LET'S TALK
Times OF OMAN

SAYYID BADR MEETS PRESIDENT OF ICRC

Foreign Minister, Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi met on Tuesday with Peter Maurer, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). > **Full story on Page 5**

HIS MAJESTY ISSUES ROYAL DECREE SHIFTING EDUCATION MUSEUM OF AL SAIDIYA SCHOOL

FULL STORY >A5

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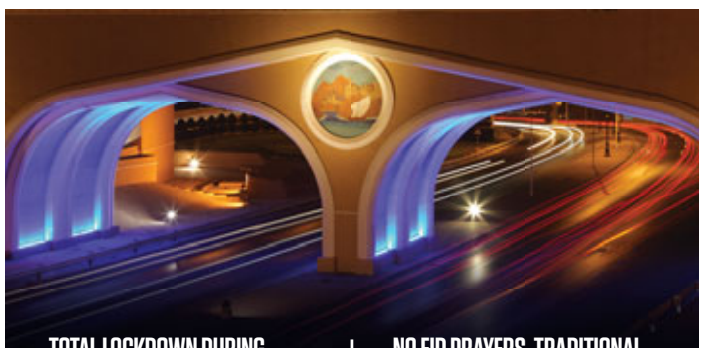
SAYYID THEYAZIN RECEIVES KSA AMBASSADOR

His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin HaithamAl-Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth received in his office yesterday Abdullah Saud Al-Anzi, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) to the Sultanate. The meeting reviewed the relations between the two brotherly countries. It also exchanged views on means of developing them for the interest of the two sides. The meeting also discussed aspects of the existing cooperation in areas related to culture, sports and youth. — ONA

TOTAL LOCKDOWN DURING EID AL ADHA

Night movement ban between 5pm and 4am from July 16 to July 31, 2021



- TOTAL LOCKDOWN DURING THREE DAYS OF EID AL ADHA
- NIGHT MOVEMENT BAN BETWEEN 5PM AND 4AM FROM JULY 16 TO JULY 31
- MOVEMENT BAN, COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES CLOSURE EXEMPT FOR GOVERNORATE OF MUSANDAM
- PEOPLE IN-COUNTRY MUST BE VACCINATED WITH AT LEAST ONE DOSE OF COVID VACCINE TO VISIT MUSANDAM AND DHOFAR
- NO EID PRAYERS, TRADITIONAL SOUQS ALLOWED DURING EID AL ADHA, FAMILY GATHERINGS ARE NOT PERMITTED
- EGYPT REMOVED FROM TRAVEL BAN LIST
- PASSENGERS FROM SINGAPORE, INDONESIA, IRAQ, IRAN, TUNISIA, LIBYA, ARGENTINA, COLUMBIA, AND BRUNEI TO BE DENIED ENTRY
- SPORTS, EXHIBITIONS REMAIN SUSPENDED, LEASING OF HALLS AND TENTS NOT ALLOWED

MUSCAT: The Supreme Committee tasked with tackling developments resulting from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic held a meeting on Tuesday under the chairmanship of Sayyid Hamoud Faisal Al-Busaidi, Minister of Interior.

The meeting, held at the Interior Ministry, followed updates on the pandemic, measures of protection against COVID-19, ways of tackling its impacts and means of curbing the spread of the virus.

Different variants

The Supreme Committee studied the epidemiological scenario of COVID-19 worldwide as indicated by the latest data about the virus and its different variants. It also reviewed the situation in different countries that experienced rapid spread due to mutated strains of the virus that eventually caused a huge surge in infections in the Sultanate, with the number of inpatients multiplying in hospital wards and intensive care units, in addition to a spate in death cases.

To protect all individuals of society against this pandemic and, to safeguard the capability of the health system in the Sultanate to handle this disease and other services, the following has been decided:

- The evening closure of commercial activities and the ban on movement of individuals and vehicles shall continue to take effect from 5 pm everyday till 4 am the next day, starting from Friday, 16 July 2021 to the morning of Saturday, 31 July 2021, except on the three days of Eid Al Adha (10 to 12 Dhul Hijjah 1442 AH), in which the lockdown on commercial activities and ban on movement of individuals and vehicles shall continue all day long (throughout the three days of Eid).
- The Governorate of Musandam is exempted from the decision of closure of commercial activities and ban on movement of individuals and vehicles due to the low number of infections and hospitalized Covid-19 patients there. This decision starts to take effect from today, with emphasis on the population in Musandam Governorate taking full precautions as indicated earlier, like wearing face masks and refraining from gatherings.

Also, it is not allowed to visit the Governorate of Musandam, except for people who have taken at least one dose of the approved vaccine in the Sultanate (from among citizens and residents aged 18 years and above), as well as travellers from abroad who took two doses of the vaccines. This decision takes effect from 5 pm from Friday, 9 July 2021, till further notice.

> A5

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

WORLD

UK likely to end COVID-19 curbs

2 UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced on Monday that July 19 would likely see the lifting of most restrictions imposed to stop the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) in England. >A6

OMAN

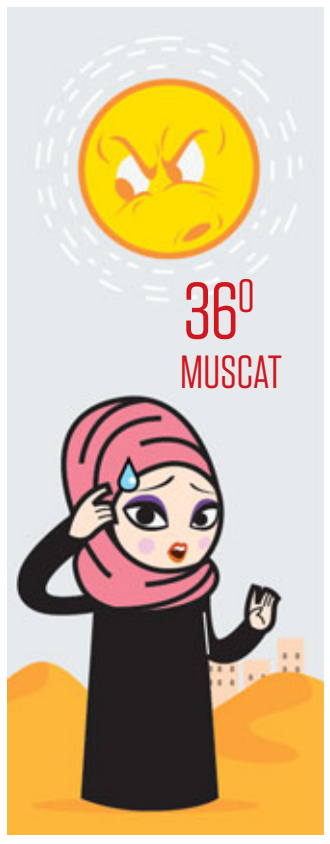
Vaccination drive follow-up organised

1 The Minister of Interior and other members of the Supreme Committee followed-up the process of vaccinating target segments at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre. >A2

MARKET

Oman oil tops $76 as Opec calls off meet

3 Oman oil price on Tuesday reached $76.09 a barrel, up $1.34 from Monday. The average price of Oman oil (July Delivery 2021) has stabilised at $66.40, $3.30 per barrel higher than June Delivery 2021. >B1



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PRAYER TIMINGS

Dhuhr	12.17pm
Asr	3:36pm
Maghrib	7:03pm
Isha	8:24pm
Fajr (Tomorrow)	4.00am

Supreme Committee members follow-up vaccination process

Sayyid Hamoud and the panel members were briefed on the procedures of the vaccination process

MUSCAT: Headed by Sayyid Hamoud Faisal Al-Busaidi, Minister of Interior, several members of the Supreme Committee tasked with tackling developments resulting from coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, followed-up on Tuesday the process of vaccinating target segments within the National Strategy for Immunisation against coronavirus at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC).

Sayyid Hamoud and the panel members were briefed on the procedures of the vaccination process, from the registration phase all the way to taking the vaccine.

They commended the great turnout of target segments, which reflects the societal awareness of immunisation against COVID-19.

In a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA) and to Oman Television, Eng. Said Hamoud Al-Ma'awali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, member of the Supreme Committee praised the vaccination process, its easiness, and the organisation at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre. He underscored the pivotal role of the centre in the vaccination process.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Health, within the National Strategy for Immunisation against Coronavirus (COVID-19) continues vaccinating target segments in all governorates of the Sultanate, which sees a great turnout of people. – ONA

OMAN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT COMPANY

dusitD2 Naseem Resort to boost tourism in Oman

MUSCAT: Oman Tourism Development Company (OMRAN Group), the executive arm of the Sultanate for tourism development, announced the soft opening of dusitD2 Naseem Resort in Al Jabal Al Akhdar, marking the commencement of its operational activities.

The four-star dusitD2 Naseem Resort Jabal Akhdar is the newest addition to OMRAN Group's diverse hotel portfolio in the Sultanate. The resort draws inspiration from the natural and cultural characteristics of Al Jabal Al Akhdar, one of the most prominent tourist spots in the region.

The resort will offer its visitors unmatched experiences and tourism products that combine both leisure and entertainment aspects in a distinctive way, thereby playing an important role in meeting the market needs and growing demand for new and innovative hotel facilities and tourist experiences in the country.

On this occasion, Hashil Obaid Al Mahrouqi, CEO of OMRAN Group, said: "The soft opening of dusitD2 Naseem Resort is an important step that solidifies OMRAN Group's steadfast tourism development journey across the country, while reflecting our continued determination towards building a sustainable future for the sector, and stimulating investments in the most prominent tourist spots of the Sultanate. These efforts align with the objectives of the National Tourism Strategy 2040 to strengthen the Sultanate's position as one of the premier tourism destinations for regional and international travellers".

He added: "dusitD2 Naseem Resort will provide tourism experiences that go beyond hotel accommodation and focus on a whole new tourism offering that combines the elements of adventure tourism and entertainment, therefore diversifying into wider market segments and opening up new horizons for similar projects in the Sultanate".

PREMIER DESTINATION: The resort has 250 decorated contemporary rooms and suites, and is located on the Saiq Plateau.-ONA

"We are delighted to make our Oman debut with this vibrant resort which showcases the heritage, culture and visual splendour of the destination in truly distinctive fashion,' said Ms. Suphajee Suthumpun, Group CEO, Dusit International.

"From enriching wellness experiences and exciting dining journeys to adventurous excursions and a wide range of exhilarating activities, dusitD2 Naseem Resort, Jabal Akhdar has all the elements in place to provide a highly memorable vacation for visitors of all ages. Bright days are on the horizon for international travel, and we look forward to making the property a resounding success."

Comprising 250 beautifully decorated contemporary rooms and suites, and located on the Saiq Plateau, an area of natural beauty in Al Jabal Al Akhdar at an altitude of 2,000 metres, the resort is only 2 hours by car from Muscat International Airport.

It features panoramic views of the surrounding Al Hajar mountain range, along with several facilitates, to be opened at a later stage, including an 8,000 sqm Adventure Park, and other experiences inspired from the local heritage and culture, such as traditional olive oil and rose water distilleries and other amenities that offer the perfect environment for an exciting, yet relaxing stay.

dusitD2 Naseem Resort, Jabal Akhdar is the second hotel property owned and developed by OMRAN Group in Jabal Al Akhdhar.

In 2014, OMRAN launched its iconic Alila Jabal Akhdar Resort, which underpinned the Group's pioneering role in catalysing growth in various governorates and represented a significant milestone that contributed to attracting local and global visitors to Jabal Al Akhdhar and the Sultanate.

Marking its debut in the Sultanate, dusitD2 Naseem Resort, Jabal Akhdar will further create wider tourist dimensions in the country, boost domestic tourism and attract tourists from around the world to explore the spectacular scenery of Oman and embark on various outdoor adventure experiences.

OMRAN Group Owns and oversees an array of renowned regional and international hospitality brands, amounting to 25 hotels and resorts with over 4,000 hotel rooms, as well as heritage and eco-tourism destinations celebrating the local culture and authentic Omani hospitality. -ONA

WRITTEN TESTS

17,525 applicants vie for 1,003 public sector jobs

MUSCAT: A new set of job seekers began receiving written tests at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) on Tuesday. The candidates are taking tests for employment in the public sector.

Saif Sulaiman Al-Shaqsi, Head of the Department of Job Vacancies and Announcements Section at the Ministry of Labour, said that the ministry sent invitations to 17,525 job seekers to sit for the tests and compete for 1,003 employment opportunities available in nine government departments, which are the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the Directorate General of the Council of Ministers, the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation and the State Audit Institution.

EXAMINATION: The test for each set takes 30 minutes, followed by 40 minutes for sorting and announcement of results, after which a new group enters the exam halls. - ONA

Al-Shaqsi pointed out that today's tests were run in a smooth manner, thanks to the presence of a large number of supervisory human resources having enough experience in this field. UTAS facilities were ideal for organsing such tests, said Al-Shaqsi, adding that precautionary measures were undertaken for protection against COVID-19.

Speaking in detail, Al-Shaqsi stated the following: "The job seekers, who come from all governorates of the Sultanate, have been distributed in accordance with the capacity of each college so that all candidates could be accommodated. The job seekers are received in sets of 600 each day over a period of three days starting from today (Tuesday to Thursday, 15 July 2021) from 8.30 am to 2 pm. The test for each set takes 30 minutes, followed by 40 minutes for sorting and announcement of results, after which a new group enters the exam halls."

