

DEMAND FOR ELECTRICITY SERVICES UP BY 27% IN DUQM

The Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZD) posted a 27% rise in the volume of demand for electricity services in 2022. By then, the number of subscribers stood at 6,953. Between 2020 and 2022 electricity service connections registered a growth of nearly 100 percent. **>A3**



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STATE COUNCIL, SHURA COUNCIL HOLD JOINT SESSION

The State Council and the Shura Council on Tuesday held the first joint session of the 4th regular session of Oman Council's 7th Term. The meeting was chaired by Sheikh Abdulmalik Abdullah Al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council. **>A2**



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FAREWELL

Sayyid Shihab receives ambassador of Philippines



MUSCAT: Delegated by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received in his office at Al Murtafaa Garrison yesterday Imelda Macapundag Panolong, Ambassador of the Republic of the Philippines, to bid her farewell at the end of her tour of duty.

HH Sayyid Shihab expressed his appreciation for the efforts exerted by the ambassador to enhance bilateral relations, wishing her success. On her turn, the ambassador lauded the advanced relations between the two countries. She also expressed her thanks for the cooperation extended to her during her tour of duty in the Sultanate of Oman. — **ONA**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN Over 13,800 pilgrims register for Hajj



1 The number of pilgrims who applied to perform Hajj from Oman this year stood at over 13,800, of whom 99% completed all travel requirements. **>A2**

OMAN Strategic grid station in Dhofar complete

2 OETC has announced the successful completion of a significant project in Saih Al Khairat in the Governorate of Dhofar. **>A5**

WORLD China launches new manned spaceship

2 China sent three astronauts, including a civilian, to its Tiangong space station as part of a crew rotation plan. **>A6**

BY APRIL 2023

Gas production exceeds 17 billion cubic metres

MUSCAT: The exports of oil in the Sultanate of Oman till the end of April 2023 stood at OMR101,548.4 million based on an average oil price of \$81.7.

Oil exports constituted 79.5 percent of total oil production which stood at 127,768 million barrels, according to the latest data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The total production of crude oil increased by 1.7 percent to reach 100,547.9 million barrels. Condensates production also went up by 5 percent to reach 27,220.1 million.

Meanwhile, daily production of oil reached 1,064,700 barrels by the end of April 2023.

China came on top of the list in terms of countries that imported oil from Oman, reaching 93,100,700 barrels. It was followed by Japan with 3,781,600 barrels and India with 2,215,300

barrels. Imports from other countries stood at 2,450,800 barrels. Furthermore, gas production (including imports) in Oman registered a growth of 6.5 percent till the end of April 2023 to stand at 17,515.1 million cubic metres compared to 16,441.5 million cubic metres during the corresponding period in 2022.

Industrial projects took the lion's share of gas usage in Oman (61.8 percent) till the end of April 2023.

The consumption of gas for industrial projects stood at 10,825.4 million cubic metres.

Consumption of gas for various uses stood as the following: 4,453.4 million cubic metres for oil fields, 2,147 million cubic metres for power plants and 89.2 million cubic metres for industrial areas. Production of non-associated gas (including imports) stood at 14,032.5 million cubic metres. — **ONA**



'SOCIAL MEDIA' CREATING MARITAL DISCORD IN OMAN



Marriages are not always rosy, couples have to make adjustments for smooth sail in life

Times News Service

MUSCAT: An alarming increase in the number of divorce cases in the Sultanate of Oman is a cause of concern with a leading official at the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) attributing the rise in divorce to growing influence of social media.

Speaking to Al Shabiba radio recently, Dr Jalal bin Yousef Al Mukhaini, director of family counselling and guidance at the social development ministry, said: "We have seen a marked increase in the divorce cases in the

Sultanate of Oman from 2020 to 2021. According to official statistics, 6,000 divorce cases have been filed in the country in 2021, an average of 16 cases every day and an increase of 75 per cent approximately or 2,574 cases compared to 2020.

"In 2020, divorce rates in Oman also rose by almost 50 per cent, compared to the previous year, with pressures caused by the pandemic to be one of the main reasons. At least 3,426 divorce certificates were issued in Oman in 2020, which meant nearly nine cases a day."

75%

According to official statistics, 6,000 divorce cases have been filed in the country in 2021, an average of 16 cases every day and an increase of 75 per cent approximately or 2,574 cases compared to 2020

As for marriage, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information, (NCSI), marriages of Omanis increased from 18,000 in 2020 to 39,000 in 2021.

Al Mukhaini said: "The statistics give us a grim picture of today's world. I even have doubts that the stats provided are complete and correct. I have heard there may be more divorce cases that go unreported. The rise of divorce is increasing among young people and groups with low educational and economic levels."

Al Mukhaini expressed his concern on the impact of social media on newly-married couples.

He said: "We see young married couples getting carried away with their own ideas, believing that marriage is all rosy and full of love. But the fact is that there are a lot of adjustments to be made by both. And when there is a lack of communication between partners and families who fail to intervene, it causes a rift. At times, the expectations towards life differ for both with financial issues often leading to clashes. **>A2**

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EXCHANGE OF CURRENCY

Indian expatriates in a dilemma over 2000 rupee notes

Times News Service

MUSCAT: As the clock starts ticking for the September 30 deadline for the exchange of INR2000 currency notes by India's central bank (Reserve Bank of India), Indian expats living in the Sultanate of Oman are in a dilemma as local exchange houses have refused to exchange their notes.

For many people, it is not feasible to visit India for the exchange of (INR2000=OMR9.3) notes because the return trip would cost them double or triple the amount of currency they possess and some have just returned from their vacation, so

they won't get an opportunity to visit India again in the near future too.

When *Times of Oman* contacted Amit Talukder, General Manager of Global Money Exchange, he said: "As we are not in a position to accept the notes due to RBI directives, we are advising customers to deposit/exchange the INR2000 denomination when they are travelling to India at any bank branches. In the past also, we observed that the Reserve Bank of India issued revised guidelines to streamline the exchange processes."

He added: "In pursuance of the "Clean Note Policy", the Reserve



Bank of India has decided to withdraw the INR2000 denomination banknotes from circulation. The banknotes in INR2000 denomination will continue to be legal

tender. The public may deposit INR2000 banknotes into their bank accounts and/or exchange them into banknotes of other denominations at any bank branch in India.

The exchange of INR2000 banknotes into notes of other denominations can be made up to a limit of INR20,000/- at a time at any bank starting from May 23, 2023. The facility is available until 30th September 2023, as of now."

R Rajesh, an expatriate from the southern Indian state of Kerala, who has just returned from a trip to his hometown, said: "I always keep some larger denomination of Indian currency for emergency

purposes. Moreover, I have to pay taxi fares when I land in India and also need some money to buy goods for my family. I did not know that I would encounter such a situation. It's my hard-earned money, how can I let it go to waste as a piece of paper?"

Same is the plight of many expatriates who have these pink coloured notes in their possession. The situation is worse for the blue-collar workers who visit India after two years. In fact, requests to people going to India on a vacation to carry their currency for exchange have increased manifold after the RBI decision regarding INR2000 notes.

PRAYER
TIMINGS

Dhuhr.....	12:09pm
Asr.....	3:29pm
Maghrib.....	6:54pm
Isha.....	8:15pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....	3:54am

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Over 13,800 pilgrims register for Hajj trip

The cost of travel for Hajj by road dropped by 7.1 percent from OMR1,472 to OMR1,367 last year

MUSCAT: The number of pilgrims who applied to perform Hajj from Oman this year (1444 AH) stood at 14,000 pilgrims, of whom 99 percent completed all travel requirements of travel to the Holy Places, with 1 percent of the pilgrims are undertaking medical examinations. This was unveiled at a press conference held on Tuesday by Sultan Said Al Hinai, Director General of Administrative and Financial Affairs at the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs, who heads the Omani Hajj Mission this year.



The press conference was aimed at outlining the mechanism set for managing the pilgrimage electronically, besides providing details about the service package at the camps of Mina and Arafat, among other particulars. Al Hinai told reporters that

Oman's share of pilgrims this year stands at 14,000. Giving a breakup, he said that 13,500 of the pilgrims are Omanis, 250 Arab residents and 250 non-Arab residents. The majority of the pilgrims (43 percent) belong to the age group of 30-45 years, followed by the 46-60 years segment, which constitutes 35.1 percent of the pilgrims, the group aged above 60 years (16.6 percent) and the age group of 18-30 years (5.3 percent), Al Hinai explained. Speaking about the cost of Hajj

this year, Al Hinai said that air travel pilgrims pay an average of OMR2,054 and that was less by 7.5 percent, compared to OMR2,221 last year, said Al Hinai. He added that the cost of travel for Hajj by road dropped by 7.1 percent from OMR1,472 to OMR1,367 last year.

