

HUNDREDS BRAVE THE COLD TO TAKE ON THE HIMAM TRAIL

At the first glimpse of sunlight on Saturday morning, around 421 trail runners representing 35 countries lined up at Birkat Al Mouz Bayt Ar Rudayda castle to take on the Himam Trail Run Race. The moment the clock ticked around 6:15 am, they were off, climbing into the mountains by as high as 2,210m. **>A5**



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HIS MAJESTY RECEIVES THANKS CABLE

His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey in reply to His Majesty's greetings cable on his country's 98th Anniversary of Proclamation of the Republic. In the cable, President Erdogan expressed his sincere appreciation for His Majesty's heartfelt sentiments, praying to the Almighty Allah to grant His Majesty good health and happiness and the Omani people further progress and prosperity. President Erdogan affirmed the keenness of enhancing the relations of the two countries for the good of their peoples. **-ONA**



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E-PAYMENT

MoCIIP lists businesses that must offer e-payment services to consumers

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) announced the list of existing businesses that are obligated to provide electronic payment service to consumers, starting from 2022.

The MoCIIP said in a statement, "Starting next January, the ministry, in cooperation with a number of competent authorities, will begin the first stages of implementing the decision to obligate some existing commercial activities to provide electronic payment service to consumers."

Digital transformation

The statement continued that this came in pursuit of comprehensive digital transformation in line with the vision of Oman 2040.

The ministry pointed out that these commercial activities include industrial areas, complexes and commercial centres, gift markets, food sales, gold and silver sales, restaurants and cafes, fruit and vegetable sales, electronic, building materials and tobacco sales.

"Providing the service without installation fees or monthly or annual fees for private sector institutions and commitment only to merchant transaction fees specified by the Central Bank of Oman," the statement added.

PRINCE MOHAMMED BIN SALMAN VISIT TO BOOST OMAN-SAUDI TIES

The Saudi Crown Prince's visit to the Sultanate begins on 6 December 2021

The two countries have contributed to building relations in several fields, including the agreement signed in March 1990 on demarcation of joint borders

MUSCAT: His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud, Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) will visit the Sultanate of Oman this Monday, December 6, 2021.

This came in a statement issued on by Diwan of Royal Court, reading as follows: "In affirmation of the ties of fraternity and kinship, and the historic relations



binding the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and, in culmination of the Royal visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik to the KSA last July 2021 and his meeting with the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud of the KSA, HRH Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud, KSA Crown

Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence will pay a visit to the Sultanate of Oman with effect from Monday, 6 December 2021.

The visit will explore diverse areas that serve interests of the two countries and meet aspirations of their peoples towards further prosperous future.

May Allah the Almighty bless

the leaderships of the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with success for the good of their people and the Arab and Muslim nations!

The Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia continue boosting and developing their deep-rooted relations in the various spheres for the interest of the people of the two countries, un-

der the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik and the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Within this context comes the visit of HRH Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud, to the Sultanate as well as the visit His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik made, last July, to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia wherein a number of agreements were signed mainly the one on establishment of the Omani-Saudi Joint Coordination Council between the governments of the two countries.

Through the Omani-Saudi Joint Coordination Council, the two countries will coordinate and consult on a number of issues of common concern in all spheres and on expanding cooperation horizons and would sign a number of agreements and Memoranda of Understanding for the interests of both the countries.

During the past 50 years, the two countries have contributed to building brotherly relations in several fields including the agreement on demarcation of the joint borders between the two countries, signed in March 1990.

>A2



TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN UAE envoy stresses common history

1 Mohammed Sultan Al Suwaidi, Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to the Sultanate of Oman has affirmed in a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA) and Oman TV that the Omani-UAE relations are deep-rooted and based on ancestry and common history. **>A3**

WORLD Omicron could slow growth, warns IMF

2 The new Omicron variant of COVID-19 could slow the global recovery, International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva has said. In its most recent World Economic Outlook, the IMF projected global growth of 5.9% this year and 4.9% next year. **>A6**

MARKET Air cargo demand up 9.4 per cent in M-E

3 Middle Eastern carriers saw a 9.4 per cent rise in international cargo volumes in October 2021 versus October 2019, according to a new IATA report. Economic conditions continue to support air cargo growth but are slightly weaker than in the previous months, the report said. **>B1**

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MUSCAT



TALE OF GRIT

'We braved Shaheen and tended to the critically injured'

Times News Service

MUSCAT: A nurse serving at a clinic in Bidiyah has told of the determination and courage shown by her team to continue to provide healthcare to those who needed it during Cyclone Shaheen, despite the extensive damage her facility suffered.

The cyclone had extensively damaged the health centre's walls, caused a power cut, and disrupted communications to the outside world, while the accompanying flooding meant senior legal nurse Sultana bin Salim Al Riyamiya and her colleagues were unable to get to their cars to seek out assistance.

"Although I was not paying very close attention to the weather forecasts, all of us had heard of the developments relating to Shaheen," she said, in an exclusive interview with *Times of Oman*. "On the Sunday of the cyclone, I went to work at 4pm as usual, taking some of my personal effects with me."

By the time she reached work, the rain that had begun earlier in the day intensified into a heavy downpour, and proceeded to wors-



DUTY FIRST: Senior legal nurse Sultana bin Salim Al Riyamiya

en throughout the night. The health centre held out as best as it could against the elements, but at 3am, floodwaters from the overflowing wadis in the surrounding areas burst through its doors. "The water flooded the entire centre: it entered the X-Ray room and some of our treatment areas first," recalled Al Riyamiya. "Our staff cars were completely submerged underwater. All of us were in a state of panic and

tension...we prayed to God to protect our families and children."

"We needed, however, to stay calm and continue our work, as we knew it was our responsibility to provide assistance to nationals and expatriates in the area," she explained. "We did receive two patients who required our attention. Both of them had been injured during Shaheen: the first had deep wounds in his legs, as well as frac-

tures, while the second was suffering from a head wound.

Shaheen caused extensive damage across huge swathes of the Batinah regions of Oman, while also having a far lesser impact on other governorates in the country. Homes were flooded, property was washed away, electricity and communication poles were uprooted, and roads in the area suffered extensive damage. Bidiyah is located in the Sharqiyah region, and was among those areas to feel the wrath of the cyclone. The town is nearly 200km from Muscat, and about 50km from the local capital of Ibra.

Government agencies, the military, and civil defence organisations, along with charities, municipalities, and volunteers from across the country, helped quickly rebuild in the wake of the cyclone. Sultana's house was also not spared from the destruction.

"We knew it was our responsibility to remain vigilant until the waters subsided, which they did around noon," added Sultana. "I went to a relative's home which was just 20 minutes away from the

clinic, but it still took a long time, as the roads were broken, and it was difficult to navigate them at the time. It was due to the help of Ahmed and Hamid, the sons of my colleague, that we were able to get out of the clinic safely."

"At 5:30 that evening, I arrived home, to see my children waiting for me, in a wretched state; tears flowed down their faces, while my husband was grief-stricken by the damage caused to our house by overflowing wadis," she recalled.

Despite the hardship suffered by Al Riyamiya and her colleagues, she is grateful to the government for the swift action and relief measures provided.

"I also want to thank all the medical staff for continuing to due their duty during the cyclone," she said.

"I also wish to thank the children of my colleague, paramedic Hasina Al Sinani, who helped us in the aftermath of Shaheen.

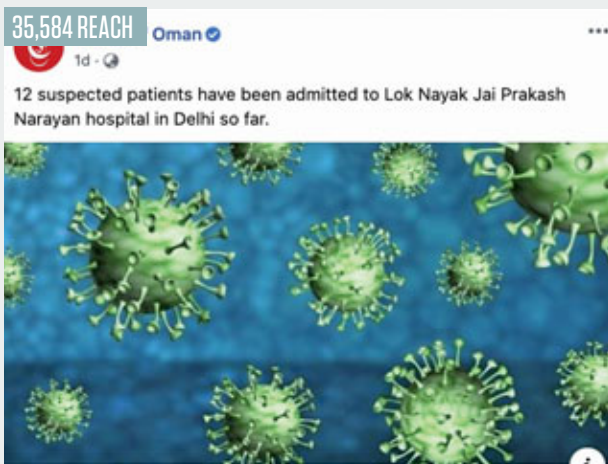
"I hope that all the emergency service personnel did a great job during what was a time of great need for the people in this part of the country," she added.



Dhuhr.....	12:02pm
Asr.....	3:05pm
Maghrib.....	5:25pm
Isha.....	6:40pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....	5:15am

Trending ON SOCIAL MEDIA

📖 MOST READ ON FACEBOOK



12 suspected patients have been admitted to Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan hospital in Delhi so far.



12 Omicron suspects admitted to Delhi's LNJP hospital

A story on the spread of the Omicron variant in New Delhi reached 35,584 people and had 2,661 engagements on Facebook.

