

OMANI INNOVATOR WINS INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION

Omani innovator Razan bint Hamad Al Kalbani won the Grand Prize in the Korea International Women's Innovations Exhibition and Competition (KIWIE) for her innovation "X-ray absorbing coating from a natural ingredient", among 353 innovations from more than 18 countries around the world. **>A5**



HM SENDS GREETINGS TO EGYPT

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi of Egypt on the 23 July Revolution Anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere congratulations along with his best wishes of good health, happiness and a long life to the President, praying to the Almighty Allah to grant him success to achieve further aspirations of progress and growth for the brotherly Egyptian people. **-ONA**



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REFORMS TO RESHAPE OMAN'S LANDSCAPE FOR SOCIAL CARE

The inspiring vision of His Majesty is committed to providing protection and care to people

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman is getting all-round praise for its ambitious social reforms initiated by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik with the issuance of Royal Decree No. (52/2023) on the Social Protection Law.

This landmark decision has the potential to reshape the social protection landscape of the Sultanate of Oman.

Not only citizens and residents, even the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has lauded the social protection reforms that will improve the quality of life of people in the country.

In its report, the UN agency said that this newly adopted legislation, developed with the support of the ILO, radically reshapes the social protection system in the Sultanate of Oman, and represents



the culmination of an ambitious reform process launched under the Tawazun and Estidama programmes, which aim to achieve fiscal balance and sustainability. The organisation added that

cooperation between the Social Protection Fund and the International Labour Organisation identifies the main aspects of reforms and highlights its achievements. The measures include the devel-

opment of a comprehensive and adequate social protection system that integrates and addresses life risks and vulnerabilities in an effective manner, without abandoning any group of society.

It aims to provide a sustainable model of financing and public revenues to ensure fairness, and contributes substantially to reducing poverty and inequality, in an integrated and cost-effective manner.

The UN organisation stated that the inspiring vision, led by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, expresses the government's commitment to providing the necessary protection and care to citizens, in order to ensure that the state fulfils its basic duties and provides a decent life for citizens, and spares them the effects that may result from some financial procedures and policies.

The strong link between financial reforms and investment in social protection was evident through the tendency to allocate part of the revenues of financial policies to the social protection system, so that this system becomes a comprehensive national umbrella for the various efforts and measures of protection and social care.

The International Labour Organisation indicated that the experience of the Sultanate of Oman is an effective model for comprehensive social protection in the Arab region, and it will restore financial sustainability of the public sector pension systems, while opening up new resources to expand coverage, to ensure basic income security for all, enhance protection against new emerging risks, and facilitate transitions in the labour market. **>A2**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES



OMAN Duqm, a hub for investment

1 Duqm is the unique blend of modern amenities and traditional Omani culture, creating a distinct and unforgettable experience for tourists and investors. **>A4**

WORLD Amsterdam to close cruise ship port

2 Amsterdam is set to ban cruise ships from the city in an attempt to reduce carbon emissions. The plan has been in the works since 2016 and was approved by a local government vote. **>A6**

SPORTS Messi's dream start to Inter Miami era

3 Lionel Messi made a dream start to his American adventure with a stoppage-time winner as Inter Miami overcame Cruz Azul 2-1 in the Leagues Cup. **>B6**

WORKSHOPS IN INDIA

Campaign to promote Oman tourism

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism will organise on Monday promotional workshops to promote the tourism potential of the Sultanate of Oman in India.

The events will be held in four major Indian cities, namely: New Delhi, Jaipur, Kolkata and Mumbai, and will continue until July 31, 2023.

The campaign aims to strengthen



existing relations between Oman and India, highlight the Omani heritage, its tourism potential, and promote attractive destinations and diverse experiences, in addition to promoting a number of tourism patterns such as weddings, as well as conference and exhibition tourism.

During the campaign, participants from the Indian tourism sector will have an opportunity to network with their counterparts

in Oman, including hotels, tour operators, airlines and representatives of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism to learn about the travel experiences available in the Sultanate of Oman.

The campaign will include presentations, and one-on-one meetings, providing an ideal platform for Indian tourism companies to strengthen ties, establish business partnerships with their Omani counterparts. **>A5**



Oman, Türkiye trade volume reaches \$2bn

A2

HIJRI NEW YEAR HOLIDAY

Holidays over, back to work after 3-day break

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The long weekend is over. It is back to work, starting on Sunday. Citizens and residents in the Sultanate of Oman expressed their happiness over the extended break on the occasion of Hijri New Year.

Majority of people were seen rushing to shopping malls and hypermarkets on Saturday evening as they prepared themselves for the work ahead.

The Islamic New Year, which was announced on Thursday as a holiday, kicked off the celebrations as families and friends planned out picnics and family get-togethers.

Though a short three-day break, the mood of fun and frolic swept the country as a large rush travelled to cooler destinations up the mountains of Al Jabal Al Akhdar



and Jabal Shams and neighbouring areas of Al Hamra.

With the Dhofar Khareef season on, there were many who planned a trip to Salalah.

"It was a nice break to enjoy with my family. Such an extended weekend helped us plan a get-together with friends and we were

a team of 18 persons who booked a flat in Al Jabal Al Akhdar. As we were a large group, we booked accommodation in adjoining flats. The weather was amazing and we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. To have such a destination in peak summer here is a blessing," said Raj, a private sector employee.

Such has been the clamour to go to the pleasant destinations like Jabal Akhdar that more than 79,000 people visited the place during the first half of this year, with the highest number of visitors from the Arab Gulf countries hailing from Saudi Arabia, according to statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The number of visitors to Al Jabal Al Akhdar this year until the end of June 2023 was about 79,034. The number of Omani visitors reached 28,406. Saudis topped the list from the Gulf countries with more than 3,848 visitors, followed by Kuwaitis (611), Emiratis (329), and Qataris (265). The number of visitors from other nationalities reached 45,302, the data revealed.

Endorsing the trend of visitors

increase in recent months and a 100 percent surge during the weekend, Jagdeep Thakral, General Manager, dusitD2 Naseem Resort Jabal Akhdar, told *Times of Oman*, "We had an exceptional weekend. From Wednesday to Saturday we saw an uplift with Thursday and Friday being packed. We witnessed a 100 percent surge more than our regular weekends this time."

Dusit International is one of Thailand's leading hotel and property development companies and the dusitD2 Naseem Resort Jabal Akhdar boasts of one-of-its-kind adventure parks in Oman.

Opened in 2021, dusitD2 Naseem Resort is located within an 8,000 sqm Adventure Park on the Saiq Plateau, just a five-minute drive from the 'Grand Canyon of the Middle East.' **>A6**



36°
MUSCAT





PRAYER
TIMINGS

Dhuhr.....	12:18pm
Asr.....	3:40pm
Maghrib.....	6:59pm
Isha.....	8:19pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....	4:09am

Oman, Türkiye trade volume reaches \$2 billion in 2022

Work is underway to establish a Turkish industrial zone in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, which will generate employment, income and products for export, said the Turkish ambassador

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Trade exchange between the Sultanate of Oman and Türkiye is witnessing continuous growth and reached nearly \$2 billion in 2022.

A statement issued by ONA said that the volume of trade between the Sultanate of Oman and Tür-



kiye has been growing since 2017, to reach nearly \$2 billion US dollars in 2022, while the total Omani imports from Türkiye amounted to \$1.58 billion, the total Omani exports to Türkiye amounted to \$465 million.

Muhammet Hekimoğlu, Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to the Sultanate of Oman, stressed that the cooperation between the two friendly countries during the past ten years has increased significantly on the basis of common interests in various fields. He expressed Turkish Em-

bassy's endeavour to support and strengthen relations to meet the aspirations of the two friendly countries and people.

In an interview to Oman News Agency, he indicated that work is underway to establish a Turkish industrial zone in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, which will generate employment, income and products for export to the economies of both countries, and will have a significant impact on the development of bilateral relations between the two countries.

The ambassador stated that

the Turkish side attaches importance to investing in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, especially with the stimulating investment environment provided by the Sultanate of Oman by giving priority to the development of non-oil commercial and industrial activities.

He said many Omani ports are distinguished by their strategic locations and with their proximity to the markets of South Asia and East Africa.

He pointed out that joint efforts continue to increase cooperation and exchange of experiences in the fields of electricity, mining, renewable energy and alternative energy sources.

He pointed out that work is also underway to take advantage of trade and investment opportunities between the two friendly countries, which would increase trade and investment, and seek to solve all obstacles that prevent the flow of trade and investment between the two countries.

He invited Turkish businessmen to visit the Sultanate of Oman and participate in the exhibitions held there, and introduce Omani investors to the investment opportunities available in the Republic

of Türkiye, noting that there are approximately 35 Turkish companies operating in the Sultanate of Oman in the contracting and engineering sector, as they have implemented projects worth \$7 billion, and many of these companies are still working, and are continuing to enter into tenders to implement new projects.

He said that the committee, the Turkish-Omani Business Council and the chambers of commerce and industry in both countries are in touch with businessmen and companies in Türkiye to encourage them to participate in various exhibitions in the Sultanate of Oman, especially in the food and beverage sector.

In the field of tourism, he explained that the number of Omani tourists coming to Türkiye is constantly increasing.

The number of Omani tourists who visited Türkiye in 2022 exceeded 130,000, indicating that a request to cancel the need of visas for both countries has been submitted, and it is expected to be approved before the end of this year.

The ambassador stressed that he is currently seeking to enhance tourism between the two friendly

countries by organising events and meetings that would contribute to attracting Turkish tourists to Oman and to learn about the tourism potentials that characterise the Oman governorates and states.

The Ambassador said: "The Omani-Turkish relations are growing and developing closely in many fields, and their roots extend back to the sixteenth century."

Praising the role of the Omani-Turkish joint committee in strengthening cooperation in the commercial, industrial, cultural and artistic fields, he said during the meeting of the committee held in Ankara 2022, a memorandum of understanding was signed for the establishment of the "Yunus Emre Institute for Teaching Turkish Language" in Muscat.

The ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye expressed his gratitude for the aid sent by the Sultanate of Oman to the areas affected by the earthquake that struck 10 Turkish provinces last February, praising the role played by the National Search and Rescue Team of the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority of the Sultanate of Oman in search and rescue operations and assisting those affected by the earthquake.

Dhofar Governorate

Omani youth-led project enhances tourism in Salalah

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The 'Lameer Al-Mugh-sail' is a youth-led project in Dhofar Governorate that is enhancing tourism services during the Dhofar Khareef 2023 season by providing an outlet for tourists and families.

The initiative by a group of Omani youth, is being organised for the second year in a row in Al Mugh-sail area in Salalah during Khareef season, and is entirely managed by a small Omani company with the support of the private sector.

Nadir bin Bakhit Fadhel, the founder of the "Lameer Al-Mugh-sail" project, told Oman News Agency, "The idea of the project was to establish a recreational tourism project that provides various services for all age groups during the Khareef tourism season in Dhofar Governorate, by converting the course of the valley into a tourist attraction."

He added "The project contributes to improving the tourism infrastructure in Al Mugh-sail area in the Wilayat of Salalah. By pro-



THE INITIATIVE BY A GROUP OF OMANI YOUTH, IS BEING ORGANISED FOR THE SECOND YEAR IN A ROW IN AL MUGHSAIL AREA IN SALALAH DURING KHAREEF SEASON

viding various entertainment and tourism services to families and visitors during the exceptional Khareef season, as well as providing job opportunities for Omani youth in the region, and involving small and medium enterprises in

the tourism development of the region."

