

REPAIR WORK OF AL BATINAH HIGHWAY CONTINUES

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology is currently executing the repair work of Al Batinah Highway from the Wilayat of Barka to Khatmat Milaha in the Wilayat of Shinas. **>A5**



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RAMADAN PRAYER TIMINGS	
DHUHR	12:14pm
ASR	3:41pm
MAGHRIB	6:30pm
ISHA	7:42pm
FAJR (APRIL 10)	4:34am

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Oman to be fastest growing GCC country in 2023: World Bank

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman is set to become the fastest growing economy among the six GCC nations in 2023 with a 4.3 percent projected growth, according to a report by the World Bank.

The World Bank, however, predicted slowing of GDP growth across the GCC, revising its 2023 economic growth projection for the GCC downwards to 3.2%, from 3.7% forecast in October.

The report said that Oman is expected to perform better than its fellow GCC nations amid this decelerating growth scenario. It said: "In the GCC, growth is expected to slow to 3.2 per cent in 2023 and to 3.1 per cent in 2024. This comes after the GCC grew 7.3 per cent in 2022. The fastest growing economy within the GCC in 2023 is projected to be

Oman, at 4.3 percent growth."

"Despite weakening demand for oil, Oman's relatively high growth is expected to be sustained by increased hydrocarbon production capacity, in particular aided by the development of new natural gas fields," the report stated.

The report, titled "Altered Destinies: The Long-Term Effects of Rising Prices and Food Insecurity in the Middle East and North Africa," said that the GCC growth will continue to outperform the wider MENA region with GDP to slow down to 3.0 percent in 2023, from 5.8 percent in 2022.

The report said that energy producers that benefited from resurgent Oil and Gas export revenues in 2022 will experience slower growth, but will fare significantly better than the rest of the region.

OMRAN EYES MORE TOURISM REVENUES FOR ECONOMY

We are working to strengthen collaborations with stakeholders to achieve tourism development goals, says Omran Chairman Eng Mohammed Salim Al Busaidi

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran Group), the Sultanate of Oman's executive arm responsible for delivering the objectives set in the 2040 National Tourism Strategy, is working on ways to strengthen collaborations with various stakeholders to explore tourism development opportunities in the country, according to its chairman, Eng Mohammed Salim Al Busaidi.

Speaking to Al Shabiba Radio



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Spread over a large area, Hay al Sharq will have entertainment and leisure theme parks, wildlife and water parks, equestrian and edutainment centres



during a talk show, Al Busaidi said: "We have ambitious plans to develop the tourism sector and are involved with many projects across the Sultanate in partnership with the Ministry of Her-

itage and Tourism and various stakeholders."

"This is part of Omran's ongoing efforts to improve the tourism sector's competitiveness and create unique offerings."

He added: "Omran Group is continuously working to strengthen collaborations with stakeholders to achieve its comprehensive tourism development goals. We are dedicated to developing the tourism sector in various governorates of the Sultanate by creating high-end tourism projects.

By developing the tourism sector and collaborating with local entities, Omran aims to maximise the sector's contribution to the government's economic diversification plans."

Among the key initiatives are Omran plans to organise tourism activities at various locations in collaboration with their respective governor's offices. **>A2**

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TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Ukraine keen to boost ties with Oman

1 Given the significant role played by the Sultanate of Oman in the Gulf region, it is important for Ukraine to promote bilateral relations in mutually beneficial ways. This was stated by Dr Maksym Subkh, Special Representative of Ukraine for the Middle East and Africa, who visited Oman recently. In a statement released to the Omani media, he said Oman is one of Ukraine's important partners in the Middle East and we pay much attention to the development of bilateral relations. **>A3**

WORLD



India registers 6,155 fresh Covid cases

2 India recorded 6,155 fresh Covid-19 infections in the last 24 hours, marking a marginal increase from Friday's tally of 6,050 cases, the Union health ministry stated in a bulletin on Saturday. **>A6**

SPORTS

Oman to take part in ACC Men's Premier Cup

3 A confident Oman are set to compete in the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) Men's Premier Cup – an integral part of ACC's new pathway structure – that will be held in Nepal from April 18-May 1. Ten Associate nations will battle it out in Nepal's capital of Kathmandu with the winner securing a direct qualification for the ACC Men's Asia Cup 2023. The top-three teams at the event will also qualify for the ACC Emerging Cup 2023. Zeeshan Maqsood will lead the national team. **>B6**

One killed, 11 injured after tourist boats catch fire in Khasab

A5

BENEFITS OF FASTING

Fasting in solidarity during the holy month of Ramadan

Times News Service

MUSCAT: One is a doctor who has served in the Sultanate of Oman for more than three decades. The other, a homemaker, has also been living in the country for more than 30 years.

However, both have one more thing in common – fasting throughout the holy month of Ramadan – despite following other faiths.

Col (Dr) Narayan Ramachandran (ret'd) and Ajitha Subramanian have been fasting during the holy month of Ramadan for the past many years and feel that "the experience gained through fasting has made them better persons".

As the holy month completed 15 days on Friday, *Times of Oman* spoke to the fasting non-

Muslims to get an insight on the reasons for fasting.

Ramchandran, a well-known orthopaedic surgeon, said: "I started to regularly fast during Ramadan from the year 2000. It all started a year earlier when I was invited to a post-sunset feast (iftar) gathering at an industrial camp in Ghala. I had gone to that iftar after my lunch and evening tea. But what I saw there moved me. I saw the piety on the faces of those workers who waited patiently for the call of prayers before breaking the fast."

The doctor, who has been actively involved with many social and charitable causes, continued: "I then decided that whenever I attend an iftar, I would keep a fast and I did that in 1999. But from 2000, I decided to keep fast throughout the holy month and



Col (Dr) Narayan Ramachandran (ret'd), orthopaedic surgeon.

have been fasting except for a couple of years when my health didn't permit it."

He added: "I feel good fasting during the holy month as it gives me immense satisfaction. When I



Ajitha Subramanian, a homemaker from Thrissur.

see all my colleagues at the workplace fasting, I feel it is not right for me to eat or drink. I feel much better after fasting and it is not tough doing it even if I am a Hindu. I share the values of fellow people

of different faiths and there is a feeling of wellbeing.

Teachings of Ramadan

Ramachandran said: "Fasting during Ramadan is indeed special as everyone around you is fasting. It is also a month that teaches us how to live the remaining 11 months of the year. I firmly believe that one should not forget the teachings of Ramadan during the rest of the year. We should follow the principles of the holy month all the time."

For Ajitha, who is 60 years of age and a Hindu, it was the desire to share the feeling of Ramadan with fellow people in Oman that led her to start fasting.

"I wanted to experience how one feels while fasting without even water throughout the day. Once I did, I felt good and since then, I

have been regularly doing it for the past ten years."

"It is also a spiritual journey when one fasts and I feel good when I fast during the holy month. It gives me a lot of satisfaction," said Ajitha, who hails from Thrissur in the southern Indian state of Kerala.

She arrived in Oman in 1990 and joined her husband who has business interests in Ibri in Al Dhahirah Governorate.

She said: "Oman is a country that treats people equally with respect and dignity. So, I thought when I stay in this country, I should go by its tradition and culture."

Ajitha said that she never forced her kids to do fasting but would like to continue "as long as my health permits." **>A3**

PRAYER
TIMINGS

Dhuhr.....	12:14pm
Asr.....	3:41pm
Maghrib.....	6:30pm
Isha.....	7:42pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....	4:34am

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TOURISM SECTOR

Omran aims to contribute more to promote Oman’s tourism sector

< FROM A1 These projects will be carried out to international standards to attract diverse groups and boost local tourism. Such initiatives align with the Omran’s goals of promoting local tourism, maximising local value, and achieving social and economic benefits.

Major projects
Speaking about the major projects, Al Busaidi said: “At present we are involved with five tourism development projects in Dhofar Governorate, funded by the Dhofar Municipality and the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism. These include development of Jarzeez, Iteen Plain, Wadi Darbat, Al Mughsayl and Hamrir Plain areas. “Omran is also working on a number of projects in Musandam Governorate, Al Dhahirah Governorate (three), Al Buraimi Governorate (two), and a few projects in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate.” Al Busaidi said: “Omran’s mandate is to create sustainable and authentic tourism assets, lifestyle communities and destinations that drive economic growth and contribute to the diversification of the economy. We achieve our mandate by acting alone, or as a catalyst, bringing together the strength of government and the entrepreneurship of the private sector. “We work with all stakeholders, partners, SMEs and local communities to ensure a positive physical, social and economic contribution to both the environment and people’s lives while respecting the traditional culture and environmental values of Oman.” Al Busaidi admitted that Omran is committed to cut the operational losses, which it suffered during the COVID-19 pandemic. “It will take time for us to get back our return on investment as we plan our operations in a better way ahead. The pandemic really hit us hard,”

he said. Giving an example of the Omran Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) project, Al Busaidi said “the project will still take many more years to gain profit as the operational value is high.” “The investments made in OCEC were very high and we need to attract a huge number of international events in future to make it a viable and a profit-making project,” he said. The Omran chairman also said that the Al Hoota Cave project needs larger investment due to its high operational cost. Al Busaidi agreed that the Sultanate of Oman failed to capitalise on global opportunities that took place in neighbouring countries. He said: “We couldn’t maximise the benefits, be it the Expo 2020 in the UAE or the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar, despite the efforts made by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and the other stakeholders. Possibly, the reasons were delay in execution of plans due to the lack of sufficient resources.” **First entertainment project** Al Busaidi also spoke about the first entertainment project in the Sultanate – Hay Al Sharq district project that is expected to be ready by 2024. Developed by ASAAS, Hay al Sharq will be spread over a multi-cluster 1.5 million square metres entertainment and leisure theme park, which will boast an integrated theme park, wildlife and water parks, an equestrian centre and an edutainment centre, as well as retail areas that will offer a range of retail, leisure and dining options. It will also feature hotels, with a residential zone and retail areas. Besides the Yiti Intergrated Tourism Development project, the other major master development projects include Madinat Al Irfan, InterContinental Hotel development, and Mina Sultan

Qaboos Waterfront. **Adventure activities** The start of water sports and adventure activities at Wadi Dayqah dam in Qurayyat was also mentioned by Al Busaidi. It may be mentioned that in October 2022, a range of facilities, including kayak and paddleboard rentals, donut boat hire, pedal boats and a mountain bike trail were offered at the popular tourist site. Al Busaidi said: “The water sports activities launched at Wadi Dayqah are part of a broader development plan we are implementing along with a private operator at the dam in collaboration with the Ministry of Heritage in Tourism and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources. With this development plan, Omran is leveraging Wadi Dayqah’s popularity and unlocking its potential as a water sports and adventure tourism destination. By doing this, we’ll be able to diversify our range of tourism products.” Al Busaidi expressed happiness on the recent signing between Omran and Dar Al Arkan, the leading real estate company in Saudi Arabia and the GCC, to develop ‘AIDA’ a premium, mixed-use project nestled within the masterplan of Yiti Integrated Tourism Development. **Dar Al Arkan’s first entry** The project marks Dar Al Arkan’s first entry into Oman to drive the development of the property market and support the growth of Oman’s tourism and real-estate sectors in accordance with Oman Vision 2040. The value of the investment in the project from both parties will reach US\$1.5 billion, and it will be developed in three phases on an area of 3.5 million square metres. “Yiti Integrated Tourism Development” is one of the largest

urban developments in Oman, extending to a total area of over 11 million square kilometres. The project is surrounded by unique aspects of the Sultanate’s natural wonders, including its sandy shores, majestic mountains, curvaceous hills and valleys, and unique topography that naturally envelops the breath-taking setting to make the most of Oman’s beauty. Earlier this year, Oman Investment Authority (OIA) announced the restructuring of its tourism and real-estate investments in the Sultanate by transferring them to Omran, a subsidiary of OIA. The restructuring saw the transfer of the integrated “Yeti Sustainable Tourism City” project, a 1.5 million square metres waterfront tourism complex, the 5-star ‘Alila Hinu’ Bay Hotel in the Wilayat of Mirbat, Dhofar, with its 112 room, integrated leisure facilities and free-hold villas. **Adventure Park** Additionally, Naseem Hotel at Al Jabal Al Akhdar with its chalets and Adventure Park has also been transferred to Omran’s hospitality arm. The restructuring is aimed to channelise tourist and real-estate investments under one efficient management in alignment with Oman Vision 2040 and the Tenth Five-Year Plan. Tourism has been identified in the plan as a key sector to achieve economic diversification in the Sultanate, promote growth, increase the GDP’s non-oil revenues, and attract direct foreign investments. The operational framework of Omran is based on four key pillars: tourism, development, hospitality and development partnerships. Omran owns, manages and invests in many tourist assets across the Sultanate amounting to 27 hotels and resorts with over 4,000 hotel rooms. (With inputs from OMA and www.omran.om)