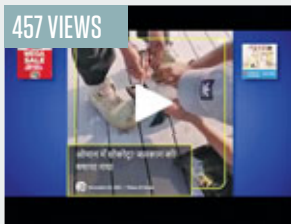
📺 MOST WATCHED VIDEO ON FACEBOOK



The Maghrib Minute video

The Maghrib Minute video had 6,800 views and reached 28,200 people on Facebook

📺 MOST VIEWED VIDEO ON INSTAGRAM



Maghrib Minute video in Hindi

The Maghrib Minute video in Hindi had 457 views and 26 likes on Instagram.

VISIT

< FROM
A1

Economic ties to get strengthened

The cooperation and the strong ties between the two countries have shown in the GCC Summit (Sultan Qaboos, Sheikh Sabah Summit) held last January.

The summit had stressed the necessity for enhancement of the regional and international role of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) through development of the strategic partnerships among the GCC and other countries and regional and international organisations for the joint interests and through enhancement of the military integration under the supervi-

sion of the Joint Defence Council and the Supreme Defence Committee and the Common Military Command of the GCC in order to face any challenges.

The visit of HRH Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud, Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) to the Sultanate would, no doubt, review a number of issues of common concern, the economic relations between the two countries and a number of regional issues. —ONA



Oman-Saudi Arabia ties historic: Saudi envoy

The visit would make a qualitative shift in relations and would mark a new and prosperous beginning



GREAT BEGINNING: Abdullah bin Saud Al Anzi, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA

MUSCAT: Abdullah bin Saud Al Anzi, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Sultanate of Oman, reaffirmed that the visit of HRH Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud, Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will boost the deep-rooted distinct relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The ambassador described the relation between the two countries as historic as it expands the bilateral relations to wider ho-

rizons. He said in a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA) that the visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and His Majesty's meeting with the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and HRH, Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud, represented

a qualitative shift in the bilateral relations, established by late Sultan Qaboos bin Said bin Taimur, following his first visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik has proceeded with the same method of further cementing the bilateral relations and ties, he added. The visit would make a

qualitative shift and would mark a new and prosperous beginning, which would reflect in aspirations of the peoples of the two countries, he said, adding that the visit would further enhance cooperation in the various spheres within the visions of the two countries; Oman Vision 2040 and the Saudi Vision 2030. —ONA





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DEVELOPMENT

PDO to celebrate opening of Jibal-Khuff Project tomorrow

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) will celebrate on Monday the opening of Jibal-Khuff Project, the second largest in the company's history under the patronage of His Highness Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs.

Located 50 kilometres from

Fahud oilfield, Jibal- Khuff Project is one of the strategic projects which contribute to meeting the increasing demand for oil and gas in the Sultanate and contributes to reduce the gas imports of PDO.

Costing \$2.6 billion, it is one of the largest projects and includes the construction of oil and gas production plant, which is a refinery rather than a traditional oil and gas station, said Munir

Khamis Al Hamadi, Project Manager of Jibal - Khuff Project. It would produce 5,000,000 cubic metres of gas a day and 20,000 barrels of crude oil per day, he added.

The project includes 33 oil and gas production wells linked to a pipeline network with a length of 198 kilometres and construction of a power station of 45MW capacity among other facilities.—**ONA**



Rooted firmly in past, Oman-UAE ties aim for sky on neighbour's 50th National Day



Omani-UAE relations are based on ancestry, common history, Mohammed Sultan Al Suwaidi, Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates to the Sultanate of Oman affirmed

MUSCAT: Mohammed Sultan Al Suwaidi, Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to the Sultanate of Oman has affirmed that the Omani-UAE relations are deep-rooted and based on ancestry and common history.

He said in a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA) and Oman TV, that these relations have reached advanced level in all spheres, thanks to the joint keenness of His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik and Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, UAE President who sphere no effort in



The UAE's forward march is inspired by the Founder of the State, the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan and led by President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan and members of the UAE Supreme Council, said Mohammed Sultan Al Suwaidi, Ambassador of the UAE to the Sultanate of Oman. —**ONA**

pushing these relations toward wider horizons.

In the investments front, the UAE Ambassador pointed out that his country tops the Arab and GCC list of investors in Oman. The volume of trade exchange between Oman and the UAE in 2010 reached AED8 billion, said the ambassador, who pointed out that this number have doubled 500 per cent to

reach AED50 billion in 2021.

He underscored his country's keenness on investment in non-oil sectors, such as tourism, logistics converting industries. This drive, the ambassador affirmed, comes in line with the Sultanate of Oman's approach to diversify sources of income within the context of Oman Vision 2040.

With regard to the United Arab Emirates celebrations of the 50th

National Day, the UAE Ambassador to Oman said, "My country moves with steady strides towards achieving further development in various sectors.

"This march is inspired by the Founder of the State, the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan. It is led by President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan and members of the UAE Supreme Council". —**ONA**

UAE 50TH NATIONAL DAY

Sultanate joins UAE in celebrations; border checkpoints hold colourful events

SHINAS/ AL BURAIMI: The Sultanate of Oman on Thursday joined the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in marking the UAE 50th National Day.

Celebratory events at the at the Al Wajaja and, Hamasa border checkpoints were among the highlights of the day.

Al Wajaja

In this context, the Secretariat General of National Celebrations (SGNC), in cooperation with Royal Oman Police (ROP), organised a ceremony at Al Wajaja border checkpoint.

Hamasa

Similarly, Hamasa border checkpoint in Al Buraimi Governorate organised a ceremony marking the 50th National Day of the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The ceremony included a number of operettas produced by the Secretariat General of National Celebrations (SGNC). The ceremony reflects the cohesion and unity between peoples of the two countries.

Attended

The ceremony was attended by a number of officers at Al Buraimi Governorate Police Command and Al Ain border checkpoints, members of the State Council, members of Shura Council, and a number of government officials in Al Buraimi.

The ceremony included many activities, in addition to some musical pieces played by the ROP Music Band.

Those arriving from UAE were received at Al Wajaja border checkpoint with souvenirs in celebration of this occasion. —**ONA**



OMAN



MEETING



Oman, UAE review strong relations

ABU DHABI: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister and Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayid Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) reviewed yesterday the strong relations between the two countries and ways of further development of cooperation in various fields.

The meeting also tackled the keenness of the leaders of the two countries for development and enhancement of joint cooperation between the two countries.

On the occasion of the 50th National Day of the United Arab Emirates, Sayyid Badr expressed his sincere sentiments for the UAE president, the government and the people of the United Arab Emirates along with his wishes of further progress and development for the UAE under the leadership of Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, UAE President, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince and Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces and members of the UAE Supreme Council.

During the meeting, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan expressed his wishes of further progress and prosperity for the Sultanate under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tark and further development to the brotherly ties between the two countries.—**ONA**

BIRD WATCHING IN BARR AL HIKMAN AND MASIRAH ISLAND



The Sultanate of Oman is a perfect spot for bird watching as many migratory birds make the Sultanate their home during the winter months. According to Oman's Ministry of Tourism, "Oman witnesses huge swarms of migratory birds during their seasonal journey between their nesting habitats and the places where they spend winters, especially those birds migrating from Europe and East Asia. Many birds, especially water fowl, migrate from faraway regions like northern Siberia, and travel about five thousand kilometres. Visitors can see many species of birds in each of Oman's different regions. Al Hikman Peninsula, Masirah Island, Al Wusta Governorate beaches, the Lagoons, the beaches and springs in Dhofar are ideal places for bird observation. Many of these species live in Damaniyat Islands and in Musandam."

Barr Al Hikman is considered one of the most important bird migration stations both in Oman and Southeast Asia. Many birds congregate here, especially water birds coming from as far as Siberia's northern shores.

Located at the crossroads of some important bird migration routes, Masirah Island attracts birds from India and Pakistan in the east and from Africa in the west, and wintering birds from as far north as Siberia. "The island provides a perfect stopover point for travelling birds that cross more than one continent. The birds found in these places include Crab Plover, Eurasian Oystercatcher, Black-Winged Stilt, Pied Avocet, Sociable Lapwing, Pacific Golden Plover, Grey Plover, Lesser Sandplover, Eurasian Curlew, Egyptian Vultures and many others.



