

Times OF Oman

Chief Editor: Rana N. Parveez

VOL. 1, NO. 1

MUSCAT, SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 1975

PRICE BAIZAS 200



"I shall work with every possible haste to make your lives happy in preparation for a better future."
 "Our nation in the past was glorious and powerful. If we work together, co-operating on a united front, we shall be able to regain our past glory so as to claim our rightful place in the Arab world."

**HIS MAJESTY SULTAN QABOOS BIN SAID
 FOUNDER ARCHITECT OF THE MODERN OMAN.**



45 YEARS OF CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY

Oman's best-loved newspaper celebrates a big birthday today. It was 45 years ago when the *Times of Oman* first hit newsstands and revolutionised the way we look at the world. Today, Sunday, February 23, begins our 45th-anniversary celebrations, and to honour the spirit in which this paper was first conceptualised, we are recreating the first cover of the *Times of Oman* that appeared 45 years ago.

Of course, we could not have gotten this far without our loyal readers. Our intention to inform and educate has seen our readership grow to millions. In January 2020, more than 11 million people visited our website, timesofoman.com, while on social media, we have more than 850,000 dedicated followers.

As a small gesture from the Muscat Media Group, exclusive prizes from our sponsors Mysk Al Mouj, Mistal and Centrepoint will be offered to our valued readers to remember this momentous occasion. To win, all you need to do is log on to our social media pages.

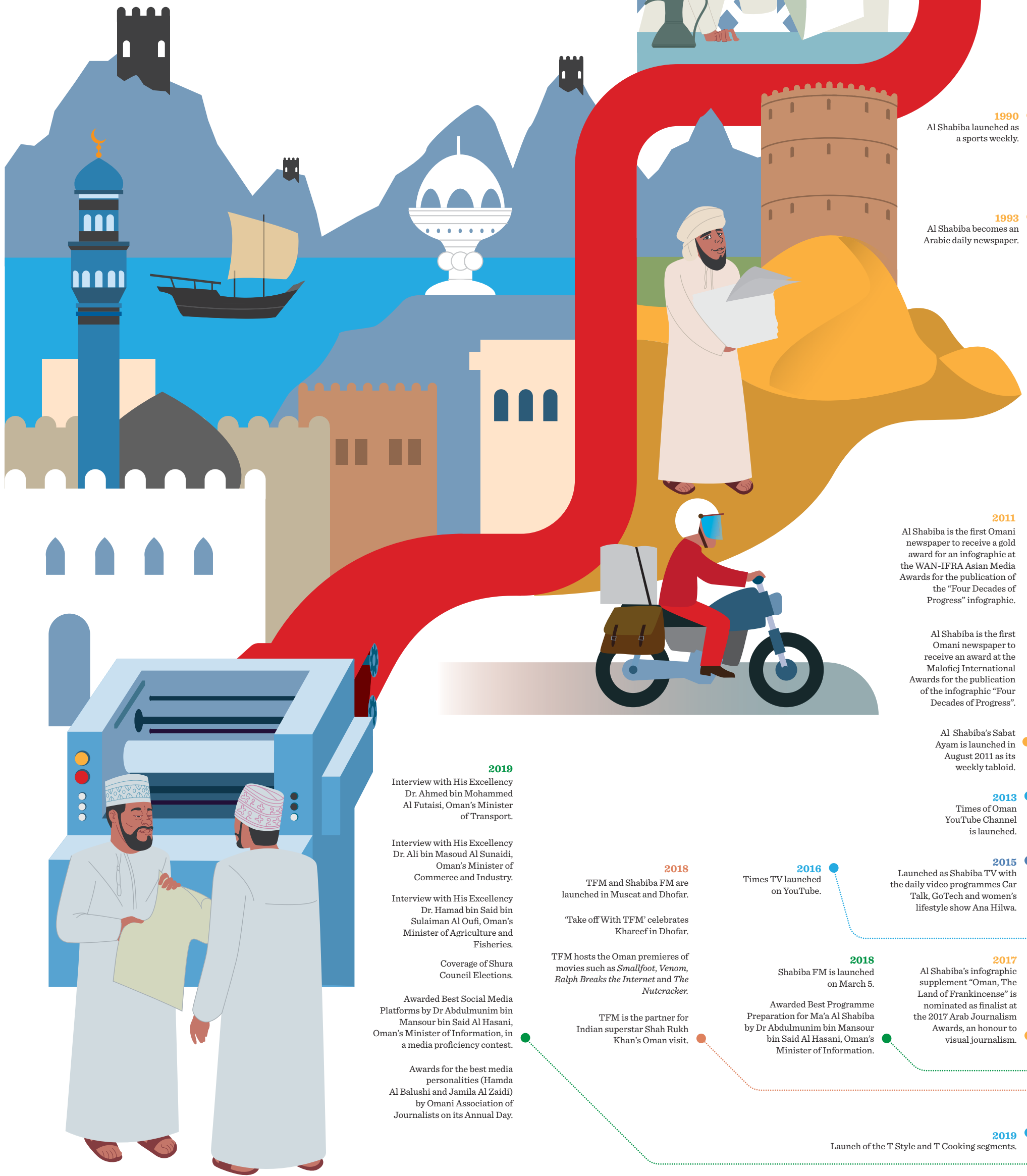
Thank you all for the 45 wonderful years!



YEARS OF CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY

45 Years of Muscat Media Group

As *Times of Oman*, the Sultanate's first and oldest English paper, celebrates its 45th anniversary, we look back at the key moments that have defined our publications over the years. From our humble beginning in 1975, to a diversified and fast-expanding media house today, it has been quite a journey for both *Times of Oman*, as well as its sister publications and other allied offerings. Our successes would not have been possible without you, our loyal readers, and we look forward to more fond memories in the future.



- Oriental Printing Press
- Times of Oman
- Al Shabiba
- Times TV
- Shabiba TV
- T FM
- Shabiba FM



2019
Interview with His Excellency Dr. Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Futaisi, Oman's Minister of Transport.

Interview with His Excellency Dr. Ali bin Masoud Al Sunaidi, Oman's Minister of Commerce and Industry.

Interview with His Excellency Dr. Hamad bin Said bin Sulaiman Al Oufi, Oman's Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Coverage of Shura Council Elections.

Awarded Best Social Media Platforms by Dr Abdulmunim bin Mansour bin Said Al Hasani, Oman's Minister of Information, in a media proficiency contest.

Awards for the best media personalities (Hamda Al Balushi and Jamila Al Zaidi) by Omani Association of Journalists on its Annual Day.

2018
TFM and Shabiba FM are launched in Muscat and Dhofar.

'Take off With TFM' celebrates Khareef in Dhofar.

TFM hosts the Oman premieres of movies such as *Smallfoot*, *Venom*, *Ralph Breaks the Internet* and *The Nutcracker*.

TFM is the partner for Indian superstar Shah Rukh Khan's Oman visit.

2016
Times TV launched on YouTube.

2018
Shabiba FM is launched on March 5.

Awarded Best Programme Preparation for Ma'a Al Shabiba by Dr Abdulmunim bin Mansour bin Said Al Hasani, Oman's Minister of Information.

2015
Launched as Shabiba TV with the daily video programmes Car Talk, GoTech and women's lifestyle show Ana Hilwa.

2017
Al Shabiba's infographic supplement "Oman, The Land of Frankincense" is nominated as finalist at the 2017 Arab Journalism Awards, an honour to visual journalism.

2019
Launch of the T Style and T Cooking segments.

2020
Times TV reaches 56,000 subscribers and 25 million views.

1990
Al Shabiba launched as a sports weekly.

1993
Al Shabiba becomes an Arabic daily newspaper.

2011
Al Shabiba is the first Omani newspaper to receive a gold award for an infographic at the WAN-IFRA Asian Media Awards for the publication of the "Four Decades of Progress" infographic.

Al Shabiba is the first Omani newspaper to receive an award at the Malofej International Awards for the publication of the infographic "Four Decades of Progress".

Al Shabiba's Sabat Ayam is launched in August 2011 as its weekly tabloid.



YEARS OF CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY



1974
Oriental Printing Press is the first printing company to be established in the Sultanate of Oman.

1975
Times of Oman, founded by Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali, starts publication of the first English-language paper from February 23, 1975.

1991
Times of Oman becomes a broadsheet daily.

1995
The first ever Times of Oman Quiz is held.

1998
Times of Oman launches its website, which additionally made MPPH the first publication house in the region to develop a website dedicated to news information.

1999
Thursday magazine is launched on November 18.

2004
The Times of Oman e-paper is launched.

2006
timesofoman.com wins the Gold Award at the 2006 Oman Web Awards.

2007
Hi Weekly is launched.

Times of Oman launches its first mobile application for iPad and smartphones.

timesofoman.com wins the Bronze Award at the 2007 Oman Web Awards.

