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MADAYN
LEADS OMAN
PRESENCE AT
GULFOOD 2022



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MASNADA
BREAKS AWAY
TO CLAIM
STAGE FOUR



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QALHAT ALSO
A GREAT
HIKING
DESTINATION



MUSCAT

HM THANKED BY SAUDI KING

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in reply to His Majesty's condolences cable to him on the death of Prince Faisal bin Khalid bin Fahd al Saud. In his cable, King Salman expressed his appreciation for His Majesty's sympathies and sincere prayers, praying to Allah the Almighty to protect His Majesty against all harm. — ONA

HM THANKED BY PRESIDENT OF INDIA

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from President Ram Nath Kovind of the Republic of India in reply to His Majesty's greetings cable to him on the occasion of the 73rd Republic Day anniversary. In his cable, President Kovind expressed his sincere appreciation for His Majesty the Sultan's heartfelt sentiments. — ONA



NEW MARITIME ROUTE OPENS



A set of vessels dropped anchor at Sohar Port on Sunday, signalling the start of operations on the fast maritime route commissioned by the Sultanate of Oman's Asyad Group along the Indian Ocean. Asyad expanded the range of the fast Indian container cargo route by establishing a new maritime route that connects the Sultanate of Oman directly with Malaysia and Singapore. **DETAILS ON P2**

No 'cause for optimism' on Ukraine

WASHINGTON: Amid mounting warnings that a Russian invasion of Ukraine could come any day, the Pentagon said on Sunday that the latest top-level US-Russian contacts did not provide "any cause for optimism."

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby offered a grim assessment of the one-hour phone conversation on Saturday between US President Joe Biden and Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin.

"It's certainly not a sign that things are moving in the right direction. It's certainly not a sign that Mr Putin has any intention to de-escalate. And it's certainly not a sign that he is recommitting himself to a diplomatic path forward," Kirby told "Fox News Sunday" when asked about the lack of fundamental change after the call.

"So, it does not give us any cause for optimism."

US officials in recent days have issued a series of increasingly blunt warnings that a Russian invasion of Ukraine could be imminent, and foreign countries have been rushing to evacuate their nationals. **SEE ALSO P7**

Deal signed to run Bahla Fort

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, Feb 13

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has inked an agreement with Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran Group) for the management and operation of Bahla Fort and Oasis in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate.

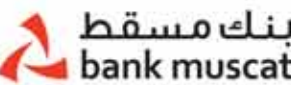
The step is part of the efforts to enrich the sustainable tourism development in the Sultanate of Oman in line with the directions of the National Tourism Strategy 2040. The agreement was signed at the ministry's headquarters by Eng Ibrahim bin Said al Kharousi, Under-Secretary of Heritage Affairs, and Mohammed bin Salim al Busaidy, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Omran Group. Senior officials from both sides were present during the signing ceremony.

Under the agreement, Omran Group will manage Bahla Fort and Oasis for a period of 15 years, including the internal and external areas of the site.

Commenting on the occasion, Bahla Fort holds a unique place in the Sultanate of Oman's rich history. It is the first historical landmark in the country to be inscribed in the Unesco's World Heritage List in 1987

ENG IBRAHIM BIN SAID AL KHAROUSI
Under-Secretary of Heritage Affairs

Al Kharousi said: "Bahla Fort holds a unique place in the Sultanate of Oman's rich history. It is the first historical landmark in the country to be inscribed in the Unesco's World Heritage List in 1987. The site is considered as one of the main cultural and heritage destination that attracts visitors and tourists from across the world."



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Medics perform complex cardiac intervention

BALQEES AL ARAIMI
MUSCAT, FEB 13

Marking a milestone in the medical history, a medical team in Electrophysiology at the Royal Hospital succeeded in performing a complex implant of a pacemaker.

The rare procedure was done after a patient had a problem in electrical connection between the atria and ventricles after open-heart surgery to change the tricuspid valve on the right side of the heart.

Speaking to the *Observer*, Dr Najib bin Zahran al Rawahi, Senior Consultant-Invasive Adult Cardiac Electrophysiologist at the National Heart Centre and Electrophysiologist at Royal Hospital, said the operation was carried out through a small incision of no more than five centimetres.

“The complex procedure to the 18-year-old female was done without general anaesthesia and took an hour and a half to complete. The accuracy of the operation lies in the need to insert the wire conducting electricity into the left ventricle through the branches of the coronary sinus that drains into the right atrium,” Dr Najib al

Rawahi, who is also the head of the medical team, added.

He further said that pacemaker implantation is one of the common procedures done worldwide for patients who require restoration of regular heart rhythm. Most patients will have disturbance of the natural electrical connections of the heart for which the implanted pacemaker acts as new artificial connection.

The pacemaker consists of two main parts; the pulse generator, which contains the battery and a small regulator.

The second part is the wires which connect the regulator to the heart muscle.

“The operation is done by a small opening just below the collar bone. A pocket of the pulse generator is made through the opening. Then the wires are pushed through the vein which drains the upper arm to the heart to be fixed into the targeted heart chamber. Another way to implant the pacemaker is to implant the wires over the heart muscle, which requires a bigger operation to cut the ribcage,” he further added.

The patient had a smooth recovery and was discharged home after a few days.



First ships dock at Sohar Port along Oman-Malaysia-Singapore route

SUHAR: A set of vessels dropped anchor at Sohar Port on Sunday, signalling the start of operations on the fast maritime route commissioned by the Sultanate of Oman's Asyad Group along the Indian Ocean.

Asyad expanded the range of the fast Indian container cargo route by establishing a new maritime route that connects the Sultanate of Oman directly with Malaysia and Singapore.

The move seeks to enhance the competitiveness of Omani seaports and maintain support to the local merchant community.

To cater to the rising demand in inter-nation cargo, the new service line, which is now connecting the Sultanate of Oman with India, Singapore, Malaysia through the Port of Sohar sets a new standard for what can be achieved by Asyad

The move seeks to enhance the competitiveness of Omani seaports and maintain support to the local merchant community

Group, with an anticipated total throughput of 100K TEUs annually.

Commenting on the expansion of Asyad Shipping's ocean-freight service to Singapore and Malaysia – Dr Ibrahim Bakht al Nadhairi, Chief Executive Officer of Asyad Shipping and Drydock Services, said: “Asyad Group remains committed to enhancing the competitive edge of country's ports, boosting their operational

efficiency and harnessing their logistics potential by linking them via direct lines with various global commercial ports, to provide an added value to the national economy and cement Oman's position as a global logistics hub and transit gateway.”

“We realise that the strength of our network in Asia will play a critical role in driving future growth. This new container line is set to increase trade relations with Asian countries, provide competitive advantages to the local and regional trade community, enhance all national exports to and from Singaporean and Malaysian and neighbouring markets, and provide Omani traders with a fast, time- and cost-effective access to Singapore as an international distribution hub and subsequently to Southeast

Asian markets”, he added.

Asyad keeps up to its obligations to provide new direct maritime routes that connect the Sultanate of Oman with the rest of the world, provide reliable global solutions and ensure prompt delivery amid a surge in volume of cargo and commercial traffic in Asia and the Indian Ocean region. Asyad Shipping is the only direct sea route carrier from the West Coast of India to the Sultanate of Oman and vice versa. It is also the only direct carrier to connect the South of Oman (via Salalah Port) to the North of GCC including Iraq without transshipment, providing a reliable direct link to key markets. Asyad Shipping operates four ships in two services: Oman-India Express Service, and the Oman-Gulf Express. — ONA

Cases drop, but surge in critical cases continues

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

Despite a drop in the number of daily cases, the situation continues to be critical as the country reported 13 deaths in the last 72 hours.

In the last 24 hours, 110 patients were also admitted to hospitals, taking the total number of inpatients to 421, including 87 in the Intensive Care Units (ICU).

The Ministry of Health (MoH) on Sunday reported 4,701 new cases (Thursday-2,064, Friday-1,295, Saturday-1,342). The recovery rate is 93.3 per cent.

While the country has been showing signs of steady and impressive economic recovery, there are concerns over vaccine hesitancy among certain sections of society.

According to the statistics released by MoH last week, of the 6,676,224 doses of Covid vaccines administered, five per cent of the target groups were yet to get the first dose, 11 per cent the second dose, and 83 per the booster dose.

Accordingly, 3,191,912 people have received one dose, 2,976,872 have received two doses 507, 440 people have got the third dose or the booster.

As per that data, 363, 242 residents have taken the third dose compared to 144,198 citizens, which has been also pointed out by the Supreme Committee in its statement issued last week.

Booster doses can also be administered to all citizens above 12 years of age.

At the same time, 1,665, 562 citizens took two doses of vaccines compared to 1,311,310 residents.

A total of 1, 770,962 citizens took the first dose compared to 1,420,950 residents.

The WHO has also reiterated that vaccines remain one of the best tools to save lives. “While

vaccines remain a critical tool, our success requires a comprehensive approach with governments and communities at the heart of the response.”

Meanwhile, several countries have announced plans to reopen or relax border restrictions, including places that have maintained some of the strictest border control.

According to the World in Data, over 54 per cent of the world's population is now vaccinated, and statistics also show that vaccines helped to reduce the possibility of hospitalisations and deaths due to Covid.

Covid-19: Bus joins vaccination drive

Al SEEB: The Directorate-General of Health Services, in cooperation with Aster Al Raffah Hospital, on Sunday launched a two-week Covid-19 vaccination campaign on a mobile bus in the Wilayat of Al Seeb.

Dr Lamia bint Hussein al Balushiyah, Director of Disease Control at the Directorate-General of Health Services in Muscat Governorate, said the health and medical team on board the bus will be administering Covid-19 vaccine for citizens and residents near Muscat Mall in Al



Maabela South for two days from 4 pm to 8 pm. The mobile bus will then move to the public area near City Centre in Al Mawaleh South.

Al Balushiyah added that the service will also be available in the wilayats of Bausher, Muttrah, Muscat and Al Amerat, until February 24.

The mobile bus vaccination campaign aims to increase the number of the vaccinated with three doses particularly the booster dose which has so far received low turnout.

— ONA





Meeting discusses govt digital transformation programme

MUSCAT: Heads of Units of the State's Administrative Apparatus on Sunday held their first joint meeting on the five-year Government Digital Transformation Programme (2021-2025) endorsed by the Council of Ministers in July 2021.

The meeting was aimed at establishing a common platform for higher administration in the government sector to help monitor the progress made in the programme, the challenges and measures to resolve them to ensure streamlined implementation of the action plan and to achieve the desired national goals.

The meeting touched on the regulatory aspects and the rate of accomplishment of e-government goals of 2021. It also studied the 2022 targets, the mechanism of monitoring, follow-up and measuring to be utilised to assess the course of action, as well as the



proposed projects and initiatives.

Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, outlined the roles and responsibilities of

heads of government units and the teams tasked with implementing the programme.

The ministry will submit regular reports to the Council of Ministers accordingly.

The five-year plan of the government digital transformation programme is aligned with Oman Vision 2040 and the priorities of the national economy. — ONA

Deal to manage, operate Bahla Fort

FROM P1

"This agreement will aid the growth of the tourism industry in the country, by enabling it to be a key contributor to the national economy. Based on the position of Bahla Fort as a unique cultural and historical landmark, the collaboration with Omran Group is a step that will further support the management and promotion of major historical and cultural sites. It will enhance tourism experiences and products by celebrating the cultural heritage to the highest standards, in addition to attracting more visitors from both within and outside the Sultanate of Oman," Al Kharusi added.

Speaking on the agreement, Salim al Busaidy said: "This agreement comes to complement the current cooperation and the successes accomplished by the Omran Group in managing and operating many heritage, geological and environmental sites. The group plays a strategic



role in generating new tourism experiences and products in collaboration with the private sector. The objective is to maximise the economic and social returns as well as promote the cultural and Sultanate of Oman's natural treasures."

"This collaboration is expected to improve the operational aspects of this remarkable historical site.

As a result, the Omran Group will collaborate with SMEs to take over the operational tasks of the Bahla Fort and Oasis facilities and work closely with them to grow the country's prospective tourism landscape in line with the group's efforts to enhance in-country value. The operational scope of this partnership will entail providing tourist experiences of

the fort and the area surrounding the oasis through the development of facilities and services, as well as incorporating the well-known rich heritage and cultural characteristics of the Wilayat of Bahla," Al Busaidy added.

Omran Group oversees and manages a number of cultural, environmental, and geological sites, including the Nizwa Fort, Al Hoota Cave, and the Ras Al Jinz Turtle Reserve. The group works relentlessly to stimulate investments for the operation of such prominent locations in partnership with the private sector.

The group aspires to increase in-country value by offering direct and indirect work opportunities for local talents, as well as the procurement of local tourism products and services through collaboration with SMEs. Additionally, the group supports the economic diversification through the various initiatives that conserve nature, culture, and local communities.

Several juvenile delinquency cases referred to Public Prosecution

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The number of juvenile delinquency cases referred to the Public Prosecution in three months in various governorates was 71, which included 37 Omanis (35 males, two females), and 34 non-Omanis (32 males and two females), according to statistics from the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD).

Most cases were reported from North al Batinah Governorate (27), followed by Dhofar (19), South al Batinah and Al Dakhiliyah (6), Muscat and Al Buraimi (4), North al Sharqiyah 3, South al Sharqiyah and Al Dhahirah (one each). No cases were recorded in Musandam and Al Wusta.

The report published by the *Oman* newspaper, quoting the Ministry of Social Development, said, "71 cases were referred to the Public Prosecution, and six cases were sent to rehabilitation.

Juvenile delinquents are

children in the age group of nine and 17 who have committed an act punishable by law, while aftercare (rehabilitation) is the support services provided to them to integrate them into society.

The report confirmed that the total number of juveniles present in the juvenile rehabilitation home is seven (all males in the age group 15-18 years).

A juvenile rehabilitation home offers shelter and corrective measures as per the orders of the court.

The Juvenile Police are responsible for maintaining the security of these homes. Among the violations listed are the cases of misdemeanor, assault, theft, one case of illegal exit from the Sultanate of Oman and a case of violation of the decisions of the Supreme Committee, traffic law violations, violations of the information technology law, violations of the residence law, smuggling, vandalism, sexual harassment, sexual abuse, violence against a child, and homicide.

SQU ranked best research institution

MUSCAT: The Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) occupied first place as the best educational and research institution in the Sultanate of Oman, according to the database of Nature Index.

The ranking was informed by the volume of distinguished research papers published in established scientific journals from November 1, 2020 to October

31, 2021. The index provides transparent and up-to-date database based on independent reports corroborated with sufficient data.

Nature Index figures high among the 82 top high-impact ratio journals specialised in chemistry, bio and physio sciences, geology and environment.

— ONA

Oman holds potential for alternative energy: Study

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Solar, tidal and wind energy resources can be the best alternatives to fossil fuel in future in the Sultanate of Oman, and experts called for an advanced Wind Energy Center in Duqm, according to a study conducted by the Sultan Qaboos University (SQU).

The study conducted by principal investigator Dr Mohamed Eldesoky Hereher, Assistant Professor, Geography Department and Dr Ahmed M El Kenawy and published in *Renewable Energy* journal at the University, suggests the country's richness of nearly 360 days of sunlight and its potential in attaining self-sufficiency in solar energy.

The research indicates that almost 3.2 per cent and 4.4 per cent of the Omani territory is

valid for sustainable use of wind and solar radiation, respectively.

"We have made a comprehensive assessment of the potential renewable energy resources in the country, with a particular focus on solar, wind and tidal energy resources. We adopted a novel approach to assess the potential of these energy resources, in which information from multiple climatic indicators is coupled with socioeconomic drivers of energy development," Doctor Mohammed told the *Observer*.

His study titled 'Exploring the potential of solar, tidal, and wind energy resources in Oman using an integrated climatic-socioeconomic approach' was awarded in the Energy and Industry field within the PhD category, selected from a number of innovative research projects in the 8th National Research Award organised by the Ministry of



Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI).

According to Dr Mohamed, the team then introduced a new overall assessment index (OAI) based on these three climatic indicators to explore the best localities from a climatic perspective for generating solar and wind energies.

The validity of the recommended sites was discussed in the context of important physiographic, environmental and socioeconomic constraints such as population density, urban settlements, distance to water bodies, transportation network and the like.

Their study was based on a

daily dataset of the National Centers for Environmental Prediction (NCEP) Climate Forecast System Reanalysis (CFSR); three climate indicators were employed to characterise the frequency, intensity, and duration of solar radiation and wind speed.

According to Dr Mohamed,

the Sultanate of Oman can be the hub for alternative energy for the future as both solar radiation and wind can be used as substantial alternative sources of fossil fuel resources in Oman, with almost 3.2 per cent and 4.4 per cent of the Omani territory being valid for sustainable use of wind and solar radiation, respectively.

