

Opec+ sticking to planned oil output

Opec+ oil production levels are going to stick to previously announced plans, the groups said on Wednesday, despite high prices on international markets. That means the alliance, led by Saudi Arabia and Russia, will stick to a plan to boost daily production by 400,000 barrels in March, in line with increases in previous months. But this glosses over the fact that the 20 participating countries have not actually implemented the monthly increases as planned and produced less oil than agreed. — AFP



P12

PELLISTRI
INSPIRES
URUGUAY



P13

PRIVATE INVESTMENTS
IN DUQM SEZ
TOTAL RO 3.6 BN



P20

THE ANATOMY
OF AN OMANI
CAMEL RACE



MUSCAT

**HM RECEIVES
CABLE OF THANKS**

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from President Ignazio Cassis of the Swiss Confederation, in reply to His Majesty's congratulatory cable on the occasion of him being elected as his country's president. In his cable, President Cassis expressed his utmost appreciation for His Majesty's sincere sentiments and best wishes to him and his country's people. He also underscored the strong relations between the two countries and their peoples. — ONA

**HM THANKED BY
KING OF JORDAN**

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from King Abdullah II of the Kingdom of Jordan in reply to His Majesty's greetings cable to him on his 60th Birthday Anniversary. In his cable, King Abdullah expressed his deep gratitude and appreciation for His Majesty's fraternal feelings and good wishes. He prayed to Allah the Almighty to protect His Majesty the Sultan and grant him good health and well-being to achieve the Omani people's aspirations of progress, welfare and prosperity under the wise leadership of His Majesty. — ONA





Today's story is with
Areej al Saleh



omanobserver.om/podcast

INSIDE



TURKEY STRIKES KURD
TARGETS IN IRAQ, SYRIA

P6



US TO SEND TROOPS TO EAST
EUROPE TO COUNTER RUSSIA

P7

VISIT TO BOOST RELATIONS BETWEEN SULTANATE OF OMAN AND BELGIUM

King and Queen of the Belgians arrive

MUSCAT: Philippe Leopold Louis Marie, King of the Belgians, and Mathilde Marie Christine Ghislaine d'Udekem d'Acoz, Queen of the Belgians, arrived here on Wednesday on an official three-day visit to the Sultanate of Oman.

King Philippe and Queen Mathilde and their delegation were received upon their arrival at the Royal Airport by HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth.

The monarchs were also received by Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, Dr Mohammed bin Hamad al Rumhy, Minister of Energy and Minerals — Head of the Mission of Honour, Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education — Escort of the King's spouse, Najeem bin Sulaiman al Abri, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Kingdom of Belgium and Dominique Minior, Ambassador of the Kingdom of



Belgium to the Sultanate of Oman.

The monarchs are accompanied by an official delegation comprising Sophie Wilmès, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Tinne Van der Straeten, Minister of Energy, Pol De Witte, Secretary-General of the Household of the King of the Belgian, Jeroen Cooreman, Director-General for Bilateral Affairs, Dominique Minior, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Belgium to the Sultanate of Oman and Machteld Fostier, Secretary to the Queen of the Belgians and Leo Peeters, Director of Economic Interests. During the high status visit, various aspects of common concern will be taken up in a manner that serves the interests of the two countries and realises their aspirations for a more prosperous future. — ONA (SEE ALSO P2)

Hungary hails Oman's
role in regional peace

MUSCAT: Peter Szijjarto, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary expressed his country's appreciation for the approach espoused by the Sultanate of Oman's foreign policy under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. He affirmed that this policy is based on sticking to traditions, heritage and values.

This came during the joint press conference held at the Foreign Ministry today between Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister and Peter Szijjarto, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary.

The guest hailed efforts of the Sultanate of Oman in easing tensions and its endeavours to establish peace in the region. He affirmed that European countries accord an importance to stability of this region, which reflects positively on Europe in general.

ECONOMIC TIES

The Hungarian minister pointed out that the backbone of the bilateral economic relations between the two countries represented in the strategic cooperation between MOL Hungary, one of the leading Hungarian companies in the oil and gas industry and Oman Oil



An agreement was
signed to the tune of
€10 million (supported
by the Hungarian
government) to
construct solar power
plant in the Sultanate
of Oman

PETER SZIJJARTO
Minister of Foreign Affairs

Marketing Company. He hoped that the relations in energy field would witness a stage of further innovation during the upcoming period. He said an agreement was signed to the tune of €10 million (supported by the Hungarian government) to construct solar power plant in the Sultanate of Oman.

The Hungarian minister said that EXIM Bank in Hungary has launched a line of credit to the tune of \$56 million to support business cooperation between the two countries within the context of the agreement for the encouragement and protection of mutual investments. **TURN TO P3**

Science writing heuristic has impact
on students' performance: Study

MUSCAT: A research study titled 'Effects of using Science Writing Heuristic strategy on 7th grade students' academic achievement and attitude towards scientific writing' showed that Science Writing Heuristic (SWH) has an impact on students' performance in achievement tests.

As revealed in the latest issue of *Scientific Insights* magazine published by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, the study aimed to investigate the effect of using SWH strategy. It is defined as

a writing-to-learn model for learning from laboratory activities in secondary science and can be used by teachers as a framework to design classroom activities, and on developing the Omani 7th grade female students' academic achievement in science and their attitude towards scientific writing.

It also targeted assisting students to investigate and discover in order to deeply understand concepts of scientific knowledge.

The study used a quasi-experimental approach. A sample of 49 female students was

randomly selected and divided into two groups: Experimental group (24 female students) that was taught using the SWH strategy and a control group (25 female students) that was taught using the traditional way in the second semester of the 2018/2019 academic year.

The findings of the study showed that the students of the experimental group that used the SWH approach outperformed those who did not apply this strategy.

TURN TO P2

Omicron infections are slowing

BRASILIA: Covid-19 infections and deaths in the Americas are still increasing, but the rise in infections seems to be slowing down in places hit earliest by the Omicron variant, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) said on Wednesday.

Most of the 7 million new cases reported in the past week were in North America — some 4 million new infections — while Chile and Brazil posted record numbers of daily cases. Deaths have more than doubled in Cuba,



the Bahamas and Antigua and Barbuda, the regional health agency said.

PAHO said 63 per cent of

people across Latin America and the Caribbean have now been fully vaccinated against Covid-19, and the region has some of the highest Covid-19 vaccination coverage in the world.

But it remains the most unequal region in the world, with uneven coverage between countries: while 14 countries have fully immunised 70 per cent of their populations, the same number of countries have yet to protect 40 per cent of their people, the agency said. — Reuters



King of Belgians begins 3-day visit



Science writing heuristic has impact on students' performance

FROM PAGE 1

A significant difference in the academic achievement and the attitude towards scientific writing was observed in favour of the experimental group.

Unlike the control group that failed to understand the educational material using the traditional approach, the experimental group had a positive attitude towards learning Chemistry.

The study was conducted by Prof Abdullah bin Khamis Ambosaidi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education (MoE) and Afrah bint Salim al Maktoumiyah, Science Teacher at the MoE.

The findings of the study were published in the *Journal of Educational Sciences*, a scientific refereed journal issued by the Saudi Educational and Psychological Association at King Saud University.

It is recommended that teachers should be encouraged to activate the writing portal for education to develop students' educational attainment, promote their positive attitudes towards scientific writings and hold workshops for teachers, senior teachers and supervisors to train them in the way of applying the SWH in teaching science, and to include lessons designed in accordance with the SWH in science books so that teachers can benefit from them in preparing similar lessons.

Scientific Insights is a scientific journal published every three months by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation in both Arabic and English.

— ONA

ROHM heralds February with Flamenco and Fado

MUSCAT: From classical ballet to soulful Fado, covering folk music, flamenco and stellar Arab music in between, February 2022 looks set to be a thorough exploration of diverse genres of musical performance from around the world. The Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) continues to deliver on its commitment to global collaboration.

Anastasia the ballet is built on a cultural legend. From her first love, to leading an army against the Tartars in defence of her kingdom, this production of Anastasia is a dramatic performance, featuring masterfully choreographed battles expressing an inspiring story about loyalty and courage. The ballet will be performed by the acclaimed National Academic Bolshoi Opera and Ballet Theatre of Belarus on February 3 and 4 at 7 pm and on February 5 at 4 pm.

Annual Oman World Folk Music Festival 2022 will welcome Costa Rica, Poland and Bashkortostan! Performing artists from Oman and the visiting countries will present



their unique folk traditions at this spectacular festival presented over two nights. Performed with wonderful flamboyance and showmanship on the Seafront Maidan at the ROHM on February 11 and 12 at 7 pm.

Mi Carmen Flamenca is a one hundred per cent Andalusian show from the Antonio Andrade Company, performed and in costumes by José Galván from Malaga and by Andalusian artists and fashion designers Victorio and Lucchinos.

The myth of Carmen created first by Prospero Mérimée and Georges Bizet is re-interpreted in the spirit of new flamenco with Arab elements, jazz and salsa and pure flamenco. Dramatic, romantic and exciting to watch, Flamenco is a Spanish dance form the world adores for its vibrant energy and iconic costumes to be held on February 17 and 18 at 7 pm.

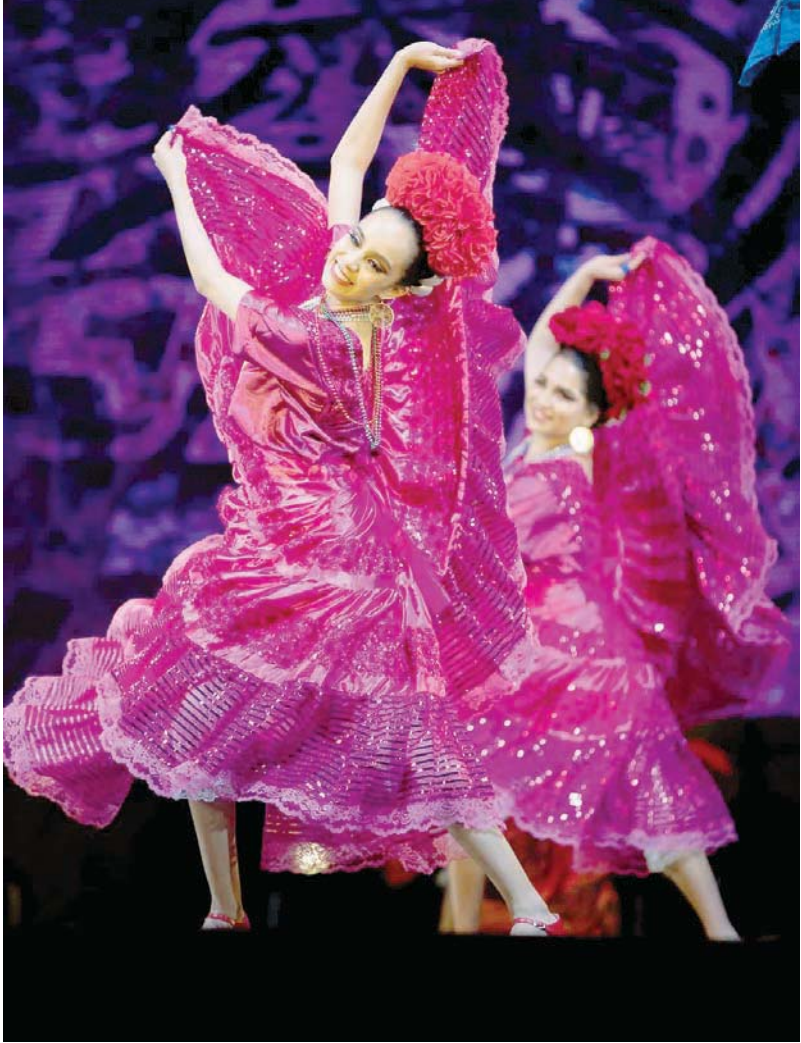
Hugely popular Omar Khairat bridges contemporary Egyptian and Western music. He is especial-

ly renowned for original arrangements of works by Mohamed Abdel Wahab and songs of Umm Kulthum. Adding to the wide appeal of this talented artist, the concert will be enriched by the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra scheduled to be held on February 24 and 25 at 7 pm.

The final performance of this packed month is soulful Fado by Carminho who is heralded throughout the world as one of the best in her genre. With a 12 strong band of musicians, listen to a stirring concert embodied with the emotional anthems of love and loss. This Portuguese musical tradition is beautifully moving and powerful to watch to be held on February 26 at 7 pm.

All performances will take place under the guidelines issued by the Supreme Committee tasked with tackling developments resulting from coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.

Safety measures are in place throughout the ROHM to ensure your comfort and safety. — ONA

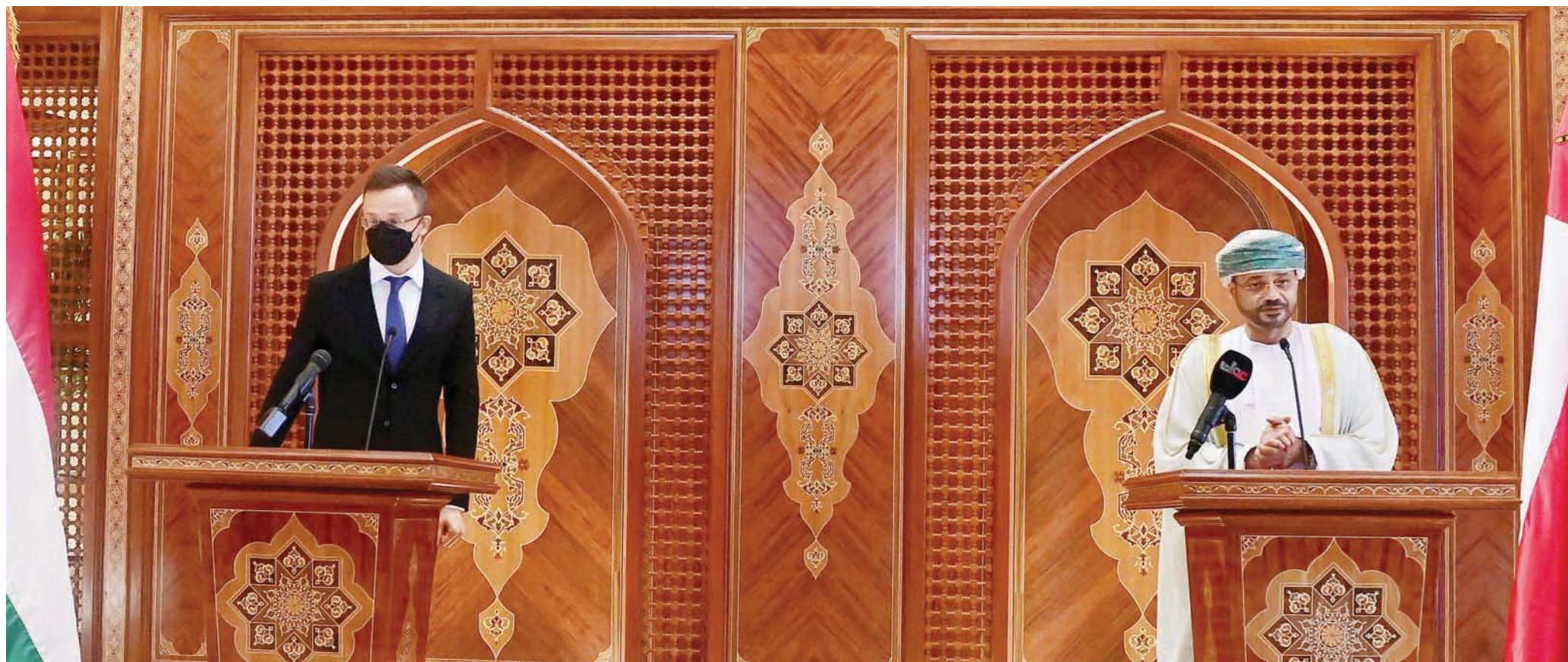




Follow us on **facebook**
omanobserver

OMANDAILY**OBSERVER**
THURSDAY | FEBRUARY 3 | 2022

3



Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister and Peter Szijjarto, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary at the press conference in Muscat on Wednesday. — ONA

Hungary hails Oman's role in regional peace

FROM PAGE 1

On his turn, Sayyid Badr commended the outcomes of the talks session held here on Wednesday with Peter Szijjarto. The talks covered areas of cooperation and investment partnership between the two countries particularly in oil and gas sectors, renewable energy, development of trade, tourism relations, mutual investments, aviation and logistics sectors, which are all promising for further growth in the future.

Sayyid Badr said: "We share identical views during the talks towards several regional and international issues of common concern. We also share same perceptions towards the challenges we are dealing with in this interconnected world".

He also pointed out that the visit of the Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade demonstrates the strength and growth of the bilateral relations. He hoped that he would visit Hungary in the near future to reciprocate enhancing avenues of joint cooperation.

Sayyid Badr added that the two sides agreed during the talks to activate the Omani-Hungarian Joint Committee, being led by the under-secretaries of the foreign ministries of the two countries. He hoped that this committee would play its role in exploring further investment opportunities and providing the appropriate support for the growth of the bilateral economic relations. — ONA

Oman and Hungary FMs hold talks

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister and Peter Szijjarto, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Hungary, held a session of political talks in Muscat on Wednesday. They discussed cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and Hungary in various sectors, including trade, energy, tourism, higher education and investment in renewable energy.

They also exchanged views on a number of regional and international issues of common concern. The session of talks was attended by Khalid bin Hashil al Muselhi, Head of the Minister's Office Department; Tibor Szatmari, Ambassador of Hungary to Oman; and officials from both countries. During the session, they signed an agreement for the encouragement and protection of mutual investments. The agreement was signed by Sayyid Badr and Peter Szijjarto. The ceremony was attended by Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, and



Tibor Szatmari, Ambassador of Hungary to Oman.

