

AT BEHEST OF HM, ECONOMY MINISTER HEADS TO UAE FOR ABU DHABI SUSTAINABILITY WEEK

At the behest of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Dr. Said Mohammed Al Saqri, Minister of Economy left here today heading to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to attend the opening ceremony of Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week (ADSW). **>A2**



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BILARAB BIN HAITHAM AWARD FOR ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN Praised

Specialists in the field of architectural engineering in the Sultanate of Oman have underscored the significance of Bilarab Bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design, which was officially announced yesterday. **>A5**



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CEREMONY



Sayyid Theyaz bin Haitham Al Said presides over commissioning of OQ's LPG plant

SALALAH: His Highness Sayyid Theyaz bin Haitham Al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, presided over the commissioning ceremony of OQ's LPG plant in the Governorate of Dhofar on Sunday.

The ceremony was attended by some members of the Royal Family, ministers, undersecretaries and other dignitaries.

Built with an investment of OMR318 million, OQ's LPG plant embodies the government's strategy to drive economic diversification, optimise value creation from the country's natural resources, promote in-country value (ICV) development, and implement the Oman 2040 Vision to diversify revenue generation streams.

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TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN Higher studies

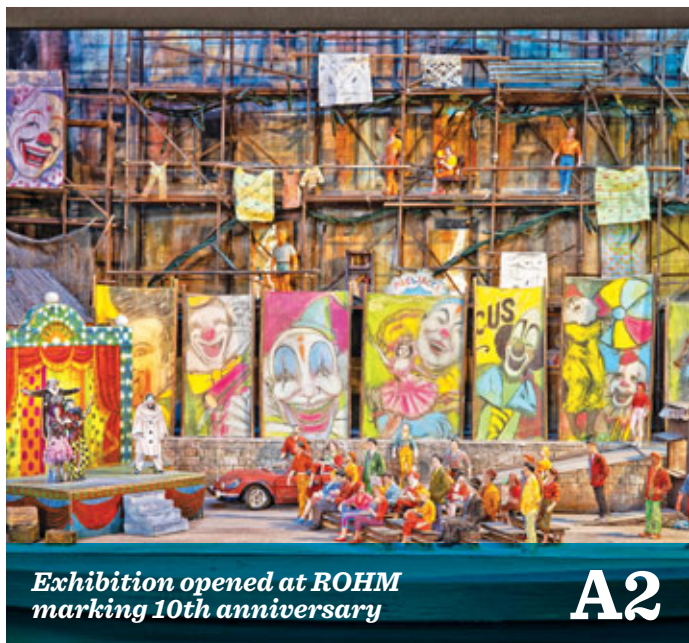
1 Nearly 1,200 government staff considered for graduate, post-graduate studies. **>A3**

WORLD Djokovic appeal

2 Australia's Federal Court rules against Djokovic's appeal. **>A6**

ROUND-UP Al Mouj initiative

3 A new initiative is helping train Omani women with small businesses. **>B8**



Exhibition opened at ROHM marking 10th anniversary

A2

COMMERCE MINISTRY

42 more expats get investor residency

Times News Service

MUSCAT: 42 more foreign nationals were given long-term investor residence cards in Oman, as part of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion's efforts to encourage foreign investment in the country.

17 investors were provided residency for 10 years, while 25 were given five-year residency status, by Asila bint Salem Al Samsamiyah, the Undersecretary for Investment Promotion at the ministry. These 42 investors represent the third batch of foreign nationals who have so far received long-term residency.

From the time the investor residence programme launched in October 2021, some 75 investors have been given long-term residency.

Investors who are conferred investor residence cards receive many incentives: they can own property for residential, commercial, or industrial purposes outside integrated tourism complexes, in addition to a host of other benefits and incentives. This



property can also be transferred to other prospective owners.

The only exception that arises in this case is that they are not permitted to own lands in areas reserved for Omani ownership. In the context of the Investor Residency Programme (IRP), Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef, Oman's Minister of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion, said:

"The recently launched IRP is an initiative designed to attract

high-impact foreign investment and enhance Oman's economic growth," he said.

"The IRP offers two extended residency programmes through real estate and commercial investment on a renewable five and 10-year basis subject to applicants meeting specific criteria.

"It is clear the pandemic is reshaping economic geography," he added.

"Businesses as well as people

are rethinking their real estate needs and physical footprints, reimagining how and where they live, work and invest.

"The introduction of the IRP is a direct response to this trend," he went on to say. "We understand that successful places of the future will be those that offer an environment where creative and innovative people can make a home, raise a family and pursue a rewarding career."

Minister shares

details of plans and opportunities at a business meeting in London

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman is taking 'historic steps' to encourage more business to set up shop, and attract more investments to commit to funding operations in the country.

That's according to Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef, the Minister for Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion, who explained in great detail the steps taken to transform Oman's economy into one that is diversified and sustainable.

The guidelines for economic expansion have been laid out in Oman Vision 2040, a set of plans launched by His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq that aims to provide sustained growth, good opportunities, and decent standards of living for all.

"We are proud of this action-oriented strategy designed to chart a new, bold and sustainable future for Oman," said Al Yousef. "Launched in January of last year, by order of His Majesty the Sultan, this is a progressive development strategy built on four main pillars: people and society; economic development; governance and institutional performance; and environment and sustainability."

The minister added that four main plans have also been drawn up in support of Vision 2040:



the Five Year Development Plan (2021-25); the Medium Term Fiscal Plan (2021-24), also known as Tawazun; the Economic Stimulus Plan; and the Social Security Scheme. "The purpose of these is to increase the private sector's resilience, attract investment, and especially aid the post COVID-19 recovery," said Al Yousef, speaking in London at a recent meeting of the Arab-British Chamber of Commerce.

"I want to underline to you that these are historic steps taken to ensure the right support is in place for Omani businesses, help firms get through the challenges of the pandemic, protect and create jobs, reinvigorate Oman's economy, and secure the nation's economic future," added the minister.

During the meeting, Al Yousef also shed light on the benefits provided under the Economic Stimulus Plan, which was formed as a direct result of conversations held with local and international businesses, designed to support the economy.

Benefits include interest-free emergency loans, tax and fee reductions and waivers as well as the flexibility to pay taxes in instalments. Other elements of the

ESP are a 25 percent reduction in land rents in the Special Economic Zone and Madayn industrial estates from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2022.

Also included is the opportunity for foreign companies to own land over 5,000 sqm that is either commercial or commercial-residential, tourism or industry related.

"I am pleased to say the ESP and other SME support packages are already making an impact on our business environment and delivering dividends," explained the minister. For example, at the end of the fourth quarter of 2021, the number of businesses registered with the SME Development Authority rose to just over 64,000, a jump of 17 percent compared to figures released at the end of the second quarter of 2021.

"Set up by Omani entrepreneurs, many of these businesses are responding to the changing needs of a post-COVID economy," added Al Yousef. "And there is good reason to be optimistic about their long-term success as some of the world's best-known brands such as Uber, Disney, FedEx, Microsoft and WhatsApp all rose out of tough economic times – something worth reflecting on."

PANDEMIC

More than 2,000 COVID cases detected over three days

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman recorded more than 2,000 new infections of COVID-19 between Thursday, 13 January, and Saturday, 15 January. During this period, three more people also died from the disease.

Of the 2,087 new infections, 755 people tested positive on Thursday, 605 people on Friday, and the remaining 727 on Saturday. 720 people also successfully recovered from COVID-19 during this time-frame, bringing the net recovery rate to 96.7 percent. Since the start of the pandemic in Oman, 312,425 people have tested positive for COVID-19, of whom 302,178 have recovered. Sadly, 4,122 people have succumbed to the disease.

There are currently 88 people in health centres, of whom 25 were admitted in the last 24 hours leading up to Sunday, 16 January, and 11 are in intensive care. **>A2**



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Dhuhr.....	12:22pm
Asr.....	3:27pm
Maghrib.....	5:48pm
Isha.....	7:02pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....	5:32am

Exhibition opened at ROHM marking 10th anniversary



MUSCAT: Symbolising a delightful symmetry for the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM), an exhibition was opened at the House yesterday on the late Franco Zeffirelli, stage director of the 2011 inaugural opera Turandot. Zeffirelli is one of the most celebrated designers and directors of his era whose illustrious career spanned seven decades. Delve into Zeffirelli's imagination through this exhibition of artefacts designed especially for the Royal Opera House Muscat.

The Artistic World of Franco

Zeffirelli, being held at the Exhibition Hall in the Royal Opera House of Musical Arts till 20 March, comprises original sketches, costumes, films and models, as well as many others on display in public for the first time. Among Zeffirelli's world class opera productions explored here will be Turandot and Rigoletto, commissioned especially by ROHM, along with his production of Tosca at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, featuring Maria Callas, La Bohème at Teatro alla Scala, Milan, and Falstaff at the Metropolitan Opera, New York. -GNA



AT BEHEST OF HIS MAJESTY



Minister heads to UAE for Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week

MUSCAT: At the behest of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Dr. Said Mohammed Al Saqri, Minister of Economy left here today heading to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to attend the opening ceremony of Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week (ADSW). The event is scheduled to be held on Monday at Dubai International Convention and Exhibition Centre. The ADSW, which comes within the events of the Expo 2020 Dubai, contributes to the international

efforts exerted to address climate change by focusing on three areas, namely international cooperation and leadership, economic development, technology and innovation. The ADSW will see wide participation of leaders and officials from all over the world. During the ceremony, Zayed Sustainability Prize 2022 will be handed over to participants in initiatives that develop innovative projects in areas related to sustainability, including health, food, energy and water. -GNA

COVID-19

FROM A1 Follow protocols

The Ministry of Health has reminded people to continue to follow all protocols related to the stopping of COVID-19. "With our commitment to wearing masks and maintaining social and physical distancing, we will prevent ourselves, our families, and our community from the spread of the coronavirus," said the ministry in its daily briefing. People are also advised to com-

plete their vaccination courses as soon as they are able. Those who can be also requested to get their booster doses. Both the Pfizer and AstraZeneca vaccine are currently available for those who wish to get the booster shots. In the case of the latter vaccine, only those who have been previously jabbed with the AstraZeneca vaccine can apply for a booster dose of the same vaccine.

OAB Signs Agreement with Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning



Oman Arab Bank (OAB) recently entered into an agreement with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning on January 13. The agreement stems from efforts to enhance partnership and collaboration between the public and private sectors and will enable the Ministry's beneficiaries to utilise the Bank's state-of-the-art e-payment gateway.

The signing took place at the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning headquarters, between Nasser Khamis Al Siyabi, Director General of Administrative and Financial Affairs, representing the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning and Sulaiman Ali Al Hinai, General Manager - Treasury, Investment & Government/FI Banking Group, representing OAB.

Commenting on the agreement, Nasser Khamis Al Siyabi, Director General of Administrative and Financial Affairs of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, said, "The Ministry strives to continue in its journey towards enhancing comprehensive digital transformation, to facilitate seamless and efficient services for its beneficiaries. We are extremely proud to be working together with OAB to enhance the experience of our beneficiaries, when utilising the Ministry's digital services, which is in turn, aligned with the Oman Vision 2040."

