank experiments. The effect of the depth of screens of injection wells, their loci with respect to the toe of the saline water tongue, the injection volume, on the dynamics of the saltwater-freshwater interface were assessed and quantified.

For the findings, results of the sand tank experiments presented that injecting water away from the saline water wedge was less effective to decrease the SWI by 32% to 61.4% compared to when MAR was practiced near it depending on the injected volume (0.5 L to 1.4 L). Injection of water inside the transition zone caused to delay the re-intrusion of saline water because the injection water built a hydrological barrier against the saline water intrusion. Injection of water close the coastal boundary caused to loss of the injected water through the coastal boundary and caused less effect to push the saline water wedge seaward direction.

Moreover, Shahad added that the results showed that injection at deeper depth was less effective in decreasing the SWI compared with the scenario when the injection was performed at the shallow depth. For example, injecting 1.06 L of freshwater near the toe of saline water interface at deeper depth (42 cm) decrease less salinized volume by 25.5% compared to when the injection

of same volume was at shallow depth (22.5 cm). During the injection, it was also very important to monitor the height of the water table mound to increase the effectiveness of MAR in mitigating SWI because a high-water table mound may consequence the rapid discharge of the injected water happening through the discharge boundary and therefore less effect in reducing SWI.

Shahad stressed that the optimisation of MAR practice (in terms of the location of injection, depth of injection, duration of injection, rate and volume of injection, along with keeping water balance for the aquifer) was essential to avoid failure or ineffectiveness of MAR to reducing SWI problem.

She maintained that the effect of MAR in controlling SWI was definitely site-specific, depending on geological and hydrogeological features. Hence developing a good understanding of the dynamics of both the injected water and SWI in small-scale experiments will be of help for numerical and analytical modeling, and eventually, successful implementation of MAR. Sand tank experiment at a laboratory scale is an excellent tool that allows better understanding and visualization of SWI phenomena. The obtained experience and knowledge definitely will help in a better design of successful MAR systems for the mitigation of SWI.

Shahad mentioned that the research team included Dr. Ali Al Maktoumi, Prof. Anvar Kacimov, Prof. Osman Abdalla and Mr. Mohammed Al Belushi. The paper was published in the Journal of Hydrology in 2021 with an impact factor of 6.708.

As for her win, Shahad Al Yaqoubi stated that she felt "a sense of pride and happiness, especially since the project won the National Research Award among the many participating researchers. Winning this award helped me get an opportunity to participate in the Annual Research Forum. Through this forum, we were able to convey the general idea of the project and the results of the study, and its importance to the decision-makers in Oman."

WORLD TRADE ORGANISATION



WTO reviews efforts supporting trade liberalisation and economic growth

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources yesterday organised a meeting with the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

The meeting held to exchange views on issues related to the WTO tasks and efforts in support of international trade liberalisation and economic growth.

The meeting touched on ways to support the global trade system, achieve stability in the trade movement and maintain the best rates of its flows around the world. It also discussed enhancing the benefit of the organisation in building specialised capabilities and public awareness in a way that enhances common interests and benefits within the framework of international trade.

A visual presentation on green hydrogen in the Sultanate of Oman was presented during the meeting.

The meeting was attended by Qais Mohammed Al Youssef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Dr. Saud Hamoud Al Habsi, Minister Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources and Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, WTO Director General.

— ONA

VIA ELECTRONIC LINK



Online registration for Hajj to begin from February 21

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs announced on Tuesday the period from 21 February to 4 March 2023 as the time for registering pilgrims from the Sultanate of Oman wishing to perform Hajj this year (1444 AH).

The ministry explained that the pilgrims' registration should

be made directly via the electronic link (www.hajj.om), only during the aforementioned period.

The website allows for registration by entering a pilgrim's civil number or identity card or mobile phone number if the ID card and mobile chip are PKI-supported.

— ONA



Sultanate of Oman

Ministry of Health

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Directorate General of Khoula Hospital invites specialized companies to participate in the following Tenders: -

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WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

Equatorial Guinea confirms outbreak of Marburg virus

MALABO: At least nine people have died in Equatorial Guinea from the “outbreak” of the Marburg virus, which causes hemorrhagic fever and is similar to the ‘Ebola’ disease, World Health Organization (WHO) said.

In a press statement, WHO said that Equatorial Guinea confirmed its first-ever outbreak on Monday after the nine people’s

samples turned out positive for the Marburg virus disease. As per the statement, the advance teams have been deployed in the affected districts to trace contacts, isolate and provide medical care to people showing symptoms of the disease.

WHO is deploying health emergency experts in epidemiology, case management, infection

prevention, laboratory, and risk communication to support the national response efforts and secure community collaboration in outbreak control.

WHO is also facilitating the shipment of laboratory glove tents for sample testing as well as one viral hemorrhagic fever kit that includes personal protective equipment that can be used by

500 health workers.

“Marburg is highly infectious. Thanks to the rapid and decisive action by the Equatorial Guinean authorities in confirming the disease, emergency response can get to full steam quickly so that we save lives and halt the virus as soon as possible,” said Dr. Matshidiso Moeti, WHO Regional Director for Africa. — **ANI**



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Air India to purchase 250 Airbus planes from France

The deal, billed as the world’s largest aviation deal in history, includes 40 A350 wide-body ultra-long-range aircraft. The rest will be narrow-body aircraft



Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, veteran industrialist Ratan Tata, and other leaders were present during the virtual conference.

Historic moment

“It is a historic moment for Airbus to help script Air India’s revival,” Airbus chief executive Guillaume Faury said in a video conference.

Air India was looking for a remix of aircraft to boost their domestic and international network through recent orders. Soon after the divestment of the airline, CEO Campbell announced in its speech to the AI employees that the airline is going for a historic order.

On the occasion of its first anniversary on January 27 this year, Air India said the airline will transform itself over the next five years to being among the best globally with an Indian heart.

— **ANI**

‘Deal reflects India’s success in aviation sector’

NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron on Tuesday virtually attended the launch of the new Air India-Airbus partnership. The Tata group will buy 250 aircraft from Airbus, in what is the world’s largest aviation deal in history.

PM Modi expressed gratitude to the French President for participating in the launch of the Air India-Airbus partnership. He said that the deal shows the “deepening ties” between India and France and reflection of India’s successes and expectations in the civil

aviation sector. In his remarks, PM Modi said, “I would like to express my heartiest congratulations and best wishes on this landmark agreement between Air India and Airbus. My special thanks to my friend President Macron for joining us in this event.”

“This important deal not only demonstrates the ever-deepening relations between India and France. But, are also reflections of India’s successes and expectations in the civil aviation sector,” he added.

PM Modi said that the civil aviation sector is an integral part of India’s development

and stressed that strengthening civil aviation is an important aspect of the national infrastructure strategy of India. He stated that the number of airports in India have reached 147 from 74 in the past eight years.

“Today our civil aviation sector is an integral part of India’s development. Strengthening civil aviation is an important aspect of our national infrastructure strategy. In the last eight years, the number of airports in India have jumped from 74 to 147, which means it has nearly doubled.

— **ANI**

WHITE HOUSE PRESS CONFERENCE

US probing if flying objects had a ‘surveillance aspect’



WASHINGTON: In a press conference on Monday, White House national security spokesperson John Kirby justified shooting down three unidentified flying objects in recent days, as they posed a risk to civilian air travel.

On February 4, the US first shot down what it believes was a Chinese “spy balloon.” Over the weekend, the US military shot down another three unidentified flying objects that were discovered over North American airspace.

What is the latest?

Kirby provided more details on the recent operations, saying the US government “couldn’t rule out” whether the unidentified objects were carrying out surveillance.

“We don’t know for sure whether they had a surveillance aspect to them, but we can’t rule it out,” he said. He said US decisions to shoot down unidentified objects were “based purely and simply on what was in the best interests of

the American people.”

White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said there is “no indication” that alien activity is behind recent unidentified objects over the US.

“There have been questions and concerns about this but there is no -- again, no -- indication of aliens or extraterrestrial activity.”

At an earlier press conference, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said he views “some sort of pattern” in the downed aerial

objects over North America. He said rescue efforts are underway after an aerial object was shot down over northwestern Yukon territory in Canada.

Trudeau called the unidentified objects a “very serious situation.”

The first of the three recent unidentified objects was shot down over the northwestern US state of Alaska. A second was shot down over Canada on Saturday by the US military in coordination with Canadian authorities. — **DW**

BUCKINGHAM PALACE



UK’s Queen Consort Camilla tests positive for COVID-19

WASHINGTON: King Charles III’s wife Queen Consort Camilla has tested positive for COVID-19, according to a USA-based news outlet.

According to the outlet, a statement from Buckingham Palace said, “After suffering the symptoms of a cold, Her Majesty The Queen Consort has tested positive for the Covid virus.” “With regret, she has therefore cancelled all her public engagements for this week and sends her sincere apologies to those who had been due to attend them,” it continued.

Whether King Charles III is also feeling ill, remains unknown. Camilla also tested positive for COVID-19 almost exactly one year ago.

“Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Cornwall has tested positive for COVID-19 and is self-isolating. We continue to follow government guidelines,” Clarence House said in a statement released on February 14, 2022, according to Fox News.

She tested positive for coronavirus just days after it was revealed that then-Prince Charles had also tested positive for the virus. Camilla was said to have received the vaccine several times at the time.

Camilla’s symptoms persisted, according to an interview she gave shortly after becoming ill, reported Fox News. This week, Queen Consort Camilla was scheduled to appear in Milton Keynes alongside King Charles III. She also had solo engagements in the West Midlands.

King Charles III has tested positive for COVID twice now - once in March 2020 and again in February 2022, as per Fox News. — **ANI**

ELECTION COMMISSION

Shahabuddin Chuppu elected Bangladesh’s 22nd President

DHAKA: Mohammad Shahabuddin Chuppu has been declared as the next president-elect of Bangladesh on Monday by the country’s Election Commission after no other candidate was put forward, according to media report.

A former commissioner of the Anti-Corruption Commission, retired district and sessions judge, and freedom fighter, Shahabuddin was elected unopposed as the 22nd President of Bangladesh. Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal made the announcement while speaking to journalists at the Election Commission building in Agargaon.

He said Awami League nominee Shahabuddin became president-elect by default as no one else submitted any nominations, reported Dhaka Tribune.

The nomination process for the presidential election ended on Sunday.

With 302 members, the AL party has the majority in the 350-seat



national parliament, and no other party had the numbers to nominate a presidential candidate.

Awami League chief and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina greeted Shahabuddin with a flower bouquet after the submission of his nomination, reported Dhaka Tribune.

Shahabuddin was born in 1949 and had a distinguished political career from a young age, starting in his student years.

Hailing from Pabna, a northern district of Bangladesh, Shahabuddin has served various political

and state roles.

During the Liberation War in 1971, Shahabuddin was a key player in the northern region, serving as a student leader and the convener of the Swadhin Bangla Chattrang Sangram Parishad.

