

## HM GREETES PRESIDENT OF NAMIBIA

**MUSCAT:** His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to Dr. Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia on his country's Independence anniversary. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his best wishes of good health and happiness to President Geingob. His Majesty also wished the people of Namibia further progress and welfare. - **ONA**



## HM GREETES PRESIDENT OF TURKMENISTAN

**MUSCAT:** His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to Dr. Serdar Berdimukhamedov, President of Turkmenistan on his inauguration as a new president of his country. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Berdimukhamedov, wishing him success in leading the people of Turkmenistan towards further progress and prosperity. His Majesty also wished the relations between the two countries further development and growth. - **ONA**



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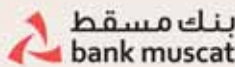
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## Foreign Minister receives copies of credentials

**MUSCAT:** Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister received copies of credentials of Kim J., Ambassador of the Republic of Korea appointed to the Sultanate of Oman and Mark Donovan, Ambassador of Australia appointed to the Sultanate of Oman.

Sayyid Badr welcomed the ambassadors and wished them success in carrying out their duties. He also wished the relations between Oman and their countries further progress and growth.

The meeting was attended by Dr. Khalid Said Al Jaradi, Head of the Protocols Department at the Foreign Ministry. — **ONA**



TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

### Winter season in Oman is officially over

**1** Sunday, March 20, 2022, was officially the last day of winter in the country, according to the Oman Astronomical Society (OAS). Ibrahim Al Mahrouqi of the OAS said, "On Sunday evening, at 7:33, the winter season will end, from an astronomical perspective, and the spring season will begin." **>A3**

WORLD

### Five ancient tombs found in Egypt

**2** Egypt's Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities presented its recent discoveries which include five tombs belonging to a pharaonic complex at Saqqara. **>A6**

MARKET

### Solar-powered inspection facility

**3** Hutchison Ports Sohar held a groundbreaking ceremony, marking the start of construction on its new solar-powered integrated inspection facility project. **>B1**



## TONNES OF DRUGS, 2 MILLION PILLS SEIZED BY ROP IN 2021

### The vigilance of the Royal Oman Police has helped in stopping criminal attempts

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** Smugglers who attempt to sneak drugs into Oman are regularly coming up with newer methods to

dupe law enforcement officials in the country requiring the Royal Oman Police to adopt modern and advanced means to monitor, track and apprehend criminals.

Last year, the ROP seized 21 tonnes of drugs and two million pills of psychotropic substances from smugglers, said Lt. Col. Sulaiman bin Saif Al Tamtami, the director of enforcement administration at the Directorate General of Combating Drugs and Psychotropic Substances.

#### Various means

"Smugglers use varied means to transport and conceal drugs such as boats," he said. "They move quickly,



land them on the beaches in rugged areas, bury them and sometimes hide them in construction materials, food and other places.

"The vigilance of our officers helped in detecting and stopping these criminal attempts," he added. "The Royal Oman Police pays great attention to combating narcotics and psychotropic substances as well as illicit trafficking, as per security and preventive norms and legislation." **>A5**

MAZAYA

### Salalah Free Zone signs two pacts to lease warehouses



**SALALAH:** Salalah Free Zone, an affiliate of Asyad Group, announced that two usufruct agreements were signed to the tune of OMR1.5 million. The projects will be set up in the Mazaya warehouse. The first agreement is on the establishment of a complex for the trade of plastic products, while the second agreement is on the establishment of a complex for the assembly of communications equipment on a space of 13.5 thousand square metres.

These agreements bring the space of leased warehouses in Salalah Free Zone to 83 percent of the total Mazaya warehouses, which extend to 58.5 thousand square metres. Salalah Free Zone is witnessing a boom in the number of projects in industrial and logistical fields. This comes within the free zone's efforts in boosting investments by attracting quality projects.

Salalah Free Zone provides many economic incentives for investors, such as tax exemptions and full ownership of projects.

Moreover, it enjoys a strategic position near Salalah Port and Salalah Airport. — **ONA**

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TOURISM

## Jabal Akhdhar iconic villages are 'work of art'

SALEH AL-SHAIBANY

**J**abal Akhdhar is already known for its grand peaks, mysterious canyons and terraced farms, but the iconic villages that date back over two hundred years, still take the breath away of many travellers, including international town planning experts.

British architect Martin Bailey, who has been designing accommodations for over thirty five years, finds the construction of old houses in the villages 'intriguing.'

"The fact that these old houses are still standing is a tribute to old Omani engineers who built them. The houses in Wadi Habib and Al-Ayn, to take examples of just two villages, are at least 150 years old. It is not the just the old technology used that I find intriguing but the craftsmanship of using a combination of woods, bricks and plaster, is a masterpiece and work of art, even in the world of today," said Mr Bailey, a 68-year old retired architect based in Manchester, England.

The villages are located on the tallest peaks of Jabal Akhdhar,



The village of Wadi Bani Habib. — Photo by Saleh Al-Shaibany

where pomegranates, olives, apricots, grapes, pears, plums, peaches and raspberries grow. In the spring months, even gardens of roses flourish there. But not only are the architects impressed, but also the tourists looking to feast their eyes on the beauty around them, are fascinated by the enchanting villages that are still intact against the ravages of time.

Hugo Veran, a 36-year old French school teacher, said the villages of the Jabal Akhdhar

have mystical beauty and endless charms that made him come back twice to see them again.

"I cannot get enough of their beauty, mystery and charms that never end. I came here for the first time last September and I am here again this month of February. The houses are so old but reasonably preserved for us to come here and enjoy more than a century later," Veran, who is in Oman on a week holiday, told *Times of Oman*.

To many tourists, Jabal Akhdhar

is like a magic box that has endless charms and mystical beauty that never cease to amaze them and according to hotel managers, villages are a top attraction to the guests.

"The visit to the villages are a top attractions for our guests. Then comes the canyon viewing, trekking, hiking and mountain climbing. Why? Because most of the guests like to take away a piece of history in their minds, not just the activities. Our guests are also journalists who go back to their countries to write about these old habitats and the way people used to live more than a hundred years ago," Greg Dsouza, Director of Sales and Marketing for DusitD2 Hotel, told *Times of Oman*.

The hotel, which was opened last summer, is owned by Omran, the Omani government's arm for tourism development and investments. The massive 300-plus rooms accommodation, is located near all attractions, including the beautiful villages of Al-Ayn and Aqar.

What is the real story about these beautiful villages that still stand today? **>A3**





|                      |         |
|----------------------|---------|
| Dhuhr.....           | 12:25pm |
| Asr.....             | 3:44pm  |
| Maghrib.....         | 6:11pm  |
| Isha.....            | 7:22pm  |
| Fajr (Tomorrow)..... | 5:18am  |

# Oman pavilion attracts over 1 million visitors

The pavilion houses a future interactive library of expertise that represents a spiritual and futuristic space where visitors are treated with multi-sensory experiences



**DUBAI:** The Sultanate of Oman's pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai has attracted more than one million visitors since its launch on 1 October 2021, until 17 March 2022. Oman's pavilion continues its participation in the exhibition, which sheds light on various stories of sustainability, starting with communicating with minds

through creating opportunities for the future, which are identical to the main themes of Expo 2020 Dubai. Through its participation, the Sultanate of Oman aims to highlight the civilizational and human achievements throughout the history of the frankincense tree. It also highlights Oman's

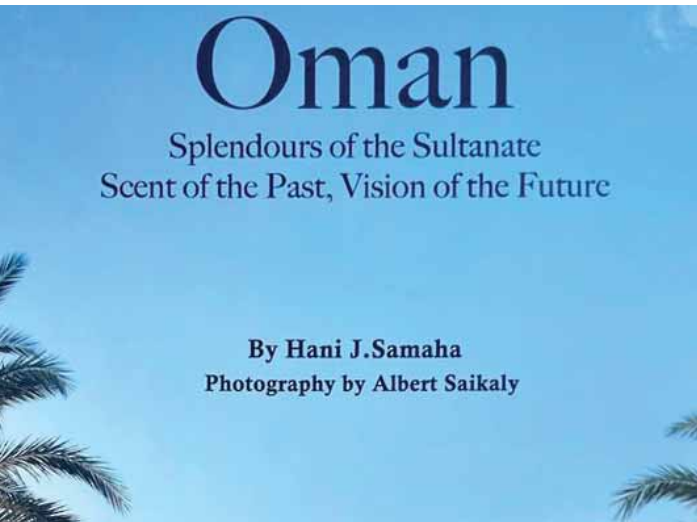
current achievements, its renewed renaissance and future aspirations. Oman's pavilion also promotes the Sultanate of Oman as a promising, distinctive tourism and investment destination in various economic fields. The pavilion houses a future interactive library of expertise

that represents a spiritual and futuristic space where visitors are treated with multi-sensory experiences. It sheds light on Oman through history, resources and marvelous nature, in addition to competencies, innovation capabilities and an optimistic view of the future. -ONA

## MINISTRY OF HERITAGE AND TOURISM

# Book on splendours of Oman launched

**MUSCAT:** The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism yesterday launched a book titled "Splendours of the Sultanate of Oman: Scent of the Past, Vision of the Future". The 312-page book, translated into English, highlights Oman's tourism potentials, enhanced by pictures of various tourist attractions in the Sultanate of Oman. The launching ceremony of the book was held under the patronage of Sayyid Saud Hilal Al Busaidi, Minister of State, Governor of Muscat in the presence of Salim Mohammed Al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism.



**Omani library** Sayyid Saud bin Hilal Al Busaidi, Minister of State, Governor of Muscat affirmed that this book represents a valuable knowledge addition to the Omani library as well as the Arab and international libraries as the book features selected images and brief

phrases highlighting unique components of all the governorates of Oman. Salim Mohammed Al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism said that this book will enrich

the Omani tourism library. He added the book contributes to supporting the promotional efforts undertaken by the ministry, both at the local and the global levels, within the framework of

implementing the comprehensive tourism development plan. He pointed out that the ministry will work to ensure the distribution of the book through its available promotional channels, and through its tourist representation offices in 16 countries targeted by tourism, as well as through the embassies of the Sultanate of Oman. The stages of filming the book, authored by Hani J. Samaha, began on 18 September 2017 and ended on 22 August 2018. These stages started in the Governorate of Dhofar, passing through all the governorates of the Sultanate of Oman and ending in the Governorate of Muscat. As many as 5,600 images were photographed, and about 1,000 images were selected by the photographer Professor Albert Saikaly, while the British editor Philippa Clayre edited the book in English. -ONA

## SINCERE THANKS

# His Majesty receives thanks cable from ITPF participants

**MUSCAT:** Participants at meetings of the General Assembly of the International Tent Pegging Federation (ITPF) sent a cable of thanks to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. They expressed their sincere thanks and appreciation for the Sultanate of Oman's host to the ITPF meetings. They also valued the major role played by Oman in supporting the ITPF and its positive impact in popularizing this sport at the local, regional and international levels. The participants concluded their cable by praying to Allah the



Almighty to perpetuate a good health, happiness and a long life on His Majesty. They also wished security and stability for the Sultanate of Oman under the wise leadership of His Majesty. -ONA

## Trending ON SOCIAL MEDIA

### BOOK MOST READ ON FACEBOOK



Story on long-term visas for investors in Oman

A story on long-term visas for investors in Oman reached 28,719 people and had 1,551 link clicks on Facebook.

