

NEW BATCH OF FEMALE CITIZENS JOINS ROP

The Royal Oman Police, in coordination with the Ministry of Labour, received on Sunday a new batch of female citizens having a general education diploma qualification for military and academic training. **>A2**



OMAN CONDEMNS BURNING OF HOLY QURAN

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman has expressed its strong condemnation of extremists' burning a copy of the Holy Quran in Sweden. In a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry, Oman voiced its denunciation of such provocative actions that provoke Muslims' feelings and incite violence and hatred. In this context, Oman stressed the need for concerted international efforts to consolidate the values of tolerance, coexistence and respect. Oman also lays emphasis on criminalizing all acts that promote the ideology of extremism and hatred or offend religions and beliefs. — **ONA**

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SAI

Over OMR76 million collection helps swell State Budget 2021

MUSCAT: More than OMR76 million was collected, recovered and realised in favour of State Budget 2021 as a result of inspection conducted by the State's Audit Institution (SAI).

This indicates the existence of many positive effects in the action undertaken to achieve direct added value from the procedures of sums' collection and recovery in favour of the State Budget.

In its operations aimed at enhancing integrity, the SAI dealt with 101 cases against which verdicts were issued and these included cases of forgery in official documents and a party's use of a forged document, despite being aware of the fraud.

Such cases also included entering data into a government information system in an illegal way, asking for a bribe, squandering

public money, a state employee's misuse of official position, and breach of job duties.

The inspection brief also covered other types of audit missions, scrutiny of direct added value and comments from units of the State's Administrative Apparatus (government departments), public authorities and establishments, commercial firms and oil and gas companies.

The SAI has been keen on professional attention when handling complaints and reports filed by social segments via existing channels of communication associated with financial and administrative offences, negligence, failure to perform job duties and manipulation of public funds.

As many as 505 complaints and reports were filed in 2021. — **ONA**



MINISTERIAL DECISION RAISES VALUE OF HOUSING ASSISTANCE



OMR25,000
ELIGIBLE FAMILIES
CONSISTING OF TWO TO
THREE MEMBERS ARE
ENTITLED TO OMR25,000
HOUSING ASSISTANCE TO
BUILD OR RECONSTRUCT
A RESIDENCE

is set at OMR30,000 for eligible families consisting of 4 or more members, provided the area of the constructed residence (to be built or reconstructed) shall not be less than 190 sqm. In the event of beneficiaries contributing towards the value, the area shall not be more than 300 sqm.

The decision applies to all cases that have not been financially bound until its date.

Article (18) of the previous ministerial decision No. 6/2011 had set the value of the housing assistance at a maximum of OMR20,000 and allowed the minister to raise the value of the housing assistance for those inhabiting areas in difficult terrain. **>A3**

The new ministerial decision seeks to cement social ties and enhance the stability of families

Times News Service

MUSCAT: In a major decision, the Minister of Housing and Urban Planning has raised the financial assistance to needy families for building or rebuilding their houses.

Dr. Khalfan Said Al Shu'aali, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning, issued Decision No. 9/2023 amending Article (18) of

the previous ministerial decision No. 6/2011 on the value of housing assistance offered to entitled citizens.

The decision reflects the ministry's concern for needy segments of society that are beneficiaries of the Social Housing Programme serving families of the disabled and social security families.

According to the decision, eligible families consisting of 2 to

three members are entitled to OMR25,000 housing assistance to build or reconstruct a residence. This is on condition that the constructed area is not less than 140 sqm, and in case the beneficiary contributes towards the value, the area should not be more than 250 sqm.

The value of housing assistance

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN Oman, Bahrain hold bilateral talks

1 Sheikh Khalifa Ali Al Harthy, Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry for Diplomatic Affairs received on Sunday Dr. Mohammed Ali Bahzad, Bahrain's Undersecretary for Consular and Administrative Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The two sides reviewed bilateral relations and means of enhancing them. They also exchanged views on cooperation in consular and administrative affairs between the two foreign ministries. **>A2**



WORLD Nine killed in mass shooting in California

2 Nine people were killed and several others hurt when a gunman opened fire at a dance studio in the US state of California on Saturday night. The shooting occurred at Monterey Park around 10 pm near the site of a Chinese Lunar New Year celebration, the US newspaper reported citing law enforcement sources and witnesses. Tens of thousands of people gathered on Saturday for the start of Lunar New Year festivities, one of the largest events in the region. **>A6**

SPORTS Rybakina edges past top seed Iga Swiatek

3 In a fourth-round showdown No.22 seed Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan upset World No.1 Iga Swiatek of Poland to make her first Australian Open quarterfinal at Rod Laver Arena on Sunday. Rybakina produced a sublime game, defeating World No. 1 Swiatek 6-4, 6-4. Indian tennis ace Sania Mirza's women's doubles career at the Grand Slam came to an end after she suffered a Round 2 defeat in the Australian Open 2023 on Sunday. **>A8**



Heritage Ministry unveils 2023 key festivals

A5

WEATHER

THE HIGHEST AND LOWEST TEMPERATURES RECORDED DURING THE LAST 24 HOURS

THE LOWEST FIVE TEMPERATURES	THE HIGHEST FIVE TEMPERATURES
-3.4°C JABAL SHAMS	28.2°C SALALAH PORT
3.8°C SAIQ	27.6°C SALALAH
8.2°C YANQUL	27.5°C MIRBAT
10.7°C THUMRAIT	27.4°C SHALIM
11.1°C SUNAYNAH	27.1°C SADAH

Oman freezes: Temperatures drop to -3.4 degrees Celsius

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The lowest temperature recorded in the Sultanate of Oman on Sunday was in Jabal Shams, which was -3.4 degrees Celsius.

According to the Oman Meteorology, Jabal Shams station in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate recorded -3.4 degrees Celsius, which was the lowest temperature among all the weather stations during the last 24 hours, followed by Saiq in South Al Sharqiyah Governorate with 3.8 degrees Celsius.

Jabal Shams literally means the

"Sun Mountain" in Arabic because it is the first place to get sunrise for having the highest peak in Oman.

Highest temperature

Salalah Port, however, recorded the highest temperature in Oman with 28.2 degrees Celsius and Muscat governorate recorded 18 degrees. Officials said that temperatures may drop further from Tuesday as it will be affected by a low-pressure starting from Tuesday until the end of the week.

During this time, northern governorates and the coast of Arabian Sea will be affected by rains of

varying intensity.

In its 24-hour outlook, the Meteorology Department said: "Clear to partly cloudy skies over most of the northern governorates of the Sultanate of Oman with chance of isolated rain over Musandam governorate and the coastal areas of the Sea of Oman and Dhofar, and clear skies over rest of the governorates. Chances of late night to early morning low clouds or fog over parts over Dhofar and Al Wusta."

The sea state along most of the coastal areas of Oman with maximum wave height of 2.0 metres.



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MUSCAT



Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Labor

TENDER
ANNOUNCEMENT

The Internal Tender Committee at the Ministry of Labour announces the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender title	Last date for tender purchase online	Bid submission date
01/2023	Providing cleaning and gardening services to the building of the Directorate General of Labour in South Al-Sharqiyah Governorate	Sunday 12/02/2023 2:00 pm	Sunday 05/03/2023 10 a.m.

- Specialized establishments may obtain the tender's documents online through the following link, starting from Monday 23/01/2023 at 08:00 am:
[/https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om](https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om)
- Each bid shall enclose a tender bond for 1% of the total bid value in the form of a bank guarantee or certified cheque issued by a local bank in favor of the Ministry of Labour and valid for 90 days from the date of bid submission.
- Bids shall be submitted online along with the bank guarantee by the bank, provided that the original bank guarantee shall be submitted upon request by the Ministry.
- Bids shall be opened at 11:00 am on Sunday 05/03/2023.

(The Ministry shall not be bound to accept the lowest or any other bid)

labour_OMAN



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MEETING

Sheikh Khalifa, Bahraini official hold bilateral talks



MUSCAT: Sheikh Khalifa Ali Al Harthy, Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry for Diplomatic Affairs received here on Sunday Dr. Mohammed Ali Bahzad, Bahrain's Undersecretary for Consular and Administrative Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The two sides reviewed bilateral relations and means of enhancing them. They also exchanged views on cooperation in consular and administrative affairs between the two foreign ministries. The meeting was attended by

Sheikh Ahmed Hashel Al Maskari, Head of the GCC Department at the Foreign Ministry, Dr. Juma Ahmed Al Ka'abi, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the Sultanate of Oman. It was also attended by officials from both sides. -ONA

TRAINING

New batch of female citizens joins Royal Oman Police



MUSCAT: The Royal Oman Police, in coordination with the Ministry of Labour, received on Sunday a new batch of female citizens having a general education diploma qualification for military and academic training. They will be recruited as policewomen after passing the stages of assessment and admission to the Royal Oman Police. The recruitment is in line with empowering women to carry out their work and duties and help the nation in its progress and development. The Royal Oman Police is working to provide a model environment for the training of new recruits at the hands of specialised cadres of trainers at the Women's Police Institute at the Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences

so that they can qualify to join the work in the various formations of the Royal Oman Police and perform the national duty efficiently and competently alongside their colleagues at work from both male and female police officers in Sultanate of Oman. -ONA

MINISTRY OF LABOUR

Conference on human resource management to start in February



MUSCAT: The 6th annual conference of the Omani Society for Human Resource Management (OSHRM), organised in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, will kick off on 7 February 2023 under the theme "The New Era of Work". The three-day conference aims to develop human resources and enhance human capital. This was announced during a press conference on the event. Dr. Ghalib Saif Al Hosni, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Omani Society for Human Resources Management, said that the conference gains impetus from developments in the human resources sector. It reflects the progress made by the sector in a manner that keeps pace with the government's aspirations and vision, he explained. Al Hosni added that the conference caps up success stories of the previous five editions, which saw wide participation in the local and international spheres, thanks to the competence of lecturers and the quality of scholarly materials.

In his turn, Dr. Muhammed Mustafa Al Najjar, Director General of Training at the Ministry of Labour, affirmed that the conference will represent an opportunity to explore developments related to human resources through practices, theories, research and studies. The event also touches on developing the human resources system and strives to achieve integration between the public and private sectors. Further, Manal Amir Al Harthy, Member of the Board of Directors and Head of the Organising Committee of the Conference, said that the conference will bring together specialists from Oman and beyond. During the event, various related experiences in the public and private sectors will be reviewed. The event also highlights major challenges in this sector. -ONA

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CDAA

Two children injured by rockslide in Muscat

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Two children were injured when debris from nearby mountain fell on their house in Darsait area of Muttrah wilayat. The house has suffered damage in the rockslide and rescue teams have rushed to the site, said the Civil Defence and Am-

bulance Authority (CDAA). A statement from the CDAA said: "The rescue and ambulance teams responded to a report of a rockslide from a mountain on a house in the Darsait area of Muttrah. The accident resulted in minor injury to two children who were taken to the hospital for treatment."



COMMENTARY

Is Oman a heaven on earth in January?



SALEH AL-SHAIBANY

A group of European tourists whom I met on the beach last week were impressed about Oman as the weather has now cooled making it easier for them to visit many of the attractions across the country. They have been in Oman for a week and plan to extend another week to explore the country more. One of them, to my surprise, said "Oman is a heaven on earth in January." He described towns like Jabal Al Akhdhar, the desert, beaches and the mountains as "spectacular." I nodded in agreement but his enthusiasm made me think. If a group of tourists like him find Oman "a heaven" in the winter why we are not doing enough to promote the country? He said that there was natural beauty surrounding every city, town or village in the Sultanate. He noted that all was needed is the re-branding of the country with more efforts. I think many Omanis do not "see" their country the way a foreign visitor sees it. They look the other way when the mist descends on the peaks of the mountains or the fluffiness of the clouds hover over the horizon. That particular tourist was impressed about the drive he took to various towns of Oman. He 'noticed' that every area he went was different from the last one. He even said villages and towns had "their own unique signature" of attractions. He was surprised to notice that



there were not enough visitors exploring on the "natural beauty" in those areas. I simply had no answer to his queries. He invited me for coffee to show me all the photos and videos he took during his visit. He was 'bubbling' with enthusiasm as he spoke describing all the attractions in different locations he visited. He said he would be back next winter to visit places he had no time to visit. He even took out his notebook to jot down the places he should visit next year when he returns. We shook hands before we parted company and exchanged contacts. Hours later, I was watching Oman Television broadcasting a documentary of local culture and tradition. It was all in Arabic and that made think about the whole thing. Why channels like Oman Television do not regularly do the

same documentaries, with a little modification, but in English language to be screened in different countries? All it needs is a little more concentration on branding Oman as a destination of natural surrounding and rich heritage to bring in more visitors for the economy to receive a boost. Sometimes a vision is not enough but the willingness to make things happen is important. Oman can easily attract more than 10 million tourists a year. Tourism will also help local suppliers and service providers with the extra cash they need to survive to give a boost to rural areas economy. There are many winners in tourism development. All it needs is a little more effort to create awareness to commercialise the hospitality industry by giving it more credibility it deserves.

