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INDIA KNOCK ON VICTORY'S DOOR IN CENTURION



P13

RAS MARKAZ CRUDE OIL TERMINAL READY FOR LAUNCH IN Q2 2022



THE YEAR THAT WAS

Today's edition has a 4-page pull out detailing the major events that shaped the Sultanate of Oman in 2021



MUSCAT

HM RECEIVES THANKS FROM 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 Nahar bin Saud bin Abdulaziz al Saud. In the cable, King Salman expressed his sincere appreciation for His Majesty the Sultan's heartfelt sympathies and sincere prayers. He prayed to Allah the Almighty to rest the bereaved's soul in peace in paradise and to protect His Majesty against all harm.

BUDGET 2022 ON JANUARY 1

The Sultanate of Oman Budget 2022 is all set to take off on January 1, 2022 amidst a vote of confidence in economy by global rating agencies following improvements in debt-to-GDP ratio and the size of the budget deficit. The budget, which comes in the second year of the Tenth Five-Year Development Plan, paves the way to implement Oman Vision 2040 development objectives. Higher oil prices in 2021, along with fiscal reforms, are expected to narrow state deficits. SEE P3

Now get news on the go



INSIDE



PALESTINIAN PRESIDENT VISITS ISRAEL



PAKISTAN BRACES FOR OMICRON SPREAD

JAPAN, BANGLADESH ENVOYS BID FAREWELL



On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan bid farewell to Mizanur Rahman, Ambassador of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to the Sultanate of Oman and Toshinori Kobayashi, Ambassador of Japan to the Sultanate of Oman (pictured). SEE ALSO P2

Women's hockey Asia Cup in Muscat from Jan 28

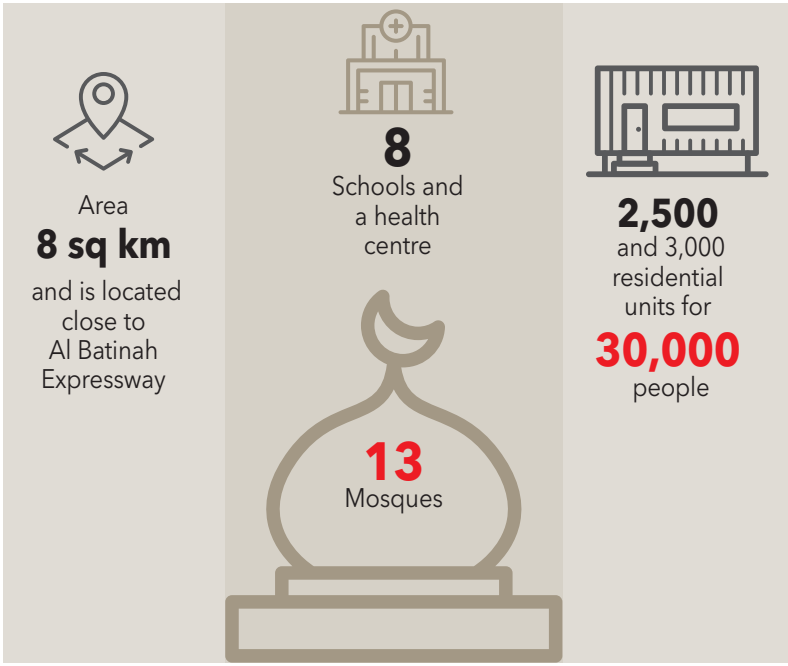
MUSCAT: Asian Hockey Federation (AHF) announced on Wednesday that the Sultanate of Oman was named as the host of the 2022 Women's Asia Cup. The event will take place from January 21 to 28 at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Muscat. Nine teams including China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Sultanate of Oman will take part in the tournament and vie for the prestigious title. The tourney will be held in the Sultanate of Oman for the first time and it is in line with the Oman Hockey Association's (OHA) strategies to boost women's hockey activities and initiatives.

Dr Marwan al Juma, OHA Chairman, said that the Women's Asia Cup is one of the top significant events in the region. "I am very delighted with hosting of this major championship. I believe hosting of the Asian event will bring a lot of positive impact and improve the status of Omani women's hockey. "Establishing a new women's hockey team is one of the plans beside organising many courses and workshops including first coaching course. I thank the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for their support and assistance," he said. SEE ALSO P10

New Liwa city awaits investors

MOHUP TO ROLL OUT TENDERS FOR USUFRUCT RIGHTS

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning will shortly roll out 9 investment sites on the basis of usufruct rights in the new Liwa city in North Al Batinah Governorate. The move comes within the framework of the government's efforts to boost the national economy and enhance logistics support to investment projects and in line with the ministry's initiatives to reinvigorate the real estate sector and economic activities in the governorate. The initiative also aims to meet the requirements of population and economic growth to meet the growing demand for commercial and industrial real estate units, and to help the private sector attract investments in the governorates which contribute to the



development of integrated and sustainable urban communities. The land plots, measuring between 1,000 sq metres and 5,000 sq metres, will be earmarked for governmental, commercial, residential and industrial purposes. The land

plots will be put out to tenders on a usufruct basis according to certain conditions and specifications including that the bidder should be an Omani citizen not older than 23 years of age or a company that has no less than 30 per cent Omani or GCC citizens as shareholders. Bids can be registered online on the Real Estate Service Centre website using ID number and commercial register number. The new residential city in Liwa occupies 8 sq km and is located close to Al Batinah Expressway. It contains between 2,500 and 3,000 residential units complete with services and public utilities and has a capacity to accommodate 30,000 people. It has 13 mosques, 8 schools, a health centre and a road network — ONA

Two deaths, 104 cases in 24 hours

VINOD NAIR @vinot_nair

The last month of 2021 has seen a big spurt in Covid-19 cases across the region, including the Sultanate of Oman. On Wednesday, the nation reported two deaths and 104 new cases, confirming the reality that the virus can still take lives if precautions are not followed. According to Dr Zakariya al Balushi of Royal Hospital, as per preliminary observations, patients vaccinated with three doses are likely to get only simple symptoms like the cold. "For patients vaccinated with two doses, their condition is also simple, but the severity of symptoms is stronger than those vaccinated with three doses, but without the presence of serious lung infections/ the majority of hospitalised patients with serious lung infections and deaths are those who are not vaccinated with Covid vaccines."

'Tsunami' of Covid-19 cases raises testing, quarantine fears

SYDNEY/ROME: Global Covid-19 infections hit a record high over the past seven-day period, Reuters data showed on Wednesday, as the Omicron variant raced out of control, keeping workers at home and overwhelming testing centres. Almost 900,000 cases were detected on average each day around the world between December 22 and 28, with myriad countries posting new all-time highs in the previous 24 hours, including the United States,

Australia and many in Europe. Almost two years after China first alerted the World Health Organisation (WHO) to a cluster of "viral pneumonia" cases of unknown origin in the city of Wuhan, the regularly mutating coronavirus is still wreaking havoc, forcing numerous governments to rethink quarantine and test rules. Although studies have suggested Omicron is less deadly than some previous variants, the huge numbers of people testing



A pedestrian walks past the National Covid Memorial Wall in London on Wednesday. — AFP

positive mean that hospitals in some countries might soon be overwhelmed, while businesses might struggle to carry on because of workers having to quarantine. "Delta and Omicron are now twin threats driving up cases to record numbers, leading to spikes in hospitalisation and deaths," WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said. "I am highly concerned that Omicron, being highly transmissible and spreading at

the same time as Delta, is leading to a tsunami of cases."French Health Minister Olivier Veran told lawmakers France was seeing a "dizzying" rise in cases, with 208,000 reported in the space of 24 hours — a national and European record. Britain, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Cyprus and Malta all registered record numbers of new cases on Tuesday, while the seven-day average number of new daily cases in the United States hit a record 258,312. — Reuters

Asaad bids farewell to ambassadors

MUSCAT: On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, His Highness Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, and Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, received separately in his office on Wednesday Mizanur Rahman, Ambassador of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to the Sultanate of Oman, and Toshinori Kobayashi, Ambassador of Japan to the Sultanate of Oman, to bid them farewell at the end of their tasks.

The two ambassadors expressed their thanks to His Majesty the Sultan for the support extended to them during their tour of duty in the Sultanate of Oman from His Majesty, the Government and the Omani people, which had enabled them to carry out their tasks.



They also expressed their best wishes of good health, happiness and long life to His Majesty the Sultan, wishing the Sultanate of Oman further progress and growth under the wise leadership of His Majesty.

On his turn, HH Sayyid Asaad expressed his utmost thanks to the ambassadors for the efforts they exerted in serving relations between the Sultanate of Oman and their countries, wishing them permanent success, and the people of Bangladesh and Japan further progress and prosperity.

The meeting was attended by the Secretary-General and the two advisers at the Office of HH Sayyid Asaad.

— ONA

Projects worth RO 10.8 million approved

MUSCAT: The Tender Board has awarded tenders worth RO 10,830,421 for a number of projects and additional works at its meeting held on Wednesday under the chairmanship of Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, Chairman of the Tender Board.

The projects include design and provision of consultancy services for the management of the standardised financial system at the Ministry of Finance to the tune of RO 3,224,785.



Annual maintenance of road networks in Dhofar Governorate to the tune of RO

3,083,025. Construction of Afoul bridge in Dhofar Governorate to the

tune of RO 3,052,300.

Supply of Microsoft programmes for the Ministry of Education at a value of RO 938,332.

Additional works for Maqinyat-Maskan road in Al Dhahirah Governorate and Al Leahyan-Kahnat road from Saham to Ibri at a value of RO 404,290.

Provision of periodical maintenance and supply of spare parts of medical devices for the Ministry of Health at a value of RO 127,685. — ONA

SQHS to get new oxygen generating machines

SALALAH: The Ministry of Health, represented by the Directorate-General of Health Services in the Governorate of Dhofar, on Wednesday signed an agreement with Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) to provide medical equipment for Sultan Qaboos Hospital in Salalah (SQHS).

As per the agreement, the hospital will be equipped with

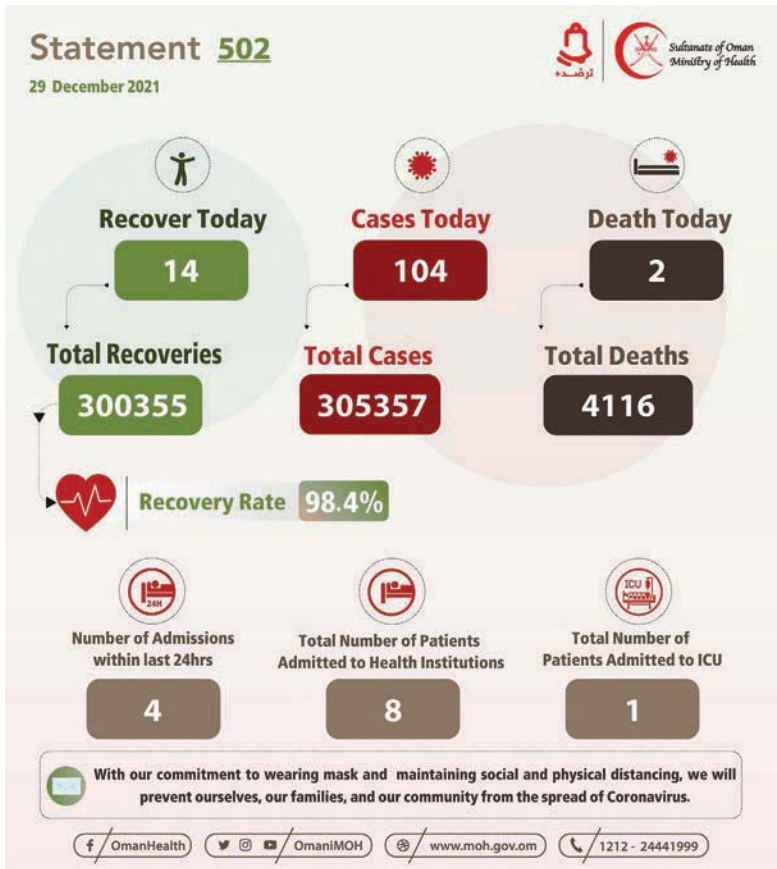
oxygen generating machines for respiratory patients, including Covid-19.

The agreement was signed by Dr Khalid bin Mohammed al Mashikhi, Director-General of Health Services in Dhofar, and Eng Mohammed bin Ahmed al Ghareebi, PDO's External Affairs and Communications Manager.

— ONA



104 CORONAVIRUS CASES, 2 DEATHS REPORTED



Over 18,000 marriages registered in 2020



18,621 MARRIAGE CERTIFICATES ISSUED IN 2020

NORTH AL BATINAH — 3,938

MUSCAT — 3,354

MUSANDAM — 104

3,426 DIVORCE CERTIFICATES ISSUED IN 2020

MUSCAT — 796

NORTH AL BATINAH — 672

MUSANDAM — 18

MUSCAT: The number of marriage certificates in Oman increased by 2.1 per cent in 2020 compared to 2019.

The "Marriage and Divorce Bulletin 2021" issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) indicated that 18,621 marriage certificates were registered during 2020.

The Governorate of North Al Batinah topped the list with 3,938 marriage certificates issued in 2020, comprising an increase of 11 per cent compared to 2019. The Governorate of Muscat came second with 3,354 certificates, a rise of 1.9 per cent compared to 2019.

Meanwhile, the Governorate of Musandam came at the bottom of the list with 104 certificates issued in 2020, a decrease by 31.1 per cent compared to 2019.

NCSI data also indicated a decrease by 180 cases in the number of Omanis married to expatriates in 2020. The number

of Omanis married to GCC women also declined by 49 cases compared to 2019.

Additionally, the number of Omani women married to GCC citizens went down by 65 cases. The number of Omani women married to expatriates also fell by 53 cases in 2020.

Moreover, the total number of divorce certificates issued in the Sultanate of Oman during 2020 amounted to around 3,426 (9.4 cases a day), marking a decline by 8.1 per cent compared to 2019.

On the other hand, the number of divorce cases in 2020 among Omanis fell by 192 cases, and by 17 cases between GCC citizens and Omani women.

Further, the Governorate of Muscat recorded the highest number of divorce cases with 796, followed by the Governorate of North Al Batinah with 672, while the Governorate of Musandam recorded the lowest number of divorce cases with 18. — ONA

CULTURAL CLUB LAUNCHES 2022 SEASON



MUSCAT: The Cultural Club launched its cultural season for 2022 under the title 'Our culture is our identity', under the auspices of Ali bin Khalfan al Jabri, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Information for Information, at its premises in Qurum on Tuesday evening. The launch ceremony was attended by members of the club's board of directors, intellectuals, writers and artists. — ONA

Expo 2020 Dubai: Sultanate of Oman's pavilion receives more than half a million visitors

KABEER YOUSUF

@kabeeryousef

More than half a million people have visited the Sultanate of Oman's pavilion at the Expo 2020 venue in Dubai nearly three months after it opened to the public on October 1, this year.

This number includes visitors from the GCC, Asia and Far East, Europe and Americas and other parts, according to the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP).

"We are glad to note that over half a million people have made it to the pavilion at the Expo 2020 in less than three months, and they include people from across the world," Mohsin al Balushi, Commissioner-General of the Sultanate of Oman at Expo 2020 Dubai, told the *Observer*.

"We are expecting more visitors in the coming days as more events are charted out on a weekly and monthly basis," he added.

The frankincense-themed pavilion of the Sultanate of Oman at the Expo 2020 has been pulling a steady stream of people from



across the world since its opening. In January 2022, the Sultanate of Oman's Ministry of Transport, Communication and Information Technology, Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, and Oman Air will take an active part during the Travel and Connectivity Week that will take place from January 9-15.

"Seeking greater participation from across the globe, we are also organising visits for honorary consuls to visit the Sultanate of

Oman's pavilion in cooperation with Foreign Ministry. The visit will include showcasing investment opportunities at the pavilion's Opportunity Centre."

According to available statistics, the Sultanate of Oman's pavilion received an average of 6,000 visitors a day, and in the first week, the number of visitors crossed 81,071, and the number was steadily increasing. But with travel restrictions imposed in some countries due to Covid-19



and its new variant Omicron, the number is more or less steady, thanks to the enthusiasm that Expo 2020 has been creating.

The Luban outlet at the

pavilion contains more than 1,500 products from more than 400 Omani small and medium businesses, family businesses, craftsmen and rural women. This

embodies the opportunities that the Omani pavilion can provide through the Expo for the theme, which is one of the sub-themes of the Expo 2020 Dubai.

RAFO NEW RECRUITS GRADUATE



MUSCAT: The Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) celebrated the graduation of a new batch of recruits at Adam Air Base on Wednesday after completing their military training and qualification process.

The ceremony was held under the auspices of Air Commodore

Ali bin Mubarak al Ameri, Commander of Ghala Air Base and Commandant of Sultan Qaboos Air Academy. The graduation ceremony was attended by a number of RAFO senior officers, commissioned and non-commissioned officers, personnel and the graduates' parents. — ONA



Budget 2022 set to take off amid stable outlook

SAMUEL KUTTY

@samkuttyvp

The Sultanate of Oman Budget 2022 is all set to take off on January 1, 2022 amidst a vote of confidence in economy by global rating agencies following improvements in debt-to-GDP ratio and the size of the budget deficit.