2010
Times of Oman and Al Shabiba launch their editorial redesign on April 4.

2011
Times of Oman makes history by becoming the first Omani print media publication to win international creative awards.

Times of Oman is the first Omani newspaper awarded by the World Press Cartoon.

Times of Oman becomes the first Omani newspaper to be awarded at the Communication Arts Magazine Annual Competition.

2012
Times of Oman becomes the first Omani newspaper to be awarded at the Society of Illustrators Annual Competition.

In December 2012, the Times of Oman website is redesigned to include more sections for news coverage, both locally and across the globe.

2013
Times of Oman's Facebook page is born

The first edition of the Times of Oman Literary Contest is organised. It is the first event of its kind across the Gulf.

Times of Oman is the first Omani newspaper to receive an award from the Society of Publication Designers.

2013
Al Shabiba begins to cover corporate events, as well as uploading videos online.

2014
Times of Oman bags the top two awards at the Oman Football Association's Annual Award Ceremony.

Muscat Media Group is awarded the ISO 9001:2008 certificate for Quality Management Systems.

Times of Oman's Twitter page becomes active.

At the 35th edition of the Society for News Decision(SND) competition, Times of Oman receives the most number of awards, becoming the first non-American newspaper to achieve such a feat.

Times of Oman's supplement, Thursday Magazine, is the first Omani publication to be awarded at the HOW Magazine International Design Awards.

Times of Oman's supplement, Thursday Magazine, is the first Omani publication to be awarded at the Type Director's Club Annual Competition.

2018
Eshhar - Muscat Media Group's e-Distribution Service is launched.

2018
VAR, a sports commentary show, was launched on Shabiba TV.

2019
Times Of Oman crosses 700,000 followers on Facebook.

2020
Today, Shabiba TV on YouTube has more than 76,000 subscribers.

2020
OPP Expands to Food Packaging Business.

2016
Ouloom Alyoum news bulletins and Al Jamahir sports bulletins come online.

2016
Times of Oman is the first Omani newspaper to receive a gold award at the WAN-IFRA World Digital Media Awards for the publication of the infographic "Oman's National Dress".

Times of Oman is the first Omani newspaper in receive a gold award at the WAN-IFRA Middle East Digital Media Awards for the publication of the infographic "Oman's National Dress".

Times of Oman is the first Omani newspaper to be awarded at the European Newspaper Awards.



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HM GIVES AUDIENCE TO US SECRETARY OF STATE



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik gave an audience to US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo at Al Alam Palace in Muscat on Friday. The meeting reviewed the aspects of bilateral cooperation between the two countries and matters of mutual interest. The audience was attended by Yousuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah, Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs, and Leslie M Tsou, US Ambassador to the Sultanate. Mike Pompeo and his accompanying delegation left the Sultanate on Friday. -ONA

ANNOUNCEMENT

HM issues Royal Decree

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Thursday issued a Royal Decree, No.2/2020, amending Annex (3) of the Law on State's Flag, Emblem and National Anthem. Article (1) states that the clause attached to this decree shall replace the clause termed "First" of Annex No.3 attached to the Law on the State's Flag, Emblem and National Anthem, issued under Royal Decree No.53/2004.

Article (2) cancels all that contradicts this decree or contravenes its provisions.

Article (3) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced on its date of issue. -ONA

HIS MAJESTY

HM pardons prisoners

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, has issued a Royal pardon to a number of prisoners convicted of different cases. They included 282 prisoners. 123 of them are foreign prisoners. -ONA

Muscat Book Fair inaugurated
>A7



An incredible 45-year bond with Times



MOHAMED ISSA AL ZADJALI
Chairman of Muscat Media Group

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The *Times of Oman*, a newspaper that started as a weekly publication in 1975, is now celebrating 45 years of its momentous journey as the country's leading English daily.

On this watershed occasion, Mohamed Issa Al Zadjali, the Chairman of Muscat Media Group, talks about how the operation of the newspaper started with the commitment and devotion put in by his late father, Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali.

"Today we are celebrating our 45th anniversary since the launching of the newspaper," said the Chairman. "It all started with my father in 1975. A lot of people have asked me the question: 'how did your father come up with the idea of publishing *Times of Oman*? I once asked him the same question when I was young and he told me that when he was working with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1974, he was in-charge of providing all the airlines permission to fly over the Sultanate.

"In late 1974, in a request sent to my father from a company called Flying Tiger, to get permission to fly over Oman, the company had misinterpreted the positioning of the country," recalled Al Zadjali.

"In the telex it was written 'Muscat, Oman, Saudi Arabia' and that gave an impression of Oman being a part of Saudi Arabia." >A7



AHMED ESSA AL ZEDJALI
Chief Executive Officer of Muscat Media Group

Times News Service

MUSCAT: On the occasion of *Times of Oman's* 45th anniversary celebrations, Ahmed Essa Al Zedjali, the Chief Executive Officer of Muscat Media Group, is looking forward to what the future holds, and is confident the publication will keep up with changes around the world, having swiftly and resolutely done so far.

"Today, we are seeing unprecedented changes in media," said the CEO.

Innovation

"Access to instant information has changed societies like never before. With this in mind, we at Muscat Media Group (MMG) have reinvented ourselves to meet those changes that have enabled us to solidify our position at the top. Innovation will continue to drive everything we do, be it our quick adaptation to social media and the digital world, or any of the other changes that will come in the future. "Our initiatives in embracing the digital landscape and ensuring we are always available on the information superhighway today see us reaching readers across the world," he added.

"Millions of views by the hundreds of thousands of users on our website would not have been possible without meticulous planning, commitment and hard work." >A7

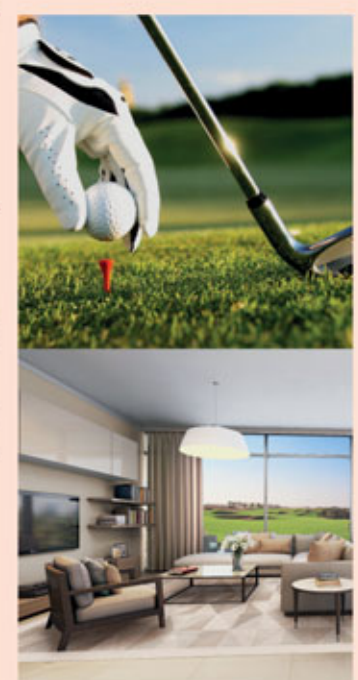


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Asr.....	3:44pm
Maghrib.....	6:11pm
Isha.....	7:22pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....	5:19am



YEARS OF CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

'Contract of expat teaching staff won't be renewed'

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Education has issued a Circular No. 7 of 2020 stating that it would not renew the contract of its expatriate teaching staff. A statement

issued by the Ministry of Education said: "Please confirm that non-Omani employees will not be granted a certificate of contract renewal 2020/2021 period."

"You will be notified later on the timing of the possibilities of

granting this certificate in the future," the Ministry added.

When contacted by *Times of Oman*, a senior official at the Ministry of Education said: "This circular is applicable to government schools only."

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

People from COVID-19 infected countries to be quarantined

Times News Service

MUSCAT: People who travel to Oman from countries in which the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has been detected will be subject to quarantine on arriving in the Sultanate.

"The Ministry of Health urges

the travellers coming from the countries in which the epidemic has been reported, particularly China, South Korea, Japan, Singapore and Iran during the past 14 days to contact the Ministry of Health Contact Centre to guide them with regard to the quarantine and the other precautionary

measures. "As part of the infection control procedures, the ministry indicates that it will enforce the home or institutional quarantine for the travellers coming from the above mentioned countries for a 14-day period, inclusive of China, Iran, Singapore, and South Korea."

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YEARS OF CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY

CABLES

HM sends greetings

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to David Arthur Granger, President of Guyana on his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan ex-

pressed his sincere greetings and wishes to the President and his country's people.

His Majesty the Sultan has sent a cable of congratulations to Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkihah of Brunei

Darussalam on his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere greetings and wishes of good health and happiness to him and his country's people progress and prosperity. -ONA

NOTICE

It is hereby announced that the election for the Executive Committee of Indian Social Club, Sohar for 2020 & 2021 will take place on Friday 3rd April 2020 from 6 P.M. to 9 P.M. at the temporary office in Al Nahdha Garden, Sohar. Details are available on the website (www.iscsohar.com) as well as the Club Notice Board. For further information, please contact the undersigned. The election would be preceded by AGM @ 5 P.M.