CHANGE TO THE BETTER

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MINISTRY OF INTERIOR

Dates set for submitting papers for Shura polls

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Interior has issued a decision defining the period of submitting applications for candidacy to the Shura Council 10th Term Membership. The applications can be submitted between 29 January and 16 February 2023, according to the decision, which also set 3 September 2023 as the deadline for withdrawing such candidacy. The ministry alerts eligible citizens to submit their applications via the elections' website (elections.om), after filling the subscribed forms available at the website and attaching all required documents. No applications for candidacy can be ac-



cepted if received after the set dates or delivered by means other than the stated website.

-ONA

HOUSING ASSISTANCE

< FROM A1 New ministerial decision

The new ministerial decision seeks to cement social ties and enhance the stability of families, besides consolidating partnership and cooperation with the private sector. The step also takes into consideration current demographic and economic developments like the high value of building materials, the VAT and improving the quality of the residences. In 2019, the number of beneficiaries of the Housing Assistance

Programme stood at more than 1,000 families with a total cost of more than OMR41 million. In 2020, the number of beneficiaries stood at 600 families to the tune of more than OMR15 million. In 2021, the number of beneficiaries stood at 1,261 families with a total cost of more than OMR30 million. In 2022, the number of beneficiaries stood at 1,478 families with a total cost of more than OMR35 million.

-With ONA inputs

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A WORLD FULL OF INTERACTION, ENTERTAINMENT AND IMAGINATION

While the laser show illuminates the entire area in Qurum Natural Park, Naseem Garden reflects the depth of friendship between the participating countries and the Sultanate of Oman. The participation of the Bahrain Society for the Development of Small and Medium Enterprises through a mini-exhibition reflects the culture of the place and the flags of the two neighbouring countries with similar history and friendship that linked them as well as the rest of the Gulf states flutter at the entrance.

The Oman Automobile Association has several activities and stage shows to attract visitors. A theatrical and lyrical performance was held by Ace the Whitebeaders, an Omani youth troupe that presents theatrical art. It targets and promotes a renewed youthful taste and deals with the

interests of the current generation of youth. There are also many electronic games rooms to keep pace with the interests of young people who love technology and play in the virtual world.

There are a variety of artistic performances at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre with a show called 'Winter Show in the Forest'. It is a circus that simulates the North Pole in a carnival style. The show for children presented by Mr. Bob, is a world full of interaction, fun and imagination.

Muscat Municipality has stressed on the importance of pre-booking of the tickets to enter the venue. This is in order to ensure the smoothness of the entry process to the sites. In order to make it easier for the visitors and give them an opportunity to view the events and make selections, one should visit the link: <https://muscatnightslinks.com/>



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Ministry unveils its most prominent festivals that will be held this year

Organising those festivals is aimed at stimulating local tourism, promoting the heritage, natural and tourism elements, enhancing the Sultanate of Oman's position on the tourism map

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism held a press conference on Sunday to reveal the festivals that the Ministry will organise during 2023.

Organising those festivals is aimed at stimulating local tourism, promoting the heritage, natural and tourism elements, enhancing the Sultanate of Oman's rank on the tourism map and contributing to adding value to the local community by supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and increasing the number of reservations in hotels.

Azzan Qasim Al Busaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Tourism said that the Ministry will organise the Desert Adventures Festival at

A'Sharqiyah Sands in the Governorate of North A'Sharqiyah during the period from 29 January to 4 February 2023.

This festival will include various activities and will be held in cooperation with several public and private entities.

Al Busaidi pointed out that the Desert Adventures Festival aims at revitalising winter tourism in the governorate in general, and in the wilayat of Bidiyah in particular.

This year, Al Busaidi said, the Ministry will also launch the first edition of the Omani Maritime Heritage Festival, during the pe-

riod from 3 to 19 February 2023, in the Wilayat of Sur at the Governorate of South A'Sharqiyah.

This festivals will highlight the historical and present role of the Wilayat of Sur, as a commercial and historical hub and an area deeply related to ship building over centuries.

The Omani Maritime Heritage Festival, will include the Maritime Heritage Village, to tell the story of the maritime heritage that Sur is well-known for. It will also include an Omani Food Carnival, to host a series of interactive activities that allow visitors to explore several renowned Omani and international

dishes, with a focus on fresh local seafood.

The festival will also include a life simulation of the traditional sea voyage which embodies the historical journey of Omani ships to and from the Omani ports. Also, the simulation covers mechanism of transporting and loading goods and cargo in the past, accompanied by folk arts, Al Busaidi added.

The Undersecretary elaborated that this festival will also include side events such as a windsurfing experience, a sailing experience, marine championships for juniors and professionals, a sea fishing competition, a symposium on

itage, entertainment and adventure events, as well as several tourism experiences that are unique to the governorate. During the festival, several seminars and dialogue sessions will be held, in addition to a show of horses, camels and a gliding show, among other activities.

Furthermore, the Undersecretary pointed out that the Ministry is preparing to hold the second edition of the Empty Quarter Festival at the Wilayat of Thumrait, the Governorate of Dhofar, in the period from 25 January to 3 February. The event will be held in cooperation with several public and private entities.

The Empty Quarter Festival, he said, aims to shed light on prominent winter tourism features and attract investors to available investment opportunities in the governorate. The event will include various heritage, tourism, entertainment and sports activities, in addition to competitions and marketing exhibitions. — OMA

FOR HEALTHY LIVING

International medical conference on treatment of stroke and epilepsy held

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Lama Polyclinic and Muscat Family Physicians' Group in association with Apollo Hospital, Bengaluru and Global Treatment Services held a medical conference on 'Latest in the Treatment of a Stroke & Epilepsy' as a part of their annual Continuous Medical Education Programme.

"Stroke" is as common as heart attack worldwide! Unfortunately stroke awareness is poor in the general public and many are unaware of the newer modalities in the treatment of stroke.

Improvised imaging for the brain can pick up the stroke early and can even quantify the clot burden. Anybody with an acute stroke like symptoms like facial droop, speech issues, limb weakness or sudden blindness should immediately report to their nearest stroke ready hospital where procedures like angioplasty, clot removal and even brain vessel stenting can be performed which

can be potentially limb saving. More than 70 percent of patients have favourable outcomes if treated early.

This aspect was discussed in detail with illustrations of the cases by Dr Adoor Gurucharan, Consultant Neurologist.

Epilepsy today affects around over 50 million people in the world and around 500,000 are added to it every year.

Refractory cases

Around 70 percent of them are manageable with one, two or sometimes three anti-epileptic drugs. Of the remaining 30 percent

Refractory cases needs further detailed evaluation.

With the present knowledge and different imaging technologies over two in three of such non responders to medication, also called 'Refractory case' can be well controlled and even many of them can be 'cured' of seizures by different selective surgical procedures.

A big relief can be provided to such cases and the family of affected individuals and ultimately the Society.

Dr. Sudhir Pai, Sr. Consultant, Neurosurgery, discussed some of the cases, details of the investigative procedures and surgical modalities on the surgical options in Refractory Epilepsy.

The conference was attended by around 50 doctors practicing in Oman which included neurosurgeons, neurologists, internists, paediatricians and family physicians both from government and private sectors.

"Continuous Professional Development is essential for all medical professionals. New research and technologies are evolving at a great speed and one must attend these kind of conferences to keep abreast with the latest. We intend to continue the same at the same speed," Dr. Sanjay Dalal, Founder, Muscat Family Physicians' Group, the main organiser and co-ordinator said in his concluding address.



THE ROYAL GUARD OF OMAN

Tender Advertisement

The Royal Guard of Oman, announces the following tender:

Tender Reference	Subject	Tender Document Value	Bid Submission Date
02/2023	IT Network Infrastructure Upgrade at RGOTC	RO 500/- non-refundable	13th March 2023

Specialized Companies registered with the Government Tender Board, having Grade 1 & above, can collect the tender document from the Tender Committee Secretariat, The Royal Guard of Oman, Seeb during working hours from Monday 23rd January to Thursday 02nd February 2023.

Wax-sealed Tenders addressed to the Chairman - Tender Committee should be submitted to RGO before 1200 hours on the submission date along with a Tender Bond in the name of The Royal Guard of Oman equivalent to 1% (One Percent) of the tender value from any registered Bank in the Sultanate of Oman, valid for a period of 120 days from the date of bid submission. The tenderer should not reveal his identity other than the tender title and the address mentioned below.

No Tender will be accepted after the submission date. Tender submitted without the bond will be rejected.

The Royal Guard of Oman reserves the right to accept or reject any Tender without giving reasons.

Tender Committee
P.O Box 381C.P.O
Postal Code 111

Nine people killed in mass shooting in US

The shooting occurred at Monterey Park around 10 pm local time near the site of a Chinese Lunar New Year celebration

CALIFORNIA: Nine people were killed and several others hurt when a gunman opened fire at a dance studio in the US state of California on Saturday night, according to media report.

The shooting occurred at Monterey Park around 10 pm local time near the site of a Chinese Lunar New Year celebration, the US newspaper reported citing law enforcement sources and witnesses.

Tens of thousands of people gathered on Saturday for the start of Lunar New Year festivities, one of the largest events in the region. The injured were taken to multiple hospitals in the area, said the report. It was unclear whether a



suspect was in custody.

Chinese Lunar New Year celebration is one of the largest events in the area, as per the media report. Internal police communications have revealed that there have been some fatalities.

Earlier on Saturday, people were enjoying skewers and shopping for Chinese food and jewellery.

The New Year festivities were scheduled from 10am to 9pm. Videos that have surfaced on social media showed the presence of police and fire units on Garvey Avenue and treating victims.

The media report said injured people were moved to multiple hospitals in the region.

Seung Won Choi, who owns the Clam House seafood barbecue across the street from where the shooting took place said that three people rushed into his restaurant and told him to lock the door, according to the report.

The report added that three people told him that there was a man with a machine gun in the region. According to Choi, people also told him that the shooter had multiple rounds of ammunition on him.

— DW

WITHIN A MONTH

Burkina Faso orders French troops to leave

OUAGADOUGOU: Burkino Faso's government on Saturday ordered French troops to depart the country within a month.

National broadcaster RTB announced the decision, citing the official government press agency.

Agence d'Information du Burkina said the actual decision to end the deployment of French troops on Burkinabe soil was made on Wednesday. Hundreds demonstrated in the capital Ouagadougou on Friday, chanting anti-France slogans and calling upon the French army to leave the country.

Some of the tensions have to do with the perception that the French military presence has done little to improve security in the conflict-torn country.

The decision comes five months after France pulled its last remaining troops from Mali after nine years of operation, after falling out with Malian authorities. — DW

BILATERAL COLLABORATION

Scholz and Macron celebrate 60 years of Elysee Treaty

PARIS: German Chancellor Olaf Scholz met with his French counterpart, Emmanuel Macron, in Paris on Sunday to mark 60 years since the signing of the Elysee Treaty.

Speaking at the Sorbonne University, Germany's Scholz said the future of Europe rested on the "driving force" of Paris and Berlin.

"The German-French engine is a machine for compromise — well oiled, but from time to time also loud and marked by hard work," the German chancellor said.

Addressing the Ukraine war, Scholz said France and Germany would back Ukraine "as long as necessary."

The Elysee Treaty between France and Germany, sealed in 1963, laid the foundation for close bilateral collaboration between the two former enemies.

Scholz, Macron, and around 300 lawmakers from both countries gathered at the French capital's Sorbonne University for a ceremony to celebrate the occasion.

Later in the day, the French and German Cabinets are to take part in a joint Council of Ministers at the Elysee Palace. The two rounds of talks are expected to focus on energy and economic policy, then security and defense. Military aid for Ukraine is also reportedly on the agenda.

The gathering will be the first in-person meeting of its kind between the two governments since 2019. The joint discussions had initially been planned for October but were canceled at short notice, sparking concerns about strained Franco-German relations. Both sides have since reaffirmed their close cooperation.

Scholz and Macron are expected to hold a joint press conference later in the day, followed by dinner at a Paris restaurant.

The Elysee Treaty was signed by then French President Charles de Gaulle and West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer on January 22, 1963. — DW





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MERRYMAKING JAMBOREE

Buckingham Palace reveals details of King Charles' coronation



LONDON: King Charles III, whose coronation is scheduled in May 2023 will include a star-studded Windsor Castle concert, reported Buckingham Palace's press release.

Late Saturday, Buckingham Palace announced details of a three-day merrymaking jamboree that will rival Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee last June. Among the highlights: a star-studded concert at Windsor Castle, a nationwide series of street parties and a national volunteering campaign, branded "The Big Help Out."

