

TRA GRANTS POSTAL SERVICE LICENCE TO 3 LOCAL COMPANIES

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) announced that it granted three local companies licence to provide postal services and related activities after the firms met the prescribed regulatory conditions. >B1



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HM RECEIVES THANKS CABLE FROM KSA

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) in reply to His Majesty's condolences cable to him on the death of Princess Al Jawhara Mohammed Abdulaziz Al-Saud. In the cable, King Salman expressed his thanks for His Majesty the Sultan's good feelings and sincere prayers, praying to the Almighty Allah to rest the deceased's soul in peace in paradise and protect His Majesty against all harms. -ONA



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TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES



OMAN World Bicycle Day

1 On the occasion of World Bicycle Day, Omani triathlete Mohammed Al Masroori speaks to TFM's Evita Louis on how cycling became his passion. >A4

OMAN Meeting on strategy for immunisation

2 A virtual meeting was held at the Ministry of Health to review the National Strategy for Immunisation against COVID-19. >A5

SPORTS Oman Sail opens registration

3 Registration is now open for the upcoming 2021 49er, 49erFX, and Nacra 17 World Championships. >A8

MEETING



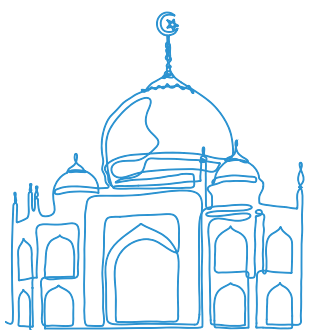
Sayyid Asa'ad reviews ties with Palestinian PM

MUSCAT: Assigned by His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik, His Highness Sayyid Asa'ad bin Tarik Al-Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan received in his office on Wednesday Dr. Mohammad Shtayyeh, Prime Minister of the State of Palestine and his accompanying delegation. The meeting exchanged cordial conversations and reviewed bilateral relations between the Oman and Palestine. It also touched on aspects of the existing coop-

eration between the two sides to serve the common interests of the two countries and their brotherly people.

The meeting was attended by Sayyid Badr Hamad Al-Busaidi, Foreign Minister, Riyad Najeed Al-Maliki, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the State of Palestine, the two advisers at Sayyid Asa'ad's Office, Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry for Diplomatic Affairs, Dr. Tayseer Ali Farhat, Palestinian Ambassador to Oman and the delegation accompanying the guest.

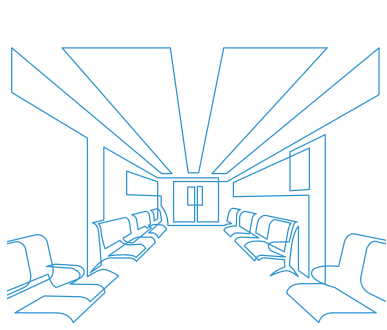
- ONA



Reopening of mosques that have a capacity of more than 100 worshippers, provided they operate at 50 percent occupancy, for the five daily prayers. Friday prayers are not permitted.



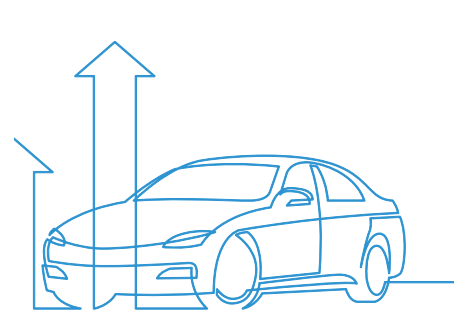
Commercial activities and restaurants can operate beyond 8pm, maintaining 50 percent capacity, Children aged 12 and under can now enter malls and restaurants



Exhibition centres, wedding halls and other such activities can resume operations at 30 percent capacity, up to an occupancy of 300 people



Beaches and public parks are now open, although large gatherings are not permitted, gyms can operate at 50 percent capacity, Sports activities can resume at 50 percent audience attendance



Omanis and residents of the GCC countries can freely cross the country's land borders for work

COVID RESTRICTIONS EASED



Sayyid Hamoud Faisal Al-Busaidi, Minister of Interior. - ONA

Decisions are aimed to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on private sector and boost business

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Supreme Committee tasked with tackling developments resulting from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic issued a number of decisions to alleviate the impact of the pandemic on the private sector and to stimulate different business activities while protecting individuals and society

against the COVID-19 infection.

As part of the re-opening measures, permission was given to re-open mosques with a capacity of not more than 100 worshippers. The re-opening will take place in accordance with procedures announced by the Ministry of Awqaf and the Ministry of Health.

Children below 12 years old are now permitted to enter the business outlets while the decision prohibiting all commercial activities in all governorates of the Sultanate from 8 pm to 4 am has been annulled.

Permission has been granted, with curbs, to open exhibition and wedding halls and similar collective commercial activities. Even Omanis and GCC citizens who are residents of Oman can move across land borders between Oman and other GCC countries. Permission has been granted for visits to beaches and public parks, use of swimming pools

and for the resumption of collective sports activities in open places.

The Supreme Committee also extended till further notice its decision prohibiting entry to the Sultanate of travellers arriving from Sudan, Brazil, Nigeria, Tanzania, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, the United Kingdom, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Egypt and the Philippines.

The Committee added to the above-mentioned in-bound travel ban list the following countries: Thailand, Malaysia and Vietnam as well as travellers arriving from any other country if they happen to have passed by any of the above-mentioned countries within a period of 14 days from applying to enter the Sultanate.

This decision takes effect from 2 pm, Saturday, June 5, 2021, till further notice. The Committee has also advised Omani citizens not to visit the above-mentioned countries during this period. With inputs from ONA

Entry ban extended

Oman has extended entry ban of passengers arriving from Sudan, Brazil, Nigeria, Tanzania, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, United Kingdom, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Egypt and the Philippines

This apart, travellers arriving from Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam will be denied entry, starting from 2pm on June 5 till further notice, the Supreme Committee said.

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Maghrib.....	6.55pm
Isha.....	8.17pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....	3.53am

COVID vaccinations, drive-thru tests at Oman International Hospital soon

5,000 vaccines to be distributed in 5 days

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Companies planning to vaccinate their staff against COVID-19 can now send them to Oman International Hospital, said Dr Jose Alexandre Cunha, a board member of the hospital. The move is part of efforts from OIH to vaccinate locals and expatriates against the coronavirus, thereby helping bring down infection rates.

“As a health institution, it is our role to battle this pandemic, which can be done through vaccinating the maximum number of people,”

said Cunha, who also serves as chairman of Al Afia Healthcare Development, the company that established the hospital. “We will distribute 5,000 vaccines in five days,” he added. This is in addition to a drive-thru facility where people can undergo COVID tests from the safety and comfort of their cars. “We are proud to play our part in contributing to the country’s healthcare sector, in line with the objectives of the Omani government to develop integrated medical services and medical training.

“With the government encouraging the private healthcare sector, we look forward to being recognised as the go-to private hospital in the capital,” he said. To celebrate its soft opening, Oman International Hospital will offer people the opportunity to sign up for its OIH Bronze Card. Benefits of membership include access to



telemedicine services of the IGHS Group, a 10 percent discount on services, free GP consultation during the hospital’s first year, and access to home consultations, with a 10 per cent discount are just some of the benefits.

“The Bronze Card is one of three cards that the Hospital is presenting to the market,” said Cunha. “As a patient, you can start with the Bronze Card and be upgraded later on, according to the number of points you are accumulating – just like the frequent flyer miles that are spent using airline loyalty cards. You can go from the Bronze to the Silver and from the Silver to the Gold, and the benefits and discounts will also increase”.

“The difference in benefits between the various membership levels are the special access holders receive to the Globalcare international network of hospitals,

namely in Europe and America,” he explained. “We will be doing a promotion at Oman Avenues Mall, starting from next week, where we will present our cards, and make them available to whoever wants to acquire them.”

While OIH does aim to be one of the best healthcare providers in the country, it also intends on being easily accessible and affordable to those who require its services. “Now is not the time to focus solely on profit, but on service to the community,” Cunha went on to say. Oman International Hospital was established with the objective of creating the ideal conditions for clinical and research activity in Oman. It hosts health professionals in various specialisations and has different clinical partner entities offering the best medical and diagnostic services, keeping in mind a patient’s well-being and comfort.

