



HIS MAJESTY SENDS CABLE OF CONGRATULATIONS TO IRAN

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to Dr. Ebrahim Raisi, President-elect of the Islamic Republic of Iran on winning the presidential elections.

In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings and wishes to the president and to his country's people further progress and prosperity. His Majesty the Sultan also reaffirmed further enhancement of existing strong relations between the two countries and cooperation in the various spheres for the interest of the peoples of both the countries.—**ONA**



Founded 1975 · Volume 46 No. 82 | 16 Pages · Baisas 200 · Subscription OMR63 | ISO 9001:2008 Certified Company | Chairman/Editor-in-Chief: Mohamed Issa Al Zadjali | Printed & Published by Muscat Media Group

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TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN Drive-thru graduation ceremonies

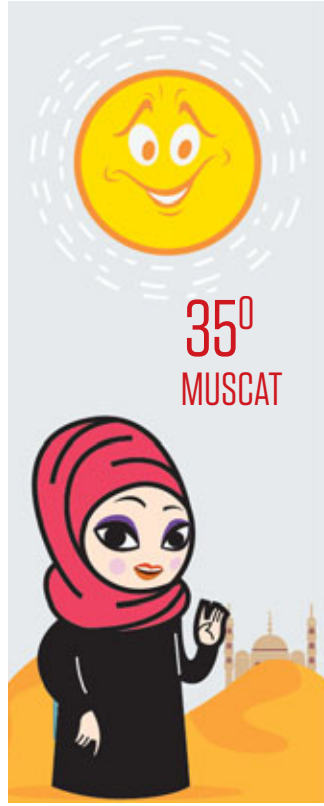
1 Schools are organising drive-thru graduation ceremonies for their students, who cannot attend the event on the premises, because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Traditionally the ceremony takes place in a large indoor space. **>A3**

WORLD Biden warns of 'deadlier' variant

2 Cautioning Americans against the highly transmissible delta variant that appears to be "particularly dangerous" for young people, US President Joe Biden has urged people to take the shot as soon as possible. **>A7**

MARKET Muscat Pavilion construction starts

3 Asawer Real Estate and Muscat Hills Joint Development celebrated start of construction of Muscat Pavilion in Muscat Hills. It took place under the patronage of Sayyid Saud bin Hilal Al Busaidi, Minister of State and Governor of Muscat. **>B1**



NIGHT MOVEMENT BAN IN EFFECT FROM TODAY UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE



The Committee urges all target segments to take the initiative and get vaccinated against COVID-19

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Supreme Committee tasked with tackling developments resulting from coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has decided to impose a ban on movement of people and vehicles, and ordered the closure of all public places and com-

mercial activities (while allowing home delivery service) from 8 pm to 4 am starting from tomorrow Sunday, 20 June 2021, till further notice.

The decision exempts activities and segments excluded from similar bans announced earlier.

The Supreme Committee reaffirms that all health sector estab-

lishments, led by the Ministry of Health, are resolute in their efforts to continue implementing "COVID-19 National Immunisation Plan" in accordance with the preset stages and segments.

The Committee urges all target segments to take the initiative and get vaccinated against COVID-19 to protect themselves, their families and their communities from this disease.

While appreciating the commitment of many individuals in society and across different establishments to precautionary measures aimed to curb the spread of the disease, the Supreme Committee expresses its astonishment and deep concern at the indifference of some people

who continue to hold gatherings for various events in stark violation of the approved procedures. The Committee warns that the (law and order) departments concerned are firm in undertaking (punitive) action adequate in this regard.

There were 2,015 fresh cases of COVID-19 reported on Thursday, June 17, according to the Tarassud COVID monitoring app. In Oman, 26,217 people still have the disease.

242,723 people in the country have tested positive for COVID-19 since the pandemic began, of whom 134,951 are Omani, and 107,772 are expatriates. 171,129 of those who have tested positive so far are men, the other 71,594 are women.

—With inputs from ONA

FIGHTING COVID

COVID vaccinations for people aged over 45 from today

Times News Service

MUSCAT: People in Oman aged 45 and above can now book their COVID-19 vaccine appointments at the nearest vaccination centre, the Ministry of Health has announced.

The move comes as part of efforts to vaccinate additional target groups in society, as part of the national campaign for immunisation against COVID-19.

People in these target groups

can go to the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC), where vaccines are being administered, as well as at the health centre in Quriyat. All visitors to health centres and vaccination sites are requested to adhere to the required preventive measures.

With the opening of the OCEC vaccination centre, other sites in the wilayats of Muttrah, Bausher, Seeb and Amerat that are used to distribute vaccines to the popula-

tion will be closed.

"We have completed all the required procedures for operating the centre, in cooperation with the OCEC, Royal Oman Police, and Directorate General of Scouts and Guides," said Dr Thamra bint Said Al Ghafriah, the Director General of Health Services in Muscat. "Vaccination centres in the above wilayats will be closed, with the exception of Al Sahil Health Centre in Quriyat."

>A5



Hiker? Try the White Mountains of Oman

A2

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Looking for a new place to hike? Visit Oman’s White Mountains

The slopes of this mountain range are often visited by shepherds and goatherds, who graze their flocks on the sloping terrain, and it is also part of the network of falaj systems

Times News Service

MUSCAT: People who enjoy Oman’s outdoors will surely want to visit the White Mountains, which provide an amazing opportunity for hikers and off-road enthusiasts to explore another part of the country.

Forming the core of the Eastern Hajar Mountains, the White Mountains are also vital to the surrounding communities: the towns of Quriyat, Sur, Wadi Bani Khalid, Al Qabil, and Tahin are a few of the settlements located in their vicinity. The slopes of this mountain range are often visited by shepherds and goatherds, who graze their flocks on the sloping terrain, and it is also part of the network of falaj systems that feed water to the surrounding agricultural lands.

Al Muathir Al Kindi, a geologist from Nizwa, often frequents the White Mountains for reasons both personal and professional.



MAJESTIC MOUNTAINS: Forming the core of the Eastern Hajar Mountains, the White Mountains are also vital to the surrounding communities: the towns of Quriyat, Sur, Wadi Bani Khalid, Al Qabil, and Tahin are a few of the settlements located in their vicinity.

His love for hiking has seen him explore many mountain ranges in the country, while he has also led survey teams and field trips from the Geological Society of Oman and other organisations that aim to spread awareness of the country’s rich, rugged and varied landscape.

“Its apex roughly forms a geographical boundary between the governorates of North Sharqiyah, South Sharqiyah, and the south-eastern edge of Muscat governorate,” said Al Kindi, who holds a Master of Science in geology from Royal Holloway University. “It reaches elevations as high as 2,216



Al Muathir Al Kindi, a geologist from Nizwa.

metres at its highest peak, Jebel Khadar, which is different to the well-known Jebel Akhdar.”

“The terrain largely comprises a plateau with extensive elevated space, cross-cut by the canyons of significant wadis draining from the mountains,” he added. “This is definitely a good destination for hikers and adventurers, because it has some natural paths for shepherds, which are used by hikers to climb up the mountain slopes. When the weather is pleasant, walking on the plateau on top of the mountain range is an amazing experience.”

creatures thrived in the conditions currently present in the seas off Oman’s coastline.

These areas became elevated much later, he adds, just like other mountains in Oman, which share many similarities with Jebel Khadar. These ranges, for one, are extremely resistant to soil erosion, because of their ridge-like terrain, steep slopes, and elevated plateaus.

“However, the key difference between the White Mountains in the Eastern Hajar Mountain range and the Jebel Akhdar or Jebel Shams range in the Western section is their geological age,” Al Kindi explained. “The rock formations in here are considered young in geological terms, whereas those found in the elevated mountains of the west were formed even earlier, mostly during the Mesozoic era that is well-known to be the age of dinosaurs.”

Although the mountain is abundant in limestone, Al Kindi says extracting them is not very economically viable, in addition to a number of other challenges presented by companies that attempt to quarry it.

“The terrain means it is too difficult and too costly to transport the required machinery,” he said. “Another aspect that discourages mining is the unique environment worth preserving. A good resource from the region would be agricultural products: if the flat stretches of elevated land are cultivated, their cooler climate would be suitable for Mediterranean fruits as of those planted in Jebel Akhdar.”

“One of the challenges for this project, however, is the scarcity of water but this could be overcome by pumping it from desalination plants by the coast, or even from the already-available freshwater reservoir of Wadi Dhayqah dam that is relatively close,” explained Al Kindi.