The budget, which comes in the second year of the Tenth Five-Year Development Plan, paves the way to implement Oman Vision 2040 development objectives.

Higher oil prices in 2021, along with fiscal reforms, are expected to narrow state deficits and slow a rise in debt levels over the next few years.

As per the announcement by Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance, the budget deficit is expected to reach 5 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2022, well within the limits of the Medium Term Fiscal Plan and considered to be the lowest since 2014.

"The budget aims to achieve a number of economic and social goals, among them maintaining safe levels of government spending, giving priority to projects of economic and social objectives and finalising digital transformation, to name a few," he said at a recent press conference.

Calculated on the basis of a breakeven oil price of \$50 a barrel, revenues are estimated at RO 10.58 billion, 6 per cent higher than revenues expected by the end of the current year. Oil

and gas returns comprise 68 per cent of the total revenues, against 32 per cent for non-oil and gas revenues.

Deficit in 2022 is estimated to stand at RO 1.5 billion and the cost of repayment of government loans in 2022 is expected to stand at RO 2.7 billion.

The total public debt is expected to reach 75 per cent of GDP, which is less than the 86 per cent expected earlier in the year.

Abdullah bin Salim al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Finance, during a press conference in the second week of this month expressed optimism that the Sultanate of Oman's credit ratings will gradually improve over the coming years.

Three major global rating agencies including Fitch, Moody's and S&P Global Ratings have revised their outlooks on the Sultanate of Oman upwards.

"The budget sets a prudent and measured tone in both its revenue and expenditure projections," says Jose Chacko, Partner, Crowe Oman.

"The budget 2022 has been prepared in accordance with the priorities in Oman Vision 2040 and objectives to achieve fiscal sustainability. It has measures to reduce the ratio of the size of public debt to GDP," he said.

According to him, the level of economic growth in the budget will contribute to the employment of Omani nationals, and continue to enhance the role of private sector institutions in the development process.

Practice



appropriate behaviour

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH
@patkaushal

Unlike previous Covid-19 mutants, Omicron has given ample time to the world to be prepared and act. It was around the same time last year when Covid-19 cases had started rising. Unfortunately, the world took the rise lightly, leading to so many deaths, lockdowns and closure of businesses.

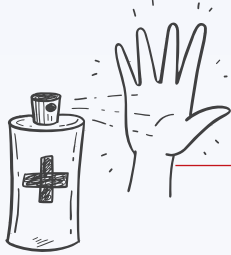
Festivals and gatherings are clear indications of the rise in Covid-19 cases. It is catching people whenever they are off guard. It is human nature to be comfortable even in uncomfortable situations. The call is to be clean, cautious and careful.

People still have time to

protect against the virus by taking the pandemic protocols seriously. Those who have not taken the protective vaccines should go for it immediately. There is an option of booster dose for those who have already taken both doses.

There are cases in which the new variant has affected those who were properly vaccinated and went through both the doses. But the severity of the symptom among them was less, and in most cases, they did not need hospitalisation.

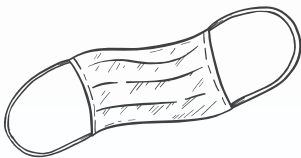
It is difficult for anyone to predict the severity of the disease. Still, some experts feel that 2022 should be a better year in terms of control over the disease due to preparedness, global cooperation and attempt to



WASH YOUR
HANDS
REGULARLY



FOLLOW COVID
PROTOCOL



WEAR MASK IN
CLOSED PLACES

nip the new variants in the bud.

“The world took the Omicron very seriously as soon as it was detected. Some people termed the restrictions imposed by the governments as over-reaction, but as a medical practitioner, I feel it is a right step because when the new variant was found, hardly anyone was knowing about its severity,” said Dr Harish, who has several years of work experience in Gulf countries.

“The pandemic’s message so far is to avoid reluctance and go for the norms set by the medical experts and governments. The world demography would have been entirely different had there been no vaccination,” he said.

Some countries, including

the Sultanate of Oman, has started administering booster doses. People should avail the opportunity by understanding that top-level experts decide all the Covid-related norms in line with global cooperation.

The vaccine coverage has been widespread and the option of booster is already there. A relatively early response in the form of following Covid-19 norms and restrictions could keep the surge at manageable levels.

As the world is expecting a surge in Covid-19 cases by mid-January, controlling the ferocity of the pandemic would be a challenging task. The most crucial factor, as usual, would be people’s compliance with Covid-appropriate behaviour.



PASI reviews performance indicators

MUSCAT: The Board of Directors of the Public Authority for Social Insurance (PASI) on Wednesday held a meeting under the chairmanship of Dr Mahad bin Said bin Ali Baowain, Minister of Labour, Chairman of PASI Board.

The meeting discussed PASI's institutional performance indicators for 2021 linked to the Authority's 2040 vision, as well as its investment performance indicators. It also approved the investment budget of PASI for 2022.

The board also looked

into statistical and financial indicators associated with job security.

It comprised the number of beneficiaries and their distribution in accordance with the service termination types.

The board approved a number of investment

opportunities figuring in the second phase of execution of the PASI plan of the year. It also studied audit and financial reports about the Authority's activities, besides reports related to enhancing governance.

— ONA

HORSE RACE IN BARKA TODAY

MUSCAT: The Royal Horse Racing Club (RHRC) will organise the 9th horse race of the season on Al Rahba racecourse in the Wilayat of Barka on Thursday.

The eight rounds of the race will see the participation of more than 120 horses. Six rounds will be dedicated for pure Arabian horses and two rounds for thoroughbred horses.

The race will be held in accordance with preventive measures against



Covid-19 set by the Supreme Committee tasked with tackling developments resulting from coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. — ONA

MAJIS INDUSTRIAL SERVICES SAOC (Majis)
P.O. Box No. 553, Falaj Al Qabail, Postal Code 322, Sultanate of Oman
Tel No. 26852421 Email: Tender@miscoman.com
(Office Location: Administration Building, Opposite Sohar Aluminium and Sohar Power co. at Sohar Industrial Port Area)

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Majis Industrial Services SAOC (Majis) is a closely held joint stock company fully owned by the Government of Oman. Majis is engaged in providing various water utility services at the Sohar Industrial Port Area and Sohar Free Zone.

Tenders are invited from local and international qualified firms for the following (Note: small description of TOR is available in our e-tendering system).

Sl. No.	Tender No.	Tender Description	Bids fees in R.O.	Last date for paying bid fee	Last date for tender submission
1.	Majis/52/2021	Design, Build GFS Potable Water Storage Tanks (6000 m3) at Majis RO Plot 21A	262,500 incl. 5% VAT	Monday 10th January 2022	Tuesday 8th February 2022

Bidders who have made electronic transfer of bid fee will be issued soft copy of the tender document through the e-tendering system on or before Monday 10th January 2022. The companies participating must be registered with Majis' in e-tendering system (<http://tendering.majis.om/VendorLogin.aspx>) during the tendering stage. The payment of bid fee should be made by direct transfer to the following bank account of Majis. (Account Name: Majis Industrial Services SAOC, Bank : Bank Muscat SAOG, Account Number: 0423010783830018).

Note: The registered companies who can upload the tender fee transfer receipt into our e-tendering system under the above referred tender section. Tender documents will be issued to such firms only through the system.

The Tender should be delivered in sealed envelopes, addressed to the EXECUTIVE, NOMINATION & REMUNERATION COMMITTEE "ENRC", Majis Industrial Service SAOC, P.O. Box No. 553, Falaj Al Qabail, Postal Code 322, Sultanate of Oman (at Majis' reception).

Tenderers must not display their identities on envelopes. Majis is not bound to accept the lowest or any other tender.

Questions regarding this procurement process shall be directed to tender@miscoman.com.

Contract inked to set up furniture factory

MUSCAT: Khazaen Economic City signed an investment contract with Al Nameer Advanced Enterprises Company to set up the first home furniture factory to the tune of RO 1 million as a first phase.

The contract was signed by Eng Salim bin Sulaiman al Thuhli, CEO of Khazaen, and Mohammed Baqwaan, CEO of Al Nameer.

Al Thuhli said that Khazaen Economic City has been selected as venue to the factory due to the prospective growth of the city, which will give the home furniture unit access to markets in the Middle East and Africa. — ONA

MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No. (59/2021)

Muscat Municipality invites interested companies to the following tenders:

Tender No.	Tender Description	Document Fee	Last Date for Inquires Submission	Last Date for Obtaining Tender Docs.	Last Date for Submission
94/2021/MM/PA-20	Provide Cleaning Labor for Muscat Municipality	118/- OMR	18/01/2022	03/02/2022	07/02/2022
95/2021/MM/PA-21	Valuation of Muscat Municipality Properties	25/- OMR	18/01/2022	03/02/2022	07/02/2022
96/2021/MM/PA-22	Supply of Tools and Pesticides for Insect Control	25/- OMR	18/01/2022	03/02/2022	07/02/2022

- Specialized Companies with a valid registration certificate from Tender Board can obtain tender documents from the website through the following link: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>. Starting from the date of this announcement until the end of deadline mentioned above.
- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically through link mentioned above.
- Tender Bonds shall be E-Bond which is equivalent to (1%) of the total value of the tender to be submitted through E-Tendering system, addressed to Muscat Municipality and valid for (90) days starting from the deadline for submission.
- Tender not accompanied by a tender bond will be rejected.**
- Clarifications and support:**
 - For any inquiries regarding tenders, please contact us through e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
 - For technical support of e-tendering system, please send an email to (etenderhd@mtc.gov.om) or call (+968 24402200).
 - For technical support of E-Bond through e-tendering system please send an email to (esnad@gstb.gov.om) or call (+968 24402200 / 24402330).

Website: www.mm.gov.om



Sahara Hospitality Co. (S.A.O.G.)
P.O. Box 311, Muscat, Postal Code 100, Sultanate of Oman.

DIRECTORS' REPORT FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED ON NOVEMBER 30, 2021

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to submit the un-audited Financial Statements of the company for the financial year ended on November 30, 2021 along with related reports.

We would like to state that the revenue for the above period RO 11,240,348 has exceeded the budgeted figure of RO 10,328,244 whereas reported a decrease against RO 12,598,760 in the corresponding period of last year.

The total shareholders fund increased from RO 24,403,350 at the end of November 2020 to RO 25,718,916 at the end of current financial year and as a result of this growth, the net assets per share have recorded R.O 3.408.

On behalf of the Board of directors, I express our most sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq Bin Taimour Al Said for his wise leadership and generous support to the private sector. Furthermore, I would extend our gratitude to his government for their co-operation and assistance with special mention of Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Muscat Securities Market and Capital Market Authority.

I conclude this report by expressing our appreciation to our shareholders, Petroleum Development Oman, our bankers and customers for their valued support and cooperation.

For and on behalf of Board of Directors,

TALAL BIN QAIS AL ZAWAWI
CHAIRMAN

Unaudited Consolidated Statement of Financial Position at 30 th November 2021		
	2021 RO. '000	2020 RO. '000
Fixed assets	15,719	16,790
	<u>15,719</u>	<u>16,790</u>
Current assets		
Inventories	30	31
Trade Receivables	5,225	4,816
Receivables from related parties	28	53
Bank and Cash	7,023	5,924
	<u>12,306</u>	<u>10,824</u>
Total assets	28,025	27,614
Current liabilities		
Trade and other Payables	566	536
Payables to related parties	1,145	1,022
Bank loans and over drafts	--	983
Lease liability	20	19
Tax liability	374	432
	<u>2,105</u>	<u>2,992</u>
Long term liabilities		
Lease liability	67	86
Deferred Tax liability	134	133
	<u>201</u>	<u>219</u>
Total liabilities	2,306	3,211
Net Assets	25,719	24,403
Shareholders' funds		
Share capital	7,546	6,737
Legal reserve	2,458	2,246
Retained earnings	15,715	15,420
Total shareholders' equity	25,719	24,403

Unaudited Consolidated Statement of Comprehensive Income For 12 months ended 30 th November 2021		
	2021 RO. '000	2020 RO. '000
Turnover/Revenue	11,240	12,599
Gross Profit	3,968	4,443
Depreciation	(1,080)	(1,088)
Administration & general expenses	(549)	(441)
Operating profit	2,339	2,914
Finance charges	(31)	(93)
Other income	191	178
Profit before taxation and minority interest	2,499	2,999
Taxation	(375)	(451)
Net profit attributable to ordinary Shareholders	2,124	2,548
Net profit margin	19%	20%

The complete accounts in either Arabic or English will be delivered to any shareholder within 7 days of receipt of the request. Such requests may be sent to the Board Secretary, Sahara Hospitality Co. (S.A.O.G.), PO Box 311, Postal Code 100, Muscat.

Perfume show in February 22

MUSCAT: Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) will organise the "Oman Perfume Show 2022" on February 1, 2022.

The five-day event is considered one of the prominent exhibitions specialised in perfumes, incense and frankincense products.

In a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA), Eng Said bin Salim al Shanfari, CEO of OCEC, said that the "Oman Perfume Show 2022" is an ideal platform for perfume traders to showcase the competitive features of their brands.

He added that more than 100 local, regional and international trademarks will be present in the exhibition.

A fashion show and other live events will be held on the sidelines of "Oman Perfume Show 2022".

— ONA

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Nama Shared Services Company LLC (NSS) invites the specialized companies to participate and submit their best offers for the tender below:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last Date for Collection of Tender Documents	Time & Last Date for Proposal Submission	Tender Fee (OMR)
NSS/2021/12	Call of contract Agreement for the supply of IT consultancy and PMO resources for DIGITAL ENTERPRISE DEPARTMENT	12 Jan 2022	7 Feb 2022	100 *VAT not included

- Bids shall be submitted in a single envelope and sealed with red wax, addressed to the "Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee", and must write on the envelope the tender name & number.
- 3 separate envelopes shall be included inside the single sealed envelope, and each of these 3 envelopes must be marked with a tender name & tender no. as per the below:
 - Commercial Proposal
 - Technical Proposal
 - Bid Bond
- Bids should be dropped in the tender box at NSS reception before 1.00 pm, time of the Sultanate, on Monday 7 February 2022.
- Each bid should be accompanied with a temporary insurance, in the form of a bank guarantee or a cheque certified from one of the banks operating in the Sultanate, covering (1%) of the total bid value and valid for a period of (90) days from the last date for submission of offers, addressed to the "Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee". Tenders that do not include the required temporary insurance will not be considered.
- NSS is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other bid.
- Tender fee includes (100 OMR original price + 5% VAT = 105 OMR).
- Registration of the bidders to be done through the company Tender website (www.nama.om).
- Interested party to deposit Tender Fee (Non-Refundable) on: Account Name: Nama Shared Services, Bank Muscat: 0423-048027270-017 Corporate Branch (Bidder name and Tender Number to be clearly mentioned). Tender Documents will be received by email.
- The deposit at the last day of purchasing should be before 1.00pm.
- In the event of receipt of the tender document on behalf of another company, the interested purchasers in the above tender document should provide details of the person's name and the company details.



نماء للخدمات المشتركة
Nama Shared Services

Al Muzn Mall

R-Floor, Al Mawalleh North, Al Seeb
P.O Box C9740, Post Code 900, Sultanate of Oman.
Phone Number: +968 24559200 / 217
E-Mail: Ibrahim.ALHina@holding.nama.om



Palestinian president visits Israel

JERUSALEM: An Israeli was wounded in a shooting attack on the Gaza border on Wednesday, the military said, after a rare visit to Israel by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas drew condemnation from the enclave's Hamas rulers.

The Israeli military said it responded to the shooting with tank fire, targeting Hamas posts in the northern Gaza Strip. Gaza health officials said three Palestinian farmers were wounded.

Israel's Defence Minister Benny Gantz hosted Abbas in his home late on Tuesday, the Western-backed Palestinian leader's first such visit to Israel in more than a decade, although it signalled few prospects for any resumption of long-stalled peace negotiations.

Following their talks, the Israeli Defence Ministry announced a series of what it described as "confidence-building measures" that would ease the entry of hundreds of Palestinian business people to Israel.

In Gaza, Hazem Qassem, a Hamas spokesman, said that by meeting Gantz, Abbas was "deepening Palestinian political divisions" and encouraging accommodation with "the occupation", a term Hamas uses to describe Israel.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the shooting attack from Gaza, which



the Israeli military said slightly wounded the civilian. The border has been largely quiet since an 11-day war between Israel and Gaza militants in May.

Abbas and Gantz last met in August, in the occupied West Bank. Palestinian official Hussein al Sheikh said that at Tuesday's talks they discussed the "importance of creating a political horizon" for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Gantz, in his summation of the meeting on Twitter, made no mention of a peace process, stalled since 2014 after US-backed talks collapsed. Palestinians seek to establish a state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

"We discussed the implementation of economic and civilian measures, and emphasised the importance of deepening security coordination and preventing terror and violence — for the well-being of both Israelis and Palestinians," Gantz wrote.

