

OMAN SUPPORTS RESEARCH FOR MANUFACTURING OF VACCINES

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Health, during its participation in the meeting of the G20 Health Ministers in India on Saturday, affirmed its full and integrated support for the proposed framework for regional research, development and manufacturing of vaccines. **>A5**



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HM SENDS CABLE OF CONDOLENCES TO PRESIDENT OF SOUTH KOREA

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to President Yoon Suk Yeol of the Republic of Korea on the death of his father Yoon Ki-jung. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sympathies to President Yoon Suk Yeol, family of the deceased and the people of Korea. — **OMA**



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DEVELOPMENT OF DOMESTIC FOOTBALL

OFA signs season-long media partnership deal with MMG



Times News Service

MUSCAT: Let's play together! Oman Football Association's (OFA) continuous efforts to raise the profile of domestic football and create meaningful partnership with key stakeholders got a further boost when the national governing body inked a strategic media partnership deal with the Muscat Media Group (MMG) for the 2023-24 season on Thursday.

MMG is the leading media group in the Sultanate of Oman. Founded by the late Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali, the group has played a vibrant role in Omani society since 1975.

Being the media gateway for the population of Oman - from the young, ambitious Omani workforce, to the vibrant expat community,

the power-players, and the decision-makers, the deal is expected to serve as a catalyst to the development of local football.

360-degree platform

With a 360-degree platform for media coverage, which includes *Times of Oman* and *Al Shabiba* in print, strong digital, video and FM Radio presence, OFA hopes to reach new frontiers in their approach to get closer to the youth and football-loving population of the Sultanate of Oman.

OFA believes in community partnership and in a bid to enhance the role of media, signed the season-long deal. The agreement was signed by Salem bin Saeed bin Salem Al Wahaibi, OFA President, and Ahmed Essa Al Zedjali, CEO, Muscat Media Group.

Speaking after the signing of the agreement, Al Wahaibi said, "Muscat Media Group is a leading media institution. Our decision to ink an agreement with the reputed group was based on various factors and offers made to the association. After a careful study of various bidders, Muscat Media Group was selected and we are pleased to join hands with them."

He added, "We are constantly striving for development of football, and trying to involve government institutions and the private sector to enhance the sports and youth sector. We realise the potential of the media and its role and we hope the deal will help us achieve our goals."

Al Zedjali expressed his happiness at signing the media partnership agreement with the Omani

Football Association. He said: "We hope that our media group (*Al Shabiba* and *Times of Oman* in print and various other digital platforms) will succeed in providing quality media coverage during the current football season."

He added: "This media partnership is a positive step for both the organisations and the Muscat Media Group will provide elaborate and quality services to the passionate football fans through various media programmes (press, radio, television and electronic). The details of various programmes will be revealed in the coming days."

The 2023-24 Omantel League, Sultanate of Oman's top-flight league, featuring 12 teams began on Thursday and the first week concluded with five games played on Thursday and Friday.

MSX-LISTED FINANCE FIRMS POST STRONG PERFORMANCE

These companies praised government's efforts to control spending, reduce public debt, and help in raising credit rating of Oman



Times News Service

MUSCAT: Finance companies listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) recorded strong performance in the first half of this year with their net profits rising by 8.7 percent to OMR 9.9 million, compared to about OMR 9.1 million in the same period last year.

In their financial reports for the first half of this year, these companies praised the government's efforts to control spending, reduce public debt, and help in raising the credit rating of the Sultanate of Oman, which is expected to reflect positively on the finance sector and other sectors of the economy.

The finance and leasing companies operate in a range of activities related to working capital, financing the purchase and leasing of vehicles, debts, temporary loans, and financing of construction projects. Their services contribute to enhancing the performance of major companies.

The finance and leasing companies have witnessed strong growth in recent years, benefiting from the increase in government spending and the increase in demand for credit for real estate in order to build housing units.

They also grant working capital facilities to encourage companies to increase financing of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and

other sectors.

They also accept deposits from institutions and grant personal loans to individuals according to specific controls, and this decision is expected to contribute to the growth of companies' activities operating in the sector and increase their contribution to the national economy.

Earlier in June 2023, the scope of lending by Finance and Leasing Companies (FLCs) in Oman were expanded by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO).

They can now carry out additional business activities and these include real estate financing, working capital facilities, personal loans and lending against

their own deposits.

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

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

Muscat Finance Company said that the new decision for the finance and leasing companies is expected to expand the business opportunities available to the company, stressing that it has a positive future outlook in terms of business. **>A2**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Oman-India explore space partnership

1 Eng. Said Hamoud Al Ma'awali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, held a meeting with S. Somanath, Chairman of ISRO, and a number of ISRO officials and specialists. **>A2**



WORLD

Trump expected to surrender next week

2 United States former President Donald Trump is expected to surrender himself to the Fulton County jail next week in connection with the efforts to overturn the 2020 election results in Georgia. **>A6**

MARKET

Credit given by Omani banks top OMR20bn

3 The total credit granted by commercial banks recorded an increase of 5.1 percent to reach OMR20.2 billion at the end of June 2023 according to the monthly bulletin of Central Bank of Oman. **>B1**





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37° MUSCAT



INDIAN SUPERSTAR

Advance booking begins for Indian film three weeks ahead of release

Times News Service

MUSCAT: In one of the rarest cases in Oman, the cinema houses here have opened advanced bookings for Shah Rukh Khan's movie *Jawan* almost 3 weeks ahead of the film's release on September 7.

Normally, the advance bookings open around a week before any scheduled release of a movie.

Shah Rukh Khan is one of the most popular Bollywood stars across the globe but there is a big craze for the Indian superstar in the GCC region.

Be it the UAE or Oman or other countries, he is undoubtedly one of the most sought-after actors and his movies evoke huge interest.



And cashing in on the fan base are the movie houses with a lot of excitement and hope to the latest starrer of Shah Rukh Khan – *Jawan*.

The SRK fever has already started gripping Oman with people started buying tickets. Vox cinemas in Oman are offering advance booking at seven of

its venues – Azaiba, Nizwa Grand Mall, Muscat Grand Mall, Mall of Oman, City Centre Suhar, City Centre Qurum, and City Centre Muscat for a total of 41 shows daily with the first show beginning as early as 11am.

Options in Standard and MAX are available for the cinema buffs. Online booking options at VOX Oman gives the option of advance booking with the first show on September 7, 2023, the official release date.

Besides Vox, Cinepolis Oman has also announced advance booking and put up a promo for advance booking.

The first show in Oman will be at Cinepolis Oman at 10am on

September 7. At its three venues- Oman Avenues Mall- Muscat, Oasis Mall – Salalah and Oasis Mall – Sohar.

With two categories – Standard and Macro, the first day of the movie will be offered in a total of 31 shows.

Meanwhile, reports have confirmed that advance bookings have also opened for the movie in Germany, USA, Australia and the UAE.

Recently, SRK released the film's second song *Chaleya*, in which he can be seen romancing Nayanthara. *Jawan* is Shah Rukh Khan's second release of the year after *Pathaan*, which created history at the box office.

RECEIPT OF NOTICE OF TAKEOVER OFFER FROM
GOLDEN SANDS HOTEL CO LLC (“**GSH**” or “**OFFEROR**”)
TO ACQUIRE 34.91% OF THE SHARE CAPITAL OF
SALALAH BEACH RESORT SAOG (“**SBR**” or “**TARGET**”)

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT

THIS IS AN ANNOUNCEMENT OF AN OFFER (THE “**OFFER**”) TO ALL SHAREHOLDERS OF SALALAH BEACH RESORT SAOG (“**SBR**”) (TOGETHER THE “**SBR SHAREHOLDERS**” AND EACH AN “**SBR SHAREHOLDER**”) BY GOLDEN SANDS HOTEL CO. LLC (THE “**OFFEROR**” OR “**GSH**”) TO ACQUIRE 34.91 PERCENT OF THE ISSUED SHARE CAPITAL OF SBR PURSUANT TO THE TAKEOVER AND ACQUISITION REGULATION (E/2/2019) (THE “**TAKEOVER REGULATION**”). THIS ANNOUNCEMENT IS DATED 17 August 2023.

OFFER DETAILS	
Offer or GSH	Golden Sands Hotel Co. LLC, limited liability company incorporated under the law of Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, with commercial licence No. 514656. The Offer is only being made by the Offeror and there are no persons acting in concert with the Offeror in making the Offer.
Target or SBR	Salalah Beach Resort SAOG, a public joint stock company incorporated under the laws of Oman, with commercial registration No. 2134462.
Offer	The offer by the Offeror to all the shareholders of SBR to acquire the remaining 34.91 percent. of the SBR Shares which would increase the Offeror’s beneficial shareholding in SBR to 100 percent of the SBR Shares (being 6,250,000 fully paid-up shares as at the Record Date). Offer Completion is subject to acceptance by SBR Shareholders representing a minimum of 90 percent of the Offer.
Offer Document	The Offer document that is approved by the Capital Market Authority, Oman (“ CMA ”) for the Offer.
Offer Dates	Offer Opens: 11 September 2023 Offer Closes: 08 October 2023 Note: The offer shall be open for 28 days but shall close prior to offer closing day, if it receives acceptance from SBR shareholders amounting to 100 percent of the offer.
Announcement Date	17 August 2023
Record Date (for the purpose of the Offer)	10 September 2023
Offer Notice	Offer Notice published by GSH via a disclosure made on Muscat Stock Exchange (“ MSX ”)’s website dated 17 August 2023. Copy of the notice is available on GSH’s website.
Suspension of Trading	The trading in SBR shares to be suspended once the Offer is accepted by 90 percent of SBR shareholders during the Offer Period, subject to regulatory approvals.
Offer Objective	The Offeror is making the Offer with the following objectives: a. The Offeror will continue the business and make necessary investments required to complete the renovation of rooms and other facilities of the hotel. b. SBR Shares will be delisted from MSX and converted into a closed joint stock company, subject to regulatory approvals. c. Upon completion of the Offer, all employees of SBR will continue in their employment and there will be no immediate change to the employment structure. SBR employees will be subject to periodic appraisals and restructuring carried out in standard course of business.
SBR Shares	The issued share capital of SBR.
Offer Price	A cash only offer of OMR 1.000 per SBR Share.
Offer Acceptance Qualification	In the event that SBR Shareholders who hold in aggregate less than 75 percent of the Offer accept the Offer for the Offer Price in accordance with the terms of the Offer Document (together the “Selling SBR Shareholders” and each a “Selling SBR Shareholder”), GSH may choose to either withdraw the Offer or acquire the relevant number of SBR Shares from the Selling SBR Shareholders. In the event that Selling SBR Shareholders who hold in aggregate more than 90.0 percent of the Offer accept the Offer for the Offer Price in accordance with the terms of the Offer Document, GSH will compulsorily acquire the shares from the remaining shareholders in order to acquire 34.91 percent direct shareholding in SBR which amounts to a 100 percent beneficial shareholding in SBR.
Encumbrances	Only an SBR Shareholder whose SBR Shares are not subject to an encumbrance may accept the Offer.
Compulsory Acquisition	As provided in the Takeover Regulation, once SBR Shareholders holding 90 percent of the SBR Shares accept the Offer, GSH intends to exercise the “compulsory acquisition” provisions of Articles 62 to 65 (inclusive) of the Takeover Regulation.
Cash Consideration for Compulsory Acquired Shares	As per Article 65 of the Takeover Regulation, GSH will pay the shareholders of the Compulsory Acquired Shares the Offer Price as stated in the Offer Document, being an amount of OMR 1.000 per SBR Share.
Offer Completion	The completion of the Offer which shall occur on the date the Offer Price is paid to the Selling SBR Shareholders post completion of the Offer Period and implementation of the Compulsory Acquisition.
Offer Completion Date	The date on which the Offer Completion occurs.
Offer Manager	Ubhar Capital SAOC, a closed joint stock company incorporated in Oman with registered office at PO Box 1137, PC 111, CPO, Oman. Ph.: +968 24 949 051 Email: ubhar-corporatefinance@u-capital.net
Voting Shares in SBR Already Held by GSH	GSH holds 65.09% of the SBR Shares as of the date of this Offer Announcement.
Existing or proposed arrangements or agreements between the Offeror and the SBR shareholders	The Offeror has reached an in-principle agreement with a major SBR shareholder (representing 16.0 percent of the shares in SBR).

INDICATIVE OFFER TIMELINE		
#	Description	Indicative Dates
1	Offer Announcement	17 August 2023
2	Offer Document sent out to SBR Board and SBR Shareholders	30 August 2023
3	The Offer Period opens	11 September 2023
4	The Offer Period closes	08 October 2023
5	GSH to pay the Offer Price	12 October 2023
6	GSH acquires remaining shares – Compulsory Acquisition	12 October 2023

Note: The above timeline is indicative only and may be subject to change, following review, input, and approval from the competent authorities.