PICTURES: DERREL PINTO





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HUNDREDS OF RUNNERS BRAVE THE COLD TO TAKE ON THE HIMAM TRAIL RUN RACE

Times News Service

MUSCAT: At the first glimpse of sunlight this morning, around 421 trail runners representing 35 countries lined up at Birkat Al Mouz Bayt Ar Rudayda castle to take on the Himam Trail Run Race. The moment the clock ticked 6:15am, the starting pistol sounded and they were off, climbing into the mountains as high as 2,210m. This year's Himam Trail Race featured three distances, 20km, 35km and 70km. The first runners began to cross the finishing line after just over one hour 23 minutes after completing the 20km race and more athletes crossed the line for the next two hours and 50 minutes until all 145 athletes returned safely. Each course heads towards the village of Al Muaydin and nearby date plantations before ascending the mountainside in the ultimate test of endurance. The routes then reverse course to head for the finish line with a gentle descent back down the mountain. The battle for the lead went almost to the finishing line before Imad Al Farsi (OMA) managed to outlast Nasr Al Naabi (OMA) to take the gold medal. Omar Al Hadrami (OMA) finished third. The top ten male finishers were all Omani. The first female home was Ciara Blackstock (IRL) who finished eleventh overall in a dead heat with tenth place, completing the 20km course in 1:39:28. Next to cross the line were the leaders in the 35km race, once more dominated by local runners. Yusuf Al Subaihi (OMA) took

first place in a time of 3:01:43, followed six minutes later by Jamal Al Khatri (OMA) in a time of 3:07:35. Just 12 seconds later, Ghaith Al Saidi (OMA) finished third in a time of 3:07:47. The first female runner to complete the course was Joanna Buchholz (GBR) in a time of 4:25:28, finishing 22nd overall. Winners of each race receive a prize of OMR500, OMR300 for second and OMR 150 for third. The first female finisher will receive OMR150 and all runners completing the course within 18 hours will receive a medal. The 70km race this year is registered at the International Trail Running Association (ITRA) and carries three points for each finisher which helps towards ranking positions and entry into the world's toughest trail running marathon races, while the 35K carries 3 ITRA points. **Himam Adventure** The Himam Trail Race was organised by Himam Adventure, under the umbrella of Al Sahwa Team, Nizwa Club, and supported by the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth, and the Oman Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, and the Authority for SME Development (Riyada) in Al Dhakhlia. The event was sponsored by Petroleum Development Oman, gold sponsors Oman LNG, Ooredoo and bp Oman, and silver sponsors the Golden Tulip Nizwa and Mazoon Dairy, Zados and Daleel Petroleum.



WINNERS' LIST:

- 70KM Overall**
Rachid El Murabity, MAR, 6:57:07
Sami Al Saidi, OMA, 7:06:37
Hamdan Al Khatri, OMA, 7:28:48

70K Female leaders:
Suaad Al Nasibi, OMA, 10:07:22
Natalie Forester GBR 12:06:23
Dana Matar LEB 14:42:02

35KM - Overall
Yusuf Al Subaihi, OMA, 3:01:43
Jamal Al Khatri, OMA, 3:07:35
Ghaith Al Saidi, OMA, 3:07:47
- 35K Female leaders:**
Joanna Buchholz, GBR, 4:25:28
Liis Pagil - Estonia 4:47:53
Lynsey Mackay GBR 4:50:30

20KM - Overall
Imad Al Farsi, OMA, 1:23:51
Nasr Al Naabi, OMA, 1:24:14
Omar Al Hadrami, OMA, 1:28:12
20K Female leaders:
Ciara Blackstock, IRL, 1:39:28
Brenda Bac Netherlands 2:08:37
Klazina Stapel - Netherlands 2:09:12

Official results: <https://my.raceresult.com/187574/results>





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Omicron likely to slow economic growth: IMF

In its most recent World Economic Outlook, the IMF projected global growth of 5.9% this year and 4.9% next year

WASHINGTON: The new omicron variant of COVID-19 could slow the global economic recovery, International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said on Friday at an event in Washington.

In its most recent World Economic Outlook, the IMF projected global growth of 5.9% this year and 4.9% next year. The United States and other major economies suf-



International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva. — DW

ferred major downward revisions after the appearance of the delta strain of COVID-19.

The emergence of omicron lead to a major crash in the global stock and oil markets in late November, reflecting investors' concerns over the effect new coronavirus restrictions could have on economic

The IMF's recent forecasts raised concerns that global supply chain issues and uneven distribution of vaccines were slowing the recovery and that many countries were being left behind. A surge in demand in advanced economies along with shortages of key components has fueled a wave of price increases.

Georgieva said that to deal with inflation the US Federal Reserve will have to raise interest rates in 2022 rather than in 2023, as the IMF had previously predicted.

Georgieva encouraged the United States to implement tariff reductions as a "useful tool" to help contain inflation. She also called for more aggressive debt restructuring so that the current debt burden in developing countries doesn't become a major obstacle to global economic recovery.

"2022 is going to be a very pressing year in terms of dealing with debt," Georgieva said. Sovereign debt has risen 18% during the COVID pandemic, according to the IMF chief.

— DW

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PERSPECTIVES JOURNAL

Study says cardiovascular disease, high cholesterol linked to plastics

WASHINGTON: Phthalate — a chemical used to make plastics more durable — has led to increased plasma cholesterol levels, according to a recent study.

The findings of the study were published in the journal 'Environmental Health Perspectives'. "We found dicyclohexyl phthalate, or DCHP, strongly binds to a receptor called pregnane X receptor, or PXR," said Changcheng Zhou, who is a professor in the UCR School of Medicine.

"DCHP 'turns on' PXR in the gut, inducing the expression of key proteins required for cholesterol absorption and transport. Our experiments show that DCHP elicits high cholesterol by targeting intestinal PXR signalling," added Zhou.

DCHP, a widely used phthalate plasticizer, has recently been proposed by the Environmental Protection Agency as a high-priority substance for risk evaluation. Not much is known yet about DCHP's adverse effects on humans.

"To our knowledge, our study is the first to show the effects of



DCHP exposure on high cholesterol and cardiovascular disease risk in mouse models. Our results provide insights and new understandings of the impact of plastic-associated chemicals on high cholesterol -- or dyslipidemia -- and cardiovascular disease risk," Zhou said.

Zhou's team also found that

mice exposed to DCHP had in their intestines higher circulating "ceramides" — a class of waxy lipid molecules associated with increased cardiovascular disease risk in humans — in a way that was PXR-dependent.

"This, too, points to the potentially important role of PXR in contributing to the harmful effects

of plastic-associated chemicals on cardiovascular health in humans," Zhou said.

Zhou was joined in the research by Zhaojie Meng, Jinwei Liu, Rebecca Hernandez, and Miko Gonzales of UCR; and Yipeng Sui, Taesik Gwag, and Andrew J. Morris of the University of Kentucky.

— ANI

10 CONFIRMED INFECTIONS

Omicron variant in US

WASHINGTON: Cases of the coronavirus Omicron variant have been reported by health officials in five additional US states today, bringing the total number of states with confirmed infections to ten.

New Omicron variant cases were reported in the states of Maryland, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Utah on Friday, according to health officials. Cases were also reported earlier this week in California, Colorado, Hawaii, Minnesota and New York. Omicron, which was first detected in southern Africa, has emerged as a variant of concern, prompting new travel restric-

tions and public health measures in the United States and primarily Western countries.

The Biden administration has said that the Omicron variant is a cause for concern but not for alarm. White House COVID-19 experts said the United States is in a better position to deal with the Omicron than with previous variants.

South Africa health officials said the infections were discovered in fully vaccinated individuals, the cases were mild and the initial reactions in the United States and other primarily Western countries - overblown.

— ANI

EXPERTS SAY

Putin's visit much more important than ever for India-Russia ties



Vladimir Putin

NEW DELHI: As India gears up to host Vladimir Putin on Monday, experts highlight the significance of the visit of the Russian President for the annual summit between the leaders of both countries, which was postponed last year due to the COVID pandemic, and amid increased speculation about the future of India-Russia ties.

According to Pushpesh Pant, professor, international relations at Jawaharlal Nehru University, Putin's visit is much more important than it has ever been in the past five to six years. "What India is realising now is that over-dependence with America is not

probably very reliable because what happened to Quad shows India that Americans can suddenly shift from Quad to Aukus to their own backyard, and retrieve from Afghanistan, have more concern about Saudi Arabia and the Middle East. India realises that if it doesn't reinforce ties with Russia, Russia will gradually become even more reinforced from fortifying with China," Pant told ANI.

"And the state of our relationship with China being what it is, India require their S-400 missile and so on. We have been buying equipment from France, Israel and other countries including Canada. I think we would love to rediscuss

our ties and community with interest in Russia. We have no clash of interest with Russia at all."

Large trading partner

Professor Pant also said: "India started going closer to the US, not now but almost 25 years back when the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), was governing this (India) country and the defence was having its long discussions. India had started moving away from Russia although Moscow has continued to be our very large trading partner in military hardware because you can't switch your military hardware overnight."

While Nandan Unnikrishnan, a

distinguished fellow at Observer Research Foundation said: "It is a very significant visit because it has been postponed due to COVID and there are lots of positive issues that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Putin have to discuss. At the end of the visit, speculation is that they will sign a defence pact for ten years as well as several other important agreements."

