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Houses in Dhofar represent traditional Omani architecture

A5

A portrait of a man with a beard and mustache, wearing a white thobe and a white ghutra with a black agal. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile.

In his address, the Health Minister emphasised the country's commitment to addressing the burden of NCDs in the face of all and any challenges, affirming their continuous strive to strengthen non-communicable diseases data and monitoring processes which would pave the way for successful implementation towards the SDG targets that have been set.



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Ministers discuss GCC early health warning system

The meeting highlighted the decision of the Supreme Council on establishing the Gulf Centre for Disease Prevention & Control under the umbrella of the Gulf Health Council



Dr. Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Saidi, Minister of Health.

Health with the presence of Dr. Mohammed bin Saif Al Hosni, MoH Undersecretary for Health Affairs and senior MoH officials.

The meeting aimed to accelerate the implementation and follow-up of the decisions of the 41st session of the GCC Supreme Council (Sultan Qaboos and Sheikh Sabah Summit) held at Al-Ula city, Saudi Arabia this month.

The extraordinary meeting reviewed the contents of the closing statement of the Supreme Council, particularly the decisions with regard to the health field including the development of the GCC general framework of the public health plan for emergency preparedness and response.

The Supreme Council of the GCC leaders has approved the general framework of the plan and assigned the concerned authorities in the GCC countries to implement this plan by cooperating and coordinating with the health ministries.

It is worth mentioning that, Al-Ula Declaration underlined

strengthening the role of this Centre to coordinate the joint Gulf action to confront the Covid-19 pandemic and other epidemics.

At the end of the Sultan Qaboos and Sheikh Sabah Summit, the Supreme Council had directed to complete monitoring and documenting the efforts of the GCC countries to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic and to develop an electronic database to document these efforts.

The closing statement of the Supreme Council stressed that the challenges faced by the region require strengthening the cooperation and partnership relations, as well as scaling up the coordination level in all fields including the health field with all countries and active regional and global systems. The closing statement also focused on the implementation of the joint action plans as scheduled for the benefit of the GCC citizens, and to enhance the international standing of the Cooperation Council and its role in the regional and global issues.

WORKPLACE



<FROM A1> 'Preparing Omani workforce important'

"It is also important to educate the Omanis who will take these posts about the importance of these workplace procedures, particularly if they are in managerial roles," he revealed.

"When an expat worker who has the same skills and a similar amount of experience comes in to do these jobs, he already knows these rules because they are followed in his home country, so the Omani nationals must take an interest in knowing these procedures. They are being brought in for the good of everyone," Al Hooti further added.

These proposals were made by the Ministry's Human Resources Development department, which is tasked with bringing in sound employment practices and addressing related local concerns.

Among the other tasks of the department are drawing up career development plans, methods to qualitatively measure employee contributions, conduct a review of company functions and projects, identify and look into employee complaints, follow up on plans and training programmes for workers, provide technical assistance to public sector bodies where required, periodically renew policies related to manpower hiring, based on the needs of the country and the financial situation, and coordinate with the relevant authorities to prioritise the development of the local workforce.

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VATing it out

With the impending VAT in April 2021, BDO will be addressing your concerns through a series of weekly articles.

Oman announces VAT rates on food commodities

The Oman Tax Authority (TA) vide Ministerial Decree 2/2021 dated 4 January 2021, has announced the list of food products that would be taxed at zero rate.

The TA has listed 93 food items with their Harmonized System (HS) Codes that would be classified as zero rate. Some of the major food categories are listed below:

Sr. No	Description
1.	Poultry, meat and fish
2.	Dairy and its derivatives
3.	Vegetables and fruits
4.	Beverages (Coffee, tea, cardamom)
5.	Olive oil which is not chemically modified
6.	Cereal/ Grains
7.	Sugar
8.	Food preparations for children
9.	Bread
10.	Water
11.	Salt

(For more details please refer <https://tms.taxoman.gov.om/portal/web/taxportal/vat-tax>)

What is Zero VAT rate?

Supplies which are subjected to VAT but at a 0% rate. Having zero-rated supplies on the outward side, allows recovery / claim of Input VAT credit and subsequent refund, if such a situation arises.



Bipin Kapur, Managing Partner

Will all the food items be taxed at zero rate?

No, supply of basic food items announced and published by Oman TA are ONLY subjected to the zero rate. Example: cooking oil (other than certain categories of olive oil) are not zero rated and shall be subjected to 5% VAT.

Based on our experience of implementing VAT in other GCC member states, it has been observed that zero rating of basic food items is lost when such food items are provided along with services which could include services by caterers, restaurants, coffee shops or similar establishments.

This is a 4-part series on VAT. Opinions expressed are personal and should not be considered as an opinion or interpretation of law. Further clarity shall be available as VAT Regulations / Guides are issued.

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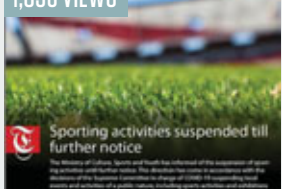


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GEOLOGICAL WONDERS OF WADI AL MAYH



LOCATED IN AL AMERAT, Wadi Al Mayh can certainly be called a geological wonder. From the breathtaking natural beauty of the landscape to flowers, date palms, trees of lemons, mangoes and pomegranate, along with streams of fresh water, this picturesque place is certainly a tourists' delight.

According to Oman's Ministry of Tourism, "Wadi Mayh is a long valley that lies between Yiti and Sifah, along the highway to Quriyat. In the western part of the valley is an enormous mountain range that appears to have been naturally engraved with many layers created during different geological periods. Now, it looks like a massive display of rock art. This picturesque landscape is dotted with small streams and pools of fresh water, which are an intense turquoise blue in colour. Two villages are conveniently situated on the edge of the wadi in the middle of the valley."

Tucked away between the mountains is the village that has several archaeological and geological sites. It also has tombs, old houses and some examples of 'rock art'. As you reach Wadi Al Mayh you can see an open plain surrounded by high mountains. The towering limestone cliffs form a canyon and the multicoloured layers of rock makes it more appealing.



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Sayyid Theyazin visits cricket academy, meets national teams

Welcomed by Oman Cricket's Board of Directors, Sayyid Theyazin was shown the indoor and outdoor facilities, including net practice arena and gymnasium equipped with state-of-the-art facilities

Times News Service

MUSCAT: His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham bin Tarik Al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, visited Oman Cricket Academy in Amerat recently and praised the top class playing and training facilities for the players.

Welcomed by Oman Cricket's

Board of Directors, Sayyid Theyazin was shown the indoor and outdoor facilities, including net practice arena and gymnasium equipped with state-of-the-art apparatus as well as a variety of pitches to play on. He viewed with keen interest Oman Cricket's Hall of Fame corridor that also displayed a collection of coveted



VISIT: His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham bin Tarik Al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, during his visit to Oman Cricket Academy in Amerat.

trophies Oman's various teams had won recently in international tournaments.

Briefing him on a host of wonderful achievements by Oman's cricket team in recent years, Pan-kaj Khimji, senior Board member, said it was heartening to see that Oman was placed so high in International Cricket Council's rankings, 13th in One-Day Internationals and 18th in T20 Internationals, out of 104 members.

Sayyid Theyazin was also introduced to the country's men's and women's teams by Duleep Mendis, Chief Development Officer, Oman Cricket, and national coach, and Vaishali Jesrani, captain of girls' team, on the famed OC Turf1 ground that now enjoys Test match status from the ICC. He was presented a special bat by OC Board of Directors as a memento marking his first visit to the OCA.

FEBRUARY

Oman to take part in Gulf Cancer Awareness Week

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman is participating with the other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries in the 6th Gulf Cancer Awareness Week that will take place in the first week of February.