Highlighting the importance of the signing, General Manager - Treasury, Investment & Government/FI Banking Group at OAB, said "We are proud to have OAB's e-payment gateway chosen by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning. We are committed to ensuring the provision of comprehensive and integrated services to the Ministry. We believe that this collaboration reinforces the partnership between the public and private sectors, to achieve our common objective."

The OAB e-payment gateway has been ranked as one of the best digital payment solutions in the local market. It was developed with the very latest technology and aligned with the highest standards of security and in compliance with both local and global security control standards, including the Payment Card

Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS). The e-payment gateway is designed to help simplify and facilitate the payment process in a smooth way and also at the lowest possible cost. Furthermore, it is the only platform as of date which offers a direct link to all categories of local and international bank cards.

Oman Arab Bank has a rich and proud history as one of the first financial institutions to be established in the Sultanate. Today, the Oman Arab Bank Group operates a nationwide network of 51 conventional branches, 15 Islamic branches, 150 conventional ATMs and 15 Islamic ATMs in high footfall locations across the Sultanate. OAB provides a complete range of financial products and services through its OAB Online App. Customers can now digitally benefit from several other services, directly from the convenience of their mobile phones.



NEW PLANT

<FROM
A1

OQ's LPG plant will meet energy needs of industry, retail sectors



The chief guest familiarised himself with the timeline for the start of production of the plant's three main commodities: propane, butane and condensates, as well as plans to meet the LPG requirements of local citizens and residents of Dhofar Governorate via road tanker supply. Key details about the arrangements to ship customised LPG tankers for export markets were shared as well.

HH Sayyid Theyazin said: "These national projects in the petrochemical sector carried out by Oman Investment Authority through OQ Group support the national economy and reflect the aspirations of the government of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, towards promoting the economic diversification approaches in the country in line with Oman Vision 2040."

"We would also like to commend the success in commissioning OQ's LPG plant in Dhofar and its high level of operational efficiency. The plant, which is run by young Omani cadres, reflects the efforts exerted by OQ to make the optimal use of natural resources, maximise its benefits and promote the downstream industries. This will support the various economic activities related to the energy sector, particularly the small and medium enterprises" His Highness added.

OQ LPG has a capacity to process around 8.8 million standard cubic meters per day of lean gas to produce about 304 kilotonnes per year of LPG comprising 155 kilotonnes per year of propane (C3), 111 kilotonnes of butane (C4) and 38 kilotonnes of condensates (C5+).

OQ's LPG plant will also meet the energy requirements of industrial and retail consumers in Dhofar Governorate. Surplus output will be exported to world markets through OQ Trading, the marketing arm of the Group. Furthermore, the Group is studying the feasibility of using LPG products to develop petrochemical industries to help optimise value creation from hydrocarbons and support downstream investment.

Speaking on the occasion, Talal bin Hamed Al Oufi, CEO of OQ Group, said: "The OQ LPG plant in Salalah is one of the most important projects of Oman Investment Authority. It will contribute to improving the gas value chain in general, providing liquefied petroleum gas and exporting the surplus production and some of its derivatives to global markets."

Al Oufi also indicated that the LPG plant is integrated with various other facilities of OQ Group assets in Dhofar Governorate. The project was supervised by a capable Omani management team from the beginning of its design and implementation all the way to its commercial operation.

The plant has since commenced production of LPG according to international standards and specifications, with the first LPG shipment exported in July 2021. OQ's gas network supplies the project with its needs of natural gas, while multiple products are exported through OQ Trading, the trading arm of the group, to various global markets.

The CEO of OQ Group also stated that the establishment of such projects in various governorates contributes to promoting economic and social development in the different regions of the country, while advancing the growth of the industrial sector. OQ Group aims to contribute to this objective through its various investments projects conceived in line with the sustainable development goals set out in the Oman 2040 Vision, he noted.

"The project, from inception, has sought to enhance in-country value (ICV) development in the gas sector by retaining a sizable part of the expenditure within the country. Accordingly, it contributed to developing human capabilities and strengthening the national economy. The plant paid great attention to creating job opportunities and honing the skills of young Omanis. Total expenditure as part of ICV development reached more than OMR6 million. Around 300 small and medium



enterprises took part in the implementation of the plant during the procurement and construction phase," Al Oufi explained.

The project has also contributed to the development of local communities in the governorate through the implementation of a number of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives in the fields of education, health and the environment. Furthermore, it has helped enhance the expertise of small and medium enterprises, which have benefited from technical advisory supported provided as part of OQ's SME development initiatives.

In line with OQ's strong commitment to Omanisation and human capital development, two batches comprising more than 40 Omani staff were trained at the headquarters of an international company operating in the LPG field. Some employees were also sent for training and internship programmes at various international methanol and LPG plants, as well as refineries. Moreover, a number of employees took part in intensive training courses to acquire the skills necessary to operate the plant efficiently.

But the project did face its share

of challenges, as have other such ventures around the world, during the Covid-19 pandemic, said Al Awfi. These difficulties, encountered during the implementation phase, were nevertheless tackled thanks to the concerted efforts of the various teams working on completing this project. As a result, OQ was able to overcome many of the logistical and technical challenges posed by the pandemic, he noted.

In his address, OQ Group's CEO also reiterated OQ's commitment to adhering to best practices in driving sustainability through the application of governance principles,

continuous review of all the company's activities and operations, and the development of an action plan to raise the efficiency of operational processes. OQ prioritises performance improvement, which makes it a leader in the energy industry, he stressed.

Affirming OQ's commitment to financial stability and sustainability, he said the company has adopted a strategy that seeks to rebalance its investment portfolio with a view to attracting foreign investments, while studying options for privatising and exiting some assets. —ONA/THANI AL SIYABI

Bilarab Bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design praised

The award highlights the location of Al Mina Quarter of the Wilayat of Muttrah where a landmark was designed to incarnate the 50 years of Omani renaissance

MUSCAT: Specialists in the field of architectural engineering in the Sultanate of Oman have underscored the significance of Bilarab Bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design, which was officially announced yesterday.

The award, they said, was the first-of-its-kind in Oman and that it is distinguished in many ways: It is aligned with its intellectual message and it reflects human communication across the ages.

The award is an accolade acknowledging the merits of talented Omani youth.

In its first round, it highlights the location of Al Mina Quarter of the Wilayat of Muttrah where a landmark was designed to incarnate the 50 years of Omani renaissance and the country's quest to accomplish Oman Vision 2040.

Dr. Saleh Nassir Al Saadi, Associate Professor at the Sultan Qaboos University's College of



Engineering, said that Bilarab Bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design, unveiled at the outset of Oman Vision 2040, promotes a set of national priorities, including "promoting sustainable development of governorates and

cities", "grooming national capabilities in the fields of education, learning and research", "venerating citizenship, identity, heritage and culture" and "underlining the importance of environment and natural resources".

Al Saadi added that, besides developing the expertise of youth, the award serves as a means of familiarising local and international libraries about their engineering designs which reflect the diversity of Omani topography and climate and the related challenges to be addressed by the participants.

Omani youth

Meanwhile, Eng. Badr Nassir Al Haddabi, an architect, said that the award is an initiative aimed at asserting the role of Omani youth in developing the local communities as envisaged in Oman Vision 2040 and strategies related to tourism and economic strategies.

The award serves as a platform for empowering Omani youth by giving them exposure to common local and international designs, Al Haddabi added, noting that it will eventually translate into small and medium enterprises.

On her turn, architectural engineer Huda Al Jahwari, said that the award reflects a civilized humanitarian aspect of Omani culture.

"The award crystallises the accomplishments of the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said bin Taimour over the past 50 years of Omani renaissance, as well as the clear-cut vision of Renewed Renaissance espoused by His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik," Eng. Huda added.

"As architects, we are greatly delighted by the launch of Bilarab Bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design, which brings about a unique model of dealing with the very spirit of Omani architecture. It is a big incentive for Omani

youth to delve into the domain with innovative designs that are equally comprehensive and universal", she explained.

Eng. Ali Jaafar Al Lawati, a researcher in the field of architecture, said that the launch of the award in the heart of Old Muttrah bears great significance due to the city's historical role as a commercial hub throughout the ages, with its different ethnic groups co-existing peacefully for centuries.

Al Lawati affirmed that the award constitutes a platform for the exchange of ideas on Arab and contemporary architectural designs.

Bilarab Bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design offers an opportunity for 10 competitors to contest the final round, which will be officiated by an arbitration committee. The winner of first place will get OMR20,000; the second OMR15,000 and the third OMR10,000. -ONA

Dhofar

Over 43,000 tourists visit Land of Frankincense sites

SALALAH: The number of visitors to the Land of Frankincense sites in the Governorate of Dhofar last year stood at 43,174, according to data released by the Directorate General of Heritage and Tourism in Dhofar.

The number of visitors to Al Baleed Archeological Park and the Museum of the Frankincense Land reached 27,962, while the visitors of Samahram Archeological Site stood at 12,916. Moreover, the number of visitors to the Wbar Archeological Site reached 2,296.

The Al Baleed Archeological Park, Samahram, Wbar and the Wadi Dokka archeological sites



are registered on the World Heritage List under the name "Land of Frankincense" sites.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, represented by the Directorate General of Heritage and

Tourism in the Governorate of Dhofar, develops the sites and provides them with service and aesthetic facilities to serve the goals of cultural and archeological tourism in the governorate. -ONA

Muscat

ROP arrests five with drugs

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Royal Oman Police (ROP) has arrested five expats for possessing more than 35 kilograms of crystal drug and a certain quantity of marijuana in the Muscat Governorate.

A statement issued online by ROP said: "The Directorate General for Combating Drugs and Psychotropic Substances was able to arrest five expatriates, including an infiltrator who entered the country illegally by sea and smuggled drugs in partnership with an international gang."

"After the smuggling boat was spotted, the infiltrator was tracked down and arrested with the rest of the gang members. More than 35 kilograms of crystal drug and a quantity of marijuana were found in their possession.

Simplify Procedures

Ministry of Endowments launches electronic app



MUSCAT: The Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs launched yesterday the electronic system of endowments.

The move aims to ease and simplify procedures related to endowments and to serve the public interest.

The system will provide services dealing with the management of endowments.

Moreover, the electronic sys-

tem is a comprehensive scheme that organizes the process of compiling and registering endowments and the ones managing them in the Sultanate of Oman. Ultimately, the system will electronically connect all parties involved in the compilation process, including donors and people responsible of managing endowments, as well as public and private entities. -ONA

Trending ON SOCIAL MEDIA



MOST READ ON FACEBOOK

21,189 REACH

It targets Omani youth specialised in the fields of architecture and design.



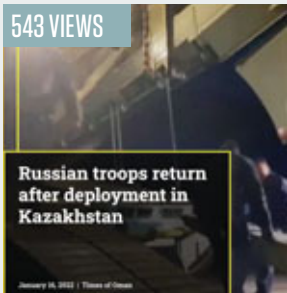
A story on the launch of Bilarab Bin Haitham Award reached 21,189 people and had 467 engagements on Facebook.



