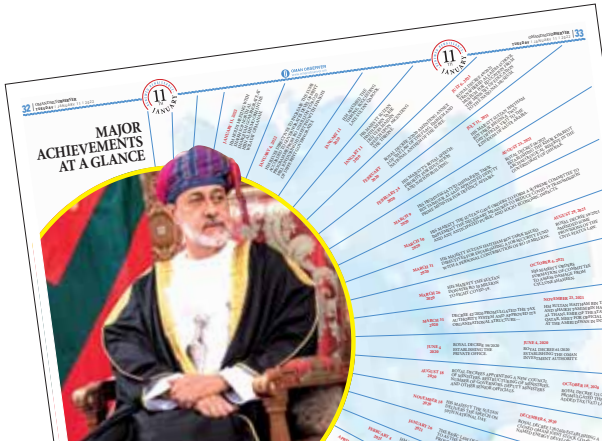




11th January, Anniversary of His Majesty the Sultan's Accession to Power — page 29-36



Marching ahead on the path of progress



HIS MAJESTY THE SULTAN UPHOLDS THE OMANI TRADITIONS OF CITIZENS' SOLIDARITY WITH THEIR LEADERSHIP

THE CITIZENS TAKE PRIDE IN THE POSITIVE RESULTS EMANATING FROM THE TANGIBLE MEASURES UNDERTAKEN TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES OF THE RENEWED RENAISSANCE LED BY HIS MAJESTY THE SULTAN

HIS MAJESTY THE SULTAN CALLED UPON ALL CITIZENS TO CONTINUE TO SAFEGUARD THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE RENAISSANCE AND WORK FOR THE ELEVATION OF THE STATUS OF THIS COUNTRY

Government will spare no efforts in shouldering its responsibilities

HIS MAJESTY POINTS OUT THAT ELEVATING OMAN TO ITS DESERVED STATUS IS A NATIONAL DUTY THAT REQUIRES THE CONTRIBUTION OF EACH CITIZEN

MANAH: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Monday held a meeting at Hisn Al Shumookh in the Wilayat of Manah with shaikhs of North Al Sharqiyah Governorate.

The Diwan of Royal Court issued a statement to this effect reading as follows:

"In continuation of Royal meetings held by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik with shaikhs of Governorates in the Sultanate of Oman to serve interests of the country and citizens of this dear homeland and, in pursuance of His Majesty's attention to interact directly with citizens, His Majesty the Sultan held a meeting on Monday January 10, 2022, with shaikhs of the North Al Sharqiyah Governorate at Hisn Al Shumookh in Manah.

At the outset of the meeting, His Majesty the Sultan gave thanks and praise to the Almighty



The government is pressing ahead with measures to upgrade citizens' living standards and achieve economic stability and prosperity

HIS MAJESTY SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK

Allah for the great bounties of safety and security He has bestowed on Oman, praying to Allah that the march of building in Oman be a success.

After that, His Majesty the Sultan touched on a variety of issues of developmental, economic and social significance to citizens' aspirations. He affirmed that the government is pressing ahead with measures to upgrade citizens' living standards and achieve

economic stability and prosperity. He pointed out that elevating Oman to its deserved status is a national duty that requires the contribution of each citizen.

Then, His Majesty the Sultan engaged in an open dialogue with the shaikhs, who presented demands and requests for development projects and services needed in their wilayats. This reflected the depth of the relationship between the leader and the people.

His Majesty the Sultan stressed that the government would spare no effort in shouldering its responsibilities and that the renewed renaissance is cutting its way through, in firm resolve, and will eventually attain its objectives.

The meeting was attended by HH Sayyid Bel'arab bin Haitham al Said, Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance, Dr Hamad bin Said al Aufi, Head of the Private Office, Shaikh Ali bin Ahmed al Shamsi, Governor of North Al Sharqiyah and walis of the governorate.

May the Almighty Allah protect His Majesty the Sultan and grant him good health and well-being. May He protect Oman, citizens and residents against all harms." — ONA

11th January, Anniversary of HM's Accession to Power

Today, the 11th of January, coincides with the anniversary of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's assuming the reins of power in the Sultanate of Oman, succeeding the late Sultan Qaboos. The anniversary, which constitutes a historic date in Oman, epitomises that unanimous stance of Omanis who, on this day in 2020, welcomed their monarch, pledging loyalty and allegiance to him.

Since he assumed the reins of power in the Sultanate of Oman, His Majesty the Sultan called upon all citizens to continue to safeguard

the achievements of the renaissance and work for the elevation of the status of this country, so that its people would have a better life.

His Majesty the Sultan upholds the Omani traditions of citizens' solidarity with their leaderships. He continues to meet citizens from all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, acting from his deep conviction in the significance of directly interacting with the public and listening to opinions and proposals that serve the interests of the country and its citizens.

SEE P 29-36



MANAH: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq on Monday held a meeting at Hisn Al Shumook castle in the Wilayat of Manah with Shaikhs of North Al Sharqiyah Governorate.

GOVT WILL SHOULDER ITS RESPONSIBILITIES



Warm felicitations to
His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik
and the people of Oman
on the occasion of the 2nd Anniversary of
His Majesty's Accession.



#Jan11th_Renewed_Renaissance



Oman, our
divine objective



ooredoo



Sultanate of Oman, Iran seek to strengthen cooperation

MUSCAT: His Highness Sayyid Fahd Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, received here on Monday Dr Hossein Amir Abdollahian, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Iranian official conveyed greetings and best wishes of President Dr Ebrahim Raisi of Iran to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq and people the Sultanate of Oman.

The meeting reviewed the bilateral relations and means of enhancing them in various fields. It also touched on matters of common interest.

The two sides exchanged views on regional and international developments and the efforts exerted for the consolidation of peace and stability to serve the peoples of the region and enhance international cooperation.

The two sides stressed the importance of activating



the joint Omani-Iranian committee, as well as increasing consultations between the two countries on several issues of regional concern.

The meeting was attended by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister and Ali Najafi Khoshroudi, Ambassador of Iran to Oman.

POLITICAL TALKS

Also on Monday, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy held a session of political

talks with Dr Hossein Amir Abdollahian.

The session reviewed relations of cooperation between the two countries in various spheres and the means of enhancing them.

The two sides reviewed some regional and international issues of common interest. They also touched on Vienna talks regarding the nuclear agreement "Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)",

emphasising the importance of the Plan to achieve security and stability.

The session was attended by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, the Foreign Ministry's Under-Secretary for Diplomatic Affairs, Khalid bin Hashel al Musalhi, Head of the Minister's Office Department, Ali Najafi Khoshroudi, Ambassador of Iran to Oman, and members of the delegation accompanying the guest.

— ONA

His Majesty pardons 229 prisoners

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, the Supreme Commander, has issued a Royal pardon to a number of prisoners convicted of different cases.

They included 229 prisoners, 70 of them are foreign prisoners, according to an official source at the

Royal Oman Police (ROP).

The Royal pardon of His Majesty the Sultan coincides with the anniversary of January 11, the day when His Majesty assumed reins of power. It also comes in consideration of the families of the prisoners.

— ONA

HM condolences to Emir of Qatar

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq has sent a cable of condolences to Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, on the death of Shaikh Mohammed bin Khalid bin Hamad bin Abdullah al Thani.

His Majesty expressed his heartfelt condolences and sympathies, praying to Allah the Almighty to rest the departed soul in peace and grant his family fortitude to bear the loss.

— ONA

4 kidney transplant surgeries conducted in a week at RH

MUSCAT: A specialised medical team from the Royal Hospital conducted four kidney transplant surgeries in one week. It used advanced endoscopes to end the suffering of two children and four adults who had been inflicted with chronic complications.

The accomplishment caps the success of the National Programme for Human Organ and Tissue Transplant.

The programme assumed legal status when its organisational regulation was issued and endorsed in 2018. It aims to streamline targets and principles in the field of organ and tissue transplants, besides lending support to research in

related clinical areas.

The medical team comprised cadres from the Royal Hospital, including Dr Mohammed al Abri, Dr Khalid al Bulushi, Dr Mohammed Salah, Dr Shatha al Zaabi, Dr Ashraf Abdulsalam, Dr Nawal al Sharji, Dr Mohammed al Riyami, Dr Naveen al Kalbani, Dr Sadiq al Lawati, Dr Faisal al Ismaili, Dr Issa al Salmi, Dr Mohammed Hamed, Dr Marwa al Bulushi, nurse Khadia al Habsi and other assisting teams. It also saw the participation of Dr Fairuz Amir, an expert of kidney transplantation and advanced laparoscopic surgeries.

— ONA

SBT Sohar SAOC

EXTRA ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING AGENDA

The Board of Directors of **S B T Sohar SAOC** is pleased to invite the Company's shareholders to attend the company's extraordinary General Meetings, to be held at 1:50 pm on **Wednesday, 26/01/2022**, in the company's head quarter in Qurum, near the Philippine Embassy if the quorum of the meeting is not completed, a second annual ordinary general meeting will be held on **Thursday 27/01/2022** at the same time and place to discuss the following agenda:

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

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

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

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

SBT Sohar SAOC

ANNUAL ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING AGENDA

The Board of Directors of **S B T Sohar SAOC** is pleased to invite the Company's shareholders to attend the company's ordinary Annual General Meetings, to be held at 2:00 pm on **Wednesday, 26/01/2022**, in the company's head quarter in Qurum, near the Philippine Embassy if the quorum of the meeting is not completed, a second annual ordinary general meeting will be held on **Thursday 27/01/2022** at the same time and place to discuss the following agenda:

1. To consider and approve the Report of the Board of Directors for the financial year ended on 31/3/2021.
2. To consider the auditor's report and approve the balance sheet and profit and loss account for the financial year ended on 31/3/2021.
3. To approve the sitting fees paid to the board of directors' meetings and its sub-committees for the previous financial year and to determine the fees for the forthcoming financial year.
4. The appointment of the Auditors for the Company for the financial year ending 31/3/2022 and approve their fees.

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

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

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



Sultan Qaboos University Hospital

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Sultan Qaboos University Hospital announces the following tender:

Tender No.	Subject	Non-Refundable Fee	Last Collection Date	Site Visit Date	Last Date of Submission
HMD/T/ 32/2022	ELECTROMECHANICAL AND CIVIL OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE SERVICES IN SQUH	OMR. 290	18/01/2022	19/01/2022	21/02/2022

Tender Conditions:

1. The companies who are registered in Tender Board shall collect the documents during office hours from 8.00 am to 1.00 pm from the Procurement Department/ Sultan Qaboos University Hospital.
2. The site visit shall be at 10.00 am in the Technical Affaires Department building / Sultan Qaboos University Hospital.
3. The Tenderers shall submit with the form of tender a certified cheque or tender bond from a locally registered bank in the sum of (1%) of the tender value and valid for 90 days from the date of tender submission and addressed to the chairman of tender committee, Sultan Qaboos University.
4. The tender quotations shall be sealed and addressed to Procurement Director; Sultan Qaboos University Hospital. The tender number and the name of the tender shall be mentioned on the tender document. It is not accepted to indicate or mention the name of the company or its logo on the envelop.
5. The quotations are subject to the Tender General Terms & Conditions for the Sultan Qaboos University Hospital.
6. Sultan Qaboos University Hospital is not bound to accept the lowest bid or any other bid.

Procurement Directorate
Sultan Qaboos University Hospital
AL Khoudh / Sultanate of Oman
Tel: 24144688/ 24144633
Fax: 24413156
E-mail: hospitalprocure@squ.edu.om
www.squ.edu.om



Over 6m mobile phone subscriptions till Nov 2021



MUSCAT: The total number of fixed mobile subscriptions via Internet protocol in the Sultanate of Oman increased by 3.2% as of the end of November 2021, according to data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The number of fixed Internet subscriptions reached 526,367 by the end of November 2021.

Total fixed telephone line subscriptions reached 577,966 by the end of November 2021, while the number of mobile phone subscriptions reached 6,026,395, comprising a decline by 3.1% compared to the same period in 2020.

The total international capacity of the Internet went down by 2.6% compared to November 2020 to stand at 1,501,777 megabytes.

The number of local leased circuits reached 4,950, whereas the number of Telex line subscriptions stood at 116 by the end of November 2021. — ONA



Council of Ministers approves new sports, culture clubs: Sayyid Theyazin

MUSCAT: Within the context of the Royal attention accorded by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to sports and culture clubs — given their role in honing the skills and talents of youth and serving as podiums for cultural, sports and youth activities — and, in keeping with

Oman Vision 2040, His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, has unveiled the Council of Ministers' approval to announce sports and culture clubs in some wilayats, as listed below:

1. The Wilayat of Al Amerat in Muscat Governorate

2. The Wilayat of Nakhl in South Al Batinah Governorate
3. The Wilayat of Taqah in Dhofar Governorate
4. The Wilayat of Izki in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate
5. The Wilayat of Dima W'attayeen in North Al Sharqiyah Governorate

6. The Wilayat of Dhank in Al Dhahirah Governorate
- HH Sayyid Theyazin wished that the clubs will cater to the needs of different segments of society, notably by hosting social events and activities to meet the objectives that gave rise to their establishment. — ONA

NDC COUNCIL HOLDS ANNUAL MEETING



The Board of the National Defence College (NDC) on Monday held its annual meeting for the academic year 2021-2022, under the chairmanship of Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), Chairman of the NDC Board. The meeting reviewed the evaluation results of the current and previous stages. It also covered the progress of the current academic programme for 2021-2022. — ONA



Chief of Staff of Bahrain Defence Force arrives

MUSCAT: Lieutenant General Dhiab bin Saqr al Nuaimi, Chief of Staff of Bahrain Defence Force (BDF), and his accompanying military delegation arrived here on a several-day official visit to the Sultanate of Oman.

The guest and his delegation were received upon arrival at Seeb Air Base by Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), and a number of senior officers of SAF. — ONA

Website and logo of Oman Forum for Environment Sustainability launched

MUSCAT: The Environment Authority and Al Roya Newspaper on Monday launched the website and logo of the Oman Forum for Environment Sustainability, which will kick off in its first edition in 2023.

The forum will be an Omani international platform that enriches research and dialogue on persevering the environment and ensuring its sustainability.

The launching ceremony came in the 5th Oman Environment Forum, themed "the vital safety of our atmosphere" which coincides with the celebration of Oman Environment Day.

The opening ceremony of the forum was held under the patronage of Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

Al Habsi said that this event discusses the effects of air pollution and climate change on the environment. This topic, Al Habsi affirmed, requires



collective efforts, as well as cooperation and the exchange of expertise on local and regional levels.

A workshop was held on the sidelines of the forum, covering the topic of the GCC and WHO dust-related air quality standards.

Moreover, establishments and individuals who contributed in preserving the environment were awarded in the forum. — ONA



Trees planted as part of green campaign

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

The Oman Environment Day, which falls on January 8 every year, saw a series of activities, including initiatives to mark the day in various parts of the country by planting trees to increase the country's green cover. To realise this, the Environment Authority has set an ambitious plan to have 10 million trees.

According to the Authority, cyclones and rains have increased tree cover in many governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. In addition, a rise in water level in the underground basins has also been observed.

Marking the Day, the conclusion of the Empty Quarter Festival witnessed several activities, including a five-km walk followed by plantation of 200 trees of Sidr and Ghaf as well as cleaning of tourist sites in the desert.

The Environment Department in the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah held a campaign to plant and distribute 2,000 seedlings of Omani wild trees in the Wilayat of Nizwa in cooperation with the Wali of Nizwa.

In cooperation with the Environment

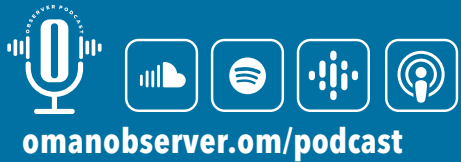
Administration in Al Wusta Governorate, the Marine Environment Conservation Department carried out a campaign to plant 2,300 saplings of cane trees in addition to some efforts made to protect and enrich marine habitats.

Continuing with the framework of the national initiative to plant 10 million trees, the Environment Administration in North Al Batinah Governorate involved a group of students and planted 1,200 saplings in Shinas Creek. The plantation comes as a complement to the efforts of the Authority to implement the qualification programme of the youngsters in the framework of the National Agriculture Initiative.

Heritage and Tourism department in the North Al Sharqiyah Governorate planted 230 wild seedlings in the Arabian Oryx Camps, Desert Nights, Sama Al Wasel, Al Rahala camp, and Bidiya Tourist Camp in cooperation with the Environment Authority and the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The initiative aims to plant 1,000 wild seedlings in the tourist camps in Rimal Al Sharqiya (Sharqiyah Sands) in multiple stages.





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7



Strong measures kept the pandemic under control



KABEER YOUSUF

@kabeeryousuf

The Sultanate of Oman handled Covid-19 efficiently since the outbreak of the pandemic. The able leadership in the country took all possible measures to contain its spread and protect its population through all

possible measures.

The slew of initiatives that the Supreme Committee on Covid-19 took has merited global recognition and international health agencies appreciated the steps taken by the country to protect its people from the pandemic.

In its first decision the country's leadership

decided to set up a Supreme Committee to tackle the situation emerging out of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The country efficiently handled the situation through appropriate measures. It covered most of its target population with vaccination and booster doses.

Ministry urges caution as Covid cases rise

TOTAL CASES REGISTERED SO FAR REACH 308,261

KABEER YOUSUF

@kabeeryousuf

The Ministry of Health (MoH) has urged all to adhere to Covid protocol as the number of cases jumped three times high in a week's time.

The ministry on Monday reported 539 new cases and one death during the last 24 hours.

The total number of cases registered in the country reached 308,261, including 4,119 deaths.

The total number of recoveries reached 301,083 with recovery rate of 97.7 per cent.

In the last 24 hours 14 patients were admitted to hospitals across the country and the total number of inpatients is 40, including six in intensive care units (ICUs).

The number of Covid cases registered with the MoH on Sunday was 539 against 176 cases reported on January 3 which is more than three times high.

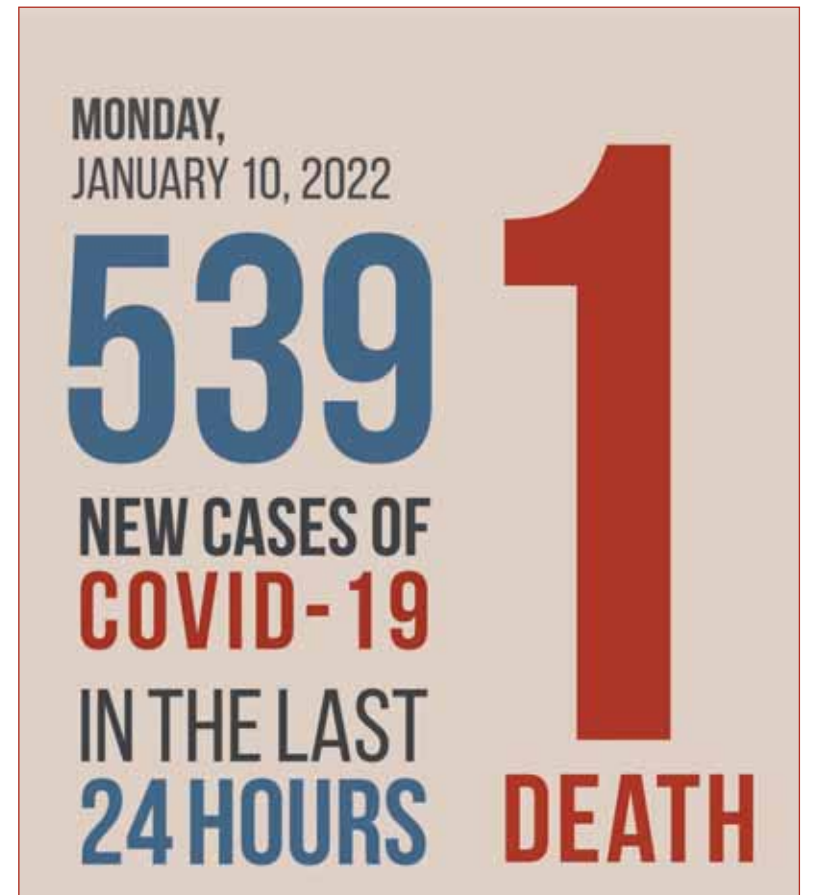
Added to it, there has been one death over the weekend and another one reported on Sunday.

