

HM CONGRATULATES PRESIDENT OF BOLIVIA

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to President Luis Alberto Arce of Plurinational State of Bolivia on his country's Independence Day anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings and wishes to the president and his country's people. **-ONA**



PRIVATE FACILITIES A BIGGER DRAW FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Health institutions in the government sector in Oman have witnessed a huge drop in the number of doctors in 2021 as compared to 2019. Private facilities, on the other hand, have recorded a corresponding rise in the number of personnel during the same period. **>A6**



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OMR2.6 MILLION POWER PUSH FOR DUQM INVESTORS



Equipped with the latest technology, the power distribution station feeds a number of existing and under construction projects

Times News Service

DUQM: Efforts are being made by the Special Economic Zone Administration in Duqm (SEZAD) to ensure availability of power to investors. As part of the plan, a main transformer power station project with a capacity of 60 MVA at an estimated cost of about OMR2.6 million, was installed.

The project was executed by the Special Economic Zone Administration at Duqm in cooperation with the Rural Areas Electricity Company.

Engineer Said bin Ahmed bani Arabah, who is in-charge of the

Department of Electricity and Water Regulation in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, confirmed that the power distribution station is equipped with the latest electrical appliances in accordance with the Omani standard specifications and will feed a number of existing and under construction projects in the light industries and exhibition areas in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm through a distribution network consisting of underground 11 KV and 1415 volt cables.

He told Oman News Agency that the main station has a number of electrical transformers, and control rooms, and includes measuring and protection equipment and devices. The station will feed the current and future electrical loads in these areas according to the general plan of this area.

He added that a number of works to connect investors with the electricity network have been completed, while a number of requests to provide connections to projects under construction in the light industries area and the exhibition area are being dealt with.

He explained that work is underway to complete the connection work for 10 other investment

projects under construction in the industrial zone, a factory for the manufacture of lighting lamps, and other targeted investments in the region.

Engineer Said bin Ahmed said the authority pays great attention to accelerating supply of electricity to investors, especially since the authority has amended the electricity service delivery regulation to speed up the pace of service delivery to investors, which had a positive impact in increasing the demand for electricity and increasing the number of subscribers in the economic zone of Duqm.

He said that the number of electricity subscribers increased to about 5,031 by the end of 2021, compared to 3,490 in 2020, an increase of 30 percent.

He indicated that there are other projects in their final stages, examination stages and experimental operation, distributed in the targeted schemes of the region.

The implementation of the plan of the General Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones are being done in order to raise the attractiveness of schemes with the availability of services and increasing investors' appetite for it. **-With ONA inputs**

HIS MAJESTY RETURNS HOME

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik returned home on Friday, after paying a private visit to the United Kingdom. This was stated in a statement issued by the Diwan of Royal Court.

-ONA



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TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN Oman exports \$21mn worth goods to Jordan

1 The value of Omani exports to Jordan in the first five months of the current year stood at \$21 million, according to Jordanian official data. During the same period the total volume of trade exchange between the two countries amounted to \$45.3 million. **>A5**

OMAN Women aged over 50 give 24 live births

2 Women above 50 years of age have given birth to 24 infants in 2021, while more than 890 children have been born to women in the age group of 15-19 years in Oman according to NCSI data. **>A3**

MARKET ahlibank's net profit up 18.6 percent

3 ahlibank has reported first quarter financial performance with an impressive net profit of OMR15.8 million in the half year, recording an increase of 18.6 per cent over the same period in 2021. **>B1**





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Asr.....	3:42pm
Maghrib.....	6:51pm
Isha.....	8:08pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....	4:18am

ANNOUNCEMENT

Shabab Oman II wins International Friendship Cup for Tall Ships 2022



MUSCAT: The Royal Navy of Oman ship, Shabab Oman II, was crowned the International Friendship Cup for Tall Ships for the year 2022 in Denmark. This is the highest award won by a sailing ship in the long-distance sailing races. This came during the announcement of the results of the Long Dhov Sailing Race, at the closing festival of the Long Sailing Race 2022 in Aalborg, Kingdom of Denmark. The award is given to the ship that excels in demonstrating friendship among all participating ship crews. Voting for this award is conducted by the captains and crews of the participating ships. The entire crew of the ship expressed their joy at the ship's victory in the International Friendship Cup for the year 2022, after the strenuous efforts made by the crew on this voyage (Oman journey, the land of peace).



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MINISTRY OF COMMERCE, INDUSTRY AND INVESTMENT PROMOTION



SUPPORT FOR CLEAN ENERGY: The preparation of this standard specification comes in response to the government efforts aimed to encourage and support clean and sustainable energy. – ONA

New standard specification for hydrogen fuel vehicles issued

MUSCAT: A new Omani standard specification related to hydrogen fuel-operating vehicles has been issued by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP). The specifications set the performance requirements related to safety and availability of the conditions which mitigate damages to humans in case of accidents. Nadia bint Mohammed Al Siyabi, Director of the Specifications Department at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion said the preparation of this standard specification comes in response to the government efforts aimed to encourage and support clean and sustainable energy. She said that issuance of the standard specification has been established on the international regulation of hydrogen operating vehicles, issued by the World Forum for Harmonisation of Vehicle Regulations. The vehicle regulations of the World Forum for Harmonisation of Vehicle are issued in joint agreement and coordination among the top industrial countries, she added. These vehicles contain three basic systems which are the fuel supply and storage system, the fuel cells system and the electric torque system. The success of hydrogen vehicles in the Sultanate of Oman would lead to curb the pollutants resulting from gasoline and diesel fuel, she said. – ONA



TENDER NOTICE

Oman Water & Wastewater Services Company hereby announces the following Tenders: -

Tender No.	Description	Eligibility	Tender Fee (RO)	Last Date of Sale Tender Documents	Bid Submission Date
T/2450056/2022	Construction of Water Distribution Network and House Connections in Adh-Dhahira Governorate	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board and specialized in the works mentioned	100/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	18/8/2022	19/9/2022
T/2450059/2022	Extension of Water Networks in Batha Hilal in Al Suwaiq Wilayat, North Al Batinah Governorate	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board and specialized in the works mentioned.	50/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	18/8/2022	19/9/2022
T/2452160/2022	Consultancy Services for Supervision of Construction of Water Distribution Networks in New Liwa Schemes in Liwa Wilayat	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board and specialized in the works mentioned.	100/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	18/8/2022	19/9/2022
T/2452162/2022	Consultancy Services for Supervision of Construction of Water Distribution Networks in Wadi Endam in Al Mudaybi Wilayat	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board and specialized in the works mentioned.	100/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	18/8/2022	19/9/2022
T/2452163/2022	Consultancy Services for Supervision of Construction of Water Distribution Networks in Al Aloo in Yanqul Wilayat	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board and specialized in the works mentioned.	100/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	18/8/2022	19/9/2022
T/2452149/2022	Supply of IT Hardware and Accessories (Dell)	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board and specialized in the works mentioned.	100/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	18/8/2022	5/9/2022

The tender documents can be purchased from Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (OWWSC) e-tendering page (Supplier Login) from the date of publication of this announcement until 18/8/2022. The applicants shall pay the tender fee through electronic payment gateway through Supplier Login.

Applicants who are not registered with OWWSC shall register from <https://owwsc.nama.om/Business-with-Us/Vendor-Registration> to have the login credentials of Supplier portal.

All applicants who have paid the tender fee shall have access to the Tender Documents through OWWSC e-tendering page (Supplier Login).

All participating Companies shall submit a Bid Bond of 1% of the bid value in a sealed envelope to OWWSC's Chairman of Tender Committee not later than 3:00 pm on the bid submission date. Bid Bond must be obtained from a Bank registered in the Sultanate of Oman and it should be addressed in favour of OWWSC.

The bid along with all required documents shall be uploaded through OWWSC e-tendering page not later than 3:00 pm on the date specified above.

For more details refer to Tender Page of our website www.owwsc.nama.om or Email to: tender@owwsc.nama.om



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making life easy

24 live births to women aged over 50 years

The largest number of live births was reported among mothers in the age group of 30-34

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Women above 50 years of age have given birth to 24 infants in 2021, while more than 890 children have been born to

women in the age group of 15-19 years in the Sultanate of Oman. The National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), in the Statistical Yearbook 2022, out of the 24 live births in 2021, 22 were reported among Omani women, including 14 males and 8 females. Two males were born to expatriate mothers over the age of 50, bringing the total to 24 live births in Oman to women over 50 years. **Live births** Likewise, the number of live births to mothers in the age group between 15 to 19 years reached 894, including 421 males and 406 females from Omani mothers, and 34 males and 33 females from expatriate mothers. Among women in the age group of 45-49 years, 463 live births were reported, including 445 to Omani mothers and 18 to expatriate mothers. While the number of live births from mothers in the age group of 40-44 years reached 5,886, 17,643 live births were reported among mothers between the ages of 35 and 39. As for the largest number of live births, it was among mothers in the age group of 30-34, which was 24,453, of whom 22,235 were born to Omani mothers and 2,008 to expatriate mothers. The number of live births to mothers in the age group 25-29 reached 23,453, and in the age group 20-24, it was 9,618 live births.

COMMERCIAL LANDMARK

Governor of Dhofar to inaugurate Salalah Grand Mall tomorrow



SALALAH: His Highness Sayyid Marwan bin Turki Al Said, Governor of Dhofar, will inaugurate the Salalah Grand Mall in the Governorate of Dhofar on Monday. Built at a cost of OMR35 mil-

lion, the Salalah Grand Mall is a tourist and commercial landmark that enhances the retail, entertainment and tourism sectors in the province. The commercial complex ex-

tends over an area of 55,000 square metres, with a built-up area of 103.8 thousand square metres. It has stores of famous local, regional and global brands, in addition to a food court and cafes. -ONA



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Story on Sri Lankan Airlines reached 40,089 people and had 920 link clicks on Facebook.