He indicated that the 'La Mer Al-Mugh-sail' project includes a number of tourism services targeting all family members, including a corner for restaurants

and cafes that serve a variety of foods, and another corner for children's games and bicycles, in addition to providing boats for picnics and enjoying water tours with an artificial waterfall and beach sessions.

It is worth noting that the Mugh-sail area in the Wilayat of Salalah is one of the most prominent tourist destinations in the Dhofar Governorate. It is famous for its soft silver sandy beaches and its natural water fountains that attract visitors near the Al Marneef Cave.

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Model for social protection



The organisation stated that this reform in social protection applies an integrated, multi-level approach, completely restructuring the social insurance system and the new unified retirement system, and provides comprehensive protection for workers in all sectors of employment, as well as greater opportunities for women through the application of a social protection approach that takes into account gender differences, according to specific steps towards expanding the rights of citizens working abroad.

ILO stressed that the social protection system provides the possibility of creating integrated benefits that guarantee the provision of basic income for all in a specific emergency, in line with International Labour Organisation Recommendation No. 202 of 2012, while ensuring higher levels of

protection for people who are able to make contributions to social insurance through paid work, in line with the minimum standards of ILO Convention No. 102 of 1952.

Huda bint Salem Al Khatri explained that the social protection system is one of the basic pillars of any country, and it aims to provide support and care to the needy groups, improve the quality of life of individuals and meet their basic needs in the field of healthcare, housing, education and income.

She added that social protection systems differ from one country to another due to their impact on the economic, social and political factors of each country, and this system is one of the most important pillars of comprehensive development, as it works to achieve social equality, address the social and economic challenges facing some groups of

people and provide a better opportunity for development.

Salem bin Ali Al Harthy said that the social protection system is an important pillar for any society that aims to ensure the well-being and security of its citizens and includes a wide range of policies, programmes and initiatives designed to protect individuals and societies from various risks and vulnerabilities, such as disease, disability and old age.

Dr. Rajab bin Ali Al Awisi stressed that the upcoming entitlements drawn by the social protection system at the individual, institutional and societal levels, in light of the changes taking place and the economic and social data, reflects the priority of the citizen in the Royal vision, and the concern and keenness of His Majesty to provide a decent life and safe living for the citizen.

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Book lovers flock to watch ‘Logos Hope’ ship library

With over 5,000 books on board, across different genres - the floating library has something for everyone

Times News Service

Muscat: Book lovers of Muscat had a gala time flocking in large numbers to have a glimpse of the ‘Logos Hope’, the largest floating library in the world docked at Port Sultan Qaboos in Muttrah.

Saturday (July 22) being the last day, people had come in large numbers to take a short trek from the car park to a packed queue of eagerly waiting families as no cars were allowed at Sultan Qaboos Port. Buses used to collect the visitors from the car park and ferry them to the ship.

One of the visitors, Fatima aged 22, who was travelling on one of these buses with her family, said: “We all saw some posts on Instagram and decided to go as a family, as we are interested in reading. One of my younger siblings reads a lot.”

Fatima was quite excited to see what treasures the ship held.

With over 5,000 books on board, across different genres - the floating library has something for everyone. Whether National Geographic floats your boat, or you are looking for a book on leadership, or geology, you are bound to have a happy experience.

Tanat Ansari, who was with his family said, “My children came for books because there are not only

children’s books, but books for everyone, so we all enjoyed the experience together.”

Lines of books for every age fill these shelves, goodie bags and boxes of stationary as well.

More than just books

With the aim of offering more than just books, the library also organised literary and community events for the visitors.

‘Logos Hope’ collaborated with the local book Clubs in Oman for fun-filled activities.

‘Oman Book Lovers Club’ organised a Reading Corner as well as storytelling sessions, creative writing and calligraphy sessions attended by the likes of M Alrawahy, authors Vaishali Ham-lai and Shahad Al Wahaibi. ‘Once Upon a Time Muscat’ and ‘Care Share Books Library’ also offered storytime and craft sessions onboard.

The crew

With volunteers from around 60 different nationalities, the Logos Hope crew is an admirable initiative of international goodwill and understanding.

The crew and staff are all non-salaried volunteers, including many serving in their professional capacity, such as seafarers, engineers, electricians, nurses, teachers and cooks. Sponsorship from friends, family members and civic organisations enables crewmembers to serve on board. Logos Hope volunteers say ‘It’s amazing to be aboard’.

Last days in Muscat

The ship will be docked at Muscat port till July 24 before making its way to Salalah to open its doors there on July 27.

The Floating Library is proven to be a big hit for many. If you have visited already, share your experience and pictures with us as comments on Facebook and Instagram.



LINDAU NOBEL LAUREATE

Omani researcher wins award



Times News Service

MUSCAT: Dr. Fares bin Abdullah Al-Farsi and his team won the prize for the best innovative research project in a science marathon at the Lindau Nobel Laureate Meeting.

More than 27 teams from various countries participated in the meeting.

Dr. Al-Farsi explained to Oman News Agency (ONA) that the winning project is concerned with using smart biochips to identify and resist bacteria that cause infections in chronic wounds, indicating that these slides contain microscopic antibodies manufactured in a laboratory, and linked to enzymes and sensors that help identify and eliminate bacteria as they approach the wound site.

He pointed out that the winning project was part of a research team consisting of young scientists from several disciplines, with the support of the “Max Planck” Foundation in the Federal Republic of Germany, adding that the participating research projects were evaluated by a scientific committee consisting of a number Nobel Prize-winning scientists, as well as global investors in the field of developing scientific research.

Dr. Al-Farsi pointed out that his participation in the 72nd Lindau Nobel laureate Meeting, which was held in June in Germany, came with the support of the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation to represent the Sultanate of Oman among the top 600 young scientists in the medical field.

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Duqm, a hub for tourism and investment

Visitors can enjoy the privacy and traditional charm of the region, while also having access to modern 4-star hotels



DUQM: When visiting Duqm, what immediately captures the attention of visitors after travelling more than 550 kilometres from Muscat, is the unique blend of modern amenities and traditional Omani culture, creating a distinct and unforgettable experience.

One can enjoy the privacy and traditional charm of the region, while also having access to modern 4-star hotels located off the shore of the Arabian Sea. Visitors can gather with family and friends in an estate during the evening or at night under the light of the moon or stars, while still being close to the vibrant Bedouin lifestyle. Here, one can savor Omani coffee and dates, and immerse themselves in the rich cultural heritage of the region.

In addition to traditional experiences, visitors can indulge in modern cafes that offer a variety of coffee, tea, and other hot or cold drinks. The cafes cater to diverse tastes and preferences, providing visitors with a range of options to choose from.

Diverse cultures

Duqm's unique diversity, climate, and environment are so captivating that visitors often find themselves wanting to prolong their stay in the city. This has led to a significant increase in population and urban growth in recent years. Today, the city boasts a vibrant mix of nationalities, cultures, and peoples who are all working together to build a modern city and an economic destination that caters to the needs and aspirations of both visitors and residents.

The commercial and tourism sectors in Duqm are committed to meeting the expectations of those who visit or live in the city. This dedication is reflected in the many businesses that have been established by the people of Duqm themselves, who are equally invested in the city's growth and development.

A'Soud Global School

A'Soud Global School is a vital component of Duqm Modern City, providing a modern and inclusive educational community for Om-

ani, Arab, and foreign students. Established three years ago, the school was designed to encourage families to relocate to Duqm by providing quality education for their children. This has been particularly attractive to engineers and other professionals who come from all parts of the world and want to ensure that their children receive a top-notch education.

Year after year, A'Soud Global School has witnessed a steady increase in the number of its students and has firmly established itself within Duqm. This success is driven by the school's unwavering commitment to providing quality education and a wide range of educational, sports, and entertainment facilities.

Health facilities

In a city where the workforce exceeds 18,000, it is crucial to have adequate health facilities that can provide quality health services to the population. Prior to the establishment of the Special Economic Zone Authority at Duqm (SEZAD), Duqm Hospital served the limited population. However, with the rapid growth of the city, there has been an increasing need to expand the health sector in Duqm.

To address this need, several private health centres were established early on in the establishment of SEZAD to cater to the growing population. Over time, the number of these centres has increased, and they now operate 24/7, with outpatient clinics covering all medical specialties and providing a range of scan, examination, and diagnosis devices.

Health and education

Education and healthcare are two crucial factors that people consider when choosing a city to reside in, whether as permanent or partial residents. In Duqm, which is still in its growing and development phase, these factors play a significant role in attracting investors, engineers, and experts who contribute to building the modern city of Duqm.

One of the most common questions raised by those interested in investing in Duqm is whether there is an international school to which an employee can transfer their family. The availability of quality education is essential for families



relocating to a new city. Similarly, access to healthcare services is also a vital consideration for those who want to ensure that their families are well taken care of.

Aside from education and healthcare, there are other amenities and facilities that people consider when choosing a city to reside in.

These include the availability of airports, hotels, malls, restaurants, cafes, and recreational and entertainment facilities. In Duqm, many of these amenities have already been realized, even though the city is still in its development phase.

Oman Bowling Centre

Said bin Nasser Al Jabri, an Omani investor, recognized the importance of having a recreational centre that combines sports and entertainment and meets the desires of youth to enjoy their time in Duqm. This led him to establish the Oman Bowling Centre, which is located in the new commercial district of Duqm and has become a popular destination for residents, tourists from Oman and abroad, and families.

The Oman Bowling Centre has 12 bowling tracks with high standard and accuracy screens to display the results. The bowling hall has high standards and specifications that allow it to host local and international competitions. In addition to the bowling hall, the centre has a variety of other halls that offer video games, modern electronic games, billiards, and snooker.

Due to the increasing demand for sports and entertainment activities in Duqm, Said bin Nasser Al Jabri decided to expand his project by adding three new buildings over 2376 square metres next to the Oman Bowling Centre.

This expansion will include cafes, stores, gym facilities, and



other sports activities, including two paddle tennis courts that will be established to international standards on an area of 400 m2.

Beladi Business Centre

Beladi Business Centre, also known as Beladi Plaza, is a mall and business center located in Duqm that was established by an Arab investor. The centre is situated next to the headquarters of SEZAD, and it is one of a group of modern architectural malls that contribute to the city's urban landscape.

The total built area of the Beladi Business Centre is 7200 sqm, consisting of two adjacent parts: Building (A), which is designed to be a mall, and Building (B), which is designed to be an office complex. The centre's marketing campaign focuses on attracting local and international brands in various sectors and businesses.

The investor behind the Beladi Business Centre aspires to make it a new and outstanding addition to SEZAD, as it is the first centre of its kind in Duqm to provide services to the commercial and corporate sectors. The centre is a suitable location for organizing various exhibitions and events, thanks to the existence of a big hall that can host many commercial and marketing exhibitions and events, promoting this critical sector.

Hotel choices

Duqm has seen a significant increase in the number of hotel options available in recent years. Three years ago, the city had only three hotels, but today there are more than 12 hotel options available, ranging from four-star hotels with sea views to three-star and two-star hotels located in the central area of Duqm.

The increased number of hotel options has brought a variety of choices to residents, tourists, and business travellers. Visitors can choose hotels that offer scenic views of the sea or those located in central Duqm, making it easy for them to access different parts of the city.

A hub for investment and tourism

The increase in the number of hotel options and the development of tourism infrastructure in Duqm has made it an attractive destination for both domestic and international visitors. Duqm's location, picturesque beaches, and natural beauty make it an ideal destination for tourists seeking a relaxing holiday.

Duqm is also an optimal site for those interested in practicing various sports hobbies, including fishing, diving, and other water sports. The city offers a range of sports facilities and activities that cater to different interests and skill levels.

