

HIS MAJESTY CONDOLES BRAZILIAN PRESIDENT

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to the President of Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro, on the death of his mother. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere condolences and sympathy to President Bolsonaro, all members of his family and the friendly Brazilian people. **-ONA**



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HIS MAJESTY THE SULTAN SENDS CONDOLENCES TO SAUDI KING

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on the death of the Late Her Royal Highness Princess Seetah bint Jalawi bin Saud bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sympathies, praying to the Almighty Allah to rest the deceased's soul in peace in paradise and grant his family patience to bear the loss. **-ONA**



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ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

Bilarab Bin Haitham Award entries open until February 5



Times News Service

MUSCAT: Entries for the Bilarab Bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design can be submitted until 5 February.

Those interested in competing for the award can visit the relevant website, [www.bha.om](#), and enter the details pertaining to their project. Participants must submit their initial idea for the project during the registration stage, including drawings and illustrations, and a detailed description of the proposed project that does not exceed 500 words.

The jury will study and evaluate the submitted projects, and then select the ten best according to the established criteria, and will communicate their decisions with those who have come up with the ideas that have been shortlisted. These 10 candidates must then

جائزة بلعرب بن هيثم للتصميم المعماري

Bilarab Bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design

develop their detailed technical drawings and three-dimensional plans, which are to be presented before the jury in a preliminary review session that begins on 27 February.

The award aims to encourage the creation of innovative and contemporary Omani architectural styles; help create concepts for environmentally friendly tourist and entertainment areas – a key objective under Oman Vision

2040; invest in the knowledge and skills of Omani youth; create investment opportunities for owners of small and medium businesses; and provide the tourism and investment planning sectors with ideas and plans for modern, innovative and viable projects.

The award is open to Omani youth specialising in the field of architecture, design, and urban planning. All participants must be aged 35 or under. Jobseekers are also welcome to compete for the award. Ideas can be submitted individually, or from a group consisting of a maximum of three people working together.

Spanning an area of 7,500 square metres, the project site for the current phase of the award is located in the neighbourhood of Al Mina, in the Wilayat of Muttrah, between the Muttrah Fish Market and the waterfront. **-ONA**

OMAN'S POSITIVE ECONOMIC INDICATORS A RESULT OF TRANSFORMATIONAL REFORMS

Policies receive encouraging response from international community

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Positive economic indicators and ratings earned by the Sultanate of Oman are a result of reforms undertaken by the government to encourage diversification and investment.

That's according to Qais bin Mohammed Al Yusef, the country's Minister for Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, who welcomed "the strong and decisive leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik and the economic reform measures his gov-



ernment has put in place."

"I am also proud to share that the response from the international community to these transformational policies has been encouraging," he added.

Al Yusef was speaking at a re-

cent meeting of the Arab-British Chamber of Commerce in London, where he described at length the steps being taken by Oman to encourage foreign investors to help diversify the economy, as well as the measures adopted to improve

the country's fiscal performance.

"In November last year, as Oman participated in its third World Trade Organisation trade policy review in Geneva, WTO members complimented Oman on its low tariffs and minimal

non-tariff barriers to trade," explained the minister.

"Earning particular WTO praise was the 10 percent growth in our GDP in the first half of 2021, as well as new legislation covering foreign capital investment, priva-

tisation, and public-private partnerships have improved Oman's business environment and led to higher inflows of investment."

A direct impact of these measures and a rise in oil prices, S&P Global Ratings revised Oman's rating in outlook to positive from stable.

The credit rating agency also affirmed the country's 'B+/B' long and short-term foreign and local currency sovereign credit ratings. Moody's Investor Service also changed the outlook on Oman's credit rating to stable from negative and affirmed its rating at Ba3.

FDI rises

Al Yusef added that FDI in Oman at the end of the second quarter of 2021 reached over OMR16bn, billion up by 6.7 percent for the same period in 2020, despite COVID-19 and the related lockdowns.

A key element of Oman's investment and diversification push is also the country's Investor Residency Programme, on which the minister also shed light during his speech. **>A4**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES



OMAN Austrian Minister lauds Vision 2040

1 Oman's plans for Vision 2040 are a reflection of the government's desire to create a brighter future for its people, Dr Margarete Schrambock, Austrian Federal Minister has said. **>A4**

WORLD Mumbai building fire leaves seven dead

2 The death toll in the fire that broke out inside a 20-storeyed residential building in Mumbai on Saturday morning reached seven. 15 injured people were shifted to various hospitals in Mumbai following the fire incident. **>A6**

MARKET Oman to open solar power plant in Ibri

3 The inauguration of the OMR155 million Ibri solar power plant will be celebrated on Monday. The plant will produce 500 megawatts of electricity, enough for the needs of about 50,000 homes. **>B1**

FIGHTING PANDEMIC

New COVID-19 restrictions come into effect from today

MUSCAT: Reducing workplace attendance to 50 percent and temporarily halting Friday prayers were among a host of measures announced by the COVID-19 Supreme Committee after a review meeting to curb the pandemic.

This came after the Supreme Committee tasked with tackling developments resulting from coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, as part of its ongoing convening, studied updates about the pandemic, ways of protection against the virus and means of curbing its spread in the Sultanate of Oman.

The committee reviewed reports on the epidemiological situation of the virus in the domestic front and noted a sharp surge in the number of patients afflicted with Omicron, the mutated vari-



ant of the virus, coupled with a spike in number of people admitted to hospital wards in different governorates. The current readings point to the probability of a further rise in numbers of patients and hospitalised persons, particularly among children who have not

yet been vaccinated.

To maintain the health service department's ability to handle the situation, the COVID-19 Supreme Committee took the following decisions, which will be enforced for a period of two weeks with effect from Sunday 23 January: **>A2**

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TIMINGS

Dhuhr.....12:24pm
Asr.....3:30pm
Maghrib.....5:52pm
Isha.....7:05pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....5:32am

COVID-19

Omicron detected in 99% of tests

Times News Service

MUSCAT: About 99 per cent of COVID-19 cases recorded in the Sultanate of Oman recently have been of the Omicron variant.

Dr. Amal bint Saif Al Maani, Director of the Department of Prevention and Infection Control at the Ministry of Health, said: "According to the statistics and the results of laboratory tests, about 99 per cent of COVID-19 cases registered in the Sultanate during the current period are infected with the Omicron mutator, and the number of registered cases is increasing, and it is expected that the cases will continue to rise during the coming period."



Dr. Amal added in an interview to Oman TV: "It is noticeable that the spread of infection has occurred simultaneously in all the governorates at the same time, unlike previous waves, where the

spread began in certain governorates, and the percentage of positive results among those showing symptoms reached 25 per cent in some governorates."

Occupational safety

She confirmed: "The decisions of the Supreme Committee aim to preserve the policy of conducting business and occupational safety and providing healthcare to all citizens during this period. Taking the booster dose reduces the complications of disease and hypnosis by 80 per cent. So we call on everyone, especially those who are suffering from chronic diseases and are over the age of 60, to take the vaccine."

COVID

New decisions

Firstly, limiting to 50 per cent the number of employees who attend at the workplace in units of the State's Administrative Apparatus (government units) and other public entities.

Secondly, suspending all conferences and exhibitions.

Thirdly, suspending congregational activities and advising the organisers to hold them without audience, while at the same time ensuring that the participants/organisers abide by the precautionary measures announced before, including showing proof of vaccination.

Fourthly, suspending the holding of Friday prayers, while at the same time allowing mosques to hold the five daily prayers at a capacity of 50 percent at each mosque and in line with the procedures announced by the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs in coordination with the Ministry of Health.

The Supreme Committee has urged all establishments permitted to practice their activities (like restaurants, cafeterias, commercial complexes, trade outlets and public halls) to stick to the measures set for such activities, especially the need to operate at a capacity of 50 percent, show proof of vaccination, observe physical distance and wear face masks, among other procedures.

The Supreme Committee affirmed that it will review its decisions and the epidemiological situation on a regular basis and take new decisions accordingly. -OHA

"Tender Announcement"

Supply of Food Parcels for the "Ramadan Iftar Program" for the Year 1443 AH / 2022 AD for Al Mahrah Governorate and Surrounding Areas in the Republic of Yemen

Tender No. 1/2022

Oman Charitable Organization (O.C.O.) announces a tender for the supply of 27,900 (twenty Seve thousand and nine hundred) food parcels for the "Ramadan Iftar Program" for the year 1443 AH / 2022 AD, and distributing them to all the districts of Al Mahrah Governorate and the surrounding areas according to the attached list of locations (16 locations).

Specialized merchants and suppliers wishing to submit their bids for this tender can obtain the terms and conditions from the Financial Department of Oman Charitable Organization against payment of nominal fees, during the period from Sunday 23 January 2022 to Thursday 27 January 2022. The last date for bid submission and acceptance shall be Monday 31 January 2022.

Bids shall be deposited in the tender box at the Financial Department, O.C.O. Headquarters Building at the Wilayat of Baushar, Muscat Governorate, Al Khuwair 33, Southern Street No. 47, near Sultan Said bin Taimur Mosque.

Bids shall be placed in closed envelopes sealed with red wax and addressed to H.E. the Chairman of the Projects and Tenders Committee of O.C.O. before the specified date.

*O.C.O. is not obligated to award the tender in whole or in part or to consider the lowest price."

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WEATHER

Dust storm hits Oman

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Dust storm has hit a number of governorates in the Sultanate of Oman, preceded by low stratigraphic clouds, which may lead to rain showers and a noticeable drop in temperatures.