OFFER RELATED PARTIES & CONTACT PERSONS		
Offeror	Golden Sands Hotel Co LLC	
	Contact:	K V Vijayaraghavan, Director, PO Box. 2622, Dubai, UAE Tel: +971 4 4401136 / 050 6530422, Email: vijay@aaaagroup.ae
Target	Salalah Beach Resort SAOG	
	Contact:	Mohamed Ifteqar, Salalah Beach Resort SAOG, PO Box 699, Salalah 211, Sultanate of Oman Tel: +968 93369651, Email: mifteqar@salalahbeachresort.co.om
Offer Manager	Ubhar Capital SAOC	
	Contact:	Muhammad Kashif Sabih, Head Corporate Finance and Advisory, PO Box 1137, PC 111, CPO, Sultanate of Oman, Tel: +968 24 949008, Email: ubhar-corporatefinance@u-capital.net
Legal Advisor to the Offeror	Dentons & Co, Oman Branch	
	Contact:	Jamie Gibson, Partner, PO Box 3552, PC 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman Tel: +968 24573010, Email: jamie.gibson@dentons.com

ACCEPTANCE OF OFFER – TERMS, CONDITIONS, & PROCEDURE	
Notice Procedure	Only electronic copy of the Offer Document will be sent based on Muscat Clearing & Depository Company SAOC (“ MCD ”) data and will be available on GSH, Ubhar Capital SAOC and the CMA websites.
Acceptance Form	The acceptance form to be used by SBR Shareholders to submit their acceptance of the Offer pursuant to the terms of the Offer Document. These forms will be sent to each SBR Shareholder through email based on MCD data. The acceptance form will also be available on GSH, Ubhar Capital SAOC and CMA websites.
Procedure for Acceptance of Offer by SBR Shareholders	1. In order to accept the Offer, the SBR Shareholders are required to; i. deliver the Acceptance Form duly completed and signed to Ubhar Capital SAOC located in OMINVEST Business Centre, PH Level, Building no. 95, Way no. 501, Airport Heights, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman. or alternatively, ii. the SBR Shareholders can send an email to ubhar-corporatefinance@u-capital.net stating their acceptance of the Offer along with a scanned copy of the Acceptance Form duly completed and signed. along with the requisite documents (as set out below) on or before 2 pm, on the offer closing date. 2. The Offer will remain open for acceptance for 28 days starting from 11 September 2023 to 08 October 2023 (both days inclusive). Acceptances received after working hours i.e., 8am -2pm on Offer Closing Date shall not be accepted.
Required Documents	Acceptance Form furnished by the SBR Shareholder(s) without the requisite documents listed below may be rejected by the Offer Manager as being incomplete and invalid. The Acceptance Form must be accompanied by the following documents: For Individual Applicants: - A copy of Omani ID for SBR Shareholders that are Omani nationals and Passport copy for SBR Shareholders that are Non-Omani nationals. - Birth Certificate of the minor SBR Shareholder, if the father or legal guardian is accepting the Offer on behalf of the minor children. - A copy of a valid power of attorney duly notarised by the relevant authorities must be included in the event the acceptance is on behalf of another person (with the exception of an acceptance made by a father or legal guardian on behalf of the minor children). For Corporate Applicants: - ID Card of signatories, - Commercial Registration Certificate Copy of the company - board resolution authorizing persons to accept the Offer with specimen signatures of such authorized persons, if applicable.
Acceptance by GSH	The acceptance by GSH of the SBR Shares tendered by the SBR Shareholders and settlement is subject to the following conditions: - Offer Completion. - Approval of the CMA for the final Offer result. - The settlement for the tendered SBR Shares does not contravene any applicable law. - The acceptance form being duly and validly completed along with the required documents and submitted to the Offer Manager on or before the Offer Closing Date. - The person accepting the Offer is a valid SBR Shareholder. - GSH not withdrawing the Offer in accordance with the provisions of the Takeover Regulation
Timing of Payment of the Offer Price	Upon receipt of valid Acceptance Form along with the requisite documents and subject to satisfactory verification, the Offer Manager will notify the eligible SBR Shareholders regarding acceptance of the Offer and arrange to make payment via bank transfer in coordination with MCD (based on bank account details available with MCD) in favour of the SBR Shareholder within 10 (ten) days of the Offer Closing Date subject to CMA approval. No interest, mark-up, surcharge, tax, or other increment will be payable for any cause or reason on the aggregate price for the SBR Shares purchased by GSH from any SBR Shareholder for any cause or reason. After a Selling SBR Shareholder has accepted the Offer, they are not permitted to sell their relevant SBR Shares to any other party unless and until GSH withdraws the Offer.



Dhuhr.....	12:15pm
Asr.....	3:42pm
Maghrib.....	6:42pm
Isha.....	7:56pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....	4:26am

MORE TREES TO SPREAD GREENERY AND SHADE

Within its obligation to spread greeneries and shade in the Muscat Governorate, Muscat Municipality adopts a local approach to plant local trees in public areas like walkways, roadsides, gardens and parks to spread shade. The drive was chosen due to the great ability of Omani shrubs to withstand drought, high temperatures. — Supplied picture



Introducing ‘Laila Has Stripes’: A heartwarming children’s book

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Shahad Nasr Al Wahaibi has unveiled her debut children’s book, ‘Laila Has Stripes’, an enchanting tale that explores the beauty of diversity and acceptance. Set to become a part of modern Omani literature, the remarkable book delivers a powerful message to young readers and adults alike.

The story revolves around Laila, a young girl with unique stripes on her skin, which sets her apart from others. When her family moves from farm-life to living in the bustling city, Laila discovers that being different leads to being perceived in various ways. ‘Laila Has Stripes’ follows her journey of self-acceptance, the unwavering support from her parents, and leaves readers with a profound reflection on making life better for those like Laila.

With an educational background in Finance, Shahad Nasr al Wahaibi has skillfully combined her love for words with her passion for shaping young minds. “I use numbers to see the future in the corporate world, but words are my tool to shape the minds of our future generation. That’s why I chose to write children’s books,” Shahad explained.

The author envisions ‘Laila Has Stripes’ as the first installment in a captivating series, with seven more stories already brewing in her creative mind. The overwhelmingly positive response since the book’s announcement has fueled Shahad’s determina-



representation. Shahad believes that children understand the value of empathy and aims to inspire positive change through her storytelling.

Dedicated to both children and adults, ‘Laila Has Stripes’ offers healing and celebrates uniqueness, leaving a lasting impression on anyone who reads it. The book’s touching narrative and captivating illustrations make it a must-have addition to every home, school, and library.

About the Author

Shahad Nasr al Wahaibi is a young Omani corporate professional working in the Energy sector, and has made significant contributions to various fields. As the Chief Marketing Officer for iSAW, a global organization dedicated to advancing women’s growth in the corporate world, she has already impacted countless lives. Furthermore, her involvement with the Strathclyde MBA in Oman and dedication to teaching marketing reflects her commitment to empowering others. Recognized with the NTI BizPro Award and active in the Toastmasters community, Shahad’s debut book is a testament to her love for literature and her passion for making a difference. ‘Laila Has Stripes’ is now available for purchase online and in leading bookstores, bringing a heartwarming message of acceptance to readers of all ages.

To learn more about the book and the author, please visit: @Shahad_writes on Instagram or Shahad_writes88 on Facebook.

tion to continue sharing meaningful tales.

Many organisations have already extended invitations to Shahad, recognising the importance of her work in guiding children on how to embrace those with special abilities or who may be different in any way.

Surprisingly, ‘Laila Has Stripes’ resonates deeply with both children and adults, making it an essential read for all ages.

A personal message

In a personal message to young readers in the book, Shahad writes, “Laila wants you to remember that it is alright to be different, as long as you are kind and respectful. Being different is a superpower because it shows who truly loves you for who you are!”

Illustrated by the talented Anisa Al Amri, the book empowers children with empathy and addresses the significance of diverse

SPACE INDUSTRIES

Oman explores joint cooperation with India’s ISRO in space sector

BENGALURU: Eng. Said Hamoud Al Ma’awali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, on Thursday held a meeting with S. Somanath, Chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), and a number of ISRO officials and specialists.

Eng. Al Ma’awali was briefed about the Indian experience in the area of space. The two sides discussed various aspects of cooperation and partnership in this field. As an initiative of cooperation between the Ministry and ISRO, Eng. Al Ma’awali inaugurated the Indian-Omani Earth Observation Platform, which was developed by ISRO.

The platform, which comprises images and data of Indian earth



observation satellites, seeks to maximise benefits through its connections with terrestrial space applications, notably by making the data available for use in various development sectors like agriculture, water, fisheries, transport, natural disaster management, urban development and renewable energy.

On the sidelines of the visit,

Eng. Al Ma’awali and his accompanying delegation toured the Indian satellite control and monitoring centre.

There, the Omani side was briefed about the stage where India’s Chandrayaan-3 vehicle separated from the propulsion capsule in its quest to land on the moon’s surface.

During the visit, Al Ma’awali and his delegation conferred with a number of Indian companies specialised in space industries, as well as emerging firms specialised in information and communication technology. Besides getting insights into the Indian companies’ experience and services, the Omani side marketed investment opportunities available in the Omani market. — OMA

MUSCAT SECURITIES EXCHANGE

Business environment reflects positive outlook



<FROM A1 The National Finance Company recorded the highest profits at OMR 5.4 million, followed by Omani Finance Services with net profits of OMR1.565 million, Taageer Finance with profits of OMR1.562 million, and United Finance with a profit of OMR 809,000. Muscat Finance reported a net profits of OMR590,000.

The assets of the five companies increased at the end of last June to OMR1.123 billion in the first of this year compared to OMR1.012 billion in June of last year, recording a growth of 10.9 percent.

The current year witnessed four companies increase their capital by distributing bonus shares to their shareholders, which prompted the sector’s capital to rise at the end of last June to OMR180.8 million, compared to OMR175.9 million in June last year.

Despite the improvement

in financial results in the first half of this year, companies see that there are a number of challenges facing the sector, and the United Finance Company said that the second quarter of this year witnessed a set of enormous challenges facing companies worldwide, especially in the financial sector. While the National Finance Company saw that there is a gradual recovery of the economy from the effects of the Corona pandemic, indicating that it is monitoring the negative impact associated with fear of global recession and high oil prices.

Taageer Finance said that despite the challenges in the financing sector, the business environment reflects a positive outlook, and the improvement in the credit rating of the Sultanate of Oman reflects the positive global outlook towards the Omani economy. — OMA



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IN BENGALURU, INDIA



Meeting focuses on safe digital economy

BENGALURU: The Sultanate, represented by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology has participated in the meeting of Digital Economy Ministers, held in Bengaluru, India, on the sidelines of the G20 Summit.

The meeting concluded to a number of recommendations focused on the general digital basic structures, the significance of establishing a safe digital economy and development of digital skills for building international power ready for the future.

Digital basic structures

The participants agreed, during the meeting, on establishing a joint framework for the general digital basic structures. The purpose of this framework is to develop, which framework would develop and showcase the general digital basic structures and to recognise the significant role of

the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the need for development of comprehensive curriculums that ensure safety through Internet and protection of the privacy of children and their personal details, protection of human rights and development of cyber education and awareness tools for children and the youth.

The participants welcomed the initiative of development of Virtual Centre of Excellence concerned with digital skills programmes practices, occupational criteria, and skills classification among other issues. The participants also agreed on development of tools for the design and introduction of programmes for improvement of digital skills. They also agreed on a roadmap to facilitate comparison and understanding job roles, digital skills and qualification related to the members of G20 Group. — DNA

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REQUEST
FOR
PROPOSALS

Zubair Investment Corporation is a holding company having interests in diverse fields. It is currently looking for a manpower/workforce consultant who can provide support with **demand planning and forecasting**.

RFP Description (Scope of Work):

- Review the current organisational structure and assess if all positions align with the organisation's objectives.
- Review, evaluate and prepare new job descriptions for each, assess if they are accurately defined and if tasks are being fulfilled.
- Review the tasks assigned to each position and identify if they are being utilised fully and efficiently by the respective staff.
- Assess the experience and qualifications required for each position and provide recommendations on any necessary adjustments to the organisation structure or job descriptions to optimise resource utilisation.
- Provide a comprehensive resource planning report that outlines recommendations and action plans to optimise resource allocation for the existing operation.

RFP Number : ZIC/HR/001/2023
Last Date for Expression of Interest: : 31-08-2023
Confirmation of Interest and address for clarification : hr@zubairinvestment.com
Submission Date: : 30-09-2023
(Only consultants having expressed interest in submitting their proposals can do so by this date)

The submission has to be addressed to the Group HR Director, Zubair Investment Corporation. It should be submitted by email in pdf format to the email hr@zubairinvestment.com on or before the submission date.

Any proposals submitted after the submission date will not be considered.