Moreover, Duqm is an important site for those interested in visiting the Arabian Oryx Reserve, which is located nearby. Tourists can also visit Barr Al Hakman or other tourist landmarks in Al Wusta Governorate, making Duqm an excellent base for exploring the region.

Mesmerising landscape

Duqm's investment identity does not limit its potential as a tourist destination. The city offers a range of attractions and activities that cater to tourists seeking entertainment and enjoyment. One of the highlights of Duqm is the Rock Garden and Duqm Desert, which offer a unique and mesmerising landscape that is ideal for outdoor enthusiasts and adventure seekers.

Another popular attraction in Duqm is the Arabian Sea Beach, where visitors can enjoy the beautiful scenery and the relaxing sound of waves. The beach is an excellent location for swimming, sunbathing, and other water activities, including fishing, diving, and snorkelling.

Duqm's weather is another attraction that distinguishes it on the summer tourism map in Oman. The city's temperatures stay within the twenties even during the hottest summer months, which makes it a comfortable and enjoyable destination for tourists seeking to escape the summer heat.

WEATHER

Oman likely to be affected by a low pressure



Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman's weather is expected to be affected by a low pressure starting from Monday.

The General Directorate of Meteorology said: "There are expectations that the atmosphere of the Sultanate will be affected by a low pressure extending from western India, starting from Monday until the end of the week, with chances of sporadic rain, and occasional thunder."

It is expected to affect parts of North Al Sharqiyah, South Al Sharqiyah, Al Wusta, Dhofar, and the Hajar Mountains and its neighbouring areas, as well as parts of the coasts of the Sea of Oman.

According to the Met office, the weather for Sunday is expected to be partly cloudy and humid

with a high of 34 degrees Celsius and a low of 30 degrees Celsius.

In its 24-hour outlook, the CAA said partly cloudy to cloudy skies along the coastal areas of Dhofar governorate and adjoining mountains with intermittent drizzle and chances of isolated rain over mountains and desert area.

"Advection of high and medium clouds over most of governorates with chance of convective clouds development and isolated rain, occasionally thundershowers, over parts of Al Hajar Mountains and adjoining areas towards afternoon associated with downdraft wind. Low clouds or fog patches are expected along parts of coastal areas of Sea of Oman and Arabian Sea. Chance of dust rising over deserts and open areas," it said.

اكتشاف خريف صلالة



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SCIENTIFIC INNOVATION

Omani innovator bags Grand Prize in South Korea contest

Times News Service

MUSCAT: An Omani innovator has won the Grand Prize in an international competition in South Korea among 353 innovations from more than 18 countries around the world, Oman News Agency (ONA) has announced. Razan bint Hamad Al Kalbani won the Grand Prize in the Korea International Women's Innovations Exhibition and Competition (KIWIE) for her innovation "X-ray absorbing coating from a natural ingredient", among 353 innovations from more than 18 countries around the world.

Razan Al Kalbani said that her scientific innovation is a coating that absorbs X-rays from a natural ingredient (lycopen), which is the red pigment found in tomatoes, watermelons, red fruits and vegetables in general.

She added, "After extracting the lycopene, I carried out laboratory tests and mixed it with a coating with unique properties and techniques to ensure that the properties of the lycopene were not affected."

She pointed out that the scientific innovation is the first of its kind in the world using a natural compound to shield rays, indicat-



ing that the paint absorbs rays by 97 percent, and is characterized by being 100 percent water and moisture resistant, and 95 percent heat resistant, and prevents the formation of mold and bacteria, and is non-flammable.

Lycopene

She said that one of the most prominent features of this scientific innovation is the possibility of using tomato mold to extract lycopene, and in terms of mechanical advantage, it is less expensive than the lead currently used.

She stated that her participation in the Korea International Women's Innovations Compe-

tition and Exhibition (KIWIE) came with the support of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.

She stated that her scientific innovation achieved many achievements at all levels, whether global, regional and local, most notably her winning the first place in the Falling Walls Lab competition in November 2020, the silver medal at the Challenge and Innovation Forum in the State of Qatar, the gold medal at the Second Beirut International Innovation Exhibition.

She also won the silver medal at the level of the Middle East in the Mabaret Fayda Al Saad competition in the State of Kuwait.

FIRST DAY OF HIJRI YEAR

Over 7,000 visit Oman Across Ages Museum

Times News Service

MUSCAT: On the first day of the Hijri New Year, the Oman Across Ages Museum attracted 7,708 visitors from various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

Nasser bin Saeed Al Riyami, Head of Visitor Services Department at Oman Across Ages Museum, explained that measures were undertaken to facilitate the movement of the unexpected high number of visitors.

The measures included assigning an additional number of employees to facilitate the movement of visitors and the services provided to them, answering inquiries and directing them inside the museum exhibition halls, and explaining the mechanism of work of interactive devices.

The museum administration is working to facilitate the procedures for booking tickets to enter the museum exhibition halls for visitors.

Through the development of the ticketing platform, which will soon be available to the public,



self-service ticketing machines will also be added, which would add a unique experience to museum visitors.

It is worth noting that the museum exhibition halls receive visitors from Saturday to Thursday from 9am until 5pm, and on Friday from 9:30 in the afternoon until 7 pm.



MINISTRY OF TOURISM

<FROM A1 An opportunity to learn about Oman

It will also be an opportunity to learn about the latest and upcoming developments in the Omani tourism sector and special promotions.

Workshops organised by the Ministry in various global tourism markets are a major part of the applied steps of the promotional strategy pursued by the Ministry, as it is committed to promoting Oman as a tourist destination throughout the year, whether for adventure enthusiasts, nature lovers, history researchers, or those looking for luxurious havens.

The Ministry seeks, through the establishment of promotion-

al circles, to enter and participate in target markets, establish direct relations with them, get acquainted with their features and requirements closely, introduce travel and tourism companies and the media within these markets to Omani tourism potential, and focus qualitatively on the marketing aspect of the Sultanate of Oman by promoting the most important products, facilities and services.

Tourism representation offices affiliated with the Ministry around the world also contribute to strengthening the presence of Oman in the most important tourism markets.

MINISTRY OF INFORMATION

Discussion on changes in media

BAKU: The Ministry of Information, represented by the Omani News Agency, participated in the 'New Media in the Era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution' forum in Shusha, Republic of Azerbaijan.

The forum, which will continue until July 23, was sponsored by President Dr. Ilham Heydar Aliyev of the Republic of Azerbaijan. More than 150 journalists and



specialists representing 49 countries are participating in the forum, in addition to 60 participants from leaders and representatives of local media in the Republic of Azerbaijan. During its session, the forum will discuss media developments in light of changes in the world, exchange of experiences between media institutions, development of media relations, and various media issues. -ONA

Tender Announcement

(LV2023/SSC/T/01)
JULY 23, 2023

Tender Invitation

The House of Expertise for Integrated Projects & Trading extends an invitation to Experienced, Excellent, and First Grade Contractors to participate in the tender process for the construction of the School & Gymnasium at AlKhoud. The project encompasses a full built-up area of approximately 12,300 square meters, and the selected bidder will assume the role of the main contractor.

The following are the tender purchase details:

Tender No.	Tender Name	Deadline for last day Tender Documents Purchase	Deadline for Tender Documents Submission	Tender Fee
LV2023/SSC/T/01	Construction of School & Gymnasium	Thursday July 30, 2023 Not later than 4 pm	Thursday August 30, 2023 Not later than 12 pm	500 OMR

- Interested bidders are to submit an official "Expression of Interest" letter to the following email addresses, indicating their willingness to participate in the said tender:
 - To: Tender@linesandvisions.com
 - Cc: r_azri@sapsoman.edu.om nabhan@sapsoman.edu.om
- Interested bidders shall transfer the tender fee to the following bank account and must attach the fee transfer receipt with the EOI letter and NO CASH will be accepted:
 - MEETHAQ Islamic Banking** -Bank Account Number: **0614-50020449-000-1**
HOUSE EXPERTISE AND INTEGRATED TRD PROJ
- Full Tender Documents will be issued to the interested bidders via email as a link (digital copy) and the bidder must acknowledge the receipt of the same.
- Interested bidders will be requested to sign an NDA after purchasing the tender

SCRAP SALE AT GHALA

We invite offers from interested parties for sale of steel and plastic pipes and fittings surplus materials and scrap. Interested parties may contact mobile No: 9922 1476

Inspection of the scrap start date is from: 23RD July 2023 till 30th of July 2023. Only one inspection allowed for one person and No photography is allowed.

Quotations shall be submitted before 5TH AUGUST 2023.

Offers must be sent to mail Id: scrapsale485@gmail.com

Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Health

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry of Health invites specialized companies to participate in the following Tenders: -

Tender Ref:	DESCRIPTION	LAST DATE FOR COLLECTION OF TENDER DOCUMENT	CLOSING TIME/ DAY/ DATE	ELIGIBILITY	TENDER FEE (NON-REFUNDABLE)
2023/2669	Maintenance and rehabilitation of Ibra health Center	Before 10 am on Thursday 3/ August/2023	Before 9 am on Thursday 31/ August/2023	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	R.O 25 Per set
2023/2671	Sewage suction for health institutions in North Sharqiya governorate	Before 10 am on Thursday 3/ August/2023	Before 9 am on Thursday 31/ August/2023	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	R.O 25 Per set
2023/2672	BOQ for renovation of existing Medical store in IPC Ibra	Before 10 am on Thursday 3/ August/2023	Before 9 am on Thursday 31/ August/2023	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	R.O 25 Per set

- All Specialized and interested Companies registered with Tender Board on the above mentioned Grade may obtain Tender documents from the E. Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.
- Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accepts or reject any tender. (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) Any Clarification, you may contact via Telephone: 24402200 Email id: etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om

Approved by/ director of financial affairs

OMAN/WORLD

HIJRI NEW YEAR HOLIDAYS

Occupancy rates surge in Jabal Akhdar, Jabal Shams, Hamra and Salalah hotels

<FROM A1 For Deepesh, a government sector employee, the long weekend was a chance to drive down to Salalah with his family. “The drive is good and Salalah during Khareef is one of the best destinations. We will reach home late on Saturday night but it is fine,” he said.

As the holidays end, it is time to return to work for Mohammed Al Abri, a professional in the private sector, who spent his holidays with his family in his village near Hamra. “We caught up with my family and relatives and the climate up the mountains near Hamra is very pleasant. There were a lot of people who spent their time in nearby hotels and resorts as we could see the rush of cars passing through our village,” said Mohammed.

Shopping malls and hypermarkets saw a sharp increase in footfalls as people purchased essentials to prepare themselves for work from Sunday.

“Such short breaks rejuvenate us physically and mentally and it is nice to be back to work after an extended weekend,” said Altaf Al Balushi, a banking professional.

With just a three days break, staycations were the norm for most of the expatriates.

Hotel industry executives told *Times of Oman* that occupancy rates saw a surge in hotels in Jabal



Akhdar, Jabal Shams, and Hamra due to pleasant weather while there was also good rush in Salalah during the long weekend.

An executive of a hotel in Jabal Akhdar said long weekends in Oman are always a blessing as they boost domestic tourism.

“Our hotel was fully occupied during the long weekend. Staycations are becoming popular these days,” he said.

While there were plenty who enjoyed staycations, there were

some who just decided to stay put at home and relax by watching movies on Netflix.

“It was fun spending time with family at home as one hardly gets such a long weekend often. So we made our home a theatre and enjoyed watching movies,” said Seema, a woman professional in the IT sector.

“We did not even go out for brunch or dinner. Rather we just ordered food and enjoyed quality family time and bonding,” she

added.

The public parks and beaches also witnessed good rush on the weekends and nearby cafes did brisk business. Restaurants experienced rush in the evenings as people opted to dine out in the evenings.