The Directorate General of Meteorology said: "There is dust coming from the south of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the coasts of the Sea of Oman and Musandam Governorate. The dust advances low stratigraphic clouds that may lead to showers and a noticeable decrease in temperatures and low clouds spread over parts of Al Buraimi and Al Dhahirah governorates."

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology said: "The Roads Department in Al-Wusta Governorate is making efforts to remove the accumulated sand on Adam-Haima-Thumrait road."

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AXIS EVENTS



Oman Vision 2040 hailed by Austrian Minister

The Austrian Minister affirmed that the relations between the two countries are deep and long lasting



MUSCAT: Dr. Margarete Schramböck, Federal Minister for Digital and Economic Affairs in Austria expressed her admiration over Oman Vision 2040 and its pillars, which reflect keenness of the Omani government on making the future more brighter for the Omani citizens.

In an interview with Oman News Agency (ONA) and Oman TV, she said that the four main pillars of Oman Visions 2040, "People and Society," "Economy and Development," "Governance and Institutional Performance" and "Environment Sustainability", constitute a comprehensive roadmap for the future.

She pointed out that her country has a similar vision, Austria 2040,

which comes almost in line with the Omani visions, particularly in the theme of Environment.

As for the bilateral relations, the Austrian Minister affirmed that these relations are deep and long lasting. She pointed out that the relations are growing particularly after the reopening of the Austrian Embassy in Muscat two years ago. "We are focusing now in setting up new projects in the economic areas that would contribute to augmenting the volume of trade exchange between Oman and Austria," said the Minister.

She explained that her visit to Oman aimed at promoting the bi-

lateral relations and cooperation towards wider horizons, noting that she discussed with the Omani side various topics of mutual interest, such as cooperation in renewable energy and green hydrogen technologies.

In this context she said, "Despite the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, Oman and Austria were determined to promote their relations. There are many promising sectors in which we can cooperate. Austria needs green energy and it looks for new resources and partners. We have discussed with the Omani side the possibility of signing a memorandum of understanding in this field".

As for the National Programme of Digital Economy, which was approved by the Council of Ministers last October, the Austrian Minister said: "I am very pleased that the digital economy tops the priorities of the Omani government. This field is the key for a prosperous economic future and we look forward to cooperating with Oman in this area to adopt the best practices."

She further added that during her visit, she presented the Austrian experience in honing skills of students in school and then in university to prepare them for the labour market.

Austria adopts a dual-learning system, said the minister, pointing out that this system enables students to study a particular subject and at the same time they work at a specialized company to sharpen their skills in that profession.

She touched on the field of artificial intelligence. She said, "My country has devised a strategy in this field with the participation of many companies and institutions. This strategy is on the process of implementation and we are keen to present it for the Omani side so we can cooperate in this important area." -ONA

FROM A1 Covid reshaping economic geography

"We understand that successful places of the future will be those that offer an environment where creative and innovative people can make a home, raise a family and pursue a rewarding career," said the minister. "We are confident our Investor Residency Programme (IRP) will make Oman even more attractive to business, investors, as well as talent."

"It is clear the pandemic is reshaping economic geography, businesses as well as people are rethinking their real estate needs and

physical footprints, reimagining how and where they live, work and invest," he added. "The introduction of the IRP is a direct response to this trend."

Oman's recently launched IRP is an initiative designed to attract high-impact foreign investment and enhance Oman's economic growth. The IRP offers two extended residency programmes through real estate and commercial investment on a renewable five and 10-year basis subject to applicants meeting specific criteria.

The IRP is a significant ingredient of Oman Vision 2040, the country's long-term plan to create a diversified, sustainable economy that is able to withstand the impact of global events, provide good employment opportunities for all, and enable everyone to enjoy good standards of living.

The minister explained: "With the roll-out of Oman Vision 2040, we are delivering a better than ever pro-enterprise environment, making it even easier for international companies to take advantage of

Oman's business opportunities in logistics, manufacturing, tourism, mining, renewable energy, fisheries and so much more.

"And with the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik steering the implementation of Oman Vision 2040, we look ahead with both optimism and enthusiasm to the possibilities of tomorrow as we welcome friends as they invest in the many opportunities presented by our vibrant and diversifying economy," added Al Youssef.

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Dust storms from Iran to affect northern governorates of Oman

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The Legends League match summary

The Legends League match summary had 19,400 views and reached 21,900 people on Facebook.

MOST VIEWED VIDEO ON INSTAGRAM

3,002 VIEWS

The Maghrib Minute video

The Maghrib Minute video update had 3,002 views and 120 likes on Instagram.

CONDOLENCES



Muscat Media Group offer their sincere condolences to our colleague **Jisha Nambiar** on the demise of her father **MR. MADHAVAN NAMBIAR.**

May His Soul Rest in Peace







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EGYPT’S FOREIGN MINISTER ARRIVES

Sameh Shoukry, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt, and his accompanying delegation arrived on a two-day visit to the Sultanate of Oman on Saturday evening. The guest and his accompanying delegation were received upon their arrival in the country by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Minister of Foreign Affairs. -ONA



EGYPTIAN MINISTER

New hospital inaugurated

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Arab Specialised Eye, Nose, Throat and Dental Hospital was opened in the Muscat Governorate on Saturday.

A statement issued by Oman News Agency, said : “The Arab Specialised Eye, Nose, Throat and Dental Hospital was opened under the patronage of Sheikh Seba’a bin Hamdan Al Saadi, Secretary-General of the Higher Committee for Celebrations, in the presence of Sameh Shoukry, the Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs, a number of officials in the Sultanate of Oman and Egypt.”

The Secretary-General of the Higher Committee for Celebrations confirmed that the hospital represents a qualitative addition



to the private health sector in the Sultanate, and provides many medical services in the field of ophthalmology, ear, nose, throat and teeth.

He added that the hospital also reflects the tireless efforts made by the concerned authorities to promote investments in the

country, within the framework of the Oman’s plans to achieve economic diversification, and to translate the efforts to achieve the goals of the future vision “Oman 2040”.

Professor Ahmed Reda, a member of the Omani-Egyptian Businessmen Council, praised the efforts of the Ministry of Health in promoting investments in the health sector, stressing the close cooperation between the hospital and the ministry in many fields.

Reda explained that the opening of the hospital comes on the agenda of the Omani-Egyptian Business Council, expressing his hope for more investment and economic cooperation between Oman and Egypt.



Ministry of Social Development

Tender Announcement

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

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of tender document	Last date for tender submission	Tender Document Price (non-retundable)
2/2022	Maintenance work for alwafa center at alswaiq	Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board, which have construction contracting and maintenance activities, and are registered in the first class	Thursdaysdy 10-2-2022 02:00 PM	Wednesday 2-3-2022 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=

- ❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the Tender Board may obtain the Tender documents at theTender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) , On Sunday 23/1/2022
- ❖ Tender shall be submitted in compliance with the technical specifications and terms along with a local bank warranty at (1%) of the tender value, valid ninety (90) days from the date of e-submission.
- ❖ For Inquiry , please contact though the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (24402200)

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

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WORLD



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COUNTERTERRORISM LAW

Myanmar sentences lawmaker from Suu Kyi’s party to death

YANGON: A closed military court in Myanmar has sentenced a lawmaker from Aung San Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy (NLD) party and a prominent democracy activist to death, Al Jazeera reported on Saturday.

The NLD’s Phyto Zeyar Thaw, who was arrested in November, was sentenced to death for offences under the country’s Counterterrorism Law, the media outlet citing a statement from the generals reported. Prominent democracy activist Kyaw Min Yu, better known as Ko Jimmy, was given the same sentence, the statement added.

“The Burmese military has handed out death sentences to prominent activists, Ko Jimmy & Zeyar Thaw. This may be the latest attempt by the military to crush dissent & hopes of the people... but protests & resistance grows daily, so does our determination to uproot this military,” a Burmese human rights activist working at Burma Campaign UK also tweeted. Al Jazeera reported that they were found guilty of offences involving explosives, bombings and financing terrorism, but details were sketchy because of the black-out on proceedings.

Myanmar was plunged into crisis when army chief Min Aung Hlaing deposed the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi and seized power for the military on February 1 last year. The coup prompted mass protests and a civil disobedience movement, and thousands have been arrested in the military’s attempt to crack down on dissent. Almost 1,500 civilians are estimated to have been killed, according to Al Jazeera. **ANI**

Seven killed, several injured in Mumbai residential building fire

21 fire tenders were rushed to the 20-storey building near Tardeo and the fire was brought under control

MUMBAI: The death toll in the fire that broke out inside a 20-storeyed residential building in Indian state of Mumbai on Saturday morning reached seven, said Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC).

DCP Saurabh Tripathi said that 15 injured people were shifted to various hospitals in Mumbai following the fire incident. “Of these, four were reported critical,” he said. He further informed that a total of 21 fire tenders were rushed to the 20-storey Kamala building near Mumbai’s Bhatia hospital in Tardeo and the fire was brought under control with the help of fire department, local police and traffic police.



RESCUE: Maharashtra Minister Aaditya Thackeray on Saturday said that he is in constant touch with the authorities, adding that rescue and cooling operations are underway.

“As per the preliminary investigation, the fire broke out on the 15th floor and went upwards via duct. The most affected with 19th floor. The fire is under control now,” said the DCP. Meanwhile, Maharashtra Minister Aaditya Thackeray on Saturday said that he is in constant touch with the authorities, adding that rescue and cooling operations are underway.

