

**HM GREETES PRESIDENT
OF THE PHILIPPINES**

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to President Rodrigo Duterte of the Republic of the Philippines on his country's Independence Day anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes to the president and to his country's people. **-ONA**



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HM GREETES RUSSIAN PRESIDENT

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin on the occasion of the Declaration of Sovereignty Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings and wishes of good health and happiness to the president and to his country's people further progress and prosperity. **-ONA**



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TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN
PIA repatriation flights

1 PIA flew 19,000 people to Pakistan during the COVID-19 pandemic. **>A3**

WORLD
US relaxes travel tests

2 The US has relaxed COVID-19 tests rules for people arriving there. **>A6**

MARKET
M-E travel demand up

3 Middle East airlines have seen a 265 per cent demand rise in April. **>B1**

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MUSCAT

TANZANIA PRESIDENT'S VISIT TO STRENGTHEN TIES WITH OMAN

His Majesty the Sultan will discuss bilateral relations with the visiting Tanzanian President



MUSCAT: The relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Republic of Tanzania, especially in the economic field, is set to enter a new phase with the meeting between His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and President Samia Suluhu Hassan at Al Alam Palace in Muscat on Sunday. Besides sharing age-old ties and a common culture, the two nations enjoy healthy trade partnership of OMR30.6 million. Statistics also reveal that in 2021 the balance of

trade lay in the Sultanate's favour. Omani exports, including that of plastic products, oil derivatives, electrical goods, home appliances and food items, to Tanzania in 2021 stood at OMR40.1 million, according to statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI). Omani imports from Tanzania during the same year stood at approximately OMR9.500 million, and included mainly food items and meat. **>A2**

OPWPC PLANS

Projects worth OMR480mn planned in renewable energy and water sector

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman Power and Water Procurement Company (OPWPC) plans to attract investments of more than OMR480 million, or \$1.250 billion, for several projects in renewable energy and water sector, said CEO of the company Yaqub bin Saif Al-Kiyumi. In a statement to the Oman News Agency, the CEO said the company is planning to develop



two solar power plants in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, with a total capacity of 1,000 MW. The projects are expected to be awarded before the end of this year. Private

investment in these projects is estimated at about \$600 million. The company also plans to invest about \$300 million in wind energy in the Wilayat of Jalan Bani Bu Ali in South Sharqiyah Governorate and in the Wilayat of Duqm in the Al Wusta Governorate, he said adding that the company will begin the process of selecting developers before the end of this year. He pointed out that these projects come within the national

priorities set by the Oman Vision 2040, of preserving environment, reducing carbon emissions, exploiting natural resources, developing governorates, engaging the private sector, attracting foreign investments and generating job opportunities for Omani youth. Yaqub bin Saif Al-Kiyumi stressed that there is a positive growth in energy demand in the Sultanate of Oman, especially renewable energy projects. **>A5**



Shabab Oman II receives guests during UK tour

A2

Al Mouj Muscat has delivered significant sustainable socio-economic impact for the Sultanate of Oman

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Dhuhr.....	12:12pm
Asr.....	3:30pm
Maghrib.....	6:59pm
Isha.....	8:21pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....	3:52am

Summer heat takes its toll on outdoor workers

Health and Safety experts say that dehydration is the biggest problem for construction workers during the hot summer months

Saleh Al-Shaibany

MUSCAT : Although the government has decreed a three-hour midday relief for construction workers during the summer months but the labourers are struggling to work outdoors as the mercury this week recorded high temperatures in Muscat and adjoining areas.

Building workers say the summer has started with the vengeance making it difficult for them to work during the day in the construction sites.



“It is really hot even early in the morning and the heat continues all evening when we stop working. The midday break is supposed to be the hottest time but that is only a theory. It is as hot at midday as it is in other time of the day,” Mohammed Farook, a Bangladeshi construction worker, told *Times of Oman*.

The government has ordered

all construction companies to ask their labourers to stop working between 12.30pm to 3.30 pm to provide them a break from the scorching sun.

Pakistani labourer Masood Khan said he fainted last week while working in the construction site he works in a Maabela area.

“It was around 4.30 in the afternoon. I was carrying bricks at

the site and suddenly I blacked out. The next thing I know my colleagues were fanning my face. I was unconscious for over 10 minutes,” Masood told *Times of Oman*.

Other labourers said that the heat does not only effect them while they work but when they rest or go to sleep. They call for cooling system in their sleeping quarters to give them a resting relief.

“After working hours, we don’t get a proper rest because our accommodation has no air conditioning. It is really unbearable in the night when we go to sleep with the heat. At least the owners of the construction companies should provide us with air conditioning in our sleeping quarters,” Chandran Raman, an Indian construction worker, said.

Health and Safety experts say that dehydration is the biggest problem for construction workers during the hot summer months.

“When the temperatures is in the 40s then the body gets dry quickly while you are working in the heat. They need to drink a lot of water and work more in the shade. But unfortunately, not all labourers work in the shade. Construction sites are mostly open areas,” Jack Hamilton, an HSE expert, told *Times of Oman*.

Shabab Oman II receives guests during UK tour



LONDON: RNO Shabab Oman II received a number of visitors while anchoring at West India Docks in the United Kingdom as part of its 6th international tour “Oman, the land of Peace” to Europe.

Air Marshal Sammy Sampson, UK Defence Senior Advisor to the Middle East; Commander of the National Defence College in London and a number of senior officers visited the RNO Shabab Oman II. A number of prominent personalities and military attaches at the foreign embassies in London attended the reception organised on the vessel.

The visitors were acquainted with the roles and mission of



RNO Shabab Oman II and the photo exhibition organised on-board the vessel, showcased the landmarks and development in the Sultanate. The visitors were briefed on the course of the vessel, the ports it has anchored at and the challenges the crew faced during the tour. -ONA

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University of Technology and Applied Sciences

Teaching jobs at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS)

The University of Technology and Applied Sciences, in coordination with the Ministry of Labour, is pleased to announce vacancies for teaching positions in the University's branches. Applicants who are qualified and willing to fill any of the positions shown in the attached table shall apply via the link (<https://rec.shct.edu.om/>). The submission of application closes on Saturday, 25/06/2022.

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2. All academic qualifications should be in the same field of knowledge.
3. All academic qualifications of the applicant must be from recognized institutions.
4. The applicant should not have been convicted of a felony or a penalty for a crime involving moral turpitude or dishonesty, unless he/she has been rehabilitated from this judgment based on the regulations of the Criminal Procedure Law.
5. To be of good conduct and behavior.
6. Applicants must not have been sentenced to retirement or dismissed from service, unless three years have passed since this decision.
7. Applicants must fulfill the requirements clarified for each position in this advertisement.
8. Applicants must not apply for more than one job position.
9. At the time of submitting the application, applicants must not be occupying any position in one of the units of the Administrative Apparatus of the State (civil, military or security) from the date of publishing this announcement.
10. Be committed to working in the branch of your choice when applying for the job.
11. To pass the assessment for the position applied for.
12. To be medically fit.
13. No application shall be considered if submitted after the advertisement period has expired.
14. The candidacy is considered null if it is proven that what violates the general conditions or the requirements of filling the position, whatever the reasons and the result of the interviews.
15. The applicant for the advertisement must upload the required documents in the link above to prove the extent to which he/she meets the conditions and requirements for filling the job.

❖ or apply submission of application by QR code:

JORDAN

Oman bags second place in international warrior contest

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Royal Oman Police came second in the 12th International Warrior Competition held in Jordan.

Forty teams specialised in combating terrorism and special operations forces from different countries of the world took part in the event.

The Royal Oman Police said: “The ROP team won second place in the 12th International Warrior Competition in Jordan, with the

participation of 40 teams specialised in combating terrorism and special operations from various military and security sectors and special forces from countries around the world.”

MOU SIGNED

OIA plays a key role in East Africa investments

It may be mentioned that Oman Investment Authority plays a key role in facilitating investments in East Africa following the opening of its office in Tanzania in February 2015.

The OIA's investment portfolio includes the port of Mangapwani, Zanzibar in Tanzania, for which the procedural phase has already been completed. It will be followed by execution along with rehabilitation and development works at Malindi Port and adjacent areas. A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed and the joint teams have commenced feasibility studies, besides offering a number of services.

The two countries also signed a Memorandum of Understanding last May in the field of fisheries and fish farming in Zanzibar. In June, a similar MoU was signed between Asyad and Tanzania Posts Corporation (TPC) in the field of e-trade services and logistics solutions, which is expected to push up the volume of e-trade activities between the two countries.

OIA's Omran Group is currently involved in negotiations to offer its expertise in the field

of tourism and develop and manage the historic and tourist landmarks in Tanzania.

Besides, the visit of the Tanzanian trade delegation to the Sultanate last February contributed in familiarising the delegation with investment opportunities in the fields of industry, agriculture, fisheries, mining, logistic services, tourism, health, education, renewable energy and information technology along with infrastructure required at ports and free zones and legislations supportive of investments and trade in the Sultanate, including exemption from tax for five years, renewable to ten years and tax exemptions on equipment for

establishment and expansion of industrial projects.

The two countries enjoy good relations at the political level and they hold regular sessions of discussions, the latest of which was the one held in Tanzania last March, which reaffirmed their commitment to dialogue and peaceful methods for resolving conflicts.

The Sultanate's participation in the celebrations on the 60th Anniversary of Independence of Tanzania, reflected the deep-rooted historic relations between the two countries and is evidence of the two sides' interest in developing bilateral cooperation between the two countries. -ONA

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REPATRIATION FLIGHTS

NCSI

PIA flew 19,000 people to Pakistan during pandemic

Times News Service

MUSCAT: 19,000 people in Oman, including thousands of Pakistani nationals working in the country, were flown to Pakistan during the height of the pandemic even as countries around the globe were organising repatriation flights to bring their citizens home.

“I am eternally grateful that we were able to provide services and assist those who required us during the pandemic, without the need for them to come to our office,” said Mohammed Arif, country manager for Pakistan International Airlines in Oman. “Without any complaints or any difficulties to people, we were able to fly nearly 19,000 people home. We told our people that this is our national airline, and we will support them in any eventuality.”

“We had roughly about 100 repatriation flights organised during the pandemic, and each one of them were full,” he added. “We made it a point to offer round-the-clock services during these testing times, even going to their doorstep to offer services when required. We did our utmost to make sure they found seats on our flights.”

Arif admitted that the efforts to fly Pakistani expats home from Oman were a team effort, singling out PIA’s Chief Commercial Officer and Chief Executive Officer for their initiative. The Embassy of Pakistan also extended tremendous support.

He said: “It is because of this teamwork from our community, our management and our embassy that we were successful.”

As a result of these efforts, there has been an increased demand for seats on board the national carrier’s planes, leading to PIA expanding their operations from nine flights a week to 20.

“Pre-pandemic, we had nine flights a week, and now we have 20 flights,” said Arif. “Hopefully,

in the coming days, we will have two more flights. What people like is our easy accessibility. There are other minor issues that need to be addressed, but it is important that we do so, because it is these minor chinks that can lead to major concerns.

