

HM GREETES PRESIDENT OF ICELAND

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Dr. Gudni Johannesson of the Republic of Iceland on his country's National Day. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments to President Johannesson, wishing him good health and happiness. His Majesty also wished the people of Iceland further progress and prosperity. **-ONA**



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HM SENDS WRITTEN MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT OF UZBEKISTAN

TASHKENT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a written message to President Shavkat Mirziyoyev of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The message deals with the advanced relations between the two countries and ways to promote them. The message was handed over by Ahmed Said Al Kathiri, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of Uzbekistan when he met with Vladimir Norov, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan. **-ONA**



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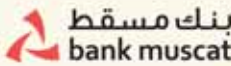
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NEWLY-APPOINTED MINISTERS TO LEAD OMAN INTO A NEW ERA

Analysts and experts have hailed the new appointments saying it's a way forward to addressing new challenges

Saleh Al-Shaibany

MUSCAT: The newly-appointed ministers will take Oman to a brighter future to match the country's ambitions and raise both the economy and social activities to new levels.

Analysts and experts have hailed the new appointments saying it is much-needed to address new challenges.

"I have no doubt that new min-

isters will inject new blood in their ministries and come with fresh ideas and elevate their ministries to new levels. The world is going through different economic and social challenges and Oman must move forward with the times and that is why these new appointments are important," Talal Al Araini, an independent economic analyst, told *Times of Oman*.

Other experts say new ministers are well placed to keep

up with the global demands and sustainability.

"Not only we have had challenges in the economy and social areas but keeping pace with the development of the world as well. The new appointed ministers will keep up with the global digital world and sustainability. As policy makers in their ministries, I am sure they will also be in touch with the latest international trends in all spheres of the development," Ali Al-Saifi, a PhD candidate in International Relations, told *Times of Oman*.

Analysts also say the ministerial replacements proved that grooming for the top jobs is important to tackle challenges.

"The three new ministers are relatively young and they have

been groomed for the top jobs. This is important when it comes to replace old talents with new blood to take the country to new heights," Salim Al Siyabi, a retired economic lecturer, said.

Last week, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik replaced three ministers in a minor reshuffle of the cabinet.

Engineer Salim Al-Aufy replaced long-serving Dr Mohammed Al-Rumhi as Energy and Minerals Minister. The second decree appointed Dr Hilal Al-Sabti to take over from Dr Ahmed Al-Saidi as Minister of Health.

The third decree picked Dr. Mohammed bin Said bin Khalfan Al Ma'amari as Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, for the outgoing Sheikh Abdullah Al Salmi.



DR. HILAL BIN ALI BIN HILAL AL SABTI, MINISTER OF HEALTH



DR. MOHAMMED BIN SAID BIN KHALFAN AL MA'AMARI, MINISTER OF ENDOWMENTS AND RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS



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Saleh Al-Shaibany

MUSCAT: Dr Mohammed bin Hamed Al-Rumhi and Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed Al-Saidi both contributed positively to the Sultanate of Oman in different fields in their efforts to serve their country and its people in their own capacity as cabinet ministers.

As Energy and Minerals Minister, Dr Mohammed Al-Rumhi served the post for nearly a quarter of century and in this position, he reshaped the oil and gas sector and rebuilt its investment portfolios into a formidable force to what it is today.

Al-Rumhi helped Oman ramp up oil productions by more than 35 per cent during his tenure. He also presided over the construction of the Sohar Refinery, the establish-

ment of the Duqm Refinery and took part in the establishment of OQ. Oman is now the biggest oil producer outside OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries), thanks to his efforts during his administration.

Dr Ahmed Al-Saidi presided at the helm of the Ministry of Health at the crucial time when the world was going through the worse of the Covid-19 pandemic.

He took a lead to educate the general public of the dangerous spread of the virus. He advised the Supreme Committee responsible for COVID-19 every Thursday for over two years to take the right steps to control the pandemic. But it was not only the pandemic that he championed but the general administration of the health ministry

as well. During his tenure as the health minister, he expanded the health sector to a reasonable level in the attempt to make sure all Omanis enjoy the privilege of the medical services.

Sheikh Abdullah Al Salmi, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs modernised the ministry to cater for multinational society in Oman as well as recognise the importance of respecting the rights of followers of all religions in the Sultanate.

He also preserved Islamic values to go along with Omani traditions as practiced by the forefathers of the country over the centuries. He was replaced by Sheikh Mohammed Al Maamari as Minister for this cabinet position.

Times of Oman wishes the new ministers all the success.

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

IKEA to open its first store in Oman today

1 Swedish home furnishings giant IKEA, is opening doors to its first store in Oman today. The two-level store spans over 25,000 square metres and is located in Lulu Group's Oman Avenues Mall. **>A2**

OMAN

Oman's GDP rises, reaches OMR33bn

2 The gross domestic product at current prices rose by about 16.1 percent by 2021 end to reach OMR33bn compared to about OMR28.4bn at the end of 2020. **>A5**

WORLD

UK upholds Assange extradition request

3 British Home Secretary Priti Patel signed an order authorising the extradition of Wikileaks founder Julian Assange to the US. **>A7**



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Maghrib.....	7:01pm
Isha.....	8:23pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....	3:53am

OPENING OF IKEA

IKEA to open its first store in Oman today

SWEDISH home furnishings giant IKEA, is opening doors to its first store in Oman today. The two-level store spans over 25,000 square metres and is located in Lulu Group's Oman Avenues Mall. Offering over 9,000 products from categories such as living room, bedroom, kitchen, bathroom and other home furnishings, the store will include inspirational room displays and provide customer experiences with diversified furnishing solutions. IKEA has also expanded its digital footprint, allowing customers to view the entire product range online from the comfort of their homes. Additionally, the new IKEA store will also offer a wide range of services such as assembly and delivery, measurement facilities and kitchen services at affordable prices.

Mr. Vinod Jayan, Managing Director of IKEA, in an interview with *Times of Oman* tells about IKEA Oman offering and its future plans.

How big is IKEA Oman?
This is the first IKEA store opening in the Sultanate of Oman. The store is located in Lulu's Oman Avenues Mall. The two-level store is spread across 25,000 square metre.

What are IKEA Oman's key USPs?

- Bringing customers affordability and a comfortable shopping experience, the new IKEA will be located in the centre of the city making it more accessible to the many people.
- Oman's first IKEA will also comprise a 394-seat restaurant, directly connected to the shopping centre for easy access and convenience.
- Featuring self-service kiosks, the IKEA restaurant extends into the mall for more seating options for customers.
- Customers can shop from the Swedish Food Market for their favourite Scandinavian ingredients. The food market is also accessible from the mall.



- The in-store bakery will consist of some Swedish classics and other traditional baked goods such as rye bread, cinnamon bun, baguettes and croissants.

What is the IKEA Oman offering?
At Al-Futtaim IKEA, we are providing affordable home furnishing solutions with over 9,000 articles across Living Room, Bedroom, Kitchen, Bathroom, and other home furnishing accessories in the store and locally relevant inspirational room setups

We are also increasing our digital presence, bringing Al-Futtaim IKEA to where people are as opposed to always asking them to come to us. For customers from the neighbouring cities who are not able to visit the store physically, IKEA will be creating a Virtual Store with the same experience making it accessible to more of the many people

As one of the world's largest food providers, IKEA is taking the next step towards making healthy and sustainable food more affordable and accessible to many people. We hope to inspire better food choices at its Oman store, with a food and beverage range that includes IKEA's popular plant-based meatballs, ASC-certified salmon, and UTZ-certified coffee, not to forget our ever famous Sha-

warma and Ice cream.

How is the store contributing to Oman's green agenda?
Al-Futtaim IKEA is one of the leading global brands within sustainability as a result of our commitment to the Al-Futtaim IKEA sustainability strategy: People and Planet Positive. Our aim is to inspire and enable more than 70 million people in the region to live a better everyday life by 2025. We are also aligning ourselves with Oman vision 2040 that focuses on creating a balanced sustainable environment with efficient systems.

As such, we are contributing to Oman's Green Agenda, saving the environment and reducing water consumption using sustainable solutions inside the store. These include:

- EC motors that are 30% more efficient than Conventional Air conditioning
- Condensate from all AC's will be used for landscaping in the mall
- All bulbs are LED, that reduces lighting consumption by 70-80 percent

Furthermore, all IKEA products are crafted with sustainability in mind, inspiring and enabling more than 70 million people in the region to live a better everyday life by 2025. We pledge to design

every product from the very beginning to be reused, refurbished, remanufactured, and eventually recycled by applying its circular product design principles during the product development process. We also recycle 90% of its dry operational waste annually on a global level.

What are the other services provided by the home furnishing retailer?
We want to create a convenient shopping experience for our customers. The new IKEA store in Oman will also provide the Click and Collect service to enjoy a convenient and contactless shopping experience. The "Click & Collect" works in three simple steps. First, customers need to choose their preferred time and place for delivery. Secondly, they receive an email and an SMS once the order is ready and finally, they can have the order picked up from the store on the same or next day, without getting out of the car. Customers can access the "Click & Collect" service through the IKEA website and mobile app. This service is available for all online paid orders.

Additionally, the new IKEA store will also offer a wide range of services such as assembly and delivery, measurement facilities, and kitchen services at affordable prices.

Can you tell us about the IKEA Homes of Oman magazine you created in collaboration with Omani real-life families?
To celebrate IKEA's arrival in Oman, we wanted to engage with customers to learn about their needs and help create a better, more inspiring and affordable home. This gave birth to the IKEA Homes of Oman makeover initiative. We worked with five selected real families of the Sultanate, to co-create the space in their home. Over the course of the last two months, IKEA Designers connected with them to learn about their needs and dreams to achieve

the perfect result. We transformed their spaces to create a more sustainable and comfortable living making life at home in Oman feel more home-like.

What is the IKEA vision for the rest of the region?
The IKEA vision - to create a better everyday life for the many people, is more relevant today than ever before. We offer a wide range of well-designed and functional home furnishing products at prices so low that as many people as possible will be able to afford them. This is, and will always be, the core strength of IKEA. Our Vision is to:

1. Be affordable to people who cannot afford IKEA today
2. Reach and interact with many more of the many people, wherever they are
3. Create a positive impact for people, society and the planet

IKEA has plans to create more job opportunities for Omani citizens in the coming years. Over 48,000 job applications were received to fill in various positions. How are you seeing this to drive the economy?

As outlined in vision 2040, Oman's private sector is a key contributor towards the country's economic expansion and social development. The recent hiring of Omani nationals for this store is another step towards this vision.

IKEA's focus on Omani hires aligns with the country's vision 2040 which aims to diversify and build a sustainable economy to enable growth; integrating roles and creating equal work opportunities for men and women.

