

**BYLAW TO REGULATE E-MARKETING,
PROMOTION VIA WEBSITES**

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion on Sunday issued a bylaw to regulate business activities involving marketing and promotion via electronic websites and social media groups. **>A5**



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**SAI SUBMITS ANNUAL REPORT
TO HIS MAJESTY THE SULTAN**

Sheikh Ghosn Hilal Al Alawi, Chairman of the State's Audit Institution (SAI) submitted "SAI annual report 2021" to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. SAI focused all its resources and utilised all its potential to execute the powers entrusted to it, with a high level of proficiency. **>A2**



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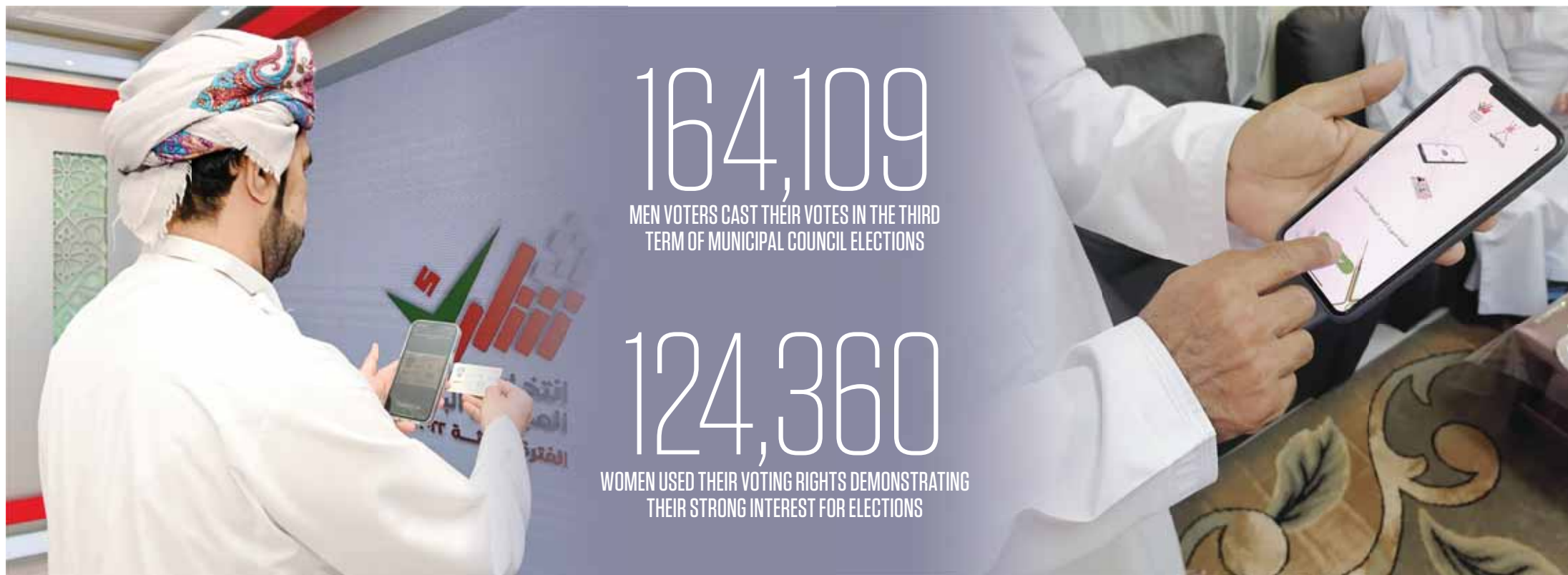


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OVER 280,000 CAST VOTES TO ELECT 126 MUNICIPAL COUNCIL MEMBERS



Eng. Khalid bin Hilal Al Busaidi announced names of the winners on Sunday evening

Times News Service

MUSCAT: A total of 126 representatives were elected after results of the third term of various municipal councils in the Sultanate of Oman were announced on Sunday night.

Voting was held on Sunday from 7am to 7pm with the Ministry of Interior confirming that a total of 288,469 voters had exercised their franchise.

Out of the total voters, 164,109 were men while 124,360 women voted, demonstrating the strong

interest among women voters.

Voting percentage was recorded at just around 40 percent as 288,469 of the 731,767 voters used their franchise.

For the first time the voting was done through an electronic application - 'Intakheb'.

In Muscat, 12 members from 85 candidates were elected while 20 from 145 candidates were elected from Dhofar governorate.

In Musandam, eight members were elected from the 22 in fray, while six won from 20 in race in Al Buraimi governorate.



Sayyid Hamoud Faisal Al Busaidi, Minister of Interior

Al Dakhiliyah elected 18 representatives from the registered 85 candidates and 12 members were among the 97 contestants that won in North Al Batinah.

In South Al Batinah, a similar

number of 12 winners were announced from the 49 in fray while ten were elected from 61 candidates in South Al Sharqiyah.

A total of 14 members were elected from the 45 in the race

*OHRC praises voting
in municipal polls* **>A3**

FULL LIST OF WINNERS **>A4**

in North Al Sharqiyah while six members won from 31 in the fray in Al Dhahirah.

In Al Wusta governorate, eight members won from the 56 contestants.

Eng. Khalid Hilal Al Busaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior, Chairman of the Main Committee for Third Term Municipal Councils' Elections, announced the names of winners of the elections on Sunday evening.

Sayyid Hamoud Faisal Al Busaidi, Minister of Interior, has said that His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik accorded attention to activating the role of municipal councils.

The minister underlined His

Majesty's keenness on upgrading the councils' legislations to empower them to realise more partnership with the government in municipal affairs, notably by boosting the overall development march and the growth of governorates—so that the councils could serve as channels of national action aimed to accomplish the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

The minister said in a speech that, over the past period, the government embarked on the modernization of procedures regulating elections in line with this vision and its approaches for digital transition. The action, he said, involved the automation of all steps and stages of the electoral process. It begins from the moment the names of voters are entered in the Electoral Register and proceeds through the stage of candidacy to the stages of voting and votes sorting. **>A3**



MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY SIGNS AGREEMENT

Private guards to help keep beaches and public places in top condition

Times News Network

MUSCAT: Watch out! Next time if you are littering or creating nuisance on a beach or in a public place, you are not going to escape.

In a first-of-its-kind, Muscat Municipality has signed an agreement with Security and Safety Services, a private security company, to ensure that the beaches are kept clean, public places and parks are not vandalised nor is there a public nuisance.

The agreement aims to make Oman's beaches clean and environment-friendly and also encourage more families to have hassle-free and enjoyable outings at public places and beaches.

On Sunday, Ahmed Mohammed al Humaidi, Muscat Municipality Chairman, signed an agreement with Brigadier General (ret'd) Saeed bin Sulaiman Al Asimi, CEO of the Security and Safety Services, on surveillance along beaches and public facilities belonging to Muscat Municipality.



HELPING HANDS: Muscat Municipality has signed an agreement to promote good environmental practices along beaches and public places.

As part of the agreement, security guards will monitor errant behaviour that may harm the public health, environmental safety and, in the first phase, will

monitor the sea-front in Seeb area or any other place determined by the municipality.

The duty hours will be in the morning and evening, while the

work hours will be doubled on weekends.

As part of the mandate given to the private security guards, they will help prevent littering and dumping waste at places other than those designated, spitting, tampering with garbage containers, using vehicles and bicycles along beaches, lighting fires and barbecue on grass, leaving droppings of dogs and animals, leaving children unattended and camping violations. They will also advise people not to visit beaches during unsafe weather conditions, and any action that may damage trees and plants, or cause inconvenience to visitors, or violate public decency, or are inconsistent with public order.

According to the agreement, the municipality shall train the Security and Safety personnel with the mechanism for monitoring and documenting municipal violations, plus coordination with the municipal employees to control violators and slap fines. **>A2**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN ROHM to present pianist Gile Bae

1 The ROHM has announced that a concert will be staged on 31 December 2022 featuring the acclaimed pianist Gile Bae. **>A2**

SPORTS India seal series with three-wicket victory

2 India defeated Bangladesh by 3 wickets in a thrilling contest in the second Test in Dhaka to seal the series. **>A8**

MARKET High oil prices to act as buffer for GCC

3 High oil prices this year have added an extra cushion to the finances of Oman and other GCC countries, according to an expert. **>B1**



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TIMINGS



Dhuhr.....	12:12pm
Asr.....	3:13pm
Maghrib.....	5:33pm
Isha.....	6:48pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....	5:26am



OMAN VISION 2040

ACCLAIMED PIANIST

SAI submits annual report to His Majesty

MUSCAT: Sheikh Ghosn Hilal Al Alawi, Chairman of the State's Audit Institution (SAI) submitted "SAI annual report 2021" to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. SAI focused all its resources and utilised all its potential to execute the powers entrusted to it, with a high level of proficiency. In implementation of Article (66) of the Basic Law of the State, promulgated under Royal Decree No. 6/2021 and Article (29) of State's Audit Institution's Law, issued under Royal Decree No. 111/2011, the SAI forwarded copies of its report to the Council of Ministers, the State Council and the Shura Council. SAI's annual report comprised



key outcomes of its inspection of some units of the State's Administrative Apparatus, public authorities, establishments and companies, as well as branches of these bodies covered by the SAI. The report was corroborated by SAI's final findings, along with the replies of those bodies to its queries made within the context of the institution's annual plan 2021. The SAI mission was conducted

bearing in mind the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 and the principles and standards endorsed by the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI) and SAI audit guidelines of risk analysis based on the principle of segment-per-segment inspection. The SAI report also included a statement on financial and administrative violations and the measures taken in this regard, in addition to the SAI's efforts to enhance integrity within the context of its mandate to combat corruption and its follow-up of implementation of the UN Convention against Corruption. -ONA

ROHM to present pianist Gile Bae

MUSCAT: The Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) announced a concert will be staged on 31 December 2022 featuring the acclaimed pianist Gile Bae and the Armenian State Symphony Orchestra. Gile Bae is an extraordinary pianist who has been performing to great acclaim since the age of 5. Bae is joined by the Armenian State Symphony Orchestra to perform a beautiful, sophisticated concert with a programme of the finest pieces of classical music, under the baton of the legendary conductor, Jan Latham-Koenig.



Audiences are invited to take their seats and sit back to enjoy pieces from the masters of the classical music canon, Mozart, Beethoven, Bizet, Elgar and Ravel. -ONA

ACADEMIC ACCREDITATION AUTHORITY

COMMUNITY AWARENESS

School performance evaluation discussed

MUSCAT: The board of directors of Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education on Sunday discussed the guideline of programme assessment (programme accreditation). It also exchanged views about qualifications proposed by Oman Medical Specialisations Board, the pilot plan for evaluation of school performance and the School Self-assessment

Guideline. **Board's 6th meeting** The deliberations took place during the Board's 6th meeting of the year (2022), held under the chair of Dr. Rahma Ibrahim Al Mahrouqi, Chairperson of the Board on Sunday. The officials also looked into an executive plan to launch a national system for evaluating the per-

formance of schools in the year 2023 and reviewed an updated report on external review of higher education institutions. **Board members** During the meeting, the Board members signed a "Conflicts-of-Interest Disclosure Form" designed for institutions that will be subject to evaluation in 2023. -ONA



FROM A1 Beach monitoring

In a statement to the Oman News Agency, Ahmed Al Humaidi said, "the agreement was the first of its kind to benefit from the security and safety services in the field of beach monitoring and protection of public facilities and has been signed for a year with an option to renew the deal." As part of the initial plan, the services will be used at the Sur Al-Hadid area, Seeb Beach, as it is a

popular waterfront." **Comfortable environment** Al Humaidi said: "The agreement reflects the municipality's aim to create a safe and comfortable environment. We hope to deter irresponsible practices that would harm the public health or service facilities of the municipality. We also hope to raise community awareness with these measures."



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MONDAY COLUMN

Looking back at the year 2022

Saleh Al-Shaibany

We are in the last week of the year 2022 and we are probably looking back to find out if there were any missed opportunities so we can correct ourselves in the year that is about to begin next week. Was it a year of gloom and despair or was it a year to celebrate and look back with pride? Perhaps it was a year of the brave things we should have done but never had the courage to do.

Personally, I should have taken more time off my working schedule. I should also have paid more attention to my family and certainly refused to delve into matters that were not important to my life. But having said that, when one

is engrossed with a pressing situation, everything becomes a priority. You try to live several days in just a few hours in a bid to accomplish a host of things in a short time. As you rush through, you give little time to each and do little justice to any of them. I pledge, though I doubt that I would have the resilience to adhere to the promise, I would slow down without slamming the brakes on my ambitions.

I would also like to do so many things but I will resist, try to resist at least, the temptations to overload my work schedule. Does it make me feel good now by saying that? Of course it does. The challenge is for us to make our words good when it matters. But the question is that why wait until the calendar turns the year? I can start right away by filtering my desk and throw away all the useless papers that clutter my office.

I can also clear out my mind with thoughts that bog me down at this very instant. I am sure I will be surprised to find, just less than 20 percent in that list, what I see now as priority, is important. If I go further down for another short list, I am confident I would just find a couple of items that are really important to me.

If I can do it, then I would start the year with a fresh enthusiasm giving myself time to flush out all the undesirables in my mind. If I am successful, than I would free my life with all the unnecessary confusion and see things quite clear. As usual, I would refrain from making silly resolutions that I would not follow. I hate shackling my routine with a few scribbled words. A year is not a lot but it can heap a lot of trouble if you don't take care of the minutes that go by. I have been writing about new years for the last ten years and yet, I have learned very little about life itself. But it is never too late and I am not going to wait for another year to do something about it.

We might all celebrate the closing of the year but the beginning of the new calendar must bring fresh hope, a new start and looking closer at the finer detail. Before we know it, another year would swish past and we will be stuck with the same song like a broken record. Let's put our words in practice. Let's also learn to spend more time with our families and address their needs even if they seem not to demand it. Life starts at home and if the domestic is not taken care for then it can be unpleasant place to go back to.

MUNICIPAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS

OHRC commends ease of voting in municipal polls

MUSCAT: Oman Human Rights Commission (OHRC) on Sunday updated itself about the progress made in Municipal Councils Third Term Membership Elections. A delegation from the commission visited the Elections Control Centre where it held meetings with members of the Main Committee.

The team also visited the communications centre where it took note about mechanism of call reception and reporting of cases to specialised panels. The commission expressed its great appreciation for the efforts made

in organizing the municipal elections which, it said, scaled new unprecedented heights, thanks to the application of technological advancement.

The commission valued the whole new approach, which replaced voters' physical presence at electoral centres with online voting that can be made from home or office or anywhere else.

The supervisory committee also lauded the application of digital voting which, it said, ensures transparency and secrecy in conducting elections.

