

MORE THAN HALF OF OMAN'S POPULATION OBESE: AL SAIDI

Oman is facing a spike in obesity cases, as more than half of the Omani population is now overweight or obese with 30 per cent of them having a Body Mass Index (BMI) of more than 30, said Dr. Ahmed Mohammed Al Saidi, Minister of Health. **>A2**



OMAN'S ENVOY PRESENTS CREDENTIALS

AMMAN: King Abdullah II of Jordan received Sheikh Hilal Marhoon Al Ma'amari, who presented his credentials as the Sultanate's envoy to Jordan at Basman Palace on Sunday. During the meeting, the ambassador conveyed greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik and best wishes of good health and wellbeing to King Abdullah II and the people of Jordan further progress and prosperity. King Abdullah II asked the ambassador to convey his greetings and best wishes of good health and happiness to His Majesty the Sultan and the Omani people further progress and growth. **-ONA**



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WOMEN'S DAY

Honourable Lady hails Omani women's achievements



MUSCAT: The Honourable Lady, Spouse of His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik, has sent greetings on the occasion of the International Women's Day, which falls on March 8 every year, reading as follows:

"On this day, the world celebrates the International Women's day as a gesture to highlight woman's prominent status, recognises her original role in nation building and reaffirming common determination to continue to support and enable women in all spheres."

"Today, as we share this global experience, we would like to express our pride and delight at the accomplishments made for Omani women and by Omani women, as well as the high status accorded to them locally and

internationally. This, indeed, reflects a progressive and advanced national vision.

"We would like to recall, with solemn respect, the great efforts exerted by women in Oman and the fact that they join hands with womenfolk worldwide in building, developing and supporting their families and communities.

"Our sincere commendation goes to women for their eventful and impactful contribution to global human issues—their contribution being influenced by a high sense of responsibility that has been an innate part of woman's character throughout the ages.

"Hail woman in our dear country Oman! Hail woman everywhere in the world!" **-ONA**

See also **>A4**

DUQM TO GET \$4.2 BILLION GREEN PETROLEUM PLANT

The technology used will reduce, among other hazardous wastes, the amount of sulphur emissions produced during the processing of petroleum

Times News Service

MUSCAT: A plant that refines petroleum using technology that is reportedly less harmful to the environment than conventional methods is being set up in Oman, at a cost of \$4.2 billion (OMR1.62 billion).

The factory is being built in the port town of Duqm through a public-private partnership between the Oman government and Canada Business Holdings, in collaboration with the Special Economic Zone Authority at Duqm (SEZAD). It is expected to produce about 300,000 barrels of oil a day, once operations begin.

"With the proper domestic



support and encouragement, the refinery project should be able to produce our first batch of products towards the end of 2023," said Moses Solomon, chairman and CEO of Canada Business Holdings.

"Like many precious resources of the earth, petroleum is stored underground. The elements found in hydrocarbons are natural components of all living organisms on our planet earth."

"However, chemical processes involved in the refining of petroleum often produce hazardous materials, and they sadly fail to emulate the natural cycle of decomposition that converts waste into harmless natural ingredients that can be used and reintegrated into the natural environment," he added.

The plant will use technology that reduces, among other hazardous wastes, the amount of sulphur

300,000
barrels a day to be produced once the green petroleum refinery begins operations

500
employment opportunities to be directly created through the setting of this plant

emissions produced during the processing of petroleum. Sulphur dioxide and other oxides contribute to acid rain, which could harm fragile natural ecosystems and damage trees by stunting their growth and harming their foliage. Trees and crops also do not



Moses Solomon, chairman and CEO, Canada Business Holdings

thrive in areas that have high concentrations of sulphur and its oxides. The end product of this factory will have ultra-low sulphur content, and almost zero gases that contribute to acid rain.

"The chemical processes designed for our green petroleum refinery attempts to address such issues and fill in the gaps in conventional extraction processes, so that we are able to protect the planet even while processing natural resources," Solomon said. "It is important we use modern technology responsibly."

Expressing gratitude to the Omani government for enabling CBH to set up this plant, the company's CEO added that the green extraction processes here would minimise the environmental impact such refineries have on the quality of air, soil and water in the country. **>A5**



Dhofar Club thrash Al Suwaiq 5-1, lift His Majesty the Sultan's Football Cup

A8

MINISTERIAL DECISION

New gratuity rules for expats

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Expatriates employed in Oman's government sector for less than 10 years will be provided a gratuity calculated on the basis of a number of conditions, including time served under employment and the reasons for leaving their jobs.

The conditions were stipulated in Ministerial Decision No. 35/2021, which makes some amends to the country's Civil Service Law, as issued by Dr. Mahad bin Said bin Ali Ba'owain, the Minister of Labour.

Issued on March 4 this year, these decisions have also been published in the Official Gazette.

According to the Article 1 of the decision, the text of Clause 8 of Appendix No 10 of the executive regulations of the aforementioned Civil Service Law shall be replaced by the following text: "The second party (employee) is entitled, upon the termination of their service, a gratuity amounting to one month's salary for each year of their service, up to a maximum of 10 months for occupations from grades A to six, and 12 months for occupations for grades seven to 14. **>A4**

FIGHTING PANDEMIC

200,000 doses of Johnson & Johnson's vaccine by June end

MUSCAT: Oman is expected to receive 200,000 doses of Johnson & Johnson's COVID-19 vaccine by the end of June or the beginning of July 2021, said Dr. Ahmed Mohammed Al Saidi, Minister of Health.

By the end of March 2021, Oman is likely to receive thousands of doses of Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, Al Saidi said, adding that coordination is under way among governments of the world to regulate the distribution of vaccines.

The minister added that, through the 190-strong international vaccine alliance of states, more than 240,000 doses of different vaccines are scheduled to arrive in the Sultanate from mid-March to the beginning of May 2021.

Oxford-AstraZeneca

The Ministry of Health is exerting efforts to receive one million doses of Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, said Dr. Ahmed, noting that a contract will be signed

to add 500,000 more doses of Pfizer-BioNTech.

Pfizer-BioNTech

The minister pointed out that the biggest hurdle towards receiving vaccines is not the financial position, but rather the delay from vaccine producing countries. The Sultanate has so far received a total of 180,000 doses, of which 80,000 were Pfizer-BioNTech and 100,000 Oxford-AstraZeneca.

Vaccine supply is a common challenge to all countries of the world, said Dr. Ahmed, adding that the Sultanate approached many international companies, but it will not endorse any medicine before checking its validity, safety and efficiency.

The minister regretted the fact that some shunned vaccination with Oxford-AstraZeneca. He reaffirmed that the Sultanate will not receive any vaccine or medical drug before checking that it is safe and secure for human consumption. **>A4**

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Asr.....	3:46pm
Maghrib.....	6:18pm
Isha.....	7:28pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....	5.08am

WORLD OBESITY DAY

More than half of Oman’s population obese: Al Saidi

MUSCAT: Oman is facing a spike in obesity cases, as more than half of the Omani population is now overweight or obese with 30 percent of them having a Body Mass Index (BMI) of more than 30, said Dr. Ahmed Mohammed Al Saidi, Minister of Health on. He said that these figures showed a rise in the prevalence of obesity in Oman since the last survey in 2008, especially among women.

He pointed out that there is an increasing recognition worldwide that overweight and obesity are not only problems of individuals but also society-wide problem of population.

He added, “The causes of obesity are complex but one of the key drivers is in the way we eat and how much we move, which is changing dramatically. As a result of changes in our environment, unhealthy processed food and the technology that promote sedentary lifestyles has become more readily available. Unfortunately, convenience has led us to adopt an unhealthy lifestyle, which in turn has led to obesity.

Obesity epidemic

“Even though there is no simple or single solution to the obesity epidemic, if we are to fight this escalating crisis in our societies, a coordinated response that goes beyond the health sector is crucial. Only through the engagement in multi-sector dialogues and relentless commitment to work together on reducing the burden of obesity can we promote health and prevent disease.

“The importance of population-based changes in the socio-environmental variables that influence energy intake and expenditure cannot be stressed enough. Marketing restrictions, dietary guidelines, policies that focus on improving environments like schools & workplaces are only but some of the many interventions that should stop the drastic spreading of obesity,” Dr.



LAUNCHED: A book on obesity was launched through a virtual event held under the patronage of Dr. Ahmed Mohammed Al Saidi, Minister of Health. - OMA

Ahmed explained.

Coinciding with the celebrations of World Obesity Day, Oman obesity briefing book titled “Obesity in Oman, a major public health challenge” was inaugurated at the Ministry of Health headquarters on Sunday.

The launch took place through a virtual event held under the patronage of the Minister of Health.

This important document has been developed as a collaboration between the National Diabetes and Endocrine Centre (NDEC), the Department of Non-Communicable Disease, the Department of Nutrition, the Oman Diabetes Association and Novo Nordisk, a Danish multinational pharmaceutical company.

Health challenge

Dr. Noor Al Busaidi, Director of National Diabetes and Endocrine Centre, gave an in-depth overview of the Oman obesity briefing book and commented, “This briefing book seeks to inform policymakers, healthcare professionals and the general public of the serious and widespread health challenge of obesity in Oman by highlighting its impact on society and individuals. The book also aims

to emphasise opportunities for the prevention and management of obesity as a disease as well as showcasing initiatives that have been introduced in Oman to address this issue.”

It is worth to mention that in 2019, Oman hosted the World Obesity Regional Conference on Women and Child First, and the Gulf Obesity Surgical Society's sixth annual obesity conference.

These events signal that the health community in Oman is committed to addressing the issue of obesity for vulnerable groups and ensuring treatment for people with severe obesity.