Along with former Awami League presidium member Mohammad Nasim, he played a crucial role in the Pabna district during the war, reported Dhaka Tribune.

Shahabuddin started his career in Judicial Service in 1983 and was a district judge till 2006. He also discharged his duties as chairman of the Labour Court in 2006, lawyer of the Supreme Court from 2008-2011 and commissioner of the ACC from 2011-2016.

The tenure of Md Abdul Hamid, the longest-serving president of the country, will expire on April 23, and according to the constitution, there is no scope for a third term. — **ANI**

Full story at timesofoman.com/world



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Rescue phase ‘comes to a close’ in Türkiye-Syria quake disaster

The two powerful earthquakes that struck border regions of the two countries last Monday have killed at least 35,000, with the UN expecting the number to rise to more than 50,000

ANKARA: United Nations aid chief Martin Griffiths on Monday said the Türkiye and Syria earthquake rescue phase is nearing an end, with efforts now set to turn more towards recovery.

The two powerful earthquakes that struck border regions of the two countries last Monday have killed at least 35,000, with the UN expecting the number to rise to more than 50,000.

Griffiths, who made the comments during a visit to the devastated northern Syrian city of Aleppo, said the disaster response was reaching a turning point.

“The rescue phase is dragging live people out from the rubble and finding those who died in the rubble... that’s coming to a close,” he said. “Now the humanitarian phase, the urgency of providing shelter, psychosocial care, food, schooling, and a sense of the future for these people, that’s our obligation now.”

Griffiths drew particular attention to the plight of those in Aleppo, a major focal point in the Syrian civil war.

“What is the most striking here, is even in Aleppo, which has suffered so much these many years, this moment, that moment... was about the worst that these people have experienced,” he added.

Griffiths also said the UN would have aid moving from government-held regions in Syria to the rebel-held northwest of the country.



He said that, so far, the world had failed to provide enough aid to Syria, with people there “looking for international help that hasn’t arrived.”

“We have so far failed the people in northwest Syria. They rightly feel abandoned,” he said, adding, “My duty and our obligation is to correct this failure as fast as we can.”

Urgent need for aid

Syrian President Bashar Assad stressed the urgent need for aid to be delivered to all areas of the country, including territory held by the opposition, during a meeting with UN relief chief Martin Griffiths on Monday.

Later in the day, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said that Assad had agreed to allow UN aid deliveries to opposition-held northwest Syria through two additional border crossings from Türkiye for three months.

International efforts should also focus on rebuilding the country’s infrastructure, the Syrian president said in an official statement.

The devastating earthquake struck provinces under Assad’s control, including Aleppo, Latakia and Hama. The last death toll posted by the Health Ministry on Sunday evening stood at 1,414.

But it also devastated opposition-held areas in the north-western Idlib province, where resources are even more scarce. The Civil Defence Forces group, also known as the White Helmets, put the death toll on Monday evening at 2,274.

Media reports in recent days have suggested that the Islamist Hayat Tahrir al-Sham group, which governs the opposition-held areas, has rejected aid arriving from the government, as well

as from the Kurdish authorities in the northeast. The group reportedly said it would only allow in aid via Türkiye, with which it shares a single operational border crossing.

The devastating earthquakes in the Turkish-Syrian border region one week ago have left 1.2 million people in south-eastern Türkiye homeless, Türkiye’s presidential office said.

Death toll tops 35,000

Figures put the latest death toll from the quakes at more than 35,000 on Monday, with search and rescue efforts starting to wind down.

Official and medical sources said that at least 31,643 people had died in Türkiye and 3,688 in Syria, bringing the confirmed total to 35,331.

The first 7.8-magnitude quake struck near the Turkish city of Gaziantep, close to the Syrian border, followed by a 7.5-magnitude tremor.

The earthquakes reduced whole neighborhoods of cities in southeastern Türkiye and northern Syria to rubble. — **DW**

TÜRKİYE EARTHQUAKE



2000-year-old castle of Roman era destroyed

GAZIANTEP [Türkiye]: The massive 7.8 magnitude earthquake that struck Türkiye and Syria not only left bustling neighbourhoods in ruins but also destroyed the 2,000-year-old Gaziantep Castle from the Roman Empire, a historic site and tourist attraction in Türkiye. The Gaziantep castle, located in the heart of the city fell, quite literally, during the earthquake that struck in the early hours of February 6.

The castle, which stood strong and remained intact even in the face of invasion and conquest, was destroyed after more than two millennia by the devastating earthquake.

Terming the incident ‘unfortunate’, Ahmad, a local of Gaziantep told ANI, “We are very sad because of the earthquake, this historical palace has been destroyed.”

Locals in Gaziantep said the castle, more than 2000 years old, was built for surveillance in the city. The Roman king got it constructed in the 2nd and 3rd centuries. It was further developed during the time of the Byzantine emperor Justinian. After this, its present form came into existence. Earlier it was used by the army of the Roman Empire. Later it was developed into a memorial for the brave.

Another local Mohammad told ANI, “This palace is our pride but the earthquake destroyed it. i hope it will be restored to its original state again.”

Due to the powerful earthquake in Türkiye, the walls of this castle cracked and then fell. The castle broke into two parts. According to the Video, “the iron railing built around the castle also fell. Apart from this, big cracks were also seen in the floor of the castle.”

With Türkiye still counting its dead and struggling to come to terms with the scale of the tragedy, India and many other countries came forward to help.— **ANI**

Operation Dost: India provides life-saving medical assistance

NEW DELHI: Under ‘Operation Dost’, Indian Health Ministry provided life-saving humanitarian medical Assistance to quake-hit Türkiye and Syria.

Taking to Twitter, Indian Minister of Health and Family Welfare Mansukh Mandaviya said, “India is helping Syria and Türkiye with the concept of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. @MoHFW_India provided life-saving emergency medicines, protective items, medical equipment, critical care drugs, etc as part of India’s efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to Türkiye and Syria.” On February 06, 2023, a devastating earthquake with a magnitude of 7.8 happened in Türkiye and Syria.

According to a statement released by Union Health Ministry, the emergency relief

material comprised of life-saving medicines, protective items, and critical care equipment valued at over Rs 7 crore was arranged and promptly dispatched to Türkiye and Syria.

When two powerful earthquakes hit Syria and Türkiye, 3 truckloads of relief materials were arranged at Hindon airbase consisting of life-saving emergency medicines and protective items within 12 hours.

The consignment consisted of 5,945-ton emergency relief material which included 27 life-saving medicines, two kinds of protective items, and three categories of critical care pieces of equipment, valued at approximately Rs 2 crore.

Moreover, on February 10, many relief materials were

arranged for both Türkiye and Syria. The consignment for Syria consisted of 72 critical care drugs, consumables, and protective items of 7.3 tonnes, valued at Rs 1.4 crore, the statement read.

Relief materials sent for Türkiye included 14 types of medical and critical care equipment, valued at Rs 4 crore. Some of the medical equipment is Patient Monitor Cardio VI (100), Syring Pump Medvo (100), ECG Machine IMAC 300 (50), and many more, the statement added.

Under Operation Dost, India is helping Türkiye in the earthquake-affected area and is conducting search and rescue operations. To save the lives of earthquake victims, the Indian Army has also established 60 Para Field Hospitals in Türkiye. — **ANI**

BOLLYWOOD FILM FACTORY

Bollywood romances: More than sarees, songs and Switzerland

MUMBAI: “The course of true love never did run smooth,” wrote William Shakespeare in the opening scene of “A Midsummer Night’s Dream.”

It may not be appropriate advice on Valentine’s Day, but has served as a template for many a romantic film that has emerged from India’s Bollywood film factory.

The epic romance films of the celebrated Hindi filmmaker and producer Yash Chopra (1932-2012) are a case in point. His 1995 classic “Dilwale Duhania Le Jayenge” (The Big-Hearted Will Take Away The Bride) remains the longest-running film in Indian cinema history — and sealed Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan’s reputation as King of Romance.

The award-winning director and his romance musicals is the subject of a new Netflix docuseries, “The Romantics,” that premieres on the streaming service on Valentine’s Day.

Featuring interviews with the who’s who of Bollywood, the series explores Chopra’s vision for expressing love on celluloid — from lavish outfits and heartfelt songs to alpine settings.

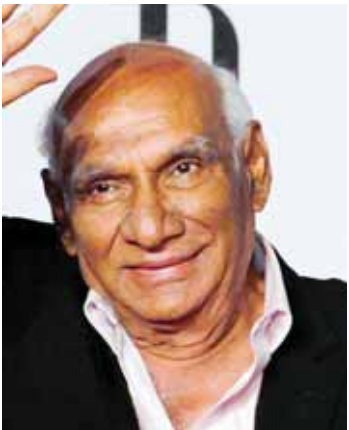
A masala of emotions

In the 1990s, Yash Chopra kept the romance blockbusters coming with 1997’s “Dil Toh Pagal Hai,” or “The heart is crazy.”

The Hindi romantic drama revolved around members of a musical troupe in which two female dancers, Pooja and Nisha — played by actors Madhuri Dixit and Karisma Kapoor — are enmeshed in a love triangle with their choreographer Rahul.

With then up-and-coming Bollywood heartthrob, Shah Rukh Khan, playing Rahul, the film was packed with unsaid longings, heartbreak, confrontations, big reveals and a happy ending.

These romance tropes were not



confined to Bollywood: Hollywood too was churning out the romantic melodramas and comedies, from Julia Roberts in Pretty Woman to James Cameron’s “Titanic” and Richard Curtis’ “Love, Actually.”

However, as a Bollywood love story, “Dil Toh Pagal Hai” was distinctive for the extensive song dance numbers, and over-the-top emoting.

Other Yash Chopra romance hallmarks included urbane and at-

tractive protagonists, trendsetting fashion, stirring dialogue, and poetic song lyrics.

Self-empowered female leads

Besides his knack for tackling complicated love stories with sensitivity, Chopra’s films were set apart by their heroine-centric storytelling. His leading ladies were often strong-willed, forward-thinking characters who sometimes loved unconventionally.

IN “Dil Toh Pagal Hai,” for example, Rahul apologises tearfully to his best friend Nisha, whose love he cannot reciprocate. As Nisha eventually moves on and the two remain friends, Chopra portrays a healthy, and equal, adult relationship.

In 1981’s “Silsila” (“Continuation”), starring Bollywood doyen Amitabh Bachchan together with his real-life wife Jaya and fellow actor Rekha, Chopra’s story of an extra-marital affair avoided portraying Rekha’s “other woman” as the stereotypical conniving vamp.

Meanwhile, in “Chandni” (“Moonlight”) from 1989, the late actress Sridevi played the free-spirited lead character who has to choose between two suitors — but is no pushover in making her ultimate decision.

A romantic trip to the alps

The filmmaker was known for favouring foreign locations for song and dance sequences, with Switzerland topping his list.