Hajj firms
Al Hinai said that pilgrims' contracts with Hajj firms were valued at OMR24,191,480. In reply to a question, Al Hinai said that Hajj request cancellation cases stood at 2,657. This, he observed, calls for a re-evaluation of mechanism for submitting requests to go to Hajj. He explained that such cancellations from Dhofar governorate topped the list (669 cases), followed by cancellations from Muscat governorate (573 cases). -ONA

ITEMS OF DISPUTE DISCUSSED



State, Shura Council hold joint session

MUSCAT: The State Council and the Shura Council on Tuesday held the first joint session of the 4th regular session of Oman Council's 7th Term. The meeting was chaired by Sheikh Abdulmalik Abdullah Al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council. Al Khalili said that the session dealt with reports of joint committees, including reports on draft versions the Labour Law, the Social Protection Law and the

biometric fingerprints bill. This session follows the two councils' forming joint committees to discuss the divergence of views on draft laws. The two sides reached agreement about all debated items, except for a limited number of items of dispute in the draft biometrics law. The meeting was attended by Khalid Hilal Al Ma'awali, Chairman of the Shura Council, and the two councils' members and secretaries general. -ONA



TENDER NOTICE

Oman Water & Wastewater Services Company (NAMA WATER SERVICES) hereby announces the following Tenders: -

Tender No.	Description	Eligibility	Tender Fee (RO)	Last Date of Sale Tender Documents	Bid Submission Date
T/2456784 /2023	Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of Air Compressor for Surge Vessel System at Wadi Thiqah PS	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board and specialized in the works mentioned	R.O. 50/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	15/06/2023	3/7/2023
2456788T/ /2023	Construction of Sewer Network for C3C and C3D Areas - Seeb Catchment	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board in Excellent Grade and International Companies specialized in the works mentioned	R.O. 2500/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	15/06/2023	24/7/2023
T/2456801 /2023	Construction of Deem Strategic Storage Reservoir in Muscat Governorate	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board in Excellent Grade and International Companies specialized in the works mentioned	R.O. 2500/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	15/06/2023	24/7/2023
T/2453384-2/2023 (Re-Float)	Re-engineering, Supply, installation & Commissioning of Wendenware SCADA System at Vacuum Stations in A'Seeb	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board and specialized in the works mentioned	R.O. 50/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	15/06/2023	3/7/2023
T/2456810/ 2023	Supply of Water Leak Detection Equipments	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board and specialized in the works mentioned	R.O. 50/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	15/06/2023	3/7/2023

The tender document can be purchased from Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) e-tendering page (Supplier Login) from the date of publication of this announcement until 15/06/2023. The applicants shall pay the tender fee through electronic payment gateway through Supplier Login.

Applicants who are not registered with Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) shall register from <https://owwsc.nama.om/Business-with-Us/Vendor-Registration> to have the login credentials of Supplier portal.

All applicants who have paid the tender fee shall have access to the Tender Documents through Nama Water Services e-tendering page (Supplier Login). All participating Companies shall submit a Bid Bond of 1% of the bid value in a sealed envelope to Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) Chairman of Tender Committee not later than 3:00 pm on the bid submission date.

Bid Bond must be obtained from a Bank registered in the Sultanate of Oman and it should be addressed in favour of Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services). The bid along with all required documents shall be uploaded through Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) e-tendering page not later than 3:00 pm on the date specified above. For more details refer to Tender Page of our website www.owwsc.nama.om or Email to: tender@owwsc.nama.om

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NAVAL STAFF TALKS

RNO Acting Commander meets Indian military delegation

MUSCAT: Commodore Tarik Issa Al Raisi, Acting Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) received at Al Murtafaa Garrison on Tuesday a military delegation from the Republic of India, headed by Commodore Anil Jaggi, Director of the Indian Navy's Foreign Cooperation. The delegation, currently visiting Oman, is taking part in the Oman-India naval staff talks for 2023. During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views and discussed several matters of common interest. They also touched on means of enhancing cooperation between the two sides. The meeting was attended by Commodore Jassim Mohammed Al Balushi, RNO Director of Operations and Plans, and a number of senior RNO officers.

Indian Military delegation visits MSC
A military delegation from the



Republic of India, headed by Commodore Anil Jaggi, Director of the Indian Navy's Foreign Cooperation visited the Maritime Security Centre (MSC). The delegation, currently visit-

ing Oman, is participating in the Oman-India naval staff talks for 2023. The members of the delegation toured the MSC's facilities and viewed its latest equipment and technologies used in carrying out its national duties. They were also briefed on the tactical roles and tasks carried out by the centre in the safety of the Omani maritime environment. -ONA

DIVORCE CASES

Poor communication cause for rift

< FROM A1 "In today's world, infidelity caused by social media interactions has also led to a rise in divorce cases in Oman, where women are now looking for equal life partnerships." Al Mukhaini opined that the reasons for divorce differ for each couple but denial of parity in marriage partnership or a shift in the gender role expectations are among the other reasons. Government data also show that more women in Oman are now seeking divorce compared with 10 years ago with 67 percent of all divorces being initiated by women in 2021. Al Mukhaini said: "Studies have shown that among the other causes of divorce include poor communication and conflict resolution skills, lack of quality time spent together, and a delay or reluctance in seeking

marriage counselling." The ministry official said there is "a need to bring down the number of divorce cases in the Sultanate of Oman and it would be possible only if efforts are made at all levels to safeguard family life." Al Mukhaini also revealed that the statistics indicate that the divorce in Oman happens mostly within the first four years of marriage. He said: "When divorce happens in the early years of marriage the grounds for divorce were found to be weak. Such marital discords could have been resolved through dialogues, family mediation and the involvement of counsellors." In her remarks to *Times of Oman*, a Muscat-based marriage counsellor said: "Everyone agrees that there is a need to find solutions but that can only happen if

we understand the reasons for the rise of divorce cases. Divorce cases are a result of rapid social change that we are witnessing in all aspects of life. The pace of development has brought key changes to today's lifestyle. More women work, leave the family home, and are financially independent creating a gap at times between the husband and wife's understanding." She added: "Culture plays an important role in forming young people's impressions of marriage. For instance, most movies and soap operas on TV highlight how beautiful and fun it is to be in a relationship, creating a vivid image in young people's minds that it is easy to be married. They fail to consider that one of the biggest challenges of marriage is to understand and support each other and that this is a two-way process."

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Power demand in Duqm surges 27%

The increase in electricity demand reflects a steady growth and the rapid pace of investment at the Special Economic Zone at Duqm

DUQM: The Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZD) posted a 27 percent rise in the volume of demand for electricity services in 2022.

By then, the number of subscribers stood at 6,953. Between 2020 and 2022 electricity service connections registered a growth of nearly 100 percent.

This development reflects the steady growth and the rapid pace of investment at the SEZD, as well as the tremendous efforts made by the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones and the companies operating in the sector.

The authority has developed a mechanism for electrical connection to beneficiaries so that it could be more flexible. The company in charge of the service would remain committed to delivering the service without additional costs. The electric power capacity will be raised from 2500 kilowatts to 6,000 kilowatts.

A top official from the Special Economic Zone of Duqm administration stressed that the current projects in the electricity sector in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm aim to keep pace with the steady growth in electricity to meet the current and future needs

CAPACITY BUILDING: The electric power capacity will be raised from 2500 kilowatts to 6,000 kilowatts. - ONA

of society through cooperation with partners in the private sector with the suppliers in this field, such as the Rural Areas Electricity Company, the Oman Electricity Transmission Company and the 'Marafiq' company.

He said that there are a number of major projects that are currently being implemented, including connecting the current network in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm to the national main network with a voltage of 400 kilovolts, to meet the needs of various economic projects and stimulate the investment environment of

the region. It is hoped that the linking project will be operational during the year. This will provide mutual coverage in case of emergency, benefit from the surplus and reduce the cost of producing electric power.

He pointed out that the projects approved by the General Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones completed in the past two years had a major role in providing service to beneficiaries in many locations, including the area of light, medium and heavy industries, fisheries and the sea fishing port. - ONA

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System designed to monitor power transmission grid

MUSCAT: A research team from Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) succeeded in designing an integrated system for measuring and monitoring the wide area of Oman's electricity transmission network.

The system indicates the status and stability of the electrical network, with a view to achieving safe operation and raising its reliability.

Smart grid
Dr. Amer bin Saif Al Hinai, Associate Professor at the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering,

Vice Chancellor of Sultan Qaboos University for Post-graduate Studies and Research, said that the research team embarked on a simulation model for the smart grid. The project seeks to identify the weaknesses and forge appropriate solutions, he added. He pointed out that Oman is linked with other GCC states via the Gulf Cooperation Council Interconnection Authority.

The smart grid technology will be essential in providing homes and establishments in Oman with reliable and sustainable energy. - ONA

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OMAN RANKED SECOND IN GCC IN DATES' PRODUCTION



MUSCAT: During the past few days, wet weather began in more than one of the wilayats of the Sultanate, especially those concentrated in the governorates of North Al Sharqiyah, Al Dakhiliyah and the mountainous areas in the Governorate of South Al Batinah in the Wilayat of Rustaq.

Engineer Haitham bin Badr Al-Khanjari, palm specialist at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, said in an interview with Oman News Agency, "There are varieties of dates such as Qas Battash, which starts harvesting early due to the favourable environment, the most important of which is the high temperature in the villages of the mountainous state, which makes it a destination for traders .

Al-Khanjari stressed that the Sultanate of Oman is currently one of the leading countries in the production of dates and is ranked eighth in the world and the second in the Gulf, as the number of date palm trees in the Sultanate is more than 9 million, spread over an area estimated at 62,000 acres, with a productivity of 51kg per palm, compared to a global average of 40Kg. The Sultanate of Oman's production of dates reached 374,000 tonnes in 2021, and consumption accounted for



53% of production, while 4% was for manufacturing and 4% for export, and the rest were used as animal feed.

He pointed out that the discrepancy in date varieties is due to the variation in climatic conditions and environment, explaining that the Wilayat of Ibri is the most productive state in the Sultanate of Oman, with a production of 26,817 tonnes, according to 2021 statistics, followed by the states of Barka and Nizwa. The Khalas variety ranks first in terms of quality whose production during the year 2021 increased by 15%.

He added that an Omani individual consumes 60 kilograms or more, thanks to the advantages and benefits of dates, and the advantage of the length of the wet season, which begins at the end of April and continues in some



The number of date palm trees in the Sultanate is more than 9 million, spread over an area estimated at 62,000 acres, with a productivity of 51kg per palm



governorates until the first half of November.

He stressed that there is a great interest by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in the field of establishing model farms among farmers, especially by providing support for the provision of tissue date palm seedlings. The project started in 2020 AD and more than 25,000 tissue palm seedlings were cultivated with an area estimated at more than 250 acres in various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman and more than 140 farmers have benefited from it so far.

With regard to the production

of tissue palm seedlings, he said that more than 80 varieties of local and international date palm varieties have been introduced, including the Medjool variety and well-known Gulf, Maghreb and Iraqi varieties that have proven successful. .