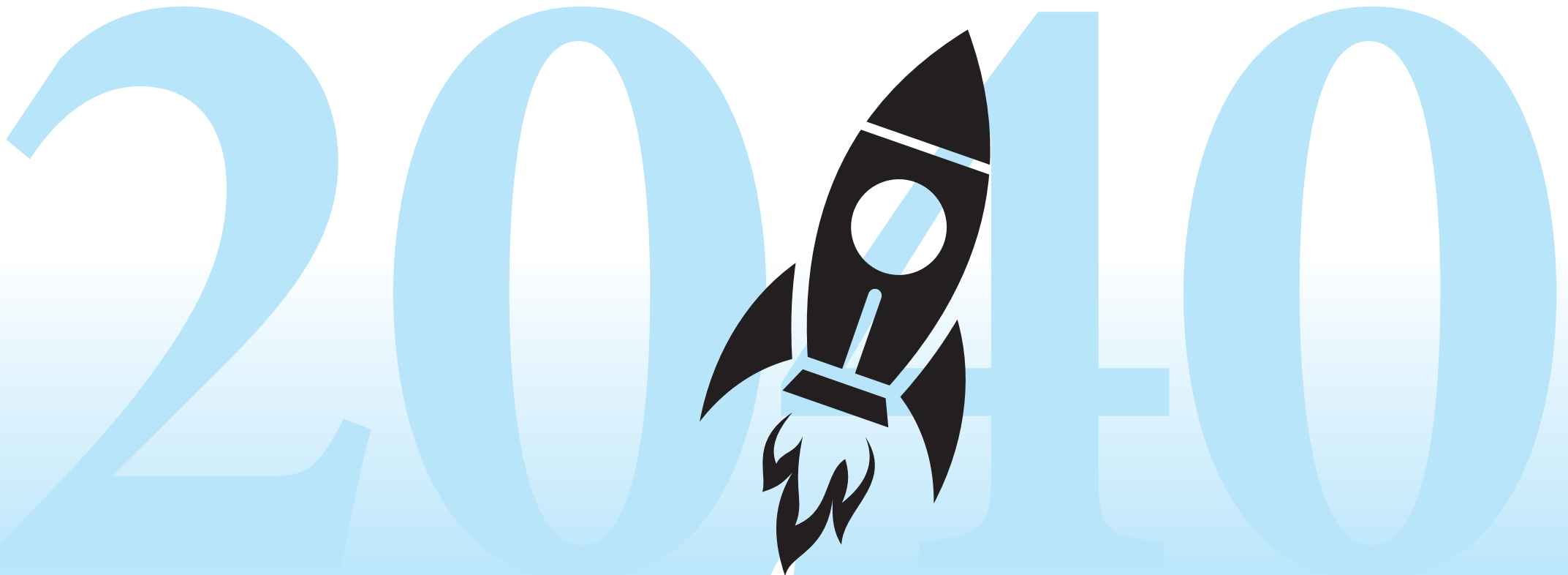
The most recommended sites for wind generation are located mainly along Al Jazir and Duqm coasts of southeastern Oman, where a promising wind energy centre can be constructed.

He added that the best localities for the development of hybrid solar radiation generation centres are likely to be placed in Suhar and Thamrait, where solar intensity approaches 8.1 kWh/m², with a high frequency of occurrence throughout the year.

In contrast, Oman showed low potential to generate tidal power, mainly due to a low tidal range.



V I S I O N



RACING TO THE SPACE

SAMUEL KUTTY
[@samkuttvvp](#)

Corresponding with Oman Vision 2040, the Sultanate of Oman is emerging in the list of space-faring nations with its ambitious satellite launch endeavours.

With a milestone collaboration and framework agreement signed by five consortium members towards the end of last month in Muscat, the country is all set to create history with its first satellite launch and the first mission to deep space.

The agreement was signed by the Sultanate of Oman with US-based launch company Virgin Orbit; Polish Small Satellite manufacturer and operator SatRevolution; Poland-originated AI data analytics specialists TUATARA; and Omani-based emerging technology innovator ETCO for the country’s first mission to deep space.

The same agreement also lays the foundation for the consortium to collaborate on delivering additional small satellites to Low Earth Orbit, including the first in the Sultanate of Oman’s history.

Following the agreement, Poland’s SatRevolution will deliver and operate its proprietary nanosatellite technologies alongside partners Virgin Orbit, a leading US-based launch company and Omani-based emerging technology innovator ETCO.

As part of the historic mission, a SatRev CubeSat satellite aboard a Virgin Orbit rocket will conduct ground-breaking scientific research and capture imagery of deep space.

With plans to launch small satellites into Low Earth Orbit and foster a local, sustainable space ecosystem and industrial base, the Sultanate of Oman further plans on expanding its ambitious space endeavours and engaging the Omani public and students through STEM activities.

Both missions are in line with the Royal Directives and will be directly aligned with the Oman Vision 2040, being part of a broader educational outreach initiative with the goal of stimulating long-term growth in the sector.

The activities specified in the Agreements are intended to generate and seize opportunities to foster economic competitiveness and social well-being, stimulate growth and build confidence in economic, social and developmental relations nationwide.

“The satellite will travel to, for example, the Moon, Mars or Venus”, Grzegorz Zwolinski, SatRevolution CEO, was quoted as saying.

All collected data and images, both from the Low Earth Orbit and deep space missions,

will be analysed digitally using computer vision, machine learning, and AI solutions in strategic partnership with ETCO.

The space projects will contribute to the near-term goals of the Sultanate of Oman, which include the modernisation of the educational ecosystem, support for scientific research and innovation, and the enhancement of in-country development of cutting-edge technologies.

It will be possible, for example, to detect hidden patterns, identify trends and predict changes caused, among others, by the climate or natural disasters.

Ultimately, the installation of satellites for the Sultanate of Oman in low orbit will consist of a dozen or so objects using technologies that ensure the possibility of 24-hour Earth observation.

According to Tariq al Balushi, ETCO Vice-President, “The future of the Sultanate of Oman is one of innovation, and it’s through these partnerships the country will make active contributions to those sectors and technologies that are driving progress on a global scale”.

“This partnership is a major step in helping us to enrich the Sultanate of Oman’s Space industry with the latest technologies and know-how while adding overall economic value according to Oman’s Vision 2040.”

WHY SO MANY SATELLITES?

Zwolinski said that the Sultanate of Oman is currently a rapidly developing country that wants to invest in the latest space research and technologies. In addition, he added, Sultanate of Oman’s new economic strategy envisages that the data obtained from satellites will become another important source of the Sultanate of Oman’s revenues in the coming years, apart from energy resources.

“Data is the oil of the modern world”, Zwolinski noted.

According to him, information obtained from satellites is a valuable commodity, including agricultural, insurance, logistics, mining and distribution sectors. “Satellite images allow, among others, to monitor the condition of sensitive infrastructure and quickly react, for example, to leaks from pipelines, predict agricultural yields and market prices, as well as disasters such as landslides or volcanic eruptions”, he said.

WITH PLANS TO LAUNCH SMALL SATELLITES INTO LOW EARTH ORBIT AND FOSTER A LOCAL, SUSTAINABLE SPACE ECOSYSTEM AND INDUSTRIAL BASE, THE SULTANATE OF OMAN FURTHER PLANS ON EXPANDING ITS AMBITIOUS SPACE ENDEAVOURS AND ENGAGING THE OMANI PUBLIC AND STUDENTS THROUGH STEM ACTIVITIES



STATE COUNCIL LEGAL PANEL DISCUSSES INTERNAL REGULATIONS



MUSCAT: The State Council's Legal Committee finalised discussions on a proposed study regarding the State Council internal regulation, on Sunday. At its fourth meeting of the third annual session held under the chairmanship of Dr Rashid bin Salim al Badi, the Legal Committee discussed the visions of the sub-committee tasked with studying the proposed study. The panel also approved the minutes of the previous meeting and followed up the implementation of decisions. – ONA

World Radio Day marked

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman on Sunday marked the World Radio Day, which falls on February 13 each year. This year's anniversary is themed, "Radio and Trust".

Member states of the Unesco in 2011 declared February 13 every year as the World Radio Day. The proposition was approved by the UN General Assembly in 2012.

The Unesco adopted three main approaches in this regard, namely trust in radio press, easing access to audiences and ensuring competitiveness.



Moreover, public and private radios in the Sultanate of Oman (in Arabic and other languages) reached 15 radio stations operating compatibly with modern needs.



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ANNOUNCEMENT

The Royal Oman Police Pension Fund announces extension for receiving the tender documents for the construction of International Private School in Qurum, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman from 17/2/2022 to 3/3/2022 with no change in terms and conditions published earlier. The last date for tender submission is now at 12:00hrs on Thursday 3rd March 2022.

Visitors to Oman surge during Dec 2021



MUSCAT: The total number of visitors to the Sultanate of Oman by the end of December 2021 reached 652,000 while the number of departures (Omani and expatriates) reached 1,900,000 by the end of December of 2021.

GCC visitors scored first as their number reached 293,125 followed by 106,042 visitors from India, 41,923 visitors from Yemen, 19,326 visitors from Pakistan and 18,173 visitors from Egypt.

The total revenues of hotels rated (3 - 5 stars) amounted to RO 102 million.

The number of guests in those hotels reached 1,200,000 until the end of December 2021, according to the latest data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The data shows that the number of visitors coming to the Sultanate of Oman during December 2021 reached about 180,000 comprising an increase of 384% compared to 37,000 visitors during the same period of the previous year.

The number of GCC visitors reached 75,839 accounting for 42% of the total visitors during December 2021. Indian visitors constituted 12.7% of the total visitors, Germans constituted 5.4%, Yemenis accounted for 4.8% of the total visitors during December 2021.

As for the number of departures from the Sultanate of Oman during December 2021, they amounted to 336,000 comprising an increase of 245,000 departures compared to the same month of the previous year.

Omani departures constituted 60.7% of the total departures during December 2021, with an increase of 161,000 departures compared to the same period of the previous year.

The revenues of 3-5-star hotels amounted to RO 17.6 million during December 2021, compared to RO 7 million during the same month in 2020, comprising a growth of 149.2%. The number of guests in these hotels reached 136,000 during December 2021, compared to 84,500 guests during the same period of the previous year, constituting a rise of 61.4%.

The occupancy rate reached 47.5% during December 2021, compared to 26.7% for the same period in 2020, going up by 77.6%.

— ONA



Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender committee of **Ministry of Social Development** hereby announces the following tender :-

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of Tender Document	Last date for Tender Submission	Tender Document Price (non-refundable)
3/2022	Supply & Maintenance of Printers for Ministry of Social Development & Operated them with Central System	Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board that have the activity of supplying information technology services, technology and communications systems and programmes Registered in excellent or first	Friday 4-3-2022 02:00 PM	Thursday 24-3-2022 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=

❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the Tender Board may obtain the Tender documents at the **Tender Board** e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) , On Sunday 13/2/2022.

❖ Tender shall be submitted in compliance with the technical specifications and terms along with a local bank warranty at (1%) of the tender value, valid ninety (90) days from the date of e-submission.

❖ For Inquiry, please contact though the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (24402200).

" The lowest or any other tender shall not be binding to the Ministry "

www.mosd.gov.om



Sultan Qaboos University Hospital

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Sultan Qaboos University Hospital announces the following tender:

Tender No.	Subject	Non-Refundable Fee	Last Date of Submission
120/2022	SUPPLY OF NUCLEAR MEDICINE CONSUMABLE CONTRACT FOR (SULTAN QABOOS UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL) FOR TWO YEARS.	OMR. 25	04/04/2022

Tender Conditions:

- The companies who are registered in Tender Board shall collect the documents during office hours from 8.00 am to 1.00 pm from the Procurement Department/ Sultan Qaboos University Hospital.
- The Tenderers shall submit with the form of tender a certified cheque or tender bond from a locally registered bank in the sum of (1%) of the tender value and valid for 90 days from the date of tender submission and addressed to the chairman of tender committee, Sultan Qaboos University.
- The tender quotations shall be sealed and addressed to Procurement Director; Sultan Qaboos University Hospital. The tender number and the name of the tender shall be mentioned on the tender document. It is not accepted to indicate or mention the name of the company or its logo on the envelope.
- The quotations are subject to the Tender General Terms& Conditions for the Sultan Qaboos University Hospital.
- Sultan Qaboos University Hospital is not bound to accept the lowest bid or any other bid.

Procurement Directorate
Sultan Qaboos University Hospital
AL Khoudh / Sultanate of Oman
Tel: 24144680/ 24144635
Fax: 24413156
E-mail: hospitalprocure@squ.edu.om
www.squh.edu.om





MINISTRY OF INFORMATION

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

The Internal Tender Committee in Ministry of Information announces the following Tender:

Tender No.	Tender Name	Class & Grade	Last Date For Collection	Submission Date	Purchase Fees (R.O.)
1/2022	The Technical Fitout and Interior Decoration Works for MOI Auditorium.	Excellent	17/2/2022	6/3/2022	150/-

- All specialized companies in the field of the tender shown above and are registered with the Tender Board to the degree indicate above, may obtain tender documents, against non-refundable fees, from the website through the following link: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>
- Bidder shall submit their offers electronically accompanied with electronic copy of the a bond issued by any local bank in Oman addressed to Ministry of Information. The bond shall be (1%) of the tender value valid for (90) days. Any tenders which do not meet the required bond shall not accepted.
Note: The original bank guarantee should be submitted to the General Directorate Of Administrative And Financial Affairs, Project Department building at Ministry of Information, if it **Requested**.
- The Ministry has the right to:
 - Add or Cancell some works in the tender if necessary.
 - Cancellation of the tender without giving reasons.

For clarifications you may contact via:
Telephone : 24943093, 24943785, Email id: (projects@part.gov.om)



Tunisian president extends powers over judiciary

TUNIS: Tunisia's president cemented his grip over the judiciary on Sunday with a decree that lets him dismiss judges or block their promotion, helping consolidate his power after he seized executive authority last summer in a move his foes call a coup.

President Kais Saied outraged his opponents and alarmed democratic foreign allies with his announcement last week that he was dissolving the Supreme Judicial Council, a body that has guaranteed judicial independence.

Several thousand people took to the streets of the capital Tunis on Sunday to protest against the measures. "Shut down the coup... take your hands off the judiciary," some chanted as they gathered in central Tunis.

The protest was organised by the Ennahda, the biggest party in the suspended parliament that has emerged as Saied's most vocal opponent, and by a separate civil society organisation.

Saied, a former constitutional lawyer and whose wife is a judge, has accused the council of acting for political interests and has set up a temporary replacement to oversee judges' work while he prepares broader changes.

The judiciary was seen as the last remaining institutional check on Saied's actions after he suspended parliament last year and said he could rule by decree.



Demonstrators protest against Tunisian President Kais Saied's seizure of governing powers in Tunis. – Reuters

Anas Hamaidi, president of the Tunisian Judges Association, said he feared there could now be a wave of sackings of judges.

"We will move forward in protecting the legitimate judicial authority," he said in a statement, hinting that judges could stage

more strikes, after going on strike last week.

Youssef Bouzakher, head of the dissolved Supreme Council rejected the decree, describing it as "unconstitutional that ends guarantees of the independence of the judiciary".

Saied has said his actions were temporary and were needed to save Tunisia from a corrupt, self-serving elite that had allowed its economy and politics to stagnate for years and brought the state to the brink of collapse.

Some Supreme Judicial Council

members and other judges demonstrated last week and shut down many courts with a two-day strike in protest at Saied's moves on the judiciary.

However, Saied issued a new decree early on Sunday creating a temporary new council, with no

The judiciary was seen as the last remaining institutional check on Saied's actions after he suspended parliament last year and said he could rule by decree

fixed term, to oversee the judiciary and saying judges had no right to go on strike.

The decree also said Saied has the right to object to the promotion or nomination of any judges and is responsible for proposing judicial reforms, effectively giving him sole power over the entire justice system. Saied has already seized absolute control over both executive and legislative authority, and his critics accuse him of seeking dictatorial powers and undermining rule of law.

He has said he will uphold rights and freedoms won in the 2011 revolution that brought democracy and that he will put a new constitution to a referendum this summer, with new parliamentary elections to follow in December.

However, with Tunisia facing a rapidly looming crisis in public finances, the Western donors that have previously bailed it out have voiced deep concern at Saied's moves and have said any political process needs to be inclusive.

— Reuters

Iraqi supreme court rules Zebari out

PRESIDENTIAL RACE

BAGHDAD: Iraq's Supreme Federal Court has ruled that former foreign minister Hoshyar Zebari is not eligible to run for the presidency amid corruption allegations, the state news agency reported on Sunday, a move that prolongs a political standoff.

Zebari, a prominent Kurdish politician who served as Iraq's foreign minister for more than a decade, called the court's decision "an injustice". He was finance minister when he was sacked by parliament in 2016 over alleged corruption. He denied the accusations and said they are politically motivated.

The court said a decision by parliament to accept his presidential bid was incorrect and it also barred him from running for the post in the future, the agency said.



Hoshyar Zebari speaks during a news conference in Baghdad. – Reuters

The ruling was the court's final decision after it issued an initial ruling last week suspending Zebari's candidacy while it looked into the corruption allegations.

"We were surprised by our exclusion from our right to nominate," Zebari said in a news conference on Sunday following the ruling.

"We respect the judiciary, but I have the right to say that there has been injustice and arbitrariness in the decision."

Earlier this month, four parliamentarians filed a petition to the federal court demanding Zebari's exclusion from the presidential race, accusing him of financial and administrative corruption.

Zebari, who was one of 25 presidential candidates, had high chances of winning the parliamentary vote to be president before the corruption allegations surfaced again.

Parliament had been due to vote

on a new head of state last Monday but cancelled the vote because it lacked the quorum to hold a session after many lawmakers said they would boycott it after the Supreme Federal Court suspended Zebari's candidacy. The president's role is mostly ceremonial, but will ask the largest bloc in parliament to form a government.