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1,009 DEATHS FROM COVID-19 IN JUST THREE MONTHS

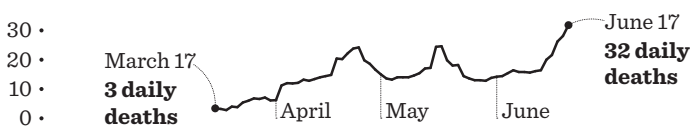
Updated on June 17, 2021

Since the pandemic began in Oman, 2,626 deaths have occurred, but the most alarming fact is that nearly 40% of those deaths occurred only in the last three months. Only five wilayats have not reported a single death so far: Maqshin, Sadah and Dalkut in Dhofar; Madha in Musandam; As Sunaynah in Al Buraimi

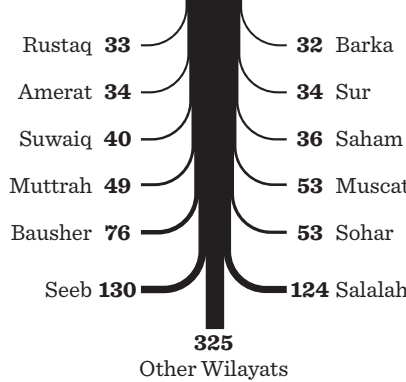
Source:
Ministry of Health
novaogram

■ Daily number of deaths (5-day average)

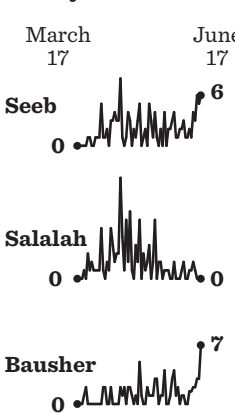
Currently, the daily number of deaths from Covid-19 is in the order of the 30s, a growth of 1,000% over the last three months



■ Number of deaths from March 17 to June 14



■ Number of daily deaths in the top 3 wilayats



COVID-19

Muttrah Market prohibits entry of children, elderly

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Children and the elderly will not be allowed entry into Muttrah Market, as part of precautionary measures taken to stop the spread of COVID-19.

A number of other decisions have also been taken by Muscat Municipality concerning the Muttrah Market for Fish, Fruits and Vegetables.

Temperature checks will be carried out for all entrants to the market: those with a body temperature of more than 37.5 degrees Celsius will not be permitted to enter, as will those who aren't wearing masks.

Visitors to the market are also required to maintain a distance of at least 1.5 metres, and must enter and exit the premises through only the one gate designated for this purpose. Proper ventilation must be put in place, and the market will also only run at 30 percent customer capacity.

Furthermore, workers must



FRESH CURBS: Visitors to the market are also required to maintain a distance of 1.5 metres, and must enter and exit the premises through only the one gate designated for this purpose.

adhere to the requirements and preventive measures to halt the further spread of COVID-19, which includes wearing face masks and disposable gloves, and the frequent cleaning of display counters and surfaces.

Customers are requested not to touch the fish on display within the market, and be required to view all produce from a distance, which will be maintained through barriers erected from unused display tables.



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School graduation celebrations take drive-thru route

The ceremony that traditionally takes place in a large indoor space was creatively re-designed by Knowledge Gate International School

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Schools are organising drive-thru graduation ceremonies for their students, who cannot attend the event on the premises, because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has kept schools closed since March, it has not stopped students from continuing their education or experiencing their graduation.

The restrictions on large gatherings means that graduation ceremonies have been different from others before them: virtual or drive-thru.

The graduation ceremony that traditionally takes place in a large indoor space with graduates walking across a stage to accept their certificates, has been uniquely and creatively re-designed by Knowledge Gate International School.

KGIS Executive Principal, Liz Stanley said: "We wanted to make sure that our students' successes were properly acknowledged and



celebrated. The graduating class of 2021 will absolutely go down in history with the majority of their senior years being dominated by a global pandemic. But rather than being victims of this pandemic, they have emerged triumphant and resilient, they have conquered every challenge that they have faced and have shown that they are the most skilled problem solvers.

"They have worked tirelessly to ensure that they gain the university places they deserve, and to deliver what promise to be the best examination results in the history of the school," she added.

"As a result of the pandemic, the Class of 2021 go out into the world better equipped to navigate life beyond school better than any of their predecessors."

At the ceremony, students and their families line up in rows of well-spaced vehicles in front of the main stage set up on the roof top car park at the Crowne Plaza (OCEC), set against the stunning backdrop of the Muscat skyline. Families decorated their cars, waved flags and held signs congratulating their offspring.

The main ceremony was preceded by a drive by parade with students standing out of sunroofs as school staff and hotel guests clapped and cheered. The full ceremony was live-streamed so that families could see and hear everything from the comfort and safety



of their own vehicles maintaining appropriate social distancing from others.

One by one the students, dressed in traditional gowns and caps with the addition of their face mask, left their car to receive their certificates to the cheers of encouragement from their relatives. They greeted the School Principal and Head of Secondary from a safe distance and had their photo taken before returning to their vehicle.

The evening ended with a box of refreshments being delivered to each car before pyrotechnic fireworks lit up the sky in a finale.

Stanley added, "We considered running a virtual graduation but after speaking to our students it became clear that togetherness was the most important thing to them. They wanted the opportunity to celebrate with their friends and family in a safe but exciting way and this is exactly where the drive-thru concept came from."



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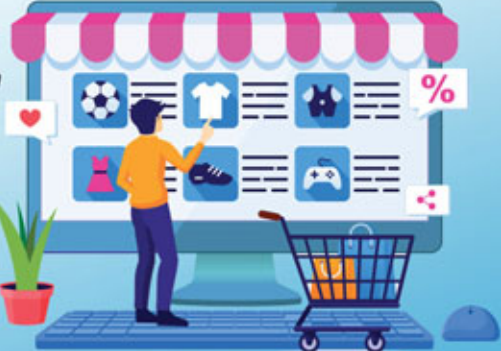
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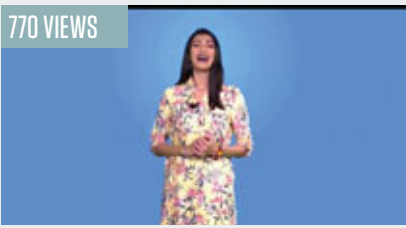
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Story on Khareef Season starts in Dhofar

A story on Khareef Season begins in Dhofar reached 18,679 people and had 1,388 engagements on Facebook.

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IBRI'S UNIQUE TOPOGRAPHY AND RICH BIODIVERSITY



The geographic region of Al Dhahirah Governorate is characterised with a rich biodiversity and unique topography including mountains, plain lands and deserts. At the eastern part of the Governorate there are high mountains with moderate temperatures in summer and cold winters and with some rare trees including Juniperus excelsa found at Jabal Al Suorat in Ibri. From the mountains at the eastern part of Al Dhahirah Governorate run several wadis toward the desert areas to add a new topography with water springs, varied plants and wildlife. Engineer Tariq bin Hasan Al Mamari, Director of Environment Department in Al Dhahirah Governorate said that, “Al Dhahirah Governorate is a haven for migrating birds throughout the year.” He said that Al Dhahirah Governorate was famous for Pterocles (Sandgrouse family birds), one of the local birds that live in the desert area in addition to eagles and other migrating birds that are common in the area.

“The governorate also hosts a number of rare and endangered animals including Arabian Tahr, Arabian Gazelle, Afghan’s fox and caracal among others,” he said adding that “the plain lands host several wild trees mainly acacia that cope with the climate at the area”. “The Environment Department in Al Dhahirah Governorate receives complaints from citizens cooperating in preservation of wildlife in relation to any abuse of natural life”, he said. On the Royal Directives of His Majesty the Sultan for making environment one of the pillars of Oman Vision 2040, the Environment Authority is extending due efforts for protection of environment through the scheme for Oman strategy for development of environment and other sustainable environment projects. Such projects included planting 10 million wild trees in the various parts of the Sultanate to combat desertification and to disseminate green areas, he added.

COMMENTARY

Plugging-in generation gap — being your child’s best friend

There is no better relationship than a prudent and faithful friend. The basic foundation of every relationship is friendship. However, communication is the key. It is indeed the engine of a perfect relationship between a parent and a child. With the age of transition, it is seen that children struggle to understand and go along with their parents in different phases of life. In the whole process of the change, effective communication is getting overblown.

I, Anis Sajjan, Vice Chairman of Danube Group and my wife Rubina Sajjan are parents to two children: Azhar (23 years) and Sahil (20 years). As parents, we cannot afford to ignore the duties of raising them in a significant way. However, there is no denying the fact there is a sure visible generation gap between me and my children in my family. The values, tastes and outlook on life are different with each generation. In general, both parents and children do not see things from the standpoint of each other. As a father of two, I believe that listening and empathising with the children is important for a parent to strengthen the relationship. Here are a few things which parents can look deeper into to have a better relationship with their children and bridging the generation gap.

A child who finds a friend in his father finds a treasure in life!