“One of the issues was that people complained that we didn’t give them good service, and that annoyed them. So that was something we needed to address,” he added. “When we began giving round-the-clock service to the people, they really began seeing us positively. Now that we have increased demand for flights, it has been easy to convince the management to increase the number of flights to and from Oman.”

PIA’s decision to increase the frequency of flights to Pakistan has been welcomed by members of the Pakistani community in Oman. Pakistan school staff in Oman have been among the most regular PIA passengers and are happy to acknowledge the overall improvement.

Done a lot

“PIA has done a lot to improve its image by overhauling its system in recent years. We are extremely glad to observe a marked improvement in customer handling by PIA staff and regularity in flight schedule. The airline now keeps its passengers updated ten days prior to their flight and, above all, offers highly competitive prices fetching it increased revenue of late. I have no hesitation in acknowledging that things have improved noticeably over the last few years,” remarked Nasir Nawaz, senior principal, Pakistan Schools Oman.

Akhmat Hayat Raja, former PSC Chairman and former Pakistan schools board member, has been a frequent flyer since 1983 and feels that Pakistan’s national carrier has raised the bar and its winning rave reviews from its

regular customers.

He said: “Apart from travelling on PIA, I have been working closely with the airline management in Oman for a number of social causes in the last four decades and have seen many ups and downs in service. However, the airline’s check-in and onboard services have improved a lot in recent years. The current PIA country head Mohammed Arif did an exceptional job during the pandemic, helping the stranded Pakistanis repatriate to their homeland.

“He has worked hard to bring PIA back from the lows of the pandemic, restoring its commercial operations with great success,” explained Raja. “It is heartening to see 20 direct flights from Oman in a week carrying passengers to eight destinations in Pakistan, covering all big cities for the first time in the history of its operations in Oman. Apart from transporting human bodies free of charge, it is also offering lower fares to help the labour class when all other airlines are charging exorbitant prices. We are proud of our airline for operating with a heart.”

By improving its operations, PIA has succeeded in winning many elite customers and globe trotters. Dr Sharif Ataullah, a prominent cardiothoracic surgeon in Oman, now chooses to travel on PIA whenever possible.

“I have been travelling to various parts of the world on other airlines, but now prefer PIA, particularly to Pakistan, because of a marked improvement in its standards. The flight crew is well-mannered and cooperative with better food quality and choice on this route,” he said.

However, the doctor feels the airline needs to improve its seating and operate more check-in counters at Karachi airport, for flights operating to international destinations.

34th Consumer Confidence Survey to kick off today

MUSCAT: The National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) will today commence the activities of the 34th Consumer Confidence Survey for the second quarter 2022.

The two-week survey will target citizens aged 18 and above and will have a sample size of not less than 1,500 citizens in the various governorates of the Sultanate. The data collection will be done by using of mobile phones.

The consumer confidence index is one of the vital indices for performance of economic activity.



The survey aims to measure development of the material conditions of Omani families.

Aims

It also aims to measure the factors which positively or negatively affect the level of Oman’s economy, and forecasts for its future.

It also assesses the current economic condition of families, their purchasing power for home appliances, cars and other goods.

It also takes into account the extent of availability of current and future job opportunities. -ONA

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China eyeing high-speed rail network in Bangladesh

A story on China eyeing high-speed rail network in Bangladesh reached 64,025 people and had 2,172 link clicks on Facebook.

📺 MOST WATCHED VIDEO ON FACEBOOK

1,100 VIEWS



MIDDAY UPDATE

The MIDDAY Minute news update had 1,100 views and reached 2,100 people on Facebook.

📺 MOST VIEWED VIDEO ON INSTAGRAM

1,626 VIEWS



Oman offers collection of Omani publications in Arabic to Japan

The Maghrib Minute news wrap had 1,626 views and 43 likes on Instagram.



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MUTUAL GRASSROOTS CULTURAL DIPLOMACY OF OMANIS AND KOREANS IN MUSCAT



Young Omanis and Koreans gathered at the Korean Embassy to the Sultanate in Muscat on June 9. At this gathering, Korean students wore Omani dishdasha and sirwal offered by members of the OK Nuri, a voluntary group of Omani fans of Korean culture. Omani participants tried hanbok, Korean traditional costume. They appreciated the beauty and traditional elegance embodied in the design of both costumes of Oman and Korea.

The Omani and Korean participants are further engaged in sessions where traditional handicraft items were introduced. What made the sessions even more enjoyable and lively was the activities to make handicrafts on the spot, going beyond just seeing the items.

H.E. KIM Kiejoo, Korean Ambassador to the Sultanate valued highly the voluntary cultural exchange activities at the grassroots level, which contributes substantially to mutual understanding, exchanges and support in other parts of the relations. Ambassador KIM emphasised that "promoting knowledge about respective traditions and cultures is a great privilege for the Koreans and Omanis as the two countries are endowed with rich history and cultural heritage." He also assured that "the Korean Embassy will continue to work together with the Omani and the Korean friends to promote people-to-people exchanges."

Members of the OK Nuri Group expressed their intention to continue their work as a "cultural bridge" to link the Omani and Korean people. They also pledged that they will exert their best efforts to contribute to the already- strong bonds of friendship between the two peoples and countries.



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MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDINGS

Education ministry signs six pacts with private sector



Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Education signed six Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) with a number of private sector institutions that support Oman Science Festival 2022, under the patronage of Dr. Madiha bint Ahmed Al Shai-baniyah, Minister of Education. The signing took place at the Min-istry's headquarter on Thursday.

Dr. Abdullah bin Khamis Ambosaidi, Undersecretary of the Min-istry of Education for Education stated: "We were pleased to sign six MoUs with the institutions supporting Oman Science Festival, which believed in the power

of the idea, its richness, its impor-tance and its benefit not only to education and science, but also to the economy in general, and to the private sector itself, stressing that the support provided is to imple-ment the third edition of the Oman Science Festival, which will be held in October 2022."

"It will contribute significantly to motivating students in schools, colleges, and universities to pay more attention to science, innova-tion, and creativity in general, as the festival targets all segments of society, especially school and university students, with the aim of spreading science to everyone. Today, science and technology are the engine and developer of socie-ties," he added.

Dr. Abdullah bin Khamis Am-bosaidi signed three MoUs. The first agreement was signed with Oman Telecommunications Com-pany (OmanTel). The agreement was signed by Eng. Alaa Eddin bin Abdullah Beit Fadel, Commercial Chief Executive Officer of the com-pany, in the presence of Sheikh Talal bin Saeed Al Maamari, CEO of Oman Telecommunications Com-pany (Omantel).

The second agreement was signed with Petroleum Develop-ment Oman (PDO). The agree-ment was signed by Eng. Mo-hammed bin Ahmed Al-Gharibi, Director of External Affairs and Communications at the company, in the presence of its representa-tive, Engineer Abdul Amir bin Abdul-Hussein Al-Ajmi, Execu-tive Director of Foreign Affairs and Added Value. The third agreement was signed with Khimji Ramdas Corporation (Eshraqa Corpora-tion). The agreement was signed by Mahmoud bin Khalifa Al-Sagri, General Manager of the Group's Social Responsibility, in the pres-ence of the company's representa-tive Sheikh Anil Khimji Ramdas, member of the Board of Directors of Khimji Ramdas.

[Full story @timesofoman.com/oman](#)

IN MUSCAT AND BARKA

<FROM A1 New desalination plants coming up

With regard to water sector, Yaqub bin Saif Al-Kiyumi said the company had contracted with the private sector to estab-lish two desalination plants in Muscat and Barka, with an in-vestment of about \$350 million.

To enhance efficiency and re-duce operational and adminis-trative costs of electricity, water and sewage companies, Nama Group continues to work on implementing the royal direc-tives regarding the integration of distribution and supply com-panies, he said. -**ONA**

OMAN METEOROLOGY

Parts of Oman to get cooler

MUSCAT: Low clouds contin-ue to intensify along the coasts of Musandam. There are clouds over parts of Al Hajar Moun-tains with chances of thunder-storms, Oman Meteorology an-nounced in its forecast.

The Meteorology office said there are chances of scattered rain and thunderstorms, ac-companied by active downward winds and hail over parts of Al Hajar Mountains, the gover-norates of North Al Sharqiyah, South Al Batinah and Al Dakh-iliyah. — *Times News Service*

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Customers are therefore requested to present the relevant Repair Order Forms and collect their items upon settlement of repair charges from the respective outlets where the products were given for repair.

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THE ROYAL GUARD OF OMAN

Tender Advertisement

The Royal Guard of Oman, invites proposals for the following:-

Tender Reference	Subject	Tender Document Value	Bid Submission Date
01/2022	Cleaning and Pest control Services for various RGO locations	R.O. 1,200/- non-refundable	18th July 2022

Specialised Companies registered with Govt. Tender Board, having First Grade and above can collect the tender document from the office of the Tender Committee Secretariat, The Royal Guard of Oman, Seeb during working hours from Sunday 12th June to Thursday 16th June 2022.

Wax-sealed bids addressed to the Chairman - Tender Committee should be submitted to RGO before 12.00 hours on the above mentioned submission date along with a Tender Bond/Certified Cheque in the name of the Royal Guard of Oman, equivalent to 1% (One Percent) of the value of the bid from any registered Bank in the Sultanate of Oman, valid for a period of 120 days from the bid submission. The tenderer shall not reveal his identity other than the tender title and the address mentioned below.

No Tender will be accepted after the submission date and the Royal Guard of Oman reserves the right to accept or reject any Tender without giving reasons.

Tender Committee
P.O Box 381C.P.O
Postal Code 111

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	DISC/Tender/2022/077
Subject	UNE - LOT 04H - 2022
Tender Fee	RO. 52,500 Inclusive VAT (5%) Note: Tenderer who wish to participate in the above tender should collect the tender document from DISC's office or send an e-mail to below mention mail id for tender document.
Experience	The tenderers shall be registered electrical contractor with Distribution Code Review Panel (DCRP) Oman (Minimum C-Grade for 11 kV jobs and D-Grade for LV jobs) and should have performed similar UNE jobs in Sultanate of Oman.
Pre-qualification	Bids to be attached along with valid "DCRP Registration Certificate" and valid "CEP Authorized card copy issued by DISC" Shall only consider for evaluation, Further, Tenderers will be evaluated as per the pre-qualification criterion specified in the Tender documents.
Last date for issue of tender documents	03:00 PM on 26 th June 2022
Site Visit	-
Last date for seeking pre Bid clarification	-
Last date for Response for .pre bid clarification	-
Last date for submission of bids	02:00 PM on 4th July 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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Royal Oman Police

ANNOUNCEMENT

Royal Oman Police – Directorate of Public Relations and Security Information - announces that no vehicles shall be allowed to park on both sides of the Sultan Qaboos Highway Road, beginning from Burj Al Sahwa Roundabout to the Wilayat of Muscat during the period from Sunday 12/06/2022 to Tuesday 14/06/2022.