The Oman and Hungary Business Forum, organised by the Embassy of Hungary, in cooperation with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), on Wednesday explored ways of enhancing investment and commercial exchange between the two countries. The forum also discussed the establishment of partnerships between Omani

and Hungarian businessmen. It was attended by Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA). Investment opportunities available in the economic diversification sectors of Oman Vision 2040 were reviewed by Asila bint Salim al Samsamiyah, Investment Promotion Under-Secretary.

In her statement, Asila also showcased the incentives offered by the Sultanate of Oman to investors. On his turn, Peter Szijjarto, Minister of Foreign

Affairs and Trade in Hungary, stressed the significance of investment and commercial exchange between Oman and Hungary. He said that emphasis is laid on quality investments. During the forum, the two sides signed a memorandum of understanding between OHI Group and Er-Petro of Hungary.

In a separate meeting, Asila bint Salim al Samsamiyah, Investment Promotion Under-Secretary and Peter Szijjarto, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Hungary reviewed the

advanced relations between the two countries. They also discussed various aspects of cooperation in economic, commercial and investment fields.

The visit aimed to upgrade the level of trade exchange, focused on incentives that the Ministry offers investors and explore investment opportunities in the sectors of industry, renewable energy, fisheries, tourism, scientific research, mining and other economic diversification sectors targeted by Oman Vision 2040. — ONA

35,000 people use Empty Quarter Road

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

Nearly 35,000 people have taken the advantage of the recently opened Empty Quarter Road that links the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Speaking to the media, Abdullah bin Saud al Enezi, the Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to the Sultanate of Oman, said that about 35,000 people have travelled through the Empty Quarter

since its opening in December. "People of both sides are keen to strengthen relations between the two countries."

Eng Said bin Hamoud al Mawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology said that the Empty Quarter Road is a point of social contact for the people of two countries, apart from its importance as a key logistics route. This road has reduced the distance to commute between the two countries by 10

hours following a reduction in the number of border points, which will also help boost tourism.

The ministry is studying the need for a dual carriage from the checkpoint to the Wilayat of Ibri as per the traffic density. Later, the road dualisation project will be carried out between Ibri and Suhar to enable the movement of goods.

Opened on December 8, the 725 km road starts from Ibri in Al Dhahirah Governorate and ends

at the Empty Quarter border port with a length of 161 km.

The road starts from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia from Batha intersection and ends at the border port with a length of 564 km.

One of the eagerly awaited yet to be opened roads for many years, it will also benefit thousands of Haj and Umrah visitors from the Sultanate as their travel time will be reduced by nearly half from the three days that it used to take till now.

FOREIGN MINISTER RECEIVES COPIES OF CREDENTIALS



MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister received copy of credentials of Mohammed Imran Ali Chaudhry, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan appointed to the Sultanate of Oman, in Muscat on Wednesday. Sayyid Badr welcomed the ambassador, wished him success in carrying out his duties, and the bilateral relations between the two countries further progress and growth. Sayyid Badr also received copy of credentials of Thomas Lid Ball, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Norway appointed to the Sultanate of Oman. Sayyid Badr welcomed the ambassador, wished him success in carrying out his duties, and the bilateral relations between the two countries further progress and growth. — ONA

WEDNESDAY,
FEBRUARY 2, 2022

2335
NEW CASES OF COVID-19

103
ADMITTED TO
HOSPITALS

IN THE LAST
24 HOURS

339
TOTAL NUMBER OF INPATIENTS, 50 IN ICU

omanobserver.om

CORONAVIRUS
UPDATE

5
DEATH



WETLANDS TO PRESERVE BIODIVERSITY



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@LAKSHMIOMAN

February 2 is celebrated as World Wetlands Day every year to create awareness about the wetlands’ vital role in preserving biodiversity.

On February 2, 1971, in Ramsar, Iran, the Convention on Wetlands was adopted and brought into focus the need to protect the world’s wetlands.

February 2, 2022, however, has its unique importance because this is first time the World Wetlands Day is being observed as a United Nations International Day, the decision for which was taken by the General Assembly through a resolution co-sponsored by 75 member states.

With the participation of 171 national governments, by July 2021, Ramsar sites recorded 2,424 sites that protected 629,149,070 acres of wetland.

According to Ramsar.org, the convention on Wetlands came into force in the Sultanate of Oman on August 19, 2013, by designating Qurum Nature Reserve as a Wetland of International Importance.

The Environment Authority of the Sultanate of Oman stated

that the nation is observing the World Wetland Day along with the world with working to protect land for the benefit of people and nature, theme. The Day emphasises measures to ensure conservation and sustainable use of wetlands for the benefits of human health and safety of the earth.

A wetland in the Sultanate of Oman that holds great international prominence as it meets all the nine criteria is Barr al Hikman.

A wetland can be considered of international importance if any of the nine criteria are met: “If it contains a representative, rare or unique example of a natural or near natural wetland type found within the appropriate bio geographic region; it supports vulnerable, endangered species or threatened ecological communities; it supports plant and/or animal species important for maintaining the biological diversity of a particular bio geographic region; it supports plant and/or animal species at a critical stage in their lifecycles, or provides a refuge during adverse conditions; it regularly supports 20,000 or more water birds; it regularly supports one per cent of the individuals in a population

Comprised of intertidal mudflats, reefs, ‘Sabkhas’ or salt flats and associated coastal wetlands, the Barr Al Hikman peninsula in Al Wusta province in Oman is the most critically important area for waterbirds in the West Asian-East African flyway, sustaining over half a million water birds

BARR AL HIKMAN: SHOREBIRD PARADISE IN OMAN

of one species or subspecies of water bird; it supports a significant proportion of indigenous fish subspecies, species or families, life-history stages, species interactions and/or populations that are representative of wetland benefits and/or values and thereby contributes to global biological diversity; it is an important source

of food for fishes, spawning ground, nursery and/or migration path on which fish stocks, either within the wetland or elsewhere, depend; and it regularly supports one per cent of the individuals in a population of one species or sub species of wetland-dependent non avian animal species.”

As Barr al Hikman met all nine criteria, it has been classified as Wetland Area of International Importance under the International Ramsar Convention.

Barr al Hikman has been described as the jewel of the West Asian-East African flyway, the least known flyways of the African-Eurasian region. This is where the migratory birds rest, feed, and nest during winter as thousands of them arrive from arctic Russia and Central Asia. On the other hand, it is an important nesting area for many waterbird species from East and west.

The book, *Barr Al Hikman: Shorebird paradise in Oman*, jointly authored by Jimmy de Fouw, Roeland Bom, Andrew Thorpe and Raymond Klaassen with Ward Hagemeijer from Wetlands International, described Barr al Hikman in great depth.

“Comprised of intertidal mudflats, reefs, ‘Sabkhas’ or salt flats and associated coastal wetlands, the Barr al Hikman peninsula in Al Wusta province in Oman is the most critically important area for waterbirds in the West Asian-East African flyway, sustaining over half a million water birds,” the book describes.

A voluntary group for the protection of the environment in the Sultanate of Oman, Basmatna Gheer, observed the day with awareness via social media channels and also emphasised on Barr al Hikman. The chairman of the group, Jihad al Farsi, said, the celebration comes with the aim of raising awareness on the importance that wetlands represent in human life and their vital functions for the planet.

“Environment is our life, and it is our responsibility to protect it and preserve it for the future,” said Al Farsi.

“Coastal wetlands are natural solutions to extreme weather events. The Sultanate of Oman has paid great attention to wetlands, as the wetlands reserve was declared a nature reserve by Royal Decree No 51/2,” their campaign stated.





ESO receives grants from Britain for three projects

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, FEB 2

The Environment Society of Oman (ESO) has been awarded a special grant from the British Embassy Muscat. The embassy had invited bids from non-profit organisations who are delivering in-country projects focused on achieving long-term environmental sustainability. ESO is using the funds to support two conservation projects; Population Assessment of Frankincense Trees in Oman and Fishing Net Collection and Recycling on Masirah Island, which will be carried out over a period of three months.

“The UK, alongside our partner Italy, recently hosted the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) with world leaders to accelerate action towards the goals of the Paris Agreement, to protect communities and natural habitats,” said Bill Murray, British Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman.

“The Oman Vision 2040 has outlined Oman’s ambition for climate protection and sustainable development, and the British Embassy wants to



support these aims by working with partners like Environment Society of Oman to deliver on green initiatives that will have a long-term sustainable impact in Oman, and beyond. The two chosen projects are more than deserving of these funds and we look forward to seeing the outcome of their valuable work.”

“Environmental degradation affects us all and we must all take steps to tackle it. As the British Embassy’s pledge shows, this is not merely a local issue; countries around the world are mobilising all for a mutual cause: to preserve our natural environments,” added Her Highness Sayyida Tania al Said, ESO President.

“We are overwhelmed by the support we received to secure this valuable grant and would like to extend our deepest gratitude to the British Embassy Muscat for helping us ensure that we can continue to safeguard the future of Oman’s precious environment.”

The frankincense tree project, which is being conducted in collaboration with the Environment Authority and other local entities in Oman, and in partnership with Wageningen University and FairSource Botanicals LLC, is part of ESO’s long-running efforts to conserve frankincense trees in Dhofar. Over three months, the team will assess the initial health and distribution of wild frankincense (Boswellia sacra) trees across Dhofar. The team will attempt to map existing populations and estimate densities, and advocate for the conservation of Frankincense trees to government authorities, farmers, land holders, traders and local communities.

Meanwhile, the second project is a new initiative designed to accelerate the recycling of fishing nets in Oman. It builds on years of work led by ESO to reduce the entanglement of marine and coastal wildlife in abandoned fishing nets on Masirah Island, an issue which has contributed to a 79 per cent decline in nesting turtle populations over the last 30 years.

Conducted in partnership with Future Seas Global SPC and Wakud International LLC (part of the 44.01 Group), and in collaboration with the Environment Authority, be’ah, the Wali of Masirah and local Municipalities, it includes a dedicated net clean-up initiative, followed by the collection, sorting, washing and palletizing of fishing nets from Masirah before shipping them to recyclers abroad.

Pact on recycling shredded banknotes

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) on Wednesday signed an agreement with Dar Al Herafiya, which is a specialised establishment in producing and developing traditional Omani handicrafts.

The agreement was signed by Tahir bin Salim Al Amri, CBO’s Executive President, and Zuwaina bint Sultan al

Rashdi, Dar Al Herafiya’s CEO. Being the first of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman, this project aims to produce innovative and unique recycled products from shredded banknotes, reflecting the Omani culture and heritage. The products are made for both local and international consumption. — ONA



Governor of Al-Batinah North
Suhar Municipality

Advertisement

Companies specialized in the field of this Tender may obtain tender documents for the following tenders, on any working day between 8:00 a.m. and 1:00 Noon, from **Quantity Surveying & Contracts Office, Suhar Municipality Building** on payment of non-refundable tender fee as noted below:

Tender No.	Description of Work	Tender Fee (non refundable)
PRS/22/001	Construction of Al-Harem Market in Al-Hambar Commercial Area	R.O. 25

Start Date for Selling Tender	Last Date for Selling Tender	Site Visit Date	Return Date
Sunday 13/02/2022	Thursday 03/03/2022	Sunday 06/03/2022	Sunday 13/03/2022

The **Form of Tender** (in small envelope) under wax sealed cover shall be placed in the tender box location in our **Quantity Surveying & Contracts Office, by 10.00 a.m.** All envelopes are to be clearly marked with the name of the Governor of Al-Batinah North and no other marks.

The Tenderers shall submit with Form of the Tender (**Financial Offer**) a **Certified Cheque or Tender Bond** in the sum of 1% of the tender value valid for **90 days**, issued by a locally registered bank in the Sultanate of Oman. Tenders without such bond shall be rejected.

Comments:

- has the right to distribution items or works or quantities there of between more than one contractor without giving reasons to the bidder.
- The Tender Committee is not obliged to accept the lowest or any tender that may

State Council participates in regional workshop



integrate the issue of violence against women in the efforts targeting women empowerment in addition to disseminating women-friendly culture and fighting the cultural roots of distinction and violence against women.

The workshop dealt with three pillars namely the reality of legislations on violence against women in the Arab countries, the challenges facing the enforcement of legislations on combating violence against women and the elements required for the Arab guiding draft law on combating violence against women in the Arab world.

Dr Aisha bint Hamad al Darmakiyah presented a working paper on the best practices in the Sultanate of Oman regarding the protection of women, in which she touched upon legislation, laws and policies, international conventions and agreements signed in this regard, and institutions concerned with the protection of women against violence in the Sultanate of Oman.

She also presented proposals regarding topics and issues that should be to be included in the law.

The workshop was held in coincidence with the celebration of the Arab Women’s Day, which comes within the framework of the Arab Parliament’s endeavours to prepare the Arab guiding draft law on combating violence against women.

MUSCAT: The State Council took part in a virtual regional workshop on the Arab national laws and legislations, the obstacles hampering the enforcement of laws and the preparation of an Arab guiding draft law on combating violence against women in the Arab world.

Dr Aisha bint Hamad al Darmakiyah, Head of the Culture, Media and Tourism Committee, represented the State Council in the workshop which sought to shed light on the reality of laws and legislations on combating violence against women.

The workshop highlighted the Arab national achievements in the field of women empowerment and reviewed information and successful experiences on the conditions of the Arab women.

It also identified the challenges facing the enforcement of laws on combating violence against women and the best mechanisms required for facing these challenges.

The workshop sought to

— ONA



الشركة المتحدة للتمويل ش.م.ع.و United Finance Company SAOG

Board of Directors’ Report 2021

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, it is my pleasure to present to you the audited financial results of your company for the year ended 31st December 2021.

Economic Overview

The year that went by was tumultuous, hopeful, challenging and satisfying, all rolled into one. In short, it was a year like no other. Leaders globally battled the twin challenges faced by saving and creating jobs, versus the challenge that Covid and its various variations of concern kept throwing at them. At the end, we feel that in Oman we have taken the bull by the horns and are opening up the economy slowly but surely, and we expect that normalcy will return by mid-2022, inshallah.

The buoyant Oil and Gas prices have helped tremendously, and have given Oman some breathing space in the coming year, with the Oil revenues for 2021 coming in at RO 5.55 billion versus a budget of RO 3.55 billion, and Gas revenues at RO 2.63 billion versus a budget of RO 1.87 billion. Credit rating agencies have also upgraded the outlook for Oman, and with the global economy on an upswing, the World Bank has projected a GDP growth rate of 3.4% in 2022 for Oman.

All this augurs well for your company and we expect to continue our good performance in the coming year as well.

Financial Performance

United Finance has embarked on a transformation journey and the appointment of a new CEO is a first step in this direction. Our Profit after tax came in at RO 1.91 million, which is a 147% growth over 2020 and the highest profit after tax since 2016.

The company continued its strict focus on collection of overdue loans and the total impaired loans have come down to RO 26.29 million in 2021 from RO 27.3 million in 2020. Despite a challenging economic environment the impaired loans of the company have been coming down over the last two years and the company holds adequate impairment reserves. Our total provisions including special reserves, is one of the highest amongst finance companies at 78.4%. The company also implemented a new model for impairment provision based on the expert opinion of an external firm, and the same has been vetted by our external auditors. We believe our company is in a strong position going into next year and we expect the strong financial performance to continue.

Looking Ahead

We are optimistic of the year ahead even though the challenges of 2021 have not gone away. The efforts of His Majesty’s government have led to the budget deficit reducing and Oman has embarked on a transformation journey which emphasizes the diversification of the economy. In line with His Majesty’s Vision 2040, United Finance Company SAOG (UFC) has also undertaken a transformation. While it has always placed its values around Oman’s people, community and economic development, the company is now fast tracking its emphasis on technology-led growth. This will lead to many opportunities for improved service delivery, new products and higher customer satisfaction. We believe this will be transformative, make us future

ready and serve our ambition of the becoming a finance powerhouse in Oman.

Appointment of Chief Executive Officer

The Board appointed Mr. Nasser Salim Said Al Rashdi as the Chief Executive Officer to execute the company’s strategic plan and build UFC’s business by attracting, retaining and developing employees and also growing the overall business of the company. He brings to UFC over 30 years of extensive experience in the areas of business development, risk management and internal audit. We welcome him and wish him all the success in the future.

Human Resources

We continue to work on improving our employee engagement through various initiatives and have engaged a leading training company to train our staff. Our goal is to ensure that by the end of 2022 every Omani employee has been through at least two training programmes. We have also identified young Omanis to undertake special Leadership Training so that we can develop them as the future leadership of the company. We believe that our efforts will result in higher retention, improved productivity and also lower the overall costs of the company going forward.

Dividend

The Board of Directors has recommended a cash dividend of 5 % for the year 2021. This is subject to approval by the regulators and shareholders.

Corporate Social Responsibility

As part of its corporate social responsibility initiatives, UFC continues to contribute to the community and donated an amount of RO 10,000 for the affected victims of Cyclone Shaheen. The company extends funding to SME’s and local community contractors in the interior regions which indirectly aids in providing employment opportunities and a source of livelihood to the locals in the vicinity of the projects funded.

Acknowledgement

The Board of Directors and Management express their highest gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik Al Said and respectfully acknowledge his able leadership to nurture the country in the years to come.

On behalf of the Board, I wish to express our gratitude to the Central Bank of Oman, Capital Market Authority, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Ministry of Manpower, Royal Oman Police and other Regulatory Authorities and thank them for their support and guidance. We also take this opportunity to extend our sincere thanks to our bankers, shareholders and other stakeholders for their unstinted support.

On behalf of the Board I would like to place on record my appreciation and thank the Management and staff for their individual and collective contribution to achieving operational efficiency and realizing the company’s goals.