-Anis Sajjan

Unleashing the true friendship power

Being the child's first friend is the best thing to do. First a friend, you will always have a first say in the child's life. It will help the child to share a special connection with you. The wisdom of friendship will open up a foundation for a new way of parenting. While growing, children with more friends of their age onboard start to spend less time with parents. By knowing their close friends and connecting with their parents and family will tell you a lot about your child.

It is usually observed that sons are mama's boys. They share everything more often with their mother than with their father. Learning to put me in my children's shoes and trying to understand their thoughts as well as encouraging them to share their experiences has not only helped me to be their faithful father but also for them to be my faithful friends.



Lead from the front

As things move fast, little things like 'special bonding' are left behind. Technology affects the generation gap to a larger extent. Gone are the days when cell phones were used mainly for the dire need for communication. Gadgets definitely go along with your child's personal time but a family space

where a child can safely interact is becoming fewer and fewer. But should they be blamed alone? Not anymore! As a parent, it is our responsibility too to be gadget-free at least one time a day most preferably the dinner time.

One meal a day

The simple act of talking to your

children about each other's day at the end of the day can close the generation gap to some extent. All great changes happen at the "dinner table". At the same time, all the fondest memories happen when gathered around the dinner table. Keeping that time open for communication and building a bond is very productive. I am happy to

find a good interaction time always with my children Azhar and Sahil, making them share an incredible positive connection with me. It also reassures them of parents being with them in even the hardest phase of their life.

The game changer — sports

As parents, we constantly compare our growing years to how our children are seen spending their childhood. How I used to let my imagination run wild in my childhood and do things out of curiosity have evolved and changed now. Children are getting glued to their gadgets more and giving preference to online games over sports. As a sports aficionado, and father, helping my children develop a healthy sports-playing routine was always a plus. Keeping them busy in sports will divert their attention from using gadgets 24/7. I am happy to go out and play cricket twice a week with my sons Azhar and Sahil while developing a healthy rivalry in the game between father and son. This early-cultivated approach towards life will help them become 'Accomplishers' and 'Explorers' rather than just 'Followers'.

Over the years I have seen parents missing out on family interaction. Giving our children space and the right space is very important. This father's day let us take the parent pledge and make a big difference happen.

Happy Father's Day!

TOKYO OLYMPICS

Tokyo scraps public viewing of Olympics to stop COVID surge

TOKYO: Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike said on Saturday that the city administration is canceling all public viewing events in the Japanese capital to prevent the risk of a surge in coronavirus infections.

"These are necessary measures to make the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics a success," she told reporters after meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga.



There had been six planned viewing sites across the Japanese capital, including Inokashira and Yoyogi parks as well as a university in Tokyo. Koike said the sites will now instead be offered as COVID vaccination centers.

The announcement came as Koike and Suga prepare for a key meeting with Olympics and Paralympics officials on Monday.

They are then expected to fi-

nalize whether to allow domestic spectators inside Games venues.

Politicians and organizers are pushing for some spectators to be allowed. But public health experts have recommended holding the Games behind closed doors.

Fans from abroad were already banned several months ago.

Officials have also reduced the number of participants, volunteers and guests. **ANI**



Printed and published by:
Muscat Media Group
Post Box 770,
Postal Code: 112



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India's PM Modi mourns demise of track legend Milkha Singh

Singh passed away at 11.30 pm on Friday night at the age of 91. He had tested positive for COVID-19 in May this year



THE FLYING SIKH: The legendary athlete is a four-time Asian Games gold-medallist and 1958 Commonwealth Games champion.

NEW DELHI : Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday expressed deep condolences at the demise of track legend Milkha Singh and said India lost a colossal sportsperson, who captured the nation's imagination.

Singh passed away at 11.30 pm on Friday night at the age of 91. He had tested positive for COVID-19 in May this year. "In the passing away of Shri Milkha Singh Ji, we have lost a colossal sportsperson, who captured the nation's imagination and had a special place in the hearts of countless Indians. His inspiring personality endeared

himself to millions. Anguished by his passing away," the Prime Minister Tweeted.

"I had spoken to Shri Milkha Singh Ji just a few days ago. Little did I know that it would be our last conversation. Several budding athletes will derive strength from his life journey. My condolences to his family and many admirers all over the world," he said in another Tweet.

Earlier today, the bereaved family informed about the death of the former Indian Sprinter, also known as the Flying Sikh, in a statement.

"It is with extreme sadness that we would like to inform you that Milkha Singh Ji passed away. He fought hard but God has his ways and it was perhaps true love and companionship that both our mother Nirmal Ji and now Dad have passed away in a matter of 5 days," the family said.

The former Indian sprinter had tested positive for COVID-19 last month and was in isolation at his home in Chandigarh before he was admitted to the ICU of Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER) hospital in Chandigarh.

In a statement, PGIMER informed that Milkha Singh was ad-

mitted to the ICU of COVID Hospital of PGIMER on June 3.

"He was treated for COVID there till June 13 when after putting up a valiant battle with COVID, Milkha Singh Ji tested negative. However, due to post-Covid complications, he was shifted out of COVID Hospital to medical ICU. But despite the best of efforts by the medical team, Milkha Singh ji could not be retrieved from his critical condition and after a brave fight, he left for his heavenly abode at 11.30 pm on 18th June 2021 here at PGIMER," the Hospital said.

Singh's wife and former Captain of the Indian Women National Volleyball team, Nirmal Milkha Singh succumbed to COVID-19 at the age of 85 on June 13.

The legendary athlete is a four-time Asian Games gold-medallist and 1958 Commonwealth Games champion. He is still the only Indian athlete to win Gold in the Asian and Commonwealth Championship.

He was awarded the Padma Shri, India's fourth-highest civilian honor, in recognition of his sporting achievements.

He is survived by one son and three daughters. His son Jeev Milkha Singh is also a renowned Golfer. **ANI**

NEW GUIDELINES

Vietnam introduces national social media guidelines

HANOI: Vietnam has introduced new guidelines that codify ethics for social media companies and the public, according to the state's news agency and other local media.

Besides requiring individuals to be themselves on platforms and avoiding fake news, the new code also requires social media organizations to "deal with users in accordance with Vietnamese law" if they're requested by authorities to remove content from their platforms.

What do the new guidelines say?

The guidelines encourage users to create accounts using their real identities, share information from official sources, and avoid posting content, which violates Vietnamese law or contains bad language.

It requires individuals not to use words that incite hatred or trigger violence, to avoid posts with information that defame others, as well as not post fake news.

The new directions encourage Vietnamese people to post positively about the country and "spread good stories about good people." The guidelines have



been published on the Information Ministry website. It is not clear whether they're legally binding.

Has Vietnam always been strict about social media?

The country has a large number of young people — 70% of the population is under 35 — who often use social media to express their opinion.

Vietnam's ruling Communist Party allows little criticism and press freedom is limited. Authorities recently arrested a spate of

people who criticized Hanoi's handling of the coronavirus pandemic online.

In December 2020, Amnesty International had accused the social media giants of "far-reaching complicity" by censoring content deemed critical of the government. Vietnam is among one of the biggest countries by revenue for Facebook and Google in Southeast Asia.

In 2018, Facebook's income from Vietnam neared \$1 billion — almost a third of all its revenue in Southeast Asia. **nw**

COVID RESTRICTIONS LIFTED

EU lifts travel restrictions for US tourists

NEW DELHI: The European Union on Friday lifted travel restrictions on American travellers along with over ten other countries after over a year.

Apart from the US, the EU has lifted restrictions on non-essential travel from 13 other countries including Albania, Australia, Israel, Japan, Lebanon, New Zealand, Republic of North Macedonia, Rwanda, Singapore, Serbia, South Korea, Thailand, and China (subject to confirmation of reciprocity). According to an EU statement, the criteria for determining the non-EU countries for which the current travel restriction should be lifted cover, in particular, the epidemiologi-

cal situation and containment measures, including physical distancing, and economic and social considerations. They are applied cumulatively.

Last year on June 30, the Council adopted a recommendation on the gradual lifting of the temporary restrictions on non-essential travel into the EU. This recommendation included an initial list of countries for which member states should start lifting the travel restrictions at the external borders.

The list is reviewed every two weeks and, as the case may be, updated.

On 20 May, the Council adopted an amending recommenda-

tion to respond to the ongoing vaccination campaigns by introducing certain waivers for vaccinated persons and easing the criteria to lift restrictions for third countries.

At the same time, the amendments take into account the possible risks posed by new variants by setting out an emergency brake mechanism to quickly react to the emergence of a variant of interest or concern in a third country.

The Council recommendation is not a legally binding instrument. The authorities of the member states remain responsible for implementing the content of the recommendation.

