

OMAN COMMITTED TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: SHEIKH KHALIFA
The Sultanate of Oman reaffirmed its keenness for incorporating the objectives of sustainable development into the development strategies and plans to allocate budgets for achieving the goal in the medium term and the long term. **>A2**



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RAFO TAKES PART IN THE UK AIRSHOW

The Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) takes part in the international airshow at Fairford Air Base in the United Kingdom. **>A2**



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MOMENTOUS DAY FOR OMAN-GERMANY TIES



His Majesty, and Scholz reviewed the bilateral ties between the two countries

BERLIN: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and Olaf Scholz, Chancellor of Germany, held an exclusive meeting at the Chancellery's premises in Berlin on Thursday.
Upon His Majesty the Sultan's arrival at the Chancellery, he was welcomed by Scholz and senior German government officials.

Then, His Majesty the Sultan attended a luncheon hosted in his honour by the German Chancellor to mark his official visit to the Federal Republic of Germany.
During the banquet, His Majesty the Sultan and Scholz reviewed the growing bilateral relations between the two friendly countries. **>A4**



BERLIN: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and President Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier of the Federal Republic of Germany held a round of official talks at the presidential Bellevue Palace here on Friday.
At the outset of the session, President Steinmeier expressed his great delight at the visit of His

Majesty the Sultan to Germany. He hailed the deep-rooted relations between the two countries.
In his turn, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his deep appreciation for the hospitality accorded him and his accompanying delegation.
His Majesty the Sultan commended the strong ties of friendship binding the Sultanate of Oman and

the Federal Republic of Germany.
The talks dealt with scopes of cooperation between Oman and Germany and studied ways of upgrading it in various spheres in a manner that meets the aspirations of their friendly peoples. The talks also touched on a number of issues of common concern in the regional and international arenas. **>A4**



Sayyid Asa'ad meets HRH Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia

A2



TROPICAL DEPRESSION

Rain expected across Oman today, tomorrow

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Most of the governorates in the Sultanate of Oman may witness some rains from Sunday onwards due to the tropical depression developing in the Arabian Sea.
The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), in its weather report on Sunday said the latest satellite images and their analysis by the National Center for Early Warning of Multiple Hazards (NCE-WMH), point to the formation of a low pressure area in the north-east of the Arabian Sea, that is, along the Indian coasts.
Meteorologists on Saturday said the depression would turn



into a tropical depression near the Omani coast, about 964 km west of its current location, during the next two days.
The authorities also said this would lead to formation of clouds over most of the governorates in Oman with chances of scattered rains over the Al Hajar Mountains.

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN Indian expats remitting money as rupee falls

1 As the exchange rate between the Omani Rial and the Indian rupee continues to climb, people in Oman who send money to their families and friends back in India can now get even more for a single Rial. **>A6**

WORLD Saudi Arabia, US hold official talks session

2 His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Crown Prince and Deputy Prime Minister, and US President Joe Biden held official talks. **>A6**

MARKET Bank Muscat posts net profit of OMR99.26mn

3 Bank Muscat has posted a net profit of OMR99.26 million for the first six months of 2022 compared to OMR94.65 million reported during the same period in 2021, an increase of 4.9 per cent. **>B1**



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Dhuhr.....	12:18pm
Asr.....	3:38pm
Maghrib.....	7:01pm
Isha.....	8:21pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....	4:05am

FAIRFORD AIRBASE

Royal Air Force of Oman takes part in UK airshow



LONDON: The Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) is participating in the International airshow at Fairford Airbase of the UK Royal Air Force in the United Kingdom from 15 to 17 July.

The RAFO participation is through a pavilion within the show and an accompanying exhibition, which comprised various sections that depict the development and modernisation at RAFO and reflect the deep-rooted relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom.

This is in addition to a model Omani tent that reflects Oman's cultural heritage along with the participation of the troupe of RAFO Music Unit for playing varied pieces of music.

Air Commodore Yaqoob Rashid Al Mammary said that the airshow is one of the significant international shows at the world level as it displays advance items and equipment and receives participations from various countries, worldwide.

-ONA

MEETING

Sayyid Asa'ad holds talks with HRH Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia

JEDDAH: Assigned by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, His Highness Sayyid Asa'ad bin Tariq Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan arrived in Saudi Arabia, leading the Sultanate's delegation at the Jeddah Security and Development Summit, scheduled for Saturday.

On arrival at King Abdulaziz International Airport, Sayyid Asa'ad and his accompanying delegation were received by His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Crown Prince and Deputy Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Sayyid Asa'ad and his accompanying delegation were also received by Adel Al Jubeir, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Head of the Mission of Honour; Abdullah bin Saud Al Anzi, ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia accredited to the Sultanate; a number of Saudi officials



and members of the Sultanate's embassy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Sayyid Asa'ad bin Tariq Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs and Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan is accompanied by an official

delegation comprising Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister; Dr. Abdullah bin Nasser Al Harrasi, Minister of Information; Said bin Hamoud Al Mawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology; HH Sayyid Faisal bin Turki Al Said, the Sul-

tanate's ambassador accredited to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; Khalifa bin Hamad Al Badi, Advisor at the Office of His Highness Sayyid Asaad bin Tariq Al Said; Saif bin Ahmed Al Sawafi, Advisor at the Office of His Highness sayyid Asaad bin Tariq Al Said and a number of officials. -ONA

THE NETHERLANDS

Shabab Oman II secures Award of the Best Ship

AMSTERDAM: RNO vessel Shabab Oman II, secured the Award of the Best Ship at the Port of Harlingen in the Netherlands, during the conclusion of phase one of its long sail contests for 2022.

The participation of Shabab Oman II continues in the international festivals and sail races as part of its international tour to Europe, organised under the theme "Oman, the land of peace". -ONA



UN HEADQUARTERS

Oman committed to sustainable development goals: Sheikh Khalifa

NEW YORK : The Sultanate of Oman reaffirmed its keenness for incorporating the objectives of sustainable development into the development strategies and plans coupled with allocation of budgets capable of achieving the goal in the medium term and the long term.

The reaffirmation came in the speech of Sheikh Khalifa bin Ali Al Harthi, Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry for Diplomatic Affairs during the ministerial meeting of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, which concluded, yesterday, at the UN in New York.



In his speech, Sheikh Khalifa bin Ali Al Harthi, Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry for Diplomatic Affairs said that the objectives and purposes of Sustainable Development 2030 have become one of the key components and pillars of Oman Vision 2040.

He also pointed to the significance of gathering efforts to overcome the impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic along with the importance of working on achievement of the targeted objectives of sustainable development by 2030. -ONA



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JEDDAH SUMMIT FOR SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT

US President praises Oman, Saudi Arabia for peace efforts in Yemen

JEDDAH: Assigned by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, His Highness Sayyid Asa'ad bin Tariq Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs and Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan participated in the Jeddah Summit for Security and Development held yesterday in the presence of the GCC leaders, US President Joe Biden, King Abdullah II Ibn Al Hussein of Jordan, President Abdul Fatah El Sisi of the Arab Republic of Egypt and Mustafa Al Kadhimi Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq.

Ahead of the meeting, HRH Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, Crown Prince and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia received Sayyid Asaad bin Tariq Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs and Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, leaders of the GCC States and heads of the delegations taking part in the summit.

HRH Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, Crown Prince and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reaffirmed in his speech and the opening of the summit that the global economy is associated with the stability of prices of energy.

He also called for investment in clean energy. On the situation in Syria and Libya, he said that the conditions require political solutions for the stability of the region. He also pointed out that Iraq is witnessing improvement in its security.

The US President said that the United States supports partnerships with the countries adopting an international system established on the laws. The United States is committed to offering



assistance to the countries suffering crises in food security, he said, adding that the interests of the United States are associated with the successes in the Middle East.

During his speech at the inaugural of the summit, the US President praised the role of the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in providing political solution in Yemen.

King Abdullah II Ibn Al Hussein of Jordan reaffirmed that the stability of the region requires reaching a solution to the Palestinian cause. He also pointed out that Jordan hosts over one million Syrian refugees.

In his speech, President Abdul Fatah El Sisi said that the Jeddah Summit carries a clear message for determination on the joint work between the Arab countries and

the United States. He also called for gathering efforts for curbing the conflicts and wars in the region and for effective cooperation among the countries for the sake of stability of the markets. President El Sisi also stressed the necessity for establishing an independent Palestinian state on the borders of 1967 and reaching a final irrevocable solution.

King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa of Bahrain called for a fair and permanent solution for the Palestinian cause in accordance with the Arab initiative. He also pointed out that the Arab region has suffered for long years from severe challenges and that effective cooperation is required for addressing such challenges.

Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Emir of Qatar said that the

crisis and conflicts in any area affect the whole world and that the UN Convention provides an opportunity for solutions for such crises and conflicts.

He also stated that the GCC and Arab relations with the United States have an effective role in the Middle East and the world. At the conclusion of his speech, the Emir of Qatar reaffirmed the rights of the countries of the region for the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes in accordance with the international rules.

Mustafa Al Kadhimi, Prime Minister of Iraq called for setting a comprehensive strategy for combating terrorism and its sources of funding. He also reaffirmed that Iraq supports the international and regional efforts for putting an end to the crises in

Syria and Lebanon.

Sheikh Mishal Al Ahmed Al Jabir Al Sabah, Crown Prince of Kuwait said that the GCC-US relations have seen remarkable achievements and that the challenges in the region require more consultations and cooperation. He also called for unity, elimination of differences and overcoming the risks in the region.

The summit aimed to reaffirm the historic partnership between these countries and the significance of close cooperation towards the various causes and conditions in the region besides cementing the joint cooperation in the various fields and development of ways of cooperation.

It is worth mentioning that the official delegation accompanying His Highness Sayyid Asaad

bin Tariq Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs and Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan comprises Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister; Dr. Abdullah bin Nasser Al Harrasi, Minister of Information; Said bin Hamoud Al Mawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology; HH Sayyid Faisal bin Turki Al Said, the Sultanate's ambassador accredited to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; Khalifa bin Hamad Al Badi, Advisor at the Office of His Highness Sayyid Asa'ad bin Tariq Al Said; Saif bin Ahmed Al Sawafi, Advisor at the Office of His Highness Sayyid Asa'ad bin Tariq Al Said and a number of officials.