LAUNCHED

Oman Air offering direct seasonal flights to Tbilisi



TWICE WEEKLY: The twice weekly flights will operate with Boeing 737 aircraft from 16 June 2021 to 16 September 2021, subject to government approvals.

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman Air has launched seasonal service between Muscat and Tbilisi, the capital city of Georgia.

The national carrier of the Sultanate of Oman is offering two weekly direct flights (Wednesdays and Sundays), operated with Boeing 737 aircraft.

The flights will operate from 16 June 2021 to 16 September 2021, subject to government approvals.

The Wednesday flight from Muscat will depart at 20:15 and arrive in Tbilisi at 00:15. The flight from Tbilisi will depart Thursday at 01:15 and arrive in Muscat at 05:00. The Sunday flight from Muscat will depart at 03:30 and arrive in Tbilisi at 07:30. The flight from Tbilisi will depart at 08:55 and arrive in Muscat at 12:40.

Oman Air will maintain its comprehensive safety programme throughout all elements of the travel journey to ensure that guests fly confidently. Masks are required when guests are on

board the aircraft and in Oman’s airports. Distancing is maintained while guests board and exit the aircraft, which are carefully cleaned after each flight and at the end of every day. Cabin crew all wear a full set of personal protective equipment, meal service has been modified to further ensure safety, and a number of other measures have been implemented to ensure that the airline’s guests and crew are safe at all times.

Guests who are planning to travel to Muscat should visit the Civil Aviation Authority website, caa.gov.om, to ensure they are prepared to comply with requirements to enter the Sultanate.

Guests travelling to Tbilisi, Georgia should ensure they are aware of official requirements to enter or transit through the country.

Guests departing from Oman should also ensure that they are aware of all pre-departure requirements and requirements during their flights, which are provided at omanair.com.

PANDEMIC

1,258 new COVID-19 cases, 14 deaths in Sultanate: Ministry

MUSCAT: More than 1,200 new COVID-19 were reported in the Sultanate on Wednesday.

As many as 1,258 new cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) were registered in the Sultanate on Wednesday, in addition to 14 new COVID-19-related death cases.

This brings the total number of positive COVID-19 cases to 219,529 in the Sultanate.

The total number of Covid-19-related death cases reached 2,370, the Ministry of Health said. The Ministry added that 692 new cases have recovered, bringing the total number to 201,113 recoveries.

The Ministry also pointed out that 124 cases were hospitalised over the past 24 hours, as the total number of current hospitalised COVID-19-infected patients stands at 824. Of that number, 265 are in intensive care units (ICUs).

Meanwhile, the Ministry of health and the Ministry of Education continue administering vaccines to General Education Diploma (GED) students in all the governorates of the Sultanate, as the total number of administered vaccines by yesterday (Tuesday) reached 41,155 which covers 54 per cent. -ONA

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Marriage halls, gyms ready to welcome people once again

Under the recent decisions of the Supreme Committee to deal with COVID-19, marriage halls, exhibition centres were among the businesses allowed to operate at 30 per cent capacity

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Young couples in Oman are once again ready to tie the knot at traditional ceremonies among friends, family and well-wishers in marriage halls, which have once again reopened after staying shut since the start of the pandemic.

Marriage halls, exhibition centres and other large-scale venues were among those allowed to open under the recent decisions of the Supreme Committee to deal with COVID-19. These venues can now operate at 30 per cent capacity, or can accommodate up to 300 people, whichever is lesser.

get married over Zoom during the pandemic, Omani national Hamed Al Nabhani is planning to call all of them to his wedding, which is set for this August.

"It was very difficult to not be there with our friends on their special day," he said. "We've known them since childhood, and to see them get married from a distance makes for a very bitter-sweet moment. I am so relieved marriage halls are allowed to function again, I can now invite my close friends to my wedding, and we can celebrate being together once again."

"Of course, we will make it a point to see that everyone follows the COVID-19 precautions," he said. "The decision to close so many economic facilities for so long has taken its toll on all of us, but we understand this is important." Faisal Al Shukaily, another Omani, said he had postponed getting married because of the current conditions, but can now make plans for his wedding.

"We will do it later this year, maybe after September," he said. "By then, the number of cases

would have subsided even more, I hope. To hear the decisions of the Supreme Committee and the reopening of so many places will come as a relief and blessing to so many.

"My nephews and niece have already made plans with me for the weekend: they want me to take them to the park," he added. "I am not going to say 'no' to them this time, they have been at home for far too long, and this small outing is a source of great happiness for them."

Faisal is hoping to get fitter by the time his wedding rolls around: it is a good thing, then, that gyms and other sports facilities have also been allowed to open.

A gym manager in Muscat said he had spent all of Wednesday afternoon calling his customers to let them know of the latest decisions. Under Supreme Committee guidelines, gyms must operate at 50 percent capacity.

"We have a booking sheet for our customers who have to reserve their slots in advance, because we're only taking in 10 people at a time," he said. "Members are also only allowed to work out for up to one hour during every session, because we have to make sure everybody gets a chance to use the gym."

"I also ask all our customers to please come to the gym on time, finish your workout, and leave, while maintaining COVID protocols," he added. "If you come late, we cannot extend your session, as we must respect other people's timings as well."

Supreme Committee keen to cover all aspects of pandemic: Health Minister



Dr. Ahmed Mohammed Al Saidi, Minister of Health

The minister called for total adherence to precautionary procedures, noting that the Supreme Committee stated in its decisions issued yesterday that it might ban the activities again in case of non-abidance by precautionary procedures

MUSCAT: Dr. Ahmed Mohammed Al Saidi, Minister of Health, has said that the Supreme Committee tasked with tackling developments resulting from coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic takes special care to study all aspects of life impacted by the epidemic, including economic, social and health aspects.

The minister told Oman News Agency (ONA), Oman Radio and

TV that the pandemic is still persisting, though numbers decreased before Eid Al Fitr holidays. However, gatherings held afterwards caused a sharp increase in infection cases, said Dr. Ahmed, who hoped that this surge will be a temporary one.

The minister called for total adherence to precautionary procedures, noting that the Supreme Committee stated in its decisions

issued yesterday that it might ban the activities again in case of non-abidance by precautionary procedures.

Dr. Ahmed added that he looks forward to regular decline in infection cases now that a wide-scale immunisation drive has commenced, with the main objective of attaining 60 per cent to 70 per cent protection of citizens and residents. -DINA

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THIS IS WHO I AM:

How this Omani athlete fell in love with cycling



Times News Service

MUSCAT: Four years ago, when Mohammed Al Masroori was looking for an affordable, efficient way to travel long distances, he did not realise the bicycle he had just bought was to change his life forever.

He'd been looking for something that would let him travel freely, explore nature at his own pace, and understand the culture of people all across Oman. One day, while looking at the options available to him, he stumbled across an idea on social media.

"One of the things that used to really excite me when I was on social media was seeing people make long journeys on bikes, travelling in a very simple manner, such as using their bike frames to carry the luggage they needed," he said.

What Mohammed was looking for was a touring bike, a versatile cycle that can be used both on and off-road. When he went in search of one, however, he ended up empty-handed.

"The shop owner instead advised me to buy a road bike and see how far I could go on it," he said. "If you like it, he told me you can take a touring bike."

Mohammed got on the bike and never looked back – except to check for traffic.

"I realised, this is who I am, this gives me freedom," he explained. "This goes deep into myself, helps me energise myself. Through the years, I developed my interest in cycling, and have now gone beyond that by taking part in triathlons. It's been an amazing career, and here I am now."

"There have been a lot of up and down moments, but overall, I am very thrilled about the experiences I have faced," he added. "Triathlon is a very exciting sport: you begin by swimming, start cycling, and finish your course by running."

Mohammed is the founder of Pactora-Arsen, a professional triathlon outfit in Oman that competes at local and international events, encourages others to get fit, and if they want to, take up the sport.

One of the things that used to really excite me when I was on social media was seeing people make long journeys on bikes, travelling in a very simple manner, such as using their bike frames to carry the luggage they needed.



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Mohammed Al Masroori
Cyclist, Triathlete

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lon outfit in Oman that competes at local and international events, encourages others to get fit, and if they want to, take up the sport.