The World Health Organization (WHO) and the MoH have urged people to stick to Covid protocol and avoid gatherings and close contacts.

"There are several reasons why we're seeing such a sharp increase in case numbers", says Dr Maria Van Kerkhove, Covid-19 Technical lead, WHO Health Emergencies Programme.

According to her, the predominant reason is the emergence of Omicron and the circulation of Omicron, which transmits very efficiently between people.

"There's a number of reasons for this. First is the mutations that it has. The virus is able to adhere to human cells more easily. It has mutations that



Vaccines are incredibly effective at preventing severe disease and death, but they don't prevent all infections and they don't prevent all onward transmission

DR MARIA VAN KERKHOVE

WHO official

don't prevent all infections and they don't prevent all onward transmission. So it is still absolutely critical to get vaccinated because it will save your life, but it doesn't prevent all infections or transmission", Dr Maria added.

Dr Nihal Afifi, Head of Primary Health and contact point for vaccination, informed that all can get their vaccines administered at the old airport building in Seeb on an appointment.

"Now anyone can have vaccine at the old airport premises including the 3rd dose on an appointment through tarassud plus app."

She advocates that people should avoid mixing more, people coming into contact with others more and adhere to public health and social measures like social distancing, wearing of a well-fitting mask, avoiding crowds and spending time more outdoors than indoors.

allow it to do that. Second, is that we have what is called immune escape." This means that people can be reinfected.

She urged all to get vaccinated as the governments advise and safeguard oneself and others.

"Vaccines are incredibly effective at preventing severe disease and death, but they



Family affairs panel discusses media impact on the young

MUSCAT: The National Committee for Family Affairs on Monday held a meeting during which it discussed the impact of media means on young people, a proposal on maternity leave for working women and cases reported to the Public Prosecution Department. The meeting was held under the auspices of HE Dr Laila bint

Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development, chairperson of the committee.

The National Committee for Family Affairs, established under Royal Decree No 12/2007, specialises in drafting policies and programmes on family welfare. It is tasked with coordinating with official authorities and voluntary organisations and encouraging

research in family matters.

The committee also follows up and implements decisions and recommendations issued within the context of international conferences. In addition, it offers opinions on related agreements and liaises with Arab and international committees and councils.

— ONA

ODB augments project funding budget to RO 86 million

MUSCAT: Oman Development Bank (ODB) has announced the augmentation of project funding budget to RO 86 in 2022. The sum is largely allocated for entrepreneurship and SMEs projects.

This drive comes within the framework of implementing the Royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to boost entrepreneurship programmes. — ONA



FAO conference debates policies on food systems

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, took part in the first senior officials' session in the Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) 36th Regional Conference for Near East and North Africa, hosted by Iraq.

Oman's delegation was headed in the online conference by Dr Ahmed bin Nasser al Bakri, the Ministry's Under-Secretary for Agriculture.

The conference is an opportunity to exchange opinions on directives and regional priorities which affect FAO's action. The session discussed regional and international policies and other regulatory matters to transform agricultural food systems towards achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs). It also reviewed the role of women in the Near East and North Africa in these areas.

— ONA

Chaos and opportunism in Kazakhstan



DJOOMART OTORBAEV

Was prime minister of Kyrgyzstan in 2014-15

The protests that erupted across Kazakhstan on January 2 quickly turned into riots in all of the country’s major cities. What do the protesters want, and what will be the outcome of the country’s most severe civil unrest since independence in 1991?

Although the initial trigger was a doubling of fuel prices, the protesters soon demanded the dissolution of parliament and new elections. Moreover, they want former President Nursultan Nazarbayev to exit the political scene for good.

Nazarbayev, the country’s ruler for the first 30 years of independence, gave up the presidency in 2019, but not before having himself named “leader of the nation” and thus

ensuring that he would maintain a tight grip on the country’s politics. Protesters toppled a statue of him in Taldykorgan, the capital of the Almaty region, with chants of “Shal ket!” (“Old man, go away!”).

As of January 7, clashes had killed dozens of law enforcement officials and demonstrators, and Nazarbayev’s successor, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, had declared a state of emergency and requested assistance from the Kremlin. Russian President Vladimir Putin quickly answered the call, deploying Russian troops to help quell the protests. Tokayev has given the security forces permission to “fire without warning” on protesters.

With conditions on the ground changing by the hour, it is too early

WHAT STARTED AS A PROTEST OVER SOCIOECONOMIC ISSUES HAS ESCALATED INTO A BATTLE AMONG OLIGARCHS

to predict how the confrontation will end. Nonetheless, some preliminary conclusions are already possible.

For starters, the authorities clearly panicked when the protests erupted. How else to explain Tokayev’s frantic call for foreign troops to enter the country to impose order? Instead of recognising that the protests are an angry—and predictable—response to the government’s own policies, he has conjured the spectre of an external aggressor.

Tokayev claims that the rioters received extensive training abroad. In his appeal to the members of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), he insisted that his government needed help to overcome a “terrorist threat.” But the rationale for appealing to the CSTO remains in question: Why would any other country bother to offer “serious training” to “bandit formations” to disrupt Kazakhstan’s regional centres?

By calling on Putin, Tokayev has made a risky bet. What would happen if Russian paratroopers started mowing down Kazakhstani women or children, or if a Russian military helicopter were to crash in some densely populated area? Any such event would deepen

the crisis, as well as the scale of Russia’s intervention. In fact, it is hard to see how the presence of CSTO “peacekeepers” could do anything other than inflame the situation and awaken anti-Russian and nationalist sentiment in Kazakhstan.

Obviously, the real issue concerns the government’s own competence and legitimacy. With well-trained police and security forces and a fully equipped army, why couldn’t the authorities manage the protests on their own? Most likely, they could have done so. But by seeking Putin’s help, Tokayev hopes to shape the internal situation in ways that will buttress his own rule vis-à-vis rival factions.

— *Project Syndicate Services*

EyeQ: New lane assistant doesn’t even need road markings

Lane departure warnings - the automatic alerts that go off in modern cars when the driver accidentally leaves the lane - traditionally rely on clearly visible lane markings on the road to properly work.

But a new kind of system developed by Intel subsidiary Mobileye and set to be installed in Volkswagen’s electric cars doesn’t need any visual help from its surroundings.

Instead of being guided by white or yellow lines on the road, the system follows precisely the route that other vehicles were driving on that road based on previously collected data.

In the past year alone, information on 4 billion kilometres has been added, Mobileye announced last week at the CES tech fair in Las Vegas.

Today, conventional lane assistants can only be used on about half of the kilometres driven, Mobileye manager Johann Jungwirth pointed out. The reason is not only that the markings are missing, but also because they cannot be recognised by the vehicle’s cameras due to rain, snow or dirt, for example.

At the CES, Mobileye also presented a chip system for autonomous driving called EyeQ Ultra. Mobileye expects it to be launched in the first vehicles from 2025.

“Autonomous driving will be possible with an EyeQ Ultra chip, you will then usually only have a second processor, which is a little smaller, for redundancy,” Jungwirth said.

“I don’t see anything that can stop us, neither regulatory, nor technical, nor in terms of customer acceptance.”

Mobileye is now sending its self-driving test cars out for road tests in Tel Aviv, Munich, Paris and Tokyo.

EyeQ Ultra relies on all-round vision with eleven cameras, as well as additional data from radar sensors and laser radars called Lidar. “In the next three to five years I don’t see any technical possibility of bringing a system onto the market that is only camera-based,” said Jungwirth, who previously worked at Mercedes, Apple and Volkswagen, among others. “But we are not saying it will never happen.”

Tesla boss Elon Musk, among others, has always shown himself convinced that cameras are sufficient and that laser radar is an expensive detour. But most developers of robot car technology consider them indispensable for now. The technology scans the cars’ surroundings and can detect them even in poor visibility conditions. — **dpa**

INSTEAD OF BEING GUIDED BY WHITE OR YELLOW LINES ON THE ROAD, THE NEW SYSTEM FOLLOWS PRECISELY THE ROUTE THAT OTHER VEHICLES WERE DRIVING ON



The daughter of an independence hero, Suu Kyi spent nearly two decades enduring long stretches of house arrest under the former military regime.

The prisoner of generals

After years on the front lines of Myanmar’s battle for democracy, 76-year-old Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi is once again a prisoner of the military, facing the bleak possibility of decades in detention.

The former leader has been held since a coup that ousted her government in the early hours of February 1 last year, ending a brief democratic interlude for the country.

The daughter of an independence hero, Suu Kyi spent nearly two decades enduring long stretches of house arrest under the former military regime.

Her National League for Democracy (NLD) swept national elections last November and she had been preparing to begin another five-year term as the nation’s de facto leader.

But the coup and Suu Kyi’s detention sidelined her from Myanmar’s democracy movement, which has forged a more radical path as she fights a raft of charges that could see her jailed for years.

On Monday, she was sentenced to four years over charges related to importing and possessing walkie-talkies and flouting Covid rules.

The judgment added to a two-year sentence last month for incitement against the military and for other Covid violations.

She will remain under house arrest as she battles a slew of other charges.

While Suu Kyi remains immensely popular in Myanmar, her legacy abroad became deeply tarnished by her government’s handling of the Rohingya crisis.

There was global revulsion at a 2017 military crackdown that saw around 750,000 members of the stateless Rohingya minority flee burning villages to neighbouring Bangladesh.

DAUGHTER OF A HERO

Suu Kyi was born on June 19, 1945 in Japanese-occupied Yangon during the final weeks of World War II.

Her father Aung San fought for and against both the British and the Japanese colonisers as he jostled to give his country the best shot at independence, achieved in 1948.

Suu Kyi spent most of her early years outside of Myanmar — first in India, where her mother was an ambassador, and later at Oxford University, where she met her British husband.

After General Ne Win seized full power in 1962, he forced his brand of socialism on Myanmar, turning what was once Asia’s rice bowl into one of the world’s poorest and most isolated countries.

SUU KYI REMAINS IMMENSELY POPULAR IN MYANMAR BUT HER LEGACY ABROAD HAS BEEN TARNISHED BY THE ROHINGYA CRISIS

THRUST INTO SPOTLIGHT

Suu Kyi’s elevation to a democracy champion happened almost by accident when she returned home in 1988 to nurse her dying mother.

Soon afterwards, at least 3,000 people were killed when the military crushed protests against its authoritarian rule.

The bloodshed was the catalyst for Suu Kyi.

A charismatic orator, the then-43-

year-old found herself in a leading role of a burgeoning democracy movement, delivering speeches to huge crowds as she led the NLD to a 1990 election victory.

The generals were not prepared to give up power, ignoring the result and confining Suu Kyi to her home in Yangon, where lived for 16 of the next 20 years.

She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize while detained in 1991.

The junta offered to end her imprisonment at any time if she left the country for good but Suu Kyi refused.

That decision meant not seeing her husband before his death from cancer in 1999, and missing her two sons growing up.

TROUBLED RELATIONSHIP

The military eventually granted her freedom in 2010, just days after elections that her party boycotted but which brought a nominally civilian government to power.

She swept the next poll five years later, prompting jubilant celebrations by massive crowds across the country, and increased her party’s majority in 2020.

But Suu Kyi’s administration was beset with trouble and marked by an uneasy relationship with the military, which maintained a powerful political role.

The government and the military appeared in lockstep after the 2017 Rohingya crackdown, however.

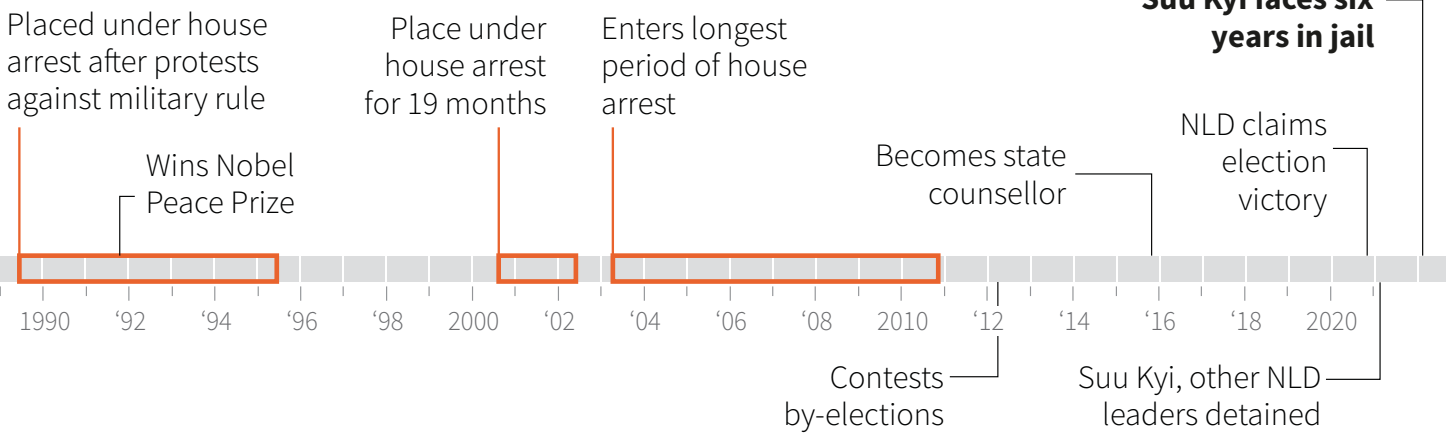
Her office denied claims that fleeing refugees had suffered abuse, extrajudicial killings and arson attacks on their homes by Myanmar troops.

Suu Kyi defended the army’s conduct and even travelled to The Hague to rebut charges of genocide at the UN’s top court. — **AFP**

Aung San Suu Kyi’s trial timeline

A court in military-ruled Myanmar has sentenced ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi to four years in jail on charges including possession of unlicensed walkie-talkies, on top of two years on another charge of breaching a natural disaster management law related to coronavirus rules.

SUU KYI’S POLITICAL CAREER



Source: Human Rights Watch; Reuters reporting.

A. Bhandari, 6/12/2021

REUTERS

Can the West stop Russia and avert conflict?



DAN BILEFSKY
The writer is a Canada correspondent for *The New York Times*, based in Montreal. He returned to Canada in 2017 after 28 years abroad, reporting from, among other places, Paris, Brussels, New York, Istanbul, London and Prague

It feels like a scene from the Cold War. An unpredictable Russian president amassing thousands of troops on the border of a neighbouring country, Ukraine. The threat of invasion. A possible bloody conflagration between East and West.

But what may seem like a perilous episode from a bygone era will be front and centre this week in global diplomacy, when the

United States, its Nato allies and Russia meet for various talks in Geneva, Vienna and Brussels aimed at averting another Russian incursion into Ukraine.

That potential military flare-up threatens to destabilise the already volatile post-Soviet region, buffeted by last week's popular revolt in Kazakhstan. It would also have serious consequences for the security structure that has governed Europe since the collapse of the Soviet Union three decades ago.

In a move that has aggravated already tense relations between Washington and the Kremlin, Russia has mobilised more than 100,000 troops near its border with Ukraine. The United States has disclosed intelligence showing that Russia has a war plan envisioning an invasion force of 175,000 troops that Ukraine's military, despite US-provided equipment and training, would have little ability to stop.

On Friday, Nato Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg warned that "the risk of conflict is real."

Russia has made a list of far-reaching demands: that Nato pledge to halt further eastward expansion and pull back its troops from Nato members bordering Russia; that Ukraine cease deployments of Nato weaponry; and that Ukraine yield to Russian terms for a settlement in the war in the eastern part of the country.

Essentially, Russian President Vladimir Putin is seeking to redraw the post-Cold War boundaries of Europe, establishing a broad, Russian-dominated security zone and pulling Ukraine back into Moscow's orbit by force, if necessary.

In the event of an invasion, the United States and its allies have threatened to impose a series of sanctions that would go far beyond those imposed in 2014, after the Russian annexation of Crimea. Putin warned that imposing new sanctions could lead to a "complete rupture" in relations with Washington.

WHAT'S AT STAKE FOR EUROPE?

At stake for Europe is whether it can allow Putin to upend the security structure that has helped keep the peace on the continent since World War II. The conflict has also laid bare the weakness of the European Union and its failure as a foreign policy force in international relations.

The European Union doesn't have a seat at the table at most of these talks, which, after all, are about European security, and it is seeking to be more involved.

With the departure of Chancellor Angela Merkel, who grew up in the east, speaks fluent Russian, and had developed a good working relationship with Putin, Europe lost an invaluable interlocutor with Moscow. Her successor, Chancellor Olaf Scholz, is less of a known quantity in foreign affairs, and is the head of a complicated coalition more critical about Russia than his own Social Democratic Party.

Europe has important trade ties with Russia, and would stand to lose far more than the US from sanctions imposed after a Russian invasion of Ukraine. It is also dependent on Russian gas supplies, a weakness that Putin has exploited in past disputes.

An escalating crisis in Ukraine also threatens to upend recent efforts by the United States and Nato to shift the alliance's attention to the security challenge posed by China, and would push it back towards its traditional role of protecting Europe and, by extension, North America.

Nato's response in the face of Russia's attempt to neutralise the alliance will also help shape its geopolitical heft for years to come.

— *The New York Times Services*



11th JAN — MUCH TO CELEBRATE



Lakshmi Kothaneth
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The writer is a senior journalist and a radio anchor

A renewed renaissance began this day in the year 2020 for the Sultanate of Oman under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

Under the Royal directives there have been attention given to increase the potential of SMEs and entrepreneurship, industries, agriculture and fisheries, development of women, support for the rehabilitation centres for the welfare of the people with disabilities as has been seen during His Majesty's meetings with shaikhs from governorates of Dhofar, Al Dakhiliyah, Al Wusta, South Al Sharqiyah.

The growing role of the governorates in executing social and service projects sees the movement towards an approach that will see the participation of local administration in community development.

An important development that has been seen in the recent days has been the endorsement of the principle of government and citizens' partnership in implementing projects that serve the public interest. During the meeting with shaikhs from South Al Sharqiyah, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik stressed on the need to address difficulties that might come in the way of the march towards the domestic development.

The two years have had their share of success stories as well as challenges that were the same for the world as in the beginning with the oil prices and of course the pandemic.

The fluctuation in oil prices had created fiscal challenges in the past few years for the Sultanate of Oman and it has

had its impact on the national economy. But we have just seen the new budget and it has taken into consideration the challenges and is in line with the Tenth Five Year Plan (2021 - 2025). The budget reflects the economic vision 2040.

According to experts public spending will be prudent and sustainable while the contribution of non-oil revenue will be enhanced leading to diversification. It is the diversification that sees the emphasis on tourism (which is recovering from the impact of the pandemic and travel

THE DAY ALSO REMINDS US OF THE VALUE OF EACH PERSON'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE NATION TO CONTINUE THE VIBRANT MARCH OF RENAISSANCE

restrictions), logistics, manufacturing, but most importantly SMEs. Measures have been taken to increase investors confidence and a major emphasis is on means to boost job creation by bringing about opportunities at the same time invest in training.

Small and Medium Enterprises also has the potential to create job opportunities and is one of the reasons HM Sultan Haitham has given extra support which was addressed during his meeting with the shaikhs and the directives have already been issued.

So it is these very challenges that have become part of the success stories.

The transition of education during the work from home period online to offline or opening of the establishments following strict guidelines have had its benefits. We are on a precautionary note again as Covid-19 numbers increase but what is important is that people have been made aware at the same time the vaccination drive has also been running efficiently.

As the day brings about it also reminds us of the value of each person's contribution to the nation to continue the vibrant march of renaissance. Technology is evolving and is the era of Artificial Intelligence. Continuous learning is the way forward.

As a young Omani who got his dream job after six years in the field he majored, said as he reflected, "I am still in a state of shock. But it just goes on to prove that if you hold onto your dream and hope it will surely happen one day. But I did not wait for it at home.

I took many short courses, freelanced and took up other jobs too but now I have my dream job."

So what is important is a vision and then work towards it and if everyone is aligned towards that vision, then every challenge is just a hump on the road.

The challenges can also be exciting adventures but the responsibility is in our hands too such as combating Omicron. Most importantly it is up to us to be innovative. And it is definitely an exciting time for SMEs!

US and Russian negotiators face off in Geneva over Ukraine

GENEVA: After days of pessimistic statements on both sides, the United States and Russia began tough negotiations in Geneva on Monday that Washington hopes can avert the danger of a new Russian invasion of Ukraine without conceding to the Kremlin's far-reaching security demands.