Royal Oman Police calls upon drivers to abide by the above instructions and to cooperate with policemen for the public interest.

US to drop COVID-19 testing requirement for international travellers

Until now, all passengers had to present a negative COVID-19 test, which was not older than 24 hours

WASHINGTON: The United States will drop from Sunday a requirement that people arriving in the country by air take a COVID-19 test within a day before boarding their flights, a senior White House official confirmed on Friday.

Until now, all passengers had to present a negative COVID-19 test, which was not older than 24 hours, to their airline before departing for the US.

The only exception to this was for people who had recovered from an infection within 90 days before-hand – and had proof of this.

A formal announcement will be made later on Friday, said White House assistant press secretary Kevin Munoz on Twitter.

The step comes as the busy summer travel season is kicking off and airlines are already preparing for record demand. Airlines have said



many US travelers are not flying internationally due to concerns they could test positive and be stranded abroad.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has determined that the science and data show the pre-departure COVID tests are no longer necessary, the Associated Press reported, citing a Biden administration official.

According to the official, the agency would reevaluate the need for the testing requirement every

90 days and that it could be reinstated if a troubling new variant emerges.

Travelling made easier

The United States has required incoming international air travelers to provide pre-departure negative tests since January 2021. The CDC has not required testing for land border crossings, but still required it for international arrivals.

In November, as the highly transmissible omicron variant

swept the world, President Joe Biden's administration toughened the requirement and required all travelers, regardless of vaccination status, to test within a day of travel to the US.

The US government has gradually relaxed COVID restrictions in the past few weeks. However, the number of new infections has recently increased again. Around 300 people still die every day in the US after being infected with the coronavirus. **DW**



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MONKEYPOX



Monkeypox cases rise to 31 in Nigeria

LAGOS: Confirmed cases of monkeypox in Nigeria have risen to 31 as more cases were reported across the most populous African country, a report by health authorities said.

In its latest monkeypox situation report, the Nigeria Center for Disease Control (NCDC) said the country has recorded since January 110 suspected cases in total and 31 confirmed cases from 12 states.

A monkeypox national emergency operations center was activated in May in response to the risk assessment conducted, which put Nigeria at high risk for a monkeypox outbreak, said

the report.

Symptoms of monkeypox include sudden fever, headache, body pain, weakness, sore throat, enlargement of glands in the neck and under the jaw, followed by the appearance of a rash (often solid or fluid-filled at the onset) on the face, palms, soles of the feet, genitals, and other parts of the body.

The World Health Organization said that the sudden appearance of monkeypox in several countries around the world shows that the virus has been spreading for a while outside of West and Central African countries, where it is usually found. **ANI**

IN A FIRST

North Korea appoints first female foreign minister

PYONGYANG: North Korea has named a top nuclear negotiator Choe Son Hui as its first female foreign minister, state media reported on Saturday.

Her appointment comes as Pyongyang ramps up its weapons testing program. North Korea's state news agency KCNA reported her appointment on Saturday, shortly after the conclusion of a three-day Workers' Party's Central Committee in Pyongyang on Friday.

Choe played a key role during North Korea's negotiations over its nuclear program with the United States. The 57-year-old career diplomat, formerly the deputy foreign minister, also speaks strong English.

The talks have stalled, with North Korea ignoring repeated offers from the US to return to negotiations.

North Korean leader reaffirms arms buildup

Instead, Kim Jong Un doubled down on his arms buildup in the face of what he described as an aggravating security climate.

"[Kim] said the right to self-defense is an issue of defending sovereignty, clarifying once again the party's invariable fighting principle of power for power and



head-on contest," state-run outlet KCNA said.

Without giving details, it said that Kim said his armed forces and military scientists would pursue further "militant tasks." He did not mention nuclear weapons or South Korea directly.

On Tuesday, US Special Representative for North Korea Sung Kim said Washington believed North Korea was preparing to conduct a seventh nuclear test, its first since 2017.

The International Atomic Energy Agency also said North Korea was readying a test site, "possibly in preparation for a nuclear test."

"The conduct of a nuclear test would contravene UN Security Council resolutions and would be a cause for serious concern,"

IAEA general director Rafael Grossi said.

US and South Korea ready 'deterrence'

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and his South Korean counterpart, Lee Jong-sup, on Saturday condemned the North's ongoing military activities, after an unprecedented number of ballistic missile tests this year.

Meeting on the sidelines of the Shangri-La Dialogue security summit, Austin and Lee "agreed to expand the scope and scale of South Korea-US combined exercises as agreed at the two countries' summit in order to maintain steadfast deterrence and constant readiness," South Korea's Defense Ministry said in a statement. **DW**

FOOD ASSISTANCE

22 per cent of Sri Lankans need food aid: UN official

COLOMBO: A total of 22 per cent of the Sri Lankan population or 4.9 million people live in need of food assistance at the moment, a high-level UN official said on Friday.

UN Resident Coordinator Hanaa Singer-Hamdy said several factors are interacting to put pressure on the current food security situation in Sri Lanka. "We have also seen that low-income households are the hardest hit and adopting negative coping strategies," Singer-Hamdy said in an interview with Daily Mirror newspaper. As many as 40 to 50 per cent reduction in paddy crop harvest from the 2021/2022 Maha season due to a lack of chemical fertiliser, she said.

"Since the initial decision to ban the importation of chemical fertiliser in April 2021, expenditure on fertiliser imports has fallen by nearly 60 per cent compared to the period before the ban," the UN Resident Coordinator added.

Sri Lanka, formerly an upper-middle income country, is facing its worst economic crisis since independence. In May, food inflation stood at 57.4 per cent, while shortages of key food items, as well as fuel for cooking, transport, and industry, remain widespread, with ongoing daily power outages.

The economy is bracing for a



sharp contraction due to the unavailability of basic inputs to production, an 80 per cent depreciation of the currency (since March 2022), coupled with a lack of foreign reserves and the country's failure to meet its international debt obligations.

The economic crisis has particularly impacted food security, agriculture, livelihoods, and access to health services. Food production in the last harvest season was 40 - 50 per cent lower than last year, and the current agricultural season is at risk, with seeds, fertilizers, fuel and credit shortages.

Nearly 5 million people (22 per cent of the population) are cur-

rently in need of food assistance. Latest surveys reveal that 86 per cent of households are using at least one coping mechanism such as reducing food intake, including skipping meals.

Currently close to 200 essential medicines are now out of stock, with a predicted shortage of another 163 critical over the next two to three months. Additionally, over 2,700 essential surgical and more than 250 regular laboratory items are also out of stock.

Due to power cuts and the lack of fuel to operate generators, many hospitals have had no choice but to postpone routine and non-urgent surgeries and procedures. **ANI**

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WORLD

SUBMARINE CONTRACT

Australia to compensate French shipbuilder for scrapped contract

CANBERRA: The Australian government on Saturday agreed to pay a French shipbuilder 830 million Australian dollars after tearing up a submarine contract.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said the government will pay Naval Group 830 million Australian dollars (585.3 million U.S. dollars) in compensation for the canceled contract, saying the “fair and equitable” settlement would improve relations between the nations.

French President Emmanuel Macron previously accused former Prime Minister Scott Morrison of lying about the future of the submarine deal.

“I intend to have an honest relationship with France and one that is based upon integrity and mutual respect,” Albanese, whose Labor Party defeated Morrison’s Coalition in May’s general election, told reporters.

“I’m looking forward to taking up President Macron’s invitation to me to visit Paris at the earliest opportunity, and we will make further announcements forthcoming about the dates in which that will occur.”

The Coalition government in 2016 awarded Naval Group, then DCNS, a contract to build a fleet of 12 new attack class submarines at a cost of 50 billion Australian dollars (35.2 billion U.S. dollars), making it one of the biggest defense contracts in the Australian history.

Amid disputes over where the submarines would be built and delays the projected construction cost blew out to 89 billion Australian dollars (62.7 billion U.S. dollars), with maintenance expected to cost a further 145 billion Australian dollars (102.2 billion U.S. dollars) through to 2080, the Coalition tore up the contract in 2021.

Albanese said the settlement took Australia’s total spend on the project to 3.4 billion Australian dollars (2.3 billion U.S. dollars).

“It represents an extraordinary waste from a government that was always big on announcements but not good on delivering, and from a government that will be remembered as the most wasteful government in Australia’s history since federation,” he said. **ANI**

COUP CHARGES

Former Bolivian President Jeanine Anez handed ten-year prison term

SUCRE: A Bolivian court on Friday found former President Jeanine Anez guilty of mounting a coup in 2019.

Anez was sentenced to 10 years in prison.

The 54-year-old has been convicted of making “decisions contrary to the constitution” and “of dereliction of duty.”

Prosecutors said Anez violated norms that guaranteed the constitutional and democratic order after Bolivia’s 2019 presidential elections.

Anez, then the most senior member of the country’s parliament, ascended to the presidency after President Evo Morales resigned in 2019.

Morales, who ruled Bolivia for nearly 14 years by then, resigned after the military called on him to go following a disputed election result in October 2019.



Anez detained since March 2021

Anez, who has been detained since March 2021 on initial charges of terrorism, sedition and conspiracy, was not allowed to attend the trial in person.

She followed the hearing from prison.

“I didn’t lift a finger to become president, but I did what I had to do,” Anez said in her final statement to the judge.

“I assumed the presidency out of obligation, according to what is established in the constitution,” Anez added.

Experts have raised concerns about the trial turning into a game of political score-settling between rival parties, with Cesar Munoz, a senior researcher at the Human Rights Watch saying they “were concerned about how this case has been pursued.”

Munoz added that they “call on superior courts to examine how the processings were conducted.”

Jeanine Anez, then the most senior member of the country’s parliament, ascended to the presidency after President Evo Morales resigned in 2019

Bolivia’s political crisis of 2019

Large demonstrations rocked Bolivia in 2019 after protesters accused socialist leader Evo Morales of rigging elections to secure a fourth term, in defiance of term limits.

Morales, on the other hand, leveled criticism against a “civic coup” that led to his resignation in November 2019, just after the

presidential election of October 2019. Anez, a conservative and then vice president of the Senate, took power two days after Morales resigned, based on the constitutional line of succession.

Morales’s leftist party, Movement for Socialism (MAS), boycotted the naming of Anez, with Morales fleeing to Mexico for safety.

Anez said her goal was to help the country hold new and transparent elections and that she would not run for president, angering people when she announced her bid in January 2020.

Anez also drew widespread criticism for protests that followed immediately after she took power, where 20 supporters of Morales were killed. The OAS accused Bolivian security forces of carrying out a massacre during the social unrest.

Morales’ MAS party, which returned to power in 2020, then accused Anez of playing a key role in what it claimed was a coup against Morales. **DW**

DEATH SENTENCES

UN experts alarmed over Myanmar junta’s decision to enforce death sentences

GENEVA: The Myanmar junta’s announced decision to enforce death sentences against four individuals, including two prominent activists, marks the start of what could be a spate of death pronouncements, two UN experts have warned.