Regarding the use of technology in the agricultural operations of the palm tree, Al-Khanjari explained that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, represented by the General Directorate of Agricultural and Animal Research, employed and adopted agricultural technologies and innovations, and conducted many researches that resulted in many innovations, the most important of which is the technology of pollination with a liquid pollen suspension by spraying to be an alternative to manual pollination. It is easy and affordable in terms of cost, ease and speed of implementation in pollination of palm trees, especially large palms. Drones are currently being used in date palm germination operations by spraying with liquid suspension and pest control such as palm dubas.

He pointed out that among the challenges facing date palms is due to pests and diseases, especially weevils and dubas.





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OETC completes strategic grid station project in Dhofar

The project includes the installation of 6 bays of 132kV GIS, 2 125MVA Transformers, 4 bays of 33kV GIS switchgear, as well as telecom and security infrastructure

MUSCAT: Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) has announced the successful completion of a significant project in Saih Al Khairat in the Governorate of Dhofar: the 132/33kV grid station, situated approximately 80km from Thumrait.

The project includes the installation of 6 bays of 132kV GIS, 2 125MVA Transformers, 4 bays of 33kV GIS switchgear, as well as telecom and security infrastructure.

Additionally, a 91km overhead transmission line has been constructed, connecting the Thumrait grid station to the Saih Al Khairat grid station, with a total investment of approximately OMR13 million.

This project represents a strategic investment by OETC, aimed at meeting the future electricity demands of the Governorate of Dhofar. It will ensure a stable and reliable power supply for various industries, including poultry farms, agriculture farms, and manufacturing units.



Eng. Khaled Marhoon Al Harmali, OETC Project Manager, pointed out that the importance of this project lies in its alignment with Oman's plan to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.



annually and the elimination of environmental pollution from the production of 114,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide gas.

Al Harmali further added that the Saih Al Khairat Grid Station will play a crucial role in mitigating pollution and reducing operational expenses. Additionally, it will facilitate the integration of rural areas into the electricity network of the Dhofar Governorate.

It is worth mentioning that OETC, member of Nama Group is the only company responsible for the transmission and control of electricity in the Sultanate of Oman's network, where electricity is transferred from production stations to distributed load centers in all governorates of Oman.

In addition, OETC manages the interconnection lines between the Sultanate and the Gulf interconnection network with a voltage of 220 kV.

-ONA

LAPAROSCOPIC SURGERY

Rare surgery conducted to remove tumour from a patient's stomach

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The surgical team of the Gastrointestinal Cancers Programme at the Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Centre (SQCCRC) successfully managed to perform the first laparoscopic tumour resection in a complex area.

The operation is known as the "Whipple procedure", during which the tumour is resected along with the head of the pancreas, the duodenum, and part of the bile duct.

After performing the Whipple procedure, the remaining organs reconnect to allow the patient to digest food normally after surgery.

This procedure is a complex surgical procedure that carries potential risks and represents a major surgical challenge. Therefore, it requires a specialised medical team, a high level of experience and competence in surgery and minimally invasive surgery, and advanced medical support to ensure patient safety during and after the operation.

Dr. Abdallah bin Yahya Al-Farai, Consultant Surgical Oncologist, said: "We performed the first totally laparoscopic Whipple operation on a patient who is less than 60 years old and had a tumour in the area between pancreas, duodenum, and bile duct. Despite the difficulty of the operation, the team was able to complete it successfully without any complications.

Al Farai added, the patient's recovery after the operation was smooth and discharged home in less than two weeks.



The Whipple procedure is one of the major operations that are performed either through open or minimally invasive surgery in some specialised medical centers around the world, and it usually takes between four to eight hours.

Performing pancreatoduodenectomy using Laparoscopic is a minimally invasive procedure that requires making a number of small incisions in the abdomen to insert surgical instruments and extract the tumour. This method offers several advantages for patients, such as reducing pain, surgical scars, and reducing the level of complications associated with

This comes within the framework of the Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Center's ongoing efforts to introduce the latest and safest therapeutic technologies, with the aim of reducing potential risks of operations, ensuring patient safety, and improving the quality of clinical care provided to them.

the operation compared to open surgery. In addition, it cuts down a patient's recovery period.

The surgical team of the Gastrointestinal Cancers Programme expressed their happiness at presenting this surgical option (minimally invasive) to cancer patients in the Sultanate, for those whose health condition allows it.

This is added to the many surgical interventions that the team performs to resect tumors laparoscopically, including laparoscopic resection of the tail of the pancreas.

ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY



SQUH doctors perform mitral valve repair

MUSCAT: A medical team from Sultan Qaboos University Hospital (SQUH) succeeded in performing mitral valve regurgitation operations using a modern technology. The operation deals with the use of a "mitral valve clip" system, which spares the patient open-heart surgery in high-risk cases.

The operations were led by a qualified medical team comprising

Dr. Fahad Al Kindi, Senior Consultant in the Department of Cardiac Catheterization, and Dr. Adel Al Kindi, Senior Consultant at the Department of Cardiac Surgery, SQUH. This advanced technique constitutes a safe and effective alternative to traditional open-heart surgery. It enables the patient to discharge within 1 to 3 days after the operation.

-ONA



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TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Competitive tender is invited from the service provider for

"Installation & customization of school ERP software."

The collection of basic documents from the school will start from **31 May 2023** after a payment of **R.O. 10/-**. The tender should be submitted in a sealed envelope addressed to **"The Chairperson, Purchase Subcommittee, ISAM"** on or before **15 June 2023**.

The school reserves the right to reject any tender without providing any reason and does not find itself to accept the lowest or any tender.

China launches new manned spaceship with first civilian on board

This is China’s fifth manned mission to its now fully functional space station since 2021. It’s also the first time China has sent a civilian into orbit

BEIJING: China sent three astronauts, including a civilian, to its Tiangong space station on Tuesday as part of a crew rotation, according to state media.

This is China's fifth manned mission to its now fully functional space station since 2021. It's also the first time China has sent a civilian into orbit.

The Shenzhou-16 crew

The crew has Jing Haipeng as the leading commander on the mission, as well as engineer Zhu Yangzhu and Beihang University professor Gui Haichao, the first Chinese civilian to travel to space.

Gui will be serving as the payload specialist on the mission and will manage experiments at Tiangong space station.

The crew on the spacecraft, Shenzhou-16, or “Divine Vessel,” took off atop a Long March-2F rocket from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre which is located in the Gobi Desert in northwest China.

The launch was a “complete success” and the “astronauts are in good condition,” said Zou Lipeng,



director of the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre.

China’s space plans

The Tiangong space station is key to China’s “space dream” and was developed after the US barred NASA from engaging with China.

China has been actively pursuing its plans to send a crewed mission to the moon and build a moon

base by the end of the decade.

The station holds several state-of-the-art pieces of equipment, including “the world’s first space-based cold atomic clock system,” state news agency Xinhua reported.

China has already announced that it will expand its permanently inhabited space station.

Shenzhou-16 is the first mis-

sion to Tiangong since it entered its “application and development” stage, authorities said.

The Shenzhou-16 crew will replace the three-member crew of the Shenzhou-15 which was sent to the space station in November last year.

China is expected to send another crewed mission to the space outpost this year. —DW



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REPORT

49 govt institutions in above average level for digital transformation

MUSCAT: The average general performance of the government establishments for digital transformation for 2021/2025 amounted to 62 percent by the end of 2022, according to the Excellence Measurement Report issued by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology.

The report pointed out that 49 government establishments have maintained above average (green) level, representing 16 percent of the establishments as per the report.

These establishments are the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones; Royal Oman Police, State Audit Institution (SAI); Muscat Governorate; the National Centre for Statistics and Information; Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development; the Public Authority for Social Insurance (PASI); the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs and the Telecommunication Regulatory Authority.

The report showed that 37 government establishments have maintained the average level (yellow), representing 76 percent of the total establishments covered by the report while three establishments maintained the below average level (red) representing



37 government establishments have maintained the average level

6 percent of the total establishments covered by the report.

The annual report for 2022 indicated that 1,621 procedures for government service have been simplified out of 2,869 procedures, representing 57 percent of the total targeted procedures. 1,338 government services have been digitised, including 1,138 services for automatic licenses out of 2,523 services, representing 53 percent of the government service targeted by 2025.

—ONA

RECONNAISSANCE SATELLITE

North Korea plans to launch first military spy satellite in June

PYONGYANG: North Korea will launch its first military reconnaissance satellite in June for monitoring movements from the United States, Pyongyang’s state-run news agency KCNA reported on Tuesday.

Ri Pyong Chol, vice-chairman of North Korea’s Central Military Commission, said space-based monitoring was needed to fend off Washington’s “reckless” military exercises with South Korea.

The statement came a day after North Korea told Japan’s coast guard of its launch intentions and that it would occur sometime between May 31 and June 11, adding the manoeuvre might affect waters in the Yellow Sea, East China Sea and east of the Philippines’ Luzon Island.

Tokyo’s defence minister warned its forces to shoot down

the satellite or debris, if any entered Japanese territory, while its coast guard issued a safety warning for vessels.

Joint missions

US and South Korean forces have carried out several joint missions in recent months, including the biggest-ever live-fire exercises earlier this month.

Ri said the joint exercises meant Pyongyang had to respond with the “means capable of gathering information about the military acts of the enemy in real time.” “We will comprehensively consider the present and future threats and put into more thoroughgoing practice the activities for strengthening all-inclusive and practical war deterrents,” Ri said in the statement carried by the KCNA news agency. —DW

CEASE-FIRE PACT

Sudan’s warring parties agree to extend fragile agreement

KHARTOUM: Sudan’s military and the rival paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) have agreed to extend a flimsy 7-day cease-fire agreement for five extra days, as mediators Saudi Arabia and the US maintain hope it could lead to a longer-term truce.

In a joint statement, Saudi Arabia and the US acknowledged the many breaches to the weeklong cease-fire committed by both parties. However, they stressed that the truce enabled the delivery of humanitarian assistance despite being “imperfectly observed.”