Al-Shaqsi explained that each test consists of 30 questions, of which 20 pertain to the specialisation, 5 are dedicated to mental abilities and 5 for general knowledge.

As many as 83,038 applied after the jobs were announced, said al-Shaqsi, adding that precedence in sorting of results was accorded to those who applied first. -ONA

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Scheme to provide Omani youth latest job skills launched

The Upshift initiative will provide young people with the skills they need to thrive in a competitive labour market

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth in partnership with UNICEF Oman and with the support of Sultanate's private sector on Tuesday launched Upshift, an initiative which provides young people with the skills they need to thrive in a competitive labour market and to become agents for positive social change.

The new national initiative is fully in line with Vision 2040 which seeks to put young people at the very heart of Oman's development goals. Upshift is an initiative designed to meet the urgent need for expanded education, training and employment opportunities for young people.

The programme is based on the outcome of research conducted by MoCSY and UNICEF on the situation of youth and adolescents in Oman as well as a comprehensive survey mapping out the key youth programmes in the Sultanate.

Upshift offers an important opportunity for Oman to showcase its innovative approach to youth development. Firms in multiple sectors have pledged their support for Upshift by offering financial and in-kind contributions.

> The programme is based on the outcome of research conducted by MoCSY and UNICEF on the situation of youth and adolescents in Oman

"Young people are our greatest asset and it falls on them to ensure that our nation continues to prosper and develop," said Sheikh Rashad Al Hinai, Undersecretary for Youth at Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.

"With the support of the private sector, Upshift will provide them with opportunities to develop employability and entrepreneurship skills, and empower them to become agents for positive change in their communities."

"Supporting young people and adolescents to survive and thrive and reach their full potential is a key component of UNICEF's work in Oman," said Lana Al Wreikat, UNICEF Representative in Oman. "Upshift is already impacting hundreds of thousands young people globally and I am delighted this initiative will now also support adolescents in Oman."

Upshift is an adaptable and scalable approach. In the first year, it will launch in three governorates: Muscat, Dakhliyah and Al Batinah South. There are three main packages.

The first is for those preparing to enter the job market. Participating companies will establish an in-house unit to provide employability skills, training and recruit trainees for apprenticeships, internships and on-the-job learning. Academic institutions will also be invited to support skills building.

The second component is the social enterprises virtual training package for young people aged 18-29 who will have the opportunity to participate in youth challenges and incubation programmes, receive technical coaching and, potentially, seed money to fund successful ideas and solutions.

The third component is for 10-to-18-year-olds in schools and covers psychosocial skills for resilience and development, transformational leadership, innovative thinking and problem solving.

FOOTBALL

Fans of England, Denmark gear up for semifinal clash

Times News Service

MUSCAT: English and Danish citizens in Oman have sent their best wishes to their national teams, ahead of their crucial semi-final match at UEFA Euro 2020.

The two teams will take to the pitch at London's Wembley Stadium at 11pm on Wednesday, July 7, with a place in the final up for grabs.

Ole Emil Moesby, the Ambassador of Denmark to Oman, has a special message for his national team before kick-off. He believes that no matter the result, his football side have done the country proud, restarting a wave of patriotic pride in the country.

"Since our first game, where we suffered a very traumatic incident to our best player, Christian Eriksen, the team spirit and fight our boys have shown has been absolutely phenomenal," he said. "They have gained the attention of everyone in the country, and there is a lot of national pride for what they have done, even among those who don't normally follow football: the entire nation is united behind them."

On June 12, midfielder Eriksen collapsed during his side's opener against Finland, after his heart stopped. Medics had to administer him frantic medical attention, before he was rushed to hospital where he recovered. That incident has brought the Denmark squad together, as they know are they now fighting for something greater than just victory on the pitch.

"Our captain Simon Kjaer showed us just how good a leader he is, when he organised things quickly to get Eriksen help," said the ambassador. "I think everyone is a hero on our team: our goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel has been excellent so far."

"It is not just the players on the pitch, but also on the bench as well: Kasper Dolberg, our striker, was asked to start when our main forward Yousuf Poulsen was injured, and he came in and scored in our quarter-final victory against the Czechs. Our coach Kasper Hjulmand has also been superb. Our technical team, the ones who organise the team behind the scenes, everyone has been a hero for us."

The match will surely see England try to make the most of home advantage, with the vast majority of the crowd supporting the Three Lions. Denmark might be hoping to use the pressure the hosts are facing against them, but their ambassador admits the challenge ahead of them is by far the sternest they will have at the tournament.

"It is a very exciting time: I don't think England have conceded a goal this tournament, which makes them a very organised team," said Eliott Wright, an Englishman in Muscat. "But this is a little bit like the last World Cup, where we've had fairly okay teams against us, with the exception of maybe Germany. They've been fairly beatable, but the team's confidence is high, it is at Wembley, where there are going to be 60,000 fans, which will be amazing to see, given the damage the coronavirus has caused over the last 18 months."

England have never won the European Championships, while the Danes won it in 1992, with legends such as Peter Schmeichel and Michael Laudrup taking them to victory. The absence of Eriksen this time around, agrees Wright, will give the Danes plenty of motivation. "We need to respect Denmark – they are going to be coming out all guns blazing, but may the best team win!" he said. "I hope we go on into the final and win the tournament."

British national Chuck Martini was able to sum up his sentiments in just three words: football's coming home. "England is starting to show their full potential, and Harry Kane is full of confidence right now," said Martini, who is the head coach of the Muscat Football Academy. "Denmark is a tricky team, but I think the English will still win. Their defensive midfielders Kalvin Phillips and Declan Rice, as well as the back four and goalkeeper, have been fantastic so far.

"I do hope we are able to bring the trophy home and it will do England and English football a world of good," he said. "This is something special they have got in the making."

FIGHTING PANDEMIC

Landmark Group rolls out COVID vaccination for staff

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Landmark Group – the region's leading retail and hospitality conglomerate, has launched a country-wide COVID-19 vaccination programme for its Oman-based employees and their families. Landmark Group's vaccination drive supports the Oman's goal of vaccination programme.

The drive is part of the Group's sustained commitment to safeguarding the health and well-being of its workforce and customers in Oman, with frontline and operational workers given the top priority.

The Group is facilitating employee appointments at health centres across the country that are administering vaccines, approved by health authorities. Landmarkers from stores, offices and warehouses have been inoculated in the Oman so far.

Saikat Mishra, Business Head of Landmark Group – Oman said, "We have always prioritised the health and safety of our employees and customers, more so during this pandemic. Our teams on ground are working tirelessly to drive a successful vaccination programme for our workforce and their families. We would like to thank the Government of Oman for establishing an advanced infrastructure that made vaccine bookings easy and we launched the vaccination programme".

During the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Landmark Group has implemented multiple layers of safety measures to ensure the health and well-being of its workforce, customers, and the wider community. The rollout of the vaccination programme reinforces its commitment to the happiness and well-being of its internal and external stakeholders. The company is also conducting various internal awareness campaigns to encourage employee participation through emphasising the significance of the vaccination programme, along with driving the importance of continued safety measures and social distancing.

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PRESERVING OMAN'S MARITIME HERITAGE

THE SUR MARITIME Museum charts the history of shipbuilding in Oman. The maritime museum Sur houses pictures and models of Omani ships and their captains and shipbuilders, the ports the ships frequented, as well as the equipment and tools used for navigation, such as instruments, maps, and manuscripts.

According to Oman's Ministry of Tourism, "The Maritime Museum in Sur is abundant with examples of the Omani marine heritage that highlights the leading role the Omanis played in the maritime industry for a long period of time.

"In order to preserve this heritage, and to ensure that the coming generations know of it, the Maritime Museum in the Wilayat of Sur was established to reflect various types of Omani maritime heritage. The Museum was established in 1987 at the Al Orouba Club. Since its inception, it has been serving a scientific cause for the benefit of those interested in Omani maritime history."

The museum includes several sections. The emblem of the wilaya 'Al Ghanja Ship' is located at the entrance of the museum. In the middle of the ship section, there are different types of Omani ships.

The visitors can see images of famous makers of ships, locally called Al Wistad, in addition to images of a number of sailors and captains of ships locally called "Nokhidha," as well as photos of ports visited by those ships.

IMPORTANT DAY

Celebrating World Chocolate Day

World Chocolate Day, also referred to as International Chocolate Day, is an annual celebration of chocolate on July 7. Started in 2009, World Chocolate Day marks the anniversary of the day when this iconic dessert made its first entrance in Europe in 1550. On this day people savour different lip-smacking chocolates and chocolate desserts. Chocolate as a food item has come a long, long way since its inception. The origins can be traced to the ancient Aztec and Mayan civilisations, which prized chocolate for centuries, before slowly bestowing the knowledge to the world. The divine cocoa was first said to have been used in a drink called 'chocolati' made from roasted cocoa beans. That was how the sweet, addictive journey of chocolate began, and since then there has been no looking back.

Chocolate, apart from being a versatile food item, is said to do a number of other jobs. The smell of chocolate increases the brain waves, which triggers relaxation. So if you thought that you feel relaxed after having a bite of a chocolate bar only because of the satisfaction of getting to eat it, then remember that there is actually more to it.

Also, eat some chocolate when you are feeling a little drained and low on energy, and drinking chocolate milk after exercising is great for our health, because it is full of protein. Additionally, it helps to increase your endurance, making it a great workout buddy. And if you are feeling low and a little stressed out, then chocolate can come to your rescue. The contents of dark chocolate can help in the production of endorphins, which are known to improve your mood.

Apart from this, dark chocolate has a number of health and skin benefits. Chocolate and its main ingredient, cocoa are known to reduce risk factors for heart disease. Flavanols in cocoa beans have antioxidant effects that reduce cell damage implicated in heart disease. Flavanols - more prevalent in dark chocolate than in milk chocolate - may also help lower blood pressure.

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SHIFTING THE EDUCATION MUSEUM

His Majesty issues Royal Decree

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik on Tuesday issued a Royal Decree, No. 49/2021, shifting the Education Museum of Al Saidiya School from the Ministry of Education to the National Museum.

Article (1) transfers Al Saidiya School's Education Museum, with its existing organisational level, from the Ministry of Education to the National Museum.

Article (2) stipulates that all allocations, origins, rights, obligations and assets of Al Saidiya School's Education Museum shall be transferred from the Ministry of Education to the National Museum.

All employees

Article (3) transfers to the National Museum all employees of Al Saidiya School's Education Museum, along with the employees' existing job status and financial allocations.

Article (4) cancels all that contradicts this decree or contravenes its provisions.

Article (5) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced on its date of issue. — ONA

OMAN INVESTMENT AUTHORITY

OIA announces new job, training initiative

MUSCAT: Oman Investment Authority (OIA), in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, launched an initiative of more than 4,800 job and training opportunities in OIA's companies.

The initiative will be implemented in three phases in 2021.

It includes direct employment, training coupled with employment, and on-the-job training opportunities, in addition to training programs that polish the trainees' skills and attain experiences to prepare them for the labour market. — ONA

SUPREME COMMITTEE

< FROM A1

Ban on travellers from Egypt lifted

■ Lifting the ban on travellers arriving from Egypt to the Sultanate. Yet, a new list of travel-ban countries has been added, and these are Singapore, Indonesia, Iraq, Iran, Tunisia, Libya, Argentina, Columbia, Brunei Darussalam.

Travellers from the above-mentioned countries are not allowed to enter the Sultanate with effect from 5 pm of Friday, 9 July 2021, till further notice. The same ban applies to travellers who happened to have visited the above-mentioned countries within 14 days from applying to enter the Sultanate.

Governorate of Dhofar

Upon the advent of the monsoon rains season in the Governorate of Dhofar (Khareef), it has been decided that citizens and residents in the Sultanate who have taken at least one dose of approved vaccines (from among those aged 18 years and above) are allowed to visit the Governorate of Dhofar.

Also, travellers from abroad who took two doses of the vaccines will be allowed to enter Dhofar. The decision takes effect from 5 pm on Friday, 9 July 2021 till further notice.

It is a condition that occupancy in hotels and furnished apartments shall not exceed 50% in the Governorate of Dhofar. All approved precautionary measures have to be undertaken as stated by the authorities concerned earlier. The Supreme Committee stresses that no Eid Al Adha prayers, no traditional pre-Eid souqs (habta) and no gatherings are allowed in all sites and governorates of the Sultanate. This ban includes family gatherings, Eid greeting assemblies and collective celebrations of the Eid.