"You go through so many experiences as a triathlete," he revealed. "The way you set yourself up for a triathlon, condition yourself for it, and the endurance you require is very different to cycling. We are ambitious about taking this forward, and would like to expand our activities, going beyond the borders of Oman."

As captain of this triathlon team, Mohammed is also a member of the Oman Cycling Association, which has provided him plenty of opportunities to pursue his passion, and spread awareness of the importance of cycling.

"Their efforts really impact your presence and your team, as well the decisions you make, because they affect all cyclists locally," he says of the OCA. "This membership helps us have a voice, so I am thankful to the Oman Cycling Association for giving us the chance to take part in local races and the opportunity to make an impact in cycling. This is a sport that is progressively developing in Oman."

While cycling is definitely a way for people to get fit, an a fantastic environmental alternative to cars, given our preoccupation with fossil-fuel guzzlers, does Mohammed feel bikes have an important role to play in future?

"Scientists have a famous saying," he says. "Physical impact when done moderately impacts all ages at all stages. Cycling is a mode of transportation, it is very simple and reliable, and an environmentally sustainable means of travelling. It also helps enhance the human body's cardiovascular system."

"Cities and societies around the world are currently focused on creating a safe and sustainable infrastructure, and are trying to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide produced to reverse global warming," he added. "Cycling is one of the

ways to reduce our impact on the environment."

Mohammed, however, saves his best piece of advice for last: cycling, he says, it also has a social synergy with people.

"It helps the economy by creating jobs," he reveals. "If you look at some Western countries, bicycle manufacturers and retailers have helped create jobs, because there are so many aspects to it: finance, procurement, maintenance, retail, engineering, so this does offer something beyond what we can ordinarily imagine."

"As a cyclist, I am very happy we have World Bicycle Day," Mohammed admits. "We have 365 days in a year, but this is one of the days we are proud of. This is also a day that serves as an encouragement for people in wider society to take up cycling, and the importance of the bicycle."

Mohammed Al Masroori was speaking to TFM's Evita Louis on the occasion of World Bicycle Day.

DELEGATED BY HIS MAJESTY

GAVI’s global distribution of vaccines fair, says minister



Dr Ahmed Mohammed Al Saidi, Minister of Health. — ONA

MUSCAT: Delegated by His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik, Dr Ahmed Mohammed Al Saidi, Minister of Health, took part in the GAVI-COVAX conference, a virtual international meeting organised by GAVI-COVAX under the theme ‘One Protected World’.

Dr Ahmed commended the efforts being undertaken by the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI) with the purpose of making the world more suitable for the billions living in it, despite the challenges

that the alliance is facing.

He pointed out that the GAVI proved its ability to rally solidarity and fair global distribution of vaccines.

The minister called for supporting the COVAX to help fill the gap of insufficient resources. In particular, he urged donating parties to take initiatives to save lives and ensure that the vaccines reach poor countries.

The Sultanate has been chosen to participate in the conference due to its good international repu-

tation in the field of health and due to its position as linking point among countries of the region.

The GAVI, acting under the leadership of the World Health Organisation (WHO) and partners, seeks to accelerate the distribution of the vaccines, including polio vaccine, and this initiative plays a major role against the spread of contagious diseases in the world.

The conference, hosted by Japan, worked towards the arrival of 1.8 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccine to low income countries

through advance commitments of COVAX, which eyes an additional \$2 billion-worth of grants from donating countries and private entities, to be added to the existing \$6.3 billion collected prior to launching the conference.

The conference brought together government, private sector organisations, civil society institutions, technical and executive parties. The lessons learned will help address the challenges of the pandemic.

— ONA

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

Meeting reviews National Strategy for Immunisation

MUSCAT: An expanded virtual meeting was held at the Ministry of Health to review the National Strategy for Immunisation against COVID-19 on Wednesday.

The virtual meeting was held under the chairmanship of Dr Ahmed Mohammed Al Saidi, Minister of Health (MOH).

The meeting was attended by the MOH’s undersecretaries along with a number of senior officials of the Ministry and from the governorates.



VIRTUAL MEETING: The meeting was attended by the MOH’s undersecretaries along with a number of senior officials of the Ministry and from the governorates. — ONA

General features

Al Saidi reviewed the general features of the National Strategy for Immunisation against COVID-19, referring that despite the community response for the vaccination campaign, the coverage rate in the governorates is varying due to

the concerns of some elder people and parents.

Bader Saif Al Rawahi, Director of Communicable Diseases Control gave a presentation on

vaccinating the target groups during the next weeks, as well as the number of received and under procurement vaccines.

— ONA



SWEDISH MINISTER LEAVES OMAN

Ann Linde, Foreign Minister of the Kingdom of Sweden and her accompanying delegation left after an official two-day visit to the Sultanate on Wednesday. She was seen off by Dr Khalid Said Al Jaradi, Head of the Protocols Department at the Foreign Ministry and a number of officials. - ONA



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The Internal Tender Committee at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology
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TENDER NO	TENDER NAME	DATE OF PUBLISHING	LAST DATE TO PURCHASE TENDER DOCUMENT	SUBMISSION DATE	COMPANIES WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THIS TENDER	DOCUMENT PRICE
11/2021/ITA /HQ-5	RED HAT ENTERPRISE LINUX SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL	2/Jun/2021	09/Jun/2021	16/Jun/2021	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES IN THE SIMILAR WORKS (Excellent)	(25/-) TWENTY FIVE OMANI RIAL NON- REFUNDABLE

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CORRESPONDANCE:

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Pre-Qualification of Tenderer & Experience	The Tenderer should be a registered business owner with proper commercial registration with ministry of commerce also should be a ROP approved valid license holder. The Tenderer must show minimum 3 years previous experience in performing similar jobs in the past with electricity distribution sector.
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Site Visit	10:00 AM on 20th June 2021
Last date for seeking pre-bid clarifications	03:00 PM on 23rd June 2021
Last date for providing pre-bid clarifications	03:00 PM on 27th June 2021
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MINISTRY OF FINANCE

Government revenues estimated at more than OMR2.7bn by April 2021

MUSCAT: Fiscal bulletin issued by the Ministry of Finance shows that government revenues dropped by 27.68 per cent from January till the end of April 2021 to stand at OMR2.76 billion compared to the corresponding period in 2020.

The statement indicated that net oil revenues stood at OMR1.34 billion, down by 36.82 per cent due to the decline in oil prices and production average, coupled with COVID-19 impacts which slowed the Sultanate's economic and financial growth.

The bulletin noted that the Sultanate is committed to Opec-Plus production cut agreement.

Meanwhile, current revenues saw a rise of 14.43 per cent, of



which OMR313 million came from the distribution of government investment dividends.

The bulletin stressed that the state's public spending continues to decline in light of policies and procedures aimed to rationalise spending and raise its efficiency.

As a result, general expenditure by the end of April 2021 stood at OMR3.59 billion (OMR3.596

billion), down by 2.65 per cent, compared to the corresponding period in 2020, while Investment expenditure (developmental, capital) of civil ministries stood about OMR143 million.

The bulletin also showed that the Sultanate introduced a new item, a provision termed 'Debt Settlement Allocation', in drafting the State Budget 2021, with the purpose of paying part of future loan outstanding. By the end of April 2021, a sum of OMR50 million was transferred to the Debt Settlement Allocation Provision, from a target sum of OMR150 million.

The budget deficit by April 2021 reached OMR827.4 million, while the local and foreign paid loans

stood at OMR668.1 million.

The bulletin showed that in light of establishing Energy Development Oman (EDO), starting its operations, and transferring the expenditure obligations to the company in the second half of 2021, the government still continues to pay the expenses of oil and gas sectors which stood at OMR554.5 million by April 2021.

The reserves of crude oil and condensates by the end of 2020 stood at OMR4.7 billion barrels, while the average production rate reached 950,700 barrels daily. In addition, the Sultanate's gas reserves by the end of 2020 reached 23.69 trillion cubic feet, while the average production rate was 121.9 million cubic feet daily. - ONA



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SULTAN'S ARMED FORCES CORPS

SAF proceeding with employment drive for jobseekers



MUSCAT: The Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) Corps in coordination with the Ministry of Labour are proceeding with completion of the procedures necessary for appointment of nationals who meet the terms set forth in the appointment notices.

