LET'S TALK
Times OF OMAN

KOREA-OMAN GREEN HYDROGEN STRATEGY FORUM 2022 HELD

The Korean Embassy and the H2KOREA (Hydrogen Convergence Alliance of Korea) co-hosted the Korea-Oman Green Hydrogen Strategy Forum 2022 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) on December 5, 2022. >A5

HIS MAJESTY THE SULTAN GREETS PRESIDENT OF FINLAND

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Sauli Niinisto of the Republic of Finland on his country's Independence Anniversary. In the cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Niinisto. His Majesty also wished the people of Finland further progress and prosperity. - ONA

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MEDIA AND ADVERTISING SERVICES

Information Ministry launches Oman's first official advertising agency 'Izdihar'

MUSCAT: With an aim to strengthen the existing business partnership model between the Ministry of Information (MoI) and the private sector, the Sultanate of Oman launched its first official advertising agency, 'Izdihar', on Monday.

'Izdihar' will offer media and advertising services to global and domestic clients, which are expected to benefit from the information ministry's visual, audio, print channels and electronic platforms.

The launch ceremony was held under the auspices of Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, in the presence of Dr Abdullah bin Nasser Al Harrasi, Minister of Information.

The new Oman brand strives to provide state-of-the-art services that keep pace with the advertising market's transitions.

Most suitable

Speaking to Oman News Agency (ONA), Al Yousef said: "The launch of 'Izdihar' has come at an appropriate time, with the climate ripe for full interaction between the corporate sector and the media sector. The official agency will serve as the most suitable means of providing the best advertisements at the most competitive rates."

Mohammed bin Said Al Balushi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Information, said: "Izdihar would set the stage for a lucrative future advertising market by providing the ministry with many advertisements that would expand revenues."

Fatma Mohammad Al Kalbani, Director of the Business Department at the Ministry of Information, said that "her department serves as a link between advertisers and the ministry".

"The Business Department has already gained experience in handling all kinds of radio, press and TV advertising campaigns, both traditional and digital," she added.

On the sidelines of the ceremony, the ministry signed eight agreements worth OMR400,000 with private sector enterprises tapping the ministry's media and advertising services.

The agreements were signed by Mohammed bin Said Al Balushi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Information and the representatives of the private sector establishments concerned.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, Al Yousef felicitated the top 10 companies that posted the largest number of advertisements through the ministry's channels this year.

-ONA

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

EU panel approval for visa-free travel

1 The Civil Liberties Committee of the European Parliament has approved visa-free travel for citizens of Oman, Qatar, Kuwait and Ecuador, a statement said. The endorsed proposal grants visa-free travel of up to 90 days to citizens of Kuwait, Qatar, Oman and Ecuador. >A3

WORLD

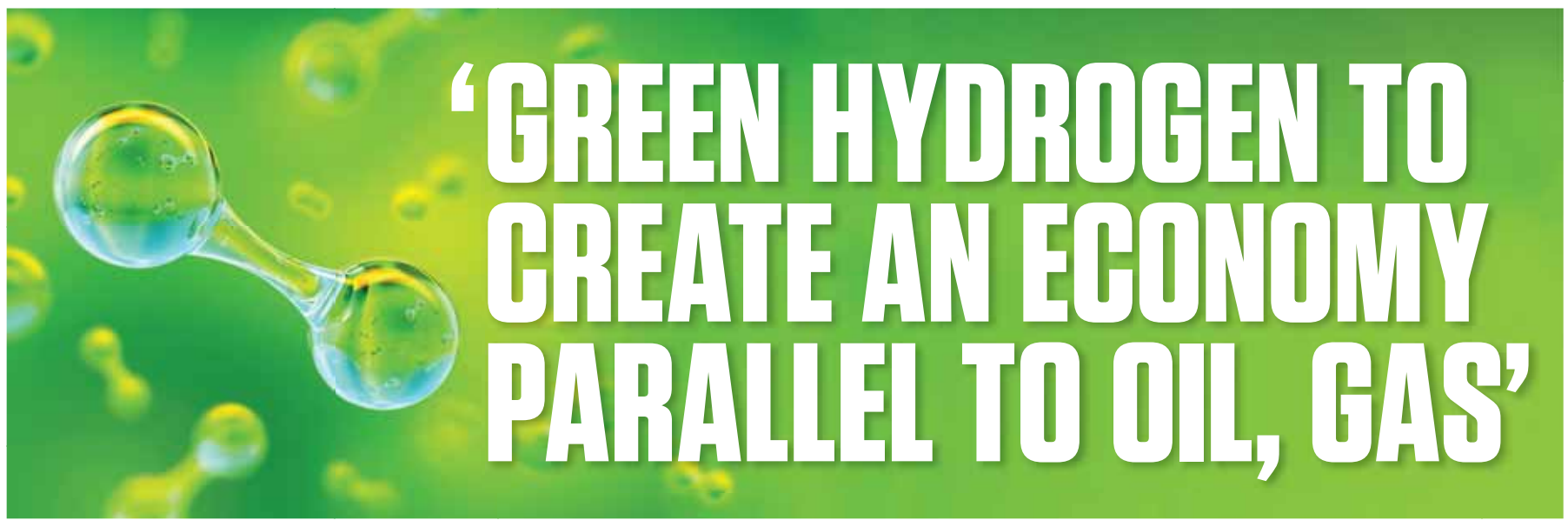
Modi thanks leaders for G-20 support

2 Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi thanked his US, French and Japanese counterparts for extending their support to India as New Delhi assumed the G20 Presidency on December 1. Responding to US President Joe Biden's congratulatory message for India, PM Modi tweeted, "Thank you @POTUS. >A6

MARKET

Water and electricity output up in Oman

3 Oman's electricity and water production grew by 0.5 per cent and 5 per cent respectively at the end of September 2022, according NCSI data. The total electricity generation in Oman reached 32,501.5 Gwh by the end of September 2022, the NCSI report said. >B1



'GREEN HYDROGEN TO CREATE AN ECONOMY PARALLEL TO OIL, GAS'

Oman aims to become one of the leading countries in the production of green hydrogen in the world

MUSCAT: Green hydrogen will create an economy parallel to the oil and gas economy, currently existing in the Sultanate of Oman, said Eng. Salim Nasser Al Awfi, Minister of Energy and Minerals.

He was speaking at the Green Hydrogen Summit that kicked off at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre in Muscat on Monday.

The opening ceremony of the exhibition was held under the patronage of the Minister of Energy and Minerals, who underscored the importance of the hydrogen sector in transitioning carbon-based energy to renewable and clean energy sources.

He added that hydrogen is one of the outputs or derivatives of clean energy and can be used to provide solar energy and wind energy to local industries and export them to the rest of the world.

He described the participation in the exhibition as excellent in terms of presence of local and international companies, both in the manufacturing processes or technology-import operations.

He explained the student competitions came in with new ideas contributing to further development of the idea and concept of renewable energy and hydrogen energy. The minister further said the hydrogen projects will contribute to achieving the Sultanate of Oman's net-zero strategy.

The strategy cannot be achieved unless there is clean and alternative energy to replace the energy currently being used. He said the clean alternative is renewable energy for electricity and hydrogen for local gas-dependent industries, and therefore the existence of hydrogen is essential to the energy transition and zero neutrality by 2050.

The three-day event was launched with the opening of an accompanying exhibition in which 30 local and international specialised establishments are taking part. The establishments are showcasing their projects, programmes and modern technologies in the field of green hydrogen. This helps promote the exchange of experiences and provides a platform for advances in the field.

Through its pavilion at the exhibition, the Ministry of Energy and Minerals has displayed the tasks it has undertaken in the field of green hydrogen and available investment opportunities.

It also introduced the National Strategy for Energy Transition and the most important minerals that enter into the production of green hydrogen technologies. Oman seeks to become one of the leading countries in the production of green hydrogen in the world.

Accordingly, the Ministry of Energy and Minerals has worked on developing a strategy to ensure the growth of a green hydrogen economy. >A4

BIG 5 EXHIBITION

Oman seeks to boost non-oil exports at Dubai exhibition

DUBAI: With the aim to promote its non-oil exports, the Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, is participating in the Big 5 exhibition, being held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Besides promoting Omani non-oil Omani exports, the participation seeks to explore export opportunities and attract foreign capital and investments to the Sultanate.

Oman is taking part in the exhibition, which will continue until Thursday. A number of Omani companies specialising in the construction sector are taking part in the exhibition.

Role of technology

This year's edition of the exhibition focuses on the role of technology in shaping the features of a better future, in conjunction with the construction sector's endeavours to meet challenges related to aspects of climate resilience and sustainability.

The 43rd session of the annual exhibition hosts diverse regional and international exhibitors to highlight their latest innovations in the field of building technology.

The event agenda, with its various activities and content sessions, focuses on the role of technology in transforming the sector and strengthening its position as one of the most prominent tributaries of sustainability.

>A5

Calligraphic art exhibition opens at Omani Society for Fine Arts A2

OMAN

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PRAYER TIMINGS

Dhuhr	12:03pm
Asr	3:05pm
Maghrib	5:25pm
Isha	6:40pm
Fajr (Tomorrow)	5:16am

23RD MEETING

Oman participates in GCC meeting

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs, today took part in the 23rd meeting of the Standing Committee of Officials of GCC Legislative Departments. The meeting was held via video-conferencing.

The Omani side was headed by Dr. Yahya Nasser Al Khusaibi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs.

The meeting reviewed the Unified Industrial Organisation System (law) for GCC states and the GCC Unified System for International Land Transport, among other issues. -ONA

Calligraphic Art Exhibition 'Karma' opens

The exhibition is organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth in cooperation with the Embassy of Japan in Oman

MUSCAT: The Omani Society for Fine Arts on Monday played host to a Japanese calligraphy art exhibition titled "Karma".

The exhibition is organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth in cooperation with the Embassy of Japan in Oman.

The event marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Oman and Japan.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of HH Sayyeda Alia Thuwaini Al Said, in the presence of Jota Yamamoto, Ambassador of Japan to Oman, and calligraphy enthusiasts.

The exhibition showcases the works of three main calligraphers, who are Yoho Kawaguchi and Serrin Kawaguchi and the Belgian artist Ingrid van Heyden, and a total of 52 works of art.

The exhibition, which will run until 10 December 2022, includes a presentation of calligraphers' experience and a general workshop for artists. -ONA

Announcement

Sultanate of Oman
Consumer Protection Authority

HONDA
The Power of Dreams

Honda Bike Recall Campaign

Date of the campaign : 06 December 2022
Campaign type : Safety
Campaign section : Motorcycles

Product Description :

Type	Bike Model	Model Year	VIN No
Honda Bike	GL1800BL	2020 YM	JH2SC79P2LK200001
	GL1800L	2021 YM	JH2SC7936LK200029
	GL1800BM	2021 YM	JH2SC79P9MK300002
	GL1800M	2021 YM	JH2SC7934MK300003
	GL1800M	2021 YM	JH2SC7938MK300005
	GL1800M	2021 YM	JH2SC7937MK300030

Details:
"In a vehicle equipped with a 5 speed MT, the ignition timing program of the engine control computer (PGM FI Unit) may not be properly controlled in a specific clutch area while driving. Therefore, the load torque becomes high, and in the worst case, it stalls."

Action:
Rewrite PGM FI of all vehicles to countermeasure programs.

For more Information:
The vehicle identification No (VIN) or the chassis Number appears on the plate attached to the chassis behind the front fork.

For Contact:
Toll free No : 800-71133 Timing : 24 hours daily
Landline No : 24665741 Timing : From 8 AM to 6 PM

Contact details:
For more information please visit any Honda Oman service centers.

عماسكو OMASCO

FUNDING AGREEMENT

Ministry of Education signs pact with OQ8

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Education signed an agreement with the Duqm Refinery and Petrochemical Industries Company, OQ8, to fund the third edition of the English language development programme for students of Duqm schools, grades (10-12) in Al Wusta Governorate.

The agreement was signed by Majid Al-Sinawi, Director General of the Directorate-General of Education in Al-Wusta Governorate, and Jassim Al-Ajmi, Head of Corporate Identity and Work Culture of the company, in the presence of Majid bin Saeed Al-Bahri, Undersecretary for Administrative and Financial Affairs, and Nasiha bint Muhammad Al-Falahi, Executive Vice President for Affairs of Duqm Refinery and Petrochemical Industries OQ8. The signing of the agreement took place in the office of the Undersecretary for Administrative and Financial Affairs.

In the current academic year 2022/2023, the programme targets sixty students from the schools of Duqm and will last for seven months. It is implemented during the evening period by the Department of Educational Studies and International Cooperation at the Ministry, in partnership with the British Council, to provide qualitative support in learning the English language, represented in providing students with English language skills, self-development, time management, teamwork and other twenty-first century skills.

Full story @ timesofoman.com/oman

EU panel nod to visa-free travel for Omanis

The EU Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs endorsed a proposal to grant visa-free travel of up to 90 days to citizens of Oman and three other countries

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Civil Liberties Committee of the European Parliament has approved visa-free travel for citizens of Oman, Qatar, Kuwait and Ecuador, a statement said.

The EU Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs endorsed a proposal to grant visa-free travel of up to 90 days to citizens of Kuwait, Qatar, Oman and Ecuador on Thursday (42 votes in favour, 16 against, 0 abstaining)

But in the case of Kuwait, the members supported visa freedom on the condition of a moratorium on death penalty.

They said visa freedom can be used to develop the partnership between EU countries and the Gulf States, emphasizing that a human rights dialogue must be part of such development.

According to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), the Chair of the European Parliament's committee on civil liberty, justice and interior affairs Juan Fernando Lopez Aguilar said: "I am a strong advocate for visa-waiver or visa exemption. Why? Because it favours exchange and favours mutual knowledge. It favours cooperation. It is also beneficial for EU citizens who are willing to travel abroad."

The Spanish MEP added that the European Commission took the initiative to waive the visa requirement for Kuwait and Qatar, and have now added Oman and Ecuador to the list.

"We have worked hard to pass the proposal which favours the enlargement of the visa waiver. It wasn't easy. Let us say it clearly. Executions and death penalty in Kuwait have been a major blow to the process," said Lopez Aguilar, who has been an MEP since 2009 for the Socialist group in the EP.

"That is why there has been an amendment in Kuwait that it has to self-impose a moratorium on death penalties," he said.

The MEPs noted that Ecuador has consistently demonstrated its commitment to respecting human rights, although more work is needed on prison conditions, women's rights, and the rights of indigenous peoples and refugees, among other things.

The draft legislation will now have to be endorsed by the full house of the European Parliament. Then, the Parliament and European Council can negotiate the final form of the legislation.

When the law takes effect, each visa waiver would be negotiated bilaterally between the EU and third countries.

Explaining the work of the committee, Lopez Aguilar said" "This committee is the first law making committee in the European Parliament. It is the one responsible for making laws to enter the territory of the EU and thus is the one responsible for EU regulations on visas". The regulation also states nationals of which third countries are requested to show visas when entering the EU territory and whose nationals are exempted from the visa requirement, he clarified.

MEPs said the dialogue between the EU countries and the Gulf states should happen at least annually, and the European Parliament should be informed of the progress, adding that visa waivers should be cancelled if there is no progress in areas of concern.

BY 2040

Sultanate working on $40 billion booster for green energy projects

SALEH AL-SHAIBANY

MUSCAT: Oman is working with potential partners for the investment of $40 billion to build a number of green energy projects in the Sultanate by the year 2040.

