

ROHM set to kick off 2022 season

The Royal Opera House Muscat announced that it will kick off its awaited 2022 season with two concerts on 6 and 7 January 2022 starring famous pan Arab singer, composer and violinist Saber Rebai. Rebai will perform a programme of his best loved songs, accompanied by an orchestra in a show which is designed to stir the senses and enrich the souls of the audiences of loyal and newly inspired fans. **SEE P5**

  
  
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RC HORSE SCORES FIRST PLACE IN DUBAI



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RO 5 BILLION-WORTH NON-BUDGETARY INVESTMENTS PLANNED IN 2022



P20

LIVING THEIR LIVES TO THE SAME SOUNDTRACK



**MUSCAT**

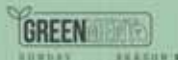
**OMANI ENDOWMENT WAQF LAUNCHED**

The Imam Jabir bin Zaid Waqf Foundation on Sunday launched an Omani Endowment Partnership Portal named “Waqf”. The portal aims to enhance the concept of community-based endowment service and offer digitised solutions to streamline the process of humanitarian donation.

The portal will henceforth serve as a platform for endowment establishments in the Sultanate of Oman. **SEE P3**

**EDUCATION GETS 17% IN BUDGET**

Oman Budget 2022, which maintains prudent and sustainable levels of public spending, accords priority for citizens’ standard of living. Public revenues and expenditures have been estimated after taking into account the Medium-Term Fiscal Plan, as well as a set of bases and scenarios, which all aim to ensure the continuation of basic services. **SEE P3**

  
SUNDAY JANUARY 2, 2022  
Let's talk emotional health

  
**DIVORCE**  
why does it happen?



INSIDE

  
SECURITY FORCES FIRE TEAR GAS AT PROTESTERS

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FIRE BRINGS DOWN ROOF AT SOUTH AFRICA PARLIAMENT

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**ASTRONOMY EXHIBITION OPENS**



His Highness Sayyid Bel'arab bin Haitham bin Tarik on Sunday presided over the opening of the Astronomical Photography Exhibition 2022. The exhibition included 27 astronomical photos of 20 photographers. HH Sayyid Bel'arab felicitated the participants for the success of the exhibition. – **ONA**

**Over 30% rise in registered SMEs**

**MUSCAT:** The total number of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) registered in the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development till the end of November 2021 increased by 30.4 per cent to reach 62,335 compared to 47,802 in November 2020, according to the data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI). Among the governorates, the Governorate of Muscat topped the list by reaching 21,068 enterprises, comprising a rise by 31.5 per cent, followed by the Governorate of North Al Batinah with 9,830. **SEE P5**

## Low pressure trough effects to continue

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH  
[@lakshmioman](#)

Rains in January due to troughs from low pressure is an annual feature, but this is the first time the duration of the trough is prolonged for so many days.

“We can say that we have been affected like this because we have had this trough for a very long period. So this year, this is the difference,” The weather forecaster at National Early Warning Centre, Jaifer bin Hamed al Busaidy, explained.

The reason is this, “Because this trough has been for three different short waves and they came one after the other.”

“We had a cloudy day with isolated rain first. Then we had this trough four days ago, and

we will have the final effect of the same trough in the middle of this week. As this trough is strong, we are expecting some fresh wind in the desert and the open area of Dhofar, Al Wusta, Al Dhahirah and Al Buraimi making it dusty and impacting horizontal visibility.”

Thundershowers took place over the Arabian Gulf, and the eastern coast of Musandam. The experts said some rain could be experienced in Musandam and North Al Batinah. The weather forecaster at Oman Met Office, Aisha al Qasmi, said, “On Sunday there could be a possibility for isolated rain and thundershower over Musandam and North Al Batinah. But chances are higher on Monday and Tuesday.” **TURN TO P2**

## COVID CASES SURGING

VINOD NAIR  
[@vinot\\_nair](#)

The Sultanate of Oman continued to report a surge in cases despite assurances from health experts that the Omicron variant is less severe than previous ones.

The Ministry of Health reported 343 cases in 72 hours, including one death.

According to MoH, 119 new cases were recorded on Thursday, 102 on Friday, and 122 on Saturday.

Dr Zakariya al Balushi, a consultant at Royal Hospital, said, citing initial statistics, that Omicron variants do spread fast, but the chances of people getting severe illness are less compared to other variants.



Meanwhile, the health experts have also warned that this situation can change as the world currently has a new wave of daily cases and even deaths in some countries.

“The surge is going to be very fast and many people are going to be sick,” WHO Chief Scientist Soumya Swaminathan said.

“The surge is going to be very fast, and many people are going to be sick,” she warned with the new variant of concern already driving up cases across the world. **TURN TO P2**

## Royal Hospital gets advanced cancer treatment device

**MUSCAT:** The Royal Hospital, represented by the General Surgery Department, inaugurated the first advanced device for the treatment of cancerous tumours in the Sultanate of Oman.

The machine is a heated chemotherapy infusion device, which is one of the most important scientific discoveries that eliminate cancer cells in the abdominal cavity after tumour removal operations.

“The device is the first of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman. It replaces the traditional method of injecting chemical drugs into the abdominal cavity after the operations of removing cancerous tumours,” said Dr Rashid bin Mohammed al Alawi, Head of the General Surgery Department at the Royal Hospital, said.

Dr Rashid pointed out that the device will contribute to the treatment of cancerous tumours



in many parts of the body, especially colon, ovarian, and appendix tumours and that it can be used for dozens of cancer cases every month.

Dr Aamid bin Khamis al Aرامي, Director of the Department of Surgery at the Royal Hospital, said that as many as 13,821 surgeries were conducted by different departments of the Royal Hospital.

The cases varied between critical and stable, said Dr Aamid, noting that this achievement coincided with the exceptional period of the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic outbreak and its emergent strains. The performance confirms the hospital’s readiness to handle various surgical cases in a way that ensures the safety of patients in accordance with the highest approved standards, he explained. — **ONA**



# Sayyid Bel'arab opens Astronomy Exhibition 2022



MUSCAT: His Highness Sayyid Bel'arab bin Haitham bin Tarik on Sunday presided over the opening of the Astronomical Photography Exhibition 2022.

The event was organised by Oman Astronomical Society in cooperation with the History of Science Centre (HSC) at the German University of Technology in the Sultanate of Oman. The exhibition included 27 astronomical photos of 20 photographers.

Ammar bin Salim al Rawahi, Chairman of Oman Astronomical Society, delivered the opening speech.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, HH Sayyid Bel'arab felicitated the participants for the success of the exhibition. — ONA



## SAUDI ARMY CHIEF ARRIVES



MUSCAT: Lt Gen Fayyad bin Hamid al Ruwaili, Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, arrived here on Sunday on a several-day official visit to the Sultanate of Oman. He was received upon arrival at the Seeb Air Base by Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces, a number of senior officers and the military attaché of the Saudi Embassy in Muscat. — ONA

# ‘Excellence’ showcases Oman to the world

KABEER YOUSUF  
@kabeeryousef

A repertoire of myriad images of the Sultanate of Oman, from ancient seafaring to a modern nation embracing the new Renaissance, is featured in a coffee table book in the backdrop of the country's participation at the Expo 2020.

The book, titled 'Excellence International' launched under the auspices of Mohsin bin Khamis al Balushi, Adviser, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), shares with the global visitors at the Oman pavilion a window to the history, society, safety and security, trade and commerce, economy, key performance indicators, and the possibilities available in the country for a better living.

"The Expo 2020 is no longer just a place to showcase the participating countries' goods, products, industrial achievements, and inventions. Instead, it's a venue to exchange views and put forward new creative ideas that contribute to the enrichment of contemporary civilisation," said Al Balushi, who is also the Commissioner-General of the Sultanate of Oman for the Expo 2020.

The book, divided into six parts, makes an attempt to delve into the six different facets of the Sultanate of Oman. Starting with the history and culture of the Sultanate of Oman that traces the maritime tradition through Qalhat, Dhofar regions till the National Museum and Royal Opera House Muscat, the rich textual journey takes the readers to the sound safety and security through the Royal Oman Police and Oman's Vision 2040.

"According to Oxford Business



# Coronavirus cases surging

FROM P1

Dr Swaminathan said that the Omicron outbreak, which has triggered fresh concerns globally and raised the alarm, will see the burden shift from hospitals to the out-patients department, from ICUs to home-based care.

"Unlike the Delta variant, there have been no reports of patients suffering from severe respiratory issues due to Omicron."

Even the epidemiological data from South Africa (where the Omicron was reported for the

first time), suggest that the variant is fatal compared to others.

Studies from the UK have warned that variant could still lead to large numbers of people in hospital.

The Ministry of Health has warned that hospital inpatients are likely to go up in the Sultanate of Oman and it can put an extra burden on the healthcare system.

Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Health, stressed the need for taking the third dose or booster to increase

protection against the Omicron.

He said that the number of infections witnessed an increase in recent days and added it is the government's duty to protect members of the society and maintain public health, as the health sector underwent a rough time in the previous year.

"There is no plan, at the time being, to make the booster dose mandatory and it is very early to discuss the possibility of administering an annual dose against Covid-19," Al Saeedi said.

# Low pressure trough effects to continue

FROM P1

Generally, the weather forecast predicts a cloudy to partly cloudy sky on Monday with chances of thundershowers and downdraft.

"There are chances of isolated rain for the rest of the governorates. The wind direction is generally southeasterly to easterly, and for most of the northern part of the Sultanate of Oman it could be occasionally fresh," added Aisha.

Along the Musandam coast, the sea state will be rough to moderate as well as at the coastal areas of the



country.

There is a chance of horizontal visibility reduction in the desert and open areas due to dust rising.

There are also chances of late

night to early morning low-level clouds off fog patches over parts of Oman Sea coasts and South Al Sharqiyah, Al Wusta and Al Buraimi governorates.

Report, Oman's commitment to diversification has seen the country's non-oil sector record an average real GDP growth rate of 7 per cent since the turn of the century. It also noted that the Sultanate's strategic position near established global trade routes and a history of political neutrality is opening up opportunities for Oman in transport, trade, tourism and manufacturing."

Ayman Helal, CEO of Darran LLC, Director of Production of the 116-page book said in the foreword.

Ample pages have been set for the country's march towards the future through the Renewed Renaissance and key performers to the national strategy of empowering the economy and landing upon the Expo 2020 and its importance in showcasing the country on the global platform.

Inge Leutscher, President, Excellence International SA is the Publisher of the book while the production team consists of Majid al Hashmi, Head of Coordination and Followup at the MoCIIP, Sajda al Ghaithy, Director-Communications and Media, Adil al Uwaidi, Mechanical Engineer, Jokha al Rashdi, and Rana al Sabti.



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# Endowment forum launches partnership portal 'Waqf'

**MUSCAT:** The Imam Jabir Bin Zaid Waqf Foundation (JBZF) on Sunday launched an Omani Endowment Partnership Portal named 'Waqf'. The portal aims to enhance the concept of community-based endowment service and offer digitised solutions to streamline the process of humanitarian donation.

The programme was unveiled during the first endowment forum organised by the JBZF in cooperation with the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs. The event kicked off under the auspices of Shaikh Al Fadhl Mohammed al Harthy, Secretary General of the



Council of Ministers.

The Omani Endowment Partnership Portal (Waqf) will henceforth serve as a platform for endowment establishments in the Sultanate of Oman. Its electronic

port will gear the activities of donations made through the Omani endowment organisations.

Commenting on this move, His Eminence Shaikh Ahmed bin Hamad al Khalili, Grand Mufti of

the Sultanate of Oman, Founder of the JBZF, said, "While Infaq — spiritual spending for the sake of the Almighty Allah — is deemed one of the tasks that bring one closer to Allah, the best Infaq is the type of endowment that lasts even after one passes away."

Al Khalili took the opportunity to call for the consolidation of social cooperation, noting that collective action to promote social responsibility is a blessed task.

The forum saw the signing of a number of memoranda of understanding in the field of endowment-based donation.

— ONA

## Education gets 17pc in Budget 2022

**SAMUEL KUTTY**

@samkuttvyp

Oman Budget 2022, which maintains prudent and sustainable levels of public spending, accords priority for citizens' standard of living.

"Public revenues and expenditures have been estimated after taking into account the Medium-Term Fiscal Plan (MTFP), as well as a set of bases and scenarios, which all aim to ensure the continuation of basic services delivery such as education, healthcare, housing and social welfare", a statement issued by the Ministry of Finance said on Saturday.

According to it, the main considerations when preparing 2022 Budget estimates were maintaining the level of spending on essential services such as education, healthcare, housing and social welfare.

Education gets the highest 17 per cent out of a total of 40 per cent allotted for basic services in the budget, which has a public spending estimate of RO 12.1 billion for 2022.

Healthcare gets 11 per cent, followed by social welfare with seven per cent and housing five per cent.

In the budget statement, the Ministry of Finance said it would undertake a number of initial studies on certain projects to be carried out under public, private partnership to provide basic infrastructure.

"Developing educational infrastructure and benefiting from the private sector expertise in designing, building and maintaining schools to meet the increasing demand for schools in various governorates will be undertaken", informs the statement.

In this phase, 40 schools are planned to be constructed under public-private partnership.

In the health sector, under the hemodialysis services project, a number of dialysis centres are planned to be established under public private partnership so as to reduce the costs borne by the Ministry of Health.

Current expenditures of ministries and government units are estimated at RO 4.3 billion, in accordance with actual needs of all government civil units, the outcome of fiscal consolidations and government initiatives geared towards spending reduction.

Salary appropriations of government units allocated as per the occupied posts amount to 74 per cent totalling RO 3.2 billion.

The appropriations allocated under 'Contributions and Other Expenses' for subsidies are estimated at RO 1,071 million. These include subsidies for electricity, water, sewage and waste sectors. In addition there have been subsidies for oil products, housing and development loans.

These allocations include housing aid, social housing scheme and housing loans. In 2021, the number of households that benefited from the social housing scheme reached 1,247 households.

"The amount allocated for such a scheme shall remain at the same level in 2022. The total appropriations allocated for oil products subsidy are estimated at about RO 35 million", the statement adds.

While an amount of RO 575 million has been allocated for electricity and water subsidy, the transport sector is planned to receive a subsidy worth RO 80 million.



**MUSCAT:** A delegation from the Defence Services Command and Staff College (DSCSC) in Bangladesh visited on Sunday the Maritime Security Centre (MSC). The delegation was received by Commodore Mohammed Hamoud al Zedjali, Head of the MSC. The guests toured the centre's facilities and viewed its latest equipment and technologies. They were also briefed on the tactical roles and tasks carried out by the centre as part of its national duties, as it coordinates with relevant authorities in search and rescue missions and in the safety of the maritime environment.

— ONA

### ■ BANGLADESH DELEGATION VISITS MSC



## Follow healthy habits to protect self and others from Covid

**KABEER YOUSUF**

@kabeeryousef

The Ministry of Health (MoH) has urged all to follow a healthy lifestyle and take preventive measures to keep communicable diseases away and be better equipped against Covid-19 and other physical and mental challenges.

"Follow healthy habits and take preventive measures to protect you and others from communicable diseases and other physical and emotional issues", a statement issued by the MoH has said.

One should necessarily be in the habit of washing hands before and after having food, cleaning hands after handling trash,

**Healthy habits are must to avoid getting a communicable disease like bacterial, viral, protozoal diseases in general and especially in view of ongoing covid 19 pandemic**

**DR DILIP SINGHVI**

Specialist-Internal medicine,  
Apollo Hospital

waste and after cleaning household and surroundings are to be strictly adhered to, according to the statement from the MoH.



All the other precautionary measures, such as using soap and water to wash hands after sneezing, wearing face masks and social distancing, should be continued. Often, sanitiser should be applied on hands whenever one touches common areas like lift buttons, electric switches, etc.

"One shouldn't fail to adhere to the precautionary measures including wearing masks and social distancing and all other precautions have to be strictly followed", Dr Faryal al Lawati, Senior Consultant and Head of Infection Diseases Section at the Royal Hospital under the MoH said.

"Healthy habits are must to avoid getting a communicable disease like bacterial, viral, pro-

tozoal diseases in general and especially in view of ongoing covid 19 pandemic", says Dr Dilip Singhvi, Specialist-Internal medicine, Apollo Hospital.