-ONA

ELECTIONS

Winning candidates congratulated

<FROM A1 The minister pointed out that new high accuracy applications were implemented, to ensure both secrecy and cybersecurity.

This process, he explained, is fully reliant on artificial intelligence accessed via smart phones to enable the voters from Oman and abroad to select their preferred candidates.

Sayyid Hamoud stressed that both voting and sorting opera-

tions contributed to saving time and effort, as well as financial cost. As a result, he said, the procedures were streamlined for voters, candidates contesting the elections and the supervising committees.

The minister congratulated the winning candidates who will now onwards serve as members of the municipal councils of their respective wilayats during the third term. -ONA

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FULL LIST

Names of winners of third term Municipal Councils' elections announced on Sunday

Eng. Khalid Hilal Al Busaid, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior, Chairman of the Main Committee for Third Term Municipal Councils' Elections, announced on Sunday evening the names of winners of the elections. The names of the winners are as follows:



GOVERNORATE OF MUSCAT

WILAYAT OF MUSCAT:
• Faisal Ali Ibrahim Al Balushi
• Dawood Sulaiman Salim Al Jabri

WILAYAT OF A'SEEB:
• Fida Ahmed Abdulaziz Al Balushi
• Abdulrahman Nasser Mohammed Al Hinai

WILAYAT OF MUTTRAH:
• Murtaadha Mohammed Abdulkhaliq Al Issani
• Hamad Khalfan Abdullah Al Wahibi

WILAYAT OF BAUSER:
• Hamad Marhoon Khalfan Al Seyabi
• Amer Salim Al Hassani

WILAYAT OF AL AMIRAT:
• Mazin Sulaiman Issa Al Hadi
• Haitham Hamad Nasser Al Rahbi

WILAYAT OF QURIYAT:
• Yasser Saud Ibrahim Al Zedjali
• Ahmed Abdullah Said Al Balushi

GOVERNORATE OF NORTH AL SHARQIYAH

WILAYAT OF IBRA:
• Hamad Mohammed Uddai Al Manji
• Nasser Said Ali Al Yazeedi

WILAYAT OF BIDIYAH:
• Amer Salim Ali Al Wehaibi
• Mohammed Nasser Salim Al Hajri

WILAYAT OF AL QABIL:
• Salim Mohammed Salim Al Malki
• Said Abdullah Hamad Al Harthi

WILAYAT OF AL MUDHAIBI:
• Sulaiman Mohammed Salim Al Qanoobi
• Said Abdullah Said Al Shabibi

WILAYAT OF DAMA WA'TA'EEEN:
• Mohammed Said Humaid Al Hassani
• Saif Salim Shunoon Al Seyabi

WILAYAT OF WADI BANI KHALID:
• Hamoud Mohammed Al Muselhi
• Khalfan Sulaiman Al Sa'adi

WILAYAT OF SINAW:
• Mohammed Said Hamad Al Rashdi
• Muhanna Mohammed Said Al Fazari

GOVERNORATE OF AL WUSTA

WILAYAT OF HAIMA:
• Ageel Hamad Mohammed Al Harsoosi
• Hamdan Salim Mohsin Al Harsoosi

WILAYAT OF MAHOUT:
• Salim Abdullah Said Al Hakmani
• Mansoor Hamad Salim Al Ghufaili

WILAYAT OF DUQM:
• Khalifa Said Khamis Al Junaibi
• Zayed Juma Anbar Al Junaibi

WILAYAT OF AL JAZIR:
• Juma Salim Naseeb Al Junaibi



• Abdullah Zayed Abdoon Al Junaibi

GOVERNORATE OF NORTH AL BATINAH

WILAYAT OF SOHAR:
• Abdullah Yahya Salim Al Jabri
• Ibrahim Ali Khadim Al Ra'eesi

WILAYAT OF SHINAS:
• Khamis Abdullah Musabab Al Mazroui
• Haitham Ali Obaid Al Mayasi

WILAYAT OF LIWA:
• Adel Mohammed Ahmed Al Balushi
• Khalfan Sulaiman Musabab Al Kindi

WILAYAT OF SAHAM:
• Nasr Yousef Abdullah Al Farsi
• Said Salim Mohammed Al Braiki

WILAYAT OF AL KHAPOURAH:
• Said Salim Ali Al Qutaiti
• Ali Said Hadeeb Al Qutaiti

WILAYAT OF A'SUWAIQ:
• Ghanim Saif Salim Al Khumaisi
• Saif Salim Sagheer Al Sa'adi

GOVERNORATE OF SOUTH AL BATINAH

WILAYAT OF A'RUSTAQ:
• Abdullah Salim Khamis Al Khatiri
• Salah Abdullah Rashid Al Khanbashi

WILAYAT OF NAKHAL:
• Said Ali Salim Al Hakamani
• Salim Mohammed Saif Al Riyami

WILAYAT OF WADI AL MA'AWEL:
• Saud Said Hilal Al Ma'awali
• Badr Mohammed Said Al Ma'awali

WILAYAT OF AL AWABI:
• Sulaiman Yousef Hamad Al Kharousi
• Salim Sulaiman Ali Al Hatali

WILAYAT OF AL MUSANNAH:
• Hilal Salim Saleh Al Sa'adi
• Jassim Yaqoub Abdullah Al Farsi

WILAYAT OF BARKA:
• Ali Slayim Nasser Al Rushaidi
• Said Saif Said Al Sudairi

GOVERNORATE OF AL DHAHIRAH

WILAYAT OF IBRI:
• Nasser Saif Said Al Jassasi
• Sultan Rashid Said Al Kalbani

WILAYAT OF YANQUL:
• Mohammed Saleh Ali Al Badi
• Said Saif Said Al Sudairi

WILAYAT OF DHANK:
• Hamdan Nasser Rashid Al Yahya'ee
• Saif Rashid Ali Al Badi

GOVERNORATE OF AL DAKHILIYAH

WILAYAT OF NIZWA:
• Ahmed Zayed Khalifa Al Busaidi
• Saud Salim Saud Al Furqani

WILAYAT OF SAMAIL:
• Khalil Khalfan Nasser Al Qarni
• Badr Hamoud Abdullah Al Jalandani

WILAYAT OF BAHLA:
• Saud Ali Said Al Shuaili
• Nasser Humaid Nasser Al Wardi

WILAYAT OF ADAM:
• Nasser Mohammed Suwaidan Al Dar'ee
• Sultan Said Hamad Al Mahrouqi

WILAYAT OF AL HAMRA:
• Hamad Sulaiman Hamad Al Abri

• Saud Said Rashid Al Abri

WILAYAT OF MANAH:
• Obaid Said Ali Al Junaibi
• Said Khairallah Said Al Oraini

WILAYAT OF IZKI:
• Mubarak Yousuf Ali Al Amri
• Nasser Salim Hakim Al Amri

WILAYAT OF BIDBID:
• Waleed Said Saif Al Seyabi
• Yasser Fahdil Mubarak Al Muharbi

WILAYAT OF AL JABAL AL AKHDAR:
• Waleed Saif Mohammed Al Zakwani
• Ahmed Hamad Saif Al Nabhani

GOVERNORATE OF DHOFAR

WILAYAT OF SALALAH:
• Said Ahmed Said Al Shehri
• Emad Mohsin Ali Al Shanfari

WILAYAT OF THUMRAIT:
• Said Mohammed Saad Ghawas
• Mahir Said Mohammed Al Katheri

WILAYAT OF TAQAH:
• Bukhait Ali Said Al Shehri
• Said Ali Mubarak Al Shehri

WILAYAT OF MIRBAT
• Mohammed Suhail Mohammed Al Amri
• Mohammed Ahmed Mohammed Al Yaqoubi

WILAYAT OF SADAH:
• Abdoud Sangour Naseeb Bait Kamt
• Haitham Ali Hamid Al Amri

WILAYAT OF RAKHYUT:
• Salim Ali Said Issa
• Ali Salim Suhail Al Baraami

WILAYAT OF DHALKUT:
• Rajih Amer Mohammed Al Amri
• Mohsin Issa Ali Al Mujaibi

WILAYAT OF MAQSHAN:
• Mohammed Musallam Rahaba Jadad
• Habta Bukhait Salim Al Sha'sha'ei

WILAYAT OF SHALEEM WA JUZUR AL HALANIYAT:
• Mohammed Salim Mohammed Al Mahri
• Faisal Abdulaziz Mohammed Al Shehri

WILAYAT OF AL MAZYOUNAH:
• Mohammed Musallam Mud'hi Zabanout
• Mohammed Ahmed Issa Rafait

GOVERNORATE OF AL BURAIMI

WILAYAT OF AL BURAIMI:
• Mohammed Khalifa Mohammed Al Jabri
• Fahd Said Abdullah Al Ghaithi

WILAYAT OF MAHADHA:
• Khalid Khamis Rashid Al Kaabi
• Ahmed Said Mohammed Al Kaabi

WILAYAT OF AL SUNAINAH:
• Musallam Ali Rashid Al Man'ei
• Payza Khalfan Abdullah A'Shamsi

GOVERNORATE OF MUSANDAM

WILAYAT OF KHASAB
• Abdulmonem Saleh Abdullah Al Kamzari
• Ahmed Mohammed Abdullah Al Kamzari

WILAYAT OF BUKHA:
• Ali Abdullah Mohammed Al Shehi
• Mohammed Darwish Saleh Al Shehi

WILAYAT OF DIBA:
• Mohammed Ali Mohammed Al Shehi

• Khalid Mohammed Zaman Al Ra'eesi

WILAYAT OF MADHA:
• Badr Mohammed Ali Al Madhani
• Hamad Mohammed Abdullah Al Madhani

GOVERNORATE OF SOUTH AL SHARQIYAH

WILAYAT OF SUR:
• Mohammed Nasser Mohammed Al Araimi
• Juma Abdullah Mubarak Al Araimi

WILAYAT OF AL KAMIL WA AL WAFI:
• Abdullah Khalifa Abdullah Al Rasbi
• Hamad Waney Hadeeb Al Hashmi

WILAYAT OF JA'ALAN BANI BU ALI:
• Sultan Mohammed Sultan Al Kasbi
• Amer Said Nasser Al Sunaidi

WILAYAT OF JA'ALAN BANI BU HASSAN:
• Hamad Helees Al Tuwaih Al Owaisi
• Khamis Rashid Khamis Al Masroori

WILAYAT OF MUSAIRAH:
• Salman Hamad Khamis Al Farsi
• Hamoudah Humaid Waney Al Wehibi

The Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior, Chairman of the Main Committee of the 3rd Term Municipal Councils' Elections commended cooperation of the voters through "Antakhib" app, which is considered a qualitative shift in the electoral process that was conducted smoothly and easily. **ONA**



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VIA WEBSITES, SOCIAL MEDIA

Bylaw to regulate e-marketing, promotion via websites issued

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion on Sunday issued a bylaw to regulate business activities involving marketing and promotion via electronic websites and social media groups.

The bylaw will be in force after 90 days from its publication in the Official Gazette.

Social media

The bylaw, which seeks to protect both merchants and consumers, requires the promoters of products and services via social media to obtain a license from the Commercial Affairs and Electronic Trade Department of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

try of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

Though it mandated licence as a prerequisite for practicing product and service promotion, the bylaw excludes people engaged in non-profit activities, like charity or volunteering services, as well as a merchant's promoting

his/her own products or services. Requests for e-promotion licenses should be made by filling the prescribed forms available at the above-mentioned authorised department, provided the applicant meets the conditions.

The bylaw indicates that an applicant's request may be finalised within 15 days from the date the authorised department receives the necessary documents. In case the licence application is approved, the authorised department issues a 3-year licence, renewable, to enable the applicant to practise e-marketing and promotion activities.

— ONA

MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION, RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

9 winning projects of Upgrade programme 2022 announced

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The nine winning teams of the latest edition of Upgrade 2022, a programme that transforms the best graduation projects into startups, were announced during the Annual Research Forum, organised by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MOHERI), on 14 December 2022 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, under the patronage of HE Eng. Said bin Hamood Al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, and in the attendance of HE Prof. Dr. Rahma bint Ibrahim Al Mahrooqi, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, and a number of officials, academics and research winners.

For this year's edition, Upgrade program is divided into two tracks: the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) track and the newly launched industrial track. The ICT track focused on transforming the winning student graduation projects into startups in fourth industrial revolution areas such as Smart Cities, Internet of Things, Information Security, Artificial Intelligence, Big Data and Blockchain. As for the industrial track, the

areas of interest included Engineering, Agricultural Sciences, Marine Sciences, Applied Sciences, Environmental Sciences and Vital Resources.

In the ICT track, the six winning projects went to 'Long-term Forecasting of Solar PV System Output Using Machine Learning' by Insiya Zehra, Wadhah Al Darii, Tamadher Al Hosni, Asma Ghafur Khan and Safa Al Baiti, 'Drilling Rigs Planning and Scheduling' by Ahmed Al Mazroey, Husam Al Nasser and Mazin Al Rubkhi, 'Mobile App for Handling Legal Issues' by Sara Al Sinani, Balqees Al Ghafri and Maroa Al Dairi, 'Low-Cost Smart Poultry Farming Based on IoT' by Saif Al Janabi, Aisha Al Risi and Rahma Al Waili, 'Drone Jamming' by Aflah Al Hajri, and 'Q Drop' by Ahmed Al Jabari and Fatema Al Alawi.

As for the industrial track, the three winning projects went to 'Design of Photobioreactor for

Microalgae Cultivation' by Mona Al Maashani, Maryam Al Balushi and Fatima Al Hinai, 'Graphene-Based Polymeric Solar Cells' by Aisha Al Wahaibi, Al-Hasnaa Al Adwani, Muzn Al Abri and Nusbah Al Kharusi, and 'Sustainable Fabric Production from Recycled Plastic Water Bottles' by Zainab Al Hajri and Jihan Al Busaidi.

With the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, Upgrade program included two new partners, Bank Muscat and Madayn Academy for Industrial Innovation, in addition to the existing partners, Oman Telecommunications Company (Omantel), the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, the Authority for SME Development, Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, and Oman Technology Fund (Takween).

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Muscat Digital City to create more job opportunities for citizens, expats



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MUSCAT Digital City

The Muscat Digital City with an investment of OMR6 million plans to create more than 5,000 employees in the development of technology and software development in Oman. In an interview Sultan bin Ahmed Al Raisi, Founder of Muscat Digital City, elaborates about the details of what the it intends to achieve.

1-What are the details of this technology and how does it work?
It is an idea through which the systems of governmental and private institutions and the main sectors, including education, tourism, economy, health care, the legal sector, and all sectors of the state's administrative apparatus, are developed. It also facilitates the work of individual and institutional performance. This idea is based on merging the real and virtual worlds and the use of simulation and artificial intelligence in all aspects of life.