RFP
Zubair Investment Corporation LLC | Muscat, Sultanate of Oman | Fax: +968 24691259
P O Box 880, PC 130, | Tel: +968 24607770 | Email: hr@zubairinvestment.com

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Capturing the unseen, one click at a time

MENA CELEBRATES WORLD PHOTOGRAPHY DAY WITH ENCHANTING STORIES OF ARABIA

Every year, the global population captures a staggering 1.81 trillion photos. That's 57,000 images per second! According to creative advisory firm Photutorial, the worldwide tally for photos taken in 2021 was 1.2 trillion, increasing significantly to 1.72 trillion in 2022. Projections suggest that by the year 2030, this figure will surge to approximately 2.3 trillion photos annually.

As camera clicks accelerate on World Photography Day, there is a charm in the air enveloping our region. This charm is not just about the golden dunes, vibrant souks, or historic architecture that make this region a photographer's paradise. It is about the people, their stories, and the way they see their world through the lens of their cameras.

Photography is more than just capturing beautiful landscapes or portraits; it is about storytelling. Every click is a narrative, and every frame is a story. Our flagship contest Stories of Arabia serves as an apt example of how photography is used to weave tales of food, people, places, and traditions.

A symphony of cultures

Our region represents a rich tapestry of histories. Each photo taken here is like a note in a symphony, contributing to a grand composition that tells the story of a diverse and colourful region. From the natural wonders of Oman and the lively cityscapes of Dubai to the serene desert landscapes of Saudi Arabia, photographers capture the essence of these places and their people, creating visual masterpieces that resonate with viewers around the world.

The power of a single frame

A single photo has the power to evoke a myriad of emotions, thoughts, and reactions. It can encapsulate joy, sorrow, hope, despair, love, and much more. In the hands of a skilled photographer, a camera becomes a tool for powerful storytelling. From images of adventurous children horse riding against the backdrop of the highest mountain range in the Arabian Peninsula, to rare shots of the Arabian Red Fox peeking out from its hidden residence, Stories of Arabia have been telling tales of the human condition in a way words often cannot.

Shining a light on the unseen

Photography has the power to shine a light on those parts of society that often go unseen or under-represented. Through their lenses, photographers in the region are bringing attention to issues such as poverty, displacement, and social



inequality. These images serve as a stark reminder of the challenges many people face, but they also highlight the resilience, strength, and spirit of those who endure.

Connecting cultures and fostering understanding

Today, photography transcends its traditional role of merely preserving memories. It has evolved into a way of building bridges of understanding between different cultures. Every photo taken in our region and shared globally is an opportunity for dialogue—a chance to challenge stereotypes and misconceptions.

These images offer glimpses into the everyday lives of people, their customs, traditions, celebrations, and struggles. They humanize news stories, putting faces to the headlines, and allowing us to see beyond our own immediate experiences. Each image shared is a step towards fostering empathy and understanding between distant cultures.

The advent of digital technology and social media has democratized photography, allowing anyone to share their stories with the world. In addition, visual content consistently garners higher engagement rates on social media platforms compared to text-based content.

According to data from UNESCO, the UAE, Qatar, and Bahrain have solidified their positions as global frontrunners in the realm of social media engagement. Notably, the UAE has emerged as

a standout, showcasing a remarkable growth trajectory. In 2023, the number of active social media users in the UAE surged by an impressive 8.2%. This rise amounts to a significant increase of over 810,000 users compared to 2022, underscoring the nation's dynamic embrace of digital connectivity and social engagement.

Meanwhile, the number of social media users in Saudi Arabia is approaching the 30 million mark. These remarkable figures are testament to the profound engagement of people in the digital arena, highlighting the pervasive influence of visual communication as an undeniable and potent force in today's interconnected world.

As such, photographers now serve as ambassadors of their native countries. When they showcase the beauty, diversity, and richness of their cultures to a global audience, they are creating curiosity and inspiring people from around the world to explore, visit and experience these places firsthand.

This elevates photography to new heights, positioning it as a pivotal catalyst for economic growth and development. The tourism industry, which plays a key role in the economies of many countries within the region, benefits greatly from the increased visibility made possible through photography. Every shared photo is an invitation to discover, creating a ripple effect that boosts tourism and propels economic growth.

Contributed by Binoj Nair



Two Omani companies take part in ‘Digital Innovation’ contest

The summit is an important platform for showcasing and supporting emerging companies that provide digital solutions around the world

Times News Service

MUSCAT: On the sidelines of the Sultanate of Oman's participation in the G20 Summit, two Omani companies are among the competitors in the 'Digital Innovation' competition India, among 115 startups from 29 countries. This comes within the framework of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology's (MTCIT) endeavour



to develop emerging Omani technology companies and maximise their contribution to the domestic product and the national economy in general. With the support of the Ministry, two Omani companies (Rahal and H2SolarO) are participating in the "Digital Innovation" competition, which is being organised in the Republic of India as part of the activities of the G20 summit, with the participation of 115 startups

from 29 countries. The competition is being organised on the sidelines of the G20 Digital Innovation Alliance conference, in Panglu from August 17-19. It is an important platform for showcasing and supporting emerging companies that provide digital solutions around the world. The conference is also of great importance as it includes discussions and specialised workshops on various disciplines of information

and communication technology, including: general digital infrastructure, cyber security, qualification of competencies and specialists, and bridging the digital gap. Rehal company was established in 2018, it works in the field of enabling and supporting organisations to reach their digital goals by understanding their needs and using latest technologies, methodologies and field expertise to become



the best in creating added value for their customers. The company offers a range of services and products in the areas of data management, robotic process automation, artificial intelligence, IT technology resourcing and software engineering. H2SolarO company works to provide green economy solutions for institutions and companies, and offers a wide range of products and services that aim to promote

the development and production of biofuels derived from local agricultural sources, as the company supports and links farmers and companies to study their own requirements and design appropriate economic solutions based on green energy alternatives mutually beneficial, it also verifies and approves carbon credit and certificates to enable credit holders to contact companies and trade credit.

G20 MEETING

Oman supports development, research for manufacturing of vaccines: Minister

NEW DELHI: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Health, during its participation in the meeting of the G20 Health Ministers in the Republic of India on Saturday, affirmed its full and integrated support for the proposed framework for regional research, development and manufacturing for vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics. In a speech delivered by Dr. Hilal Ali Al Sabti, Minister of Health, and head of the delegation participating in the meeting, called for preventive measures across the scope of 'One Health' within the global platform for coordinating the proposed medical measures, referring to the strategic location enjoyed by the Sultanate of Oman and the political stability it enjoys. It's readiness enables it to assume an important role in the production and distribution of medical supplies, especially in emergency situations. He explained that the Sultanate of Oman supports the initiatives stipulated in priority areas for its belief that convergence, strengthening and creating a healthier tomorrow enables the building of more resilient, sustainable and inclusive health systems. He indicated that the Sultanate of Oman has good research institutions and capabilities across the horizon of One Health, which has contributed in the past for research and development of vac-



MEETING: The delegation of the Sultanate of Oman participating in the meeting was headed by Dr. Hilal Ali Al Sabti, Minister of Health, and the Sultanate participated in it as a guest country.

cines, and could play a key role in the future preparedness for emerging diseases and other medical countermeasures. The Minister of Health also indicated that the Sultanate of Oman supports and promotes the use of quality-assured and sustainable digital health solutions that are in line with the Global Digital Health Strategy (2020-2025) of the World Health Organization, and also contributes to achieving comprehensive health coverage, and at the local level, we are investing in Digital Health Solutions. We support the implementation of the National Digital Health Strategy which is in line

with WHO rules, standards and guidelines. He called on the G20 member states, international organisations, private institutions and factories to make the most of the potential of the Sultanate of Oman in the global healthcare ecosystem. The conference was accompanied by discussion sessions that focused on the priority of providing medical resources and medical tools and the availability of possible procedures and measures to access them safely, effectively and comprehensively. Digital health solutions and innovations were also discussed to help achieve comprehensive

health coverage and improve the provision of health care services. **'One Health' approach,** Earlier, in his speech during the meeting, the Minister of Health stressed that the Sultanate of Oman is keenly aware of the ongoing global challenge of antimicrobials and the importance of adopting the 'One Health' approach, indicating that moving from concepts to practical measures is necessary to confront antimicrobial resistance more effectively. **Data collection** He added: "To strengthen the global system for surveillance of antimicrobial resistance, G20 countries can provide the necessary support to build infrastructure data for countries to facilitate better data collection on antimicrobial resistance and consumption." He added: "To strengthen the global system for surveillance of antimicrobial resistance, G20 countries can provide the necessary support to build infrastructure data for countries to facilitate better data collection on antimicrobial resistance and consumption." The first session of the meeting also included two panel discussions, the first with the World Health Organization's Global Summit on Traditional Medicine, and the second on the topic "One Earth, One Health" for advanced healthcare in India 2023. -ONA

WORLD HUMANITARIAN DAY

Oman's charitable institutions doing wonderful work



MUSCAT: The world today is witnessing realistic challenges and many problems that have left many effects resulting from natural disasters, wars and epidemics that still claim millions of lives every year. And because humanitarian work is not limited to material aspects or those related to sudden global emergencies, it goes beyond that, to what is represented in psychological support and providing aid to those in need of that help in various countries of the world. The United Nations launched a record humanitarian appeal in 2023 worth \$51.5 billion to support 339 million people around the world, and this comes in line with World Humanitarian Day, which falls on August 19 of each year. The Sultanate of Oman has harnessed all its efforts at the inter-

national and local levels, through official and other social bodies that play their roles according to well-studied plans to work on. Among the institutions that represent Oman in its humanitarian missions abroad is the Omani Authority for Charitable Activities, which was established in 1996 to pool the efforts of civil work represented in charitable and professional societies, Omani women's associations, charitable teams and humanitarian work activities. The Omani Authority for Charitable Activities has been able to expand its activities and its services year after year, and built a prestigious position for itself locally, regionally and internationally. It has been able to achieve its desired goals for which it was established, whether inside or outside the Sultanate of Oman. -ONA

INSPIRATION AND SUCCESS

Programme launched for entrepreneurs

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority announced the launch of a mentoring programme in its seventh edition, "Inspiration and Success", with the participation of 50 owners of small and medium enterprises and startups. The authority stated that the programme is a fundamental pillar of the guidance provided by the authority to entrepreneurs and owners of small and medium enterprises and startups, to enable them and develop their managerial, strategic and leadership skills through seven training seminars, in addition to spreading the culture of entrepreneurship in the Sultanate of Oman. Furthermore, the authority indicated that each business owner will be allocated a mentor from business management experts for a full year according to a clear map based on the business model of the enterprise and



the project, and graduates will be awarded a certificate in managing small and medium enterprises from the Royal Society of Management accredited in the United Kingdom. It is noteworthy that the guidance programme targets two categories of entrepreneurs: the category of small and medium enterprises and startups, and the mentors category, in which the programme is looking for experienced businessmen to support small and medium enterprises.

Sultanate of Oman

Ministry of Health

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Directorate General of Khoula Hospital invites specialized companies to participate in the following Tenders: -

Tender Ref	Description	Last date for collection of tender document	Bid Submission Closing Date on/ Before 09:00 am Wednesday	Eligibility	Tender Fee (Non-Refundable)
MOH/DGKH-31/3076/2023	Re-Design and Renovation of Medical Furniture in the Private Ward at Directorate General of Khoula Hospital	03/September/ 2023	27/September/ 2023	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in Excellent Grade	R.O 25.000

- Tenders should be submitted on line on <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.
- Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accepts or reject any tender
- For any Clarification, you may contact via Telephone: 24402200 , Email id etenderhd@ita.gov.om

Biden hails ‘new era’ of Japan, South Korea ties

US President Joe Biden sealed new security cooperation with Japan and South Korea as he hosted the leaders of the Asian countries in three-way talks at Camp David.

CAMP DAVID: South Korea's President Yoon Suk Yeol, left, President Joe Biden and Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, right, meet at Camp David, the US presidential retreat on August 18, 2023

US President Joe Biden on Friday sealed new security cooperation with Japan and South Korea as he hosted the leaders of the Asian countries in three-way talks at Camp David.

"We, the leaders of Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK), and the



United States, convened at Camp David to usher in a new era of trilateral partnership," a statement released by the White House said.

"We do so at a time of unparalleled opportunity for our countries and our citizens, and at a hinge point of history, when geopolitical competition, the climate crisis, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, and nuclear provocations test us," the statement added.

Biden also praised the "political courage" of South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in turning the page on their historical animosity.

Japan and South Korea have had strained relations dating back to Japan's 1910-1945 occupation of Korea.

The three nations have agreed to

a new security pledge committing them to consult with each other in the event of a security crisis or threat in the Pacific.

Under the pledge, the three allies agreed to share information via an emergency hotline between Washington, Tokyo and Seoul, according to the White House.