-ANI

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GULACSI HEROICS EARN HUNGARY DRAW WITH FRANCE

The only effort the Hungarian goalkeeper couldn't stop was one from Griezmann, who seized on a poor clearance from defender Orban and evened the score

BERLIN: Peter Gulacsi could not hide his excitement after Hungary earned their first point of Euro 2020, dropping to his knees and pumping his fists shortly after the

final whistle. His effort against world champions France was worth the celebration as his sure-handedness between the sticks earned his side a valuable draw. It's a result that has blown Group F wide open and made their tie against Germany on June 23 much more interesting. The stat sheet will only show that Gulacsi three saves in the game. But he was in complete command of the penalty area, and when Hungary's conservative defensive approach began to crack, the RB Leipzig man stood his ground. The only effort the Hungarian goalkeeper couldn't stop was one from Antoine Griezmann, who seized on a poor clearance from defender Willi Orban and evened the score. But the raving Hungary fans in a jam-packed Puskas Arena could only be as jubilant as Gulacsi was after Hungary's first point against France since 1976. Peter Gulacsi, Hungary's star Though Hungary entered the tournament as one of the minnows,

no one could question the quality of Gulacsi. He led the German Bundesliga in clean sheets with 15 in 33 games. He was also one of two goalkeepers who conceded less than one goal per 90 minutes — the other, Loris Karius, played only five games. His performance earned him a contract extension with Leipzig until 2025, where he's been the starting goalkeeper since their promotion to the Bundesliga in 2015. Reports in Germany had linked him with Borussia Dortmund before the German Cup winners signed Stuttgart's Gregor Kobel instead. Though Gulacsi's heroics proved crucial for Hungary, it was Attila Fiola's goal that got the home fans out of their seats. After receiving a pass on the left wing, the Hungarian wing-back dribbled past France defenders Benjamin Pavard and Raphael Varane before slotting his effort home. It was Fiola's second ever goal for Hungary and the first goal the world champions had allowed in six games. **DW**

FOOTBALL

Sweden edge past Slovakia at Euro 2020

ST. PETERSBURG: Sweden striker Alexander Isak was the man of the match as the Swedes overcame a poor first half to claim a vital 1-0 win against Slovakia in the Euro 2020 here on Friday. Sweden has conceded just one goal in their last seven matches and collected four points from their two group games. They intend to secure a berth into the last 16 in the last game against Poland on June 23. The first 45 minutes were hard going for fans, with Sweden struggling to create anything against a rival who decided not to play a specialist striker and consequently lacked a focal point in attack or anyone to try and make runs to stretch the Swedish defense. Sweden also lacked ambition after their draw with Spain in their opening game, although they had few problems in keeping the Slovaks at bay with a relatively narrow defense and sat deeper and deeper as the half progressed. Isak was isolated in attack in the first half, but things changed drastically after the half time break. Swedish keeper Robin Olsen produced a reflex save to deny Juraj Kucka's header, while at the other end Martin Dubravka was



EURO CUP: Sweden has conceded just one goal in their last seven matches and collected four points from their two group games.

at full stretch to parry Ludwig Augustinsson's header from Sebastian Larsson's perfect cross. From the following corner, Marcus Danielsson nodded over after Isak nodded the ball back across the face of goal and shortly afterwards Isak saw a shot deflected wide as the Swedes finally began to come to life. Isak then headed Lustig's cross just over as the Swedes continued to press for a winner and then

drew a low save from Dubravka after a mazy run which saw him twist and turn past three defenders before firing in a low shot at the near post. In the 76th minute, Emil Forsberg calmly converted the penalty with a powerful shot to the corner. The penalty was awarded after Robin Quaison was brought down in the box. "It feels absolutely amazing. I am extremely happy. It's very nice

to win. We only played half a first half, but were better in the second. We know we're mentally strong. It was a fantastic piece of play from Quaison that led to the penalty," said Forsberg. "It's good to have four points after two games. We've played seven games this year, and conceded just one goal. Our attack deserved more today, they were fantastic at times," said Janne Andersson, Sweden coach. **ANI**

WORLD TEST CHAMPIONSHIP

Pujara falls, but Kohli and Rahane steady ship for India

SOUTHAMPTON: Cheteshwar Pujara might have perished but skipper Virat Kohli along with his deputy Ajinkya Rahane ensured that India does not fall behind against New Zealand in the second session on the second day of the ongoing World Test Championship (WTC) final at the Ageas Bowl on Saturday. At tea break on Day Two, India's score reads 120/3 with Kohli (35*) and Rahane (13*) at the crease. The second session saw 51 runs being scored in 27.3 overs. Resuming the second session on Day Two at 69/2, Pujara and Kohli saw off the first 50 minutes without any hiccups. The run-scoring was not easy, but the duo frustrated the Kiwi bowlers and they were letting the ball come on to them, instead of searching for it. However, Trent Boult removed Pujara (8) in the 41st over, and India was reduced to 88/3. Rahane then joined Kohli in the middle and the duo started to ro-



tate the strike more often, throwing Kiwi bowlers off their length. The duo ensured that India does not lose more wickets, and bad light forced an early end to the second session and tea was taken. At the lunch break, India's score read 69/2 with Kohli (6*) and Pujara (0*) at the crease. While Rohit (34) was dismissed by Kyle Jamieson in the 21st over of the innings, Gill was sent back by Neil Wagner towards the end

of the first session for 28. Earlier, New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson won the toss and opted to field first in the much-awaited World Test Championship (WTC) final against India. Incessant rain saw the opening day's play being washed off at the Ageas Bowl on Friday. Brief Scores: India 120/3 (Virat Kohli 35*, Ajinkya Rahane 13*, Neil Wagner 1-19) vs New Zealand. **ANI**

DRAW

England held by Scotland, Czech Republic draw against Croatia

BERLIN: England were held to a goalless 0-0 draw with their oldest rivals Scotland in the second-round Group D match at the Euro 2020 at Wembley on Friday. England is level on points with the Czech Republic, who held World Cup runners-up Croatia 1-1 in the day's earlier match. Both the teams collected four points from the first two matches while Scotland and Croatia are equal on only one. Croatia will need to beat Scotland in their final group match to keep their qualification hope alive, and England are to strive for the top spot of the group when hosting the Czechs in the last group action. England and Scotland met for the 115th time since 1872 when there was the world's first international football fixture. Their previous meeting at a major tournament came in the group stage of Euro 1996, with England winning 2-0. On the rain-soaked pitch at Wembley, the two teams fought hard in the middle field with England pressing to the front more frequently. In the 11th minute, John Stones headed Mason Mount's corner to the post. Two minutes later, Mount missed the target by inches after receiving Raheem Sterling's smart low cross in the box. Scotland, which qualified for the finals of Euro for the first time in 25 years, missed their



best chance in the first half as Jordan Pickford barred Stephen O'Donnell's volley with a single hand in the half-hour mark. England looked dangerous at the beginning of the second half, but Scotland kept calm in defense. Scotland captain Andy Robertson from Liverpool and Arsenal defender Kieran Tierney played toughly while their 36-year-old goalkeeper David Marshall also made a fine save. Aston Villa playmaker Jack Grealish and Manchester United forward Marcus Rashford were sent onto the pitch by England manager Gareth Southgate, but the sparks they brought were not enough to break Scotland's defense. "It was a frustrating night," said Southgate. "You've got to give Scotland huge credit. If you're not going to win a game then it's important that you don't lose it." Scotland kept their hopes of reaching the knockout stage

alive with one point after two games, while England will face the Czech Republic in their last group match as both teams have four points in hand. "A point keeps us alive and it's important to keep this feeling," said Robertson. 2018 World Cup finalists Croatia suffered another disappointing day after a 1-1 draw with the Czech Republic at Hampden Park. The key moment in the game came in the 33rd minute when Dejan Lovren caught Czech striker Patrik Schick in the face with a swinging arm as the pair jumped for a corner. The incident left Schick bleeding badly from his nose and after consulting with the VAR, referee Carlos del Cero Grande pointed to the penalty spot. Bayer Leverkusen forward Schick converted the penalty to add his tournament scoring tally to three and put his side in front. **DW**

DISCHARGED

Christian Eriksen discharged from hospital

COPENHAGEN : Denmark Football Association on Friday confirmed that midfielder Christian Eriksen has been discharged from the hospital. Last week, Eriksen had collapsed on the pitch while playing for Denmark against Finland in the ongoing Euro 2020. He was later taken to the hospital. "Christian Eriksen has been through a successful operation and was today discharged from Rigshospitalet. Today he also visited the national team in Helsingor - and from there he will go home and spend time with his family," the Denmark FA said in an official statement. "After being discharged from the hospital, Eriksen said: "Thank you for the massive number of greetings - it has been incredible to see and feel. The operation went well, and I am doing well under the circumstances. It was really great to see the guys again after the fantastic game they played last night. No need to say, that I will be cheering on them

on Monday against Russia." Eriksen will have a heart starter device (ICD) implanted after he suffered a cardiac arrest over the weekend during Denmark's match against Finland, the team's doctor had confirmed in a statement on Thursday. "After Christian has been through different heart examinations it has been decided that he should have an ICD (heart starter)," Morten Boesen said in an official statement released by DBU. "Christian has accepted the solution and the plan has moreover been confirmed by specialists nationally and internationally who all recommend the same treatment." "We encourage everybody to give Christian and his family peace and privacy the following time," the statement added. The 29-year-old Inter Milan midfielder earlier had said of his recovery, "I'm fine -- under the circumstances. I still have to go through some examinations at the hospital, but I feel okay." **ANI**