Land border checkpoints

The Supreme Committee stresses that the decisions of closure of all land border checkpoints of the Sultanate continue to take effect and that international activities and conferences be suspended in the Sultanate till further notice. All celebration halls have to be closed, and so shall related activities like the leasing of tents. All local activities of public nature shall be suspended, and this includes sports activities and exhibitions of all types. — ONA

SAYYID BADR MEETS PRESIDENT OF ICRC

Foreign Minister, Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi met here on Tuesday with Peter Maurer, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

During the meeting, they reviewed the current humanitarian situation in Yemen and the efforts made by all parties to end the conflict and stop the suffering of the brotherly Yemeni people.

— ONA

AL BUSTAN PALACE
A RITZ-CARLTON HOTEL

Tender Announcement

Al Bustan Palace, a Ritz-Carlton Hotel invites sealed bids for the below.

Description	Last Date of tender submission	Tender Fee
1. Ladies Beach Landscape & Civil Work	22nd July 2021	RO 10/-

Companies of Excellent & international grades, having proven track record in this area may obtain detailed Scope of Work from Finance Department from Wednesday 07th July, 2021 onwards between 09:00 – 14:00 hours.

For site visit, please contact Mr. Ehab Zaki, Director of Engineering @ 24764191, the site visit is scheduled on Sunday, 11th July 2021 @ 10.00AM

Tender must be submitted in a sealed Envelope along with companies Trade License and certificates addressed to:

Coordinator of the office of The General Manager,
Al Bustan Palace, a Ritz-Carlton Hotel
On or before 22nd July 2021 before 2 pm.
Sub: Ladies Beach Landscape & Civil Work

Note: Al Bustan Palace, a Ritz-Carlton Hotel is not obliged to accept the tenders with least prices or any other tenders.

International FMCG Company looking for following candidates in UAE

Modern Trade Manager: 10+ years of proven managerial experience in Food Industry handling Modern Trade/Key Accounts is a must. Graduate/MBA qualification.

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Sales Executive: 3-5 years of experience in Food Industry managing sales team with valid Driving License.

Sales Supervisor for General Trade & Modern Trade: 3+ years of experience in managing Sales team with valid Driving License.

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TENDER

The company invites offers for the following tender:

Sl. #	Tender No.	Description	Tender Fee	Deadline for Purchasing of Tenders	Deadline for Submission of Offers
1.	019/2021/ OCC	Fabrication, Erection of Metallic Platform with Portacabin Office at OCC	RO. 52.500	29th July, 2021 5 PM	3rd August, 2021 11 PM
2.	020/2021/ OCC	Cranes Maintenance Services	RO. 52.500	29th July, 2021 5 PM	3rd August, 2021 11 PM

1. All specialized and interested companies that are registered with the Tender Board participate and get the specifications and conditions of the tender from the website; https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om.
2. Tenders should submit their bids online on the given website Signed and sealed. The Tenderer should enclose a scanned copy of a temporary insurance in the form of a bank guarantee or a check certified by a bank, operating in the Sultanate of Oman of not less than (1%) of the Tender Value, valid for (90) days from the offers submission date, addressed to Chairman of the Tender Committee.
3. The original bank guarantee should be submitted to the OCC's Tender Box located at the reception area of the Administration Building at Al Misfah West factory Site not later than the time and date of the submission of tenders.
4. OCC is not bound to accept the lowest or any other bid, and reserves the right to accept or reject any offer without giving reason

For Clarifications on e-Tendering, you may contact via
Telephone : 24166670
Email Id: etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om

SULTANATE OF OMAN

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Secretariat General for National Celebration announces to the following Tenders for 51st National Day :

1	TENDER NO 1/2021	Supply of Flags
2	TENDER NO 2/2021	Fireworks (Muscat)
3	TENDER NO 3/2021	Fireworks (Salalah)

Those who are registered with Tender Board in grade two and above qualified to carryout the project perfectly, may collect the tender documents, against payment of R.O.25/- per set, non refundable, for each tender , from the Office of Secretariat General for National Celebration at Al-Khuwair , during the working hours, on working days from Wednesday **7th of July 2021**. last Date of submission of the tenders will be **25th of July 2021** . Tenderer should submit their documents stating Grade . Registration Certificates and relevant papers, issued by the concerned authorities when collecting Tender Documents

Tender should be submitted in a red sealed wax envelope , addressed to H.M. Secretariat General for National Celebration. Tenderer should enclose approved Bank Guarantee or certified cheque for value of 1% of tender sum valid for 90 days and to be addressed to Secretariat General for National Celebration Al-Khuwair.

For any information contact to technical office (24601271).

The Committee is not bound to accept the lowest offer or any offer.

OMAN/WORLD

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TRAVEL BAN LIFTED

Germany to ease ban on travellers from India, 4 other countries

NEW DELHI: Germany is lifting a ban on most travellers from five countries hit by 'Delta' variant of COVID-19, including India and the UK from Wednesday, said German envoy Walter J Lindner.

"From tomorrow, Germany is removing the entry ban and easing travel rules for five countries where Delta variant is widespread, including India," tweeted German ambassador to India, Walter J Lindner on Tuesday. German public health agency the Robert Koch Institute on Monday said India, Nepal, Russia, Portugal and the UK, currently listed as so-called virus variant countries, would be reclassified from Wednesday as "high-incidence areas".

The change will means simpler requirements for people visiting those countries. People who have had either both vaccination doses, or who can demonstrate they have recovered from COVID, will not need to isolate on their return or arrival. India was classified as a virus variant area at the end of April, followed by Nepal and the UK in May. The EU country Portugal, as well as Russia, were added to the list on June 29. Germany banned entry for travellers from India due to an upsurge in the number of coronavirus cases. ANI

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COVID-19 curbs likely to end by July 19 confirms Boris Johnson

The other parts of the UK — Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland — are also planning to leave lockdowns on similar paths but more slowly

LIFTING LOCKDOWN: The wearing of face masks will be voluntary except in hospitals and other healthcare institutions.

LONDON: UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced on Monday that July 19 would likely see the lifting of most restrictions imposed to stop the spread of the coronavirus in England.

His announcement at a press conference in Downing Street came as cases in England rise to their highest level since January. A final decision is to be taken on July 12.

The other parts of the UK — Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland — are also planning to leave lockdowns on similar paths but more slowly.

What type of restrictions will be lifted on July 19?

The wearing of face masks will be voluntary except in hospitals and other health care settings. Transport providers can still choose to insist on masks. Nightclubs and other businesses will be able to reopen. There will be no more legal limits on numbers at indoor and outdoor meetings. There will be no more 1-meter (3.3-foot) rule on social distancing. The interval between vaccine doses for people younger than 40 will be reduced to eight weeks from 12 weeks to speed up the vaccine rollout. People will no longer be instructed to work from home. Fully vaccinated people will no longer have to self-isolate if they have had contact with an infected person.

What else did Johnson say?

Johnson, who himself suffered a serious bout of the disease, has often talked of COVID-19 as something to be conquered, but Monday's announcement seemed to suggest that society would have to learn to live with the virus.

"As we begin to learn to live with this virus, we must all continue to carefully manage the risks from COVID and exercise judgment when going about our lives," Johnson said ahead of his address.

At the press conference, Johnson, however, noted that "this pandemic is far from over" and "we must reconcile ourselves, sadly, to more deaths from COVID."

The lifting of restrictions was originally planned for June 21, but Johnson was forced to delay because the highly contagious delta variant caused a resurgence of infections.

What do scientists and critics say?

The health spokesman for the opposition Labour Party, Jonathan Ashworth, said the decision could lead to "further pressure on the health system, more sickness, disruption to education and risks a new variant emerging with a selection advantage."

Paul Hunter, a professor of medicine at the University of East Anglia, said easing restrictions made more sense in summer, when schools are closed, people are outdoors more and other respiratory infections are in abeyance.

The British Medical Association urged the government to maintain some restrictions, calling a current increase in the number of COVID-19 cases "alarming."

"Allowing community transmission to surge is like building new 'variant factories' at a very fast rate," said Susan Michie, a psychology professor at the University of London who specializes in behavioral science.

What is the situation in the UK?

The UK has had the highest death toll from COVID-19 in western Europe, with 128,000 people dying from the disease.

In the past week, infections have risen sharply, from about 2,000 a day earlier this year to more than 20,000. But the death toll has dropped dramatically in comparison with the early days of the pandemic, with just 122 coronavirus-related deaths last week.

Public health officials say the comparatively high rate of vaccination in the UK has been decisive in lowering the death toll from the disease. So far, 86% of UK adults have been vaccinated at least once, while 65% are fully vaccinated. DW

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND

IMF concludes its 2021 Article IV Mission for Oman

MUSCAT: The Sultanate welcomed the concluding statement issued by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) after its recent staff mission to Oman.

The virtual mission was part of IMF's Article IV consultations with the Sultanate for the year 2021.

As part of the engagement, the IMF delegation held a series of discussions with various authorities of the Sultanate, including the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Economy, the Central Bank of Oman, several other government and private organisations, and the members of civil society.

During the 15-day mission, the delegation discussed the recent macroeconomic developments, economic outlook, and several other pertinent topics. It also held discussions about the Sultanate's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the strategy for the recovery phase.

The delegation also discussed the Sultanate's financial policies, priorities, and the implementation of the Medium-Term Fiscal Plan (2020-2024). The discussions included deliberations on the fiscal adjustment measures, monetary and banking developments, and various other structural reform programs initiated by the Sultanate.

Despite the uncertainty surrounding the global outlook due to the new COVID-19 variants and its impact on Oman, the IMF mission commended the measures taken by the Sultanate to contain the pandemic, as well as its efforts to accelerate the vaccination process to immunise 70 percent of the population, enhance a healthy business environment, and support the economic sectors most affected by the pandemic including the launch of the 'Economic Stimulus Plan'.

The IMF mission expects the Omani economy to gradually recover from the effects of the pandemic and post a decent growth over the medium term. The statement further projected that the Sultanate's GDP is expected to grow by about 2.5 percent in 2021 to 3 percent average growth over the medium term. The revenue and spending efficiency are expected to rise while the public debt is projected to decrease in the medium term.

It is also expected that the current account deficit will decrease to 0.6 percent of GDP in the medium term due to the fiscal consolidation measures taken up by the Sultanate and higher trade balance surplus.

The IMF mission indicated that the Sultanate's fiscal and monetary responses for 2021 and the Medium-Term Fiscal Plan (MTFP) projects a balance between various measures taken to resolve weaknesses in public finances and the initiatives announced in recent times to support economic recovery.

The Mission also noted that the initiatives announced by the Sultanate to improve the performance of the government sector companies have been in the right direction. They believed these measures would contribute to enhancing not only the competitive atmosphere in these companies but also in bringing efficiency in the utilisation of public resources.

Furthermore, the IMF mission welcomed efforts exerted by the Debt Management Unit to coordinate borrowings and manage the associated financial risks. In this context, IMF stressed that the adopted medium-term public debt strategy improves the government borrowing programs and allows for forecasting the financing requirements.

With regard to the proposal of the government to increasingly tap renewable sources of energy and ensure their optimum utilization, the Mission said the move will make a positive impact on the economy, as it will attract local and foreign investment, besides creating more job opportunities.

On the other hand, the IMF mission welcomed government plans to enhance the efficiency and governance of government companies to improve competition and more efficient use of public resources. The steps to develop a Code of Governance for government companies will strengthen corporate governance, making it easier for government companies to go through initial public offerings, and meet the required transparency.

The Mission called upon the Sultanate to continue with strengthening its regulatory framework and implementation of structural reforms to move towards stronger growth. In addition to implementing policies aiming at increasing productivity, strengthening Labor market flexibility, boosting investments and enhancing business environment. Such measures will enhance the competitiveness and capabilities of the private sector as to promote growth of non-oil sectors.

The Sultanate confirms that it is committed to implementing the MTFP (2020-2024) and other structural reforms that have been initiated. With these measures, the Sultanate endeavors to embark on the path of inclusive and sustainable growth. - ONA

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Amid security concerns in Afghanistan, India likely to bring back its nationals

India has its embassy in Kabul along with the consulates in Kandahar and Mazar where it has over 500 staff deployed

BIG PRESENCE: India, which has had a big presence in Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban in 2001 following the US invasion, has been helping the successive governments.