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The Midday Update video had 1,900 views and reached 3,800 people on Facebook.

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The Maghrib Minute video news wrap in Hindi had 879 views and 43 likes on Instagram.



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‘SALALAH EAT’ FOOD FESTIVAL KICKS OFF



SALALAH: ‘Salalah Eat’ food festival, which comes from the cooperation between Oman Tourism Development Company (OMRAN Group), Dhofar Municipality, Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, and several private organisations, kicked off recently. The festival is designed to enrich the visitors’ experiences with multiple events and entertainment performances targeting various segments of society to promote local tourism in Dhofar governorate.

The inaugural ceremony of the festival was held in Hawana Salalah Resort under the auspices of His Excellency Dr Ahmed bin Mohsen Al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality, and witnessed the presence of Eng Mohammed bin Abu-Bakar Salim Al Sail Al Ghasani, Deputy Chairman of OMRAN Group and the CEO, Hashil Bin Obaid Al Mahrouqi, CEO of OMRAN Group, said, “The Group continues to work with our key partners to strengthen the potential of Oman’s tourism sector, further contributing to creating innovative and unique tourism experiences. “Salalah Eat” represents the Group’s efforts to diversify tourism products in the governorate. It also reflects the Group’s endeavors to find effective initiatives aligned with the latest practices of In-Country Value (ICV), social investment and the promotion of Omani

products in the local market. As such, the aim is to provide a stimulating environment for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and local talents”.

Marwan bin Abdul Hakim al Ghassani, Director of Tourism Promotion Department at the Directorate General of Heritage and Tourism in Dhofar Governorate, commented on the Ministry’s role in boosting tourism sector through such events, “Organising ‘Salalah Eat’ festival reflects



the Ministry’s efforts to create events that help enhance the performance of the tourism sector as well as supporting SME sector and create business opportunities. Through these festivals, participants look forward to providing delicacies from both Omani and international cuisines that attract more visitors”.

Defining the food festival, Sarah bint Najeeb Al Balushi, Founder and CEO of Celebrate Oman, said, “Salalah Eat festival offers an opportunity for visitors to spend quality time and taste local and international dishes whilst enjoying the planned entertainment activities for 10 days. With the participation of a range of competent nationals and SMEs, the festival is expected to attract a significant crowd”.

“Salalah Eat’ festival is the first event of “OMRAN Carnivals”, which the Group plans to hold in many tourist destinations in Oman. This reflects the Group’s role in promoting the local tourism scene and maximising ICV to achieve multiple social and economic returns.



OMRAN Group has a number of investments and assets in Dhofar governorate, namely, Hawana Salalah Resort, Crowne Plaza Salalah, Alila Hinu Bay in Mirbat and Atana Stay Salalah.

OMRAN Group works closely with Dhofar Municipality and Ministry of Heritage and Tourism to promote the tourism experiences offered in the region.



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TRADE

Oman’s exports to Jordan top \$21mn in five months

AMMAN: The total volume of trade exchange between the Sultanate of Oman and Jordan during the first five months of this year amounted to \$45.3 million.

The official Jordanian statistics indicated that the total Omani exports to Jordan by the end of May 2022 amounted to about \$21 million in food products, mineral oils and their distillation products, vegetable oils, pipes, tubes and fish, in addition to polyethylene and others.

Statistics also showed that the volume of Jordanian exports to the Sultanate of Oman during the same period amounted to about \$24.3 million, represented in pharmaceutical products, vegetables, meat and fish preparations, and various chemical products.

Yanal Al Barnaway, spokesperson of the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Supply of Jordan, said that Jordan aspires to enhance economic cooperation with the



Sultanate of Oman in the various spheres during the upcoming stage mainly in the field of trade for the joint interest of both the countries and for availing from the available opportunities in both the countries.

He also stressed the significance of boosting the trade relations between the private sectors of both the countries as well as the communication for development of economic cooperation.

-ONA

HEAVY RAIN

Services restored

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Almost 95 per cent of the roads affected by rains in South Al Batinah have been repaired. Electricity, water, sewage, communications, fuel and waste services management are also fully restored.

Sheikh Dr Manson Talib Al Hanai, Chairman of the Services Regulatory Authority, Head of the Basic Services Sector of the National Emergency Management Committee, during a field visit to the affected areas in the wilayats of Rustaq and Al Awabi, was briefed on the progress of the sector’s work and the efforts made by the technical teams to restore services to the areas affected.

CIVIL DEFENCE AND AMBULANCE AUTHORITY

Firefighting teams put out fire in Ibri

MUSCAT: Firefighting teams were able to extinguish a fire that broke out in a house in Al Dhahirah Governorate.

The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) said: “The firefighting teams of the CDAA in Al Dhahirah Governorate managed to put out a fire that broke out in a house in the Al-Qurain area in the Wilayat of Ibri, without registering any injuries.”



Ministry of Social Development

Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender committee of Ministry of Social Development hereby announces the following tender :-

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of tender document	Last date for tender submission	Tender Document Price (non-retundable)
118/2022	Providing male and female workers for the diagnostic the fulfillment unit and the assessment and vocational rehabilitation center of the general directorate of persons with disabilities affairs at al khoudh	Companies specialized in the field of industrial workshop services and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the excellent, first, second, third or fourth degree	Thursday 25-8-2022 02:00 PM	Thursday 15-9-2022 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=

❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the Tender Board may obtain the Tender documents at theTender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>), On Sunday 7/8/2022

❖ Tender shall be submitted in compliance with the technical specifications and terms along with a local bank warranty at (1%) of the tender value, valid ninety (90) days from the date of e-submission.

❖ For Inquiry, please contact though the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (24402200)

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CONDOLENCES

In the name of Almighty, we express our sincere condolences and deepest sympathies to
Sheikh Nasser Bin Mohammed Al Hashar
Sheikh Nasser Bin Saeed Al Hashar
and all the honourable members of
Al Hashar family on the sad demise of
Sheikh Nasser Bin Saeed Al Hashar’s mother.

We pray God to bless the deceased with his vast mercy. We belong to God and to him we shall return.



NCSI DATA

Private health facilities a bigger draw for medicare professionals

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Health institutions in the government sector in Oman have witnessed a huge drop in the number of doctors in 2021 as compared to 2019. Private facilities, on the other hand, have recorded a corresponding rise in the number of personnel during the same period.

Dentists and general physicians have witnessed a huge drop in the government sector – while for the dentists the figure is 75 percent, the number of general physicians has dropped by 33.2 percent, according to the figures released by the National Centre of Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The NCSI report states that the total number of physicians at the government health institutions stood at 6,409 in 2021 compared to 9,602 physicians in 2019. Likewise, the government sector



witnessed a decrease in the total number of dentists by 75.9 per cent, that is from 1,494 dentists in 2019 to 359 in 2021.

During the same period, the number of nurses in the government sector dropped by 4,399

(21.6%) from 2019, to just 15,924 nurses in 2021 in various government hospitals. The statistics includes the medical staff working under the Ministry of Health and ROP, SQUH, Diwan of Royal Court and PDO.

The private sector witnessed an increase in total health manpower to 14,377 in 2021 compared to 13,450 in 2019.

Pharmacists decreased by 66.6 per cent in 2021 compared to 2019.

The private sector, on the other hand, witnessed an increase in total health manpower to 14,377 in 2021 compared to 13,450 in 2019. The private sector added 60 new physicians in 2021 to its list of 2,557 physicians in 2019. The total number of nurses, however, decreased in the private sector, dropping from 4,078 in 2019 to 3,968 in 2021.



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LAFAYETTE SQUARE

Three killed in lightning strike near White House

WASHINGTON: Three people are dead and one injured following a lightning strike across the street from the White House on Thursday night, according to local media reports.

The lightning hit Lafayette Square, just north of the White House leaving four people critically injured.

Among the victims are two adult males and two adult females. James Mueller, 76, and Donna Mueller, 75, died from injuries following the strike, a DC Metropolitan Police spokesperson confirmed, and CNN reported.

The couple was reportedly visiting from Wisconsin. **ANI**

COUNTERSUIT

Elon Musk accuses Twitter of fraud in countersuit



CALIFORNIA: Billionaire Elon Musk has accused the social media platform Twitter of fraudulently holding back information about the company as part of a countersuit, media reported on Friday.

The court records show that Musk is claiming Twitter misled him about key aspects of the business during his bid to buy the company for \$44 billion (€43.3 billion).

The social media company is suing the Tesla CEO to force him to go through with the deal, which he has since tried to abort.

"Twitter's disclosures have slowly unraveled, with Twitter frantically closing the gates on information in a desperate bid to prevent the Musk Parties from uncovering its fraud," the countersuit, which was unsealed in a court filing late Thursday, claims.

Twitter said in its own filing that "according to Musk, he – the billionaire founder of multiple companies, advised by Wall Street bankers and lawyers – was hoodwinked by Twitter into signing a \$44 billion merger agreement."

What are the claims of Musk's countersuit?

Twitter had issued its own response to the countersuit before it was made public.

The company preemptively de-

Musk agreed to buy the company in April for a price of \$54.20 per share. He then announced that he would back out of the deal in July, which has seen the company's stock price tumble

is set to go to trial in October with the Delaware Chancery Court judge expecting it to last five days.

