

HM RECEIVES THANKS CABLE

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from President Ignazio Cassis of the Swiss Confederation, in reply to His Majesty's congratulatory cable on the occasion of him being elected as his country's president. In the cable, President Cassis expressed his utmost appreciation for His Majesty's sincere sentiments and best wishes to him and his country's people. He also underscored the strong relations between the two countries and their people. **-ONA**



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VISIT

Sayyid Theyazin welcomes King and Queen of the Belgians



MUSCAT: Philippe Leopold Louis Marie, King of the Belgians, and Mathilde Marie Christine Ghislaine d'Udekem d'Acoz, Queen of the Belgians, arrived on Wednesday on an official three-day visit to the Sultanate of Oman.

Royal Airport

King Philippe and Queen Mathilde and their delegation were re-

ceived upon their arrival at the Royal Airport by His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham Al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth.

The monarchs were also received by Sayyid Khalid Hilal Al Busaidi, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, Dr. Mohammed Hamad Al

Rumhy, Minister of Energy and Minerals—Head of the Mission of Honour, Dr. Madeeha Ahmed Al Shaibani, Minister of Education—Escort of the King's spouse, Najeeb Sulaiman Al Abri, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Kingdom of Belgium, and Dominique Minior, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Belgium to the Sultanate of Oman. **>A2**

SERVICE FEES SLASHED FOR GOVT BODIES

Move part of
an initiative to
make Oman more
competitive

Times News Service

MUSCAT: A number of government bodies have slashed or cancelled fees across more than 500 services offered to investors and members of the public.

The move was part of an initiative to make Oman more competitive, strike a balance between the services and fees paid for them, rationalise government spending, streamline fee structure and improve the value of services offered to the customers.

Fees have been cancelled or reduced for 548 government services offered by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and the Muscat Municipality among other municipal organisations. Fees have been revised in line with the government services pricing guide that came into effect following the approval of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, when he presided over a cabinet meeting on 9 November, 2021.

The MOCIP has cut fees across 30 services from anywhere between 17 and 96 per cent, depending on the type of service. Among the most important cuts are the fees charged by the consulting offices. From between OMR500 and OMR250, their fees have been fixed at OMR50, and the fee to obtain an industrial li-



548

Fees have been cancelled and/or reduced for 548 government services offered by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, and Muscat Municipality and other municipal organisations

cence has also been reduced to OMR50 from OMR1,000.

Similarly, cuts ranging from 17 per cent to 60 per cent have been effected by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, across 29 services. The cost of a tourist guide licence has also been cut from between OMR15 and OMR100, to between OMR10 and 50, while fees to set up a heritage hotel, eco lodge or guest house has been cut from OMR500 to OMR250.

Municipalities in Oman have reduced and cancelled fees for 489 services. While the fees for the same services were previ-

ously different across the municipalities, these have been brought down to OMR25 for Muscat Municipality and OMR5 for other municipalities. Licences for commercial vehicles will also no longer be handled by municipalities, instead, they will come under the Royal Oman Police.

"The reduction and cancellation of these fees came into force at the beginning of January 2022, after approval was given on 9 November 2021, by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik," explained an official from the Ministry of Finance. **>A2**

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TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Sri Lankan envoy lauds ties with Oman

1 On the occasion of 74th Independence Day of Sri Lanka, Omar Lebbe Ameer Ajwad, the country's envoy to the Sultanate has said that Sri Lanka and Oman are bound by long-standing historic ties. **>A4**

WORLD

Putin: West 'ignored' Russia's concerns

2 In his first public remarks over the Ukraine standoff, Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Tuesday that the West had "ignored" Moscow's security concerns. **>A7**

MARKET

GDP to grow at 6.1% this year in GCC



3 Gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the GCC countries will see a surge and grow at 6.1 per cent in 2022, on the back of higher oil prices, increased oil production, and robust non-oil activity. **>B1**

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Hungary to invest €10 million in Oman solar plant

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Hungary will invest €10 million in a proposed solar power plant in Oman, as part of the two countries' efforts to effect a transition towards clean and renewable source of energy.

The agreement represents the close relationship between both the nations, as was announced by Peter Szijarto, Hungary's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, who arrived in Muscat with representatives of a number of Hungarian companies, to boost economic cooperation.

"Oman has been a pretty successful destination for Hungarian investors, and the biggest Hungarian company, MOL, has a strategic cooperation with Oman Oil Co., and this is basically the backbone of our bilateral cooperation," said

Szijarto, during a joint press conference with Oman's Foreign Minister, Sayyid Badr Al Busaidi.

New phase

"As the global energy industry is entering a new, more innovative phase, our energy cooperation has to enter a more innovative phase also," he added. "MOL has had a big role in Oman to upgrade the traditional carbon-hydrogen industries and now we are ready that with the support of the Hungarian government, Hungarian companies will take part in building up the renewable energy sector of Oman."

"An agreement has been signed by a Hungarian company with the financial support of the Hungarian government to construct a solar power station in Oman," the minister said. "This investment



will have a range of 10 million Euros and the Hungarian government is lending its financial support to this investment."

During his visit to Oman, Szijarto also oversaw the financial and legal basis for the safe and

secure investment of Hungarian companies in Oman. An agreement was also signed on the mutual protection of investment interests.

"The interest of the Hungarian business sector is proven by the

fact that the representatives of 24 Hungarian companies have accompanied me here," he added.

During his press conference, Szijarto also stressed the importance of wider regional cooperation between the European Union – of which Hungary is a member – and the Arabian Gulf.

Visa-free regime

"We encourage the European Union to enter into tighter cooperation with the Gulf countries," he said. "I think the EU would be stronger in case of successful cooperation with this region. The first step would be people-to-people contact. That is why Hungary supports the visa-free regime to be established for Oman, on behalf of the EU. We see no risks in that: Only advantages and possible profit." **>A5**

**MIND POPPING
NEW LOOK!**





Dhuhr.....	12:26pm
Asr.....	3:37pm
Maghrib.....	6:00pm
Isha.....	7:12pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....	5:29am

King and Queen of the Belgians arrive

<FROM A1 The monarchs are accompanied by an official delegation comprising Sophie Wilmès, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Tinne Van der Straeten, Minister of Energy, Pol De Witte, Secretary General of the Household of the King of the Belgian, Jeroen Cooreman, Director-General for Bilateral Affairs, Dominique Minior, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Belgium to the Sultanate of Oman, and Machteld Fostier, Secretary to the Queen of the Belgians, and Leo Peeters, Director of Economic Interests.

During the high status visit, various aspects of common concern will be taken up in a manner that serves the interests of the two countries and realises their aspirations for a more prosperous future. -ONA



GOVERNMENT SERVICE

<FROM A1 Pricing guide highlights initiatives of Ministry of Finance

The service pricing guide targets a wide range of stakeholders in the government administration, as mentioned under Royal Decree No. 75/2020. Entities that are compulsorily required to follow the government service pricing guide are called “obligatory entities”. These include ministries, agencies, councils, and other government bodies. “Non-binding bodies” are those that are not obligated to follow the regulations of the guide, such as state-owned companies, pension funds, invest-

ment funds, and free zones.

The media plan for the government services pricing guide aims to highlight the initiatives of the Ministry of Finance, spread awareness about the guide, introduce guide framework and changes in fees, ensure that the state administrative apparatus adheres to the framework, speed up the review of fees according to the approved time plan and build trust between the public and government.

The principles of the govern-

ment services pricing guide focus on achieving transparency in service pricing and service delivery procedures, imposing fees on services that add value to the customer and are in public interest and making sure that services are provided at the same price to all people, barring certain exceptions.

The pricing guide also seeks to provide to its beneficiaries services that are in line with the rest of the world, looks to privatise services wherever possible, achieve rationalisation of spending, sim-

plify fee structures, strike a balance between the cost of services and competitiveness and raise the efficiency of services provided.

The objectives of the pricing policy include support to economic development and financial stability in line with Oman Vision 2040 and removal of obstacles to the entry of the private sector and investors into the market and improve the competitiveness of the business environment.

The policy also aims to create a balance between pricing, quality

of services provided, and the level of competitiveness of services provided to applicants. Steps required to achieve this include a unified approach towards government fees, sharing information regarding policies and procedures with the public and providing easier access to government services for customers by reducing the number of procedures, related costs and investing in modern technologies.

“Revised fees included in the second phase of implementation of the government services pricing

guide will be announced once they have been approved,” added the Ministry of Finance official.

“The revision of fees aims to support Oman’s orientation towards building a better business environment, making it more attractive for investments, and encouraging the private sector to expand by reviewing and rationalising the costs of current fees and tracking the steps our beneficiaries take to make use of our services so that we understand how to make them better.”



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Sri Lanka, Oman bound by strong historic ties: Envoy Ameer Ajwad

Omar Lebbe Ameer Ajwad, Ambassador of Sri Lanka to the Sultanate of Oman, sends message on the occasion of 74th Independence Day of his country

Times News Service

MUSCAT: On the occasion of 74th Independence Day of Sri Lanka, I wish to extend my warmest greetings and felicitations to all members of the Sri Lankan community living in the Sultanate of Oman and back home.

Independence Day is an important day for all Sri Lankan citizens. Our leaders of all communities in Sri Lanka fought hard to gain this independence with unity.

Sri Lanka has embarked on an ambitious socio-economic development plan and strategy with a drastic policy reforms aiming at regaining her past glory in the Indian Ocean.

The vision of the Government of Sri Lanka is to transform the country into the hub of the Indian Ocean, with a knowledge-based, highly competitive, social-market economy.

Sri Lanka and Oman are bound by long-standing historic relations underpinned by a vibrant tradition of people to people contacts and mutual respect. Both countries commemorated the 40th Anniversary of the establishment of Diplomatic Relations on 17th February 2021 by organising a special event at the Foreign Min-



Omar Lebbe Ameer Ajwad Ambassador of Sri Lanka to Oman.

istry of the Sultanate of Oman.

A memorial logo on this significant occasion was also jointly issued by both countries. The Foreign Ministers of the two countries exchanged congratulatory messages to mark this milestone by demonstrating their commitment to consolidate the relations between the two friendly countries with renewed vision and vigour.

Despite COVID-19 pandemic challenges, a series of activities were organised during the said commemorative year.

A number of initiatives in key areas of mutual interest including direct maritime connectivity were taken whereby laying a strong foundation for the future cooperation between the two countries with a view to achieving another milestone in the bilateral relations in the years ahead.

Bilateral agreement on the mutual visa exemption for diplomats, officials, service people and other

special passport holders of both countries was signed in order to facilitate smooth exchange of bilateral visits between the two countries.

This arrangement will ease and invigorate the exchange of bilateral political, diplomatic, economic, defence and other official level visits and engagements between the two countries.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the two national Chambers of Commerce of Sri Lanka (NC-CSL) and the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) was virtually signed with a view to enhancing interactions between the private sector business communities in both countries.

A virtual business forum with the participation of key Government Ministries and agencies of both countries as well as private

sector B2B sessions were also organised with the participation of around 100 private companies from both countries.

High-level bilateral visits from Sri Lanka to the Sultanate of Oman were also organised including a visit by Hon. Ajith Nivard Cabral, then State Minister and Special Representative of the Hon.