NEW DELHI: Amid the rapidly deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan with the Taliban capturing new territories, India is likely to bring back its nationals and officials from the war-torn country.

India, which has had a big presence in Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban in 2001 following the US invasion, has been helping the successive governments there including the members of the northern alliance who have been friends with India for a long time.

"With the Afghan security situation deteriorating, plans have been discussed for bringing back our citizens and officials present in different parts of that country and multiple agencies are in discussion for this purpose," sources in the government told ANI.

India has its embassy in Kabul along with the consulates in Kandahar and Mazar where it has over 500 staff deployed.

Two consulates in Herat and Jalalabad had ceased operations earlier there.

The process is under discussion and it is not clear whether the entire workforce would return or some essential staff would be staying back in Afghanistan. Indian military officials have also been assisting in training the Afghan National Army personnel both in Afghanistan and India as well, the sources said.

In view of the US decision to withdraw the entire force from Afghanistan, the Taliban troops have been capturing newer districts and areas at a lightning speed and the Afghan government forces are also fleeing from a number of places there.

In Kandahar, the Taliban have captured important bridges and roads connecting the city with other parts and the Afghan officials are also taking steps to ensure their own security, reports from Afghanistan suggested.

India has worked immensely for the redevelopment of Afghanistan and helped it to construct Parliament building along with several roads connecting important cities of the war-torn country. ANI

TERRORIST ACTIVITY

Hong Kong police arrest 9 on suspicion of engaging in terrorist activity

HONG KONG: Hong Kong police on Tuesday arrested nine people, including six students, on suspicion of engaging in terrorist activity.

The police made the arrests after uncovering an alleged attempt to make explosives and plant bombs across the city.

The arrests come at a politically divisive time for Hong Kong — two years after months of pro-democracy protests rocked the financial hub.

Last week, a man stabbed a police officer with a knife, before killing himself in what authorities said was a "lone wolf" attack.

The police said the five men and four women arrested were between the age of 15 to 39.

Besides the students, the group included a university management-level employee, a secondary school teacher, and an unemployed person. Police said the nine people belong to a pro-independence group that called itself "Returning Valiant."

They had been renting a hostel room in the heart of the city for about a month.

"They had a good division of labor among those arrested," said Senior Superintendent Steve Li of the Hong Kong Police National Security Department.

"Some of them provided money. Some are the scientists — the ones who made the bombs in the room."

"One is responsible for the sourcing of chemicals and other materials needed for the plan, while another small group of people creates the bombs, using chemical equipment," he told reporters. "There is also a surveying team and an action team, which is responsible for laying the bombs."

What did the police find?

Authorities said they found the apparatus and raw material used for making the bombs, which have been seized.

The group was allegedly attempting to make the explosive triacetone triperoxide (TATP) in the hostel room that police described as a laboratory for bomb-making equipment. DW

RECOVERED

Black box in Philippines plane crash recovered

MANILA: Military investigators recovered the black box Tuesday of the military transport plane that crashed over the weekend in the town of Patikul on Jolo island 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) south of the capital Manila.

Fifty-two people died in the country's worst military air disaster. Cirilito Sobejana, the chief of staff of the Philippines armed forces, said troops had cordoned off a 1-kilometer radius around the crash site in their search effort.

"The area is restricted so that the pieces of evidence they gather are uncontaminated," Sobejana told dpa.

He added, "It's hard to speculate what really happened [...] It's good that the black box has been recovered and we can hear the last conversations of the pilots and crew."

The pilot did not survive the crash. The biggest clues as to what went wrong will come from the black box.

How many were killed and injured in the crash?

The Lockheed C-130 was carrying 96 passengers, most of them recent military graduates, headed to Jolo island to assist in counter-insurgency operations against the Abu Sayyaf terrorist group.

Of the 96 on board, 49 were killed along with three civilians on the ground. An additional 47 troops and four civilians on the ground were injured, leaving some in critical condition. DW

LOCKDOWN CONTINUES

Bangladesh extends 'strict' nationwide lockdown till July 14

ALARMING RISE: The surge in the South Asian country's COVID infections is blamed largely on the highly infectious delta variant first detected in India.

DHAKA: Bangladesh has been witnessing an alarming rise in coronavirus cases over the past several days, prompting the government to deploy the military to the nation's streets to ensure that people stay indoors and don't violate lockdown restrictions.

The surge in the South Asian country's COVID infections is blamed largely on the highly infectious delta variant first detected in India.

Hospitals are struggling to cope with the growing number of patients, particularly in areas bordering India. Some rural towns have recorded infection rates of about 70%, underlining the magnitude of the problem facing the health system.

Bangladesh has so far reported nearly 950,000 infections and more than 15,000 related deaths. But observers say that's a huge undercount and stress that the real caseload could be three to four times higher.

On Monday, the country reported 164 new COVID-19 deaths, its biggest daily rise since the pandemic began. It also registered the highest-ever number of new daily infections at 9,964.

Military and police patrol empty streets

As per the government's lockdown rules imposed at the start of the month, and now extended until July 14, Bangladeshis can only leave home in case of emergencies and to buy essentials.

The army and police have been patrolling mostly empty streets in the capital, Dhaka, and other major cities. Authorities have also shut down public transport and most shops. Stores that sell essential items can open for a few hours a day. Furthermore, large social gatherings have been banned in a bid to restrict people's movement.

"We have called upon the people to stay indoors to help improve the situation. Those who go out of their homes without a valid reason will face legal action," Mahtab Uddin, a police officer in Dhaka, told the AFP news agency.

"The prime target is to ensure social distancing, not to punish or fine anyone," he said.

Nevertheless, over 2,000 people have been detained over the past few days on charges of violating the lockdown rules, according to local media reports.

Despite the curbs on public transport, there was an exodus of migrant workers, with tens of thousands of them leaving the capital Dhaka and other large cities and moving to their home villages.

Emergence of a hotspot

The southwestern city of Khulna has emerged as a major virus hotspot over the past few days.

Many of the affected families in the region report of a shortage of oxygen cylinders and hospital beds. And the death toll continues to rise, with reports suggesting that graveyards could not cope with the huge number of dead.

Officials blame the surge on people's refusal to wear masks or maintain physical distance.

On Thursday, Khulna city recorded 46 virus deaths, according to an official count, while in earlier waves the daily death toll never went into double figures.

Most people in the city believe the real toll could be much higher. DW

Bahwan International Group مجموعة بهوان العالمية

سهيل بهوان للسيارات ش.م.م
Suhail Bahwan Automobiles LLC

Sultanate of Oman Consumer Protection Authority

Recall Campaign on Nissan

Date of Campaign : 7th July, 2021
Campaign Type : Recall Campaign
Description : Anti-Theft alarm concern

Model	Year of Import	VIN - No Range	No of Vehicles
Sunny N18	MY20	LL890230 - LL899068	36

Defect and Action :

Model	Concern Background	Field Action
Sunny N18	BCM was configured to 50 sec. alarm duration (similar to US type) instead of 27.5 sec. (similar to JPN, EUR type), hence The anti-theft alarm may keep going for over 30 sec. As per GSO regulation the anti-theft alarm visual and audible alarm signals duration should less than 30 seconds.	BCM configuration update to correct alarm duration of 27.5 sec.

For More Information :
Customer driving these vehicles may please contact M/s Suhail Bahwan Automobiles for further details / booking appointments etc.

Contact Details :
Toll-free No : 800 50011 on all working days between 08:30 to 13:00hrs & 14:00 to 17.00hrs

C.R. No. 1/71955/6

SPORTS

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2021 INTERNATIONAL GT OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP

Al Zubair, Soucek aim to defend GT Open Series lead

HUNGARORING: Oman's Al-Faisal Al-Zubair and Spanish team-mate Andy Soucek head to the Hungaroring this weekend determined to defend a one-point lead in the 2021 International GT Open Championship after two rounds.

After securing a win and a third place at the most recent round in Belgium, theLechner Racing Team Porsche 911 GT3 R crew have amassed 43 points and take a single-point advantage over the Vincenzo Sospiri Racing Lamborghini crew of Frederick Schandorff/Michele Beretta into the weekend's action in Hungary.

The Spa success in Belgium marked the first outright win for a Porsche in the GT Open series in almost five years.

Kevin Estre and Peter Terting were the last crew to grace the top step of the podium with the Stuttgart brand in Barcelona at the end of the 2016 season.

"Very excited for the Hungaroring now that we have the championship lead by one point," said Al-Zubair. "I think going by the championship and our philosophy, this will not change anything from our side to be honest.

"I think the team is prepared now. We are working better together. On a personal level, the Hungaroring is a track that I am strong at. It's a track that Andy likes as well and one where the Porsche will be strong. Hopefully we come out with a good points' haul at the end."

Al-Zubair and Soucek have joined forces with Lechner Racing after achieving their own successes in circuit racing. Two of the highlights of the young Omani's career so far were his two Porsche GT3 Cup Challenge Middle East titles, while Soucek was the

2009 FIA Formula Two champion and has achieved more recent success in the Blancpain GT and GTWC America series'.

Two free GT Open practice sessions are scheduled for Friday (July 9) and then teams will take part in a 30-minute qualifying session from 10.15hrs (CET) on Saturday. The 70-minute opening race takes centre stage from 15.10hrs.

Qualifying for race two is scheduled from 09.00hrs on Sunday and precedes the one-hour second race, starting at 13.00hrs.

Unfair that we won't have stadium filled with fans: Mancini

More than 60,000 fans are currently permitted at the Euro 2020 semi-finals and final at Wembley Stadium

SEMIFINALS: The last time when both teams met in Euros, Italy eliminated La Roja with a 2-0 win in the 2016 round of 16.

LONDON: Italy head coach Roberto Mancini has said it's "pretty unfair" that Azzuri and Spain fans will not be able to travel for Tuesday's Euro 2020 semi-final at Wembley.

More than 60,000 fans are currently permitted at the Euro 2020 semi-finals and final at Wembley Stadium following an announcement by the UK government, increasing attendance to 75 percent of capacity for each game, UEFA announced last week. But the COVID-19 travel restrictions mean supporters of Spain and Italy won't be able to fly to England for the game. Speaking about the situation, Goal.com quoted Mancini: "I think it's pretty unfair if I'm perfectly honest."

"We're better off playing in front of any crowd as opposed to playing in front of a small number of people; that's what's great about football and entertainment in general. But I do think it's very unfair that we don't have half the stadium full of Italian fans and half the stadium full of Spaniards," he added.

It means the only supporters of either side will be those who are already based in the UK, with the majority likely to be neutrals.

The last time when both teams met in Euros, Italy eliminated La Roja with a 2-0 win in the 2016 round of 16. Azzuri has won each of their last 13 international matches.

Their dizzying pace and killer finishing proved too much for a talented Belgium team last time out.

Both teams have scored 23 goals between them in getting this far in European Championships as they clash in the opening UEFA EURO 2020 semi-final at the historic Wembley Stadium. ANI

EURO 2020

Italy vs Spain is going to be a hotly contested match in midfield: Pedri

LONDON: Spain midfielder Pedri believes it's going to be a very hotly contested match in midfield against Italy at Wembley on Tuesday as both teams possess a great deal of quality in that area of the pitch.

The last time when both teams met in Euros, Italy eliminated La Roja with a 2-0 win in the 2016 round of 16. Azzuri has won each of their last 13 international matches. Their dizzying pace and killer finishing proved too much for a talented Belgium team last time out. "Both teams have a very strong midfield and a great deal of quality in that area of the pitch.

It's going to be a very hotly contested match in midfield. The team that gets the better of it will be the team that makes the fewest mistakes," UEFA quoted Pedri as a saying.

At 18 years and 201 days, Pedri is the youngest player ever to play for Spain at the Euro finals. Luis Enrique's Spain has been enigmatic after group stage draws against Sweden and Poland as they beat Slovakia 5-0 to reach the last 16, where they scored five again, though it took extra time to finish off Croatia.

A string of missed chances then allowed ten-man Switzerland to take them to penalties in the quarter-finals, but top-class opponents like Italy may yet bring out the best in them.

Roberto Mancini the head coach of Italy recognise this 'different' challenge against Spain as he said: "It will be difficult, even if Spain are different from Belgium. It will not be the same kind of game compared to the previous one, but it will present many difficulties for sure. Spain have been extraordinary for years, even if now there has been a change and they are a younger side. They have a good coach and very good players."