2-How can the recipient of this technology be sure of its effectiveness?
Among the advertising plans for the idea will be to create experimental virtual environments with a number not exceeding ten. Metaverse technology glasses will be distributed to some active sites in Muscat Governorate so that the recipient can understand and test the idea.

3-What are the advantages of this technology?
- Production of a number of devices in the world of software technology.
- Expanding human's horizons.
- Encouraging creativity and experimentation.
- Understanding users' needs.
- Creating new job opportunities.
- Developing tools of social interactions.
- Improving work environments.

4-Are there certain gaps in this technology that you seek to fill and develop the work of this technology?
We are still in the process of preparing and working on this technology. No loopholes have been encountered so far. On the other hand, we seek through this technology to bridge some of the gaps faced by the service sector in Oman.

5- Does this technology cope with the global technical revolution? In other words, is it usable for a long time?
According to our continuous research on this technology and the study of all its aspects, the Gartner Corporation conducted a research study on this technology and predicted that "about a quarter of internet users would spend at least one hour a day working, shopping, learning, and practicing social and entertainment activities within the digital Metaverse space by 2026." The study added that, based on the wide cooperation opportunities provided by this technology and its impact on the rapid completion of business and the reduction of infrastructure construction costs, it is expected that institutions will participate with their services and products in this technology by 30%. This gives us positive indications about the possibility that this technology continues for a long time.

6- How can this technology attract investment and revive the local economy?
This technology will attract investment. It is a new technology that will develop the reality of services and make it easier and more flexible. It will produce a number of smart devices that can be exported to be manufactured locally and expanded. It will also facilitate the individual and institutional performance in all sectors and will reduce construction costs. In this regard, McKinsey Management Consulting has estimated the volume of investments related to Metaverse during the first five months of the year 2022 at about \$ 120 billion. This would encourage effective investment and planning to introduce this technology.

7- Has this technology been applied in a specific field to prove its effectiveness?
It has been applied in some countries,

including Dubai. Also, the South Korean capital, Seoul, has announced that it wants to be the first major city in the world to adopt this technology. Meta Company continues to employ about 10,000 employees working in the Metaverse project and development of systems and software. The world is also witnessing this new technology with high support and a growth rate of 2.3% annually until 2030.

8- How did you get this idea? How were your beginnings? Did you encounter any difficulties?
This idea came from my passion for virtual entertainment games. So the question was, why not incorporate it into real life? In terms of difficulties, I have not encountered any difficulties so far, and work is still underway to implement this technology.

9- How can you market this technology to reach the largest possible segment in various fields?
Currently, we are currently working on developing advertising and marketing plans for this technology, including targeting social media platforms, launching paid advertising campaigns, and other various advertising tools.

10- Is this technology cyber safe? Are there security holes in it?
There are no security gaps. We use the best types of servers prepared for this technology. We also provide it with the best types of programming and global cloud hosting with the availability of a responsive support team as soon as any gaps occur.

11- What are your future aspirations?
- To facilitate and develop the service sector in the Sultanate.
- To be pioneers in software.
- To enter into global competition and be the first Arab country in the advancement of the technical field.

12- What is the market value of the project?
The market value of the project is RO 6,000,000, and it employs more than 5,000 employees working in the Metaverse project and the development of systems and software.



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GAS TANKER

Eight killed, several injured in Johannesburg tanker explosion

JOHANNESBURG: A gas tanker apparently stuck under a bridge exploded in Johannesburg on Saturday, killing eight people, injuring several others and damaging nearby buildings, reports ABC News citing emergency services.

The blast damaged the roof of the emergency department at the Tambo Memorial hospital and destroyed two houses and several cars, and injured bystanders. The

tanker caught fire while under a low bridge, emergency services spokesperson William Ntladi said.

“Apparently, a gas tanker drove under the subway bridge and got stuck in there, and due to friction, it caught alight,” Ntladi told South African media.

He said six firefighters from Boksburg Central Fire Station were called to the bridge to help, reported ABC News.

“While doing the fire suppression, there was an explosion that took place,” said Ntladi. He added that a fire engine and two motor vehicles were destroyed by the blast.

The injured were transported to the nearby Tambo Memorial hospital, but its efforts to treat the injured were hampered by damage to its roof, reported ABC News.

A video on Twitter from inside the hospital showed a chaotic scene, with people running for cover.

“We can confirm that a roof section at the hospital casualty department has collapsed,” added Ntladi. He further added that the fire crews were still fighting the blaze at the bridge and were also attending to two homes nearby, adding, “The fire is now under control.” **ANI**



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US winter storm brings bitter cold weather, wreaks havoc

The storm has affected a vast area from the Great Lakes near Canada to south of the Mexico-US border



At least 2,000 US flights were canceled early on Saturday, with total delays tallying 4,000, according to flight-tracking service FlightAware. More than 5,000 flights were canceled on Friday, the flight tracker said.

The city of Buffalo in western New York imposed a driving ban and closed all three local border-crossing bridges to halt inbound traffic from Canada because of the weather.

Canada and Mexico also freezing

In Canada, hundreds of thousands of people were left without power in Ontario and Quebec as meteorologists there warned of a potential once-in-a-decade weather event. Many flights were canceled at airports in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal.

In Mexico, migrants camped near the border in unusually cold temperatures as they awaited a US Supreme Court decision on pandemic-era restrictions that prevent many from applying for asylum.

Churches, schools, and a civic center in El Paso, Texas, opened their doors to offer shelter to some of the migrants, but some chose to stay outside in frigid temperatures to avoid drawing the attention of immigration authorities. **nw**

WASHINGTON: A severe winter storm continues to affect a large portion of the United States and Canada, bringing heavy snow, freezing rain, flooding and dangerously low temperatures.

The storm has affected a vast area from the Great Lakes near Canada to south of the Mexico-US border. The storm is expected to produce record-cold temperatures on Christmas Eve in cities from Pennsylvania to Florida.

Winter weather advisories or warnings are in place for 60% of the US population, according to the National Weather Service.

The NWS warned that temperatures and strong winds are expected to create “dangerously cold wind chills” and “in some areas,

being outdoors could lead to frostbite in minutes.”

At least 17 storm-related deaths have been confirmed across eight states.

‘Bomb cyclone’ to blame for record lows

The NWS called the storm, which started on Thursday, a “once in a generation” event. It is expected to continue through the Christmas weekend.

Some parts of the country recorded temperatures as low as -55

Fahrenheit (-48 Celsius).

Temperatures were expected to drop to 8 degrees Fahrenheit in Pittsburgh (-13 Celsius) on Christmas Eve, colder than the previous record of 13 Fahrenheit set in 1983. The capital cities of Florida and Georgia, Tallahassee and Atlanta, are also expected to experience their coldest Christmas Eve daytime highs, while Washington, D.C. is forecast to have its chilliest December 24 since 1906.

Forecasters said the extreme colds were powered by a “bomb

cyclone,” which happens when atmospheric pressure drops very quickly in a strong storm. The cyclone had developed near the Great Lakes, stirring up blizzard conditions, including heavy winds and snow.

Power outages and cancelled flights

As of Saturday morning, more than 1.7 million homes and businesses were without power, according to the website PowerOutage.

The storm also disrupted holi-

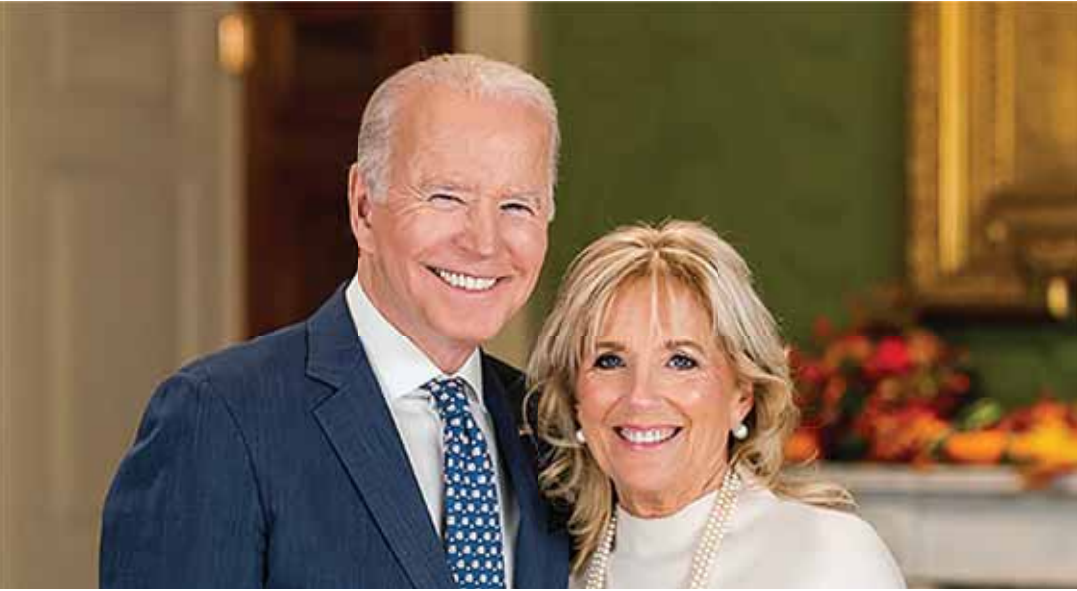
day plans for millions of Americans during one of the busiest travel periods of the year.

The weather service warned that the conditions “will create a potentially life-threatening hazard for travelers that become stranded.”

The American Automobile Association had estimated that 112.7 million people planned to venture 50 miles or more from home between Friday and January 2. But stormy weather heading into the weekend likely ended up keeping many of them at home.

CHRISTMAS WISHES

From Joe Biden to Pope Francis, world leaders wish people ‘Merry Christmas’



NEW DELHI: On the occasion of Christmas, world leaders - US President Joe Biden, Prime Minister of Canada Justin Trudeau, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, and Pope Francis wished a ‘Merry Christmas’ to people across the globe.

“Jill and I hope everyone is able to spend time with family and friends during the holiday season. We’re also holding a special place in our hearts for anyone missing a loved one during this time. From our family to yours, we wish you a peaceful Christmas Eve,” tweeted Biden. Meanwhile, Pope Francis tweeted, “Tonight, God draws near to you because you are important to him. From the manger, as food for your life, He tells you: ‘If you feel consumed by events, if a sense of guilt and inadequacy devours you, if you hunger for justice, I am with you. #Christmas. Jesus asks us to go to the bare reality of things, to lay down all our excuses, our justifications and our hypocrisies at the feet of the manger. He whom Mary tenderly wrapped in swaddling wants us to be clothed in love. #Christmas.’”

Canadian PM Trudeau also

wished “joy, health, love, and peace,” and said that he is “excited to gather around the Christmas tree and spend some quality time together.”

“Merry Christmas! Like millions of Canadians, my family is excited to gather around the Christmas tree and spend some quality time together. And as we look ahead to the new year, we’re also wishing you joy, health, love, and peace,” tweeted Trudeau.

He also thanked the Canadian Armed Forces for protecting the country. “This year, I’m thinking of Canadians who go the extra mile to make our country a better place. I’m thinking of members of the Canadian Armed Forces who are protecting our country and the values we share. I’m thinking of the doctors, nurses, and first responders working throughout the holidays. And I’m thinking of everyday Canadians who find ways to show up for their friends and neighbours.”

Trudeau said that 2022 was a challenging year; for many, this holiday season won’t be easy. “But I’m confident that Canadians will continue to be there for each other in 2023 - because that’s just who

we are,” he said.

Australian PM Albanese said that Christmas is a special time of year.

“It’s a day of giving. It’s a day for relaxing together with family and friends. And for many Australians, it is a day that is so central to their faith. Of course, not everyone gets to take it easy today. If you’re rostered on somewhere, I want to say thank you for your service to others. If you’re working because you volunteered your time to make Christmas better for your fellow Australians, whether you’re serving lunch to those in need or you’re keeping our beaches safe, I want to express my gratitude and my admiration.”

Thanking emergency service workers and Australian Defence Force, he said, “The same goes to all our emergency service workers and of course, all Australian Defence Force personnel, whether they’re serving here or far from home overseas. Thank you to every single one of you. Whatever form Christmas Day takes for you, may it be a very happy one and may Santa be good to every child. Merry Christmas.” **ANI**

LANDSLIDE AT CAMPSITE

Death toll in Malaysia landslide rises to 31, search comes to an end

KUALA LUMPUR: The death toll from a landslide at a campsite in Malaysia has risen to 31.

The landslide occurred on December 16, around 50 kilometres (31 miles) from Kuala Lumpur, at a campsite in Batang Kali town of Selangor district.

Ninety-two people were sleeping at the campsite when tonnes of soil and mud thundered down a hill. Among the deceased were 11 children. All those who died were Malaysian nationals. A total of 61 campers were rescued. Many of the victims were families enjoying their year-end holidays.



Rescuers: ‘We found the last body’

Rescuers called off the search for bodies after the last missing person was recovered on Saturday — a boy aged between 7 and 12 years.

His body was found in a sleeping bag more than one meter below Earth’s surface.

“We found the last body, that of a boy. We will end our search and rescue operations,” said senior rescue official Hafisham Mohamad Noor.

Two of the deceased — a mother and her baby daughter — were found hugging each other, while another man was uncovered still clutching his dog.

For close to 10 days, nearly 700

government and emergency services personnel, backed by police tracker dogs and earth-moving machines, trawled through the debris searching for survivors and bodies.

Authorities said that while the farm was licensed, it did not have permission to run a campsite and had been doing so illegally for the last two years.

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim announced an aid of 10,000 ringgit (€2,125, \$2,266) to the family members of every deceased person and 1,000 ringgit to the survivors.

A regular disaster prone region

The disaster struck just outside the Genting Highlands, a popular tourist destination known for its natural beauty and famous resorts.

According to authorities, one of the causes of the landslide could have been the “accumulation of underground water and high soil saturation” beneath the campsite.

About 450,000 cubic metres of soil was displaced in the landslide. Every year end, after heavy rains Malaysia tends to be punctuated with landslides.

However, no heavy rains were recorded in Batang Kali area on the night of the calamity.

Previously, one of the deadliest mudslides in Malaysia occurred in 1993 when heavy rains caused a 12-storey residential building near Kuala Lumpur to collapse, killing 48 people.

In December 2021, about 21,000 people were displaced after torrential rains caused floods in seven states across the country. **nw**

REFUGEES ARRIVE

Rohingyas arrive on Indonesian shore

JAKARTA: Dozens of Rohingya refugees arrived on the shores of Indonesia’s Aceh province early on Sunday morning, officials said.

The group of 58 men reached land on Indrapatna beach in Ladoong, a fishing village, local police chief Rolly Yuiza Away said.

Villagers who saw the group of Rohingya on a rickety wooden boat assisted them in coming to shore before informing the authorities of their arrival, the police official added.