He first became smitten by the alpine country’s landscape after honeymooning there himself in 1970, eventually returning to shoot several film sequences.

“At that time few of us had the disposable income to go to Switzerland and see these things. And so, we traveled vicariously through these films,” Anupama Chopra, Indian journalist and film critic says in the Netflix documentary.

The Swiss returned his love by erecting a statue in 2016 to Chopra for boosting the country’s popularity among Indian tourists via his films.



‘There’s a little bit of everything’

Chopra recalled in an interview how he responded to critics who preferred fight sequences over songs: “If you think a fight is a highlight, I feel a song is a highlight. It’s a bigger highlight because a song remains with you after you go out of the theatre.”

Even today, songs from Chopra’s films make wedding celebration playlists.

Bollywood romances may not have universal appeal, but they have been steadily gaining non-Indian and non-Hindi speaking fans for how love is perceived and expressed in other ways.

Perhaps actor Abhishek Bachchan best explains Bollywood’s allure in the series: “Our movies are like our food, our thali (a platter of several different dishes). There’s a little bit of everything in it. Every emotion and every style.” — **DW**

Series against Hong Kong to benefit our boys: U19 cricket team coach

The first of the four-match series against Hong Kong U19 begins on Wednesday

Times News Service
MUSCAT: Oman U19 cricket team coach Adeel Shafique is hopeful of his boys gaining lot of experience and match exposure when they tackle the visiting Hong Kong U19 team during the four-match 50-over-a-side series, beginning on Wednesday, at the Oman Cricket Academy ground in Al Amerat.
Ahead of the series, Shafique said: "Such series helps the boys to gain exposure and experience match situations that will do a world of good for these youngsters."
The first of the four-match series begins on Wednesday while the other three games will be played on Thursday, Sunday and Tuesday.
Shafique added: "I think it is another great opportunity for our boys to showcase their talent. After a brilliant showing in the World Cup qualifiers that took place in October 2022 where we fell just

short in the semi-final, I think it's great that the boys can play some more cricket together as a group."
"After the last tournament, there wasn't much cricket planned or scheduled for the U19 boys. During the World Cup qualifiers, we had a close game against Hong Kong. There is a mutual respect between both sides and an appreciation that our boys are extremely competitive."
Shafique, who has spent eight months in Hong Kong before taking up the assignment in Oman, said: "Our close relationship with Hong Kong Cricket has made it possible to convince them to visit Oman for the series."
The Oman U19 coach said that "plans and talks are in place to have a annual bilateral series in Oman and Hong Kong for the youth team."
Aditya Gurumukhi has been named the skipper of Oman squad with Tanuj Sivakumar appointed his deputy for the series.



Shafique said: "The boys have been active and have been playing in the league as our current season is going on since September 2022. They have also been playing for their respective schools."
"They have had a lot of game time which is excellent for preparation. Besides that we have been in camp since the end of November and had a mix of fitness sessions along with practice matches and skills sessions."

The coach added that the boys have been in the middle of exams as most of them are in 12th class.
He said: "We have been able to find a good balance for the boys to study which is important, and at the same time, practice and play so that they are in good touch. Our boys have performed well in the men's premier division, with Mohammad Arafat Islam (AER) performing brilliantly in the Oman D10 league. Tanuj Siva-

kumar (Zawawi Powertech) also had some good performances and Lakshmi Narayana has done well in a few games. All three of them are playing in all formats for their respective Premier Division sides which is beneficial for their development as they are playing with and against current Oman national team players."
Shafique said: "I am looking forward to seeing some competitive cricket with both sides playing to

win. We are going to see some excellent performances throughout the bilateral series. Some of our boys have been involved in the men's national team practice sessions. The aim is to see some of these boys eventually break into the national team and rub shoulders with them. The series is a great opportunity for our boys to test themselves."
It may be mentioned that Oman U19 lads had missed out on a place in the Asia Regional Qualifier after going out in the semifinals of the ICC U19 Cricket World Cup Division 2 - Asia Qualifier at home last October. On the other hand, Hong Kong went on to reach the final before losing to Singapore.
Hong Kong has qualified for the Asia Regional Qualifier and will play the six-nation tournament with one spot at stake for the ICC U19 Cricket World Cup 2024. The Qualifier will be held in the UAE from February 24.
Beside Singapore and Hong Kong, the other nations in fray are Kuwait, Malaysia, Nepal and hosts UAE. The 14-member Oman squad is supported by Majees Technical Services.
February 15: first match, Feb 16: second match, Feb 19: third match, Feb 21: fourth match. Match Start at 9:30am

DOMESTIC LEAGUE

Renaissance, Muscat CT and OCT Ruwi register crucial victories

Times News Service
MUSCAT: Renaissance beat Oman Stallions and Muscat CT beat Zawawi Powertech in the Premier Division and OCT Ruwi cruised past ABL Task in the A Division of the Oman Cricket Domestic League Season 2022-23.
Renaissance batters put to bat first, started off brilliantly with Sajith Fernando (78 of 67; 8x4, 3x6) and Aqib Ilyas (62 of 88; 6x4) setting them up to a big total.
Mighty contributions from Hammad Mirza (47 of 52; 4x4, 1x6) and Shubo Pal (39 of 41; 4x4) ensured Renaissance dominate the Stallions bowling with Renaissance finishing at 283/9 in 50 overs.
Hemal Tandel (3/26) and Jay Odedra (2/62) were the key wicket-takers for the Stallions. In response, Oman Stallion's got off to a start courtesy Pratik Athawale's (65 of 80; 8x4) steady knock but couldn't find support from other batsmen for long restricting



them to get to the total. Bilal Muhammed's (5/57) fifer ensured the Stallions were restricted to 231/8 in 50 overs. Renaissance registered their 3rd win out of 6 games of the first round of the league with a game to go.
Muscat CT beat Zawawi Powertech by 151 runs
Muscat CT's decision to bat first was entrusted by their top order batsmen Kashyap Prajapati (121

of 120; 10x4, 4x6) and Shoaib Khan (114 of 109; 12x4, 2x6) scoring magnificent hundreds and stitching a 144 run partnership for the 2nd wicket positioning Muscat CT's total at 331/5 in 50 overs. Yashas GL (3/64) was the pick of the bowlers for Zawawi. In response, Zawawi batsmen kept loosing their ground at regular intervals with Sagar Gowtham's (46 of 48; 1x4, 3x6) lone effort to bring life to their chase. Ayaan Khan's (5/25)

fifer and Samay Shrivastav (3/42) bundled Zawawi Powertech for 180 in 45.1 overs. Muscat CT registered their 6th win of the first round of the league.
OCT Ruwi beat ABL Task by 7 wickets
Put into to bat first, ABL Task got off to a steady start negotiating the new ball. Parth Trivedi (63 of 97; 5x4, 1x6) and Mudassar Iqbal (51 of 39; 6x4) held the helm of their innings in the middle order taking them to 247/7 in 50 overs. In response, OCT Ruwi lost 2 wickets in the powerplay but succumbed well to the situation exploding with a magnificent hundred by Shuaib Ismail Al Balushi (124 of 98; 14x4, 4x6) and a composed half-century by Zubair Al Balushi (58 of 52; 7x4) stitching a unbeaten 140 run partnership to take OCT Ruwi over the line chasing down the target in 36.4 overs. OCT Ruwi registered their 5th win of the A Division League confirming their berth as the Runners-Up.

BORDER-GAVASKAR TROPHY

Team Australia in Delhi for 2nd Test

NEW DELHI: Australian men's cricket team on Tuesday, arrived in Delhi for the second Test of the four-match Test series against India in Border-Gavaskar Trophy.
The second Test of the series will be held in Delhi's Arun Jaitley Stadium from February 17-21. Delhi is hosting its first Test since December 2017.
India will look forward to their World Test Championship Final qualification chances while Australia looking to register a series win in the subcontinent.
Merely two sessions of play were needed to achieve a result on the third day of the first Test as India took a 1-0 lead in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy in Nagpur.
After stretching their lead to over 200 runs, India bowled out Australia for 91 in about a session to win the Test by an innings and 132 runs. Ravindra Jadeja was declared the Player of the Match for bowling figures of 7-81 and 70 runs with the willow.

The victory shortens the gap between the two sides in the World Test Championship Standings with India's point percentage rising to 61.67 percent while Australia's dropped to 70.83 percent.
Australia squad: Pat Cummins (c), Ashton Agar, Scott Boland, Alex Carey, Cameron Green, Peter Handscomb, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Usman Khawaja, Matt Kuhnemann, Marnus Labuschagne, Nathan Lyon, Lance Morris, Todd Murphy, Matthew Renshaw, Steve Smith (vc), Mitchell Starc, Mitchell Swepson and David Warner.
India squad: (for the first two Tests) Rohit Sharma (c), KL Rahul (vc), Shubman Gill, Cheteshwar Pujara, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, KS Bharat, Ishan Kishan, Ravichandran Ashwin, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Ravindra Jadeja, Mohammed Shami, Mohammed Siraj, Umesh Yadav and Suryakumar Yadav. -ANI

DOMINATING DISPLAY

Pakistan veterans to play hockey series in Oman



Times News Service
MUSCAT: Oman will be hosting a bevy of Pakistani hockey greats as a star-studded Pakistan veterans hockey team will be playing a series with Oman national veterans team at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex - Hockey Ground.
Three matches
The three matches are scheduled to be played at 6.00 pm on February 23, 25 and the final match will be 27 February 2023 at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher.
According to Oman Hockey Association, these matches are

a part of Oman Veterans hockey team's preparation for the upcoming Masters hockey tournament in Hong Kong China.
Legendary hockey star - Olympian Islahuddin Siddiqui will be coming to Oman as team manager, with many former Olympians and International hockey players will be part of the team. The Hockey Lovers & Fans will have a great opportunity to meet and greet the former hockey Olympic Gold medalists & World Hockey Champions.
The event is being held under the patronage of Oman Hockey Association (OHA).

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The MSX index closed at 4,618.69 points, down by 2.55 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 1.43 per cent at 483.28 points. Oman Oil Marketing, up 2.17 per cent, was the top gainer while, Gulf Mushroom Products, down 9.71 per cent, was the top loser.

A vibrant advertisement for Suzuki cars. The background is a dynamic blue and purple gradient with abstract light streaks. In the center, seven Suzuki vehicles are displayed: a silver Vitara SUV, a lime green Jimny off-road vehicle, a brown Ciaz sedan, a silver Celerio hatchback, a red Swift hatchback, a red Ignis hatchback, and a blue Baleno sedan. The Suzuki logo is in the top right corner. Large yellow and white text on the left reads "Switch to smart savings this New Year with Suzuki." A QR code is located at the bottom left, with text below it stating "Scan the QR Code to check out the SUZUKI RANGE". At the bottom, contact information for Moosa Abdul Rahman Hassan & Co. LLC is provided, including phone numbers and social media links. A small disclaimer at the bottom right states "Offer is valid from 17.01.2023 to 16.02.2023".