The appointments come in response to the Royal Directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik on accelerating the

pace of appointment of national jobseekers.

The Royal Army of Oman (RAO) continues with the procedures for evaluation of applications and recruitment.

The Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) and the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) are also proceeding with receiving applications for employment.

— ONA



STATE HERMITAGE MUSEUM IN RUSSIA

National Museum opens Oman Hall in Russia's State Hermitage Museum

Times News Service

MUSCAT: A space, reserved to highlight the history, culture and scientific heritage of the Sultanate, was inaugurated at the State Hermitage Museum in Russia on Wednesday.

The Oman Hall is located in the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg in Russia, alongside the Saint Petersburg International Economic Forum.

It will highlight the historical, cultural, and scientific heritage of Oman at the regional and international levels, according to an online statement issued by Oman News Agency.

The event saw participation by Prof Dr Mikhail Piotrovsky, Director-General of the State Hermitage Museum and member of the Board of Trustees of the



National Museum of Oman and His Excellency Yousef bin Issa Al Zedjali, Oman's Ambassador to the Russian Federation.

His Excellency Jamal bin Hassan Al Moosawi, Secretary-General of the National Museum, joined in the proceedings virtually.

"It gives me great pleasure to attend today the inauguration of Oman Hall, which hosts the exhibition 'Oman: The Land of Frankincense', organised by the National Museum of Oman," said H.E. Yousef Al Zedjali.

"The exhibition is being held in the corridors of one of the larg-

est and leading museums in the world," he added.

The opening of the Oman Hall is the second such event held at Hermitage Museum during the past three years. The first event, 'Oman's Day, organised on July 23, 2018, celebrated the Renaissance Day of the Sultanate of Oman.



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WORLD

Joe Biden marks 100th anniversary of racist massacre in Tulsa

Tulsa became a scene of carnage a century ago when an angry white mob burned down a prosperous Black neighbourhood

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden visited the city of Tulsa, Oklahoma on Tuesday to mark the centennial anniversary of one of the deadliest events of racist violence in the country's history. "I come here to help fill the silence because in silence wounds deepen," Biden said of the racist incident which has long been considered a taboo.



"Some injustices are so heinous, so horrific, so grievous, they cannot be buried, no matter how hard people try," the president said. Tulsa became a scene of carnage a century ago when an angry white mob burned down a prosperous Black neighborhood — often referred to as the Black Wall Street — and in the process killed some 300 people. Biden's visit comes as the country faces an upswell of people protesting police violence and systemic discrimination against Black and other non-white people.

A dark chapter of US history The president, who served as vice president under the country's first Black president, Barack Obama, also met with three survivors of the attack who were just children at the time. He highlighted the importance of remembering the deadly inci-

dent. "Just because history is silent, it does not mean that it did not take place," Biden said, describing the course of events by saying that "hell was unleashed, literal hell was unleashed." From May 31 to June 1 in 1921, violence erupted in the town after a group of Black men went to a courthouse to defend a young man from being lynched who had been accused of stepping on a white woman's foot. In response, an angry group formed at dawn the next day and proceeded to loot and burn down buildings in the more than 30-block district. Thousands ended up in internment camps, watched over by the national guard.

Biden takes a different approach to Trump Biden — who secured his election win with the overwhelming support from Black voters — has pursued a very different path than his predecessor when it comes to handling questions of racism. **DW**

G7 leaders intend to back Tokyo Olympics efforts



TOKYO: The Group of Seven (G7), consisting of the world's leading economies, is expected to pledge support to Japan's efforts in organizing and carrying out upcoming summer Olympics and Paralympics in Tokyo following the G7 summit next week, Kyodo reported on Wednesday citing sources familiar with the matter. A relevant statement will be released after the summit, scheduled for June 11-13 in Cornwall in southwest England. According to Kyodo, the support gesture was requested by Japan. The G7 consists of the UK, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States. The Summer Olympics in Tokyo were initially scheduled for 2020 but were postponed in the spring

of last year due to the coronavirus pandemic. The Games are currently set to be held this summer, from July 23 until August 8. The Japanese government has decided to hold the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics without foreign spectators. The authorities are still considering allowing Japanese fans to attend the event if they provide proof of vaccination or a negative COVID-19 test result. The final decision on the matter will be made in June. An increasing number of people have been calling for the Olympics to be canceled, concerned by pandemic-related threats to public safety and the strain on the country's healthcare system that is already struggling with a new surge in COVID-19 cases. **ANI**

NO COVID DEATHS IN 24 HOURS

UK reports no new daily COVID deaths, first time since last year

LONDON: The United Kingdom (UK) on Tuesday reported no new daily COVID-19 deaths in the last 24 hours, for the first time since last year. An official data released by the UK said that the figure is unprecedented since July 30 last year as no one was reported to have died from COVID-19 in the past 24 hours. This comes amid concerns in the country over the fast-spreading Delta variant, which was first detected in India and now accounts for the majority of new cases in Britain, reported euronews. After weeks of decline, new cases were on the rise with an additional 3,165 infections reported on Tuesday, bringing the cumulative total to 4.5 million since the pandemic began. Over the past seven days, new infections increased by 31.9 per cent, according to the UK government's coronavirus dashboard. British health authorities are speeding up the vaccination race to contain the new variant. Current vaccines appear to be effective against it, reported euronews. The UK is one of the world's leading countries for coronavirus vaccinations. About three-quarters of British adults have had one dose, while almost half have received both doses. Yet many experts are urging the UK government to postpone plans to lift remaining restrictions on June 21, warning more



people need to be inoculated before measures can be eased safely, reported euronews. The government said that it will announce on June 14 whether the easing of restrictions will be delayed. The UK is the European country with the highest number of coronavirus deaths, with a total 127,782 lives lost to the pandemic. **ANI**

Ministry of Higher Education, Research & Innovation
Electronic Tenders

The Internal Tenders Committee of the Ministry of Higher Education Research & Innovation announced the following tenders:

Tender No.	Tender Name	Company that are entitled to participate	Tender Price	Last Date for purchasing Tender	The deadline for submission of tenders
16/2020	Annual Maintenance contract for non-comprehensive of cctv, access control & intrusion alarm system	Specialized in providing Same service and registered with the Tender Board with Grade: 'Excellent and first	25 /= RO	10/06/2021	20/06/2021

please visit the following link in E-Tendering system for purchasing the tender documents :

<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om/>

All companies that are bidding must provide a bank guarantee or a certified cheque from a bank operating in the Sultanate for at least (1%) of the tender value on behalf of His Excellency Dr. / Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee.

Preference will be given to companies' or small and medium enterprises registered with the General Authority for the development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) that includes the largest proportion of its tender Omanization.

Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest or any other tender.

Chairman of tender committee
Ministry of Higher Education Research & Innovation



IN KAMPALA

Ugandan minister wounded, daughter, driver killed in 'targeted shooting'

KAMPALA: Daughter of Katumba Wamala, Uganda's Minister of Works and Transport was killed in an alleged "targeted drive-by shooting" which left the former top general wounded. The driver of the Minister has also been killed in the attack targeting the general outside his home in Kampala on Tuesday. Four attackers riding on two motorcycles with concealed number plates followed Wamala from his home in the capital, Kampala, for 4 km (2.5 miles) before they sprayed his vehicle with bullets shortly before 9 am (06:00 GMT) on Tuesday, a police statement said, reported Al Jazeera. The CNN reported that the general, his 26-year-old daughter Brenda Nantogo, his bodyguard and his driver Haruna Kayondo were traveling in a military registered car when the attack unfolded, the police said. His daughter and the driver were killed in the attack, while Katumba Wamala was hospitalised after sustaining gunfire injuries. The bodyguard was not hurt, the police said. Police described the attack as a "targeted drive-by shooting,"



saying the gunmen trailed the vehicle as it left Katumba Wamala's home. Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni said in a tweet that he has spoken to Katumba Wamala twice on the phone and that he was being well taken care of. He said the authorities already "have clues to the killers in General Katumba's shooting." Katumba Wamala served as the Inspector General of Police of the Uganda Police Force from 2001 until 2005, being the first active Uganda People's Defence Force soldier to serve as the head of the force. His military carrier dates back to 1984 when he was a Second Lieutenant in the Uganda National Liberation Army that was eventually defeated by the National Resistance Army led by Museveni. **ANI**

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SPORTS

Oman Sail opens registration for world championships

Oman Sail will welcome a 400-strong fleet of the world's best sailors

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Registration is now open for the upcoming 2021 49er, 49erFX, and Nacra 17 World Championships, to be held at Mussanah from 16-21 November 2021. Oman Sail will welcome a 400-strong fleet of the world's best sailors in three Olympic Classes when the Championships, being held in Asia for the first time in its history, kick off later this year.