What does Elon Musk want with Twitter?

Musk agreed to buy the company in April for a price of \$54.20 per share. He then announced that he would back out of the deal in July, which has seen the company's stock price tumble to just over \$40.

The Tesla chief, who is an avid user of the platform, said he planned to root out fake accounts and take a lighter touch to content policing, even going so far as saying he would restore the account of former US President Donald Trump, who was banned after the January 6 Capitol riots.

Although the number of Twitter users pales in comparison to the likes of Facebook, it is popular among numerous political leaders and well-known figures. The prospects of a Musk takeover, and his promises of free speech absolutism, have sparked fears that the platform will be used to incite violence and hatred.

Whichever side is found culpable for the failure of the deal to go through may have to pay a \$1 billion breakup fine.

But Twitter wants to force the billionaire to cough up the full \$44 billion and purchase the company. **DW**



Sultan Qaboos University Hospital

TENDERS ANNOUNCEMENT

Sultan Qaboos University Hospital announces the following tenders:

Tender No.	Subject	Non-Refundable Fees	Last Collection Date	Site Visit Date	Last Date of Submission
HMD/T/625/2022	SUPPLY, INSTALLATION AND COMMISSIONING OF AIR-COOLED WATER CHILLER IN LAUNDRY, SQUH COMPLEX.	OMR.25	23/08/2022	24/08/2022	19/09/2022
TAD/T/626/2022	DESIGN, SUPPLY AND INSTALLATION OF ACCESS CONTROL SYSTEM IN BMT BUILDING	OMR.25	23/08/2022	24/08/2022	19/09/2022
TAD/T/627/2022	DESIGN, SUPPLY AND INSTALLATION OF CCTV SYSTEM IN BMT BUILDING	OMR.25	23/08/2022	24/08/2022	19/09/2022
TAD/T/628 /2022	SUPPLY AND INSTALLATION OF 3C X 240SQMM 11KV COPPER CABLE	OMR.30	23/08/2022	24/08/2022	19/09/2022
HKL/T/629 /2022	LAUNDRY SERVICE For SQU & SQUH	OMR.30	23/08/2022	24/08/2022	19/09/2022

Tender Conditions:

- The companies who are registered in Tender Board shall collect the documents during office hours from 8.00 am to 1.00 pm from the Procurement Department/ Sultan Qaboos University Hospital.
- The site visit shall be at 09.00 am in the Technical Affaires Department building / Sultan Qaboos University Hospital.
- The Tenderers shall submit with the form of tender a certified cheque or tender bond from a locally registered bank in the sum of (1%) of the tender value and valid for 90 days from the date of tender submission and addressed to the chairman of tender committee, Sultan Qaboos University.
- The tender quotations shall be sealed and addressed to Procurement Director; Sultan Qaboos University Hospital. The tender number and the name of the tender shall be mentioned on the tender document. It is not accepted to indicate or mention the name of the company or its logo on the envelop.
- The quotations are subject to the Tender General Terms & Conditions for the Sultan Qaboos University Hospital.
- Sultan Qaboos University Hospital is not bound to accept the lowest bid or any other bid.

Procurement Directorate
Sultan Qaboos University Hospital
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Rights bodies condemn Sri Lanka’s crackdown on peaceful protesters

The violent crackdown includes arrests, intimidation and the brutal attack on the protest camp in Colombo

COLOMBO: As many as 13 organizations have condemned the Sri Lankan authorities’ violent crackdown and increasing reprisals against peaceful protesters in the island country.

The violent crackdown includes arrests, intimidation and the brutal attack on the protest camp in Colombo on July 22, 2022, News Wire reported citing a statement released by the organizations.

“The Sri Lankan authorities must ensure that security forces do not use excessive force and will respect the rights of peaceful protesters at the ‘Gotagogama’ site, which authorities have ordered to be vacated by 5:00 pm on 5 August 2022,” the statement added.

On July 18, then-acting President, Ranil Wickremesinghe declared a state of emergency, granting sweeping powers of arrest and detention to the police and armed forces.

After receiving the supreme power, the peaceful protesters and protest leaders became criminals, freedom of expression was arbitrarily restricted to forbid legitimate political expression, and the



prosecution authorities are bringing excessive and disproportionate criminal charges for acts of civil disobedience in the midst of an unprecedented economic crisis.

The statement noted that the current economic crisis derives from and aggravates widespread violations of economic, social and cultural rights.

“The Sri Lankan authorities should immediately stop reprisals against anti-government protesters and guarantee people’s right to free and peaceful expression of their grievances safely and without fear of arrest or violence.”

It further reads that Sri Lanka’s allies have repeatedly said to the government to respect human rights, but their message was unheard. Sri Lanka’s international

partners should now make it absolutely clear that the government needs to uphold its human rights obligations.

“Our organizations have documented attacks against protesters, media outlets, human rights defenders, and religious and civil society organizations following the swearing-in of the new president and cabinet on 21 and 22 July, respectively. Below are details of such incidents,” it added.

The organisation urged the Sri Lankan government to end the clampdown on dissent, and ensure that people can exercise their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly safely, without fear of reprisals;

The organisations also asked the Sri Lankan government to conduct

a prompt, independent and impartial inquiry into the crackdown that took place on July 22, including allegations of torture and other ill-treatment, with the support of international observers, with a view to establishing responsibility for violations of human rights and bringing those responsible to justice.

“Drop all charges for participation in an ‘unlawful assembly’ brought against peaceful protesters solely for the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, and release unconditionally those facing such charges,” the statement added.

It further said that the government had to ensure that journalists, lawyers and human rights defenders have safe access to protest sites, and allow them to carry out their professional duties without fear of reprisals.

“Stop all labelling peaceful protesters as criminals or terrorists” and asked to “lift all travel bans and all other conditions imposed on peaceful protesters solely because of their role in organizing or participating in the protests.”

The statement has been signed by Amnesty International, Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA), CIVICUS, FIDH-International Federation for Human Rights, Franciscans International, Front Line Defenders, Human Rights Watch, International Commission of Jurists, International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR), International Service for Human Rights, Sri Lanka Campaign, The International Working Group on Sri Lanka and World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) .ANI



Blinken holds talks with Azerbaijan President, Armenia PM for de-escalation

WASHINGTON: US State Secretary Antony Blinken on Friday spoke with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and called for a de-escalation in and around Nagorno-Karabakh.

“Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken spoke with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. Secretary Blinken assured Prime Minister Pashinyan that the United States is watching the situation in and around Nagorno-Karabakh closely,” a State Department press release said.

Blinken urged direct dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan to resolve issues related to, or resulting from, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Blinken also spoke with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev. Secretary Blinken called for de-escalation and urged direct dialogue between Azerbaijan and Armenia to resolve issues.

According to the Russian Defence Ministry, the Azerbaijani Armed Forces recently breached the ceasefire in the zone of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, in the area of the height of Sarybaba.

Nagorno-Karabakh broke away from Azerbaijan with Armenian support after a bloody post-Soviet conflict in the early 1990s. In 2020, Azerbaijan and Armenia fought a war over the region and Baku successfully won back part of the territory controlled by the separatists.

Under the terms of a subsequent ceasefire, Russian peacekeepers were deployed to protect the remainder of the separatist-held territory. Both sides accuse each other of breaches, and in recent days violence has flared.

“The situation in the zone of responsibility of the contingent is aggravated. In the area of the height of Sarybaba, the ceasefire regime was breached by the armed forces of Azerbaijan,” the Russian Defence Ministry said.

“The command of the Russian peacekeeping contingent, together with representatives of the Azerbaijani and Armenian sides, is taking measures to stabilize the situation,” it added.

The Azerbaijani military captured several heights in Nagorno-Karabakh on Wednesday, the Defence Ministry’s press office told Sputnik. ANI

FLASH FLOODS

Flash floods in California’s Death Valley leave 1,000 people stranded

CALIFORNIA: Near-record rainfall caused flash flooding in California’s Death Valley National Park stranding almost 1,000 people, officials said.

The park was temporarily closed after 1.46 inches (3.7 centimetres) of rain fell in the park’s Furnace Creek area. The record torrential rain almost tied the previous daily record of 1.47 inches.

“Unprecedented amounts of rainfall caused substantial flooding,” the National Park Service said in a statement, adding that “there are approximately 500 visitors and 500 staff currently unable to exit the park.”

While no injuries were reported, about 60 cars belonging to park visitors and staff were buried in several feet of debris at the Inn at Death Valley, an historic luxury hotel. US photographer John Sirlin, who witnessed the flooding, said many dirt side roads were impassable and “washed out completely.”

The rain also flooded offices and hotels, and tore up sections of paved roads. It also knocked a water treatment system out of service that serves the park area.

Sirlin told the AP news agency that “entire trees and boulders



were washing down.”

“The noise from some of the rocks coming down the mountain was just incredible,” he said.

Death Valley holds record for hottest place on Earth

The park in the northern Mojave Desert, California, is one of the driest places in North America.

The average annual rainfall in the region is less than 2 inches.

A flash flood warning for the park and surrounding area expired at 12:45 p.m. Friday but a flood advisory remained in effect into the evening, the National Weather Service said.

Furnace Creek holds the record for the highest temperature ever recorded on Earth, 134 degrees Fahrenheit (56.7 degrees Celsius).aw

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Arsenal kick off season with 2-0 win over Crystal Palace

The scorecard might show the game as a comfortable 2-0 win for Arsenal but it wasn't that easy

LONDON: Arsenal won the first premier league match of 2022-23 season 2-0 over Crystal Palace at the Selhurst Park Stadium on Friday.