MINISTRY’S PLANS OUTLINED

Shura Council hosts Minister of Transport

MUSCAT: The Shura Council on Thursday hosted Eng. Said Hamoud Al Ma’awali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, who outlined his ministry’s policies, plans and programmes within the field of transport and infrastructure. In the ministry’s statement at the Shura Council’s 12th regular session of the 9th Term, the minister discussed the policies, plans and programmes within the context of the 10th Five Year Plan and measures to activate it in line with Oman Vision 2040, the Development Budget 2023 and strategic approaches to the communications and information technology sector. In his speech, Al Ma’awali said that the ministry is supervising vital sectors including transport, communications and information technology that will have a prominent role in achieving the goals of “Oman Vision 2040”. Emphasis is laid on the priorities of the current stage of the Vision, the establishment of an empowering infrastructure that is capable of keeping pace with developments and modifications, he explained. The minister added that the ministry is embarked on drafting a number of regulatory and legislative frameworks for the governance of its activities, besides improving the satisfaction of those benefiting from its services. He pointed out that the ministry gave directives to implement a number of strategic road projects during the current five-year plan. These projects, he said, include the addition of a third and fourth

lanes to the Rusayl - Bidbid road (Part 1), whose accomplishment rate stood at 60% as at the end of 2022. The project assumes special significance and it is scheduled to be completed by the end of this year (2023), said Al Ma’awali. The minister added that the Ministry is making progress in its plan to complete the remaining parts of Adam-Thumrait dual-carriageway—a 400-km stretch. He said that the ministry monitored the implementation of projects that were suspended over the past few years due to contractors’ inability to complete the projects. The works were later floated, assigned and accomplished during the current five-year plan. These include the final part of A’Sharqiyah Expressway and Al Abela- Al Fayyad) road, the remaining tasks of Al Batinah Expressway, a project to raise the efficiency of Sinaw-Mahout-Duqm road and another to complete the remaining part of Adam-Haima road. The Ministry is finalising contractual procedures for another set of projects, which include the designing and implementation of Daba-Khassab road with Lima link, the designing and implementation of the remaining parts of the Al Batinah Coastal Road (Phase 1), Barka link and A’Suwaiaq link, said the minister. He added that the ministry awarded a project for designing the dual-carriageway between the Wilayat of Al Kamil W’al Wafi and the Wilayat of Ja’alan Bani Bu Ali. — OMA

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Ukraine praises Oman’s role in Gulf region, keen to promote bilateral ties

Oman is considered as one of Ukraine’s significant trading and economic partners in the Middle East and Gulf region

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Given the significant role played by the Sultanate of Oman in the Gulf region, it is important for Ukraine to facilitate and promote bilateral relations in mutually beneficial ways.

This was stated by Dr Maksym Subkh, Special Representative of Ukraine for the Middle East and Africa, who visited Oman recently.

In a statement released to the Omani media, he said Oman is one of Ukraine’s important partners in the Middle East and we pay much attention to the all-round development of bilateral relations, people-to-people ties and cooperation within the international organisations.

“Personally, I am pleased to pay an official visit to Oman for the first time since taking office as the Special Representative. Your country is truly impressive; it represents an example of delicate balance between wise leadership, prudent policy-making and huge economic ambitions,” Dr Subkh.

“We have many opportunities and plans on how to turn our sincere intentions into a successful story of friendship and partnership,” he added. Regarding his



Dr Maksym Subkh, Special Representative of Ukraine for the Middle East and Africa.

visit to Oman and his experience here, Subkh said, “Personally, I am pleased to pay an official visit to Oman for the first time since taking office as the Special Representative. Your country is truly impressive; it represents an example of a delicate balance between wise leadership, prudent policy-making and huge economic ambitions.”

“We have many opportunities and plans on how to turn our sincere intentions into a successful story of friendship and partnership,” he added.

“We spare no efforts trying to strengthen our trade and economic cooperation with Oman. Notwithstanding the negative economic consequences of COVID-19 pandemic, our bilateral trade in 2020 increased by 21 percent and amounted to \$107 million. It’s a highly positive trend but our real potential is still to be explored.

“And to show that our expectations are justified, I would like to

draw your attention to the fact that during 2021, bilateral trade between Ukraine and Oman grew by more than 119 per cent, and amounted to \$203 million,” Dr Subkh said.

He said, “We believe that there is still a substantial unlocked capacity for growth in the future. It is real and obvious that with the beginning of the war, our business slowed down, sometimes it stopped, but at the same time it quickly resumed and, in some cases, even increased in volumes. Hardships create new opportunities and experienced Ukrainian entrepreneurs are professionally taking advantage of them.”

Ukraine now takes all necessary measures in order to create opportunities for national exporters to have access to more foreign markets, especially related to the Global South region, he added.

Dr Subkh said, “We consider agriculture, construction, infra-

structure, manufacturing, health-care, information technologies and digital transformation as the most promising areas for our trade, economic and investment cooperation, as well as invite the Omani side to participate in privatisation processes in Ukraine.”

“We are convinced that holding regular contacts as well as establishing additional bilateral mechanisms and platforms of coordination and interaction like inter-parliamentary friendship groups, joint intergovernmental commission on trade and economic cooperation and Ukrainian-Omani business council can provide a strong impetus to development of our relations and, in particular, clearly help to unleash their enormous potential.”

Dr Subkh said, “In this regard, we consider business-to-business connections to be of crucial importance in terms of promoting and accelerating our trade and economic partnership, especially taking into account the positive effect of the negotiations and presentation of Ukrainian manufacturers’ products at the Chamber of Commerce of Oman in recent years. We hope that our joint efforts on this track will benefit all the parties involved.”

Regarding the opening of the Embassy of Ukraine in Muscat. He said that, “At the end of 2022 the President of Ukraine took a decision to open the Embassy of Ukraine in Muscat. This step is important for shifting our relations to a qualitatively new level. Also it is a direct signal to our Omani friends: we are seriously committed to leave our footprint in Oman and turn to the next page of our cooperation.”

“We believe that mutual establishment of permanent diplomatic missions is of crucial importance for our mutual future and Ukraine would welcome the decision of the

Sultanate of Oman on opening its Embassy in Kyiv as well,” Dr Subkh further added.

He said that in Ukraine, we are consistently monitoring the security, political, social and economic developments in the Gulf and entire Middle East region and, thus, underline the role which Oman plays within the framework of promoting and strengthening peace and stability in the region, that goes fully in line with Omani tested and trusted mediation experience in supporting solution of different conflicts and crises.

The visit of the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy to the Sultanate of Oman in January 2020 gave a significant boost to further systematic and institutionalised development of our bilateral relations in various fields. In recent years, we have been holding regular consultations and contacts between Foreign Ministries of Ukraine and Oman, which make it possible to maintain close coordination on a wide range of bilateral and international agenda issues that are of mutual interest, Dr Subkh said.

Elaborating on the post-war economic recovery of Ukraine, he said, “Despite the negative effects of Ukraine’s economic development, I believe that we should prepare the groundwork for the full-scale restoration of trade cooperation with the countries of the region, as well as the attraction of their investment potential for the restoration of Ukraine’s destroyed infrastructure.”

The post-war rebuilding of Ukraine’s economy should provide for extensive economic and social recovery, and should not be limited to physical reconstruction of infrastructural assets.

As the President of Ukraine has stated, the economic recovery of Ukraine will be the largest economic project in Europe. And

we have the honour to invite our Omani partners to take advantage of such a great opportunity to participate in mutually beneficial investment initiatives, he added.

Speaking about global food security, Dr Subkh said, “Ukraine has proven its role as a reliable food security guarantor committed to all of its obligations and has asserted The Black Sea Grain Initiative together with the UN and Turkey.”

In November, President Zelenskyy launched the initiative of 18.4 million tonnes of food have already been shipped to the most vulnerable countries. The initiative allows direct purchase of agricultural products from Ukraine by participating states and the transfer of Ukrainian food products to the countries in need.

To date, more than 30 countries have joined the humanitarian programme, which has accumulated more than \$200 million in donations. Ukraine’s goal is to provide at least 5 million people with grain by the end of spring this year. Ukraine is committed to fulfilling its obligations and is continuing to ship agricultural products to ensure global food security and price stability, he further added.

Dr Subkh further elaborated that, “As a Special Representative of Ukraine for the Middle East and Africa I am a specially authorised person entrusted with facilitating the coordination of the actions of the executive authorities regarding the development of cooperation between Ukraine and the states of the Middle East and Africa.”

He said, “What I have seen and learned during the visit to Muscat filled me with more confidence that Ukraine and the Sultanate of Oman enjoy massive potential in various fields of cooperation, which has to be exploited and realised through our mutual efforts for the benefit of our nations.”

HOLY MONTH OF RAMADAN



‘Ramadan a time of spiritual discipline’

<FROM A1 While fasting is certainly one component of the month, it is hardly the sole motivation.

Ramadan is a time of spiritual discipline that is dedicated to prayer, charity and self-reflection,” she added.

Helps to control our mind

Ajitha said: “I personally feel that fasting during Ramadan makes me calm and composed. Personally, it is also an exercise that helps us to control our mind and fight cravings.”

Another resident of Oman, spoke on condition of anonymity. A Hindu, she has been fasting for the past five years, and said: “Although the experience of Muslims is undoubtedly different, the benefits of fasting don’t

elude non-Muslim participants. When you’re fasting, you get an immense sense of clarity of mind and you become a lot less anxious.” “During the month of Ramadan, I’m forced to slow down. I simply don’t have the energy to carry on working at my full pace. I genuinely like the experience because it’s good discipline — like a refresh for the year. It is a nice way to detoxify our mind and bring positivity in life,” she added.

“I fast because I want to pay respect to the belief system and the culture of the country I am in. Secondly, most of my colleagues are Muslims and all are fasting.”

In observance of the Holy Month of Ramadan, Muslims fast for 29 or 30 days from dawn to sunset.

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» CUISINE

IFTAR TRADITIONS IN IRAN

By Firdaus Noorain

Like every Islamic country, Iran is also known for its traditions and culture specially followed during the holy month of Ramadan. Their food culture is very similar to Turkish, Indian Mughals and Omani Cuisine. Saffron is a much-favoured ingredient in Iranian rice and pudding preparations.

In fact serving Sholeh Zard (Farsi) or Persian Saffron Rice Pudding is a traditional way of breaking the Iftar. 'Sholeh' means pudding and 'Zard' means yellow. This Popular Persian dessert is made on all kinds of occasions in Iran including 'Shab-e-Yalda' also known as Yalda Night which is celebrated like a festival on the longest night of the year and arrival of winter and specially during Ramadan.

During Iftar, Iranians prefer to have dates with water and black tea. Later they savour a delicious dish called Ash Reshteh, in other words, noodle soup. It's a nutrient rich meal made with special noodles similar to Italian minestrone cooked along with lentils, beans and herbs which make it ideal to have after Iftar.



» HEALTH

EXPLORE VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES DURING RAMADAN



VOLUNTEERING is a great way to help others and give back to our communities — and it's good for our mental and physical health. People who volunteer for as little as two hours a week may experience improved mental, emotional and physical health benefits that many older volunteers are gaining because, on average, they volunteer almost twice as much as people in other age groups.

There are a million ways to offer a helping hand, so why not start today. Whether you volunteer to help a poor person or someone going through difficult times, good deeds will earn you many blessings. Although it is important to be selfless and kind throughout the year, helping someone during the Holy Month is indeed a great act of kindness.

Volunteering doesn't have to mean a big-time commitment. So, decide what you're inter-

ested in—and spend time doing something that is meaningful to you! Make calls to someone who may be lonely, read to children at a local school or participate in a community day of service, you can decide what you want to do! The possibilities for volunteering are endless!