“In touch with the authorities regarding the fire outbreak at the Kamala building in Tardeo. The fire brigade and the police are on site. Rescue and cooling operations are underway,” tweeted Thackeray today.

Following the incident, Mumbai Mayor Kishori Pednekar visited Bhatia hospital, where some of the injured are being treated.

VOLCANIC ERUPTION

Tonga government says over 80% of population affected by eruption



NUKU’ALOFA: Tongans are facing a shortage of food and drinking water supplies, while communication remains an “acute” challenge, Tonga’s prime minister said in a statement on Saturday.

It was the second update released by the government on the damage caused by the eruption of the Hunga Tonga Hunga Ha’apai undersea volcano last week. The eruption blanketed the Pacific island nation with ash and triggered a tsunami that destroyed homes on some of its outer islands.

The Tongan government said the powerful volcanic eruption and its after-effects had affected nearly 84% of its population.

Tonga has a population of around 105,000 people, including those living in the outer islands.

What is the latest on the damage?

The government said that securing drinking water was a priority for its residents since volcanic ash had contaminated the archipelago’s drinking water supply.

A New Zealand navy ship that arrived on Friday carrying a desal-

ination plant had begun drawing water from Tonga’s harbours. The ship additionally carried 250,000 litres (66,000 gallons) of water for Tongans. But aid deliveries arriving at sea are facing significant challenges, since the volcanic fallout on the ocean surface is also damaging ships.

“Although there has been no further volcanic activity, challenges to sea transportation remain as fallout on the surface of the ocean is causing damage to vessels,” the government said.

This means it could become harder to transport people from smaller islands to the main island, Tongatapu, as the government promised to do.

So far, 62 people had been relocated from Mango island to Nomuka island, located in the southern part of the Ha’apai group, after residents lost their homes and personal belongings. A field hospital had also been set up in Nomuka.

Another factor complicating relief efforts was disrupted digital and telecom communication, since satellite and radio links were limited after undersea cables

snappped. The New Zealand government said earlier this week that full restoration of telecom links could take up to a month.

Tongans queued up Saturday to access limited money services that were restored in the capital, as rescue and restoration efforts continue.

No further deaths, aid continues

The government also said that the death toll remained unchanged at three after two Tongans and a British national were confirmed to have died as a result of the eruption and tsunami earlier this week.

More naval vessels from Australia, New Zealand and Britain are on their way to deliver aid to Tonga, as military aid flights also continue from Australia and New Zealand.

The UN office coordinating Tonga’s humanitarian efforts said on Friday it was determined to make sure aid supplies to the nation would not bring with it any COVID-19 infections, planning instead a range of “no-contact” delivery options. **ANI**

RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

Germany rejects arms deliveries to Ukraine, but will send field hospital

BERLIN: Germany’s defence minister has said that sending arms to Ukraine would not be helpful in defusing the current situation as fears of a Russian invasion continue to mount.

In an interview published Saturday, Defence Minister Christine Lambrecht told the *Welt am Sonntag* newspaper there is consensus in the German government when it comes to barring the supply of weapons to Kyiv.

“We are standing on Kyiv’s side. We have to do everything to de-escalate. Currently, arms deliveries would not be helpful in this respect; there is agreement on this in the German government,” Lambrecht told the paper.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz told a news conference on Friday that in recent years, “Germany has not supported the export of lethal weapons.”

The decision comes despite appeals from Kyiv to provide armaments.

Germany to provide medical assistance

While arms deliveries are off the table, Germany plans to send a field medical facility to Ukraine in February, Lambrecht said.

“Ukraine will receive a complete field hospital together the necessary training in February, all co-financed by Germany for €5.3 million (\$6.01 million),” the defense minister said.

Germany’s armed forces have been treating injured Ukrainian soldiers at its medical facilities for a number of years. Lambrecht added that Berlin has already delivered respirators to Ukraine.

Rising Russia-Ukraine tensions

Russia has sent around 100,000



troops to the Ukrainian border, which has caused alarm in the West. Ukraine has accused Russia of ramping up support for separatists in eastern breakaway regions of the country on Friday.

Moscow has denied it is planning an invasion, with the Kremlin demanding NATO halt its eastward expansion in the region and deny membership to Ukraine.

On the point of Ukraine’s ambition to join NATO, Lambrecht said Moscow didn’t have a leg to stand on.

“There is no Russian veto right for membership to NATO. Every sovereign nation that shares our values is free to apply for membership. But beyond this red line, there is readiness from the West

to speak with Russia and to take its interests into account,” she said.

Diplomatic measures have been taking place to address the regional security concerns.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Russia’s top diplomat, Sergey Lavrov, met on Friday in an attempt to defuse tensions.

The US has expressed a willingness for more dialogue on the matter, with Russia signalling a willingness to participate in further talks.

Russia previously attacked Ukraine in 2014, with Moscow ordering the annexation of the Ukrainian Crimean Peninsula. The move was met with condemnation and sanctions from the West. **ANI**



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EMERGENCY MODE

UN chief calls for action to put out ‘5-alarm global fire’

NEW YORK: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Friday raised five alarms for the world for 2022 and urged countries to forge a new, more hopeful and equal path at a time when “the only certainty is more uncertainty”.

“We face a five-alarm global fire that requires the full mobilization of all countries,” he said, referring to the raging COVID-19 pandemic, a morally bankrupt global financial system, the climate crisis, lawlessness in cyberspace, and diminished peace and security.

He stressed that countries “must go into emergency mode”, and now is the time to act as the response will determine global outcomes for decades ahead, UN News reported.

Stopping coronavirus spread must be at the top of the agenda everywhere, said Guterres, calling for countries to “go into emergency mode in the COVID-19 battle.”

The pandemic has also highlighted the failure of the global financial system, on which Guterres was particularly blunt. “Let’s tell it like it is: the global financial system is morally bankrupt. It favours the rich and punishes the poor.”

The system is supposed to ensure stability by supporting economies through financial shocks, such as the pandemic, but he said the lopsided invest-



ment is leading to lopsided recovery from the crisis.

As a result, poorer countries are experiencing their slowest growth in a generation, while middle-income nations are denied debt relief despite surging poverty levels. Most of the world’s poor are women and girls, who are paying a high price in lost healthcare, education and jobs, the UN chief added.

“The divergence between developed and developing countries is becoming systemic - a recipe for instability, crisis and forced migration. These imbalances are not a bug, but a feature of the global financial system,” he said.

For the Secretary-General, countries have no choice than to go into “emergency mode” against the climate crisis. The world is far off-track on limiting global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels, as outlined in the Paris Agreement on climate change. **ANI**



Asia Lions coast to six-wicket victory over World Giants

Sri Lankan pair of Upul Tharanga (63) and Tillakaratne Dilshan (52), chased down a stiff target of 206 with five balls to spare

Times News Service

MUSCAT: On a windy and cold evening, Asia Lions coasted to six-wicket victory over the World Giants in the Legends League Cricket at the beautiful Al Amerat Cricket Ground.

Thanks to a 88-run partnership from 54 balls by the Sri Lankan pair of Upul Tharanga (63) and Tillakaratne Dilshan (52), they chased down a stiff target of 206 with five balls to spare.

Dilshan
Asian Lions opener Dilshan smashed three sixes and two fours in his 32-ball knock, while Tharanga scored 63 in 43 balls, which included seven boundaries and two sixes. The duo took control of the game after Kamran Akmal (14) was dismissed in the fourth over.

Mohammad Hafeez made 27 from 13 balls when 56 runs were needed off 24 balls after Tharanga was run out by Imran Tahir.

Ashgar Afghan (14 from 7 balls) and Lions skipper Misbah-ul-Haq

(19 from 11 balls) hammered Ryan Sidebottom for two sixes and two boundaries in his over that yielded 22 runs to virtually seal the game.