Putin is scheduled to visit India on December 6. The meeting between Putin and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is also likely to see the presentation of the S-400 air defence system to India which has already started arriving in India in parts, as per

sources said.

In a major boost to India and Russia military ties, the two countries are scheduled to ink the deal on supplying 7.5 lakh AK-203 assault rifles on upcoming Monday during Putin's visit here.

All necessary clearances have been done including the final approval from the Cabinet Committee on Security. It is scheduled to be inked during the Russian President's visit, government sources told ANI.

Work is also in progress between both the countries on the Igla shoulder-fired air defence system which has been in the making for last many years now. — ANI



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US SPECIAL ENVOY FOR AFGHANISTAN



'Much more needed', says US envoy after Taliban decree on women's rights

WASHINGTON: US special envoy for Afghanistan Thomas West welcomed an order of the Taliban, under which a woman can not be married against her will, but noted that much more needs to be done to ensure women's rights in all spheres in the country.

On Friday, Taliban leader Haibatullah Akhundzada issued a decree on women's rights acknowledging that women are not property and cannot be forced into marriage. "Welcome today's decree reinforcing a woman's right to determine if & whom she marries. At the same time, much more is needed to ensure women's rights in every aspect of Afghan society including schools, workplaces, politics and media," West said in a tweet.

The Taliban leader, under United Nations' sanctions for terrorism, acknowledged women's right to marriage where they cannot be used for exchange in a deal on Friday, reported Sputnik.

"A woman is not property, but a noble and free human being; no one can give her to anyone in exchange for a peace deal and/or to

end animosity," Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid informed in a tweet on Friday.

The decree necessitates women's consent for marriage and that "no one can force women to marry by coercion or pressure," reported Sputnik.

Widows are not at liberty to determine their future ahead and re-marry. They will also enjoy the right to inheritance along with a fixed portion of the property of her husband, children, father and relatives, under the newly passed decree by the Taliban, reported Sputnik.

The rights of women to education and work have not been mentioned in the decree.

The Taliban has called upon the Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Information and Culture to raise public awareness of women's rights to curb the prevailing oppression.

Moreover, the Courts in Afghanistan are instructed to consider and accept complaints and applications with regard to women's rights and violations, reported Sputnik. — ANI



HISTORIC FACT: Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, and Emmanuel Macron, President of France, attended the signing of agreements between the UAE and France.



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جدول النقاط

POINTS TABLE



Group A	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	PT	المجموعة أ
Qatar	2	2	0	0	3	1	6	قطر
Iraq	2	0	2	0	1	1	2	العراق
Oman	2	0	1	1	2	3	1	عمان
Bahrain	2	0	1	1	0	1	1	البحرين

Group B	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	PT	المجموعة ب
UAE	2	2	0	0	3	1	6	الإمارات
Tunisia	2	1	0	1	5	3	3	تونس
Syria	2	1	0	1	3	2	3	سوريا
Mauritania	2	0	0	2	1	6	0	موريتانيا

Group C	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	PT	المجموعة ج
Morocco	2	2	0	0	8	0	6	المغرب
Jordan	2	1	0	1	1	4	3	الأردن
Saudi Arabia	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	السعودية
Palestine	1	0	0	1	0	4	0	فلسطين

Group D	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	PT	المجموعة د
Algeria	2	2	0	0	6	0	6	الجزائر
Egypt	1	1	0	0	1	0	3	مصر
Lebanon	2	0	0	2	0	3	0	لبنان
Sudan	1	0	0	1	0	4	0	السودان

Played, Draw, Won, Lost, Goals For, Goals Against, Points
لعب، فوز، تعادل، خسارة، أهداف لصالح، أهداف ضد، النقاط

ديسمبر 6

DECEMBER 6

مباريات يوم غد

NEXT MATCHES

تونس
TUNISIA

19:00

الإمارات
UAE

سوريا
SYRIA

19:00

موريتانيا
MAURITANIA

قطر
QATAR

23:00

العراق
IRAQ

عمان
OMAN

23:00

البحرين
BAHRAIN

FIFA ARAB CUP QATAR 2021: SYRIA BEAT TUNISIA 2-0



DOHA: Syria defeated Tunisia 2-0 in Group B of the FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2021, in what is the competition's biggest upset so far. Doha is hosting the competition until December 18.

Oliver Kawo opened the scoring for Syria in the 4th minute, with Mohammed Anz scoring the second in the 74th minute. Sandwiched between the two goals was a sending off for Tunisia's Ali bin Romdhane.

The win gives Syria their first points in the tournament, level on points with Tunisia but behind on goal difference. They will face bottom team Mauritania, while Tunisia will have to beat group leaders UAE to stand a chance of qualification. -QNA

NEXT ROUND QUALIFICATION

Qatar coach happy with qualification



DOHA: The Qatar national football team coach, Felix Sanchez, expressed his happiness at winning and qualifying for the next round, noting that it is difficult to beat the Omani team.

He added that the great commitment of the players and the continuation of the performance and the attempt on the goal enabled the team to win the match in the end. -QNA

FOR QUARTERFINALS



Algeria edge past Lebanon 2-0

DOHA: The Algerian team qualified for the quarterfinals of the Arab Football Cup by beating Lebanon 2-0 in the second round of Group D in a match that the two teams played with ten players on Saturday.

In the 69th minute of the match, Yacine Brahimi gave the Algeria team the winning goal while Al-Tayeb Al-Mazyani scored the second goal in the dying moments of the match. The win brought them 6 points to top Group A, while the Lebanon team is at the bottom of the standings without a score.



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India on top after Ajaz's historic 10-wicket haul

Ajaz Patel scripted history by becoming only the third bowler in the history of Test cricket to bag all 10 wickets in an innings

MUMBAI: It was a wicket galore at the Wankhede Stadium on Day 2 as India and New Zealand bowlers scalped 16 wickets in total after which hosts find themselves on the top of the ongoing second Test here at Mumbai.

After the end of Day 2 play, India's score in the second innings read 69/0 with Mayank Agarwal and Cheteshwar Pujara unbeaten on the field with innings of 38* and 29* respectively.

Hosts now lead Kiwis by 332. Starting the day, the stars were perfectly aligned for the Mumbai-born spinner, Ajaz Patel as he scripted history by becoming only



LEAD WICKET TAKERS: Ravichandran Ashwin and Mohammed Siraj were the picks among the bowlers as the duo scalped three and four wickets respectively.

the third bowler in the history of Test cricket to bag all 10 wickets in an innings. His historic effort overshadowed the heroic 150-run knock of Mayank Agarwal as India were bowled out for 325.

But there was more in store for bowlers as India then fought back and crushed Kiwi's batters resistance in no time. New Zealand were bowled out for 62 in the

third session as this was the lowest total by any team against India in Test matches. It was also the lowest total by any team in India.

For hosts, Ravichandran Ashwin and Mohammed Siraj were the picks among the bowlers as the duo scalped three and four wickets respectively.

Resuming the final session at 38/6, visitors had nowhere to hide

as Indian bowlers clawed further deep and bowled them out after 29 overs in their first innings.

Then starting their second innings, India stood firm as Agarwal and Pujara frustrated the Kiwi bowlers to the full extent.

Brief Scores: India 325, 69/0 (Mayank Agarwal 38*, Cheteshwar Pujara 29*; Ajaz Patel 0/35) vs New Zealand 62. **ANI**



Babar Azam, Azhar Ali help Pakistan take Day 1 honours

DHAKA: Babar Azam and Azhar Ali held the fort as Pakistan dominated Bangladesh on Day 1 of the ongoing second Test here at the Shere Bangla National Stadium on Saturday.

At stumps on Day 1, Pakistan's score read 161/2 with Babar (60*) and Ali (36*) currently unbeaten at the crease.

Opting to bat first, Pakistan got off to a decent start as openers Abid Ali and Abdullah Shafique put on 59 runs for the opening wicket.

However, Bangladesh stormed right back into the contest with quick wickets of Shafique (25) and Ali (39), reducing Pakistan to 70/2.

However, it was then that Babar and Azhar joined hands to retrieve innings for Pakistan and the duo stitched together a 91-run stand for the fourth wicket and both batters will make their way out on Day 2.

Brief Scores: Pakistan 161/2 (Babar Azam 60*, Azhar Ali 36*; Taijul Islam 2-49) vs Bangladesh.

ANI

CRICKET ROUND-UP

Shoaib, Samay shine to keep Muscat unbeaten

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Shoaib Khan's superb 81 not out and leggie Samay Shrivastava's 4 for 49 were the highlights of Muscat CT's comfortable 9-wicket win over Renaissance in a 50-over Premier Division League game at Oman Cricket Turf 1 in Al Amerat on Friday.

Unbeaten Muscat lead the points table with 12 from 6 matches, followed by Oman Stallions with 8 from 5 games.

Invited to bat first, Renaissance ambled to a modest 189 for 9, Abdul Attaullah (47) and Sufiyan Mahmood (44) being the main scorers. Apart from Samay's superb spell, Shoaib Khan bowled well too, taking 2 for 26.