Prime Minister of Sri Lanka together with 10 member private sector delegation carrying a special message addressed to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. The Special Representative had an audience with His Highness Sayyid Asa'ad bin Tariq Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs and Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan.

Hon. Namal Rajapaksa, Minister of Sports and Youth Affairs of Sri Lanka visited Oman in October 2021 as a Special Guest on the invitation extended by His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham bin Tarik Al Said, the Crown Prince and the Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth Affairs of Oman, to attend the inauguration of T20 Cricket World Cup Tournament hosted first time by Oman and he had bilateral meetings with the Crown Prince and other dignitaries of the Government of Oman.

Hon. Tharaka Balasuriya, Minister of Regional Cooperation of Sri Lanka visited Oman in December 2021 to attend the first ever bilateral hockey tournament between the two countries, organised by Sri Lanka Embassy in Oman jointly with the Oman Hockey Association, to mark the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

A series of virtual webinar meetings were organised between different private sector companies of both countries in the areas of food & beverages, fruits & vegetables, boat building, Ceylon tea and ICT & BPM with a view to promoting bilateral trade between the two countries.

A series of visits by potential investors from both countries were

also organised under the "investment bubble" concept due to pandemic restrictions, to explore investment opportunities by Omani investors in Sri Lanka as well by Sri Lankan investors in Omani Freezone.

As the two countries share the Indian Ocean, Sri Lanka and Oman could complement each other in trade and investment by utilising their strategic geographical locations and making use of the new opportunities that are unfolding in both countries under the new visions of the wise leadership of the two countries.

In this regard, vital agreements such as the Agreement on the Avoidance of Double Taxation and Prevention of Fiscal Evasion which was signed between the two countries in 2018 and the proposed Agreement on Promotion and Reciprocal Protection on Investments which is being currently negotiated between the two countries, will serve as catalysts for the enhancement of bilateral trade and investment between the two countries.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) that are being finalised between the two countries in the tourism as well as agriculture sectors will also facilitate cooperation and collaboration between the two countries in these two important sectors of common interest. Sri Lanka and Oman are popular tourist destinations.

It would be mutually beneficial for both countries to seek cooperation in this area through regular interaction between the inbound and outbound tour operations, facilitated by the Government authorities.

The commemorative year opened a new chapter in the sports cooperation between Sri Lanka and the Sultanate of Oman.

The first ever international cricket friendly matches were played by the national cricket teams of Sri Lanka and the Sultanate of Oman under the T20 World Cup tournament hosted by Oman in 2021 and the first ever friendly

Hockey Tournament between the hockey clubs of the two countries was held in December 2021 to mark the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations.

I am confident that the solid foundation that has been laid during the commemorative year of the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations and the growing momentum in the bilateral relations between Sri Lanka and the Sultanate of Oman will continue to flourish in the years ahead.

I take this opportunity to sincerely thank all the members of the Sri Lankan community living in the Sultanate of Oman for their unwavering cooperation extended to the Embassy during the challenging times due to the outbreak of COVID - 19 pandemic by demonstrating their great sense of social responsibility in the host country and for their generous solidarity with the home country.

I cordially invite all the members of the Sri Lanka community in the Sultanate to join hands with us to further elevate the relations that happily exist between Sri Lanka and Oman for centuries into new heights encompassing all areas of mutual interest.

I also take this opportunity to extend, on behalf of the Government and the people of Sri Lanka, best wishes for the good health, happiness and personal well-being of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and for the continued progress and prosperity of the people of the Sultanate of Oman.

On this special occasion of 74th Independence Day of Sri Lanka, I wish to extend my sincere appreciation and gratitude to His Majesty, the Government and the people of the Sultanate of Oman for their goodwill and support extended, over the decades, to the Embassy of Sri Lanka in Muscat as well as to the Sri Lankan community living in the Sultanate for their well being and peaceful stay in this blessed country.

Omar Lebbe Ameer Ajwad,
Ambassador of Sri Lanka to the Sultanate of Oman

ABUNDANCE OF BIRD LIFE AT AL ANSAB WETLAND

HOME to nearly 300 species of birds, many of which come to Oman during their biannual migratory flights across the world, the Al Ansab Wetland is a nature lover's paradise that few have heard of so far, but many will soon know of, given the area's fast-growing popularity.

It is a natural wonderland in the heart of Muscat that showcases Oman's impressive nature with its abundance of bird life.

Sea-wading birds such as the Black Winged Stilt are full-time residents at the wetland, while many species of eagles come to Muscat during the winter months, where they fly into the Sultanate in November and leave once the cold season is over.

"Set in the middle of Muscat, Al Ansab Wetland is a protected area and an ornithologist's dream," said the Ministry of Tourism. "Over 293 species of birds stop over at different times throughout the year, with over 80 resident species."

Colours and fragrance fill the air at Al Ansab Wetland where winter sees the best of plants and trees bloom. The wetland has 113 species of Omani trees and shrubs.

The Ministry of Tourism said that the wetland had five lagoons, the biggest of which had a depth of four metres. "The water, besides attracting birds, also supports greenery. Most of the trees and shrubs are naturally grown. The Haya Water team planted 300 trees to create a forest area, which have all grown and today provide extended shade. In the process, there have been other trees that have sprouted naturally such as banyan trees and date palms. A little further away, adjacent to the nursery of the wetland, the team planted more trees."

The wetland is open from 6:30am to 2pm from Sunday to Thursday. The best time to visit the site is early in the morning, between 6.30 and 9.00 a.m. Visitors should also wear comfortable shoes and carry drinking water with them.



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INVESTMENT

Oman, Hungary review economic cooperation



MUSCAT: Aseela Salim Al Samsami, Investment Promotion Undersecretary received on Wednesday Peter Szijarto, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Hungary, and his delegation, currently visiting the Sultanate. The two sides reviewed the advanced relations between the two countries. They also discussed various aspects of cooperation in economic, commercial and investment fields. The visit aimed to upgrade the level of trade exchange, focused

on incentives that the Ministry offers investors and explored investment opportunities in the sectors of industry, renewable energy, fisheries, tourism, scientific research, mining and other economic diversification sectors targeted by Oman Vision 2040. -ONA

CABLE

HM receives thanks cable from King of Jordan

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from King Abdullah II of Jordan in reply to His Majesty's greetings cable to him on his 60th Birthday Anniversary.

Fraternal feelings
In the cable, King Abdullah expressed his deep gratitude and appreciation for His Majesty's fraternal feelings and good wishes. He prayed to Allah the Almighty to protect His Majesty the Sultan, and grant him good health and wellbeing to achieve the Omani people's aspirations of progress, welfare and prosperity under the wise leadership of His Majesty. -ONA

PEACEMAKER

Szizjarto welcomes Oman's efforts

Szizjarto also warmly welcomed Oman's efforts as a peacemaker in the region, saying the country's efforts to defuse conflict had earned his respect. "We would like to express our respect towards the approach represented by the foreign policy of Oman, namely, sticking to tradition, sticking to heritage and sticking to values," he said. "I think that is extremely important. On the other hand, I have to tell you that for us Europeans, the security situation in this part of the world is vital. "That is why resolving conflict, pacifying violent activities and preventing further wars and armed conflicts are among the strategic security objectives of the European Union," he added. "That is why all efforts, including those of Oman, to defuse tensions and create peace in the region are pretty much respected." "This is also why we opened our embassy here a few years ago in order to pursue tighter cooperation and to increase respect towards this nation," explained Szizjarto. The minister went on to say that Hungary actively seeking investment in Oman and other countries will be mutually beneficial for both his own country as well as the one receiving the investment. "We had two complicated years behind us, but the Hungarian economy proved to be successful, regardless of the crisis, which gives us a good basis to upgrade it to the next level," said Szizjarto. "But the Hungarian economy can only be upgraded in case Hungarian companies successfully complete investments outside the country.

RESEARCH STUDY

Science Writing Heuristic impacts performance of students

MUSCAT: A research study titled "Effects of using Science Writing Heuristic strategy on 7th grade students' academic achievement and attitude towards scientific writing" showed that Science Writing Heuristic (SWH) has an impact on students' performance in achievement tests. As revealed in the latest issue of Scientific Insights magazine published by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, the study aimed to investigate the effect of using SWH strategy. It is defined as a writing-to-learn model for learning from laboratory activities in secondary science and can be used by teachers as a framework to design classroom activities, and on developing the Omani 7th grade female students' academic achievement in



science and their attitude towards scientific writing. It also targeted assisting students to investigate and discover in order to deeply understand concepts of scientific knowledge. **Quasi-experimental approach**
The study used a quasi-experimental approach. A sample of 49 female students was randomly selected and divided into two groups: Experimental group (24 female students) that was taught using the SWH strategy and a control group (25 female students) that was taught using the traditional way in the second semester of the 2018/2019 academic year. The findings of the study showed that the students of the experimental group that used the SWH

approach outperformed those who did not apply this strategy. A significant difference in the academic achievement and the attitude towards scientific writing was observed in favour of the experimental group. Unlike the control group that failed to understand the educational material using the traditional approach, the experimental group had a positive attitude towards learning Chemistry. The study was conducted by Prof. Abdullah Khamis Ambosaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education (MoE), and Afrah Salem Al Maktoumi, Science Teacher at the MoE. The findings of the study were published in the *Journal of Educational Sciences*, a scientific refereed journal issued by the Saudi Educational and Psychological Association at King Saud University. It is recommended that teachers should be encouraged to activate the writing portal for education to develop students' educational attainment, promote their positive attitudes towards scientific writings, and hold workshops for teachers and supervisors to train them in the way of applying the SWH in teaching, and to include lessons designed in accordance with the SWH in science books so that teachers can benefit from them in preparing similar lessons. Scientific Insights is a scientific journal published every three months by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation in both Arabic and English. -ONA

Trending

ON SOCIAL MEDIA

 MOST READ ON FACEBOOK

23,341 REACH

Oman recorded the highest number of daily COVID infections on Tuesday, since the start of the pandemic.



Story on Covid-19 cases in Oman

 MOST WATCHED VIDEO ON FACEBOOK

4,400 VIEWS

Expat women's volleyball association had 4,400 views and reached 17,500 people on Facebook.



Story on Expat Women's Volleyball Association

 MOST VIEWED VIDEO ON INSTAGRAM

766 VIEWS

Omani research explores the efficiency of greenhouse production in Oman.