The six-day event will be the first stop on the road to the Paris 2024 Olympic Games for sailors in the 49er, 49erFX, and Nacra 17 class and offers another chance for the international sailing community to experience Oman's famed hospitality. Conditions in



November are likely to be perfect for sailing with wind averaging between 10 and 14 knots, an average temperature of 23 degrees Celsius, meaning the powerful sea breezes and pleasant waves will power the sailors to top speed and allow for thrilling action out on the water.

Rashid Ibrahim Al Kindi, Oman Sail's Director of Sailing, said, "This is a chance for the Sultanate of Oman to make history as the first Asian hosts of the World Championships and welcome the world's best sailors in all three classes to our shores. The cham-

pionships will mark the first global sailing event post-Tokyo 2020 and the start of the next qualification campaign building towards the 2024 Games in three years' time. With such a high calibre of sailing talent on show, we anticipate an exciting return to the water for the 49er, 49erFX, and Nacra 17 classes, and everyone at Oman Sail is looking forward to welcoming the world's best sailors for what promises to be another excellent major tournament hosted in Oman."

The race will be managed by Oman Sail's professional race

management team in collaboration with World Sailing and 49er Class officials. As the world begins to reopen following the pandemic, there will be opportunities for visitors to stay longer in the Sultanate familiarise themselves with the country's natural beauty. Personalised city tours, cultural visits and adventuring into the mountains, the sea and the desert will also be available through Oman Sail.

The Sultanate of Oman has garnered a well-deserved reputation in international sailing as an impressive host venue, complete with excellent sailing conditions and world-class facilities. Past successes include the 2010 Asian Beach Games, for which Al Mussanah Sports City was purpose-built, the 2013 Laser World Championships, the 2015 RSX world Championships, the 2019 Asian and Oceanian Optimist Championships, and most recently the 2021 Mussanah Open Championship, a Tokyo 2020 qualification event for African and Asian nations.

Oman will also host the 2021 Asian Windsurfing Championships in October 2021 and is currently bidding for the Youth World Championships due to take place in December 2021.

ICC, Oman Cricket look for increased fan engagement



Vaishali Jesrani

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Having been picked by International Cricket Council (ICC) for its 100 % Future Leaders Programme on Tuesday, Oman's Vaishali Jesrani, captain of women's team, feels the Sultanate will do well to increase fan engagement as it looks to host international sports events in future.

To facilitate this aspect of women's cricket development, ICC has appointed Anthony Everard, Cricket Australia's Executive General Manager, Fan Engagement, to work as Vaishali's mentor as the six months programme starts next week.

"I look forward to serve women's cricket on a major platform in a much bigger way. The new role is extremely motivating after all the years of playing and establishing women's cricket in Oman. Getting into the ICC Future Leaders Programme is a great honour. I believe I have many more levels to reach in cricket and develop myself. I am working with Anthony which is going to be a great learning experience as Cricket Australia is one of the best organisations to work with as it takes women's cricket equally serious to any international sport around the world," said Vaishali, who is also Oman Cricket's Lady Coordinator for Women's Cricket Development.

Wishing her success, Duleep Mendis, Chief Development Officer, Oman Cricket (OC), said Vaishali's selection was an honour for OC and a rare opportunity for her. Talking about the top class cricket infrastructure in Oman and the wonderful support Oman

Cricket Board provided to develop women's cricket over the years, Vaishali said ICC and Oman Cricket were looking to see how they can have more fans engaged when it comes to international events in the future.

"ICC is not only looking to expand its TV audience but is also trying to see the game growing internationally. Looking back, things did not look good for women's cricket in Oman initially. A lot of girls were even questioning themselves whether they had any real prospects to grow as international sportswomen but things started changing. It's quite clear now that women can definitely meet their ambitions and have a career in sport. There is a big platform open to them now and many opportunities are going to come their way. It's all about how their family or society looks at each and every daughter or girl who picks up her cricket kit and goes out there to perform," she added.

She was all praise for the parents, schools and Oman's media for helping women's cricket develop and grow.

The six-month programme will include a kick-off workshop with Belinda Clark, followed by monthly check-ins and a three-month review with the mentees and mentors agreeing the frequency and method of communication.

The role of a mentor is to unlock their mentee's potential and help them to be at their best. This could include being a confidential sounding-board, providing advice, guidance, and connections to reach their potential.

FRENCH OPEN

Nadal, Djokovic storm into second round

PARIS: Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal, the top two favorites at Roland Garros and the finalists of last year, kicked off their campaign both with straight-set wins on Tuesday.

The 34-year-old Spaniard was forced to save a set point in the third set but held his nerve to defeat Australia's Alexei Popyrin 6-3, 6-2, 7-6 (3). The Serbian top seed, playing under the light in the night session, eased past Tennys Sandgren of United States 6-2, 6-4, 6-2.

However, Russia's seventh seed Andrey Rublev was shocked by Germany's world No. 42 Jan-Lennard Struff in a thrilling five-set battle. Struff powered to a two-set lead but lost the third and fourth before restoring in the deciding set to pocket the victory 6-3, 7-6 (6), 4-6, 3-6, 6-4 after three hours and 46 minutes.

With the seedings based on the world rankings, four-time reigning champion Nadal, seeded third, was drawn in the same half with Djokovic and Switzerland's giant

Roger Federer who came to Paris as the eighth seed.

"I'm here to try my best, and when you are the third seed, you know that you're going to have the chance to be in the same part in the draw with the number one or the number two," said Nadal, who is bidding to win his 21st Grand Slam title, a feat would make him break the tie with Federer to take sole ownership of the all-time record for most Grand Slam men's singles titles.

The King of Clay clinched his

13th Grand Garros title by beating arch-rival Djokovic in a lopsided final 6-0, 6-2, 7-5 last year.

"I have won my first match, something that I'm happy with and I'm focused on the second one. That's it. The other stuff doesn't worry me much now," Nadal said.

Djokovic's opening round match with Sandgren was the first-ever men's night session on Court Philippe-Chatrier as the 2016 champion took a comfortable win. **ANI**

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OMAN CRUDE PRICE RISES

The price of Oman oil has increased, with prices for delivery by August 2021 reaching \$69.46, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil rose by 31 cents from the price of Tuesday, which was \$69.15. - **ONA**

MARKET BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 3,915.46 points, up 0.56 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up 0.19 per cent at 563.53 points. Sharqiyah Desalination, up 9.60 per cent, was the top gainer while Al Suwadi Power, down 3.45 per cent, was the top loser.

TRA grants postal service licence to three new local firms in Oman

The licence aims to enhance further chances for investment and employment and it will generate more than 200 jobs

MUSCAT: The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) announced that it granted three local companies licence to provide postal services and related activities after the firms met the prescribed regulatory conditions.

The services include receiving, clearing, sorting and distributing courier, as well as all types of postal letters, including documents, parcels, packs and packages weighing not more than 25 kilograms.

The license aims to enhance further chances for investment and employment and it will generate more than 200 jobs, besides promoting services and offering additional options to beneficiaries in terms of prices and quality.

It is worth noting that 19 companies operate in the field of postal services. On its website, the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority publishes updates about existing postal service firms. - **ONA**



SERVICES: The services include receiving, clearing, sorting and distributing courier, as well as all types of postal letters, including documents, parcels, packs and packages weighing not more than 25 kilograms. - **ONA**

CAPITAL MARKET AUTHORITY

CMA imposes OMR10,000 fine

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Executive President of the Capital Market Authority (CMA) issued a decision imposing an OMR10,000 fine on Takaful Oman Insurance Company for breaching Table (b) of the Standard Motor Insurance Policy Schedule which resulted in misleading some policyholders of the existence of insurance coverage for personal accidents in the compulsory insurance cover in addition to changing certain terms in Table (b) of the Policy Schedule.