The next national holiday in Oman will now be in September on the 12th of Rabi Al Awwal to observe the birthday of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH), which is likely to be on September 26 or 27.

TO REDUCE CARBON EMISSIONS

Amsterdam to ban cruise ship

AMSTERDAM: Amsterdam is set to ban cruise ships from the city in an attempt to reduce carbon emissions.

The plan has been in the works since 2016 and was approved by a local government vote on Thursday.

“The polluting cruise ships don’t merge with the sustainable goals

of our city,” Amsterdam councilor Ilana Rooderkerk said. “It’s time to take action, the climate won’t wait.” Her party, the liberal “D66,” which governs the city in a coalition with the social democrats “PvdA” and the environmentalist “GroenLinks” party, pointed to the Italian tourist hub of Venice as an example, after it banned cruise

ships in 2021. The IJ Terminal, on the waterfront near Amsterdam’s central rail station, will now have to move outside the city.

Dick de Graaff, director of Cruise Port Amsterdam, which operates the cruise terminal, said the company had taken note of the vote and is awaiting the municipality’s next move. — DW

BRAZIL

Lula tightens laws on guns

BRASILIA: Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva tightened restrictions on firearms access by decree.

The executive order reverses his predecessor Jair Bolsonaro’s regulations that expanded gun ownership in the country.

Lula’s decree reduces the number of guns civilians can possess for personal safety from four to two, and reduces the allowed ammunition for each gun from 200 rounds to 50. It asks civilians for documentation to prove their need for guns and bars them from owning 9 mm pistols, restricting them to members of the police and military. — DW



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NATIONAL WEATHER INSTITUTE

Greece faces longest heat wave on record

ATHENS: Greece’s heat wave is set to become the longest in the country’s recorded history, according to senior official with the national weather institute.

“According to the data, we will probably go through 16-17 days of a heatwave, which has never happened before in our country,” Kostas Lagouvardos, the director of research at the National Observatory, told ERT television.

That’s as temperatures were forecast to rise above 40 Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) over the next couple of days, which could make it the hottest July weekend in half a century.

“This weekend risks being the hottest registered in July in the past 50 years,” said Panagiotis Giannopoulos, meteorologist with state broadcaster ERT.

“Athens is going to have temperatures above 40 Celsius for six to seven days, through to the end of July.”

Authorities have been warning people to stay out of the sun during the hottest periods of the day and to remain hydrated.

Greek wildfires

Firefighters meanwhile have been battling dozens of wildfires burning across Greece.

On Friday fire services spokesman Vassilios Vathrakoyannis reported that 52 new fires were burning, while teams were tackling a total of 79 fires.

During the week, firefighters from Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Malta and Slovakia traveled to Greece to assist with efforts.

Vathrakoyannis said that the country would remain in a state of alert through the weekend amid concerns that strong northerly winds could spark more fires.

The southern US is also swel-



tering with temperatures of 41 degrees Celsius and above this weekend, according to the National Weather Service (NWS).

In Phoenix, Arizona temperatures of up to 46 degrees have been forecast and follows a record-breaking three weeks in a row of highs above 43C.

The NWS on Saturday said that “A dangerous, long-lived, and record-breaking heat wave will continue over the Southwest this weekend,” and said low-lying desert areas would feel the heat particularly.

July on track be hottest month

Scientists from NASA have warned that the heat is likely to get worse. Temperatures in June were already found to be the hottest on record, while July was expected to be the hottest month overall.

Scientists from the space agency previously saw a spike in temperatures like this in July and August of 2016 due to a super El Nino event. The current El Nino event has according to NASA, only just emerged.

El Nino is associated with the warming of ocean surface temperatures in the central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean.

Meanwhile, several cities in China including Shanghai and Beijing are bracing for floodwaters. — DW

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47 people die in excessive rains, 3 still missing in South Korea

The landslides and floods brought on by intense rains have pummelled the nation since early last week

SEOUL: Rescuers have found one more corpse of someone who was washed away by recent torrential rains, bringing the verified death toll to 47, according to fire authorities, as reported by Yonhap news agency. The body of a man in his 60s was found in Yecheon, 161 kilometres

southeast of Seoul, on Saturday. But in the wake of the landslides and floods brought on by the intense rains that have pummelled the nation since early last week, three persons were still unaccounted for as of Saturday. Around 2,000 of 18,000 evacuees in 15 cities and provinces still remain in shelters, Yonhap news agency reported. Meanwhile, monsoon rains of up to 100 millimetres are expected to drench South Korea over the weekend again, the state weather agency said. A stationary front and low atmospheric pressure from north-eastern China to North Korea are forecast to create humid heat in the South, bringing heavy rains across the country through Monday, Yonhap news agency reported. The greater Seoul area will receive 50 to 100 mm of rain over the weekend, while the northern Gyeo-

nggi Province may see over 150 mm of rainfall. Precipitation is expected to range between 30 and 80 mm for inland and mountainous areas of Gangwon Province, and the central and southern regions. According to the authorities, 10,570 people nationwide had to leave their homes because of rain damage. In addition, Yonhap reported that 628 public buildings and 317 other private properties were damaged by downpours, including 146 roads that collapsed or were washed away and 139 flooded homes, Yonhap news agency reported. Due to the heavy rains, a total of 28,607 homes across the country were left without electricity. Additionally, as of Monday morning, heavy rain warnings were in effect for the southern regions, Jeju Island, and the Chungcheong provinces. — ANI

DOCTORS WITHOUT BORDERS

MSF may stop work at hospital after 18 staff attacked in Sudan

KHARTOUM: Doctors Without Borders (MSF) said that it may have to stop humanitarian work at a hospital in Sudan if its staff continue to be attacked. The announcement comes a day after the group said 18 of its aid workers were attacked while supporting the Turkish Hospital in Khartoum. “If an incident like this happens again, and if our ability to move supplies continues to be obstructed, then, regrettably, our presence in the Turkish Hospital will soon become untenable,” said Christophe Garnier, MSF’s emergency coordinator for Sudan. MSF is one of the few aid organisations still active in Sudan after many others pulled out due to safety concerns. The charity says it has treated more than 1,600 war wounded patients in Khartoum since the conflict began in April.

What happened in the attack on MSF aid workers? In a statement published on its website on Friday, MSF said one of its medical teams was stopped by a group of armed men while driving in Khartoum on Thursday. The MSF team was transporting medical supplies to the Turkish Hospital in the south of the city. “After arguing about the reasons for MSF’s presence, the armed men aggressively assaulted our team, physically beating and whipping them,” the charity said. “They detained one of our drivers and threatened his life before releasing him. They also stole one of our vehicles.” The group did not say whether the attackers were in uniform or provide other details.

— DW

MILLENNIUM MILLIONAIRE

Indian expat wins \$1mn in Dubai Duty Free draw

Times News Service

MUSCAT: An Indian expatriate won \$1 million in the Dubai Duty Free Millennium Millionaire draw held at Dubai International Airport on Wednesday. Hailing from Mumbai, Vinay Shreekar Chodankar won \$1 million with Millennium Millionaire Series 429 ticket number 3588. **Ticket bought while going to Saudi Arabia** Vinay had bought the ticket when he was going to Saudi Arabia from Dubai on June 30. Another Millennium Millionaire Series 428 winner is Mani Balaraj whom Dubai Duty Free officials gave the ceremonial cheque. Balaraj has been living in Abu Dhabi for the last 12 years and had bought the ticket with help from his friends.



Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Health

ANNOUNCEMENT

Governorate invites specialized companies and authorized individuals to participate in the following The Ministry of Health Directorate of Health Service North Sharqiya tender:

Tender Ref	Description	Last date for Collection of tender Document	Closing Time/ Day/ Date	Eligibility	Tender Fee (Non-Refundable)	Office where Tenders are to be deposited (HQ)
2023/2	Supply drinkable water for institutions (Wadi Andam Center)	thursday 03/08/2023	Before 10 am on Monday 31/08/2023	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board and authorized individuals	R.O. 25/= Per set	Office of the directorate finance at the Directorate General of Health Service North Sharqya Governorate

Take in your consideration:

- Tender Documents can be purchased from the Office of the director of finance at the Directorate General of Health Service North Sharqya Governorate between 8.00 A.m and 12.00 P.M on working days, on payment of Tender Fee mentioned above.
- Tender(s) submitted without Bank Guarantee or a Certified Cheque will not be considered. -
- The ministry is not bound to accept the lowest or any other tender.

Approved by/ director of financial affairs

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SPORTS

Had to do the hard yards, says Kohli

The India batter slammed his 76th international century on day two of the second Test against West Indies

PORT OF SPAIN: Star batter Virat Kohli made his first away Test century in almost five years and his 76th international ton (121), while Ravindra Jadeja (61) and R Ashwin (56) helped themselves to half-centuries, as India piled up 438 in Port-of-Spain on day two of the second Test against West Indies on Friday.

In reply, West Indies started slowly, with captain Kraigg Brathwaite and Tagenarine Chanderpaul responsible for the hosts' first half-century partnership in the series. But Jadeja struck 20 minutes before stumps to have Chanderpaul carving a catch to Ashwin. Brathwaite and debutant Kirk McKenzie then safely negotiated a tricky passage of play, with West Indies still 352 runs behind.

Following his century in his 500th international match, Kohli said that the century was "satisfying" as he had to "do the hard yards" and added that he had to be



patient as the wicket was slow. "I really enjoyed myself out there. I was in the rhythm I wanted to be in. Started off in challenging times. I switch on during these times. When I have something to overcome, I get charged up. I had to be patient as the outfield was slow. It was very satisfying as I had to do the hard yards," said Kohli after the day's play.

Kohli said that milestones mean something to him when the team needs him and expressed his gratitude for being able to play 500 matches. "I have got 15 centuries away from home; I have got more hundreds away than at home. I have got a few fifty plus scores. I just have

to focus on what I have to do for the team. I try to help the team. These stats and milestones mean something to me when the team needs me. Firstly, I am very grateful that I got to play 500 games for India. I looked after myself. Training, sleep cycle, rest and diet. Converting 1 into 2s is easy for me.

"It helps me to stay off pressure. Fitness helps me in all formats. I can field with intensity in all formats. I want to keep playing at the top of my fitness ability," he said.

On India and West Indies cricket relations on the occasion of the 100th Test, Kohli said that playing this match was a "special occasion" for him.

"Could not have asked for a better beginning to the Test. There is a sense of history to this ground. The crowd loves their cricket here. Antigua and here are my two favourite venues in the Caribbean. Adelaide in Australia and The Bullring in South Africa are my favourites as well. The wicket is slow. Wickets in bunches would not come. If we can stay in the game and put the scoring rate down, hopefully we can get a few wickets," he said.

Brief scores [day 2]: India 1st innings 438 (Virat Kohli 121, Rohit Sharma 80, Ravindra Jadeja 61, R Ashwin 56; Jomel Warrican 3-89) vs West Indies 1st innings 86 for 1 (Kraigg Brathwaite 37*). - **ANI**

‘Would be great to lose few overs here and there’

MANCHESTER: With Australia's Ashes 2023 lead under threat, pacer Josh Hazlewood admitted that he would be pleased if rain gods would intervene and lend a helping hand to struggling Aussies in the form of a drawn match.

England ended day three of the fourth Test at Old Trafford on a strong note as Mark Wood dominated the entire final session to take the hosts one step closer to levelling the series on Friday. Though Australia leads the Ashes by 2-1, they are just six wickets away from losing the match by an innings as they still have 162 out of England's 275 runs worth of lead yet to be made.

With a sensational spell from Wood, Australia are praying that a large chunk of remaining two days is washed away by rain. The forecast also predicts some rain and Australia are not hiding at all that they would like some assistance from rain.