The talks between Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov and Deputy US Secretary of State Wendy Sherman began at the US diplomatic mission in Geneva with US-Russia relations at their most tense since the Cold War ended three decades ago.

The pair made only brief eye contact when they posed for photographs beforehand.

"The talks promise to be long and substantial," the Russian diplomatic mission in Geneva tweeted, with a picture of the two lead negotiators standing in front of their national flags.

Sherman said "the US will listen to Russia's concerns and share our own" in an earlier tweet from Geneva, adding that no discussions on European security would be held without the presence of other allies. Discussions will move to meetings in Brussels and Vienna later this week.

Nearly 100,000 Russian troops are gathered within reach of the border with Ukraine in

RUSSIA DENIES INVASION PLANS AND SAID IT IS RESPONDING TO WHAT IT CALLS AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR FROM THE NATO MILITARY ALLIANCE AND UKRAINE, WHICH HAS TILTED TOWARD THE WEST AND ASPIRES TO JOIN NATO

preparation for what Washington and Kyiv say could be a new invasion, eight years after Russia seized the Crimea peninsula from the former Soviet republic.

Russia denies invasion plans and said it is responding to what it calls aggressive behaviour from the Nato military alliance and Ukraine, which has tilted toward the West and aspires to join Nato.

Last month, Russia presented sweeping demands including a ban on further Nato expansion and an end to the alliance's activity in central and eastern European countries that joined it after 1997.

The United States and Nato say large parts of the Russian proposals are non-starters.

Ryabkov told RIA news agency Russia would not accept US attempts to limit the agenda to discussion of military exercises and missile deployments — the topics outlined by the Biden administration as areas it is

willing to broach.

"We need legal guarantees of the non-expansion of Nato and the elimination of everything that the alliance has created since 1997," Ryabkov said.

Russia had tried to show flexibility for the past 30 years and it was time for the other side to be flexible, he said. "If they are unable to do this, they will face a worsening situation in their own security."

The two countries are also at odds over Russia's deployment of troops in Kazakhstan after an uprising there last week, its support for Belarus in a migrant crisis on the EU's border, and what Washington sees as Russia's use of its gas supplies to Europe to gain political leverage over its neighbours.

Nato Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg, who will meet the Russian team on Wednesday in Brussels, said Russia and the West could find a pathway to avoid conflict.

"What we are hoping for is that we can agree on a way forward, that we can agree on a series of meetings, that we can agree on a process," Stoltenberg said.

Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister Olga Stefanishyna, appearing alongside him, said Russia should not set conditions while its tanks remained near the Ukrainian border. — **Reuters**

Our warmest felicitations to

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik

and the nation of Oman on the anniversary of the renewed renaissance.



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A full-length portrait of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq of Oman. He is standing outdoors, wearing a white turban and a white thobe with a gold-embroidered bisht. He has a grey beard and is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. In the background, a large, modern building with arched windows and a flagpole are visible under a clear blue sky.

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We extend our warmest congratulations and blessings to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik, may God protect him, on the occasion of the Accession Anniversary of His Majesty. We pray to the Almighty Allah to enable him to take this great nation to greater prosperity.

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3	SIPC 2021/014	Consultancy Services for Environmental Impact Assessment study (EIA) for SOHAR Port.	RO 105

The above-mentioned tender fees including the VAT 5%. Tenderers can request to receive the electronic tender documents from 9:00 am on Tuesday, 11/01/2022 until 4:00 pm on Monday, 25/01/2022. Tenderers to follow the below procedures and steps to obtain the electronic tender documents:
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business

Seven firms join hands to build Musandam innovation centre

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JAN 10

Aiming to enhance innovation, tourism, technical, cultural and entertainment facilities in Musandam, Sayyid Ibrahim al Busaidy, Minister of State and Governor of Musandam, signed on Monday an agreement with Eng Salim al Aufi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals (MEM), and Talal al Aufi CEO of OQ, to establish the Musandam Culture and Innovation Centre in the Wilayat of Khasab.

Construction of the centre will be funded via the MEM's CSR programme in cooperation with Petroleum Development



Oman, Occidental Oman, BP Oman, OQ, Daleel Petroleum, CC Energy Development and ARA petroleum. OQ is overseeing the construction of the centre on behalf of the sponsoring companies.

The Centre will be established over a 10,000 sq metre area in a strategic location in Khasab. It will feature an Innovation Centre, Culture Centre, retail

spaces, and watersports club for Oman Sail. The Centre is expected to be launched in 2024.

Sayyid Ibrahim stated that the project is the product of mutual cooperation between the government and private sector to serve young Omanis in Musandam Governorate.

While the Cultural Centre will be managed by the Ministry

of Culture, Sports and Youth, the Innovation Centre will be managed by the Ministry of Education. Investment areas of the centre will be overseen by the governorate.

The Centre will support cultural activities such as forums, conferences, poetry events and artistic exhibitions, as well as enhance innovation

Al Aufi added: "We hope this project will achieve the aspirations of Musandam people in the cultural, scientific, entrepreneurship and innovation aspects. We are looking forward to a continuous cooperation that reflects the social responsibility in similar future initiatives."

Towards a renewed renaissance under your wise guidance

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His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik
And the people of Oman
On the Second Anniversary of the Accession Day



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BOLD MEASURES DRIVE OMANI ECONOMIC RECOVERY

A series of landmark reforms and programmes launched at the outset of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's reign two years ago has helped pivot the Omani economy, weighed down by the damaging effects of the oil price shock and coronavirus pandemic, back to health and long-term growth

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

Inheriting an economy severely pummelled by the dual impact of collapsing international oil prices and the coronavirus pandemic, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's first order of business, at the outset of his reign in January 2020, was to institute a series of landmark reforms and programmes aimed at, among other goals, achieving fiscal sustainability in the face of ballooning public debt and budgetary deficits.

Plummeting oil prices, which account for 75 per cent of budget revenues, had sent the country's debts soaring to about 70 per cent of GDP, up from 15 per cent in 2015. Adding to the nation's woes were the adverse credit ratings from international rating agencies, which made borrowings from debt markets not only difficult but expensive as well.

It is in the midst of these challenging economic times that the government of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik adopted some bold decisions to get the economy under control.

In addition to a series of expenditure cuts, belt-tightening measures and overhaul of government structures, the government also rolled out the Medium Term Fiscal Plan (MTFP) as a pillar of its economic reform programme. The five-year programme sets out targets for non-oil revenue growth, rollback of subsidies, introduction of new taxes and a strident employment generation programme for Omani job-seekers.

Dramatic turnaround

In two short years, those momentous reform initiatives paid rich dividends. By the end of 2021, the Omani government under His Majesty Sultan Haitham had notched significant improvements across a number of financial, economic and monetary indices.

GDP at current prices had climbed to reach a value of RO 24.2 billion as of October-end 2021, registering a growth of 13.8 per cent compared to 2020.

At the same time, the fiscal deficit, estimated RO 4.8 billion at the start of 2021, tumbled to RO 1.2 billion by the end of the year, constituting a 75 per cent decline.

As a share of GDP, the



REVENUES FOR 2022 ARE ESTIMATED AT RO 10.580 BILLION BASED AN ASSUMED PRICE OF \$50 A BARREL (VERSUS \$45/ BARREL FOR 2021). THE CONTRIBUTION OF OIL & GAS IS ESTIMATED AT RO 7.24 BILLION, CONSTITUTING 68 PER CENT OF TOTAL REVENUES, WHILE NON-OIL REVENUES WILL ACCOUNT FOR THE REMAINING 32 PER CENT (RO 3.34 BILLION)

deficit was slashed from 15.5 per cent in 2020 to 3.8 per cent at the end of 2021. The results were remarkable on multiple fronts. Public spending was brought under control, despite financial challenges, which required allocating extra credit to manage the situation.

This included addressing the spread of coronavirus and raising the reception/admission capacity of higher education establishments to 31,000 seats, in addition to the allocation of RO 418 million for the payment of overdue balance of previous years, RO 1.2 billion for the settlement of the financial dues of private sector companies till the end of 2021 and employment costs and the allocation of RO 200 million to meet the cost of repairing damages resulting from the tropical cyclone Shaheen.

Significantly, commodity exports posted an increase of 42.2 per cent till September 2021, compared to the corresponding period last year of 2020, while commodity imports rose by 54.3 per cent till September this year, compared to the corresponding period in 2020.

The Central Bank of Oman's



reserves in foreign currency grew by 31 per cent to \$18 billion till the end of December 2021, compared to about \$14 billion by the end of December 2020. Also easing the fiscal burden on the government this year was the creation of Energy Development Oman (EDO) with the mandate to independently raise the financing requirements of Block 6 licensed to Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), the country's largest producer of hydrocarbons.

As of September 2021, Energy Development Oman (EDO) became fully operational and thus all government obligations related to the oil and gas production expenditure has been transferred to EDO.

In August, EDO announced that it had successfully secured a \$2.5 billion debut financing transaction involving the participation of a number of local, regional and international banks.

Buoyant outlook

Further endorsement of the government's strategies to turn around the national economy have come from the Big Three of international rating agencies, which are now broadly in agreement about the buoyant

outlook of the Omani economy in 2022 and beyond.

New York-headquartered Fitch revised the Sultanate of Oman's outlook to stable from negative while affirming the sovereign's Long-Term Foreign- and Local- Currency Issuer Default Ratings (IDR) at 'BB-'.

It came just two months after S&P Global Ratings revised its outlook on the Omani economy to positive from stable. Also based in New York, the rating agency affirmed its 'B+/B-' long-term and short-term foreign and local currency sovereign credit ratings.

The transfer and convertibility assessment was set at 'BB-'. Moody's Investors Service followed suit in October with a revision in the outlook on the Government of the Sultanate of Oman's issuer rating to stable from negative and affirmed its long-term issuer and senior unsecured ratings at Ba3. Moody's also affirmed the Government of the Sultanate of Oman's (P) Ba3 senior unsecured medium term note programme rating. The trio of the world's most influential rating agencies cited significant improvement of key fiscal metrics, most notably

the dramatic shrinkage of the budget deficit for 2021 aided by buoyant oil prices and a steady uptick in non-oil revenue.

Also spurring the rapid evolution of the Sultanate of Oman's credit rating – from junk status just status barely two years to stable/positive today – are the government's fiscal reforms enshrined in its landmark Medium Term Fiscal Plan (MTFP) unveiled in late 2020.

Among the key metrics that underscore this turnaround in the Omani economy is the budget deficit which narrowed to 3.4 per cent of GDP in 2021, down from 16.1 per cent of GDP in 2020.

Oil and gas revenues also climbed by a third, driven largely by a 28 per cent rise in Oman's average fiscal oil price. Fitch also forecast a strong rise in real GDP growth to 3.1 per cent in 2022 before steadying at 2.3 per cent in 2023, driven by stronger hydrocarbon growth next year. However, non-oil growth is expected to moderate at just over 2 per cent on average.

Earlier, S&P Global Ratings cited the "solid path" charted by the Omani government to reduce historically high fiscal

deficits, and backed by a "strong political will" to implement reform measures. It noted that the Medium Term Fiscal Plan (2021 – 2025) is expected to produce a net positive outcome.

Significantly, the improved outlooks by all three major ratings agencies bode well for the Omani government's ability to access international debt markets at competitive interest rates and terms and issuance options of choice as well.

Fiscal prudence

Earlier this month, the Omani government unveiled a fiscally prudent Annual State General Budget for 2022 with a deficit that is the lowest since 2014 – proof that the economic reform programme initiated by His Majesty the Sultan is delivering concrete results.

Revenues for 2022 are estimated at RO 10.580 billion based an assumed price of \$50 a barrel (versus \$45/barrel for 2021).

The contribution of Oil & Gas is estimated at RO 7.24 billion, constituting 68 per cent of total revenues, while non-oil revenues will account for the remaining 32 per cent (RO 3.34 billion).

Total public spending is set at RO 12.13 billion, which is two per cent higher than the corresponding figure for 2021. This will include an allocation of RO 1.3 billion towards the cost of servicing the country's public debt. The deficit of RO 1.5 billion, representing 15 per cent of total expenditure [about 5 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP)], is well within the range projected in the Medium Term Fiscal Plan (MTFP). Part of the deficit will be financed from external and internal borrowings, while the rest of the deficit, estimated to be RO 400 million, will be funded through withdrawals from the State's reserves.

Supply chain woes prompt a new push to revive US factories

When visitors arrive at the office of America Knits in tiny Swainsboro, Georgia, the first thing they see on the wall is a black-and-white photo that a company co-founder, Steve Hawkins, discovered in a local antiques store.

It depicts one of a score of textile mills that once dotted the area, along with the workers that toiled on its machines and powered the local economy. The scene reflects the heyday — and to Hawkins, the potential — of making clothes in the rural South.

Companies like America Knits will test whether the United States can regain some of the manufacturing output it ceded in recent decades to China and other countries.

That question has been contentious among workers whose jobs were lost to globalisation. But with the supply-chain snarls resulting from the coronavirus pandemic, it has become intensely tangible from the consumer viewpoint as well.

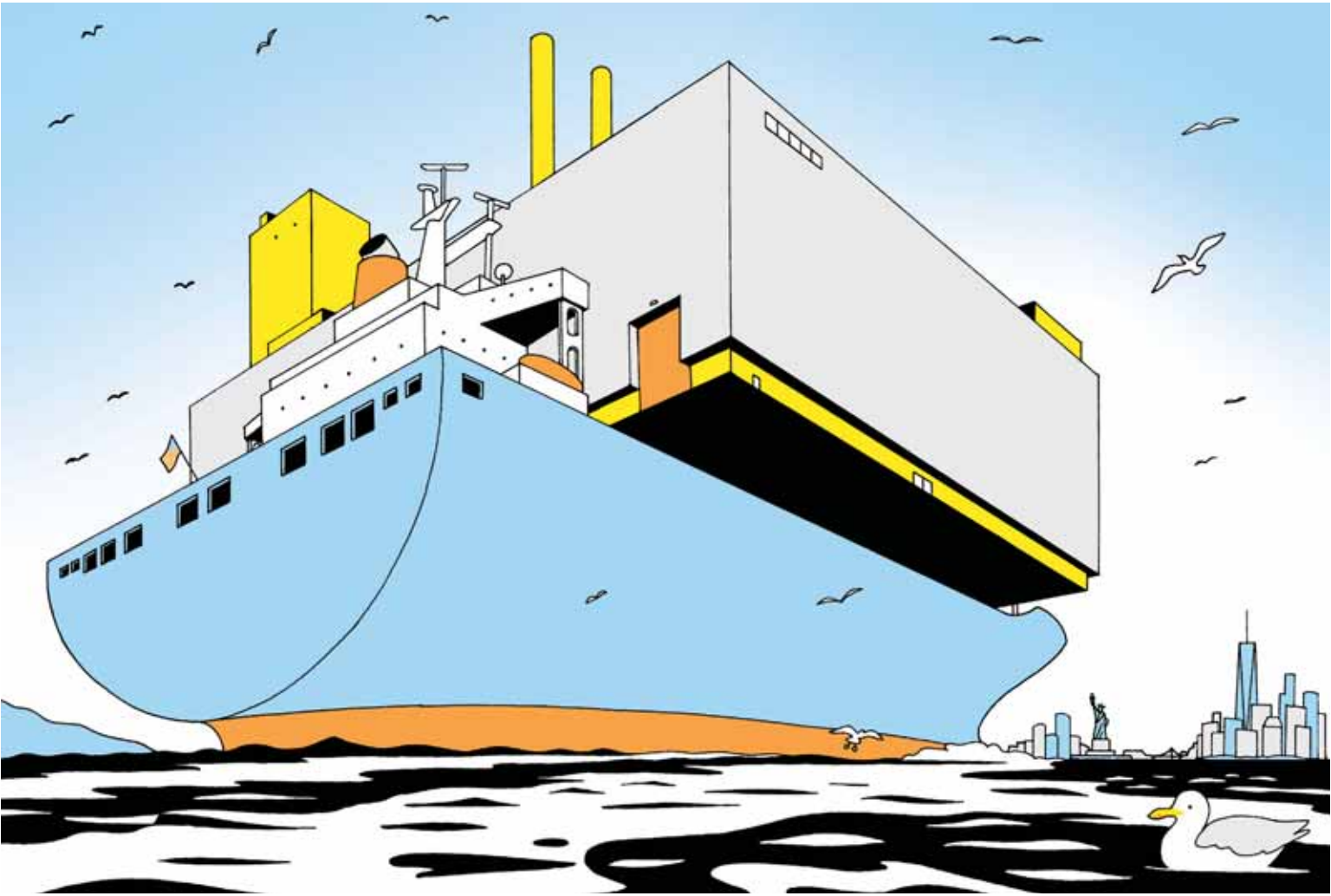
Hawkins' company, founded in 2019, has 65 workers producing premium T-shirts from locally grown cotton. He expects the workforce to increase to 100 in the coming months. If the area is to have an industrial renaissance, it is so far a lonely one.

"I'm the only one, the only crazy one," Hawkins said. But as he sees it, bringing manufacturing back from overseas — a move often called onshoring or reshoring — has found its moment. "America Knits shows it can be done and has been done," he said.

Some corporate giants are keen on testing that premise, if not for finished goods, then certainly for essential parts.

General Motors disclosed in December that it was considering spending upward of \$4 billion to expand electric vehicle and battery production in Michigan. Just days later, Toyota announced plans for a \$1.3 billion battery plant in North Carolina that will employ 1,750 people.

In October, Micron Technology said it planned to invest more than \$150 billion in memory chip manufacturing and research and development, with a portion of that to



Companies are testing whether the United States can regain some of the manufacturing output it ceded in recent decades to China and other countries.

be spent in the United States.

And in November, South Korean giant Samsung said that it would build a \$17 billion semiconductor plant in Texas, its largest US investment to date. Bringing manufacturing back to the United States was a major theme of former president Donald Trump, who imposed tariffs on imports from allies and rivals, started a trade war with China and blocked or reworked trade agreements.

Still, there was little change in the balance of trade or the inclination of companies operating in China to redirect investment to the United States.

Since the pandemic began, however, efforts to relocate manufacturing have accelerated, said Claudio Knizek, global leader for advanced manufacturing and

mobility at EY-Parthenon, a strategy consulting firm. "It may have reached a tipping point," he added.

Knizek of EY-Parthenon expects industries with complex and more expensive products to lead the resurgence, including automobiles, semiconductors, defence and aviation and pharmaceuticals. Anything that requires large amounts of manual labour, or that is difficult to automate, is much less likely to return.

For items like shoes or furniture or holiday lights, for example, "the economics are daunting," said Willy C Shih, a professor at Harvard Business School. "It's hard to beat wages of \$2.50 an hour."

Although trade tensions and shipping delays are making headlines, Shih added, China retains huge advantages, like a

mammoth workforce, easy access to raw materials and low-cost factories. "For a lot of what American consumers buy, there aren't a lot of good alternatives," he added.

But as the moves by auto and tech companies show, the United States can attract more sophisticated manufacturing. That has been a goal shared by Republican and Democratic administrations, including President Joe Biden's, which supports \$52 billion in subsidies for domestic chip manufacturing.

"Incentives to help level the playing field are a key piece," said David Moore, chief strategy officer and senior vice-president at Micron. "Building a leading-edge memory fabrication facility is a sizable investment; it's not just a billion or two here and there. These are major decisions."

What's next for the deal boom?

When your job involves pulling off seemingly impossible transactions in mergers and acquisitions, persistent optimism is a necessary quality. But the always sunny outlook of deal makers seemed especially warranted last year.

Despite the calamity of the pandemic, the corporate world did extremely well. Companies announced \$5.8 trillion worth of transactions — surpassing the previous high by more than \$1 trillion, according to Refinitiv. And unlike many previous deal booms, activity wasn't constrained to just one sector or one region, with nearly every part of the M&A world taking part in the frenzy.

"This is the stuff that dreams are made of," said Anu Aiyengar, global co-head of mergers at JPMorgan Chase. Most investment bankers say that while last year's blockbuster pace may not be sustainable, they expect the deal boom to continue: Companies and their investors are still craving growth, and private equity firms are ready to spend their collective hundreds of billions in cash on new takeovers.

But dreams don't last forever, and there are several reasons that making deals could be significantly more difficult in 2022 than it was last year. (Some deal mavens even admit as much.) Here is what's keeping corporate rainmakers up at night.