"Buckingham Palace is pleased to announce further details on the ceremonial, celebratory and community events that will take place over the Coronation Weekend between Saturday 6th and Monday 8th May 2023," read the release.

As per the plans the coronation of King Charles and her Queen Consort, Camilla will take place at Westminster Abbey on Saturday 6th May 2023.

"The Service will be conducted by the Archbishop of Canterbury. As previously announced, the Service will reflect the Monarch's role today and look towards the future, while being rooted in longstanding traditions and pageantry," read Buckingham Palace's release.

Across the Coronation Weekend, there will be further opportunities for people to come together in celebration of the historic occasion.

On Sunday, 7th May 2023, a special Coronation Concert will be staged and broadcast live at Windsor Castle by the BBC and BBC Studios, with several thousand pairs of tickets to be made available via a public ballot.

The Coronation Big Lunch, at which neighbours and communities are invited to share food and fun together, will take place across the country on the same date. On Monday, 8th May 2023, members of the public will be invited to take part in The Big Help Out, added the release.

"Their Majesties The King and The Queen Consort will arrive at Westminster Abbey in procession from Buckingham Palace, known as 'The King's Procession'. After the Service, Their Majesties will return to Buckingham Palace in a larger ceremonial procession, known as 'The Coronation Procession'. Their Majesties will be joined in this procession by other Members of the Royal Family," added the release.

— DW

CHILD TRAFFICKING

The murky world of foreign child adoption in Africa

LUSAKA: It should have been a dream come true for Damir M and his wife, Nadica; Subosic Z and his wife, Azra; Ladislav P and his wife, Aleksandr; and Noah K and his wife, Ivona.

The four Croatian couples had finally adopted their children from the Democratic Republic of Congo, or so they believed.

But before they could board their flight to Croatia, Zambian authorities detained the four couples, claiming the children's adoption papers were falsified. Now, all eight face child trafficking charges.

The Croatians have spent at least a month in detention since December 2020, and were only recently granted bail by a Zambian court.

DW reached out to the Zambian Immigration Department; the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services, which currently has custody of the children; and the Congolese embassy. However, none were willing to comment on the case.

EU closely following the case

The Delegation of the European Union (EU) in Zambia told DW that it has been closely monitoring the case, especially since Croatia — an EU member — does not have an embassy in Zambia.

"As an institution, we are interested in this case because it involves citizens from a European country," Elias Banda, the EU Del-



egation in Zambia press and information officer, said.

"In this particular case, the Croatians did not contact any member state. Instead, they decided to contact their own government, [which is] represented by an embassy in Pretoria, [which has] been in constant touch with these people," Banda said.

Discourse about foreign adoptions

The case has re-ignited the old debate about child adoptions in Africa involving Western nationals. Critics argue that in some cases the practice has facilitated child trafficking. At the same time, supporters believe adoptions help reduce the burden of feeding, clothing, and sheltering orphaned kids in institutions and families that struggle to raise their children due to poverty.

"Lately, there's been a lot of [human] trafficking cases that have been intercepted by the police, especially enroute to other countries," Josaphat Njovu, executive director of Advocacy for Child Justice (ACJ) in Zambia, told DW.

Call to strengthen laws

"It's a concern that we have as a country and also civil society organisations," Njovu said, stressing that Zambia must strengthen the laws and policies surrounding child trafficking and human trafficking.

"What we've experienced is weak border controls in some borders and some countries, and this gives opportunities to unregistered children or human beings to pass."

In 2014, the Kenyan government enacted a 20-year moratorium on intercountry adoptions, citing, among other reasons, concerns over the existing loopholes in adoption laws of local children by foreigners.



Reviewing adoption processes

At the time, the government of Kenya and the UN children agency Unicef undertook a review of the adoption process. Titled "a technical assessment of the legal provisions and practices of guardianship, foster care and adoption of children," it highlighted weaknesses in the legal process subject to manipulation and leading to the commercialisation of adoptions. That, critics feared, put adopted children at risk of exploitation.

South Africa once had a ban on international adoptions, too. However, it later lifted the ban after establishing a proper legal framework in government agencies could trace the movement of adopters. With that kind of framework, the government argued, it would be easy to monitor the well-being of children after adoption.

Carrying out due diligence

Zambia, all adoptions must go through an elaborate process involving more than one government organisation to ensure due diligence.

"The process commences with the Ministry of Community Development," Lisuba Kabanda, a representative from the Ministry of Home Affairs, said.

"They are the ones who receive the application or the intention by a family to adopt a child, they assess that family to ensure that the family [is] able to take good care of that child."

Kabanda said once they are satisfied the family is qualified to adopt that child, the case is taken to court for an adoption to be granted.

"Then the Ministry of Community Development compiles the documentation, together with the adoption, that is given to our department for registration, for us to issue an adoption certificate, together with an abridged birth certificate," Kabanda said. — DW

PARAM VIR CHAKRA

India to name 21 Andaman islands after PVC awardees

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will preside over a virtual ceremony to name the 21 largest unnamed islands of Andaman & Nicobar after 21 Param Vir Chakra (PVC) awardees at 11 am on January 23, the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) informed through an official statement on Saturday.

January 23 is also marked as 'Parakram Diwas' to commemorate the birth anniversary of Netaji. Further, according to the statement, PM Modi will also unveil the model of the National Memorial dedicated to Netaji. The memorial is to come up on Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Dweep.

Keeping in mind the historical significance of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands and honour the



memory of Netaji, Ross Islands were renamed as Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Dweep by Prime Minister Modi during his visit to the islands in 2018.

Neil Island and Havelock Island were also renamed Shaheed Dweep and Swaraj Dweep.

The statement from the PMO said giving the country's real-life heroes their due has always been accorded the highest priority by

Prime Minister Modi.

Largest unnamed islands

It is in that spirit that it has now been decided to name the 21 largest unnamed islands of the island group after 21 Param Vir Chakra awardees, the released stated, adding that the largest unnamed island will be named after the first Param Vir Chakra awardee, the second will be named after the second Param Vir Chakra awardee, and the remaining in the same order.

"This step will be an everlasting tribute to our heroes, several of whom had made the ultimate sacrifice to protect the sovereignty and integrity of the nation," the statement added.

It was decided that these islands will be named after the 21 Param

Vir Chakra awardees -- Major Somnath Sharma; Subedar and Hony Captain (then Lance Naik) Karam Singh, MM; 2nd Lt. Rama Raghoba Rane; Nayak Jadunath Singh; Company Havildar Major Piru Singh; Capt GS Salaria; Lieutenant Colonel (then Major) Dhan Singh Thapa; Subedar Joginder Singh; Major Shaitan Singh; CQMH. Abdul Hamid; Lt Col Ardeshir Burzorji Tarapore; Lance Naik Albert Ekka; Major Hoshiar Singh; 2nd Lt. Arun Khetrapal; Flying Officer Nirmaljit Singh Sekhon; Major Ramaswamy Parameswaran; Naib Subedar Bana Singh; Captain Vikram Batra; Lt Manoj Kumar Pandey; Subedar Major (then Rifleman) Sanjay Kumar; and Subedar Major Retd (Hony Captain) Grenadier Yogendra Singh Yadav. — ANI

FIRE AT APARTMENT

Four dead in Japan's Kobe

TOKYO: At least four people were killed and four others critically injured after a fire broke out at an apartment in Japan's Kobe, *The Japan Times* reported on Sunday citing local authorities. According to The Japan Times, the firefighters received the call around 1:35 am from a neighbour, stating that black smoke was coming from the first floor's window. The police confirmed that four were dead at the scene while the other four men were taken to a hospital, said to be in their 40s to 70s, were all unconscious.

They said all eight individuals were found on the first floor of the apartment, which has about 30 rooms. — ANI



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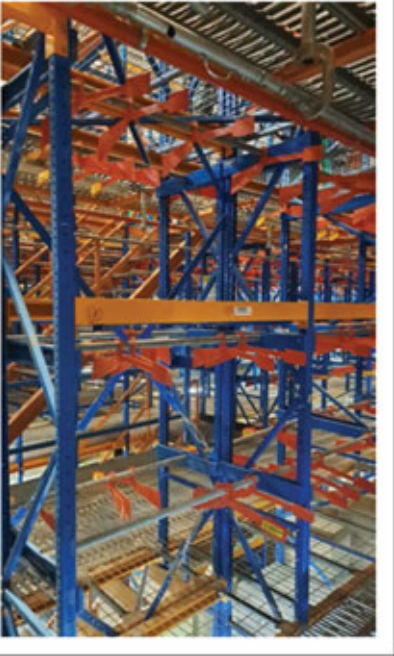
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University of Technology and Applied Sciences

The Internal Tender Committee at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences announces the tender shown in the following table:

Tender Number	Tender Subject	Establishments eligible to bid	Document's Price	Last date for bid purchase online	Last date for bid submission
06/2023	Hosting the central university systems via cloud services	Companies specialised in this field and registered with the Tender Board at the (Excellent, First, Second, Third and Fourth) Grades	RO 25/- (Twenty Five Omani Riyals)	02/02/2023 at 02:30 pm	10/02/2023 at 10:00 am

• Tender documents may be purchased online starting from Sunday, 22/01/2023 at 07:30 am through the following link: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>

• All bidding companies must attach with their bids a temporary tender bond in the form of a bank guarantee or a cheque certified by a bank operating in the Sultanate, not less than (1%) of the bid value, addressed to the name of the Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee, and valid for a period of (90) days from the date of bid submission. Any bid that does not meet the required temporary tender bond shall not be considered. Bid shall be submitted sealed and signed by the authorised person, and uploaded in the electronic tender system of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences with the tender name and number only.

• Preference in awarding will be given to small and medium enterprises registered with the Authority for SME development and whose bid includes the biggest percentage of Omanisation and a biggest purchase percentage of national products.

• The University shall not be bound to accept the lowest or any other bid.

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SPORTS

Rybakina edges top seed Iga Swiatek

Rybakina produced a sublime game, defeating World No. 1 Swiatek 6-4, 6-4



MELBOURNE: In a fourth-round showdown No.22 seed Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan upset World No.1 Iga Swiatek of Poland to make her first Australian Open quarterfinal at Rod Laver Arena on Sunday.

Rybakina produced a sublime game, defeating World No. 1 Swiatek 6-4, 6-4 in a match which lasted for an hour and a half to make her first Australian Open quarterfinal.

With an early 2-0 lead, Rybakina demonstrated no qualms about attacking Swiatek's second serve. However, Swiatek was equally as impressive, scoring second-return points to get back to 2-2.

From that point forward, the Kazakh was untouchable on serve, closing the opening frame with four aces as she stole the one-set advantage.

Rybakina then broke Swiatek

once more for 4-3. In the opening set, Rybakina won 79 per cent of her first-service points, outperforming Swiatek's 63 per cent success rate.

Rybakina rallied to win six of the next seven games after going behind 3-0 in the second set to complete the shock. She had 11 winners and nine unforced errors in the second set, while Swiatek had six victories and eight unforced errors.

Elsewhere, No.17 seed Jelena Ostapenko moved through to the quarterfinals of the Australian Open for the first time in her career with a 7-5, 6-3 win over No.7 seed Coco Gauff at Melbourne

Park on Sunday.

The Latvian in her career head-to-head record against Gauff to 1-1 with a 93-minute victory in Margaret Court Arena while playing in her maiden Round 4 at the Australian Open. She recorded 30 wins, held off seven of the eight break points she faced, and went a flawless 3-for-3 when she had opportunities to attack Gauff's serve.

Sania Mirza suffers defeat India tennis ace Sania Mirza's women's doubles career at the Grand Slam came to a disappointing end after she suffered a Round 2 defeat in the ongoing Australian

Open 2023 on Sunday.

Sania and her women's doubles partner Anna Danilina lost to the unseeded duo of Anhelina Kalinina and Alison Van Uytvanck.

Playing at Court 7, Mirza and Danilina lost by a margin of 4-6, 6-4, 2-6 at Melbourne Park. Given that Mirza, a six-time Major champion, will retire after the Dubai Open next month, this was her final appearance in a women's doubles Grand Slam match.

Earlier in the day, the all-French duo of Jeremy Chardy and Fabrice Martin defeated the event's alternates, N Sriam Balaji and Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan in a straight set 6-4, 6-4.

In the opening set of the match, Mirza-Danilina nearly had an ideal start as they contested the Van Uytvanck serve. Five break points were available during the 11-minute match, but none were converted since the Belgian was able to hold serve.

Earlier, Sania Mirza and Anna Danilina overpowered the Hungarian-American team of Dalma Galfi and Bernarda Pera to advance to the second round of women's doubles.

On the other hand, the Indian ace mixed doubles pair of Sania Mirza and Rohan Bopanna breezed into the second round at the Australian Open 2023 at Melbourne Park on Saturday. -ANI

Djokovic downs Dimitrov, Murray's campaign ends

MELBOURNE: At the Australian Open on Saturday, Novak Djokovic was once more put to test physically due to earlier hamstring ailment, but he managed to maintain his chances of capturing a record-extending 10th title at Melbourne Park.