The celebration of this week comes based on the recommendations of the Executive Authority of the Council of Health Ministers of the GCC countries.

Cancer is the second leading cause of death globally. Usually, the incidence rate in developed industrial countries is much higher than in developing countries. In addition, several studies indicate the possibility of having 27.5 million new cases of cancer each year by 2040, an increase of 61.7 percent from 2018, if the current trends continue.

From this standpoint, as a continuation of the efforts made to fight cancer worldwide and as a part of the GCC countries, the Sultanate of Oman will participate in the 6th Gulf Cancer Awareness Week that will take place from 1-7 February 2021. The activities of the week will include health awareness lectures, walkathons and entertainment events in various governorates of the Sultanate. These events are organized in



partnership with various stakeholders from public and private sectors. The closing ceremony will take place on February 7, 2021.

The activities of the Gulf Cancer Awareness Week will be launched on Monday, and will go on from the February 1-7, within the framework of the unified Gulf campaign with the slogan 40/40, which was chosen based on the scientific evidence that indicates that 40 per cent of the cancer diseases can be prevented by following healthy lifestyle, adopting correct dietary habits, practicing regular physical activity and maintaining an ideal body weight, while 40 types of cancer can be cured if detected early and managed with the appropriate treatment plan in a timely manner.

The GCC countries have adopted the first week of February every year as Gulf Cancer Awareness week in line with the celebration of the World Cancer Day which

takes place on February 4 every year. The Gulf Cancer Awareness week aims to raise health awareness about risk factors leading to cancer; to encourage the community to adopt a healthy lifestyle including diet and physical activity as well as to encourage saving the environment, public health, professional health and the importance of early detection of cancer for better prognosis.

Further, it also aims to activate national cancer control programs and the shared responsibility of the governmental and non-governmental sectors in these programmes. The message of the GCC campaign is to strengthen the relationship between all stakeholders in the society in raising health awareness through the preparation and implementation of quality and effective joint educational programmes and activities that help in cancer prevention and control.

The Oman Cancer Association, in cooperation with all governmental, private and non-governmental organisations, is ready to celebrate this occasion with the aim of raising awareness on cancer prevention with special emphasis on the importance of following a healthy lifestyle for cancer prevention.

UNIQUE STRUCTURES

Houses in Dhofar represent traditional Omani architecture

SALALAH: The traditional architecture of Dhofar Governorate represents one of the ancient Islamic arts when travellers visiting Dhofar in ancient times wrote about the unique architectural designs seen in palaces, houses and mosques, mainly in the Grand Mosque in the old city of Dhofar (Al Baleed).

They have also described the design of Al Ribat Mosque and its

unique architectural structure.

Abdullah bin Ali Al A'alian, a researcher in history, said that the archeological heritage of Dhofar was rich with Islamic designs which included marvellous Islamic geometric patterns.

He said that the traditional Omani patterns and formations have added to the beauty of Islamic architectural designs.

The arches in the old buildings

have been skillfully employed to add to the beauty of the external designs of old buildings. The doors of buildings in Dhofar have received attention and care with traditional Omani formations and shapes seen in the form of triangles, squares and other shapes, he said, adding that this is particularly seen on the doors of old houses in the wilayats of Salalah, Taqa, Mirbat and other areas". -ONA

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European Union approves AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine

Acting on the EMA's recommendation, the European Commission gave the vaccine its final approval for use in the 27-member bloc



AMSTERDAM: The Amsterdam-based European Medicines Agency (EMA) on Friday recommended the COVID-19 vaccine produced by British-Swedish firm AstraZeneca for conditional market authorization.

Acting on the EMA's recommendation, the European Commission then gave the vaccine its final approval for use in the 27-member bloc.

Clinical trials showed that the vaccine "was safe and effective at preventing COVID-19 in people from 18 years of age," EMA said.

The EU body also noted doubts about the product's effectiveness among more mature patients. However, EMA experts predicted that "the vaccine can be used in older adults," would be safe to administer and would provide some protection to people over 55.

"There are not yet enough results in older participants to provide a figure for how well the vaccine will work in this group. However, protection is expected, given that an immune response is seen in this age group and based on experience with other vaccines,"

the experts said in a statement.

The pharma giant welcomed EMA's decision.

"Today's recommendation underscores the value of AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine which is not only effective and well-tolerated, but also easy to administer," said AstraZeneca boss Pascal Soriot. A day earlier, Germany's vaccine commission said it could not recommend the use of the jabs on people aged 65 years and older because efficacy data for the group were lacking.

Older age groups and people with underlying conditions are among the first in line to be vaccinated in most countries with active vaccination programs. Germany's vaccine commission said Friday it would stick to advice recommending the AstraZeneca jab only for adults under the age of 65.

French President Emmanuel Macron also expressed doubts about the vaccine's efficacy for seniors, calling it "quasi-ineffective for people over 65."

"What I can tell you officially today is that the early results we

have are not encouraging for 60 to 65-year-old people concerning AstraZeneca," he said.

EU's third COVID vaccine approval

The approval by the European Commission makes the AstraZeneca drug the bloc's third certified vaccine, along with those made by the US-German enterprise BioNTech-Pfizer and the US firm Moderna.

None of those vaccines were "perfect" or could be used as a "magic wand" in the fight against the virus, European Medicines Agency director Emer Cooke told reporters. At the same time, they make up an "arsenal" of immunizations that help combat the pandemic, she added.

According to the EMA, the approval guarantees that the vaccine meets EU standards for safety and quality, despite bits of data not yet being available.

"However, the [available] data must show that the benefits of the medicine or vaccine outweigh any risks," EMA said in a statement.

AstraZeneca would be required to provide further data from ongoing studies. The UK government approved the product a month ago, and it has been used to immunize Britons for several weeks.

According to the EMA, the most common side effects of the AstraZeneca vaccine were "pain and tenderness at the injection site, headache, tiredness, muscle pain, a general feeling of being unwell, chills, fever, joint pain and nausea."

These side effects were usually "mild or moderate and got better within a few days" since the inoculation, according to the EU body.

EU demands answers on supply

On Wednesday, the EU aired its frustrations with AstraZeneca, suggesting the pharmaceutical giant was reneging on its agreement.

Europe's vaccination process was dealt a blow last week when AstraZeneca unexpectedly announced cuts in supplies to the EU, citing production problems at a Belgian factory.

That triggered a furious response from the bloc, which was expecting an estimated 60% cut to 31 million doses in the period to the end of March.

The news was a major blow for the EU's 27 member states, which are already lagging behind vaccination campaigns in Israel, Britain and the United States. The company on Friday said it could offer a further 8 million doses to the EU, with the bloc saying this still fell well short of the promised amount.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on Friday said Brussels wanted a "plausible explanation" from AstraZeneca about an expected delay to deliveries of its vaccine. **AW**

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NEW VACCINE

Serum Institute seeks Drugs Controller nod for clinical trials of coronavirus vaccine

NEW DELHI: Pharma giant Serum Institute of India (SII), whose Covishield vaccine has already received restricted emergency use approval by the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI), has now sought permission to start clinical trials of 'COVOVAX', a COVID-19 vaccine developed by Novavax.

In a tweet on Saturday, Adar Poonawalla, CEO of SII said: "Our partnership for a COVID-19 vaccine with Novavax has also published excellent efficacy results. We have also applied to start trials in India. Hope to launch COVOVAX by June 2021."

According to a government official, "Serum Institute has applied to the DCGI for its Novavax vaccine. The Subject Expert Committee (SEC) sometime back has reviewed their application and asked them to submit the revised protocol."