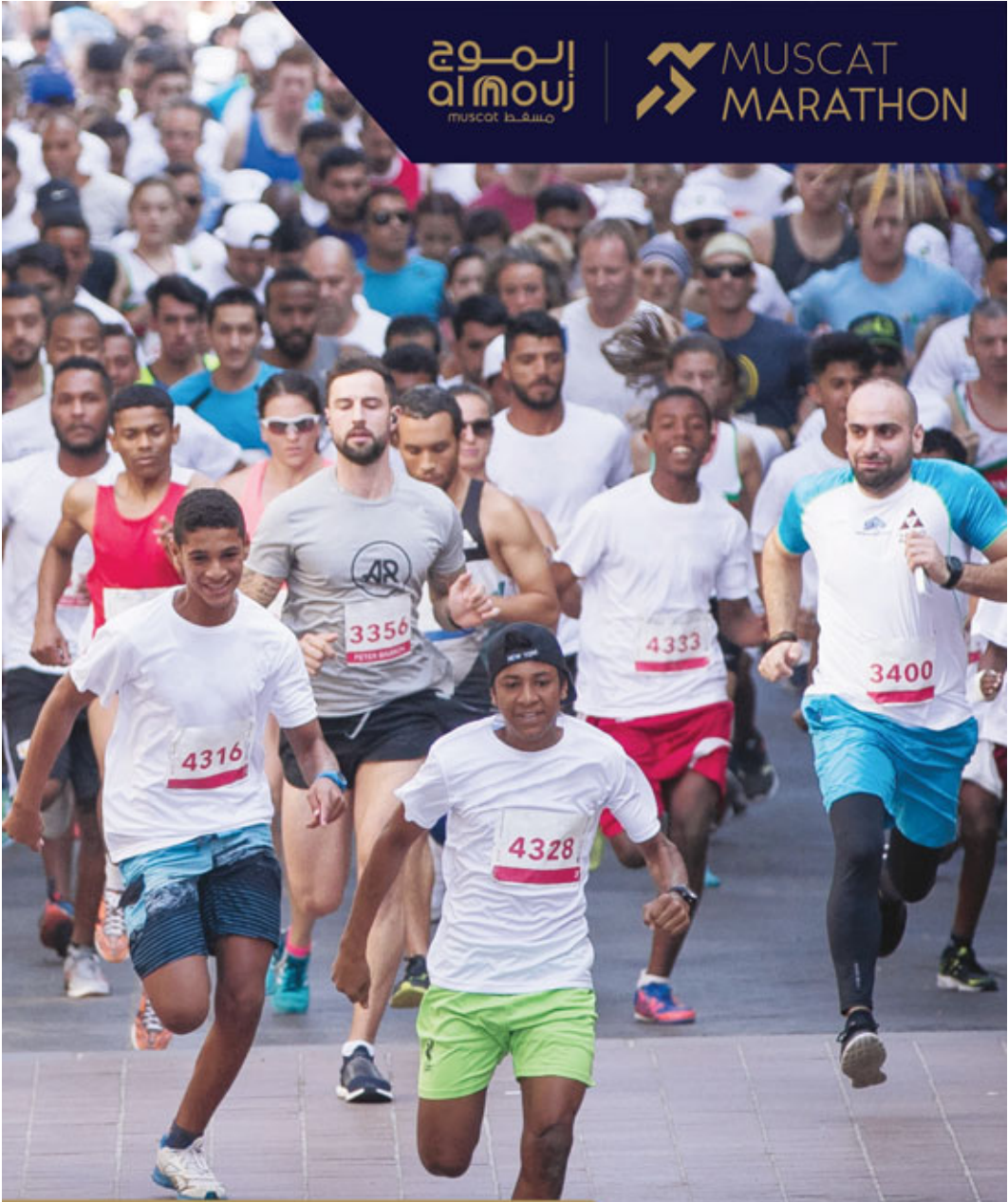
Earlier, Kevin O'Brien had set the stage on fire for World Giants with a gorgeous 95 from 46 balls (7x6, 7x4) to score 205/7 after Lions opted to bowl.

Short of a century
The ex-Irish cricketer held their innings together after former English batsman Kevin Pietersen (14) was out cheaply in the third over. O'Brien scored 95 but Muttiah Muralitharan got him out five runs short of a century. Sri Lankan pacer Nuwan Kulasekara returned with a tidy spell of 4-1-17-2, while Hafeez claimed two wickets.

"As a team, we were looking for a win and we finally got that, it's a wonderful feeling," Hafeez, said.

Top stars
"Above everything, I personally enjoyed the game to play with the top stars of World cricket," Hafeez added.





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Daniil Medvedev into round four, Tsitsipas downs Paire in four-set

The second seed, who battled past Kyrgios in four sets, produced a dominant performance against van de Zandschulp



MELBOURNE: Daniil Medvedev on Saturday continued his red-hot form as the world number two stormed past Botic van de Zandschulp to reach the fourth round of the Australian Open.

The second seed, who battled past Kyrgios in four sets on Thursday, produced a dominant performance against van de Zandschulp, downing the Dutchman 6-4, 6-4, 6-2 to move his title bid into week two in Melbourne. Medvedev was

in control of the match from the third game when he broke the world number 57 on Margaret Court Arena. Medvedev saved all three break points he faced and fired 26 winners, including 10 aces,

to advance after one hour and 55 minutes.

At Rod Laver Arena, Stefanos Tsitsipas put on a dominant performance against Benoit Paire to move into the fourth round of the AO.

Despite dropping the third set in a tie-break, the Greek always looked in control of the match, firing 21 aces and benefitting from 50 unforced errors from the Frenchman to advance after two hours and 42 minutes.

Sabalenka, Collins rally to win

Simona Halep on Saturday thrashed Montenegrin Danka Kovinic to roll into the second week of the Australian Open for the fifth straight year.

Former world number one Romanian dropped just three games

during 64 minutes in the 6-2, 6-1 victory over Kovinic at John Cain Arena. Halep bettered her season record to 8-0 and her record in the third round of Grand Slams to 21-3. She's won all six sets she's played in at the Australian Open so far and has only lost 12 games. The number two seed Aryna Sabalenka continued to collect comeback wins at the Australian Open. The Belarusian battled past No.31 seed Marketa Vondrousova of the Czech Republic 4-6, 6-3, 6-1 to win her third straight match from a set down this week.

Sabalenka needed an hour and 49 minutes to quash the challenge from Tokyo Olympic silver medalist Vondrousova and advance into the round of 16 for the second straight season.

At Kia Arena, Elise Mertens registered a 6-2, 6-2 win over Zhang

Shuai of China.

The No.19 seed needed just 70 minutes to defeat Zhang, a win in which she broke serve five times. She advances to a meeting in the last 16 with No.27 seed Danielle Collins, who toughed out a three-set win over Danish teenager Clara Tauson from a set and a break down.

2019 Australian Open semifinalist Danielle Collins, the No.27 seed, outlasted the last remaining teenager in the draw, 19-year-old Clara Tauson of Denmark, 4-6, 6-4, 7-5 in a 2-hour and 35-minute barnburner on Rod Laver Arena.

At Margaret Court Arena, birthday girl Alize Cornet of France fought back from a set and a double-break down to overcome No.29 seed Tamara Zidansek of Slovenia 4-6, 6-4, 6-2 in an epic 2 hours and 43 minutes. **ANI**

CRICKET

Oman Women whitewash Wanstead 3-0

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman Women whitewashed the touring UK side Wanstead Cricket Club, winning the third T20 game by 38 runs to clinch the series 3-0 here at Oman Cricket Turf 1 in Amerat on Friday. Opting to bowl first, Wanstead CC failed to restrict Oman to a small total. Priyanka Mendonca (30), Hina Javed (23) and Nayan Anil (20) were the hosts' main batters, Hina hitting the game's lone six. Laura Anna claimed 2 for 14.



Determined to make amends and end the tour on a winning note, Wanstead got off to a sound start, reaching 51 for 1 in 9 overs. However, Oman fought back again, slowing the tourists down further before it became impossible to catch up with the required run rate. Though Wanstead crossed the 100-run mark for the first time in the series, it could still manage to score only 122 for 4 in 20 overs, a good 38 runs short of the target. Yasmin Daswani (38 not out) and Saba Nasim (25) were again its top scorers.

Brief Scores: Oman Women's

160 for 6 in 20 overs (Priyanka Mendonca 30 - 3x4, Hina Javed 23 - 1x6, Nayan Anil 20 - 3x4. Laura Anna 2-14) beat Wanstead Women's 122 for 4 in 20 overs (Yasmin Daswani 38 - 3x4, Saba Nasim 25 - 3x4) by 38 runs.

Wins for Maniz Azad, OHI

In the Oman Cricket League action, Maniz Azad defeated Bank Muscat while Douglas OHI

trounced OCT Al Hail A by 6 wickets in B Division games on Friday.

Brief Scores (B Division): Bank Muscat 186 for 9 in 30 overs (Osman Al Zadjali 53 - 7x4, 1x6, Asghar Khan 36 - 3x4, 1x6, Aneek Chakraborty 4-25, Rehman Bhatt 2-23) lost to Maniz Azad International 190 for 4 in 24 overs (Krishna Pradhan 81 - 12x4, Muhammad Attique 43 - 5x4, 1x6, Adnan Ahamad 32 - 1x4, 1x6, Vinoth

Thangavel 3-22) by 6 wickets.

Brief Scores (B Division): OCT Al Hail 'A' 95 all out in 24.5 overs (Waleed Rahim 51 - 5x4, Shamsudheen Shareef 3-26, Murtaza Shah 3-14, Viplav Kumar 2-23) lost to Douglas OHI 97 for 3 in 12 overs (Shamsudheen Shareef 28 - 2x4, 2x6, Krishhang Srivastava 27 - 1x4, Santosh Vishwakarma 26 - 2x4, 1x6, Waleed Rahim 2-22) by 7 wickets.

INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE

IPL 2022 to be held in India without crowd, says BCCI

NEW DELHI: The Indian Premier League (IPL) 2022 season will be held in India itself, top sources in the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) confirmed.

Sources in the know of developments confirmed that if the COVID-19 subsides in the country, then the board will go ahead with hosting the IPL 2022 in India. "IPL 2022 will be held in India and the tournament will be staged without crowds in attendance."

Likely venues for IPL 2022 are Wankhede Stadium, Cricket Club of India (CCI), DY Patil Stadium in Mumbai and if needed, we can look at Pune as well," the source said.

The IPL player registration closed on January 20 and a total of 1,214 players (896 Indian and 318 overseas) have signed up to be part of the 2022 player auction.

The two-day mega auction will see 10 teams bidding for some of the finest talents in world cricket.



The players' list incorporates 270 capped, 903 uncapped, and 41 Associate players. The detailed list is as follows: Capped Indian (61 players), Capped International (209 players), Associate (41 players), Uncapped Indians who were a part of previous IPL seasons (143 players), Uncapped International who were a part of previous IPL seasons (6 players), Uncapped Indians (692 players), and Uncapped Internationals (62 players).