“The illegitimate military junta is providing the international community with further evidence of its disregard for human rights as it prepares to hang pro-democracy activists. These death sentences, handed down by an illegitimate court of an illegitimate junta, are a vile attempt at instilling fear amongst the people of Myanmar,” the experts said. In the face of increasing human rights violations, the experts urged the international community to exert greater pressure on Myanmar’s military.

“Without imposing serious costs on the military for its attacks on fundamental rights, we should expect increasing numbers of these death penalty pronouncements from the junta,” they said.

“The international community - chiefly Member States and the Security Council - must demonstrate that these actions will not go unpunished and do more to target the military’s needs for money,



weapons and legitimacy.”

The experts stressed that one of the condemned individuals is a former member of parliament from the National League for Democracy, while another is a leader of the 88 Generation activist group that stood up to former dictator Ne Win’s regime.

They were sentenced to death by a military tribunal in January 2022, on charges of treason and terrorism. If the executions proceed, they will be the first judicial executions in Myanmar since 1988.

“The junta’s announced decision to execute the activists illustrates how the military seeks to use all apparatuses of the state to persecute those that oppose its attempt to return Myanmar to military authoritarian rule,” they said. **ANI**

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Barca, Real Madrid to square off in Las Vegas

Football fans in the US are going to be treated to another Clasico on July 23 at Allegiant Stadium, Las Vegas

BARCELONA: Real Madrid and FC Barcelona are to meet again this summer for a game in Las Vegas on July 23, one of the four that the Catalans will play on their US tour.

In addition to friendlies already announced against Inter Miami FC on July 19 and the New York Red Bulls on July 30, Xavi Hernandez will also be preparing for the forthcoming season with games against Real Madrid on July 23 in Las Vegas and Juventus on July 26 in Dallas. Football fans in the US are going to be treated to another Clasico on July 23 at Allegiant Stadium, Las Vegas, which holds 65,000



spectators and is the home of the Las Vegas Raiders in the NFL.

Barca and Real Madrid are meeting on US soil for the second time, having previously met on 30 July 2017 at the Hard Rock Stadium, Miami before a sold out crowd of 64,000 in a game ultimately won by the Catalans, 3-2 with goals from Leo Messi, Ivan Rakitic and Gerard Pique.

There have been two other occasions when the sides met outside of Spain.

The most recent was the semi-final of the Spanish Super Cup earlier this very year in Riyadh, which also ended 3-2 but this time to Real, while the earliest of all was in Barquisimeto, Venezuela on 30 May 1982, also ending in a Madrid victory, that time 1-0.

FC Barcelona have been to the USA no fewer than 12 times in the past, but this will their first ever trip to Vegas.

Three days later, on July 26, the Blaugrana will be taking on Mas-

similiano Allegri's Juventus at the Cotton Bowl Stadium, Dallas.

It will be the fifth time that Barca have met the Serie A side in the US.

The first two were both in 1969, one on May 30 at the Yankee Stadium, New York, a 3-2 win for the Catalans, and another five days later in Chicago, which also ended in Barca victory, 1-0. The teams drew 2-2 in 2003 in Boston, and Barca were again victorious in 2017, this time 2-1 at the MetLife, New Jersey. **ANI**

Sergi Roberto extends contract with FC Barcelona

BARCELONA: FC Barcelona and the player Sergi Roberto have reached an agreement to extend his contract until June 2023. The player's buy out clause will be set at 400 million euros.

Sergi Roberto, as the other first team captains, came through the youth teams at La Masia before reaching the Barca first team. At the age of just 19, Sergi Roberto made his first team debut at the Santiago Bernabeu in the first leg of the Champions League semi-final in 2011. Since then he has become a vital part of the squad as a member of the first team for the last nine seasons.

The player from Reus in the south of Catalonia was at the centre of one of the most memorable moments in recent Barca history, scoring the all important final goal in the 6-1 comeback win against PSG in the Champions League.

"I'm very happy to continue one more year here at the club of my life. I've been here since I was 14 years old. So, having this extra year is very important for more especially after the last two years when I've had quite a lot of physical problems," Sergio told Barca TV after extending the contract.



"I've not been 100% and I've not been able to play how I know and how I enjoy playing. This year is an extra opportunity for me to get back to enjoy playing, with the new coach and I'm sure it will work out really well."

"I came here when i was 14, I turned 30 last year, so I've been here for 16 years. It's been a dream since I was a child to be at this club. Like I said I hope I can start enjoying it again this season more than the last few. So, bring back a bit of joy, especially to the fans who have always been by our side in the most complicated moments," he added.

With the first team, Sergi Roberto has won 23 trophies: two Champions League titles, six league championships, five Spanish Super Cups, two European Super Cups and two World Club Cups. In 316 official appearances, he has scored 12 goals and provided 37 assists. **ANI**

Babar Azam creates record despite missing ton against West Indies

MULTAN: Babar Azam reached another massive feat in men's international cricket history as he became the first batter to score nine consecutive half-centuries in all three formats of cricket.

Pakistan skipper scored 77 off 93 balls in the second ODI match against West Indies and added yet another fifty-plus score to his name to enter the record books for a massive batting record. This was

Babar's ninth-consecutive fifty-plus score in men's international cricket, which is now the longest streak for any batter.

His half-century streak started with a 196 during the second Test against Australia, following it up with a 66 and 55 in the third and the final Test.

The three-match ODI series against Australia saw Babar smash two centuries, registering 57, 114,



and 105* in the three games. In the only T20I against Men in Yellow, Babar scored 66.

Earlier, the Pakistan skipper on Wednesday scripted a brilliant record with his century against West Indies in the first ODI in Multan, becoming the first batter to score three consecutive hundreds on two separate occasions in ODIs.

Babar smashed 103 off 107 balls

and led Pakistan to victory by five wickets.

With this outstanding accomplishment, Babar also surpassed the long-standing record of Virat Kohli, becoming the fastest to score 1,000 runs as captain in the format.

He attained the milestone in his 13th innings as Pakistan captain while it took 17 innings for Kohli to get there.

Talking about the match, Pakistan put a total of 275/8 all thanks to Babar (77) and Imam-ul-Haq (72), as well as the lower-middle order who hammered the visitors all around the ground.

Pakistan's bowling attack led by Mohammad Nawaz's four-wicket haul restricted West Indies to merely 155 runs in the run-chase, as Pakistan clinch a secure 2-0 lead in the three-match series. **ANI**

COMMENTARY

Hardik Pandya could have been named captain

Anis Sajan, Vice Chairman, Danube Group



Team India management missed a golden opportunity to name Hardik Pandya as the Captain of the T20 series against South Africa after KL Rahul picked up a groin injury and instead named Rishab Pant has been named as the captain.

Hardik Pandya was instrumental with both bat and ball, leading from the front to fashion them into a winning outfit in their very first season in the world's Premier franchise cricket ten days ago at the Iconic Narendra Modi Stadium. Not many had given Gujarat Titans any chance when the season began as barring Rashid Khan, the franchise did not have any big names but Hardik Pandya got the best from all his players like Wriddiman Saha, Shubman Gill, David Miller, Rahul Tewatia, Mohammed Shami, Lockie Ferguson and Yash Dayal and every player joined hands and gave their best and won them a game or two and in the end Gujarat Titans were clinical in winning the finals against Rajasthan Royals.

And who lead them from the front, it was their captain who first picked up three crucial wickets and also chipped in useful 34 runs and ensured there were not hiccups and lifted the coveted trophy.

He lead from the front scoring 497 runs, the highest runs for his franchise and also picked up eight wickets at an economy of just 7.25 per over.

He was street smart in getting the right bowlers at the right time and his match ups were spot on in almost every game where Gujarat Titans just lost four leagues games out of the 14 and won the qualifier and finals easily.

India's World Cup winning coach who was a part of the Gujarat Titans coaching team said that Hardik Pan-

dya had natural leadership quality and he plays the game instinctively. He added that Hardik Pandya engages in a lot of cricket conversations and wants to learn, get better and improve and understand his players.

India had announced KL Rahul as the captain before the IPL got over and this was the best chance for team India to test his captaincy in an international format with the T20 World Cup just four months away.

There were already talks about him being the future captain after he lead his side to the IPL title and one wonders why the thinktank of India let waste this opportunity when Rahul got injured. Rishab Pant had struggled as Captain and as a batsman for Delhi Capitals. This was the right time to test Hardik Pandya.

Sunil Gavaskar summed very well that when you have leadership qualities, it automatically opens the door for honours at the national level to be able to captain the Indian team.

The way Hardik Pandya led from the front and the way he got his franchise players to gel as a team means he has leadership qualities.

India has appointed Rohit Sharma as the captain after Virat Kohli had stepped down but with Rohit being in the twilight of his career at 35 years, India could not have asked for a better replacement than Hardik Pandya.

CRICKET

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman thumped Nepal by 13 runs in the second game of the ICC CWC League 2 Tri Series (USA-Nepal-Oman) at the Moosa Stadium, Pearland , USA on Thursday , June 9 , 2022. Oman's first game against USA saw the hosts dominate in all verticals of the game handing Oman a 114 run defeat on Wednesday, June 8 , 2022. Oman won the toss and deciding to bowl first but did not fare well as the hosts managed to dominate the Omani bowlers through the first half of the first innings.

USA lost its first wicket of Steven Taylor courtesy Bilal Khan but later the duo of Sushant Modani and Monank Patel scored centuries at almost run-a-ball putting Oman on the backfoot.

The 209-run partnership was broken in the 36th over by Khawar Ali dismissing the USA Skipper, Monank Patel. Oman held onto the op-



portunity created, bagging 4 wickets conceding only 28 runs in the following 7 overs with Khawar Ali bagging 3 wickets to sum things up.

USA ended on 323 for 8 in their 50 overs with Bilal Khan finishing with 2 scalps. In return, Oman could only score 209 with a swift but short start from its openers - both falling in successive balls followed by a steady partnership

between Ayaan Khan and Shoaib Khan for a 117 run stand.

Oman was all out in the 43rd over with 5 batsmen with single digit scores at the end of the match.

On Thursday, Oman returned with positive intent electing to bat first this time around. Oman lost both its openers in quick succession courtesy Nepal's fast bowling spearhead Karan KC. Shoaib

Khan held the helm with Skipper Zeeshan Maqsood for a few overs the latter then falling to Sandeep Lamichanne's leg spinner for 27.

Oman lost Mohd Nadeem and Ayaan Khan for single digit scores with Zeeshan Maqsood standing at one end playing seamlessly.

Khawar Ali joined Zeeshan to take the Oman innings to the shore with his patient 30.

Zeeshan Maqsood ended the Oman innings on a high note and also achieving his century with 12 fours to his account.

Oman ended on 211 for 8 wickets in its 50 overs.