Both teams have scored 23 goals between them in getting this far in European Championships as they clash in the opening UEFA EURO 2020 semi-final at the historic Wembley Stadium. ANI

WIMBLEDON

Roger Federer beats Sonego to enter 18th quarter-final

LONDON : Swiss tennis maestro Roger Federer stormed into the quarter-finals of the ongoing Wimbledon Championships after recording a 7-5, 6-4, 6-2 victory over Lorenzo Sonego on Monday.

With this win, Federer reached his 18th Wimbledon quarter-final. The Swiss tennis maestro defeated the 23rd-seeded Italian in three straight sets to clinch the game. As the match started, Sonego fought fiercely and directly at least for the first 15 minutes.

Soon after that, Federer started to apply a bit of pressure; he had a breakpoint - and then another and another. As the game wore on, Sonego managed to extricate himself from the situation, but only just. The play was also suspended for the usual 17 minutes.

Federer saved two of the three break points he faced in the match to book a place in his all-time record-extending 58th Grand Slam quarter-final.

The eight-time champion will have to wait until Tuesday to learn his next opponent as he awaits the winner of second seed Daniil Medvedev and Hubert Hurkacz's match.

Medvedev is one set from reaching his first Wimbledon quarter-final and had fought hard with Hurkacz before the play was suspended due to rain.

Earlier, World number one Novak Djokovic stormed into the quarterfinals of the tournament after defeating Chile's Christian Garin 6-2, 6-4, 6-2 in the fourth round.

The Serbian brought his A-game to the court and he won the first set quite comprehensively, dropping just two games, and his opponent Garin had no answers to whatever was being thrown at him.

Djokovic storms into quarters

London World number one Novak Djokovic on Monday stormed into the quarterfinals of the ongoing Wimbledon 2021.

Djokovic defeated Chile's Christian Garin 6-2, 6-4, 6-2 in the fourth round of the ongoing Grand Slam here at the Centre Court. The Serbian brought his A-game to the court and he won the first set quite comprehensively, dropping just two games, and his opponent Garin had no answers to whatever was being thrown at him.

Garin showed more fights in the second set, and at one stage, the scoreline was level at 3-3. But at that moment, Djokovic took his game to a notch higher and he was able to win it 6-4.

Djokovic needed to win just one more set to progress to the last eight in the men's singles at the ongoing Wimbledon. The 34-year-old Serbian did not disappoint and he won the third set, progressing ahead into the quarterfinals.

Later in the day, Roger Federer would play his fourth-round match against Italy's Lorenzo Sonego.

Djokovic has already won the Australian Open and French Open this year and he currently sits on 19 Grand Slam titles. ANI

OMAN BEACH SOCCER TEAM TO TAKE PART IN RUSSIA EVENT

Oman's national beach soccer team will participate in the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup Russia 2021. A statement issued by Oman News Agency (ONA) said: "Next Thursday, the national beach soccer team is awaiting the draw for the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup Russia 2021, which will be drawn in the Swiss city of Zürich. The national team will participate in it since the Asian Football Confederation decided to choose it among the teams that will represent the Asian continent in the Beach World Cup." -ONA

COPA AMERICA

Brazil beat Peru 1-0 to enter final

RIO DE JANEIRO: A first-half goal from Lucas Paqueta helped Brazil reach the finals of the ongoing Copa America after beating Peru 1-0 on Monday (local time).

The host and defending champion will lock horns either with Argentina or Colombia in the summit clash at the Maracana on Saturday. Argentina and Colombia will play with each other in Tuesday's semi-final clash. Paqueta scored the only goal of the game in the 35th minute. He converted Neymar's cutback from close range to obtain the first ticket to the final of the oldest national team tournament.

Peru might have put Brazil under pressure in the second half, but lacked the class to find an equaliser.

Brazil once again claimed a victory against the Peruvians, having defeated them 3-1 in the final of the Copa America in 2019

Brazil made their match with more shots on goal in the first half (7) and fewer shots on goal in the second half (1) in the Copa America 2021.

Earlier, Brazil had defeated Chile 1-0 in the quarterfinals of the Copa America. The only goal of the match came in the 46th minute as Paqueta netted the ball into the goalpost, giving Brazil a 1-0 lead.

No more goals were scored in the game as Brazil won the match 1-0 on Saturday. ANI

MARKET
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WEDNESDAY, JULY 7, 2021

DAE SIGNS AGREEMENTS

Dubai Aerospace Enterprise (DAE) Ltd announced that its leasing division DAE Capital recently signed agreements to sell nine narrow and wide-body aircraft with a total market value of approximately $500 million. > B2

MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 4,121.52 points, up 0.46 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended up 0.06 per cent at 597.05 points. Al Hassan Engineering, up 25.00 per cent, was the top gainer while Oman Cables Industry, down 4.62 per cent, was the top loser.

Oman oil price on DME tops $76 a barrel; key Opec meet called off

Experts are of the view that the decision to cancel the Ministerial Meeting of Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) and non-Opec may lead to the oil prices rallying further

RESEARCH REPORT: In its research report, S&P Global Ratings said that OPEC and its allies had abruptly called off their July 5 meeting, after a flurry of mediation efforts failed to resolve the standoff between members. - File photo

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman oil price on Tuesday reached $76.09 a barrel, comprising a rise by $1.34 from the price of Monday, which was at $74.75.

"The average price of Oman oil (July Delivery 2021) has stabilised at $66.40, thus $3.30 per barrel higher than June Delivery 2021," the Dubai Mercantile Exchange said on Tuesday.

On Tuesday, West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude in New York recorded its highest price since 2014, nearing $77 a barrel, after the "Opec+ talks failed to reach an agreement on raising production in the face of increasing demand."

The price of WTI crude for August delivery reached $76.98 a barrel, a level it last recorded in November 2014. Brent crude also rose by 0.4 per cent on Monday to $76.52 a barrel, from the opening level at $76.24 and recorded its lowest level at $75.72.

Experts are of the view that the decision to cancel the Ministerial Meeting of Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) and non-Opec may lead to the oil prices rallying further.

"The 18th Opec and non-Opec Ministerial Meeting have been called off," Opec Secretary-General, Mohammad Sanusi Barkindo, said in a letter to Heads of Delegation of Opec member countries and non-Opec oil-producing countries participating in the Declaration of Cooperation (DoC). "Upon consultations with Prince Abdul Aziz Bin Salman, Minister of Energy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and Alexander Valentinovich Novak, Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Chairman and Co-chairman of the Opec and non-Opec Ministerial Meeting, the reconvened 18th Opec and non-Opec Ministerial Meeting has been called off," the Secretary-General stated on Monday.

"The date of the next meeting will be decided in due course and we will inform you accordingly," the Secretary-General added.

Meanwhile, in its research report, S&P Global Ratings said that OPEC and its allies had abruptly called off their July 5 meeting, after a flurry of mediation efforts failed to resolve the standoff between members.

This raises the risks that the producer group could steer the market into a supply squeeze if it sticks to current quotas - or potentially a bruising price war if the coalition collapses, the report added.

No date has been set for a rescheduled meeting, though delegates said members were still holding back-channel consultations to try and broker a deal between the members.

"The impasse has left an oil market thirsting for crude on tenterhooks since the talks began July 1, with many forecasters warning of a potential price spike if the 23-country alliance does not further unwind its production cuts. The coalition is currently withholding 5.8 million barrels per day of output," the S&P report said.

"The stalled deal in question calls for Opec+ countries to increase production by 400,000 barrels per day each month starting in August and remain bound to collective market management beyond the original April 2022 expiry through the full year.

The DME is the leading energy-focused commodities exchange in the Middle East and home to the benchmark sour crude oil futures contract. The DME Oman is a key component of crude oil pricing for Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Bahrain and accounts for 50 per cent of their official selling price (OSP), while it solely reflects the price of Oman and Dubai crude oil.

MEETING

Alizz Islamic Bank's Sharia Supervisory Board reviews its products and services

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Sharia Supervisory Board (SSB) of Alizz Islamic Bank recently held its third meeting for the year.

The meeting was led by Sheikh Dr Essam Khalaf Al-Enezi, Chairman of the Sharia Supervisory Board. Members of the Board including Sheikh Dr Ahmed Subhi Ahmed Ayadiand Sheikh Nasser bin Yousef Al Azri and the internal Sharia auditor Issa Al-Riyami were present. The meeting was also attended by Sulaiman Al Harthi, CEO of Alizz Islamic Bank and a number of senior executive management members.

The meeting discussed matters related to the services and products provided by the bank to various clients. Sulaiman Al Harthi gave a presentation on the bank's ongoing activities during the second quarter of this year, and Muhammad Nadeem Aslam - DGM - Chief of Wholesale Business & Key Initiatives gave a visual presentation through which he showcased the performance of the wholesale banking portfolio.

The Sharia Supervisory Board reviewed the Sharia audit report submitted to them and discussed the observations and took the appropriate decisions. They also reviewed the Sharia audit and compliance report, which included periodic reviews of transactions, training and awareness activities for Sharia management. The Sharia Supervisory Board also reviewed several new products that will be launch during the second half of the year.

Alizz Islamic Bank continues to focus heavily on improving its services and products through coordination and continuous meetings between the Sharia Supervisory Board and various departments to provide services and products, present and propose possible Sharia solutions to the challenges arising from financial transactions in accordance with Sharia principles and provisions. It aims to find sound Sharia alternatives to violating transactions and correcting them and advising the management concerned with identified challenges.

The Sharia Supervisory Board at Alizz Islamic Bank reviews and studies all Islamic banking products and services launched by the bank. The board includes in its membership scholars who are distinguished by deep knowledge of Islamic Sharia and the jurisprudence of transactions, as well as to spread reassurance among shareholders and depositors whose trust is undoubtedly one of the most important success factors for the bank.

Commenting on the meeting, Issa Al-Riyami, Head of Sharia Audit and Compliance Department at Alizz Islamic Bank said, "The growth of the Islamic banking industry is fuelled by the high demand for Sharia-compliant products. This demand is not only among customers and financial experts in the Middle East and Islamic countries but also from investors and clients all over the world making it a global financial industry."

Al Riyami added, "In addition to its vast geographical expansion, Islamic banking is witnessing a significant expansion across all sectors of various financial activities, including personal banking, Islamic Takaful insurance and investments in the financial markets. The continuous growth in the Islamic banking industry is attributed to several factors, including the increase in demand for Islamic banking products, and the growth of attractiveness of Sharia-compliant financial services to investors who wish to adhere to "ethical" investment and banking practices.

"The Omani Islamic banking industry is expected to continue its steady growth over the coming years, as reports and opinions of banking experts indicate that the Sultanate will witness a growth in Sukuk as institutions in the Sultanate and the region aspire to raise funds in a manner consistent with the provisions of Islamic Sharia."

CENTRAL BANK OF OMAN

Treasury bills worth OMR146mn issued

MUSCAT: Oman's central bank raised OMR146 million by way of allotting treasury bills on Tuesday.

The treasury bills are for a maturity period of 28 days, from July 7 until August 4, 2021.

The average accepted price reached 99.950 for every OMR100 and the minimum accepted price arrived at 99.950 per OMR100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 0.65179 per cent and 0.65211 per cent, respectively.

It may be noted that the interest rate on the Repo operations with CBO is 0.5 per cent while the discount rate on the Treasury Bills Discounting Facility with CBO is 0.75 per cent.

Treasury bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance, and they provide licensed commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds. The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) acts as the Issue Manager and provides the added advantage of ready liquidity through discounting and repurchase facilities (Repo).

MATURITY PERIOD: The treasury bills are for a maturity period of 28 days, from July 7 until August 4, 2021. - ONA

Furthermore, treasury bills promote the local money market by creating a benchmark yield curve for short-term interest rates. Additionally, the government may also resort to this instrument whenever felt necessary for financing its recurrent expenditures. -ONA

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Al Hassan Engineering, up 25.00 per cent, was the top gainer while Oman Cables Industry, down 4.62 per cent, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,121.52 points, up 0.46 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended up 0.06 per cent at 597.05 points. Al Hassan Engineering, up 25.00 per cent, was the top gainer while Oman Cables Industry, down 4.62 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of Global Investment Holding were the most active in terms of the number of shares traded while Oman Investment & Financials were the most active in terms of turnover.