— ONA

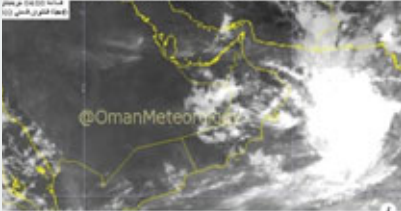


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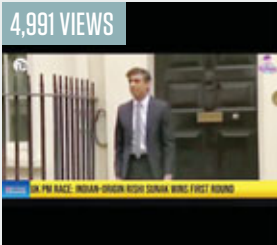
Video on French National Day in Oman

A video on French National Day in Oman had 2,600 views and reached 10,100 people on Facebook.



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4,991 VIEWS



Video on Indian origin Rishi Sunak wins first round at UK PM race

A video on Indian origin Rishi Sunak wins first round at UK PM race had 4,991 views and 237 likes on Instagram.



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HM accorded an official reception at presidential Bellevue Palace

President Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier accompanied His Majesty the Sultan to the Dais of Honour

BERLIN: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq was accorded an official reception at the presidential Bellevue Palace in Berlin on the occasion of his visit to the Federal Republic of Germany. Upon His Majesty the Sultan's arrival at Bellevue Palace, he was received by German President Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who led the welcoming party. President Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier accompanied His Majesty the Sultan to the Dais of

Honour, where the Royal Anthem of Oman and the German National Anthem were played. His Majesty the Sultan shook hands with senior members of the German welcoming party, while President Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier welcomed the official delegation accompanying His Majesty the Sultan. Then, His Majesty the Sultan and the German President held a one-to-one meeting at Bellevue Palace. -ONA



DISCUSSION

<FROM A1 HM, Scholz exchange views on regional, world issues

The two leaders discussed ways of upgrading the existing cooperation and partnership to serve the common interests of the Omani and German peoples. They also exchanged views about a variety of issues of common concern in the backdrops of developments in regional and international arenas. The luncheon was attended by Gen. Sultan Mohammed Al

Nu'amani, Minister of the Royal Office, Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, Dr. Hamad Said Al Aufi, Head of the Private Office, Abdusalam Mohammed Al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority, Eng. Salim Nasser Al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, and Sayyid Dr. Sultan Yaarub Al Busaidi, Adviser at

the Private Office. The luncheon was also attended by Steffen Hebestreit, State Secretary, Dr. Jörg Kukies, State Secretary, Janet Schoenberger, Head of the Private Office of the German Chancellor, and Thomas Schneider, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Sultanate of Oman, among other officials. -ONA



MEETING

<FROM A1 Oman, Germany discuss ways to boost bilateral relations

The session was attended from the Omani side by Gen. Sultan Mohammed Al Nu'amani, Minister of the Royal Office, Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, Dr. Hamad Said Al Aufi, Head of the Private Office, Abdusalam Mohammed Al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority, Eng. Salim Nasser Al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals and Sayyid Dr. Sultan Yaarub Al Busaidi, Adviser at the Private Office. Meanwhile, it was attended from the German side by Dr. Tobias Lindner, State Minister at the Federal Foreign Office, Cerstin Gammelin, Spokesperson of the Federal President, Thomas Schneider, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Sultanate of Oman, Captain Alexander Dubnitzki, Head of Private Office at the Federal Presidency and Joost Schmallenbach, Head of Division for General Foreign Policy and Relations with the Americas, the Middle East, North Africa, International Organizations and Nongovernmental Organizations, in addition to a number of officials. -ONA





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MANGO

HM the Sultan gives audience to German businessmen and CEOs



The audience aimed to boost trade relations and promote investment opportunities between the two countries in various spheres

BERLIN: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik gave an audience at his residency in Berlin to a number of German businesspeople and CEOs of German companies.

The audience aimed to boost trade relations and promote investment opportunities between the two countries in various spheres.

The audience was attended by Gen. Sultan Mohammed Al Nu'amani, Minister of the Royal Office, Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, Dr. Hamad Said Al Aufi, Head of the Private Office, Abdussalam Mohammed Al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority, Eng. Salim Nasser Al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, Sayyid Dr. Sultan Yaarub Al Busaidi, Adviser at the Private Office, Charge D'affaires of Oman's Embassy in Berlin and Thomas Schneider, Ambassador of Germany to Oman. — **DNA**



THREE-DAY VISIT



His Majesty the Sultan leaves Germany after official visit

BERLIN: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik left Germany on Friday evening, after an official visit that lasted three days.

Sessions of talks

During the visit, His Majesty held sessions of talks with German President Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier and German Chancellor

Olaf Scholz.

His Majesty was accompanied by an official delegation comprised Gen. Sultan Mohammed Al Nu'amani, Minister of the Royal Office, Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, Dr. Hamad Said Al Aufi, Head of the Private Office, Abdussalam Mohammed Al Murshidi, Chairman

of Oman Investment Authority, Eng. Salim Nasser Al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals and Sayyid Dr. Sultan Yaarub Al Busaidi, Adviser at the Private Office.

May the Almighty Allah protect His Majesty wherever he might be and grant him good health, happiness and success! — **DNA**

Invitation to Tender

Dhofar Integrated Services Company S.A.O.C (DISC) invites reputable contractor for carrying out following works in Dhofar Region.

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DISC/Tender/2022/111	SHIFTING OF PDO TAPPING POWER SOURCE FROM EXISTING PDO AMAL GSS TO GRATER SAQAR PDO GSS DUE TO DISMANTLE OF AMAL GSS BY PDO
Tender Fee	RO. 105.000 Inclusive VAT (5%) Each Tender. Note: Tenderer who wish to participate in the above tenders should collect the tender documents from DISC's office or send an e-mail to below mention mail id for tender documents.
Experience	The Tenderer should have performed similar works in the last three (3) years in Sultanate of Oman.
Pre-qualification	Contractors participating in the tendering process shall be at least Grade-B registered electrical contractor with Distribution Code Review Panel (DCRP), Sultanate of Oman. Apart from the above, the Contractors participating in the tendering process shall have Competent Electrical Person (CEP) certified by DISC and copy of the valid CEP certificate shall be submitted along with bid without which the bids will not be considered for evaluation. Further, Tenderers will be evaluated as per the HSE qualification criterion specified in the Tender documents.
Last date for issue of tender documents	03:00 PM on 20 th July 2022
Site Visit	N/A
Last date for seeking pre bid clarification	N/A
Last date for response pre bid clarification	N/A
Last date for submission of bids	03:00 PM on 24 th July 2022
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Tenderers are requested to note that the bids accompanied with Tender Bond (1% of the quoted bid price and having 90 days validity) shall only be considered for evaluation.



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STEADY RISE

Indian expats enjoying higher exchange rate for rupee remittance

Times News Service

MUSCAT: As the exchange rate between the Omani Rial and the Indian rupee continues to climb, people in Oman who wish to send money to their families and friends back in India can now get even more for a single Rial.

According to online currency converter XE, the Indian rupee conversion rate for the Omani

Rial rose to as high as INR208.6 on 14 July, before dipping slightly to INR207.4 on the 16th, following a pattern of a steady rise in the exchange rate over the past year. Over the long-term, the Rial to rupee exchange rate has been rising steadily since at least July 2012.

In terms of conversion from US Dollars, the Indian rupee has in fact witnessed a consistent depreciation against the US dollar with

multiple all-time lows in 2022, and is now only a whisker away from touching the 80 mark. The value of the rupee depreciated by around six per cent this year. Various factors that have put pressure on the rupee are rising current account deficit, the strengthened US dollar, and rising inflation amid high global commodity prices. Prices of crude oil, which India imports heavily to meet its domestic demand, saw a

sharp rise after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February.

The extent of fall in the value of the Indian rupee versus the US dollar has been lower in 2022 as compared to other major currencies. The US dollar index against six major currencies - Euro, British pound, Japanese yen, Swiss franc, Canadian dollar, and the Swedish krona - has gained 13.0 per cent this year.



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HRH Crown Prince, US President Biden hold official session of talks

HRH Crown Prince and the American President also chaired an expanded meeting for the two sides



MEETING: The historical friendship between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United States of America were reviewed, in addition to discussing the aspects of cooperation.

JEDDAH: His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Crown Prince and Deputy Prime Minister, and President Joe Biden of the United States of America held an official talks session at Al-Salam palace in Jeddah on Friday.

HRH Crown Prince and the American President also chaired an expanded meeting for the two sides.

The historical friendship between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United States of America were reviewed, in addition to discussing the aspects of cooperation between the two countries in a number of fields. Ways to confront challenges in the region and the world were also discussed.

The official talks session and the expanded meeting were attended by Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman

bin Abdulaziz, Minister of Energy; Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki Al-Faisal, Minister of Sports; Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud bin Naif bin Abdulaziz, Minister of Interior; Prince Abdullah bin Bandar bin Abdulaziz, Minister of the National Guard; Princess Reema bint Bandar bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz, the Saudi Ambassador to the United States of America (accompan-

ying minister); Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah, Minister of Foreign Affairs; Minister of State, Cabinet's Member and Security Advisor Dr. Musaed bin Mohammed Al-Aiban; Minister of Commerce, Dr. Majid bin Abdullah Al-Qasabi and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Cabinet's Member and Envoy for Climate Affairs Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir.

From the U.S. side, they were attended by Secretary of State Antony Blinken; National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and a number of other officials.

Saudi Arabia, US review historical relations

A joint statement (Jeddah Communique) was issued on Friday between the Kingdom of Saudi

Arabia and the United States of America. Following is the text of Jeddah Communique:

“Joint Communique between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United States of America”

At the invitation of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, President Joseph R. Biden conducted an official visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia July 15-16, 2022. Following the meeting with the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, President Biden and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al-Saud, Deputy Prime Minister, held an official meeting, attended by senior officials from both sides. The two sides reviewed in detail the many shared priorities that contribute to the partnership between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United States.