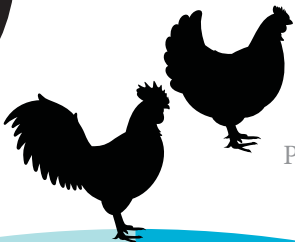
"Everyone and especially children should take care regarding hand hygiene, washing or sanitising hands regularly, avoiding touching unknown surfaces like in lifts, corridors, malls, railings, and elsewhere", adds Dr Singhvi.

While using regular masks on the face, it is important to note to cover the mouth and nose, not to keep it on the chin, to avoid getting infected.

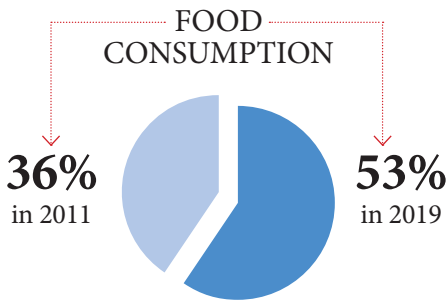
Also, avoiding going to crowded places will enable us to reduce the risk of exposure to communicable diseases like Covid, influenza and other airborne diseases.



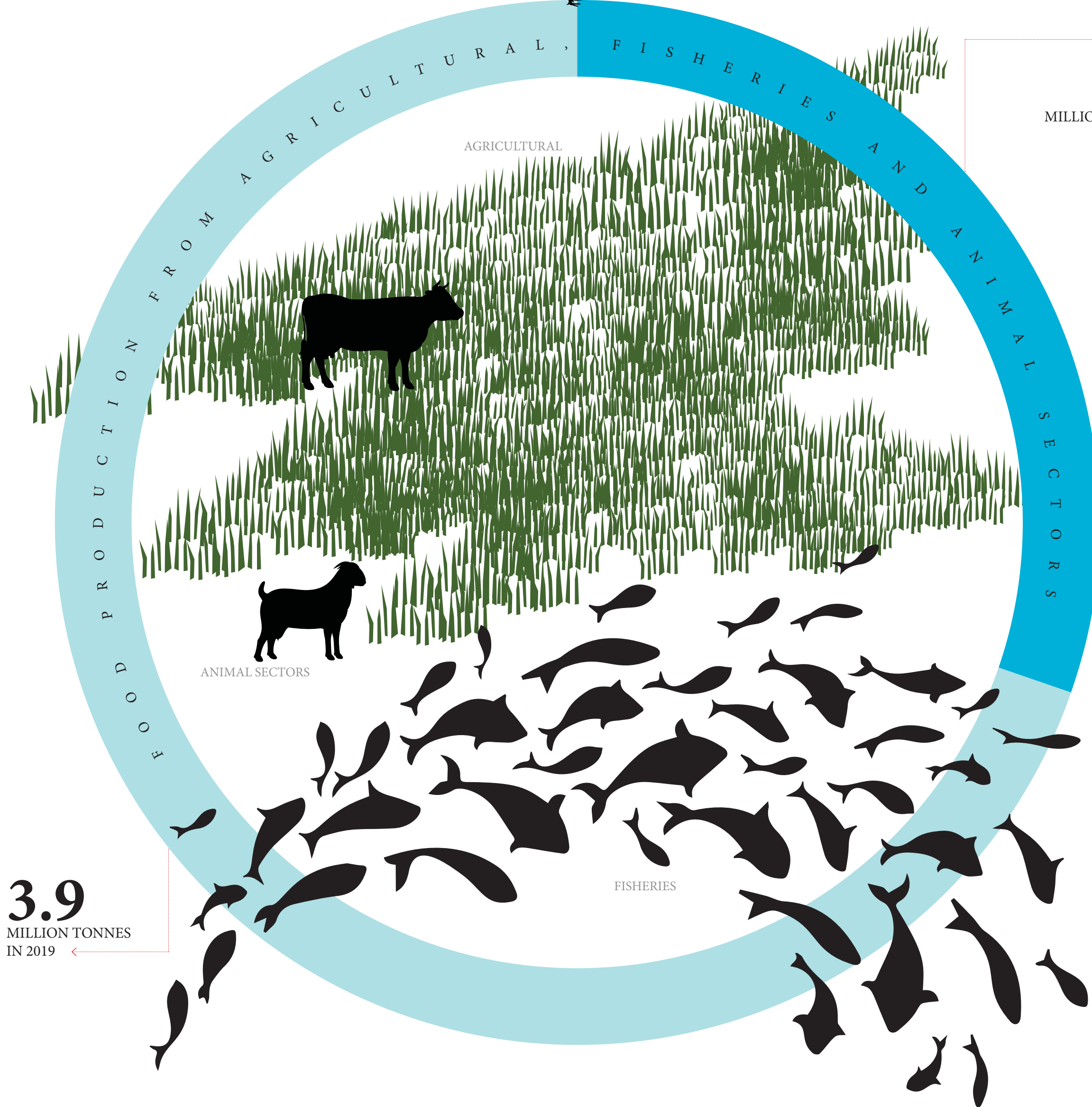
# H A R V E S T I N G A G R O P O T E N T I A L S



POULTRY



1.7  
MILLION TONNES  
IN 2011



3.9  
MILLION TONNES  
IN 2019

SAMUEL KUTTY  
@samkuttyvp

With agriculture and fisheries forming the central part of the Sultanate of Oman's economy and society, a positive impact has been noticed among social security households in terms of ensuring food availability. The leadership under His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik devotes utmost attention to the issue of food security and food supply and has developed a wide array of plans and programmes focused on the security and sustainability of food supply for nationals and expatriates.

Even as most sectors witnessed a slowdown after the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, agriculture and fisheries showed significant combined growth of 9.8 per cent to reach RO 571 million by the end of September 2020. Support for innovative government-backed dairy products, red meat and poultry projects continue to boost production and provide investment opportunities, while niche segments such as organic farming need more robust regulation. Food production from agricultural, fisheries and animal sectors increased from 1.7 million tonnes in 2011 to 3.9 million tonnes in 2019. As a result, the total contribution of agriculture

and fisheries sectors in the total food consumption amounted to 53 per cent in 2019 compared to 36 per cent in 2011. A number of new programmes were launched to capitalise on the potential of individuals and households, engage them in the development process and empower and enable them to become productive and self-dependent. These programmes sought to turn social security households into self-dependent ones; invest in their capabilities, and support them at administrative, technical, and financial levels in the management of SMEs. According to the Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy towards

2040, the combination of priority policy reforms and targeted investments is intended to create a more conducive framework and enhance the quality of public service delivery. "This should, in turn, enable the more active participation of private investors while ensuring long-term sustainability", it says. The strategy aims to increase water productivity and the overall value of the country's production by growing high-value crops, introducing the widespread adoption of good agricultural practices, minimising losses and adding value through packaging and processing, differentiation, branding, etc. The Sultanate of Oman is forging ahead with development

plans in all segments to open up new pathways to growth. Investment priorities include establishing post-harvest infrastructure in key production areas like Al Batinah and supporting farmers to supply these facilities with the required quality standards. The Sultanate of Oman is striving to maintain its agricultural acreage to preserve agricultural lands and allow workers in the farming sector to settle down in their villages. They contribute to the sustainability of this sector, promote its productivity and play a role in achieving food security, and protect the Omani environment from change and deterioration. The strategy also aims to add

value to livestock production and reduce its numbers to sustainable levels without compromising the environment. Investment priorities include establishing milk collection systems in order to strengthen the raw material base of the national dairy industry; providing animal health (e.g., diagnostic labs) and cold chain infrastructure (e.g., abattoirs for poultry cooperatives, refrigeration trucks); and rehabilitating rangelands in the Salalah area. In the same vein, the Government is currently executing construction projects of protection walls for farms located on the banks of wadis to prevent their deterioration due to precipitation and wadi floodwaters.



# Pacts on service projects inked in Al Dakhiliyah



**NIZWA:** A number of agreements were signed on Sunday in the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah to implement a package of municipal and developmental service projects.

The move comes as part of the efforts exerted by Al Dakhiliyah Governor's Office to develop and improve municipal services in the wilayats of the governorate.

The agreements, worth over RO 1.8 million, were

signed by Shaikh Hilal bin Said al Hajri, Governor of Al Dakhiliyah with a number of companies.

The agreements included a number of projects, namely the development of commercial areas in Al Madra area in the Wilayat of Samayil, Al Alam area in the Wilayat of Izki, and the renovation of Birkat Al Mouz Park in the Wilayat of Nizwa, in addition to other agreements. — ONA

# ROHM kicks off 2022 with 2 concerts starring Saber Rebai



**MUSCAT:** The Royal Opera House Muscat announced that it will kick off its awaited 2022 season with two concerts on January 6 and 7 starring famous pan Arab singer, composer and violinist Saber Rebai.

Born of Yemeni parents from the region of Hadramut, long celebrated for its rich artistic heritage, Saber Rebai

grew up in Tunisia and started his music career at the young age of 17.

With a voice of tremendous range, Saber Rebai's talent was recognised by great artists and he continues to be hailed as a major voice on the music stage of the Arab world. Rebai's songs are considered distinctive and his repertoire richly diverse. A critic aptly remarked, "His songs take us back to the golden age of the original art of Arab music, he is a star".

Rebai will perform a programme of his best loved songs, accompanied by an orchestra in a show which is designed to stir the senses and enrich the souls of the audiences of loyal and newly inspired fans.

# Wadi Afoul bridge to ease traffic, boost development in Dhofar

**RAKHYOUT:** The Wadi Afoul bridge in the Wilayat of Rakhyout in Dhofar Governorate, the financial allocation of which was approved by the Tender Board recently, will ease vehicular movement between Salalah and the wilayats of Rakhyout and Dhalkout and boost economic activities.

In comments to ONA, Shaikh Issa bin Ahmed al Maashani, Wali of Rakhyout, said the bridge project is among the projects that have recently been approved by the Tender Board and constitutes a shift in terms of services and development aspects.

The bridge will play a significant role in solving the issue of road block and traffic and disruption of traffic movement to the west of Dhofar Governorate



during wadi overflowing and the international road linking the Sultanate of Oman and Yemen, the wali said.

Engineer Yousef bin Salim al Mashaikhi, representative

of the Wilayat of Rakhyout at Majlis Ash'shura, said that the announcement of the bridge project was good news to the residents of the wilayats of Rakhyout and Dhalkout.

The implantation of Wadi Afoul bridge has a great importance in terms of future development and services in the west of Dhofar Governorate.

— ONA

**Sultanate of Oman**  
**The Council of Administrative Affairs for the Judiciary**  
**Tender Announcement**

The Administrative Affairs Council of the Judiciary announces its desire to re-submit the following tender:

| Tender No | Tender Title                                                                                                                              | Tender Document Sales End Date | Bid Submission Closing | Vendor Grade                                    | Tender Document Fee |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 11/2021   | Maintenance and agriculture services for buildings belong to the council of administrative affairs for the judiciary for the year of 2022 | 23/1/2022                      | 14/02/2022             | Excellent<br>First<br>Second<br>Third<br>Fourth | RO. 25/-            |

Where you can buy the tender documents electronically via the link below website :  
(<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)

Bidders shall submit their bids electronically via the aforementioned website. An electronic bank guarantee certified by one of the banks operating in the country shall be delivered at a rate of (1%) of the bid value with each bid, valid for a period of (90) days from the date of submission of bids and addressed in the name of the Chairman of the Internal Committee of Tenders in the Council of Administrative Affairs for the Judiciary, based on directives from the General Secretariat of the Tender Board, and the latest updates to the electronic tender system.

**1- For inquiries and clarifications on the tender:**  
Submit inquiries related to the project electronically through the website of the electronic tender system (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).

**2- For inquiries and clarifications on the electronic bidding system:**  
Submit inquiries regarding technical support for the electronic bidding system via e-mail and the phone number shown below:

Phone: +968 24402200  
Email: [etenderhd@ita.gov.om](mailto:etenderhd@ita.gov.om)

**MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY**  
**Advertisement No. (1/2022)**

Specialized Companies in the field of tender shown below and registered with **Tender Board**, may obtain tender documents from the website through the following link: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) against non-refundable fees until the end of deadline stipulated below.

| Tender No. | E- Tender No.  | Description of Tender                                                                       | Tender Fee | Last Date to Collect the Tender | Tender Return Date | Grade       |
|------------|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| PRE/21/062 | 2021/MM/ QS-30 | Supply & Fixing Kiosk in Wilayat A'Seeb ( Re Call ) ( E- Tender )                           | Rial 25    | 22/01/2022                      | 13/02/2022         | Specialized |
| PRE/21/092 | 2021/MM/ QS-32 | Supply of Spare Parts for Road Marking Machines ( Re Call ) ( E- Tender )                   | Rial 25    | 22/01/2022                      | 13/02/2022         | Specialized |
| PRE/21/095 | 2021/MM/ QS-34 | Supply of Granit Walls for Mutrah Corniche ( Re Call ) ( E- Tender )                        | Rial 25    | 13/01/2022                      | 26/01/2022         | Excellent   |
| PRE/18/102 | 2022/MM/ HQ-1  | Construction of Dualization of Halban Street ( Phase 1 ) ( E- Tender )                      | Rial 290   | 22/01/2022                      | 13/02/2022         | Excellent   |
| PRE/21/070 | 2022/MM/ HQ-2  | Construction of Link Road between Al Amerat Road and AL Joud Road ( Phase 1 ) ( E- Tender ) | Rial 290   | 22/01/2022                      | 13/02/2022         | Excellent   |

**Tender Conditions :-**

- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically accompanied with an electronic copy of abond 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 E-Bond and to be submitted through E-Tendering system, addressed to Muscat Municipality.
- 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@mtcit.gov.om](mailto:etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om)) or call (+968 24402200).
- For technical support of E-Bond through e-tendering system please send an email to ([esnad@gstb.gov.om](mailto:esnad@gstb.gov.om)) or call (+968 24402200 / 24402330).

## Over 62,000 SMEs registered till November 2021

**MUSCAT:** The total number of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) registered in the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development till the end of November 2021 increased by 30.4 per cent to reach 62,335 compared to 47,802 in November 2020, according to the data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Among the governorates, the Governorate of Muscat topped the list by reaching 21,068 enterprises, comprising a rise by 31.5 per cent, followed by the Governorate of North Al Batinah with 9,830, comprising an increase by 30.4 per cent, the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah with 7,604, going up 25.9 per cent and the Governorate of Dhofar by 5,318, constituting a surge by 33.7 per cent compared to the same period in 2020.

The total number of SMEs registered by the end of November 2021 recorded an increase in the Governorate of South Al Batinah by 33.1 per cent to reach 4,742, the governorate of North Al Sharqiya by 27.9 per cent to reach 4,110, the Governorate of South Al Sharqiya by 32.2 per cent to reach 3,738, the Governorate of Al Dhahirah by 24 per cent to reach 3,454, the Governorate of Al Buraimi by 28.9 per cent to reach 1,321, the Governorate of Al Wusta by 33 per cent to reach 831 and the Governorate of Musandam by 73.4 per cent to reach 319. — ONA

**NOTICE**  
We would like to inform that Mr. Alaaeldin Mohamed Mohamed Ahmed Attia, Egyptian National, holder of passport number (A04182470) and resident card number (61572323) is no longer connected with **Salalah Shipping & Marine services Company, LLC**. He is not authorized to represent the company in any matters whatsoever.

Any person dealing with him shall do at their own risk & responsibility.

**Salalah Shipping & Marine Services Company LLC**

**TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT**

Namo Institute for Competency Development, a member of Nama Group, invites the specialized companies to participate and submit their best offers for the tender below:

| Tender Number | Tender Name                                                                                       | Last Date for Collection of Tender Documents | Time & Last Date for Proposal Submission | Tender Fee (OMR)             |
|---------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| NICD/2022/01  | Provide Online Assessment Portal, Psychometric and Business Simulation Instruments for Nama Group | 9 -Jan-2022                                  | 23-Jan-2022                              | 100/- plus VAT value (5 OMR) |

- Bids shall be submitted in a single envelope and sealed with red wax addressed to the "Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee" and must write on the envelope the tender name & number.
- 3 separate envelopes shall be included inside the single sealed envelope, and each of these 3 envelopes must be marked with a tenderer name & tender no. as per the below:
  - Commercial Proposal
  - Technical Proposal
  - Bid Bond
- Bids should be dropped in the tender box at the Nama Holding reception before 02.00pm, time of the Sultanate, on Sunday, 23 January 2022.
- NICD is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other bid.
- Interested party to deposit Tender Fee (Non-Refundable) on Account Name: Namo Institute for Competency Development, Bank Muscat: 0423027651810018 Corporate Branch (Bidder Name and Tender Number to be clearly mentioned).
- The deposit at the last day of purchasing should be before 4.00pm.
- In the event of receipt of the tender document on behalf of another company, the interested purchasers in the above tender document should provide details of the person's name and the company details.