### TELEVISION MOST WATCHED VIDEO ON FACEBOOK



Midday Update video on the end of winter

The Midday Update video on the end of winter in Oman had 756 views and reached 2,300 people on Facebook.

### INSTAGRAM MOST VIEWED VIDEO ON INSTAGRAM



Morning Minute video on architecture projects in Oman

The Morning Minute video on architecture projects in Oman had 668 views and 33 likes on Instagram.

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SEASON CHANGE

Winter season is officially over in Oman, spring has begun

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** While temperatures have been rising in Oman over the past few days, Sunday, March 20, 2022, was officially the last day of winter in the country, according to the Oman Astronomical Society (OAS). Ibrahim Al Mahrouqi of the OAS said, "On Sunday evening, at 7:33, the winter season will end,

from an astronomical perspective, and the spring season will begin. The spring equinox announces the start of spring...on this day, the duration of daytime and nighttime are equal." "Spring will continue from the evening of March 20, 2022, and end on June 21, 2022," he added. "The summer solstice will occur then and this event marks the first day of summer."

Nearly all major settlements in Oman recorded maximum temperatures of above 30 degrees Celsius on 20 March, according to the weather report released by the Directorate General of Meteorology at the Civil Aviation Authority. In Muscat, Seeb measured maximum of 31 degrees, while Amerat was 30 degrees. Sohar and Suwaiq towns saw temperatures of 30 de-

grees. In the Batinah, Rustaq saw maximum temperature of 32 degrees. Towns located in the interior parts of the country such as Nizwa, Bahla, Haima and Yanqul (all 33 degrees), as well as Samail and Ibra (32) degrees, also saw increased temperatures. Al Mudheibi, Duqm and Salalah at 35 degrees were the hottest places in the country, followed closely by Ibra (34 degrees).

Even areas along the coast such as Sur and Muhut (33 degrees), Masirah Island (31 degrees) and the Hallaniyat Islands (30 degrees) were comparatively warmer than they were just a few weeks ago. The country's mountainous areas are still a bit cooler: Jabal Shams (21 degrees), Jabal Samhan (27 degrees) and Jabal Qamar (26 degrees) are still more pleasant than the plains,

as is the Saiq plateau (23 degrees) near Jabal Akhdar. Khasab in the northern governorate of Musandam was one of the few places in the country that recorded a maximum below 30 degrees, but the same was not true of the other northern town of Dibba (31 degrees) as well as the enclave of Madha (30 degrees) and the border regions of Buraimi (also 30 degrees).

TOURISM

<FROM A1 Story of a quaint village

Times of Oman caught up with one of the descendants who told the story of one of the most visited villages his family built on the edge of a cliff.

"Over 120 years ago, my family built the Wadi Bani Habib village and it started with only one accommodation. Years later, as the family grew, they built more houses. They were farmers and they chose the location because of the wadi to water the farms. They also reared animals. To build these houses, they carved each brick from rocks, made woods from trees around them and used mud from the wadi for plastering walls," Yusuf Al-Habib, a descendant from a long-line of the family, told Times of Oman.

A visitor sitting on the top of a mountain can see below villages like Al-Ayn and Al-Aqar hugging the edge of a mountain. They are surrounded by formidable rocks that shelter villagers from strong winds. One can hear faint screams of children playing on the terraced farms where villagers grow their food.

"I cannot get enough of this view," said 44-year old Rose Almeida, a Portuguese expatriate working in Muscat, "I come here every day just to sit here and watch the old houses below me. It is so peaceful and at the same time mind boggling. It is like time has stood still for the villagers who are living there."

AHEAD OF RAMADAN

Several shops inspected in Seeb

**MUSCAT:** Ahead of the Holy Month of Ramadan, Muscat Municipality carried out inspections at several commercial establishments in Seeb "to follow up on

the commitment to the health requirements to be followed when displaying and circulating chilled and frozen foodstuffs, dairy and their products."

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Careers at Khimji Ramdas

Khimji Ramdas (KR) is one of the most respected and admired business conglomerates in Oman. Headquartered in Muscat, it partners with some iconic global brands, across FMCG-Retail, Lifestyle, F&B, Construction & Engineering, Shipping & Logistics, and various other business verticals. As an employer of choice, Khimji Ramdas fosters excellence and individual initiative. Experience a fulfilling career, and be a part of the KR workforce.

**The below vacancies are for the Group's Consumer Products business which distributes renowned brands such as Nivea, Bel, Afia, Foster Clark, Britannia, and several others.**

KEY ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE

The candidate must hold a Diploma/Degree in Marketing with 3-6 years of experience in handling key FMCG customers with a strong track record of sales volume and maintain visibility of space and freshness of stock. He will be responsible for achieving sales including negotiations with clients and developing new customers, distribution and display of products, proactive in collecting outstanding dues, and enhancing customer relationships.

Candidates with good communication skills with a valid Oman driving license will be preferred.

VAN SALES EXECUTIVE

The candidate must be a graduate or an intermediate with a minimum of 2 years of experience. He will be responsible for maintaining stock levels in the van at all times and updating the PALM customer database, attending to sales inquiries and carrying direct sales activities, adhering to health & safety policies and requirements related to company equipment, managing van merchandising, and attending business meetings to ensure cash and stock controlled accurately. Candidates with good communication skills, the ability to speak Arabic, and a valid Oman driving license will be preferred.

All above positions are located in various parts of the Sultanate of Oman and carry industry-standard salaries and Incentives.

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# ROSES ARE IN FULL BLOOM IN JABAL AKHDAR



**E**very spring, the mountain slopes of Jabal Akhdar in the Al Hajar mountains in Northern Oman come alive with indigenous pink Damask roses. Found exclusively on the hill-sides of Jabal Akhdar, the Jabal Akhdar rose is unique to the Green Mountain in Oman. Known in Oman and outside the country for its fragrance, the pink rose is traditionally harvested in March and April, and is widely used in fragrances and herbal remedies, and is also a favourite in spa treatments in the Sultanate. Located two hours' drive from Muscat at 2,000m above sea level, Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort is one of the highest altitude hotels in the Middle East. Set among climbing routes and hiking trails, guests can explore the surrounding landscape while the roses are in full bloom. During rose season, which runs from mid-March until early May, tourists get an opportunity to learn how the flowers are used to make oil for perfume and rose water, explore the rose-covered slopes with an expert mountain

guide, and meet the local rose-pickers for a truly immersive experience. Accompanied by the resort's Mountain Guru, who grew up in Jabal Akhdar, guests can visit one of the area's oldest rose water distilleries, where they can discover the ancient technique of extracting pure rose water from the harvest petals. They can join local rose-pickers plucking the blossoms from the stems, which are then placed inside traditional mud ovens, known as 'Al-duhjan', for distillation.

Anantara Spa features a signature 90-minute 'Rose Rescue Ritual' that uses the soothing, balancing and hydrating properties of the Damask rose. The treatment starts with a rose-infused welcome drink, followed by a milk and rose petal foot ritual and a calming and nourishing rose-themed express facial. The treatment ends with a body massage with balancing rose oils.

There is also a special Rose Season Package for two, which includes an overnight stay in a room or villa with breakfast, the rose water tour and the Rose Rescue Ritual treatment from OMR 299.





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# Incentives to ensure availability of basic commodities in Oman

The meeting discussed many issues of priority pertaining to the food security



**MUSCAT:** The second joint meeting between several competent departments on providing basic commodities in the local markets was held at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion on Sunday. The meeting discussed many issues of priority pertaining to the food security sector. It reviewed the developments and the availability of basic commodities in the markets of the Sultanate of Oman, like wheat, rice and vegetable oils. The meeting also took note of the mechanisms set to ensure price stability and the availability of all

foodstuffs and consumer commodities in all markets of Oman's governorates. The meeting was chaired by Dr. Saud Hamoud Al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, in the presence of Qais Mohammed Al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Ahmed Nassir Al Bakri, Undersecretary for Agriculture, Salayum Ali Al Hakmani, Chairman of the Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) and Dr. Saleh Said Masan, Undersecretary for Commerce and Industry. During the meeting, a package

of incentives was announced to boost the food reserve in the local markets, including the provision of free food reserve stores for a number of foodstuffs imported directly from a number of target markets, as well as facilitating the import of these commodities through Omani ports. The conferees affirmed the availability of all basic commodities and the stability of their prices during the holy month of Ramadan. The departments concerned, each according to its prerogatives, will ensure the availability and stability of the prices of basic commodities. -ONA

# Oman participates in ARABOSAI meeting

**DOHA:** The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the State Audit Institution (SAI), is taking part in the 63rd meeting of the Executive Council of the Arab Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (ARABOSAI), held in Doha, Qatar. Oman's delegation in the two-day meeting is headed by Sheikh Nasser Hilal Al Ma'awali, Chairman of SAI. The meeting approves the closing account for 2021 and the draft budget for 2022. It also addresses reports on the participation of audit institutions in committees



and work teams that stem from the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI). The meeting will further discuss ARABOSAI initiatives and development activities, among other topics. -ONA

## HARMFUL EFFECTS OF DRUGS

# <FROM A1> Community partnership helps in effectively controlling crime

"The presence of a community partnership helps us in effectively controlling this crime which is a serious international scourge that has devastating effects on the security and safety of states and societies – both at present and in the future," he said. Drug crimes are among the most serious offences in Oman. In terms of investigation, such crimes require great effort and careful work by the authorities involved in their prevention. In collaboration with other teams at the Royal Oman Police, the Directorate General of Combating Drugs and Psychotropic Substances is constantly working to develop new methods and enhance capabilities to thwart the attempts of drug traffickers and smugglers. Through continuous efforts of the Royal Oman Police divisions, present across the geography of the country, society is protected from the harmful effects of drugs and their spread. The Law on Combating Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances



issued by Royal Decree No. 17/99 and amendments to Royal Decree No. 34/2015, has recommended strict penalties for drug smugglers and those who commit crime in collaboration with international criminal gangs. Punishment could include the death penalty or life imprisonment, in addition to fines of OMR50,000. The law also brings under its ambit drug abusers and their relatives up to the second degree. "However, when it comes to kinship, it is stipulated in Article 65 that a criminal case must not be instituted against the next of kin, in case he has requested

the abuser to take treatment at a clinic, provided that this is done before he is arrested in connection with a drug crime," said Al Tamtami. "Thus, we can find that the legislator has given the abuser an opportunity to be treated for drug addiction at an approved clinic in Oman – either government or private – or that his family has applied for him to seek treatment on his behalf, in the hope that he would return to the straight path and become an active member of the community," he added. Furthermore, anyone who takes initiative to report such activities to the authorities shall be exempt from punishment in accordance with Article 69 of the law, which concerns informing the authorities about the crime before it was committed. By informing the authorities and coming to the police, the informer has obviously aimed to have the perpetrators retract their crimes and find a solution to combating this crime by getting those involved punished.