At the end of this meeting, the two sides issued this communique outlining the strategic partnership between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United States over the coming decades with the aim of advancing their mutual interests and advancing a common vision for a more peaceful, secure, prosperous, and stable Middle East.

between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United States of America that was established nearly eight decades ago with the meeting between King Abdulaziz Al-Saud and President Franklin D. Roosevelt on board the USS Quincy. They underscored the importance of continuing to strengthen their strategic partnership to serve the interests of the governments and peoples of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United States. The two sides also emphasised the pivotal role this historic partnership has played in promoting regional stability and prosperity. They stressed that the U.S.-Saudi partnership has been a cornerstone of regional security over decades, and affirmed that the two countries share a vision of a more secure, stable, and prosperous region, interconnected with the world.

The two sides affirmed the importance of resolving international disputes through peaceful and diplomatic means, and alleviating humanitarian crises through economic and financial support to the region's countries most in need. They affirmed the importance of the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity.

They stressed the need for supporting governments in the region facing threats from terrorists or proxy groups backed by outside powers. **SPA**

Strategic Partnership

The two sides reviewed the historical relations and partnership

CAPITOL RIOT

US Capitol riot committee subpoenas Secret Service

WASHINGTON: The US House of Representatives committee investigating the January 6, 2021 riot at the US Capitol issued a subpoena for records from the US Secret Service on Friday after revelations that the agency allegedly erased text messages.

Bennie Thompson, the chairman of the committee, said the panel was seeking “relevant text messages, as well as any after action reports that have been issued in any and all divisions of the USSS pertaining or relating in any way to the events of January 6, 2021.”

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) inspector general sent a letter to lawmakers on Wednesday, saying “many” messages had been erased by the Secret Service after the watchdog agency asked for records.

The Secret Service denied the accusation on Thursday, saying



some phone data was lost during a routine device migration planned before requests for information were made, but added that all of the texts that had been requested were saved.

“A ‘routine’ clearing of files will require a process, so we want to see what that process is,” Thompson said Friday.

Secret Service agents were with

then President Donald Trump during the day of the riot and were also with Vice President Mike Pence, who went into hiding at the Capitol after pro-Trump rioters called for him to be hanged.

The committee investigating the Capitol attack met the DHS inspector general behind closed doors on Friday, American news outlet CNN reported. **bnw**

GAS SUPPLY

Dependent on Russian gas, EU prepares emergency plan

BRUSSELS: Should Russia not resume gas supplies after maintenance work on the Nord Stream 1 pipeline is complete, the European Union would bring its 2017 Security Of Supply regulation into force. Under SOS, all EU member states should have emergency plans and a three-phase alarm system at their disposal. Not all governments, however, have done their homework in this respect.

EU member states are parts of regional groups that share common risks. One group is made up of the Baltic states and Finland, countries that have thus far been completely dependent on Russian gas and that have partly found alternatives already.

Portugal, Spain and France are in another group. Those countries receive only small quantities of Russian gas and would not be directly affected by a delivery stop.

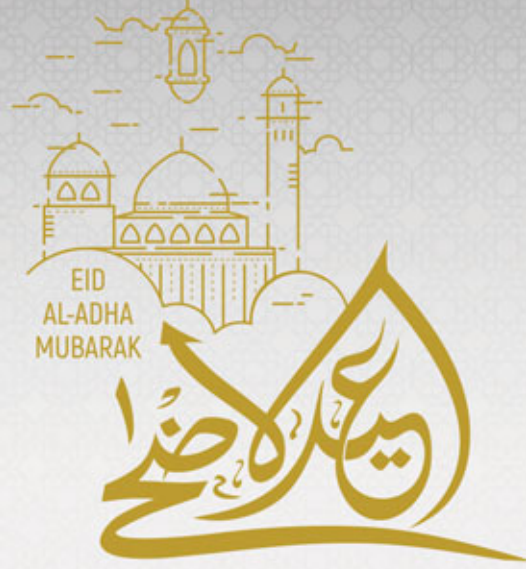
In a crisis situation, member states would be obliged to help each other in solidarity, which means providing each other with gas and exchanging information. In addition, EU member states are required to have their gas storage facilities at least 80% full until the heating season begins in autumn. The problem identified by many experts and politicians is that the loss of the largest gas supplier, Russia, makes mutual deliveries or filling storage facilities extremely difficult.

Germany is the largest importer of Russian gas in Europe and an important transit country for pipeline gas transported via Nord Stream and other pipelines. However, what would happen if Germany were no longer to receive Russian gas? Would Germany then have to transfer gas received from Norway or the Netherlands,

for instance, to other EU member states despite suffering from a shortage itself?

German Economy Minister Robert Habeck is currently negotiating solidarity agreements with neighboring countries. Those agreements will regulate supply in emergency situations. “We will have to take a look at all possible scenarios and what exactly will happen in which situation — i.e., when a disruption of gas supplies has to be officially announced, in which countries, in which steps, so that we know exactly what's happening,” Habeck said on a recent visit to Czech Industry and Trade Minister Josef Sikela.

Habeck negotiated a treaty with the Czech government. There had to be a common administration of shortages, he said, so that individual countries would not be unduly affected. **bnw**



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WORLD



NEW PRESIDENT

Lawmakers set to replace Sri Lanka’s former president Gotabaya Rajapaksa

COLOMBO: Sri Lankan lawmakers met on Saturday to choose a next president for their country. On Friday, Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe was sworn in as acting president as mandated by the constitution. Also according to the constitution, the new president can potentially appoint a new prime minister, who would then have to be approved by parliament. In a televised statement on Friday, Wickremesinghe said he would initiate steps to change the constitution to curb presidential powers and strengthen parliament, restore law and order and take legal action against “insurgents.” Security was tightened around the parliament building in the capital, Colombo, on Saturday, with armed masked soldiers on guard and several roads blocked to the public. The secretary general of the parliament, Dhammika Dasanayake, said on Saturday that nomi-



nations for the election of the new president would be heard on Tuesday. If more than one candidate is nominated for the presidency, lawmakers in parliament would vote Wednesday, Dasanayake added. Dasanayake also read aloud former President Gotabaya Rajapaksa’s resignation letter — after having received the hard copy on late Thursday. Rajapaksa said in the letter he

stepped down from his position following a request by party leaders. He added that the economic crisis that engulfed Sri Lanka this year was looming around the time he took over the presidency in 2019, but those hardships were aggravated by the coronavirus pandemic and the consequent lockdowns. Rajapaksa fled the country Thursday, before resigning, to

possibly avoid being arrested by members of the next administration since presidents are protected from arrest while in office. But that he sought refuge in Singapore marks a major fall from grace for a leader whose family dominated Sri Lankan politics for nearly 20 years. **Opposition leader in running** Although there’s a chance that Wickremesinghe can be named president, protesters have demanded that he step down because he threw “a lifeline to the Rajapaksa,” Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu, executive director of the Sri Lankan think tank Centre for Policy Alternatives. Wickremesinghe, a senior politician, has been prime minister six times before, and began his latest stint in May, as Rajapaksa made a desperate attempt to cling to power. **rw**

ECONOMIC CRISIS

India focusing on ways to help Sri Lanka, says S Jaishankar

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Reiterating India’s support for Sri Lanka, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said that the situation in the island nation is very sensitive and New Delhi is focusing on ways it can help Colombo economically at this time of need. Addressing a press briefing in Kerala, Jaishankar said, “The situation in Sri Lanka is very sensitive and complicated. Even as we speak there are developments taking place. Our commitment is to support the Sri Lankan people because they are our neighbours. They are friendly people. We want to help them as they are going through a very difficult phase. We want to help because of this feeling of friendship. We have been extremely supportive of the island nation in the last few months.” “Our focus is on Sri Lanka’s economic situation and how we can help them. We are not involved in the other matters. Only focused on economic aspects of the issue

and we are not concerned about other factors. We can not respond to everything that comes on social media,” the Minister added. **Aid to Sri Lanka** Jaishankar said that India has been providing assistance to Sri Lanka and is monitoring the developments in the island nation adding that there is no refugee crisis now. “We have been supportive of Sri Lanka, are trying to help, and have always been helpful. They are working through their problem, we will see what happens. There is no refugee crisis right now, said Jaishankar upon his arrival in Kerala as part of intensifying the BJP’s efforts to make gains in South India.” Jaishankar’s comments reflect how India continues to stand by its neighbours amid difficult times. His remarks particularly hold more importance as Sri Lanka faces an unprecedented political and economic crisis. **ANI**

WILDFIRES

Pilot dies battling wildfire in Portugal, blazes force evacuations in France, Spain

LISBON: A pilot died while battling a blaze in Portugal, as hundreds more were evacuated from Spain and France on Friday. A scorching heatwave has set blazes across European towns, with officials issuing heatwave warnings in the coming days. Portugal’s Prime Minister Antonio Costa tweeted about the death of the pilot, saying he was sad to learn about it and sent his “deepest condolences to family and friends.” The pilot died Friday after his water-bombing aircraft crashed while battling a blaze in a northern Portuguese town, authorities said. Even though medical services rushed to the site of the crash around 8 p.m local time (700 p.m. UTC), he was pronounced dead at the scene, officials said.



had killed one person and injured around 60. **Blazes in France, Spain** Wildfires continued to blaze in southwestern France as well, forcing hundreds to evacuate, authorities said Friday. More than 1,000 firefighters, supported by nine water-bombing aircraft, have been battling two big fires since Tuesday. The blazes have burnt 7,300 hectares by now, with 2,000 hectares burned overnight, authorities said Thursday. A wildfire that broke out near the southeastern town of Tarascon on Thursday and burnt at least 1,000 hectares have been

brought under control, firefighters said. The fires since Tuesday have forced the evacuation of nearly 10,000 people in France, many of them holidaymakers. In Spain, temperatures have soared, with some places recording 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit (37 degrees Celsius) as early as 7:00 a.m. Thursday. Authorities said at least 20 fires were raging still, with a fire near Mijas, a town on the southeastern coast of Spain, forcing the evacuation of some 2,300 people. A fire also broke out on Thursday near the Monfrague National Park, a protected area famous for its wildlife. **rw**