Muscat had no trouble in chasing down the total, racing to 190 for 1 in 36 overs thanks to brilliant batting by Shoaib and Pranav Athawale (73).

Brief Scores (Premier Division): Renaissance 189 for 9 in 50 overs (Abdul Atta Ullah 47 - 4x4, 1x6, Sufiyan Mahmood 44 - 4x4, 2x6, Samay Shrivastava 4-49, Shoaib Khan 2-26) lost to Muscat CT 190 for 1 in 36 overs (Shoaib Khan 81 - 12x4, 1x6, Pranav Athawale 73 - 8x4) by 9 wickets.

Orient score big win

Ibrar Hussain's magnificent 138 not out powered Orient Travels to a huge 164-run victory against LC Tech in a 50-over A Division clash at OC turf 2 on Friday.

Batting first, Orient Travels, which has now three wins from three matches, posted 282 for 8 on the board, Ibrar leading the way with an excellent century. Imran Ali and Shahil Mohammed claimed three and two wickets respectively.

LC Tech was jolted by early blows from Tanveer Rana, who picked up 4 for 44, and was dismissed for a disappointing 118 in the 26th over. Lakshmi Narayana was the only notable scorer with 31.

Brief Scores (A Division): Orient Travels 282 for 8 in 50 overs (Ibrar Hussain 138 - 17x4, 2x6, Imran Ali 3-46, Shahil Mohammed 2-59) beat LC Tech 118 all out in 25.5 overs (Lakshmi Narayana

31 - 5x4, Tanveer Rana 4-44) by 164 runs.

Awais helps PDO to victory

Awais Mohammed's 4 for 39 helped PDO RC to a thrilling 7-run win over Maniz Azad International in a 30-over C Division match at Muscat Municipality ground 1 on Friday.

PDO's 203 for 9 included 44 from Muhammed Idrees and Azhar Habib's 36. Star Omani all-rounder Shuaib Al Balushi bagged two wickets.

Maniz Azad made a valiant attempt at chasing down the total by fell short by 7 runs. Shuaib topscored with the bat, contributing 57 off 53 while Usman Asgher chipped in with a solid 37.

Apart from Awais's outstanding spell, Zakir Khan and Umer Khalil bowled well too, taking two wickets each.

Brief Scores (B Division): PDO RC 203 for 9 in 30 overs (Muhammed Idrees 44 - 2x4, Azhar Habib 36 - 4x4, 1x6, Shuaib Al Balushi 2-29) beat Maniz Azad International 196 for 9 in 30 overs (Shuaib Al Balushi 57 - 8x4, Usman Asgher 37 - 5x4, Awais Mohamed 4-39, Zakir Khan 2-34, Umer Khalil 2-39) by 7 runs.

Ranjith stars

In a 20-over C Division game at the same venue, Design Group Engineering Consultants defeated Khalsa United by 4 wickets thanks to a match-winning 64 off 50 by

opener Ranjith Kumar.

Khalsa was restricted to 146 for 7 due to brilliant bowling by Mohammed Firoz who picked up 3 for 21. Harminder Singh topscored with 31.

Design Group surpassed the total rather comfortably, scoring 147 for 6 in the 18th over thanks to solid knocks from Ranjith and Muhammed Althaf (33). Majid Rafique took 2 for 33.

Brief Scores (C Division): Khalsa United CT 146 for 7 in 20 overs (Harminder Singh 31 - 6x4, Deepesh Mehta 29 - 3x4, Mohammed Firoz 3-21) lost to Design Group Engineering Consultants 147 for 6 in 17.5 overs (Ranjith Kumar 64 - 6x4, Muhammed Althaf 33 - 4x4, Majid Rafique 2-33) by 4 wickets.

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INDIA-UAE TRADE TIES

The India Pavilion marked the UAE's 50th National Day and will be presenting an array of cultural performances showcasing a unique fusion of India's and UAE's culture. **> B2**

MARKET

BUSINESS & FINANCE



US AND UK TRADE DEAL

The United States will delay its deal to remove tariffs on UK steel and aluminium because of concerns about post-Brexit trade rules affecting Northern Ireland, the Financial Times reported. **> B2**

Middle Eastern carriers' air cargo demand up 9.4 per cent

Global goods trade and industrial production remain above pre-crisis levels, IATA said in its October 2021 report

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Middle Eastern carriers experienced a 9.4 per cent rise in international cargo volumes in October 2021 versus October 2019, a significant drop in performance compared to the previous month (18.4 per cent), according to a new report.

"This was due to a deterioration in traffic on several key routes such as Middle East-Asia, and Middle East-North America. International capacity was down 8.6 per cent compared to October 2019, a decrease compared to the previous month (4 per cent), the International Air Transport Association

(IATA) said in its October 2021 data for global air cargo markets.

As comparisons between 2021 and 2020 monthly results are distorted by the extraordinary impact of COVID-19, unless otherwise noted, all comparisons below are to October 2019 which followed a normal demand pattern.

Global demand, measured in cargo tonne-kilometres (CTKs), was up 9.4 per cent compared to October 2019 (10.4 per cent for international operations).

Capacity constraints have eased slightly but remain 7.2 per cent below pre-COVID-19 levels (October 2019) (-8.0 per cent for international operations).

Economic conditions continue to support air cargo growth but are slightly weaker than in the previous months, The IATA's latest report said.

Supply chain disruptions and the resulting delivery delays have led to long supplier delivery times. This typically results in manufacturers using air transport, which is quicker, to recover time lost during the production process. The global Supplier Delivery Time Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) reached an all-time low of 34.8 in October; values below 50 are favourable for air cargo.

Relevant components of the October PMIs (new export orders and



manufacturing output) have been in a gradual slowdown since May but remain in favorable territory.

The inventory-to-sales ratio remains low ahead of the peak year-end retail events such as Christmas. This is positive for air cargo as manufacturers turn to air cargo to rapidly meet demand.

Global goods trade and industrial production remain above pre-crisis levels.

The cost-competitiveness of air cargo relative to that of container shipping remains favourable.

"October data reflected an overall positive outlook for air cargo. Supply chain congestion continued to push manufacturers towards the speed of air cargo. Demand was up 9.4 per cent in October compared to pre-crisis levels. And capacity constraints were slowly resolving as more passenger travel meant more belly capacity for air cargo," said Willie Walsh, IATA's Director General.

"The impact of government reactions to the Omicron variant is a concern. If it dampens travel de-

mand, capacity issues will become more acute. After almost two years of COVID-19, governments have the experience and tools to make better data-driven decisions than the mostly knee-jerk reactions to restrict travel that we have seen to date. Restrictions will not stop the spread of Omicron. Along with urgently reversing these policy mistakes, the focus of governments should be squarely on ensuring the integrity of supply chains and increasing the distribution of vaccines," he added.

Regional performance

1 Asia-Pacific airlines saw their international air cargo volumes increase 7.9 per cent in October 2021 compared to the same month in 2019. This was close to a doubling in growth compared to the previous month's 4 per cent expansion.

The improvement was partly driven by increased capacity on Europe-Asia routes as several important passenger routes reopened. Belly capacity between the continents was down 28.3 per cent in October, much better than the 37.9 per cent fall in September. International capacity in the region eased slightly in October, down 12.9 per cent compared to the previous year, a significant improvement over the 18.9 per cent drop in September. North American carriers posted an 18.8 per cent increase in international cargo volumes in October 2021 compared to October 2019. This was on par with September's performance (18.9 per cent). Demand for faster shipping times and strong US retail sales are underpinning the North American performance. International capacity was down 0.6 per cent compared to October 2019, a significant improvement from the previous month.

Full story @ timesofoman.com/business

SKILL DEVELOPMENT



Future Makers Programme in Duqm concludes

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Special Economic Zone at Duqm (Sezad) concludes this week the activities of the Future Makers Programme, which aims to create a generation of young Omanis at Duqm, capable of keeping pace with the rapid developments in modern technologies and future skills.

The Programme focused on developing the talents of school students in grades 8 to 11 in personal and skills aspects. The programme is implemented by Tawasul Foundation with the support of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) and Asyad Dry dock in partnership with the Ministry of Education.

The Programme, which kicked off on November 7, seeks to develop students' skills and abilities in dealing with future technologies and their applications, and to enhance the aspects of innovation and creativity among male and female students to contribute to achieving the national goals and priorities of Oman Vision 2040.

It aims to introduce the new generation to the importance of future technologies and skills and their role in achieving Oman vision 2040. In addition, the Programme seeks to support students' comprehension of the basics of mathematics and English language and strengthen their understanding in a way that contributes to the development of their skills and reflects positively on their academic journey and daily life.