Morning Minute video

RECYCLED PRODUCTS

Central Bank of Oman signs pact on recycling shredded banknotes

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) on Wednesday signed an agreement with Dar Al Herafiya, which is a specialised establishment in producing and developing traditional Omani handicrafts. The agreement was signed by Tahir Salim Al Amri, CBO's Executive President, and Zuwaina Sultan Al Rashdi, Dar Al-Herafiya's CEO. Being the first of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman, this project aims to produce innovative and unique recycled products from shredded banknotes, reflecting the Omani culture and heritage. The products are made for both local and international consumption. The project will contribute to the preservation of the environment and reduction of waste and pollution; leading to maintaining the ecological balance which has been an integral part of Oman's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The idea of this project was originally proposed by Mohammed Al Riyami, a CBO employee, who won the first place in "Kharij Al Sundooq Competition" or "Out of the Box Competition". This competition was held at CBO in 2019 to promote innovation and support creative employees. -ONA

3D PRINTER INK

Omani innovator's project bags award

AL MUSANNAH: The royal flement project won numerous awards locally, regionally and internationally on making 3D printer ink from marine algae. Manar Hamad Al Jahwari, an innovator, student at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) in the Wilayat of Musannah, Governorate of South Al Batinah, and the CEO of Plumor company said that the idea of the project started after the announcement of the Injaz Oman competition in 2019. This happened by establishing a student company in UTAS in Al Musannah, which was to find a solution to the carbon plastic problem through the royal flement project. -ONA

ANNOUNCEMENT

To Whom It May Concern



Gharbia Services Company LLC announce that Mr. Raji Varghese, Indian national, holding Resident Card No. 66142776 and Passport No. J5404620, has left work as of 20/01/2022 and no one may deal with him as of the mentioned date. This announcement constitutes a release of the Company's responsibility from any obligation towards the mentioned person. Any claims will not valid after two weeks from the date of publication of this announcement.

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COMMUNITY CASES

New Zealand reports 142 community cases of COVID

WELLINGTON: New Zealand recorded 142 new community cases of COVID-19 on Wednesday, the Ministry of Health said in a statement.

Among the new community infections, 103 are in the largest city Auckland, 12 in nearby Waikato, five in Bay of Plenty, two in the Lakes Region, and 11 in Northland, according to the ministry.

In addition, 54 new cases were

detected at the New Zealand border, said the ministry.

Six COVID-19 patients are currently being treated in New Zealand hospitals, with none in the intensive care unit.

The country has recorded 16,442 cases of COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic, including 12,274 cases from the current community outbreak, said the ministry.

To date, about 94 per cent of the eligible people in New Zealand are fully vaccinated with at least two doses, the ministry said, adding that more than 1.36 million boosters, or the third doses, have been administered.

Nearly 178,000 children in the 5-to-11-year-old group have received their first dose.

The ministry urges everyone in New Zealand to act as the Omicron

variant of COVID-19 is transmitting in the community. People are encouraged to wear a mask, keep a physical distance from each other, and use the contact tracing app when going outdoors.

Also on Wednesday, the government decided to reduce the interval between a person's primary vaccination course and the booster from four months to three months. **ANI**



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Stability restored after coup attempt fails in Guinea-Bissau

The attack comes on the heels of a spate of coups in the region in Burkina Faso, Mali and other African nations

BISSAU: Guinea-Bissau President Umaro Sissoco Embalo said stability was restored on Tuesday, after a suspected coup attempt in the country's capital, Bissau.

The remarks came after heavy gunfire was heard for several hours in the capital. The attack also comes on the heels of a spate of coups in the region in Burkina Faso, Mali and other African nations.

What did the president say? Embalo told the media that officials were taking part in a meeting at a government palace, when assailants with AK-47 rifles



SUSPECTED COUP: The president said the situation is now "under control" after an "attack on democracy." He said "many" members of the security forces were killed in the nearly five-hour assault

launched an attack on the building. The president said the situation is now "under control" after an "attack on democracy." He said "many" members of the security

forces were killed in the nearly five hour assault.

"Our republican defense and security forces were able to stop this evil," Embalo said.

He said the attack "has to also do with our fight against narco trafficking" though it's unclear who is exactly behind the assault. Regional groups swiftly con-

demned the violence, giving credence to fears that an armed group had attempted to take over the West African nation once more.

People were seen fleeing the area on the edge of Bissau, near the airport. Local markets were closed and banks shut their doors, while military vehicles laden with troops drove through the streets.

Guinea-Bissau has experienced four coup d'etats and more than a dozen attempted coups since independence from Portugal in 1974.

The country's state broadcaster reported earlier that the shooting had damaged the building and that "invaders" were holding officials hostage.

ECOWAS, AU condemn violence

The regional bloc ECOWAS and the African Union issued swift rebukes of the military.

"The President of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, is following with grave concern the situation in Guinea-Bissau, consisting of an attempted coup against the country's government," the AU said in a statement.

"He calls on the military to return to their barracks without

delay and to protect the physical safety of President Umaro Sissoco Embalo and members of his government and to immediately free those of them who are in detention," it said.

In its own statement, ECOWAS said it "condemns this coup attempt and holds the military responsible for the bodily integrity of President Umaro Sissoco Embalo and the members of his government."

Portugal's foreign ministry also condemned the attack and called for respect for constitutional order. President Embalo has been at the center of controversy since he was declared the winner of the December 2019 runoff vote. The results were contested by his opponent, Domingos Simoes Pereira.

Embalo started forming a new government with support from the military while a Supreme Court election challenge was still pending.

Guinea-Bissau has long suffered from official corruption, as well as the violence that comes with drug trafficking. Because of graft and lax law enforcement, the country is used as a transit point for cocaine on the way to Europe from South America. **BW**

COVID CASES

Australia's COVID-19 cases, death numbers continue to rise

CANBERRA: Australia reported more than 40,000 new COVID-19 cases on Wednesday when more than 50 million doses had been delivered in total during the vaccine rollout.

Nationally there were 70 deaths reported on Wednesday, including 27 in New South Wales, 25 in Victoria, 16 in Queensland and one each in the Northern Territory (NT) and South Australia, according to official figures from states and territories. According to Department of Health data published on Tuesday night, there were 4,954 cases being treated in hospitals nationwide, including 375 in intensive care units.

Health Minister Greg Hunt on Wednesday announced that Australia has surpassed 50 million coronavirus vaccine doses administered, including more than eight million booster doses.

Health authorities in NT said it was approaching the peak of the current wave of coronavirus infections.

The NT health officials on Wednesday reported more than 1,000 new coronavirus infections and the NT's third COVID-19 death.



Charles Pain, NT acting deputy chief health officer, said that pressure on the health system was "significant at the moment" but that he was optimistic the caseload would reach its peak within days.

"We hope that it will peak in the next few days, the next week or so," he told reporters on Wednesday.

In South Australia (SA), some students began to return to school on Wednesday after the summer holidays were extended amid surg-

ing COVID-19 infections.

SA Chief Public Health Officer Nicola Spurrier said returning to school was "a safe thing to do."

"Our modeling does show that we expect to have an increased in pediatric admissions, but it's not a high number, and so we're expecting to have a little blip," she told Australian Broadcasting Corporation radio. "But we're still overall expecting to have our numbers decrease every day over this period of time." **ANI**

WORST FLOODING

Landslide kills dozens in Ecuador

QUITO: A landslide in the Ecuadorian capital Quito has left at least 24 people dead, city authorities said on Tuesday.

Heavy rains have sparked the worst flooding to hit the country in two decades.

What do we know so far?

So far, at least 48 people have been reported injured from the disaster, according to the Quito Security Department. A dozen people are also still missing.

The landslide was caused by the collapse of a rain-weakened hillside on Monday. The rupture poured mud on homes in the working-class neighborhoods of La Gasca and La Comuna and caused power to be disrupted.

"We saw this immense black river that was dragging along everything, we had to climb the walls to escape," Quito resident Alba Cotacachi told Reuters news agency. She rushed her two young daughters out of her house due to the landslide.

"We are looking for the disappeared," she added.

Mud swept away vehicles, flooded sports field

The mud in some cases was as



high as 3 meters (10 feet), sweeping away vehicles, trash cans and other debris. It also flooded a sports field where volleyball players were practicing in front of spectators. Search operations are still ongoing.

Rescue crews have requested silence in the area to hear the screams of people who may be trapped, with Quito police also saying that more bodies could be found.

Much of the city's 2.7 million population have been taken to shelters amid the crisis, with some residents receiving treatment for hypothermia. Authorities have called for three days of mourning to remember the victims.

Ecuadorian President Guillermo Lasso has expressed his condolences to those impacted by the landslide.

"We continue to work in search and rescue, containment actions, psychological care and the transfer of injured people to the hospital," Lasso tweeted.

Ecuador has witnessed torrential rains in recent days.

The rains also triggered the rupture of a oil pipeline in eastern Ecuador last week, which in turn caused a spill that affected the Cayambe-Coca nature reserve and the vital Coca River.

Climate experts say the warming of the earth's atmosphere could be causing heavy rains to become more frequent. **BW**

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Tour of Oman aims to captivate the world once again

The 11th edition of the race will see an international peloton of 18 teams battle over 891km



The action will begin in Al Rustaq, a former capital of Oman, whose historic fort will welcome the start of stage 1. From there, the peloton will head to the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre in Muscat. The mostly flat route (138km) could favour explosive riders such as Sonny Colbrelli, winner in the same place in 2019. Stage 2 will bring fast racing as well, as the peloton heads from Naseem Park to Sohar, one of the most important ports in the history of the area. Sprinters can eye another opportunity to shine, but with 167.5km to cover

along the coast, everyone will be wary of echelons en route to the Suhar Corniche! More intense racing is expected on days 3 and 4, with punchy routes to open up the battle for the final victory. On stage 3, the peloton will start from the Sultan Qaboos University and chase glory on the uphill finish of Qurayyat (2.8km at 6.5 percent), where Alexey Lutsenko took the leader's jersey in 2019. Stage 4 promises a thriller between Al Sifah and the Royal Opera House Muscat (119.5km) with a punchy circuit around the climb

of Bausher Al Amerat (Jabal Street) following the ascents of Al Jissah and Wadi Al Kabir. Intensity will keep rising as the race gets closer to its conclusion, with a climax expected on the slopes of Jabal Al Akhdhar (Green Mountain). The grueling ascent (5.7km, 10.5 percent) is set to welcome the queen stage (150.5km from Samail) for the 10th time in the history of the Tour of Oman. Climbers will attempt to follow in the footsteps of winners such as Vincenzo Nibali, Joaquim Rodriguez, Chris Froome and Miguel Angel Lopez. The final stage brings the peloton back to Muscat, with a start in the prestigious district of Al Mouj and a traditional finish on the Muttrah Corniche. Fast men such as Alexander Kristoff and Mark Cavendish are used to shining in these spectacular settings where the overall winners of the Tour of Oman have been crowned since Fabian Cancellara won the inaugural edition in 2010.

ISC Women, OWCA, MCCC Yellow score big victories

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Suhani Dadhwal struck an elegant 64 to help ISC Women to an emphatic 62-run victory against Muscat Women in a Women's League T20 game at Oman Cricket Turf 2 in Amerat. Suhani, who hit 7 fours and a six, got good support from Jayadhanya Gunasekar (37) as the duo added 109 runs for the second wicket. ISC ended its 20 overs at a robust 146 for 4. Amanda Dcoasta took 2 for 23. Muscat failed to make a match of it, getting bundled out for 84 in 19.4 overs, Nikita Rajesh topscoring with 29. Jayadhanya claimed 2 for 9. Brief Scores (Women's League T20): ISC Women 146 for 4 in 20 overs (Suhaani Dadhwal 64 - 7x4, 1x6, Jayadhanya Gunasekar 37 - 4x4, Amanda Dcoasta 2-23) beat Muscat Women 84 all out in 19.4 overs (Nikhitaa Jagadish 29 - 2x4, Jayadhanya Gunasekar 2-9) by 62 runs.