Coming onto chase 212 , Nepal lost its debutant wicketkeeper Subhash Khakurel to an inswinging delivery hitting top of off stump by Bilal Khan.

Wickets kept tumbling causing disruptions in the chase with the spin duo of Khawar Ali and Zeeshan Maqsood bagging 3 wickets each.

UEFA NATIONS LEAGUE

Cancelo, Guedes guide Portugal to 2-0 win over Czech Republic in UEFA Nations League

LISBON: Joao Cancelo and Goncalo Guedes scored a goal each to help Portugal to a 2-0 win over the Czech Republic in their UEFA Nations League Group A Group 2 tie at Jose Alvalade Stadium, Lisbon on Thursday.

Joao Cancelo scored for his side in the 33rd minute. Guedes followed soon with another goal in the 38th minute to give Portugal a 2-0 lead heading into the half-time, which the side was able to maintain till the end of the match.

With this win, Portugal is at the top of their group's table in League A with seven points. Spain is just two points behind the current toppers with five points, moving to the second spot after a 1-0 win over Switzerland after Pablo Sarabia struck in the 13th minute of the game.

Earlier on Wednesday, Belgium responded to their opening UEFA Nations League defeat against the Netherlands with five second-half goals as they came back to beat



Poland 6-1 on Wednesday.

Belgium began brightly, Michy Batshuayi hitting the post then having a goal disallowed in the first five minutes.

Poland's response was a patient one, their strikers going closer and closer until Robert Lewandowski took one touch

to control then got their opener with a half-volley after 28 minutes. The home team were level shortly before half-time as Timothy Castagne's smart stabbed pass was steered in by Axel Witsel to make it 1-1 at the break.

From there, Belgium went on to dominate and took a merited lead

when Eden Hazard broke to set up Kevin De Bruyne as he curled in from just inside the box.

Substitute Leandro Trossard then scored twice - his second a deep curling effort - before a long-range drive from Beander Den-doncker and Lois Openda's first goal for his country rounded off an ultimately emphatic win.

Also, The Netherlands made it two wins from two in UEFA Nations League Group A4 in dramatic fashion, Wout Weghorst heading the winning goal four minutes into added time, moments after Rhys Norrington-Davies had seemingly salvaged a point for Wales on Wednesday.

The first half proved an even contest, Norrington-Davies heading narrowly over for the home side and Harry Wilson drawing a diving stop from Mark Flekken.

At the other end, Teun Koopmeiners had an early effort blocked while Cody Gakpo's shot deflected just wide shortly before half-time. **ANI**

POWER TALKS OMAN

With the support of Nama Group as a strategic partner, The IEEE Power Talks Oman Conference concluded on June 8. The IEEE Conference, which was under the auspices of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, dealt with many important topics.

MARKE

BUSINESS & FINANCE



NEW AGE BANKING SUMMIT

The seventh edition of New Age Banking Summit Oman, supported by the Oman Banks Association, was organised by UMS Events on May 31 at Al Bustan Palace - A Ritz Carlton Hotel. The summit hosted a panel discussion titled 'The Future of Banking and Financial Services'.

STATISTICAL BULLETIN

Credit extended by banks in Oman tops OMR23 billion



MUSCAT: The total bank credit extended by commercial banks in Oman during the first quarter of this year amounted to OMR23.10 billion, compared to OMR22.68 billion during the same period in 2021, an increase of 1.4 per cent.

The quarterly statistical bulletin issued by the Research and Statistics Department of the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) indicated that the personal loans sector had obtained OMR8.05 billion, or 37.8 per cent of the total bank credit to commercial banks at the end of March.

The industry sector received OMR2.56 billion, at 8.9 per cent,

the construction sector OMR2.44 billion, or 8.9 per cent, followed by the services sector OMR1.97 billion, or 8.6 per cent of the total bank credit.

The bulletin indicated that the transportation and communication sector received OMR426.3 million, or 6.2 per cent of credit granted to commercial banks during the first three months of 2021, and the electricity, gas and water sectors received OMR413.5 million, or 6.1 per cent of the total credit volume.

The financial institutions' sector received 267.9 million, at 5.5

per cent, followed by wholesale and retail trade at OMR112.44, or 4.8 per cent.

The quarterly bulletin of the CBO indicated that the volume of bank credit granted to the mining sector (mines and quarries) during the first quarter of this year amounted to OMR785.9 million, or 3.4 per cent, followed by the import trade sector by OMR776.5 million, or 3.4 per cent of the total bank credit.

At the end of March, the government sector received OMR528.2 million, or 2.3 per cent of the total credit, and the agriculture sec-

tor and related activities received OMR43.5 million, or 0.2 per cent of the volume of bank credit to commercial banks, followed by the export sector at OMR35.5 million, or 0.2 per cent of the total.

The bulletin also indicated that the volume of bank credit to commercial banks in the Sultanate of Oman for other economic activities during the first quarter of this year amounted to OMR680.2 million, or 3 per cent, while the volume of bank credit to non-residents amounted to OMR162.9 million, or 0.7 per cent of the total volume of bank credit. - **ONA**

Middle East airlines witness 265% demand rise in April: IATA report

The April capacity rose 101.0 per cent against the year-ago period, and the load factor climbed 32.2 percentage points to 71.7 per cent, the International Air Transport Association said in its latest report

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Middle Eastern airlines witnessed a 265 per cent demand rise in April compared to April 2021, bettering the 252.7 per cent increase in March 2022, against the same month in 2021, according to a new report.

The April capacity rose 101.0 per cent against the year-ago period, and the load factor climbed 32.2 percentage points to 71.7 per cent, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) said in its latest report.



wards normality," he added.

International passenger markets

European carriers' April international traffic rose 480.0 per cent versus April 2021, substantially up over the 434.3 per cent increase in March 2022 versus the same month in 2021. Capacity rose 233.5 per cent and load factor climbed 33.7 percentage points to 79.4 per cent.

Asia-Pacific airlines saw their April international traffic climb 290.8 per cent compared to April 2021, significantly improved on the 197.2 per cent gain registered in March 2022 versus March 2021. Capacity rose 88.6 per cent and the load factor was up 34.6 percentage points to 66.8 per cent, still the lowest among regions.

North American carriers' April traffic rose 230.2 per cent versus the 2021 period, slightly above the 227.9 per cent rise in March 2022 compared to March 2021. Capacity rose 98.5 per cent, and load factor climbed 31.6 percentage points to 79.3 per cent.

Latin American airlines experienced a 263.2 per cent rise in April traffic, compared to the same month in 2021, exceeding the 241.2 per cent rise in March 2022 over March 2021.

April capacity rose 189.1 per cent and the load factor increased 16.8 percentage points to 82.3 per cent, which easily was the highest load factor among the regions for the 19th consecutive month.

IN ELECTRICITY SECTOR

Nama working on integrating its distribution, supply companies

MUSCAT: In order to enhance efficiency and reduce operational and administrative costs of electricity, Nama Group is continuing to work on implementing the integration of distribution and supply companies.

The group is currently working on merger of the distribution and supply companies of the group into two companies — a company for supply and another for distribution in all the governorates of the Sultanate, except Dhofar, according to an official source from the communication and sustainability department of Nama Group.

The step is aimed at enhancing the competence and reduction of operating and administration costs. The source said that the initiative of restructuring the distribution and supply companies

came within a package of initiatives aimed to review the costs in electricity sector.

The source said that Nama Holding is working with a number of government departments represented by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, the Oman Investment Authority (OIA) and the Authority for Public Services Regulation on execution of all initiatives including the one on merging the distribution and supply companies.

The source also pointed out that there are currently four companies for distribution and supply in Oman (except Dhofar Governorate) and upon restructuring there would be one company for the supply services (represented by billing and collection) and another company for distribution services and for meter and

low-voltage networks including installation of power lines and transformers for distribution of the service for customers.

The initiative on restructuring aimed to reduce the costs in electricity sector in the mid-term and to upgrade the capacity of the group and develop the service and customers' satisfaction with regard to the services offered as well as development of the services to keep abreast of the technological advancement in customers' services.

The year 2021 has seen approval of the biggest number of billing and payment activities which facilitated online receipt and payment of bills, said the source adding that the number of customers of e-payment channels increased to over 63 per cent of all payments collected from customers. - **ONA**



NEW SERVICE



Electronic cadastral drawing service for investors launched by Opaz in Duqm

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (Opaz) announced the provision of cadastral drawing service electronically, so investors can obtain their copy of the drawing immediately upon signing usufruct contracts.

This service is currently applied for some blocks of land in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (Sezad) and will cover other blocks afterwards.

Introducing the service of issuing the cadastral drawing, which

marks an official document to prove the land usufruct right, comes within the direct electronic land selection service in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, which is provided to investors through the Zone's digital portal. This new service assists the automation process of investment procedures in a smart way, which significantly serves to accelerate the completion of the investors' transactions through the one-stop shop.

Dr Said bin Khalifa Al Tuwairshi from the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free

Zones said: "By increasing the number of electronic services, provided to investors, Opaz is seeking to enrich its digital transformation plan, which goes in parallel with the relevant government plans and keeps pace with the government's digital transformation plan. Further, Opaz plan aims to expedite and facilitate the pace of business, organise and simplify it for investors and other beneficiaries on an ongoing basis and contribute to stimulating the business environment and enhancing investment opportunities in the special economic zones and free zones."



MARKET



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Banking, fintech leaders decode the future of financial services

New Age Banking Summit Oman was a unique platform for the banking and finance professionals to discuss the new developments in global banking and debate the focus areas for Omani banks

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The seventh edition of New Age Banking Summit Oman, supported by the Oman Banks Association, was organised by UMS Events on May 31 at Al Bustan Palace - A Ritz Carlton Hotel. Tahir Salim Al Amri, Executive President, Central Bank of Oman (CBO) was the chief guest.



The event was attended by leading names from the banking, finance, investments, fintech and insurance industries apart from the Central Bank of Oman, Ministry of Finance and Oman Investment Authority.

The event witnessed the signing of two Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) to work together between Bank Nizwa and Oman Data Park for collaboration on AI Innovation and Deployment and Data Center Partnership. On the occasion, Oman Data Park and Al-

liance Network also signed up to work together for colocation.

The summit hosted a panel discussion titled 'The Future of Banking and Financial Services'. The panel comprising the well-known industry leaders from banking, fintech and technology solution providers, deliberated on the new trends in digital banking & payments and the future of the financial services sector with evolving customer needs.

The summit was a unique platform for the banking and finance

professionals to discuss the new developments in global banking and debate the focus areas for Omani banks.

In his keynote address, Al Amri talked about the digital transformation in the way financial services are produced and delivered, the evolution of payments and settlement systems, and the challenges of growing digitalisation. He stated that CBO is committed to supporting innovation and modernisation while preserving financial stability.