“The extension will provide time for further humanitarian assistance, restoration of essential services, and discussion of a potential longer-term extension,” the two countries said.

A day earlier, mediators from the two countries accused both the army, under the leadership of General Abdel Fattah Burhan and Mo-



hamed Hamdan Dagalo’s RSF of “posturing for further escalation.”

Sources told the Reuters news agency amendments to the new deal were underway to produce a more effective truce. Amid the truce talks and cease-fire announcements, the two warring parties are still engaged in fighting. Residents of the capital Khartoum told the French AFP news agency

street battles were rife on the streets on Monday, and that they could hear gunfire, as well as artillery fire in the south of the city.

“Since yesterday evening there has been bombardment with all types of weapons between the army and the Rapid Support,” Hassan Othman, a 55-year-old resident of Omdurman, told Reuters by phone. “We’re in a state of

great fear. Where’s the truce?”

Residents also told Reuters they could hear airstrikes in Omdurman, part of Greater Khartoum, on Monday. The military has been relying on airstrikes to target RSF forces taking position in the capital’s neighborhoods.

Meanwhile, also on Monday, the United Nations’ World Food Program announced starting to reach thousands of Khartoum’s trapped residents in a “major breakthrough.”

Many residents of the capital have found themselves trapped in their homes amid the fighting, unable to stock up on essentials due to the dangerous situation on the streets.

The fighting, ongoing since mid-April, has killed hundreds and displaced over a million, hundreds of thousands of whom crossed into neighbouring countries to seek refuge. —DW

KASHMIR

Cherry harvest: A blossoming mid-year economic relief

SRINAGAR: As the lush green landscapes of Kashmir Valley awaken from their winter slumber, a vibrant spectacle unfolds with the commencement of the cherry harvesting season.

Known for its mesmerising beauty and heavenly climate, this picturesque region has emerged as a haven for cherry cultivation, providing a vital lifeline to orchardists and labourers in the mid-year when most other fruits remain dormant. Speaking about the significance of cherries in the valley, a Horticulture Development Official, emphasised, “Cherry holds a crucial position in Kashmir’s horticulture sector, especially after the strawberry harvest. Cultivated across 333 hectares of land in Srinagar district alone, we witness an

impressive yield of approximately 3,000 metric tonnes of cherries.”

Traditionally, cherry cultivation has found its stronghold in the Harwan, and Shalimar zones of Kashmir. However, with advancing techniques and the introduction of new varieties, cherry orchards have expanded across the valley, promising enhanced production and economic opportunities.

Highlighting the positive trend, a local farmer revealed, “In earlier times, we had a limited range of cherry varieties such as Avval, Italy, Mishry, Makhmaly, Double, and Hybrid. However, our horticulturists have recently introduced new varieties, which not only require less effort to grow but also deliver superior results. These advance-

ments have significantly boosted our production capacity.”

The prosperity brought by the cherry harvest is not limited to the valley’s orchardists alone. It extends to the labourers, who eagerly migrate from districts like Rajouri and others to partake in the bustling cherry season, finding a source of livelihood amidst the abundance. This influx of labour creates a ripple effect, invigorating local economies and fostering a sense of unity as individuals from various regions come together in pursuit of a bountiful harvest.

The economic relief brought by cherries is timely, as it fills the gap left by the autumn harvest season when other fruits dominate the market. The mid-year income generated through cherry cultiva-

tion uplifts the spirits of both orchardists and labourers, ensuring financial stability and sustenance during what would otherwise be a lean period.

Cherry harvest in Kashmir Valley has blossomed into a pivotal fruit crop, enriching the lives of the local community. With the introduction of new varieties and improved cultivation techniques, the region is witnessing a surge in production, providing a much-needed boost to the horticulture sector.

As the cherries are plucked from their branches and fill the baskets of laborers, the sweet taste of prosperity lingers in the air, reaffirming the indomitable spirit and resilience of Kashmir’s agricultural landscape. —ANI





A successful Indian story of saving the tigers from the brink

NEW DELHI: Around five decades ago, the tiger population in India had reached the brink of extinction. Now, India has over 3,000 tigers in the wild, which is over 70 percent of the world's total tiger population. India has not just managed to save tigers but doubled the population.

Tiger conservation is one of many such successful wildlife conservation stories that India has presented before the world. India has been one of the most populous countries and the forest cover is just a quarter of its total geographical area. Yet, the various conservation programs implemented by India over the years, that too without affecting its industrial and economic growth, led to the protection of its rich biodiversity.

There were estimated to be over 100,000 tigers in India at the turn of the twentieth century. However, the poaching and hunting game led to a drastic decline in tiger numbers. India launched 'Project Tiger' in 1972, which saw adoption of different approaches to protect tigers. India's achievement is commendable when the tiger population in other tiger range countries is either declining or has stopped growing. Lao PDR, Singapore, Cambodia, and Hong Kong have already lost their tigers. India's efforts are sustainable, smart, and technology-driven. Radio collars are used to track the movement and monitor the behavior of wild tigers. It helped the government and researchers plan conservation activities in effective ways. — ANI

Does Europe need to declare a 'wartime economy' now?

Despite multiple EU decisions to boost funding and lower barriers for joint procurement, the effort is moving far too slowly

BRUSSELS: The interchangeable terms "war economy" or "wartime economy" bring to mind dramatic measures from dark days gone by: Governments reconfiguring their entire economic systems and industrial output to prioritise production for the war effort.

EU Commissioner Thierry Breton started invoking the concept regularly in early March as he sought — and continues to seek — a rapid ramp-up in EU government orders for and manufacturing of ammunition and weapons, both to supply Ukraine and refill their own stockpiles.

The commissioner has just toured more than a dozen weapons-manufacturing facilities throughout the bloc where he would have heard complaints about the lack of long-term contracts being signed. Despite multiple EU decisions to boost funding and lower barriers for joint procurement, the effort is moving far too slowly, he thinks.

"The delays are not in line with our immediate needs," Breton said in a May 3 press conference. "There is therefore — and I say this clearly — the necessity to push the industrial base and move it to a 'wartime economy', if you permit me to put it in those terms."

But it doesn't seem Breton



consulted all member states — if any — as to whether they would actually "permit [him] to put it in those terms" if they had a choice.

Germany may be among the most sensitive to the concept. As Berlin's ambassador to Poland, Thomas Bagger knows a thing or two about being pressed for weapons supplies. He finds Breton's tactic unproductive. "You will not have a positive response to the term 'war economy' in Germany," Bagger said tersely at the Lennart Meri Conference in Tallinn, Estonia earlier this month. "It is not the right way to mobilise the effort."

That reaction is wholly unsurprising, explains Edward Lucas with the Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA), who tells DW he would completely ban the phrase. "It means very

different things in different countries," he notes.

"A real 'war economy' is where men with guns come and take over your factory and make it produce more guns. I don't think anyone's actually suggesting that" in Europe, Lucas says, although he emphasizes that Russia has already taken such steps.

"In Germany it has echoes of the Nazi control of the economy with the colossal suffering and abuse of the slave labourers," Lucas told DW in Tallinn. "It's a bit like if you said, 'we need to get this up to a plantation tempo' in the United States. That would immediately not be a sign of productivity but be a sign of the darkest period in American history! I don't think you solve this with slogans. You solve this by actually getting round the table and taking difficult financial regulatory decisions that create the outcome you want."

Ramping up rhetoric, not industry

Another analyst, Ben Tallis with the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP), notes that French President Emmanuel Macron has also spoken of a "war economy" without taking the dramatic actions it entails. "This would have a lot of implications,"

Tallis says, "a lot of state control over the economy and state guidance over the economy. It would probably mean rationing of different kinds, which would send a very interesting signal to European populations, one I don't think the current generation of politicians in Western Europe is willing to send."

But it is necessary to send a signal of urgency if the EU — and NATO — want the weapons-manufacturing machinery turned up. It's understandable why some EU officials are trying out the term, says Nathalie Tocci, who runs the Italian Institute of International Affairs. They need to bridge a huge gap in threat perception across Europe, "persuading those member states that are very far from the front line, that rather than spending funds [on domestic issues] in — whatever, Calabria — they've got to spend them on the defense industry to send weapons to Ukraine." Tocci says some people already support that, "but it just takes time to make that argument compelling for everyone."

Estonian Defence Minister Hanno Pevkur says no one needs to explicitly invoke a "war economy" in his country, which has already given more than one percent of its GDP in assistance to Ukraine. "We don't have to state

[it] specially," he tells DW. "We see the threat and we are saying that everyone in Europe has to come to the reality that Russia is an existential threat."

Save it for later?

While supporting that goal, military historian Slawomir Debski, director of the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM), doesn't think the framing of a "war economy" is necessary — at least "not yet" — and tells DW he suspects politicians themselves don't really know what they mean when they say it. "In 1942, the United States was capable to produce big ships in 14 days [instead of two years]," he explained. "That's the kind of privatization of a war economy. So we are not there and there is no need to introduce this kind of regime into our own economy."

Ben Tallis suggests that instead of just throwing out the term, politicians should start to explain the thinking behind a "war economy." "Ukraine is fighting for all of our freedom and I don't think that message has fully got through in parts of Western Europe," he told DW in Tallinn.

"They are stopping us from getting attacked. If we see it like that, then this should really be our conflict and for us to win." He argues that people should normalize that logic and accept they are in a serious conflict they have to win. "I think it is right to start preparing the minds of people for that."

But Germany's Ambassador Bagger isn't sold on the idea. "What is important is that we don't take these differing perceptions of 'existential threat' as a fundamental question mark that says the others still don't get it," he argued.

"My point is: We do get it. But you do have to understand that history and geography are immensely powerful teachers and they have taught us different lessons." — DW

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OMAN CRUDE PRICE FALLS

The price of Oman oil has decreased with prices for delivery by July 2023 reaching \$74.12, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil fell by \$1.58 from the price of Monday, which was \$75.70. - **ONA**

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS LOWER

The MSX index closed at 4,618.72 points, down by 0.51 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.01 per cent at 467.83 points. Al Madina Investments, up 9.52 per cent, was the top gainer while Jazeera Steel Products, down 3.93 per cent, was the top loser.