STAFF-LEVEL AGREEMENT

Pakistan set to receive \$1.17bn tranche, says IMF

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said that Pakistan will receive USD 1.7 billion tranches in the coming three to six weeks, after reaching the staff-level agreement earlier this week. In a press briefing on Thursday, IMF’s Communication Director Gerry Rice said. “It’s an agreement on a combined seventh and eighth review of the programme... that will translate into about USD 1.17 million being disbursed to Pakistan. Pretty much, straight away.” He further said that this brought the total disbursements from the IMF to Pakistan under the ongoing program to about \$4.2 billion. The IMF and Pakistan reached a staff-level agreement on Wednesday on the combined seventh and eighth reviews for a USD 6 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF) loan facility. Pakistan hoped that this agreement would stabilise the country’s economy and depreciate its currency. Meanwhile, IMF also hoped that it would bring down high inflation and end Pakistan’s political instability. The agreement “could also unlock more funding for Pakistan, which in recent weeks has neared the brink of a balance of payments crisis,” Rice said. The discussion was finalized by an IMF team led by Nathan

Porter and the agreement is subject to approval by the IMF’s Executive Board. “About USD 1,177 million (SDR 894 million) will become available, bringing total disbursements under the program to about USD 4.2 billion,” Porter said in the statement. The SDR is an international reserve asset, created by the IMF in 1969 to supplement its member countries’ official reserves. An extension of the EFF until the end of June 2023 and an augmentation of access by SDR 720 million bringing the total access to about US\$7 billion will be considered by the IMF board in order to support program implementation and meet the higher financing needs in FY23, as well as catalyze additional financing. The implementation of the outlined policies will help create the conditions for sustainable and more inclusive growth. The newspaper noted that reviving the loan programme and getting the economy back on track “have been a political litmus test for Pakistan’s new prime minister.” The report also highlighted the government’s fear that the IMF-induced reforms could trigger “public backlash that could hurt PML-N’s chance of success in the next general elections.” **ANI**

Invitation to Tender

Dhofar Integrated Services Company S.A.O.C (DISC) invites reputable contractor for carrying out following works in Dhofar Region.

Tender Reference Number	Title of the Tender
DISC/Tender/2022/110	REINFORCEMENT WORKS FOR REINSTATING DAMAGED COMPOUND WALLS IN FEROQ PSS AT DHALKUT AREA IN DHOFAR GOVERNORATE

Tender Fee	RO. 52.500 Inclusive VAT (5%) Each Tender. Note: Tenderer who wish to participate in the above tenders should collect the tender documents from DISC’s office or send an e-mail to below mention mail id for tender documents.
Experience	The Tenderer should have performed similar works in the last three (3) years in Sultanate of Oman.
Pre-qualification	The Tenderer should be a registered business owner with proper commercial registration with Ministry of Commerce and Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The Tenderer must show minimum 3 years previous experience in performing similar jobs in the past with civil construction activities. Further, Tenderers will be evaluated as per the HSE qualification criterion specified in the Tender documents.
Last date for issue of tender documents	03:00 PM on 31 st July 2022
Site Visit	N/A
date for seeking pre bid. Last clarification	N/A
Last date for response pre bid clarification	N/A
Last date for submission of bids	03:00 PM on 8 th August 2022
Any Queries Please Contact	Phone 23232554, purchase@disc.nama.om

Tenderers are requested to note that the bids accompanied with Tender Bond (1% of the quoted bid price and having 90 days validity) shall only be considered for evaluation.



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Shaheen Afridi picks 4 wickets to bundle out Sri Lanka for 222

Meaningful scores were few and far for Sri Lanka, with Afridi starting the proceedings for Pakistan team

GALLE: The Pakistan bowling attack led by Shaheen Afridi ran through the Sri Lanka batting order to bowl them out for 222 before the hosts struck late to leave the contest hanging in the balance here at the Galle International Stadium on Saturday.

Opting to bat first, Sri Lanka hoped to make it count big, with a big first innings total in Galle. But the Pakistan bowling attack, led by the 2021 ICC Men's Cricketer of the Year - Shaheen Afridi - made the hosts dance to his tune. Mean-



ingful scores were few and far for Sri Lanka, with Afridi starting the proceedings for the visitors taking the all-important wicket of skipper Dimuth Karunaratne.

It wasn't all doom and gloom for the Sri Lanka batting department. Dinesh Chandimal continued his golden run in Galle after his brilliant double ton against Australia. As wickets were falling, Chandimal was dogged in his resistance,

playing a vital knock of 76. He also played a few brilliant shots, taking the attack to the Pakistan pacers.

He got some support from Theekshana, with whom he established a 44-run stand. After the departure of Chandimal, Maheesh Theekshana added 45 runs in a partnership with Kasun Rajitha, which helped the hosts cross the 200-run mark.

The spinner played a knock of 38

runs, before finally departing against the brilliance of Shaheen Afridi.

Afridi scalped three more wickets in the form of Dhananjaya de Silva, Niroshan Dickwella and Theekshana, ending with figures of 4/58.

Yasir Shah (2/66) and Hasan Ali (2/23) were also massively impressive, as Pakistan restricted Sri Lanka to a modest total of 222.

Pakistan started their first innings of the match against Sri Lanka. After an under-par total on the board, early wickets were the need of the hour for the hosts. Rajitha delivered just that. He struck Imam-ul-Haq on the pads, trapping him lbw for 2. Imam immediately reviewed the call and ball tracking showed that the delivery was clipping the stumps.

It was an early jitter for Pakistan, who now had to see through an awkward final 45 minutes of the day. Abdullah Shafique and the experienced Azhar Ali adopted a defence-first approach, trying to see through the remainder of the day. They failed to do that as Prabath Jayasuriya got Shafique lbw for 13 with an arm ball. **ANI**



Barcelona sign Bayern Munich star Lewandowski for £42.5 million

BARCELONA: Robert Lewandowski leaves Bayern Munich as a legend, and continues his journey at FC Barcelona. As per Sky Sports, Barcelona agreed to a 42.5 million-pound deal to sign the Bayern Munich striker.

The Polish striker will fly to Spain on Saturday for a medical before signing a three-year contract with the Spanish side. Lewandowski only had one year remaining on his Bayern contract but was eager to sign for FC Barcelona.

He announced the previous month that his career for Bayern has come to an end and he will be looking forward to other opportunities. The 33-year old had achieved a lot in his time with Bayern Munich. He won eight league titles and one Champions

League trophy at Bayern scoring 312 goals in his 384 matches played in the Bundesliga. He is also one of the top scorers in the Champions League with 86 goals in 106 games.

The funds from the sale of the striker might be used to fund the signing of Matthijs de Ligt. The Juventus defender has been tracked by the German club for some time and they'll be looking to bring him in to strengthen the defence.

After the departure of Lionel Messi the previous season, Barcelona had to struggle a lot with goals and playmaking abilities in the front three of the squad. They will be looking to fill in the gap of less goals with the signing of Lewandowski. **ANI**

INQUIRY

Liverpool fans unfairly blamed for Champions League chaos: French inquiry

PARIS: An inquiry by the French Senate into crowd chaos at this year's Champions League final in Paris concluded that organizers were to blame, not supporters.

The report added that Liverpool fans had been blamed so as to "divert attention" from the failure of the organizers and that problems were caused by a "string of dysfunctions," including a lack of

preparation by French authorities and poorly executed security arrangements.

"These dysfunctions were at every level, not only during the implementation but also during preparations in advance," co-chair of the inquiry Laurent Lafon told reporters at a press conference.

The report also said that policing had been influenced by a

"dated vision" of British fans, that UEFA's management of the ticketing system had been "unsuitable," and that training for stewards on site was poor.

The report was also in stark contrast to the statements of police and French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin, who said Liverpool fans were mostly responsible, and that up to 40,000 of them traveled

to the stadium either with no tickets or with fake ones.

The game between Liverpool and Real Madrid on May 28 was marred by a delayed kickoff, crushes, teargas and street crime.

DW's Matt Pearson witnessed the chaos unfolding at the stadium that night, and reported on what went wrong at the Champions League final. **DW**



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BANK NIZWA APPOINTMENT

Strengthening its leadership in the Islamic banking industry, Oman's leading and most trusted Islamic bank, Bank Nizwa, announced during its recent Sharia Supervisory Board (SSB) meeting the appointment of Dr Majid Mohamed Al Kindi as chairman of the SSB.

MARKET BUSINESS & FINANCE



VODAFONE SIGNS PACT

Vodafone entered into a partnership agreement with Tamimah, an award-winning IT solutions provider in Oman. The collaboration will see the provision of government-based services, such as enquiring about general secondary high school results and parking payments via SMS.

Bank Muscat posts net profit of OMR99.26mn in 2022 first half

The bank posted a net profit of OMR99.26 million for the period compared to OMR94.65 million reported during the same period in 2021, an increase of 4.9 per cent

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the flagship financial institution in the Sultanate, has announced its preliminary unaudited results for the six months ended 30 June 2022.

The bank posted a net profit of OMR99.26 million for the period compared to OMR94.65 million reported during the same period in 2021, an increase of 4.9 per cent.

The key highlights of the results for the period are as follows:

Net Interest Income from Conventional Banking and Net Income from Islamic Financing stood at OMR 166.25 million for the

six months ended 30 June 2022 compared to OMR 168.44 million for the same period in 2021, a decrease of 1.3 per cent due to higher interest expenses.

Non-interest income was OMR81.44 million for the six months ended 30 June 2022 as compared to OMR74.70 million for the same period in 2021, mainly due to higher income from the sale of investments.

Operating expenses for the six months ended 30 June 2022 was OMR102.71 million as compared to OMR95.12 million for the same period in 2021, an increase of 8.0 per cent.

Net Impairment for credit and other losses for the six months ended 30 June 2022 was OMR 28.40 million as against OMR 35.33 million for the same period in 2021. The decrease is mainly attributed to the precautionary and collective provisions created by the bank during the first half of 2021, due to the ongoing pandemic situation and the improving global crude oil prices.