The security pledge comes against the backdrop of China's recent assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific region, particularly Beijing's vow to retake the autonomous island of Taiwan by force, if necessary.

The leaders issued a sharply worded statement about Beijing's actions in the South China Sea, where China has claimed territory that according to international law, belongs to other countries.

China has also pledged to con-

duct military exercises in the region, which could further escalate tensions.

Regarding the dangerous and aggressive actions we recently witnessed by the People's Republic of China in support of its illegal maritime territorial claims in the South China Sea, we ... strongly oppose any attempt to unilaterally change the status quo in the Indo-Pacific waters, the statement said.

Despite the tensions between Washington and Beijing, Biden did, however, say he expects to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping later this year.

The US, Japan and South Korea also agreed to set up an "early warning system" to share information and coordinate on "possible disruptions to global supply chains as well as to confront and overcome economic coercion."

One of several regional security challenges discussed during the Camp David talks was North Korea.

The three leaders spoke forcefully in remarks to reporters about Pyongyang's nuclear and other threats and said they would cooperate to counter them.

They agreed to hold trilateral military training exercises annually and to share real-time information on North Korean missile launches by the end of 2023. -ANI



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Trump expected to surrender in Georgia poll case

WASHINGTON DC: United States former President Donald Trump is expected to surrender himself to the Fulton County jail next week in connection with the efforts to overturn the 2020 election results in Georgia, CNN reported citing sources.

On Monday, Trump and 18 co-defendants were charged with a plot to subvert the 2020 election results in Georgia. Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis set the date August 25 as a deadline for his surrender.

Negotiations between Trump's lawyers and Willis' prosecutors are expected to continue into next week, ahead of the surrender deadline. The exact timing of Trump's surrender remains unclear.

Trump's expected surrender in Georgia comes the same week as the first Republican presidential debate of the 2024 election cycle.

The former president, however, is planning to skip the event and instead sit for an interview with former Fox News host Tucker Carlson, multiple sources familiar with his plans told CNN on Friday — though he could change his mind, as per CNN.

Trump now faces a total of 91 charges across four criminal



cases. His surrender and arraignment in Georgia are expected to look different from those in his previous three criminal cases.

Fulton County Sheriff Pat LaBat has previously suggested he wants to treat Trump and the others named in the indictment similar to any other defendant. This could mean that they would have mugshots taken and fingerprinted.

Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis launched the investigation into Trump and his associates nearly two years ago, reported New York Post.

After all the 19 people were charged in connection with the efforts to overturn the 2020 election on Monday, Willis told reporters at a press conference. -ANI

FORMER AFGHANISTAN PRESIDENT

Karzai urges Taliban to reopen girls' schools

KABUL: Former Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai on the country's 104th independence anniversary, urged the Taliban to reopen girls' schools and universities, emphasizing that true independence requires educational access for all, Khaama Press reported.

Karzai talked about the critical role of knowledge and stressed

that achieving peace, stability, development, and independence requires acquiring knowledge.

Karzai urged all to educate their children, including girls. He called on the Taliban to open schools for girls and promote nationwide education for true independence.

"I wish all the people of our country to spare no effort in edu-

cating their children, including both boys and girls. On this historic day, I once again ask the Taliban to open the gates of schools and universities to girls as soon as possible and to provide education for everyone throughout the country so that by salvaging from dependence on others, we will gain independence in its real sense and own

a self-reliant country," Karzai said.

The former president emphasised that overcoming challenges and achieving peace demands bolstering national unity, enhancing harmony, and promptly initiating intra-Afghan talks. He said he believes these steps are essential for resolving issues and establishing lasting stability in the country. -ANI

INVESTIGATION

‘I am evil...’: British nurse guilty of killing seven babies in a year

LONDON : A British nurse has been found guilty of murdering seven babies and attempting to kill six others at the hospital where she worked, CNN reported on Friday.

During the investigation at her residence, the police found notes stating "I am a horrible evil person" and "I don't deserve to live".

The incident is being considered as the country's worst baby serial killer in recent times.

Lucy Letby, 33, harmed babies in her care by injecting air into their blood and stomachs, overfeeding them with milk, physically assaulting them and poisoning them with insulin, the prosecutors informed Manchester Crown

Court. In a particular case, Letby murdered a baby boy by administering air into his bloodstream, CNN reported citing UK's PA Media news agency. The next day, she attempted to kill his twin brother as well as by poisoning him with insulin.

Notably, a court order protects the identity of the children involved in the allegations against Letby, including those who died and survived under her care, per CNN.

During the investigation, the police found a trove of handwritten notes while searching Letby's house during their investigation, including one that read, "I am evil I did this."

She secretly attacked 13 babies in the neonatal ward at the Countess of Chester hospital between 2015 and 2016, CNN reported Britain's Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).

Her intention was to kill the babies while duping her colleagues into believing there was a natural cause of death, the prosecutors argued.

Pascale Jones of the CPS called Letby's actions a "complete betrayal of the trust placed in her."

"Lucy Letby sought to deceive her colleagues and pass off the harm she caused as nothing more than a worsening of each baby's existing vulnerability," she said. -ANI



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Sultanate of Oman
MINISTRY CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH

MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH, Muscat, hereby give notice of tenders for the following projects

TENDR. No.	Project Category	Grade In Tender Board Registration	Location
Re-tender 14/2023	Supply	Excellent & First	SUPPLY AND INSTALLATION SPORT SCIENTIFIC EQUIPMENTS
16/2023	Services	Excellent & First	Request for Proposal Integrated Marketing Communications Tender for the Sultanate of Oman's Participation in Expo 2025, Osaka, Kansai, Japan

Companies, which are registered with the Tender Board and engaged in same category with experience in and same Grade as noted above, can obtain the Tender Documents at the Tender Board E-tendering digital portal link (<http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) until 26 /08 / 2023.

The last date of tender submission on above E-tendering site at 09:00am 04/09 /2023.

INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE OF MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH

Any participants have doubt in adopting e-tendering can contact over the phone 24402200 or through email etenderhd@ita.gov.om

NEW VARIANT

WHO designates Covid’s BA.2.86 as ‘variant under monitoring’

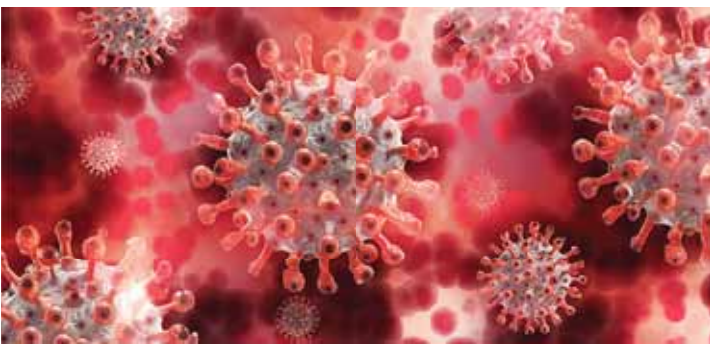
GENEVA: World Health Organization (WHO) designated COVID-19 variant BA.2.86 as a ‘variant under monitoring’ due to the large number of mutations it carries.

The WHO said on Friday that they are tracking 3 variants of interest and 7 variants under monitoring at the moment.

“WHO continues to call for better surveillance, sequencing, and reporting of #COVID19 as this virus continues to spread and evolve,” the WHO said in a tweet.

Who further stated that it needed more data to understand this COVID19 variant and the extent of its spread, but the number of mutations warrants attention.

Recently, the latest variant, EG.5 (also known as Eris), has grabbed



the attention of public health experts around the world and is becoming a dominant strain in countries including the United States and Britain.

The variant is causing about 17 per cent of the new Covid-19 cases in the country compared to 16 per cent for the next most common lineage, XBB.1.16, according to the latest estimates from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CNN reported.

The new variant is a spinoff of

the XBB recombinant strain of the Omicron family.

According to the WHO, all viruses, including SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, change over time. Most changes have little to no impact on the virus’s properties. However, some changes may affect the virus’s properties, such as how easily it spreads, the associated disease severity, or the performance of vaccines, therapeutic medicines, diagnostic tools, or other public health and social measures.

In June 2020, the WHO Virus Evolution Working Group was established with a specific focus on SARS-CoV-2 variants, their phenotype and their impact on countermeasures. This later became

the Technical Advisory Group on SARS-CoV-2 Virus Evolution. In late 2020, the emergence of variants that posed an increased risk to global public health prompted WHO to characterize some as variants of interest (VOIs) and variants of concern (VOCs) to prioritize global monitoring and research and to inform and adjust the COVID-19 response. From May 2021 onwards, WHO began assigning simple, easy-to-say labels for key variants.

Considerable progress has been made in establishing and strengthening a global system to detect signals of potential VOIs or VOCs and rapidly assess the risk posed by SARS-CoV-2 variants to public health. It remains critical that

Canada wildfires: British Columbia declares emergency

Emergency Management Minister Bowinn Ma says the number of people under evacuation order in British Columbia went from 4,500 to 15,000 in a matter of an hour



in British Columbia went from 4,500 to 15,000 in a matter of an hour.

A further 20,000 people are under evacuation alert, reported CBC.

Eby said declaring a state of emergency “enables a number of legal tools for us to issue specific orders and to ensure that resources are available.”

In a statement, the provincial government said a state of emergency lets the province enact emergency orders, which could include travel restrictions if people fail to heed calls to avoid non-essential travel to the central Interior and southeastern British Columbia.

Earlier, the wildfire in Canada’s Northwest Territories prompted emergency declarations and the evacuation of the capital city of Yellowknife by road and air, CNN reported.

Yellowknife accounts for about

half of the total population of the remote territory, which sits north of Alberta and east of Yukon.

Premier Caroline Cochrane said in a statement on Wednesday night: “We’re all tired of the word unprecedented, yet there is no other way to describe this situation in the Northwest Territories.”

“Residents living along the Ingraham Trail, in Dettah, Kam Lake, Grace Lake and Engle Business District are currently at the highest risk and should evacuate as soon as possible. Other residents have until noon on Friday, August 18, 2023, to evacuate,” Northwest Territories officials said in a news release on Wednesday, as per CNN.

The community of N’Dilo is also under an evacuation order, officials said in the release. Those unable to leave by vehicle can register for an air evacuation, officials said. **ANI**

Public participation is key to healthcare success: Indian PM

NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday highlighted the importance of public participation for the success of health initiatives. He stressed that it is one of the main reasons for the success of India’s leprosy eradication campaign.

In his virtual address at the G20 Health Ministers Meeting in Gujarat’s Gandhinagar, PM Modi said, “Public participation is a key factor in the success of health initiatives. It was one of the main reasons for the success of our leprosy eradication campaign. Our ambitious programme on TB elimination also encourages public participation. We have called upon the people of the country to become “Friends for eradication of TB”. Under this, nearly 1 million patients have been adopted by citizens. Now, we are on our way to achieve TB elimination well ahead of the global target of 2030.”

PM Modi stressed that digital solutions and innovations are useful means to make efforts “equitable and inclusive.” He stated

that India’s national platform, e-Sanjeevani, has facilitated 140 million telehealth consultations to date. He noted that India’s COWIN platform has facilitated the largest vaccination drive in human history.

“Digital solutions and innovations are a useful means to make our efforts equitable and inclusive. Patients from far and wide can receive quality care through tele-medicine. India’s national platform, e-Sanjeevani, has facilitated 140 million tele-health consultations to date. India’s COWIN platform successfully facilitated the largest vaccination drive in human history. It managed the delivery of more than 2.4 billion vaccine doses, and real-time availability of globally verifiable vaccination certificates,” PM Modi said.

“The Global Initiative on Digital Health will bring together various digital health initiatives on a common platform. Let us open our innovations for public good. Let us avoid duplication of funding. Let us facilitate equitable availabil-

ity of technology. This initiative will allow countries in the Global South to close the gap in healthcare delivery. It will take us one step closer to our goal of achieving Universal Health Coverage,” he added.

PM Modi spoke about India’s comprehensive approach to healthcare, embracing traditional medicine, expanding healthcare infrastructure, and ensuring affordable healthcare for all. He stated that the global celebration of the International Day of Yoga showcases the universal desire for a holistic approach.

“In India, we are following a holistic and inclusive approach. We are expanding health infrastructure, promoting traditional systems of medicine, and providing affordable healthcare to all. The global celebration of the International Day of Yoga is testament to the universal desire for holistic health,” PM Modi said.

“This year, 2023 is being marked as the International Year of Millets,” he added. **ANI**



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Nama Dhojar Services invites the specialize companies to participate and submit their offers for the below said tender in Dhojar Governorate.