Chronic disease

However, until obesity is recognised as a serious chronic disease, treatment options are likely to remain limited, despite the substantial impact that obesity can have on the quality of life for individuals and the capacity of healthcare systems.

The virtual event saw the participation of some MOH officials, Ole Emil Moesby, Ambassador of Denmark to Oman, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Yemen, and Alkin Aksekili, Vice President at Novo Nordisk Gulf Cluster. -OMA

DATA

Omanis constituted 76% of visitors to local hotels

MUSCAT: The total number of guests in the (3-5) star category in the Sultanate fell by 49.5 percent at the end of January 2021 to stand at 78,451 guests compared to 155,488 guests for the same period of 2020.

Among the nationalities, the Omani guests constituted the maximum number of visitors with 76 percent to stand at 59,735 guests. This was followed by the Asian guests with 7,435, the European guests with 3,482, the Arab guests (excluding GCC countries) with 2,242 and the GCC guests with 1,468.

The number of American guests reached 1,437, followed by the Oceanian guests with 708, the African with 377 guests and 1,567 guests from other nationalities.

Meanwhile, the occupancy rate reached 27 percent, according to the latest monthly statistics released by the National Centre for Statis-



VISITORS: The occupancy rate in hotels reached 27 percent, according to the latest data. - OMA

tics and Information (NCIS).

The total revenues of these hotels also fell to OMR6.231 million in January 2021, com-

pared to OMR21.026 million during the same period of the previous year.

-OMA



Tender Announcement

Supply of Food Parcels for the “Ramadan Iftar Program” for the Year 1442 AH / 2021 AD for Al Mahrah Governorate and Surrounding Areas in the Republic of Yemen
Tender No. 1/2021

Oman Charitable Organization (O.C.O.) announces a tender for the supply of 25,900 (twenty-five thousand and nine hundred) food parcels for the “Ramadan Iftar Program” for the year 1442 AH / 2021 AD, and distributing them to all the districts of Al Mahrah Governorate and the surrounding areas according to the attached list of locations (16 locations).

Specialized merchants and suppliers wishing to submit their bids for this tender can obtain the terms and conditions from the Financial Department of Oman Charitable Organization against payment of nominal fees, during the period from Sunday 7 March 2021 AD to Thursday 11 March 2021. The last date for bid submission and acceptance shall be Tuesday 16 March 2021.

Bids shall be deposited in the tender box at the Financial Department, O.C.O. Headquarters at the Wilayat of Baushar, Muscat Governorate, Al Khuwair 33, Southern Street No. 47, near Sultan Said bin Taimur Mosque.

Bids shall be placed in closed envelopes sealed with red wax and addressed to H.E. the Chairman of the Projects and Tenders Committee of O.C.O. before the specified date.

“O.C.O. is not obligated to award the tender in whole or in part or to consider the lowest price.”

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Local innovation helps improve COVID medicare

The artificial intelligence used in this CDSS aims to diagnose patients to see if their symptoms match those associated with the coronavirus

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Telemedicine practices and an AI-driven symptom checkers were some of the tools used by primary healthcare centres in Oman to provide better care to COVID patients in the country. These ideas were developed by Dr PC Sherimon from the Arab Open University, whose team put forth these ideas in the form of a clinical decision support system (CDSS) which was sent to Royal Oman Police (ROP) health centres, and clinics in far-flung areas in the country. Sherimon's efforts were among those funded by the COVID-19 Research Programme of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, which has encouraged people in the country to come up with ways to better tackle the disease. Many of these plans can also be used to tackle future hurdles Oman might face. The CDSS encouraged the use of telemedicine to help patients



who did not have easy access to health centres, or were unable to get there. Their symptom checker was based on WebRTC – a Google-run software used in the medical field – and integrated into the CDSS. After testing their systems using sample data, it was found that the symptom checker provides results similar to those given by actual doctors. The artificial intelligence used in this CDSS aims to diagnose patients to see if their symptoms match those associated with the coronavirus. It also considers and evaluates existing/underlying medical conditions and complications present in patients, on the basis of which it provides the necessary recommendations for care, and the appropriate medical prescriptions. Further follow-up and guidance can also be provided through these telemedicine services. The

symptom checker can be used by any person in the country from the comfort and safety of their homes. These services also enable doctors to examine patients based on the symptoms recorded, and prescribe further tests and medications where required. A system that can be best used in hard-to-access areas of the country, such as its interior, the main findings of this CDSS showed that it can be used to help people who visit healthcare centres, and provide health-based assistance in other public places as well, said Dr Sherimon. This also helps minimise contact between healthcare workers and infected people, with this AI-based detection system finding great value as a support tool in healthcare centres. A teleconferencing utility present within the service also helps doctors consult with other practitioners from around the world.

VISIT TO SALALAH



PNS Alamgir, RNOV Khasab hold joint naval exercise

Times News Service

MUSCAT: A Pakistan Navy Ship has visited Salalah and conducted a joint exercise (PASSEX) with Royal Navy of Oman. Pakistan Navy Ship Alamgir (with embarked Alouette helicopter) arrived in Salalah, on 6 March 2021 for a two-day visit. The visit to port Salalah is part of ship's ongoing Regional Maritime Security Patrol (RMSP) by Pakistan Navy which is aimed at maintaining robust security posture in the critical sea areas and choke points in Indian Ocean Region for protection of national and international shipping against threats of maritime terrorism, piracy, narco/arms smuggling and human trafficking etc. Apart from ensuring freedom

of navigation at sea, another important objective of RMSP is to foster partnership with regional countries and to enhance interoperability. On completion of the visit, the ship finally sailed on 07 March, 2021 to continue its sea deployment. The ship also conducted a joint exercise (PASSEX) with RNOV Khasab, while en route to deployment area. The visit by PNS Alamgir to Omani port Salalah and Joint Exercise (PASSEX) with Royal Navy of Oman will surely contribute towards further strengthening the bilateral relationship between Sultanate of Oman and Pakistan in general and military cooperation between Royal Navy of Oman and Pakistan Navy in particular.



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CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

To honour women and their contribution in building the society, the United Nations announced March 8 as International Women's Day. Celebrated on March 8 every year, this day is commemorated to honour the achievements of women. This year, the theme for International Women's Day is "Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world". It is to celebrate the tremendous efforts by women and girls around the world in shaping a more equal future and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and highlights the gaps that remain.

According to a statement released by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, "This year's International Women's Day is like no other. As countries and communities start to slowly recover from a devastating pandemic, we have the chance to finally end the exclusion and marginalisation of women and girls. But to do that, we need immediate action. Women must have the opportunity to play a full role in shaping the pivotal decisions being made right now as countries respond to and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic – choices that will affect the wellbeing of people and the planet for generations to come.

"To do this, we must break down the deep-seated historic, cultural, and socio-economic barriers that prevent women from taking their seat at the decision-making table to make sure that resources and power are more equitably distributed. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is working with countries across the globe to address these inequalities.

"Despite the barriers, women, especially young women, are at the forefront of diverse and inclusive movements for social change -- online and in the streets. That includes their leading role in taking a stand against climate change, fighting for a green economy and pushing for women's rights. And we know that more inclusive leadership and representation leads to stronger democracies, better governance, and more peaceful societies.

"To build forward better from the COVID-19 crisis, and to get the Global Goals firmly back on track, we cannot simply return to the world we had before. We must do things differently. That means shattering the barriers that hold women and girls back. This year's International Women's Day is a rallying cry for Generation Equality. It is time to finally fully harness the power of women's leadership to realise a more equal, more inclusive and more sustainable future."

CIVIL SERVICE LAW

< FROM **A1** Gratuity is based on last salary received by second party

"The gratuity is based on the last salary received by the second party, with its value not exceeding OMR12,000." The decision read, "The employee is not entitled to the aforementioned gratuity in the following cases: if their service period was for less than five years, unless they have been terminated due to death or an inability to work, if they have been dismissed from service as a form of punishment, or if they have been terminated because they need to be sentenced for a felony, or have to be punished for a crime involving deceit and dishonesty."

Article 2 stated that this amendment solely applies to non-Omanis, and those who have not yet completed 10 years of service. Expatriates who have completed 10 years of service or more are still provided gratuity under the previous regulations of the Civil Service Law.

Article 3 refers to the cancella-

tion of details that contradict the above decisions, or contravenes the law's provisions. Appendix 10 of the Civil Service Law provides conditions for a contract for non-Omanis who employ permanent jobs. In this context, Clause 8, which was amended as part of the ministerial decision, says: "the second party is entitled, upon the end of their service, a gratuity in the amount of one month's salary for each year of their service, up to a maximum of 12 months. This is calculated on the basis of the last salary drawn, and deducted from it is the salary corresponding to the days he has taken as leave without pay." The employee is also not allowed to claim gratuity in case he has served less than two years, unless they have been terminated due to illness or death, or for any reason at the sole discretion of the unit, or if he/she is involved in a felony or criminal activity.

COVID-19

< FROM **A1** Oman hopes to cover 60% of citizens and residents by the end of this year

"The delay in receiving Pfizer-BioNTech is beyond the will of the Ministry of Health. It is a global delay that occurred when the company opted to expand one of its European factories," said Dr. Ahmed.

He exhorted citizens, residents and health workers to come forward and take the vaccines which, he said, are effective and secure. He reaffirmed that no serious side-effects were registered in the Sultanate or elsewhere in the world so far from COVID-19 vaccines.

The minister deplored unfounded rumours and wrong information in circulation via social media about the vaccines. He also expressed his dismay at some health workers' favouring some vaccines over others, noting that such opinions are not based on any scientific evidence.

Dr. Ahmed asserted that, after Oxford-AstraZeneca was administered to scores of millions of



people, studies showed that this vaccine—even though it might not be the best—has been equally efficient as other vaccines.