There's no better time than now to explore the volunteer opportunities available in your community.

» IFTAR TIMING

6:30 pm

» PRAYER TIMINGS

Dhuhr	12:14 pm
Asr	3:41 pm
Maghrib	6:30 pm
Isha	7:42 pm
Fajr (April 10)	4:34 am

» IFTAR RECIPE

SHOLEH ZARD

Recipe by Firdaus Noorain

- INGREDIENTS**
- 1 cup rice – Preferably Jasmine rice which is used the traditional way, soak for 3 to 4 hours.
 - 8 cups of water
 - 1 cup of sugar
 - 60g butter
 - 6 tsp rose water
 - 1/3 cup bloomed saffron
 - 1/2 cup almonds sliced or chopped
 - 1/4 tsp powdered cardamom
 - Some silver cut almonds and pistachios for garnish
- PREPARATIONS**
- Add the soaked rice with water to a cooking pot and cook the rice until it's mushy and sticky in consistency.
 - Add sugar and keep on medium heat.
 - Add bloomed saffron along with butter and keep stirring.
 - You may add water if needed to keep the consistency right.
 - Now add rosewater and sliced almonds and cook for 5 minutes on very low flame and keep stirring.
 - Remove from the heat and serve it hot with garnished almonds and pistachio and cinnamon.



» FASTING TIP

BUILD YOUR FITNESS

It's important to begin each day with a short session of light exercises, such as 10 to 15 minutes of brisk walking or running. The frequency and intensity can be gradually increased while maintaining the regimen. Just keep in mind that you won't feel as energetic on the day you're fasting as you would on any other day. Avoid performing high-intensity exercises like sprinting or heavy lifting.



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MANUFACTURING SECTOR



Ministry to begin conducting annual survey of industrial establishments

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The annual industrial establishments survey for the years (2020, 2021, and 2022) will be implemented in the Sultanate of Oman on Sunday.

The survey targets more than 960 industrial establishments in various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion will start implementing the survey in various industrial establishments, including industrial zones, ports, free zones and the Special Economic Zone at Duqm.

It will be submitted electronically. The digital system for industrial statistics aims to make all phases of the industrial survey in the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion fully digital, and contribute to the speed and accuracy of access to industrial information.

The implementation of this annual survey, which lasts for three months, is based on the outputs of industrial strategy, which relies for its plans on accurate statistics of the reality of the industrial sector in the Sultanate of Oman.

Its outputs are integrated with the statistics of the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The Ministry stated that for the third time, the annual indus-



trial survey is being implemented electronically as part of the Ministry's plans for digital transformation, as it will help companies and industrial establishments deliver their data accurately and will facilitate the process of data collection, review and analysis.

Hamida bint Abdul Hussein Al Lawati, Director of the Industrial Strategy Implementation and Evaluation Department at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, said: "Industrial information relies on complete statistical surveys that have a role in following up and evaluating the industrial strategy for 2040, improving performance follow-up mechanisms, knowing how to correct the establishments' moves in a timely manner, and linking industrial statistics with main performance indicators of the ministry."

Hamida Al Lawati stressed that these surveys contribute to measuring growth rates in the manufacturing sector during the coming period. This is thanks to the continuous efforts and encouragement to adopt modern technologies in the field of industry, in order to achieve economic diversification and activate the role of non-oil sectors.

Al Lawati indicated that the aim of implementing the periodic industrial survey is to provide a modern, comprehensive and accurate database on industrial establishments in the Sultanate of Oman and to create advanced indicators to monitor and measure the performance of the industrial sector, in order to enhance transparency in the industrial sector, identify investment opportunities and raise the percentage of local content in the sector.





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1 DEAD AS TOURIST BOATS CATCH FIRE IN OMAN

One person died and 11 others were injured after three tourist boats caught fire in the Wilayat of Khasab, Musandam Governorate. The Royal Oman Police (ROP) said in a statement: “The Musandam Governorate Police Command, in cooperation with the Coast Guard Department and the Civil Defence and Ambulance Department in Musandam, dealt with a report of the burning of three tourist boats in the fishermen port in the Wilayat of Khasab, which resulted in the death of a European person and the injury of 11 people of different nationalities.”



BETWEEN BARKA AND KHATMAT MILAHA

Repair work of Al Batinah Highway being executed

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology is currently executing the repair work of Al Batinah Highway from the Wilayat of Barka to Khatmat Milaha in the Wilayat of Shinas.

The project's works includes replacement of the asphalt layer for a total length of 73 kilometres

along Al Batinah Main Road in different areas, replacement of the damaged steel barricades, installment of information board-sand paint works in accordance with the approved standard specifications set forth in the Sultanates Road Design Manual.

Al Batinah Highway is one of the significant roads which wit-

nesses huge road traffic.

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology is keen for carrying the necessary regular maintenance for Al Batinah Highway as to ensure safety of the rad users as one of the national achievements in the field of transport sector.

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The Internal Tenders Committee at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology In AL Khuwair invites for the Following Projects:

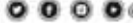
TENDER NO.	TENDER NAME	DATE OF PUBLISHING	LAST DATE TO PURCHASE TENDER DOCUMENT	SUBMISSION DATE	COMPANIES WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THIS TENDER	DOCUMENT PRICE
MTCT/ 72/2023	DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF SINGLE ROAD CONNECTING AL SUFIHAA VILLAGE IN BAHLA WITH NIZWA – JABRIN ROAD (AL DAKHILIYYA GOVERNORATE)	4-4-2023	18-4-2023	23- 5-2023	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF TENDER BOARD (FIRST CLASS)	(30/-) THIRTY OMANI RIAL NON-REFUNDABLE
MTCT/ 72/2023	CONSTRUCTION OF BALANCE WORKS FOR DUALIZATION OF MAHDAH –AL RAWDHA ROAD	9-4-2023	20-4-2023	24- 5-2023	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF TENDER BOARD (FIRST CLASS)	(50/-) FIFTY OMANI RIAL NON-REFUNDABLE
MTCT/ 74/2023	SPACE CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAM	9-4-2023	20-4-2023	24- 5-2023	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF TENDER BOARD (EXCELENT, FIRST, SECONED CLASS)	(20/-) TWENTY FIVE OMANI RIAL NON-REFUNDABLE

Interested Companies registered with the Secretariat General of Tender Board may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website:
<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of documents. Tenders should be submitted online on given website.

CORRESPONDANCE:

1. Tender Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at e-Tendering System. (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
2. E-Tendering System Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the e-Tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number:
Tel: +968 24402200/ e-mail: etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om

INTERNAL TENDERS COMMITTEE

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Ramadan Iftar Program



The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "He who provides a fasting person something with which to break his fast, will earn the same reward as the one who was observing the fast, without diminishing in any way the reward of the latter."

The Oman Charitable Organization is pleased to announce that it will receive donations for Ramadan Iftar Program in Sultanate of Oman for the year 1444 AH AD 2023

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➤ Serum Creatinine

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➤ Blood Sugar

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➤ LDL / HDL Ratio

➤ TC / HDL Cholesterol Ratio

➤ Non-HDL Cholesterol

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HAEIL-2

N. Korea claims to test underwater nuclear attack drone

PYONGYANG: North Korea carried out an underwater nuclear attack drone “Haeil-2” test from April 4 to April 7, state media Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said on Saturday.

The underwater nuclear attack drone “Haeil-2” entered into the test in Kajin Port, Kumya County, South Hamgyong Province in the afternoon on April 4. It cruised

1,000 km of simulated underwater distance in elliptical and “8” patterns set in the East Sea of Korea for 71 hours and 6 minutes.

In the afternoon on April 7 it arrived in the waters off Ryongdae Port, Tanchon City, South Hamgyong Province, the place of simulated target, where the test warhead accurately detonated underwater. The system will serve as

an advantageous and prospective military potential of the armed forces of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea essential for containing all evolving military actions of enemies, removing threats and defending the country, reported KCNA. North Korea has ramped up its military activities in recent weeks in a show of force against the United States and South Korea

that conduct joint military drills.

US and South Korean forces held their biggest war games in five years on the southern part of the Korean Peninsula.

North Korea has been testing various missiles at the same time, including the test of an intercontinental ballistic missile last week and the tests of smaller-range missiles. — **ANI**



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TENDER NOTICE

Sealed tenders are invited from authorized construction companies for the below mentioned project.

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Interested parties shall remit a sum of RO 15/ (RO Fifteen Only) at the school Office and collect the tender document between 9.00 a. m and 1.00 p. m on all working days from 10th April 2023 to 16th April 2023.

Indian School Sur reserves the right to accept or reject any tender.

Last date of submission: 20/04/2023 before 1.00 pm

IN NEXT FIVE YEARS

Kenya targets 10mn tourists

NAIROBI: Kenya is targeting 10 million foreign tourist arrivals in the next five years.

Francis Gichaba, chairperson of the Kenya Tourism Board, said the country will align its marketing initiatives so that the goal can be achieved gradually by the year 2027.

Kenya received 1,483,752 tourist arrivals in 2022.

“The tourism sector is one of the key pillars expected to positively impact lives from the lowest levels, and we have no options but to deliver,” Gichaba said in a statement.

Gichaba said that Kenya's best performing year was 2019, which closed at 2.05 million arrivals. — **Xinhua**

UNION HEALTH MINISTRY

India registers 6,155 fresh Covid cases in last 24 hours

NEW DELHI: The country recorded 6,155 fresh COVID-19 infections in the last 24 hours, marking a marginal increase from Friday's tally of 6,050 cases, the Union health ministry stated in a bulletin on Saturday.

Covid infections in the country have seen an upward trend in the past few days, with the daily fresh infections at 2,994 on April 1, 3,824 on April 2, 3,641 on April 3, 3,038 on April 4, 4,435 on April 5, 5,335 on April 6 and 6,050 on April 7. The overall active cases are stands at 31,194, as of Saturday, with the daily positivity rate at 5.63 per cent, the Health ministry stated further in its release.

With 3,253 recoveries in the last 24 hours, the overall count stood at 4,41,89,111, the bulletin stated, adding that the overall recovery rate is currently at 98.74 per cent.

Under the nationwide vaccination drive, a total of 220.66 crore vaccine doses (95.21 cr second doses and 22.87 cr precautionary doses) have been administered, as of Saturday, of which 1,963 doses were administered in the last 24 hours.

The ministry further stated that the weekly positivity rate currently stands at 3.47 per cent.

On Friday, Delhi reported 755 fresh Covid cases, in a continuing upward spiral in infections. Neighbouring Bihar reported 17 new cases.

The superintendent of Patna's Indira Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences (IGIMS) said, “Cases have increased due to recklessness and lax observance of Covid protocols. It could also be attributed to the changing weather pattern. But hospitals and the Bihar government are on alert.”

“Compared to other states, the situation in Bihar is still normal. Two patients were detected with Covid on Friday. They are receiving treatment and there is no need to panic,” he said.

Amid a nationwide upward

trend in the Covid cases, Union Health Minister Dr Mansukh Mandaviya on Friday chaired a review meeting with health ministers of all states and Union Territories through video conferencing.

Mandaviya urged state Health ministers to conduct mock drills at hospitals on on April 10 and 11 to assess their preparedness in handling a surge in cases.

He also urged states to identify emerging hotspots by monitoring trends of influenza-like illness (ILI) and severe acute respiratory infections (SARI) cases and sending sufficient samples for testing of COVID-19 and Influenza; and ramping up whole genome sequencing of positive samples. — **ANI**

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DISC/2023/063	Engage a competent consultancy company to develop quality policy, quality management system manual, and other procedures	23rd April 2023	14th May 2023	RO. 26.250
DISC/2023/064	Engage a competent consultancy company to conduct a gap analysis audit in existing waste& wastewater test facilities (02 labs.)	23rd April 2023	14th May 2023	RO. 26.250

- To view the tender details, you can visit www.disc.nama.om / scan the QR code
- The deposit at the last day of purchasing should be before 3.00pm.
- Bids shall be submitted online through using "isupplier portal". No hard copies are accepted.
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Very good day at the office: Krunal Pandya



The all-rounder starred with both bat and ball to help Lucknow Super Giants triumph

LUCKNOW: Lucknow Super Giants' all-rounder Krunal Pandya starred with both bat and ball to help his side defeat Sunrisers Hyderabad by five wickets on Friday. He said that he has put a lot of work into his bowling action in the last four to five months, trying to get taller at the crease and bowl with a higher arm. On a slowish Lucknow surface he put in an excellent figures of 3 for 18 off his four overs to keep Hyderabad to 121 for 8.