MOST VIEWED VIDEO ON INSTAGRAM

543 VIEWS

Russian troops return after deployment in Kazakhstan





MOST WATCHED VIDEO ON FACEBOOK

5,100 VIEWS

AstraZeneca vaccine permitted as booster dose in Oman



The Morning Minute video on AstraZeneca vaccine as booster dose in Oman had 5,100 views and reached 21,800 people on Facebook.



Morning Minute video on Russian troops in Kazakhstan

The Morning Minute video on Russian troops in Kazakhstan had 543 views and 23 likes on Instagram.



Story on the launch of Bilarab Bin Haitham Award



Morning Minute video on AstraZeneca vaccine as booster dose in Oman

RAFO

Indian expat airlifted for treatment

Times News Service

MUSCAT: A helicopter of the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) carried out the transport of an Indian resident suffering from a critical condition, from Dibba Hospital to Khasab Hospital in the Musandam Governorate to receive necessary treatment.

Humanitarian efforts

This service comes within the framework of the national services and humanitarian efforts provided by the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) and other departments of the Ministry of Defence to citizens and residents of this dear country, along with the other government institutions.

RNO COMMANDER HEADS TO PAKISTAN

Rear Admiral Saif Nasser Al Rahbi, Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) left on Sunday heading to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on an official visit lasting several days. He was seen off at A'Seeb Air Base by some senior RNO officers. -ONA



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Tennis star Djokovic loses appeal, will have to leave Australia

The tennis player was also ordered to pay the legal costs to the government

MELBOURNE: Novak Djokovic on Sunday lost his appeal against deportation, the Chief Justice James Allsop of the Federal Court of Australia announced.

Djokovic will now be required to leave Australia. The decision was unanimous, said Chief Justice Allsop. Other judges who were hearing Djokovic's appeal were Anthony Besanko, and David O'Callaghan of the Federal Court of Australia. The tennis player was also ordered to pay the legal costs to the government.

Djokovic's visa was cancelled on Friday by Hawke, the Australian Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services, and Multicultural Affairs.

"Today I exercised my power under section 133C(3) of the Migration Act to cancel the visa held by Novak Djokovic on health and good order grounds, on the basis that it was in the public interest to do so," minister in an official statement said.

"This decision followed orders by the Federal Circuit and Family Court on January 10, 2022, quashing a prior cancellation decision on procedural fairness grounds. In making this decision, I carefully considered information provided to me by the Department of Home Affairs, the Australian Border



DEPORTATION: Djokovic will now be required to leave Australia. The decision was unanimous, said Chief Justice Allsop.

Force and Djokovic."

"The Morrison Government is firmly committed to protecting Australia's borders, particularly in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. I thank the officers of the Department of Home Affairs and the Australian Border Force who work every day to serve Australia's interests in increasingly challenging operational environments," the statement added.

Djokovic's visa was initially cancelled upon arrival after hours of interrogation by Border Force officials. Then on Monday, judge Anthony Kelly of the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia quashed the cancellation of Djokovic's visa after tennis player spent five days detained in an immigration hotel.

Notably, world number one men's singles tennis player Djoko-

vic on Wednesday admitted that he conducted an in-person media interview and photoshoot in December despite knowing the fact that he was COVID-19 positive.

Novak Djokovic on Sunday said he is "extremely disappointed" by the Australian court's ruling to dismiss the tennis player's application for judicial review of the cancellation of his visa.

He further confirmed that he will not participate in the Australian Open, where he is the three-time defending champion. A statement released by the nine-time AO champion read: "I would like to make a brief statement to address the outcomes of today's Court hearing. I will now be taking some time to rest and to recuperate, before making any further comments beyond this."

"I am extremely disappointed

with the Court ruling to dismiss my application for judicial review of the Minister's decision to cancel my visa, which means I cannot stay in Australia and participate in the Australian Open," he added.

"I respect the Court's ruling and I will cooperate with the relevant authorities in relation to my departure from the country. I am uncomfortable that the focus of the past weeks has been on me and I hope that we can all now focus on the game and tournament I love. I would like to wish the players, tournament officials, staff, volunteers and fans all the best for the tournament."

"Finally, I would like to thank my family, friends, team, supporters, fans and my fellow Serbians for your continued support. You have all been a great source of strength to me," he signed off. **ANI**



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COVID TESTS

UK to abolish mandatory PCR Test for vaccinated people returning to country

LONDON: The United Kingdom will abolish mandatory COVID-19 tests for all fully vaccinated travellers returning to the country by the end of January, the *Times* reported on Sunday, citing a source close to UK Transport Secretary Grant Shapps.

"We are looking at removing all COVID tests for vaccinated travelers by the end of January, which is likely to coincide with the review of the plan B measures on January 26," the source said, as quoted by the media. According to the newspaper, this move will help UK families to save hundreds of pounds and will give impetus to the recovery of the tourism industry.

In addition to the abolition of PCR tests for fully vaccinated people, the minister intends to remove other restrictions, in particular the mandatory wearing of face masks in shops and public transport.

The UK faced a surge in COVID-19 cases ahead of Christmas. On December 7, the authorities introduced the requirement for a negative COVID-19 test to all persons over 12 entering the country amid the spread of the new Omi-



cron strain. In accordance with these rules, all passengers were required to present a negative PCR test taken no more than 48 hours before their arrival.

On December 8, UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced that the country would move to the so-called Plan B. The British were encouraged to work from home whenever possible and required to wear a mask. In addition, a COVID-19 pass confirming vaccination became mandatory for visiting public places. Daily testing was required for those who may have come into contact with carriers of the coronavirus.

A few days later, British airlines asked Johnson to abolish mandatory COVID-19 tests for fully vaccinated passengers. **ANI**

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UN-led COVAX delivers its billionth COVID-19 vaccine dose

The COVAX programme was set up in 2020 to ensure global access to coronavirus vaccines

WASHINGTON: The UN-led COVAX scheme has delivered one billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines, one of the organisations that manage the programme announced on Saturday.

The COVAX program was set up in 2020 to ensure global access to coronavirus vaccines, particularly to poorer countries.

The programme is backed by the World Health Organization (WHO), the Gavi vaccine alliance, and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI).

A 'key milestone'

"COVAX has delivered its first billionth dose of Covid-19 vaccines to 144 countries & territories across the world," Gavi chief executive Seth Berkley tweeted. "It's a key milestone in the largest and most rapid global vaccine rollout in history."

The plane carrying the shipment with the one billionth dose arrived in Kigali, Rwanda Saturday evening, Berkley said.

"I felt proud but also humbled knowing how far we have to go to protect everyone and solve vaccine inequity," he tweeted.



COVAX PROGRAM: The program is backed by the World Health Organization (WHO), the Gavi vaccine alliance, and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations

COVAX began delivering vaccines in February 2021, with the first doses reaching Ghana.

It has since supplied 144 countries and has received more than \$10 billion (€880 million) in donations.

Vaccine deliveries below target

Vaccine supplies to low-income countries had long remained limited after the doses initially became available in December 2020.

This was because they were forced to compete with wealthier states buying shots from vaccine makers at a premium and hoarding

them. Many countries even placed export restrictions on vaccines. But shipments have exponentially increased in the last quarter, Gavi said.

However, the program has fallen far short of its initial plan of delivering two billion doses by the end of 2021.

COVAX's plan was also to only supply jabs procured directly by the program using the donors' funds. But of the one billion doses, about one-third have been donated by rich nations.

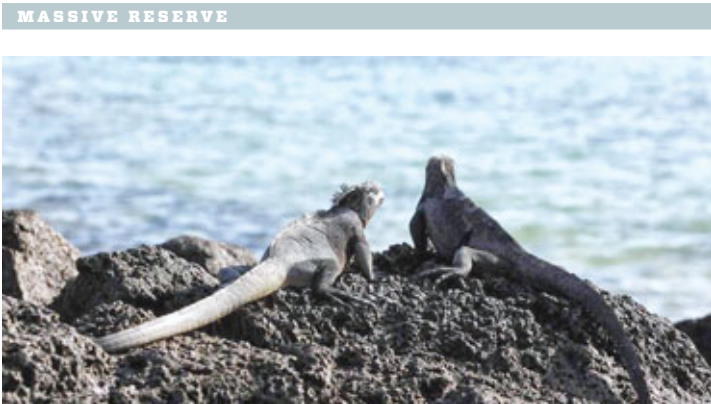
This change in strategy led to delays as some donors asked for the shots to be sent to countries picked by them.

Vaccine inequity remains high

Despite the one billion milestone, a vast majority of the population in poorer countries remain unvaccinated.

About 67% of the population in wealthy countries have been vaccinated compared with only 5% in poorer nations, according to WHO data.

More than 40% of the world population has not received a single dose. WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on Thursday pointed out that more than 85% of people in Africa have yet to receive a single dose.



Ecuador expands Galapagos Marine Reserve

QUITO: Ecuadoran President Guillermo Lasso signed a decree creating a massive new marine reserve north of the Galapagos Islands in the Pacific.

The new reserve, named "Hermandad" (Brotherhood), expands the protected waters by 60,000 square kilometres (23,166 square miles). It builds upon the existing Galapagos Marine Reserve, which already protects about 133,000 square kilometres of water from extractive activities.

"There are places that shape human history, and today we have the honor of being in one of those places," Lasso said while on a ship in the bay of Puerto Ayora, a town in the Galapagos.

"These islands teach us something about ourselves," Lasso said. "What if we didn't set ourselves up as masters over this Earth, but as its protectors?"

Lasso first announced the expansion in November in Glasgow, on the occasion of the COP26 climate summit. The project was in exchange for a reduction in Ecuador's international debt.

"The seas are great regulators of the global climate," Lasso said. "Taking care of them is not naive idealism," he added. "It is a vital necessity."

A UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site

Since 1978, the archipelago has been a UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site known for its unique flora and fauna.

It's thought to be home to more than 2,900 marine species, including rare ones such as marine iguanas and Galapagos finches.

In 1835, English naturalist Charles Darwin spent time on the islands, which helped inspire his theory of evolution. **bw**

CARAVAN STOPPED

Hundreds of migrants heading to the US stopped in Guatemala

WASHINGTON: A migrant caravan made up of several hundred men, women and children was stopped by authorities in Guatemala.

Authorities said the group, who had set off from the Honduran city of San Pedro Sula on Saturday, was attempting to make its way across Mexico to the US border, nearly 1,200 miles (2,000 kilometres) away.

The migrants, many from Honduras and Nicaragua, had arrived in the Honduran border town of Corinto on Saturday afternoon. They then crossed into Guatemala, where hundreds of security personnel were waiting for them.

There was a violent confrontation with security officials, during which stones and other objects were reportedly thrown. Guatemalan police said that a dozen officers had been injured as they attempted to turn the group back.

According to the Guatemalan Migration Institute, discussions on returning the migrants to their home countries have begun.

"People are being returned, everything in order, humanely," the institute's general director Carlos Emilio Morales said.

"We are protecting our borders; we are protecting the health of all Guatemalans," Morales added.

Migrants wishing to remain in Guatemala are required to have identification, proof of vaccination,



tion, along with a negative COVID-19 test.

A photographer with AFP news agency reported seeing people without those required documents being turned back to Honduras.