Mr. Rajesh Kondala

General Secretary

GSM: 99385148, Email: kondalarajesh@gmail.com

ISSUED

Certificates

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry said that number of certificates of origin for local products exported to GCC and Arab countries in 2019 amounted to 60,475. Talal bin Hamoud Al Balushi, Head of the Commercial Licensing Department at the Ministry said that 49,228 farm and animal origin certificates for local products exported to Gulf countries were issued. -ONA

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Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Mohamed Issa Al Zedjali
Deputy Editor-in-Chief: Anees bin Essa Al Zedjali
Chief Executive Officer: Ahmed Essa Al Zedjali

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SWEETS OF OMAN SAOG
P.O. Box 49, Rusayl - 124, Sultanate of Oman

Invitation to attend the Annual Ordinary General Meeting

The Board of Directors of Sweets of Oman SAOG is pleased to invite the Company's shareholders to attend the company's Ordinary Annual General Meeting, to be held at 3:00 PM, on Wednesday, March 11, 2020 at Al Falaj Hotel, Ruwi. In the event that the quorum is not satisfied for the meeting, the second Annual Ordinary General meeting will be held on Tuesday March 17, 2020, in the same place and at the same time to discuss the following Agenda:

- To consider and approve the Board of Directors' report for the financial year ended December 31, 2019.
- To consider and approve the Corporate Governance report for the financial year ended December 31, 2019.
- To consider the Auditors' Report and to approve the Financial Statement, Balance Sheet and Profit & Loss Account, for the financial year ended December 31, 2019.
- To consider and approve the proposal to distribute a cash dividend of 5 Baiza per share to the shareholders as on the date of the AGM for the financial year ended December 31, 2019.
- To approve sitting fees to the Board of Directors meetings and its Sub-committees for the financial year ended December 31, 2019 and determine the fees for the forthcoming financial year December 31, 2020.
- To consider and approve the amounts allocated and spent for the company's social responsibilities for the year ended December 31, 2019.
- To discuss and approve the proposed allocation of RO 3000 (Riyal Omani Three thousand only) to fulfill the company's social responsibilities for the year ending December 31, 2020.
- The appointment of the Auditors for the financial year ending December 31, 2020, and determine their fees.

Pursuant with the Commercial Companies Law, any shareholder is entitled to authorize in writing any other person to attend the meeting and vote on the decisions taken on his behalf except for the members of the Board of Directors provided the authorization is made from the authorization card attached to the invitation. Natural persons should attach ID (for adults) or a copy of the passport (for ladies and minors) or residence card and passport for non-Omanis. For juristic persons, the authorization should be signed by any authorized signatory. The authorization form should carry the stamp of the company and include a copy of the commercial registration of the company and specimen of the authorized signature.

Shareholders are requested to arrive about half an hour before the scheduled meeting time.

If you have any inquiries kindly contact Mr.S.Balakrishna at the following numbers: Tel : (968) 24446278 / 24446279 . Fax : 24446276

Chairman

Auditors

Legal Advisor

MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No. (18/2020)

Companies specialized in the field and registered with **Tender Board**, may obtain tenders documents from the website through the following link: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) against non-refundable fees as mentioned below starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated below.

Tender No.	No. E.Tender	Description of Tender	Tender Fee	Last date to collect the tender	Tender return date	Grade
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Tender Conditions :-

- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically accompanied with an electronic copy of a bond issued by any local bank in Oman addressed to Muscat municipality. The bond shall be (1%) of the tender value valid for ninety (90) days starting from the date of bids submission. Any tenders which do not meet the required bond shall not be accepted.
- Tender Bonds shall be placed in the **Office No (B3 - 040)** in the Third floor at Secretariat of Interior Committee for Tenders in Muscat Municipality, Head Office, Darsait.
- For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).
- For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@ita.gov.om) or call (+96824166670).



AL BATINAH POWER COMPANY SAOG

P.O. Box 39, P.C 103, Bareeq Al Shatti, Sultanate of Oman,
albatinahpower.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Al Batinah Power Company SAOG (the "Company"), I have the pleasure to present the Directors' Report of the Company for the year ended 31 December 2019.

Operational Highlights

The plant achieved an excellent milestone as it crossed 3,100 lost time accident free days (901,611 man hours) at site since inception, maintaining its excellent record of zero lost time accidents and zero environmental incidents, which reflects our continued focus on health, safety, security and environment. The plant's operation was excellent during the year achieving a reliability of 99.88% which is one of the best reliability records in the plant history. The plant delivered 1,389 GWh to the grid, corresponding to a load factor of 21.53% compared to 74.02% for the year of 2018.

Financial Results

	2019 RO'000s Audited	2018 RO'000s Audited	Percentage change
Revenues	49,206	75,138	-34.5%
Direct costs	(27,728)	(53,957)	
Gross profit	21,478	21,181	1.4%
Other income	52	115	
General and administrative expenses	(800)	(778)	
Profit before interest and tax	20,730	20,518	1.0%
Finance costs (net)	(9,320)	(9,871)	
Profit before tax	11,410	10,647	7.2%
Tax	(1,665)	(1,575)	
Net profit for the period	9,745	9,072	7.4%

Lower revenue as compared to the previous year is attributed mainly to lower plant load factor. Low load factor led to less fuel gas consumption and less energy variable fees which are the reasons for the decrease in the direct costs as compared to the last year.

Higher gross profit as compared to the previous year was attributed mainly to the better plant reliability, favorable indexation, the higher thermal efficiency and adoption of the IFRS16 (Leases) partly offset by the higher plant auxiliaries' electricity consumption when the plant load is zero and the higher EUR exchange rate applied for the O&M expenses to the operator.

The steady reduction in finance costs due to the scheduled debt repayments contributed positively to the better profit before tax. Consequently, the net profit is 7.4% higher than the previous year.

Subsequent to the Executive Regulations issued in February 2019, the Oman Power & Water Procurement Company SAOC ("OPWP") has compensated the Company for a withholding tax ("WHT") on interests. Furthermore, WHT on interest and dividends was fortunately suspended with effect from May 2019 for 3 years.

The Company distributed a cash dividend of 2.80% (Baizas 2.80 per share) in June 2019 and 4.20% (Baizas 4.20 per share) in December 2019.

The share price was 58 Baizas at the end of December 2019.

Corporate Social Responsibility

Driven by the Company's CSR Policy to support the local community in education and environment, The Company has entered into sponsorship agreement with three other power

companies to install a 48 Kw photovoltaic ("PV") system in Hafidh bin Saif School in Liwa. Enhancing the awareness of the clean and renewable energy amongst the students and society, the project has been completed and the PV is expected to produce around 77 MWh/year. The total project cost is around 60,000 OMR which is sponsored by four power companies equally.

Furthermore, the Company with another sector company sponsored an aerospace ship shaped cinema of 12,500 OMR (6,250 OMR each), which plays scientific movies using the virtual reality technology. Targeted about 200,000 visitors the cinema offered its services in the Oman Scientific exhibition (4-8 November 2019) and then was transferred to General Directorate of Education for North Al Batinah Governorate where it serves the local community schools and colleagues for a period of 10 years.

Finally, enhancing students' engagements and interactions with scientific subjects, the Company denoted the supply of interactive displays & interactive white boards to Abu Almunther School in Sohar with a cost of 3,750 OMR.

Medium term Outlook

The plant dispatch was impacted by the introduction of the new IPP projects in Sohar and Ibra and the low growth of power demand in MIS compared to what was forecasted by OPWP. As a result, the plant is expected to continue receiving low dispatch in winter period and partial dispatch in summer period. It is worth to mention that the scenario will have no impact on the financial performance of the Company since its net profit is mainly derived from the plant availability.

There is no planned major inspection during the winter period (October 2019 - March 2020). Minor inspections for gas turbines no. 11&12 are planned in March 2020. Lessons learnt from the previous inspections are being considered and management will endeavor to achieve smooth and timely completion of this inspection.

The Company is evaluating the financial market conditions for any opportunities to avoid the cash sweep that applies to the last two instalments of the commercial loan tranche that is scheduled from April 2023 as agreed in the Finance Documents.

Authority of Electricity Regulation ("AER") plan to introduce the electricity spot market in 2021 is progressing. The Company's generation license had been modified to reflect the introduction of the electricity spot market. The Company continued to participate in the working group committee meetings and preparing the implementation plan as per the guidance from AER. OPWP plans to introduce a training trail period by mid of 2020 and to go live with new trading system by end of 2020. The Company's Power Purchase Agreement ("PPA") with OPWP expires in 2028 and accordingly the spot market will have no impact on the revenue stream of our Company until the expiry of the PPA. The Company is protected by the PPA for any cost it may incur as a result of the spot market.

All reasonable measures are taken by the management to maintain the plant excellent records in health, safety, security and environment as well as the plant high availability levels in 2020.

Finally, on behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to express our deep sorrow for the demise of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, may Allah rest his soul in peace and to wish His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq bin Taimur, the utmost success for the future, as he prepares to take the Sultanate forward. The Company will continue to effectively participate in the growth of the Sultanate's economy and to dedicate our efforts to the building of a strong nation.

