LET'S TALK
Times OF OMAN

HOLIDAY NOTICE

The next edition of the Times of Oman will be on Sunday, November 26 due to National Day holidays.

NIZWA MUSEUM PROVIDES A CULTURAL LINK BETWEEN OMAN'S PAST AND PRESENT

Nizwa Museum, which is located in the centre of the Wilayat of Nizwa in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, provides visitors an opportunity to embark on a journey through history and learn about Omani heritage, culture and civilization. Nizwa is a major tourist destination in the Sultanate of Oman and plan is to make the museum a cultural centre. >A4

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STRONGER DEMAND FOR PERSONAL LOANS IN 2022

Record OMR10.935 billion was disbursed by commercial and Islamic Banks in Oman in 2022

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Salaried individuals in the Sultanate of Oman have relied a lot on personal loans from commercial and Islamic banks and the growing appetite can be gauged from the new figures released by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) in its 2022 report.

According to the report, personal loan disbursals by commercial and Islamic banks in Oman hit a new record of OMR10.935 billion in 2022, up from OMR10.542 billion a year earlier, underscoring the continued demand for personal banking credit by salaried individuals to address their private, consumer and family-related funding requirements.

The report said that personal loans accounted for a significant 37.4 percent of total banking credit of OMR29.223 billion recorded in 2022. This is in line with a 40 per cent cap of their loan portfolio set by the Central Bank of Oman for personal loans (including residential housing loans).

Personal loan requests cover a broad array of funding requirements ranging from housing finance and improvements, to educational, wedding, medical and holiday-related expenditures. Often, it can also be used to fund the purchase of automobiles, household electronics and other consumer-related expenditures.

Personal credit has been on a steady upward trajectory over the past several years, according to the CBO report.

Surpassing the OMR10 billion mark for the first time in 2018, it climbed to OMR10.242 billion a year later. After a marginal increase of OMR10.269 billion in 2020, personal loan disbursals jumped to OMR10.542 billion in 2021. It has since risen just shy of the OMR 11 billion mark in 2022. >A5

DEVELOPMENT BANK

Royal Decree restructures Oman Development Bank

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik yesterday issued Royal Decree No. 84/2023 on restructuring Oman Development Bank. It reads as follows:

Article (1) stipulates that the name of "Oman Development Bank" shall be amended to "Development Bank" and that the provisions of the bylaw attached to this decree shall be applied in this regard.

Article (2) states that the Development Bank shall draft its articles of association in accordance with the Commercial Companies Law promulgated under Royal Decree No. 18/2019.

Article (3) states that the provisions of this decree and the bylaw attached to it shall not prejudice the rights or obligations arising prior to its date of enforcement.

Article (4) says that the Minister of Finance shall issue the Executive Regulation of the bylaw attached to this decree, along with the decisions necessary for its enforcement. Till such time, the existing regulations and decisions shall continue to be applied without prejudice to the provisions of this decree or the bylaw attached to it.

Article (5) cancels all that contradicts this decree and the attached bylaw or contravenes their provisions.

Article (6) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from the day following its date of publishing. – ONA

RISE IN BOOKINGS

Staycations on rise as Oman set for National Day holiday break

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The excitement is palpable as Oman gears up for the upcoming National Day holidays from Wednesday. Staycation bookings are on the rise, with residents and citizens eagerly anticipating the leisurely break from Wednesday, November 22, to Saturday, November 25, 2023.

Hotels and resorts across the Sultanate have reported a significant rise in bookings and are enthusiastically preparing to welcome guests.

For those yet to plan their getaway, seizing the deals and offers by tomorrow is advised, as rooms are being swiftly booked, according to prominent travel agents and hoteliers.

In conversations with *Times of Oman*, leading travel agents revealed that "a majority of citizens and residents have already secured their plans for a mini-vacation set between Wednesday, November 22, and Saturday, November 25, 2023."

Arup Singh Deo, Director of Operations and Projects at Al Nahda Hotels & Resorts, which manages Al Nahda Resort & Spa Dunes and Al Nahda Sahab Resort & Spa, said, "Long weekends in Oman always invigorate domestic tourism. Most of our rooms are already reserved for the upcoming National Day holidays.Highlighting the advantages of staycations, he noted, "Staycations offer the allure of a 'luxury for less' holiday. With no expenses on flights and visas, staycation budgets are considerably lower compared to international travel. Moreover, it allows individuals to explore the abundant local tourist attractions in Oman."

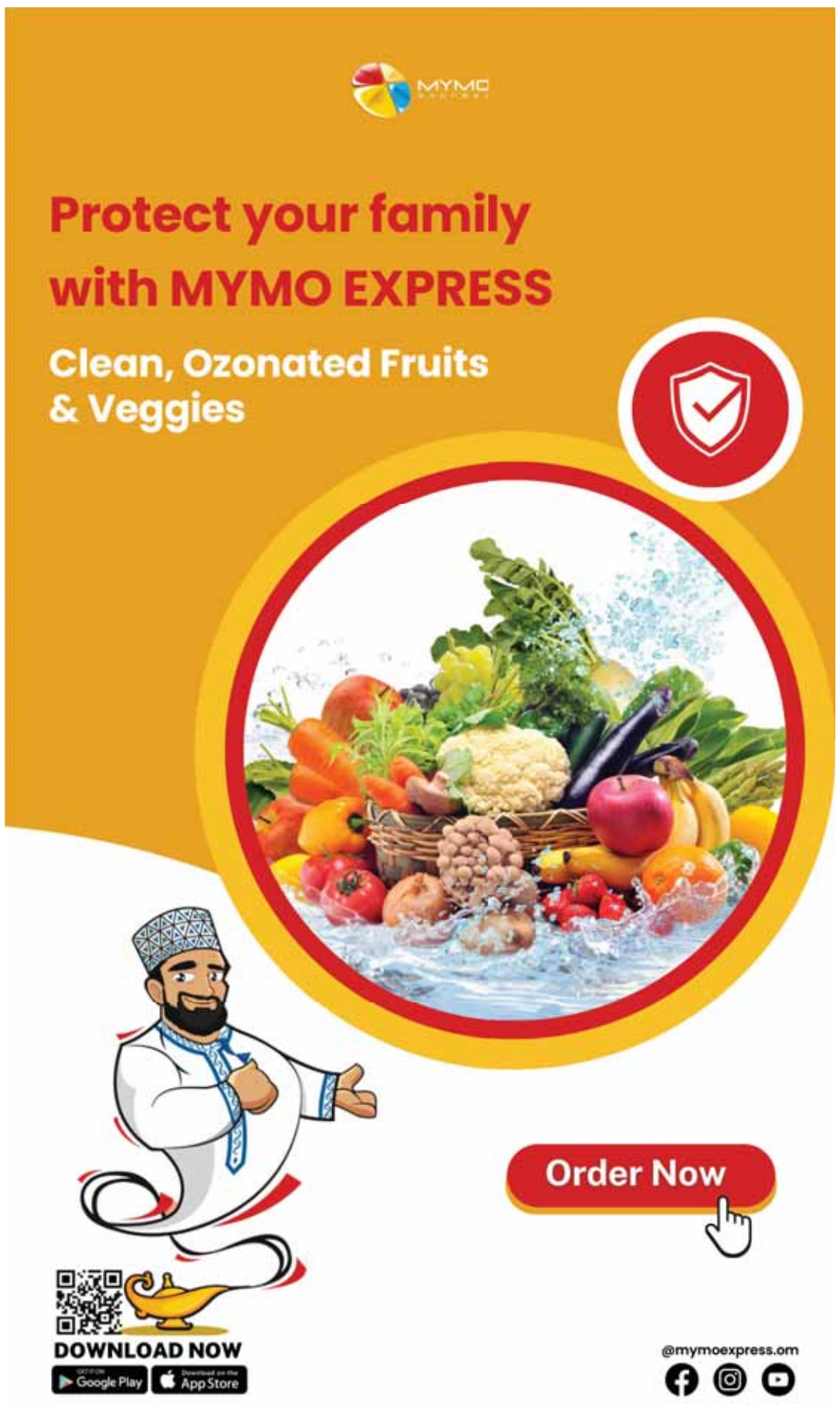
Amidst rising travel costs and hurdles in obtaining visas for European countries, Omani citizens and residents are opting to explore local destinations for their staycations. This emerging trend has been duly noted by travel industry professionals in Oman.

One of the highly sought-after destinations is Al Jabal Al Akhdar, where hotels in the popular city of Al Dakhiliyah Governorate are witnessing a healthy influx of visitors.

Jagdeep Thakral, General Manager of Naseem dusitD2 Naseem Resort, Jabal Akhdar, commented, "We are experiencing a bustling weekend, and the National Day holidays have undeniably spurred a surge in bookings starting from Wednesday at our property. Elaborate arrangements have been made to ensure our guests enjoy a relaxed and fulfilling break amidst the stunning backdrop of Al Hajar Mountains."

Seema Pankaj, a long-time resident in Oman, eagerly anticipates spending a couple of days in the mountain city and has chosen Naseem dusitD2 Naseem Resort in Al Jabal Al Akhdar. "The Adventure Park at the hotel is exceptional, catering to both children and adults. I look forward to relishing the cool mountain climate and trying out some of the activities at the Adventure Park."

"Additionally, the Himam Trail Run Race will take place from Thursday, and the Al Hajar Ultra 110km kicks off on November 23 from Al Hamra. My friends and I are planning to watch the race on our return from Al Jabal Al Akhdar."



TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN
Economic leadership programme conducted

1 The Royal Academy of Management (RAM) conducted the Economic Leadership Programme - Win in China to equip executive leaders with the necessary skills. >A2

OMAN
Complex surgery done at Royal Hospital

2 A specialised medical team at the Royal Hospital succeeded in performing a complex and rare interventional catheterisation operation for a 70-year-old patient. >A3

WORLD
UN chief calls for Gaza ceasefire

3 Amid the ongoing war between Israel and Hamas, UN chief Antonio Guterres has reiterated his call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. >A7

OMAN

PRAYER TIMINGS

Dhuhr.....11:58pm
Asr.....3:04pm
Maghrib.....5:25pm
Isha.....6:39pm
Fajr (Tomorrow)..... 5:07am

'TABSEER'

National Family Affairs Committee holds meeting

MUSCAT: The National Committee for Family Affairs on Monday held its second meeting of the year (2023) under the auspices of Dr. Laila Ahmed Al-Najjar, Minister of Social Development, Chairperson of the Committee.

The meeting reviewed the 2024-2025 Country Programme Plan joining the government of the Sultanate of Oman and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

It discussed a number of family issues, including premeditated murder and assault on people.

The meeting provided an opportunity to explore "Tabseer" initiative, which aims at raising community awareness about the safe use of social media and the launch of the website of the National Committee for Family Affairs. -ONA

ROYAL ACADEMY OF MANAGEMENT

RAM programme to analyse China's economic growth

MUSCAT: The Royal Academy of Management (RAM) conducted the Economic Leadership Programme - Win in China. The programme is designed to equip executive leaders with the necessary skills and insights to successfully navigate and thrive within the Chinese market.

The programme will host 40 CEOs from Oman Investment Authority's (OIA) subsidiaries and the private sector, along with 7 representatives from government entities with ties to the People's Republic of China and foreign investment.

The programme is designed to familiarise participants with the opportunities and capabilities within the Chinese market. Its core objective is to foster meaningful communication among participants, enabling them to cultivate robust professional relationships both locally and globally.

This initiative aims to provide a comprehensive and balanced perspective on the remarkable transformation of the Chinese economy, empowering participants to navigate it with a holistic and balanced vision.

The programme will examine the intricate landscape of Chinese economic development and its profound global implications. It will focus on fostering strategic economic collaborations between Omani government entities, private enterprises, and Chinese businesses. Additionally, the initiative aims to strengthen trade relations with Chinese companies and institutions, not only in the Sultanate of Oman, but also across the Middle East.

The programme will run over three consecutive days featuring a variety of discussion sessions pivotal to trade expansion in the Chinese market and enhancing Chinese-Omani relations. Key topics include the economic transformation within the People's Republic of China and global influences, alongside insights into trends guiding Omani companies towards successful expansion in the Chinese market.

The programme also includes panel sessions showcasing the experiences of business leaders from both China and the Sultanate of Oman.

A dedicated session on the impact of effective decision-making in international companies and investments is included, along with an in-depth discussion centred on the bilateral relations between China and Oman.

In addition, the programme includes advisory sessions aimed at fostering trade growth in the People's Republic of China. These sessions aim to bridge relations between business people and commercial enterprises through innovative solutions, fostering collaborative opportunities and building enduring trade partnerships.

Dr. Ali Qassim Al Lawati, Chairman of the Royal Academy of Management (RAM), stated, "The inception of Economic Leadership - Win in China aligns with His Majesty the Sultan's vision to develop proficient national leaders equipped with advanced capabilities in order to support the transformation towards a resilient and sustainable economy. It mirrors the Sultanate of Oman's dedication to diversifying revenue streams, fortifying investments, and fostering the expansion of both government entities and private enterprises, facilitating their access to local and global markets."

He stressed the importance of this programme, emphasising its goal to empower executive leaders by providing them with the essential skills necessary to enable them to expand into global markets. This, in turn, serves to bolster and enrich the economic collaboration between China and Oman.

He also stated, "The programme, implemented in collaboration with the Oman Investment Authority, stands as a testament to our commitment. It was designed in partnership with the Cheung Kong Graduate School of Business Administration in the Republic of China.

Professor Xiang Bing, the Founding Dean of the Cheung Kong Graduate School of Business Administrationin the People's Republic of China, expressed his satisfaction, stating, "As the Founding Dean of CKGSB and a member of the International Advisory Board of the Royal Academy of Management, I'm delighted that our strong partnership has led to a significant stride in fostering closer business relations between the Republic of China and the Sultanate of Oman. This collaborative effort aims to deepen mutual understanding and explore collaborative opportunities between Omani enterprises and Chinese businesses. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Royal Academy of Management for their initiative, trust, and invaluable support, pivotal in launching this pioneering programme."

The programme was designed in cooperation with the Cheung Kong Graduate School of Business in the People's Republic of China, which is the first privately funded, research-based business school in China, focusing its research on global trade issues and on specific topics in China.