"I would be very pleased (if rain will help in a draw). It is obviously forecast but forecasts can change all the time. Obviously, rain and light plays a big part in cricket and has done forever. So, yeah, it would be great to lose a few overs here and there, and make our job a little easier if I am hanging in there," Hazlewood was quoted by *ESPNews*.

Jonny Bairstow's unbeaten 99 along with fifties from Harry Brook and Ben Stokes troubled Australia on day three. Hazlewood, along with Pat Cummins and Mitchell Starc went for a combined 392 runs at 5.22 runs per over.

The world's most feared pace trio had hit an unfortunate century each with the ball. It was only for the second time that these three conceded hundred runs in a single innings.

Hazlewood however said that such experiences are not new to them.

"I imagine a few games against India on some flat wickets we have gone the journey as well. So it is nothing too new for us, I guess [it] was probably just the run rate," Hazlewood said.

Australia ended their day at 113/4, with Marnus Labuschagne (44*) and Mitchell Marsh (1*) unbeaten.

Earlier, in reply to Australia's 317 in the first innings, England had scored 592 runs in their first innings.

Australia became a victim of some heavy hitting from England's top seven batters.

Zak Crawley (189 in 182 balls, with 21 fours and three sixes) led the attack with his maiden Ashes ton. Moeen Ali (54 in 82 balls, with seven fours), Joe Root (84 in 95 balls with eight fours and a six), Harry Brook (61 in 100 balls, with five fours), skipper Ben Stokes (51 in 74 balls with five fours) and Jonny Bairstow (99* in 81 balls with 10 fours and four sixes) played impactful knocks.

After opting to field first, England bundled out Australia for 317 in the first innings.

Brief scores [day 3]: Australia 1st innings 317 and 113/4 vs England 1st innings 592. - **ANI**

OTTA-ORGANISED EVENT

Al Balushi crowned national TT champion

MUSCAT: Seeb's Muhanad Al Balushi dethroned his clubmate Asad Al Raisi in the men's final of the National Table Tennis Championship, which concluded at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex on Saturday.

Al Balushi outplayed Al Raisi 3-1 in the summit clash to bring curtains down on the three-day national championship, organised

by the Oman Table Tennis Association (OTTA).

The championship attracted a total of 59 players from 15 clubs with Yanqul Club's Sultan Al Riyami finishing third to complete the podium. Al Riyami beat Saham's Muadh al Shehi 3-2 in the third place playoff match. It was the first time that young Al Shehi made it to the semis of the men's event.

Players came from Ibri, Saham, Nakhal, Quriyat, Al Rustaq, Al Ittifaq, Salalah, Yanqul, Seeb, Mirbat, Suwaiq, Ahli-Sidab, Masirah, Dhofar and Nizwa clubs.

Earlier in the semifinals, Al Raisi beat Al Shehi 3-0, while Al Balushi got the better of Al Riyami 3-1.

In the group stage, Al Balushi had blanked Salalah's Said Salim Ali (3-0), and Ahli-Sidab's Abdul

Hakeem al Kharousi (3-0). Al Balushi then swept past Al Harith al Yafei from Salalah (3-0) in the last 16 round and continued his winning streak with a win over Saham's Haitham al Mandhari in the quarter-finals.

Another highlight of the 2023 edition was the impressive performance from Saham Club's 15-year-old Nasser al Zaabi who

reached the last-32 round in the men's category. The youngster defeated Al Rustaq's Khalid al Siyadi and Al Julanda al Hadhrami by similar 3-0 margins respectively.

The tournament was officiated by the international umpires with Hashim al Salmi as the chief umpire. Khalid al Zaabi officiated as the tournament manager that featured U13, U15 and U17 events.



Muhanad al Balushi (left) and Asad al Raisi



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GLOBAL SHARES SLIP
Global share markets edged lower on Friday as most US mega cap stocks slipped, while the dollar soared against the yen after Reuters reported the Bank of Japan is leaning toward keeping its dovish monetary policy next week.

MARKET

BUSINESS & FINANCE



INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES
A delegation from the Oman's Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology met with several Chinese technology companies. The delegation is headed by Dr Ali bin Amer Al Shidhani, Undersecretary for Communications and Information Technology.

Omani stock market expected to build a clearer, positive uptrend



The market could remain in an uncertain direction as traders await the US Federal Reserve's interest rate decision on Wednesday

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Omani stock market recorded a volatile although short week of trading. The main index remained around the same price levels observed during the previous week with traders considering local and global factors amid an ongoing and mitigated earnings season, according to an analyst.

"The market could remain in an uncertain direction after its surge last month and could continue stagnating for the first few days of the week as traders await the Federal Reserve's interest rate decision on Wednesday," Farah Mourad, XTB Market Analyst.

The US central bank is expected to raise its interest rates another time after it decided to skip hiking during its previous meeting. The slowdown in inflation in the US has fuelled expectations of an end to the interest rate hike cycle which could help improve sentiment among investors and fuel appetite for investment opportunities in global markets and among them the Omani stock market. As



Farah Mourad

a result, traders could remain cautious before the Federal Reserve decision, she said.

This decision and the comments of the president of the US central bank could affect the Omani financial sector and the broader economy which have been seeing increasing financing costs for some time and some pressure on business activity. "While interest rates could stabilise and eventually decline progressively, the Omani stock market could see stronger performances and could build a clearer uptrend. The market has been mostly trading horizontally since the end of last year," Farah Mourad said.

The financial sector could continue to see positive performances in the meantime despite a slight decline this week thanks to grow-

MSX index continues to rise for sixth week in a row

MUSCAT: The main index of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) managed last week to record new gains, rising for the sixth week in a row, benefiting from the rise in the shares of a number of leading companies such as Bank Muscat, National Bank of Oman, Omantel, Ooredoo and Oman Cement, at a time when most stocks tended to decline.

Last week, the main index rose 8 points and closed at 4,805 points, surpassing the 4,800-point barrier. However, the performance of other indices was negative.

The financial sector index declined by 36 points, the industrial sector index lost 31 points, the service sector index lost 15 points, while the Sharia index recorded a slight increase without one point.

The market value of the securities listed on the stock exchange rose by the end of trading last week to OMR23.90 billion, recording weekly gains of OMR2.9 million. Last week, MSX was affected by a wave of decline in the shares of many companies. The preliminary financial results of the pub-



lic shareholding companies showed a performance below investors' expectations, despite the increase in the profits of many leading companies, especially banks and several industrial companies and companies operating in the services sector.

The stock market was also affected by the decline in investor sentiment, with the decline in liquidity directed to the stock market in exchange for the increase in liquidity directed to the bond and sukuk market, at a time when investors are waiting for more liquidity in the stock market after the Muscat Stock Exchange announced six initiatives to stimulate trading.

Last week, the prices of 37 securities declined, compared to 16 securities whose prices rose, and 17 securities that settled unchanged at their previous levels. The bourse witnessed a decline in trading value by 34 percent to reach OMR10.8 million compared to OMR16.4 million in the previous week, and the number of transactions executed decreased by 45.5 percent from 3,363 transactions to 1,833 transactions. The daily turnover decreased from about OMR3.3 million to OMR2.7 million. The Muscat Stock Exchange was closed on Thursday due to the Hijri year holiday of 1445.

Trading data issued by the Muscat Stock Exchange showed a decline in the purchases of local investment institutions that focused on the bonds and Sukuk market, accounting for 44.6 percent of the total trading value.

The share of Oman Chrome recorded the best increase, up by 32.8 percent and closed at OMR4.650, the share of Oman Educational and Training Investments rose by 10 percent and closed at 253 baisas, and the share of Oman Flour Mills rose by 9.9 percent and closed at 576 baisas.

Muscat Insurance topped the losing stocks, declining by 9.5 percent and closing at 380 baisas. Dhofar Food and Investment share fell by about 9 percent and closed at 81 baisas. Voltamp Energy declined to 120 baisas, down by 7.6 percent.

Issuance 59 of the Government Development Bond (GDB) came at the forefront of the most traded securities in terms of turnover, after it witnessed transactions worth OMR3,980,000, representing 36.7 percent of the total trading value. - **ONA**

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

Net profits of MSX-listed banks grow 17.5% to over OMR235mn



MUSCAT: Local banks listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) during the first half of this year recorded record results, with net profits rising to OMR235.30 million, recording a growth of 17.5 percent. The assets of the eight banks listed on the stock exchange at the end of last June rose to OMR39.90 billion, recording a growth of 4.6 percent.

The preliminary financial results showed an increase in the net profits of all banks, in conjunction with the rise of many local economic indicators. Such as the rise in government revenues, the increase in government spending, the rise in exports, and the banking sector's tendency to finance investment projects, private sector projects, and small and medium enterprises.

Bank Muscat recorded the highest profits at OMR104.30 million, National Bank of Oman (NBO) came second with OMR29.30 million, Sohar International Bank ranked third with OMR23.60

million, HSBC Bank Oman came fourth with OMR 21 million, Ahli Bank ranked fifth with OMR 19.90 million, and Bank Dhofar sixth with OMR 18.40 million, Oman Arab Bank (OAB) came seventh with OMR11.50 million and Bank Nizwa ranked eighth with OMR7.20 million.

The eight banks were able to achieve an increase in their net profits in the first half of this year, and Oman Arab Bank (OAB) recorded the highest growth rate at 64.2 percent, followed by HSBC Bank Oman, whose net profits increased by 50 percent, while the National Bank of Oman (NBO) recorded a growth in its net profits by 33.1 percent. The National Bank of Oman (NBO) ranked third with net profits of OMR4.4 billion, Bank Sohar with OMR4.3 billion and Oman Arab Bank reported a net profit of OMR3.9 billion.

The market value of banks rose at the end of last June to OMR4.70 billion compared to OMR4.66 billion last December. - **ONA**

VOSTRO ACCOUNTS



22 countries opened special bank accounts in India to trade in Rupee

NEW DELHI: Banks from 22 countries have opened special Rupee vostro accounts in Indian banks in order to trade in local currency as part of gradual de-dollarisation plans, the Parliament was informed. Simply put, vostro accounts enable domestic banks to provide international banking services clients who have global banking needs.

In a written reply in Lok Sabha, Union Minister of State (External Affairs) Rajkumar Ranjan Singh listed out the names of the countries. They include Belarus, Botswana, Fiji, Germany, Guyana, Israel, Kenya, Malaysia, Mauritius, Myanmar, New Zealand, Oman, Russia, Seychelles, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Uganda, Bangladesh, Maldives, Kazakhstan and United Kingdom.

"Government is engaged with Indian trading community including the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to simplify the administrative procedures to implement this mechanism," the minister said.

The Reserve Bank of India last year put in place an arrangement, allowing transactions in domestic currencies to promote growth of global trade with emphasis on exports from India and to bring in increasing interest towards rupee.

The internationalisation of the rupee gathered steam following the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) announcement of a mechanism to settle payments for interna-

tional trade in rupees, especially for India's exports. The RBI allowed invoicing and payments for international trade in Indian Rupee on July 11, 2022.

Experts widely believe if the mechanism fructifies then it may go a long way in internationalizing the Indian currency rupee in the long run.

A currency can be termed "international" if it is widely accepted worldwide as a medium of exchange. To examine issues related to internationalisation of INR and suggest a way forward, the RBI had constituted an Inter-Departmental Group in December 2021.

The panel has recently come up with a report, where it made various short-term and long-term recommendations.

In the short-run, the members of the Group recommended enabling rupee as an additional settlement currency in existing multilateral mechanisms; integrating Indian payment systems with other countries for cross-border transactions; inclusion of G-Secs (or government bonds) in global bond indices; and providing equitable incentives to exporters for rupee trade settlement.