The IPL auction is set to be held on February 12 and 13 in Bengaluru. **ANI**

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FOREX RESERVES RISE

India's foreign exchange (forex) reserves rose by \$2.229 billion to \$634.965 billion for the week ended January 14, 2022, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) data showed. The forex reserves had declined by \$878 million in the previous week.

MARKET

BUSINESS & FINANCE



PROTECT ECONOMIC OUTPUT

The pandemic must be contained to protect economic output, the head of the International Monetary Fund has said. Business leaders and policymakers agree that supply chains need to be rebuilt with resilience in mind.

Oman set to open solar power plant in Ibri

The 500MW plant is the first station to be connected to the main electricity network in the Sultanate of Oman, and will have enough power to supply about 50,000 homes with electricity

Times News Service

MUSCAT: At a cost of OMR155 million, the Sultanate of Oman will celebrate the inauguration of the Ibri solar power plant on Monday. In a statement the Oman News Agency said, "The inauguration of the Ibri solar power plant will be celebrated in the Wilayat of Ibri on Monday, with an investment



of about OMR155 million, in line with Oman's 2040 Vision to invest in available opportunities and protect the Sultanate of Oman's natural resources.

The plant is the first station to be connected to the main electricity network in the Sultanate of

Oman, and it will produce 500 MW of power, enough to feed about 50,000 homes with electricity.

Engineer Yaqoub bin Saif Al Kiyumi, CEO of the Oman Energy and Water Procurement Company, indicated that the Ibri solar power plant project is in the interest of

the national priorities set by Oman Vision 2040, which are environmental conservation, exploitation of natural resources, development of the governorate and the involvement of private sector in the green initiative.

-ONA

ABU DHABI SUSTAINABILITY WEEK

World needs smarter policies for carbon transition to succeed

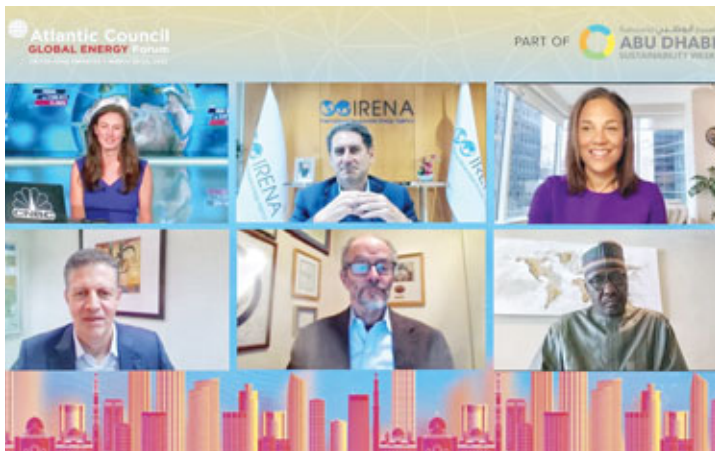
SHARJAH: The energy supply crunch in Europe, Asia and the US this past year has underscored the need for smarter carbon-transition policy, Majid Jafar, the CEO of Crescent Petroleum, told industry and policy leaders gathered for a virtual panel at Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week.

To make lasting progress, carbon transition policy must be tailored to each country's needs and dynamics while addressing the limitations of renewable energy like intermittency and lack of storage.

"Any successful and sustainable policy must address the need for affordable and reliable energy in the developing world, where a billion people still don't have electricity and 3 billion have no clean cooking solutions," Jafar told attendees to the launch of the Atlantic Council Global Energy Agenda.

"What has become clear in recent months is that insufficient investment in oil and gas is leading to higher energy costs and more burning of coal worldwide, which both harms the economy and efforts to tackle climate change," he added.

Jafar was joined on the panel by Mele Kiyari, Group Managing Director, Nigerian National Petro-



leum Corporation; Francisco La Camera, Director General of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA); Amb. Daniel Fried, former Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Distinguished Fellow at the Atlantic Council; and Helima Croft, Managing Director and Head of Global Commodity Strategy at RBC Capital Markets. The panel discussed the key issues facing energy markets in 2022. The launch of the Global Energy Agenda was held in collaboration with Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week. The speakers

contributed essays to the Global Energy Agenda, which analyzes the key issues and challenges facing the energy markets in 2022.

Jafar highlighted that the price rises and energy shortages last year were the result of three simultaneous trends: low investment in oil and gas production and infrastructure, a rise in demand as economies recover from the pandemic and the shutdown of some nuclear power sources. He stressed that while renewables are part of the solution to reducing carbon emissions, the continuing importance of oil and

gas in ensuring a stable energy supply and in enabling the transition cannot be ignored.

"Solar and wind power are promising but cannot be stored, so stable energy sources like natural gas and nuclear power will be needed to complement them, as the UAE's wise policy has demonstrated," Jafar added.

In addition, there is a proven formula for cutting carbon emissions quickly that is easily applied today: reduce energy consumption by boosting efficiency, encourage reforestation, and switch from high-carbon-emitting fuels to lower-emitting ones. These steps would bring rapid reductions in emissions and complement renewables in the transition to a more sustainable energy future.

Crescent Petroleum became one of the first companies in the industry to achieve carbon neutrality across its operations in 2021 after completing a series of projects to reduce carbon intensity and offset remaining emissions. The milestone was the culmination of years of effort to improve total process efficiencies and become one of the least carbon-intensive companies in the energy sector. -WAM

REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP



Business leaders praise RCEP as huge New Year gift for regional and global economy

PHNOM PENH: The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) free trade agreement, which entered into force on Jan. 1, is a huge New Year gift for the regional and global economy, businesspeople in Cambodia said.

The RCEP is a mega trade agreement signed by 10 ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) member states Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam, and its five free trade agreements partners, namely China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand.

Paul Kim, deputy chief of Hong Leng Huor Transportation, said the RCEP would eventually eliminate up to 90 per cent of regional trade tariff and non-tariff barriers, which will further promote the flows of goods and services, deepen regional economic integration and increase regional competitiveness.

"With preferential tariff rates under the RCEP, I believe that people in the member countries will enjoy buying products and other necessities at a competitive price during the Spring Festival season this year," Paul said.

He dubbed the RCEP "a huge New Year gift for businesses and peoples in the region and the world at large," saying that the agreement will "serve as a driving force for regional and global economic recovery in the post-COVID-19 pandemic."

Collectively covering about one-third of the world's population with 30 per cent of the global gross domestic product, the RCEP will increase the member economies' incomes by 0.6 per cent by 2030, adding \$245 billion annually to regional income and 2.8 million jobs to regional employment, according to an Asian Development Bank's study.

Focused on trade in goods and services, investment, intellectual property, e-commerce, competition and dispute settlement, Paul

said the deal offers opportunities for regional countries to defend multilateralism, trade liberalisation and promote economic cooperation.

Hong Leng Huor Transportation specialises in various services ranging from freight forwarding, dry port operations, customs clearance, road transportation, warehousing and distribution to e-commerce and last-mile delivery.

"RCEP will facilitate logistics, distribution and supply chain resilience as it simplifies customs processes, shipment clearances and other provisions," he said. "Despite the pandemic, trade has remained surprisingly strong during the past two years, and we're excited to witness how RCEP would further facilitate trade and, thus, regional economic growth, in the years to come."

He is confident that the RCEP will further boost cross-border trade and investment among the member countries in the long run.

"For Cambodia, with tariff concessions, the deal will definitely further boost goods traded between Cambodia and other RCEP member states, especially with China," he said.

Ly Eng, an assistant to the general manager of Hualong Investment Group (Cambodia) Co., Ltd, said her company had recently imported mandarin oranges to Cambodia from South China's Guangdong province for the first time under the RCEP.

She hopes that Cambodian consumers will have more options in buying vegetables and fruits with products from China such as mandarin oranges, apples and crown pears.

"It will make China and other RCEP member countries easy to exchange goods faster," Ly Eng said, adding that the prices would also be lower. "We also hope that more and more Cambodian tropical fruits and other potential agricultural products will be exported to the Chinese market in the future," she said. -Xinhua

PARTNERSHIP

Agreement signed to boost Oman's travel trade industry

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Visit Oman – the country's dynamic B2B travel booking gateway recently signed a partnership agreement with SalamAir, to enhance its capability to connect international travel trade markets with tourism suppliers in Oman.

Signed in Muscat in early January 2022, this latest partnership with SalamAir benefits Visit Oman's international travel trade partners by providing more flight/holiday package options to Oman via the VisitOman.om platform.

The partnership will facilitate an increase in the number of agencies around the world selling Omani tourism, which will serve as a boost to the local travel industry in Oman.

Established in 2016, SalamAir is the first low-cost carrier based in the Sultanate of Oman and currently flies destinations around the Middle East, Africa and South Asia.

Capt. Mohamed Ahmed, CEO of SalamAir, stated, "We are pleased to have partnered with Visit Oman; this is another step in contributing to the Oman Vision 2040, and generating opportunities to foster the leisure travel by offering bespoke travel solutions that can attract different market segments and increase the inbound tourism movement. We do not doubt that our partnership will be successful in further enabling tourism in Oman."

Speaking about this latest partnership, Shabib Al Maamari, Managing Director - Visit Oman, stated, "For Visit Oman, SalamAir represents a valuable partner in terms of their provision of safe, reliable and affordable travel, combined with service excellence. Furthermore, SalamAir represents the soul and spirit of Oman and its people – and this aligns with our aim to connect the global travel trade to unlimited discovery

in Oman. Through SalamAir, Visit Oman can further promote Beautiful Oman to key source markets connected to the airline's diverse international network."