In a separate decision the Federal Court said that President Barham Salih, who is also running for a second term, will continue in his position until a new president is elected.

The court decision is a blow to populist cleric Moqtada al Sadr, who was the biggest winner in the October parliamentary election. He had vowed to quickly push through a government. Sadr, along with the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) of which Zebari is a member, and an alliance of lawmakers had supported Zebari's bid for president.

— Reuters

Marcos Jr's lead widening in presidential race

MANILA: The son and namesake of late Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos strengthened his lead over his closest rival ahead of the presidential election in May, results of a new poll released on Sunday showed.

Ferdinand Marcos Jr garnered a 44-point lead over Philippine Vice-President Leni Robredo in the January 19-24 survey by independent pollster Pulse Asia, an 11-point increase compared with the previous poll in early December.

A total of 2,400 respondents were asked to pick their first choice for president and vice-president if the election were held during the survey period, with 60 per cent expressing preference for Marcos, while 16 per cent chose Robredo. In the December poll with the same sample size, Marcos was on top with 53 per cent compared to Robredo's 20 per cent.

Boxing superstar Manny



Philippine Vice-President Leni Robredo, presidential candidate for the 2022 Philippine elections, during a campaign rally in Quezon City, Metro Manila. – Reuters

Pacquiao and Manila city mayor Francisco Domagoso trailed, each getting 8 per cent, while Senator Panfilo Lacson took 4 per cent. In the Philippines, the president and vice-president are elected separately.

Marcos' running mate, Sara Duterte-Carpio, the daughter of incumbent President Rodrigo Duterte, remained the top choice for vice-president, taking a 21-point lead over her closest rival, Senate President Vicente Sotto. — Reuters

SV Pittie Sohar Textiles SAOC

ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING AGENDA

The Board of Directors of **SV Pittie Sohar Textiles SAOC** is pleased to invite the Company's shareholders to attend the company's Ordinary General Meetings, to be held at 2:00 pm on **Tuesday, 01/03/2022**, in the company's head quarter in Qurum, near the Philippine Embassy if the quorum of the meeting is not completed, a second annual ordinary general meeting will be held on **Wednesday 02/03/2022** at the same time and place to discuss the following agenda:

1. To consider the auditor's report and approve the balance sheet and profit and loss account for the financial year ended on 31/3/2021.

Each shareholder can view reports, documents and data related to the agenda items of the annual ordinary general meeting during the official working hours at the company's main office, and each shareholder has the right to authorize in writing any other person to attend the meeting and vote on his behalf on the decisions of the meeting.

Please arrive to the meeting venue at least half an hour before the scheduled time.

For further information, please contact
Mr. Majed Al-Muqbali on the phone 99811888

SV Pittie Sohar Textiles SAOC

EXTRA ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING AGENDA

The Board of Directors of **SV Pittie Sohar Textiles SAOC** is pleased to invite the Company's shareholders to attend the company's extraordinary General Meetings, to be held at 1:50 pm on **Thursday, 01/03/2022**, in the company's head quarter in Qurum, near the Philippine Embassy if the quorum of the meeting is not completed, a second annual ordinary general meeting will be held on **Wednesday 02/03/2022** at the same time and place to discuss the following agenda:

1. To consider and approve the company financial situation and take the necessary measures in this regard according to the proposal of the Board of Directors (according to the attached explanatory bulletin).

Each shareholder can view reports, documents and data related to the agenda items of the extra ordinary general meeting during the official working hours at the company's main office, each shareholder has the right to authorize in writing any other person to attend the meeting and vote on his behalf on the decisions of the meeting.

Please arrive to the meeting venue at least half an hour before the scheduled time.

For further information, please contact
Mr. Majed Al-Muqbali on the phone 99811888

UNITED NATIONS

5 UN staff abducted in Yemen

Five United Nations staff have been abducted in southern Yemen while returning to Aden after a field mission, the United Nations said. The staff were abducted on Friday in Abyan governorate, said Russell Geekie, a spokesman for the top UN official in Yemen.

"The United Nations is in close contact with the authorities to secure their release," Geekie said. Yemen's internationally recognised government, which is based in south Yemen, was working to safely free the UN staff abducted by unknown gunmen, the official news agency cited a cabinet statement as saying.

An official at the UN office in Aden said that four of those seized were Yemeni nationals. The war has killed tens of thousands of people and caused a dire humanitarian crisis with 80 per cent of Yemen's population reliant on aid.

— Reuters



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In brief

■ RIYADH



\$80 BN ARAMCO SHARES MOVED TO SAUDI SOVEREIGN FUND

Saudi Arabia has moved four per cent of Aramco shares worth \$80 billion in the world's biggest oil exporter to the kingdom's sovereign wealth fund, authorities said. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman announced the move as part of efforts to recalibrate the oil-dominated economy. The transfer is also the latest sign that Saudi Arabia wants to open up the oil giant and "crown jewel" of the Saudi economy, the Arab world's largest.

The "transfer of four per cent of Aramco shares to the Public Investment Fund (PIF)... is part of the kingdom's long-term strategy to support the restructuring of its economy", the crown prince was quoted as saying by the official Saudi Press Agency. — **AFP**

■ JAKARTA



HIGH WAVES KILL 10 DURING INDONESIA BEACH RITUAL

At least 10 Indonesians died after tidal waves swept away a group of people meditating on a beach during Sunday's early hours, police said. The group of 23 people was holding hands and meditating on Payangan beach, East Java province, shortly after midnight.

"They were too close to the sea and could not save themselves when the tidal waves came and swept them away", local police chief Hery Purnomo told TVOne. Ten bodies had been retrieved from the ocean and 12 people rescued alive. One more person, a 40-year-old man, was still unaccounted for.

It was unclear what kind of ritual the group was performing in the region, Purnomo said, but it was led by a spiritual guru who survived the incident and would be questioned. — **AFP**

■ WINDSOR



KEY BRIDGE TO US STILL SHUT AS POLICE CLEAR PROTESTERS

Canadian police cleared protesters and vehicles that had blocked a vital trade route along the border with the United States, with some arrests, but the bridge was not yet open to traffic on Sunday. The arrests came after a tense standoff between Canadian police and demonstrators since Friday when a court order and threats of arrest failed to end the blockade of the Ambassador Bridge in Windsor, Ontario, which entered its sixth day on Sunday. "Enforcement actions continue at the demonstration area with arrests being made. Vehicles being towed. — **Reuters**

Germany re-elects Steinmeier as president

FRANKFURT: Frank-Walter Steinmeier was elected to a second term as Germany's president on Sunday after a special assembly voted the veteran politician, seen as a symbol of consensus and continuity, back in to the prominent yet largely ceremonial post.

Steinmeier's election by secret ballot by a majority of the assembly for another five years was widely expected, amid broad support from most of Germany's major parties during a time of global turmoil and following a recent change of government.

In his acceptance speech, Steinmeier criticised Russia's military build-up near Ukraine. "I can only warn (President Vladimir Putin)... Don't underestimate the strength of democracy."

A top government aide during Gerhard Schroeder's chancellorship and a foreign minister under Angela Merkel, Steinmeier is the 12th person — all men — to hold the office in the post-war era.

During his first presidential term he built a reputation as a moral compass for the nation, urging people to get coronavirus vaccinations and speaking out against extremism and violence.

In 2020, at an event at Jerusalem's



German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier waves next to his wife Elke Buedenbender after his re-election as Germany's President in Berlin. — **Reuters**

Yad Vashem memorial centre to mark the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp, Steinmeier described himself as "laden with the heavy, historical burden of guilt" and warned that the "spirits of evil are emerging in a new guise". "I wish I could say that we Germans have learnt from history

once and for all", he said.

Barred from active politics as president, Steinmeier grew to prominence as a Social Democrat, the party of Schroeder and of current Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

As foreign minister in 2016, he drew criticism when he labelled Nato's decision to stage military manoeuvres in eastern Europe as

"sabre-rattling".

German presidents are elected by special assemblies comprising lawmakers and hundreds of other prominent citizens.

This time the body included Merkel, making her first public appearance since leaving government, the co-founder and chief medical officer of BioNTech,

Appeals to Putin to de-escalate tensions over Ukraine after his re-election

Ozlem Tureci, and moustachioed drag queen Gloria Viagra.

Steinmeier received 1,045 out of 1,437 votes cast at an extraordinary meeting of the Federal Convention, Bundestag President Bärbel Bas confirmed. Steinmeier used the occasion to appeal to Russian President Vladimir Putin to de-escalate tensions over Ukraine.

The Russian leader has been accused of planning an incursion into eastern Ukraine in the near future after weeks of warnings over a massive troop build-up along the countries' shared border.

"I appeal to President Putin to loosen the noose around Ukraine's neck and join us in seeking a way to preserve peace in Europe", Steinmeier said in Berlin.

Putin should not make the mistake of underestimating the strength of democracy, Steinmeier added in his address.

The politician also referred to the pandemic's impact on German democracy. — **AFP**

US says diplomacy still open to end Ukraine standoff



Lithuania's military aid including Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, delivered as part of the security support package for Ukraine, is unloaded from a Globemaster III plane at the Boryspil International Airport outside Kyiv. — **Reuters**

HONOLULU/DONETSK: The United States said diplomacy could still resolve a standoff with Moscow over Ukraine but added that the risk of a Russian invasion was high enough to warrant pulling US Embassy staff out of Kyiv.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken was speaking after talks on Saturday with Japanese and South Korean counterparts, following Washington's warning that Russia's military, which has more than 100,000 troops massed near Ukraine, could invade at any moment. Moscow denies having any such plans.

A flurry of meetings and phone calls in recent days between top Western and Russian officials has produced no sign of a breakthrough to resolve in weeks

of escalating tensions.

Germany Chancellor Olaf Scholz is set to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday but a German source said Berlin did not expect "concrete results" from those talks. Scholz would make clear the West was united and any aggression would prompt "painful, considerable sanctions" on Russia, the source said.

"The diplomatic path remains open. The way for Moscow to show that it wants to pursue that path is simple. It should de-escalate, rather than escalate", Blinken said after his meetings in the US Pacific archipelago of Hawaii.

In an hour-long call on Saturday, US President Joe Biden told Putin that the West would respond decisively to any

invasion of Ukraine, adding such a step would produce widespread suffering and isolate Moscow.

A senior Biden administration official said the call was substantive but that there was no fundamental change.

The Kremlin said Putin told Biden that Washington had failed to take Russia's main concerns into account and it had received no "substantial answer" on key elements of its security demands.

Putin wants guarantees from the United States and Nato that include blocking Ukraine's entry into Nato, refraining from missile deployments near Russia's borders and scaling back Nato's military infrastructure in Europe to 1997 levels.

Washington regards many of the proposals as non-starters but

has pushed the Kremlin to discuss them jointly with Washington and its European allies.

Washington, along with its Western allies and many other countries, ordered most of its embassy staff on Saturday to leave Ukraine immediately due to the threat of an invasion.

"We ordered the departure of most of the Americans still at the US Embassy in Kyiv. The risk of Russian military action is high enough and the threat is imminent enough that this is the prudent thing to do", Blinken said in Honolulu.

Many of Washington's European allies and others have also been scaling back or evacuating staff from their Kyiv missions and have urged citizens to leave or avoid travel to Ukraine. — **Reuters**

Turkish oppn leaders seek to abolish presidential system

ISTANBUL: Six Turkish opposition parties have agreed on a strategy to replace President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, with the shared goal of abolishing his presidential system, they said on Sunday. Instead, the parties want to strengthen parliament, they said after a meeting.

Turkey is mired in one of its deepest ever political and economic crises, primarily due to arbitrary leadership under the presidential system, they said.

The six party leaders said they would publish details of the agreement at the end of February.

The six parties, which include the largest opposition party CHP and the national conservative Iyi Party, are expected to form an alliance, observers say. They are likely to put forward a joint candidate for the presidential and parliamentary elections that are scheduled for 2023.

The leaders of the Saadet Party, the Democratic Party (DP), the Democracy and Progress Party (Deva) and the Future Party also joined the pact.

The group does not include Turkey's pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP), which Erdogan's government accuses of having ties to the banned Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). — **dpa**

Replace criticism with acceptance and appreciation



Hyesha Barrett
@coach_hyesha

The writer is a certified Master Life Coach and NLP Practitioner based in Muscat. She is affiliated with the Whispers of Serenity Clinic

For most of us, it comes with extreme ease to give kind and caring words to others showing our endless support and unconditional love; yet when the tables are turned, why do we find it difficult to accept equal compassion towards ourselves?

We have been taught to be kind to others yet to hold the same love for ourselves can be considered ego-centric, narcissistic even. For the most part, the majority of us don't possess enough self-love, so in turn low self-worth, and low self-value and low self-confidence.

Self-love is extremely important. It is a state of appreciation for oneself that grows from continuous actions that support your physical, psychological and spiritual growth.

It means accepting your emotions and holding a high regard for your happiness. It means taking care of your own needs and not sacrificing your well-being to please others. When you hold yourself in high esteem, this will drive you to make healthy choices in life that serve you well.

Caring for others is important,

but it shouldn't come at the expense of your own well-being. Here are the ten reasons:

1 Self-love helps reduce stress: Self-care is a significant part of self-love. Without it, you might not believe you deserve a break and might therefore power through a stressful time even when it's painful. When you have healthy self-love, you will recognise the signs of burnout and are willing to take time out to repose, replenish and revive.

2 Self-love can help you develop healthier habits: Loving yourself can help you make better decisions. When you accept yourself without harsh judgment, you are more motivated to make positive changes in your life. Self-compassion helps form new, healthier habits.

3 Self-love improves your emotional resilience: During hard times, it's easy to slip into despair. Self-love helps counter negative self-talk and put things in perspective. Even if your struggles are a result of mistakes you made, self-love encourages you to learn from the mistakes and move forward. This builds your

emotional resilience and prepares you for future challenges.

4 Self-love improves your relationships: There's a common saying that states you can't truly love others until you love yourself. While this proverb is a bit extreme, loving yourself does help improve your relationships. When you love yourself, you won't feel as

CARING FOR OTHERS IS IMPORTANT, BUT IT SHOULDN'T COME AT THE EXPENSE OF YOUR OWN WELL-BEING

dependent on others for your sense of worth. This helps you set boundaries or if necessary, end unhealthy relationships.

5 Self-love makes you more productive: Procrastination is a productivity killer. To get yourself motivated, you might resort to harsh tactics. Some people use threats of self-punishment to try and accomplish a task, but this is not an effective motivator. It's better

to have compassion for yourself when you procrastinate. Use your "failure" as a learning opportunity for the future. Instead of being bogged down with self-criticism, you'll feel lighter and ready to make changes to your behaviour.

6 Self-love can help manage anxiety and depression: It has been suggested that people with high levels of self-compassion have a lower risk for developing anxiety or depression. This implies that aspects of self-love can help manage symptoms.

7 Self-love can increase your happiness: Accepting and loving all aspects of yourself, flaws included is linked to increased happiness. Self-love encourages you to view yourself like a good friend. You can acknowledge that you're not perfect and still worthy of acceptance and support.

8 Self-love boosts your confidence: People with negative self-talk often struggle with low self-esteem. Self-love is a great way to recognise your skills, be compassionate when you're frustrated and celebrate your wins

— this in turn strengthens your confidence muscle.

9 Self-love helps you achieve your goals: Self-love teaches that your dreams deserve priority. It isn't selfish to go after what you want in life. As long as you aren't stepping on others to reach your goals, you can live your fulfilling life.

10 Self-love inspires others: Self-love can be contagious. When you model a healthy relationship with yourself, it motivates others. They will follow suit and begin to practice more self-care and self-compassion.

In order to truly encompass the meaning of self-love, make sure you replace criticism and comparison with acceptance and appreciation. Communicate with yourself in a kind and loving manner.

Show respect for yourself by setting boundaries and prioritising your needs through spending quality time doing what makes your heart happy. There is no better love than loving oneself. You will automatically radiate from the inside out and spread the joy and beauty that resides inside.

Crisis overshadows Blinken bridge building trip to Asia

PAUL HANDLEY

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and his Japanese and South Korean counterparts declared their unity on confronting security threats in the Asia-Pacific, even as Washington was intensely occupied by the possibility of war in Eastern Europe.

Blinken, South Korean Foreign Minister Chung Eui-yong, and Japanese Foreign Minister Hayashi Yoshimasa met in Honolulu for a day of talks focused on North Korea's nuclear threat as well as the China challenge. Washington organised the meeting as the third stop of a pan-Pacific round of diplomacy meant to reassert the on-off US "pivot" to Asia in politics and security.

Blinken first attended a meeting of the Quad in Melbourne, the alliance of Australia, Japan, India, and the United States aimed at blunting Beijing's expansive military policy in the Asia-Pacific.

The top US envoy then travelled to Fiji for a virtual meeting of representatives of 17 Pacific Island nations who are also experiencing China's economic, political and military ambitions.

US officials said the trip was to assure countries across the region that Washington is still deeply attentive to their issues.

During the week-long trip, the White House released its strategy for what it has rebranded the "Indo Pacific region," an 18-page document that stresses the centrality of the region in US policy.

"That strategy reflects the fundamental truth that more than any other part of the world, what happens in this region is going to shape the lives of Americans and people around the world," Blinken said in Honolulu on Saturday to close out the week.

At every stop, however, the threat of a Russian invasion of Ukraine had nearly all of Washington's attention, and drew concerns from its counterparts.