**Namo Holding**  
In Beach One Building, 3rd Floor (Units 305 & 307), Shatti Al Qurum  
P.O Box 850, Post Code 116, Sultanate of Oman.  
Phone Number: +968 24559200  
[Nawahel.aljunaibi@holding.nama.om](mailto:Nawahel.aljunaibi@holding.nama.om)  
[Sharifa.alshukailli@holding.nama.om](mailto:Sharifa.alshukailli@holding.nama.om)



# Security forces fire tear gas at protesters in Sudan

**KHARTOUM:** Security forces fired tear gas at anti-military protesters in Sudan's capital Khartoum, televised images showed, as demonstrators marched towards the presidential palace in the 12th round of major protests since a coup on October 25.

Internet and mobile services appeared to be disrupted in Sudan's capital Khartoum on Sunday ahead of planned protests against military rule, Reuters witnesses said.

All bridges directly connecting to Khartoum were also closed, one Reuters witness said.

Sunday's protests come after six people died and hundreds were injured in nationwide demonstrations against military rule on Thursday.

The death toll since the security forces' crackdown began in October is now 54, the Central Committee of Sudanese Doctors said.

The military took power in an October 25 coup that ended a power-sharing deal with civilian political forces. That deal, agreed in 2019, was supposed to pave the way for a transitional government and eventually elections following the overthrow of long-time leader Omar al Bashir.

Protests against military rule have continued even after Abdallah Hamdok was reinstated as prime minister last month.

The demonstrators have demanded the military play no role in government during a transition to free elections.

Some people managed to post



Sudanese demonstrators rally in Al Daim neighbourhood in Khartoum on Sunday. – AFP

images on social media showing protests in several other cities, including Ad-Damazin and Port Sudan.

Al Hadath TV quoted an adviser to military leader Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan as saying the military would not allow anyone to pull the country into chaos and that continued protests were a "physical, psychological, and mental drain on the country" and "would not achieve a political solution."

On recent occasions when communications have been disrupted, sources at telecom companies have told Reuters that authorities demanded providers cut

**Internet and mobile services appeared to be disrupted in Sudan's capital Khartoum on Sunday ahead of planned protests against military rule. All bridges directly connecting to Khartoum were also closed**

their services. Officials could not immediately be reached for comment on Sunday.

In a televised speech on Friday,

Burhan said disputes over power and the loss of lives meant everyone "should use the voice of reason."

"The only way to rule is by popular mandate through elections", Burhan said.

Sudan's Sovereign Council, which Burhan leads, on Friday denounced the violence that accompanied Thursday's protests, adding it had ordered authorities to take all legal and military measures to avoid a recurrence and "nobody will go unpunished".

Last week, the council reinstated powers of arrest and detention to the intelligence service.

— Reuters

## UN urges Yemen govt to allow new equipment for Sanaa airport

**DUBAI:** The United Nations has called on Yemen's internationally recognised government to allow the entry of communications equipment to the airport in the Ansar Allah-held capital Sanaa.

Yemen has been wracked by civil war since 2014, pitting the government, which is supported by a Saudi-led coalition, against the Ansar Allah fighters, who control much of the north.

Flights into the Ansar Allah-held capital have been largely halted by a Saudi-led blockade since August 2016, but there have been exemptions for aid flights that are a key lifeline for the population.

But Sanaa airport was closed for several days in December after the coalition pounded it with air strikes, accusing the Ansar Allah of using it to launch missiles and drones at Saudi Arabia.

The Ansar Allah reopened it on December 27.

"Closure of the airport to humanitarian flights severely undermines aid operations", the UN humanitarian co-ordinator for Yemen, David Gressly, said in a statement on Friday.

"I remain deeply concerned about any further disruptions."

Gressly welcomed the airport's reopening, but said communications equipment there had been found to be faulty.

"The Civil Aviation and Meteorology Authority (CAMA) in Sanaa deems the equipment obsolete," he said.

According to Gressly, "UN humanitarian flight crews have reported at least 10 instances in which they were unable to contact the air control tower... or had unclear communications".

— AFP



Displaced Yemenis receive aid donated by a Kuwaiti charitable organisation on the outskirts of the northeastern city of Ma'rib, on Saturday. – AFP

# Concern over 'critical' Palestinian prisoner on hunger strike

**TEL AVIV:** A Palestinian prisoner languishing in hospital after an extensive hunger strike teetered close to death on Sunday, sparking international concern and Palestinian demands that Israel release him from detention without charges.

Hisham Abu Hawash, a 40-year-old member of the militant movement, began refusing food in August to protest Israel holding him without charges or trial.

The married father of five from Dura in the south of the Israeli-occupied West Bank was being held under administrative detention, a practice of arresting suspects for renewable six-month terms without allowing them to view the

charges or evidence against them.

"His condition is difficult and complex," Liad Aviel, spokesman of the Shamir Medical Centre in central Israel where Abu Hawash is being held, said.

The International Committee of the Red Cross said medical teams that visited Abu Hawash had found him "in critical condition requiring expert clinical monitoring".

According to the ICRC, Abu Hawash has been refusing food for around 140 days.

It issued a statement warning of "potentially irreversible health consequences and possible tragic loss of life".

His wife, Aisha Hrebat, said on Sunday he was in a "very danger-



Izz, son of the hunger-striking Palestinian prisoner Hisham Abu Hawash, holds a sign during a protest in solidarity with him in Dura, in the Israeli occupied West Bank, on Sunday. – Reuters

ous" situation, adding that "since yesterday he can't talk at all and doesn't know what's going on around him".

"Even after he ends his strike, he will have difficult problems," she said, adding their lawyer was submitting an urgent appeal

against his detention to Israel's supreme court.

An Israeli security source described Abu Hawash as "an militant operative, who was arrested due to involvement in terror activity".

Israel says the protocol prevents crimes while authorities continue to gather evidence, though Palestinians say it denies them of their rights.

"The way Israel has used administrative detention is arbitrary," said Shawan Jabarin, head of the Al-Haq rights group based in Ramallah on the West Bank.

He said Abu Hawash was one of about 550 Palestinians held by Israel in administrative detention.

Abu Hawash's plight has ignited

Palestinian support.

Palestinian civil affairs minister Hussein al Sheikh called on Israel via Twitter to "release Abu Hawash immediately", with his appeal echoed by protesters who gathered over the weekend in Ramallah.

At a rally in Gaza, Ismail Radwan, an official with the Islamist movement Hamas that rules the enclave, said Israel must understand that prisoners constitute a "red line" for the Palestinians.

The Islamic Jihad, the second largest fighter group in Gaza, said it holds "the Israeli occupation fully responsible for the deteriorating health" of Abu Hawash, threatening revenge if he dies.

— AFP

### TEHRAN

#### Satellite launch 'legitimate' scientific research

US and French criticism of Iran's resumption of satellite launches is unwarranted, said Iran on Saturday, blasting back at its detractors.

"Iran very much- has the legitimate right to conduct scientific research, especially in the fields of aeronautics and space," Foreign Office spokesperson Saeed Khatibzadeh said on Saturday.

According to Khatibzadeh, the launch was also not a violation of UN resolutions, as claimed by the two countries. Therefore, the criticism is baseless and ineffective,



the spokesperson said, according to the ISNA news agency.

The Defence Ministry reported on Thursday that Iran had launched a Simorgh (Phoenix) missile with three research satellites into orbit at an altitude of 470 kilometres.

### RIYADH

#### Covid cases in Saudi, UAE continue to rise

Daily coronavirus cases in Saudi Arabia have climbed above 1,000 for the first time since August, while daily infections in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have crossed the 2,500-level.

Both countries confirmed their first known case of the Omicron variant in early December.

Saudi Arabia on Sunday registered 1,024 new coronavirus infections and one death. Daily cases had fallen below 100 in September.



The UAE, a tourism and commercial hub now marking its peak tourism season and hosting a world fair, announced 2,600 new coronavirus cases and three deaths.

### TEHRAN

#### Iran's Guards say 9 killed in shootout

Iran's Revolutionary Guards said they killed six "armed bandits" in a shootout in the country's southeast that also left three members of a Guards-linked paramilitary force dead.

The latest clashes in Sistan-Baluchistan broke out around a hideout of militants near a village in the centre of the province, the Guards said late on Saturday.

Sistan-Baluchistan, bordering Pakistan and Afghanistan, is a flashpoint for clashes with smuggling gangs as well as separatists



from the Baluchi minority and extremist militant groups. "Six bandits were killed and five others wounded," the Sepah News report said, while three members of the Basij, a paramilitary force linked to the Guards, also died.



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## In brief

### FRANKFURT



#### POLL SHOWS PRIVATE HOUSEHOLDS RICHER THAN EVER

Many people in Germany have saved more in the past year, meaning private households are richer than ever, according to DZ Bank.

The bank estimates that Germans' financial assets increased by more than 7 per cent in the past year, to a record high of almost 7.7 trillion euros (8.8 trillion dollars).

Official figures from the German Bundesbank are expected in the spring.

The calculations take into account cash and bank deposits, securities such as shares and funds as well as claims against insurance companies.

"The main driver of wealth accumulation was savings, which, although slightly lower, were once again extremely high by historical standards," explained DZ Bank economist Michael Stappel.

### SYDNEY



#### 85 ARRESTED AT NEW YEAR MUSIC FESTIVAL

Police arrested and charged 85 people with drug-related offences at a New Year's Day music festival in Sydney. New South Wales police said on Sunday that the arrests were the result of a high-visibility operation at Field Day 2022 targeting anti-social behaviour, alcohol-related crime and illegal drug use.

Some 11,981 people are estimated to have attended the music festival held on Saturday in Victoria Park, in central Sydney.

During the operation police seized drugs including MDMA, ketamine, mushrooms, LSD, cocaine and cannabis. The majority of those arrested were charged with drug possession while two people were charged with supply.

A 22-year-old man was allegedly found with 50 capsules of MDMA, police said, adding that the man allegedly struggled with police as he was searched causing "minor injuries" to an officer. He was charged with supplying prohibited drugs, assaulting police and resisting arrest.

### RIO DE JANEIRO



#### NEW YEAR GENERATES 50% LESS TRASH

Between the pandemic and the rainy weather, it was a muted New Year's celebration on Rio de Janeiro's famed Copacabana beach, but there was a silver lining on Saturday: 50 per cent less garbage to collect.

The iconic Brazilian beach city's sanitation service, COMLURB, said it had picked up 320 tonnes of trash from New Year's Eve celebrations, less than half the annual average of 724.2 tonnes from 2018 to 2020. That included 167 tonnes in Copacabana following a 16-minute fireworks display over the beach, down from a pre-pandemic average of 340.6 tonnes, it said. "We're going to have the beaches and seaside clean much earlier than usual," said COMLURB head Flavio Lopes, as nearly 5,000 trash collectors finished the clean-up job by 9:00 am.



Firefighters battling the fire at the Parliament building in Cape Town. — Reuters

# Fire brings down roof at South Africa parliament

CAPE TOWN: A massive fire in South Africa's houses of parliament in Cape Town caused the roof of the old National Assembly building to collapse on Sunday as the blaze continued to rage after eight hours.

No casualties have been reported in the fire, which has also spread to the wing housing the current National Assembly, where parliament sits.

"The roof of the Old Assembly building has collapsed and is gone," Jean-Pierre Smith, Cape Town's mayoral committee member for safety and security, told reporters.

The cause of the fire was not yet known, but an investigation was opened.

President Cyril Ramaphosa told reporters at the scene an arrest had been made.

"Someone has been held right now and is being questioned," he said.

The historic building houses a collection of rare books and the original copy of the former Afrikaans national anthem "Die Stem Suid-Afrika" ("The Voice of South Africa"), which was already damaged.

"The entire building has suffered extensively smoke and water damage," Smith said, adding "the fire has not been contained".

It started at around 03:00 GMT on Sunday in the parliament complex's oldest wing, which was completed in 1884 and has rooms covered in wood where parliamentarians once sat.

It then spread to newer parts of the complex which are currently in use.

"Firefighters are currently trying to control the fire in the New Wing, where the fire has affected the National Assembly Chamber," parliamentary spokesman Moloto Mothapo told an online press conference.

The imposing red and white building was still shrouded in a thick cloud of black at midday.

#### METRES FROM TUTU'S BURIAL

A team of firefighters who were first to arrive at the scene battled the flames for several hours before being forced to retreat and call for reinforcements.

Some 70 firefighters were later deployed, some using a crane to spray water on the blaze.

Former Cape Town mayor and current minister Patricia de Lille warned it would still be several hours before the fire was brought under control.

Inside the rooms, fine showers of grey ash fell from the ceiling to the floor, which was already littered with debris.

Emergency services feared the fire could spread swiftly through the old rooms, which are decorated with wood, thick carpets and curtains.

Images broadcast on television had earlier shows giant flames leaping from the roof.

The area around the fire in the

upmarket neighbourhood was quickly cordoned off.

The cordon stretched to a square where flowers were still displayed in front of the nearby St. George's Cathedral, where anti-apartheid icon Archbishop Desmond Tutu's funeral took place on Saturday.

After a simple, no-frills mass, with a cheap coffin — according to the famously modest Tutu's instructions — his ashes were interred in the cathedral on Sunday.

#### SECOND FIRE IN A YEAR

Cape Town has been home to South Africa's houses of parliament since 1910, including the National Assembly and upper house National Council of Provinces, while the government is based in Pretoria.

It was in parliament where South Africa's last apartheid president FW de Klerk declared the end of the brutal white minority regime in 1990.

The houses of parliament in Cape Town consist of three sections, with the newer additions constructed in the 1920s and 1980s. Another fire also broke out in the older wings of parliament in March, but it was quickly contained.

Cape Town suffered another major fire in April, when a blaze on the famed Table Mountain which overlooks the city spread, ravaging part of The University of Cape Town's library holding a unique collection of African archives.

## Russia says will respond after RT taken off air

BERLIN: Russia's ambassador to Germany, Sergei Nechaev, vowed that Moscow will respond to the announcement of restrictions on state broadcaster RT.

"There will certainly be a reaction from the Russian side," Nechaev said in an interview. "I'm no Oracle of Delphi, but there are different possibilities there. There are so many German journalists in Russia."

All of these journalists feel comfortable in the Russian media landscape, Nechaev said. "And we don't really want any conflict. We just want our station in Germany to have the same rights and opportunities and to be able to work in peace."

In mid-December, RT launched its channel RT DE, live and in German, via various distributors. YouTube blocked the channel on its platform after

a few hours, citing community guidelines.

Media regulators in Berlin initiated proceedings against RT the following day. As a result, the satellite operator Eutelsat stopped broadcasting RT DE shortly before Christmas.

The reason for the decision was that German regulators had not granted a broadcasting licence. RT, however, argues that it had obtained a valid Serbian broadcasting licence for the channel.

A previous attempt to obtain a licence via Luxembourg had failed.

RT is repeatedly referred to in the West as a Kremlin propaganda tool. The channel has been criticised for spreading conspiracy theories and disinformation. RT rejects these accusations. — dpa

## Masks back in British classrooms



LONDON: Children in secondary schools in England will be told to wear face coverings when they return after the Christmas holiday next week to tackle a surge in cases of the Omicron variant of Covid-19, Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi said on Sunday.

"We want to maximise the number of children in school and college for the maximum amount of time," he said in an article in the *Sunday Telegraph*.

"One of the additional, temporary measures that will help achieve this in light of the omicron surge is recommending face coverings are worn in secondary school classrooms and teaching spaces for the coming weeks — although not for longer than they are needed."