This latest collaboration with SalamAir follows a number of recent developments for Visit Oman, including a signed agreement in late 2021 with the internationally renowned Sabre Travel Solutions as the online travel-trade gateway's strategic technology partner.

International travel trade welcome VisitOman.om as a dynamic, all-encompassing resource that seamlessly connects the entire accredited Omani tourism supply chain to the travel-trade sector in key international markets.

The Visit Oman initiative falls within the broader, existing Oman Tourism Vision 2030 strategy, which acts as a driving force in the Sultanate of Oman's move to a more diversified and developed economy.



COLLABORATION: Signed in Muscat in early January 2022, this latest partnership with SalamAir benefits Visit Oman's international travel trade partners by providing more flight/holiday package options to Oman via the VisitOman.om platform. - Supplied picture

MARKET

IMF chief says world must ‘spend billions’ to ‘gain trillions’

The pandemic must be contained to protect economic output, the head of the International Monetary Fund has said while speaking on the final day of the World Economic Forum

DAVOS: Two of the most important figures in the economic world were united in their views on inflation while speaking on the final day of the World Economic Forum on Friday.

“We see a lot of this super-strong recovery that has outpaced supply, which was constrained,” European Central Bank (ECB) President Christine Lagarde said in an on-line panel discussing the threat of inflation on the global economy.

Consumer prices have risen significantly over the past year in many markets around the globe. The Euro area inflation rate for December 2021 was 5 per cent, a record high for the month.

But the ECB has been reluctant

to combat rising prices by raising interest rates, with Lagarde insisting that the current high inflation is the product of many factors, including temporary ones.

A combination of monetary and fiscal policies helped avoid massive layoffs during the pandemic and allowed the economy to bounce back more quickly than expected, she said.

“In a way, we are a victim of our own success,” Lagarde said. Meanwhile, wages in Europe have yet to start climbing. “We are not seeing this sustainable movement that would see inflation spiralling out of control,” said Lagarde.

International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Kristalina



IMF CHIEF: Head of the International Monetary Fund Kristalina Georgieva says monetary policy isn't the only tool for fighting inflation. - DW

na Georgieva took a similar stance.

“If we look at the reasons for inflation, it is not just for central bankers to fight it,” she said.

Changing labour markets and other issues are also feeding into rising consumer prices, issues that policymakers in other areas would be better suited to address, she said. The IMF chief stressed that pandemic policy remains a top economic policy for global leaders this

year and that protective measures need to be taken around the globe to avoid continued disruptions.

“My main message is to recognise that the world must spend the billions necessary to contain COVID in order to gain trillions in output as a result,” she said.

Not everyone on the panel was in agreement, however.

“My fear is that the beast is out of the bottle. I don't think inflation

will be transitory at all,” Brazil's Minister of the Economy Paulo Guedes said. “I think these supply-adverse shocks will fade away gradually. But there's no arbitrage on the western side to be exploited anymore. I think the central banks are sleeping at the wheel.”

A chance to ‘reglobalise’

Creating a global trade system more resilient to future shocks was the subject of a Thursday panel that included Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala and CEO of the semiconductor manufacturer Intel Pat Gelsinger.

A semiconductor shortage caused in part by a spike in demand for electronics has led to a major disruption to supply chains around the globe during the pandemic.

“What we saw is that we just got focused on the cost of supply chains and the optimization of that and we lost sight of resilience and what I would call a geographically balanced resilient supply chain,” said Gelsinger.

The Intel boss listed ongoing initiatives to build a larger industry presence in both the US and Europe. Up until the pandemic, these regions had relied heavily on

computer chip producers in Asia. On Friday, Intel announced it will invest \$20 billion (€18 billion) in a new chip facility in Ohio. The company also plans to announce a new European facility in the near future.

The WTO Director-General took a constructive view on the situation, highlighting the opportunities that these “supply chain snafus” had presented.

“This is a chance for us to integrate those parts of the world ... that have been left behind and not been included in globalization,” said Okonjo-Iweala. She pointed to a greater shift in manufacturing to developing economies like Vietnam, Cambodia and Ethiopia.

“I call it a way of re-globalizing, and using globalization and supply chains to solve some of the inequality problems,” she said.

The World Economic Forum's Davos Agenda was a weeklong event that brought together leaders from business, government and society to discuss critical issues affecting the global population. The virtual event was held instead of the annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland, which had to be postponed to May due to the rise in COVID cases, fuelled by the omicron variant. -DW

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FOREIGN EXCHANGE RESERVES

India's forex reserves rise by \$2.22 billion to \$634.96 billion

MUMBAI: India's foreign exchange (forex) reserves rose by \$2.229 billion to \$634.965 billion for the week ended January 14, 2022, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) data showed.

The forex reserves had declined by \$878 million in the previous week.

According to the RBI's Weekly Statistical Supplement, all categories of forex reserves increased during the week ended January 14, 2022.

The forex reserves consist of foreign currency assets, gold, SDRs and reserve position in the International Monetary Fund.

The foreign currency assets rose by \$1.345 billion to \$570.737 billion. Expressed in US dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-dollar currencies like Euro, UK's Pound sterling, Japanese Yen held in the foreign exchange reserves. -ANI

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IN 2021

China remains world's leading shipbuilder

BEIJING: China's shipbuilding sector continued to take the lead globally last year, as busy maritime transport across the world pushed up ship demand.

The country's shipbuilding output, an indicator reflecting the vitality of the sector, amounted to 39.7 million dead-weight tonnes (dwt) in 2021, rising 3 percent year on year, data from the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology showed.

The 2021 output accounted for 47.2 percent of the world's total, up 4.1 percentage points from that in 2020, the ministry said.

New shipbuilding orders, another major indicator of the shipbuilding industry, surged 131.8 percent year on year to 67.07 million dwt in 2021, accounting for 53.8 percent of the global market share.

Holding order volumes came in at 95.84 million dwt by the end of last December, rising 34.8 percent from the end of 2020 and taking up 47.6 percent of market share globally.

The ministry also said the international competitiveness of Chinese shipbuilding companies further enhanced in 2021, with six companies ranking among the world's top 10 shipbuilders in terms of output, new orders and holding orders, respectively. -Xinhua

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DO WE GET CREATIVE IDEAS WHILE WALKING?

A new study has examined the connection between movement and cognition from a scientific point of view. The research has been published in the 'Psychological Research Journal'.

"Our research shows that it is not movement per se that helps us to think more flexibly," said neuroscientist Dr Barbara Handel from Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg (JMU) in Bavaria, Germany.

Instead, the freedom to make self-determined movements is responsible for it.

Accordingly, even small movements while sitting can have the same positive effects on creative thinking.

However, the researcher does not derive any concrete movement suggestions from her work, "The important thing is the freedom to move without external constraints."

It is important, she said, that movement is not suppressed or forced into regular patterns.

"Unfortunately, this happens when people focus for example on a small screen," explained the JMU researcher.

The increased use of mobile phones and similar devices – also in the field of education at the time of the Corona pandemic – could therefore have a negative effect on cognitive processes such as creativity.

How do people perceive their environment? What effect do sensory stimuli have in the peripheral nervous system and what in the brain? What influence do body movements have on the perception of sensory input?

Researchers like Barbara Handel are interested in such questions for many reasons. In the long term, their findings could contribute to a better understanding of diseases that affect body movements as well as cognitive processes.

From February 2022, the scientist will continue her research at the Neurological Clinic of Würzburg University Hospital. There she plans to focus on the topics of Parkinson's disease and ADHD.

Barbara Handel's work is funded by a Starting Grant from the European Research Council (ERC). - ANI



LIFESTYLE

OMAN



OMAN PLANS A SERIES OF EVENTS TO MAXIMISE GAINS FROM EXPO 2020 DUBAI



MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman's pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai in coordination with a number of relevant government and private agencies will organise a number of events in February, with the aim of maximising economic gains from participation, attracting foreign capital, forging commercial partnerships and promoting products. Omani.

Mohsen bin Khamis Al Balushi, Advisor to the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and Commissioner-General of the Sultanate at the Expo., said that the pavilion will showcase during the month of February a number of economic events, which will start with the Omani-Emirati Economic Forum on the 17th of February, which brings together a number of entities.

The Omani side will be headed by Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef, the Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and Chairman of the Main Committee overseeing the preparation and preparation for the Sultanate's participation in Expo 2020 Dubai.

Mohsen bin Khamis said in a statement to the Oman News Agency that bilateral meetings will be organised between Omani businessmen and investors with their counterparts from representatives of the Sri Lankan Export Corporation, which includes 75 major Sri Lankan companies operating in many fields, on February 18, and economic meetings will be held on February 19 between Omani companies with representatives of American companies located and operating in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, and on the 20th of the same month, similar bilateral meetings will be held with representa-

tives of Dutch companies.

His Excellency indicated that these events will be organised in coordination and cooperation with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the General Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones, the Oman Investment Authority, the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates "Mada'yn", the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Petroleum Development Company. Oman.

His Excellency Mohsen bin Khamis Al Balushi added that there are other upcoming events, including the holding of the Omani Products Exhibition, in coordination with all concerned parties under the umbrella of the Joint External Exhibitions Coordination Committee for Omani Products (OPEX), and the Small and Medium Enterprises Products Exhibition, in coordination with the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority.