Net Loans and advances including Islamic financing receivables decreased by 2.5 per cent to OMR9,003 million as against OMR9,238 million as of 30 June 2021, due to certain large repayments.

Customer deposits including Islamic Customer deposits increased by 1.9 per cent to OMR8,834 million as against OMR8,670 million as of 30 June 2021.

The full results for the six months ended 30 June 2022 along with the complete set of unaudited financial statements will be released following the approval of the Board of Directors of the bank at its meeting scheduled later in July 2022.



NCSI DATA



Oman's FDI tops OMR22 billion

MUSCAT: There has been a rapid increase in direct and indirect foreign investment into the Sultanate, according to data published in the 15th edition of the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) statistical bulletin for foreign investment in Oman.

The total foreign investments increased by 6 percent to OMR22.244 billion by end of 2020 compared OMR20.983 billion during the same period in 2019.

Foreign direct investment increased by 9.2 percent by end of 2020 to reach OMR15.761 billion compared to OMR14.432 billion during the same period in 2019.

Direct foreign investment represented 70.9 percent of the total foreign investments. Foreign investment formed 78.2 percent of the GDP, while the direct foreign investment represented 55.4 percent of the GDP in 2020.

The cashflows in foreign investments increased by 24.5 percent to reach OMR1.261 billion by end of 2020 compared to 2019, according to the NCSI statistical bulletin.

The oil and gas production sector secured the bulk of foreign investment of OMR11.174 billion by end of 2020, an increase of 50.2 percent compared to the same period in 2019.

It was followed by financial mediation with a total investment of OMR6.6 billion, an increase of 27 percent compared to the same period in 2019 and the manufacturing sector with total investments of OMR2.013 billion, respectively.

The UK topped the direct foreign investments by the end of 2020 with total investments of OMR7.112 billion, followed by the USA investments of OMR2.045 billion and the UAE investments of OMR998.3 million. -ONA

PORT-BASED CONTAINER FREIGHT STATION

Pact signed to develop container freight station and logistics complex at Sohar Port

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Sohar Port and Freezone has partnered with Arkan Sohar Logistics to develop a port-based Container Freight Station (CFS) and logistics complex that will occupy 26,000^m².

Through this agreement, Arkan Sohar Logistics will offer bonded and non-bonded facilities, ambient and covered storage, as well as temperature-controlled, dry, chilled and frozen storage facilities. These facilities will also provide value-added services such as cross stuffing for import, re-export and transshipment cargo, lashing, crating, staging, labelling, repacking, kitting, and order processing. An Oman-based company, Arkan Sohar Logistics has become one of the fastest-growing logistics service providers in the region with a total investment of approximately OMR 2.7 million.

The CFS will allow importers and exporters using Sohar Port to securely store goods and products for consolidation and expedited shipping. Arkan Sohar Logistics' CFS services have become a landmark success for the company, offering state-of-the-art customs-bonded areas for cargo, a racked warehouse facility and custom-built dock levellers to facilitate easy access to trailers for safe and efficient loading and unloading.

Omar bin Mahmood Al Mahrizi, CEO of Sohar Freezone, DCEO Sohar Port said, "As we continue to expand and position Oman as a world-class logistics hub, it is important that we consolidate and de-consolidate shipments coming into Sohar by offering CFS ser-



vices within the port and close to the container terminal. This will speed up the clearance and processing functions to move goods and products to their next destination efficiently. Arkan Sohar Logistics have a well-earned strong reputation as an excellent and dependable service partner and we are looking forward to welcoming them to Sohar."

Ali Al Muttawa, CEO of Arkan Sohar Logistics, said, "Our experience in operating CFS, and warehousing facilities for frozen commodities will benefit Sohar Port's clients and ensure they can meet the needs of a growing consumer

market by handling goods safely and securely and providing end-to-end logistics solutions. Our facilities can be customised to suit their requirements, and by maintaining shipping containers, we are able to increase cost efficiency and keep businesses moving without delays caused by damaged goods, during processing or transportation. Sohar Port and Freezone is one of the fastest-growing industrial and logistics hubs in the region and our presence here aims to add significant value to Oman's supply chain capabilities and shipping lines choosing Sohar, positioning Oman as a global leader in the logistics sector."

Sohar Port and Freezone offers a wealth of attractive incentives designed to make doing business easier and more efficient, including 100 per cent foreign ownership, attractive local labour requirements, 0 per cent import or export duties and 0 per cent income tax. In addition, Sohar Port operates a Customs clearing service available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and a bonded transport corridor which allows goods to travel between Port and Freezone within 14 minutes, with on-site One-Stop-Shop service available to assist with the acquisition of all necessary registration, licenses and visas.

EXCHANGE OF TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE

Oman, Germany sign declaration of intent in energy field



BERLIN: The Sultanate of Oman and the Federal Republic of Germany have signed a declaration of intent for cooperation in the field of energy. The step would contribute to the exchange of technical knowledge, related integrated systems and smart networks.

The declaration of intent was signed from the Sultanate of Oman's side by Eng. Salim Nasser Al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals while it was signed from the German side by Dr Patrick Graichen, State Secretary at the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action.

The declaration was signed within the framework of the official visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the Federal Republic of Germany.

The signing of this declaration fulfils the desire of the two countries to continue promoting their cooperation in the field of energy based on mutual benefit, as the two countries are parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as well as fulfilling their desire to establish a framework for the exchange of technical knowledge and advice, skills and expertise related to the field of energy.

The two sides reached an understanding on several topics that include encouraging cooperation in the fields of renewable energy technologies, their integrated systems and smart networks and energy efficiency, such as industry, buildings and transportation, green hydrogen and its derivatives, energy regulatory frameworks, research and mar-

ket planning, to create an attractive milieu to invest in energy transition technologies.

The two sides also held a meeting touching on the existing friendship and constructive cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the Federal Republic of Germany. The two sides also discussed the major joint projects that the two countries aspire to achieve in the fields of energy, green hydrogen and its lucrative feasible derivatives in a manner that brings mutual benefits to them.

The meeting was attended by Khalid Hashel Al Muselhi, Head of the Foreign Minister's Office Department, Thomas Schneider, German Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman and officials from both sides. -ONA



MARKET



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Vodafone partners with IT solutions provider

The collaboration will see the provision of government-based services, such as enquiring about general secondary high school results and parking payments via SMS



Times News Service

MUSCAT: Vodafone recently entered into a partnership agreement with Tamimah, an award-winning IT solutions provider in Oman. The collaboration will see the provision of government-based services, such as enquiring about general secondary high school results and parking payments via SMS. Commenting on the objective of the signing, Mohammed Al Hakamani, Head of Product from Vodafone said, "At Vodafone, we are committed to enhancing al-

ready existing services and joining hands with pioneers in the fields to extend these benefits to our customers. Entities and service providers that we partner with, host state-of-the-art products that ensure ease of accessibility and are completely digital, which is reflective of our vision. Our recent partnership with Tamimah, one of the first companies to introduce IVR & SMS-based Solutions in Oman, is a testament to our efforts in encouraging digitally-holistic services that enable our customers to conveniently utilise government-related amenities. Moreover, we

continue to enhance the offerings of our My Vodafone App to include even more facilities that will bring about even benefits for all Vodafone subscribers in the future." Vodafone customers can now avail of government services, such as paying for their parking or enquiring about general secondary high school results, once published by the Ministry of Education, via SMS. Parents or students who are subscribers can access the General Secondary Certificate Results by simply sending a message 90200, with the respective student seat number. For parking payments,

customers can send an SMS to 90091 with details of their car number, code and time in minutes, with no hassle. This is in addition to several other facilities that are aimed to be rolled out in the upcoming period. Balqees Abdullah Al Fadhil from Tamimah added, "We are proud to join hands with Vodafone, a company that hosts immense global expertise and strives to transform the face of the local telecommunications industry. Together, we believe that we can bring about a new age of digital convenience for all the people within the Sultanate."

Saudi Arabia and USA ink partnership agreement in 5G and 6G technologies

JEDDAH: The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United States of America signed a memorandum of cooperation between the two friendly countries in the fields of 5G and 6G technologies to accelerate the growth of the digital economy and R&D in the Kingdom's digital ecosystem.

Saudi Vision 2030

This agreement comes in line with the leadership's support to the communications and information technology sector to achieve the targets of Saudi Vision 2030 and is a direct result of both friendly countries' efforts to push their strategic relationship in the economy to new heights, especially in the technology sector, and strengthening the growth of the digital economy.

The agreement was signed during the American president's visit to Saudi Arabia, by Eng. Abdullah Alswaha, Minister of Communications and Information Technology, and Alan Davidson, Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information and NTIA Administrator.

This MoU will greatly contribute to the development of the digital economy in the Kingdom's GDP, create thousands of

jobs, and bolster the Kingdom's position as a regional leader in future technologies and innovation. GSMA estimates that 5G technology economical revenue will contribute in around 60 billion Saudi Riyals to MENA's GDP by 2030, with the Kingdom having the largest digital economy in the region with 18 billion Saudi Riyals from the Kingdom's GDP in the same period, in addition to creating hundreds of thousands of new jobs in the region by increasing productivity and launching new digital markets.

Collaboration

Under this memorandum, the two sides will cooperate to promote collaboration in the fields of communications and information technology through the deployment of 5G technology and commercial expansion solutions and will collaborate in 6G R&D.

Saudi Arabia is the largest technology and digital market in the Middle East and North Africa with \$40 billion and is the second fastest growing country in the Digital Competitiveness Report according to the World Economic Forum, and one of the 10 fastest growing countries in Fintech, digital content and e-commerce. -SPA

SUSTAINABLE SKILLSETS

United Finance launches talent development programme



MUSCAT: United Finance Company, a leading financial services provider, recently launched its first-ever talent development programme that aims at building sustainable and unique skill sets to complement its transformation and people strategy. The programme will consist of various elements such as specialised training modules, coaching, skill-based E-learning programmes, rotations, and special projects which will result in build-

ing and sustaining a performance-based culture. Nasser Al Rashdi, Chief Executive Officer of United Finance Company said: "The launch of the talent development programme comes in line with the organisation's transformation and people strategy and setting a benchmark in the industry. "It is also in line with the board's vision of elevating our human capital and sustaining our performance through our people."