England was the only one of

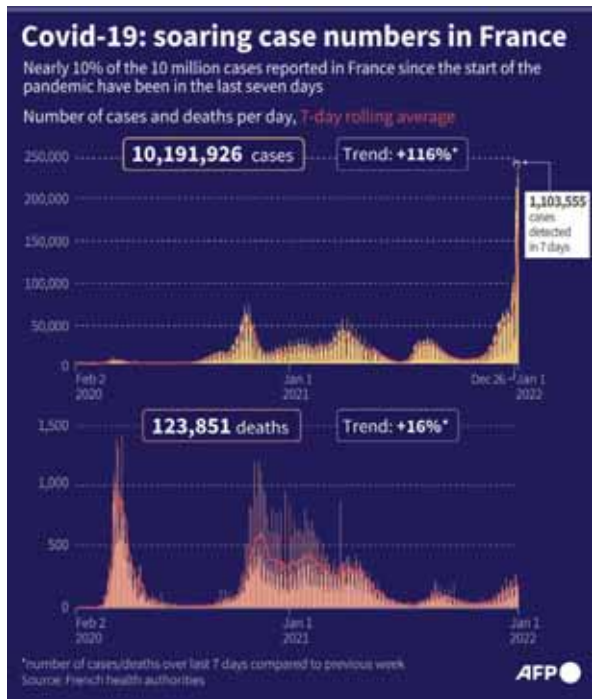
the four UK nations where face coverings were not previously recommended in the classroom.

With daily infection numbers at record highs and people who test positive required to isolate for at least seven days, schools and other public services are facing disruption from staff shortages.

The government has asked public sector managers to prepare for a worst-case scenario of 25 per cent of staff absent in the weeks ahead.

Zahawi said some remote learning would be necessary given the number of pupils and teachers who would have to self-isolate. But he added that face-to-face teaching would continue to be the expected norm and exams would go ahead as planned this month. — Reuters

## France shortens isolation for Covid cases, contacts



PARIS: France announced an easing of Covid restrictions from Monday that will enable fully vaccinated people who test positive to isolate for seven days instead of the previous 10 days. Although France is one of six countries in the world to have recorded more than 10 million cases since the pandemic began, authorities are juggling tough choices between public health and economic concerns.

Fully vaccinated people who test positive will only have to isolate for seven days regardless of the coronavirus variant they were infected

with, but can leave quarantine after five days if they show an antigen or negative PCR test.

There will be no quarantine for fully inoculated individuals who have a close contact test positive.

However, people must respect protective measures and "undergo regular testing", French Health Minister Olivier Veran said in an interview with the weekly *Le Journal du Dimanche*.

Until now, those who tested positive in France had to isolate for 10 days with their close contacts also quarantined for a week.

The maximum isolation period could be up to 17 days — regardless of the variant — if a household contains a positive case.

The change in rules responds to the need "to take into account the extremely rapid evolution of the spread of the Omicron variant in France", said a ministry of health statement.

It should allow a "benefit-risk balance aimed at ensuring the virus is controlled while maintaining socio-economic life", the statement added.

Additionally, "the first available virological data"

showed "the incubation period of Omicron appears to be faster than previous variants, favouring a possible reduction in the length of isolation".

Meanwhile, people who test positive for the virus — but who are not fully vaccinated — must complete a 10-day quarantine, according to the same rules, but shortened to seven should they present a positive antigen or negative PCR test.

The seven-day quarantine remains for close unvaccinated contacts, who must show a negative test to leave isolation. — AFP

# A year after Capitol siege, US democracy still faces test

PAUL HANDLEY

One year after supporters of Donald Trump stormed the US Capitol and shut down Congress, Americans still await a reckoning on the unprecedented challenge to the country's democracy.

Was it a simple protest-turned-riot? An insurrection? A coup attempt plotted by Trump?

Videos from January 6, 2021 bear witness to the violence wrought in the former president's name.

Attackers are seen beating security officers with iron bars and clubs. A policeman is crushed in a doorway, howling in pain.

Rioters clad in assault gear chant slogans, while the vice-president and Democratic and Republican

lawmakers flee. A woman is fatally shot in a Capitol hallway.

Americans were stunned by the hours-long assault, and so was much of the world, accustomed to seeing the United States as a model of stable democracy.

One year later, the brazen attempt to prevent Democrat Joe Biden from taking office after his victory in the November 2020 presidential election needs an accounting.

"Not even during the Civil War did insurrectionists breach our Capitol, the citadel of our democracy," Biden said in July.

"This was not dissent. It was disorder. It posed an existential crisis and a test of whether our democracy could survive."



TRUMP DEFIANT

A year later, more than 700 people involved in the January 6 attack have been charged, for assaulting law enforcement officers and breaking into and desecrating the halls of Congress.

Investigations have shown a concerted effort by Trump and his allies to prevent Pence from leading Congress in certifying Biden as the lawfully elected president.

The looming question is: how are the attack and Trump's effort linked?

A special committee of the House of Representatives is investigating, but the deeper they get, the more sensitive it becomes.

If they find evidence suggesting that Trump knowingly incited

the attack, or plotted to illegally keep power, should they risk more turmoil by seeking an unprecedented criminal prosecution of an ex-president?

For the first anniversary of the attack on Thursday, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has ordered a "solemn observance" in Congress.

Trump, who remains the most powerful figure in the Republican Party, plans his own January 6 commemoration in Palm Beach, Florida, which he says will focus on the "rigged" presidential election of 2020.

Although he has shown no evidence that the election was fraudulent, polls show that around two-thirds of Republican voters believe him. — AFP

EXPERTS SAY  
BARING THE  
TRUTHS ABOUT  
JANUARY 6 POSES  
HUGE POLITICAL  
RISKS FOR THE  
BIDEN ADMIN-  
ISTRATION. BUT  
LEAVING THEM  
BURIED IS ALSO  
DANGEROUS

## Nowhere to hide: Afghans find shelter dwindling

ELISE BLANCHARD

Married off at seven to a man old enough to be her great-grandfather, Fatema endured abuses, beatings and starvation until she could take no more and tried to kill herself.

Through tears she recalls the beatings she received — like the time, aged 10, she was flung against a wall and "my head crashed against a nail... I almost died".

Today the 22-year-old is living in one of the few shelters for battered women still open in Afghanistan since the Taliban's August return to power, but is fearful she could lose her place at any time.

If the refuge closes, Fatema will have nowhere to go. She has lost touch with her own family, while in-laws have vowed to kill her for dishonouring their name.

Fatema's plight is shared by millions in Afghanistan, where patriarchal tradition, poverty and a lack of education have held back women's rights for decades.

According to the United Nations, 87 per cent of Afghan women have experienced some form of physical or psychological violence.

Despite this, the country of 38 million had only 24 shelters dedicated to their care before the Taliban's return — almost all financed by the international community and frowned upon by many locals.

Some NGOs running shelters stepped up their work long before the Taliban takeover.

The director of one organisation said she began moving women away from shelters in unstable provinces in advance of the US troop withdrawal.

Some were sent back to their blood relatives in the hope they would be offered protection from vengeful in-laws. Others were sent to shelters in bigger provincial capitals.

As the Taliban onslaught continued the situation became desperate, and around 100 women were transferred to Kabul — only for the capital to fall.

"We have to start from scratch," says the director, who asked not to be named or the organisation identified while they navigated how to operate under the new regime.

The Taliban insist they provide women with rights and protection, but the reality is very different and they are slowly being squeezed out of public life. Most secondary schools for girls are shut, women are barred from government employment apart from select specialised areas, and this week new guidelines stated they cannot undertake long journeys unless accompanied by a male relative.

— AFP

## Healthy mind, happy life



Hyesha Barrett  
@CoachHyesha

Hyesha Barrett is a certified Life Coach and NLP Practitioner based in Muscat

WHEN WE FOCUS  
ON OUR MENTAL,  
PHYSICAL AND  
EMOTIONAL  
HEALTH THIS WILL  
AUTOMATICALLY  
CREATE A MUCH  
MORE WELL-  
ROUNDED  
BALANCED, HAPPY  
HUMAN BEING

There is no better time than today to shine a light on our mental health. It used to be a taboo topic with so much stigma surrounding it and most people would not dare explore the subject — through fear of being judged, criticised or even worse, chastised.

The term mental health refers to an individual's emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Just as taking care of our physical health makes us feel fit and strong, the same applies to our mental health. We can feel uninspired, lethargic, demotivated and if not taken care of, this can easily lead to depression or varying disorders — bipolar, anxiety or post-traumatic stress and an overall feeling of "wanting to give up".

It is crucial to understand that when you are feeling any of the negative emotions such as stressed, overwhelmed or anxious, the best solution is to welcome them, acknowledge them and listen to them. Our automatic response is to push them aside, thinking that ignoring them will make things better but being in denial will not make them go away. Rather the opposite, your worries will come out in other ways, such as stomach problems, eczema, headaches etc

Coming from this angle you will be on top of your emotions rather than them being on top of you.

Here are 10 tips on how to take care of your mental health:

1 Speak up and get help: the more you open up, the more you will realise you are not alone in feeling this way.

2 Be physically active: the ties between physical and mental health are frequently highlighted, and taking care of one helps to maintain the other.

3 Get out into nature: soak in the vitamin D enriched sunrays and walk bare foot on the grass or in the sand — this will ground your body with the earth's energies and revitalise you. Research has proven that bacteria in soil and sand trigger our bodies to make serotonin, the happy hormone which calms us and makes us feel good: nature's perfect antidepressant recipe.

4 Practice self-love and self-care: do things that you enjoy doing, not what others want you to do.

5 Stay connected: we are social creatures who thrive on community. When we are surrounded by people who understand us, there is sense of belonging and we feel happier.

6 Eat healthy brain stimulating foods: cut out sugars and anything that has been processed.

7 Practice mindfulness: as well as decreasing stress, practicing meditation (even sitting still for a few minutes and deep breathing) improves one's mental health and overall well-being.

8 Do something new: we all love our routines but this can get boring. Make sure to add some novelty to your day.

9 Hydrate and get enough sleep: dehydration affects your cognitive abilities and those who suffer from mental health conditions may find it impacts their sleep patterns.

10 Limit social media: the comparison game will only make you feel worse about yourself.

When we focus on our mental, physical and emotional health this will automatically create a much more well-rounded balanced, happy human being.

Even though the subject of mental health is still a bit sensitive, gone are the days of feeling the need to appear "having it all together". We have entered a new age where being vulnerable and talking about our feelings is considered strong.

So let's be that beacon of light and strength for others to follow. Here's to a happier, healthier and stronger you!

### RARE DEFECTION TO NORTH KOREA



An unidentified person entered North Korea after crossing the heavily guarded border with the South, military officials in Seoul said on Sunday. South Korea's military said the person was seen walking through the 4-kilometre-wide Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) which separates the two countries on Saturday night. North Korea was notified of the border incident through a military communication line, Seoul said. South Korean authorities later reviewed security footage and saw that the person broke through the barbed-wire fence to enter the buffer zone at around 6:40 pm (0940 GMT) on Saturday, Yonhap news agency reported citing an unnamed Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) official. The review indicated that authorities only detected the breach nearly three hours after it happened. — dpa

Recognition for extraordinary contributions

MICHAEL HOLDEN

Britain recognised the scientists and medical chiefs at the forefront of the battle against Covid-19 in Queen Elizabeth's annual New Year's honours list, while James Bond actor Daniel Craig was given the same award as his famous onscreen character.

Craig, who bowed out from playing the fictional British spy after five outings following the release of "No Time to Die" this year, was made a Companion in The Order of St Michael and St George (CMG) in recognition of his outstanding contribution to film.

Bond was also a CMG, so the honour means Craig has now matched all his titles, having been made an honorary Commander in the Royal Navy in September.

There were also major honours for the high-profile officials and others involved in tackling the coronavirus pandemic.

The chief medical officers for England, Scotland and Wales — Chris Whitty, Gregor Smith and Frank Atherton — were given knight-hoods. There were also honours for the deputy medical officers for England, with Jonathan Van-Tam knighted and Jenny Harries made a dame.

The government's chief scientific adviser Patrick Vallance, who had previously been knighted, was made a Knight Commander Of The Order Of The Bath.

There were also awards for those involved in producing vaccines including Pfizer Chief Development Officer Rod MacKenzie, Sean Marett, the chief business and commercial officer at BioNTech, and Melanie Ivarsson, the chief development officer at Moderna.

Cyclist Jason Kenny, who achieved his seventh gold medal at the Tokyo Olympic Games, more than any other Briton has won, was also knighted. His wife Laura, who is the nation's most successful female Olympic athlete and became the first to win gold at three successive Games, received a damehood. Among the 78 Olympian and Paralympians to be included in the list were gold medal winners swimmer Adam Peaty and diver Tom Daley, who received OBEs. — Reuters

THERE WERE ALSO AWARDS FOR THOSE INVOLVED IN PRODUCING VACCINES INCLUDING PFIZER CHIEF DEVELOPMENT OFFICER ROD MACKENZIE, SEAN MARETT, THE CHIEF BUSINESS AND COMMERCIAL OFFICER AT BIONTECH, AND MELANIE IVARSSON, THE CHIEF DEVELOPMENT OFFICER AT MODERNA



FRANCE TAKES OVER EU PRESIDENCY

French authorities took down a temporary installation of the European Union flag from the Arc de Triomphe monument in Paris on Sunday, after rightwing opponents of President Emmanuel Macron accused him of "erasing" French identity. The giant blue flag was raised in place of a French flag on New Year's Eve to mark France's turn at the rotating presidency of the EU Council, which it will hold for the next six months. — AFP

No winter lasts forever



Abdulaziz Al Jahdhami aljahdhami22@gmail.com

NOBODY KNOWS WHAT NEW CHALLENGE OR OBSTACLE COMES THE NEXT DAY, BUT WE ALWAYS HAVE TWO OPTIONS, EITHER TO TAKE CONTROL OR TO FOLD UNDER PRESSURE

The year 2021 has bid farewell, announcing the start of a new chapter in the book of 2022. As the American Author and journalist, Hall Borland, said, "No winter lasts forever; no spring skips its turn". Everything in life is temporary and nothing lasts and so are years, transiting one after another. They bring different experiences, challenges and opportunities in various forms throughout their days.

In 2022, it is the time to decide what to note down or stamp on the blank pages of this book. This is another chance given to make things even better than the past year. Hence, people are differently observing this new book of life; each has certain ideas, plans and dreams that are planned for the 365 days of opportunities throughout the 12-month journey. But, one has to remember that life is about accepting challenges, choosing to keep moving and enjoying the journey.

People represent a product of their past, but one should not be a prisoner of it and stick to what no longer exists. Therefore, as we welcome a new year, it is time to say goodbye to the past and say hello to the new opportunities. Probably, it could be hard, but one has to let go all unpleasant experiences, challenges

and disappointments or failures. In fact, every moment gives a new beginning and a new ending, so everyone literally gets a second chance everyday!

Similarly, every time it rains, it stops raining and everything that goes up comes down. After darkness, there is always light; we are recall this every morning, but somehow we do not see it. Nobody knows what new challenge or obstacle comes the next day, but we always have two options, either to take control or to fold under pressure. It is not always about what happens to us, rather how we choose to handle the storms. In fact, the strongest people do not quit, but they simply grab their umbrellas and keep moving forward.

Khalil Gibran, a Lebanese poet and writer, said, "Out of suffering have emerged the strongest souls; the most massive characters are seared with scars." In view of that, when challenges bring you down, do not give up; stand strong like the tree, which stays strong no matter how heavy the thunder is or how strong the wind blows. Trials and challenges are part of life, so do not be demotivated; be courageous, focused and persistent. Every time you stand stronger, God will

uplift you and make you stronger than ever before.

As life is hard and takes work, achieving your dreams and objectives takes work and requires sacrifices too. It is attributed that our most beautiful dreams are born from our most unpleasant nightmares. Our spirit, sometimes, gets weak when we act in fear and lose hope while chasing our dreams. However, we get stronger as we believe in hope and have faith to meet and conquer the challenges we face. Achieving dreams and objectives is never an easy mission.

Nobody has not experienced failure in life, but failure offers a natural checkpoint on your journey, so it allows you to evaluate your way and principles of making improvements. When you fail, you get the chance to review your decisions and behaviours. Such a review can bring important details, which you possibly missed the first time, so you can take a better approach the next time. Then, no matter how hard or impossible it is, never lose the sight of your dreams. Every morning is a symbol of rebirth of life. Take a deep breath, open the door to the future and start a brand new chapter in your life.

The long decline: Mass migration batters Balkans

DARKO DURIDANSKI & LAJLA VESELICA

Abandoned shops and mostly empty streets offer few signs of life in North Macedonia's Valandovo, where young people are fleeing in large numbers hoping to find a better life abroad.