Stating India as one of the fastest-growing countries which showed remarkable resilience even in the face of major headwinds, the IDG said it feels that the rupee has the potential to become an internationalised currency. - **ANI**

GLOBAL INTEGRATED ENERGY AND CHEMICALS COMPANY

Saudi Aramco completes \$3.4 billion acquisition deal of 10% stake in Rongsheng Petrochemical

DHAHRAN: Saudi Aramco, a leading global integrated energy and chemicals company, completed a deal to acquire a 10 per cent stake in Rongsheng Petrochemical Company for CNY 24.6 billion (\$3.4 billion) through its wholly-owned subsidiary, Aramco Overseas, it was reported.

The acquisition follows the signing of strategic agreements between Saudi Aramco and Rongsheng Petrochemical Company, announced on March 27, 2023. The deal will contribute to the continued growth of Saudi Aramco and expand its presence in the

The strategic agreements will contribute to the growth of Saudi Aramco

refining, chemicals and marketing business in China.

The deal includes the supply of 480,000 barrels per day of Arab crude to the largest integrated refining and chemicals complex in China, owned by Zhejiang Oil and Petrochemical Co., Ltd., a

subsidiary of Rongsheng.

On this occasion, the President of Refining, Chemicals and Marketing at Saudi Aramco, Mohammed bin Yahya Al-Qahtani, confirmed that this partnership with Rongsheng contributes to strengthening Saudi Aramco's strategy aimed at converting liquids into chemicals, strengthening Aramco's presence in China, and highlighting its role as a reliable supplier of crude oil.

He added that the acquisition represents an integral part of Saudi Aramco's long-term growth strategy and expansion of

its presence in vital markets.

For his part, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Rongsheng Group Li Shuirong said: "The completion of this deal marks the entry into a new era for both Rongsheng and Saudi Aramco, and also indicates an important step in the future strategy of Rongsheng on the international level."

Rongsheng has a 51 per cent stake in Zhejiang, which owns and operates the complex, enjoys a processing capacity of 800,000 barrels per day of crude oil and produces 4.2 million metric tonnes of ethylene annually. - **SPA**

MARKET

Omani delegation explores investment opportunities with Chinese tech firms

The meetings discussed possibilities of cooperation and partnership with leading Chinese companies in the fields of space, data hosting and processing, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence (AI) semiconductors and electronic chips



BEIJING: A delegation from the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology met with several Chinese technology companies.

The delegation is headed by Dr Ali Amer Al Shidhani, Undersecretary for Communications and Information Technology. The meetings discussed possi-

bilities of cooperation and partnership with leading Chinese companies in the fields of space, data hosting and processing, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence

(AI) semiconductors and electronic chips. Further, the meeting reviewed means of boosting the investments of Chinese technology companies in Oman.

Incentives and facilities offered by Oman's government in the field of communications and information technology were also highlighted during the meeting. -ONA

OQ GAS NETWORKS



OQGN signs financing facilities worth \$1.2bn

Times News Service

MUSCAT: OQ Gas Networks (OQGN), the exclusive operator of the natural gas transportation network in Oman, has signed three complex financing agreements with local and regional banks for a total commitment of \$1.2 billion. Together, this financing is considered the largest syndicate of Islamic financing in the Sultanate of Oman, providing the company with access to capital in dual currencies to support its ongoing business activities and

refinancing requirements.

In June 2023, OQGN concluded a complex multi-currency, multi-structure transaction with 16 local and regional banks. The agreed terms included Sharia-compliant financing rules. This sets a positive precedence for future transactions. The transaction was oversubscribed, demonstrating the strength of the relationship between OQ and its subsidiaries with banks. It also demonstrated the trust of banks in the robustness of OQ and OQGN's business models.

OIL PRICES

Oil rallies for fourth straight week on tightening supply

BENGALURU: Oil prices rose nearly 2 per cent on Friday to record a fourth consecutive weekly gain, buoyed by growing evidence of supply shortages in the coming months and rising tensions between Russia and Ukraine that could further hit supplies.

According to Reuters, Brent crude futures rose \$1.43, or 1.8 per cent, to settle at \$81.07 a barrel, with a weekly gain of about 1.2 per cent. US West Texas Intermediate crude ended \$1.42, or 1.9 per cent, higher at \$77.07 a barrel, its highest since April 25. WTI gained nearly 2 per cent in the week.

"The oil market is starting to slowly price in a looming supply crunch," Price Futures Group analyst Phil Flynn said.

"Global supplies are starting to tighten and that could accelerate dramatically in the coming weeks. Increased war risk could also impact prices," Flynn said.

In the US, crude inventories (USOILC=ECI) fell last week, amid a jump in crude exports and higher refinery utilisation, the Energy Information Administration (EIA) said on Wednesday.

Earlier on Monday, the EIA had forecast that US shale oil and gas



production was likely to decline in August for the first time this year, adding to concerns about supply tightness.

Meanwhile, US energy firms this week reduced the number of

oil rigs by seven, their biggest cut since early June, energy services firm Baker Hughes said. At 530, the US oil rig count, an early indicator of future output, is at its lowest since March 2022. -BNA

KUIPER PROJECT

Amazon builds \$120mn satellite processing facility in Florida

WASHINGTON: Amazon is building a \$120 million processing facility at Nasa's Kennedy Space Center in Florida for its thousands of planned Kuiper internet satellites, the company and state officials said Friday.

The 100,000-square-foot building is part of the roughly \$10 billion that Amazon has vowed to invest in its Kuiper project, a planned network of 3,200 low Earth-orbiting satellites designed to beam broadband internet globally.

The Kuiper internet network, which will largely compete with Starlink from Elon Musk's SpaceX, is expected to complement Amazon's web services powerhouse, Reuters reported.

The Florida facility will employ 50 staff and be a last stop for Amazon's Kuiper satellites before they go to space after being manufactured at the Kuiper project's primary plant in Redmond, Washington. A 10-storey-tall room will allow the satellites to be fitted into rocket payload fairings, the protective shell around satellites that sit atop the rocket. -BNA

SHARE MARKETS

Global shares slip, dollar soars versus yen on Bank of Japan policy expectations

NEW YORK: Global share markets edged lower on Friday as most US mega cap stocks slipped, while the dollar soared against the yen after Reuters reported the Bank of Japan is leaning toward keeping its dovish monetary policy next week.

Gold prices fell as the dollar rebounded to its highest in more than a week as investors prepare for next week's big central bank policy meetings, including the BOJ, the Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank, Reuters reported.

The yen weakened 1.16 per cent to 141.74 per dollar, while the dollar index, a measure of the greenback against major trading currencies, rose 0.29 per cent.

The Dow eked out a gain to extend its winning streak to 10 sessions. But the Nasdaq fell and the S&P 500 barely rose, signs that the mega-cap tech and growth stocks that have driven the two indices respective 34 per cent and 18 per cent advances this year have stalled.

Garrett Melson, portfolio strategist at Natixis Investment Managers in Boston, said "You've seen a broadening out in the rally coming off narrow leadership," a reference to megacaps such as Microsoft Corp and Apple Inc.

More investors are now embracing the probability of a soft landing, with many companies well-financed at lower interest rates so that higher rates - the



Fed's terminal rate is expected to rise to 5.25 per cent - 5.5 per cent next week - will not cause a credit crunch as in the past.

"This is an income-driven cycle as opposed to a credit cycle," said Melson. "Real incomes are growing as inflation cools and corporate and household balance sheets are very, very robust and have excess cash," he said.

"Bottom line, the odds for a soft landing are very strong."

The Dow rose 0.01 per cent, while the S&P 500 gained 0.03 per cent and the Nasdaq Composite slid 0.22 per cent.

"The mood across equity markets is unequivocal that the worst is behind us," said Dec Mullarkey, managing director of investment

strategy and asset allocation at SLC Management in Boston, though the Fed's credit tightening is creating cracks.

"None of them is happening with massive severity, but the longer we go on with higher rates, more and more that's going to come through," he said. "But again, big picture pretty good, but there are cracks."

A special rebalancing of the Nasdaq 100 that takes effect before Monday's opening may cause "quirky price action" in tech megacaps, said Patrick Spencer, vice chair of equities at Baird in London.

The overhaul of the index to reduce its heavy weightings of the super megacaps, such as Microsoft and Apple, may exacerbate

moves in these stocks during the ongoing earnings season, he said.

MSCT's US-centric gauge of stocks across the globe closed down 0.2 per cent, and the NYSE FANG+TM index, which includes the megacap stocks, slid 0.97 per cent.

In Europe, the pan-European STOXX 600 index rose 0.32 per cent to end the week higher as declining tech stocks were offset by gains in energy companies that tracked oil prices higher.

BOJ policymakers prefer to scrutinise more data to ensure wages and inflation keep rising before changing yield control policy, five sources familiar with the matter said.

The report added there was no consensus within the central bank and the decision could still be a close call.

As Japanese inflation has stayed above the BOJ's target, traders have bet on the central bank ditching its yield curve control programme, a move likely to cause the yen to strengthen.

"Markets were building up expectations which now look unlikely to play out," said Guillaume Paillat, a multi-asset manager at Aviva Investors.

Japan's benchmark 10-year government bond yield fell 5 bps to 0.41 per cent, the lowest level since July 6, right before speculation for a hawkish tweak to policy this month began to ramp up. -BNA

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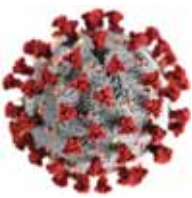


GENE MUTATION COULD EXPLAIN WHY SOME DON'T GET SICK FROM COVID-19: STUDY

A mutation in one of the genes coding for HLA appears to help virus-killing T cells identify SARS-CoV-2 and launch a lighting attack. The T cells of some people who carry this variant can identify the novel coronavirus, even if they have never encountered it before, thanks to its resemblance to the seasonal cold viruses they already know



We did not set out to study genetics, but we were thrilled to see this result come from our multi-disciplinary collaboration with Dr. Hollenbach and the National Marrow Donor Programme,” said Mark Pletcher, MD, MPH, a professor of epidemiology and biostatistics at UCSF