— Reuters

'Erdogan may cash in on economy steps with early election'

ISTANBUL: Turkey's President Tayyip Erdogan has effectively opened the door to early elections, political analysts said, after two big recent announcements — a 50-per cent rise in the minimum wage and a deposit-protection scheme that arrested a currency crash.

The announcements came within five days of each other as a grinding currency crisis hit a peak on December 20 when the lira tanked to a record low of 18.4 to the dollar, deeply rattling the economy and households.

Erdogan and senior officials from his ruling AK Party (AKP) have repeatedly dismissed the idea of presidential and parliamentary

elections being held before scheduled in mid-2023.

But the 2022 wage relief and the sharp turnaround in the lira — rallying to 12 per dollar — suggest Erdogan may want to act soon, after a long slide in his opinion poll ratings.

Analysts said his announcements echo past pre-election gambits to prove his leadership credentials. A snap poll could wrongfoot the opposition coalition, which has not yet agreed on a presidential candidate.

"The decisions have... given the impression that the AK Party and Erdogan are excellent managers of the economy," said Mehmet Ali Kulat, Chairman of MAK Con-



A money changer counts Turkish lira banknotes at a currency exchange office in Ankara. — Reuters file photo

sulting.

"For Erdogan, a 'last minute' success story emerges before every election," he said. "We see that this process will be presented as a political leader who beat the dollar and disrupted the game of foreign powers."

However, the message's effectiveness will depend on the direction of the lira and inflation, and their impact on Turks who have seen their spending power slashed.

To boost the lira, Erdogan announced a scheme in which the state protects converted lira deposits against future depreciation losses versus hard currencies.

With the help of state-backed

market interventions, the move halted a currency slide brought on by Erdogan's own unorthodox policy of slashing interest rates despite inflation seen hitting 30 per cent this month.

Yet the scheme risks further driving up prices and the fiscal debt in the months ahead, economists say.

Omer Taspinar, a Turkey expert at Brookings and professor at National Defence University, said Erdogan is "already following election politics" by raising citizens' purchasing power.

"To stop the bleeding, he practically indexed the value of bank accounts in domestic currency to the dollar," he said. — Reuters

Two die of wounds from Israel strike on Latakia

At least two members of a pro-government militia were killed in an Israeli strike on the Syrian port of Latakia, a war monitor said on Wednesday. The strike before dawn on Tuesday marked the second time that Israel has hit the key cargo hub since the outbreak of Syria's civil war in 2011.

The Israeli attack — one of nearly 30 that have hit Syria this year — caused significant damage with stacks of containers catching fire. "Two members of a pro-regime militia were killed



in the Israeli strike," the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. Syrian state media said the containers hit in the strikes carried "engine oil and spare parts for cars and other vehicles".

Sadr meets leaders of paramilitary alliance

The winner of Iraq's October parliamentary election, Moqtada Sadr, met on Wednesday with rivals from the Hashed al Shaa-bi former paramilitary alliance ahead of the opening of parliament.

The October 10 vote was rejected by the Fatah (Conquest) Alliance, the political arm of the pro-Tehran Hashed, but Iraq's top court on Monday dismissed their allegations of voter fraud and ratified the results.

It paves the way for parliament



to meet and elect a president — who will then name a prime minister tasked with forming a new government. The leaders discussed "the political situation" and the "formation of the next government", INA reported.

Kuwait swears in fourth govt in two years

A new Kuwaiti government was sworn in on Wednesday, after the last one resigned in November amid political deadlock.

Kuwait has been shaken by disputes between elected lawmakers and successive governments dominated by the ruling Al Sabah family for more than a decade, with parliaments and cabinets dissolved several times.

The last government called it quits in November in the face of a standoff with parliament over



reforms. The cabinet was sworn in before the crown prince, the official KUNA news agency reported.

In brief

NEW DELHI

TAX AUTHORITIES SEIZE \$30M IN CASH

Indian tax officials have seized more than \$30 million in cash and gold in raids on suspected tax evaders this week including a record haul of 1.94 billion rupees (\$26 million) and 23 kg of gold ahead of assembly elections in five states.

The raids triggered a flurry of accusations from rival political parties over protection for tax evaders as they prepare to compete in the elections, including in the bellwether state of Uttar Pradesh.

MANILA

NAVY TO BUY 2 S KOREAN WARSHIPS FOR \$556M

The Philippines has ordered two new warships from South Korea's Hyundai Heavy Industries, Defence Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said, modernising Manila's navy. The Philippine Navy had become run down in recent decades — even featuring US craft from World War II — until President Rodrigo Duterte's predecessor, Benigno Aquino, began a modest modernisation programme in 2010.

Tuesday's deal with the South Korean shipbuilding giant comes five years after the firm also won a contract to build two new frigates for the Philippine Navy.



People queue in their cars for PCR testing at a clinic in Sydney. — Reuters

Sydney's NYE fireworks show to go ahead as planned

SYDNEY: Thousands of people were expected to descend to ticketed vantage points to watch Sydney's famous New Year's Eve fireworks despite record-shattering numbers of infections in New South Wales.

Sydney on Wednesday released details about its fireworks display, for which some 17,000 tickets for vantage points managed by the city were already sold, according to news agency AAP.

The agency quoted a city spokesperson as saying they could not predict the turnout for the pyrotechnic show, but five of the six locations managed by the city were sold out and tickets for another 25 locations, with capacity for nearly 87,000 people, were still on sale.

Vaccination and the use of

masks will not be mandatory to attend the ticketed venues, though encouraged, organisers said.

Six tonnes of fireworks were expected to be launched across two displays at 9 pm and midnight were expected to be launched, according to a Wednesday press release. More than 25,000 "shooting effects" will be fired from the Sydney Harbour Bridge and a further 6,000 from the tops of the Sydney Opera House, among others.

The state of New South Wales on Wednesday reported a staggering 11,201 new coronavirus infections, almost doubling its previous record, as the local government struggled to control soaring numbers believed to be driven by the Omicron variant of the virus. — dpa

Pakistan braces for Omicron spread

ISLAMABAD: Health authorities in Pakistan say that they are bracing themselves for a possible fifth wave of coronavirus infections in the country as cases of the Omicron variant increase.

"We fear that a fifth wave of the pandemic may hit in a few weeks," Qaiser Sajjad, the secretary general for the Pakistan Medical Association, told reporters on Wednesday.

Sajjad blamed a combination of vaccine hesitancy and the mass violation of coronavirus-related restrictions, particularly regarding face masks, for the potential new wave in Pakistan.

"We are prepared to deal with a new wave, but at present there is neither surge of new cases nor pressure on hospitals," special assistant to the prime minister on health services, Faisal Sultan, said, adding: "Though there were fears of a new wave, we have not witnessed an alarming rise of cases dominated by the Omicron variant."

Sultan called on people to wear face masks and to get vaccinated as soon as possible.

Pakistan reported its first case of Omicron on December 13



A man receives a Covid-19 vaccine in Peshawar. — Reuters

and by Tuesday the number had reached 79. Life has returned to normal after the fourth wave of the pandemic subsided last month. However, authorities have tightened travel restrictions to avoid a new surge.

At least six deaths and 378 new cases were reported during the last 24 hours, according to the Health Ministry. The country has

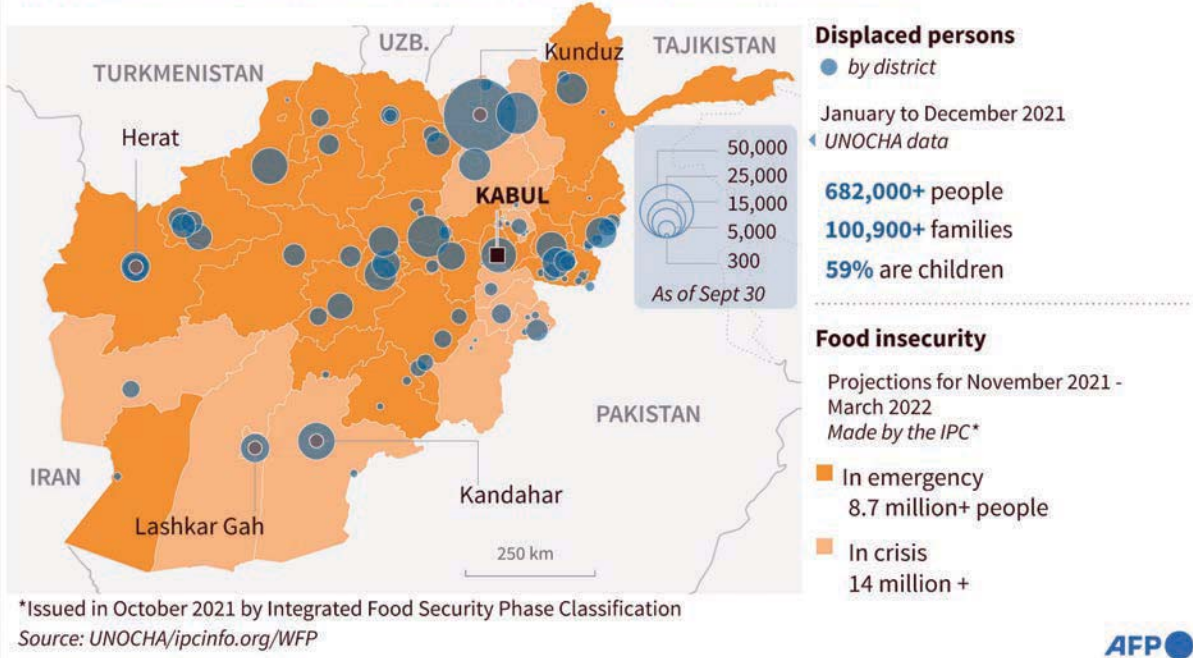
so far recorded 1,294,379 cases and 28,918 Covid-related deaths in total.

Pakistan has administered more than 153 million vaccine doses since its immunisation drive began in February.

However, with a population of 220 million, this translates to less than 30 per cent of the total population. — dpa

2021 Humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan

22.8 million people, half the population, facing food insecurity according to the World Food Program, with 3.2 million children and 700,000 mothers of newborns at risk of acute malnutrition



Turkey, Qatar await Taliban green light to run Afghan airports

KABUL/ISTANBUL: Private Turkish and Qatari companies have agreed to jointly operate five airports in Afghanistan, although they are still waiting to reach a final deal with the Taliban, officials said.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu has said that a "memorandum of understanding" had been inked in Doha earlier this month, covering Kabul and four other airports in the war-ravaged country.

Cavusoglu said the United Arab Emirates, which operated the civilian part of Kabul airport before the Taliban stormed back to power in August after two decades of war, had also expressed an interest in joining the Turkish and Qatari companies.

He said the issue was discussed

during Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed's visit to the Turkish capital Ankara in late November.

"They said 'maybe we can run work trilaterally' but there was never any concrete proposal," said Cavusoglu.

"We haven't presented any proposal to them either. But operating the airport briefly appeared on the agenda."

Turkish and Qatari officials have said little about the details of the memorandum of understanding, refusing to say which companies were to be involved.

Responding to mounting speculation that a deal may be imminent, Afghan civil aviation ministry spokesman Imamuddin Ahmadi told the media on Tuesday that "no deal has been signed yet".

The Taliban have already rejected Turkey's offer to provide security for Kabul airport, which offers an escape route for civilians seeking to flee the country, as well as a way for humanitarian aid to reach Afghanistan.

Cavusoglu has stressed that no deal can be reached until the group allows a trusted foreign operator to secure the airport terminal while the Taliban protects its perimeter.

"Our teams went to Kabul... to present our proposals and then our friends in Doha continued the discussions," Cavusoglu said.

"It is natural for different countries to make bids in this process," Cavusoglu added.

"The Taliban administration had stated it would receive proposals from different countries." — AFP

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

THE TENDER COMMITTEE ANNOUNCES THE FOLLOWING TENDER:

Tender No.	Subject	Document Fees	Tender Bond	Closing Date
MJN-KWM-PM-TED-00018	Invitation for the submission of bids for a freight forwarding service & insurance of 100 buses from Oman to Qatar	OMR 100/-	1% of Bid Value	16 th January 2022

CONDITIONS:

- The tender documents package can be obtained from the Finance Department of the company from the 2nd to the 9th of January 2022 from 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM, upon payment of a non-refundable document fee to the following bank account and providing proof of deposit and signed authorisation letter to collect the tender document, with a company stamp.
- Payment should be processed by bank transfer or deposit to the following bank coordinates or by cash:

Account Name: **Karwa Motors**
Bank Name: **Meethaq Islamic Banking**
Bank Branch: **Al Khuwair Islamic Branch**
Account Number: **0625500193570001**
Swift Code: **BMUSOMRXISL**

KEY DATES:

- Issue Tender Package - 2nd January 2022 - 9th January 2022
- Last Date for Queries - 12th January 2022
- Last Date for Submission - 16th January 2022
- Tender should be submitted not later than 12:00 Noon on the closing date and must be deposited at Karwa Motors Tendering Office located at Office No 5-25, 2nd Floor, Finaa Al Fardan Building No.254, Way 4204, Plot No 836, North Al Ghubra, Postal Code: 1115, Muscat, and should be in a sealed envelope addressed to 'Tender Committee, Karwa Motors', quoting the Tender No. and subject.
- Offers arriving after the closing date and time shall not be accepted.
- For queries please e-mail: tendercommittee@karwamotors.com

Together, every mile

KARWAMOTORS.COM



Scientists study climate change at ‘end of the world’

PUNTA ARENAS: Chilean scientists studying organisms in one of the most remote places on Earth are urging regional leaders to step up efforts to tackle climate change.

A recent expedition, which was delayed by a year due to the coronavirus pandemic, sought to investigate harmful organisms and how they are impacting climate change.

Chile’s Magallanes region — on the southern tip of South America where the Atlantic and Pacific oceans meet — is known as the “end of the world” and extends from Punta Arenas through the Magallanes Strait to the Beagle Channel.

Sailing through peak-lined straits past glaciers and soaring birds, the scientists on board the oceanographic research vessel *Cabo de Hornos* had their focus trained on the water, which has lower levels of acidity, salt and calcium than other seas and oceans, especially in their shallowest parts.

Scientists believe the conditions found in the water will appear in other parts of the world in the

coming decades, as the impact of climate change mounts.

“The regional plans for mitigation and adaptation to climate change are out of date with respect to what is happening in the environment,” Jose Luis Iriarte, who headed the expedition, said.

“The environment is changing quicker than we as a society are responding to it.”

The scientific mission paid special attention to the “red tides” — harmful algal blooms that can turn the sea red.

They were first recorded in the Magallanes region half a century ago and have since been responsible for the deaths of 23 people and poisoned more than 200.

This area is also affected by melting glaciers, a product of global warming.

“We don’t know how these organisms and particularly microorganisms will respond to these effects,” said Iriarte.

The expedition stopped at 14 places, each time taking water samples at different levels up to a depth of 200 metres using a piece of equipment called a rosette.



Crew members of the Chilean navy scientific research ship *Cabo de Hornos* take pictures at the glacier Fouque, in the region of Magallanes, Chile.

Another piece of equipment was used to collect soil samples, sometimes at a depth of more than 300 metres.

The scientists also combed the

shores for algae and molluscs.

From the highest point on the boat, marine biologist Rodrigo Hucke, one of 19 scientists on the expedition, spent hours scanning

the surface of the water.

Spotting a far off whale, he would give the signal and then jump into a small motorboat to try to get as close as possible to the

huge mammal in a bid to collect its faeces, with the aim of looking for changes to its diet.

Hucke says there has been a historical lack of action by governments when it comes to the oceans, which cover 70 per cent of the planet’s surface.

He hopes the next UN Climate Change Conference — COP27 in Egypt — will mark a true global transformation in how the oceans are managed.

“All of this needs to change in 2022 and there needs to be a concrete decision in advancing towards profound policies of change in how us humans do things,” said Hucke.

He is worried that this region could one day become “one of the last bastions of biodiversity on Earth.”

After the nine-day mission, it was time to head back to laboratories to analyse the information gathered.

“I think we’re the voice of what nature cannot say,” said Wilson Castillo, a biochemistry student who, at 24, was the youngest member of the expedition.