Like much of this corner of southeastern Europe, this tiny Balkan nation is sitting on a demographic time bomb fuelled by an ageing population, sinking birth rate and mass migration.

North Macedonia has shed 10 per cent of its population in the last 20 years. Around 600,000 Macedonian citizens now live abroad, according to World Bank and government data.

Abysmal economic growth and a lack of investment have clobbered the country, now home to just 1.8 million people, in its 30



Customers sitting at a cafe terrace in Valandovo. — AFP

years of independence.

"If you have a little over 2.4 million citizens and more than a quarter have left, then you have to seriously be worried about what is happening," says Apostol Simovski, Director of the

Country's Statistics Office.

Villages and small towns such as Valandovo, 146 kilometres from the capital, offer few jobs, pushing the ambitious and able to search elsewhere.

"The spirit of young people has

been systematically destroyed," Pero Kostadinov, the newly elected 33-year-old mayor said. "The enthusiasm to fight and stay home has been lost."

In Valandovo alone, nearly 90 per cent of people's income is linked to agriculture, a common denominator across North Macedonia.

"Five of my friends from our class of 20 students have already moved abroad with their families," said Bojan Nikolov, 24, a member of the youth municipal council in Valandovo.

The anecdote offers a stark picture of where the country's future is headed.

'BETTER TO WORK ABROAD'

Initial results from North Macedonia's most recent census conducted in September estimate

that the population has declined by more than 200,000 since 2002.

Since independence and the dissolution of Yugoslavia in 1991, many hoped integration into the European Union would provide a life raft and promises of a brighter future.

But North Macedonia's path to EU membership has been repeatedly blocked, first by Greece and later Bulgaria, ushering in fresh doubts that the country will ever join and pushing many to jump ship.

For those who stay, monthly salaries average 470 euros (\$530).

"It is better to be a abroad for 2,000 euros in some foreign country, than to be a struggle with 300 euros at home," goes a popular refrain in North Macedonia.

It is a picture replicated across the Balkans. — AFP

NORTH MACEDONIA HAS SHED 10 PER CENT OF ITS POPULATION IN THE LAST 20 YEARS. AROUND 600,000 MACEDONIAN CITIZENS NOW LIVE ABROAD

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# sport

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## RC Horse “Fakhr” scores first place in Dubai

**DUBAI:** The horse “Fakhr” of the Royal Cavalry (RC) won first place in the second half competitions at Meydan Racecourse in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The winning horse, in the 1,400-metre race of the purebred Arabian horse category, was led by the jockey Antonio Friso and trained by coach Ibrahim al Hadhrami. Moreover, the victory is a first-of-a-kind for the RC in Dubai’s Meydan Racecourse for purebred Arabian horses. — **ONA**

# Dhofar face Al Suwaiq in top draw HM Cup quarterfinal clash

ADIL AL BALUSHI  
MUSCAT, JAN 2

Record tenth times winner, Dhofar, will meet Al Suwaiq in a crucial fixture at the quarterfinal of 2021/2022 HM football Cup. Both teams met in the final match of the previous edition and Dhofar were crowned as champions after defeating Al Suwaiq 5-1.

The draw of the coveted cup took place on Sunday at Al Seeb Stadium and unveiled for another top clash between Fanja and Al Nasr. Al Seeb will meet Sur in another tight encounter while Al Rustaq will face Nizwa in the same round.

From last-eight round onwards, first and second leg matches will be held which will give better chances for teams in case if defeat happens in the first game. The home matches will be held on January 19 and 20 while away games will be scheduled on February 10 and 11.

**DIFFERENT SHOW**

The Northern Al Batinah team, Al Suwaiq, will look this time for different show in order to clinch the fourth title this season after their last cup in 2016/2017. On the other hand, Dhofar players will try to rekindle their best memories of the last season and eye chasing records and claiming



On the other hand, Dhofar players will try to rekindle their best memories of the last season and eye chasing records and claiming their 11th title in history

their 11th title in history.

The only first division league representative, Sur, will try to defeat Al Seeb and move further in the prestigious competition while Al Seeb team will not miss the golden opportunity to continue in their best show this

season and compete in both domestic competitions including league and cup championships.

Both teams including Al Rustaq and Nizwa have a historic chance to reach into semis for first time and get inch closer to the coveted cup. After an absence

of seven years from their last title in 2014, Fanja will target to win Al Nasr and get closer to the title but Salalah representatives will work hard to return into triumphs loop as the team crowned the HM Cup champion for five times and last cup was in 2018.

Mohammed Ahmed al Amri, General Manager of Sporting activities at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth was the chief guest of the draw in presence of OFA officials.

# Messi and three others test positive for COVID-19

**PARIS:** Paris St Germain forward Lionel Messi and three other players have tested positive for Covid-19, the French Ligue 1 club said on Sunday.

Argentina international Messi joined PSG from boyhood club Barcelona in August and the 34-year-old has scored six goals in 16 games in all competitions for the Parisian side.

Defender Juan Bernat, back-up goalkeeper Sergio Rico and midfielder Nathan Bitumazala were the other players who returned positive tests. PSG said the four players were in isolation and subject to the appropriate health protocols.

Mauricio Pochettino’s team are top of the Ligue 1 standings on 46 points after 19 matches, 13 points above second-placed Nice. They are due to travel to third-tier club Vannes on Monday for a French Cup round-of-32 match.

Pochettino said he was unsure if Messi, who is currently in Argentina, would feature in their next league game, at Olympique Lyonnais on January 9.

“Messi has been in regular contact with our medical team and when he has a negative test, he will travel to France but we don’t know any more than that. I don’t know if he will be involved against Lyon.

“Until he gets a negative test in



Argentina, he will not be able to travel to France. So it is all down to the test in terms of when he can travel... we will assess when he is ready to play.”

France reported 219,126 new confirmed Covid-19 cases in a 24-hour period on Saturday, the fourth day in a row that the country has recorded more than 200,000 cases.

France has joined the United States, India, Brazil, Britain and Russia in having had more than 10 million cases.

PSG also said that Brazil forward Neymar, who is out with an ankle injury, was about three weeks away from returning to training. — **Reuters**

# Novice Joy inspires Bangladesh as NZ toil

MOUNT MAUNGANUI, NZ: An unbeaten 70 by Mahmudul Hasan Joy, backed by 64 from Najman Hossain Shanto, put Bangladesh in a strong position at stumps on day two of the first Test against New Zealand at Mount Maunganui on Sunday.

The tourists were 175 for two at the close of play, trailing New Zealand by 153 with eight wickets in hand and the pitch playing true.

It was only the third innings in Tests for the 21-year-old Joy, who was dismissed for nought and six in his one previous outing against Pakistan last month.

But he played with plenty of maturity on a day that belonged to the tourists, facing 211 deliveries for his unbeaten 70 and forging a 104-run partnership with 23-year-old Shanto which impressed New Zealand's only successful bowler Neil Wagner.

"The younger guys that played today played phenomenally," Wagner said. "They played quite patiently, they didn't give many opportunities and they sort of hung in there.

"When the ball was there to score, they scored and when we looked like trying to get them out they left well and defended well."

But Wagner said the Test outcome was still far from clear with three days remaining.

"There's still a lot of cricket left and that's the beauty of Test cricket going five days.

"The wicket might take turn but also create opportunities later down the track if those cracks do come into play."

| SCOREBOARD                                                                                                                  |            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>New Zealand first innings (0/n: 258-5):</b>                                                                              |            |
| T Latham c Liton b Shoriful.....                                                                                            | 1          |
| W Young (run out).....                                                                                                      | 52         |
| D Conway c Liton b Mominul.....                                                                                             | 122        |
| R Taylor c Shadman b Shoriful.....                                                                                          | 31         |
| H Nicholls c Shadman b Mominul.....                                                                                         | 75         |
| T Blundell b Ebadot.....                                                                                                    | 11         |
| R Ravindra c Shadman b Shoriful.....                                                                                        | 4          |
| K Jamieson c Shadman b Mehidy.....                                                                                          | 6          |
| T Southee c Mominul b Mehidy.....                                                                                           | 6          |
| N Wagner c Das b Mehidy.....                                                                                                | 0          |
| T Boult (not out).....                                                                                                      | 9          |
| Extras (B-1, LB-4, W-3, NB-3).....                                                                                          | 9          |
| <b>Total (all out, 108.1 overs).....</b>                                                                                    | <b>328</b> |
| <b>Fall of wickets:</b> 1-1, 2-139, 3-189, 4-227, 5-258, 6-265, 7-297, 8-316, 9-316                                         |            |
| <b>Bowling:</b> Taskin 26-7-77-0, Shoriful 26-7-69-3, Ebadot 18-3-75-1, Mehidy 32-9-86-3, Shanto 20-10-0, Mominul 4.1-0-6-2 |            |
| <b>Bangladesh first innings</b>                                                                                             |            |
| S Islam c and b Wagner.....                                                                                                 | 22         |
| M Hasan Joy (not out).....                                                                                                  | 70         |
| N Hossain Shanto c Young b Wagner.....                                                                                      | 64         |
| M Haque (not out).....                                                                                                      | 8          |
| Extras (LB-4, W-2, pen-5).....                                                                                              | 11         |
| <b>Total (for 2 wkts, 67 overs).....</b>                                                                                    | <b>175</b> |
| <b>Fall of wickets:</b> 1-43, 2-147                                                                                         |            |
| <b>Bowling:</b> Southee 15-2-41-0, Boult 14-5-37-0, Jamieson 13-4-35-0, Wagner 16-5-27-2, Ravindra 9-1-26-0                 |            |

New Zealand resumed the second morning at 258 for five and were all out before lunch for 328, their lowest score on a home wicket in nine Tests against Bangladesh.

Bangladesh then enjoyed ideal batting conditions as they made a solid reply.

## FREE-FLOWING SHOTS

They survived several near misses early in a test of concentration, but what began as a fight to survive gave way to an abundance of free-flowing shots by Shanto and Joy.

They put on 104 for the second wicket with Shanto bringing up his 50 with a huge six over the long-leg boundary.

He then played an audacious one-day stroke when he stepped away from a short Neil Wagner delivery, exposing all three stumps, and guided the ball past the close-catching cordon for four.

Wagner proved the most dangerous of the New Zealand bowlers and claimed the wicket of opener Shadman Islam for 22 with a diving catch after a low full toss was

chipped back.

He then saw off Shanto with a succession of short deliveries before pitching up an outswinger which the batsman edged to Will Young in the gully.

He had struck Shanto on the body with his first ball to the new batsman and, when Joy was on 20, was frustrated by having an appeal for lbw turned down.

New Zealand decided not to review and ball-tracking technology indicated the ball would have hit the stumps.

New Zealand, having made a promising start to be 139 for one on day one, fell apart on the second morning to be all out for 328 with only last man out Henry Nicholls (75) showing any resistance as the Bangladesh spinners did the damage. Mehidy Hasan took three for three in the space of 21 deliveries while Mominul, a part-time spinner, removed Nicholls to go with the dismissal of Conway to lift his total career scalps to six in 48 Tests.

— AFP



Bangladesh's batsman Mahmudul Hasan Joy plays a shot on day two of the first Test against New Zealand. — AFP

# Ghazanfar shines in thrilling victory for Ghubrah; Ruwi, Bousher win

MUSCAT: Oman veteran Ghazanfar Iqbal was at his six-hitting best when he helped Ghubrah Giants to a sensational 4-wicket win over Amerat Royals in a D20 Cricket League game at Oman Cricket Turf 1 in Al Amerat on Saturday.

Prathik Athavale's 91 off 63 and Rafi Ullah's belligerent 26 off 8 including 3 massive sixes, were the highlights of Amerat's 180 for 6. Ghazanfar and Akshay Jathar claimed two wickets each.

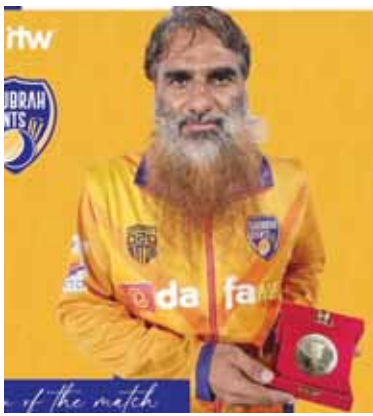
Opening the innings, Ghazanfar worked up his old magic by smashing 78 off only 47 balls, including 7 fours and 5 sixes, paving the way for Ghubrah's successful chase in 19.3 overs as it reached 183 for 6. Haroon Khan chipped in with a fluent 32. Prasad Sankata bagged 3 for 30.

**Brief Scores (D20):** Amerat Royals 180 for 6 in 20 overs (Pratik Athavale 91 – 12x4, 1x6, Rafi Ullah 26 – 1x4, 3x6. Ghazanfar Iqbal 2-30, Akshay Jathar 2-49) lost to Ghubrah Giants 183 for 6 in 19.3 overs (Ghazanfar Iqbal 78 – 7x4, 5x6, Haroon Khan 32 – 2x4, 2x6. Prasad Sankata 3-30) by 4 wickets.

## GUSTAV, MOHIT HELP RUWI TO VICTORY

Earlier, in the day's second game at the same venue, Ruwi Rangers rode on Gustav Burger's fluent 44 and Mohit Patel's superb 3 for 10 to beat Darsait Titans by 48 runs.

Apart from Burger, Naseem



Ghazanfar Iqbal of Ghubrah



Gustav Burger



Asif Khan

Khushi was the other main scorer with a whirlwind 23 off 10 including 2 fours and 2 sixes as Ruwi scored 147 all out in 19.4 overs. Ubaid Ullah and Khawar Ali picked up three and two wickets respectively.

Darsait failed to make a match of it, folding up for a dismal 99 in the final over. Nester Dhamba top scored with 25. Sanuth Ebrahim and Imran Ali lent Mohit excellent support by taking two wickets each.

**Brief Scores (D20):** Ruwi Rangers 147 all out in 19.4 overs (Gustav Burger 44 – 1x4, 3x6, Naseem Khushi 23 – 2x4, 2x6. Ubaid Ullah 3-27, Khawar Ali 2-31) defeated Darsait Titans 99 all out in 19.3 overs (Nester Dhamba 25 – 3x4, Mohitdhirubhai Patel 3-10, Sanuth Ebrahim 2-21, Imran Ali 2-0) by 48 runs.

## ASIF STARS IN BOUSHER WIN

Asif Khan's all-round contribution helped Bousher Busters to a 3-wicket victory against Khuwair Warriors in Saturday's first D20 match that was reduced to 15 overs due to rain. Amir Kaleem once again top scored for Khuwair, scoring 50 off 30 including 4 sixes as his side limped to 102 for 8. Ajay Lalcheta and Bilal Muhammed claimed two wickets each whereas Asif took one.

Bousher surpassed the modest total off the last ball, scoring 103 for 7 for a nail-biting win. Asif led the tense chase with a vital

34. Amir Kaleem was the pick of Khuwair bowlers, taking 3 for 11 while Rubel Sattar and Arjun Suresh bagged two wickets each.

**Brief Scores (D20):** Khuwair Warriors 102 for 8 in 15 overs (Amir Kaleem 50 – 1x4, 4x6, Ajay Lalcheta 2-14, Bilal Muhammed 2-9, Asif Khan 1-12) lost to Bousher Busters 103 for 7 in 15 overs (Asif Khan 34 – 1x4, 2x6, Aamir Kaleem 3-11, Rubel Sattar 2-16, Arjun Suresh 2-18) by 3 wickets.

## GURU BOWLS SARCO TO BIG WIN

Guru Kotian's magnificent 6 for 29 powered Sarco to a thumping 134-run victory against Orient Travels in a 50-over A Division League game at OC Turf 2 in Al Amerat on Friday. Sarco exhibited its batting prowess by posting 251 for 8 on the board in the stipulated 46 overs, Ajay Menon (59) and Sathisha Achary (42) being its main batters. Ibrar Hussain picked up 3 for 35. Orient Travels failed to stand up to Guru's devastating spell with the new ball and was dismissed for a lowly 117 in only 21.2 overs. Sandip Patel was the other standout bowler, taking 3 for 28.

**Brief Scores (A Division):** Sarco 251 for 8 in 46 overs (Ajay Menon 59 – 4x4, 2x6, Sathisha Achary 42 – 6x4, 2x6, Dileepa Srilal 33 – 3x4, Ibrar Hussain 3-35) beat Orient Travels 117 all out in 21.2 overs (Syed Mohammed 38 – 3x4, 3x6, Guru Kotian 6-29, Sandip Patel 3-28) by 134 runs.