May Allah bless all of us,

Mohamed Abdulla Al Khonji
Chairman

Statement of financial position at 31 December 2021

	2021 RO	2020 RO
ASSETS		
Property and equipment	2,330,284	2,389,523
Deferred tax asset	16,923	16,923
Deposit with the Central Bank of Oman	250,000	250,000
Investment securities	554,150	554,150
Instalment finance debtors	80,301,718	85,315,987
Other receivables and prepaid expenses	106,977	139,563
Cash and cash equivalents	896,294	707,594
TOTAL ASSETS	84,456,346	89,373,740
EQUITY		
Share capital	34,914,441	34,914,441
Share premium reserve	528,402	528,402
Legal reserve	5,091,813	4,900,439
Special reserve	2,368,989	2,368,989
Foreign currency reserve	-	294,514
Impairment reserve	1,911,736	1,911,736
Retained earnings	2,510,743	493,862
Total equity	47,326,124	45,412,383
Liabilities		
Borrowings	27,947,227	36,675,049
Corporate deposits	4,000,000	4,000,000
Creditors and other payables	4,820,934	3,199,975
Taxation	362,061	86,333
Total liabilities	37,130,222	43,961,357
Total equity and liabilities	84,456,346	89,373,740
Net assets per share	0.135	0.130

Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the year ended 31 December 2021

	2021 RO	2020 RO
Instalment finance income	8,191,013	7,513,942
Interest expense	(1,940,915)	(2,517,391)
Net instalment finance income	6,250,098	4,996,551
Other income	536,306	463,928
Operating expenses	(3,069,545)	(2,951,965)
Depreciation	(95,004)	(100,237)
Allowance for expected credit losses	(1,302,729)	(1,495,288)
Profit before tax	2,319,126	912,989
Income tax expense	(405,385)	(136,948)
Profit and total comprehensive Income for the year	1,913,741	776,041
Basic and diluted earnings per share	0.005	0.002

The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who requests them, in either Arabic or English within 7 days of the receipt of such request addressed to:

Chief Executive Officer, United Finance Co. SAOG
P O Box 3652, PC 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman.
Tel: 24577300 Fax 24561557
E-mail: ufc@ufcoman.com, Website: www.ufcoman.com



Vehicles of the Iraqi security forces gather near the Iraqi-Syrian border. – Reuters

Turkey strikes targets in Iraq, Syria

BEIRUT: Turkey said on Wednesday launched deadly strikes against Kurdish targets in Iraq and Syria, where Kurd forces have been left reeling from the largest IS group attack in nearly three years.

The raids on Tuesday night targeted shelters, tunnels, caves, ammunition depots, bases and training camps operated by the outlawed Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) and the People’s Protection Units (YPG) which Ankara views as terrorist groups, the Turkish defence ministry said. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the Syria strikes hit a Kurdish-run power station near the town of Al

Malikiyah in Hasakeh province, where a brazen jailbreak attempt by IS fighters last month sparked days of clashes that have left hundreds dead.

“At least four people were killed in the strike targeting a power station near Al Malikiyah”, the Britain-based war monitor said, adding they were all security guards.

Later on Wednesday, shelling on the Turkish-held city of Al Bab in northern Syria killed eight people, including five civilians, according to the Observatory.

The war monitor didn’t specify who was responsible but Kurdish forces and Syrian regime troops are both deployed in the region.

In northern Iraq’s autonomous Kurdistan region, Turkish strikes on Tuesday hit PKK positions in the Makhmur and Sinjar regions, where bombardment caused “human and material losses”, Kurdish authorities said, without specifying a casualty toll.

As part of the attack, which drew condemnation from Baghdad, Turkish “military aircraft bombarded six PKK positions in the Karjokh mountains”, which overlook a camp for Kurdish refugees from Turkey, Kurdish counter-terrorism services said in a statement.

A PKK-linked group that oversees management of the camp reported

“the death of two combatants and dozens of injuries among camp residents”. The wounded were in stable condition, it said.

Blacklisted as a terrorist group by Ankara and its Western allies, the PKK has been waging an insurgency against the Turkish state since 1984.

The SDF said 40 of its fighters as well as more than 70 prison guards and staff were killed in the week-long IS attack on Ghwayran jail.

The YPG condemned the latest Turkish strikes that came on the heels of IS’s largest Syria operation since 2019. “Turkey tries to continue what ISIS started”, it said on Twitter, using a different acronym for IS. — AFP

60 killed in eastern DR Congo attack

BENI, Democratic Republic of Congo: At least 60 people were killed in a militia attack early on Wednesday at a displaced persons’ camp in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, according to the head of a local humanitarian group and a camp resident.

Both sources told Reuters that the CODECO militia was responsible for the killings at about 0200 GMT at the Savo camp near Bule in Ituri province. Ituri army spokesman Jules Ngongo confirmed the attack by CODECO and gave a provisional toll of about 20 dead.

Congolese troops came into contact with the militia on Tuesday night but the assailants changed direction and got past them to reach the camp, he said.

CODECO is one of an array of militias operating in eastern Congo amid longstanding tensions over land and resources. Its fighters have killed hundreds of civilians in Ituri and forced thousands to flee their homes, according to the United Nations.

In recent months it has targeted displacement camps, where some people had settled after fleeing other attacks by CODECO. “I first heard cries when I was still in bed. Then several minutes of gunshots. I fled and I saw torches and people crying for help and I realised it was the CODECO militiamen who had invaded our site”, said Lokana Bale Lussa, a camp resident.

“We have counted more than 60 dead and (more) seriously injured”, he said. “We really need security because we can’t access our farms and now we’re pursued even in our camps.”

Charite Banza Bavi, president of the humanitarian group for the Bahema-North area, put the death toll at 63. — Reuters



A soldier of the UN Mission in DR Congo, shoots at CODECO militiamen to repel them as they launched an attack on a Red Cross team in northeastern Democratic Republic of Congo. – AFP

Yemenis, strapped for cash, yearn for their own honey

SANAA: Idrees al Haddad used to buy 7 kilogrammes tubs of Yemen’s world-famous honey when he went shopping. Today he can only afford 1 kg. Like many Yemenis suffering the extreme inflation and salary losses of a seven-year war, Haddad’s reduced consumption has left the industry with a production surplus.

“Merchants used to come to us to buy honey from our houses, from the valley apiaries. Nowadays we go to the market — but there isn’t demand!” said beekeeper Amin Hussein amid his insects at Wadi Dhahr, in Sanaa province.

The bees crawl and buzz around cabinet-like wooden hives, feeding on almond tree flowers. In the capital Sanaa, shopkeeper Faris al Hourai said honey prices have fallen 30-40 per cent from last year, when

“Our commercial trade has almost halted”

HELMI AL MARHEBI
Honey vendor

prices were already low.

“Border crossings are closed, shipping and export have stopped. Demand is non-existent”, Hourai said, adding that people can barely afford food, never mind honey.

In Sanaa’s upmarket honey shops vendors scoop up the light, dark, clear and opaque honeys reputed for their taste and medicinal properties. They tease the viscous liquids around spoons for customers to try. “Our commercial trade has almost



Vendor Abdullah Yarim pours honey into a glass bowl at his shop in Sanaa. – Reuters

halted”, said vendor Helmi al Marhebi.

Yemen’s honey industry faces many challenges. Frontlines, landmines and fuel shortages hamper farmers transporting colonies to feed on seasonal plants. Climate change is also seen as a problem.

Abdullah Yarim, chairman of an industry organisation, said war has reduced access to markets in Gulf states. Saudi Arabia who control Sanaa and northern Yemen, maintains an air, sea and land blockade on Ansar Allah territory.

Import packaging standards also constrain exports, Yarim said. In the UAE, 1 kg of top-end Yemeni Sidr honey can retail around 2,000 AED (\$545). Haddad paid just 30,000 Yemeni riyals (\$50) for his 1 kg of Sidr honeycomb. — Reuters

KABUL

Abducted Afghan journalists released

Two Afghan journalists who disappeared this week have been released, their employer said after the United Nations called on the Taliban to provide information on their whereabouts. Two reporters for broadcaster Ariana News were taken by unknown abductors on Monday, according to their news agency. The Taliban denied arresting them but said they were investigating the matter.

Ali Asghari, the news manager at Ariana News, said they had



been released but gave no more information. A spokesman for the Taliban administration, Bilal Karimi, said he was not aware of the men’s release but would seek further information. — Reuters

CAIRO

Egypt signs \$1.7 bn deal for S Korean howitzers

Egypt has signed a \$1.66 billion deal for South Korean howitzers, the military said, a week after Washington approved a major arms sale to Cairo. The memorandum of understanding was signed on Tuesday during a ceremony attended by Defence Minister Mohamed Zaki and the head of South Korea’s Defence Acquisition Programme Administration, Kang Eun-Ho. The deal provides for “joint management and manufacture of the K9A1 howitzer system at



the factories of the (Egyptian) National Authority for Military Production in cooperation with South Korean firm Hanwha”, the Egyptian military said in a statement. — AFP

MUMBAI

India arrests police officer over crypto kidnap plot

An Indian cryptocurrency trader who amassed a \$40 million fortune was kidnapped by a police officer and seven others who demanded he transfer his bitcoin wallet to them, authorities said. Vijay Naik, 38, was abducted in the city of Pune on January 14 and told to hand over his digital fortune, along with Rs 800,000 in cash.

He was abruptly let go the next day when the kidnappers realised the police were on their tail, and the perpetrators were detained on



Tuesday. Among the accused was Dilip Tukaram Khandare, a police officer who had been trained in cybercrime investigations and had come to learn of Naik’s bitcoin holdings. — AFP



omanobserver.com/podcast

world

OMANDAILYOBSERVER

THURSDAY | FEBRUARY 3 | 2022

7

In brief

■ ZURICH



SWISS START RELAXING PANDEMIC MEASURES

Switzerland began easing coronavirus pandemic restrictions as fears waned that a spike in infections fuelled by the Omicron variant would overwhelm the health care system. Quarantine rules and a work-from-home order will end on Thursday, the government said. It proposed further easing measures in consultations with regional authorities to run until February 9. A final decision on how to proceed is due on February 16. “The government has noted a positive development in the hospitals — despite record high infection figures, there has been no overloading and the occupancy of intensive care units has decreased further,” it said in a statement. — **Reuters**

■ BISSAU



COUP ATTEMPT IN BISSAU, PRESIDENT SURVIVES GUN ATTACK

Guinea-Bissau’s capital appeared calm a day after President Umaro Sissoco Embalo survived a gun attack, as France joined condemnation for what has been called an attempted coup in one of Africa’s most unstable countries. Heavily armed men on Tuesday afternoon surrounded government buildings in the capital Bissau where Embalo and his prime minister were believed to be attending a cabinet meeting. Embalo, 49, later told reporters that he had been unharmed during a five-hour gun battle, which he described as a plot to wipe out the government. Journalists reported hearing sustained gunfire. — **AFP**

■ VIENNA



AUSTRIA TO CHALLENGE N-GREEN LABEL IN COURT

Austria will challenge a European Commission decision to give a sustainable finance label to investments in nuclear power, the environment minister said. “We will prepare all legal steps in the next weeks, and if or when the taxonomy takes effect, we will file legal action at the European Court of Justice,” Environment Minister Leonore Gewessler told reporters.

She added Luxembourg had already said it would join the legal complaint against the commission’s decision on the bloc’s so-called “taxonomy” — its classification of “green” energy sources. — **AFP**

US to send additional troops to east Europe to counter Russia



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy greets Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte during a meeting in Kyiv, Ukraine. — **Reuters**

WASHINGTON/MOSCOW: US President Joe Biden has approved sending additional forces to eastern Europe, two US officials said on Wednesday, as Washington reinforces its allies against what it describes as a Russian threat to invade Ukraine.

One of the officials said about 2,000 American troops would deploy from the US to Poland and Germany, while around 1,000 troops now based in Germany would head to Romania.

In signs that, publicly at least, Russia is in no mood to signal compromise, the Kremlin mocked British Prime Minister Boris Johnson as “utterly confused” and ridiculed British politicians for their “stupidity and ignorance”.

Moscow, which has massed more than 100,000 troops near Ukraine’s borders, denies any plan

to invade its neighbour but says it could take unspecified military measures if demands are not met, including a promise by Nato never to admit Kyiv.

The Kremlin turned its rhetorical fire on Johnson, who cancelled a phone call with Putin on Monday to answer questions in parliament about boozy events in his Downing Street office during the Covid-19 lockdown. Johnson visited Kyiv on Tuesday, where he accused Russia of holding a gun to Ukraine’s head.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said Russia had not announced any phone call with Johnson but added: “It makes sense to speak to anybody. Russia and President Putin are open to communicating with everyone. Even to someone who is utterly confused, he is prepared to provide

US troops set to deploy to eastern Europe within days as Washington offers talks but rejects main Russian demands

exhaustive explanations.”

Russia’s foreign ministry went further, mocking Foreign Secretary Liz Truss for saying Britain was sending supplies to its “Baltic allies across the Black Sea” — two bodies of water that are on opposite sides of Europe.

“Mrs Truss, your knowledge of history is nothing compared to your knowledge of geography,” Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova wrote in a blog post. “If anyone needs saving from anything, it’s

the world, from the stupidity and ignorance of British politicians.”

Meanwhile, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte has promised Ukraine cybersecurity support during a visit to Kiev. Rutte said at a joint press conference with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Wednesday that his country was keen to offer expert advice in the area.

In January, Ukraine was hit by a serious hacking attack on government websites, for which it blamed Russia. Rutte did not comment on possible Dutch arms deliveries to Ukraine, though he has previously signalled a willingness to do so. Zelensky said that Ukraine had handed over a list of military needs to the EU country. At the same time, he stressed: “We are only thinking about peace.” — **Reuters**

Prolonged storm delivers winter misery to central US

CHICAGO: A massive winter storm walloped the central United States with heavy snow, freezing rain and gusty winds on Wednesday, threatening to make travel virtually impossible and possibly knocking out power for millions of Americans.

Winter and ice storm warnings and watches were in effect for a wide swathe of the United States that reached from Texas and Colorado up through the Midwest and into Northern New York until Friday morning, the National Weather Service (NWS) said.

Much of the northern part of the region could get 1 foot of snow while southern spots may see a mixture of snow and freezing rain that will rapidly deteriorate travel conditions on Wednesday, the NWS said. Winds gusts as high as 40 miles per hour were also forecast.

“Expect power outages and tree damage due to the ice. Travel could be impossible. The hazardous conditions could impact the morning or evening commute,” the service said in its advisory for Memphis.

More than 100 million people are under winter weather alerts that stretch from the Rockies to New England, CNN reported. — **Reuters**



NYPD officers push a car stuck on a snow-covered road in Central Park in New York City. — **AFP**

UK minister hits back at Macron over Channel crossings

LONDON: Britain’s interior minister hit back on Wednesday at President Emmanuel Macron after he said London must take responsibility for the deaths of migrants attempting to cross the Channel from northern France.

“Macron’s comments are wrong — they’re absolutely wrong,” Priti Patel told a panel of lawmakers in parliament.

The Conservative minister said more than 51,000 migrants tried to cross the Channel last year — a record — with over 28,000 reaching British waters or shores.

However, some journeys ended in tragedy — in November, 27 migrants drowned off France during an attempted crossing in a boat likened by French officials to a children’s inflatable pool.

Macron, who is expected to seek re-election in April, told a regional French newspaper on Tuesday that Britain’s failure to establish a legal route to claim asylum in the country was in part responsible for the crisis.

“The moral responsibility for

those who perish at sea does not lie with France, but with this British refusal to respond,” he told *La Voix Du Nord*.

He also accused London of “hypocrisy” in its immigration approach, due to 1980s-style economic policies that accept low-

pay workers following illegal entry. “We are hostages to an absurd and inhuman situation,” Macron added.

His comments follow several of his ministers making similar statements in recent months, as the increasing number of migrants

crossing the Channel sours relations with Britain.

It has prompted an unseemly blame game, even as both sides try to disrupt the people trafficking networks, while also becoming a political headache for embattled British Prime Minister Boris



More than 51,000 migrants tried to cross the Channel last year — a record — with over 28,000 reaching British waters or shores. Macron’s comments are wrong — they’re absolutely wrong.

PRITI PATEL
UK’s interior minister

Johnson.

The Nationality and Borders Bill, currently working its way through the London parliament, promises tougher action against people smugglers and, controversially, migrants themselves.

If passed, the bill, opposed by rights groups, will allow the return of asylum seekers who have passed through so-called “safe third countries”.

Meanwhile, ministers have paid short shrift to proposals to allow people to claim British asylum in northern France.

Asked about such plans, Patel said on Wednesday they were “not viable”. “It would not stop people making (the) dangerous crossing,” she added. “That proposal will effectively make France a big magnet for more migrants to come.”

“I don’t know how the French public feel about that... they have enough problems with camps and criminality and all sorts of issues taking place.”

— **AFP**

Ensure you give your body plenty of water



DR NISMA HARIS
dr.nisma.healthyvows@gmail.com

The writer is a general physician, content creator, health and wellness adviser

For maintaining a healthy lifestyle, the role of drinking water is prime and undeniable. Usually, while focusing on fitness and well-being we chiefly make amendments with our food habits. However, learning and incorporating the right water intake into our health schedules are coequal.

Most of us don't realise that we are drinking less water than required and our bodies stay in a state of dehydration for long creating a platform for illnesses to procure.

Water not only quenches your thirst but is a medium to flush out all the toxins from the body which makes its role even more significant towards attaining and sustaining holistic health.

So, how often you should be drinking water in a day?

Right when you wake up, instead of heading to get your coffee or tea, grab a glass of water preferably lukewarm water to get you hydrated

after prolonged sleeping hours.

Hydration is essential as it directly affects your mood, memory and visual perception according to the British *Journal of Nutrition*. Likewise, drinking water before retiring to bed at night is of utmost importance to keep you hydrated during sleep.

Besides, while you are sick, drinking water regularly helps with fluid loss and balances the dehydrating effects caused by certain medicines and thereby plays a vital role in the healing process.