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MARKET

MSX index ends lower



Oman Oil Marketing, up 2.17 per cent, was the top gainer while Gulf Mushroom Products, down 9.71 per cent, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,618.69 points, down by 2.55 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 1.43 per cent at 483.28 points. Oman Oil Marketing, up 2.17 per cent, was the top gainer while Gulf Mushroom Products, down 9.71 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of Galfar Engineering were the most active in terms of the number of shares traded while Bank Muscat were the most active in terms of turnover. A total number of 411 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating a turnover of OMR3.37 million, with more than 16.51 million shares changing hands. Out of 39 traded securities, 3 advanced, 20 declined, and 16 remained unchanged. At the session close, foreign investors were net sellers for OMR168,000 while domestic investors were net buyers for OMR125,000, followed by GCC & Arab investors for OMR44,000 worth of shares. Financial Index closed at 7,479.66 points, down 1.42 per

cent. Prices of National Bank Oman, Oman & Emirates Investment, Global Financial Investments, Ominvest, and Bank Dhofar were down by 1.45 per cent, 3.85 per cent, 3.45 per cent, 2.33 per cent and 1.96 per cent respectively. Industrial Index closed at 5,951.12 points, down 0.62 per cent. Prices of Dhofar Cattle Feed were up by 1.45 per cent respectively. Prices of Gulf Mushroom Products, Galfar Engineering, Oman Fisheries, Raysut Cement, and Oman Cement were down by 9.71 per cent, 3.06 per cent, 2.25 per cent, 1.54 per cent and 0.66 per cent respectively. Services Index was down by 1.8 per cent before closing at 1,653.44 points. Prices of Oman Oil Marketing were up by 2.17 per cent respectively. Prices of Ooredoo, Oman Telecom, Renaissance Services, Oman National Engineering, and National Gas were down by 8.41 per cent, 5.79 per cent, 3.49 per cent, 1.65 per cent and 0.99 per cent respectively. — United Securities

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDECIES							
Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff %	
MSX 30 INDEX	4,740.52	4,616.58	4,618.69	4,739.65	-120.95	-2.55	
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,587.43	7,466.43	7,479.66	7,587.43	-107.77	-1.42	
Industry Index	5,999.27	5,951.12	5,951.12	5,988.18	-37.06	-0.62	
Services Index	1,685.44	1,648.58	1,653.44	1,683.83	-30.39	-1.80	
MSX Shariah Index	489.91	483.28	483.28	490.31	-7.03	-1.43	
MSX TR INDEX	5,985.70	5,829.22	5,831.88	5,984.61	-152.72	-2.55	
FINANCIAL TR IDX	7,939.39	7,812.78	7,826.63	7,939.39	-112.77	-1.42	
SERVICES TR IDX	1,788.07	1,748.93	1,754.08	1,786.31	-32.24	-1.80	
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	6,245.98	6,195.85	6,195.85	6,234.44	-38.59	-0.62	
Trading Summary							
Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
16,513,626	3,372,904	411	23,430,065,559	3	20	16	39

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 14

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST HD	LAST OFFR	PRI VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET																
OM0000002200	AHLI BANK	316	51	2	0.160	0.160	0.160	0.160	0.160	0.000	0.000	0.160	0.150	0.160	0.100	311,945,195
OM0000003030	AI MAHA PETROLEUM	5,430	4,996	2	0.920	0.920	0.920	0.920	0.920	0.000	0.000	0.920	0.912	0.920	0.100	63,480,000
OM0000003740	OMAN CEMENT	1,000	302	1	0.302	0.302	0.302	0.302	0.304	-0.002	-0.658	0.302	0.302	0.302	0.100	98,923,558
OM0000003398	SOHAR INT. BANK	2,398,000	239,600	16	0.100	0.100	0.099	0.100	0.101	-0.001	-0.990	0.100	0.099	0.100	0.100	458,008,229
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	4,258,986	1,206,221	68	0.286	0.286	0.280	0.282	0.286	-0.004	-1.399	0.282	0.282	0.283	0.100	2,116,803,971
OM0000001152	OMAN NAT. ENG.	99,480	11,837	8	0.118	0.119	0.118	0.119	0.121	-0.002	-1.653	0.119	0.119	0.126	0.100	16,660,000
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	111,100	46,910	13	0.428	0.428	0.420	0.420	0.430	-0.010	-2.326	0.420	0.420	0.420	0.100	280,713,479
OM0000003125	GLOBAL INV. H.	73,692	4,127	5	0.056	0.056	0.056	0.056	0.058	-0.002	-3.448	0.056	0.056	0.056	0.100	11,200,000
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SER.	245,496	111,608	24	0.450	0.456	0.440	0.442	0.458	-0.016	-3.493	0.442	0.442	0.442	0.100	104,493,220
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	145,380	133,851	49	0.956	0.956	0.908	0.912	0.968	-0.056	-5.785	0.912	0.912	0.912	0.100	684,000,000
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	458,412	120,446	27	0.265	0.265	0.250	0.250	0.266	-0.016	-6.015	0.250	0.250	0.262	0.100	408,488,589
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	94,516	37,660	36	0.400	0.402	0.392	0.392	0.428	-0.036	-8.411	0.392	0.390	0.400	0.100	255,170,138
Total	12	7,892,785	1,917,606	251												
Parallel Market																
OM0000002572	OMAN OIL MARKETING	500	470	1	0.940	0.940	0.940	0.940	0.920	0.020	2.174	0.940	0.940	0.000	0.100	57,598,500
OM0000003866	THE PEARL REIT	172,750	20,356	7	0.117	0.119	0.116	0.119	0.117	0.002	1.709	0.119	0.118	0.119	0.100	30,547,655
OM0000001301	DHOFAR FOODS AND INVESTMENT	500	35	1	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.069	0.001	1.449	0.070	0.000	0.070	0.100	5,659,500
OM0000001178	MUSCAT GASES	10,000	1,050	1	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.000	0.000	0.105	0.105	0.000	0.100	3,150,000
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	46,031	2,655	4	0.058	0.058	0.057	0.058	0.058	0.000	0.000	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.100	1,781,487
OM0000002275	SHELL OMAN MRK	17,250	14,980	11	0.872	0.872	0.860	0.860	0.860	0.000	0.000	0.860	0.800	0.860	0.100	81,700,000
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	318,337	19,100	9	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.000	0.000	0.060	0.059	0.060	0.100	20,948,665
OM0000003661	VOLITAMP ENERGY	104,550	10,455	12	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.000	0.000	0.100	0.100	0.103	0.100	8,140,275
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	60,100	3,065	9	0.051	0.051	0.051	0.051	0.051	0.000	0.000	0.051	0.050	0.051	0.100	10,181,416
OM0000004699	SHARQIYAH DESALIN.	12,425	1,880	5	0.140	0.140	0.140	0.140	0.140	0.000	0.000	0.140	0.138	0.140	0.100	13,692,302
OM0000004788	MADINA TAKAFUL	100,706	9,064	6	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.000	0.000	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.100	15,750,000
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	22,100	730	4	0.033	0.035	0.033	0.035	0.035	0.000	0.000	0.035	0.033	0.035	0.100	23,621,060
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	149	5	1	0.035	0.035	0.035	0.035	0.035	0.000	0.000	0.035	0.000	0.035	0.100	25,004,222
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	827,010	44,659	10	0.054	0.055	0.054	0.055	0.055	0.000	0.000	0.055	0.054	0.055	0.100	80,443,088
OM0000006979	OMAN QATAR INSUR.	5,000	760	1	0.152	0.152	0.152	0.152	0.152	0.000	0.000	0.152	0.150	0.156	0.100	15,200,000
OM0000007811	MUSANDAM POWER	130,000	41,080	3	0.316	0.316	0.316	0.316	0.316	0.000	0.000	0.316	0.316	0.332	0.100	22,243,240
OM0000008710	BARKA DESALINATION	36,000	5,040	4	0.140	0.140	0.140	0.140	0.140	0.000	0.000	0.140	0.140	0.143	0.100	10,573,080
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	109,000	10,900	14	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.101	0.101	-0.001	-0.960	0.100	0.099	0.100	0.100	8,500,000
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	221,616	21,940	7	0.100	0.100	0.099	0.099	0.100	-0.001	-1.000	0.099	0.099	0.100	0.100	221,458,350
OM0000001418	RAYSUT CEMENT	5,565	722	3	0.130	0.130	0.128	0.128	0.130	-0.002	-1.538	0.128	0.128	0.130	0.100	25,600,000
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	116,500	17,475	3	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.153	0.153	-0.003	-1.961	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.100	449,452,715
OM0000001566	OMAN FISHERIES	13,000	1,131	2	0.087	0.087	0.087	0.087	0.089	-0.002	-2.247	0.087	0.085	0.087	0.100	15,840,821
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEER	6,222,748	1,197,631	25	0.189	0.189	0.190	0.190	0.196	-0.006	-3.247	0.190	0.190	0.194	0.100	38,567,425
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	7,000	525	1	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.078	-0.003	-3.846	0.075	0.071	0.076	0.100	9,140,625
OM0000007910	AMAN REAL ESTATE	10,000	920	1	0.092	0.092	0.092	0.092	0.098	-0.006	-6.122	0.092	0.092	0.092	0.100	18,400,000
OM0000002267	GULF MUSHROOM P.	17,100	3,661	7	0.220	0.220	0.214	0.214	0.237	-0.023	-9.705	0.214	0.214	0.221	0.100	8,903,528
Total	26	8,586,947	1,430,288	152												

ECONOMIC FORECAST

EU's inflation past its peak, no recession

BRUSSELS: The EU's executive branch published revised economic forecasts on Monday, saying the bloc will narrowly avoid a technical recession and has already passed its inflation peak as natural gas prices continue to retreat from the historic levels of mid-to-late 2022. But the European Commission also warned that consumers would continue to feel the pinch of reduced purchasing power as inflation remains above 5 per cent. "The EU economy beat expectations last year, with resilient growth in spite of the shockwaves from the Russian war of aggression," Commissioner for the Economy Paolo Gentiloni said. "And we have entered 2023 on a firmer footing than anticipated: the risks of recession and gas shortages have faded and unemployment remains at a record low."

What are the Commission's growth forecasts? Growth for 2023 should reach 0.8 per cent for the 20 countries using the euro single currency, and



0.9 per cent for the 27-member bloc as a whole, the Commission said. That's compared to forecast growth of 0.3 per cent in its previous quarterly report. The Commission also forecast that the bloc would avoid a contraction in the current January-March quarter, and thereby narrowly stave off a technical recession. This follows the growth of just 0.1% in the previous quarter. Many economists classify a technical recession as two consecutive quarters of negative growth.