"The application would be evaluated thoroughly by the expert panel as and when the revised will be submitted by the firm."

It may be noted that the SII is already manufacturing millions of doses of Covishield vaccine in

technical collaboration with Oxford University and AstraZeneca.

In the latest press statement, Novavax announced that NVX-CoV2373, its protein-based COVID-19 vaccine candidate, met the primary endpoint, with a vaccine efficacy of 89.3 per cent, in its Phase three clinical trial conducted in the United Kingdom (UK).

The study assessed efficacy during a period with high transmission and with a new UK variant strain of the virus emerging and circulating widely. It was conducted in partnership with the UK Government's Vaccines Taskforce. The study, which has enrolled 15,000 people aged 18 to 84, is expected to be used to apply for use in Britain, the European Union and other countries.

NVX-CoV2373 contains a full-length, prefusion spike protein made using Novavax' recombinant nanoparticle technology and the company's proprietary saponin-based Matrix-M adjuvant. The purified protein is encoded by the genetic sequence of the SARS-CoV-2 spike (S) protein and is produced in insect cells. **ANI**

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WORLD



Africa’s second COVID wave likely to be more transmissible: CDC

At least 40 countries have experienced a second wave of the pandemic as of January 27

ADDIS ABABA: The Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) on Saturday said the ongoing second wave COVID-19 infections could be associated with the emergence of variants that are more transmissible.

“Africa is currently experiencing an increase in the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases,” the African Union (AU) Commission’s specialized healthcare agency said in its latest publication on Saturday.

At least 40 countries have ex-



perienced a second wave of the pandemic as of January 27, including all countries in the Southern Africa region, the Africa CDC said.

“This new wave of infections is thought to be associated with the emergence of variants that are more transmissible,” the Africa CDC said.

According to the agency, preliminary findings show that three new similar but distinct Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Cor-

onavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) variants, the 501Y/VUI - 202012/01, 501YV2, 501YV3, reported in the United Kingdom, South Africa and Brazil, respectively, “are significantly more transmissible than previously circulating variants, with high viral shedding observed among cases.”

Despite the fact that there is currently limited data on the extent to which these new variants have spread in Africa, the

Africa CDC stressed that preliminary data show that the 501Y.V2 variant has been reported in 22 countries globally including South Africa, Ghana, Botswana and Zambia.

The Africa CDC is presently working with partners and member states to map the regional spread of the new variants in Africa through regional genomic surveillance; and support laboratory centers of excellence to address the emerging SARS-CoV-2 sequencing needs of Member States and ensure availability of geographically representative and timely data.

Providing technical guidance for genomic surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 in Africa; ensuring quality-assured sequencing by specialized laboratories and regional laboratory hubs; and strengthen the capacity of national and regional laboratories to effectively respond to the emerging sequencing needs are also said to be the major Africa CDC intervention areas in the fight against the pandemic. *Xinhua*



Myanmar army vows to protect constitution amid fears of coup

NAYPYITAW: Myanmar’s military pledged on Saturday to protect the constitution and act according to law, after comments this week from its commander-in-chief sparked fears of an impending coup.

The country’s powerful army has repeatedly made allegations of widespread vote fraud in the November elections, which saw Aung San Suu Kyi’s ruling National League for Democracy (NLD) win by a landslide.

But political tensions escalated this week when a military spokesman refused to rule out the possibility of a coup, and warned the armed forces could “take action” if concerns about election irregularities weren’t addressed.

been misinterpreted.

“The Tatmadaw is protecting the 2008 constitution and will act according to the law,” it said.

“Some organizations and media assumed what they want and wrote as Tatmadaw will abolish the constitution.”

The statement said the general’s comments aimed to make military staff “understand the situation of the constitution.”

The NLD, which won 83% of the seats in the election, said the military’s statement offered a “suitable explanation.”

Myanmar-based analyst Richard Horsey said an imminent coup now seemed unlikely.

“It appears that [the] Myanmar military has stepped back from its coup threat,” he said on Twitter.

“How to interpret that, and what it means for stability going forward, depends on the behind the scenes details that aren’t clear yet.”

Myanmar was ruled by the military for almost five decades after a 1962 coup. It is now governed under a power-sharing agreement between Suu Kyi’s civilian administration and the country’s generals.

The country’s election commission has rejected the army’s allegations of widespread vote fraud, although it has conceded there were minor flaws in the process.

Newly elected MPs are expected to take their seats in Myanmar’s parliament on Monday. *AP*

Thousands of Syrians offered temporary residency extension in the United States

WASHINGTON: The United States on Friday extended the temporary legal residency status for almost 7,000 Syrians due to the war in their homeland.

In an early sign of a broader pro-immigrant platform from President Joe Biden’s administration, the acting Department of Homeland Security Secretary David Pekoske said temporary protected status (TPS) for the thousands of

immigrants would be extended by 18 months.

This deportation relief was set to end on March 31 but will now expire in September 2022.

Lives at risk

Temporary status allows foreign citizens to remain in the United States if they lack some other form of legal residency and come from a country where returning

would put their lives in danger. Pekoske said Syria meets that criteria because of the country’s ongoing war. He said there were examples of deliberately targeting civilians in the conflict, sometimes with the use of chemical weapons, and a lack of food and water. The extension of TPS covers Syrians and those without other nationalities who last resided there.

Latin Americans may get similar offer

US president Joe Biden also pledged to grant TPS to immigrants from Venezuela, citing the economic turmoil in the South American country, although the former US president Donald Trump, had pre-empted that move by giving the protections through a similar program before he left office. *AP*



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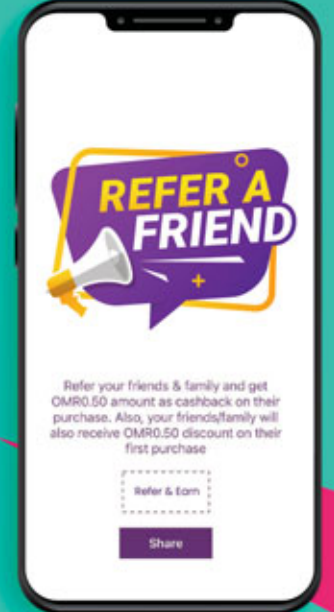
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Archer, Burns, Stokes to begin training as England team clears 2nd COVID test

The trio will practice in the morning for the next three days to get into the groove ahead of the four-match Test series

CHENNAI: England pace spearhead Jofra Archer, batsman Rory Burns and all-rounder Ben Stokes will begin their training on Saturday at the MA Chidambaram Stadium for the upcoming first Test against India slated to be played from February 5.

While England's touring contingent arrived in Chennai on Wednesday and are undergoing quarantine, Stokes, Archer, and Burns touched down in India earlier just as their teammates



INDIA VS ENG: The first Test of the four-match series will begin at the MA Chidambaram Stadium from February 5 while the second game will be played at the same venue from February 13.

were wrapping up the 2-0 Test series win Sri Lanka. The trio will practice in the morning for the next three days to get into the groove ahead of the four-match Test series.

"Three players from the England touring party are set to train this morning at the MA Chidambaram Stadium. Jofra Archer, Rory Burns, and Ben Stokes," said England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) media team on Saturday.

"The first group of players - Archer, Burns, and Stokes - will practice each morning for the next three days. They are limited to a two-hour session," it added.

Meanwhile, the entire visiting contingent has detected negative for coronavirus in their second PCR COVID-19 test done on Friday.

"The entire England touring party received their second PCR COVID-19 test yesterday. All results returned negative results," said ECB media.

The first Test of the four-match series will begin at the MA Chidambaram Stadium from Febru-

ary 5 while the second game will be played at the same venue from February 13.