URGENT ACTION REQUIRED

G20 finance ministers aim to tackle energy, food crises

BALI: US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen on Friday urged the Group of 20 leading rich and developing nations to take urgent action to tackle the food crises caused by Russia's war in Ukraine. "We must take action to address the short-term food insecurity crisis and, equally importantly, the longer-term drivers of food insecurity, including the nexus with climate change," Yellen said. "The speed and wisdom of our decisions now will make the difference on whether we get the current crisis under control," she added.

The agenda of the two-day meeting of G20 finance ministers on the Indonesia resort island of Bali is dominated by the economic fallout of the war in Ukraine. A G20 finance meeting in April saw officials from the United States, Britain, France, Canada, and Ukraine walk out to protest the attendance of Russian envoys. Only last week, Moscow's top diplomat walked out of talks with



G20 foreign ministers.

Sergey Lavrov told his counterparts the Russian invasion of Ukraine was not responsible for a global hunger crisis and that sanctions designed to isolate Russia amounted to a declaration of war.

G20 members include Western countries that have imposed sanctions on Russia, while other member nations, including China, India and South Africa, have been more muted in their responses. Indonesia, the host of the fi-

nance meeting, said it has tried acting as an "honest broker." Indonesian Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati warned the world is facing alarming global hunger due to war, export restrictions and the lingering effect of the coronavirus pandemic. "Millions and millions — if not billions — of people are depending on us," Indrawati said. "Fuel shortages are unfolding around the world. And we are seeing this is having a huge political and social implication," she added. The risk of a fertiliser supply crisis could exacerbate the food crisis even into 2023 and beyond, Indrawati said. She suggested the G20 could form joint finance and agriculture ministries to address the issues. However, Yellen said existing organisations were up to the job. "We don't need new institutions. We need robust coordination, knowledge sharing, research and development, financing, and action," she said. -BW

APPOINTMENT

Bank Nizwa elects new chairman of Sharia Supervisory Board

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Strengthening its leadership in the Islamic banking industry, Oman's leading and most trusted Islamic bank, Bank Nizwa, announced during its recent Sharia Supervisory Board (SSB) meeting the appointment of Dr Majid Mohamed Al Kindi as chairman of the SSB. Assisting Dr Majid as Vice Chairman is Dr Aznan bin Hassan. Furthermore, Sheikh Ali Al Jahdani has joined the board as a new member. Bank Nizwa is committed to promoting Sharia-compliant banking throughout the Sultanate. The effectiveness of an Islamic banking model is dependent on strict adherence to Sharia standards. The Islamic Bank is full of pride in its Sharia Supervisory Board (SSB), which constitutes highly trained, qualified, well-versed and internationally known Sharia consultants. The existence of such a Sharia board also gives the necessary oversight of Sharia Governance function as well as assurance to shareholders and depositors that all funds invested with the bank are deployed in a Sharia-compliant manner be it in any Sharia-compliant investment activities or financing transactions where the profit for the clients are assured to meet the highest degree



of Sharia requirements. This shows that Bank Nizwa is fully committed to adhering to and implementing a holistic Sharia Governance Framework in all its operations in letter and spirit as enshrined in the Islamic Banking Regulatory Framework issued by the Central Bank of Oman. Khaled Al Kayed, CEO of Bank Nizwa said, "The stability of the Islamic financial system is dependent on Sharia governance. It increases stakeholders' and the general public's trust in the activities and operations of Islamic financial institutions (IFIs). In general, the Sharia committee plays an important role in the Sharia governance of IFIs. The Sharia committee's role is enhanced by its delivery of objective and high-quality Sharia council and verdicts. Bank

Nizwa is acclaimed for delivering superior Sharia-compliant financial solutions. Customers can be assured that its commitment to providing Islamic banking benefits always adheres to the judgments and decisions of its Sharia Board, as well as to the Sultanate's regulations set by the Islamic Financial Services Board (IFSB)." The appointment of Dr Majid Al Kindi as a new chairman of the board comes within the framework of the bank's commitment to implement the principles of Islamic Sharia by strengthening its board with pioneering expertise. Dr Al Kindi holds the position of Secretary of Fatwa in the Office of the General Mufti of the Sultanate at the Ministry of Endowment and Religious Affairs. He is also a researcher on Islamic affairs in the Ministry. He has delivered several papers and studies on Sharia supervision in Islamic finance institutions. Dr Al Kindi holds a PhD in jurisprudence and its principles from the International Islamic University in Malaysia and another PhD in Islamic economics and banking from Yarmouk University in Jordan. The SSB also includes Dr Aznan bin Hssan who joined the committee in December 2020. He is an Associate Professor in Sharia at the Institute of Islamic Banking and Finance (IIIBF), IIUM. He is

also the President of the Association of Sharia Advisors in Islamic Finance (ASAS), the Deputy Chairman of the Sharia Advisory Council, Securities Commission and the Deputy Chairman of the Sharia Advisory Committee Employee Provident Fund (EPF). In addition, Dr Aznan is also a member of the Sharia Advisory Council, AAOIFI, Bahrain and the Higher Sharia Authority, Central Bank of UAE. He serves as a member of the Board of Directors of Maybank Islamic Berhad and the Chairman of the Sharia Advisory Board of FNB Bank, South Africa. He also serves as a Shari'ah consultant to Maybank Investment Bank and Hong Leong Islamic Bank. He is a registered Sharia Advisor for the Islamic Unit Trust Schemes and Islamic Securities (Sukuk) with the Securities Commission of Malaysia. In addition, the SSB includes Sheikh Jahdani who has concrete experience in the field of Islamic banking and has obtained certifications in Islamic banking accredited by the Arab Academy for Banking and Financial Sciences in Jordan and professional Sharia audit in Islamic banks and financial institutions. Sharia governance maintains the benefit of focusing on the interests of all stakeholders and providing justice to them.

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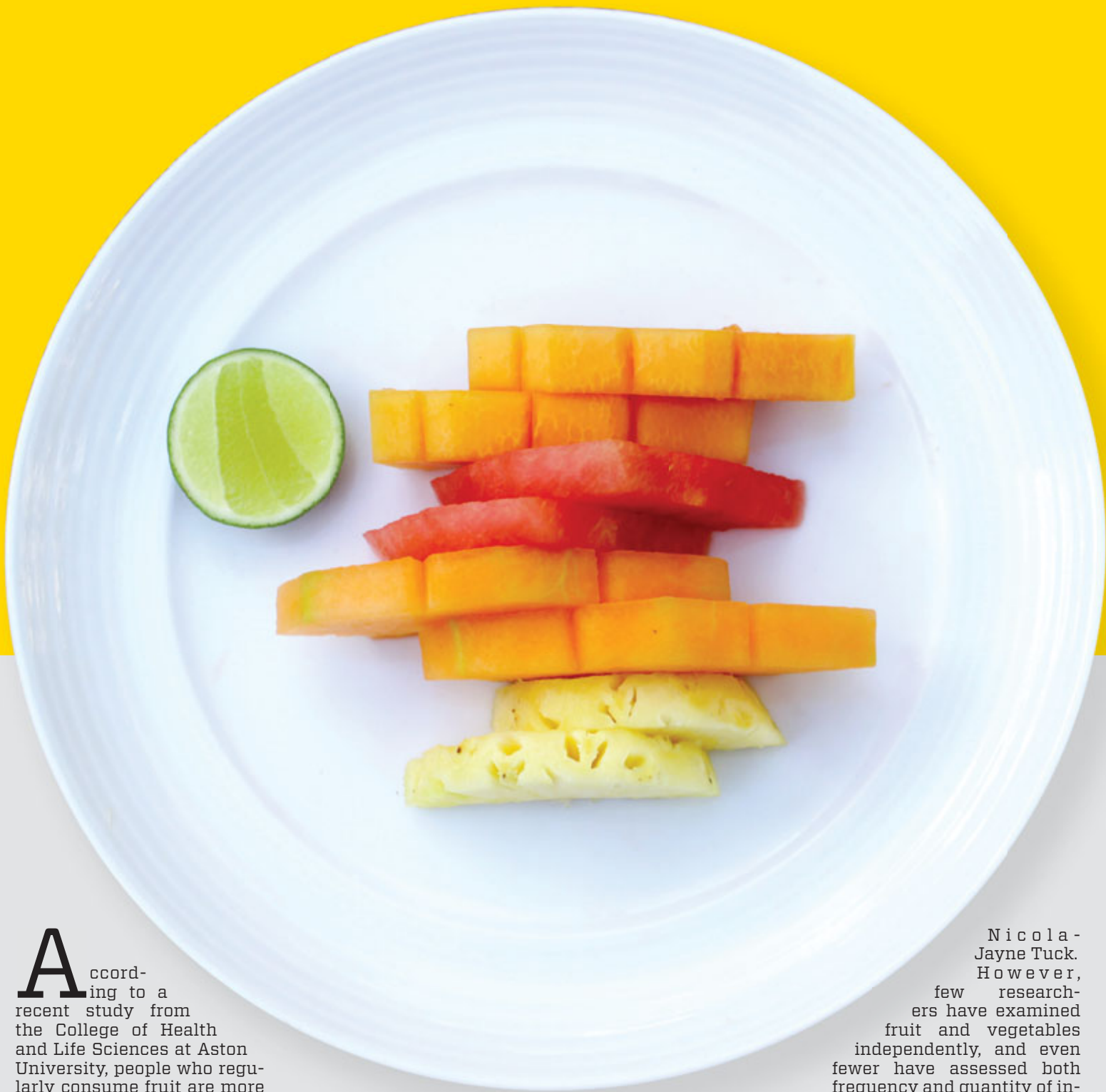
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EATING MORE FRUITS KEEPS DEPRESSION AT BAY