With a strong focus on equal employment, diversification and inclusion is at the heart of our corporate policy. For example, the first ever female forklift operator across our territories is hired for this store. By hiring the right mix of talent, we are opening doors to a wide range of ideas, skills, resources

and energies, giving the business a competitive edge

What type of training does an IKEA co-worker undergo to be prepared for day to day challenges?
Al-Futtaim IKEA uses multiple professional development platforms to contribute to the growth of its co-workers. For the opening, we spent 55,000 hours training the co-workers and preparing them to successfully face challenges on the floor. All co-workers can qualify for any of these programmes based on their assessment by their managers. At IKEA, every job and every day is different. It takes many roles such as Operations Manager, Interior designers, Visual Merchandisers, Food and Beverage Manager, Sales Leaders and Shopkeepers to create a better everyday life for the many people. Our co-workers are at the heart of our corporate well-being, and we are committed to their personal and professional development. Our aim is to provide a holistic working environment and experience to our co-workers in Oman

How many other stores are you looking to open in the next few years?
Our focus right now is to ensure that the new store is fulfilling the customers highest expectations of service from our brand. As part of the expansion plan, IKEA will reach out to more of the many people by customizing its offering for each sub market as per the needs of the customer. This will not be limited to physical stores but we will also build our online presence.

How much investment was made to launch IKEA Oman?
A huge investment goes behind opening a new store which also includes manpower, material and monetary value. This would not be possible if it wasn't for our strong confidence in the local economy of the Sultanate, which continuously attracts tourists and expats alike.



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SKYTRAX STAR RATINGS

Muscat Airport bags award

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Muscat International Airport has been awarded the "Best Airport Staff Award" in the Middle East, based on the Skytrax Star Ratings, Oman Airports announced.

According to Oman Airports, this award reflects the excellent work environment that the company provides to its employees, which in turn ensures Muscat

International Airport's status as among the best airports in the world.

Oman Airports provides a number of employee services, which reflect the high level of importance they place on the well-being of their staff, and the general well-being of the airports industry in Oman.

Furthermore, Oman Airports is constantly working on giving their employees the qualifica-

tions, training skills and experience to stay abreast with the latest developments in international airports management; and to be future leaders in the operation and management of airports in the Sultanate of Oman. Indeed, the company is proud to be a cornerstone for building an Omani generation that is willing and able to take responsibility for successfully operating and managing Oman's airports.



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MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Omani businesses eye global opportunities

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Exporters from across Oman, both established and the potential ones, will come together at the Civil Aviation Authority Training Centre at 7:30 pm on 22 June to discuss accessing new international markets.

Organised by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) in partnership with the Ministry of Culture, Sports & Youth and Oman Business Forum and generously supported by HSBC and SOHAR Port & Freezone, the 22 June 'Cracking the Export Market' Tejarah Talks will be moderated by His Highness Sayyid Dr. Adham Al Said, founder, The Firm. And sharing their export insights and stories will be Salem Al Bortmany, CEO, Areej Vegetable Oils; Abdullah Al Badri, CEO, Voltamp Energy; Ali Taqi Hassan, Assistant General Manager & Head of Global Trade & Receivables Finance, HSBC; Faisal Ahmed Khan, COO, A'Saffa Food Processing; and Shayan Sumar, Operations Director, Apex Transgulf Manufacturing

Designed for exporters

According to Maymuna Al Adawi, MoCIIP Director and Tejarah Talks organiser: "Wednesday's session has been designed specifically to help existing as well as potential Omani exporters network and guide them on how to improve their exports or export for the first time."

Today, there is a number of Omani SMEs and start-ups that have products and services to export but may lack the know-how on where and how to start their export journey. The 22 June MoCIIP-organised event is an opportunity for these businesses to get advice from market experts as well as hear from successful exporters on their



His Highness Sayyid Dr Adham Al Said, founder, The Firm and moderator of Tejarah Talks

experiences and learnings. "At the end of the day, our aim is to inspire more Omani SMEs to look at the opportunities afforded by the export sector," emphasized Al Adawi.

When it comes to exploiting new markets through exports, Oman has its fair share of international success, from car batteries and fibre optic cables to marble and sanitary ware. Companies across the length and breadth of Oman producing value-added products and services exported to over 130 countries. But given that two thirds of growth in global trade is coming from new entrants, there is a constant demand for business advice and support in breaking into high-growth market economies and overcoming barriers.

Despite the ongoing global health pandemic, inflationary pressures and supply chain problems, Omani exports remain robust. In 2021, Oman's non-oil exports to India reached US\$1.2 billion, a jump of 172% over 2020. Oman-made exports to the US hit

nearly US\$500 million in February 2022, up 141% from the same period last year. Positive trade data indicates increased demand for Omani goods and services in two of the world's most competitive markets.

Encouraging results

"These are very encouraging results," remarked the MoCIIP Director. "Exports of goods and services already contribute a significant amount to Oman's economy but it is vital we maintain and capitalise on this momentum in order to meet the challenges we face today and in the future. Now really is the time for local businesses to focus on the bigger picture and explore opportunities elsewhere, and the reality is they do not have to look too far to successfully diversify their export markets."

However, opportunity does not come without risk, points out Al Adawi, adding that "to minimise these risks, I would urge local businesses seeking to take their first steps into overseas markets to attend Wednesday's Tejarah Talks and take advantage of the wide range of expert advice on offer."

The MoCIIP Director concluded: "The world is facing a number of significant challenges, but our focus is firmly on building a stronger and more resilient economy and increasing Oman's export capacity will be pivotal to this. Our SMEs are the multinationals of tomorrow and we must focus on nurturing their export potential. Hopefully, Wednesday's Tejarah Talks will help small firms break into the international scene and for larger companies boost their global presence."

To reserve your Tejarah Talks seat, e-mail your name and contact details to: TT@tejarah.gov.om



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ECONOMY



Oil subsidy bill rises as steps taken to provide relief to citizens

MUSCAT: The government's subsidy outgo for oil products for the first quarter 2022 increased to OMR67.3 million compared to OMR7.6 million during the corresponding period, last year, registering an increase of 785 percent.

The increase comes within the attention and care of the government aimed to mitigate the economic burden on citizens and in accordance with the Royal Directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik.

The Sultanate fixed, last year, the prices of fuel for vehicles in accordance with the rate of October 2021 maximum to end of 2022. It also provided that the government shall bear the differences resulting from any increase that occur on oil prices.

The fuel prices for Mogas 91 has been fixed at OMR0.29

per litre maximum, Mogas 95 at OMR0.239 and diesel at OMR0.258 per litre.

In the General Budget of the State for 2022, the government allocated OMR35 million as subsidy for oil products, however, the increase of oil price above USD 100 per barrel at the time the government fixed the prices of fuel for vehicles, led to the increase in the amounts allocated as subsidy for oil products and the average oil prices in the General Budget of the State for 2022 is estimated at USD 50 per barrel.

Oman Oil's average price during the first quarter 2022 increased to USD79 per barrel against USD49.5 per barrel, an increase of 59.5 percent against the corresponding period of last year. -OMA



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APPOINTMENTS

HM the Sultan issues 13 Royal Decrees

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik issued 13 Royal decrees reading as follows:

Royal Decree No. (34/2022) on restructuring the Council of Ministers.

Article (1) restructures the Council of Ministers under the chairmanship of His Majesty the Sultan as follows:

- His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers
- His Highness Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik bin Taimour Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs
- His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham bin Tarik Al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth
- Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal bin Saud Al Busaidi, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court
- General Sultan bin Mohammed Al Nu'amani, Minister of the Royal Office
- Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal bin Said Al Busaidi, Minister of Interior
- Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hamoud Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister
- Sultan bin Salim bin Said Al Habsi, Minister of Finance

Dr. Madiha bint Ahmed bin Nasser AlShaibani, Minister of Education

■ Dr. Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Said Al Sa'eedi, Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs

■ Dr. Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al Harrasi, Minister of Information

■ Salim bin Mohammed bin Said Al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism

■ Dr. Saud bin Hamoud bin Ahmed Al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources

■ Dr. Khalfan bin Said bin Mubarak Al Shu'a'ili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning

■ Dr. Rahma bint Ibrahim bin Said Al Mahrouqi, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation

■ Eng. Said bin Hamoud bin Said Al Ma'awali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology

■ Dr. Said bin Mohammed bin Ahmed Al Saqri, Minister of Economy

■ Qais bin Mohammed bin Moosa Al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion

■ Dr. Laila bint Ahmed bin Awadh Al Najar, Minister of Social Development

■ Dr. Mahad bin Said bin Ali BaOwain, Minister of Labour

Eng. Salim bin Nasser bin Said Al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals

■ Dr. Mohammed bin Said bin Khalfan Al Ma'amari, Minister of Endowments and Religious Affairs

■ Dr. Hilal bin Ali bin Hilal Al Sabti, Minister of Health

Article (2) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree No. (35/2022) on governing the administration of judicial affairs.

Article (1) stipulates that a council to be named "Supreme Judicial Council" shall be established and that it shall have a legal identity and enjoy financial and administrative autonomy. The



headquarters of the Council shall be in the Governorate of Muscat. The Council shall apply the provisions stated at the annex No. (1) attached to this decree.

Article (2) approves the general structure of the judiciary as per the annex No. (2) attached to this decree.

Article (3) states that all allocations, rights, obligations, assets and holdings of the Administrative Affairs Council for the Judiciary, the Administrative Judicature Court and the Public Prosecution Department shall be transferred to the Supreme Judicial Council.

Article (4) states that all members of the Administrative Judicature Court shall be transferred along with their financial grade and job status to the equivalent judicial positions stated in the aforementioned Judicial Authority Law. The same law shall be applied on all matters related to their job and retirement affairs.

Article (5) states that all employees of the Secretariat General of the Administrative Affairs Council for the Judiciary, the Administrative Judicature Court and the Public Prosecution Department shall be transferred to the Supreme Judicial Council along with their financial grades.

Article (6) the Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council shall issue the regulations and decisions necessary for the implementation of the provisions of this decree. Till such regulations and decisions are issued, the laws and regulations in force shall apply without prejudice to provisions of this decree. The Deputy Chairman of the Council shall take all legal procedures necessary to amend laws and Royal decrees of relevance to the judiciary in accordance with the provisions of this decree during a period not more than one year from the date of enforcing this decree. This period of time may be renewed for another term with the approval of the Sultan.

Article (7) replaces the phrases "Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs" and "Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs" wherever they might occur in the aforementioned Royal decree No. (35/2010) and its attached system with the phrases "Supreme Judicial Council" and "Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council".

Article (8) replaces the phras-

es "Administrative Judicature Court" and "Chairman of the Administrative Judicature Court" wherever they might occur in laws and Royal decrees with the phrases "Primary Administrative Department" or "Appeal Administrative Department" and "Head of the Primary Administrative Department" or "Head of the Appeal Administrative Department" as per the context of the text. Job titles of members of the Administrative Judicature Court shall be replaced wherever they might occur in laws and Royal decrees with the equivalent jobs stated in the Judicial Authority Law. Phrase of "Administrative Judicature Court Law" shall be replaced wherever it might occur in laws and Royal decrees with the phrase "Administrative Procedures Law".

Article (9) cancels texts of the aforementioned Administrative Judicature Court Law except articles from No. (3) to (23), and articles No. (25) and (107 on judicial fees). Provisions of the Civil and Commercial Procedures Law shall be applied on administrative disputes and cassation appeals, as well as all matters not stated in these articles. The aforementioned Royal decrees No. (88/2008), (25/2011), (9/2012), (10/2012) and (54/2012) shall be cancelled and all that contradicts this decree and the two annexes attached or contravenes their provisions.