ANTITRUST

By far the biggest concern among bankers and lawyers is government intervention. Deal makers always expected the Biden administration to scrutinise mergers on antitrust grounds more closely than its predecessor, but now they worry it will go further than they had predicted. Many of President Joe Biden's top antitrust enforcement picks — including Jonathan Kanter at the Department of Justice, Lina Khan at the Federal Trade Commission and Tim Wu as an antitrust adviser — are noted critics of concentrated corporate power.

Biden himself recently argued that a dearth of competition

in the meat-processing industry was leading to higher prices for consumers. And antitrust officials have sued to stop several high-profile deals, opposing Nvidia's \$40 billion purchase of Arm, Aon's \$30 billion bid for Willis Towers Watson, Illumina's \$7 billion takeover of Grail and Penguin Random House's \$2 billion deal for Simon & Schuster.

"Some of the new approaches on the regulatory front, antitrust in particular, will likely wind up being adjudicated by the courts one way or another," said Peter Orszag, the CEO of Lazard's financial advisory business. He added that the flurry of legal challenges was a primary reason that many of the deals announced last year involved \$10 billion or less. Relatively small deals are considered less likely to draw opposition from regulators.

Some M&A practitioners say the blitz of litigation is a strategy for changing regulations. A string of company losses in these cases could help buttress efforts by lawmakers like Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., to toughen up antitrust laws.

Tougher antitrust scrutiny isn't confined to the United States: The European Union's regulators are cracking down as well, raising objections to deals, including Illumina's. The prospect of being tied up in months of fights with regulators could make corporate leaders reluctant to pursue deals. "It's becoming more of a topic of discussion, especially for public company boards on whether they can take that risk," Aiyengar said.

COSTS

For years, rock-bottom interest rates have made borrowing the billions necessary to finance an acquisition fairly inexpensive. As inflation rises rapidly, that era is likely to end soon. Federal Reserve officials last month weighed raising interest rates faster than expected, and the anticipation of higher borrowing costs could deter some corporate boards from moving ahead with a deal, some practitioners said. Higher

If inflation continued to ramp up, and there were some volatility on interest rates, that could have an impact. Would that have a dramatic effect, though? Debt's still pretty cheap

STEPHAN FELDGOISE
GOLDMAN SACHS'S GLOBAL
CO-HEAD OF M&A

interest rates could also hit private equity firms, which often rely on access to cheap borrowing to do their core deal-making.

"If inflation continued to ramp up, and there were some volatility on interest rates, that could have an impact," said Stephan Feldgoise, Goldman Sachs's global co-head of M&A. But he quickly added that he believed this might not be a huge threat. "Would that have a dramatic effect, though?" he asked. "Debt's still pretty cheap."

MARKET VOLATILITY

Despite some rocky moments, including the onset of the pandemic and spurts of meme-stock mania, the stock market has steadily risen over the past several years. That kind of stability has been incredibly helpful for the mergers business. Corporate boards like predictability, particularly when it comes to their companies' stock price as they consider striking a big deal.

While M&A could survive more bouts of occasional volatility, prolonged periods of market choppiness could undercut business leaders' boldness in pursuing takeovers. Aiyengar said unwelcome surprises, such as even more rapid inflation, a deadly new coronavirus variant or renewed supply-chain disruptions, could spook deal makers. "If there is a shock like that and the market re-rates, that could affect deal-making," she said. "That influences boardroom confidence."

THAT SAID ...

While any of these shocks could disturb the deal-making party, few bankers believe that they will bring the boom to a screeching halt. Companies still face immense pressure to grow, and striking a deal remains one of the fastest ways to do that.

"Companies and boards are saying, 'If there's something strategic we want to do, we should try and get it done,'" said Feldgoise.

A pre-pandemic US job market is a long way off

The US job market is still nursing itself back to health two years after the Covid-19 pandemic began. Employers added an average of 537,000 jobs per month in 2021, and the jobless rate fell to 3.9% in December, the Labour Department said. Those are healthy trends. Yet the economy remains off-kilter.

America's unemployment rate has fallen quickly from its 6.7 per cent level in December 2020 while the labour force participation rate increased 0.4 percentage points to 61.9 per cent in December. Still, overall employment is down by 3.6 million jobs from the April 2020 peak.

And jobs growth fell short of forecasts last month, even though the data was collected before the Omicron variant surge.

Payrolls increased by 199,000 positions, about half of what economists expected.

Employers are struggling to find workers, with a record 4.5 million people quitting their jobs in November.

There's plenty of evidence of the continuing distortions created by the coronavirus. The highest rates of people leaving their positions are in sectors where remote work is not an option and Covid risks are elevated.

Healthcare, retail and restaurants are facing big labour shortages. For example, there were 1.8 million job openings in healthcare and social assistance in November, but only about 6,100 workers were added last month.

The problem will get worse before it gets better. Nearly 20 per cent of nurses, doctors and others in the industry have quit since the pandemic began, according to a Morning Consult poll from October. About 31 per cent of those who have stayed are considering leaving, and that's before the current load of Omicron cases.

The mismatch between the supply and demand of workers could last a while, at least in certain sectors. And pay raises haven't made meaningful dents in the hiring challenge.

Hourly wages for hotel and restaurant workers have gone up by more than 10 per cent over the last year to more than \$18 an hour, per the Labour Department.

But the sector had the highest quits rate in November despite 1.3 million job openings. Anything resembling a pre-pandemic labour market looks a long way off. — Reuters

The mismatch between the supply and demand of workers could last a while, at least in certain sectors. And pay raises haven't made meaningful dents in the hiring challenge



FACTORY WORKS

A woman works at a car factory at Castle Bromwich, West Midlands, UK. British manufacturers are optimistic that business conditions and productivity will improve this year despite most saying they have been hurt by Brexit and rising costs, according to an industry survey published. Trade body Make UK and accountants PwC said 73 per cent of manufacturers believed conditions for the sector would improve and 78 per cent foresaw at least a moderate increase in productivity in 2022. — Reuters

Capital is not a strategy



WILLIAM H JANEWAY

The author, a special limited partner at the private-equity firm Warburg Pincus, is an affiliated lecturer in economics at the University of Cambridge

UNDER THE CONDITIONS THAT CENTRAL BANKS HAVE CREATED, INVESTORS (BOTH INSTITUTIONAL AND RETAIL) HAVE BECOME INCREASINGLY AGGRESSIVE IN THEIR PURSUIT OF POSITIVE REAL RETURNS

Along with the rest of the world, entrepreneurs have spent the past dozen years living in an unprecedented financial environment. Responding first to the stubbornly slow recovery from the 2008 financial crisis, and then to the recession caused by Covid-19, major central banks have sustained an array of unconventional initiatives and asset-purchase programmes collectively known as 'quantitative easing' (QE).

The direct result has been a massive accumulation of financial reserves in central banks and throughout the financial system, and a reduction of nominal interest rates on risk-free financial assets to levels below the rate of inflation. Interest rates are thus negative in real terms (and even in nominal terms, in some cases).

Years of unconventional monetary policies have also had a secondary effect on investment behaviour. Under the conditions that central banks have created, investors (both institutional and retail) have become increasingly aggressive in their pursuit of positive real returns.

Not only have they accepted increased levels of fundamental risk (that is, the risk of business failures wiping out the value of their securities); they also have become increasingly willing to accept illiquidity, buying securities that they cannot freely resell.

One dramatic example of this phenomenon is the flood of 'nontraditional capital' — the National Venture Capital Association's term for mutual funds, hedge funds, sovereign wealth funds, and so forth — into venture-backed private companies at historically high valuations.

Others are the bubbles in crypto assets and the (often fleeting) explosion of 'meme' stocks, driven by Reddit communities and retail investors on apps like Robinhood.

Finally, the apparently limitless supply of low-cost capital (in terms of ownership dilution) available to entrepreneurs and early-stage venture-capital firms has had a third-level effect as well: The proliferation of business models with little or no potential to generate sustainable, self-financed growth. The idea of 'capital as a strategy' has taken hold.

In the low-friction world of internet-delivered or mediated services, start-ups are eager to spend ever-greater amounts of other people's money to acquire customers, the goal being to emerge victorious in a winner-takes-all race.

The problem, of course, is that capital is not a strategy; rather, it is a resource whose supply and cost are highly variable historically. At least since the Dutch tulip mania of the 1630s and London's South Sea Bubble of 1720, financial history has been replete with episodes of speculative excess (which is why I called a chapter in my

book *Doing Capitalism in the Innovation Economy*: "The Banality of Bubbles").

Occasionally, these explosions of investor exuberance have funded the deployment of innovative technologies at sufficient scale to transform the market economy, as was the case with railroads, electrification, and the internet. Whether a bubble is productive depends on what it leaves behind.

But all bubbles burst, so even investors in the vehicles of a productive episode inevitably will fall into one of two categories: the quick or the dead.

Opportunism is a virtue in the VC world. Taking virtually free capital from investors who have no interest in (or capacity for) firm governance is irresistible.

As the old saying goes, "When they are passing around the cookies, take all that you can." If nontraditional sources of capital are prepared to liquify original investors' holdings at a multiple of cost that is usually only available through an initial public offering or a trade sale, a partial seller would have to be extraordinarily greedy to refuse the offer.

And yet the extraordinary increase in the supply of capital has eliminated any perceived need for critically assessing business models and business plans, undermining the Golden Rule of venture capital: that those who have the gold set the rules. © Project Syndicate 2022

Kazakhs count cost of living as largest city reels from violence

BY CHRISTOPHER RICKLETON

Before clashes between security forces and government opponents left dozens dead and rendered parts of Kazakhstan's largest city almost unrecognisable, citizens in the west of the oil-rich country were staging their own protest against a sudden New Year fuel hike.

By the time the government rolled back prices for liquefied petroleum gas — a relatively cheap petrol alternative widely used by residents of the former Soviet republic's hydrocarbon heartland — solidarity demonstrations had popped up all over the vast republic.

In Kazakhstan, a long summer drought and complications in the landlocked country's trade with China made 2021 an especially

expensive year, with strong inflation forecast to continue this year too.

The concession from beleaguered President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev to reduce LPG prices by more than half on Tuesday arrived too late to save a reputation for stability carefully cultivated by the republic's image-conscious authoritarian leadership.

That night and on Wednesday the southern city of Almaty witnessed protests of unprecedented size and ferocity that saw government buildings seized and set alight before the army and a Russia-led peacekeeping mission restored an uneasy calm.

As residents surveyed the devastation, many blamed the sheer gulf between a ruling elite constantly finding ways to enrich itself and ordinary people getting

steadily poorer.

"Everything has become so awfully expensive", complained Galiya, a 42-year-old protester who gave only her first name and said she planned to go abroad in search of work if there were no major changes to the government.

"We have all the minerals in the periodic table here but we live in poverty. The government raised the minimum wage from 42,500 tenge (roughly \$100) to 60,000 tenge at the start of the year. How would you begin to live here on that?"

The last quarter of 2021 bequeathed Kazakhstan its worst food inflation since 2016, a year that brought unprecedented nationwide protests as citizens opposed proposals for land code amendments that extended land leases for foreign investors.

The demonstrators made

frequent reference to next-door China, whose economic interests in the country have sparked anxiety in the past.

But local analysts argued that the protest mood was payback for the government's overnight move to strip away supports for the tenge currency the year before — a de facto 50 per cent devaluation that collapsed local purchasing power and intensified resentment of top-level officials and their offshore lifestyles.

This time round a long summer drought causing price spikes for vegetables, meat and animal feed has compounded household woes in an economy still struggling to bounce back from the global energy price crash in 2014.

Frequent rule changes, subsidy cuts and "speculation" on Beijing's side of the border in the second

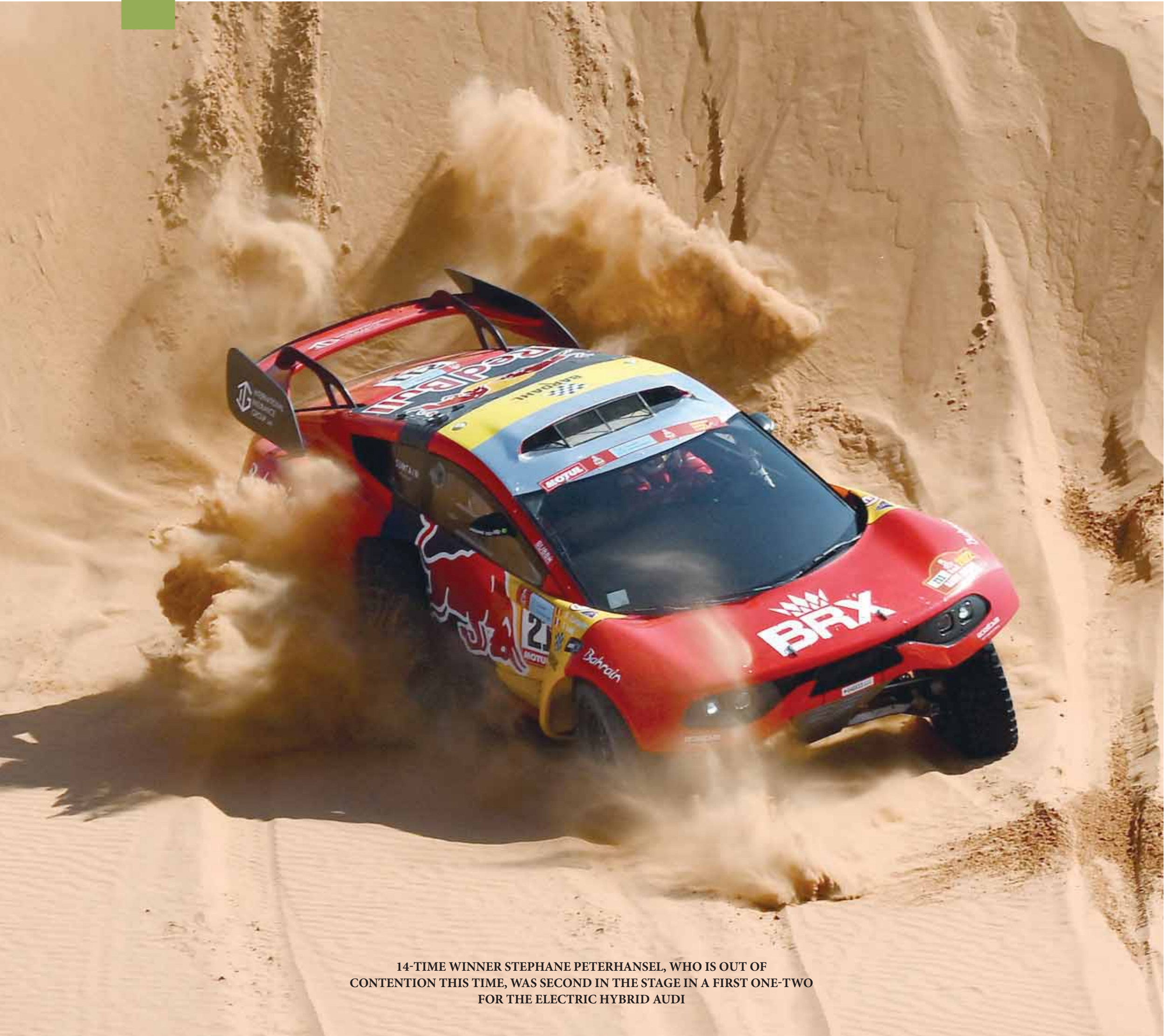
half of 2021 meanwhile caused long waits and a surge in costs for containers carrying imported goods, according to Oksana Sorokina, Director of the Almaty-based SevenR Logistics company.

"As a result we met the end of the year with a shortage of goods with wild prices that of course were passed on to end-consumers", Sorokina said.

Like many emerging economies dependent on energy exports, Kazakhstan is a country of stark contrasts. Nur-Sultan, the city that replaced Almaty as capital in 1997, glitters with cosmic architecture designed by the likes of Britain's Norman Foster. The government has continued to pour money into the city, while many provincial centres have struggled to shed their Soviet-era skin. — AFP

sport

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14-TIME WINNER STEPHANE PETERHANSEL, WHO IS OUT OF CONTENTION THIS TIME, WAS SECOND IN THE STAGE IN A FIRST ONE-TWO FOR THE ELECTRIC HYBRID AUDI

Loeb takes a chunk out of Al Attiyah’s lead

RIYADH: Frenchman Sebastien Loeb cut Nasser al Attiyah’s substantial Dakar Rally lead on Monday in an eighth stage in Saudi Arabia won by Audi’s Mattias Ekstroem.

Nine times world rally champion Loeb finished third for the Bahrain Raid Xtreme team in the 395 km stage from Al Dawadimi to Wadi Ad Dawasir to cut his Toyota rival’s lead from 45 minutes to just under 38 with four stages remaining.

Qatari Al Attiyah, chasing his fourth Dakar title, finished 11th.

“We tried really hard from the start, but I had a puncture,” said Loeb.

“We changed the wheel quickly and finally we continued like that until the neutralisation point when we saw that we had lost our spare wheel and it was the only one we had left, so I was a bit careful at the end.”

Last year’s winner Stephane Peterhansel, the Frenchman who has a record 14 Dakar victories on two wheels and four but is out of contention this time, was second in the stage in a first one-two for

the electric hybrid Audi.

Ekstroem’s win was also a first on the Dakar for the 43-year-old Swede, a former world rallycross and twice German Touring Car (DTM) champion, and a second for Audi after Carlos Sainz last week.

In the motorcycle category, Britain’s Sam Sunderland won the stage and regained the overall lead he had lost on Sunday.

The GasGas rider was three minutes and 45 seconds clear of Austrian Matthias Walkner in the general ranking with previous leader Adrien Van Beveren dropping to third, four minutes and 43 seconds off the lead.

“I had a few crashes in the dunes this morning where I was perhaps riding a little bit too much but I settled down after the refuelling and got a good rhythm, so I’m happy with that,” said Sunderland.

“It looks like the race is really close this year.”

Botswana’s factory Yamaha rider Ross Branch withdrew from the rally after a fall last week.

— Reuters



French driver Sebastien Loeb and co-driver Fabian Lurquin of Belgium compete during Stage 7 of the Dakar Rally 2022 between the Saudi capital Riyadh and Al Dawadimi town. – AFP



West Ham United's Jarrod Bowen scores their second goal. – Reuters

Hammers knock out Leeds with VAR help

ANDY JALIL
LONDON, JAN 10

Leeds FA Cup drought has continued for 50 years now after a 2-0 defeat by West Ham in the third round of the competition. It is the fifth successive occasion that Leeds have suffered defeat at this stage of the Cup.

Referring to West Ham's controversial first goal, Leeds manager, Marcelo Bielsa, sportingly said: "It's a decision I prefer to accept what the referees say, not because I haven't created an opinion, but it's a collaboration us managers should make. We should accept their decision even if they jeopardise us."

He added: "If not, we enter a terrain where we can't offer what we want to offer, which is good

football. It's a lot of arguments to say the position I'm taking is incorrect. I consider them and revise them. I think the argument I'm offering is superior to that."

Bielsa went on to say: "I think it corresponded they won the game. They created more danger than we did. They had balls with which to attack in worse situations than we did and created more danger."

Hammers' disputed first goal came in the 34th minute after Leo Hjelde tackled Nikola Vlasic and Illan Meslier tried to grab the loose ball but missed.

While several players tried to take possession in a scramble, the ball went to Lanzini whose shot went into the net. VAR checked and decided the goal should stand. Leeds were



West Ham United's Jarrod Bowen celebrates after the match. – Reuters

convinced that Jarrod Bowen was offside before he joined the scramble and Meslier's attempt to get the ball was hampered by Bowen.

West Ham dominated much of the first half as a

depleted Leeds — with illness and injuries struggled — had two teenagers, Hjelde and Lewis Bate making their debut and another teenager Sam Greenwood getting his first start to the game for the senior side.

Hammers missed further chances to score in the first half. Antonio shot wide from close range and Ryan Fredericks could not get the finishing touch to an excellent move by Bowen who had been unlucky earlier to see his shot cleared off the line.

Leeds were also lucky in the 23rd minute not to concede a penalty when the ball struck Hjelde's hand while attempting to clear a free-kick.

Leeds should have equalised in the 73rd minute when Mateusz Klich shot across the goal and then Jack Harrison

incredibly missed from a yard out.

Shortly after that Daniel James failed to guide the ball home from a cross by Harrison. Finally, three minutes into added time, came the second goal.