Saif Al Harthy
Chairperson of the Board

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2019 (AUDITED)

	2019 RO'000	2018 RO'000
Revenues	49,206	75,138
Direct costs	(27,728)	(53,957)
GROSS PROFIT	21,478	21,181
Other income	52	115
General and administrative expenses	(800)	(778)
PROFIT BEFORE INTEREST AND TAX	20,730	20,518
Finance costs - net	(9,320)	(9,871)
PROFIT BEFORE TAX	11,410	10,647
Income tax expense	(1,665)	(1,575)
NET PROFIT FOR THE YEAR	9,745	9,072
Earnings per share		
Basic earnings per share (Baizas / cents)	14.44	13.44

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AT 31 DECEMBER 2019 (AUDITED)

	2019 RO'000	2018 RO'000
ASSETS		
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	246,322	253,649
Right-of-use assets	3,479	-
Capital spares	487	305
	250,288	253,954
Current assets		
Inventory	1,911	1,878
Trade and other receivables	5,118	5,905
Short term deposit	1,578	1,807
Cash and cash equivalents	1,883	2,021
	10,490	11,611
TOTAL ASSETS	260,778	265,565
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
Equity		
Share capital	67,489	67,489
Legal reserve	5,468	4,493
Retained earnings	15,981	11,935
Total equity	88,938	83,917
Hedging reserve	(6,816)	(3,249)
Net Equity	82,122	80,668
LIABILITIES		
Non-current liabilities		
Term loans	122,685	137,490
Lease liabilities	3,553	-
Derivative instruments	8,019	3,822
Deferred tax liability	17,901	16,887
Asset retirement obligation	276	256
End of service benefits	22	34
	152,456	158,469
Current liabilities		
Trade and other payables	5,040	9,341
Lease liabilities	128	-
Short term borrowing	5,238	2,200
Term loans	15,794	14,887
	26,200	26,428
Total liabilities	178,656	184,897
TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	260,778	265,565
Net assets per share (Baizas / cents) - adjusted	131.78	124.34



YEARS OF CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY

OMAN



CHAIRMAN

< FROM A1 'We owe our success to people'

"He was a little bit unhappy that the company did not know that Oman is an entirely different country and, therefore, he didn't give them the permission to fly over the country," the Chairman added. "After a few weeks, however, he found out that this could've been because there was no media available in the country, except those that broadcast in Arabic that could tell the world about Oman," he explained.

"So, the idea of publishing a newspaper in English came to his mind and he approached His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud Al Said who was the Minister of Information during that time. His Highness welcomed the idea and encouraged him in launching this newspaper as soon as possible."

The *Times of Oman* was therefore born on February 23, 1975, with the first editions initially put out as a weekly newspaper. The transition from weekly publication to daily newspaper was subsequently made in 1991.

"All the expats living in the country were very excited to know that they could read about what was happening in Oman, and at the same time, enjoy reading about the cities and places they could travel to within the Sultanate," said the Chairman. "We also became the first English newspaper to be sent worldwide, using a newspress service that was provided by a lot of five-star hotels before the internet came. So, anybody flying to a specific destination wanting to get a copy of *Times of Oman*, could receive it through the newspress services available in the hotel."

News publications

With the changes available to news publications, thanks to the advancement in technologies, *Times of Oman* continued setting up fresh milestones, to the point that they became the first newspaper to launch their Arabic version on the internet.

"In 2005, we also launched our first e-paper and received a great

response from the readers," explained Al Zadjali.

"With the progress in technology and the presence of social media platforms, *Times of Oman* always managed to lead across all the platforms in the country. At present, a lot of people are reading our newspaper through emails they receive as part of their subscription, as well as on WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, or Twitter – basically, whatever medium on which we are available, with which they are comfortable."

He added: "In 2018, we then launched our radio station known as TFM, alongside Times TV so that our readers could also now hear and watch us. I think all this success has been made possible due to the loyalty shown by the people who read, watch and listen to us, and also, because of our hardworking employees who made sure that this newspaper went on to become, and continued to stay the number one newspaper in the Sultanate."

45 YEARS

< FROM A1 'Thanks to our readers for their continued support'

The CEO then went on to highlight the synergy among the various arms of MMG, through which *Times of Oman* was able to accurately inform people across the country, of the latest developments.

"These days, the first place we see our news is on the screens of our mobile phones, so we want to be where our readers want to be, on whichever platform that might be," explained Ahmed Al Zedjali.

"I would like to take this opportunity to extend our sincere gratitude to our readers for their unwavering support to us. From our part, we will always strive to be a company whose association they can be proud of."

"Breaking news, for example, can go online, before being expanded upon through a video from Times TV," he went on to say. "A deeper story can then be issued in print, while a detailed discus-

sion can take place on our radio station. All of these sectors complementing each other through strong synergy and understanding will be the key to our success in the future, and will give us a truly unique position in Oman."

Muscat Media Group's CEO also went on to pay tribute to *Times of Oman's* readership, while also praising the hardworking MMG employees for the success of the organisation, and said the paper would continue to uphold the ideals under which it had been founded 45 years ago to strive to always be the best English media publication in the Sultanate of Oman.

"When I joined Muscat Media Group, our flagship newspaper, *Times of Oman*, was already an established product and occupied a special place in the hearts of our readers," he explained. "Over the years we launched many other products that are today a part of

our group. I state with pride that *Times of Oman* has gone through significant growth over the last decade. Our organisation has turned 45 today, and I wish our founder, Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali, were with us to see the journey we have undertaken.

"The paper was his vision and it was his dream to see it grow," he said.

Immense love

"It was the immense love for his beloved country that inspired him to launch the newspaper. This was born from the passion of serving his country. Our founder wanted the paper to be a roving ambassador for the Sultanate of Oman. We look forward to your continued patronage to share with you our vision for the years that now lie ahead. The next decade of our relationship with you will certainly be more endearing to both you and us."

BOOK FAIR

Sayyid Shihab presides over the book fair opening



INAUGURATED: His Highness Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq Al Said, Advisor to His Majesty the Sultan, presided over the opening of the 25th edition of Muscat International Book Fair at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre yesterday.

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Assigned by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, His Highness Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq Al Said, Advisor to His Majesty the Sultan, presided over the opening of the 25th edition of Muscat International Book Fair (MIBF) at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre yesterday.

The Minister of Information who is Chairman of the Main Committee of MIBF, Dr Abdulmoneim bin Mansour Al Hasani; a number of members of the Royal Family; Ministers, undersecretaries, advisors, mediapersons and invitees from within and outside the Sultanate were also present on the occasion.

During the ceremony, three Omani personalities who contributed to enrichment of the cultural arena were honoured. They are Dr Amna Rabie in the field of theatrical studies; Photographer Abdulrahman bin Ali Al Hinai in the field of photography and Dr Wafa bint Salim Al Shamsi in the field of children literature.

On the conclusion of the ceremony, Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq Al Said, Advisor to His Majesty the Sultan in the company of the attendees, toured various pavilions of Muscat International Book Fair (MIBF), which has seen the participation of the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Heritage and Culture, Bait Al Zubair, Omani Society for Writers and Literati among other participations from within and outside the Sultanate.

The 25th edition of MIBF would see the participation of 946 publication houses from 32 countries, including 676 publication houses directly participating in the event and 270 publication houses through their agents, an increase of 64 participants and 184 pavilions compared to the last edition of MIBF.

During the press conference, the Minister of Information said that this edition of MIBF would see several participations and media coverage by 25 media institutions from Arab and international countries.

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who passed away on 22nd February 2020 in India.

We deeply mourn her sad and untimely demise

Indian School Al Ghubra family



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Congratulations to Muscat Media Group on the 45th Anniversary Celebration



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Anniversary



Congratulations to the entire team of professionals from the **Muscat Media Group** on the celebrated occasion of your 45th anniversary.

We wish the team many more years of continued success.



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MARKET

BUSINESS & FINANCE



ISLAMIC BANKING ENTITIES

Islamic banking entities provided financing to the extent of about OMR4 billion at the end of December 2019, recording a growth of 11 per cent over that a year ago, according to the bulletin issued by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO). — OMA

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Real estate deals in Sultanate rise

Of the total traded value until the end of December 2019, OMR911.2 million worth transactions were sale contracts while OMR1.83 billion transactions were mortgage deals



decline of 5.5 per cent from the end of December 2018, when 223,492 title-deeds were issued.

Of the total traded value until the end of December 2019, OMR911.2 million worth transactions were sale contracts while OMR1.83 billion transactions were mortgage deals.

Mortgage contracts

As many as 56,887 sales contracts were executed until the end of December 2019 against 58,828 contracts during the same period of 2018. However, the total number of mortgage contracts fell by 0.1 per cent to reach 16,017 contracts against 16,027 contracts in 2018. The Sultanate's government collected OMR82.3 million as real

estate transaction fees until the end of December 2019, which is a drop by 2 per cent compared to the same period of 2018.