Ministry of Defence

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

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| SUMMARY OF ASSETS & LIABILITIES OF M/s. LULU EXCHANGE CO. LLC (MONEY CHANGING ESTABLISHMENT) AS OF 31ST DECEMBER 2021 |            |            |                                            |            |            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|------------|--------------------------------------------|------------|------------|
| (In RO 000's)                                                                                                         |            |            |                                            |            |            |
| ASSETS                                                                                                                | 31.12.2021 | 31.12.2020 | LIABILITIES                                | 31.12.2021 | 31.12.2020 |
| (01) Cash on Hand                                                                                                     | 1,751      | 1,776      | (01) Capital and Reserve                   | 5,336      | 5,318      |
| (02) Deposit with Central Bank of Oman                                                                                | 120        | 120        | (02) Borrowing from Banks                  | 1,515      | 1,525      |
| (03) Precious Metals                                                                                                  | -          | -          | (03) Balances due to Branches              | -          | -          |
| (04) Balances due from Banks                                                                                          | 3,930      | 4,179      | (04) Balances due to Money Changers        | 144        | 35         |
| (05) Balances due from Branches                                                                                       | -          | -          | (05) Loan and Advance Payable              | -          | -          |
| (06) Balances due from Money Changers                                                                                 | -          | -          | (06) Cheques & Drafts issued & outstanding | 4          | 35         |
| (07) Cheques and Draft purchase                                                                                       | -          | -          | (07) Other Liabilities                     | 354        | 311        |
| (08) Loans and Advances                                                                                               | -          | -          |                                            |            |            |
| (09) Investments                                                                                                      | -          | -          |                                            |            |            |
| (10) Fixed Assets                                                                                                     | 475        | 446        |                                            |            |            |
| (11) Other Assets                                                                                                     | 1,077      | 703        |                                            |            |            |
| TOTAL                                                                                                                 | 7,353      | 7,224      |                                            | 7,353      | 7,224      |



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ECONOMIC COOPERATION

## Japan to invest \$42bn in India over next 5 years

**NEW DELHI:** Japan will invest \$42 billion in India over the next five years, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced here on Saturday, accompanied by visiting Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida.

The two noted with appreciation the significant growth in economic cooperation between the two countries.

They expressed satisfaction that the investment target of \$29 billion announced in 2014 had been achieved, said a joint statement issued after their talks.

The joint statement also said that the two welcomed the launch of the India-Japan Clean Energy Partnership for cooperation towards achieving sustainable economic growth, addressing climate

change and ensuring energy security. They also discussed regional and global issues during their talks. Three Memorandums of Understanding were signed on areas such as cyber security, sustainable urban development and wastewater management with a new Japanese technique, said India's Foreign Secretary Harsh Shringla.

— Agencies



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# Egyptian archaeologists discover five ancient tombs in Saqqara

The tombs, which are believed to have housed senior officials from the Old Kingdom and First Intermediate period of ancient Egypt, date back to as long ago as 2700 BC

**CAIRO:** Egypt's Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities presented its recent discoveries on Saturday which include five tombs belonging to a pharaonic necropolis complex at Saqqara, just outside the capital Cairo.

The tombs, which are believed to have housed senior officials from the Old Kingdom and First Intermediate period of ancient Egypt, date back to as long ago as 2700 BC.

Excavations began in September and the most recently discovered tombs were unearthed last month.

"All of those five tombs are well-painted, well-decorated," Mostafa Waziri, head of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, told reporters. "Excavations did not stop. We are planning to continue our ex-

cavations. We believe that we can find more tombs in this area."

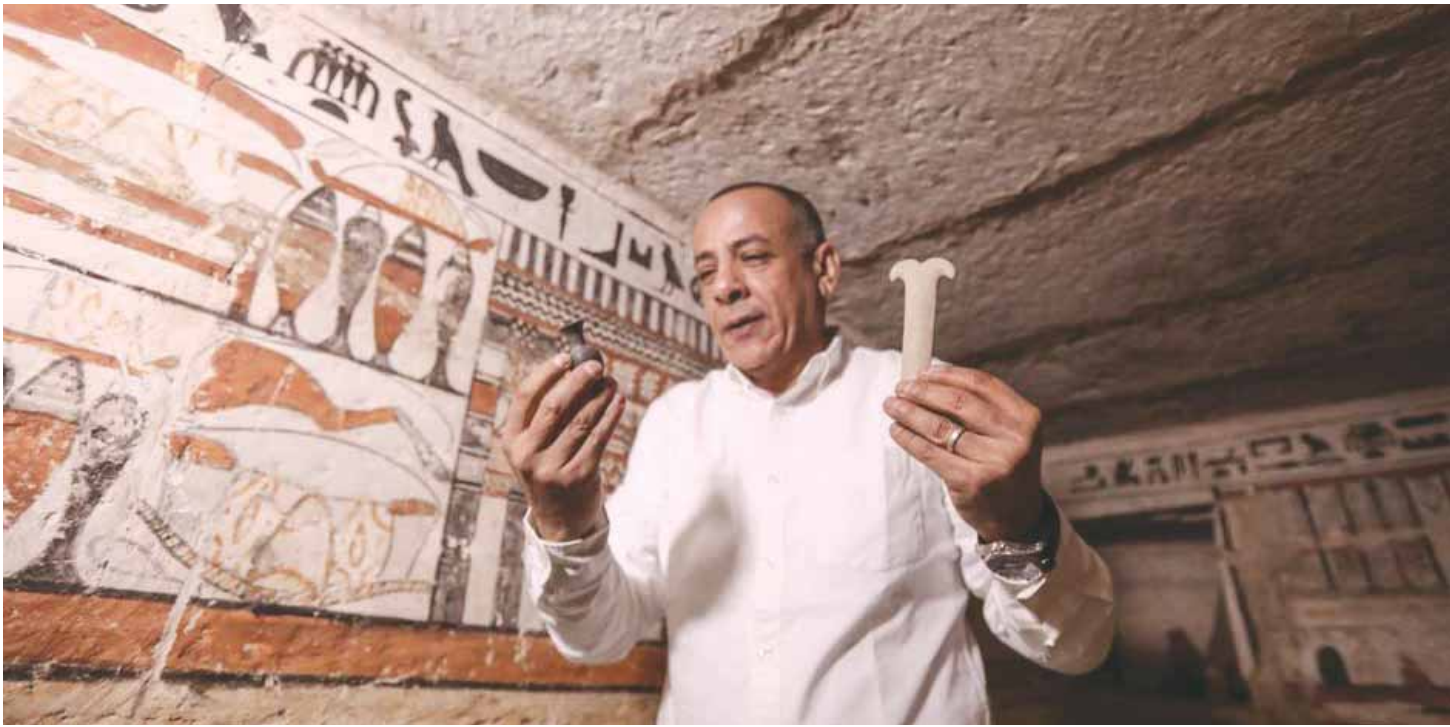
Archaeologists found not only well-preserved paintings, but also small statues and pottery as well as stone and wooden coffins.

The area where the tombs were discovered is rich with ancient Egyptian history. The necropolis is close to the step pyramid of Djoser and not far from the pyramid of King Menrenre I.

It is the location of the ancient capital of Memphis which also includes the famous Giza pyramids. UNESCO designated the array of ruins a World Heritage Site in the 1970s.

The area has provided a plethora of ancient discoveries in recent years.

The pyramids and Egypt's ancient history are a big draw for



**PHARAONIC NECROPOLIS COMPLEX:** Archaeologists found not only well-preserved paintings, but also small statues and pottery as well as stone and wooden coffins. — DW

tourists and so play an important role in the north African country's economy.

The political turmoil and violence that began with the ousting

of former autocratic leader Hosni Mubarak in 2011 have taken a toll on the tourism sector.

The coronavirus pandemic also brought this to a halt, but just as

things began to improve, the Russian invasion of Ukraine struck the country with another blow.

Russia and Ukraine are both key sources of tourists to Egypt. The

country's 100-million strong population is also vulnerable to unstable food prices which have only become worse during the conflict.

— DW

INTERVIEW

## Russia, Ukraine nearing agreement on key issues: Turkey

**ISTANBUL:** Turkey's foreign minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said in an interview published on Sunday that Russia and Ukraine were nearing agreement on 'critical' issues and he was hopeful for a ceasefire if the two sides did not backtrack from progress achieved so far.

Russian forces invaded Ukraine on 24 February 2022. President Vladimir Putin has called Russia's actions a 'special operation' meant to demilitarise Ukraine and purge it of what he sees as dangerous nationalists. Ukraine and the West say Putin launched an aggressive war of choice.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba met in the Turkish resort town of Antalya earlier this month with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu also attending. The discussions did not yield concrete results.

But Cavusoglu, who also travelled to Russia and Ukraine last week for talks with Lavrov and Kuleba, told Turkish daily *Hurriyet* that there had been "rapprochement in the positions of



both sides on important subjects, critical subjects", Reuters news reported.

Meanwhile, Russia's war against Ukraine is entering its fourth week. Apart from the news of fighting and victims, there are reports of talks between the gov-

ernments in Moscow and Kyiv. Having met a few times in person in Belarus, the negotiators are now talking via video link.

While few concrete details have emerged from the negotiations, an article in the British *Financial Times* this week caused a stir.

It said that Russia and Ukraine had made 'significant progress on a tentative peace plan' and were discussing a 15-point draft deal. It reported that the deal involved Kyiv renouncing its ambitions to join NATO and promising

not to host foreign military bases or weaponry in exchange for protection from allies such as the US, UK and Turkey.

### Ukrainian delegates

Ukrainian delegates say that Kyiv needs legally binding commitments, the report said.

Alyona Hetmanchuk, head of the Kyiv-based think tank New Europe Center, said it was an 'absurd' situation. "First, one has to agree to a cease-fire, and then one can conduct concrete negotiations. But this is what it is like today: The more intensive the negotiations are, the more gunfire there is," she said.

She said that the fact that Ukraine was willing to agree to neutral status was its biggest concession. "Not only because NATO membership is one of the goals of the constitution, but because it has the support of an unprecedented majority," she said. She explained that the concession had been linked to security guarantees that would effectively replace Article 5 of the NATO treaty, its principle of collective defence.

— Agencies

SHITALAKSHYA RIVER

## Four dead and several missing after ferry capsizes in Bangladesh

**DHAKA:** At least four people died and dozens remain missing after a ferry capsized in the Shitalakshya river in Bangladesh's Dhaka on Sunday afternoon, according to local media.

The ferry was carrying at least 50 passengers on board sank in the river after it was hit by a cargo vessel at around 2 pm local time, *Dhaka Tribune* reported. One of the deceased has been identified as Joynal Abedin. Three other victims, including two women and a child, could not be identified, as per the media outlet.

The Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) along with the river police, navy and the coast guard have started rescue operations in the area following the accident.

Fire service diving teams are also taking part in the operation.

— ANI



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# WORLD



# Kazakhstan President vows reforms to limit his powers

With an aim to create “New Kazakhstan”, Tokayev presented a programme of comprehensive modernisation based on what he described as long-standing public demand for radical changes

**NUR-SULTAN:** Proposing Constitutional reforms to limit the powers of his office, Kazakhstan’s President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev said central Asian country needs to switch from ‘super presidential’ rule to political modernisation with a focus on the role of citizens in governing the state, including through electoral processes.