Gabriel Martinelli's header and an own goal from Palace's centre-back Marc Guehi won Arsenal the first three points of their campaign. After an excellent pre-season campaign, the North-London side delivered in the first game of the season too. The scorecard might show the game as a comfortable 2-0 win for Arsenal but it wasn't that easy. The game was hard fought by Patrice Vieira's side but they failed



to convert their chances. Both the teams had two shots on the target but Arsenal was able to make their chances count.

The first major chance came from Arsenal within three minutes from a loose pass from Wilfried Zaha as Palace side lost the ball in

their own half. Gabriel Jesus drove the ball forward shielding from the first player and then beating two players with staggering dribbling skills. Leading the ball into the 18-yard box, the striker attempted a shot but it was blocked by Guehi. The deflected shot came straight

into the path of Martinelli but his shot rolled wide.

Another sloppy loss of possession in their own half resulted in a chance for Arsenal. Martinelli passed the ball to the left side to new Arsenal left-back Zinchenko who cut in and tried a shot but it

was punched away by Palace Goalkeeper, Vicente Guaita.

The goal finally came through for Arsenal in the 20th minute from a cross. Saka's cross went straight to Zinchenko who was completely unmarked. The left-back headed the ball in front of the goal for their teammates. The ball was too high for the first two players but came straight to the head of Martinelli who headed it in goal for Arsenal.

The first chance came through for Crystal Palace in the 42nd minute as a freekick from Eze set-up as Anderson created a chance for Edouard who tried a header but Ramsdale was able to block the effort.

Sloppy defending from Arsenal resulted in a chance for Edouard but the striker was surrounded by too many players and his shot got deflected in the extra time of the first half. The score stood 1-0 for Arsenal at the end of the first half.

The second half started with an amazing chance for Crystal Palace as Zaha put a through ball for Eze on the left flank who was on a run. Eze turned in and tried a shot but it

was yet again saved by Ramsdale.

Palace lost hold of the ball yet again releasing Jesus for a chance on the right flank. The striker put the ball in for Odegaard who attempted a pass in front of the goal but it was blocked. The deflected ball came through to Jesus and he attempted a shot that went wide.

Arsenal made the score 2-0 in the 85th minute. The visitors worked the ball in Palace's half quickly and caught the defence lacking. Eddie Nketiah who was just substituted in the game for Jesus two minutes ago passed the ball wide to Saka who made a run on the right flank. Saka turned in and attempted and attempted a short cross from within the penalty box. An attempt from Guehi was made to clear the ball outside but it didn't quite go through as he would've wanted and resulted in an own goal.

The hosts are bound to be disappointed with the result as they dominated the ball in possession and made a couple of chances as well but could not convert them into goals.

ISLAMIC SOLIDARITY GAMES

Oman all set for Islamic Solidarity Games

KONYA: Oman's delegation arrived on Saturday in Konya to take part at the Islamic Solidarity Games in its fifth edition in Turkey which will be held from August 9 to 18.

Saif bin Sebaa Al Rushidi, Abdullah bin Mohammad Ba Makhalaf are the Board of Directors members at Oman Olympic Committee, while Hisham bin Salem Al Adwani is the delegation chief, and Ishaq bin Abdullah Al Balushi is the assistant to delegation chief.

Oman National teams will par-

ticipate in the Islamic Solidarity Games with a delegation of 30 members out of 5,000 athletes representing 55 Islamic countries. Omani team will compete in five sports, including athletics, cycling, swimming, weightlifting and shooting.

Oman athletes aim to achieve top participation in this event and claim maximum number of medals. The Islamic Solidarity Games represents a sports and youth meet that strengthens the relation between the Islamic countries.

Athletics

Oman national athletics team will participate from August 11 to 14.

The team comprises Team Manager Khawla bint Rashid Al Rawahi, Mohammed bin Talib Al Balushi as the team administrator, national coach Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Hoti, national coach Saeed bin Hamad Al Harthi, coach Imad Mohammed Shawqi Siraj and a physiotherapist Krasimir Petrov.

The athletes squad feature Oman's top runner Barakat bin

Mubarak Al Harthy, Ali bin Anwar Al Balushi, Mohammed bin Hamdan Al Sulaimani, Mohammed bin Obaid Al Saadi, Ammar bin Yasir Al Seifi, Hussein bin Mohsen Al Farsi, Salem bin Saleh Al Yarubi, Salem bin Abdullah Al Rawahi, Fatek bin Abdul Ghafour Beit Jaaboub, among others.

Oman national weightlifting team will compete during 11 to 15 August, where the team consists of coach Mazen Hamid Al Badri and players Amer bin Salem Al Khanjiri and Elias bin Tamim Al Busaidi.

COMMONWEALTH GAMES

India's Deepak Punia, Sakshi Malik clinch gold in wrestling

BIRMINGHAM: Indian grappler Deepak Punia won the gold medal in the Men's Freestyle 86kg category in the ongoing Commonwealth Games 2022. He defeated Pakistan's Muhammad Inam at the Coventry Arena Wrestling Mat B on Friday.

Punia won the gold medal match 3-0. Punia bagged India's third wrestling gold at the Commonwealth Games 2022. The Indian grappler took 2-0 lead in the first period and all the pressure was on the Punia's opponent heading into

the last three minutes.

Indian wrestler Sakshi Malik clinched country's third medal in wrestling of the day at the ongoing Commonwealth Games 2022 in Birmingham by defeating Ana Paula Godinez Gonzalez in the finals of women's freestyle 62 kg category on Friday. The Canadian Gonzalez was dominating the match initially as she gained a 0-4 lead in the first period. Then in the second period, Malik scripted an entire comeback to equal the scores 4-4 and won the match.

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NEW GM AT GRAND HYATT

Joerg Wickihalder has been appointed General Manager of Grand Hyatt Muscat and will be overseeing the operations of the property's 278 rooms and 8 outlets. Wickihalder has enjoyed more than 32 years of working in luxury hospitality across Europe, the Middle East, Africa and the Caribbean.

MARKE

BUSINESS & FINANCE



PHISHING ATTACKS SURGE

The attacks related to data loss threats (phishing and scam/social engineering) increased significantly in Q2 2022 at 192 per cent in comparison with the previous quarter in Oman, Kaspersky analysis has revealed. The company's security solutions have detected 865,691 phishing attacks in Oman in Q2.

ahlibank's net profit up 18.6% to OMR15.8mn in first half of 2022

ahlibank recorded 7.0 per cent growth in total assets — amounting to OMR3,046.3 million as of 30 June 2022, compared to the same period last year

Times News Service

MUSCAT: ahlbank has augmented its successful first quarter financial performance with an impressive net profit of OMR15.8 million in the half year, recording an increase of 18.6 per cent over the same period in 2021.

While the operating environment is gradually returning to pre-pandemic levels, Oman's banking industry also reported positive growth. ahlbank also substantiated its strong growth trajectory with stable key performance indicators. It recorded 7.0 per cent



“

While our financial performance for the first half of 2022 reflects our strong reliance on innovative products and services to stay on par with the global banking industry, our overall growth during the current year exemplifies our commitment to sustainable business practices

Said Abdullah Al Hatmi
CEO, ahlbank

growth in total assets - amounting to OMR3,046.3 million as of 30 June 2022, compared to the same period last year.

Its operating income rose by 13.3 per cent to reach OMR44.72 million, and operating expenses increased by 17.3 per cent to reach OMR19.32 million. While its customer deposits increased by 12.4 per cent to reach OMR2,212.2 million, its net loans, advances, and financing witnessed a 9.1

per cent growth, amounting to OMR2,494.2 million for the period ending June 2022, over the corresponding period in 2021.

Attributing the bank's growth to its steady focus on top-quality assets and effectively managed liquidity, Said Abdullah Al Hatmi, CEO, ahlbank, said, “Our strength lies in our core competencies. We have, time and again, delivered what we promised and have maintained a consistent customer-cent-

tric approach to business. We are expecting to gain further traction following the mitigation of risks associated with the pandemic and the gradual recovery of local economic activity. In the coming days, our strategic perspective will help us strengthen our market position and validate our credentials to be the leading bank in the Sultanate.”

He added, “While our financial performance for the first half of 2022 reflects our strong reli-

ance on innovative products and services to stay on par with the global banking industry, our overall growth during the current year exemplifies our commitment to sustainable business practices.

“We will leverage the gradual easing of pressure on the operating environment to accentuate our vision of becoming a vibrant and innovative centre of banking for customers and for the community in which we operate, while we will continue to monitor the elevated inflation levels and a slowdown in various global economies, on account of global events. We believe innovation is the key to progress and we will continue investing our resources to exceed our customers’ expectations with state-of-the-art products and services.”

2022 saw ahlbank launch a suite of products to meet the changing needs and demands of customers from diverse segments. It unveiled several schemes and offers, including referral schemes, and personal and home loans at interest rates as low as 4.50 per cent. ahlbank has also introduced a first-of-its-kind “Tamkeen” Crowd Funding initiative to support Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and bolster the national economy. Its unwavering focus, however, has been on reinforcing its digital capabilities to stay on

par with global banking trends. Its commitment to developing sustainable business practices has and will continue to ensure that its growth strategy is in harmony with the environment, and is in tune with its dedicated community development initiatives that are aimed at aiding Oman's Vision 2040 objectives.

ahlibank has made a name for itself with a number of initiatives related to education and training, including Himam Programme for new graduates and its continued participation in the government program, Etimad.