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last Date for Collection of Tender Documents	Time & Last Date for Proposal Submission	Tender Fee (OMR) Including VAT (5%)
DISC/2023/132	SUPPLY OF SEWER CLEANING EQUIPMENTS	03/09/2023	25/09/2023	RO. 105.000
DISC/2023/133	SUPPLY OF STANDBY DIESEL GENERATORS	03/09/2023	25/09/2023	RO. 105.000
DISC/2023/134	SUPPLY, TESTING & COMMISSIONING OF DIESEL EMERGENCY SEWAGE / STORM WATER PUMPS	03/09/2023	25/09/2023	RO. 105.000
DISC/2023/135	CONSTRUCTION WATER DISTRIBUTION LINE AT TAQAHLAIN	03/09/2023	28/09/2023	RO. 26.250
DISC/2023/136	CONSTRUCTION OF WATER NETWORK AT AI MUROQJ	03/09/2023	28/09/2023	RO. 1,575.000
DISC/2023/137	UPGRADE AND IMPROVE THE STORAGE FACILITY AT SANAYA, AIWOAD	03/09/2023	28/09/2023	RO. 525.000
DISC/2023/138	LINE-LOT 08 A-2023	03/09/2023	10/09/2023	RO. 52.500

• To view the tender details, you can visit www.dhofarservices.nama.om / scan the QR code

• The deposit at the last day of purchasing should be before 3.00pm.

• Bids shall be submitted online through using "supplier portal". No hard copies are accepted.

• The company is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other bid.

• In the event of receipt of the tender document on behalf of another company, the interested purchasers in the above tender document should provide details of the person's name and the company details.

• For any clarifications contact us on:- Tel No. 23232554 -email: purchase@dhofarservices.nama.om



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Advertisement No. 28/2022

Companies specialized in the field and registered with Tender Board, may obtain tender documents for the website through the following link: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) against non-refundable fees as mentioned below starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated below.

Tender Number	Tender Description	Last date to collect the tender	Tender return date	Grade
(PRE/23/128) 2023/MM/HQ-43	Maintenance of Landscaping and Cleaning Works at As Seeb (A)	09/09/2023	21/09/2023	Excellent/ First
(PRE/23/129) 2023/MM/HQ-44	Maintenance of Landscaping and Cleaning Works at As Seeb (B)	09/09/2023	21/09/2023	Excellent/ First
(PRE/23/130) 2023/MM/HQ-45	Maintenance of Landscaping and Cleaning Works at As Seeb (C)	09/09/2023	21/09/2023	Excellent/ First
(PRE/23/131) 2023/MM/HQ-46	Maintenance of Landscaping and Cleaning Works at As Boshier (C)	09/09/2023	21/09/2023	Excellent/ First
(PRE/23/132) 2023/MM/HQ-47	Maintenance of Landscaping and Cleaning Works at Muttrah & Muscat	09/09/2023	21/09/2023	Excellent/ First
(PRE/23/156) 2023/MM/HQ-48	Consultancy Services for Development of Quriyat Seafont	09/09/2023	01/10/2023	First
(PRE/23/180) 2023/MM/HQ-49	Supply of Lighting Materials	09/09/2023	01/10/2023	Specialist
(PRE/23/189) 2023/MM/HQ-50	Consultancy Services for Development of Al Mahaj Commercial Area	09/09/2023	01/10/2023	First
(PRE/23/190) 2023/MM/QS-61	Design & Construction of the Upgradation of Existing Al Marid at Al Uthaiba	09/09/2023	21/09/2023	Excellent
(PRE/23/191) 2023/MM/QS-62	Reconstruction of Silver Jubilee	09/09/2023	01/10/2023	First

- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically.
- Clarification and Support:
 - For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).
 - For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om) or call (+96824402200).

KERYAS PAPER INDUSTRY

In the backdrop of the surge in demand for paper packaging across the Middle East, Oman's Keryas Paper Industry is taking part in the upcoming Propaper Dubai 2023, which will run during September 12-14 in Dubai at Dubai Festival City.

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



OIL PRICE RISES 1%

Oil price rose about 1 per cent on Friday on signs of slowing US output, but both crude benchmarks also ended their longest weekly rally of 2023 on mounting concerns about global demand growth.

Credit granted by banking sector tops OMR20 billion

The total investment of traditional commercial banks in securities witnessed a decrease of 5.9 percent, to about OMR4.6 billion at the end of last June

MUSCAT: The total credit balance granted by conventional commercial banks recorded an increase of 5.1 percent to reach OMR20.2 billion at the end of June 2023 according to the monthly bulletin of the Central Bank of Oman (CBO).

The total investment of traditional commercial banks in securities witnessed a decrease of 5.9 percent, to about OMR4.6 billion at the end of last June, while investment in government development bonds (GDBs) decreased by 5.1 percent compared to the same period in 2022, to reach OMR2.1 billion.

Their investments in foreign securities increased by 90.8 percent to reach OMR1.3 billion.

On the liabilities side, total deposits with conventional commercial banks increased by 3.1 percent to reach OMR22.2 billion at the end of June 2023.

Government deposits with commercial banks increased by 7.7 percent to about OMR5.4 billion. The deposits of public sector institutions increased by 1.6 percent to about OMR1.6 billion during the same period.

Meanwhile, private sector deposits increased by 2.1 percent to reach OMR14.8 billion in June 2023, constituting 66.4 percent of total deposits with conventional commercial banks.



Assets of Islamic banks and windows top OMR7bn

MUSCAT: The total assets of Islamic banks and windows combined recorded growth by the end of June 2023 to reach about OMR7 billion. This is 17.2 percent of the total assets of the banking sector in the Sultanate of Oman by the end

of June this year, higher by 12.6 percent compared to the same period last year.

Sharia-compliant

The total balance of financing granted to Sharia-compliant banking entities in Oman en-

gaged in this activity increased by 12.8 percent to reach OMR5.8 billion. Deposits with Islamic banks and windows also increased by 10.5 percent and reached about OMR5.2 billion at the end of last June this year. -ONA

Broad money supply

The broad money supply grew by 2.8 percent year-on-year, to reach OMR21.4 billion at the end of June 2023, while cash in its narrow sense decreased by 4.8 percent.

The increase in cash in the broad money supply was attributed to the increase in quasi-money by 5.9 percent. It consists of the sum of savings deposits, term deposits in Rial Omani and certificates of deposit issued by banks, in addition to margin accounts and all deposits in foreign

currency with the banking sector.

Cash with the public increased during the same period by 2.5 percent while demand deposits decreased by 6.9 percent.

With regard to the interest rate structure of conventional commercial banks, the weighted average interest rate on deposits in Rial Omani increased from 1.870 percent in June 2022 to 2.313 percent in June 2023. The weighted average interest rate on loans in Rial Omani decreased from 5.502

percent to 5.434 percent during the same period.

As for the average interest rates in the interbank lending market for one night, it recorded an increase of 5.350 percent in June 2023, compared to 1.450 percent in June 2022. This came as a result of the increase in the weighted average interest rate on repurchases to 5.750 percent compared to 1.875 percent during the same period last year, in line with the policies of the US Federal Reserve. -ONA

NCSI REPORT



Oman's real estate general index rises by 6.2% to reach OMR182.4 million

MUSCAT: Residential land prices led the general index of residential real estate prices in the Sultanate of Oman registering an increase of 6.2 percent in the second quarter of this year, amounting to OMR182.4 million, according to the Residential Real Estate Price Index report issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The residential land price index recorded a growth of 14.8 percent, to a value of OMR128.6 million, while the apartment price index decreased by 15.2 percent, to a value of OMR19.2 million. The villa price index also decreased by 6.2 percent, to OMR27.6 million, as well as other homes by 12.3 percent, recording a value of OMR7 million. On the other hand, the general index for residential real estate prices recorded an increase of 3.2 percent compared to the first quarter of this year.

Residential land prices increased by 3.9 percent, apartments prices increased by 1.7 percent, villas increased by 1.6 percent, and other homes increased by 1.1 percent.

The statistics showed that

The residential land price index recorded a growth of 14.8 percent, to a value of OMR128.6 million, while the apartment price index decreased by 15.2 percent

the number of transactions for selling residential real estate at the end of the second quarter of 2023 decreased by 6.6 percent compared to the same quarter of last year, and residential lands accounted for 87.6 percent of real estate sales transactions, compared to 5.2 percent for apartments, 4.1 percent for villas, and 3.1 percent for villas. -ONA

OMANI STOCK MARKET

MSX index rebounds but remains within a horizontal trading range



Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Omani stock market recorded a slightly positive week but remained within a horizontal trading range since the beginning of July, according to an industry expert.

"In this regard, it contrasted with some other markets in the region and other major global markets which have been declining lately," Hani Abuagla Senior Market Analyst at XTB, said.

"Although the main Omani index was able to record some increases, it could not return near its latest peaks which could fuel some pressures if traders move to secure their gains in particular as global uncertainties remain," he further added.

Last week, the main index of the MSX resumed its rise, up 28 points and closed at 4,785 points. The financial sector index rose 27 points and the Sharia index recorded a slight increase, while the industrial sector index declined 110 points.

The market was mostly supported by the positive performance of the financial sector which recorded particularly strong gains from Ominvest, Oman United Insurance, National Bank of Oman, and Sohar

International Bank, Hani Abuagla said. Ominvest released second-quarter earnings which were higher than in the same period of last year although lower than in the previous quarter.

Overall, increasing trading volumes compared to the previous week have also helped the market's rebound. "Sentiment could become more positive and trading volumes could increase if expectations over global conditions improve and uncertainty around monetary policy recedes and the volatility in energy markets diminishes," Hani Abuagla added.

In this regard, oil prices remain in a tumultuous period and have been declining during the week after a multi-month strong performance that hit this year's peak, he said. Oil markets have been rattled by the concerns around demand levels in China in particular where the economic recovery continued to be weaker than expected. "However, the production cuts established by Saudi Arabia could continue to support the market and create opportunities for Omani oil exports," Hani Abuagla further added.

However, China's economic performance could remain the centre of attention for global traders

as well as investors in the Omani stock market due to its potential impact on the local economy. Besides the slowing activity in the Chinese manufacturing sector, some concerns emerged again from the banking and real estate sectors which investors could monitor for potential contagion risks. The country could also see some risks regarding its credit rating.

In parallel, investors have monitored the release of the Federal Reserve's minutes as well as some data on the US job market this week, Hani Abuagla said. Both have supported the possibility of maintaining a strict monetary policy if not increasing rates again. "While the end of the interest rate hike cycle could be near, concerns about another increase could fuel some uncertainty among investors in global stock markets and could contribute to the volatility in Omani stocks as well," he added.

Next week, traders could monitor US data and interventions from the Federal Reserve's governors which could culminate during the Jackson Hole Symposium during the second half of the week. The event could impact the expectations of investors which could be more cautious ahead.

Tender

Oman chamber of commerce and industry would like to announce the following public tender:

Tender No.	Tender Name	Tender Fees (irrevocable)	Specialized companies	Deadline for Obtaining Documents	Deadline for Tender submission
3/2023	Analytical study on competitiveness of the business environment in the Sultanate of Oman	25 /-R.O	Companies specialized in consulting and economic studies	3 September 2023	Before 12 pm 11 September 2023
4/2023	consulting and developing in franchising program	25 /-R.O	Companies specialized in consulting and developing franchising program	3 September 2023	Before 12 pm 11 September 2023

Companies may obtain the tender documents from the Administration Department at the Second Floor of the chamber's Headquarters in Ruwi , during the official working hours against the payment of tender fees.

Tender Terms:
Provide valued CROCCCI membership ,Tender Board membership and taxation certificate .

Interested companies should enclose their bids a 1% Bank guarantee/ certified cheque of proposal value issued by one of the banks operating in Oman valid for 90 days from the deadline of submitting the bids addressed in the name of **Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry**. The bids without this temporary guarantee will not be considered .

The bids should be submitted in red waxed envelopes addressed to - Head of main tendering Committee , OCCCI, written outside the Number and title of the Tender. No indication about the bidder is allowed on the envelope.

Offers should be deposited in the tender box kept at the Administration Department in the Second floor of OCCCI Head office.

OCCCI is not bound to accept the lowest or any other bids. It has the right to accept or reject any bids without showing reasons.

Interested companies should submit the Tenders before 12 pm on 11 September 2023
For any inquiries please call : 24763881
Email : Shahla.zadjali@omanchamber.om

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MARKET

Oil up 1% on signs of slow US output

Concerns for investors remain focused on the tension between slowing global growth and still-tight global supplies

BENGALURU: Oil prices rose about 1 per cent on Friday on signs of slowing US output, but both crude benchmarks also ended their longest weekly rally of 2023 on mounting concerns about global demand growth. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures gained 86 cents, or 1.1 per cent, to settle at \$81.25 a barrel, and Brent crude futures rose 68 cents, or 0.8 per cent, to settle at \$84.80 a barrel. Both benchmarks pushed higher on Friday after industry data showed that the US oil and natural gas rig count, an early indicator of future output, fell for the sixth week in a row. A slump in US production could exacerbate an anticipated



supply tightness through the rest of this year, Reuters reported. Those concerns, spurred on by output cuts from the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies, helped oil prices gain for seven straight weeks since June. Brent crude gained about 18 per cent and WTI gained 20 per cent over the seven weeks ended August 11. This week, however, oil prices dropped about 2 per cent from last week, as a worsening property crisis in China added to concerns about the country's sluggish economic recovery and reduced investors' appetite for risk across markets. "Concerns for investors remain focused on the tension between slowing global growth and still-tight global supplies," said Rob Haworth, senior portfolio manager at US Bank Asset Management.