Blinken spent much of his travel time liaising with allies and his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, on the crisis.

And at each press conference, meant to showcase the US' dedication to Asia-Pacific affairs, attention instead fixed on Blinken's statement that Russia could attack Ukraine within days. Yet Blinken's message was well-received. — AFP

They took a chance on collaborative living. They lost everything



LISA PREVOST

The writer is a freelance reporter for The New York Times

MEMBERS OF ROCKY CORNER MOSTLY AGREE THAT THE INCREASING COMPLEXITY OF THE PROJECT PROVED MORE THAN THE GROUP COULD AFFORD OR MANAGE

For Claudia Ruffle, living in a cohousing community was a lifelong dream. She longed for connection with people who shared her values, particularly around concern for the environment. But as an introvert, she found it hard to meet people on her own.

Cohousing, a form of collaborative living that originated in Denmark, provided "a structure where I didn't have to be outgoing and could still get the benefit of getting to know people," said Ruffle, 72, a former substitute teacher and administrative secretary. "It compensated for my lack of outgoingness."

So she was among the early supporters of what was envisioned as Connecticut's first cohousing community. After more than a decade of planning, the project, called Rocky Corner, finally broke ground in 2018 on a 33-acre plot in Bethany, a suburb of New Haven. Ruffle and a friend contracted to purchase one of the attached housing units there, and sold their home in New Haven in anticipation of closing in 2019. But their closing date kept getting extended. And then members of the community were told that the project was having a cash flow problem.

"We thought, Oh, OK, we will give them all of our money for our unit with the understanding that once we can move in, our unit is paid for," Ruffle said. But instead, the entire project went into foreclosure. And Ruffle's dream — and finances — were dashed.

"That money is now gone and there's no way for us to retrieve it," she said. "We lost about \$170,000. And we both have very low incomes. Ever since, we've been living in not good circumstances at all." Members of Rocky Corner offer varying views of what exactly went wrong. But in general, most agree that the increasing

complexity of the project proved more than the group could afford or manage.

"Mistakes were made all along the line by all parties," said Dick Margulis, a book designer and editor who, along with his wife, was among the community's earliest organisers. What happened at Rocky Corner is not a reflection of the viability of cohousing in general, said Karen Gimnig, the interim executive director of the Cohousing Association of America, a national nonprofit that supports newly forming and existing communities.

There are about 170 established cohousing communities in the United States, according to the Cohousing Association. There are about 30 cohousing communities in California and five in New York State. In a cohousing model, residents own their own homes, but share common spaces — a structure aimed at fostering connection and community through collaborative living. "Projects that get under construction, like any other development project, it's imaginable that things could happen," Gimnig said. "But it's really, really rare."

The association always advises people planning such communities to partner with experienced cohousing

developers in order to minimise their risks, she said. Though cohousing projects are typically built on properties that have municipal water and sewer, she said, the Rocky Corner project was a rural property and involved reserving a portion of the land for farming.

Only about half of the planned 30 housing units were close to completion when Ion Bank, in Naugatuck, recently took possession of the property through a limited liability company. The bank submitted the sole bid of \$6.9 million at the foreclosure sale in November. Ion filed for foreclosure in 2020, with outstanding loans on the project totalling about \$6.7 million.

Housing Enterprises, a consulting firm in Enfield, helped the group win a \$2.6 million housing grant from the state to make some of the units affordable.

"A lot of people lost money," said David Berto, the president of Housing Enterprises. "There was a whole group of people who put in money to buy the land, and some of those weren't homebuyers. They were just people who wanted to help, including me. We have all lost money and that's just the way it is."

—The New York Times



From left: Eli Bradley, Dick Margulis, Kirina Gair-MacMichael and Brenda Caldwell with a poster for the Rocky Corner cohousing community in Bethany.

Love forms
spiritual reaction
and chemistry



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An author, columnist,
creative writer,
translator and a
communications
professional

and to be loved is actually a basic and genuine human instinct. Accordingly, this insists that we look for a mate to emotionally survive and have something deeply essential and spiritual to our soul.

Love, as an emotional need, is powerful; it is as strong as medication for its effect on human brain. Scientists have monitored the impact of love on the brain patterns of love-hooked individuals using imagery of their loved one. The results showed that the part of the brain, which responds to love feeling, is the same that reacts to powerful drug addiction. This reflects the strong effect that love can impose on people, as drugs are able to heal their sickness.

One of the scientists has been researching the effects of love on human brain for around three decades. Love stimulates the brain exactly the same way as powerful

LOVE IS A POWERFUL
CHEMICAL FOR IT
TRANSFORMS AND
EVOLVES DURING
RELATIONSHIPS AND
THE JOURNEY OF
HUMAN LIFETIME

‘feel-good’ chemical in the brain, which is called dopamine. Likewise, it is also highly influential in the management of pain, so love really does hurt sometime!

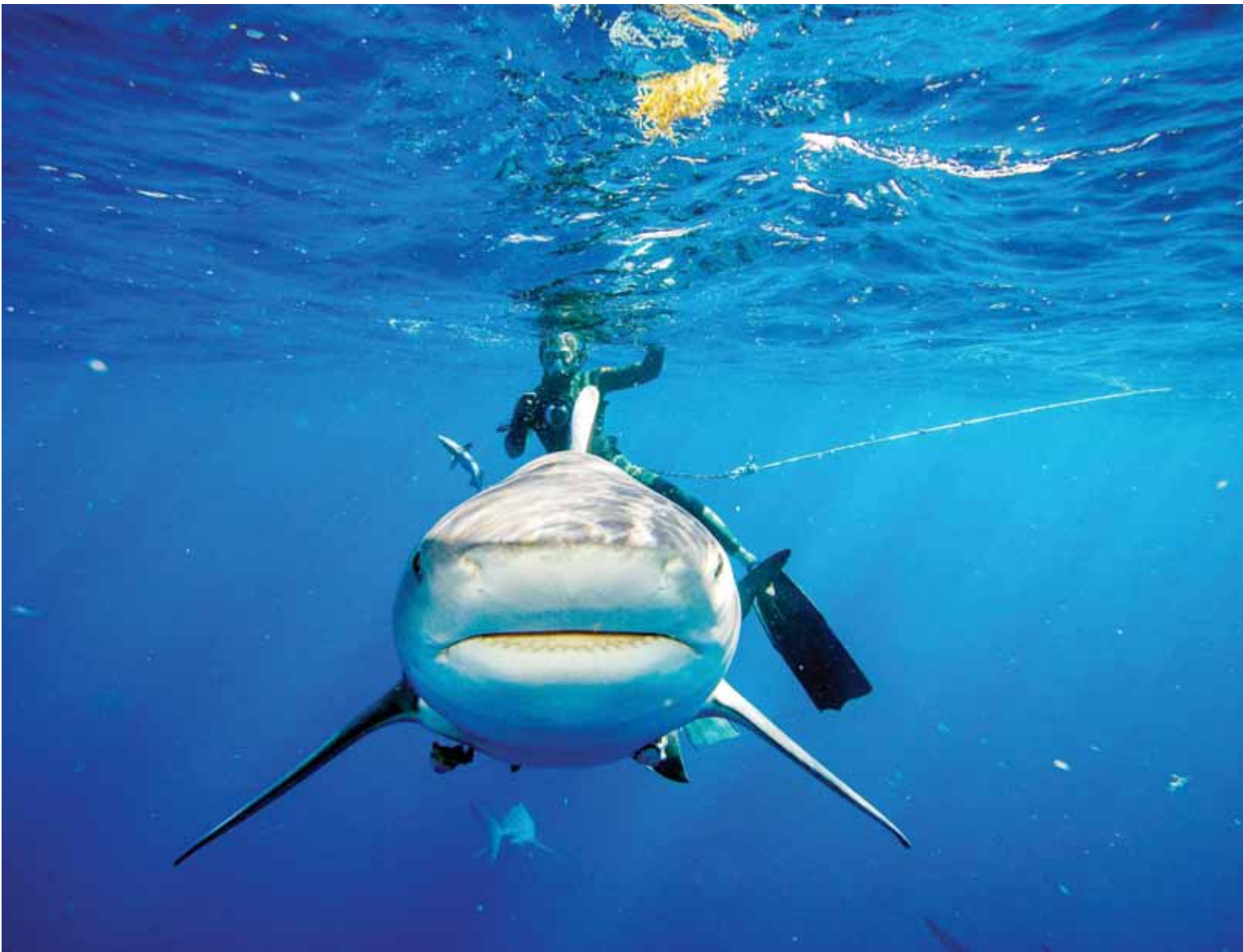
When we value love, we are not only willing to sacrifice for others and support them, but we also realise there is nothing wrong with being helpless. Many people define love as their sense of life, and it makes love even more important, but in all these cases love is regarded the main feeling and power of life. Plato said, “Every heart sings a song, incomplete, until another heart whispers back.” In fact, love is another form of dedication, passion and consistent performance.

Love is not a relationship between nations; rather it is a condition of mind brought about by the tranquility of soul. Love is not only the absence of war, but it reflects a state of peace that one needs. To evaluate a lasting love relation means to understand the value of a situation and act upon it wisely. Simply, love is not something we can buy; it has to be created and treasured between people. It has been said that love does not just sit there like a stone, but it has to be made like bread; remade all the time and made new.

Over the years, love will always remain critically a significant necessity throughout human existence. Love is a powerful chemical for it transforms and evolves during relationships and the journey of human lifetime. That is why an early passionate love cannot last at the same level of desire and intensity. Therefore, it starts along the way of a relationship to have a more solid and durable state, which serves cementing the relationship between two people together throughout the different challenges and experiences both come across in their life.

Albert Einstein attributed that one cannot blame gravity for falling in love. Hence love and compassion and love and are necessities, not luxuries in life. In view of that, love is the principle, which creates and sustains relations between human beings. Love complements humans to one another like the different colours of a rainbow, which exist to make each other more beautiful with no envy, jealousy, or hatred between colours. Overall, love is the crowning grace of humanity, the holiest right of the soul, the golden link, which connects us to duty and truth, the redeeming principle that primarily reunites the heart to life, and is predictive of endless good.

As February is known as the month of love as Valentines Day falls on 14th of this month. However, this is not the only day of love in the year where one could celebrate love with a wife, a mother, a friend or others. Some represent their love to their dear ones by purchasing heart-shaped chocolates or baking heart-shaped cookies and celebrate the day! To love



A CLOSE
LOOK

A bull shark
inspects a
photographer,
coming close to
the camera,
during a shark
dive off the coast
of Jupiter,
Florida, US, on
Saturday. – AFP

Germany loses patience with
ex-chancellor’s Russia lobbying

MICHELLE FITZPATRICK

Former German chancellor Gerhard Schroeder’s close friendship with President Vladimir Putin and lucrative business dealings with Russia have for years been reluctantly tolerated at home.

But as war clouds gather over Ukraine and allies question Germany’s resolve, Schroeder is increasingly seen as potential liability to new chancellor and fellow Social Democrat Olaf Scholz, fuelling calls for a clean break with the pro-Kremlin lobbyist.

“Schroeder is a burden to Germany’s foreign policy and to his old party,” *Der Spiegel* weekly wrote. “He has clear goals. Not for his country, but for himself”

Schroeder’s recent warning to Ukraine to stop its “sabre rattling” was met with widespread disbelief in Germany, even among longtime friends within the centre-left SPD party.

Last week’s announcement that the 77-year-old is set to serve on the board of Russian state energy giant Gazprom did little to calm tempers, as did the revelation that Schroeder held talks about Russia with an SPD interior ministry official last month.

The controversy comes at an awkward time for Scholz, who faces a major test next week when he travels to Moscow for his first in-person talks with Putin since taking office.

Scholz has been accused of being slow to step into the diplomatic fray in the Ukraine crisis, and of muddying Germany’s message of being united with allies against the Russian threat.

After much prodding from the United States and other allies, Scholz recently toughened his stance on possible sanctions should Russia invade Ukraine, including halting the Gazprom-owned Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline.

It was Schroeder, chancellor from 1998-2005, who signed off on the first Nord Stream pipeline between Russia and Germany in his final weeks in office, and he currently heads the Nord Stream company’s shareholders’ committee.

He is also chairman of the board of directors of Russian oil giant Rosneft.

In a TV interview, Scholz denied being influenced by Schroeder ahead of the Moscow trip.

“I haven’t asked him for advice, he hasn’t given me any either,” he said. “There’s only one chancellor, and that’s me.”



This file photo shows Russian President Vladimir Putin and then German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder during an economic forum in Moscow. – AFP

Putin and Schroeder appear to have built “a genuine friendship, based on trust” back when Schroeder was in power, political scientist Ursula Muench said.

But “it’s problematic when a former chancellor uses his past political activities and contacts to make money,” she said.

Germany’s SPD has historically championed close ties with Russia, born out of the “Ostpolitik” policy of rapprochement and dialogue with the then Soviet Union, devised by former SPD chancellor Willy Brandt in the 1970s.

Successive chancellors continued the policy to varying degrees, including Scholz’s centre-right predecessor Angela Merkel who focused on the economic benefits of dealing with Russia — a strategy known as “Wandel durch Handel” in German, or “change through trade”.

But even among German politicians sympathetic to Russia and its longstanding grievance over Nato’s expansion, patience with Schroeder — who famously celebrated his 70th birthday with Putin in Saint Petersburg — is running out.

SPD veteran Rudolf Dressler told

Spiegel that Schroeder’s behaviour was “embarrassing”, and urged the party leadership to ask Schroeder to refrain from commenting on political matters in public.

Opposition politicians and those from the SPD’s junior coalition party, the liberal FDP, have called for Schroeder to lose his privileges as ex-chancellor — including an office with staff and a driver.

German taxpayers should no longer “finance Russian lobbying”, MP Volker Ullrich from the conservative CSU party told *Bild* newspaper, suggesting Gazprom pay for Schroeder’s upkeep.

Sudha David-Wilp, deputy director of the German Marshall Fund think-tank in Berlin, said the latest Schroeder saga was “a distraction” in the Ukraine crisis, but nothing new.

“Everybody knows where Schroeder stands, everybody knows where he is getting his source of income from,” she said. More interesting is how Scholz and the SPD choose to navigate relations with Russia in the future, she said.

“Is there now an understanding that ‘Ostpolitik’ or ‘Wandel durch Handel’ is a thing of the past? Or will they keep using the same formula?” she asked.

— AFP

sport

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Bardiani-CSF rider Samuele Zoccarato (L) and Euskatel-Euskadi’s Julen Irizar (R) ride during the fourth stage of Tour of Oman between Al Sifah and Royal Opera House Muscat on Sunday. – AFP

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, FEB 13

Talented Fausto Masnada of Quick-Step Alpha Vinyl took command of the Tour of Oman 2022 after a dominating performance in the Stage 4 here on Sunday.

The Italian completed the 119.5km Stage 4 from Al Sifah to Royal Opera House in Muscat in 03:01:53 to climb up the overall standings with two stages left.

Quick-Step dominated the stage with Masnada winning it solo by over a minute to earn a comfortable advantage in the overall standings.

Masnada’s partner Mauro Schmid finished second 1.07 minute behind the team-mate.

French rider Kevin Vaquelin of Arkea-Samsic claimed the third position.

Stage 3 winner and former red jersey holder Anthon Charmig (Uno-X Pro Cycling Team) stayed in the hunt by finishing sixth after Portuguese rider Rui Costa of UAE Team Emirates and Team DSM’s Kevin Vermaerke.

Charmig is now 55 seconds behind Masnada in the overall standings.

Czech cyclist Jan Hirt of Intermarche-Wanty-Gobert Materiaux is third at 58 seconds and Schmid fourth at 1:08.

Climbing specialist Masnada, fourth red jersey holder after four stages, is expected to do well in the Monday’s crucial summit finish on Jabal Al Akhdhar (Green Mountain) ahead of the flat final stage on Tuesday.

There was an early breakaway — Samuele Zoccarato (Bardiani-CSF), Julen Irizar (Euskaltel-Euskadi), Michael Kukrle (Gazprom-RusVelo) — but it didn’t last long as the race exploded on the early climbs of Al Jissah and Al Wadi Al Kabir.

MASNADA’S FINAL PUSH

A small group got back together behind Schmid as they headed for the final ascent of Al Jabal Street (Bausher-Al Amerat), to be summited with 15km to go. Kevin Vauquelin (Arkea-Samsic) set off in pursuit of Schmid and goes over the top with a 10 second gap to a 7-man group.

Masnada broke away despite Charmig’s efforts to catch up and Vauquelin was caught with 12km to go. Masnada went solo to victory with a 1 minute 7 seconds gap on the line.

Mark Cavendish leads the points classification with 30 points ahead of team-mate Masnada with 24 points and Fernando Gaviria of UAE Team Emirates with 22 points.