The bank also marked the holy month of Ramadan with a number of community welfare initiatives. Ramadan supplies and Eid clothing were distributed to selected families, in collaboration with local charity organisations and with the involvement of the members of ‘ahli cares’ volunteering team. The team undertook a visit to the Oncology Ward of Royal Hospital.

“Whether it is developing our national workforce with skills and knowledge that are conducive to the current employment market, or fostering our client's growth and prosperity through capital-raising services, we are tuned to the needs of our shareholders, our human capital, and our valued customers,” Al Hatmi noted.

DUBAI MERCANTILE EXCHANGE

Over 620 million barrels of Oman crude oil traded in first half of 2022

MUSCAT: More than 620 million barrels of Omani crude oil were traded in the first half of this year, Oman News Agency quoting the Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME), said on Saturday.

“This reflects the growing interest in Omani crude oil by regional oil producers and oil importers in Asia and the world,” the DME statement said.

The mercantile exchange said that global markets went through sharp volatility in oil prices and demand for crude oil due to the Corona pandemic, at the beginning of 2020, and then the geopolitical turmoil in more than one region around the world in 2021.

The oil markets started to return to an upward trend at the beginning of 2022 as a result of the military operations in Ukraine as well as the high demand for oil and its products, and demand picking up with the easing of precautionary measures of the pandemic by many countries.

In the first half of this year, DME witnessed an increase in the trading volumes of the Oman crude oil contract for the delivery month by 18 per cent, reaching 361 million barrels, compared to 296 million barrels for the same period in 2021. The exchange delivered 90



million barrels in the first half of 2022, and the average monthly delivery was 15 million barrels, an increase of 23 per cent over the first half of 2021.

Raed bin Khalifa Al Salami, Director General of the DME, said that Oman's crude oil prices wit-

nessed a remarkable rise, reaching 51.48 per cent between January 2021 and June 2022, with the continued recovery of markets and the increase in demand in Asia on the one hand, and global tensions and political crises on the other.

Raed Al Salami added to the

Oman News Agency that the performance of the Oman oil future contract reaffirms the importance of this indicator in the oil markets in the Middle East and Asia, as it plays a pivotal role in discovering oil prices and pricing more than 5 million barrels of oil per day. - ONA

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



Forbes Middle East publishes list of top GCC exchange houses going digital

Times News Service

MUSCAT: In a major acknowledgement of the GCC region's move towards digitisation of financial services, Forbes Middle East unveiled its list of “Top 5 GCC Exchange Houses Going Digital”.

The list shines the spotlight on remittance companies in the GCC region that have been driving the digitisation of their services, in line with the efforts of their respective nations.

UAE-based Lulu Exchange and Al Ansari Exchange, Kuwait-based Al Mulla Exchange, Qatar-

based Alfardan Exchange, and Oman-based Purshottam Kanji Exchange are the top five companies on this list.

These firms are well-established institutions, having provided high-quality services to both retail consumers and businesses over several years. They have been in news recently for their aggressive digital push and digital infrastructure investments. Between them, these companies serve millions of customers in GCC and have invested heavily in building state-of-the-art digital infrastructure to drive their next stage of growth.

IATA DATA

Middle Eastern airlines' traffic soars 246.5% in June

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Middle Eastern airlines' traffic rose 246.5 per cent in June compared to June 2021, according to the International Air Transport Association (IATA) passenger data for June 2022.

“June capacity rose 102.4 per cent versus the year-ago period, and load factor climbed 32.4 percentage points to 78.0 per cent,” the IATA said in its report.

The total traffic in June 2022 (measured in revenue passenger kilometres or RPKs) was up 76.2 per cent compared to June 2021, primarily propelled by the ongoing strong recovery in international traffic. Globally, traffic is now at 70.8 per cent of pre-crisis levels.

Domestic traffic for June 2022 was up 5.2 per cent compared to the year-ago period. Strong improvements in most markets,

combined with the easing of some Omicron-related lockdown restrictions in the Chinese domestic market, contributed to the result. Total June 2022 domestic traffic was at 81.4 per cent of the June 2019 level.

International traffic rose 229.5 per cent versus June 2021. The lifting of travel restrictions in most parts of Asia-Pacific is contributing to the recovery. June 2022 international RPKs reached 65.0 per cent of June 2019 levels.

“Demand for air travel remains strong. After two years of lockdowns and border restrictions people are taking advantage of the freedom to travel wherever they can,” said Willie Walsh, IATA's Director General.

International passenger markets

Asia-Pacific airlines had a 492.0



per cent rise in June traffic compared to June 2021. Capacity rose 138.9 per cent and the load factor was up 45.8 percentage points to 76.7 per cent. The region is now relatively open to foreign visitors and tourism which is helping foster the recovery.

European carriers' June traffic

rose 234.4 per cent versus June 2021. Capacity rose 134.5 per cent, and load factor climbed 25.8 percentage points to 86.3 per cent. International traffic within Europe is above pre-pandemic levels in seasonally adjusted terms.

North American carriers experienced a 168.9 per cent traffic rise

in June versus the 2021 period. Capacity rose 95.0 per cent, and load factor climbed 24.1 percentage points to 87.7 per cent, which was the highest among the regions.

Latin American airlines' June traffic rose 136.6 per cent compared to the same month in 2021. June capacity rose 107.4 per cent and load factor increased 10.3 percentage points to 83.3 per cent. After leading the regions in load factor for 20 consecutive months, Latin America slipped back to third place in June.

African airlines had a 103.6 per cent rise in June RPKs versus a year ago. June 2022 capacity was up 61.9 per cent and load factor climbed 15.2 percentage points to 74.2 per cent, the lowest among regions. International traffic between Africa and neighbouring regions is close to pre-pandemic levels.

The bottom line

“With the Northern Hemisphere summer travel season now fully underway, predictions that the lifting of travel restrictions would unleash a torrent of pent-up travel demand are being borne out. At the same time, meeting that demand has proved challenging and likely will continue to be so. All the more reason to continue to show flexibility to the slot use rules. The European Commission's intent to return to the longstanding 80-20 requirement is premature. Just look at the issues that airlines and their passengers at some hub airports are being confronted with. These airports are unable to support their declared capacity even with the current 64 per cent slot threshold and have extended recent passenger caps until the end of October. Flexibility is still essential in support of a successful recovery,” said Walsh.



MARKET



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Phishing attacks surge 192% in second quarter

The Kaspersky's security solutions have detected 865,691 phishing attacks in Oman in Q2

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The attacks related to data loss threats (phishing and scam/social engineering) increased significantly in Q2 2022 at 192 per cent in comparison with the previous quarter in Oman, Kaspersky analysis has revealed.

The company's security solutions have detected 865,691 phishing attacks in Oman in Q2.

Social engineering which is sometimes called "human hacking" scams is used in many ways, and for different purposes, to lure unwary users to the site and trick them into entering personal information. The latter often includes financial credentials such as bank account passwords or payment card details, or login details for social media accounts. In the wrong hands, this opens doors to various malicious operations, such as money being stolen or corporate networks being compromised.

Phishing is a strong attack method because it is done on a large scale. By sending massive waves of emails under the name of legitimate institutions or promoting fake pages, malicious users increase their chances of success



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Planning a vacation is not easy. People can spend weeks, even months, looking for the perfect place to stay and the tickets to get them there. Fraudsters use this to lure users that have grown tired of searching for great deals

Mikhail Sytnik
Security expert at Kaspersky

in their hunt for innocent people's credentials. Phishers deploy a variety of tricks to bypass e-mail blocking and lure as many users as possible to their fraudulent sites. A common technique is HTML attachments with partially or fully obfuscated code. HTML files allow attackers to use scripts, obfuscate malicious content to make it harder to detect and send phishing pages as attachments instead of links.

In particular, while vacation season is high, scammers are trying to lure travellers who are looking for interesting places to go, cheap places to stay and reasonably priced flights.

Kaspersky researchers have observed intensified scamming activities, with numerous phishing pages distributed under the guise of airline and booking services. The number of attempts to open

phishing pages related to booking and airline services in the first half of 2022 was 4,311 in the META region.

"Planning a vacation is not easy. People can spend weeks, even months, looking for the perfect place to stay and the tickets to get them there. Fraudsters use this to lure users that have grown tired of searching for great deals.

"After two years of flight restrictions imposed by the pandemic, travelling is back. But so are travel scams - with intensified scamming activity targeting users through fake booking and rental services. Such attacks are preventable, which is why we urge users to be sceptical about overly generous offers. If an offer seems too good to be true, it probably is," comments Mikhail Sytnik, a security expert at Kaspersky.

To keep yourself protected, Kaspersky experts recommend:

Carefully look at the address bar before entering any sensitive information, such as your login details and password. If something is wrong with the URL (i.e. spelling, it doesn't look like the original or it uses some special symbols instead of letters) don't enter anything on the site. If in doubt, check the certificate of the site by clicking on the lock icon to the left of the URL.

Not clicking on links that come from unknown sources (either through e-mails, messaging apps or social networks).

Visiting the business' official website if you see a giveaway offered in e-mail or on social media by a travel company or an airline to confirm the giveaway exists. You should also carefully check the links the giveaway ad leads you to.

APPOINTMENT



Joerg Wickihalder named general manager of Grand Hyatt Muscat

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Joerg Wickihalder has been appointed General Manager of Grand Hyatt Muscat and will be overseeing the operations of the property's 278 rooms and 8 outlets.

A highly experienced hotelier across international markets, Wickihalder has enjoyed more than 32 years of working in luxury hospitality across Europe, the Middle East, Africa and the Caribbean.