— AFP

Nov 8

Congressional elections in US

Mid-term elections on Nov 6, 2017

Nov 21-Dec 18

World Cup of football in Qatar

Feb 4-20

Winter Olympics in Beijing

Oct 2

Presidential elections in Brazil

Lula

Jair Bolsonaro

Autumn*

20th Chinese Communist Party Congress

Aug-Sept

Launch of ESA's Juice probe for Jupiter

Aug 9

Presidential elections in Kenya

Elections on Oct 26, 2017

June 2-5

Celebrations for 70th year of Queen Elizabeth II's reign

May 29

Presidential elections in Colombia

Elections on June 17, 2018

April 25-May 8

COP15 biodiversity in Kunming, China

May 9

Presidential elections in Philippines

Elections on May 9, 2016

April 10 and 24

Presidential elections in France

Elections on May 7, 2017

2022

MAJOR WORLD EVENTS

Sources: FSA-ATG Medialab, NASA-FSA-I. Nichols (Univ. of Leicester), NASA/JPL Univ. of Arizona, NASA/JPL DLR

AFP Photos

*date to be announced

AFP

Street photography pioneer Sabine Weiss dies at 97

PARIS: Swiss-French photographer Sabine Weiss, who chronicled social change with a unique gaze for nearly eight decades, has died aged 97 in her Paris home, her family said on Wednesday.

Weiss was the last of the French humanist photography school of post-World War II that reimagined the evocative powers of images, which included Robert Doisneau, Willy Ronis and Brassai.

A pioneer of what later became known as street photography, Weiss captured the condition of ordinary people in the French capital, often outdoors, in a body of work that has been shown in major retrospectives around the world.

She was also in high demand as a portrait photographer of artists, including composers Benjamin Britten and Igor Stravinsky, renowned cellist Pablo Casals and French painter Fernand Leger.

“From the start I had to make a living from photography, it wasn’t something artistic,” Weiss said in an interview in 2014, adding that she started taking pictures in 1942.

“It was a craft, I was a

craftswoman of photography,” she said.

Weiss was born in Switzerland and moved to Paris in 1946, and she later became a French citizen.

Her work has featured in 160 exhibits and is shown in permanent collections of several leading museums, including the Museum of Modern Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and the Centre Pompidou in Paris.

Weiss said that she had wanted to immortalise “the snotty-nosed kids,” “the beggars” and “the little piss-takers” in her photos.

“A good pictures must move you, have a good composition and be sober,” she told French daily *La Croix*. “People’s sensitiveness must jump out at you.”

She told the France Inter broadcaster: “The people who know me are the ones who like my view of things. I have empathy.”

In the 1950s, the photographer and her American husband, the painter Hugh Weiss, explored the streets of Paris, often at night, looking to capture furtive moments on film, such as a quick kiss, crowds rushing to the metro or workers on construction sites.

— AFP

SHORT TAKES

LONDON

‘90% in ICUs have not had booster jab’

Around 90 per cent of coronavirus patients in intensive care units have not had a booster jab, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Wednesday, defending his decision not to tighten virus curbs in England.

Speaking at a vaccination centre, Johnson urged people to get “vital” booster jabs, saying “the overwhelming majority” of those currently going into intensive care in our hospitals have not had the booster jab.

“I’ve talked to doctors who



say the numbers are running up to 90 per cent of people in intensive care who are not boosted,” the prime minister added in Milton Keynes in central England.

WASHINGTON

Former US Senate leader dies at 82

Former US Senate majority leader Harry Reid, a Nevada Democrat who rose from humble beginnings to lead the upper chamber during the presidencies of George W Bush and Barack Obama, has died aged 82.

“I am heartbroken to announce the passing of my husband,” his wife, Landra, said in a statement released to US media, adding he died “peacefully... surrounded by our family.”



Reid, who used his experience in Congress to help Obama steer his landmark Affordable Care Act through the Senate, had been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in 2018.

BERLIN

‘Germany’s Covid curbs not enough’

Germany’s health minister warned on Wednesday that current coronavirus curbs will not suffice in preventing a wave of new infections of the highly transmissible variant Omicron.

The rules came on top of restrictions already hitting the unimmunised who are barred from shops, restaurants and cultural events.

But Health Minister Karl Lauterbach said they may have to be toughened up further.

“The protective measures



that we are currently using to largely successfully counter the wave of Delta infections will not be enough to prevent a significant rise in Omicron cases,” he said.

Sometimes at odds, united against apartheid

CLAIRE DOYEN

Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela forged a lifelong bond fighting together to end apartheid in South Africa, even if the two icons did not always agree.

Tutu's death on Sunday at 90 plunged South Africa into mourning, eight years after the country lost Mandela, its iconic first black president, following a long battle with illness.

The two men differed in many aspects from stature to tactics, but both separately became Nobel Peace laureates for their roles in ending white-majority rule.

"They had a complex relationship based on a similar sense of justice and a true friendship that allowed them to disagree on many things," said political analyst William Gumed.

Tutu, a short and charming Anglican clergyman committed to non-violence, used his religious robes as a shield against the apartheid regime.

Mandela, a tower of calm strength 13 years his senior, instead turned to armed struggle against the country's rulers, becoming South Africa's "public enemy number one".

Both men at different points in their lives lived a stone's throw away from each other on the same street in Johannesburg's Soweto township.

But they did not meet until they were adults, when Mandela was asked to judge a debate competition in which Tutu was participating before the activist stood trial for treason and sabotage in 1963 and was handed a life sentence. After Mandela emerged from jail 27 years later as apartheid crumbled, he stayed at Tutu's home on his first night of freedom.

At Mandela's request, he retired in 1996 to become head of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, embarking on a harrowing journey to reveal the horrors of apartheid.

But as the country transitioned to multiracial democracy, the archbishop did not hesitate to call out his old friend.

Tutu despaired at the high salaries, cars and generous benefits ministers enjoyed during Mandela's single five-year term.

In a 2003 interview, Tutu said Mandela's one flaw was "his quite extraordinary degree of loyalty" when perhaps he should have shown certain ministers the door while president. — AFP

They had a complex relationship based on a similar sense of justice and a true friendship that allowed them to disagree on many things

WILLIAM GUMEDE
political analyst



TO THE BONES

Fisherwomen climb up on a scaffolding to hang Bombay duck fish to dry in the sun at the Versova beach in Mumbai on Wednesday.

— AFP

Cyberbullying, a growing pandemic



Sonia Ambrosio
soniambrosio@gmail.com

Looking back to the challenges faced in the past eighteen months or more and renewing hopes for a New Year are some sort of cultural routines. There are others, like myself, who take a moment or two to reflect on the good and bad events of the previous year. This is paired with a positive outlook for a new future full of zeal, good health, and everything else that makes for a happy life.

However, I decided to shift gears and look into something troubling that is rapidly developing and spreading like wildfire. Cyberbullying of educational institutions, and professors is on the rise. Bullying has always occurred, but because of the Internet and social media platforms, it has become more prevalent.

Students are taking advantage of social networking's features to propagate their dislikes, name-calling, grievances, and gossip, whether true or not. This 'liberty of opinion and expression' in the digital sphere, as well as high-speed bullying dissemination, is, even more, engaging with the self-delete message feature.

Bullying of students, instructors, and administrative staff has escalated in educational institutions around the world, particularly since the introduction of online studies as one of the impacts of the pandemic.

Grades and assignments are two of the

most common reasons for cyberbullying. For example, a student's expectation of a high mark is based on the completion of an assignment, regardless of the quality of the work delivered.

The pressure to high grades can erode the quality of students' learning while also impeding their capacity to deal with real-life situations. In short, they become incapable of dealing with stress, deadlines, or delivering good or high-quality work. And more, they reinforce bad habits as a way of life. Known as 'the entitlement generation', students believe that 'trying hard' should result in a good grade.

Another issue is egocentricity that Mary McKinney addresses in the article "Coping with 'Oy Vey' Students". Some of the demands and complaints are said to be: "I had to miss the class", "I was sick", "help me please miss", "I have so many personal concerns that I couldn't study." I didn't cheat!" "You're not going to give me a zero, are you?" "Plagiarism? I didn't even see the website!" I could add to the list 'Don't you help a sick student?', or threatening to go (and really going) to the head of the department or the dean if the lecturer doesn't react positively to the requests. It is more like students are attempting to outsmart the lecturers by using foxy persuasion and manipulation

techniques. There are cases of students losing good opportunities as a result of their tweets, status updates and other online postings.

Richard Vedder, an expert on the economics of higher education, once claimed that students don't see the benefits in learning when they can search and find immediate answers on the Internet. This gives rise to the idea of students as consumers, in which they believe that their schools – or even society- owe them something. It also reinforces what they have learned from shopping: the client is always right.

Unfortunately, many eager-to-learn-students who have talent and enthusiasm are overshadowed by those who feel entitled and attention seekers. Teachers end up having less time to work with students who want to improve themselves – and that is a serious educational setback.

Teachers and lecturers deserve better recognition than they currently receive.

Educating future leaders, academics, engineers, and doctors should be considered one of the professions on the verge of extinction. The social media madness is putting any desire to teach to the test. Who wants to be disrespected or even challenged by students who believe their viewpoints and opinions are just as valid as an expert? Values are at stake.

The mutation of vaccine apartheid



SAFURA ABDOOL KARIM
The author is a public health lawyer in South Africa

UNLESS THE PROTECTIONIST POLICIES THAT PROMOTE THIS VACCINE INEQUITY CHANGE, THE VIRUS WILL MUTATE AND SPREAD

The reaction by governments in the Global North to the discovery of the Omicron variant of Covid-19 in South Africa has provided further proof – as if any more were needed – of the deeply inequitable response to the coronavirus pandemic. The backlash against African countries was swift and severe, as if barring travellers from the region could somehow keep the rest of the world safe.

It hasn't, and closing borders won't work when the next frightening variant emerges. Global injustice, it turns out, is very bad for public health.

Although more than half the world's population has now been vaccinated against Covid-19, only 8 per cent of people living in lower-income countries have received a vaccine dose, compared to 48

per cent in lower-middle-income countries and much higher rates in high-income countries. As of November, the United States had administered more than twice as many doses than had been given in all of Africa.

Given these numbers, it is no surprise that variants of concern continue to emerge and spread rapidly in countries with low vaccination rates. And the disparity is not an accident. It is a direct result of nationalist policies and vaccine hoarding by wealthy countries.

Even before vaccines became available, many experts, including Director-General of the World Health Organization Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, warned about the consequences of vaccine nationalism. Despite this, wealthy countries have

monopolised vaccine supplies, in some instances purchasing enough doses to inoculate their populations nine times over.

This summer, it seemed like the tide was turning. In June, members of the G7 pledged to donate their excess doses to low- and lower-middle-income countries either directly or through mechanisms like the Covid-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) facility. As more and more people in wealthy countries were vaccinated, there was some hope that vaccine nationalism and hoarding might end and that doses might finally make their way to countries desperately in need of them.

But in the past few months it has become clear that vaccine nationalism hasn't ended. Instead, it has mutated.

Wealthy countries like the US began pushing to administer additional doses of some vaccines even before there was evidence to support the use of booster shots. In fact, shortly before the WHO called for a moratorium on boosters until vaccines had reached those who need them most, the US signed a deal to purchase 200 million doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for use as boosters. At the time, the use of third shots as boosters was not even approved by the US Food and Drug Administration.

But booster shots in developed countries are not the only reason low- and middle-income countries lack doses. Canada, Spain and Germany, among others, pledged months ago to donate millions of vaccines directly to low- and middle-income countries as well

as to COVAX. Yet recent figures show that many governments have failed to deliver on these commitments. For example, the United Kingdom pledged to donate over 70 million doses, but has delivered less than 7 per cent of this commitment.

Pharmaceutical companies and wealthy governments have been quick to blame low vaccine uptake in poor countries on vaccine hesitancy and underdeveloped health-care delivery systems. In a media briefing hosted by the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Associations, Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla said that the level of vaccine hesitancy in Sub-Saharan Africa is "way, way higher than the percentage of hesitancy in Europe or in the US or Japan."

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SULTANATE OF OMAN TO HOST 2022 WOMEN'S ASIA CUP HOCKEY



ADIL AL BALUSHI

MUSCAT, DEC 29

Asian Hockey Federation (AHF) announced on Wednesday that the Sultanate of Oman was named as the host of the 2022 Women's Asia Cup.

The Asian event will take place from January 21 until 28 at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex. Nine teams will take part in the tournament and vie for the prestigious title including China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand

and the hosts Sultanate of Oman.

The tourney will be held in the Sultanate of Oman for the first time and it is in line with the Oman Hockey Association's (OHA) strategies to boost women's hockey activities and initiatives.

Dr Marwan al Juma, OHA Chairman, said that the Women's Asia Cup is one of the top significant events in the region. "I am very delighted with hosting of this major championship. I believe hosting of the Asian event will bring a lot of positive impact

I am very delighted with hosting of this major championship. I believe hosting of the Asian event will bring a lot of positive impact and improve the state of Omani women's hockey. Establishing a new women's hockey team is one of the plans beside organising many courses and workshops including first coaching course. A special thanks to the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for their support and assistance

DR MARWAN AL JUMA

OHA Chairman



and improve the state of Omani women's hockey. Establishing a new women's hockey team is one of the plans beside organising many courses and workshops including first coaching course. A special thanks to the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for their support and assistance," he ended.

In last June, the Sultanate of Oman had won the rights to host the first ever FIH Hockey5s World Cups (Men and Women) which is scheduled to be played in January 2024.

Hammers back in form with win over Watford

ANDY JALIL

WATFORD, DEC 29

Having won just one game in seven, West Ham came roaring back into form with an overwhelming 4-1 win over Watford. Since beating Liverpool in November and reaching a top four position on the table, the Hammers had seen an inexplicable slump in form.

Their manager, David Moyes, said: "I'm smiling. It's a long journey. Everyone who has done this job will tell you how hard it is to win games and to stay in a job sometimes. I am demanding really high levels but we have great resilience and toughness and that showed."

He added: "It was a poor start to the game and we needed to be strong to come back and go in 2-1 up at half-time. The biggest thing for me was for us to play a game 72 hours ago and go again and

score four goals away."

Moyes was particularly pleased with the performance of Jarrod Bowen. "He played very well and his assists were very important, as well as his link-up play and combinations. Making the goals were a sign of his maturity. Competition for his position for England is very tough and that's where he'll find it difficult to break in. But we still want more goals and assists from him."

It started so well for the hosts, playing their first game in 18 days, they got an early goal. Josh King, in the fourth minute, slipped a short pass to Emmanuel Dennis – a new signing this season – who took a couple of clever skips at the edge of the 18-yard box to strike a sublime goal.

West Ham soon began to attack and Said Benrahma was unlucky his curling shot from 20 yards hit the crossbar. But in a space of two minutes West Ham scored twice.



West Ham United's Mark Noble celebrates scoring their third goal with Said Benrahma. – Reuters

In the 27th minute, Bowen played through Tomas Soucek who thumped in the equaliser from 12 yards.

That was followed by Kiko Femenia losing possession to Manuel Lanzini who found Michail Antonio and his cross

was hit, with a deflection from Adam Masina, into the net for the second goal. Bowen was then denied a goal by VAR for a foul

just before he had found the net from a cross by Soucek.

But in the 58th VAR found in favour of the Hammers when goalkeeper Daniel Bachmann brought down Bowen in the box and the resulting penalty was converted, for the third goal, by veteran Mark Noble who was in the side for the suspended Declan Rice.

Finally, the Hammers tally of four was completed by substitute Nikola Vlasic, a 25-million new signing this season from CSKA Moscow, when he guided in a brilliant cut-back from Bowen.

Watford manager, Claudio Ranieri, said: "I don't want to make an excuse but having the players for just one day to prepare, it's not easy. We started really well but then conceded two goals in two minutes. Then when we had momentum after half-time, we conceded a penalty. We must improve ourselves."



INDIA KNOCK ON VICTORY'S DOOR IN CENTURION

CENTURION: India pushed forward for victory in the first Test as they picked up two wickets in South Africa's herculean second innings chase of 305 at the Supersport Park.

South Africa were fighting a tough battle against the menacing Indian pace attack of Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammad Shami and Mohammad Siraj.

Shami and Siraj picked up the wickets of Aiden Markram and Keegan Petersen to raise India's hopes of a famous victory.

South African skipper Dean Elgar (25) and Rassie van der Dussen (8) were at the crease as they kept the Indian bowlers at bay.

It will be a huge task for South Africa to overhaul the Indian target of 305 given the pace and uneven bounce of the pitch coupled with the wear and tear of the surface on days four and five.

But, with a rain forecast for the fifth and final day, South Africa will have a glimmer of hope if they resist the Indian bowlers on the fourth day.

INDIA POST MAMMOTH TARGET

Earlier, Rishabh Pant and Ajinkya Rahane played crucial quickfire knocks of 34 and 20 to help India set up a target of 305 for South Africa.

Virat Kohli and Cheteshwara Pujara chipped in with 18 and 16 runs respectively.

India showed patience with the bat to reach 79 for three at lunch, a second innings lead of 209 on a lively wicket providing



India's Mohammed Siraj celebrates the wicket of South Africa's South Africa's Keegan Petersen. — Reuters

plenty of assistance to the seam bowlers.

India added 63 runs in the session as South Africa bowled tight lines and lengths, but also spurned chances to make further inroads into the tourists' batting lineup.

It is the kind of pitch that can move the game forward quickly,

as evidenced on day three when 18 wickets fell, but rain is predicted for at least part of the fifth day.