In this context, the minister referred to the experience of one of the countries that administered Oxford-AstraZeneca to 140,000 people and found out that it adds extra protection from acute infec-

tion and contributes to shorter hospitalisation and cutting down death rates by more than 94 per cent, compared to the products of other companies that registered only 84 per cent in similar cases (of infection and death).

Dr. Ahmed underscored the fact that there is scientifically and practically no difference between Pfizer-BioNTech and Oxford-AstraZeneca, though one of the two might be more abundant than the other at a certain time.

New segments of society will be given priority to vaccination, said the minister, noting that the age limit of target groups will be brought down and that Oman hopes to cover 60% of citizens and residents by the end of 2021.

The minister explained that the vaccines of some international companies have not yet been given the approval of World Health Organization (WHO) and that such companies use the vaccines in their respective regions, but the

Sultanate will not accept any vaccine not endorsed by the WHO.

Oman began its National Immunisation Campaign against COVID-19 late last December 2020 at a time the turnout of citizens was initially slow and when Health Ministry officials, governors and walis were in constant contact with citizens to encourage them to join the immunisation drive, said Dr. Ahmed.

As for the private sector, the supply of vaccines will be made after the ministry has been able to cover the target social segment set by the technical team, said the minister, who explained that this segment, which constitutes 20 per cent or less (of the population), is highly vulnerable to infection and its full coverage is likely to take place during or before the end of April 2021. Then, the vaccine will be made available in the private sector for those wishing to be vaccinated, said the minister.



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ELECTRONIC EQUIVALENCY

Electronic service launched for attestation of certificates

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, has launched an electronic service whereby applicants can get their certificates attested. The e-copy, to be applied for online, will substitute the paper copy that was issued by the ministry earlier. The electronic equivalency service is a step forward in the government's efforts to shift to electronic transformation and provide a satisfactory user experience through the streamlining of procedures.



Data from the annual report of the Department of Qualification Equivalence and Accreditation 2020 shows that, from January to December 2020, the ministry's electronic system (Asas) received

about 12,321 attestation applications for the verification of qualifications obtained abroad, less by 24.1 percent compared to such applications filed in 2019 (which stood at 16,235). This is attributed to the global prevalence of coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic which compelled many countries to suspend studies last year and later shift to online learning. Now that the service is digitalised, the designated working team hopes to clear all pending applications in record time. -ONA

SQU

Cooperation programme

MUSCAT: A joint cooperation programme was signed between Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) and Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-Up Unit on Sunday. The programme aims to follow up implementation of Oman Vision 2040 goals, indicators of the university's performance on targets sought to be realised, find incentive work environment to execute programmes pertaining to education and research within the Vision, in addition to devising solutions to tackle obstacles facing such programmes. -ONA

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

1,059 new COVID-19 cases reported

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health has registered 1,059 new coronavirus cases and 8 deaths in Oman. The total cases in the country have now touched 143,955 including 134,314 recoveries, according to MoH. -ONA

SAFE ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICES

<FROM A1 Project to create job opportunities

This green refinery aside, the company is also looking to build a urea and ammonia plant in the country which will use excess carbon dioxide to make fertiliser that can be used in the country's agriculture sector, as well as exported to other countries, reducing Oman's needs to import the same from abroad. "Neglecting safe environmental practices while carrying out industrial activities will ultimately

leave our lives on earth in limbo," Solomon explained. "The after-effects of our activities are being felt deeply in the form of climate change, which is affecting all of us." "It is not for nothing that the last decade we witnessed was the hottest on record in living human memory," he added. "Carbon dioxide levels are rising in the air, and wind stream directions in our stratosphere are shifting wildly,

leading to potentially devastating consequences on the weather conditions across all countries." "If we continue like this, many of the species and living organisms we know on this planet could disappear," he said. "What we will then face is a serious question of our existence." While the COVID-19 pandemic has slowed down progress at the site, protocols by local Omani health authorities in keeping with

international standards to ensure the safety of workers during these uncertain times has made sure the project can proceed. "There are various estimates for the direct and indirect job opportunities that this refinery project may create," said Solomon. "On an average, we expect to directly hire about five hundred people of various disciplines in process operations, engineering, and administration."

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MUNICIPALITY

Expats arrested

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Expat workers have been arrested by Muscat Municipality for storing and selling smoking material, including tobacco, and its derivatives. A statement issued online by Muscat Municipality said: "Muscat Municipality has arrested workers in Muttrah who stored and sold tobacco, and its derivatives. Legal measures have been taken against them."



AL JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS CO. SAOG
P.O. Box 40, PC 327, Suhar Industrial City, Suhar, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: 26751763/64/65, Fax: 26751766

INVITATION TO ATTEND ORDINARY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Board of Directors of Al Jazeera Steel Products Co. SAOG (the Company) are delighted to invite the shareholders of the company to attend the Ordinary Annual General Meeting ("AGM") to be held on Tuesday, 23 March 2021 at 5.00PM through Muscat Clearing & Depository website (www.mcd.gov.om). In the event the legal quorum for the meeting is insufficient, a second meeting will be held on Sunday, 28 March 2021 at 5.00PM to consider the following agenda:

- To consider and approve the Board of Director's Report for the financial year ended 31 December 2020.
- To consider and approve the Corporate Governance Report for the financial year ended 31 December 2020.
- To consider the Auditor's Report and to approve the Financial Statements (Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss Account) of the Company for the financial year ended 31 December 2020.
- To consider and approve the sitting fees of the Board of Directors and Subcommittees for the financial year ended 31 December 2020 and determination of the fees of the Board of Directors and Subcommittees for the next financial year ended 31 December 2021.
- To consider and approve the proposed distribution of cash dividend of 14 Baiza per share to the shareholders as on AGM date.
- To consider and approve the proposal of distributing the total sum of RO 94,021 as remuneration for the Board of Directors of the Company for the year ended 31 December 2020.
- To inform the related party transactions for the financial year ending 31 December 2020.
- To inform the Corporate Social Responsibility for the financial year ending 31 December 2020.
- To approve the criteria for measuring the performance of the Board of Directors for the year ending 31 December 2021.
- To appoint an independent external consultant to evaluate the performance of the Board of Directors for the financial year ending 31 December 2021 and fix their fees.
- To appoint the statutory Auditors of the company for the financial year ending 31 December 2021 and fix their fees.
- To elect the members of the new Board of Directors of the company (vacancy: 7 members). Any person who wishes to stand as candidate shall fill the Nomination form and submit it to the company at least five (5) days prior to the AGM i.e. before 5:30PM on Wednesday, 17 March 2021. Forms submitted after this cut-off time will not be accepted.

According to the Company's Articles of Association and the controls for holding General Meetings using modern technology issued by the capital market authority, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

- Legal person exclusively has the right to delegate a natural person to attend the General Meeting and vote on its behalf through technical means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in MCDC.
- Voting on any of the agenda items begins no more than three days before the date of the General Meeting until the voting process ends on the day of the General Meeting. If the shareholder's shares are increased or decreased, the voting process will be canceled and the shareholder will have to vote again on the day of the General Meeting.

If you have any queries you may please contact Mr. Yousuf Ismail Al Kamali on telephone 26751763 / 4 / 5 Ext: 117.

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Auditor

Legal Advisor

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Ola Al Nabhanl
Lawyer at BK Law Firm

WALL STREET JOURNAL

FDA warns against one-dose regimen for COVID vaccines



In February, some scientists and lawmakers suggested using a one-dose regimen for all coronavirus vaccines approved in the US, after certain preliminary studies showed that a single

"You would be flying blind to just use one dose," a senior scientist and adviser to US President Joe Biden told the *Wall Street Journal*, adding "If you're going to do something else other than follow the studies shown to the FDA, show me that this one-shot effect is durable." **ANI**



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ANTI-COUP PROTESTS

Thousands defy military crackdown in Myanmar

A group of people, likely healthcare workers or protesters, are shown wearing full-body white protective suits, hoods, and face shields. They are holding signs that read "#SAVE MYANMAR". The image is part of a collage related to the Myanmar crisis.

scene indicated that live rounds were also fired.

Bagan is best known for being one of Myanmar's top tourist attractions and is a UNESCO World Heritage site that plays host to more than 2,000 ancient pagodas or their remnants.

Protests elsewhere on Sunday, including in the two biggest cities of Yangon and Mandalay, were also met with the use of force by police firing warning shots, tear gas, rubber bullets and stun grenades. **DW**

SALALAH MILLS COMPANY SAOG
Salalah-Sultanate of Oman

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT

Dear Shareholders,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all on behalf of the Board of Directors of Salalah Mills Co. (SAOG) and present to you the Twenty Fourth Annual Report and Audited Financial Statements for the year ended on 31st December, 2020, along with the Report on Corporate Governance..

Financial Results

Dear shareholder, the company's total revenues reached OMR 53.5 Million, showing a slight decrease compared to total revenues of OMR 53.6 Million made in the year 2019. The export revenues represented 53.8% of the total revenues. The net profit made by the company was about OMR 1.35 Million, showing a decrease of OMR 229 Thousand compared to the previous year because of additional Social Responsibilities contribution made during Covid-19 of OMR 94 Thousand and higher service cost and fees.

Cash Dividend

Dear shareholders, based on the dividends policy approved by the Board of Directors, I am pleased to announce that the Board of Directors is proposing a cash dividend of Baiza 20 per share.

Animal Feed Line Enhancement Project

As a result of the current situation of Covid-19, the completion date of the enhancement of the existing animal feed production line to produce different concentrated Animal Feeds Products is delayed to May 2021.

Investment in Ethiopia

In addition, the Joint Venture with giant Ethiopian industrial and trading group by moving one Spaghetti Production Line of Salalah Macaroni Plant to Ethiopia is also delay to the end of 2021.