The school has been ranked as one of the best colleges in highlighting successful billionaire companies, businessmen, chairpersons and CEOs in China. The college has trained 3,000 executives from a variety of Chinese companies. -ONA

IMPORTANT PROGRAMME: Dr. Ali Qassim Al Lawati, Chairman of the RAM emphasised programe's goal to empower executive leaders by providing them with essential skills. - ONA

GREEN COVER

Campaign to plant trees in Amerat starts

Times News Service

AMERAT: The Environment Authority, represented by the General Directorate of Nature Conservation, began on Monday a campaign to plant one million seeds of wild trees, including: Sidr, Samar and Ghaf, in the Wilayat of Al Amerat in Muscat Governorate, under the patronage of the governor of Al-Amerat.

The campaign includes planting about 500,000 wild tree seeds per day, and they are being planted in four locations on the banks of the valleys and mountains of the wilayat.

The two-day campaign aims to spread green cover in Muscat Governorate, specifically in the Wilayat of Al Amerat, and to preserve environmental systems in the targeted areas, in addition to enhancing the role of community participation in preserving plant diversity, and implementing the plans of the national initiative to plant 10 million trees.

Cutting-edge tool for prostrate gland removal available

LRP is a minimally invasive surgical procedure to remove the prostate gland in patients with prostate cancer

Times News Service

MUSCAT: In a significant step towards cutting-edge medical care, the urology department team at Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Centre (SQCCCRC) performed the first Laparoscopic Radical Prostatectomy (LRP) in Oman.

LRP is a minimally invasive surgical procedure to remove the prostate gland in patients with prostate cancer.

Dr.Hilal Al Rashdi, Consultant Urology at SQCCCRC said: "Traditionally, open radical prostatectomy involved a more invasive approach, resulting in longer hospital stay and extended recovery period. However, with the advent of laparoscopic procedures, patients can now benefit from surgery with smaller incisions, less pain, a reduced chance of requiring blood transfusion and much quicker recovery with better outcome."

He added: "LRP involves the use of specialised instruments including 3D camera to remove the prostate gland. This innovative approach not only minimises trauma to surrounding tissues but also provides surgeons with improved precision and vision during the procedure."

Less pain

Dr. Mohammed Marzouk, Consultant Urology at SQCCCRC explained: "The key advantage of LRP is its potential to speed the post-operative recovery process. Patients usually experience less pain and scarring, resulting in a faster return to their daily activities. Additionally, the reduced risk of complications associated with this minimally invasive technique adds an extra benefit for those undergoing prostate surgery."

Dr.Mohammed Motaz, Consultant Urology stressed that SQCCCRC is committed to staying at the forefront of medical advancements and is prepared to provide the best possible care to the community. The introduction of LRP reflects our dedication to offering state-of-the-art treatments that prioritise patient comfort with improved outcomes.

He added: "With Laparoscopic Radical Prostatectomy now available, SQCCCRC is proud to have contributed to the advancement of healthcare in Oman, ensuring that our community receives world-class treatment for prostate cancer."

Patients in Oman can now access this cutting-edge treatment, bringing the benefits of advanced surgical techniques closer to home.

As SQCCCRC continues to embrace technological innovations in the field of medicine, the Centre remains steadfast in its commitment to improving patient experiences and outcomes.

REVIEW RELATIONS

Oman, Estonia review relations

MUSCAT: Sheikh Khalifa Ali Al Harthy, Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs received Mariin Ratnik, Undersecretary for Economic and Development Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia in Muscat yesterday.

The meeting reviewed relations between Oman and Estonia, and means of promoting them in different areas. The two sides also exchanged views and touched on various issues of mutual interest.

The meeting was attended by Ingrid Amer, Ambassador of Estonia to Oman and some officials at the Foreign Ministry. -ONA

Recall

Recall Date: 21/11/2023

Brand of Commodity	Year of Production	Number of Affected Commodities
AMG SL 55 4MATIC+	2022-2024	7

Recall consequence: on certain SL (232 platform) vehicles with M177 engine the routing of the 12V-starter/generator wiring harness might not meet specifications. In this case, the wiring harness could chafe on the drive shaft. As a consequence, a short circuit, which could potentially result in a loss of propulsion, cannot be ruled out. Additionally, due to the high electrical currents potentially flowing through this connection, the temperature in this area might increase. Legal requirements might not be met.

Recall Action: As a precautionary measure Zawawi Trading Company team will check the routing of the wiring harness on the affected vehicles and rework it. The expected workshop visit for the check and rework of the wiring harness will take around 30 minutes. Zawawi Trading Company team will contact the customers affected by the recall to arrange a convenient time from 21/11/2023 on all working days between 08:30AM-5:00 PM to check and rework of the wiring harness and rework, if necessary.

To check the serial numbers of the affected commodities, please visit the website from Recalls & Warning: http://recall.pacp.gov.om

هيئة حماية المستهلك
Consumer Protection Authority
www.pacp.gov.om

خط المستهلك
Consumer line
80079009
80077997

Toll free number
80079777

Zawawi Trading Company L.L.C.

CARDIAC CATHETERISATION

Complex surgery of a 70-year-old patient broadcast live

MUSCAT: A specialised medical team from the National Heart Centre at the Royal Hospital succeeded in performing a complex and rare interventional catheterisation operation for a 70-year-old patient suffering congenital deformities in the aortic valve.

The operation was carried out after the deformities caused severe narrowing of the valve opening, coupled with the development of extreme cardiomyopathy, posing challenges that made it impossible to resolve the issue through ordinary surgical procedures.

The success of the operation constitutes a new medical and scholarly accomplishment credited to the health sector in the Sultanate of Oman.

The operation was broadcast live, with direct TV connection with a conference held in Dubai by the Gulf Intervention Society for cardiovascular catheterization.

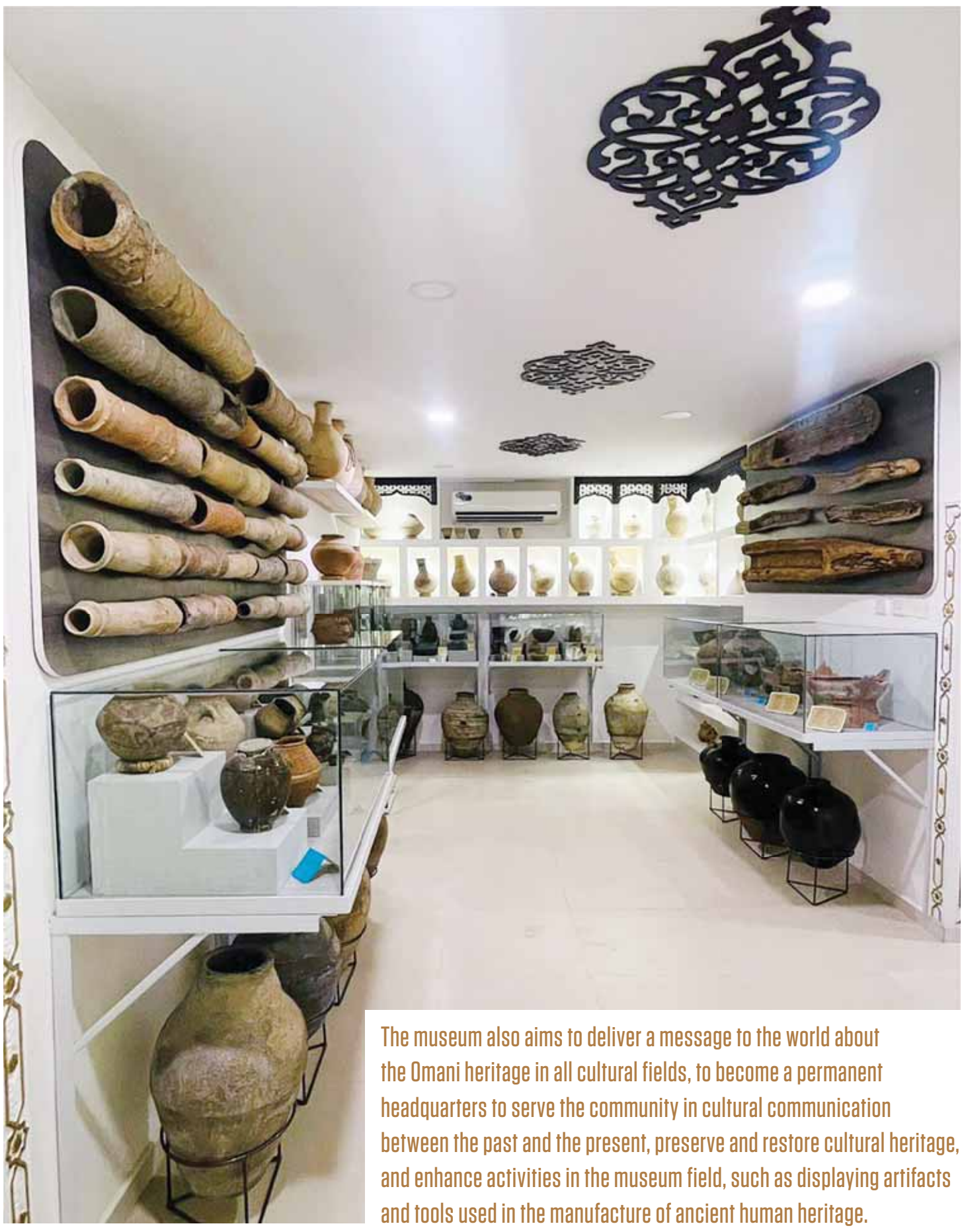
The conference, which brings together experts and specialists from around the world, is considered the largest gathering for interventional and structural cardiac catheterisation.

The operation was conducted by Dr. Hatim Ali Al Lawati, Senior Consultant of Interventional Cardiology and Structural Heart Disease at Sultan Qaboos University, and Dr. Khalid Humaid Al Sa'eedi, Consultant in Interventional and Structural Cardiology at the Royal Hospital.

The operating team was assisted by Dr. Mohammed Al Na'ebi and Dr. Haifa Al Za'abi from the Royal Hospital's Anaesthesia Department, nursing staff and catheterisation technician staff at the hospital. -ONA

OMAN

Nizwa Museum provides a cultural link between Oman's past and present



The museum also aims to deliver a message to the world about the Omani heritage in all cultural fields, to become a permanent headquarters to serve the community in cultural communication between the past and the present, preserve and restore cultural heritage, and enhance activities in the museum field, such as displaying artifacts and tools used in the manufacture of ancient human heritage.

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Nizwa Museum, which is located in the centre of the Wilayat of Nizwa in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, provides visitors an opportunity to embark on a journey through history and learn about Omani heritage, culture and civilization.

Mohammed bin Ahmed Ambusaidi, owner and director of the Nizwa Museum, said: "The museum, which is supervised by the General Directorate of Museums at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, includes about two thousand exhibited items, divided into 8 carefully selected halls, which are: the Manuscripts Hall, the Weapons Hall, the Human Hall, the Civilizational Communication Hall, the Copper Hall, the Handicrafts Hall, the Pottery Hall, and the Women's Hall."

Ambusaidi added that the collections distributed in the museum halls highlight the Omani ability to harness nature to enable construction and stability, and focus on the Omani tangible and intangible heritage.

Ambusaidi explained that the museum's vision aims to improve the heritage tourism system in the Sultanate of Oman in general and the Wilayat of Nizwa in particular.

Nizwa is a major tourist destination in the Sultanate of Oman and plan is to make the museum a centre for cultural radiance and an integrated historic reference for those who wish to explore the depths of Omani history and learn about the ancient population's collectibles and their various uses.

"The museum also aims to deliver a message to the world about the Omani heritage in all cultural fields, to become a permanent headquarters to serve the community in cultural communication between the past and the present, preserve and restore cultural heritage, and enhance activities in the museum field, such as displaying artifacts and tools used in the manufacture of ancient human heritage," Ambusaidi said.

Regarding the collectibles, Mohammed bin Ahmed Ambusaidi said: "The museum contains nearly two thousand archaeological and heritage pieces, represented by Omani manuscripts dating back more than 400 years, rarities of Omani pottery, handmade Omani copperware, doors, windows, wood with various patterns, colors and shapes, and equipment, machines and materials used in crafts and handicrafts."

Ambusaidi added that the museum has a collection of traditional weapons and their accessories, dating back to the sixteenth century, fossils and artifacts dating back to 260 million years, handicrafts used by ancient residents, and many heritage pieces that tell the story of cultural and commercial communication with other peoples.

SUPREME JUDICIAL COUNCIL

Action plan for 2023 reviewed

MUSCAT: The Directorate General of Judicial Inspection at the Supreme Judicial Council yesterday held a meeting during which it reviewed its action plan for the current judicial year (2023), its objectives, the challenges and measures to deal with them.

The meeting was chaired by Sheikh Dr. Yaqoub Mohammed Al Saidi, Supreme Court Judge and Head of the Directorate General of Judicial Inspection.

Ibra and Al Mudhaibi

It was attended by Judges of Courts of Appeal and Judges of the Courts of First Instance who operate in the areas of Ibra and Al Mudhaibi. Various technical and legal aspects were discussed during the meeting, including the management of lawsuits and hearings, electronic proclamation procedures, fulfilment of litigants' requests, justification for rulings and all that relates to the unification of judicial functions and the improvement of quality of rulings. -ONA

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LOANS

Extension of bank credit

< FROM A1

Other sectors of the economy too have benefited from banking credit extended by conventional and Islamic banks during 2022.

The CBO report commented: "The banking sector continued to play a supportive role in promoting economic diversification initiatives by meeting the credit needs of all segments in the economy. The present regulatory framework permits banks to allocate a prescribed proportion of their total credit towards personal loans and to allocate a minimum of 5 percent of total credit to SMEs."

It further noted: "The personal loans category continued to hold a majority share in total credit at 37.4 percent at end of 2022. This category witnessed a growth rate of 3.7 percent in 2022 and 2.7 percent in 2021. Additionally, several other sectors also registered positive growth rates during the year demonstrating some signs of economic recovery."

The service sector accounted for 10 percent of total credit of 2022 while the construction sector constituted 9.4 percent and manufacturing sector was 8.3 percent. Electricity, gas and water constituted 5.6 percent while transport and communication accounted for 5.9%.

Credit to agriculture and allied activities, despite having small shares, experienced the highest 50.1 percent in 2022. Similarly lending to the government sector expanded by 36.1 percent while to non-residents it increased by 34.8 percent.

On the other hand, credit to the manufacturing and wholesale and retail trade sector declined by 3.1 percent and 2.4 percent respectively.