Earlier, ECB clarified that Jonny Bairstow will return for the third and fourth Test after assistant batting coach Graham Thorpe said the batsman will join the squad following the first Test.

The England selectors and team management faced huge criticism for resting Bairstow for the first two Tests against India. Thorpe defended the team's decision to rest Bairstow for the first two Tests given the bio-bubble situation forced by the coronavirus pandemic.

"To clarify, the plan is still for Jonny Bairstow to return for the third and fourth Test and not the second Test. Along with Sam Curran and Mark Wood," the ECB media team said after Thorpe's comments.

India and England are set to lock horns in four Tests, three ODIs, and five T20Is. After the first two games in Chennai, the cricketers will move to Ahmedabad for the third and fourth Test. **ANI**

CRICKET

Langer's training style under scanner, coach says 'leadership isn't a popularity contest'

SYDNEY: While there have been reports that the senior cricketers in the Australian camp were frustrated with Justin Langer's coaching style, the former batsman and current head coach has squashed any such allegation saying it "couldn't be further from the truth".

Australia's disappointing show against India in the Test series has seen many spots come under the scanner and according to a report in the Sydney Morning Herald, senior players find former all-rounder and assistant coach Andrew McDonald more approachable than Langer. The Sydney Morning Herald cited sources saying that some senior cricketers are annoyed with Langer's micro-management within the Australian camp. Questions have also been raised on his interaction with the bowlers. But Langer denied micro-managing Australian bowlers saying that he never attends bowlers' meetings or talks about the stats with them.

"Leadership isn't a popularity contest. If players just want someone to tickle their stomachs all the time then I'm not doing my job," the Sydney Morning Herald quoted Langer as saying.

"It's actually the opposite of what happens. I never talk about statistics to the bowlers, ever. I don't go to any of the bowlers' meetings. That's what the bowl-



ers' coach is meant to be doing," he added. During the fourth and final Test against India in Brisbane, Langer ordered players not to sneak toasted sandwich while they were on the field and this has supposedly irked some players.

"You're walking on against India, we're trying to win a Test match and one of our players walks on with a toasted sandwich in his hand," said Langer. "I spoke to [the player] about it at length yesterday. I said, 'How do you reckon it looks, mate?' Is that not something I should say?"

After losing the four-match Test series 2-1 against India, Langer had credited the visiting side say-

ing that nothing can be taken for granted and one should not ever underestimate the Indian cricket team.

Soon after the loss, former Australia spinner Shane Warne anticipated that the series defeat against India will have big repercussions for Langer's side going forward.

"I think there'll be a huge fallout from this. There's not too many times that you lose to the second or third (choice) side," Foxsports.com.au quoted Warne as saying.

But Cricket Australia on Wednesday affirmed its support for skipper Tim Paine and coach Langer. **ANI**

HAILED

ARTT hails effort of Oman Cricket ground staff

Times News Service

MUSCAT: ARTT appreciated the Oman Cricket grounds staff for their hard work for the development of cricket facilities in Oman.

Team ARTT proved once again that they are much more than just a cricket team and they are here to spread happiness, and love in surroundings.

Team ARTT organised a dinner for Oman Cricket's ground staff to appreciate their tireless efforts throughout the year to provide the participating teams with one of the best cricketing facilities in the Gulf, which has attracted many international teams to play in Oman.

Captain Ahmed Khan said: "If we go 10 years back, professional cricket was played on muddy grounds with cement & astro pitches. Today, we play cricket on international standard wickets, thanks to their efforts."

Ali Anwar, Managing Director of ARTT said, "We often see or attend an event, but we forget to appreciate all the people who have worked tirelessly behind the scenes for that show to happen. Let's not forget that these wonderful lush green facilities are brilliantly maintained in a land which is known to the world as a desert."

FOOTBALL

Gareth Bale has to help team in Kane's absence: Mourinho



LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur manager Jose Mourinho feels that striker Gareth Bale has to step up for his side in the absence of injured Harry Kane.

Kane had suffered injuries to both ankles during the club's match against Liverpool.

Liverpool registered a 3-1 win over Tottenham in the Premier League on Friday. Kane was forced to withdraw at the half-time interval after suffering multiple knocks and Mourinho is expecting the player to be out for "a few weeks".

"It is a crucial moment for him [Gareth Bale], he feels better and better. When you lose a player of Harry's quality, other players have to step up and hopefully Bale can help us," Goal.com quoted

Mourinho as saying.

Bale has four goals to his name in his second spell at Tottenham, but only one has come in the Premier League -- a competition he has seen little action in.

Mourinho claims Bale has had chances, and in his preferred position.

"The position that [Bale] likes to play is the position we put him in every minute we give him, which is the correct side of the attack," Mourinho said.

Bale's one Premier League goal came against Brighton in November, and he could get the chance of a repeat when Spurs take on Brighton on Monday.

Spurs are sixth in the Premier League table, eight points behind leaders Manchester City. **ANI**

ICC RANKING

Pujara climbs to sixth spot, Rahane moves to eighth place

DUBAI: India batsman Cheteshwar Pujara has leapfrogged Pakistan skipper Babar Azam to go to the sixth spot in the latest ICC Test batting rankings released on Saturday. India's Test deputy Ajinkya Rahane has also moved up a place.

Often criticised for his slow approach, Pujara batted like a warrior in the fourth Test against Australia to help set the stage for India's historic win at Australia's fortress -- The Gabba. He took blows to the body, fingers, and head, but did not flinch. Pujara stood tall, defying the Australian bowlers who looked for one opportunity to break into the Indian lower-order. Rahane, on the other hand, played the captain's knock in the second Test to see India home. Rahane, who is now at the eighth spot, hit 24 off 22 balls before Rishabh Pant's match-winning knock in the fourth Test.

India skipper Virat Kohli and New Zealand captain Kane Williamson have retained their fourth and first spot in the latest rankings while England all-rounder Ben Stokes who was rested for Sri Lanka Tests has moved down two places to tenth



position in the batting rankings.

In the bowling rankings, Indian bowlers Ravichandran Ashwin and Jasprit Bumrah have retained their eighth and ninth spot while England pacer James Anderson has jumped one spot to number six.

Last week, Anderson became the second fast bowler after the great Richard Hadlee to take 30 fifties in Test cricket. While the Englishman is the second pacer, he is sixth on the overall list. Anderson achieved the feat in the second Test against Sri Lanka at the Galle International Stadium.

Earlier this week, Ireland all-rounder Paul Stirling gained eight slots in the ODI batting rankings to reach 20th place after scoring 285 runs against Afghanistan which included centuries in the second and third matches.

Bangladesh spinner Mehidy Hasan Miraz progressed nine spots (ODI bowling rankings) to take the fourth position after grabbing seven wickets including a haul of four for 25 in the second ODI against West Indies that won him the player of the match award. **ANI**

JANURAY 26

Sports hockey museum marks India's Republic Day

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Keeping up the traditions of Indian hockey alive, a small function was organised on January 26 while maintain COVID-19 protocols to mark the occasion.

The Councillor of Indian embassy, P.K. Prakash, visited the SAS Naqvi - Sports, Olympic and Hockey museum to commemorate the Republic Day of India.

P K. Prakash graced the occasion on the Republic Day and was felicitated in the presence of Osama Rawat.

Under the patronage of Embassy of India in coordination with Oman Hockey Association, the Friends of Naqvi Group and Team Coorg Muscat have been organising the events.