Djokovic appeared to be in pain the entire match against Grigor Dimitrov due to the hamstring ailment that has bothered him since Adelaide.

The Serbian, though persevered and defeated the 27th seed 7-6(7), 6-3, 6-4 to go to the fourth round. In a close match, the former World No 1 fought valiantly to win the first set, saving three set opportunities before converting his fifth set point with a diving forehand volley. After taking the set, the 35-year-old struggled to his feet and requested a medical timeout as an alarmed Goran Ivanisevic (his coach) looked on.

Despite his concerns about his hamstring, Djokovic maintained his composure and focused on his game, playing superbly to win the second and third sets.

At 4-1 in the third set, the fourth seed, who had 28 winners and 22 unforced errors, was given another medical timeout. However, Djokovic went back to the court and was able to complete the match by winning a number of arduous rallies in



his last service game. He will be up against Australian Alex de Minaur in the next round.

Djokovic's three-hour and seven-minute victory gave him a 10-1 advantage against Dimitrov in their head-to-head series. The 35-year-old is vying for a record-tying 22nd Grand Slam championship this week and, if successful, will retake the top spot in the ATP Rankings.

Andy Murray pushed his body to its limits to defeat Thanasi Kokkinakis and Matteo Berrettini in five-set marathons during the course of his first two matches at the Australian Open but could not replicate the performance as he suffered a defeat against Roberto Bautista Agut to crash out of the Australian Open on Saturday. -ANI

HOCKEY WORLD CUP

Spain beat Malaysia on penalties

BHUBANESWAR: Spain made it to the quarterfinals of the ongoing FIH Men's Hockey World Cup in Odisha after it edged past Malaysia 4-3 on penalties after playing a stalemate that ended on 2-2 on Sunday, setting up a clash with three-time champions Australia in the final eight.

The first quarter of the match

saw Spain earning two penalty corners in the first and 11th minutes. But Marc Miralles failed to convert either of them into goals. Malaysia tried to attack a bit, but Spain enjoyed the majority of possession.

The first quarter went goalless. In the second quarter, Malaysia tried to attack once again, trying to

infiltrate Spain's penalty circle but the latter guarded their circle like a fortress. At the end of this quarter and the first half of the match, the scoreline did not have any goals.

The third quarter saw Faizal Saari making the best use of the lack of defence from Spain, handing his side a lead in the 34th minute. -ANI

ICC

Kiwis drop to second in ODI rankings after loss to India

DUBAI: New Zealand dropped to No 2 in the ICC men's ODI Team Rankings following their eight-wicket loss to India at Raipur on Saturday, allowing England to overtake them.

Days after playing out a thriller at Hyderabad, New Zealand suffered a resounding defeat against India on January 21. With this, they have lost the series as well as their top ODI rankings tag. England are now the top-ranked team in the ODI Team Rankings chart. Before this game, New Zealand were top with 115 rating points while England were in the second position with 113 rating points. Australia were third with 112 ratings and India fourth with 111 rating points.

After losing to India by eight wickets, New Zealand now sit at the second spot with 113 rating points and 3166 overall points. England and India are ranked first and third, respectively, with 113 rating points.



After a thrilling win in Hyderabad, Raipur proved to be a cakewalk for India. The fast bowlers flooded the Kiwis in the opening overs, reducing New Zealand to 15/5 inside 11 overs. The visitors had Glenn Phillips (36), Michael Bracewell (22) and Mitchell Santner (27) to thank for saving them the blushes but

they were eventually bundled out for 108.

India made light work of the chase, with Rohit Sharma helping himself to a fifty.

If India replicates their performances from the first two matches in the last game and sweeps the series 3-0, they will become the No 1 side in ODIs. -ANI

OLD TRAFFORD

We are in right direction, says Manchester United manager

MANCHESTER: Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag is confident that he will be successful at the club as he attempts to bring back glory days to Old Trafford once again.

Ten Hag has made a great start to United manager after winning 21 of 29 matches in charge since joining the club from Ajax last summer and has overseen a 10-game unbeaten run across all competitions. Manchester United has been in an incredible form and is currently fourth in the Premier League table. They will play Arsenal away from home on Sunday.

United has not won a Premier League title since 2013 and experienced silverware almost six years back. But ten Hag is confident that the club can change with him at the helm of affairs.

"There are six or seven teams who can all win the Premier League because there are so many investments," the Dutchman said, as quoted by Sky Sports.

"When you have the right philosophy and the right strategy, many more clubs can compete for the top positions. That is a great challenge and if you want to be there, you have to be really good," he added.

"You need consistency, you need a good strategy, consistency in the strategy, and you need hard



work to compete there. If you want to win trophies, everything has to go in the right way," he added.

Ten Hag is confident that the club is on the right path with him in charge. "Yes, I am quite convinced of that process," he said, adding, "I think we are in the right direction, but it also means that we have to improve a lot if you want to compete in the future for the top positions because the competition will be really tough."

Entrusted with an unenviable rebuilding task at Old Trafford, Ten Hag's efforts have won praise, with his firm, fair management style instilling a sense of disci-

pline in the team and helping him earn the trust and respect of his players.

"What I want to bring in is a culture of high standards and values," he said, adding, "Accountability, transparency, and honesty - they are the values I want to set and I want to control. I think that is the way to operate internally but also externally, so for instance with the media and the fans."

United currently sit fourth in the points table, having won 12 out of 19 matches, losing four and drawing three. They have a total of 39 points, eight points behind the table-toppers Arsenal.

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MARKET

BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS LOWER

The MSX index closed at 4,770.47 points, down by 0.58 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.02 per cent at 487.36 points. Sembcorp Salalah, up 5.63 per cent, was the top gainer while Oman Refreshment, down 8.89 per cent, was the top loser.

Abraj Energy intends to offer 49% of total issued share capital on MSX

The offering is expected to take place in March 2023, subject to receiving the required regulatory approval from the Capital Market Authority

MUSCAT: Abraj Energy Services (under transformation) announced its intention to proceed with an initial public offering (IPO) and listing of 49 per cent of its total issued share capital on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX).

The offering is expected to take place in March 2023, subject to receiving the required regulatory approval from the Capital Market Authority (CMA).

The offering is being offered to eligible investors in Oman and eligible international investors outside the United States 'Phase I Investors' and to retail investors in Oman 'Phase II Investors'.

Subscription period

The subscription period for Phase I and Phase II investors is expected to commence in February, after receiving the required approval



from the CMA.

This was announced during an introductory meeting held by Abraj Energy Services under the patronage of Abdulsalam Moham-

med Al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority.

Al Murshidi said that the company's planned listing will allow investors to gain exposure to a leading

onshore oil and gas field services provider in Oman, with a wide service offering that includes drilling, work over and well services.

Economic diversification

Ayad Ali Al Balushi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Abraj Energy Services, said that this offering will contribute to economic diversification, especially as it is expected to attract many investors from Oman and beyond. It will also increase opportunities for further IPOs by OIA companies and other private sector companies.

Abraj Energy Services had OMR593 million (\$1.5 billion) worth of order backlog for the years 2023 through 2031 as of 30 September 2022, equivalent to more than the last five full years of revenue.

The company boasts strong revenue - for the year ended 31 December 2021, the company

earned OMR125 million from contracts with customers. It also had a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 23 per cent from 2007 to 2021, supported by growth in its drilling rig fleet.

The company proposes to pay yearly dividends, subject to debt repayments and covenants, working capital requirements, operational expenditure obligations, growth plans and the necessary approvals.

In 2023 the company intends to pay a dividend of 85 per cent of profit for the year ended on 31 December 2022.

In 2024 and 2025, Abraj Energy Services intends to pay a yearly dividend for the years ended on 31 December 2023 and 2024, respectively, which is the highest of 85 per cent of the prior year's profit or a six per cent increase on the prior year's dividend. -**OMA**

GOVERNMENT'S DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Pact inked to provide cloud, hosting services in Musandam Governorate

Times News Service

MUSCAT: To take part in the government's digital transformation within the pursuit of the governorate to keep pace with the technological developments, the Musandam Governor's Office signed on Sunday a cooperation agreement with Oman Data Park (ODP), to utilise the company's cloud services in hosting the governorate data centre.

In accordance with the inked agreement between the two parties, ODP will create and host the domain name and e-mails IDs for the Governorate of Musandam, where ODP will set an official electronic



address for Musandam to be used by visitors and beneficiaries of electronic services of the governorate.

ODP will also create an e-mail ID for each employee in the gov-

ernorate that allows them to communicate with each other and with others. It will also assure the safe hosting of the governorate's data and provide continuous technical

support to raise the efficiency and effectiveness of government work as well as assuring the smooth running of its transactions.

The agreement was signed by Sayyid Ibrahim bin Al Busaidy, Governor of Musandam Governorate and Eng. Maqbool bin Salem Al Wahaibi, CEO of Oman Data Park Company.

The signed agreement reflects the governorate's endeavour within the national direction to implement the Oman Vision 2040, which aims at creating an innovative government sector and accelerating the implementation of the government digital transformation programme.

BUSINESS CONGLOMERATE

Danube grew faster in Oman: Anis Sajan

MUSCAT: For Danube Group, the business in Oman gave them a bigger push compared to other GCC countries.

The business conglomerate started its business in Dubai in 1992 and Oman four years later. In the almost 26 years of existence in this country, they grew faster here compared to the UAE, thanks to people's faith in the group.

"Milano is the brand that has helped us grow in Oman. I have got help from the rulers and people, and our loyal customers in Oman have been behind this meteoric rise," said Anis Sajan, Vice chairman of Danube Group.

"In the Covid period, the Danube grew much faster compared to other times in the past as most of the people were confined to their homes so they started refurbishing their houses and rebuilding them, be it bathroom or shower or furniture. Since they were not travelling, they had cash to use. Though I shouldn't praise this pandemic, Covid was a blessing in disguise for us as it helped us grow faster."

While talking about Covid restrictions, Sajan said there was no gathering in the past but I promise it would become now a regular feature from Milano.

He said that his company pays adequate attention to corporate social responsibility due to which a storekeeper in Oman and another in Dubai have become country managers. Teaching English to blue-collar workers is also a part of the initiative to help them at immigration counters and to break



the language barrier, he said.

"Buying from the Danube is cheaper compared to foreign suppliers as my company buys in bulk. Moreover, the service and quality of the product are also there at Milano. That makes the difference. We give seven years of conditional warranty and for any problem; a client can come and return the faulty product. Any problem is taken care of between 24 and 48 hours."

He hoped that after Covid it is going to be a boom time for everybody and Oman also. "Construction work has started and the government has started allocating money for projects. People are going into development mode, so Oman will also benefit."

When asked about the income from VAT, he said that the revenue is being used for the benefit of citizens and expatriates.

"The government in the UAE and Oman are taking much better care of expats compared to other countries. They take the tax but they take care. My company did not reduce salaries during Covid though many companies did."

LATEST TECHNOLOGIES

Alshawamikh Oil inks pact related to water sustainability

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Alshawamikh Oil Services signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with International Desalination and Water Treatment Group (IDWT Group) and their partners represented by the Austrian company Devise Energy and Water and Devise Engineering a Greek company, specialising in advanced water treatment and recycling solutions.

The agreement aimed to exchange cooperation in providing the latest technologies and methods related to water sustainability for uses related to oil sector operations. It was signed by Dr Afiah Al



Hadhrami, CEO of Alshawamikh Oil Services, and Omar Elmaraghy, CEO of IDWT.

Dr Afiah Al Hadhrami said: "The signing of this agreement enhances the company's strat-

egy and plans to enter into vital projects within the energy sector. This partnership is a result of the company's aspirations to engage in projects related to the use of modern technologies and techniques

related to water treatment in the oil sector."

He added that IDWT has extensive experience in desalination and wastewater treatment solutions, and is active in the water industry providing reliable solutions to a variety of water-related issues, noting that IDWT has implemented 23 projects in the Sultanate of Oman over the past 15 years.

Alshawamikh Oil Services is one of the super local community contractors within the energy market in Oman, including the sustainable energy field, and is seeking to fulfil Oman's ambition in the energy sector, regarding the Oman 2040 Vision.

RBI BULLETIN

India's forex reserves rose over \$10bn to hit 5-month high

NEW DELHI: India's foreign exchange reserves rose by USD whopping \$10.417 billion to \$572.0 billion in the week ending on January 13, Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) Bulletin Weekly Statistical Supplement data showed. With this sharp jump, the reserves hit over a five-month high.

During the week that ended on January 6, the country's forex reserves were at \$561.583 billion, earlier data showed.

According to RBI's latest data, India's foreign currency assets, the biggest component of the forex reserves, rose by \$9.078 billion to \$505.519 billion.