But by the EU's measuring system, the previously-forecast first-quarter performance coupled with the last quarter of 2022 would have qualified as a technical recession. Longer-term growth forecasts for 2024 remained unchanged, at 1.6 per cent for the EU and 1.5 per cent for the eurozone. "Europeans still face a difficult period ahead. Growth is still expected to slow down on the back of powerful headwinds and inflation will relinquish its grip on purchasing power only gradually over the

coming quarters," Gentiloni said. "Thanks to a unified and comprehensive policy response, the EU has weathered the storms that have hit our economies and societies since 2020. We must show the same resolve and ambition in tackling the challenges we face today."

What about inflation? For 2023 as a whole, inflation was forecast to be 5.6 per cent within the eurozone and 6.3 per cent across the entire EU. Inflation peaked last October at 10.6 per cent in the eurozone but has been falling since, reaching 8.5 per cent in January. The EU believes that falling gas prices, partly as the EU secures alternative sources of supply and compensates for the halt of Russian imports, explain this — but it warns that pressures on the prices of other goods are less likely to decrease. "The decline was driven mainly by falling energy inflation, while core inflation has not yet peaked," the Commission said in a press release on Monday. —DW

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CONNECT OMAN

Conference highlights opportunities for energy supply chain businesses

Times News Service

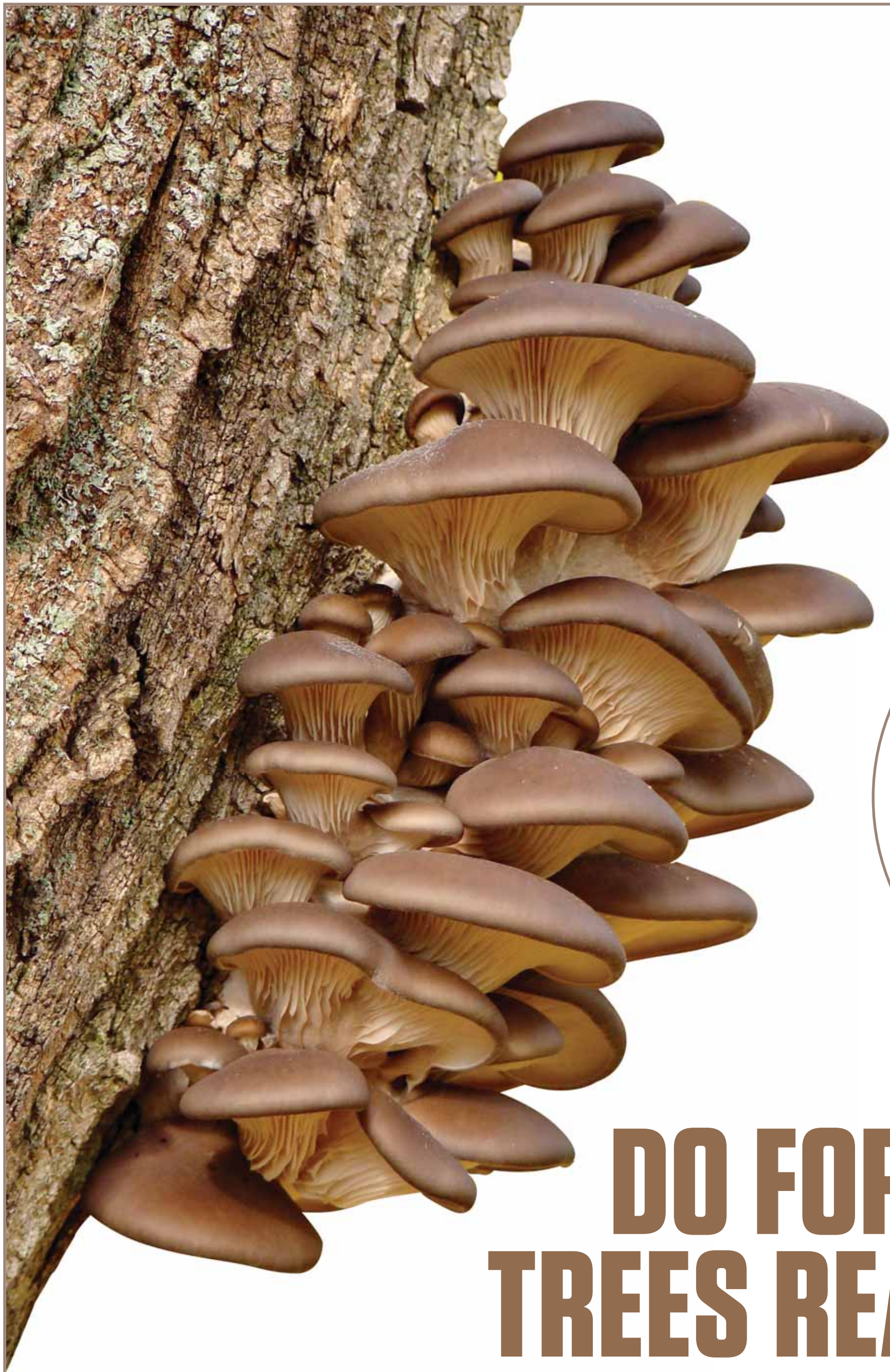
MUSCAT: The Energy Industries Council (EIC), the world's leading energy-agnostic trade association, has launched its first EIC Connect Oman, part of EIC event solutions which bring together supply chain businesses with decisions and policymakers from around the globe. EIC Connect Oman, held in Muscat on February 7, presented a unique opportunity for energy companies to network, share knowledge, and establish partnerships with one of the Middle East's major energy producers, which also boasts an ambitious green hydrogen strategy. The event attracted participants, including government officials, national operators, EPC contractors and developers. "Oman has been making major investments in the energy sector and is indeed an important regional hub for both conventional and unconventional energy industries," said Ryan McPherson, EIC's Regional Director for the Middle East and Africa. "We at EIC are always keen to create business opportunities for our members and clients and connect them with important decision-makers, and our first EIC Connect Oman has successfully achieved that. It is, indeed, a testimony to the ever-increasing global demand for



our events and data solutions." Connect Oman opened with remarks by Michael Eyley, Director of Trade & Investment and First Secretary of Defence & Security at the Department for International Trade, the event's supporting partner. Faiza Al Harthi, Head of Energy Environment & Natural Resources at Oman Vision 2040, also gave introductory remarks. In an overview of Oman's energy market, Dina Magdy, an EIC Business Development Manager, presented EIC Data Stream data showing that Oman will invest \$91.6 billion between now and 2030 in energy projects, with nearly \$40 billion going to downstream and more than \$23 to hydrogen - a key clean energy sector for Oman. Adil Al Abduwani, Commercial & Strategy Lead at Hydrom, said Oman was expected to spend \$140 billion by 2050 on green hydrogen and related infrastructure, includ-

ing solar panels, wind turbines, electrolyzers, derivative synthesis, storage, transport, water desalination, among others. Oliver Stevens, Head of Corporate at Addleshaw Goddard Oman, gave a detailed presentation about doing business in Oman, including regulations around setting up companies in the country, which now allow 100% foreign ownership in nearly all companies. Sreejith Kesavan, Business Development Manager at Arabian Industries, delivered a contractor briefing. Following his presentation, he said, "Congratulations to EIC for organising Connect Oman 2023, a wonderful event that brought together key players of Oman's energy sector with a relevant programme and an excellent lineup of speakers." Here is what other delegates said about the inaugural EIC Connect Oman event:

"Excellent opportunity to meet people that are involved in various parts of the industry, all extremely keen to help connect you to the right people," said Sam Norris, Asia Waterjet Equipment. "A very worthwhile and interesting Connect experience, providing valuable market insight and networking opportunities," said James Brazier, Serck Services Company. "Another well-organised EIC event. Professional and enjoyable, always good to be part of EIC-organised sessions," said Jayne Moran, Ampelmann Middle East. "Thank you EIC TEAM, for the great work and dedication in putting together an exceptional event. The event made it a truly unforgettable experience and will help us to grow our network in Oman," said Nandhakumar Sadasivan Pillai, Modutech, which exhibited at the event.



To evaluate the popular claims, Karst and co-authors Melanie Jones of the University of British Columbia Okanagan and Jason Hoeksema of the University of Mississippi reviewed evidence from existing field studies

DO FOREST TREES REALLY ‘TALK’ THROUGH UNDERGROUND FUNGI?

”

It’s great that CMN research has sparked interest in forest fungi, but it’s important for the public to understand that many popular ideas are ahead of the science,” says Karst

The thought that forest trees may “speak” to one other, exchange resources with their seedlings, and even defend them via a connected underground web of fine fungal filaments piques the interest of scientists.

The concept has taken hold in popular media, even being discussed in the famous Apple TV comedy Ted Lasso, and has been nicknamed the “wood-wide web,” but the science underlying those ideas is unproven, according to University of Alberta researcher Justine Karst.

In a peer reviewed article published in Nature Ecology & Evolution that also shares their personal point of view, Karst and two colleagues contest three popular



claims about the capabilities of underground fungi known as common mycorrhizal networks, or CMNs, that connect roots of multiple plants underground. Fungi are living organisms such as moulds, yeast and mushrooms.

“It’s great that CMN research has sparked interest in forest fungi, but it’s important for the public to understand

that many popular ideas are ahead of the science,” says Karst, associate professor in the U of A’s Faculty of Agricultural, Life & Environmental Sciences.

While CMNs have been scientifically proven to exist, there is no strong evidence that they offer benefits to trees and their seedlings, the researchers suggest.

To evaluate the popular claims, Karst and co-authors Melanie Jones of the University of British Columbia Okanagan and Jason Hoeksema of the University of Mississippi reviewed evidence from existing field studies.

They found that one of the claims, that CMNs are widespread in forests, isn’t supported by enough scientific evidence. Not enough is

known about CMN structure and its function in the field, “with too few forests mapped.”

The second claim, that resources such as nutrients are transferred by adult trees to seedlings through CMNs and that they boost survival and growth, was also found to be questionable.

A review of 26 studies, including one in which Karst is a co-author, established that while resources can be transferred underground by trees, CMNs don’t necessarily bring about that flow, and seedlings typically don’t benefit from CMN access. Overall, their review revealed roughly equal evidence that connecting to a CMN would improve or hamper seedlings, with neutral effects most commonly reported.

The third claim, that adult trees preferentially send resources or “warning signals” of insect damage to young trees through CMNs, is not backed up by a single peer-reviewed, published field study, Karst and her co-author note.

The researchers say overblown information can shape and distort the public narrative about CMNs, and that could, in turn, affect how forests are managed.

