

ABOUT 200 CRUISE SHIPS EXPECTED TO VISIT OMAN

About 200 cruise ships may visit the various ports of the Sultanate of Oman in the 2022/2023 season, giving a big boost to the tourism activities. **>B6**



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HM THE SULTAN SENDS GREETINGS

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulation to President Ranil Wickremesinghe of Sri Lanka on his country's Independence Day anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings and wishes of good health and happiness to the president and to his country's people further progress and prosperity. **-ONA**



Founded 1975 · Volume 47 No. 232 | 16 Pages · Baisas 200 · Subscription OMR63 | ISO 9001:2008 Certified Company | Chairman/Editor-in-Chief: Mohamed Issa Al Zadjali | Printed & Published by Muscat Media Group

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FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND

Honourable Lady inaugurates National Autism Centre



MUSCAT: Her Highness the Honourable Lady Assayida Ahd Abdullah Hamed Al Busaidi, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman, inaugurated the Ministry of Social Development's National Autism Centre in Al Khoud, Wilayat of Al Seeb, Muscat.

Considered to be the first-of-its-kind in the Sultanate of Oman, the National Autism Centre incarnates the principle of strategic partnership between the Ministry of Social Development and Oman LNG.

It is designed to provide cutting-edge rehabilitation and treatment

services for autistic individuals across all ages from toddlerhood to adulthood, using the latest programmes to enable social inclusion and independence.

Vocational rehabilitation

Her Highness the Honourable Lady visited the Centre's different halls and facilities showcasing the services offered to beneficiaries, including behavioural therapy, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, as well as vocational rehabilitation. **>A5**

IT'S RAINING INVESTMENTS IN OMAN

Investments in Madayn's cities top OMR7bn

More than 19,000 Omanis are employed in various industrial cities

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The volume of investments in the industrial cities of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) exceeded OMR7 billion at the end of 2022, a senior executive of Madayn said.

"The industrial cities of Madayn are witnessing a great demand from investors from both inside and outside Oman by localising their projects in various sectors," said Hamad bin Hamoud Al-Qasabi, Acting CEO of Madayn.

The number of the national workforce reached more than 19,000 across various industrial cities, he added.

He said that Madayn is working to improve the services it provides to investors and has completed the opening of Masar



Hamad bin Hamoud Al-Qasabi, Acting CEO of Madayn

centres in all the industrial cities and working on the digital transformation system and automating the services it provides.

Madayn is currently working on development projects in all of its industrial cities, for which more than OMR120 million has been allocated for the development of infrastructure, he said, adding, some of the works are nearing completion while others are in the implementation stages. These include the Ibri Industrial City project and the Mahas Industrial City project in Khasab. This will contribute to the development of the economy of the governorates

of Al Dhahirah and Musandam by providing an incubating environment for economic activities and providing vital job opportunities.

He added that there are two other projects in North Sharqiyah and Dhofar being implemented and the procedures related to it are now being finalised.

Al-Qasabi said: "Madayn continues to develop and develop the infrastructure of its industrial cities and has developed new spaces in each of the industrial cities in Sur, Nizwa and Al Buraimi and the development of Phase 4 in Raysut Industrial City has been completed. **-ONA**

Infrastructure development gathers momentum in South Al Batinah Governorate

Times News Service

AL RUSTAQ: With an investment of OMR5.738 million, work is underway for the development of several service facilities, internal roads, installation of lighting poles and other landscaping projects in the South Al Batinah Governorate.

The development projects are part of the programme to keep abreast with the Phase I of the 10th Five-year plan.

Sheikh Saif bin Himyar Al Malik Al Shahi, Governor of South Al Batinah, said that the Governorate has focused during the past year on the growth of investments, mainly the Nakhal Mall project in the Wilayat of Nakhal, an integrated entertainment project in the Wilayat of Al Mussanah, an integrated commercial, entertainment and tourism complex in the Wilayat of Al Rustaq, development of Ain Al Kasfah site in the Wilayat of Al Rustaq, investment in land plots in the Wilayat of Barka, among other project.

He said that work is also going on Phase I for the development of Ain Al Kasfa hot spring,



road lighting works at the main road from Hay Al Sarh roundabout to Al Sahtan Roundabout, the design and construction of Al Hoqain - Meli Road (Phase 1), the design and construction of internal roads (package 3, supply and installation of lighting poles, installation of box culverts at the courses of the wadis in Al Hoqain area among other projects in the various wilayats of South Al Batinah Governorate. **-With inputs from ONA**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN Muscat Nights ends with fanfare

1 The 17-day long Muscat Nights came to an end on Saturday with the slogan 'Menawrah Bewejodak'. The ceremony was held at several venues in the Muscat governorate and watched by thousands of people. **>A4**



OMAN Over 2,300 diagnosed with cancer in 2019

2 More than 2,300 cases of cancer were diagnosed in 2019 in the Sultanate of Oman, according to the Ministry of Health (MOH). The whole world unites on February 4 in the fight against cancer. **>A5**

MARKET Oman's domestic liquidity rises

3 Oman's total volume of domestic liquidity reaches OMR20.28bn at the end of November 2022 compared to OMR20.10bn during the same period at the end of November 2021. **>B1**

REAL-LIFE STORY

Oman's first web series on Netflix's gets good views

Times News Service

MUSCAT: A web series titled 'Scattered Barriers' on Netflix about a real-life story in one of the wilayats of the Sultanate of Oman is getting worldwide applause. The story deals about the sufferings of an Omani family during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ibrahim Al-Zadjali, the Omani actor, who did the role of Nasser, spoke exclusively to *Times of Oman* about the series.

He said: "The movie tells the story of 'Nasser', the person who refused to believe and accept the grave danger posed by the Covid-19 until he loses his mother to the virus. He starts blaming himself for the tragedy and refrains from accepting the new reality,



until he realises the true meaning of the family and society. Making amends, he strives to improve his life in honour of his mother."

Many Omani actors, including Amina Abdulrasoul, Essam Al Zadjali, Balqis Al Balushi, Raed Al Ameri, Emirati actress Salama Al Mazrouei and 28 people with disabilities from 11 different countries also participated in the series.

Al Zadjali said: "I took the role of Nasser, who is the focus of the story. I was very happy in this role. I did my best to master this character in this series with real feelings that touch the heart of the viewer."

Al Zadjali added that the series has three episodes, each of which is 50 minutes. It is a dramatic story that was shown exclusively for the first time on Netflix and Abu Dhabi Channel on January 12, 2023. **>A6**

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GREEN ALGAE

People urged not to consume fish affected by green tide

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) has urged sea-goers not to catch and consume fish affected by the green tide phenomenon. The ministry has also warned people not to swim at places af-

ected by the phytoplanktons. The warning came after the ministry noticed recently a bloom of phytoplanktons in what is known as the green tide in parts of the Wilayats of Duqm and Masirah, with the death of some fish. According to environmental experts, green tide is a huge

accumulation of large green algae that occur in many parts of the world, but are more common in temperate and tropical latitudes. The most affected areas are the eastern and western coasts of North America, Asia, and the Pacific Ocean. This incident occurs in a specific

area, and is often seasonal or episodic, and is temporary and ephemeral. According to what is known scientifically, the type of phytoplankton that causes the phenomenon of green tide flourishes in Omani waters in specific months, which are December, January and February.



132 PLAYERS

Al Mouj Golf gears up to host world's top pro golfers



Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman's championship golf course Al Mouj Golf is gearing up to host some of the world's best professional golfers including Sergio Garcia, Louis Oouisthazen and Joaquin Niemann at The International Series, the elevated series of tournaments on the Asian Tour. Taking place at the oceanfront course over four days between 9 and 12 February, the Al Mouj Golf event is the first leg of ten events in 2023. Garcia, Oouisthazen and Niemann are part of an impressive line-up of 132 players entered which includes two winners of major tournaments, a Ryder Cup/President Cup player, and 14 golfers ranked in the World's top 300 all competing for their share in a total prize fund of \$2 million. Spain's Garcia has won 36 international tournaments as a professional, most notably the 2017 Masters Tournament whilst South Africa's Oouisthazen's titles include the 2010 Open Championship. He has also finished runner-up in the four major championships of the Masters, the U.S. Open, the 2015 Open Championship, and the PGA Championship. Other big names include Brooks Koepka of the USA who in October 2018 became world number one in the Official World Golf Ranking for 47 weeks after winning the 2018 CJ Cup. Fellow American Sihwan Kim plays on the European Tour and the Asian Tour, where he has won two titles. One of the most prominent players is Joaquin Niemann of Chile who has won twice on the PGA Tour and was the number one ranked amateur golfer from May 2017 to April 2018. Joaquin has reached a career-high 15th in world rankings in April 2022, and has been a top 50 player for more than two years. Two other players that are ones to watch based on past achievements and current form are Graeme McDowell of Northern

Ireland and Scott Vincent of Zimbabwe. Vincent has won three times on the Japan Golf Tour and in 2022 he won the International Series England and eventually went on the clinch the victory of being The International Series' inaugural winner. McDowell has a record of 11 tournament victories on the European Tour, and four on the PGA Tour, including one major championship, the 2010 U.S. Open at Pebble Beach. CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, Nasser bin Masoud Al Sheibani says: "Bringing world-class players to experience Oman for the first time through the international series promises to promote the country across continents, elevating the competitive experience for players on the Asian Tour. Al Mouj Golf, a world-renowned top 100 course, continues to make a significant impact in supporting and driving the country's sports-tourism sector." "With so many incredible players about to arrive in Muscat, excitement is building particularly for golf fans who will have the chance to watch these professionals up close. We invite spectators of all ages to come and experience the competition over the four-day period. Our club will be open to the public during this time and to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for all, we will provide dedicated transportation to the golf course" Al Mouj Golf has now received 23 International Awards and welcomes 16,000 golfers and 35,000 guests annually, many more are expected as part of this latest competition. The course is a key asset of Al Mouj Muscat, the Sultanate's leading leisure and lifestyle destination, and a joint venture between Majid Al Futtaim Properties, Omran, and Tanmia. As Oman's first Integrated Tourism Complex Al Mouj Muscat has delivered significant socio-economic impact on job creation, development, foreign direct investment, growth in the number of SMEs as well as across the tourism sector.




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Muscat Nights



Times News Service

MUSCAT NIGHTS concluded on Saturday under the slogan of ‘Menawrah Bewejodak’ with an outstanding closing ceremony held at different venues in Muscat.

Seventeen nights of entertainment, amusement, culture and cuisine, was inaugurated at Qurum Natural Park on 19th January under the patronage of His Excellency Sayyid Saud bin Hilal Al Busaidi, Governor of Muscat, His Excellency the Chairman of Muscat Municipality, and a number of their excellencies, sheikhs, representatives of the authorities and other invitees.

It concluded with a wonderful concert of Omar Abdallat and Khaled Abdul Rahman at the

Muscat Drift Arena in the Omani Automobile Association. Another concert of Haitham Rafi and Mohammed Al Manji was held in Naseem Garden. The activities of Muscat Nights 2023, which started from 19th January and continued till 4th February, included a variety of activities that were designed to meet the expectations of the public and serve the various segments of society.

It was a real visual delight for the visitors at Qurum Natural Park who got an opportunity to see several laser and LED shows that illuminated the lake and also brightened the night sky of Muscat. The sounds of the various musical compositions reverberating in the air and the reflective laser lights on the waterfronts were a sight to behold. Drone

shows were also one of the biggest attractions this year. To engage the audience the outdoor cinemas were introduced in Qurum Natural Park and Naseem Garden which were quite popular amongst the youngsters.

Sandeep Paul, an Indian expatriate, had a memorable experience at Muscat Nights. “Visiting Muscat Nights was a pleasant experience. The chilly winter evenings were the perfect time to visit with family and friends. It was good to see the smiling faces of the children enjoying their favourite rides, holding the colourful balloons and savouring the cotton candies,” he reminisced.

Sandeep was delighted to see the adults strolling around without their masks, enjoying their cup of karak tea with cheesy

loaded fries.”The laser show and the drone shows were magical and mesmerising in the perfect setting of the lake in Qurum Natural Park. Although some attractions like the live tableau was missing, overall the biggest happiness for me was to be able to visit and enjoy at Muscat Nights,” he added.

The Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre had showcased an entertainment carnival for children.

It included some of the popular shows like ‘Aladdin’ and ‘Alice in Wonderland’ and cartoon circus such as ‘Winter in the Woods’, a circus that simulated an experience reflecting the Arctic winter. The other carnival shows that were enjoyed by the children were ‘Lion Fantasy’, ‘Mr. Bob’ and ‘3D Mapping’ show.





AUTISTIC CHILDREN

Her Highness praises role of caretakers

< FROM A1 Her Highness also visited the Centre's tailored simulation rooms, specifically built to reflect the actual ambiance of facilities to revive the capabilities and skills of autistic individuals, besides engendering familiarity and tolerance for day-to-day activities.

Moreover, Her Highness was briefed about the recreational activities within the centre that range from music and swimming to playrooms and sports corners.

Her Highness also conferred with a number of caretakers and specialists. She expressed her gratitude for their ceaseless role and dedication in supporting the autistic community. She valued their integral role in imparting di-

versity and inclusion within the community.

Her Highness later attended a play titled "Innovators Factory", which highlighted the talents and creativity of autistic children, as well as the role of the centre in developing these talents and integrate into society.

At the end of her visit, Her Highness the Honourable Lady received a commemorative gift from Dr. Laila Ahmed Al Najjar, Minister of Social Development.

The National Autism Centre's compound occupies a total area of 23,600 square metres, with the main building covering a total of 5,225 square metres. The project was set up to the tune of OMR2.5 million and accommodates 120 autistic cases.

More than 2,300 cancer cases detected in 2019

World Cancer Day aims to prevent millions of deaths each year by raising awareness and education about cancer



Times News Service

MUSCAT: More than 2,300 cases of cancer were diagnosed in 2019 in the Sultanate of Oman, according to the Ministry of Health (MoH). The whole world unites on February 4 in the fight against cancer.

World Cancer Day aims to prevent millions of deaths each year by raising awareness and education about cancer, and pressing governments and individuals across the world to take action against the disease.

The Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) continues to expand on the success and impact of the day, and is commit-

ted to ensuring that year-on-year the event is seen and heard by more people around the world. UICC does this by developing a campaign that serves the different organisational priorities of its members worldwide.

The Ministry of Health has released the latest cancer statistics in the Sultanate of Oman for 2019, where the total number of diagnosed cases reached 2,307 (nationals and non-nationals).

The number of Omani patients diagnosed with cancer in 2019 was 2,089, while the number of cancer cases among non-Omanis was 200, and 18 cases of carcinoma in situ. Cancer was also the third cause of death in hospitals, after respiratory diseases, sec-

ondly, and diseases of the circulatory system first.

The frequency distributions of cancer incidence rates showed that the number among Omani females was higher than those of males, reaching 1,158 (55.43 percent), while the number of affected males was 931 (44.57 percent). 124 cases were recorded among children less than 14 years of age.

It is worth noting that the average age at diagnosis is 54 years, which increases among males to reach 60 years compared to 50 years for females.

The data also showed that the crude cancer rate among Omanis is 69.6 per 100,000 males and 87.9 per 100,000 females. According to the standard world population

table ASR, the global average indicates 113.6 per hundred thousand Omanis and 122.4 per hundred thousand Omanis.

Breast cancer still ranks first among all cancers in general and among women in particular, as the number of cases has reached 350, and 31 percent were diagnosed in the third and fourth stages. Thyroid cancer ranked second among all cancers of both sexes.

The National Cancer Registry in Oman began recording cancer cases first as a hospital-based registry in 1985, and then as a population-based registry in 1996. The registry collects and records data for cancer patients from various data sources throughout Oman.

The Registry issues an annual report containing the most important data collected, in line with international standards, such as those of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Agency for Research on Cancer.

The National Cancer Registry has many aspects of cooperation with local, international and regional associations and organizations concerned with cancer registration. The importance of having a national cancer registry lies in the presence of a database that is used as reference for research and educational purposes by researchers and decision-makers.



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ANNOUCEMENT

This is to inform all concerned that **Mr. SHEHAN PRIYAMAL BERAGAMA GAMAG** holder of **SRI LANKAN passport No. N8307579**, Resident card No. 127256274 is no longer representing our company. **GLOBAL EXCELLENCE BUSINESS AND SERVICES, LLC** (Resettlet World Wide Consultants) from 03 January 2023. Therefore, all the concerned are requested to stop dealing with the above named in favor of the company. If anyone is dealing with him it is at their own risk and company will not take any responsibility hereafter. If anybody has any claim, he/she should report to the company within next 3 working days.

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U.S. EMBASSY - MUSCAT

ONLINE AUCTION SALE OF USED ITEMS

The U.S. Embassy Muscat is auctioning used household and office furniture, furnishings, appliances, computers, and IT equipment by online auction.

Interested bidders may view the auction items online starting on Tuesday, January 31, 2023 by going to <https://online-auction.state.gov/en-US>. Online bidding for all items will open on Thursday, February 2 at 10:00hrs. Bidders must first register on the website before placing a bid.

All items offered for sale will be sold "as is, where is," which means that there are no warranties, either expressed or implied. Bidding closes on Sunday, February 5, 2023 at 12:00hrs (noon).

Successful bidders will be notified on Monday, February 6, 2023. At that point, they must make full payment of all lots won to the Bank Muscat U.S. Embassy account. Payment instructions are listed in the "How to pay for your items" section in the "How it works" link on the auction page. **PLEASE NOTE PAYMENT INSTRUCTIONS MAY BE DIFFERENT FROM PREVIOUS AUCTIONS AND FAILURE TO FOLLOW PAYMENT INSTRUCTIONS WILL RESULT IN FORFEITURE OF YOUR LOTS AND BANK FEES TO RETURN YOUR MONEY. PLEASE READ INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY.** All payments must be received in full before 12:00hrs (noon) on February 8 in the U.S. Embassy account in Bank Muscat. **NO LATE PAYMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED.**

Successful bidders with fully paid lots may collect their items on Saturday, February 11 at the Ghala Warehouse during their scheduled time. If you are not available to collect your items on Saturday, February 11, 2023, please do not participate in the auction, as there are no alternate pickup dates.

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FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2022

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT	STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT
On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present the report of Muscat Thread Mills SAOG, for the year ended December 31, 2022.	
Preview of Results: During the year 2022, severity of Covid-19 pandemic was minimal compared to the previous year 2021, though overall environment was not conducive for economic / business activities throughout the world due to continuing conflicts in some part of the world. The overall business situation throughout the globe had further worsened during last few months of the year, having cascading impact on MTM's performance also during last quarter of the year.	
Despite various challenges, company could achieve turnover of OMR 3,617,576, closer to that of OMR 3,696,852 achieved during previous year 2021. Increased input costs continued to put pressure on margins, combined with provisions, which had resulted in reducing profit after tax to OMR 13,472 for the year 2022, as against OMR 75,463 profit after tax earned during previous year 2021. Net worth as on 31 December 2022 was as at OMR 1,830,375 compared to OMR 1,860,666 as on 31 December 2021.	
Operations: During the year under review, company sold 1,104 metric tons of sewing thread as against 1,198 metric tons sold during last year. Company's revenue is mainly generated from exports, which accounts for about ninety percent of total revenue.	
Outlook: It is believed that business environment would gradually start improving from second quarter of the year. The company is taking focused approach to establish its presence in new markets, to diversify into different product categories, to obtain optimum product mix of volume business, along with high value items, for long term sustainability.	
International Accreditation: During the year under review, company has maintained its upgraded international quality certification of OekoTex Standard 100 to annexure 6, class 1 level that is related to the product and had also retained its quality system accreditation of ISO 9001:2015.	
Human Resources: Company encourages recruitment and retaining of local talent in each area of activity. Providing on the job training and as per the identified needs; outsourced professional training is awarded to local employees to motivate them and to increase their participation in various activities. Company provides healthy and cordial working atmosphere to its employees to obtain best results from them.	
Corporate Governance: Board of Directors and the Management are committed to the principles of Corporate Governance as laid down by the Capital Markets Authority.	
During the year under review, in compliance with the applicable code of corporate governance, shareholders have appointed third party consultant to appraise the performance of the Board, impartially and independently. As per the report, that is being separately put up for review and approval of shareholders in ensuing AGM, the overall performance assessment result of the board for the year 2022 was found satisfactory, given its organizational model and board structure.	
Internal Control Systems: Company is employing adequate resources commensurate with the nature and size of its operations to ensure that effective internal control systems are in place and to comply with all applicable laws, regulations and ensure safeguarding of company's assets.	
The Board, through the Audit Committee, reviews the adequacy, effectiveness, and compliance of the control procedures. Further, internal and external auditors submit their reports with their observations and recommendations for improvements in the existing internal control systems. Management reviews those recommendations and takes necessary steps for continuous improvement.	
Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR): Company acknowledges and appreciates Capital Market Authority's initiative on the Corporate Social Responsibility and looks at various alternatives in reaching out to the needs of the society. The CSR charter is in place and management did make necessary plans for CSR, which was approved by your Board, based on amount that was allocated for the year 2022, amounting to OMR 1,000. Activities as per plan included donating to such organization which are approved by the Financial Affairs and Energy/Resources Council or similar organization operating in the field of promoting education, sports or providing medical facilities. Your company is looking into different avenues and opportunities for spending this amount going forward.	
Acknowledgement: On behalf of the Board of Directors and employees of the company, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tanki for his wise leadership and generous support to the private sector. We also thank the government, under his leadership, for taking timely and effective measures to protect the people and to support the economy during critical period.	
We would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to shareholders for continued confidence reposed in the company and to employees for their dedication and hard work.	
We also thank the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment promotion, other government authorities' ministries, the Capital Market Authority, Muscat Stock Exchange, Muscat Clearing & Depository Co. and our bankers for their support.	
On behalf of Board of Directors, Chairman.	

	2022 RO	2021 RO
ASSETS		
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	618,589	669,055
Right-of-use assets	162,633	173,402
Deferred tax asset	95,149	84,525
Total non-current assets	876,371	926,982
Current assets		
Inventories	1,143,908	1,339,893
Trade and other receivables	800,977	1,100,144
Bank balances and cash	94,946	18,929
Total current assets	2,039,831	2,458,966
Total assets	2,916,202	3,385,948
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
Equity		
Share capital	1,607,265	1,591,352
Legal reserve	210,343	208,996
Retained earnings	12,767	60,318
Total equity	1,830,375	1,860,666
Liabilities		
Non-current liabilities		
Non-current portion of lease liabilities	165,417	169,201
Non-current portion of term loan	21,823	60,223
Employees' end of service benefits	121,315	106,175
Total non-current liabilities	308,555	335,599
Current liabilities		
Current portion of lease liabilities	3,783	5,140
Current portion of term loan	38,400	37,200
Bank borrowings	259,706	308,415
Trade and other payables	454,610	818,008
Taxation	20,773	20,920
Total current liabilities	777,272	1,189,683
Total liabilities	1,085,827	1,525,282
Total equity and liabilities	2,916,202	3,385,948
Net assets per share	0.114	0.117
STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME		
	2022 RO	2021 RO
INCOME		
Revenue from contracts with customers	3,617,576	3,696,852
Cost of goods sold	(2,789,305)	(2,735,831)
Gross profit	828,271	961,021
Other income	6,572	2,428
Provision for slow moving inventories written back	--	11,746
	834,843	975,195
EXPENSES		
Selling and distribution	492,063	575,705
General and administration	199,428	216,941
Provision for slow moving inventories	64,893	--
Allowance for expected credit losses against trade and other receivables	6,709	49,395
	763,093	842,041
Profit from operations	71,750	133,154
Finance charges	(55,423)	(41,801)
Profit for the year before taxation	16,327	91,353
Taxation	(2,855)	(15,890)
Net profit and total comprehensive income for the year	13,472	75,463
Basic earnings per share	0.001	0.005

Note: The Company does not have any items under other comprehensive income.