Gold reserves rose by \$1.106 to \$42.890 billion.

Notably, at the start of last year - 2022, the overall forex reserves were at about \$633 billion. Much of the decline can be attributed to RBI's intervention and a rise in the cost of imported goods. -**ANI**

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MARKET

MSX index ends lower



Sembcorp Salalah, up 5.63 per cent, was the top gainer while Oman Refreshment, down 8.89 per cent, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,770.47 points, down by 0.58 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.02 per cent at 487.36 points. Sembcorp Salalah, up 5.63 per cent, was the top gainer while Oman Refreshment, down 8.89 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of Bank Muscat were the most active in terms of the number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 215 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating a turnover of OMR1.11 million, with more than 6.2 million shares changing hands.

Out of 35 traded securities, 7 advanced, 11 declined, and 17 remained unchanged.

At the session close, GCC and Arab investors were net sellers for OMR93,000 while domestic investors were net buyers for OMR91,000, followed by foreign investors for OMR2,000 worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,721.29 points, down 0.58 per

cent. Prices of Al Madina Takaful and Bank Muscat were up by 2.22 per cent and 0.36 per cent respectively. Prices of Oman Qatar Insurance, Bank Dhofar, Bank Nizwa and Sohar International Bank were down by 3.33 per cent, 2.94 per cent, 2.00 per cent and 1.92 per cent respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,946.62 points, down 1.24 per cent. Prices of Voltamp Energy and Oman Cement were up by 3.33 per cent and 1.33 per cent respectively. Prices of Oman Refreshment, A'Saffa Foods, Raysut Cement and Galfar Engineering were down by 8.89 per cent, 4.27 per cent, 4.11 per cent and 1.64 per cent respectively.

Services Index was up by 0 per cent before closing at 1,635.29 points. Prices of Sembcorp Salalah and Al Batinah Power were up by 5.63 per cent and 3.45 per cent respectively. Prices of National Gas, Phoenix Power and SMN Power Holding were down by 4.76 per cent, 4.08 per cent and 1.92 per cent respectively. — United Securities

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MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

Trading Summary																	
Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded										
6,209,640	1,112,331	215	23,632,464,383	7	11	17	35										
SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR SUNDAY, JANUARY 22																	
ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PIN VALUE	MARKET CAP	
REGULAR MARKET																	
OM00000001749	OMAN CEMENT	57,902	17,602	5	0.304	0.304	0.304	0.304	0.300	0.004	1.333	0.304	0.302	0.306	0.100	100,585,304	
OM00000002796	BANK MUSCAT	2,101,080	588,236	42	0.280	0.280	0.279	0.280	0.279	0.001	0.358	0.280	0.280	0.280	0.100	2,101,791,177	
OM0000000483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	42,000	11,970	4	0.285	0.285	0.285	0.285	0.285	0.000	0.000	0.285	0.285	0.285	0.100	463,394,711	
OM0000000533	OMINVEST	44,900	18,858	5	0.424	0.424	0.420	0.420	0.420	0.000	0.000	0.420	0.420	0.420	0.100	280,713,479	
OM00000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PROD.	24,000	5,400	2	0.225	0.225	0.225	0.225	0.225	0.000	0.000	0.225	0.225	0.230	0.100	28,102,041	
OM00000003026	OMAN TELECOM	34,251	32,461	3	0.940	0.948	0.940	0.948	0.948	0.000	0.000	0.948	0.920	0.948	0.100	711,000,000	
OM00000003224	RENAISSANCE SER	70	31	1	0.448	0.448	0.448	0.448	0.448	0.000	0.000	0.448	0.440	0.470	0.100	105,911,680	
OM00000003281	TAGEER FINANCE	380	38	1	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.000	0.000	0.100	0.000	0.100	0.100	25,668,180	
OM00000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	486	214	1	0.440	0.440	0.440	0.440	0.440	0.000	0.000	0.440	0.430	0.440	0.100	24,200,000	
OM00000003398	SOHAR INT. BANK	938,890	95,821	23	0.103	0.103	0.102	0.102	0.104	-0.002	-1.923	0.102	0.102	0.102	0.100	468,186,354	
Total	10	3,243,959	770,632	87													
Parallel Market																	
OM00000004735	SEMBCORP SALALAH	214,713	16,102	15	0.074	0.075	0.074	0.075	0.071	0.004	5.634	0.075	0.074	0.078	0.100	71,592,896	
OM00000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	6,360	191	3	0.030	0.030	0.030	0.030	0.029	0.001	3.448	0.030	0.028	0.030	0.100	20,246,623	
OM00000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	83,239	7,666	13	0.091	0.093	0.091	0.093	0.090	0.003	3.333	0.093	0.093	0.093	0.100	7,570,456	
OM00000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	206,004	18,752	4	0.091	0.092	0.091	0.092	0.090	0.002	2.222	0.092	0.090	0.092	0.100	16,100,000	
OM00000008868	THE PEARL REIF	800	93	2	0.116	0.116	0.116	0.116	0.115	0.001	0.870	0.116	0.000	0.119	0.100	49,273,345	
OM00000001566	OMAN FISHERIES	10,335	982	4	0.095	0.095	0.095	0.095	0.095	0.000	0.000	0.095	0.094	0.095	0.100	17,297,448	
OM00000002275	SHELL OMAN MRK	21,339	17,583	3	0.824	0.824	0.824	0.824	0.824	0.000	0.000	0.824	0.000	0.824	0.100	78,280,000	
OM00000002374	UNITED FINANCE	52,163	3,338	3	0.064	0.064	0.064	0.064	0.064	0.000	0.000	0.064	0.063	0.064	0.100	22,345,242	
OM00000004669	SHARIQAH DESALIN	1,160	158	2	0.136	0.136	0.136	0.136	0.136	0.000	0.000	0.136	0.132	0.136	0.100	13,301,094	
OM00000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	186,098	5,402	5	0.029	0.030	0.029	0.030	0.030	0.000	0.000	0.030	0.029	0.030	0.100	21,432,190	
OM00000007084	MCT DESALINATE	32,888	3,286	6	0.100	0.100	0.099	0.099	0.099	0.000	0.000	0.099	0.093	0.103	0.100	15,399,490	
OM00000007811	MUSANDAM POWER	55,739	17,391	6	0.312	0.312	0.312	0.312	0.312	0.000	0.000	0.312	0.312	0.334	0.100	21,961,680	
OM00000007910	AMAN REAL ESTATE	170	17	1	0.098	0.098	0.098	0.098	0.098	0.000	0.000	0.098	0.092	0.098	0.100	19,600,000	
OM00000003521	GALFAR ENGINEER	519,212	92,771	15	0.180	0.180	0.177	0.180	0.183	-0.003	-1.639	0.180	0.177	0.180	0.100	36,537,560	
OM00000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	85,400	4,356	6	0.053	0.053	0.051	0.051	0.052	-0.001	-1.923	0.051	0.050	0.052	0.100	10,181,416	
OM00000004420	BANK NIZWA	937,469	91,873	5	0.100	0.100	0.098	0.098	0.100	-0.002	-2.000	0.098	0.098	0.098	0.100	219,221,397	
OM00000002549	BANK DHOFAR	10,000	1,650	1	0.165	0.165	0.165	0.165	0.170	-0.005	-2.941	0.165	0.165	0.180	0.100	494,397,987	
OM00000005963	PHOENIX POWER	359,802	16,911	7	0.047	0.047	0.047	0.047	0.049	-0.002	-4.082	0.047	0.047	0.047	0.100	68,742,269	
OM00000001418	RAYSUT CEMENT	14,220	1,991	1	0.140	0.140	0.140	0.140	0.146	-0.006	-4.110	0.140	0.140	0.150	0.100	28,000,000	
OM00000002804	ASAFA FOODS	10,535	2,362	4	0.230	0.230	0.224	0.224	0.234	-0.010	-4.274	0.224	0.212	0.224	0.100	26,880,000	
OM00000001160	NATIONAL GAS	81,500	8,242	10	0.103	0.103	0.100	0.100	0.105	-0.005	-4.762	0.100	0.100	0.105	0.100	8,500,000	
OM00000006979	OMAN QATAR INSUR	51,731	8,278	8	0.153	0.170	0.153	0.161	0.170	-0.009	-5.294	0.161	0.161	0.170	0.100	16,100,000	
OM00000001426	OMAN REFRESHMENT	100	123	1	1.230	1.230	1.230	1.230	1.350	-0.120	-8.889	1.230	1.215	1.300	0.100	61,500,000	
Total	23	2,940,977	319,518	125													

ELEVATES EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Sohar Port opens Central Emergency Response Unit to enhance flexibility, efficiency of tasks

Times News Service

MUSCAT: To elevate emergency preparedness and response, including firefighting services, for all Sohar facilities and tenants, Sohar Port and Freezone has launched Central Emergency Response Unit.

A signing ceremony was organised to mark this milestone under the patronage of Eng. Khamis bin Mohammed Al Shamakh, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology for Transport.

“Ports play an important role not only as national economic drivers, but also serve as business and trade hubs in line with the Oman Vision 2040, which prioritises logistics as one of the most important pillars,” said Engineer Khamis bin Mohammed bin Abdullah Al-Shamakh, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology for Transport. “Sohar Port and



Freezone's investment in high-quality emergency preparedness and response will help safeguard the continuity of port operations thereby protecting the safety and vital interests of port users and Oman's logistic chain.”

The signing was also attended by representatives from Unity Fire and Safety Services, a key local provider of firefighting and emergency response services that will manage Central Emergency Response Unit, representatives of

the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority and OQ, which will assist with large scale incidents. In addition, Central Emergency Response Unit will further enhance collaboration among all partners through a regularly trained system of Mutual Aid services to adequately address large-scale and/or complex incidents.

Central Emergency Response Unit is highly trained, specifically tailored to the scenarios in Sohar Port and Freezone and prepared

to handle various incidents ranging from building and industrial fires to traffic accidents to medical emergencies and traumas. Central Emergency Response Unit has several key capabilities and is tasked to provide medical assistance, standard and industrial firefighting, hazardous materials and technical rescue, including rope and confined space rescue. On a 24-hour basis, Central Emergency Response Unit maintains an emergency response and dispatch centre to handle incident reports and alert emergency response team members.

The Central Emergency Response Unit is tasked with assisting anywhere within the port within six minutes of an emergency being reported.

An important additional task is to add value for tenants, with services including support in their emergency preplanning and training for effective (joint) emergency response operations.

CMA

Inspection results in combating money laundering discussed

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Within the Capital Market Authority's (CMA) endeavours to enhance combating money laundering and terrorism financing in the sectors regulated by the CMA, it held a session to discuss the most important results of the inspection for the year 2022 and to review the requirements of the risk assessment questionnaire for the companies licensed by the CMA.

The session was managed by Majid Mohammed Al Kiyumi, Director of the Anti-Money Laundering And Combating Financing Terrorism Department and was attended by compliance officers and the like in the companies regulated by the CMA in the capital market and insurance sectors.

The session was held to review the key observations of the audit visits and to present the new questionnaire and data, in addition to clarifying some of the concepts included in the questionnaire, correcting some errors made by some companies in the previous questionnaire further to obtaining more accurate information that reflects the operations and size of the company, answer companies' inquiries and highlight the deadline for the mutual assessment process by the Financial Action Task Force.

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

Importance of compliant solutions takes centre stage in discussion on financial inclusion

Times News Service

DAVOS: As the world's leaders, social scientists and business community converge on this year's World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting, the key theme of ‘Cooperation in a fragmented world’, has resonated with stakeholders of Mena's financial services sector.

Building upon this message, UAE-based Lulu Financial Holdings and Eastnets organised a special event around the role of fully compliant technologies in achieving financial inclusion.

Speaking at the event, Aadeb Ahamed, Managing Director of Lulu Financial, said that competition through collaboration requires the collective action of all stakeholders, including governments, fintech and traditional players.

He stressed the role of fully compliant solutions in helping companies tap into each other's benefits, adding, “The foundation of interoperable solutions depends on fully compliant platforms that adhere to regulations and simplify processes for interconnected entities. The significance of such platforms is set to increase as consumer behaviour undergoes further evolution and regulations are put in place to ensure proper data ownership.”