"Prices are likely to remain range-bound for now," Haworth said, adding that demand is in question for investors worried by the weak data from China. Concern is also mounting that the US Federal Reserve has not finished raising interest rates to tackle inflation. Higher borrowing costs can impede economic growth and in turn reduce overall demand for oil. Oil benchmarks were further depressed by seasonal demand weakness heading into the autumn, said Jay Hatfield, CEO of Infrastructure Capital Management. Hatfield said he expects demand to hold up in China despite its slowing economy and forecast oil prices would trade between \$75 to \$90 a barrel over the coming months. -BNA

NATURAL GAS RESERVES



EU gas reserves reach 90% ahead of November deadline

BRUSSELS: The natural gas reserves in the European Union are filled to 90 per cent of their capacity well before the target date of November 1, the European Commission announced on Friday. Gas storage levels have reached 1,024 TWh, or 90.12 per cent of storage capacity, equivalent to just over 93 billion cubic meters of natural gas, a commission statement said. "The EU energy market is in a much more stable position than it was this time last year," European Energy Commissioner Kadri Simson said, recalling the summer of 2022 when Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine sent energy prices soaring. She added that the EU is "well-prepared for winter," but investments in renewable energy and

energy efficiency could further strengthen the EU's position. The commission estimates that with 90% storage full, the EU will have enough gas to cover a third of its winter needs. However, the levels differed depending on the EU country. Spain has 99% of its capacity filled, while France has 83% and Latvia 77%. In Germany, it's around 92%. **EU survives without Russian gas** After Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine sparked an energy crisis in Europe, the EU took action to be better prepared for the winter when energy demand peaks. This included a gas storage regulation that set a binding EU target of filling storage facilities to 90% by November 1 each year. EU

member countries also committed to reducing gas consumption by 15% between April this year and the end of March 2024. Simson cautioned that gas prices remained "sensitive." The commission would continue to monitor the situation, she said. Before Moscow launched its invasion in February 2022, Russia accounted for almost half of the EU's natural gas imports. Although Russia's gas is not subject to EU sanctions, its supplies to the EU have fallen below 10% as Moscow has turned off the taps. The move initially sent energy prices soaring in mid-2022, but they fell sharply by the end of the year as Europe benefited from a mild winter and more gas was imported from the US and the Middle East. -BNA

EXPONENTIAL GROWTH

Oman's Keryas Paper Industry anticipates surge in paper packaging demand

Times News Service

MUSCAT: In the backdrop of the surge in demand for paper packaging across the Middle East, Oman's Keryas Paper Industry is taking part in the upcoming Propaper Dubai 2023, which will run during September 12-14 at Dubai at the Festival Arena in Dubai Festival City. "The growth in paper food packaging which surged during and after the pandemic continues to create growth for paper players in the MEA markets, and specifically in the GCC, where internet penetration is the world's highest aiding online commerce. The opportunity size has also grown with verticals like pharma, personal care and cosmetics taking to paper packaging solutions in a big way riding the e-commerce boom," said Omar Ali Abdullah Al Hosni, Chairman, Keryas Paper Industry, Oman. Anticipating increased demand in this sector, Keryas Paper had announced investments in the kraft paper segment to manufacture

re-cycled kraft paper jumbo reels, unveiling a \$40 million kraft paper project in the UAE during the previous Propaper expo in 2022. A statement from the organisers of the expo, Verifair, said that the share of paper packaging in the estimated US\$74 billion overall packaging market in the Middle East and Africa (MEA) continues to see exponential growth with e-commerce boom and consumer preference veers to sustainable and environment-friendly solutions. Propaper Dubai 2023 will host a large contingent of global paper and packaging companies which are at the vanguard of innovation. The show also incorporates Super Sourcing Dubai under the auspices of the Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO). Industry experts participating at the upcoming leading B2B exhibition said that in line with this demand growth, investments in kraft paper mills have also risen in the region in the post-Covid era, with enhanced use of paper packaging



across industry verticals such as food, catering hygiene, pharma and cosmetics driving up demand. "E-commerce continues to be on an upsurge in the GCC and larger MEA markets, and this has in turn catalysed the demand for packaging solutions across the board.

The overall e-commerce market in the region may surpass \$25 billion within the next couple of years, and this will fuel the need for paper packaging solutions, and the paper industry with its sustainable and alternative propositions stand to gain," said Majid Rasheed - Managing

Director of the UAE's Star Paper Mill Paper Industry. Quoting a Data Bridge Market Research report, Propaper 2023 spokespersons said that the kraft paper market will continue to gain market share. According to the forecast for 2020-2028, the kraft paper market will grow at a CAGR of 3.8 per cent in the UAE alone to over \$54 million. Star Paper Mills had also announced investments in the kraft paper segment, and in collaboration with RC, Paper Machines had announced an investment of over \$54 million in Khalifa Economic Zones Abu Dhabi to manufacture re-cycled kraft paper jumbo reels. A Mordor Intelligence report also confirmed the growth trend in B2C and B2B paper packaging solutions at an estimated CAGR of 4.30 per cent in MEA during 2023-2028. "The paper industry has been seeing a steady surge of investments, both as expansion in existing projects as well as greenfield projects with the market for paper-

based products consistently rising. In the GCC alone, the growth has been pronounced for paper packaging with a digitally savvy and sustainability-conscious young population accelerating their online spending," said Jeen Joshua, Managing Director, Verifair. **India participation** Indian companies at Propaper 2023 form the single largest contingent of exhibitors, while China and Egypt are the other pavilion participants. Indian participation also comes in the context of the growing bilateral trade between India, the GCC countries. Propaper will be a platform or paper industry stakeholders to congregate, showcase products and explore partnerships and growth opportunities, the expo in its second year is a unique buyer-seller platform which will facilitate partnerships, joint investments, market entry and exploration as well as increased sales forays for the participants.

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PROTECTIVE FEATURE

Elon Musk says X will strip ability to block accounts

WASHINGTON: Social media company X, formerly known as Twitter, will remove a protective feature that lets users block other accounts, owner Elon Musk said on Friday in another controversial move for the company he bought last year. The block function on X allows a user to restrict specific accounts from contacting them, seeing their posts or following them, Reuters reported. "Block is going to be deleted as a 'feature', except for DMs," Musk said in a post on the platform, referring to direct messages. He said X would retain the mute function, which screens a user from seeing specified accounts but, unlike blocking, does not alert the other account to the action. The billionaire owner has described himself as a free speech absolutist, but some critics have said his approach is irresponsible. Researchers have found an increase in hate speech and antisemitic content on the platform since he took over, and some governments have accused the company of not doing enough to moderate its content. Removing or limiting the block feature might bring X into conflict with guidelines incorporated by Apple's (AAPLO) App Store and Alphabet's



(GOOGL) Google Play. Apple says apps with user-generated content must have the ability to block abusive users. Google Play Store says apps must provide an in-app system for blocking user-generated content and users. X, Google and Apple did not immediately reply to requests for comment. Responding to a post from anti-bullying activist Monica Lewinsky urging X to keep the "critical tool to keep people safe online", Chief Executive Linda Yaccarino defended Musk's move. "Our users' safety on X is our number one priority. And we're building something better than the current state of block and mute. Please keep the feedback coming," Yaccarino posted. The company has said Musk would lead the product and engineering teams, while Yaccarino would lead all other teams, including legal and sales. -BNA

BRIEFS

Wall Street yields tread water as investors await



WASHINGTON: Wall Street ended mixed Friday and US Treasury yields stabilised after a recent surge and as investors awaited further interest rate insight from the Federal Reserve next week. Global shares were stuck around two-month lows and Wall Street indexes closed nearly flat and narrowly mixed. The Dow Jones Industrial Average ended up 0.08%, the S&P 500 dropped 0.01% and the Nasdaq Composite dipped 0.2%. The MSCI world equity index, which tracks shares in 45 nations, was last down 0.24%, Reuters reported. Yields on benchmark 10-year US Treasuries stepped back after flirting with 16-year highs earlier in the week. Investors expected the Fed may hold interest rates higher for longer as the US economy continued to show strength. -BNA **British consumers curb their shopping in July** **LONDON:** British retailers reported a bigger-than-expected drop in sales in July as heavy rain put off shoppers who are also feeling the hit from high inflation and 14 back-to-back increases in interest rates. Official data showed sales volumes last month were 1.2% lower than in June. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast a 0.5% drop, Reuters reported. Sterling weakened as investors assessed how much the sales drop represented a warning sign about a slowdown in Britain's sluggish economy, beyond the hit caused by the sixth-wettest July in records dating back to 1836. "It was a particularly bad month for supermarkets as the summer washout combined with the increased cost of living meant sluggish sales for both clothing and food," Heather Bovill, deputy director for surveys and economic indicators at the Office for National Statistics, said. -BNA



LIFESTYLE

BLUE-LIGHT GLASSES

According to an analysis of 17 randomised controlled studies, blue light-blocking eyewear has no effect on computer-related eye strain or sleep quality

The included studies did not analyse this outcome, hence the analysis did not uncover any proof that blue-light-filtering lenses shield against harm to the retina, the light-sensitive tissue at the back of the eye.

Since the early 2000s, blue-light filtering lenses, commonly referred to as blue-light blocking eyewear, have become more frequently prescribed or advised, frequently by optometrists.

Researchers from the University of Melbourne, in cooperation with associates from City, the University of London, and Monash University, led the new review, which was published in the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews.

The team's goal was to evaluate the benefits of blue-light-blocking lenses to non-blue-light-blocking glasses for enhancing visual performance, shielding the retina, and enhancing sleep quality.

After analysing data from every randomised controlled trial they could uncover, they discovered 17 experiments from six different nations. Participant counts in various experiments ranged from five to 156, and the length of time used to evaluate the lenses was somewhere between a few hours to five weeks.

The senior author of the review is Associate Professor Laura Downie, Dame Kate Campbell Fellow and Head of the Downie Laboratory: Anterior Eye, Clinical Trials and Research Translation Unit, at the University of Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

She said, "We found there may be no short-term advantages with using blue-light filtering spectacle lenses to reduce visual fatigue associated with computer use, compared to non-blue-light filtering lenses. It is also currently unclear whether these lenses affect vision quality or sleep-related outcomes, and no conclusions could be drawn about any potential effects on retinal health in the longer term. People should be aware of these findings when deciding whether to purchase these spectacles."

However, the quality and duration of the studies also need to be considered, she said.

"We performed a systematic review to Cochrane methodological standards to ensure the findings are robust. However, our certainty in the reported findings should be interpreted in the context of the quality of the available evidence. The short follow-up period also affected our ability to consider potential longer-term outcomes."

The first author of the review, Dr Sumeer Singh, a postdoctoral research fellow in the Downie Laboratory, said, "High-quality, large clinical research studies with longer follow-up in more diverse populations are still required to ascertain more clearly the potential effects of blue-light filtering spectacle lenses on visual performance, sleep and eye health. They should examine whether efficacy and safety outcomes vary between different groups of people and use different types of lenses."

The review did not find any consistent reports of adverse side effects from using blue-light filtering lenses. Any effects tended to be mild, infrequent and temporary. They included discomfort wearing the spectacles, headaches and lower mood.

These were likely to be related to the wearing of spectacles generally, as similar effects were reported with non-blue-light filtering lenses.

Prof Downie said, "Over the past few years, there has been substantial debate about whether blue-light filtering spectacle lenses have merit in ophthalmic practice. Research has shown that these lenses are frequently prescribed to patients in many parts of the world, and a range of marketing claims exist about their potential benefits, including that they may reduce eye strain associated with digital device use, improve sleep quality and protect the retina from light-induced damage. The outcomes of our review, based on the current, best available evidence, show that the evidence is inconclusive and uncertain for these claims. Our findings do not support the prescription of blue-light filtering lenses to the general population. These results are relevant to a broad range of stakeholders, including eye care professionals, patients, researchers and the broader community."

The potential mechanisms by which blue-light filtering lenses might be able to help with eye strain, sleep and protecting the retina are unclear. One basis for claims about the benefits of these lenses is that modern digital devices such as computers and smartphones emit more blue light than traditional lighting sources, and are being used for longer, and closer to bedtime.