Compensate policyholders

The CMA obliged the company to compensate the policyholders who suffered damage due to the breaches of the company.

CMA issued the Standard Motor Insurance Policy to regulate the relationship between policyholders and insurers to maintain the rights and obligations of the parties to reduce disputes. The personal accidents addendum is a crucial service in the motor insurance package and is a basic benefit in the comprehensive insurance and optional benefit in the compulsory insurance. A large portion of motor vehicle owners is keen to



COMPENSATION: The CMA obliged the company to compensate the policyholders who suffered damage due to the breaches of the company. - **File picture**

add this benefit to hedge against the expected risks while driving.

Capital Market Authority calls on all insurance companies and brokers to comply with the legal and professional provisions when rendering the insurance service to the customers to avoid legal

consequences and urge the policyholders to contact customer service departments in the insurance companies and the Institutional Services Department of the Capital Market Authority in case of queries and complaints relating to the insurance services.

MEETING

Oil prices rise as OPEC+ holds back on strategy for second half of 2021

VIENNA: Despite an expected rise in demand for oil, the members of the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies (OPEC+) are not giving hints as to their strategy for the second half of the year.

During an online meeting of the energy ministers on Tuesday, the oil producers only confirmed planned production increases by July, Deutsche press agency (dpa) reported.

Faced with an unchanged short-term strategy and lacking signals about future increases, the oil price rose.

Brent crude rose to \$71.21 per barrel in the afternoon, 1.89 dollars more than on the previous day. West Texas meanwhile rose by \$2.3 to \$68.62 per barrel.

OPEC+ consists of the OPEC countries plus cooperating states such as Russia, Kazakhstan and Malaysia.

The alliance is currently facing conflicting pressures.

On the one hand, the demand for oil in large markets like the United States and China is improving, and there are also posi-



ONLINE MEET: During an online meeting of the energy ministers on Tuesday, the oil producers only confirmed planned production increases by July. - **BNA**

tive developments in Europe, said Saudi Energy Minister Abdulaziz bin Salman.

“But there are still clouds on the horizon,” he said, adding that it remains to be seen if the market needed additional oil. “I will only believe it when I see it.”

Angolan Oil Minister Diamantino Azevedo pointed out that coronavirus infections had recently risen in large countries like Brazil and India and that coronavirus variant could hamper economic recovery. Therefore, OPEC+ needed to remain flexible. - **BNA**

TRADING RELATIONSHIP

Small UK firms struggle with post-Brexit hurdles to doing business in Europe

BRITAIN: It was billed as the rebirth of British business — a chance to build a brighter commercial future, free of costly bureaucracy. But Brexit is proving far from profitable for many UK small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Swamped by paperwork, taxes, and eye-watering additional costs, some are having to shutter their EU operations indefinitely. Others, unwilling to cut off European customers, are simply upping sticks, and moving to the continent.

Antos, a Scottish dog chew producer, is one such firm.

“We’ve had to move the whole export side of our UK business to within the EU,” says owner Antoon Murphy. “We simply weren’t able to efficiently provide for our European customers from Britain anymore, with all the extra health certificates and documentation that’s required.”

Big changes

Before leaving the EU, trading with the continent couldn’t have been easier. Shipping orders to the likes of Belgium, the Netherlands, and France was often cheaper than servicing remote parts of the UK. Now outside of the bloc, British exporters must wrestle with a mountain of documents on rules of origin, customs, and VAT when sending the stock to Europe. If the item contains animal products, as Antos’s dog chews do, the paperwork is particularly onerous.

With this in mind, Antoon decided to partially relocate to France, acquiring a warehouse



BUSINESS BARRIERS: Swamped by paperwork, taxes, and eye-watering additional costs, some are having to shutter their EU operations indefinitely. - **DW**

two hours east of Lyon. Having recruited a small local workforce, he’s recently resumed barrier-free business with continental Europe, where the company makes around a quarter of its overall sales. Though it’s early days yet, he has no regrets.

“There was an option to just walk away and fold that area of the business, but we’d worked for the last six or seven years gaining those customers through going to trade shows and engaging with them online. I didn’t want to give them up.”

Non-tariff barriers

It’s a conundrum that confronts many British businesses. Though

the UK government secured an eleventh-hour tariff-free trade with Brussels, massive non-tariff barriers have emerged since the start of the year. Exports to the EU fell by almost 20 per cent in the first quarter of 2021 compared with the final free months of 2020, official figures show, while goods travelling in the other direction — Europe to the UK — dropped by over one-fifth.

Much of the pain has been felt by Britain’s small businesses. In the first 12 weeks of the year, close to a third had lost consignments in transit to the continent, an industry survey revealed, with 70 per cent suffering some sort of shipment delays. As a result, al-

most a quarter said they had temporarily stopped sending goods into Europe.

The British government has remained bullish throughout the post-Brexit period, promising that these early setbacks are simply “teething problems” that’ll ease with time. But some experts aren’t convinced.

“With the changes to VAT, rules of origin, customs paperwork, these are related to the UK leaving the customs union and single market, and us undergoing such a huge change to our trading relationship with the EU,” James Sibley, head of International Affairs at the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), told DW. “These changes are not

going away,” he added.

Looking on the bright side

There is, however, optimism around the flip side of Brexit — Britain being able to broker its global trade agreements. More than two-thirds of FSB members traded with non-EU countries, and though new markets such as Australia, New Zealand, the US and Japan might not entirely mitigate commercial losses in Europe, it is an exciting prospect, said Sibley.

In the meantime, the government has launched a £20 million (€23.2 million, €19 million) fund to support EU-exporting SMEs struggling with post-Brexit barriers — an acknowledgement of the breadth of the issues they’re facing. The money is only available to businesses that solely trade with Europe, however, excluding the likes of Forageplus, a Wales-based seller of nutritional horse supplements.

“In a lot of the European countries now things are running smoothly,” said General Manager Kieren Brownhill, who had to overcome huge logistical hurdles in the first weeks of 2021. “It’s very expensive for the customer to receive the goods, however — they’re being charged anywhere from 20 per cent to 40 per cent, and it seems totally random what the charges are.”

These fees, slapped on Forageplus’s products by customs authorities in the destination country, have put the firm’s European sales into reverse. Brownhill and the team now plan to double down on their domestic customer base,

noting that a move to the EU just isn’t viable.

Moving to Germany?

For SMEs that can consider relocating to the continent, Germany is among the most promising destinations, officials say.

“Germany is a hugely important market, 83 million consumers,” said Dr Ulrich Hoppe, director-general of the German-British Chamber of Industry & Commerce in London. “There’s an established trading relationship and profitable business to be done across the Channel.”

It’s a message that’s resonating with UK businesses — around 250 have contacted the chamber over the last year, keen to learn more about setting up in Germany. Those who do make the move will be employing EU citizens and contributing to European coffers, money and jobs that Britain will miss out on.

As for Antoon Murphy, he’s enjoying the best of both worlds: Half of the year will now be spent in the beautiful French Alps, overseeing the growth of the European and UK businesses. There is, however, a rather sizable hurdle on the horizon. “From October 1, there will be a requirement on our suppliers in Europe to provide export health certificates for all goods entering Britain,” said Antoon.

“We’ve asked the UK’s Animal Plant Health Agency for assistance in identifying and creating new health certificates for our products, but so far they are yet to assist.” - **DW**

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PHOTO - FEATURE



A car with automatic parking assistance system takes part in a remote automatic parking test at the research and development centre of the Changan Auto in Chongqing, southwest China. Wan Kailin, a young engineer in Changan Auto, spent seven years with his colleagues in the research of automatic parking, and developed an automatic parking assistance system with independent intellectual property rights. The intelligent system helps drivers park their cars via a cellphone app. To make the system adapt to different practical situations, Wan and his research team did many tests.