The session also saw subject matter experts Hazem Mulhim, Founder and CEO of Eastnets, Christos Christou, Chief Compliance Officer of Lulu Financial



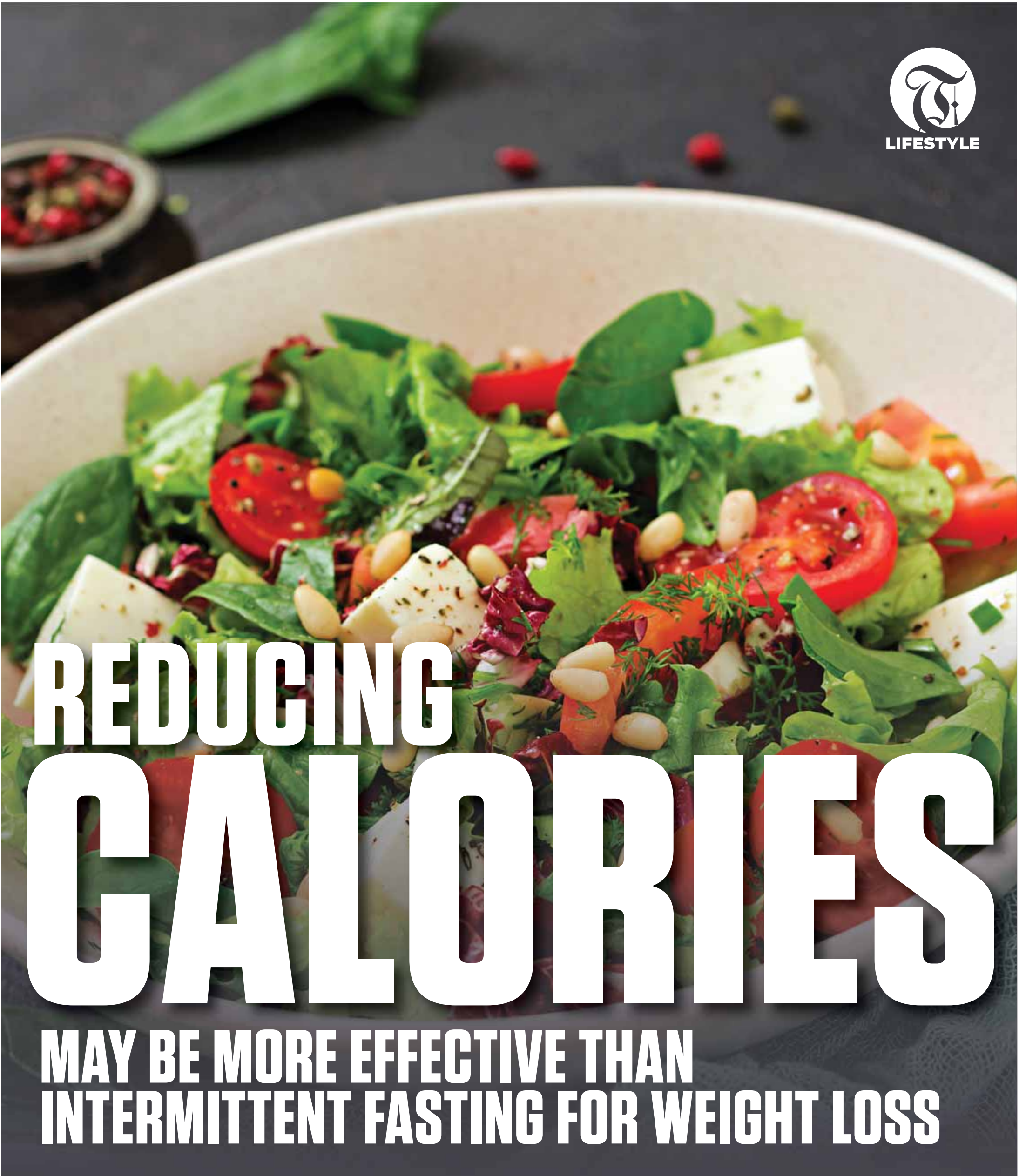
Holdings, and Joel Lange, General Manager of Dow Jones Risk & Compliance, discuss the role of compliance in plugging gaps in financial services, especially cross-border remittances.

Christos said that the strategic role of compliant systems is gaining relevance and that companies such as Lulu Financial Holdings are enabling platform-based services to fintech and traditional players, that can bridge the gap between the underbanked and technologically advanced financial products.

Calling for inclusion to be responsible and sustainable, Eastnets deputy CEO Deya Innab said in her closing remarks, that access to digital financial services

should create financial stability and not lead to a debt trap situation. “Financial inclusion needs to be supported by consumer needs & financial education and should be guarded against fraud, data privacy issues and financial crime.”

The session was attended by dignitaries from the UAE government and financial services sector, including Abdulla bin Touq Al Marri, UAE Minister of Economy, MA Yusuff Ali, Chairman & Managing Director, Lulu Group International, Dr Shamsheer Vayalil, Founder & Chairman, Burjeel Holdings, Mark Büsser, Chairman, IMTF, Hatem Dowidar, Group CEO, E&, and Brooks Entwistle, SVP, Ripple Services, among others.



REDUCING CALORIES

MAY BE MORE EFFECTIVE THAN INTERMITTENT FASTING FOR WEIGHT LOSS

THIS STUDY EVALUATED THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN TIME FROM THE FIRST MEAL TO LAST MEAL WITH WEIGHT CHANGE.

According to research, the number and quantity of meals were more important predictors of weight gain or reduction than the interval between meals. The findings of the study were published in the Journal of the American Heart Association, an open-access, peer-reviewed journal of the American Heart Association. According to the senior study author Wendy L. Bennett, M.D., M.P.H., an associate professor of medicine at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore, although 'time-restricted eating patterns' - known as intermittent fasting - are popular, rigorously designed studies have not yet determined whether limiting the total eating window during the day helps to control weight. This study evaluated the association between time from the first meal to last meal with weight change. Nearly 550 adults (18 years old or older) from three health systems in Maryland and Pennsylvania with electronic health records were enrolled in the study. Participants had at least one weight and height measurement registered in the two years prior to the study's enrollment period (Feb.-July 2019). Overall, most participants (80%) reported they were white adults; 12% self-report-

ed as Black adults; and about 3% self-identified as Asian adults. Most participants reported having a college education or higher; the average age was 51 years; and the average body mass index was 30.8, which is considered obese. The average follow-up time for weight recorded in the electronic health record was 6.3 years. Participants with a higher body mass index at enrollment were more likely to be Black adults, older, have Type 2 diabetes or high blood pressure, have a lower education level, exercise less, eat fewer fruits and vegetables, have a longer duration from last mealtime to sleep and a shorter duration from first to last meal, compared to the adults who had a lower body mass index. The research team created a mobile application, Daily24, for participants to catalog sleeping, eating and wake up time for each 24-hour window in real time. Emails, text messages and in-app notifications encouraged participants to use the app as much as possible during the first month and again during "power weeks" - one week per month for the six-month intervention portion of the study. **Based on the timing of sleeping and eating each day recorded in the mobile**

app, researchers were able to measure: The time from the first meal to the last meal each day; the time lapse from waking to first meal; and the interval from the last meal to sleep. They calculated an average for all data from completed days for each participant. **The data analysis found:** Meal timing was not associated with weight change during the six-year follow-up period. This includes the interval from first to last meal, from waking up to eating a first meal, from eating the last meal to going to sleep and total sleep duration. Total daily number of large meals (estimated at more than 1,000 calories) and medium meals (estimated at 500-1,000 calories) were each associated with increased weight over the six-year follow up, while fewer small meals (estimated at less than 500 calories) was associated with decreasing weight. The average time from first to last meal was 11.5 hours; average time from wake up to first meal measured 1.6 hours; average time from last meal to sleep was 4 hours; and average sleep duration was calculated at 7.5 hours. The study did not detect an association meal timing and

According to the senior study author Wendy L. Bennett, M.D., M.P.H., an associate professor of medicine at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore, although 'time-restricted eating patterns' - known as intermittent fasting - are popular, rigorously designed studies have not yet determined whether limiting the total eating window during the day helps to control weight.

weight change in a population with a wide range of body weight. As reported by Bennett, even though prior studies have suggested intermittent fasting may improve the body's rhythms and regulate metabolism, this study in a large group with a wide range of body weights did not detect this link. Large-scale, rigorous clinical trials of intermittent fasting on long-term weight change are extremely difficult to conduct; however, even short-term intervention studies may be valuable to help guide future recommendations. Although the study found that meal frequency and total calorie intake were stronger risk factors for weight change than meal timing, the findings could not prove direct cause and effect, according to lead study author Di Zhao, Ph.D., an associate scientist in the division of cardiovascular and clinical epidemiology at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Researchers note there are limitations to the study since they did not evaluate the complex interactions of timing and frequency of eating. Additionally, since the study is observational in nature, the authors were unable to conclude cause and effect. Future studies should work toward including a more diverse population, since the majority of the study's participants were well-educated white women in the mid-Atlantic region of the U.S., the authors noted author. Researchers also were not able to determine the intentionality of weight loss among study participants prior to their enrollment and could not rule out the additional variable of any preexisting health conditions. According to the American Heart Association's 2022 statistics, 40% of adults in the U.S. are obese; and the Association's current diet and lifestyle recommendations to reduce cardiovascular disease risk include limiting overall calorie intake, eating healthy foods and increasing physical activity. The 2017 American Heart Association scientific statement: Meal Timing and Frequency: Implications for Cardiovascular Disease Prevention did not offer clear preference for frequent small meals or intermittent fasting. It noted that irregular patterns of total caloric intake appear to be less favorable for the maintenance of body weight and optimal cardiovascular health. And, altering meal frequency may not be useful for decreasing body weight or improving traditional cardiometabolic risk factors. **-ANI**

SPORTS

40 WORLD TITLES DECIDED ON THE FINAL DAY OF THE WORLD VETERAN TABLE TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIPS - MUSCAT 2023

Two players will look back with fond memories as they completed the ‘full house’ of medals. Maria Donner of Finland and India’s Mantu Murma won gold in each of the competitions they were eligible

MUSCAT: The final day of the World Veteran Table Tennis Championships Muscat 2023, held at the Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre (OCEC), saw prizes presented in 40 events. The final day was naturally tense, but the spirit of togetherness that has embodied this event was on show throughout.

Two players in particular will look back on the day with fond memories as they completed the coveted ‘full house’ of medals. Maria Donner of Finland and India’s Mantu Murma won gold in each of the competitions they were eligible. Donner added the women’s singles gold in the 40-45 years category to the Mixed Doubles gold she won with Sweden’s Igor Krokhim and the Women’s Doubles she won with Sofia Westhom.

Murma, meanwhile, won Mixed Doubles gold in the 60-years group with Vinay Chopra and then won Women’s Doubles with Jette Vieg.

Presenting the winners in the Singles events was His Excellency Basil bin Ahmed Al Rawas, Undersecretary for Sports and Youth at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth. He said, “The World Veteran Table Tennis Championships 2023 is an essential part within the ITT calendar, with many players keen to take part every two years. We are delighted that 1600 participants from 69 countries have visited Oman to enjoy our well-known warm hospitality firsthand.

“We are immensely proud to have received positive feedback on the country’s hosting and organisational capabilities to making this event ground-breaking. Oman’s unique charm and authentic Arabian experience, combined with the state-of-the-art facilities at the Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre, has made this edition like no other in the event’s history.”

Elsewhere in the championship, Gregor Förster and Zsolt-Georg Böhm of Germany, and Norway’s Paal Guttormsen and Japan’s Kazuo Masuda all finished with two gold medals.

Böhm and partner Boris Rosenberg won the Men’s Doubles 60-years competition and then went on to take the Men’s Singles 60-64 years crown by beating Wang Yansheng in the final. Paal Guttormsen, won the men’s singles 65-69 years title, after winning the Mixed Doubles 65-years the day be-



fore with Estonia’s Kai Thornbech.

Förster and Masuda each won two gold and one bronze. Förster won the Men’s Singles 40-years gold, and earlier secured the Men’s Doubles 40 years title with Michael Marsden of Wales. He also won a bronze in Mixed Doubles 40 years with Germany’s Tatiana Pokrovskaya. Masuda won the Men’s Singles 85-years event and partnered with Reiko Miura to then win the Mixed Doubles. He also secured a bronze in Men’s Doubles 85-years with Sweden’s

Urban Living.

As the Doubles events wrapped up, Latvia’s Ina Jozepsone, Switzerland’s Margit Geiger, Germany’s Heidi Wunner and Donna Sakai all secured two titles each.

Ina Jozepsone won the Mixed Doubles with her compatriot Sandis Vasiljevs in the 50-years age group, and then claimed Women’s Doubles gold with Germany’s Sylvia Messer. Margit Geiger claimed Mixed Doubles gold with Romania’s Andreas Fejer-Konnerth in the 55-years competition, and gold



in the Women’s Doubles with partner Liliia Andrieieva from Ukraine. Geiger also added a bronze in the Women’s Singles 55-59 years.

In the 75-years category, Donna Sakai won mixed doubles gold with her husband David and the Women’s Doubles top prize with compatriot Connie Sweeris. In the 80-years events, Heidi Wunner secured Mixed Doubles gold with Dimitrije Bilic and then partnered with Ruth Schneider to claim Women’s Doubles gold. She also takes home silver in the Women’s

Singles 80-84 years.

Hungary’s Gizella Zacher was the only winner from the last event in Las Vegas to repeat the feat. The Women’s Singles 70-74 winner in 2018 secured the 75-79 years title this time around.