The Rohingya coming ashore in Indonesia came after demands from humanitarian organizations, pleading for them to be allowed to disembark after being adrift at sea for a month.

On Friday, the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) called on regional governments to rescue at least 190 Rohingya people set adrift between the Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal.

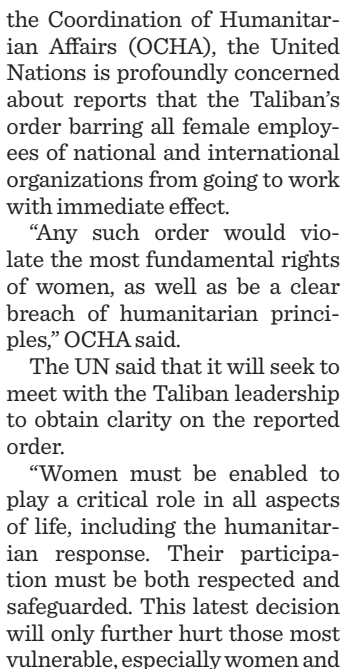
According to the UNHCR, the

refugees were stuck aboard an unseaworthy vessel with very little food and water.

Up to 20 people had died during the journey, the UN humanitarian body added.

“It is devastating to learn that many people have already lost their lives, including children. Sadly, this makes it one of the deadliest years in the seas in the region,” Indrika Ratwatte, UNHCR’s Director for Asia and the Pacific, said in a statement. **nw**

UN Secretary-General reiterated the rights of all women to participate in the workforce



girls,” OCHA said in a statement. The UN in Afghanistan and its partners condemned the reported order and reminded the de facto authorities that taking away women’s free will to choose their own fate disempowering and excluding them systematically from all aspects of public and political life.

On Saturday, the Taliban regime ordered all local and foreign NGOs to stop female employees from coming to work in the country.

The Taliban-led Ministry of Economy (MOE) ordered all national and international non-government organizations to suspend the jobs of female employees until further announcement, TOLONews reported.

This comes a few days after the Taliban ordered the closure of universities to female students across the country. **ANI**

Nepal President appoints Pushpa Kamal as new PM

KATHIMANDU: Nepal President Bidhya Devi Bhandari on Sunday appointed Maoist Centre leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal as the Prime Minister of the Himalayan nation, Nepal President's Office said.

"Pushpa Kamal Dahal of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) will take oath as the new Prime Minister of Nepal tomorrow at 4pm (local time)," said Nepal President's office.

Dahal was appointed PM for the third time after he secured the support of 169 members of the Parliament to form the new government. Dahal, also known by his nom de guerre Prachanda, meaning "fierce", served as Prime Min-

ister of Nepal from 2008 to 2009 and again from 2016 to 2017.

Earlier, Prachanda moved an application with the President claiming the Prime Ministership of Nepal shortly after a coalition of six parties decided to support him to form the next government.

"A coalition of 6 parties have decided to project Pushpa Kamal Dahal as the Prime Minister. An agreement has been reached. Dahal will lead the government for two and a half years and the CPN-UML will be in power in the remaining two-and-a-half years," Barshaman Pun, leader of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Center) said.

In the new coalition, the CPN-UML has 78, Maoist Center 32, Rastriya Swatantra Party 20, Rastriya Prajatantra Party 14, Janata Samajbadi Party 12, Janamat Party 6, Nagarik Unmukti Party has four MPs and three independent lawmakers are in support of Prachanda.

Earlier on Sunday, Nepali Congress senior leader Ram Chandra Paudel said Maoist Center decided to leave the ruling coalition.

Confirming the decision of the Maoist Centre over the phone with ANI, Paudel said that Pushpa Kamal Dahal aka Prachanda walked out of the coalition meeting on Sunday after saying that “the coalition has lost its relevance.” **-ANI**

Sr. No.	Tender No.	Tender Name	Last date for documents collection	Bid Submission Date	Grade	Tender Document's Fees (Including VAT) (RO)
1	113/2022	Supply of Drinking Water Bottles for 3 Years	09/01/2023	07/02/2023	Local Companies with Experience in Same Field, Have A Valid Commercial Registration.	26.250
2	114/2022	Comprehensive Insurance for all OETC Vehicle for five Years (2023-2028)	09/01/2023	07/02/2023	Local Companies with Experience in Same Field, Have A Valid Commercial Registration.	52.500

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Experience	The Tenderer should have performed similar works in the last three (3) years in Sultanate of Oman.
Pre-qualification	Contractors participating in the tendering process shall be at least Grade-C registered electrical contractor with Distribution Code Review Panel (DCRP), Sultanate of Oman. Apart from the above, the Contractors participating in the tendering process shall have Competent Electrical Person (CEP) certified by DISC and copy of the valid CEP certificate shall be submitted along with bid without which the bids will not be considered for evaluation. Further, Tenderers will be evaluated as per the HSE qualification criterion specified in the Tender documents.
Tender document sales cut-off date	03:00 PM on 9 th January 2023
Tender document published date	03:00 PM on 10 th January 2023
Site Visit	N/A
Last date for seeking pre bid clarification	N/A
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17030832156B2

(12) **United States Patent**
Al-Sahli

(54) SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR A COMMERCIAL FINANCIAL TRANSACTION ENGIN A MOBILE SERVICE

(72) Inventor: **Mohamed Anas Mohamed Al-Sahli**, Muscat (SA)

(72) Inventor: **Mohamed Anas Mohamed Al-Sahli**, Muscat (SA)

(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

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CPC G06Q 40/00; G06Q 20/02; G06Q 20/18; G06Q 20/188; G06Q 20/18 (2013.01)

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India beat Bangladesh by 3 wickets, seal series

R Ashwin (42*) and Shreyas Iyer (29*) stitched an unbeaten 71-run partnership to help India win the final Test

DHAKA: India defeated Bangladesh by three wickets in a thrilling contest in the second test to seal the series 2-0 here at the Shere Bangla National Stadium, Dhaka. Ravichandran Ashwin (42*) and Shreyas Iyer (29*) stitched an unbeaten 71-run partnership on the fourth day to help India win the final test of the two-match test series against Bangladesh. Mehidy Hasan Miraz bowled superbly to take a five-wicket haul but was unable to win the test for the hosts. The Test series victory was the 16th win in a row in Asia for the men in blue. India resumed their inning at 45/4, with Axar Patel on 26(54) and Jaydev Unadkat on 3(8). The duo played an eventful first over of the fourth day as Unadkat sur-



WONDERFUL WIN: The Test series victory was the 16th win in a row in Asia for the men in blue.

vived a close leg-before wicket call on the day's third ball and smoked a massive six on the next ball. However, the pacer could add only nine runs to his tally before being dismissed for 13 by Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan. The pacer was found right in front of the stumps in the second over of the day, reducing India to 56/5. India's hopes to win the match rested on Rishabh Pant who had played a brilliant knock of 93 runs in the first inning. But the left-hander perished to Mehidy Hasan Miraz for just 9 runs. Axar Patel who had been batting superbly walked to the pavilion to become Mehidy's fifth wicket in the inning. The left-hander was dismissed for 34 runs. The hosts were all over India and it looked like the visitors would collapse to give them the victory. India were in a spot of bother with the score reading 74/7 when Ravichandran Ashwin walked into bat with Iyer to accompany him on the crease. **Rich form** Iyer, who has been in a rich vein of form this year, continued his run as he looked confident against the Bangladeshi bowlers.

The duo batted the hosts out of the game as they stitched an unbeaten 71-run partnership for the eighth wicket. Bangladesh looked helpless against the pair as they managed to find boundaries and scored at a quick rate. Ashwin did offer a chance to Bangladesh when a catch popped up at short fine-leg but the rub of the green was with the off-spinner as the catch was dropped. The spinner smashed a six and two boundaries off Mehidy to take 16 runs off the 47th over and sealed the game and the series for India. Earlier, Bangladesh bowlers struck early in the innings to dismiss India's top order leaving visitors reeling at 45/4 and needing 100 more runs to win at the time of stumps of Day three of the second Test. Ravichandran Ashwin was declared the player of the match for his match-winning knock in the second inning. Cheteshwar Pujara was chosen as the player of the series for scoring 192 runs in the two tests which included a century and a half-century. **Brief scores:** Bangladesh 227/10 and 231/10 (Litton Das 73, Zakir Hasan 51; Axar Patel 3-68) vs India 314/10 and 145/7 (Rishabh Pant 93, Shreyas Iyer 87; Taijul Islam 4-74) (Ravichandran Ashwin 42*, Axar Patel 34; Mehidy Hasan Miraz 5-63). -ANI

Messi and football: A lifelong love born in Rosario

ROSARIO: The house at 525 Estadio de Israel street in La Bajada, Rosario, in Santa Fe province - an area of hard-working, humble people - is where Argentine football star Lionel Messi started, and it has become a pilgrimage site for many fans. "I love you Messi," two-year-old Nahitan Vera shouted towards the house. He travelled with his family from Santiago del Estero in the north of the country to Buenos Aires to welcome the national team, including captain Messi, following their World Cup final victory against France. Nahitan and his family were part of a wave of more than five million fans to travel to the capital. After realizing they wouldn't be able to even come close to the team's victory parade, they decided to travel another 300 kilometers to Rosario and Messi's childhood home. "I want to thank him for everything he did for us and for giving us so much football," said Joaquin Vera, 19. "Messi is something unique, a genius, we love him very much. We love him." In one of the city's many murals, Messi looks at the sky in celebration, the way in which he always salutes his maternal grandmother Celia, who died in 1998 at the age of 68, a victim of Alzheimer's. In another part of the mural, Messi is shown in the middle of a video call with his wife, Antonella Rocuzzo, and his three sons. "Leo is a character that goes beyond sports, he is magical," mural artist Lisandro Urteaga, 51, told Xinhua. "What he does and what he is, is extraordinary, also because he is an emblem, an ambassador for the world, not only because of how fascinating his football expression is, his technique, his skills, but also because he maintains consistency, simplicity, humility and peace." The city is divided in two: on one side are the fans of Newell's Old Boys, for whom in the youth team, Messi played until he left for Barcelona, Spain, at the age of 13. On the other side are the fans of Rosario Central, from where Angel Di Maria emerged. Messi, his brothers, and his friends played football all day in the street or in the open space owned by the Argentine Army at the time. "When he wanted to play football and his mother was punishing him, he would raise the blinds, go out, and start playing," said Nieves Meyer, 62, a resident of the area, who said it didn't matter if it was hot, cold, or if the dirt street was flooded. "Everything was a reason to play football and Leo participated in all of them," she said. "You heard the balls hit the gate and you were already screaming: Lionel! We're taking a nap!" Carlos Ibanez, another local resident, said that Messi "stood out from the crowd, he was very good", that he "was not afraid", even when facing bigger rivals. Messi went to school at No. 66 General Las Heras, about 600 meters from his house. Andrea Sosa was his fifth and sixth grade teacher. "He was a calm student, compliant with his tasks, responsible, respectful, without any problem, calm, passionate about recreation, yes, to go out and play ball," she told Xinhua. The teacher, who retired this year, said that Messi serves as a positive example for local children. -Xinhua

PREMIER DIVISION LEAGUE

Oman Stallions, Yalla Shabab register wins



Imran Alam, Mohammed Zahid, Nester Dhamba of Yalla Shabab.

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman Stallions brushed past Majees CT by 2 wickets and Yalla Shabab thrashed Renaissance by 108 runs in the Premier Division League Season 2022-23 powered by Muscat Pharmacy. On Friday, Oman Stallions decided to bowl first. The Stallions' Bilal Khan and Hemal Tandel were lethal and trumped the Majees batsmen picking 6 wickets within 16 overs. The Majees batsmen kept falling having no answer to the Stallions bowling, with skipper Zee-shan Maqsood notching 22 of 16 balls (4x4), being their highest run-getter. Hemal Tandel ended with 6 wickets to his name and Rafiullah bagged a couple of wickets. In response, Majees CT's Jan Shafiq and Ishtiaq Mohammed startled the Oman Stallion batsmen with 4 of them departing in the powerplay. Hard-Hitting All Rounder Rafiullah scored quick fire 35 with three boundaries and two maximums to ensure the Stallions get over the line. Ishtiaq Mohammed ended with 3 wickets and Jan Shafiq and Md Yousuf bagged 2 wickets each. **Brief scores:** Majees CT 106/10 in 27.3 overs (Hemal Tandel 53/6, Rafiullah 13/2) lost to Oman Stallions 107/8 in 23.4 overs (Rafiullah 35(35) 3x4, 2x6; Ishtiaq Mohammed 27/3) by 2 wickets. On Saturday, Renaissance invited Yalla Shabab to bat first. Yalla Shabab lost 2 of its mainstay batsmen for cheap courtesy of a fiery spell from Fawad Ali. Hannan Rizwan and Mohammed Nadeem played through the 1st drinks losing their wick-



Hemal Tandel of Oman Stallions

ets post drinks. Imran Alam and Mohammed Zahid chancelessly stitched a 119 run partnership with both of them reaching to their half-centuries but falling consecutively in a space of 3 balls between the 41st and 42nd over. Kaleemullah's late blitz scoring 20 of just 9 balls took Yalla Shabab to 241 in 50 overs. Syed Muzamil was the key armer picking 5 wickets in the innings. In response, Renaissance got off to a shaky and slow start losing 3 wickets in the first 20 overs for just 45 runs. Hammad Irfaq and Ahmed Fayyaz Butt scored 30+ runs trying to help Renaissance get close to the target but fell short due to Nester Dhamba's terrific spin-bowling display claiming five wickets to seal the deal for Yalla Shabab. Renaissance bundled down to just 133 in 42.3 overs. **Brief scores:** Yalla Shabab 241/10 in 50 overs (Muhammed Zahid 57(64) 4x4, Imran Alam 51(93) 3x4; Syed Muzamil 59/5) beat Renaissance 133/10 in 42.3 overs (Hamad Irfaq 31(45) 3x4, Ahmed Fayyaz Butt 30(28) 4x4, 1x6; Nester Dhamba 45/5) by 108 runs.



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SEASON 2022-2023

GERMANY'S INFLATION
Inflation in Germany is predicted to stay elevated for another two years, a senior government adviser warned. "Inflation will also be an issue in 2024, and only thereafter will we maybe see it returning to 2 per cent," Monika Schnitzer, chair of the German Council of Economic Experts, told the Rheinische Post newspaper.

MARKET

BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS LOWER
The MSX index closed at 4,830.77 points, down by 0.16 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.06 per cent at 498.49 points. Gulf International Chemicals, up 7.14 per cent, was the top gainer while Oman Chlorine, down 9.43 per cent, was the top loser.

High oil prices provide extra cushion to GCC economies

The region would also continue to see strong growth, thanks to improvements in non-oil sectors and various other diversification initiatives

VINOD KUMAR PK
vinodkumar@timesofoman.com

MUSCAT: High oil prices recorded this year have added an extra cushion to the finances of Oman and other GCC countries as they rely heavily on energy export revenues, according to an industry expert.