Note: The complete accounts are available on MSX website. If required, the same can also be provided by email or post in Arabic or English, in seven days, on receipt of written request from the shareholder.

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US 10,032,156 B2

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(51) Int. Cl. G06Q 20/30 (2012.01) G06Q 20/40 (2012.01) G06Q 20/50 (2012.01) 2001-081061 A1 3-2007 Matthew 70/79 2003-02-26 A1 11-2007 Tammam 219/90 2008-06-18 A1 1-2008 Ghanem et al. 219/90

(52) U.S. Cl. G06Q 20/32 (2012.01) G06Q 20/38 (2012.01) G06Q 20/40 (2012.01) G06Q 20/50 (2012.01) FOREIGN PATENT DOCUMENTS

(53) Field of Classification Search CPC G06Q 20/32 (2012.01); G06Q 20/38 (2012.01); G06Q 20/40 (2012.01); G06Q 20/50 (2012.01) USPC 709/35-45 See application file for complete search history.

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(10) Patent No.: US 10,032,156 B2 (41) Date of Patent: Jul. 24, 2018

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BILATERAL RELATIONS

HM sends written message to Tajikistan

DUSHANBE: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a written message to President Emomali Rahmon of the Republic of Tajikistan on the bilateral relations and ways of their enhancement between the two countries.

The message was delivered by Ibrahim bin Ahmed Al Muaiani, the Sultanate's ambassador accredited to the Republic of Tajikistan, when he was received on behalf of the President by Sirojiddin Muhriddin, Foreign Minister of Tajikistan, in the Capital Dushanbe.

During the meeting, the ambassador conveyed the greetings of His Majesty the Sultan along with his wishes of good health and happiness to the president and for his country's people further progress and prosperity.

The Foreign Minister of Tajikistan asked the ambassador to convey the sincere greetings and wishes of the President to His Majesty the Sultana and for the Omani people further progress and prosperity.

The meeting reviewed the relations between the two countries and stressed the joint interest for enhancement of cooperation in the various spheres.

— ONA



Mall of Muscat unveils exciting new brands

Mall of Muscat, Mabella starts the year with a big bang announcing the launch of 6 new exciting brands including the World's first Costa Coffee in an Aquarium



Times News Service

MUSCAT: Mall of Muscat, Oman's Most Luxurious Mall, continues to add more variety to its current tenant mix to enhance the customer experience and meet the expectations of its loyal patrons.

The new openings cover categories such as food and beverage, fashion, perfumes and jewellery.

The exciting new brands that have opened recently include Oman's finest perfume brand Amouage, the nation's favourite Coffee brand 'Costa Coffee', the region's popular jewellery brand 'Pure Gold' and other brands such as Family Outlet Store, the Mall's first Budget Outlet Department store, Specialty Coffee brand 'Baron Café' and V-Perfumes.

During the ribbon cutting ceremony held at Mall of Muscat, Phil Broad, Vice President President of Food and Beverage at Alghanim Industries, the Franchise Partner of Costa Coffee in Oman said. "Customers will now be able to enjoy top-quality hand-crafted coffee, pastries, and sandwiches at Costa Coffee's latest branch in Oman at Mall of Muscat. The beloved coffee-chain's customers will also enjoy a delightful view of Oman Aquarium, as part of the café is located within one of the Aquarium's under water tunnel. Loyal customers looking to fill their cups with smiles and an exclusive experience will certainly get much more than that at our 5th branch at Mall of Muscat, Mabella."

On Amouage's decision to open a branch at Mall of Muscat, Anne Mette, Country and Retail Manager, Oman said "Amouage is on a constant drive to push the boundaries of perfumery, and offer elevated consumer experiences. Our retail unit at Mall of Muscat will serve the Mabella region, following our new retail direction that redefines luxury retail in perfumery, bringing the award-winning flagship store concept to a different retail format."

New tenants

"The growing list of new tenants at Mall of Muscat reflects the vibrant business environment in Mabella. The latest addition brings something unique for our customers. Providing choice, affordability, quality, convenience and exceptional service are the core values which the new brands

will be offering. We are thrilled to be welcoming many new exciting brands at the mall in time to kick off the New Year 2023. We look forward to contributing to their journey towards success, growth and expansion," said Moninder Brar, Head of Sales.

The Mall has also developed comprehensive plans to introduce additional brands in the near future including entertainment and restaurants to meet the customers' growing needs and the fast-paced urban development the city is witnessing. Enjoy more of your favorite brands now at Mall of Muscat, Mabella

Mall of Muscat is located in Mabella, just 26 minutes from the Muscat International Airport. Featuring over 240 brands, ranging from fashion and lifestyle to sports and electronics, Mall of Muscat provides unmatched luxury, and has some of the world's most renowned brands, including the only Debenhams and Shakeshack store in Oman, Café Di Roma, Molten Chocolate and flagship stores of Victoria's Secret Pink and an exclusive Starbucks which offers an aquarium view.

The mall is home to a range of fun attractions for the entire family. This includes Novo Cinemas, the Sultanate's first indoor Aquarium - Oman Aquarium, Novo Cinemas, Fabyland and Extreme Zone. For more information, visit www.mallofmuscat.com.

Times
OF OMAN

Printed and published by:
Muscat Media Group
Post Box: 770,
Postal Code: 112

Founders: Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali
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Deputy Editor-in-Chief: Anees bin Essa Al Zedjali
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Great experience of working with people who have disabilities

<FROM A1 Al Zadjali said: "The characters in the series wear Omani clothes, and dialogues are in Omani accent. I am very proud of the success of this drama and its presentation on Netflix. It is being watched by different nationalities around the world. Netflix is very choosy in buying web series and movies and this indicates the quality of our drama."

Al Zadjali clarified: "The drama is part of a series of four novels, including Syrian, Emirati, Gulf, and Omani novels."

Talking about the Omani novel, he said: "The Omani novel is titled 'Scattered Barriers'.

The television work was done by an Emirati company called Film Gate, owned by Mansour Al-Dhaheiri from Abu Dhabi.

The film was completed with funding from the Abu Dhabi Media Corporation, as well as the Charitable Foundation for People of Determination in the UAE. This project was carried out with the participation of people with disabilities who are called in Arabic As'hab Al Himam."

He also added: "They organised a workshop for a group of authors with disabilities from the Arab world, and they chose these four novels."

Al-Zadjali confirmed that the story for 'Scattered Barriers' was written by Ahmed Al-Hajji, a blind young man during the Coronavirus pandemic.

He also added that the director of this film is Abdul Bari Belkhair, and he is among the people with disabilities.

His disability has not become a barrier in his directorial journey. In fact, he has worked much better than other television directors who do not suffer from any physical disability.

"The director of photography is a hearing impaired woman," he added

Al Zadjali also said: "It was a great experience working with people from disabilities. They have proven their worth and have been able to overcome challenges and hardships despite their physical disabilities. They have the spirit to succeed. They are cheerful, positive and they fill the space with happiness and optimism. They make you love your work a lot."

The series was filmed in the United Arab Emirates, with the participation of a number of Arab artists and stars. The actor, Ibrahim Al-Zadjali, confirmed that the television work won the award for the best dramatic series at the Barcelona Festival. Subsequently, Netflix bought this drama for its platform.

PR AND EVENT
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7

البيان

RANKED 125TH GLOBALLY

Oman advances five places in World Democracy Index

Times News Service

MUSCAT:

The Sultanate of Oman is ranked third in the Gulf in the World Democracy Index 2022, according to the Information Unit of the British Economist magazine.

The Sultanate of Oman came after Kuwait and Qatar, while the UAE came fourth, Bahrain fifth, and Saudi Arabia sixth.

Additionally, The Sultanate of Oman advanced five places in the World Democracy Index. The Sultanate ranked 125th globally in the 2022 index, compared to 130th in the 2021 index.

Globally, Norway topped the index, followed by New Zealand and Ireland. Afghanistan ranked at the end of the ranking,

followed by Myanmar.

According to the report, the average score of the global index witnessed a stagnation in 2022, and despite expectations of a recovery after the lifting of epidemic-related restrictions, the result is nearly unchanged, which cancelled the positive effect of restoring individual freedoms.

The report also stated that the scores of more than half of the countries measured by the index had witnessed stagnation or decline. Western Europe was a positive case, as it was the only region whose scores returned to pre-pandemic levels.

FOR SIX DAYS

Cinemana festival begins in Oman

MUSCAT: The Cinemana International Festival was inaugurated on Saturday under the patronage of the Minister of Heritage and Tourism.

The festival is being hosted by the Sultanate of Oman for the second time in a row, at the stage of the Scout Band of the Directorate General of Scouts and Girl Guides in Muscat Governorate. It will last for six days.

The opening ceremony of the festival was sponsored by His Excellency Salem bin Mohammed Al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, who said in a statement: "The Sultanate of Oman's hosting of the festival is important for a thriving cinematic industry, and Oman, with its diverse terrain between the

plain, the mountain and the sea, is an open theatre, to employ this terrain in the content of the aesthetics of this country."

Social issues

The Minister added. "Each governorate has different advantages, and linking these aesthetics with content that touches on social issues, terrain, and current and future issues is considered an area of creativity, as cinema represents the appropriate platform for this aspect."

"The Sultanate of Oman enjoys diverse geographical locations and terrains that are closer to open studios for filmmakers, which are no less important than what we see in the global cinematic picture, indicating that the festival comes as an invitation to producers and filmmakers to enter this scenic and charming nature," Dr. Khaled bin Abdul Rahim Al Zadjali, Chairman of the Organising Committee of the Festival and Vice President of the General Union of Arab Artists said.

At the end of the ceremony, His Excellency the Minister of Heritage and Tourism, the sponsor of the occasion, honoured the artists Duraid Lahham, Tariq Abdulaziz, Akef Najm, and a number of producers and sponsors of the festival.

The activities of the Cinemana Festival are being held in the governorates of Muscat and Musandam, with the aim of identifying the cultural, civilisational and developmental landmarks in the two governorates, due to their distinction in historical and geographical components.

SPORTS

Real Madrid, Barca's battle for La Liga crown continues

Barcelona's players will enjoy a rare midweek break after their match at home to Sevilla on Sunday

MADRID: FC Barcelona and Real Madrid continue their battle for La Liga as Barca host Sevilla and Real Madrid visit Mallorca on Sunday. Both sides in midweek won their matches against Betis and Valencia, which were postponed due to their participation in the Supercup in January, leaving Barca five points clear of Madrid, who are six ahead of Real Sociedad. Real Madrid are first into action on Sunday lunchtime away to Mallorca, who have won their last three home games by 1-0. Although Javier Aguirre's side has scored just 15 goals this season, they have only conceded 18 in 19 matches and are tough to break down. The match will test Real Ma-



drid's stamina after they played Valencia on Thursday night, leaving them little recovery time. The packed fixture calendar means Karim Benzema and Eder Militao miss the trip to the island after picking up muscle injuries on Thursday, and they join Lucas Vazquez and Ferland Mendy on the injury list. Benzema and Militao will have tests on their injuries on Saturday,

and the hope is they will be able to travel to Morocco with the rest of the Madrid squad for the Club World Cup. That tournament will mean another two matches for Madrid next week (provided they reach the final), with next weekend's scheduled league match against Elche put back to February 15th. While Madrid continue to play matches, Barcelona's players will

enjoy a rare midweek break after their match at home to Sevilla on Sunday night, with Xavi Hernandez allowing his squad Tuesday and Wednesday off. Sevilla travel to Camp Nou after consecutive wins lifted them out of the bottom three, although they will go into Sunday's game just two points clear of third from bottom Cadiz and with plenty of work still to do. Barca won 2-1 away to Betis on Wednesday, with Raphinha producing his best display in several weeks to replace the injured Ousmane Dembele. Robert Lewandowski will again be the man to stop for Sevilla, although Pedri was hugely impressive in both attack and defense in midweek and his efforts, along with Gavi and Frenkie de Jong, are one reason why Barca's defense has been so well protected - conceding just seven league goals all season. Although Barca haven't been brilliant in attack recently, their watertight defense has meant they haven't needed to be, and the hope will be that another clean sheet will clear the way to three more points and a well-earned rest before another intense period of matches until the end of March. *-Xinhua*