Quick-Step Alpha Vinyl Team’s rider Fausto Masnada reacts as he wins the fourth stage at Royal Opera House in Muscat on Sunday. – AFP

TOUR OF OMAN STAGE 4 RESULTS			
POSITION	RIDER	TEAM	TIMING
1	Fausto Masnada (Ita)	Quick-Step Alpha Vinyl Team	03:01:53
2	Mauro Schmid (Swi)	Quick-Step Alpha Vinyl Team	03:03:00
3	Kevin Vaquelin (Fra)	Arkea-Samsic	03:03:00
4	Rui Costa (Por)	UAE Team Emirates	03:03:00
5	Kevin Vermaerke (USA)	Team DSM	03:03:00
6	Anthon Charmig (Den)	Uno-X Pro Cycling Team	03:03:00
7	Jan Hirt (Cze)	Intermarche-Wanty-Gobert Materiaux	03:03:00
8	Henri Vandenabeele (Bel)	Team DSM	03:03:00
9	Sander Armee (Bel)	Cofidis	03:03:11
10	Jonas Hvideberg (Nor)	Team DSM	03:03:16

GENERAL CLASSIFICATION AFTER STAGE 4			
POSITION	RIDER	TEAM	TIMING
1	Fausto Masnada (Ita)	Quick-Step Alpha Vinyl Team	14:49:00
2	Anthon Charmig (Den)	Uno-X Pro Cycling Team	14:49:55
3	Jan Hirt (Cze)	Intermarche-Wanty-Gobert Materiaux	14:49:58
4	Mauro Schmid (Swi)	Quick-Step Alpha Vinyl Team	14:50:06
5	Rui Costa (Por)	UAE Team Emirates	14:50:07
6	Elie Gesbert (Fra)	Arkea-Samsic	14:50:22
7	Kevin Vermaerke (USA)	Team DSM	14:50:22
8	Henri Vandenabeele (Bel)	Team DSM	14:50:23
9	Rein Taaramae (Est)	Intermarche-Wanty-Gobert Materiaux	14:50:28
10	Denis Nekrasov (Rus)	Gazprom-RusVelo	14:50:31



Oman's Abdullah al Rawahi during Qatar Rally



Nasser and Mathieu celebrate on the podium

AL RAWAHI

CLAIMS SECOND BEHIND ALATTIYAH

LOSAIL (Qatar): Qatar's Nasser Saleh al Attiyah overcame the most difficult challenge of his career at the Qatar International Rally to record a 16th victory at his home event and achieve a stunning milestone of 80 wins in the FIA Middle East Rally Championship (Merc) since 2003.

Driving his customary Autotek Volkswagen Polo GTI, Al Attiyah only hit the front on the eighth of 12 gravel special stages in the Qatar deserts and survived a front puncture in stage nine to press home his advantage over the final three stages. Mads Ostberg pushed him all the way to the penultimate stage, but Al Attiyah hung on doggedly and eventually secured a winning margin of 4min 38.4sec after the Norwegian retired.

The success was a 28th for co-driver Mathieu Baumel in the Merc and his fifth in Qatar, while

Al Attiyah's 80th success as a driver equalled the number of wins achieved last month by French legend Sebastien Loeb in the FIA World Rally Championship.

"It is a good feeling," said Al Attiyah, who duly extended his lead in the regional series. "I am really happy to win Qatar Rally. This is my home and in front of my people. This was not an easy race. It was tricky. The pace that we did from yesterday to today, me and Kris and Mads, was very hard. This was a fantastic win. I was trying to keep one pace. It was amazing."

Ostberg and Ilka Minor certainly took the fight to Al Attiyah, led overnight and extended their advantage on the first stage of the morning. The Norwegian lost his way for a few seconds in stage eight and then a rear puncture cost him his lead

before the regroup. He pushed hard during the afternoon to try and hunt down a charging Al Attiyah, but it was in vain and a heavy impact in the penultimate stage damaged the Skoda Fabia R2 Evo, caused a water leak from a fractured pipe and sidelined the former FIA WRC2 World Champion within sight of the finish.

ABDULLAH KEEPS COOL

Oman's Abdullah al Rawahi was patient and stayed clear of trouble as chaos ensued around him. He and Jordanian co-driver Ata al Hmoud were rewarded with a stunning second place in their Oman Rally Team-run Skoda Fabia R2 Evo and a useful haul of championship points.

Al Rawahi said: "Quite happy. The guys in front were pushing too much and a few of them had technical problems. I was trying

to be clean and take advantage of anyone who made mistakes. Overall, on the second day, the times were quite close and I am happy with my performance. It was really important that we finished second."

Andorra-based Ulsterman Kris Meeke and co-driver Chris Patterson led after two stages on Friday before rolling out of contention for the win in stage four. Meeke climbed from fifth to third during the final day and then overcame a damper issue on the final loop of three stages to regain third overall and the final place on the podium.

The former WRC star said: "Normally I like to be at the races. We were early on but I made that silly mistake on stage four. We saw Nasser had his issues but still got through. He has proven why he is the king of the desert."

Dhofar meet Al Rustaq, Al Nasr face Al Seeb

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, FEB 13

The semifinal leg draws of the His Majesty's Cup football championship was announced with crucial fixtures. Defending champion Dhofar will take on Al Rustaq in a tight clash while five times winner, Al Nasr, will face heavyweights, Al Seeb, in a key semifinal encounter.

The first leg match of the semifinals between Dhofar and Al Rustaq will be held first at Al Saada Sports Complex on February 20 while in the following day, Al Nasr will host Al Seeb at the same venue.

Both matches will kick off on 5:45 pm. The second leg matches will take place on March 2 as Al Rustaq will host Dhofar at Al Rustaq Sports Complex while Al Seeb will face Al Nasr at Seeb Stadium on March 3.

The Oman Football Association (OFA) held a draw ceremony of the semifinal round on Sunday at its headquarters located in Seeb Stadium.

The former national football team and top scorers, Hani al Thabit and Emad al Hosni attended the draw function in presence of OFA officials and representatives of the qualified teams.

Shaikh Thabit al Yafei, vice chairman of Al Nasr club said for the media post the draw that the match against Al Seeb will be an easy game. "The team is in good condition and full readiness to overcome Al Seeb and move to the final. We are ready for the



clash and awaiting the opponent in the field. I am expecting Al Nasr and Dhofar will advance to the final match of the coveted cup and both teams will be in Salalah," he ended.

Al Seeb and Al Nasr will rekindle the memories of the 2005/2006 season as both teams met in the concluding match. Al Nasr had lifted the title after defeating Al Seeb 3-1 in the final match which played at the Sohar Sports Complex.

On January 15 at Omantel League, Al Seeb posted a 2-0 win over Al Nasr in the 11th week. However, the assignment in HM Cup will be different than the previous matches and both teams will eye the triumph only.

On the other side, record-chasing Dhofar's assignment will not be easy as they will face fighting Al Rustaq who will be targeting the first presence in the final of the prestigious cup.

Rasheed Jaber's men will work hard in the forthcoming days to gear up properly for the match. The opponent Al Rustaq will not miss the opportunity as they inch closer to the historic title by two steps.



UAE keep cool to beat Ireland

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, FEB 13

UAE kept their cool to win against Ireland by 13 runs in a battle of nerves at the quadrangular T20 series at the Oman Cricket Academy in Al Amerat on Sunday.

The second win put the UAE on top of table with 4 points from two matches. Ireland are second with two points and a better net run-rate than Nepal with same points. Hosts Oman are yet to get a point.

Ireland captain Andy Balbirnie won the toss and sent UAE to bat.

Craig Young got the explosive opener Chirag Suri early at 13 and Josh Little sent back other opener Mohammad Waseem for 12 as UAE slumped to 29-2 in the fourth over.

Vriitya Aravind and all-rounder Rohan Mustafa then rescued UAE with a 94-run partnership from 69 balls.

Aravind hit 50 from 36 balls and Mustafa scored 54 from 43 balls, both falling to Young who had an impressive bowling figures of 4-28 in four overs.

Kashif Daud hammered Mark



UAE's Rohan Mustafa in action.

Adair for 23 runs in the last over as UAE posted a total of 178 for 5.

In reply, Ireland started badly when star batter Paul Stirling (1) got out to a brilliant direct throw from Aravind in the fifth ball of the innings.

Gareth Delany then played a blinder smacking fours and sixers and threatened to take away the

match from the UAE.

UAE bowlers were relieved when Rohan Mustafa brilliantly bowled Delany with a slow ball after conceding consecutive boundaries. Delany hit 40 from 20 balls.

Delany stitched a 64-run partnership with skipper Balbirnie. Curtis Campher joined

Balbirnie in effort to build a partnership.

Palaniapan Meiyappan broke the partnership when he took the wicket of Balbirnie, caught by Mustafa. The Ireland skipper made 42 from 27 balls.

The Irish hopes of a win ended when Campher was run out after a smart piece of work from wicketkeeper Mohammad Boota and Zohoor Khan. Campher made 40 from 39 balls.

Zohoor, who was at the receiving end from Delany in his first over, came back brilliantly to bowl back-to-back yorkers in his second spell to make scoring difficult of Irish batters.

In the end, it was too big an ask for Mark Adair and Simi Singh as they fell 13 runs shot at 165 for 7.

On Monday, Oman will play UAE at 10 am while Ireland take on Nepal at 2 pm.

BRIEF SCORES: UAE 178-5 in 20 overs (Rohan Mustafa 54, Vriitya Aravind 50; Craig Young 4-28) beat Ireland 165-7 in 20 overs (Andy Balbirnie 42, Gareth Delany 40, Curtis Campher 40; Palaniapan Meiyappan 2-23)

SUV cars bonanza at Al Bashayer Camel fest

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, FEB 13

The fifth edition of the Al Bashayer Annual Camel Festival will be organised from February 28 to March 5 with the support of HH Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan.

A press conference to announce more details regarding the event will be held on Tuesday under the chairmanship of Dr Abdullah bin Salim bin Saeed al Junaibi, director of Al Bashayer Race Track for Arab Camels.

Dr Abdullah stated that the conference will be held in Al Bashayer Race Track in Adam, with the participation of camel owners, enthusiasts and media.

The most prominent details will be about 25 SUV cars as prizes for winners of different ages and categories, from varied distances (robotic rider) 4 and 5 km for the young age, a distance



Dr Abdullah al Junaibi

of 6/8 for old age and there are also surprises for a race for the (human rider) from a distance of 2/12 km.

On the other hand, more information will be shared regarding the installation of the new application of the camel database (Al Bashayer Race Track).

It will be the first time in the field in Al Bashayer festival. Also he added that there are other artistic programmes that will be on display including the Heritage Forum and folk arts.

LIVINGSTONE, ARCHER

HIT JACKPOT DEALS AT MEGA IPL AUCTION

HARIDEV PUSHPARAJ
MUSCAT, FEB 13

On a day of frenetic bidding action at the Indian Premier League (IPL) auction 2022 in Bangalore, Englishmen Liam Livingstone (INR 11.5 cr) and Jofra Archer (8 cr), West Indians Romario Shepherd (7.75 cr) and Odean Smith along with the current hot property India U-19s made all the headlines and came away with big bucks.

With 439 players up for bids on the concluding day, most teams were going to pick up their core group of players.

Big-hitting batsman Livingstone was lapped up by the Punjab Kings after some heavy duty bidding and the same franchise clinched the deal for another overseas power hitter Odean Smith for 6 crore.

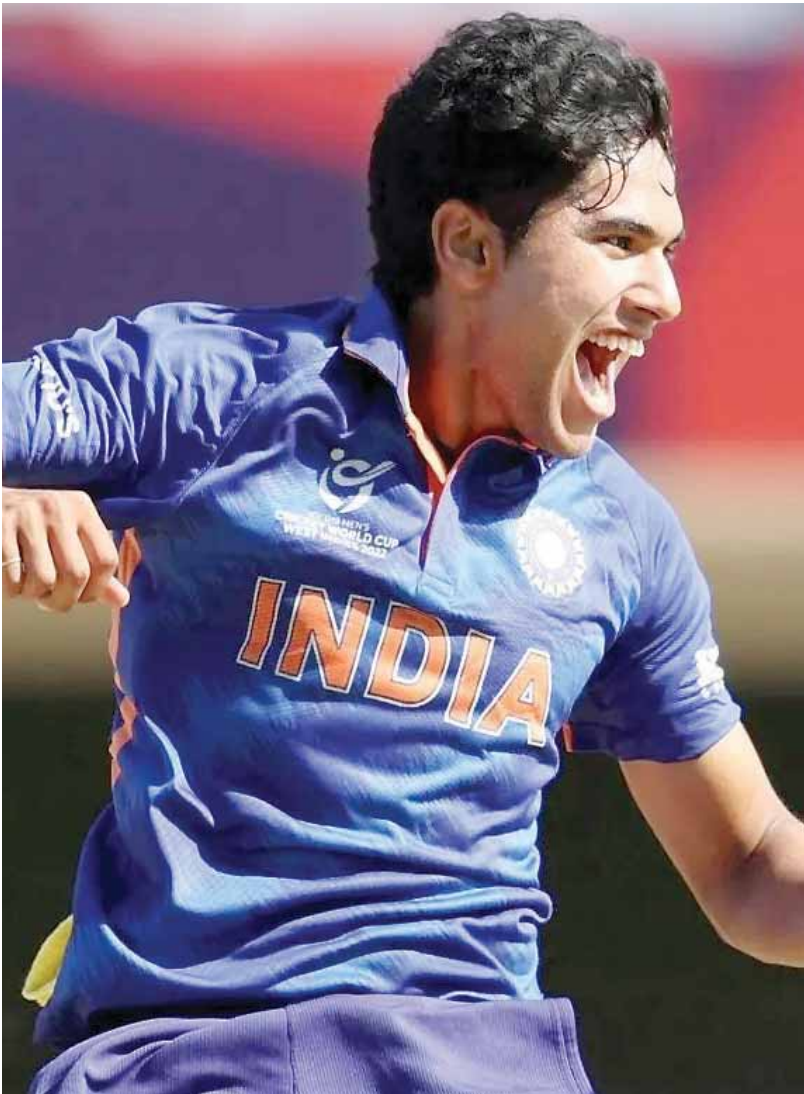
Mumbai Indians, who started off the day slowly and seemed very strategic in their plans, got the services of potent strike bowler Jofra Archer for 8 crore and Singapore batsman Tim David for 8.25 crore in what were very worthy buys.

The surprise package of the day was Romario Shepherd after he was bought by Sunrisers Hyderabad after a fierce bidding war for 7.75 crore.

CHAHAR MAKES IT TO CSK
Earlier, apart from Ishan Kishan's whopping sum of 15.25 crore paid by the Mumbai Indians, it was Deepak Chahar who made all the news.

The India all-rounder was picked up by his current team Chennai Super Kings for 14 crore as CSK broke the bank to bring one of their most sought after players back into the fold. The deal made Chahar the most expensive Indian bowler in the IPL.

"When I reached till 14 [crore], I was thinking I should not go for more than this", Chahar told Star



Sports. "If CSK pulls out, then I will feel very sad. I wanted to play for CSK because I've not imagined myself playing in any other colour than yellow. At one time I was thinking it's too much. As a CSK player, I also want that we should build a good team, so after 13 [crore], I was actually thinking the bidding should stop and then CSK can buy some other players."

INDIA-U19s ENTER BIG LEAGUE

Three members of the U-19 World Cup winning Indian team members who were registered in the last minute came away with good deals.

Star batsman Raj Bawa was picked up by Punjab Kings for 2 crore and Rajvardhan Hangargekar was bought by Chennai Super Kings for 1.5 crore.

Meanwhile, skipper Yash Dhull was taken by Delhi Capitals for 50 lakh as the U-19s expectedly made an impact at the mega auction.

Among the senior Indian players, left-arm pacer Khaleel Ahmed was lapped up by Delhi Capitals for 5.25 crore while the beleaguered batsman Ajinkya Rahane was taken by Kolkata Knight Riders for 1 crore.

CSK bought allrounder Shivam Dube for 4 crore while Vijay Shankar went to Gujarat Titans for 1.4 crore.

SRI LANKANS SHINE

The likes of Dushmantha Chameera, Maheesh Theekshana and Chamika Karunaratne bagged IPL deals as well.

Pace bowler Chameera was bought by the new franchise Lucknow Super Giants for 2 crore while Theekshana was picked up by Chennai Super Kings for 70 lakhs. Karunaratne went to Kolkata Knight Riders for 50 lakhs.

Earlier on Saturday, Wanindu Hasaranga was bought by the Royal Challengers Bangalore for a healthy 10.5 crore.