The upward trajectory in crude prices could also act as a buffer for these economies in the coming months. "The region would also continue seeing strong growth, thanks to improvement in non-oil sectors and various diversification initiatives of GCC economies,"



Osama Hamdan, Sales Director at XTB, said in an exclusive interview with the *Times of Oman*.

Elaborating on the expectations of world oil prices next year, Hamdan said, "Oil prices could remain under pressure next year as the global economy could continue slowing down. There are concerns that a recession could take place which could strongly affect demand for crude, pulling prices down in the process."

“Global oil inventories could rise to a certain extent if supply outpaces demand, particularly if the global economic slowdown is sharper than expected. However, Opec could take steps to stabilise the market by reducing output, thereby helping keep inventories relatively stable throughout the year

Osama Hamdan
Sales Director at XTB

"The decrease in demand could be less severe if Chinese economic activity improves with the gradual lifting of sanitary restrictions. At the same time, we could see supply limitations in particular if geopolitical tensions in Europe grow and new sanctions further impact production. Opec's decision could also have an impact if the organisation adopts output cuts," he further added.

Sounding a word of caution, Hamdan said that geopolitical tensions and economic growth prospects could heavily affect oil prices' direction with traders closely observing both factors. "Monetary policies are having a strong impact on the global economy and are expected to continue changing during the coming months as the Federal Reserve could be reviewing the pace of interest rate increases and policy tightening," he said.

Speaking about the Brent crude price, the analyst said it could hover

around the current levels if the expected economic slowdown is not too severe.

Otherwise, prices could be seen lower in the case of a severe recession. However, the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) could move to provide a floor for the market by cutting production levels.

"Global oil inventories could rise to a certain extent if supply outpaces demand, particularly if the global economic slowdown is sharper than expected and prices remain relatively low," Hamdan said. "However, Opec could take steps to stabilise the market by reducing output, thereby helping keep inventories relatively stable throughout the year," he further added.

Regarding Opec's stand relating to oil production and price, Hamdan said the oil exporting members group could move to secure prices above a certain threshold to maintain healthy revenue levels for its member countries. As a result, it could announce new cuts in production levels at its future meetings if crude prices retreat too much. "Opec has previously decided to limit output when it deemed that available volumes were enough to cover global demand," he added.

Elaborating on who is buying Russian oil and gas since the Ukraine crisis, Hamdan said since

the start of the Ukrainian conflict and the adoption of sanctions against Russia, Russian oil has found its way towards countries like China and India. "Both countries are large oil importers due to the respective size of their economies and due to the European sanctions, China and India were able to secure oil prices at significant discounts compared to market prices."

The recent price caps on Russian oil announced by the European Union near current selling prices could further pressure Russia to lower its prices for Asian buyers which are becoming the main trading partners. However, the measure could add a new layer of complexity to the oil supply chain as shipping companies have to contend with insurance issues. In the meantime, the price cap could have a limited impact on the market as a whole.

Regarding the impact of oil prices on developing countries, Hamdan said the emerging economies lacking hydrocarbon resources could greatly benefit from lower energy prices and softer inflation in general despite a global economic slowdown. "Most saw their economies being affected by higher input costs as imports, like grain and energy became dearer as well as other items whose prices were influenced by supply chain issues," he added.

SPECIAL OFFER

Alizz Islamic Bank offers 4.75% profit rate on goods finance

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Alizz Islamic Bank has announced a special offer for goods finance at a very competitive profit rate of only 4.75 per cent. If you are willing to purchase furniture, equipment, home appliances or other domestic implements, goods finance is the solution for you.

At Alizz Islamic Bank, personal finance is based on 'Murabaha'. Under the Goods Murabaha Product, the bank will at the customer's request purchase the goods from the authorised dealer and sell the same to the customer at an agreed price. The advantage is that you know the bank's profit mark-up and installment at the time of signing the deal, and it never changes throughout the financing term. This arrangement allows for immediate possession & ownership of the goods.

"Goods finance is available to Omanis and residents. Upon their



request, the Bank can purchase any type of Sharia-compliant goods for the customer, who will know the profit rate and installments before signing the agreement. Goods finance is available for up to 100% of the goods value. They just have to transfer their

salary to any of the Alizz Islamic Bank branches," said Mohammed bin Juma Al-Ghassani, AGM - Chief Consumer Banking Officer of Alizz Islamic Bank.

Alizz Islamic Bank also offers the goods finance option via the IFIN instant financing services

for goods like furniture, accessories, electronics and other products at Danube Home, Enza Home, Mustafa Sultan Electronics, Sofa Land, Al Madina Cement products, Sky Orbits and Fahmy Furniture. Alizz Islamic Bank customers can get finance on the spot for up to 120 months without the need for visiting any of Alizz Islamic Bank branches.

The finance process has been simplified so that finance can be done within 10 minutes as a customer will receive an OTP on their registered phone number and sign the finance agreement subject to instant approval.

The IFIN instant finance service for personal finance comes as a part of Alizz Islamic Bank's plans for the provision of a wide range of carefully designed banking solutions that address the needs of all customers and fulfil customer needs for instant banking solutions when carrying out banking transactions.

TURKISH BANKS



Saudi Export-Import Bank signs \$26 million financing agreement

RIYADH: Saudi Export-Import Bank has announced the signing of a \$26 million financing line agreement with Türkiye Finance Katilim Bank to finance Saudi non-oil exports to Turkey, which is the first direct financing agreement for Saudi non-oil exports to the Republic of Turkey.

It also signed an agreement with Turkish Export Bank that allows co-operation in several fields, including the exchange of experiences and the promotion of export movement between the two countries.

The agreements were signed by

the CEO of the Saudi Export-Import Bank, Eng. Saad Al-Khalab, and the CEO of Türkiye Finance Katilim Bank Murad Aksim, and the CEO of the Turkish Export Bank, Ali Koni.

The agreements come within the framework of Saudi partnerships with Turkish financial institutions, and within the bank's direction to develop its local and foreign partnerships aiming at providing sustainable financing solutions, credit and guarantee services that support the development of Saudi non-oil exports and enhance their competitiveness in global markets. -SPA

DATA

China's financial institutions' assets up 10.1%

BEIJING: China's financial institutions saw expanded balance sheets by the end of the third quarter (Q3) of 2022, official data showed.

The country's financial institutions saw their combined assets increase 10.1 percent year on year to 413.46 trillion yuan (about \$59.23 trillion) by the end of Q3, while their combined liabilities rose 10.3 per cent from a year earlier to 376.61 trillion yuan, data from the People's Bank of China showed.

Insurers
Banking institutions - accounting for the lion's share of the financial industry - reported a 10.2 per cent rise in total assets, while companies in the securities industry saw their combined assets jump 7.3 per cent year on year. The country's insurers reported combined assets of 26.71 trillion yuan, up 9.8 per cent year on year, central bank data showed. -Xinhua



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MARKET



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MSX index ends lower

Gulf International Chemicals, up 7.14 per cent, was the top gainer while Oman Chlorine, down 9.43 per cent, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,830.77 points, down by 0.16 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.06 per cent at 498.49 points. Gulf International Chemicals, up 7.14 per cent, was the top gainer while Oman Chlorine, down 9.43 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 395 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating a turnover of OMR3.79 million, with more than 1777 million shares changing hands. Out of 43 traded securities, 8 advanced, 14 declined, and 21 remained unchanged. At the session close, GCC & Arab investors were net buyers for OMR15,000 while domestic investors were net sellers for OMR11,000, followed by foreign investors for OMR4,000 worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,814.05 points, down 0.1 per cent. Prices of Al Anwar Investment and Bank Dhofar were up by 1.19 per cent and 0.59 per cent respectively. Prices of Global

Financial Investments, Bank Muscat, Oman & Emirates Investment, Al Omaniya Financial Services, and National Life & General Insurance were down by 7.14 per cent, 1.41 per cent, 1.33 per cent, 0.71 per cent and 0.59 per cent respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 6,344.41 points, down 0.88 per cent. Prices of Gulf International Chemicals, A'Saffa Foods and Gulf Mushroom Products up by 7.14 per cent, 2.18 per cent and 0.82 per cent respectively.

Prices of Oman Chlorine, Jazeera Steel Products, Raysut Cement, Galfar Engineering, and Oman Fisheries were down by 9.43 per cent, 6.84 per cent, 3.49 per cent, 2.35 per cent and 1.91 per cent respectively.

Services Index was down by 0.08 per cent before closing at 1,614.11 points. Prices of SMN Power Holding and Phoenix Power were up by 2.44 per cent and 2.33 per cent respectively. Prices of Oman National Engineering, Sembcorp Salalah, Ooredoo and Al Jazeera Services were down by 1.79 per cent, 1.47 per cent, 0.47 per cent and 0.35 per cent respectively. — United Securities

OMAN STOCKS

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INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff.	Diff%
MSX 30 INDEX	4,840.23	4,802.68	4,830.77	4,838.40	-7.62	-0.16
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,822.11	7,771.86	7,814.05	7,822.11	-8.06	-0.10
Industry Index	6,417.05	6,344.41	6,344.41	6,400.99	-56.58	-0.88
Services Index	1,618.36	1,589.85	1,614.11	1,615.47	-1.36	-0.08
MSX Shariah Index	499.83	493.88	498.49	498.79	-0.30	-0.06
MSX TR INDEX	6,109.26	6,061.86	6,097.32	6,106.94	-9.62	-0.16
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,184.97	8,132.39	8,176.53	8,184.97	-8.43	-0.10
SERVICES TR IDX	1,710.46	1,680.33	1,705.98	1,707.42	-1.44	-0.08
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	6,680.94	6,605.32	6,605.32	6,664.23	-58.91	-0.88

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
17,779,524	3,790,474	395	23,698,573,585	8	14	21	43

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR SUNDAY, DECEMBER 25

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PR.	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PRN VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET																
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	137,710	39,936	6	0.290	0.290	0.290	0.290	0.290	0.000	0.000	0.290	0.280	0.299	0.100	471,524,443
OM0000001525	OMAN INVST&R FIN	16,500	2,112	2	0.128	0.128	0.128	0.128	0.128	0.000	0.000	0.128	0.128	0.133	0.100	30,338,000
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	23,939	9,974	2	0.420	0.420	0.420	0.420	0.420	0.000	0.000	0.420	0.420	0.430	0.100	280,713,479
OM0000002020	AHLI BANK	770,356	127,109	6	0.165	0.165	0.165	0.165	0.165	0.000	0.000	0.165	0.160	0.167	0.100	321,653,482
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	34,900	32,666	6	0.936	0.936	0.936	0.936	0.936	0.000	0.000	0.936	0.908	0.936	0.100	702,000,000
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SER	39,006	18,317	4	0.470	0.470	0.468	0.470	0.470	0.000	0.000	0.470	0.460	0.470	0.100	11,112,700
OM0000003398	SOHAR INT. BANK	188,996	20,409	12	0.105	0.108	0.105	0.108	0.108	0.000	0.000	0.108	0.104	0.111	0.100	495,726,727
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	26,022	11,450	4	0.440	0.440	0.440	0.440	0.440	0.000	0.000	0.440	0.438	0.440	0.100	24,200,000
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	116,724	33,687	25	0.290	0.293	0.288	0.288	0.289	-0.001	-0.346	0.288	0.288	0.297	0.100	17,626,831
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	321,305	126,770	22	0.428	0.430	0.380	0.420	0.422	-0.002	-0.474	0.420	0.420	0.420	0.100	273,396,577
OM0000002077	AL OMANIYA FIN.S	420,168	58,663	21	0.140	0.140	0.139	0.139	0.140	-0.001	-0.714	0.139	0.136	0.139	0.100	42,146,695
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	7,498,987	2,100,501	92	0.284	0.284	0.280	0.280	0.284	-0.004	-1.408	0.280	0.265	0.280	0.100	2,101,791,177
OM0000001152	OMAN NAT. ENG.	100,000	11,000	6	0.110	0.110	0.110	0.110	0.112	-0.002	-1.786	0.110	0.109	0.115	0.100	15,400,000
OM0000003125	GLOBAL INV. H	103,870	5,508	8	0.053	0.055	0.053	0.053	0.055	-0.002	-3.636	0.053	0.053	0.055	0.100	10,600,000
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PROD.	21,020	4,624	10	0.232	0.232	0.218	0.218	0.234	-0.016	-6.838	0.218	0.220	0.220	0.100	27,227,755
Total	15	9,817,883	2,602,125	226												
Parallel Market																
OM0000002028	GULF INT. CHEMI.	4,420	398	1	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.084	0.006	7.143	0.090	0.081	0.090	0.100	1,890,000
OM0000000647	OMAN REIT FUND	709,630	59,373	21	0.079	0.089	0.079	0.085	0.082	0.003	3.659	0.085	0.085	0.090	0.100	40,050,943
OM0000004246	SMN POWER HOLDING	85,200	3,364	12	0.042	0.043	0.041	0.042	0.041	0.001	2.439	0.042	0.041	0.045	0.100	8,384,695
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	100	4	1	0.044	0.044	0.044	0.044	0.043	0.001	2.326	0.044	0.000	0.044	0.100	64,354,464
OM0000002804	ASAFFA FOODS	21,800	5,072	8	0.229	0.238	0.225	0.234	0.229	0.005	2.183	0.234	0.230	0.245	0.100	28,080,000
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	30,000	2,550	2	0.085	0.085	0.085	0.085	0.084	0.001	1.190	0.085	0.084	0.088	0.100	17,000,000
OM0000002267	GULF MUSHROOM P	500	123	1	0.245	0.245	0.245	0.245	0.243	0.002	0.823	0.245	0.230	0.245	0.100	10,193,291
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	4,982,257	847,572	24	0.170	0.171	0.169	0.171	0.170	0.001	0.588	0.171	0.171	0.179	0.100	512,376,096
OM0000001517	HISBC BANK OMAN	60,839	9,978	2	0.164	0.164	0.164	0.164	0.164	0.000	0.000	0.164	0.164	0.167	0.100	328,051,298
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	10,000	640	1	0.064	0.064	0.064	0.065	0.065	0.000	0.000	0.064	0.064	0.065	0.100	19,964,511
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	100	6	1	0.064	0.064	0.064	0.064	0.064	0.000	0.000	0.064	0.064	0.067	0.100	22,345,242
OM0000003661	VOLITAMP ENERGY	130,000	12,090	3	0.093	0.093	0.093	0.093	0.093	0.000	0.000	0.093	0.098	0.100	0.100	7,570,456
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	922,980	90,924	16	0.099	0.099	0.098	0.099	0.099	0.000	0.000	0.099	0.096	0.099	0.100	221,458,350
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	275,000	24,730	9	0.089	0.090	0.089	0.090	0.090	0.000	0.000	0.090	0.086	0.091	0.100	15,750,000
OM0000004925	ALBATAINAH POWER	72,765	2,044	7	0.030	0.030	0.028	0.030	0.030	0.000	0.000	0.030	0.028	0.030	0.100	20,246,623
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	82,409	2,308	7	0.029	0.030	0.028	0.030	0.030	0.000	0.000	0.030	0.028	0.030	0.100	21,432,190
OM0000006920	VISION INSURANCE	10,000	1,150	2	0.115	0.115	0.115	0.115	0.115	0.000	0.000	0.115	0.115	0.115	0.100	11,500,000
OM0000007811	MUSANDAM POWER	1,900	585	1	0.308	0.308	0.308	0.310	0.310	0.000	0.000	0.308	0.308	0.300	0.100	21,820,900
OM0000000870	BAKRA DESALINATION	3,000	402	1	0.134	0.134	0.134	0.134	0.134	0.000	0.000	0.134	0.134	0.136	0.100	10,119,948
OM0000008989	THE PEARL REP	2,000	222	2	0.111	0.111	0.106	0.109	0.111	0.000	0.000	0.111	0.111	0.115	0.100	49,273,245
OM0000007043	NATIONAL LIFE INS.	198,000	66,924	1	0.338	0.338	0.338	0.340	0.340	-0.002	-0.588	0.338	0.338	0.338	0.100	134,650,528
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	1,000	74	1	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.075	-0.001	-1.333	0.074	0.070	0.074	0.100	9,018,750
OM0000004735	SEMBORP SALALAH	1,500	101	2	0.067	0.067	0.067	0.067	0.068	-0.001	-1.471	0.067	0.064	0.067	0.100	63,956,321
OM0000001566	OMAN FISHERIES	59,139	6,092	4	0.102	0.105	0.102	0.103	0.105	-0.002	-1.905	0.103	0.102	0.104	0.100	18,754,072
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEER	221,425	37,864	30	0.170	0.177	0.166	0.166	0.170	-0.004	-2.353	0.166	0.166	0.174	0.100	33,695,750
OM0000001418	RAYSUT CEMENT	74,142	12,649	7	0.175	0.175	0.166	0.166	0.172	-0.006	-3.488	0.166	0.165	0.166	0.100	33,200,000
OM0000002341	OMAN CHLORINE	910	437	7	0.480	0.480	0.480	0.480	0.530	-0.050	-9.434	0.480	0.480	0.582	0.100	32,688,756
Total	27	7,961,016	1,187,884	168												