# India can improve on first Test performance, says coach Dravid

JOHANNESBURG: India coach Rahul Dravid said on Sunday that his side had room for improvement ahead of the second Test against South Africa starting at the Wanderers Stadium on Monday.

Speaking at a pre-match press conference, Dravid sent out a clear message that there was no room for complacency following India's 113-run win in the first Test in Centurion.

Dravid praised the Indian bowlers for twice bowling out South Africa for under 200 and gave credit to the top-order batsmen for setting up the game with their batting on the first day.

"It's not very often you come to overseas conditions and get to 272 for three on the first day," he said. "We know we could probably have got more (runs). To get bowled out for 327, that's something we'd like to improve."

Dravid added that India could also have batted better in the second innings, when

they were dismissed for 174.

"It was a good Test match but there are areas where we can learn and improve because we know we are going to have to do it in this game."

India's recently-appointed coach said there was an awareness in the team that in the past that "maybe we've slipped up a little after winning a game.

We're going to work very hard because I expect South Africa to respond tomorrow."

Dravid gave credit to Virat Kohli's role as captain and said it was "just a matter of time" before Kohli started making big scores again.

"Virat has been a phenomenal leader on and off the field. I thought the team was in a really good space leading into the first Test and a lot of that was due to Virat."

Dravid said he expected a typical Wanderers pitch. "There might be something for the bowlers, as there usually is, and then for it to flatten out a bit, although it does get a little harder for batsmen towards the end. — AFP



**MOHD SIRAJ**  
Test Career  
2020-2021  
11 Tests, 8 Away  
30 wickets (Away)  
30.20 (Away Bowl Avg)

# THE INDIAN WOLF PACK



For the strength of the Pack is the Wolf, and the strength of the Wolf is the Pack

**RUDYARD KIPLING**  
*The Jungle Book*

**HARIDEV PUSHPARAJ**  
MUSCAT, JAN 2

“For the strength of the Pack is the Wolf, and the strength of the Wolf is the Pack”

Rudyard Kipling’s iconic lines from *The Jungle Book* could be the ultimate summation of the metamorphosis of India’s now venerated fast bowling attack.

And especially so, away from home where they have been on a rampage since 2018 breaching fortresses on their way to catapulting India to become the World’s No 1 Test nation.

The rise of a certain Jasprit Bumrah and his almost beast like instincts unheard and unseen in Indian fast bowling parlance for decades. The control over pace, the precision of lines and lengths, accuracy of seam positions all working in tandem as the Ahmedabad-born player transformed the character of Indian fast bowling.

Bumrah has featured in 25 Test matches for India and 23 of those Tests have been away from home. With a bowling average of 21.04 away from home and 102 of his 106 wickets coming on overseas tours, Bumrah has been nothing short of a revelation.

Barring New Zealand, where he has played only two Tests, Bumrah has been an outstanding performer in the rest of the SENA (South Africa, England, NZ, Australia) nations.

In SA, the Mumbai Indians bowler has scalped 19 wickets in four Tests so far with an average of 22.05.

He has been most impressive in Australia claiming a whopping 32 wickets in seven matches played there with an average of 21.25 troubling the Australians to no end in India’s now famous back-to-back series wins in 2018 and 2021.

Bumrah was the shining light in England too where in seven Tests he bagged 32 wickets at an average of 25.93 to maintain India’s stranglehold over the English since 2018.

In the current series in SA, Bumrah made all the difference in the second innings of the first Test as the wickets of Rassie van der Dussen, Keshav Maharaj and

Dean Elgar demonstrated.

If Bumrah is the leader of the pack, Mohammad Shami is a relentless pursuer of a batsman’s defensive fragilities and has augmented India’s pace department.

**SHAMI LENDS THE EDGE**  
Mohammad Shami, who is five years senior to Bumrah, has over the years had an up and down sort of a career but in the last couple of years has matured to become Bumrah’s most able ally.

Shami has a striking average of 19.47 in South Africa where he has played 9 Tests since 2013 and picked up 42 wickets. The Bengal bowler has been a thorn in the flesh for the Proteas.

Although, his average in other SENA nations is not that impressive, Shami’s mastery over his craft has ensured India’s fast bowling attack is ever potent.

**FURIOUS SIRAJ**  
The emergence of the young, restless and fearless Mohammad Siraj and his brilliant performance with the ball Down Under in the 2020-2021 series has completed the fast bowling pack like never before.

Siraj’s sheer hunger, enthusiasm and passion to rattle the opposition batsmen and create something out of nothing has made him a dangerous proposition.

The Hyderabad lad picked up 13 wickets in three matches with an average of 29.53 on the Australia tour where the cricketing world took notice of him.

Siraj was equally good on the England tour last year when he scalped 14 wickets in four matches with an average of 30.71 as he took India to the cusp of a series victory.

With the trio of Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammad Shami and Mohammad Siraj operating at the helm of affairs, one could safely India’s fast bowling attack is truly working like a wolf pack.

One picks up wickets and creates pressure for the opposition batsmen. The others are unrelenting as well and eventually they hunt their prey down with alacrity.

They are one for all and all for one.

**JASPRIT BUMRAH**  
Test career  
2018-2021  
25 Tests, 22 Away  
102 wickets (Away)  
21.04 (Away Bowl Avg)



**MOHD SHAMI**  
Test career  
2013-2021  
55 Tests, 38 Away  
137 wickets (Away)  
29.70 (Away Bowl Avg)





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# RO 5 billion-worth Omani non-budgetary investments planned in 2022

An aerial photograph showing a multi-lane asphalt highway that curves through a rugged, mountainous landscape. The road is dark with white dashed lane markings and solid yellow edge lines. The surrounding terrain is dry and rocky, with steep, reddish-brown hillsides. A concrete guardrail runs along the outer edge of the road. The perspective is from a high angle, looking down at the road as it winds through the valley.

# Oman Budget 2022: Key initiatives to enhance govt services

It helps develop a modern financial accounting and reporting system using a unified Chart of Accounts (CoA) and new budget classification which is in line with Government Financial Statistics (GFS). **TURN TO PAGE 15**

# Bank Nizwa supports and joins first Waqf Forum

**MUSCAT:** Continuing its efforts to contribute to social development, Bank Nizwa, the leading Islamic bank in the Sultanate of Oman, participated in and sponsored the first Waqf Forum, which was organised by Imam Jabir Bin Zaid Waqf Foundation in cooperation with the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs at Sheraton Hotel Muscat.

Aiming to empower the role of Waqf foundations in the Sultanate of Oman, this initiative comes in alignment with Bank Nizwa's commitment to support Islamic Awqaf and develop the endowments sector in the Sultanate of Oman, which is regarded as one of the most effective Sharia-compliant tools, contributing to the economic growth and social welfare.

The forum was held under the auspices of Shaikh Al Fadl bin Mohammed al Harthy, Secretary General of the Council of Ministers, in the presence of a host of industry experts and representatives from the public and private sectors.

The event focused on key topics



related to Islamic endowments, including activating the partnership between endowment foundations, the mechanism of managing endowment foundations, and adopting the best practices to organise Awqaf in the country, as well as reviewed regulatory and framework of

Waqf investments and its related challenges.

Commenting on the forum, Khalid al Kayed, Chief Executive Officer of Bank Nizwa said: "The Islamic Awqaf sector in the Sultanate of Oman is witnessing remarkable developments thanks to the efforts made by the Ministry

of Awqaf and Religious Affairs to expand the role of community participation in developing endowments in accordance with specific governance and controls.

The annual forum of Waqf foundations is an ideal and great platform that brings together industry stalwarts and experts

to discuss the significance of Waqf foundations and its roles in promoting societal development.

Certainly, this forum contributed at bridging communication between the endowment foundations across the Sultanate of Oman through exchanging experiences and

knowledge, as well as developing some aspects related to the endowments administration and compliance in the Sultanate of Oman."

The event witnessed the participation of Khalid al Kayed, Chief Executive Officer at Bank Nizwa, in a panel discussion on the topic of 'Waqf Partnership — Cooperation and Integration', addressing the role of private sector in general and Bank Nizwa in specific in developing the sector of Waqf.

The panel discussion also highlighted Bank Nizwa's efforts in developing Waqf foundations and promoting awareness on the concept and principles of Islamic Waqf, as well as discussing the challenges faced to enhance integrated roles between Waqf foundations and other entities.

The forum also carried out workshops covering a wide array of topics related to the endowment sector, including governance of endowment foundation, feasibility studies for endowment investment projects, and promotion of endowment across the country.

## NBO offers cash back on OOMCO fuel transactions

**MUSCAT:** Continuing to reward customers with convenient solutions, National Bank of Oman (NBO) has partnered with Oman Oil Marketing Company (OOMCO) to offer a 10% cash back on fuel transactions.

From January 2-15, 2022, NBO customers can get up to RO 5 cash back per day when topping up their tanks using NBO credit cards at Omanoil filling station across the country.

Maha al Raisi, Head of Retail Products at NBO, said, "We are always looking at new ways to



reward our customers for their loyalty and to add value to our range of products.

For the next two weeks,

customers can earn cash back on fuel purchases with Omanoil simply by paying conveniently and securely using any NBO chip and pin or contactless credit card and receive ten per cent back by the next working day following an approved transaction."

NBO offers a range of credit cards to suite every requirement, each with unmatched benefits and lifestyle features loaded with exclusive discounts and offers which allow customers to save, earn nuqati loyalty points and win every time they use their NBO

credit card.

Every NBO credit card is equipped with cutting-edge technology and leading security features to give customers a convenient and safe alternative to cash.

More details about NBO's range of products and services can be found online at [www.nbo.om](http://www.nbo.om), by using the award-winning NBO digital banking app, in-branch at any of the 60 conveniently located branches across the Sultanate of Oman, or by calling the NBO Call Centre on 2477 0000.

## Go beyond with the powerful & dependable Toyota Hilux



**MUSCAT:** The Toyota Hilux rises above expectations, to deliver some of the finest on-road and off-road experiences ever. The Hilux really is two vehicles in one: a work truck through the week and a family vehicle on weekends, thanks to added comforts and safety features. Indeed the Hilux models are stunning in design and features. Their performance & safety parameters are amongst the best and the strong frame and suspension impart toughness for any demanding task.

Apart from this, high-quality materials are used to ensure a high durability. The distinctive Toyota grille renders the Hilux instantly recognisable. Tough deck protects cargo and increase carrying capabilities, while wheels are fitted with wide tyres for a better grip.

In the Sultanate of Oman, the Hilux is available in two versions — The rugged Hilux with J-Deck and the sporty 4.0 Litre V6 Hilux Adventure with the A Deck. The 4.0 Litre V6 Toyota Hilux Adventure is a truly exciting mean machine that's been developed by Toyota to get your pulse racing. Check out the Hilux Adventure and Unleash the Power! The Toyota Hilux

Adventure packs the legendary Hilux ruggedness!

Every Toyota Hilux Adventure comes with high-end features that start with the mighty 4.0 Litre V6 Engine packing a mighty punch with 235 HP & 38.3 Kg-m Torque. It has an Auto Disconnect Differential to keep the tempo going. Equal importance has been provided to the technical superiority and safety features of the Hilux 4x4. The noteworthy features include a 2.7 Litre Petrol Engine that is available in 5-speed Manual Transmission and 6 Speed Automatic Transmission, outputting 164 HP.

The Hilux is not only a tough vehicle but also an advanced pick-up with stylish cues hitherto found only on SUVs. The front of the Hilux gives a sense that the vehicle is wider than it is.

For the latest press releases, test drive requests and more, please visit [www.toyotaoman.com](http://www.toyotaoman.com), [www.youtube.com/toyotaoman](http://www.youtube.com/toyotaoman), [www.facebook.com/toyotaoman](http://www.facebook.com/toyotaoman), and [instagram.com/toyotaomanofficial/](http://instagram.com/toyotaomanofficial/). For any further details & to ascertain availability of stocks, please visit your nearest Toyota Showroom.

## Baituna home finance customers' first choice for owning their dream homes

**MUSCAT:** Every New Year comes with new plans and dreams, like owning a house that can warmly bring together family members.

Throughout all these years, Bank Muscat, the leading financial institution in the Sultanate of Oman, managed to help turning thousands of dreams into reality through Baituna home finance.

It has been steadily attracting large numbers of customers across the Sultanate of Oman for its competitive features and offers that go in line with Bank Muscat's customer-centric vision.

The bank has been providing financing products to a wide range of customers, both Omanis and residents, facilitated by its large network of 174 branches.

Thus, customers can easily visit any branch or apply for home finance through any of the dedicated Baituna Sales Centres at Qurum, Maabela, Nizwa, Salalah, Barka, Sur, Saham, Suhar, Ibri, Al Buraimi and Ibra. In line with the vision "To serve you better, everyday", Bank Muscat has attractive offers

aligned to the customers' unique needs.

It should be noted that Bank Muscat offers very attractive interest rates and a tenor up to 25 years. Omanis employees of government and semi-government institutions as well as Tier 1 companies are eligible to apply for home finance products and enjoy the banking facilities.

Baituna home finance is available for salaried government employees with a minimum salary of RO 250 and minimum service of 3 months for up to 25 years of home financing, while employees of Tier 1 private sector companies with a minimum salary of RO 500 and minimum 6 months service, are eligible for home loans having a tenure of up to 25 years.

Loans of up to RO 500,000 are available through Baituna, subject to the applicant fulfilling the relevant criteria. Easy and convenient credit approval can be obtained at any of the dedicated Baituna Sales Centres or at branches across the Sultanate of Oman.



Speaking about Baituna, Abdullah Tamman al Maashani (pictured), General Manager — Products, Bank Muscat, said: "Since its launch, we have seen the demand for Baituna home finance and it became the customers' first choice when they think of buying a house or a land. During this season and the active movement in real estate sector, we anticipate a higher demand for our home finance.

The bank is fully prepared to receive its customers' application for our product and we hope that they will enjoy the benefits it

provides. We call upon our valued customers to utilise these benefits and fast processing procedures to finance their dream homes."

Bank Muscat is always committed to supporting the real estate sector, which contributes substantially to the Sultanate of Oman's economic growth. Customers can use the bank's Baituna financing facilities to construct or purchase new homes as well as land for residential use.

Bank Muscat customers can take advantage of the fast processing of applications across the bank's extensive network of branches and dedicated Sales Centres and the excellent insurance coverage for their financing. Flexible payment options and simple documentation makes Baituna the leading home finance facility in the Sultanate.

Please visit <https://www.bankmuscat.com/en/loans/Pages/details.aspx#baituna> or call 2479 5555 or visit the nearest Bank Muscat branch to know more about Baituna.



## S Korea exports grow 25.8 per cent in 2021



Hanjin Shipping container terminal is pictured at Incheon New Port in South Korea. — Reuters

SEOUL: South Korea's exports expanded at their fastest pace in 11 years in 2021, with the total export value reaching a record high, supported by post-pandemic recoveries in global demand.

For the full year, exports rose 25.8 per cent from a year earlier to \$644.54 billion, trade ministry data showed on Saturday, the fastest pace since 2010.

That also marked the first growth in three years after contractions of 5.5 per cent and 10.4 per cent in 2020 and 2019, respectively. "Now is the time to head towards the \$700 billion export-era ... The trade ministry will step up policy efforts so that industries and

exports can tow the complete (economic) normalisation this year," Minister Moon Sung-wook said.

A breakdown by items showed exports of semiconductors jumped 29 per cent year-on-year to a record \$128 billion, while those of petrochemicals also surged 54.8 per cent to a record \$55.1 billion.

Other items such as cars and steel jumped 24.2 per cent and 37 per cent, respectively.

By destination, exports to China, South Korea's biggest trading partner, rose 22.9 per cent, and those to the United States and the European Union jumped 29.4 per cent and 33.9 per cent. — Reuters

# CCED highlights socio-economic benefits of improved WEF efficiency

BUSINESS REPORTER  
MUSCAT, JAN 2

CC Energy Development (CCED) Managing Director Walter Simpson (pictured) participated in the 8th Oman Energy Forum 2021, which brought together a host of experts to discuss the water-energy-food (WEF) nexus in the Sultanate of Oman under the theme 'How to find Sustainable & Holistic Solutions to Achieve Water-Food-Energy Security'.