MINISTRY OF HERITAGE AND TOURISM



Over 800 take part in Ironman 70.3 Oman Championship

MUSCAT: The competitions of the Ironman Championship 70.3 Oman, hosted by the Sultanate, represented by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, concluded yesterday at Qurum Beach with the participation of over 800 participants, representing 63 countries. The conclusion ceremony was held under the patronage of His Highness Sayyid Fahr bin Fatik Al Said, in the presence of Azzan bin Qasim Al Busaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism. The competition included three stages which are swimming for 1.9 kms, cycling for 90 kms and run race for 21.1 kms bringing the total distance to 113 kilometres. *-ONA*



WOMEN'S LEAGUE

Pakistan School Muscat Women's team claims championship

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Pakistan School Muscat Women's team beat Indian Social Club Women's by 6 wickets in the final of the Oman Cricket Women's League Season 2022-23 powered by TM Done. In the lead to the final, PSM Women's registered 3 victories in 4 games while ISC Women's also registered 3 victories in 4 games, their only defeat was against PSM Women's in the league stage. PSM Women's won the toss and put ISC to bat first. ISC's Suhaan iDadhwal (30 of 51; 2x4) and Geetha Jagdish (27 of 48; 3x4) stitched a steady 69 run partnership for the 2nd wicket stand. ISC were cruising to put up a formidable total but PSM Women's did well to restrict them. Sani E Zehra, Sameera Khan and Hina Javed picked up a wicket

each to end ISC Women's team on 108/4 in 20 overs. In response, Hina Javed (25 of 33; 2x4) and skipper Sameera Khan (32 of 28; 3x4) created a base for them to get the target with ease. Hira Javed (17 of 23; 1x4) contributed to the chase to take them over the line in 17.1 overs losing 4 wickets. Trupti Pawde, Flavia Dsouza and Sushma Shetty bagged a wicket each. In the post match presentation ceremony, Paul Sheridan - Vice Chairman, Oman Cricket, Ms. Vaishali Jesrani - Women's Co-Ordinator and Board Advisor and Duleep Mendis - Chief Development Officer, Oman Cricket were present. Vaishali Jesrani addressed the opening note, said, "I would firstly thank Oman Cricket and its board

to back and help develop cricket among women in Oman. I would also like to thank the participating teams, their management and the participants for putting up great cutting-edge competitiveness in every game. I would congratulate PSM Women and ISM Women for their podium finish. We envision having 8 teams in the Women's Domestic League in the coming years and we expect each and everyone to contribute to be able to play ICC tournaments in the near future. We are also looking to play more cricket through the calendar year and look forward to your participation." The player of the match for the final was handed by Duleep Mendis to Sameera Khan. The league accolades comprising of Best Batting was handed to Nikitha Jagdish (ISM Women's) and Best Bowler was handed to Sameera Khan (PSM



Women's). The player of the tournament was bagged by Hina Javed (PSM Women's) for her all-round performance during the league.

Paul Sheridan handed the Runners Up trophy to ISC Women's skipper, Trupti Pawde and handed the Champions Trophy to PSM

Women's skipper, Sameera Khan to conclude the Season 2022-23 of the Women's Domestic Cricket League in Grand Style.

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DCO MEET TO BE HELD TODAY
The Digital Cooperation Organisation (DCO) will host the 2nd General Assembly in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on February 5, bringing together DCO Member States to discuss strategic directions and initiatives to enable digital prosperity for all nations.

MARKET

BUSINESS & FINANCE



EU'S GREEN INDUSTRY PLAN
The European Union's top official laid out plans to offset a US domestic green-tech spending spree, and ensure the bloc gets its slice of a globally burgeoning industry, expected by the International Energy Agency to more than triple in worth by 2030 to \$650 billion.

Profit-taking drags Muscat bourse lower in January 2023



Muscat Stock Exchange had risen in November and December 2022 by more than 490 points.

MUSCAT: The benchmark index of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) declined in January by 154 points to close at 4,703 points amid the poor performance of most of the stocks listed on the stock exchange. In November and December 2022, the index had risen by more than 490 points. January's trading was characterised by investors' tendency for profit-taking to reap gains after the rise in shares in November and December 2022, at a time when investors feared that public shareholding companies listed on the stock exchange will reduce the amount of profits they pay to shareholders. This pushed the prices of 50



securities to decline while 25 securities saw an increase in the prices while prices of 16 securities remained unchanged. The statistics issued by the MSX showed a decline in all sectoral indices except for the service sector index, which rose by 65 points, benefiting from the rise in the shares of energy companies besides Omantel and Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company. In January, the Muscat Stock Exchange witnessed a decline in

most of its indices. The trading value declined to about OMR52.4 million compared to about OMR84.5 million in December, recording a decrease of about 38 per cent. The number of executed transactions decreased by 24 per cent, from 12,354 to 9,342 transactions. At the end of January, the market value of the securities listed on the stock exchange fell to OMR23.53 billion, registering losses of OMR200 million. Bank Muscat acquired 17.9 per

cent of the total trading value, with the value of its traded shares amounting to OMR9,390,000. Barwani dollar sukuk came next with transactions worth OMR7,479,000, followed by the National Bank of Oman with transactions worth OMR4 million, representing 7.6 per cent of the total trading value. The shares of energy companies emerged at the forefront of the companies that rose the most in terms of the percentage of the share's rise, as the share of Al Batinah Energy rose by 27.5 per cent and closed at 37 baisas, the share of Phoenix Energy rose by 25.5 per cent and closed at 54 baisas, and the share of Al Suwadi Energy rose to 36 baisas, recording an increase of 24.1 per cent, SMN Power Holding rose by 17.3 per cent and closed at 54 baisas, and Sembcorp Salalah's share rose to 77 baisas, registering an increase of 16.6 per cent. The share of Oman Refreshments recorded the highest losses, declining by 25 per cent, and closed at OMR1.240, the share of Al-Saffa Foods fell to 200 baisas, down by 21.8 per cent and Al Khaleejia Mushroom Production declined by 16.8 per cent and closed at 198 baisas. - ONA

Industrial sector index gains in weekly trading

MUSCAT: Last week, the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) registered an improvement in its performance with the support of the industrial companies, which pushed the industrial sector index to record the highest rise during the week, rising by about 76 points and closing at 5,917 points. The service sector index was able to achieve gains of 11 points, and the index rose legitimate 5 points. On the other hand, the financial sector index recorded the highest losses, declining by 70 points while the main index of MSX declined by 31 points and closed at 4,719 points, down for the third week in a row. Industrial companies pushed the trading value up last week by 11 per cent, to

rise to OMR 12.28 million compared to OMR11.31 million in the preceding week. The number of deals executed increased by 20.8 per cent, to 1,970 compared to 1,630 deals in the previous week. The Oman Cables Industry Company emerged at the forefront as the most heavily traded company in terms of turnover, accounting for 39.6 per cent of the total trading value, with the value amounting to OMR4.86 million. Last week, the prices of 31 securities rose, compared to 22 whose prices fell, and 18 securities that remained at their previous levels. The market value rose by the end of Thursday's trading to OMR23.57 billion recording weekly gains of OMR2.2 million. - ONA

NCSI DATA

Oman's total domestic liquidity rises by 0.9% to OMR20.28 billion

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman's total volume of domestic liquidity rose by 0.9 per cent to reach OMR20.28 billion at the end of November 2022 compared to OMR20.10 billion during the same period at the end of November 2021. The total cash issued at the end of November 2022 amounted to about OMR1.64 billion registering a decrease of 6.2 per cent compared to the same period at the end of November 2021, which was at OMR1.75 billion. Initial statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) indicated a decrease in the money supply in the narrow sense, which consists of total cash outside the banking system, by 0.8 per cent, to reach OMR5.62 billion at the end of November 2022, compared to OMR5.67 billion during the same period of 2021. The NCSI data further shows that the volume of foreign assets of the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) decreased by 16 per cent to reach OMR6.28 billion at the end of November 2022 compared to



OMR7.48 billion during the same period in 2021. Total private sector deposits with commercial banks and Islamic windows in the Sultanate of Oman decreased by 0.1 per cent, to reach OMR17.31 billion at the end of November 2022 compared to OMR17.32 billion during the same period in 2021.

The NCSI data further indicated an increase in total loans and financing in commercial banks and Islamic windows by 5.1 per cent, to reach OMR29.18 billion at the end of November 2022 compared to OMR27.76 billion during the same period in 2021. The effective exchange rate index for the Omani rial increased

by 7.5 per cent to record 114.1 points at the end of November 2022, compared to 106.1 points in the same period in 2021. The average interest rate on loans in Omani riyals decreased from 5.519 per cent at the end of November 2021 to 5.372 per cent at the end of November 2022. - ONA

CENTRAL BANK OF OMAN

CBO increases repo rate for local banks by 25 basis points

MUSCAT: After the US Fed's recent announcement to raise its key policy rate, the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) increased its repo rate for local banks at a similar rate of 25 basis points to 5.25 per cent. The Central Bank of Oman's monetary policy target is to sustain and maintain its fixed exchange rate. This policy is aligned with the structure and nature of the Omani economy. There are a number of advantages for the Sultanate of Oman that are derived from this policy among which are the stability of the Omani Rial, mitigation of capital outflow and promoting certainty among investors by removing exchange rate risk. **Caution** The CBO has cautioned banks not to increase the cost of borrowing to consumers given ample liquidity in the system. The repo rate is the policy rate that allows commercial banks to acquire short-term liquid-

ity from the Central Bank as the lender of last resort. **Economy** The global economy is witnessing rising and sustained inflationary pressure and as such, central banks in a number of countries are attempting to address this pressure by hiking their respective key policy rates with the objective of reducing lending and by default reducing aggregate demand that in turn would translate into reduced consumption. While higher interest rates are expected to lead to lower inflation, in some cases, as related to consumers in high-income brackets, they could result in higher savings. Therefore, and in light of such conditions dominating the global market, key policy interest rates were also hiked by central banks in countries that anchor their monetary policy on fixed exchange rate regimes and in a number of other countries that are experiencing similar inflationary pressure.

EXEMPLARY RETAIL PERFORMANCE

ahlibank's fourth quarter retail banking meeting charts branches' progress; sets new milestones for 2023

Times News Service

MUSCAT: ahlibank's resilient fourth quarter performance for the year 2022 received a thumping response from branch managers at its recently concluded Retail Banking Meeting, held to review the bank's retail performance and explore newer avenues to enhance customer experience. The meeting underscored the significant all-round growth witnessed by the bank during the last quarter, with the net profit for the period ending 31st December 2022 growing by 19.9 per cent to reach OMR33.1 million, compared to the corresponding period in 2021. This growth has been commensurate with the sustained growth witnessed by the bank's branches throughout the year. Branch managers, partaking in the retail meet, highlighted their joint efforts to augment the growth parameters and achieve the set targets for the year. Retail performance discussions also explored the importance of



enhancing customers' experiences by meeting their everyday banking needs with convenience and ease through the network of branches established in all major governorates of the country. Speaking on the sidelines of the meeting, Muneer Al Balushi, AGM - Head of Retail Distribution, ahlibank, commended the role played by individual branches in shaping the outcome of the fourth quarter results. He said, "Our ex-

emplary retail performance will set the tone for the current year, as we expect to make good on our initiatives and plans with our team of professionals helming the network of 23 branches in the country. We have established our enhanced presence through our branches, which are engaged in implementing ahlibank's mission of exceeding customer expectations and delivering outstanding shareholder value through a suite

of retail, commercial and investment banking solutions." He threw the spotlight on the bank's e-channels, which have shaped, in no small way, the changing tide of the banking sector in the country and helped drive the government's Vision 2040 for a digital society. Explaining further, he said, "We will continue to forge ahead with our robust digitalisation journey, engaging with our savvy custom-

ers to exceed their expectations with newer and innovative products and services. "We believe in change management to adapt to the global trends that have brought about newer and more advanced technological solutions in the financial and banking sector. We are assured in the knowledge that the year 2023 will set a new paradigm for growth; we will continue to invest our resources to enhance our customer-centric approach to banking and develop our key performance indicators to lead the industry from the front." The interactive session also analysed the bank's credit risk management as well as complaints management and the attending branch managers discussed operational plans to take advantage of the current sustained growth and prep up for any global economic slowdown by delivering innovative products and services. Finally, the meeting culminated with a round of awards for top-performing branches.