"Oman has plans to produce 200 millions tonnes of Green Hydrogen materials by 2040. Oman is now well placed to become a major contributor of green hydrogen projects in the world. We are taking this project very seriously and we are determined to reach our goals," Nasser Al Ruzeiki, green energy specialist at the Ministry of Energy and Minerals told the delegates at the Oman and Korea Green Hydrogen Strategic Forum.

Energy officials in Oman said the closer collaboration between the two countries will make the Sultanate a major source of green energy.

Oman has allocated over 50,000 sqkm of land for the green hydrogen projects.

"We are well placed to be one of the global leaders in green hydrogen, especially in solar and wind energy. We are working with strategic partners, including Korea, to move forward with our ambitions," Khalil Al Hanashi, Project Manager at the National Hydrogen Alliance, told delegates.

Oman has already developed Duqm, Salalah and Sohar freezones for major green hydrogen projects.

5G-enabled digital services to be offered to SMEs soon

Rollout of 5G sites continues, with populous parts of the country currently being prioritised, says the Vodafone Oman CEO

MUSCAT: Vodafone Oman says its 5G enabled telecom network will cover much of the Sultanate of Oman by the fourth quarter of 2023 – a commendable feat for a company that commenced operations less than a year ago.

Vodafone CEO Bader Al Zidi said the rollout of 5G sites continues apace, with populous parts of the country currently being prioritised.

"To date, we have managed to cover the whole of Muscat Governorate all the way to Qurayyat with our own fully 5G network. In 2023, we will complete North Al Batinah, Dhofar and the Duqm Special Economic Zone," the CEO stated.

Speaking to Times of Oman, Al Zidi noted that the phased rollout of Vodafone's 5G-enabled telecom networks will also pave the way for the introduction of new products and services in the coming years. This will primarily depend on the penetration of 5G-enabled handsets, which is currently limited to urban areas like Muscat, and that too, in modest percentages.

Vodafone has planned an array of initiatives in the coming years as the company seeks to monetise its considerable investment in new 5G-enabled networks.

An immediate goal is to provide 5G-enabled digital services to small and medium enterprises (SMEs), said Al Zidi. This is in line with the brand's commitment to supporting the Omani government's digital transformation strategy, he noted.

"Vodafone is a global player in the digital solutions space. The brand has been named a leader in the 2022 Gartner Magic Quadrant for Managed IoT Connectivity Services for the 8th consecutive year. Our aim is to bring these capabilities to Oman for the benefit of our SME and enterprise customers within the next couple of years."

Significantly, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is being harnessed by Vodafone Oman to provide highly-customised digital solutions to its subscribers – a feature that also comes in handy in addressing customer complaints and network failures, according to the CEO.

"We are a step ahead of conventional telecom operators. For example, in a traditional setup, a customer with a complaint typically calls the call centre, which creates a ticket and starts the rectification process. At Vodafone, the AI-enabled networks sense something is amiss, automatically analyses failures through data analysis, and creates tickets for dispatch to the network operation centre. This saves a lot of time for affected customers."

He further added: "Also, with our 5G networks provided by Ericsson, we are able to analyse call patterns and optimise the customer experience rapidly – something we wish to offer our enterprise customers in the future. We also plan to leverage Big Data and Machine Learning to provide a superior experience for our customer base."

But it's Vodafone commitment to localisation and In-Country Value (ICV) creation that is a source of much pride for the company, Al Zidi points out.

Vodafone Oman CEO Bader Al Zidi

"ICV is in our heart – it's what makes us different. While any telecom operator would need to make massive investments in the required infrastructure, we have managed to achieve this by creating local partnerships amounting to over RO 60 million since the time of our launch. For example, instead of building our own telecom towers, we have leased tower capacity from Oman Tower Company, a local company. Likewise, fibre connecting our sites has been leased from Oman Broadband, another state-owned company."

Furthermore, instead of investing in its own data center, Vodafone has signed an agreement with ODB, a local data center in addition to Equinix, an international company operating data centres in Oman. Cyber-security services, while being managed by Vodafone, in coordination with an international entity, many of its support services are outsourced to an Omani partner. Similarly, delivery services are handled by Asyad Express, while marketing and communications are led by local Omani SMEs.

As for the services of a call centre, Vodafone decided to set up an academy for want of an independent call centre operation in Oman.

"We decided to build our own call centre locally through a programme called Vodafone Academy. From a total of 17,600 applicants, we selected 145 Omani fresh graduates and trained them. This is an example of the ICV we have created through our operations here in Oman," the CEO stressed.

Furthermore, in keeping with its positioning as an innovation-driven telecom company, Vodafone offers car-parking payment options through its app.

The facility, integrated with Muscat Municipality's offerings, enables car owners to pay parking fees anywhere in the capital region. There are plans for the feature to be extended to include parking options in Nizwa and other locations in the future. Also on the horizon are plans for the rollout of Vodafone's eCommerce platform, which will be launched tentatively towards the end of 2023.

Besides, in line with parent company Vodafone's commitment to its Net Zero goal, the Omani outfit is also set to make its own contributions, says the CEO. This is demonstrated in its promotion of eSiMs, which enables customers to access their electronic SIMs without the need to visit the brand's retail stores. Additionally, the company has opted to go green by using electric vehicles and reduce its carbon footprint.

More product rollouts are envisioned in tandem with the growth of Vodafone's subscriber base, according to the CEO. "Our focus right now is to have the main fundamentals in place, comprising our subscriber base, the network itself, app stability, and the unique service offerings. Then it's easy to build on top of these building blocks as we move forward," he added in conclusion.

Looking back at the company's performance as it prepares to celebrate one year of successful operations, Al Zidi is gratified that the new brand has been well received in an otherwise fiercely competitive marketplace.

"In terms of market share, the targets we had envisioned at the one-year mark may be surpassed. It's quite an achievement for us because it has taken a while to educate the market about the strengths and value offerings associated with our brand. We also wanted to strike the right balance between creating our own network and depending on the other host networks with a view to maximising revenue growth from our own networks. So our goal has been not to simply increase our customer base, but also to ensure that this growth contributes first and foremost to our revenues, and not to our host networks. In light of the current dynamics of the market, we are targeting a market share of about 30% within the next 10 years."

Al Zidi said: "At Vodafone, our purpose globally is to connect for a better future and our expertise and global scale gives us a unique opportunity to drive positive change in society. In Oman, we promised to be different, digital and simple. I believe within our first year we have transformed the industry with a series of big firsts such as a state-of-the-art app, a complete cloud-based network (one of 3 globally), 5G with the best in class latency and eliminating bill shocks while roaming in favourite destinations. We have also seen our entry shaking up the industry with more and more companies looking to transform their own businesses and follow our lead in digitalising services, products and processes. We have achieved all this with a workforce that is over 90% Omani and one that supports local SMEs first and foremost. We have been overwhelmed by the talent we have found in our country. We now even showcase our local Omani talent to the worldwide Vodafone community."

IN MUSCAT

Bangladesh Social Club celebrates 52nd National Day of the Sultanate

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Bangladesh Social Club Oman celebrated the 52nd National Day of the Sultanate of Oman with a day-long programme of the Bangladeshi community on 2nd December 2022 in Muscat. A large number of people attended the programme.

Thousands of people of the community from all walks of life attended the celebration programme. A large number of stalls were put up with decorations having elements of Omani and Bangladeshi cultures.

Miss Moushimi Rahman, Deputy Chief of Mission and Thoyan Aye, Head of Chancery of Bangladesh Embassy in Muscat also attended the programme as Chief Guest & Special Guest, respectively. The Deputy Chief of Mission requested the participants to abide by the laws of the land.

Thousands of people of the community from all walks of life attended the celebration programme.

The Bangladesh Social Club Oman awarded a memento to Iftakher ul Hasan Chowdhury, CEO of Gulf Overseas Exchange for his contribution to the socio-cultural development of the community & Dr. Abdul Momen of New Fanza Policlinic for his support to community health care.

The programme was presided over by the Chairman of the Club, Sirajul Hoque. Rezaul Karim, Vice President of the Club and Convener of the programme and Azimul Hoque Babul, Vice President also addressed the gathering.

The programme ended with a music event comprising Omani and Bangladeshi songs and dances.

GREEN HYDROGEN SUMMIT

Key issues in green hydrogen value chain highlighted

< FROM A1 The ministry also embarks on promoting this sector due to its positive role in the context of energy resources diversification.

The sector also constitutes an opportunity for Omani and global companies to cooperate and participate in supporting energy security and realising economic diversification

Dialogue session

A dialogue session, organised for participants in the summit, took up a number of key issues in the green hydrogen value chain.

These included ways of striking a balance between short-term energy security goals and long-term sustainable goals, common tracks of energy transition, the importance of decarbonisation, the role of green hydrogen in energy diversification and its contribution to global energy security.

The session will also discuss green hydrogen as a means of economic development and environmental sustainability, as well as challenges and opportunities in the hydrogen sector and the development and sustainability of green hydrogen production.

The main event of the green hydrogen summit conference, titled "Strategy and Technology" will kick off on Tuesday.

ICV chain

The Green Hydrogen Summit represents an extension of the role undertaken by the ministry, acting in cooperation with its partners, to enhance policies of the in-country value (ICV) chain.

It seeks to localise industries related to the hydrogen sector, empower strategic studies, research and development and develop national capacity building, in addition to fostering community awareness about clean energy. - ONA

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BILATERAL RELATIONS

Oman, Singapore explore cooperation in economy, investment and culture fields

SINGAPORE: Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, met on Monday with Vivian Balakrishnan, Foreign Minister of Singapore.

The meeting comes within the framework of Sayyid Badr's visit to Singapore to hold the first strategic dialogue between the two countries.

The meeting reviewed bilateral relations explored area of cooperation in the fields of economy, investment and culture.

The two sides also exchanged views on a set of regional and international issues of common interests.

The meeting was held with the participation of Maj.Gen Idris Abdulrahman Al Kindi, Secretary-General of the National Security Council.

It was attended by Khalid Hashel Al Muslehi, Head of the Minister's Office Department and Anwar Ahmed Muqebel, Consul General of the Sultanate of Oman in Singapore. – ONA

Sayyid Badr meets Singaporean Minister

SINGAPORE: Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, met on Monday with Teo Chee Hean, Singaporean Senior Minister and Coordinating Minister for National Security.

The meeting came as part of Sayyid Badr's visit to the Republic of Singapore.

During the meeting, the two sides explores areas of cooperation pertaining to security cooperation and exchange of expertise. They also touched on views on regional and international developments of common interest in a manner that contributes to enhancing international peace and security.

Present in the meeting was Maj.Gen Idris Abdulrahman Al Kindi, Secretary General of the National Security Council.

The meeting was attended by Khalid Hashel Al Muselhi, Head of the Minister's Office Department, Anwar Ahmed Muqaibel, Consul General of the Sultanate of Oman in Singapore and officials from both sides. – ONA

PROMISING OPPORTUNITIES

Korea-Oman Green Hydrogen Strategy Forum 2022 held

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Korean Embassy and the H2KOREA (Hydrogen Convergence Alliance of Korea) co-hosted the Korea-Oman Green Hydrogen Strategy Forum 2022 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) on December 5, 2022 on the sidelines of the Oman Green Hydrogen Summit to contribute to the Summit process.

Omani and Korean sponsors including HYFLY, Birba Energy and KOTRA supported the Forum. Eng. Salim Nasser Al Awfi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, graced the Forum with officials from the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other public authorities. A number of high profile firms of Korea and Oman including POSCO, Samsung Engineering, KOGAS, OQ, and Oman LNG, to name a few participated in the Forum.

The Forum proved to be an effective platform to exchange perspectives and strategic insights of the key public and private stakeholders in Korea and Oman. It also provided the participants with an opportunity to share their outlooks and assessment on materialising cooperation in green hydrogen projects.

The participants reached a common perception on three important matters. First, they agreed that green hydrogen economy represents a huge industrial and environmental opportunities.

Second, they recognised the collective progress in pursuing solutions for creating an enabling environment to realise the green hydrogen industry while addressing challenges. Third, they acknowledged that the shared priorities and commitment of Korea and Oman to the development of green hydrogen industry would open up yet another promising opportunities.

KIM Kiejoo, Ambassador of Korea to the Sultanate underlined that "building on the traditional energy bridge, Korea and Oman could further create a "green hydrogen bridge" by sharing their respective priorities of exploring green hydrogen economy and leveraging corresponding advantages in a mutually-beneficial way."

Public Notice

This is to inform the public that **Mr. Robert Lobo (Resident Card number: 63264251),** whose picture appears above has been officially Terminated with effective 22.10.2022 and he is not authorized to represent the company in any matters whatsoever.

Any transactions/activities made by him on the Company's behalf will no longer be honored. Please report immediately any such unauthorized activity that warrants legal action.

INTEGRATED FISHING TECHNOLOGIES MARINE EQUIPMENT LLC

MARITIME SECURITY CENTRE

CTF-152 Commander visits MSC

MUSCAT: Captain Rashid Abdullah Al Amin, Commander of the Combined Task Force (CTF-152) and his accompanying military delegation, currently in Oman, visited the Maritime Security Centre (MSC) on Monday.

He was greeted by the Acting Head of the MSC. The guest and members of the visiting delegation were briefed on the roles and tasks carried out by the centre in maintaining the safety of maritime environment. They also toured the centre's facilities and viewed its latest equipment and technologies that are used in carrying out its national duties. – ONA

DUBAI EVENT

< FROM A1

Oman at Big 5 expo

Lubna Mohammed Al Harthy, Director of the Export Development Department at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, said "Participation in such specialised exhibitions provides Omani companies with an ideal opportunity for their continuity and enhance their competitiveness and commercial activity in foreign markets."

She added that the exhibition is an opportunity to inform the owners of Omani companies about the products of their counterparts and the development they have reached in terms of modern technologies used in manufacturing.

The participation is also an opportunity to obtain agents and ink new contracts and deals that guarantee the expansion of their business abroad, Lubna pointed out.

This annual exhibition brings together the most prominent experts in the sector, developers, innovators, suppliers, stakeholders and consultants in the field of environmental, social responsibility, governance and policy makers at the international level. - ONA

REF: OFM/TD-22/-026
Manpower Supply for Cleaning Services

Oman Flour Mills SAOG. (OFM) invites specialized contractors to participate in our tender for "Manpower Supply for Cleaning Services)" as per the scope of work.

Tender Documents: Bidders wishing to participate in this tender are required to provide all details of their company, contact details and bank details no later than the date shown below via email tender3@omanflourmills.com

Oman Flour Mills SAOG. (OFM) will send all the tender documents to participants after receiving a tender fee depositing receipt copy via email.