His Excellency pointed out that after more than three months have passed since the opening of Expo 2020 Dubai, the participation of the Omani pavilion can be evaluated as good and honorable, and this came thanks to the cooperation of all concerned parties, whether from government agencies or the private sector, and the continuous follow-up of the main committee supervising the preparation and preparation for the participation Sultanate at Expo 2020 Dubai.

His Excellency said that the number of visitors to Expo 2020 Dubai was affected in general, as a result of the preventive measures imposed by many countries, as well as the host country and the organis-



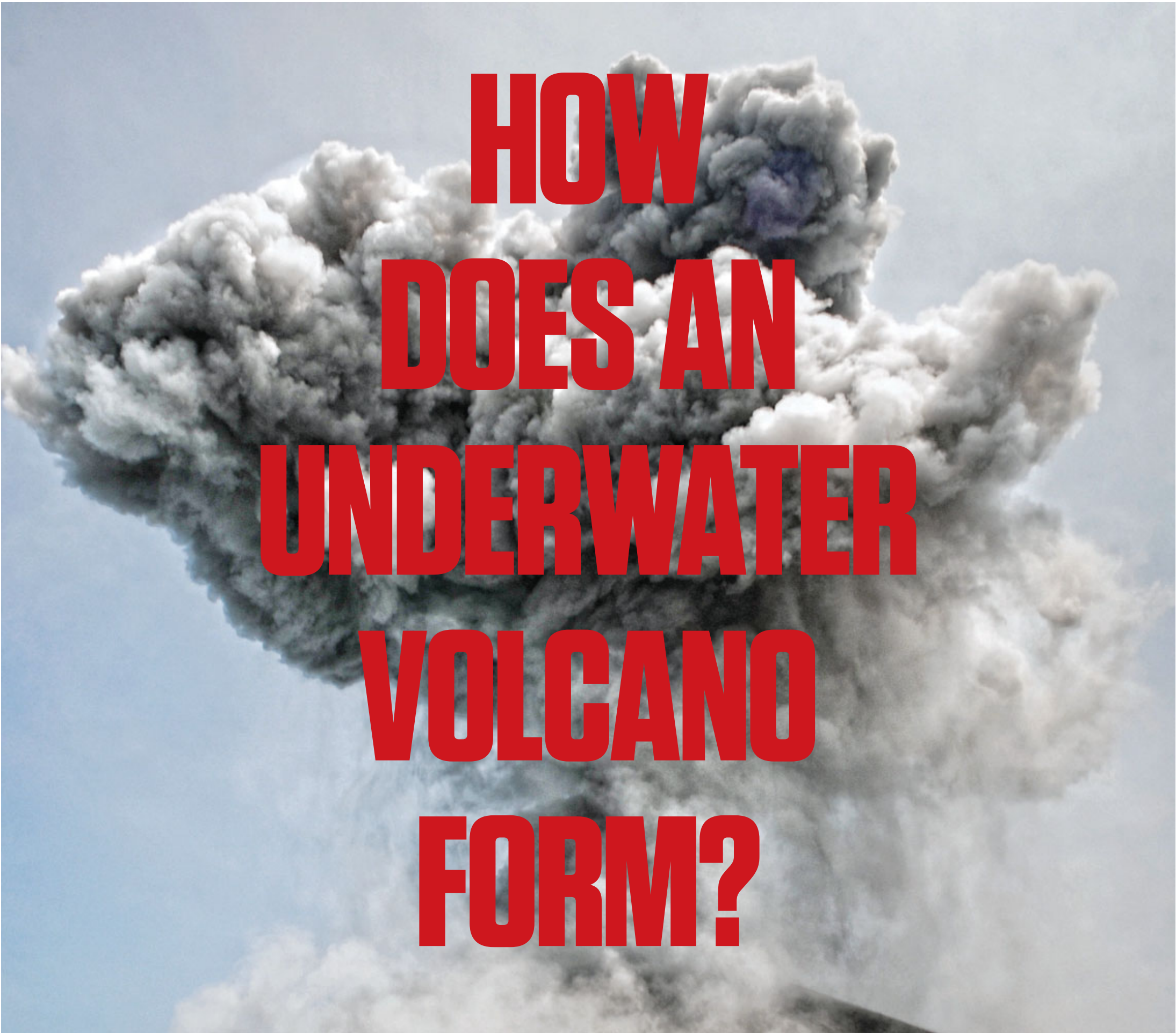
ing committee of the event, as well as the restrictions imposed by a large number of countries on travel due to the repercussions of the Covid 19 epidemic, where the target for the Expo Organizing Committee, visitors are 25 million visits, while the numbers until the date of January 16, 2022 AD reached 10 million, and it is expected that during the remaining two and a half months of the time of the Expo, it will reach approximately 20 million or more, thus the Expo will achieve between 80 to 85 percent or more, of the targeted visitors, which is a remarkable and acceptable achievement in light of the challenges posed by the pandemic.

His Excellency the Adviser at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and Commissioner-General of the Sultanate of Oman at Expo 2020 Dubai expressed his thanks and appreciation to the organising committee and the brothers in the United Arab Emirates for providing all means of success for this global event, which is being organised for the first time in the region and in an Arab country, and the facilities provided to all countries for participation.

His Excellency added that this decrease in the number of visitors is reasonable in light of the various challenges and is a great achievement by the organising committee of the exhibition, explaining that the Omani pavilion and all participating pavilions were somewhat affected by this decrease, as they acquire and attract a share of the total visitors to Expo 2020 Dubai. -OHA



FEATURE



Most volcanic activity happens beneath the ocean — but we often don't know about it. DW looks at how underwater volcanoes form and what happens when they erupt.

It's usually the volcanoes we can see that get our attention. But a violent underwater volcanic eruption on the Pacific island of Tonga in mid-January has people looking at the volcanoes beneath the ocean.

"Two-thirds of all volcanic activity happens in the deep sea," said Christoph Helo, a volcanologist at the University of Mainz in Germany. The underwater eruption in Tonga caused a tsunami that flooded parts of the country's capital. But generally, these underwater explosions come and go without much fanfare.

"Most volcanoes on our planet are indeed underwater volcanoes — this is nothing peculiar. They just erupt very quietly (not explosively) so nobody takes notice," Helo told DW.

The exact number of active underwater or submarine volcanoes is not known, but estimates range from hundreds to thousands, said Tamsin Mather, a volcanologist and professor of earth sciences at the University of Oxford.

How do underwater volcanoes form?

"There is no specific difference in the formation of submarine (underwater) and subaerial (on land) volcanoes," Helo told DW.

Volcanoes form when molten

rock is produced in the second layer of the Earth's interior — the mostly solid upper mantle — and makes its way through the crust.

"Most submarine volcanism is associated with the continuously active volcanism along mid-ocean ridges, where two tectonic plates are pulling apart," said Mather.

The collision of two plates can also cause a volcano. If both tectonic plates are beneath the ocean, then the volcano will develop underwater, said Helo. Over time, they may grow to form volcanic islands, he added. Volcanic activity within a single tectonic plate can also result in the formation of a volcano. This can happen when there is a hotspot underneath an oceanic plate, creating a chain of volcanic islands like Hawaii.

What happens when an underwater volcano erupts?

The impact of an underwater volcano eruption depends on its proximity to the water's surface.

"If the eruption happens at very great depths underwater, then the weight of the overlying water acts as a pressure cap," said David Pyle, a volcanologist and professor of earth science at the University of Oxford. If a piece of molten rock enters the sea two kilometers (1.24 miles) below the surface, it will come into contact with cold seawater and cool very quickly. The water will get very hot, but it won't turn into steam.

But if the water is shallow

enough, the magma starts to heat the water, which is then converted into steam. This creates a big change in volume.

"Steam explosions are really destructive because a small volume of water turns into a huge volume of steam," Pyle told DW.

Aside from the risk of tsunamis, the mass of ash ejected into the air when an underwater volcano erupts in shallow water can have a serious impact on people's health.

The falling ash and emitted gases not only pollute the air but can affect access to electricity and water supplies, said Pyle.

Lack of access, lack of data

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the fact they are underwater makes submarine volcanoes difficult to study. "Only a few active sites have been studied in detail due to their inherent inaccessibility," Mather told DW.

Scientists working on land can learn about the history of a volcano by visiting the volcano site and gathering data. This can be done using cliff sequences or digging holes and collecting materials.

For underwater volcanoes, scientists usually have to rely on marine surveys and mapping technology like sonar.

"It's like a really complicated layer cake," says Pyle, "somebody is going to cook this pretty complicated cake and then bash it around and cut a hole in it, and if it's above water, you can just go and have a look at it, and if they've dropped it in the bath then you're really stuck." -DW

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ROUND-UP

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The Seltos combines forward-looking technical features, class-leading space and a suite of world-class safety features, and is powered by a highly-efficient smartstream petrol engine



MUSCAT: The Kia Seltos SUV is compact yet fun to drive and makes every drive fascinating. The Seltos with its sleek and stylish looks along with its impressive performance and fuel efficiency is one of the popular models in the Kia range.

The Seltos combines forward-looking technical features, class-leading space and a suite of world-class safety features, and

is powered by a highly-efficient smartstream petrol engine. It offers distinctive exterior design details, such as its long hood, a strong, character line on the front bumper, and sharp lines pressed into the bodywork. It also sports a wide 'tiger-nose grille', making the car instantly recognizable as a Kia, but with a difference. Seltos is equipped with intricate and sharply designed full LED head-

lights and taillights, providing the car with a commanding and confident presence on the road. For daytime driving, the car also has LED daytime running lights and rear lamps, and 3D multi-layer indicators to make it clear exactly where the Seltos is heading. For driving in foggy conditions, the car is also equipped with LED fog lights.