“Distorting science on CMNs in forests is a problem because sound science is critical for making decisions on how forests are managed. It’s premature to base forest practices and policies on CMNs per se, without further evidence. And failing to identify misinformation can erode public trust in science.” -ANI

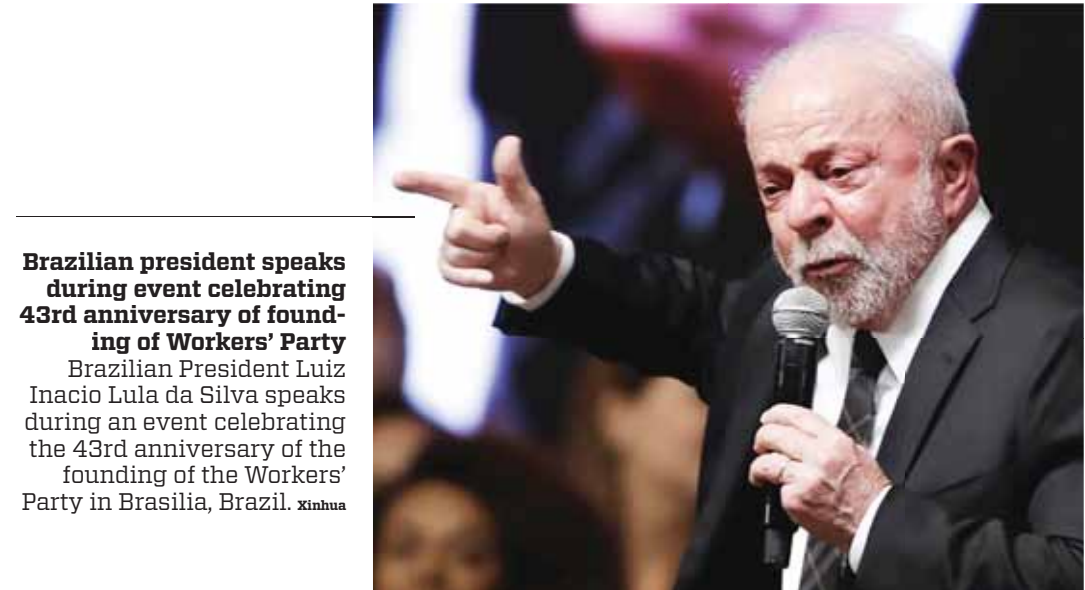
IN-PICTURES



Snow scenery of Jiankou section of Great Wall in Beijing
This aerial picture shows snow scenery of the Jiankou section of the Great Wall in Beijing, capital of China. *Xinhua*

Highlight of 2023 Nice Carnival
A performer participates in the 2023 Nice Carnival in Nice, France. The 2023 Nice Carnival runs from February 10 to February 26. *Xinhua*

Dharmendra, Aditi Rao Hydari, Sandhya Mridul during the launch of ZEE5's upcoming series TAJ
Bollywood veteran actor Dharmendra, actresses Aditi Rao Hydari, Sandhya Mridul, and others pose for a group picture during the launch of ZEE5's upcoming series TAJ, in Mumbai. *ANI*



Brazilian president speaks during event celebrating 43rd anniversary of founding of Workers' Party
Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva speaks during an event celebrating the 43rd anniversary of the founding of the Workers' Party in Brasilia, Brazil. *Xinhua*

Students and teachers participate in 'One Billion Rising' global campaign in Manila
Students and teachers dance as they participate in the 'One Billion Rising' global campaign to end violence against women and children at a school in Manila, the Philippines. *Xinhua*



People participate in Carnival of Putignano
A float parade is held during the Carnival of Putignano in southern Italy. The Carnival of Putignano is known as one of the oldest carnivals in Italy. *Xinhua*

Fire ravages commercial shops and houses in suburb of Uganda's Kampala
This picture shows the scene after a fire in the suburb of Uganda's capital city of Kampala. *Xinhua*



Al Mouj Muscat launches only golf and ocean-side Business Park in Middle East

Al Mouj Business Park is a unique and inspirational business district of 8 cutting edge ocean and mountain-view office buildings set within Al Mouj Golf

MUSCAT: Al Mouj Muscat launched Al Mouj Business Park, with a vision to reimagine how business success is delivered.

The new business destination is situated within Al Mouj Golf, one of the world's top 100 golf courses, with an exemplary location not seen anywhere else in the Middle East.

At the launch, a group of esteemed business leaders from across the Sultanate were presented with the premier lifestyle destination's vision for a park where its occupants will enjoy an ocean-front setting and a delightful outlook across the golf course. They will also benefit from superb connectivity and transport links and the support of Al Mouj Muscat's world-class leisure, commercial and tourism amenities.

The state-of-the-art complex

offers 39,000 square metres of office space within eight mid-rise buildings set across two districts, three in Business Park East and five in Business Park West. Built to exacting Grade A standards, the buildings are separate yet seamlessly connected by beautifully landscaped gardens and outdoor spaces designed to be convivial to business networking.

Offices range from 3,990 to 5,320 square meters with flexible floor plans and where the average floor plate is 1300 square meters. There will be rooftop gardens and each building will have controlled access basement car parking of between 115 and 148 spaces per office block, one of the most generous in Muscat.

Companies choosing to locate at Al Mouj Business Park can take advantage of a sophisticated meet-

ings and events ecosystem within neighbouring 4 and 5-star hotels and event spaces including those at Al Mouj Golf which has both a restaurant and an events marquee. The Okura Hotel and St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort are adjacent to the park and the Kempinski, the Mysk and Rotana are in close proximity.

Al Mouj Muscat CEO, Nasser bin Masoud Al Sheibani said, "It is a great honour to launch our Business Park, a unique destination where business can be reimaged. We are looking forward to seeing Omani companies take their enterprises to the next level by choosing a base that, unlike traditional business parks, provides staff with a high-tech working environment which also supports



their well-being and productivity."

In addition to providing a top-quality environment inside and out, transport links are excellent

as the park is directly accessible through the Muscat International Airport's intersection and only 10 minutes to Muscat City Centre,

and 15 minutes to the Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre.

He added, "The launch of Al Mouj Business Park clearly shows that it is possible to mix business with pleasure and we are confident of its success and how it will build on the extraordinary impact Al Mouj has had over the last 17 years as an engine for growth across tourism, employment and development."

A joint venture between the Oman government and Majid Al Futtaim Properties, Al Mouj Muscat is a dynamic and diverse community, now home to 8,000 residents and which attracts 4.9 million annual visitors to its coastal setting, boulevard style retail and dining experiences, luxury hotels, a 400-berth marina and multi-award-winning golf course.

EXPANSION

DENSO Sales Middle East & North Africa FZE partners with Oman's Al Arabiya Group

MUSCAT: DENSO Corporation, a global manufacturer of automotive components offering advanced automotive technologies, systems and products, was founded in Japan and spun off from Toyota Motor Corporation in 1949.

Driven by Oman's market needs and DENSO's network expansion mission in Oman, DENSO MENA announced a partnership with Al Arabiya Group (Al Arabiya Unlited), an Oman-based automotive spare parts company.

Al Arabiya will be DENSO's authorised distributor for car AC parts in Oman and distribute DENSO's genuine high-quality aftermarket parts. DENSO will continue to collaborate with Al Arabiya Group to cover the aftermarket car AC parts demand and customer satisfaction in Oman.

DENSO fulfils its corporate social responsibility by providing the world's top products and technologies with 170,000 employees from its 200 global subsidiaries.

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Working in partnership with a range of car manufacturers, DENSO has invested extensively in car AC components, producing a range that is unique and consistent with OE part quality. Through product performance, R&D and a range tailored to the needs of manufacturers, the DENSO car AC system has gained a reputation for efficiency and reliability. With the utmost reputation

achieved, DENSO has successfully marked its status as the No.1 AC supplier all over the world.

Having a mindset that automation and mobility are vital tools of infrastructure, DENSO's aftermarket mission is to establish a sales and service network, where end users can purchase high-quality parts and obtain high-quality service anywhere across the globe.

WORKSHOP FOR REJUVENATION

BEC organises D-stress session for its employees

MUSCAT: Bahwan Engineering Company's (BEC) visionary management believes in and takes care of the health and wellness of its employees.

Keeping up to this spirit they scheduled a D-stress and rejuvenate workshop, in association with Balance Muscat Ayurveda & Yoga Center.

Anitra Pillai the founder of Balance Muscat Ayurveda & Yoga, mentioned that post the pandemic, in an era of uncertainties, investment in health & daily commitment to our well-being has become paramount. This awareness session highlighted the importance of preventive health care while emphasising on the importance of good health.

The high impact session commenced with a presentation by Dr Monika Seth, Nutrition Consultant- Balance Muscat, on an understanding of stress & how healthy food choices can actually combat stress.

The session progressed into



a fun activity where, Dr Preeti Chinchpurkar, Ayurvedic & Yoga Consultant- Balance Muscat guided the participants on "easy to do" series of chair yoga exercises.

Simple breathing techniques on how to calm the body and mind when confronted with stressful

situations, was demonstrated. The session ended on a high, with laughter therapy.

The objective of this workshop was to inculcate simple and healthy lifestyle changes which are easy to follow on a daily basis to the employees of BEC.

OMAN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Omran Group hosts site visit to Nikki Beach Resort

MUSCAT: Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran Group) recently hosted a site visit to the Nikki Beach Resort, which is currently being developed as part of the Sustainable City - Yiti.

The visit aimed to assess the progress of construction and was attended by several ministers and dignitaries from various government institutions, as well as members of the executive management of Omran Group.

The visit comprised a viewing of the completed construction works for the Sustainable City - Yiti, which is part of the first phase of the master plan for the Yiti Integrated Tourism Development. The group also received an overview of the components and details of the Nikki Beach Resort, a 5-star hotel considered to be one of the most significant additions to the luxury hospitality sector in the Sultanate of Oman.

The delegation was also presented with a report on the ongoing construction works, which are progressing according to schedule. During the visit, they had the chance to visit a model of one of the resort's luxurious chalets, which will be available once the resort is completed. The model showcases the concepts of luxury and hospitality that are the signature of Nikki Beach resorts worldwide.

Mohammed Abdullah Al Salami, Senior Development Manager at Omran Group, stated, "We are



pleased that the construction works have progressed to such an advanced stage in the development of this pioneering resort. The resort will bring a new concept to the hospitality industry, blending the richness of Omani culture with modern luxury. This aligns with Omran Group's efforts to create sustainable and distinctive tourism destinations, strengthening Oman's position as a preferred global destination for tourists."

He stated, "This resort is being developed within the confines of the Sustainable City - Yiti, which is a landmark project that follows the highest standards of sustainability and a green economy in the Sultanate of Oman. It aligns with all the principles of sustainability and sets the foundation for creating a destination that reflects Omran Group's vision of establishing

it as a local landmark and a globally renowned destination with world-class cultural, educational, and entertainment facilities."

The resort, expected to open in the first quarter of the next year, boasts a unique and award-winning design, having received the 'Best New Hotel Construction and Design Arabia Award' in its regional category at the International Property Awards 2022. With 140 hotel rooms and 30 villas, it will offer an array of dining concepts and facilities, including the beach club, three one-of-a-kind and luxurious restaurants, swimming pools with unique panoramic views, Nikki Spa, Tone Gym, and a marina. As a top mega-yacht destination, the location will appeal highly to the yachting community.