Internal Regulations

The Board of Directors have reviewed the effectiveness of the internal control systems and approved the Audit Committee's action plan and the internal audit plan for the year 2021. The Board of Directors confirms its compliance with the new disclosure regulations issued by the Capital Market Authority.

The Board also confirms that there are no substantial matters affecting the continuity of the company's activity to its knowledge for the coming years.

Social Responsibility

During the year 2020, the company made several contributions to toward the society to overcome the effects of Covid-19. The company funded the Molecular Pathology Laboratory at Sultan Qaboos Hospital and distributed food item worth about OMR 157,000. In addition to spending OMR 87,000 during 2020 on programs and functions which benefit the community.

Finally, I would like to thank the Board of Directors, the Executive Management and Employees of the Company for their efforts and contribution to this success. I pray to Allah the Almighty to help us achieve more progress and success in the coming years. And on behalf of the shareholders and myself I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq for his great support to Omani Products.

Ahmed Abdullah Saeed Al Rawas
Chairman

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2020

	31 December 2020 RO	31 December 2019 RO
ASSETS		
Non-current assets:		
Property, plant and equipment	28,852,440	28,170,277
Right-of-use assets	926,056	534,397
Total non-current assets	29,778,496	28,704,672
Current assets:		
Inventories	10,085,133	14,220,836
Trade and other receivables	7,467,929	12,764,317
Amounts due from related parties	2,635,005	2,734,394
Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	397,556	386,549
Cash and cash equivalents	5,978,717	2,959,343
Total current assets	26,564,340	33,065,439
Total assets	56,342,836	61,770,111
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
Share capital	4,996,306	4,996,306
Share premium	3,587,782	3,587,782
Legal reserve	2,089,103	2,089,103
General reserve	2,891,826	2,891,826
Retained earnings	18,781,526	18,427,722
Total equity	32,346,543	31,992,739
LIABILITIES		
Non-current liabilities:		
Lease liabilities	942,053	502,763
Borrowings	1,558,857	5,000,000
Employees' end of service benefits	487,168	470,487
Deferred tax liability	1,145,611	1,023,122
Total non-current liabilities	4,133,689	6,996,372
Current liabilities:		
Lease liabilities	38,194	41,814
Amounts due to related parties	19,648	23,411
Borrowings	11,004,880	20,646,615
Trade and other payables	8,516,696	1,959,950
Income tax payable	283,186	109,210
Total current liabilities	19,862,604	22,781,000
Total liabilities	23,996,293	29,777,372
Total equity and liabilities	56,342,836	61,770,111
Net assets per share	0.647	0.640

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020

	Year ended 31 December 2020 RO	Year ended 31 December 2019 RO
Revenue	53,513,151	53,662,614
Cost of revenue	(47,632,631)	(48,716,564)
Gross profit	5,880,520	4,946,050
Other income	257,487	633,025
Fair value changes in financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	11,007	40,544
Administrative expenses	(3,733,997)	(3,415,994)
Sales and marketing expenses	(75,785)	(125,188)
Operating profit	2,339,232	2,078,437
Finance costs	(580,351)	(751,486)
Profit before tax	1,758,881	1,326,951
Income tax	(405,809)	255,416
Profit for the year	1,353,072	1,582,367
Other comprehensive income	-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year	1,353,072	1,582,367
Earnings per share - basic and diluted	0.027	0.032

Note: The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who requests the company in either Arabic or English as requested within 7 days of receipt of the request at P.O. Box No. 67, Al Awqadain, P.C. 217, Sultanate of Oman.

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- Mohammed Mustafa/ONA

DHOFAR CLUB LIFT HIS MAJESTY THE SULTAN'S FOOTBALL CUP



Dhofar Club lifted the crown for the tenth time in history when they beat Al Suwaiq 5-1 in the final

MUSCAT: Dhofar Club secured His Majesty the Sultan's Football Cup title for the season 2020-2021 at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher on Sunday.

10th time

Dhofar Club lifted the crown for the tenth time in history when they beat Al Suwaiq 5-1 in the final. The final match was organised under the patronage of Sayyid Saud

bin Hilal bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Minister of State and Governor of Muscat, in the presence of His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham bin Tarik Al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth and a number of members of the Royal family, Ministers, Chairman of Oman Olympic Committee, chairpersons of the boards of clubs and invitees.

The scorers for the Dhofar

team were Khalid Al Hajri (three goals), Lawson Bekui and Yasin Al Sheikh scored one each while Amran Al Hidi scored for Al Suwaiq team.

On the conclusion of the match, Sayyid Saud bin Hilal bin Hamad Al Busaidi gave away the championship cup and gold medals to the Dhofar team and silver medals to the players of Al Suwaiq Club. —ONA

COMMENTARY

50 Sunny years



Anis Sajan

Fifty-years ago a young man from Mumbai made his debut for India against fearsome West Indies and scored 771 runs helping India win an incredible series.

He was the first man from India to score 10,000 runs. Sunny Gavaskar also broke the record of Sir Donald Bradman scoring 29 centuries and eventually scored 34 centuries for Team India.

He was also the first batsman from India who carried his bat against Pakistan and showed why he was India's best opening batsman.

He was a part of India's

World Cup victorious squad under Kapil Dev in 1983.

His last innings in Test Cricket was a magnificent 94 on a spinning track against Pakistan which is still rated as the best among his test innings.

Sunny Gavaskar is now a renowned commentator and his analysis of the game is second to none.

He is a living legend and I dare to say that he is the original Little Master who has inspired millions across the world with his temperament that is required at the highest level while playing Test Cricket.

We all are proud of you!

CRICKET ROUND-UP

Muscat closer to T20 title

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Sandeep Goud continued to fetch vital wickets while Jatinder Singh started middling the ball with ease as Muscat CT stretched their unbeaten run to eight games with emphatic wins over Renaissance and Arm Alpha in Premier Division T20 League at OC Turf 1 in Amerat.

Muscat, which has 16 points, may still win the title even if they lose remaining two matches. Second-placed Renaissance has 12 points but has played out 10 games while IT Works have 10 points from 8 matches so far.

In Saturday's game, Renaissance were bundled out for 88 on Saturday, Sandeep picking up 3 for 5. Spinners Samay Shrivastava and Wasim Ali bowled well too, taking

two wickets each. Rafi Ullah top-scored with 28.

Jatinder led the chase with a strokeful 48 not out as Muscat surpassed the total in only 12.2 overs, scoring 92 for 2. Shoaib Khan contributed a fluent 28.

Shoaib stars in Muscat win

Shoaib Khan's sparkling 69 was the highlight of Muscat's 161 for 6 against Arm Alpha. Sanuth Ebrahim and Bilal Khan bagged two wickets each. Alpha failed to bat well against Muscat's in-form bowlers, folding up for a dismal 76 in 15.1 overs.

Leg-spinner Samay Shrivastava was the pick of Muscat bowlers, taking 3 for 5 whereas Wasim Ali and Sandeep Goud claimed two wickets each in impressive spells.

INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE

IPL 2021 to begin from April 9, MI to play RCB in opener



MUMBAI: The IPL Governing Council on Sunday announced the schedule for Indian Premier League 2021 to be held in India across six venues from April 9.

Defending champions Mumbai Indians will take on Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) in Chennai in the tournament opener. "After nearly two years, the IPL extravaganza will return home with Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata hosting the marquee event," the BCCI said in a statement on Sunday.

The final of the 14th edition of the tournament will be played on May 30 at Narendra Modi Stadium. Playoffs will also be played at the same venue.

"The World's Largest Cricket Stadium - Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad will host the Playoffs as well as the final on 30th May, 2021 which promises to be a visual spectacle. The newly-built stadium that hosted India's second pink-ball fixture at home with great grandeur will host its first-ever IPL," the release read.

The BCCI said that this IPL will be played "behind closed doors to begin with and a call on allowing spectators will be taken at a later stage of the tournament". —ANI

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GCC PORT OPERATORS

Port operators in the region are reimagining their operations, shifting to a broader concept of port-centric logistics, where they are part of a larger integrated ecosystem of global trade.

MARKET
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MSM INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSM index closed at 3,655.16 points, up 0.08 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended up 0.29 per cent at 543.94 points. Oman Cables Industry, up 5.93 per cent, was the top gainer while Oman Telecommunication, down 4.21 per cent, was the top loser.

New e-services added to Invest Easy portal

The new services aim to facilitate the process of amending trade names by the investor himself without a visit to the premises of Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion



Mubarak bin Mohammad Al-Dohani, Director-General of Commerce and Head of the Digital Transformation Team

Times News Service

MUSCAT: A number of improvements and new e-services have been added to the Invest Easy portal, according to the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP).

The new services aim to facilitate the process of amending trade names by the investor himself without a visit to the premises of MoCIIP, and any suspension on the commercial registry could be lifted in order to amend the concerned trade name.

The first article of the Ministerial Decision No (37/2021) stipulates the cancellation of Clause No. (8) of Article (10) in the regulation for organising the registration of trade names "if it carries a meaning synonymous with the business name of the establishment or combines or singles out the name of the registered establishment." The third article of the decision stipulates that the decision shall be enforced from the day following the date of its publication in the Official Gazette.

Commenting on these improvements, Mubarak bin Mohammad Al-Dohani, Director-General of Commerce and Head of the Digital Transformation Team at MoCIIP, said that the ministry continues to facilitate the process of starting new businesses by reducing procedures in all transactions and cutting down the time to complete investor transactions to commence their projects, as well as finding solutions to tackle the difficulties of investors.