HOW THE TEAMS STACK UP SO FAR

Chennai Super Kings: Ruturaj Gaikwad, Ambati Rayudu, Moeen Ali, MS Dhoni, Ravindra Jadeja, Shivam Dube, Deepak Chahar, Dwayne Bravo, Robin Uthappa, KM Asif, Tushar Deshpande, Maheesh Theekshana [Players bought: 12. Budget remaining: 15.75 crore. Overseas players: 3]

Delhi Capitals: David Warner, Prithvi Shaw, Mitchell Marsh, Rishabh Pant, Sarfaraz Khan, KS Bharat, Mandeep Singh, Axar Patel, Shardul Thakur, Kuldeep Yadav, Anrich Nortje, Kamlesh Nagarkoti, Mustafizur Rahman, Chetan Sakariya, Khaleel Ahmed, Ashwin Hebbur [Players bought: 16. Budget remaining: 5.95 crore. Overseas players: 4]

Gujarat Titans: Shubman Gill, Jason Roy, Abhinav Manohar, Vijay Shankar, Hardik Pandya, Rahul Tewatia, Dominic Drakes, Rashid Khan, Mohammed Shami, Lockie Ferguson, Jayant Yadav, R Sai Kishore, Noor Ahmad [Players

TOP BUYS AT IPL AUCTION 2022			
Mumbai Indians	Ishan Kishan	Wicket Keeper	Rs 15,25,00,000
Super Kings	Deepak Chahar	Bowler	Rs 14,00,00,000
Knight Riders	Shreyas Iyer	Batsman	Rs 12,25,00,000
Punjab Kings	Liam Livingstone	All-Rounder	Rs 11,50,00,000
Delhi Capitals	Shardul Thakur	Bowler	Rs 10,75,00,000
RCB	Wanindu Hasaranga	All-Rounder	Rs 10,75,00,000
RCB	Harshal Patel	All-Rounder	Rs 10,75,00,000
Sunrisers	Nicholas Pooran	Wicket Keeper	Rs 10,75,00,000
Titans	Lockie Ferguson	Bowler	Rs 10,00,00,000
Super Giants	Avesh Khan	Bowler	Rs 10,00,00,000

bought: 13. Budget remaining: 14.65 crore. Overseas players: 5]

Kolkata Knight Riders: Venkatesh Iyer, Nitish Rana, Shreyas Iyer, Sheldon Jackson, Ajinkya Rahane, Rinku Singh, Andre Russell, Sunil Narine, Pat Cummins, Shivam Mavi, Varun

Chakravarthy [Players bought: 11. Budget remaining: 11.10 crore. Overseas players: 3]

Lucknow Super Giants: KL Rahul, Quinton de Kock, Manish Pandey, Deepak Hooda, Marcus Stoinis, Krunal Pandya, Jason Holder, K Gowtham,

Ravi Bishnoi, Avesh Khan, Mark Wood, Dushmantha Chameera, Ankit Rajpoot, Shahbaz Nadeem, Manan Vohra [Players bought: 15. Budget remaining: 3.30 crore. Overseas players: 5]

Mumbai Indians: Rohit Sharma, Ishan Kishan, Suryakumar Yadav, Dewald Brevis, Kieron Pollard, Jasprit Bumrah, M Ashwin, Basil Thampi, Jaydev Unadkat, Mayank Markande [Players bought: 10. Budget remaining: 25.90 crore. Overseas players: 2]

Punjab Kings: Shikhar Dhawan, Mayank Agarwal, Jonny Bairstow, Liam Livingstone, Jitesh Sharma, Prabhsimran Singh, Odean Smith, Shahrulkh Khan, Harpreet Brar, Kagiso Rabada, Rahul Chahar, Arshdeep Singh, Ishan Porel, Sandeep Sharma [Players bought: 14. Budget remaining: 10.65 crore. Overseas players: 4]

Rajasthan Royals: Devdutt Padikkal, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Sanju Samson, Jos

Buttler, Shimron Hetmyer, Riyan Parag, R Ashwin, Trent Boult, Yuzvendra Chahal, Prasidh Krishna, KC Cariappa, Navdeep Saini [Players bought: 12. Budget remaining: 9.55 crore. Overseas players: 3]

Royal Challengers Bangalore: Faf du Plessis, Virat Kohli, Glenn Maxwell, Anuj Rawat, Dinesh Karthik, Shahbaz Ahmed, Wanindu Hasaranga, Harshal Patel, Josh Hazlewood, Mohammed Siraj, Akash Deep [Players bought: 11. Budget remaining: 9.25 crore. Overseas players: 4]

Sunrisers Hyderabad: Abhishek Sharma, Rahul Tripathi, Kane Williamson, Nicholas Pooran, Aiden Markram, Priyam Garg, Abdul Samad, Washington Sundar, Marco Jansen, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, J Suchith, Shreyas Gopal, Kartik Tyagi, T Natarajan, Umran Malik [Players bought: 15. Budget remaining: 13.35 crore. Overseas players: 4]



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Madayn leads Oman presence at Gulfood 2022



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, FEB 13

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates — Madayn, is participating in Gulfood 2022 — one of the world's largest annual food and hospitality events — at Dubai World Trade Centre. The five-day event, which began on Sunday, features the participation of more than 4,000 exhibitors representing 180 countries.

The spotlight of the Oman pavilion is the 'Made in Oman' programme through which Madayn aims to promote Omani products among consumers inside and outside the Sultanate of Oman, build brand loyalty, and contribute to export growth.

Hamood al Balushi, Assistant Director General at Madayn, said Madayn is taking part in Gulfood for the tenth consecutive year. "This global event presents an ideal platform for the Sultanate's participants to promote the local manufactured products to consumers and visitors from different countries, and explore new markets and collaborations," he said.

A number of Omani companies and factories representing the food industry are taking part in Gulfood 2022 under the umbrella of Madayn.

Phase 1 of RO 372 million Oman Electricity Grid project to come online next year

KEY ADVANTAGES: North-South Interconnector project to unlock significant benefits for national economy and sustainability

CONRAD PRABHU
[@conradprabhu](https://twitter.com/conradprabhu)

The first phase of a landmark initiative to interconnect the Main Interconnected System (MIS) — a grid serving much of the northern half of the Sultanate of Oman — with the Dhofar Grid covering the southern part of the country, is due to come into operation next year. The so-called North-South Interconnector project, also known as 'Rabt', will lead to the creation of a unified National Electricity Grid, which is due for completion by 2026 at a total cost of RO 372 million.

In a post on Sunday, the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit — which played an instrumental role in bringing the respective stakeholders together in the expeditious implementation of the undertaking — hailed the initiative as a "national strategic project" that will integrate the different, standalone electricity systems into one national grid.

Playing an important role in



The Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit hailed the initiative as a "national strategic project" that will integrate the different, standalone electricity systems into one national grid

the delivery of the project is Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC), part of Nama Group, which in October 2020 had signed agreements totalling RO 183 million for the implementation of Phase 1 of the interconnection project.

It covers the construction of around 660 km of 400kV overhead transmission lines that will eventually connect the Main Interconnected System (MIS) with the isolated networks of Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) and the Rural Areas Electricity Company (Tanweer) in Duqm. This phase, slated for launch in 2023, also result in the inclusion of Haima and Mahout in Al Wusta Governorate into the future

national grid.

Additionally, it will help strengthen electricity supply to PDO areas, currently served by a 132kV network, as well as reduce the energy company's dependence on gas-fired power generation for its electricity needs.

Crucially, interconnection will pave the way for vast areas of Al Wusta Governorate, which are deemed optimal for solar and wind power projects, to be developed as part of the country's future green energy ambitions.

A further 502 km of 400kV transmission lines will be constructed as part of Phase 2 of the North South Interconnected project. Running south from the Duqm grid all the way to Dhofar, this final section is on track for completion in 2026.

Besides strengthening the efficiency of electricity transmission, the Rabt project will contribute to reduced energy generation costs, savings in greenhouse gas emissions, improved energy efficiency, and enhanced energy security, the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit added.

Agreement signed to set up Oman exports e-platform

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion signed on Sunday a cooperation programme with a local tech firm for the establishment of an Oman Exports e-Platform. The



agreement was signed by Asila bint Salim al Samsamiyah, Investment Promotion Under-Secretary and Thamir bin Ahmed al Marhoon, CEO of the Omani company. The partnership will support the development of an electronic

platform that promotes and displays Omani exports targeted at international markets. It will also support market research to support the promotion of Omani goods and develop content to market local brands. — ONA

Omantel Group posts net profit of RO 233.6m for 2021

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, FEB 13

Omantel Group's net profit rose 2.0 per cent to RO 233.6 million for the year 2021, up from RO 229 million for the previous year.

Announcing its initial unaudited results for the year, the Sultanate of Oman's biggest telecom group posted total revenue of RO 2,408.3 billion, down from RO 2,511 billion for the previous year, entailing a decrease of 4.1 per cent. EBITDA declined 5.5 per cent to RO 970.3 million in 2021, down from RO 1026.3 million in 2020.

On the domestic front, Omantel posted a net profit of RO 73.2



million in 2021, which was lower by 5.3 per cent from the previous year's figure of RO 77.3 million. Total revenue dipped 1.7 per cent to RO 531.4 million, down from RO 533.1 million in 2020.

EBITDA slumped 15.2 per cent to RO 190 million, down from RO 205.2 million in 2020.

Omantel said: "Despite continued business disruptions witnessed during the year resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, Omantel's domestic operations were able to put up an impressive performance. This was contributed by comparatively high margin capacity sales, growth in postpaid mobile (YOY 19.2 per cent) and fixed broadband

revenue (YOY 9.1 per cent), despite a decline in the prepaid mobile revenue segment.

This was further supplemented by a reduction in Operation & Maintenance costs and depreciation driven by proactive cost optimisation measures."

Zain Group, in which Omantel has a minority stake, generated consolidated revenue of \$5.0 billion in 2021, while consolidated net income reached \$616 million.

The Board of Zain Group, at its meeting on February 10, declared a cash dividend of 23 fils per share in addition to 10 fils per share paid as interim dividend. The total dividend stands at 33 fils for 2021, Omantel added.

Atyab Food Industries launches new brand identity



MUSCAT: Atyab Food Industries, a homegrown Omani brand and one of the leading industrial bakeries in the Gulf region, has completed an extensive rebranding effort in response to accelerated company growth and a renewal of its corporate vision.

At the heart of this rebranding is an update to the corporate logo with 'Atyab' boldly on display — the updated brand identity under which the company aims to launch a host of new products to better serve and bring smiles to its customers across the region.

The company has recently launched its new brand identity in the Sultanate of Oman. Commenting on the introduction of the new branding, the CEO of Atyab, Ali Kashoob said, "Atyab is truly a 'one-of-a-kind' industrial bakery that has served as an essential part of Oman's food industry for the past ten years, often clubbed as a trusted brand under 'Dahabi'.

As the market has continued to evolve, our authentic Omani taste and quality helped us connect with our customers and grow in popularity with each passing year. We now feel that Atyab is ready to serve the region's changing needs, bringing smiles to the faces of our customers across Oman and the region with the best, most nutritious, and tasty food we can offer under our own brand.

"The launch of this new brand identity is, therefore, a major milestone for us as a company. For this reason, we wanted to design a logo that would exemplify our passion for food and the level of care we put into every product we produce.

Extreme thought and care were subsequently put into every aspect of our new logo, and I feel that, together with our new product offerings, our new brand identity completely embodies each of these aspects of our business in both emotion and design."

Atyab's new brand identity and logo, which will eventually adorn the packaging of a range of new products as they are launched, features the name in clear, direct font signifying the company's magnitude.

The "playful smiles" above it have been intentionally and carefully designed to be perceived in multiple ways. They first and foremost reflect the brand's offering: good food that makes you happy. The interlinked smiles also represent the consumer and the brand connected by the love of good food and togetherness. The logo can also be perceived as interlinked Omani dhows, signifying that food from Oman delights the world.

Bank Muscat extends support to Omani Association of the Hearing Impaired

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider, continues to extend strong support to disabled students studying in different educational institutions in Oman, in line with its efforts in the field of social responsibility. As part of its commitment to deliver long-term benefits to society, the bank recently partnered with the Omani Association of the Hearing Impaired to provide a number of hearing aids to school and university students in Oman.

Accordingly, a number of hearing aids with special features were distributed to students at the premises of the Omani Association of Hearing Impaired in the presence of Talib bin Saif al Makhmari, Manager, Community & Media Relations, Bank Muscat, Saif bin Humood al Busaidy, Member of Board of Directors in the Association, and Hamad bin



Nasser al Amri, Sign Language Translator.

Speaking on the occasion, Talib bin Saif al Makhmari, Manager, Community & Media Relations, Bank Muscat, said: "The bank is delighted to support and partner a number of civil society organisations and bodies in our endeavour to enhance the quality

of life of all sections of our society. We hope that these devices will help the students in their studies and their day-to-day lives by enhancing their skills and capabilities and their potential to contribute to our society. We would like to take this opportunity to specially thank and encourage the Omani Association of the Hearing Impaired for their

dynamic and highly-motivated vision of supporting people with hearing disabilities and help them achieve success in their lives. We wish all the students here today the very best for their future."

Mohammed bin Mubarak al Amri, Chairman of the Omani Association of Hearing Impaired said: "We would like to express our sincere appreciation and thanks to Bank Muscat for its excellent role in supporting persons with disabilities over the years.

The bank has been a strong supporter of the Association and we are very happy with the support extended, which is making a world of difference to many young people in their pursuit to be productive citizens who are actively contributing to the growth and development of our beloved nation."

The Omani Association of

Hearing Impaired is run by a dynamic team of deaf and hearing-impaired volunteers and translators. It aims to cater to the needs of the people with hearing disabilities and supporting them in all aspects of their lives. The Association was established under a Ministry of Social Development Decision in 2013 to serve as a representative of people with hearing disabilities and impairments in the Sultanate of Oman.

Students who received the hearing aids expressed their happiness at receiving the devices and said that it would greatly improve the quality of their lives and their studies. They hoped that the devices would help them do well in their studies so that they can play their rightful role in society and strengthen the Omani economy and society through their services.

Win tickets to football matches with Ooredoo

MUSCAT: Ooredoo's second edition of its 'Hello World' campaign, is giving football fans the chance to win tickets to the upcoming Manchester Derby.

With the draw taking place on February 21, 2022, all Home Internet, Hala prepaid and Shahry postpaid customers can be in to win a once-in-a-lifetime trip to watch two of Europe's most famous teams go head-to-head in March, which includes match tickets, air travel and accommodation for them and a friend, simply by upgrading, subscribing to plans or recharging.

As the Official Middle East & Africa Telecommunications partner for the Fifa World Cup Qatar 2022, football is the name of the game this year and Ooredoo is getting into the spirit



of the game with a series of raffle draws, offering tickets to some of the biggest matches around Europe.

With the campaign kicking off with 'Hello

Milan' last month, customers can look out for upcoming draws for matches in Spain, Germany and Russia!

All Home Internet customers have to do to enter the draw is activate a new connection or upgrade their existing plan. Hala customers simply need to activate a new SIM or recharge. Plus, more recharges mean more chances of winning. Meanwhile, Shahry customers, both new subscribers or those upgrading their plans, will automatically be entered into the draw. Winners are being announced on Ooredoo's social media channels.

Alizz Islamic Bank wins Mudarabah Deal of the Year 2021 awards

MUSCAT: Reinforcing its position as one of Oman's most dynamic Wholesale Banking Islamic banking institutions, Alizz Islamic Bank was recently conferred with the award for 'Mudarabah Deal of the Year 2021' at the Islamic Finance News Awards 2021. Alizz Islamic Bank is pleased to announce that its landmark Investment Banking transaction: the RO 52 million Ominvest Perpetual Sukuk has been recognised globally and has won the prestigious IFN award for Mudarabah Deal of the Year 2021. Alizz Islamic Bank is honoured to have acted as the Joint Issue Manager on the deal along with Ubhar Capital SAOC.

The Islamic Finance News (IFN) Awards are one of the most prestigious awards in the world of Islamic banking and finance. They acknowledge and recognise the contributions of Islamic Banking institutions in the growth and expansion of the Islamic banking and finance sector.

Expressing the banks delight at winning the award, Sulaiman al Harthi, the CEO of Alizz Islamic Bank said: "We are delighted to have worked on this pioneering Sukuk transaction for Ominvest. The IFN award for the deal of the year is the testimony of Alizz Islamic Bank's expertise in advising its clients on such innovative Sukuk transactions and our efforts to develop a vibrant domestic Islamic capital markets. We would like to



thank our clients and the investor community for their confidence and support. We are also grateful to our regulators — the Capital Market Authority and the Central Bank of Oman for their guidance and support."

Ominvest is the first non-financial company to have issued perpetual instrument in Oman which provides a unique investment opportunity to investors looking for Shariah compliant instruments. The issuance of the perpetual Sukuk will enable Ominvest to further optimise its capital structure, channel the funds to make new long-term investments and enhance return on capital.

Toyota Corolla 1.8L HEV with exclusive benefits

MUSCAT: The fuel-efficient and amazing to own Toyota Corolla 1.8L Hybrid Electric Vehicle is available with exclusive benefits. They include service 8 years/80,000 kms (whichever is earlier), 1 year insurance or cash gift in lieu of insurance RO 175. The campaign is valid until March 9, 2022. (Prospective buyers may be advised that the benefits vary between model variants, model year and manufacturing year. Terms & Conditions apply. Visit the showroom for exact details.).

Owning the powerful 1.8L Toyota Corolla Hybrid Electric Vehicle is a great choice when compared to many petrol sedans in the category. Its Hybrid Electric technology makes it churn out better mileage and even more savings due to lesser visits to the fuel station.



Based on the TNGA platform, the Corolla offers some of the smoothest and stable driving experiences too. Its striking look is characterised by a frontal treatment with a two-step rendering of the front corners, flanking a strongly projecting lower grille.

The LED projector headlamps

with integrated daytime running lights give the Corolla HEV a sleek and stylish look.

Meanwhile, the rear of the car echoes the look of the front through the shape of the bumper and the inverted trapezium design of the boot lid. The rear lamp clusters are connected by a chrome trim, further highlighting

the car's wide stance. The Corolla HEV is equipped with 17-inch alloy wheels that further express its elegance and sportiness.

The Corolla HEV's distinct personality is completed by its expansive and comfortable cabin, which displays exceptional quality and finishing throughout. The interior design adopts a simple yet appealing style, with comfortable spaciousness and integrated functional parts combining to create a refined elegance. The ergonomically designed seats, the armrest and ample legroom offer superior comfort for the rear-seat passengers.

The cabin is accentuated with an extensive range of features, which vary based on the trim level. Occupants also benefit from Auto Air Conditioner with vents for the rear seat, a moonroof, a

7-inch colour multi-information display (MID), 7-inch touch-screen multimedia infotainment display, rear view camera, cruise control, six-speaker sound system and 60:40 split-folding rear seats.