"In the last four-five months, I took a break from cricket, where I was not playing. I just wanted to work on my skills, especially bowling," Krunal said at the post-match presentation.

"I was just playing the white-ball format and what happened in the last two-three years, I just went wider and wider [with my release]. So I just wanted to work on my action, wanted to get tall so that I could get that turn and get that arm ball going as well."

Krunal was introduced into the attack in the third over, and he immediately struck, drawing Mayank Agarwal into an uppish drive. His next two wickets may have given even more satisfaction. He first sent back Anmolpreet Singh with a trademark quicker one that skidded through and pinned the batter in front of



the stumps.

The very next ball, he lured Aiden Markram forward with one that was a touch slow in the air. The Sunrisers captain prodded half-forward but failed to reach the pitch of the ball that spun just a touch to beat his outstretched defences and cannon into the off stump.

"Very good day at the office," Krunal said. "Having more right-handers [to bowl at], I knew I would be bowling four overs today and I was prepared for it. Overall, this year I am in a good headspace, I have much more clarity about how I want to go about my game, whether it's bat and ball.

"Everything, I guess, once you have clarity up there, things automatically fall in place. I am someone who is very process-driven, doesn't think that much

about results, and it is coming out really well."

Krunal wasn't done after his three-wicket haul. Coming out to bat at No.4, the left-hander scored a crucial 23-ball 34, adding 55 with his captain KL Rahul to help Lucknow Super Giants get closer to their target.

"I am trying to recollect how I played my first four-five years of IPL where I was batting at No.4 consistently for Mumbai [Indians]," Krunal said. "In the last three years, for MI when I batted, my role was completely changed, I was batting at No.7.

"So again, I am trying to find my rhythm and trying to find that consistency in how I would play at that number. Having clarity just helps you to go out there and execute your skills."

- Agencies

No-brainer to bowl spin early, says Lucknow captain Rahul

LUCKNOW: Lucknow Super Giants' captain KL Rahul said that he had no doubts about utilising spinners early on in the game against Sunrisers Hyderabad on Friday, which helped the hosts register a comfortable five-wicket win.

KL Rahul revealed that he had read the pitch on the eve of the game. "We've been here for a couple of weeks now. I knew what we were getting into (nature of the pitch)," Rahul said in the post-match presentation.

As Jaydev Unadkat's cutters were also gripping, the Lucknow captain said that "using spinners in



powerplay was always in his plans". "We saw in the first couple of overs: when Jaydev bowled a few

cutters, they were gripping. Was a no-brainer to bowl spin early. I knew Krunal Pandya (KP) is better in the powerplay," he added.

He also praised the batting unit for adapting well to the situation, saying that the players had conversations to help each other out. "First instinct when I saw both pitches was that we'll need to bat smartly here. We've adapted well as a batting unit. Each person plays very differently. Just a couple of chats with the batting group to help each other out. Good to see the players are going there and putting in the practice," said KL Rahul. -ANI

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LUCKNOW VS HYDERABAD

I've done lot of hard work, says Mishra

LUCKNOW: Veteran Indian leg-spinner Amit Mishra of Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) stole the show with his economical spell against the Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) on Friday.

Lucknow Super Giants (127/5) defeated Sunrisers Hyderabad (121/8) by five wickets to register their second win of the season in three matches at the Bharat Ratna Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ekana Cricket Stadium.

The 40-year-old Mishra kept Hyderabad's scoring rate in check in the middle overs with his skills and ended the game with 2/23 in 4 overs.

"I am feeling good. I have done a lot of hard work on my bowling and fielding. I know if I bowl faster it is easy to score for the batsmen. I try to vary my bowling. I try to do everything efficiently," said Mishra after the match. -ANI

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ESSENTIAL TRADE PARTNER

South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin, who is on a two-day visit to India, said India is an essential partner in South Korea's strategy for a peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific region.

MARKET
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SUNDAY, APRIL 9, 2023



DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Oman Data Park (ODP) and Uqudo, one of EMEA's most innovative digital identity companies, have joined a strategic partnership between them to contribute to accelerating the digital transformation in the Sultanate of Oman.

ahlibank appointed as financial advisor to support Duqm Port's expansion plans

As part of a recent agreement, ahlibank has been appointed as the sole financial advisor and the mandated lead arranger to Port of Duqm's expansion plans

Times News Service

MUSCAT: ahlibank's reputed Investment Banking division has been appointed as the sole financial advisor and mandated lead arranger for the Port of Duqm's fund-raising plans.

Port of Duqm Company is in preparation to set up a steel hub in the Duqm Port. Such set-up requires sizable port facilities and therefore necessary financing will have to be raised by the Port of Duqm.

Reggy Vermeulen, CEO, Port of Duqm and Hanaa Al Kharusi, Senior



General Manager of Wholesale Banking at ahlibank signed the pact in the presence of key representatives from two sides.

As part of a recent agreement ahlibank has been appointed as the sole financial advisor and the mandated lead arranger to Port of

Duqm's expansion plans.

Hanaa Al Kharusi, Senior General Manager of Wholesale Banking at ahlibank, stated, "We at ahlibank are delighted to have collaborated with the Port of Duqm Company in offering guidance for this pioneering venture in setting

up the steel hub that will accommodate world-class companies at Oman's prestigious port city. This financing deal is a significant milestone as it represents one of the most strategic greenfield projects to be financed in Oman to date. It will present an excellent long-

term investment opportunity for local, regional and international financiers by facilitating trade and fostering economic growth.

"The expansion will cater to the rising demand in the manufacturing sector while ensuring stable cash flows. Our Investment Bank-

ing team is committed to reinforcing its reputation as a trusted advisor to marquee corporate and GRE clients by providing customised and timely financial solutions."

Reggy Vermeulen, CEO, Port of Duqm, said, "We are thrilled to share that the Port of Duqm Company has appointed ahlibank as the sole financial advisor to raise the necessary funds for the set-up of the steel hub in Duqm. This strategic milestone will provide more opportunities for employment and In-Country-Value."

He further stated, "The partnership with ahlibank is a testament to the Port of Duqm Company's commitment to serve Oman's Vision 2040 and continue supporting a sustainable future for Oman's economy."

ahlibank Investment Banking provides a comprehensive range of financial advisory and fundraising services with a proven track record across products including Equity/Debt capital markets, debt syndications, refinancing/restructurings, M&A, private equity, Islamic finance and structured finance, complemented by its asset management team offering a diverse range of investment solutions across asset classes to institutions and high net worth clients and is the only bank in the country to provide brokerage and research services to clients.

STATISTICS

Oman's total domestic liquidity rises by 2% to reach OMR20.50 billion

MUSCAT: The total volume of domestic liquidity witnessed an increase of 2.1 per cent, to reach OMR20.50 billion at the end of January 2023 compared to the same period in 2022, according to a new report.

According to the preliminary statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) the total cash issued in Oman decreased at the end of January 2023 by 5.3 per cent to reach OMR1.60 billion, compared to OMR1.69 billion at the end of January 2022.

The money supply in the narrow sense, which consists of total cash outside the banking system, in addition to current accounts and demand deposits in local currency, decreased by 3.1 per cent to reach OMR5.57 billion at the end of January, compared to OMR5.75 billion during the same period of 2022.

As for the volume of foreign assets of the Central Bank of Oman (CBO), it decreased by 15.1 per cent, reaching at the end of last January to OMR6.25 billion compared to OMR7.58 during the same period in 2022.

On the other hand, total private sector deposits with commercial banks and Islamic windows in the



Sultanate of Oman increased by 1.5 per cent, to reach OMR17.53 billion at the end of January 2023, compared to OMR17.26 billion during the same period in 2022.

The NCSI data further indicated an increase in total loans and financing in commercial banks

and Islamic windows by 5 per cent, to reach OMR29.35 billion at the end of January 2023 compared to OMR27.95 billion during the same period in 2022.

The actual exchange rate index for the Omani rial increased by 5.5 per cent at the end of January

2023, to record 112.5 points, compared to 106.6 points in the same period in 2022, while the average interest rate on loans in Omani rials decreased from 5.504 per cent at the end of January 2022 to 5.306 per cent at the end of January 2023. -ONA

ISSA AL AUFI

Renaissance appoints Chief People Officer

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Renaissance Services has appointed Issa Al Auafi as its new Chief People Officer.

A seasoned human resource professional with over 15 years of experience in the field, Issa joined the company in March.

Having held positions in companies across various sectors like oil and gas, aviation, real estate, FMCG and banking, Issa brings his capabilities in effectively managing complexities and challenges of organisations with large, diverse workforces across hierarchies. His expertise ranges from Labour Law, conflict resolution, change management, communication, compensation and rewards and relationship management among others.

A Bachelor of Accounting and Master of Business Administration from Sultan Qaboos University, Issa joins Renaissance from Ahli Bank and has previously held positions in Oman Refreshment Company, Saraya Bandar Jissah, Oman Airports Management Company, Oxy, PDO and the Ministry of Defence. He is also a visiting lecturer on HR-related topics in various colleges in Oman.

Welcoming Issa, CEO Stephen R Thomas said, "Renaissance is proud of its diverse workforce, which is driving its success. Issa brings with him the right combination of skills and understanding of the challenges and potential of attracting, nurturing, and retaining great people."

On his part, Issa said, "Renaissance's range of services solutions and the way these are delivered is outstanding. The company's acknowledgement that its success comes from its frontline staff and how it cares for them is exemplary. I feel honoured to be part of this culture and look forward to contributing to its purpose and vision."

Renaissance is the leading accommodation, services solutions and IFM company in Oman, listed on Muscat Stock Exchange. The company has invested over \$520 million in Oman employing over 2,600+ Omani nationals contributing to local growth, building potential and creating opportunities. Renaissance is committed to safety, efficiency, green awareness, and sustaining in-country value. The company has built a strong local supply chain with 61% per cent of procurement within Oman and is



Having held positions in companies across various sectors like oil and gas, aviation, real estate, FMCG and banking, Issa brings his capabilities in effectively managing complexities and challenges of organisations with large, diverse workforces across hierarchies

passionate about building a sustainable future by investing in substantial CSR programmes every year. Renaissance owns and operates Renaissance Village Duqm, Oman's largest workforce accommodation facility, in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (Sezad).

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

Trading on MSX falls in first quarter of 2023

MUSCAT: The value of trading on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) declined in the first quarter of this year to about OMR191.40 million, compared to OMR341.3 million in the first quarter of last year, down by 43.9 percent.

However, trading in the first quarter of this year recorded an increase of 2.8 percent compared to the transactions in the fourth quarter of last year, amounting to OMR186.1 million.

The first quarter of this year witnessed the listing of Abraj Energy Services Company after its transformation into a public shareholding company by offering part of its shares for public subscription. The company, which was listed on March 14, witnessed a good turnout from investors, and its total trading amounted to OMR35.30 million, which pushed the trading value up. In March, it reached OMR93.60 million, compared to OMR45.30 million in February and OMR52.40 million in January. Abraj Company accounted for



37.7 percent of the total trading value in March 2023, and 18.4 percent of the total trading value in the first quarter of this year.

The main index rose in the first quarter of this year by 5 points, taking advantage of the two increases it achieved in February and March, when it rose by about 50 points and 110 points, respectively. The index recorded a decline of 154 points last January.

These gains were supported by

some of the gains recorded by the leading stocks before the approval of the annual general assemblies of public shareholding companies and the dividends recommended by their boards of directors.

During the first quarter of this year, the Gulf Quarries Company announced that the company's board of directors recommended liquidating the company, noting that this recommendation comes to preserve shareholders' rights

after the company accumulated financial losses and the inability to raise its capital by major shareholders or through agreement with strategic partners.

The first quarter of this year witnessed several positive news. Al Batinah Development and Investment Company said that its subsidiary, Al-Farabi Company for Veterinary and Agricultural Medicines, has leased land in Al-Buraimi Industrial Area to construct a pharmaceutical factory. It was equipped with three production lines, including a capsule production line, a liquid production line, and a production line. Powder, indicating that the factory is being prepared for operation, expects the factory to start trial production next May.