Accordingly, since Thursday, March 4, 2021, MoCIIP has started adding new amendments to a number of services provided by the portal of Invest Easy, Al-Dohani added. He pointed out that MoCIIP has

launched a service for registering trademarks electronically through self-service or via Sanad offices. The registration of this service is also being provided through "approved legal offices" via Invest Easy portal. These offices will be able to register trademarks through the Invest Easy portal not requiring the attendance of the investor to the ministry's premises or its affiliated directorates and departments across the Sultanate.

Mubarak Al-Dohani emphasised that among the facilities provided by MoCIIP, which aims at the continuation of work at all times in order to complete the investor transactions electronically, quickly, easily and conveniently, the ministry has activated the electronic authentication feature via the phone chip for its employees associated with the Invest Easy portal.

This accelerates the pace of completion of investor transactions electronically through the online portal, where the concerned employee can enter the portal through the phone or smart tablets and complete a number of transactions after official working hours or during holidays from anywhere efficiently and effectively.

LEADERSHIP ROLE

NBO appoints Salah Al Sharji as chief internal auditor

Times News Service

MUSCAT: National Bank of Oman (NBO) has announced the appointment of Salah Al Sharji as chief internal auditor.

A certified internal audit executive and banking industry veteran, Al Sharji has over 16 years of experience in a number of leadership roles across some of the Sultanate's largest private institutions. With a proven track record in operational and compliance auditing, he is expected to spearhead the bank's control environment and support it in its next phase of development.

Abdullah Zahran Al Hinai, Chief Executive Officer at NBO said, "At NBO, our hand-picked and highly qualified Omani leadership is integral to our position as a market leader. Salah's extensive experience across the sector and integral role in Oman's developing banking landscape makes him an added value to our team and we look forward to welcoming him on board."

With 16 years of operational and compliance auditing experience, including most recently as Chief Executive Auditor at a local



Salah Al Sharji, Chief internal auditor, National Bank of Oman

bank, Al Sharji is highly accomplished in establishing, organising and managing internal audit departments. He holds a Diploma in Economics and a Bachelors in Accounting and Finance from the University of London. He is also a Certified Internal Auditor (CIA), Certified Risk Management Assurance (CRMA), Certified Fraud Examiner (CFE), and holds an International Certificate in Anti Money Laundering.

DEBT FINANCING

OMR31.7 million raised for Renaissance Village Duqm expansion

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Renaissance Village Duqm (RSVD) has successfully concluded the debt and equity raising for its first phase of expansion of OMR31.7 million.

The construction of the first phase of expansion has been completed out of funding from equity, shareholder's bridge funding and internal surplus; and the capacity has increased by 5,000+ beds taking the total capacity of RSVD to 23,000+ beds.

Shareholders of RSVD have funded 40 per cent of the expansion. In addition to the major shareholder Renaissance Services, other shareholders of RSVD include Royal Court Affairs, Ministry of Defence Pension Fund, Bank Muscat and Al Khonji Holding Group.

The debt financing for the expansion has been secured from six leading Omani financial institutions, Bank Muscat, National Bank of Oman, Bank Dhofar, Ahli Bank, Oman Arab Bank and Al Omaniya Financial Services. The key high-

lights of debt financing include long-term tenure, supportive step-up repayment schedule akin to a bond structure and competitive terms mutually beneficial to the company and financiers.

RSVD has also secured the debt portion of the total financing of OMR11 million for the second phase of expansion. The company will proceed with the debt draw-down and equity injection for the second phase only when the company starts construction after restrictions related to the pandemic are eased.

Long-term business model

The successful conclusion of the debt which was 2.5x oversubscribed is a testament to the trust and confidence of the financial institutions in the strong fundamentals and long-term business model of the company, underpinned by the company's track record of performance, strong corporate governance, prospects for future growth and clear visibility of cashflows.

The expansion will further ce-



FIRST PHASE: The construction of the first phase of expansion has been completed out of funding from equity, shareholder's bridge funding and internal surplus. - Supplied picture

ment RSVD's strong position as the dominant player in accommodation solutions, providing high-quality, ILO standard world-class

accommodation at highly competitive costs. It highlights the company's commitment to delivering on the Opaz and Sezad strategy for

Duqm, and for the Government of Oman to realise its future vision for Duqm.

RSVD is proving to be the accommodation solution of choice for its clients especially during the current challenges, in particular with Covid-19. RSVD timely and adept responses to Covid-19 and cyclones like Hikka, ensure the facility is recognised as a safe haven for workforces. The measures taken have enabled clients to continue their work and projects without interruption. Authorities and clients have expressed appreciation of the role of RSVD in suppressing the virus, keeping people safe and operations functioning.

With Duqm at the heart of the national imperative to diversify the economy whilst ensuring social development, RSVD is well aligned with Oman's Vision 2040.

Vishal Goenka, Group CFO & Deputy CEO of Renaissance, said, "We are delighted with the support our banking and equity partners have extended to us in these unprecedented times. Despite the current tough market for financ-

ing, we have been able to successfully conclude the debt and equity raising for the expansion of RSVD because of our lenders' and shareholders' belief in the company's fundamentals and business model. We thank our shareholders and our lenders of existing and new financing for their unwavering confidence in us and their commitment to the company.

We also thank our financial adviser to the debt financing project -Bank Muscat Investment Banking Team for their contribution in achieving an exceptional outcome in an accelerated timeframe in difficult market conditions. Our thanks also to our legal advisers Al Bunsaidy Mansoor Jamal and Adleshaw Goddard for their assistance in the successful completion of the debt raising transaction.

With the conclusion of the financing, RSVD is well placed for growth and will continue to deliver improvements in, standards, safety and service offerings in Duqm. For us, RSVD is not just another business, it is a small contribution to nation-building."

ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

Omani businesses seeking to boost ESG issues, encouraged to sign up to 'Living Business'

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Businesses in Oman that want to improve their approach to environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues are encouraged to register for the second edition of the Living Business programme.

The programme, organised by Globally, Get in the Ring and HSBC, aims to improve the sustainability of businesses by helping them deliver a significant ESG enhancement initiative.

Participants will be provided with one-on-one coaching with ESG experts to help them achieve their goals. The companies that show the most promise will present their initiatives at the UK pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai, with winners invited to attend a course at the Institute for Sustainability Leadership at The University of Cambridge.

Simon Adcock, Head of Commercial Banking in HSBC Bank Oman, said, "At HSBC, we recognise the potential impact of climate change. Therefore, we aim to accelerate our efforts to build a sustainable future in the communities we serve and to help our customers in their transition to a low carbon economy."



ESG ENHANCEMENT: The programme, organised by Globally, Get in the Ring and HSBC, aims to improve the sustainability of businesses by helping them deliver a significant ESG enhancement initiative. - Supplied picture

"Living Business is yet another step towards achieving this goal, and it complements the other initiatives taken by HSBC Oman to support Omani businesses to contribute to achieving a green and circular economy that is responsive to national needs," he added.

Applications are open to all active businesses in Oman, Bahrain, Egypt, Qatar and the UAE who are prepared to implement a project that will have a significant ESG impact such as:

Reducing the business's or industry's environmental footprint

Enhancing the social capital of the business through initiatives such as improving the health, safety, wellbeing or skills of its staff or the wellbeing of its customers.

Creating a sustainable governance framework, including engagement, reporting and transparency.

Daniel Howlett, HSBC's Head of Commercial Banking in the Middle East, North Africa and Turkey, said, "If the world hopes to achieve

its climate targets, the business has to become more sustainable. Our latest Navigator Report told us that 98 per cent of companies in the Middle East see multiple opportunities for improving their environmental and ethical sustainability, so we do feel optimistic."

"HSBC is committed to helping our customers make the transition to a low-carbon future, not only by providing green and sustainable finance but also by sharing our knowledge and expertise," he added.

Last October, HSBC set out an ambitious plan to prioritize financing and investment that supports the transition to a net-zero global economy - and helps to build a thriving, resilient future for society and businesses. At the heart of the plan is a pledge to reduce financed emissions from HSBC's portfolio of customers to net-zero by 2050 or sooner, in line with the goals of the Paris Agreement.

The bank also aims to become net zero in its operations and supply chain by 2030. Towards this end, HSBC Oman's head office in Muscat is advancing towards a greener future with an innovative solar grid over its car park, which will generate enough power every day to provide about half of the building's energy needs.

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANISATION

Global food price index rises for 9th consecutive month in February

ROME: Global food commodity prices rose for the ninth consecutive month in February with quotations for sugar and vegetable oils increasing the most, according to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations.

The FAO food price index, which tracks monthly changes in the international prices of commonly-traded food commodities, averaged 116 points in February, 2.4 per cent higher than the previous month and up 26.5 per cent from a year ago.

The FAO sugar price index rose by 6.4 per cent from January as production declines in key producing countries together with strong import demand from Asia prompted ongoing concerns over tighter global supplies.

Expectations of a production recovery in Thailand and a bumper crop in India dampened the increase.

The FAO vegetable oil price index gained 6.2 per cent, reaching its highest level since April 2012. Prices for palm, soy, rape and sunflower seed oils all rose.

The FAO dairy price index rose

by 1.7 per cent led by international export quotations for butter where firm imports by China met limited supplies from western Europe. Cheese prices declined partly due to high inventories in the United States.

FAO also released the cereals supply and demand brief including updated assessments of global production, consumption, trade and inventories.

Global wheat production in 2021 is likely to increase and hit a new record of 780 million tonnes, according to FAO's preliminary forecast, as expectations of a rebound in production in the European Union more than offset weather-impacted production prospects for output in the Russian Federation.

FAO's new projections for 2020-21 include a 2 per cent annual increase in global cereal utilisation to 2,766 million tonnes and a 5.5 per cent growth in world trade in cereals to 464 million tonnes.