In search of a 'better life'

A Nicaraguan man called Ovaldo told AFP that his primary concern was "a better life for their family."

"There is no work," Pablo Mendez told Reuters news agency. The Honduran father was carrying his 2-year-old daughter in his arms. "That is why people are leaving in this caravan."

In January 2021, a much larger caravan numbering a few thousand was also intercepted in Guatemala,

forcing many to return to Honduras.

Those in Saturday's group said they were making the arduous journey to escape poverty and violence and begin new lives. Many had been victims of natural disasters like floods and drought.

Criticism of US migration policy

In September 2021, the Biden administration faced a flood of criticism over its handling of the thousands of migrants who had gathered underneath a bridge at Del Rio, at the US-Mexico border.

Images of US border guards on horseback chasing down migrants aggressively to stop from proceeding were widely condemned by rights groups. **bw**

OMICRON CASE

Ahead of Winter Olympics, Beijing reports first local Omicron case

BEIJING: Weeks ahead of the Winter Olympics, China's capital Beijing has reported its first locally transmitted infection of Omicron variant, local media reported on Sunday.

Global Times reported citing Beijing authorities that they have confirmed that a new local COVID-19 case reported on Saturday belongs to the Omicron

strain. According to an official statement, the patient had visited several entertainment venues, including shops, cafes, and a talk show event, in movements tracked since December 31.

Xu Hejian, a spokesperson for the Beijing municipal government, said that Beijing has entered Winter Olympic time, and is facing double pressure of domestic and imported cases, while the new case reported today rings alarm bell for the city's COVID-19 prevention work, Global Times reported. The infection comes less than three weeks before the Winter Olympic Games' opening ceremony on February 4, and around two weeks before the start of the Lunar New Year celebrations in China. **ANI**





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Aussies beat England by 146 runs in 5th Test

Australian skipper Pat Cummins took three wickets in the second innings

HOBART: Cameron Green and Scott Boland took three wickets each in the second innings as Australia defeated England by 146 runs in the fifth Ashes Test here at the Blundstone Arena on Sunday. With this win, Australia won the five-match Ashes 4-0. Australian skipper Pat Cummins also took three wickets in the second innings as the hosts completed a perfect bowling performance.



Resuming the third and final session on Day 3 at 68/1, England batters Dawid Malan and Zak Crawley added 14 more runs to the total, but Australia came storming back as Cameron Green dismissed Malan (10) and Crawley (36) in quick succession, reducing Eng-

land to 83/3 in the 23rd over. Left-handed batter Ben Stokes (5) failed to leave a mark with the bat as he was scalped by Mitchell Starc in the 28th over. Nine runs later, Scott Boland went through Root's (11) defence, and England found itself reeling at 101/5, still,

170 runs away from the target. Boland struck once again and this time he sent Sam Billings (1) back to the pavilion and hence England was in danger of losing the fifth Ashes Test inside three days. In the very next over, Ollie Pope (5) was bowled by skipper Pat Cummins and the wheels started to come off for England.

In the end, the Three Lions were bowled out for 124, handing Australia a 146-run win in the fifth and final Ashes Test. Earlier in the day, Australia were bowled out for 155 in the second innings, setting England a target of 271 to win.

For Australia, Alex Carey top-scored with a knock of 49 while Mark Wood scalped six wickets for England.

Brief Scores: Australia 303 and 155; England 188 and 124 all out (Zak Crawley 36, Rory Burns 26; Scott Boland 3-18). **ANI**

Muscat too good for Majees, Waqas stars in Al Jadidi win

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Star-studded Muscat CT showed its batting prowess in a 96-run drubbing of Majees CT when four of its top five batters struck sizzling fifties in a 50-over Premier Division League match at Oman Cricket Turf 1 in Amerat on Saturday.

Shoaib Khan (75), Jatinder Singh (72), Kashyap Kumar Prajapati (69) and Sandeep Goud (51) all batted brilliantly as Muscat posted an impressive 325 for 5 on the board. Amanpreet Singh took 2 for 49.

Majees struggled to stay on course despite a superb 112 by Ravindra K'Ratne before being dismissed for 229 in the 45 th over. Chonira Aiyappa, Ganesh Chandrashekher and Samay Shrivastava all claimed two wickets each.

Waqas helps Al Jadidi win

Splendid 57 by Muhammed Waqas and Shaheer Najeeb's 3 for 13 were the highlights of Al Jadidi Stars' comfortable 7-wicket win over Ernst and Young in a T20 game of A Division League at OC Turf 2 on Saturday.

Ernst and Young failed to prosper, getting bowled out for 112 due to brilliant bowling by Shaheer, Ali Muhammed (3 for 21) and Aneermom (2 for 18).

Al Jadidi raced to the target in 16.2 overs, scoring 116 for 3 thanks to top knock by Waqas. Alkesh Joshi picked up 2 for 23. Brief Scores (A Division T20): Ernst & Young 112 all out in 18.2 overs (Krishnan Karthik 35 - 2x4, 2x6, Issa Al Balushi 27 - 5x4, 1x6, Shaheer Najeeb 3-13, Ali Muhammed 3-21, Aneermom Abdulrahman 2-18) lost to Al Jadidi Stars 116 for 3 in 16.2 overs (Muhammad Waqas 57 - 8x4, 1x6, Alkesh Joshi 2-23) by 7 wickets.

Akbar steers Ideal to win

Akbar Shaikh's magnificent 97 and Ruban Durai's 4 for 7 powered Ideal International to a massive 180-run victory against OCT

Al Amerat in a C Division T20 clash at Muscat Municipality ground 2 on Friday.

Ideal's huge 253 for 2 included top scores of 97 from Akbar, 53 by Salman Khan, 41 by Wasim Jamadar and 39 from Ruban Durai. Anaya Allah bagged 2 for 38. No batter from OCT Amerat could stay on to fight except Sulaiman Haider who struck 33 as the whole side was restricted to 73 for 7 in 20 overs. Apart from Ruban's destructive spell, Sachin Mamnani bowled exceptionally well, taking 3 for 8.

Brief Scores (C Division): Ideal International 253 for 2 in 20 overs (Akbar Shaikh 97 - 14x4, Salman Khan 53 - 9x4, 1x6, Wasim Jamadar 41 - 6x4, 2x6, Ruban Durai 39 - 7x4, 1x6, Anaya Allah 2-38) beat Oct Al Amerat 73 for 7 in 20 overs (Sulaiman Haider 33 - 4x4, Ruban Durai 4-7, Sachin Mamnani 3-8) by 180 runs.

Rahul lifts Vanderlande

In another C Division match at Muscat Municipality ground 1, Vanderlande rode on a superb 54 by its star performer Rahul Chadha and 3 for 24 by Haja Hussain to defeat Design Group Engineering Consultants by 30 runs.

Vanderlande's 205 for 6 included top scores of 54 by Rahul and 37 by Barathwaj Vinayagam. Amir Mohammed and Satham Hussain took two wickets each.

Design Group fought well but fell short by 30 runs, scoring 175 for 7 in 20 overs. Parvez Beg (52) and Muhammed Althaf (45) were its main scorers. Haja Hussain and Vignesh Kumar claimed three and two wickets respectively.

Brief Scores (C Division): Vanderlande 205 for 6 in 20 overs (Rahul Chadha 54 - 7x4, 2x6, Barathwaj Vinayagam 37 - 4x4, Amir Mohammed 2-38, Satham Hussain 2-39) beat Design Group Engineering Consultants 175 for 7 in 20 overs (Parvez Beg 52 - 5x4, 1x6, Muhammed Althaf 45 - 2x4, 1x6, Haja Hussain 3-24, Vignesh Kumar 2-22) by 30 runs.

BOOST THE BONDING

Football tournament for Oman Flour Mills Company staff begins

MUSCAT: With the participation of 72 employees comprising six sports teams, the second football tournament for the employees of Oman Flour Mills Co. and its subsidiaries kicked off at the Al She-mali Sports playground on Sunday, January 16, 2022.

The tournament is being organised in order to enhance the bonding among the employees and for creating better coordination between the employees of Oman Flour Mills and its subsidiaries, giving them an opportunity to meet and compete away from working hours, which contributes to strengthening their physical strength and an opportunity to showcase their skills in football.

The CEO of Oman Flour Mills believes in highlighting the capabilities and talents of the employees and developing their interests.

The importance of this event can be gauged from the fact that it comes in line with the strategy of the Oman Flour Mills Co. to pay attention to the human resources as an integral part of its identity, where the company is keen to promote communication between employees and create a work environment that motivates creativity, he said, adding that such events contribute to the strengthening of moral and physical aspects of the premise and as sound mind lives in a healthy body.



COMMENTARY

Virat Kohli played into the hands of Indian selectors

Anis Sajjan, Vice Chairman, Danube Group

My article today was supposed to be on how Team lost the series to South Africa which they were favourites but South Africa won it coming from behind to beat favourites India. I shall leave that for some other day as the big news coming out is the sudden announcement of Virat Kohli stepping down as India's test captain.

Virat Kohli's stepping down as captain is not because India lost the series to South Africa. This was bound to come after the drama which happened with the BCCI which started with his T20 resignation before the T20 World Cup. And to make matters worse for Kohli, the BCCI president Sourav Ganguly had requested Kohli not to step down but Virat didn't want to continue and hence they decided to axe Virat.

Kohli as an ODI captain too felt two white ball captains was too much of leadership. Virat Kohli contradicted Sourav Ganguly's statement at the press conference before leaving for South Africa saying his decision to step down as T20 captain was well received and that he was not told to reconsider his decision.

In fact, he further said that he had been told about his removal as ODI captain just one and half hours before the selection meeting to pick the test squad for South Africa and that there was no prior communication to him at all.

This bombshell made Ganguly to say this is BCCI matter and they will handle it. Instead, he made the chief selector Chetan Sharma who I would call as a puppet of the Big guys running the BCCI in the middle of the series to counter Virat allegation that everyone who were present in the meeting had asked Virat



to reconsider his decision to stay on as T20 captain.

I find it baffling to see a captain who has led India to 40 test wins in 68 test matches and just 11 losses to give up his captaincy just after a series loss to South Africa. He was so desperate to win the series that in the last test match when Dean Elgar's decision was reversed by the DRS, he lead his frustration further digging a hole for himself.

His statement where he said everything has to come to a halt at some stage and for me as test captain is now which can't be coming because of one series loss but because the way the BCCI has handled his removal as ODI captain and it has left India high and dry with a captain with so much of success to step down as Test captain.

To wind up my story, I believe the selectors wanted Virat to succumb under pressure and I am afraid he fell into the trap of the top bracket running the BCCI.

The sad part is that the next test match which India would be playing against Sri Lanka in February end would be Virat's 100 test match and thanks to the dirty politics played the most successful test captain won't be leading his team out.

I am baffled that he has stepped down as India's test

captain, I sincerely hope that this decision which Virat has taken for sake of India is not taken in anger and that he is contented and happy of what he has done for team India till date. We just saw him playing two high quality innings in the last two test matches where we could see the solid temperament and hunger he had for test cricket.

He has got so much of cricket left in him and I sincerely hope that this decision has come out of happiness and not anger for him being removed as odd captain as he has a lot to contribute to Indian cricket.