If you are on a weight loss journey, it cannot be accomplished without consuming water timely. A glass or two of water before meals is an excellent way to keep you fuller and keep excess eating in check.

Moreover, a few sips of water during and after the meals also aids in digestion.

Performing any sort of physical activity that has led to sweating — be it a brisk walk, exercise, taking

DRINKING WATER IS A PRICELESS WAY TO KEEP YOUR SKIN SUPPLE AND FIGHT ANTI-AGING EFFECTS AND KEEP AWAY WRINKLES WATER IS THE FUNCTIONAL SYNONYM OF LIFE, HENCE TO PUT IT SIMPLY NO WATER MEANS NO LIFE

a steam bath, or even cooking in hot weather makes drinking water necessary to replenish the fluid loss.

Now, who doesn't want to look youthful?

Drinking water is a priceless way to keep your skin supple and fight anti-aging effects and keep away wrinkles.

Whenever outside, do carry a water bottle with you so that you don't miss out on your body's water needs. At your workplace, make

sure you have your water bottle at your desk so that you don't miss out on your water intake when you are so immersed in your work and can't afford to walk a few steps to get water.

On top of this, staying in an air-conditioned environment for longer durations is the most neglected cause of dehydration which quite often leads to headaches.

Just ensure you are not compromising on your body's water requirements while in such settings. There are scientific studies that emphasised the role of drinking water in alleviating headaches as well as menstrual cramps.

And last but not least when you are travelling on a flight do not miss out on drinking water as the high altitudes are devoid of moisture-laden air and when this air circulates through the aircraft cabin it causes dryness and makes you thirsty.

So now you have comprehended

the diverse health benefits of drinking water, you might be wondering how much to drink water in a day?

The US National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine say more fluid is better for average, healthy adults — 15.5 cups (3.7 litres) a day is ideal for men, while 11.5 cups (2.7 litres) a day from all food and drinks is enough for most women.

But this intake depends on your health status. Any medical conditions which demand an increase to this value such as pregnancy or breastfeeding, the type of climatic conditions you are in, whether your work is centred in a sedentary sitting or involves more physical activity.

Conclusively, safe drinking water is a zero-calorie drink that provides a matchless boon to your health and wellness.

Ensure you give your body plenty of it!

The race is on to translate viral app Wordle

JOSEPH BOYLE

Wordle, the simple word game that has taken the English-speaking world by storm, is sparking spontaneous efforts to develop similar games for other languages. The English-language app poses a simple puzzle: it thinks of a five-letter word and challenges the user to guess what it is in six tries or fewer. The magic formula has persuaded the *New York Times* to open its wallet and buy the app.

Versions have sprung up in every corner of the globe, covering anything from German to Urdu.

And Hong Kong linguistics professor Lau Chaak-ming reckons he has cracked a Cantonese version. He developed a game using “jyutping”, a method of transliterating Cantonese into the Western alphabet.

“One day during a breakfast, my colleague suggested why don't you make a jyutping version? We then read out the words on the menu and realised that a lot of phrases contain five letters,” he said.

He said his creation, known as Zidou, was just a bit of fun at first. “I thought it would be great if there were a few hundred people playing it. But it surprised me that more than 10,000 or even 100,000 people have played this game. I'm quite happy.”

Israeli mathematician Amir Livne Bar-on admits he got swept up by the English version of Wordle, but also admits that he was not very good at it. “I think it's because English is not my mother tongue,” he said.

“So I wanted a similar game in Hebrew that I could play and enjoy.”

When he set about trying to create a Hebrew version, though, he realised it would be a different game.

“Hebrew words are much denser and have far fewer double letters and vowels,” he said. “So even though Hebrew has fewer words, there are way more words containing five letters, so it's harder.” Nevertheless, he says the Hebrew game is proving popular among young people, particularly in the Tel Aviv area.

“It made me most happy when people tell me that the game broke their quarantine routine, that it made them more at ease during this Omicron wave.”

If the complexity of the language posed problems for a native speaker like Bar-on, then Wayne McDougall faced an even stiffer challenge in developing a version in the Maori language Te Reo.

— AFP

US parents of children gradually accept vaccines



SHERYL GAY STOLBERG

The writer is an American journalist based in Washington, DC who covers health policy for The NYTJOSEPH S NYE, JR

Three in 10 parents of children younger than age 5 say they intend to get their children vaccinated against the coronavirus as soon as shots become available for that age group, according to a survey published by the Kaiser Family Foundation.

That acceptance figure reflects parental caution about the shots but also growing acceptance of vaccinating young children.

The foundation's Vaccine Monitor, which tracks attitudes towards Covid-19 vaccines, found an uptick in parents' willingness to have their children get the shots across all age groups.

Still, the pace of vaccination among children is much lower than health experts would like. The younger the child, the more cautious the parents, experts say.

Among parents of 12- to 17-year-olds, the foundation reported, 61 per cent said their child had received at least one shot, up from 49 per cent in November.

Among parents of 5- to 11-year-olds, a third said their child had received at least one shot, up from 16 per cent in November.

And 31 per cent of parents of children younger than 5 said they would let their children get the shots as soon as they become available, up from 20 per cent in July.

Roughly one-third of those parents said they would wait and see whether their children would get the shots; about one-quarter said they definitely would not allow them to get vaccinated.

“Parents do seem to be proceeding with more caution when it comes to vaccinating their kids than making decisions for themselves,” said Liz Hamel, who directed the Kaiser research.

“Where parents of the under 5s are right now is pretty similar to where parents of 5- to 11-year-olds were the month before it was approved for that age group,” she added. Parents of young children will soon have to decide.

Pfizer and its partner, BioNTech, asked the Food and

Drug Administration to authorise coronavirus vaccines for children under 5 years old as a two-dose regimen while the regulators continue to research how well three doses work.

THE RATE OF VACCINATION AMONG YOUNG CHILDREN HAS REMAINED LOWER THAN HEALTH EXPERTS HAD FEARED

Federal regulators are eager to review the data and authorise the shots on an emergency basis, perhaps by the end of February.

With children back in school amid a coronavirus surge fueled by the highly infectious omicron variant, “many parents report concerns about illness, exposures and shutdowns,”

the Kaiser researchers wrote. Four in 10 parents said they had experienced school disruptions tied to Covid-19, the survey found.

Half the parents surveyed reported being worried that their child would become seriously sick from the coronavirus, and one-quarter of them said they are “very worried.”

The rate of vaccination among young children has remained lower than health experts had feared.

According to another recent analysis by the Kaiser Family Foundation based on federal data, only 19 per cent of children ages 5-11 are fully vaccinated, and only 28 per cent have received one dose.

Hamel said the foundation dug into parents' attitudes with a deeper survey in November. Although they did not ask about children under 5 at that time — because the vaccines for them were not close to being available — attitudes among parents of 5- to 11-year-olds provided strong clues, she said.

— *The New York Times*



Skyler Schmidt, left, and Lauren Richardson pick up their son from day care at Ocean Shores Elementary School in Ocean Shores, Washington.

Living on shifting sands: New realities



Sonia Ambrosio
soniambrosio@gmail.com

The little things that used to be a part of life are now sorely missed. Changes and uncertainties have become the norm. One never knows what to expect the next day. There are no significant plans ahead without the risk of flights being cancelled, countries closing borders and large odds of losing down payments on

tickets or vacation reservations. It feels as if time has stood still while waiting for the pandemic to pass, but as the days go by, further social, health and security adjustments are implemented. Life has been put on a hold. And now, health experts warn, get ready: Covid is here to stay. Anxiety and stress appear to be here to stay as well. The effects of Covid-19 on mental health have yet to be seen.

Social changes were already being noticed before the pandemic, but they were assimilated at a slower pace. A new norm is evolving rapidly. It seems the future is being restructured with the seeds of a collective revolution presenting the end of systems and the beginning of new ones.

Labelling everything as pre-Covid or during lockdowns is a huge characterisation. It is disturbing though, that the coronavirus pandemic has reached the point where it defines our entire lives.

Will everything return to normal or will they never be the same? Several people have been asked what they miss the most about their pre-covid lives. Personal feelings swung from powerlessness to excessive information consumption, including conspiracy theories. Anger, mistrust, isolation, grief, were just some of the sentiments echoed. The loss of mental and bodily energy became excruciating for many people.

Others expressed their pain at seeing decades of hard work being ripped away by opportunists. The feeling of freedom had vanished. Going where you want, when you want, a or not someone has Covid is a thing of the past. Physical interaction is another significant component in the answers. Hugging and shaking hands used to be so commonplace. This emotional stabiliser is currently restricted. Physical touch has been shown to reduce sickness and strengthen the immune system, as research studies point out. We were much happier and didn't know!

Travelling without restrictions, no tests. It was such a pleasure. Furthermore, it now has a long list of requirements that must be met and paid for! Have you thought how natural and effortless it was to breathe freely? That has changed with the need to wear masks — aggravated by acne caused by the friction of wearing them. Masks probably will stay for a long time, like some other peculiarities of the pandemic.

What about being sick and not having to worry about it? The little flu with no repercussions? Now there's the worry of whether it's the flu, a simple cough, or Covid. Is it Omicron or Deltacron?

From so many replies to the question, what do you miss the most from pre-Covid, several young people expressed their difficulties in processing anxiety and uncertainty regarding their future. Their career plans no longer stand.

The pandemic has shaken any sense of control people previously had. Fair enough, there was always the possibility that things would not go as expected, but that was unusual. Now, the unusual is the norm. The need to improvise, adapt, and overcome a 'new normal' can be draining. It seems people are being pushed and shoved into new adjustments. Choppy and bumpy changes will continue to happen here and there, but the widespread of double standards highlights deep inequalities, and that is disturbing.

The reality we were familiar with is being transformed and it could be the beginning of a social, economic, scientific and technological revolution. So, it is important to look at the changes and try to understand them.



CELEBRATING NEW YEAR

People are sprayed with foam at an amusement park as part of holiday festivities on the first day of the Lunar New Year of the Tiger in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, on Wednesday.

— AFP



Ali Al Matani
alimatani2@gmail.com

Organising the social media!

It is very unfortunate that many of those who are active on social media are circulating inaccurate information and rumours which they call as official reports. But there is no truth in them. They utilise media freedom in the country for the purpose better known to them. Since there are no proper rules to regulate these social media platforms, they find it as fertile ground to spread rumours. Such activities create tension and trouble. This also incites public opinion and creates undue embarrassment for the government in the society. Such rumours are spread as if they are orders or announcements of the government. This puts the people of the country in the state of anticipation. People think that if such announcements are made by the government, it would implement them on the ground.

For such rumours and inaccurate information, catchy captions and attractive images are made and circulated so that it draws the attention of everybody. These lies are put on these social media platforms as if they are accurate and reliable. Such claims which do not have any iota of being true are crime in the eyes of the law. There is no doubt that the government is making all efforts to serve the people in the best possible manner. It has declared objectives to achieve. It is leaving no stone unturned to achieve them. Therefore, these objectives should not be mixed with rumours on social media. It does not serve any positive purpose. Instead, it misleads public opinion and general perception.

Social media has become a reality of life. It should be organised on the same lines as the traditional media. They are a vital part of the modern life and crucial for both the government and the society, if used in proper manner. Sometimes, it also poses threat of all sorts. Therefore, it is a must that there should be certain rules and regulations to prevent any misuse of these platforms. If inaccurate information would be spread on social media, it would leave its negative impact in the minds of the common people, individuals, and the society.

SOCIAL MEDIA HAS BECOME A REALITY OF LIFE. IT SHOULD BE ORGANISED ON THE SAME LINES AS THE TRADITIONAL MEDIA. THEY ARE A VITAL PART OF THE MODERN LIFE AND CRUCIAL FOR BOTH THE GOVERNMENT AND THE SOCIETY, IF USED IN PROPER MANNER

The neighbouring countries in the Gulf region and other Middle East nations have realised the importance of regulating the social media, the same as other arteries which are known as traditional print, electronic and digital media. There should be certain terms and conditions for dealing with the reality. They should be disciplined. These rules

and regulations should remind the people who are active on social media about the moral values and ethics of dealing with any information. Accountability should be determined so that such open space is never exploited.

The posts of the twitterati who are called influencers are closely monitored if they mention anything about the government or are against the local values in those countries. Certain rules and regulations are devised to make them accountable, so that they cannot create trouble or spread rumours.

The use of social media in our country has become ridiculous and dirtier. It does not spare anybody from top to bottom, without any sense of being accountable. We realise the importance of freedom of media and social media. We live in the era of open skies. It should remain so, except if there is no sense of responsibility among those who use these platforms. Such platforms should be utilised for giving information and discussing them. But there are moral responsibilities and ethics which should not be ignored at any cost. Human society always needs certain rules and regulations to protect its values and characteristics.

We expect that the Ministry of Information would be looking into this crucial matter. It has always served the country in the best manner. It would bring certain rules and regulations to govern the social media and streamline the practices which have crossed all moral and ethical limits and have become a matter of concern for the society.



sport

Follow us on
omanobserver.om/sports



GRITTY DRAW AGAINST AUSTRALIA LIFTS SPIRITS

ROAD TO QATAR ENDS FOR OMAN

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, FEB 2

Issam al Subhi's whirlwind goal gave a surprise start to Oman in the Road to Qatar campaign in Tokyo in September last year when they stunned World Cup regulars Japan at their den.

The qualification route but had lots of unexpected turns for the Red Warriors as they stand out of the Qatar World Cup 2022 with the final two matches of the campaign remaining.

Oman are a distant fourth in Group B with eight points from eight matches.

The last result against Australia in Muscat earned Oman a hard-fought point but they remained out of the running for third place, which would have taken them into the play-off with the third-placed side from Group A.

Two wins in the upcoming two matches would not be sufficient for the Red Warriors to come on par with the Australian tally of 15

points.

Head coach Branko Ivankovic, however, was pleased with Oman's fighting spirit in the match.

"I want to congratulate the players for the performance they had in this difficult match against a strong Australian team. They showed their ability to play against strong teams and I'm satisfied with their performance," Ivankovic told AFC website.

"It was not an easy match for

our team and everyone knows the strength and experience of the Australia team.

"We were missing many players tonight whether due to Covid-19 or injuries. Our players showed high respect to our opponents and I told them at half time that they should change this and we managed to have a good second half."

Australian coach Graham Arnold also credited Oman players for their gritty show by coming

back twice to net the equaliser.

CLOSE MATCHES

In several matches, Oman lost by a narrow margin and the results could have gone either way.

After their stunning win against Japan on September 2, Oman returned for a home match against Saudi Arabia.

Oman dominated the encounter with ball possession and skills, but in the end it was Saudi Arabia who used their top-level experience to successfully defend a one-goal lead till the end.

Saleh al Shehri came to Green Falcons rescue with a clinical goal in the 42nd minute.

In the third round on October 7, Oman slumped to a 3-1 defeat against Australia.

Though Rabea al Mandhar hit the equaliser in the 28th minute after an early goal by Australia, Red Warriors had a forgetful second-half with the Socceroos scoring twice in Doha.

At the Sultan Qaboos Sports

Complex in Muscat, Oman returned to winning ways against Vietnam, the lowest-ranked team in the group with a 3-1 result in the fourth round on October 12.

In Sharjah, Oman were held to a 1-1 draw by China in the fifth round on November 11.

Amjad al Harthi earned a point for the Red Warriors in the 75th minute after Wu Lei had put China in the lead in the 21st minute.

Five days later in Muscat, Japan took revenge of their Tokyo defeat in similar fashion. Junya Ito's 81st minute goal robbed the Red Warriors of a point after an impressive outing.

In their seventh match, Oman missed out closely to hosts Saudi Arabia 1-0 in Jeddah on January 27.

The match saw several chances for the Sultanate team but went a-begging.

Oman play Vietnam on March 24 and China PR on March 29 to conclude their qualification campaign.

GROUP B POINTS TABLE

(READ AS POSITION, TEAM, MATCHES, WON, DRAW, LOSS, GOALS FOR, GOALS AGAINST, GOAL DIFFERENCE, POINTS)

1. SAUDI ARABIA	8	6	1	1	10	5	5	19
2. JAPAN	8	6	0	2	9	3	6	18
3. AUSTRALIA	8	4	3	1	15	6	9	15
4. OMAN	8	2	2	4	8	10	-2	8
5. CHINA PR	8	1	2	5	8	16	-8	5
6. VIETNAM	8	1	0	7	7	17	-10	3



Oman head coach Branko Ivankovic

Branko credits players, highlights clubs' role

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, FEB 2

Oman head coach Branko Ivankovic appreciated the players after their top show against Australia on Tuesday after the match ended in a 2-2 draw.

"I am really proud of the players as they produced top performance against the Asian top side Australia. I am fully satisfied with the technical performance of the players. Oman players proved that they can play at same level against top teams like Australia," Branko told after the match.

The draw ended Oman's hopes in advancing to the play-off spot in the Asian qualifiers — Road to Qatar 2022.

The Croatian coach opined that the match was not easy for both teams. "The opponents are a strong team as they feature top international and experienced players. We had many absences in the squad due to positive cases of Covid-19 besides to injury of experienced mid-fielder Harib al Saadi," he said.

The 68-year-old commented on the team's poor show during the first half.

"Our players respected the opponents a lot and during the break, I talked to my players for some new rules and instructions. This led to an improved performance in the second half," he added.

ROLE OF CLUBS

Ivankovic also delivered an important message to the domestic clubs in the Sultanate of Oman.

"Proper establishment of any player should start from the club. The domestic clubs have a vital role for the players development as we get less time for internal camps due to the impact of the epidemic."

Oman's hero Abdullah Fawaz, who scored a brace, gave the credit to his teammates.

"Thanks to all the players for the massive efforts made during the game. We delivered top performance but could not achieve the triumph. We managed to play strong match against Australia and aimed to finish the fixture on better result than the draw," he said. Fawaz also wished a speed recovery for all the players who are Covid positive and others who are injured.