Antonio broke clear on the counter attack to pass to Bowen, on his left, who slotted the ball in through Meslier's legs.

Hammers' manager, David Moyes, was particularly pleased with Bowen's performance and said: "If Bowen keeps this level, he will get closer to an international call-up. He's been talked about and referenced but competition for an England spot in his position is so strong. But if you get goals and assists, you'll always get a chance. I think he's in with a shout."

Al Azhar to play in fourth tier of Spanish football league



ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JAN 10

Al Azhar bin Hamza al Balushi will be one of the Sultanate of Oman football stars who will play in the fourth tier of the Spanish football league.

Al Balushi, who travelled to Spain on Monday, will represent Spain's Sant Andreu club in the league. The team is currently in seventh place and possesses 26 points. The Spanish team played in the league's 17 fixtures and registered eight victories, two draws and suffered seven losses.

The 20-year-old had a professional development footballing experience programme at Spain's Sant Andreu club in coordination with Spain Academy and Sports Business Company.

The player unveiled about the programme in a press conference in last November in presence of Naseem Kamil, Director of Spain Academy, Abdullah al Balushi, Sports Business Company and Oman Football Association (OFA) representatives.

The selection of former Al Shabab and Seeb player came after his top show with the Olympic football team in Turkey camp. Al Azhar affirmed in his previous statement that he aims to gain more footballing experience and developing my technical abilities and capabilities.

"I am confident this experience will remain in my sporting football and I will do the best to accomplish all the desired outcomes to benefit my national football team," he ended.

Al Azher al Balushi began his footballing career in Al Shabab club and then moved to Seeb. He is a key player in the Olympic national football team.

Legendary Naqvi leaves behind a history of sports

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

The name Sayyid Sibtain Naqvi is sharply synonymous with the game hockey and players across the globe have something or the other to cherish about with the legend.

SAS Naqvi, former technical adviser at the Oman Olympic Committee (OOC), recently passed away, leaving behind a rare collection from the historic moments of the game in Oman and India, at a small museum on the walls of his house where he lived.

On the white walls of his two-bedroom apartment near Bait al Falaj area in Ruwi, there sleep the history of Oman's sports projecting hockey as a national game in the forms of images, certificates, badges and pins, awards and accolades

and what more, the bags and suitcases that he used to carry whenever he represented Oman at international sports meets. It is a huge canvas where the portraits of achievements at the Asian Games, Olympics, World Cup and the like are portrayed dominated by the recognitions he received both on the home soil and abroad.

"This museum was born years ago from my fear that all the objects, pictures and letters that marked the growth of sports in the Sultanate of Oman would go unnoticed after my death. I have given special focus on hockey because it's my life and I have been breathing hockey for more than eight decades," an emotional yet energetic Naqvi 'Saab', the first official coach of Oman hockey team told the *Observer* in an earlier interview.

His collections also feature his



moments with Oman's ministers, sports council members, interaction with Dhyan Chand, a great hockey player of all time, photographs of his meetings with Presidents and Prime Ministers of India where he represented the game, among others. He was also the key strength behind the

formation of the OOC.

SAS Naqvi Sports museum was officially inaugurated on October 15, 2018 by Shaikh Dr Hammad bin Hamed al Ghafri, who is now a member of the Supreme Council and former president of the OOC. A number of both Omani and Indian sports stars have already visited Naqvi's 'Wall of Fame' and were wowed by the diverse collection and attention that he has paid to the details. Tayyib Ikram, CEO of Asian Hockey Federation (AHF) and member of the International Hockey Federation (FIH) executive board was one of the key people who was delighted to see more than 75 years of hockey career and the Olympic moments that Naqvi had in his collection.

The AHF chief had flown from Switzerland as a special guest and many top ranking

sports personalities have been so impressed with the collections of Naqvi.

Hockey legend and former Oman coach Tahir Zaman had also visited the museum.

It has acquired the recognitions of international bodies FIH and AHF along with the Oman Hockey Association.

Naqvi first arrived in the Sultanate of Oman on July 1, 1982, to join the national hockey team as the official coach to steer the team to participate in the Asian Games held in New Delhi.

That was the beginning of the nearly 4-decade-long association with Oman sports where he spent nearly 36 years promoting the Oman Olympic Committee, sports and hockey in the country. Naqvi was later promoted to the position of Technical Adviser to the OOC. It was Naqvi who managed the

affairs of the Oman delegation to the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, 1988 Seoul Olympics, 1992 Barcelona Olympics, 1992 Atlanta Olympics and the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

The immense contribution of Dr Hammad bin Hamed al Ghafri is something to be highlighted, according to Naqvi.

"It is Dr Hammad who helped me build a special hall to establish the museum. Without his support and guidance, nothing would have been possible. These vignettes of the history of sports in Oman will be depicted and presented to the visitors and to the next generations to come."

"This museum which stands as the memoir of my father will remain as a museum and maintained as it was for the sports lovers of the Sultanate of Oman and beyond," his son Inayat Naqvi said.

Boult skittles Bangladesh out as NZ take control

CHRISTCHURCH, NEW ZEALAND: Trent Boult bagged five wickets as Bangladesh were rolled for 126 in reply to New Zealand's mammoth 521 for six declared in the second Test on Monday.

The last wicket fell in the final over of the day in Christchurch as the Bangladesh innings ended inside a session and a half, to leave them 395 in arrears. After two days the hosts look well on course for the victory they need to draw the two-match series after losing the first Test by eight wickets.

New Zealand had made batting look easy after being sent in on a green wicket with opener Tom Latham in the middle for more than nine hours for his 252, while Devon Conway added 109 and Tom Blundell was 57 not out.

When the Black Caps declared, pace bowlers Boult and Tim Southee then showed how to move the ball on a verdant surface as they ripped through the Bangladesh line-up.

Boult put the difference down to local knowledge.

"That's the beauty of Test cricket, the little subtleties that come with different grounds," he said. "The wicket obviously offers a little bit of bounce with a bit of grass on it.

SCOREBOARD	
New Zealand first innings (0/n: 349-1):	
T Latham c Yasir b Mominul	252
W Young c Naim b Shoriful	54
D Conway (run out)	109
R Taylor c Shoriful b Ebadot	28
H Nicholls c Nurul b Ebadot	0
D Mitchell c Nurul b Shoriful	3
T Blundell (not out)	57
K Jamieson (not out)	4
Extras (LB-8, W-5, NB-1)	14
Total (For 6 wkts decl, 128.5 overs)-----	521
Fall of wickets: 1-148, 2-363, 3-411, 4-414, 5-423, 6-499	
Bowling: Taskin 32.5-117-0, Shoriful 28-9-79-2, Ebadot 30-3-143-2, Mehidy 31-2-125-0, Shanto 4-0-15-0, Mominul 3-0-34-1	
Bangladesh first innings:	
S Islam c Latham b Boult	7
M Naim b Southee	0
N Hossain Shanto c Latham b Boult	4
M Haque b Southee	0
L Das c Blundell b Boult	8
Y Ali c Mitchell b Jamieson	55
N Hasan lbw Southee	41
M Hasan b Boult	5
T Ahmed c Young b Jamieson	2
S Islam b Boult	2
E Hossain (not out)	0
Extras (W-1, NB-1)	2
Total (all out, 41.2 overs) -----	126
Fall of wickets: 1-7, 2-11, 3-11, 4-11, 5-27, 6-87, 7-109, 8-118, 9-126	
Bowling: Southee 12-4-28-3, Boult 13-2-43-5, Jamieson 9-3-32-2, Wagner 7-1-23-0	

ALL ABOUT LENGTH

"It's all about the length here, of us getting them on the front foot and encouraging them to drive down the ground ... pitching the ball up and hopefully we can get 10 (wickets) pretty quickly again."

Boult ended with five for 43

while Southee took three for 28.

Only two relative Test novices, Yasir Ali and Nurul Hasan, provided any resistance.

Yasir, in his third Test, made 55 while Nurul was out for 41 in his fifth appearance.

"Of course we're disappointed," Bangladesh batting coach Ashwell Prince said.

"If we can learn something from the Kiwis batting on day one it was that they left a lot more balls outside the off stump.

"The Kiwis got it swinging as well today and bowled really well and made it tough for our guys."

The tourists lost their first four wickets for only 11 runs inside seven overs and were then 27 for five before Yasir and Nurul put together a 60-run partnership.

In a whirlwind start, Boult had Shadman Islam (seven) and Najmul Hossain Shanto (four) both caught by Latham at second slip while Southee bowled debutant Mohammad Naim and captain Mominul Haque without scoring.

The fifth wicket fell in the first over after tea when Boult had Liton Das caught behind for eight.

Southee came back to break up the Yasir-Nurul partnership with a ball that nipped back sharply on Nurul to trap him lbw. — **AFP**



New Zealand's Trent Boult celebrates the wicket of Bangladesh's Liton Das on day two of the second Test against Bangladesh in Christchurch. — AFP

Kohli bats away concerns over recent poor form

CAPE TOWN: India captain Virat Kohli has batted away criticism of his recent form and says he is "at peace with my game" heading into the decisive third Test against South Africa at Newlands on Tuesday.

Middle order batsman Kohli will return to the side after back spasms ruled him out of the seven wicket defeat in the second test in Johannesburg that left the teams level at 1-1 and India in the hunt for a first series victory in South Africa.

He does so with an average of only 26.08 in 14 Tests since the start of 2020, well below his career mark of 50.34. But the 33-year-old said it is not the first time his place has been under scrutiny.

"It has happened a few times in my career. England in 2014 was one of those. But I don't look at myself through the lens that the outside world sees me," Kohli said on Monday.

"The standards we are talking about today have been set by myself. In sport, sometimes things do not go the way you want them to. But I have been part of important (batting) partnerships when the team has needed me.

"Those moments have been crucial for us in many Test matches. If you are always going to judge yourself on the basis of numbers and milestones, you will never be content.

"I am at peace with how I am playing and what I am able to do for the team when there is a tricky scenario. I have nothing else to worry about. I don't need to prove



anything to anyone."

Kohli has revealed that fast bowler Mohammed Siraj will miss the third test with the hamstring injury he suffered in Johannesburg.

One of Ishant Sharma or Umesh Yadav are likely to get the nod as a replacement.

"I don't think he (Siraj) is match ready and you can't risk a guy who is not at 110 per cent as a fast bowler. We are yet to sit down to decide what we want to do about the replacement," Kohli said.

"It is difficult to figure out who we play because everybody is at the top of their game." — **Reuters**

LOCAL FLAVOUR

Sarco, Zawawi notch T20 victories, Amanpreet leads OCA to U-19 win

MUSCAT: Rakesh Patel's superb 3 for 12 steered Sarco to an exciting 30-run win over ABL Task in an A Division T20 League clash at Oman Cricket Turf 2 in Al Amerat on Saturday. Sarco's 129 for 7 did not look imposing but became a mountain to climb for ABL Task who were floored for 99 in 18.1 overs due largely to Rakesh's brilliant bowling.

Brief Scores (A Division T20)

Sarco 129 for 7 in 20 overs (Ajay Menon 40 not out – 4x4, 1x6. Sathisha Achary 20 – 2x4, 1x6, Rakesh Patel 20 – 2x4, 1x6. Saud Haroon 4-21) beat ABL Task 99 all out in 18.1 overs (Ravi 25 – 3x4, Rakesh Patel 3-12, Sandip Patel 2-22) by 30 runs.

Zawawi Powertech 157 for 5 in 20 overs (Mohammed Shiraj 62 – 8x4, Arun Dev 59 – 3x4, 1x6, Abdul Rauf 2-23) beat LC Tech 99 all out in 16.3 overs (Abdul Rauf 22 – 1x4, 1x6, Nishad K S 4-10. Manikandan Govindarajan 3-14) by 58 runs.

Junior Division U-19

Indian School Muscat U-19 184 all out in 41.1 overs (Shanmugarajan Kuttiraja 44 – 5x4, 1x6, Aditya Gurumukhi 42 – 2x4, Nakul M 34 – 5x4, Amanpreet Singh 4-22) lost to Oman Cricket Academy U19 186 for 4 in 40.1 overs (Amanpreet Singh 83 – 9x4, 1x6, Lakshmi Narayana 65 – 10x4) by 6 wickets.



Sohar Aluminium supports Muscat Marathon

MUSCAT: In line with its endeavour to support an active lifestyle amongst the youth, Sohar Aluminium has joined forces with the upcoming Al Mouj Muscat Marathon to inspire the next generation of athletes. There has been an overwhelmingly positive response from the youth looking to take the first steps towards a healthy and active lifestyle when the Sultanate of Oman's biggest race returns on February 11-12 and Sohar Aluminium has been promoting the race within the community in Sohar.

Engineer Said bin Mohammed al Masoudi, CEO of Sohar Aluminium, said, "our sponsorship of this important event stems from our belief, as a leading company, in the importance of supporting national and international events that contribute to strengthening the Sultanate of Oman's position on the map of global sporting events. It is an opportunity to share and exchange sports and health values and best practices that promote healthy lifestyle among members of the society."

The 2022 Al Mouj Muscat Marathon includes three races designed specifically for kids, with the option of 1 km designed for children between 7-8 years old, 2 km for those aged 9-10 and a 3 km race for 11 and 12-year-olds. Every participant will experience the same incredible atmosphere as the adults, receiving an official time, a t-shirt and a medal at the finishing line. The event has also been popular with teams of runners from several of the Sultanate of Oman's corporates.

Ittin International, Minar Al Qauf post wins

SALALAH: A division teams Ittin International and Minar Al Qauf posted contrasting wins on the seventh day of the fifth season of Oman Cricket Club Salalah Cricket League 2021-22 recently.

BRIEF SCORES

A Division

Ittin International beat Sabeel Al Khair by 151 runs.

Ittin International – 264/6 in 30 overs (Iftikhar Ahmed 72 (45b), Abhijith 64 (44b), Mohammed 32 (32b) and Veera 48 n.o. (18b); Naeem 3/63 in 6 overs, Adaan 2/17 in 6 overs) bt Sabeel Al Khair 113 all out in 20.4 overs (Zafar Iqbal 30, Mubashar Ali 24; Abhijith 6-30-6, Mohammad Tahir 4-20-2); MoM: Abhijith - 64 runs and 6 wickets.

Minar Al Qauf beat Arabian Beach Tourism by 3 wickets.

Arabian Beach 202 all out in 27.3 overs (Biju Thomas 53 (45b), Mohd Shakeel 29, Khizer 31; Noushad 2.3-12-4, Madeep 6-38-3) lost to Minar Al Qauf 203-7 in 27.5 overs (Sajjad 45 (39b), Mandeep 33, Waheed 33; Mohd Shabir 6-33-3, Khizer 4.5-33-2); MoM: Noushad Abbasi - 4 wickets

B Division

Abraj Al Janoob beat Said Bin Mohammed by 6 wickets.

Said Bin Mohammed 92 all out in 16.5 overs (Siddiq 33; Nidheeshkumar 4-10-3, Najmul 4-31-3, Shinil 4-15-2) lost to Abraj Al Janoob 94-4 in 8.4 overs (Afzal 44 (25b), Shinil 18; Tarek 3-19-2); MoM: Nisheeshkumar - 3 wickets.

Majan Mining beat Al Taqween by 63 runs

Majan Mining 193-6 in 20 overs (Abid Ali 65 (46b), Pradeep 42 (23b); Ganesh 4-35-2, Najim 4-40-2) bt Al Taween 130-7 in 20 overs (Nilesh 43, Ganesh 23; Pradeep 3-22-2); MoM: Abid Ali - 70 runs

C Division

Al Barari Glass and Aluminium beat ONEIC by 62 runs.

Al Barari 235-7 in 20 overs (Usman Ahamed 102 (46b), Suhaib 38, Anshad 37 (19b); Mithun 4-38-3) bt ONEIC 173 all out in 17 overs (Muthu 35, Imran 24, Manoj 21; Asif 4-26-3); MoM: Usman Ahamed 102.

AL ZUBAIR BACK IN ACTION AT DUBAI 24H

OMANI DRIVER TEAMS UP WITH HRT FOR HANKOOK 24H DUBAI

DUBAI: The Sultanate of Oman's Al Faisal al Zubair returns to international circuit racing action this weekend to take part in the Hankook 24H Dubai at the Dubai Autodrome.

Al Zubair is raring to go after a successful inaugural season in the International GT Open that saw him team up with Andy Soucek to record several impressive victories and second and third places in the drivers' championship.

On this occasion, Al Zubair replaces his Lechner Racing Porsche 911 GT3 for a Mercedes-AMG GT3, where he heads a four-man Al Manar Racing by HRT team entered under the Sultanate of Oman's national flag.

Al Zubair teams up with Dutchman Indy Dontje, Germany's professional driver Luca Stolz and Austrian amateur racer Martin Konrad in the second of two Mercedes' run by the Haupt Racing Team that took over the racing operations of Black Falcon. Twenty-eight cars are entered in the GT3 category.

Al Zubair said: "I am really excited for the 24 Hours of Dubai, especially having one year of GT Open experience. I think I am a lot better prepared now in the GT3 category than I was when I first participated in the Dubai 24. That was cut short after seven hours, so I am counting this as pretty much the first Dubai 24 for me."

"The team we are coming in with now are very successful and have won Dubai 24 numerous times and, with that, and along with my team-mates, I think we can feel quite confident in the package that we have. I am really excited to start driving again."

Dontje, 29, began his career racing in the ADAC Formel Masters and ATC Formel 3 Cup and is now a Mercedes works GT3 driver who earned class success in Dubai in 2019. He partnered Al Zubair on the Omani's debut in Dubai in 2020.

Stolz, 26, also competes in the ADAC GT Masters and GT World Challenge Europe and



has won races in the Blancpain GT Series. He also came close to winning the Dubai race with the Black Falcon team in 2018.

Konrad, 43, is the oldest driver in the team and won the class A6-Am at the Dubai 24Hr race in 2019 with HTP Motorsport.

Last season, he competed with a Mercedes in the Fanatec GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup and in the Intercontinental GT Challenge.

The Haupt Racing Team is running a sister car for team owner Hubert Haupt, Khaled al



The team we are coming in with now are very successful and have won Dubai 24 numerous times and, with that, and along with my team-mates, I think we can feel quite confident in the package that we have. I am really excited to start driving again

**AL FAISAL
AL ZUBAIR**

Omani racer

Qubaisi, Raffaele Marciello and Manuel Metzger. Marciello is the former Sauber Formula 1 test and reserve driver and is making his first appearance in Dubai.

The Dubai 24-Hour race was inaugurated in 2006 and ran as a 24-hour series race for the first time in 2015. Porsche is the most successful manufacturer with six victories, Black Falcon is the leading team with five wins and Jeroen Bleekemolen, Khaled al Qubaisi and Hubert Haupt are the most successful drivers with three successes apiece.

Unofficial private tests will be permitted on the circuit on Wednesday, but the first official practice sessions get underway at 12.15hrs on Thursday (January 13). These are followed immediately by two sets of three qualifying sessions for all Dubai 24Hr entrants.

The GT runners take to the track for 55 minutes from 15.25hrs. The stint is then followed by an official press conference for the leading qualifiers and then an important night practice session, starting at 18.00hrs and running for 90 minutes. The Hankook 24H Dubai then fires into life at 15.00hrs on Friday afternoon with the chequered flag falling for the leading crew at 15.00hrs on Saturday.

Kvitova survives Rus scare in Sydney opener



SYDNEY: Two-times Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova survived a scare against Arantxa Rus in her opening match of the Sydney Tennis Classic on Monday, coming back from a set down to win 3-6 7-6(4) 7-5 and reach the second round of the WTA 500 tournament.

Czech Kvitova was stunned by Priscilla Hon in the first round at Adelaide last week and came close to another shock as she lost the opening set tamely against the world number 66 and was then dragged into a second set tiebreak.

However, Kvitova clawed her way back to level the contest at one set each and saved two match points in the decider before wrapping up the near three-hour match on Ken Rosewall Arena.

"I really had to fight a lot. I lost my first match in Adelaide and after losing in the beginning of the season, you don't feel the best, and that was my case," Kvitova said.

"It's been a long time since I turned a match from match points so this is something special."

Also advancing to the next round of the Australian Open warm-up event was Spain's Paula Badosa, who beat former French Open champion Jelena Ostapenko 7-6(1) 6-1.