The Republic Day of India hockey festival, the Independence Day hockey of India festival and the Dhyani Chand day national sports day of India for the past 15 years. These events were always supported by the business and sports top personalities in Oman which are held at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex



FUNCTION: The Councillor of Indian embassy, P.K. Prakash, visited the SAS Naqvi - Sports, Olympic and Hockey museum to commemorate the Republic Day of India.

in cooperation with Ministry Of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs and the director of Sports Complex.

It all started in 2005 when former ambassador Ashok Attari had invited Air India hockey team to establish Indo-Oman sports friendship relation.

It continued under Anil Wadhwa, J S. Mukul, Indramani Pandey and current ambassador Munu Mahawar.

However, the spread of COVID-19 had an adverse impact on the events and all of them were cancelled in 2020.

The Indian ambassador had also visited the sports museum most on October 20, 2020.

Dr Shiekh Hammad Hamed Al Ghafri, member of the State Council had received the Indian envoy and felicitated him.

ECONOMIC SURVEY

The economic survey released in India pitched for shifting the focus from consumer price-based inflation (CPI) to core inflation. It also called for the revision of CPI's base year.

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



GOLD DEMAND FALLS

The COVID-19 pandemic, with its far-reaching effects, was the driving factor behind gold consumer demand weakness throughout 2020, leading to a 14 per cent decline in annual demand to 3,759.6 tonnes.

ahli islamic announces new “Qitaf” 2021 prize scheme

MUSCAT: In line with its vision to increase the chances of winning for its customers and help them realize their dreams and enhance their financial stability, Ahli Islamic unveiled details of its new 2021 Qitaf prize scheme, which is based on Shari'a principles. With the new scheme, the bank seeks to reward its customers with prizes totaling more than OMR 1,250,000, for more than 4200 winners enabling more customers to win from its branches across the Sultanate.

Mr. Yousuf bin Salim Al Rawahi, Deputy General Manager and Head of Ahli Islamic said, “Qitaf Savings account, launched in late 2019, reflects the bank's vision to offer innovative banking solutions to its customers across the Sultanate. We are delighted with the wide acceptance that the account has garnered since its launch, reflected in the increased rate of demand and deposit ratio, which further confirms that we are on track to achieve our customers' aspirations to change their lives for the better.”

Qitaf Savings account aims to provide investment opportunities to suit customer's needs, thereby instilling a culture of wise savings among the society and reward them for their commitment by holding weekly, monthly and quarterly prize draws and special event draws. In its new draw program for 2021, the bank has added new categories, including weekly draws for all customers, as well as weekly dedicated draws for children. In order to honor and appreciate the active role and



efforts of the teacher to prepare future generations and support the country's development journey, the bank has dedicated to conduct draws for Teacher's Day.

“Today we will witness the launch of a new and distinct journey for the 2021 Qitaf scheme,

which includes more prizes, ensuring maximum number of people win and help them to benefit from our innovative offers, underscoring our commitment to providing more unique savings opportunities coupled with the utmost convenience for our

customers,” Mr. Al-Rawahi added. According to the new scheme system, Qitaf account holders are eligible to participate in the monthly, weekly, and special occasion prize draws if they maintain an average minimum balance of OMR 100. However,

the minimum eligibility criteria for the quarterly draw is OMR 1,000. A dedicated children's weekly prize draw will have Three (3) winners from each branch rewarded with OMR 50 each; and another two (2) general category winners from each

branch winning OMR 250 each on a weekly basis.

The Bank will conduct its monthly draws within eight months of the year, rewarding cash prizes of OMR 160,000 equally to eight winners (OMR 20,000 each) across all branches of the bank. Additionally, the Grand quarterly prize draw, which will be in March, June, September and December 2021, will reward OMR 400,000 equally to 4 Winners (OMR 100,000 each).

In an effort to extend the winning range to other categories of customers, 25 teachers will be rewarded with OMR 1,000 each on Teacher's Day. A special draw to mark the 51st National Anniversary of the Renaissance will be conducted, where 51 lucky customers will be rewarded with OMR 2,000 each; and for the special Omani Women's Day draw OMR 25,000 will be distributed equally among 25 winners.

It's worth mentioning that Qitaf prize scheme reflects Ahli Islamic's commitment to establishing a culture of savings among its customers and rewarding them for their commitment and loyalty, providing customers with the opportunity to invest their capital in profitable assets, as well as providing an opportunity to win cash prizes through various draws. Accordingly, reflects Ahli Islamic continued efforts to provide the best offers and products that suit the changing requirements of its customers in this evolving world.

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MARKET

Bank Muscat to offer quality SME insurance

The newly-launched plans will in particular benefit entrepreneurs and owners of small and medium-sized enterprises in facing unexpected risks to their business activities and projects

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services institution in Oman, has announced the availability of high-quality and class-leading bancassurance plans through its tie-up with AXA, a global leader in insurance.

The newly-launched plans will in particular benefit entrepreneurs and owners of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in facing unexpected risks to their business activities and projects.



Abdullah Tamman Al Maashani.

neurs and owners of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in facing unexpected risks to their business activities and projects.

Speaking on the occasion Abdullah Tamman Al Maashani, DGM - Institutional Sales & Product Development, said, "Bank Muscat is very happy to continue its cooperation and strong partnership with AXA Insurance, one of the largest insurance companies in the world, to provide a range of insurance products that meet the needs of a large segment of the bank's customers. The new products will enhance customer satisfaction and provide insurance plans and solutions to support our



Jonathan Jane.

customers' business and projects, thereby supporting the national economy too." He thanked AXA Insurance for their continuous partnership with Bank Muscat and for enhancing the range of products and services.

Jonathan Jane, Senior Partnerships Director and General Manager of Oman & Bahrain at AXA Gulf said, "We are pleased to partner with Bank Muscat to offer new and innovative insurance products for the SME sector, which is an important part of Oman's economy and has the potential for improving economic diversification and creating employment. Our customers will be able to enjoy full

peace of mind knowing that they have planned to ensure unforeseen risks to their business and projects. We are committed to being a trusted partner during these difficult times by helping find solutions to everyday problems, making things quicker, easier and more convenient."

The new products will offer comprehensive covers that are tailor-made for each business according to their business activity and size. An expert team will advise customers on the best protection and covers needed specifically for their business.

The new insurance products will be particularly helpful for SMEs operating in a number of sectors including construction, hospitality, IT sector, manufacturing, professional services, health-care clinics, retail trading, travel and tourism, computers and IT products etc.

Bank Muscat offers a variety of bancassurance products that cover various customer segments. Life, health, home, motor and yacht insurance services are among some of the innovative products that are available through Bank Muscat Bancassurance, with great features and at a competitive value that suits customers.

REPORT

Gold demand drops to 11-year low in 2020: World Gold Council

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The COVID-19 pandemic, with its far-reaching effects, was the driving factor behind gold consumer demand weakness throughout 2020, leading to a 14 per cent decline in annual demand to 3,759.6 tonnes. Last year was the first sub-4,000 tonnes year since 2009 according to the World Gold Council's latest Gold Demand Trends report.

Global gold demand dropped by 28 per cent year-on-year (y-o-y) to 783.4 tonnes in fourth quarter (Q4), making it the weakest quarter since the midst of the global financial crisis in second quarter (Q2) 2008.

Gold jewellery demand

Gold jewellery demand in Q4 fell 13 per cent y-o-y to 515.9 tonnes, resulting in a full-year total of 1,411.6 tonnes, 34 per cent lower than in 2019 and a new annual low for our data series. While demand improved steadily from the severely depleted Q2 total, the coronavirus continued to impact consumer behaviour.