The panellists included Ali Has-

san Moosa, CEO, Oman Banks Association; Badar Al Shanfari, Chief Operating Officer, Ominvest; Ewan John MacLeod, Chief Transformation Officer, Sohar International; Mujahid Al Zadjaly, GM - IT & Operations, Bank Nizwa; Eng. Maqbool Al Wahaibi, CEO, Oman Data Park; Ali Al Lawati, Country Leader - Oman & Yemen, Cisco; and Hussain Al Maimani, Head - Banking & Energy, GBM.

The event hosted a line-up of speakers including Hassan Abdul Ali, General Manager - Business Development, Oman Data Park; Manahil Jaffar, Manager - Corporate Services, Mala'a; Dalel Maghrebi, Manager - Digital Business Solutions (DBS), GBM Oman; and Shadi Al Shami, Senior Systems Architect, Cisco. The event culminated with a workshop on 'ESG Adoption in BFSI Sector' conducted by Imad Alfadel, Founder & Managing Partner, ESG Integrate, UAE.

Oman Banking & Finance Awards 2022 were co-located with the New Age Banking Summit. Bank Muscat won the Best Bank award in the large banks' category. Bank Nizwa was presented with the Best Bank award in the mid-size banks' category. The Fastest Growing Bank in the large banks' category went to Sohar International. National Finance walked away with

the best Non Banking Finance & Leasing Company award. The winners for these awards were selected based on a survey of banks and NBFCs done by OER and Ubhar Capital; the results were verified by Abu Timam Grant Thornton. The survey was based on the banks' and NBFCs financial performance on various parameters over the last four years.

In addition, various best performing companies and industry leaders in banking, leasing, insurance, fintech and investments were felicitated with the special awards. The winners of special awards were selected by the editorial board of OER.

The event was supported by leading companies - GBM and Cisco as the lead partners; Bank Nizwa as the strategic partner; Sohar International as the digital transformation partner; ahlibank and Ahli Islamic as the associate partners; Taageer Finance as the finance partner; Oman Data Park as the cloud services partner; Global iTS as the technology partner; National Life & General Insurance as the composite insurance partner; United Securities and United GCC Fund as the support partners; Ubhar Capital as the knowledge partner; ESG Integrate as the ESG partner and UMS Digital as the digital support partner.

GARTNER REPORT

Worldwide IaaS market grew 41.4% in 2021

DUBAI: The worldwide infrastructure as a service (IaaS) market grew 41.4 per cent in 2021, to total \$90.9 billion, up from \$64.3 billion in 2020, according to Gartner, Inc. Amazon retained the No. 1 position in the IaaS market in 2021, followed by Microsoft, Alibaba, Google and Huawei.

"The IaaS market continues to grow unabated as cloud-native becomes the primary architecture for modern workloads," said Sid Nag, VP Analyst at Gartner. "Cloud supports the scalability and composability that advanced technologies and applications require, while also enabling enterprises to address emerging needs such as sovereignty, data integration and enhanced customer experience."

In 2021, the top five IaaS providers accounted for over 80 per cent of the market. Amazon continued to lead the worldwide IaaS market with revenue of \$35.4 billion in 2021 and a 38.9 per cent market share.

Microsoft followed in the No. 2 position with 21.1 per cent share



Sid Nag, VP Analyst at Gartner

and above-market growth, reaching over \$19 billion in IaaS revenue in 2021. With many organizations already relying on Microsoft's enterprise software and services, Azure has been positioned to capture opportunities across nearly every vertical market.

Alibaba was again the No. 3 IaaS public cloud provider worldwide with a 9.5 per cent market share and revenue of \$8.7 billion for 2021. While Alibaba continues to lead the Chinese cloud market, it is also poised to be the leading regional provider in Indonesia, Malaysia, and other emerging cloud markets, given its local market understanding and ability to serve as a bridge to digital commerce.

"Regional cloud ecosystems are becoming increasingly important amidst growing geopolitical fragmentation and emerging regulatory and compliance requirements, presenting an opportunity for providers with a strong regional presence," said Nag.

Google Cloud saw the highest growth rate of the top five IaaS vendors, growing 63.7 per cent in 2021 to reach \$6.4 billion in revenue. This growth was driven by steadily increased adoption for traditional enterprise workloads as well as Google's innovation in more cutting-edge capabilities such as artificial intelligence and

Kubernetes container technologies, supported by an expansion of their partner ecosystem to reach a wider customer base.

While Huawei's growth tempered in 2021 after two straight years of over 200 per cent growth, it still maintained the No. 5 market share position with \$4.2 billion in revenue. Huawei has made significant investments in its IaaS ecosystem in the past two years, and through an enhanced strategy of open hardware, open-source software and partner enablement it has been able to provide expanded offerings for universities, developers and startups.

"The next phase of IaaS growth will be driven by customer experience, digital outcomes and the virtual-first world," said Nag.

"Emerging technologies that can help businesses bring experiences closer to their customers, such as the metaverse, chatbots and digital twins, will require hyper-scale infrastructure to meet growing demands for computing and storage power."

WTO MEET

India to look for positive outcome on TRIPS waiver, fisheries agreement

NEW DELHI: India is hoping for some positive action on the TRIPS waiver during the 12th World Trade Organisation (WTO) ministerial meet that begins on June 12.

Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goel will take part in the conference.

In October 2020, India and South Africa submitted a proposal for a waiver from certain provisions of the TRIPS Agreement for the prevention, treatment, and containment of COVID-19, to the WTO TRIPS Council.

The proposal seeks a temporary waiver from certain provisions of the TRIPS Agreement to the extent that they pose a barrier to accessing COVID-19 products and technologies.

A total of 65 countries have joined as co-sponsors. Subsequently, the EU submitted a related proposal that focuses on com-

pulsory licensing and is limited only to patents. These proposals are being discussed at the TRIPS Council and it has been agreed that discussions on this issue will continue up to MC12.

The issue was also pursued under a DG-led informal process with engagement from India, South Africa, the EU and the US (referred to as the Quad discussions). Multiple rounds of discussions at the level of ministers and senior officers took place on this subject, following which DG, WTO has circulated a draft to the TRIPS Council for discussion and agreement amongst the larger membership.

Members are currently engaged in negotiations. India is now working with other like-minded members in the WTO to achieve an outcome on this subject to safeguard its best interests. -ANI



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STRATEGIC PARTNER

Nama Group concludes its participation in Oman Electricity and Energy Conference

Times News Service

MUSCAT: With the support of Nama Group as a strategic partner, The IEEE Power Talks Oman Conference concluded on June 8. The IEEE Conference, which was under the auspices of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, had been organised by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) in cooperation with Raya Services Company and Al Nimr Expo Company.

The conference dealt with many important topics. On its first day, the conference discussed the future of the energy sector in the sultanate, renewable energy technologies and storage solutions, in addition to the future of the electricity transmission network considering the current changes.

On the second day, the conference discussed asset management and its performance improvement, in addition to energy management solutions.

The third day included three workshops, the first presented by SEL, which dealt with the mechanism of linking renewable energy projects with the transport network, while the second workshop was presented by Siemens and dealt with energy efficiency technologies, and the third workshop was presented by Wood, which dealt with the economics of hydrogen projects.

More than 50 speakers from



electricity and energy experts from around the world participated in the conference and presented many distinguished papers. The conference also witnessed major interest from local development institutions.

Energy experts
A number of prominent energy experts in Oman participated in the conference including Eng. Abdulaziz Al Shedhani, Director General of Renewable Energy and Hydrogen at the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, Eng. Yaqoub al Kiyumi, CEO of the Oman Energy and Water Procurement Company, Eng. Ibrahim al Harthi, Director General of Technical Regulation at the Public Services Regula-

tory Authority, and Eng. Faiza Al Harthiya, Director of Energy Sector, Oman 2040 Vision Implementation and Follow-up Unit, Eng. Yahya Al Rawahi, CEO of Shams al Dhahirah Electricity Generating Company, Dr Salem Al Hudhaili, CEO of Solar Wadi and Dr Adel Al Busaidi, Head of Energy Systems at Daleel Petroleum.

The conference was attended by more than 350 participants from various stakeholders in the Sultanate, including representatives from various Nama Group companies, in addition to specialists from Petroleum Development Oman and OQ, as well as electrical engineers from the Royal Oman Police and several ministries such as the Ministry of Information

and the Ministry of Health, Education and others.

The conference included an exhibition in parallel, in which Nama Group and a number of companies operating in the sector participated, to display and share their experiences and present the latest energy technologies and solutions.

Nama Group extends its thanks to all those who participated and contributed to the success of this conference, including employees and engineers from the sector companies and co-organisers. Nama Group also empathises with the importance of the foundations of renewable energy to enable the development components of the electricity sector, based on the group's commitment to achieving the government's rational aspirations to raise the percentage of contribution of various renewable energy projects to 30 per cent of the total electricity generation in the Sultanate by 2030.

Nama Group is moving forward according to a specific and approved timetable for the implementation of renewable energy projects to generate electric power in the various governorates of the Sultanate.

The group seeks to be a tributary to diversify the economy, provide job opportunities and attract new investments, as well as localise modern technologies and open new horizons for knowledge and professional development.



ARE ULTRA-PROCESSED FOODS HARMFUL?

EXPERTS PRESENT THEIR ARGUMENT

A study by the American Society for Nutrition outline the case for and against using the concept of ultra-processed foods to help inform dietary guidelines beyond conventional food classification systems.



The authors, Carlos A. Monteiro, MD, PhD, of the University of Sao Paulo in Sao Paulo, Brazil, and Arne Astrup, MD, PhD, of Novo Nordisk Foundation in Hellerup, Denmark, will discuss the issue in a live virtual debate June 14 during NUTRITION 2022 LIVE ONLINE.

The debate centres around NOVA, a system developed by Monteiro and colleagues that classifies foods by their degree of industrial processing, ranging from unprocessed or minimally processed to ultra-processed. NOVA defines ultra-processed foods as those made using sequences of processes that extract substances from foods and alter them with chemicals or additives in order to formulate the final product.

Ultra-processed foods are characteristically designed to be cheap, palatable and convenient; examples include soft drinks and candy, packaged snacks and pastries, ready-to-heat products, and reconstituted meat products or plant-based alternatives.

Studies have linked consumption of ultra-processed foods -- which are often high in salt, sugar and fat -- with weight gain and an increased risk of chronic diseases, even after adjusting for the amount of salt, sugar and fat in the diet.

While the mechanisms behind these associations are not fully understood, Monteiro argues that the existing evidence is sufficient to justify discouraging the consumption of ultra-processed foods in dietary recommendations and government policies.

"The negative dietary effects of ultra-processed foods have now been

made clear by many nationally-representative studies," Monteiro wrote in his position paper. "Guidelines should emphasise the preference for unprocessed or minimally processed foods and freshly made meals and make explicit the need to avoid ultra-processed foods."

In a counter argument, Astrup argues that classifying foods according to their processing methods does not meaningfully improve upon existing systems and could lead to unintended consequences.

For example, there are both nutritional and environmental benefits to increasing the emphasis on plant-based foods, yet many healthful plant-based meat and dairy alternatives are considered ultra-processed.