Tender fee shall be deposited directly to the Oman Flour Mills SAOG bank account as mentioned below.
Account Name: Oman Flour Mills Company SAOG
Bank: Sohar International
Account Number: 0010200102407
Swift code: BSHROMRUXXX

Tender Ref no.	OFM/TD-22/-026
Tender subject	Manpower Supply for Cleaning Services
Tender fee	RO 25/- (non-refundable)
Start date for tender collection	06.12.2022
Last date for tender collection	12.12.2022
Site visit	13.12.2022
Last date for receiving the technical queries	13.12.2022
Closing date of the tender	18.12.2022
Mode of payment of tender fee	By Bank Transfer
Email address for communication	tender3@omanflourmills.com
Mode of submission	All bidders are required to submit their proposals addressed to the Chairman of Tender Committee and deposited in the tender box located at the reception of our Alqab Investment building on the 18 December 2022

- Vendor selection will be based on "**best and final offer**". OFM is not bound to select the lowest bidder
- All tender communication must be addressed to tender3@omanflourmills.com
- Notwithstanding the specific terms in the Tender Documents, Tender fee is not refundable
- Bids submittal shall consist of 2 separate sealed envelopes (Technical) & (Commercial), with bidder name on each and tender reference number (OFM/TD-22/-026 (Manpower Supply for Cleaning Services))

REF: OFM/TD-22/-027
Manpower Supply for Packing and Stacking Services

Oman Flour Mills SAOG. (OFM) invites specialized contractors to participate in our tender for "Manpower Supply for Packing and Stacking Services" as per the scope of work.

Tender Documents: Bidders wishing to participate in this tender are required to provide all details of their company, contact details and bank details no later than the date shown below via email tender3@omanflourmills.com

Oman Flour Mills SAOG. (OFM) will send all the tender documents to participants after receiving a tender fee depositing receipt copy via email.

Tender fee shall be deposited directly to the Oman Flour Mills SAOG bank account as mentioned below.

Account Name: Oman Flour Mills Company SAOG
Bank: Sohar International
Account Number: 0010200102407
Swift code: BSHROMRUXXX

Tender Ref no.	OFM/TD-22/-027
Tender subject	Manpower Supply for Packing and Stacking Services
Tender fee	RO 25/- (non-refundable)
Start date for tender collection	06.12.2022
Last date for tender collection	12.12.2022
Site visit	13.12.2022
Last date for receiving the technical queries	13.12.2022
Closing date of the tender	18.12.2022
Mode of payment of tender fee	By Bank Transfer
Email address for communication	tender3@omanflourmills.com
Mode of submission	All bidders are required to submit their proposals addressed to the Chairman of Tender Committee and deposited in the tender box located at the reception of our Alqab Investment building on the 18 December 2022

- Vendor selection will be based on "**best and final offer**". OFM is not bound to select the lowest bidder
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OMAN/WORLD

MOUNT SEMERU

More evacuations after Indonesia's volcano eruption

JAKARTA: Rescuers on Monday were evacuating more people from nearby villages after the eruption of Indonesia's Mount Semeru even as activity from the volcano appeared to be in decline.

The evacuations came amid warnings of danger from cooling lava.

Mount Semeru, located on Indonesia's main island of Java, erupted on Sunday, forcing over 2,000 people to flee. On Monday, improved weather conditions aided rescue workers to resume evacuation operations and a search for possible victims.

There have been no reports of casualties so far.

"The military, police, local disaster and village officials keep evacuating people in Curah Kobokan where the hot ash cloud and cold lava might travel,"

Abdul Muhari, a spokesperson for Indonesia's disaster mitigation agency, told local television.

"So far the total number of evacuees is 2,489."

Hundreds of rescuers have been deployed in the worst-affected villages of Sumberwuluh and Supiturang, where houses were buried to their rooftops by volcanic debris.

The eruption occurred after monsoon rains eroded and finally collapsed the lava dome atop the volcano — Indonesia's highest at 3,676 meters (12,060 foot).

The volcano spewed a cloud of ash 15 kilometers into the sky as it erupted and unleashed rivers of lava down the side of the mountain.

It also dispersed volcanic ash in a radius of seven kilometers. DW

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PM Modi thanks Biden, Macron for supporting India's G-20 presidency

Biden said that India-US together will advance sustainable and inclusive growth

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi thanked his US, France and Japanese counterpart for extending their support to India as New Delhi assumed the G20 Presidency on December 1.

Responding to US President Joe Biden's congratulatory message for India, PM Modi tweeted, "Thank you @POTUS. Your valued support will be a source of strength for India's G-20 Presidency. It is important we all work together to build a better planet." Earlier, Biden said in his tweet that the US support India and PM Modi during the G-20 presidency. He also said that India-US, together will advance sustainable and inclusive growth while tackling shared challenges like the climate, energy, and food crises.

PM Modi also thanked other global leaders including French President Emmanuel Macron. PM Modi said in a tweet, "Thank you, my dear friend @EmmanuelMacron! I look forward to consulting you closely during India's G20 Presidency, as we work to focus the world's attention on the issues that affect humanity as a whole."

"Your solidarity is vital. Japan has contributed a lot to global well-being and I am confident the world will continue to learn from Japan's successes on various fronts. @kishida230," PM Modi tweeted in response to Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's congratulatory message.

Meanwhile, on Sunday, the G20 Sherpa meeting commenced with a panel discussion on accelerating the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Formal sherpa discussions will be spread over five sessions and will be held on December 5-6.

During a panel discussion at Udaipur G20 Sherpa, Amitabh Kant said that India believes every crisis is an opportunity.

"There're challenges of geopolitical crisis in Europe, breakdown of supply chains, the crisis of climate action, poverty, inflation & slowdown of global growth. Amid such a crisis India is taking the G20 presidency, we believe every crisis is an opportunity," Kant said at the first side event of G20, 'Transforming Lives: Accelerating Implementation of SDGs - A panel discussion'.

He further stated that when there is a surge in inflation and a slowdown of global growth, India is not only taking the G20 presidency but also rolling out its own agenda.

"So far we were getting agendas from the developed world, this is the first time we are setting out our own agenda, and we will tell that we are the mother of democracy," Kant said. ANI

FEASIBILITY STUDY

OQ signs two pacts for green fuel supply

MUSCAT: The Alternative Energy (AE) business unit of OQ company on Monday signed a memorandum of cooperation (MoC) with Asyad Group, A.P. Moller-Maersk and Sumitomo Corporation Middle East on conducting a feasibility study for the provision and supply of green fuel in the Sultanate of Oman.

The MoC, signed on the sidelines of the Oman Green Hydrogen Summit 2022, provides that the joint parties discuss the commercial and technical feasibility of providing and supplying green ammonia and green methanol in the ports of Duqm and Salalah for use in operating ports, as well as chances for exporting the products abroad in the future.

Essam bin Nasser Al Sheibani, Group VP Sustainability, Asyad, said that the MoC consists of two phases. The first phase relates to the feasibility study on exploiting the existing infrastructure in ports with green zone projects.

The second phase deals with choosing which type of fuel is currently commercial, notably since world vessels use fossil fuels and there is strong competition between some ports to produce this type of fuel, he added.

Al Sheibani told Oman News Agency (ONA) that the study will place Oman on the green fuel map. He pointed out that the selection of the ports of Duqm and Salalah to supply green ammonia and methanol was due to the availability of vast lands and the possibility of establishing most green hydrogen projects there. This advantage will help reduce the cost of transporting green fuel, he added.

OQ's Alternative Energy Business Unit also signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Oman Indian Fertilizer Company (OMIFCO) to study a plan to achieve carbon cycling economy (technologies and applications of carbon capture and storage). The plan envisages the use of recycled carbon to boost national efforts for the diversification of sources of energy.

Renewable energy technology will be used to contribute to Oman's carbon neutrality goal by 2050, according to the plan, which also aims to study the feasibility of producing blue ammonia in the Wilayat of Sur and its uses in the company's production operations. — ONA

Full story @ timesofoman.com/oman

PROBE

New Zealand launches inquiry into COVID pandemic response

AUCKLAND: New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern on Monday announced a top-level inquiry into her government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The country adopted a zero-tolerance approach that saw New Zealand's death rate remain much lower than in most other countries, but which was later criticized for its economic and social impact.

What questions will be asked?

A Royal Commission, New Zealand's highest possible level of public inquiry, will examine whether the government adopted the correct response in its policy of elimination.

The inquiry will consider how the overall response might have been improved, considering social and economic impacts.

"The scope of the inquiry is wide-ranging and it will cover specific aspects of our health response such as our border, community care, isolation, quarantine, as well as the economic response, and that does include broadly monetary policy," said Ardern. "It will not consider individual decisions such as how policies applied to an individual case or circumstance."

"It will also look into the effectiveness of our strategies including elimination, minimization, and protection."

"It had been over 100 years since we experienced a pandemic of this scale, so it's critical we compile what worked and what we can learn from it should it ever happen again," Ardern said.

The zero-tolerance strategy saw Ardern's government impose strict lockdowns to contain outbreaks and maintain strict border quarantine restrictions.

The policy — adopted early in the pandemic — appeared successful at first, with the death rate far lower than in most other developed countries and life continuing much as normal for most New Zealanders.

However, Wellington abandoned the approach earlier this year as increasingly contagious variants emerged that proved impossible to contain, and as more people were vaccinated.

As late as March, the country of 5 million had reported only 65 virus deaths. Since an omicron wave took hold, that number has risen to more than 2,200. DW

UPCOMING WINTER

UNICEF announces cash aid for Afghanistan's poor families

KABUL: The United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) has announced cash aid for 1,00,000 poor families in Afghanistan to help them survive the upcoming winter, as the local population of Afghanistan is in desperate need of help to meet their daily household needs, The Khaama Press a news agency from Afghanistan reported quoting a tweeted video from UNICEF Afghanistan on December 4.

In the tweeted video, from which The Khaama Press quoted, Feruza a mother of five daughters and three sons said she is afraid of the upcoming winter. Her house is in dire need of repairs, she and her children suffer from food shortages and is not able to breastfeed her kid.

She also added that she needs firewood, money, coal clothes, rugs and a mattress to survive the upcoming winter which is always a cause of worry for her every winter.

The cash aid being provided to the poor Afghan family is supported by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office UK, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and the German Foreign Office, the Khaama Press reported.

The Khaama press reported quoting the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) report, which said more than 20 million people in Afghanistan are facing food shortages.

Another report from the World Health Organisation (WHO) said that more than 34000 malnourished children had been admitted to hospitals across Afghanistan because and 19 million people in Afghanistan face extreme food insecurity. ANI

CROATIA IN QUARTERS

LIVAKOVIC'S PENALTY HEROICS KNOCK OUT JAPAN IN A THRILLER

Croatia goalkeeper Dominik Livakovic donned his cape and became the hero in the penalty shootout as his side came from behind to see off Japan and reach the quarter-finals of the World Cup on Monday.

Livakovic saved three spot-kicks - from Takumi Minamino, Maya Yoshida and Kaoru Mitoma - to give his side a huge advantage in the shootout after the two sides could not be separated after 120 minutes and Mario Pasalic converted his kick to clinch a 3-1 victory for Croatia.

Livakovic is the third goalkeeper to make three saves in a single World Cup penalty shootout after Portugal's Ricardo in 2006 versus England and Croatia's Danijel Subasic versus Denmark in 2018.

Croatia now face either Brazil or South Korea in the last eight and continued midfield icon Luka Modric's stay at his fourth and likely final World Cup.

Japan's bid to reach the last eight for the first time in their history came to a crushing end after another display of the sort which saw off Spain and Germany on their way to topping Group E.

However they could not claim one more big European scalp in the shape of the 2018 finalists and go home in the second round, as they did four years ago, after having three of their penalties saved.

Japan produced an impressive first-half performance at Al Janoub Stadium and took the lead through Daizen Maeda after a well-worked short corner.

But Croatia's experience shone through. Zlatko Dalic's side had fallen behind in all three of their knockout matches on their way to the 2018 World Cup final and again they did not panic.

A stunning header from Ivan Perisic drew them level and they looked more likely to find the winning goal.

In the end they did not need it, as Japan froze in the shootout and Croatia stood tall, Marcelo Brozovic and Nikola Vlasic converting their penalties before Pasalic sealed Japan's fate.

Key moment

Perisic is one of the surviving members of the Croatia team that reached the 2018 World Cup final and, just as in the semi-final with England when his side were also trailing 1-0, the veteran winger delivered in his nation's hour of need.

He shook off the presence of three defenders to meet an inviting cross from Dejan Lovren a good distance from goal and direct the ball into the far bottom corner.

Croatia have won their last three penalty shootouts at the World Cup, having beaten Denmark in the last 16 in and hosts Russia in the quarter-finals in the 2018 tournament.

Japan could easily have been ahead within three minutes when Shogo Taniguchi glanced a header wide from point-blank range, and 10 minutes later Daizen Maeda came close to turning in Junya Ito's brilliantly placed low ball from the right flank.

In the meantime Perisic had let off a shot from a tight angle which led to a goalmouth scramble, but had Croatia scored they risked the goal being ruled out for what looked like a clear push on Takehiro Tomiyasu.

Modric was replaced nine minutes into the first half of extra-time in which Japan had the best chance, Kaoru Mitoma's effort well tipped away by Livakovic.

With penalties drawing close, one final chance fell to Modric's replacement Lovro Majer, who dragged his shot wide, but his team prevailed in the shootout to end the Blue Samurai's entertaining adventure. - Agencies

BY THE NUMBERS

2.45 MN

Cumulative stadium attendance of spectators after first 48 matches. That equals an average of 96% occupancy and is higher than the corresponding 2.17 million figure for the 2018 edition.

TODAY'S MATCHES

ROUND OF 16

7pm (Oman time)
SPAIN VS MOROCCO
Education City Stadium

11 pm
PORTUGAL VS SWITZERLAND
Lusail Stadium

FRANCE

This is the competition of my dreams: Mbappe

DOHA: There are plenty of stories still to unfold at the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, but the mark left on the 22nd edition of the tournament by Kylian Mbappe is already looking indelible.

On Sunday, the French forward reminded us all why he is the centre of everyone's attention. In scoring a brace against Poland in the round of 16, the Paris Saint-Germain player notched his fourth and fifth goals of the tournament, jumping to top of the goalscorers list.

It is the first time in the history of the tournament that a player has scored twice in the round of 16 of two consecutive editions. In Russia 2018, the boy from the Parisian suburb of Bondy scored twice in Les Bleus' unforgettable 4-3 victory over Argentina.

At 23, Mbappe is at the peak of his powers and has already left behind French legends such as Thierry Henry, Michel Platini and Zinedine Zidane with his nine World Cup goals (his five in Qatar added to his four from 2018). Quite simply, nobody has scored so many World Cup goals before his 24th birthday. Not even Pele, nor the great Ronaldo, nor even the top scorer in World Cup history, Miroslav Klose, could lay claim to such a record at the same age.

Talking of comparisons, Mbappe has as many World Cup goals as Lionel Messi, and one more than Cristiano Ronaldo. And with one key difference: the two icons are both the wrong side of 35 and playing their fifth World Cup, while the French star is only in his second. So how far can this amazing young man go? Surpassing Klose's total of 16 World Cup goals seems genuinely feasible given how young Mbappe is.

> Currently the top scorer at FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, Kylian Mbappe is stacking up records and top-class performances at the same lightning speed

Anyone who wondered if Mbappe might struggle for motivation in 2022, relative to 2018 when he won the trophy, received their answer from the French prodigy in the post-match press conference: "This is the competition of my dreams", he stated. "My sole objective is winning the World Cup. That's my dream, my only dream. That's why I'm here."

Nobody can say how far Mbappe can go in his career, or even if he will one day become the greatest player in World Cup history – if indeed it is truly possible to definitively bestow that subjective honour on one player.