"A match against Jelena is

always tough," said Badosa, who had a breakthrough season in 2021 and captured titles in Belgrade and Indian Wells.

"She's a tough player and you never know how good she can be that day, so I'm really happy with my first win of the year."

In the evening session, Tunisian seventh seed Ons Jabeur was flawless on serve as she made light work of local hope Astra Sharma, racing to a 6-1 6-3 win. Sharma improved in the second set but was let down by a string of unforced errors as Jabeur continued her fine form from last season.

Russia's Daria Kasatkina pulled off a surprise win against 2020 Australian Open champion Sofia Kenin, prevailing 6-4 6-0 over the American in just over an hour.

In the men's ATP 250 tournament in Sydney, eighth seed David Goffin rolled past Argentina's Facundo Bagnis 6-4 6-4. Australian Nick Kyrgios, who pulled out of last week's Melbourne Summer Set tournament due to asthma, withdrew from his clash with Italian seventh seed Fabio Fognini, later saying that he had tested positive for Covid-19.

Kyrgios, however, said he hoped to be fit for the Australian Open, which begins on January 17.

— Reuters

Djokovic out of Australia detention, still faces deportation threat

MELBOURNE: World tennis number one Novak Djokovic was released from Australian immigration detention on Monday after winning a court challenge to remain in the country, but the government said it was still considering another move to deport him.

Judge Anthony Kelly ruled the federal government's decision last week to revoke the Serbian tennis star's visa amid a row over his medical exemption from Covid-19 vaccination requirements was "unreasonable" and ordered his release.

Djokovic, who arrived in Australia last week in pursuit of a record 21st Grand Slam title at the upcoming Australian Open, spent the day at his lawyers' chambers and did not immediately appear in public or make any statement after the ruling.

There were chaotic scenes on Monday evening as supporters who had gathered outside the

lawyers' office chanting "Free Novak!" surged around a black car with tinted windows leaving the building, while police at one stage used pepper spray as they tried to clear a path.

It was unclear if Djokovic was in the vehicle, though police later told reporters outside that he had left. His family were due to hold a news conference in Belgrade later.

A spokesman for Immigration Minister Alex Hawke said he was considering using broad discretionary powers he is given by Australia's Migration Act to again revoke Djokovic's visa.

"The minister is currently considering the matter and the process remains ongoing," the spokesman said.

The controversy has been closely followed around the world, creating diplomatic tensions between Belgrade and Canberra and sparking heated debate over national vaccination rules.



Members of the local Serbian community members hold a banner outside the legal offices where Serbia's tennis champion Novak Djokovic is in with his legal team in Melbourne. — AFP

Serbia's parliamentary speaker, Ivica Dacic, said he was concerned Hawke could still deport Djokovic, a move that would bar the 34-year-old from the country for three years.

"The process should have ended when the court ruled on the matter," Dacic, a former

foreign minister, told Serbia's Happy TV. "It defies common sense."

COURT 'CIRCUS'

Spanish rival Rafael Nadal called the drama surrounding the build-up to the tournament, which starts on January 17, a "circus".

"Whether or not I agree with Djokovic on some things, justice has spoken and has said that he has the right to participate in the Australian Open and I think it is the fairest decision to do so," Nadal told Spanish radio Onda Cero.

There has been huge global interest in the case, but the authorities' efforts to let the media and public follow events in court at times descended into farce as pranksters hijacked the Internet links to stream loud music and porn.

Judge Kelly said he had quashed the decision to block Djokovic's entry to Australia because the player was not given enough time to speak to tennis organisers and lawyers to respond fully after he was notified of the intent to cancel his visa.

Officials at Melbourne's airport, where Djokovic had been detained on arrival late on Wednesday, reneged on an

agreement to give Djokovic until 8.30 am to speak to tournament organiser Tennis Australia and lawyers, the judge said.

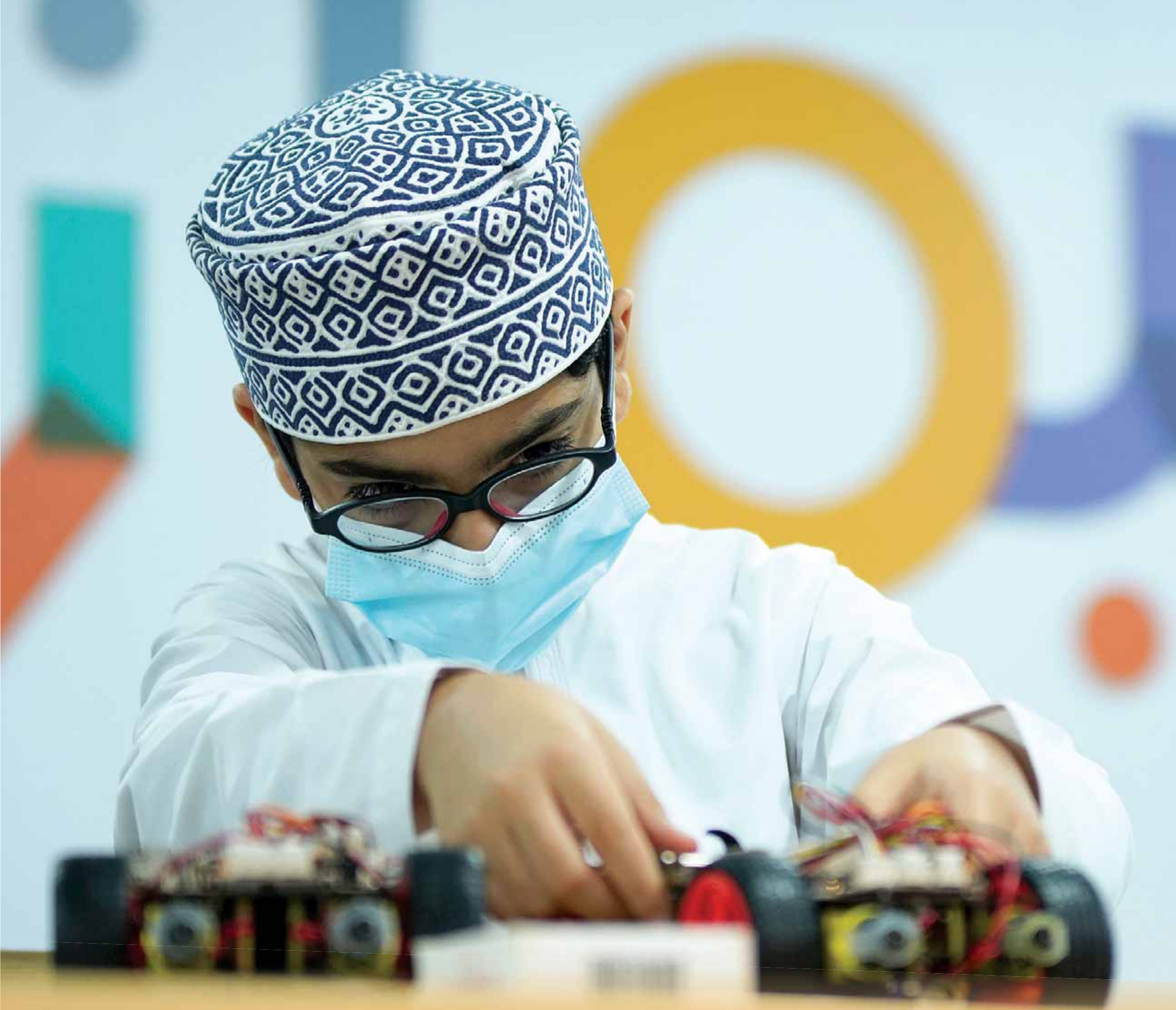
Djokovic was instead woken up by officials at around 6.00 am after a brief rest and said he felt pressured to respond. The player, a long-term vocal opponent of mandatory vaccination, told border officials he was unvaccinated and had Covid-19 twice, according to a transcript of the interview.

MEDICAL EXEMPTION

Kelly earlier told the court it appeared Djokovic had sought and received the required medical exemption from Covid-19 vaccination on the basis that he had contracted the virus last month. He had presented evidence of this before he travelled to Melbourne and when he landed on Wednesday evening.

— Reuters

features



Their first tryst with science

Experts advise children should take the lessons of science at a tender age to help them in gaining opportunities to develop and practice many different skills and attributes such as communication skills, team working, collaborative skills besides developing perseverance... **P28**

GASTRONOMY

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE BISCUITS: 1 cup/120 grams all-purpose flour 2/3 cup/92 grams fine cornmeal 2 teaspoons baking powder 1 teaspoon sugar 1/2 teaspoon fine sea or table salt 1/4 teaspoon baking soda 8 tablespoons/113 grams cold, unsalted butter, cut into 1/2-inch cubes 3/4 cup/177 millilitres buttermilk or plain whole-milk yoghurt 1 scallion, thinly sliced, plus more for serving Milk or more buttermilk or yoghurt, for finishing 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan, for finishing	FOR THE CHILLI: 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil 1 pound ground turkey 1 large yellow onion, diced 1 jalapeño, seeded (if desired) and diced 3 garlic cloves, finely grated, passed through a press or minced 1 tablespoon chilli powder 1 1/2 teaspoons fine sea or table salt, plus more to taste 1 teaspoon dried oregano 3/4 teaspoon ground cumin 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper 1 (14 1/2-ounce) can whole plum tomatoes (1 3/4 cups) 2 (15-ounce) cans pinto or black beans, drained and rinsed 1/2 cup chopped fresh cilantro leaves and tender stems Sour cream (or Greek yoghurt) and pickled jalapeños, for serving (optional)
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Chilli, Biscuits and All, in One Pan



PREPARATION:

1. Prepare the biscuits: In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, cornmeal, baking powder, sugar, salt and baking soda.
2. Using a pastry cutter or your hands, cut or rub in the butter until mixture resembles rolled oats. Fold in the buttermilk and scallion. Gently stir mixture until it comes together in a moist, sticky mass. Cover bowl and refrigerate until ready to use.
3. Heat oven to 425 degrees.
4. Start the chilli: In a large ovenproof skillet, heat oil over high heat until it thins. Stir in turkey and cook, breaking up meat with a wooden spoon, until it's no longer pink with some browned bits, about 7 minutes.
5. Reduce heat to medium-high, and add onion and jalapeño, and cook until translucent and tender, about 5 minutes. Stir in garlic, chilli powder, 1 teaspoon salt, oregano, cumin and pepper, and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute longer.
6. Using kitchen shears or your hands, break up tomatoes and add them, along with the juices, to the pan. Add beans and remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt, and scrape up any brown bits on the bottom of the pan. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer until slightly thickened, 3 to 5 minutes. If the mixture seems very dry, add a few tablespoons water. It should be juicy-looking but not wet. Remove from heat and stir in cilantro. Taste and add more salt, if needed.
7. Divide biscuit dough into 6 equal balls. Use your palm to flatten each ball into a 3/4-inch-thick disk. Arrange on top of turkey chilli. Brush biscuits lightly with milk, and sprinkle grated Parmesan on top. Transfer skillet to oven and cook until biscuits are golden at the edges, 25 to 30 minutes. Let cool for 10 minutes before serving. Serve with sour cream and pickled jalapeños, if you like, and more scallions. — *The New York Times*

ART

Soul of Colours



THE (SOUL OF COLOURS), is the first exhibition of Sudanese artist Abdelrahman Saad, held in Art & Soul Gallery hall at the water-front in Qurum, Muscat. The exhibition is characterised by the con-

trast of cold and hot colours and mixing them with high-quality methods that show the artist's ingenuity in choosing colours to meet in (the Soul of colours)... Abdelrahman Saad, a writer and artist who

loves colours and extracts rich details from them. He produces some brilliant ideas of artwork.... Abdelrahman, who appreciates Colour and its manifestations, plays with Colour to create a world

full of joy, transcending the world's cosmic sorrows to reach the spirit of things. He participated in number of exhibitions and publishes his paintings on his Instagram & Fine Art America accounts.



FILMS

'MY HEART CAN'T BEAT UNLESS YOU TELL IT TO'
One of my favourite horror films of 2021 was this deeply moving, brazenly violent drama, written and directed by Jonathan Cuartas, about a frail young blood drinker and his sibling caretakers. Cuartas has said he was inspired by his family's own difficult experience caring for his grandmother in hospice; the pain of that time comes through in his profound, empathetic film about mercy and what it means to be bound by blood.

'THE DARKNESS OF THE ROAD'
A young mom (Najarra Townsend) drives down a desolate highway on a dark night as a storm approaches, her daughter asleep in the back seat. At a gas station, she agrees to give a ride to a young woman (Leah Lauren) whom she meets in the bathroom. They don't get far before a



creature lunges in front of the car, and they discover that a doll has replaced the sleeping child. As the women try to figure out what's behind the uncanny

goings-on, they discover that their meeting wasn't by chance.

'AUTUMN ROAD'
Struggling to make it as an actress, Laura (Lorelei Linklater, daughter of director Richard Linklater) returns to her small Texas hometown where her sister Winnie (Maddy-Lea Hendrix) disappeared 10 years ago on Halloween. There, she meets up with identical twin brothers Charlie, the sweet one who prefers nerdy cardigans, and Vincent, the creepy one in black. (Kudos to writer-director Riley Cusick for a bizarre performance as the twins.)

'TWO'
Have you ever woken up naked in bed with a stranger and wondered, "Who are you?" In this lurid thriller from Spain, that's what happens to David (Pablo Derqui) and Sara (Marina Gatell), except they don't just wake up next to each other — they wake up sewn together at the abdomen. And they have no idea where they are or how they literally got together.

'REPOSSESSION'
Jim (Gerald Chew) did something dumb at work and got fired from his engineering job in Singapore. He keeps the news from his wife and daughter for months, and to make money, he starts driving for a ride-sharing company. One night, he drives a young man who tells him a once-upon-a-time story about a monster who terrorises a village. The timing of the tale is weird, considering that Jim has been seeing ghastly figures and hearing devilish whispers since he lost his job. As Jim's prospects for employment plummet, he has flashbacks to a playground incident with his sister that tortures him still, even at 50. Soon, his personal demons become angry real ones. — **NYT**



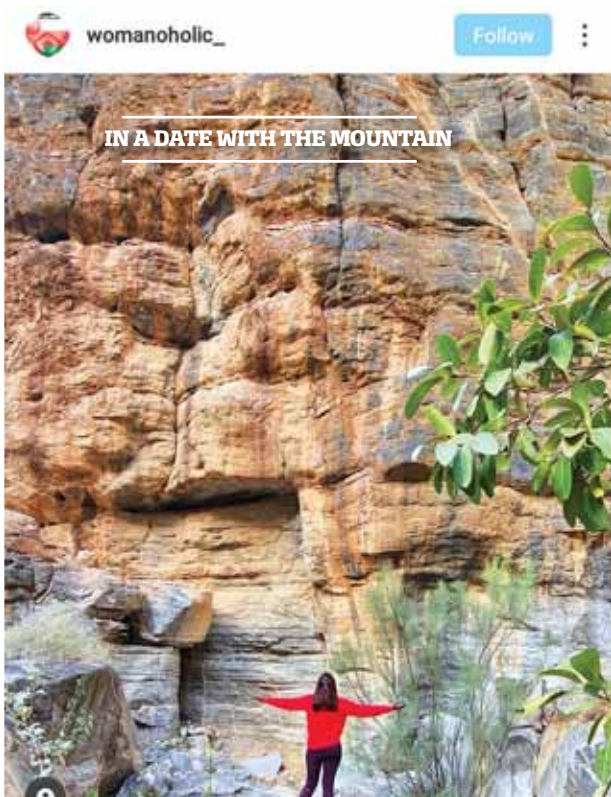
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TUESDAY | JANUARY 11 | 2022

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INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



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

ENVIRONMENT

Environment society of Oman rounds off a successful year for environmental conservation



BUILDING ON ITS 17-year precedence, the Environment Society of Oman (ESO) is starting off the year by highlighting its efforts to protect Oman's natural heritage and influence environmentally sustainable behaviour in 2021 and setting out its agenda for 2022. Despite reduced staff, resources and funding, ESO, the Sultanate of Oman's only non-profit organisation focusing on environmental conservation, carried out a number of educational programmes, awareness campaigns and conservation projects in 2021 thanks to the steadfast and generous help of its members, sponsors and supporters. ESO is welcoming in the New Year with a renewed commitment to conserve and protect one of Oman's greatest assets: Its incredible natural heritage and is inviting you to join them.

With raising environmental awareness at the core of its activities, ESO led 14 community awareness events throughout 2021 and worked with 31 schools from different governorates in Oman to promote environmental literacy among students in its Namat competition, previously known as the Green School Competition. The non-profit organisation also delivered a series of summer workshops to ensure that children understand the interconnectedness of the environment, economy and society at an early age and provide them with the skills and knowledge to make responsible decisions for a sustainable future.

Building on its ongoing programmes, ESO launched an anti-lighting pollution initiative to preserve the sea turtle population on Masirah Island and help local coastal communities switch to low glare lighting, one of the main threats to nesting and hatching turtles. Running since 2008, the team continued their Whale and Dolphin conservation programme with a series of surveys aiming to quantify the body condition, scarring, and skin lesions of Arabian Sea Humpback whales. The data collected will be used as a baseline to monitor the health and status of these endangered mammals. Moreover, the team visited 89 sites across seven governorates and spent over 1,000 hours, throughout the year, conducting surveys on endangered vultures while also raising awareness on the importance of their conservation.

TRAVEL

Going Deep Into Oyster Country



IN THE MARSH-BOUND causeway to Chincoteague Island on Virginia's Eastern Shore, cars and their drivers seemed to float across the still waters of Queens Sound. As I made my way across, I thought of how, in centuries past, skiffs drifted through the region's bays, channels and coves in search of shellfish. Back then, before fish-farming became popular, the land itself functioned as a sort of natural pier for its residents who wrangled clams and oysters and terrapin, as thick as treasure, from beds in the brackish water.

My visit to Chincoteague last September was part of an exploration of an American tradition rich in history and lore. A few weeks after that trip, I would head to the opposite side of the Chesapeake, to Leonardtown, Maryland — home of the St Mary's County Oyster Festival and National Shucking Competition. On my journey through the region, I wanted to delve into something that had been a part of my childhood: The culture surrounding oysters. I was curious about the difference between the tradition, here, along the eastern Virginia coast, and in places like New York City and New Orleans, where I'm from. As an African American and native Southerner, I also wanted to explore how Black culture figured in — to see if the world of oysters reflected something larger about the American experience across racial lines.

Years ago, growing up on Louisiana's Gulf Coast, I'd watch oyster shuckers, usually Black men, popping open shell after shell, joking with guests on the opposite side of the bar while they worked. They reminded me of my uncles at our family seafood boil, who shared stories as they stood around an 80-quart pot. In New York and other cities to the north, the lifestyle surrounding oysters

seemed altogether different, from the well-attired shuckers at fancy restaurants, down to the serving plates and wine pairings. I wanted to know more about this difference in attitude toward the shellfish and the kinds of experiences they conjured.

A BLACK OYSTERMAN FROM COASTAL VIRGINIA

Chincoteague was quiet on this clear blue day in September, but between the succession of seafood shacks and ice-cream parlours I felt the pulse of a town aware of its history. The regional boom in oysters that began in the mid-19th-century still hangs over the place whose nearness to waters that were once rich with oyster reefs allowed the industry to thrive.

I stopped at the town's museum, where I found rustic oyster tools and shells, and exhibits in the front room on the boats that were used for various maritime activities, such as duck hunting and shellfish dredging. Past the "Misty" exhibition (about a beloved wild pony), I fiddled with a pair of traditional oyster tongs, which are rarely used these days and resemble a pair of rakes slanting across one another and bolted together, and tried my hand at raking loose shells from beneath a mound of boxed-in sand.

In one corner, there was an area dedicated to the African

American experience on Chincoteague Island. I read through the text on the wall and then examined a photo of Black men shucking oysters in an adjacent section. Strangely, I didn't come across any mention of one of the area's most famous Black oystermen — Thomas Downing, who would eventually become the acclaimed proprietor of Downing's Oyster House, a 19th-century oyster cellar in New York City.

Downing was born on Virginia's Eastern Shore in 1791 to a Black family whose freedom had been granted after a travelling preacher convinced the Downing's slaveholder that it was bad faith to be both a member of the Methodist Church and hold enslaved people. Post-enslavement, the Downings stayed in Accomack County on the Virginia shore and eventually acquired a small plot of land.