The interior of the Seltos is impressive. The cabin is character-

ised by broad, sweeping shapes and highly technical details and is equipped with a range of technologies to maximise convenience, connectivity and ease of use.

Powering the Seltos is a 1.6-litre gasoline engine producing 121 HP paired to a six-speed automatic transmission (6AT). To further elevate the driving experience, the Seltos is equipped with a Drive Mode Select system that lets driv-

ers adapt the car to their preferred style or the road conditions. Drivers can choose from 'Normal', 'Eco' and 'Sport' mode. The Eco mode is tuned to maximize vehicle range by using fuel-saving measures, while Sport mode increases responses from the steering and electric motor to maximise the dynamic driving feel of the car. Normal mode provides a careful balance between the two.

The Seltos is a technologically advanced and refined compact SUV equipped with a range of advanced features. They include a Smart Key with Button Start, Auto Cruise Control, Terrain Mode System (Snow, Mud, Sand) & Electronic Stability Program (ESP).

The Seltos is fitted with dual airbags, as well as a suite of electronic vehicle safety systems. These include Kia's Vehicle Stability Management system as standard, incorporating traction control and electronic stability program. It also includes Anti-lock Braking System, a Traction Control System as well as front and rear parking sensors, for assistance when parking. 17" Alloy Wheels are standard.

Reliable International Automotive (RIA), the distributor for Kia in Oman provides a rewarding ownership experience for customers. Excellent product attributes and unmatched facilities easily ensure their absolute satisfaction, every mile of the way. No wonder then that Reliable International Automotive has been ranked amongst the top Kia distributors worldwide and has been honoured with prestigious accolades including the 'Good Partnership award', 'Family Like Care' Service award', and 'Kia Distributor of Distinction' award.

GLOBAL RECOGNITION AWARDS

Omani student teams win big in Shell NXplorers 2021

MUSCAT: Omani student teams, who rose to the challenge of Shell NXplorers 2021 and made home with wins in three categories through innovative solutions to environmental concerns, received the prestigious Global Recognition Awards at a virtual ceremony held recently.

NXplorers is a Shell educational program that introduces young people to complex and creative thinking that can lead to positive global change. Omani participants won one gold, one silver and one bronze award in three distinct categories: Fakhriya Al Shaibani won the Silver Award as the 'Most Inspiring NXplorers Mentor'; Team Awaser from Al Dakhiliya Governorate won Golden under the 'Outstanding NXplorers Student Team'; and 'My Palm Green Legacy' from Al Amal School won the Merit for 'Best NXplorers Project by a School Team'.

The virtual award ceremony, held on January 20, recognised and celebrated participants of Shell NXplorers from more than 20 countries, who came up with inspiring concepts and ideas to tackle global challenges related to food, water and energy. It was a worldwide celebration of NXplorers participants, facilitators and mentors, who, over the year, availed opportunities to develop skills, tools and techniques to become agents of change.

Speaking on the occasion, Jasim Al Ajmi, Social Investment and Performance Manager at Oman Shell stated, "For the 2021 edition of Shell NXplorers, we at Oman Shell worked together with the Ministry of Education and Engineering Village, our delivery partner, to implement the programme in 22 solar schools across the country. While we were amazed by the increase in the number of participants this year, despite the pandemic, we were also impressed by the diversity of ideas that the Omani student teams came up with. Over the years, our carefully developed educational program has grown in strength and stature to touch the lives of so many young students. Since its launch in Oman, NXplorers has benefitted



more than 1,400 students, and has equipped more than 60 science teachers and career advisors with the necessary information and methods to nurture STEM thinking skills amongst students."

Expressing delight over the win from the Omani teams, Dr Mayya Al Azri, Director of the Department of Innovation and Scientific Olympics, Ministry of Education, said, "On behalf of the Ministry of Education, I would like to salute all the participants for their tremendous efforts in the field of STEM and congratulate our winners for validating Oman's calibre in the global arena. We are particularly overwhelmed by the interest demonstrated by our students to be a part of Shell NXplorers, which is predominately oriented towards STEM. Most students perceive STEM programmes as challenging and are wary of the demands it places on their time and space. But the sheer number of participants is a clear indication of the popularity gained by NXplorers programme in inspiring the youth."

Fakhriya, who won the distinguished silver award, is an NX facilitator from the Ministry of Education (Al Amal School). This award is a recognition of her inspiring credentials as a Shell mentor who went that extra mile to motivate and empower young students on their NXplorers journey. It is an acknowledgement of the passion she demonstrated in delivering the NX Programme for two years during school sessions. Relying on NXplorers tools, she presented papers and research topics to integrate curricula with critical thinking tools. She also

managed to galvanise support and sponsorships from local companies to spearhead six projects. Besides, she played a pivotal role in monitoring some winning projects locally and regionally.

As golden winners of the 'Outstanding NXplorers Student Team', Awaser from Um Al Fadhel School at Al Dakhiliya governorate won kudos for their hard work in restoring the heritage of the banana tree plantation in their town, Birkat Al Mouz. Their initiative to support the recovery of native ecosystems and develop the economy through the cultivation of bananas and related products saw the team researching the reasons for the decline in the plantation. They identified the problem as a general apathy from new farmers owing to poorer returns - as compared to cattle and stock feeds - and initiated a campaign to raise awareness. With the help of government institutions, the team managed to plant over 1000 banana saplings and involved other agencies to utilize byproducts from the plants.

Merit award to 'My Palm Green Legacy' team from Al Amal School worked around the scourge of palm weevils in Oman. Having witnessed the infestation in palm trees and the problems they wrecked on the plants, they relied on NXploers thinking tools to follow a three-pronged approach - early detection, data processing, and insect disposal system - which led to the discovery of an organic insecticide to inhibit reproduction. They used petroleum ether and diethyl ether, which is extracted from the oils of ginger roots and garlic roots, and mixed with a sugary substance - similar to glucose. The insect feeds on this spray before entering the palm and as the substance affects the prechrysalis stage, the insect cannot produce eggs or eggs are unable to fully develop, which ends up as organic decomposers for sieving.

These and other initiatives presented by local teams under the NXplorers programme will gain further ground in the coming days as global recognition is expected to translate as viable projects for the private sector to invest in.

QUATERNARY CARE HOSPITAL

Logo unveiled of newly constructed multispeciality Aster Royal Hospital



MUSCAT: Name and logo of newly constructed 200 bedded multispeciality hospital "Aster Royal" was unveiled by Indian ambassador Amit Narang.

"The upcoming quaternary care hospital with permission from Ministry of Health Oman will aim to conduct complex treatment including transplant which will help the residents and citizens of Oman from travel to other countries for these procedures," Dr Azad Moopen, Founder Chairman & MD Aster DM healthcare conveyed through a digital video message. "Through the services of senior Omani consultants & consultants from India, robotic surgeries, 24hrs emergency and intensive care the team will ensure that each patient would receive royal services in this hospital," he added.

To take forward theme "Care is just an Aster away" of Aster DM healthcare's 35th foundation day, two additional services "Aster@home" & "Aster-Dilse" were inaugurated by Amit Narang. "Product like this which allows us to have somebody to look after our aged parents and relatives while we are working abroad unable to serve them. I do believe that there can be no better source of comfort than this. I congratulate Aster

hospital for launching this facility for NRIs who are here in Oman and I am sure this facility will go a long way. My warmest congratulations on Aster management initiatives. Aster hospitals are very popular in Oman by giving great service not only Indian community but also to the local Omani community by providing quality health care. The Embassy of India is also a customer of Aster Hospital, my members from the Indian embassy regularly visit the hospital and we are very happy with your services. We are very happy to see you expanding in Muscat with the launch of the new hospital. We wish Aster a great success and we wish aster to continue to provide good quality affordable medical services to the Indian community as well as Omani people. My best wishes to the Aster management on this endeavour as well," said Amit Narang while happily accepting the first registration of Aster-Dilse services.

"Once Aster Royal hospital is commissioned citizens and residents of Oman will no longer need forgoing out of the country for medical services. Along with the expert Omani consultants, senior doctors working in Aster DM Healthcare-India will be made available in Oman," as said by Farhan Yasin,

Regional Director for Aster Kerala and Oman Clusters.

"The new building, which is located next to Aster Al Raffah hospital in Ghubra, will be one of its kind state of the art facility in terms of medical services and facilities. Our new doctors are specialists and equipped for any major operation or complication. We have been in Oman for the last 12 years and it has been an incredible journey," Dr Ashik Sainu Mohiyadeen, Medical Director of Aster Oman said.

"With Aster @ Home services we will be able to provide our medical expertise to more people of Oman both digitally and physically who are unable to travel to our hospitals due to COVID, old age or other medical issues at Muscat, Sohar & Ibri" said Dr Ashendu Pandey CEO Aster Oman.

"At Aster Royal Hospital we will ensure that everybody gets the best patient care experience. As a part of adapting to new technologies, an Artificial Intelligence enabled Whatsapp booking system (+968 9855 0066) has already been ruled out which makes appointment booking, lab reports and patient care services very easy," said Dr Shinoop Raj, COO Aster Muscat region while concluding the meet.

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