What can be said for certain is that just as the names of Pele, Maradona, Ronaldo, Klose or Zidane have become inextricably linked to the World Cup, the same is already true of Mbappe. And he is just 23. - FIFA+

FIFA WORLD CUP Qatar 2022

BRILLIANT BELLINGHAM

The young midfielder shines in England's 3-0 victory over Senegal in the last-16 encounter with an outstanding display, supported impressively by Jordan Henderson

DOHA: England had just won through to a FIFA World Cup quarter-final against world champions France after an impressive 3-0 victory over Senegal in the round of 16 encounter at the Al Bayt Stadium in Al Khor, Qatar, on Sunday night.

Harry Kane had relocated his shooting boots. Jordan Pickford had kept his ninth tournament clean sheet. Raheem Sterling was on a plane home. Yet the first question that Gareth Southgate had to answer at his press conference at Al Bayt Stadium was about Jude Bellingham.

"I think the biggest thing is the mentality," he began of the 19-year-old Borussia Dortmund player.

"Obviously we've done a lot of work over the years with young players and young player development and the thing that makes the difference is the mindset, the drive, the desire to learn and improve, and he has all of that."

So much so, added the England manager that "I don't think we could have predicted how quickly he would mature. Even in the last six months, or the last three months in fact, that's gone up to another level."

Southgate was not alone in hailing the impact made by Bellingham on the night he became the second English teenager, after Michael Owen in 1998, to start a World Cup knockout tie.

England legend Gary Lineker tweeted: "Goodness me, Jude Bellingham is unbelievably good. He's the leader in this team."

Down in the post-match mixed zone, Luke Shaw told a TV reporter: "For me, the world is his oyster and he can be anything he wants."

Phil Foden was even more emphatic. "I don't want to big him up too much because he's still young..." he started, before doing precisely that: "He's one of the most gifted players I've ever seen. He has no weakness in his game. I think he will be the best midfielder in the world."

Jordan Henderson had his say too, telling BeIN's reporter: "I feel I'm running out of things to say about him. Incredible mentality, incredible player. You're talking about a player whose mentality is unique. He's a one-off and we just need to let him enjoy his football."

Here was a 19-year-old who had just grabbed a World Cup knockout match by the scruff of the neck. Owen back in 1998 did it with speed and ice-cool finishing. Bellingham, for his part, pressed and pushed from the off, driving up the inside-left channel, imposing his will on the contest. And his forward thrust proved crucial for both first-half goals.

For the first, he sped up that same channel on to Harry Kane's pass and cut the ball back with perfect accuracy for Jordan Henderson to become England's oldest World Cup scorer since Tom Finney.

For the second, he won a ball 10 yards outside his half, nodding it away from a green shirt and charging past another before feeding Phil Foden, who in turn set Kane clear. In modern parlance, an assist and a pre-assist.

When England last played France on the world stage, at Spain 82, Bryan Robson – a midfielder who excelled at getting forward into the box – stole the show with two goals. In this mood, Bellingham might have a significant say when the nations meet at the World Cup for the first time since then.

Senegal coach Aliou Cisse spoke afterwards about England's threat from transitions and cited the entire midfield trio of Declan Rice, Jordan Henderson and Bellingham for their athleticism, recoveries and distribution.

Southgate was more specific, praising the way Bellingham worked with the more experienced Henderson in particular during a first period in which Senegal had the better of the opening half-hour.

"Those two out of possession really got us into the game," Southgate explained. "We were a bit stuck with the ball and our best moments were turning the ball over. Hendo's influence is allowing Jude more freedom positionally and he responded to that remarkably well."

The way that Henderson and Bellingham celebrated the older man's goal highlighted the obvious mutual respect between the pair. If Bellingham is simultaneously the present and future of England's midfield (and surely an early candidate for Qatar 2022's Best Young Player award), Henderson still has a telling role to play alongside him on this evidence. - FIFA+

France are the biggest test we could face: Southgate

DOHA: Gareth Southgate said that holders France provide the greatest challenge England may face at the ongoing FIFA World Cup 2022 after his side advanced to a quarterfinal matchup with the reigning champions on Saturday.

In seven matches since the year 2000, Southgate's team has only defeated France once, and the manager has never defeated Les Bleus, losing 3-2 in June 2017.

Didier Deschamps' team lifted the trophy in Russia in 2018 and ahead of the clash at the Al Bayt Stadium, Skysports quoted Southgate as saying, "In terms of France, it's the biggest test we could face."

"They're world champions with an incredible depth of talent and outstanding individual players. They're very difficult to play against and score goals against, so it's a fantastic challenge and a brilliant game to prepare for," he added.

England's match against France is the second quarterfinal match to be announced, following Argentina's match against the Netherlands on Friday.

"The two quarter-finals that are already in place are historic rivalries. It's a great game to be involved with and to test ourselves against the very best," Southgate said.

The quarterfinal clash will be the first-ever knockout stage meeting between the two European heavyweights at a World Cup. - ANI

BURGLARY AT HOME

Raheem Sterling leaves England squad and returns to London

DOHA: Raheem Sterling has left the England World Cup squad in Qatar and returned to London on Monday after his home was burgled. The Chelsea winger, 27, missed Sunday's last-16 win over Senegal.

Surrey Police said the occupants returned home on Saturday evening and found jewellery and watches had been taken. No threats of violence were involved.

Speaking after Sunday's match, England manager Gareth Southgate said: "Sometimes football isn't the most important thing and family should come first."

According to his spokesperson, Sterling was "shaken" by the news and "as soon as he was alerted he wanted to get home, concerned for the wellbeing of his children". - Agencies

ENGLAND VS SENEGAL

Kane silences his critics

DOHA: It's detention time for the keyboard warriors. Their custodial class will involve a FIFA World Cup history lesson.

Harry Kane was the subject of more abusive tweets than any other England player during the first phase of Qatar 2022. Overlooking the fact that he had set up more goals than any other player at the tournament, and had helped his country advance as Group A winners, the critics blasted the England No 10.

Kane's crime? Not finding the target on the Arabian Peninsula and prolonging his World Cup goal drought to almost 10 hours.

They will soon discover them Mario Kempes required 11 hours and 38 minutes of trying to score his first World Cup goal. He ended his drought in his fourth outing of the 1978 edition. He ended that tournament with the Golden Boot. Argentina ended it as champions.

There's more. Paolo Rossi had gone almost 15 hours without scoring in the competition until netting in his fifth run-out at Spain 1982. He finished it with the leading marksman's award. Italy finished it with football's most prestigious prize.

The Walthamstow native hardly needs extra motivation, but he's now just one shy of Wayne Rooney's England goal record (53) and three off Gary Lineker's national record in World Cups (10).

"I don't let [missed chances] bother me," declared Kane before the Senegal showdown. "I feel that's one of my biggest strengths. I am able to switch off and be ready for the next chance that comes my way.

"And I also feel I am better in the knockout games where you have to be more clinical. A chance becomes much more important and that's where I come into my own."

That he did at Al Bayt Stadium. When Phil Foden slid the ball into his path in first-half stoppage time, the 29-year-old buried it clinically. Harry Kane was back. Or, actually, Harry Kane the elite marksman was back.

"I had so much time, the ball set up nicely and the connection was perfect," Kane said. "I had one just before that, which I should have done better with, so it was nice to see that one go in. I'm a striker so whenever I score I'm happy."

"For any striker who hasn't scored it is there in the back of your mind and you get that lift of confidence when it comes," said manager Gareth Southgate. "There is still nobody I would rather have bearing down on goal. It was a clinical finish and that will do him the world of good."

Kane scored five times in just 153 minutes during the group stage at Russia 2018 – once every 31 minutes on average – but isn't alien to stumbling starts preceding sprint finishes.

The Walthamstow native hardly needs extra motivation, but he's now just one shy of Wayne Rooney's England goal record (53) and three off Gary Lineker's national record in World Cups (10). - FIFA+

OMAN OIL PRICE FALLS

The price of Oman oil has decreased, with prices for delivery by February 2023 reaching $80.87, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil fell by 25 cents from the price of Friday, which was at $81.12. - ONA

MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 4,622.13 points, up by 0.18 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.17 per cent at 466.57 points. Muscat Thread Mill, up 7.27 per cent, was the top gainer while Gulf Mushroom Products, down 5.98 per cent, was the top loser.

Oman sees rise in water and electricity production

The Governorate of Dhofar recorded an increase in electricity generation by 9.1 per cent, to reach 3,226.6 gigawatts per hour

MUSCAT: Oman's electricity and water production grew by 0.5 per cent and 5 per cent respectively at the end of September 2022, according to the statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The total electricity generation in Oman reached 32,501.5 Gwh by the end of September 2022, the NCSI report said.

The Governorate of Dhofar recorded an increase in total electricity generation by 9.1 per cent, to reach 3,226.6 gigawatts per hour (Gwh) by the end of September 2022. The governorates of North and South Al Batinah and Al Dhahirah also recorded an increase in total electricity generation by 5 per cent, to reach 21,163.5 gigawatts per hour.

As for the Sultanate of Oman's net production of electricity until the end of September 2022, which includes purchases by the Oman Power and Water Procurement Company (OPWP) and purchases by the Rural Areas Electricity Company, by region, it amounted to 31,459.7 GWh, an increase of 0.4 per cent.

The largest amount of net electricity generation came in the Governorate of Dhofar, with an increase of 9.5 per cent. The governorates of North and South Al Batinah and Al Dhahirah recorded an increase in net electricity generation by 4.9 per cent.

On the other hand, the total amount of water produced in the Sultanate of Oman increased by 5 per cent to reach 383.80 million cubic metres at the end of September 2022. The governorates of Dhofar and Muscat recorded an increase in water production by 8.7 per cent and 6.9 per cent, respectively, compared to the same period in 2021. - ONA

PUBLIC AUTHORITY FOR SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONES

Opaz records 82% customer satisfaction rate for its services

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (Opaz) has recorded around 82 per cent of customer satisfaction rate as of the end of November 2022.

The rate included evaluating a number of services provided by Opaz in its affiliated zones, such as services for providing building permits, demarcation, environmental permits, amending building permits, project plans, and investor relation management systems.

Opaz Call Centre (1919), which was launched in September 2022, received more than 270 calls in addition to other inquiries received via online communications. All calls and inquiries have been managed and communicated with the concerned departments. Further, the Call Centre issued regular reports on all complaints and recommendations as well as conducted customer satisfaction evaluations for the services provided. The centre is equipped with relevant systems that assist in handling all the complaints received and managed internally with the concerned departments. It is worth noting that the Call Centre serves all special economic zones and free zones by providing key guidelines and information to investors, customers, entrepreneurs and the community.

Opaz is keen to provide all facilities that contribute to achieving highly efficient and quality services to investors, whether local or international and provide sufficient information and tools that ensure smooth performance and quick response.

Moreover, Opaz has received a number of ideas and recommendations via the internal portal "Share Your Ideas", which exceeded 170 ideas. However, the opportunity was also given to the public to share their ideas and suggestions, which are being evaluated and brought to discussion for further clarification and a way forward.

On the other hand, Opaz announced last August of this year that it will stop all paper-based transactions and documents at the one-stop shop in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm.

STRONG DEMAND

Services activity growth in India hits 3-month high

NEW DELHI: Services activity in India rose at the quickest pace in three months in the month of November, thus supporting a sharp expansion in services output and further job creation.

The S&P Global India services purchasing managers' index rose to 56.4 in November from 55.1 in October. Survey participants linked the latest expansion to demand strength, successful marketing and a sustained upturn in sales, S&P Global said in a statement.

New orders placed with service providers in India rose for the 16th consecutive month in November. The rate of expansion was marked and the fastest since August. According to panellists who participated in the survey, sales were boosted by favourable underlying demand and fruitful advertising, the statement said.

"Indian service providers continued to reap the benefits of strong domestic demand, with PMI data for the penultimate month of 2022 showing faster increases in new business and output. Moreover, expectations of demand buoyancy in the medium-term promoted further job creation," Pollyanna De Lima, Economics Associate Director at S&P Global Market Intelligence, said.

"Evidence of stubborn inflation may prompt further hikes to the policy rate at a time when global economic challenges could negatively impact India's growth," Pollyanna De Lima added.

Meanwhile, India's manufacturing sector expanded the fastest in three months in November with the S&P Global India Manufacturing PMI at 55.7. In October, the index was 55.3. The indices vary between 0 and 100, with a reading above 50 indicating an overall increase compared to the previous month, and below 50 an overall decrease.

Demand resilience boosted manufacturing growth in India, with companies noting the quickest increases in new orders. -ANI

BILLION-DOLLAR-PROJECT

Sustainable City-Yiti outlines its commitment to Oman

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Sustainable City-Yiti (TSCY), a development by Sustainable Development Investment Company (SDIC) - a partnership between Diamond Developers and Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran Group), has reaffirmed its commitment to the Sultanate.

The billion-dollar development aims to support the goals of the Oman Vision 2040, as well as the National Tourism Strategy, by creating a live-work-thrive city that is green, energy efficient, and people-centric.

It is also playing an integral role in contributing to in-country value for the Sultanate, with 78.65 per cent of Omani-sourced goods and materials being sourced in the past six months alone.

More than 58 SMEs in Oman have also benefited from the works undertaken at TSCY in the last two quarters.

Scheduled to be completed in 2025, the development has supported more than 1,800 jobs during construction, both direct and indirect, generating over 961,000 man-hours to date.

Eng. Ammar Sulaiman Al Kharusi, Head of Development at Omran Group said: "We are delighted to play our part in strengthening the economy of Oman, from the tourism sector to SMEs and the huge number of employment opportunities through this exciting project. Ours is truly sustainable development in every sense of the word and by driving in-country value across the board, we are further contributing to the growth and prosperity of the Sultanate."

TSCY will consist of 300 villas, 1,225 apartments and 132 luxury serviced apartments. The community also includes indoor and vertical farms, a central plaza with a mall, a school, a nursery, two hotels, a sports complex, medical clinics, an autism centre, and an institute.

Home to 10,000 residents and visitors once complete, The Sustainable City-Yiti will be the largest operational sustainable community in the world, with ambitions to be the first Net Zero Carbon community in Oman by 2040. The city is designed to deliver measurable outcomes across all three pillars of sustainability: social, environmental, and economic, bringing forward the UN emission reduction targets for 2050.

The city follows the blueprint for low-carbon living that was pioneered by the first 'The Sustainable City', which opened in Dubai in 2016. The model ensures a reduction in carbon footprint, from design to operation, using disruptive innovation to achieve transformational societal change.

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Muscat Thread Mill, up 7.27 per cent, was the top gainer while Gulf Mushroom Products, down 5.98 per cent, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,622.13 points, up by 0.18 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.17 per cent at 466.57 points. Muscat Thread Mill, up 7.27 per cent, was the top gainer while Gulf Mushroom Products, down 5.98 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of Bank Muscat were the most active in terms of the number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 264 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating a turnover of OMR1.05 million, with more than 5.99 million shares changing hands. Out of 42 traded securities, 11 advanced, 13 declined, and 18 remained unchanged. At the session close, domestic investors were net sellers for OMR481,000 while GCC & Arab investors were net buyers for OMR388,000, followed by foreign investors for OMR92,000 worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,543.88 points, up 0.72 per cent. Prices of Oman & Emirates Investment, DIDIC, Bank Muscat, Al Sharqia Investment, and Sohar International Bank were up by 6.06 per cent, 5.19 per cent, 5.00 per cent, 1.41 per cent and 0.95 per cent respectively.