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES IMPORTER

Suhol Al Fayha to launch new logo and announce expansion plans

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Suhol Al Fayha, a part of the KV Group and the leading importer, distributor and grower of fruits and vegetables in the Sultanate of Oman, will be launching its new logo in sync with the renewed Renaissance of the country and announcing its future expansion plans at an event to



LIFESTYLE



WHY EATING JUST ONE POTATO CHIP IS IMPOSSIBLE

High-calorie foods — high in fat, oil, and sugar — may taste delicious, but they frequently lead to overeating, which leads to obesity and other serious health concerns. But what causes the brain to be aroused and cause overeating?

Recently, it has become clear that a gene called CREB-Regulated Transcription Coactivator 1 (CRTC1) is associated with obesity in humans. When CRTC1 is deleted in mice, they become obese, indicating that functioning CRTC1 suppresses

obesity. However, since CRTC1 is expressed in all neurons in the brain, the specific neurons responsible for suppressing obesity and the mechanism present in those neurons remained unknown.

To elucidate the mechanism by which CRTC1 suppresses obesity, a research group led by Associate Professor Shigenobu Matsumura from the Graduate School of Human Life and Ecology at Osaka Metropolitan University focused on neurons expressing the melanocortin-4 receptor (MC4R). They hypothesized that CRTC1

expression in MC4R-expressing neurons suppressed obesity because mutations in the MC4R gene are known to cause obesity.

Consequently, they created a strain of mice that expresses CRTC1 normally except in MC4R-expressing neurons where it is blocked to examine the effect that losing CRTC1 in those neurons had on obesity and diabetes.

When fed a standard diet, the mice without CRTC1 in MC4R-expressing neurons showed no changes in body weight compared to control mice. However,

when the CRTC1-deficient mice were raised on a high-fat diet, they overate, then became significantly more obese than the control mice and developed diabetes.

“This study has revealed the role that the CRTC1 gene plays in the brain, and part of the mechanism that stops us from overeating high-calorie, fatty, and sugary foods,” said Professor Matsumura. “We hope this will lead to a better understanding of what causes people to overeat.”

The research results were published in the FASEB Journal on November 9, 2022. -ANI





ROUND-UP



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BSM commemorates the 52nd Victory Day of Bangladesh and Silver Jubilee of school



BANGLADESH School Muscat (BSM) celebrated the glorious 52nd Victory Day of Bangladesh and the Silver Jubilee of BSM in a befitting manner. On this magnificent occasion, a very mottled cultural extravaganza was organised on the school premises. Expats, living in different parts of the Sultanate, gathered at BSM to celebrate Victory Day. The spontaneous presence of the community leaders and parents; and the eye-catching performances of the students made the celebration a huge accomplishment.

Aziz bin Salem bin Hamoud Al Hasani Member of the Shura Council of the state of Bausher, Mr. Humayun Kabir, Counsellor, Embassy of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Mr. Asadul Hoque, Second Secretary, Embassy of the

People's Republic of Bangladesh to the Sultanate of Oman, Sheikh Ahmed Mohammad Naseer Awlad Tani; Sheikh of Ghubrah, Chairman Engineer Kazi Emdad Hossain; Board of Directors and all the Board members, All branch schools Managing committee were the honourable guests. High Dignitaries from different government offices of the Sultanate and

prominent expatriates from the Bangladesh Community also attended the celebration.

On this very colourful and festive occasion, The Guests & Chairman paid homage to late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said bin Taimour and also vowed our allegiance and loyalty to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the present ruler of the Sultanate of Oman. They also mentioned in his speech, "This country has sheltered us and has given us the opportunity to grow and flourish. We made our dreams and aspirations a reality in this country. Each one among the expatriates residing in the Sultanate of Oman is indebted to this country." They paid homage to the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on this occasion.

"I pay homage to the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who gave us independence, made us proud and separated identity in the world. I pray to the Almighty Allah, for eternal peace of the martyred who sacrificed their lives to give us freedom in 1971." said the Chairman.

Members of the Board, Engineer Abdul Majid Biswas; Director of Academic, Engineer MD. Ismail Hossain; Director of Finance, Engineer Nuruzzaman Hossain Liton. Director of Admin, Sports & Culture, Engineer Jamal Uddin; Director of Branch School Affairs participated in the celebration with great enthusiasm. While addressing the audience, Nasrin Sultana, Acting Principal of BSM, recalled the

supreme sacrifice of the martyrs of the freedom struggle and exhorted students to pay homage to the heroes of Bangladesh. She sketched in brief, the achievements of the school in recent years. She thanked all the participants, the staff and the audience for making the celebration a huge success. The honourable guest Aziz bin Salem bin Hamoud Al Hasani Member of the Shura Council of the state of Bausher, unveils the school magazine for 2022. On this festive occasion, Bangladesh school has arranged "Bijoy Mela-2022" on the school premises which is inaugurated by the Embassy official's wife.

All the honourable guests gave away awards to the students of BSM to mark the day, for their brilliant results in different examinations and extra curriculum activities. The guests, Chairman and Board members also handed over the Academic Excellence Award, comprising Medals and Certificates to the students provided by the Edexcel Pearson authority for outstanding performances in the latest examination session. 'Ambassador's Excellence Awards' and 'Outstanding Academic Excellence Awards' also have been given to distinguished students.

The colourful cultural program was enjoyed by the enthused audience. The rich culture and heritage of Bangladesh were glorified in immortal poems recited by the students. Group dances choreographed to the tunes of patriotic songs, drama and fashion shows were applauded by the jubilant crowd.

GROUND-BREAKING CEREMONY

Al Mouj Muscat begins construction of exclusive collection of luxurious homes at Murooj Lanes



MUSCAT: On Sunday Al Mouj Muscat held a ground-breaking ceremony to mark the start of construction of Murooj Lanes, an exclusive collection of luxury apartments and town houses situated close to the Marina at Oman's premier lifestyle and leisure destination. Al Mouj Muscat is a thriving urban oceanfront community of 2,200 residences which are home to 8,000 people from 85 countries and where this latest development of 283 homes will create a new neighbourhood within the family-friendly Ghadeer District.

Murooj Lanes comprises a mix of apartments from studios to

A ground-breaking ceremony marks the start of its development of 283 luxury apartments and townhouses within the family-friendly Ghadeer District

spacious penthouses and garden suites as well as elegant three and four-bedroom town houses. Such choice, along with the

quality that is synonymous with properties at Al Mouj, is proving popular with a broad range of buyers from professional singles

to couples and growing families and only nine homes within the Murooj Lanes' collection remain available for purchase.

Each home will be built to Al Mouj Muscat's exacting standards and will be contemporary in design with spacious layouts, modern, light-filled interiors and high-quality bathrooms and kitchens. The residents will enjoy delightful views of Ghadeer's exquisite landscaped gardens and the surrounding open spaces that blend with the natural environment.

Conveniently located alongside Al Mouj's largest public park, Murooj Lanes give its residents

the opportunity to enjoy many shared leisure facilities in the neighbourhood. Also on the doorstep are sports courts, jogging and cycle pathways, the Murooj Lanes pavilion and pool and as well, the cafes, restaurants and shops of Al Mouj Walk are only a short stroll away and the award-winning championship Al Mouj Golf is within easy reach.

CEO of Al Mouj Muscat Mr Nasser Al Sheibani said: "It is with great pride that we have started to build Murooj Lanes, yet another construction milestone in the Al Mouj Muscat success story that continues to define oceanfront living at its finest.

"This particular project epitomises what buyers and investors find unique to Al Mouj. A combination of luxury residences, exceptional lifestyle and leisure options, and a true sense of community. This is where people can enjoy great moments, every day."

Al Mouj Muscat is Oman's first Integrated Tourism Complex (ITC) which attracts over 3.9 million visitors to its boulevard style, world-class retail, dining and leisure experiences, including a 400-berth marina and an award-winning championship golf course.



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ROUND-UP



SBA offers special after-sales service promotion for Nissan customers

Every customer purchasing a Nissan vehicle can be assured of Nissan’s top-class after-sales service, which guarantees the advantage of well-trained expert

MUSCAT: Suhail Bahwan Automobiles (SBA) has announced ‘Happy Wednesday’ and ‘Exciting Thursday’ attractive aftersales service promotion for the benefit of Nissan customers. Under ‘Happy Wednesday’ customers who visit their nearest Su-

hail Bahwan Automobiles Service Centre with prior appointment on any Wednesday during the campaign period can avail exciting benefits. They can win scratch and win exciting services and get 20% discount on value added services. As part of the ‘Exciting Thurs-



day’ scheme customers with prior appointment on any Thursday during the campaign period can avail exciting benefits of 20 per cent discount on periodic maintenance service, raffle draw chance to win free next periodic maintenance service, 20 per cent discount on value added services. The unique offer also boasts a

host of advantages for Nissan vehicle owners. Customers who buy a Nissan Service Package, will now a 20% discount on value added services along with interior cleaning. The package includes four maintenance services to get the benefits. The aftersales service promotion offer is valid till December 31. A spokesperson for SBA said, “Every customer purchasing a Nissan vehicle can be assured of Nissan’s top-class after-sales service, which guarantees the advantage of well-trained experts. We always use only genuine replacement parts. Customers can expect consistency and support during aftersales service, which ascertains Nissan’s performance and resale value in the years to come.” Nissan Oman is extending a ‘book a home test drive’ service for its prospective customers. The service enables potential customers to schedule their test drive online as per their convenience. A home test drive can be booked simply by logging on to the official SBA Nissan Oman website. SBA is largely committed to supporting Nissan’s growth in the Sultanate through major emphasis on customer satisfaction and by providing world-class after-sales services in Oman. With a national network of 14 showrooms, 17 service centres and 24 spare parts outlets, SBA has further built upon its legacy of excellent customer service and providing value for money to each of its customers.

PAPERLESS, UNMANNED BRANCH

Bank Nizwa opens digital-only branch in Mall of Oman

MUSCAT: The leading Islamic bank in the Sultanate, Bank Nizwa, has introduced its first digital-only branch in the Mall of Oman. The paperless, unmanned branch was inaugurated by Tahir Al Amri, the Chief Executive Officer of the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) along with Sheikh Khalid Abdullah Ali Al Khalili, the Chairman of Bank Nizwa, Sheikh Majid Ali Al Mamari, Board Member at Bank Nizwa and Khalid Al Kayed, the Chief Executive Officer of Bank Nizwa.

Islamic Finance Knowledge Corner In attendance were also board members and C-suite executives. In addition to providing market-leading services with an emphasis on rendering seamless customer experience, the digital branch is designed to educate consumers on Islamic financial products and services through its dedicated ‘Islamic Finance Knowledge Corner’. Commenting on this significant milestone, Khaled Al Kayed said, “The pandemic had expedited digitalisation in banking and other industries. Bank Customers were compelled to use remote banking for months. Due to this shift, more individuals use online and mobile banking now. “Although this change was first driven by need, it led to masses of



patrons learning about the simplicity, convenience and reliability that digital banking offers. “This led to the belief that these services can successfully take the role of branch banking. Customers can bridge the analogue and digital worlds with the use of such services. Whilst personal interaction remains a cornerstone of customer service, digital enhances the experience, especially for quick turnaround requirements.” Bank Nizwa’s digital branch leverages technological evolution and aims to encourage those who use conventional banking methods to adopt digitalisation. The branch is equipped with three machines where customers can complete a host of transactions and activities. The first is an Interactive Teller Machine that features a video calling feature to facilitate different transactions remotely where customers can withdraw and deposit a large sum of cash (up to a maximum of OMR 20,000), which they usually would not be able to do through an ATM. In the digital branch, they can also make instant cheque deposits, cash the cheques immediately and transfer funds. They are also able

to update their account details using their valid issued ID rather than heading to a traditional branch during the working day. The second machine is a fully functioning machine where customers can make regular withdrawals and deposits or pay bills. The last machine is a kiosk where customers can fulfil their debit card issuance needs. The machine can replace an expired, lost or damaged card within minutes. At the end of the transaction, the customer will receive a new debit card that is already activated. This machine is enabled to support the ongoing debit card migration. Customers can come at their convenience and get their cards replaced at no additional cost. The cards issued by this kiosk are also eco-friendly. To bring Islamic banking closer to the people and businesses in Oman, the bank seeks to offer one-stop financial services to all of its customers along with a variety of channels for customer contact and assistance. Curating and delivering Sharia-compliant digitised banking solutions, Bank Nizwa is on track with its digital transformation journey. By doing so, it expects to maintain its position as the nation’s top Sharia -compliant partner of choice and advance the development of Islamic banking locally and regionally.