A total number of 1,122 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating a turnover of OMR3 million, with more than 26 million shares changing hands. Out of 47 traded stocks, 19 advanced, 8 declined and 20 remained unchanged. At the session close, local investors were net buyers for OMR314,000 while foreign investors were net sellers for OMR228,000 followed by GCC & Arab investors for OMR86,000 worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 6,561.60 points, up 0.61 per cent. Global Investment Holding, Oman & Emirates Holding, Al Sharqia Investment, Bank Muscat and Bank Nizwa were up 5.97 per cent, 4.11 per cent, 2.88 per cent, 2.34 per cent and 2.04 per cent respectively. United Finance, Oman & Qatar Insurance and Al Omaniya Financial Services were down 1.61 per cent, 1.32 per cent and 0.79 per cent respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 6,011.57 points, down 0.22 per cent.

Services Index was up by 0.59 per cent before closing at 1,762.56 points. Oman Investment & Financials, Phoenix Power, Al Batinah Power, Al Suwadi Power and Sembcorp Salalah were up 5.74 per cent, 2.04 per cent, 1.85 per cent, 1.82 per cent and 1.19 per cent respectively. — **United Securities**

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	4,131.71	4,104.46	4,121.52	4,102.84	18.68	0.46
FINANCIAL INDEX	6,572.37	6,522.03	6,561.60	6,522.03	39.57	0.61
Industry Index	6,032.24	6,001.44	6,011.58	6,024.99	-13.41	-0.22
Services Index	1,766.37	1,757.17	1,762.57	1,752.19	10.38	0.59
MSX Shariah Index	598.56	597.05	597.05	596.71	0.34	0.06
MSX TR INDEX	4,961.30	4,928.58	4,949.06	4,926.63	22.43	0.46

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
26,231,371	3,363,020	1,122	21,664,955,587	19	8	20	47

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR TUESDAY, JULY 6

REGULAR MARKET

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RO)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
OM0000001525	OMAN INVST& FIN.	2,997,105	385,852	108	0.127	0.130	0.126	0.129	0.122	0.007	5.738	0.126	0.125	0.130	0.100	30,573,000
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIA INV.	3,331,090	355,073	141	0.104	0.109	0.104	0.107	0.104	0.003	2.885	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.100	9,630,000
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	698,430	305,751	50	0.432	0.440	0.432	0.438	0.428	0.010	2.336	0.434	0.434	0.436	0.100	1,565,619,959
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	961,224	112,199	46	0.117	0.118	0.115	0.117	0.115	0.002	1.739	0.117	0.116	0.117	0.100	23,400,000
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	317,500	151,745	23	0.476	0.478	0.476	0.478	0.472	0.006	1.271	0.478	0.478	0.484	0.100	105,160,000
OM0000006920	VISION INSURANCE	1,618,363	142,624	81	0.088	0.090	0.088	0.088	0.087	0.001	1.149	0.088	0.088	0.091	0.100	8,800,000
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SER.	218,500	92,767	23	0.424	0.426	0.424	0.424	0.422	0.002	0.474	0.426	0.426	0.428	0.100	100,237,840
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	71,330	17,894	6	0.252	0.252	0.250	0.251	0.250	0.001	0.400	0.250	0.249	0.255	0.100	83,049,050
OM0000001087	OMAN UNITED INSUR	12,000	4,992	2	0.416	0.416	0.416	0.416	0.416	0.000	0.000	0.416	0.398	0.416	0.100	41,600,000
OM0000001418	RAYSUT CEMENT	37,000	10,952	1	0.296	0.296	0.296	0.296	0.296	0.000	0.000	0.296	0.295	0.308	0.100	59,200,000
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	81,200	25,984	10	0.320	0.320	0.320	0.320	0.320	0.000	0.000	0.320	0.320	0.320	0.100	258,487,145
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	104,787	6,602	8	0.063	0.063	0.063	0.063	0.063	0.000	0.000	0.063	0.062	0.067	0.100	19,350,218
OM0000002200	AHLI BANK	14,700	1,661	2	0.113	0.113	0.113	0.113	0.113	0.000	0.000	0.113	0.109	0.114	0.100	220,311,294
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	168,084	70,596	12	0.430	0.430	0.420	0.420	0.420	0.000	0.000	0.420	0.410	0.420	0.100	25,705,795
OM0000003398	SOHAR INT. BANK	1,296,550	126,057	28	0.098	0.098	0.097	0.097	0.097	0.000	0.000	0.097	0.094	0.100	0.100	236,147,153
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	82,663	30,695	20	0.376	0.376	0.370	0.372	0.372	0.000	0.000	0.370	0.370	0.374	0.100	20,460,000
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM.	15,980	12,655	3	0.792	0.792	0.788	0.792	0.796	-0.004	-0.503	0.788	0.788	0.816	0.100	594,000,000
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	44,521	6,871	8	0.155	0.155	0.154	0.154	0.155	-0.001	-0.645	0.154	0.154	0.154	0.100	13,090,000
OM0000002077	AL OMANIYA FIN.S	585,000	73,745	5	0.127	0.127	0.126	0.126	0.127	-0.001	-0.787	0.126	0.126	0.126	0.100	36,783,832
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	464,449	192,671	7	0.414	0.422	0.414	0.414	0.420	-0.006	-1.429	0.422	0.420	0.422	0.100	269,490,911
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDSTR	222,000	252,384	23	1.140	1.155	1.120	1.135	1.190	-0.055	-4.622	1.150	1.150	1.175	0.100	101,809,500
Total		13,342,476	2,379,769	607												

Parallel Market

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RO)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
OM0000003125	GLOBAL INV. H	4,353,017	307,694	167	0.068	0.072	0.068	0.071	0.067	0.004	5.970	0.071	0.070	0.071	0.100	14,200,000
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	691,280	52,573	39	0.075	0.077	0.075	0.076	0.073	0.003	4.110	0.077	0.077	0.078	0.100	9,262,500
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	575,525	57,440	16	0.100	0.100	0.099	0.100	0.098	0.002	2.041	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.100	150,000,000
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	2,980,690	149,097	97	0.050	0.051	0.050	0.050	0.049	0.001	2.041	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.100	73,130,073
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	273,350	15,026	13	0.055	0.055	0.054	0.055	0.054	0.001	1.852	0.055	0.054	0.055	0.100	37,118,809
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	40,000	2,240	1	0.056	0.056	0.056	0.056	0.055	0.001	1.818	0.056	0.055	0.056	0.100	40,006,755
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEER.	436,000	37,065	22	0.085	0.086	0.085	0.085	0.084	0.001	1.190	0.085	0.082	0.085	0.100	17,253,848
OM0000004735	SEMBCORP SALALAH	9,000	764	5	0.083	0.086	0.083	0.085	0.084	0.001	1.190	0.084	0.083	0.086	0.100	81,138,616
OM0000001517	HSBC BANK OMAN	150,000	15,300	7	0.102	0.102	0.102	0.102	0.101	0.001	0.990	0.102	0.102	0.102	0.100	204,031,905
OM0000001319	ALUMINIUM PROD.	299,800	50,904	21	0.170	0.171	0.169	0.170	0.169	0.001	0.592	0.169	0.166	0.172	0.100	5,707,147
OM0000001178	MUSCAT GASES	1,700	311	1	0.183	0.183	0.183	0.182	0.182	0.000	0.000	0.183	0.172	0.190	0.100	5,460,000
OM0000001566	OMAN FISHERIES	156	13	1	0.085	0.085	0.085	0.085	0.085	0.000	0.000	0.085	0.000	0.085	0.100	10,625,000
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INV.	289,224	6,941	7	0.024	0.024	0.024	0.024	0.024	0.000	0.000	0.024	0.023	0.025	0.100	4,971,633
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	178,000	22,982	8	0.130	0.130	0.129	0.129	0.129	0.000	0.000	0.129	0.129	0.130	0.100	386,529,335
OM0000002572	OMAN OIL MARKETING	2,350	2,263	3	0.940	0.980	0.940	0.908	0.908	0.000	0.000	0.940	0.912	0.940	0.100	55,637,700
OM0000003711	SOHAR POWER	210	9	1	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.047	0.047	0.000	0.000	0.045	0.045	0.046	0.100	10,387,470
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	1,088,008	115,872	43	0.107	0.107	0.106	0.106	0.106	0.000	0.000	0.107	0.106	0.107	0.100	18,550,000
OM0000005260	OMAN ARAB BANK	6,171	1,151	2	0.186	0.189	0.186	0.186	0.186	0.000	0.000	0.189	0.175	0.189	0.100	310,510,260
OM0000007084	MCT DESALINATE	61,840	5,576	7	0.091	0.091	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.000	0.000	0.090	0.088	0.090	0.100	13,999,536
OM0000007407	DHOFAR GENERATING	19,250	2,481	5	0.129	0.129	0.128	0.129	0.129	0.000	0.000	0.129	0.128	0.129	0.100	28,668,960
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	320	30	1	0.094	0.094	0.094	0.094	0.094	0.000	0.000	0.094	0.091	0.095	0.100	61,547,340
OM0000001152	OMAN NAT. ENG.	10,000	950	1	0.095	0.095	0.095	0.095	0.096	-0.001	-1.042	0.095	0.093	0.097	0.100	12,350,000
OM0000006979	OMAN QATAR INSUR.	370,000	55,500	7	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.152	-0.002	-1.316	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.100	15,000,000
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	991,802	60,460	34	0.062	0.062	0.060	0.061	0.062	-0.001	-1.613	0.060	0.058	0.061	0.100	21,297,809
Total		12,827,693	962,641	509												

DUBAI AEROSPACE ENTERPRISE

DAE signs agreements to sell aircraft valued at $500 million

DUBAI: Dubai Aerospace Enterprise (DAE) Ltd announced that its leasing division DAE Capital recently signed agreements to sell nine narrow and wide-body aircraft with a total market value of approximately $500 million.

The aircraft sales are all expected to close in 2021.

Post-pandemic market for trading aircraft assets is robust

Firoz Tarapore, Chief Executive Officer of DAE commented, "The post-pandemic market for trading aircraft assets is robust. These transactions demonstrate DAE's ability to originate and trade aircraft assets with a lease attached from high-quality airline credits."

BANK MUSCAT

Meethaq banking solutions help SMEs grow their business efficiently

MUSCAT: In line with the bank's vision 'To serve you better, everyday', Meethaq, the pioneer of Islamic banking in Oman from Bank Muscat, has been regularly launching various new products and services for the SME sector. Meethaq's comprehensive suite of SME solutions is designed to empower SMEs to succeed at every stage of their business evolution and grow to their full potential.

Meethaq's Sharia-compliant SME solutions are unique and provide support to an important sector of the economy. Meethaq's SME product offerings include working capital finance, term and project finance, contract finance, trade services, currency exchange services and tailored financing solutions for the SMEs based on their business needs. Each Meethaq SME customer is assigned a dedicated Account Relationship Manager with a wealth of experience to provide financial advice and guidance. A brief highlight of Meethaq's key SME solutions is listed below.

Meethaq's Ijarah financing solution allows customers to enjoy the utility and benefits of assets, while Meethaq bears the ownership risks associated with the assets until the end of the financing tenor. The ownership of the financed asset is transferred to the customer at the maturity of the financing based on requirements, which include the settlement of all liabilities in accordance with the relevant finance documents. The Ijarah financing solution is best suited for financing the purchase of plant machinery, equipment, property and vehicles.

Diminishing Musharaka is another financing solution, which allows customers to purchase assets in partnership with Meethaq. Based on the concept of 'Shirkat Al-Milk', assets are purchased under the joint ownership of both the customer and Meethaq. Subsequently, Meethaq will lease its ownership in the assets to the customers for their use under a lease agreement. The share of Meethaq in the Musharaka is on a diminishing basis (i.e., The customer from time to time purchases Meethaq's share in the Musharakah through periodical instalments in accordance with the relevant finance documents). The gradual reduction of Meethaq's share means a corresponding increase in the share of the customer in the asset, with the entire ownership of the financed asset being transferred to the customer after the final payment.

Other essential solutions offered by Meethaq include bank guarantees to third parties as well as Letters of Credit. These solutions facilitate the import/export of goods or win and complete various contracts awarded by ministries, public sector entities and large corporates respectively.

FITCH RATINGS

Sovereign rating actions stall in first half of 2021

HONG KONG: Fitch Ratings said on Tuesday there were no sovereign rating upgrades and only three downgrades in 1H21, marking the fewest rating actions in six months in more than 20 years.

After the busiest year on record, when 33 sovereigns were downgraded, 2021 is shaping up to be among the quietest.