Prices of United Finance, Oman United Insurance and Al Anwar Investment were down by 7.27 per cent, 1.48 per cent and 1.33 per cent respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 6,115.33 points, up 1.41 per cent. Prices of Muscat Thread Mill and Oman Fisheries were up by 7.27 per cent and 1.01 per cent respectively. Prices of Gulf Mushroom Products, Oman Cables Industry, Jazeera Steel Products and Oman Cement were down by 5.98 per cent, 5.06 per cent, 2.33 per cent and 0.67 per cent respectively.

Services Index was down by 0.66 per cent before closing at 1,540.89 points. Prices of Muscat Desalination, Ooredoo, Renaissance Services and Oman Telecom were up by 4.55 per cent, 3.50 per cent, 3.21 per cent and 0.46 per cent respectively. Prices of Al Suwadi Power, Al Batinah Power and National Gas were down by 3.23 per cent, 3.23 per cent and 1.00 per cent respectively. — **United Securities**

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	4,663.47	4,599.18	4,663.47	4,622.13	41.34	0.89
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,581.95	7,501.23	7,581.95	7,543.88	38.07	0.50
Industry Index	6,119.11	6,056.58	6,056.58	6,115.33	-58.75	-0.96
Services Index	1,552.62	1,541.49	1,552.62	1,540.89	11.73	0.76
MSX Shariah Index	467.93	463.73	463.73	466.57	-2.84	-0.61
MSX TR INDEX	5,886.15	5,805.00	5,886.15	5,833.97	52.18	0.89
FINANCIAL TR IDX	7,933.66	7,849.20	7,933.66	7,893.83	39.83	0.50
SERVICES TR IDX	1,636.12	1,624.40	1,636.12	1,623.76	12.36	0.76
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	6,370.75	6,305.65	6,305.65	6,366.81	-61.16	-0.96

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
11,201,247	3,383,776	681	23,608,820,583	13	12	12	37

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR MONDAY, DECEMBER 5

REGULAR MARKET

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RO)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	5,233,040	1,496,575	319	0.282	0.294	0.280	0.294	0.280	0.014	5.000	0.294	0.294	0.294	0.100	2,206,880,736
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	193,719	79,176	66	0.400	0.414	0.400	0.414	0.400	0.014	3.500	0.414	0.410	0.438	0.100	269,490,911
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SER.	116,077	50,820	17	0.438	0.450	0.430	0.450	0.436	0.014	3.211	0.450	0.436	0.450	0.100	106,384,500
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIA INV.	90,100	6,487	6	0.072	0.072	0.072	0.072	0.071	0.001	1.408	0.072	0.072	0.075	0.100	6,480,000
OM0000003398	SOHAR INT. BANK	273,909	28,558	5	0.104	0.106	0.104	0.106	0.105	0.001	0.952	0.106	0.100	0.106	0.100	486,546,603
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	78,064	67,993	25	0.872	0.872	0.860	0.872	0.868	0.004	0.461	0.872	0.868	0.872	0.100	654,000,000
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	758,531	217,959	89	0.280	0.289	0.280	0.289	0.288	0.001	0.347	0.289	0.280	0.289	0.100	469,898,497
OM0000001525	OMAN INVST& FIN.	100,000	13,000	3	0.130	0.130	0.130	0.130	0.130	0.000	0.000	0.130	0.128	0.130	0.100	30,810,000
OM0000003000	Al MAHA PETROLEUM	119,665	107,699	25	0.900	0.900	0.900	0.900	0.900	0.000	0.000	0.900	0.900	0.900	0.100	62,100,000
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	175,346	52,253	3	0.298	0.298	0.298	0.298	0.300	-0.002	-0.667	0.298	0.298	0.302	0.100	98,600,068
OM0000001087	OMAN UNITED INSUR.	8,092	2,172	5	0.270	0.270	0.266	0.266	0.270	-0.004	-1.481	0.266	0.266	0.270	0.100	26,600,000
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PROD	3,000	630	1	0.210	0.210	0.210	0.210	0.215	-0.005	-2.326	0.210	0.208	0.210	0.100	26,228,572
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDST'R	18,015	28,302	5	1.580	1.580	1.500	1.500	1.580	-0.080	-5.063	1.500	1.500	1.425	0.100	134,550,000
Total	13	7,167,558	2,151,624	569												

Parallel Market

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RO)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
OM0000002036	Muscat Thread MILL	100	6	1	0.059	0.059	0.059	0.059	0.055	0.004	7.273	0.059	0.000	0.059	0.100	948,287
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	41,350	2,844	6	0.068	0.070	0.068	0.070	0.066	0.004	6.061	0.070	0.070	0.072	0.100	8,531,250
OM0000001509	DHOFAR INT.	34,900	4,896	3	0.138	0.142	0.138	0.142	0.135	0.007	5.185	0.142	0.123	0.145	0.100	58,112,977
OM0000007084	MCT DESALINATE	13,850	1,593	3	0.115	0.115	0.115	0.115	0.110	0.005	4.545	0.115	0.111	0.115	0.100	17,888,296
OM0000008868	THE PEARL REIF	1,000,000	117,000	2	0.117	0.117	0.117	0.117	0.115	0.002	1.739	0.117	0.115	0.117	0.100	49,698,115
OM0000001566	OMAN FISHERIES	17,850	1,785	3	0.101	0.101	0.100	0.100	0.099	0.001	1.010	0.100	0.100	0.101	0.100	18,207,840
OM0000001020	OMAN CHROMITE	318	700	2	2.200	2.200	2.200	2.200	2.200	0.000	0.000	2.200	2.200	0.000	1.000	6,600,000
OM0000001319	ALUMINIUM PROD.	30,000	2,220	2	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.000	0.000	0.074	0.074	0.075	0.100	2,484,287
OM0000001418	RAYSUT CEMENT	74,000	8,066	2	0.109	0.109	0.109	0.109	0.109	0.000	0.000	0.109	0.106	0.109	0.100	21,800,000
OM0000001517	HSBC BANK OMAN	233,295	37,327	14	0.160	0.160	0.160	0.160	0.160	0.000	0.000	0.160	0.155	0.161	0.100	320,050,046
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	9,000	532	2	0.058	0.060	0.058	0.060	0.060	0.000	0.000	0.060	0.057	0.060	0.100	18,428,780
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	973,970	150,965	20	0.155	0.155	0.155	0.155	0.155	0.000	0.000	0.155	0.155	0.160	0.100	464,434,473
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	2,500	93	1	0.037	0.037	0.037	0.037	0.037	0.000	0.000	0.037	0.036	0.037	0.100	7,386,517
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	2,000	190	1	0.095	0.095	0.095	0.095	0.095	0.000	0.000	0.095	0.093	0.095	0.100	212,510,538
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	27,000	2,268	1	0.084	0.084	0.084	0.084	0.084	0.000	0.000	0.084	0.080	0.084	0.100	14,700,000
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	31,658	1,362	3	0.044	0.044	0.043	0.043	0.043	0.000	0.000	0.043	0.039	0.043	0.100	62,891,863
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	115,000	11,375	12	0.099	0.099	0.098	0.099	0.100	-0.001	-1.000	0.099	0.099	0.101	0.100	8,415,000
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	172,273	12,426	7	0.073	0.074	0.072	0.074	0.075	-0.001	-1.333	0.074	0.073	0.074	0.100	14,800,000
OM0000007910	AMAN REAL ESTATE	51,000	4,696	4	0.092	0.094	0.092	0.094	0.097	-0.003	-3.093	0.094	0.092	0.094	0.100	18,800,000
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	1,353	42	2	0.031	0.031	0.030	0.030	0.031	-0.001	-3.226	0.030	0.029	0.030	0.100	20,246,623
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	46,475	1,411	6	0.031	0.031	0.030	0.030	0.031	-0.001	-3.226	0.030	0.030	0.030	0.100	21,432,190
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	2,000	124	1	0.062	0.062	0.062	0.062	0.065	-0.003	-4.615	0.062	0.063	0.066	0.100	21,646,953
OM0000002267	GULF MUSHROOM P	12,050	2,656	5	0.225	0.225	0.220	0.220	0.234	-0.014	-5.983	0.220	0.220	0.230	0.100	9,153,160
Total	23	2,891,942	364,576	103												

STAGFLATION

UK economy to shrink in 2023

LONDON: Britain's economy is on course to shrink 0.4 per cent next year as inflation remains high and companies put investment on hold, with gloomy implications for longer-term growth, the Confederation of Business Industry forecast on Monday.

"Britain is in stagflation, with rocketing inflation, negative growth, falling productivity and business investment. Firms see potential growth opportunities but headwinds are causing them to pause investing in 2023," CBI Director-General Tony Danker said, Reuters reported.

The CBI's forecast marks a sharp downgrade from its last forecast in June when it predicted growth of 1.0 per cent for 2023, and it does not expect the gross domestic product (GDP) to return to its pre-COVID level until mid-2024.

Britain has been hit hard by a surge in natural gas prices, as well as an incomplete labour market recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic and persistently weak investment and productivity.

Unemployment would rise to peak at 5.0 per cent in late 2023 and early 2024, up from 3.6 per cent currently, the CBI said.

British inflation hit a 41-year high of 11.1 per cent in October, sharply squeezing consumer demand, and the CBI predicts it will be slow to fall, averaging 6.7 per cent next year and 2.9 per cent in 2024.

The CBI's GDP forecast is less gloomy than that of the British government's Office for Budget Responsibility - which last month forecasted a 1.4 per cent decline for 2023.

But the CBI forecast is in line with the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which expects Britain to be Europe's weakest-performing economy bar Russia next year.

The CBI forecast business investment at the end of 2024 will be 9 per cent below its pre-pandemic level, and output per worker 2 per cent lower. To avoid this, the CBI called on the government to make Britain's post-Brexit work visa system more flexible, end what it sees as an effective ban on constructing onshore wind turbines, and give greater tax incentives for investment. -**BNA**

CRUDE

Oil prices climb after Opec+ keeps output targets steady

MELBOURNE: Oil prices rose as much as 2 per cent on Monday after Opec+ nations held their output targets steady ahead of a European Union ban and a price cap kicking in on Russian crude.

At the same time, in a positive sign for fuel demand, more Chinese cities eased COVID-19 curbs over the weekend, Reuters reports.

Brent crude futures were last up 72 cents, or 0.8 per cent, to $86.29 a barrel at 0430 GMT, while US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures gained 70 cents, or 0.9 per cent, to $80.68 a barrel.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) and allies including Russia, together called Opec+, agreed on Sunday to stick to their October plan to cut output by 2 million barrels per day (bpd) from November through 2023.

Analysts said the Opec+ decision was expected as major producers wait to see the impact of the EU import ban and Group of Seven (G7) $60-a-barrel price cap on seaborne Russian oil, with Russia threatening to cut supply to any country adhering to the cap.

"While Opec remained steady on output over the weekend, I expect they will continue to balance the market," said Baden Moore, head of commodity research at National Australia Bank.

"(A) Roll-off of the SPR releases, and implementation of the EU sanctions and price cap act to tighten the market, although we'd expect the market has already positioned for this outlook," he said, referring to the US strategic petroleum reserve.

The European Union will need to replace Russian crude with oil from the Middle East, West Africa and the United States, which should put a floor under oil prices at least in the near term, Wood Mackenzie vice president Ann-Louise Hittle said in a note. "Prices are currently weighed down by expectations of slow demand growth, despite the EU oil import ban on Russian crude and the G7 price cap. The adjustment to the EU ban and price cap is likely to support prices temporarily," Hittle said.

A key factor that has weighed on demand is China's zero-COVID policy, but that appears to be easing now, relaxing restrictions to varying degrees.

Hittle added that the EU's looming embargo on Russian oil products, in addition to crude oil, from February 5 should support crude demand in the first quarter of 2023. -**BNA**

POWER PLANT

Fast-power project enables economic growth in Sezad

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Special Economic Zone at Duqm (Sezad), one of the Middle East and North Africa's largest economic zones contains a wide range of services and features, including a multi-purpose port; a dry dock for ship repair; a fishing port; an international airport; a tourist district featuring 18 kilometres of coastline; a logistics district; and light, medium, and heavy industrial zones.

Located on modern maritime sea routes linking Asia, Africa, Europe, and beyond, the economic zone is quickly adding new tenants, new industrial projects, and an expanding list of manufacturing operations. This rapidly growing economic zone, which has made sustainability a key pillar, requires a reliable supply of electricity that will meet the needs of industry, residents, and tourists, but also protect the nearby natural environment.

Because of its location, Duqm has not yet been connected to the national grid. Initially, diesel-powered generators provided power to the development but in 2021, GE signed an agreement to build, own, and operate a power plant equipped with four of its TM2500 aero-derivative gas turbines to provide up to 80 megawatts (MW) of power.

GE built the plant for the Centralised Utilities Company,

Marafiq, which will sell the electricity to the Rural Areas Electricity Company, Tanweer, which provides power to regional users, including Sezad.

"With development moving quickly at Sezad and connection to the grid several years away, the speed with which GE delivered this fast-power project was critical to our ability to serve Sezad and ensure they continued to have access to the electricity required to facilitate their ongoing expansion and growth," said Victor Ogg, General Manager of Project Development and Delivery for Marafiq.

In less than 200 days, GE started exporting power, helping Marafiq, Tanweer, and Sezad transition to a lower-emission power source quickly and smoothly.

"Working with Marafiq and Tanweer, GE transported the four TM2500 gas turbines to Duqm, set up the 80MW mobile power plant, and connected it to Tanweer's island grid in a rapid timeframe, despite the COVID-19 pandemic and related logistics constraints," said Ahmad Elsayed, Senior Project Manager, GE Gas Power.

Nearly as important as the speed with which the plant was installed, was the significant positive impact on the environment. By replacing diesel generators with cleaner-burning natural gas turbines, the facility is dramatically cutting carbon dioxide emissions by up to 90,000 tonnes per year. That is equivalent to taking up to 20,000 vehicles off Omani roads.

Idrees Sheikh, Project Management Director for Europe and the Middle East with GE Gas Power, added, "By supporting Marafiq in switching from diesel or other liquid-fueled power generation to gas, GE is helping to generate more sustainable electricity, while delivering reliable, flexible and affordable power supply that is crucial to the successful expansion of the economic zone."

LIFESTYLE

THE FESTIVE SEASON IN GENEVA:

A CELEBRATION PAINTED WITH HISTORY, CULTURE AND TRADITION

A mesmerising blend of culture, heritage and festivities lands in Geneva each year during December, mirroring the authentic feel of this diverse European city, and crafting an ambiance of shared joy between its residents and visitors, starting from L'Escalade Celebration, and building up towards a New Year's Eve to remember.

Geneva's festive season is ushered in with the L'Escalade Celebration, commemorating a historical victory of Genevan bravery over 2000 soldiers of the Duke of Savoy, who on the night of 11-12 December 1602 launched an attack attempting to annex Geneva, making it a part of France. The city's victory has been celebrated for over 400 years each year, starting with a three-day parade of Genevans and enthusiastic tourists, dressed in medieval costumes and roaming the city streets on foot or horseback.

The celebrations continued this year with the 44th Course de L'Escalade, a pedestrian race that took place on 3rd and Sunday 4th of December 2022 in the Old Town of Geneva, where runners from all walks of life had gathered, making it the biggest pedestrian race in Switzerland and one of the most important in Europe. The event mixed joyful moments with competitive seriousness to promote the values of the race: fun, respect, solidarity, integration and excellence.