Dr Singh said, "The amount of blue light our eyes receive from artificial sources, such as computer screens, is about a thousandth of what we get from natural daylight. It's also worth bearing in mind that blue-light filtering lenses typically filter out about 10-25 per cent of blue light, depending on the specific product. Filtering out higher levels of blue light would require the lenses to have an obvious amber tint, which would have a substantial effect on colour perception." -ANI

MAY NOT REDUCE EYE STRAIN FROM SCREENS: STUDY

Sweden beat Australia to clinch bronze at Women’s World Cup



It was second successive third-place finish for Swedes; co-hosts Matildas recorded their best-ever result at the FIFA World Cup

BRISBANE: Sweden’s Kosovare Asllani’s stunning second-half strike sealed victory and a third-place finish as they defeated Australia 2-1 at the 2023 FIFA Women’s World Cup on Saturday. She rifled in a shot from the edge of the area to add to Fridolina Rolfo’s first-half penalty as Sweden won the bronze medal match for the second World Cup in succession, *BBC Sport* reported on Saturday. Despite the defeat, this represents co-hosts Australia’s best ever World Cup finish but the Matildas were unable to end on a high. Rolfo’s penalty gave Peter Gerhardsson’s side the lead after a video assistant referee (VAR) check confirmed that Claire Hunt had clipped Stina Blackstenius in the box after 26 minutes. And on the hour mark, Blackstenius played a superb square ball to Asllani, who stroked in a first-time shot to double their lead. The Matildas’ achievement in finishing fourth cannot be understated in a country where football is not the number one sport. Their 3-1 semi-final defeat by England was the most watched TV event in Australian history with 11.15 million viewers tuning in. But they seemed deflated on Saturday and put in a tired performance, with even their talisman Sam Kerr struggling to make an impact on the game - in fact, she had the fewest touches of any player on the pitch in the first half.

Their best chances fell to Hayley Raso and Clare Polkinghorne, but they were both denied by Sweden goalkeeper Zecira Musovic. Australia, who had only ever reached the quarter-finals once previously, in 2015, were the first hosts to reach the semi-finals since the United States in 2003. Their efforts in this tournament have certainly captured the hearts of the fans in green and gold and the hope will be that that leaves a lasting legacy. Sweden have plenty of experience of playing in the third-fourth place match, having reached the semi-finals on five occasions but only making the final once - in 2003, when they were beaten by Germany. And they dominated the game to win bronze for a fourth time. They were already on top before Rolfo beat the dive of Australia keeper Mackenzie Arnold with a well-placed penalty into the bottom left corner to give them the lead. And Asllani’s super strike secured victory in a game of few clear cut chances. It has been another fine tournament for the Scandinavians who topped their group with maximum points before knocking out defending champions the United States in the last 16. A victory over Japan followed before a dramatic semi-final exit at the hands of Spain, conceding the winner in the final minute, having only equalised 60 seconds before. - *Agencies*

SUCCEEDS MANCINI

Spalletti named as Italy’s head coach

ROME: Luciano Spalletti has agreed to take over Italy national football team as head coach, the country’s football governing body FIGC announced on Friday. The 64-year-old has rich coaching experience, having led Udinese, Roma, Zenit Saint Petersburg, Inter Milan and guided Napoli to win their first Serie A title in 33 years last season, but the Tuscan coach still decided to part ways with the club after the success. “We welcome Spalletti,” said FIGC president Gabriele Gravina. “The national team needed a great coach and I am very happy that he has accepted to lead the Azzurri. His enthusiasm and expertise will be fundamental for the challenges that await Italy in the coming months.” Spalletti’s predecessor Roberto Mancini, who helped the Azzurri rise from the ashes to win the Euro 2020 championship but failed to qualify for the 2022 FIFA World



Cup, unexpectedly resigned last Sunday. Spalletti, who has signed a contract until 2026, will start his role from September 1. His official presentation will take place in Coverciano when the squad gathers for the Euro 2024 championship qualifiers against North Macedonia and Ukraine. - *Xinhua*

GERMAN LEAGUE

Kane scores on Bundesliga debut as Bayern thrash Werder Bremen

BERLIN: England captain Harry Kane scored and set up a goal on his Bundesliga debut as champions Bayern Munich recorded a thumping 4-0 win at Werder Bremen on Friday. Kane swept a low right-footed effort past home goalkeeper Jiri Pavlenka from 15 yards to double Bayern’s lead. He had earlier assisted the first of Leroy Sane’s two goals with a deft clip over the top inside four minutes. Mathys Tel rounded off a comfortable victory for Thomas Tuchel’s side late on. “I was a little bit nervous [and] excited to play the game of course,” Kane told broadcaster DAZN after the match. “We started well with a goal in the first few minutes. For sure there were a few butterflies, but as always when I get on the pitch, instinct takes over.”



“It was nice to get the second goal. The boys from the bench finished the work,” added the England striker. It was a fine evening for Bayern and the club’s record signing Kane, who arrived in Bavaria to great fanfare but had a disappointing start

with a 3-0 defeat to RB Leipzig in the German Super Cup. Billed as the man to finally fill Robert Lewandowski’s boots over a year on from the prolific Poland striker’s switch to Barcelona, Kane expertly laid on the first goal for Sane. His quick thinking sent the former Manchester City winger racing clear to roll a low effort into the bottom left corner. A much-improved Bremen threatened after the break, but Kane dispatched the visitors’ second goal of the night, collecting Alphonso Davies’ precise pass before picking his spot and placing a low shot into the bottom left corner. With Kane struggling with cramps, Bayern made several changes. Substitute Thomas Muller teed up Sane’s second goal before Kane’s replacement, French teenager Tel, drove in a late fourth. - *Xinhua*

IRELAND VS INDIA T20I SERIES

Didn’t feel I missed out a lot, says Bumrah after his return match



DUBLIN: Ace India pacer Jasprit Bumrah, who bagged the Player of the Match in his comeback match from a back injury against Ireland on Friday, said that he never felt he “missed out a lot” and gave credit to the staff for keeping him in “good spirits”. Bumrah shone in his comeback outing after suffering a back ailment. Bumrah-led India beat Ireland by two runs by the Duckworth-Lewis (DLS) method in a rain-curtailed match in the opener of the three-match T20I series to take a 1-0 lead in three-match series. The ace pacer last played for India almost a year ago in a bilateral T20I series against Australia at home. A back ailment kept him out of the ICC Men’s T20 World Cup in Australia in 2022, necessitating surgery and a lengthy rehabilitation period. “Felt very good, so many ses-

sions I did at the NCA, didn’t feel I missed out a lot or was doing something new. Credit to the staff, they kept me in good spirits. You are not thinking about yourself, you are thinking about others out there. Not really nervous but very happy,” Jasprit Bumrah said in a post-match presentation. On his comeback, Bumrah won the toss and chose to field the young Indian side against Ireland in Malahide. The experienced pacer got off to a flying start, bowling a terrific first over. After allowing a boundary with his first delivery, Bumrah’s second ball moved in quickly, resulting in an inside edge off Andy Balbirnie’s bat that knocked the stumps over. The over would only get better as he scalped Lorcan Tucker, who failed to execute a ramp shot. In addition to the two wickets, Bumrah would hit a yorker in the fourth delivery of the over. “There was some swing upfront

so we wanted to use it. Luckily we won the toss and it was coming out fine. “There was some help due to the weather, so very happy. In every game, you would want more. After a crisis, they played well, credit where it is due. Even when you win, there are areas to improve on. Everybody is very confident, they are very well prepared. I think the IPL also helps. It is always good, wherever we go, they support us, that helps us to keep the spirit high,” he added. Bumrah returned to the attack in the 16th over, conceding 13 runs. His final over came in the 19th over, and he conceded only one run. The star pacer finished with the figure of 2/24, which was a huge boost for the Indian squad as their pace spearhead gained much-needed health ahead of the ICC Men’s Cricket World Cup 2023 in October and November. The other bowlers also contrib-

uted as India restricted Ireland to 139/7. It was looking bleak for the hosts at one stage, but superb knocks from Curtis Campher (39) and Barry McCarthy (51*) drove them to a competitive score. In reply, India had a solid start, with Yashasvi Jaiswal and Ruturaj Gaikwad looking assured. But Ireland fought back, as Craig Young dismissed Jaiswal and Tilak Varma in back-to-back deliveries. With India’s score at 47/2, two runs ahead of the DLS par score, the rain began to fall at the 6.5 over mark. India beat Ireland by two runs by the Duckworth-Lewis method in a rain-curtailed match and took a 1-0 lead in the three-match series. **Brief scores:** Ireland 139/7 in 20 overs (Barry McCarthy 51, Curtis Campher 39; Jasprit Bumrah 2-24) lost to India 47/2 in 6.5 overs on DLS method (Yashasvi Jaiswal 24, Ruturaj Gaikwad 19*; Craig Young 2/2). - *ANI*

ROUND-UP

RECOGNITION



Bank Muscat wins Corporate Banking Innovation Award

MUSCAT: In recognition of its initiatives to enhance customers' experience, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has won the prestigious Infosys Finacle Innovation Award 2023 in the category of Corporate Banking Innovation for its dynamic forex service to corporate banking customers which were successfully launched in January 2023. Bank Muscat's Corporate Banking offers secure 'best-in-class' solutions and services, which are based on customer feedback and needs as well as global trends.

As part of its unwavering commitment to delivering exceptional customer experience, the Bank's corporate online banking platform recently launched a dynamic forex service. This innovative service empowers the bank's corporate customers to access special exchange rates through the online channel, thereby transforming the entire forex transfer process into a fully digital experience. With this new service, customers can easily book foreign exchange rates for large and high-value forex transactions with quick, transparent, and efficient processing. Moreover, the platform's cutting-edge technology eliminates errors,

providing timely processing of transactions and enhancing the reliability of the forex service.

Speaking on the occasion, Wafa Ibrahim Al Ajmi, Assistant General Manager - Transaction & Government Banking, Bank Muscat, said: "It is our pleasure to take this opportunity to thank Infosys Finacle for recognising the bank's innovative dynamic forex service, which was developed to further enhance and confirm on the bank's commitment towards innovation and excellence in customer services. Through continuously upgrading and developing its services, Bank Muscat is focused on catering to different sectors' customers. We would like to thank all our customers for their continuous support and confidence in the bank."

Recent innovative services are helping customers speed up their transactions. These additions are derived by the technological advances made available to them through the implementation of cutting-edge technology. The introduction of the dynamic forex service through the Corporate Online Banking platform has brought numerous benefits, including improved rates for customers, increased transaction volume, and higher exchange income.

Make your journeys memorable in Lexus NX

Adding to the dynamic design is the NX's hallmark spindle grille. The front design features 3-eye LED headlights incorporating Lexus' first slim Adaptive High-beam System



for smartphones, and a Climate Concierge to ensure the cabin temperature is precisely adjusted to suit each occupant.

The NX also offers SmartAccess with a push-button start, a 10-speaker premium surround sound system, a panoramic roof with movable outer sliding glass for the front section, and an extended rear section to provide more light for rear-seat passengers. Additionally, the 2022 Lexus NX adds the convenience of a hands-free electrically powered backdoor, which is activated via a foot-operated system that can be used when the user's hands or arms are full.

The NX is equipped with two powertrain options. A newly developed inline 4-cylinder, 2.4 L turbocharged engine that produces 275 hp and 430 nm of torque and is mated to a new 8-speed Direct-Shift automatic transmission (8AT). Meanwhile, the new hybrid-electric system combines two power sources consisting of a 2.5-liter petrol engine and two electric motors producing 240 hp. The hybrid-electric system is also mated to a Direct Shift Continuously Variable Transmission (CVT).

As with any Lexus vehicle, safety is a top priority for the Lexus NX. Drivers can enjoy complete peace of mind, thanks to the Lexus Safety System+, which is an advanced safety and driver assistance system that includes a Pre-Collision System (PCS) with new features and expanded detection range, Automatic Emergency Braking (AEB), Emergency Steering Assist (ESA), and Daytime Pedestrian Detection (DPD). The system also includes all-speed range Dynamic Radar Cruise Control (DRCC) with two new features, namely the Inter-linked Control that makes highway overtaking safer and smoother by providing an initial increase in acceleration when the driver has engaged the turn signal, and the Curve Speed Reduction (CSR) that suppresses vehicle speed when entering a bend and offers additional acceleration upon exiting the bend. Drivers also benefit from Lane Tracing Alert (LTA), Lane Departure Alert (LDA), Advanced Driver Assistance (ADAS), and Adaptive High-beam System (AHB).

In another world-first, the new Safe Exit Assist (SEA) feature uses the Lexus-first e-latch system combined with a Blind Spot Monitor (BSM) to help prevent accidents. The vehicle also includes comprehensive safety features including three SRS airbags, Vehicle Stability Control (VSC), Traction Control (TRC), Anti-lock Braking System (ABS), Electronic Brake-force Distribution (EBD), Brake Assist (BA), Parking Assist Monitor (PAM), Rear Cross-Traffic Alert (RCTA), Active Cornering Assist (ACA), Drive-Start Control (DSC), Panoramic View Monitor (PVM), and Hill-start Assist Control (HAC), among many others.