Sport begins at Beijing Olympics under shadow of Covid

BEIJING: Curling got the Beijing Winter Olympics under way on Wednesday in front of a smattering of spectators as China tried to move on from the diplomatic boycotts and Covid fears that have dogged the lead-up to the Games.

The Olympics do not officially launch until Friday's opening ceremony but the action began with mixed doubles curling at the 'Ice Cube' — known as the 'Water Cube' when the Chinese capital hosted the 2008 Summer Games — in front of a limited number of masked fans.

China barred overseas fans because of the pandemic but some spectators will be invited to attend and organisers say venues could be up to 50 per cent full. Arenas were mostly empty at last summer's pandemic-delayed Tokyo Games to stop the spread of infection.

The build-up to the Beijing Olympics, which will unfold within a huge Covid-secure 'bubble', has been overshadowed by controversies ranging from rights concerns to Peng Shuai and warnings about snooping on competitors by the Chinese government.

Adopting the catchphrase 'Together for a shared future', China, its ruling Communist Party and the International Olympic Committee hope the rancour will be forgotten once the Games get into full swing.

However, there have already been nearly 250 positive Covid cases within the 'closed loop' bubble and Dr Brian McCloskey, chairman of the medical expert panel for Beijing 2022, said 11



Czech Republic's Zuzana Paulova competes during the mixed doubles round robin session 1 game of the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic Games curling competition against Norway at the National Aquatics Centre in Beijing. — AFP

people had been hospitalised.

"None of those are seriously ill in any way," he said. It is not known who they are but nearly 3,000 athletes together with thousands of support staff, volunteers and media are cut off from the outside world in the bubble.

When Beijing hosted the 2008 Games, the torch relay took in swathes of China and other countries — where it met protests in places — but this time it will last just three days, ending at the 'Bird's Nest' stadium for the opening ceremony.

Beijing 2022 official Cai Qi said at the start of the relay on Wednesday — which will involve

more than 1,000 torchbearers and included former NBA star Yao Ming — that he hoped the Games would help "dispel the gloom of the pandemic".

China, where Covid-19 emerged towards the end of 2019, has pursued a zero-Covid policy nationwide and is taking the same approach at the Olympics.

FACE OF THE GAMES

The Games will be held in three zones. In addition to downtown Beijing, the two other areas are outside the capital and will rely on artificial snow to cover what would otherwise be brown mountainsides. Environmentalists

have voiced concern.

American ski ace Mikaela Shiffrin is chasing a third slalom gold, while Japan's Yuzuru Hanyu is looking to make it a hat-trick of figure-skating Olympic titles.

There will be huge interest in Chloe Kim, the American snowboarder who melted hearts when she won gold aged 17 at the Pyeongchang Olympics in 2018, while Eileen Gu could become the face of the Games.

The 18-year-old grade-A student, born and raised in California, switched from the United States to represent China and is hot favourite in freestyle skiing. — AFP

Oman to take part in 4 athletic events



SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, FEB 2

The Board of Directors of Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) reviewed Oman's four prominent international participations for 2022 in a meeting on Wednesday.

Outgoing chairman Sayyid Khalid bin Hamad al Busaidy presided over the meeting in presence of all members.

Sayyid Khalid thanked the board members for their efforts over the past five years in developing the work system at OOC, activating its various activities and programmes, and contributing to many projects and qualitative programmes, wishing them success in their next phase.

He also extended his thanks and appreciation to the Ministry of Sports, Culture and Youth, headed by His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said for his great support and continuous

backing to sports and athletes.

He also thanked the sports federations and committees for implementing plans and programmes aimed at development of the various sports.

The Board of Directors for the new term will be elected during the general assembly on February 28.

GCC GAMES

Oman will take part in the 3rd GCC Games to be held in Kuwait from May 11 to 21, the Islamic Solidarity Games in Turkey from August 9 to 18, the 19th Asian Games to be held in China during September 10-25 and the Asian Youth Games also in China during December 20-28.

The Board directed that the Planning and Following-up Committee, in coordination with the sports federations and committees, complete the procedures for confirming participation in the scheduled courses, and follow up the

preparation plans and programmes for the national teams and athletes, and the expected results of each participation.

The Board of Directors reviewed the proposal submitted to postpone the Beach Games scheduled to be held in Muscat over two days at the end of last year 2021, to be held this year after agreeing on its new date by Oman Sports and Active Society Committee.

The proposal submitted by the Oman Women's Sports Committee directed to the Organising Committee for Women's Sports in GCC regarding the postponement of 7th Games for Women's Sports scheduled to be held in March 2022 to the latter half of 2022 or the beginning of 2023 to give sports teams the opportunity for the gradual normal return to training and good preparation for the tournament.

The training programmes were suspended during the last period

due to Covid-19.

The Board of Directors approved the programme and budget of the courses to be organised by Oman Olympic Academy during this year, where 9 training courses will be organised in various programmes and fields such as financial management, marketing management, sports management, e-sports, volunteer management in the sports field, crisis management in sports events, training, stadium injuries, sports rehabilitation, and event management in sports institutions.

The meeting also approved the proposal submitted by the Academy on training courses and programmes to include sports institutions and their affiliates, enthusiasts in sports sciences, scholars and researchers.

The members reviewed the financial position of the committee for the past year 2021, and the estimated draft budget for the current year 2022.

Muscat Women, OWCA, MCCC Yellow score big wins

MUSCAT: Suhani Dadhwal struck an elegant 64 to help ISC Women to an emphatic 62-run victory against Muscat Women in a Women's League T20 game at Oman Cricket Turf 2 in Amerat.

Suhani, who hit 7 fours and a six, got good support from Jayadhanya Gunasekar (37) as the duo added 109 runs for the second wicket. ISC ended their 20 overs at a robust 146 for 4. Amanda Dcosta took 2 for 23.

Muscat failed to make a match of it, getting bundled out for 84 in 19.4 overs, Nikita Rajesh top-scoring with 29. Jayadhanya claimed 2 for 9.

MINDULI POWERS OWCA

In another match, Minduli Medagoda's superb spell in which she picked up 4 for 13 powered OWCA Women to a mighty 10-wicket win over Wadi Kabir Women at OC Turf 1.

Minduli was instrumental in having Wadi Kabir dismissed for 60 with brilliant bowling by Afida Aftab and Anshita Lalit, who claimed two wickets each. Shreya Suresh top-scored with 20.

OWCA raced to the target in only 6.5 overs, scoring 61 without loss for a massive win.

KRIV STARS FOR MCCC YELLOW

In a Junior League Under-13 T20 game, MCCC Yellow rode on an excellent 93 by Kriv Rajesh to thrash ISWK B by 161 runs.

MCCC Yellow's total of 244 for 2 also included superb fifties by Mohammed Imran (55) and Shravan Sridhar (50). ISWK



Suhani Dadhwal and Jayadhanya of ISC Women

B could not find any rhythm, limping to 83 for 9 in 20 overs.

BRIEF SCORES

Women's League T20

ISC Women 146 for 4 in 20 overs (Suhani Dadhwal 64 – 7x4, 1x6, Jayadhanya Gunasekar 37 – 4x4, Amanda Dcosta 2-23) beat Muscat Women 84 all out in 19.4 overs (Nikhita Jagadish 29 – 2x4, Jayadhanya Gunasekar 2-9) by 62 runs.

Wadi Kabir Women 60 all out in 20 overs (Shreya Suresh 20 – 2x4, Minduli Medagoda 4-13, Afida Aftab 2-14, Anshita Lalit 2-2) lost to OWCA Women 61 for 0 in 6.5 overs (Sakshi Vijaya 32 – 5x4, Nitya Joshi 23 – 3x4) by 10 wickets.

Junior Division U13

MCCC Yellow 244 for 2 in 20 overs (Kriv Rajesh 93 – 13x4, Mohammed Imran 55 – 7x4, Shravan Sridhar 50 – 4x4) beat ISWK B 83 for 9 in 20 overs (Naitik Tusharkumar 20 – 1x4, Pradhiyuni 2-9, Vihaan Sanjay 2-10) by 161 runs.

MCCC Blue 137 for 9 in 20 overs (Abdul Muqith 40 – 7x4, Pranav Nivash 26 – 4x4, Hadi Muhammed 3-25, Nithin Jayarajan 2-22) lost to ISM 138 for 1 in 16 overs (Hafiz Mohamed 46 – 4x4, Swagath Navaneetha 40 – 5x4) by 8 wickets.

MCCC Red 169 for 3 in 20 overs (Karnik Samir 70 – 6x4, Yohan Sriram 56) beat BSC B 78 all out in 20 overs (Aarav Saraiya 11, Sivabalaji Siddeshwaran 3-9, Vatrana Radhika 2-2) by 91 runs.

PELLISTRI INSPIRES URUGUAY

S A N C H E Z R E I G N I T E S C H I L E ' S W C H O P E S

MONTEVIDEO: Young winger Facundo Pellistri stole the show on only his second appearance for Uruguay as the twice former World Cup winners boosted their hopes of reaching Qatar 2022 with a 4-1 win over Venezuela on Tuesday.

Chile also gave themselves a lifeline as Alexis Sanchez scored a brace in a 3-2 win at Bolivia in South American World Cup qualifying.

Ecuador inched closer to qualification with a 1-1 draw in Peru, who dropped into the inter-continental play-off spot.

Colombia's hopes all but died after failing to score for a seventh consecutive match in a 1-0 defeat in Argentina.

Goals from Rodrigo Betancur, Giorgian de Arrascaeta, Edinson Cavani and a Luis Suarez penalty saw Uruguay romp to a second successive victory under new coach Diego Alonso that propelled them into the final of four automatic qualification berths in the single South American group in which Brazil and Argentina have already booked their tickets to Qatar.

But it was Manchester United youngster Pellistri, who has spent the last year on loan at Spaniards Alaves, who shone brightest.

His mazy run set up the second goal and his trickery won the penalty converted by Suarez.

"He has what it takes to help



Uruguay's Facundo Pellistri (L) and Venezuela's Oscar Gonzalez (R) vie for the ball during their South American World Cup qualifier in Montevideo, Uruguay. — AFP

us... pace when one on one, the craftiness to exploit the defensive position", said Alonso.

VENEZUELA'S TORMENTOR

With two qualifiers left at home to Peru and away to Chile, Uruguay's World Cup destiny remains in their own hands.

They had a dream start in Montevideo as Cavani's first

minute cross was half cleared to the edge of the box where new Tottenham signing Betancur hit a sweet half volley that clipped a heel and skidded past Wuliker Farinez in the Venezuela goal. Uruguay were dominant and doubled their lead on 23 minutes after Pellistri showed great trickery to beat three players on the right and cut the

ball back for De Arrascaeta to slot home from close range.

Cavani, who had a second half goal ruled out for offside, all but sealed the victory in first half stoppage time with an opportunistic overhead kick from six yards out as Uruguay's players were lining up to finish off their weary opponents.

SANCHEZ STUNNER

In La Paz, veteran Sanchez scored a brilliant brace to relaunch Chile's hopes of reaching Qatar after Thursday's 2-1 defeat at home to Argentina. The win left them three points behind Uruguay and two off Peru with two to play.

Former Barcelona and Manchester United star Sanchez,

SOUTH AMERICAN WORLD CUP QUALIFYING RESULTS ON TUESDAY:

At La Paz
Bolivia 2 (Enoumba 37, Moreno 88)
Chile 3 (Sanchez 14, 85, Nunez 77)
At Montevideo
Uruguay 4 (Betancur 1, De Arrascaeta 23, Cavani 45+1, Suarez 53-pen)
Venezuela 1 (J. Martinez 65)
At Cordoba
Argentina 1 (L. Martinez 29) Colombia 0
At Belo Horizonte
Brazil 4 (Raphinha 28, Coutinho 62, Antony 82, Rodrigo 88) Paraguay 0
At Lima
Peru 1 (Flores 69) Ecuador 1 (Estrada 2)

33, rolled back the years by opening the scoring on 14 minutes with a wicked swerving free-kick before netting the killer third goal five minutes from time.

"It's still not over, we've got two important games left", said Sanchez. "It was vital to win today in La Paz against tough opponents."

Third-placed Ecuador were held to a 1-1 draw in Peru.

Colombia's miserable record-equalling seven-match goalless streak has left them with little chance of even making the inter-continental play-off. Argentina dominated throughout in Cordoba and deserved more than Lautaro Martinez's 29th minute winner.

Brazil ended Paraguay's hopes of going to Qatar with a 4-0 thrashing in Belo Horizonte. Philippe Coutinho scored the pick of the goals with Raphinha, Antony and Rodrigo also on target. — AFP

‘Its Auba time’ at Barcelona

‘I’M HERE!’ AUBAMEYANG TELLS FANS AFTER DELAYED SIGNING

BARCELONA: "It's Auba time!" declared Barcelona on Wednesday as they signed Gabon striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang as a free agent.

The club's tweet also included a video of Aubameyang declaring "I'm here Barcelona fans! Forca Barca!"

"The player will sign a contract until June 30, 2025", said the club on their website, adding that the deal for the 32-year-old included a 100 million euros (\$113 million) buyout clause.

"I'm very happy, very happy to be here and I'm already looking forward to being on the pitch", Aubameyang told the Barca website.

Barcelona are "one of the biggest clubs in the world and that is why I have signed for Barca".

His previous club, Arsenal, on Tuesday released Aubameyang. That cleared the way for the striker, who was already in Spain, to sign for Barcelona as a free agent outside the transfer window which closed on Monday night.

"It was a very long day, but in the end I'm here, I'm looking forward to it and I'm very happy", he said.

French-born Aubameyang is, like his father Pierre, a Gabon international. His mother was born near Madrid before moving to France as a child.

"I'm very proud especially because my family is Spanish by my mother's side", said Aubameyang.

The move gives him the set of the five major European leagues, although he never played in Serie A for AC Milan, where he began his career and starred for the youth team.



Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang

"I have experience, I played in Germany, in France, in England, so I'm here to help and give the maximum for the team", said Aubameyang.

Aubameyang is believed to have taken a significant cut on his Arsenal wage, which started at around 300,000 euros (\$337,000) a week.

‘DISCIPLINARY BREACH’

It was a spectacular way for Barca to end an active transfer window.

They have been busy despite their enormous debts and their inability to either sign talented French World Cup winning striker

Ousmane Dembele to a contract extension or to sell him before he becomes a free agent in the summer.

Barcelona have struggled to fill the hole Lionel Messi left when he departed in the summer. With Dembele out of favour, Ansu Fati injured and Memphis Depay and Luuk de Jong struggling, the club were desperate to add punch in attack.

Aubameyang's arrival follows Spain winger Ferran Torres, bought at the end of December for 55 million euros from Manchester City, and the return of both club legend Dani Alves at 38 and

Spanish winger Adama Traore, on loan from Wolves.

They sit fifth in La Liga, a point behind Atletico Madrid, who they play at home on Sunday, when Aubameyang could make his debut.

Aubameyang, who was named African Footballer of the Year in 2015, was recruited by Arsenal on the last day of the 2018 January transfer window for a reported 56 million pounds, a club record at the time.

In almost exactly four years at the club, he appeared in 165 competitive games and scored 92 goals

But his form dipped rapidly after he signed a three-year contract that reportedly made him the Premier League's highest earner at the time in September 2020.

The striker's indiscipline and chronic lack of punctuality caused problems at Arsenal as they had at Dortmund.

In December he was stripped of the captaincy for what Arsenal described as "his latest disciplinary breach".

"I have always been 100 per cent focused and committed on doing everything I can for this club which is why leaving without a real goodbye hurts — but that is football", Aubameyang wrote to Arsenal fans on Instagram after he was released on Tuesday.

In January, Aubameyang was part of the Gabon squad at the Africa Cup of Nations in Cameroon but missed the first two games with coronavirus before being sent home after team medical staff said they had detected "cardiac lesions". — AFP

‘Best managers are in Europe’, says Cannavaro as he seeks return



LONDON: World Cup and 2006 Ballon d'Or winner Fabio Cannavaro said he is ready to come back to Europe and start his coaching career anew among the best, adding he was recently interviewed by Premier League clubs.

Cannavaro captained Italy to victory in the 2006 World Cup and played at major European clubs such as Juventus and Real Madrid, where he won two LaLiga titles. He ended his playing career in 2011 and began coaching two years later. The 48-year-old was an assistant at UAE-based side Al Ahli before he became the head coach at Chinese Super League club Guangzhou and then Saudi Arabia's Al Nassr.

In 2019 Cannavaro was appointed head coach of the China national team, a role which he combined with once again managing Guangzhou. He resigned less than two months later to focus on the club.

"I have had very good jobs in Asia but the best clubs and managers are in Europe and so if I want to be one of the best I have to compete with them", Cannavaro

told *The Telegraph* in an interview published on Wednesday. "I think I am ready.

"Sometimes people maybe think that I don't know the league, that I don't have experience in Europe but it's football. I know what is happening in the clubs, in the changing rooms.

"I have worked for very good coaches and I want to share these experiences... I want to teach."

Cannavaro said he recently held talks with Premier League sides Everton and Watford after both teams dismissed their managers. "(At Everton) I explained to (the owner) my philosophy and strategy. But of course it's understandable when you have the opportunity to take (Frank) Lampard who stays (in England), who knows better than me, maybe, the Premier League", he said.