OWCA emerge winner In another match, Minduli Medagoda's superb spell in which she picked up 4 for 13 powered OWCA Women to a mighty 10-wicket win over Wadi Kabir Women at OC Turf 1. Minduli was instrumental in having Wadi Kabir dismissed for 60 with brilliant bowling by Afida Aftab and Anshita Lalit who claimed two wickets each. Shreya Suresh topscored with 20. OWCA had a cakewalk chase, racing to the target in only 6.5 overs, scoring 61 without loss for a massive win. **Brief Scores** (Women's League): Wadi Kabir Women 60 all out in 20 overs (Shreya Suresh 20 - 2x4, Minduli Medagoda 4-13, Afida Aftab 2-14, Anshita Lalit 2-2) lost to OWCA Women 61 for 0 in 6.5 overs (Sakshi Vijaya 32 - 5x4, Nitya Joshi 23 - 3x4) by 10 wickets.



Kriv stars in MCCC Yellow win In a Junior League Under-13 T20 game, MCCC Yellow rode on an excellent 93 by Kriv Rajesh to thrash ISWK B by 161 runs. MCCC Yellow's total of 244 for 2 also included superb fifties by Mohammed Imran (55) and Shravan Sridhar (50). ISWK B could not find any rhythm, limping to 83 for 9 in 20 overs due to brilliant bowling by Pradhiyuin (2 for 9) and Vihaan Sanjay (2 for 10). Naitik Tushar was its main batter, scoring 20. **Brief Scores** (Junior Division U13): MCCC Yellow 244 for 2 in 20 overs (Kriv Rajesh 93 - 13x4, Mohammed Imran 55 - 7x4, Shravan Sridhar 50 - 4x4) beat ISWK B 83 for 9 in 20 overs (Naitik Tushar-kumar 20 - 1x4, Pradhiyuin 2-9, Vihaan Sanjay 2-10) by 161 runs. **Brief Scores** (Junior Division U13): MCCC Blue 137 for 9 in 20 overs (Abdul Muqith 40 - 7x4, Pranav Nivash 26 - 4x4, Hadi Muhammed 3-25, Nithin Jayarajan 2-22) lost to ISM 138 for 1 in 16 overs (Hafiz Mohamed 46 - 4x4, Swagath Navaneetha 40 - 5x4) by 8 wickets. **Brief Scores** (Junior Division U13): MCCC Red 169 for 3 in 20 overs (Karnik Samir 70 - 6x4, Yohan Sriram 56) beat BSC B 78 all out in 20 overs (Aarav Saraiya 11, Sivabalaaji Siddeshwaran 3-9, Vatrana Radhika 2-2) by 91 runs.

NZ all-rounder Daryl Mitchell awarded with ICC Spirit of Cricket accolade

DUBAI: New Zealand's Daryl Mitchell has been named the recipient of the ICC Spirit of Cricket Award after his gesture in the 2021 ICC Men's T20 World Cup semi-final against England in Abu Dhabi. As a result, Mitchell has become the fourth New Zealand player to win the award, following the footsteps of Daniel Vettori,



Brendon McCullum and Kane Williamson. Mitchell wins the award for refusing to take a single in the high-pressure T20 World Cup semi-final against England in Abu Dhabi on November 10, 2021. "It's an honour to receive the ICC Spirit of Cricket Award," Mitchell said in an official release. "To be part of that T20 World Cup in UAE was an amazing experi-

ence, and to receive an award like this is pretty cool." "It's something that we pride ourselves on as New Zealanders, the way we go about playing our cricket, and yes, the Spirit of Cricket side. Personally, I felt I got in the way and we wanted to win on our own terms, and didn't want to be controversial in such a big game," he added. **ANI**

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MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER
The MSX index closed at 4,124.44 points, up by 0.33 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.30 per cent at 503.18 points. Muscat City Desalination, up 4.60 per cent, was the top gainer while, Raysut Cement, down 3.52 per cent, was the top loser.

GDP to grow at 6.1% this year in GCC



RESEARCH: The economic growth in the GCC will also outperform all EM peers in 2022 except Asia, with Saudi Arabia and the UAE leading this recovery, given their impressive bounce back in non-oil GDP, a rebound in their domestic demand, their higher investment levels in line with National Vision strategies. - Photo used for illustrative purpose only

This will be the fastest pace of cyclical expansion since 2011 and is higher than other emerging markets peers, the MUFG Research suggests

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries will see a surge and grow at 6.1 per cent in 2022, on the back of higher oil prices, increased oil production, and robust momentum in non-oil activity.

cyclical expansion since 2011 and is higher than other emerging markets (EM) peers, the MUFG Research released on Wednesday suggests. "A supportive oil market, robust momentum in non-oil activity, stronger balance sheets, and easing geopolitical tensions are driving a compelling GCC story in 2022," according to research author Ehsan Khoman, Head of

MUFG's EMEA Emerging Markets Research team. "The GCC authorities' unabated drive to realise their National Vision strategies of structural transformation away from hydrocarbons will also continue to gain traction," he further added. "The GCC 2022 outlook is markedly skewed to the upside this year. The robust vaccination programme, ongoing reopenings and higher oil prices as well as production, is spurring a real GDP growth forward in the region, Ehsan Khoman explains. "Following several years of having fiscal deficits, the GCC will rebuild its buffers in 2022. Higher government revenues and the rationalisation of expenditure in 2022 budgets will strengthen the countries' balance sheets and offer the greater fiscal capacity to navigate towards a post-pandemic equilibrium," he added. This will lead to an aggregate GCC fiscal surplus in 2022 of \$27 billion, the first since 2014. The oil surge and austerity measures will support sovereign balance sheets, with the GCC's financing need remaining limited at only \$2.8 billion in 2022, and its Debt Capital Markets' needs (DCM) at only \$4.8 billion. According to the research, the economic growth in the GCC will also outperform all EM peers in 2022 except Asia, with Saudi and the UAE leading this recovery, given their impressive bounce back in non-oil GDP, a rebound in their domestic demand, their higher investment levels in line with National Vision strategies, as well as being best-positioned to respond to the global economic recovery.

TRADE CONFERENCE



EXHIBITION: Breakbulk ME attracts representatives from more than 1,700 companies at every stage of the industrial supply chain from over 70 countries and is one of the few events to make direct contact with prospective new clients. - Supplied picture

Sohar Port presents port capabilities at Breakbulk Middle East 2022 in Dubai

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Sohar Port and Freezone joined logistics provider C. Steinweg Oman (CSO), General Cargo Operator Terminal at the port at the Breakbulk Middle East 2022 international trade conference and exhibition in Dubai presenting the port's shipping and logistics capabilities to companies from across the region. Breakbulk ME attracts representatives from more than 1,700 companies at every stage of the industrial supply chain from over 70 countries and is one of the few events to make direct contact with prospective new clients. Sohar Port is one of the fast-

est-growing port and freezone complexes in the world and has attracted close to \$27 billion in investment by serving diverse industries including metals, raw materials, plastics and foodstuffs. By investing in cutting-edge technology to maximise efficiency, increase throughput and lead the expansion and modernisation of the Sultanate's global trade capacity and logistics sector, Sohar Port has continued to attract new clients to the freezone and become the gateway for over 70 per cent of products entering Oman. Sohar Port will take a leading role in achieving the national economic priorities within Oman's 2040 Vision.

FIRST MEETING OF 2022

Oman Banks Association discusses enhancing banking excellence

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman Banks Association (OBA), held its Board of Directors meeting on February 2, 2022. Chaired by Abdul Hakeem Al Ojaili, Chairman of OBA the board discussed and deliberated on the development and enhancing bank-

ing excellence in Oman. The OBA Board of Directors comprises 12 members, representing member banks. They meet every quarter and minutes of the meetings are circulated to member banks, the Central Bank of Oman and the Ministry of Social Development.

With a comprehensive agenda ranging from several important current plans and future goals, the board met and engaged in strategic deliberations. The board also approved 2021 audited financial results and reviewed and discussed the audit report. Since its formation, the Oman

Banks Association has committed itself and drawn plans of action to provide ongoing support to the banking sector of Oman through its various stages of growth. The board thanked the Central Bank of Oman, the Capital Market Authority and the Ministry of Social Development for their con-

tinuous support and guidance. Oman Banks Association is a non-profit professional association created to represent the banking sector, promote Omani banking activities, coordinate with the regulators on matters of policy and strategy and support banking excellence in Oman.



OIL PRICES

Oil climbs to 7-year highs on US stock draw

TOKYO: Oil prices climbed on Wednesday toward last week's seven-year highs as a draw in US crude stocks confirmed strong demand and a lack of supply, but investors remained cautious ahead of an OPEC+ meeting later in the day. Brent crude rose 17 cents, or 0.2 per cent, to \$89.33 a barrel by 0339 GMT, after easing 10 cents on Tuesday. US West Texas Intermediate crude was up 16 cents, or 0.2 per cent, at \$88.36 a barrel, having gained 5 cents the previous day. Tight global supplies and geopolitical tensions in Eastern Europe and the Middle East have boosted oil prices by about 15 per cent so far this year. On Friday, crude benchmarks hit their highest prices since October 2014, with Brent touching \$91.70 and US crude hitting \$88.84. -BNA

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MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Muscat City Desalination, up 4.60 per cent, was the top gainer while, Raysut Cement, down 3.52 per cent, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,124.44 points, up by 0.33 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.30 per cent at 503.18 points. Muscat City Desalination, up 4.60 per cent, was the top gainer while, Raysut Cement, down 3.52 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of Ahli Bank were the most active in terms of the number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 527 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating a turnover of OMR12.6 million, with more than 98.6 million shares changing hands. Out of 42 traded securities, 14 advanced, 11 declined and 17 remained unchanged. At the session close, Omani investors were net buyers for OMR356,000 while foreign investors were net sellers for

OMR183,000 followed by GCC & Arab investors for OMR173,000 worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 6,583.03 points, up by 0.42 per cent. Prices of Sohar International Bank, Vision Insurance, Ahli Bank, Al Sharqia Investment, and Al Madina Takaful were up by 2.78 per cent, 2.44 per cent, 1.7 per cent, 1.09 per cent, and 1.04 per cent respectively. Prices of Global Financial Investments, Muscat Finance, United Finance, Taageer Finance, and HSBC Bank Oman were down by 2.7 per cent, 1.64 per cent, 1.47 per cent, 1.22 per cent, and 1 per cent respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,813.11 points, down by 0.34 per cent. Services Index was up by 0.07 per cent before closing at 1,605.55 points. — **United Securities**

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff.	Diff%
MSX 30 INDEX	4,127.44	4,112.00	4,124.44	4,110.71	13.73	0.33
FINANCIAL INDEX	6,583.02	6,556.11	6,583.02	6,555.65	27.37	0.42
Industry Index	5,833.56	5,813.11	5,813.11	5,833.04	-19.93	-0.34
Services Index	1,610.54	1,604.62	1,605.55	1,604.36	1.19	0.07
MSX Shariah Index	504.29	502.23	503.18	501.68	1.50	0.30
MSX TR INDEX	4,968.40	4,949.81	4,964.78	4,948.25	16.53	0.33