The paper, published July, 19, 2023 in Nature, offers the first evidence that there is a genetic basis for asymptomatic SARS-CoV-2. The research helps to solve the mystery of why some people can be infected without ever getting sick from COVID-19. The secret lies with the human leukocyte antigen (HLA), or protein markers that signal the immune system. A mutation in one of the genes coding for HLA appears to help virus-killing T cells identify SARS-CoV-2 and launch a lighting attack. The T cells of some people who carry this variant can identify the novel coronavirus, even if they have never encountered it before, thanks to its resemblance to the seasonal cold viruses they already know. The discovery points to new targets for drugs and vaccines. “If you have an army that’s able to recognize the enemy early, that’s a huge advantage,” explained the study’s lead researcher, Jill Hollenbach, PhD, MPH, professor of neurology, as well as epidemiology and biostatistics, and a member of the Weill Institute for Neurosciences at UCSF. “It’s like having soldiers that are prepared for battle and already know what to look for, and that these are the bad guys.” The mutation – HLA-B*15:01 – is quite common, carried by about 10% of the study’s popula-

tion. It doesn’t prevent the virus from infecting cells but, rather, prevents people from developing any symptoms. That includes a runny nose or even a barely noticeable sore throat. UCSF researchers found that 20% of people in the study who remained asymptomatic after infection carried at least one copy of the HLA-B*15:01 variant, compared to 9% of those who reported symptoms. Those who carried two copies of the variant were far more likely – more than eight times – to avoid feeling sick. **Leveraging a national marrow donor database** Researchers suspected early on that HLA was involved, and fortunately a national registry existed that contained the data they were looking for. The National Marrow Donor Program/Be The Match, the largest registry of HLA-typed volunteer donors in the U.S., matches donors with people who need bone marrow transplants. But they still needed to know how the donors fared against COVID-19. So, they turned to a mobile app developed at UCSF, called the COVID-19 Citizen Science Study. They recruited nearly 30,000 people who were also in the bone marrow registry and tracked through the first year of the pandemic. At that time, vaccines were not yet available, and many people

were undergoing routine COVID testing for work or whenever they were potentially exposed. “We did not set out to study genetics, but we were thrilled to see this result come from our multidisciplinary collaboration with Dr. Hollenbach and the National Marrow Donor Program,” said Mark Pletcher, MD, MPH, a professor of epidemiology and biostatistics at UCSF. The primary study group was limited to those who self-identified as white because the final set of study respondents did not have enough people in it from other ethnic and racial groups to analyze. Researchers identified 1,428 unvaccinated donors who tested positive between February 2020 and the end of April 2021, before the vaccines were widely available and when it still took many days to get back test results. Of these, 136 individuals remained asymptomatic for at least two weeks before and after testing positive. Only one of the HLA variants – HLA-B*15:01 – had a strong association with asymptomatic COVID-19 infection, and this was reproduced in two independent cohorts. Risk factors for severe COVID-19, like being older, overweight and having chronic diseases like diabetes did not appear to play a role in who remained asymptomatic. “We are proud to partner on research that has the potential

to leverage a long-term public investment in building the national registry to help cure diseases and improve our ability to avoid future pandemics,” said Martin Maiers, vice president of research at the National Marrow Donor Program/Be The Match. To figure out how HLA-B15 managed to quash the virus, Hollenbach’s team collaborated with researchers from La Trobe University in Australia. They homed in on the concept of T-cell memory, which is how the immune system remembers previous infections. The researchers looked at T cells from people who carried HLA-B15 but had never been exposed to the SARS-CoV-2 virus, and found these cells still responded to a part of the novel coronavirus called the NQK-Q8 peptide. They concluded that exposure to some seasonal coronaviruses, which have a very similar peptide, called NQK-A8, enabled T cells in these individuals to quickly recognize SARS-CoV-2 and mount a faster, more effective immune response. “By studying their immune response, this might enable us to identify new ways of promoting immune protection against SARS-CoV-2 that could be used in future development of vaccine or drugs,” said Stephanie Gras, a professor and laboratory head at La Trobe University. **ANI**

UCSF researchers found that **20%** of people in the study who remained asymptomatic after infection carried at least one copy of the HLA-B*15:01 variant, compared to 9% of those who reported symptoms. Those who carried two copies of the variant were far more likely – more than eight times – to avoid feeling sick

Researchers identified **1,428** unvaccinated donors who tested positive between February 2020 and the end of April 2021, before the vaccines were widely available and when it still took many days to get back test results.

SPORTS

Smith scores twice as USA sweep Vietnam

Defending champions make a flying start to their FIFA Women’s World Cup campaign

AUCKLAND: Reigning champions the United States (USA) got their title defence underway at Eden Park as they dominated debutants Vietnam 3-0 in a Group E match of the FIFA Women’s World Cup here on Saturday, with Sophia Smith scoring two and setting up another.

Having won the last two editions of the tournament and four titles overall, the USA are considered as the most successful team in the campaign, while Vietnam have made history by qualifying for a men’s or women’s World Cup final stage for the first time.

Smith struck twice before half-time for the four-time world champions in front of thousands of travelling USA fans in a crowd of 41,107.

Smith, one of 14 players in the squad appearing at their first World Cup, fired the No.1-ranked team in the world ahead with a low drilled finish from an angle.

Her second was awarded following a lengthy check by the Video Assistant Referee for an offside before captain Lindsey Horan, after an assist by Smith,



swept home the third in the 77th minute.

There was a memorable moment for Vietnam keeper Tran Thi Kim Thanh when she was mobbed by her jubilant team-mates after keeping out Alex Morgan’s penalty, which was awarded for a foul on Trinity Rodman.

Vietnam rarely managed to get out of their own half but worked hard and produced a gritty defensive performance to keep the scoreline respectable.

Megan Rapinoe was benched with Alex Morgan starting up front for the USA, while Vietnam fielded a 5-4-1 formation.

Rapinoe was introduced in the 61st minute, making her 200th appearance for the national team.

While this was not the hammering some had predicted in the build-up, the United States did enough to get their campaign off to a winning start.

Four years ago in France they recorded the biggest Women’s World Cup win, a 13-0 thrashing of Thailand, in their opening game on the way to winning the tournament.

They carved out enough chances against Vietnam to record another double-digit win and there was a tinge of disappointment from boss Vlatko Andonovski that his side did not make the most of their 28 attempts.

The USA arrived in New Zealand as favourites but tougher tests lie ahead and only after Thursday’s match against the Netherlands in Wellington - a repeat of the 2019 final - will their fans learn more about whether they can make it three World Cup successes in a row.

- Agencies

FIFA WOMEN’S WORLD CUP

England pass Haiti test; Denmark win



BRISBANE: England were given a stern test by debutants Haiti in their opening group match but came through with a narrow 1-0 victory in Brisbane on Saturday.

Georgia Stanway’s penalty - taken again after the Video Assistant Referee adjudged Haiti goalkeeper Kerly Theus had stepped off her line early in saving the midfielder’s first attempt - was enough to give England victory in an underwhelming performance.

Much like their display in the opening match against Austria in Euro 2022, which England went on to win, Sarina Wiegman’s side looked short of creativity and sharpness. Haiti, ranked 53rd in the world, were dangerous in attack - especially hugely impressive teenager Melchie Dumornay, who was the most effective player on the pitch.

The 19-year-old was

involved in Haiti’s biggest chances as England were heavily tested in defence, with captain Millie Bright struggling at times on her first appearance since March following knee surgery.

Striker Alessia Russo, given the nod ahead of Women’s Super League Golden Boot winner Rachel Daly, was also denied by Haiti goalkeeper Theus on numerous occasions in each half. While England had opportunities to extend their lead in the second half, their goalkeeper Mary Earps pulled off a brilliant save to push away Roseline Elois-saint’s strike from close range in what was one of the biggest chances of the match.

The Lionesses, who have lost just once in 33 games under Wiegman, take on Denmark in their second Group D match on Friday.

In a late game in Perth on Saturday, Amalie Vangsgaard scored a late winner as Denmark marked their return from a 16-year absence with a 1-0 win over China. The substitute, who had only been on the pitch for five minutes, headed home Pernille Harder’s corner in the 90th minute in Perth, Australia.

There were doubts over whether the goal would stand but VAR officials decided that Danish defender Rikke Sevecke had not interfered with China’s keeper Xu Huan as the ball hit the back of the net. The result moves Denmark to the top of Group D, level on points and goal difference with England. - Agencies

FIFA WOMEN’S WORLD CUP



Japan trounce Zambia

HAMILTON: Japan got their campaign off to a perfect start with a dominant 5-0 win against debutants Zambia in Hamilton, New Zealand, on Saturday.

Hinata Miyazawa’s two goals were separated by a Mina Tanaka strike before Jun Endo added a fourth.

Zambia goalkeeper Catherine Musonda got a second yellow card for conceding a late penalty in the match.

Her replacement Eunice Sakala saved Riko Ueki’s penalty but was ruled to have come off her line and the Japan striker slotted home the second effort.

Futoshi Ikeda’s side’s late spot-kick means there has been a penalty awarded in all seven games of this year’s tournament so far - but only three have been successfully converted.

Aoba Fujino was Nadeshiko’s primary threat early on, forcing

Musonda into a fingertip save with a close-range effort before firing a 25-yard shot off the woodwork two minutes later.

Zambia were handed the first of several lifelines after 20 minutes when the Video Assistant Referee (VAR) intervened to rule out Mina Tanaka’s goal for offside after the Japan forward had reacted quickly to the Copper Queens’ inability to clear their lines from Endo’s in-swinging free-kick.

Japan finally made their breakthrough just before the break when Miyazawa raced onto Fujino’s delivery across the face of goal and slotted past Musonda with a calm right-footed finish.

VAR took centre stage again in a hectic start to the second half, when Tanaki had her second goal of the game ruled out for offside and Japan had a penalty revoked soon after when Fujino - who was

wiped out in the box by Musonda - was judged to be narrowly offside in the build-up.

It was third time lucky for Tanaki, however, as she slid in to reach Endo’s cross and guide it into the Zambia net to double Japan’s lead in the 55th minute.

Miyazawa then got her second shortly after with an easy tap-in and Endo added a fourth in the 71st minute.

In the seventh minute of added time, Musonda rushed out and brought down Ueki inside the area, earning herself a second yellow card and presenting Japan with a penalty.

Substitute keeper Sakala, making her international debut, saved the first effort but was deemed to have been off her line by VAR when she tipped the strike onto the bar and Ueki made no mistake with her second attempt to score her side’s fifth. - Agencies

LEAGUES CUP

Messi makes a dream start to Inter Miami era



WASHINGTON: Lionel Messi made a dream start to his American adventure with a stoppage-time winner as Inter Miami overcame Cruz Azul 2-1 in the Leagues Cup on Friday.

The Argentine great started on the bench, but Miami looked sharp at their DRV PNK Stadium as a Robert Taylor strike gave them the lead just before halftime.

Messi and his former Barcelona teammate Sergio Busquets were introduced after halftime to rousing applause from the capacity crowd of around 20,000 fans.

But they fell silent shortly after when Uriel Antuna equalised for the Mexican outfit with an unstoppable effort into the roof of the net.

With only seconds remaining and the game seemingly drifting toward a draw, Messi was illegally

dragged down 25 yards from goal.

In true story-book fashion, the No.10 curled the resultant free-kick over the defensive wall and into the top left corner, sending Miami’s fans into wild celebrations.

“It was important to start winning,” the Argentina captain said after the final whistle. “I just had the chance to put us on level terms and I was lucky that the goalkeeper couldn’t get across in time.”

The 36-year-old added, “We wanted to start like this for the fans and I want to thank everyone who was present today. It was important to start winning for the team’s confidence.”

Messi arrived in the United States last week after agreeing to an Inter Miami contract that runs until December 2025 with the option of another season. He will re-

portedly earn an annual salary of around US\$55 million before tax.

In June, Messi announced he was leaving Paris Saint-Germain to join the Florida outfit, which is partly owned by former England captain David Beckham.

The forward has since said that he is looking forward to enjoying the last stage of his career, having achieved his ultimate goal of winning the FIFA World Cup for Argentina in Qatar last December.

Inter Miami’s next match will be another home Leagues Cup fixture against Atlanta United on Tuesday.

Messi is expected to make his first appearance in Major League Soccer (MLS) when Inter Miami host Charlotte on August 20. Miami are currently last in the MLS Eastern Conference with just 18 points from 22 outings. - ANI

CONTRACT ROW



Mbappe left out of PSG’s pre-season trip to Asia

PARIS: Kylian Mbappe has been left out of Paris Saint-Germain’s squad for their pre-season tour of Japan and South Korea.

The club’s all-time leading goalscorer is refusing to sign a year’s extension to his contract which ends next summer.

PSG therefore want to sell the France forward now and secure a transfer fee rather than let him go for nothing.

Mbappe, however, has said he

wants to remain with PSG for one more year before leaving upon the expiration of his current deal.

He is widely believed to be aiming to join Real Madrid for nothing at the end of the upcoming season.