IN AL HAIL

Indian envoy visits Apollo Super Speciality Hospital

MUSCAT: Amit Narang, the Indian ambassador to Oman, and his delegation recently visited the brand-new Apollo Super Speciality Hospital (ASSH) in Al Hail, Muscat. V T. Saileshwaran, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Apollo Hospitals Oman, and Sultan Abdullah Ahmed Suhail Bahwan Al Mukhaini, Director, greeted Amit Narang and his delegation upon their arrival. Shyam Sailesh, Director, Shilpa Sailesh, Director and Debraj Sanayal, Group Business Head & COO gave the Ambassador a guided and comprehensive visit of ASSH’s five centres of excellence – orthopaedics, obstetrics, gastroenterology, urology and gynaecology - which offers a dedicated exclusive floor



only for women and children, a first of its kind in Oman’s private healthcare sector. Narang also visited the hospital’s state-of-the-art facilities viz the 24-hour emergency and trauma department, the intensive care unit, the neonatal intensive

care unit etc. The clinical team briefed Narang on the hospital’s super speciality services, cutting-edge modular operating rooms and DEXA – a device that measures bone density used in the radiology department. Narang lauded the hospital’s clinical bandwidth and congratulated the hospital’s health awareness initiatives and preventative health programmes, which include preventive health screenings for colon cancer, cardiac and women’s health. Saileshwaran briefed Narang on Apollo Hospital’s 18-year-long journey of delivering clinical excellence in Oman and reaffirmed Apollo’s commitment to serving the people of Oman as the best private healthcare provider.

CASHBACK OFFER

ahlibank extends its credit card offers with Shell Oman till end of the year



MUSCAT: In a continued effort to offer value-added benefits and services to its customers, ahlibank has once again teamed up with Shell Oman Marketing Company (Shell Oman) to provide all its credit card holders with an exciting cashback offer. Scheduled to run for 5 days starting from December 27 till the end of the year 2022, the promotion offers all ahlibank credit cardholders 20% cashback when fuelling or shopping in Shell service stations and Select shops with a maximum cap of OMR10 per customer. Commenting on the promotion, Muneer Al Balushi – AGM-Head of Retail Distribution, ahlibank, said, “Our role as one of the Sultanate’s leading banking institutions requires us to develop offers and services that meet customer needs over time. This will enable us to fulfil their intention to utilize their credit cards in the best way possible. Such offers enhance our customers’ loyalty and give them added value.” “We are pleased to extend this offer, which will help us strengthen relationships with existing clients and build relationships with new ones. With the launch of the latest promotional offer, ahlibank is demonstrating its leadership in providing innovative banking reward programs and solutions that meet the diverse needs of its customers,” he added. The cashback campaign reflects the bank’s commitment to its growth strategy by creating products and services that offer value-added benefits to the customers and help consolidate its position in the market as one of Oman’s leading and most trusted banks. The bank continues to offer a comprehensive suite of services, modern technology, and innovative solutions across its branches in Oman. All its product offerings and account types aim to achieve its customers’ targets and consolidate its position in the market. The bank offers top-class retail, commercial, and investment banking solutions in line with its vision of being a vibrant and innovative centre of banking.

EXCITING DRIVE

Go places confidently in powerful Toyota Fortuner



MUSCAT: The powerful and capable Toyota Fortuner is a perfect partner for maximising experiences both on the road and off-road too. Toyota’s tried and tested Fortuner offers some of the most exciting drives with a choice of petrol engines that include a 2.7 litre four cylinder engine producing 164 hp & 25.0 kg-m of torque. For even more exciting experiences, the 4.0 Litre V6 Engine churns-out 235 HP along with 38.3 Kg-m of Torque. The 6-speed Automatic Transmission, available as a standard option, provides thrilling acceleration. Rugged and adroit, the Fortuner also is known for its high standards on the inside. Premium Leather Seats, Leather and Wood finished

Steering Wheel with Paddle Shifts, Cool Glove Box, Cruise Control and a whole bunch of other goodies augment its interior ambience. Toyota Fortuner has a powerful Air Conditioner. Other innovative touches include a Navigation System. The Rear View Camera ensures peace of mind when Reverse Parking. The 6-speaker Audio System enhances its harmonious ambience. And to add to the convenience, there is a Power Back Door System which adds to the sheer convenience. The Fortuner is equipped with Comprehensive Safety Systems to protect its occupants. These include Anti-lock Braking System (ABS) that prevents the tyres from locking during braking. The Fort-

tuner is equipped with SRS Driver Airbag, SRS Front Passenger Airbag, Side Airbag, Curtain Airbag and SRS Knee Airbag (driver only). In terms of seatbelts, a three-point Emergency Locking Retractor (ELR) seatbelts are equipped. When impact is experienced during a collision, the Seatbelt Locks to restrain the passenger. Other reassuring safety features include the Vehicle Stability Control (VSC) and the Tyre Pressure Monitoring System (TPMS). In Oman, the nationwide parts and service network of Saud Bahwan Automotive supports Toyota’s outstanding product quality. No wonder that today, Toyota is one of the most trusted and well-known brands.



ROUND-UP



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MHD ACERE unveils new Chinese automotive brand Jetour in Oman

The three models displayed at the InterContinental Muscat included the X70FL, X70 Plus and X90 Plus, each featuring a distinct characteristic of city-based SUVs that accommodate advanced technology and the highest-quality safety and luxury features

MUSCAT: Mohsin Haider Darwish Automotive, Construction Equipment and Renewable Energy (MHD ACERE) recently revealed the introduction of the renowned automobile brand from China, Jetour, to Oman at the InterContinental Muscat.

The three models displayed included the X70FL, X70 Plus and X90 Plus, each featuring a distinct characteristic of city-based SUVs that accommodate advanced technology and the highest-quality safety and luxury features, further enhanced by an exclusive offering of 10 years / 1 million kilometre engine warranty.

Commenting on the launch of the brand, Mohsin Hani Al Bahrani, CEO of MHD ACERE, said, "It is truly an honour to bring a well-established brand and be its local distributor within the local market. We seek to create a strong foundation for these vehicles and



make an effort in reflecting its global reputation as one of the fastest-growing global car brands. We believe that the introduction of Jetour and its state-of-the-art vehicles will help elevate our customer's driving experience, through excellent performance and the presence of intelligent technology, well-equipped to match our customer's needs and personalities."

Established in 2018, Jetour is a rising Chinese auto brand focusing on the concept of "travel +". Its name is derived from the Mandarin words, "Jet" and "Tour" which trans-

lates to "convenient" and "travel". This is aligned with the brand's vision to manufacture the best SUV models that provide its passengers with convenient journeys, complemented by stylish, unique, intelligent, spacious and multi-functional designs and features.

The Jetour X70FL boasts a 1.5L turbocharged engine, with a maximum of 156hp and maximum torque of 230N.m. Alongside a 6DCT transmission and convenient electronic parking brake system (EPB), it also comprises entertainment and accessibility features

such as an infotainment display, digital gauge screen, keyless access, 360-degree vision system and front and rear parking sensors within a spacious interior cabin.

The Jetour X70 Plus is a slightly larger variant of the X70 based on the same platform with a redesigned front and rear to give the vehicle a more sporty feel. Its interior is enhanced with fully functional luxury options including a large cabin space and adjustable rear seats for flexible space options, making it one of the best family and travel cars for long journeys

and trips. This is complemented by a multi-information display and an intuitive infotainment system with intelligently integrated apps and Bluetooth facilities. The X70 Plus also hosts state-of-the-art safety technology ranging from blind spot monitoring to lane departure warning systems and advanced EBS.

The Jetour X90 Plus combines intelligent safety and a comfortable driving experience with multi-functional features, a high-strength cage body and luxurious car dimensions and expansive storage space.

The vehicle comes with a powerful 1.6TGDI engine that ensures a smooth and responsive drive for both city and long journeys.

The Jetour brand is created for those who desire modern technology, comfort, adventure, and affordable luxury.

Jetour commits to creating the best Chinese luxury cars covering SUV/MPV/EV at an affordable price. Customers can reach out to the team on 2453 3373 or via WhatsApp on 7146 1999 and get in touch with any of the brand's sales personnel to request a test drive.

OMAN ARAB BANK

OAB opens new branch in Shinas



MUSCAT: Oman Arab Bank (OAB) has recently taken another important step towards offering a consistently superior customer experience with the official opening of its new branch in the Wilayat of Shinas in a prime location opposite Shinas Mall.

To mark the launch of the new branch, the bank hosted an official opening ceremony that was held under the patronage of Sheikh Khalifa Hilal Al Alawi, Wali of Shinas and in the presence of Rashad Al Shaikh, Head of Retail Banking and other senior bank officials.

Commenting on the opening, Rashad Al Shaikh, Head of Retail Banking at OAB said: "We are delighted to deliver the best custom-

er experience to the people and communities we serve with the launch of the new Shinas Branch in a prime location.

"Our branch optimisation plan is fully geared towards ensuring people can take advantage of our unique services wherever they are, and it builds on OAB's ongoing efforts to empower Omanis with an elevated quality and a diverse suite of financial services and solutions."

The new Shinas branch features a refreshed contemporary look and feel, designed in line with the bank's digital transformation strategy. The branch offers individuals and business owners, access to the bank's latest digital solutions and products.

The branch also features an exclusive and private lounge for Elite clients, who will have access to a dedicated relationship manager and bespoke and first-rate services that cater to their needs.

OAB has a rich and proud history as one of the first financial institutions to be established in the Sultanate. Today, OAB operates a nationwide network of 48 conventional branches and 142 conventional ATMs locations across the Sultanate.

OAB provides a complete range of financial products and services through its OAB Online App. Customers can now digitally benefit from several other services, directly from the convenience of their mobile phones.

RECOGNITION

Meethaq wins Global Finance's Best Islamic Digital Bank Award

MUSCAT: Meethaq Islamic Banking, the leading Islamic financial services provider in the Sultanate, has won Global Finance's Best Islamic Digital Bank (Oman) Award.

Meethaq won the prestigious award based on a number of criteria including success in getting customers to use digital offerings, growth of digital customers, breadth of product offerings, evidence of tangible benefits gained from digital initiatives, and website and mobile banking design and functionality. The award was received on Meethaq's behalf by Mohammed Sultan Al Habsi, Chief Representative, UAE Representative Office, Bank Muscat.

Speaking on the occasion, Sami Bait Rashid, Assistant General Manager, Retail Banking - Meethaq said: "Meethaq is delighted to win this prestigious Islamic Digital Banking award and we would like to thank Global Finance for recognising our commitment to continue investing in state-of-the-art technology to further increase efficiency and enhance customer service. Meethaq, which recently celebrated its 10th Anniversary, is committed to offering the latest financial services and solutions in line with global financial trends. Meethaq contin-



ues to emphasise on service delivery through multiple channels and introduce new products that cater to different customer segments thereby maintaining its leadership in hi-tech products and services."

Over the past two years, Meethaq has witnessed a remarkable rise in e-channels usage including a rapid uptake in contactless payment solutions through its various debit and credit cards.

Customers are able to transact quickly, securely and 24/7 via mobile banking, Internet banking, contact centre, over 40 ATMs and CDMs in addition to free access to Bank Muscat's ATM-CDM network of over 800 ATMs/CDMs, which is an affirmation of its customer-centric strategy.

In fact, a deep analysis of

Meethaq customer transactions at branches has revealed that over 88 percent of all eligible transactions have already moved to digital channels with branch transactions confined to mostly those beyond the limits for Internet and mobile banking.

Meethaq offers a large number of digital options including convenient instant account opening, local and international account-to-account, fund transfers, scheduled payments, card management, utility bill payments, Zakat, Sadaqah and Waqf donations, identification of branch locations, Feedback Management System integration, acquiring of e-commerce vouchers as well as real-time email and SMS alerts for both financial and non-financial transactions.