NCSI data reveal a significant rise in traded value of exchange (barter) contracts by 45.4 per cent at the end of December 2019 to OMR23.3 million, as against OMR16 million posted in the comparable period of 2018.

The number of barter contracts witnessed a rise of 7.5 per cent to a total of 1,641 compared to 1,527 contracts in 2018.

The number of plots allocated to GCC citizens fell by 37.3 per cent to reach 875 plots compared to 1,396 plots during the same period of 2018, the data showed.

— OMA

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

The Internal Tender Committee at the Ministry of Manpower announces the following tenders:

Tender Number	Tender title	Institutions eligible to bid and registered with the Tender Board	Last date for tender purchase online	Bid submission date	Document's Fee
8/2020	Providing maintenance services to the Vocational College of Technology in Ibbri	Second Grade	Sunday 15/03/2020 2:30 p.m.	Thursday 02/04/2020 10 a.m.	25 OMR
9/2020	Supply and installation of laboratory equipment for the water treatment specialty at the Vocational College for Marine Sciences at Al-Khabourah	---			25 OMR
10/2020	Providing cleaning team to the Vocational College of Technology in Shinas	---			25 OMR

- Specialized establishments may obtain the tenders' documents online through the following link, starting from Sunday 23/02/2020 at 7:30 am: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>
- Each bid shall enclose a tender bond for 1% of the total bid value in the form of a bank guarantee or certified cheque issued by a local Bank addressed to the Ministry of Manpower and valid for 90 days from the date of tender submission.
- Bids shall be submitted online along with a copy of the bank guarantee, provided that the original bank guarantee shall be submitted at the Secretariat of the Internal Tender Committee at the ground floor of the Ministry's building at the Airport Heights before the last date for bid submission.
- Bids shall be opened at 11 a.m. on the same day.

(The Ministry shall not be bound to accept the lowest or any other bid)

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ROUND-UP



YEARS OF CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY

RENAISSANCE SERVICES ANNOUNCES 20% DIVIDEND AT ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Renaissance Services SAOG, Oman's largest services and facilities management enterprise, has announced the board is recommending a 20 per cent dividend for shareholders' approval at the Annual General Meeting. The company's operating profit increased by 41 per cent, with earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation (Ebitda) over OMR22 million and profit after tax of OMR20 million. — Times News Service



All-new Chery Tiggo 8 comes equipped with a bouquet of high-end features

The tiger-crouching exterior and the tiger-eyes inspired headlamp design add to the aggressive stance of the vehicle and the sharp, simple waistlines on the sides add to the sporty looks

MUSCAT: All-new Tiggo 8 the flagship 7-seater SUV from Chery, developed based on the proprietary T1X platform, is a sporty and stylish SUV offering a host of high-end features that are best-in-class and usually found in the luxury vehicles.

The tiger-crouching exterior

and the tiger-eyes inspired headlamp design add to the aggressive stance of the vehicle and the sharp, simple waistlines on the sides add to the sporty looks. The interior of Tiggo 8 designed by adopting the design philosophy "wide body, embracing and floating" gives a spacious feel. The cabin quietness is



best-in-its-class and is loaded with high-end features that include a 10.25-inch touch capacitor console screen, a 7-inch multi-function LCD instrument panel and an 8-inch intelligent shared air-conditioning LCD touch screen.

The 7-inch intelligent multi-function instrument has functions such as intelligent driving assistance systems etc., At the same time, the three screens can also interact amongst them, bringing more hi-tech driving ex-

perience to the occupants.


The console area uses a horizontally-integrated suspension instrument panel that comes with a number of user-friendly intelligent configurations such as a D-type multi-functional steering wheel, 3USB ports, etc., improving the convenience of the users.

While considering both high-tech sense and luxury sense, Tiggo 8 has carried on the people-oriented design. Thanks to the "wide body, embracing and floating" cabin design philosophy, Tiggo 8 can provide a wider driving vision and larger cabin space.

To improve comfort, the seating system is supplied by the British company - LEAR, a global automotive technology leader in Seating, enables superior in-vehicle experience for consumers. The enveloping of the back flank and support to the waist to maximise

comfort for driver and the passengers and at the same time, 100 per cent flat reclining of the second-row seats provides more flexible space options.


Tiggo 8 is equipped with Chery's 2.0 turbo which boasts of a maximum power of 125 KW a peak torque of 250Nm and also meets the China VI emission standard. This engine is mated with a nine-speed auto transmission. This third-generation engine uses die-casted all-aluminium alloy cylinder block making it lighter and also fuel-efficient when compared with similar engines. It integrates five advanced technologies including iHEC combustion system, rapid-heating thermal management system, rapid-response supercharging technology, friction reduction technology and lightweight technology, laying a solid foundation for its excellent performance.



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Coronavirus takes first European national's toll

The victim was one of the two people who had tested positive for COVID-19 in the Veneto region

ROME: An Italian man infected with coronavirus died on Friday, becoming the first death of a European national linked to the deadly illness that has spread across the globe.

The elderly man died in a hospital in the northern city of Padua, Italian Health Minister Roberto Speranza said on Friday. He said that the 78-year-old had been in the hospital for 10 days for an unrelated illness.

The victim was one of two people who had tested positive for COVID-19 in the Veneto region. Last weekend, France reported the first death in Europe from the virus — a Chinese tourist who had been visiting Paris.

Scramble to contain the outbreak

Earlier in the day, officials had ordered schools, public buildings, restaurants and coffee shops in ten towns in northern Italy to close after a cluster of 15 other cases emerged.

All cases were located in the Lombardy region, where a 38-year-old man fell ill with the virus after meeting someone who returned from China in late January. Five doctors and nurses and several patients were infected at the hospital in Codogno where he was treated.

Three other people, who all visited the same cafe in the Lom-



FIRST EUROPEAN NATIONAL: The elderly man died in a hospital in the northern city of Padua, Italian Health Minister Roberto Speranza said on Friday.

bardy region, also tested positive for the virus.

Hundreds of people have been put in isolation and are being tested for the virus, Italian health officials have said. Over 150 co-workers of the 38-year-old as well 70 medical staff at Codogno hospital are among those being tested.

The new cases represent the first acquired through secondary contagion in Italy and brought the total number of confirmed cases up to 17.

COVID-19 spreads globally

The COVID-19 virus has now infected more than 77,000 people worldwide, with China, where the virus originated, by far the worst affected. China has reported some 2,345 deaths, mostly in the central province of Hubei.

South Korea also reported a

major jump in the number of infections on Saturday, with 142 new cases since Friday, taking the total number of infected to 346. The country also reported a second death from the virus.

Prime Minister Chung Sye-kyun called the situation an emergency. The cities of Daegu and Cheongdo have been designated special care zones.

Iran is also struggling to contain the virus within its own borders. Authorities there announced 13 new cases as well as two deaths from the COVID-19 virus on Friday. Most cases here are linked to the holy city of Qom, but people are infected in other cities too.

Lebanon also reported its first case — a 45-year-old woman who had recently traveled to Qom.

Authorities in Israel confirmed its first case — a passenger on the

virus-stricken Diamond Princess cruise ship. The infected person had initially tested negative to the virus on arrival in Israel.

What's the situation in South Korea?

Most of the cases in South Korea center around the Shincheonji Church of Jesus, a religious sect in the southern city of Daegu. More than 120 members of the church have been infected.

The government is trying to identify those who might have come in contact with infected people and diagnose the disease at the earliest opportunity.

"We will proactively provide necessary assistance including sickbeds, personnel, and equipment," the prime minister said in a meeting with senior officials.

The mayor of Daegu advised its

population of over 2.4 million people to stay indoors.

Economic hit for China

Speaking with DW, President of the EU Chamber of Commerce in China Jörg Wuttke warned of short- and long-term effects the virus will likely have on the Chinese economy. Supply chain disruption could have greater effects than those seen after the 2002-2003 SARS outbreak, he said.

"The economy is going to take a major hit in the first quarter... Transportation is 80% down. Hotels and restaurants are all closed...there is not much activity if any at all. Manufacturing is partially coming back...but the first quarter is basically gone."

Nevertheless, he was optimistic that international investors would retain interest in the country. **nw**

Teachers' strike puts 2mn kids out of school in Canada

TORONTO: Major teachers unions in the Canadian province of Ontario went on strike on Friday, leaving more than 2 million school children out of class.

The strike saw 30,000 union members at Queen's Park. Another 20,000 were picketing along a 30-km stretch on Highway 10 in Peel Region, local media reported.

"We want this government to understand that over 200,000 teachers and education workers across this province are standing up and in one voice saying you must pull back these cuts," Liz Stuart, president of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, said Friday.

Ontario's Education Minister Stephen Lecce said the students should be in school instead.

"Parents are losing patience with the union-caused disruption in their lives, the inconsistency in their children's education and the financial impact of scrambling for alternate care," Lecce said.