Denmark’s Pia Toelhøj and Sweden’s Petra Sörling - President for the ITTF - had to settle for silver in the 50-years category. However, Pia Toelhøj did manage to win the Women’s Singles 55-59 years title later in the day.

Trine Grauholm won the Wom-

“We are immensely proud to have received positive feedback on the country’s hosting and organisational capabilities to making this event ground-breaking. Oman’s unique charm and authentic Arabian experience, combined with the state-of-the-art facilities at the Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre, has made this edition like no other in the event’s history

en’s Singles 45-49 years title; Estonia’s Kai Thornbech emerged victorious in the 65-69 years category; Singapore’s Liang Mui Heng secured 50-54 years gold. However, several age groups were dominated by Japanese players; the 70-74 years title went to Kazuko Horino, Noriko Watanabe won the 80-84 years event, Reiko Miura struck gold in the 85-years competition.

In the Men’s Singles, Iran’s Mehran Ahadi won the 45-49 years event; Henrik Vendelbo emerged as the 50-54 years winner; China’s Pan Yan emerged to 55-59 years winner; India’s Yogesh Desai won the 70-74 years event, and Niels Ramberg won gold in the 75-79 years category.

Commenting after the closing ceremony, Abdullah Bamakhalif, President of the Oman Table Tennis Association, said, “It has given us a great pleasure to welcome participants from around the world to compete in the Sultanate of Oman. The International Table Tennis Federation entrusted us to stage the event in our beautiful country that is known for its welcoming hospitality and breathtaking landscapes. We are honoured by this trust and can assure all participants and international delegates that we will together be witnessing an historic edition.

“We hope that by hosting this event, we can attract even more players – of all ages – to the sport and compete on the world stage. I would like to extend my gratitude and appreciation to the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth for the invaluable support they have given us to making these championships a ground-breaking success.”

The next edition of the World Veteran Table Tennis Championships will take place from 6-14 July 2024, in Rome, Italy.

The World Veteran Table Tennis Championships 2023 was organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, the Oman Table Tennis Association and the International Table Tennis Federation, with support from Oman Fiber Optic, STAG Sports, Oman-tel and Belltel.

THE
CULT
OF
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Remember “That ‘70s Show”? Netflix has revived the hit TV series with “That ‘90s Show,” a sequel that indulges in 1990s nostalgia. But what defined the era?

THE ‘90s: a decade when crop tops were in, casted boy bands were hot and the internet was still in the early days of making its way into homes. On-demand streaming services like Netflix were still a far-off dream. But the media giant is turning its focus back to the last decade of the past millennium with its new series “That ‘90s Show” — a reboot of “That ‘70s show,” the successful teen sitcom that aired on US broadcaster Fox from 1998 to 2006.

The original show focused on Eric and his girlfriend Donna, and many scenes featured the two of them smoking pot with their friends in the basement of Eric’s parents’ house. The series launched the film careers of Ashton Kutcher and Mila Kunis.

Fashion flashbacks

In the sequel series, which starts streaming on January 19, it’s 1996, and Leia, the daughter of Eric and Donna, is spending the summer with her grandparents. Their house, and thus the setting for the show, has remained unchanged — and a new generation of teens spends their time in the same basement, smoking pot and drinking alcohol.

But with the generational shift comes a change in fashion: ‘90s clothing trends included midriff-baring tops, leggings and distressed jeans. The show keeps the nostalgia vibe going by bringing back some-

thing that’s gone out of fashion for sitcoms: a laugh track to simulate the reaction of a studio audience that is not present.

Of course, a decade is defined by more than its fashions. The 1990s started on a wave of a general sense of optimism in the West, thanks to the fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the Soviet Union and, with those events, the end of the Cold War. For many people, it felt as if a new era had dawned, one that promised greater freedom, prosperity and peace.

One cultural expression of this optimistic mood was the Love Parade, an annual techno street party that started in Berlin in 1989 and quickly grew not only in size but also in global fame throughout the ‘90s, drawing hundreds of thousands of revelers eager to dance and party through the streets. Despite its hedonistic vibe, the Love Parade was officially a political demonstration, as reflected in its annual mottos.

The musical sound of the decade included other genres, too. Rap, which started out reflecting the lives of Black people in the poorer neighbourhoods of US cities, went global. Disaffected young rock fans found expression in grunge with bands like Nirvana and Pearl Jam. Its adherents expressed a punk-inspired anti-establishment and anti-commercialism stance — only to see their preferred anti-fashion of flannel shirts and vintage cardigans get eaten up and spat out again by the fashion-industrial complex.

Those two uniquely American music genres stood in sharp contrast to what was coming out of Europe in the 1990s. Inspired by techno, music producers gave electronic dance music a pop twist, resulting in something called “Eurodance,” led by artists like Sweden’s Dr. Alban, Denmark’s Whigfield and the Netherlands’ 2 Unlimited. Germany was represented by Scooter, whose tracks such as “Hyper Hyper” and “How Much is the Fish” have made them the country’s third-largest musical export after Rammstein and Scorpions.

The ‘90s were also the heyday of boy bands and girl groups like New



Kids on the Block, the Backstreet Boys and the Spice Girls. Talented singers who usually didn’t know each other beforehand were cast by record producers or talent managers into a single act, often over the course of a reality competition TV show. In 1995, singer Robbie Williams upset fans worldwide by leaving his boy band, Take That. The intense devotion that group inspired is comparable to the feelings felt by fans of K-pop band BTS — the South Korean music industry has perfected the art of the purpose-built band.

Music fans increasingly abandoned cassette tapes and the once ground-breaking Sony Walkman, as well as vinyl albums. Both formats were made obsolete (at least temporar-

ily) by the compact disc. It was small, transportable, not quite as delicate as vinyl and the sound quality was better than with cassettes. But who back then could have dreamed that one day, people would be able to carry their entire music collections in their pockets? Streaming technology eventually superseded the CD. But in an ironic twist, the nostalgic urge has revived the once-discarded vinyl album, as people too young to have used CDs discover its warm, analog sound.

The 90s film business was also eager to experiment with new technology. In 1993, Steven Spielberg’s “Jurassic Park” used the latest in digital special effects to tell a story about the dark side of reviving the past. It’s since developed into a movie

franchise, relying on nostalgia and ever-more realistic CGI dinosaurs to thrill audiences.

Also thrilling audiences in the 90s was director Quentin Tarantino, whose “Pulp Fiction” from 1994 became a cult favorite. Part of its appeal stemmed from how it dipped deep into the nostalgia well, from the film’s retro soundtrack to the comeback of one-time heartthrob John Travolta. The movie’s famous dance scene between Uma Thurman and Travolta was a wink to the actor’s star-making turns in the 1970s dance films “Saturday Night Fever” and “Grease.”

A new leading man took off in the ‘90s: Brad Pitt. That decade laid the groundwork for his global career, starting with a small but notable role in “Thelma and Louise.” He went on to star in “Interview with the Vampire,” “Seven” and “Fight Club.” And he’s still going strong today, including a Best Actor Oscar win in 2020 for Tarantino’s “Once Upon a Time in Hollywood.”

The 1990s also saw a shift in television, driven in large part by a boom in cable TV in the United States and deregulation in other countries. Starting in 1998, “Sex and the City” followed four women friends in New York City as they navigated dating and love, which was often discussed in taboo-breaking ways. That winning formula resulted in two feature films and, in 2021, the first season of a series sequel, “And Just Like That...” which checked in again on the protagonists’ lives as they navigate middle age.

The television series was also famous for its fashionable costumes — though the style trends of the 90s weren’t entirely new. As nostalgia-driven retro trends fold in on themselves, we get revivals of revivals. The ‘90s were the decade of ‘70s-inspired fashion, including bell-bottoms and platform shoes. And they’re making yet another comeback now, along with other ‘90s trends like hair clips, scrunchies and smoky eye makeup. As the saying goes, everything old is new again. So Netflix’s “That ‘90s Show” is right on time. -DW

ROUND-UP

Youth Sada celebrates impact of social investment programmes

The programmes in general targeted different groups across the communities including small and medium enterprises (SMEs), entrepreneurs, project leaders, children, parents as well as college and university students in Al Dhahirah region

MUSCAT: In partnership with bp Oman, Youth Sada held a closing ceremony for bp Oman's social investment programmes which benefited 3,342 members of community in Al Dhahirah region last year.

Professor Rahma bint Ibrahim Al Mahrouqi, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation was present at the ceremony. The programmes included the Youth Sada Centre Initiative, the Reading Family programme, Al Dhahirah Leadership Forum, and the Habbah programme.

The programmes in general targeted different groups across the communities including small and

medium enterprises (SMEs), entrepreneurs, project leaders, children, parents as well as college and university students.

In 2022, Youth Sada Centre was able to incubate 21 initiatives and benefit 361 beneficiaries. The Al Dhahirah Leadership Forum which focused on topics related to the Environment and Natural Resources was able to benefit 1,006 Omani youth. In addition, the Reading Family programme benefitted 724 participants which included 292 school students through various activities this year, and the Habbah programme was able to enhance and develop



19 SMEs and benefit 1,251 participants through the entrepreneurial workshops in 2022.

Ibrahim Al Hinai, bp Oman's Social Investment Specialist, commented: "Our partnership with Youth Sada begun in 2018 and continues delivering positive impact to community members in Al Dhahirah region. Over the last five years, 10,000 members of commu-



nity in the region benefited from several initiatives with a main focus on advancing Oman's youth. Oman's youth is thriving with skills and talent, and these initiatives have proven to set them up for success."

Qais Al Maqrashi, Chief Executive Officer at Youth Sada, further added: "Over the years we have developed and enhanced our pro-

grammes to meet the top standards and I'm proud to say that our programmes were able to achieve several awards nationally and internationally to prove that. The Youth Sada Centre was awarded with the best initiative award by the National Youth Committee in 2019 and the Voluntary and Humanitarian Award at Kuwait in 2020. The Reading Family pro-

gramme was able to win second place and fourth place in 2021 and 2022 respectively, at the Cultural Initiative Competition as part of the Muscat International Book Fair. The Habbah programme was able to win the Youth Proficiency Award recently in 2022 for the entrepreneurship field. We are grateful for bp Oman's support in delivering these initiatives."

FLAGSHIP CSR PROGRAMME



Bank Muscat launches 2023 edition of Green Sports initiative

MUSCAT: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes form an essential pillar of Bank Muscat's strategy of working continuously for the benefit of society. Hence, the bank launched the 2023 edition of its flagship CSR programme, Green Sports, and has invited all local sports teams who would like to apply for the programme to do so well before the deadline on 18 February 2023.

The Green Sports programme is developed to help local sports teams enhance their role in the community and provide suitable infrastructure that can help the youth develop their talents. The scope of Green Sports support for sports teams include greening of football fields with natural or synthetic turf, floodlights and water desalination equipment in areas facing problems of water salinity. This year too, 20 sports teams from different governorates will be provided support in one of the four categories available to them.

To improve the programme's inclusivity and reach across the Sultanate, applications can be submitted digitally. For more information and to submit applications, teams should go to: <https://techgurusaales.com/greensports/green-stadium-participation-form-terms.aspx> and complete the application form electronically using a computer, a tablet or a mobile



phone. All applicants should be able to showcase their positive impact and contributions to the local community.

Speaking about the launch of the 2023 edition, Talib Saif Al Makhmari, Manager, Community & Media Relations, Bank Muscat, said: "We are pleased to see the positive social impact that Green Sports has created since its launch in 2012 as it is considered one of the major sustainable programmes the bank is implementing. It was developed to support talented Omani youth by enhancing the infrastructure available to local sports teams in the Sultanate. We would like to encourage all teams who would like to apply for the support to submit their applications through the specified link ahead of the deadline. Going ahead, the

bank will continue its support to sports teams through Green Sports and help the youth meet their aspirations in this field."

Talib Al Makhmari thanked all sports teams for their confidence in Green Sports programme as it witnesses excellent and spirited competition every year. This confirms the success of the programme in enhancing this important sector. He wished the applicants all the best with their applications this year.

The landmark Green Sports Programme is one of Bank Muscat's CSR initiatives, which draws from the values of leadership and partnership so as to create a positive impact on Omani society. The programme aims to develop and provide a sustainable infrastructure for sports fields in Oman. It is a matter of great encouragement that Bank Muscat's Green Sports programme has so far benefitted 163 teams with over 50,000 team members across the Sultanate of Oman and with yet another 20 teams to be added this year. In the past few months, the bank has seen the inauguration of more Green Sports fields across Oman. The facilities developed as part of the programme are often used as a venue for other social activities by local communities, leading to stronger social bonding and positive behaviour among young people.