At mid-year, 31 sovereigns are on a negative outlook, down from the COVID-19 crisis high of 44 in August 2020. Fitch downgraded three sovereigns (Laos, Maldives and Sri Lanka) to CCC during this period and thus they are no longer assigned outlooks.

Outlooks that were revised to stable from negative were about evenly split between those downgraded and those whose ratings were affirmed. Fitch expects an approximately similar split for the remaining negative outlooks, though the timing of changes will vary. The current negative outlooks have been in place for an average of 12.5 months.

The median global fiscal deficit was 6.9 per cent of GDP in 2020 and is forecast by Fitch to be 5.7 per cent in 2021 and 4 per cent in 2022. Government debt relative to GDP is forecast to rise in 75 of 120 rated sovereigns this year. -ANI

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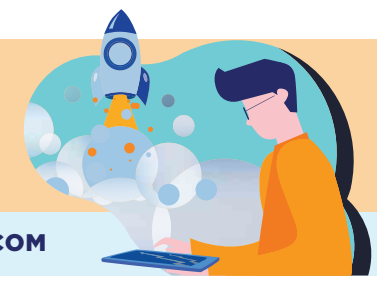

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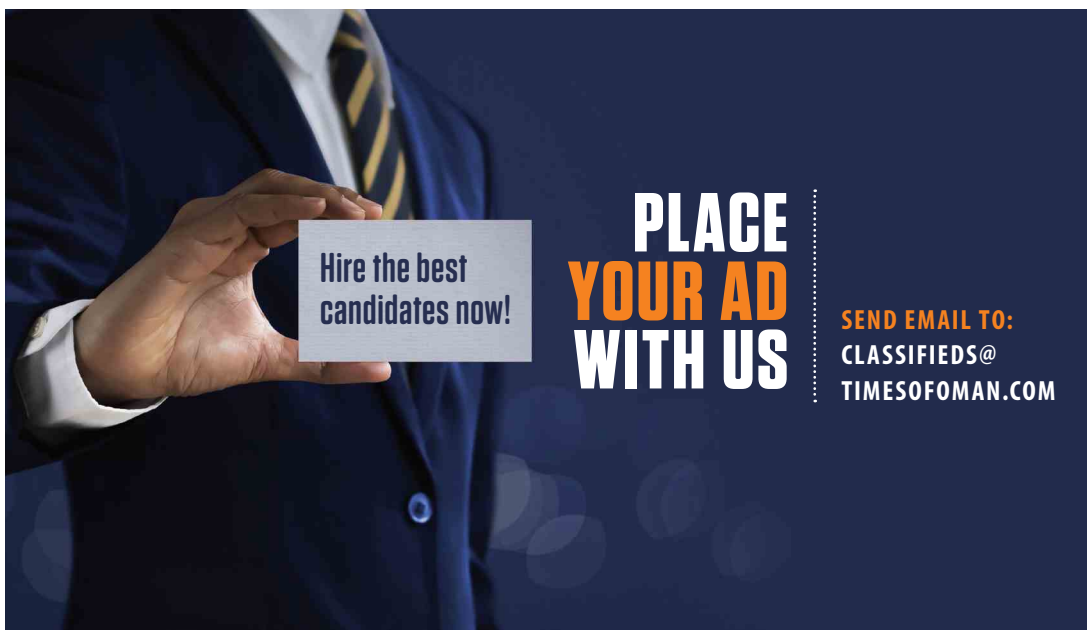

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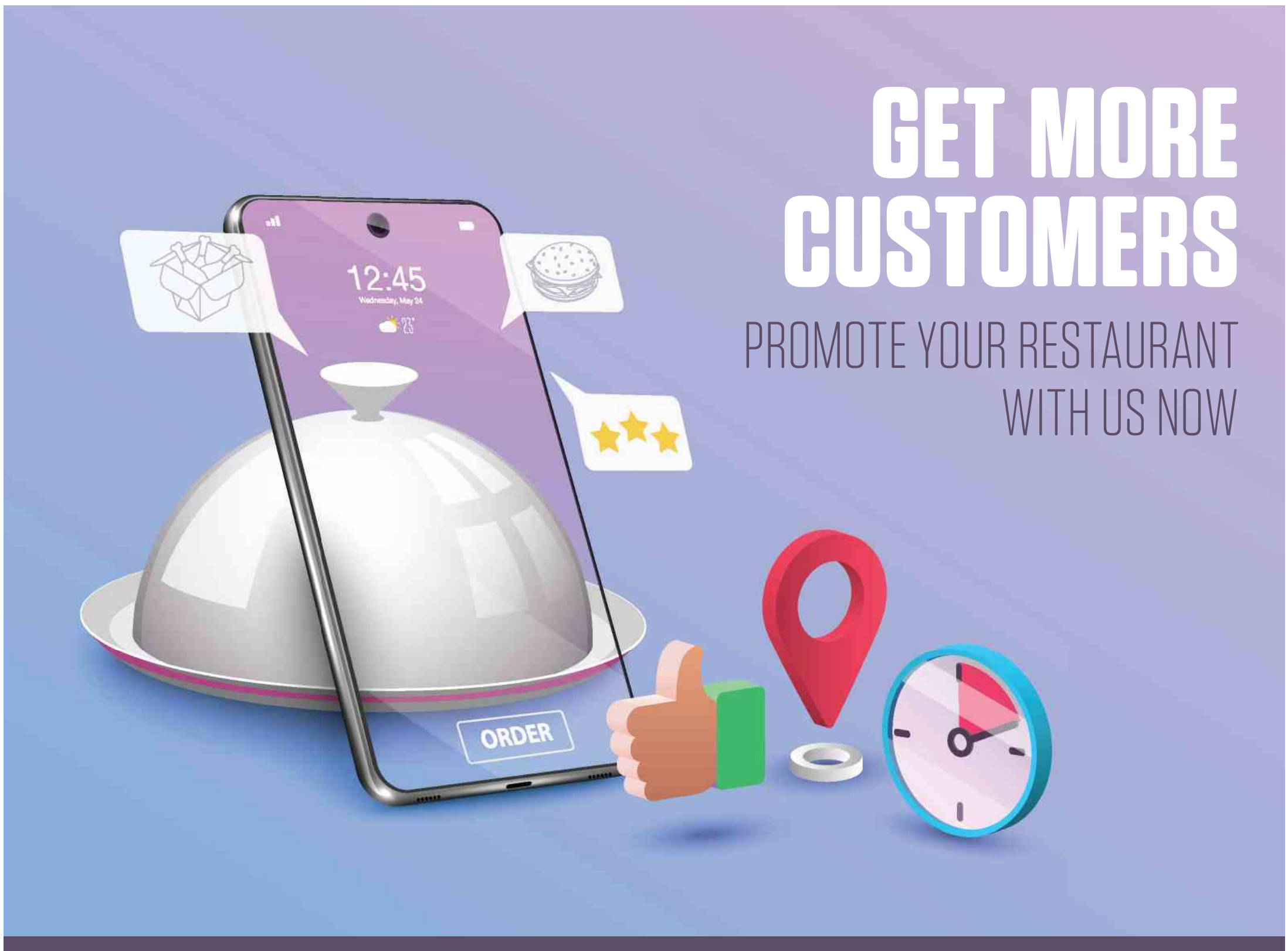

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ROUND-UP

OAB announces initiative for 2nd dose of COVID-19 vaccination

The initiative includes children over the age of 12, following the Ministry of Health's directives to include individuals from this age group

MUSCAT: Oman Arab Bank (OAB) announced a COVID-19 vaccination drive for the administration of the second dose of the Pfizer vaccine for its employees and their families.

This is in line with the national vaccination drive, spearheaded by the Ministry of Health. The initiative includes children over the age of 12, following the Ministry of Health's directives to include individuals from this age group.

This step is also aligned with the Wiqaya programme, launched by the bank's human resources division, ever since the onset of the pandemic. The initiative will run in coordination with multiple hospitals across various wilayats, providing ease and accessibility to staff, without the need for them to travel to Muscat.

Commenting on the success of the initiative, Rashad Al Musafir, CEO of the bank said, "We are proud of the level of awareness shown by the employees from all wilayats and their willingness to participate in the vaccination campaign. Upon completion of the second stage of vaccination, we will surely be in a better position to reduce the spread of infection. Furthermore, instructions have been issued to relevant divisions to maintain all precautionary measures and educate employees of the need to adhere to them, even after receiving the vaccination, as per the Ministry of Health directives."

The vaccination campaign began on July 4 and included the employees of the head office and the bank's branches in the capital who have completed 3 weeks at least from getting their first dose. It will later include the employees from the 53 branches spread across the Sultanate in the upcoming weeks, with a coverage rate of 100%. The cost of the second dose for employees and their families will be covered by the bank.

"Through this campaign, we aim to support the government's vaccine provision efforts to everyone in the Sultanate, stemming from our role in this field. We wish safe health and well-being to all citizens and residents alike, as we look forward to starting the recovery phase soon, together with everyone's efforts," Al Musafir added.

SECOND EDITION

Zubair International U-16 Classic Chess Championship sees great participant turnout

MUSCAT: The second edition of the Zubair International U-16 Classic Chess Championship witnessed a great turnout from participants across all nationalities. This was after the opening of registration that took place recently for this tournament, which will run from July 11 to 14. The number of participants has reached more than 50 participants so far, noting that the registration is still open until July 10, 2021.

This tournament stems from the framework of The Zubair Corporation's adoption of the activities of the Oman Chess Committee. This is to encourage talented youths, develop them and enhance their chess abilities, through their interaction and participation in various local and external competitions. In addition, it motivates and supports them to do more through participation in such competitions.

The tournament has been approved and implemented virtually via the lichess.org website, taking into account the prevailing health conditions. Players wishing to participate in the tournament must have an account on the lichess.org website, provided that all final stage players are monitored via 'Zoom'. Those wishing to participate must register via the link: https://forms.gle/McGTAcr-5zcS7AqEL8.

The tournament's system follows the regulations and laws of the International Chess Federation for remote Internet tournaments. Each players' pairing will be merged through the Swiss Manager Programme. Nine rounds will be played according to the Swiss system, giving each player five minutes with the addition of two seconds after each move in the qualifying stage. The top 40 players will qualify for the finals.

Commenting on the launch of the second edition of this tournament next week, Hilal Al Siyabi, Chief Corporate Services Officer at the Zubair Corporation said, "We are extremely pleased with the high turnout of participants in the second edition of the tournament, which is a positive indication of the wide popularity of chess among young members of the society. At The Zubair Corporation, we aim to support young talents in chess, especially the outputs of the Zubair Chess Centres.

"This way we can contribute to raising the spirit of competition and enthusiasm and raising youth awareness of the importance of these activities in enhancing commitment and raising their IQ. This support is aligned within the framework of The Zubair Corporation's strategy to adopt several sports, cultural and community initiatives to serve the local community through its partnerships with many government and private entities."

Ahmed Darwish Al Balushi, Chairman of the Oman Chess Committee said, "The tournament is a continuation of the cooperative efforts with The Zubair Corporation, to discover young Omani talents in chess, who are capable of achieving advanced positions in local and external competitions. We would like to highlight that participation is open to all players of all nationalities and we look forward to benefiting Omani players from this competition and achieving advanced results."

The first edition of this tournament witnessed the participation of nearly 60 male and female players from 6 countries (Sultanate of Oman, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Yemen, India and Pakistan), including 23 international ranked players. The first three are the Indian international player Arberry Armstrong with a rating of 1551, our national junior team player, Hammoud Al Busaidi, with a rating of 1453 and the Qatar national team player Irfan Mohammed, with a rating of 1255.

The Zubair Chess Centers are spread in various governorates of the Sultanate. Currently, there are 10 centres located in the governorates of A'Dhahirah, A'Dakhiliyah, North and South Al Batinah, Muscat, Musandam, South A'Sharqiyah, Dhofar, Al Buraimi, and Al Wusta in Duqm.

LUXURY VEHICLE

Mercedes-Benz Oman announces its latest collection of Certified Pre-Owned cars

MUSCAT: Inviting customers to discover the ultimate in vehicle innovation, comfort and style, Mercedes-Benz Oman has announced its latest collection of Certified Pre-Owned cars.

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RECOGNITION

Lulu Group among Deloitte's Top Global Retailers List 2021

DUBAI: Two retail giants from the UAE have made it to the world's top 250 most powerful retailers. International consultancy Deloitte's 'Global Power of Retailing 2021, has ranked the UAE-based Lulu Group and Majid Al Futtaim Holding among the powerful retail brands.