Salalah Mills Company also said that it intends to establish a grain trading company in the Dubai Multi Commodities Centre Free Zone under the name of 'Salalah International Grain Trading Company'. -ONA

MARKET

Agreement signed to accelerate digital transformation in Oman

Oman Data Park (ODP) and Uqudo will work together to integrate digital identity solutions into ODP's existing infrastructure, enabling individuals and organisations to securely authenticate and verify their identities online

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman Data Park (ODP), Oman's primary provider of IT-managed and cloud services, hosting, and virtual data centre services and Uqudo, one of EMEA's most innovative digital identity companies, have joined a strategic partnership between them to contribute to accelerating the digital transformation in the Sultanate of Oman. This partnership was celebrated

in a ceremony held for this occasion on April 4, at the W Hotel in Muscat, in the presence of several officials, representatives of the two companies, interested parties, guests and media representatives. Based on this partnership, Uqudo and ODP will work together to integrate digital identity solutions into ODP's existing infrastructure, enabling individuals and organisations to securely authenticate and verify their identities online. This strategic partnership will



lead to leveraging Uqudo's platform that provides end-to-end digital identity technologies for customer enrollment, digital identity verification and biometric detection, NFC-based passport reading and verification, document cognitive analysis and scanning as well as utilising (eKYC) technologies and Artificial intelligence (AI).

Commenting on this partnership, Eng. Maqbool Al-Wohaibi, CEO of Oman Data Park said, "While we at Oman Data Park are committed to providing our customers with the latest and most advanced technologies, our partnership with Uqudo, will contribute to enhancing our customer services through providing digital identity solutions that are resistant to digital fraud." Al-Wahaibi added, By this strategic cooperation, both parties have committed to building combined offerings to facilitate and accelerate the digital journey in Oman. This will enhance user experience and security and improve access to online services across the country, supporting Oman's efforts in the process of digital transformation. Mohamed Fagiri, CEO of Uqudo, said: "We are delighted to collaborate with ODP on a national level to address identity challenges and strengthen the empowerment of the digital economy in the Sultan-

ate of Oman." He added: This partnership will be a vital step toward Oman's digitalisation after our recent participation with ODP and Oman Tel in conducting the first fully digital national elections in the region. He pointed out that, Uqudo will provide extensive digital onboarding services for all companies supported by ODP. With Oman accelerating towards an inclusive digital society with rapid digital growth, comprehensive digital onboarding is necessary for companies to scale. This cooperation will also contribute to enhancing the businesses on the ODP platform, which will gain access to exhaustive identity solutions that can support their overall growth while being compliant with regulatory requirements. This strategic partnership marks a significant milestone for both Uqudo and Oman Data Park, as they work together to advance the digital transformation of the Sultanate of Oman.

50 YEARS OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

India an essential partner in Indo-Pacific, trade and investment: South Korea Foreign Minister

NEW DELHI: South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin, who is on a two-day visit to India, has said that he will discuss ways to deepen bilateral cooperation and strengthen partnership as the two countries celebrate 50 years of diplomatic relations. In an exclusive interview with ANI, Park Jin said India is an essential partner in South Korea's strategy for a peaceful, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region. "This is my first visit to India as the Foreign Minister. This year South Korea and India mark the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations. It is half a century, a long time in our friendship and partnership. I am very happy to visit India to celebrate the special milestone in our bilateral relationship, Park Jin said. "India is a very important country in our Indo-Pacific strategy, which we announced last year. Korea wants to play its role and responsibility to contribute to freedom, peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond. In that sense, India is our essential partner," he added. Referring to supply chain disruptions, technological competition and war in Ukraine, he said the common challenges cannot be



solved by one country alone and there was a need for cooperation among countries which share core values such as democracy and rule of law. "India and Korea have mutual interest and mutual possibilities of greater cooperation for the future. We are now living in a very challenging time. For example, the supply chain disruption, global technological competition, the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the climate crisis all these common challenges cannot be solved by one country alone and we need cooperation among the countries that have core values like democracy, free markets, human rights, and rule of law. India is such an important country to Korea in that sense and commemo-

rating half a century of diplomatic relationship, we would like to upgrade our existing successful partnership with India. "So, I am going to meet with my counterpart Jaishankar to discuss our joint efforts to promote our partnership and to explore possibilities in deepening and widening our cooperation," he added. Talking about the key focus areas in sectors in which both countries can work together, the minister said some of these include Artificial intelligence, big data and space. "Important areas of special attention are of course, trade, investment and supply chain stabilisation...manufacturing sector and critical minerals...also in the area of science and technology, Korea and India have a lot to cooperate with each other such as in artificial intelligence, big data, biotechnology and space exploration. So, there is a whole range of possible areas for cooperation. I think that based on our 50 years of successful partnership, we should move forward to the future together," the Foreign Minister told ANI. Speaking about India as a 'soft powerhouse' and the viral 'Naatu Naatu' song from 'RRR' movie that was celebrated in India, Park Jin said he was happy that the Korean

embassy here has paid special attention to the movie and that both the countries need much wide cultural exchange. "Naatu Naatu dance is really popular in Korea. I saw the movie myself which is a fantastic movie and story. I think it was extraordinary and I am very glad that our embassy has given special attention to Naatu, Naatu and the movie. They demonstrated music, singing and dancing to the Indian public which I think is a great way to communicate with each other," the Minister said. "I love Bollywood movies, I saw 3 Idiots and Chennai Express. I think we need a wider cultural exchange between the two countries, especially among the young generation to understand each other and to appreciate India's culture and vice versa," he added. On the strategic partnership between the two countries, Park said that it is mutually beneficial. "Korea and India have a special strategic partnership. This is a very special relationship through which we can work together with the same vision towards the future and I think that we should make full advantage of this special relationship for our mutually beneficial relationship in the future." -ANI

ELECTRIC VEHICLE

Tesla cuts prices on all models, third cut this year

DETROIT: Tesla cut prices on its entire US electric vehicle model lineup for the third time this year in an apparent effort to lure more buyers amid rising interest rates. The largest of the cuts that appeared Friday on Tesla's website were \$5,000 per vehicle for the company's slower-selling more expensive models, the S large sedan and the X big SUV. The company lopped \$2,000 off the price of the Y small SUV, its most popular model, and added a lower-cost dual-motor version priced at \$49,990. The 3 small sedan saw a \$1,000 price cut. The moves come as Tesla's first-quarter sales grew 36 per cent but fell short of analysts' expectations. The company said Sunday that it delivered a quarterly record of 422,875 vehicles worldwide from January to March, up from just over 310,000 a year ago. But the increase fell short of analyst estimates of 432,000 for the quarter, according to FactSet. A message was left Friday seeking comment from the Austin, Texas-based Tesla on why the prices were cut. Guidehouse Research e-Mobility Analyst Sam Abuelsamid said the cuts are a sign of slowing



demand for Tesla. The company, he said, needs to sell more vehicles to keep its factories running at full capacity to protect high profit margins. "Overhead of underutilised plant eats up margin extremely quickly," he said. Tesla has added a huge plant near Austin to its US factory footprint, in addition to its original plant in Fremont, California. The company also has built new plants in Shanghai and near Berlin. Other analysts have speculated that Tesla was cutting prices to take advantage of its profit margin per vehicle, which is larger than most automakers. The move could increase market share and put pressure on startups and legacy automakers now rolling out EVs. -BNA

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LABOUR MARKET

US economy added just 236,000 jobs in March

MINNEAPOLIS: US employers added just 236,000 jobs in March, coming in below expectations and indicating that the labour market is cooling off amid the Federal Reserve's year-long rate-hiking campaign to chill inflation, CNN Business reported. The unemployment rate dropped to 3.5 per cent, according to the March jobs report released on Friday by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Economists were expecting a net gain of 239,000 jobs for the month and a jobless rate of 3.6 per cent, according to Refinitiv. This is the first jobs report in 12 months that came in below expectations, CNN Business said. While the US labour market has kept trucking along despite other areas of the economy slowing under the weight of interest rate hikes, it is showing some signs of cooling, it added. "The labour market in March came in like a lion with a banking crisis and more layoffs, and is going out like a lamb with a solid jobs report," said Daniel Zhao, Glassdoor's lead economist, in a statement. "The labour market is still strong, but it's gliding slowly back down to Earth." Over the past 12 months, the labour market has seen a net gain of more than 4.1 million jobs. -ANI

NEW ENERGY VEHICLES

NEV industry recharges China's old industrial base

SHENYANG: Boasting a reputation as an auto industrial centre stretching over several decades, northeast China's old industrial base is readying itself for a new wave. From establishing a layout for the battery industry to drawing manufacturers of new energy vehicles (NEV), the region again takes on an important role in China's automobile industry. In Tiexi District of Shenyang City, the capital of Liaoning Province, which was once the beating heart of the former industrial powerhouse, the NEV industry is taking off. It is estimated that by 2030, the output value of the new energy industry of Tiexi will reach 100 billion yuan (about \$14.53 billion), with the formation of relevant industrial clusters such as lithium batteries, hydrogen energy, and energy storage. In March, EVE Energy Co., Ltd, one of China's leading lithium-ion battery manufacturers, broke ground on a 10-billion-yuan battery production base in Tiexi. The project will connect the upstream and downstream industrial chains, contributing to the district's construction of an industrial battery centre, said Guo Zhongxiao, the district Party chief. Along with German auto behemoth BMW's battery production project in Shenyang, the Chinese battery manufacturer's production base offered a glimpse of the



region's booming new energy vehicle industry. After building its Shenyang production base into the group's largest one globally, the German carmaker chose to take a crucial step in its e-mobility strategy in China by further cooperating with the region and investing in the new energy project of a 10-billion-yuan battery production project in the same district. In 2022, the German marque saw its sales of electric models maintain strong growth, with some 42,000 electric vehicles delivered to customers in the Chinese market, up 91.6 per cent year on year. "The relevance of the Chinese market for BMW remains enormous, particularly regarding electric vehicles," a company spokesperson told Xinhua. In 2023, the carmaker expects China's share of total battery-electric vehicle sales to "continue to rise significantly." Another prominent global player

eyeing the potential of the region is German luxury carmaker Audi AG. Cooperating with China's leading automaker FAW Group Co., Ltd., the company invested over 30 billion yuan into a NEV project in Changchun City, Jilin Province, regarded as the cradle of China's auto industry. The Audi FAW NEV project, the German automaker's first production base specifically for purely electric vehicles in China, is expected to be completed and operational at the end of 2024, with a designed annual production capacity of 150,000 vehicles. Likewise, for the US electric automaking giant Tesla, the marketing potential, sound business environment, abundant research and development resources, quality infrastructure, and skilled human resources make the region a second-to-none magnet. -Xinhua

SPORTS

NZ clinch series in last-over thriller

Hosts register a four-wicket win over Sri Lanka in the third and final T20I game

QUEENSTOWN: New Zealand registered a thrilling four-wicket victory over Sri Lanka in the third and deciding T20I match to clinch the series 2-1 on Saturday. With the series levelled at 1-1, the decider in Queenstown was rife with intrigue and drama as New Zealand secured a nervy final-over victory. Sri Lanka's death bowling nearly pulled it back from the brink, but New Zealand kept their cool to secure an comfortable four-wicket win to secure a 2-1 series victory. Tim Seifert anchored a successful chase of 183 with his 48-ball 88, which trumped Kusal Mendis' 73 off 43 earlier in the day. After Seifert's dismissal New Zealand needed just 29 from 23 deliveries with seven wickets in hand. From 17th to 19th overs, Sri Lanka conceded just 19 runs, leaving the hosts needing ten to win off the last over. A six off the first delivery seemed to have settled matters but Sri Lanka would land a team hat-trick off the next three balls, with Lahiru Kumara picking up two wickets and effecting a run out. They might have made it four from four too, but Kumara missed an almost identical run-out chance, allowing New Zealand



to steal a bye to the keeper. Rachin Ravindra then struck the winning runs a ball later, as New Zealand breathed a collective sigh of relief. New Zealand's Matt Henry's three-run final over proved pivotal. The five overs prior had seen Sri Lanka hit 56 runs, and with five wickets in hand and Wanindu Hasaranga and Charith Asalanka at the crease. But Henry varied his pace and kept it full and wide to keep the over to singles at most. Having gone wicketless for 32 off his previous three, Henry came through clutch at the death, and New Zealand would eventually win with just a ball to spare. Seifert managed to pick up a boundary in nearly every over up

until the 17th, in which he was dismissed. His partnerships of 53 and 84 with Chad Bowes and Tom Latham also ensured that even the chaotic loss of wickets at the end wouldn't derail his side's chase. Nearly every Sri Lankan bowler went at over 8 an over - Hasaranga went wicketless in his four overs for 41 - and Seifert struck at over 170 against all of them barring the always excellent Maheesh Theekshana, who maintained an economy rate of 5.50. Sri Lanka got off to their best start of the series with Mendis and Pathum Nissanka putting on a 76-run opening stand. Mendis would go on to top score in a destructive innings that saw six fours and five sixes.