"(At Watford) They spoke to me before Roy Hodgson (was appointed) but they needed a coach quickly. But it was an honour to speak with them and it's important that I have started to have these conversations"

— Reuters

business

MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE
4,124.439



CRUDE
OIL PRICE

Oman Crude \$87.71
Brent Crude \$89.13
Light Crude \$88.29



Follow us on
omanobserver.om/business

Banking Services
Made Special
to Suit Your World

BankDhofar provides you with a host of innovative products, services that are specially designed to suit your needs and exceed your expectations

For more information:
<https://bit.ly/BankdhofarEng>

Al Riadah Priority Banking Services

Al Riifa Special Banking Services

Ladies Banking Services

Youth Banking Services

Expat Banking Services

Children Banking Services

بنك ظفار
BankDhofar

the best bank for you 24791111 www.bankdhofar.com

Private investments in Duqm SEZ total RO 3.6 bn

INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADE:
First cranes for Port of Duqm to arrive later this month

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, FEB 2

Private investments in the Special Economic Zone have soared to RO 3.6 billion to date, with as many as 431 projects in various stages of development and operation, according to Ahmed bin Hassan al Dheeb, Deputy Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ).

In a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA), a total of 22,200 workers are currently employed in various industrial and tourism projects under development in the SEZ. Omanisation averages about 22 per cent in the zone, although Port of Duqm has achieved 85 per cent, he noted.

Investment opportunities are not limited to industrial projects, but also tourism, storage,



logistics, real estate development, commercial complexes, fish and food industries, drone operation and Artificial Intelligence, clean energy, green hydrogen projects and ammonia projects, Al Dheeb said.

Major enhancements are

underway at the Port of Duqm that will help augment the cargo handling capabilities of this key logistics gateway.

OPAZ has signed agreements with leading crane manufacturer Liebherr for the supply of four fully automated ship-to-shore

container cranes, as well as 12 rubber tyre gantry cranes at a total cost of RO 27.9 million. Delivery of the first batch of hardware is anticipated later this month with the rest slated for delivery before May.

The cranes will be assembled

in preparation for the launch and operation in Q1, 2023. Oman Drydock, which operates a modern ship repair yard at Duqm, has so far handled a total of 1,170 ships since it commenced operations in 2011. Last year, the yard began small-scale ship

building as well.

Equipped with two basins, the dry dock can handle ship of up to 600,000-tonne capacity. A 2,800-metre pier, industrial workshops and 453,000 square metres of workspace are part of the yard's capabilities.

At the nearby multipurpose fisheries port, which is the largest in the Sultanate of Oman, a rejig of its capabilities now enables this complex to accommodate investments in, besides fish processing and related activities, also food industries, livestock, and marina-related leisure activities as well.

Covering an area of 600 hectares with a depth of 10 metres, the fisheries port consists of 3.3 kilometres of wave breakers, a 1.3 kilometres fixed pier and 6 pontoons.

The facility can handle medium-sized fishing vessels operating on the high seas, and also dhows laden with livestock. Already, a number of fish processing and canning ventures have leased land to operate at the port.

Bank Muscat
sells minority
stake as part
of \$620m
Octal deal



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, FEB 2

Bank Muscat has sold its 4.99 per cent stake in Octal Holding, along with the other shareholders of the latter firm, to Alpek Polyester, a petrochemicals company incorporated in Mexico.

In a filing to the Capital Market Authority (CMA), Bank Muscat said it is entitled to around RO 11.9 million (\$31 million) from the transaction, given that Alpek had offering to acquire 100 per cent of Octal Holding for a consideration of \$620 million.

In comparison, the carrying value of its 4.99 per cent stake in Bank Muscat's book as of December 31, 2021 was RO 4.2 million, it added.

Singapore SWF investment to bolster Omani green energy mega project

STRONG FILLIP: GIC announces equity investment in InterContinental Energy, which is developing major green energy projects, including one in the Sultanate of Oman in partnership with OQ and EnerTech

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

Plans for the development of a mega green hydrogen project in the Sultanate of Oman have received a further shot in the arm with Singapore's sovereign wealth fund (SWF) announcing a strategic equity investment in a key developer behind the Omani venture.

Singapore-based GIC, which is estimated to manage assets valued in excess of \$740 billion, announced last week that it would invest in Hong Kong-headquartered global energy developer InterContinental Energy (ICE), which is promoting a large portfolio of world-scale green hydrogen schemes in key locations, including the Sultanate of Oman.

In the Sultanate of Oman, ICE has teamed up with OQ, the integrated state-owned Omani energy group, and EnerTech



“We believe that in time, hydrogen will play a crucial role in decarbonisation globally and that InterContinental Energy will be a key player in this transformation”

ANG ENG SENG
Chief Investment Officer of Infrastructure, GIC

Holding, a Kuwaiti state-owned enterprise, to develop Green Energy Oman (GEO), billed as one of the world's largest green energy ventures, in Al Wusta Governorate.

At full capacity, Green Energy Oman will be powered by 25 gigawatts (GW) of solar and wind generation capacity, to enable the production of 1.8 million tonnes per annum of green hydrogen and 10 million tonnes of green

ammonia. A Final Investment Decision (FID), slated sometime in early 2026, will pave the way for construction work on Green Energy Oman to commence in 2027.

While the size of its equity investment in ICE was not disclosed, GIC said it supports ICE's "global hydrogen vision" encompassing the development of large-scale green hydrogen projects in the Sultanate of Oman,

Western Australia and Saudi Arabia.

"This is a strategic investment to position GIC early for the emerging hydrogen economy. We believe that in time, hydrogen will play a crucial role in decarbonisation globally and that InterContinental Energy will be a key player in this transformation," Ang Eng Seng, Chief Investment Officer of Infrastructure at GIC, said in a statement.

ICE's current portfolio of projects entail the development of an unrivalled 200 gigawatts (GW) of wind and solar capacity to support the production of over 14 million tonnes per annum of green hydrogen or 80 million tonnes of green ammonia.

These ventures will help offset over 200 million tonnes of CO2 per annum and potentially create more than 100,000 direct and indirect jobs in the countries where they are implemented.

Welcoming GIC's equity investment, ICE Chief Executive Officer Alexander Tancock added: "InterContinental Energy has an ambitious vision, together with our partners, customers and stakeholders, to deliver green fuels at scale, and we are excited to have GIC on board as an investor, who share the same long-term commitment to global decarbonisation."

PDO signs
agreements
to support
training of
250 Omanis

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, FEB 2

Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour (MOL), signed on Wednesday agreements with seven contractors to provide training for employment programmes to upskill and recruit more than 250 Omanis in various positions.

The Memorandums of Understanding, which are part of PDO's Emdad Initiative, were signed virtually under the auspices of Dr Saeed bin Hamed al Rubaie, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences.

Under the terms of the agreements, the participants will secure work with Arabian Industries (AI), Special Technical Services (STS), MB Petroleum Services, Shaher United Trading and Contracting Co, Al Ghalbi International, Zawawi Powertech Engineering, and Carillion Alawi upon the successful completion of the training programmes, which will range from 10-18 months in duration.

TURN TO PAGE 15

New bookings open for 2022 Chevrolet Groove

MUSCAT: True to its newly-garnered reputation as an international bestseller, Chevrolet Groove — the sporty and youthful new compact SUV from General Motors — quickly sold out as soon as it made its debut in the Omani market.

The resounding success of the new brand, replicated in markets around the world where it was launched over the past year, is a testament to its burgeoning global popularity.

Following the brand's runaway success, OTE Group — the exclusive distributor of Chevrolet cars in the Sultanate of Oman — has announced the opening of bookings for the next shipment of the all-new 2022 Chevrolet Groove, which is due to arrive in March.

Since its arrival in the Middle East late last year, the Groove has charmed potential customers and motoring enthusiasts alike,



particularly among the young and tech-savvy.

Occupying a distinctive niche of its own in Chevrolet's expanding SUV portfolio, the 2022 edition of the Groove is targeted at customers looking

for a vehicle bristling with tech innovations, offering excellent fuel efficiency and boasting stunning looks — but all wrapped up in an affordable package.

The all-new Groove is powered by a 1.5L engine,

mated to a continuously variable transmission (CVT) the offers a more efficient acceleration and deceleration for a smoother and more enjoyable daily drive.

With an amazing fuel efficiency of 15.9 km/l, owners can go

further on a tank of fuel than the brand's peers.

Technology and safety features come standard across all variants in the Groove line-up from the base trim upwards.

For ease of driving and manoeuvrability, there is a reverse camera and sensors, while a multifunctional steering wheel ensures all controls are easily accessible from Cruise Control. Stability and Traction Control also ensures the driver remains in control, no matter the road conditions.

A spacious and delightfully designed cabin can seat up to five people. Taking centre stage in the cabin is an 8-inch screen packed with the latest Chevrolet infotainment capabilities, including phone projection, USB ports, and up to six speakers.

A panoramic sunroof in the Premier trim helps bring a bit of the outside world into the

comfortable cabin.

"Clearly, the all-new Chevrolet Groove made quite an impression on Chevy fans when the first vehicles hit the local market in January this year", said Mandeep Singh, General Manager — OTE Group, exclusive distributors of Chevrolet in the Sultanate of Oman.

"With prices starting at RO 6,889 (inclusive of VAT), the Groove is simply the most price-competitive SUV on the market, and a key driver of its overwhelming appeal. We are moving quickly to replenish our inventory to meet what is anticipated to be strong and consistent demand for this popular brand."

Book now to own one of Oman's bestselling, yet most affordable, SUVs, which come in four distinct colour options — metal red, candy white, aurora silver and European blue!

Pay+ makes international money transfer a lot easier

MUSCAT: From a touch of a button, transferring money has become easier than ever with pay+. Developed by Ooredoo and the National Bank of Oman (NBO), the tech-savvy app continues to set standards in Oman's evolving digital payments ecosystem.

Allowing for international remittance via its international partner, MoneyGram, users can send money to over 40 destinations worldwide, quickly and securely anywhere and everywhere.

Using MoneyGram's worldwide network and the convenience and speed of pay+, the service enables customers to send money to bank accounts or to cash pick up locations all over the world, via a single app on their mobile device.

Meanwhile, pay+ users can benefit from a whole host of useful transactions including bill payments, deposits, money transfers to other



wallets and withdrawals.

The service also enables contactless payments at over 3,000 locations all over Oman using QR Code scanning, including Oman Oil petrol stations, StarCare hospitals and pharmacies, McDonalds, Caribou cafe, Nesto and Spar supermarkets, Oman United Insurance, Al-Obaidani stores and many more. Moreover, robust

security features mean that payment information is protected.

Frequently updated and enhanced, the easy-to-use service is just one way Ooredoo is ensuring its customers have an awesome digital experience. Registration for pay+ is completely digital, requiring a national / resident Omani ID and photo only. Download the pay+ app from the Apple Store or Google Play, or find out more at www.payplus.om.

SOHAR presents port capabilities at Breakbulk Middle East 2022

MUSCAT: SOHAR Port and Freezone joined logistics provider C. Steinweg Oman (CSO), General Cargo Operator Terminal at the port at the Breakbulk Middle East 2022 international trade conference and exhibition in Dubai presenting the port's shipping and logistics capabilities to companies from across the region.

Breakbulk ME attracts representatives from more than 1,700 companies at every stage of the industrial supply chain from over 70 countries and is one of the few events to make direct contact with prospective new clients.

SOHAR is one of the fastest-growing Port and Freezone complexes in the world, and has attracted close to US\$ 27 billion in investment by serving diverse



industries including metals, raw materials, plastics and foodstuffs.

By investing in cutting-edge technology to maximise efficiency, increase throughput and lead the expansion and modernisation of the Sultanate of Oman's global trade capacity and logistics sector, SOHAR has continued to attract

new clients to the Freezone and become the gateway for over 70% of products entering Oman

SOHAR will take a leading role in achieving the national economic priorities within Oman's Vision 2040. For more information on SOHAR Port and Freezone, visit soharportandfreezone.com

Alizz Islamic Bank holds grand draw, restructures Bushra Savings Account

MUSCAT: Alizz Islamic Bank recently celebrated the final Grand draw for "Bushra" savings account with a total of RO 195,000 in cash prizes distributed to a number of winners who had saved money in their 'Bushra' accounts.

The bank had earlier announced the restructuring of Bushra Savings account to a tier based savings account with various tiers of monthly profits based on the customers savings.

This was in compliance with the Central Bank of Oman's directive to stop prize accounts in all banks operating in the Sultanate of Oman.

Currently, Alizz Islamic Bank offers Bushra Savings Account based on the Sharia principle of unrestricted 'Mudarabah', where the customer is the owner of the money, and the bank manages the 'Mudarabah' by investing the pool of customer funds in joint 'Mudarabah' transactions.

All profits are divided between the customer and the bank,



based on a profit-sharing ratio determined by the bank. Profit rates based on each category will be applied to the deposit balances kept in the Bushra Account.

Based on each customer's account balance, the bank will deposit their profit shares on a monthly basis. Customers can get more details on profit rates by visiting the bank's official website at (<https://alizzislamic.com>) or

walking into their nearest bank branch across Oman.

For 2022, Bushra has been restructured to keep up with the changes in customer lifestyles, making the account bigger to secure the best possible profits for the customer. Alizz Islamic Bank continues to tailor-make products and services to suit the expectations and requirements of customers. Bushra customers,

whether Omanis or expats, will enjoy many advantages and benefits including monthly profit payment, same-day debit card issuance and collection, and free online and mobile banking, and SMS alerts, to name a few.

Mohammed al Ghassani, Acting Chief Consumer Banking Officer at Alizz Islamic Bank said, "The benefits and incentives offered by the restructured 'Bushra' account comes in line with our plans to provide customers with tailor-made products and services to meet all their needs and requirements in today's ever-changing world."

"The new Bushra account gives customers the opportunity to grow their funds as we help them to save and invest and eventually get to their desired financial goals. We are always keen to offer the products and services needed by our valued customers, and it is always our priority to offer banking with transparency", Al Ghassani added.

Toyota GAZOO Racing celebrates podium finish at Rallye Monte-Carlo

MUSCAT: The GAZOO Racing (GR) World Rally Team (WRT) completed a strong debut event for the new GR YARIS Rally1 recently, with Sébastien Ogier claiming second place overall at the famous Rallye Monte-Carlo. Ogier, who was chasing a record-extending ninth win together with new co-driver Benjamin Veillas, gave his all in the final stage to finish just 10.5 seconds from victory in the No 1 GR YARIS Rally1.

GAZOO Racing World Rally Team began a bold new hybrid electric era in the FIA World Rally Championship as the 2022 season commenced in Monaco. Toyota's new vehicle, the GR YARIS Rally1, is the successor to the all-conquering Yaris WRC, which achieved a clean sweep of the manufacturers', drivers', and co-drivers' championship titles during the 2021 season.

The hybrid electric vehicle consists of a 3.9kWh battery and motor-generator unit delivering

an additional 134 hp combined with the proven 1.6-litre turbocharged engine from the Yaris WRC to provide the drivers with over 500 hp.

It runs on 100% sustainable fuel and is the first of its kind to be used in an FIA world championship.

All three of the team's drivers claimed stage wins in their new vehicles, which made the GR YARIS Rally1 the fastest vehicle on nine of the 17 stages. It demonstrated both impressive performance and reliability despite the challenges of the new Rally1 regulations, which introduce hybrid electric power to rallying's top level for the first time.

Akio Toyoda, President and CEO of Toyota Motor Corporation, commented: "It was so close for Séb to achieve his ninth victory in Rallye Monte-Carlo. His driving feeling with our new vehicle, the GR YARIS Rally1, seemed to be good."



Private firms can pay licence registration fees till March 31

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, FEB 2

The deadline for payment of licence registration and renewal fees by private firms affected by the pandemic has been extended to March 31, 2022, according to the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI).

However, a general fee from the total pending fees can be collected from these firms in addition to the renewal of the current year, within the framework of the facilities provided by the Chamber to its affiliates.

Speaking to the *Observer*, Eng Ridha bin Juma al Saleh, Chairman of OCCI, said the Board has taken into consideration the various challenges faced by the private sector in the Sultanate of Oman.

"An exemption of various fees payable to the OCCI has been announced at the first Board of Directors meeting on Tuesday and all the private firms affected by Covid-19 can pay their registration renewal fees till March 31, 2022.

"The challenges facing the private institutions and companies affiliated with them have been looked at. The Council has also decided to collect a general fee from the total late fees only," he added.

The Board held its first meeting with a number of representatives of the executive body of the

Chamber in attendance.

They expressed gratitude to the Council of Ministers for extending the term of the current Board of Directors of the Chamber for a period of 6 months until the issuance of the new system of the Chamber.

"Extending the term of the council's management

will provide more support to the private sector in the Sultanate of Oman by devoting efforts to complete the initiatives launched during the recent period, which would enhance the economic performance

and ensure the sustainability of the business of private sector institutions, including the incentives and facilities provided to affiliates.

"Enhancing investment attraction and encouraging partnerships between the private sector in the Sultanate of Oman and its counterparts in brotherly and friendly countries," Al Saleh added.

The Council also discussed the Chamber's budget for 2022, which was approved during the meeting, and aims to contribute to the implementation of the economic activities and activities that the Chamber aims for.

The Chamber has allocated funds to conduct economic studies in support of research and innovations, in addition to supporting social responsibility.

Honeywell inks pact to support Omani energy initiatives

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, FEB 2

Honeywell, a Fortune 100 technology company, has announced an agreement with Meras, the energy, engineering, construction and project management services provider, to support Honeywell's expansion to conduct sustainability and energy projects across the Sultanate of Oman.

Part of the private equity firm Oman Investment Corporation (OIC), Meras will develop a capability centre to support Honeywell as it implements energy and sustainability projects in the country including innovation, resources, design,



contract, procurement and more.

Meras has a strong presence in the Sultanate of Oman, with strategic ties with private and government entities related to infrastructure healthcare,

hospitality and education.

This collaboration will enable to strengthen the local capability around sustainability and energy domain. It will also support the requirements to implement

energy efficiency actions, and carbon neutral objectives.

Honeywell has a long-standing history in the Sultanate of Oman, having worked on a wide range of projects including airports, oil and gas projects and refining and petrochemicals technology implementation.