Lulu Group - which operates hypermarkets and superstores across 10 countries - posted $7.4 billion in revenues in the financial year ending 2019, achieving a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5 per cent. The UAE-headquartered Lulu has 210 stores across GCC, Egypt, India, Indonesia and Malaysia.

While Majid Al Futtaim Holding group revenues reached $9.57 billion, it posted group net retail income of $7.65 billion with CAGR retail revenue of 6.5 per cent, reveals Deloitte report.

The list is led by US giants with Wal-Mart Stores at No.1 followed by Amazon, Costco Wholesale Corp., Schwarz Group, The Kroger Co. among others. US$ 4.85 trillion is the total aggregate retail revenue generated by the Top 250 retailers with 4.4% composite year over year retail revenue growth.

Some of the key impacts of Covid-19 on leading global retailers as per the report are essential versus non-essential retail, reduced demand, enforced store closure, travels bans etc. On the other hand, online retailers have benefited from consumers aversion to in-store shopping due to the pandemic crisis. However, leading retailers were able to capitalise on the new consumer opportunities presented by the pandemic, particularly online shopping and delivery and were able to continue trading from their stores.

Since the start of the pandemic, the Lulu group opened 26 new hypermarkets and supermarkets, including 4 e-commerce fulfilment centres across the region.

"No doubt these are very challenging times and we had to delay our expansion plans last year due to lock-downs and COVID restrictions, but now we are fully back on track to open 30 new hypermarkets and 10 e-commerce fulfilment centres in the GCC, Egypt and the Far East by the end of this year. Dubai Expo 2020 coupled with fast-improving health and safety situation is sure to boost the market sentiments sooner than later," commented Yusuffali MA, Chairman of Lulu Group.

MARKETING TALENT

Sarah Khaled featured on Hotelier 2021 Power List

MUSCAT: The annual 'Power List' has been finally revealed by Hotelier Middle East to celebrate the success of marketing industry professionals from all around the region. The Power List for 2021 featured the top 50 hotel marketing talents playing a key role in shaping and deciding the future of the industry across the Middle East.

After a long selection process, Sarah Khaled, Director of Marketing and Communications for Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah, Muscat and Shangri-La Al Husn, Muscat has been selected and featured as the only representation from the hospitality landscape in Oman; due to her continuous business-focused approach on driving results paired with innovation during the pandemic.

Sarah Khaled, Director of Marketing and Communications for Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah and Shangri-La Al Husn is featured as the only representation from Oman hospitality landscape

Sarah has 15 years of progressive experience in luxury hospitality, and she has been the mastermind behind the "Largest Collection of National Flags by The Sea of Oman" on Shangri-La's expansive beach during Oman's 50th National Day in 2020 which has generated massive interest and exposure within Oman. She has also led a "Limited Edition" e-voucher sale drive for the first time in Oman and over four days, it has resulted in purchases of 714 room vouchers, 112 dining vouchers and 385 hotel day use vouchers.

From a communications perspective, Sarah drove 300 pieces of media coverage during quarter one in 2021 which has generated around 49 million impressions for Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah.

Area General Manager for Shangri-La Resorts in Oman, René D. Egle said, "Sarah's showstopper ideas and campaigns have been the highlight of our market exposure and business results during the past period; as she has been a key member on the senior management team in orchestrating consecutive stories of success since 2020. I am very proud that one of our colleagues has been chosen for the 2021 Hotelier Middle East Power List, which is a real accolade not only for Sarah but for all of us here at Shangri-La."

ROUND-UP

Ford Expedition: The unstoppable large SUV

Coming from the Ford stable, this family-size large SUV empowers you to make a lasting mark on every journey

MUSCAT: The Ford Expedition's sheer size, build quality and powerful performance, offers a unique advantage of taking people places without worry.

Coming from the Ford stable, this family-size large SUV empowers you to make a lasting mark on every journey.

Powered by a 3.5-litre EcoBoost engine with standard Auto Start-Stop plus a class-exclusive new 10-speed automatic transmission, the Expedition offers best-in-class fuel economy and power, with up to 400 horsepower and 650Nm torque available.

An available electronic limited-slip differential on models with Intelligent 4WD enables improved off-road capability by sending power where it's needed.

The Expedition offers more driver-assist technologies than any other full-size SUV. In addition, an all-new high-strength, aluminium-alloy body and redesigned high-strength steel frame form the foundation for Expedition's rugged off-road and strong towing capabilities. More than 40 features and driver-assist technologies in the Expedition help make the journey as enjoyable as the destination. These include class-exclusive enhanced active park assist to easily pull in and out of parking spots, as well as available 360-degree camera technology to help customers see more around their Expedition for easier parking.

The Adaptive Cruise Control keeps a constant speed without having to work the brake or accelerator pedals – plus it automatically maintains a comfortable distance from vehicles ahead, once a pre-set distance has been set. Newly added stop-and-go functionality uses radar and cameras to scan the road ahead and detect slower-moving traffic travelling in the same lane. The auto-hold feature keeps the vehicle at a complete stop without the driver having to press and hold the brake pedal. If the vehicle has stopped for more than three seconds, the driver can tap the resume button or press the accelerator and the vehicle will return to its pre-set speed.

Expedition's collision avoidance detection system helps drivers avoid other vehicles or pedestrians, while the available Blind Spot Information System helps monitor blind spots outside the driver's immediate view. In addition, Expedition offers available new connectivity technologies and convenience features, including – Wireless charging, SYNC® 3, Power in every row: With four 12-volt power points, six USB chargers and a 220-volt power outlet that lets passengers stay charged and connected; Advanced cargo manager with an adjustable shelf, and Panoramic Vista Roof.

The Ford Expedition also offers the best towing capability of any full-size SUV, together with features such as Pro Trailer Backup Assist, which makes backing up a trailer as easy as turning a knob. Plus, an available hands-free liftgate makes loading cargo easy.

The Expedition has a roomy, flexible interior. With seating for up to eight people and their gear, this full-size SUV makes modern family adventures more comfortable during short and long trips alike.

The Expedition is the first full-size utility to feature a sliding second-row seat with tip-and-slide functionality, providing easy access to the third row without the need to first remove a child safety seat. Once in the third row, even adults will appreciate more legroom and reclining seats.

Those interested in experiencing the Ford Expedition can visit their nearest Ford showroom.

In Oman, Ford vehicles are brought to you by Arabian Car Marketing Co.

STABLE

AM Best affirms credit ratings of National Life and General Insurance

MUSCAT: AM Best has affirmed the Financial Strength Rating of B++ (Good) and the Long-Term Issuer Credit Rating of "bbb+" (Good) of National Life and General Insurance Company (NLGIC) (Oman). The outlook of these Credit Ratings (ratings) is stable.

The ratings reflect NLGIC's balance sheet strength, which AM Best assesses as very strong, as well as its strong operating performance, limited business profile and appropriate enterprise risk management.

NLGIC's balance sheet strength assessment is underpinned by its risk-adjusted capitalisation at the strongest level, as measured by Best's Capital Adequacy Ratio (BCAR), and benefits from a conservative investment strategy and a reinsurance panel of good credit quality. The balance sheet strength assessment also factors in the company's good level of liquidity and absence of financial leverage.

A partially offsetting rating factor is the concentration of the company's assets to the Gulf Cooperation Council region, particularly Oman.

The company's balance sheet strength assessment also takes into account the economic, political and financial system risks associated with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Oman, where the company operates.

NLGIC has a track record of strong operating performance, as evidenced by a five-year (2016-2020) weighted average return-on-equity ratio of 18.8%. The company's earnings are attributable primarily to the solid underwriting returns from its non-life portfolio, which translated into a five-year weighted average combined ratio of 92.1%.

NLGIC's 2020 technical results benefited from a reduction in claims frequency driven by the governmental restrictions imposed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular, on its primary medical and motor lines of business.

AM Best expects NLGIC's investment returns to remain modest, reflecting a conservative investment portfolio, although yields should increase moderately, as the company shifts part of its cash holdings to fixed-income securities.

NLGIC has a concentrated underwriting portfolio, with medical business accounting for over 80% of gross written premium. The company is the leading medical underwriter in Oman and has an established presence in the UAE.

INAUGURATION

Alfardan Motors opens its renovated showroom in Muscat

MUSCAT: Alfardan Motors, the official Ferrari importer in Oman, celebrated the inauguration of its newly renovated Ferrari showroom this week.

Located in Muscat, Oman, the showroom offers the Prancing Horse brand's discerning clientele and prospective owners the opportunity to experience the famous brand in an immersive state-of-the-art facility.

The event was enhanced with the presentation of the Ferrari Portofino M, a few short months following its online premiere during the Covid-19 crisis.

Omar Alfardan, President and CEO, Alfardan Group, said: "Our new showroom undoubtedly represents an exciting new chapter for Ferrari in Oman, worthy of the legendary Italian brand and its popularity in Oman. We have always been committed to offering our customers the highest standards of service and maximum ownership value, and we look forward to continuing fulfilling this vision of excellence at the brand's new home in Oman."

The new Ferrari showroom located in Al Azaiba, Muscat, offers a total dimension of 800m2 and features a main display area accommodating the entire Ferrari range. Sitting alongside a spacious client area, guests can relax and enjoy an Italian-inspired coffee bar while experiencing a warm community feel.

The opening of our expanded and fully renovated showroom underlines the importance of the Ferraristi in Oman. The space is equipped with state-of-the-art interactive screens, innovative lighting systems and a new lounge area. Additionally, clients and prospective owners can use the Configurator Room allowing them the opportunity to interact with products virtually and tailor cars to suit their taste, while leveraging from a broad range of modification options.

ONLINE CLASSES

be'ah Academy returns with two successful programmes on holistic sustainability practices

MUSCAT: Bouyed by their remarkable success, be'ah Academy, the capacity building unit of be'ah Oman (Environmental Services Holding Company be'ah) has announced that its Environmental Management Accreditation Programme and the Certified Sustainability Practitioner Programme will start online from September 2021.

be'ah Academy will provide the Environmental Management Accreditation Program in collaboration with the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment(IEMA), which is a global institute with over 15,000 specialists in the field of environment and sustainability as members.

This year's programme will outline the implications of global trends on the environment, society, economy and organisations. It will cover sustainable business/governance principles and their relationship with organisations, products and services other than the relationship between environmental principles and organisations, products and services, major policy and legislation.

Apart from these, it will delve into important tools, techniques, systems and practices used to improve sustainability performance, the role of innovation and other leading practices in developing sustainable products and services and solutions. Participants will learn how effective sustainable solutions can be arrived at by collecting, analysing, and evaluating information besides research and planning.

They will gain insights into the role of effective communication, feedback, engagement with stakeholders, tools and techniques in identifying opportunities and risks and propose ways to improve performance and support transformation that further promotes sustainability.

The Certified Sustainability Practitioner Programme, meanwhile, will be delivered in collaboration with the Center for Sustainability and Excellence (CSE), a specialised organisation in consultancy, training and global sustainability headquartered in Chicago, US.

The Certified Sustainability Practitioner Programme comprises a number of modules covering several topics including Sustainability (CSR) and the Business Case for Adoption, Global and Local Legislation for Sustainability and GHG Emissions, Sustainability Strategy & Widely Used Standards & ESG Ratings, Sustainability (ESG) Reporting based on GRI and other ESG Guidelines, Responsible Communication and How to Avoid Green & Blue Washing, Circular Economy, Importance of Sustainability in Supply Chain and carbon reduction strategies. The list of global institutions and companies that has benefited from this program includes NASA, Pfizer pharmaceuticals company, Coca-Cola Company, Nestle, DHL, Panasonic, in addition to United Airlines.

Commenting on the courses, Eng Muhanad bin Yehya Al Juma, manager, be'ah Academy, said: "These two programs showcase how the academy is striving to incorporate all leading global practices and issues pertaining to environmental sustainability into its capacity building and educational initiatives. A deeper understanding of issues becomes a good starting point for effective sustainable solutions. Environmental Management Accreditation Programme and the Certified Sustainability Practitioner Programme have met with remarkable success over the last two years, and are a vital contributor to meeting Oman Vision 2040 targets on environmental sustainability, and building Omani competencies in Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) aspects."

He added, "Upon successfully completing these courses, participants will gain the internationally recognised Sustainability Practitioners (CSR-P) certificate and IEMA membership (CMI) that will assist them in building a specialised career along with their management and leadership skills."

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