During the virtual workshop, participants discussed how all sectors should work towards the common goal of efficiently managing the WEF nexus. The discussions highlighted the importance of the nexus at the national and governorate levels in the Sultanate of Oman.

In addition, participants discussed the reciprocal effects between the nexus and long-term growth trends. Another key topic the forum explored is the need to set the right incentives for foreign



direct investment and how to create an environment conducive to the formation and/or transformation of enterprises on a sustainable basis.

Speaking during the forum, Simpson highlighted that the energy industry has a key role to play and it is right in the centre of change and what is required is real intention and ownership from all stakeholders to come together, work as one team to address challenges and leverage opportunities.

Simpson said, "The hydrocarbons sector is resourceful and brings a lot of value to the table. We need to build trust with all stakeholders and we can achieve that by reducing our emissions and being transparent about the fact that we are working hard to do that.

It's about managing water sources effectively, and that may be reusing it or ensuring that saline water doesn't contaminate areas. It's also about being responsible with these resources and above all, I think it's

about working with the community and implementing solutions.

This will ultimately help all industries across different areas of the Sultanate of Oman."

By 2050, experts anticipate the world's population to reach 9 billion. By then, the demand for water is expected to rise by 55 per cent and demand for food by 60 per cent.

Experts also expect the world economy to be four times larger than today and that could be using up to 80 per cent more energy.

According to the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), access to WEF is linked throughout the world and plays an important role in sustainable development, poverty reduction and human well-being.

The Water-Energy-Food (WEF) Nexus Index is a global composite indicator that aggregates 21 globally available indicators. The WEF Nexus Index value for the Sultanate of Oman is 54.8, placing the nation in the 85th position for the countries assessed in 2021.

## SWF, public pension fund assets hit record \$31.9 tn

LONDON: Assets held by the world's sovereign wealth and public pension funds rose to a record \$31.9 trillion in 2021 thanks to rising US stock and oil prices, and investments rose to their highest for several years, a report showed.

The report on state-owned investment vehicles by industry specialist Global SWF found that the assets managed by sovereign wealth funds rose 6 per cent over the year to \$10.5 trillion, while those of public pension funds jumped 9 per cent

to \$21.4 trillion.

The report also found that state-owned investors had deployed more money, both in number of deals and by volume, than in any of the previous six years. — Reuters

## Oman Budget 2022: Key initiatives to enhance govt services

FROM PAGE 13

It also enables better cash management and effective utilisation of public funds by implementing and using cash forecasting (revenues and expenditures) and streamline treasury banking operation under the Treasury Single Account (TSA).

**iv) Programme Based Budget (PBB)**

An advanced approach of fiscal planning that identifies public spending priorities and links spending to objectives and activities.

**v) National Register of Government Assets**

The register is an integrated central system, seeks to take full account of government assets and draft a strategy to maximise returns. The Sultanate of Oman is among the leading countries to establish an integrated central system for managing government assets.

The register aims to: Register and determine the actual value of Government assets; Generate more financial resources; Centralise Government assets management and enhance its efficiency; Secure more financial resources for the state budget; and Identify the Government assets for privatisation and public-private partnership (PPP).

**vi) Fee Setting Policy Handbook**

The Fee Setting Policy Handbook comes as a unified and clear framework to standardise the pricing of government services, which would serve as a reference for the government units.

Some other entities — such as OIA, pension funds, investment funds and free zones — can use the handbook when pricing their



services.

In its first phase, the handbook was applied to the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and municipalities sector, which resulted in a: A reduction and cancellation of 548 services fees; Merging some municipal licenses. This entails that similar business activities will no longer require

separate licenses; and Shifting 88 per cent of services provided by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion to the Invest Easy platform.

**vii) Merger of Pension Funds:** Pursuant to the Royal Decree no. (2021/33) on systems of retirement and social security, a civil pension fund for public and private sectors shall be established under the name "Social Security

Fund". This is in addition to the establishment of a fund for military and security under the name "Military and Security Services Retirement Fund".

**viii) Common Contract**

The Common Contract is an initiative aimed at modernising the standard contracts of various Government units, in accordance with the latest practices adopted by the International Federation of Consulting Engineers (FIDIC). The Common Contract updates contract clauses as per the international practice so as to facilitate the process and save money and time. Drafted in Arabic and English in one document, it is possible to electronically fill the required data.

**ix) Central Government Procurement**

This initiative seeks to identify a central unit with the aim of integrating government procurements and contracts for all Government units. The unit shall carry out the following:

- Controlling all Government procurement and contracting process
- Enhancing purchasing power of the unit so as to be able to negotiate the quotations.
- Establishing a direct link with the main suppliers and service providers.
- Monitoring government inventory efficiently.
- Reducing public expenditures and the number of staff working in procurement departments.
- Building a close relationship with suppliers and enhancing training and support potentials.
- Migrating to e-business for key processes such as tendering, contracting and payment transactions.

**x) Supply Chain Financing (SCF) Scheme**

The Ministry of Finance is working with a group of banks, primarily based in the Sultanate of Oman, to provide a simple and effective financing solution to the suppliers under contract with various Government units.

The objective is to offer the suppliers an alternative option of getting their invoices settled in a timely manner without signing any financing agreement with the banks. The bank shall transfer the funds directly to the bank account of the supplier and then the Ministry of Finance will repay the funds to the same bank.

**xi) Tafakur Platform**

An e-platform that aims to promote community participation between the Government and society by receiving ideas, suggestions and solutions that will help improve public financial management and achieve fiscal sustainability.

The platform targets, during the pilot phase, all employees of the MOF and the target group will expand later depending on the outcomes of the pilot phase.

**xii) Treasury Single Account**

The Treasury Single Account (TSA) is a unified structure of government bank accounts, deal with government revenue and expenditure on a daily basis, thereby allowing for an optimal use of government cash resources.

The TSA aims to: Enhance the efficiency of government cash management, by utilising the unused cash; Improve monitoring the implementation of the State's budget through providing accurate information on the expenditure and revenue; Reduce fees and costs of banking transactions; Facilitate payments; and Ease banking settlements.

## Russian annual oil output recovers in 2021 after slump



A worker checks a pressure gauge at an oil pumping station near the Rosneft company owned Suzunskoye oil field in Krasnoyarsk, Russia. — Reuters

**MOSCOW:** Russia's annual oil production rose by more than 2 per cent last year thanks to the easing of output cuts by the Opec+ group of leading oil producers after a pandemic-induced decline in 2020, data showed on Sunday.

Russian oil and gas condensate output rose to 10.52 million barrels per day (bpd) last year, according to energy ministry data, from 10.27 million bpd in 2020.

In tonnes, oil and gas condensate output increased to 524.05 million in 2021 from 512.68 million tonnes in 2020, but was still below a post-Soviet record-high of 560.2 million, or 11.25 million bpd, seen in 2019.

Russian oil exports outside the former Soviet Union declined by 2.2 per cent in 2021 to 214.4 million tonnes. It also said that Russian natural gas output jumped by 10 per cent last year to 762.3 billion cubic metres.

In April 2020, Russia agreed to reduce its oil production by more than 2 million bpd, a voluntary cut, along with other leading oil producers and the Opec member countries.

— Reuters

# Banker pay surge prompts rise of the robot analyst

Dealmakers are the Luddites of the banking world. Algorithms have conquered trading floors, but departments that underwrite securities and advise on deals are still stuffed with twentysomethings formatting pitchbooks and copying data from annual reports. A pay surge offers new incentives to automate. Prepare for the rise of the robot investment banker.

Bank bosses like JPMorgan’s Jamie Dimon and David Solomon of Goldman Sachs get it. Both banks have set up teams dedicated to modernising their M&A advisory and capital markets businesses.

The problem is that old-school rainmakers often mistrust valuation multiples pulled from live databases. Some also prize the process of making analysts spend hours sweating over seemingly trivial details, as it helps to weed out the less committed.

**The problem is that old-school rainmakers often mistrust valuation multiples pulled from live databases**

An aversion to technology partly explains why the number of mergers, debt and equity bankers has risen by 2% since 2016 to 19,500, according to Coalition Greenwich, even as the number of humans trading shares and bonds has declined.

That will change. Record deal volumes and a tight labour market pushed up pay in 2021. First-year analysts at Morgan Stanley will now earn a \$100,000 base salary, a \$15,000 rise. Rivals worldwide have followed suit.

That changes the calculus for tech-averse senior bankers: Higher pay for juniors eats into their bonus pot. It’s also harder to justify paying analysts six-figure salaries to perform menial tasks, such as fiddling around with font sizes on PowerPoint presentations.

The logical alternative is to use software that gathers data automatically and pulls it into live pitchbook templates. It could be a stop on the way to a slicker business model. Imagine if companies could issue bonds with the click of a button, or if chief executives could pull up a list of merger targets on a smartphone app.

Senior bankers will defend the status quo, but the sudden ubiquity of video calls shows entrenched habits can change.

The bigger question is whether analysts should welcome their robot counterparts. In theory, automation should mean fewer all-nighters and more time for interesting tasks. However, it may knock some of them out of a job. — Reuters



## COINS PLUNGED

UK pound coins plunge into water in this illustration picture. Sterling hit its highest level against the euro since the end of February 2020 as easing concerns about the economic impact of the pandemic boosted risk-on currencies, while analysts expect more rate rises from the Bank of England in 2022. “The sterling is a risk-on currency that will benefit from the huge financial and fiscal stimulus and a more benign pandemic outlook”, Enrique Diaz, Chief Risk Officer at Ebury, said. His short-term target is at its pre-pandemic levels at 83 pence per euro.

– Reuters

# The ECB’s savvy gradualism



MELVYN B KRAUSS

The author is Professor Emeritus of Economics at New York University.

FRAGMENTATION OF THE CURRENCY AREA IS A CHRONIC ISSUE FOR THE EUROZONE BECAUSE THE ECB OPERATES WITH 19 INDEPENDENT FISCAL AUTHORITIES

This month, the world’s major central banks shifted gears and announced plans to tighten monetary policy. But there was one notable exception: The European Central Bank, which says it does not intend to raise interest rates in 2022, even though it is well aware of today’s inflation risks.

By contrast, the US Federal Reserve now expects to raise its policy rate three times in 2022, and the Bank of England has already increased its main policy rate by 15 basis points.

Moreover, to keep an earlier promise that it would not raise rates until it had unwound its balance sheet, the Fed will accelerate the wind-down of its monthly asset purchases.

Does this mean that the ECB is “soft on inflation”, occupying a dovish outlier position among the world’s major central banks? Is Germany’s bestselling tabloid, Bild, justified in bestowing on ECB President Christine Lagarde the mocking sobriquet “Madame Inflation”?

No and no. While Bild may accurately reflect the traditional German view that inflation counts for everything in ECB monetary policy, that perspective is hopelessly outdated in the Europe of 2022.

Lagarde understands that withdrawing

monetary stimulus after a crisis can be a fraught task.

Raising interest rates too fast could tear apart the currency union by pushing up borrowing costs and stifling the recoveries of heavily indebted member states like Italy, Spain and Greece. Economists call this “fragmentation risk.”

Fragmentation of the currency area is a chronic issue for the eurozone, because, unlike the Fed and the BoE, which both are backed by a single fiscal authority, the ECB operates with 19 independent fiscal authorities.

This may have been uppermost in Lagarde’s mind at her December press conference, where she explained that gradualism is necessary to avoid a “brutal transition” to a more restrictive monetary policy.

Not surprisingly, that statement provoked a churlish response from the traditionally hawkish outgoing Bundesbank president, Jens Weidmann.

Similarly, Christian Lindner, the new German finance minister, says there are growing fears in Berlin that the ECB’s sensitivity to heavily indebted member states’ borrowing costs would lead it to withdraw stimulus too slowly.

In a way, Lindner is right. Lagarde indeed is in no rush to tighten monetary

policy, because of her concern for keeping the currency union intact as the stimulus is scaled down.

Like a responsible medical professional, she does not want to rush the process of weaning an addict off a powerful drug. And make no mistake, the ECB’s stimulus policies have had a potent effect on the economy, which in turn has become dependent on them.

Always politically savvy, Lagarde understands that in a region that has created a €750 billion (\$850 billion) recovery fund to keep the currency union together, a monetary policy that threatens to split the union would not sit well with the public.

A “cold turkey” approach would be as reckless politically as it would be economically. The biggest potential source of fragmentation risk today is Italy, with its €2.6 trillion in public debt and a long history of political instability.

Managing these conditions requires very careful handling. So far, investors seem pleased with Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi’s leadership. But they fear that political instability will return if Draghi chooses to pursue the presidency (generally a more ceremonial role) following Sergio Mattarella’s imminent departure from that office.

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# India’s unicorn year: Start-ups in spotlight of 2021 tech boom

NIVRITA GANGULY

Sumit Gupta has had a big year — turning 30, getting married and seeing his start-up become one of India’s newest tech unicorns. Hampered by the coronavirus pandemic and too busy expanding and getting funding for his cryptocurrency platform CoinDCX, his team finally grabbed a few days on the beach in Goa to celebrate recently.

“That was very delightful to everyone”, Gupta said. “It’s been a very, very exciting journey. I’ve learned a lot... The future of India is very bright.” This year 44 Indian unicorns — privately held startups valued at more than \$1 billion — were minted as investors piled money into a country long overlooked despite its vast potential. Overseas funds put more than

\$35 billion into Indian start-ups in 2021 — a tripling from 2020, according to data compiled by Tracxn — buying into everything from fintech and health to gaming.

Foreign investors have long preferred China, another Asian country with more than a billion people.

But Beijing’s clampdown on runaway growth in China’s powerful Internet sector, and reining in of big businesses, have spooked investors and wiped billions off giants such as Baidu, Alibaba and Tencent.

In the start-up space, investors this year sank \$54.5 billion into Chinese firms, down from \$73 billion in 2020.

India by contrast became more attractive, with its large pool of well-educated entrepreneurs upending how many businesses work using a fast-developing digital infrastructure.

“India really is that final frontier

where businesses can attract a sixth of the world’s population”, said Siddharth Mehta, founder of investment firm Bay Capital Partners.

“I think India is about 13-14 years behind China in terms of size and scale of the market. India’s overall digital marketplace is about sub-\$100 billion today but that number can easily be a trillion or \$2 trillion over the next 10 to 15 years.”

Among those attracted are Japan’s Softbank, which invested \$3 billion in India this year, as well as China’s Jack Ma and Tencent, and US-based Sequoia Capital and Tiger Global.

“I believe in the future of India. I believe in the passion of young entrepreneurs in India. India will be great”, Softbank’s founder Masayoshi Son said.

Indian tech also saw a record number of initial public offerings this year.

Companies going public included food delivery app Zomato and beauty products platform Nykaa, listing at huge premiums to their IPO prices and making billionaires of their founders.

At their October high, Indian stocks had rallied more than 125 per cent from their April 2020 low, becoming one of the world’s best-performing equities markets. But some experts warn that many of these firms may be grossly overvalued.

For instance, local fintech giant Paytm, the biggest IPO of the year, is yet to make a profit and its share price is some 40 per cent down from its IPO valuation.

India’s bumper year for startups also masks serious problems for an economy struggling to provide jobs for the 10 million young people entering the workforce every year.

Desperate for employment, many take low-wage “gig economy”

jobs, earning as little as 300 rupees (\$4) a day with little to no job security.

But for white-collar workers in the startup sector, demand for qualified workers has outstripped supply this year.

Flush with cash, companies are competing to recruit and retain top talent, offering cash, stock and even motorcycles and tickets to cricket matches as incentives.

“Recruiters reach out to us all the time”, one tech employee said on condition of anonymity. “Salaries have inflated in the last year and it feels like everybody is hiring. People are changing their jobs constantly.” CoinDCX’s Gupta, fresh from his beach holiday, was bullish.

“If you remain persistent, it’s very possible to create a unicorn, especially if you’re living in a country like India, which is full of opportunities”, he said. — AFP

INDIAN TECH ALSO SAW A RECORD NUMBER OF INITIAL PUBLIC OFFERINGS THIS YEAR

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**Announcement of Capital Reduction**

IN accordance with the provisions of Article 150 of the Commercial Companies Law. The company **Jebel Wadi Al Halti Trad. Co.**, which is registered with the Commercial Registration No **3205070**, hereby announces that it is going to reduce its capital from RO 25,000 to **5,000**. Whoever has any objection to the foregoing shall present the reasons for such objection to the Secretariat of Commercial Registry at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion within 30 days from the date hereof.