Article (10) states that the provisions of this decree shall exempt the panel of jurisdiction and judgements to continue hearing the cases brought before the panel prior to the issuance of this decree and till issuing their judgements.

Article (11) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree No. (36/2022) issues System of the Governorates

Article (1) stipulates that the System of the Governorates attached to this decree shall be applied.

Article (2) approves organizational structures of the governorates as per the model attached to the System of the Governorates. The same model shall be governed by the provisions stated in the aforementioned system of the State Administrative Apparatus on establishing, amending and

cancelling administrative divisions within these structures.

Article (3) states that all files, documents, archives and assets pertaining to the purviews of the Ministry of Interior from the governorates of Muscat, Dhofar and Musandam shall be transferred to the Ministry of Interior.

Article (4) states that all allocations, assets, rights, obligations and holdings pertaining to the Wali offices in the governorates shall be transferred from the Ministry of Interior to the governorates (each within its purview). Files, documents, archives, weapons, cannons and ammunition shall remain as properties of the Ministry of Interior.

Article (5) states that employees of the Ministry of Interior who work at the Wali offices shall be transferred to the governorates (each within its purview) along with their financial grades.

Article (6) cancels the aforementioned Royal decree No. (101/2020) and all that contradicts this decree and the attached system or contravenes their provisions.

Article (7) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree No. (37/2022) determines purviews of the Ministry of Interior and approves its organizational structure

Article (1) determines the purviews of the Ministry of Interior as per annex No. (1) attached to this decree.

Article (3) cancels the aforementioned Royal decree No. (102/2020) and all that contradicts this decree or contravenes its provisions.

Article (4) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree No. (38/2022) amends some provisions of Municipal Councils Law

Article (1) states that the amendments attached to the aforementioned Municipal Councils Law shall be applied.

Article (2) cancels all that contradicts this decree and the attached amendments or contra-

venes their provisions.

Article (3) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from the day following its date of publishing.

Royal Decree No. (39/2022) transfers the purview of property survey and appraisal from the Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning

Article (1) states that all purviews, allocations, assets, rights, obligations and holdings pertaining to property survey and appraisal shall be transferred from the Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning.

Article (2) states that employees specializing in property survey and appraisal shall be transferred from the Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning along with their financial grades.

Article (3) cancels all that contradicts this decree or contravenes its provisions.

Article (4) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree No. (40/2022) appoints Deputy Chairman for the Supreme Judicial Council

Article (1) appoints Sayyid Mohammed bin Sultan bin Hamoud Al Busaidi as Deputy Chairman for the Supreme Judicial Council along with his rank and financial allocations.

Article (2) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree No. (41/2022) appoints governors

Article (1) appoints the following as governors:

■ HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki bin Mahmoud Al Said as Governor of Dhofar with a minister's rank.

■ Sayyid Saud bin Hilal bin Hamad Al Busaidi as Governor of Muscat along with his rank and financial allocations.

■ Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said bin Ibrahim Al Busaidi as Governor of Musandam along with his rank and financial allocations.

■ Sheikh Saif bin Hamyar bin Mohammed Al Malik Al Shehi as Governor of South Al Batinah along with his rank and financial allocations.

■ Mohammed bin Sulaiman bin Hamoud Al Kindi as Governor of North Al Batinah along with his grade and financial allocations.

Article (2) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree No. (42/2022) appoints Chairman for State Audit Institution

Article (1) appoints Sheikh Ghusun bin Hilal bin Khalifa Al Alawi as Chairman of the State Audit Institution with a minister's rank.

Article (2) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree No. (43/2022) appointments on some positions

Article (1) appoints the following to the positions assigned to each name:

His Highness Sayyid Nadir bin Al Julanda bin Majid Al Said as Secretary General at the Diwan of Royal Court with a special grade.

His Highness Sayyid Kamil bin Fahd bin Mahmoud Al Said as Secretary General at the Secretariat General for the Council of Minis-

ters with a special grade.

Mohammed bin Hamad bin Mohammed Al Sarmi as Head for the Royal Protocols at the Diwan of Royal Court with a special grade.

Sayyid Khalifa bin Al Merdas bin Ahmed Al Busaidi as Secretary General at the Ministry of Interior along with his grade and financial allocations.

Sheikh Muhanna bin Saif bin Salim Al Lamki as Adviser at the Ministry of Interior along with his grade and financial allocations.

Dr. Saleh bin Salim bin Hamoud Al Rahbi as Adviser at the Diwan of Royal Court along with his grade and financial allocations.

Jameel bin Ayoob bin Juma Al Zedjali as Adviser at the Royal Court Affairs with a special grade.

Pankaj Kanaksi Gokaldas Khimji as Adviser for External Trade and International Cooperation at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion with a special grade.

Article (2) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree No. (44/2022) appoints Secretary General for the Supreme Judicial Council

Article (1) appoints Issa bin Hamad bin Mohammed Al Azri as Secretary General for the Supreme Judicial Council along with his grade and financial allocations.

Article (2) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree No. (45/2022) transfers an employee to the Foreign Ministry

Article (1) transfers Talal bin Sulaiman bin Habib Al Rahbi to the Foreign Ministry with his grade and financial allocations.

Article (2) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree No. (46/2022) issues Securities Law

After presenting the same before the Council of Oman

Article (1) states that the Securities Law attached to this decree shall be applied.

Article (2) says that the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Capital Market Authority (CMA) shall issue the executive bylaw for the law attached to this decree during a period of one year from the date of its enforcement. The CMA Chairman shall also issue the decisions necessary for the implementation of the law's provisions. Till such bylaws and decisions are issued, the regulations and decisions in force shall continue to be applied without prejudice to the provisions of the law attached to this decree.

Article (3) states that those addressed by provisions of the Securities Law shall reconcile their conditions during (6) months from the date of enforcing the same law. This period may be extended as per a decision from the CMA Board of Directors for additional (6) months.

Article (4) cancels texts of the aforesaid Securities Law except articles from No. (46) to (58). It also cancels all that contradicts this decree and the attached law or contravenes their provisions.

Article (5) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced the day following its date of publishing.

-ONA

IN DUQM

Land reservation pact signed for major projects in Duqm

MUSCAT: The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones signed an agreement on reserving the land for the downstream segment of the green hydrogen and ammonia production facility project with Hyport Duqm Company.

The project is a joint venture in the field of energy between OQ Group and Deme group of Belgium.

The agreement signing of the downstream segment of the project came following the upstream agreement of the renewable energy project, last September.

The agreement was signed by Dr. Ali Masaud Al Sunaidi, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones while from the side of Hyport Company, Duqm, it was signed by Najla Zuhair Al Jamali, Chairperson of the Board of the Company and CEO for alternative

energy sector at OQ Group and Martin Dova, Vice Chairman and General Manager of Deme Group.

Green hydrogen

According to the agreement, Hyport Duqm will work on development of a facility for production of green hydrogen on a total area of approximately 793, 000 square metres and with a capacity of 500MW at an area close to Duqm Port, following production of the alternative energy through wind turbines and solar sheets which would be installed at the area designated for alternative energy at Special Economic Zone, Duqm. The agreement on this area was already signed for approximate area of 200 square kilometres.

Hyport Duqm project for production of green hydrogen comprises installation and operation of solar energy and wind energy



field, construction of a plant for production of green hydrogen and construction of high-voltage transmission line.

Yahya Khamis Al Zedjali, assigned with the duties of the director of the Special Economic Zone- Duqm said that the agree-

ment is of vital significance in the work progress of the project as it enables the work team conducts the necessary studies at the project including the soil tests and the topography study as a step for the project's feasibility study.

"We aspire to work with the

project's team on completion of the necessary studies and to commence with the project, the first in the field of green hydrogen and ammonia in Duqm, he said. This comes within the Authority's efforts for achievement of the Royal Vision of His Majesty Sultan

Haitham bin Tarik as set forth in Oman Vision 2040," he added.

Najla Zuhair Al Jamali, CEO for alternative energy sector at OQ Group and Chairperson of the Board of the Hyport Company -Duqm said that the agreement signing would enable the project's team proceed with conducting the necessary studies and to go ahead with the feasibility study for the detailed engineering studies.

Martin Dova, Vice Chairman of the Board and general manager of Deme Group said that "with signing the second agreement for Hyport Duqm Project, the project is all set for the second phase, a step closer for first plant for production of green ammonia in Duqm". Ammonia produced from the plant would be exported from Duqm Port to customers at European destinations and other compomers, worldwide, he added. -ONA



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Oman’s GDP surges by 16%, touched OMR33bn in 2021

MUSCAT: Oman’s gross domestic product (GDP) at current prices increased by about 16.1 per cent at the end of 2021 to reach OMR33 billion against OMR28.4 billion at the end of 2020, according to data released by the National Center for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The total revenues of man rose by 28.7 per cent to OMR10.9 billion at the end of 2021 compared to OMR8.5 billion at end the of 2020. The total general spending decreased by 5.9 per cent at OMR12.2 billion, according to a the report the economic condition of for the last quarter of 2021, issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The deficit in the general budget at the end of 2021 stood at OMR1.2 billion. This represents 3.7 per cent of Oman’s gross domestic product (GDP) at current prices.

The increase in the GDP is attributed to the increase in the average oil price by 39.7 per cent as it increased from \$46 per barrel at the end of 2020 to \$64.3 per barrel at the end of 2021. The value added for oil activities recorded an increase by OMR2.9 billion to



reach OMR10.5 billion in 2021 compared to approximately OMR7.6 billion at end of 2020.

This increase is ascribed to increase in the value added in crude oil by approximately 46.6 per cent to reach OMR9 billion compared to approximately OMR6.1 billion at the end of 2020. The value added of natural gas also increased by approximately 4.8 per cent at end of 2021.

The total value added of non-oil activities increased by 8.4 per cent at the end of 2021 compared to end of 2020 at OMR24 billion.

The value addition of industrial activities increased by 13.6 per

cent due to the increase in the value added of manufacturing industries by some 40.8 per cent, the increase in electricity and water supplies and sanitary activities by 5.7 per cent, the mining and quarries by 4.3 per cent. The value added of agriculture and fisheries increased by 7.7 per cent while the value added of service activities increased by 6.5 per cent.

As for indicators of foreign trade, the report said that the surplus in the trade balance increased by OMR1.4 billion to reach OMR5.2 billion at the end of 2021 compared to the end of 2020. — **ONA**

IN TURKIYE

SalamAir launches flights to Bursa

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Expanding its network further, Sultanate’s fastest-growing value-for-money airline, SalamAir, has launched flights from Muscat to Bursa starting on June 16. Bursa becomes the third destination SalamAir flies to in Turkiye after popular destinations Istanbul Sabiha Airport and Trabzon. SalamAir will fly to Bursa thrice weekly on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. SalamAir will take off from Muscat at 10:05AM and arrive at Bursa at 2:05PM local time. It will take off from Bursa at 2:50PM and arrive in Muscat at 8:30PM.

Bursa will now be part of SalamAir’s popular summer destinations in addition to Phuket, Istanbul, Trabzon, Tehran, Alexandria, Baku and Sarajevo.