He always gives more than 100 percent in every game and the energy which he rubs on to every cricketer in the Indian team is unmatched. No one can doubt his credibility when playing for India, we might sometimes disagree to the decisions he took sometimes but he stood by it and wore his heart on his sleeve as the Indian captain.

He was the ideal brand ambassador for test cricket and took India from the seventh position to number one winning series in Sri Lanka, West Indies, Australia and also beat England.

Before he became the captain, India never had the fast bowlers who could win you test matches abroad but under him India developed fast bowlers like Ishant Sharma, Mohammed Shami, Jasprit Bumrah, Shardul Thakur, Mohammed Siraj, Umesh Yadav who could challenge opposition in any condition, be it England,

Australia, South Africa. It's a sad day for Indian cricket as there is no one even close to him who is the flag bearer for test cricket and I sincerely hope he changes his mind as India needs him in test cricket at least for the next five years till we groom a new captain.

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MARKET

BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS LOWER

The MSX index closed at 4,240.53 points, down 0.62 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.84 per cent at 519.21 points. Taageer Finance up 4.00 per cent, was the top gainer while, Al Batinah Development down 18.00 per cent, was the top loser.

Natural gas production rises by 9.2% in Oman

The increase is attributed mainly to the rise of associated gas by 26.2 per cent to reach 8.499 billion cubic metres compared to 6.736 billion cubic metres by the end of November 2020

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman's production of natural gas (including imports) by the end of November 2021 reached 46.05 billion cubic metres compared to 42.186 billion cubic metres in November 2020, comprising a rise of 9.2 per cent, according to the latest data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The increase is attributed mainly



NCSI DATA: The use of gas in industrial zones (including Oman Mining Company and Oman Cement Company) reached 201 million cubic metres by the end of November 2021 compared to 128 million cubic metres at the end of the same period in 2020, constituting a surge by 57.2 per cent. - ONA

to the rise of associated gas by 26.2 per cent to reach 8.499 billion cubic metres compared to 6.736 billion cubic metres by the end of November 2020 and the increase of non-associated gas (including imports) by 5.9 per cent to reach 37.550 billion cubic metres compared to 35.449 billion cubic metres by the end of the same period in 2020.

Gas usage in electric power plants (including Sultan Qaboos University and the Ministry of

Defence) went up by 8.9 per cent to reach 7.384 billion cubic metres by the end of November 2021 compared to 6.778 billion cubic meters by the end of November 2020.

The use of gas in industrial zones (including Oman Mining Company and Oman Cement Company) reached 201 million cubic metres by the end of November 2021 compared to 128 million cubic metres at the end of the same period in 2020, constituting

a surge by 57.2 per cent.

The amount of gas used in oil fields recorded a rise by 17 per cent to reach 11.925 billion cubic metres compared to 10.189 billion cubic metres by the end of the same period in 2020. Meanwhile, the amount of gas used in industrial projects recorded a marginal increase by 5.8 per cent to reach 26.539 billion cubic metres compared to 25.091 billion cubic metres by the end of November 2020. - ONA

OMAN WATER AND WASTEWATER SERVICES



Deal inked to supply treated water for copper mining project

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company signed an agreement with Al Hadihta Resources Company at Al Ansab Wetland.

The agreement aims to supply the copper mining project in the Wilayat of Mudhaibi with treated water during the project's estimated 10 years.

Al Hadihta Resources will also invest by upgrading the capacity of Al Mudhaibi Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) to 1800 cubic metres per day.

The agreement was signed by Qais bin Saud Al-Zakwani, CEO of the Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company and Eng. Avigyan Bera, CEO, on behalf of Al Hadihta, in the presence of Asilabint Salim bin Sulaiman Al-

Samsami, Undersecretary at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Investment Promotion.

Al Zakwani, said, "In the first phase, the Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company will supply the mining project with 300 cubic metres per day of treated water from Al Mudhaibi STP. After increasing the plant capacity, the volume of treated water that it will be supplied will increase from 300 cubic metres per day to 1200 cubic metres per day."

Al Zakwani added that the mining company will benefit from this agreement to control the dust resulting from the daily operational works. In addition, TE will be used in mining operational works for copper production, as well as using it to make the project area greener.

PARTNERSHIP

OMR19mn financing pact signed for major mining project in Oman

Times News Service

MUSCAT: As part of its continued efforts to further support major industries in the Sultanate, Sohar International recently signed an agreement with Al Hadeetha Resources to extend OMR19 million worth of financing to the Wash-hi Majazah mining project that seeks to provide impetus to the Sultanate's mining industry, and thereby contribute to the economic diversification objectives in line with Oman Vision 2040.

Signing the agreement on part of the bank was Ahmed Al Musalmi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International, whereas Sayyed Khalid bin Hamed bin Saif Al-Busaidy, Chairman of Al Naba Holding, Devaki Gulabsi Khimji, Managing Director of Al Tasnim Group and Atmavireshvar Sthapak, Managing Director of Alara Resources Ltd represented the company.

Commenting on the signing ceremony, Ahmed Al Musalmi, said, "Mining is one of the government's key focus sectors as per the economic diversification plan, and Oman's mining industry has attracted both, foreign and local operators. As a bank that has been strongly aligned with Oman Vision 2040, it gives us immense pleasure

to support and finance such projects that contribute towards the overall long-term vision of the nation. Regarded as one of the major mining projects in the Sultanate, the scale of its operations will contribute significantly to the overall economy, creating in-country value, job opportunities and much more. At Sohar International, we remain invested in supporting ventures that provide sustainable socio-economic benefits to the community enabling people to prosper and grow."

Al Hadeetha Resources, a joint venture between Alara Resources, Al Hadeetha and Al Tasnim, is the first international joint venture company that has been awarded a copper mining license in Oman for the Wash-hi Majazah project. Located in the Governorate of North Al-Sharqiyah, the Wash-hi Majazah copper deposit has been evaluated under JORC standards for over 16 million tonnes of copper resources and 10 million tonnes of mineable reserves. With an increase in global demand for copper, the Wash-hi Majazah project provides various channels of growth and prosperity in the economy as well as socio-economical benefits to the Sultanate and local communities such as providing



STRATEGIC: Sohar International signed an agreement with Al Hadeetha Resources to extend OMR19 million worth of financing to the Wash-hi Majazah mining project. - Supplied picture

employment for approximately 200 Omanis, local skill developments, opportunities for local suppliers and vendors, infrastructure development and much more. We would like to mention that the factory will be inaugurated in November of this year, coinciding with the country's celebrations of the glorious National Day.

"A project of this scale requires the right kind of support, and we are grateful to Sohar International for extending their project financing services to ensure that our

operations are carried out without any hindrance," said Sayyed Khalid bin Hamed bin Saif Al-Busaidy, Chairman of Al Naba Holding. "Supported by the government represented by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals implementing favourable reforms to support the mining industry in Oman, we are certain that developments in this sector will be promising."

"While the economic benefits from the mining sector will be far-reaching, such mega projects complement the government's agenda

to establish a decentralised local administration resulting in the various regions of Oman prospering and growing.

"It is also important to note that Wash-hi Majazah project will contribute immensely to the generation of job opportunities and increasing employment for the local workforce. Apart from individual job seekers, the project will provide ongoing business prospects to local SMEs and vendors."

With an equity contribution of OMR8 million bringing up the total valuation of the project at approximately OMR27 million, Wash-hi Majazah project will generate cash flows of OMR200 million for 10 years. The project will empower the local community in the Governorate of North Al-Sharqiyah and create significant in-country value that will have an impact on the neighbouring governorates and regions harnessing local capabilities and creating a strong value chain impacting everything from skills to infrastructure development such as upgradation of local STP plants, power, road and water. This project will also contribute in general to support the financial sector and the country's cash flow.

"We are always looking at the opportunities that will boost in-

country value and we are proud to invest in local cooper mining projects in Oman with our esteemed partners. We appreciate Sohar International for their trust in this project," says Devaki Khimji.

At the forefront of encouraging Omani businesses to invest in flourishing sectors, Sohar International has extended financial support to various organisations that have demonstrated due credibility, competence and dedication in contributing to the nation's progress. The bank's dedicated team of highly-qualified professionals ensures seamless project execution which is not just limited to the provision of funds, but also insightful financial advisory based on in-depth market knowledge and analysis.

AV Sthapak, Managing Director of Alara Resources said, "Alara wishes to thank Sohar International, our fellow JV partners for their valuable support and for their disciplined approach towards realising our mission of becoming a mid-tier mineral producer with a focus on mineral deposits and projects in Oman. These are exciting times for the global copper mining industry and Al wash-hi Majazah Project is destined to write a new chapter for Oman copper."

DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Pacts worth more than OMR2mn inked



MUSCAT: A number of agreements were signed in the Governorate of Al Dhahirah to implement service, municipal and development projects at a sum of more than OMR2 million.

They were signed with the companies executing the projects by Najeeb Ali Al Rawas, Governor of Al Dhahirah.

These projects will contribute to developing and boosting the governorate's economy, as well as enhancing the services rendered to cover the three wilayats of the governorate.

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MSX index ends lower

Taageer Finance up 4.00 per cent, was the top gainer while, Al Batinah Development down 18.00 per cent, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,240.53 points, down 0.62 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.84 per cent at 519.21 points. Taageer Finance up 4.00 per cent, was the top gainer while, Al Batinah Development down 18.00 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of Vision Insurance were the most active in terms of the number of shares traded while Al Anwar Ceramics were the most active in terms of turnover.