Astrup also contends that unhealthy foods like fries, burgers and pizza would be considered ultra-processed if purchased from a fast-food restaurant but minimally processed if made at home with similar ingredients.

"Clearly, many aspects of food processing can affect health outcomes, but conflating them into the notion of ultra-processing is unnecessary because the main determinants of chronic disease risk are already captured by existing nutrient profiling systems," wrote Astrup.

"The NOVA classification adds little to existing nutrient profiling systems; characterizes several healthy, nutrient-dense foods as unhealthy; and is counterproductive to solve the major global food production challenges," — **ANI**

Studies have linked consumption of ultra-processed food, which are often high in salt, sugar and fat, with weight gain and an increased risk of chronic diseases, even after adjusting for the amount of salt, sugar and fat in the diet.



IN PICTURES



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Turkish farmers turn to China-financed power plant for irrigation water
Aerial picture shows a view of the Emba Hunutlu power plant in Sugozy village in south Turkey's Adana Province. Faced with chronic drought, farmers in southern Turkey have turned to a China-financed thermal power plant that provides irrigation water from an environment-friendly wastewater solution.



Chongqing Zoo holds birthday party for giant pandas
Giant pandas enjoy food during their birthday party at the Chongqing Zoo in southwest China's Chongqing Municipality. The zoo held a birthday party for two one-year-old giant pandas named Xingxing, Chenchen, and four three-year-old giant pandas Shuangshuang, Chongchong, Xixi, Qingqing respectively. Xinhua



Highlight of 2022 Azerbaijan Grand Prix first practice session
Alfa Romeo Ferrari team's Chinese driver Zhou Guanyu competes during the first practice session of the 2022 Azerbaijan Grand Prix in Baku. Xinhua



Random COVID-19 testing in Canadian airports to be suspended
Travellers wearing face masks are seen at the arrival hall of Vancouver International Airport in Richmond, British Columbia, Canada. The federal government announced that it will suspend mandatory random COVID-19 testing at all airports for vaccinated travellers starting to reduce traveller wait times. Xinhua



Aditya Roy Kapur, Sanjana Sanghi, Ahmed Khan and Shaira Ahmed Khan at the trailer launch
Bollywood actor Aditya Roy Kapur, actress Sanjana Sanghi, producer Ahmed Khan and his wife Shaira Ahmed Khan at the trailer launch of their upcoming film 'Om: The Battle Within', in Mumbai on Friday. ANI Photo



Belgian Chocolate Village showcases chocolate products
A jacket made from chocolate is displayed in the Belgian Chocolate Village in Brussels, Belgium. The village is a museum to showcase the knowledge, history and culture related to chocolate. Xinhua



Relics unearthed from tomb of Marquis of Haihun on display
Visitors look at bronze chimes, unearthed from tomb of Marquis of Haihun, displayed at Emperor Qinshihuang's Mausoleum Site Museum in Xi'an, northwest China's Shaanxi Province. Xinhua



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ROUND-UP



Bank Muscat extends special offer on Sayyarati

Sayyarati auto finance is the easiest path to financing one's dream car, and the ongoing offer includes a special discounted short-term rate that starts at just 3.5 per cent for both new and used cars

MUSCAT: Taking into consideration excellent customer feedback and the high demand for its Sayyarati auto financing, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has announced an extension of its special offer, which features attractive interest rates starting at just 3.5 per cent for the purchase of new and pre-owned cars.

The bank has announced that customers can take advantage of the special rates till August 31. The extension of the offer is in line with the bank's customer-centric strategy and commitment to continuously develop new services that meet current and future customer needs.

Speaking on the occasion, Abdullah Tamman Al Mashaani, General Manager - Products, Bank Muscat, said: "We are delighted with the wonderful customer response to Sayyarati Auto Finance and its various benefits and features. As part of our strategy to partner with various auto dealerships and improve road safety by making ownership of some of the best and safest vehicles in the world easy, the special Sayyarati offer has been extended until the end of August 2022. This will ensure that the maximum number of customers can benefit from the most competitive rates in the market, and are able to buy the vehicle



of their choice. We thank all our customers and partners for their continued confidence in Bank Muscat's products and services, and promise that we will continue to enhance customer experience in the future."

Sayyarati auto finance is the easiest path to financing one's

dream car, and the ongoing offer includes a special discounted short-term rate that starts at just 3.5 per cent for both new and used cars. Highly competitive rates are also available for up to 10 years along with free third-party insurance for financing used cars.

Omani nationals working in government and semi-government institutions as well as Tier 1 and Tier 2 companies are eligible for financing up to RO 60,000. Expatriates working in government and semi-government organizations as well as Tier 1 companies can also make use of the attractive interest rates in the offer.

It must be noted that Sayyarati enhances banking convenience as no postpaid cheques are needed, and instalments are automatically deducted from the customer's account once the mandate to do so is provided. Applications may be submitted at Sayyarati Centres in Wattayah or Salalah or at the nearest Bank Muscat branch.

Documents needed to ensure prompt processing of the application include copies of customer ID and Driving Licence, a salary transfer letter, valuation of the vehicle and seller's ID copy (for pre-owned cars).

SUPPORT



KR Eshraqa provides financial assistance to Association of Early Intervention

MUSCAT: Eshraqa, Khimji Ramdas' Social Development Arm will be supporting the construction of a new vocational centre for the Association of Early Intervention for children with special needs (AEIC). An agreement was signed by Nailesh Khimji, Director, Khimji Ramdas and Sabah Mohammed Al Bahlani, CEO AEIC.

The AEIC's vocational centre will be dedicated to providing children of determination with training and rehabilitation equipment and facilities that will ensure their integration into society, and help them and their families lead a better quality of life.

Nailesh mentioned: "Eshraqa strives to play a role in ensuring inclusive and quality education for all in the sultanate. We aim to promote lifelong learning, by supporting programmes in early childhood development, as well as access to technical and voca-

tional education and training for the youth. Our commitment to the Association of Early Intervention is in line with the same vision. Through our assistance, we hope to enable generations of special needs children, to reach their full potential and take part in shaping their future and in turn that of the nation."

Al Bahlani said: "We need to leverage private and public partners in new, innovative ways to finance and scale infrastructure that will help in bridging the inclusion divide for children with special needs. I would like to thank the KR Group for their philanthropic efforts and support in this regard. The vocational centre will offer special needs children access to boundless beneficial activities and facilitate new ways of interactive learning while enriching their life's experiences through meaningful exchanges."

TESTIMONIAL

Renault Koleos allows owners to elevate their everyday journey

MUSCAT: Renault Koleos effortlessly blends refined luxury with functionality offering business class comfort for everyday adventure.

Owners say it is a vehicle that offers the discerning driver a unique experience that combines innovative technology, unequalled comfort and uncompromising safety to perfectly serve all of their top-end vehicle expectations.

The 2022 Renault Koleos SUV is engineered to demand attention and make heads turn. Offering off-road capability with its all-wheel drive transmission, Renault Koleos stands out with its assertive exterior design and enhanced interior comfort. With its athletic profile, robust front end, roomy seats, taut lines underscored with chrome, Renault Koleos allows owners to take their journey with confidence. Featuring a powerful and efficient new engine and more on-board technologies Renault

Koleos fully embodies the values of the top of the Renault line-up.

The 2022 Renault Koleos also comes with additional features, such as rich acoustics with the BOSE audio system, lighting options, multimedia, navigation, Bluetooth and driving assistance systems in addition to easy park assist.

Renault Koleos has been capturing everyone's attention in Oman with its charismatic, features rich and packed with safety attributes. If you are looking for a spacious SUV with elegant styling and unparalleled four-wheel drive technology, Renault Koleos is the car to buy.

Afrah Al-Kharusi from Nizwa is fascinated with the brand's easy trunk access and hand-free function. She says, "The model features powerful, efficient engines, safety attributes and on-board technologies. The SUV is marked for its



fuel efficiency and infotainment options too. With a sensor located under the bumper, all you need is a simple gesture with your foot to open the boot with ease. It is very practical when your hands are full when returning from office or shopping. I also like its 8.7" touch-

screen navigation with R-Link2 system & Bose sound, 5 colour ambient lighting."

The model's spacious cabin inspired Taamir Al Hinai from Muscat into buying a Renault Koleos. "Renault Koleos has a 2,705 mm wheelbase - for a to-

tal vehicle length of 4,673mm - counts amongst the longest in the class and allows Koleos to boast record-breaking interior space to position itself as a D-segment SUV," Taamir says.

Sabeel Al Mashari from Muscat says, "Renault Koleos stands out with its assertive exterior design and enhanced interior comfort. The wide-ranging suite of driver-assistance systems and infotainment options it offers make it a top brand."

Sohail Al Jabri, who loves to go on adventure drives, loves Renault Koleos All mode 4x4-i technology. "One can get off the beaten track with Renault Koleos any time. It's all mode 4x4-i technology, swap between 2WD mode, Auto mode and 4x4 (lock) mode is really impressive. It offers an ideal balance of torque between the front and rear wheels for perfect grip in all circumstances," he adds.

Sameer Zedjali from Rusayl likes Renault Koleos for its strong and high-end design, comfort and outstanding performance. He says, "Koleos extends a variety of features that are among the most capable in the market. I particularly like its blind spot warning with flank protection warning, auto park assists and remote start engine with timer option."

A spokesperson for Renault Oman, from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles, said, "Well-defined edges make the overall profile of the 2022 Koleos appear solid and athletic and are one of the most prominent features in this new version. A great combination of power and refinement, the Koleos makes its presence felt with large shoulders and muscular side panels that are further enhanced by a robust front end; broad, smart-looking tires; and a distinctly large wheelbase."

INDIAN SCHOOL DARSAIT



ISD connects with nature on World Environment Day

MUSCAT: Indian School Darsait (ISD) organised an awareness programme on the occasion of World Environment Day on June 5 by joining the 2022 World Environment Day Campaign #OnlyOneEarth that advocates for transformative environmental change on a global scale.

The students of class IX B conducted a special assembly as the culmination of the day's celebration. The highlights of the programme included a speech on the importance of Environment Day, a poem, a recitation on Mother Earth along with a video presentation while the school choir enthralled all with a melodious song to create awareness of saving the environment. In his message, the principal brought to the students' attention the rarity of our planet Earth in the endless universe that we live in and spoke about the present-day scenario of our environment. He accentuated the steps to be taken proactively to make our environment healthy not only as part of this celebration but as a way of life.

Amar Srivastava, Principal and Geeta Chauhan, Vice Principal took part in the programme by planting trees inside the campus.

NEW BRANCH OPENING

Sky Rays Global Travel and Tourism rebranded

MUSCAT: Sky Rays Global with a track record of more than 18 years in the travel and tourism industry has rebranded the company as Sky Rays Global Travel and Tourism.

Sky Rays which is operating in Oman for one year has opened its office in Lulu Hypermarket in Wadi Luwami in Seeb.