The family became a part of the Chincoteague community where they were said to have regularly hosted prominent whites of the county before and after church on Sundays — a relationship that at least appeared to approach being neighbourly, though it still evoked a resemblance to antebellum culture, in which enslaved Black people cooked meals for white plantation families. — **NYT**

A WINDOW INTO CONTEMPORARY OMANI LITERATURE



Dr Khalid Mohammed al Balushi
khalidalbalushi@hotmail.com

Ode to the Sand Lady

The following are translations of poems by the Omani poet Hilal al Hajri (1968-) from his first collection titled: "Night Is Mine", (Muscat: 2006):

Ode to the Sand Lady
Where're you taking my soul?
The world no longer has
A place for madness,
The world no longer has
A place for foreheads.
I come to you from the birth of love
Before departure.
I'm last of the lovers.
I'm first of the lovers.
I love as the rural rain falls on the drowsy palms
I fear the tattlers
And am hurt by the promise, if wasted by years.
Take my hand
I beg your affection as I'm but a child love
Snatched by verse amidst chief-tains and the plant
I beg your affection.
This is my steed
I'll slaughter it for the kindly der-ishes of my village

As a prayer
For all the mirrors that wounded us
From love and even yearning
From cradle to certitude
For all sins and steps
As a prayer
For all the gloom in your eyes
From which love and songs seek light

As a prayer
For all the whiteness in my eyes
Dislodged by sadness and desire.

Take my hand
The world no longer has
A place for madness
The world no longer has
A place for foreheads
The world no longer has
A place for madness.
An expanse of desperation
From which our eyes move back
And move forward
A caravan of ancient questions
If doubts deliver to illusions
Would be led astray by a thou-sand paths

No one is there
On the path.
Take my hand
I'm sick of verse and the tire-some
Of the lust of silence
Of my hidden pride
Of what I want
And of what I don't
Of my steps wobbling from suspi-cions
And of frivolity from which there's no escape.
Take my hand
An orphan pile of misery and scraps
Of a lost one in a crowd

Of an eye that pleads its dreams
To sleep.
Wounded I come to you, my lady,
Nothing is there between me
And the end save pain
Save yearning
Save defeat.

Take my hand
Doesn't my eye drop blood
When yearning for you?
Isn't there a fracture on my forehead
Or smoke of fire on my eye balls?
Would extinction shelter me
From your gypsy-like love?
Would water today protect me?

I come to you
Nobody in front
Except me
Nobody behind.
I'm estrangement
To the East an earth took me
To love
To the West skies took me.
Take my hand
I shall emigrate from my despair
And ride the seesaw of dream-ers
Like others.

Tomorrow we'll dream
Of glory and jasmine
And we'll make our desert anew
And draw our dreams like a kiss
On the lips of stars
And recite our sweetest poems
Burning for a home or a beloved.
We'll make our desert anew
We'll fly a thousand butterflies of love
And a thousand chants.
Won't you shelter me
From the shiver of dreams
From a chilling age like ice
From death and senility that run from tears
To the vein
From a baby-girl who sleeps
On her dreams in my blood
From a sea-gull the harbors led astray
To a death preferred in my eye-balls.
Take my hand
To you I'll declare a fatwa on love:

Love is either loss
Or yearning and sweat
Pouring from the forehead.
I beg your affection
Seize my hand
I'm about
To fly into sadness and mirage
They are but two hands
It is but a hug
It is but a steed
Trapped in love
And pride
And antiquity
And an era of despair and vig-or.



Their first tryst with science

KABEER YOUSUF

Do kids have an aversion towards science?

Are they not more keen to learn digits than drawing pictures and yes indeed, they can be seen yawning and playing hit-or-miss and behave indecisive if they aren't happy about learning something.

Science can be so interesting for the tiny tots if it is taught in an enjoyable, friendly way and in the correct proportion that they don't feel overburdened.

Experts advise children should take the lessons of science at a tender age to help them gain opportunities to develop and practice many different skills and attributes such as communication skills, team working, collaborative skills besides developing perseverance. Learning science can also help them in analytical, reasoning and problem-solving skills.

Kids are given a window to science at a very young age at the Children's Museum where a new project called StamaZone is implemented, thanks to the relentless efforts of the Ministry of Education, Khimji Ramdas's ICV initiative called 'Eshraqa' which traces roots in line with Oman Vision 2040 that focuses on enhancing the educational system in the country while introducing Omani children to the wonderful world of Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics (STEAM).

The Children's Museum is a scientific museum that delves into science, biology, interesting optical illusions and other interactive displays for children. The museum has many hands-on displays, including experiences



such as a fake electric shock, triggering a lightning bolt, launching a hot air balloon and other such unique activities.

"The online learning platform, e-stemazone, gives children the freedom to access a vast library of useful material from the comfort of their homes or schools", says Nailesh Khimji, Director, Khimji Ramdas.

While the full-fledged learning centre dedicated to STEAM sub-

jects at the Children's Museum in Muscat as the anchor location welcomed children to the intricate world of science, a dedicated online portal aims to cater to students in other wilayats.

"With the freedom to log in 'anytime, anywhere', students are encouraged to learn, attend innovative online STEAM workshops, and access live webinars at their convenience. Children across Oman who have a passion

for science have been encouraged to register themselves at www.stemazoneoman.om to review different course structures or book a slot for webinars giving an opportunity to students outside Muscat to participate in all the Stemazone activities", he adds.

The idea of e-stemazone came as a response to the Covid-19 crisis that disrupted traditional modules of learning in schools,

museums, after-school programmes and makerspaces. With educational institutions continuing to be temporarily closed, e-stemazone has provided the needed resources to continue learning through virtual platforms. The programmes under e-stemazone are customised in a way to suit learners from different age groups while being engaging, interactive and easily comprehensible. This initiative

has proven its success in providing alternate channels for students to continue their learning journey uninterrupted.

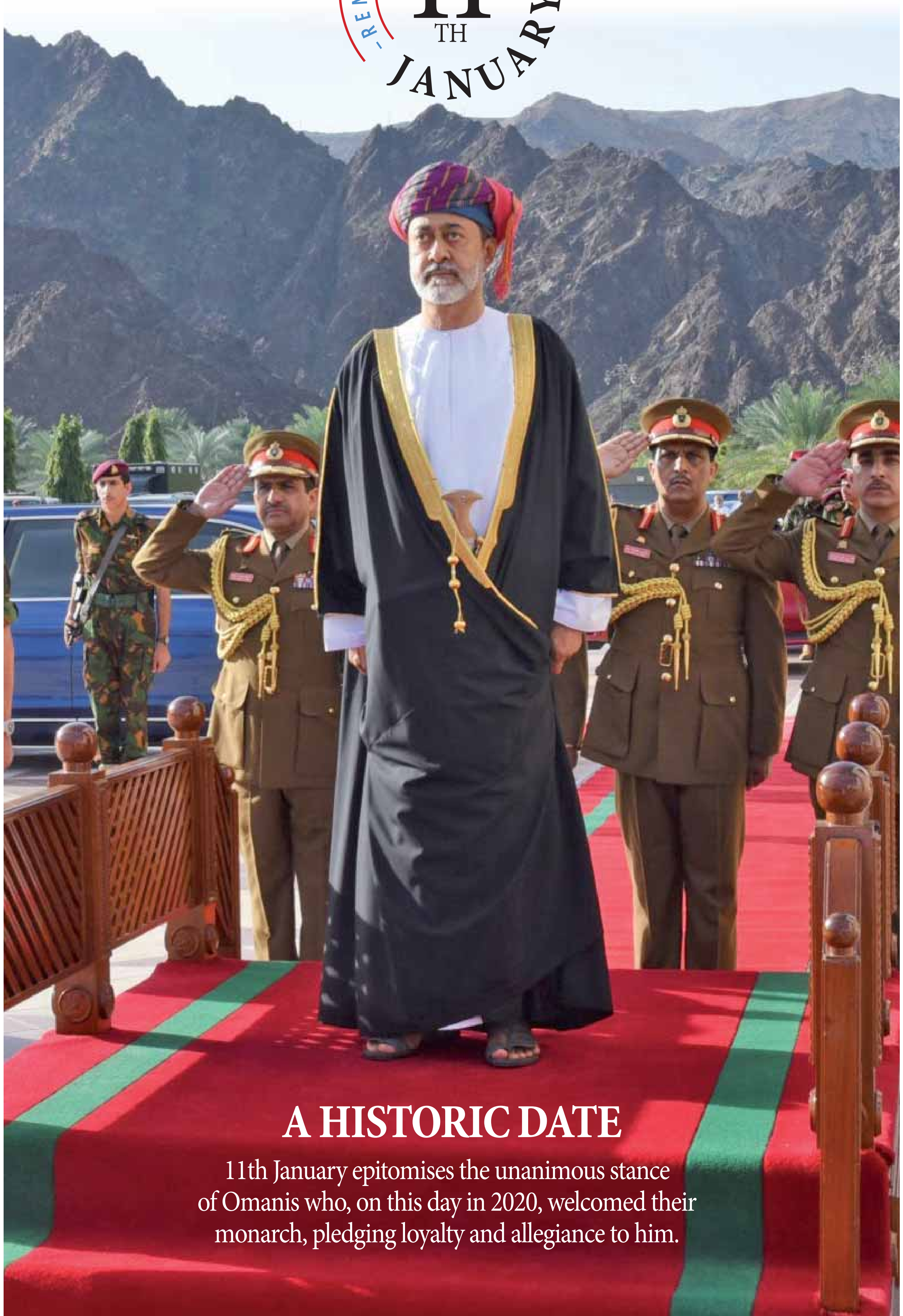
Reaching out to the children in other governorates, Steamazone virtual summer camps have been set up in cooperation with innovation centres located in the governorates of South Al Batinah, North Al Batinah and Al Dhahirah. These virtual camps, which recorded the active participation of 161 students, covered various topics aimed at instilling an interest in STEAM subjects and raising awareness of its importance. The Stemazone team is also doing its best to offer STEAM educational activities and sessions to children based in and outside Muscat.

Plans are under way to conduct innovative and interactive workshops and other educational activities in various schools across different governorates in Oman, according to Eshraqa, on the thought that the youth are the key drivers of prosperity and growth, and helping them attain their full potential is critical to the progress of a nation.

Efforts for human development never go unnoticed. Stemazone has been recognised with the 'Youth Proficiency Award', a prestigious award that recognises and honours significant initiatives that are innovative and exemplary, recently.

Going forward purposefully, the Stemazone programme will continue to encourage students to delve deeper into the world of STEAM and become critical thinkers, innovators and leaders of tomorrow. This is expected to contribute to building a strong, knowledgeable and productive youth sector which is an important category in any society.

RENEWED RENAISSANCE -
11
TH
JANUARY



A HISTORIC DATE

11th January epitomises the unanimous stance of Omanis who, on this day in 2020, welcomed their monarch, pledging loyalty and allegiance to him.



ANNIVERSARY OF HIS MAJESTY THE SULTAN'S ACCESSION TO POWER

UPHOLDING TRADITIONS OF CITIZENS' SOLIDARITY

Today, January 11, coincides with the anniversary of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq's assuming the reins of power in the Sultanate of Oman, succeeding late Sultan Qaboos. The anniversary, which constitutes a historic date in the Sultanate of Oman, epitomises that unanimous stance of Omanis who, on this day in 2020, welcomed their monarch, pledging loyalty and allegiance to him. Since he assumed the reins of power in Sultanate of Oman, His Majesty the Sultan called upon all citizens to continue to safeguard the achievements of the renaissance and work for the elevation of the status of this country, so that its people would have a better life — with Oman Vision 2040 serving as a roadmap for all aspirations. His Majesty the Sultan

upholds the Omani traditions of citizens' solidarity with their leaderships. He continues to meet citizens from all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, acting from his deep conviction in the significance of directly interacting with the public and listening to opinions and proposals that serve the interests of the country and its citizens. The State's modern institutions keep pace with Majlis Ash'shura (consultation) and democratic action, namely the Council of Oman, with its bicameral chambers of State Council and Majlis Ash'shura and municipal councils in different governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. His Majesty the Sultan introduced a comprehensive vision enshrined in legislations like the Basic Law of the State, the Governorates

and Municipalities Affairs System (law), as well as action programmes, including Oman Vision 2040, which targets a set of national priorities such as health, education, research, innovation, economic diversification, fiscal sustainability and governance of the State's Administrative Apparatus. The citizens take pride in the positive results emanating from the tangible measures undertaken to address the challenges of the Renewed Renaissance led by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, whose prudence played a great role in tackling all difficulties. On the economic side, the Medium-Term Fiscal Balance Plan (2020-2023) continued to deliver a positive outcome in its second year, including the reduction of 2021 deficit, control

THE NEED TO ADDRESS THE REPERCUSSIONS OF THE COVID-19 CALLED FOR THE FORMATION OF A SUPREME COMMITTEE TASKED WITH TACKLING THE IMPACTS OF THE PANDEMIC AND HANDLING ITS ECONOMIC FALLOUTS

of public spending, cutting down public debt and augmenting the Central Bank of Oman reserves in foreign currency. One of the outcomes was that global credit rating agencies amended Oman's status to "stable" and "positive". This is in addition to the creation of a social security system designed to maintain a suitable standard of decent life and the alleviation of the impacts of the current stage. The need to address the repercussions of the Covid-19 called for the formation of a Supreme Committee tasked with tackling the impacts of the pandemic and handling its economic fallout. As a result, internationally approved antivirus vaccines were endorsed and applied to protect citizens and residents in the benign land of Oman. His Majesty the Sultan's

emphasis on cooperation with all countries is a clear indicator of the constant state of Omani foreign policy based on advocating the cause of international peace and security, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries and encouraging dialogue and peaceful settlement for regional and international issues. Over a span of 49 years, the late Sultan Qaboos laid solid foundations for the renaissance in Oman. He established a basic infrastructure that earned accolades from the international community. To name a few of his achievements, late Sultan Qaboos initiated a social and economic system based on justice. The best way to eternalise the good deeds of the late Sultan is to preserve his achievements and build on them. — ONA



CEMENTING THE REGIONAL TIES

Highlights

JULY 11, 2021: HIS MAJESTY SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK ARRIVES IN NEOM, SAUDI ARABIA, ON A TWO-DAY VISIT TO THE KINGDOM IN HIS FIRST FOREIGN TRIP SINCE HE ASSUMED OFFICE ON JANUARY 11, 2020

JULY 12: LEADERS OF THE TWO COUNTRIES EXCHANGE VIEWS ON REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ISSUES OF MUTUAL INTEREST

SIGNS A DOCUMENT TO ESTABLISH A JOINT COORDINATION COUNCIL TO OVERSEE SEVERAL AGREEMENTS

DECEMBER 6, 2021: CROWN PRINCE MOHAMMED BIN SALMAN AL SAUD, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF DEFENCE IN THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA, ARRIVED IN THE SULTANATE OF OMAN

THE TWO COUNTRIES SIGN 13 MEMORANDA OF UNDERSTANDING (MOUS) FOR JOINT WORK ON SPECIFIC PROJECTS

DECEMBER 8: A 725 KILOMETRES LONG ROAD FROM THE SULTANATE OF OMAN TO SAUDI ARABIA OPENS

SAMUEL KUTTY

The state visits of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the State of Qatar represent a practical confirmation of the strong and distinguished historical relations between the two brotherly countries and peoples.

For over five decades, relations between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) governments have been characterised by cooperation, mutual respect and understanding on various regional and international issues.

The relations have grown from strength to strength, yielding ambitious economic partnerships and joint action on the GCC, which has seen a merging of strategic aims and a shared vision for economic diversification. Likewise, connections at the people-to-people level run deep thanks to bonds of history, shared Arab customs and traditions, and a common Gulf Arab heritage.

When it comes to the Sultanate of Oman and Saudi Arabia, the two countries coordinate their actions in accordance with the region's common visions and strategic goals, with a view to achieving integration between member states in different fields.

A similar cooperative spirit informs their roles at the Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the UN and various international bodies.

This is evident from what Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, made before the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly, "We, in the Sultanate of Oman, are part of this interconnected world with which we share common interests and destiny. We are pleased with what pleases the world and regret what is harmful to it. Therefore, we strive with all our energies and capabilities to contribute to the advancement of peace at all

regional and international levels". From Saudi Arabia's part, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman arrived in Oman on December 6 as he embarked on a tour of neighbouring Gulf states.

The two countries signed 13 Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) for joint work on specific projects within economic sectors through several companies owned by the Oman Investment Authority and Oman's private sector alongside their Saudi counterparts.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham's accession to the throne, on this day two years back following the passing away of late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, came at a critical moment when large parts of the world, including the Arab region, faced challenges on multiple fronts: Political, economic, social and health.

SAUDI VISIT PAVES WAY FOR MORE COOPERATION

His Majesty Sultan Haitham's visit to Saudi Arabia on July 11 and 12, 2021 marks his first foreign trip after becoming the country's leader, testifying clearly to the importance of the relationship between the two countries.

Leaders of the two countries exchanged views on regional and international issues of mutual interest and agreed to coordinate their positions in a way that would serve their interests and support security and stability in the region and globally.

Regarding Yemen, the two sides expressed an identical view on the need to continue their efforts to find a comprehensive political settlement to the Yemeni crisis based on the Gulf initiative and its executive mechanism, the outcomes of Yemen's Comprehensive National Dialogue Conference and United Nations Security Council Resolution 2216, as well as the Saudi initiative to end the Yemeni crisis and alleviate

the humanitarian suffering of the brotherly Yemeni people.

While leaders of both countries called for political solutions to the Syrian and Libyan crises in a way that ends the human suffering and preserves the unity and integrity of their territories, they also stressed the importance of cooperation and dealing seriously and effectively with all aspects and repercussions of the Iranian nuclear and ballistic missile issues.

The royal visit witnessed the signing of a memorandum of understanding on the establishment of an Omani-Saudi Coordination Council co-chaired by the foreign ministers of both countries to strengthen bilateral relations in all fields.

They affirmed their determination to enhance the pace of joint economic cooperation by stimulating the government and private sectors to reach qualitative trade and investment exchanges that serve the Oman Vision 2040 and Saudi Vision 2030 and, promote opportunities for partnership between the private sector in the two countries.

Another important decision during the visit was the opening of the direct land route and border crossing, contributing to the smooth movement of citizens of the two countries and the integration of supply chains as a prelude to achieving the cherished economic integration between the two brotherly countries.

On cooperation in the field of trade and investment, the two sides agreed to increase the facilities that contribute to the smooth flow of intra-regional trade, enhance cooperation in the field of food security, and investment opportunities in the sectors of standardisation, health, pharmaceutical industries, advanced technologies and innovation, renewable energy and industrial projects, tourism

projects, petrochemical projects, manufacturing industries and logistics partnership as well as financial technology so as to achieve common benefits for the two countries.

QATAR VISIT OPENS NEW HORIZONS OF TALKS

The historic visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the State of Qatar on November 22 and 23, 2021, opened new horizons of consultation, coordination and cooperation between the two countries.

The visit came after an invitation from Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, Emir of Qatar, that witnessed extensive bilateral discussions reviewing the relations between the two brotherly countries, enhancing and developing them in all fields and exchanging views on several regional and international issues.

With regard to bilateral relations, the two sides reiterated the strong political will of the leadership of both countries to promote all aspects of cooperation at all levels.

At the regional and international levels, the two leaders agreed on the importance of the Gulf Cooperation Council in strengthening the security and stability of the region. They stressed the need to strengthen discussions and coordinate positions at a bilateral level in various regional and international forums to serve Arab and Islamic issues and support just humanitarian causes.

At the forefront of these being the Palestinian cause and promoting security and stability in the Middle East and the world.

HM Sultan Haitham and the Emir Shaikh Tamim attended the signing of six agreements covering military cooperation, avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of tax evasion on income, capital, labour and investment, as well as deals on

tourism and hotels, maritime transport and ports.

The military cooperation agreement was signed on the Omani side by HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs and from the Qatari side by Shaikh Khalid bin Muhammad al Attiyah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs.

An investment cooperation deal was signed between the Omani Investment Authority and the Qatari Investment Authority, along with two other agreements that covered tourism and hotels along with maritime transport and ports.

MEETING WITH QUEEN ELIZABETH II

His Majesty Sultan Haitham during his visit to the United Kingdom, which lasted for several days, met Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Head of the Commonwealth, in addition to a number of senior UK officials.