A total number of 651 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating a turnover of OMR1.7 million, with more than 11.4 million shares changing hands. Out of 47 traded securities, 6 advanced, 24 declined and 17 remained unchanged. At the session close, GCC & Arab investors were net

buyers for OMR53,000 while domestic investors were net sellers for OMR49,000 followed by foreign investors for OMR3,000 worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 6,761.89 points, down 0.61 per cent. Prices of Taageer Finance, National Bank Oman and United Finance were up by 4.00 per cent, 1.91 per cent and 1.70 per cent respectively. Prices of Al Batinah Development Company, Ahlia Insurance, Al Sharqia Investment, Bank Dhofar, and Oman & Emirates Investment were down by 18.00 per cent, 8.94 per cent, 6.25 per cent, 5.84 per cent, and 3.13 per cent respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 6,015.56 points, down 0.19 per cent. Services Index was down by 0.81 per cent before closing at 1,651.43 points. — **United Securities**

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INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff%
MSX 30 INDEX	4,277.59	4,240.53	4,240.53	4,266.93	-26.40	-0.62
FINANCIAL INDEX	6,817.76	6,761.90	6,761.90	6,803.13	-41.23	-0.61
Industry Index	6,056.25	6,015.57	6,015.57	6,027.18	-11.62	-0.19
Services Index	1,663.26	1,651.43	1,651.43	1,664.96	-13.54	-0.81
MSX Shariah Index	523.38	519.21	519.21	523.62	-4.41	-0.84
MSX TR INDEX	5,147.46	5,102.87	5,102.87	5,134.63	-31.76	-0.62

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
11,487,990	1,772,321	651	22,406,614,351	6	24	17	47

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR SUNDAY, JANUARY 16

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PD	LAST BD	LAST OFFER	PDA VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET																
OM0000000216	JAZEERA STEEL PROD	486,589	195,423	106	0.408	0.410	0.398	0.402	0.392	0.010	2.551	0.400	0.400	0.400	0.100	50,208,980
OM0000000188	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	548,540	245,634	9	0.448	0.448	0.442	0.448	0.444	0.004	0.901	0.442	0.430	0.442	0.100	98,560,000
OM0000001418	RAISUT CEMENT	390	43	1	0.210	0.210	0.210	0.217	0.217	0.000	0.000	0.210	0.202	0.210	0.100	43,400,000
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	2,000	612	2	0.306	0.306	0.306	0.306	0.306	0.000	0.000	0.306	0.304	0.312	0.100	204,519,820
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	1,670	402	3	0.244	0.244	0.240	0.244	0.244	0.000	0.000	0.240	0.230	0.239	0.100	80,732,941
OM0000002200	AHLI BANK	819,500	98,535	11	0.120	0.120	0.119	0.120	0.120	0.000	0.000	0.120	0.114	0.120	0.100	233,658,896
OM0000002786	BANK MUSCAT	191,082	99,768	16	0.522	0.524	0.520	0.522	0.522	0.000	0.000	0.520	0.522	0.526	0.100	1,865,875,841
OM0000003000	AL MAHA MARKTING	150	86	1	0.640	0.640	0.640	0.682	0.682	0.000	0.000	0.640	0.644	0.688	0.100	477,48,000
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	243,820	186,789	23	0.764	0.768	0.764	0.768	0.768	0.000	0.000	0.768	0.768	0.772	0.100	576,000,000
OM0000003398	SOHAR INT BANK	168,070	19,347	18	0.116	0.116	0.115	0.115	0.115	0.000	0.000	0.115	0.113	0.115	0.100	343,857,163
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	5,090	1,727	6	0.340	0.340	0.340	0.340	0.342	-0.002	-0.585	0.340	0.330	0.340	0.100	20,809,453
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	56,300	24,565	8	0.440	0.440	0.436	0.436	0.440	-0.004	-0.909	0.438	0.436	0.438	0.100	23,980,000
OM0000003968	QOREDOO	10,026	3,770	4	0.376	0.376	0.376	0.376	0.380	-0.004	-1.053	0.376	0.364	0.380	0.100	244,755,030
OM0000006920	VISION INSURANCE	1,791,090	147,888	21	0.082	0.084	0.082	0.083	0.084	-0.001	-1.190	0.084	0.084	0.086	0.100	3,300,000
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SER.	37,755	16,770	5	0.450	0.450	0.442	0.444	0.450	-0.006	-1.333	0.444	0.440	0.444	0.100	104,966,040
OM0000002077	AL OMANIYA FIN.	133,475	17,547	10	0.132	0.133	0.130	0.131	0.133	-0.002	-1.504	0.133	0.130	0.132	0.100	38,243,507
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	290,000	26,988	24	0.094	0.094	0.092	0.093	0.095	-0.002	-2.105	0.092	0.091	0.092	0.100	18,600,000
OM0000001525	OMAN INVEST & FIN.	504,299	79,730	35	0.159	0.160	0.155	0.158	0.163	-0.005	-3.067	0.158	0.155	0.160	0.100	37,446,000
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	10,220	1,298	2	0.127	0.127	0.127	0.127	0.132	-0.005	-3.788	0.127	0.127	0.132	0.100	10,795,000
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIA INV.	120,300	10,678	5	0.083	0.083	0.080	0.080	0.086	-0.006	-6.250	0.080	0.080	0.083	0.100	8,100,000
Total		20	5,419,576	1,177,508	310											
Parallel Market																
OM0000003281	TAAGEER FINANCE	810,745	62,841	47	0.077	0.078	0.077	0.078	0.075	0.003	4.000	0.077	0.076	0.077	0.100	19,780,020
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	582,900	124,695	7	0.211	0.214	0.211	0.214	0.210	0.004	1.905	0.213	0.189	0.214	0.100	347,952,520
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	775,250	46,515	28	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.059	0.001	1.695	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.100	20,948,665
OM0000001152	OMAN NAT. ENG.	1,282,942	126,248	76	0.099	0.100	0.098	0.098	0.097	0.001	1.031	0.099	0.099	0.100	0.100	12,740,000
OM0000001517	HSCB BANK OMAN	78,322	8,169	10	0.104	0.106	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.000	0.000	0.104	0.104	0.105	0.100	308,032,530
OM0000002872	OMAN OIL MARKETING	500	150	1	0.900	0.900	0.900	0.904	0.904	0.000	0.000	0.900	0.872	0.900	0.100	55,392,600
OM0000003125	GLOBAL INV. H.	319,000	21,169	18	0.069	0.069	0.067	0.068	0.068	0.000	0.000	0.067	0.066	0.070	0.100	13,600,000
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	35,100	3,510	7	0.101	0.101	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.000	0.000	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.100	223,695,303
OM0000004333	AL SUWADI POWER	8,000	392	1	0.049	0.049	0.049	0.049	0.049	0.000	0.000	0.049	0.047	0.050	0.100	35,005,911
OM0000005989	PHOENIX POWER	261,740	13,087	11	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.000	0.000	0.050	0.049	0.050	0.100	72,130,073
OM0000006979	OMAN QATAR INSUR.	5,000	1,050	1	0.210	0.210	0.210	0.214	0.214	0.000	0.000	0.210	0.193	0.210	0.100	21,400,000
OM0000007084	MCT DESALINATE	500	45	1	0.089	0.089	0.089	0.087	0.087	0.000	0.000	0.089	0.087	0.089	0.100	13,532,885
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	1,211,530	113,998	49	0.094	0.095	0.093	0.094	0.095	-0.001	-1.053	0.094	0.093	0.094	0.100	16,450,000
OM0000001178	MUSCAT GASES	88,650	14,531	16	0.164	0.164	0.163	0.164	0.166	-0.002	-1.205	0.163	0.160	0.163	0.100	4,920,000
OM0000004776	TAKAFUL OMAN	13,000	923	4	0.071	0.071	0.071	0.071	0.072	-0.001	-1.388	0.071	0.071	0.071	0.100	7,100,000
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEER	21,385	1,621	5	0.075	0.077	0.075	0.076	0.078	-0.002	-2.564	0.077	0.074	0.080	0.100	15,495,970
OM0000007407	DHOOFAR GENERATING	135,500	8,574	11	0.061	0.064	0.061	0.063	0.065	-0.002	-3.077	0.063	0.063	0.063	0.100	14,001,120
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	20,000	1,240	1	0.062	0.062	0.062	0.062	0.064	-0.002	-3.125	0.062	0.062	0.062	0.100	7,554,250
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	25,000	3,220	3	0.130	0.130	0.128	0.129	0.137	-0.008	-5.839	0.128	0.125	0.132	0.100	386,529,335
OM0000004669	SHARQIYAH DESALIN.	30,784	3,140	4	0.102	0.102	0.102	0.102	0.109	-0.007	-6.422	0.102	0.101	0.108	0.100	9,975,820
OM0000002804	ASAFPA FOODS	24,275	3,850	6	0.166	0.166	0.156	0.159	0.173	-0.014	-8.992	0.156	0.156	0.156	0.100	10,980,000
OM0000001319	ALUMINIUM PROD.	44,610	5,044	13	0.120	0.120	0.112	0.113	0.124	-0.011	-8.871	0.112	0.112	0.112	0.100	3,793,574
OM0000006912	AHLIA INSURANCE	10,000	3,260	1	0.326	0.326	0.326	0.326	0.358	-0.032	-8.939	0.326	0.326	0.326	0.100	32,600,000
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	267,385	26,471	16	0.089	0.089	0.089	0.089	0.109	-0.010	-9.174	0.089	0.089	0.089	0.100	8,058,572
Total		24	6,045,416	594,043	337											

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ANALYSIS

United Nations forecasts lower global economic growth for 2022 and 2023

NEW YORK: The United Nations forecast lower global economic growth for 2022 and 2023, saying the world is facing new waves of coronavirus infections, persistent labour market challenges, lingering supply chain issues and rising inflationary pressures.

The UN said that after ex-

panding 5.5 per cent in 2021 - the highest rate of global economic growth in more than four decades - the world economy is projected to grow only 4 per cent in 2022 and 3.5 per cent in 2023, The Associated Press (AP) reported.

Liu Zhenmin, the UN under-secretary-general for economic

and social affairs, said at a news conference releasing the economic report that two years after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic “we are still living in a time of great uncertainty.” “At the start of 2022, the global economic picture in the market is still murky,” he said. -BNA

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FIRST OMANI



SWAPPING JUST ONE FOOD ITEM DAILY MAKES DIET PLANET-FRIENDLY

Want to eat healthier but struggling with it? Well, according to a new Tulane University study, it may be easier than you think.

People who eat beef could slash their diet’s carbon footprint as much as 48 per cent by swapping just one serving per day for a more planet-friendly alternative, according to the study.

The study has been published in ‘The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition’.

Using real-world data from a survey of what more than 16,000 Americans eat in an average day, researchers from Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine and the University of Michigan calculated how much of a difference people could make if they swapped one high-impact food item for similar, more sustainable options.

They examined how the change would impact two metrics – their daily diets’ greenhouse gas emissions and water scarcity footprint,

a measure of the irrigated water used to produce the foods they eat that takes into account regional variations in water scarcity.

The highest impact item in Americans’ diet is beef and around 20 per cent of survey respondents ate at least one serving of it in a day. If they collectively swapped one serving of beef – for example, choosing ground turkey instead of ground beef – their diets’ greenhouse gas emissions fell by an average of 48 per cent and water-use impact declined by 30 per cent.

“People can make a significant difference in their carbon footprint with very simple changes – and the easiest one would be to substitute poultry for beef,” said lead author Diego Rose, a professor of nutrition and food security at Tulane University’s School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine.

The study also examined how the change would affect the overall environmental impact of all food consumption in the U.S. in a day – including the 80 per cent of diets without any changes. If



only the 20 per cent of Americans who ate beef in a day switched to something else for one meal, that would reduce the overall carbon footprint of all U.S. diets by 9.6 per cent and reduce water-use impacts by 5.9 per cent.

Agricultural production accounts for about a quarter of global greenhouse gas emissions and about 70 per cent of global freshwater withdrawals. For the study, researchers built an extensive database of the greenhouse gas emissions and water use related to the production of foods and linked it to a large federal survey that asked people what they ate over a 24-hour period.

Although swapping beef had the greatest impact, they also measured the impact of changing other items. Replacing a serving of shrimp with cod reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 34 per cent; replacing dairy milk with soy milk resulted in an 8 per cent reduction.