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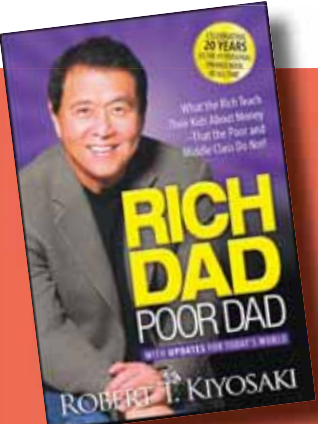


## Soulmates in life and music

To tell the truth, there is something special about couples, who play music together. You may wonder how they can stay together and remain so well-matched! In fact, the music being played together has a way of stimulating the couple's relationship... **P20**

### CELEBRITIES

#### READ



**RICH DAD POOR DAD**  
BY ROBERT KIYOSAKI

The book is about Robert Kiyosaki and his two dads—his real father (poor dad) and the father of his best friend (rich dad)—and the ways in which both men shaped his thoughts about money and investing. You don't need to earn a high income to be rich. Rich people make money work for them.

## Betty White, working actress into her 90s, dies just shy of her 100th birthday

**COMEDIC ACTRESS BETTY** White, who capped a career of more than 80 years by becoming America's geriatric sweetheart after Emmy-winning roles on television sitcoms "The Golden Girls" and "The Mary Tyler Moore Show," has died, less than three weeks shy of her 100th birthday, *People* magazine

reported on Friday, quoting her agent. Her agent and close friend Jeff Witjas told the magazine: "Even though Betty was about to be 100, I thought she would live forever." In a youth-driven entertainment industry where an actress over 40 is facing career twilight,

White was an elderly anomaly who was a star in her 60s and a pop culture phenomenon in her 80s and 90s. Playing on her imminent likability, White was still starring in a TV sitcom, "Hot in Cleveland," at age 92 until it was cancelled in late 2014. White said her longevity was a result of good health, good fortune and loving her work. "It's incredible that I'm still in this business and that you are still putting up with me," White said in an appearance at the 2018 Emmy Awards ceremony, where she was honoured for her long career. "It's incredible that you can stay in a career this long and still have people put up with you. I wish they did that at home." White was not afraid to mock herself and throw out a joke about her sex life or a snarky



crack that one would not expect from a sweet-smiling, white-haired elderly woman. She was frequently asked if, after such a long career, there was anything she still wanted to do and the standard response was: "Robert Redford." — **Reuters**



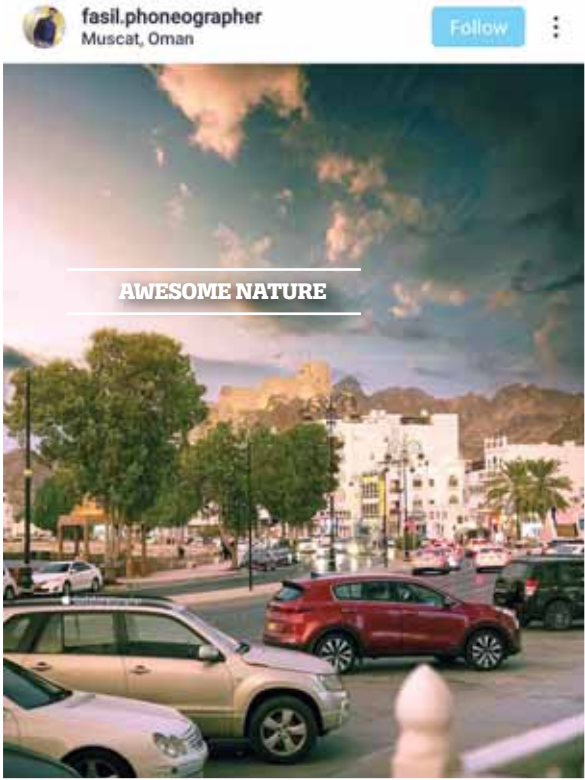
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## AROUND THE WORLD

### HISTORY

# Vienna Nazi art show seeks to address WWII legacy

IN A VIENNA MUSEUM, Nazi-era art crams two small rooms, some still in storage boxes. A painting of Vienna's opera features Nazi flags, a swastika is woven into a tapestry.

The pieces are part of an exhibit in the Austrian capital aiming to shed light on the politics of art under the Third Reich — one of the latest ways in which Vienna is seeking to address its complicated war-era past. Austria, the birth place of Adolf Hitler, long cast itself as a victim after being annexed by Nazi Germany. Only in the past three decades has the country begun to examine seriously its role in the Holocaust.

The exhibit's curators are hoping their research will help in that process — but they have been careful not to give the artworks too much of an "aura". Austria had a Jewish population of 200,000 before Nazi Germany annexed the country in 1938. More than 65,000 of them were killed in the Holocaust, which exterminated six million Jews.

Instead of being displayed on the museum's large walls, the works are packed into just two rooms, as if in a warehouse.

"This can't be like other exhibitions in the classical sense... it had to be broken up", curator Ingrid Holzschuh said.

**Racist vision**  
The show came about after four years of research by Holzschuh and fellow curator Sabine Plakolm-Försthuber, who combed through the membership files of 3,000 artists who officially belonged to the Reich's artistic association after the Nazi annexation.

The artists were all carefully vetted and closely watched.

"Aspiring members needed to meet the Nazi regime's artistic, political and racial criteria", says material for the show.

"Political dissidents and Jewish artists were barred."

Under the regime, Viennese artists who did not comply with the new rules were forced to flee or murdered in concentration camps, according to the show's catalogue.

"The Nazi regime secured control of the art world and steered it in accordance with its ideological and racist vision", it says.

Together with the biographical details of some of the artists, the exhibition displays their paintings, sculptures, textiles and pottery — most of them kept in storage by the city of Vienna for decades.

The show, called "Vienna Falls in Line. The Politics of Art under National Socialism", is part of a broader trend of reconciling with an ugly chapter of Austrian history.

"Since the late '80s a big change of mood has taken hold... a big process of reflection has taken place", said historian Gerhard Baumgartner, head of the Documentation Centre of Austrian Resistance.

Unearthing art from the period is part of that movement, and a way to learn more about the artists behind the pro-Nazi works — of which often little has been known. — AFP



### ENVIRONMENT



# Colombia's forgotten Alcatraz: The island prison of Gorgona

AT THE END of October, a presidential candidate stirred up old memories when proposing to send corrupt politicians to Colombia's notorious former island prison of Gorgona.

No one took the threat seriously but it did pique interest about a little-known part of Colombia's history that could be compared to Alcatraz or Robben Island.

Right up until 1984, this 26 square kilometre island situated 55 kilometres (34 miles) off Colombia's Pacific coast was a tragic place where political prisoners and dangerous criminals were sent to serve out their sentences, sometimes until death.

Far from prying eyes, and among several species of venomous snakes, prisoners were left to suffer their fate at the hands of the island's brutal guards or violent fellow inmates.

"Damned be this place", wrote one former inmate in a poem.

These days, only a few crumbling walls of the prison remain on an island that attracts a small amount of eco-tourism, mostly for scuba-diving or to explore its incredible biodiversity.

credible biodiversity.

### 'TERRIBLE SUFFERING'

The only way to reach Gorgona is a two-hour boat ride from the coastal town of Guapi, hidden amongst mangroves.

Gorgona is a humid mass of volcanoes and jungle, with daily rain and waters teeming with dolphins and whales.

It was discovered in 1526 by Spanish conquistadors, who lost 87 men to venomous snake bites within a few months of arriving.

It was thus named after Medusa, a gorgon in Greek mythology whose hair was made of snakes and who could turn people to stone by looking into their eyes.

For a time, it was a pirate haven before passing into private hands. The Colombian state appropriated it in the 1960s to build the prison.

"There are many legends around Gorgona", said Corazon de Jesus Aguino, 35, a park technician and local celebrity.

Most of them are unverifiable", he added. "What is certain, is that it was a place of punishments and terrible suffering."

More than a thousand prisoners passed through the prison: murderers and rapists, but also political detainees from La Violencia, Colombia's 10-year civil war (1948-58) between the governing conservative party and the liberals.

### NAZI MODEL

"The prison was built along the lines of Nazi camps", said De Jesus Aguino.

Several courtyards with dormitories, each with their own "corridor of death" leading to the disciplinary area.

"Visitors sometimes have very negative feelings", added De Jesus Aguino.

A single dormitory has resisted being swamped by the encroaching jungle and its constant hum of insects.

Prisoners slept in wooden bunk beds, often directly on the boards with no mattress.

"Each prisoner was designated by a number", he said.

Visitors were rare, and outdoor exercise only allowed for prisoners to help cut down the forest.

The 120 guards reined with impunity. "Nothing left here", said De Jesus Aguino.

One place embodied the misery of the prison: The disciplinary quarter with isolation cells secured with heavy iron bars.

### 'TORTURE THROUGH HUNGER'

The most feared punishment was "the can" — an 80 centimetre wide pit where the prisoner would be forced to stand for days on end in squalid water up to his neck.

"Torture, mistreatment, infected food... when I arrived, Gorgona was a hellhole", said the prison's last director, Miguel Dario Lopez, who AFP spoke to in Bogota.

Appointed in 1981, Lopez, 78, proudly claims to have ended abuse by guards and "pacified" the prison.

"The guards here were thieves, corrupt, they took their revenge on prisoners", said Lopez, now retired.

"Ten 'cans' were still in use. I stopped all that. There was also torture through hunger. Inmates were only allowed potatoes and a bit of rice, with occasionally a bit of barely cooked snake.

— AFP

## AROUND OMAN IN 3RD GEAR



Rachael MacIver  
Instagram: @rachael\_maciver

# The Adventures of a Blonde and A Very Old Car

"ZZZZZZZ", WAS ALL I could hear from Mrs J's tent. She was blissfully unaware of the significance of this day.

Today was THE day. The first day of the abalone fishing season. Omanis from all over Dhofar had waited for this day for a very long time. The population of the wild abalone had decreased drastically and the government had banned fishing of these valuable sea snails for several years. But, today the season finally started. It was a very short season — only 10 days. Anyone who wanted to fish for them during these ten days had to obtain a licence in advance. They had practiced for weeks holding their breath under water and dive down between the kelp and rocks. Some had already scouted the best places along the coast where wild abalones were clinging to the rocks, ready to be picked. Favourite places were guarded fiercely, but discretely, so as not to alert other hopeful abalone fishers to the location. Everyone was waiting for daybreak so they could get in the water and let the hunt begin.

I sat outside my tent drinking my cold tea, making a mental note that there was only so much one could ask of a thermos. Still, it tasted tea. The ashes from the night's camp fire were cold and I was too lazy to try and revive whatever embers might be left. Cold tea was OK — especially with a view like the one in front of me.

As an avid and passionate sea shell collector, often driving my family to despair, picking up every single interesting shell on the beach, I couldn't believe my luck when I spotted the most beautiful mother-of-pearl catching the sunlight not far from where I sat. I got up and walked over to the shining object, drawn to it like the magpie I was, and noticed a handful of similar smaller shells next to it. They were all the same

oblong shape, almost like a large ear (also giving them the name 'ear snail'), and at the very top along the edge was a row of small holes, delicate as an antique piece of lace. The inside was a little girl's dream of pearly colours, in stark contrast to the outside, which looked somewhat moth eaten. These were abalone shells. Someone had quite obviously started the abalone fishing season a little early.

Over-fishing and poaching had seriously reduced the wild abalone population in Dhofar. It had long been a valuable food source, fresh or sun-dried, but most were for export to Japan or China, where abalone meat would often be part of special occasion luxury banquets alongside shark fin soup or boiled birds nests. Very little abalone meat was to be found in the Sultanate of Oman.

Except, during these ten days.

It was only 10 in the morning, but I was already on my 3rd raw abalone. Mrs J had tried one and after that pretended she was allergic to shellfish, so as not to offend anyone by gagging on the raw sea snail.

No amount of polite refusals would stop the kind Dhofari abalone divers rolling down their car windows, reaching into their bucket on the passenger seat, whipping out a pocket knife to loosen the still shell chocked (no pun intended, honestly) abalone from its shell and offering it to me. They would watch expectantly while I took a bite of this prized sea snail and smiled back at them with tight lips.

"Lovely", I would squeal. "Finish it!" The proud fishermen would insist.

I had to. I couldn't let down their generosity. The firm, salty, still alive jelly I was chewing was worth its weight in gold and a real treat. I knew it.

But between you, me and the gate post, I was never going to crave another one. Ever.



# Soulmates in life and music

By Abdulaziz al Jahdhami

**C**onnection and communication are integral parts of a healthy relationship. People are usually attracted to those who are like them, so a relationship happens subconsciously. This is called mirroring, which is often developed in business interactions, but it also applies to personal relationships. It sets apart a great friendship or love from all the rest.

This is reflected in the things you love about a partner and the actual connection and moments of harmony you both

who shares the same taste in music is like finding someone who has been living their life to the same soundtrack as you.

To tell the truth, there is something special about couples, who play music together. You may wonder how they can stay together and remain so well-matched! In fact, the music being played together has a way of stimulating the couple's relationship. Having the same taste in music as someone else is like a soul connection. It is attributed that musicians connect very well and provide emotional support.

It is incredible what music can do, and it is no shock why people keep tapping into its magic.

with his brothers who were having a music band. He joined the Royal Band in September 1998 and 2 weeks after, he participated in his first musical show. On the other hand, Farah started first playing Accordion instrument at school since she was 8 years old and got employed in the Royal Band in 1994 while studying in grade 6. Now, she is mastering Qanun, a traditional Middle Eastern stringed instrument.

After years of being coworkers in the Royal Band, they came to know each other and eventually got married in 2000. Talal al Siyabi pointed out, "Reaching new grounds in music is easier when you have someone at your side who understands the concept and is ready to support you and make all hours of practice count. What makes it even more special and inspiring is if that person is a soulmate and a talent partner at the same time. She would undoubtedly encourage you musically and emotionally alike".

Both attended a 4-year professional training course and jointly took part in high profile events and concerts and royal celebrations. They have travelled together to play in events and places of various scales including Royal Opera of Egypt, Omani and foreign embassies overseas and special concerts for Royal families. They have played music in Iraq, Egypt, UK, Saudi Arabia, Switzerland, and Lithuania, to name a few.

Farah commented, "I believe there is a strength with playing music together. You feel always having someone who holds your back and can rely on with the music and with life. That is why we are complementing each other with every music and song we play wherever we go. This is very inspiring indeed".

As a future plan, both are intending to form a private music band, which could be thrived by their expertise in playing all sorts of music, including Arabic, Turkish, African and Indian. Talal and Farah, come from artistic families who play different instruments, where the love for music has always been there. They found out that there is something in music that united them together through youth and into old age.



share, but cannot be expressed in words. Perhaps, you sometimes feel like your partner can read your mind and find yourselves completing one another's sentences, or even walking, talking and acting in similar ways! This marks a sign of a strong and deep connection, whether you are emotionally involved or have been best friends for quite some time.

Case in point, if two partners are holding hands and walking down the street, they are most likely walking on the same foot at the same speed! Such mirroring brings harmony and love chemical between the partners, reflects their combined feelings and strengthens their bonds to build a lasting relationship. Mirroring between partners could be observed in playing music, with which there is always more to learn and experience.

Though people are mysterious and fascinating creatures, a joint music playing marks a fun way to explore each other's details as well as maintains a sense of wonder and grow together. Connecting with someone

Science, too, agrees that listening to the music we like, our brain releases a hormone called Dopamine. It is the cheering hormone that makes one feel elevated, motivated, and happy. Likewise, when we listen to music with people, our brains release prolactin, a hormone that boosts bonding. All these bring us to the question, is it essential for couples to have the same taste in music?

A clear answer is marked by the couples, Talal al Siyabi and Farah Jamal; interpreting the philosophy of mirroring. Both are talented musicians playing different instruments as a living-making profession and talent alike. Started their journey with music as colleagues playing music in the Royal Band and ended up being couples and soulmates in life and music! Those couples have been spellbound by music, so it crossed all the bridges and boarders to connect them.

As music is what feelings sound like, both have been inspired by music since childhood days at school. Talal started playing Percussion and other instruments since 1980s