Green hydrogen project pacts to be signed in Oman on June 1

Eng Salim bin Nasser Al-Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals and Chairman of the Board of Directors of Hydrom will sign these agreements with the developers

Times News Service

MUSCAT: As part of Oman's continuous efforts to be a worldwide hub for the production of green hydrogen, Hydrogen Oman (Hydrom), a subsidiary of Energy Development Oman (EDO), will sign the first green hydrogen project agreements in Oman on Thursday, June 1. These agreements fall within the Phase A Round 1 auc-



AGREEMENTS: The signing of these agreements is in line with Oman's constant efforts to stimulate the growth of its hydrogen sector by strategically creating attractive investment opportunities in this promising sector. - Photo used for illustrative purpose only

tion process that was kicked off last November.

Building upon the progress achieved since the announcement of the Oman Green Hydrogen Strategy in October 2022, as well as the subsequent announcement of the first public auction bidding pro-

cess, the issuance of Royal Decree 10/2023, and the signing of Commercial Terms with six legacy Initiatives earlier this year, Hydrom will now proceed to sign its first project-related agreements, marking the commencement of the development stage for these projects.

Eng Salim bin Nasser Al-Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals and Chairman of the Board of Directors of Hydrom will sign these agreements with the developers in a special event at Grand Millenium Muscat. The occasion will also witness the signing of a Head-

Usufruct Agreement between the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, and Hydrom, as well as other Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) between various prominent entities related to the green economy.

The signing of these agreements is in line with Oman's constant efforts to stimulate the growth of its hydrogen sector by strategically creating attractive investment opportunities in this promising sector. These efforts are also aligned with Oman Vision 2040, which aims to create a bright future for renewable and sustainable energy to achieve Net-Zero emissions by 2050.

To lead the execution of Oman's ambitious green hydrogen strategy following Royal directives, the Government established Hydrogen Oman SPC (Hydrom), a fully owned independent subsidiary of Energy Development Oman SAOC. Regulated by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals (MEM), Hydrom is the orchestrator and overall master planner of Oman's green hydrogen sector.

Its mandate includes the delineation of government-owned land areas, the structuring of associated large-scale green hydrogen projects, managing the process for their allocation to developers, as well as facilitating the development of common infrastructure and connected ecosystem industries and hubs.

MINISTRY OF ENERGY AND MINERALS

Three concession agreements inked for extracting potash and lithium ores



MUSCAT: The Ministry of Energy and Minerals signed three agreements in the mining sector for exploring potash and lithium ore in Al Dhahirah and Al Wusta governorates.

New methodology

These agreements are in pursuit of a new methodology for the development of the mining sector, notably through the preparation of a concession agreement that covers legal, technical and financial instruments to be agreed upon by the ministry and investors. The pact will spearhead the man-

agement of mineral ores' extraction from the specific concession areas.

The agreements were signed by Eng. Salim Nasser Al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, and the representatives of the companies concerned, as follows: Mohammed Ali Al Barwani, Chairman of Mawarid Potash Mining Company (for Concession Area No. 53-B), Mohit Khimji's, CEO of Tasnim Projects Company (for Concession Area No. 53 - C) and Al Zubair Mohammed Al Zubair, Chairman of Ara Natural Resources Company (for Concession Area No. 51 - C). -**ONA**

BINDING AGREEMENT

Sohar International and HSBC Oman agree to seal proposed merger deal

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Following discussions which began in June 2022, Sohar International and HSBC Oman have entered into a binding agreement to undertake the necessary measures towards a merger by incorporation, whereupon completion, all the assets and liabilities of HSBC Oman will be transferred to Sohar International and HSBC Oman will be dissolved (referred to as the Merger).

On May 30, Sohar International and HSBC Oman announced that their respective Boards of Directors have approved the proposed Merger and have called for Extraordinary General Meetings (EGMs) of their respective shareholders to consider the Merger.



Both Boards of Directors believe that the Merger is in the best interests of their respective shareholders. At the forthcoming EGMs, explanatory statements encompassing the terms of the Merger

will be presented, along with a recommendation that shareholders vote in favour of the Merger and each of the EGM resolutions.

While the Merger is subject to the approval of the relevant regula-

tory bodies, the immediate impact on customers will be unaffected by Tuesday's announcement. Both banks will continue to operate independently, providing a business as usual service until the Merger is completed. Further details regarding the date, time, and agenda of the EGM will be announced separately in due course, in accordance with applicable regulations.

Sohar International and HSBC Oman remain committed to transparency and will continue to update shareholders, customers, and stakeholders as the Merger progresses. For any inquiries or additional information, please refer to the official sources of information, including the Muscat Securities Exchange and the Sohar International Corporate website.

CENTRAL BANK OF OMAN



Treasury bills worth OMR57mn issued

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) raised OMR57 million by way of allotting treasury bills on Tuesday.

The value of the allotted Treasury bills amounted to OMR10 million, for a maturity period of 28 days. The average accepted price reached OMR99.655 for every OMR100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at OMR99.655 per OMR100.

The average discount rate and the average yield reached 4.49732 per cent and 4.51289 per cent, respectively.

Whereas, the value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to OMR47 million, for a maturity period of 91 days. The average accepted price reached OMR98.765 for every OMR100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at OMR98.765 per OMR100.

The average discount rate and the average yield reached 4.95357 per cent and 5.01551 per

cent, respectively.

Treasury bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance, and they provide licensed commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds.

The CBO acts as the Issue Manager and provides the added advantage of ready liquidity through discounting and repurchase facilities (Repo).

It may be noted that the interest rate on the Repo operations with CBO is 5.75 per cent while the discount rate on the Treasury Bills Discounting Facility with CBO is 6.25 per cent.

Furthermore, treasury bills promote the local money market by creating a benchmark yield curve for short-term interest rates. Additionally, the government may also resort to this instrument whenever felt necessary for financing its recurrent expenditures. -**ONA**

WORKSHOP

Opaz highlights advantages of its special economic, free zones

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (Opaz), represented by the investment development sector, organised a workshop highlighting the existing investments in different sectors and the competitive advantages of the special economic zones, free zones, and industrial cities that are affiliated with Opaz. The workshop attracted a group of commercial affairs employees in the zones.

The 2-day workshop was held to familiarise employees and participants of the key investment

projects in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (Sezad), Sohar Free Zone, Salalah Free Zone, Al Mazunah Free Zone and the industrial cities, operated by the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates "Madayn". The workshop also aimed at exchanging expertise and knowledge between Opaz employees and other zones.

Moreover, the workshop touched on the procedures related to regulating the investment environment and managing investment opportunities, as well as the possibility of reforming the procedures for land leasing service and its digital transformation plan as

the land selection e-service, implemented in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm.

Furthermore, the workshop included discussion sessions to develop a joint business plan aimed at promoting and ensuring integration between the zones affiliated with Opaz.

This serves to provide a flexible and attractive work environment for employees of commercial affairs and specialised departments in the different zones. Accordingly, it will be contributing to achieving the target objectives of the plans and initiatives developed to improve the business environment

and services provided to investors.

It is worth noting that the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (Opaz) is executing a number of initiatives that will enhance the relative advantages of the special economic zones, free zones and industrial cities that are supervised by Opaz.

In this regard, Opaz launched the land allocation e-service, issued the electronic cadastral drawing, launch automatic permits and licenses, the fast track for investor residence permits, and introduced the Centralised Compliance System "Itizam" and other electronic services.



MARKET

MSX index ends lower

Al Madina Investments, up 9.52 per cent, was the top gainer while Jazeera Steel Products, down 3.93 per cent, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,618.72 points, down by 0.51 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.01 per cent at 467.83 points. Al Madina Investments, up 9.52 per cent, was the top gainer while Jazeera Steel Products, down 3.93 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of Bank Muscat were the most active in terms of the number of shares traded while Sohar International Bank Perpetual Bonds were the most active in terms of turnover.

A total number of 572 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating a turnover of OMR2.25 million, with more than 6.42 million shares changing hands. Out of 48 traded securities, 13 advanced, 17 declined, and 18 remained unchanged. At the session close, foreign investors were net sellers for OMR244,000 while domestic investors were net buyers for OMR179,000, followed

by GCC and Arab investors for OMR64,000 worth of shares. Financial Index closed at 7,556.10 points, down 0.34 per cent. Prices of Al Madina Investments, United Finance, Oman & Emirates Investment, Al Anwar Investment and Bank Nizwa were up by 9.52 per cent, 1.75 per cent, 1.33 per cent, 1.08 per cent and 1.08 per cent respectively. Prices of Ominvest, Ahli Bank, Global Financial Investments, Bank Muscat and Bank Dhofar were up by 2.63 per cent, 2.20 per cent, 1.61 per cent, 0.76 per cent and 0.57 per cent respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,977.54 points, down 0.54 per cent. Prices of Dhofar Cattle Feed, Oman Refreshment, Raysut Cement and Al Anwar Ceramics were up by 9.23 per cent, 1.42 per cent, 0.57 per cent and 0.37 per cent respectively. Services Index was down by 0.6 per cent before closing at 1,694.82 points. — **United Securities**

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff%
MSX 30 INDEX	4,654.28	4,610.45	4,618.72	4,642.40	-23.69	-0.51
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,610.11	7,551.22	7,556.10	7,581.72	-25.62	-0.34
Industry Index	6,029.96	5,977.54	5,977.54	6,010.29	-32.75	-0.54
Services Index	1,705.10	1,688.39	1,694.82	1,705.10	-10.28	-0.60
MSX Shariah Index	468.45	467.68	467.83	467.88	-0.05	-0.01
MSX TR INDEX	6,118.99	6,061.36	6,072.23	6,103.38	-31.14	-0.51
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,289.98	8,225.83	8,231.15	8,259.05	-27.91	-0.34
SERVICES TR IDX	1,874.45	1,856.08	1,863.15	1,874.45	-11.30	-0.60
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	6,441.50	6,385.50	6,385.50	6,420.48	-34.99	-0.54