The greatest reduction in the water scarcity footprint came

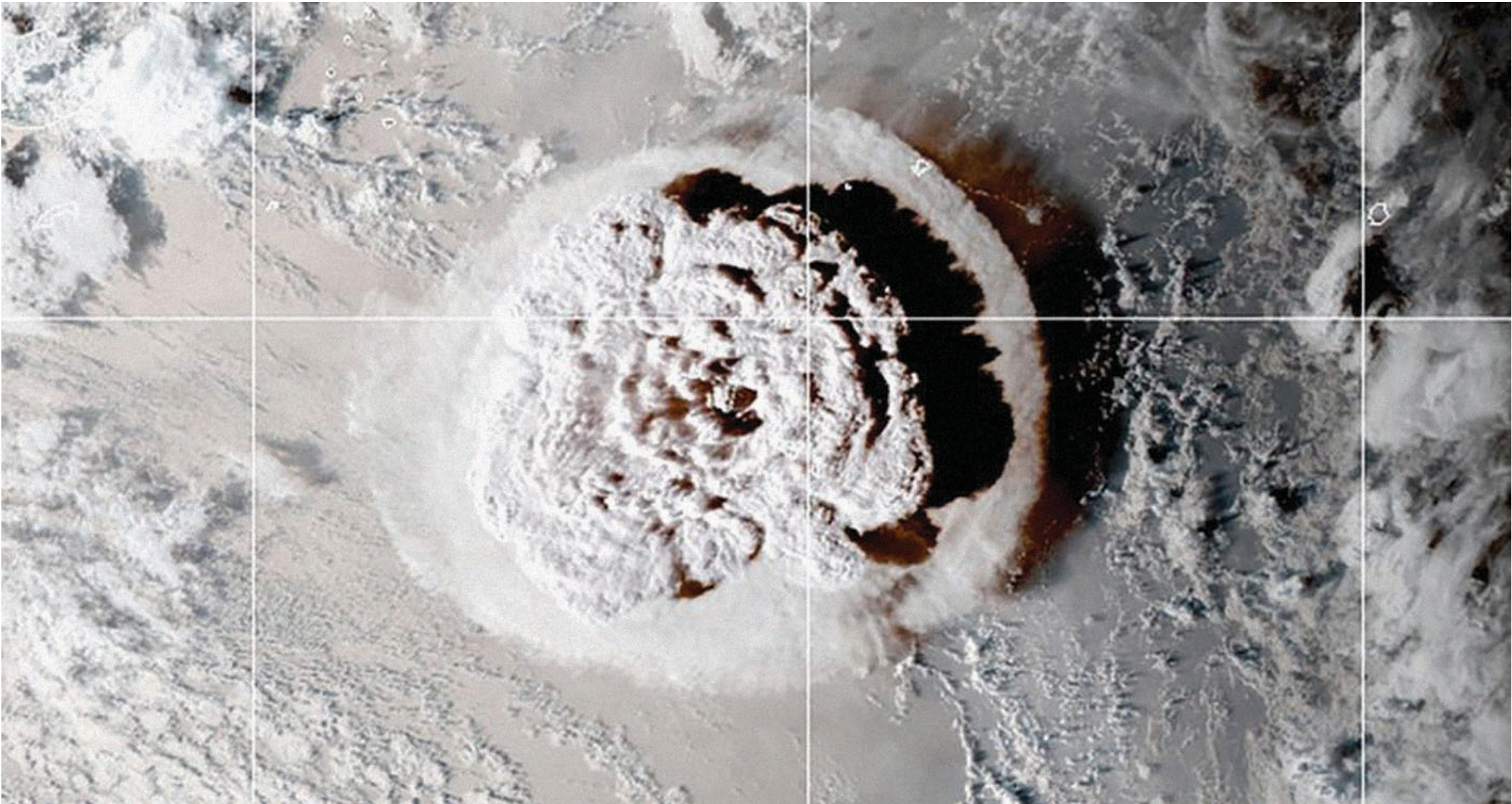
from replacing asparagus with peas, resulting in a 48 per cent decrease. Substituting peanuts in place of almonds decreased the water scarcity footprint by 30 per cent.

Although individual substitutions were the focus of the study, Rose said that addressing climate change must involve more than singular actions.

“The changes needed to address our climate problems are major. They are needed across all sectors and along with all levels of human organisation from international agencies to federal and state governments to communities and households,” Rose said.

“Many individuals feel strongly about this and wish to change our climate problem through direct actions that they can control. This, in turn, can change social norms about both the seriousness of the problem and the potential solutions that can address it. Our study provides evidence that even simple steps can assist in these efforts,” Rose concluded. **ANI**

FEATURE



TONGA VOLCANO ERUPTION: ‘SIGNIFICANT’ DAMAGE LIKELY, TSUNAMI THREAT RECEDES



Communication with the Pacific island is still spotty after a massive volcanic eruption spewed ash into the atmosphere and triggered a tsunami that flooded coastlines from Japan to the United States.

The tsunami threat around the Pacific basin from a powerful underwater volcano eruption off the coast of Tonga began to recede on Sunday, the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center said.

Authorities at “impacted coastal areas should monitor... to determine when it is safe to resume normal activities,” the center said.

The Hunga-Tonga-Hunga-Ha’apai underwater volcano erupted off the coast of Tonga on Saturday evening, sending a plume of ash, steam, and gas rising high into the atmosphere. The roar from the eruption was reportedly heard 10,000 kilometres (6,000 miles) away in Alaska.

The seismic force sent powerful waves crashing into coastlines from Japan to the United States.

“It was a remarkable eruption. It was extremely explosive. We’re sort of thinking it’s one of the most explosive eruptions in the 21st century at the moment,” Shane Cronin, professor of volcanology at the University of Auckland in New Zealand, told DW.

“These very large ones at this volcano happen about once every 900 years, but they seem to have a series of events, and so this may be the first in a series of eruptions,” he added.

‘Significant’ damage to Tonga capital

A full assessment of the damage on Tonga was not possible as of Sunday, as the eruption knocked out the internet and disrupted communication with the island. Tonga receives its internet via an undersea cable from Fiji.

However, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said at a press briefing Sunday that Tonga’s capital, Nuku’alofa, suffered “significant” damage.

“The tsunami has had a significant impact on the foreshore on the northern side of Nuku’alofa with boats and large boulders washed ashore,” she said after managing to contact the New Zealand embassy in Tonga.

“Nuku’alofa is covered in a thick film of volcanic dust but otherwise

conditions are calm and stable,” the prime minister added.

There were no official reports of injuries or deaths in Tonga, she said, while cautioning that authorities were yet to contact some coastal areas and smaller islands.

“Communication with Tonga remains very limited. And I know that is causing a huge amount of anxiety for the Tongan community here,” the prime minister said.

The thick ash cloud 63,000 feet (19,000 metres) above Tonga was preventing them from sending a military surveillance flight above the island. New Zealand’s defence force tweeted that an air force reconnaissance aircraft would be sent “as soon as atmospheric conditions allow.”

“So far, what we’ve seen has been tsunami damage, and most of what we’ve seen has been from Tongatapu - the main inhabited island of Tonga where the capital Nuku’alofa is,” Cronin said.

“What we’re concerned about is some of the low-lying islands, which are actually very close to Hunga-Ha’apai - Nomuka and the islands of the Ha’apai group. These islands have potentially a lot of low-lying areas that were affected by tsunami waves,” he added.

“At the moment, the ashfall that has gone on to Tongatapu hasn’t been that large yet, but the eruption column actually spread in a way that it probably would have [and possibly still will] put more ash onto the central part of the Tongan island group,” the volcanologist said.

“What we’re waiting to find out now is that what kinds of impacts there have been, what kind of help people need.”

International support

Besides New Zealand, other countries have expressed concern for Tonga and offered help.

An Australian government spokesperson said initial assessments were still underway, but the country was ready to provide support to Tonga if requested.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken also expressed concern, adding that the US “stands prepared to provide support to our Pacific neighbors.”

However, international aid efforts were complicated by the fact that Tonga, home to about 105,000 people, is one of the rare countries that have avoided any COVID-19 outbreaks. —DW



ROUND-UP

Barr Al Jissah’s artificial reef project scales new success

The project aims to achieve sustainable development of marine life in Barr Al Jissah and the surrounding areas, improve bio-cover and biodiversity, and rehabilitate marine life

MUSCAT: Launched in July 2021 by the Barr Al Jissah Resort Company, the Sultanate’s most luxurious address, the artificial coral reef project has scaled new successes. The project aims to achieve sustainable development of marine life in Barr Al Jissah and the surrounding areas, improve bio-cover and biodiversity, and rehabilitate marine life. Given the extent of the destruction of these reefs, the initiative will also raise awareness about the importance of maintaining the marine environment and its long-term sustainability. Commenting on the project suc-

cess, Firas Matraji, CEO of Barr Al Jissah Resort Company said, “The artificial reef project saw realisation through the cooperation of marine biologists and several local organisations. We have built several structures with artificial coral reefs, lowered them onto the seabed, and provided the right circumstances for them to thrive. We hope to create an adequate environment for the long-term survival of marine life and coral reefs in the waters of the Sultanate.” “We have collaborated with a group of expert divers to monitor the coral reefs regularly. The goal



of these trips is to guarantee that these reefs can continue to offer sustenance and habitat for other marine species. “We also liaised with Shangri-

La and Extra Divers to promote environmental awareness about this project and its importance in reducing the effects of overfishing, environmental pollution, and the

irresponsible use of small boats, through communication with fishermen and the local community. We are pleased with the recent positive reports of the project,

which confirmed the acceleration of coral reef growth and the emergence and repopulation of many new marine organisms in the region,” he added.

OFFER

10% cashback reward awaits salary transfer customers of Ahli Islamic

MUSCAT: Assessing the needs of its customers to continue providing them with offers that provide added benefits, Ahli Islamic has announced a cashback reward of 10% of up to OMR500 when transferring a monthly salary of at least OMR1,000 with the bank. Once the monthly salary has been transferred to Ahli Islamic, all current and new Omani customers and expatriates will be eligible to receive a one-time cash reward. The offer is part of the bank’s initiatives to enhance its services and products, maximising benefits for its customers, within a framework that conforms to the Islamic-Sharia principles. Through its new salary transfer campaign, which will run for two months starting January 2022, Ahli Islamic aims to provide its customers with Islamic banking products and services



that suit the ever-evolving choices of today’s customers. Yousuf bin Salim Al Rawahi, Deputy General Manager and Head of Ahli Islamic said, “Islamic banking has recently become increasingly popular among Oman’s

new workforce, who is characterised by being more aware, and decisive of their choices. The trend is attributed to customers’ awareness of the benefits offered by Islamic banks. With our current promotion, we aim to enhance

our valued customers’ experience, whether by giving them the advantage of this offer or through the various offers and programmes designed for them.” “The bank’s cashback reward to its salary transfer customers is an exclusive opportunity that allows customers to make a wise choice and invest their money in line with their conviction. It also serves the national priority of financial inclusion among the community, especially among youth,” he added. Ahli Islamic is committed to ensuring that its innovative offers with Sharia-compliant products and services are catered throughout the Sultanate. Based on the principle of honesty and transparency, the bank offers end-to-end Sharia-compliant banking solutions to retail, SME and corporate clients.