Captain Mohamed Ahmed, CEO of SalamAir, said it always gives me great pleasure to welcome new destinations to our network. We are consistently looking at destinations that pose



significant interest to our adventurous customers.” “Our customer feedback and commercial viability are at the forefront of our decisions to offer more excellent destination choices. As such, Bursa is the third destination we are introducing in our operations in Turkiye. We are sure it will appeal to our frequent passengers to Turkiye, mainly Istanbul because of the proximity between Istanbul and Bursa which can be easily accessed with an array of ground travel options.”

“The charming city of Bursa offers many tourist attractions from adventure, sightseeing to shopping and the pleasant weather offers a holistic enjoyable experience,” he added.

 Full story at timesofoman.com/xxxxxx

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Salary + perks	Negotiable based on experience
Closing date	1st July 2022
Please send your CV to the email at the earliest.	Email : horintschool2022@gmail.com



Sultanate of Oman
Consumer Protection Authority



Zawawi Trading Company LLC.

Recall Campaign for Mercedes-Benz
ML, GL (164 platform), R-Class (251 platform)
Model year: 2004-2016



Date of Campaign: 19.06.2022
Recall Segment: Mechanical
Recall Type: Safety

Product Description:

Number of vehicles	Chassis number	To	Chassis number	Sales Designation
3	4JG1641751A012259	TO	4JG1641751A038486	ML 500 4MATIC
24	WDC16417*1A007792	TO	WDC16417*1A742688	ML 500 4MATIC
5	***1641771A130965	TO	***1641771A554238	ML 63 AMG 4MATIC
202	WDC1641861A007349	TO	WDC1641861A709167	ML 350 4MATIC
57	WDC1648711A184583	TO	WDC1648711A785298	GL 450 4MATIC
49	WDC1648861A119006	TO	WDC1648861A797193	GL 500 4MATIC
3	WDC2511541A139651	TO	WDC2511541A119258	R 300
3	WDC2511541A111267	TO	WDC2511541A141549	R 280
9	WDC2511561A077945	TO	WDC2511561A099685	R 350
32	WDC2511651A008086	TO	WDC2511651A162663	R 350 4MATIC
1	WDC2511751A008870			R 500 4MATIC
1	4JG2511651A028394			R 350 4MATIC
1	4JG1641861A359644			ML 350 4MATIC

Description of defect:

Based on analysis of reports coming to Mercedes-Benz for certain vehicles of the ML, GL (BR 164) and R-Class (BR 251) series from the production period 2004 - 2015, we have found that in some of those vehicles, the function of the brake booster could be affected by advanced corrosion in the joint area of the housing. This would affect the process of applying the brake leading to failure of the braking process accompanied by a hissing or airflow noises with the possibility of complete failure. Thus, the risk of a crash or injury would be increased.

Procedure:

As a precautionary measure Zawawi Trading Company will check the brake booster on the affected vehicles and - depending on the result of this inspection - replace it, where necessary. The intended work procedure (check and if necessary replacement of the brake booster) will take up to 4 hours and will be free of charge.

For more information:

Sultanate of Oman customers affected by the recall who have not been contacted already will be telephoned by representatives of Zawawi Trading Company LLC, so that they can arrange a convenient time from 19.06.2022 to get their car inspected.

Contact details:

Toll free number: 80079777 on all working days between 08:00 to 17:30 hrs with effect from Sunday 19.06.2022.

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WORLD 

EMPLOYEES SACKED

SpaceX fires several employees who criticised CEO Elon Musk

WASHINGTON: Elon Musk's SpaceX has fired several employees involved in writing an open letter that was critical of the billionaire's public behaviour, according to a media report. SpaceX, the private rocket company in a statement on Thursday said that it fired employees who helped write and distribute an open letter criticizing the behaviour of its chief executive, *The New York Times* reported. As per the American publication, the letter termed the billionaire's public behaviour and tweeting "a frequent source of distraction and embarrassment" and asked the company to rein him in.

Tesla chief Musk is currently closing a USD 44 billion deal to buy Twitter. Earlier Musk said that the takeover of Twitter Inc is temporarily on hold due to the calculation of fake accounts in it.

"Twitter deal temporarily on hold pending details supporting calculation that spam/fake accounts do indeed represent less than 5 per cent of users," Musk tweeted tagging a media report.

Musk's announcement came before the opening of trading in the American stock exchanges.

In the pre-market trading, Twitter Inc share price crashed to USD 37.10, which is 17.7 per cent lower than its previous day's close.

Musk reached an agreement with Twitter on the acquisition of the social network for USD 54.20 per share in a transaction valued at approximately USD 44 billion in late April. He later said that he would like to revolutionize Twitter's role in public debate as "free speech is the bedrock of a functioning democracy, and Twitter is the digital town square where matters vital to the future of humanity are debated."

The billionaire said earlier that he was ready to spend USD 21 billion of his own funds to seal the deal, and that Morgan Stanley Senior Funding, Bank of America, Barclays, and other institution will provide USD 25.5 billion in debt financing, with some USD 12.5 billion to of the loan to be secured with Tesla shares. **ANI**

EXTRADITION

British government upholds Julian Assange extradition request

LONDON: British Home Secretary Priti Patel signed an order on Friday authorizing the extradition of Wikileaks founder Julian Assange to the United States.

He is wanted in the US on 18 criminal charges, including breaking a spying law, relating to the release by Wikileaks of vast troves of confidential US military records and diplomatic cables that Washington said had put lives in danger.

"On 17 June, following consideration by both the Magistrates Court and High Court, the extradition of Mr. Julian Assange to the US was ordered. Mr. Assange retains the normal 14-day right to appeal," the Home Office said in a statement.

WikiLeaks, the organization founded by Assange, said in a tweet that the approval of the extradition was "a dark day for press freedom and for British democracy." WikiLeaks insisted that Assange "did nothing wrong" and was "being punished for doing his job," and indicated that the decision would be appealed.

The organization slammed the British home secretary, saying: "It was in Priti Patel's power to do the right thing. Instead, she will forever be remembered as an accomplice of the United States in its agenda to turn investigative journalism into a criminal enterprise."

Assange's wife Stella, a lawyer who married her husband in a prison ceremony in March, confirmed that he would appeal the decision.

"We're going to fight this. We're going to use every appeal avenue," she said.

Stella Assange called the decision a "travesty" and said she would "spend every waking hour fighting for Julian until he is free, until justice is served."

Legal experts say the appeals process could involve months of court hearings.



The US case against Assange

The US has asked British authorities to extradite Assange so he can stand trial over thousands of secret diplomatic cables and military files that WikiLeaks published online in 2010.

He faces 17 charges of espionage and one charge of computer misuse. American prosecutors allege Assange unlawfully helped US Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning steal the classified documents that were later published, putting lives at risk.

Assange denies any wrongdoing. His supporters allege the case against him is politically motivated.

They argue he was acting as a journalist and as such is entitled to freedom of speech for publishing documents that exposed US military misconduct during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

Earlier ruling rejected extradition

A British judge had ruled Assange should not be deported, saying his mental health meant he would be at risk of suicide if convicted and held in a maximum-security prison.

But this was overturned on an appeal after the US gave a package of assurances, including a pledge he could be transferred to Australia to serve any sentence.

Legal wrangle starting in 2010

Assange was also the center of a separate legal saga that unfolded in 2010 when Sweden sought his extradition from Britain over allegations of sex crimes.

His supporters accused Stockholm of being part of a campaign by the US Pentagon to smear the Wikileaks founder, which the Swedish government denied.

When Assange lost that case in 2012, he fled to the Ecuadorian embassy in London, where he spent seven years.

When he was finally dragged out of the diplomatic building in April 2019, he was jailed for breaching British bail conditions, even though the Swedish case had been dropped.

Assange has been fighting extradition to the US since June that year and remains in London's high-security Belmarsh prison. **bw**



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MANGO FESTIVAL

Indian mangoes make foray into EU market

BRUSSELS: Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal on Friday (local time) inaugurated a "Mango Festival" organized in Brussels to create awareness among the Europeans and create a market for Indian mangoes in Europe.

India is a major exporter of mangoes to the world, but mostly the mangoes are going to Middle-East countries rather than coming to Europe.

Santosh Jha, Indian Ambassador to Belgium, Luxembourg and European Union (EU) shared his thoughts on the event and the "immense potential" Indian mango has in the European market.

"Indian mangoes in Europe have immense potential. The idea is to bring it first here, and get them to taste it. This is the first time being held in Belgium, considered the capital of Europe, and all the organizations of the EU are here. We are also fortunate to have Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal here who inaugurated the event. I am really proud of it as most of the mangoes are from my home-state Bihar. I tasted them after so many years," said Jha in an exclusive interview with ANI.

Speaking over EU-India free trade negotiations (FTAs), he said that EU-India negotiations started with the mango-mania.

"If you are talking about FTA,



it was paused in 2013, we have now begun to restart, and negotiations will be formally relaunched. Then we will start the formal negotiations at the technical level. I think that as India now has a new approach to FTA, there is a lot of optimism. If we negotiate well, understand each other, overall sense of mutual engagement, then we will have a really good opportunity to conclude it at an early date. We have a very fast-track approach, we want to finish it quickly. If you see, how we have finished other FTAs, it should give you an indication of how quickly we could possibly do it.

Giving an inkling about the timeline of the EU-India negotiations, he said, "It will begin with proper negotiations on each and every track. There are multiple tracks in FTA and in each track as we progress, we will take it, as it goes." **ANI**

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TENNIS

My intention is to play at Wimbledon, says Nadal

MAJORCA: Tennis great Rafael Nadal on Friday confirmed his intentions to take part in the forthcoming Wimbledon Championships and said that playing in the Grand Slam “will depend on his fitness.”

In a press conference at the Mallorca Country Club on Friday, Nadal said, “My intention is to play Wimbledon, but it will all depend on what happens with my body this next week. I’m without pain for a week and have been practising, so it tells me there may be a chance to play in the tournament.” The Spaniard also said that he will travel to London for training sessions this past week following the treatment he underwent on his foot.

“[The foot treatment that] was done in Barcelona is not a 100% immediate thing, but changes are noticeable. I have noticed them, strange sensations, my joint pain has decreased,” he said.

“I have noticed changes with the treatment, still have strange sensations, sometimes I can’t feel my foot, but the pain that did not allow me to support my weight on



my foot has subsided,” he said.

Since winning the Roland Garros title at the beginning of June, Nadal has undergone a radio frequency procedure as he tries to deal with his regular foot issue.

“With the treatment in the nerves, things happen in your foot, sometimes one part of the foot goes numb, sometimes another. It’s normal apparently and after a few weeks the nerves reorganise themselves. I’m happy. I’ve felt a bit of pain, but it’s different to what I had before, which for me is progress,” said the Spaniard.