Parameters such as vehicle weight, dimensions & fuel economy could vary from the GSO Conformity Certificate due to fitment of dealer installed accessories. Pictures and colours shown may differ from actual specifications. For the latest press releases, test drive requests and more, please visit www.toyotaoman.com, www.youtube.com/toyotaoman, www.facebook.com/toyotaoman and www.instagram.com/toyotaomanofficial/. For any further details & to ascertain availability of stocks, please visit your nearest Toyota Showroom.



Mazoon Dairy portfolio grows to over 190 products

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, FEB 13

Mazoon Dairy, the flagship dairy company of the Sultanate of Oman, commemorated the Sultanate of Oman's annual Industry Day last week by highlighting its various milestones cemented since operation in 2019.

In addition, the company also shed light on its noteworthy development plans for the next five years.

Commenting on the occasion, Ahmed al Ghafri, Chief Support Officer, remarked, "Mazoon Dairy has had a fruitful past year with exciting new developments moving forward as part of our long and short-term plans. Today we have established a strong position in the local market, as we have also managed to add variety to the unique products on shelves.



We are engaging in a holistic approach that is innovative and

moves our industry standard more towards sustainability, without

compromising on our efforts to ensure the highest level of quality

during our operations."

The company focused on strengthening the scope of its promotional activities to reach wider segments of consumers in the local market.

Mazoon Dairy produces over 190 products, from fresh milk products of various flavours including laban, fresh juices, cheeses, ice creams and long-life dairy products. The company showcased its mission to continue raising the local Omani industry standard and supporting the development of high-quality national industry in the field of dairy products.

Expanding on Mazoon Dairy Company's future plans, Al Ghafri added, "We plan to significantly increase our production capacity during the next five years, which includes doubling the size of the herd on the farm and increasing

the capacity of the factory. In addition, we also look to generate further job prospects for Omanis and create more opportunities for local industries."

The company's state-of-the-art dairy farm currently provides for a capacity of 10,000 dairy cows in 15 temperature-controlled high-tech barns, managed at a steady 25 degrees Celsius.

The integrated facility in Al Sunainah can produce over one million litres of milk in a day. Mazoon Dairy runs five laboratories with 25 full-time quality assurance employees to ensure the highest standards are obtained in the production and delivery of each product.

The company performs over 100 tests daily during the manufacturing process to ensure overall safe conditions and the highest quality in the final results.

CMA to hold seminar on capital market and financing options

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, FEB 13

The Capital Market Authority (CMA) will host a seminar on the theme, "The Capital Market and its Financing Options to Enhance the Investment Activities", in collaboration with the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) at the offices of Port of Sohar on Tuesday.

The seminar, which is part of the awareness activities of the CMA, is targeting at the chairpersons of boards of directors and managements of the companies operating at Sohar Free Zone.

Speakers from the Capital Market Authority, Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX), Muscat Clearing Depository Company (MCD) and Ubhar Capital will take part in the seminar about



the financing instruments available in the capital market in addition to highlighting the importance of the capital market in the economic growth of the companies as well as the role of MCD and its pivotal role in the capital market sector.

The seminar will emphasise the roles of the capital market in achieving the financial sustainability for the companies, the financing products available

in the capital market and their use in the financial support of the companies and the advantage of financing by long-term debt instruments.

The CMA will organise this year series of seminars for the companies operating in the free zones in the various wilayats of the Sultanate of Oman to introduce the capital market and its financing instruments in line with the Oman Vision 2040.

OABC hosts workshop on Oman's legal and tax landscape

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, FEB 13

In collaboration with ALC Lawyers and Counsels (ALC) and PwC Middle East, the Oman American Business Center (OABC) hosted a session on "Oman's Tax and Legal Landscape" at the Sheraton Oman Hotel recently. The session included a brief time of business networking over breakfast, followed by legal and tax presentations covering a variety of key topics and ended with plenty of time for Q & A.

Speaker Abdulredha al Lawati, Founder of ALC, discussed the current laws related to court processes and commercial practice. His presentation was followed by PwC Middle East's Ghalia al Sharji, Tax Senior Manager, who covered Oman's 2022 State Budget. Finally, Darcy White, Tax & Legal Services Partner discussed e-invoicing, personal income tax, regional trends and the future of Oman's tax legislation.

Events like this one are part of OABC's overall mission to facilitate trade and investment between Oman and the USA, and to support ease of doing business in Oman", says Ali Daud, Founder and Chairman Emeritus of OABC. "Oman is moving towards its Vision 2040 and more changes affecting the private sector will certainly come. We are proud to partner with firms like ALC and PwC Middle East



and host sessions that keep our members informed about key developments across all sectors."

"The past few years have seen a big shift in the global tax landscape in terms of how countries are expected to tax, record, and report on resident entities and individuals", says Darcy White, Tax Partner at PwC Middle East.

"Global influence on local tax policy is greater than ever before, fueled particularly by the OECD's Inclusive Framework on BEPS, which Oman is a member of. The BEPS Project brings with it significant compliance requirements to meet multilateral cooperation objections. This coupled with the increased focus on taxation in Oman's Vision 2040 and the 2022 Budget means that taxable entities will need to ensure they are "tax ready" for the future."

Oman LNG commits RO 3 million in funding for second phase of Sur Park

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, FEB 13

As part of its efforts to sustain the environment's unique biodiversity and transform the coastal landscape of Sur, Oman LNG has pledged RO 3 million in funding support for the implementation of the second phase of the Sur Public Park, in collaboration with the South Al Sharqiyah Governor's Office.

The gesture commemorates the Royal Decree issued by the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos on February 9, 1994 formally establishing the company.

As a public facility, the park will attract residents and visitors of Sur and South Al Sharqiyah Governorate in general. It is planned to operate as a self-sustaining enterprise, providing exceptional opportunities for entrepreneurship.

Additionally, the park will



boost the tourism sector in this historic governorate. The second phase of Sur Public Park builds on earlier support where Oman LNG had funded detailed consultancy services for the design phase of the park, taking into consideration a number of important factors to accommodate all community needs.

Dr Yahya al Maawali, Governor of South Al Sharqiyah said: "It gives us a great pleasure to continue

the exceptional relationship and collaboration with Oman LNG, through supporting various social responsibility programmes and projects.

Sur Public Park is an additional vital project and comes as a testimony to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq's call to enhance and develop services across the governorates of Oman. Additionally, such project will accommodate many benefits from

The park is planned to operate as a self-sustaining enterprise, providing exceptional opportunities for entrepreneurship

social, economic and touristic spectrums that will offer to people and tourists."

Talal al Aufi, Chairman of Oman LNG, said: "As a responsible company, Oman LNG and its shareholders are determined to continue to play its pioneering role in the socio-economic fabric of the Sultanate of Oman and meeting community's aspirations. This initiative allows us to march in step with His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq's call for the development of the governorates, which also aligns with the government's vision for the future as articulated in Oman's Vision 2040."



Nama Group launches Silah Programme

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, FEB 13

In efforts to highlight the impact and importance of internal and external communication with employees, customers and stakeholders, Nama Group launched the Silah programme inviting its community to connect with the group.

The programme concept showcases the role of communication in the employee's and customer's journey in the water and

electricity sectors for the process of improvement and continuous development.

Further, to ensure that any communication reaches all target groups, the programme focused on building data-driver approaches to develop a set of objectives to be achieved.

The objectives of the programme are divided into several stages, which are translated to initiatives that will form the roadmap for the upcoming communication strategy.

Credit Suisse self-flagellation is risky but right

Medieval Christians habitually whipped themselves to show penance. Credit Suisse Chief Executive Thomas Gottstein is practising his own form of self-flagellation after a torrid year. The challenge is to do so without leaving permanent scars on the \$25 billion Swiss bank.

The Zurich-based group said that revenue fell 12 per cent year-on-year in the fourth quarter, driven by a one-third plunge in the investment banking division. French rival Société Générale reported 12 per cent growth in its equivalent unit.

Credit Suisse's key Asian wealth management business lost \$3.2 billion of client assets in the quarter, while cross-town rival UBS attracted client money in the region.

Much of the shrinkage is self-imposed. Gottstein has reduced the size of the bank's balance sheet, adjusted for the riskiness of its assets, by 12 per cent since last March; European and American rivals on average boosted theirs by 4 per cent over the same period.

Risk-weighted assets in the investment bank are down by a fifth. In effect, Credit Suisse is turning away opportunities to make money while others are raking it in.

Abstinence carries risks of its own. Wealthy clients may favour more expansive banks like UBS and Morgan Stanley. Credit Suisse's star traders and dealmakers could defect to lenders that are trying to grow rather than retrench. Gottstein slashed bonuses by 32 per cent in 2021, a year in which Goldman Sachs and JPMorgan jacked up staff rewards.

Still, Gottstein's caution is necessary. Promising to double down on risk controls has helped him deflect the blame for recent blowups of the Archegos hedge fund and supply chain lender Greensill Capital. Another mistake would probably put his job on the line.

Meanwhile funky new pay structures mitigate the risk of a banker exodus. An unusually large proportion of last year's \$2.2 billion bonus pot, roughly two-fifths, was in upfront cash payments for senior staff.

They'll have to give some back if they leave before February 2025.

The bank's managing directors and directors are also in line for special new share-based awards, worth around \$540 million, which come in addition to normal bonuses and will pay out if the bank hits unspecified financial targets.

— Reuters

Obstinence carries risks of its own. Wealthy clients may favour more expansive banks like UBS and Morgan Stanley.



HEAVY-PRICED PAPER

A man browses books at a library in Tehran. For literature lovers in sanction-hit Iran, a new novel has long provided a brief respite from a grinding economic crisis triggered by international pressure imposed over Tehran's contested nuclear programme. But now losing yourself in a good book is becoming harder, as cash-strapped publishers struggle because the price of paper is soaring.

— AFP

America's not-so-great inflation



BARRY EICHENGREEN

The writer is Professor of Economics at the University of California, Berkeley, is a former senior policy adviser at the International Monetary Fund.

WE CAN INFER THAT EXPECTED INFLATION FOR THE YEARS 2023 TO 2026 IS BELOW THIS FIVE-YEAR AVERAGE, GIVEN THE EXPECTATION OF 5 PER CENT FOR 2022

It has become abundantly clear that the United States has an inflation problem. What is not yet clear is how big the problem will turn out to be and how long it will last.

Alarmed observers point to parallels with the 1970s, when commodity prices shot up, the US Federal Reserve fell behind the curve, and inflation expectations became unmoored. Consumers, producers, and workers all expected prices to keep rising at the same or even an accelerating pace. Accordingly, households adjusted their spending, unions their wage demands, and businesses their prices, triggering an inflationary spiral. Today, in contrast, inflation expectations remain firmly anchored.

The Michigan Survey of Consumers shows that respondents expect inflation to approach 5 per cent over the coming year, before falling back to just above 2 per cent in the subsequent four years. The inflation rate implicit in the price of five-year inflation-indexed Treasury securities shows basically the same thing: inflation averaging 2.8 per cent over the next five years.

We can infer that expected inflation for the years 2023 to 2026 is below this five-year average, given the expectation of 5 per cent for 2022. There is no sign of the ship dragging anchor, in other words. Things can always change, of course. The question is whether inflation expectations, however stable they might be for the moment, will remain equally well anchored in the future, or whether they will become unmoored, as

they did in the 1970s.

Answering that question requires ascertaining whether the conditions leading to the 1970s "Great Inflation" have really been consigned to the dustbin of history. Importantly, in 1973, when consumer price inflation reached 6 per cent, it was entirely rational for consumers, producers, and workers to extrapolate that rate into the future. They were justified in thinking that inflation would persist, because there were absolutely no grounds for believing that the Federal Reserve would tamp it down.

The Fed, or at least those responsible for its policies, did not even possess a model of the connections between central-bank policy and inflation. The closest thing to an anchor for policy in the 1950s and early 1960s was the Bretton Woods international monetary system. Under Bretton Woods, the US pegged the dollar to gold at \$35 an ounce, and foreign central banks and governments could redeem their dollars for gold, on demand.

It is commonplace to attribute the Great Inflation to the collapse of Bretton Woods in 1971-73. In fact, Bretton Woods had already lost its bite, and inflation had begun to accelerate in the second half of the 1960s.

The US adopted policies, such as an Interest Equalization Tax on American foreign financial investments, that loosened the link between inflation and gold losses.

The Treasury Department asserted its responsibility for managing the foreign-exchange market, allowing the Fed to dismiss gold losses and dollar weakness as someone else's problem.

As a result, US inflation was approaching 6 per cent already in 1970, even before the collapse of Bretton Woods. The demise of Bretton Woods would not have mattered had the Fed possessed a coherent theory connecting monetary policy with inflation.

In lieu of that was Chairman Arthur Burns's view that monetary policy didn't matter.

Burns believed that inflation was caused by unions' excessive wage demands, price increases by firms with market power, poor harvests, high oil prices, and excessive government spending. His successor, G. William Miller, lacked Burns's academic credentials and was not inclined to question the views of his illustrious predecessor. Paul Volcker eventually would have something to say about this, but not until after he became Fed chair in 1979.

Today's circumstances could not be more different. Fed officials understand that, in all but the most exceptional circumstances, monetary policy and inflation are intertwined. They have a coherent policy framework, average inflation targeting, to which they are committed. Financial-market participants and survey respondents alike show every sign of believing them.

Nonetheless, the Fed has a rocky road ahead. Interest-rate hikes can roil financial markets and provoke capital outflows and debt difficulties in emerging economies. Such are the consequences of falling behind the curve. But, in contrast to the 1970s, the Fed knows what is at stake. Having fallen behind, it is now firmly committed to catching up.

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Omicron stalled Britain's economic recovery



ESHE NELSON

The author is business and economics reporter for The New York Times in London.

The sudden emergence of the fast-spreading omicron variant of the coronavirus in Britain late last year stalled the country's economic recovery, though the impact was milder than expected.

Britain's gross domestic product fell 0.2 per cent in December from the previous month, the Office for National Statistics said, as the government told people to work from home where possible. High case numbers and voluntary social distancing led to a wave of cancellations for restaurants, bars, theatres and other social activities. Economists surveyed by Bloomberg had forecast, on average, a 0.5 per cent decline in economic output.

The data adds to evidence that successive waves of the coronavirus are less virulent, both in terms of severity of the disease, as vaccinations are increasingly widespread, and to the economy.

The economic impact of omicron was smaller than that of previous surges in virus cases as restrictions were also looser. For example, in January 2021, Britain's economy contracted nearly 3 per cent as the country went into a tight lockdown.

Last year's economic recovery was choppy. An early boost from reopening in the spring eventually slowed into more middling growth in the second half of year when virus case numbers were high, supply chain bottlenecks impeded businesses and exports declined.

Still, the economy grew 7.5 per cent in 2021, its fastest pace since 1941, as it rebounded from a 9.4 per cent slump the previous year.

By the end of last year, the British economy matched its pre-pandemic size. The recovery was propelled forward by activity in health services as billions of pounds were spent on test and tracing virus contacts. Consumer-facing services, such as restaurants, bars, travel and entertainment, were still more than 8 per cent below their pre-pandemic level.

Britain is trying to move into a new phase where coronavirus is considered endemic. Prime Minister Boris Johnson said this week that he wanted to remove remaining Covid rules, including the legal requirement to self-isolate

for positive cases, as soon as this month. But in this post-pandemic phase where the economic impact of coronavirus is waning, there is another economic challenge created by high energy prices and rapid inflation.

Price gains are expected to peak above 7 per cent in April but wages aren't keeping up, energy bills are rising and tax increases are scheduled. The squeeze on household budgets is expected to dampen consumer spending and weigh on the economy in the second half of the year.

"The omicron wave has only briefly stalled the UK's strong economic recovery, which should be more stable from here on in," James Smith, research director at the Resolution Foundation, a think

tank focusing on living standards in Britain, said in a statement. This will allow policymakers to concentrate on the "more urgent cost-of-living crisis that Britain is experiencing."

The Bank of England has already raised interest rates twice in the past two months in an effort to try to bring inflation back down to the bank's 2 per cent target, and more rate increases are likely in the coming months.

The central bank expects the British economy to grow about 3.75 per cent this year. It lowered its forecast from 5 per cent in November as household income growth, once adjusted for inflation, is expected to be negative for the next two years.

— The New York Times

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I, Suma Hussain (holder of Indian Passport No. M2927750) daughter of Joseph Mallath Chacko, having permanent residence in Mallathu House, Punnavey PO, Kottayam Dt, Kerala 689589 and presently residing in P Box No. 49, Postal Code 311, Suhar, Sultanate of Oman, intend to change my name from **SUMA HUSSAIN** to **SUMA JOSEPH** for all practical purpose. Any objection towards my name change may please be communicated to Embassy of India, Muscat, Diplomatic Quarters, Al Khuwair, P Box No. 1727, Postal Code 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman.