No celebration in Geneva is complete without the presence of its most celebrated delicacy, chocolate, and as a tradition tied with the L'Escalade each year, the city indulges in choc pot, locally known as Marmite de L'Escalade and is made of chocolate, filled with marzipan vegetables.

The festive market remains true to the city's reputation as one of the world's most popular festive exhibitions. Until 23rd December at Jardin Anglais, NOËL AU JARDIN gathers the best artisans, designers, creators and delights' producers to provide locals and visitors with a wide range of products for their festive gifts. Other activities at the market include the restaurants, providing a culinary journey from 30 different restaurants serving seasonal favourites including the city's famous raclette, street food and chocolate delicacies. For those who prefer to stay in the warmth of indoors spaces, le Chalet à Fondue is the perfect place for a hearty meal, good company, and cosy ambiance.

One of the market's attractions that should not be missed is the sky view of the city from the Ferris wheel, located at the entrance near Pont du Mont-Blanc and offers a unique experience for families to take in Geneva's winter charm. Children can also enjoy the carousel at the kids' corner for fun times and joyful giggles.

Geneva blends the traditional and unique to offer its visitors an authentic experience of its festivities, sharing its history, food favourites and winter charm to further spread the joy, turning travellers into locals, and experiences into long lasting memories.

SPORTS

ASIAN CUP

Saudi Arabia set to host 2027 edition of AFC Asian Cup

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Saudi Arabia is set to host the 2027 AFC Asian Cup after India withdrew its bid, the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) said on Monday.

The AFC's executive committee shortlisted bids from India and Saudi Arabia in October after Qatar pulled out of the process following their successful bid to host the 2023 edition in place of original hosts China.

The bid from the Saudi federation (SAFF) will be the only one presented to the AFC Congress in February next year, when they meet in Bahrain to decide the host.

Hosting the tournament would give the country's football fans more cause to celebrate, coming after their memorable 2-1 win over Argentina in the group stage of the World Cup in Qatar. The Saudis didn't advance to the knockout stages after back-to-back losses to Poland and Mexico in Group C. Argentina topped the group and then edged Australia in the Round of 16 to qualify for the quarterfinals.

The All India Football Federation (AIFF) cited a need to focus on "building the foundations of proper footballing structure" as reason for their withdrawal, according to media reports.

"India has always been a wonderful and efficient host to big tournaments, which was amply demonstrated in the recently concluded FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup," AIFF President Kalyan Chaubey said.

"However, the (Executive Committee) has decided that the overall strategy of the federation currently remains on focusing on the fundamental goals to strengthen our football at every level from grassroots to youth development."

Saudi Arabia have won the continental title three times but have never hosted the tournament.

Earlier this year, the SAFF also submitted an Expression of Interest to host the 2026 Women's Asian Cup.

England defeat Pakistan by 74 runs in first Test

With the sun dropping at the end of a tension-filled final day, England took the last wicket with only minutes of light remaining

Times News Service

RAWALPINDI: England pulled off one of their greatest victories with a 74-run win over Pakistan on a remarkable final day in the first Test in Rawalpindi on Monday.

With the sun dropping at the end of a tension-filled final day, England took the last wicket with only minutes of light remaining, registering only their third Test match win in Pakistan.

In scenes reminiscent of England's famous victory in the dark in Karachi in 2000, Jack Leach trapped Naseem Shah lbw to leave Pakistan 268 all out, 75 short of their target of 343, with less than 15 minutes left in the day's play.

Ollie Robinson and James Anderson were the pick of the bowlers as the ball finally did some tricks on a wicket that had come into scrutiny earlier in the game.

Going into the third session of day five, Pakistan were 257/5 with Agha Salman and Azhar Ali in the middle.

And then there were four as Agha (30 off 64) fell to a reverse swinging ball from Ollie Robinson with the Decision Review System (DRS) giving England the lbw. Drama was on.

Naseem Shah was bowled first ball but the bails didn't fall.

Robinson would have his moment as Azhar Ali fell to the right arm quick, flicking a reverse-swinger straight to Joe Root at leg slip.

New ball had been available but England hadn't taken it as the old ball was reversing. A wise decision that was proven right again.

Jimmy Anderson would then strike twice in quick succession, picking Zahid Mahmood and Haris Rauf inside three deliveries.

A short one from Anderson on the rib cage got Mahmood trying to glance, but edged it down leg for Ollie Pope to complete a diving grab. The 40-year-old got Rauf lbw on the first ball. Finally Jack Leach rapped Naseem Shah around his pads with an in-drifter, beating the forward prod to trap him plumb. The DRS wouldn't help Pakistan again as England took a 1-0 lead in the series.

Having won the toss and elected to bat first, Ben Stokes and co. posted 657 runs in the first innings, courtesy of four centuries, from Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Ollie Pope and Harry Brooks. In response, Pakistan had posted 579 runs, powered by hundreds from Abdullah Shafique, Imam-ul-Haq and Babar Azam.

The visitors would extend their first innings lead to 343 after scoring quickfire 264 runs off just 35.5 overs in the second innings to set up a total of 343.

The two teams will next face off in Multan for the second Test starting Friday, when England will have the chance to secure the series.

This is an England win that will be remembered for a long time, a fitting way to mark their first Test in Pakistan for 17 years.

The drama of victory being secured late on the fifth day was entirely in keeping with the extraordinary action of the previous four days.

England plundered 921 runs in 136.5 overs at a scoring rate of 6.73, the fastest of any team batting twice in Test history. The 506-4 runs they racked up on day one is a Test record.

Ben Stokes' bold declaration at tea on Sunday engineered a contest that had all four results possible going into the final session of the match.

AUSTRALIA VS WEST INDIES

Morris, Neser earn Australia Test call-up against West Indies

ADELAIDE: Australia have moved quickly to provide cover for ailing skipper Pat Cummins with uncapped quick Lance Morris and pacer Michael Neser joining up with the squad ahead of the second Test against the West Indies in Adelaide.

Cummins fought quad soreness for much of the latter phases of the opening Test against the Caribbean side in Perth and failed to play during the West Indies' second innings as Australia clinched a 164-run victory. The selectors have flown Morris and Neser to Adelaide in case the Australia captain is unable to play in the second Test, which gets underway on Thursday.

Morris, 24, has more wickets this year than any other bowler in Australia's domestic Sheffield Shield tournament and often clocks velocities of more than 150 km/h despite having yet to earn a Test cap for his country.

Neser, meanwhile, has been one of the most reliable players at the local level for more than a decade and played his lone Test for Australia against England in Adelaide last year. Neser played his one and only Test match to date in last year's Adelaide day-night Test when the captain Cummins was ruled out with Covid.

While Scott Boland is already in Australia's squad and would be the logical choice to replace Cummins should the captain miss the second Test, the inclusion of Morris and Neser does provide selectors with further pace options should conditions suit.

Australia selection chair George Bailey said both players deserved their selection in the squad.

"Michael (Neser) has been with the squad on a regular basis in past seasons and was simply outstanding in Adelaide last summer. He has continued to perform incredibly consistently since and will be warmly welcomed back. Lance is another of the outstanding young fast bowlers coming through the ranks. - ANI

INDIA VS BANGLADESH FIRST ODI

I had the honest belief that we could win, says Mehidy Hasan

DHAKA: Mehidy Hasan Miraz and Mustafizur Rahman stitched up an unbeaten 51-run partnership to guide Bangladesh home against India in an edge-of-the-seat nail-biter in Dhaka on Sunday.

After it appeared that there was no hope left, Bangladesh fought their way back into the game to produce a memorable victory and take a 1-0 lead in the ODI series. The architect of the victory, Player of the Match, Mehidy Hasan, however, asserted that he believed that he could win it for Bangladesh despite the situation they were in.

"Maybe people will call me pagol (mad) but I had the honest belief that we could win. I only focused on winning the game. I kept telling myself that I can do this. I thought I'd score 15 runs with Ebadot, 20 runs with Hasan Mahmud and the remaining 15-20 runs with Mustafiz. But two quick wickets meant that it was a do-or-die situation with the last wicket remaining. I had to take calculated risks. Mustafiz's words really stayed with me. It gave me more belief," *ESPNcricinfo* quoted Mehidy as saying.

He revealed that the words of his batting partner, No.11 Mustafizur, gave him confidence. "Mustafizur told me, "You don't worry about me. I will stop the ball at my end. I will take balls on the body, but I won't get out," he said.

"If I thought that we would lose or we won't be able to get the remaining runs, it wouldn't have worked out like this. It was definitely a do-or-die situation. There was no problem getting out trying to hit out. When we needed 50 runs, I took the chances. It came off," Mehidy said.

Mehidy slammed Kuldeep Sen for two sixes in an over and thereafter hammered Deepak Chahar for three fours in the 44th over. It reduced the runs remaining to 14, and that's when it got serious.

"If I thought that we would lose or we won't be able to get the remaining runs, it wouldn't have worked out like this. It was definitely a do-or-die situation. There was no problem to get out trying to hit out. When we needed 50 runs, I took the chances. It came off. But when we needed 14 or 10 runs, then I got really excited. We have lost a lot of close matches, but Mustafiz kept giving me encouragement. He told me, 'don't hurry, don't try to hit a six. You bat along the ground, we will get the runs'. I was very clear with my game plan. I knew exactly what I wanted to do. I think that helped out also," Mehidy said. Mehidy was helped by Mustafizur's assured posture at the other end, where he even launched Bangladesh's first boundary since the 23rd over with a four through the covers.

"Mustafiz is my good friend. He supported me a lot. One thing that stood out was his confidence, " Mehidy said.

"He kept telling me not to worry about him. A batter would always worry about the tailender. If he gets out, it's all over. But his approach allowed me to shape my game plan. Who to attack, when to attack. I didn't go after every ball. I did sky a couple, but they couldn't take the chances. You are bound to get out if you are trying to hit every ball. Calculative risk helped out," he further added.

With the help of his all-round performance, Miraz has helped Bangladesh take a 1-0 lead in the three-match ODI series putting Rohit Sharma-led side in a spot of bother from where they will have to win both their upcoming games to win the series. - ANI

INDIA VS BANGLADESH ODI SERIES

Team has asked me to bat at No. 4, keep wickets: Rahul

DHAKA: Star India batter KL Rahul opened up about his new role in the ODI setup on Sunday, saying that the team think-tank has asked him to bat at the No 4 position and also keep wickets.

A genuine opener, Rahul batted at No 4 and kept wickets for India in the first match of the three-match ODI series against Bangladesh in Dhaka on Sunday.

Rishabh Pant, who had initially been named in the ODI squad as the wicketkeeper-batsman, was released after consultation with the team's medical experts.

Issuing a clarification on him serving as India's primary wicketkeeper-batsman in the series, Rahul said he has been doing it for the national team since 2020-21.

The batter added that the role has been specifically assigned to him by the team think-tank.

"We have not played many ODIs in the past 6-7 months but if you look from 2020-'21, I have kept wickets and batted at four. I have been assigned this role by the team. I don't exactly know the reason for Pant's release. The medical team will be able to tell why Pant was released," said the opener.

The Lucknow Supergiants skipper also dwelt on the last half-an-hour of play in the first ODI, where Bangladesh, reeling at 136/9 and needing another 51 runs to win, but still managed to get over the line.

"You can expect the unexpected in this game. Such games keep happening, that's cricket. The game is never won till the last ball. Mehidy's innings and the way they fought till the end made the difference. One or two dropped chances hurt us too.

"But yeah, they played well. Bangladesh fought really hard today. We made some mistakes which we need to learn from and come back strongly. He (Mehidy) took risks and found the boundary. Bangladesh are playing at home and they are good here. They pose a tough challenge," said the 30-year-old.

Rahul stood out with the bat and was the top-scorer for India with a knock of 73 runs off 70 balls.

Sharing his thoughts on his outing with the willow, Rahul said, "It was just one of those days where I was timing the ball better than everyone else. Every shot that I played and the options I took worked for me today. Have been working on it (shots) even in the last couple of (net) sessions in Bangladesh.

"I tried to challenge myself on this pitch and I am pleased with my inning. I enjoyed batting today. But we would have liked 30-40 more runs. Siraj was batting well with me. Towards the end, I could have stayed longer and taken our score to 230-240. I fancied getting there," said the batter.

Talking about India's inexperienced bowling line-up, he said, "We don't win or lose just because one department failed. It's a team game and each skill has to click and come together for us to win. We have been plagued by injuries that have forced us to play different players. Having said that, India has no dearth of talent. The youngsters coming in need to be backed so that they can learn and improve as they go along. We are not fussing over one result not going our way. As a team, we will try to get better and come back stronger."

India lost the nail-biter by one wicket on Sunday. It was the team's first ODI loss to Bangladesh after seven years. - ANI

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Special customer meets organised to introduce various banking services

Bank Muscat hosted Asalah Priority Banking and Al Jawhar Privilege Banking customers in Nizwa

MUSCAT: In line with the bank's customer-centric vision and commitment to further strengthen its communication channels with customers, Asalah Priority Banking and Al Jawhar Privilege Banking from Bank Muscat recently hosted special customer events in Nizwa to introduce to them various exclusive services, banking facilities and offers.

The events were attended by Abdulnasir N. Al Raisi, General Manager, Personal Banking, Bank Muscat, bank officials and a large number of Premier Banking customers. It was the latest in a series of customer meets organised by the bank this year to strengthen its partnership with customers and get their feedback regarding new services, products and offers.

Speaking on the occasion, Taya Eid Bait Sabeea, Deputy General Manager, Bank Muscat, said: "We are delighted to host our valued customers today as we constantly endeavour to listen to their feedback and comments on new services and products which are constantly launched by the bank. Promptly responding to customer feedback and having a strategy of keeping pace with global trends are key to Bank Muscat's continued leadership in the financial services sector in Oman and the bank continues to work on constant betterment of the customer experience as part of its mission to provide a world-class banking experience. We take this opportunity to thank each one of our valued customers for their strong confidence in the bank and their continued patronage."

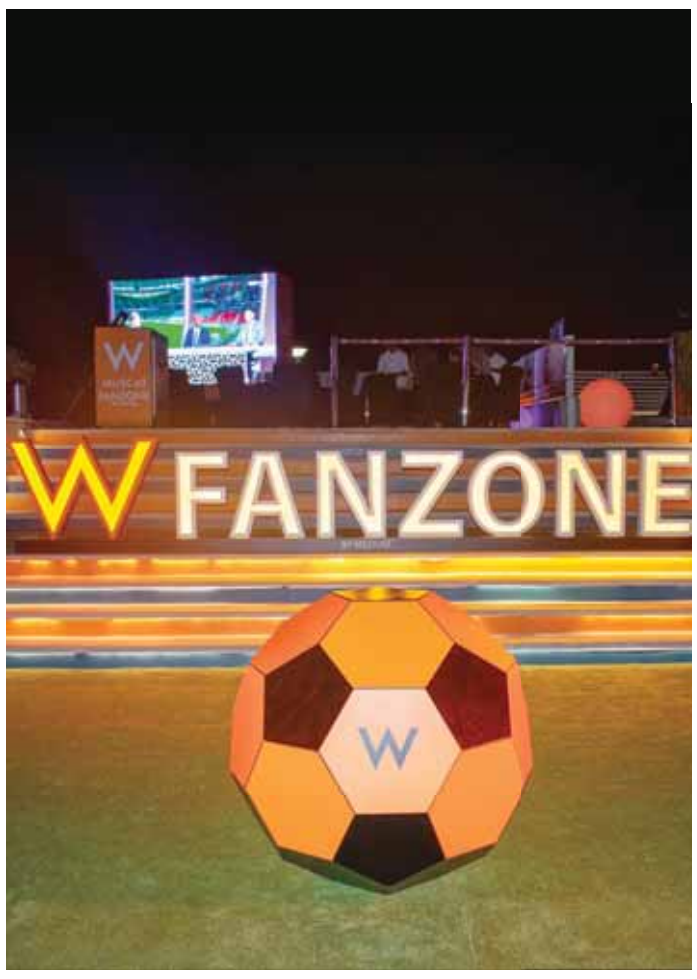
Asalah Priority Banking customers enjoy a range of unrivalled benefits including access to a team of dedicated Relationship Managers, 39 Asalah Centres across Oman and a dedicated 24/7 Asalah Call Centre. Exclusive lifestyle benefits for its clientele include the Asalah Entertainer App, which has more than 3,500 "Buy 1, Get 1 Free" offers in Oman and at international destinations as well as rewards of indulgence and merchant discounts across fine dining, entertainment, leisure, and the beauty and wellness segments. The Asalah Debit Card offers access to 50 lounges worldwide and has a higher ATM withdrawal limit of OMR1,000.