FLCs now offers personal loans

The record disbursals of personal loans also received a boost after the announcement by the Central Bank of Oman in June authorising Finance & Leasing Companies (FLCs) to extend, among other products, personal loans to customers.

Following the nod, FLCs have been carrying out additional business activities and these include real estate financing, working capital facilities, personal loans and lending against their own deposits.

The CBO said that expansion of additional activities include relaxing certain conditions for their existing activities.

The CBO in its circular said that the relaxations were extended to FLCs on conditions to accept corporate deposits, investments including discretion to change its business hours as per need of the market.

The amendments aim to broaden the activities of FLCs and help in contributing positively to the development of the sector and the overall economy.

In its circular, CBO said that FLCs are now permitted to extend personal loans to individuals that do not require collateral or security, subject to some conditions.

ANNOUNCEMENT

National Gas Company SAOG
announces that Mr. Ajay Martin Soloman, who previously worked for us as sales representative, no longer works for the company and is not authorized to represent any business related to the company.

We would like to clarify that the company does not bear any responsibility resulting directly or indirectly from any actions undertaken by him.

To communicate:
Number: 90604445, Email: sales@nationalgasco.net

E-Auction – Punj Lloyd Limited (in Liquidation)
Sale of assets of the Company pursuant to the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code,2016, as amended

The Liquidator of Punj Lloyd Limited ("Company") is announcing the 3rd round of public e-auction for sale of the movable assets owned by the Company and located in the Country of Oman on a collective basis: on 'as is where is basis', 'as is what is basis', 'whatever there is basis', and 'without recourse basis'; in accordance with the provisions of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016, as amended and the rules and regulations made thereunder.

Interested applicants may refer to the detailed E-Auction Process Information Document uploaded on website of the Company http://www.punjlloydgroup.com/liquidation-documents and also on E-Auction website www.eauctions.co.in.

The Auction Sale will be done through the E-Auction platform: www.eauctions.co.in.

Asset Description	Manner of Sale	Date and time of E-Auction	Reserve Price (in INR)	EMD Amount (in INR) & Submission deadline
Movable Assets owned by the Company and located in the Country of Oman	Collective Basis	18 December 2023 from 10:00 GST to 18:00 GST	INR 230,173,140/- (Approx US Dollars equivalent USD 2,765,215/-)	INR 23,017,314/- (Approx US Dollars equivalent USD 276,521/-) or before 15 December 2023

Further, as per the provisions of the IBBI (Liquidation Process) Regulations, 2016, as amended, all interested bidders are required to submit the Expression of Interest along with the requisite eligibility documents on or before 05 December 2023 as provided in the E-Auction Process Information Document.

The Liquidator reserves the right to amend the key terms of the sale process including timelines for the e-auction to the extent permissible under the applicable laws and regulations. Any information about amendments /extension of any of the timelines will be available on the Company's website and communicated to the Qualified/ Successful Bidder.

Nothing contained herein shall constitute a binding offer or a commitment for sale of assets of the Company pursuant to this e-auction.

Please feel free to contact Mr. Ashwini Mehra at LQ.PUNJ@in.gt.com or Mehra.ashwini@gmail.com or Mr. Surendra Raj Gang at Surendra.raj@in.gt.com (representative of GT Restructuring Services LLP, IPE appointed as professional advisors to the Liquidator) in case any further clarification is required.

Sd/-
Ashwini Mehra
Liquidator
(Regn No: IBBI/IPA-001/IP-P00388/2017-18/10706)
Punj Lloyd Limited - in Liquidation
Authorization for Assignment valid till -23 March 2024
Correspondence Address:
Mr. Ashwini Mehra, Liquidator
Punj Lloyd Limited
C/O Mr. Surendra Raj Gang,
GT Restructuring Services LLP
L-41, Connaught Circus, New Delhi - 110001, E: LQ.Punj@in.gt.com

Date: 20 November 2023
Place: New Delhi

URGENTLY REQUIRED

Job Title	Planning Engineer
Location	Muscat
Qualification	Degree in a relevant engineering discipline.
Experience	6 - 10 years.
Particular	Proficiency in Project Control, Planning, and reporting software (i.e. Primavera P6).
Personnel	Multidiscipline Knowledge and good communication skills.

Role/Accountabilities

1. Detail study on scope as specified in the scope of work document.
2. Develop and maintain detailed project plans that outline a project's scope, objectives, tasks, and timelines.
3. Preparation of EPS, OBS, WBS, and activities in line with contract requirements.
4. Preparing and maintaining L1, L2, L3, L4, and L5 project schedules in various formats (Primavera) and what-if analysis and Resource Loading.
5. Identification of critical path and schedule interfaces between design, engineering, procurement, and construction.
6. Preparation & circulation of "look ahead" & "Updated" schedules & Recovery Plan.
7. Tracking, monitoring & controlling the Project progress w.r.to baseline schedule on parameters such as time, cost, and physical completion through S curves.
8. Creation of dashboards, and progress monitoring reports to monitor plan vs. actual.
9. Weekly & monthly reports generation and participation in Weekly/Monthly review meetings.
10. Monitoring system-wise completion of the project to ensure effective Mechanical / Pre-commissioning and commissioning Completion.
11. Preparing & updating of project resource histograms.
12. Frequently liaise with the site in charge, the internal team, and the client to discuss factors influencing the project's progress.
13. Escalation of identified risks, discussing recovery strategies and actions towards risk mitigation.

Interested candidates please forward
CV jobscareer.oman2023@gmail.com

ORIENT INSURANCE ORGANISES A BROKER FRATERNITY EVENT IN MUSCAT

Muscat: Orient Insurance PJSC (Orient), part of Al-Futtaim Group and one of the leading insurance service providers in the Middle East, organised an event that provided a platform for insurance brokers and the Orient team leaders to network and share best practices to enrich the industry in general.

The Broker Event, a first-time initiative in the Oman region, was held on the 25th of October, 2023, at the Intercontinental Hotel, Muscat, where more than 150 guests participated.

Addressing the gathering, Omer Elamin, Group President, Orient Insurance PJSC elucidated his vision for Orient Insurance and the great opportunities that await the group in the industry. His optimism and determination were inspiring, and he congratulated the entire team in Oman for Orient's achievements. He especially mentioned the success of Orient Insurance in the Retail segment.

Orient has been accomplishing enviable ratings in performance and turnover, and Omer Elamin extended his regards and appreciation to all brokers for their relentless support. He reiterated that Orient Insurance wishes to strengthen and deepen its relationship with brokers by further promoting our products and services and making the industry more lucrative for every stakeholder.

Along with Omer Elamin, other senior dignitaries like Xavier Arputharaj, Wissam Khalifeh, Vamshidhar Vanama, Fadi Awni, Subramoni Janardhan, Rohana Alagiyage, Gaurav Bajaj, Selvan Raman and Bharath Kumar attended the function from Orient Insurance PJSC.

Members from the Orient - Oman region team who attended the session included Aqil Allawati, Faisal Navaid, Abbas Jamesha, Sara Alharthi, Naveed Ahmed Zubairi, Radiya Al Ruzaiqi, Abdul Shakeel, Abdullah Al Mamari, Amjad AL Ismaili, Dawood AlMamari, Thuraiya Algharibi, Asila AlBattashi and Faiza AlSharji.

orient
orient insurance pjsc

OMAN

ENHANCE COOPERATION

Royal Office Minister meets US official

MUSCAT: Gen. Sultan Mohammed Al Nu'amani, Minister of the Royal Office received in Muscat yesterday Barbara Leaf, US Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs.

Gen. Al Nu'amani welcomed the guest, who expressed her thanks to the Sultanate of Oman and the steps taken to enhance cooperation between Oman and the United States. The meeting dealt with issues on the regional and international arenas and various matters of common concern. It also discussed the deep-rooted relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the United States of America. It looked into measures to develop bilateral relations in a manner that achieves the common interests of both countries. -ONA

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Winter tourism in Oman offers unique destinations, experiences

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is promoting the winter season among the local community, targeting citizens and residents, as well as tourists from the abroad

Ministry of Heritage and Tourism always promotes Oman's winter tourism season in targeted markets across Europe, Asia and GCC countries via promotional campaigns, holding business meetings with travel and tourism agents

MUSCAT: Visitors are pouring in various tourism destinations in the Sultanate of Oman during the winter tourism season, which is one of the most important tourism seasons in the country.

Meanwhile, the efforts of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT) are integrating with the partners of tourism sector, to provide attractive products and services through which the visitor can live a unique experience.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism worked to promote the winter season among the local community, targeting citizens and residents, as well as tourists from the abroad exporting tourism markets.

Commenting on this topic, So'adah Abdullah Al Harthy, Director of Market Development at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, said "MHT always promotes Oman's winter tourism season of the current year in targeted markets across Europe, Asia and GCC countries via promotional campaigns, holding business meetings with travel and tourism agents, and organizing introductory trips for media and tourism agencies".

She added that for the same purpose of promoting the winter season of Oman, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism also holds workshops in India and GCC countries, in addition to organising introductory workshops in Italy and Germany.

She emphasised that targeting these markets came from the standpoint that these markets are considered a primary source of tourists.

She also added that the Sultanate of Oman's participation in important international tourism exhibitions, such as the World Travel Fair in London 2023, has contributed to promote the Omani tourism destinations and acquainting the visitors of the diversity of products and experiences in the Sultanate of Oman's tourism destinations.

She pointed out that there are also many opportunities to attract visitors from global tourism markets, as the Sultanate of Oman is an official partner of the ITBBerlin 2024, the leading travel exchange. This partnership will provide greater scope for displaying cultural elements and features, which will help promote the tourism in Oman and attract tourists to its destinations.

For his part, Talal Humaid Al Khusaibi, Assistant Director General for Tourism Licensing and Investor Services at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, stated that the hotel establishments of various types in the Sultanate of Oman include more than 32,000 rooms across the governorates.

These hotel establishments are exerting efforts to modernise and maintain their facilities while the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism works to assure that these hotels are complying with the required specifications.

He clarified that the hotel establishments provide many diverse tourism packages and organizing trips to major tourism destinations.

He added that the Sultanate of Oman offers a spectrum of experiences and destinations in the winter season. They are characterized by exceptional weather, including the camping experience, which witnesses a good demand from visitors from inside and outside the Sultanate of Oman.

Camping is considered one of the tourism products that the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is keen to promote due to its importance. Camping during winter represents an added value to the tourism sector, and provides a unique tourism experience that is integrated with the other tourism experiences in the Sultanate of Oman as the country enjoys diverse natural marine, mountainous and desert environments.

In order to highlight various types of sheltering and accommodation patterns in the country, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is encouraging the establishment of camps in accordance with the required controls that take into account the quality and safety specifications to highlight the desert features enjoyed by the Sultanate of Oman, in addition encouraging the addition of hotel rooms to accommodate the growing number of tourists annually.

Talal Humaid Al Khusaibi, Assistant Director General for Tourism Licensing and Investor Services at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism also clarified that the winter camps offer tourism programmes and recreational activities for visitors to familiarize with desert life and Omani authenticity, including camel riding, climbing on the sand, watching the sunrise and sunset, wandering in the sand, and enjoying adventure trips across the desert.

The winter tourism camps provide local added value by enriching local communities through enabling local residents to provide support services, sell local products, and employ citizens to organize tourist tours for visitors, provide tourism services and activities that complement the role played by the camps.

Al Jabal Al Akhdar stands at the forefront of sites that represent a unique tourism destination which is preferred by many tourists for its various tourism activities. The activities include the exploration experience, the adventure trips and the chance of experiencing Omani culture and history within its environment.

Talal Al Khusaibi added that Al Jabal Al Akhdar enjoys an exceptional weather and stunning nature, where the temperature drops below zero in some winter seasons. It also includes valleys, heritage villages, and many attractions that were and still appeal to lovers of adventure and exploration. The visitor to this area can enjoy a very different experience, where the cold atmosphere, enjoyable mountain life, and the unique agricultural products contribute to attract more tourists to that tourism destination.

Furthermore, visiting the Al Jabal Al Akhdar provides tourists and visitors the opportunity to meet the local community and learn about their daily life, while the tourists or visitors to Al Jabal Al Akhdar can enjoy a fun and interesting adventure and a walking trip through the mountain trails.

The Turtle Reserve is also one of the main tourism destinations in the Sultanate of Oman, where its visitors are keen to visit it throughout the year. The reserve is one of the eco-tourism destinations enjoyed by Oman. The country seeks to preserve as it is a national treasure which contributes to promote the sustainable tourism.

Foreign and Arab tourists, as well as citizens and residents, are keen to visit the turtle reserve to enjoy watching turtles for relaxation.

As for the Governorate of Dhofar, it has enhanced the winter tourism season by implementing tourism programmes, activities and harnessing all means and tools that would enhance the governorate's position as one of the most prominent destinations on the tourism map.

In addition to the picturesque nature and the heritage and archaeological sites listed in the World Heritage List, which are Al Baleed, Sumhuram, Shasr, in addition to the Museum of the Land of Frankincense, the historical castles and forts in Taqah, Mirbat and Sadah, the natural markets, water springs, valleys, caves, adventure tourism activities, marine sports activities and desert tourism. All these attractions are contributing to diversify the tourism experiences including the adventure tourism activities, marine sports activities and desert tourism in Al Rub' Al Khali. -ONA

GLORIOUS OCCASION

Oman's embassy in Iran hosts reception on 53rd National Day

TEHRAN: Ibrahim Ahmed Al Mu'aini, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Islamic Republic of Iran, held a reception on the occasion of the 53rd National Day.

The guests extended their congratulations to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on this glorious occasion. They wished Oman and its people further growth, progress and prosperity. The reception was attended by Abbas Ali Abadi, Iranian Minister of Industry, Minerals and Trade, officials from Arab and foreign diplomatic missions, representatives of international organisations, military attachés accredited to Iran, academics, members of the press, intellectuals and businessmen. -ONA

UN chief reiterates call for immediate ceasefire in Gaza

"The war in the Middle East is having a staggering and unacceptable number of civilian casualties, including women and children, every day. This must stop," Gutteres said

NEW YORK: Amid the ongoing war between Israel and Hamas, United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres has reiterated his call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire.

He said that the war, which has currently taken the Middle East by storm, had an unacceptable number of civilian casualties.