The resort will be operated by Nikki Beach & Resorts, a glob-



ally renowned luxury lifestyle and hospitality brand. The brand's signature elements - music, dining, entertainment, fashion, and art - will be seamlessly integrated throughout the property, creating the iconic atmosphere for which Nikki Beach is known.

As a demonstration of its commitment to the development of the tourism industry in Oman, Omran Group consistently collaborates with a range of local, regional and international institutions and authorities to identify key projects and opportunities that can enhance and enrich the tourism experience offered in the country. The group strives to identify and facilitate investment opportunities for local and international partners while attracting leading hospitality and entertainment brands to the Omani market.



ROUND-UP

Exclusive benefits on Kia's stylish, stunning SUV range to end tomorrow

On buying a Telluride, Sorento, Sportage, Seltos, or Sonet, customers will get comprehensive service up to 50,000km, 1 year insurance and cash gift

MUSCAT: Kia customers can now own their favourite Kia SUV with exclusive benefits.

On buying a Telluride, Sorento, Sportage, Seltos, or Sonet, customers will get comprehensive service up to 50,000km, 1 year insurance and cash gift. The campaign will end on February 16 (Conditions apply). For details customers can visit Reliable International Automotive showrooms.

Kia Telluride makes a fine mark with its impressive design, space, comfort and range of features that contribute to making every experience amazing. The Telluride is loaded with a power-packed 3.8L GDI engine that produces 291 hp and 36.2 kg.m. torque. Complementing this powerful SUV is the 8-speed automatic transmission. The first vehicle to be based

on Kia's new-generation midsize SUV platform, the Sorento's redefined exterior and attractive cabin set it apart as much more than a work of engineering efficiency.

Powering the all-new Sorento SUV is the 3.5L engine with 268 hp and 33.8 kg.m. torque. This is paired to an 8-speed automatic transmission for smooth driving experiences. Adding to driving delights is the auto cruise control, drive mode select offering the driver choices to enjoy exciting driving experiences on varied terrains.

The fifth-generation Sportage challenges design norms and moves the Sportage identity to the next level, while paying homage to its rich heritage. The Sportage is equipped with comprehensive range of powerful, responsive and efficient powertrains. A 2.0 RVC



4WD with Nu 2.0 MPI churning 157 hp at 19.5 kg.m torque.

This is paired to a 6-speed AT. The Sportage is also available as 1.6T 2WD SRF, 1.6T 2WD SPL and 1.6T 4WD SPL with Gamma

1.6T GDI with 176 HP and 27 kg.m. torque. These are paired to a 7-speed DCT.

The Kia Seltos SUV combines advanced technical features, class-leading space and a suite of

world-class safety features. The Seltos is equipped with a 1.6-liter gasoline engine producing 121 HP paired to a six-speed automatic transmission (6AT). To further elevate the driving experience, the

Seltos is equipped with a Drive Mode Select system that lets drivers adapt the car to their preferred style or the road conditions. Drivers can choose from 'Normal', 'Eco' and 'Sport' mode. The Eco mode is tuned to maximize vehicle range by using fuel-saving measures, while Sport mode increases responses from the steering and electric motor to maximize the dynamic driving feel of the car. Normal mode provides a careful balance between the two.

The Kia Sonet with its advantage of space, power, fuel-efficiency and more, is a good choice for daily drives. Kia Sonet is equipped with a powerful 1.5L engine that is paired to a CVT transmission. Offering comfortable space to passengers with its 5-seater capacity, this SUV goes the distance giving an impressive average of 17.5 kmpl.

Customers looking to experience a Kia SUV can visit any Reliable International Automotive showroom.

Reliable International Automotive (RIA), the distributor for Kia in Oman provides a rewarding ownership experience for customers. Excellent product attributes and unmatched facilities easily ensure their absolute satisfaction, every mile of the way.

EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS



Kidsity and bp Oman conclude third 'Hope' programme for students with disabilities

MUSCAT: In partnership with bp Oman, Kidsity concluded the third cycle of the 'Hope' programme targeting students with disabilities from Al Amal School, Al Tarbyia Al Fikriya School, and Omar bin Al Khattab Institute for the Blind.

The programme introduced them to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) topics, allowing them to explore various possible career paths.

The programme offered many educational workshops which allowed the students to experience different learning methods. It also focused on developing their

soft skills and interpersonal skills such as brainstorming, teamwork, problem-solving, creative thinking and critical thinking. In addition, this programme provided two internship opportunities for new trainers to work as assistants during the workshops.

Ibrahim Al Hinai, bp Oman Social investment specialist, commented, "By supporting this programme we were able to support more than 32 children through 27 workshops in the year 2022. Allowing children to learn these disciplines and skills at a young age increases their knowledge of future optional career paths that

they can take an interest in. We are happy to have this programme targeted for students with disabilities and delivering education in an interactive and inclusive manner."

Saif Al Manji, Co-Founder of Kidsity, further added, "These workshops and projects encourage students to think outside the box and invent different solutions for new challenges. One of our goals at Kidsity is to continue delivering more of these types of programmes in Oman to increase the capabilities of the new generation, steering them into the fields of science and innovation."

REAL ESTATE AND TOURISM DEVELOPER

Wali of Salalah recognises Muriya for creating positive impact on community

MUSCAT: Muriya, Oman's largest real estate and tourism developer, was recently recognised by Sheikh Mohammed Saif Al Busaidi, Wali of Salalah, in the Governorate of Dhofar for its efforts to make a positive impact on the community, near its flagship destination, Hawana Salalah.

Receiving the token of appreciation on behalf of Muriya were Younis Al Kindi, Head of Government Affairs and Samira Al Bahri, Director of Human Resources and Administration. As one of the largest and most diversified developers in Oman, Muriya contributes to the nation's economic development by ensuring long-term value for tourism, real estate, and leisure.

Muriya, a master developer of Hawana Salalah and Jebel Sifah, is a partnership between Omran, the leading government arm for tourism development in Oman, and Orascom Development Holding, an internationally acclaimed developer of fully-integrated towns.

"It has been our honour and privilege to receive this token of appreciation from the Wali of Salalah. We always strive to make a real and sustainable impact on communities across Oman and even beyond our flagship destinations," said Wael Al Lawati, Chief Executive Officer of Muriya.

"From supporting schools, elderly, and underprivileged people, as well as women entrepreneurs, Muriya remains committed to its many impact-driven corporate social responsibility initiatives. Meanwhile, as a future-ready organisation, we always put the empowerment of local talent first. We consider this approach to be one of the most impactful ways to grow and thrive together with our communities," Al Lawati said.

Muriya's contributions are designed to benefit the local community, contribute to people's health and well-being and empower women and young talent.

What unites all these various



areas of endeavour is that they are part of Muriya's wider corporate social responsibility programme to create a difference in all the communities in which it operates.

Education is an important pillar of Muriya's CSR strategy. The company upgraded and redecorated the library at the British School in Salalah and distributed gifts at school events. In addition, the developer collaborated with the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs to help build a Mosque in Salalah. When it comes to women entrepreneurs in the Governorate of Dhofar, and in

collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development, Muriya helped Omani women in showcasing their products and crafts in Hawana Salalah.

Invested in the health and well-being of local communities, Muriya provided food hampers to families in need, as well as an orphanage centre in Salalah during the holy month of Ramadan. Other collaborations included organising the Alwan Colour Run for children at the Trimi and British School in Salalah. Additional activities included the renovation of houses in the Wilayat of Taqah.