Wickihalder studied in the prestigious Hospitality Management School Lucerne, Switzerland and over the years has accumulated in-depth knowledge in all fields of the hospitality industry. He began his career as a Chef in his hometown in Switzerland, where he worked in several five-star hotels gaining experience across hospitality roles, from kitchen to front desk, to housekeeping and administration. Wickihalder moved to Baur au Lac, five-star luxury property for five years, where he had previously completed his internship as a waiter.

He continued his career journey at the hotel, promoted from head waiter to F&B Director, to Executive Assistant Manager.

Wickihalder moved overseas in 2006 as General Manager of II Villaggio Restaurants & Lounges in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. In 2010, Wickihalder joined the Movenpick flagship hotel at the Dead Sea in Jordan as F&B Manager, and in 2012 he moved to the Magdalena Grand Beach & Golf Resort in Trinidad & Tobago, W.I as Hotel Manager.

His next promotion took him to Cairo, Egypt as Cluster Director of Food and Beverage at Fairmont Heliopolis & Towers, where he was responsible for 24 dining

venues. He later stepped into the role of Acting General Manager for the property's brand transition to Hilton.

In September 2018, Wickihalder joined the Hyatt family as Director of Operations to open the Hyatt Regency Algiers Airport, where he was promoted to Hotel and Acting General Manager after three years. This August, he continues his exciting career journey with Hyatt as the newly appointed General Manager of the five-star hotel, Grand Hyatt Muscat, in Oman.

Throughout his hospitality career, Wickihalder has been passionate about learning and discovering new cultures as well as empowering people to unleash their untapped potential and thus find their true calling. Being his first visit to Oman, he is eager to dive into the rich history and diverse landscapes of Oman and looks forward to further strengthening the legacy of the Grand Hyatt Muscat as a landmark destination within the majestic destination and the jewel of Arabia - the Sultanate of Oman. Joerg admires the warm hospitality of the Omani people as well as the country's stance on pursuing neutrality, ensuring stability and promoting peace.

Joerg Wickihalder is forever grateful to two of his mentors, who have fostered and coached his path in the world of hospitality - Michel Rey, former Managing Director at the Baur au Lac Hotel in Zurich, Switzerland and Sami Zoghbi, former Vice President and Managing Director at Fairmont Heliopolis & Towers in Cairo, Egypt.

In his spare time, Wickihalder enjoys reading about history and culture, cooking, swimming and entertaining family and friends.

RBI DATA

India's forex reserves rise by \$2.31 billion after 4 straight weekly fall

MUMBAI: India's foreign exchange (forex) reserves rose by \$2.315 billion to \$573.875 billion for the week ended July 29 on the back of robust capital inflows in the equities markets and the strengthening of the rupee from the record low, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) data showed.

The country's forex reserves have risen for the first time in the last five weeks under review. The forex reserves had declined by around \$17 billion in the previous

four weeks. For the week ended July 22, the forex reserves had dropped by \$1.152 billion.

After four straight weeks of decline, the country's forex reserves have registered significant gains. There was a sharp jump in the foreign currency assets and gold reserves.

According to the RBI's weekly statistical supplement, India's foreign currency assets, which are the biggest component of the forex reserves, rose by \$1.121 billion to

\$511.257 billion during the week ended July 29.

The foreign currency assets had declined by \$1.426 billion in the previous week.

Expressed in US dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-dollar currencies like the Euro, UK's Pound Sterling and Japanese Yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.

There was a sharp increase in gold reserves. The value of gold

reserves rose by \$1.140 billion to \$39.642 billion during the week ended July 29.

The value of India's Special Drawing Rights with the International Monetary Fund rose by \$22 million to \$17.985 billion during the week under review, the RBI data showed. India's reserve position in the International Monetary Fund rose by \$31 million to \$4.991 billion during the week ended July 29, as per the RBI Weekly Statistical Supplement. **-ANI**

EDITORIAL

Opec can help stabilise world economy

ABU DHABI: Healthy global oil markets rely on stability, which has been hard to find recently. Intricately linked to all parts of the world economy, they are unsettled today for reasons as diverse as COVID-19 and the supply chain crisis, to name only a few, a local daily commented.

"Perhaps most important of all, the war in Ukraine has sent shock waves that will be felt for quite some time. Brent rose to a staggering level of almost \$140 per barrel following its start," The National wrote in its editorial.

"The commodity will be hard to tame in the short to medium term, although unexpected crashes have been known to happen when prices are this high. Even that will have its downsides, however. Countries with economies reliant on oil would quickly have to re-calibrate government spending, and sudden price fluctuations could hurt the global economy.

"Therefore, lurches in either direction would be shocks to the global economy at a time when it is already at breaking point. But there are still actions that can make a noticeable difference for the better and bring about some calm. The online meeting of Opec members on Wednesday is a good example," the paper added.

At the session, the super group of oil producers agreed to increase September's output by 100,000 barrels a day. "Any increase is a step in the right direction, but some in the international community will have hoped for much

more," the Abu Dhabi-based newspaper said.

Key reason

"In a statement, the organisation laid out why such requests were not possible, a key reason being "the severely limited availability of excess capacity, which necessitates utilising it with great caution in response to severe supply disruptions."

There are other reasons, too, the English daily noted. "Pumping more oil is not a straightforward process, and quickly bringing about a surge in production does not happen at the simple flick of a switch."

Opec communique

Also on Wednesday, an Opec communique described its concern about the impact of long-term under-funding in the industry. It said, "Insufficient investment into the upstream sector will impact the availability of adequate supply in a timely manner to meet growing demand beyond 2023."

The paper added, "Members also have a responsibility to protect their economic well-being amid so much uncertainty. With the world on the brink of a recession, too much oil on the market could devalue prices further if and when a downturn was to happen; energy demand typically dries up during a recession.

"This caution is not just to protect the interests of producers. Oil is not isolated in the economy, and mismanaging it could have

an effect on other sectors. With all parts of the energy industry vulnerable, high inflation across the board - the UK has raised interest rates by the biggest level since 1995, for example - and yet more geopolitical instability on the horizon, the latest concern being Taiwan, responsible management of oil is key. Opec understands this."

Another important part of the meeting was introducing the organisation's new head, Kuwaiti oil executive Haitham Al Ghais, who took over on Monday. He will be in the post for three years. He takes over from Mohammad Barkindo, who died last month, leaving the Opec community bereft, after two consecutive terms of dedicated service.

Mediator

Al Ghais now becomes an important mediator on the global stage. In a statement on the day he took up the job, he reminded the world, "Opec has been at the forefront of promoting dialogue, cooperation and partnerships to achieve its mission I look forward to working with all our member countries and our many partners around the world to ensure a sustainable and inclusive energy future which leaves no one behind."

The paper concluded, "It sums up the nuanced path the organisation must tread on the road ahead. Founded with cooperation and responsibility as its guiding principles, Opec is more than capable of doing so." **-WAM**

EV MAKER

Tesla sets August 25 as trading day for three-for-one split shares

AUSTIN: Tesla said on Friday trading in its three-for-one split shares will start on August 25, after the electric vehicle maker's shareholders approved the proposal during its annual meeting.

Shareholders of the EV maker voted for board recommendations on most issues at the company's annual meeting on Thursday, including re-electing directors, approving a stock split, while rejecting proposals focused on environment and governance, Reuters reports.

Chief Executive Elon Musk owns 15.6 per cent of Tesla, according to Refinitiv data, after selling millions of shares last year. Each stockholder of record on August 17 will get a dividend of two additional shares for each share held, to be distributed after close of trading on August 24, the company said.

The new share split comes two years after a five-for-one split helped bring down the price of the high-flying stock within the reach of ordinary investors. While a split does not affect a company's fundamentals, it could buoy the share price by making it easier for a wider range of investors to own the stock.

Tesla shares, which debuted at \$17 apiece in 2010, rose to more than \$1,200 late year after the 2020 stock split. **-BNA**

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DIETS HIGH IN CALCIUM, POTASSIUM MAY PREVENT RECURRENT SYMPTOMATIC KIDNEY STONES

30%

The likelihood of developing another kidney stone within five years increases by 30 per cent if you’ve already had one.

Aside from being extremely painful, kidney stones are also linked to cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis, and chronic kidney disease. The likelihood of developing another kidney stone within five years increases by 30 per cent if you’ve already had one.

The findings of the study were published in Mayo Clinic Proceedings.

Changes in diet are often prescribed to prevent recurrent symptomatic kidney stones. However, little research is available regarding dietary changes for those who have one incident of kidney stone formation versus those who have recurrent incidents.

Mayo Clinic researchers designed a prospective study to investigate the impact of dietary changes. Their findings show that enriching diets with foods high in calcium and potassium may prevent recurrent symptomatic kidney stones.

Dietary factors were based on a questionnaire administered to 411 patients who had experienced first-time symptomatic kidney stones and a control group of 384 people -- all of whom were seen at Mayo Clinic in Rochester and Mayo Clinic in Florida between 2009 and 2018. The study show that lower dietary calcium and potassium, as well as lower intake of fluids,

caffeine and phytate, are associated with higher odds of experiencing a first-time symptomatic kidney stone.

Of the patients who had first-time stone formation, 73 experienced recurrent stones within a median of 4.1 years of follow-up. Further analysis found that lower levels of dietary calcium and potassium predicted recurrence.

“These dietary findings may have particular importance because recommendations for preventing kidney stones have been based primarily on dietary factors associated with first-time rather than recur-

rent stone formation,” says Andrew Rule, M.D., a Mayo Clinic nephrologist and senior author of the study. “Patients may not be likely to adjust their diet to prevent an incidence of kidney stones, but they are more likely to do so if it can help prevent a recurrence.”