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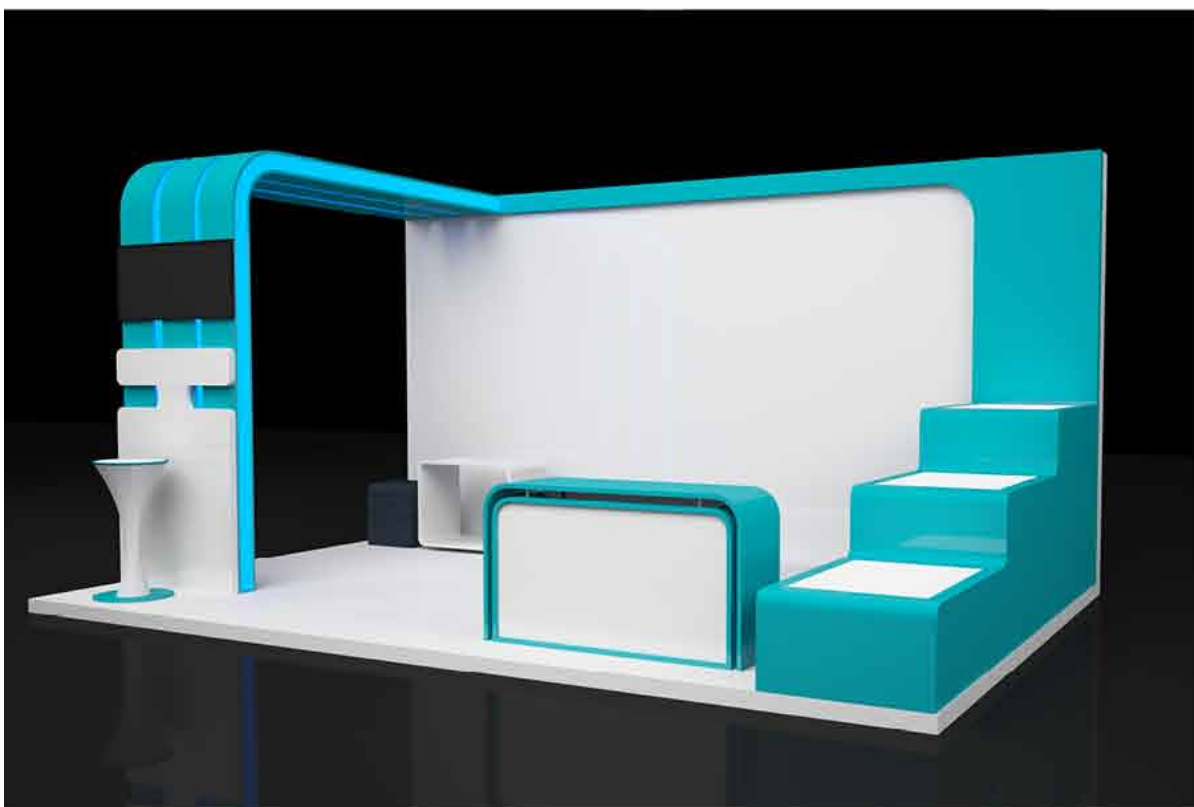
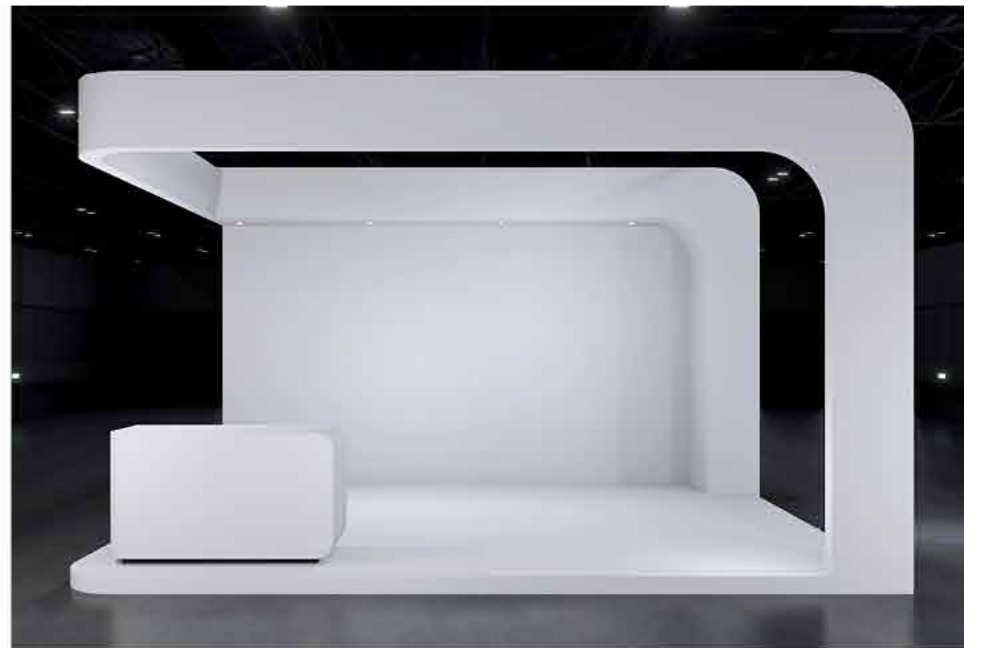
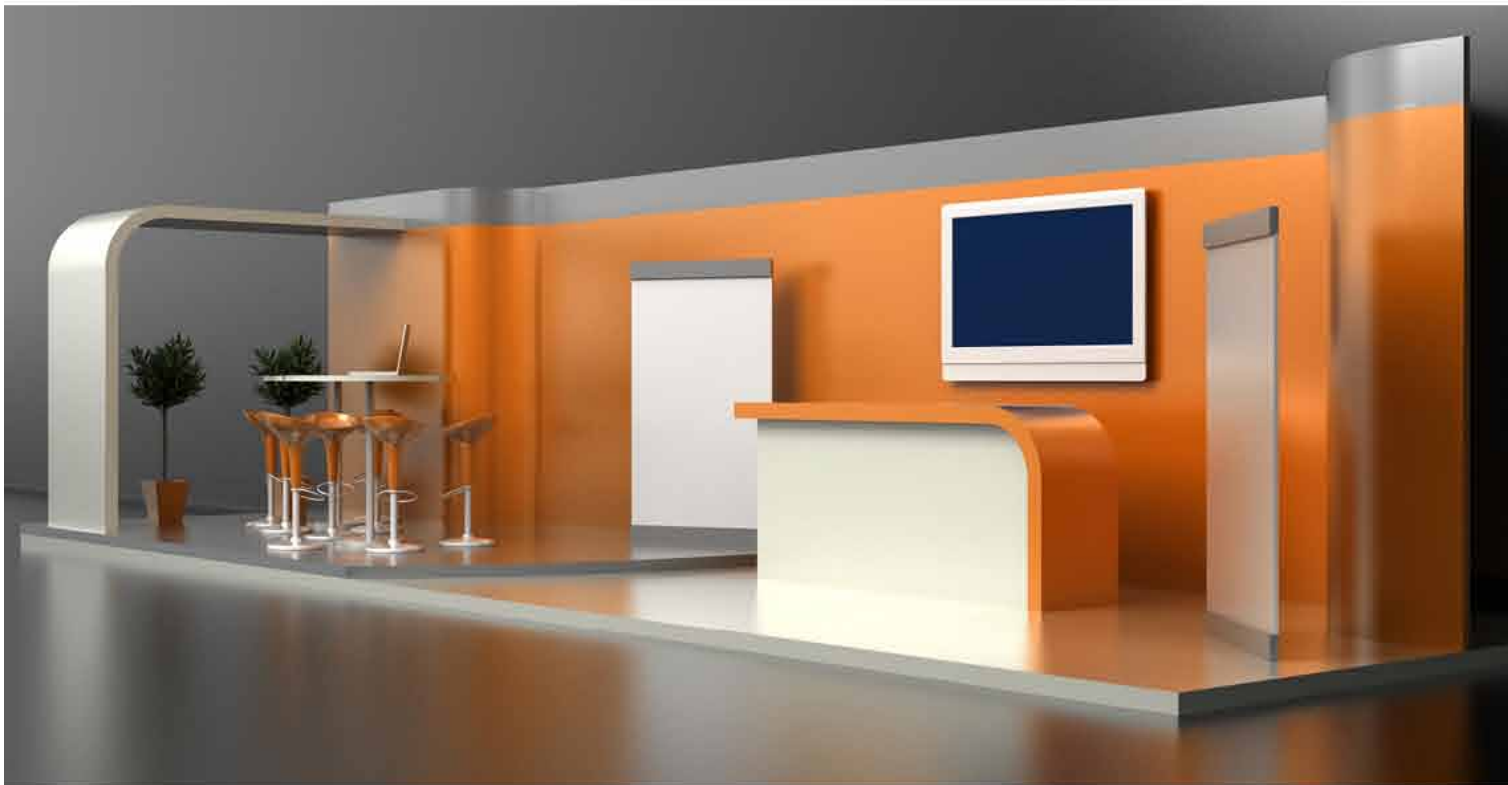
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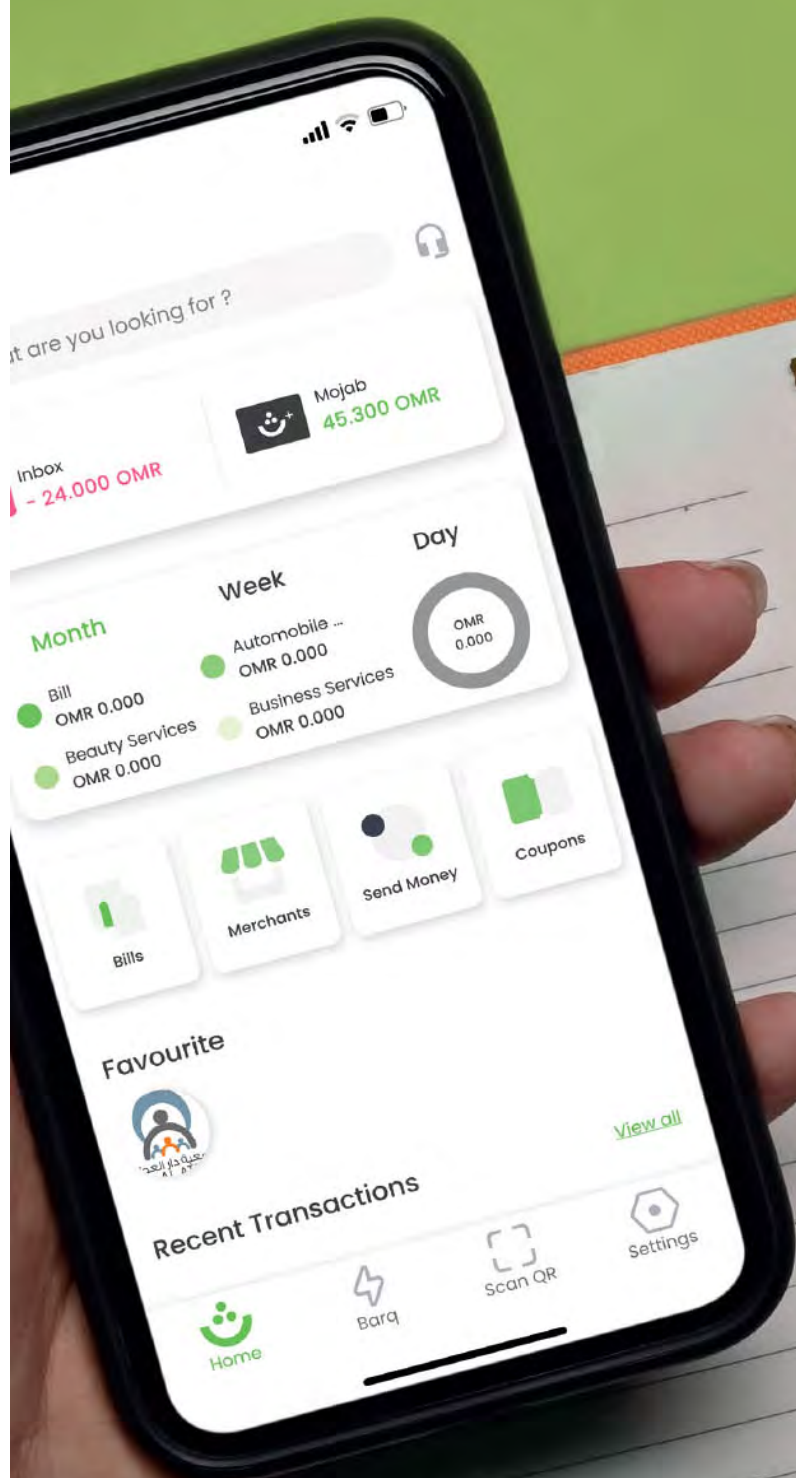
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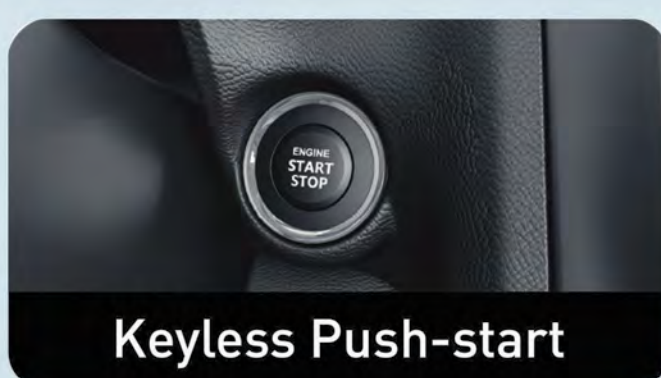
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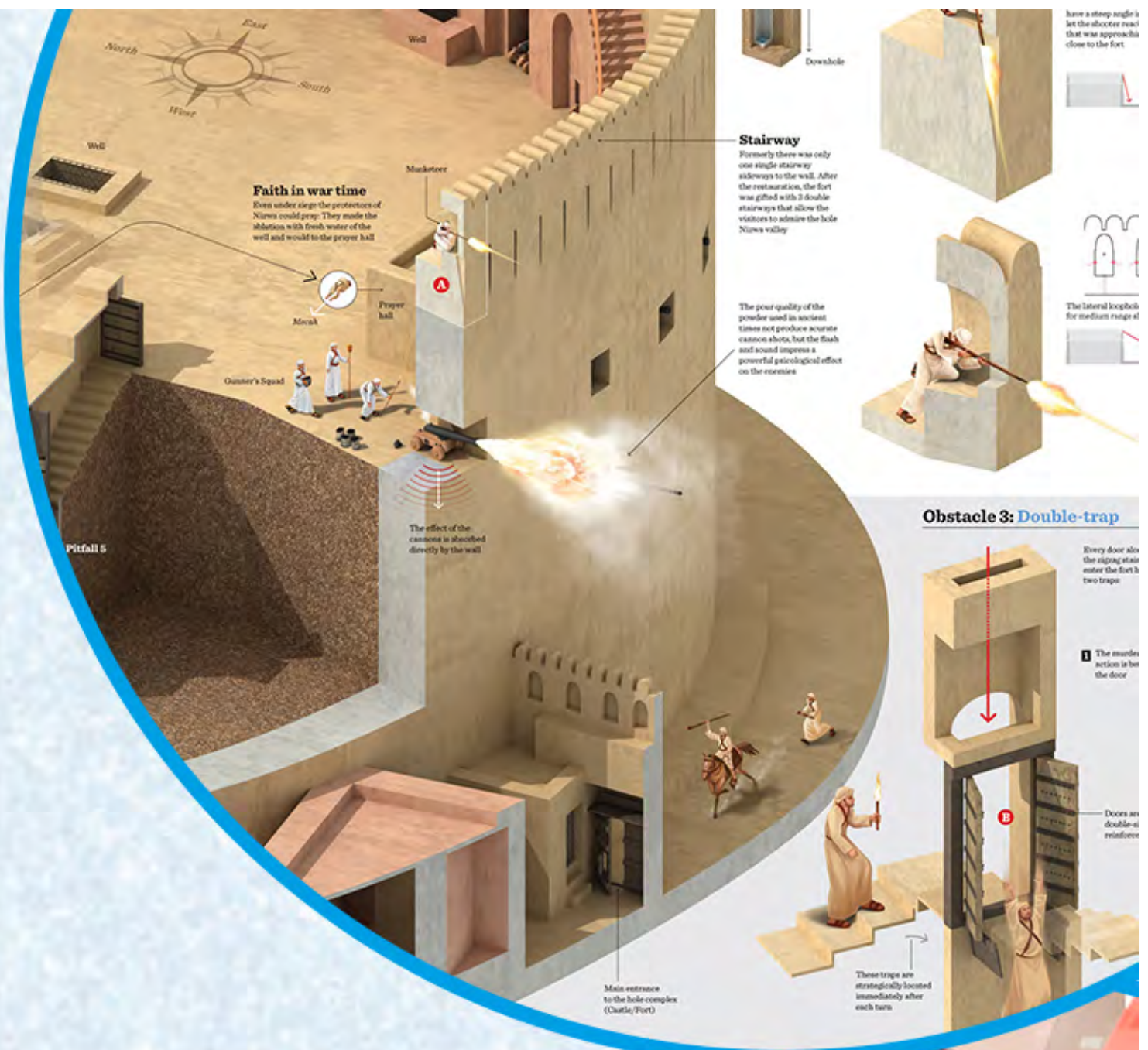
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