The highest fourth innings chase at Centurion Park is 251 for eight by England in 2000, an infamous test where both teams agreed to forfeit an innings after rain to force a result.

The next highest is 226 for four by South Africa against Pakistan in 1998.

India started the day on 16 for one but lost nightwatchman Shardul Thakur (10) when he edged Kagiso Rabada to Wiaan Mulder at third slip.

Pujara got a first ball duck in the first innings and should



India's Ajinkya Rahane in action. — Reuters

It will be a huge task for South Africa to overhaul the Indian target of 305 given the pace and uneven bounce of the pitch coupled with the wear and tear of the surface on days four and five

have been out early again, but Rabada dropped a simple catch at mid-on off Lungi Ngidi when the batsman had six.

Ngidi did get his reward for a probing spell of bowling when he induced an edge from first innings century maker KL Rahul (23), Dean Elgar taking the catch at first slip.

— Agencies



India's Mohammed Shami celebrates after the dismissal of South Africa's Kagiso Rabada (not seen) during the third day of the first Test in Centurion. — AFP

Sultanate of Oman umpire picked to officiate in Under-19 World Cup

MUSCAT: Senior the Sultanate of Oman umpire Rahul Asher has been nominated to officiate in the 50-over ICC Under-19 Cricket World Cup, scheduled to be held in the West Indies from January 15 to February 5, 2022. Sixteen teams will play a total of 48 matches in the 14th edition of the tournament which is being hosted by The Caribbean for the first time.

A regular at ICC and ACC competitions for quite some time now, Rahul is excited to be officiating at the highest level.

"Firstly, I would like to thank Oman Cricket and ICC for believing in me to officiate at such a higher level. I would also like to thank my mentors for shaping me to this level. It is indeed the biggest opportunity so far for me and it feels immensely proud to represent the Sultanate of Oman in such a prestigious event. This is the platform every umpire wants to reach," said Rahul.

When asked how did he prepare for such top level events and were they any different to standard cricket matches, he said one had to be a good person to be a good umpire.

"You must have good peo-



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RAHUL ASHER
Oman umpire

ple skills and have good values. These are the things people can constantly improve upon. It is really important to do what you can and deliver the best possible performance on the day. I would not say we need to be thick-skinned, but we have to be mentally tough, deal with conflict, ability to empathise and relate to people of different backgrounds, cultures and personalities. None of those are related to decision-making, but there are a lot of life skills that are really important to be a good match official," he explained. What does he expect to learn from an event like an ICC World Cup?

"Like I mentioned before, Every match is a different game and one needs to work on it individually because there are always new things to learn in each game. However, officiating in an U-19 World Cup in a new place like West Indies, a major Test playing nation, will help me learn new things at such high standards. It feels great to know that our experience on the field is going to be utilised at the highest level," added Rahul, who will be officiating in his 19th tournament since joining the ICC Development Panel.

Latif powers Ghubrah to another win, Hammad powers Azaibah

MUSCAT: Ghubrah Giants' talisman Imran Latif led his side to yet another victory, this time a 6-wicket thriller against Khuwair Warriors, in a D20 Cricket League clash at Oman Cricket Turf 1 in Amerat on Tuesday.

Latif picked up three valuable wickets to help Ghubrah restrict Khuwair to 161 for 9. Ghazanfar Iqbal and Aqil Khan claimed two wickets each. Sean Novak top scored with a solid 44 whereas Amir Kaleem struck a whirlwind 40 off 20.

Building on the blazing opening start of 47 in less than four overs in which Ghazanfar smashed 40 off only 17 balls including 4 huge sixes, Latif (50 not out off 41) made sure Ghubrah stayed on course to seal a memorable win. Azmatullah (36 not out off 20) joined him for an unbroken 59-run partnership for the fifth wicket as they reached 164 for 4 in 18.5 overs. Danish Mohammed bagged 2 for 36.

Brief Scores (D20): Khuwair Warriors 161 for 9 in 20 overs (Sean Novak 44 – 1x4, 4x6, Amir Kaleem 40 – 4x4, 3x6, Imran Latif 3-45, Ghazanfar Iqbal 2-30, Aqil Khan 2-36) lost to Ghubrah Giants 164 for 4 in 18.5 overs (Imran Latif 50 – 4x4, 1x6, Ghazanfar Iqbal 40 – 3x4,



4x6, Danish Mohammad 2-36) by 6 wickets.

HAMMAD'S LAST-BALL SIX LIFTS AZAIBA

In another D20 League game on Tuesday, Hammad Mirza's blazing 85, including a magnificent last-ball six and Imran Mohammed's fantastic 4 for 24 were the highlights of Azaiba XI's sensational 7-wicket win over Bausher Busters.

Veteran Adnan Ilyas whacked a belligerent 66 off 44, including 7 hits over the fence, while Ajay Lalcheta contributed 42 off 30 as Bausher posted 155 for 8 on the board. Imran's four-wicket spell

was the major reason Bausher could not set a bigger target.

Azaiba found the going tough and was struggling at 43 for 3 in the 9th over before Hammad (85 not out off 44) joined Rao Waqar (40 not out off 37) for a match-winning 105-run partnership. Requiring 13 to win in the final over, Hammad finished the game with a six off the last ball to secure a thrilling victory.

Brief Scores (D20): Bausher Busters 155 for 8 in 20 overs (Adnan Ilyas 66 – 1x4, 7x6, Ajay Lalcheta 42 – 4x4, 1x6, Imran Muhammad 4-24) lost to Azaiba XI 158 for 3 in 20 overs (Hammad Mirza 85 – 2x4, 7x6, Rao Waqar 40 – 4x4, Fawad Ali 2-26) by 7 wickets.

OTHER OMAN CRICKET LEAGUE RESULTS:

Brief Scores (D Division): Safara International 218 for 2 in 20 overs (Yasir Mohammed 67 – 6x4, 2x6, Sandesh Pusalkar 54 – 7x4, Adeel Anwar 46 – 6x4, 1x6) beat Oct Al Mabela 100 all out in 20 overs (Mohammed Nadim 25 – 4x4, Mushir Nazir 4-17, Syed Uzair 2-13, Amol Dhore 2-14) by 118 runs.

Brief Scores (E Division): Aflag Group Ct 185 for 5 in 20 overs (Junaid Iqbal 117 – 15x4, 2x6, Sagheer Mohammad 2-33) lost to Israr Ghala 187 for 5 in 19 overs (Ali Gul 83 – 12x4, Sagheer Mohammad 49 – 4x4, 1x6, Syed Osama 2-17) by 5 wickets.

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EDO names new Chief Executive Officer



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 29

Wholly government-owned Energy Development Oman (EDO) SAOC has named Mazin bin Rashid al Lamki (pictured) as the new Chief Executive Officer.

Announcing the appointment, EDO's Board of Directors said the new CEO will join the company in the first quarter of 2022. Al Lamki, currently the Chief Operating Officer at Abu Dhabi headquartered Mubadala Petroleum, a leading international oil and gas company, will take over from Interim CEO Haifa al Khaifi.

In a post on her private social media account, Haifa congratulated Mazin on his appointment as CEO, adding: "It has been an absolute pleasure setting up EDO over the past two years, and serving as its Interim CEO. EDO is in absolutely good hands with Mazin at its helm.

I also take this opportunity

to thank the Board, as well as the team at EDO for their unwavering support during my tenure as the Interim CEO during the transition period."

EDO was established in December 2020 to take over the Omani government's 60 per cent stake in Petroleum Development Oman's (PDO) Block 6 oil and associated gas, and 100 per cent in PDO's Block 6 non-associated gas and condensate. PDO continues to operate Block 6, and EDO, through PDO, is responsible for the bulk of the Sultanate of Oman's hydrocarbon output.

Following its establishment through Royal Decree 128/2020, the transfer of the Block 6 oil concession (Royal Decree 21/2021) and the granting of a new Block 6 gas concession (Royal Decree 43/2021), EDO has made substantial progress on its journey to become the country's energy champion and to support the Sultanate's economic diversification.

Ras Markaz Crude Oil Terminal ready for launch in Q2 2022

STRATEGIC HUB: The oil storage park is owned 100 per cent by the Omani government, represented by OTTCO

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 29

The crude storage terminal at Ras Markaz in the Wilayat of Al Duqm, Al Wusta Governorate, assumes significance as a vital project undertaken by Oman Tank Terminal Company (OTTCO) due to its strategic location in the vicinity of nascent markets in Asia and Africa.

The project seeks to manage and maintain an integrated network of tanks for different types of energy derivatives in the Sultanate of Oman, notably in Duqm.

Ard Van Hoof, CEO of OTTCO, said that the company has clear-cut vision aimed to provide high-level storage services for liquid and gas products, including renewable energy products.

OTTCO boasts an infrastructure that is capable of meeting the requirements of the local and international markets.

The Ras Markaz Oil Storage Project is owned 100 per cent by the government, represented by OTTCO, said Eng Salim bin Marhoon al Hashmi, General Manager.

Work on the project began in August 2019, he noted. Al Hashmi pointed out that the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) granted OTTCO



usufruct rights for 40 years to set up an oil storage facility at Ras Markaz with effect July 5, 2017.

The agreement provides for a storage capacity of 26.7 million barrels of oil in the first phase. The company will increase its capacity in tandem with the growth of demand from investors, said Al Hashmi.

The project consists of two streams: The first caters to maritime business. It is completed and it comprises an import-export floating station situated 7 kilometres from the beach, in addition to two 42-inch pipelines, Al Hashmi explained.

He added that the second stream (which is 80 per cent complete) features a variety of civil tasks, mountain demolishing, oil pumping systems, water treatment, installing tanks, building a power grid and adding associated systems. The infrastructure of the first phase of the oil storage project is ready to

operate by the second quarter of 2022, said Al Hashmi.

The Ras Markaz terminal has been connected via an 80-km pipeline to Duqm Refinery, where eight mega tanks are dedicated for the purpose. The entire project has a construction area of 10 square kilometres, while the total area stands at 40 square kilometres, which means the facility has a storage capacity of 200 million barrels of oil.

The floating terminal can receive very large crude carriers (VLCC) from around the world and it has been connected with four main stations to pump crude upwards, said Al Hashmi.

The Sultanate of Oman is currently leaning heavily on Mina Al Fahl for the export of crude oil, so the Ras Markaz station will add a strategic dimension to outbound crude export, said Al Hashmi, adding that the facility's existence outside the Strait of Hormuz area

will encourage many investors to store oil there and engage in import, export and oil blending operations.

Al Hashmi said that OTTCO envisages making Ras Markaz the largest oil storage facility of its kind the Middle East and a global hub in the Arabia Sea and Indian Ocean zones. The project will generate 130 direct and indirect jobs, 90 of which will be occupied during the period of operation, said Al Hashmi, noting that more employment opportunities will be provided as the facility's capacity keeps expanding. Al Hashmi said that OQ Group and Aramco of Saudi Arabia had signed a memorandum of understanding for the storage of their products at Ras Markaz, besides exploring other areas of cooperation related to the import, procurement, production and storage of crude and petroleum products at Duqm Refinery and Ras Markaz.

(With inputs from ONA)

New Omani-Bahraini joint venture company established

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 29

The Board of Directors of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) endorsed the establishment of a joint Omani-Bahraini joint venture company with a capital of RO 10 million and shareholders representing the two chambers as well as investors from the two brotherly countries.

The approval came at the sixth meeting of the Board presided over by Eng Ridha bin Juma al Saleh, Chairman - OCCI.

In other decisions, the Board pledged funding support of RO 5,000 annually toward the 'Made in Oman' campaign with the aim of supporting, developing,



expanding and strengthening the presence of Omani products locally, regionally and internationally.

The Chamber said it is

currently preparing a study of the fees imposed on the private sector and comparing them with those in the GCC countries. It will submit a number of proposals to

the authorities concerned with the goal of strengthening the economy and empowering the private sector.

Additionally, the Board

discussed the importance of creating an integrated centre for exhibitions and conferences in Dhofar Governorate, a tender for the study for which will be floated

first, it said.

Furthermore, based on the studies and recommendations of the Investment Committee, the Board approved investments in GCC and international equities.

As an incentive to members to participate in exhibitions organised by the Chamber locally and internationally, the Board agreed to cut the participation fee by 50 per cent.

It also decided to allocate free seats in the chamber's courses, programmes and training workshops to private sector institutions and companies, and offer holders of Riyadh cards a 50 per cent reduction in fees to attend the Chamber's meeting in various governorates.

(With inputs from ONA)

Ministry of Social Development, Bank Muscat celebrate International Day of Persons with Disabilities



MUSCAT: Celebrating the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, Bank Muscat participated recently in the event the Ministry of Social Development organised on this occasion. Bank Muscat is keen to support persons with disabilities through CSR programmes and initiatives in partnership with government institutions and NGOs.

During the event, the Ministry of Social Development honoured Bank Muscat for its constant support.

The event was held under the patronage of HH Sayyida Dr Mona bint Fahd al Said, Assistant Vice-Chancellor for International Cooperation at Sultan Qaboos University, where Afaf Ali Moosa, Assistant General Manager, Large Corporates, Bank Muscat, received the honour from Her Highness.

On this occasion, Afaf Ali Moosa, Assistant General Manager, Large Corporates, Bank Muscat, said: “We are proud of all the tremendous efforts that various government and private institutions, NGOs and individuals are keen to put for the development of services and facilities for persons with disabilities.

“The bank values its longstanding partnership and cooperation with the Ministry of Social Development to best serve the community.

“The bank pays great attention to activities, events

and social responsibility programmes especially those targeted at developing facilities and services for persons with disabilities.

“This recognition of the bank’s efforts further motivates us to continue working on developing sustainable programmes that provide support to the community in general and ensure the welfare of persons with disabilities.”

In line with its commitment to deliver long-term benefits for the disabled and helping them integrate into mainstream society, the bank contributed this year a number of wheelchairs, including powered and non-powered versions, electric beds, laptops and BrailleSense devices to visually-impaired students, and hearing aids.

Bank Muscat had earlier supported the construction of a playground at the Al Aman Rehabilitation Centre for children with severe disabilities, and is also at present helping provide a sports field at the Al Wafa Centre for the Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities.

Bank Muscat has taken many measures for the inclusion of persons with disabilities into mainstream society.

The bank’s efforts in this regard include the operation of a special ATM with a special transaction flow for blind and visually-impaired people.

BankDhofar receives awards for excellence in customer experience

MUSCAT: In recognition of its efforts to ensure the best customer experience, BankDhofar received three international Awards from Live Show Middle East 2021 Awards, “Best CX Transformation Project” – BFSI, “Best Customer Journey Mapping” – BFSI, and “Best Change Management” – BFSI.

The awards were handed over during the Customer Experience Live Show Middle East held at The Meydan Hotel in Dubai last month. Receiving the awards on behalf of the bank was Abdul Aziz Ali Saar, Head of BankDhofar Experience and Change Management.

The event brought together CX practitioners and leading brands that were recognised for their exceptional customer services.

On receiving the award, Abdul Aziz Ali Saar, Head of BankDhofar Experience and Change Management, said: “We are honoured to receive these prestigious awards that add to our achievements and reflect our vision to be the best bank in customer experience.

“At BankDhofar, we have invested significantly in our customer experience, as part of our transformation journey, making sure to provide services that exceed their expectations. We



have always been coping with the trends, to ensure providing what is suitable for the various segments of our customers, through the various customer touchpoints.”

Providing a convenient banking experience has always been the top priority for BankDhofar since its inception, putting technology and innovation at the core of its strategy to improve the experience of its customers.

BankDhofar exerts its efforts to enhance the overall customer experience and journey by modernising several branches nationwide.

The modernised branches are equipped with latest technologies and are designed to provide a convenient banking experience, reflecting both the traditional Omani culture of hospitality, with the latest trends in customer experience.

Placing customer experience at the heart of the branch design, all BankDhofar branches offer privacy, hospitality and a personalised experience in one package.

The bank has also introduced Drive-Thru Banking Services with the aim of providing the utmost

convenient banking experience with state-of-the-art digital channels. This service, the first of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman, enables customers to conduct transitions without stepping out of their vehicle to complete a bundle of transactions including; cash deposit and withdrawal, cheque deposit, instant debit card issuance, bank transfers, and request for account statements.

This unique outlet is now available in Al Seeb branch and Al Saada branch in Salalah, yet the bank plans to expand it across other branches.

Alizz Islamic Bank SSB holds sixth meeting

MUSCAT: The Shari’a Supervisory Board of Alizz Islamic Bank held its sixth meeting of year at the main branch of central business district at Ruwi headed by Shaikh/ Prof Dr Essam Khalaf al Anzy.

Members of the Shari’a Supervisory Board including Shaikh Dr Ahmed Subhi Ahmed Ayadi, Shaikh Nasser bin Yousef al Azri, attended the meeting. Sulaiman al Harthi, Chief Executive Officer, and Issa bin Salim al Riyami, Head of Shari’a Audit and Compliance, Chief Internal Auditor, Chief Risk Officer and several other officials were present.