Global cereal stocks are now forecast to end 2021 at 811 million tonnes, 0.9 per cent below their opening levels, pushing down the stock-to-use ratio to 28.6 per cent. - ANI

MSM index ends higher



MUSCAT: The MSM index closed at 3,655.16 points, up 0.08 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended up 0.39 per cent at 543.94 points. Oman Cables Industry, up 5.93 per cent, was the top gainer while Oman Telecommunication, down 4.21 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 562 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating a turnover of OMR2.1 million, with more than 12 million shares changing hands. Out of 39 traded stocks, 21 advanced, 7 declined and 11 remained unchanged. At the session close, foreign investors were net sellers.

Services index was up by 0.02 per cent before closing at 1,545.33 points. Oman National Engineering, Al Jazeera Service, Phoenix Power, Al Suwadi Power and Oman Investment & Financials were up 5.43 per cent, 4.35 per cent, 2.13 per cent, 1.96 per cent and 1.22 per cent respectively. Oman Telecommunication and Ooredoo were down 4.21 per cent and 1.46 per cent respectively. –

United Securities

APPOINTMENT

Investcorp appoints Head of Bahrain and Kuwait for Private Wealth

Mohammed Al Sada joined Investcorp in 2008 and has held various senior roles within the firm,

In his new role, Mohammed will serve Investcorp's clients in Bahrain and Kuwait markets further growing its business in these geographies in line with the firm's ex-

Yusef Al Yusef, the Managing Partner of Investcorp Private Wealth, said, "Mohammed has been a great ambassador for Investcorp and his appointment not only reinforces our commitment to maintaining a longstanding relationship with clients in the GCC but also reflects the strengths and

Mohammed Al Sada commented, "In this market environment, it is crucial to have a client-centric culture that provides innovative and tailored investment solutions across geographies and asset classes. I am excited to take on this new role."

GCC port operators expanding their presence across supply chains

Times News Service

Shahnawaz Nakhoda, Partner, Ports and Logistics, KPMG Lower Gulf said, "The GCC's strategic geographic location and state-of-the-art infrastructure has enabled port operators to play a vital role in global maritime trade. As the world battles geopolitical trade tensions and the coronavirus pandemic, ports are playing a vital role in keeping the flow of goods moving. Port operators are building a presence across the supply chain to enhance their value proposition."

Container penetration in GCC



“The GCC’s strategic geographic location and state-of-the-art infrastructure has enabled port operators to play a vital role in global maritime trade

Shahnawaz Nakhoda
Partner, Ports and Logistics, KPMG
Lower Gulf

countries is more than six times that of the world average and significantly higher than that of major developed nations in the west. The development of port-linked free trade zones has contributed to the success of the sector in the region. GCC port operators have continued to invest in infrastructure, expansion and technology.

Currently, the region's annual average capacity growth is estimated to be 4.2 per cent – double the global average capacity growth of 2.1 per cent, as supply growth has outpaced demand in recent years. Excess capacity has resulted in a port utilisation rate

Meanwhile, climate change is emerging as a significant risk. Other emerging challenges include growing freight traffic and critical operational challenges while delivering services. To overcome these, ports are increasing investment in smart port technologies and the integration of the value chain with digital platforms.

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Sr.Accountant, Male, Semi qualified CMA US, MBA-Fin, 18 years exp in finance & accounts with Oman DL seeks suitable placement Contact 78392239

27 yrs male Sudanese Accountant 3 years experience MBA holder. Contact 94706138

Accountant, 4 years experience in Oman with DL # 95762756

26 yrs B.Com graduate with 3 yrs experience in accounts & logistics. seeking suitable placement.NOC available. Contact 91362146

Indian CPA 15+ years of experience in Oman & UAE as finance manager / chief accountant on visit and have NOC. Contact: 79007124
Email: shkkader@gmail.com

Accountant: looking for Accounts job, having morethan 10 years experience, can handle up to Finalization, with Valid D/L, seeking suitable placement. Contact 92800781

Indian Male, B.Com, MBA, 10yrs experience in accounts & export coordination with Focus, Oracle & Tally seeks suitable placement. NOC, D/L available. Mob: 98747867

Well experienced accountant looking part time job(including VAT) Contact 78075878

Accountant, 15 yrs of professional experience including 8 yrs in Oman looking for suitable placement. Contact 79898089

MBA Finance 16+Exp of Oman in Accounts up to finalization & Bank Facility LC, LTR, looking for suitable senior position. Contact 92383882

Indian Male with 5 yrs Experience in accounts (up to finalisation). Employment Visa, Ready to transfer immediately. Contact 79049345. Email muhammad.sahidhi@gmail.com

Accountant with 7 yrs experience along with Sales & Marketing in Oman with D/L. Local release available. Contact 91367217

Indian Male, 5 years' experience Looking for Accountant job. Software knows Tally & MS Office. Presently on Visit Visa. # 96761026/71561092. Email: mehreenratz@gmail.com

Accountant cum Business coordinator with an experience of 6 yrs in India,looking for placement.Ability to work with manufacturing & trading companies,Purchases,logistics, banking. Contact 94947900. Email bashabash@gmail.com

Part time accountant having 13 yrs experience seeking job Contact 79102100

Indian Male Accountant, M.Com 14 years experience in Oman with D/L & NOC seeks suitable placement Contact 99757409

Sudanese 32 yrs, 7 yrs experience in Oman in Accounting & Administrative assistant. Contact 94050251. email danygalaxy184@gmail.com

Sr Accountant looking for part time accounts job after 5.00pm upto finalization. Location Qurum to Mabelah. Contact 90935099

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JOB WANTED

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Commercial/Secretarial with Stenography/Documentation/Administration cum Basic Accounts 20 + years experience working in oman with NOC & D/L looking for a suitable job. Contact 92925926, 97704828. Email francis7@gmail.com

Indian female MBA (HR), PGDBA, BE, 7 yrs of experience in HR & administration (5 yrs in Oman) with Omani D/L. Looking for suitable placement. Contact 92474376

Indian Male, 12 years experience in Oman seeks job for Admin/Secretary or any suitable post. Holding Oman D/L. Email: vinrai99@gmail.com, Contact 79734085

Indian female BE MBA has DL, looking for job in Muscat. # 97613235

Commercial/Secretarial with Stenography /Documentation/Administration cum Basic Accounts 20 + years experience working in oman with NOC & D/L looking for a suitable job. Contact 92925926, 97704828. Email francis7@gmail.com

Indian female MBA, 3 yrs Oman experience, looking for suitable job (Oman D/L). Contact 99257214. Email sansshetty@gmail.com

Indian Female Bcom. 7 years experience. Exa. Secretary,Admin/Coordinator. DL. Contact 92243552/91190552.

Indian Female with 15 years experience in Administration with excellent communication skills, on family visa with D/L. Part time also willing. Contact 91469220

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Indian Female, Msc Biotechnology graduate currently in Muscat looking for suitable opportunities. 94687398 Email gayathrisprem21@gmail.com

Indian lady teacher [Bsc BioTech; currently pursuing B.Ed (8th sem)] with 6 years of experience handling secular and Islamic studies looking for suitable opportunities. 96950115, sahilnms89@gmail.com

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Indian Mech. Engineer with 14 yrs exp. in various industrial activities looking for short/long term project manager/engineer post anywhere in Oman. Visa available. Contact/ whatsapp 95326432

Indian Graduate 3 years experience looking for suitable job. Contact 968 94575752

Sudanese civil engineer, 10 yrs experience (Supervision & execution, projects, management, dams, roads) with Masters degree in Business Management. Contact 93214768

BE civil engineer having 14 yrs of Oman experience mainly in building construction looking for a suitable position. Please contact: 72132426

Electrical Engineer with 6+ years experience Available in Oman. having valid transferable Engineering Visa and oman DL, seeking new opportunities. Have ability to work as Estimation Engineer, Procurement Engineer, Design Engineer, Site Engineer and QA/QC Engineer in MEP department. Contact : 0096896739500 Whatsapp : +919633799797

Site civil engineer, 9 yrs experience building construction.Oman D/L & NOC available. Contact 94334402. Email nishath.ind91@gmail.com

Mechanical engineer, experience 4-5 yrs as Mechanical supervisor seeks job. Contact 79859336

Indian male Diploma Electrical Engineer, with 15 years of experience with 8 yrs exp in Oman with CEP and NOC available. Valid Oman D/L. Looking for suitable placement can join immediately. Contact 99579171

Civil Engineer fresh graduate, 6 months UAE/ Oman intensive training in construction and infrastructure, holder of valid D/L, Arab native who speaks 3 languages on a visit visa. seeking a job. Contact 97727285

Indian 25 yrs, Mechanical engineer, having Oman valid D/L. Looking for suitable placement. # 78043052

Exp 18 yrs Infrastructure engineer, looking job, have visa. Contact 79041286

Civil engineer more than 10 years experience in GCC country. Already have visa. Contact 98913676

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Civil Engineer (B.E) Indian, 1 year Exp, living in Oman seeks job. Contact 94227623

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BE Civil engineer having 12 years oman experience looking for sub contracting works like block work,plaster, tiling, false ceiling and so on. Please contact 72132426

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Civil Engineer, 7 years experience, working in reputed construction company in UAE seeking job in Oman.Contact 78031493
Email: sharathp20@gmail.com

Arabic civil engineer excellent spoken and written english - 6 years experience in projects coordination & supervision, preparing submittals & engineering softwares resident and have DL. Contact 95432250

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CONNECT

JOB WANTED

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Contact +968 71548622
cleetadsu7259@gmail.com

EGYPTIAN CIVIL ENGINEER

2 yrs experience in Site & Design with Driving License seeks job

Contact 97500522
Email: mohamelgeziry@gmail.com

SR. MECHANICAL / MEP ENGINEER / MEP MANAGER

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Contact: +96871180492
allirod1975@gmail.com

FINANCE

Indian Male 32yrs (CMA, MBA-Fin.) with 10 Yrs (8yrs in GCC Manufacturing & SAOG) experience currently working as Asst. Finance Manager expertise in MIS reporting, Accounting upto finalization, Budgeting, Financial modeling, Business Analysis, IFRS, ERP & Advance Excel, seeking similar position in the Finance department.