Fluid intake of less than 3,400 millilitres per day, or about nine 12-ounce glasses, is associated with first-time stone formation, along with caffeine intake and phytate, the study finds. Daily

fluid intake includes intake from foods such as fruits and vegetables. Low fluid and caffeine intake can result in low urine volume and increased urine concentration, contributing to stone formation. Phytate is an antioxidant compound found in whole grains, nuts and other foods that can lead to increased calcium absorption and urinary calcium excretion.

“Changing your diet to prevent kidney stones can be very difficult,” says Dr. Rule. “Thus, knowing the dietary factors that are most important for preventing kidney stone recurrence can help patients and provid-

ers know what to prioritise.” Low dietary calcium and potassium was a more important predictor than fluid intake of recurrent kidney stone formation, says Api Chewcharat, M.D., the article’s first author and a post-doctoral research fellow at Mayo Clinic at the time of the study. “This is not to say high fluid intake is not important. We just did not find benefits of increasing fluid intake among those patients with a history of kidney stone formation.”

The study concludes that diets with daily intake of 1,200 milligrams of calcium may help prevent first-time and recurrent kidney stones. That daily intake is in line with the Department of Agriculture’s daily recommended nutrition.

While higher potassium intake also is recommended, the USDA does not make a recommendation for daily potassium intake. The study also doesn’t recommend an intake level.

Dr. Chewcharat says the takeaway is that patients should add more fruits and vegetables that are high in calcium and potassium to their diets. Fruits that are high in potassium include bananas, oranges, grapefruits, cantaloupes, honeydew melons and apricots. Vegetables include potatoes, mushrooms, peas, cucumbers and zucchini. —ANI

1

Changes in diet are often prescribed to prevent recurrent symptomatic kidney stones. However, little research is available regarding dietary changes for those who have one incident of kidney stone formation versus those who have recurrent incidents.

2

Dietary factors were based on a questionnaire administered to 411 patients who had experienced first-time symptomatic kidney stones and a control group of 384 people — all of whom were seen at Mayo Clinic in Rochester and Mayo Clinic in Florida between 2009 and 2018

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SPORTS



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SPORTS CARAVAN ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN KICKS OFF IN WILAYAT OF IBRI

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The activities and events of the sports caravan were launched in the town of Al Bana in the Wilayat of Ibri in Al Dhahirah Governorate. The events have been organised by the Al Bana Sports, Cultural and Social Team, in cooperation with the Department of Culture, Sports and Youth in the governorate.

The sports caravan's activities include a number of actions, such as: a bicycle race for children and young people aged 15 years and under for a distance of 5 km, in addition to a mountain walk of 7 km for youth aged 15 years and older, the relay race, the shot put competition and basketball matches.

The events also include cultural programmes such as the storytelling session for children, in which some talents and literary paragraphs are presented, such as telling stories in an interesting artistic style, cultural competitions dedicated to various groups and popular games.

It also organised a workshop

The events was organised by the Al Bana Sports, Cultural and Social Team and the Department of Culture, Sports and Youth in the governorate

on "first aid" aimed at raising the awareness among participants on how to deal with emergency situations in various environments, and another workshop for women on soap making.

Qasim bin Muhammad Al Hosani, head of the Al Bana Sports, Cultural and Social Team, said: "We greatly appreciate the keenness of the Department of Culture, Sports and Youth in Al Dhahirah Governorate, which strives diligently to activate sports activities in the state, pay attention to the youth, and develop their skills, and creativity in various fields."





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FEATURE



BEEES

have a secret survival
weapon that might
surprise you

Hornets can be vicious. Some like nothing more than smashing their way into a beehive, decapitating its inhabitants and leaving the colony in ruins. But the hornet that dares attack a Japanese honeybee colony might get more than it bargained for. As the hornet hones in, a defensive army swarms the attacker. Hundreds of bees buzz so furiously, the temperature at the heart of their dense mass rises to 46 degrees Celsius (about 115 degrees Fahrenheit). When the swarm dissipates, it leaves behind a dead hornet — cooked alive by its would-be prey. The “hot defensive bee ball” is a high-stakes tactic — a few soldier bees usually lose their lives along with the hornet — and not common to all species of bee. But its principles of working together for the good of the colony, and skillfully controlling temperature, are echoed in beehives around the world.

A temperature-controlled ‘superorganism’
Unlike mammals, insects can’t regulate their own body temperature. But working together, the beehive acts like “superorganism” with a steady internal warmth. To raise their young, honeybees need to keep their home within a cosy 33 to 36 degrees Celsius. Luckily, bees can sense temperature changes of just a quarter of a degree. And they have a knack for insulated architecture that any environmentally minded homeowner might aspire to. They carefully select sheltered sites to build their hives, and use propolis — made from resins gathered from plants — to plug holes and keep out drafts and moisture. The “brood chamber” itself is encased in layers of pollen, honey and wax. And if that isn’t enough, adult bees huddle their fuzzy bodies together to keep one other, and their young, warm.

Hundreds of bees buzz so furiously that the temperature at the heart of their dense mass rises to

46 °C



33-36 °C

The temperature which honeybees need to keep their home in raising their young

Keeping cool in a warming world

Insulation keeps warmth out as well as in, and during heat waves, bees also proactively work to keep the colony cool — gathering water, which they distribute in droplets throughout the hive, and fanning air through its chambers with their wings. The climate crisis is taking its toll on bees, and causing some populations to fall out of sync with the flowering plants they depend on for food. But researchers are looking into whether their impressive thermoregulation abilities might help bees survive in a warming world. -nw

The humble honeybee can control temperature in astounding ways — from keeping the hive cool during heat waves to cooking their enemies alive



ROUND-UP



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Huawei inaugurates its largest experience store in Mall Of Oman

The inauguration of the flagship retail experience store consolidates Huawei's long-standing position as a leader in technology, innovative devices and exceptional products in the Sultanate

MUSCAT: Huawei Consumer Business Group (CBG) has opened its largest and third experience store in Muscat.

The new store on level 3 of Mall of Oman is also one of the tech giant's biggest experience stores in the region. The inauguration of the flagship retail experience store consolidates Huawei's long-standing position as a leader in technology, innovative devices and exceptional products in the Sultanate.

The opening event was led by ChenJian Han, CEO of Huawei Oman, Steven Li, President of Huawei CBG, Middle East Multi Countries and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority Executive Director of the Strategic Planning Eng. Ahmed Al Hadabi attended the ceremony as a special guest. Mohammed Al Balushi, General Manager, ABT Group Oman, Huawei's partner and official distributor in Oman was also present during the inauguration and celebrated



this milestone alongside Huawei and the brand's enthusiasts.

ChenJian Han commented, "We are thrilled to be expanding our retail presence here as an essential part of our growth objectives in Oman. We are committed to bringing the best user experience and most intelligent technology to our customers. This is a dedicated Huawei store with all our products, smartphones, accessories, tablets, PCs, and even IoT products. We promise our customers to

continue working on channel expansion in Oman, providing wider product availability to meet their needs for Huawei products."

Telecommunications Regulatory Authority Executive Director of the Strategic Planning Eng. Ahmed Al Hadabi said, "I am honoured to be part of the opening of the largest Huawei experience store in the Sultanate of Oman. I also hope that it will be a new and bright expansion for Huawei for years to come" "We are proud of what we have

accomplished in the Middle East over the past few years. Thanks to the trust of our customers, we have a strong presence in Oman, which is definitely one of the fast-growing markets," added Steven Li, President of Huawei CBG, MEMC.

Mohammed Al Balushi, General Manager, ABT Group Oman, Huawei's partner and official distributor in Oman, said, "I would like to extend my thanks to Eng. Ahmed bin Hassan Al Hadabi, Executive Director of the Strategic Planning

for Telecommunications Regulatory Authority, for his generous support with our opening ceremony. Being the official agent of Huawei in the Sultanate, we are proud to be part of this company and their celebration with the third and largest Huawei Experience Store in Oman."

More than a shop, the Huawei experience store offers a comprehensive retail experience with customer engagement highest in mind. Customers will look forward

to a hands-on, personalised experience with access to the brand's latest products and services all under one roof. The store will showcase all of the latest devices along with a service centre. The Huawei Experience Store at Mall of Oman is open daily from 10:00 to 22:00.

During the next 2 weeks, all customers visiting HES in Mall of Oman will enjoy a 50% discount on selected devices, in addition to OMR10 cash back on all OMR100 purchases.

NEW CORPORATE CARD

Bank Muscat launches Visa pre-load payment card for corporate customers

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial institution in the Sultanate, has announced the launch of its Visa pre-load payment card. Aimed at government and semi-government institutions, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and corporate customers, this new corporate card will give a boost to electronic payments and help reduce reliance on cash.

Bank Muscat's Visa pre-load payment card is a contactless card, which can be used for fast, convenient and secure transactions. The card is accepted locally and internationally at Visa's 100 million+ merchant locations and is ideal for daily administrative expenses, employee travel expenses and online shopping as well as all types of operational expenses and payments thereby helping organisations to streamline their petty cash and cash expenses by enabling an electronic record of all transactions.

Some of the key features of this new card include the ability to withdraw cash up to 100 per cent of the card balance at any Bank Muscat ATM, a 3-year validity, and a maximum pre-load amount of OMR50,000 with no requirement for a minimum balance. The card can be pre-loaded through any of the bank's branches, ATMs and as well as Internet Banking. Bank Muscat's existing and new government, semi-government institutions, SMEs and corporate customers can apply for as many cards

as they wish to have by visiting the nearest Bank Muscat branch and filling out the Corporate Card application form.