"The war in the Middle East is having a staggering and unacceptable number of civilian casualties, including women and children, every day. This must stop," Gutteres said.

"I reiterate my call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire," he added.

On Monday last week as well, the United Nations had reiterated its demand for an "immediate humanitarian ceasefire" in Gaza amid the war with Israel and said that keeping an entire population besieged, under attack and denied access to amenities is "unacceptable".

The UN Geneva issued a statement by 'Principals of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory'.

Premature babies evacuated

Twenty-eight premature babies evacuated from Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza were taken through the Rafah crossing on Monday to receive medical treatment in Egypt, according to the Palestine Red Crescent Society.

The Egyptian Al-Qahera News channel broadcast footage showing each baby transferred into an incubator, then into an Egyptian ambulance. 'Over the weekend, a total of 31 infants were transferred from the hospital by the Red Crescent Society and UN aid agencies.

Health officials said the babies were in "extremely critical condition" and were treated at the Emirates Hospital in Rafah on Sunday, before they were taken to the border on Monday.

The BBC has reported that three premature babies out of the 31 who were evacuated from Al-Shifa hospital were not taken to Egypt from Gaza.

The British broadcaster quoted a doctor from Gaza's Al-Ahli hospital, to which the babies were initially evacuated, as saying that one of the babies was "unidentified."

The parents of the other two babies refused their relocation to Egypt "due to personal circumstances," according to the BBC.

20,000 people flee north

The United Nations humanitarian agency, known as OCHA, said around 20,000 people fled northern Gaza on Sunday amid ongoing fighting between Hamas militants and Israeli troops.

"OCHA's monitoring team estimates that about 20,000 people moved during the day, most of whom arrived at Wadi Gaza by donkey carts or buses, and some on foot," it said. -ANI/DW

GALLANT KNIGHT 3

UAE aid convoy sets off towards Rafah crossing

AL ARISH [EGYPT]: A UAE humanitarian aid convoy set off from Al Arish, Egypt, towards the Rafah Border Crossing on Sunday, in preparation for its entry into the Gaza Strip.

The aid will be distributed under the UAE's supervision as part of the 'Gallant Knight 3' humanitarian operation, launched under the directives of President His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan to support the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip.

The convoy comprises 13 trucks carrying a total of 272.5 tonnes of aid. These include 10 trucks carrying 16,800 food packages weighing 252 tonnes to support 84,000 people, and 3 trucks carrying 360 tents weighing 20.5 tonnes.

The UAE is continuing its humanitarian aid drive to support the Palestinian people as part of Operation 'Gallant Knight 3' through the operation of an air bridge. To date, the air bridge facilitated 49 flights aimed at alleviating the suffering of civilians in the Gaza Strip during these dire circumstances. -ANI

COLLAPSED TUNNEL

Rescuers plan new escape route for 41 trapped workers

New Delhi: Rescue workers in mountainous northern India began new efforts on Monday to reach 41 men trapped in a collapsed tunnel, now trying to reach them by digging a vertical shaft.

This follows failed efforts to burrow in horizontally and extract the laborers, who were caught in a cave-in on November 12.

Officials on site said that a malfunction with the machinery and a "cracking sound" that caused "panic" prompted them to pause attempts to force a steel pipe through the debris just wide enough for the men to crawl through and reappraise their options.

Digging vertically to reach them presents new challenges, not least creating an access road in the hilly, forested area to the new starting point for the tunnel. Without this, workers and heavy equipment can't access the site.

Rescuers hope the digging could start as soon as Tuesday once new machinery arrives, according to Jasvant Kapoor, a general manager at state-run company SJVN, which is involved in the rescue efforts.

Workers build a path in the hill as part of an alternate plan to reach to the workers trapped in a tunnel after a portion of the tunnel collapsed in Uttarkashi in the northern state of Uttarakhand, India, November 19, 2023. Workers build a path in the hill as part of an alternate plan to reach to the workers trapped in a tunnel after a portion of the tunnel collapsed in Uttarkashi in the northern state of Uttarakhand, India, November 19, 2023.

Foreign experts have been drafted in, including independent disaster investigator Arnold Dix, president of the International Tunneling and Underground Space Association.

"We are going to find a solution and get them out," Dix told reporters Monday at the site. "A lot of work is being done here. It is important that not only the men rescued but also the men who are [doing the] rescuing are safe."

Several potential solutions to reach the trapped men, including restarting the halted horizontal pipe insertion, are still under consideration.

"Every effort is being made," Uttarakhand chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami said in a statement Monday, insisting that the "workers trapped in the tunnel are safe."

They are being supplied with light, oxygen, dry food like nuts, rice and chickpeas, water and medicines via a pipe. Communication is possible via radio.

Authorities are drilling a second pipeline into the debris to enable the delivery of cooked food. -DW

BASHES PRESIDENT BIDEN

US borders 'most unsafe' in world history: Donald Trump

TEXAS: Former US President Donald Trump visited Texas near the US-Mexico border on Sunday and attacked the Biden administration over his 'anti-migrant' rhetoric, calling the US borders the "most unsafe" in the history of the world, CNN reported.

Speaking at the South Texas International Airport, Trump bashed President Joe Biden over his handling of the border, arguing that the US now has the "most unsecure border in the history, I believe, really, of the world."

During the visit, Trump also received the endorsement of Texas Governor Greg Abbott.

"We need Donald J. Trump back as our president of the United States of America," the Republican governor said at an event with the former president in Edinburg, Texas.

The former president has been ramping up his rhetoric on the campaign trail, promising to conduct the "largest domestic deportation operation in American history" if he wins the White House next year. He has said that undocumented immigrants are "poisoning the blood of our country".

"There's never been anything like this. Our country is being invaded. This is an invasion,".

Notably, the Republican frontrunner has made 'curtailing illegal immigration' a cornerstone of his 2024 campaign, CNN reported.

The former President is also planning a widespread expansion of his administration's hard-line immigration policies that would restrict both legal and illegal immigration, should he be elected to a second term. -DW

ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION

Around 450,000 Afghan migrants willingly return home from Iran

KABUL: Amid the ongoing issue of illegal immigration, around 450,000 Afghan migrants have willingly returned to the country from Iran, Khaama Press reported, citing Iranian local media reports.

Quoting Javad Khani, the official who is in charge of managing illegal migrants at the National Organisation for Migration in Iran, has stated that there is a possibility of approximately four million illegal migrants being present in the country.

Iranian official claims that eight main towns in Iran--Tehran, Sistan and Balochistan, Khorasan Razavi, Qom, Kerman, Yazd, Fars, and Alborz--are home to 92 per cent of the country's illegal Afghan migrants.

The Iranian official further underlined that at least one million illegal Afghan migrants in the country have received identity cards to date, Khaama Press reported, citing Iranian local media.

According to a Khaama Press report, Javad Khani noted that the enormous number of migrants in Iran are citizens of Afghanistan, and initiatives have been launched to organise those lacking the necessary paperwork.

Last week, Afghan refugees in Iran raised concerns regarding the increase in deportations, arrests, and harassment by the police. The Taliban has called on neighbouring countries to not deport Afghan refugees.

Afghan refugee representatives in Iran have criticised the Iranian government and the international community for their perceived lack of support and have called on them to address the challenges faced by Afghan refugees.

"Afghan refugees are being deported from Iran. The Iranian people and government are very oppressive towards refugees. Iran pushes out refugees ahead of winter when it is not right," said Spogmai Jabbarkhil, an Afghan refugees' representative in Iran. -ANI

SPORTS

We were not good enough in the final, says India skipper

I'm really proud of the team, how we played from game one. It wasn't our day, we tried everything we could from our side, but it wasn't supposed to be, says Rohit Sharma

AHMEDABAD: India captain Rohit Sharma said on Sunday that he is really proud of his team for their spectacular run to the ODI World Cup final despite losing the final to Australia.

However, Rohit admitted they were just "not good enough" on the big day to get past serial-winners Australia in Ahmedabad.

"Honestly, the result hasn't gone our way," Rohit said at the post-match presentation ceremony.

"And we know that we were not good enough today. But I'm really proud of the team, how we played from game one. It wasn't our day, we tried everything we could from our side, but it wasn't supposed to be.

"Honestly, 20-30 [runs] more would've been good. We spoke around 25-30 overs when KL and Virat were batting. I thought when they were batting they were stitching a good partnership there and then we just needed to bat as long as possible.

"We were looking at 270-280 at that point, but then we kept losing wickets. We couldn't stitch a big partnership there, and that's exactly what Australia did to win the game. They stitched a big partnership after three [early] wickets."

"When you have 240 on the board, you want to take wickets as early as possible, and we did that," Rohit said. "But then credit to [Travis] Head and Marnus [Labuschagne], they stitched a big partnership and put us completely out of the game. But again, we tried everything we could but I thought the wicket got slightly better to bat on under the lights.

"We knew under the lights it would be slightly better [to bat on]. I don't want to give that as an excuse, we didn't bat well enough to put enough runs on the board.

"And then upfront we got those three wickets and we thought another wicket there we can open up the game. But, again, credit to those two guys in the middle for stitching that big partnership." - Agencies

'We saved the best for the last'

AHMEDABAD: Australia weren't the clear favourites heading into the 2023 ODI World Cup. They began their campaign with two big losses (to India and South Africa), had injury troubles, and a number of out-of-form players. And most of their wins in the league stage were not necessarily convincing. But captain Pat Cummins was pleased his side "saved the best for last" as they beat hosts India - who were unbeaten in the tournament until Sunday - by six wickets to lift the ODI World Cup trophy for the sixth time.

"You've got to go and win a World Cup," he said at the post-match presentation ceremony. "You just can't wait for it to happen. And I think you got to be brave at times, you got to take the game on. And it was a real shift after those first two games. With our batting particularly, you saw the openers going out really aggressive and pretty much didn't waver from that for the rest of the tournament.

"Think we saved our best for last. And a couple of big-match players stood up and, yeah, we're pretty chuffed."

Travis Head, who was the Player of the Match in the final for his 137 off 120 balls, was injured at the start of the World Cup. The selectors, however, persisted with him and kept him in the squad. Making his comeback only in Australia's sixth match - against New Zealand - in the tournament, he smashed 109, playing an important hand in the five-run win. He was also the Player of the Match in the semi-final against South Africa.

"Amazing," Cummins said of Head's performance.

"I think you have to give it to the selectors that backed him even when he was out with a broken hand and the medical team to get him back. It was a big risk that we took and it paid off and you couldn't be happier for Travis, a legend. We love him and he's easy to watch."

Cummins had said ahead of the final there would be "nothing more satisfying" than silencing the 100,000-plus crowd in Ahmedabad. His side did that, but he also said it was a "pretty special" moment to win in front of a massive crowd despite the support being one-sided in favour of India.

"It [the crowd] was awesome, I must say," he said. "I was pretty happy. They were solid for a lot of the bowling innings. A couple of times they got loud and it was really loud. But fantastic. I mean, the passion in India is unrivalled around the world and I think it's amazing.

"Every single person is wearing the blue shirt. So you look around and it's a pretty special moment - one that whatever the result happened, we're never going to forget a day like today."

Dravid: The better team won on the day

AHMEDABAD: India fell "30-40 runs short" of a good total in the final, but it wasn't because of a safety-first approach in the middle overs - that's the line Rahul Dravid took in the wake of his team's defeat to Australia in the 2023 World Cup title bout in Ahmedabad on Sunday.

"I won't agree that we played with fear. We had 80 runs in ten overs. We had lost wickets, and when you lose wickets you have to change your strategy," Dravid said at the post-match press conference.

"If we had got to 280-290 and they were 60 for 3 then it might have been a very different game. But 240, I think they were always one partnership away from getting there."

"There were a lot of emotions in that dressing room. It was tough to see as a coach, because I know how hard these guys have worked, what they've put in, the sacrifices they've made," he said. "But that's sport. That happens. It can happen. And the better team won on the day. I'm sure the sun will come up tomorrow morning.

"We'll learn from it, we'll reflect, and we'll move on. That's what you do as sportsmen. You have some great highs in sport, and you have some lows in sport. And you keep moving on. You don't stop."

Dravid attributed the slowdown to the loss of wickets at regular intervals, and not a lack of intent.

"We haven't played any fearful cricket in this final. In the middle overs, they bowled really well and we lost three wickets. So a period of consolidation was needed, and every time we thought we could get on the attack, we would lose a wicket," he said. "If you lose wickets, you have to rebuild. We didn't set out to play defensively."

While Australia eventually coasted to the target with seven overs to spare and six wickets in hand, Dravid reckoned the game would have played out differently had India got 30-40 more runs on a surface he believed was tougher to bat on in the afternoon.

"Just felt like the ball was stopping in the afternoon a little bit more than it did in the evening," he said.

"It felt like the ball came on to the bat a lot better in the evening. There was that period where the ball was stopping and we weren't able to get boundaries. We were able to rotate the strike but we weren't able to get those boundaries.

- Agencies

JOINT WORLD CUP AND ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS

Oman aim to keep the winning rhythm in Bishkek

MUSCAT: Oman's Red Warriors will aim to maintain their winning rhythm in Group D of the Preliminary Joint Qualification - Round 2 for the FIFA World Cup 2026 and AFC Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2027 on Tuesday.

Oman will take on Kyrgyz Republic at the Dolen Omurzakov Stadium in Bishkek. The match will kick off at 6pm, Oman time.

Oman cruised 3-0 past Chinese Taipei in Muscat to begin their campaign in style under Croatian coach Branko Ivankovic.

The team left for Bishkek soon after their win against Chinese Taipei on November 16 from Muscat to get acclimatised to the cool weather conditions.

In the same group, Malaysia produced an amazing comeback to defeat Kyrgyz Republic 4-3 in their opening encounter.

Oman, seeking a return to the third round of the qualifiers after having done so for the first time in the previous edition, will be determined to not slip up in Bishkek.

They were impressive against Chinese Taipei and Kyrgyz Republic, who squandered a 3-1 lead against Malaysia, but may not be in the best frame of mind to stop the West Asian side.

Kyrgyz Republic will be appearing in just their second AFC Asian Cup but head coach Stefan Tarkovic wants them to emulate, if not better, their 2019 achievement.