- Xinhua/Liu Chan



ROUND-UP

All-new Mazda 3 Sports Wagon: A thoughtful, luxurious design

The new Mazda 3 is a breath of fresh air in terms of the design and its minimalistic approach to the exterior and interior lines and curves

MUSCAT: The all-new Mazda 3 Sports Wagon is all the rage in Oman. This comes as no surprise that it is one of the most beautifully designed, stylish vehicles to have ever come out of the Mazda lineup. Some might term anything stylish as expensive but this is not the case with Mazda. Its drop-dead looks along with its class-leading features and an understated, minimalist design language are what attracts one towards it. The Mazda 3 is a favourite amongst the youth. Zainab Said Al Wahaibi is one such excited, youthful customer. She is a first-year Chemical engineering student at Muscat University. Having bought the Mazda 3 Sports Wagon Luxury almost a month back from the Wattayah showroom, she had all the positive things to say. When asked what she liked about the car she said that it had a reasonable price, it was comfortable, had a modest design especially the interior and she wanted the Mazda 3 “design for a change”. The new Mazda 3 is a breath of fresh air in terms of the design and its minimalistic approach to the exterior and interior lines and curves. The specific model which Zainab purchased is the 2.0L Sports Wagon. The design is stunning in the truest sense. The



CX-30 and Mazda 3 are the 7th Generation Mazda cars. Starting from the key to the interior design and extending to the exterior, everything has been rethought and redesigned which refines the distinct drive of previous generations.

The new Mazda 3 is available in sedan and sports Wagon styles and comes in 1.5L and 2.0L SKYACTIV engine versions. The design of it is to inspire excitement and adventure, keeping the driver's comfort and driving posture in mind.

It is to ensure that all the senses while driving are fully invoked, no matter how long and what the destination is. It is a suave vehicle designed to charm you with its ultra-modern, sporty looks. But more than its charming looks is its driving pleasure. With rain-sensing intermittent wip-

ers, signal indicators, LED headlights, alloy wheels and the list goes on that will make you fall in love with the Mazda 3 as soon as you start driving. Available in gorgeous hues of greys, whites, metallics and red, it is sure to win your heart. Coming on to the interior, the Mazda 3 Sports Wagon is a 5 seater with stylish, sporty seats for increased support and a low-slung dash. Added to this the interior includes an 8.8 touch-screen and a menu intensive system i.e Apple car play and android auto which makes for a highly interactive driving experience. Apart from that, the Mazda 3 has a navigation system with map data, Bose acoustics for a groovy drive and an auto-dimming rearview mirror for increased safety. More than the design, the 2.0L engine delivers power when needed and acceleration which is responsive. Powered by SKYACTIV Technology and a 16 valve, 4-Cylinder engine it achieves a high compression ratio of up to 13:0:1. This high compression leads to significantly improved engine efficiency and torque. Every drive is improved thanks to increased torque of 150@4000 rpm and horsepower of 155@6000 rpm. The Mazda 3 Sports Wagon is also extremely fuel-efficient by ensuring optimal distribution of torque and minimizing drivetrain energy loss, fuel is only used to power the engine when necessary. The Mazda 3 Sports Wagon is one such vehicle determined to give you a smooth ride coupled with rack-and-pinion steering which further heightens the overall performance of the vehicle. The Mazda 3 Sports Wagon will elevate all your expectations giving you the experience to remember. Now is the time to venture out into a new realm with your dream car. With exemplary features and design, the Mazda 3 Sports Wagon is here to stay and turn heads wherever you go.

PROMOTION



Lincoln pays your VAT: Avail exclusive benefits on Aviator

MUSCAT: Lincoln enthusiasts can now own the stylish and sleek Lincoln Aviator without additional payment (Since 5 per cent VAT on net selling price will be borne by Lincoln Oman) & cash gift OMR8,400, service 5 years / 1,00,000km, and registration. (Conditions apply. Please visit the Lincoln showroom for details). Aviator offers the kind of capability premium clients requires in a three-row SUV, with available all-wheel drive. The standard twin-turbocharged 3.0-litre V6 engine, paired with a 10-speed SelectShift automatic transmission, delivers an impressive 400 horsepower and 562 Nm of torque for effortless acceleration. Lincoln Drive Modes' five signature settings – Normal, Conserve,

Excite, Slippery and Deep Conditions – allow owners to further customise their driving experience, while a 10.1-inch standard configurable LCD instrument cluster confirms their choices with beautiful, easy-to-read dynamic graphics and prompts. Aviator delivers a wealth of intuitive technologies designed to assist the driver while enhancing the overall experience of the journey. Right from the start, the suspension system on Presidential trim automatically lowers the vehicle to “greet” the driver, adding a new level of sophistication to Lincoln's signature welcome lighting embrace. The convenience of this feature makes loading cargo easier as well. Also new to Lincoln is an avail-

able technology that enables Aviator to “see” most potholes or uneven pavement and immediately make suspension adjustments to keep the ride as smooth as possible. Adaptive Suspension with Road Preview uses an advanced forward camera to constantly scan the road, seamlessly adjusting the suspension as needed. All Lincoln vehicles come standard with a suite of driver-assist features known as Lincoln Co-Pilot360. Traffic Jam Assist helps guide the vehicle using adaptive cruise control with stop-and-go, lane centring and traffic sign recognition, adjusting speed based on the information obtained. Evasive Steer Assist offers assistance to the driver to help avoid a collision with a slower or stopped vehicle; it

provides additional steering support when a collision cannot be avoided by braking alone. Reverse Brake Assist can help stop the vehicle while backing up if Aviator's integrated rear sensors and camera detect an obstacle at the rear. Active Park Assist Plus removes the stress from parking by taking over steering, shifting, braking and acceleration functions with the touch of a button to navigate parallel and perpendicular parking spaces with ease. The boundless allure of flight has long inspired automotive design, and the all-new Lincoln Aviator takes that inspiration to the next level. In Oman, Lincoln vehicles are brought to you by Arabian Car Marketing Co.

VIRTUAL 3D EVENT

Oman's innovative payment application Khedmah participates in Comex 2021

MUSCAT: Oman Investment and Finance Company's innovative national asset 'Khedmah' is participating in the Communications and Information Technology Exhibition 'Comex 2021'. Launched recently under the slogan 'Digital Transformation and Accelerated Utilisation of the Future', the virtual 3D event, Comex will last for 10 days until June 8. In line with the objectives of the event, OIFC aspires to exhibit its constant efforts toward adopting digital transformation in its methods of work and services provided to clients. To further reinforce its leading position in the market, the company seeks to keep pace with modern developments in the industry and therefore enrich customers' experience by providing easy and high-end services to them. The Khedmah phone app serves as a testament to the company's strategic digital approach in this regard. In the future, the Khedmah app intends to redefine Oman's cashless payment landscape. Commenting on the participation in this digital gathering, Mohammed Bin Saif Al Toqi, Sr. Manager Telecom Recovery at OIFC said, “In light of the accelerating technological developments the world is witnessing currently, it has become imperative for companies and other institutions to keep pace with modern trends and capitalise on digital advancements. This will contribute to delivering top-notch services to beneficiaries by enhancing operational efficiency and the quality of products, ultimately stimulating productivity.” Through its booth numbered E23 in hall 2, OIFC aims to showcase its integrated solutions and bouquet of services catering to both individuals and corporates.



These include paying telephone, water and electricity bills, as well as the dues of the Public Authority for Social Insurance PASI. Furthermore, customers can top-up phone, pre-paid electricity, and enter meter readings. These services can be availed with a push of a button by creating a unified account for all operators in the Sultanate through the Khedmah app. Moreover, OIFC boasts a robust network that covers the Sultanate, with 61 Khedmah branches, Khedmah app, website and self-service Kiosks. “Through the exhibition, OIFC endeavours to feature its efforts in digital transformation that comes in line with the Sultanate's objectives aimed at encouraging the embracing of digital technologies and focusing on the Fourth Industrial Revolution, thus establishing a thriving digital economy and sustainable future,” he further stated. Comex, the region's leading ICT exhibition witnessed the participation of various government institutions, private sector companies and also some international companies, this year.

ROUND-UP

IT: Powering Bank Muscat's banking services and products

As the leading financial services provider in Oman, Bank Muscat invests millions of rials in state-of-the-art technology and solutions to provide the best services in the country



edge technology. It must be noted that the bank's achievements in IT are well recognised on the international stage with the bank winning two awards for IT implementation in 2020.