ASMED to highlight major initiatives to empower SMEs

MUSCAT: The Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED) will hold a press conference today to showcase its outcomes during 2022, in addition to revealing plans and strategic approaches for the current year. The press conference will highlight prominent initiatives aimed at developing and empowering SMEs in fields related to In-Country Value (ICV), funding, digital transformation and entrepreneurship, among others. - ONA

MARKET

EU unveils green industry plan to counter US spending spree

The EU Commission has laid out plans to offset the Biden administration's Inflation Reduction Act

BRUSSELS: The European Union's top official laid out plans on Wednesday to offset a US domestic green-tech spending spree, and ensure the bloc gets its slice of a globally burgeoning industry, expected by the International Energy Agency to more than triple in worth by 2030 to \$650 billion.

In her "Green Industrial Plan," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen set out a four-pronged approach focused on streamlined regulation, relaxed state aid rules, worker skills, and using trade agreements to ensure critical raw material supply.

"We are living now in a decisive time, basically the decade that will decide on whether we are going to be successful in fighting climate change or not," von der Leyen told reporters in Brussels. Industries that supported EU goals of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 were



key to this fight, she stressed.

A notable absence — at least in the short term — is the prospect of fresh cash. Von der Leyen said existing EU money, mainly from the bloc's pandemic recovery fund, could be redirected to serve the green industry but stayed clear of the touchy question of new joint EU borrowing.

Answer to US spending spree

The EU industrial plan comes in response to the United States Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) — a spending package that includes \$369 billion to be spent on energy security and climate change programs and which raised hackles in Europe when unveiled by Presi-

dent Joe Biden last year.

EU officials and leaders warned at the time of unfair subsidization, particularly for US-made electric vehicles, that could see EU businesses disadvantaged, or even encourage firms to base themselves stateside to benefit from planned tax credits, for example.

On Wednesday, von der Leyen struck a conciliatory tone concerning other countries' investment plans. "We welcome this. This is good news," she said, pointing also to initiatives in Japan, India, the United Kingdom and Canada. "The fight against climate change is a must. However, it is important to ensure balanced competition, both globally and within the EU," von der Leyen added.

The plan, which is not yet a formal legal proposal, will be debated by EU leaders at a summit next week. The 27 national governments must give the initiative their seal of approval.

Though still only a broad outline, Wednesday's announcement was hotly anticipated by observers fearing an international subsidy race, but also within the EU because of a brewing showdown over skewed state aid and the prospect of shared EU debt.

Germany, France are EU's big spenders

A key tenet of the industrial plan is to extend the application of relaxed state aid rules to aid climate-friendly projects not currently covered —

renewable technologies, renewable hydrogen and biofuel storage, for example, according to press material from the Commission.

The EU already relaxed its state aid rules in response to the COVID-19 pandemic starting 2020, and then again last year after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. But loosening up state aid rules is controversial because more prosperous states, particularly Germany and France, can afford to help their companies the most. Of €672 billion (\$733 billion) granted under the temporary crisis framework in 2022, 77% went to Berlin and Paris combined.

In the interest of fairness to smaller member states, the European Commission previously seemed poised to propose a fund derived from fresh joint EU borrowing. But seven fiscally conservative member states, led by the Netherlands, made their opposition clear in recent weeks.

No new funds? No disaster, expert says

Jacob Kirkegaard, a senior fellow at the German Marshall Fund in Brussels believes it would be very difficult to get new money on the table given the political sensitivity. "But that may not be such a big problem because quite frankly, we still have quite a lot of firepower in the pandemic recovery fund," Kirkegaard told DW.

This €872 billion pot already includes €250 billion for green measures, including investments supporting the decarbonization of industry, the Commission press material from Wednesday stated.

To keep the EU's edge in the long term, Brussels said it would propose by mid-2023 a new European Sovereignty Fund targeting critical and emerging technologies for the green industry.

It will also set out a so-called Net-Zero Industry Act, with a "simplified regulatory framework for a production capacity of products that are key to meet our climate neutrality goals," including batteries, windmills, heat pumps, solar, electrolyzers, carbon capture and storage technologies.

In addition, a Critical Raw Materials Act due to be published next month should support a diversified supply of strategically important materials like lithium, used for batteries. This should give EU companies clarity about future supply.

Within the EU, there is a real risk of market distortion if state aid relaxation is not matched by funding for smaller states to invest too, Kirkegaard warned. This can be repurposed EU money, as von der Leyen proposed, but it needs to be on the table, he said.

When it comes to deciding which companies benefit from funds, Kirkegaard believes the European Commission should be firm in not letting Germany and France get away with too much. "It needs to be a firmly narrow list of companies that is agreed among all member states," he told DW. -aw

COMMENTARY

India's Budget 2023 points towards growth and stability



A. V. Manohar

INDIA'S Budget 2023 was presented by Nirmala Sitharaman, Finance Minister under the back-drop of various accolades and recognitions received such as 'G20 Presidency', 'India in Bright Spot', 'An opportunity called India', '5th Largest Economy in the World' and 'Pharmacy of the World'.

The COVID pandemic has

spread miseries everywhere, creating a tailspin in all economies. While many countries are still reeling under the negative financial impact, India has come out of the crisis early, thanks to the efficient and effective measures initiated at various levels.

As expected, economic indicators such as the country's GDP, growth in essential sectors such as agriculture, industry and services, inflation, employment, capital investment, fiscal deficit and FOREX have shown unfavourable numbers during this bad phase of the economy. The government has on hand daunting challenges such as growing unemployment, increasing inflation, slow growth of capital projects, increasing public debt, interest burden and higher fiscal deficit, all stunting overall growth.

The Budget 2023 is embarking on a new trajectory with renewed vigour, optimism and confidence and has incorporated certain significant measures. The approach adopted is mature, totally professional and oriented towards "What is required for rejuvenating the economy", rather than on introducing populist measures with an eye on the vote bank.

With enhanced allocation to various sectors, expected higher private consumption, efficient tax buoyancy, further ease of doing business, changes in tax rates and concessions, expected better performance of corporates and lending institutions and effective monetary and fiscal steps, India is all set to move forward in its financial agenda, trying to excel, even better than the

pre-pandemic level.

The government's vision looms large around continuing the fundamental framework such as affordable housing, clean drinking water and sanitation, access to education, health, nutrition, road, telecom and sustainable livelihood and employment opportunities.

GDP growth: The essential trigger of the economy comes from improving the "In-Country Production Value" i.e. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) between 6 to 6.8% in 2023-24. To achieve this, the Government has increased the Capital Investment outlay by about 33.4% to Rs 10 Lakh Crore, which is about 3.3% of the GDP. This allocation will ensure the setting up of new projects, production units and infrastructure facilities such as transport networks, ports,

roads and railways. All these will have a multiplier effect in terms of a rise in growth, improved supplies, new employment generation, increased business opportunities for ancillary units, the flow of higher credit, improved cash flow and softening of inflation. It is expected that the Private Sector, which was playing at a low gear during the pandemic phase will take up much of the share in this capacity-building process.

Fiscal deficit & inflation control: Reduction of Fiscal Deficit (Spending in excess of receipts), is another focus area. From a level of 9.2% of GDP in 2020-21, it has been brought to 6.4% in 2022-23, aiming to reduce further to 5.9% in 2023-24 and 4.5% in 2025-26. To bridge Fiscal Deficit, the Government proposes to

source external borrowings and internal savings aggregating to Rs 15.4 Lakh Crore. Needless to mention that three shocks namely COVID-19, the Russian-Ukraine conflict and the increase in the FED Rate in the US leading to an appreciation of the US Dollar and widening of the Current Account Deficit (CAD) have caused inflation at 6.8% in 2022-23. Improved GDP, higher capital outlay, and increased production and supplies shall yield higher tax collections and contribute towards a reduction in fiscal deficit and inflation.

Overall, the Budget 2023 has incorporated many bright spots towards growth and stability.

The writer is the Chief Executive Officer of Wisdom Business and Training Services

DIGITAL COOPERATION ORGANISATION

DCO meet to discuss strategic initiatives to enable digital prosperity for all nations

Times News Service

RIYADH: The Digital Cooperation Organisation (DCO) will host the 2nd General Assembly in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on February 5, bringing together DCO Member States to discuss strategic directions and initiatives to enable digital prosperity for all nations.

Ministers representing the 13 DCO member states, along with high-level delegations from DCO observers, as well as representatives from guest countries and international organisations will convene for the General Assembly, to discuss the state of the digital economy and the challenges facing all nations in achieving equitable global digital growth and development.

The assembly will be the first-ever in-person meeting of the DCO Member States, marking two years of progress for the international organisation which has been founded to help achieve social prosperity and growth by unifying efforts to advance and promote interest in the digital economy. The monumental event, taking place at the Fairmont Hotel in Riyadh, will also reflect the qualitative leaps made by the member states in its shift toward a tech-powered economy.

Deemah Al Yahya, Secretary-General of the DCO said, "Digital technologies have immense potential to transform economies and empower groups including women and entrepreneurs with

The Digital Cooperation Organisation's (DCO) 2nd General Assembly will explore areas of multilateral cooperation to empower cross-border digital markets and foster sustainable and inclusive digital economies by bridging the gap and promoting digital inclusiveness across member states

new opportunities, especially that 70% of the new value created in the global economy over the next decade will be based on digitally enabled platforms so it is of critical importance that all nations have the same ability to leverage the power of digitalisation to achieve their goals. The DCO was formed to accelerate digital transformation through collaboration and knowledge sharing among all stakeholders to empower nations to develop strategies and programs to drive their digital development and equally participate in the global digital economy."

"I am very pleased that the ministers from the DCO Member States will convene in Riyadh, the headquarters of the DCO, for the 2nd General Assembly to mark two years of progress towards the DCO's goals, and to continue the discussions on how we can

achieve digital prosperity for all in collaboration with our international observers from the ecosystem stakeholders representing the private sector, academia, think tanks and civil society organisations," Al Yahya added.

Focused on empowering youth, women, and entrepreneurs, leveraging the accelerative power of the digital economy and leapfrogging with innovation, The DCO is a global multilateral organisation founded in November 2020 that aims to enable digital prosperity for all by accelerating the inclusive growth of the digital economy. Thirteen Member States have joined DCO to date - Bahrain, Cyprus, Djibouti, The Gambia, Ghana, Jordan, Kuwait, Pakistan, Oman, Nigeria, Rwanda, Morocco and Saudi Arabia - along with the private sector, academia, and NGO Observer Members.

NEW MODELS



Samsung announces pre-order for Galaxy S23 series in Oman

MUSCAT: Samsung Gulf Electronics announced that the new Samsung Galaxy S23 Series comprising the Galaxy S23 Ultra, Galaxy S23+, and Galaxy S23, is now available for pre-order for customers in Oman until February 16.

The series comes equipped with new standard-setting innovations, such as the ultimate 200MP camera that captures epic moments with incredible precision, and a powerful processor that unleashes a premium gaming experience. Additionally, the new devices feature a striking design that advances Samsung's sustainability commitment with more components made using recycled materials than any other Samsung Galaxy smartphone.

To celebrate the milestone, Samsung Gulf Electronics is offering exclusive gifts for all pre-orders on Samsung.com.

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STUDY REVEALS HOW CUTTING ON SWEETS, CARBOHYDRATES AFFECTS BEHAVIOUR

ARE YOU FOLLOWING any diet plan currently? Maybe you're cutting off all sweets and carbohydrates or trying to control your late-night cravings. These are examples of behaviour changes, and avoiding those diet cues when it comes to food can be challenging.

To understand what drives people to overeat, scientists are looking more closely at a brain structure involved in motivation, called the nucleus accumbens. This small region drives reward-seeking behaviours.