New Zealand's James Neesham's quality take in the deep to dismiss Nissanka set the tone, which was followed by a phenomenal direct hit by Adam Milne from the deep to run out Perera. Dasun Shanaka, who had looked dangerous striking two boundaries off his first five deliveries, saw Bowes hold on to a tricky skier, before Asalanka was run out courtesy of another gun throw from the boundary. That last one was part of Henry's game-changing final over. **Brief scores:** Sri Lanka: 182/6 (Kusal Mendis 73, Kusal Perera 33; Ben Lister 2/37) lost to New Zealand: 183/6 in 19.5 overs (Tim Seifert 88; Tom Latham 31; Lahiru Kumara 3/38).



RAMADAN CRICKET

HCC emerge champions



MUSCAT: HCC defeated Ayan Muscat by five wickets in the final of fourth edition of the Danube Group Ramadan Cricket Tournament, organised by Al Hail Cricket Team, at its ground on Thursday. HCC won the toss and was elected to field first. They restricted Ayan Muscat to 84/8 in stipulated 10 overs. Ishtiaq Hussain top scored with 22 runs and other useful contributions came from Ayaz (14) and Shafeeq (10). For HCC, skipper Gireesh took

two wickets for 10 runs. In reply, HCC scored 85 for five with the winning runs coming off the last ball. Gireesh top-scored with 23 runs. Gireesh was declared man of the match, man of the series for his all-round performance and was adjudged the best bowler of the tournament. Shafeeq of Ayan Muscat was declared the best batter of the tournament. Sheik Irfan from Danube Group was the chief guest along with Doshambe Al Balushi and gave away the prizes.

NEW ZEALAND VS SRI LANKA T20I SERIES

It was little tight, but we got result: Latham

QUEENSTOWN: New Zealand captain Tom Latham admitted that the deciding match of the T20I series against Sri Lanka was a close affair and they were relieved that the result went their way on Friday. Latham said: "They put us under a bit of pressure bowling first, and it was good to see the guys respond to that and keep them to a total that was a little below par. "Seifert got the required rate down to seven in the last six or seven overs, which was really important. It was a little tight, but we got the result. When you're chasing you know the equation, and on a really good wicket it was really hard to defend. There's some big pockets out there so the twos come into play as well." Meanwhile Tim Seifert, the hero of Saturday's win said: "I didn't get off to the best start in the series, but that happens. In Dunedin, Chad [Bowes] took a lot of pressure off me getting a fast start. My cricket's been going well, but importantly we are getting the wins. If I'm not keeping, I do back myself to be in the team just as a batter." Sri Lanka's captain Dasun



Shanaka said: "We were 10-15 runs short today. That was the main lack, on the batting side. New Zealand did really well in the series."

Shanaka has already noticed the factors which hindered Sri Lanka's chances of clinching the series. "The main adjustment was the

conditions. When we come here again we must make sure we come two or three weeks before," he added. - Agencies

WINNER TO SEAL SPOT IN ASIA CUP

Confident Oman all set to take part in ACC Men's Premier Cup in Nepal

MUSCAT: A confident Oman are all set to compete in the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) Men's Premier Cup - an integral part of ACC's new pathway structure - that will be held in Nepal from April 18-May 1. Ten Associate nations will battle it out in Nepal's capital of Kathmandu with the winner securing a direct qualification for the ACC Men's Asia Cup 2023. The top-three teams at the event will also qualify for the ACC Emerging Cup 2023. Zeeshan Maqsood will lead the national team and Aqib Ilyas, who makes a return from injury, has been named the vice-captain of the 14-member squad. The trip to Nepal will serve as the start of a 'dream mission' for Team Red as they not only chase a maiden place in the Asia Cup but also prepare themselves for the ICC Men's ODI Cricket World Cup Qualifier in Zimbabwe in June-July, where they hope to qualify for the World Cup in India later this year. Oman have never qualified for the Asia Cup and the tournament provides yet another opportunity for them to showcase their potential as a top Asian Associate nation. Oman have been placed in a tough group that includes hosts



Nepal who have also qualified as one of the two teams from Asia for the ICC World Cup Qualifier. The other teams in Group A include Qatar, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia. Group B comprises the UAE, Hong Kong, Kuwait, Bahrain and Singapore. Oman skipper Zeeshan Maqsood expressed confidence ahead of the team's departure on Monday. He said: "We have been preparing hard for the tournament. We have played a few practice matches and the boys are in good shape. "All the players have been going through rigorous training sessions

and the fitness level has been one of the priorities. With the onset of the holy month of Ramadan, the training did affect us but we have managed our sessions. There is no let-up in our energy levels and we are confident that we have the potential to beat any Associate nation team." Maqsood, an experienced all-rounder, added: "As we have played in Nepal during the World Cricket League Division 2 campaign, we are aware of the conditions there." Oman chief coach Duleep Mendis said: "It's an opportunity for us to rub shoulders with cricket's giants, should we win the title. We

had performed very well during the World Cricket League Division 2, where we finished second among the seven nations. I am very much optimistic of a good outcome in the tournament." He added: "The boys are very well-prepared, keeping in mind both the Asia Cup qualifier and World Cup qualifier. It will be great if we can make it to Asia Cup and then take the confidence into the World Cup Qualifier." Madhu Jesrani, the long-time manager, who has been with the national team for more than two decades, said: "The team is capable of winning the Asia Cup qualifiers.

They have geared up well and a lot of hard work has gone into their preparations. We will do well in Nepal and the boys have the support of all cricket lovers of Oman." Oman selectors have picked an uncapped Adeel Shafique in the 14-member squad. Shafique qualified to play for the national team recently. The wicket-keeper-batter has been the coach of the Oman U19 squad for the past few years. Oman have never made it to the Asia Cup finals. The big five teams of the continent - India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan - await the winner of the Premier Cup. Sri Lanka are the defending champions. If Oman win the Premier Cup, they will join India and Pakistan in Group 'A' of the Asia Cup, while Group 'B' comprises Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. The 2023 Asia Cup, scheduled to be played in September is likely to be played in Pakistan with another overseas venue to host India games. The overseas venue is not confirmed but the UAE, Oman, Sri Lanka are among the potential contenders. Oman have lined up a couple of practice matches in Nepal with the first to be played against Bahrain on April 13 and the other against the hosts on April 15.

Oman will begin their campaign against Qatar at Mulpani Ground on April 19 and then play Nepal at TU Ground on April 21. Oman will return to Mulpani Ground on April 23 to meet Malaysia and conclude their group engagements against Saudi Arabia at TU Ground on April 26. **Oman squad:** Zeeshan Maqsood (captain), Aaqib Ilyas (vice-captain), Jay Odedera, Kaleemullah, Shoaib Khan, Kashyapkumar Prapapati, Adeel Shafique (wicket-keeper), Jatinder Singh, Mohammad Nadeem, Sandeep Goud, Bilal Khan, Ayaan Khan, Naseem Khushi (wicket-keeper), Fayyaz Butt. **Coaching staff:** Duleep Mendis (chief coach), Madhu Jesrani (manager), Mazhar Khan (coach co-ordinator), Evert Laubscher (assistant coach), Avishkar Salvi (bowling coach), Zeeshan Siddiqui (analyst), Sean Nowak (physio). **Oman's fixtures:** • April 19 : Oman vs Qatar • April 21 : Oman vs Nepal • April 23 : Oman vs Malaysia • April 26 : Oman vs Saudi Arabia • April 29 : Semi-finals, • April 30 : Third place • May 1 : Final. (All matches will start at 7:45am, Oman time).

ROUND-UP

Capture spirit of holy month at Dubai’s top Ramadan tents and restaurants

The city beams with options for breaking your fast and having suhour during your Dubai visit

DUBAI: This holy month of Ramadan, celebrate the spirit of togetherness over iftar and suhour. Travel to Dubai and cherish beautiful memories during your visit by checking out the different Ramadan tents, restaurants, and dining venues.

Ramadan tents
Decked in dazzling Middle Eastern decors and displays, and offering delectable medleys of traditional and contemporary cuisines, these are some of the must-visit Ramadan tents in Dubai:
One of the most sought-after Ramadan tents in Dubai is Asateer at Atlantis The Palm. This popular venue offers Arabic entertainment and delectable dishes across various cuisines including Moroccan, Lebanese, Persian, and Emirati throughout the Holy Month.

Dana Tentat City Walk in the Green Planet Building is hosting a sumptuous iftar buffet and a la carte menu for suhour. The purpose-built venue features modern arabesque interiors with seven VIP rooms. Enjoy the lavish spread complemented by special live shows to keep guests entertained while dining.
Another prominent purpose-built Ramadan tent in Dubai is Al Majlis at Madinat Jumeirah. Guests will be treated to delightful dishes of traditional Arabic and Middle Eastern dishes amidst a beautiful and luxurious setting.
Make your way to Bulgari Majlis for a sumptuous iftar. The Bulgari Ramadan experience celebrates the theme ‘The Wonders of Love’ with live food stations comple-



mented by live entertainment with a Qanun player and Arabic bands.
Mark the holy month with an exquisite experience at Jumeirah Emirates Towers as the venue hosts an opulent outdoor tent at Terrace Between the Towers. Admire the stunning view of the Museum of the Future and Dubai skyline while relishing a delicious iftar spread.

Iftar and suhour
Have a special Ramadan celebration in a very special setting with an Iftar at Dubai Opera. Break your fast with family and friends and savour a one-of-a-kind culinary experience while enjoying live performances of Arabic music and classical tunes.
For an iftar with a view, book a

table at Carna by Dario Cecchini located on the 74th floor of SLS Dubai. The menu focuses on locally sourced ingredients, and flavoursome food, set amidst a relaxing atmosphere.
Palazzo Versace’s Hikayat Ramadan Garden is worth a visit with its stunning al fresco set up overlooking Dubai Creek. Break your fast under the stars with a great selection of mouthwatering traditional dishes in a deluxe setting.
Located in the heart of Dubai and on the banks of the Dubai Water Canal, with the enchanting backdrop of Habtoor Palace Dubai, Ramadan Garden by Winter Garden at Al Habtoor City Hotel Collection promises an experience that truly reflects the authenticity of Ramadan in Dubai. Guests



Lounge Mangrove Terrace, Banquet Iftar and Tean at Jumeirah at Sadiyat Island Resort, plus other Jumeirah restaurants including Hillhouse Brasserie, The Duck Hook, Boaz, and Butcha.

Gastronomic experiences with a difference
This Ramadan in Dubai, there’s also the chance to step outside of the usual, with gastronomic experiences in unique settings where memories are made.
At Al Hadheerah, the open-air restaurant at Bab Al Shams, there’s the chance to enjoy a cultural experience, with captivating performances by traditional dancers, musicians, falconers, and camel riders, along with an array of live-cooked cuisine.
Dine at an authentic outdoor iftar buffet at Al Mashowa, a traditional Emirati seafood restaurant in the heart of Riverland Dubai. Indulge in a selection of age-old traditional recipes, along with a live barbecue and beverage station.
Become immersed in a unique iftar experience at Legoland Dubai with an Arabic and internationally-inspired buffet at Bricks Family Restaurant. Sample local Emirati dishes, and other authentic delicacies from Egypt, Syria and Lebanon. Or try Kalea Restaurant at Lapita Hotel in Motiongate Dubai, with an iftar buffet featuring classic Middle Eastern specialties, Arabic sweets and live Oud music.