Tokayev was elected in 2019 following the resignation of Nur-



**CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS PROPOSED:** Tokayev was elected in 2019 following the resignation of Nursultan Nazarbayev, who stepped down after running the mineral-rich nation for three decades. – DW

sultan Nazarbayev, who stepped down after running the mineral-rich nation for three decades. Nazarbayev this year gave up sweeping powers as the head of the security council and the leader of the ruling party during and after violent unrest in January. In a speech to the country’s Parliament, Tokayev said at the initial

stage of the country’s development, ‘super presidential’ style rule was justified. “But we are not standing still - society is changing, the country is changing. And our political system must constantly adapt to new realities.”

With an aim to create “New Kazakhstan”, Tokayev presented a programme of comprehensive

modernisation based on what he described as long-standing public demand for radical changes.

“Today, literally everything is focused on the President, and this is fundamentally wrong. We need to gradually move away from this practice,” he said in an address titled “New Kazakhstan: The Path of Renewal and Modernisation.”

Emphasizing that long-term interests of the state are more important than additional levers of power, Nazarbayev had said at the January congress of the Amanat party that he will leave the post of chairman.

Tokayev said his main priority as President “has always been” and “will be” the implementation of the reforms needed by the people. “I am absolutely confident that steady progress of the country and large-scale social and economic reforms are impossible without political modernisation. In two and a half years we have achieved substantial results in this direction,” he said.

Speaking about the January unrest, the Kazak President said that the events were the biggest test for the country’s statehood. “We were standing on the edge of a precipice. With one wrong step, we could have lost our state,” he said.

“The investigation into the conspiracy by the security forces and their accomplices continues at an intense pace, and is classified,” he added.

The January unrest was a series of massive protests that began on 2 January after a sudden sharp increase in liquefied gas prices following the lifting of a government-enforced price cap on 1 January. – ANI

## BRIEFS

**Taliban to open high schools for girls next week**  
**KABUL:** The Taliban will allow girls to return to class when high schools open on March 22, ending the uncertainty over whether the Islamic group would allow full access to education for girls. Since the Taliban took control of the country in mid-August last year, it had barred girls from going to schools across Afghanistan.

**North Korea fires multiple rocket launcher**



**SEOUL:** North Korea on Sunday fired a short-range multiple rocket launcher, the South’s military said. It was the latest in a series of weapons tests amid heightened tensions in the region. “This morning there was firing in North Korea which is assumed to be multiple rocket launcher shots, and our military was monitoring the related situation and maintaining a readiness posture,” South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement.

**German minister calls for new EU-US trade deal**

**BERLIN:** German Finance Minister Christian Lindner on Sunday called for a renewed attempt to secure a free trade agreement with the US in the wake of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. “We should resume negotiations,” Lindner told German business daily Handelsblatt. “Especially now with the [Ukraine] crisis, it is becoming clear how important free trade is with partners in the world who share our values.”

**Six dead as car hits crowd in Belgium**



**STRÉPY-BRACQUEGNIES:** Authorities in Belgium said six people had died after a car ploughed into a crowd waiting to attend a carnival in the town of Strépy-Bracquegnies on Sunday. “A car drove from the back at high speed. And we have a few dozen injured and unfortunately several people who are killed,” Jacques Gobert, mayor of the neighboring town La Louvière said. Prosecutor Damien Verheyen said 26 people were injured, 10 were in critical condition. – Agencies

## A ROLE MODEL

### Tanzania’s President Samia Suluhu Hassan a boon for women

**DODOMA:** When Samia Suluhu Hassan became Tanzania’s president a year ago after the sudden death of her predecessor John Magufuli, many women had high hopes.

It wasn’t just President Suluhu Hassan’s enormous potential as a role model — upon her inauguration on March 19, 2021, she became Tanzania’s first female president, as well as the only woman head of state in Africa.

It was also that the late President Magufuli made frequent comments belittling women while supporting policies that curbed their rights. For example, he banned pregnant teenagers from going back to school.

Now, one year on, many women are applauding Suluhu Hassan for her leadership style and promotion of women.

They also praise the president for steering her country out of the economic and health crises triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. Suluhu Hassan has also boosted Tanzania’s regional standing since taking office.

The 62-year-old leader has given Tanzania a diplomatic face-lift after the isolation during the Magufuli era. She has visited several African and European countries and the United Arab Emirates in the past year.

“Issues around economic diplomacy and trade relations have improved so much [under President Suluhu Hassan],” Ugandan human rights and woman’s rights advocate Stella Nyanzi told DW.

This has allowed Tanzania to secure funding and sign contracts for several large projects, including a €178 million (\$196 million) concessional loan for bus rapid transit, financing to refurbish the international airport, and €450 million in EU COVID-19 relief funds, according to the Tanzanian daily, The Citizen.

Under Samia Suluhu Hassan, Tanzania is rapidly opening up to its neighbours.

The country ratified the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) last year, giving Tanzania access to a market of 1.2 billion potential customers.

Just last month, her administration agreed to join the rest of the East African Community in signing a trade deal with the European Union, which Magufuli had previously blocked. Tanzania also recently removed dozens of trade barriers with Kenya. – DW

## MISCHIEVOUS VISITORS

# Farmers use tech solutions to keep away marauding monkeys

**BENGALURU:** Raghavendra Bhat runs an organic farm surrounded by forest just outside the southern Indian city of Bengaluru, the country’s tech capital. When Bhat exchanged his keyboard for a plough in 2014, he didn’t realise he’d have to contend with some mischievous visitors wreaking havoc on his 15-acre (6-hectare) plot.

At first, he didn’t mind the intruders. But then things took a turn for the worse.

“At some point of time, we started getting literally hundreds coming to the banana plantation, and then they started slowly coming to the house, jumping on people,” said Bhat. “That is when we literally felt it’s a menace now, and we need to do something.”

The farmer was facing a monkey onslaught. As the attacks on his orchard surged, he even started to recognise some of the animals individually.

“One of them is without a tail, and he is the leader actually. Every year, he comes with a larger group,” said Bhat.

Farmers are used to pests. But with climate change and human encroachment on wildlife habitats leading to shrinking food supplies, animals are increasingly raiding farms in search of a snack.



Farmers in India are already seeing failed harvests at a time of erratic rainfall, so most cannot afford to lose more of their crops to wild animals.

Bhat, who has a sizeable farm, wonders how small farmers can handle the double whammy of wildlife attacks and climate change. Nearly 90% of his recent pigeon pea harvest rotted due to excess and unseasonal rains.

“Imagine the same thing happening to a small farmer who is just dependent on income from this, because many of them would have taken a loan and he will have to pay it despite the crop losses,” said Bhat. “Now imagine monkeys or any other wild animals damaging the remaining 10%. He won’t be able to even survive the next year.”

To protect their livelihoods, some are using firecrackers, electric fences and even poison on the animals raiding their land. But others, like Bhat, are looking to technology to offer a kinder solution to outwit intelligent visitors like monkeys and elephants.

Bhat loses at least 20% of his revenue to invasions of monkeys and elephants looking for a meal. The losses could have doubled if he hadn’t taken the laborious step of baiting and caging monkeys when the attacks became too much about five years ago. He would lug up to 25 trapped monkeys on his tractor and free them in a forest around 100 kilometres (62 miles) away.

“I don’t mind if they just eat and go,” said Bhat. “Right from bananas to guava to mango to sapota,

they will pluck 10, bite all of them and probably eat one, sometimes none of them.”

In December 2021, a guest staying at Bhat’s farm experienced the monkey menace. He recommended a bioacoustic device that was being tested in northern India to scare away monkeys. The motion-sensing, solar-powered equipment played the roar of lions, tigers, leopards or even gunshots to scare off animals.

Bhat got in touch with SR Ayan of Katidhan, the wildlife tech company that produces it. “How do you change the behaviour of an animal without harming it?” asked Ayan. “It is by attacking its senses.”

Before hitting on the sound device, Ayan’s team tried out a motion-detecting sprinkler that would squirt water on the swinging marauders, but that didn’t have the intended effect. “When we initially started out, the monkey felt a little agitated thinking that the water was coming toward him. But later on it started playing around with it, just within a day or two,” said Ayan.

The team then turned to sound, programming the speaker to play a different noise each week so the monkeys wouldn’t figure out they were being tricked. – DW

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# SPORTS



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MELBOURNE



**FULL PUBLIC SERVICE:** As per an official ICC release, Warne will be given a full public service at his beloved Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) later this month.

## Family, friends bid adieu to Warne at private funeral

**MELBOURNE:** A host of former teammates and international stars were among those present to bid farewell to former Australia spinner Shane Warne at a private funeral in Melbourne on Sunday. Warne tragically died from a heart attack at the age of 52 earlier this month.

As per an official ICC release, Warne will be given a full public service at his beloved Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) later this month, but approximately 80 of

his nearest and dearest friends and family were in Melbourne on Sunday to pay their respect.

Former England captain Michael Vaughan was in attendance, while Australian stars Glenn McGrath, Merv Hughes, Ian Healy and Mark Waugh were among a group of his former teammates also at the private event. A group of former Australia Test captains also attended with Allan Border, Mark Taylor and Michael Clarke among a group of

Warne's closest friends that paid their respect to the Victorian.

Warne's public service on March 30 is expected to attract a large crowd at the MCG, a venue which Warne made his own over his 15-year international career.

Warne famously claimed his 700th Test wicket at the ground on Boxing Day in 2006 when he dismissed England captain Andrew Strauss and finished his career with 56 Test wickets at the iconic venue. **-ANI**

PREMIER LEAGUE

## Saka fires Arsenal to win over Aston Villa

**LONDON:** Bukayo Saka scored Arsenal's 2,000th Premier League goal as they earned a tense 1-0 win over Aston Villa at Villa Park.

Arsenal's bright start was rewarded on the half-hour when Saka fired in from the edge of the area after Villa had failed to clear a set-piece. It made Arsenal the third team to reach the 2,000-goal landmark after Manchester United and Liverpool. Villa pressed for an equaliser after the break and the closest they came was on 68 minutes, when Ollie Watkins' shot deflected off Kieran Tierney and hit the near post.

A fifth consecutive away win for the first time since 2015 takes fourth-placed Arsenal four points clear of Manchester United, with 54 points. Villa are ninth with 36 points.

Manuel Neuer has created a new Bundesliga record for most top-flight wins, pulling clear of former goalkeeping great Oliver Kahn on 311 victories after Bayern Munich's 4-0 triumph over Union Berlin.

Neuer, 35, brought up the record number as Bayern overpowered Union on Match day 27, making a number of good saves to bring up another milestone: his 150th clean sheet for the Reds in the Bundesliga. Win number 311 came on the nine-time champion's 460th appearance in Germany. **-ANI**

ISLAMIC SOLIDARITY SPORTS GAMES

## OOC takes part in Turkey meetings



Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) participated in the coordination meetings held in Konya, Turkey. It will host the 5th Islamic Solidarity Sports Games, from August 9-18 this year.

OOC was represented in the meetings by Hisham bin Salem Al-Adwani, Chef de Mission, and Hana bint Saeed Al-Batashiya, head of the coordination and following-up department and the

responsible for the procedures for registering Oman sports missions in foreign sports tournaments.

The delegations toured the sites of the competitions and the Olympic Village, the sports facilities and the coordination meetings were attended by the delegation managers from all the countries that will participate in the competition to clarify many important points and the sequence procedures to be done before the start, the system, the mechanism for registering sports delegations and other topics.