In his presentation, Sulaiman al Harthi highlighted performance of the bank during the fourth quarter of the current year and the challenges faced by it. He also focused on the action plan to be



pursued by the bank during the forthcoming year.

The meeting discussed several issues of interest including Shari’a Audit and Compliance reports during the fourth quarter of 2021 following which Shari’a Supervisory Board suggested appropriate guidelines with regards to the subjects of

discussion.

Shari’a Supervisory Board also approved the audit and training plan for the next year 2022 in addition to numerous meeting agendas which were adequately addressed.

The meeting commended Shaikh Nasser bin Yousef al Azri, SSB member, for his valuable

contributions to the bank during his nine-year tenure with Alizz Islamic Bank.

The Board of Directors praised the role played by Shari’a Supervisory Board in spreading and promoting awareness about the role of Islamic banking and community initiatives in various media.

From time to time, the bank generates and develops innovative ideas to consolidate the experience of Islamic banking and make it a success story.

The General Assembly also endorsed the proposal of the BOD to appoint Shaikh Dr Ibrahim al Sawafi as a member of the board.

The Shari’a Supervisory Board at Alizz Islamic Bank reviews and studies all Islamic banking products and services launched by the bank.

Experience high levels of comfort in the Toyota Granvia

MUSCAT: The Toyota Granvia is designed to be spacious, offering passengers an impressive and relaxing space on every drive.

The Granvia’s elegant design, luxurious interior, powerful engine and advanced safety features enable customers to travel in optimal comfort while enjoying total peace of mind.

The Granvia is equipped with a fancy front grille with headlights, additional chrome trim, as well as an attractive set of alloy wheels. There’s even additional taillight garnishes at the back which give the Granvia a flashier finish. For the interior, the Granvia has faux wood trim, along with darker materials that reward it with a more sleeker and luxurious look.

To heighten on-road experiences is the availability of captain seats that provide a comfortable and relaxing touch for the passengers. The Granvia is equipped with a 3.5-litre V6 engine with 268 HP and 34.9 Kg-m of torque, powerful enough to keep journeys exciting and memorable.

The Granvia is available in 6 seater and 7 seater configuration. In keeping with the Granvia’s luxurious exterior, Toyota’s engineers have created a space with a modern design aesthetic that delights guests as soon as they enter the vehicle.

The rear cabin is available with four individual reclining quilted leather captain’s chairs with



armrests and power-adjustment for the backrests.

Each chair also offers a power fold-out Ottoman leg-rest and individual reading lamp with three levels of brightness adjustment. A combination of wood grain and

satin decoration adorns the back of the front seats, while the side-trim decorations flow seamlessly to envelop passengers in a comforting ambience.

The subtle, indirect cabin-side illumination perfectly

complements the interior, with its positioning at waist level helping to create a calm and relaxing environment.

The front and rear climate control system incorporates ion generators with nanoe technology that helps to remove bacteria and odours. A rear control panel is available, enabling passengers to adjust the airflow volume, airflow vents and temperature.

Additional cabin amenities include dual-side power sliding doors, LED-type illumination for the side step, and six rear USB ports to keep devices fully charged for business or entertainment.

Passengers also benefit from ample luggage space, with the rear of the vehicle easily

accommodating four large suitcases or four golf bags.

Along with the high level of comfort and convenience for passengers, the Granvia features an array of driver assistance features such as a 4.2-inch colour TFT (Thin Film Transistor) Multi-information Display, a 7-inch colour multimedia display and back monitor with guide lines.

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 and to ascertain availability of stocks, please visit your nearest Toyota showroom.

Khazaen Dry Port, Bank Nizwa ink financing pact

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 29

Bank Nizwa has extended financing facilities to Khazaen Dry Port, which is establishing inland port facilities at Khazaen Economic City in South Al Batinah Governorate. An agreement to this effect was signed by Khalid al Kayed, CEO of Bank Nizwa and Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Abri, Chairman of Khazaen Dry Port.

Commenting on the financing of this national initiative, Khalid al Kayed, CEO of Bank Nizwa said, "Offering exceptional connectivity, the Khazaen Dry Port is set to serve as a trans-shipment point and will be a logistics hub that will link the Sultanate of Oman to a number of countries.

At Bank Nizwa, we view this as an opportunity to contribute to the socio-economic and infrastructural development goals of the country as the



establishment of this dry port will have numerous positive implications on the economy. By supporting large-scale projects that offer tangible added value to the national economy, Bank Nizwa seeks to highlight the growing preference of Sharia-compliant financing while also

establishing its distinct footprint in the country's journey of progression."

The primary objective of Khazaen Dry Port would be to serve the Sohar Port while focusing on the trade activities in Muscat and nearby areas such as Nizwa, Sur and Ibra.

After its development, the movement of empty containers will be significantly minimised, resulting in lower transportation costs for consignees and empty container storage costs for shipping lines.

An integrated transportation system will also help achieve

The establishment of the Khazaen Dry Port will be instrumental in facilitating trade activities and developing an integrated logistic system that will enhance performance, drive economic growth and position the Sultanate of Oman as a global logistics hub

DR AHMED BIN MOHAMMED AL ABRI
Chairman, Khazaen Dry Port

better margins and increase the overall economic activity within Khazaen Economic City and the Sultanate of Oman.

"With most of the Sultanate's

trading activities being routed through Muscat and the adjoining areas, the establishment of the Khazaen Dry Port will be instrumental in facilitating trade activities and developing an integrated logistic system that will enhance performance, drive economic growth and position the Sultanate of Oman as a global logistics hub," said Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Abri, Chairman of Khazaen Dry Port.

"We appreciate Bank Nizwa's efforts in playing an integral role in the development of the Sultanate of Oman's critical infrastructure. The proposed dry port will have a total area of approximately 30 hectares including 20 hectares for interlock and 41,928 square meters for container stacks.

To successfully carry out a project of this scale, it is imperative to have the right support from a financial institution that is reliable and is aligned with the goals of the country."

Oil firms, near highest in 2 months on risk appetite

SINGAPORE: US oil rose for a sixth consecutive session on Wednesday while Brent gained more ground with a broad-based rally in global markets supporting prices. The benchmark Brent crude rose 23 cents, or 0.3 per cent, at \$79.17 a barrel. US est Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude added 21 cents, or 0.3 per cent, at \$76.19 a barrel. Both contracts are trading near their highest levels in a month, aided by strength in equities.

Asset classes from oil to equities have clawed back losses from late November, when the Omicron variant of Covid-19 sent



A man fills a vehicle with petrol at a gas station in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. — Reuters

investors scurrying for safety.

A delay in Britain and France on imposing more Covid curbs before the year-end also excited investors. As the worst fears over the impact of the variant have subsided, investors have returned to risk assets. Omicron-induced staff shortages led to thousands of flight cancellations over the Christmas weekend in the United States.

Oil prices were underpinned by three oil producers declaring forces majeure this month on part of their oil production because of maintenance issues and oilfield shutdowns. — Reuters

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 29

National Life & General Insurance Company (NLG) — part of Ominvest — has appointed Dr Dhafir bin Awadh al Shanfari (pictured) as the new Chief Operating Officer.

Dr Al Shanfari, who holds a MBA Degree from Duquesne University (Pittsburgh USA) and a PhD from Deakin University (Melbourne Australia), also spent a number



of years in the academic sector, notably providing teaching, research and consultation

services at Sultan Qaboos University.

In the public sector, he served in leadership positions with several organisations. He was Acting CEO of the Competition and Monopoly

Prevention Centre, CEO of the Omani Authority for Partnership and Development, and CEO of the Public Authority for Privatisation and Partnership.

Sri Lanka bank downplays default fears

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's central bank sought on Wednesday to downplay fears of a debt default, saying its foreign currency reserves had almost doubled and would remain "comfortable" throughout 2022.

The tourism-dependent economy was hammered by the pandemic and the government has imposed a broad import ban to shore up forex reserves, triggering shortages of essential goods such as fuel and sugar.

Earlier this month, ratings agency Fitch downgraded Sri Lanka, seeing an "increased probability of a default event in coming months" on the country's \$26 billion in foreign debt.

The central bank said on Wednesday, however, that its foreign currency reserves had almost doubled to \$3.1 billion from \$1.6 billion last month, a level that was only sufficient to pay for a month's imports.

"Accordingly, the Government and the Central Bank are confident that the reserve position will remain at comfortable levels throughout the year 2022," the bank said in a statement. — AFP

be'ah and Sohar University complete Industrial Waste Data Inventory project

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 29

As part of the academia-industry collaboration in finding solutions for local environmental issues, Oman Environmental Services Holding Co SAOC (be'ah) partnered with Sohar University (SU) to conduct a research consultancy project on Industrial Waste Data Inventory.

The project was awarded to Sohar University through a competitive bidding process floated by be'ah through the Ejaad platform. Prof Rakesh Belwal from the Faculty of Business at Sohar University led the project and a contract in this regard was signed between Prof Barry Winn, Vice-Chancellor of Sohar University, and Eng Tariq al Amri, CEO of be'ah in June 2020.

The project aims to have a solid database of industrial waste generation in the Sultanate. In a recently held ceremony, the project team comprising students and co-investigators led by Prof Belwal



was felicitated with certificates and words of appreciation by Eng Abdulkareem bin Qasim al Balushi, Sector Head, Industrial Waste and Dr Mohab bin Ali al Hinai, Head of the Environmental Centre of Excellence (ECE) at be'ah headquarters in Muscat.

Besides Professor Belwal, the SU team comprised of Dr Shweta

Belwal, Dr Manisha Rajhansh Sinha, Ali al Jabri, Fatma al Badi and Mohammed al Rushdi. The purpose of this project was to develop a list of active industrial waste-generating industries in the Sultanate of Oman and to acquire data on the quantity and type of industrial waste generated across the country," said Dr Belwal. The project

covered seven industrial estates — Rusayl, Salalah, Sohar, Sur, Nizwa, Al Buraimi and Samayil; three Economic Zones — Al Mazyunah Free Zone, Knowledge Oasis Muscat, Salalah Free Zone and two Special Economic Zones — Port of Sohar and Duqm.

The research was closely facilitated and monitored by

be'ah chemists, Amira bint Mohammed al Moqrashiyah, Mahra bint Ali al Balushiyyah, Ahoud bint Rashid al Maqbaliyyah and Tafla bint Saif al Ruzaqiyyah. "It was very challenging to collect data during the Covid-19 time and the Sohar University team did the work fairly well. We thank the entire team for your commitment and dedication," said Dr Farah al Barwani Research and Development Manager. Amira al Moqrashi, Chemist at be'ah, said: "We strive at be'ah to apply research-proven best practices. This project will enable us to have reliable information and database about the main sources of industrial waste, quantities and different types of the industrial waste as this information are crucial for planning of the waste collection and treatment infrastructure.

Our partnership with Sohar University is a true example of how Academia and Industry can work together to find solutions for the environmental challenges facing us today."

India’s tech stock bubble is poised to deflate

India’s newly listed start-ups are set to discover their limits. Buyers of stocks in the giant emerging market will increasingly give money-losing digital companies a short leash on dizzying valuations. Some mix of rampant competition and higher mobile data tariffs will crash the party.

A pandemic-induced flood of easy money and mom-and-pop investors have lifted stocks around the world, but Indian tech companies hit extremes in 2021.

One97 Communications’ financial super-app Paytm, Falguni Nayar’s online beauty retailer Nykaa, and food delivery giant Zomato fetch more than 30 times sales as of December 8, per Refinitiv, after listing their enterprises in Mumbai.

Peers elsewhere point to rich valuations in India as a benchmark to insist their businesses are cheap. Other companies, including ride-hailing giant Ola Mobility, budget lodging chain Oyo Hotels & Homes, and Delhivery are eyeing debuts.

Newcomers will find it harder to maintain premium valuations than traditional consumer-facing giants like Indian lender HDFC Bank and Hindustan Unilever; both are richly rewarded for their healthy margins, consistently trading on close to 4 times trailing book value and over 60 times earnings, respectively, per Refinitiv.

One obstacle is the sheer raft of newcomers jostling for users. Although there’s plenty of room to grow online, India’s fierce competitive landscape contrasts with China, where Alibaba and its affiliates dominate in e-commerce and payments, or Southeast Asia where all-singing super-apps like Grab and GoTo dominate in ride-hailing, delivery and digital financial services.

Maintaining the current growth rates will become costlier as onboarding customers and merchants in far-flung towns can be a painstaking process requiring boots on the ground.

India’s tech story is strong, but its valuation bubble is poised to deflate. — Reuters

A pandemic-induced flood of easy money and mom-and-pop investors have lifted stocks around the world, but Indian tech companies hit extremes in 2021



GROWTH FACTORY

HANOI: A man works inside a clothing factory in Hanoi. Vietnam reported economic growth for 2021 of just 2.58 per cent on Wednesday, beating a 30-year low set last year. The country has long been a success story among Asian economies, posting growth of seven per cent in 2019. But shutdowns caused by coronavirus have battered the export-reliant economy, sending GDP growth plunging to 2.91 per cent in 2020 – the lowest reported in three decades. — AFP

The appeal of green and blue bonds



HAIDER AL LAWATI
haiderdawood@hotmail.com

SEVERAL ARAB AND ISLAMIC COUNTRIES ARE NOW LOOKING AT GREEN BONDS TO FUND ECONOMIC PROJECTS WHILE PRESERVING THE ENVIRONMENT

Interest is growing globally in new sources of funding for renewable energy projects to help advance sustainable development. Emerging markets around the world have begun to make progress in the use of green bonds, pioneered by European countries some years ago.

According to a report by Oxford Business Group, several Arab and Islamic countries are now looking at green bonds to fund economic projects while preserving the environment.

Recently, the Red Sea Development Company, a developer of Saudi tourism projects, secured green bonds worth 14.1 billion Saudi riyals (\$3.8 billion) from four Saudi banks, with funds earmarked to build 16 renewable-energy hotels across the country.

Indonesia was also able to raise \$3 billion in sovereign Sukuk (Islamic bonds) to help it finance sustainable development projects as part of its interest in green finance.

Within the next two years, it is expected that the Central Bank of Iraq will issue green bonds amounting to

more than one trillion dollars to support a number of economic projects.

All these steps and developments reflect the ability of countries to move towards exploiting their potential in renewable energy to higher levels, which will lead to the promotion and marketing of more environmental projects and the demand for more such financial instruments.

The total size of green finance is expected to reach \$500 billion in 2021 compared to \$270 billion last year, an increase of 46 per cent.

Great efforts have been witnessed this year in the establishment of renewable energy projects and exploiting alternative energy resources around the world.

Financial institutions have strengthened their funding efforts towards this goal as well.

The European Union has launched many programmes through to the year 2050 with funds pledged to member states to support investments in clean energy projects with a view to reducing carbon emissions.

The EU is also rolling out a number of innovative financial instruments,

including sustainability bonds, representing finance to fund green and social projects during the Covid pandemic.

Blue bonds are similar in function to green bonds as debt instruments that are issued to support investment in green initiatives and the blue economy.

Several countries in the world have succeeded in establishing tourism projects by relying on renewable energy and obtained financing for expansion in marine areas, fish projects and others.

There are also several countries that are launching debt swap projects as part of their strategy to restructure their sovereign bonds.

This is a trend in Latin America and the Asia-Pacific region, due to the significant impact of the pandemic on their tourism projects resulting in large-scale job layoffs.

In our region, we can take advantage of these financing programmes to accelerate the implementation of renewable energy projects and thereby stimulate wider economic development and employment generation.

The Euro at 20



JEAN PISANI-FERRY

The author, a senior fellow at Brussels-based think tank Bruegel and a senior non-resident fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, holds the Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa chair at the European University Institute

Twenty years ago, on January 1, 2002, citizens of 12 European countries began using new euro banknotes and coins. A larger-than-life project — emblematic of a time when European leaders were bold enough to step into the unknown — thus became a tangible reality.

This flawless transition crowned an endeavour that was imagined in the 1970s, designed in the 1980s, and negotiated in the 1990s.

Expectations were high: the euro’s advocates hoped that it would deliver economic and financial integration, policy convergence, political amalgamation and global influence.

Two decades on, it is difficult to avoid feeling disappointed about economic integration.

Early assessments of the single currency’s trade impact found that it barely exceeded 2 per cent. Recent research by the European Central Bank puts the effect at

perhaps 5 per cent. That is still small, and by itself not worth the effort. Two regions within Europe trade with each other on average six times less if they are not in the same country.

Because of history, languages, networks, judicial systems, and reluctance to unify regulations, national borders still matter considerably.

The financial services story is more dramatic. In the first years, banks extended credit abroad, often recklessly, until the euro crisis a decade ago triggered a precipitous retreat behind national borders.

Regulators, applying the famous aphorism that banks are global in life, but national in death, told them to stop sharing liquidity with non-national subsidiaries. Fragmentation ensued.

The bold decision to launch a European banking union in June 2012 was a response to this.