For those seeking to experience the ultimate in thrilling responsiveness, the all-new NX is also available in a Sport version. The NX Sport model boasts exclusive interior and exterior features, including a distinctive 'F' mesh-pattern grille in Piano Black, new front and rear bumper designs with larger side vents cut into the front bumper, black roof rails, and 20-inch alloy wheels with a 10-spoke design inspired by the wheels used on Lexus' LC flagship coupe. The cabin comes with Dark Spin Aluminium ornamentation, a unique meter, bolstered sport seats, a newly developed steering wheel, and aluminium pedals and scuff plates.

SETTING NEW BENCHMARK

BankDhofar's transaction banking: A game-changer for corporate, SMEs and government customers

MUSCAT: BankDhofar is setting new benchmarks in the world of modern banking with its cutting-edge Transaction Banking Services. Committed to innovation and customer satisfaction, the Bank continues to raise the bar, delivering unparalleled convenience and efficiency to its valued Corporate, Small and Medium Enterprises, and Government customers.

Over the past several decades, BankDhofar has been at the forefront of the banking industry, empowering individuals and businesses alike to achieve their financial ambitions. Their cutting-edge Wholesale Banking approach reaffirms their dedication to excellence and cements their position as a trailblazer in the financial sector. As part of the wholesale banking strategy, BankDhofar has embraced the latest technological advancements and charted a transformative roadmap to enhance the financial landscape.

Established in 2022, the Transaction Banking Division empowers customers to effortlessly manage their financial transactions with its ground-breaking suite of services, designed to streamline banking experiences, enhance security, and transform customers' banking journeys.

The division is focused on providing customers with effective solutions to manage their collections and payments digitally, backed by a robust MIS and reconciliation platform. Their main objective is to help customers enter new markets and capitalize on existing sales and supply chains with aims to improve key relationships, mitigate risks, and optimize working capital while providing receivables and payables financing facilities.

The Trade Finance Sales unit under this division is a testament to the Bank's commitment to support and facilitate growth by enlisting professionals specialized in selling trade products and providing cus-



tomers with effective trade solutions. The success of its operations delivery has been corroborated by customers in a recent survey, which demonstrated a high Net Promoter Score in providing world-class services to its customers.

BankDhofar believes that forging strong partnerships is the cornerstone of sustainable growth, which is why it seeks to closely understand the specific needs of its customers before sharing customized solutions, including fund and non-fund based structures. This not only helps mitigate payment risks for buyers and sellers but also accelerates expansion into new and existing markets, thereby driving revenues and market shares. Consequently, customers can free up their cash flow, unlock cash to reinvest in their businesses, enhance reconciliation, and enjoy financing support to key counterparties.

Commenting on the Transaction Banking Services, Fatema Salim Ba Omar, Head - Trade &

Transaction Banking at BankDhofar, said, "At BankDhofar, we believe that banking should be a seamless experience that fits into our customers' busy lives. Transaction banking is an expression of our commitment to empower businesses with bespoke financial solutions. It redefines the transaction banking experience, simplifies complex processes, and delivers real value to our customers. Through strategic partnerships, cutting-edge technology, and a deep understanding of our customers' evolving needs, we are shaping the future of banking and propelling businesses towards unprecedented growth and success."

BankDhofar's Transactional Banking services underscore its relationship with its customers; it enhances financial management while reinforcing trust and transparency. As the pioneer in introducing innovative banking solutions in Oman, BankDhofar continues to shape the future of banking and raise the bar for excellence.

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ROUND-UP

ahlibank’s home loan offer starting from 4.5% per annum interest rate

Integrated with flexible repayment features, the loan promises customers a hassle-free experience, alongside convenient options and smooth processing service

MUSCAT: Substantiating its mission to create an unrivalled ability to meet customer needs, ahlibank continues to offer its popular home loan MyHome offer at competitive pricing, with interest rates starting from 4.5% per annum. Integrated with flexible repayment features, the loan promises customers a hassle-free experience, alongside convenient options and smooth processing service. Customers planning on home improvement works, renovations or new constructions can avail the easy loan offer that is in sync with industry best practices, ensuring not only quick turnaround time, but also exemplary service



that guarantees smooth banking experience for all customers. As per the loan scheme, customers of the Bank can avail a maximum of OMR 350,000 for a loan tenor of up to 25 years; Highlighting the significance of the loan offer, Muneer Al Balushi, AGM – Head of retail distribution at ahlibank, said, “We have tailored this financial solution to meet our customers’ immediate housing requirements, many of whom need a buffer to fulfill their dream home. We want to convey a sense of reassurance, as our key objective is to in-

still a culture of savings and educate people to spend their money wisely, especially when it comes to projects and tasks that are of priority for themselves and their families. We also want to assure all our existing and new customers that the process itself is seamless, with flexible re-

payment options - when we say hassle-free, we mean peace of mind.” ahlibank’s MyHome loan plan is all about reaching out to customers with aspirations of bringing their dream home to fruition. With loans of up to OMR350,000, and comfortable monthly pre-

RBG GRILL AT PARK INN BY RADISSON

RBG introduces exciting new offers to delight food lovers



MUSCAT: RBG Grill at Park Inn by Radisson announced a range of enticing new offers designed to satisfy the taste buds of food lovers. With a commitment to delivering exceptional dining experiences, these exciting offers are sure to delight both loyal and new guests. RBG is the go-to modern grill restaurant in Muscat. With a focus on serving the best steaks and burgers, the restaurant offers a diverse menu that combines culinary creativity with the highest quality ingredients. Known for its warm hospitality and inviting atmosphere, RBG Grill has become a favourite dining destination for locals and tourists alike. Here’s what RBG Grill has in store for all.

Seafood extravaganza
With an exquisite selection of seafood, RBG’s seafood platter is a true celebration of the ocean’s bounty. Indulge in a mouthwatering array of the finest seafood delicacies expertly prepared by our talented chefs for OMR 11 per person inclusive of a glass of grapes.



Grape down Mondays
A weekly indulgence for guests to unwind and savour a selection of exquisite grapes. Pair your favourite grapes tasting experience with a specially crafted menu of small bites and artisanal cheeses designed to elevate your dining experience.

RBG gourmet deal
For guests looking for a quick and delicious bite, our RBG gourmet deal is the best choice & the perfect option for a satisfying and ef-

ficient meal along with a complimentary selected beverage. **RBG Happy Hour**
Gather your friends and enjoy your favourite selected beverages with our Happy Hour from 4pm to 8pm daily, following which you can enjoy specialities from RBG’s new menu. “We are excited to introduce these new offers and provide our guests with memorable dining experiences,” said Ajay Dhoundyal -Executive Chef and F & B Manager. “At Park Inn by Radisson Muscat, we strive to exceed expectations and create moments that our guests will cherish. Whether it’s our seafood platter, leisurely grape down Mondays, a romantic evening for two, or a friends gathering, we have something to cater to everyone’s taste and preferences.” RBG is renowned for its commitment to culinary excellence, impeccable service, and inviting ambience. With these new offers, guests can experience the restaurant’s exceptional hospitality while enjoying a range of delightful dishes and beverages.

PRESTIGIOUS



Crowne Plaza Resort Salalah wins Haute Grandeur Global Hotel Award for Best Coastal Resort in Oman

MUSCAT: The Crowne Plaza Resort Salalah has been recognised as the Best Coastal Resort in Oman in the 2023 Haute Grandeur Global Hotel Awards. The prestigious award honours establishments that continuously excel through remarkable hospitality experiences. As the winner of this regional award, the Crowne Plaza Resort Salalah has been acknowledged as the leading beachfront resort in Oman. Situated along the picturesque shoreline near Salalah, the resort offers luxurious accommodations, five-star amenities, and impeccable Omani hospitality. “We are honoured to be named the Best Coastal Resort in Oman

by the Haute Grandeur Global Hotel Awards,” said Maher Bahsoun, General Manager of the Crowne Plaza Resort Salalah. “This award recognizes the hard work and dedication of our entire team in creating memorable experiences and pampering service for every guest.” The Crowne Plaza Resort Salalah features a total of 153 guest rooms including suites with private balconies and villas overlooking the Arabian Sea. Resort amenities include outdoor pools, a spa and wellness centre, tennis courts, kids club, a garden golf course with a driving range, and seven Restaurant & Bar outlets. The resort organises an array of cultural experiences, family activities, and excursions to nearby attractions. The Haute Grandeur Global Hotel Awards are considered one of the most prestigious accolades in the hospitality industry. After rigorous evaluation of thousands of hotels worldwide, the Official Global, Continent and Country winners are released. “These hotels truly represent the best in the industry,” said Marinique de Wet, President & Founder. “Their outstanding commitment to excellence has set them apart from others and has made them the ultimate choice for travellers around the world looking for quality business and leisure hotel experiences.”





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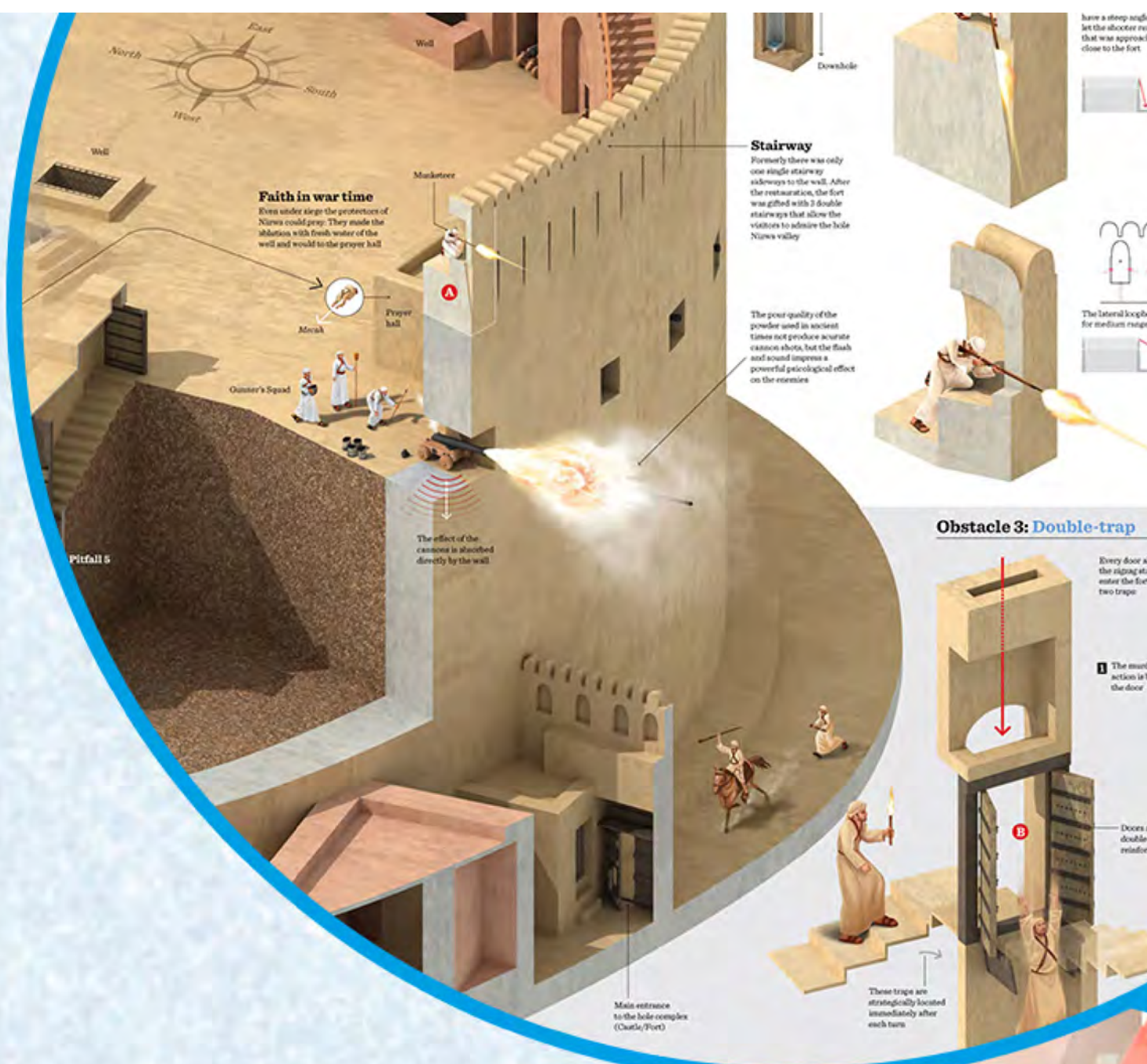
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