FIRST ROUND

## Mumbai Stars, Muscat Thunder move into second round

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** Mumbai Stars, Muscat Thunders, Kingsmen CC and Renaissance Rangers registered win in the first round of the Grand cricket T10 Challenge Cup tournament organised by the Grand Global Investment (GGI) at the Al Hail Cricket Club grounds recently.

Mumbai Stars thrashed Darsait XI by nine wickets and Muscat Thunders beat NEI Warriors by five wickets on March 11 to advance into the second round.

On March 12, Kingsmen CC



prevailed over Petrofac XI by eight wickets and Renaissance Rangers defeated Misfah Strikers by 50 runs to move into next round.

In other matches on March 11, Sunshine International posted a nine-wicket win over ISWK, KCA easily beat Pakistan XI by nine wickets, Michael XI thumped Rising Phoenix by 10 wickets, Kingfisher Cricketers registered a 29-run win over AKCT and Kalinga Warriors came better against RC Melco by six runs.

Matteo XI beat Aster Hospital by 24 runs and United Friends Club posted a 16-run win against

Boom Boom CC in the other matches of the Challenge Cup on March 12.

Chief organiser Ali Humaid al Alawi, Chairman of Grand Global Investment, said the matches were intense and congratulated the winning teams.

**Intense competition**

"Since all matches were knock-out we witnessed very intense competition between the teams," Ali said.

In the women's Cup, Indian Social Club Oman claimed the opening win in the round-robin tour-

nament by beating Wadi Kabir Women by 14 runs on March 12.

In the other matches, Sunshine International beat Seema Dance Academy by 10 runs, Wadi Kabir Women thumped Aster Women by 59 runs and Seema Dance Academy beat Aster Women by 12 runs.

Tournament technical director Sanjit Kanooja appreciated CGI CEO Ali al Alawi's efforts to promote the local cricket, especially women's tournament.

"Despite the challenges, we have brought together five women's teams on the field. This is a great effort from Ali al Alawi," Sanjit said.



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# MARKET

## BUSINESS & FINANCE



### MSX INDEX ENDS LOWER

The MSX index closed at 4,314.88 points, down by 0.02 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.11 per cent at 491.25 points. Voltamp Energy, up 4.35 per cent, was the top gainer while, United Finance, down 2.44 per cent, was the top loser

# Construction of new solar-powered integrated inspection facility begins

A groundbreaking ceremony was held, marking the start of construction of the new \$30 million project as part of the terminal development plans to enhance the inspection services for inbound and outbound containers

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** Hutchison Ports Sohar held a groundbreaking ceremony, marking the start of construction on its new solar-powered integrated inspection facility project.

In attendance at the ceremony was Eng. Khamis Al Shamakhi, Undersecretary of Ministry of Transport, Muhna Al Lawatia, General Manager of Ports at Ministry of Transport, Abdullah Al Hadabi, General Manager at Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MoAFWR) and delegates from Customs, Mark Geilenkirchen, CEO of Sohar Port and the management team of Hutchison Ports Sohar.

The new \$30 million project will



**ENHANCED SECURITY MEASURES:** The inspection facility will further support Oman Customs and other related authorities to seamlessly turnover the inspection with enhanced security measures under the Sultanate of Oman's Logistics Strategy 2040. - Supplied picture

be a part of the terminal development plans to enhance the inspection services for inbound and outbound containers. The integrated inspection facility will further support Oman Customs and other related authorities to seamlessly turnover the inspection with enhanced security measures under the Sultanate of Oman's Logistics Strategy (SOLS) 2040.

Al Shamakhi said that such an initiative by the company illustrates a true partnership by the company with the government

to facilitate smoother and timely handling and clearance of goods, additionally, adopting new simplified processes and standards will improve and facilitate world-class operations of the port.

**Logistics performance**

"We are looking forward to seeing its impact and that such project is implemented in other ports. It will also result in improvements to our domestic and global logistics performance as per the Logistics Performance Index and its

key dimensions."

This project is designed to accelerate the process of customs inspection through high standard services, and it will ease the process of releasing the goods from the container terminal.

In addition, by using the X-ray container scanners, the new project will help our inspectors to distinguish between those containers with high risk and low risk, Colonel Said Al Ghaithi, Director General of Customs, Royal Oman Police commented.

The project will be spread across a total area of 37,000 sqm within the Terminal C premises and is expected to complete by mid of 2023. Once ready, it is set to be the largest and first integrated one-stop-shop for all the relevant government authorities to handle the clearance in the Sultanate.

Geilenkirchen said, "Hutchison Ports Sohar is one of Sohar's biggest success stories and we are delighted with the progress the company has made.

"The new facility in the terminal

will be vital in attracting world-class tenants to the complex and improving customer experience and satisfaction. This will continue to create an environment where business can thrive and contribute to the ongoing development of the national economy."

"This integrated inspection facility project will be transformative for the clearance process but more importantly, it will significantly expand terminal's ability to serve the growing community needs through a superior one-stop-shop service station," Anacin Kum, CEO of Hutchison Ports Sohar said.

The inspection facility will be temperature-controlled and outfitted with cargo scanners at the inspection platforms. Out of the 66 container inspection bays, a dedicated section of about 1/3 of the total inspection facility will be reserved for refrigerated and foodstuff inspection. The three X-ray container scanner portal units and Container Radiation Monitor System will be integrated with the security control system for scanning containers. The project also has a reserved area for a safe and clean laboratory testing process to ensure food safety control on the growing imports and exports in the country.

With the focus on Oman Vision 2040, we strive to continue contributing with our investments towards the growth of Oman's logistics sector. In our conscious efforts to support the sustainability goals of the country, a solar energy system will be installed on the new infrastructure, existing buildings and car parking areas which will result in a reduction of approximately 5,000 tonnes of CO2 emissions per year.

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MARKET

MSX index ends lower

Voltamp Energy, up 4.35 per cent, was the top gainer while, United Finance, down 2.44 per cent, was the top loser

**MUSCAT:** The MSX index closed at 4,314.88 points, down by 0.02 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.11 per cent at 491.25 points. Voltamp Energy, up 4.35 per cent, was the top gainer while, United Finance, down 2.44 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of Bank Muscat were the most active in terms of the number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 409 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating a turnover of OMR3.2 million, with more than 9.7 million shares changing hands. Out of 30 traded securities, 8 advanced, 7 declined and 15 remained unchanged. At the session close, GCC & Arab investors were net buyers for OMR192,000 while domestic investors were net sellers for OMR135,000 followed by foreign investors for OMR57,000 worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 6948.43 points, was down 0.33 per cent. The price of Bank Muscat was up by 0.36 per cent.

Prices of United Finance, Ominvest, Oman Arab Bank, Al Madina Takaful, and Sohar International Bank were down by 2.44 per cent, 1.79 per cent, 1.43 per cent, 1.03 per cent, and 0.86 per cent respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 6012.79 points, was up 0.29 per cent. Prices of Voltamp Energy, National Aluminium, Jazeera Steel Products, Al Anwar Ceramics, and Al Maha Ceramics were up by 4.35 per cent, 2.41 per cent, 0.94 per cent, 0.44 per cent, and 0.4 per cent respectively. Prices of Oman Fisheries, Oman Ceramics, Gulf Stones, Al Hassan Engineering, and Abrasives Manufacturing were down by 1.14 per cent, 0 per cent, 0 per cent, 0 per cent, and 0 per cent respectively.

— United Securities

CAPITAL MARKET AUTHORITY



CMA meeting focuses on Moroccan experience in green sustainable financing

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** An official meeting was held between the Capital Market Authority, the Moroccan Capital Market Authority and several related entities in Oman to discuss ways of cooperation and exchange of expertise in the field of green and sustainable financing.

It focused on the Moroccan experience in regulating green financing products as green and sustainable financing is a vital matter to achieve the objects of sustainable development, Oman Vision 2040, and striking balance

between the economic objects, natural resources and environmental requirements to preserve the sustainability of the vital resources and enhancing their proceeds financially and socially for the longest possible term.

The meeting reviewed the Moroccan experience and acquainted with the key legislative and technical areas for such financing products besides the discussion of the economic feasibility of offering green bonds and Sukuk, as well as the key requirements and needs to launch such products in the Omani capital market.

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EXCHANGE

INDICES

| Index             | High     | Low      | Value    | Prev. Value | Diff   | Diff% |
|-------------------|----------|----------|----------|-------------|--------|-------|
| MSX 30 INDEX      | 4,325.42 | 4,314.88 | 4,314.88 | 4,315.79    | -0.91  | -0.02 |
| FINANCIAL INDEX   | 6,979.79 | 6,948.42 | 6,948.42 | 6,971.63    | -23.21 | -0.33 |
| Industry Index    | 6,014.39 | 5,995.30 | 6,012.78 | 5,995.30    | 17.49  | 0.29  |
| Services Index    | 1,632.00 | 1,627.94 | 1,632.00 | 1,627.94    | 4.06   | 0.25  |
| MSX Shariah Index | 491.25   | 490.20   | 491.25   | 490.71      | 0.54   | 0.11  |
| MSX TR INDEX      | 5,211.00 | 5,198.29 | 5,198.29 | 5,199.39    | -1.10  | -0.02 |

Trading Summary

| Volume    | Turnover  | Trades | Market Cap     | Up | Down | Equal | Sec. Traded |
|-----------|-----------|--------|----------------|----|------|-------|-------------|
| 9,706,440 | 3,210,137 | 409    | 22,302,538,191 | 8  | 7    | 15    | 30          |

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR SUNDAY, MARCH 20

| ISIN | SECURITY NAME | VOLUME | TURNOVER | TRADES | OPEN PRICE | HIGH | LOW | CLOSE PR. | PREV. CLOSE | DIFF (RD) | DIFF % | LAST PR. | LAST BID | LAST OFFER | PR. VALUE | MARKET CAP |
|------|---------------|--------|----------|--------|------------|------|-----|-----------|-------------|-----------|--------|----------|----------|------------|-----------|------------|
|------|---------------|--------|----------|--------|------------|------|-----|-----------|-------------|-----------|--------|----------|----------|------------|-----------|------------|