Conversely, increased uncertainty and policy response to the pandemic supported annual

investment demand, which increased 40 per cent y-o-y to a new high for our series of 1,773.2 tonnes. Most of the growth came in the form of gold-backed ETFs (gold ETFs) but was aided by bar and coin demand growth in H2. In addition, evidence suggests that over-the-counter (OTC) activity, which is not directly captured in our data set, was also robust throughout the year. However, in Q4 there was a notable decline in investment demand for gold ETFs with outflows totalling 130 tonnes.

Total annual gold supply also took a hit and was 4 per cent lower y-o-y (4,633 tonnes), the largest annual fall since 2013. The drop can be largely explained by coronavirus-related disruption to mine production, offset by a marginal 1 per cent increase in recycling to 1,297.4 tonne for 2020.

The US dollar gold price returned 25 per cent in 2020 supported by investor demand.

Demand for gold bars and coins grew 10 per cent in Q4. A recovery in China and India in the second half of 2020 added to continued strength in Western markets to lift annual demand to 896.1t (+3 per cent).

MONETARY POLICY

Economic survey calls for greater focus on core inflation in India

NEW DELHI: The Economic Survey released in India pitched for shifting the focus from consumer price-based inflation (CPI) to core inflation.

It also called for the revision of CPI's base year. The survey said the sole focus on CPI-Combined (CPI-C) inflation may not be appropriate

as food inflation - which contributes significantly to CPI-C - is driven primarily by supply-side factors.

Given its role as the headline target for monetary policy, changes in CPI-C anchor inflation expectations. Food inflation has been driving overall CPI-C inflation due to the relatively higher

weight of food items in the index, said the survey.

"While food habits have undergone revisions over the decade since 2011-12, which is the base year of CPI, the same is not reflected in the index yet." Hence a greater focus on core inflation is warranted, said the survey. - ANI

ECONOMY

US economy suffers worst contraction in 74 years

WASHINGTON: The US economy contracted 3.5 per cent in 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the largest annual decline of US gross domestic product (GDP) since 1946, according to data released by the US Commerce Department.

The data also showed that the US economy grew at an annual rate of 4 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2020 amid a surge in COVID-19 cases, much slower than 33.4 per cent in the previous quarter.

Despite a partial economic rebound in the second half of last year, the US economy shrank 3.5 per cent for the whole year of 2020, compared with an increase of 2.2 per cent in 2019, according to the department. It also marked the first negative annual growth in US GDP since 2009.

"Over the past year, the economy contracted 10 per cent in the first half of the year and made up three-quarters of that decline in the second half," Jason Furman, professor at Harvard University, said on Twitter.

"This is the largest decline in GDP since the demobilisation from World War II in 1946, worse even than the 2.5 per cent decline in 2009," Furman said. - Xinhua

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Indian Male Bcom MBA. 20 years experience in Finance, Tax, Budget, MIS, ERP. Contact 91190552/92243552

Well experienced Accounts Manager looking for suitable placement. Contact 99044724

Indian male with 12 yrs experience in construction companies/accounts upto finalization.looking for suitable position.NOC & D/L available. Contact 96454187. email srinath.kollam@gmail.com

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Accountant having 3 yrs experience trained under CA,knowledge on tally ,peachtree,QB,tax,payroll,arabic typing on visit. Contact 78210435

Indian female, M.com (Finance) & MBA (HR), 6 years experience seeking an opening in Muscat. Contact : 95340104; sunilasunil30@gmail.com

Accountant M.Com with 13 years experience in Oman seeks suitable placement contact 79506513

Accountant, 5 yrs experience in Oman & India seeks suitable job. NOC available. Contact 98304173.Email alexkkadoor@gmail.com

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Looking for Driving job. Contact 93985092

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JOB WANTED

Senior MEP Manager

Indian Male: Btech, having 23 years GCC experience with valid Oman driving licence seeks suitable placement.

Contact GSM: 79880377
Email: jaksona8081@gmail.com

FINANCE / ADMIN

Experienced Female with 8 years experience in accounts & Admin who is also a qualified paralegal in company law looking for a suitable post.

Contact: 96303874

FINANCE

Experienced European National Male with 7 years experience looking for a suitable post in the Accounts/ Finance. NOC available.

Contact: 97711584

Indian female (M.Sc. chemistry), 2 years experience as a quality control officer seeking a suitable opportunity in any chemical industry/food industry /lab assistant.

Contact +968 71548622
cleetadsu7259@gmail.com

Indian male chief accountant 21yrs experience in financial accounting, budgeting and finalisation. Oman D/L familiar with Sap, customised ERP and Tally. On visit

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Contact: 968-94029112
Email: sakthiveljothi@gmail.com

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jobsearchzac@gmail.com

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Whatsapp: 7730012111
Mobile: 94268870
Email: mvssmngbr@gmail.com

Omani Mechanical Engineer

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Contact: 95070748
Email: siyabi430@gmail.com

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Please contact me on 95051103,
Email: loyannavildsouza@gmail.com

Structural/Civil Engineer

with 14 years of experience (8 years in USA and 4 years in Oman) in PEB, RCC, Pipeline, Offshore, and Marine structures and have Master degree from USA. Seeking for placement as Project Engineer or Manager.

Please contact me on +968-93368626
irfan.sanjari.syed@gmail.com

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9539 1786

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Contact # boopathiraja88@gmail.com / 97412105

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GSM: 78259755

Indian female B Com graduate having 7 years' experience as Accountant in Oman (Tally ERP 9). Seeking suitable placement in Accounts/ Admin.

Contact: 92999419
d.kaiyarla1986@gmail.com

Experience more than 20 years of experience working in: Public Administration, Human Resource, Public Relations, Preparation and Writing of Reports, Coordination and Preparation of Meetings, Business Development, Marketing, Management and Retail Real Estate.

Contact whatsapp: 99477009
Email: abualmutsam@gmail.com

ACCOUNTS/FINANCE

Indian Male, 41 Years, B.Com + CA Intermediate, having more than 15 Years of experience (13 years in Oman) in the different positions as Accounts Manager, Internal Auditor and statutory auditor. currently working as Accounts Manager, seeking similar Managerial position in finance.

Contact: 99169501

HR Manager

17 years' experience in Finance & HR (10 Yrs), Indian Male, MBA & M.Com. NOC Available.

Contact: 96332608

OMANI HR/PRO

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Contact 97264447

INDIAN, female, MBA, 4 years experience in Office administration and customer service (Banking & Construction field), knowledge of MS packages, currently on family visa, residing in Ruwi.

Mob: 95073054
Email: bfaqua88@gmail.com

Finance Manager / CFO

Indian Chartered Accountant and Cost Accountant with 25 years experience in Finance, MIS, Budget, Strategy, Projects, VAT seeks suitable placement.

Contact: 99884291 / 99741875
VIPUL70@GMAIL.COM

Junior Architect with 3-years Oman experience in designing, proficiency in AutoCAD, Sketchup, Lumion Vray & Photoshop. Has worked in quantity estimations. Looking for suitable placement in Muscat.

Contact 95972625

SENIOR ACCOUNTANT

Srilankan Senior Accountant looking for a suitable opportunity. 7 years experience in Oman & capable of handling accounts up to finalization. On hand experience in Tally, Spur, QB etc. Having D/L.

CONTACT: 92821932

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Contact 92651105
Email rejil_mathai@hotmail.com

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Contact 94634053

Finance/Accounts Manager

Indian male (MBA Fin) with 20 yrs working exp as Accounts & Finance Manager (Strategic planning, Procurement, Finance, Accounting, HR Admin, Audit, Tax, VAT) seeking suitable post. Valid Oman DL. NOC available.

Contact No.99705790
email: thoms_mat@yahoo.com

Graduate Civil Engineer

From India with over 11 years Project Management Experience with Consultant and Client in Oman with local release & driving license seeks suitable opportunities.