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
6,422,656	2,250,942	572	23,638,924,375	13	17	18	48

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR TUESDAY, MAY 30

REGULAR MARKET

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (BD)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BD	LAST OFFER	PDA VALUE	MARKET CAP
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	15,154	879	3	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.057	0.001	1.754	0.058	0.057	0.058	0.100	20,655,383
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	69,903	5,308	8	0.075	0.076	0.075	0.076	0.075	0.001	1.333	0.076	0.074	0.076	0.100	9,262,500
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	100	9	1	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.087	0.001	1.149	0.088	0.083	0.088	0.100	17,567,833
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	188,482	19,282	11	0.103	0.103	0.102	0.102	0.101	0.001	0.990	0.102	0.102	0.103	0.100	468,186,354
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	5,450	1,499	2	0.275	0.275	0.275	0.275	0.274	0.001	0.365	0.275	0.270	0.277	0.100	60,500,000
OM0000001087	OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	6,000	1,572	3	0.262	0.262	0.262	0.262	0.262	0.000	0.000	0.262	0.262	0.262	0.100	26,200,000
OM0000001152	OMAN NATIONAL ENGINEERING & INVESTMENT	200	22	1	0.108	0.108	0.108	0.108	0.108	0.000	0.000	0.108	0.108	0.108	0.100	16,200,000
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	132,387	35,726	34	0.270	0.270	0.267	0.270	0.270	0.000	0.000	0.270	0.270	0.275	0.100	439,005,516
OM0000001517	HSBC BANK OMAN	365,700	57,049	4	0.156	0.156	0.156	0.156	0.156	0.000	0.000	0.156	0.156	0.156	0.100	312,048,795
OM0000001525	OMAN INVESTMENT & FINANCE	36,689	3,982	5	0.108	0.109	0.108	0.108	0.108	0.000	0.000	0.108	0.108	0.111	0.100	26,675,800
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIA INVESTMENT HO.	256	19	1	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.000	0.000	0.075	0.073	0.075	0.100	6,750,000
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	23,450	8,888	41	0.376	0.380	0.370	0.380	0.380	0.000	0.000	0.380	0.370	0.380	0.100	89,835,800
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	1,805	153	2	0.085	0.085	0.085	0.085	0.085	0.000	0.000	0.085	0.082	0.085	0.100	14,875,000
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	123,337	119,277	38	0.968	0.968	0.964	0.964	0.968	-0.004	-0.413	0.964	0.964	0.968	0.100	723,000,000
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	6,000	1,045	2	0.170	0.175	0.170	0.175	0.176	-0.001	-0.568	0.175	0.170	0.175	0.100	524,361,501
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	841,136	220,714	67	0.262	0.264	0.261	0.261	0.263	-0.002	-0.760	0.261	0.261	0.261	0.100	1,959,169,633
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	21,773	1,333	4	0.062	0.062	0.061	0.061	0.062	-0.001	-1.613	0.061	0.060	0.062	0.100	12,200,000
OM0000003968	QOREDOO	111,217	30,392	49	0.356	0.356	0.350	0.350	0.356	-0.006	-1.685	0.350	0.350	0.356	0.100	227,830,481
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	8,100	2,592	2	0.320	0.320	0.320	0.320	0.328	-0.008	-2.439	0.320	0.320	0.328	0.100	105,679,267
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	132,300	49,835	17	0.378	0.380	0.370	0.370	0.380	-0.010	-2.632	0.370	0.370	0.370	0.100	247,295,208
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	86,377	23,240	5	0.270	0.270	0.269	0.269	0.280	-0.011	-3.929	0.269	0.270	0.272	0.100	33,597,551
Total	21	2,176,816	591,795	300												

Parallel Market

OM0000001982	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	354,707	16,317	26	0.046	0.046	0.046	0.046	0.042	0.004	9.524	0.046	0.043	0.046	0.100	3,910,000
OM0000001301	DHOHAR FOODS AND INVESTMENT	130,513	9,051	17	0.065	0.071	0.065	0.071	0.065	0.006	9.231	0.071	0.071	0.071	0.100	5,740,350
OM0000004925	ALBATHAH POWER	15,654	441	3	0.028	0.030	0.028	0.030	0.029	0.001	3.448	0.030	0.028	0.030	0.100	20,246,623
OM0000001426	OMAN REFRESHMENT	508	724	1	1.425	1.425	1.425	1.425	1.405	0.020	1.425	1.425	1.425	0.000	0.100	71,250,000
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	747,899	69,828	42	0.094	0.094	0.093	0.094	0.093	0.001	1.075	0.094	0.093	0.094	0.100	18,800,000
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	328,694	30,853	16	0.095	0.095	0.093	0.094	0.093	0.001	1.075	0.095	0.095	0.096	0.100	210,273,585
OM0000007910	AMAN REAL ESTATE	1,000	94	1	0.094	0.094	0.094	0.094	0.093	0.001	1.075	0.094	0.090	0.095	0.100	18,800,000
OM0000001418	RAYSUT CEMENT	73,689	12,894	10	0.174	0.179	0.174	0.176	0.175	0.001	0.571	0.176	0.165	0.178	0.100	35,200,000
OM0000001095	DHOHAR INSURANCE	47,777	8,460	3	0.198	0.198	0.198	0.198	0.198	0.000	0.000	0.198	0.198	0.200	0.100	23,742,885
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	5,000	510	2	0.102	0.102	0.102	0.102	0.102	0.000	0.000	0.102	0.100	0.110	0.100	8,670,000
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	10,000	580	1	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.000	0.000	0.058	0.057	0.058	0.100	17,814,487
OM0000002275	SHELL OMAN MARKETING	250,300	225,270	5	0.900	0.900	0.900	0.900	0.900	0.000	0.000	0.900	0.880	0.900	0.100	85,500,000
OM0000003281	TANGEREE FINANCE	100,000	9,000	2	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.000	0.000	0.090	0.089	0.091	0.100	23,745,153
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	25,146	2,590	3	0.103	0.103	0.103	0.103	0.103	0.000	0.000	0.103	0.093	0.107	0.100	8,384,483
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	270,000	7,566	20	0.028	0.029	0.028	0.028	0.028	0.000	0.000	0.029	0.029	0.029	0.100	20,003,378
OM0000004947	OMAN REIT FUND	80,000	6,510	4	0.080	0.082	0.080	0.082	0.082	0.000	0.000	0.082	0.082	0.082	0.100	38,657,284
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	112,014	220,108	5	1.965	1.965	1.965	1.965	1.970	-0.005	-0.254	1.965	0.000	1.965	0.100	176,260,500
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	491,833	148,254	63	0.300	0.304	0.295	0.298	0.300	-0.002	-0.667	0.298	0.298	0.310	0.100	229,519,600
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	8,465	1,527	2	0.181	0.181	0.180	0.181	0.183	-0.002	-1.093	0.180	0.180	0.180	0.100	36,740,547
OM0000007811	MUSANDAM POWER	28,500	7,844	4	0.286	0.286	0.286	0.286	0.286	0.000	0.000	0.286	0.286	0.286	0.100	20,835,440
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	355,745	22,928	11	0.064	0.065	0.063	0.063	0.064	-0.001	-1.563	0.063	0.062	0.065	0.100	92,143,892
OM0000003141	BAKRA WATER AND POWER	300	18	1	0.059	0.059	0.059	0.059	0.060	-0.001	-1.697	0.059	0.056	0.059	0.100	9,440,000
OM0000002200	AHLI BANK	117,000	20,836	2	0.178	0.178	0.178	0.178	0.182	-0.004	-2.198	0.178	0.178	0.184	0.100	347,039,029
OM0000004735	SEMOBPS SALALAH	356,116	35,753	14	0.101	0.101	0.100	0.100	0.103	-0.003	-2.913	0.100	0.099	0.102	0.100	96,457,195
Total	24	3,908,860	858,923	258												

RISK TO RESILIENCE

World's largest cybersecurity roadshow reaches Oman as part of global tour

MUSCAT: Trend Micro Incorporated, a global leader in cybersecurity, announced that its Risk to Resilience world tour powered by AWS – the world's largest cybersecurity roadshow made its way to the Middle East and Africa (MEA) to empower enterprises in building up their defence capabilities and reimagine cybersecurity.

With a total of 100 cities



SELF-CARE TIPS FOR MOMS AND CARETAKERS

Carving out some “me time” is not just good for your mental health, physical wellness and confidence, as many moms know, it can actually make you a better parent. According to a survey of moms conducted by Hutchinson and Cassidy, those who had higher self-esteem had higher levels of perceived parenting confidence.

Here are three ways to practice self-care:

1. Get some rest: We live in a goal-oriented society

where the value of rest and relaxation is not always emphasized. Whether it's a spa day with your best friend or curling up with a good book at home, be sure your schedule includes adequate time to recharge your batteries.

2. Take care of your smile: One of the best ways to foster self-confidence is with a clean, healthy smile. In fact, a 2020 Cigna Dental Report found that smile satisfaction is one of the top three drivers of self confidence among U.S. adults. Give yourself the gift of innovative brushing technology. The iO Se-

ries 5 Rechargeable Electric Toothbrush from Oral-B, for example, allows you to personalize your brushing experience with its five smart modes: daily clean, intense, whitening, sensitive and super sensitive. No ordinary toothbrush, this one is designed to help you brush smarter and more safely. To help protect gums, a smart pressure sensor displays a red light when you're brushing too hard and a green light when you're brushing just right, and its dentist-inspired round brush head cleans with micro-vibrations and oscillating action.

Plus, a connected app tracks brushing behavior to ensure you're targeting all six zones of your mouth, and a vibrating timer lets you know when you've brushed for the dentist-recommended 2 minutes.