The Spaniard won a record-extending 14th French Open and 22nd Grand Slam title - Nadal said that he was forced to use pain-killing injections to numb the pain in his left foot. **ANI**

ACC WT20 CHAMPIONSHIP

Points shared as rain stops play between Oman and UAE

Times News Service

MUSCAT: On Friday, Oman Women played vs the UAE Women in their opening game of the ACC WT20 Championship 2022 in Malaysia. Both sides looked evenly poised ready to grab their 1st two points of the tournament. Winning the toss, Oman asserted themselves to put on a score to ably defend against the heavyweights UAE. Oman got off to a slow start with



openers Sakshi Shetty and Fiza Javed looked to settle before going all out. But UAE's skipper was sharp with her subtle bowling changes that put Oman down by 3 wickets for a mere 26 in 8 overs. The rain started pouring in and play was called off after just 8.4 overs.

Both teams shared 1 point each coming of a No Result. Oman play their GCC counterpart Qatar in its next game on Sunday, 19th June 2022 starting 10am GST.

5 New ideas for cozy bedrooms





Now open in Oman Avenues Mall

VODAFONE SIGNS PACT

Vodafone signed an exclusive agreement with Whisbi for the provision of customer care services via video call. The agreement was signed between Bader Al Zaidi, CEO of Vodafone, and Alex Bisbe CEO of Whisbi, at the Vodafone headquarters in Muscat.

MARKET

BUSINESS & FINANCE



LABOUR CITY AT KHAZAEEN

Khazaen City will soon develop infrastructure to meet the increasing demand for investment in the city, including a labour city covering an area of 55,000 square metres.

CAPITAL MARKET AUTHORITY

Suspension of withholding tax on dividends and interests extended



Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Capital Market Authority (CMA) has issued a circular addressed to the general public of investors, public joint stock companies, Muscat Stock Exchange, Muscat Clearing and Depository Company, audit and law firms and the companies operating in the field of securities.

Circular 11/2022 advised the extension of the suspension of the collection of withholding tax on dividends of shares, returns on Sukuk and interests on bonds,

which ended on May 6, 2022.

The circular stipulates that the Capital Market Authority has recently noticed the questions raised on the social media by investors and those interested in investing on the Muscat Stock Exchange on the fate of the decision to suspend the collection of withholding tax at 10% of the dividends on shares, returns on Sukuk and interests on bonds, which ended on May 6, 2022.

The CMA would like to clarify that this decision was abolished by the decision of the Council of

Ministers as part of the economic stimulus plan and was extended to 2025. And, to furnish an appropriate environment to achieve the Oman Vision 2040 as instructed by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik Said, May Allah protect him, the CMA is continuously communicating with the concerned entities to properly address this matter and other related issues that would enhance the ability of the capital market in the Sultanate of Oman to grow and compete in attracting foreign capital to finance economic projects."

Oman's economy projected to grow at 4.5% in 2022

Oman's economy is strengthening, and inflation has been contained so far. The real GDP grew by 3 per cent in 2021, largely driven by the buoyant hydrocarbon sector: IMF report



Russia and Ukraine," Kanda said at the conclusion of the mission.

The Omani authorities undertook substantial and well-coordinated vaccination efforts and policy actions to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and foster the recovery.

"The authorities undertook substantial vaccination efforts and policy actions to mitigate the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic and foster the recovery. Nearly all persons 12 years and older had been at least partially vaccinated and about 90 per cent were fully vaccinated as of end-May 2022," Kanda said.

"With declining infections, all COVID-19-related restrictions have been removed. Targeted fiscal, monetary, and financial measures provided relief to households, firms, and banks," he added.

Favourable oil prices and continued fiscal consolidation efforts are expected to generate substantial fiscal and external surpluses, and support higher growth, over the medium term, the IMF said in a statement.

"Higher oil prices and fiscal consolidation have improved fiscal and external positions. The fis-

cal balance is expected to improve to a surplus of 5.5 per cent of GDP in 2022, with surpluses persisting over the medium term owing to higher oil prices and continued consolidation under the authorities' Medium-Term Fiscal Plan (MTFP)," the statement said.

"Alongside, central government debt is expected to decline substantially from about 63 per cent of GDP in 2021 to 45 per cent of GDP in 2022. Buoyed by oil exports, the current account balance is projected to improve to a surplus of 6.8 per cent of GDP in 2022. International reserves held at the CBO increased to \$19.7 billion (5.2 months of prospective imports) in 2021," the statement added.

The banking sector remains well-capitalised and liquid, benefiting from the strong buffers before entering the crisis and prudent oversight of the Central Bank of Oman (CBO).

"The banking system has weathered the recent shocks relatively well, supported by substantial capital and liquidity buffers and the CBO's continued efforts in strengthening regulatory and supervisory frameworks," the IMF statement said.

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman's economy is projected to grow by about 4.5 per cent in 2022, benefiting from increased hydrocarbon production and continued recovery of non-hydrocarbon activities, according to a new report by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), led by Daniel Kanda.

"The economy is strengthening, and inflation has been contained so far. Real GDP grew by 3 per cent in 2021, largely driven by the buoyant hydrocarbon sector," a staff team from the IMF, led by Kanda, who visited Muscat, Oman, during June 5-12, 2022 to discuss economic developments, the outlook, and the country's policy priorities.

"Inflation turned positive to 1.5 per cent in 2021 and is projected to increase to 3.7 per cent in 2022, given rebounding economic activity and rising global inflationary pressures. There are limited direct trade or financial links to

AMCHAM OMAN

Networking event explores new business opportunities

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman American Business Centre (AmCham Oman) hosted its last networking event of the spring season at Sama Terraza on the Park Inn by Radisson Rooftop for members of the Oman business community on June 15. At the event, held in collaboration with AmCham Dubai and FedEx Express, attendees had the opportunity to network with small and medium businesses (SMEs) and explore new business opportunities.

Sammy Bousaba, Managing Director of Middle East and Africa Sales at FedEx Express said: "Oman connects the East and West of the GCC region, and in addition to its business-friendly environment, the Sultanate has comprehensive initiatives to integrate its road, airport, and port networks."

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Khazaen Economic City witnesses increasing demand for investment

Khazaen Economic City is witnessing a great demand from investors to localise their projects due to its strategic location near Muscat Governorate and Sohar Port

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Khazaen City will soon develop infrastructure to meet the increasing demand for investment in the city, including a labour city covering an area of

55,000 square metres. Khazaen Economic City is witnessing a great demand from investors to localise their projects due to its strategic location near Muscat Governorate and Sohar Port. Last week, Khazaen Economic City signed an agreement to develop and operate the “Labour Village” with Al-Adrak to build on an area of 55,000 square metres, with an investment value of OM-R12million. The labour village consists of housing complexes designed with high specifications for housing employees and workers, and the first phase of labour housing complexes will be built on a land area of 25,000 square metres, in addition to the integrated service complex that will be built on a land area of 35,000 square metres. The labour village aims to accommodate more than 5,000 employees and workers and provide integrated services and facilities such as shopping stores, restaurants, banks, gyms, mosques, clinics, recreational places and other

support services. Engineer Salem bin Sulaiman Al-Dhuhli, CEO of Khazaen City, explained that the signing of the agreement came as a continuation of the city’s efforts to establish an integrated economic city, and to provide a healthy and safe environment for workers, noting that Khazaen Economic City allocated 730,000 square metres for labour villages, which aims to accommodate more than 90,000 workers when the city is completed. He told Oman News Agency that the “labour village” project comes as an attractive factor for local and foreign investments in addition to the facilities provided by Khazaen Economic City, especially with regard to the speed of completion and the city’s strategic location, services and ready infrastructure. He stressed that Khazaen Economic City continues to implement vital projects in the city, along with Khazaen Land Port, Khazaen Central Market for Vegetables and Fruits, and the Pharmaceutical City.



CUSTOMER CARE SERVICES VIA VIDEO CALL

Vodafone signs agreement with Whisbi

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Vodafone signed an exclusive agreement with Whisbi for the provision of customer care services via video call. The agreement was signed between Bader Al Zaidi, CEO of Vodafone, and Alex Bisbe CEO of Whisbi, at the Vodafone headquarters in Muscat. The signing of this agreement is aligned with Vodafone’s constant endeavour to utilise the latest international technologies to provide an exceptional and comprehensive digital experience to its customers. With Whisbi, Vodafone customers can easily communicate with the Vodafone Customer Care Centre via video calls to answer inquiries related to products and services or provide solutions to any challenges, directly. Commenting on the signing of the agreement, Bader Al Zaidi said, “Vodafone is one of the leading ICT service providers in the world. Ever since the commencement of our operations in the Sultanate of Oman at the end of last year, we have strived to ensure the provision of multiple channels through which our customers can communicate with Our Care team. This includes direct calling facilities, WhatsApp and chat services through a state-of-the-art MyVodafone application. This is



PARTNERSHIP: With Whisbi, Vodafone customers can easily communicate with the Vodafone Customer Care Centre via video calls to answer inquiries related to products and services or provide solutions to any challenges, directly. - Supplied picture

in addition to social media channels, which in turn are among the preferred channels for customers. With Whisbi, we’re adding a new and exclusive channel in the Sultanate, where we can enable our

customers to communicate with us visually and accurately. “This can be described as an integrated virtual store that is time and effort efficient, without the need for our customers to visit

us physically, while also ensuring that the highest level of privacy is maintained. Whisbi technology hosts a one-way communication, allowing the customer to see the call centre expert and not the other way around.” From Whisbi’s side, Alex Bisbe stated, “We are pleased to have joined hands with Vodafone Oman. Through this exclusive agreement, we can add them to our portfolio of customers from major brands around the world including Samsung, Hyundai, Mazda, Motorola and many more. We believe that the Whisbi service will provide an added value in terms of customer care service in the Sultanate. We would like to extend a warm thank you to the management of Vodafone Oman for their confidence in the technology developed by Whisbi over the past years. We look forward to rolling out this service and following up on customer feedback that we may receive. Whisbi is a leading virtual store that enables customers to meet all their respective requirements, no matter the time and place.” Whisbi technology provides the possibility of multi-party video meetings so that more than one person can join the video call at the same time. This way, customers can view new services and products together and share in the experience.