Contact 99250104, Email: hyder065@gmail.com

ENGINEER

Omani female looking for a job, BSc in Process engineering (Done four different internships in process engineering), marketing experience as well.

Contact: 95119284
alya_alsiyabi93@outlook.com

B.E Civil Engineer

Indian Male 29yrs with 7 Plus years of Experience in handling High End Building Construction Projects, Infrastructure, MEP, Interior finish and Landscaping works looking for any suitable job in immediate. Having Knowledge of MS Project & Primavera P6. NOC & Oman D/L Available.

Contact/ Whatsapp No.: 95051103,
Email: loyannavildsouza@gmail.com

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Female with 8 years experience in Admin & Accounts looking for a suitable post.

Telephone: 96303874

Indian male chief accountant 21yrs experience in financial accounting, budgeting and finalisation. Oman D/L familiar with Sap, customised ERP and Tally. On visit

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Email sajeevsmi2005@gmail.com

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Contact: 78371040

Project Director / Senior Project Manager / Contracts Administrator

Indian National having 18 years of work experience, 14 years in Oman having master's in Construction Project Management & Construction Law & Dispute Resolution from UK Universities. Experienced in Handling High End Hospitality, Residential & Commercial Projects from initiation till completion. Seeks Placement as Clients or Consultants representative in Oman.

Please contact – 78022980

Indian male B Com, ICWA intermediate with 20 years of Oman middle management experience in handling MIS, project finance management, managing banks, budgeting, forecasting, finalization of accounts and year end audits, seeks proper placement. NOC/ DL available.

Please contact 94839479,
sureshswaminathan2311@gmail.com

FINANCE

Male with 7 years experience in accounts & admin looking for a suitable post.

Telephone: 97711584

GIS Engineer

Indian Male, Age 24, B.E. Computer Engineering and Masters of Science in GIS (Geographic Information Systems) from U.K. Seeking suitable placement in GIS field. Having Oman Driving License. Resident of Oman. Ready to join immediately.

Contact: 99738614,
deepitkotian14@gmail.com

Indian male, bachelor's degree, Graduate (B.Com, B. Ed) looking for secretary, exec assistant, office administration jobs, 18 years experience, 7 years in Oman.

Call 97015841
Email khalid.bin.umar@gmail.com

FINANCE

Indian Female (MBA Finance) having 15 years (Oman) of work experience in Banking / Finalization / Audit; seeks suitable placement.

Contact 94953826 / 92824146

ACCOUNTANT

A certified VAT professional having Masters degree & 10 years of GCC experience in senior positions, is available to handle accounts & VAT compliance.

Contact 71990782

PROJECT ADMIN/CEO OFFICE MNGMT/HR/OPS CORPORATE & MKTG. COMMUNICATIONS/ADMIN

Indian, Masters, excellent English, Arabic speaker, 17years Oman exp in Airports Project, Hospital, Media in Project Coordination, Corporate & Mktg. Communication, CEO & Chairman Office Mngmt, Operations, Admin, HR. Immediate. NOC.

CONTACT 99283938

ELECTRICAL MANAGER

Graduate Electrical Engineer & MBA (Project Management) with 28 years' experience in Industrial Projects & Maintenance looking for senior role. NOC Available and can join immediately.

Contact: 968-94029112
Email: sakthiveljothi@gmail.com

FINANCE MANAGER

INDIAN MALE, FINANCE MANAGER WITH OVER 20+ YEARS OF EXPERIENCE WITH NBFC, IT, MANUFACTURING AND SERVICE INDUSTRIES. GOOD KNOWLEDGE OF COMPUTERS. SEEKING SUITABLE OPPORTUNITIES. LOCAL RELEASE CAN BE ARRANGED.

CONTACT +968 95808315 / 94411825

FINANCE

Indian, Female, MCOM with B.Ed. Having 2 Years' experience in Office accounts (Inventory Checking, Book keeping, Payroll) and training experience (ICT teaching, Lecture methods-Accounting) in schools. Looking for suitable placement in Accounts/ Admin / Teacher jobs. Currently on Visit visa, Residing in Wadi kabir, Muscat.

Contact 97131091, Email: gokulsbg@gmail.com

PURCHASE + STORES + ADMINISTRATION

Indian Male 10+yrs experience in Oman (Currently available in Oman). Experience in Engineering / Construction/Structural Steel Projects, Manufacturing & Trading Concern. With administrative skills with D/L & NOC. Looking for suitable placement.

Contact: 78039935

SENIOR ACCOUNTANT

Srilankan Senior Accountant looking for a suitable opportunity. 7 years experience in Oman & capable of handling accounts up to finalization. On hand experience in Tally, Spur, QB etc. Having D/L.

CONTACT: 92821932

Finance Head

CPA, CMA, CIA with 19 years' experience in Strategic finance, Banking, Financial reporting, Budget, VAT. Looking for Senior management position in finance/ internal audit. Available to join shortly.

Contact 92148608

ACCOUNTS/FINANCE

Indian Male, 41 Years, B.Com + CA intermediate, having more than 15 Years of experience. (13 years in Oman) in the different positions as Accounts Manager, Internal Auditor and statutory auditor. currently working as Accounts Manager, seeking similar Managerial position in finance.

Contact: 99169501

JOB WANTED

HOSPITALITY

BSc Hospitality Management Graduate from Sunway University, Malaysia. Hospitality experience in Oman and Malaysia. Looking for a suitable long term placement in the Hospitality Industry. Contact 94575782 Email dhruvatul58@gmail.com

IT

Indian female MCA, 4 yrs experience in TCS as a software testing engineer seeking suitable position. Contact 95249883 Email rejaaramdas@gmail.com

LOGISTIC

Indian 24 yrs presently in Oman, graduated in BCA, experience in Rent a car in Oman, airport & in Car showroom. Contact 79224987

8 yrs experience, Customer service, operations, logistics, secretary, trading, NOC available, currently in Muscat, D/L, Excellent communication in English, Tamil, Hindi, Malayalam. Contact 91116374

8 years experience in supply chain and logistics. Having a vehicle and Oman valued D/L & valid work visa which can be transmitted. Contact 97338399, 79844071. Email manjeshbpillai@gmail.com

MANAGER

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Male having 10 years Experience (Oman), working as a "Fleet Manager" looking for a suitable position. Contact 93363316

MECHANIC/TECHNIC

HSE, professional having 20+ yrs of experience in HSE field in building, airport construction & oil & gas. Contact 90125179

Tower crane operator. NOC available. Contact 91519095

Indian fitter with diploma certification in piping & structural engineering looking for job. Immediate joining. Contact 79500069

Indian male civil supervisor, 25 yrs experience in galfar Oman. Client approved permit holder OETC scaffolding tag inspector, reservior, HDPE, DI pipeline, earth works shuttering, reinforcement, concrete. Contact 97680142 Email awadhesh37@gmail.com

PURCHASE/PROCUREMENT

Indian male, 10+ yrs experience in the field of purchase, store, asset coordinator. Valid D/L. Immediately available for joining. Contact 71596360. Email praveenskurup82@gmail.com

16 yrs Oman experience in procurement, logistics & customs with valid Oman D/L & NOC seeking suitable position. Contact 95174968

Indian male, working last 12 years in Oman as a Purchasing officer and site coordinator, D/L NOC available looking for suitable job. # 97099785. Email maniugcc@gmail.com

Indian male, 13yrs Oman Experience, Admin/Operations/Purchase/Stores, etc. NOC, D/L. # 78363835

Procurement & Logistics Head with 17+ yrs exp, Indian. # 99224623

TOUR / TRAVEL

Seeking job in Travel & Tourism. 12 years experience, Graduate (B.Sc) IATA Certified professional presently available in Oman. Contact 968 92477622, 79842322 Email: tahaspm@gmail.com

Indian male 29, exp: 03yr-09 months as ticketing reservation executive seeks job. NOC available. Contact 97322323/94478168. e-mail: anwarijalil51@gmail.com

JOB WANTED

SALES / MARKETING

Young Indian male B.com graduate, Digital Marketing & PG Diploma in logistic (Air cargo and supply chain management) Valid Oman D/L Looking for suitable placement. Contact: 79748272 Email: shazil.sadique@gmail.com.

MBA marketing having 12 years of experience in sales of various B2B products. Experience in making and implementing marketing plans. Capable to market any good product. Call 91690869

Mechanical engineer, 4 yrs experience in Oman & 1 yr in India, have Oman valid D/L. Looking for suitable placement. Contact 91521567

Indian male, 38 yrs old MBA graduate, 14 yrs experience in Oman. Looking for appropriate placement in sales & marketing job in Muscat region having valid D/L. Contact 92255983 Email vijukrishnann@gmail.com

Indian males Sales officer with 3 years experience capable to manage from quotation till finalization tally. Contact 79880058

Indian Male 15 years Experience (MBA) looking for job in Sales & Marketing. Currently in Oman with Valid Driving License and Valid Visa. Contact 91127809

Indian Male, Graduate having 8 yr Oman & 7yr India experience in Marketing and Sales field looking for suitable placement. Contact 79584458, 92369044. Email: rkumarkotian21@gmail.com

Indiam male MBA post graduate, 9 yrs experience in Sales & Marketing, Oman DL holder. Looking for suitable placement. Contact 71537034

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Do more with MG RX8

With the new seven-seat RX8, MG is entering a segment in which it has never previously been present



MUSCAT: It's big. It's bold. It's sleek. It's stylish. It just does more.