3. Take care of your mind: So much of motherhood is ensuring everyone has what they need, and often, your own needs can fall by the wayside. There are many ways to take time to check in with yourself though. You could buy yourself a beautiful journal and jot thoughts down for a few minutes

each evening or check out apps like Headspace, which can help get you started on a meditation practice. Even a 10 or 15 minute walk at lunchtime can be a powerful mood-booster and an opportunity to reflect. You might also consider taking up a hobby that offers the chance for self-expression, such as painting, poetry, music or crafting.

When it comes to parents and caretakers, the importance of self-care can't be overstated. Kick-off new routines that boost your self-confidence and your well-being. — StatePoint

IN PICTURES

Memorial Day parade held in Quincy, US

People take part in a Memorial Day parade in Quincy, Massachusetts, the United States. *Xinhua*



Fashion show held in Pakistan's Karachi

Models present creations during a fashion show organised by the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) in southern Pakistani port city of Karachi. *Xinhua*



Scarborough Renaissance Festival celebrated in Texas, US

A girl in 16-century costume sells flowers at the Scarborough Renaissance Festival in Waxahachie, on the outskirts of Dallas, Texas, the United States. *Xinhua*



National Debt Clock seen in Manhattan, New York

Pedestrians walk past the National Debt Clock in Manhattan, New York, the United States. After weeks of trading blame and playing a game of chicken, the US White House and Republicans reached a final agreement to raise the debt ceiling to avert a fast-approaching default amid global concerns. *Xinhua*

Sara Ali Khan during the launch of a jewellery showroom in Kolkata

Bollywood actress Sara Ali Khan during the launch of a jewellery showroom, in Kolkata. *ANI Photo*



French female director wins Palme d'Or at 76th Cannes Film Festival

French director Justine Triet poses with the trophy during a photocall after she won the Palme d'Or for the film "Anatomie d'une Chute" (Anatomy of a Fall) during the closing ceremony of the 76th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. *Xinhua*

UN peacekeeping plays key political, security role in S. Lebanon: UN mission chief

UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) commander Aroldo Lazaro Saenz gives a speech during a ceremony to mark the International Day of UN Peacekeepers in Naqoura, southern Lebanon. *Xinhua*





SEAWORLD ABU DHABI

ABU DHABI'S FIRST MARINE LIFE THEME PARK OPENS WITH AN UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCES TO ALL AGES



ABU DHABI: A large group of media persons, environmentalists, curious guests from all over the world had gathered at SeaWorld Yas Island, Abu Dhabi, as the region's first Marine Life Theme Park, opened its doors to the public, offering unforgettable experiences and immersive adventures to visitors of all ages.

As the guests entered the arena, they were greeted to a spectacular local dance show as a group of Emiratis showcased their dancing skills in perfect rhythm to the drumbeats. As music transcends all barriers, their Arabic songs were quite soothing to the ears and forced many guests to join their group.

Spanning five indoor levels over 183,000 sqm, the park tells a captivating One Ocean story, taking guests on a journey of discovery seamlessly blending learning and fun across eight immersive realms.

At SeaWorld Abu Dhabi, visitors of all ages can enjoy unique family-friendly experiences including up-close animal encounters and animal presentations. The park is also home to inspiring entertainment, exciting rides and attractions as well as unmatched dining and shopping experiences.

Each realm at SeaWorld Abu Dhabi is uniquely themed and intricately designed, transporting guests to different marine environments found across the globe. The One Ocean realm acts as the core of the park sharing the One Ocean story through highly im-



mersive media. SeaWorld Abu Dhabi offers 10 up-close animal encounters amongst 100 animal experiences and presentations, where guests can learn about the unique characteristics and behaviors of fascinating marine animals including dolphins, sharks, and sea turtles.

As one enters the premises, hundreds of coloured fish, sea cucumbers, starfish of different colours can be seen living peacefully in their realm. One can even get a feel of them by touching their spongy bodies with two fingers.

The surrounding gives a view of old times when the Emiratis used to excel in pearl diving and fishing and used stars and some old instruments to guide their boat across the oceans.

In Endless Ocean realm guests

can marvel at the world's largest multi-species marine life aquarium, featuring over 68,000 marine animals and an astounding 25 million litres of water. In the Arctic and Antarctica realms of the Polar Ocean, guests will enjoy icy seascapes and learn about the unique habits of polar species.

The aquarium also has a good number of small sharks living in perfect harmony with a mermaid doing frequent rounds. The beautiful mermaid steals the show with her twists and turns, swimming skills and not to miss her loving gestures.

Most of the enthusiastic crowd were eager to take her pictures. The Ocean realm, with varieties of fish and turtles, is also a treat to watch as you cross the glass filled barrel shaped aquarium.

In the polar world under freezing cold conditions, you can find Atlantic puffins. These are birds that live most of their lives in the sea. They fly through the air like most birds, but can also "fly" through the water, using their wings as paddles. As they swim, they use their webbed like a boat uses a rudder.

At Rocky Point, guests will see sea lions and harbour seals in a hidden cove inspired by the USA's Pacific Northwest.

One of the most amazing shows was an encounter with sea lions doing all sorts of tricks, flapping their wings at the beck and call of their trainers. Hats off to the trainers who have trained them to perfection as they obey all their

orders, of course, with a reward in the form of fish.

The Tropical Ocean realm features a vibrant and sunny rainforest and a stunning blue lagoon with dolphins, flamingos, fish and birds. The orange coloured flamingos and their sounds are a treat to watch.

As one enters the dolphin enclosure, a group of drummers upped the ante before the grand dolphin finale. Dressed in colourful costumes, they forced the entire crowd on their feet, tapping to their drumbeats and clapping on their call.

As the drummers went into the background, dolphins took the centre stage.

It is said that dolphins are the most intelligent animals and that was proved true while watching their marvellous skill. Their dance, diving abilities, jumping into the air, long swirls and twists and turns were eye-catching. They followed their masters' orders, and used all sorts of tricks to entertain the massive crowd that had gathered to witness their performance. And as a reward for all their tricks, they were instantly rewarded with fish.

The park is also home to over 15 interactive rides and experiences, each taking guests on a unique journey of discovery beneath the waves. Thrill-seekers can enjoy rides like the Manta Coaster at Tropical Ocean, orhop into the Hypersphere and their taste buds in many restaurants spread across the theme park.



ROUND-UP

Bank Muscat, Metlife introduce critical illness insurance plans

Critical illness and critical care plans aim to protect customers and their families by providing them with immediate financial relief should anything unexpected happen

MUSCAT: In line with its customer-centric vision, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has joined forces with MetLife to introduce an insurance solution benefit giving you financial peace of mind in case you are diagnosed with a serious illness. Critical illness and critical care

plans aim to protect customers and their families by providing them with immediate financial relief should anything unexpected happen. Abdullah Tamman Al Maashani, General Manager – Products, Bank Muscat, expressed his enthusiasm for the collaboration, stating, “Bank Muscat is delighted to offer the Critical Care and Critical Ill-



ness Insurance plans in partnership with MetLife, a global leader in providing financial and wellness protection to millions of customers globally. The bank's partnership with MetLife highlights our commitment to delivering innovative and value-added insurance so-

lutions to our customers and will help in advancing the insurance market in Oman. We thank all our customers for their strong confidence in Bank Muscat and promise to continue launching new and globally innovative solutions for their benefit.”

Raed Dawood, Country Manager at MetLife Oman, commented, “We are excited to partner with Bank Muscat in bringing innovative insurance solutions to the people living in Oman. The Critical Illness and Critical Care plans are designed to expand coverage options, providing peace of mind during challenging health events. This partnership aligns with our mission to deliver accessible and affordable health and financial protection services. These plans directly address real challenges faced by many, and we anticipate they will make a significant positive impact.” The critical illness plan provides a lump sum to cover direct treatment costs for 11 critical illnesses upon diagnosis, ensuring that customers are not financially impacted in other areas of their lives. In ad-

dition, the critical illness plan offers several competitive benefits, including a second medical opinion service and five coverage options ranging from OMR2,500 to OMR20,000, with premiums starting as low as OMR1.050 per month. The critical care plan offers financial support as a lump sum of up to OMR 40,000 through four different payment options immediately upon diagnosis of any of 32 common critical illnesses. No prior medical examination is required, nor must medical bills be submitted to make a claim. Omani nationals and residents aged between 18 and 60 holding valid resident visas are eligible for the critical illness plan, and those between 18 and 59 years are eligible for the critical care plan; all plans come with a 30-day free look period.

PICK-UP TRUCK

2023 GWM POER has all it takes to handle most challenging off-road tasks

MUSCAT: A pick-up truck that combines the luxurious feel of an SUV, the offroad capabilities of a workhorse and cutting-edge automotive technologies, is wowing motoring enthusiasts in the Sultanate of Oman, and indeed the wider Middle East region, with its standout features. POER (pronounced as ‘POWER’) is the latest offering from Great Wall Motor (GWM), a China-based global intelligent technology company that produces an increasingly popular line-up of SUVs, sedans, pickups and new energy vehicles.

Making its debut in Oman is the all-new 2023 edition of POER as a new-generation pickup specially designed and crafted for a demographic that identifies with a brand that is equal parts performance and style. As the product of GWM’s world-class technology and superior automotive components from inter-



national companies, the POER is a truly versatile vehicle that has what it takes to handle the most challenging jobs and difficult terrain. No ordinary pickup truck, the 2023 POER features a high-strength cage-type vehicle body with a door impact beam and a double front impact absorption structure that afford armour-like protection.