SOUTH AFRICA VS WEST INDIES

Dean Elgar, De Kock lead Proteas fightback on Day One

GROS ISLET : Shannon Gabriel took two crucial wickets on his return to Test cricket, but South Africa battled back thanks to half-centuries from skipper Dean Elgar and keeper Quinton de Kock on day one of the second Test on Friday. Gabriel struck in his first over -- the second of the day -- and again just before the tea break to end a crucial partnership on the opening day of the second Betway Test on Friday. The strongly-built six-footer ended the day with 2-47 off 12 overs, while the dogged Elgar made 77 off 237 balls with eight fours. The free-scoring De Kock closed the day unbeaten on 59 off 103 balls with five boundaries. Gabriel started the day in spectacular fashion to give West Indies early success when Aiden Markram slashed the ninth ball of the morning and was well caught by Roston Chase at the point. Elgar put on an 87-run stand with Kyle Verreynne (27) but Gabriel got the wicket just before



the afternoon interval when Verreynne was caught down the leg-side by Joshua Da Silva. De Kock then entered the fray, holding the fort well with Elgar. They shared a 79-run, fifth-wicket stand off 169 balls before the skipper's dismissal in the last hour of play at the hands of Mayers. The South African wicketkeeper was then joined by Wiaan Mulder, adding 15 more runs to the scorecard before stumps was called.

Gabriel and fellow pacers Kemar Roach and Jayden Seales made early inroads in the first session, while medium-pacer Kyle Mayers picked up the key wicket of Elgar late in the day. Keegan Petersen edged to Jason Holder at second slip off Seales, and Rassie van der Dussen left a delivery from Roach which jagged back and into his stumps. Late in the day, the persevering Mayers rattled the stumps of Elgar. **ANI**

TUATARA, ETCO SIGN PACT

Tuatara, an innovative business solutions provider, and international Emerging Technology Company (ETCO) have signed a framework agreement to create a strategic partnership, developing technologically advanced solutions to support the Omani society.

MARKET BUSINESS & FINANCE



CREDIT REPORT APPLICATIONS

Mala'a has received 740,000 credit report applications and 37 membership agreements signed so far in 2020, a senior executive of the company said. Mala'a offers credit and financial reports and scores for individuals and corporates and aims to be Oman's national data bank.

Construction work for smart office project at Muscat Pavilion begins

The Muscat Pavilion project represents the values added to the efforts to develop the real estate sector and enable it to attract investments



SMART OFFICE: The project meets the requirements of the Omani market for offices with high-quality specifications, characterised by privacy and tranquillity in a strategic location, and contributes to the growth and development of businesses. - Supplied picture



3 floors for smart parking underground, which can accommodate up to 550 cars.

Smart office prices at the Muscat Pavilion project starts from OMR39,000, and shops start from OMR21,000. The project is expected to be complete within 24 months.

"Ownership in the Muscat Pavilion project is considered an exceptional and unique investment for the investor. This is due to the smart specifications of these offices, which are the first of its kind in the Sultanate," Siham Al-Harthy further said.

The project offers investors the provision of free ownership for foreigners with permanent residence, in addition to the guaranteed financial return that exceeds 8 per cent. The project, located in Muscat Hills, is a part of a location that is undergoing radical transformation and unprecedented prosperity in the Sultanate.

It is a freehold area for all nationalities where the owner gets a lifelong residency and the investors can also avail of many advantages. It also contains a golf course, one of the largest in the capital, Muscat, surrounded by many residential projects and luxury villas overlooking vast green spaces.

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Asawer Real Estate and Muscat Hills Joint Development celebrated the start of construction of Muscat Pavilion for smart offices located in Muscat Hills.

The event was held under the patronage of Sayyid Saud bin Hilal Al Busaidi, Minister of State and Governor of Muscat in the presence of a number of their excellencies, media professionals and journalists.

The Muscat Pavilion project represents the values added to the efforts to develop the real estate sector and enable it to attract investments, especially since foreigners are allowed to freehold in it, in addition to entertaining specifications, Engineer Siham bint Ahmad Al Harthy, co-founder of Asawer Real Estate said.

"Whether in terms of its strategic location or the features it contains, as well as high-quality finishing, such projects contribute to attracting foreign investments into the Sultanate. It is in line with Oman's 2040 vision which seeks to create a stimulating environment for various economic sectors, leading to reviving the market and creating jobs for the citizens," Al Harthy said.

Al Harthy confirmed that the project meets the requirements of the Omani market for offices with high-quality specifications, characterised by privacy and tranquillity in a strategic location, and contributes to the growth and development of businesses.

Asawer Real Estate will market the project and sell the smart offices and stores according to a well-studied marketing plan that includes individuals and companies

both inside and outside Oman. Distinguished facilities will be provided to those wishing to own office units, including soft payments during the construction stages, without interest, and financing facilities from one of the local banks in the Sultanate. Those wishing to pay the price of the office unit in one go will receive a discount of 5 per cent.

The project is characterised by modern features, and has a luxurious architectural design that goes in line with its strategic location, taking into account the smallest details through the office design inspired by the Omani heritage, Dawoud Al Hina, CEO of Al Mukhatit Real Estate Company, said.

"The project has international specifications in decorations in a way that meets the needs of a business owner. In addition it also provides public facilities in the building, which would facilitate the movement of employees to their work environment and also contains modern technologies and advanced equipment."

He further said that the building consists of 9 floors along with

Smart office prices at the Muscat Pavilion project starts from OMR39,000, and shops start from OMR21,000. The project is expected to be complete within 24 months.

"Ownership in the Muscat Pavilion project is considered an exceptional and unique investment for the investor. This is due to the smart specifications of these offices, which are the first of its kind in the Sultanate," Siham Al-Harthy further said.

INSURANCE COMPANIES LAW

Law amendments to regulate health insurance: CMA executive president

MUSCAT: The amendments on the insurance companies law and the Takaful insurance law promulgated under the recent Royal Decrees are related to the regulation of health insurance, said Abdullah Salim Al-Salmi, Executive President of the Capital Market Authority (CMA).

The focus of the amendments is on enhancing the regulatory readiness of the health insurance system in the Sultanate in response to its increasing significance and the rapid growth in the volume of the health insurance market during the past period, explained Al-Salmi.

In a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA), Al-Salmi said that the average annual growth of this vital sector during the past eight years was 19 per cent, leading all other insurance sectors by seizing 34 per cent of the gross insurance premiums in the year 2020 worth OMR466 million.

Al-Salmi added that such indicators and the future importance of the health insurance sector and its distinctiveness from other branches of insurances require enhancement of the efficiency of insurance companies providing this activity. Those companies also need to be regulated to ensure that their financial abilities and human resources are capable of providing the required financing for their customers' health care and adequate protection for health insurance policyholders, added Al-Salmi.

In addition, he added that the new amendments separate health insurance from other insurance activities, making it independent after previously being considered as part of the general insurance business.

Al-Salmi further stated that the amendments in the Royal Decrees are a breakthrough in the regulation of the Omani insurance market as they take the industry to a new phase of regulation, and a higher level of quality in its provided services. He added, "Such independence for the sector takes into consideration the uniqueness of the health insurance activity and the nature of the insurance service as it is about the health care and the lives of individuals. This requires the provision of legislative and technological systems that commensurate with such distinctive-



Abdullah Salim Al-Salmi, Executive President of the Capital Market Authority

ness and at the same time cope with the international developments and standards of regulation, ensuring the soundness and quality of the services provided to health insurance policyholders."

Al-Salmi pointed out that the amendments respond to the requirements of the current development phase of Oman Vision 2040 under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. This comes through the economic expansion of vital activities of which health insurance is one that many rely on to create investment opportunities in the insurance sector and in related services which would attract local and international investments in the private health sector, said Al-Salmi. As a result, the health insurance sector will contribute to economic growth and in providing quality insurance and health services in the Sultanate's various governorates, as well as creating job opportunities for the youth in both the public and private sectors.

Al-Salmi explained that the amendments to the insurance companies law and Takaful insurance law were done with the participation of relevant entities in the public and private sectors to benefit from their views to build an integrated health insurance system to achieve the intended developmental goals. -ONA

EMDAD INITIATIVE

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) on June 17 celebrated the graduation of around 200 young Omanis as part of its Emdad initiative.