OMAN CRUDE PRICE RISES

The price of Oman oil has increased, with prices for delivery by January 2024 reaching $82.67, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME).The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil rose by $3.49 from the price of Friday, which was $79.18. - ONA

MSX INDEX ENDS LOWER

The MSX index closed at 4,614.20 points, down by 0.18 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 1.40 per cent at 446.91 points. Al Maha Ceramics, up 8.70 per cent, was the top gainer while Sharqiyah Desalination, down 6.82 per cent, was the top loser.

Treasury bills worth OMR21mn issued

The value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to OMR14 million, for a maturity period of 28 days and the value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to OMR7 million, for a maturity period of 91 days

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) raised OMR21 million by way of allotting treasury bills on Monday.

The value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to OMR14 million, for a maturity period of 28 days. The average accepted price reached OMR99.594 for every OMR100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at OMR99.590 per OMR100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 5.29809 per cent and 5.31971 per cent, respectively.

The value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to OMR7 million, for a maturity period of 91 days. The average accepted price reached OMR98.664 for every OMR100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at OMR98.660 per OMR100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 5.36040 per cent and 5.43301 per cent, respectively.

The treasury bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance, and they provide licensed commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds. The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) acts as the Issue Manager and provides the added advantage of ready liquidity through discounting and repurchase facilities (Repo).

It may be noted that the interest rate on the Repo operations with CBO is 6.00 per cent while the discount rate on the Treasury Bills Discounting Facility with CBO is 6.50 per cent.

Furthermore, the treasury bills promote the local money market by creating a benchmark yield curve for short-term interest rates. Additionally, the government may also resort to this instrument whenever felt necessary for financing its recurrent expenditures. -ONA

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Joint Omani-Iranian projects on anvil at economic, freezones

MUSCAT: Dr Ali Masoud Al Sunaidi, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (Opaz), received Hojjatullah Abdul Maliki, Advisor to the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Secretary of the Supreme Council of Iranian Commercial, Industrial and Special Economic Free Zones, and his accompanying delegation currently visiting the Sultanate of Oman.

The two sides discussed ways of activating the provisions of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) that the two countries signed earlier.

The MoU deals with encouraging companies operating in economic zones and free zones to establish commercial relations and set up branches for implementing joint projects.

It is worth noting that Opaz signed a memorandum of understanding with the Iranian side to spur economic and investment development and highlight the competitive advantages of special economic zones and free zones in the two countries. -ONA

VENDOR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Asyad signs four agreements to empower SMEs

MUSCAT: Asyad Group, Oman's global integrated logistics provider, signed sponsorship agreements with four small and medium enterprises (SMEs) under its Vendor Development Programme, as part of the group's roadmap to empower SMEs and promote their role in Oman's economy.

Aiming to unlock growth opportunities for its SME partners, Asyad's Vendor Development Program provides existing and new vendors with support systems and capacity-building pathways to enable their role in the logistics sector and maximise ICV in various industries and innovation sectors.

The programme offers a set of support services to promote an SME-focused culture in logistics and encourage entrepreneurs and start-ups to develop their innovations.

The agreements signed between Asyad Group and four SMEs enable the companies to develop their products and services according to the logistics provider's needs.

Under the first agreement, Onsor Technologies will design a new, tailored monitoring system to be installed on Asyad Shipping vessels which will integrate the existing digital operating systems into a single platform, enhancing data collection and enabling real-time analysis.

Through the second agreement, Serag Electrode will supply Asyad Drydock with domestically produced welding electrodes to be used in drydock's technical operations.

The third agreement, signed with Capital Development, stipulates providing maintenance and repair services for mobile equipment deployed at Asyad Ports.

The fourth agreement with Golden Depth Marine Services includes supplying Asyad Drydock with buoy inspection and maintenance to ensure the readiness and optimal operational conditions of the shipyard's buoy systems.

As the main driver of logistics in Oman, Asyad Group is dedicated to identifying and entering targeted partnerships with SMEs and private companies to empower local players and make a positive and far-reaching impact on the national economy.

In the first half of 2023, the group awarded local companies with over 5,000 contracts and purchase orders (OMR38 million), of which 2,000 contracts (OMR10+ million) were awarded to more than 600 SMEs holding Riyada cards.

With multiple ICV initiatives and local collaborations, Asyad Group continues its local empowerment strategy as it forges more partnerships with SMEs and private entities across logistics, aiming to maximise ICV and the role of the local private sector in cementing Oman's position as a global hub for logistics and investment. -ONA

TOURS STATE PROJECTS BY OQ

Ministry of Energy undersecretary visits oil, gas and social investment projects in Musandam

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Mohsen bin Hamad Al-Hadhrami, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals (MEM), toured the state projects managed by OQ, the global integrated energy group, in the energy sector in Musandam Governorate.

Al-Hadhrami visited oil facilities and plants in the governorate and was briefed about their importance, their production rates, the future investment prospects in these projects, and their development stages during the upcoming years.

OQ's officials provided an explanation to Al-Hadhrami about the role played by the group in raising the efficiency of operations to increase production and reduce operational costs. They also briefed him on the feasibility studies conducted for a number of projects aiming at maximising the economic value of governmental assets.

Al-Hadhrami also reviewed the social investment projects carried out by OQ in the wilayats of Musandam Governorate. He listened to an explanation about their importance and the progress of their implementation, in cooperation with governmental authorities in the governorate.

These projects embody OQ's corporate social responsibility and its endeavours to serve local communities by creating new job opportunities and partnering with

big entities in planning and carrying out projects that contribute to achieving the desired social and economic development.

The projects also enrich the service and tourism businesses at the wilayats of Musandam and reflect its cultural, environmental and tourism aspects. They are considered one of the most important pillars of OQ's social investment programme.

On this occasion, Dr Ibrahim Al-Saleh, Executive Director of Musandam Oil and Gas Company, said: "Since January 2019, OQ has commenced oil and gas production operations at Block 8 located in Musandam Governorate. This area contains two offshore fields including Bukha and West Bukha, which produce oil and gas and supply gas to the Musandam Power Plant. We achieved a smooth transition of production operations from the previous operator, and maintained production levels above the expected rate by implementing precise well and reservoir management plans."

"Since the beginning of our operations, we were able to set a development plan for offshore fields to raise the production level. We are currently working on implementing this plan and we hope that we will complete it by the third quarter of 2024. Other production and development programmes for Block 8 are under preparation now. We will set its details during the next year. It is hoped that these plans will increase the production and ensure the continued delivery of gas to the Musandam Power Station to continue supplying the governorate with electricity," Al-Saleh concluded.

SUMMIT

China, US presidents' meeting sends positive signal for global economic recovery

BEIJING: Following the highly anticipated summit between President Xi Jinping and his US counterpart, Joe Biden, last week, there is growing optimism that increased communication, dialogue and consultation between the world's two largest economies will strengthen cooperation, align common interests and add much-needed certainty to the evolving global landscape.

Bilateral economic and trade cooperation, long seen as the stabilizing force and driving factor in China-US relations, is among the first to experience a thaw, as a series of dialogues and exchanges in this regard has sent a positive signal to both sides and the global economy.

Discussions matter

One of the key consensuses reached between China and the United States during the San Francisco summit meeting is that the two sides decided to step up high-level interactions, and agreed to start consultations on extending the China-U.S. Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement, and on resuming the China-US Joint Committee on Cooperation in Agriculture. Rather than seeking economic "decoupling," the two sides have welcomed the development of healthy economic relations, according to top Chinese and US economic officials.

China and the United States have agreed to enhance communication, seek consensus, manage disputes, and avoid misunderstandings that may lead to unintended escalation, noted China's Vice Finance Minister Liao Min, citing talks between Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng and US Secretary of Treasury Janet Yellen before the summit.

"The China-US economic relation takes roots in the two countries' common interests in the economic field," Liao told media after He and Yellen concluded several rounds of talks in San Francisco.

Chinese and US commerce ministers also met on the sidelines of the 30th APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting. It was the first ministerial-level talk after a new communication mechanism was announced when US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo visited China in August.

While both governments agreed to step up exchanges in relevant fields, the two sides had in-depth exchanges on national security issues pertaining to the economic field. It was very important to have such discussions, said Commerce Minister Wang Wentao at the meeting, as overstretching and politicising of the concept of national security would impact regular trade and investment activities. -Xinhua

MARKET

MSX index ends lower

Al Maha Ceramics, up 8.70 per cent, was the top gainer while Sharqiyah Desalination, down 6.82 per cent, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,614.20 points, down by 0.18 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 1.40 per cent at 446.91 points. Al Maha Ceramics, up 8.70 per cent, was the top gainer while Sharqiyah Desalination, down 6.82 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of OQGN were the most active in terms of number of shares traded while Bank Muscat were the most active in terms of turnover.

A total number of 1193 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of OMR3.12 million, with more than 13.31 million shares changing hands. Out of 40 traded securities, 15 advanced, 10 declined, and 15 remained unchanged. At the session close, foreign investors were net buyers for OMR943,000 while domestic investors were net sellers for OMR920,000, followed by GCC & Arab investors for OMR23,000 worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,512.18 points, down 0.09 per cent. Prices of Muscat Finance, Al Madina Takaful, Bank Muscat, and Bank Nizwa were up by 1.89 per cent, 1.21 per cent, 1.10 per cent, and 1.05 per cent respectively. Prices of Al Omaniya Financial Services, Ahli Bank, and National Bank Oman were down by 6.25 per cent, 2.94 per cent, and 1.00 per cent respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,347.00 points, up 0.6 per cent. Prices of Al Maha Ceramics, Galfar Engineering, and Al Anwar Ceramics were up by 8.70 per cent, 3.36 per cent, and 1.20 per cent respectively. Prices of A'Saffa Foods, and Oman Cement were down by 2.82 per cent, and 0.66 per cent respectively.

Services Index was up by 0.17 per cent before closing at 1,578.21 points. Prices of Al Jazeera Services, SMN Power Holding, Dhofar Generating, Sembcorp Salalah, and Phoenix Power were up by 2.87 per cent, 2.86 per cent, 2.78 per cent, 2.15 per cent, and 1.92 per cent respectively. Prices of Sharqiyah Desalination, Al Suwadi Power, Barka Water & Power Company, Renaissance Services, and Oman Telecom were down by 6.82 per cent, 4.35 per cent, 2.44 per cent, 1.44 per cent, and 1.34 per cent respectively.

— United Securities

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	4,631.862	4,599.330	4,614.200	4,622.350	-8.150	-0.18
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,529.979	7,489.717	7,512.179	7,518.972	-6.793	-0.09
Industry Index	5,347.004	5,316.316	5,347.004	5,315.135	31.869	0.60
Services Index	1,580.676	1,572.061	1,578.208	1,575.554	2.654	0.17
MSX Shariah Index	446.913	440.728	446.913	440.728	6.185	1.40
MSX TR INDEX	6,105.350	6,062.469	6,082.069	6,092.812	-10.743	-0.18
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,216.591	8,172.657	8,197.167	8,204.580	-7.413	-0.09
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	5,711.931	5,679.148	5,711.931	5,677.887	34.044	0.60
SERVICES TR IDX	1,758.489	1,748.904	1,755.742	1,752.790	2.952	0.17
FIXED INCOME INDEX	0.000	0.000	1,000.000	1,000.000	0.000	0.00

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
13,310,431	3,118,635	1,193	23,843,358,270	15	10	15	40

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR MONDAY, NOVEMBER 20

REGULAR MARKET

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RO)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	SECIRITY SYMBOL	MARKET CAP
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	50,865	15,056	6	0.296	0.296	0.296	0.296	0.299	-0.003	-1.003	0.296	0.296	0.296	0.100	NBOB	481,280,121
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	46,567	19,738	7	0.420	0.430	0.420	0.430	0.430	0.000	0.000	0.430	0.430	0.435	0.100	OMVS	287,397,133
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	9,690	533	3	0.055	0.055	0.055	0.055	0.055	0.000	0.000	0.055	0.055	0.057	0.100	OEIO	6,703,125
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	32,151	9,687	7	0.303	0.303	0.301	0.301	0.303	-0.002	-0.660	0.301	0.301	0.303	0.100	OCOI	99,592,686
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	281,164	47,517	26	0.169	0.169	0.169	0.169	0.167	0.002	1.198	0.169	0.169	0.178	0.100	AACT	37,180,000
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	10,669	2,260	3	0.209	0.215	0.209	0.215	0.209	0.006	2.871	0.215	0.213	0.229	0.100	AJSS	13,158,919
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	300	17	3	0.056	0.056	0.056	0.056	0.056	0.000	0.000	0.056	0.056	0.061	0.100	UFCI	19,943,129
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	4,220,678	1,159,559	120	0.273	0.276	0.273	0.275	0.272	0.003	1.103	0.275	0.275	0.277	0.100	BKMB	2,064,259,192
OM0000003000	Al MAHA PETROLEUM PRODUCTS MARKETING	500	500	1	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	0.000	0.000	1.000	1.000	0.000	0.100	MHAS	69,000,000
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	689,374	723,802	26	1.049	1.050	1.031	1.035	1.049	-0.014	-1.335	1.035	1.035	0.945	0.100	OTEL	776,250,000
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	30,000	12,300	15	0.410	0.410	0.410	0.410	0.416	-0.006	-1.442	0.410	0.400	0.410	0.100	RNSS	96,928,100
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	100,000	9,900	3	0.099	0.099	0.099	0.099	0.099	0.000	0.000	0.099	0.099	0.108	0.100	BKSB	541,320,962
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	138,700	9,898	21	0.070	0.072	0.070	0.072	0.070	0.002	2.857	0.072	0.070	0.077	0.100	SMNP	14,373,763
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	118,674	9,882	6	0.083	0.084	0.083	0.084	0.083	0.001	1.205	0.084	0.082	0.084	0.100	AMAT	14,700,000
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	6,050	1,508	5	0.250	0.250	0.230	0.250	0.230	0.020	8.696	0.250	0.210	0.248	0.100	AMCI	13,750,000
Total	15	5,735,382	2,022,155	252													