The minister said the key sticking point in negotiations with high school teachers is compensation.

The unions are asking for wage increases of two percent to keep up with inflation, but the government passed legislation last year capping wage hikes for all public sector workers at one percent for three years.

The provincial government announced in March 2019 that it would increase average high school class sizes from 22 to 28 and require students to take four e-learning courses to graduate, while the unions are calling on the government to back down on cuts to education.

The government has partly backed off, offering to instead increase average high school class sizes to 25 and require two online learning courses. **Xinhua**

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REPRISAL ATTACKS

Germany prepares for possible reprisal attacks after Hanau shootings



REVENGE VIOLENCE: A media group cited terrorism investigators as saying that revenge violence by left-wing extremists is now likely.

BERLIN: Security forces in Germany are preparing for possible reprisal attacks in the wake of this week far-right shootings in Hanau, one of the country's biggest media outlets reported on Saturday.

A media group cited terrorism investigators as saying that revenge violence by left-wing extremists is now likely, as well as attacks on representatives of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party.

The sources told Germany's third-largest media publisher that although there were no specific threat of reprisals from the country's radical Islamist scene, the possibility cannot be ruled out.

On Wednesday evening, a 43-year-old German man shot dead nine people in Hanau, near Frankfurt. His victims all had an immigrant background. The gunman was later found dead in his home, along with his 72-year-old mother.

Police later recovered a confes-

sional letter outlining right-wing extremist views and a video discussing conspiracy theories.

As well as fears over reprisals, security is being stepped up at mosques across Germany as they may be targets for further far-right attacks.

Psychological assessments for firearms

Meanwhile, two German political parties have floated the possibility of having mandatory psychological assessments for gun owners and applicants.

"After the violence in Hanau, we have to examine very seriously whether we need to readjust the weapons law," Social Democrat Party interior affairs expert Helge Lindh told the newspaper, *Die Welt*.

"If it turns out that the authorities cannot sufficiently examine the psychological or personal suitability of gun owners, we must reform the law accordingly."

It's possible that in the future,

the approval of gun ownership licenses will require the presentation of a psychological report or test, he said.

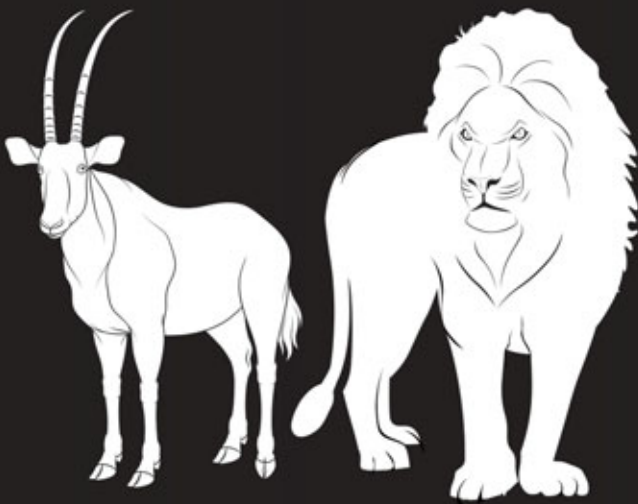
"If it is true that [Hanau gunman] Tobias R. was only recently psychologically evaluated for his gun permit, this does not cast a good light on the evaluation process," Irene Mihalic, domestic policy spokeswoman of the Green parliamentary group in the German parliament told *Die Welt*. The goal is to only allow those who have the "physical, cognitive and psychological aptitude for possessing firearms" to receive legal ownership permits.

In Saturday's edition of *Bild*, Seehofer also demanded additional psychological tests in the form of a "medical report or confirmation" for holders of firearms permits. It must be guaranteed "that everything is in order there and that the mental instability of a person does not become a danger to the general public." **DW**



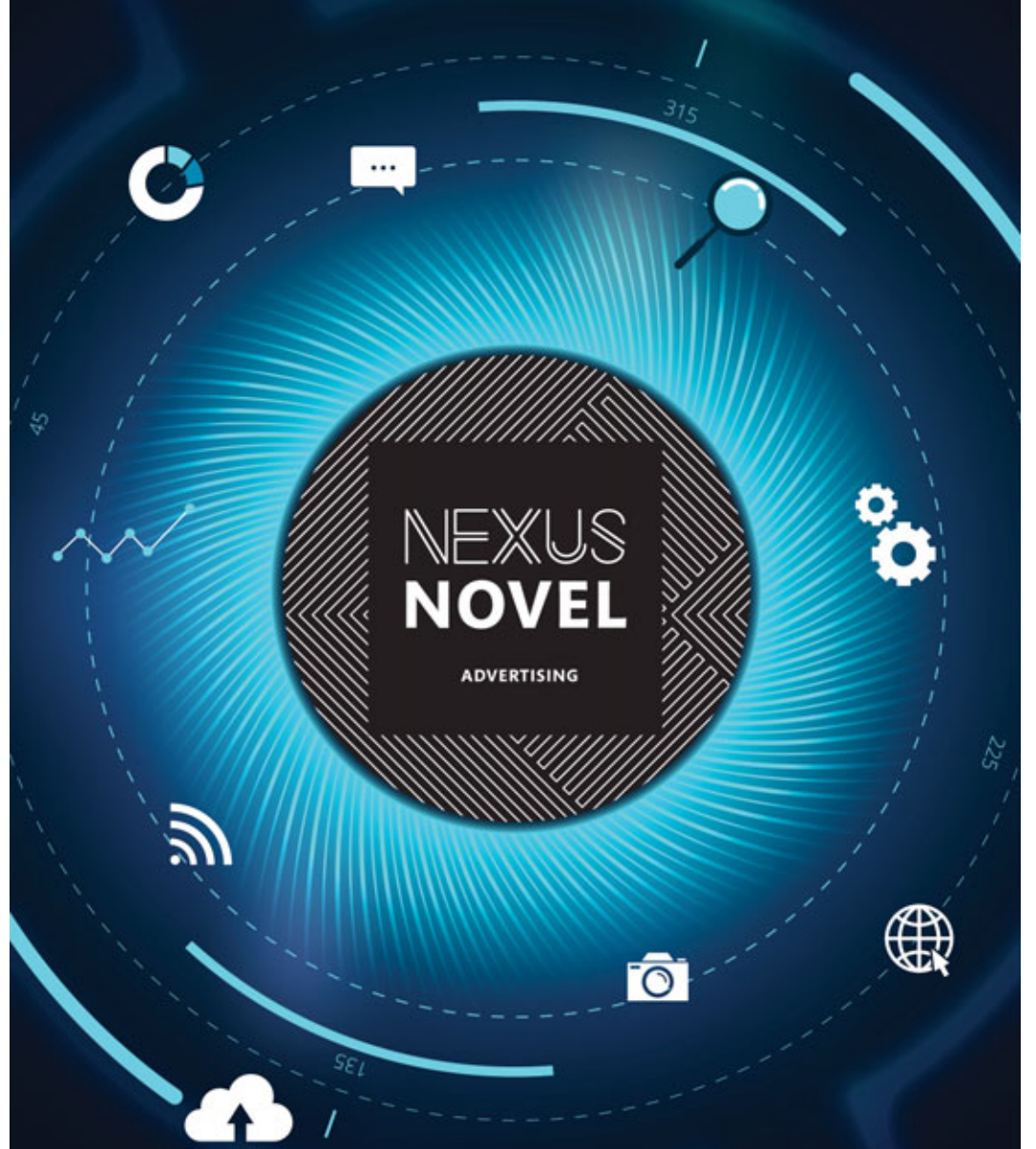
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JAPANESE ENVOY CONVEYS HIS HEARTFELT CONDOLENCES TO LATE HIS MAJESTY

I am Kobayashi Toshinori, Ambassador of Japan to the Sultanate of Oman and it is my great pleasure to address you on the occasion of His Majesty Emperor Naruhito's 60th birthday.

First of all, I would like to offer my heartfelt condolences to the government and the people of Oman for the sad passing of late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said bin Taimour, whose demise was a keenly-felt loss not only for Oman and its people but for the whole world as well. The late Sultan Qaboos was a great, wise, moderate and universally respected leader who built and nurtured this modern state and, through his uniquely peaceful foreign policy, contributed significantly to the stability and prosperity of the region.

Ten months ago, I had the honour of having an audience with the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos to present my credentials.

As the last of a long list of ambassadors who presented their credentials to late His Majesty, I shall forever admire and aspire to-

ward his wisdom and will.

The past year has been a momentous one for Japan, heralding the start of a new Imperial era. Last April marked the abdication of His Majesty Emperor-Emperor Akihito becoming the first Emperor of Japan to do so in over 200 years. His Majesty Emperor Naruhito ascended the Chrysanthemum Throne as the 126th Emperor on May 1, 2019. And thus, with his accession, the new Imperial Era 'Reiwa' has unfolded.