The trainees were the 17th batch to graduate from the programme which was launched in 2011 to create job and training opportunities for Omani job seekers in the oil and gas sector and beyond.

They were enrolled in different technical and non-technical training-for-employment and on-job training programmes which are in line with the company's efforts to support the government's economic diversification drive.

The graduates are now qualified to work in a range of sectors and trades including quality assurance/quality control engineers, planning engineers, commissioning engi-



OPPORTUNITIES: The Emdad initiative seeks to improve employment opportunities for Omani job seekers. - ONA

neers, mud engineers, HSE advisers, mechanical technicians. The batch also includes 32 graduates with special needs who will be employed in administrative positions.

The graduation ceremony was held virtually under the auspices

of Sayyid Salim bin Musallam Al Busaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Labour for Human Resources Development.

PDO Managing Director Raoul Restucci said, "We are proud of the ongoing commitment to cre-

ating sustainable jobs for young Omani which will enable them to build rewarding careers, support their families and play their role in fostering the nation's development. The success of these young graduates is another example of PDO's dedication to supporting the Sultanate's economy and local employment. The provision of sustainable goods and services by Omanis in Oman is a core pillar of our In-Country Value programme which also includes social investment and the development of local community companies. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the graduates for their dedication and hard work."

Having completed training programmes lasting from six to 24 months at different training institutes and companies, the graduates are now certified to have full-time paid positions at several companies.

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MARKET

Mala'a signs 37 membership agreements

Mala'a offers credit and financial reports and scores for individuals and corporates and aims to be Oman's national data bank

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Mala'a has received 740,000 credit report applications and 37 membership agreements signed in 2020, a senior executive of the company said.

Mala'a (Oman Credit and Financial Information Centre) was established in 2019 by Royal decree 38/2019 as the first pillar of the Central Bank of Oman's 2019-2021 strategy to enhance the business environment towards implementing Oman 2040 Vision.

The centre offers credit and financial reports and scores for individuals and corporates and aims to be Oman's national data bank.

"Mala'a plays a major role in improving the financial environment of the Sultanate by enhancing financial inclusion, creating a fertile environment for ease of doing business, and reducing credit risks by supporting various institutions in making informed financial decisions, Aadil bin Khalifa Al Saadi, Managing Director of Mala'a, said.

Mala'a also contributes to Oman's economic growth by improving the quality of loans with-



Aadil bin Khalifa Al Saadi

out interfering with the financing decision-making process, and supports individuals and corporates to improve their creditworthiness which leads to a financially literate society that is capable of informed financial planning.

Mala'a has so far signed membership agreements with credit providers from the banking and finance, telecommunications, small and medium enterprises funds, and the insurance sector, in addition to data providers such as Royal Oman Police (ROP) and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Investment Promotion.

It has also signed several Memorandums of Understanding with government entities and non-profit organisations, Al Saadi said.

"These agreements were a cornerstone of the infrastructure of the National Data Bank on which Mala'a continues to work on. The Royal Decree which established the Centre has also mentioned the process of exchanging of informa-

tion between the centre and credit providers which supports to position Mala'a as the central data bank for credit and financial information in Oman.

Services of Mala'a

Speaking about Mala'a services, Al Saadi said that the Centre provides credit information services such as credit reports, credit classification, and credit score for individuals and institutions, in addition to financial technology solutions such as the Instant Decisions Module, the IFRS9 Module, and Advisor Module.

The beneficiaries of these services are banking, financial and telecommunications sectors, as well as funds supporting small and medium enterprises, and insurance companies. This is in addition to all sectors that require creditworthiness information.

Al Saadi said: "Mala'a was established to become a focal point of reference for credit and financial information. It was established in three phases of rigorous work."

The first phase was completed at the end of last year. The development included the transition to the new Mala'a system, which included credit and financial data from the banking and financial sector of the Sultanate and small and medium enterprise development funds, as well as information derived from the data providers such as Royal Oman Police and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion.

The second phase is currently underway which aims to include the telecommunications sector as Mala'a members.

In the third phase, Mala'a targets to onboard the insurance sector as well as some more data providers from the government.

FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT

Tuatara, ETCO enter strategic partnership in Oman market

MUSCAT: Tuatara, an innovative business solutions provider, and international Emerging Technology Company (ETCO) have signed a framework agreement to create a strategic partnership, developing technologically advanced solutions to support the Omani society. This exciting combination of expertise will help to accelerate Oman into the digital age.

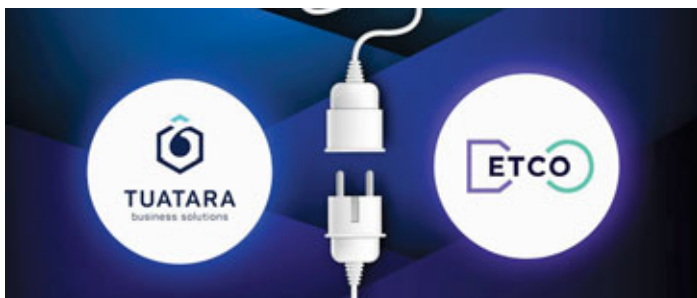
Innovative technologies towards digitalisation

The global pandemic has forced us to change the way that we live and work. With many people staying at home, companies have increased their online business services; the huge uptake by the public demonstrating how important new technologies are for people. This trend has been recognised by entrepreneurs who have moved much of their business online, especially customer services. Digital transformation in the public and private sector has become invaluable, helping to cut costs, save time and minimise the needs for personal contact, making a range of services easily accessible.

Tuatara and ETCO will innovate Oman's public and commercial sector, assisted by Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML) and Natural Language Processing (NLP) technologies. This partnership is strategically strong, both companies' experience contributing to improving Oman's businesses with innovative solutions.

"I believe that the strategic co-operation between ETCO and Tuatara will continue building the foundations of e-government in Oman and improving peoples lives in the digital space of public administration and commercial services. At Tuatara, we are a team of experts with interdisciplinary knowledge and an expanding portfolio of products based on artificial intelligence, machine learning, and cognitive technologies. When we combine our resources and know-how related to chatbot development with ETCO's expertise in NLP and Arabic language understanding, we will create a new chapter in the history of the digital state in Oman," said Krzysztof Goworek, Chief Innovation Officer at Tuatara.

This innovative partnership aims to implement various technological improvements, to make the lives of the Omani people easier, and in line with the digital age: Chatbots dedicated to the public, government and commercial companies, focused on voice recognition and synthesis, delivering 24/7 assistance, support and instant answers about important services;



E-learning solutions, allowing effective, convenient and flexible access to materials from various fields, enabling truly online learning experiences;

AI image processing tools that can be used in various areas, such as agriculture, satellite imagery analysis, medical and seismic imaging fields;

Translations, text corrections, or optical character recognition, beneficial especially in administration and document management.

The idea behind the combined expertise of Tuatara and ETCO is to support Oman's digitalisation, ensuring easy access to a range of essential services.

Existing solutions, along with new innovative approaches created as a result of their strategic partnership, will help Oman's digital transformation.

Tuatara and ETCO will improve Oman's public administration and private sector thanks to their developed technology:

Innovative and intuitive digital interface solutions that enhance the best possible user experience; Natural Language Processing, supported with AI and chatbots, that allow understanding of language and the context of each conversation, making it smooth and attractive for customers;

QABAS platform that has one of the largest Unicode libraries of Arabic fonts, allowing capacity for sustainable language development, primarily through research, translation, training and materials development;

Custom IoT (Internet of Things) solutions to support the unique needs of businesses.

"Through this partnership, we aim to provide modern and high-tech solutions based on Natural Language Processing that will facilitate public citizen affairs in

the digital space of public government and commercial services sector. We would like to leverage our expertise in cloud services and machine learning from the commercial services segment to translate this knowledge to the public administration sector, thus following Oman's 2040 digitalisation strategy. Our collaboration with an experienced partner like Tuatara will accelerate the implementation of chatbots with Arabic language understanding and thereby improve people's lives the lives of Omani citizens," Tariq Al Bulushi, Vice President Technology ETCO.

Both Tuatara and ETCO are hyper-focused on improving user experience through cutting-edge technologies. Their co-operation will bring many benefits by automating and innovating important processes and making changes to everyday lives. Introducing e-learning, supporting local talents, ensuring internship programs for graduates, or offering work to Omani specialists are only a few examples of the companies' future actions.

A forward-thinking approach

Tuatara has developed a portfolio of successful partnerships based on the desire to achieve mutual goals. The company provides dynamic solutions adapting to the changing needs of customers. The experience gained by Tuatara will be used in creating a long-lasting, successful and powerful partnership with ETCO, which will be in line with Oman's digitisation strategy for 2040. Both companies are committed to exceeding the expectations of their customers in the digital space and are determined to use their skills to secure Oman's technological future.