Under the hood is a powerful 2.0L turbocharged petrol engine mated to the smooth ZF 8-speed automatic transmission with Torque-on-Demand (TOD) all-wheel-drive. An intelligent 2WD/4WD switch enables superior vehicle performance and even better anti-skidding capability. In keeping with its multifaceted

persona, the POER comes with a cabin that is as spacious, equipped and cosy as an SUV. Passengers enjoy almost the same motoring experience in an offroad setting as they would shopping or commuting within the city. This feature represents the hallmark of the POER’s distinctive offering as a pickup truck that doubles as a lifestyle vehicle. Underpinning the POER’s laudable performance is a combination of smart automotive technologies and state-of-the-art safety system, including the latest Bosch Generation 9.3 ESP system, emergency brake assist (HBA), traction control system (TCS), hill-start assist control (HAC), reversing camera, reversing radar, curbside visibility, and tyre pressure monitoring. OTE Group is the exclusive dealer for the diverse product line-up of vehicles from Great Wall Motor, including the POER range of pickup trucks, in the Sultanate of Oman.

INFRASTRUCTURE, TECHNOLOGY, INDUSTRIAL AND CONSUMER SOLUTIONS

MHD-ITICS: Your partner for smart office innovation

MUSCAT: Modern workplaces are all about providing a conducive work environment for those that inhabit them. While elements like open spaces, greenery, and natural lighting are all said to contribute to making the place more uplifting and, thereby, boosting productivity, there is a new and more quantifiable component that a number of companies are now turning to – transforming a regular workplace to a smart office. Just like companies prioritise customers and evolve with changing market demands, it has also become quintessential to embrace technology to drive efficiency at workplaces. As a pioneer in introducing the latest developments in the realm of technology to the local market, Mohsin Haider Darwish Infrastructure, Technology, Industrial and Consumer Solutions (MHD-ITICS) provides integrated IoT-based solutions and high-end software designed to enhance collaboration, satisfaction, and productivity in any workplace.

Detecting employee occupancy on desk Desk or occupancy sensors are non-intrusive monitoring devices that are used to assess office space usage. They reduce the time spent on finding free desks or meeting rooms and generate insightful data

MHD-ITICS provides integrated IoT-based solutions and high-end software designed to enhance collaboration, satisfaction, and productivity in any workplace

on spaces that are most or infrequently used to better manage office layouts. These sensors are ideal for large, multi-level office areas and can be automated with other software to help conserve energy when desks are not in use.

Smart meeting room booking systems These systems ensure that meetings are scheduled accurately, communicated to the concerned executives, and free from disruptions. A well-integrated system also gives individuals greater flexibility to manage bookings while re-

ducing administrative workloads.

Smart AC and electricity control solutions Electricity wastage is one of the most common problems at workplaces. With the use of smart technologies, it is possible to significantly improve energy efficiency. ACs, lights, and other electricals can be automatically or remotely turned off when not in use. In addition, lights and indoor temperatures can also be customised according to the changing outdoor environments.

Integrated visitor management systems With security being a critical component of all organisations, Visitor Management Systems combined with various access controls have proven to be increasingly helpful in tracking and monitoring visitors while reducing the need for physical escorts. It can also be customised to limit access to restricted areas or beyond predetermined timings.

Zero-touch employee attendance systems While the focus of such systems is safety by minimising contact, Zero-Touch Employee Attendance Systems also deliver precise results by eliminating overlapping

and accurately identifying employees. With the growing popularity of such systems, MHD-ITICS has implemented Time and Attendance Solutions for leading manufacturing companies and retail chains in Oman. This has also helped automate processes through seamless integration with payroll and other IT systems. Timely and error-free reports of work hours clocked in by employees are not only vital to assessing performance, addressing challenges of absenteeism, and preparing payrolls but have also proven to inject higher efficiency in overall business operations while instilling a greater sense of discipline amongst employees.

Software solutions These significantly enhance employee productivity and are an essential imperative. These solutions range from Unified Communication and Collaboration suites to Service Management and Helpdesk solutions that cater to a variety of end-users ranging from IT teams to HR departments. With expertise in delivering and deploying such solutions to large enterprises, MHD-ITICS brings not just credibility but also knowledge of best practices that can be replicated effectively.

OMANTEL



Agreement signed to offer ‘Buy Now, Pay Later’ for purchasing smart devices

MUSCAT: A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Omantel, National Finance and Thawani fintech company to clinch a partnership that will bring to the doorstep of eligible consumers the BNPL option (Buy Now, Pay Later) an emerging global finance solution available at POS, for purchasing smart devices. As per the MoU, purchasers of smart devices at Omantel can avail of finance under the BNPL plan and pay back National Finance in instalments for an agreed tenure.

Omantel is integrating the financing platform with its sales portal. Once a customer opts for the BNPL option, the request will be processed through the financing platform, with relevant customer details necessary to process KYC, along with the selected product details. Once the order is completed, the approved customer can receive the selected smart device after signing the required documentation. Talal Al Mamari, CEO of Omantel, said, “We are pleased to bring on-the-spot financing to our valued consumers in collaboration with two major players in the finance and digital payment space. We are putting together a simplified and secure system to enable our customers to buy the latest and most advanced devices in the market without feeling the pinch of doling out huge sums upfront. This is yet another initiative from Omantel to provide financial ease to consumers who wish to buy new smart devices.” National Finance is Oman’s largest leasing and finance com-

pany that provides a wide array of financial products. Thawani is a fintech company specialising in offering a fully integrated digital end-to-end KYC experience for availing of the financing option. Tariq Al Farsi, CEO of National Finance, said, “We at National Finance believe that BNPL is a convenient and attractive option for many smart device buyers. We are therefore delighted to partner with Omantel and Thawani to put together a streamlined financing system that will bring relief and ease of payment for smart device buyers. We look forward to a burgeoning relationship with Omantel.” Eng. Majid bin Fayil Al Amri, Founder and CEO of Thawani Technologies, said, “The rapid development of the financial services and retail sector calls for pioneering solutions. Thawani Technologies, with the back-end service support provided by National Finance, has tapped into a new sector to support even more customers when it comes to purchases. The flexibility of the new service offering means consumers can break up the cost of their purchases, allowing them to make use of products and services without having to pay the full amount upfront and without having to worry about high-interest charges. As we continue to deploy innovative e-payment products, solutions and services for a growing market, expanding into the retail sector provides new opportunities to use the latest technologies to serve even more customers by providing attractive financial arrangements.”



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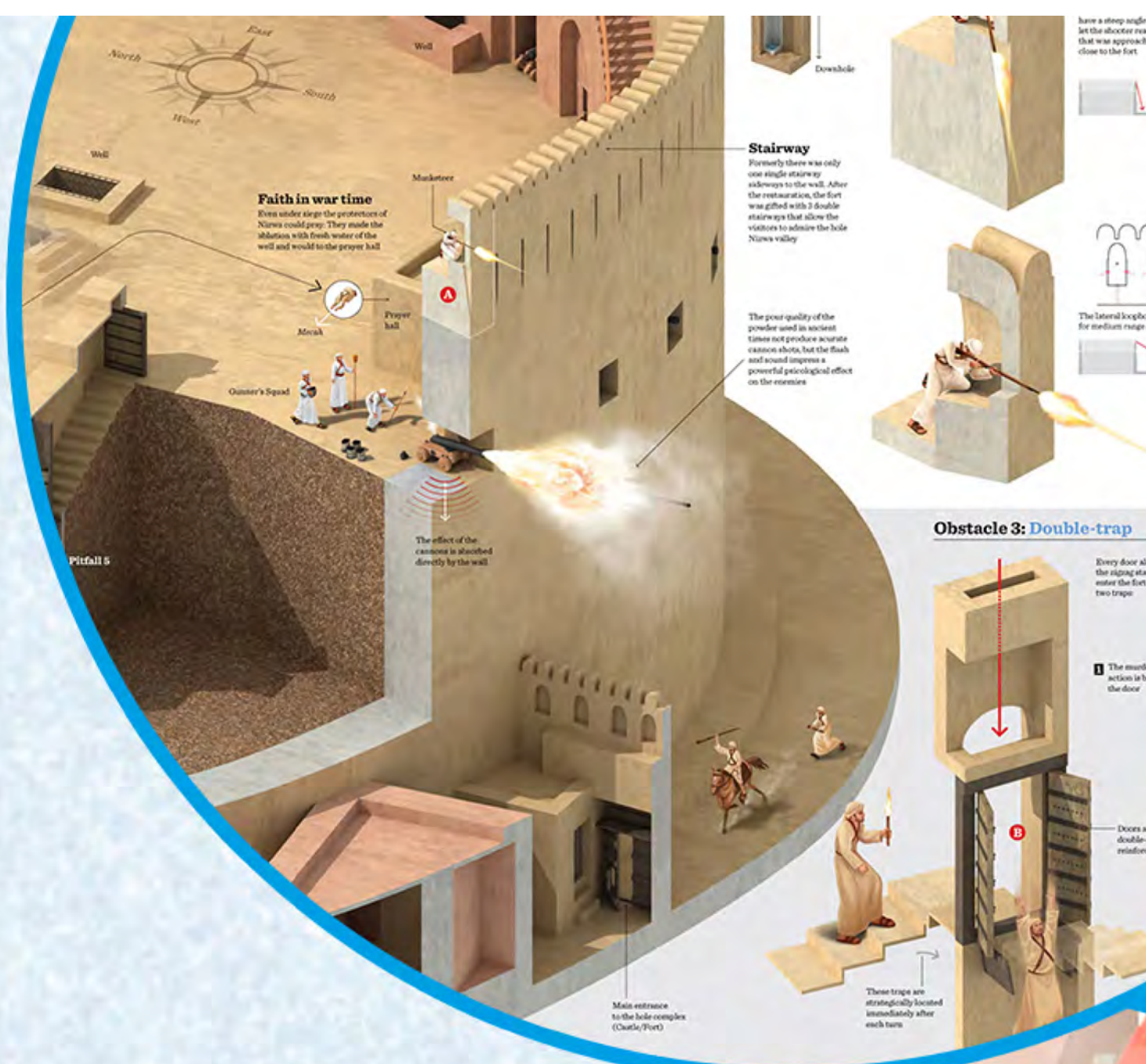
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