ALL-NEW LOOK

Ford unveils first-ever tough and powerful Ranger Raptor in Oman

MUSCAT: Ford Oman recently launched the most anticipated tough and desirable Ranger Raptor in Oman. The next-generation and next-level Ford Ranger Raptor is built to conquer every terrain. The Ranger Raptor boldly raises the bar on off-road performance making it a pure performance pick-up truck for true enthusiasts.

The Ranger Raptor sports an all-new look that builds on Next-Gen Ranger's bold, strong style. Flared wheel arches and C-clamp headlight designs emphasise the pick-up's width, while bold F-O-R-D lettering on the grille and the tough separate bumper add more visual muscle. The matrix LED headlights with LED daytime running lights push Ranger Raptor's lighting performance to new levels, featuring predictive curve lights, glare-free high beam and auto dynamic levelling to deliver better visibility for Ranger Raptor drivers and other road users.

The flared fenders cover muscular 17-inch alloy wheels wrapped in Raptor-exclusive performance all-terrain tyres. Functional vents, aero features and tough, grippy cast-aluminium side steps help enhance the look and functionality of the truck. At the rear, LED taillights provide a signature styling link to the front, while the Precision Grey rear bumper features an integrated step pad and towbar that is tucked up high to avoid compromising the departure angle.

Inside, the theme continues to emphasise Ranger Raptor's off-road performance and high-energy nature. The cabin features all-new, jet fighter-inspired sports seats in the front and rear to increase comfort and offer more support during high-speed cornering. The Code Orange accents on the instrument panel, trim and seats are mirrored by Ranger Raptor's ambient lighting.

Occupants will also benefit from the latest digital technology; the hi-tech cabin features a 12.4-inch all-digital cluster and 12-inch centre touchscreen



boasting Ford's new-generation SYNC 4A® connectivity and entertainment system that delivers wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto compatibility at no extra cost. An 8-speaker B&O sound system 6 provides the soundtrack to your next adventure.

Developed by Ford Performance, the Next-Gen Ranger Raptor is the ultimate performance derivative of the Ford Ranger. With smarter technology controlling tougher, next-generation hardware, the Ranger Raptor blends raw power with mechanical and technical precision to create the most advanced Ranger ever.

The Ranger Raptor is available with a twin-turbo 3.0-litre EcoBoost V6 engine. Ford Performance ensured the engine delivers immediate response to throttle inputs and a race-bred anti-lag system similar to that first seen on the Ford GT road car and Focus ST which enables rapid delivery of boost on demand.

The new anti-lag system, available in Baja mode, keeps the turbochargers spinning for up to three seconds after the driver backs off the throttle, allowing for faster resumption of acceleration out of corners or through the gears when the driver steps back on the accelerator. In addition, the engine is programmed with an individual turbocharging boost profile for each of the advanced 10-speed automatic transmission's gears, for optimised performance.

Ranger Raptor's new powertrain delivers effortless accelera-

tion on gravel, dirt, mud and sand. To match this comprehensive performance, an electronically-controlled active exhaust system amplifies the engine note in four selectable modes enabling Ranger Raptor to adapt its vocal character. Drivers can choose their preferred engine sound by pressing a button on the steering wheel, or by selecting a drive mode that uses one of the following settings - Quiet, Normal, Sport and Baja.

The next-generation FOX 2.5-inch Live Valve internal bypass shock absorbers feature cutting-edge control technology offering position-sensitive damping capability. These shock absorbers are the most sophisticated ever fitted to Ranger Raptor and are filled with Teflon™-infused oil that reduces friction by around 50 per cent compared to those on the outgoing vehicle. Ranger Raptor's ability to tackle rough terrain is further enhanced with some serious underbody protection. The front bash plate is almost double the size of the standard Next-Gen Ranger's unit and is made from 2.3 mm-thick high-strength steel.

For the first time, Ranger Raptor gets an advanced full-time four-wheel drive system with an all-new electronically-controlled on-demand two-speed transfer case, combined with front and rear locking differentials - a valuable feature for hardcore off-road enthusiasts.

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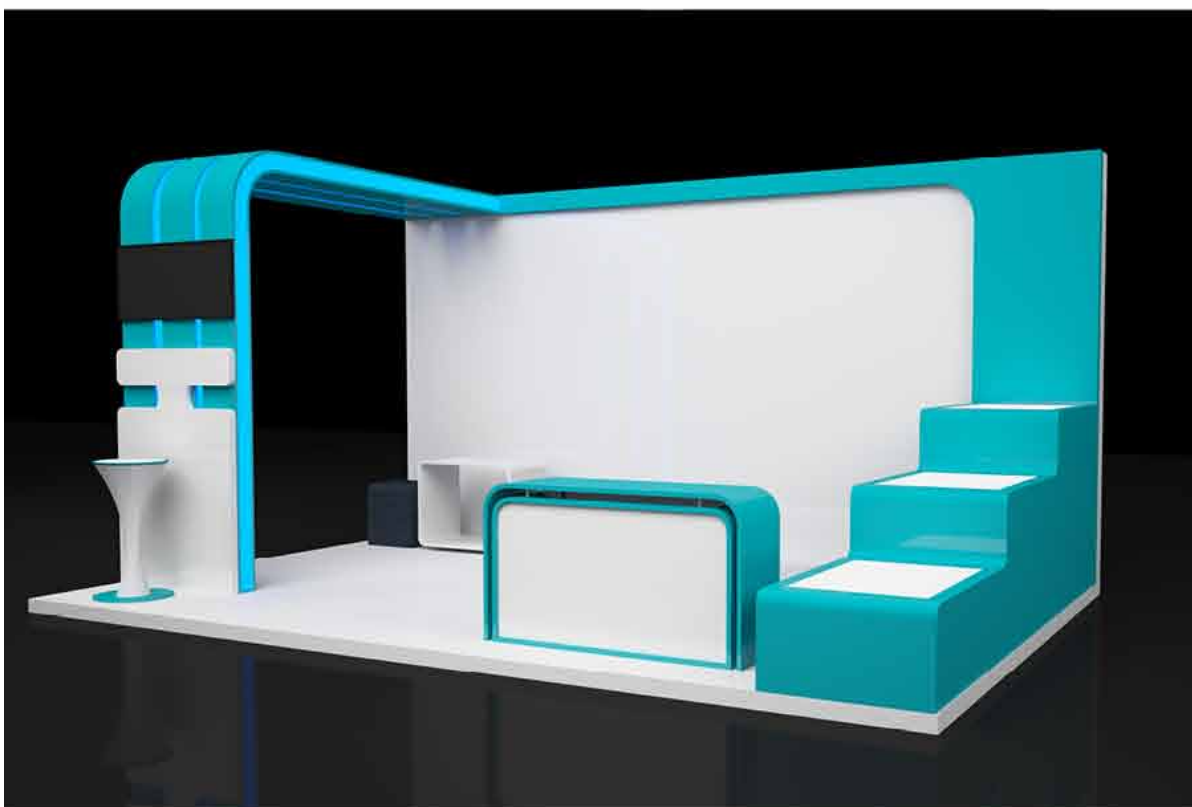
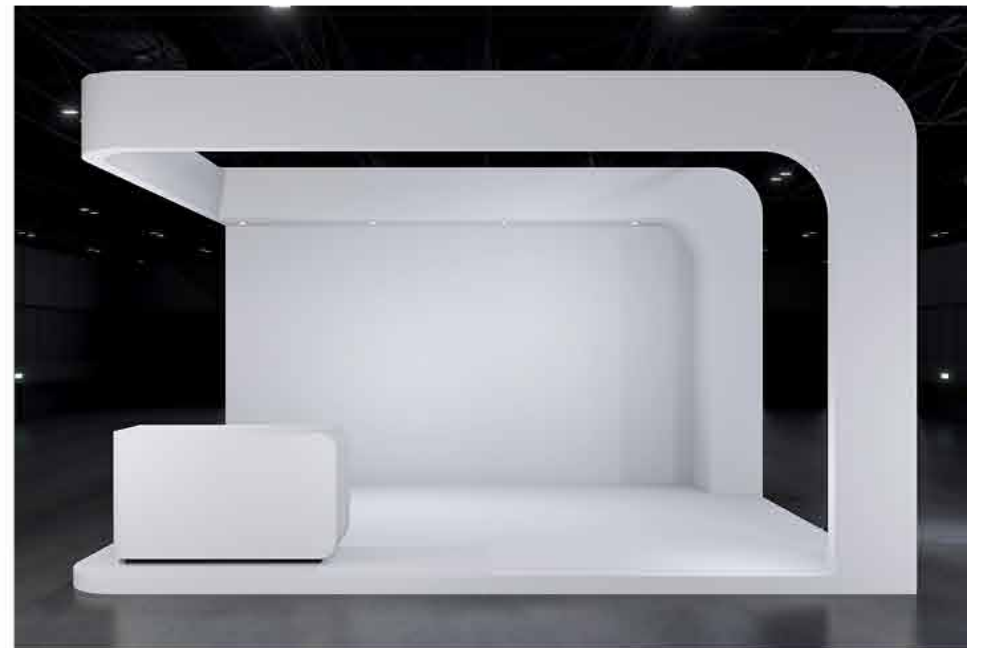
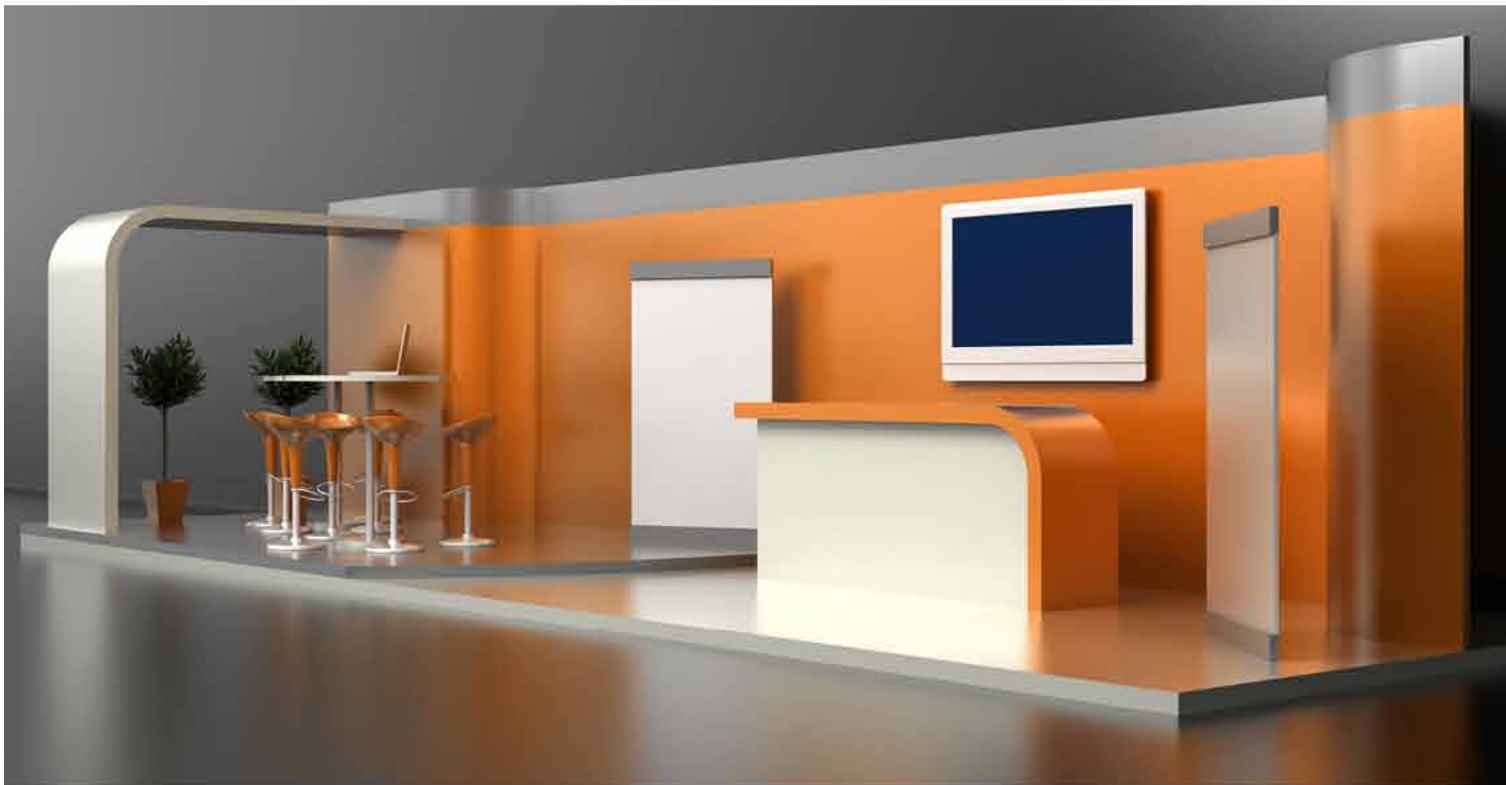
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