Honeywell also works with a number of leading healthcare, education and hospitality customers within the country. Honeywell, a US headquartered multinational conglomerate, delivers industry-specific solutions that include aerospace products and services; control technologies for buildings and industry; and performance materials globally.

PDO signs agreements to support training of 250 Omanis

FROM PAGE 13

PDO Managing Director Steve Phimister said: "Despite the constraints placed on parts of our business due to the pandemic, PDO remained resolute in supporting In-Country Value, and specifically job creation challenges.

In 2021, the Emdad programme managed to secure more than 3,000 job and training opportunities for Omanis within the oil and gas sector.

"I would like to thank our partners for their continuous cooperation and effective contribution in identifying meaningful ways to upskill the local workforce and achieving the goals of this programme. Indeed, the reliability and quality of these trainings are a testament of the successful collaboration between PDO and its contractor community in this regard."

The training programmes provided as part of these agreements will offer opportunities



in several new fields with positions including Protection Testing Engineers, Electrical Inspectors, HVAC Specialists and Crane Operators. Other areas also include Mud Engineers, Electrical Assistants, Quality Assurance (QA)/Quality Control (QC) Engineers, and Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) Specialists.

Additionally, as part of PDO's drive to bridge the gap between academia and industry and to support the local education system, the company donated

two heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) units to the University of Technology and Applied Sciences.

This donation will support in establishing the first HVAC discipline in the Sultanate of Oman with actual HVAC units and will enable students to gain practical skills.

To increase market demand for the graduates, the University will also work on improving its current diploma programme in AC to include courses in HVAC.

Opec+ eyes modest output boost despite price surge

LONDON: Top oil producing countries led by Saudi Arabia and Russia are expected to stick to their guns and announce another modest output increase on Wednesday despite soaring crude prices.

The 23-nation Opec+ cartel has resisted US pressure to further boost supplies to tamp down prices, maintaining increases of 400,000 barrels per day in the past months. The group, which includes the 13 members of the Saudi-led Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) and their 10 allies, including Russia, will unveil its March output decision after a ministerial meeting.

The alliance's prudent approach dates back to the spring of 2021 as demand recovered after drastic 2020 cuts in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Tamas Varga, an analyst at PVM Energy, said Opec+ will likely continue its 400,000-barrel policy.

Oil prices hit seven-year highs in January, with the main international crude contract, Brent, topping \$90. Prices are now hovering under \$90.

Victoria Scholar, an expert at Interactive Investor, said she expected "further gains" due to solid demand and "drip-feed production increases" by Opec+.

OPEC+ is already struggling to meet its quotas with some members, such as Angola and Nigeria, unable to scale up their production and others, such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, unwilling to do so, said Carsten Fritsch of Commerzbank. — Reuters



A flag is seen on a table during an Opec meeting in Vienna. — AFP

GCC economies to grow at 6.1% in 2022

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, FEB 2

GDP growth in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries will see a surge of 6.1 per cent in 2022, on the back of higher oil prices, increased oil production and robust momentum in non-oil activity.

This will be the fastest pace of cyclical expansion since 2011 and is higher than other Emerging Markets peers, MUFG Research said.

According to research author Ehsan Khoman, Head of MUFG's EMEA Emerging Markets Research team, a supportive oil market, robust momentum in non-oil activity, stronger balance sheets, and easing geopolitical tensions are driving a compelling GCC story in 2022.

The GCC authorities' unabated drive to realise their National Vision strategies of structural transformation away from hydrocarbons will



also continue to gain traction. Ehsan Khoman explained: "The GCC 2022 outlook is markedly skewed to the upside this year. The robust vaccination programme, ongoing reopenings and higher oil prices as well as production, is spurring a real GDP growth forward in the region.

Following several years of having fiscal deficits, the GCC will rebuild its buffers in 2022.

"Higher government revenues and the rationalisation of expenditure in 2022 budgets will strengthen the countries' balance sheets and offer greater fiscal capacity to navigate towards a

post-pandemic equilibrium."

This will lead to an aggregate GCC fiscal surplus in 2022 of \$27 billion, the first since 2014. The oil surge and austerity measures will support sovereign balance sheets, with the GCC's financing needs remaining limited at only \$2.8 billion in 2022, and its Debt

HIGHER GOVERNMENT REVENUES AND THE RATIONALISATION OF EXPENDITURE IN 2022 BUDGETS WILL STRENGTHEN THE COUNTRIES' BALANCE SHEETS AND OFFER GREATER FISCAL CAPACITY TO NAVIGATE TOWARDS A POST-PANDEMIC EQUILIBRIUM

Capital Markets' needs (DCM) at only \$4.8 billion.

According to the research, the economic growth in the GCC will also outperform all EM peers in 2022 except Asia, with Saudi and the UAE leading this recovery, given their impressive bounce back in non-oil GDP, a rebound in their domestic demand, their higher investment levels in line with National Vision strategies, as well as being best-positioned to respond to the global economic recovery.

UBS’ Morgan Stanley impression could use more work

The Mid-Atlantic Ridge, an underwater tectonic boundary, is part of the longest mountain range on earth. A similar divide exists between exuberant US bank valuations and those in Europe. UBS Chief Executive Ralph Hamers is trying to bridge the fissure. It’s a tough ask.

The \$68 billion Swiss bank has long griped about being lumped in with stodgy continental lenders like Deutsche Bank. The Americas and Asia-Pacific accounted for more than half of adjusted pre-tax profit last year.

The Zurich-based group makes money mostly from fees rather than traditional lending, sheltering it from low European rates. So why shouldn’t Hamers aspire to a valuation closer to the 2.5 times tangible book multiple of its \$184 billion US rival Morgan Stanley? That compares with his own mark of 1.2. Closing the gap would double UBS’ share price, adding about \$70 billion to its equity value. The board even recently hired Morgan Stanley’s Colm Kelleher as chair.

Hamers laid out his plan, which involves hitting a 15 per cent to 18 per cent return on common equity Tier 1 capital.

Comparing UBS’ targets with Morgan Stanley is complicated by the fact that the Swiss bank insists on using CET1, which strips out tax assets, rather than the more common measure of tangible equity.

A focus on cost discipline and share buybacks help Hamers’ cause. But analysts on average expect a mere 14 per cent return on CET1 this year and next. The missing ingredient is revenue growth. UBS’ top line is projected to grow at a measly 1.6 per cent compound annual rate between 2022 and 2024.

Hamers wants to turbocharge sales by winning clients to his digital offering. Last week he bought US automated wealth-manager Wealthfront for \$1.4 billion, which brings nifty technology and about 470,000 clients.

UBS could also try to sell more wealth products to the 2 million US customers that currently use its workplace retirement-planning schemes. But local US banks and digital upstarts are gunning for many of the same clients.

For Hamers, the Mid-Atlantic Ridge may prove insurmountable. — Reuters

The \$68 billion Swiss bank has long griped about being lumped in with stodgy continental lenders like Deutsche Bank



LOOKING THROUGH

A worker inspects a Boeing 737 MAX airliner at Renton Airport adjacent to the Boeing Renton Factory in Renton, Washington. US manufacturers continued to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic in the first month of 2022, but there were few improvements in the supply issues plaguing them, an industry survey said. The Institute for Supply Management reported its manufacturing index slipped to 57.6 per cent in January, a decrease of just over a percentage point from December but nonetheless higher than analysts had forecast. — AFP

Putting Arab-Russian economic relations on a stronger footing



HAIDER AL LAWATI haiderdawood@hotmail.com

The author is a Muscat-based economic analyst who previously worked for the Central Bank of Oman and Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry

IN TERMS OF RUSSIAN FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT IN THE ARAB COUNTRIES, IT AMOUNTED TO \$64.4 BILLION FROM 2003 UNTIL THE END OF 2021

Despite the positive stances of the Russian Federation towards Arab and Islamic issues, and its support for Arab and Islamic causes presented in international organisations from time to time, economic relations and joint ventures between the two sides do not reflect developments on the ground.

During the past 18 years from 2003 to 2021, the value of Russian investments in Arab countries has been very low.

There are also no economic and marketing forums to enhance economic relations, except for some coordination on the matter of international oil prices through the Opec+ alliance, in addition to the signing of some agreements to purchase Russian arms during the past few years.

This is what prompted the Arab Corporation for Investment and Export Credit Guarantee (Daman), which is based in Kuwait, to recently express its willingness to enhance trade and investment cooperation between Arab countries and Russia.

This support covers insurance, information and research cooperation on

issues aimed at revitalising Arab exports to the wider world.

According to UNCTAD data, the volume of foreign trade between Arab countries and the Russian Federation between 2011 and 2020 recorded a modest \$14.7 billion, which represents 2.1 per cent of Russia’s foreign trade volume and less than 1 per cent of the Arab countries’ foreign trade volume on average.

In terms of Russian foreign direct investment in the Arab countries, it amounted to \$64.4 billion from 2003 until the end of 2021, representing 5 per cent of the volume of foreign project investments in the region.

In contrast, Arab direct investment projects in Russia amounted to about \$3.8 billion, representing 1 per cent of all foreign investment projects in Russia.

There is no doubt that the establishment of the Arab Investment Guarantee Corporation to provide specialised insurance services for Arab exports, investment and financing against commercial and political risks, will work to strengthen investment, and commercial and financial cooperation between the two

parties.

In addition, it will be securing non-commercial risks in the event of appropriation, nationalisation, wars and civil unrest.

This will enable Arab industries to access Russian markets, and create relationships between private sector businesses in Russia and Arab countries by enabling direct contracts covering imports of capital and strategic goods and the inputs of Arab industries to the Russian market.

Such a policy will help secure them against political and commercial risks related to bankruptcy or insolvency of importers, or their failure to pay for exported Arab goods and products in a timely manner.

From this standpoint, it is important for the Arab countries to seek to understand the Russian political and economic factors in order to smooth the path between the two sides. This will strengthen cooperation, research and relations to develop their horizons. The global market is large enough to absorb Arab products and goods, as well as Russian products that will reach the region.

The Fed’s wary embrace of digital dollars



KENNETH ROGOFF

The author is a professor of economics and public policy at Harvard University and recipient of the 2011 Deutsche Bank Prize in Financial Economics

Many countries’ governments, most notably China’s, are continuing to experiment with central bank digital currencies (CBDCs).

Money 3.0 is moving full speed ahead, and with its recent white paper, entitled “The US Dollar in the Age of Digital Transformation”, the US Federal Reserve, a conspicuous laggard, has finally started to weigh in, if only tepidly. The Fed’s caution is understandable, but is it excessive?

The Fed sets an extremely high bar for introducing a retail digital dollar. For starters, we are told that the new form of money must provide benefits more effectively than other methods, presumably meaning dollar-linked digital stablecoins and existing bank

accounts.

For example, one purported benefit of a digital dollar is to provide “real time clearing” for small payments, which of course paper currency already achieves, and the Fed plans to introduce 24-hour electronic payments through banks soon.

The digital currency also must protect privacy (then again, the Chinese authorities say that, too) and must not facilitate criminal activity, which is ironic given the popularity of the \$100 bill in the global underground economy.

Most challenging of all is the Fed’s requirement that the expected gains from introducing a digital dollar outweigh any risks it might create.

This is a very tough, but reasonable hurdle. For all the flaws of the world’s existing financial

infrastructure, its inner workings have remained largely intact for decades.

Imagine a nightmare scenario in which a poorly designed digital dollar left open a “back door” that allowed a hostile foreign power to shut down the entire dollar-based global financial system in one fell swoop.

Risks aside, it is not difficult to fathom why the Fed is especially resistant to any quantum change in the existing financial system. After all, the dollar’s international dominance brings the United States myriad benefits.

It lowers the interest rates that American citizens and corporations have to pay, not to mention those for the world’s biggest borrower, the US government — what Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, then France’s

finance minister, famously called America’s “exorbitant privilege.”

Dollar dominance also gives US authorities leverage over the global financial system’s plumbing, including privileged access to information on worldwide dollar transactions.

Moreover, it allows the US to impose significant financial sanctions. Russia has been subject to targeted financial sanctions since its 2014 annexation of Crimea, but President Joe Biden’s administration is now threatening much stronger steps in the event of a Russian invasion of Ukraine.

As other central banks lead the charge to introduce digital currencies, some worry that the Fed might find itself in the position of Eastman Kodak (which once made a fortune processing film) when digital photography

arrived, or of Swiss mechanical watchmakers when digital timepieces became ubiquitous.

But there is another, more subtle reason for the Fed’s digital-dollar reluctance: The US is still fundamentally a democracy and a market economy. Although the government has considerable regulatory and legal power to enforce adoption of its digital currency, this applies only up to a point.

The American public cannot be forced to accept a transition it does not want. Remember when the Treasury tried to popularise \$2 bills because it would save money on printing singles?

So, when the US does try to introduce a retail digital dollar — as I believe it eventually will — it may get only one bite at the apple.

© Project Syndicate, 2022

WJ Towell Group Company

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
Choose from a wide range of brands & models
PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease

أوربت ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

Classifieds

Tally
POWER OF SIMPLICITY

TALLY FOR VAT

For Tally Sales, Services or Customization

Contact: Guruprasad +968 79248644, 98753781
Email: guru.prasad@asiasolutions.net
ASIA SOLUTIONS

<https://www.asiasolutions.net>

TallyPrime

THURSDAY

FEBRUARY 3, 2022

RAJAB 1, 1443 AH

OMAN DAILY
Observer

Classified Section

Mohammed al Rashdi: 99841230
m.alrahd86@yahoo.com

Ali al Maashari: 99639264
ali.almashari@omandaily.om

Saada al Rashdi
95919344

94501166
24649593
24649595

Tally is now available on the **Cloud**

Ask for FREE Demo

Think TALLY
Call **977 TALLY**
(977 82559)

TSO, Tally Solutions for Oman, by Infinity Thoughts LLC : 977 TALLY (977 82559) * sales@tallysolutionsoman.com * www.TallySolutionsOman.com

TallyPrime

VAT REGISTRATION, RETURN FILING, TAX CONSULTANCY

Contact: 9246 9602 / 9723 0025

PRIME MOVERS FOR SALE

4x2 Mercedes Model 2010
4x2 Mercedes Model 2009
6x4 Mercedes Model 2011

Please contact: 9321 2634

SIT. WANTED

INDIAN, Kerala, MBA holder, 12 years of experience in HR/ Admin Oman. NOC available. Mobile: 97485991.

DRAUGHTSMAN, 9 years experience and 5 years in GCC. Preparing detail steel structural and mechanical drawings in Oil and gas, marine and detail building architectural drawings. Well knowledge of Autocad, Nupass CADMATIC hull viewer. Ready to join immediately. Contact: 7956818, email: rivas349@gmail.com

25 years old BS electrical engineer, having 2 years experience from Philippines in construction and telecommunication company. Having training in cable testing. Contact: 94759002.

FOR RENT

Villa for rent at Azaiba, 5 bedrooms, maderoom, family halls, dining room, kitchen, parking. Contact WhatsApp: 79255270.

5 BEDROOM villa in Al Athaiba. Contact 97716641.

FLATS, 2BHK and 1 BHK in Mumtaz ☎99341138/ 90991079.

FLATS in Ruwi, Wadi Al Kaber and Al Khuwair. ☎99358589/ 97079146.

FLATS, 2BHK in Ghubrah near Indian School. ☎99341138/ 90991079.

SERVICES

A LEGAL translation office needs **Marketeers**. Contact E-mail: oman4n@gmail.com

AUTOCAD/REVIT ARCH MEP, part/ full- time. Contact WhatsApp: 79037728.

AL SUMRI AC maintenance. We are ready to repair and install all types of Air-Conditioner within Muscat Governorate. 94301888.

RENT A CAR

Buttercup Rent A Car
AMAZING OFFERS
○ Rent a car for 10 days and get an extra free day.
○ Rent for one month and get 5 days free.
All the cars are 2016 brand new special prices for public departments, companies and long-term contracts. ☎972494490.

LUXURIOUS
Toyota bus 2016, air-conditioned, 30 passengers, offered for daily/monthly/ annually, Muscat. Contact: 98080609, 96316269.

المجرة للشحن اللوجستية GALAXY CARGO LOGISTICS

WORLD WIDE AIR & SEA CARGO SERVICES

Location: Rex Road, Behind Modern Oman Bakery
GSM : +968 99635330 / 93569551
Email : gcloman@hotmail.com
Website : gcloman.com

Airport to Airport
Port to Port
Door to Door
FCL Services
LCL Services
Consolidation
GCC Road Transport
Professional Packing
Moving Local & International

Quality Comes First

Tower Cranes & Passenger Lifts:

- Sales and Rental Services
- Installation
- Maintenance Service
- Breakdown Service
- Spare Parts Supply
- Hoist & Lowering
- Support Fixation
- Dismantling

Steel Fabrication Works

NEW MANARA TECHNICAL SERVICES LLC
Mobile: +968 9853 1975, 9853 1970
E-mail: info@newmanara.com / newmanaratechnical@gmail.com
Website: www.newmanara.com

ZEN POLYNE

"TARPAULIN WAREHOUSE IN OMAN"
INDIAN BRAND BEST QUALITY LLDPE TARPULINE CROSS LAMINATED MULTI-LAYER TARPULIN

FEATURES OF ZEN-POLYNE

- UV STABILIZED
- 100% WATER PROOF
- LIGHT WEIGHT
- THERMO - WELDED JOINTS.
- FLEXIBLE & CUSTOMISED SIZES.
- STRONGEST TARPULIN EVER
- SUPERIOR DART IMPACT STRENGTH

RAVIRA

Please Contact: OMAN : +968 9323 1473 / 7937 1865
UAE : +971 5638 5876
Mail Id: raviranmentary@zenpolyne.com Web: www.raviranil.com

VIGAS CARGO
WORLD WIDE DOOR TO DOOR

Transportation, Packing & Cargo Services

- CARGO SERVICES BY AIR & SEA WORLD WIDE
- DOOR TO DOOR DELIVERY IN INDIA, INDONESIA & UK
- PROFESSIONAL PACKERS & MOVERS
- MUSCAT - DUBAI - MUSCAT REGULAR TRANSPORT

H.O. Ruwi
99851366
92495068

Ghubrah : 93571703
Falaj : 93571704
Store : 93571823
Misfa : 98119561
93260956

vigas.cargo@yahoo.com

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.