The striker remains the second most expensive player ever, joining PSG in 2017 in a transfer worth US\$213.3 million. The World Cup winner has scored 212 goals in 260 games since arriving from AS Monaco.

PSG believe the present situation cannot be allowed to continue and for Mbappe to remain as part of their playing group, hence the decision to leave him at home.

Chairman Nasser Al-Khelaifi has made clear his determination to take a hard-line stance over the issue, saying it is “impossible” that Mbappe will be allowed to leave for free in 2024.

It is understood a number of clubs have inquired about Mbappe

and PSG would be willing to sell this summer. It is thought unlikely the forward would accept any deal given his preference to join Real next summer.

PSG won Ligue 1 last season, but finished just a point ahead of RC Lens despite their comparatively enormous financial resources, and were knocked out of the Champions League in the last 16 by Bayern Munich.

Manager Christophe Galtier

was removed from his position earlier this summer and replaced by former Barcelona, AS Roma and Spain boss Luis Enrique.

Another of PSG’s star forwards, Lionel Messi, has already departed this summer. The Argentine, whose country beat Mbappe’s France in the final of the World Cup in Qatar last December, has joined Inter Miami in Major League Soccer.

- ANI

IN PICTURES



Spanish general election to be held on Sunday
This picture shows an advertising of Alberto Nunez Feijoo, the candidate of People's Party (PP), at the headquarters of PP in Madrid, Spain. Spaniards will go to the polls on Sunday in an atypical general election that determines the country's political future for the next four years. Xinhua



Senior doctors in England walk out due to pay dispute
Britain's National Health Service (NHS) consultants protest as senior doctors in England staged a rare walk-out due to dispute over pay, in London, Britain. Xinhua



Over 1,000 artists bring classics to Xinjiang dance festival
Russian actors perform during the opening ceremony of the 6th China Xinjiang International Dance Festival in Urumqi, northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. Xinhua



Ranveer Singh and Alia Bhatt at the promotion for their upcoming movie 'Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani'
Bollywood actors Ranveer Singh and Alia Bhatt perform during the promotional event for their upcoming movie 'Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani', in Mumbai. ANI Photo



Iraqi capital relaunches river taxi service to ease traffic congestion
People take a river taxi in Baghdad, Iraq. Xinhua



Animals seen amid heatwave at zoo in North Macedonia
Lemurs eat frozen fruits amid heatwave at a zoo in Skopje, North Macedonia. Xinhua



Enter the Dragon -- Bruce Lee's legacy still inspiring 50 years after his passing
A fan pays tribute at Bruce Lee's bronze statue at the Avenue of Stars along the Victoria Harbour waterfront in Tsim Sha Tsui, Hong Kong, south China. Xinhua

ROUND-UP

Kalyan Jewellers announces launch of ‘Shop & Shine’ campaign

Through this exciting campaign offer, the brand has announced assured giveaways on jewellery purchases worth OMR 500 and above. The unique initiative aims to offer customers with a chance to maximise the value of jewellery purchases from Kalyan Jewellers

MUSCAT: Kalyan Jewellers, one of the most trusted and leading jewellery brands, recently announced the launch of its ‘Shop & Shine’ campaign.

Through this exciting campaign offer, the brand has announced assured giveaways on jewellery purchases worth OMR 500 and above. The unique initiative aims to offer customers with a chance to maximise the value of jewellery purchases from Kalyan Jewellers.

As part of this campaign, customers will receive half gram gold coin on purchase of gold jewellery worth OMR 500. Customers are entitled to receive a 1-gram gold coin on purchase of uncut/precious stone jewellery worth OMR 500, whereas on purchase of diamond jewellery worth OMR 500, the jewellery brand will be giving away 2-gram gold coins. The offer is valid till 4th September 2023.

Speaking about the offer, Ramesh Kalyanaraman, Executive Director – Kalyan Jewellers said, “At Kalyan Jewellers, our endeavour has been to enable our customers to extract best value from their purchase while providing a great shopping experience. We have been consistently taking major strides towards offering a holistic shopping experience to patrons.



As an extension to this thought, we are delighted to announce the ‘Shop & Shine’ campaign, offering patrons with a chance to maximise benefits on their jewellery purchase. We believe patrons will continue to shower their love and support for brand Kalyan Jewellers and make this initiative a huge success.”

Kalyan Jewellers is committed to providing exceptional experiences and fostering a sense of delight for its valued patrons. Customers can avail the exciting

range of offers along with benefits of Kalyan’s 4-Level Assurance Certification on their jewellery purchases, ensuring a seamless service-backed shopping experience. The jewellery retailed at Kalyan Jewellers go through multiple purity tests and patrons will also receive the Kalyan Jewellers 4-Level Assurance Certificate, which guarantees Purity, Free Lifetime Maintenance of ornaments, Detailed Product Information and Transparent Exchange and Buy-back policies. The certi-

fication is part of the brand’s commitment towards offering the very best to its loyalists.

Kalyan Jewellers offers popular house brands such as, Muhurat – Wedding Jewellery Line, Mudhra – handcrafted antique jewellery, Nimah – temple Jewellery, Glo – dancing diamonds, Ziah – Solitaire like diamond jewellery, Anokhi – uncut diamonds, Hera – daily wear diamonds, Rang – precious stones jewellery, and the recently launched Lila – coloured stones and diamond jewellery.

PROMOTION

Avail exciting benefits with Yokohama’s ‘Summer Delights’ campaign

MUSCAT: Now is the perfect time to buy Yokohama Tyres and avail exciting benefits. The benefits include OMR10 Discount on purchase of 4 tyres of RIM 17 and below and OMR20 Discount on purchase of 4 tyres of RIM 18 and above. The campaign is valid till August 17 (Conditions apply. Please visit Saud Bahwan Automotive Tyre Retail Outlets)

Yokohama tyres are one of the finest in the automotive world backed by advanced research and technology for increased safety on the road. The vast range of Yokohama tyres are specially engineered to withstand the harsh climate temperatures and varied driving terrains, making them an ideal choice for Oman.

Yokohama tyres have always stood out when it comes to safety and reliability. Every Yokohama tyre is engineered to offer excellent road grip and comfortable smooth drive, in addition to extended tyre life.

The Yokohama Rubber Co. Ltd. is one of the world’s leading manufacturers of rubber products, offering an extensive range of tire, rubber and adhesive products. Established in 1917, Yokohama Rubber in its 100th centennial, has expanded its worldwide



business scope with a line-up of high-technology products meeting customer needs in the fields of automobiles, civil engineering, construction, marine engineering, aerospace and sporting goods.

In Oman, Saud Bahwan Automotive markets Yokohama Tyres with a nationwide network of 40 branches and over 300 dealers. The company’s complete product

line includes tyres for high-performance, light truck, passenger car, commercial truck and bus and off-the-road mining and construction applications.

The company has a wide network of tyre service centres across Oman, which has state of the art equipment, catering to the tyre service needs of the ever-growing market.

COMPETITIVE SPORTING ENVIRONMENT



Oman Banks Association organises football tournament

MUSCAT: Football tournament for banks started July 8, Saturday. The football matches were held at the Sultan Qaboos Stadium in Bausher, at the indoor hall with the participation of 12 banks operating in the Sultanate, and the Central Bank of Oman.

This event that was organised by the Oman Banks Association, aims to enhance the relationship and partnership among banks, as

we as promoting all kinds of sports and create a friendly competitive sporting environment for bankers to participate and compete in.

The final matches of the tournament witnessed fierce competition between the finalist teams, and the First place was BankDhofar, followed by the Second place National Bank of Oman, followed by the third place Bank Nizwa. A special ceremony was held under the pa-

tronage of Tahir bin Salim Al Amri, Executive President of The Central Bank of Oman, to distribute gifts and trophies to the winners.

Oman Banks Association is a non-profit professional association created to represent the banking sector, promote Omani banking activities, coordinate with the regulators on matters of policy and strategy, and support banking excellence in Oman.



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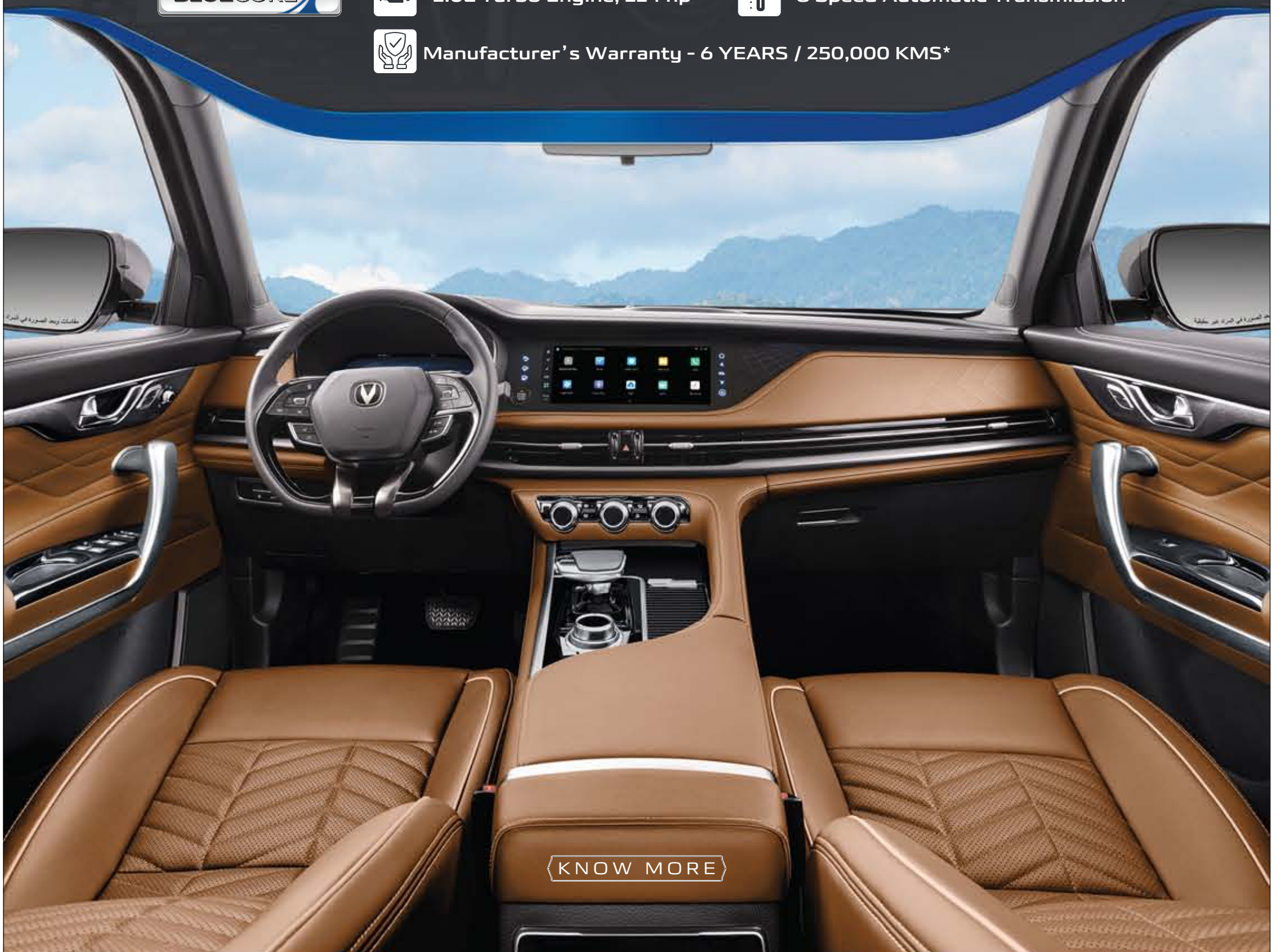
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