Her Majesty, 95, wearing a pale blue dress, her trademark pearls and a sapphire brooch, was pictured smiling as she shook hands with His Majesty and greeted him at her Berkshire castle.

The face-to-face meeting was termed as a demonstration of the importance the UK places on its relationship with the Sultanate of Oman.

During his private visit, which started on December 14, 2021, His Majesty the Sultan met with Boris Johnson, British Prime Minister, at 10 Downing Street in London.

The meeting reviewed historic relations binding the two countries and means of promoting them in various spheres to serve the joint interests of the Omani and British peoples.

The two sides also exchanged views on current international issues of common concern.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS AT A GLANCE

JANUARY 11, 2022
HM HOLDS MEETING WITH
SHAIKHS OF NORTH AL
SHARQIYAH GOVERNORATE AT
HISN AL SHUMOOKH IN THE
WILAYAT OF MANAH.

JANUARY 4, 2022
HM ISSUES DIRECTIVES TO INCREASE THE
ACCORDED TO GOVERNORATES DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAMME FROM RO 10 MILLION TO
100 MILLION DURING HIS MEETING WITH
GOVERNORATES OF DIFFERENT GOVERNORATES.



APRIL 8
2021



SUMS
TO RO 20
ES.
WITH SHAIKHS

**JANUARY 11
2020**

HM ASSUMED THE
THRONE, SUCCEEDING
LATE SULTAN QABOOS.

**JANUARY 11
2020**

HIS MAJESTY SULTAN
HAITHAM BIN TARIK
DELIVERS MAIDEN
SPEECH UPON ASCENDING
THE THRONE.

**FEBRUARY
2020**

ROYAL DECREE 2/2020 AMENDING ANNEX
3 OF THE LAW OF THE FLAG, EMBLEM AND
NATIONAL ANTHEM OF THE STATE.

**FEBRUARY 24
2020**

HIS MAJESTY'S ROYAL SPEECH:
PRIORITY FOR EDUCATION
AND NATION BUILDING.

**MARCH 9
2020**

HIS HIGHNESS SAYYID SHIHAB BIN TARIK
BIN TAIMOUR AL SAID APPOINTED DEPUTY
PRIME MINISTER FOR DEFENCE AFFAIRS.

**MARCH 10
2020**

HIS MAJESTY THE SULTAN GAVE ORDERS TO FORM A SUPREME COMMITTEE TO
IMPLEMENT THE NECESSARY MEASURES TO REDUCE COVID-19 TRANSMISSION
AND ANY ANTICIPATED PUBLIC AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS.

**MARCH 11
2020**

HIS MAJESTY SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK ISSUED
DIRECTIVES FOR ESTABLISHING A JOB SECURITY FUND
WITH A PERSONAL CONTRIBUTION OF RO 10 MILLION.

**MARCH 26
2020**

HIS MAJESTY THE SULTAN
DONATES RO 10 MILLION
TO FIGHT COVID-19.

**MARCH 31
2020**

DECREE 42/2020 PROMULGATED THE TAX
AUTHORITY SYSTEM AND APPROVED ITS
ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE...

**JUNE 4
2020**

ROYAL DECREE 59/2020
ESTABLISHING THE
PRIVATE OFFICE.

**AUGUST 18
2020**

ROYAL DECREES APPOINTING A NEW COUNCIL
OF MINISTERS, RESTRUCTURING OF MINISTRIES,
NUMBER OF GOVERNORS, DEPUTY MINISTERS
AND OTHER SENIOR OFFICIALS.

**NOVEMBER 18
2020**

HIS MAJESTY THE SULTAN
DELIVERS THE SPEECH ON
50TH NATIONAL DAY.

**JANUARY 26
2021**

THE BASIC LAW OF THE STATE (ALSO REFERRED
TO AS THE BASIC STATUTE OF THE STATE),
PROMULGATED BY ROYAL DECREE NO 6/2021.

**FEBRUARY 4
2021**

HM SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK
DIRECTED AUTHORITIES TO PROCEED
WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
DIBBA-LIMA-KHASAB ROAD PROJECT.

DECEMBER 6, 2020

ROYAL DECREE 128/2020 ESTABLISHING A
CLOSED OMANI JOINT STOCK COMPANY
NAMED ENERGY DEVELOPMENT OMAN.

OCTOBER 18, 2020

ROYAL DECREE 121/2020
PROMULGATED THE VALUE
ADDED TAX (VAT) LAW.

OCTOBER 4, 2021

HIS MAJESTY ORDERS
FORMATION OF COMMITTEE
TO ASSESS DAMAGE FROM
CYCLONE SHAHEEN.

AUGUST 29, 2021

ROYAL DECREE 59/2021
AMENDED SOME
PROVISIONS OF THE
CIVIL STATUS LAW.

AUGUST 23, 2021

ROYAL DECREE 58/2021
ESTABLISHING THE KHOR KHARFOT
ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESERVE IN THE
GOVERNORATE OF DHOFAR.

JULY 11, 2021

HIS MAJESTY SULTAN HAITHAM
BIN TARIK BEGINS A TWO-
DAY OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE
KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA.

JULY 6, 2021

ROYAL DECREE 49/2021
TRANSFERRED AL SAIDIA SCHOOL
MUSEUM FOR EDUCATION FROM
THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
TO THE NATIONAL MUSEUM.



LEGACY OF MEETING THE PEOPLE CONTINUES

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

'Meet the people tour', a distinct feature of Sultanate of Oman's renaissance march saw its continuation as His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik met the shaikhs of the governorates of Al Dakhiliyah, Al Wusta and South Al Sharqiyah at Hisn Al Shumookh in the Wilayat of Manah.

Earlier, His Majesty met with the shaikhs in Dhofar.

At his first address to the nation, His Majesty Sultan Haitham had emphasised that he would continue the legacy of late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos and the development achieved under his judicious leadership and the solid principles on which he had set up the edifice on the modern date.

"Our only relief the best with which we can eternalise his achievements is to pursue his rightful legacy and derive impetus for the brilliant steps that he treaded in full confidence and determination, to preserve the gains that he made and to build upon them."

In that address, he had stated, "People of Sultanate of Oman, the trust thrust on our shoulders and the resultant immense responsibilities require us all to work

together for the sake of our country's magnificence, with a persistent resolve to promote it to the loftiest levels. This cannot be realised without your support and cooperation, as well as the combination of all efforts to achieve the desired supreme national goal."

The objective is to attain wider horizons of progress for the Omani Renaissance.

At the meeting with the shaikhs from Al Dakhiliyah and Al Wusta, His Majesty spoke about a number of development, economic and social projects.

In this interaction, he gave the Royal Vision for the governorates to play their roles and fulfil the responsibilities promulgating the governorates and municipal affairs aligned with Sultanate of Oman Vision 2040.

The announcement of RO 10 million to RO 20 million for each governorate for the current Five Year Plan, with effect from 2022 also indicates the growing role in the administration of the governorates as the governors are expected to present annual executive plans lining out the details on how the financial resources will be expended.

As per the new developments, it is the responsibility of the governors to follow up

'SULTANATE OF OMAN IS PRESSING AHEAD WITH ITS DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND PROGRAMMES IN ALL FIELDS, DESPITE THE CHALLENGES, WITH THE PRIME OBJECTIVES OF REALISING SUSTAINABLE GROWTH AND FURNISHING A PROSPEROUS PRESENT AND FUTURE FOR ALL PEOPLE, WHEREVER THEY MIGHT BE ON THIS BENIGN LAND'

the execution of social and service projects in their governorates.

In this meeting, HM Sultan Haitham also issued the directives to provide appropriate financial support to Omani Women's Associations as well as for the public and private rehabilitation centres in aid of people with disabilities, again highlighting the importance of these entities and their contribution to the society.

It was during the 'Meet the People' tour and Symposium on Omani Women that was held on the sidelines of the tour when Omani Women's Day was declared by late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos in 2009.

When His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik held the meeting at Hisn Al Shumookh in the Wilayat of Manah with shaikhs of South Al Sharqiyah Governorate on January 9, 2022, the focus was on domestic issues as he said, "Sultanate of Oman is pressing ahead with its development plans and programmes in all fields, despite the challenges, with the prime objectives of realising sustainable growth and furnishing a prosperous present and future for all people, wherever they might be on this benign land."

He urged the governorates and municipal

councils to perform their national roles precisely as they are expected to do and instructed the bodies to 'double their efforts to elevate the status of local community.'

Royal directives were given to the departments concerned in the Ministry of Finance, Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development and Oman Development Bank to find programmes that would encourage entrepreneurs and SMEs to have the potential to employ personnel as well as to encourage entrepreneurship in the various governorates noting that 'the government will offer the incentives necessary for ensuring the success of those initiatives.'

During the open dialogue, the shaikhs presented requests for projects and development services for their respective wilayats.

An important development was the endorsement of the principle of government and citizens partnership while implementing projects that serve the public interest.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham also stressed the need to address difficulties that might come in the way of the march towards the domestic development.

OMAN VISION 2040

DYNAMIC, INCLUSIVE AND
SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

VINOD NAIR

Oman Vision 2040 builds on the achievements realised in many fields over the past decades. It represents an integrated set of socio-economic policies that should be implemented as guidelines to achieve the desired results.

Over the past five decades, the Sultanate of Oman used oil revenues to lay the groundwork for the present day, promote human development and develop many economic, social, and cultural sectors. In addition to the unique geographic location, climate conditions, and natural resources., balanced, reliable, and open international relations, good governance, the political stability gives scope for balanced and inclusive development, well-being, prosperity, and justice.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION
AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

This is attainable through increasing the quality of basic and higher education and developing scientific and educational curricula so that graduates are acquainted with competitive qualifications and employability skills to enter the local and international labour market. Such graduates will have an adequate level of productivity and competitiveness to build a knowledge-based economy, enhance job security in the private sector and foster a participatory relationship between the private and the public sectors.

HEALTHCARE SYSTEM WITH
INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

An inclusive and equitable healthcare system should cover all

of governorates in the Sultanate of Oman, with the participation of government, the private sector, and civil society. This coverage should include more medical specialties and specialised medical institutes and universities to develop a medical staff of various specialisations.

SOCIETY PROUD OF ITS
IDENTITY

While there is a need for modernisation and integration approach in an era of advanced science and technology, such direction must be counterbalanced by a sense of belonging to an authentic culture to enrich the Omani identity and preserve traditions and privacy. Success in promoting identity and preserving culture rests upon the conscious and responsible engagement in this fast-paced world and the positive exploitation of the available potential.

DECENT AND
SUSTAINABLE LIFE

It can be achieved by providing sustainable quality social well-being services, such as healthcare and education, and providing social safety nets to ensure viable livelihood means for the present and future generations. Achieving decent living standards and sustainable well-being requires the creation of an environment conducive for social responsibility programmes, voluntary civic contributions, as well as socio-economic empowerment programmes targeting women and youth.

DYNAMIC ECONOMIC
LEADERSHIP

The role that a stable economic

leadership and management will play is to set and align the fiscal, monetary, trade, investment, industrial, and labour market policies in such a manner to contribute to the development and implementation of economic plans, programmes, and projects in line with the strategic directions.

DIVERSIFIED AND
SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

Achieving this diversity and integration highly depends on developing local capabilities in innovation and creativity, promoting entrepreneurship, along with preparing a fertile legislative and incentives ground. The competitiveness of the Omani economy will, therefore, increase both regionally and globally, and the growth rates will improve and stabilise in a sustainable manner.

DYNAMIC LABOUR MARKET

Achieving balanced development requires a labour market with a highly efficient legislative system that ensures effectiveness, integrates national capabilities coming from the educational system into the domestic labour market, attracts both technical and skilled labour from abroad, and develops specific methods to improve the administrative and organisational framework to manage the labour market.

AN EMPOWERED PRIVATE
SECTOR

Driving a national economy that is competitive and aligned with the global economy promotes the values of competitiveness. This effective competition should be the criteria to gauge economic

development and strengthen the resilience of the economy towards regional and global changes.

A competitive economy led by the private sector will make use of several advantages that the Sultanate enjoys, particularly the political and economic stability and the long-term investment of strategic relations.

DECENTRALISATION AND
THE DEVELOPMENT OF
URBAN HUBS

The desired future shape of major cities in the Sultanate stems from the socio-economic strategic directions of the Oman Vision 2040. Proper city management helps accelerate growth and openness to global markets. It can create productive environments to attract global investments, increase economic efficiency, provide livable environments, and sustain the environmental and social evolution of cities.

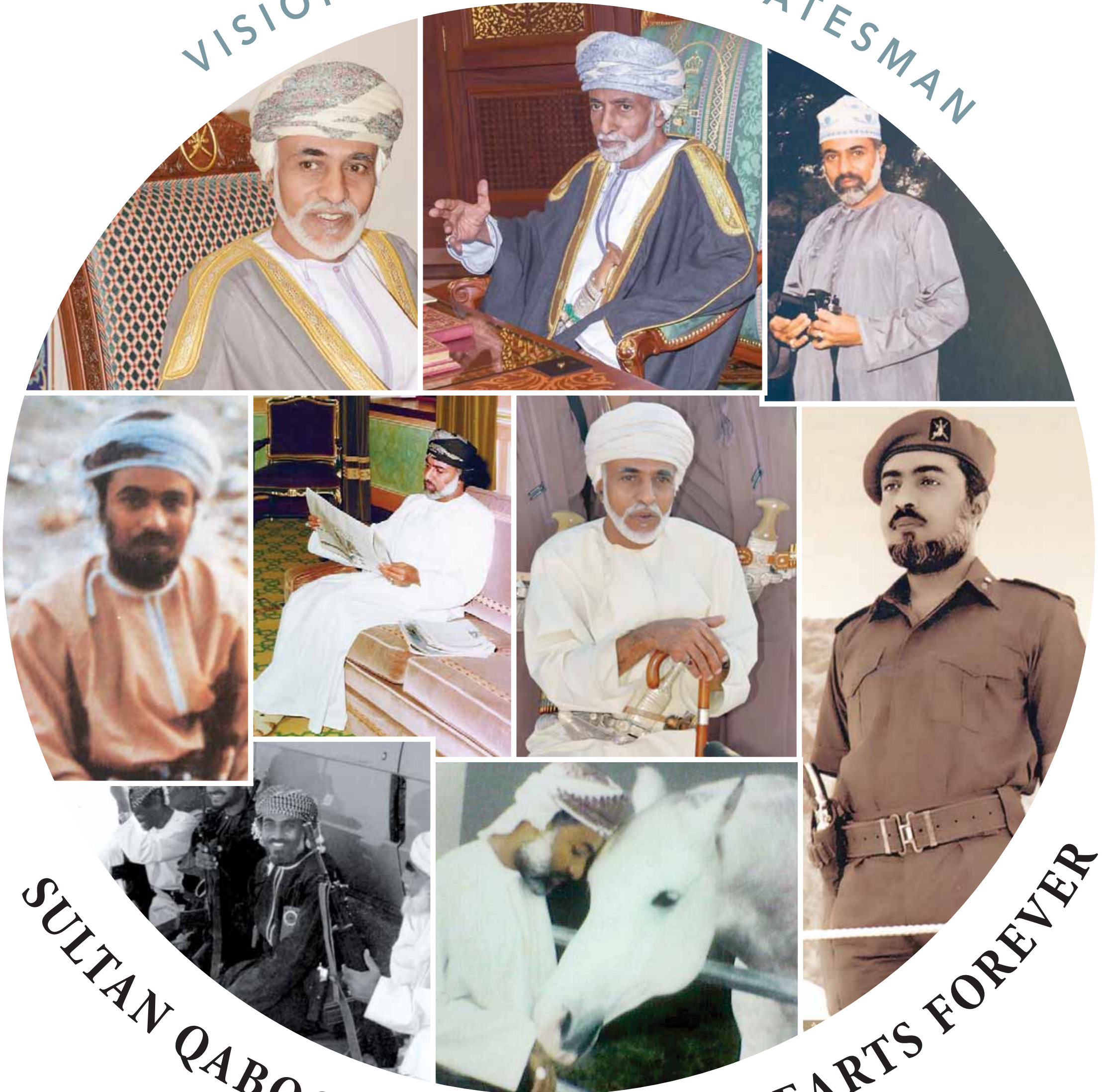
COMPETENT AND
SWIFT JUDICIAL SYSTEM

Achieving economic growth and social well-being for the Omani society goes hand in hand with national, economic, and judicial legislations that cater to contemporary needs and rapid changes, empower qualified national talents to fortify confidence in the overall legislative system, and ensure balanced and transparent enforcement of laws. Legislative support of socio-economic development also calls for the separation of powers, the pursuit of civic engagement, and public legal education about individuals' rights and duties.

THE DESIRED
FUTURE SHAPE OF
MAJOR CITIES IN
THE SULTANATE
STEMS FROM THE
SOCIO-ECONOMIC
STRATEGIC
DIRECTIONS OF THE
OMAN VISION 2040

OMAN VISION
2040

VISIONARY LEADER, STATESMAN



SAMUEL KUTTY

January 10, 2020 was perhaps the saddest day for everyone who knows the Sultanate of Oman. The day when the beloved His Majesty Sultan Qaboos left this world for his heavenly abode!

It comes to no surprise when I say every family in the country is dazed with his loss. For everyone, he was a father who listened to their needs, upheld all his promises and ensured the country's stability, safety, equality, education, and healthy life to all.

A great leader, a man of strength and vision, peacemaker, the late Sultan will be remembered by future generations for the prosperous reign of half a century. Many call the late Sultan the father of modern the Sultanate of Oman and a visionary. It was under his leadership that the country witnessed development.

When His Majesty Sultan Qaboos took the reins of the country in 1970, he made a promise to the people of the country. "My people, I will proceed as quickly as possible to transform your life into a prosperous one with a bright

future. Every one of you must play a part towards this goal. Our country in the past was famous and strong. If we work in unity and cooperation, we will regenerate that glorious past, and we will take a respectable place in the world. I call upon you to continue living as usual."

Fulfilling his promise, he reshaped this country into a sparkling oasis of peace and stability in the turbulent region. The Sultanate of Oman today is prosperous and secure as a monument to his decades of singular resolve and sweat.

And within his beloved country, His Majesty's vision for the Sultanate of Oman saw levels of education for women and men rise exponentially — with a manifold increase in schools, hospitals, roads and so much other infrastructure.

Now almost every village is connected with excellent roads to nearby towns and every big town has specialised hospitals, technical training colleges and a university. The healthcare facilities in the Sultanate of Oman are world-class.

The Sultanate of Oman has not only grown into a safe haven for citizens but also for expatriates, who say it is 'heaven



**YESTERDAY IT
WAS COMPLETE
DARKNESS AND
WITH THE HELP OF
GOD, TOMORROW
WILL BE A NEW
DAWN ON MUSCAT,
THE SULTANATE
OF OMAN AND ITS
PEOPLE**

**FROM THE FIRST
SPEECH OF LATE
HIS MAJESTY
SULTAN QABOOS
IN 1970**

on earth.' Those who have been in the country for a long time testify that the lifestyle here has evolved into a modern, forward-looking society with its culture and heritage intact.

Late Sultan Qaboos also took care of the environment amid the march of the Renaissance. He ensured that development was sustainable and without harm to the environment. The environmental policies also ensured the welfare of future generations in the country.

Late His Majesty had always been keen to fulfil all the country's international and regional obligations towards different organisations. He recognised the international responsibility towards different causes that aim to serve humankind in several fields.

He also played an important role in the convergence of views among neighbouring countries, and had always sought to assist belligerent states in conflict resolution. This important role has been welcomed internationally. The Sultanate has adopted peace as a pillar in its diplomacy and politics since

the beginning of the modern Omani Renaissance.

It is based on the firm belief that building processes and national growth and building a modern state all required the provision of necessary components, mainly peace and security. Indeed, His Majesty was well regarded for spreading messages of peace, understanding and coexistence far beyond his country's borders.

A pragmatist, the late Sultan had the ability and the courage not only to clearly and honestly express his opinions and vision towards situations and developments occurring in the region in particular and the world in general.

A lover of the arts, Sultan Qaboos leveraged his country's immense history and cultural heritage by turning it into a rarefied tourist destination, particularly for visitors who were genuinely interested in this part of the world. No doubt, he was a visionary leader and statesman who transformed the Sultanate of Oman into a modern and prosperous nation. A beacon of peace for our region and the world, he will be remembered forever!