Parallel Market

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RO)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	SECIRITY SYMBOL	MARKET CAP
OM0000001418	RAYSUT CEMENT	28,000	3,812	6	0.136	0.137	0.135	0.137	0.137	0.000	0.000	0.137	0.136	0.137	0.100	RCCI	27,400,000
OM0000001426	OMAN REFRESHMENT	9,602	13,443	5	1.400	1.400	1.400	1.400	1.400	0.000	0.000	1.400	1.400	1.410	0.100	ORCI	70,000,000
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	500	27	1	0.054	0.054	0.054	0.054	0.053	0.001	1.887	0.054	0.051	0.055	0.100	MFCI	16,585,902
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	29,800	2,205	2	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.000	0.000	0.074	0.074	0.076	0.100	AAIC	15,244,000
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	248,982	12,926	18	0.052	0.052	0.051	0.051	0.051	0.000	0.000	0.051	0.051	0.052	0.100	AMII	4,335,000
OM0000002077	AL OMANIYA FINANCIAL SERVICES	28,430	4,265	2	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.160	-0.010	-6.250	0.150	0.150	0.155	0.100	AOFS	46,151,161
OM0000002200	AHLI BANK	850	140	1	0.165	0.165	0.165	0.165	0.170	-0.005	-2.941	0.165	0.165	0.000	0.100	ABOB	387,693,482
OM0000002804	ASAFFA FOODS	17,100	5,131	7	0.300	0.310	0.300	0.310	0.319	-0.009	-2.821	0.310	0.300	0.310	0.100	SPFI	37,200,000
OM0000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	74,000	3,004	8	0.041	0.042	0.040	0.040	0.041	-0.001	-2.439	0.040	0.040	0.041	0.100	BWPC	6,400,000
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	35,083	5,232	5	0.149	0.154	0.149	0.154	0.149	0.005	3.356	0.154	0.148	0.154	0.100	GECS	31,259,913
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	13,130	1,260	6	0.096	0.096	0.096	0.096	0.095	0.001	1.053	0.096	0.095	0.096	0.100	BKNZ	214,747,491
OM0000004669	SHARQIYAH DESALINATION	1,660	204	1	0.123	0.123	0.123	0.123	0.132	-0.009	-6.818	0.123	0.124	0.000	0.100	SHRQ	12,029,666
OM0000004735	SEMBCORP SALALAH	100,000	9,255	11	0.092	0.095	0.092	0.095	0.093	0.002	2.151	0.095	0.092	0.094	0.100	SSPW	90,684,335
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	37,340	843	5	0.022	0.023	0.022	0.023	0.023	0.000	0.000	0.023	0.021	0.023	0.100	BATP	15,522,411
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	75,400	1,631	9	0.021	0.023	0.021	0.022	0.023	-0.001	-4.348	0.022	0.022	0.023	0.100	SUWP	15,716,939
OM0000005260	OMAN ARAB BANK	7,577	985	2	0.130	0.130	0.130	0.130	0.130	0.000	0.000	0.130	0.128	0.130	0.100	OAB	217,023,300
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	239,859	12,953	14	0.054	0.055	0.053	0.053	0.052	0.001	1.923	0.053	0.054	0.056	0.100	PHPC	77,517,877
OM0000007084	MUSCAT CITY DESALINATION	1,219	94	1	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.000	0.000	0.077	0.077	0.079	0.100	MCDE	11,977,381
OM0000007407	DHOFAR GENERATING	11,000	407	1	0.037	0.037	0.037	0.037	0.036	0.001	2.778	0.037	0.037	0.039	0.100	DGEN	8,222,880
OM0000007910	AMAN REAL ESTATE	2,100	200	2	0.098	0.098	0.095	0.095	0.093	0.002	2.151	0.095	0.095	0.102	0.100	AMAN	19,000,000
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	130,821	38,988	38	0.297	0.299	0.297	0.298	0.297	0.001	0.337	0.298	0.298	0.297	0.100	ABRJ	229,519,600
OM0000009072	OQ GAS NETWORKS	6,459,177	971,864	791	0.149	0.151	0.149	0.151	0.149	0.002	1.342	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.100	OQGN	653,924,212
Total	22	7,551,630	1,088,869	936													

SIMPLIFY INVESTMENT OPERATIONS

Gheras Endowment Investment Fund unveiled

MUSCAT: The Imam Jabir bin Zaid Waqf Foundation launched the 'Gheras Endowment Investment Fund', intending to create a conducive investment environment for endowments.

Held under the patronage of Sheikh Abdullah Salim Al Salmi, Executive President of the Capital Market Authority, the ceremony saw the attendance of dignitaries, senior officials, members of the board of directors and individuals with a keen interest in endowments.

The establishment of Gheras Endowment Investment Fund aims to simplify investment operations by creating a platform that consolidates all endowments. It is based on the principles of Islamic Sharia, governance, and complete transparency.

Commenting on the launch of the visual identity of the Gheras Endowment Investment Fund, Eng. Younis Khamis Al Suli, Acting CEO of Imam Jabir bin Zaid Waqf Foundation, stated, "The fund reflects the foundation's mission to promote the principle of endowment and community partnership by creating investment products aimed at diversifying income sources and achieving financial sustainability. This aligns with the general aspirations of endowments and the specific goals of those under-endowment beneficiaries."

He added, "The fund is in line with Oman Vision 2040 and contributes to meeting societal needs and supporting the non-profit sector in the national economy."

The Gheras Endowment Investment Fund, structured as an open-ended endowment fund offered through a special subscription, aims to distribute a permanent income from the net returns of the fund for the benefit of investors. The fund also allows for efficient portfolio diversification, serving the interests of the endowment, the endower, and the benefiting entity through investments in various assets.

It is worth mentioning that the Gheras Endowment Investment Fund reflects the principle of endowment partnership, providing an opportunity for other endowments to invest. The fund is characterised by a sound legal framework following the principles of Islamic Sharia. It will allow for income diversification and contribute to achieving financial sustainability for endowment assets.

UTICO IN GREEN ENERGY PUSH

Pact signed for solar plant in UAE

RAS AL KHAIMAH: The UAE's only private utility provider, Utico, today announced taking one more significant step in its strategic green initiatives by partnering with leading sustainable energy developer, Yellow Door Energy (YDE), to develop a first-of-its-kind solar plant in Umm Al Quwain in the Northern Emirates.

In a joint statement at a MoU signing ceremony at the recently concluded 25th Water, Energy, Technology, and Environment (WETEX) and Dubai Solar Show (DSS) exhibition, Utico and YDE said the solar plant and battery energy storage system (BESS) will generate 4,700 megawatt-hours of clean energy annually.

"For Utico, this is a significant step in our journey towards being carbon neutral and supporting the UAE's strategic goals of sustainability and Net Zero by 2050 target. The project, a first in the Umm Al Quwain, will help Utico enhance diversification of its energy mix for utilization in our operations," said Hussain Al Lawati, Group CEO, Utico.

Significantly, the Utico-YDE solar plant will remove 82,000 metric tons of CO2e from the environment during the system's lifetime, complementing the carbon-neutral strategy of the UAE and global climate change mitigation endeavours.

Rory McCarthy, Chief Operating Officer of Yellow Door Energy, said: "As the leading sustainable energy partner for businesses in the region, Yellow Door Energy is honoured to support Utico on its sustainability journey. The solar and battery energy storage system (BESS) project showcases our company's commitment to helping businesses decarbonise their operations, save money and become more resilient. Ahead of COP28 and in line with the UAE Net Zero by 2050 target, we are proud to be here today to congratulate Utico and its leadership on this important sustainability milestone."

As the project developer, Yellow Door Energy is responsible for financing, designing, building, commissioning, operating and maintaining the solar plant and the hybrid system integration.

The solar power plant announcement comes close on the heels of Utico partnering with Shandong Tianyi Chemical Corporation of China for a pathbreaking circular economy project to extract industrial chemicals from brine, a first of its kind in the GCC in recycling waste seawater from desalination plants. The hybrid Umm Al Quwain plant will supply green energy to run Utico's pumping station in Umm Al Quwain. The solar deployment will be within the Utico pump station premises.

INDIAN STOCK INDICES

Indian stocks start fresh week on steady note

NEW DELHI: Indian stock indices started fresh week largely on a steady note, with weak cues from global benchmark US markets coupled with uncertainty over monetary policy rates in the United States.

At the opening bell, Sensex and Nifty indices in India were less than 0.1 per cent lower from their Friday closing. Among the Nifty 50 stocks, Coal India, Divis Labs, Apollo Hospitals, HCL Technologies, and NTPC were the top five gainers, while Axis Bank, Nestle India, Mahindra and Mahindra, Kotak Mahindra Bank, and Asian Paints the losers.

Among the sectoral indices, Nifty IT, Nifty realty, Nifty pharma, and Nifty PSU bank were the top gainers, while Nifty private bank was the top loser.

"Our view is that the overall market situation is positive, but due to a temporary overbought situation, we may see some range-bound action," said Shrikant Chouhan - Head Equity Research, Kotak Securities.

Till last week, markets extended their bullish tone for the third successive week and gained over a per cent.

"Global cues are largely dictating the trend and we expect this trend to continue in the coming week as well," said Ajit Mishra, SVP - Technical Research, Religare Broking. -ANI

TRAVEL

CELEBRATING GENEVA'S

TIMELESS BLEND OF TRADITION, JOY, AND WINTER MAGIC

MUSCAT: As the festive season starts in Geneva, a wonderful blend of culture, history, and holiday happiness fills the air, projecting the true spirit of this diverse European city.

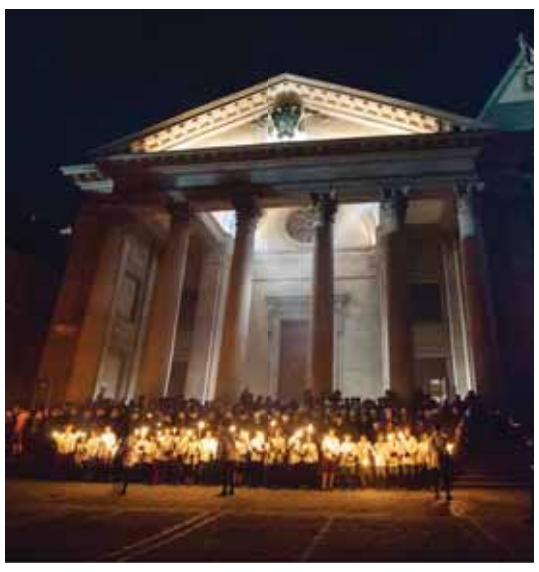
This special time of the year adds a unique charm to the city, bringing joy to both locals and visitors with an array of activities rooted in holiday heritage, starting with the famous L'Escalade Celebration, and ending with a New Year's Eve to remember for a long time.

The start of Geneva's festive season is marked by the L'Escalade Celebration, an homage to the historical triumph of Genevan bravery over 2000 soldiers of the Duke of Savoy on the night of December 11-12, 1602. This pivotal victory, celebrated for over four centuries, unfolds through a grand three-day parade where Genevans and enthusiastic tourists, adorned in medieval wear, traverse the city streets on foot or horseback, reviving the courage that safeguarded Geneva's autonomy.

Building upon this historic celebration, the festivities extend with the 45th Course de L'Escalade, a monumental pedestrian race scheduled for December 2nd and 3rd, 2023, in Geneva's Old Town. This event, not only the largest of its kind in Switzerland but also a significant spectacle in Europe, attracts runners from diverse backgrounds. The race harmoniously blends joyous moments with competitive passion, embodying the values of fun, respect, solidarity, integration, and excellence.

No celebration in Geneva would be complete without the delectable presence of its most cherished delicacy – chocolate. In a tradition intimately tied to L'Escalade, the city indulges in the delectable choc pot, locally known as Marmite de L'Escalade. Crafted from chocolate and filled with marzipan vegetables, this sweet tradition adds a flavourful touch to the festive season.

As the L'Escalade celebrations recede, the spotlight shifts to Noël au Quai, the renowned Christmas market in Geneva, famed for remaining true to the city's reputation as one of the world's most popular festive exhibitions, cherished by locals and visitors alike of all backgrounds and ages. The anticipation for this winter wonderland builds, with the market making its triumphant return from November 16 to December 24, 2023.



Nestled along the Quai du Mont-Blanc, this picturesque locale provides the perfect backdrop for the festivities. Visitors are invited to capture their best memories with the Jet d'Eau, board one of the city's oldest steamships, and relish the enchanting views of the lake. The market unfolds with arts and crafts, featuring stallholders in quaint wooden chalets offering new discoveries each week. Local creators and designers share their passion, providing endless ideas for unique Christmas gifts.

The Christmas market also caters to culinary enthusiasts, with street food stalls tempting taste buds with raclette, unique beverages, and more. The Christmas Pub, animated by a DJ, offers a cozy haven for a winter aperitif. For a unique dining experience, a delicious fondue in a large wooden chalet within the heart of the market garden will be served. As a delightful addition, this year introduces a fairy-tale fondue experience in a horse-drawn carriage through the charming Old Town, an amazing setup for a romantic or a warm family moment.

The little ones are not forgotten amidst this winter wonderland. A superb old-fashioned carousel and a yurt will bring children together to partake in a program of activities, crafts, Christmas decorations, games, face painting, storytelling, and plenty of laughter.

Geneva, in seamlessly blending tradition and uniqueness, extends a warm invitation to visitors seeking an authentic experience of its festive spirit. Whether sharing its rich history, beloved culinary delights, or the enchanting winter charm, Geneva transforms travellers into temporary locals, ensuring that these festive experiences become enduring memories.

Staying in Geneva

The Hamlet is one of the best kept secrets in Geneva's old town.

Located in the centre of Geneva, The Hamlet provides accommodation with free WiFi in a historic building.

This 5-star apartment complex, where every unit has a seating area, a flat-screen TV with streaming services, a kitchen, a dining area, a safety deposit box and a private bathroom with a walk-in shower, a hair dryer and free toiletries. A dishwasher, an oven and microwave are also provided, as well as a coffee machine and a kettle. At the apartment complex, units are fitted with bed linen and towels.

Regarding people choosing Hamlet, Anaëlle Bergoën, General Manager, says that privately owned and family run, the Hamlet is characterized by an unmistakable spirit of loyalty, friendship, and genuine commitment to something truly personal. "In an industry so often driven by the corporate and the mainstream, the Hamlet is proud to be setting new standards in warmth, personality, and luxury," she says.

Nestled among the cobbled streets of the Old Town lies a concept entirely unique to Geneva: a lovingly restored 18th century townhouse dedicated to providing discreet homes and exclusive experiences for the discerning traveller.

"With its 19 individually-designed apartments – available for rent from one night to one year and a collection of relaxed, communal spaces designed for guests to connect and unwind, this exclusive hideaway had the intimate feel of an urban village," Anaëlle Bergoën summed up.