"These brain motivation centres evolved to help us survive; are essential to the survival of an individual and of a species," said Carrie Ferrario, Ph.D., associate professor in the Department of Pharmacology at U-M Medical School.

"What was advantageous when food was hard to find has become a

disadvantage and unhealthy in the current food dense environment. This is compounded by the overabundance of over-processed, low nutrition foods that may satisfy our taste but leave our bodies unnourished. People don't tend to find it difficult to turn down an extra serving of broccoli, but just one more French-fry or making room for a bit of chocolate dessert...that's a different story. The real challenge is overcoming these urges and changing our behaviour when it comes to food," Ferrario added.

Given the immense toll obesity takes on virtually all body systems, Ferrario, Peter Vollbrecht, Ph.D., of Western Michigan University, and their colleagues are using rat models to understand potential brain differences between animals who are prone to over-eating and obesity and those who are not.

Previous research from Ferrario's lab pinpointed differences in the nucleus accumbens in obesity-prone and obesity-resistant rats. Their latest study, published in the Journal of Neurochemistry, tracked what was happening in real time in the brain when these animals were presented with glucose, a type of sugar, labeled with a tracer.

The tracer allowed the researchers to measure this new sugar in the brain.

Sugar is the brain's main fuel source and once there, the molecule is broken down and used to create new molecules such as glutamine, glutamate, and GABA, each with an important role in influencing the activation of neurons in the brain and nervous system.

"Glucose that is consumed gets broken down and then its carbons get incorporated into neurotransmitters. We see those labelled car-

bons showing up in those molecules -- glutamate, glutamine, and GABA-- over time," explained Vollbrecht.

They found that glucose was taking longer to get into the nucleus accumbens of obesity-prone animals.

Furthermore, when measuring the concentration of the glutamate, glutamine, and GABA, they discovered excess levels of glutamate, an excitatory neurotransmitter. This, said the team, implied a defect in a neurotransmitter recycling process, typically maintained in the nervous system by star-shaped cells called astrocytes.

Normally, astrocytes will pull glutamate out of the space between neurons, called the synapse, convert it into glutamine, and then shuttle it back to cells that produce GABA or glutamate. This sequence is crucial for turning neurons off and on. "The findings suggest that

we're getting too much glutamate and it's not being taken out of the synapse," said Vollbrecht.

Ferrario added, "The balance between glutamate and GABA (the main inhibitory transmitter) is really important for brain function and will influence activity of the neurons in the nucleus accumbens."

This balance, and therefore brain activity, is different in obesity-prone vs. obesity-resistant rats.

The fact that these rats are either prone to obesity or not is important for disentangling cause and effect, says Vollbrecht.

"It allows us to remove diet as one of the variables."

The team hopes to next study the role of inflammation in the development of obesity, and how differences in brain function contribute to susceptibility and resistance to obesity. **ANI**



About 200 cruise ships likely to visit Oman’s ports in 2022/2023 season

The winter tourism season aims to highlight the ingredients and the diversity of the Oman’s terrain

MUSCAT Many tourism events and activities are currently being held in the Sultanate of Oman in various governorates, coinciding with the winter tourism season, with the aim of stimulating tourism and highlighting the ingredients and the diversity of the terrain that characterises it.

Haitham bin Mohammed Al Ghassani, Director General of Tourism Promotion at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, said: “In order to activate the winter tourism season in the Sultanate of Oman, which starts from October to April of each year, the Ministry has announced a set of programmes, events and festivals that it organises during the first half of this year in the various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, some of which started since the beginning of the year, such as the Empty Quarter Festival and the Desert Adventures Festival in North Al Sharqiyah, the Iron Man event, and others.”

Haitham Al Ghassani added that the coming period will witness the establishment of some other activities in the rest of the governorates, such as the events that will be held in the governorates of Musandam and Al Buraimi. These activities will contribute to creating a tourist movement in the various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, as well as increasing the accommodation or operational rates of hotel facilities.

Al Ghassani stressed that the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is working to increase the movement of cruise ships to the Sultanate of Oman, as cruise ship tourism is a tourism pattern that contributes to attracting tourists from all countries of the world.

Khalid bin Mohammed Al Azri, Director of the Department of Tourism Patterns at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, explained that the Sultanate of Oman has succeeded in attracting many of the largest companies operating cruise ships to several ports, such as the port of Salalah, the port of Sultan Qaboos in Muscat and the port of Khasab.

“The cruise ship sector is of great importance in promoting the Sultanate of Oman as one of the prominent destinations regionally and globally and benefits from the presence of this category of tourists by organising trips and tourism programmes for various destinations,” Al Azri said.

The Director of the Department of Tourism Patterns at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism indicated



The cruise ship sector is of great importance in promoting the Sultanate of Oman as one of the prominent destinations regionally and globally

ated that the number of ship visitors in one of the tourist seasons before recovery reached 280,000 visitors, and with the return of the sector and recovery, it is expected that the numbers will return to what they were before, and that the number of cruise ships during the 2022/2023 season will reach about 200 ships.

Nailesh Khimji, a member of the Board of Directors of the Khimji Ramdas Group, explained that the tourism sector will be the largest generator of job opportunities during the coming period, both locally and globally, noting that the tourism sector has been witnessing steady growth over the past few years.



“The Khimji Group for Travel and Tourism seeks to contribute to the growth of the tourism sector in the Sultanate of Oman by attracting tourists and offering various tourism packages, especially for tourists arriving via cruise ships that dock in the ports of the Sultanate of Oman. Last year, Khimji Group for Travel and Tourism dealt with more than 80 cruise ships. It is possible that the number of cruise ships coming to the Sultanate of Oman this year will reach 97 ships,” Nailesh Khimji added.

The group has partnerships with international companies in the travel and tourism sector that provide tourism packages for the benefit of international companies specialised in organising trips and tours.

Mohammed bin Salem Al Hajri, Director of Public Relations at Jawharat Bidiyah Resort in North Al Sharqiyah Governorate, said: “Winter tourism is one of the seasons that works to stimulate the internal tourism movement in all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman in general, by attracting tourists from inside and outside the Sultanate of Oman to visit tourist sites and unique places in each governorate.”

“The Wilayat of Bidiyah witnesses a noticeable tourist movement during the winter season, due to its distinction with the presence of camps in the middle of the sands, and the holding of artistic and entertainment events that simulate the customs and traditions of the North Al Sharqiyah Governorate. The occupancy rate in the wilayat’s tourist camps and resorts during this season reached 100 percent,” Al Hajri added.



ROUND-UP

BankDhofar launches Barka service branch

With its prime location which is easily accessible, the branch offers a wide range of services to its customers except for cash services

MUSCAT: In line with its strategy to expand its branch network across the Sultanate, BankDhofar has recently announced the official opening of Barka service branch. The opening ceremony was held under the patronage of Yasir bin Ali bin Sultan Al-Mabiyahasi, Majlis Al Shura Member, representative of Willayat Barka, in the presence of a number of prominent members of the society, and BankDhofar executive management team. Amjad Iqbal Al Lawati, Chief Retail Banking Officer at BankDhofar, said: "At BankDhofar, we are planning this year to get closer to our customers across the Sultanate, and today we are glad to open our new service branch in Barka. The new branch will be a valuable addition to our existing branches



in Al Batinah Governorate. We look forward to welcoming our customers and serve them, and we are keen to open more branches." BankDhofar currently has a nationwide network of 70 branches & 1 Corporate Centre (59 branches of BankDhofar and 10 branches of Maisarah). With its prime location which is easily accessible, the branch offers a wide range of services to its

customers except for cash services. The new branch is designed to provide convenient banking experience to its customers. BankDhofar customers may access financial services through its branches network across the Sultanate, in addition to a wide network of ATMs, CDMs & FFM around the Sultanate that work round-the-clock with high efficiency. For added customer con-

venience, the Bank offers smart banking at the fingertips through its Mobile Banking App. Customers may conduct a wide range of instant mobile banking services through the award winning App. The services include instant transfer 24/7 to any local bank account, cardless cash, instant international money transfer service with Western Union, among other services.

NEW CATEGORY



Evocus: Oman’s first premium natural black alkaline water launched

MUSCAT: Jalaluddin Investment SPC founder and CEO Mohammad Emran Jalaluddin, on Thursday, announced the launch of Evocus, Oman's first premium natural black alkaline at Sheraton Hotel. Infused with more than 70+ natural trace minerals, the water receives its unique black colour from the blended natural minerals sourced from deep within the earth's crust from Texas, USA. The launch of a new category of water is in line with the company's expansion strategy and vision to offer living via optimum hydration and detoxification, and improved metabolism benefits, The drink with a PH of about 8.5, claims to detox, hydrate and reduce the body's acidity, prevents ageing. Evocus is a well-established brand in the USA, Mexico, New Zealand, India, Nepal and Bhutan and now opening its stores in Oman, UAE, Qatar and Kuwait. The introduction of Evocus is poised to transform the overall health and well-being of its users, thanks to the myriad health benefits it offers consumers – both the young generation as well as older adults. Evocus is available at Evocus online and offline stores, you can also order from its website.

ARAB HEALTH 2023

Siemens Healthineers to showcase latest breakthroughs in healthcare



DUBAI: Dubai will host Arab Health, the most important healthcare trade show in the Middle East, at Dubai World Trade Centre. Siemens Healthineers will display and demonstrate their latest pioneering breakthroughs in healthcare both onsite and virtually in a hybrid exhibition approach, allowing them to reconnect with visitors at the venue, as well as on their online Expo Hub. Ole Per Maloy, CEO, Siemens Healthineers Middle East and Southern & Eastern Africa, said, "We very much look forward to connecting again with our valued customers, business partners and visitors at Arab Health, where we will provide details on the latest upgrades of our portfolio. "By constantly bringing breakthrough innovations to the market, we enable healthcare professionals to deliver high-quality care, leading to the best possible outcome for patients. At Siemens Healthineers, we are striving to overcome the most threatening diseases, improve the quality of outcomes, and enable access to care by pioneering breakthroughs in healthcare. Visitors are invited to discover how advanced diagnostics and therapy workflows can combine to create comprehensive and personalised care and we will show our perspective on how to leverage digitalisation and automation at scale to create a smart imaging value chain." At the Siemens Healthineers Booth S1.D10 in Sheikh Saeed Hall 1, visitors can look forward to experiencing the latest innovations across their comprehensive portfolio – from in-vitro and in-vivo diagnostics to image-guided therapy and innovative cancer care, presenting solutions with a special focus on the most threatening NCDs (non-communicable diseases), stroke, coronary artery

disease, and cancer: Medical Imaging Innovations One of the highlights will be the world's first photon-counting CT, the NAEOTOM Alpha with Quantum Technology, representing nothing less than the total reinvention of computed tomography, offering high-resolution images at a minimal dose with spectral information in every scan and improved contrast at lower noise. In addition, MAGNETOM Free.Max, with its 80 cm bore, sets a new paradigm in patient comfort, breaking barriers in expanding access to care in MRI. There will also be an opportunity to receive a first-hand experience of the MOBILETT Impact, providing a high-quality, mobile, and digital X-ray solution to the patient's bedside at an economical price, enabling a fast and uninterrupted workflow. The Symbia Pro. spectra with myExam Companion sets new standards in SPECT/CT, bringing the nuclear medicine department into the future. The system includes intelligent SPECT/CT imaging and a fully integrated user interface to give you the power of more. Siemens Healthineers will be introducing a new release, the ACUSON Juniper 2.5* ultrasound system, which elevates the user experience while addressing clinical challenges across a variety of clinical applications. Also on the show floor, the ACUSON Sequoia ultrasound system powered by BioAcoustic technology helps to deliver effective clinical insights by reducing the effects of ultrasound variability between users, patients, and technology. **Laboratory diagnostics, point-of-care testing** Attendees at Arab Health will also be able to gather detailed insights from Siemens Healthineers' experts on the booth on the latest ad-

vancements and broad spectrum of immunoassay, chemistry, haematology, molecular, and urinalysis testing solutions, in conjunction with automation, informatics, and services to serve the needs of laboratories of any size – today and tomorrow. In the point-of-care section, visitors will be informed about solutions providing immediate, convenient, and easy-to-use diagnostic testing, including the latest innovations in blood gas testing and cardiac care. Varian will be represented as well at the Siemens Healthineers stand, sharing their vision of a world without fear of cancer. Attendees will be able to learn more about how they are paving the way for intelligent cancer care and how – together with Siemens Healthineers – they are addressing the complete cancer care continuum. **Value partnerships and innovation think tank** On the show floor, Siemens Healthineers will discuss Value Partnerships and the benefits that long-term, performance-oriented, collaborative engagements provide to healthcare institutions, their staff, and patients. Exemplary global and local case studies will be featured on their Exhibit Globe, where visitors will be informed on how Siemens Healthineers is bringing a combination of clinical insights, medical innovation, strategic vision, and implementation expertise to the advancement of healthcare. Customers and interested attendees will be able to have a closer look at one of their 3D Innovation Think Tank models, showcasing how Siemens Healthineers enables the creation of knowledge economies through self-sustainable local innovation infrastructures promoting expertise development, capacity building, and entrepreneurship at hospitals, universities, and governmental institutions.