According to a recent study from the College of Health and Life Sciences at Aston University, people who regularly consume fruit are more likely to have better levels of positive mental well-being and are less likely to experience depressive symptoms. The study was published in the British Journal of Nutrition. According to the researchers’ results, the frequency of fruit consumption is more significant to psychological health than the total amount consumed over the course of a normal week. The study also discovered that persons who consume low-nutrient savoury foods like crisps are more likely to report higher symptoms of anxiety. The study, which was conducted on 428 individuals from throughout the UK and was published in the British Journal of Nutrition, examined the association between the consumption of fruit, vegetables, sweet and savoury food snacks, and psychological well-being. The study discovered that both nutrient-rich fruit and nutrient-poor savoury

snacks appeared to be associated with psychological health after accounting for demographic and lifestyle characteristics including age, general health, and activity. Additionally, they discovered no link between consuming veggies and psychological well-being. According to the poll, regardless of the total amount of fruit consumed, persons who ate fruit more frequently scored lower for depression and better for mental wellness. People who often consumed nutrient-poor savoury snacks (like crisps) were more likely to report reduced mental wellness and experience “daily mental slips” (also known as subjective cognitive failures). Higher levels of worry, tension, and despair were observed, as well as worse mental health ratings when there were more lapses. Contrarily,

there was no correlation between these common memory slip-ups and consumption of fruits, vegetables, or sweet snacks, indicating a special link between these nutrient-poor savoury snacks, common memory slip-ups, and psychological health. These annoying tiny everyday mistakes in memory included forgetting where things were placed, forgetting why one was entering specific rooms, and having trouble recalling the names of friends whose names were “tip of the tongue.” “Very little is known about how diet may affect mental health and wellbeing, and while we did not directly examine causality here, our findings could suggest that frequent snacking on nutrient-poor savoury foods may increase daily mental lapses, which in turn reduces psychological health,” said lead author and PhD student

Nicola-Jayne Tuck. However, few researchers have examined fruit and vegetables independently, and even fewer have assessed both frequency and quantity of intake. Other studies have established a link between fruit and vegetable consumption and mental health. “Fruits and vegetables both contain a wealth of antioxidants, fibre, and other micronutrients that support good brain health, but cooking can deplete these nutrients. Fruit’s higher impact on our mental health may be explained by the fact that we are more inclined to consume it uncooked.” It’s likely that altering our snacking habits might be a relatively quick and straightforward method to boost our mental health. On the other hand, it’s also possible that the impending ban on processed snack foods at checkouts, which is set to take effect in October, may enhance both the physical and emotional health of the nation. Overall, attempting to develop the habit of reaching for the fruit dish is absolutely worthwhile. **-ANI**



IN-PICTURES



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Nam Ou hydropower project in Laos
Aerial picture shows the Nam Ou 1 hydropower plant of the Nam Ou River Cascade Hydropower Project in Luang Prabang, Laos. The Nam Ou project includes seven cascade hydropower plants along the Nam Ou river which is the largest tributary of the Mekong river in Laos. *Xinhua*



84 die in first 3 days of Spain's heat wave
People drink water in Barcelona, Spain. Eighty-four people are known to have died from the heat wave that has struck Spain since July 10, the Carlos III Health Institute, which reports to the Spanish Ministry of Health, said. *Xinhua*



International Food Festival held in Valletta, Malta
People take part in the Malta International Food Festival in Valletta, Malta. *Xinhua*

272 seals rescued in first 6 months this year along Namibia's coastline
A seal entangled in a discarded fishing net is removed by founder of Ocean Conservation Namibia (OCN) Naude Dreyer at Walvis Bay, Namibia. OCN said it rescued 272 seals in the first six months this year along the country's coastline. *Xinhua*



Scenery of Bali, Indonesia
Tourists visit Garuda Wisnu Kencana cultural park in Bali, Indonesia. *Xinhua*



Slovenia starts dismantling anti-immigrant border fence
Members of the Slovenian armed force start removing the barbed wire fence at a border crossing with Croatia, near Slovenia's Metlika. The Slovenian army started dismantling 200 kilometres of barbed wire fence on its border with Croatia that had been erected to keep off illegal migrants. *Xinhua*



People enjoy themselves at beach in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh
A man plays soccer at a beach during Eid Al Adha holiday in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. *Xinhua*

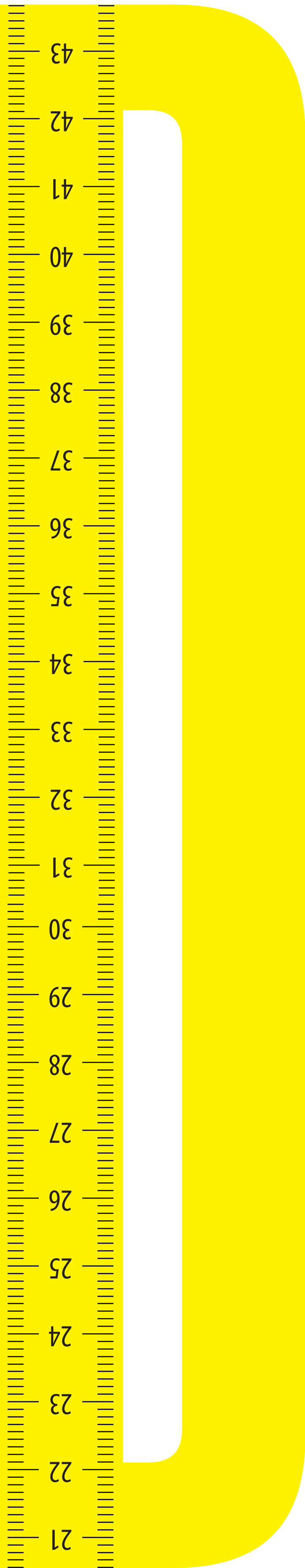
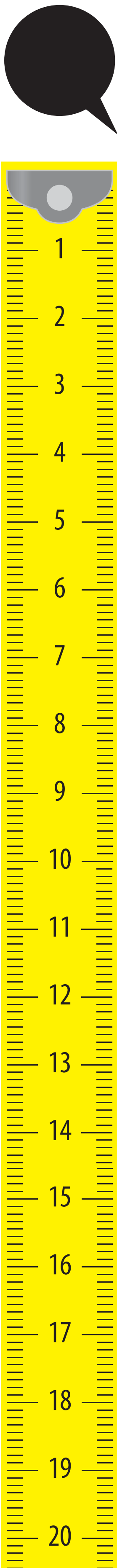


Scenery of Diaoshuilou waterfall in NE China's Heilongjiang
Picture shows scenery of Diaoshuilou waterfall at the Jingpohu Global Geopark in Mudanjiang City, northeast China's Heilongjiang Province. *Xinhua*

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FEATURE



iDip, an individualised diet programme, uses a unique visual tool that helps dieters choose foods that limit their daily calories while consuming adequate amounts of protein and fibre. Now in its third clinical trial, the programme shows promise in helping people lose weight and keep it off.

The Individualised Diet Improvement Programme is a self-guided approach that involves easy-to-use tools, according to the nutritionists at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign who created iDip.

“Our programme does not provide or offer a strict diet plan or recipes for participants to follow,” said graduate student Mindy H. Lee, a co-author of the study. “We’re not excluding food groups as low-carbohydrate or low-fat plans do. The primary goal is to empower dieters to make informed choices so they can create their own sustainable weight-management programme.”

Diet flexibility is key to making weight loss and maintenance sustainable, said study co-author Manabu T. Nakamura, a professor of nutrition at the university.

“The problem with currently available commercial weight-loss programmes and products is that the magnitude of dieters’ weight loss is not great,” he said. “The more serious problem is that people can’t maintain it.

“If they follow the programme or consume only the foods they’re told to for four or six months, they lose a certain amount of weight, but when they quit following the programme or buying the products the weight comes right back. And that’s very discouraging for them.”

A visual tool developed by the researchers plots dieters’ protein and fibre intake, helping them choose foods that reduce their overall calories without reducing their protein and fibre.

Based on the dietary guidelines issued by the Institutes of Medicine, the iDip visual tool plots foods’ protein and fiber densities per calorie along with a target range for meals. The tool helps users create meals with about 80 grams of protein and 20 grams of fibre daily while limiting their intake to less than 1,500 calories per day.

Ranging in age from 24-59, all of the participants in the initial clinical trial had a body mass index greater than 28, placing them in the overweight or obese categories. According to participants’ self-reports, they had obesity-related health conditions such as high blood pressure and had tried two or more commercial diet programmes or weight-loss products in the past.

Participants weighed themselves daily at home using a wifi-enabled scale, and the researchers provided each person with a chart every week showing their weight-loss progress, intended rate of loss and a six-month goal weight.

The daily weighing and weekly feedback charts allowed participants to monitor their progress without counting calories or completing a daily food journal, which can be tedious, time consuming and inaccurate, Nakamura said.

“In the entirety of human history, no culture counted calories,” Nakamura said. “And we know it isn’t sustainable over the long term. But weighing daily and recording the trend is a very important tool. It’s easy to sustain over one’s lifetime and is a good habit for anyone who wants to lose weight or maintain their weight.”

During the 12-month programme, participants attended 22 educational sessions led by registered dietitians. These included 19 group lectures that offered nutrition information and explained how to apply this knowledge to grocery shopping and cooking. The lectures also focused on the benefits of physical activity and how to navigate weight-loss plateaus and maintenance.

Additionally, each participant received three individual coaching and advising sessions.

According to the study, 12 of the 14 participants finished the program. Half achieved the researchers’ goal of losing at least 5 per cent of their body weight and maintained it during the six-month follow-up phase, Lee said.

Although the number of participants was small, the researchers said it demonstrated the program’s feasibility.

A third clinical trial of iDip currently is underway with 30 participants, and the results are even more promising. At the conclusion of the six-month weight-loss phase, participants have lost about 6.5 per cent of their body weight, Lee said. **am**

STUDY SHOWS INDIVIDUALISED EATING PROGRAMME HELPS DIETERS LOSE WEIGHT

The Individualised Diet Improvement Programme is a self-guided approach that involves easy-to-use tools, according to the nutritionists at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign who created iDip.