On this occasion, Abdullah TammanAl Maashani, General Manager - Products, Bank Muscat, said: "We are delighted to launch this new Visa Pre-Load Payment Card for our corporate clients aligned to Bank Muscat's vision "To serve you better, everyday." This card offers government institutions, SMEs and corporates the ability to manage their cash flow and ensures delivery of fast, convenient and secure services. It provides transparency as customers will receive a monthly statement for the transactions done through the card to help them manage their expenses. At the bank, we pay close

attention to customers' needs and we make sure that we meet their aspirations. Hence, innovation is a key factor in developing products and services. I would also like to express my deep appreciation to all our customers for their strong confidence in our services."

Manish Gautam, Visa's Country Manager for Oman, said, "Innovation in payments is essential to supporting the growth of businesses and local governments' digital transformation agendas. Our Visa Corporate solutions are an attractive proposition for businesses and governments looking to streamline expense reporting both easily and securely. We are delighted to work with Bank Muscat in bringing Visa's solutions to their corporate and government cus-

tomers. We will continue to work closely with our partners to extend the benefits of digital payments to more local businesses and support the Omani government's digital transformation agenda."

Ilham Murtadha Al Hamaid, General Manager - Corporate Banking, Bank Muscat added, "Bank Muscat is keen to leverage its strong digital and technology capabilities in playing a major role in government's initiatives of national importance. In particular, we are delighted that our continuing strong partnership with Visa has enabled the launching of this Visa Pre-Load Payment Card, ensuring convenience, speed and security of digital transactions for our large family of institutional, corporate and SME customers. This is also something which is consistent with the goals of Oman Vision 2040 and global financial trends. We would like to take this opportunity to invite all our corporate customers to enjoy the benefits that this new Visa card offers."

To offer better control to corporate customers, the Visa Pre-Load Payment Card is linked with some additional features that will help them, upon receiving access from the bank, to control and manage card restrictions using Visa Spend Clarity for enterprises.

This system is an online application for transaction data consolidation and reporting for financial management services.

OFFER



Exclusive benefits on Toyota Hilux

MUSCAT: Toyota Hilux enthusiasts looking forward to making the most of the powerful and dependable workhorse can now benefit with service 1 year/10,000 kms (whichever is earlier) and 1 year insurance or cash gift in lieu of insurance from OMR200 up to OMR250. The campaign is valid until September 15. (Prospective buyers may be advised that the benefits vary between model variants, model year and manufacturing year. Terms & Conditions apply. Visit the showroom for exact details.)

Customers can choose from two versions of the Hilux that is available in Oman. The rugged Hilux with J-Deck and the sporty 4.0 Litre V6 Hilux Adventure

with the A Deck. The 4.0 Litre V6 Toyota Hilux Adventure is a truly exciting mean machine that's been developed by Toyota to get your pulse racing.

Every Toyota Hilux Adventure comes with high-end features that start with the mighty 4.0 Litre V6 Engine packing a mighty punch with 235 HP & 38.3 Kg-m Torque. It has an Auto Disconnect Differential to keep the tempo going. Equal importance has been provided to the technical superiority and safety features of the Hilux 4x4. The noteworthy features include a 2.7 Litre Petrol Engine that is available in 5-speed Manual Transmission and 6 Speed Automatic Transmission, outputting 164 HP.



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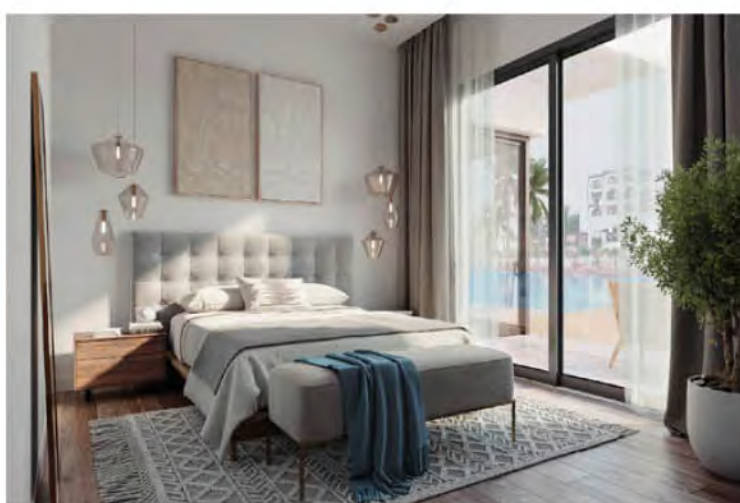
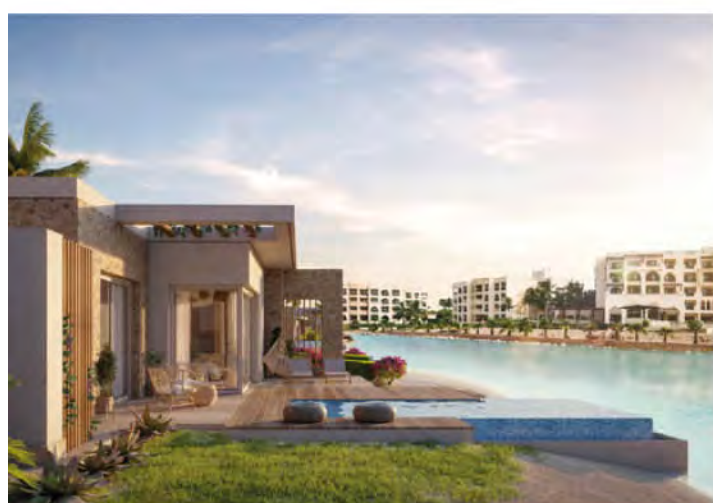
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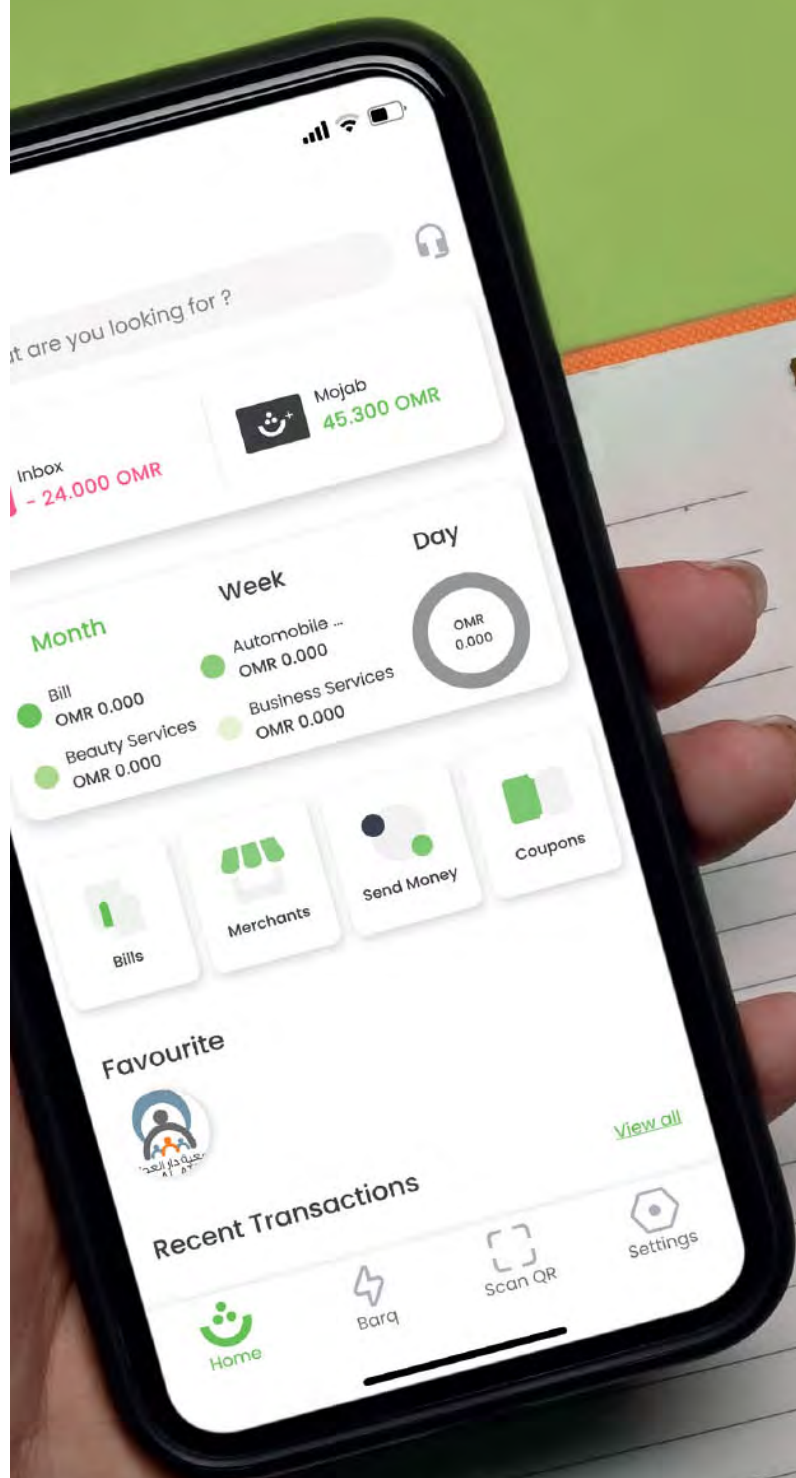


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