NEGOTIATIONS

India, EU resume free trade talks after 9-year lull

NEWDELHI: India and the European Union (EU) have re-launched negotiations for free trade agreement (FTA) after a 9-year lull, the Ministry of Commerce & Industry said on Saturday. The negotiations were re-launched at an event held at the European Union headquarters in Brussels on June 17. India’s Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, and Valdis Dombrovskis, Executive Vice-President of the European Commission, formally re-launched the India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations. Besides, negotiations were also launched for a stand-alone Investment Protection Agreement (IPA) and a Geographical Indicators (GIs) Agreement, the Ministry of Commerce & Industry said in a statement. The first round of India-EU free trade agreement negotiations is scheduled to begin in New Delhi on June 27. This would be one of the most significant FTAs for India as the EU is its second-largest trading partner after the US. The India-EU merchandise trade has reg-

istered an all-time high value of \$116.36 billion in 2021-22 with a year-on-year growth of 43.5 per cent. India’s export to the EU jumped 57 per cent in FY 2021-22 to \$65 billion. India has a surplus trade with the EU. During India-EU Leaders’ meeting held in Porto on 8th May 2021, an agreement was reached for resuming negotiations for a balanced, ambitious, comprehensive and mutually beneficial FTA and starting fresh negotiations on the IPA and a separate agreement on GIs. “Both partners are now resuming the FTA talks after a gap of about nine years since the earlier negotiations were left off in 2013 due to difference in the scope and expectations from the deal,” India’s Ministry of Commerce and Industry said. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen’s visit to New Delhi in April 2022, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s recent visit to Europe accelerated the FTA discussions and helped in defining a clear roadmap for the negotiations. **ANI**



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DISCUSSIONS

ESG seminar discusses sustainability and innovation among businesses



MUSCAT: An ESG seminar was held recently by Crowe Oman under the patronage of Dr Nasser Al Mawali, undersecretary of the Ministry of Economy at the Crowne Plaza Hotel Qurum. “We believe that everybody in the world has a responsibility to be more environmentally conscious, especially business owners. It’s a conscious decision to move sustainability and innovation together,” said Davis Kallukaran, managing partner of Crowe Oman. Initiating the seminar discussions, Karl Jackson, Audit and Assurance Partner at Crowe said, “Resolving the world’s climate change challenges, is something we all need to contribute to for the sake of our children and grandchildren after them.” Delivering his talk at the technical session, Luis Piacenza, Head of ESG practice at Crowe Global and Partner Crowe Spain, said, “Nowa-

days, everyone wants to talk about ESG, and executives compel their teams to start the path to ESGisation. The primary imperative is to mitigate the significant risks related to climate change, and erosion of social cohesion, by having good corporate governance. We also need to define what ESG means to the financial sector. In a nutshell, the financial industry needs to ensure that the capital is available for financing the transition and adaptation to the new global imperatives. For corporates, sustainability is the formula to hear the markets, not only the clients but also stakeholders. “Your value as a brand depends on how you manage your relationships and how you remove frictions in these commercial and non-commercial relationships. Improving client experience, employee journey, and environmental performance are crucial to

staying ahead in business, so it is time to demonstrate our purpose and alignment with a better society to stakeholders. Governments may foster the pace of change by introducing regulatory requirements for transparency. Most developed economies are introducing mandatory reporting to help corporations and financial undertakings follow this path. Of course, governments are also enforcing environmental compliance and taxing non-efficient operations from the environmental and social perspectives. These three imperatives are the key to deploying ESG in our economies.” Luis also spoke about the effects of climate change on businesses and how they will have to revalue their assets by taking into consideration, its transferred effect on the demand and supply of their core product. Varghese Kallukaran, Senior

Manager Advisory at Crowe UAE while making the presentation at the second session said, “There is a ripple effect that is created from the prevalence and institutionalisation of sustainability reporting among large corporations. They increasingly require ESG data and disclosures from the thousands of smaller, often privately held companies in their supply chains.” “Gaining your stakeholder’s confidence by demonstrating your organisation’s approach to addressing sustainability-related challenges and opportunities sends the right message,” Varghese added. The seminar was attended by the delegates in large numbers from CBO, CMA, MSX, banking institutions and large corporates. Paul Kallukaran, Senior Consultant at Crowe Oman proposed the vote of thanks while Buthaina Al Abri compered the event.



THE SOLITARY STAR

(In celebration of ‘Father’s Day’)

The supermarket was one place that my wife revered like a saint's tomb and once inside, she was almost always in a meditative trance and lost to the world outside as she combed through the racks for various brands and special offers. Her meticulousness often resulted in my elevated blood pressure, as by nature I was restless and highly susceptible to boredom - a trait, which my five-year-old daughter had inherited impeccably, much to my wife's disappointment. The weekly supermarket visit on Fridays often took its toll on the rest of the evening as heated arguments, harangues and sober week-ends followed in natural progression. My daughter often found herself playing referee (favorably to me most of the times) during the bouts. Things got a little out of hand after one such volatile supermarket visit, and my wife suggested that the next time around, I drop her at the supermarket and take my daughter to the beach nearby while she shopped in peace. And for a change, I found myself in total compliance. And thus began our weekly trips to the seashore.

The beach was barely a two-minute drive from the supermarket. It was a quiet beach with not very many people around. I would park my car under a coconut tree in one of the secluded spots in the beach. I would push back my car seat, open the door and sip a can of chilled coke while enjoying the cool breeze and the music on my car radio. My daughter would be busy spotting crabs and collecting seashells. But as I said before, she had inherited her vulnerability to boredom from me and it was only a matter of couple of weeks before she got bored of crabs and seashells. When she got bored, her guns were always aimed at me.

"Daddy, why is the sea so blue?" She would ask.

"Because the grass is green." would be my dry and obvious answer.

"But daddy, why is the grass so green?"

"Because the sky is so high"

"But tell me daddy, why is the sky so high?"

"Because your grandfather told a lie in 1965!"

The rhyming answer was good enough for her to switch her pestering tactics. She would start tugging at my chin, begging me to tell her a story... "Daddy, tell me a story, please tell me story,... a veeeerrrry long story,... the story should be a little scary,... a little sad,... a little happy,... a little funny... and one more thing... you should be the hero of the story!"

And soon she would be in her elements as she made me slay dragons and mon-

sters, rescue little children trapped in caves, ride on a winged horse and so on. She would give me no break and I had to think up a new story every time, as she would be in 'hyper alert' mode to check if I dared to get repetitive. This continued for a few weeks and soon, I was running out of creativity. I had to think of an alternate way to keep her occupied for those ninety minutes that my wife went on a supermarket pilgrimage. Then one evening I had an idea. I challenged her to count the number of waves that came rolling on to the shore. The idea excited her as she started counting. That left me a little in peace while I enjoyed the serenity of nature (and the coke) undisturbed. Or so I thought. Soon she was counting in high decibels... "Hundred and seven, hundred and eight... daddy what comes after hundred and eight?"

"Hundred and nine", I would reply.

"Daddy, what comes after hundred and nine?"

"Hundred and ten"

"Daddy, what comes after hundred and ten?"

And soon I realised that I was the one counting.

This was not working. Suddenly the supermarket seemed like a better option. But my pride wouldn't allow me to admit that. I decided to take it week by week. The following Friday, it was around dusk time as we drove to the beach. The sea looked tranquil as the waves gently slapped against the shore. I parked the car at the usual place and took out my can of coke. She was surprisingly quiet as she sucked her thumb, looking lost in some deep thought. But somehow, her quietness always alerted me like the calm before a storm.

"What are you thinking, baby?" I asked.

"Daddy... I'm just thinking of 'what to think'?"

Oh no! Now I had to think faster as to what to make her think before the devil entered the workshop.

"Do you know something baby?" I asked.

"What Daddy?"

"Do you know that there are more stars in the sky than there are sea shells in all the beaches of the world put together?"

"How many sea shells are there in all the beaches, daddy?"

"Uh, I don't know, sweetheart."

"But you must know daddy? How can you not know? You are supposed to know. I know that you know everything."

"How?"

"Because you are bestest daddy in the wholest world!"

"Well okay, there are one million twen-

ty thousand four hundred and seventy eight sea shells in the all the beaches of the world."

"And how many stars are there in the sky?"

Here we go again.

"One million twenty thousand four hundred and seventy nine."

"Daddy... don't fool me. How do you know so correctly?"

"Because you just said that I'm the bestest daddy in the wholest world... and so I know everything."

"Daddy,... You don't know anything. You're not supposed to know that you know everything. Only I must know that you know everything. You don't even know this."

Suddenly I was confused. I wasn't sure who was kidding whom.

"Well, if you don't believe me, you can count the stars yourself. If you are right and I'm wrong, then I will tell you two new stories. If you are wrong and I'm correct, then no 'story telling' for two weeks. Is that a deal?" I asked lifting my thumb.

"Deal daddy." She said, lifting her thumb in excitement.

"But remember, you must not miss out a single star." I said.

"Ok daddy." She said as she got down from the car to count the stars. That was a relief. I leaned back on my seat and switched on the radio. Just when I was about to open my coke, she came back to me with a glee.

"Daddy, you have lost. There is only one star in the sky." She said triumphantly.

Now, that was a rude interruption.

"That can't be baby. Look properly."

"No daddy, I counted properly. There is only one star. Come out and look for yourself."

I stepped out of the car and looked at the sky. She was right. There was just a solitary lustrous star that shimmered in the dark expansive sky. The clouds probably hid the others. And suddenly it seemed to me that it was longing for our invitation to join our little twosome beach party. The star reminded me of my younger days that were woven in a world of dreams and wishes. My elder sister used to tell me that a solitary star in the sky answers our heart's deepest wishes. All we had to do was ask for it. There were a few occasions during my growing years when I had spotted a solitary star and made my wish. The nature of the wish kept changing with time. A tricycle, scoring high marks in an exam, a motorcycle, getting through a job interview, getting a promotion, winning someone's heart... etc. were all wishes made during

my solitary star spotting over the years. Amazingly, none of these wishes I made came true. Even more amazing was the fact that I never stopped making those wishes as I felt that if it didn't happen, let it not be for the want of wishing. After all, making a wish never invited tax.

I lifted my daughter and put her on the bonnet of the car. I told her "Sweetheart, do you know, the stars are always watching us? They are our guardian angels. The grace of our forefathers shines on us through the stars..."

"Four fathers daddy?" she interrupted with a raised eyebrow, "...but, how can we have four fathers daddy? We can have only one."

"Not f-o-u-r 'four' you nut, its f-o-r-e 'fore'... forefathers... that means our grand father, great grand father and so on..."

She spent a moment in thoughtful silence.

Then she took off again, "Daddy, ... what comes after great grand father?"

"Great, great' grandfather."

She looked puzzled.

"Daddy... why can't it be 'greater' grandfather?..."

"Well, okay..." I cut her short, "right now, we're not discussing grandfathers. We're talking about the stars. So now, coming back to the stars,... you know, sometimes, one of them appears in the sky alone. It is said that if you make your wish to it, it will bless you by making your wish come true. So this is your chance. Go ahead and make your wish and ask that lonely star to fulfill it."

She stared at me with wonder and asked, "Reeaally daddy?"

"Really baby."

She looked up at the star and then looked at me again.

"Will it answer annnnnyy wish?" she asked with her eyes wide open and a tilt of her head.

"Yes. All you got to do is ask." I said, while trying to guess what her little mind was working on - ice creams... candy... a new dress... a new video game... a visit to the amusement park.... a story book...

first prize in the 'tiny tots' dance contest in her school... or an evening of uninterrupted cartoon network viewing on the TV without studies... what could it be that took priority in her tiny brain?

She once again looked up and gazed at the star for a long time. She closed her eyes, folded her palms and maintained intense silence for a few seconds. I was amused. She then opened her eyes slowly while I watched her performance in fascination trying hard to conceal a smile that came to my lips. Then with a sense of achievement she said, "I've made my wish, daddy."

"Very good." I said, "now let's get you back into the car or you may catch a cold." The air was getting chill. I carried her and put her in her seat. "And by the way, what did you wish for, baby?" I asked while folding a woolen scarf around her ears.

"Shall I tell you daddy?"

"Go ahead, tell me." I said.

"I wished that all the other stars appear on the sky because that poor star must be feeling lonely and scared all alone."

For a moment, I stood there staring at her, not believing what I had just heard as she looked at me in all innocence. Suddenly her eyes lit up as she looked behind me. "Daddy, look...!!!" she screamed, pointing her tiny fingers skywards.