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
98,618,367	12,666,150	527	22,290,630,507	14	11	17	42

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 2

SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PD	LAST RD	LAST OFFER	P/B VALUE	MARKET CAP	
REGULAR MARKET																
OM0000003398	SOHAR INT. BANK	2,583,447	286,487	36	0.108	0.111	0.108	0.111	0.108	0.003	2.778	0.111	0.098	0.111	0.100	331,896,914
OM0000006920	VISION INSURANCE	20,000	1,680	1	0.084	0.084	0.084	0.084	0.082	0.002	2.439	0.084	0.084	0.086	0.100	8,400,000
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	30,950	13,812	8	0.440	0.450	0.440	0.446	0.436	0.010	2.294	0.444	0.444	0.450	0.100	24,530,000
OM0000002200	AHLI BANK	87,584,228	10,107	7	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.118	0.002	1.695	0.120	0.119	0.120	0.100	233,958,896
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	200,038	26,025	15	0.130	0.131	0.130	0.128	0.128	0.002	1.563	0.130	0.130	0.130	0.100	11,050,000
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIA INV.	97,187	9,011	14	0.092	0.093	0.092	0.093	0.092	0.001	1.087	0.093	0.093	0.093	0.100	8,570,000
OM0000001525	OMAN INVST&FIN.	105,000	16,515	9	0.158	0.158	0.155	0.157	0.156	0.001	0.641	0.155	0.155	0.158	0.100	37,209,000
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	170,500	54,464	17	0.320	0.320	0.318	0.320	0.318	0.002	0.629	0.318	0.316	0.318	0.100	15,585,367
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	29,850	23,587	9	0.792	0.792	0.788	0.792	0.788	0.004	0.508	0.792	0.784	0.800	0.100	594,000,000
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	1,000	306	1	0.306	0.306	0.306	0.314	0.314	0.000	0.000	0.306	0.302	0.306	0.100	208,866,744
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	32,700	2,739	5	0.084	0.084	0.083	0.084	0.084	0.000	0.000	0.084	0.083	0.084	0.100	16,800,000
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	201	86	2	0.430	0.430	0.422	0.430	0.430	0.000	0.000	0.422	0.422	0.430	0.100	94,600,000
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	190,503	100,580	20	0.528	0.528	0.528	0.528	0.528	0.000	0.000	0.528	0.528	0.528	0.100	1,887,322,690
OM0000003969	OOREDOO	17,296	6,131	6	0.358	0.358	0.354	0.354	0.358	-0.004	-1.117	0.354	0.356	0.358	0.100	230,434,257
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PROD.	1,448,043	577,151	91	0.404	0.404	0.396	0.398	0.404	-0.006	-1.485	0.396	0.396	0.404	0.100	49,709,388
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	147,000	8,784	7	0.062	0.062	0.059	0.060	0.061	-0.001	-1.639	0.060	0.060	0.065	0.100	18,428,780
OM0000001418	RAYSUT CEMENT	202,182	38,635	26	0.195	0.195	0.190	0.192	0.199	-0.007	-3.518	0.190	0.188	0.190	0.100	38,400,000
Total	17	92,860,103	11,676,298	274												

Parallel Market

OM0000007084	MCT DESALINATE	128,684	11,739	14	0.092	0.092	0.090	0.091	0.087	0.004	4.598	0.092	0.087	0.092	0.100	14,155,086
OM0000001152	OMAN NAT. ENG.	794,297	95,839	42	0.119	0.122	0.119	0.121	0.118	0.003	2.542	0.122	0.121	0.122	0.100	15,730,000
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	17,972	674	3	0.049	0.049	0.048	0.049	0.048	0.001	2.083	0.048	0.048	0.051	0.100	33,069,484
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	83,000	8,654	31	0.097	0.098	0.097	0.097	0.096	0.001	1.042	0.098	0.097	0.098	0.100	16,975,000
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	20,000	3,791	4	0.189	0.190	0.189	0.190	0.189	0.001	0.529	0.190	0.190	0.189	0.100	308,929,808
OM0000001095	DHOOFAR INSURANCE	10,000	1,960	1	0.196	0.196	0.196	0.196	0.196	0.000	0.000	0.196	0.196	0.000	0.100	19,600,000
OM0000001319	ALUMINIUM PROD.	22,435	2,535	4	0.110	0.113	0.110	0.113	0.113	0.000	0.000	0.113	0.111	0.120	0.100	3,790,574
OM0000001681	OMAN EMBRATES HO.	128,084	7,893	11	0.060	0.062	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.000	0.000	0.062	0.060	0.066	0.100	7,312,500
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	27,681	2,546	4	0.091	0.092	0.091	0.092	0.092	0.000	0.000	0.092	0.090	0.092	0.100	7,489,053
OM0000003711	SOHAR POWER	950	40	1	0.042	0.042	0.042	0.042	0.042	0.000	0.000	0.042	0.000	0.042	0.100	9,282,420
OM0000004246	SMN POWER HOLDING	1,000	47	1	0.047	0.047	0.047	0.048	0.048	0.000	0.000	0.047	0.044	0.050	0.100	8,863,509
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	198,446	19,653	9	0.100	0.100	0.099	0.099	0.099	0.000	0.000	0.099	0.099	0.101	0.100	221,458,350
OM0000004669	SHARQIYAH DESALIN.	40,760	4,076	3	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.000	0.000	0.100	0.092	0.100	0.100	9,780,216
OM0000004735	SEMBOORP SALALAH	1,000	72	1	0.072	0.072	0.072	0.071	0.071	0.000	0.000	0.072	0.073	0.075	0.100	6,774,608
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	169,400	8,302	11	0.049	0.050	0.049	0.049	0.049	0.000	0.000	0.049	0.049	0.049	0.100	35,005,911
OM0000005260	OMAN ARAB BANK	4,500	720	1	0.160	0.160	0.160	0.160	0.160	0.000	0.000	0.160	0.000	0.159	0.100	267,105,600
OM0000004947	OMAN REIT FUND	18,197	1,498	4	0.084	0.084	0.082	0.082	0.082	0.000	0.000	0.084	0.080	0.084	0.100	38,637,284
OM0000001517	HSBC BANK OMAN	830,000	82,180	15	0.099	0.100	0.099	0.099	0.100	-0.001	-1.000	0.099	0.096	0.110	0.100	198,030,966
OM0000003281	TAAAGEER FINANCE	88,080	7,159	6	0.082	0.082	0.081	0.081	0.082	-0.001	-1.220	0.081	0.081	0.083	0.100	20,540,790
OM0000003321	GALFAR ENGINEER	1,463,000	105,799	52	0.073	0.073	0.073	0.073	0.074	-0.001	-1.351	0.073	0.073	0.079	0.100	14,818,011
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	855,788	55,831	34	0.067	0.067	0.066	0.067	0.068	-0.001	-1.471	0.067	0.066	0.068	0.100	23,392,676
OM0000007407	DHOOFAR GENERATING	120,000	6,928	8	0.058	0.058	0.057	0.058	0.059	-0.001	-1.695	0.057	0.057	0.059	0.100	12,880,920
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	10,000	470	2	0.047	0.047	0.047	0.047	0.048	-0.001	-2.083	0.047	0.047	0.049	0.100	68,742,289
OM0000003125	GLOBAL INV. H.	198,000	14,246	9	0.072	0.072	0.071	0.072	0.074	-0.002	-2.703	0.071	0.071	0.072	0.100	14,400,000
Total	34	5,211,294	442,852	251												

MANUFACTURING ACTIVITY

Omicron restrains US manufacturing

WASHINGTON: A measure of US manufacturing activity fell to a 14-month low in January amid an outbreak of COVID-19 cases, supporting the view that economic growth lost steam at the start of the year.

But the survey from the Institute for Supply Management (ISM) marked the third straight month of signs of improvements in labour and supplier delivery performance.

Unfinished work increased at its slowest pace in 15 months and manufacturers remained upbeat on demand, Reuters reported.

Still, Timothy Fiore, chair of the ISM manufacturing business survey committee, noted "shortages of critical intermediate materials, difficulties in transporting products and lack of direct labour on factory floors due to the COVID-19 Omicron variant."

"While off to a somewhat rocky start, 2022 will be a good year for US manufacturing," said Oren Klachkin, lead US economist at Oxford Economics in New York.

The ISM's index of national factory activity dropped to a reading of 57.6 last month, the lowest since November 2020, from 58.8 in December. A reading above 50 indicates expansion in manufacturing. — **BNA**

EQUITIES MARKETS

Indian stocks rally for 3rd day, Sensex closes 696 points higher

MUMBAI: The Indian equities markets continued winning run for the third straight day on Wednesday as key indices Sensex and Nifty closed with a gain of over 1 per cent led by strong buying support in financial and IT stocks.

The 30 stock S&P BSE Sensex closed at 59,558.33 points, which is 695.76 points or 1.18 per cent higher when compared with its previous day's close at 58,862.57 points.

The Sensex opened with handsome gains at 59,293.44 points and surged to a high of 59,618.51 points in the intra-day. The broader Nifty 50 of the National Stock Exchange closed 203.15 points or 1.16 per cent higher at 17,780 points against its previous day's close at 17,576.85 points. Earlier the Nifty opened in the positive at 17,706.20 points and surged to a high of 17,794.60 points in the intra-day.

The stock markets have rallied after the presentation of Union Budget 2022-23. In the budget tabled in Parliament on Tuesday, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has proposed to significantly boost investments to accelerate economic growth. — **ANI**

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As one gets older, it becomes even more important to remain physically active, not just to remain fit, but also to improve one's cognitive performance. A new study by researchers at University of California San Diego School of Medicine has shed light on this.

Their findings were published in the journal 'JMIR mHealth and uHealth'.

The study added to the canon of research associating physical activity with cognitive performance, this time using 90 middle-aged and older subjects who wore accelerometers while physically active and completed mobile cognitive testing from home.

"The future of lifestyle interventions really needs to be remote-based," said Raeanne

Moore, PhD, associate professor in the Department of Psychiatry at UC San Diego School of Medicine and principal investigator of the study. "The pandemic has made this especially clear."

On the days their physical activity increased, the study found, the 50 to 74-year-old participants performed more effectively on an executive function task, and on the days when their physical activity decreased, so too did their cognitive performance.

"It was a very linear relationship," Moore said. "We hypothesized that we would find this, but we couldn't be sure because we weren't telling people to increase their physical activity. They just did what they do every day."

First author Zvinka Zlatar, PhD, a clinical psychologist at UC San Diego School of Medicine, added:



Future interventions, in which we ask people to increase their physical activity, will help us determine if daily changes in physical activity lead to daily gains in cognition measured remotely or vice versa

"Future interventions, in which we ask people to increase their physical activity, will help us determine if daily changes in physical activity lead to daily gains in cognition measured remotely or vice versa."

The correlation between physical activity and cognition remained when adjustments were made for various co-morbidities, such as HIV status, age, sex, education and race/ethnicity. But it held only for persons who functioned independently -- who rely on others to perform the tasks of daily living, such as managing household activities or paying the bills.