Mona bint Said Al Shukaili, CEO of Tawasul Foundation, said that, the Foundation considers education and innovation a top priority, providing innovative educational programmes that keep

pace with future requirements and contribute to preparing students to play the role expected of them, to contribute to the realisation of Oman Vision 2040.

She added: "Our Future Makers Programme came as the first of these programmes to enhance the skills of 150 male and female students from Duqm in the areas of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and other innovative and creative skills to establish a generation capable of keeping pace with economic and scientific developments in Duqm and to supply higher education institutions and the labor sector with qualified and ambitious youth".

Eng. Yahya bin Khamis Al Zadjali, In-Charge of Managing Operations of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, said that the Programme reflects the interest of the OPAZ to enrich the knowledge of school students at Duqm of modern sciences. He noted that this Programme attracts the attention of male and female students, as student are keen to benefit from the lessons provided and the practical exercises that have been conducted over the past few weeks.

Al Zadjali added, "The Programme focused on preparing future makers to keep pace with the changes brought about by the information revolution and its impact on improving the lifestyle, especially in economic areas that depend on the business environment through multiple means of communication".

During the first week, the Programme provided interactive educational lessons in English language and mathematics.

Full story @ timesofoman.com/business

CAPITAL MARKET AUTHORITY

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Capital Market Authority (CMA) will organise next week a training programme 'General Insurance Underwriting Certificate' in collaboration with the College of Banking and Financial Studies (CBFS) and the Insurance Institute of India.

The 15 day programme will be conducted within the Tamkeen training programme for the Omani cadres working in the insurance sector to upgrade the skills and aptitude of the employees working in general insurance underwriting, marketing and those who are qualified for promotion to senior administrative levels in



underwriting departments.

The programme will focus on risk management, insurance concept and general insurance underwriting as well as all types of general insurance prevailing in

The programme will be conducted within the Tamkeen training programme

the Omani market and methods of underwriting and reinsurance to acquaint the participant with the ways for dealing with different insurance products from underwriting perspective to achieve efficient insurance underwriting.

CMA has had held earlier this year a programme on 'Basics of General Insurance' which was a short term programme for the promotion of the skills of the employees in insurance underwriting and highlighted the key roles of insurance underwriters with the participation of a number of employees of operational departments in insurance companies.

The program's aims is to enable the Omani employees to take senior positions and Omanisation of underwriting departments in insurance companies as the analysis of the sector's employees data shows that Omanisation ratios are below the requirements.

 MARKET

UAE'S NATIONAL DAY

India aims to boost trade ties with UAE

DUBAI: The India Pavilion marked the UAE's 50th National Day and will be presenting an array of cultural performances showcasing a unique fusion of India's and UAE's culture.

The UAE National Day celebrations will be hosted at the Amphitheatre at India Pavilion. Various dance groups including Balle Balle Dubai, the Punjabi Dance Group and Dhol Tasha will perform at the ceremony to highlight India's festive spirit and its support to the UAE, an important strategic partner for India.

50th National Day

Sunjay Sudhir, Ambassador of India to UAE, congratulated UAE on its 50th National Day, and said, "UAE is one of India's most valued partners. The two nations have always shared a commitment to openness, peaceful co-existence and social harmony that are based on their cultural traditions, spiritual values and shared heritage."

UAE's 50th National Day is of great importance to India as it was on 2nd December 1971 when the bilateral relations between the two countries strengthened with the unification of the UAE and the Federation coming into place; exactly 50 years ago. The

cultural performances will include the dance groups presenting an amalgamation of Indian dances with Arabic music, representing the true essence of the UAE and its achievements in the last 50 years and the peaceful co-existence of varied cultures in one nation.

India is UAE's second-largest trading partner, and the total volume of trade was estimated at \$43 billion in 2020-21. India and the UAE are working together relentlessly to ensure long-term growth in the coming years.

India has commenced negotiations with the UAE to conclude a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement which will help in leveraging the complementarities in trade between the two countries and see a quantum jump in the bilateral merchandise trade as well.

The Expo 2020 Dubai has been a catalyst for a stronger collaboration between India and the UAE and continues to grow and strengthen further. Besides showcasing India as an important destination on an international platform, the Expo has played a pivotal role in the recovery from the repercussions of the pandemic.

-ANI/NewsVair

US to delay UK trade deal over post-Brexit concern

A US Commerce Department official was quoted as saying that talks with the UK on easing metals tariffs could not move ahead

WASHINGTON: The United States will delay its deal to remove tariffs on UK steel and aluminium because of concerns about post-Brexit trade rules affecting Northern Ireland, the *Financial Times* reported.

The administration of former US President Donald Trump imposed 25 per cent and 10 per cent tariffs on steel and aluminium imports on the European Union in 2018. The tariffs were withdrawn in October of this year, but they remain in place for Britain due to its exit from the EU, Reuters reports.

In a communication seen by



the newspaper, a US Commerce Department official was quoted as saying that talks with the UK on easing metals tariffs could not move ahead.

The official cited US concerns about British threats to trigger emergency clause Article 16, the report said, especially from the US Congress.

Article 16 is an emergency brake that allows the UK or EU to seek to suspend parts of the Brexit agreement that introduced some checks on the movement of goods to Northern Ireland from mainland Britain if they lead to persistent difficulties. The FT said that the United

States had informed the UK about the reason for the delay.

The UK department of trade said, "We do not see any connection with this particular issue and the Northern Ireland Protocol and it will in no way affect the UK's approach. That is because significant changes are needed to the Protocol in order to protect the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement and Northern Ireland's place in the UK internal market."

A British government spokesperson said the UK is in regular discussions with US Trade Representative Katherine Tai and Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo

on the issue and remained focused on agreeing on a resolution for the removal of tariffs.

The United States has expressed grave concerns that disagreement between London and Brussels over the implementation of the 2020 Brexit treaty could undermine the Good Friday accord, which effectively ended three decades of violence in Northern Ireland.

In September, US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi cautioned that there could be no post-Brexit trade deal with Washington if the Northern Ireland peace agreement was destroyed. -BNA

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INDIA

Merchandise exports increase by 26.49%

NEW DELHI: As per the provisional data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, India's merchandise exports in November this year increased by 26.49 per cent to \$29.88 billion as compared to the same period in last two years.

In November 2020, the exports stood at \$23.62 billion. As per the ministry's press release, India's merchandise exports in November

2021 was \$29.88 billion, an increase of 26.49 per cent over \$23.62 billion in November 2020 and an increase of 15.93 per cent over \$25.77 billion in November 2019.

"India's merchandise exports in April-November 2021 was \$262.46 billion, an increase of 50.71 per cent over \$174.15 billion in April-November 2020 and an increase of 24.29 per cent over \$211.17 billion in April-Novem-

ber 2019," it further stated.

Further, the ministry informed that the country's imports in November were at \$53.15 billion, an increase of 57.18 per cent over \$33.81 billion in the same month in 2020, leaving a merchandise trade deficit of \$23.27 billion in November.

The value of non-petroleum exports in November 2021 was \$26.06 billion. -ANI

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CHINA

International airport expanded to boost Hainan FTP construction

HAIKOU: The expansion project of Haikou Meilan International Airport in south China's resort island of Hainan went into operation Thursday, offering a massive boost to the construction of the Hainan free trade port (FTP).

The project consists of a new terminal, a 3,600-metre-long runway, and ground transport facilities. The new runway can handle the Airbus A380, so far the world's largest passenger airliner.

Covering 300,000 square meters, the new Terminal 2 is the size of 42 standard soccer fields and about twice the size of Terminal 1. It has 110 check-in counters and a considerable number of duty-free shops spanning nearly 10,000 square metres.

A total of 41 self-service check-in devices and 10 self-service baggage checking devices will also make check-in more efficient and intelligent for passengers. It features a tropical island theme and traditional local cultural elements such as arcade houses and local ethnic Li brocade, promising a unique travel experience.

For an island province, air transportation is the most efficient way to link Hainan with the world. -Xinhua

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RESEARCH FINDS PRUNES MAY BE ABLE TO CONTROL HOLIDAY CRAVINGS



With the holiday season in its full swing, new research by the University of Liverpool has found that the intake of prunes can help control appetite and reduce overall caloric consumption.

The study was published in the 'Nutrition Bulletin Journal'. "These studies demonstrate that dried fruit can both produce satiety and be incorporated into the diet during weight management," said Professor Jason C G Halford, University of Leeds and President of the European Association for the Study of Obesity (EASO), who was part of the research team.

The study was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, researchers compared satiety, appetite, and caloric intake among participants who consumed a snack of either prunes, raisins, or jelly-bean-like candy, all comparable in calories. Researchers found that those who ate prunes consumed the fewest calories overall at subsequent meals. The prune snackers also reported reduced hunger levels, improved satiety, and a greater perceived ability to eat less food at subsequent meals.