'Reiwa' means 'Beautiful Harmony', a concept which Japan has long pursued both within our nation and throughout our global interactions.

The official ceremony of the enthronement was held at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo on October 22, 2019. It was our great pleasure that His Highness Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs and the Personal Representative of HM the Sultan, accompanied by a high-level delegation including Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Al Busaidi, participated in the ceremony conveying the greetings of

AMBASSADOR'S MESSAGE



Statement by **KOBAYASHI Toshinori**, Ambassador of Japan to the Sultanate of Oman on the occasion of 60th birthday of the Emperor on February 23, 2020

late His Majesty. The participation at the highest levels showed the warm, long-standing friendship between the Imperial Family of Japan and the Royal Family of the Sultanate of Oman.

On this occasion, I wish His Majesty the new Emperor continued success, health, happiness, and wisdom.

As for the bilateral relations between Japan and Oman, we have witnessed very robust ties between the two countries.

They have been enhanced by a series of high-level visits and exchanges, the number of which has been significantly increased since the inauguration of PM Abe's second administration in 2012. In just the past year, Sayyid Badr bin Saud bin Harib Al Busaidi, Minister Responsible for Defence Affairs of Oman visited Japan in March 2019 and signed the Memorandum of Cooperation with his counterpart Minister of Defence of Japan.

In April 2019, Sato Masahisa, State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan visited Oman to have the fifth Policy Dialogue, chaired jointly with Sayyid Badr bin Ham-

ad Al Busaidi, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Oman. In October, His Highness Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik Al Said had a fruitful meeting with Prime Minister ABE during his stay in Japan to attend the enthronement ceremony.

Dr Mohammed Al Rumhi, Minister of Oil and Gas and Ahmed Al Mahrizi, Minister of Tourism also visited Japan in September and December respectively to attend international conferences hosted by Japan. In December, Kono Taro, Minister of Defence, and former minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan visited Oman to discuss defence cooperation with his Omani counterpart.

And most recently, on January 14 of this year, Prime Minister Abe Shinzo visited Oman and paid a visit of condolence to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik at Al Alam Palace, as the only national leader to attend personally from the Asia Pacific Area.

The exceptional number of high-level human exchanges mentioned above demonstrates that relations between our two countries are growing ever more

important and that Japan considers the Sultanate as an extremely valued and significant partner both in economy and security in the Indo-Pacific area.

The Sultanate of Oman is unparalleled in its strategic importance. Furthermore, the Sultanate's unique peaceful foreign policy, which His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik pledged to uphold in his first speech as the new Sultan, proactively contributes to stability in the region. I am confident that Oman, with these unique characteristics, is capable of being an economic hub and a peaceful oasis in the Middle East.

Now our two countries have opened a new page of history.

I would like to wish continued good health and long life for both HM Emperor Naruhito and HM Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and to wish further enhancement and development for the distinguished bilateral relations between Japan and the Sultanate of Oman in all fields. I hope you enjoy the overview of the highlights of remarkable events for Japanese Oman-relations in the past year in this special supplement.

Warm wishes to the people of Japan on the occasion of the 60th Birthday of His Imperial Majesty Emperor Naruhito


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However, the Indo-Pacific region is facing various challenges such as piracy, terrorism, a proliferation of WMDs, natural disasters and attempts to change the status quo.

Under such circumstances, Japan aims to establish 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' (FOIP) through ensuring rules-based international order including the rule of law, freedom of navigation and overflight, peaceful settlement of disputes, and promotion of free trade for peace, stability and prosperity across the region.

Japan ratified the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982 and entered into effect in 1996. In line with this, Japan maintains maritime safety, marine environment protection,

maritime security and human resource development by national registration law.

Accordingly, in 2009, responding to surge of piracy activity in the Gulf of Aden, Japan enacted a domestic law that can deploy Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force (JMSDF) vessels with Japan Coast Guard (JCG) service personnel on board, as well as JMSDF aircraft off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden for its counter-piracy operations there. Since then, Japan has continuously deployed JMSDF vessels and personnel in this theatre while at the same time, the Government of the Sultanate of Oman has extended its full support and cooperation by providing anchorage and other necessary assistance for both the above-mentioned Japanese task forces and other international coalition forces engaged in these important missions.

As for human resource development, Japan and the Sultanate

of Oman have been exchanging their knowledge, skills and experience through mutual training courses and visits to promote understanding and goodwill between the countries. In November 2018, a Royal Oman Police Coast Guard (ROPCG) officer joined 'Coast Guard Global Summit (CGGS) - Working Level Meeting 2018' co-hosted by Japan Coast Guard and The Nippon Foundation. At the meeting, 'Coast Guard Global Human Resources Development' and 'Information Sharing Method' were discussed among participants over 60 countries, regions and international organisations in the world. In September 2019, a Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) officer joined 'Ship-Rider Programme 2019' which was organised by JMSDF. In October 2019, an RNO officer joined 'Short Term Exchange Programme for Officers of the Next Generations (WPNS STEP)' hosted by Japan Maritime Self Defence

Force (JMSDF) in Tokyo.

In March 2019, Government of Japan invited Sayyid Badr bin Saud Al Busaidi, the Minister Responsible for Defence Affairs to Japan. During the visit, Sayyid Badr and Iwaya Takeshi, the then-Minister of Defence, signed the Memorandum on Defence Cooperation between Japan and the Sultanate of Oman. In December 2019, Kono Taro, Minister of Defence visited the Sultanate of Oman to meet Sayyid Badr, MRDA. The two sides discussed further ties in defence between Japan and the Sultanate of Oman.

In response to rising tensions in the Middle East, on December 27, 2019, the Government of Japan decided to dispatch Japan Self-Defence Force assets (one destroyer and one P-3C aircraft) to gather information for safe navigation of Japanese ships in the Sea of Oman, the northern part of Arabian Sea, and within and east of Bab el Mandeb (on the High Seas).

Heartfelt greetings to Emperor Naruhito



Mohammed Saud Bahwan, Chairman of the Board Oman-Japan Friendship Association

WARM and heartfelt greetings to Emperor Naruhito of Japan on the occasion of his 60th birthday

On behalf of the members of the Board, Oman-Japan Friendship Association (OJFA), I convey my heartfelt greetings to Emperor Naruhito of Japan, on the auspicious occasion of his 60th birthday.

We, the people of Oman, recently mourned the passing away of our great and beloved leader, late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said bin Taimour (May His Soul Rest in Peace). The late His Majesty's inspiring vision and wise leadership steered Oman firmly on the path of peace, progress and prosperity.

We also welcome the ascension of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the throne. We the people of Oman pledge our wholehearted support to His Majesty's wise leadership and visionary journey for the progress, development and prosperity of the Sultanate of Oman. May the Almighty bless him with good health and long life.

Oman and Japan share a very deep-rooted relationship which over the years has grown from strength to strength. This remarkable association has presented immense opportunities to the people of both nations to further cooperation and promote mutual development.

The Oman Japan Friendship Association plays a humble role in building enduring relationships that offer immense opportunities for the people of both nations, to benefit and prosper. On this memorable occasion, the association reaffirms our commitment to making these remarkable bonds even stronger.

The two great nations - Oman and Japan through numerous opportunities have encouraged its people to benefit from the strengths and experiences of each other. Through long-standing cooperation in various areas like culture, business and arts, these relations are witnessing an unprecedented deepening of engagement.

On the economic front, Oman and Japan have witnessed impressive progress in various fields. Japan is one of Oman's largest trading partners. Oman benefits from a host of Japanese products like automotive, aluminium, machinery, electrical appliances and more. Similarly, Japan benefits from Omani exports like oil & gas, fisheries, agricultural produce and more.

To enhance the cultural relations between the two nations, the Oman-Japan Friendship Association has planned and initiated a number of programmes that focus on the rich and diverse culture of the two nations.

Recently in December last year, Kobayashi Toshinori, Ambassador of Japan to the Sultanate of Oman and Ahmed bin Nasser Al Mahrizi, Minister of Tourism, Sultanate of Oman discussed some topics related to tourism including ways to boost the exchange of tourists between Japan and Oman.

In October, Abe Shinzo, Prime Minister of Japan, held a meeting with His Highness Sayyid Asaad bin Tariq bin Taimur Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs and Special Representative for His Majesty the Sultan of Oman. At the meeting several topics were discussed including deepening of bilateral relation in areas such as economy and security, enhancing the bilateral relationship and more.

Earlier in October, the Embassy of Japan in the Sultanate of Oman, in cooperation with Nizwa University, organised 'Japan Day' at the university. The event offered a snapshot of fascinating Japanese traditions and cultures, with special features such as Japanese tea ceremony, karate and kendo demonstrations and a Japanese film show. The event aimed to introduce the Japanese culture and promote the understanding of Japan and its culture in Oman.