Email: contactsyedshams@gmail.com;
GSM: +968 98500235

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Indian Female 25yrs, BCA, M.tech, 5+- years experience in Wipro technologies. Key Skills – Web Application testing, Anti money laundering, Agile methodology, Manual Testing, Automation testing, selenium, Java, SQL, Appium and API testing.

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M: 9641 6394 / Mail: scms.acc133@gmail.com

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Contract: 99721926, tanvircivil@gmail.com

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Email: sljobseeker72@gmail.com
Contact: 96223114

Indian male, bachelor's degree, Graduate (B.Com, B. Ed) looking for secretary, exec assistant, office administration jobs, 18 years experience, 7 years in Oman.

Call 97015841
Email khalid.bin.umar@gmail.com

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BE Civil Engineer 8 to 9yrs experience. Contact 93850875. Email abdulcivilco2015@gmail.com

8 Years experienced Electrical Sales and Estimation Engineer with valid driving license available to join immediately. Contact: 79696089. Email xjnirmal@gmail.com.

BE Civil engineer having 13 years oman experience mainly in building construction looking for a suitable position. Contact no: 72132426

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Indian Female Structural/Civil Engineer having 25 years of experience including 18 Years Gulf Experience, on employment visa is seeking for suitable placement. Ready to join immediately with necessary documents. Contact: 92731684/79858363

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Indian male having diploma in mech engg & valid Oman DL have 6 yrs experience in Oman # 95645241

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Planning Engineer, Indian 20 yrs experience in using Primavera P6 for oil & gas, water pipeline & building, MEP works scheduling seek suitable senior position with release & Oman DL. # 92651105, 90643701 rejil_mathai@hotmail.com

IT

CRM, ERP & MIS analyst, experience 5 yrs. Contact 71561266

Indian male, B.Sc (Computer science) 6 yrs of Project management (IT) with FMCG domain across global markets, experience in managing end to end project activities. Contact 98781017

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Plumbing, painting maintenance works. Contact 96191837, 98937266

Driver plumber Electrician, looking for job. Contact 96750080

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HSE Professional, Indian national, Graduate with 23+ years of experience having GradIOSH and IDipNEBOSH certifications seeking suitable placements. Working in Oman since 2012. Ready to join at short notice. Contact: 928604510, hseoman101@gmail.com

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ROUND-UP



Exclusive benefits on all-new 2021 Lexus IS

From its aggressive and powerful performance to its impressive list of luxury features and advanced technology, the IS, is one of the finest vehicles in the Lexus range



MUSCAT: The all-new Lexus IS, is designed to draw attention and make a mark.

From its aggressive and powerful performance to its impressive list of luxury features and advanced technology, the IS, is one of the finest vehicles in the Lexus range.

Now those looking forward to owning the all-new Lexus IS can benefit with free service 4 years/40,000km and free registration (conditions apply. For more details, please visit the nearest Lexus showroom). Campaign ends on January 31, 2021.

One of the first things that Lexus' engineers targeted was to enhance the IS's body rigidity. This not only helps to reduce unwanted noise and vibration but also improves ride comfort and contributes to

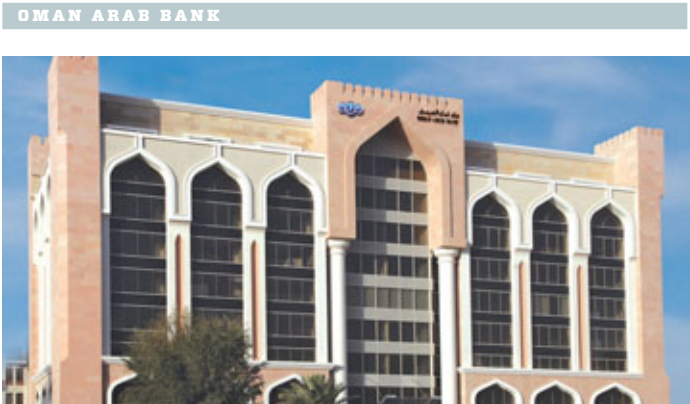
dynamic driving performance through enhanced steering response. To complement these enhancements, multiple refinements were made to the suspension setup. The new IS features coil springs that are 20 per cent lighter than the outgoing model, as well as new forged aluminium upper arm that offer an 18 per cent weight reduction. The suspension stabiliser bar has also been optimised using a new material to provide a 17 per cent weight reduction.

The new bold exterior styling and athletic silhouette of 2021 IS signifies the agile changes that have taken place below the surface. The new IS evokes lower, wider proportions with muscular fenders, reflecting the vehicle's

high performance. The sleek lines are also complemented with aggressive sharpness carved into the side and shoulder character lines.

The 2021 IS's newly designed spindle grille features an intricate pattern that emphasises a sense of presence, while the slender headlamps and daytime running lights with a sharp L-shape signature have been redesigned to complement the low-profile hood. New rocker panels accent a side profile that features a sharper contour and carries into the muscular shoulders over the rear wheel wells. At the back of the vehicle, the rear fenders blend into the extended, lowered rear deck, creating a low stance and emphasising the L-shaped full-width rear light.

The new model's distinct personality is completed by its exquisite interior, which invites drivers and passengers to enjoy a range of advanced features for a refined cabin experience. These include a new 10.3-inch touchscreen multimedia system featuring Apple CarPlay and Android Auto™ compatibility, a 4.2-inch colour multi-information display (MID), and a dual-zone automatic climate control system with touch-sensitive controls. The vehicle also offers SmartAccess with push-button start, a 17-speaker Mark Levinson sound system, a power moonroof, power-adjustable and ventilated front seats, as well as ample luggage space thanks to the 60:40 split-folding rear seats.



OAB announces winners of its December Hasaad Savings draw

MUSCAT: Oman Arab Bank (OAB) has announced the names of the 131 winners of its monthly Hasaad Savings Scheme for December 2020 on January 26, 2021, at its Elite centre.

This included 94 winners of the monthly branch draws of OMR 1,000 each, 10 winners of the Children's Account draw (OMR 100 each), 20 winners of the Youth Account draw (OMR 100 each), five winners of OMR 500 of the bank's Salary Transfer draw, one winner of OMR50,000 of the Elite draw from Al Qurum branch and one winner of OMR 25,000 from Big Prize draw for the last quarter from Bahla branch. 2020 has seen the highest number of winners for OAB's Hasaad Savings Scheme, totalling over 1796 winners over the year.

Commenting on the conclusion of the draw, Rashad Al Shaikh, Acting Head of the Retail Banking Division at OAB, said, "As the year comes to a close, so does our Hasaad Scheme for 2020. We are proud to note the success of this programme due to a large number of winners across the wide pool of draws. As we welcome the new year, which will bring with it the launch of the new Hasaad Scheme and even more exciting prizes, we hope that all our customers will continue to maintain their savings culture, to build a more stable financial future for themselves and their future generations."

"On behalf of OAB, I extend my warmest congratulations to the winners of the final draw, as well as everyone that has won during the year. I encourage all our customers to keep on saving, even more so as we launch our Hasaad Scheme for 2021, to increase their chances of winning. We wish everyone the best of luck," Rashad added.

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ROUND-UP



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Nissan Oman launches exciting special offer

The special promotion will be available till March 23, 2021, on applicable models purchased for personal use



is designed to be flexible and customers can choose special interest rates as per their convenience.”

Special interest rate

Popular Nissan models – Kicks, X-Trail, Altima and Pathfinder are available on a special rate of interest. On models of Kicks, X-Trail, Altima and Pathfinder customers can get 0 per cent up to three years or 1.99 per cent for four years or 2.49 per cent for five years or 2.99 per cent for six years. For all tenures beyond six years, normal interest rates will apply for the full tenure of the loan.