I turned and looked at the sky and up there I saw... the clouds had paved way as stars, glittering like diamonds, filled the evening sky and along with them was 'uncle' moon with his round and happy face,... all of them dutifully gathered in a celestial assembly... just to honor my little princess' wish... which was their Royal Command!

- Pradeep Govind

(The author is an International Award winner and an executive staff of Muscat Media Group. This short story is an extract from his book "The 'Capillary' Effect & Other Short Stories" published on Amazon Kindle)

“

I challenged her to count the number of waves that came rolling on to the shore. The idea excited her as she started counting. That left me a little in peace while I enjoyed the serenity of nature (and the coke) undisturbed.





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Barren land turns green with brothers' efforts to plant trees

Aerial picture shows a view of Zhangchuan Village of Tongwei County, northwest China's Gansu Province. Xu Zhigang and his twin brother Xu Zhiqiang have spent over 50 years voluntarily planting trees on barren hills on the Loess Plateau.

Xinhua



Harvest season of grapes in Menoufia province, Egypt

People collect newly-harvested grapes at a farm in Menoufia province, Egypt.

Xinhua



Highlight of Indonesia Open 2022 in Jakarta

China's Chen Yufei hits a return during the women's singles semifinal against Chinese Taipei's Tai Tzu-Ying at Indonesia Open 2022 at the Istora Senayan sports stadium in Jakarta, Indonesia.

Xinhua



25th St. Petersburg International Economic Forum held in Russia

Russian President Vladimir Putin attends the plenary session of the 25th St. Petersburg International Economic Forum in St. Petersburg, Russia.

Xinhua



Heat wave hits Brussels, Belgium

People rest at the Park of the Fiftieth Anniversary in Brussels, Belgium. Belgium witnessed a heat wave with temperature expected to reach 34 degrees centigrade in Brussels.

Xinhua



The cast of the film Jug Jug Jaiyo poses for a photo
Bollywood actor Varun Dhawan and actress Kiara Advani pose for a photo at the song launch of their upcoming film 'Jug Jug Jaiyo', in Mumbai.

ANI Photo



Summer Night Concert 2022 staged in Vienna

Members of the Vienna Philharmonic perform during the Summer Night Concert at the park of Schoenbrunn Palace in Vienna, Austria. The Summer Night Concert 2022 was staged by the Vienna Philharmonic.

Xinhua



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ROUND-UP

Bank Muscat hosts annual media event to celebrate media’s role in development

The event was an opportunity to extend Bank Muscat’s appreciation for the effort shown by the media in constantly following and covering the bank’s events throughout the year as well as its pioneering role in social responsibility

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, recently hosted a special annual event for officials from media institutions and agencies in the Sultanate. The event was attended by Sheikh Waleed K. Al Hashar, Chief Executive Officer, Bank Muscat, chief editors and media officials as well as members of the bank’s management team. The event was an opportunity to extend Bank Muscat’s appreciation for the effort shown by the media in con-



stantly following and covering the bank’s events throughout the year as well as its pioneering role in social responsibility. The bank also unveiled the logo of its 40th Anniversary celebrations at the event, which saw a documentary about the bank’s journey. Addressing senior media officials gathered at the function, Sheikh Waleed K. Al Hashar, Chief Executive Officer, Bank Muscat, expressed his gratitude for the successful partnership between the Bank and the media. He stressed on the importance of this cooperation to achieve success that benefits the banking sector and the nation. Sheikh Waleed K. Al Hashar extended his sincere appreciation to all media professionals for their efforts in publicizing knowledge about various developments, thereby contributing to socio-economic progress in Oman. The Chief Executive Officer pointed out in particular, the im-

portant role that the media has been playing over the past four decades in enhancing the Bank’s communications with society. He thanked the media for effectively conveying to society the Bank’s stellar achievements in financial inclusion, economic development and social responsibility. He said that the Bank would continue to keep pace with new developments in the media sector including social media. Sheikh Waleed K. Al Hashar added that Bank Muscat would continue its commitment to customer-centricity and sustainable development as part of its efforts to translate the goals of Oman Vision 2040 into reality. Bank Muscat has been a pioneer and trendsetter in Oman’s financial services sector, being the first bank in the country to launch various new products and services, cutting-edge technology and extensive social responsibility programmes and initiatives over the



past four decades. The Bank grew from just one branch and a small number of customers in 1982, to having 174 branches and over 800 ATMs and CDMs catering to more than 2 million customers today. The bank has expanded its regional presence through international branches and representative offices. It is noteworthy that the Bank’s assets have grown manifold from OMR16 million in 1982 to well over OMR13 billion at present. Bank Muscat enjoys outstanding leadership at all levels, achieving over 95per cent Omani-isation and gender equality among

its over 3,800 employees. It prioritises developing Omani human resources by upskilling and enabling nationals to occupy key positions across all aspects of its operations. The bank’s various achievements across different spheres are a source of inspiration for many other organisations to both excel, and to do more for society. Aimed at promoting a partnership in the progress and sustainable development of the nation, Bank Muscat pursues a dynamic communication policy, maintaining strong relations with the media.

The bank frequently interacts with the media to highlight major achievements and developments, which are of interest to the public. Interacting regularly with media partners contributes greatly to the bank’s ability and flexibility to adapt to a rapidly changing environment and enhancing communications and further exchange of knowledge. As the leading Bank in the Sultanate, Bank Muscat strives for continuous improvement as part of its strategy of achieving excellence and maintaining market leadership that benefits the bank’s various stakeholders.

APPEALING LUXURY SUV

Experience Lincoln Corsair’s inspiring luxury and driving dynamics

MUSCAT: Lincoln Corsair’s inspiring luxury and overall driving dynamics, makes it one of the most appealing luxury SUVs in the market. The spacious two-row SUV combines refined power and a wealth of purposeful technologies in a sanctuary from the outside world. The Corsair is designed to give luxury customers technology to make their drive effortless, such as Lincoln Co-Pilot360 driver-assist features. The horizontal interior design lends a visual calmness to the space, which is crafted with supple, hand-selected materials. Breaking up the elements, particularly the cantilevered console, emphasizes volume and enhances practicality with additional front-row storage. A specially tuned 14-speaker Revel™ premium audio system is available for the Corsair. Place-

ment, tuning, calibration and the number of Revel speakers are all unique to each Lincoln vehicle, designed to ensure audio quality and accuracy for each cabin size and acoustics. Multiple power outlets are located throughout. Additional technologies are seamlessly integrated through SYNC® 3 with AppLink; users simply plug their mobile phone into their SYNC 3-equipped Corsair to access apps directly from an available 8-inch touch screen. Staying true to its Quiet Flight DNA, Corsair is engineered to deliver the effortless drive experience and sensation of gliding over the road. Turbocharged four-cylinder engine options are available – a standard 2.0-liter with a targeted 250 horsepower and 275 lb.-ft. of torque. Each is mated to a new 8-speed automatic transmis-

sion for agile performance. Corsair delivers a wealth of intuitive, customizable technologies that allow clients to personalize their driving experiences to exactly their liking. Corsair, like all Lincoln vehicles, comes standard with a suite of driver-assist features. It provides Pre-Collision Assist with automatic emergency braking and Pedestrian Detection, Blind Spot Information System, a Lane-Keeping System, rear backup camera and auto high-beam lighting, Active Park Assist 2.0, 360-degree Camera, Intelligent Adaptive Cruise Control & Head-up Display. Those interested in experiencing the Lincoln Corsair can visit a Lincoln showroom. In Oman, Lincoln vehicles are brought to you by Arabian Car Marketing Co.



RECOGNITION

Taageer Finance felicitated with awards for excellence

MUSCAT: Taageer Finance, a leading finance & leasing company in the Sultanate, bagged two awards at the prestigious Oman Banking & Finance Awards 2022 held recently at Al Bustan Palace – A Ritz-Carlton Hotel. Taageer Finance received the coveted trophies from Tahir Al Amri, Executive President, Central Bank of Oman, in the august presence of over 250 industry leaders. Taageer Finance was the only finance & leasing company at the event that received two awards for its excellent credentials and performance. The company was felicitated with the ‘Excellence in Customer Experience’ and ‘Excellence in Digital Transformation’ Awards in the Finance & Leasing segment. Shahin Mohammed Al Balushi stated, “We are delighted with the twin awards, and they are testimony to our relentless pursuit to provide the highest standards of customer service and embrace the latest in digital technologies to raise the market benchmarks. Over the decades, the company has carved a niche for itself among the Finance & Leasing companies and positioned itself with sustained and stable growth. With a consistent track record of profits and dividends to the shareholders, the brand of Taageer Finance is well established in the industry.” Talking about the key priorities for Taageer Finance, Al Balushi said, “Customer is the core strength



of Taageer Finance. We are continuously building a customer-centric digital platform for enriched customer experience, embracing technological innovation & preparing for futuristic development, and making continuous efforts to make Taageer Future Ready.” He further added, “We are embarking on several digital transformation initiatives including a new look website, revamped customer-centric app, development of comprehensive MIS to cover all key functional areas, use of Machine Learning tools for customer communication and on-boarding and process automation of key functions. With our primary focus on utmost customer satisfaction and quick service, we have provided enhanced digital experience by offering a customer-friendly mobile application with an array of services to customers at their fingertips.” Taageer Finance has an exten-

sive branch network comprising the head office at Al Khuwair and offices at six other locations including Wattayah, Sohar, Nizwa, Salalah, Barka and Al Kamil, to provide seamless access and services to its customers. To enhance its customer outreach, Taageer will be opening its Seeb branch shortly. With the primary objective of its commitment to customers, the company has taken several initiatives during the year including a reduction in customers’ loan turnaround time from the industry average, making it convenient for customers to make payments via the app during COVID, installing Point of Sale (POS) machines to all branches to ensure simplified cashless payment process, processing of customer requests through the App minimising number of customer visits and automation of customer’s complaint management system.

AGREEMENT

KR Eshraqa to sponsor 3rd edition of MoE’s Oman Science Festival

MUSCAT: In continuing its efforts to encourage young people to take up scientific disciplines and work towards creating a knowledge economy, Khimji Ramdas’ (KR) Eshraqa has signed an agreement with the Ministry of Education (MoE) to sponsor the 3rd Oman Science Festival. The agreement was signed by Abdullah bin Khamis Ambusaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education ‘for Education’, and Mahmood bin Khalifa Al Saqri, Manager of Eshraqa, Khimji Ramdas’ Social Development Arm. Scheduled to be held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Center (OCEC) in October 2022, the Science Festival will present science to students in an easy and interactive way that will motivate them to achieve excellence in the fields of science, innovation, and research. Organised under the theme, “With Science, We Meet Again”, this festival will encourage students to recognise the importance of science in everyday life and help them to keep pace with global trends in science and technology. Announcing their partnership with the MoE, Nailesh Khimji, Director of Khimji Ramdas Group stated, “Under the able and visionary guidance of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, our country is steadily working towards achieving Oman’s Vision 2040. We at Eshraqa Stemazone are delighted to be part of MoE’s



unique knowledge forum that brings students together with decision-makers, thinkers, academicians, and experts from inside and outside the Sultanate. It is a perfect synergy of both creativity and innovation. Our Stemazone programs promote a scientific temperament among children to build an ecosystem of innovation and technological progress.” Various international organisations, as well as government, private, and military sector institutions in Oman, are expected to participate in the festival. There will be interactive programmes, hackathons, competitions, scientific shows, and workshops on programming, robotics, and other STEMA (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, Arts) subjects. Ambusaidi said: “Our partnership with the Khimji Ramdas Group comes in several fields,

including the field of science and innovation. It has launched a number of educational initiatives such as Stemazone, and sponsored the Oman Science Festival to contribute to empowering students, raising their awareness of the importance of science, creativity, and innovation, and encouraging them to keep abreast of the latest developments in the fields of digital and scientific development because of their importance and a close and direct connection with the daily lives of students’ lives. We are pleased to witness the tireless efforts that the group is making and harnessing its capabilities for the sake of this country and its people, as we value the group’s contribution to the Oman Science Festival, which will be implemented in October 2022, and which is the most prominent national scientific event implemented and supervised by the ministry.”