SPORTS

Lukaku scores four goals in Belgium's impressive win

On a busy day of Euro 2024 qualifying, Portugal finish with a 100 percent record, Spain's Gavi suffers knee injury, and Scotland hold Norway in a thriller

BRUSSELS: Romelu Lukaku scored four first-half goals as Belgium thrashed 10-man Azerbaijan 5-0 in Euro 2024 qualifying on Sunday, *BBC Sport* reported.

The 30-year-old now has 83 goals in 113 Belgium games, making him the seventh-highest scorer in men's international football history.

He headed in Jeremy Doku's cross before Eddy Israfilov was sent off, then smashed in a second from Timothy Castagne's knock down, nodded in Wout Faes' cross, and scored from Orel Mangala's ball, all before being replaced at half-time.

Leandro Trossard added a late fifth for Belgium from Doku's ball, with all five goals being set up by England-based players.

This was Belgium captain Lukaku's first international quadruple, having scored four once before in his club career in Everton's 6-3 Premier League win over Bournemouth in February 2017.

Only Cristiano Ronaldo (128, Portugal), Ali Daei (109, Iran), Lionel Messi (106, Argentina), Sunil Chhetri (93, India), Mokhtar Dahari (89, Malaysia) and Ferenc Puskas (84, Hungary) have scored more than Lukaku in international football.

His 14 qualifying goals put him far clear of closest challengers Ronaldo and Kylian Mbappe, who have scored 10 and nine respectively in this campaign.

Fourteen goals is a record for a European Championship qualifying campaign - beating the benchmark of 13 set by Northern Ireland's David Healy in 2008 and equalled by Poland's Robert Lewandowski in 2016.

The Red Devils had already booked their place in Euro 2024 and overtook Austria to finish top of Group F with this victory. They remain unbeaten since boss Domenico Tedesco joined in February.

Sweden, whose qualification hopes were already over, beat Estonia 2-0 in Stockholm in the group's other fixture.

Gavi suffers serious injury in Spain's win

Spain and Barcelona midfielder Gavi suffered a serious knee injury in the Euro 2024 qualifying 3-1 win over Georgia on Sunday.

The 19-year-old landed awkwardly after jumping to control the ball, and left the pitch in tears in Valladolid.

Manager Luis de la Fuente said Spain must wait for tests amid concerns it could be an anterior cruciate ligament injury.

"This is the ugly part of football. This is the most bitter victory I have ever experienced in my life," he said.

"It is a very difficult moment for Gavi, Barcelona, the national team and for me - it seems as if we have lost the game.

"I am very sorry (for Gavi). Let's wait for the tests to confirm the extent of the injury."

Spain, who had already sealed their place at next summer's European Championships, beat Georgia to finish top of Group A above Scotland.

Defender Robin le Normand put Spain ahead after four minutes but Khvicha Kvaratskhelia equalised.

Ferran Torres restored Spain's lead in the second half before Luka Lochoshvili scored an own goal for Georgia.

"We can't celebrate as we would have liked. Gavi's injury is a hard blow. I'm really gutted," said Le Normand.

Torres, who held up Gavi's shirt to celebrate his goal, said: "An important victory to end on a good note, but we leave with a bittersweet feeling. "We don't know the extent of the injury but, knowing how much of a warrior Gavi is, we think it could be serious."

Scotland hold Norway at Hampden

Scotland's successful Euro 2024 qualifying campaign ended with a thrilling 3-3 draw as Mohamed Elyounoussi's late equaliser earned Norway a point at Hampden on Sunday.

Steve Clarke's side had already secured their place in Germany next summer but had to settle for second place in Group A, with Spain, as expected, overcoming Georgia to win the section.

The Scots twice came from behind in the first half, with sloppily-conceded goals scored by Aron Donnum and Jorgen Larsen cancelled out by John McGinn's penalty and Leo Ostigard's own goal.

Stuart Armstrong's strike looked to have earned another win in front of a jubilant Tartan Army, before former Celtic winger Elyounoussi capitalised on a wonderful, floated ball to level late on.

Scotland now await the Euro 2024 draw next month, for which they will be among the third pot of seeds.

Fernandes on target in Portugal triumph

Portugal ended their Euro 2024 qualification campaign with 10 wins out of 10 as Bruno Fernandes set them on the way to 2-0 victory over Iceland on Sunday.

The Manchester United captain fired a shot into the bottom corner from Bernardo Silva's flick in a game which the 2016 European champions controlled.

Ricardo Horta added a second after Cristiano Ronaldo's shot was saved.

Portugal have won every match they have played in 2023 after appointing Roberto Martinez in January.

France are the only other team who could finish qualifying with a 100% record, provided they win in Greece on Tuesday.

Other results: Hungary 3 Montenegro 1, Serbia 2 Bulgaria 2, Bosnia-Herzegovina 1 Slovakia 2, Liechtenstein 0 Luxembourg 1.

RECORD SEASON FOR SERB

Djokovic claims seventh record ATP Finals title

TURIN: Novak Djokovic won a record seventh ATP Finals title with a dominant victory over Jannik Sinner that marked another milestone in his memorable season. The Serb, 36, who lost to the Italian in the group stage, avenged that with a 6-3, 6-3 win in Turin, Italy.

He has set records in rankings and titles this year and played some of his best tennis against the youngsters - like Sinner - trying to challenge him.

"One of the best seasons I've had in my life, no doubt," Djokovic said. "It's very special. To crown it against a hometown hero in Jannik this week is phenomenal," he added. "Tactically I played differently today than in the group stage against Jannik. Overall, a phenomenal week."

World No.1 Djokovic had been tied with Roger Federer on six ATP Finals title wins, but it was clear from the outset in Sunday's final that he was hungry to take the outright record.

This year has been full of records for Djokovic and so it seems only fitting that his tour season should end with another.

Sunday's victory confirmed as year-end men's world No.1 for a record-extending eighth time earlier in the tournament. This year he also surpassed Steffi Graf's record for the most weeks spent at the top of the singles rankings, with his tally now about to stand at 400 from Monday.

Djokovic won three of this season's four Grand Slam singles titles to overtake Rafael Nadal's men's tally of 22 and draw level with Australian Margaret Court's all-time record of 24. That included a record-extending 10th title at the Australian Open.

His French Open victory in June made him the only man to win a career Grand Slam - all four major titles - three times.

And this year he also set a record for most Grand Slam final appearances with 36, two more than Chris Evert's previous mark, and earlier this month he won a record-extending seventh Paris Masters trophy for a record-extending 40th Masters title.

WORLD CUP 2026 QUALIFYING

Egypt prevail but Nigeria draw again

CAIRO: Egypt kept up their perfect start in qualifying for the 2026 Fifa World Cup but Nigeria dropped points once again.

A goal in either half from former Aston Villa midfielder Trezeguet gave Egypt a 2-0 win over nine-man Sierra Leone, *BBC Sport* reported.

Meanwhile, Nigeria drew 1-1 away against Zimbabwe after Leicester City forward Kelechi Iheanacho steered in a second-half equaliser for the visitors.

Elsewhere, Algeria and Gabon extended their 100 percent records, while Sudan registered a shock win over DR Congo.

Africa has a guaranteed nine qualifiers for the 2026 finals in Canada, Mexico and the United States, with all group winners booking a spot at the tournament.

Egypt had cruised to a 6-0 home win over Djibouti in their Group A opener, with Mohamed Salah scoring four times, and the Liverpool forward had a hand in both Pharaohs goals against Sierra Leone.

Mostafa Mohamed flicked on a ball from Salah and Trezeguet was on hand inside the area to chest down and slide home in the 18th minute.

Sullay Kaikai almost levelled when he hit the outside of the post but Sierra Leone's task was made harder when Derby County midfielder Tyrese Fornah was shown a straight red card seven minutes before half-time for a high boot on Hamdi Fathi.

Trezeguet, who now plays in Turkey for Trabzonspor, made it 2-0 just after the hour mark in Monrovia, Liberia, when he latched on to a through ball from Salah and his effort deflected off a defender before looping in over the goalkeeper.

And the Leone Stars finished with nine men when defender Abdul Kabia was shown a second yellow card for a cynical foul on Omar Marmoush deep into injury time.

Nigeria were held to a draw by minnows Lesotho in their first game in Group C on Thursday and once again failed to find inspiration in attack against Zimbabwe.

The Super Eagles were stunned in the 26th minute in Butare, Rwanda, when Walter Musona sent a brilliant 35-yard free-kick flying past Francis Uzoho and into the top right-hand corner.

But the West Africans were almost gifted an equaliser when Zimbabwe goalkeeper Bernard Donovan was penalised for picking up a back pass, but Southampton's Joe Aribo saw his effort from the resulting indirect free-kick cleared off the line.

Nigeria did equalise midway through the second half when Iheanacho slid in a cut-back from Moses Simon, but Zimbabwe had the better chances to win it as Teenage Hadebe hooked over, Divine Lunga headed wide and Tanaka Shandirwa blasted off target.

Pressure may grow on boss Jose Peseiro with Nigeria on just two points after two games, a point behind Group C leaders South Africa, who travel to Rwanda on Tuesday.

Algeria beat an enterprising and attacking Mozambique side 2-0 in Maputo, with second half goals from Fares Chaibi and Ramiz Zerrouki seeing off the hosts, who had had the better of proceedings before the break.

Gabon also made it two wins from two with a 2-1 Group F victory away against Burundi in neutral Dar es Salaam.

Meanwhile, an own goal meant Sudan extended their unbeaten start in Group B as they upset DR Congo 1-0 in Benghazi, Libya.

ROUND-UP

Liva Insurance receives coveted award in Dubai

'The Insurer of the Year' accolade recognises the company's commitment to delivering innovative digital insurance solutions, contributing to achieving new heights in the insurance industry in Oman

MUSCAT: Liva Insurance, one of the leading insurers in the Sultanate of Oman, was recently honoured with 'The Insurer of the Year' at the International Business Magazine (IntlBM) Annual Award, held in Dubai.

This prestigious accolade recognises the company's commitment to delivering innovative digital insurance solutions, contributing to achieving new heights in the insurance industry in Oman.

The UAE-based International Business Magazine Award event aims to bring together investors, corporate leaders, and decision-makers across the world.

The magazine annually honours institutions and corporates as testaments for their exceptional performance and innovative services throughout the year.

Placing its customer as an important drive for the company's success, Liva Insurance has been always at the forefront of implementing the concept t of innovation and digitalisation while offering insurance services and products. These creative services include; an improved claims registration service via WhatsApp to facilitate the process of registering claims for customers and online insurance policy, in addition to implementing a rewards program for valuable customers. Positioning itself as a leading insurer and contributing to the development of the insurance sector in Oman, Liva is working on establishing self-service kiosks where customers can easily conduct their insurance transactions without the need to visit branches. Furthermore, Liva Insurance continues making improvements to its e-services on the company's websitewww.livainsurance.om, which significantly increases the number of requests submitted to conduct transactions online.

Commenting on this momentous, Bader Al Marzouqi, Head of Distribution Personal Lines – Liva Insurance, said "We are delighted to receive this prestigious award that is a testament to our outstanding efforts and unwavering dedication in harnessing innovative and digital insurance solutions for customers. Digitization and technology are fields of great importance to Liva Insurance and we remain committed to adopting new and innovative products and services to efficiently cater to the needs and aspirations of our valued customers in this ever-changing world."

Liva is a unique combination of two dynamic and award-winning companies with a collective experience of over 80 years and highly complementary capabilities.

Moving forward, the company aspires to be at the forefront of providing innovative insurance services and products that enhance the lives of its customers.

NEW ONLINE PLATFORM

Audi Oman introduces innovative website for instant car valuation

MUSCAT: Audi Oman, represented by Premium Motors, has rolled out a new online platform designed to offer Audi owners a hassle-free, instant valuation of their vehicles.

This user-friendly interface prioritises transparency and accuracy, aiming to create a seamless experience for Audi owners.

The highly intuitive platform asks owners for specific details about their Audi vehicles, such as country and city of residence, model year, variant, mileage, vehicle condition, service history, and GCC specification if applicable, and then provides an immediate, competitive valuation of the vehicle. Once this information is provided, the website offers an immediate, competitive valuation of the vehicle.

The valuation provided can be used in multiple ways, whether owners are looking to upgrade to a newer model, trade in for a pre-owned Audi, or simply wish to sell their vehicle. After filling out the online form, users' requests are swiftly forwarded to Audi's experienced sales team, who will guide them through the next steps of the process.

Christian Nehme, General Manager of Premium Motors, stated, "Audi's new platform offers complete peace of mind for our valued customers. Emphasising our unwavering commitment to a customer-centric approach, we highly value our customers and their Audis." He added: "This platform is designed with customer's satisfaction and convenience in mind, ensuring that their experience with Audi is nothing short of exceptional."

#IAMTOURISM STRATEGY

Omran launches 'GIFTed' initiative at Naseem dusitD2 Resort

MUSCAT: As part of the #IAmTourism strategy, Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran Group) has announced the launch of the 'GIFTed' initiative.

This initiative is dedicated to qualifying and empowering individuals with disabilities to work within the tourism sector. The launch event was hosted at Naseem dusitD2 Resort, Al Jabal Al Akhdar, under the patronage of Her Highness Sayyida Hujaija bint Jaifar Al Said and attended by key figures from Omran Group and the Al Wafa Centre for the Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities in Al Jabal Al Akhdar.

'GIFTed' stands as the premier initiative focused on supporting individuals with disabilities in the tourism industry, fostering their abilities, and creating pathways to acquire practical skills and explore diverse employment opportunities. The initiative strives to achieve several main objectives, including raising awareness of the capabilities of individuals with disabilities in the tourism sector, enabling participants through specialised training for the labour market, and promoting social integration by emphasising the vital role individuals with disabilities play in the community.

On the occasion of the launch, Hilal bin Masoud Al Jadidi, Chief Human Capital Officer at Omran Group, stated: "The 'GIFTed' initiative is a key component of our #IAmTourism strategy, serving as a roadmap towards empowering national talent to succeed in this opportunity-rich sector. The initiative embodies our deep belief in enhancing professional avenues for people with disabilities due to the talents and capabilities they possess. We aim to utilise the outcomes of this initiative as a model for application across our assets and future projects."