In the second phase of the study, researchers focused specifically on weight loss. Participants were divided into two groups - those who fol-



lowed a 12-week weight loss programme with prunes as their snack and those who followed the same programme but were only provided with guidance on healthy snacking. While there were no statistically significant differences between the two groups in terms of pounds lost, the prune group experienced greater weight loss on average than the group who only received healthy snacking guidelines (-4.4 lbs. versus -3.4 lbs.). Additionally, those who consumed prunes also reported higher levels of satisfaction and greater ease of following the weight-loss programme.

"This study reveals that nutrient-dense prunes can provide an advantage over other snack choices due to their favourable effects on satiety and appetite control," said Andrea N. Giancoli, MPH, RD Nutrition Advisor for the California Prune Board.

While consumers may be concerned about troublesome side effects for their digestive system, Halford stated, "These are the first data to demonstrate both weight loss and no negative side effects when consuming prunes as part of a weight management diet." As consumers continue their merry way through this festive season, they may want to consider reaching for a handful of prunes to keep their health goals on track into the New Year. **ANI**

SPORTS

OMAN RALLY SOHAR INTERNATIONAL 2021

HISTORY-MAKING ABDULLAH AL-RAWAHI BECOMES FIRST LOCAL TO WIN THE OMAN RALLY



MUSCAT: Abdullah Al-Rawahi became the first Omani in motor sport history to claim victory at the Oman Rally Sohar International 2021 on Saturday. Partnered by Jordanian co-driver Ata Al-Hmoud, Al-Rawahi guided his SRT Škoda Fabia Evo to a stunning start-to-finish victory with a winning margin of 21min 22.5sec. In so doing, the talented youngster joined veteran Nizar Al-Shanfari (Qatar Rally – 1999) as one of only two Omanis in history to have won a round of the FIA Middle East Rally Championship (MERC) since its inception in 1984. Al-Rawahi won all of the event's 12 demanding gravel special stages and gained valuable time behind the wheel of his new car before embarking upon a full MERC campaign in 2022.

The feat means that the Omani

becomes the 41st winner of a MERC event on the 221st ever round of the regional series. Al-Hmoud duly became the second Jordanian co-driver in the history of the championship to win a round of the series; fellow countryman Khaled Zakaria claimed six victories during a short spell sitting alongside Mohammed Ben Sulayem and a solitary win in Jordan with Amjad Farrah. "This is a fantastic result for me and the whole team on my first event in the car," said a delighted Al-Rawahi. "It was a perfect opportunity to gain more experience before next season and to secure a first MERC win. I thank my sponsors, everyone at the Oman Automobile Association for their efforts and the team at SRT for their support."

Qatar's Nasser Khalifa Al-Atya and Italian co-pilot Giovanni Bernacchini overcame a time-

consuming first day puncture to snatch second place in a Ford Fiesta R5. The former MERC runner-up set a string of second fastest times on the final day to overhaul Zakariyah and Mohammed Al-Amri. Al-Amri's consolation was guiding his Subaru Impreza to success in the MERC2 section and finishing on the last step of the podium in third overall, despite delays with mechanical issues in SS12. Jordanian driver Ihab Al-Shorafa teamed up with Emad Juma to claim fourth place and Asem Aref, partnered by Ahmad Jankhout, stayed clear of trouble in his little two-wheel drive Renault Clio RS to confirm the 2021 MERC3 title in the absence of rival and defending champion Henry Kahy. Aref finished a fine fifth. Oman's Faisal Al-Rashdi rounded off the finishers in the

international field in sixth place with Yaqdhan Al-Rashdi and his Subaru Impreza. Jarah Al-Touqi was forced to retire his Subaru Impreza after mechanical problems in stage nine. Haitham Al-Soomar was not able to start the third round of the Oman Rally Championship after the issues that had plagued his Mitsubishi Lancer on Friday. Hamed Al-Qasmi had been fastest over the six stages on day one, but an eighth stage accident side-lined his Mitsubishi and that opened the door for Waheeb Al-Khuraishi and Musaab Al-Soomar to fight for National Rally honours, with the former securing a comfortable win in his Toyota Yaris. The official calendar for the 2022 FIA Middle East Rally Championship will be released after the FIA World Council meeting later this month.



OMAN RALLY SOHAR INTERNATIONAL 2021 - POSITIONS AFTER SS12:

1. Abdullah Al-Rawahi (OMN)/Ata Al-Hmoud (JOR) Škoda Fabia Evo **2hr 29min 02sec**
2. Nasser Khalifa Al-Attiyah (QAT)/Giovanni Bernacchini (ITA) Ford Fiesta R5 **2hr 50min 24sec**
3. Zakariya Al-Amri (OMN)/Mohammed Al-Amri (OMN) Subaru Impreza ST **3hr 07min 50sec**
4. Ihab Al-Shorafa (JOR)/Emad Juma (JOR) Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IX **3hr 09min 30sec**
5. Asem Aref (JOR)/Ahmad Jankhout (JOR) Renault Clio RS **3hr 48min 20sec**
6. Faisal Al-Rashdi (OMN)/Waleed Al-Rashdi (OMN) Subaru Impreza WRX **3hr 48min 38sec**

OMAN NATIONAL RALLY - RESULT AFTER SS11:

1. Waheeb Al-Kharusi (OMN)/Wadeea Al-Kharusi (OMN) Toyota Yaris **3hr 30min 38sec**
2. Musab Al-Soomar (OMN)/Bassam Al-Qassimi (OMN) Kia Rio **4hr 56min 23sec**



ROUND-UP



Middle East—With a bold styling, powerful stance and distinctive accents, the GMC Terrain sets a whole new standard for small SUVs. Its signature grille embodies this small SUV's premium status and its aircraft inspired interior shoutssuperiority.

But the GMC Terrain mesmerizes more than just the eyes. Behind its captivating looks the Terrain is equipped with advanced tech features that significantly improve the driving journey by adding comfort, innovation and practicality that will please the tech-enthusiast in you.

Here are seven examples how:

Your convenient companion: We've all been there; walking back to your car after few hours of shopping at the mall or the grocery store whilst struggling to carry your bags in both hands and simultaneously pushing your child's stroller. Manually opening the trunk can often be the final straw. Fortunately, this intuitive family SUV is your best friend in times of need and is there to help when your hands are full. The Terrain features a hands-free power programmable liftgate option that can be activated simply by kicking your foot underneath the left-hand side of the rear bumper.

Technology meets entertainment: The GMC Terrain also takes entertainment very seriously. Ultimately, the ambience in a car can make or break the drive experience, so it is important to set the right vibe to your drive. The available Bose® Premium 7-Speaker Sound System option in the GMC Terrain, delivers a strong and crisp sound that will dial up your entertainment experience.

Your vehicle, your way: When it comes to infotainment, the GMC Terrain offers the power of personalization through its 8" diagonal GMC Infotainment System. The driver can bring their favorite apps and features to the center of the SUV's touchscreen, whilst controlling the passenger experience from the front dashboard.

All season comfort: In addition to being fun-to-drive, a motor also needs to be comfortable to be the perfect road companion. Whether through scorching summer temperatures or the chilling winter, the GMC Terrain is designed to provide the perfect climate. The SUV is available with a number of advanced heating and cooling features, including the optional heated front seats, available ventilated front seats and available second-row heated outboard seats, to maintain all-season comfort.

Shine bright like a diamond: While the signature C-shaped headlamps and taillamps on the GMC Terrain are beautifully designed, they are also engineered to stand out in every way imaginable. The headlamps elegantly flow from front to back, while emitting brilliant LED light to help cut through darkness or fog, ensuring your second pair-of-eyes when you need it most.

A smooth ride across all terrains: A quiet and smooth ride are sometimes taken for granted but are integral during those daily commutes. The Terrain comes available with a plethora of advanced technologies, ranging from uniquely tuned suspension valving to the urethane spring isolators, which enhance the smoothness and quietness of every drive whilst improving the overall journey on the roads. Additionally, the GMC Terrain is prepared for changing driving conditions thanks to the Traction Select system, which allows the driver to make real-time adjustments for optimal performance.

What is technology if not used for safety?

Last but not least, safety is undoubtedly the biggest priority, especially for family vehicles. The GMC Terrain is loaded with advanced safety features that bring more peace of mind and comfort to the driver and passengers alike. From the available front pedestrian breaking and Lane Change Alert with Side Blind Zone Alert to Rear Cross Traffic Alert options, the GMC Terrain has got you covered from all sides.



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ROUND-UP

CSR INITIATIVE

Bank Muscat supports NGOs working for welfare of persons with disabilities

MUSCAT: In line with its pioneering efforts in the field of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), and its commitment to deliver long-term benefits to the community and the nation, Bank Muscat continues to extend strong support to Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) working for the welfare of disabled persons.

On the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 3, the bank highlighted a number of key initiatives in the recent past, where it partnered with a number of NGOs to extend support to different segments of society.