REGULAR MARKET

|              |                     |           |           |     |       |       |       |       |       |        |        |       |       |       |       |               |
|--------------|---------------------|-----------|-----------|-----|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------------|
| OM0000003968 | OOREDOO             | 392,674   | 135,874   | 23  | 0.346 | 0.348 | 0.346 | 0.346 | 0.340 | 0.006  | 1.765  | 0.348 | 0.346 | 0.348 | 0.100 | 225,225,704   |
| OM0000002176 | JAZEERA STEEL PROD. | 615,210   | 264,578   | 52  | 0.432 | 0.432 | 0.428 | 0.430 | 0.426 | 0.004  | 0.939  | 0.432 | 0.430 | 0.440 | 0.100 | 53,706,123    |
| OM0000003224 | RENAISSANCE SER.    | 398,554   | 173,766   | 15  | 0.436 | 0.436 | 0.430 | 0.436 | 0.432 | 0.004  | 0.926  | 0.436 | 0.436 | 0.474 | 0.100 | 103,074,760   |
| OM0000002168 | AL ANWAR CERAMIC    | 1,089,000 | 500,940   | 22  | 0.460 | 0.460 | 0.460 | 0.460 | 0.458 | 0.002  | 0.437  | 0.460 | 0.460 | 0.460 | 0.100 | 101,200,000   |
| OM0000005005 | ALMAHA CERAMICS     | 237,000   | 118,500   | 7   | 0.500 | 0.500 | 0.500 | 0.500 | 0.498 | 0.002  | 0.402  | 0.500 | 0.494 | 0.500 | 0.100 | 27,500,000    |
| OM0000002796 | BANK MUSCAT         | 2,477,211 | 1,389,592 | 33  | 0.556 | 0.556 | 0.546 | 0.552 | 0.550 | 0.002  | 0.364  | 0.550 | 0.548 | 0.550 | 0.100 | 1,973,110,085 |
| OM0000001525 | OMAN INVST&FIN      | 7,000     | 1,029     | 1   | 0.147 | 0.147 | 0.147 | 0.147 | 0.147 | 0.000  | 0.000  | 0.147 | 0.136 | 0.147 | 0.100 | 34,839,000    |
| OM0000001772 | ALANWAR INVESTMENT  | 195,000   | 16,575    | 10  | 0.085 | 0.085 | 0.085 | 0.085 | 0.085 | 0.000  | 0.000  | 0.085 | 0.085 | 0.085 | 0.100 | 17,000,000    |
| OM0000000200 | AHLI BANK           | 1,000     | 122       | 1   | 0.122 | 0.122 | 0.122 | 0.124 | 0.124 | 0.000  | 0.000  | 0.122 | 0.122 | 0.127 | 0.100 | 241,757,526   |
| OM0000000240 | AL SHARQIA INV.     | 50,000    | 4,250     | 1   | 0.085 | 0.085 | 0.085 | 0.085 | 0.085 | 0.000  | 0.000  | 0.085 | 0.080 | 0.085 | 0.100 | 7,650,000     |
| OM0000003026 | OMAN TELECOM        | 255,200   | 221,509   | 10  | 0.868 | 0.868 | 0.864 | 0.868 | 0.868 | 0.000  | 0.000  | 0.864 | 0.848 | 0.872 | 0.100 | 651,000,000   |
| OM0000003398 | SOHAR INT. BANK     | 510,500   | 59,448    | 11  | 0.116 | 0.118 | 0.114 | 0.116 | 0.117 | -0.001 | -0.855 | 0.115 | 0.110 | 0.120 | 0.100 | 346,847,226   |
| OM0000001533 | OMINVEST            | 164,132   | 54,241    | 25  | 0.336 | 0.336 | 0.330 | 0.330 | 0.336 | -0.006 | -1.786 | 0.330 | 0.330 | 0.330 | 0.100 | 220,560,591   |
| Total        | 13                  | 6,392,481 | 2,920,424 | 211 |       |       |       |       |       |        |        |       |       |       |       |               |

Parallel Market

|              |                   |           |         |     |       |       |       |       |       |        |        |       |       |       |       |             |
|--------------|-------------------|-----------|---------|-----|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------------|
| OM0000003661 | VOLTAMP ENERGY    | 281,500   | 33,729  | 26  | 0.117 | 0.126 | 0.117 | 0.120 | 0.115 | 0.005  | 4.348  | 0.122 | 0.122 | 0.126 | 0.100 | 9,768,330   |
| OM0000001319 | ALUMINIUM PROD.   | 344,126   | 29,260  | 32  | 0.085 | 0.087 | 0.084 | 0.085 | 0.083 | 0.002  | 2.410  | 0.084 | 0.084 | 0.084 | 0.100 | 2,853,573   |
| OM0000001095 | DHOFAR INSURANCE  | 10,000    | 1,810   | 1   | 0.181 | 0.181 | 0.181 | 0.181 | 0.181 | 0.000  | 0.000  | 0.181 | 0.181 | 0.196 | 0.100 | 18,100,000  |
| OM0000001681 | OMAN EMIRATES HO. | 644,545   | 45,123  | 24  | 0.070 | 0.071 | 0.070 | 0.070 | 0.070 | 0.000  | 0.000  | 0.071 | 0.068 | 0.071 | 0.100 | 8,531,250   |
| OM0000003233 | SALALAH PORT SR.  | 5,000     | 2,750   | 1   | 0.550 | 0.550 | 0.550 | 0.560 | 0.560 | 0.000  | 0.000  | 0.550 | 0.538 | 0.600 | 0.100 | 100,708,944 |
| OM0000003521 | GALFAR ENGINEER   | 378,500   | 27,177  | 27  | 0.072 | 0.073 | 0.071 | 0.072 | 0.072 | 0.000  | 0.000  | 0.071 | 0.071 | 0.072 | 0.100 | 14,615,024  |
| OM0000003711 | SOHAR POWER       | 1,022     | 42      | 1   | 0.041 | 0.041 | 0.041 | 0.043 | 0.043 | 0.000  | 0.000  | 0.041 | 0.000 | 0.041 | 0.100 | 9,503,430   |
| OM0000004420 | BANK NIZWA        | 377,280   | 37,351  | 12  | 0.099 | 0.099 | 0.099 | 0.099 | 0.099 | 0.000  | 0.000  | 0.099 | 0.099 | 0.099 | 0.100 | 221,458,350 |
| OM0000004925 | ALBATINAH POWER   | 115,000   | 5,615   | 7   | 0.049 | 0.049 | 0.048 | 0.049 | 0.049 | 0.000  | 0.000  | 0.048 | 0.048 | 0.049 | 0.100 | 33,069,484  |
| OM0000004933 | AL SUWADI POWER   | 141,700   | 6,943   | 12  | 0.049 | 0.049 | 0.049 | 0.049 | 0.049 | 0.000  | 0.000  | 0.049 | 0.048 | 0.049 | 0.100 | 35,005,911  |
| OM0000005963 | PHOENIX POWER     | 7,293     | 351     | 3   | 0.049 | 0.049 | 0.048 | 0.048 | 0.048 | 0.000  | 0.000  | 0.048 | 0.048 | 0.049 | 0.100 | 70,204,870  |
| OM0000001152 | OMAN NAT. ENG.    | 207,989   | 23,543  | 16  | 0.114 | 0.114 | 0.113 | 0.113 | 0.114 | -0.001 | -0.877 | 0.113 | 0.113 | 0.113 | 0.100 | 14,690,000  |
| OM0000004768 | MADINA TAKAFUL    | 615,004   | 59,072  | 22  | 0.097 | 0.097 | 0.096 | 0.096 | 0.097 | -0.001 | -1.031 | 0.096 | 0.096 | 0.096 | 0.100 | 16,800,000  |
| OM0000001566 | OMAN FISHERIES    | 47,000    | 4,076   | 6   | 0.088 | 0.088 | 0.085 | 0.087 | 0.088 | -0.001 | -1.138 | 0.085 | 0.085 | 0.087 | 0.100 | 10,875,000  |
| OM0000005260 | OMAN ARAB BANK    | 42,000    | 5,784   | 6   | 0.137 | 0.138 | 0.137 | 0.138 | 0.140 | -0.002 | -1.429 | 0.137 | 0.136 | 0.137 | 0.100 | 230,375,880 |
| OM0000002374 | UNITED FINANCE    | 80,000    | 6,400   | 1   | 0.080 | 0.080 | 0.080 | 0.080 | 0.082 | -0.002 | -2.439 | 0.080 | 0.080 | 0.085 | 0.100 | 27,931,553  |
| Total        | 16                | 3,297,959 | 289,025 | 197 |       |       |       |       |       |        |        |       |       |       |       |             |

OMANI PRODUCTS EXHIBITION

Lulu kicks off mega campaign to promote 'Made in Oman' products

**MUSCAT:** Lulu Oman has launched a campaign to promote 'Made in Oman' products. The campaign to 'Think Buy and Go Local' was flagged off at Lulu Hypermarket in Mall of Muscat yesterday, under the patronage of Hilal bin Hamad Al Hasani, CEO of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn).

The campaign aims to promote Made in Oman products in the local markets and boost their consumption rate. It also introduces customers to national products in local and international markets as Omani products are always a preferred option for those who look for quality and excellence. By promoting local products, Lulu intends to support SMEs, open up job opportunities for locals and create added value for the national economy.

Ananth A V, Director of Lulu Hypermarkets Oman & India, stated, "The campaign is an excellent step towards marketing 'Made in Oman' products. It is one of Lulu's promotional campaigns that contribute to support local businesses, boost sales of Omani manufacturers, maintain better returns for the national economy, as well as contribute to providing direct and indirect job opportunities for locals."

"This campaign is in line with our commitment towards the society and an important step in our efforts to enable customers to 'Think Buy and Go Local'. This is also an initiative to encourage entrepreneurs to develop their business, market their products and encourage consumers to buy locally produced goods," he added.

"Promoting and generating awareness on the locally-manufactured products is one of the key objectives of Madayn to further attract investments and localise projects in its various industrial cities. This exhibition, which features over 100 Omani products, coincides with the active commercial movement as the blessed month of Ramadan is approaching," said



Abdullatif Al Ajmi, Marketing and Promotion Supervisor at Madayn's Omani Products Department.

Al Ajmi added, "Madayn is undertaking significant efforts to ensure the presence of Omani products in local and foreign markets, and solve any obstacles that may face importers, exporters or consumers in cooperation with the Sultanate's public and private bodies. Moreover, several Omani products exhibitions will be organised locally and abroad in the coming period in cooperation with other government bodies."

Shabeer K A, Regional Director - Lulu Hypermarkets, Oman,

stated "Choosing local products is considered a national responsibility of each individual toward enhancing the purchasing power and increasing the production of local firms. Lulu has always demonstrated its commitment towards promoting Oman-made products in all its stores through such platforms. These campaigns help in spreading awareness about the positive effect of purchasing Omani products in supporting the national economy."

All Lulu outlets have been stocked up with a wide range of local products for customers to pick up during the pre-Ramadan shopping season. The promotion of Omani products is happening along with other offers and discounts coinciding with Ramadan shopping. This year, Lulu has introduced a first-of-its kind 'Shop and Win' promotion offering OMR100,000 worth cash prizes. There is a grand prize of OMR10,000 and weekly prizes of OMR5000 and more.

For the pre-Ramadan shopping, Lulu has stocked up on all essential items such as food and beverages, sweets, coffee, spices, nuts, milk and dairy products, and other miscellaneous products. Omani products enjoy excellent reputation and are marked by their high quality and standards.

DATA

China's cargo, container throughput rises in first two months

**BEIJING:** China's ports recorded growth of cargo throughput in the first two months of the year amid the country's steady economic recovery, data from the Ministry of Transport showed. Cargo throughput at ports came in at 2.36 billion tonnes in the two-month period, up 2.7 per cent year on year, the ministry said.

**TEUs**

During the first two months, container handling volume at China's ports expanded by 2.9 percent from a year ago to 43.6 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs). Last month, China's ports handled 1.06 billion tonnes of cargo, while container throughput stood at 19.44 million TEUs, according to the ministry. — XINHUA

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# EARLY ENGLISH LESSONS HAVE LONG-TERM BENEFITS

A research team has examined how English lessons in primary school affect language proficiency in secondary school. The findings of the study were published in the journal 'System'.

Children who started learning English in the first grade of the primary school performed significantly better in listening and reading comprehension in grade nine than children who started in grade three.

The study was a continuation of an earlier paper that had only covered the period up to the seventh grade and couldn't find any such learning advantage.