JagdeepThakral, General Manager of Naseem dusitD2 Resort Al Jabal Al Akhdar, remarked: "We are proud that our resort is the launching point for this significant initiative. Throughout the six-month training period, we are committed to enriching the trainees' experience with essential knowledge and skills and providing a safe, comprehensive training environment that allows their potential and social and professional skills to flourish."

Ablahbint Khalaf Al Riyamiya, Director of Al Wafa Social Centre for the Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities at Al Jabal Al Akhdar, added: "Our centre's members and their peers with disabilities are equipped with a variety of skills and knowledge that prepare them for success across numerous fields of employment. We are proud to partner in the launch of 'GIFTed', which marks a pivotal phase in employing their diverse talents and abilities. We call upon all entities to establish similar initiatives that contribute to the professional and social development of individuals with disabilities."

53RD NATIONAL DAY

Bank Nizwa renews commitment to furthering socio-economic progress

MUSCAT: On the occasion of the Sultanate of Oman's 53rd National Day, that marks the glorious progress of our dear country under the inspiring leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik Al Said, Bank Nizwa has reaffirmed its commitment to furthering the development of Oman's Islamic finance sector and the advancement of the nation's economy, while also prioritising the empowerment and well-being of its citizens.

Over the past decade, Bank Nizwa has achieved remarkable milestones and has championed transformative initiatives within the sector. Upholding values of transparency and integrity, the bank has not only promoted the merits of Sharia-compliant banking but has also elevated the Islamic finance landscape with modern solutions, thereby setting new benchmarks within the industry, and redefining the conventional perspective of Islamic banking. Oman's socio-economic progress amidst dynamic economic environments has formed the bedrock of this strategic approach.

The Islamic banking industry in Oman has seen exponential success over the years, with the total assets of Islamic banks and windows growing by 12.6% year-on-year, reaching the RO 7 billion mark at the end of June 2023, according

to the Central Bank of Oman's data. Islamic banking entities also provided financing worth OMR5.8 billion, recording a 12.8% growth over the previous year, and total deposits held by Islamic banks and windows increased by 10.5% to OMR5.2 billion, thus reflecting the great demand for Sharia-compliant banking solutions in the country.

Speaking on the occasion, Khaled Al Kayed, Chief Executive Officer at Bank Nizwa, said, "This momentous day is a powerful reflection of our nation's identity and core values. It is a reminder that we should always aspire to achieve the highest standards of excellence in all our endeavours, while reinforcing our commitment to advancing the nation's progressive agenda. Bank Nizwa salutes His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik Al Said for his visionary leadership and conveys heartfelt congratulations to the people of Oman on the occasion of the country's glorious 53rd National Day."

As Bank Nizwa joins the country in commemorating the 53rd National Day, it looks forward to continue charting a path of innovation and advancement in the Islamic finance sector, while also exploring more opportunities to uplift local communities and contribute to socio-economic progress at large.

Bank Nizwa's influential role in nurturing the growth of Islamic finance in the Sultanate lies in its commitment to innovation, underpinned by unwavering adherence to Sharia-compliant principles

Through its insightful Islamic Finance Knowledge Sessions (IFKS), the bank has been at the forefront of fostering awareness of Islamic banking practices across communities and nurturing a financially conscious society. Transcending traditional banking services and striving to enhance financial literacy, Bank Nizwa also actively participates in and supports acclaimed conferences and forums as a cherished thought leader. Bank Nizwa places a keen emphasis on empowering the nation's workforce. The bank has been cultivating its potential through tailored training programs and exposure to a dynamic banking environment.

TRAINING PROGRAMME

Programme launched to define eligibility criteria for disability cash benefits

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Social Development and the Social Protection Fund, with the technical support of Unicef Oman, launched a comprehensive training programme on the identification of eligible beneficiaries for the new disability cash benefits.

The training programme will enable them to apply the Functional Disability Determination Tool, which is a standard tool to classify disability based on abilities and functions.

The training will equip the 80 participants from the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Health with the knowledge and skills to use the Functional Disability Determination Tool effectively for screening and determining the level of disability to define the eligibility criteria for people with disability to benefit from the new disability cash benefits stipulated in the Social Protection Law (52/2023).

This training programme highlights the commitment of the Ministry of Social Development and the Istidama Programme to improve and expand services for people with disabilities.

These efforts are aligned with Oman's Vision 2040, which emphasises social development, inclusivity, and the well-being of all citizens. The training programme, which will span several weeks, involves a series of workshops, interactive sessions, and practical exercises delivered by global experts on disability.

EMPOWERING INITIATIVES

ahlibank hosts events to celebrate its women's achievements

MUSCAT: In acknowledgment of the invaluable contributions made by its female staff, ahlibank hosted a series of activities throughout October to spotlight the achievements of women within the organisation.

As a resolute supporter of its workforce, with a particular focus on women, ahlibank is committed to fostering a positive and motivating work environment that upholds principles of fairness and equity. In October, the bank organised a workshop addressing the significance of work-life balance for its female employees. Additionally, on Omani Women's Day, female staff members shared their success stories and achievements with colleagues. A dedicated cancer awareness session was also conducted to educate female employees about the dangers of cancer and ways to prevent it.

Jumana Al Hashmi, Head of Marketing and Corporate Communications at ahlibank, commended the female workforce for their outstanding accomplishments, stating, "ahlibank consistently supports its team in their pursuit of success. Our female employees, integral contributors to ahlibank's standing in the competitive Omani market, have displayed remarkable achievements. We are dedicated to showcasing their successes and maintaining a stimulating, supportive work environment that fosters loyalty and a sense of belonging."

A notable aspect of ahlibank's commitment to gender diversity is the significant representation of women in leadership positions at the bank. Women within the bank actively contribute to strategic decision-making processes and play pivotal roles in driving the bank's business success. Their leadership and expertise have been instrumental in positioning ahlibank as a leader in the highly competitive Omani market.

ahlibank emphasises the significant role played by its female employees, recognising their hard work and determination as crucial factors in the bank's numerous successes. The well-being and support of these employees undoubtedly contribute to the overall development of the community as a whole.

ROUND-UP

GOLF EVENT

Europcar Open to bring together top golfers from Oman

MUSCAT: After the tremendous success of the last eight editions of the Europcar Open, Al Mouj Golf course is once again ready to host the ninth edition which promises to be even more enthralling on Friday, December 8.

As in every year, the Europcar Open Golf event will bring together the top golfers from Oman, Dubai and Bahrain to compete for the Men's Division A, Men's Division B, Ladies & Inter-Club challenge trophies.

Europcar Oman hosted a luncheon at its new headquarters for the general managers, operation heads and captains of the 5 golf clubs from Oman along with the sponsors and partners. Oman Golf Association was represented by Ahmed Al Jahdhami - Director & Jamie Wood - Championship & Technical Director. The clubs were represented by Mubarak Hill - GM, Marcus Casey - Head Golf Professional & Girish Chawla - Men's Captain at Al Mouj Golf, Ahmed Al Farsi - GM & Hussain Dad - Men's Captain at Ghala Golf Club, Salim Al Harthy - GM, Shawn Skibinsky - Operations Manager & Simon Walker - Men's Captain at Ras Al Hamra, Freddie Rextrew - Operations Manager & Mohamed Ghalib Al Alawi - Golf Operations Manager at La Vie Golf Club and Lance Scott from Milly's Golf Society.

The title sponsor for this prime corporate golfing event is Peugeot & Aston Martin and will be partnered by Mistal Watches and Liva Insurance. Other sponsors include St Regis, Travelpoint, Travelex, African & Eastern, WH Smith, Mumtaz Mahal, Woodlands & media partner Times of Oman.

"It is almost overwhelming to see how far we have come. This is our ninth year hosting the Europcar Open but we are as excited as we were when we did our first. The Europcar Open effortlessly blends the elements of business with pleasure, bringing to the golfers an experience to remember. The event serves as a great networking platform between fellow golf enthusiasts," said Nitin Sapre, CEO, Europcar Oman & Bahrain."

PROMOTING PROACTIVE HEALTH MEASURES

BEC and Al Ishraq Medical Centre observe World Diabetes Day

MUSCAT: In a dedicated effort to prioritise employee well-being, Bahwan Engineering Company (BEC) and Al Ishraq Medical Centre observed World Diabetes Day. This collaborative initiative aimed to raise awareness about diabetes and promote proactive health measures among the workforce.

Approximately 125 employees including nationals & expats participated in the event, which included informative sessions and health check-ups. The focus was not only on increasing awareness about diabetes but also on encouraging preventive measures and healthy lifestyle choices.

The employees were provided with valuable insights into diabetes prevention management and the importance of regular health screenings. Al Ishraq Medical Centre's team of healthcare professionals conducted comprehensive health check-ups, ensuring that participants received personalized attention and audience.

RECOGNITION

Oxy Oman awarded at Omani Youth Day celebrations

MUSCAT: During the recent Omani Youth Day celebrations organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth, Oxy Oman was recognised for its continued contributions to youth programmes in Oman. The celebration was held at Al Mouj Muscat. Steven Lauver, President and General Manager of Oxy Oman, attended the event along with senior executives at the company.

Oxy Oman has sponsored a variety of high-impact youth-centred initiatives in Oman, including its strategic sponsorship of the Oman Youth Centre. The Youth Centre is an initiative by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth aimed at developing integrated centres for Omani youth, with plans to expand to all governorates of Oman.

"We're excited to celebrate Omani Youth Day and humbled to receive this award as recognition for our years of support for youth development, from sports & well-being, to youth entrepreneurship as well as cultural and arts appreciation. As a company, Oxy Oman believes it is important for the Sultanate to enhance the well-being and development of Omani youth programs. Through our Corporate Social Responsibility programme, we remain committed to supporting initiatives that promote youth development throughout Oman," said Lauver.

Meethaq Islamic leads journey of progress of banking landscape

Over more than a decade, it has significantly elevated the quality of Sharia-compliant banking services, tailoring a diverse range of products to meet the varied needs of individuals, institutions, and SMEs

MUSCAT: Since its inception in 2012, Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat has played a pivotal role in shaping Oman's Islamic banking landscape.

Over more than a decade, it has significantly elevated the quality of Sharia-compliant banking services, tailoring a diverse range of products to meet the varied needs of individuals, institutions, and SMEs. With the celebration of the 53rd glorious National Dayof Oman, Meethaq takes immense pride in the track record of achievements solidifying its position as a leader in the industry. Its success lies in a customer-focused strategy, underpinned by rigorous Sharia compliance certified by the Sharia Supervisory Board and adherence to the Central Bank of Oman's guidelines.

Year after year, Meethaq Islamic Banking continues to emphasize its leadership stance, strengthened and enhanced through the fulfillment of ongoing consecutive successes such as expanding the network of branches distributed across the Sultanate,which now currently stands at a total of 28 branches.Within the network of Meethaq branches, 13are located in Muscat Governorate and the remaining 15 branches are in the other Governorates. In addition to this, Meethaq is currently offering its customers access to a dedicated network of over 50 ATMs/CDMs while also providing them with free access to over 800 ATMs and CDMs of Bank Muscat, which suggests that the diverse suite of Meethaq's banking services and facilities are obtainable and accessible for a wide base of customers. These services are designed to align with Oman's vision for digital transformation by 2040, offering innovative and Sharia-compliant solutions.

SMEs and corporate support

Meethaq is committed to providing great performance-driven support to its customers from SMEs and Institutional clientsby offering a comprehensive suite of banking services and facilities such as current accounts, short-term and long-term financing solutions conducive to capital growth.These financing solutions include trade solutions, "Ijarah" financing, working capital financing, financing solutions for large-scale projects using sharia-compliant structures. Likewise, Meethaq's Islamic banking services offered to SMEs and institutional customers comprise facilities which not only foster the growth of Islamic Banking but also contribute significantly to the progress of the SME sector.

These facilities include payment solutions, liquidity solutions, financing solutions, Corporate Purchase Credit Cards, sukuk (the Islamic version of bonds), investment products across various asset classes, guarantees to third-party beneficiaries in compliance with the Sharia provisions, FX solutions including offering Meethaq's customers with efficient and seamless access to FX markets, providing them with market updates, helping them execute transactions as per their needs in accordance with the Sharia principles, offering them a comprehensive set of solutions on exchange and payment facilities encompassing all major currencies in various developed and emerging market currencies. Meethaq Islamic Banking also offers multiples services available online through its Internet Banking and Mobile Banking platforms.

Tailored services for individuals

Individual customers benefit from a wide array of Islamic Banking services provided by Meethaq. These offerings range from deposit products such as current and saving accounts, children saving accounts, Meethaq saving plan, Safe Deposit Lockers to financing solutions catering to various needs such as personal finance, car, home, travel, education and marriage financing.

Additionally, Meethaq provides investment products and sharia-compliant wealth management solutions. Moreover, distinguished Islamic banking products offered to Meethaq's customers include debit cards, various attractive financing services catering to their diverse needs, and sharia-compliant insurance services represented through "Takaful" products including Smart Critical Illness Takaful, Life Takaful and Motor Takaful; all of which enhance the customers' Islamic banking experience.

To continuously cater to the demand of its growing customer base Meethaq has adopted the latest digital technologies by offering its Islamic banking services and products through Meethaq's Internet Banking and Mobile Banking platform enhancing overall customer experience. Furthermore, Meethaq provides investment banking solutions that allow customers to manage their wealth and investment portfolios through multiple sharia-compliant options.

Commitment to community and employee development

Beyond its banking initiatives Meethaq, the Islamic banking pioneer in the Sultanate, has actively contributed to serving the Omani community by participating in many societal and CSR-focused initiatives, community programs, and charity events that aim to develop the local community.

In fostering the realization of Oman's vision 2040, which emphasises human resource development as a cornerstone, Meethaq prioritises the advancement of Omani employees, aiming to bolster their experience and qualifications within the realm of Islamic Banking.

To unlock their creative potential and equip them with tools for growth, Meethaq offers employees a range of learning opportunities, diverse courses, and tailored training programs. These initiatives inspire the acquisition of varied skills, empowering them to deliver Meethaq's customers with exemplary Islamic banking services and facilities.

Remarkably, Meethaq has garnered substantial acclaim, owing to the responsiveness of the Omani workforce in meeting the Islamic banking needs of customers through top-tier, Sharia-compliant services.

Additionally, Meethaq actively nurtures leadership capabilities among its Omani employees, evident in its network of branches managed by competent Omani professionals with extensive experience in Islamic banking.

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