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Jafza reports 12% growth in healthcare and pharma customer base

DUBAI: DP World, UAE Region's Jebel Ali Free Zone (Jafza) witnessed a 12 per cent growth in its healthcare and pharmaceuticals customer base between 2019-2020. To showcase its commitment to promote the growth of healthcare and pharmaceutical companies, DP World, UAE Region and Jafza will participate in Arab Health 2021, one of the leading medical equipment exhibitions in the Middle East.

As one of the most important contributing sectors in the Free Zone, the healthcare and pharmaceuticals segment is one of the key economic pillars in Jafza. Spanning an area of around 170,000 sqm, and currently, housing 174 companies from 41 countries, the segment provides jobs to 1,100 employees. In 2019, the volume of trade in the segment stood at 25,000 metric tonnes, valued at AED900 million.

The healthcare sector in the UAE has rapidly expanded to meet the evolving needs of the population, helping the nation in its endeavour to become a regional medical tourism hub. Partnerships and initiatives by the government and private and public sector companies are helping to achieve these goals.

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REIGNING CHAMPIONS PORTUGAL EVEN STRONGER THAN FIVE YEARS AGO

Portugal are no strangers to groups of death.

At Euro 2012, they had to contend with the Netherlands, Denmark, and a Germany team that beat them 1-0. Two years later at the World Cup in Brazil, they were again drawn against Joachim Löw’s eventual champions and were on the receiving end of a 4-0 drubbing in their opening match.

A comparatively straight-forward set of first-round opponents followed at Euro 2016, yet the Portuguese still only scraped through in third place behind Hungary and Iceland, drawing all three of their group games.

What followed, of course, was a surprise title, as they beat hosts France in the final. Five years on from that triumph in Paris and Portugal are back in the group of death along with France, Hungary and Germany.

A convincing, albeit late, 3-0 win over Hungary has given them a perfect start. Next up, Germany

in Munich on Saturday evening.

In 18 matches against their upcoming opponents, Portugal have won just three, and have lost the last four meetings. It’s not a great omen, but Portugal have no need to fear the past this time around.

They began the postponed Euro 2020 as reigning champions, and Fernando Santos’ side has only got better. The Portugal national team’s nickname Os Navegadores, the Navigators, is a play on their nation’s historical sea-faring exploits. And their current crop of globetrotters certainly live up to that. In the past five years, Cristiano Ronaldo and his supporting cast could be found at top clubs all across Europe.

Portugal have always had a glut of quality in creative midfield posi-

tions but have long struggled to fill the striker position. While an ageing Ronaldo may now lay claim to that role, his side finally have other options to either partner their captain or come off the bench.

Bruno Fernandes enjoyed an excellent season for Premier League runners-up Manchester United, notching up 28 goals and 17 assists across all competitions. The 26-year-old could be key in taking the creative burden off Ronaldo, even if the playmaker has so far not been able to replicate that form for the national team and at times looked exhausted in the season run-in.

But if Portugal are looking for a traditional, out-and-out striker, Andre Silva is coming off a barnstorming season with Eintracht Frankfurt, breaking the club record

for goals scored in a Bundesliga season with 28 in 32 games. The majority have come after the turn of the year, so Silva has hit top form in time for the tournament.

However, coach Santos placed his trust in Diogo Jota against Hungary. The versatile forward is coming off an injury-riddled but efficient first season for Liverpool in which he scored 9 goals in 19 league outings.

Not that Ronaldo is finished just yet. He missed out on most of the action in Portugal’s Euro 2016 final victory against France, coming off with a knee injury just 25 minutes in. The captain then led from the sidelines, showing his eagerness to claim the trophy. Ronaldo is obsessed with winning and other members of the squad are

developing a taste for it too.

Ronaldo and coach Fernando Santos gesture on the touchline during the Euro 2016 Final match between Portugal and France

At 36, he’s no spring chicken and has endured a disappointing season with Juventus, getting knocked out of the Champions League by Porto and losing their Serie A crown to Inter Milan. Nevertheless, Ronaldo still finished the season as league top scorer with 29 goals, which proves that adjectives like “disappointing” are always relative.

He goes into Saturday’s game against Germany just three goals short of Iranian Ali Daei’s all-time scoring record in international football (109 goals between 1993 and 2006). Earlier this week, he set the all-time mark for goals scored at a European Championship.

For a man notably keen on personal accolades, there is certainly ample added motivation for Ronaldo to become the tournament’s top scorer. -DW



ROUND-UP



FEATURE-RICH CHANGAN CS75 4WD IS AVAILABLE ON LOW EMI OF OMR150



Comprising popular features such as spacious interiors with leather seats and 360 view camera, the model delivers a greatly satisfying driving experience to the astute consumer

MUSCAT: Changan CS75 the SUV with stylish looks, distinctive agility and all-terrain capability is now available at EMI starting from OMR150 for six years.

Arabian Gulf Automobiles and Equipment, which is part of Bahwan International Group announced that the EMI includes a 5 per cent Value Added Tax (VAT). Comprising popular features such as spacious interiors with leather seats and 360 view camera, the model delivers a greatly



satisfying driving experience to the astute consumer.

A spokesperson for AGAE said, “We are delighted to offer Changan CS75 on a low EMI. The vehicle is a perfect combination of dynamism and intelligence for professionals, families or avid travellers who want to explore new places every day.”

Its intelligent all-wheel-drive system helps conquer different terrains since the Changan CS75 4WD comes with a 1.8-litre tur-

bocharged engine that produces 170hp and 245 nm of torque and is mated with a 6 speed AT. It delivers an excellent fuel economy of 12.2 kilometres per litre as per the GSO rating.

Changan CS75 makes everyone explore new territories with its exceptional on-road performance and all-terrain capabilities. Along with the off-road prowess, CS75 is also instilled with everyday practicality, form and function to be prepared for



all kinds of weekend adventure.

Its features include Push Start Button, 10” Infotainment Touch Screen, Navigation, 360° View Camera, Blind Spot Detection, Side Assist, Side Airbags, Leather Seats, Cruise control, Panoramic sunroof, roof rails, LED taillights, electronic parking brake and Rear Vehicle approaching alarm etc.

By seamlessly integrating luxurious interior with thoughtful technologies, Changan CS75 creates a level of ride comfort, even on rough roads. With a range of innovative driving technologies, the Changan CS75 gives the driver the confidence to control the vehicle in challenging situations.

Its Blue Core Powertrain Technology, based on the principles of power, clean and quiet, provides owners with a highly efficient and

energy-saving performance.

Exterior

Among its exterior features are 19-inch alloy wheels, LED headlights with auto headlamps, panoramic sunroof, roof rails, LED taillights, twin exhaust pipes, electrically adjustable, folding ORVMS with heating, puddle lamps.

Interior

Its interior boasts Leather seats, Navigation, Multi-function steering wheel, Cruise control, Bluetooth, Keyless Entry with Push-button start and 10” Infotainment Touch Screen.

Safety

Its safety and security features front, side and curtain airbags, ESP (ABS+TCS) + EBD, hill hold

and hill descent control, auto-hold function, front and rear parking sensors, 360° view camera, electronic parking brake.

Technical specifications

Changan CS75’s technical specification includes an engine of 1.8L Turbo Power –a torque of 245Nm, the transmission of 6 Speed AT, drive type 4WD. Dimensions include length x width x height of 4650x1850x1705 mm, wheelbase of 2700 mm and fuel tank of 58 litres.

The premium automotive brand Changan launched by Bahwan International Group in Oman has received an overwhelming response among the customers. Changan Automobile boasts a comprehensive portfolio of a range of products including sedan, crossovers and SUVs like EADO- family sedan, CS35 Plus crossover, CS75 4WD crossover, CS85 coupe and CS95 7 seater 4WD.

Arabian Gulf Automobiles and Equipment, which is part of Bahwan International Group, has set up a spacious and state-of-the-art showroom in Al Qurum and service centre in Ghala, Muscat. AGAE has already tied up for Periodic Maintenance Services in many cities including Salalah, Sohar, Sur, Nizwa, Ibra and Barka etc. Changan Oman offers 5 years or 150,000 km manufacturer warranty on all passenger vehicles in Oman.

ROUND-UP

‘Movement That Inspires’: Kia launches new identity in MEA

Defined by the new brand slogan ‘Movement That Inspires’ and a modernised logo, the shift will see Kia expand its influence beyond vehicle manufacturing to provide sustainable mobility solutions for customers

MUSCAT: Kia launched its new global brand identity, strategy, and purpose across the Middle East and Africa (MEA) as a signal of Kia Corporation’s future direction and vision. The regional launch, which involved a striking multimedia show at Dubai’s Burj Khalifa, follows the global announcement of Kia’s brand transformation at the beginning of 2021.