"For them, physical activity may have a greater benefit on daily, real-world cognitive performance," Moore said, a finding consistent with research into Alzheimer's disease and related dementias.

Though it didn't fall within the

purview of this study, Moore speculated that, because functionally independent adults likely perform more cognitively stimulating and social activities, which are known to have positive impacts on brain health, physical activity may have less of an impact on cognition.

Moore and Zlatar said their work has implications for the development of novel digital health interventions to preserve brain health in aging.

"We don't know yet if there's a cumulative, long-term effect to these small daily fluctuations in cognition," Zlatar said. "That's something we plan to study next -- to see if performing physical activity at different intensities over time, in unsupervised settings, can produce long-term improvements in brain health and sustained behavior change." - ANI



Here Come the Brides: ‘Say Yes to the Dress Arabia’

STARZPLAY, the leading subscription video on demand (SVOD) service in the MENA region, partners with Discovery to present its 'Original', 'Say Yes to the Dress Arabia', available to stream exclusively on the platform from February 11, 2022, with two episodes released each week.

'Say Yes To The Dress Arabia', a STARZPLAY Original is coming to the Middle East for the first time. It gives brides from the region a once-in-lifetime opportunity to feature on the show and find their perfect wedding dress.

The Arabian edition is the 25th local spin-off of the popular series featuring 20 brides from various cultural backgrounds, ranging in age from 23 to 50, all in search for their dream wedding dress.

Shot at the Hazar Haute Couture in Dubai - the largest wedding dress producer in the Gulf region -- the bridal boutique houses an unrivalled collection of one-of-one bridal dresses, that perfectly accommodated the bridal budgets

ranging from \$615 to \$14,000.

'Say Yes to the Dress Arabia' beautifully captures the emotional journeys of brides-to-be, bundled with the show's trademark fun family drama, as each loved one holds their own opinion on the dress. Hosted by renowned Lebanese celebrity stylist, Khalil Zein, an expert and in-demand stylist in the Arab world, Khalil has dressed many celebrities from across the region, including Haifa Wehbe, Rahma Riad, Nancy Ajram, Maya Diab, and Nadine Nassib Njeim, to name a few.

A virtual event to mark the show's launch was held by STARZPLAY and Discovery. Joining several of the brides in the event were host Khalil Zein, Khaled Benchouche, SVP of Programming & Acquisitions, STARZPLAY, said: "The addition of 'Say Yes to the Dress Arabia' to our content portfolio reflects STARZPLAY's commitment to bring quality content to our local audience. 'Say Yes to the Dress Arabia' showcases a diverse roster of brides with many different backgrounds and stories, which will indeed resonate with our viewers. The series underlines STARZPLAY's focus on delivering world-class homegrown content with regional relevance, and we are proud to add it to our library of

such an iconic legacy and it brings me great pride to be part its first regional appearance. The process of helping the brides, from a plethora of different backgrounds, was a fruitful challenge. I am very excited for the viewers to watch what we worked so hard to put together and I am sure they will enjoy every bit of it as much as we did. Thank you to the STARZPLAY and Discovery teams for giving me this wonderful opportunity."

Khaled Benchouche, SVP of Programming & Acquisitions, STARZPLAY, said: "The addition of 'Say Yes to the Dress Arabia' to our content portfolio reflects STARZPLAY's commitment to bring quality content to our local audience. 'Say Yes to the Dress Arabia' showcases a diverse roster of brides with many different backgrounds and stories, which will indeed resonate with our viewers. The series underlines STARZPLAY's focus on delivering world-class homegrown content with regional relevance, and we are proud to add it to our library of

STARZPLAY Original shows."

Anouska Widdess, Senior Director of TLC & Channel Operations, Discovery Communications, added: "TLC's Say Yes to The Dress is one of Discovery's most beloved global franchises, having gained a cult following worldwide.

We are proud to be partnering with STARZPLAY to finally bring the region its own edition, especially since MENA is famous for having some of the most glamorous weddings and brides. We trust regional viewers will enjoy the diversity of dresses, personalities and culture the show has to offer."

discovery+, the definitive non-fiction, real life subscription streaming service from Discovery, Inc., signed an exclusive deal with STARZPLAY in July 2021 to bring 'Say Yes to The Dress Arabia' to the region.

Fans of 'Say Yes to The Dress' can already enjoy plenty of seasons of this popular series on the discovery+ add-on channel on STARZPLAY.



Mary Millben performs during the celebration of the 40th Anniversary of U.S.-China Student Exchanges in Washington D.C., the United States, November 21, 2019. —Xinhua

Prominent U.S. singer recalls life-changing experience as exchange student in China

November 21, 2019 was a big day Mary Millben can hardly forget. On that day, the prominent American and Hollywood actress and singer became the first artist to sing both the U.S. national anthem along with the Chinese national anthem marking the 40th Anniversary of U.S.-China Student Exchanges at the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the United States.

“I was the first African-American to sing both anthems and certainly the Chinese Anthem in Chinese,” Millben told Xinhua recently, recalling the beautiful moments she had at the event hosted by the Chinese Embassy in coordination with the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

“It brought me back to my participation and life as an exchange student in China,” said Millben, who have visited and studied in China as a part of the University of Oklahoma Journey (OU) to China 2006 summer program.

The six-week programme was Millben’s first visit abroad, and it took the midwestern girl, who had no idea about how large the Chinese community was in Oklahoma, to China’s four universities

in four major cities -- Xi’an International Studies University, Yunnan University (Kunming), Peking University (Beijing), and Fudan University (Shanghai).

“It was a life-changing experience,” she said.

What China impresses me

“I literally chose the furthest place from Oklahoma, and that actually happened to be China... that’s the truth. That’s actually how it first started,” chuckled Millben, who studied opera in OU.

Millben said she felt very much indebted to then OU President, David Lyle Boren, also veteran politician in the state of Oklahoma, who knew the value that China played in the context of diplomatic relations with the United States and brought the journey to China program to the university.

“I didn’t know much at all about China. What really intrigued me was the opportunity to be really thrown into a culture over weeks or a period of time, and to learn the culture, the history and its people,” Millben, who was joined by a make-up of 17 OU students from different majors, races and backgrounds during the 2006 China trip. “I was so excited for this assimilation into a different part of

the world,” said Millben.

The first morning she woke up around 6 am in Xi’an International Studies University hearing “all of this noise” outside her dormitory. “I’m not exaggerating, but there were hundreds of students on the field track which was right outside my window practicing their English.”

“I was so amazed. That continued by the way over the entire course of our time there, seeing the diligence of the students, practicing their English, I was very impressed.”

Millben said she didn’t have much of a cultural shock in China. “The heritage and the longevity of the Chinese culture was incredibly fascinating.”

“Probably one of the most memorable times was climbing the Great Wall of China. It was an incredible and exhausting experience,” she said. “The beauty of the landscape of China at that height, it was such a joy.”

During her stop in Lijiang, Yunnan, Millben got a rare opportunity to meet virtuoso Xuan Ke, now 91, head of Dayan Naxi Orchestra, whose musicians play centuries-old instruments without music sheets.

“It was really sitting at that mo-

ment witnessing a piece of Chinese history in real time,” she said.

“The one consistency between all was the warmth that I felt from the Chinese people, and the value of the country’s rich history,” she emphasized.

Culture cultivates friendship

In recent years, Millben has dedicated her platform as an artist to finding ways in strengthening ties with countries.

She performed the song “Let There Be Peace On Earth” for the 2021 Chinese New Year celebration hosted by Chinese Embassy during the pandemic.

“The greatest way to develop friendship is to get to know each other... Culture is a great reminder of our commonalities,” she said, adding “it reminds us that we are one family.”

She suggested “the best way to do that is to encourage that type of learning early in one’s life.”

“It’s why student exchanges, getting students to study abroad in high school and in college is so important to professional development,” she said. “It was certainly for me, how studying abroad in China really impacted the way that I feel about China and the Asian American community today.”

In any culture, the younger generations are “much more open, accepting and tolerant, of less prejudice,” Millben said.

“I think that’s a beautiful trait among younger generations that we can all learn from. We have to find ways in the context of older generations to take on the heart of a child, a young person and lean into inclusiveness, lean into those commonalities that we all share as a human race, as a global family,” she said.

Actually, Millben was “on a very fast track” in pursuit of a career in American politics as in 2005 she worked as a summer White House intern for President George W. Bush and as a White House presidential appointee for President Bush from September 2006 to January 2009.

Can't wait to visit china again

Calling herself “a small-town girl from the midwest,” Millben said her experience encourages people to “dream big and know everything and anything is possible.”

“My journey started with very humble beginnings. Success is not a destination. But success is a journey that’s filled with many commas, I would say. So, try to en-

joy the journey along the way, and define success by those beautiful moments,” she said.

Whatever the future has in store, Millben said she hopes to continue to be “a voice of hope.”

“I hope my future continues to include opportunities to help unify the world, and unify our souls,” she said. “I can definitely say what I hope in the near future is to visit China again.”

Millben is optimistic that the strained U.S.-China relationship will be back on the right track.

“I’m very hopeful. The relationship between the two countries is an important relationship to the world. We have to maintain healthy ties for the betterment of the world,” she said.

“There’s no doubt that the United States and China need each other. I think if we just come to the table understanding that we need each other, we may find a way to work through misunderstanding so that we can be the best we need to be to our citizens and to each other,” she said.

“I am optimistic. I certainly want to do everything that I can to help strengthen the U.S.-China relationship, because I believe in the power of culture and friendship,” said Millben.

Feature: Dual-Olympic city Beijing carries forward Olympic dream

BEIJING: For many people across the world, Beijing may just be China’s capital city with abundant historical and cultural heritage.

But to many Chinese, it is an enduring symbol of the Olympics - the first city in the world to have hosted both summer and winter Olympic Games. It preserves the Olympic spirit and carries forward the Olympic dream.

Faster, cleaner and more experienced

Xu Xin first came to Beijing as an 18-year-old in 1997 to enrol at Beijing Foreign Studies University.

“My first impression was that there were so many opportunities in Beijing, especially for a language-learning student like me,” he recalled. His major was in Swedish. In summer 2001, when the entire city was in ecstasy after winning the bid to host the 2008 Olympics, Xu graduated.

A total of 74,615 volunteers from 98 countries and regions helped the organization of the 2008 Olympics, including Xu, who provided translation service for Team Sweden at the Olympic Village. He watched several competitions during the Games, met famous athletes and even had a photo with the late Kobe Bryant.

Those days were busy, but discussing the experience, Xu always has a big smile. After the 2008 Olympics, he revisited the venues for different purposes, a recent one being to the Wukesong Arena, which had hosted basketball matches, for a concert.

He also witnessed the development of Beijing, where the public transportation network expanded and the city became cleaner.



Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics and Paralympics volunteers from Beijing Jiaotong University pose for photos on campus in Beijing, capital of China, January 22, 2022. — Xinhua/Ren Chao



Yu Yongjun (L) of China competes during the men's 1,500m preliminaries in the 2011 ISU Short Track World Cup in Salt Lake City, the United States, on October 21, 2011. — Xinhua/Yang Lei

With the Beijing Olympic Winter Games around the corner, Xu applied to become an Olympic volunteer for the second time. “It is unbelievable that my city could host two Olympics within only a few years, and I am lucky to become a volunteer at both events,” he said.