Meanwhile, Asalah Visa Signature credit cardholders can enjoy airport lounge access at more than 1,000 lounges worldwide, and a 24/7 global concierge service. The Credit Card also offers 1% cash back on purchases as well as free multi-trip travel insurance for customers and their direct family members. Cardholders can also enjoy complimentary chauffeur service to and from the Muscat International Airport. Asalah customers also enjoy access to an integrated wealth management platform that allows them to invest in global asset classes through a single touchpoint and get the latest updates on local and international investment opportunities. Please visit https://www.bankmuscat.com/en/premier-banking/Pages/asalah-priority-banking.aspxfor other details about Asalah Priority Banking.

As for customers of Al Jawhar Privilege Banking, they are eligible for exclusive 2-for-1 deals on food; entertainment and shopping that are available through the 'xperience with the Entertainer' app on their smartphones. They also have access to a higher ATM withdrawal limit of OMR800. Al Jawhar Visa Platinum Credit Cardholders offer access to 25 premium lounges around the world in addition to the lounges at Muscat airport. Cardholders are eligible for a complimentary Dragon Pass and a 'Meet and Greet' service with 15% discount at over 450 global destinations.

Al Jawhar Visa Platinum Credit Cardholders can enjoy the "best in class" complimentary travel insurance, which includes travel accident insurance as well as insurance for lost baggage and money, cancellation, travel delay, delayed baggage, personal liability, legal expenses and loss of passport and access to free medical and legal referral services worldwide. The cardholders also enjoy 1% cash back on all local and international spending. Designed around unique lifestyle and banking requirements, Al Jawhar is a unique privilege banking service that offers its customers unmatched features and benefits.

FIESTA



Feel the football frenzy at W Muscat's Fanzone by Meduse

MUSCAT: If you are wondering where to catch the football matches live, W Muscat has got you covered. Whether you are cheering hot favourites like Argentina, Brazil, Germany and defending champions France, or rooting for the underdogs, the coolest spot to feel the frenzy is the Fanzone by Meduse.

Guests can immerse themselves in a sea of football fans, and enjoy the fiesta together with Meduse flavours, mega screens, exciting eats, and bevvies with a minimum spend.

By booking their spot now, football enthusiasts can show their favourite team some love at the Fanzone which is open from 1pm to 1am. WIP spaces are also available.

Gerald Chevasson, General Manager of W Muscat said, "Fanzone by Meduse is the perfect place to lose yourself in the roar of the crowd. Sports is always more fun with a cheering crowd, tasty food and great bevvies.

"Reserve your spot and soak in the lively and upbeat atmosphere from wherever you are seated or standing. Fanzone concept conveys W's passion points of 'taste', 'sound' and 'passionate'. At W Muscat, we are on a mission to ignite curiosity and expand worlds."

ALIZZ ISLAMIC BANK

Pioneers of 'RuwadAlizz' programme celebrate enrolment of second batch

MUSCAT: During a festive ceremony, Alizz Islamic Bank launched its 2nd Batch of the innovative 'RuwadAlizz' programme, in collaboration with, Harvard Manage Mentor, the online learning platform and a subsidiary of Harvard University, one of the most prestigious universities in the world.

With the launch of the 2nd Batch, Alizz Islamic Bank continues with its mission to develop Leadership to suit the "Future of Work" by steering a holistic and accelerated development journey to its potential future leaders. Based on the belief that there is immense opportunity for collaborative learning and exchanging ideas in the new age of digital and automated business environment.

The learner group includes delegates with potential from different industries in Oman alongside the Alizz delegates.

It would make the learner experience more enriching while also being conducive to nurturing alliances, for the future business ecosystems will need communities of interconnected individuals, organisations and industries that work in tandem in a complex environment, where members play roles of leaders, innovators, and most importantly, entrepreneurs who will be able to develop commercial allies across industries.

The event was attended by, Sulaiman bin Hamad Al Harthy, Chief Executive Officer, members of senior management along with the internal and external delegates of the latest batch as well as the pilot batch. The event was also attended by the line managers of the delegates, Dr Aju Samuel from the Performance Factory – the training partner for RuwadAlizz and Dr Yasmin Al Balushi (Project Manager of The National Program for Developing Leaders and Future Forsight at Royal Academy of Management) as the guest speaker for the event.

Sulaiman bin Hamad Al Harthy, Chief Executive Officer addressing the invitees stated that the new age leaders face different challenges in a global setting where technology leads evolution. He further stated that he sees potential in Oman's youth which needs to be leveraged in an objective manner to suit the "Future of Work" and that he and his team at Alizz Islamic Bank are proud to be a positive force behind the pursuit in developing young Omani leaders who would shoulder the country's growth in future.

Welcoming the guests, Mohammed Al Balushi, Chief Human Resources Officer at Alizz Islamic Bank, stated that they wish to continue with this initiative with many future batches.

Al Balushi added that the pilot batch launched in May 2022 was a huge success while the programme outline had been adjusted to the better based on their feedback and thus the experience of Batch two is expected to be even better.

He further elaborated that the programme follows a blended delivery methodology with the aim to cater to multiple learning styles, and thus the activities will include self-study using learning materials of Harvard Manage Mentor through their online learning platform followed by classroom assimilation to discuss bi-weekly topics covered in the e-learning modules. The classroom assimilation sessions will continue to be conducted by the Oman wing of the Performance Factory, a leading consultancy firm renowned for its work in Management Consulting & Organisation Development. The delegates will also be subject to several assignments and assessments to measure effectiveness in learning.

In addition, participants will get the opportunity to join several Leadership Exchange sessions by connecting with Thought Leaders across different walks of life. The Leadership Exchanges aim to provide them with a glimpse into business topics and careers which focuses on education out of the classroom, and through positive social interactions about their professional journeys in transforming people or organisations, or new ideas or ways of thinking about business.

Adding further variety to the programme, the delegates will join field visits to various Industry floors with a vision of enriching themselves with the practical insights of different companies. Another objective in organizing these industrial visits is for the delegates to get a first-hand experience of the issues and experiences of the manpower working in a real industrial scenario. By interacting with the key persons, the delegates also will come to know the solutions, which are many times outside the purview of the textbook syllabus.

The learning journey concludes with the delegates joining in for a Team Building day followed by a group-based Action Learning Projects (ALP) to address a selected real-life specific problem in their organisation, with a deadline of two months to collaborate and submit the proposal.

A ceremony will be held to honour graduates who manage to meet the criteria for the certification and they will be awarded a joint certificate from Alizz Islamic Bank and Harvard Manage Mentor.

ROUND-UP

Rafeeq SHOP NOW rafeeq.om

OAB joins hands with Visa to launch mobile payment solution for SMEs

With this new solution, merchants will be able to transform their smartphones into a payment terminal and accept contactless payments from their customers using an NFC-enabled Android device

MUSCAT: Oman Arab Bank (OAB) continues to drive its digital transformation agenda forward with its latest digital solution targeting small businesses.

OAB has partnered with Visa, global leader in digital payments, to launch the OAB Point of Sale (Mobile Pay) Payment Solution for all small business owners and SMEs. With this new solution, merchants will be able to transform their smartphones into a payment terminal and accept contactless payments from their customers using an NFC-enabled Android device.

Small business owners or SMEs with a corporate account at OAB, can now access the new Mobile Pay solution by simply downloading the Mobile Pay app from the Google Play Store. Once the registration process is complete on the app, the bank will activate the service within 24 hours. The business owner will then receive a verification code to confirm the registration and will be able to start using this payment solution instantly. When using this payment solution, customers will be able to pay using their contactless cards and receive their payment receipt by e-mail or SMS seamlessly.

OAB designed this convenient and rapid payment solution with business owners' needs in mind, reducing their reliance on hardware POS terminals, paper roles, data connectivity and technical maintenance. With this new solution, merchants only require an NFC-enabled Android Device to start receiving contactless payments from their customers. The new Mobile Pay solution gives them flexibility to sell their products and services in a cost-effective way.

Commenting on the launch, Rashad Al Shaikh, Head of the Retail Banking Division at OAB, said:

"We are delighted to add the Mobile Pay solution to the range of services we offer businesses at OAB. This new service highlights our efforts to provide technology-oriented solutions for our customers in line with OAB's Digital Transformation Strategy. The Mobile Pay solution is tailored to SMEs' needs, enabling them to replace traditional POS devices with their Android smart device. Highly cost-effective, Mobile Pay allows small businesses to expand their payment options and facilitate all their daily transactions."

Manish Gautam, Visa's Country Manager for Oman, said: "As more consumers seek digital - especially contactless - payments it becomes critical for businesses to expand their acceptance methods beyond cash. OAB Mobile Pay enables SMBs in Oman to accept contactless payments in an easy, and cost-effective way so they can reinvent the shopping experience for consumers. We are therefore delighted to partner with OAB to support local businesses in their digital transformation, and support the Omani government's digital commerce agenda."

CONSTRUCTION EVENT

Big 5 opens in Dubai with agenda to explore future-proofing of construction industry

DUBAI: The 43rd edition of the Big 5, the largest and most influential construction event in the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia, opened yesterday and started a four-day run at the Dubai World Trade Centre with an industry-altering and future-proofing agenda.

More than 2,000 participants from 60 countries are taking part in the event, which will host 20 national pavilions, including newcomers Oman, Pakistan, and Singapore, bringing together the key stakeholders from across the full construction value chain to network, learn and do business. Boasting the strongest government support to date, including the UAE's Ministry of Energy & Infrastructure, Dubai Municipality, and Dubai's General Directorate of Civil Defense, the Big 5 2022 features focused exhibits, high-level summits, industry talks, visitor experiences, and incubator pitching to address key sector challenges, spur technology adoption, and promote sustainability.

A busy schedule of free-to-attend CPD-certified Industry Talks will cover topics across technology, facilities management, architecture & design, project management, and sustainable geotechnical engineering – a programme delivered by the event's supporting association Deep Foundations Institute.

Technology aficionados can head down to Digital Construction World, a dedicated sector at the Big 5, to find the latest solutions in contech, proptech and infratech, and explore Dubai Municipality's pavilion housing 3D printing companies focused on each stage of the construction cycle. Innovators in the display include Saudi Arabia's construction management software developer WhiteHelmet; Norway'sRendra, offering a BIM-based collaboration platform; UAE's PlanRadar, an award-winning, digital field management platform; and American OpenSpace, a global leader in reality capture and AI-powered analytics.

Big 5 is free to attend for industry professionals. For more information, visit: https://www.thebig5.ae

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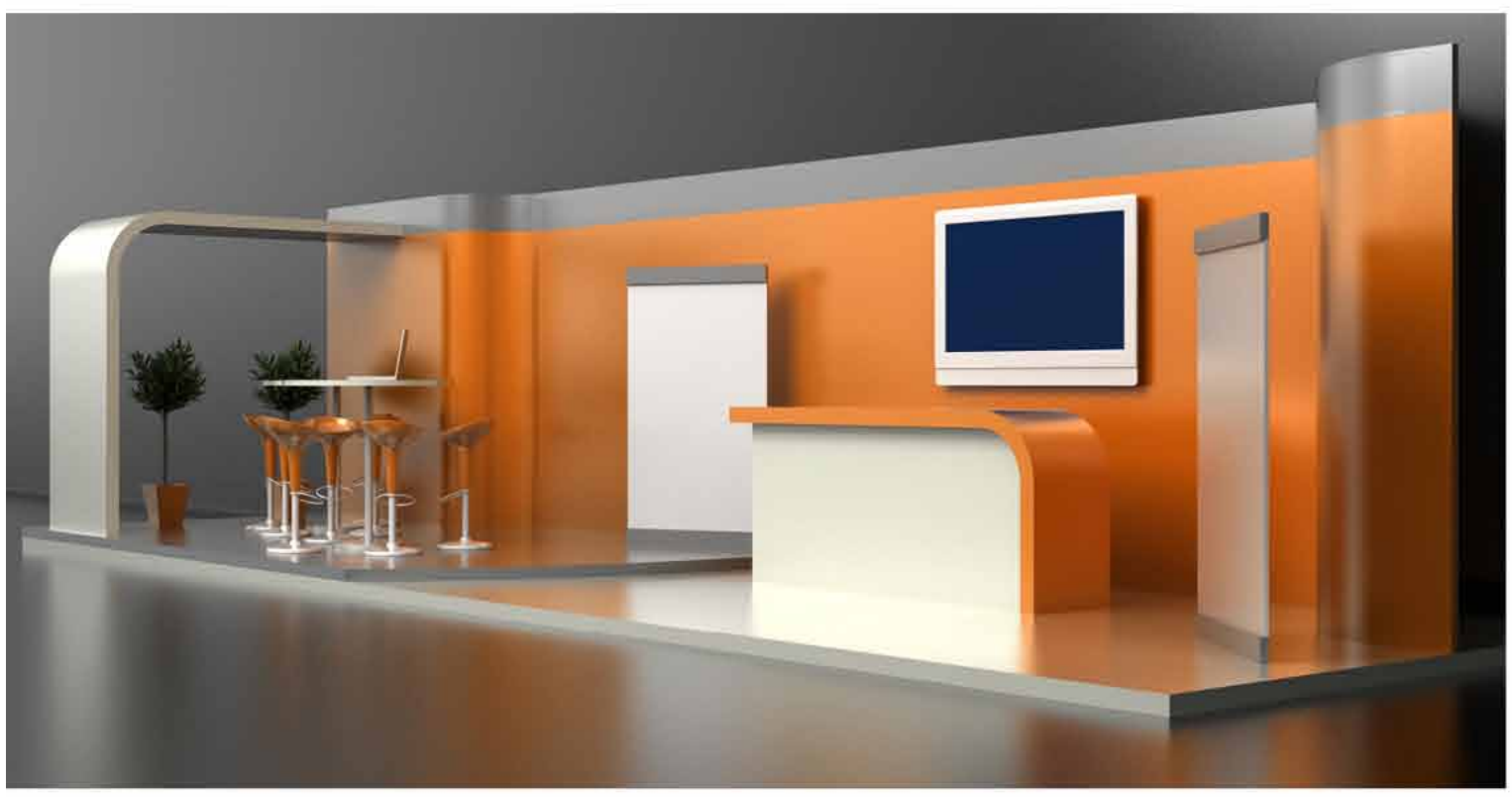