Defined by the new brand slogan ‘Movement That Inspires’ and a modernised logo, the shift will see Kia expand its influence beyond vehicle manufacturing to provide sustainable mobility solutions for customers. In support of this ambition, the new purpose will see

Kia work to create spaces that inspire customers and free up time for the activities they enjoy the most, through bold product design, innovative in-car experiences, and meaningful and convenient services at every touchpoint.

The regional brand transformation will see the manufacturer put its mid to long-term ‘Plan S’ strategy into action across MEA. The Plan S strategy outlines Kia’s preemptive and enterprising ‘shift’ from a business system focused on internal combustion engine vehicles toward one centered on electric vehicles and customised mobility solutions.

The launch of Kia’s new EV6 is



an example of the brand’s roadmap to offer a full line-up of 11 battery electric vehicles by 2025. Kia plans to strengthen its EV line-up with 11 new BEV models by 2026 – seven built on E-GMP architecture, and four derivative EVs based on existing models.

Within MEA, Kia will realise its brand relaunch by renovating all Kia facilities to reflect its new design philosophy and identity. The automaker is targeting the end of 2023 for the completion of its regional transformation.

“This is a historic moment for

Kia in the region as we transform and adopt a new perspective on what mobility has to offer the world today and, in the future,” commented Yaser Shabsogh, Chief Operating Officer at Kia Middle East and Africa. “A journey is more than getting from point A to

B – it’s about igniting the excitement of discovery. Exactly how society travels is always changing, and Kia’s brand transformation reflects our ambition to lead the way in defining what this ‘how’ looks like long into the future.”

Kia’s EV6 will be the torchbearer for the company’s dedicated new platform for battery electric vehicles (BEVs).

The model will enable the mid-to-long term strategy for BEVs, plug-in hybrid (PHEV), and hybrid electric (HEV) vehicles that are estimated to make up 40 per cent of Kia’s total sales by 2030. With an annual sales target of 1.6 million units for these eco-friendly models and 880,000 units, particularly for BEVs.

As it moves into a new era, Kia will pave the way for future mobility solutions by bringing its fleet of electric vehicles and purpose-built vehicles, which can be tailored to the needs of specific users, to local markets. As a foundation of the brand’s purpose, Kia sees movement as a basic human right, and its goal within the region – as it is globally – is to enable people to move freely through its sustainable mobility solutions.

WAFRA PRIZE DRAWS

ahlibank all set to hold its second quarterly draw

MUSCAT: Promoting financial freedom and wise spending habits among the people of Oman, ahlibank continues to hold its popular Wafra prize draws rewarding more winners, with more prizes.

The bank is all set to conduct this year’s second quarterly draw at the beginning of July. Winners from the bank-wide customer base will walk away with a total cash prize of more than OMR 300,000, including one winner who will receive a whopping OMR 250,000 in the ‘Salary for Life’ draw. The bank will announce the names in a live broadcast on its official social media pages.

Speaking about the importance of banking initiatives and programs that help customers realise their dreams, through prudent financial choices, Muneer Al Balushi – AGM, Head of Retail Distribution, ahlibank, said, “ahlibank is taking a firm approach focused on meeting the evolving customer requirements. Under the current circumstances in the world, programs that help our customers move forward and plan their future accurately to avoid any potential crisis had to continue. In this sense, we are pleased to conduct our grand draws for the second time this year, inviting our customers and encouraging them to adopt a path of financial stability, for greater savings, doubling their chances to win. ahlibank’s draws have helped to change the lives of many winners, thereby bringing about a mass positive change and happiness among the public in the local community.”

The 2021 Wafra prize scheme aims to reward more than 1,600 customers across ahlibank’s branches in the Sultanate, with total cash prizes of more than OMR 2 million.

Al Balushi added, “ahlibank’s team constantly researches to find the latest opportunities that can contribute to adding value to our customers’ banking experience.



Our team always works towards employing these opportunities to match the need of our customers’ lifestyle effectively. The new Wafra prize scheme, which includes different categories of customers and a greater value of prizes in this year, demonstrates the importance we attach to upgrading our services and products. This comes in an effort to maintain our position as one of Oman’s most preferred local banks.”

This year, the bank has allocated special quarterly draws to reward five lucky winners across the entire network with a cash prize of OMR 25,000, equivalent (OMR 5,000 each), and another prize of OMR 25,000 for one Al Nukhba and an exclusive winner who maintains an average quarterly balance of at least OMR 35,000 in the account. Upper Mass customers under ‘Imtiyaz’ who maintains an average quarterly balance of at least OMR 10,000 in their account will also have a special quarterly draw with a prize amount of OMR 10,000. In addition to that, Wafra’s ‘Salary for Life’ prize includes a grand prize with a total of OMR 1 million, under which the bank offers a prize of OMR 250,000 per quarter, awarded to four lucky winners throughout the year. Customers need to keep an average quarterly balance of at least OMR 1,000 to be qualified. In addition, the minimum amount of OMR 1,000 must be available in the account on the day of the draw.

CAMPAIGN

Bank Muscat continues its massive vaccination drive for employees

MUSCAT: In line with its strong commitment to ensuring the health and safety of employees and stakeholders as well as its social responsibility to the nation, Bank Muscat in coordination with the Ministry of Health, is at present carrying out a massive vaccination drive for the benefit of its 3,781 employees.

The vaccination drive has had an excellent response and so far more than 50 per cent of the bank’s employees have been vaccinated in the first 2 weeks of the vaccination campaign. As the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate, Bank Muscat always goes the extra mile to ensure that its employees remain safe and healthy to be able to serve the community in the best manner possible.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the bank has implemented a number of safety measures including the formation of an internal committee to oversee the planning and response of the bank to the fast-changing situation brought about by the pandemic.



It has been rigorously implementing the directives of the Supreme Committee for dealing with COVID-19 and the Ministry of Health. The bank has effected

deep-cleaning protocols at its branches and facilities and continues to distribute safety equipment to its employees. Checking of body temperatures before entry and

daily inspections of facilities and employees by a special team to ensure social distancing, the correct wearing of masks and the following of hygiene protocols are among the various measures that are followed. It is also continuously carrying out awareness drives among its employees and customers in this regard.

The bank has previously contributed OMR2 million to the Sultanate’s efforts to combat COVID-19, including OMR 1 million for the vaccination of people in Oman.

Going forward, the bank will continue to coordinate with the relevant authorities and take all appropriate measures, which are needed to ensure the health and safety of all. Bank Muscat also takes the opportunity to thank the Ministry of Health, officials and medical staff across the country for their proactive and tireless efforts to combat the spread of COVID-19 and to provide the best healthcare possible across the country.

EASE OF USE

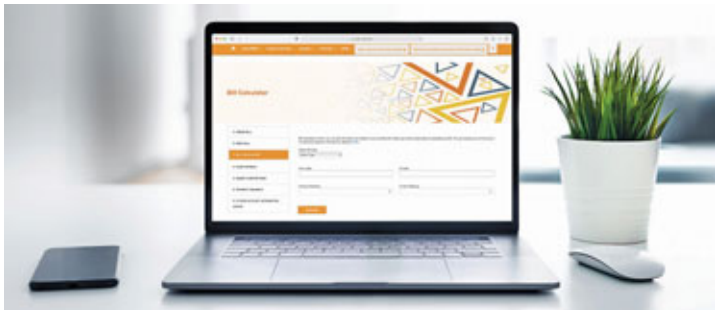
Mazoon Electricity encourages customers to use bill calculator

MUSCAT: To help better understand their electricity consumption pattern, Mazoon Electricity, the leading electricity provider in Oman, urges its customers to use the electricity bill calculator.

The company has provided a calculator for self-assessment and ease of use. The electricity bill calculator allows consumers to estimate their electricity cost in a simple way.

With the help of the bill calculator, customers will get a sense of their electricity consumption, and get the additional information and bill details.

The bill calculator can be easily



accessed on the Mazoon Electricity website using the link <https://mzec.nama.om/en-us/Pages/bill-calculator.aspx>.

Once the customers click the

link, they have to select their bill type (residential, tourism, agriculture, commercial) and then enter the ‘from’ and ‘to’ the date they want the bill to be calculated. They

must also enter their previous and current meter reading. Once they click the calculate button, the calculator will show the total amount.

Mazoon Electricity Company SAOC (MZEC) is a closed Omani joint stock company registered under the Commercial Companies Law of Oman.

The company is primarily undertaking regulated distribution and supply of electricity in Al Dakhiliya, South Al Sharqiya, North Al Sharqiya, South Batinah governorates and Suwaiq in North Batinah governorate under a license issued by the Authority of Public Services Regulation.

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