PROMOTION

‘Season of Generosity’ offer available on Ford Taurus

MUSCAT: Own the popular Ford Taurus and get exclusive benefits including Service 5 Years / 100,000km and Registration 1 Year. (Conditions apply. For details visit a Ford showroom.)
The Ford Taurus with its stylish design, impressive power and inspiring comfort and space is becoming a favourite among large sedan buyers.
The Ford Taurus is equipped with Ford’s proven 2.0-litre EcoBoost engine which is paired to an eight-speed automatic transmission, producing 232 Hp and 388 Nm of torque. Offered with front-wheel drive and three driving modes – Normal, Sport, and Eco – the Blue Oval’s flagship sedan enjoys an impressive economy of as much as 15.3 km/l.
The Ford Taurus is engineered to offer a blend of seamless connectivity, high on-road performance and an entirely new sleek modern design. Boasting an attractive and stylish design, on an entirely different platform, the Taurus exudes refinement with numerous premium touches. Featuring 19-inch, 10-spoke polished alloy wheels, a new flatter streamlined hood and a power-deployable door handle, Taurus is sleeker in its stance.
A dynamic shield-like, clipped



trapezoidal grille with active shutter, black mesh and chrome surrounds hint at the power contained within, with a dual exhaust adding a strong sense of style and substance. Auto high beams and a full LED two-piece headlamp design guarantee Taurus is always seen in the best light.
The interior of the Taurus is well-detailed and plush. The materials used throughout the cabin reinforce the feeling of comfort and exceptional, uncompromised quality. 10-way power driver, six-way power passenger seats and seven ambient colours – including a light interior colour palette.
In the Taurus, extensive use of

sound-deadening materials, advanced technologies and precise engineering, as well as cooling dual zone auto AC, ensure that whether in the front or rear seats, all occupants are treated to an exceptionally quiet cabin matched by a smooth and comfortable ride, and an incredible view from the expansive dual panel panoramic moon roof. A cavernous trunk boasting 520-litres capacity adds even greater practicality to the newly-designed flagship Ford sedan.
At the heart of Taurus’ connective experience is the large, best-in-class, multi-function 13.2-inch centre touchscreen – complementing the big 8-inch digital

instrument panel cluster – loaded with Ford’s intuitive SYNC4 technology, which comes customer-ready with its voice-activated communications, entertainment and information systems. Inductive wireless charging means no unsightly cables clog the cabin when your smartphone is low on power, while your favourite tunes can blast through six strategically-placed speakers.
For safer more hassle-free driving experiences, the Ford Taurus is equipped with BLIS – Ford’s blind spot information system – with collision mitigation, adaptive cruise control, and lane departure warning. A forward-looking camera and fixed rear-view camera give Taurus excellent vision, aurally-aided by rear parking sensors when parking. Six air bags complement the seat belt pre-tensioner capabilities, while an SOS post-crash alert system has been designed to help draw attention to a vehicle disabled in an accident, by flashing the lights and sounding the horn repeatedly. A standard feature individual tyre pressure monitor system also adds an extra sense of safety.
In Oman, Ford vehicles are brought to you by Arabian Car Marketing Co.

HOLY MONTH



Apollo Hospital Oman marks Qarangasho with students of Al Tarbiya Al Fikhriya

MUSCAT: Students at Al Tarbiya Al Fikhriya School, Al Khuwair, celebrated Qarangasho with schoolmates and teachers supported by Apollo Hospitals, Sultanate of Oman, in coordination with the Ministry of Education.
The spirit was high as they played on the air castle, greeted cartoon characters, and enjoyed the Qarangasho song. They eagerly awaited their turn for face painting and henna.
Huda Al Araiimi from the Ministry of Education said, “I like the activities and enjoyed the smiles on the students’ faces. I think it is a good gesture from Apollo Hospitals Muscat and I hope this co-operation continues to grow.”
Al Tarbiya Al Fikhriya, (Intellectual Education), is a school for intellectually challenged children. The students enrol at the age of six years and continue till the ninth grade which is up to 17 years of age.
“We always have a corporate event during the holy month of Ramadan, but this year we decided to have a Corporate Social Responsibility initiative and go straight into the community and make a difference. We are grate-

ful to the Ministry of Education for giving us this wonderful opportunity,” said Debraj Sanyal, COO, Apollo Hospitals Muscat.
Throughout the event, Apollo’s medical team was presently ready to provide consultation and support led by Dr Shakeel Moinuddin, Department of Pediatrics and Neonatology.
“The children are taught in academics and adaptive behaviour; in addition, teachers develop individual plans for each child as the development varies from child to child depending on the challenges. We have students here from Muscat, North Al Batinah and Al Dhkhiliya, but there are families from other governorates such as Dhofar, who stay in Muscat so that their child can benefit from the education,” explained Hashim Said Al Ameri, Principal, Al Tarbiya Al Fikhriya School.
The enthusiastic children of all age groups expressed their happiness and gratitude.
The principal also thanked the Apollo Hospital for the innovative idea and support for the celebration with entertainment, games and goodies marking the true spirit of Qarangasho.

ISLAMIC BANKING

Everyone can now enjoy 4.5% financing rate with Meethaq’s Ramadan offer

MUSCAT: In line with its commitment to offer the best customer value proposition, Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat has announced an exclusive offer to commemorate the holy month of Ramadan.
Customers will be able to avail of a competitive profit rate of 4.5% on home finance, auto finance, personal goods finance, education finance, marriage finance, travel finance, and financing consolida-

tion till May 31.
New and existing customers can apply for any of the products and benefit from swift processing and minimal documentation. Customers are eligible for up to 80 per cent financing for a home or auto financing while 100 per cent financing is available for travel, marriage, education and personal goods finance.
In addition, customers can consolidate any existing debt that they

may have and move to Meethaq under the special Ramadan offer. Customers working in the Government and Private sectors can avail of the special profit rates on Meethaq’s products. Applications may be submitted at any of Meethaq’s 24 state-of-the-art branches across the Sultanate.
On this occasion, Sami Bait Rashid, Assistant General Manager – Meethaq Personal Banking, said, “We are delighted to be

the leading provider of Islamic retail finance products in Oman and would like to show our gratitude through the special Ramadan package which offers customers the opportunity to save on our product suite of Housing, Auto and Personal finance products during the Holy Month of Ramadan.” He thanked all customers for their patronage and confidence in the financing offers and the various products and services of Meethaq.

ROUND-UP

2023 Chevrolet Captiva: Ideal 7-seater SUV for large families

Distinguished by its bold character and stable design, the 2023 edition features dynamic lines running all around the car

MUSCAT: With its distinctive styling, large interior space and full suite of safety and convenience technologies, the Chevrolet Captiva 2023 makes for unforgettable trips for the entire family. The seven-seater compact SUV is among the most popular in its segment as a family car, not least for its plush interior, unmatched fuel efficiency and budget-friendly price tag.

Distinguished by its bold character and stable design, the 2023 edition features dynamic lines running all around the car. Accentuating its stunning fascia is a chromatic grille featuring Chevrolet's signature bowtie logo. Other features that add to its impressive external persona are: high-quality LED lights, halogen headlights, solid 18-inch wheels, roof rails and exterior mirrors with directional signs (depending on the trims). The rear features taillights, rear



fog lights, roof spoiler, cargo access, and an exhaust system. Available in three trims - LS, LT and Premier - the Captiva is powered by a 1.5L turbocharged 4-cylinder engine generating 149hp and 255Nm of torque, connected to a CVT transmission and FWD drivetrain. With this impressive powertrain, fuel efficiency is ramped up to 13.4 km / litre - the best in its class. In addition to its 7-seater con-

figuration, the interior is thoughtful in its design and outfitting. Features include dual-tone seats, glovebox, front centre armrest with cupholders, sun visors, rear view mirror, foldable second and third-row seats, and rear AC vents. A sunroof is also standard on the LT and Premier trims. Storage space is also among the largest in its class as well. The 2023 Captiva also comes equipped with a range of class-

leading technologies and all safety features to provide maximum safety. Infotainment options include an 8-inch diagonal colour touchscreen display, Apple car play / Android Auto and USB ports. Safety and driver assistance features come in the form of a front and rear parking sensors, airbags, tyre pressure monitoring system, ISOFIX child seat locks, antilock braking system, electronic brake-force distribution, stability con-

trol, traction control and hill start assist. Safety systems also include a rear view camera and electronic parking brake. Popular among the three trims is the Premier which, in addition to cruise control, sunroof window and four air bags, also features a 7-inch display multi-colour Driver Information Centre, remote keyless entry, 6-speaker audio system with Bluetooth, and 6-way power driver seats.

Other standout features include 18-inch aluminium premium wheels and front parking sensors. The 2023 Chevrolet Captiva is available in five attractive colours: Glaze Red Metallic, Earth Brown Metallic, Polar White, Aurora Silver Metallic and Starry Twinkle Black. Customers can check out the impressive line-up at any of the showrooms of OTE Group, the exclusive distributors of Chevrolet in Oman.

EXCITING RECOGNITION

Jewel of Oman contest from Sona Gold and Diamonds to celebrate creativity and talent

MUSCAT: Sona Gold & Diamonds, the leading manufacturer, wholesaler, and retailer of gold and diamond jewellery in Oman, announced the launch of its Jewel of Oman contest. This contest celebrates creativity and talent and offers residents of Oman aged above 15 a chance to win stunning diamond jewellery. The Jewel of Oman contest is open to all residents of Oman above the age of 15. Participants are encouraged to register for the contest by sending their name, location, nationality, and occupation to +968 92055916 via WhatsApp. The winner will receive a brand ambassador contract and a diamond necklace. The second prize winner will receive a diamond pendant on a gold chain, and the third prize winner will receive a diamond

ring. Registration for the contest which is now open will end on April 15. "At Sona Gold & Diamonds, we are committed to providing a platform for talented individuals to showcase their creativity and win stunning diamond jewellery," said Vivek Mohan, Owner of Sona Gold and Diamonds. "We are excited to launch the Jewel of Oman contest and look forward to seeing the amazing entries from participants." Sona Gold & Diamonds is a renowned jewellery retailer in Oman that offers a wide range of exquisite diamond, gold, and silver jewellery. With over 39 years of experience in the industry, Sona Gold & Diamonds is committed to providing its customers with high-quality jewellery that is designed to last a lifetime.

Bank Muscat wins Best Bank in Oman award from EMEA Finance

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate, has won four awards from EMEA Finance including the Best Bank in Oman award for its contributions to the Sultanate's banking sector. Mohammed Sultan al Habsi, Chief Representative, UAE Representative Office, Bank Muscat, received the awards on behalf of the bank at a glittering ceremony held in Dubai, which was attended by senior bankers from the Middle East. The winners were chosen on a number of criteria including quality of products, financial performance, value of assets and revenues, satisfaction of customers, usage of state-of-art technology in different banking services. The recognition from EMEA Finance reconfirms the bank's continuing leadership in the banking sector in Oman and validates its strategy of providing the best services and banking products to suit all segments of society. EMEA Finance awards are one of the most pres-



tigious accolades given to leading banking institutions in the region. With over four decades of experience, Bank Muscat provides its customers with reliable, dynamic and innovative banking services and products, aiming to maintain its market leadership. It provides a wide range of retail, corporate,

wholesale and investment banking services as well as asset management and private banking offerings. Bank Muscat holds the distinction of being consistently voted as the Best Bank in Oman by leading local, regional and global institutions because of its innovations and market leadership across vari-

ous banking facilities and digital banking services. In the past, the bank has been awarded across multiple categories, including the Best Private Bank, Best Investment Bank and the Best Asset Manager in Oman by EMEA Finance and Oman's Most Trusted Brand.

EXCELLENCE

Towell Auto Centre wins Majestic Mogul Award

MUSCAT: Towell Auto Centre (TAC) is a leading business house in the automobile industry in Oman since 1972. It has once again demonstrated its excellence and commitment to providing high-quality services to its customers. The company has won the prestigious Majestic Mogul award from TotalEnergies for the fourth time, and two years in a row. The

award was received by Krishna Iyer Subramani - AGM of Towell Auto Centre during the recent TotalEnergies Marketing Middle East (TEMME) Distributor Convention held in Barcelona, Spain from March 6 - 9. The Majestic Mogul is an annual program that is keenly contested by TEMME's distributors across the Middle East and CIS regions.