GLOBAL COLOUR CARD FOR 2023



Jotun Middle East launches ‘Stories’ colour trend collection

MUSCAT: The colours we surround ourselves with matter more than ever – both in terms of what they say about us, and how they make us feel. Many of us are taking a step back and re-evaluating what matters in our lives. Around the world, we are all considering the impact on our environment. The new Global Colour Card for 2023, Stories: Colour Design by Jotun, presents a palette of expressive, hopeful shades. They are purposely designed to inspire a creative ambience in our homes. The 21 colours featured are timeless and not trend-driven, but chosen for their positivity, honesty and versatility. In their unique way, they introduce an element of joy into the home. Lisbeth Larsen, Global Colour Manager at Jotun said: "Colour has an amazing power both to express how we feel about our lives and to shape it. For many people, now is a time for reflection, and thinking about what we value. Colour can be a brilliant way of expressing those values, and reminding us of them, day by day." Of the 21 shades featured in this year's Colour Card, nine are new to the Jotun collection. Jotun's

dedicated colour technology lab in close collaboration with Global Colour Manager Lisbeth Larsen and her team have created and developed a unique palette of colours ranging from smooth warming neutrals to natural, calming greens and rich, statement reds. **Unique collections** The new colours have been divided into groups of seven, along with existing shades from the Jotun archive to create three perfectly blended colour collections. These unique collections capture different moods and modes of expression, enabling people to easily combine complementary and contrasting shades within each collection. This creates coherent interiors that tell stories about the home and those who live there. Larsen and her team monitor the mood and mindset of people, cities and societies around the world. These three themes reflect one of the key findings and strong current sociocultural tendencies. The serenity of simplicity: the consolation of nature and the comforting nostalgia of a beautifully curated lifestyle. "For many of us, the role of the

home and what we expect from it has shifted in recent times. It used to be a sanctuary that we returned to and relaxed in, but now that we spend more time at home, we expect even more from it. It has become a place of work, play, rest, and reconnection. Jotun's new Global Colour Card responds to this by encouraging people to let their homes reflect what matters most to them. To choose colours that inspire them, whatever they are doing. To step back and create from the heart," said Larsen. Rana Khadra, Colour and Creative Manager Middle East, India and Africa commented: "We hope the exhibition inspires people to explore the sensory power of colour and to paint their own story. In this collection, we present colours for the new stories expressed in our homes and personal spaces, a selection of tones, tints, and hues selected for their power to create positivity and inspire creative expression. They have not been selected because they are on trend or created to keep up with fashion, but rather because they are timeless, honest, open to an individual's interpretation and rich in meaning."

ROUND-UP

Low EMI on incredible family SUV all-new 2023 Nissan X-Trail

The X-Trail has been an integral part of Nissan SUV line-up in the region for the last twenty years and has continually catered to the needs of families and adventure enthusiasts across Oman

MUSCAT: Suhail Bahwan Automobiles (SBA) has announced low EMI of OMR 130 on the all-new 2023 Nissan X-Trail which offers customers class-leading versatility, elevated exterior and interior designs, advanced safety, and improved levels of capability. In line with SBA's commitment to provide the best for its customers, it is offering attractive EMI



which is calculated on the price of the base model with 20 per cent down payment, 6.5 per cent rate of interest for 5 years loan tenure through Bank Muscat. Subject to credit approvals. A senior official of SBA said: "We are delighted to offer low EMI on the incredibly popular Nissan X-Trail. Developed as a premium urban crossover, the all-new 2023 Nissan X-Trail furthers the brand's commitment to introduce innovative mobility solutions."

Reflecting the Nissan SUV's role to Defy Ordinary, the key themes echoed across the event were eXpand, eXpress, eXplore, and eXhale, pushing guests to eXist beyond the everyday. A segment-leader on several fronts, the all-new model features the latest Nissan Intelligent Mobility technologies, including ProPILOT Assist for the very first time on the X-Trail line-up, and offers heightened connectivity with up to collective 35.4-inches of cabin screens. The X-Trail has been an integral

part of Nissan SUV line-up in the region for the last twenty years and has continually catered to the needs of families and adventure enthusiasts across Oman. Brought about by a deep understanding of its customers, the all-new 2023 Nissan X-Trail, which is one of the most technologically advanced SUVs to date, addresses customer desires in the rapidly growing mid-size SUV segment and is in line with the global Nissan NEXT transformation plan. The latest addition to Nissan's

impressive SUV lineup, the all-new 2023 Nissan X-TRAIL features a striking exterior design, with distinctive Nissan elements including a signature V-motion grille and floating roof design. Accentuating the X-Trail's appeal to families are its bigger-opening rear door apertures that open up to 85 degrees for easier rear access and egress. The interior receive a premium upgrade, underlined by Nappa leather-accented seating with 3D diamond quilting available on the top-of-the-range SL grade. The 2023 Nissan X-Trail is powered by an all-new 2.5-litre four-cylinder petrol engine that, compared to its predecessor, raises power output by 12hp to 181hp, and boosts torque by 11Nm to 244Nm, for more effortless acceleration and confident overtaking. Power is pushed through an advanced Continuously Variable Transmission (CVT) with paddle-shift controls on the steering wheel for manual over-ride of the new shift-by-wire transmission interface. Making its debut in the All-New 2023 Nissan X-Trail is an Intelligent 4x4 system with direct coupling that reacts faster than ever before, allowing for the seamless transfer of power between axles

for ultimate stability and traction. A twist-dial Drive Mode Selector provides five driving modes to choose from: Off-Road, Snow, Auto, Eco and Sports, with the added benefit of Hill Descent Control for carefully modulated downhill off-road driving. Nissan Intelligent Mobility suite of active safety features is provided with greater capability, making it the safest X-Trail ever, with Nissan Safety Shield 360 that includes automatic emergency braking with pedestrian detection, blind spot warning, rear cross traffic alert, lane departure warning and high beam assist. Supporting this is the first-ever introduction of Nissan's semi-autonomous ProPILOT Assist on X-Trail, which can accelerate, brake, and cruise at a set speed within a single lane. Offering customers the choice to select the grade that best suits their lifestyle, the all-new model is available in three grades, with 4WD options. This is in addition to 15 different color combinations including dual-tone options with 7-seater. The all-new Nissan X-Trail 2023, which is the fourth SUV model to sport the brand's latest design language and insignia, following the Patrol, Pathfinder, and KICKS, is available for booking at SBA.

TRAINING PROGRAMME

bp Oman and Al Tawasul institute launch 'Sharah' programme for jobseekers with hearing disabilities

MUSCAT: In partnership with bp Oman, Al Tawasul Institute for Training held a ceremony to launch the 'Sharah' programme - the first of its kind in the region - under the patronage of Sayyid Salim bin Musallam Al Busaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Labour for Human Resource Development. 'Sharah' is a training programme which targets 40 jobseekers with hearing impairments. The programme aims to develop and enhance their skills in Arabic, English and computer skills to help them advance in the labour market and compete for job opportunities. It will also include capacity building workshops, outdoor activities and exposure to various fields such as literature, arts, history, graphic design and more. The programme will also train 20 of the participants to become qualified instructors and provide 10 job opportunities for people with hearing disabilities. Ibrahim Al Hinai, bp Oman Social investment specialist, commented: "The programme supports our aim at bp Oman to empower people with disabilities. This unique programme will enable them to learn the skills so that they can compete fairly with other



Omanis in the labour market. We look forward to the success of this programme in delivering that, and continuing to pave the way for more diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives in our society." Said Al Badaii, General Manager of Al Tawasul Institute for Training added: "The programme offers valuable knowledge for people with disabilities and with the exposure to various activities and sectors; we hope that it will inspire them to learn more and develop a wide range of skillset and

strengths. We hope that through the programme the participants will be able to gain job opportunities in their desired fields of work."



BUY & WIN



Nabil picks mega prize MG RX5 promo winner

MUSCAT: National Biscuit Industries Ltd, manufacturers of the brand 'Nabil' with the extensive range of Biscuits, Cream Wafers and Snacks, announced the winner of the final round of 'Nabil Buy & Win' promotion raffle draw. The winner of MG RX5 is Mohammad Humayun Rashid. The winners of 4g gold coin are: Ibrahim Abdallah Al Darmaki, Mohammad Saif, Al Salt Bin Ahmed Al Amni, Shiju Kumar, Clevan, Hamdan Aljabri, Khamis Bin Muhammed Al Kindi, Abdallah Hamoud Almitlik, Maanoop V S, Khalfan. This is the seventh year where National Biscuit Industries Ltd, had a car as a mega raffle

prize. The company has recently launched a new range of products- Maamoul, Fillz, Nankhatai and Nutgestive to name a few of them. The company thanks the consumers of Oman, for their continued support and promise to offer them a wider basket of quality products at the most affordable prices. National biscuit Industries Ltd, is a leading manufacturer of biscuits, wafers and snacks in the Sultanate of Oman. Nabil products have a strong presence in the GCC region and are exported globally to more than 45 countries. The unflinching patronage of our consumers makes National Biscuits Industries Ltd the pride of Oman.

OMAN INTERNATIONAL HOSPITAL

OIH launches Med Academy: A pathway towards clinical excellence



MUSCAT: The Oman International Hospital (OIH) began on February 1, the Med Academy, a 10 years project powered by Siemens Healthineers. The overall goal of Med Academy is to promote the technical and clinical know-how of OIH employees aiming to increase skills leading to the provision of the best health care, in line with the highest quality standards worldwide. The project includes onsite and

online training sessions, e-education platforms, preceptorships, and symposiums. And it will be used as the foundation for the process of accreditation of the hospital. Oman International Hospital was founded in 2021, in collaboration with an experienced European hospital management group (IGHS) and composed of three diverse shareholders: Oman Brunei Investment Company, Suhail Bahwan Group, and Idealmed

Global Healthcare Services (IGHS). Marcelo Pereira CEO of OIH said, "With the assistance of a network of highly devoted and skilled medical professionals, renowned international doctors, sophisticated medical equipment, and cutting-edge technology in streamlining, OIH is committed to providing world-class treatment to the citizens of Oman as well as to the expatriate populace of the country."