ROUND-UP



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MG opens new showroom in Buraimi

In addition to MHD's existing showrooms in Ibri, Sinaw, Sur, Nizwa, and more, this new branch in Buraimi is an integral part of a larger, multifaceted MHD facility, catering to consumers various needs in the area



MUSCAT: MG Motor inaugurated its 13th showroom in the city of Buraimi on July 13 to offer its high-quality products in the region. Several senior staff members and distinguished guests attended the opening ceremony of the showroom, which was inaugurated by Mohsin Hani Al Bahrani - CEO, MHD ACERE & Tom Lee - Managing Director, SAIC Motor Middle East.

In addition to MHD's existing showrooms in Ibri, Sinaw, Sur, Nizwa, and more, this new branch in Buraimi is an integral part of a larger, multifaceted MHD facility, catering to consumers various needs in the area.

Mohsin Al Bahrani described the event as "a long-awaited step" to expose potential customers to the successful automotive brand and "make aftersale services more readily available to current clients". "Our company is proud to be a distributor for MG as a brand that is committed to delivering engaging and differentiated experiences to its customers," the MHD ACERE CEO added.

Newly opened in Buraimi, this showroom offers MG's latest range of stylish, highly equipped, and affordable cars. The MG GT, MG5 and MG6 sedans are part of this range. All of which are sleek, styl-



ish, and fun to drive. The MG motor SUV lineup includes MG ZS, MG HS, MG RX5, MG RX8, and all-powerful, versatile SUVs.

With MG's new lineup of sedans and SUVs, there is something for everyone. MG's latest fastback sedan, the GT, features a coupe-like design featuring MG's latest design philosophy.

This vehicle's exterior features a wide stance, a fastback silhouette, and aerodynamic, flowing body lines that make it immediately appealing. Its performance is as impressive as its looks. With two engine variants, it dazzles from the moment it is ignited. With 173

horsepower and 250 Nm of torque, this car accelerates from 0-100 km/h in just 8.5 seconds.

Get ready to embrace the journeys of life in style with the exciting MG 5 model. The Standard, Comfort, and Deluxe trim levels boast outstanding performance and state-of-the-art features such as Interactive Technology, 5-Star NCAP Safety, 1.5L CVT, Dual Cooling Cycle Engine, and 29 storage spaces. It is not a surprise this is one of the most popular MG sedans in Oman.

Also available in three trim levels, the MG 6 is one of the most attractive MG sedans. Combined with its

sporty styling, the 1.5L turbocharged engine gives this model a lively performance. It features stability control and a 5-star C-NCAP safety rating to ensure your safety.

The MG HS belongs to the exciting MG Motor selection SUV category thanks to its innovative X-Motion design concept. With the MG HS, you will be able to experience life like never before. With its 2.0-litre High-Efficiency Turbo Engine and praiseworthy design, you will be able to live life like you never have.

It is impossible to forget a journey in the MG RX5. Incorporating an 8-inch touchscreen con-

sole, violin-style tail lights, and a sporty yet elegant design, the MG RX5 perfectly captures the brand's philosophy. The interior has a spacious feel with up to 1639 litres of storage space, and the sunroof it features is one of the largest. There are also a variety of finishes to choose from, such as Red, Blue, Black, White, and Silver.

A seven-seater SUV with a reputation for being bold, capable, and stylish, the MG RX8 is another class-leading model. Vehicles in this category should be equipped with all the features necessary to set them apart from the competition and the RX8 checks all the

boxes. In any terrain, the MG RX8 is unbeatable thanks to its 2.0-litre engine coupled with automatic transmission. This car's impressive safety features, technology-enhanced controls, and stunning appearance further impress.

In the MG lineup, there is also the MG ZS, another hot SUV. Despite its British design and engineering, the MG ZS is already popular in the Middle East due to its contemporary design and powerful engine.

A new engine, improved styling, and the most advanced technology are just a few of the features found in this stylish crossover.

2-MONTH-LONG FEST

Mall of Muscat launches spectacular summer festival

MUSCAT: Mall of Muscat - Mabelah, Oman's most luxurious mall has collaborated with Oman Aquarium and launched its 2-month-long summer festival where customers get a free summer kids pass to Oman Aquarium when they shop in the mall for OMR 20 and above.

The summer pass will allow kids to enter Oman Aquarium an unlimited number of times till 30th September and explore, learn and enjoy the different marine life along with a Free Summer camp inside the Aquarium for kids every Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 4pm to 8pm. In addition to this never-before offer in Oman, the Mall will be organising free entertainment shows, kids activities and other exciting events for both kids & adults during the weekends at The Walk Area located on the second floor of the mall.

The fun-filled free summer camp within Oman Aquarium is the ideal place for kids who are on their summer break as there are multiple activities such as

workshops, games and play educational areas as well as fun and will help the kids in multiple ways. Workshops on topics such as sea life, calculation skills, human body, science, arts and crafts are all part of the summer camp within the aquarium. There will also be a toddlers area for age group 2 to 4 years which includes ball pit, motor skills, doll house which will help in the mental development of the youngsters. There will also be face painting and minute-to-win games as add-on to the summer camp.

Every weekend, from 8pm onwards there will be free kids entertainment at The Walk Area located on the second floor of the mall. Fun activities like Magic show, roaming acts by different superheroes, Frozen sisters stage show and many other performances will keep children & adults entertained at all times.

Shopping lovers will get to enjoy an array of discounts and sizing offers from various brands across the mall which will last till September 15.

FIRST-EVER NFT COLLECTION

Boredpuma partners with Splash Fashions for Celestial Collection



MUSCAT: Boredpuma joins forces with Splash Fashions in creating the groundbreaking Celestial Collection, stepping out as the first company to release an NFT in the region.

Created in 2019 to bring together artists, visionary ideas, evolving technology, and the virtual world, Boredpuma reveals the upcoming launch of the Celestial Collection, the highly anticipated collaboration with Splash Fashions.

As an award-winning, sustainability-focused and forward-thinking fashion label, Splash stands out as the ideal collaborator in this project, fusing technology and fashion-driven art. This collection is recognised as the first-ever NFT collection and

collaboration of its kind in the Middle East, signifying the future of NFTs, the metaverse, and beyond.

The groundbreaking virtual collection features concepts of sustainability and fashion with concept art created by Jong Sacil. Featuring the mask of a 'puma' - the artwork will signify the collaborative efforts to then develop future characters for the Metaverse. The Celestial Collection is comprised of characters whose designs represent the celestial bodies in our universe, and are inspired by the elements; the sun, moon, planets, stars, constellations, and more. Symbolizing the graphic elements and featuring a Y2K aesthetic,

character designs pull inspiration from mangas and anime. The samurai sword expresses each characters' identity with compelling artwork and unique designs.

Future projects within the collection will include 3D avatars, with masks acting as the symbolic trait that combines fashion with 'Gen2' Puma Punks. This phase will allow the collaboration to move into the Metaverse.

In purchasing from this NFT collaboration, members will gain access to benefits including a digital access card, which allows entrance into the inner circle of fashion shows, future projects, and the ability to mint and purchase

during pre-sale. All NFT collection holders will be given a Discord 'Splash' badge and will be able to rank up by being an active member to reach the OG rank of 'Celestial'.

The Boredpuma X Splash collaboration of the future will also include 3D card collections, game development, a fully developed and semi-dystopian storyline, "The Celestials", as well as immersive audio and visual experience which will feature original soundtracks and elements unique to the Celestial Collection. 3D environments, 3D character creation, and VR characters will all become part of this collection's world - this is only the beginning.





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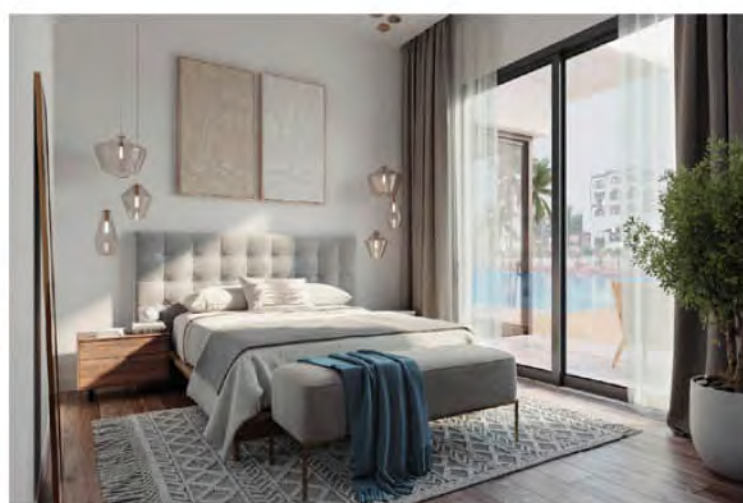
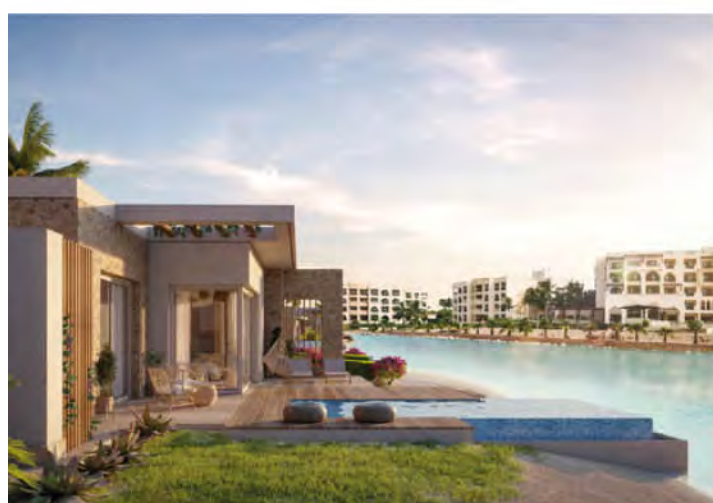
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