But implementation has been only partial: whereas euro zone

banks are now supervised by the ECB, insolvency cases de facto end up in national hands.

Financial integration has recovered somewhat, but momentum is weak. Although pan-European banks would be able to diversify risk on a broader scale, national governments remain reluctant to relinquish privileged relationships with “their” banking systems.

Policy convergence towards the best performers was meant to result from self-discipline, as well as from fiscal-policy rules and the creation of coordination processes. But, having given up monetary-policy autonomy, many governments rejected further requirements from Brussels.

For ten years, credit growth and inflation rates diverged, with few apart from then-ECB President Jean-Claude Trichet worrying much. When the euro crisis eventually erupted, it put northern and southern EU member countries squarely at odds with

each other. Convergence has improved since.

Under duress, competitiveness gaps have narrowed. The ECB has helped quell euro zone exit speculation, ensuring that borrowers in all member states have access to similarly priced credit.

The response to the Covid-19 shock was remarkably cooperative, with the support of the European Commission and the ECB. And the recovery programme launched in summer 2020 broke with long-standing taboos.

There is now a debate as to how much more reform Europe’s macroeconomic policy system needs. Some claim that current arrangements would work fine if governments played by the rules.

But as I and a group of economists and lawyers recently argued, today’s changed environment means that policy priorities cannot focus merely on fostering discipline in every member state.

Instead, high debt ratios, low interest rates, the likelihood of recurring turbulence, and secular challenges like climate change call for coordinating monetary and fiscal policies, reforming fiscal rules, and making provisions for jointly tackling shocks.

Encouragingly, Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi and French President Emmanuel Macron endorsed such reforms in a recent commentary. Political agglomeration, a longstanding European goal, was expected to follow monetary union.

Hans Tietmeyer, the late German central banker, liked to quote Nicolas Oresme, a medieval philosopher who said that money belongs to the community rather than to the prince. The euro’s supporters hoped, somewhat confusedly, that a common currency would create a sense of community. This did not happen directly.

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ANNOUNCEMENT

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BREAKING NEWS

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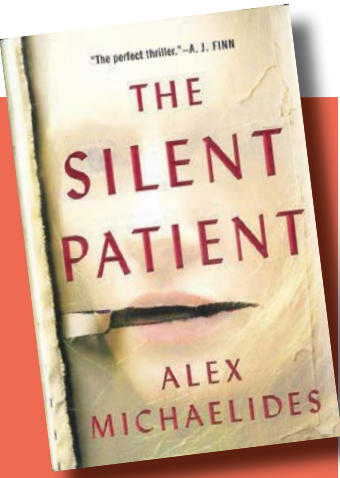


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NEW YEAR

READ



THE SILENT PATIENT
BY ALEX MICHAELIDES

The Silent Patient is a shocking psychological thriller of a woman's act of violence against her husband — and of the therapist obsessed with uncovering her motive.

New Waterford crystals added to Times Square's New Year's Eve ball

NEW WATERFORD CRYSTALS joined over 2,000 sparkling triangles covering the ball that drops over New York's Times Square every year, days before the countdown to 2022. "We're here today replacing 192 of the Waterford crystal triangles on that ball behind me with a new design, 'the Gift of Wisdom,'" said Jeffrey

Strauss, President of Countdown Entertainment, on Monday. "It's represented by a wheel with these petals of knowledge growing ever forward." Each year the geodesic sphere, which measures 12 feet in diameter and weighs 11,875 pounds, gets 192 new crystal facets that represent themes



for the new year such as Happiness, Goodwill, Harmony, Serenity, Kindness and Wonder. The ball is studded with 2,688

intricate crystal panels that range in length from 4-3/4 inches to 5-3/4 inches. For the second year in a row,

New Year's Eve in Times Square will be scaled-back event, with organisers encouraging spectators to attend the virtual show. In-person attendance, usually about 60,000 before the pandemic, will be capped at 15,000 due to the spread of the Omicron variant of the coronavirus. But the worldwide audience is expected to remain massive. "We're going to have more than a billion revellers around the world joining us on TV and on the Internet celebrating," said Strauss. "It's the one moment where we all come together, even if it's just for 60 seconds as we countdown towards 2022." Stars scheduled to perform at this year's celebration include KT Tunstall, LL Cool J, Journey and Chloe. — **Reuters**



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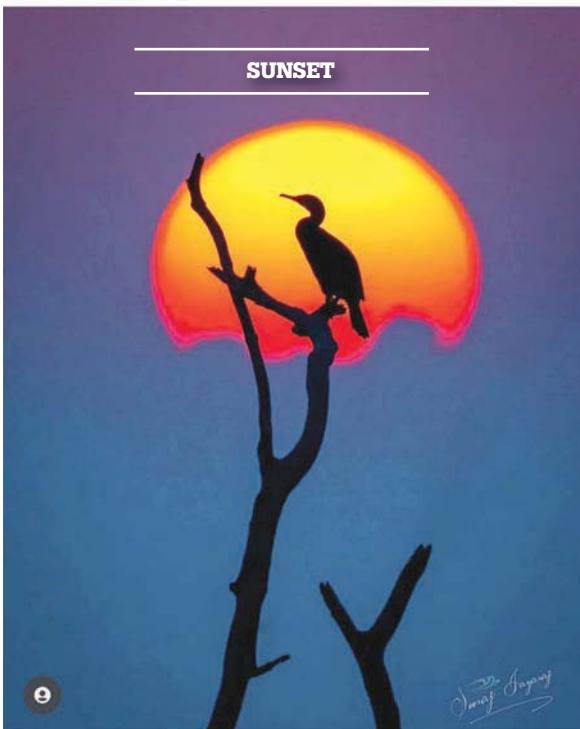


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TECHNOLOGY

Tasty TV: Japanese professor creates flavourful screen



A JAPANESE PROFESSOR has developed a prototype lickable TV screen that can imitate food flavours, another step towards creating a multi-sensory viewing experience.

The device, called Taste the TV (TTTV), uses a carousel of 10 flavour canisters that spray in combination to create the taste of a particular food. The flavour sample then rolls on hygienic film over a flat TV screen for the viewer to try.

In the Covid-19 era, this kind of technology can enhance the way people connect and interact with the outside world, said Meiji University professor Homei Miyashita.

"The goal is to make it possible for people to have the experience of something like eating at a restaurant on the other side of the world, even while staying at home," he said.

Miyashita works with a team of about 30 students that has produced a variety of flavour-related devices, including a fork that makes food taste richer. He said he built the TTTV prototype himself over the past year and that a commercial version would cost about 100,000 yen (\$875) to make.

Potential applications include distance learning for sommeliers and cooks, and tasting games and quizzes, he said.

Miyashita has also been in talks with companies about using his spray technology for applications like a device that can apply a pizza or chocolate taste to a slice of toasted bread.

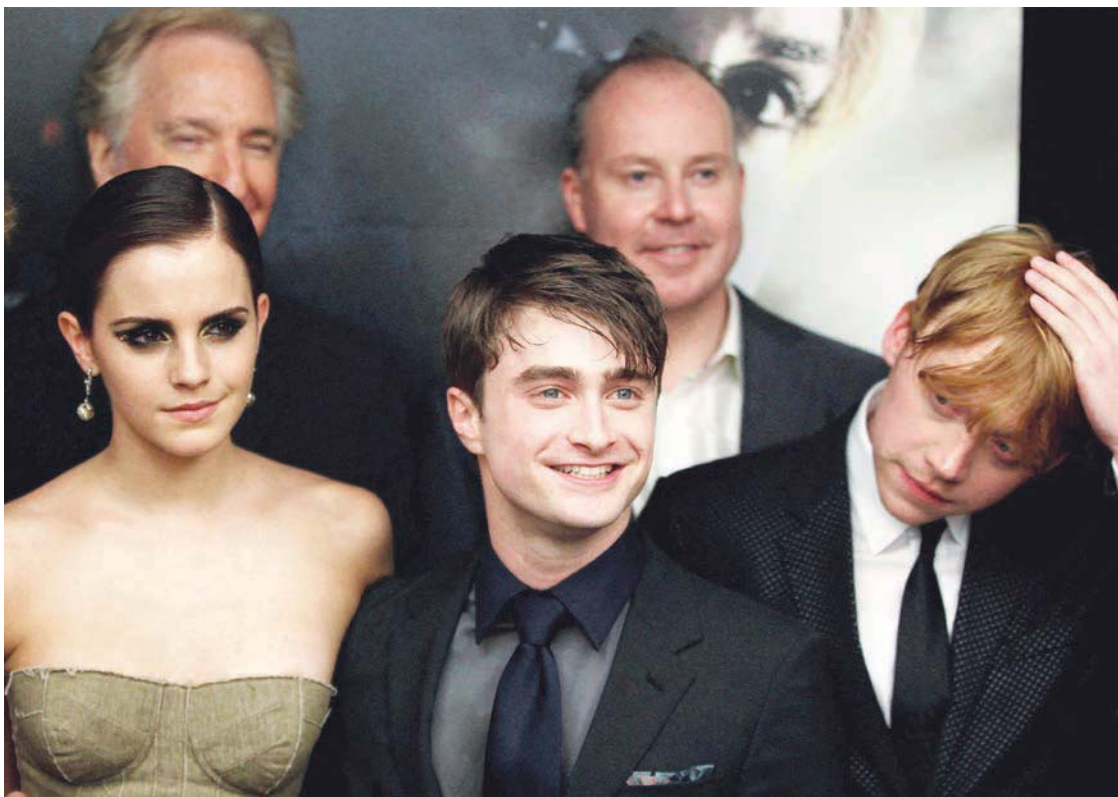
He also hopes to make a platform where tastes from around the world can be downloaded and enjoyed by users, much like music is now.

One Meiji student demonstrated TTTV for reporters, telling the screen she wanted to taste sweet chocolate. After a few tries, an automated voice repeated the order and flavour jets spritzed a sample onto a plastic sheet.

"It's kind of like milk chocolate," she said. "It's sweet like a chocolate sauce." — **Reuters**



MOVIES



'Harry Potter' cast recalls horrible haircuts in reunion special

DANIEL RADCLIFFE REMEMBERS the embarrassing haircuts, Emma Watson found meeting up with her "Harry Potter" cast mates "an unexpected joy," and director Christopher Columbus recalls the sets for the movies as "the greatest playground in the world."

Many of the cast of the "Harry Potter" film franchise reunited for a 20th anniversary TV special, called "Return to Hogwarts," to be broadcast on January 1 on HBO Max.

Radcliffe, 32, was just 11 years old when he was cast as the orphaned boy with magic powers. He said in the reunion on the set in Leavesden, outside London, that he would always be happy to talk about the film.

"Every part of my life is connected to Potter and to Leavesden. My first kiss is connected to someone here, my first girlfriends were here. ... It all spirals out from the Potter set somewhere," he said, according to advance excerpts released on Monday.

Radcliffe recalls how he and Rupert Grint (Ron Weasley) hated being told to grow their hair out for a shaggier look in later films in the series.

"We're like, 'No, no, no, no, no. You're not leaving us like this? We're supposed to be becoming teenagers and dating girls in this film! That's not what it's going to be, is it?' So, I think we were pretty devastated as we realised that it was," he said.

Radcliffe, Grint, Watson (Hermione) and Columbus are joined by actors Robbie Coltrane (Hagrid), Jason Isaacs (Lucius



Malfoy), Gary Oldman (Sirius Black), Helena Bonham Carter (Bellatrix Lestrange) and other cast members for the reunion. Watson said she was been overwhelmed with emotion at the reunion after so many years.

"Some of us haven't seen each other for years. So it's just been a joy. An unexpected joy," she said.

Oldman said getting back together was a "weird experience because you met them as kid, and now some of them are married and they've got kids of

their own."

"Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone" ("Philosopher's Stone" in the UK) was released in November 2001. The eight film franchise based on J K Rowling's stories took in some \$7.8 billion at the global box office.

Rowling does not make a personal appearance on the reunion special but will show up in archive footage. Rowling's opinions on transgender issues in the last year have been a cause of controversy. — **Reuters**

HISTORY



Scans reveal details of unwrapped ancient Egyptian mummy

RESEARCHERS HAVE USED digital technology to take the first accurate look inside the mummy of King Amenhotep I. https://www.frontiersin.org/files/Articles/778498/fmed-08-778498-HTML-r1/image_m/fmed-08-778498-g001.jpg, which has remained unwrapped in modern times, according to a study published on Tuesday.

The scans revealed details about the appearance and mummification of the 18th Dynasty king, who ruled Egypt from about 1525-1504 BC and was the son of New Kingdom founder Ahmose I.

Amenhotep's mummy, adorned with decorations on its linen wrapping and its funerary mask, was found along with those of other kings and queens in a cache in Luxor in 1881 and transferred to Cairo.

Because of efforts to preserve the decoration, it was one of few royal mummies not to be physically unwrapped and examined in the modern era, according to the study in *Frontiers in Medicine* <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fmed.2021.778498/full>, a peer-reviewed medical journal.

In 2019, Egyptologist Zahi Hawass and Cairo University professor Sahar Saleem used a computed tomography (CT) machine to "digitally unwrap" the mummy before it was moved to a new collection at Cairo's National Museum of Egyptian Civilisation.

The results of their study, published on Tuesday, showed that Amenhotep's face resembled that of his father, and estimated his age at death to be 35 years, though no cause of death was clear, according to a statement from Egypt's antiquities ministry. It appeared to show that he was the first king to be embalmed with his forearms crossed on his body, and proved that his brain was not removed, unlike those of most New Kingdom kings.

The scans also revealed 30 amulets or pieces of jewellery buried with the mummy, including a belt of 34 gold beads, showing that 21st Dynasty priests who rewrapped the mummy took care to preserve its ornaments, the ministry statement said.

During the reburial, the Theban priests re-attached Amenhotep's head and repaired other postmortem injuries likely inflicted by tomb robbers, according to the study. — **Reuters**





By Mazoun al Ghailani
Instagram: @mazoun_alghailani

SHOWING BEAUTY IN DECAY AND LOSS

One might think, is it possible to change the whole scene of ugliness and distraction into a state of beauty? How could artists see the state of weakness, fading and decay as an aesthetic state, despite the lack of beauty and the fact that the self has reached a profound stage of pain? Contemporary artists are capturing scenes of abandonment, loss and decay through photography, painting and sculpture, creating pieces that are both haunting and beautiful.

The Art of Decay has come to change the whole prospective of beauty and ugliness, stressing that there is always beauty even in distraction and decay and in this process, the artist finds a sensual aesthetic touch and a high humanitarian value. The art of Decay artwork is produced after a long series of hesitation, a several states of frustrating that Fatma went through to finally paint an artwork that she feels satisfied with it, translating her rage feeling and frustration to fiery colours. She painted Decay by blowing colours without using a brush. She let the colour flow in any direction without forcing it to follow a particular path.

Fatma al Saadi is an abstract artist who realised her gift of painting way long before this pandemic that forces the whole universe to close. In this period of lockdown, she intensified her training in using colours to produce something beautiful from the state of the pandemic frustration.

"I was reluctant to present my work online as I thought that my humble start wasn't good enough to be shared with people. However, pushed positively by my friend, I shared them in the social media and



there were some positive comments that could boosted me up to share more", she said.

"The aesthetics of passing from one stage to another, even if we feel pain or fatigue, purifies our soul. Thus, we enter a state of acceptance and satisfaction. Perhaps this is what distinguishes us as human beings from other creatures, that we continue to see beauty and hope even in the ugliest places and the most difficult circumstances," Fatma said.

Observing Fatma's artworks will find some surreal touches. Some of the paintings she planned to draw, as she may have the beginning of the idea and try to develop it. And sometimes the painting is left to its fate and responding to what appears in front of her.

remember one of Plato's philosophies that says that art imitates the objects and events of ordinary life. In other words, a work of art is a copy of a Form. It is even more of an illusion than is ordinary experience".

She added "We can consider the realistic art as reflection of the form of the real beauty of objects in reality. The creativity of the realistic artists is also measured by the quality of their copies. The more the painting is close to life, the more successful it becomes. However, the opposite happens in the abstract art. It abstracts the apparent features and relies on the essence the psychological influence becomes the idea or meaning."

The viewer to abstract art-

works has to be knowledgeable person on different kinds of arts. It is difficult to understand the idea on an abstract idea from the first glance. If you are not bothered to understand, you will see the whole work as a nonsense.

But if you want to look at things from different angles and experience a new meaning and move from the husks to the essence of the idea, you will feel that abstract art is a rich and unique spiritual and psychological experience," she said.

Sharing her view of what the abstract art needs in the Sultanate of Oman: "we need to open the field of art and attract a larger audience of young people, because abstract art is a modern and contemporary art.

We need to highlight the works of growing artists in the field of art and focus some attention to their efforts as I believe that those professionals in the field have received enough focus so far. The old generation should open the way for young people and allow the wheel to spin. Art is a cumulative process that aims in the end to refine and educate societies and does not depend only on personal interests and intermediaries."