The 2022 Winter Olympics and Paralympics have, respectively, 27,000 and 12,000 volunteers, selected from more than one million candidates.

Xu saw many young faces in the volunteer team. “I felt like seeing myself in 2008,” he said.

Driving on the roads of Beijing, he found some signs of 2008 Olympic lanes still visible, while at some other sections, signs for the 2022 special lane have already been erected.

“In the past 14 years, the telecommunication technology in our country has developed quickly, which made communication easier. China has more experience in hosting major events, and I am sure the service of volunteers will be even better this time.”

From grandeur to sustainability

While Xu Xin is busy learning the terminology of winter

sports, Li Jiulin awaits a test at the National Speed Skating Oval, dubbed the Ice Ribbon. Li was the chief engineer of its construction.

The Oval is located in north Beijing, about 3.5 kilometers away from the National Stadium, also known as the Bird’s Nest, where the opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympics presented Chinese culture to the world 14 years ago.

When Li became an engineer at the Bird’s Nest in 2003, he was 35.

The 80,000-capacity stadium was known as the world’s largest steel structure.

“The building of Beijing’s National Stadium launched a new era in China’s construction industry and has drawn a variety of innovations, many of which have been upgraded in the following years and applied to the National Speed Skating Oval,” he said.

Six of the venues from the 2008 Olympics are being used for the 2022 Winter Games in a bid to cut costs. The Ice Ribbon is the only ice-sport venue built from scratch for the 2022 Winter Olympics.

Beijing 2022 has pledged to deliver a green, sustainable and

low-carbon Games, so Li and his team had to tackle a series of technical problems to reduce the use of steel. The Ice Ribbon boasts the most extensive full ice design in Asia, with an ice surface area of 12,000 square meters. Carbon dioxide refrigerant was introduced for ice-making, which is the most environmentally-friendly natural refrigerant, in an effort to further reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

In Li’s team, about one-third of the people involved had, like him, worked in construction for both the summer and winter Games.

“Olympic stadiums showed the strength of a nation in certain eras,” he said. “The Bird’s Nest impressed visitors with its grandeur, while the new Ice Ribbon reflected the new characteristics in development: sustainability.”

“It is an honor for me to be involved in the construction of both,” he added with a grin.

Start of a dream

Unfortunately, skater Yu Yongjun will not be able to compete in the Ice Ribbon when the Olympic action gets underway next week.

The World Cup gold medalist

started short-track skating in 2001 when Beijing won the bid for the 2008 Summer Games.

“I remembered well people’s celebrations then,” Yu said. “I knew that the Olympics was the most important stage for athletes and dreamed of competing there one day.”

In the following years, he witnessed the preparation of the 2008 Olympics until the giant footprints, painted by fireworks, lit up the summer night sky to unveil the long-awaited sports gala. The 2008 Olympics sparked ordinary people’s passion for sports.

The following year, in 2009, Yu was selected by China’s national short track skating team. He finished runner-up in the 1,000-meter event at the Quebec World Cup in the 2010/2011 season, and won gold medals in the 5,000-meter relay along with teammates in the 2011/2012 Shanghai and Nagoya World Cups.

But just when everything seemed to be going in the right direction, he was struck down by injuries. He missed the Sochi Olympics in 2014 and retired.

But his Olympic dream didn’t die. After spending two years learning overseas, he moved

to China’s southern province of Yunnan to promote winter sports, setting up the provincial short track skating team. Yu came back to Beijing and was appointed assistant coach of the national team in 2018.

In 2020, he joined a skating club in Beijing’s Yanqing district called Mengqiyan, which means “start of a dream.” He gave lessons to local primary and middle school students at the club and helped train school teams.

He also coaches 16 trainees who are pursuing their sports dream, just as he did before.

“In our generation, short track skaters were mostly from north-east China where winter sports were popular,” Yu recalled. But his trainees were from different parts of the country, including the warm southwestern provinces like Yunnan and Sichuan.

His students and trainees were among the 346 million Chinese people who have participated in winter sports activities since Beijing’s successful bid for the 2022 Winter Olympics in 2015, according to China’s National Bureau of Statistics.

China now has 654 standard ice rinks, an increase of 317 percent from 2015. The number of indoor and outdoor ski resorts reached 803, up from 568 resorts in 2015.

Yu said that he expected Yanqing to become a base of short track skating in China.

He hopes that one day, his students could, as he had dreamed as a child, skate in the Olympic arena. But he also would like to see more people embracing winter sports. “May the Winter Games be the start of their dream.” Enditem

(Xinhua reporters Zhao Xu and Qiang Lijing also contributed to the story.)

ROUND-UP

2022 Renault Koleos: Engineered to demand attention, make heads turn

Well-defined edges make the overall profile of the 2022 Koleos appear solid and athletic and is one of the most prominent features in this new version

MUSCAT: Renault's first SUV the Koleos remains a favourite among customers and those looking for something different, which speaks volumes about the innovativeness that the car was built on. Well-defined edges make the overall profile of the 2022 Koleos appear solid and athletic and is one of the most prominent features in this new version. A great combination of power and refinement, the Koleos makes its presence felt with large shoulders and muscular side panels that are further enhanced by a robust front-end; broad, smart-looking tires; and a distinctly large wheelbase. A spokesperson for Renault Oman, from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles, said, "The 2022 car is engineered to demand attention and make heads turn.



Offering off-road capability with its all-wheel-drive transmission, Renault Koleos stands out with its assertive exterior design and enhanced interior comfort. With its athletic profile, robust front end, roomy seats, taut lines underscored with chrome, Renault Koleos allows owners to take their journey with confidence. Featuring a powerful and efficient new engine and more onboard technologies Renault Koleos fully embodies the values of the top of the Renault line-up." The all-mode 4x4-i transmission results in a car that promises owners all the power and comfort they would require on the road. The engine can be switched between two- and four-wheel driving giving drivers the liberty and flexibility to choose their own experience. The car is engineered to mirror the comfort of being home, with spacious leg space, ventilated memory seats, a breathable cabin. With a choice of colours for the seats, owners can choose what defines them the best — for a roomier feeling, one can opt for lighter shades, while darker ones can be picked for more assertive looks. The 2022 Koleos also comes with all-new black titanium trims that replace its predecessor's wooden trims. The car's ambient lighting, Apple CarPlay/Android Auto connectivity, R-LINK 2 all make for a memorable drive each time. The 2022 Renault Koleos is certainly a notch above when it comes to contemporary SUVs that set out to offer a bit of everything to cater to all customers, no matter their drives. The 2022 Renault Koleos also comes with additional features, such as rich acoustics with the BOSE audio system, lighting options, multimedia, navigation, Bluetooth and driving assistance systems in addition to easy park assist. Renault Koleos has been capturing everyone's attention in Oman with its charismatic, features rich and packed with safety attributes. If you are looking for a spacious SUV with elegant styling and unparalleled four-wheel drive technology, Renault Koleos is the car to buy. Sameel Al Mashari from Muscat says, "Renault Koleos stands out with its assertive exterior design and enhanced interior comfort. The wide-ranging suite of driver-assistance systems and infotainment options it offers make it a top brand." Afrah Al-Kharusi from Nizwa is fascinated with the brand's easy trunk access and hand-free function. She says, "With a sensor located under the bumper, all you need is a simple gesture with your foot to open the boot with ease. It

is very practical when your hands are full when returning from the office or shopping. I also like its 8.7" touchscreen navigation with R-Link2 system & Bose sound, 5 colour ambient lighting." Sameer Zedjali from Rusayl likes Renault Koleos for its strong and high-end design, comfort and outstanding performance. He says, "Koleos extends a variety of features that are among the most capable in the market. I particularly like its blind spot warning with flank protection warning, auto park assists and remote start engine with timer option." The model's spacious cabin-inspired Taamir Al Hinai from Muscat into buying a Renault Koleos. "Renault Koleos has a 2,705 mm wheelbase – for a total vehicle length of 4,673mm – counts amongst the longest in the class and allows Koleos to boast record-breaking interior space to position itself as a D-segment SUV," Taamir says. Sohail Al Jabri, who loves to go on adventure drives, loves Renault Koleos All mode 4x4-i technology. "One can get off the beaten track with Renault Koleos at any time. Its all mode 4x4-i technology, swap between 2WD mode, Auto mode and 4x4 (lock) mode is really impressive. It offers an ideal balance of torque between the front and rear wheels for perfect grip in all circumstances," he adds. With its athletic profile, robust front end, roomy seats, taut lines underscored with chrome, Renault Koleos allows owners to take their journey with confidence.

FIFTH CONSECUTIVE YEAR

Oman Oasis wins Oman's Most Trusted Brand Award

MUSCAT: Oman Oasis, the nation's leading water brand manufactured & distributed by Oasis Water Company, wins Oman's Most Trusted Brand Award once again for the year 2021. This marks a prestigious fifth win in a row through the survey conducted by Oman's media and voted on by the people of Oman. The survey was conducted online, and the winners of Oman's Most Trusted Brands Awards were felicitated at a special function held under the auspices of Dr Mohammed bin Hamed Al Rumhy, Minister of Energy and Minerals. The event was also attended by their highnesses, excellencies, chairmen, managing directors, CEOs, and senior officials from 45 winning companies. An annual event in its fifth year, Oman's Most Trusted Brands Awards are the ultimate recognition of a brand's products and services as well as of customer satisfaction. The public is free to nominate the companies or brands they prefer without being limited to just a few names. It is a true test of brand recall and an excellent way of establishing the genuine public perception of different brands in the country. Speaking about the award, NSS Subramanian, Chief Operating Officer, Beverages & FMCG at The Zubair Group noted, "We are proud to win Oman's Most Trusted Brand for the fifth time. On this occasion, I would like to thank employees and stakeholders for their contributions and efforts, not forgetting the trust bestowed upon us by our loyal customers." Saleh Al Amri, Deputy General Manager, Admin & Human Resources at Oasis Water Company received the honour from Mohammed Al Rumhy and Saleh



al Zakwani, Executive Chairman of Apex Media. Speaking on the occasion, Saleh Al Amri, said, "It is truly a privilege to yet again be recognised as a brand that people appreciate and trust. To win consistently since the inception of the awards in 2016 is a testament to our efforts. Oman Oasis will continue to work to further improve itself, as we always want to go further than our client expectations." Oman Oasis has always ensured the quality of its products by adhering to stringent quality control, maintaining international standards & production practices securing numerous regional and international awards & certifications. It is this unflinching commitment to the highest quality standards that has now also earned them the title of Oman's Most Trusted Brand. Winning the award for the fifth time demonstrates the level of trust consumers have in the brand, showing that the nation's favourite water brand is also the most trusted. Subramanian added, "On behalf of Oman Oasis, I would like to thank everyone who participated in the survey, which made it possible for us to win this award. We will ensure that we continue our efforts to provide our customers with only the best products - to nurture with care. Additionally, I would like to congratulate Apex Media for yet another successful award culmination."