The contestants are judged on various quantitative and qualitative parameters in alignment with TEMME's strategy. TAC was crowned as the winner for their overall performance in the top-notch Heavy Weight category for the year 2022. It's important to note that this is the fourth time TAC has won this award and it is a proud achievement for the company. Talking about the success, a senior spokesperson from TAC said: "It's an honor to receive such a prestigious award. This is the result of relentless effort by the Lubes and Battery Division Team of Towell Auto Centre. This would have not been possible without the extended support of TotalEnergies Marketing Middle East team members."

Towell Auto Centre has been the authorized distributor for TotalEnergies Automotive & Industrial Lubricants in Oman since 2001 providing high-quality lubricants to its customers. TotalEnergies has a wide range of lubricants that cater to the needs of different types of industries. The company's commitment to providing high-quality products has helped it earn

the trust of its customers. TAC's success in winning the Majestic Mogul award for the fourth time in a row is a testament to the company's commitment to providing high-quality services to its customers. The company's dedication to excellence has helped it maintain its position as a leading business in the automobile industry in Oman.



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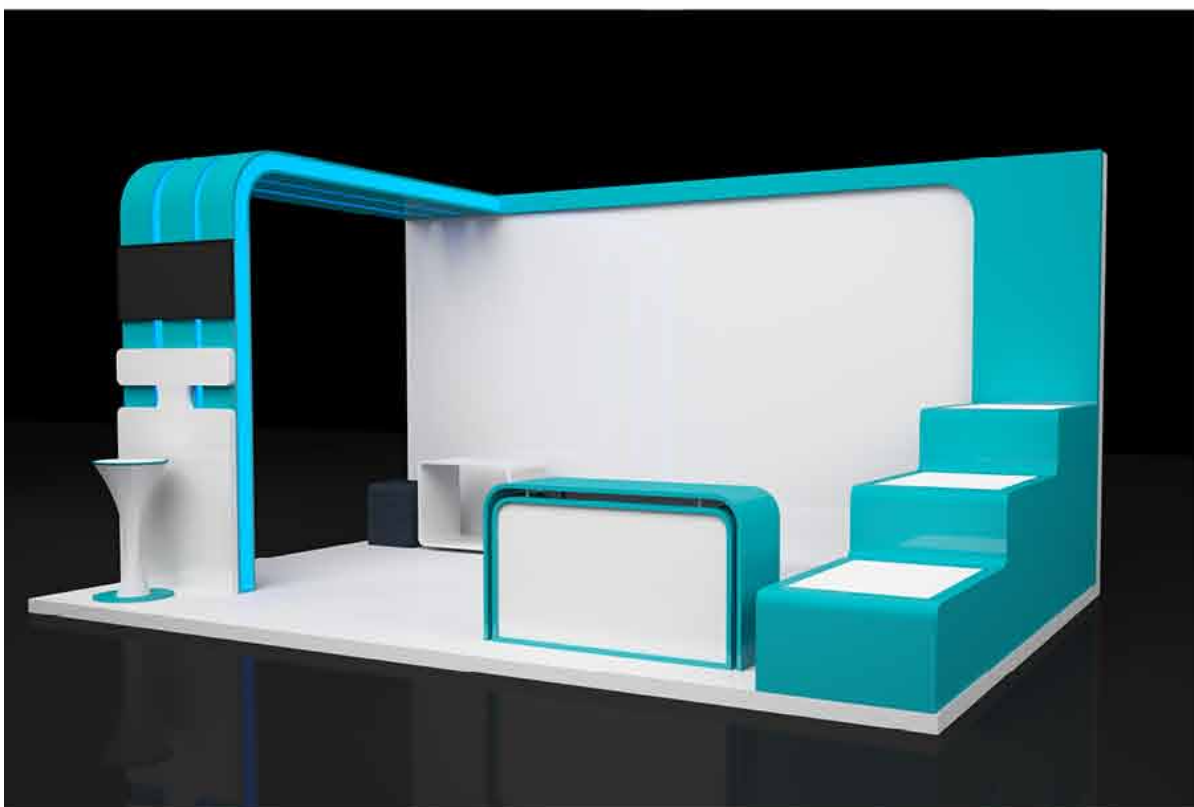
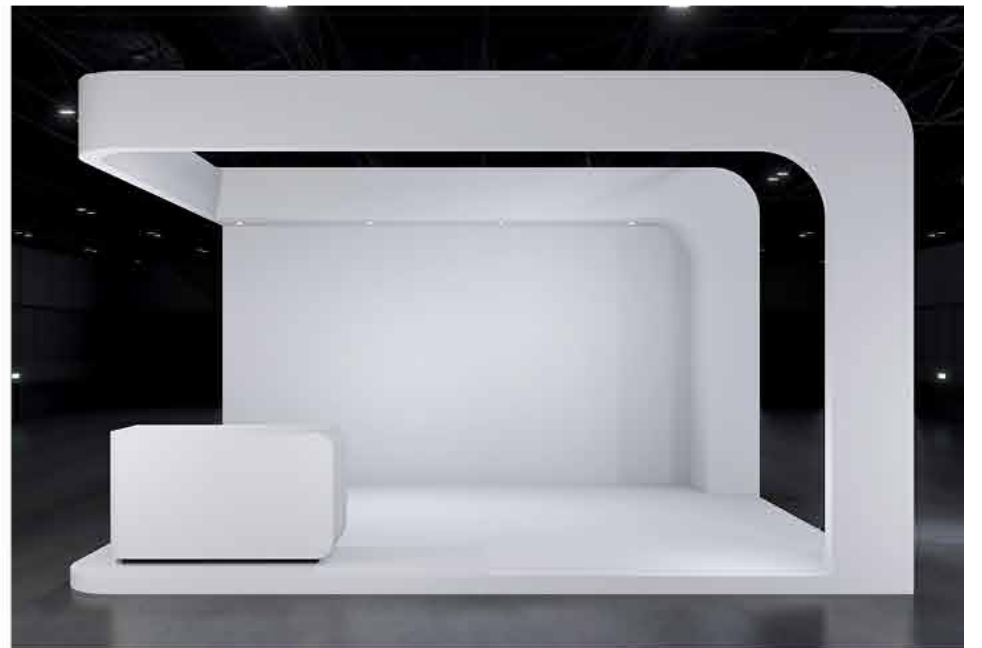
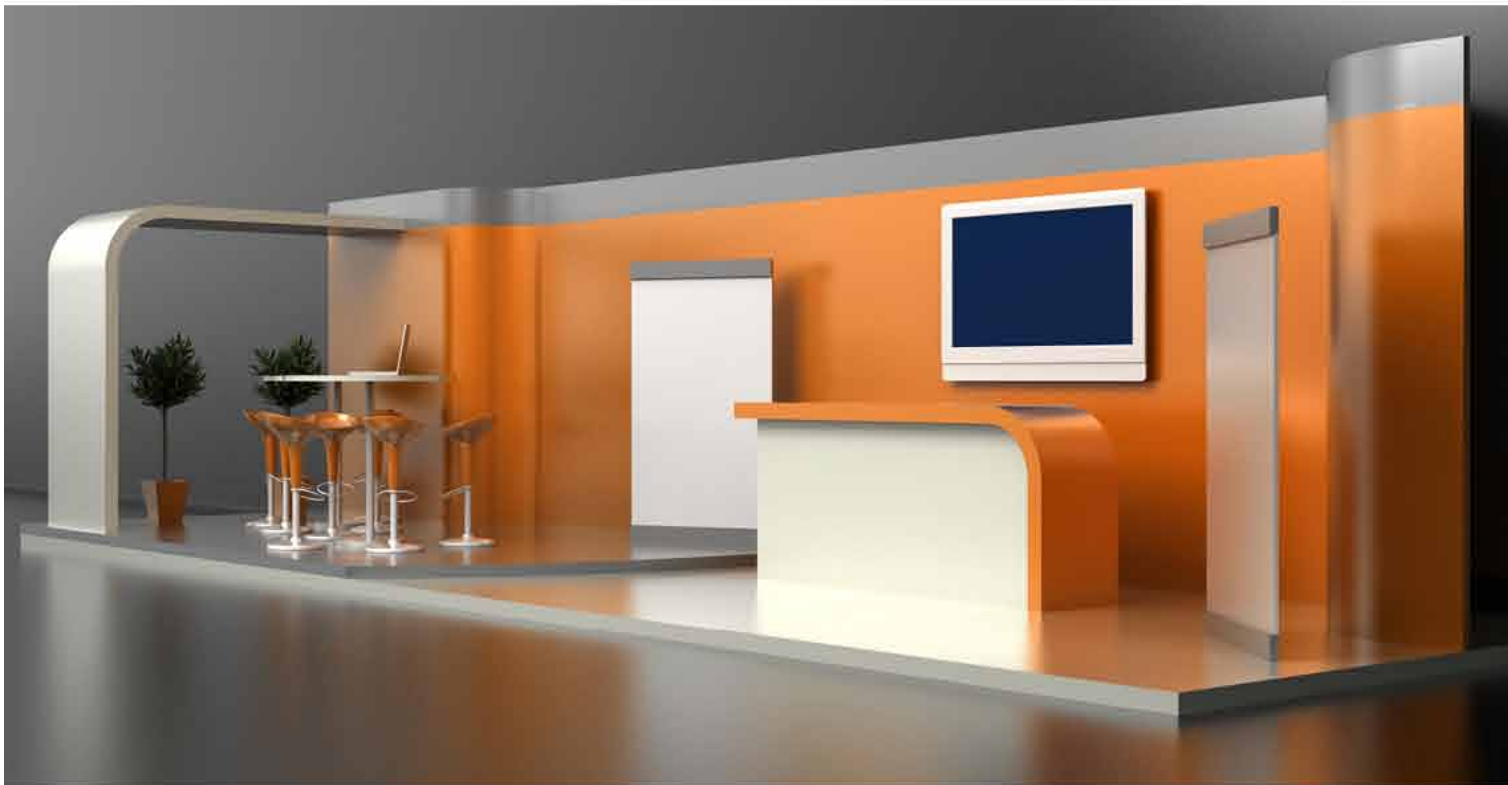
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KNOW MORE

Offer valid from 23rd February to 22nd April 2023 on all models purchased through the CHANGAN Showroom Retail Offer. # Whichever is earlier. Periodic Maintenance Service only. Offer includes only 10,000 kms service intervals. The periodic maintenance service will be between 2 years / 35,000 kms to 4 years / 75,000 kms and varies from model to model. To know more please visit the CHANGAN Showroom. @For 1st year, Oman & UAE only. *For 1st year only. **Manufacturer's Warranty - 5 Years / 150,000 Kms - Applicable on Hunter Pickup only. 6 Years / 250,000 Kms - Applicable Alsvin, EADO Plus, CS35 Plus, CS75 Plus, CS85 Coupe & CS95 only. Whichever is earlier. Images shown are for illustrative purpose only. Specification may vary as per the model variant. To know more, please visit the CHANGAN Showroom.

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LIFESTYLE



EASY WAYS TO ACE LIGHT SUMMER MAKE-UP LOOK

Summers are here! And to deal with the scorching heat is itself a task on its own. But have you thought about changing up your beauty routine for a new summer makeup look? It's time to think about some summer makeup looks. So here are some easy ways to ace the light summer make-up tips to withstand the humidity and heat.

1

USE MOISTURISER/ SUNSCREEN: Use a tinted moisturiser or sunscreen to set your makeup and concealer. Sunscreen is essential during the summer season. The tinted cream will serve as a foundation and will even out your skin tone for a bright appearance.

2

USE WATER PROOF MAKE-UP: Invest in good quality water-resistant mascara and liner. The best part is that you won't have to worry about liner and mascara running off your face due to humidity or sweat. It will also provide smudge-proof eyes.

3

USE A BRONZER: A bronzer can be used to achieve a natural and neutral appearance. It also gives the appearance of a tan. Bronzer tan appearances are popular and look great on all skin tones. It helps to brighten your look.

4

CHEEK-TO-CHEEK MAKEUP: To highlight your cheeks, lips, and eyelids, use a single neutral shade. It will not only keep your bag light, but it will also give you a monochromatic look that is ideal for the summer season.

5

USE LESS MAKE-UP: Apply less makeup. To avoid the claggy look, avoid using powder blush. Have the right tools to help you apply your makeup equally so it doesn't run on your face when the heat strikes. The best way to have a radiant summer is to invest in skincare essentials that will make your skin look naturally healthy and happy.

—ANI