The study included data from around 3,000 students who participated in a longitudinal study conducted in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany, between 2010 and 2014. The same data had also been used in the previous study, the results of which the researchers had published in 2017.

At that time, they had compared

two cohorts, one of which had started English lessons in grade one, the other in grade three. In grades five and seven, they had compared both cohorts in terms of English reading and listening comprehension. The new analysis incorporated another set of data collected in 2016 to measure the English performance of the same children in grade nine.

The previous study had found: Children who had started English lessons earlier in primary school performed worse in reading and

listening comprehension in grade seven than children who had not started English lessons until grade three. However, the new analysis showed: In grade nine, the early starters in English performed better than the late starters in English.

Additional background variables such as gender, the language of origin or cognitive abilities could not account for the difference between the poorer performance in the seventh grade and the late learning gains in the ninth grade.

"We believe the most plausible explanation is that lessons following the transition period in secondary school have been increasingly adapted to the needs of children who start to take English lessons at an early stage," concluded Nils Jakel, formerly at RUB, now at the University of Oulu. "This explanation is in line with research that considers the transition between school types to play a key role in the long-term success of English language education across school boundaries."

With this in mind, it is crucial to optimise the didactic coordination and alignment of English classes at the intersection of school types. In addition, it may be that pupils benefit in the long run from more implicit language lessons in primary school.

"We see a high need for research to elaborate factors for successful language education, and we recommend well-coordinated, evidence-based measures in educational policy overall," said the researchers. -ANI

**We see a high need for research to elaborate factors for successful language education, and we recommend well-coordinated, evidence-based measures in educational policy overall**



THE WORLD IN PICTURES



**People rest at temporary settlement site near Mariupol, Ukraine**  
People rest at a temporary settlement site near Mariupol, Ukraine. *xinhua*



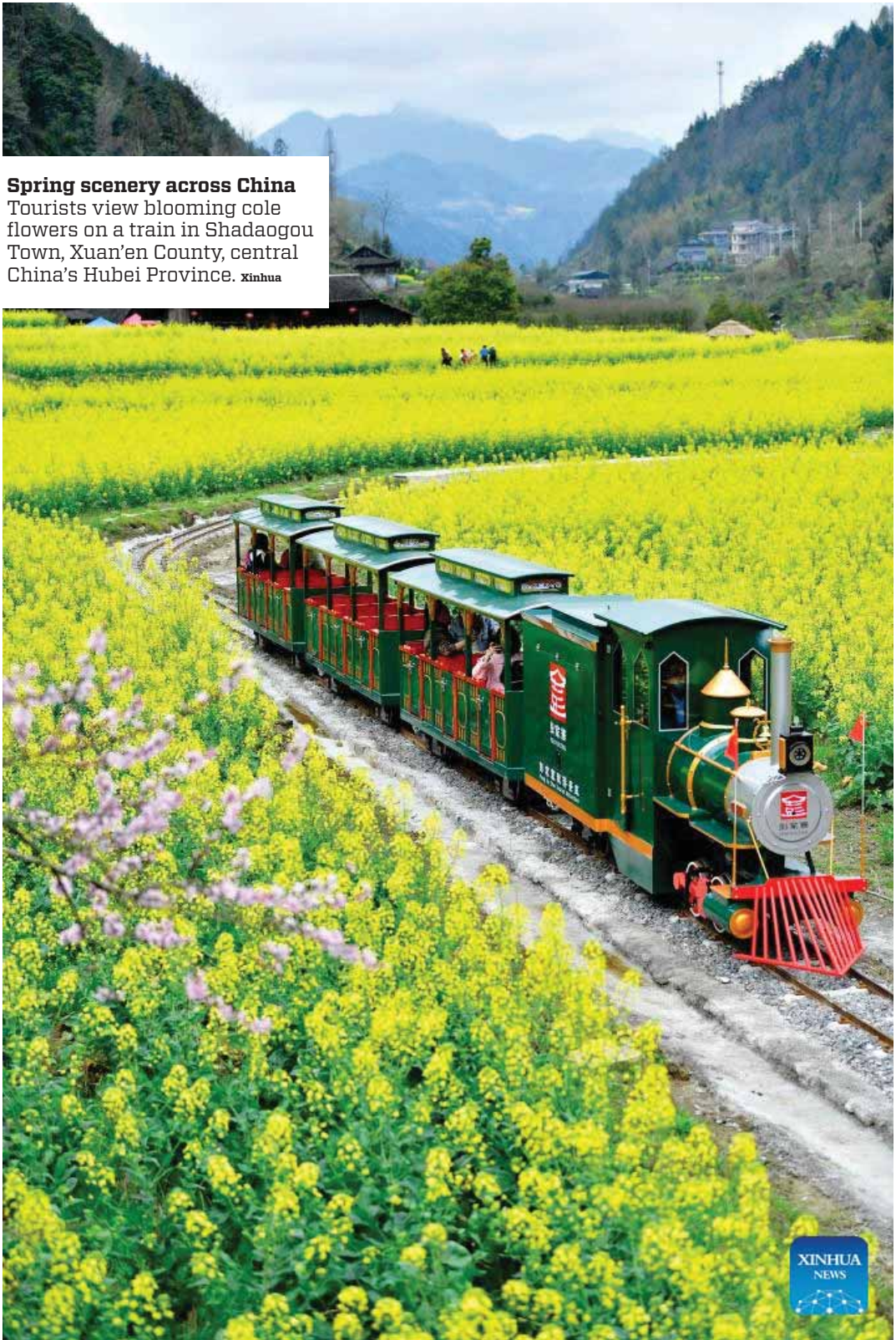
**Nucleic testing base helps enhance testing capability in Tianjin**  
Staff members analyse sample data at a nucleic testing base in Hebei District of Tianjin, north China. The base has a maximum daily testing capability of 15,000 tubes of 150,000 samples. *xinhua*



**17th annual Celtic Festival held in Vancouver**  
A man performs with bubbles during the 17th annual Celtic Festival in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. *xinhua*



**Artisanal Creation exhibition held in Tunisia**  
A man paints with a soldering iron on a wooden board during the Artisanal Creation exhibition at the Kram Exhibition Center in Tunis, Tunisia. The exhibition is held here from March 18 to March 27, in order to encourage the development of local handicrafts. *xinhua*



**Spring scenery across China**  
Tourists view blooming cole flowers on a train in Shadaogou Town, Xuan'en County, central China's Hubei Province. *xinhua*



**Highlight of Cape Town Carnival**  
A man performs during the Cape Town Carnival in Cape Town, South Africa. The annual carnival returned to the city on Saturday in a new form after a two-year break due to COVID-19. *xinhua*

ROUND-UP

# Toyota unveils enticing ‘Biggest Excitement’ campaign in Oman

Get service from 2 years/20,000km up to 8 years/80,000km (whichever is earlier), 1 year insurance or cash gift instead of insurance OMR125 to OMR450, in addition to many other benefits



**MUSCAT:** The best time to own a Toyota is here! Toyota has unveiled its ‘Biggest Excitement’ campaign in Oman. Get service from 2 years/20,000 km up to 8 years/80,000 km (whichever is earlier), 1 year insurance or cash gift instead of insurance OMR 125 to OMR 450, Grand Raffle Toyota Supra. Customers also get a chance to Scratch and Win Laptop, iPhone 13, Fuel Card, Apple Watch Series 5. Additionally get a chance to Walk-in and Win Apple Airpod 2 and Apple Watch Series 5. The campaign is valid until May 19.

(Prospective buyers may be advised that the benefits vary between model variants, model year and manufacturing year. Terms & Conditions apply. Visit the showroom for exact details.) In Oman, the Toyota range includes the Yaris. Delivering a dynamic driving experience, the Yaris sedan and Yaris Hatchback is equipped with a 1.5L engine. The 1.5-Litre four-cylinder engine can churn out a maximum output of 106 hp and 14.3 kg-m of torque and is mated to the CVT transmission to offer a smooth shifting experience with excellent fuel efficiency.

The Toyota Corolla – the popular choice of people around the world has been developed from a driver and passenger’s point of view first. The Corolla is also available in a Hybrid option. **Stylish** The sleek and stylish Toyota Camry has been one of the best-sellers. Equipped with a range of exciting features, technology and more, the Camry is also available in 2.5L, 3.5L and Hybrid options. The Toyota Avalon is a statement of luxury. It is equipped with a 3.5L V6 Engine, LED Headlamps

with Adaptive Cornering Lamps, Premium Leather Seat Material, 9” Navigation System with 14 JBL Speakers, Head-Up Display, Toyota Safety Sense and more. In the SUV range, customers can choose from the C-HR. The C-HR represents a leap forward in design, manufacturing and engineering for Toyota. The C-HR offers impressive fuel economy with 23.9 Kms/L as per GSO Conformity Certificate and carries a Hybrid battery warranty of 8 Years/160,000km. The Highlander offers an impressive fuel economy of 20

Kms/L (GLE Grade) & 19.3 Kms/L (LTD Grade) as per GSO Conformity Certificate and comes with 8 Years/160,000km Hybrid Battery Warranty. The sporty and stylish RAV4 ticks all the boxes when it comes to enjoying extraordinary moments. The RAV4 includes features like 19” Alloy Wheels, LED Headlamps & DRL, Power Back Door, Wide Moonroof, 7” TFT Multi-Information Display, Wireless Charger (Qi-Enabled) and more. The Fortuner is equipped with 4.0L, V6 Engine, 18” Alloy Wheels, LED Projector Headlamps with

DRL, Navigation System, Power & Ventilated Driver & Front Passenger Seats, Power Back Door and more. The powerful and capable Prado includes 4.0L, V6 Engine, LED Headlamps & Fog Lamp, 9” Navigation System, Ventilated Front Seats, Moonroof, Airbags: Driver + Front Passenger + Curtain + Side (Front) + Knee (Driver) and more. The pride of the land – the Land Cruiser is a symbol of strength, durability and reliability. Rugged yet luxurious, the Land Cruiser delivers high-end performance and advanced off-roading capabilities and safety features.

FIELD VISITS



## University of Buraimi organises visits to schools in Al Buraimi

**MUSCAT:** The University of Buraimi organised several field visits for 12th graders in Al Buraimi governorate schools in cooperation with the Career Guidance and Counselling Department in Al Buraimi Directorate of Education. Visits included the following schools: Azan bin Qais School, Amna bint Imam Jaber School, Sultan Qaboos School, Al Sultana School, Yazeed bin Al-Muhalab School, Zainab bint Khuzaima School, Al Meqdad bin Amr School, Malik bin Anass School, Hudifa bin Muhsan School, Um Thar School, Hafeet School, AISinaina School and Wadi Al Heyoul School. The field programme, which was implemented by the Department of Media and Marketing in cooperation with the Admission and Registration Department at the University of Buraimi, lasted for two weeks. It aimed at giving students information about the University of Buraimi and its scientific programs, facilities and services provided to students. These visits come as a contribution from UoB to society to en-

able school students to make the best decision for their academic goals and future careers. The visiting team also answered the students’ questions and inquiries. Notably, the University of Buraimi has four faculties: Commerce, Engineering, Health Sciences and Law, and offers 21 majors which award master’s degrees, bachelor’s degrees, higher diplomas and diplomas. Commendably, the university offers some unique programs not offered in the local community such as Optometry. UoB also makes it a high priority to give employees and staff opportunities to complete their postgraduate studies by providing suitable timings for the master’s programmes. Thus, some of these programs are offered at weekends, twice a month. UoB is currently offering (5) master’s programs, i.e. Cybersecurity, Engineering Management, Business Administration, as well as master’s of Public Administration and Private Law. The latter two programs are taught in Arabic.

INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY

## MySchool celebrates International Mathematics Day

**MUSCAT:** MySchool International’s scholars celebrated International Mathematics Day with great enthusiasm, and glorified the importance of this field in human life. The main purpose of this event, which took place on March 14, 2022, was to tap into students’ interest in mathematics and encourage them to pursue their studies in this regard. During her inaugural address to the students, Samia Al Balushi, the MySchool principal, delivered her motivational speech and highlighted the importance of the subject for the Oman Vision 2040. She also emphasized that innovation and creativity are indispensable parts of the school’s vision for the betterment and progress of the motherland, Oman. Later, Al-Basel Fahuad Al Maawali, a ninth-grader student, familiarized the audience with the history and background of Pi (a special mathematical figure). This



was followed by a keynote speech delivered by Marwa Al-Touqi, an alumnus of Liverpool University, London and a current teacher at the school, specialising in the field of mathematics. She shared her invaluable experience with the students and provided them with some practical hints and strategies to overcome the challenges faced by students during exams.

Muaadh Al Sarmi, one of the foremost scholars in Grade 12, also shared his hands-on experiences with the students. Next came a Pi recitation competition among the students in Grade 9 to Grade 12, which invigorated the atmosphere of the event. Tara Saif Salim (Grade 10), Ward Al Hinai (Grade 9), and Ayah Jahdhami (Grade 9) won the first

to third prizes respectively. Undoubtedly, younger scholars were also the contributing members of this gathering. This event encompassed other constructive activities such as quizzes and poster designs, which additionally addressed students at younger ages from kindergarten to primary years. MySchool International’s administrative team includes Emna Beji (Academic Coordinator), Iris Eltinay (Middle Years Program Coordinator), Pari Bagher (Primary Years Program Coordinator), Jincy Abraham (Head of Mathematics Dept.), Azeela Shihab (Head of Science Dept.), Dilna V. K. (Head of IT department) and Aref Al Sa-hood (Mathematics Educator) was present during the celebration. Every year, math-lovers celebrate International Mathematics Day (March 14 or 3/14). This idea originated from the number Pi, which approximately equals 3.14, hence the date of the celebration.

SUPPORT

## Oxy Oman sponsors SQU Photo Society Week

**MUSCAT:** Oxy Oman representatives recently attended the SQU Photo Society Week, which was organised by the Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) Photo Society and sponsored by Oxy Oman. The Photo Society Week included a photography competition and exhibition and is among a group of activities the Photo Society is conducting for the 2021/2022 academic year, all of which Oxy Oman is exclusively sponsoring. The weeklong event showcased student photography through a public exhibition at the university and hosted a competition and awards event for winning photos in several categories. The awards event was held at the SQU Exhibition and Conference Hall under the auspices of Dr Nasser



bin Mosbeh Al-Zaidi, Vice President for Administrative and Financial Affairs at SQU. Nasser Al Maskari, Corporate Social Responsibility Manager at Oxy Oman attended the event, along with other senior representatives of the company. This marks Oxy Oman’s second

consecutive year of sponsoring the SQU Photo Society. The Society regularly hosts workshops, trips, and exhibitions to promote the art of photography, and to raise art awareness and emerging talents in Oman. “We’re very excited to support

the SQU Photo Society, as we celebrate the creativity and talent being showcased through this week. Oxy Oman has always placed innovation as a fundamental pillar of our social responsibility goals, and we hope to encourage students and participants to continue developing their skills and expertise in the arts,” said Stephen Kelly, President and General Manager at Oxy Oman. This sponsorship falls under Oxy Oman’s umbrella of strategic partnerships and continuous collaboration with key stakeholders and is part of OxyOman’s endeavour and long-term commitment to support programmes that enhance economic growth and sustainable development and that yield positive impacts in the neighbouring communities.



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ROUND-UP

# Haitham Al Hadidi wins Oman Drift title, qualifies for World Finals

The Omani national took part in the 2022 Red Bull Car Park Drift Championship held on March 18, on a specialised track at the Oman Automobile Association, which included obstacles and challenges that had drivers putting their best driving skills to the test

**MUSCAT:** With his astonishing performance that fuelled the excitement of motorsports enthusiasts who flocked to the Oman Automobile Association, Haitham Al Hadidi showcased his exceptional skills and control over his car in front of an impressed panel of judges and succeeded in snagging the ‘King of Drifting’ title in the Sultanate of Oman, qualifying him for the World Finals Saudi Arabia is expected to host in November.

The Omani national took part in the 2022 Red Bull Car Park Drift Championship held on Friday, March 18, on a specialised track at the Oman Automobile Association, which included obstacles and challenges that had drivers putting their best driving skills to the test.

The event, which took place in the Sultanate for the 12th consecutive year, was organised in partnership with the Oman Automobile Association and Red Bull Mobile Oman and sponsored by Dunlop Tyres, the championship’s official sponsor, and a media partnership with Muscat Media Group, Mubashir, and Oman Radio.

After he gave riveting performances in the first round, which gathered 18 drivers, and then again in the second round which was limited to the best 8, Haitham qualified for the semi-finals, where his exceptional skills prevailed. With suspense levels reaching an all-time high, Haitham scored his victory after collecting 292 points out of a total of three hundred possible points, ahead of Ali Al Balushi in second place, who scored 275 points, and Rafaat Al Yahyai



in third with 272 points.

### Speed, accuracy and showmanship

A special panel—whose members included rally champions Jean-Pierre Nasrallah of Lebanon and Khaled Al-Manji of Oman, in addition to Wadhah Uqba—worked to decide which performances excelled and setpoints based on specific technical criteria.

To tackle the track, drifters had to have a remarkable balancing

act of speed, accuracy, and showmanship, which was heightened in the first round by the look of the car, the roar of its engine, and the smoke of its tyres.

Eighty-five points of the total balance are allocated to drifting skills, while the rest of the points go to a variety of unique challenges, including squares, spiral gates, flippers, and clips.

Additionally, points are given to the ability of drivers to get their cars as close as possible to the cones

without knocking into them.

Haitham expressed his delight at winning the qualifiers during the awards ceremony. Interestingly, what distinguished this year’s awards was the fact that they were made from recycled car parts.

Haitham confirmed that he is looking forward to competing in the Red Bull Car Park Drift Championship, hosted by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in November of this year, with his eyes set on winning the world title that Oman

previously won twice back in 2016 and 2017. At the World Finals, the Omani drift champion will face the qualifying winners of several other countries participating in this year’s event, including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Lebanon, Jordan, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Pakistan, South Africa, Jamaica, Estonia, Georgia, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, and Azerbaijan.

### A brief history

The beginnings of drifting or car

show drifting date back to the 1960s, specifically to the rugged terrains of the Japanese mountains, where several racers competed to score the best timing while pushing the endurance of their tires to the limit before it developed into a sport in its own right.

By 1970, the sport of drifting had garnered wide popularity, carving itself a distinguished position in the prestigious Japan Touring Car Championship, with amazing performances that reflect the drivers’ skills in manoeuvring their cars.

Two decades later, the sport has spread around the world, with many countries including the United Kingdom, Australia, China and New Zealand considering it a bona fide organised sport.

Back in 2008, the Red Bull Car Park Drift Championship was launched in Lebanon, in the indoor car park of a Beirut mall.

It was a golden opportunity for drifting enthusiasts to put their skills to the test, all within a sportive framework that adheres to safety standards.

The championship witnessed the emergence of Lebanese racing champion Abdo Feghali, who became a legend in the field. Moreover, the unparalleled success of the championship saw it transform from a regional annual staple into a popular global tournament.

## BANK MUSCAT

# mBanking, Internet Banking drives rapid adoption of digital banking

**MUSCAT:** In line with its vision ‘To serve you better, everyday’ and commitment to innovation reflecting the latest technological trends in banking, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate, has been launching new features and services on its digital channels continuously over the years.

Subsequently, the bank’s e-channels have been recording a massive rise in popularity with over 1.3 million customers using the Omni-channel Mobile and Internet Banking currently to conduct a wide variety of banking transactions and requests.

Both Mobile and Internet Banking are available 24/7, 365 days a

year and provides customers with the convenience of banking without having to visit a branch or worry about branch timings.

Over the past few months, the bank has launched many new features including bill payments to Awasr and instant Debit Card linkage to one’s account along with applying for Prepaid Cards through Internet banking and mBanking app. Also, linked Floosi and children’s accounts are now visible in their parent’s accounts for better transparency and oversight. Bank customers can also benefit from other useful features like the instant opening of additional savings account for existing customers, generation of a PIN for Debit



Cards, Credit Cards and Prepaid Cards, download of SWIFT advice for international transactions, blocking of the prepaid card as well as charitable contributions. The mBanking app and Internet banking also allow customers to disable or enable their debit card for international usage adding an extra layer of security for the benefit of customers.

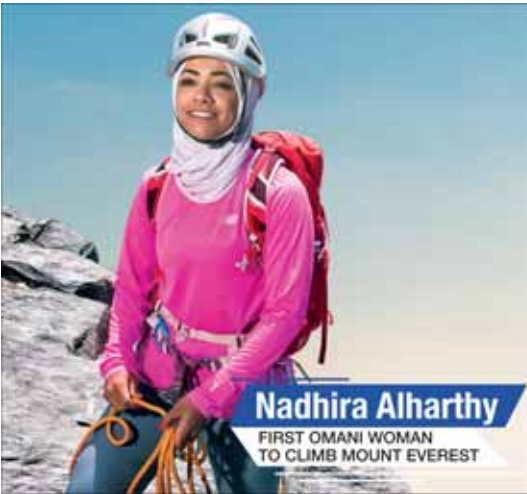
The bank’s mBanking and Internet services include real-time bill payments for utilities in Oman, fund transfers within the bank and in Oman, fund transfers across the world via the SWIFT network; speed transfers to a number of countries including Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, the Philippines

and Sri Lanka; Zakat calculator and charity payments. It also provides bill payment facilities for a variety of utility services such as electricity, water, telecom, mobile top-ups, instant credit card bill payments, and school fees payments.

Speaking about the continuous launch of new services on Internet Banking and the mBanking app, Abdullah Hamood Al Jufaili, Assistant General Manager, Digital Banking, Bank Muscat, said: “We are delighted to see our customers quickly adopting our digital banking solutions like mBanking and Internet Banking. In line with our customer-centric vision, Bank Muscat will continue to launch new features to further enhance

banking convenience for its customers. The consistent rise in active customers on our e-channels is a reflection of the popularity of both Mobile and Internet Banking as well as other electronic channels.”

It must be particularly noted that Bank Muscat’s Mobile Banking app, which offers maximum convenience to customers, is highly secure and does not store any sensitive information or transaction logs on the phone. Data exchange from this application is encrypted based on the best industry standards and dual-factor authentication. Customers can download the latest version of the Bank Muscat Mobile Banking app from Apple App Store, Google Play or Huawei AppGallery.



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