MILESTONE

Nissan Sunny exceeds 20,000 sales mark in Middle East

DUBAI: Solidifying customer admiration of the Nissan Sunny, Nissan Middle East celebrated a sales milestone last month with over 20,000 units of the popular sedan being sold within the first nine months of the company's 2021 Fiscal Year (April 2021 – March 2022). Representing a significant overall increase of 77.6 per cent compared to the same period in the previous fiscal year, the Sunny sales success is strongly echoed across the region's markets, including Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, Dubai, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, and Qatar. Accelerated by the increase in sales and building on its enviable market share in the region, the Sunny witnessed an increase of 20.4 per cent in Oman and an increase of 19.6 per cent in Kuwait from April to December 2021, as compared to the same period of the previous year. This was supported by strong growth in other markets as well, including Bahrain which accounted for an increase of 5 per cent in segment market share in the country during the first nine months of FY21. Experiencing the largest increase in sales and leading the way in the region, Kuwait recorded an increase of over 135 per cent in Sunny sales during the first nine months of the 2021 Fiscal Year (FY21), closely followed by the UAE which more than doubled sales. Logging an impressive increase in sales were also Bahrain, Oman, and Qatar, recording a rise of 38 per cent, 37 per cent, and 20 per cent respectively. Thierry Sabbagh, Managing Director, Nissan Middle East, said: "The Sunny is a core part of Nissan line up in the Middle East and has served a variety of fleet and



private customers across the region for nearly three decades. The stellar sales results witnessed so far this year are testaments to the popularity of the Sunny and our dedication to continuously offer customers advanced features and mobility solutions across all our core models." Since its introduction to the region in 1994, the Nissan Sunny has continued to revolutionize the B-segment by offering customers class-leading features and unbeatable value for over 25 years. Continuing the legacy, the latest 2022 model stands out with features that are uncommon to the segment, including Intelligent Automatic Emergency Braking, Intelligent Forward Collision Warning, Intelligent Blind Spot Warning, and Intelligent Rear Cross Traffic Alert, all of which form part of Nissan Intelligent Mobility and come together to offer customers a safer and more enjoyable driving experience. Combining an energetic exterior design and a refreshing interior with powerful, no-compromise performance, the 2022 Nissan Sunny comes in as a well-rounded offering and serves as a spectacular entry point for sedan buyers into the Nissan line-up. The 2022 Nissan Sunny is available at Nissan's official dealership network in the region, including Arabian Automobiles Company in Dubai and the Northern Emirates, Al Masaood Automobiles in Abu Dhabi, Al Ain and Western Region, Saleh Al Hamad Al Mana in Qatar, Al-Babtain Group in Kuwait, and Y.K. Almoayyed & Sons in Bahrain, Suhail Bahwan Automobiles in Oman, Bustami & Saheb Trading Co (BSTC) in Jordan and Rasamy-Younis Motor Company in Lebanon.

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ROUND-UP

OTE Group opens new bookings for 2022 Chevrolet Groove

Since it arrived in the Middle East late last year, the Groove has charmed potential customers and motoring enthusiasts alike, particularly among the young and tech-savvy

MUSCAT: True to its newly-garnered reputation as an international bestseller, Chevrolet Groove - the sporty and youthful new compact SUV from General Motors - quickly sold out as soon as it made its debut in the Omani market. The resounding success of the new brand, replicated in markets around the world where it was launched over the past year, is a testament to its burgeoning global popularity.

Following the brand's runaway success, OTE Group - the exclusive distributor of Chevrolet cars in the Sultanate of Oman - has announced the opening of bookings for the next shipment of the all-new 2022 Chevrolet Groove, which is due to arrive in March.



Since it arrived in the Middle East late last year, the Groove has charmed potential customers and motoring enthusiasts alike, particularly among the young and tech-savvy.

Occupying a distinctive niche of

its own in Chevrolet's expanding SUV portfolio, the 2022 edition of the Groove is targeted at customers looking for a vehicle bristling with tech innovations, offering excellent fuel efficiency and boasting stunning looks - but all wrapped

up in an affordable package.

The all-new Groove is powered by a 1.5L engine, mated to a continuously variable transmission (CVT) the offers a more efficient acceleration and deceleration for a smoother and more enjoyable

daily drive. With an amazing fuel efficiency of 15.9 km/l, owners can go further on a tank of fuel than the brand's peers.

Technology and safety features come standard across all variants in the Groove line-up from the

base trim upwards. For ease of driving and manoeuvrability, there is a reverse camera and sensors, while a multifunctional steering wheel ensures all controls are easily accessible from Cruise Control. Stability and Traction Control also ensures the driver remains in control, no matter the road conditions.

A spacious and delightfully designed cabin can seat up to five people. Taking centre-stage in the cabin is an 8-inch screen packed with the latest Chevrolet infotainment capabilities, including phone projection, USB ports, and up to six speakers. A panoramic sunroof in the Premier trim helps bring a bit of the outside world into the comfortable cabin.

"Clearly, the all-new Chevrolet Groove made quite an impression on Chevy fans when the first vehicles hit the local market in January this year," said Mandeep Singh, General Manager - OTE Group, exclusive distributors of Chevrolet in the Sultanate of Oman.

"With prices starting at OMR 6,889 (inclusive of VAT), the Groove is simply the most price-competitive SUV on the market and a key driver of its overwhelming appeal. We are moving quickly to replenish our inventory to meet what is anticipated to be a strong and consistent demand for this popular brand."

Book now to own one of Oman's bestselling, yet most affordable, SUVs, which come in four distinct colour options - Metal Red, Candy White, Aurora Silver and European Blue!

OMAN INTERNATIONAL HOSPITAL

OIH makes strong presence at Arab Health 2022

MUSCAT: Oman International Hospital (OIH), along with its operator IdealMed GHS, Portugal, made its strong presence at the Arab Health 2022 held recently in Dubai, UAE.

At the custom-built pavilion, OIH showcased its state-of-the-art facilities and unique features such as the five Centres of Excellence, Hybrid Operation Theatre, Medical Spa, hi-tech Cath Lab and other unique features, while IdealMed GHS demonstrated its global know-how and capabilities in the conception, development, delivery and deployment of turn-key solutions as well as day-to-day operational management and administration of hospitals and healthcare projects across the world.

Marcelo Pereira, CEO of Oman International Hospital said, "Oman International Hospital, Muscat, officially opened earlier this month, is a world-class, comprehensive healthcare institution providing 3600 healthcare solutions of highest international standards to the people of Oman and the region."

"Our multi-super speciality hospital is home to five Centers of Excellence, a unique Hybrid Operation theatre, a Medical Spa, and several other cutting-edge features and facilities. The expert doctors, nurses and para-medical staff of the hospital are drawn from Oman and across the globe."

Dr Jose Alexandre, Chairman of Idealmed Global Healthcare Services, Portugal said, "At Idealmed GHS, we assume an unconventional vision for hospitals, leading innovative projects and maximising their sustainability and profitability, enhancing the comfort and well-being of its users and sur-



passing their superlative expectations. Our decades of experience in designing, exciting and managing large scale hospital projects and healthcare solutions across the world, stands testimony to our standing."

He added, "In all our projects, we integrate local culture with science, safety with comfort, and aesthetics with functionality. Using the most innovative layouts and engineering concepts and leading-edge equipment solutions, we combine technological sophistication with the know-how of the most skilled and trained Human Resources."

Senior executives from Siemens Healthineers, Portugal and MENA- one of the long-term associates of IdealMed GHS and a

sponsor of the newly established Med Academy at Oman International Hospital, were also present at the pavilion.

During the event, several medical manufacturers, distributors, health institutions, medical innovators, pharmaceutical manufacturers and representatives from other related business sectors met with OIH and IdealMed GHS officials and held discussions.

The Arab Health 2022 is one of the largest healthcare expos held annually and is a scientific and educational platform for healthcare professionals who wish to remain up-to-date in their area of specialisation connecting manufacturers and service providers with clinicians, procurement professionals, dealers and distributors.

WORLD RALLY TEAM

Toyota Gazoo Racing celebrates podium finish at Rallye Monte-Carlo

MUSCAT: The Gazoo Racing (GR) World Rally Team (WRT) completed a strong debut event for the new GR Yaris Rally1 recently, with Sébastien Ogier claiming second place overall at the famous Rallye Monte-Carlo. Ogier, who was chasing a record-extending ninth win together with new co-driver Benjamin Veillas, gave his all in the final stage to finish just 10.5 seconds from victory in the No.1 GR Yaris Rally1.

Gazoo Racing World Rally Team began a bold new hybrid-electric era in the FIA World Rally Championship as the 2022 season commenced in Monaco. Toyota's new vehicle, the GR YARIS Rally1, is the successor to the all-conquering Yaris WRC, which achieved a clean sweep of the manufacturers', drivers', and co-drivers championship titles during the 2021 season. The hybrid electric vehicle consists of a 3.9kWh battery and motor-generator unit delivering an additional 134 hp combined with the proven 1.6-litre turbocharged engine from the Yaris WRC to provide the drivers with over 500 hp. It runs on 100% sustainable fuel and is the first of its kind to be used in an FIA world championship.

All three of the team's drivers claimed stage wins in their new vehicles, which made the GR Yaris Rally1 the fastest vehicle on nine of the 17 stages. It demonstrated both impressive performance and reliability despite the challenges of the new Rally1 regulations, which introduce hybrid electric power to rallying's top level for the first time. In Monaco to join the team and witness the GR Yaris Rally1's debut was Kazuki Nakajima, the recently-appointed Vice Chairman of Gazoo Racing Europe.

Akio Toyoda, President and



CEO of Toyota Motor Corporation, commented: "It was so close for Séb to achieve his ninth victory in Rallye Monte-Carlo. His driving feeling with our new vehicle, the GR Yaris Rally1, seemed to be good. I would like to express my respect to the leadership of the FIA, WRC Promoter, and all others involved in the preparations to help this historic and traditional World Rally Championship move toward the realization of carbon neutrality with electrified cars and new fuel."

Toyoda continued: "The GR Yaris is a production sports car that we, Toyota, made by ourselves to win in motorsports. The car has finally started the real competition stage now. I'm so glad, and I would like to thank everyone who has worked together with me to build GR Yaris. The season has just begun and I believe we can continue the good work together. To the fans, I appreciate your continued support for the Gazoo Racing World Rally Team this season. Thank you so much!"

Sébastien Ogier, Driver of the

No.1 Toyota GR Yaris Rally1, said: "It has been a huge joy to compete in this special rally again and be in this incredible fight. We have done a great performance over the weekend and there were no issues with the car, which is a fantastic achievement. Fate decided differently today, but I'm still smiling, and I still enjoyed this fight very much. It's been a good weekend for the sport."

Over the years, Toyota has been participating in many different forms of motorsports, including Formula One, the World Endurance Championship (WEC), and the Nürburgring 24 Hours endurance race. Toyota's participation in these events has overseen by separate entities within the company until April 2015, when Toyota established GR, to consolidate all of its motorsport's activities under one in-house brand. Representing Toyota's belief that 'the roads build the people, and the people build the cars,' GR highlights the role of motorsports as a fundamental pillar of Toyota's commitment to making 'ever-better' cars.

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