Supply of Pesticides, Gel (crocoraches), Public Health chemicals, Agriculture chemicals, Snake repellent, Rodent baits and other insect repellent from UK & USA

PROFESSIONALS in Pest Control Service, Bedbug Treatment, Rodent Treatment, Snake Treatment and Termite Treatment [Pre & Post Construction]

Tel: 24787606, 24787503
Direct Line: 24786077
GSM: 99382355, 99172309

pcomctom@omantel.net.om
P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

Driving School

Special offers for those wishing to learn driving in (Aziba - Khwair Qurum - Ruwi Al Amirat)

Contact No: 99074072

EURO CHOICE FOODS L.L.C.
(Importers of Frozen, Chilled, Fresh & Dry Food Products)

Food Service
Catering Supply
Ship Chandling
Re-export

Fresh Fruits & Vegetables
Fresh & Chilled Meat and Chicken
Dairy Product & Grocery Items

Tel: +968 24435211 / 24435177
foodservice@eurochoicefoodsllc.com
www.eurochoicefoodsllc.com

apave **Apave Gulf LLC**

We are hiring! Only Omani Nationals

- HSE Advisor (NEBOSH IGC / IOSH Certified)
- Plant Inspector (API Certified - 570 / 653 / 510)
- NDT Inspector (ASNT Level II in Ultrasonic Testing)
- Data Analyst (Experience in Data entry operation and MS Office - Excel & Word skill is essential)
- Mechanical Piping Draftsman (AutoCAD experience)

Fresh graduates those who are willing to undergo certain technical training may also apply

Please submit your application with latest CV and contact numbers to: Email: info-gulf@apave.com

Al Salama Polyclinic
Modern Al Salama Polyclinic
Department of PSYCHIATRY

Dr. Monikeerthana Anandhasekar
MBBS, DPM, MRCPsych(UK)
Specialist Psychiatrist

Appointments: 24451726 - 24455904
24451739
info@alshalamapolyclinic.com
www.alshalamapolyclinic.com
Al Mabrah (Near Traffic Signal) Sultanate of Oman

TIMING:
9:00 am to 1:00 pm
5:00 pm to 9:00 pm

Emergency number **94502100**
Clinic Whatsapp 94502102

WE ACCEPT ALL MAJOR INSURANCE CARDS

FOR RENT

Substantial Villa in Hay Al Shatti near Grand Hayatt. 3 Floors with 40 Rooms, 22 Bathrooms which is suitable for Embassy / Clinic / School / Multipurpose Office / Residential Premises.

TEL : 99643760 / 24704994

"As proven in many virology lab tests"

+SHYCOCAN
Virus Attenuation Device

FOR ENQUIRY, OFFER OR PURCHASE CONTACT: 78676045

100% SAFE
No emission or radiation risk to human or environment

EFFECTIVE
Disables Coronavirus by up to 99.9% in enclosed location

PLUG & PLAY
Easy installation, just switch on for safety and no consumables

ROBUST
Specially engineering you against viruses in real time

DISABLES COVID FAMILY VIRUSES

ATTENUATES COVID WITH 99.9% EFFICACY INDOORS

Al Eman Dental Clinic

Flat 22, Floor 2
Abu Zaki Trading Building
Opp. Al Nahda Hospital
Sultan Qaboos Street

+968 24834113
+968 97454854
+968 96438854

Our Mission: To preserve your teeth and smile for a lifetime

USED SHEET METAL FABRICATION MACHINES

(Ideal for Manufacturing of Electrical / Switchgear Panels, Steel Enclosures, Steel Doors, Steel Furniture, S.S. Steel Fabrication)

- CNC - PRESS BRAKE - Rarely used (Bending Machine) - Turkey
- Shearing Machine 3m x 6mm - Taiwan
- Spot Welding Machines - Italy
- Mig Welding Machines - Italy
- Tig Welding Machines - Italy
- Hydraulic Power Press - Italy
- Notching Machine - Italy
- Shark - Bandsaw - Italy
- Variety of Dies
- 1mm Galvanised Steel Sheet 4 x 8 (JSW India) - Bundles of 100
- Also available: Shuttering Jacks, Concrete Mixer - Big & Small, Core Cutting Machine (All rarely used)

Contact : RIYAN OVERSEAS LLC
Mob : 9282 2121 / 9985 5801 - Email : mail@riyanmuscat.com

AL KHOORY EQUIPMENT EST.
P.O.Box 545, P.C. 117, Al Wadi Al Kabir Area, Sultanate of Oman

Official distributor of **Schneider Electric**

Stockist & Wholesaler of Low Voltage Switchgear Products and a One Stop Solution for all Switchgear Products and Assembly

Schneider Electric, Lovato, DAB, MEG, Franklin Electric, الشاذلي

Tel: +968 24832474, +968 79474556
E-mail: alkhoory@omantel.net.om * www.alkhooryoman.com

مخازن مغلقة ومبردة للإيجار في الدقم

COLD & CLOSE STRORES FOR RENT AT DUQM

79111172
99333223
97777456
94111118

مميزات المخازن

- موقع استراتيجي وقريب من ميناء الدقم
- مساحة كل مخزن
- تصل إلى 1000 م مربع
- مواقع بمساحات كبيرة مبلطة بالانترلوك
- توفر كافة وسائل السلامة والوقاية من الحرائق

AL NAMANI CARGO
DOOR TO DOOR AIR & SEA CARGO WORLD WIDE

ALL OVER INDIA EXPRESS DELIVERY

Online Tracking
TOLL FREE NUMBER **80066766**

24/7 FREE PICK UP
Service Available
www.alnamanicargo.com

INDIA | BANGLADESH | INDONESIA | PHILIPPINES | SRI LANKA | ETHIOPIA | ALL GCC SERVICE AVAILABLE

☎ 95587410, 99785420, 99638698, 98523831
22 YEARS OF EXCELLENT SERVICE IN OMAN
HO: RUWI - HAMRIYA, GHALA, AL AMRAT, SEEB, SOHAR, SUWAIQ

M M T CARGO
DOOR TO DOOR SERVICE

MUSCAT: 95605353, 95605454
BARKA: 95893242, 93743308
SOHAR: 96773031, 95347988
FALAJ: 94002341, 95136067
SALALAH: 94575905, 97858656
DUQUH: 97218831, 94002341

ROAD, SEA & AIR TRANSPORT WORLD WIDE

GTC Building, Near Badr Al Sama Hospital, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman
E-mail: mmtcargo@yahoo.com
Customer Care: 96773031 / 97695454

Sea Cargo **800 Bz/Kg** Express Cargo to Kerala 5 to 7 days*

Observer

For Advertisements

Please Contact with our Team:

Head Office

Mohd Al Rashdi
99841230
m.alrahd86@yahoo.com

Ali Al Maashari
99639264
wadiameeh@yahoo.com

Salalah Office

Bakhit Al Shihri
92998577
bakhit.omandaily@gmail.com

Nizwa Office

Abdullah Al Abri
99429094
nizwaofc@omandaily.net.om

Suhar Office

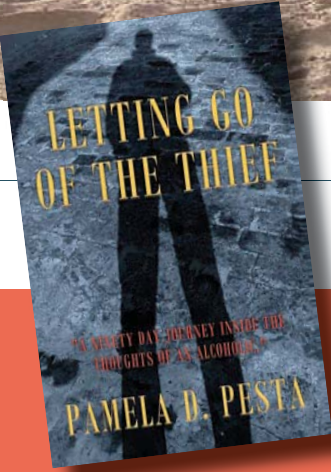
Musalam Al Saidi
99429192
sohardaily@outlook.com

The anatomy of an Omani camel race

The camel racing season is one of the hotly anticipated events in the Sultanate of Oman bringing communities from across the country into different race tracks to determine the year's best-performing camels. *Oman Daily Observer* looks into this phenomenon and breaks down what happens behind the scene... **P20**



READ



LETTING GO OF THE THIEF

BY PAMELA D PESTA

Welcome to the chaotic thrashing of a mind, pulsating with intoxication. Spend a few moments in the whirlwind of shame, guilt and utter desperation. The thief will shrewdly expose the terror of that human soul drenched in remorse and fear.

ART

Creation of 360-square-metre painting begins in Berlin

THE CREATION OF A huge indoor painting began on Wednesday in Berlin at a pop-up gallery at the Wittenberg platz square. The artist Peter Lindenberg plans to complete the 360-square-metre panorama painting, entitled

“Rien ne va plus...!?” (Nothing works anymore), on February 10. At 120 metres wide and 3 metres high, the painting is intended to draw attention to today's digital media reality. “I want to transmit the virtuality of the media back into

the visitors' experiential reality and make it a sensual-visual experience with oversized drawings, sketches and collages”, Lindenberg said. The acrylic and charcoal painting shows his personal memories of real places such as the Great Wall of China, which Lindenberg combines with sequences from the history of film. “Sometimes the themes mix within the drawing. I also try to represent the contrasts of the world that come together in my mind”, Lindenberg said. The artist often works with mostly large-format paintings and sculptures, which can be seen in exhibitions and collections in Europe, the United States and China. — dpa





find us on
TWITTER
Scan the QR Code or follow us on
www.twitter.com/omanobserver

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



marcosky80 • Following
Oman



ashgrao • Follow
Shangri-la hotel muscat



dhananjayadhar_photography • Follow
Muscat, Oman



SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

We select three photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. The rules are simple. Follow us on Instagram. Upload your photos. Tag us and use **#OmanObserver** and **#BeAnObserver**.



AROUND THE WORLD

LIFESTYLE

Thai cafe serves up crypto advice with coffee and cake



A CAFE IN northeast Thailand has become home to cryptocurrency traders, adding banks of screens showing the latest market moves and dishing out investment advice alongside coffee and cake.

Behind a calm exterior of cherry blossom trees, customers of HIP Coffee & Restaurant stare at their laptops, supping nervously on iced coffee — part of a surging interest in digital assets in Thailand that has regulators worried.

"It's exciting for me to be here because I get to meet people who share the same interests," said Detnarong Satianphut, a 35-year-old crypto trader.

"We (traders) get to exchange information because in the trading world we are coming up against millions of people."

Cryptocurrencies have been gaining momentum in Thailand, with as much as 251 billion baht (\$7.62 billion) in digital asset traded in November, according to the latest official data.

Earlier this month, Thailand said it would start to regulate the use of digital assets as payments, warning of potential risks to financial stability and the overall economic system.

HIP cafe, which has been around since 2013, got its crypto makeover in 2020.

Since then, according to staff, its customers have doubled. Manager Oakkharawat Yongsakuljinda said the cafe provides alternative investment opportunities for people in the surrounding Nakhon Ratchasima province.

It offers free investment consulting and is planning on starting its own cryptocurrency coin.

Its customers say trading in the cafe offers them the best chance of success in a volatile market, in which the most well known cryptocurrency, bitcoin, hit six-month lows this week.

"Having so many screens helps a lot... We immediately know and get to analyse crashing factors and whether we should buy," said 23-year-old trader Apakon Putnok. — **Reuters**

ART

Rare Franz Marc painting goes on sale after returning to family that fled Nazis



A RARE PAINTING by German expressionist Franz Marc — returned last year from a museum to the descendents of a Jewish collector who fled the Nazis — is expected to set a new world record for the artist when it is offered for sale in an auction next month.

"The Foxes" (Die Fuchse), featuring two brightly coloured, intertwined foxes, is estimated to fetch around £35 million (\$47 million) when it goes on sale at Christie's in London on March 1.

"It'll be an amazing moment for the art world because Franz Marc's important pictures are incredibly rare," Jussi

Pylkkanen, Christie's global president, said as the artwork went on display.

Marc, a leading figure of the German expressionist movement, was born in Munich in 1880 and died in the World War One battle of Verdun aged just 36. His short career means his body of work is small and very few of his paintings are in private hands.

"The Foxes" was purchased in 1928 by German-Jewish collector Kurt Grawi, who according to Christie's was forced to sell it to help his family survive and flee Nazi Germany. The painting was later given to the Kunstpalast Museum in

Dusseldorf.

"The picture was restituted to the family last year after a long process, and they had already made the decision that when they got it back, that it would be put onto the open market for the next great collector to have the opportunity to own it," Pylkkanen said.

Marc "painted only 45 paintings in 1913, of which four are in private hands. This is a masterpiece that has been on show in a museum in Germany since 1962, so it really is a moment which several generations of collectors have been waiting for," Pylkkanen said.

— **Reuters**

CULTURE

Cambodian lion dancers cling to craft amid COVID pandemic



CAMBODIAN DRAGON and lion dancer Gnuon Virak huddles his troupe together in a circle, before they let out a team cheer and get to work rehearsing for their a Lunar New Year performance — their only one of the pandemic-stricken year.

Gnuon, 28, has loved dancing since he was a child, and grew up near a Chinese-style temple in the capital Phnom Penh. Seven years ago, he asked a master to teach him to dance and joined a troupe, known as the Bodhi Tree Troupe. Eventually he became a team leader.

"We must practice this dancing every day," he said during a rehearsal. "This requires complete focus and motivation."

The transportation company employee used to supplement his regular income of about \$300 a month with lion and dragon dances, earning about \$20 to perform at local events. That has all but dried up during the pandemic, with



the number of performances bottoming out to about one a month instead of five.

The Cambodian Chinese Association estimates there are about eight troupes in Phnom Penh, but Gnuon worries that number may shrink.

"I want the younger generation to hold on to this tradition and make it even more well-known in the future," he said.

Sino-Khmers have long been an integral part of Cambodian society. Historical records estimate the first Chinese came to the area in the 13th century.

During the Khmer Rouge era in the 1970s, the community devastated, as the regime lashed out against well-educated, urban merchants. But in recent years, the ancestral ties to China have brought prosperity to Sino-Khmers as China aggressively ramps up investment in Cambodia's economy.

Gnuon said he hopes to introduce some new styles to bring attention to lion and dragon dancing, such as increasing the number of dancers on elevated poles, or using larger poles.

"We'll keep all our current techniques and also create some new styles in order to make the dancing more well-known, or to be able to compete with other troupes," he said. — **Reuters**



The anatomy of an Omani camel race

By Ruqaya al Kindi

As an integral part of Omani heritage, the country is seeing a growing interest in the purebred Arabian camels for racing purposes with camel acquisition and breeding also expanding in different communities as it has proven to be reliable and financially rewarding means of livelihood.

"There are approximately 25,000 camels officially registered in the Oman Camel Racing Federation. This number, in reality, is more as a large number are not registered particularly those camels within the Al Mafarid and Hajjaj group [the name of camels varies according to their age group]" shared Salim al Hashmi said, Member of the Board of The Omani Camel Racing Federation and Chairman of The Committee for Studies, Research and Digital Data.

Salim said that almost every governorate organise their own camel races but North Al Sharqiyah has been identified as the top governorate that handles the most number of camel races annually. The governorate is also home to the most trainers, locally called "Al Mudhamarin", who help in rehabilitating camels ensuring that they are safe for competition.

"These camels coaches, just like in other sports, hold the secrets to a camel's victory. Camels are trained in a closed camp, which is held next to each race track as well as a permanent camp, a place for camel breeding locally called "Ezbba", Salim said.

Abdullah al Darei, who raises his own camels in Adam said that "Our constant presence on the "Ezbba" makes us permanently close to these camels. This relationship between trainers, coaches and the camels are important and usually requires patience and skill from camel breeders and trainers."

"Winning does not happen overnight. For a camel to win an event, we spend months rehabilitating and preparing the camels," Abdullah added.

Due to its popularity, the country currently has invested in very efficient and high-level racing facilities which include the Al Bashayer and Al Fulaj racetracks.

"There are about 45 high-level racetracks in Oman with different shapes, facilities and specifications. We usually have oval, circular or straight tracks and these tracks are further divided into different distances which ranges between 8 and 10

km," he added.

To ensure a camel's ability to race, its lineage is usually traced.

"There are meticulous records about a race camel's breed. Both mother and father are also usually put on a lens and their performances are tracked especially their winnings. Currently, even Oman looks into international laboratories to determine the breeds of camels, Salim al Hashmi said.

From its lineage, racing camels are also quality reviewed for their thinness of the body, agility, running speed, endurance and response to training. While camels for breeding usually do not require a lot, camels that are meant for racing are given supplements to enhance their performance. For Instance, Abdullah said that original honey, Omani ghee and some sports medicine are the go-to for many breeders and coaches.

"Camel race events bring different communities in one place. From urban dwellers to Bedouins across all ages, a large number of people enjoy participating," said Ali al Busaidy, an avid attendee of the races.

Camel races are also the best place for people to be reminded of some of their important traditions.

For instance, Ali pointed out that in Oman, it is customary to honour the winning camel. "Camels are given a ceremonial bath by matriarchs of the families or other women in the community. Saffron is usually mixed with some of the best smells and then sprinkled on the camel's back as tribute and appreciation to their momentous accomplishment," Ali said.

The financial gains in this endeavour are not just on the breeders and racers side but also trickle down to the rest of the community particularly to those who provide nutritional food and supplements to camel owners.

Because of the national importance of these races, the Omani Camel Racing Federation has been the official institution that looks after the integrity of the races but also enacts the laws to regulate the sport.

Overall, the sport has been divided into different types namely Muzaiana, muhlaba, Ardah and the usual camel race.

"The season for camel racing is usually between September to April when the temperature and weather are appropriate," Salim said.

Camel racing festivals usually have big season-ender matches which include His Majesty's Cup. These final races usually give out big prizes.