This rate is applicable for individual purchase with private registration only and is subject to finance/credit approval.

Customers can opt for only one of the interest rate options. EMIs will be highest for per cent for three years scheme. This offer is valid till stocks of this unit last. This benefit will be applicable for financing through select finance companies only.

Customers purchasing in cash, LPO, a credit will not be eligible for special interest rate benefit. Terms and conditions apply.

EMI for popular models

Customers can avail low EMI rate as part of the offer. Starting EMI for Nissan Micra is OMR 80, Nissan Sunny (1.5L) is OMR 84, Nissan Sunny (1.6L) is OMR 98, Nissan Sentra is OMR 105. Nissan Maxima is OMR 238, Nissan

X-Terra is OMR 191, Nissan Patrol Y 61 Falcon is OMR 250, Nissan Patrol Y 61 Safari is OMR 273, Nissan Patrol Y62 is OMR 355, Nissan Navara is OMR 148, Nissan Patrol Pickup is OMR 209, Nissan Urvanis OMR 145 and Nissan Civilian is OMR 255.

These EMIs are calculated on the basis 3.25% rate of interest for 6 years loan tenure. Nissan Kicks is OMR 126, Nissan X-Trail is OMR 181, Nissan Altima is OMR 163 and Nissan Pathfinder is OMR 256. These EMIs are calculated on the basis 2.99% rate of interest for 6 years loan tenure.

Fuel card

Customers of Nissan Micra 20MY will get a free fuel card of OMR 500 and customers of Nissan Sunny 1.5L will get OMR 300.

While customers of 19MY Patrol Falcon will get OMR 1000, 20MY Nissan Patrol customers are entitled to a free fuel card of OMR 500. Customers of Nissan Navara (18MY/19MY) are entitled to a fuel card of OMR 500.

Service package

Customers can enjoy free periodic maintenance service package for 3 years/ 60,000km on Nissan Micra, Sunny, Sentra, Maxima, Kicks, X-Trail, Pathfinder, Altima, Patrol Falcon, Patrol Safari, Patrol Navara, Patrol Pickup, Patrol and Urvan. This offer is valid for 10,000 km service intervals. The offer is not available on Nissan Civilian.

Assured cash gift

Under the special promotion, customers can avail assured cash gift of OMR 1200 on Nissan Micra, OMR 1200 to OMR 1500 on Nissan Sunny; from OMR 1600 to OMR 1700 for Nissan Sentra; OMR 3100 on Nissan X-Trial, from OMR 2900 to OMR 3100 on Nissan X-Terra; from OMR 2200 to OMR 2600 on Nissan Altima; from OMR 1700 to OMR 2000 on Nissan Kicks; from OMR 4000 to OMR 4500 on Nissan Pathfinder; OMR 2200 to OMR 2700 on Nissan Navara, OMR 2500 on Nissan Maxima, OMR 4000 on Nissan Patrol, OMR 3000 on Nissan Patrol Falcon, Nissan Patrol Safari and Nissan Pickup, and OMR 2700 on Nissan Urvan.

Free insurance

Nissan customers can enjoy free insurance in Oman & UAE for the first year for private registration on models like Nissan Micra, Sunny, Sentra, Maxima, Kicks, X-Trail, X-Terra Pathfinder, Altima, Patrol Falcon, Patrol Safari, Patrol Navara, Patrol Pickup and Patrol. Offer not available on Nissan Urvan and Civilian.

Free registration

Nissan patrons can enjoy free registration on Nissan Micra, Sunny, Sentra, Maxima, Kicks, X-Trail, X-Terra Pathfinder, Altima, Patrol Falcon, Patrol Safari, Patrol Navara, Patrol Pickup and Patrol for the first year. Offer not available on Nissan Urvan and Civilian.

Alizz Islamic Bank awarded at IBSI Global Fintech Innovation Awards

MUSCAT: Alizz Islamic Bank has been awarded as the “Best Fintech Innovation for Most Innovative Use of Process Automation” at the 2nd IBSI Global Fintech Innovation Awards 2020.

The IBSI Global FinTech Innovation Awards 2020 identifies and honours technology players and banks for their excellence in driving impact through banking technology implementations and innovations using emerging technologies. The winners of the award were selected based on innovation, distinction, best practices, tools adopted, originality and adaptability of the concept. The awardees were chosen from 196 nominations, from 52 countries and 220 participants confirming the awards’ stature as a leading barometer of innovation in financial technology.

Alizz Islamic Bank’s award-winning new state-of-the-art user interface system-“Bridge”-is changing the way the bank does business. It is brought about dynamic changes to the way the bank serves its customer. Providing best customer experience is critical to the success of the bank’s strategy to build an organisation that is customer-centric and focused on delivering the best to its internal and external customers. The Bridge interface aims to bring operational efficiency, reduce turn-around time as well as make the learning curve easier for new staff.

Moosa Al Jadidi, Chief Operating Officer of the Bank, stated, “We are delighted that we were evaluated for our excellence in project delivery, innovation, and customer impact. The award is an acknowledgement of our constant effort to harness the latest innovative capabilities to deliver business value



The IBSI Global FinTech Innovation Awards 2020 identifies and honours technology players and banks for their excellence in driving impact through banking technology implementations and innovations using emerging technologies

to our customers. This prestigious commendation is a testament to the journey of innovation.”

Alizz Islamic Bank commits to achieve its objective to become the leading provider of Islamic banking services in the Sultanate by providing top banking services and superior innovative solutions. The bank’s core strategic focus is to deliver an exceptional and quality customer experience through constant enhancement of its services through state-of-the-art digital technology.

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PREMIER GOLF CHAMPIONSHIP

OHI Oman Amateur Open returns for 11th year

MUSCAT: OHI Oman Amateur Open is a premier golf championship, and now in its 11th year continue to drive tournament golf in the Sultanate.

With the championship attracting top amateur golfers in Oman, including many of the Oman National Team, it is sure to be a well-contested event as the top gross score over 36 holes will earn an invitation to rub shoulders with the European Tour’s top Professionals as well as participation in the Oman Open promoted by the Oman Golf Association, which will be held in March.

OHI Group has generously renewed their title sponsorship for the fifth year which sees the OHI Oman Amateur Open, OHI Ladies Open, OHI Juniors Open, OHI Oman Under 15s Open and OHI Under 12s Open played on the 5th and 6th of February 2021 at Ghala Golf Club in Muscat.

Having taken a one-year hiatus in 2020 due to the restrictions on hosting events during the pandemic, Oman Golf Association and OHI Group are confident that the 2021 edition will be well received, with every precaution being taken to ensure the safety of the competitors, and organising staff.

Speaking on this announcement, Mundhir Al Barwani – Chairman of Oman Golf Association, said “After a very difficult last year of no tournaments and events due to COVID-19, we are delighted to continue with OHI as our partners and title sponsors of



the Amateur Opens. We truly appreciate their continued support and belief in the future of golf even during these challenging times.”

Eihab Al Saleh, CEO – OHI Group, the title sponsor of the event, said “We are immensely proud to sponsor Oman’s leading Amateur golf Tournament for the

5th year. Golf in Oman is at a very exciting stage and OHI Group is committed to helping grow the game in Oman and promoting junior golf for which there are separate categories. We had no hesitation to continue being the title sponsors. Golf is such a unique and accessible sport, with golfers

aged from 7 to over 70 coming together to play the game.”

“The OHI Oman Amateur Opens are unique as they not only offer the elite golfers an opportunity to compete but have created a platform for the juniors to excel and learn to compete from a young age.”

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