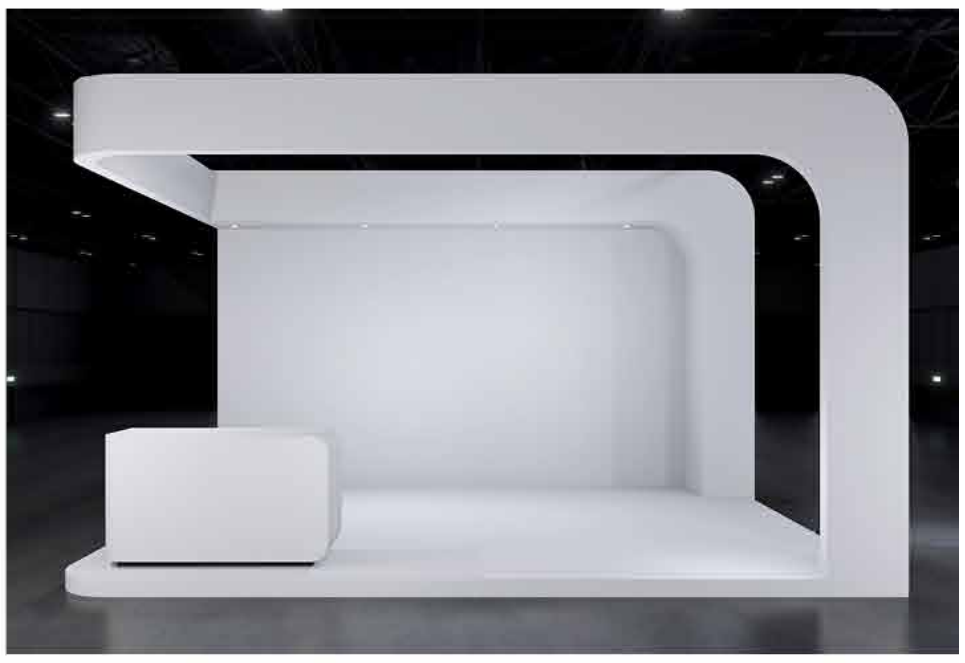

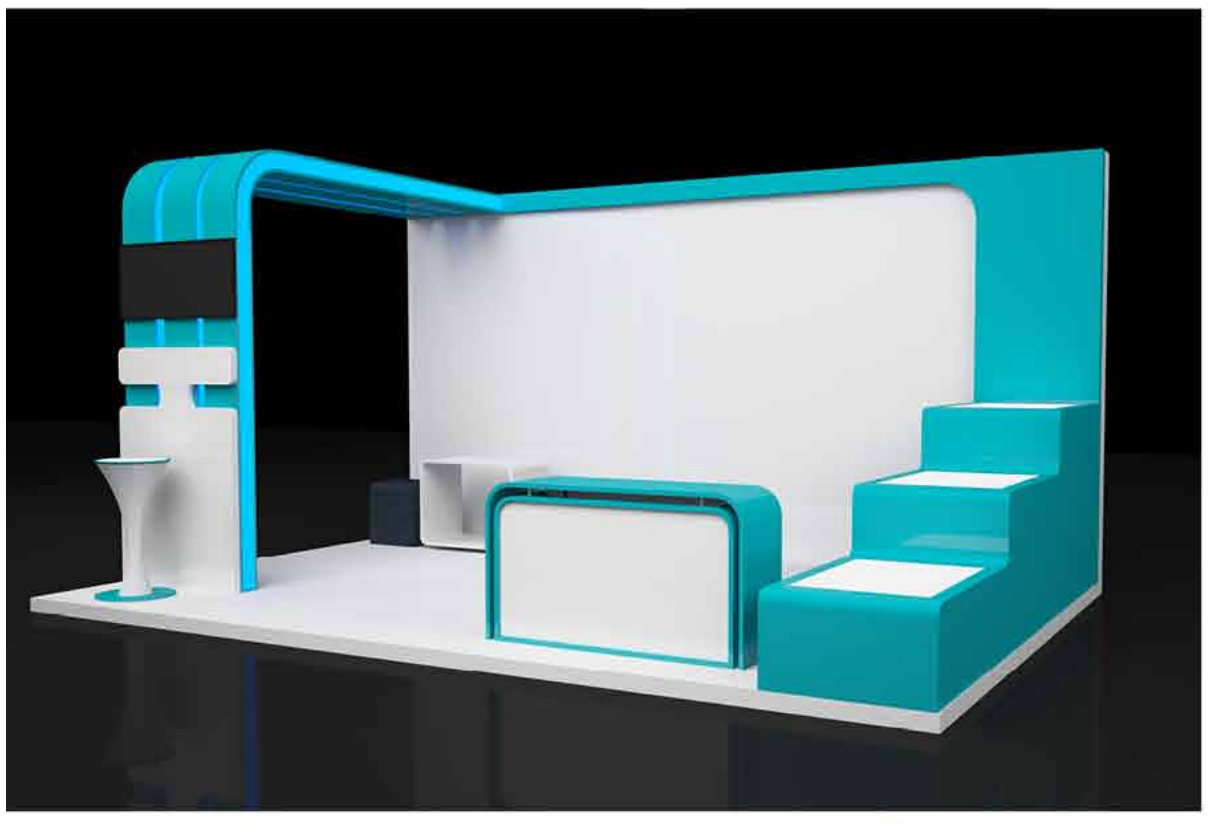

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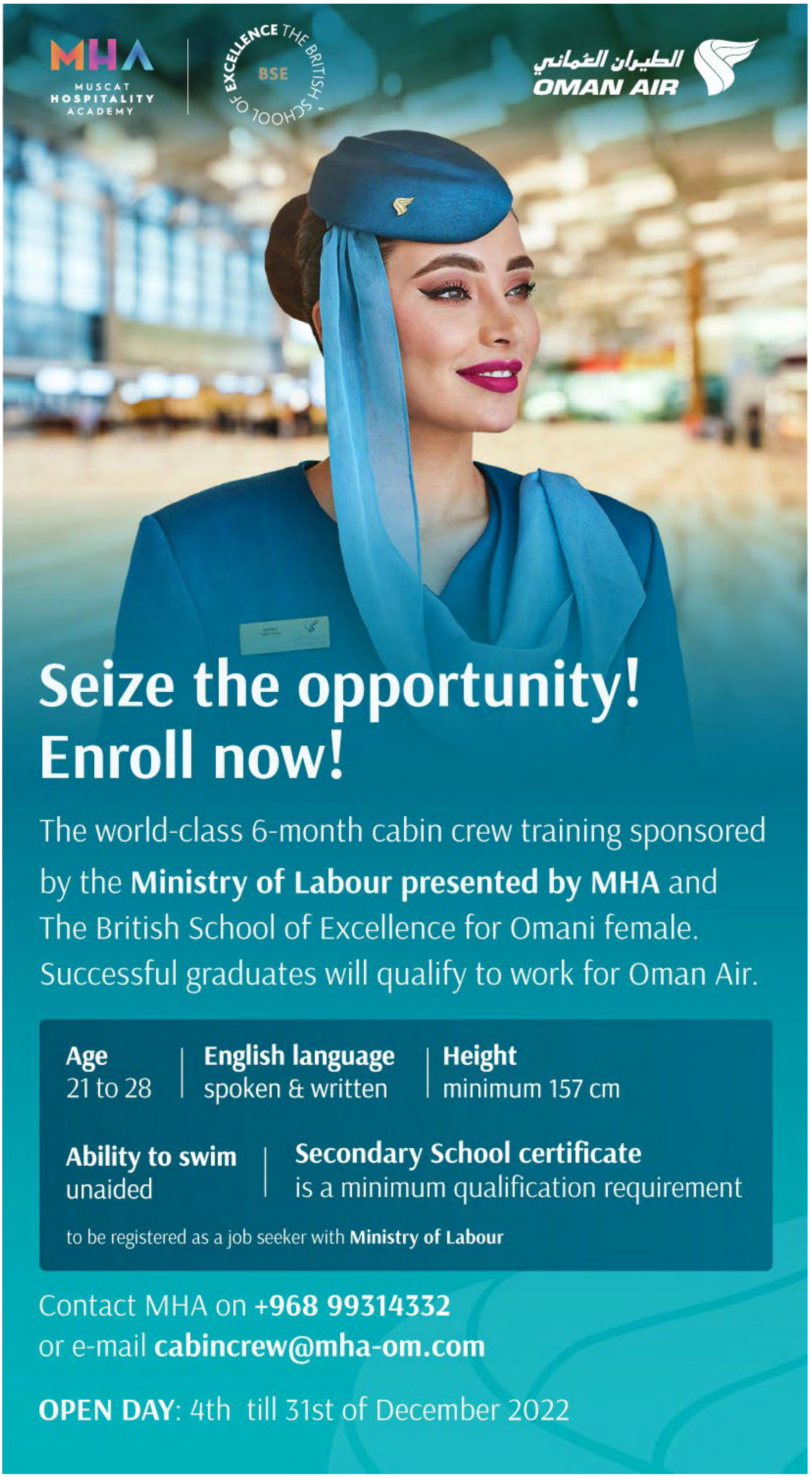

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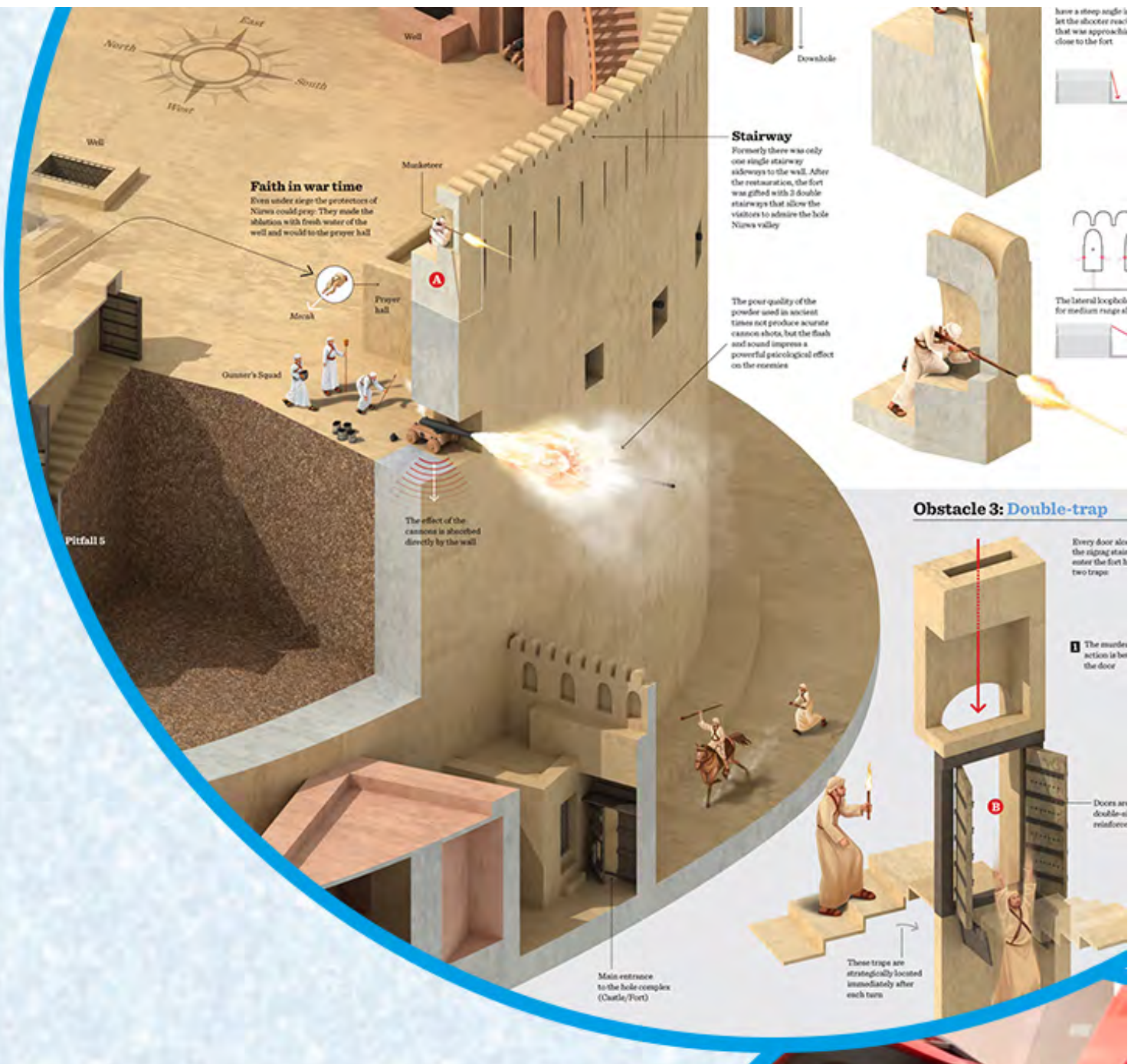

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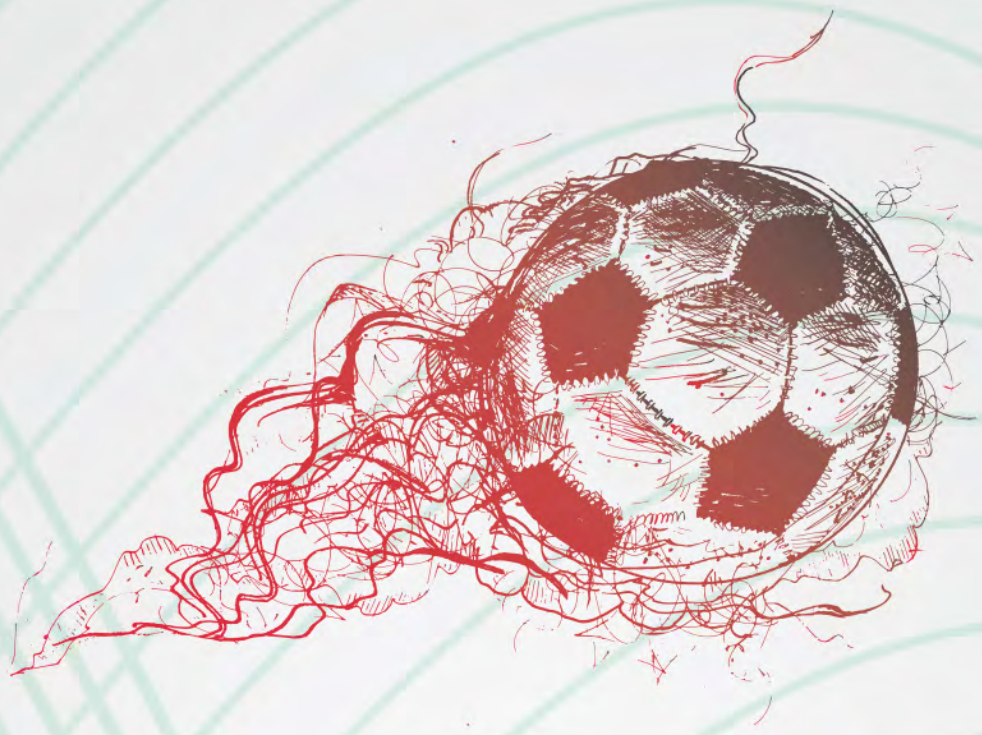

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