"Unfortunately, Corona affected all kinds of arts. Exhibitions are not held as they used to and because of the economic situation, people are no longer spending to buy art. Art, perhaps in our country, is considered a luxury, and therefore it is often left behind when crises intensify," she added.

2021 YEAR ENDER

THE YEAR
IN FLASHBACK

OMAN DAILY

Observer

THURSDAY | DECEMBER 30, 2021 | JUMADA AL ULA 25

HM PRESIDES OVER
MILITARY PARADE



SULTANATE
OF OMAN
CELEBRATES
51ST
GLORIOUS
NATIONAL DAY

SEE P 24



HM APPROVES
10TH FIVE-YEAR
PLAN, BUDGET
FOR 2021

January 5

Jan

As we step into the new year, Observer takes stock of the major happenings in the Sultanate of Oman

2021

JAN 1

Incentives for citizens, private sector announced

At the behest of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, the Ministry of Finance on Thursday announced a set of incentives to be offered to citizens and the private sector during 2021. The incentives include loans from Oman Housing Bank, with the annual sum designated for annual borrowing during 2021 to be increased to RO 100 million, from RO 60 million in the bank's budget in the same year. Only Omani lawyers in courts from 2021

JAN 2

HM approves 10th Five-Year Plan, Budget for 2021

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq issued two Royal decrees to approve the 10th Five Year Development Plan 2021-2025 and ratify the State's General Budget for Fiscal Year 2021. Tenth Five-Year Plan targets 3.5% growth in Sultanate's GDP. A growth of 3.5 per cent in the Sultanate's GDP is one of the key targets of the 10th Five Year Plan, Oman's Ministry of Economy said on Friday. The Tenth Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) is the first implementation plan for Oman 2040 vision It has 88 strategic goals, 343 programmes, 14 national priorities, and four main themes.

JAN 4

Alarming increase in divorces

Among the total personal status cases received in the courts of the Sultanate from March to October 2020 amounted to 1,239. Out of these 49.5 per cent were divorce cases. Stating these details, a source at the Council of Administrative Affairs of the Judiciary, said the alimony cases were 47.2 per cent, custody and alimony 25 per cent, while the marriage cases stood at 1.9%.

JAN 5

Many goods to cost more from April

Come April, citizens and residents will have to shell out more on many of the commodities they purchase or the services they avail. According to the announcement in Oman Budget 2021, Value Added Tax (VAT) will be imposed on many of the goods and services in Oman starting from April 2021.

Sultanate of Oman gets nod to host Test cricket.

Oman's wonderful cricket facilities have met International Cricket Council's (ICC) highest approval and the country is now an accredited Test, One-day International (ODI) and T20 International venue.

JAN 6

GCC states sign solidarity pact

On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, took part in the 41st Summit of GCC Leaders, Saudi Arabia's Al Ula city on Tuesday. Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who chaired the opening session of the summit, said the agreement stressed the need for solidarity and stability "between our peoples and countries."

Sultanate of Oman reports first case of Covid-19 strain. The government on Tuesday warned of an increase in the number of cases as the Ministry of Health reported the first case of the new highly infectious coronavirus strain in the Sultanate. The first case of Covid-19 was reported in Oman last year on February 24. The new strain was initially found in the UK and later reported in other parts of the world. MoH said that the genetic mutation of the COVID-19 virus was diagnosed in a resident who came to the Sultanate from the United Kingdom and showed respiratory symptoms while undergoing quarantine.

Jan

January 6

SULTANATE
SUPPORTS
MARCH OF GULF
COOPERATION
COUNCIL



JAN 7

MSM becomes joint stock company

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq issued a Royal Decree No 5/2021 converting Muscat Securities Market (MSM) into a closed joint stock company under the name Muscat Bourse Company SAOG. Its ownership shall be transferred to Oman Investment Authority. Muscat Bourse Company SAOG shall practice all its activities within the framework of the Capital Market Law and thereby comes under the

monitoring and supervision of the Capital Market Authority (CMA).

ROP launches new online traffic services

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) on Wednesday opened a traffic safety institutes system in different governorates of the Sultanate, and launched three online traffic services. The new online traffic services include an online testing of drivers, online issuance of driver's licence and online issuance of vehicle registration card.

Jan

JAN 12

Royal Decree on appointment of Crown Prince

Royal Decree promulgates a new Basic Law of the State, focuses on the following points: setting a specific and stable mechanism for the transfer of power in the Sultanate; sets a mechanism for the appointment of a Crown Prince; and outlines his duties, specialisations and prerogatives. Reaffirms the principle of 'rule of the law', the Independence of the Judiciary and Justice as basic pillars of rule in the country.

Jan

JAN 17

First Arab woman to climb Mount Ama Dablam

The Sultanate of Oman's Nadhira al Harthy has become the first Arab woman to reach the summit of Mount Ama Dablam (6,812 metres), which is one of the highest Himalayan peaks in the hilly country of Nepal. "A team from seven summit treks 'First Arab Ama Dablam Expedition' comprising Qatari climber Fahad Badar, Sherief Elabd from Egypt and Nadhira al Harthy from Oman have attempted Mt Ama Dablam (6,812 m) on January 14," reported the thehimalayantimes.com



JAN 10

Sultanate of Oman begins New Renaissance

The nation began a new year of its renewed Renaissance under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, who ascended to the throne on January 11, 2020. On this occasion, the government and people of the Sultanate affirmed allegiance and loyalty to His Majesty who has set his sight on reinforcing the Sultanate's status among the nations and maintaining its national interests in accordance with the goals and paths of which were identified by the Oman Vision 2040 which seeks to achieve qualitative changes in all spheres of life.



FEB 2
Volunteers rescue Arabian Sea Humpback whale
A dedicated team of specialists and volunteers from the Oman Stranding Network recently completed a successful rescue of an entangled Arabian Sea Humpback Whale that had become stranded off the coast of Duqm early last week. Specialists from the Environment Authority (EA), Five Oceans Environmental Services, and Future Seas, supported by the Environment Society (ESO) and the Port of Duqm, were quickly dispatched to undertake the complicated rescue effort.

FEB 5
Royal directives to go ahead with Diba-Lima-Khasab road project
His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has directed authorities to proceed with the implementation of Diba-Lima-Khasab road project.

FEB 7
Register lease contract to avoid fine and jail
Muscat Municipality has warned against evasion of the 3 per cent tenancy agreement registration fee by landlords or real estate companies. Following a directive from His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the fee was reduced to three per cent from five per cent in order to encourage the process of rent documentation

FEB 8
Ministers tour Musandam
Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning, and Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, made a four-day tour of Musandam Governorate during which they were accompanied by Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said al Busaidy, Minister of State and Governor of Musandam. The programme included visits to several sites and developmental projects in different areas of the governorate.



Vaccination drive begins
The Sultanate of Oman will launch a campaign on Sunday to administer vaccines to a new segment of target groups. According to the Ministry of Health, the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine will be administered to people in the age group 65 and above in all governorates. The Sultanate received 100,000 doses of Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine produced at Serum Institute of India.

RICH LEGACY OF SULTAN QABOOS



The National Museum is setting up a special corner named after the late Sultan Qaboos. The initiative comes as part of efforts to develop museum narrative art, which is considered among innovative pillars of documentation and which aims to enrich the experience of visitors to this leading cultural edifice.

February 23

FEB 10
No renewal of Resident Card with 'driver' profession
The Resident Cards of those with the profession of a 'driver' of all categories will not be renewed from June 1, said the Royal Oman Police (ROP). "The Ministry of Labour in cooperation with the Royal Oman Police (ROP) announces that as of June 1, 2021, the Resident Card for the profession of the driver in all categories will not be renewed, unless the applicant provides a valid driver's license consistent with the type of profession he is holding."

FEBRUARY 14
Drones to trace suspected Covid-19 cases
Dr Ahmed al Maashri and his team from the College of Engineering at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) designed a drone-based system equipped with artificial intelligence technology for detecting suspected Covid-19 cases remotely. The team has developed a prototype cable of detecting Covid-19 symptoms from a distance between 10 and 15 metres, and has passed field tests. The project is funded by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

MARCH 2
Meteorite 'Sayh al Uhaymir 008' returns to Mars
The meteorite 'Sayh al Uhaymir 008', which was found in the Wilayat of Haima of Al Wusta Governorate, in 1999, is now sent to its original home, Mars, through a Nasa trip. This meteorite is the first rock sent back by humans to Mars. The meteorite 'Sayh al Uhaymir 008' weighs more than 8 kg.

UN lauds Oman's eCensus
The United Nations Population Division hailed the efforts exerted by the Sultanate of Oman when conducting Electronic Census 2020 of Population, Residences and Establishments (eCensus 2020) and the publication of its results in record time amid the pandemic.

MARCH 4
Quicker, cheaper alternative to PCR test
Funded by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI), a team led by Dr Haytham Ali of Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) has developed a ready to use, rapid and sensitive colorimetric Reverse Transcription Loop-Mediated Isothermal Amplification (RTLAMP) based assay for the diagnosis of Covid-19 infection. The assay can be utilised at its current status as a screening assay with the advantages of being simpler,

quicker (20-30 minutes), and cheaper than the qRT-PCR.

MARCH 5
Night closure of shops comes into force
The nine-hour closure of all commercial establishments, as part of the measures to stem the spread of Covid-19, came into force from 8 pm on Thursday. Customers were seen making a beeline to shopping malls, small retail outlets and restaurants before they downed shutters before 8 pm.

ECONOMIC STIMULUS LAUNCHED



HIS MAJESTY PRESIDES OVER CABINET MEETING
His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq presided over a cabinet meeting on Wednesday, during which he approved the Economic Stimulus Plan to spur growth. The plan includes various measures to support businesses and create jobs, such as providing financial assistance to small and medium enterprises, and offering tax incentives to investors. The Sultan also emphasized the importance of maintaining the country's economic stability and resilience in the face of global challenges.

MARCH 27
Night ban on movement begins
The 12-day night ban on movement came into effect from 8 pm on Sunday with essential services, health and media professionals being exempted from the ban. The nationwide partial curfew, ordered by the Supreme Committee prevents movement of individuals and vehicles between 8 pm and 5 pm.



MARCH 11
E-Census 2020 to help in realising Vision 2040 goals
Sayyid Hamoud Faisal al Busaidy, Chairman of the Supreme National Electronic Census Committee tasked with the 2020 Census of Population, Residences and Establishments, said that he and members of the committee are honoured to express their gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik for his Royal directives which, the minister said, played a vital role in making the census a success. The committee reviewed the final report of the e-Census 2020, which shed light on technical aspects of the first phase of the project and its methodologies aimed to upgrade the quality of administrative registers and establish statistical rules.

US thanks HM for supporting Yemen peace efforts
The United States expressed its thanks to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik for supporting the efforts undertaken by the office of the United Nations special envoy for Yemen and the US envoy for Yemen. In a statement issued on Tuesday evening, the US affirmed its commitment to achieving a ceasefire and reaching a comprehensive political settlement to the crisis in Yemen.

50% attendance in government offices
The Supreme Committee suspends student attendance with the exception of grade 12 students, from April 4 until further notice. It also reduces attendance in govt offices to 50 per cent.





JUL 11
HM begins Saudi Arabia visit
His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq and King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud of Saudi Arabia, held a round of official talks at Neom Palace here on Sunday. At the outset of the talks, the Saudi monarch expressed his warm welcome to His Majesty the Sultan and commended the solid foundation of bilateral relations and the strong ties between the two countries. King Salman lauded the progress made in all spheres, noting that this visit will give impetus to bilateral cooperation and joint coordination. In turn, His Majesty the Sultan affirmed that Saudi Arabia, under the leadership of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, is progressing with firm confidence and shaping a brighter future.

JUL 14
Underwater heritage: Kiva documentation completed
The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism completed the scanning and excavation phase at the site of the sunken ship “Kiva” in Mirbat coasts in the Governorate Dhofar. These efforts are part of the Ministry's endeavour to preserve and document the underwater cultural heritage. The underwater archaeology team dived and photographed “Kiva” shipwreck, to register the site as an archaeological underwater cultural heritage site in the local and regional waters.



AUG 2
Power bills of May and June to be recalculated
The electricity bills for May and June will be recalculated, and in case there is an increase in the bill, the excess amount will be credited to the following month's bill, said Authority of Public Services Regulation (APSR) after it received 5,000-7,000 complaints of inflated bills.

AUG 8
‘Tiger’ among the butterflies back after 37 years
The Blue Tiger Butterfly, known for its migration in many countries in the Indian subcontinent, has returned to the Sultanate after 37 years. Researchers have spotted the Blue Tiger, known as Tirumala limniace, during July and August 2020, on four separate occasions in Manah, Al Wafi, Wadi Bani Awf and Wadi Bani Kharous..

SEPT 1
Ban on expats lifted; Vaccination must for travellers
The Supreme Committee makes vaccination against Covid-19 must for all travellers coming to the Sultanate of Oman. The announcement comes as the nation lifted air travel curbs after 127 days. Oman also got a shot in the arm when it received 86,400 doses of AstraZeneca vaccine through COVAX. Staff strength will now be 100 per cent at public offices which was limited to 50 per cent.

SEPT 6
ID cards must for Omanis aged 10 years and above
All Omanis aged 10 years and above must obtain the civil identity card, according to the Royal Decree No 59/2021, which amended Civil Status Law. Earlier, the ID card was mandatory for those above the age of 15.

SEPT 12
Al Hoota cave to get more facilities
Al Hoota Cave, known for its rare population of blind fish and the stunning stalactites hanging from the ceilings and stalagmites reaching up from the floor, is preparing to enhance facilities to attract more visitors to the cave.



DEC 4
Misfat al Abriyeen named one of the best tourism villages
Misfat al Abriyeen added another feather on its cap when it was named as one of this year's Best Tourism Villages by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

DEC 8
HM, Saudi Crown Prince hold talks
His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq and HRH Prince Mohammed bin Salman al Saud, Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, held a round of official talks at Al Alam Palace on Tuesday

DEC 9
Rub El Khali desert highway opens
The Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia officially opened the direct road connecting them, the Rub el Khali Highway and inaugurated its checkpoints on both sides of the borders.

DEC 13
Omicron reported
The Sultanate of Oman reports two cases of Omicron variant of coronavirus

DEC 17
His Majesty, UK PM discuss bilateral ties
His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq met Boris Johnson, British Prime Minister, at 10 Downing Street in London on Thursday. The meeting reviewed historical relations binding the two countries and means of promoting them in various spheres to serve the joint interests of the Omani and British people.

OCT 2
Oman opens its pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai.
Oman opened its pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai on Friday. The pavilion is inspired by frankincense tree, which played an important role in Oman's ancient history and trade. It also connects with the Expo 2020 Dubai theme “Connecting Minds, Creating the Future.”

OCT 4
Shaheen makes landfall
The tropical cyclone Shaheen made landfall between the wilayats of Al Musanah and Al Suwaiq with torrential rains and heavy winds with speeds ranging from 120-150km/hr, a statement from the Oman News Agency said.

OCT 5
HM sets up ministerial committee to assess damage
His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq sets up ministerial committee headed by finance minister to assess the damages caused to citizens' homes and properties in the governorates that took the brunt of the of cyclone Shaheen.

OCT 11
National Fund for Emergencies established
In his Royal Speech to the nation, HM the Sultan sets up a National Fund for Emergencies (NFE) to tackle the aftermath of Shaheen and similar natural disasters that may occur.



OCT 7
Oman marks 50 years of joining the UN
The Sultanate of Oman marks 50th anniversary of its joining the United Nations. The Sultanate joined the UN on October 7, 1971, and became the 128th official member.

OCT 17
Oman launches T20 World Cup in style
Oman announced itself to the cricketing world at one of its biggest stages, the ICC T20 World Cup 2021, with an opening ceremony that showcased the Sultanate's culture, customs and traditions in all its glory. The country's cricket team made a statement of its own with a resounding victory against debutants Papua New Guinea (PNG) that launched their World Cup campaign in style. The opening ceremony was presided over by HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth.

NOV 9
Cap on fuel prices
His Majesty the Sultan orders cap on fuel prices. Government employees to get promotion. An independent unit set up to monitor performance of government institutions.



NOV 11
Ahmed bin Majid among influential world personalities
The 15th century Omani navigator Ahmed bin Majid made it to Unesco's list of influential world personalities.

NOV 15
Observer marks 40th anniversary



NOV 18
51st National Day marked
His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq presides over a military parade to mark the 51st National Day. The Renewed Renaissance kicked off on a high note when His Majesty called upon the people of the Sultanate of Oman to do their best to enrich domestic development and foster progress in all fields.

NOV 22
HM visits Qatar
His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq and Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, held a round of official talks at the Amiri Diwan in Doha, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq and Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani witnessed the signing of six cooperation agreements covering military fields, avoidance of double taxation and prevention of tax evasion, labour, investment, tourism and transport. The military cooperation agreement was signed by HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq al Said and Dr Khalid Mohammed al Attiyah.