The MG name has long been synonymous with developing eye-catching sporty vehicles, with its heritage stretching back decades and incorporating some of the most memorable models around. But that was then, and this is now. The acclaimed manufacturer has delivered a bold and capable seven-seat SUV - the MG RX8 that provides incredible style with off-road capability, luxurious comfort, and some of the finest automotive technology available.

With the new seven-seat RX8, MG is entering a segment in which it has never previously been present. Robust and spacious, with both the largest wheelbase and the largest third-row space in the class, it immediately sets itself apart from the competition. The MG RX8 is equally at home off-road as it is cruising around town or on long-distance journeys, where occupants will fully appreciate the levels of advanced technology and premium comfort on offer.

"The new RX-8 is a breathtakingly affordable SUV," commented Mohsin Hani Al Bahrani, CEO of Mohsin Haider Darwish's ACERE division, distributors of the MG brand in Oman. "Reliable and tough, it can go anywhere, do anything. Off-road or on, it delivers upgraded performance and offers the latest technology and safety with incredible style. Advanced in every area including style and features, it is an ideal family vehicle

that is also dependable, tougher and provides better performance."

The bold yet simple design of the new RX8 makes it stand out from the crowd. At the front, the dual-slot bonnet, the silver lower lip, the chrome grille and the matrix-style LED foglamps are sure to impress. The commanding presence and smooth body lines are set off neatly by features such as the twin chrome exhaust, LED tail-lights, LED Headlamps, LED DRL and 20" alloys depending on trim. There is a choice of six different exterior colours.

Within the cabin, the MG RX8 reinforces the brand's reputation for delivering premium finishes at non-premium prices. The use of an array of the finest materials, including wood grain, chrome and soft-touch trim, gives the RX8 a high-class feel. Customers can opt from three attractive interior colour schemes. MG has even linked up with German company Bader, one of the world's top manufacturers of premium leather for the automotive industry.

To ensure the travel experience is as quiet as it is comfortable, MG has invested significant resources in sound insulation - 20 cavity partitions and more than 30 multi-layer damping plate structures contribute to a measurement of 55dB that is significantly better than the RX8's key rivals.

For space and practicality, the MG RX8 is head and shoulders above the competition, guarantee-

ing a relaxed and enjoyable journey for all on-board. Thanks to its impressive exterior dimensions - 4923mm long, 1930mm wide and 1842mm high - the RX8's wheelbase of 2850mm is the largest in its segment, delivering a spacious and modular interior.

MG's new model features an ingenious 'theatre-style' seating design that incorporates a shallow front-to-rear gradient that means that even the third row of passengers benefit from an exceptional view. The adjustable reach in the second row is 230mm, helping to ensure that passengers in the third row enjoy enhanced access to their seats, as well as an unrivalled 884mm of legroom - the largest third-row space in the class.

A truly capable 4x4, the RX8 offers a real-time 4x4 Torque on Demand (TOD) System, which changes the torque in 0.1 sec. This advanced 4WD system has six different driving modes: Auto for smart selection; 4L for 'go-anywhere' low speed, high torque; Off-road for a pure off-roading experience; Snow for low-adhesion, wet surfaces; Sport for faster throttle response and more aggressive shifting logic; and 2H for fuel-efficient high speed cruising in 2WD mode. The entry-level (STD) trim comes with a 4x2 rear-wheel-drive transmission system.

Built on a strong truck chassis frame, the robust MG RX8 has been designed to handle the toughest off-road terrain that Oman can

throw at it. Facilitating off-road travel, it has a high ground clearance of 202mm, a wading depth of 800mm, and when empty approach and departure angles of 23°.

The current line-up of MG models is renowned for offering some of the finest technology around, and the RX8 is no different, with wireless phone charging and smartphone connectivity with Apple Carplay and Android Auto enabled to a 10-inch colour touchscreen all standard. All three extremely well-equipped trim levels feature Dual Zone Climate Control with additional climate control in the rear, cruise control and a rear parking camera. Also standard across the range are keyless entry and push-button start, front and rear parking sensors and a panoramic sunroof.

Available under the brand's amazing new 'save with MG' offer, with prices starting from just OMR9,399, the MG RX8 is equipped with a wide range of standard safety features such as front, side and curtain airbags, front and rear sensors with a rearview camera, Active Rollover Protection and a Tyre Pressure Monitoring System. Further Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) such as a Lane Departure Warning System feature on the LUX trim. In common with the rest of the MG product line-up, the MG RX8 has been awarded a 5 Star C-NCAP safety rating.

Pre-VAT savings campaign at Malabar Gold & Diamonds

MUSCAT: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, one of the largest jewellery retailers globally with a strong retail network of over 250 outlets spread across 10 countries, has announced the 10 per cent advance scheme for customers to ensure savings before the implementation of VAT in the country.

As part of the Royal Decree issued by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, VAT is expected to be implemented in the country from April 16, 2021.

Through the pre-VAT savings campaign, customers can block the rate of gold based on the current gold rate by paying a minimum of 10 per cent in advance. This way, if the gold rate increases, customers get the benefit of the booked rate and if it reduces during purchase, they get the lower gold rate i.e. a customer intending to buy gold jewellery worth OMR 10,000 just needs to pay OMR 1000 to avail the advance booking offer and in turn get protected from the increasing gold rates.

Customers can visit any store of Malabar Gold & Diamonds on or before March 31 to avail of this offer, while they can purchase jewellery on or before April 15 i.e. before the implementation of VAT, thus ensuring maximum savings.

"Considering the current favourability of gold, both in terms of the reducing rate and as a value-appreciating lifestyle article, it is the best time now for consumers to invest in the metal and ensure savings, before the introduction of 5 per cent VAT. We are doing everything possible to ensure our customers benefit during this pre-vat hike period, with several collections displayed in our stores across gold, diamond and gemstone jewellery. By paying just 10 per cent of the total amount, customers can both ben-

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Considering the current favourability of gold, both in terms of the reducing rate and as a value-appreciating lifestyle article, it is the best time now for consumers to invest in the metal and ensure savings, before the introduction of 5 per cent VAT

Najeeb K
Regional Director – Oman, Malabar Gold & Diamonds

efit from the low gold rate in addition to saving on the 5 per cent VAT," said Najeeb K, Regional Director – Oman, Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

Customers also have the unique opportunity to buy now and pay later through an interest-free instalment scheme with selected banks including Bank Muscat, Sohar International and NBO. The pre-VAT savings offer is available across all stores of Malabar Gold & Diamonds in Oman.

BUSINESS IDEA

Zubair SEC member's Omani tea brand Karak Baitna brews a success story

MUSCAT: In a country that is ideally known for its love for tea or rather its Karak chai, Yaqob Salim Al Rawahi's business idea is a sure shot winner.

Zubair member and founder of Karak Baitna, Yaqob Salim Al Rawahi has been brewing a success story since 2018 when he first launched the Omani brand.

Karak Baitna came about from the owner's fascination and love of making Karak tea. The product, which is a mixture of tea and special spices such as cardamom, ginger, satin, saffron, cinnamon and cloves has a keen fan base of its own. Over the last few years, he has added readymade Karak tea blends with different flavours to add value to the brand.

Sustaining a brand as unique is a tough proposition in a highly competitive market. However, Karak Baitna has forged a special place for itself in the consumer's heart.

A spokesperson for Zubair SEC said, "We recognise the excellent performance and professionalism shown by Yaqob Salim Al Rawahi in building his brand. We would like to commend him for his hard work and commitment that has made a difference to his success. He has the approach to do things differently and that has helped in setting a good name for his brand."

The journey of making Karak Baitna a success story has been one of hard work, planning and



application. "We experimented a lot before creating the final product. We started distributing the products to the stores in January 2019 after signing agreements with some stores to distribute," says Yaqob.

Today, the Karak Baitna tea brand is available in 32 commercial outlets across various governorates of Oman, including Al Buraimi, Dhahirah, Al Dakhiliyah, North and South Sharqiyah, North Al Batinah and Dhofar.

Yaqob has participated in exhibitions in different places which helped him increase the popularity of his products.

Karak Baitna owner credits the

success of his business to the support from Zubair SEC.

"They helped me create and grow the brand by providing them with the necessary support and technical services. They armed me with the necessary expertise and tools to succeed in increasingly competitive markets. Zubair SEC has contributed to the support and development of many companies that have become strong leaders in the local market. Karak Baitna is one of the businesses which relied on Zubair SEC services to advance," Yaqob explains.

He redesigned the packaging at the beginning of 2020 and

added new flavours.

Speaking of the COVID-19 challenge, "To overcome the tough situation we worked on some promotions and thankfully accomplished good sales rate. At the end of the year and the beginning of 2021, we worked on redoing the packaging. We added a customised logo. I am happy to have created a brand dedicated to selling quality tea, prepared with authentic ingredients, to the common people at a reasonable price. We hope we see continued success in the future."

Karak Baitna continuously looking to spread its wings and will be available in more outlets in Oman.

Apart from commercial outlets, Karak Baitna is one of the vendors on the Souqmazoon website.

"During these modern times, SMEs must keep abreast of the latest technology and adopt its efficacy to grow in their business. I am proud of being a part of this electronic platform which has Omani products, and which promotes local SMEs," Yaqob says.

Zubair SEC provides a variety of services that include consulting solutions, guidance, business development opportunities, building competencies, networking opportunities, knowledge transfer between entrepreneurs and between those interested in entrepreneurship.

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