Speaking about the implementation of the latest technologies, Ahmed Omar Al Ojaili, Group Deputy General Manager - Technology, Bank Muscat, said, "As the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman and line with our customer-centric vision, it is of prime importance to provide our customers with an excellent banking experience. Our large investments in technology form the basis of this vital customer-centric experience that is currently driven by digital banking. The bank continues to successfully leverage its ongoing partnership with global leaders in next-generation digital services and consulting to ensure that we are able to implement the 'best in class' technological solutions for the benefit of our customers and other stakeholders."

Ahmed Omar Al Ojaili added, "It is important to note that Bank Muscat has been consistently focusing on nurturing and supporting Omani youth in line with the long-term strategic plans of the country and also supporting the long-term growth strategy of the bank. We are proud of the fact that Omani youth have taken up the challenge and are now excelling in the IT arena. At present over 85 per cent of the IT team at the bank are Omani nationals."

"The digitalisation of banking services and solutions is in line with the goals of Oman Vision 2040 and will ensure continued economic growth in the next phase of Oman's Renaissance."

The year 2020 saw an increase in the number of delivered pro-

jects by as much as 30 per cent from 2017. This was despite the challenges brought about by the global COVID-19 pandemic including working at 50 per cent capacity to ensure social distancing. Though working in shifts made critical decision-making a longer process, the team successfully overcame the challenges and obstacles through perseverance and hard work even though it was running over 50 projects simultaneously. The projects delivered in 2020 included those which improved Access Management, Robotic Process Automation and the delivery of internal IT services to ensure greater convenience for end-users.

The adoption of smart and innovative payment technology has been a key area of the bank's focus in recent years. This provided timely help since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Bank Muscat scaled up contactless credit and debit card production and distribution, which helped customers to conduct a safe electronic payment method for day-to-day transactions adhering to COVID-19 guidelines. The introduction of contactless wearables for retail payments has also been playing a role in ensuring public health and safety during the pandemic.

The bank has upgraded its Omni-channel Mobile and Internet banking with several new features to add further convenience and ease of banking for its retail customers. The online platforms meet the requirements of the bank's tech-savvy customers and further ease the delivery of services. Various features available such as bill payments, mobile top-ups, payments within Bank Muscat, within Oman and international payments and transfers are being used by

large numbers of bank customers on a daily basis and has resulted in a significant increase of active users on these platforms, especially in the post-pandemic phase.

The bank's 'B2B Connect' solution, which is digitising the corporate and government payment workflow, was another game-changer during the past year. There is no doubt that scaling up the solution to address the needs of major corporate and government organisations helped the country to maintain economic activities. The B2B solution provides secure and seamless integration with the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems of large institutions and corporates to provide an automated, two-way data transfer service for high volume online payments.

This facilitated the corporates to implement an automated robust and efficient end-to-end digitised payment workflow processing system. Smaller corporate customers are, meanwhile, well served by the online Corporate Banking platform, which averts the need for multiple branch visits and ensures secure payments and transactions through the online platform. A number of digital options such as these have been helping to avoid face-to-face interaction with bank employees and ensuring social distancing.

Developing Omani IT skills
Bank Muscat has been privileged to lead private sector institutions in creating job opportunities across its different departments. The IT department of the bank has been witnessing a steady rise in the number of Omani cadre, who are also continuously offered new opportunities to further develop their expertise and skillsets.

It is a matter of great pride to the bank that Omani employees



“It is important to note that Bank Muscat has been consistently focusing on nurturing and supporting Omani youth in line with the long-term strategic plans of the country and also supporting the long-term growth strategy of the bank. We are proud of the fact that Omani youth have taken up the challenge and are now excelling in the IT arena

Ahmed Omar Al Ojaili
Group Deputy General Manager - Technology, Bank Muscat

across all levels have been keenly putting in great efforts to develop national human resources in line with the goals envisaged by Oman Vision 2040. The rate of Omanisation within the bank's IT department increased to over 85 per cent in 2020 and more and more opportunities continue to be created for young Omani IT professionals within the bank.

Bank Muscat follows up on the creation of job opportunities with a number of other initiatives.

The bank hosts an annual IT and Project Management Achievements event to award both individuals as well as project teams for their excellent performance across different aspects.

These include categories for individual awards like Rising Star which are given to new employees to encourage initiative and hard work. Awards for project teams include categories such as Most Complex Project, Smoothest Implementation and

Best Governance Award.

It must also be noted that employees are given many opportunities to attend onsite and online pieces of training for different technology verticals such as Operating System, Database, and Security. Training is made continuously available for employees including those that enhance their hard skills and their soft skills.

With its continuous and well-planned technology strategy, there is no doubt that Bank Muscat is setting a fine example for the private sector as it continuously builds capacity and creates rewarding career opportunities for the national cadre in the Sultanate. The bank continues to innovate on a daily basis in response to its customer-centric vision and the overarching development goals of the Sultanate to persistently demonstrate its role as the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate that keeps the wheels of the economy rolling smoothly.

NEW FEATURES

GAC introduces redesigned 2021 Mitsubishi Mirage, Attrage

MUSCAT: General Automotive Company (GAC), the official distributors of Mitsubishi vehicles in Oman, has announced the launch of the redesigned and updated 2021 Mitsubishi Mirage five-door hatchback and Attrage four-door sedan. Both models offer buyers updated styling and new features, while still maintaining their position as one of the most fuel-efficient gasoline-powered non-hybrid vehicles in the region.

For the 2021 model year, both the Mirage and Attrage feature revised front and rear styling. Out front, the vehicles incorporate Mitsubishi's latest Dynamic Shield grille design. This revised front bumper design, in particular, gives both cars a dose of sportiness to go with its efficiency message. These improvements provide the Mirage and Attrage with a more re-



efined, sharper look while visually tying the vehicles to Mitsubishi's current design language. Outback, the bumper and valance grow wider, lending a more planted and stable appearance to the two models. Standard L-shaped horizontal LED combination taillamps stretch across the rear of the car,

providing both models with a more modern and sportier stance.

Commenting on the Mirage and Attrage, Manoj Ranade, General Manager of GAC, said, "As entry-level models to the Mitsubishi family, the Mirage and Attrage have always been extremely popular; especially so for their class-

leading fuel efficiency and reliability. The updated styling, coupled with a host of other additions and new features only serve to make these models an even more compelling value purchase."

For their 2021 model year, these compact models offer customers refreshing new styling, together with the best possible combination of versatility, practicality, and outstanding efficiency, thanks to a number of key design elements engineered into the vehicle. Both vehicles also feature high-tensile steel in key sections of their body and chassis, which gives them an exceptionally low curb weight, while also possessing excellent structural rigidity, to aid with stability and handling.

On the inside, both models feature comfortable cloth seating and high-quality materials throughout

the cabin, together with the best levels of interior room and cargo storage space available in their class. For 2021, Mitsubishi is also introducing its 7-inch Smartphone Link Display Audio (SDA) System in the Highline versions of the Mirage and Attrage.

The Mirage and Attrage, both retain the 1.2-litre 3-cylinder DOHC engine, featuring the latest version of the Mitsubishi Innovative Valve timing Electronic Control (MIVEC) variable valve-timing system that maximises fuel efficiency and power output while greatly minimising exhaust emissions. The engine produces 78 horsepower at 6,000 rpm and 100 Nm of torque at 4,000 rpm, ample power for comfortable day-to-day driving. The engine was built with efficiency at its core and teamed with Mitsubishi's

INVECS-III continuously variable transmission, which offers a class-leading fuel economy of just 4.7l/100km.

Both models also come equipped with a wide array of safety features. These include a dual front Supplemental Restraint System (SRS) airbags, four-wheel anti-lock brakes (ABS) with Electronic Brake-force Distribution (EBD) and Brake Assist, hill start assist, and Active Stability Control (ASC). Additional protection is provided to the vehicle's occupants by Mitsubishi Motors' patented high-tech Reinforced Impact Safety Evolution (RISE) impact-absorbing safety cell technology. In the event of a collision, the RISE system's energy-absorbing body structure helps to dissipate kinetic energy away from the driver and passengers.

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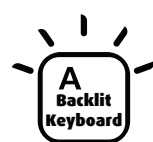


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