In May the Government of Japan conferred 'the Order of the Rising Sun, Golden & Silver Star' to Mohammed bin Yousuf Al Zarafi, former Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) for Administrative and Financial Affairs and Ambassador Khalid bin Hashil bin Mohammed Al Muslahi, Chief of the Secretary-General Office Department, MoFA in recognition of their outstanding contributions to the developments of friendly relations between Japan and the Sultanate of Oman.

In February the Embassy of Japan opened the Japan booth at the 24th Muscat International Book Fair at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre in cooperation with the Japan Foundation and Publishers' Association for Cultural Exchange (PACE).

Throughout the year, the Oman Japan Friendship Association in cooperation with the Embassy of Japan in Oman conducts 3-month Japanese Language Courses - specialised language programmes for Japanese language enthusiasts. These courses are conducted by a specially assigned, very talented and immensely experienced native teacher.

Such well-planned and relationship-enhancing initiatives encourage the development of interest and admiration of cultures among the people of Oman and Japan.

The Oman-Japan Friendship Association will in the days to come, continue to strengthen these ties with even more such programmes and initiatives that will bring people of Oman and Japan closer.

On behalf of all the Board members of the Oman Japan Friendship Association, I convey sincere greetings to His Majesty Emperor Naruhito on the occasion of his 60th birthday. May God Almighty grant him good health and long life and may the strong relation between Oman and Japan grow even stronger.

FEBRUARY 2019 - FEBRUARY 2020

Highlights of remarkable events

Muscat International Book Fair 2019

The Embassy of Japan participated in Muscat International Book Fair 2019 held from February 20 to March 2, at Oman Conventions and Exhibitions Centre. A variety of books prepared by the Japan Foundation were displayed at the embassy's booth. As with last year, Kinokuniya Book Store Dubai also joined our booth to sell their books. Many people visited our booth and enjoyed Japanese books.

JICA Training Alumni Reception



On March 3, 2019, Ambassador Kobayashi Toshinori, hosted a reception at his residence, attended by Ali bin Masoud Al Sunaidi, Minister of Commerce and Industry in the Sultanate of Oman and other ex-participants of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) training programmes.

MEXT Scholarship Alumni Reception

On March 11, 2019, Ambassador Kobayashi Toshinori, held a reception at his residence for the former Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) scholarship students. The reception was attended by Dr Abdullah Al Sarmi, Undersecretary of Ministry of Higher Education and a number of guests including officials from Ministry of Higher Education and Ministry of Education and former scholarship students.

Participation in 968 GameZ



The Embassy of Japan participated in 968 GameZ event held from March 21 to 23 at Al Arami Boulevard Mall, which was video games and pop culture event organised by Socialmania creative and digital marketing. A lot of visitors dropped by the embassy's booth and enjoyed Japanese books, movies and activities such as origami and Japanese calligraphy.

MoC on military cooperation

On March 24, 2019, Sayyid Badr bin Saud bin Harib Al Busaidi, Minister Responsible for Defence Affairs started a several-day official visit to Japan and together Iwaya Takeshi, then Minister of Defense of Japan signed on March 25 a Memorandum of the Defence Cooperation

(MoC) between the two ministries.

Visit of State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan



On April 8 and 9, 2019, Sato Masahisa, then State Minister for Foreign Affairs paid a visit to the Sultanate of Oman. During his visit, Sato met with senior Omani officials including Badr bin Saud bin Harib Al Busaidi, Minister Responsible for Defence Affairs and Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hamood Al Busaidi, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During the visit, the fifth meeting of Political Consultations between Japan and the Sultanate of Oman was held at the Foreign Ministry of Oman on April 9, 2019.

Ambassador Kobayashi presents his credentials

On April 26, 2019, Ambassador Kobayashi Toshinori, was granted an audience by late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said and presented his credentials to His Majesty. Ambassador Kobayashi conveyed greetings of His Majesty Emperor Akihito to late HM Sultan Qaboos and affirmed to exert his utmost efforts to further enhance the bilateral relations between Japan and Oman.

Conferment of the Order of Rising Sun on two former Omani ambassadors to Japan

On May 21, 2019, the Government of Japan announced the conferment of the 'The Order of the Rising Sun, Golden & Silver Star' on Mohammed bin Yousuf Al Zarafi, then Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) for Administrative and Financial Affairs and current Member of the State Council and Ambassador Khalid bin Hashil Al Muslahi, Chief of the Secretary-General Office Department, MoFA in recognition of their outstanding contribution to the development of friendly bilateral relations between Japan and Oman. Al Zarafi served as Ambassador to Japan for seven years from 2000 to 2007 and Al Muslahi served as Ambassador to Japan for 10 years from 2008 to 2018. The award ceremony was held on May 23, 2019, at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo.

Dr Suad Al Lawatiah's visit to Japan



Dr Suad bint Mohammed Al Lawatiah, Minister of Arts Affairs, then Vice-Chairperson of the State Council visited Japan to at-

tend the Women Political Leaders (WPL) Summit 2019 which took place at the House of Representatives, Japan in Tokyo on June 25 - 27, 2019.

Exchange of notes on visa exception



On July 28, 2019, Japan and Oman exchanged notes on the mutual waiver of visa requirements for diplomatic, official, special, and service passport holders between the two countries. The mutual waiver arrangement came into effect on August 28, 2019.

Oman Lawyers Association delegation's visit to Japan

On August 19, 2019, the Supreme Court of Japan received a delegation of the Oman Lawyers Association (OLA) in Tokyo. The delegation, which consisted of 31 lawyers and headed by its chairman Dr Mohammed bin Ibrahim Al Zadjali, was received by the head of the Court's International Relations unit. The delegation was briefed on Japan's judicial system, phases of evolution since its inception over the last three centuries and the type of courts across the country.

Professor Amano's visit to Oman

Professor Dr Amano Hiroshi, the Nobel Laureate in Physics (2014) for his research on the blue LED, visited Oman from September 10 to 13, 2019, with Morimoto Seiji, the former ambassador of Japan to Oman. During the visit, they paid a courtesy visit to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, then Minister of Heritage and Culture. Prof. Amano gave a public lecture at Kempinski Hotel Muscat (which was organised by the German University of Technology in Oman GUtech).

2nd Hydrogen Ministerial Meeting in Tokyo

On September 25, 2019, Dr Mohammed bin Hamad Al Rumhi, Minister of Oil and Gas attended the 2nd Hydrogen Ministerial Meeting hosted by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan, which was held in Tokyo and discussed the direction of efforts to realise a hydrogen society.

On this occasion Dr Rumhi had a meeting with Sugawara, then Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan and exchanged opinions on strengthening the relationship between Japan and Oman in the energy sector.

Japan Day at Nizwa University



On October 7, 2019, the Embassy of Japan in collaboration with the University of Nizwa organised 'Japan Day' at Nizwa University. The event offered a snapshot of fascinating Japanese traditional culture, with special features such as tea ceremony, Karate performance by the Karate Academy in Oman, Kendo performance by Ichi Byo Shi Kendo Club in Oman and a Japanese film screening.

Sayyid Asa'ad visit

In October 2019, Sayyid Asa'ad bin Tariq Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, accompanied by a high-level delegation including Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, visited Japan to participate in the enthronement ceremony of HM Emperor Naruhito. On October 21, Prime Minister Abe Shinzo held a meeting with Sayyid Asaad.

Conferment of the Order of the Rising Sun on Al Khusaibi

On November 3, 2019, the Government of Japan announced the conferment of 'The Order of the Rising Sun, Golden & Silver Star' on Mohamed bin Ali Al Khusaibi, former ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to Japan (from 1992 to 2000), in recognition of his contribution to the friendly ties between Japan and Oman. The award ceremony was held on November 7, 2019, at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo.

Visit of Minister of Defence Kono Taro to Oman

On December 29, 2019, Kono Taro, Minister of Defence of Japan paid a one-day visit to the Sultanate of Oman, during which he separately met General Sultan bin Mohammed Al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office and Sayyid Badr bin Saud bin Harib Al Busaidi, Minister Responsible for Defence Affairs.

Visit of Prime Minister Abe to Oman

On January 14, 2020, Prime Minister Abe Shinzo visited Oman. He offered Japan's heartfelt and sincerest condolences to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on the passing of late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said bin Taimour. Prime Minister Abe also had meetings with His Highness Sayyid Asaad bin Tariq, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs and Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan and His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers. They discussed bilateral relations and exchanged views on regional and international issues of common concern.



Birthday greetings to
His Majesty Emperor Naruhito of

JAPAN

May his wisdom continue the legacy of peace and
happiness across the nation and its people.



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مؤسسة عمر الزاوي ش.م.م.
Omar Zawawi Establishment L.L.C.

P.O. Box 879, Muscat, Postal Code 100, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: +968 24719500 Fax: +968 24715442, www.omzest.com



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