ROUND-UP



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Omran celebrates official opening of The Art Space ‘Makan Studios’

This comes within the ‘Creatourism’ programme, one of the group’s initiatives to promote art, culture and heritage in its various development projects and hotels



MUSCAT: As part of its ongoing efforts to encourage Omani entrepreneurs and SMEs specialised in the field of arts management, Oman Tourism Development

Company (Omran Group) celebrated the official opening of The Art Space ‘Makan Studios’ at InterContinental Muscat Hotel. This comes within the ‘Creatourism’ programme, one of the group’s initiatives to promote art,

culture and heritage in its various development projects and hotels. The ceremony was held under the patronage of Her Highness Sayyida Meyyan bint Shihab Al Said and witnessed the presence of a number of their highnesses, Om-

ran Group’s chairman and CEO and many creative artists. On the occasion of the opening, Sayyida Meyyan said, “We commend all the efforts made by Omran Group and its role in launching various ambitious initiatives and programmes, which allow creative Omani youth the opportunity to contribute to the tourism sector promotion by highlighting the cultural heritage of the community and embodying it in various creative works.” “Such initiatives contribute to empowering national competencies by providing a stimulating and encouraging environment to participate in enriching the artistic and creative scene as part of an effort to enhance the creative aspects in various tourist destinations in the Sultanate,” she added. The Omran Group’s ‘Creatourism’ programme aims to promote a variety of activities that bring creative value to the group’s projects and destinations. This can

be accomplished by empowering arts management entrepreneurs and utilising their skills and capabilities to support tourism experiences by operating shops and supervising exhibition grounds, as well as establishing artistic and cultural activities and exhibitions in various tourist facilities. The group had previously introduced the programme’s first initiative, a competition to manage and operate the InterContinental Muscat art space. The ‘Makan Studios’ won first place and was given the responsibility of managing and operating the art space. Hassan Meer, Branding Art & Culture Expert at Omran Group, said, “The group’s efforts to boost tourism experiences and provide them with various specific programmes and initiatives have resulted in our ceremony. “This is accomplished by engaging the services of entrepreneurs and experts in the sectors of creative and cultural arts to take

advantage of the tourism sector’s prospects.” He further added, “The ‘Creatourism’ programme has attracted local creative talents to enrich Oman’s tourism sector. The opening of ‘Makan Studios’ reflects the programme’s success in investing in creative youth energies and opening up new horizons for the tourism sector through innovative foundations focused on Omani culture, heritage, and authentic arts.” Futoon Al Mahrouqi, Co-founder of Makan Studios, stated, “The team has focused on activating the InterContinental Muscat Hotel art space and making it an art venue for tourists, hotel guests and creative arts professionals in Oman. We focused on highlighting a range of innovative works inspired by its icons and artistic elements from the local and cultural heritage, as well as a range of other works of art that give visitors the opportunity to enjoy and learn closely about various creative arts.”

APPOINTMENT

Kempinski Hotel Muscat welcomes Julien El Khal as its new executive chef



MUSCAT: Kempinski Hotel Muscat is proud to welcome and announce the appointment of Julien El Khal as the new Executive Chef at the hotel. In his new role, Chef Julien will be spearheading the culinary team, driving food and beverage at the hotel and uplifting restaurant offerings at the property. He joins the Kempinski Hotel Muscat team from Marsa Malaz Kempinski in Doha, where he held the position of Cluster Executive Chef from 2018 until present. During his successful career in Doha, he demonstrated successful leadership and helped nurture an award-winning culinary team that has been recognised as a top-rated unit in

the region. He was also part of the pre-opening team for Marsa Malaz Kempinski in the year 2015, which includes 281 keys, 12 food and beverage venues and nine meeting spaces. EAM in charge of Food and Beverages Abbas Souki said, “We are delighted to welcome Chef Julien to the team. I am certain that with his culinary background and extensive experience, we will greatly strengthen the local culinary scene in Muscat to achieve the world-class standards that we are known for.” Chef Julien is a classically trained Executive Chef with over 15 years of operational experience in Western, Oriental, continental

and Mediterranean cuisines in internationally recognised luxury hotels and restaurant groups in Europe and the Middle East. He has been with Kempinski Hotels since 2014 but has previously held key positions in the culinary team in Beirut between 2009 and 2014, as well as in London, Cyprus, Dubai and Kuwait, to name a few. He was also Sous Chef at The Park Tower Knightsbridge (previously Sheraton Park Tower Hotel) in the UK from 2006 until 2009. He has also participated in renowned award programmes, including Time Out Awards Doha, Food & Travel Awards Middle East and many more.

APPROVED PRE-OWNED CERTIFICATION



Ferrari Approved Certification offers maximum security

MARANELLO: At the Ferrari headquarters in Maranello, Italy and across the world at the authorised dealerships, a heritage of excellence is maintained through the Ferrari Approved Certification. This application of the highest possible standards allows the Prancing Horse team to deliver the best possible customer experience for Ferrari owners. The approved pre-owned certification programme reflects the marque’s unrivalled standards through an intricate inspection process that guarantees the programme’s customers. Pristine Ferrari vehicles that were once completely out of reach to many-

have become that little bit more accessible. But before these pre-owned vehicles are made available to the public, they have to undergo a rigorous process comprising a series of wide-ranging checks and numerous guarantees that have been approved by the parent company. To ensure that any pre-owned Ferrari is operating at standards comparable to a brand-new vehicle, the local Ferrari dealership starts by implementing a detailed technical inspection of each and every car. This is carried out by a team of highly skilled Ferrari technicians who have undergone extensive training at Maranello in Northern Italy, the home of Ferrari.

TABLET

Huawei MatePad T8: All-round choice with good value for money for everyone

MUSCAT: With many tablets out there sporting larger screens, it’s hard to find a lightweight yet portable smart device without a restricted performance. Huawei has always continued to innovate when it comes to tablets, now they have released the Huawei MatePad T8, a mid-range Android tablet that does not sacrifice flair and function. Smaller in size yet similarly powerful in performance, it is just priced at OMR 52.9 and now it’s available 16th of June – the Huawei MatePad T8 proves to be an all-round choice with a good value for money for families and more.



an octa-core processor made up of four large cores running a base of 2.0GHz and four smaller cores running at 1.5GHz. What this means that you don’t have to worry about running multiple applications in the background and your tablet lagging. Let’s say you want to show something briefly to a client or your child wants to play a short game, you can still have your important documents running in the background. Aside from a powerful processor, it also packs a large 5100mAh battery (typical value) that lets you play 12 hours of local videos playback continuously. And if you don’t need to watch videos or use high power consumption apps, it can last up to 600 hours on standby, which is a lifesaver if you don’t want to keep having to charge your tablet. With smart devices always within our reach, it’s hard to divert attention away from them. Sometimes it can have long-lasting effects on our eyes, such as eye fatigue, myopia or disrupting our sleep patterns due to the strong blue light emitted. The Huawei MatePad T8 has a number of features attentive to eyecare. To minimise the effect of blue light, you have an option to open the Eye Comfort mode. In Kids Corner, It has several eye protection features like blue light alerts, posture alerts and bumpy road alerts. It has a gyroscope and algorithms that detect when you’re using your tablet’s lying down. When you’re using a tablet on a moving vehicle or while walking, it will promote eye-protection bumpy road alerts to ensure you’re using it in the right environments. Additionally, the Huawei MatePad T8 supports eBook mode. By adjusting contrast, brightness, clarity, colour saturation and other parameters, Huawei MatePad T8 creates an eBook mode that displays content in a paper-like effect, ensuring eye protection while providing a great reading experience all at the same time.

Kids Corner is child’s play Staying at home can take its toll – it’s easy for children to be curious and spend long amounts of time on a tablet, especially with a larger screen fit for gaming. The Huawei MatePad T8 is catered for children too with the Kids Corner. Pre-installed with four basic functional modules: Recorder, Camera, Multimedia and Kids Painting, the Huawei MatePad T8 lets kids embrace all the benefits of a smart device while parents can enjoy peace of mind. There are also flexible parental controls including eye protection, time management, app management, and content management features that allows the parent to choose which apps bypass time restrictions, such as eLearning apps during prep time. Running on the new EMUI 10, the interface is coloured with a muted Morandi palette to give a minimalist interface. The Huawei MatePad T8 also has a Dark Mode, seamless Face Unlock and a large variety of apps to download from the AppGallery. Regardless if you’re looking for a tablet for day to day use, for your children to watch educational videos or for work, the Huawei MatePad T8 is a family friendly tablet that is suitable for everyone priced at 52.9 OMR.

Sleek and lightweight design The 8-inch display is just a little smaller than an A5 sheet of paper. Weighing just 310g, it is super convenient to pop into your bag on the go between work meetings or just if you want to take it out in a café. With a high 80% screen-to-body ratio, you can immerse yourself in movies to your delight. It comes in one shade of Deep sea Blue and has a premium sandblasted metal finish for a sleek look yet is comfortable to hold in the hand. Strong performance and long battery life for your entertainment Within its compact size, it packs

PIZZA



Papa John’s opens two new branches in Oman

MUSCAT: Leading pizza franchise, Papa John’s has announced the opening of its two new branches in Barka & Al Murooj Square- Al Khoud 6 with the highest regard for the safety, quality and satisfaction of their customers. Papa John’s Oman network is now up to 13 stores by launching these two new branches. Commenting on the brand’s

concept Joseph Joseph, General Manager, Papa John’s Qatar & Oman said, “Our concept of ‘Better Ingredients. Better Pizza’ means we only use the freshest & finest ingredients to create the best pizza, which will soon prove our popularity all over Oman. Papa John’s has major expansion plans in the upcoming months & intends to open more outlets in the Oman.”





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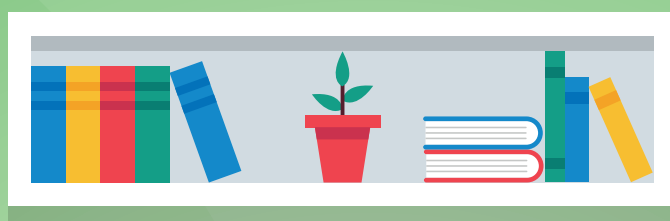


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