REBRANDING



Majliya unveiled as new brand identity for Jawahir Oman

MUSCAT: Passionately dedicated to uncompromising quality for more than 40 years, Jawahir Oman recently revealed its new brand identity, “Majliya”, in a bid to make the brand experience more accessible to customers in the Middle East and beyond. During a special event, attended by Majliya customers, the new Majliya store was unveiled in the commercial district of Al Qurum. Marco Belgrado, General Manager of Majliya, said, “Jawahir Oman was established in 1977 to continue the legacy of the Sultanate’s famed jewellery makers through the craftsmanship of refined jewels and exclusive gifts that are the very essence of Oman. In the last four decades, the brand has become a leader in the luxury jewellery and gift segment, synonymous with uncompromising quality and passion. Today, we proudly take our brand experience to the next level by making our high-end keepsakes available to anyone in the region, even the world. Through Majliya, we build on four decades of master craftsmanship in the hope to inspire our customers to be true to themselves and discover a unique Middle Eastern luxury brand with global reach.” Majliya is the story of an extraordinary Omani icon with big aspirations: Creating timeless masterpieces that honour the wishes of its clientele and are as individual in spirit as they are. With great respect for local traditions and customs, each brand element is a story in itself.

“Majliya continues on a legacy that makes us stand out. As patrons of high-end luxury keepsakes that present a lifetime of stories and memories, our success is an unquestionable proof of the attraction Oman’s heritage has on customers around the world. We help each chronicle their very own story by translating imagination into contemporary jewellery and gifts that play a profound role in their life. In an ever-changing world, we want to foster authenticity,” Belgrado adds. The brand-new Majliya brand-ship store is in the commercial district of Al Qurum and extends over an area of 252 square meters. It features a wide range of luxury jewellery and gifts crafted to inspire, drawing from past culture to fashion handcrafted collections with the utmost precision and care, ensuring true emotional value that transcends. The in-store lounge gives customers an exceptional experience on all fronts while maintaining the highest levels of privacy and exclusivity. The launch of Majliya was accompanied by the unveiling of brand-new jewellery collections - Orbit, Opera, and Shalal, the introduction of new jewellery lines within the Ahjar and Asrar Collections, as well as showcasing other iconic luxury jewellery collections, each designed to suit the individual tastes of customers. Another feather in its cap, the launch of its state-of-the-art-commerce website, highlights Majliya as one of the pioneer luxury regional brands in the jewellery industry.

HIGH-VALUE PRIZES

Bank Muscat conducts special year-end draw for Al Mazyona customers

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate, recently conducted its Al Mazyona End of Year draw with over OMR1.5 million in high-value prizes being given away to 92 lucky winners, in line with the bank’s commitment to promoting a strong savings culture in the Sultanate. The winners were chosen from amongst customers across the different governorates in the Sultanate, Asalah Priority Banking and Al Jawhar Privilege Banking during the special prize draws, which were conducted in the presence of Abdulnasir Al Raisi, General Manager – Personal Banking, Abdullah Tamman Al Mashani, General Manager – Products, Amjad Iqbal Al Lawati, Deputy General Manager – Customer Segments and Taya Eid Bait Sabaea, Deputy General Manager - Interior Regions. As many as 70 winners were chosen from across all governorates in the Sultanate, from among



customers having a minimum balance of OMR 1,000, with each winner getting OMR 5,000 in the prize draw. High-savings Asalah Priority Banking customers maintaining a minimum balance of RO 30,000 were entered into special draws wherein 10 lucky customers won OMR 50,000 each. Al Jawhar customers maintaining a minimum balance of RO 10,000 were entered into special prize draws

to choose the 10 lucky winners of OMR 20,000 each. Two mega prizes of OMR 250,000 each were also given away after conducting a prize draw from among all the customers maintaining a minimum balance of OMR 30,000 in their Al Mazyona accounts. In total, more than OMR 1.5 million were given away during the special End of Year draw. In 2021, a record 7,470 prizes

amounting to a total of over OMR 11 million were given away to the winners of the Al Mazyona Savings Scheme. The draws were held in line with the bank’s strategy of promoting a good savings habit in the country, which improves the financial stability of society and the economy as a whole. It must be noted that Bank Muscat’s various services and products are in line with global financial trends and enhance the ease of banking for its customers in line with its customer-centric vision “To serve you better, everyday.” As the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate for the last four decades, Bank Muscat has the largest banking network in Oman with 174 branches and over 800 ATMs, CDMs and other devices. Its vast array of digital banking channels including Internet Banking and Mobile Banking are helping customers meet their different financial requirements and needs.

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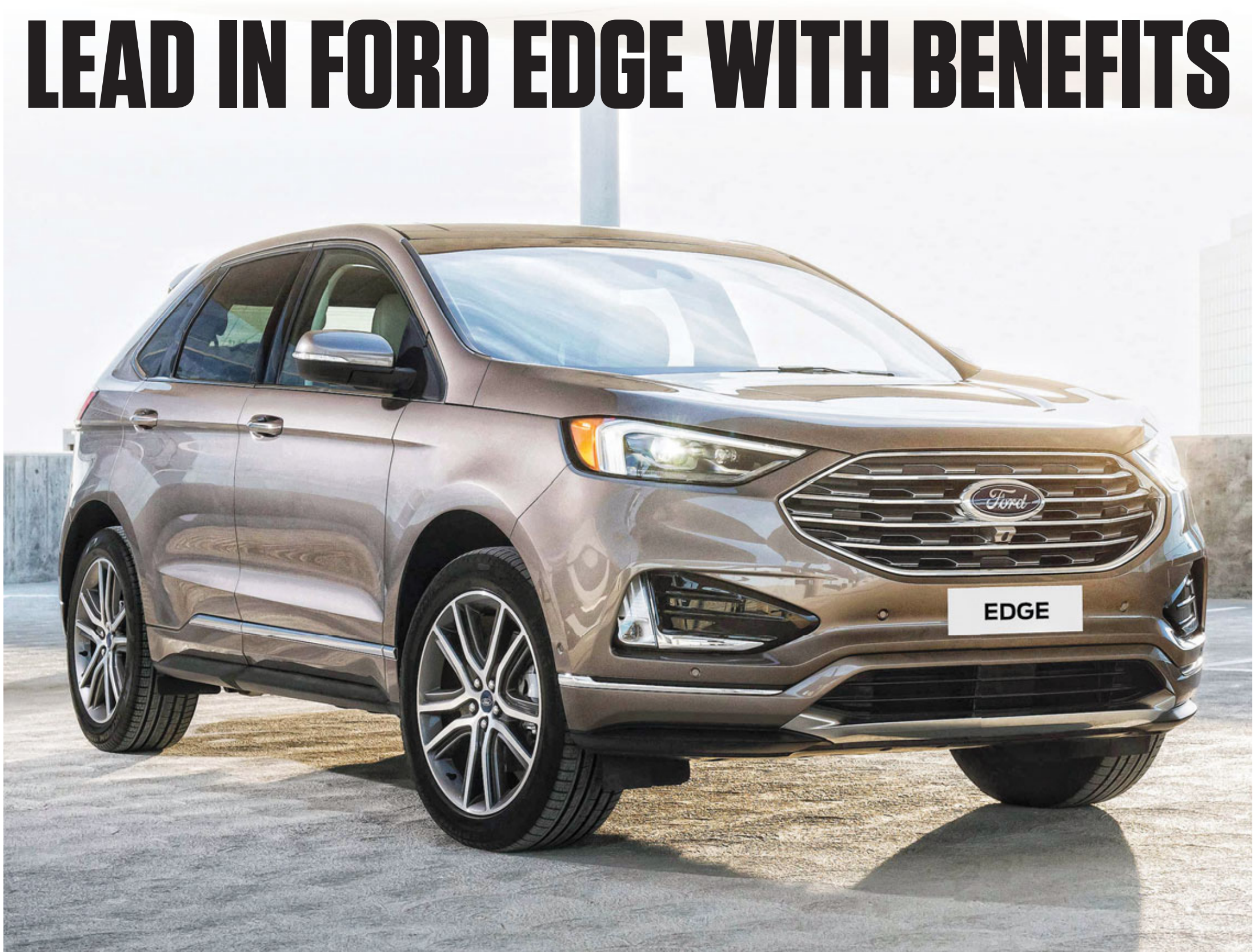
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ROUND-UP



The Ford Edge showcases an exterior that's edgy, refined and elegant

MUSCAT: The stylish and exciting Ford Edge, is now available with an exclusive offer. Service 3 Years / 60,000 km, Petrol Card worth OMR 100 and Registration 1 Year. (Conditions apply. For details visit a Ford showroom.) The offer is valid until March 9, 2022.

The Ford Edge showcases an exterior that's edgy, refined and elegant. The muscular exterior cre-

ates a sleeker, more unique look. Stepping inside the cabin of the Ford Edge you will be greeted with the classic Ford design language. You will also notice impressive buttons, the large touch screen, elegant ambient lighting and the overall high fine fit and finish. The Edge is also equipped with the rotary dial shift knob, which replaces the stick shifter.

The Edge has class-leading space for 5 adults and luggage, along with many storage spaces to provide convenience for daily travel. Dual Zone Climate Control, Premium Audio System with 9 speakers, Active-X seats add to a welcoming interior feel.

The Edge's dashboard gives a modern feel to the interior, while still being intuitive to control. The

distinct shapes of the air vents with chrome trim help to accent the dash and centre console with a modern look and feel.

The Ford Edge comes equipped with a 2.0L turbocharged four-cylinder engine outputting 250hp. This engine pairs with a front-wheel drive and the new 8-speed automatic transmission.

In terms of safety, the Ford Edge

is equipped with a state-of-the-art suite of advanced active safety features called Ford Co-Pilot 360. These features include BLIS® (Blind Spot Information System) with Cross-Traffic Alert; Pre-Collision Assist with Automatic Emergency Braking and Lane Keeping System. In Oman, Ford vehicles are brought to you by Arabian Car Marketing Co.

TRAINING WORKSHOP

Al Mouj Muscat empowers Oman's future women entrepreneurs

MUSCAT: A joint initiative between Al Mouj Muscat and the Omani Women's Association in Seeb is giving women a helping hand through workshops and training to develop their own sustainable small businesses and inspire others.

Since September of last year, 20 women from the Wilayat Seeb community, have attended Ghinsha workshops which were sponsored by Oman's premier lifestyle destination. The workshop guided them through resin-based jewelry manufacturing skills followed by guidance on how to market their products.

The Omani Women's Association in Seeb is a social and cultural organisation aimed at advancing Omani women across all social and cultural fronts.

By joining forces with Al Mouj Muscat, this project has given participating women both the practical skills and a sense of empowerment to shape their own futures by selling beautifully made products to local markets.

This week, the course culminated in a wrapping up ceremony, which was an opportunity to celebrate the programme and reflect



on what had been achieved.

Nasser Al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj said, "It has been a privilege to support the Omani Women's

Association in Seeb with this inspirational initiative which epitomises Omani culture both from a sense of togetherness and

by creating opportunities where individuals feel motivated to find, develop and channel their artistic and entrepreneurial skills. It's

clear that by helping these talented ladies to make the most of their abilities, they have grown in confidence and certainly con-

tinue to be an inspiration to their children, community and helping to spread positivity and prosperity throughout our nation."



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