In 2021, the bank contributed a number of wheelchairs, including powered and non-powered versions, and electric beds to persons with severe disabilities in partnership with the Oman Association for the Disabled.

The bank also recently contributed laptops and BrailleSense devices to visually-impaired students at Sohar University and hearing aids to the Omani Association for the Hearing-impaired. Bank Muscat had earlier supported the construction of a playground at the Al Aman Rehabilitation Centre for children with severe disabilities and is also at present helping provide a sports field at the Al Wafa Centre for the Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities.



The efforts are a part of the bank's various CSR initiatives aimed at enhancing facilities for the disabled and helping them integrate into mainstream society to contribute positively to the nation.

As the leading financial services provider in Oman, Bank Muscat has been undertaking many measures for the inclusion of persons

with disabilities into mainstream society.

The bank's efforts in this regard include the operation of a special ATM with a special transaction flow for blind and visually-impaired people on the premises of the head office of the Al Noor Association of the Blind. Also, special access ramps and other arrangements for easy access have been made available at different branches and ATMs in Oman. The bank has also trained a number of its branch employees in sign language to facilitate easy communication with the hearing impaired.

CUSTOMER SERVICE EXPERIENCE

United Finance Company set to soar to new heights

MUSCAT: The Sultanate's leading financial and leasing services provider - United Finance Company SAOG (UFC) is geared to take a giant leap as it reimagines the customer service experience by enabling quick, secure and seamless financing and loan interactions through a comprehensive, customized and innovative products and services portfolio.

It is noteworthy that the company's Board of Directors have recently appointed Nasser Salim Said Al Rashdi as the Chief Executive Officer to execute the company's strategic plan and build UFC's business by attracting, retaining, and developing employees and growing the company to become the Sultanate's provider of choice for financial services. Rashdi has a proven track record of leadership; successfully integrating products, services and people, and aligning resources for growth.

He brings to UFC over 30 years of extensive experience overseeing Oman's banking sector, and being involved in the fields of business development, risk management and internal audit. With Rashdi at its helm, UFC is poised to move forward and well



pany aims to keep the customer at the core of everything we do. With high-quality products and services, an experienced management team, key strategic investments in technology, and engaged employees, UFC is well-positioned to continue its momentum of being a trusted financial advisor for its clients.

Established in 1997, United Finance Company aims to become a next-generation Finance and Leasing company that uses technology to create a value-exchange ecosystem for digitally-engaged individuals, corporates and small & medium enterprises (SMEs). The company provides a range of financial products and services - car loans (new and used cars), equipment loans heavy vehicle financing, working capital funding, and corporate deposits. Headquartered in Watayah, UFC has eight branches in Oman, at Mawaleh, Barka, Ibra, Ibri, Nizwa, Sohar, Salalah and its Head office.

For further details on UFC's branch network and diverse range of product and service offerings, please visit - <https://www.ufcoman.com/en/home> or call - 80008322

RECOGNITION

Sohar International CEO Ahmed Al Musalmi honoured with 'Business Leader of the Year' award

MUSCAT: In recognition of his exemplary business leadership and role in Sohar International's transformation journey, Ahmed Al Musalmi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International, has been honoured with the coveted 'Business Leader of the Year Award', at the recent Alam Al-Iktisaad Awards 2021. Under the able leadership, Ahmed Al Musalmi, Oman's premium banking institution, Sohar International has been on a strong growth trajectory setting several industry benchmarks, scaling new heights and achieving commendable milestones.

The event was held on November 30, at the Majan Ballroom in Al Bustan Palace Hotel under the patronage of Maitha Al Mahrouqi, Undersecretary - Tourism, Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, along with senior leaders from



Oman's corporate world.

"It is indeed a proud moment for us at Sohar International on this honour awarded to Al Musalmi. I believe that he is truly deserving of this title and on behalf of the Board of Directors, I extend my best wishes to him. The stellar performance recorded by Sohar

International is a testament to Al Musalmi's commitment, determination and ambition to fulfil the bank's strategic objectives while making a positive impact in the lives of the bank's customers and stakeholders. He has played a pivotal role in Sohar International's meteoric success, spearheading

change and shaping a new identity for the bank, driven by a business model that goes beyond banking," said Mohammed Mahfoudh Al Ardhi, Chairman of the Board of Directors at Sohar International as he congratulated Al Musalmi on his win.

"With industry-leading initiatives geared at digitalisation, innovation and achieving excellence in all areas of operations, Sohar International's leadership has ensured a strong financial performance in 2021. The bank crossed OMR4 billion in total assets within a short span of three years while reflecting a phenomenal growth of over 40% despite a tough operating environment. We are certain that Al Musalmi will continue to attain more accolades in the years to come as he leads Sohar International to greater achievements."

EXCITING JOURNEY



Go beyond with confidence in GAC Motor GS8 SUV

MUSCAT: Make every journey an exciting one with the turbo-charged GS8 SUV that is loaded with attractive design, impressive space and advanced technology.

From easily manoeuvring congested streets to powering drives in the countryside, the GS8 always makes a mark, thanks to its powerful 2-litre turbo engine that is capable of producing 198 HP and 320 Nm of torque. The engine is made more efficient by its pairing to a six-speed automatic transmission.

Right from the front grille to the headlamps, all the way to the alloy wheels and the tail lamps, the GS8 draws all eyes making it one of the most admired vehicles in its category. It is equipped with 19" alloy wheels, LED high mounted brake light, shark fin antenna and roof rails. Overall, the exterior design of the GS8 is one of its very strong points.

Moving to the interior, the GS8 is warm and welcoming owing to its leather seats. Also, a look around will reveal ample space which offers good comfort for all occupants. The leather seats spell luxury all over. All of the seats provide utmost comfort and convenience. The driver's seat is 6-way Power Adjustable, while front passenger seat is

4-way, and both of them are heated and ventilated. For the second row the seats are equipped with 60:40 split and sliding configuration, while the third row has a 50:50 Split and fold flat. For additional cargo space, the GS8's supersized flat-bottom trunk offers huge amount of space - a perfect feature for families taking on adventures.

Adding to the joyous experiences on every journey, the GS8 is filled with features that provide nothing less. It's equipped with three-zone climate control air conditioning, central control door lock system, and power sunroof with jam protection, among other features. For in-cabin entertainment, the GS8 is equipped with an advanced infotainment system, with a 10-inch colour touch screen display system with Apple CarPlay, that is also available with Bluetooth and USB connectivity. Besides this, the GS8 is also equipped with a metre-cluster with 7-inch trip computer, 6 speakers, speed-based volume control, front and rear parking sensors, Surround View Parking Camera, Cruise Control and more.

New World Autos is the distributor for GAC Motor vehicles in Oman.

MOVIE EXHIBITOR

'Ghostbusters: Afterlife' premiered by Cinépolis Cinemas at Oman Avenues Mall

MUSCAT: Cinépolis Cinemas, the third largest movie exhibitor globally hosted the country-wide premiere of 'Ghostbusters: Afterlife' on November 30, 2021. The premier took place in the brand's flagship location of Oman Avenues Mall, Muscat.

Directed by Jason Reitman, the film features a distinguished cast, starring Paul Rudd, Carrie Coon (Avengers) and Finn Wolfhard (Stranger Things). Set 32 years after the premiere of the second movie, Ghostbusters: Afterlife revolves around a family who realise they have a connection to the original Ghostbusters and the secret legacy their grandfather left behind.

Alejandro Aguilera, Chief Executive Officer of Cinépolis Cinemas says, "Even though I was quite young at the time, I grew up watching Ghostbusters. The movie, characters and music have withstood the test of time, becoming an



iconic franchise. We are thrilled to launch the country-wide premier in our cinemas as we welcome the next generation of Ghostbusters to our screens!"

The premier was hosted in the Macro XE auditorium, a screen triple the size of an ordinary cinema that comes complete with Dolby Atmos surround sound creating a powerful audio experience un-

like anything imaginable thanks to the high-tech combination of the latest generation of audio speakers located throughout each of the venue's premium auditoriums.

The multiplex hosts a multitude of formats such as their award-winning Junior Auditorium featuring a colourful jungle gym, complete with slide and ball pit, as well as fun bean-bag seating.

Another cinematic experience that catapults Cinépolis Cinemas ahead of the competition is the state-of-the-art 4D E-motion experience. The immersive theatre format allows cinema lovers to "live" the movie thanks to motion seats and outstanding special effects such as wind, water, seat vibration, smell and air shots all perfectly synchronized with the action on the screen.

Cinépolis Luxury Cinemas, a few steps away from Cinépolis Cinemas offers guests a more luxurious and exclusive movie-viewing format. The auditoriums host a mix of recliner leather seats with adjustable tables or the brand's lounge seats, which are even more spacious and offer privacy and exclusivity to their valued customers. Cinépolis' aim is to make the movie-going experience as unique as possible in a multitude of different ways.

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