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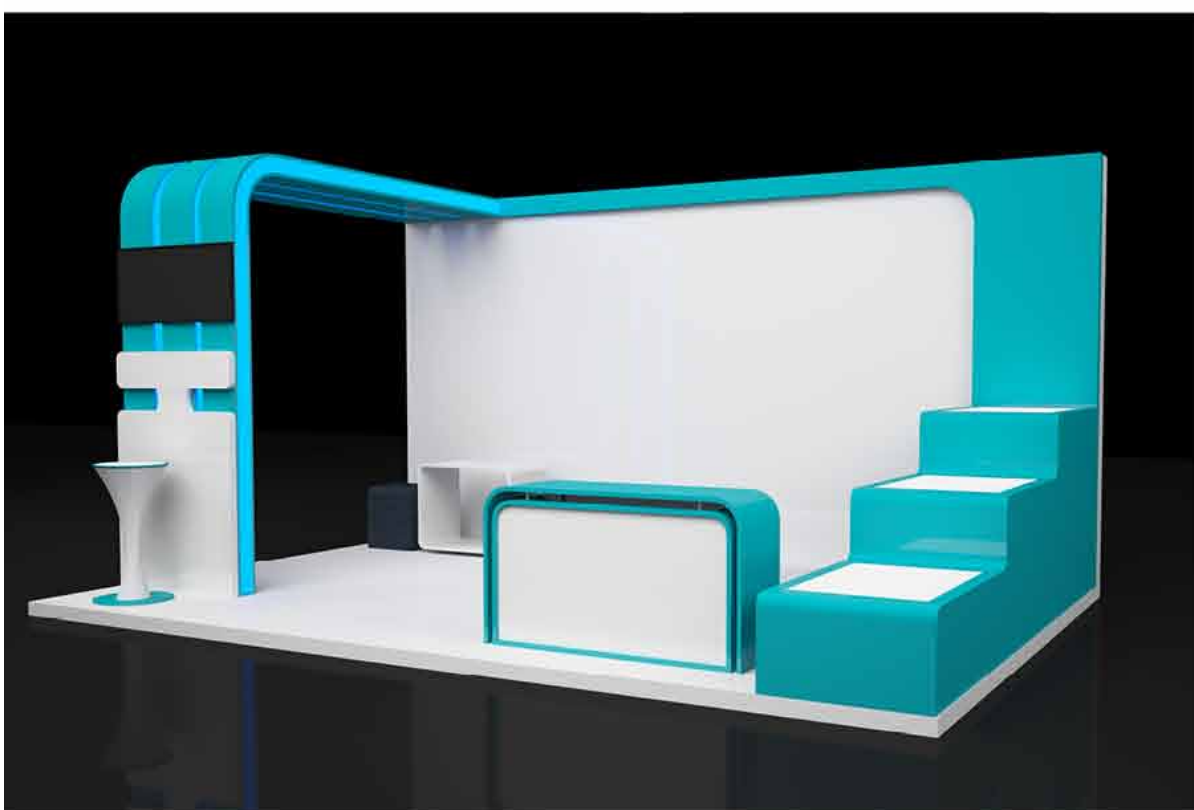
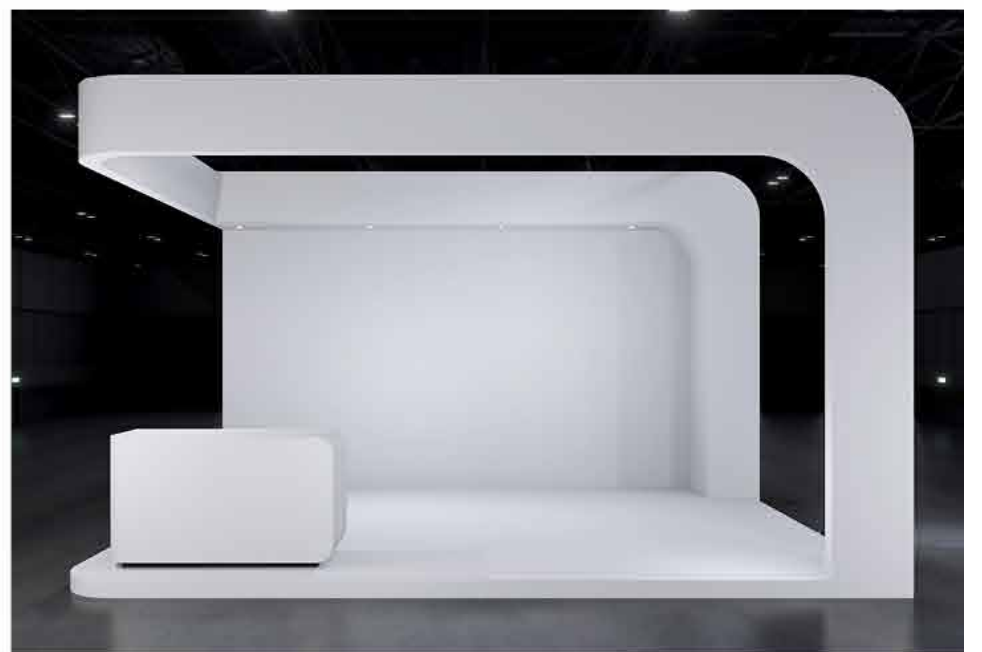
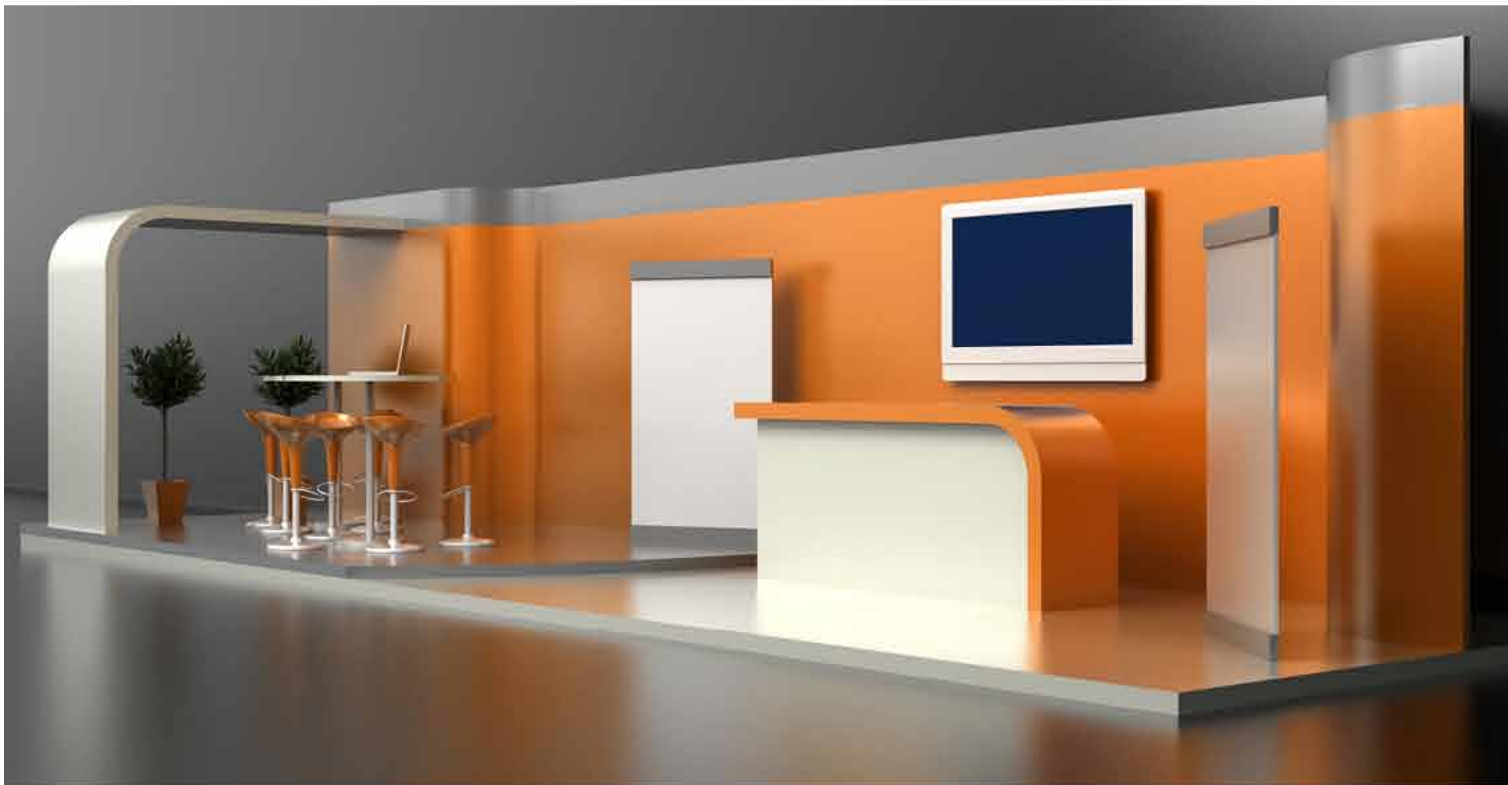
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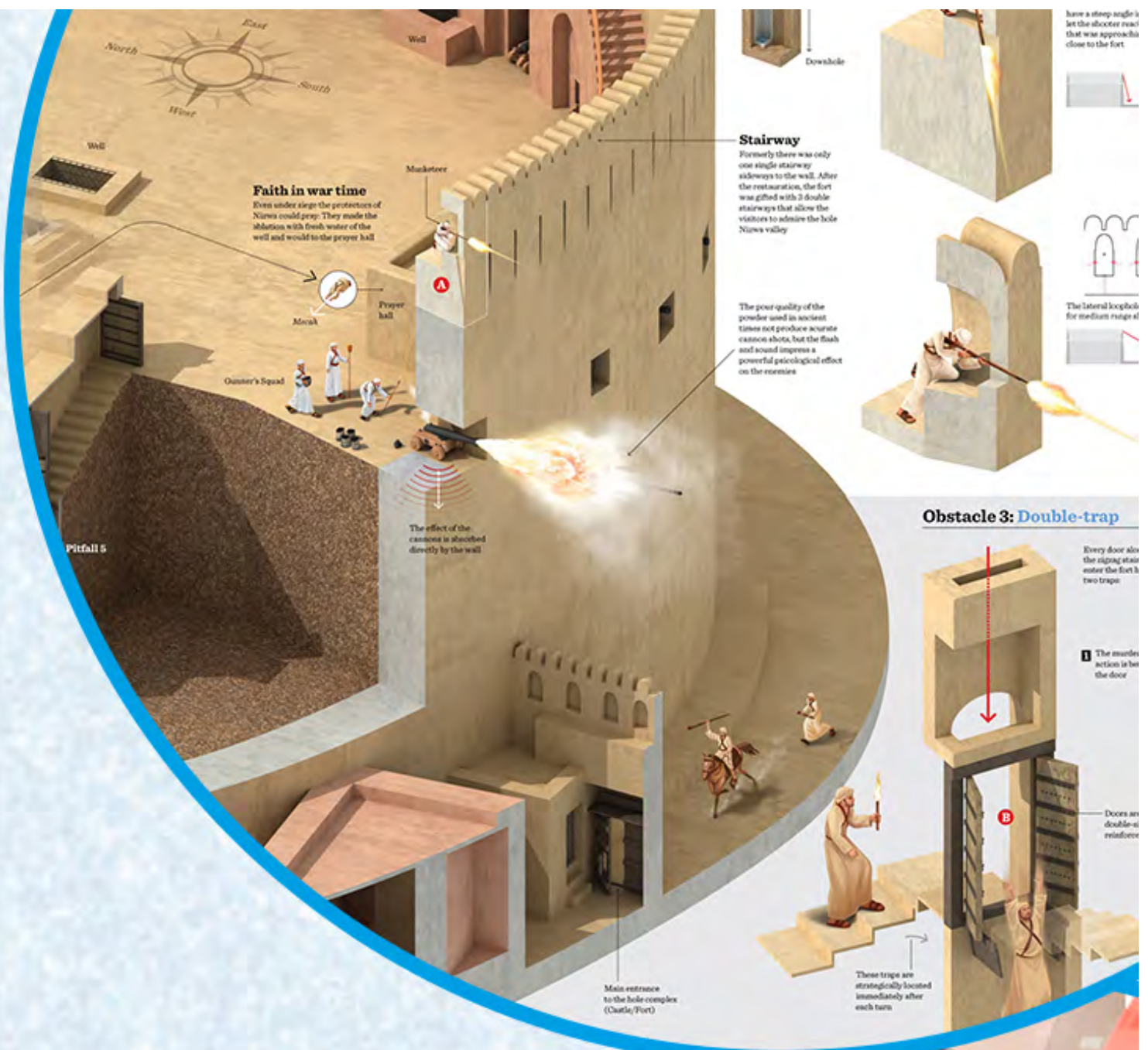
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