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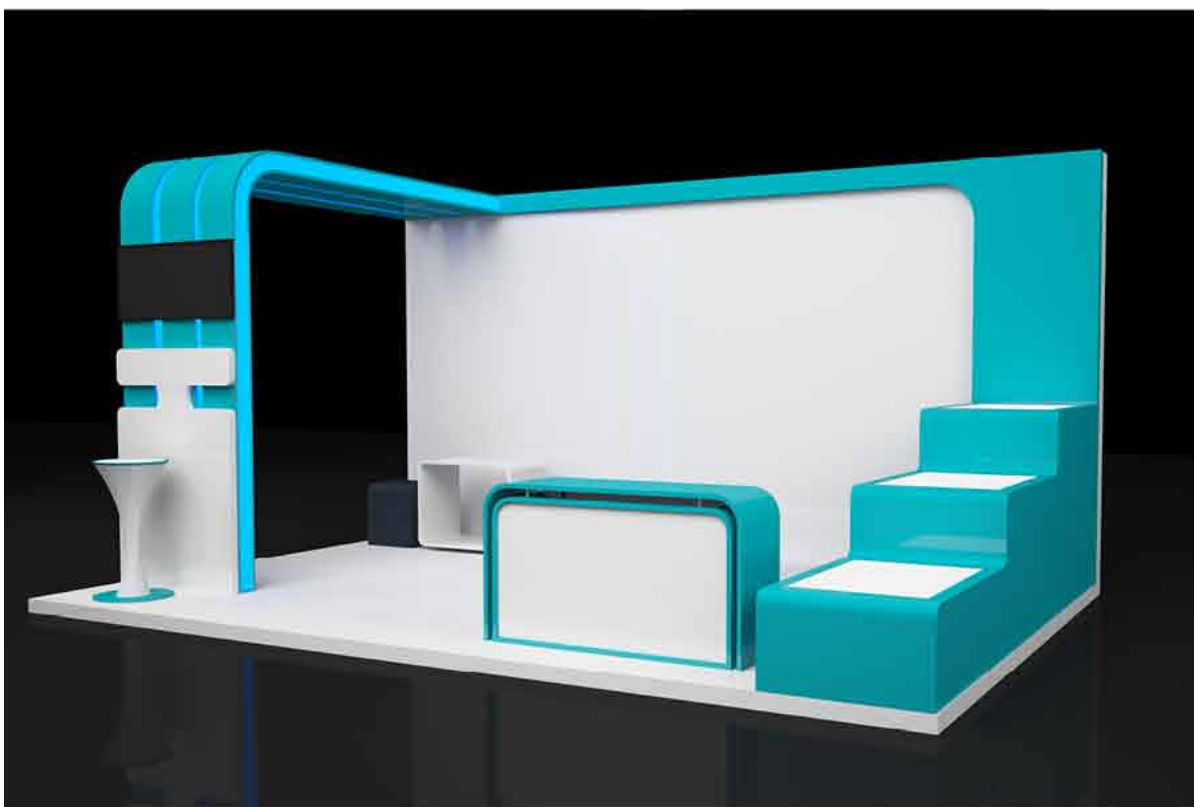
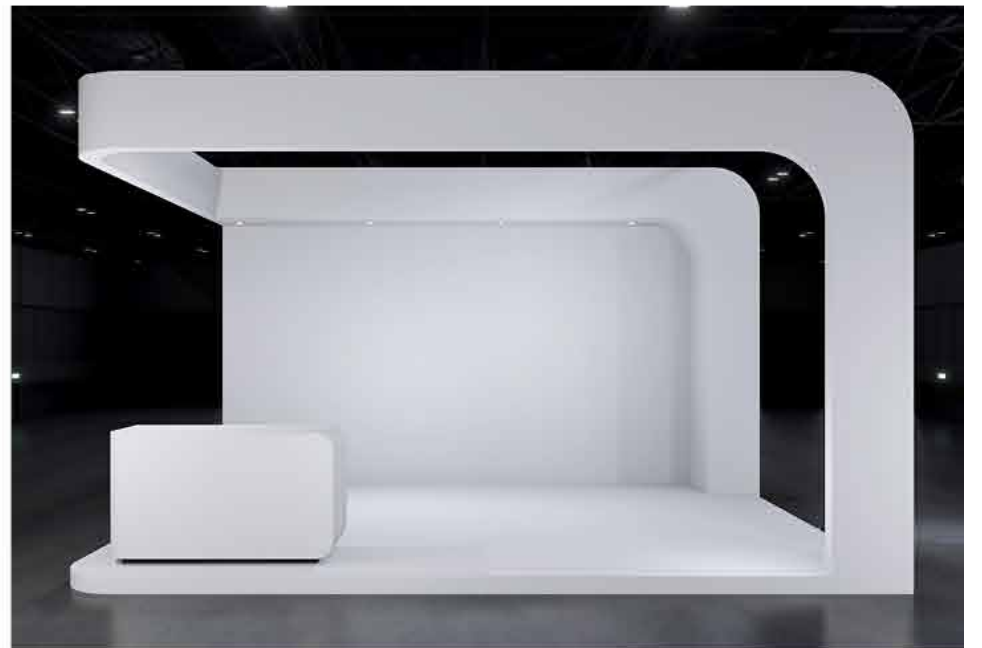
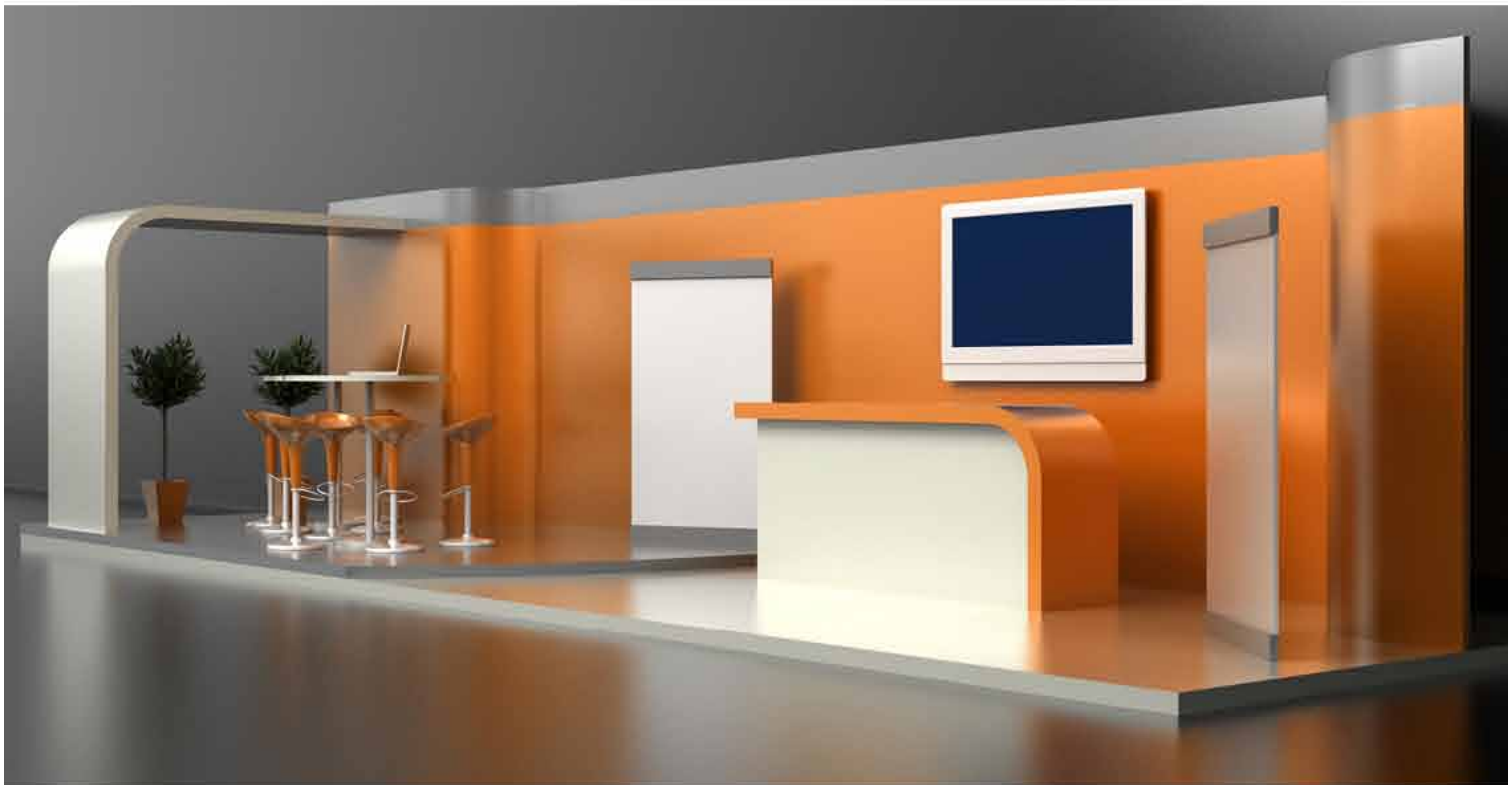
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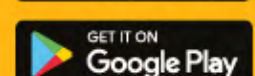
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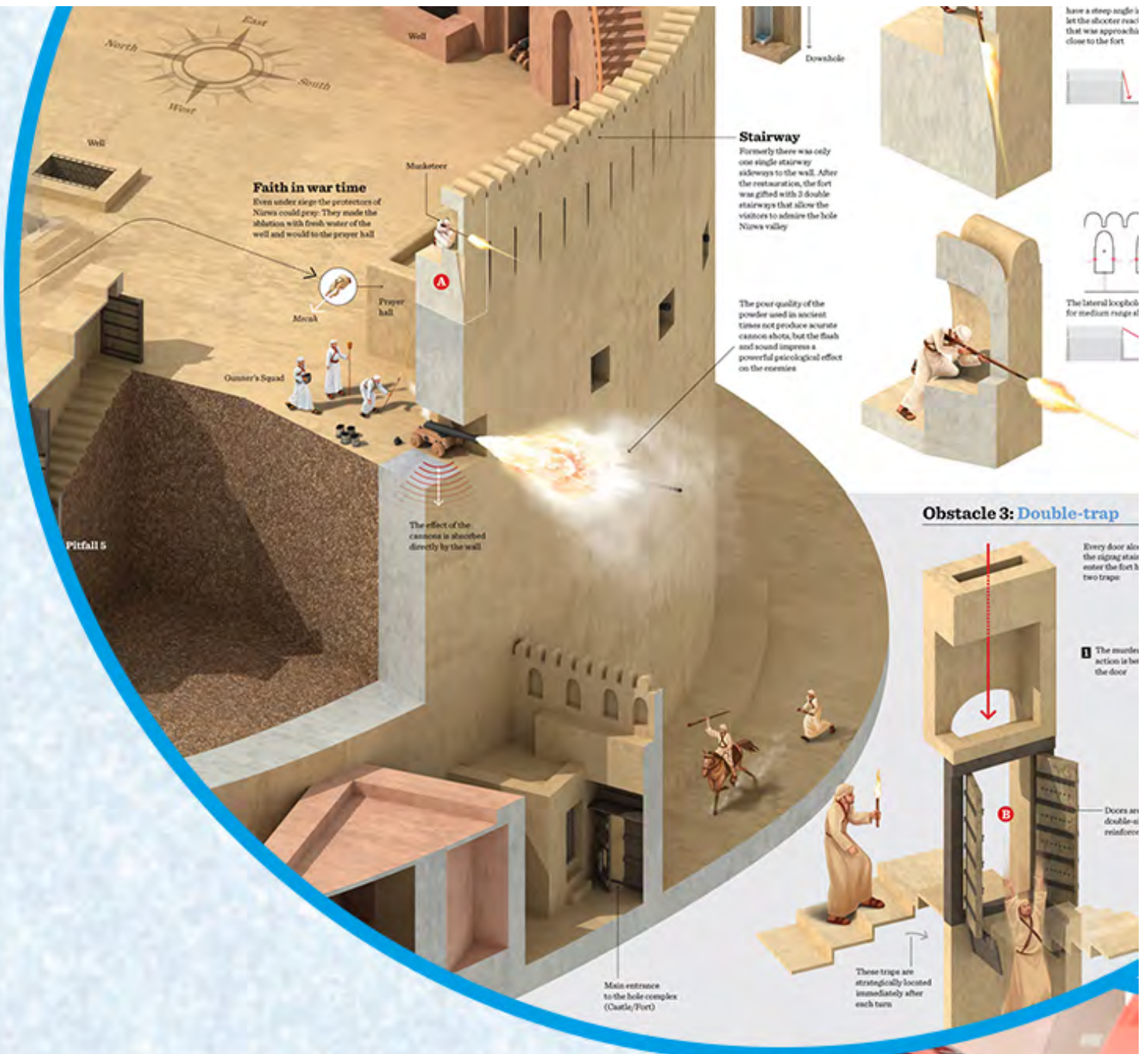


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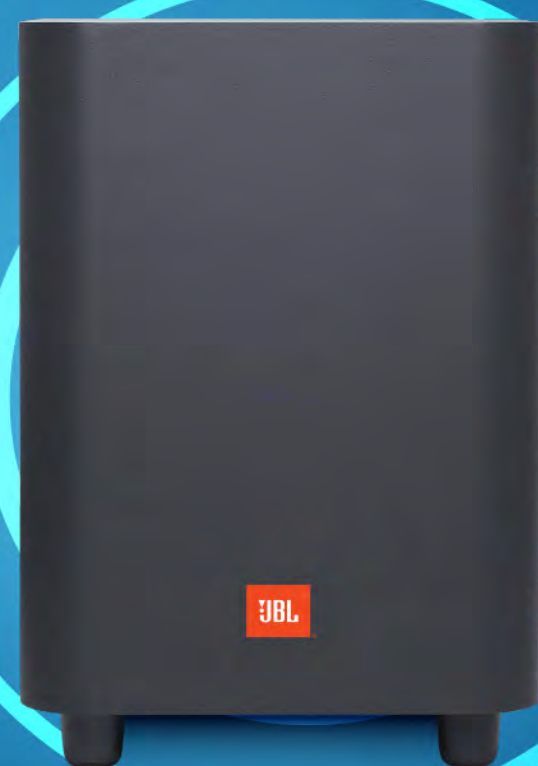


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