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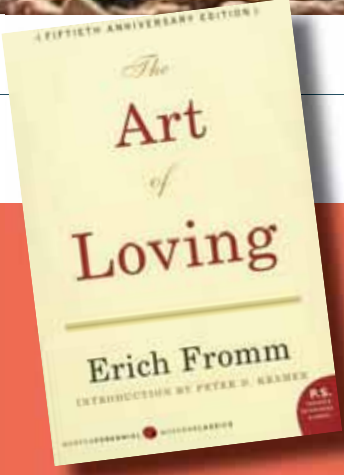
features

Beyond the tomb: Qalhat also a great hiking destination

While it is worth stopping by to take a look at the Bibi Maryam tomb, there's actually more to Qalhat than the melancholic structure many people has now come to know after it successfully became a Unesco heritage site. Check out the two sites that can become your next hiking favourites...**P20**



READ



THE ART OF LOVING
BY ERICH FROMM

The Art of Loving argues that the active character of true love involves four basic elements: care, responsibility, respect, and knowledge. Each of these is difficult to define and can differ markedly depending on the people involved and their circumstances.

Valentine's Day: flowers, chocolates or a good whipping?

Saint Valentine's Day may now be celebrated worldwide but traditions are often very different – and sometimes have nothing at all to do with romance.

While in Europe it's all about couples cosying up, in the United States it is as much about school-children celebrating friendship while in Japan women give chocolates to their bosses.

From pagan festival to marketing ploy, we look at the rich Valentine's mix:

ALL WHIPPED UP

Valentine's Day was once a rather violent affair. Its origins are thought to go back to the Roman purification festival of Lupercalia when naked young men would whip young ladies to make them more fertile.

Down the centuries that evolved into only slightly less raucous lotteries that paired young men off with young women at medieval carnivals.

MARTYR TO HIS HEART

The day is also, of course, associated with the cult of third century

Roman Christian martyr Saint Valentine.

He literally lost his head over love – decapitated on the orders of the Emperor Claudius, they say, for secretly performing weddings.

According to the legend, Valentine cured his jailer's blind daughter and the day before his death slipped her a note signed "Your Valentine". Unfortunately there was no happy ending.

LOVE LETTERS

In England the exchange of messages known as "valentines" on February 14 developed with the rise of the postal service in the 19th century, with the sender often signing off "Your Valentine".

LOVE SPOONS

They did things differently across the border in Wales. Their festival of love is held on January 25 and celebrates a fourth-century Welsh princess called Saint Dwynwen.

Unlucky in love, broken-hearted



Dwynwen sought solace in religion and became a nun, praying for others to find true love.

Among the gifts traditionally exchanged between lovers, and would-be ones, are carved Welsh wooden love spoons.

MY DARLING VALENTINE

The celebration took a commercial turn in the mid-19th century in the US, with the invention of mass-produced greeting cards.

Promoters quickly got the idea to extend the "tradition" beyond lovers, with schoolchildren now expected to bring a Valentine card for every one of their classmates.

Today it has become a \$20-billion business and has even spawned Galentines Day, when "gals" go out together and eat waffles – **AFP**



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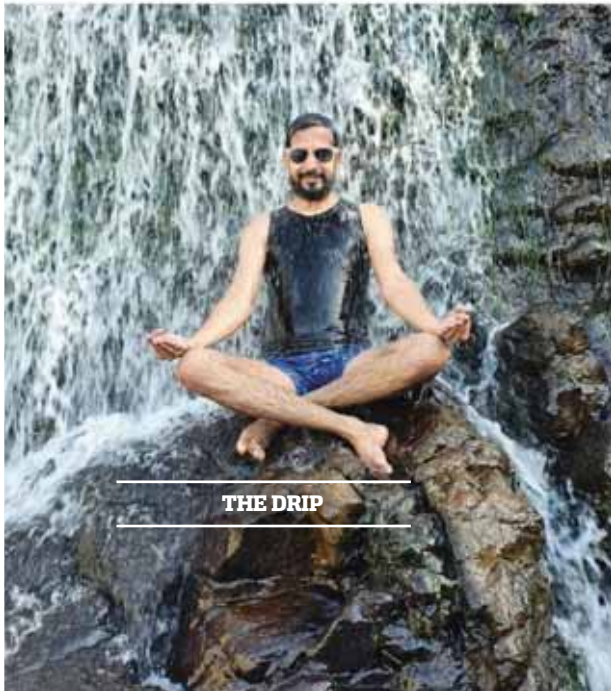
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AROUND THE WORLD

TRAVEL TALES

Venice's 'Carnival of hope' kicks off as Covid worries ease



THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE revelled in the start of the annual Carnival celebrations in Venice on Saturday, marking a slow return to normality after the Covid-19 pandemic hit the two previous editions.

The 2020 Venice Carnival, which usually draws tourists from around the world, was curtailed when the pandemic broke out in Italy in February that year and then cancelled the following year as the government sought to contain infections.

"This is the Carnival of hope," said Venice resident Cristian Scalise. "Covid is ending and we hope to return to our life as always."

Italy's rate of new Covid infections and hospitalisations has been gradually declining in recent weeks and the government this week ended a requirement for people to wear face masks outdoors under most circumstances.

However some Carnival attractions, such as parades, will remain suspended to avoid contagion, authorities have ruled.

"I came here because I missed the Carnival so much and because we haven't been able to celebrate it for two years," said Barbara del Prato, from the city of Parma.

She had travelled to Venice with her entire family, all dressed in elaborate costumes.

Some 50,000 people had come to the lagoon city to take part in the celebration, ANSA news agency reported, citing local police.

The Venice Carnival began centuries ago as a period of excess before the rigors of Lent, the 40 days of fasting that traditionally precede Easter. A traditional Carnival costume often included a mask — not as a guard against disease as in current times, but so festival-goers could hide their identities and do as they pleased.

On Saturday, only a few people were seen wearing costumes and the mood was more subdued than usual, but this is expected to change in the coming days as this year's edition, entitled "Remember the Future", gets going.

"I'm sorry not to see the (Venetian Carnival) masks that I would have expected, but it's a restart," said Ketty Milano, a Venice resident.

The Carnival is due to run until March 1.

— Reuters

GLOBAL TRENDS

New York City's 'oldest chocolate factory' ramps up ahead of Valentine's Day



DRIPPING CHOCOLATE

coated selfmade, heart-shaped marshmallows at Li-Lac Sweets' 9,000-square-foot manufacturing area in New York Metropolis, because the chocolate manufacturing unit ramped up manufacturing in time for Valentine's Day, one in all its busiest occasions of the 12 months.

Simply three days earlier than the Valentine Day vacation, workers on Friday have been busy adorning chocolate hearts with coloured sprinkles, dipping cherries in chocolate, and making ready toffee filling.

In addition they raced to put sweets into pink and gold containers on the market online and on the firm's six retail places.

Anwar Khoder, the manufacturing unit's grasp chocolatier and manufacturing supervisor, mentioned, "I've been doing like about 18 hours a day, to maintain up with the demand."

From an enterprise perspective, Li-Lac's president and co-owner Anthony Cirone mentioned it's the second largest vacation for gross sales.

"We do extra chocolate gross sales in Valentine's Day.. than we do every other time of the 12 months exterior of Christmas."

Regardless of among the challenges stocking sure uncooked supplies, the choc-

olate home is optimistic about its gross sales outlook this vacation.

"We've had a few of those which provide for chain shortages," mentioned Cirone, who added the corpo-

rate is doing its finest to navigate round it.

The corporate constructed up its on-line enterprise throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, however it mentioned retailer gross sales are beginning to develop once more, as vacationers and workplace employees start to return to Manhattan.

"Individuals love chocolate, and it's a pleasant little break and a deal with for

folks," Cirone mentioned.

Li-Lac Sweets has been working since 1923 and can rejoice its one hundredth anniversary subsequent 12 months, with all the pieces made by hand utilising the



founders' authentic recipes from the Twenties.

It makes what it calls "old skool chocolate."

The Nationwide Retail Federation expects spending on Valentine's Day on Monday to achieve \$23.9 billion, up from \$21.8 billion in 2021.

It says sweet — together with chocolate — stays the preferred merchandise, adopted by greeting playing cards and flowers.

— Reuters

A LOOK AT THE ACADEME



Dr Zainab al Ajmi
zeinbf@moe.om

E- Learning Based on Social-Skills of Learners

LEARNING, ESSENTIALLY, is expected to improve the potential of learners to have personality tendencies and attitudes: moral strength, self-control, emotional intelligence, precious personality, as well as the skills needed by themselves, society, and nation.

Keeping in view the advantages of E-Learning, a complete e-learning system implementation in lieu of in-person education is an ideal solution for educational institutes in any circumstances beyond out of control.

Since the online learning cannot be separated from technology, consequently, some of the challenges that can frequently influence when teachers deliver online learning materials, especially for the Millennials' generation often tend to be unresponsive and it could create behavioural or psychiatric disturbances issues for some students.

This is due to the Millennials' generation being more interested in various online games, social media, in comparison to the social, psychological, and environmental problems where they live. Several factors can influence students' interest when learning online including social competence, emotional resilience, and self-efficacy.

Another key point, in online learning, the three domains in the evaluation of learning must run in a balanced line: the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains, what's more, as a resource, online tools cannot contribute in terms of emotional skills development and character growth of the students.

Referring to the view of Melinda (2021), the classroom education provides a structured environment, social support, direct contact with teachers and classmates, and further, engagement in classroom activities and school competitive activities that contribute positively in terms of learning experiences social, emotional, and the general well-being.

The reliance on distance education for longer periods deprived them of such exposure. Moreover, the expected classroom conditions in learning based on social issues, values, and charac-

ter growth are: Collaborative and interactive with the environment, effective student participation, tolerance between teachers and students, and feeling safe in the learning environment. Hence, it's necessary to improve learning approaches and strategies during E-Learning, so that students can get used to being brave and confident in dealing with problems that exist in life.

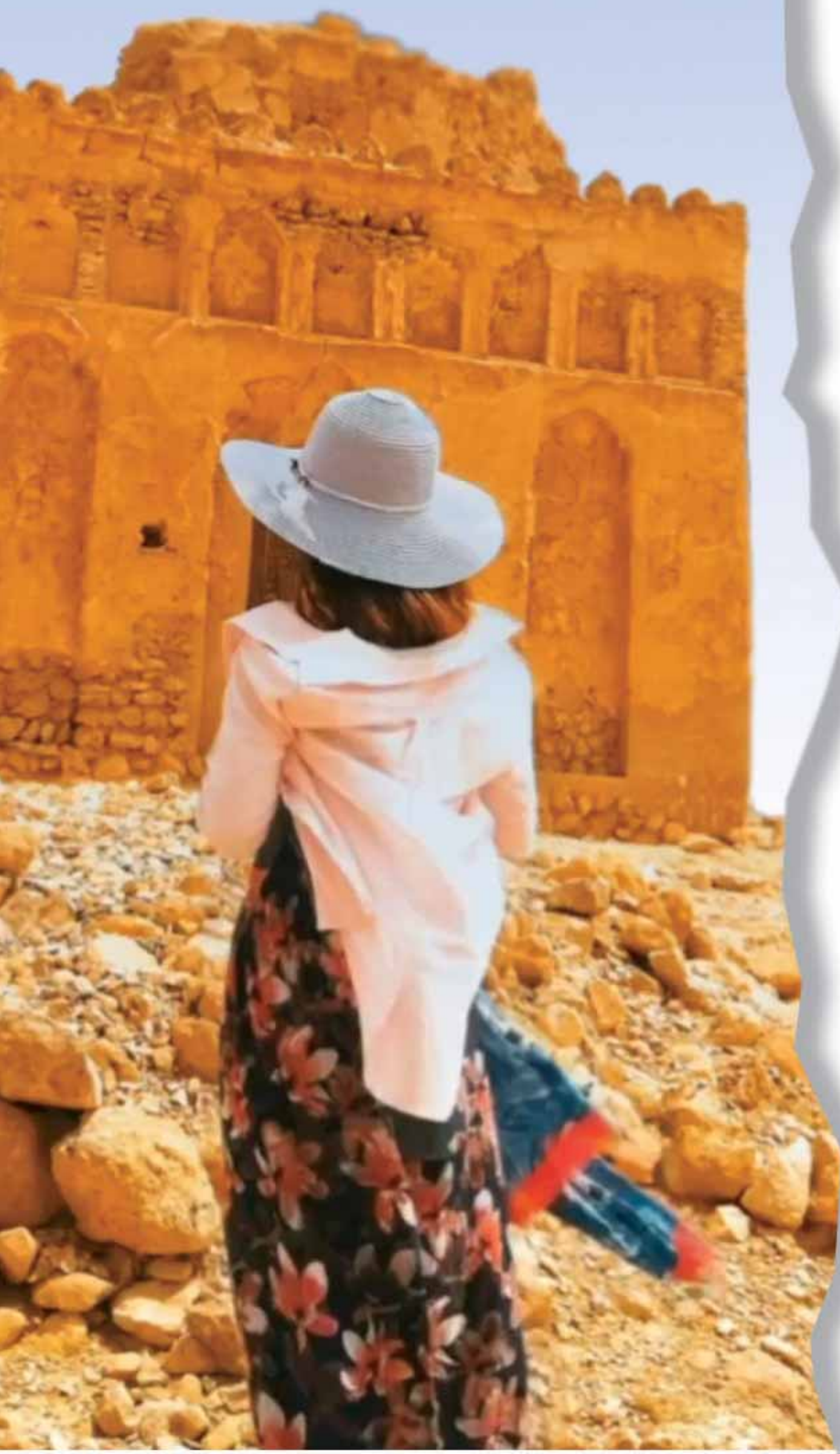
Besides, the literature demonstrates that the successful outcomes of e-learning depend on personal factors, teaching processes, and resources. For instance, the findings analysis of (Hassan et al., 2022) study reveals that emotional intelligence was to be a protective factor to handle the psychological pressures associated with online studies. The findings further demonstrate that burnout and negative achievement emotions significantly associated with academic stress. The extended e-learning during the Covid-19 pandemic increases this risk.

The authors of this study recommended that teachers should make appropriate adjustments during the online studies to create a sense of normalcy, which may include keeping regular contact hours and avoiding unexpected changes in the teaching process and assessment.

To sum up, teachers aim to inspire students to think deeply and critically about particular social and emotional experiences. Therefore, the learning presented to Millennials' generation students should acclimate to situations and circumstances around them. To this end, the teachers should focus on teaching within social contexts, which integrate social issues, Islamic and character values in e-learning. Hence, the mentality of the learners protected and balanced between their cognitive and affectional dimensions.

According to Melinda (2021), "the learning content delivered is not monotonous about formulas and theories, but rather towards implementing problems that occur in the surrounding environment, and no less important, namely the cultivation of character education, social skills, and religion' values in learning".

Beyond the tomb: Qalhat also a great hiking destination



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By Erin Coyle

When one hears of Qalhat, it's hard not to imagine the bustling city it once was during ancient times. It's hard not to imagine the lives of the people that used to live in this powerful city-state, or even the constant flow of sea vessels coming and going in its port trading different goods profitable at that time.

Today, others only associate Qalhat with Bibi Maryam's tomb — the only ruin left standing after the city was eventually abandoned.

While it is worth stopping by to take a look at the tomb, there's actually more to Qalhat than the melancholic structure many people has

will be like this — rocks upon rocks and boulders and upon boulders that reveal more challenges. It is up to you how long you wish to continue this path. The other option is to go straight instead of turning right. Here you will find three to four pools of water and eventually reach a village or two. The trail is not marked, so keep following the pools. You may pass someone living there and can ask them for directions.

Another area good for exploring near Qalhat begins near the beach. Follow the road towards the beach, and eventually, there will be some fishing boats lined up. Walk past these boats and start to walk on the coast heading to the right. As you go, some ruins level to the ground will appear. The area could have been another city, a village, or even some



now come to know after it successfully became a Unesco Heritage Site. Outside of the dig site surrounding the tomb, there are two areas one can hike around, there's also some blocks of what appears to be remains of a village or city or even shops and a bit further down, a small wadi and a charming village.

The first area to wander around is near the big bridge. The rough road towards the bridge may be tough for your car especially if it's not a four-wheel drive so it is ideal to find a good parking spot under the bridge. The beginning of the gravel path is flat, and while you are walking, the uniquely layered rocks and boulders including its interesting crevasses will definitely take your attention.

After about fifteen minutes, the trail becomes even rougher as the stones become bigger and more boulders appear. The way will continue to be like this for another hour until the pathway curves to the right and a small pool of water reveals itself. This is the best spot to take a break.

It is possible to climb up a few boulders and keep walking around from here. This route starts to get semi-challenging because upper body strength is required to pull yourself up on the rocks. If you follow the small pools, the layered slate and coloured rocks continue to become more interesting. The rest of the way

shops in ancient times. Stone columns, a small mosque, maybe even majlis' could have been part of these remains. It can be an excellent way to walk around here to discover and think about what precisely this area once was.

While walking around, you may see some broken pieces of pottery scattered on the ground. As you walk, look towards the right, and Bibi Maryam's tomb will be in the background. Start walking towards this area, and after a few minutes, you will reach the end of the path. After passing the tomb, head towards the left, and there will be a small path to walk down. Keep walking through the dry wadi and make your way back to the beach.

While the hiking trails around this area is not as scenic as some hiking paths scattered all over the country, they have their own personalities and offer an amazing insight into the history of the place.

While walking in this area, please respect the history and heritage. It is okay to take pictures of the pottery, but do not take them with you. Do not leave any trash behind. Both areas for walking are not marked, so be careful when coming to these trails. Qalhat is perfect for exploring, taking pictures of incredible rock formations, or figuring out history. The best time to visit is in the early morning or late afternoon.