It is opening its second branch in Oman Avenues Mall in Al Ghubra on June 13.

"We aim to do more in the travel

and tourism industry in Oman," said Mohammed Rassal, Managing Director of Sky Rays.

"In the coming years, we are aiming to become one of the best-established full content travel and tourism companies in Sultanate of Oman and the Middle East region," Rassal added.

Amal Boshai, Reservation Manager and Iman Al Balushi, Holidays Supervisor also attended the press conference.



FIRST PHASE

Sohar International successfully completes renovation of 42 houses in Khabourah

MUSCAT: Reflecting its ongoing commitment to the people and community it serves, Sohar International announced the successful completion of the first phase of its initiative to renovate houses of 100 families in the Governorate of Al Batinah (North) having completed the renovation of 42 houses in the Wilayat of Khabourah.

The governorate was the worst affected by Cyclone Shaheen, which hit the Sultanate last year.

Initiating the second phase that kicked off recently in presence of several officials from the governorate and members of the executive management of the bank, Sohar International targets yet more affected families in the Wilayat of Suwaiq

Commenting on the initiative, Ahmed Al Musalmi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International said, "Sohar International has al-



ways been a socially responsible financial institution that has been invested in the development of the local community and its people. Cyclone Shaheen came at a time when a lot of people were already

coping with the effects of the pandemic. At Sohar International, we, therefore, took a comprehensive approach to help alleviate the plight of those affected. Our efforts went beyond committing financial

assistance as we committed to renovating houses of more than 100 families in Al Batinah North. We are confident that our efforts will give a huge impetus to restoring the community and building back

the lives of the people."

In rapid response to the impacts of Cyclone Shaheen, Sohar International has allocated RO 5 million providing interest-free loans and deferment options on debt repayments to support impacted customers' rebuild.

With the spirit of volunteerism, social service, and philanthropy running through every member of the Sohar International team, the bank has achieved significant milestones in its various endeavours to enrich the lives of people and drive socio-economic progress in the country.

As an agile, progressive, and community-centric financial organisation, Sohar International will stay committed to its social responsibilities as it continues to come up with innovative ways to address the diverse needs of different segments of society.



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THIRD EDITION

Engineering Village, bp Oman conclude Future Engineers programme

MUSCAT: In partnership with bp Oman, and in collaboration with Department of Innovation and Scientific Olympics at the Ministry of Education, Engineering Village held a closing ceremony marking the conclusion of the third cycle of the Future Engineers programme, under the patronage of Najeeb Ali Al Rawas, Governor of Al Dhahirah.

The programme offered educational workshops within engineering, mathematics, science and technology fields, with topics related to programming and electronics targeting school students from the first to fourth grades.

The programme was implemented across 22 schools within Al Dhahirah and Al Dakhiliyah governorates.

Representatives from several



organisations including the Ministry of Education, bp Oman and schools attended the ceremony.

The programme included a variety of fun and interactive theoretical and practical workshops aimed at school students in the primary

grades as well as training sessions for the teachers participating in the programme, with special kits provided which can be applied to the programme and other aspects of the school curriculum.

Shamsa Al-Rawahi, bp Oman



Social Investment Manager, commented: "Enhancing education is one of our priorities at bp Oman. The programme helps encourage students to learn by teaching science in a fun and practical way. Through the programme, we were

able to train 90 teachers and benefit more than 4500 primary grade students in Al Dhahirah and Al Dakhiliyah regions."

Fahd Al-Siyabi, CEO of Engineering Village, further added: "The continuous support we have

received from bp Oman and the Department of Innovation and Scientific Olympics at the Ministry of Education has helped us achieve one common goal; which is to find creative and effective ways of educating students in Oman. I believe the programme will empower future generations to be informed around trends and technologies that are crucial to learn."

Dr Maya Al Azri, Educational Expert, Director of Innovation and Scientific Olympic Department at the Ministry of Education added: "We are keen to continue our partnerships in supporting such programmes that develop students' abilities in terms of innovation and creativity. The programme had a positive impact on students and the educational environment at schools."

MHD ACERE opens new facility in Salalah

The facility is home to a one-stop service centre for all commercial vehicles and construction equipment brands that MHD ACERE represents in Oman



MUSCAT: Mohsin Haider Darwish recently inaugurated a new facility in Salalah.

The facility is home to a one-stop service centre for all commercial vehicles and construction equipment brands that MHD ACERE represents in Oman. The facility was inaugurated under the patronage of Dr Ahmed Mohsin Al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality, and attended by Mohsin Hani Al Bahrani, the CEO of MHD ACERE.

Located on the busy Samahram street in the industrial zone, the new facility will serve the various segments of the population in Salalah and the broader region of Dhofar. Commenting on this occasion, Mohsin Hani Al Bahrani, the CEO of MHD ACERE said, "We are pleased to offer solutions and services of high standards to the rapidly growing market in Dhofar. The existence of a specialized workshop in commercial vehicles and construction equipment will certainly contribute to the provision of local markets and cover the growing de-

mand for this type of service."

The facility will provide specialized spare parts, testing, maintenance services, and much more for commercial vehicles and construction equipment owners. Some of the CVCE brands the facility handles are:

Ford Trucks

Ford Trucks is a leading automotive brand that provides commercial vehicles and solutions for businesses of all sizes. As one of the largest heavy truck manufacturers in the world, Ford Trucks manufactures a wide range of heavy trucks, including tractors, construction trucks like all-wheel drive tipper, concrete mixers and pumps, and distribution trucks weighing more than 16 tons. With more than half a century of experience in design and production, Ford Trucks engineers all of their vehicles' main components, including their all-new engines.

Ecotorg, the engine at the heart

of the Ford Trucks Construction Series, exceeds all expectations in the area of performance and economy. In addition, the trucks boast a variety of incredible features, such as automatic transmission, optimum wheelbase, and an improved steering system that enhances manoeuvrability.

Ashok Leyland

Ashok Leyland, a subsidiary of the Hinduja group, is the second-largest manufacturer of commercial vehicles in India, the fourth-largest producer of buses worldwide, and the 19th-largest producer of trucks. Ashok Leyland develops trucks and buses to propel economies forward. Long haul, distribution, construction and mining are just a few of the dozens of applications suited to Ashok Leyland's extensive range.

Ashok Leyland enables millions of people to reach their destinations with the highest safety standards, incredible performance, and

comfortable design while driving business success through the transportation of goods and materials every day.

XCMG

Construction machinery manufacturer XCMG was founded in 1989. The company offers a wide range of loading and handling equipment for construction and mining such as wheeled loaders (skid steers, backhoes, etc.), heavy-duty excavators, and graders and incorporates advanced technologies to ensure efficient and effective earthmoving.

This collection also includes practical scissor lifts, telescopic handlers, robust electric and diesel forklifts, truck-mounted cranes and aerial platforms up to 58.6 meters, and other handling and warehouse machines. Aside from mining equipment and cranes, XCMG also manufactures light and heavy road machinery, including walk-behind compactors, walk-in compactors, light rollers, etc., which provide thick layer compaction made possible by their tremendous force.

This variety of products is designed to suit the needs of clients, with advanced technologies such as intelligent braking, precise weighing, panoramic images, and others, giving cargo transportation a more efficient, safer and more reliable operation, as well as more comfort and convenience.

MHD ACERE is a renowned name among the top contributors in the Omani private sector. With establishments that span the country, MHD ACERE has attracted various world-class brands in fields like automotive, construction equipment, and renewable energy and successfully introduced its products and services to the Omani market.

WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP



Toyota Gazoo Racing shines at Rally de Portugal

MUSCAT: The Gazoo Racing (GR) World Rally Team (WRT) recently celebrated a fantastic one-two finish for the GR Yaris Rally1 vehicle on its gravel debut at the Rally de Portugal, the round four of the 2022 FIA World Rally Championship (WRC). Kalle Rovanperä scored his third win in a row just ahead of team-mate Elfyn Evans, with Toyota extending its lead for the Manufacturers' Championship by 59 points.

In the first test of the new generation of hybrid electric-powered vehicles on gravel roads, the GR Yaris Rally1 was the vehicle to beat, winning 15 of the 19 stages across the rally. The first day proved thrilling with an intense battle between Evans in the No. 33 Toyota GR Yaris Rally1 and Rovanperä who doubled up as championship leader for the first time in his career in the No. 69 Toyota GR Yaris Rally1. The pair were in a league of their own through the second day, and the lead moved into Rovanperä's hands in difficult mixed weather conditions during the afternoon.

But Rovanperä and co-driver

Jonne Halttunen went on to win the penultimate stage as well as the rally-ending Power Stage, ensuring another maximum points haul to increase their championship lead to 46 points after wins in three of the first four events. Evans and co-driver Scott Martin finished 15.2s away from the victory as they returned to the podium for the first time this season.

Akio Toyoda, President, and CEO of Toyota Motor Corporation commented: "Kalle, Jonne, congratulations! It is amazing to achieve three consecutive victories, especially as it was done on snow, asphalt, and gravel rallies. I truly thank them for proving that the GR Yaris Rally1 is the vehicle that can win on any type of road. Also, it was great to have a one-two finish and I thank Elfyn, Scott and everybody on the team for the outstanding performance that saw Toyota completing the first third of the season leading the championship standings. I appreciate our fans' continuous support that inspires us to strive to make our vehicle the strongest at the end of the season."

SUHAIL BAHWAN AUTOMOBILES

Nissan's pick-up and drop off facility for service appointment enjoys popularity



MUSCAT: Nissan Oman, from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles (SBA)'s pick-up and drop-off service for customers with prior service appointments has found many takers.

The facility which is available in the capital area needs to be pre-booked at a nominal fee via Nissan Oman Toll-free (80050011), Nissan Oman website (www.nissanoman.com), sending SMS <BOOK> to 99825454, writing email on appointment@sbigh.com or by WhatsApp on 97692689.

A senior official of Nissan Oman,

from the house of Suhail Bahwan Automobiles (SBA), said, "We are continuously engaging with customers on enhancing their experience. This offering is aligned with customer feedback and our efforts to make a difference in the ownership experience. This service provides our service customers with the comfort that they can get necessary vehicle work completed without stepping out.

He added, "When they opt for this service, customers do not have to take time off work or adjust their plans. Their car will be picked up

from their home or place of work, removing the inconvenience of delivering it to a service centre. Nissan Oman will take care of everything related to the car including servicing, repairs, tyres, wheel alignments and all services under the manufacturer's warranty."

Every customer purchasing a Nissan vehicle can be assured of Nissan's top class after sales service, which guarantees the advantage of well-trained experts.

The customers can be assured that Nissan always uses only genuine replacement parts. Customers

can expect consistency and support during after sales service, which ascertains Nissan's performance and resale value in the years to come.

Nissan Oman is extending a 'book a home test drive' service for its prospective customers. The service enables potential customers to schedule their test drives online at their convenience. A home test drive can be booked simply by logging on to the official SBA Nissan Oman website or through the customer service toll free number 80050011.



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